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GREATEST

ALBUMS &

TRACKS

OF ALL TIME





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THE 1000 GREATEST ALBUMS & TRACKS OF ALL TIME

Across the land, pubs lit up with arguments about whether 'Sound Of Silver' was better than 'Sgt. Pepper's...' or 'Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not' superior to 'Electric Ladyland'. *NME's* letters-page inbox exploded with debate on the glaring absence of 'A Night At The Opera' and 'The Wall'. It was undoubtedly one of the most talked-about issues in the magazine's history: when *NME* published its list of the Top 500 Albums Of All Time back in October 2013, voted for by 80 writers from throughout its illustrious lifetime, it upturned decades of fixed and long-held beliefs in the unshakeable canon of the indisputable Best Records Ever. The Strokes, Arctic Monkeys and Pulp were suddenly ranked alongside The Beatles, Bowie and Dylan, and the best bands from the new century sat brazenly among their own heroes. Recognising that seminal new classics are being made all the time, legend, reputation and antiquity counted for nought; this was all of rock reassessed.

Among all the arguing, there was so much appreciation of our updating and reorganising of music's top table that we decided to do it again. Last year, by the same complex means, we put together our list of the Top 500 Songs Of All Time and caused just as much of a ruckus.

Now, for the first time, we've combined these two definitive lists into one all-encompassing magazine; the ultimate go-to guide of what's essential in the entire history of rock'n'roll. There's a whole lifetime of listening to enjoy here, and a million nights of raging pub rows. Dive in...

Mark Beaumont, editor

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Time Inc.



The 500 greatest albums of all time

The album is an artform by which any worthwhile act wants to be judged. True artists make albums to create something inspirational, epoch-shifting and life-affirming. Something to rank alongside the 500 records here: the greatest albums ever recorded

500 Stankonia

OutKast 2000 LAFACE RECORDS



Grimes: "I really enjoyed OutKast as a kid, I don't know why. Obviously back then I wasn't like, 'Oh the production's amazing' or anything; it's just that the whole record is totally solid. 'Bombs Over Baghdad' is pretty sweet; it's like a rap/drum'n'bass sound."

499 Star Belly

1993 4AD



Following stints in Throwing Muses and The Breeders, Tanya Donnelly struck out on her own with Belly, showcasing her unnaturally charmed way a Grimm fairy-tale tune on this haunted pop forest of a debut. My Tanya, what big hooks you have...

498 Berlin

Lou Reed 1973 RCA
Drugs, domestic violence, depression, prostitution and suicide; Reed's 1973 rock opera was no 'Stankonia', but its intense misery made it one of the most powerful albums in Reed's canon.

497 Achtung Baby

U2 1991 ISLAND



U2's much-needed industrial electro-rock makeover with 'The Fly' made for a formidable rejuvenation and paved the way for tech-rock transformations from many other acts over the decade to come.

496 Album

Girls 2009 TRUE PANTHER SOUNDS



With tracks titled 'God Damned', 'Ghost Mouth' and 'Big Bad Mean Motherfucker', Girls could have been Slipknot's sisters; instead the likes of 'Hellhole Ratrace' and 'Laura' were gorgeously rusted beauties played on acoustic guitars made of solid brimstone.

495 Hot Fuss

The Killers 2004 LIZARD KING/VERTIGO



Like all of the glitz and grit of Las Vegas condensed into three-and-a-half-minutes of vengeful slut-shaming, 'Mr Brightside' arrived in a blaze of jubilant jealousy, and The Killers' debut, with its murder tales and schoolyard infatuations, was no less explosive.

494 The Head On The Door

The Cure 1985 FICTION



Having just accidentally invented goth, Robert Smith set out to distance himself from its crepuscular clutches with a lean, crisp pop record packed with lip-smacking dancefloor demons - 'Close To Me', 'Push' and 'In Between Days' were The Cure's most infectious and intoxicating tunes since 'Boys Don't Cry'.

493 Blood

This Mortal Coil 1991 4AD



A morose masterpiece, the final album from 4AD founder Ivo Watts-Russell's dream-goth collective This Mortal Coil featured some of the most moving pieces of music ever to be recorded. Go wallow.

492 Hidden

These New Puritans 2010 DOMINO



The strange, alien sounds on TNP's second album prompted endless comparisons with Radiohead, but Thom Yorke never sounded as scary and sinister as this.

491 Actually

Pet Shop Boys 1987 PARLOPHONE



The molten flow of major hits from 1986's 'Please I Done To Deserve This?' adding some kitsch glamour and theatrical twists to the PSB formula.

490 Back In The USA

MC5 1970 ATLANTIC



Refining and consolidating the furious garage scuzz of debut album 'Kick Out The Jams', Detroit's oiliest garage rockers covered Chuck Berry and Little Richard on their way into the proto-punk history books.

489 George Best

The Wedding Present

1987 RECEPTION RECORDS



The foundation stone upon which the following two decades of alternative guitar pop was built, The Wedding Present's C86 milestone of speed-strumming teenage tribulations sounds as vital today as it did at the dawn of indie as we know it.

488 I'm Your Man

Leonard Cohen 1988 COLUMBIA



Turning to synthpop to brighten his trademark dolorous baritone, 'I'm Your Man' found Laughing Len crooning 'First We Take Manhattan' and other latter-era classics.

487 Sound Affects

The Jam 1980 POLYDOR



Home to 'Start!' and 'That's Entertainment', 1980's 'Sound Affects' was a rousing declaration that post-punk new wave had staying power into the neon decade.

486 Homogenic

Björk 1997 ONE LITTLE INDIAN



Considered one of the most groundbreaking albums in modern electronica, 'Homogenic' was Björk's most elegant leap into the sonic unknown and, according to NME, "a stinging triumph for the spirit of adventure".

485 Good Kid, MAAD City

Kendrick Lamar 2012



2011's 'Section 80' mixtape had hinted at glory, but 'Good Kid...' was another beast altogether; lean and uncompromising, with daring dashes into the hip-hop unknown.

484 The River

Bruce Springsteen 1980 COLUMBIA



Flipping from weighty to flighty throughout his landmark double-album, Springsteen gave 'The River' a constantly thrashing course, and myriad murky depths.

483 Blood & Chocolate

Elvis Costello And The Attractions

1986 DEMON



The same year he reached his C&W high-water mark with 'King Of America', the chameleonic Costello ripped out this bitter, bile-fuelled slab of hate pop, stalker-level obsession, ecological disaster and dank, murderous rock'n'roll that also happened to be eerily catchy.

482 Lady In Satin

Billie Holiday 1958 COLUMBIA



Her voice disintegrating towards the end of her life, Holiday's 'Lady In Satin' was a deeply moving portrait of a broken woman at her most disconsolately beautiful.

481 Smile

Brian Wilson 2004 NONESUCH



James Skelly: "If I had written 'Heroes and Villains' I would retire. I think I've got every bootleg The Beach Boys have ever done."

480 I Never Loved A Man The Way I Loved You

Aretha Franklin 1967 ATLANTIC



Come Franklin's 10th album she had been crowned the first lady of soul, and cemented her reputation with an album featuring timeless shouty-soul smackers like 'Respect' and the legendary title track.

479 The Real Ramona

Throwing Muses 1991 4AD



'The Real Ramona' was no ordinary Throwing Muses album – here Kristin Hersh's hard-candy angst ('Counting Backwards', 'Him Dancing', 'Hook In Her Head') was sugared with Tanya Donnelly's syrupy pop magic ('Not Too Soon', 'Honeychain') to create the definition of 'bittersweet'.

478 Trouble Will Find Me

The National 2013 4AD



Recorded, quite literally, in the middle of tornadoes and hurricanes, The National's sixth album was a remarkably settled beast. 'Trouble Will Find Me' consisted of future, dramatic and lachrymose mature rock for the more discerning wine club.

477 Crystal Castles

Crystal Castles 2008 LIES



Bursting on to the electro scene in a blizzard of metallic punk screaming, febrile beats and very bad drugs, Crystal Castles' debut sounded like a post-apocalyptic rave in the world's wildest nuclear bunker.

476 Foo Fighters

Foo Fighters 1995 CAPITOL



Made in just one week at a rate of one song every 45 minutes, and with Dave Grohl playing virtually every instrument, 'Foo Fighters' was a lightning bolt of post-grunge genius that illuminated the black blank space Kurt had left behind.

475 Graduation

Kanye West

2007 ROC-A-FELLA RECORDS



Dizzee Rascal: "To me, this is the pinnacle of music. I listened to it and thought, 'Fucking hell man, that's the one.' It's like an electronic-bass-hip-hop album. It's still sample-based but Kanye's got really electric. It's different to normal hip-hop. It changed my world."

474 Smoke Rings For My Halo

Kurt Vile 2011 MATADOR



An intensely intimate listen, Vile's fourth album was a long, dreamy and compelling diary entry, one of the decade's finest confessionals.

473 Melon Collie And The Infinite Sadness

Smashing Pumpkins 1995 VIRGIN



Michael Angelakos, Passion Pit: "It's one of the few double albums that actually worked – that's one of the most incredible achievements, I think. I'm very Billy Corgan inspired; I covered 'Tonight, Tonight' a while ago."

472 Tarot Sport

Fuck Buttons 2009 ATP RECORDINGS



Quizzical robots, electro fanfares and intergalactic tunes made 'Tarot Sport', Fuck Buttons' second album, a sprawling work of total avant-pop wonderment.

471 A Storm In Heaven

The Verve 1993 HUT



Back when Ashcroft was known as 'Mad Richard' for his space cadet antics, The Verve were the ultimate post-baggy shoegazers, conjuring thunderous clashes of Can, MBV and The Doors like gargantuan rock Gandalfs.

470 Oracular Spectacular

MGMT 2008 COLUMBIA



Post-apocalyptic space wizards MGMT dented the space/time continuum with a debut that took in wondrously warped pop premonitions of the rock-star life ('Time To Pretend'), 23rd-century floor-fillers ('Electric Feel', 'Kids') and the prom at the end of the universe ('The Youth').

469 Holland

The Beach Boys

1973 BROTHER/REPRISE



Recorded in the Netherlands and featuring three-part sagas dedicated to California, 'Holland' was The Beach Boys' 70s high point, despite fulcrum Brian Wilson being largely absent, physically and mentally.

468 Chutes Too Narrow

The Shins 2003 SUB POP



A year before Natalie Portman made them famous in *Garden State*, James Mercer's The Shins had made their lasting testament: complex alt-folk gorgeousness designed to woo the manic pixie dream-girl of your choosing.

467 The Idiot

Iggy Pop 1977 RCA



Iggy's companion piece to 'Low', 'The Idiot' was the sounding board for Bowie's Berlin period, and an experimental post-punk milestone in its own right.

466 The W

Wu-Tang Clan 2000 LOUD RECORDS



The Wu were mature solo artists by their third album and it showed: murky atmospherics, masterful beats and their biggest hit to date in 'Gravel Pit'.

465 High Violet

The National 2010 4AD



Arguably The National's most cohesive and melodically charged album yet, 'High Violet' was life-changing for the immense 'Buzzblood Ohio' alone.

464 Because Of The Times

Kings Of Leon

2007 RCA



KOL's heads-down charge for the Big Time, 'Because...' was both bawl and bite, the rabid Pixies mania of 'Charmer' rubbing up to the widescreen Americana of 'Fans' and 'On Call'.

463 Pod

The Breeders 1990 4AD



Dark, druggy and melodically delirious, Kim Deal's first foray out of Pixies was 'Gigantic' expanded. A golden half-hour of Honeyblood heaven.

462 Master Of Puppets

Metallica

1986 ELEKTRA



Often considered to be metal's crowning achievement, Metallica invigorated thrash with their brutalist benchmark.

461 Generation Terrorists

Manic Street Preachers

1992 COLUMBIA



Blackwood's politicised glam-punk stormtroopers of suicide wanted to sell 16-million albums then split up. Instead, they created a true cult double that sparked devotion and disgust in equal measure. Perfect.

460 Bleach

Nirvana 1989 SUB POP



Filthy, bleak and thrown together in just 30 hours for some \$600, 'Bleach' was Nirvana's raw ore, dolloped on thick.

459 The Black Album

Jay-Z

2003 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM



Hova's retirement album saw him go out (briefly) on a high, touting '99 Problems' and the ultra-personal 'December 4th' on this, his iconic hustler 'White Album'.

458 Yankee Hotel Foxtrot

Wilco

2002 NONESUCH



Described as 'Americana's 'Kid A'', 'YHF' was a rich, multi-layered and psychedelic reimagining of the form.

457 Black Cherry

Goldfrapp 2003 MUTE



Shifting from the ambient tone of their debut, Goldfrapp's second album embraced glam and retro-modern pop, setting a spangly new standard for chart-bound dance music.

456 September Of My Years

Frank Sinatra

1965 REPRISE



Turning 50, Sinatra made his defining coming-of-middle-age statement; wistful, melancholic and tinged with the regrets he so famously denounced elsewhere.

455 The Writing's On The Wall

Destiny's Child

1999 COLUMBIA



Kele Okereke, Bloc Party: "It's a really glossy R&B and pop record. Parts of it, primarily the tracks produced by Timbaland, sound like nothing on this planet – they still sound light years ahead of so much music – and it was a really big influence when we were making 'Intimacy'. Sonically, this is by far some of the best stuff Timbaland has done. He did the Missy Elliott albums and he did the Aaliyah album and this record, but still, the songs on 'The Writing's On The Wall' are superior."

454 Vampire Weekend

Vampire Weekend 2008 XL



The record that invented campus Afrobeat and introduced a generation to the Oxford comma, Peter Gabriel and the simple joys of a jubilant "hey-hey-hey-hey!". A triumph.

453 The House Of Love

The House Of Love

1988 CREATION



Even leaving off their biggest hit 'Shine On', The House Of Love's debut was Creation's first world-beater.

452 The B-52's

The B-52's

1979 ISLAND



The kitsch rock'n'roll throwbacks of US new wave nailed their boy/girl prom-wave shtick first time, thanks to 'Rock Lobster' and 'Planet Claire'.

451 Third/Sister Lovers

Big Star

1978 PVC



A harrowing record cataloguing breakdown and defeat, Alex Chilton's stark and erratic opus ranks among rock's most traumatic listens outside of Lou Reed's collaboration cupboard.

450 Rid Of Me**PJ Harvey 1993 Island**

Pumping up the garage punk from her raw debut 'Dry', PJ Harvey's second album was a fantastically sassy and savage racket.

449 AM**Arctic Monkeys 2013 Domino**

Rising in stature all the time, the Monkeys' fifth album was a sultry slow-burner that lit up modern rock with a flick of its Elvis quiff.

448 Sci-Fi Lullabies**Suede 1997 Nude**

Proof that Suede's early B-sides were every bit as glamorous, seditious and ass-smackingly great as their A-sides, this round-up of the likes of 'My Insatiable One', 'The Living Dead' and 'Killing Of A Flash Boy' was the match of their studio albums.

447 Diamond Dogs**David Bowie 1974 RCA**

A futuristic gangland glam bang that blasted Bowie's post-Ziggy persona Halloween Jack into a post-apocalyptic *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

446 The Warning**Hot Chip****2006 Astralwerks/DFA**

Among the greatest dancefloor pop albums of the noughties, 'The Warning' boasted such immense bangers as 'Over And Over', 'Colours' and 'And I Was A Boy From School'.

445 Tusk**Fleetwood Mac 1979 Warner Bros**

The brilliantly bloated follow-up to 'Rumours', 'Tusk' saw Fleetwood Mac tackle new wave and punk with the help of a \$1million budget and a ma-hoo-ssive marching band.

444 Violator**Depeche Mode 1990 Mute**

Thanks to 'Personal Jesus' and 'Enjoy The Silence', 'Violator' was the pinnacle of the Mode's pop noir ascendance, before the leather waistcoats and demonic gospel kicked in.

443 Sometimes I Wish We Were An Eagle**Bill Callahan 2009 Drag City**

The ex-Smog frontman reached another career peak with this lush yet deadpan collection of misanthropic mastery.

442 Al Green Is Love**Al Green****1975 The Right Stuff Records**

The most revered reverend on the planet proved that, even after releasing his signature tune 'Let's Stay Together', his sweet soul magic still flowed.

441 Arrival**Abba 1976 Epic**

A-ha! Boasting such ubiquitous proto-disco classics as 'Dancing Queen' and 'Knowing Me, Knowing You', 'Arrival' was a formative 70s pop mainstay.

440 Life's A Riot With Spy Vs Spy**Billy Bragg 1983 Charisma**

Sixteen minutes of passionate Essex protest poetry that gave us 'A New England' and, very nearly, a new England.

439 The Futureheads**The Futureheads 2004 679**

O-ey-o-ey-o! Jerky, jolty Mackem yelpers make marvellously angular debut full of reinvigorated Kate Bush covers and sentences that! Stop and! Start in unex! Pected places!

438 Aha Shake Heartbreak**Kings Of Leon****2004 RCA**

Even with 'Soft' owning up to penile dysfunction, The Kings rose to the second-album occasion thanks to smackers like 'King Of The Rodeo', 'Taper Jean Girl' and 'The Bucket'.

437 Dear Science**TV On The Radio 2008 4AD**

Mike Skinner: "I was reading a lot about them on Hype Machine. I like the fact that it's rock music and still sounds experimental."

436 Mirrored**Battles 2007 Warp**

The singing gnomes and propulsive beats of 'Atlas' drove Battles' debut to eviltronic greatness.

435 Easter**Patti Smith 1978 RCA**

Songs of death, resurrection and rebellion – oh, and Springsteen's 'Because The Night' – broke Patti into the big time.

434 Steve McQueen**Prefab Sprout****1985 Kitchenware**

In which Paddy McAloon's indie pop janglers revved their way to critical acclaim.

433 2001 Dr Dre**2001 Aftermath/Interscope**

Matt Helders, Arctic Monkeys: "I loved listening to this, and still do. Production-wise, he nailed the beats perfectly – not only on that album but beyond. He's not best known for his voice, but I like it – it sounds like he's been arguing! I've been messing around with hip-hop stuff myself, I did a Roots Manuva remix."

432 Tindersticks**Tindersticks 1993 This Way Up**

Soaked in blood and whisky and slumped drunk on fag-pocked Formica, Tindersticks' superb debut was a knife-edge portrait of the wrecked urban poet musing on murder, heartbreak and cheap red wine.

431 Badmotorfinger**Soundgarden 1991 A&M**

The grunge bawlers' commercial peak, thanks to throwing their 'Jesus Christ Pose'.

430 Scott 4 Scott Walker**1969 Philips/Fontana**

Baroque songs inspired by Ingmar Bergman and Joseph Stalin revealed Scott's singular muse.

429 Bleed American Jimmy Eat World**2001 DREAMWORKS**

After eight years, the Arizona emo crew cracked the mainstream with this album of breezy pop angst.

428 Born In The USA**Bruce Springsteen 1984 COLUMBIA**

Springsteen's defining moment spoke of struggle and hard times, blown up to arena-sized widescreen.

427 Here Come The Warm Jets**Brian Eno 1974 ISLAND**

A set of exploded glam and post-Velvet guitar pop that remade the Roxy Music boffin as a solo star.

426 Goo Sonic Youth 1990 DGC

The NYC noisniks sign to a major, but the sinister cover and raucous 'Kool Thing' (with Chuck D) signalled they weren't selling out.

425 Nancy And Lee**Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood 1968 REPRISE**

Faris Badwan, The Horrors: "'Some Velvet Morning' was a favourite when I was little. The original is one of the best songs ever written."

424 The Joshua Tree**U2 1987 ISLAND**

Simon Neil, Biffy Clyro: "This was when Bono was becoming the biggest rock star in the world but still had the tunes to back it up."

423 Live At Leeds**The Who 1970 DECCA**

Frenzied takes on 'Substitute' and 'My Generation' captured the sound of a band at the peak of their powers.

422 Too-Rye-Ay Dexys**Midnight Runners 1982 MERCURY**

The dungaree-clad believers created chart-busting new wave pop and testifyin' Celtic soul.

421 Radio City Big Star**1974 ARDENT**

'Radio City' was Alex Chilton's deranged power-pop high point, and a future inspiration to REM.

420 People's Instinctive Travels And The Paths Of Rhythm A Tribe Called Quest**1990 JIVE/RCA**

A jazzy gem in hip-hop's crown, Tribe's debut was a feast of Afrocentric knowledge and goofball rhymes.

419 Let It Come Down**Spiritualized 2001 ARISTA**

It was smacky space-rock out, art-rock symphonies in as Jason Pierce went full-on Phil Spector.

418 Electro-Shock Blues**Eels 1998 DREAMWORKS**

E's had a rough time of it. But here, Mark Everett succeeded in transmuting personal grief into inventive, life-affirming pop.

417 1977 Ash**1996 INFECTIOUS**

It started with a roaring TIE-fighter and ended with the bassist throwing up. In between were 12 tracks of warp-speed power punk.

416 Merriweather Post Pavilion Animal Collective**2009 DOMINO**

James Ford, Simian Mobile Disco: "They have slowly developed their own unique sonic world. It's great futuristic psychedelic pop music that sounds like nothing else."

415 Chet Baker Sings**Chet Baker 1956 PACIFIC JAZZ**

Vocalist-trumpeter Baker, king of the West Coast 'cool school' of jazz, never sounded better than this.

414 Dig Your Own Hole Chemical Brothers**1997 VIRGIN/FREESTYLE DUST**

Noel Gallagher and Beth Orton helped Ed Simons and Tom Rowlands fashion a big-beat masterclass.

413 Pills 'N' Thrills And Bellyaches Happy Mondays**1990 FACTORY**

Shaun, Bez and company crafted a euphoric collision of acid house, funk and all the drugs in Manchester.

412 Entroducing...**DJ Shadow 1996 MO' WAX**

Serge Pizzorno, Kasabian: "Everything changed for me when I heard that album – it opened my mind to David Axelrod and hip-hop and Babe Ruth."

411 Madvillainy Madvillainy

2004 STONES THROW



Stoner humour and mind-bending beats from underground hip-hop dream team MF Doom and Madlib.

410 Antics Interpol 2004 MATADOR

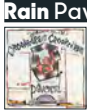
The New Yorkers returned with clammy post-punk jitters that felt like a gloved hand at your throat.

409 Tago Mago Can

1971 UNITED ARTISTS



Scholarly German avant-rockers holed up in a castle with Japanese busker Damo Suzuki for a mantric percussion workout.

408 Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain Pavement 1994 BIG CAT

Lo-fi progenitors peel back the hiss to let Stephen Malkmus' wry, collegiate songs shine.

407 Going Blank Again Ride 1992 CREATION

Taking the airy atmospherics of their debut and pumping them full of swirling noise, Ride's second was shoegazing on steroids.

406 Rated R Queens Of The Stone Age 2000 INTERSCOPE

Joshua Homme, Nick Oliveri and Mark Lanegan do psychedelic desert rock par excellence. The feelgood hit of the year 2000 is still in our bloodstream.

405 Otis Blue

Otis Redding 1965 VOLT/ATCO



The high watermark for 1960s soul: 11 covers, classics and standards recorded with unparalleled grit, sorrow and sensuality.

404 No Other

Gene Clark 1974 ASYLUM



The former Byrds' fourth solo album approached the scale of 'Pet Sounds' in its visionary entwining of country rock, gospel and soul.

403 Vespertine Björk

2001 ONE LITTLE INDIAN



A grand conceit that mingled orchestras and Inuit choirs with cutting-edge sonic manipulation.

402 Twenty One

Mystery Jets

2008 679 RECORDINGS



Constructed around the spangly '80s pop of 'Two Doors Down', Mystery Jets' third made them the coolest cult pop crooners.

401 20 Jazz Funk Greats

Throbbing Gristle

1979 INDUSTRIAL



Industrial music forerunners soften their seedy churn with exotica, pop and disco.

400 This Nation's Saving

Grace The Fall

1985 BEGGARS BANQUET



Album nine from the Prestwich punks showcased Mark E Smith at his surly best.

399 The Lyre Of

Orpheus/Abattoir Blues

Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds 2004 MUTE



A blockbuster double-package steeped in Greek myth and thrilling gothic rock dirge.

398 Everybody Knows

This Is Nowhere

Neil Young 1969 REPRISE



The Californian Canadian's first collaboration with Crazy Horse was full to the brim with raw energy.

397 Reasonable Doubt

Jay-Z 1996 ROC-A-FELLA/PRIORITY



Before the fame and riches, 'Reasonable Doubt' was Hov at his hungriest, snapping rhymes with ferocity.

396 LAMF

Heartbreakers 1977 TRACK



The work of former New York Dolls and Television members, the fuzz-drenched 'LAMF' was one of the greatest 'supergroup' albums.

395 De Stijl The White Stripes

2000 SYMPATHY FOR THE RECORD INDUSTRY



Jack and Meg made cult names of themselves thanks to the striking no-fi blues-punk of 'You're Pretty Good Looking...'

394 Chairs Missing Wire 1978 EMI

Abandoning the crunchy resonance of their debut, Wire's 'Chairs Missing' took aim at Brian Eno's ambient weirdness.

393 Dirty Mind Prince

1980 WARNER BROS



Robyn: "It's one of his first albums, and one that people don't talk about a lot. For me it's really special because it's from before the point where he had a lot of money, so it's still kind of rough and almost punky – about the time he started listening to new wave."

392 Beauty And The Beat

Edan 2005 LEWIS RECORDINGS



The most ruthless, raucous, gloriously off-piste rap record that was produced in the noughties.

391 Burial Burial 2006 HYPERDUB

Full of steely two-step beats, Burial's 2006 debut remains an enigmatic electronic tour-de-force.

390 A Northern Soul

Verve 1995 HUT



An intimate follow-up to 1993's 'A Storm In Heaven' that expanded their grand rock magic.

389 Le Tigre Le Tigre

1999 MR LADY



Bikini Kill alumnus Kathleen Hanna cooks up an unforgettable electroclash ruckus.

388 Happy Sad

Tim Buckley 1969 ELEKTRA



A daring venture into jazz at the beginning of a rich experimental period for the English songwriting icon.

387 Combat Rock

The Clash 1982 CBS



Angry at the press after a critical fall from grace, Strummer's boys hit back in vitriolic punk fashion.

386 Revival Gillian

Welch 1996 ALMO SOUNDS



Appalachian guitars and rustic vibes made Welch's bare, sorrowful debut an absolute gem.

385 Get Behind Me

Satan The White Stripes

2005 XL RECORDINGS



The bluesy garage inferno that earned the duo Top Three chart placings on both sides of the Atlantic.

384 Someone To Drive You

Home The Long Blondes

2006 ROUGH TRADE



Sheffield janglers provide a glossy guitar-pop fantasy alternative to Alex Turner's grey depictions of life in the Steel City.

383 Bridge Over Troubled

Water Simon And Garfunkel

1970 COLUMBIA



Full of poetic storytelling, this was the New York City folk pair at their plaintive, harmonising best.

382 Elvis Presley

Elvis Presley 1956 RCA VICTOR



James Allen, Glasvegas: "The woman who used to live upstairs from me had every Elvis LP you could get. I thought it was strange that anyone could be that fanatical, but in terms of somebody taking you to a different place, Elvis does that better than anybody."

381 Scary Monsters

(And Super Creeps)

David Bowie 1980 RCA



Carl Barât: "This used to scare the shit out of me when I was about three years old, strapped into the back seat of our car. It was on repeat and I remember clutching the car door in fright."

380 Silent Alarm

Bloc Party 2005 WICHITA



From 'Banquet' to the stirring 'She's Hearing Voices', Bloc Party's was simply a stunning debut.

379 The Boy With The Arab

Strap Belle and Sebastian

1998 JEEPSTER



The Scottish indie favourites served up glistening melodies with bonhomie on their third.

378 Pink Flag Wire 1977 HARVEST

British punk harbingers shout, scream and snarl their way to infamy on their exhilarating debut.

377 Stormcock

Roy Harper 1971 HARVEST



One of Johnny Marr's favourite albums, this is the cult English folk musician's finest collection.

376

Live At The Harlem Square Club

Sam Cooke 1963 (1985) RCA



More than fifty years ago, R&B artist Sam Cooke performed at the Harlem Square Club in Miami. The recording of that legendary show is now considered one of the greatest live albums ever, but originally Cooke's label RCA chose not to release the record and left the tapes to gather dust in the archives. Discovered some 22 years later in 1985, they revealed a performer pumping everything into his set. On 'Chain Gang', 'Feel It' and the yearning highlight of 'Cupid', the energy and fervour Cooke pours into his performance is, in his rasping vocals and the impassioned singalong response of the crowd, still spine-tinglingly palpable half a century later. A handful of different versions have been released since, but however you package it, this album always sounds like a long-buried treasure. ■ RD

375 Vauxhall & I**Morrissey 1994 PARLOPHONE**

With his strongest solo material, the Smiths man made a surprise venture into bombastic rock.

374 In The Wee Small Hours**Frank Sinatra 1955 CAPITOL**

The Rat Pack crooner confronted loneliness and depression on his ninth album.

373 There's No Place Like America Today**Curtis Mayfield 1975 CURTOM**

The Chicago soul man was captured here at his most irresistibly affectionate and striking.

372 Atomizer Big Black**1986 HOMESTEAD**

A take-no-prisoners noise-rock epic typical of Big Black founder Steve Albini.

371 Odelay Beck 1996 GEFEN

A fun, funk frolic that made Beck the bounciest, most satanically hairdressed 'Loser' out there.

370 Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever**The Crips 2007 WICHITA**

The sweat-soaked triumph that established the Wakefield trio as bona fide indie marvels.

369 Strange Mercy**St Vincent 2011 4AD**

Equal parts punk, prog and pop, Annie Clark's 2011 opus was beguiling and brilliant.

368 Hail To The Thief**Radiohead 2003 PARLOPHONE**

A sprawling return to art rock after the cold electronics of 'Amnesiac', albeit with a rootsy twist.

367 Nights Out**Metronomy 2008 BECAUSE MUSIC**

A record about drinking and disillusion, this "half-arsed concept album" ended up as the electro

'Whatever People Say I Am...'

366 Songs Of Love And Hate Leonard Cohen**1971 COLUMBIA**

Bleak and nihilistic it may be, but songs like 'Dress Rehearsal Rag' find the Canadian at his most poetic.

365 Fresh Fruit For Rotting Vegetables Dead Kennedys**1980 CHERRY RED/ALTERNATIVE TENTACLES**

San Francisco's politically charged hardcore punkers went straight for the jugular on their breathless debut.

364 For Emma, Forever Ago**Bon Iver 2008 4AD/JAGJAGUWAR**

Recorded in a wood cabin in a fit of heartbroken despair, Justin Vernon's debut remains unmatched in terms of arresting emotion.

361 A Nod Is As Good As A Wink... To A Blind Horse**Faces 1971 WARNER BROS**

Rod Stewart and Ronnie Wood's third chronicle of hedonism and life in the fast lane.

360 Room On Fire**The Strokes 2003 ROUGH TRADE**

The NY group's second introduced an electronic edge to the good-times vibe of their debut.

359 We're Only In It For The Money The Mothers**Of Invention 1968 VERVE**

Frank Zappa's surrealist rock opus riffed on 'Sgt Pepper's...' to create a masterpiece of his own.

358 Rock Bottom**Robert Wyatt 1974 VIRGIN**

After breaking his spine, Wyatt wrote his sparkling debut during an eight-month hospital stay.

357 Copper Blue**Sugar 1992 CREATION**

Hüsker Dü's Bob Mould discovered a post-Nirvana spurt of accessibility and cracked out the breeziest record of the grunge era, making us dance to drownings.

356 Bossanova Pixies 1990 4AD

Ditching biblical bloodshed, it was all UFOs and surf rock on Pixies' fourth.

355 New York Dolls**New York Dolls 1973 MERCURY**

Scorching glam-punk underpinned by some Vietnam War-era dread and despair.

354 Hot Buttered Soul**Isaac Hayes 1969 ENTERPRISE**

A revolution in soul music, Hayes' second snubbed three-minute, radio-friendly cuts for 12-minute grooves.

353 McLusky Do Dallas**McLusky 2002 TOO PURE**

A white-knuckle ride with clattering post-punk guitars from cult Cardiff crew.

363 Damaged**Black Flag 1981 SST**

Henry Rollins' famous howl stands at the epicentre of this caustic American hardcore classic.

362 Hello Nasty**Beastie Boys 1998 CAPITOL**

Funk-punk eclecticism from the NYC MCs that found them rapping giant robots out of Tokyo.

352 White Light/White Heat The Velvet Underground**1968 VERVE**

The band's second LP honed the wasted avant-noise-pop of their debut into something much more challenging.

351 Sweetheart Of The Rodeo The Byrds**1968 COLUMBIA**

Collaborating with the gifted Gram Parsons, The Byrds' sixth LP made country and western hip.

350 BRMC Black Rebel**Motorcycle Club 2001 VIRGIN**

The brash guitar scrawl of this debut rejuvenated Mary Chain basement rock for the new century.

349 An Awesome Wave**Alt-J 2012 INFECTIOUS**

A justly deserved Mercury Prize winner, 'An Awesome Wave's minimalist electro-folk defined the darknet generation.

348 Whitney Whitney**Houston 1987 ARISTA**

From 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody (Who Loves Me)' to 'So Emotional', a peppy R&B masterclass.

347 Dirty Sonic Youth**1992 GEFEN**

Yannis Philippakis, Foals: "It's a massive 'Fuck you!' to everyone. It was a total cure to things like school and being that age and living in England. You can just destroy stuff to this album."

346 Low-Life**New Order 1985 FACTORY**

The moment the former Joy Division members left behind their post-punk roots to truly embrace dance music.

345 Punch The Clock**Elvis Costello 1983 F-BEAT**

Taking on the brassy gleam of producers Langer & Winstanley, Costello produced his brightest, most irresistible pop set.

344 Beautiful Freak**Eels 1996 DREAMWORKS**

Heartache has never sounded quite so sweet as on Eels' sad and sombre debut release.

343 John Wesley Harding**Bob Dylan 1967 COLUMBIA**

After a motorbike accident, Dylan turned in a philosophical eighth album, tracing America's history.

342 Lazer Guided Melodies**Spiritualized 1992 DEDICATED**

Jason Pierce's woozy, cosmos-sized debut inspired a space-rock boom with its elegant drones.

341 Closing Time**Tom Waits 1973 ASYLUM**

Tom Waits' debut wowed the critics thanks to its bluesy stories of boozing in the city.

340 We Are Family**Sister Sledge 1979 COTILLION**

A swathe of wedding-disco mainstays written and produced by Chic's genius pairing, Nile Rodgers and Bernard Edwards.

339 Ten Pearl Jam 1991 EPIC

Propelled by Eddie 'Kurt 2' Vedder's famous growl, 'Ten' stamped grunge rock's pass to the mainstream.

Ready To Die

338**Notorious BIG 1994 BAD BOY**

The record that made hip-hop fans turn their attention away from Dre and the West Coast and focus on the bubbling scene in NYC. Biggie Smalls' real-life experiences growing up in Brooklyn meant he was able, aged 21, to document in never-bettered detail a life of shifting drugs, hanging in gangs, chasing women and avoiding the police. The lyrics, such as "Baby on the way, mad bills to pay/That's why you drink Tanqueray, so you can reminisce/And wish you wasn't living so devilish" on 'Everyday Struggle', captured the dramas of street life with an eloquence not seen before or since. The delivery sounded like it was coming from the pits of Biggie Smalls' belly like a thick and delicious burp. Sadly, the LP's creator was murdered in a drive-by shooting four years later, and he didn't get to see the global success of the follow-up he'd already recorded, 'Life After Death'. ■ TH

337

The Grey Album

Danger Mouse 2004 SELF-RELEASED



No album better represents the 21st century's obsession with breaking down genre boundaries than this. By taking a capella rhymes from Jay-Z's 'The Black Album' and mixing them with The Beatles' 'White Album', Danger Mouse's mash-up sees Hova brushing the dirt off his shoulder to the sound of 'Julia' and rapping, "I got 99 problems but a bitch ain't one" over 'Helter Skelter'. Jay-Z and Paul McCartney are known to be fans, though The Beatles' label EMI were less keen. Created without permission and distributed online for free, the album was downloaded more than 100,000 times before the label had it removed – perfectly capturing the file-sharing boom. The Beatles' music is timeless, but on 'The Grey Album' it sounded fresh for the first time in decades. ■ DR

336 Raw Like Sushi

Neneh Cherry 1989 VIRGIN



Blending rap and soul, hit single 'Buffalo Stance' helped newcomer Neneh to stampee to success.

335 ...Like Clockwork

Queens Of The Stone Age 2013 MATADOR



After six years away, Josh Homme's Queens made a storming return with help from Elton John, Jake Shears and Dave Grohl.

334 Since I Left You The

Avalanches 2000 MODULAR



A wonderland of eccentric, imaginative scratch sampling that has resulted in fans pleading for a sequel ever since.

333 Band On The Run

Paul McCartney And Wings 1973 APPLE



Jet! McCartney proved there was life after The Beatles in emphatic, big-chorused fashion.

332 HMS Fable Shack

1999 LONDON



Oasis' scouse peers here channelled the spirit of The Beatles and the druggy euphoria of The Velvet Underground.

331 Kick Out The Jams

MC5 1969 ELEKTRA



The Detroit proto-punks revelled in crunching guitar riffs and civil disobedience on their debut album.

330 Third Portishead 2008

ISLAND



A mesmerising trip-hop adventure, especially noted for Geoff Barrow's slick, soulful production.

326 I Can Hear The Heart Beating As One

Yo La Tengo 1997 MATADOR



Proving themselves masters of jangly indie-pop, Yo La Tengo's eighth album included a cover of The Beach Boys' 'Little Honda'.

325 Sea Change Beck

2002 GEFEN



Recording with Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich, Beck toned down the experimentation but kept the vivid colours.

324 Lives Rich Pageant

REM 1986 IRS



The college-rock kings angled slightly towards the country-rock mainstream. Rich indeed.

323 Bitches Brew

Miles Davis 1970 COLUMBIA



Rebelling against convention with loose, improvised rhythms, this is the jazz hero at his most punk.

329 "Heroes"

David Bowie 1977 RCA



The second in Bowie's Brian Eno-produced Berlin trilogy melded 'Low's' experimentalism with cloud-scraping pop epics.

328 Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots The Flaming Lips

2002 WARNER BROS



Their biggest commercial hit, 'Yoshimi...' found ringleader Wayne Coyne confronting mortality, melancholy and alien robot invasions.

327 Mutations Beck

1998 GEFEN



Obsessed with death, Beck disguised his Grammy-winning sixth album's sombre subject matter with upbeat Kinks-like jangles.

322 This is Happening LCD Soundsystem

2010 DFA/VIRGIN



James Murphy's final outing as electro raconteur LCD Soundsystem was also his most heartfelt.

324 Lost Souls Doves

2000 HEAVENLY



On their dramatic debut, the noughties indie trio delivered the sort of haunted hooks that bands spend entire careers sharpening.

320 Swordfishtrombones

Tom Waits 1983 ISLAND



More than three decades on, Waits' breakout album is still a qualified junkyard jazz gem.

319 Who's Next

The Who 1971 TRACK/DECCA



The Londoners' fifth album was their most intrepid – a daring, thwarted rock opera set to rival 'Tommy'.

318 OG Original Gangster Ice-T

1991 SIRE/WARNER BROS



Marking 10 years in the game, Ice-T's 'OG Original Gangster' is an East Coast rap masterwork.

317 Grievous Angel Gram Parsons

1974 REPRISE



Released after his death, Cecil Connor's country-crossover swansong was a fitting last post.

316 Imperial Bedroom Elvis Costello And The Attractions

1982 F-BEAT



Costello at his most refined. The sumptuous 'Man Out Of Time', 'You Little Fool' and 'Beyond Belief' had critics calling it a "masterpiece" and "as great as songwriting ever gets".

315 Cheap Thrills

Big Brother & The Holding Company 1968 COLUMBIA



Janis Joplin's final album with the acid-rockers resulted in her leaving on a delirious high.

314 Spiderland

Slint 1991 TOUCH AND GO



A set of groundbreaking post-rock noise beneath spoken word tales from the brink of madness.

313 Frank's Wild Years

Tom Waits 1987 ISLAND



His whisky-stained blues pointed the way to greatness for gravel-throated Californian Waits.

312 Treasure

Cocteau Twins 1984 4AD



The warmest, wooziest of the shoegaze trailblazers' nine albums, 'Treasure' was atmos-pop perfection.

311 Guerrilla

Super Furry Animals

1999 CREATION



The Super Furies' third album fine-tuned their abstract indie-pop to psychedelic wonderment.

310 Countdown To Ecstasy

Steely Dan 1973 ABC



A druggy ballet of Vegas jazz, boogie woogie and experimental guitars, as intoxicating as its title.

309 Metallica Metallica

1991 ELEKTRA/VERTIGO/UNIVERSAL



Featuring anthem 'Enter Sandman', the LA quartet's eponymous fifth album packed more twisted metal than a motorway pile-up.

308 It's A Shame About Ray

Lemonheads 1992 ATLANTIC



The Massachusetts outfit's mainstream breakthrough, full of slacker-pop guitars and college-rock hooks.

307 Midnite Vultures

Beck 1999 GEFEN



A Technicolor pop explosion, pitched somewhere between Prince and 'Computer World'-era Kraftwerk.

306 The Freewheelin'

Bob Dylan Bob Dylan

1963 COLUMBIA



Robert Zimmerman spins society's nuclear anxiety into a paranoid, poignant folk triumph.

305 Every Picture Tells

A Story Rod Stewart

1971 MERCURY



Ballads, blues and barmy barnets – the album with which Stewart entered his defining era.

304 UFOrb The Orb 1992

BIG LIFE



A halogen-fuelled ambient techno trip packed full of wonky synths and science-fiction spookiness.

303 Mingus Ah Um

Charles Mingus 1959 COLUMBIA



A jazz masterpiece that, beneath its gossamer surface, rallied against the US government.

302 Homework

Daft Punk 1997 VIRGIN



Mike Skinner: "They sound different from everyone else, but at the same time their music can be played in a club. I don't think anyone makes such minimal dance music as well as Daft Punk."

301 World Of Echo

Arthur Russell 1986 ROUGH TRADE



These pioneering electronic murmurs hypnotised NY dancefloors in the mid-1980s and beyond.

300 The Who By Numbers

The Who 1975 POLYDOR



'The Who By Numbers', which followed their 'Quadrophenia' soundtrack, was anything but, featuring the likes of 'Squeeze Box' and 'Dreaming From The Waist'.

299 16 Lovers Lane

The Go-Betweens

1988 BEGGARS BANQUET



The final release before the band's original split, '16 Lovers Lane' contained The Go-Betweens' biggest hit, 'Streets Of Your Town'.

298 Duck Rock

Malcolm McLaren

1983 CHARISMA



Former Sex Pistols manager McLaren's 'Duck Rock' LP fused hip-hop and world music to create a far more enlightening stew than the corny hoedown of 'Buffalo Girls' suggested.

297 Ege Bamyasi

Can 1972 UNITED ARTISTS



The krautrock experimentalists' critically acclaimed LP has found fans as diverse as Pavement's Stephen Malkmus and Kanye West, who sampled 'Sing Swan Song' on his 'Graduation' album.

296 Let's Dance

David Bowie

1983 EMI



Co-produced by Chic's Nile Rodgers, Bowie's disco-infused 'sell-out' record was a dancefloor-filling smash that saw music's biggest chameleon transform into a new-romantic funk god.

295 Doggystyle

Snoop Doggy Dogg

1993 DEATH ROW



Following appearances on Dre's 'The Chronic', Snoop's 'Doggystyle' debut set the rapper up as a blunt-chuffing, gin-glugging superstar in his own right.

293 High Land, Hard Rain

Aztec Camera

1983 ROUGH TRADE



The Scots' debut preceded more commercially successful albums 'Love' and 'Knife', but installed the group as a worthy addition to the pop end of new wave.

292 The New Fellas

The Crips

2005 WICHITA



The Jarmans' scenester-berating second effort saw them upscale from their charmingly lo-fi debut, perfectly mixing DIY spirit with genuine indie-disco hits.

291 Younger Than Yesterday

The Byrds 1967 CBS



Indulging the band's increasingly psychedelic leanings, 'Younger Than Yesterday' saw bassist Chris Hillman come into his own to steer The Byrds into acidic new waters.

290 Expecting To Fly

The Bluetones 1996

SUPERIOR QUALITY



Featuring 'Bluetonic' and 'Cut Some Rug', the Londoners' luxurious debut even managed to knock Oasis' 'What's The Story' Morning Glory' off Number One.

289 The Modern Lovers

The Modern Lovers

1976 BESERKLEY



Indebted to The Velvet Underground and responsible for influencing more bands than you can name, 'The Modern Lovers' is the sound of effortless US rock'n'roll.

288 Music Of My Mind

Stevie Wonder

1972 TAMLA MOTOWN



Drawing on a more synth-heavy sound, Stevie's 14th studio album – recorded when he was just 21 – marked his soulful maturity and lit the fuse on the disco inferno.

287 Reign In Blood

Slayer 1986 DEF JAM



On 'Reign In Blood', the Cali maniacs played thrash faster and gnarlier than it had ever been played before. Songs about insanity and Nazi scientist Joseph Mengele only served to up the gruesome ante.

286 Dust

Screaming Trees 1996 EPIC



Is Screaming Trees' swansong the most psychedelic grunge album ever? 'Dying Days' and 'Gospel Plow' see craggy rock decorated with sitar and mellotron; frontman Mark Lanegan a brooding, almost spiritual presence.

285 Midnight Love

Marvin Gaye 1982 CBS



Inspired by funk, reggae and the machine music of Kraftwerk, Gaye's first post-Motown album was named NME's Album Of The Year and spawned the huge hit 'Sexual Healing'.

284 13 Songs

Fugazi 1989 DISCHORD



Former members of Minor Threat and Rites Of Spring united to form the greatest DIY hardcore band the world has ever seen. '13 Songs' collected their first two EPs in one righteous collection.

283 Roxy Music

Roxy Music 1972 ISLAND



Art-school bands are often guilty of privileging pretension over concision, but 'Roxy Music' is avant-garde pop wholly deserving of the phrase. Smart, imaginative and revolutionary.

282 Grand Prix

Teenage Fanclub

1995 CREATION



The jangly Glaswegians worshipped at the altar of melodic giants from The Beach Boys to Big Star. But on 'Grand Prix' they made an album to rank alongside their heroes.

281 My Aim Is True

Elvis Costello 1977 STIFF



Reggae, country, torch songs, '50s dancehall and Tin Pan Alley songcraft combined on the raucous, ramshackle debut from the man who looked like a snarly post-punk Buddy Holly.

280 Drukqs

Aphex Twin 2001 WARP



Richard D James' only proper album for 13 years was a sprawling double, a demented battery of drill'n'bass and Erik Satie piano that pushed the listener to the brink of glorious exhaustion.

279 Trout Mask Replica

Captain Beefheart & The Magic Band 1969 REPRISE



Beefheart's third is one of the most challenging but rewarding albums in all rock'n'roll history. Once described as "like a piece of the Somme, put in an art gallery".

278 Cut

The Slits 1979 ISLAND



The London punk ragamuffins got together with UK reggae producer Dennis Bovell for an album of dub invention and anarchic mischief. "Do a runner!" they caterwauled on 'Shoplifting'.

277 Reading, Writing

And Arithmetic

The Sundays

1990 ROUGH TRADE



Inspired by The Smiths and the Cocteau Twins, The Sundays' Rough Trade debut was a gem of old-school indie that pushed Harriet Wheeler's shy, beautiful voice centre-stage.

276 Ocean Rain

Echo & The Bunnymen

1984 KOROVA



The Bunnymen reckoned the blustery, neo-psychedelic 'Ocean Rain' was "the greatest album ever". We rate it a bit lower, but still, good effort.

275 Quadrophenia

The Who 1973 POLYDOR



Rock opera alert! The Who's sixth gifted young Jimmy, a scooter-riding mod, with a soundtrack of monumental hard rock.

294

Myths Of The Near Future

Klaxons 2007 POLYDOR



Klaxons emerged as the three horsemen of the nu-rave apocalypse, lacing their frenzied punk pop with '90s house sirens. With 'Myths Of The Near Future' they got the UK dancing to songs inspired by Thomas Pynchon novels ('Gravity's Rainbow') and had us all believing in 'Magick'. A Mercury winner, the album was a blast of colour in a decade full of smack-brown grot-rock, and though nu-rave may have been but a brief explosion in a glowstick factory, Klaxons paved the way for MGMT and Tame Impala to explore similarly psych-blasted territory. ■ MB

274 Green REM
1988 WARNER BROS

GREEN
R. E. M.
Hitherto folksy and cryptic, REM's major-label debut saw them go loud, rocky and explicitly political ('Stand', 'Orange Crush').

273 The College Dropout
Kanye West

2004 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

Yeezy's debut shunned gangsta cliché in favour of philosophical ruminations on prejudice, materialism and religion.

272 Parachutes

Coldplay 2000 PARLOPHONE

Radiohead were about to go weird with 'Kid A', but here was a group ready to pilfer their audience.

271 Loaded

The Velvet Underground

1970 ATLANTIC

By the time this hit the shelves, a dissatisfied Lou Reed had quit the band. But 'Loaded' caught the Velvets' sunny side, 'Sweet Jane' proving they could do joyous and playful when the mood took them.

270 The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society

The Kinks 1968 PYE

Ray Davies' wistful song cycle lamented new technologies and the waning of British tradition.

269 Skying The Horrors 2011 XL

Faris' lot embarked on a soaring Big Music epic that wrapped up krautrock, shoegaze and Simple Minds in its cool embrace.

268 Todd

Todd Rundgren 1974 BEARSVILLE

The prog-rock prodigy followed his self-recorded 'A Wizard, A True Star' with another wild trip into the outer limits. It's frequently beautiful, though: see 'A Dream Goes On Forever'.

267 Stupidity

Dr Feelgood 1976 UNITED ARTISTS

Dr Feelgood's rowdy pub-rock – especially Wilko Johnson's guitar – set the blueprint for punk. 'Stupidity' captured them live.

266 A Rush Of Blood To

The Head Coldplay

2002 PARLOPHONE

'In My Place' and 'Clocks' were among the standouts on a record *NME* described as "an album of outstanding natural beauty".

265 Celebrity Skin

Hole 1998 GEFEN

Courtney Love got a makeover – and the results were fabulous. 'Malibu' and 'Awful' still rocked hard, but with a new sound steeped in power pop and Fleetwood Mac.

I Speak Because I Can

Laura Marling 2010 VIRGIN



Her second album marked the maturing of Laura Marling – despite her only turning 20 a month before its release. It found her hovering between string-accompanied sophistication and full-on folk, with a little help from Noah And

The Whale's Tom Hobden and Mumford & Sons. The subject matter moved on, too, leaving behind the frivolous tales of her teenage years to write about "responsibility, particularly the responsibility of womanhood". On 'I Speak...' Laura dealt with heartbreak, self-esteem and wartime romance with a poignancy that established her as one of Britain's best young songwriters. ■ RD

263 Please Please Me

The Beatles 1963

PARLOPHONE

Anand Wilder, Yeasayer: "My mom and I bought all The Beatles' albums in order in the '80s. I have distinct memories of using cutlery to drum along on my high chair."

262 Criminal Minded

Boogie Down

Productions 1987 B-BOY

This blueprint for East Coast gangsta rap also introduced one of hip-hop's greatest, KRS-One.

261 Live!

Bob Marley & The Wailers 1975 ISLAND

Recorded at London's Lyceum Ballroom at the tail end of the 'Natty Dread' tour, Bob and band gave a transcendent performance.

260 The Specials

The Specials 1979 2 TONE

Tales of poverty, teen pregnancy and beer that tastes "like piss" abounded as ska took root among the high-rises of post-punk Britain.

259 Yo! Bum Rush The

Show Public Enemy

1987 DEF JAM

Mark Stoermer, The Killers: "I was about 10 years old when I started to get into hip-hop. I just liked the cover and I bought every Public Enemy album after that for the next four years, before I began to get more into rock."

258 Five Leaves Left

Nick Drake 1969 ISLAND

On his debut album, Nick Drake's maudlin songs were brought vividly to life with orchestration from Fairport Convention, Pentangle and arranger Robert Kirby.

264

257 The Boatman's Call

Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 1997 MUTE

Romance and religion are Cave's meat and drink, but he seldom tackled them with the sort of dark poetry he brought to bear on 'The Boatman's Call'.

256 This Year's Model

Elvis Costello & The Attractions 1978 RADAR

Defining UK new wave, Costello's second found him at his most lyrically savage, ravaging pop culture, romance, fashion and politics on songs such as 'No Action', 'Pump It Up' and '(I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea'.

254 Meat Is Murder

The Smiths 1985 ROUGH TRADE

From the "belligerent ghoulies" of 'The Headmaster Ritual' to the abattoir shrieks of the title track, 'Meat Is Murder' was The Smiths at their darkest and most confrontational.

253 Exile On Main St

Pussy Galore 1986 SHOVE

Noise-rock brats led by one Jon Spencer have an audacious idea: a cover of the Stones' critically adored 1972 LP. Results: hardly faithful; rocks like a motherfucker.

252 Visions

Grimes 2012 4AD

Somewhere between Mariah Carey, Enya and Skinny Puppy, we find Canadian electro nymph Claire Boucher.

251 Surf's Up

The Beach Boys

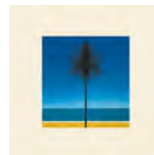
1971 STATESIDE

Though uneven in places, 'Surf's Up' features some of Brian Wilson's finest moments, including the baroque, Van Dyke Parks-assisted title track and the peculiar 'A Day In The Life Of A Tree'.

255

The English Riviera

Metronomy 2011 BECAUSE MUSIC



Look past the packs of hen parties and stag dos scrapping like wild dogs and Torquay could sometimes look like a pretty decent night out. It took a pair of eyes as sharp as Joe Mount's to see that, actually, in the right light and with just the right synths, it could look and feel like summer in Monte Carlo. Instead of the feral rutting of the masses, we got the nonchalant cool of 'The Bay'. This was pure escapism that was seized on not just by those of us who had grown up on the English Riviera, but by anyone from provincial Britain. Our very own shimmering pop classic that put the sound of sunshine in our ears and the logo of the Torbay tourist board in the hippest record collections on the planet. ■ KEPP

250 Weezer**Weezer 1994** BGC

The album that, for better or worse, gave us emo, the so-called 'Blue Album' was a tangle of surf-pop hooks, garage shouting and teen-geek balladry that almost made Buddy Holly cool again.

249 The Fat Of The Land**Prodigy 1997** XL

Featuring crossover hits 'Firestarter' and 'Smack My Bitch Up', The Prodigy's third album was a commercial smash and their ticket to techno's top table.

248 The Slim Shady LP**Eminem 1999**

AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE



Theo Hutchcraft, Hurts: "It blew my mind wide open. I lived in such a tiny town in North Yorkshire, and it made me want to escape. I still listen to it to this day. I could talk about him all night."

247 Glasvegas**Glasvegas 2008** COLUMBIA

Following the success of emotive anthem 'Daddy's Gone', Glasvegas' eponymous debut set the Scots up as heart-on-sleeve, gut-punching sonic storytellers.

246 MTV Unplugged**In New York****Nirvana 1994** BGC

A low-key but sublime live album released shortly after Kurt Cobain's death, 'Unplugged...' has, in many ways, become as celebrated a release as any of the band's original LPs.

245 Fuzzy Logic**Super Furry Animals****1996** CREATION

The pill-popping, unicorn-riding, Howard Marks-adoring valley boys' first LP provided an eclectic Technicolor insight into the mind of a pop one-off: a psychedelic blast of the weird and truly wonderful.

244 Smother**Wild Beasts 2011** DOMINO

Wild Beasts' third took the experimental idiosyncrasies of predecessor 'Two Dancers' and stripped them back to the barest, most intimate bones.

243 The Hissing Of Summer Lawns**Joni Mitchell 1975** ASYLUM

Mixing elements of folk, jazz, classical and rock, Mitchell drew on evocative tales and visual lyrics to paint a Grammy-nominated picture.

242 Off The Wall**Michael Jackson****1979** EPIC

Wall-to-wall disco gold from the peak of Jacko's 'definitely still black' 1970s phase, 'Off The Wall' set Michael up to become the world's biggest funk-pop superstar.

241 Ray Of Light**Madonna 1998** MAVERICK

Madge's post-Evita dance reinvention was to prove one of her most acclaimed yet, as the album sold more than three million copies in 18 days.

240 New Boots And**Panties!! Ian Dury****1977** STIFF

Saucy! Before teaming up with backing band The Blockheads, pub-rock king Ian Dury released this quintessentially English look at everyday life.

239 Boy In Da Corner**Dizzee Rascal 2003** XL

A Mercury Prize-winner and one of the first records to bring grime to the mainstream, Dizzee's debut put him at the forefront of the noughties' tough-talking British street talent, fixing up, sounding sharp.

238 Show Your Bones**Yeah Yeah Yeahs****2006** POLYDOR

The follow-up to their art-punk debut, 'Show Your Bones' found the NYC trio treading a funkier, more emotive and almost restrained path between 'Gold Lion' and 'Cheated Hearts'.

236 Suicide**Suicide 1977** RED STAR

Initially polarising but later elevated to cult status, Alan Vega and Martin Rev's first effort bridged the gap between '50s rock'n'roll and new wave.

235 Murder Ballads**Nick Cave And The Bad****Seeds 1996** MUTE

Featuring guest appearances from Kylie and PJ Harvey, 'Murder Ballads' crimes of passion pushed Nick Cave's lyrical dexterity into darker places than ever before.

234 Behaviour**Pet Shop Boys****1990** PARLOPHONE

Inspired by Depeche Mode and produced in Germany, 'Behaviour' saw the Pet Shop Boys eschew their usual playfulness for a more reflective approach.

233 Down In Albion**Babyshambles****2005** ROUGH TRADE

Pete's first post-Libertines LP proved he could more than cut it without Carl, dishing up two of his finest moments in 'Albion' and 'Fuck Forever'.

232 Songs Of Leonard**Cohen Leonard Cohen****1967** COLUMBIA

Detailing his erotic anguish, the first musical foray from this published poet and author became an essential '60s cult artefact thanks to its stark depictions of anger, lust and romance.

231 The Chronic**Dr Dre 1992** DEATH ROW

The debut album from the NWA lynchpin, 'The Chronic' included the early hit 'Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang' and was credited for birthing the G-funk sub-genre.

230 Aladdin Sane**David Bowie 1973** RCA

Anna Calvi: "I was eight when I bought it. It's just got incredible songs, and it has a lot of depth to it. It's a really intelligent record. I still listen to it a lot – it's one of my favourites even now."

229 Metal Box**Public Image Ltd****1979** VIRGIN

Scratchy, serrated avant-garde noise-mongering on guitars made of aluminium, PiL's second saw John Lydon spark post-punk as artfully as he'd kicked off its precursor.

228 Brighten The**Corners Pavement****1997** MATADOR

More concise slacker clatter after the sprawling 'Wowee Zowee!', 'Brighten...' gave us such memorable Pavement nuggets as 'Shady Lane' and 'Stereo'.

227 Imagine**John Lennon 1971** APPLE

Far more than the mawkish-but-you-love-it title track, 'Jealous Guy', 'Gimme Some Truth' and 'Oh My Love' made 'Imagine' Lennon's lushest solo record, albeit one doused in dark soul-searching and sly snipes at Paul.

226 The Doors**The Doors 1967** ELEKTRA

'Light My Fire'. 'The End'. 'Break On Through (To The Other Side)'. Psychedelic blues got no better.

225 Electric Warrior**T Rex 1971** REPRISE/FLY

Goodbye strumming cosmic folk-wizard, hello mirror-shoes, spangly faces and 'Get It On'. A massive glam sex-stomp, like Godzilla eating *Starlight Express*.

237**The xx****The xx 2009** YOUNG TURKS

A handful of its tracks might now be staples of trailers and emotional moments in TV dramas, but The xx's debut album is so much more than a tool for broadcasting producers looking to up the blub count. It arrived in 2009 as a minimalist gem, taking beats reserved for the club, slowing them down and pushing space between to create something bewitching and unique. Hailed by *NME* as a record of "bedsit-delicate love songs", it went on to win the Mercury Prize and its three London-born creators inspired reams of acts – from James Blake to London Grammar – to ditch a kitchen-sink approach to music and adopt a quieter, subtler attitude. Their influence has even spread further than the indie realms where The xx first triumphed, with Shakira sampling 'Islands' on her track 'Explore' and Drake enlisting Jamie xx's help on the title track of his 'Take Care' album. ■ RD

224 Heaven Up Here**Echo And The****Bunnymen 1981 KOROVA**

Like Joy Division's 'Closer' if the drugs worked, the Bunnymen's second album was steeped in doomy grandeur but kept one cheek turned to the sunlight.

223 Neon Bible**Arcade Fire 2007 MERGE**

Tacky religious glitz, futile wars, ecological disaster and economic struggle; on album two, Arcade Fire's world expanded as wide as their sonics.

Fever Ray**Fever Ray 2009 RABID****222**

Swedish electro wizards The Knife sound like nothing else. So when half of the duo, Karin Dreijer Andersson, released a solo record as Fever Ray, it made sense that the only music it resembled was her other band. But this was a record that took the ice-cool rave warrior mindset of records such as 'Silent Shout' down a notch, to create something softer and more personal. Lyrically Andersson straddled the line between mundane and profound, singing about everyday hopes and dreams. "When I grow up", she sang on 'When I Grow Up', "I want to be a forester, run through the moss on high heels". Even better, on 'Seven': "I've got a friend, who I've known since I was seven/We talk about love, we talk about dishwasher tablets/And we dream about heaven". The fact her words live on top of eerily minimal music that only gods of Scandinavian electronica are capable of just added to the blissful, otherworldly weirdness running through 'Fever Ray'. ■ TH

221 Broken English**Marianne Faithfull****1979 ISLAND**

Faithfull's drug-fucked croak matched the traumas and vulnerabilities of a moving, inventive and foul-mouthed punk-pop album soaked in years of homelessness, infidelity and addiction.

220 Alligator**The National****2005 BEGGARS BANQUET**

Ohio's finest came into their own with the weary, urbane poetry of their fourth album: songs of taut melancholy building to the screaming rampage of 'Mr November' the drunker they get.

219 All Mod Cons**The Jam****1978 POLYDOR**

Their new British vision expanding to take in Kinks covers ('David Watts') and NF attacks ('Down In The Tube Station At Midnight'), The Jam really hit their new-wave stride.

218 Primary Colours**The Horrors 2009 XL**

Hiring Portishead's Geoff Barrow as producer, The Horrors' churning goth-punk began aping My Bloody Valentine and Spiritualized to critical acclaim.

217 Lust For Life**Iggy Pop 1977 RCA**

Iggy's own Berlin adventure peaked with this cracking Bowie collaboration which, despite a superhuman booze intake, spawned 'The Passenger' and the *Trainspotting* bugle-call title track.

216 Power, Corruption**And Lies New Order****1983 FACTORY**

In the wake of 'Blue Monday', New Order cranked up the synths and lit up the nervous system of the monster we call 'dance'.

215 Mezzanine**Massive Attack****1998 CIRCA/VIRGIN**

Ubiquitous on pub jukeboxes in gritty TV dramas, the nocturnal and nightmarish atmospheres of Massive Attack's third album stepped out of trip-hop into esoteric electronica, preparing the ground for *Burial* as it did so.

214 Moon Safari**Air 1998 VIRGIN**

Chillwave? Daft Punk? 21st-century robo disco? The source is here, in 'Sexy Boy' and 'Kelly Watch The Stars' from the fresh princes of Versailles' celebrated debut.

213 One Nation**Under A Groove****Funkadelic****1978 WARNER BROS**

George Clinton's funk mothership beamed into the disco age with this melting pot of hard rock, psych and, yes, funk, primed for maximum dancefloor communion.

212 Youth & Young**Manhood****Kings Of Leon 2003 RCA**

In which four hirsute hicks from Tennessee applied The Strokes' itchy energy to down-home trucker tales of murder, sex and drugs brewed in bathtubs, and lit a stadium-sized fuse.

211 Nightclubbing**Grace Jones 1981 ISLAND**

A glimpse into the sordid disco depravities behind the velvet rope at Studio 54, 'Nightclubbing' and its standout smash 'Pull Up To The Bumper' shunted new wave, reggae and disco firmly into the neon '80s with a single arse/car metaphor.

210 69 Love Songs**The Magnetic Fields****1999 MERGE**

Stephin Merritt's awe-inspiring theatrical revue rarely dipped in quality over three hours of genre-hopping melodic brilliance, from baroque ballads to industrial electro pop. A romantic, audacious and breathtaking record.

209 The Kick Inside**Kate Bush 1978 EMI**

Brontë, sexuality, man-children and religious mysticism combined on Kate Bush's astoundingly accomplished debut album, recorded when she was cartwheeling mistily through her 18th year.

208 Risqué**Chic 1979 ATLANTIC**

When we expected a third album called 'Will You Just Chuffing Well Dance, Already!', Nile Rodgers adorned his 'Good Times' calling card with reflective love paeans that nonetheless stoked the disco fire.

207 Pearl Janis Joplin**1971 COLUMBIA**

Polished and posthumous, Joplin's final album remains an unfinished but fitting epitaph to one of the 1960s' most tragic, wild and distinctive psych-blues-folk voices, as outspoken and damaged as her final years.

206 Slanted**And Enchanted****Pavement 1992 MATADOR**

Part-Fall, part-Lemonheads and part-midnight stagger to the garage for Doritos and Rizlas, Pavement's inspired debut invented US slacker pop and oozed hazy heartbreak on 'Here'.

205 Straight Outta Compton**NWA 1988****RUTHLESS/PRIORITY/EMI**

The hammer clicks back on gangsta rap. 'Straight Outta Compton' was the fierce and confrontational bark of LA's socially chained black youth and, sentiment-wise, was not exactly hug-a-copper.

204 Bad**Michael Jackson****1987 EPIC**

Jacko's transformation from drive-in dreamboat to bad-boy biker spewed pure pop gold – 'Man In The Mirror', 'Bad', 'Dirty Diana' – from its exhaust pipe.

203 Teen Dream**Beach House****2010 SUB POP**

Whether wrapped in wintry twilight torch songs or snowboarding on melodic glaciers, Beach House's third album epitomised the new decade's dream-pop delirium.

202 Maxinquaye**Tricky 1995 ISLAND**

A murky benchmark, Tricky's first foray out of the Massive Attack fold added dank danger to Bristol's trip-hop scene, and made his nefarious name.

201 Hex Enduction Hour**The Fall 1982 KAMERA**

Five albums in, Mark E Smith's motley crew were really hitting their stride. A new double-drummer line-up spawned acerbic post-punk scrawls like 'Hip Priest' and 'Mere Pseud Mag Ed'.

200 Last Splash

The Breeders 1993 4AD



A strange album for a million-seller, 'Last Splash' oscillated brilliantly between poised pop ('Divine Hammer', 'Cannonball'), surf-rock instrumentals ('Flipside', 'SOS') and country shuffles ('Drivin' On 9').

199 Giant Steps

The Boo Radleys

1993 CREATION



A band whose career was killed by an unrepresentatively chipper hit single, it's easy to forget this post-shoe groundbreaker that boasted the brilliant 'Lazarus'.

198 Sign O' The Times

Prince 1987 PAISLEY PARK



A classic double album that was dazzling in its eclecticism, 'Sign...' started out as a triple set. It also contained a number of songs that were written for Prince's pitched-up alter ego Camille.

197 Back In Black

AC/DC

1980 ATLANTIC



"The apex of heavy metal art," was how David Fricke described this. And despite being built on big, dumb riffing and much double entendre, it's now the fourth-highest selling album of all time.

196 Rattus Norvegicus

The Stranglers

1977 UNITED ARTISTS



"Sometimes I want to smack your face" was this album's charming opening statement. There was more chauvinism on the arse-admiring 'Peaches', but also an angular, proggy sensibility.

195 A Hard Day's Night

The Beatles

1964 PARLOPHONE



Miles Kane: "There's loads of great songs on it, like 'Things We Said Today' – that's a tune! But there's loads of others on there. 'If I Fell', that's brilliant. I wish I'd made it, and met a model girlfriend on set like George Harrison did."

194

Appetite For Destruction

Guns N'Roses 1987 GEFEN



Dizzee Rascal: "I've been into Guns N'Roses since I started out. This album in particular has some of my favourite songs on it. It's got that real anthemic thing going on. It's

a wicked blend of soulful rock'n'roll, but with the hardest, grungiest shit. They have the high-pitched singing against rough, gritty music; Guns N'Roses are the perfect medium between hard and soulful. This album could inspire someone to pick up a guitar, because they've got Slash – one of the greatest guitar players ever – plus one of the greatest drummers. They have some of the best music ever made."

193 Gold

Ryan Adams 2001 LOST HIGHWAY



Like a bar-room jukebox playing '70s favourites (Allmans, The Band, the Eagles), 'Gold' came packed with familiar rootsy tropes, but there was also a whimsical homage to Sylvia Plath.

192 Franz Ferdinand

Franz Ferdinand 2004 DOMINO



Their stated intention was to "make records to make girls dance", and despite the unlikely source materials – Orange Juice, Josef K – Franz's funksome debut worked the nation's Club NMEs like a charm.

191 Elastica

Elastica 1995 DECEPTIVE



Two Wire songs ('Three Girl Rhumba', 'I Am The Fly') and The Stranglers' 'No More Heroes' provided much of the riffing here, but the attitude was pure '90s Good Mixer.

190 The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn

Pink Floyd 1967 EMI



"I nearly shit myself – by Christ it was loud": that's how Pink Floyd's engineer remembered hearing the band for the first time. Here their extended freakouts met Syd Barrett's more childlike whimsy.

189 A Wizard, A True Star

Todd Rundgren 1973 BEARSVILLE



Todd's "cosmic calling card to the universe" was a kaleidoscope of psychedelic prog-glam (with the occasional white soul diversion). Reportedly recorded on mushrooms, naturally.

188 A Love Supreme

John Coltrane

1964 IMPULSE



Clear-sighted and newly off the dope, John Coltrane's angry sax blowing on his three-track epiphany became the soundtrack to the civil rights movement.

187 Isn't Anything

My Bloody Valentine

1988 CREATION



Inventing shoegazing as effortlessly as 'Loveless' would destroy it, MBV's debut album proper was a brutally hazy, disorientating delight.

186 The Blueprint

Jay-Z 2001 ROC-A-FELLA



"I'm the Sinatra of my day", rapped Hova, as he instinctively rewrote the rulebook on modern-age rapping. 'Blueprint' also introduced the world to beats by a young Kanye West, and a coterie of melodic smurfs.

185 Paid In Full

Eric B & Rakim

1987 4TH & B'WAY



Often cited as the album that defined modern hip-hop, 'Paid In Full' is packed with James Brown samples, while Rakim is the master of rapping about rapping.

184 Kala

MIA 2007 XL



With vocal contributions from Keralan fishermen and Aboriginal street kids, 'Kala' came on like a global block party, anchored by MIA's deadpan vocals.

183 Speakerboxxx/

The Love Below

OutKast 2003 LAFACE



A double album split evenly between Big Boi ('Speakerboxxx') and André 3000 ('The Love Below'), this was a riot of ideas worthy of its tag as hip-hop's 'White Album'.

182 Everything Must Go

Manic Street Preachers

1996 EPIC



The stately post-Richey '90s benchmark wherein orchestras crashed like freedom fighters over the barricades on 'A Design For Life' and the ethics of Sunday-supplement war photography came under fire on 'Kevin Carter'.

181 Music Has The Right To Children

Boards Of Canada 1998 WARP



Inspired by testcard music and featuring samples of old VHS movies, Boards Of Canada's second album is a subtle, playful meditation on childhood.

180 Germfree

Adolescents

X-Ray Spex 1978 EMI



Unique among first-generation punkers for having an (admittedly discordant) saxophone in the lineup, X-Ray Spex railed against consumerism and identity politics.

179 Miss E... So Addictive

Missy Elliott 2001 ELEKTRA



And she was addictive, as long as she kept turning out irrepressible rap pop like 'Get Ur Freak On' and 'One Minute Man'.

178 The Coral

The Coral 2002 DELTASONIC



From the opener 'Spanish Main', which cast them as scallydelic pirates, The Coral's debut was a magpie pick'n'mix of psych-pop treasures.

177 Young Team

Mo'Nique 1997



CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND
Kele Okereke: "This was the first time I realised how powerful instrumental music could be. I had mainly been listening to more traditional British guitar music up until I heard this, but 'Young Team' sent me on a different path."

176 Want One

Rufus Wainwright

2003 DREAMWORKS



Lush, baroque and stirringly ambitious, the pizzicato strings and massed tubas of 'Want One' came across like the work of a metrosexual Brian Wilson.

175 Young Americans**David Bowie**

1975 RCA



After Aladdin Sane, Bowie's next persona was a purveyor of "plastic soul". This slick and funky album contains contributions from the young Luther Vandross and David Sanborn.

174 I'm Wide Awake, It's Morning Bright Eyes

2005 SADDLE CREEK



Conor Oberst at his most saccharine, 'I'm Wide Awake...' merged political protest, tremblesome romance and bawling heartache to enthralling alt.country effect.

173 Led Zeppelin III**Led Zeppelin**

1970 ATLANTIC



Conceived in a Welsh cottage without electricity, it's no surprise that Led Zep's third album went back to basics, with Davey Graham, Bert Jansch and John Fahey looming large.

172 Songs In The Key Of Life Stevie Wonder

1976 TAMLA



A double album with an extra four-song EP, Wonder's celebrated recording was the work of more than 100 musicians, including Herbie Hancock and George Benson.

171 Fear Of Music**Talking Heads 1979 SIRE**

Dadaist nonsense lyrics and lots of repetition: Brian Eno drove a Record Plant truck round to Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth's loft in order to catch Talking Heads on the cusp of greatness.

170 Siamese Dream Smashing Pumpkins

1993 VIRGIN



Perfume Genius: "They played 'Today' on the radio station that I listened to and I was obsessed with it, like the first chords and everything. It was the perfect teenager album."

169 Don't Stand Me Down Dexys Midnight**Runners 1985 MERCURY**

Often cited as a "lost album", Dexys' third record was Kevin Rowland's best work, musing on national identity, the state of radio and myriad attempts to distil "what she's like".

168 Dummy Portishead

1994 GO! DISCS



Jamie Smith, The xx: "It influenced a lot of the stuff that I've done to date, and it was one of the first electronic albums that inspired me. I must have been about 10 when I got it."

167 Lady Soul**Aretha Franklin**

1968 ATLANTIC



Blue-chip guests (Bobby Womack, King Curtis, Eric Clapton), the FAME Studio sessioners and the cool production heads of Tom Dowd and Jerry Wexler helped Aretha truly arrive.

166 This Is Hardcore**Pulp 1998 ISLAND**

...or alternatively 'Britpop: The Comedown'. Jarvis Cocker turned his unflinching eye from acrylic afternoons to long, dark nights of the soul on this unsparing epic.

165 Let Love In**Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds 1994 MUTE**

The Bad Seeds were at their most high gothic here, all primal drums, churchy organ and spooked guitar. Cave was also at his blood-curdling best.

164 At Folsom Prison**Johnny Cash**

1968 COLUMBIA



Undoubtedly the only live album to be recorded at 9.40 in the morning, Johnny Cash cemented his outlaw status with an uncompromising set in front of 2,000 inmates.

163 Neu!**Neu! 75 1975 BRAIN**

A game of two halves: side one was recorded as the original Neu! duo, with drummer Klaus Dinger switching to guitar and vocals on side two. The result was a big influence on Bowie and the punks.

162 Boxer**The National**

2007 BEGGARS BANQUET



Twelve tales of domestic despair from lyricist and vocalist Matt Berninger, increasingly fêted as his generation's Morrissey.

161 The Suburbs**Arcade Fire**

2010 MERCURY



A sprawling 16 tracks of Bruce Springsteen narrative given the throbbing Depeche Mode synth treatment.

160 XTRMNTR**Primal Scream**

2000 CREATION



The first Scream album to feature Mani on bass throughout also marked the arrival of My Bloody Valentine's Kevin Shields. Agitprop never sounded so motorik.

159 Entertainment!**Gang Of Four 1979 EMI**

Incorporating funk and reggae into punk, 'Entertainment!' was a massive influence on the entire punk-funk generation. And Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers.

158 Two Dancers**Wild Beasts**

2009 DOMINO



Unabashedly artful, unashamedly lusty pop, topped by the falsetto vocals of Hayden Thorpe.

157 Psychocandy**The Jesus And Mary Chain**

1985 BLANCO Y NEGRO



A record that set the template for the next generation of guitar bands (My Bloody Valentine, Pixies) – a template that read 'more feedback'.

156 Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space**Spiritualized**

1997 DEDICATED



Ben Goldwasser, MGMT: "This album is so precise and everything on it sounds amazing; it's arranged so nicely. Jason Pierce is a genius. We met him. He's really nice and he had enormous sunglasses. I was expecting him to be intense, but he was just a nice guy."

155 Music For The Jilted Generation The Prodigy

1994 XL



Rou Reynolds, Enter Shikari: "My uncle said, 'Listen to this, it's like nothing you've ever heard before!' I remember almost being scared listening to it. My uncle was right. It was like nothing I'd ever imagined. It blew my mind completely."

154 To Bring You My Love PJ Harvey

1995 ISLAND



The recruitment of Flood marked PJ Harvey's "first venture into production". The resulting release was rich in Bible imagery and plentiful nods to Captain Beefheart.

153 The La's**The La's 1990 GO! DISCS**

This Merseybeat gem engaged as many as seven producers and even then was famously hated by the band's notoriously perfectionist frontman, Lee Masters.

152 Deserter's Songs**Mercury Rev 1998 V2**

The New York State band were falling apart and made this glorious, widescreen alt.psych record for themselves. It's cut to 35mm film tape to sound "intentionally weird".

Dry 151**PJ Harvey 1992 TOO PURE**

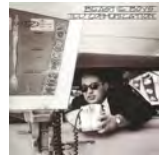
There was more than a touch of the cult-rock *Carrie* about PJ Harvey's debut. It wasn't just the references to breasts as "dirty pillows" – unused since Stephen

King's horror benchmark – but the gory, violent coming-of-age of a supernatural talent. 'Dress', our first introduction to art-rock's prime voice of the coming decades, was a breathless swirl of boy-pleasing party nerves, while 'Sheela-Na-Gig' was all post-fumble recrimination: "Gonna wash that man right out of my hair/Just like the first time he said he didn't care". But it was the primal, visceral agony of 'Oh My Lover' – a heaving-chested Harvey begging her cheating lover to stay no matter what the cost – that knocked us clean off our feet, turned our spines to ice and announced the arrival of a passionate and celestial songwriter, while the avant-garde chamber ballad 'Plants And Rags' hinted at how boldly she'd challenge rock forms in the future. ■ MB

III Communication

Beastie Boys

1994 CAPITOL/GRAND ROYAL



By 1994, the Beastie Boys' back catalogue was beginning to suggest that the New York trio suffered from some kind of musical split-personality disorder. From the dumb-ass rap-rock of their first album 'Licensed To Ill' to 1992's punky, played-on-their-own-instruments 'Check Your Head' via 1989's

sample-heavy 'Paul's Boutique', the group seemed unsure whether they were serious musos or skateboarding thrashers crushing beer cans on their foreheads. Moving on, they were bent on perfecting something that tied those threads together, and 'Ill Communication' did exactly that. The album put them at the leading edge of a type of hip-hop built on scratchy funk and jazzy samples, best epitomised by the single 'Sure Shot', and sowed the seeds for sundry rap-rock crossovers of the future with the wild, riff-laden 'Sabotage'. ■ DS

136 Blur Blur

1997 FOOD/PARLOPHONE



Shedding Britpop's taint for narcotic rock thrills, 'Song 2' was supposed to take the piss out of grunge and its fans. Instead it became their new anthem.

135 Fever To Tell
Yeah Yeah Yeahs

2003 POLYDOR/INTERSCOPE



The New York 21st-century garage-rock trio's debut cemented the claims to greatness made by their early EPs.

134 The Marshall
Mathers LP Eminem

2000 INTERSCOPE



Dev Hynes: "I remember when it came out – I got a copy of it from a friend who I used to skate with, he burned it for me. I listened to it non-stop. I'm still surprised at how many people really liked it. It was so big – you couldn't avoid it."

133 Stories From The
City, Stories From The
Sea PJ Harvey 2000 ISLAND

Her first Mercury Prize-winning album found Polly Jean Harvey at her most accessible and sonically polished, but still questing, adventurous and stridently individual.

132 John Lennon/Plastic Ono
Band John Lennon/Plastic
Ono Band 1970 APPLE

The result of undergoing primal scream therapy, Lennon's solo debut was a harrowing and brave display of political, social, religious and personal truths.

131 The Dark Side Of
The Moon Pink Floyd

1973 HARVEST



Languid backbeats, chiming clocks, serpentine guitar lines and spacious production meet the occasional bit of legendary prog song-writing. Stoners' lives would never be the same again.

130 Thriller

Michael Jackson 1982 EPIC



Ed Macfarlane, *Friendly Fires*: "I've got footage of me, aged four, singing the tunes and dancing. I still like it, even though lyrically it's a bit shit. But it's not about that, it's about the way he sings and dances."

129 Turn On The Bright
Lights Interpol

2002 MATADOR



Interpol's debut helped to usher in a new wave of American bands who were indebted to British indie rock of the 1980s.

128 On The Beach

Neil Young 1974 REPRISE



After two years of erratic shows and depression, culminating in having an album rejected by his label, Young got back on track with this introspective, bittersweet collection.

127 Urban Hymns

The Verve 1997 HUT



The late-'90s vogue for yearning, epic pop-rock reached its dizzying zenith on the Wigan band's heart-on-sleeve mega-hit.

126 Ramones

Ramones 1976 SIRE



Reputedly recorded inside a week for a paltry \$6,400, the Bruvvas' debut is considered by many to be the first punk album.

143 Desire Bob Dylan

1976 CBS



He hired a violin player he saw walking down the street and wrote a song about an ex-boxer charged with murder. Dylan was never less predictable.

142 Histoire De

Melody Nelson

Serge Gainsbourg 1971 PHILIPS



Lushly orchestrated, lazily funky, sleazily louche, Gainsbourg's 1971 record – not quite half an hour long – is a lauded if somewhat discomfiting touchstone.

141 Natty Dread

Bob Marley & The Wailers

1974 ISLAND



Widely considered to be the greatest reggae album of all time, 'Natty Dread' positioned Marley as both groundbreaking musician and socio-political icon.

140 Bryter Layter

Nick Drake 1970 ISLAND



He's seen by some as an incorrigible miserabilist, but Drake's second is often breezy and joyous.

139 Disintegration

The Cure 1989 FICTION



Already an established, if unlikely, pop act, The Cure's towering gothic centrepiece turned them into an international stadium-rock super-brand thanks to 'Pictures Of You', 'Lovesong' and the ultra-creepy 'Lullaby'.

138 Illinoise Sufjan

Stevens 2005 ROUGH TRADE



Sufjan's sublime baroque alt.folk – in thrall to the UFO sightings, serial killers and Superman of the title state – set the bar for quirky Americana.

150 Original Pirate
Material The Streets

2002 679/LOCKED ON



Not quite British rap, not quite UK garage, Mike Skinner's debut sketched a new, and commercially viable, direction for English urban music.

149 Either/Or

Elliott Smith 1997 DOMINO



It didn't trouble the charts, but the haunted Americana of 'Either/Or' was the album that propelled Elliott Smith to worldwide fame.

148 Nebraska

Bruce Springsteen 1982 CBS



Little more than four-track home demos, 'Nebraska' proved that a Springsteen song didn't need 48-track mixing desks to define his blue-collar hardships.

147 Channel Orange

Frank Ocean 2012 DEF JAM



This acclaimed debut had profound resonance, as Ocean's openness about his sexuality helped hip-hop culture to confront its latent prejudice problem.

146 Relationship Of

Command At The

Drive-In 2000 GRAND ROYAL



ATDI were the logical progression of straight-edge through emo, and their final album paved the way for post-hardcore bands to have mainstream hits.

145 Are You Experienced
The Jimi Hendrix

Experience 1967 TRACK



It would be his appearance at Woodstock that made the guitar virtuoso a superstar, but this debut built Hendrix's legend.

Odyssey
And Oracle

The Zombies 1968 CBS



Paul Weller: "It's one of my all-time favourite records. When it came out in 1968 this type of music was completely unheralded. It's very English, with wistful melodies. In a way, the vocals are quite similar to what Fleet Foxes do now – a sort of hymnal, choral thing. I went to see The Zombies twice on their 40th anniversary tour of 'Odyssey And Oracle'. They were so amazing live. My favourite track on the album is probably 'Beechwood Park'. The first time I heard it was long after it came out, a reissue in the mid-'70s. It was in the autumn and it's stuck with me, that kind of feeling."

125 Live At The Apollo**James Brown 1963 KING**

The Godfather Of Soul, in his pre-funk early-'60s pomp, spits fire on the storied Harlem stage.

124 Graceland**Paul Simon 1986 WARNER BROS**

The erstwhile Village folkie's hit collaboration with hitherto little-known South African musicians kick-started the world music boom.

123 13 Blur**1999 FOOD/PARLOPHONE**

Blur's sixth album sounded like the stuff of a band striving boldly for new purpose as the post-Britpop comedown started to bite.

122 Technique**New Order 1989 FACTORY**

Manchester's fab four went to Ibiza and added acid house to their precision-tooled electro-pop.

121 Selected Ambient Works 85-92**Aphex Twin 1992 APOLLO**

Matthew Horne, actor: "I thought it was from another world. It was somehow otherworldly, yet accessible in terms of melody and sounds."

120 3 Feet High And Rising**De La Soul 1989 TOMMY BOY**

Take three suburban teenagers, a DJ from a band on the rise and weird shit from their parents' record collections. Stir in humour and a game show. Change the world.

119 His 'N' Hers**Pulp 1994 ISLAND**

It had taken 14 years to make an album for a major label, but Pulp didn't miss a step. 'His 'N' Hers' was nowt but consummate and stylish sleaze pop; all liggloss and razzmatazz, adorable voyeurism and melodic S&M.

118 Searching For The Young Soul Rebels**Dexys Midnight Runners****1980 LATE NIGHT FEELINGS**

A record about turning belief in music into your life, Dexys' debut was a manifesto you could dance to, a political polemic you could fall in love with.

117 The Lexicon Of Love**ABC 1982 MERCURY**

Cee-Lo Green: "It was a very attractive record for a child, because it has a sugary, plastic quality. It's very pop, and at the same time it's a deep and handmade bit of artistry."

116 Elephant**The White Stripes 2003 XL**

Jack and Meg's response to becoming stars was to make a harder, darker kind of record – and to cover Bacharach & David.

115 Bandwagonesque**Teenage Fanclub 1991 CREATION**

Even at a time when Scotland seemed to have the monopoly on fuzzed-up pop, the sparkling grunge of TFC's second album stood out.

114 Kid A**Radiohead 2000 PARLOPHONE**

Yannis Philippakis: "I fell in love with it. For six months I listened to it at least six days a week."

113 If You're Feeling Sinister**Belle And Sebastian 1996 JEEPSTER**

As alt.rock became overly tribal, Stuart Murdoch's band won hearts and minds with their vulnerability and fragile melodies.

112**Liquid Swords****GZA 1995 GEFEN**

Wu-Tang Clan's 1993 debut hit hip-hop like a fist to the throat, but if anything the subsequent solo albums had a greater impact, introducing the world to a cast of individuals as colourful as any crime drama. GZA was the most senior member, old enough to remember hip-hop exploding across the Bronx, and his wise flow saw him earn the nickname 'Genius'. 'Liquid Swords' is proof such a sobriquet was well-deserved. GZA spins a dense narrative, dispatching lines with cold precision: "*I be the body dropper, the heartbeat stopper/Child educator, plus head amputator*". Add to this some of the RZA's best-ever beats, ghostly strings and snapping snares, and you've got the essence of Wu: pure atmosphere honed to a katana edge. ■ LP

111 Dare The Human**League 1981 VIRGIN**

Other synthpop bands went for style over substance; The Human League put soul songs worthy of Motown at this album's heart.

110 Liege & Lief**Fairport Convention 1969 ISLAND**

Three years after Dylan was called "Judas" for plugging in, Fairport invented folk-rock by blending the traditional and the electric.

109 Darkness On The Edge Of Town**Bruce Springsteen 1978 CBS**

As punk threatened to leave him behind, Springsteen located epic themes in workaday lives. No-one nails the struggle against a stacked deck like the Boss.

108 Pinkerton**Weezer 1996 GEFEN**

It hammered the quirks of its predecessor with mallet-like guitar heaviness, and struggled commercially as a result. But the desperate, screaming sex-angst of the second Weezer album is stronger and far more ambitious.

107 Rage Against The Machine**1992 EPIC**

Carl Barat: "I heard it when I was 14 and still know every word. We were all getting into our teenage angst and hating our parents, but my rage waned after their second album."

106 IV Led Zeppelin**1971 ATLANTIC**

John Bonham plays drums down an echoing corridor; Jimmy Page prefigures Fugazi; Robert Plant howls. History is made.

105 Rain Dogs**Tom Waits 1985 ISLAND**

Adding guitarist Marc Ribot to his 'Swordfish-trombones' template, Waits gave additional bite to mini tragedies about drunks, losers and lives lived in the shadows.

104 Fun House**The Stooges 1970 ELEKTRA**

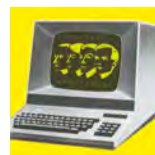
Six years before the Pistols, Iggy and his colleagues laid down most of the core elements of the punk-rock template.

103 Electric Ladyland**The Jimi Hendrix Experience**

Nick Frost, actor: "Even from a very young age, when I heard of him, for some reason I felt close to him – I felt a connection. We've got the same electric gypsy look – that's what I'm known for, really."

102 The Soft Bulletin**The Flaming Lips**

1999 WARNER BROS
After 'Zaireeka', a set of four discs to be played at the same time, Wayne Coyne and co tried a new gambit: tunes. It worked.

Kraftwerk**101****Computer World 1981 EMI**

For over a decade, Kraftwerk had peered into the distance for inspiration, pioneering new electro-soundscapes for things that were yet to come. By 1981, though, the revolutionary sound they'd coined had gatecrashed the mainstream thanks to the rise of synthpop, and everyday life was being warped by newfangled technology. Rather than rebooting everything they held dear, they responded with 'Computer World': arguably the last of their bona-fide great albums, and an exploration of how humans co-existed with computers. From the poker-faced whizz-and-burr of 'Pocket Calculator' to the cold, lonely chimes of 'Computer Love', it was the sound of the ultimate man-machines proving that they didn't need to fight for relevance; as ever, they were the ones setting the agenda. ■ BV

100 Hatful Of Hollow

The Smiths 1984 ROUGH TRADE



Nicky Wire: "That was the album when The Smiths really nailed it for me. The rest of their albums are not brilliantly produced and even 'The Queen Is Dead' doesn't have the depth of 'Hatful Of Hollow'."

99 The Libertines

The Libertines

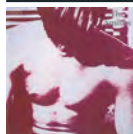
2004 ROUGH TRADE



A ramshackle mess of a record, with Pete Doherty's vocals cobbled together from the few coherent sessions he managed during his rare visits to the studio, the Libs' second album is a triumph in spite of itself, the songwriting panache and shattered beauty of 'Music When The Lights Go Out' and 'Can't Stand Me Now' shining through the druggy draws and fluffed solos to create a brilliantly haggard portrait of a great talent tipped over the edge. ■ MB

97 The Smiths The Smiths

1984 ROUGH TRADE



Often overlooked due to the pedigree of the likes of 'The Queen Is Dead', The Smiths' debut is still among the greats. Songs such as 'Reel Around The Fountain' and debut single 'Hand In Glove' shine through the slightly tinny production (hey, it was the '80s), setting the first marker of what became a generation-defining career. ■ JF

96 Fear Of A Black Planet

Public Enemy 1990 DEF JAM



Dave Maclean, Django Django: "I remember going into Our Price with my mum and asking the guy for some Public Enemy; my mum wasn't sure but when I got it home it didn't leave my Walkman for months. I was used to the '60s music in my folks' LP collection, and that was mind-expanding enough, but this felt like my music, speaking for my generation, and it blew my tiny, Scottish head."

95 Spirit Of Eden Talk Talk

1988 PARLOPHONE

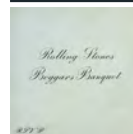


Depending on who you believe, this is either a monument to the pretension of a pop band overreaching itself, or a beguiling if flawed experiment that reveals itself in a thousand lush layers.

Now credited with inventing post-rock, its hushed-tones, cognoscenti-led reputation just seems to increase every single year. ■ GH

94 Beggars Banquet

The Rolling Stones 1968 DECCA



Thus began the most fruitful period in the Stones' long history. The first single, 'Street Fighting Man', reflected the turbulent times without resorting to the mediocre parodies they'd been churning out a year earlier. Jagger put himself in Beelzebub's shoes on opener 'Sympathy For The Devil', blazing a trail through history while Richards came on like the soundtrack to the apocalypse. Dazzling. ■ AW

93 Songs For The Deaf

Queens Of The Stone Age

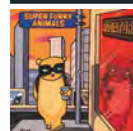
2002 INTERSCOPE



The follow-up to 2000's 'Rated R' represented the peak of QOTSA's creativity, with 14 dark, inventive and powerful blasts of paranoid, sexual, drug-fuelled mayhem. Having Dave Grohl on drums helped, but 'Songs For The Deaf' is all about Josh Homme working his mojo on hip-shaking wonders 'No One Knows' and 'Go With The Flow'. ■ TH

92 Radiator Super Furry

Animals 1997 CREATION

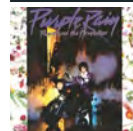


Jason Lytle: "Granddaddy had the pleasure of touring with these guys. One of their songs, 'Ohio Heat', was named after the time one of our road crew got a text message from... well, let's call her a young lady. All their records are great, but this one is terrific."

91 Purple Rain Prince

And The Revolution 1984

WARNER BROS



Prince was big before 'Purple Rain', but his sixth studio album (and soundtrack to the film of the same name) made him massive by mixing first-rate songwriting with his mastery of genres from funk to hard rock to psychedelic pop. As the Purple One himself might put it, it's close 2 genius. ■ NL

90 A Grand Don't Come

For Free The Streets

2004 LOCKED ON/679



"He's the PlayStation generation's William Blake!" they shouted after Mike Skinner's zeitgeist-capturing 2002 debut 'Original Pirate Material'. But then he went one better. Few artists ever capture the moment like this, and Skinner hooked it all around the story of a stoner losing a wedge down the back of the TV. He made the mundane seem epic. ■ GC

89 The Miseducation Of

Lauryn Hill Lauryn Hill

1998 RUFFHOUSE/COLUMBIA



Janelle Monáe: "She was speaking from so many angles – she tied in love, she tied in her love for hip-hop – and it was the first time I saw a black woman who was absolutely cheering to listen to, putting an album together that was a classic, and that every young girl should listen to."

98



In The Aeroplane Over The Sea

Neutral Milk Hotel 1998 MERGE/DOMINO

Two-headed foetuses in jars. Semen-stained mountaintops. Ecstatic suicides, carrot-flower kings and an existential spirit guiding Anne Frank through a variety of war-torn reincarnations. These days it reads like a particularly morbid edition of Noel Fielding's *Luxury Comedy*, but those familiar with debut album 'On Avery Island' wouldn't have been surprised at the grotesque surrealism that infected Jeff Mangum's second album as Neutral Milk Hotel; the debut's standout track 'Song Against Sex', was, after all, a joyous carnival romp about passionless beds, suicide pacts and Biblical apocalypse. 'In The Aeroplane Over The Sea', though – with its creepy circus feel and cover art doctored from an old European seaside postcard – was so much more haunted, damaged and seeping with tragedy, both personal and historical. This, remember, was an album inspired by Mangum's recurring dreams of a Jewish family surviving the Holocaust, largely written during all-night sessions brought on by night terrors and sung to the ghost in his haunted wardrobe.

What made 'In The Aeroplane...' a seminal alt.folk benchmark was how much *fun* Mangum made all this anguish sound. Drenched in fuzzed-to-fuck acoustic guitars, bowed saws and mariachi wedding horns, the likes of 'Holland, 1945' and 'Ghost' (which seemed to predict 9/11 with its bawl of "One day in New York City, baby, a girl fell from the sky/From the top of a burning apartment building, 14 storeys high") were sheer berserker-folk jubilation. Even the record's downbeat moments were given an elegiac luster: 'Communist Daughter' was a hallucinogenic dope-doze while the domestic violence of 'The King Of Carrot Flowers' bristled with bravado.

'In The Aeroplane...' crystallised the no-fi psych-folk ethos of the Elephant 6 collective that Mangum emerged from – but, clearly a man on the edge, the cult success of the record heaved him over. Freaked out by the attention, he disappeared into one of indie's most curious reclusive periods, rarely recording or playing live for nigh-on 12 years amid rumours of a paranoid breakdown. In Mangum's absence, the album's legend only ascended. ■ MB

88 For Your Pleasure**Roxy Music 1973** ISLAND

Roxy Music's second and best album is the pinnacle of English art rock. Mixing pop sensibilities with a brash experimental spirit, its songs about new dance crazes and lust for an inflatable doll attracted attention from devotees such as Morrissey. It's a record dominated by Brian Eno's warped genius – his departure from the band shortly afterwards pushed them firmly towards the mainstream. ■ AW

87 Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**The Beatles 1967** PARLOPHONE

A definitive '60s cornerstone long considered the ultimate achievement of recorded music, the gleam on its medals has dulled over time, its psychedelic carnival visuals and flower-power sentiments now seeming slightly corny. Today, the likes of 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', 'She's Leaving Home' and 'A Day In The Life' endure for their melodic brilliance rather than their initial era-defining shock of the new. ■ MB

86 Grace Jeff Buckley**1994** COLUMBIA

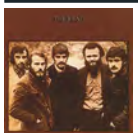
The cult success of the only album released by Tim Buckley's son during his short life is intrinsically linked to his mysterious premature death. The longing of 'Last Goodbye', the lump-in-the-throat heartache of 'Lover, You Should've Come Over' and the haunting 'Dream Brother' are all the more eerie from beyond the grave. ■ EB

85 Born To Run**Bruce Springsteen 1975** CBS

Eight flawless tracks make up Springsteen's triumphant third album. Its romantic depiction of smalltown America – all fresh-faced girls next door, drinking beer in parking lots, classic cars and broken hearts – has never been bettered. From 'Thunder Road' to 'Jungleland', its Motown influences make for a particularly emotive kind of rock'n'roll. ■ LC

84 Live Through This**Hole 1994** CITY SLANG

Lyrical examining Courtney Love's new role as a mother (as well as feminism and fame), Hole's second album showed a sweeter side to the band. Shedding the distortion of their debut, 'Live Through This' ventured into unexpectedly gentle territory with acoustic track 'Softer, Softest'. Their newly developed sound would spur on their breakthrough, inspiring young women across the world in the process. ■ RD

83 The Band**The Band 1969** CAPITOL

Bob Dylan's acolytes really came into their own in 1969 when they cemented their invention of country-rock, predated lo-fi by three decades, and introduced a rustic, ironically reactionary take on Southern mores that would later fire many an imagination. Were they not mostly Canadian, Robbie Robertson's crew would've seemed like hucksters, as opposed to documenting the times with almost telepathic instrumental interplay. ■ DF

82

Tapestry**Carole King 1971** ODE

You know who wrote 'The Loco-Motion'? It was Carole King. How about '(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman'? Also Carole King. 'Will You Love Me Tomorrow' might have initially been performed by The Shirelles, but it was the brainchild of one Carole King. Even when Carole King was in high school, she inspired classic American songwriting. Neil Sedaka's 'Oh! Carol' was written about former girlfriend – you guessed it – Carole King. Together with songwriting partner and childhood sweetheart Gerry Goffin, King's name is stitched into the history of the American pop standard. It was on 'Tapestry' (her second solo record), however, that she truly became a singer-songwriter in her own right. One year after James Taylor's 'Sweet Baby James' and only four months before the release of

Joni Mitchell's 'Blue', 'Tapestry' appeared as one of the most accomplished and perfect collections of personal songs. From start to finish, flawless creations such as 'I Feel The Earth Move', 'It's Too Late' and 'You've Got A Friend' are so vital to music that they seem to predate human memory. 'Tapestry' is the mother of the reflective records of that era; so comforting, beautifully woven and wise, it would be easy but foolish to forget to thank it for its guidance. ■ EB

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **RECORDED** January 1971 ▶ **RELEASE DATE** February 10, 1971
 ▶ **LENGTH** 44:31 ▶ **PRODUCER** Lou Adler ▶ **STUDIO** A&M Recording Studios ▶ **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 4 ▶ **SINGLES** I Feel The Earth Move, It's Too Late, Smackwater Jack, So Far Away
 ▶ **TRACKLISTING** ▶ 1. I Feel The Earth Move ▶ 2. So Far Away ▶ 3. It's Too Late ▶ 4. Home Again ▶ 5. Beautiful ▶ 6. Way Over Yonder ▶ 7. You've Got A Friend ▶ 8. Where You Lead ▶ 9. Will You Love Me Tomorrow ▶ 10. Smackwater Jack ▶ 11. Tapestry ▶ 12. (You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman

81 Trans-Europe Express**Kraftwerk 1977** KLING KLANG

Just as the blues musicians derived their rhythms from the rattle of the railroad, so Kraftwerk looked to trains as the carrier for this paean to Mitteleuropean modernity. Minimal and melodic, the songs on 'Trans-Europe Express' tackle topics from stardom ('Hall Of Mirrors'), to dance music ('Showroom Dummies'), and, on the title track, 'Iggy Pop and David Bowie'. ■ LP

80 Raw Power**Iggy And The Stooges****1973** COLUMBIA

Cee Lo Green: "Iggy Pop is the ultimate American icon – he's like the anti-working class hero, this drugged-up rebel kid with too much energy who's thumbing his nose at the world. 'Raw Power' is probably the best Stooges album, because it's so loud. It's been mastered very high in the mix, so it leaps out of the speakers at you."

79 Kind Of Blue**Miles Davis 1959** COLUMBIA

In 1959, 20 years before hip-hop provided a real voice for African-Americans, Miles Davis stood proud. Taking the blues as a starting point, he extrapolated horn-led jazz towards infinity, and made a statement of stoicism, defiance and fortitude in the volatile pre-civil-rights era. John Coltrane and Julian 'Cannonball' Adderley on saxophone are the perfect foils for Miles' wistful trumpet. ■ DF

78 Suede Suede 1993 NUDE

Exuding Bowie's androgynous trash glamour and oozing bad drugs and weirdo sex from every pore, Suede's suave and sultry debut brought overarching pop sleaze ('Animal Nitrate', 'Metal Mickey') and all-consuming doomed romance ('The Drowners', 'Pantomime Horse', 'Sleeping Pills') to a UK scene previously obsessed with Es and shoes, kickstarting the Britpop revolution. ■ MB

77 White Blood Cells**The White Stripes 2001** XL

By growing hoedown ('Hotel Yorba'), thrash punk ('Fell In Love With A Girl') and pastoral folk ('We're Going To Be Friends') branches, the did-they/didn't-they duo broke out of the Detroit garage underground to prove that they could reinvigorate the blues for the new century just as much as The Strokes had revived CBGB gabba pop. Cue the new blues barrage. ■ MB

76 Discovery**Daft Punk 2001** VIRGIN

Before 'Get Lucky' there was this: a house masterpiece that became to dance music what *Romeo And Juliet* is to tragic love stories. It may have inspired legions of rubbish EDM imitators, but classics like 'One More Time', 'Digital Love' and 'Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger' make 'Discovery' the real deal. ■ KEGP

75 Dookie

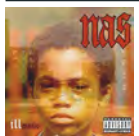
Green Day 1994 REPRISE



In 1994, anti-government concept albums and Broadway musicals seemed a long way off for Green Day, but they did manage to release the definitive punk-pop album of the decade. Its centrepiece 'Basket Case' remains one of the greatest singles in modern rock – not bad for a band named after a slang term for a day spent smoking weed. ■ JF

74 Illmatic Nas

1994 COLUMBIA



Nas was just 19 when he wrote his debut album, but already wise and world-weary, spinning vividly imagined stories of life on the streets. Eschewing the trends of commercial rap in the early '90s, Nas and DJ Premier combined minimalist production with funk, soul and jazz samples to create an album against which any future rap release would be judged. ■ LJ

73 Bringing It All Back Home

Bob Dylan 1965 COLUMBIA



The record on which Dylan morphed from quaint singer-songwriter into proper rock star. His fifth album caused shockwaves that were to be felt long after its 1965 release, with rowdy tracks like 'Subterranean Homesick Blues' and 'Maggie's Farm' a major influence on the folk-rock scene that exploded into life during the rest of the decade. ■ LC

72 Transformer

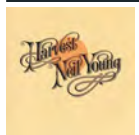
Lou Reed 1972 RCA



Having had his mind blown by Reed's band The Velvet Underground, David Bowie and his then guitarist Mick Ronson returned the compliment by aiding that group's notoriously surly former singer on his second solo album – producing, arranging, playing and singing on a record that features some of Reed's best-loved songs ('Satellite Of Love', 'Walk On The Wild Side', 'Perfect Day'). The title was appropriate, as the record turned Reed into an international star – not that you would ever see him smiling about it. ■ AW

71 Harvest Neil Young

1972 REPRISE



Neil Young admits to having a love/hate relationship with his most commercially successful album – its massive sales gave him the freedom to do what the hell he wanted, but in spite of that he's never really been able to shake off the 'country rocker' mantle. But it's on a harrowing tale of heroin abuse, the acoustic 'The Needle And The Damage Done', that we witness the real Young: raw, heartfelt and unflinchingly honest. ■ AW

70

Up The Bracket

The Libertines 2002 RCA



Great albums are snapshots of a moment in time. Arguably, there has never been another musical snapshot as vividly raw and real and drop-dead exciting as The Libertines' debut album.

Recorded in a scuzzy frenzy by The Clash's Mick Jones, the record sounds lapel-grabbingly urgent rather than lo-fi and unfinished. From the crunchy opener 'Vertigo' through the Jam-y 'Horrorshow' to the pure punk blast of 'I Get Along', the songs sound like they were pulled out of Pete Doherty and Carl Barât's hearts and straight on to tape.

Gaffa-taped and basic the process may have been, but The Libertines' graceful romanticism has still never shone brighter. "Did you see the stylish kids in the riot?/Shovelled up like muck, set the night on fire" Doherty sings on the scarves-in-the-air 'Time For Heroes', while 'The Good Old Days' similarly grandstands. It's moments like these that make 'Up The Bracket' a triumph – edgy street style gelling with passionate pop poetry in a manner that happens once a generation. ■ JF

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Did you see the stylish kids in the riot?" ('Time For Heroes')

Doherty refers to the London May Day riots of 2001, when militant anarchists used the generally peaceful May Day protests to begin attacking shops around Tottenham Court Road.

"I saw two shadowy men on the Vallance Road" ('Up The Bracket')

The two men in question may well be the Kray twins, since they were brought up on Vallance Road in Bethnal Green, east London.

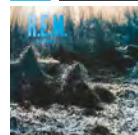
"The boy looked at Johnny and said, 'my word that was fun'" ('The Boy Looked At Johnny')

Cribbing a line from Patti Smith's classic 'Land', regular Libs rumour has the song directed at a certain Johnny Borrell.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** August 2002 ► **RELEASE DATE** October 14, 2002
 ► **LENGTH** 39:29 ► **PRODUCER** Mick Jones ► **STUDIO** RAK, London
 ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 35 ► **SINGLES** Up The Bracket, Time For Heroes ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Vertigo ►2. Death On The Stairs ►3. Horrorshow ►4. Time For Heroes ►5. Boys In The Band ►6. Radio America ►7. Up The Bracket ►8. Tell The King ►9. The Boy Looked At Johnny ►10. Begging ►11. The Good Old Days ►12. I Get Along

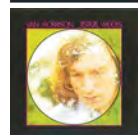
69 Murmur REM 1983 IRS



In 1983, 'Murmur' placed REM at the vanguard of American indie, a position they only relinquished when they finally called it a day in 2011. 'Radio Free Europe' was their fuzzed-up rallying cry and 'Perfect Circle' a sign of bounteous alt.balladry to come, as 'Murmur' slowly became a cultural bellow. ■ BN

68 Astral Weeks

Van Morrison 1968 WARNER BROS



A fleeting glimpse into the soul of a true visionary, 'Astral Weeks' was so sharp and fully formed that it took one breath between sanity and madness. Van Morrison sounded possessed and driven, his voice another Celtic-soul instrument, as the multiplicity of supporting players cajoled their instruments to speak in tongues. This eventually bordered on the divine, as well as something cracked and broken. ■ DF

67 (What's The Story) Morning Glory? Oasis

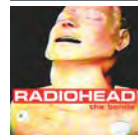
1995 CREATION



The slow-burn sales sensation of the '90s, Oasis' breakthrough album claimed Britpop for the lads and primed the band for Knebworth with such timeless anthems as 'Wonderwall' and 'Don't Look Back In Anger'. The seven-minute 'Champagne Supernova' hinted at the cocaine sprawls of 'Be Here Now', but nonetheless trapped the early-Oasis lightning in a Bolly bottle. ■ MB

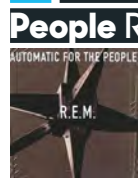
66 The Bends Radiohead

1995 PARLOPHONE



There was a time when Radiohead listeners didn't need to train their ears in order to appreciate the band's work. There was a time when Radiohead just wrote brilliant tunes. From the opening 'Planet Telex' through the blistering 'My Iron Lung', the neurotic 'Just' and the world-weary 'Fake Plastic Trees', 'The Bends' is the gateway Radiohead record. ■ EB

65 Automatic For The People REM 1992 WARNER BROS



REM's creative pinnacle was a delectably mournful affair. The global group-hug of 'Everybody Hurts' offset the gorgeous skinny-dipping piano snapshot 'Nightswimming' and sombre funeral paean 'Sweetness Follows', while 'Sidewinder...' and Andy Kaufman tribute 'Man On The Moon' were wake-rousers extraordinaire, reflecting REM at their most balletic. ■ MB

64 Highway 61 Revisited

Bob Dylan 1965 COLUMBIA



Dylan's sixth LP saw him trading stripped-back protest balladry and Woody Guthrie worship for full-band ballsiness. Solidifying his status as the greatest songwriter of the 20th century™, it kicked off with the monumental 'Like A Rolling Stone' and ended with him harking back to his acoustic roots with the epic 'Desolation Row'. ■ LC

63 Blue Joni Mitchell

1971 REPRISE



"Songs are like tattoos" sang Joni Mitchell on the title track of her fourth album. If that's at all true, 'Blue' was the equivalent of flesh inked with the names of ex-lovers, minus the stomach-churning regret.

Extremely personal but invitingly intimate, it was a record that opened a window on Mitchell's loves and losses with a poetic eloquence. ■ RD

62 Blonde On Blonde

Bob Dylan 1966 COLUMBIA



Hot on the heels of two of the greatest albums ever made, this sprawling double LP confirmed Dylan's status as his generation's superlative songsmith. Not everything here works, but when it does – the ramshackle, last-take-of-20 'Stuck Inside Of Mobile...'; the mesmeric, magical, magnificent 'Visions Of Johanna' – it's incomparable. ■ AB

61 The Clash

The Clash 1977 CBS



Brian Fallon, *Gaslight Anthem*: "I went to high school in Hackensack, New Jersey, this farming country town where they make M&Ms. It was horrible, but Sound Effect Records was its crown jewel. I was getting into

punk and I was searching out records and the owner of the store was like, 'You're trying to get into punk and you don't know The Clash?' So him and his friend actually bought the record for me. I went back and gave him the money because I was like, 'This is awesome.'"

60 Massive Attack

Blue Lines 1991 VIRGIN



For many aficionados, this record hasn't really stood the test of time as well as 1998's post-punk flavoured third album 'Mezzanine' but it's this, the collective's debut record, that marked the invention of

trip-hop and the birth of the Bristol movement. Taking in dub, soul, breakbeat and reggae, the trio forged a new type of electronica. And with the sweeping grandeur of 'Unfinished Sympathy', they dreamt up its unsurpassable blueprint. ■ EB

59 In Rainbows

Radiohead 2007 SELF RELEASED



Of course, to begin with, the biggest talking point about this album's release was the revolutionary 'pay what you want' approach the band

adopted after the surprise announcement that it was going to be made available first on their website. The merits of those actions are still being debated now, but what's not is the quality of the music.

Expectations were quite low for 'In Rainbows' as Radiohead's previous album, 2003's 'Hail To The Thief' was a bit of a dog's dinner. Then, having started recording in 2005, Thom Yorke later admitted that during this period, "We spent a long time in the studio just

58 Surfer Rosa Pixies 1988 4AD

Freddie Cowan, *The Vaccines*: "When I was growing up I used to like skate videos because all the older kids I knew were skaters, and there was this one where they used 'Where Is My Mind?' and it just got me. So

I bought 'Surfer Rosa' because of that. I reckon I'd have been about 11, so I never realised it was a seminal record or anything. But I remember thinking that it was great."

57 The Man Machine

Kraftwerk

1978 EMI/KLING KLING/CAPITOL

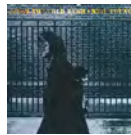


'The Robots'. 'The Model'. 'Neon Lights'. 'Metropolis'. Their seventh record is the one that saw Kraftwerk deliver their definitive text, and fire the starting gun of the synthpop revolution. It was so ahead of its

time it took another four years for 'The Model' to reach the UK Number One spot. ■ GH

56 After The Gold Rush

Neil Young 1970 REPRISE



Young was in his mid-twenties, he wrote and sang like a man who'd already seen too much. It was an album that teetered between rage ('Southern Man'), resignation ('Birds') and resolve ('Don't Let It

Bring You Down'), yet its weary mood never tires, instead creating a sense of warm euphoria. ■ DS

55 Sticky Fingers

Rolling Stones 1971

ROLLING STONES



A more joyous, winsome listen than the downbeat 'Let It Bleed' from the get-go, 'Brown Sugar' collided Jagger's libidinous swagger with the controversial story of a slave trade worker to a din of honky-tonk pianos and roaring guitars, while the album's ballad 'Wild Horses' showcased their tender side ■ AH



not going anywhere." However, a decision to go out on the road in 2006 seemed to focus the band, and when 'In Rainbows' did appear just over a year later, all fears melted away.

Despite the endless farting about (one song, 'Nude', took 10 years to get right) the record had a warmth and sensuality that had been difficult to detect in Radiohead's music previously – just listen to Yorke kicking off the sparse electro balladry of 'All I Need' with the line "I'm an animal trapped in your hot car" and later stating on the mellow strum of 'House Of Cards' that "I don't want

54 Remain In Light

Talking Heads 1980 SIRE



For 'Remain In Light', Talking Heads wanted to be more than a rock band. Frontman David Byrne had been experimenting with stream-of-consciousness writing, inspired by American baptist preachers and

African mythology. Enlisting the help of producer Brian Eno, he wound this into an album of driving polyrhythms that were fired with an ecstatic fervour, nowhere better than on the modern spiritual 'Once In A Lifetime'. ■ LP

53 Station To Station

David Bowie 1976 RCA



Emerging from a period of druggy reclusiveness and readings into occultism, Grail myths and the Third Reich, the triple-whammy of glam, funk and futurism would hold equal sway over Bowie's Thin White Duke

album. A bold, cold goose-step towards the Berlin era, and one that would send dank Teutonic chills down the spines of those soon to form new-wave pioneers Magazine, Joy Division and Talking Heads. ■ AH

52 Let It Bleed

The Rolling Stones 1969 DECCA

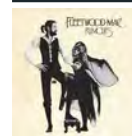


A record that followed the gloomy shades of 1968's 'Beggars Banquet' with even stormier hues, 'Let it Bleed' was to be the Swinging Sixties' sinister swansong – an album that,

beneath its bristling basslines, bluesy licks of guitar and clatter of drums, lamented the crumbling of a counterculture uprising. ■ LP

51 Rumours Fleetwood

Mac 1977 WARNER BROS



You might ask why a record associated with the car stereos of middle-aged parents continues to sell to teenagers and has inspired the rise of new artists such as Florence & The Machine and Haim.

It's because 'Rumours' travels the entire breadth of human emotion and at the heart of the record lies all the elements of an addictive rock'n'roll soap opera that never ceases to fascinate its fans. ■ AH

to be your friend/I just want to be your lover/ No matter how it ends/No matter how it starts". Elsewhere, the jittery 'Jigsaw Falling Into Place' and the krautrock-flavoured 'Bodysnatchers' even managed to appease those still pining for 'The Bends II'. Having struggled with it for so long, it's ironic that the saga ended with Radiohead's most loveable album, no matter what price you decided to pay for it. ■ AW

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** February 2005-2007 ► **RELEASE DATE** October 10, 2007 ► **LENGTH** 42:43 ► **PRODUCER** Nigel Godrich ► **STUDIOS** Tottenham Court House, Wiltshire; Halswell House, Taunton; Hospital Studios, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** Jigsaw Falling Into Place, Nude, House Of Cards/ Bodysnatchers, Reckoner ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. 15 Step ► 2. Bodysnatchers ► 3. Nude ► 4. Weird Fishes/Arpeggi ► 5. All I Need ► 6. Faust Arp ► 7. Reckoner ► 8. House Of Cards ► 9. Jigsaw Falling Into Place ► 10. Videotape

Dusty In Memphis

Dusty Springfield 1969 ATLANTIC

Of course, the title is a red herring. Dusty Springfield may have travelled to Memphis to cut this record with Reggie Young's southern soul sessioners, but she barely left her hotel room. She later claimed she was daunted by producer Jerry Wexler's constant comparisons to Aretha Franklin, and only felt comfortable recording her vocals in New York. "All Jerry did was talk about Aretha," she recalled, "and I was frankly intimidated. If there's one thing that inhibits good singing, it's fear." Dusty's insecurity manifested itself in bouts of anger. She reputedly hurled an ashtray at Wexler and called producer Tom Dowd a "prima donna". Wexler, for his part, said the sessions were "hell".

Nevertheless, the results were bewitching, and the album stands up as perhaps the ultimate piece of A&R, a perfect match of evergreen songs (Wexler originally put as many as 80 to Dusty, by the likes of Carole King, Randy Newman and Burt Bacharach), a great singer and crack musicians (The Memphis Cats and backing singers The Sweet Inspirations had all played with Elvis). The tone is playful and seductive, both 'Just A Little Lovin'' and 'Breakfast In Bed' alluding to some early-morning hanky-panky; 'Son Of A Preacher Man' dealing with the loss of innocence.

There are period psychedelic touches, too, in the Brazilian instrumentation of 'The Windmills Of

Your Mind' and 'In The Land Of Make Believe's electric sitar. But funky as the album is, it's those vocals that really catch the ear. In his sleeve notes for the 2002 reissue, Elvis Costello was moved to write: "Dusty Springfield's singing on this album is among the very best ever put on record by anyone." But, despite claiming that the barbecue was "something special", Dusty wasn't to venture south again. There was, though, one final legacy of her Memphis sojourn: it was on Dusty's recommendation that Jerry Wexler signed a young band called Led Zeppelin. ■ MH

FIVE FACTS

- 1 An NME writer, visiting the studio, ended up assisting producer Tom Dowd.
- 2 'Son Of A Preacher Man' was sampled by Cypress Hill on 'Hits From The Bong'.
- 3 Dusty claimed her difficult attitude during recording was because she'd never worked with a rhythm track before.
- 4 Jerry Wexler claims Dusty turned down every song he recorded for her to sing on 'Dusty In Memphis'.
- 5 Dusty herself refuted it, claiming she approved two.

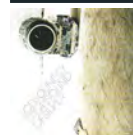
►THE DETAILS

►RECORDED September 1968 ►RELEASE DATE March 31, 1969
 ►LENGTH 33:31 ►PRODUCERS Jerry Wexler, Arif Mardin, Tom Dowd ►STUDIOS American Sound Studios, Memphis; vocals in NYC
 ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION n/a ►SINGLES Son Of A Preacher Man, Don't Forget About Me, Breakfast In Bed, The Windmills Of Your Mind ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Just A Little Lovin' ►2. So Much Love ►3. Son Of A Preacher Man ►4. I Don't Want To Hear It Anymore ►5. Don't Forget About Me ►6. Breakfast In Bed ►7. Just One Smile ►8. The Windmills Of Your Mind ►9. In The Land Of Make Believe ►10. No Easy Way Down ►11. I Can't Make It Alone



49 Sound Of Silver LCD Soundsystem

2007 DFA/CAPITOL



The sleeve said it all: space-age technology turned on its side. Seamlessly gelling the coldness of machines with the hot thrum of rock'n'roll, James Murphy's finest hour has it all: the thump of 'Get Innocuous', the wicked humour of 'North American Scum' and the plaintive 'New York I Love You But You're Bringing Me Down'. Its heart is the existential one-two knockout blows of 'Someone Great' and 'All My Friends', Murphy squealing and wailing like a crazed party animal given access to the control room of electronic music. 'Sound Of Silver' is humanism made to sound superhuman. Music doesn't get truer than this. ■ KEGP

48 Hounds Of Love

Kate Bush 1985 EMI



Half art-pop bangers – 'Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God)', 'Cloudbusting', the title track – and half a dreamlike 'song-cycle' mini-concept album about a drowning woman, 'Hounds Of Love' was Kate

Bush's most unified artistic vision.

Hayden Thorpe: "It's a real time-and-a-place album. It's so intimate, so uninhibited it's almost grotesque. She puts so much into it that you feel like you're perving over her. There's this strange dilemma going on in that some of the songs are frankly quite horrible. But she seems to need those bits to vault up to the high points. She makes herself fall so she can pick herself up again and propel herself forward."

47 Strangeways, Here We Come The Smiths

1987 ROUGH TRADE

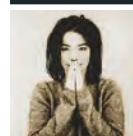


The band's own favourite Smiths record, 'Strangeways, Here We Come' was a fittingly explosive swansong for a Morrissey/Marr partnership approaching critical mass. Everything was bigger,

brighter and more resigned to the grave. Their pop edge gained a brassy gleam on 'I Started Something I Couldn't Finish' and limbo insouciance on the tragicomic 'Girlfriend In A Coma'. Their self-pitying tear-jerkers, most notably 'Last Night I Dreamt That Somebody Loved Me', expanded to the theatrical scale of a Wagner *meisterwerke*. And Morrissey's piquant poetry of moroseness and society's decline reached morbid new depths on 'Death Of A Disco Dancer' and 'Death At One's Elbow', while he brilliantly attacked the necrophilic music industry on 'Paint A Vulgar Picture'. A masterstroke to split when the only way was down. ■ MB

46 Debut Björk

1993 ONE LITTLE INDIAN



'Debut' achieved the remarkable feat of turning an idiosyncratic vocalist from a celebrated cult band into a significant global pop star, without losing one iota of the experimental mindset and creative cool that

made her so special. That unique voice was given free rein on so many inventive tracks that the record threatened to fly apart at any moment. It was an enviable piece of alchemy – Madonna hired producer Nellee Hooper for her next album – and set up Björk for a career that has seen her become arguably the most singular and accessibly nonconformist artist of her generation. ■ AB



45

Parallel Lines

Blondie 1978 CHRYSALLIS

First things first: Blondie's third LP 'Parallel Lines' was one of the finest pop albums ever made. Five of its 12 tracks are deathless classics – 'Hanging On The Telephone', 'Heart Of Glass', 'Picture This', 'Sunday Girl' and 'One Way Or Another' (which surprisingly was never released as a single in the UK). The other seven songs shine only a shade less brightly: the gorgeous girl-group swoon of 'Pretty Baby' would be a lead single for most bands, and Blondie's punk-meets-rockabilly cover of Buddy Holly's 'I'm Gonna Love You Too' could pass for a charming old novelty hit.

'Parallel Lines' was also the sound of a punk band that rubbed shoulders with the Ramones at New York's legendary CBGB venue, becoming massive global superstars thanks to those tunes and the glossy pop production of Mike Chapman, who'd previously worked with Suzi Quatro and Sweet. Naturally, on the album's release in 1978 some hardcore punk fans accused Blondie of selling out, and their objections only grew louder when the *Saturday Night Fever*-inspired disco track 'Heart Of Glass' finally gave the band a US hit single. But bitching about Blondie 'going pop' is a bit like complaining when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly – watch Blondie's early pre-'Parallel Lines'

TV performances on YouTube and it's obvious Debbie Harry was always going to be a pop star.

In fact, Debbie's platinum blonde presence (dear) was so overwhelming that initial press releases would snippily

point out that "Blondie is a band", and no review of 'Parallel Lines' should overlook the brilliant drumming of Clem Burke and awesome songwriting of keyboard player Jimmy Destri and guitarist Chris Stein in particular. But Blondie was a band that happened to have the coolest woman in the world out front, and on 'Parallel Lines' Debbie was on devastating form – whether coming off stalker-ish on 'One Way Or Another',

getting a bit pissed off on 'Just Go Away' or sounding "cold as ice cream but still as sweet" on 'Sunday Girl'.

Blondie have since gone on to release another seven LPs, some of which are very good, but 'Parallel Lines' remains their masterpiece: an all-time great pop album that turned a punk band into superstars and cemented Debbie Harry's status as a proper rock icon. ■ NL

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

It's an image that encapsulates US new wave, but Debbie Harry considered this sleeve to represent the image manipulation of then manager Peter Leeds, who'd tell Harry she was Blondie. It was Leeds' concept to make a sexy, snarling Harry stand out while the band blended into the background. As a result of the sleeve, Blondie sacked Leeds.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** June–July 1978 ► **RELEASE DATE** September 1978
 ► **LENGTH** 39:06 ► **PRODUCER** Mike Chapman ► **STUDIO** Record Plant, NYC ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** Picture This, Hanging On The Telephone, Heart Of Glass, Sunday Girl
 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Hanging On The Telephone ►2. One Way Or Another ►3. Picture This ►4. Fade Away And Radiate ►5. Pretty Baby ►6. I Know But I Don't Know ►7. 11.59 ►8. Will Anything Happen? ►9. Sunday Girl ►10. Heart Of Glass ►11. I'm Gonna Love You Too ►12. Just Go Away

44 The Holy Bible Manic Street Preachers

1994 EPIC



It's not just the cover – a triptych of sketches of an obese woman – that's intimidating. For their visceral third album, the Manics went back to their Wire, Gang Of Four and Joy Division influences for songs that touched on anorexia, the Holocaust and imperialism, unleashing their most brutal scream from the depths of social and psychological depravity. To cap it off, they appeared on *TOTP* dressed like the IRA, clad in balaclavas. It was Richey Edwards' last work with the band, a fitting summation of his harrowing, uncompromising aesthetic. ■ MH

43 Rubber Soul The Beatles 1965 PARLOPHONE



Sitting midway between The Beatles' fresh-faced beginnings and their druggier experimental indulgences, 'Rubber Soul' subtly shed the group's old, squeaky-clean skin for something more interesting. Opening with the relatively unprogressive 'Drive My Car' – a Paul McCartney composition dealing with the first sparks of a relationship – the album's second track lay the path for future creations. 'Norwegian Wood' found George Harrison twanging a sitar for the first time on record, preceding the band's visit to India a year later. With other highlights including the romantic sophistication of 'Michelle', with its French chorus, and George's politically minded 'Think For Yourself', 'Rubber Soul' was an exciting stepping stone to The Beatles' wilder innovations. ■ RD

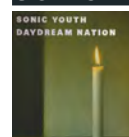
42 Innervisions Stevie Wonder

1973 TAMLA MOTOWN



The third album of Wonder's 'classic period' has two notable stars: Wonder, who wrote the songs and plays almost every note here, and the ARP synthesizer, which colours the record's sound. Having wrestled creative control of his career from Motown, Wonder was at the peak of his powers as both a performer and a songwriter, taking on a range of subjects that stretched from the safe (the worshipful love song 'Golden Lady') to the daring ('Too High' tackles drugs, while centrepiece track 'Living For The City' is an angry, epic tale of ghetto life). Stevie Wonder's transition from child hitmaker to experimental adult artist was complete. ■ DS

41 Daydream Nation Sonic Youth 1988 ENIGMA



Signing to a major label didn't exactly cost Sonic Youth their soul – 'Goo' and 'Dirty' are both ranked loftily in the alt.rock pantheon – but their last album before signing to Geffen is still their most revered, and rightly so. Epic in every sense of the word, 'Daydream Nation' was the record they had been steadily moving towards for five years, through their early, unlistenable no-wave fumbblings to the more focused and coherent 'Sister', where their growing songwriting prowess dovetailed beautifully with a penchant for sonic chaos. Hailed as a work of undiluted genius on its release, age has not withered it a jot. ■ BN

40 Unknown Pleasures

Joy Division 1979 FACTORY

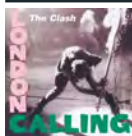


A benchmark of claustrophobia and creeping unease, it feels like there's hardly any room to breathe on Joy Division's 1979 debut – as though the austere machinery that propels the album along is

sucking all the oxygen out of your lungs. It's an uncomfortable but utterly essential record: not only does it sound like nothing else that came before it, but a quick revisit serves to remind you how utterly alien it seems in comparison to the legions of serious-faced young bands who continue to make careers out of plagiarising it. More than 30 years on, there's still something unknowable and otherworldly about 'Unknown Pleasures'. ■ BN

39 London Calling

The Clash 1979 CBS

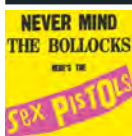


Stephen Street: "The Clash proved you didn't have to be just a one-trick pony – you could do a little bit of rockabilly, some reggae, or something straightforward, punky and rocky. The underlying thing that tied it all together was their commitment. You knew The Clash were always committed to what they did, lyrically, and in the vocal performances from Joe Strummer – and Mick Jones on a couple of tracks. As long as you've got real, true commitment and are dedicated, you really don't have to put yourself in a pigeonhole. The Clash managed to transcend all kinds of music."

38 Never Mind The Bollocks...

Here's The Sex Pistols

Sex Pistols 1977 VIRGIN

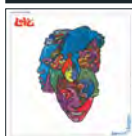


Taken on its audible merits, this is an accomplished rock record featuring some pointedly angry and biliously sarcastic songs, played competently for the most part, and lifted out of the ordinary by a treasureably unique

singer. Those who weren't around at the time could well wonder what all the fuss was about. But in the middle of the '70s, this album was the Molotov cocktail that ignited a cultural revolution. Matlock, Jones and Cook were always better than the "turn up, plug in and play" merchants that punk rubric would imply, but Rotten's performances of such scabrous songs left everyone else playing catch-up. ■ AB

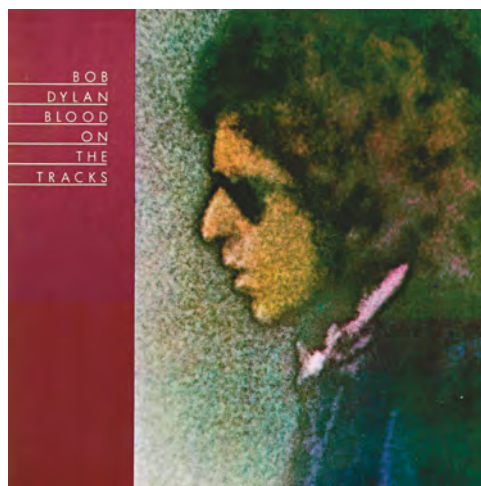
37 Forever Changes

Love 1967 ELEKTRA



Love's name is one of the more ironic in music – behind the technicolour facade, in-fighting and bullying created a mood of urgent paranoia within the Los Angeles group. Their third and best album

replaced garage-rock snarl with baroque strings and acoustic guitars, but the resulting sweetness did little to mask the air of menace within. It's beautiful (the stirring 'Alone Again Or'), threatening ('A House Is Not A Motel'), paranoid ('The Red Telephone's mantra: "They're locking them up today/They're throwing away the key/I wonder who it'll be tomorrow – you or me?") and, most of all, it's magnificent. ■ DS



36

Blood On The Tracks

Bob Dylan 1975 CBS

If the true test of great art is its ability to inspire others to make their own creative breakthroughs, then Bob Dylan's 14th studio album is great indeed. Although written and recorded late in 1974, these songs were still inspiring new art well into the 21st century. In 2009, the writer John Irving took two lines from the opening track – "I had a job in the great north woods, working as a cook for a spell/But I never did like it all that much and one day the axe just fell" – and turned that explosive germ of an idea into a 550-page novel.

Those who view this record as being about the dissolution of a love affair certainly aren't wrong, but to see 'Blood On The Tracks' simply as 'Dylan's break-up album' is to do the record and its maker a huge disservice. Worse, it reduces the listener's ability to feel the full range of a tremendous record's complicated and expansive power.

In the apparent grip of an emotional unmooring as his marriage teetered towards collapse, Dylan certainly mined his experiences of loss, heartbreak and bitterness to fuel large parts of these 10 songs. And yet, as a songwriter of unprecedented depth and richness, he'll never be someone you can pigeonhole that easily.

So, while songs like 'You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome

When You Go' or 'If You See Her, Say Hello' hit with an emphatic emotional punch because they're drawn from still-raw chapters of the songwriter's life, this stuff goes way beyond weepy confessionals. 'Idiot Wind' can be read as Dylan raging against the life partner who can't understand him, yet with those gusts blowing, mid-Watergate, "from the Grand Coulee Dam to the

Capitol", it's clear there's more going on than a loquacious lyricist scoring points in public with his soon-to-be ex-wife.

In 'Tangled Up In Blue' and 'Simple Twist Of Fate', the storylines are complicated by shifting perspectives and sliding time frames. Who are these things happening to, and when? 'Shelter From The Storm', meanwhile, points ahead to the confrontation Dylan was soon to have with a higher power, and foreshadows the overt religious direction his songwriting would take: "In a little hilltop village they gambled for my clothes", he sings, the image hardly plucked from the pages of a diary. "I bargained for salvation and they gave me a lethal dose". ■ AB

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"A lot of people tell me they enjoy that album. It's hard for me to relate to that. I mean, it... you know... people enjoying that type of pain, you know?"
Bob Dylan

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** September 16–19, December 27–30, 1974 ► **RELEASE**

DATE January 20, 1975 ► **LENGTH** 51:42 ► **PRODUCER** Bob Dylan

► **STUDIOS** A&R Recording, NYC; Sound 80, Minneapolis

► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 4 ► **SINGLES** Tangled Up In Blue

► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Tangled Up In Blue ►2. Simple Twist Of Fate

►3. You're A Big Girl Now ►4. Idiot Wind ►5. You're Gonna Make

Me Lonesome When You Go ►6. Meet Me In The Morning ►7. Lily,

Rosemary And The Jack Of Hearts ►8. If You See Her, Say Hello

►9. Shelter From The Storm ►10. Buckets Of Rain

31

Dog Man Star

35 In Utero

Nirvana 1993 DGC



Nirvana's final album was Kurt Cobain's response to the Seattle band becoming uncontrollably enormous after 'Nevermind'. Producer Steve Albini was brought in, and with him the trio created a stunningly ferocious and spiteful set of songs that reconnected Kurt, Dave and Krist with their punk-rock roots. "We intentionally made an aggressive record," said Cobain at the time. And all that aggression was channelled into songs that take on corporate bands ('Radio Friendly Unit Shifter'), bootleggers ('Tourette's') and meddling journalists ('Rape Me'). But not all of 'In Utero' was righteous rage, and 'Heart-Shaped Box', 'Dumb' and 'All Apologies' highlight Cobain's way with a pretty melody. Masterful. ■ TH

34 Abbey Road

The Beatles 1969 APPLE



A while back there was a conversation in the NME office: if John Lennon were alive today and headlining Glastonbury, what would he open with? We unanimously chose 'Come Together'. That bass-rattle intro... spine-tingling doesn't come close. One of the greatest album openers ever – but arguably overshadowed by what follows. From George Harrison's crying riff on 'Something' to the deliriously uplifting 'Here Comes The Sun', The Beatles' 11th album still sounds compelling. Just over a year after its release, the band was over – the closing suite of merged songs dominating side two was a fittingly staggering final act for this most peerless of bands. ■ JF

33 Modern Life Is Rubbish

Blur 1993 FOOD



Credited with igniting Britpop, in the run-up to the release of Blur's second album Damon Albarn declared, "If punk was about getting rid of hippies, then I'm getting rid of grunge." He may not have succeeded but 'Modern Life...' did signal an exhilarating new chapter for British music in a period when America dominated. Shrugging off the baggy leanings of the band's debut 'Leisure', the record introduced the narratives of Albarn's imagined quintessentially English characters (like the titular 'Colin Zeal', whose main trait is punctuality) that would become a trademark of the 'Life' trilogy. ■ RD

32 Paul's Boutique

Beastie Boys 1989 CAPITOL/EMI



Their debut made them brat-rap anti-heroes; but this follow-up, which sold a fraction of the copies and was deemed an ignominious failure as a result, was the Beastie Boys' finest moment. They'd left New York for LA and replaced Rick Rubin's big beats with the Dust Brothers' devil-may-care sample addiction: the quirky humour and self-deprecating shtick were still present and correct, and even if it sounded like a more 'conventional' hip-hop release, the album was infused with cheeky punk attitude. It's a rare record – iconoclastic without an ounce of calculation, startlingly innovative because its makers were just pleasing themselves. ■ AB

Suede 1994 NUDE

Not since 'The White Album' has a record riven with dislocation and conflict clicked so magically.

Brett Anderson – elegantly wasted Byronesque squire of his Highgate apartment, necking Class As to the sound of hymns from the Mennonite sect next door and writing lyrics of tortured sexual deviance, druggy pomp and paranoia. Bernard Butler – recently bereaved and touring by taxi to avoid his bandmates, concocting grandiose guitar squalls so ambitious that 'The Asphalt World' apparently started life 25 minutes long. Within months of the start of the fraught and argumentative 'Dog Man Star' sessions, Butler was allegedly making threatening calls to management demanding they sack producer Ed Buller, and the rest of Suede were leaving his guitars in the street for him to collect on his way out of the band.

And yet, ascending from the sepia buttocks of a desolate male nude, such glorious harmony. Suede had created the Britpop scene in the image of Bowie at his most stylish, only to watch it go mod, chug a load of cheap lager and pretend it didn't have a degree. So with their second album they disowned their yobbish

tearaway offspring and instead crafted something altogether classier.

From the opening dungeon thuds and squeals of 'Introducing The Band' – a dense tangle of Andersonese taking in drugs, androgyny and violent sex – 'Dog Man Star' laid itself down in needle-strewn beds of ruined

romance, and revelled. 'Heroin' was the most thinly veiled drug anthem ever recorded; 'We Are The Pigs' rallied riotous youth like a Starbucks-smashing 'Trash'; the ecstatic 'New Generation' was one defined and directed by the pills it took. Here, cast in lush guitar intricacies and propulsive melodies, was a murky effigy of England and all her most beautiful detritus.

'Dog Man Star' was at its best, though, when it bared

its wounded chest and howled at the smog-clogged moon. 'The Wild Ones', 'The Asphalt World', 'The 2 Of Us' and the glowering, ornate 'Still Life' lifted it into the realm of classical operatic tragedy; a sordid, ultra-modern edifice to rival music's most heart-wrenching achievements. ■ MB

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The front and back shots, entitled *Sad Dreams On Cold Mornings* and *Lost Dreams* respectively, came from a 1971 photo book by Joanne Leonard that Brett owned. "I just liked the image, really, of the bloke on the bed in the room," he said. "It's quite sort of sad and sexual, like the songs on the album."

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** March–July 1994 ► **RELEASE DATE** October 10, 1994
 ► **LENGTH** 57:50 ► **PRODUCER** Ed Buller ► **STUDIO** Master Rock, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 3 ► **SINGLES** We Are The Pigs, The Wild Ones, New Generation ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Introducing The Band ►2. We Are The Pigs ►3. Heroin ►4. The Wild Ones ►5. Daddy's Speeding ►6. The Power ►7. New Generation ►8. This Hollywood Life ►9. The 2 Of Us ►10. Black Or Blue ►11. The Asphalt World ►12. Still Life



Pet Sounds

The Beach Boys 1966 CAPITOL

30 Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)

Wu-Tang Clan 1993 LOUD



There may have been better rap albums, but few have been as influential as this debut. RZA's dirt-encrusted production took hip-hop back to its grimy New York basics after LA's sun-blasted melodiousness had turned the genre into a more poppy one, and the babel of lyrical styles from the masked (if not anonymous) MCs returned some mystique and intrigue to a music that was lacking those essential qualities. And when it came to marketing, Wu-Tang had it sewn up: for the rest of the decade, the industry was theirs. Everyone since has been following in this record's choppy, erratic wake. ■ AB

29 Marquee Moon

Television 1977 ELEKTRA



Where The Velvet Underground revolutionised the '60s with their guttural blues-meets-avant-garde jams, Television performed their own silent coup in '70s New York by stripping all that away. Without a doubt the most pivotal record of the post-punk era, this was, at its core, a guitar album: Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd's terse, spiralling helixes played out with a scientific precision. But it wasn't a cold record – the screeching tumble of the riff on opener 'See No Evil' was simple, dumb rock'n'roll joviality. The ludicrously long title track was a wave of immaculate instrumentation, but fizzed with a live energy. That alchemy is exactly what has kept it so fresh after all these years. ■ JS

28 Back To Black

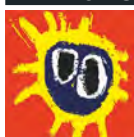
Amy Winehouse 2006 ISLAND



Due to the endless tabloid headlines surrounding Amy Winehouse before and after her tragic drink-related death in 2011, it's easy to let the music get sidetracked by the morbid carnival. But with 2006's 'Back To Black', the Camden-based singer made a record that commanded attention: 11 tracks of booze-fuelled addiction battles ('Rehab', 'Addicted') and sassy putdowns to lovers who wronged her ("You ain't worth guestlist/Plus one of all them girls you kissed"). The catalyst for her rapidly increasing fame, and therefore increasing media scrutiny, it ensured Winehouse's legacy would be more than just unpalatable column inches. ■ RD

27 Screemadelica

Primal Scream 1991 CREATION



Primal Scream have become rock'n'roll's masters of reinvention. However, it's fair to say that they never got higher than the summer of 1991, which they spent holed up in a studio with a mountain of quality drugs and heads full of music that would combine acid house and rave culture with good-ol'-fashioned gospel, blues and the sort of guitar licks that would put a smile across Keith Richards' craggy face. They even hired the Stones' production wizard Jimmy Miller to join the likes of Andy Weatherall behind the decks. Then they got loaded, and 22 years later we're still having a good time. ■ KEGP

During the vocal sessions for 'Pet Sounds', the ever-tactful Mike Love started referring to Brian Wilson as 'Dog Ears' because of his apparent gift for hearing sounds, frequencies and mistakes that were imperceptible to mere humans. At the time, Love found his bandmate's quest for perfection exhausting and frustrating; years later, however, even he was forced to concede that "we can safely say with some degree of confidence that the vocal performances are as close to perfect as humanly possible".

It's hard to argue with that. Inspired by the way The Beatles' 'Rubber Soul', released in late 1965, "somehow went together like no album ever made before", Wilson was determined to make a record that was even better. He succeeded not once, but twice: 'Pet Sounds' was so perfect that The Beatles themselves felt compelled to top it with 'Sgt

Wilson's canine ear and the thoughtful lyrics of Tony Asher resulted in something that was infinitely more complex and sophisticated than anything The Beach Boys – or any of their peers – had previously attempted,

an album that represented rock music moving on from adolescent whimsy and into a rich new maturity. Inevitably, then, it was misunderstood on release. The album was a big commercial disappointment, the leap from the frivolity of 'Beach Boys' Party!' to what Love would uncharitably term "Brian's ego music" apparently far too great for many fans to comprehend at the time, despite the anything-goes spirit of the era. Even the band's label, Capitol, had so little confidence in the album

that they considered shelving it. Be very glad they saw sense: rock music as we know it is unimaginable without 'Pet Sounds'. 'Perfect' doesn't even begin to do it justice. ■ BN

FAMOUS FAN



Yannis Philippakis

"I always associated this with my parents, so I didn't really like stuff from the '60s, but 'Pet Sounds' shows there was incredible music being made. New bands should listen to them, then there'd be a new wave of surf-inspired sweet harmony."

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** July 12, 1965–April 13, 1966 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 16, 1966 ► **LENGTH** 35:57 ► **PRODUCER** Brian Wilson ► **STUDIOS** United Western Recorders; Gold Star; Columbia; Sunset Sound Studios ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 2 ► **SINGLES** Caroline, No, Sloop John B, Wouldn't It Be Nice/God Only Knows ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Wouldn't It Be Nice ►2. You Still Believe In Me ►3. That's Not Me ►4. Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder) ►5. I'm Waiting For The Day ►6. Let's Go Away For Awhile ►7. Sloop John B ►8. God Only Knows ►9. I Know There's An Answer ►10. Here Today ►11. I Just Wasn't Made For These Times ►12. Pet Sounds ►13. Caroline, No



25 What's Going On

Marvin Gaye 1971 TAMLA MOTOWN



Hayden Thorpe, Wild Beasts:

"He's a hero to me because he's such an antihero. He was a smooth lothario in a pop band – almost like Robbie Williams today – who then went on to make an album about Vietnam and oppression. To follow through on that sort of transformation so convincingly is just amazing. Motown notoriously refused to put his album out – they said it was too heavy and that he needed to go back to making pop. But he faced them down, won, and history has vindicated him."

24 Exile On Main St

The Rolling Stones

1972 ROLLING STONES



The Stones' dark, monolithic high point is so wrapped in mythology and cult enigma it's as if the Devil himself was on the desk. The loose, narcotic roll of Villa Nellcôte's sweltering cellar infected 'Exile...' and gave it its arcane, subterranean voodoo buzz – Jagger's warped vocals and acid-vision lyrics of pirouetting lovers swam with the afterglow of psychedelia, while 'Rip This Joint', 'Shake Your Hips' and 'Casino Boogie' were juke-joint blues full of heat and hellfire. It's the epitome of the watermark album; the double-set splurge of an assured band at its peak, coasting on a creative high. ■ MB

23 The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars

David Bowie 1972 RCA



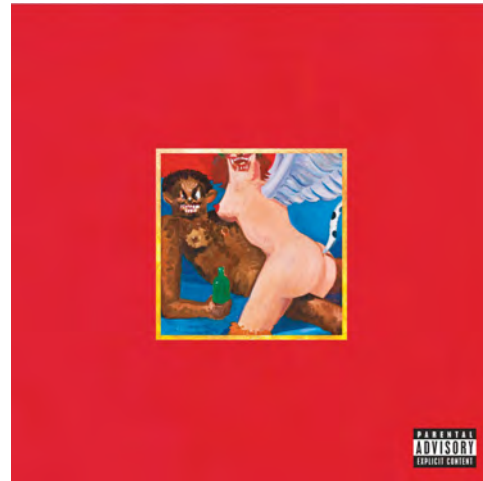
Bowie created Ziggy to be the perfect rock star, a cocaine-skinny humanoid alien, charisma down to his bones and suitably adored by the fan armies depicted in the timeless 'Ziggy Stardust' song. But he was as doomed as he was beautiful, and it's this sense of slowly hurtling towards tragedy, a dragging sadness under the surface even of songs like the jaunty, *Rocky Horror*-ish 'Star' and the soaring 'Starman', that gave the album its timelessness. In the age of the shuffle, '...Ziggy Stardust...' demands to be engaged with from start to finish, creating a bond of intrigue with Zig that strengthens with every listen. ■ JF

22 Parklife Blur

1994 FOOD



If the preceding 'Modern Life Is Rubbish' had seen Blur declare war on grunge and meathead American rock, 'Parklife' saw them perfect the sound that would put Britain firmly back in the middle of the mid-'90s cultural map. Describing a seafaring nation of dreaming eccentrics, it gave us lager louts on holiday (indie disco staple 'Girls & Boys'), cockney wideboys ('Parklife') and a dazzling cast of characters including civil servant 'Tracy Jacks' in the throes of a full-on Reggie Perrin. But it also looked within – the towering ballads 'This Is A Low', 'To The End' and 'End Of A Century' were as personal as anything Damon Albarn has ever written. Noel Gallagher once said the album was "like southern England personified". The fact that Blur's fiercest critic could muster no worse an insult is testament to its sheer brilliance. ■ DS



My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy

21

Kanye West 2010 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM

Kanye West said in his infamous Radio 1 interview with Zane Lowe that he considered his 2010 album 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' to be his big push at being a radio-friendly unit shifter – which, for an album so full of ideas and sonic innovation, seems odd. Off the back of the Auto-Tuned '80s And Heartbreak' and prior to 2013's gnarled and electronic 'Yeezus', it was easy to see the album as Kanye's most mainstream effort since 'Graduation' in 2007, but that's not to say the album wasn't as strange, contradictory and utterly baffling as its creator. The whole album was layered thick with bold megalomaniac statements like that on 'Monster', where he spat angrily, "*My presence is a present, kiss my ass*" and leftfield samples (see the use of King Crimson's '21st Century Schizoid Man' on 'Power').

At times, the album felt like a full-entourage club crawl: 'All Of The Lights' featured everyone from Rihanna to Elton John, while Nicki Minaj turned up on 'Monster', coming as close as possible to stealing focus from her host by rhyming "Sri Lanka" with "Willy Wonka". There was humour too, as when Kanye said "Choke a South Park writer with a fish stick" on 'Gorgeous', a nod to Trey Parker and Matt Stone's animated takedown of his character.

The one song that best summed up the true perfection of the record, however, was the epic, nine-minute-long

'Runaway', a self-loathing ode to the worldwide hobby of Kanye-hating. "*Let's have a toast for the douchebags*", sang the rapper over a sparse piano and processed beat; "*Let's have a toast for the assholes*". That he could acknowledge his own failings while simultaneously sounding so totally flawless is what made 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' not just West's most accomplished and well-rounded album to date, but also the perfect balance between his pop brilliance and boundary-pushing tendencies. ■ DR

FIVE FACTS

- 1 One working title for the album was 'Good Ass Job'.
- 2 It's rumoured that the album cost more than \$3 million to record.
- 3 During breaks in recording, Kanye and his team would take on the local YMCA team at basketball.
- 4 When there was a leak from the Hawaii studio, West decided he'd only record in hotel rooms from that point onwards.
- 5 Kanye chose the artwork to the album specifically because he hoped it would be banned.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 2009–10 ► **RELEASE DATE** November 22, 2010
DURATION 68:36 ► **PRODUCERS** Kanye West, Jeff Bhasker, Bink, DJ Frank E, Emile, Jay Z, Kyambo Joshua, LA Reid, Lex Luger, Mike Caren, Mike Dean, No ID, Gee Robertson, RZA, S1 ► **STUDIOS** Avex Recording Studio, Hawaii; Glenwood Place Studios, LA; Electric Lady Studios, NYC; Platinum Sound Recording, NYC ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 16 ► **SINGLES** Power, Runaway, Monster, All Of The Lights ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Dark Fantasy ►2. Gorgeous ►3. Power ►4. All Of The Lights (Interlude) ►5. All Of The Lights ►6. Monster ►7. So Appalled ►8. Devil In A New Dress ►9. Runaway ►10. Hell Of A Life ►11. Blame Game ►12. Lost In The World ►13. Who Will Survive In America

OK Computer

Radiohead 1997 PARLOPHONE



When Radiohead delivered their third album 'OK Computer', the band's American label Capitol slashed its sales forecast from two million to half a million, predicting

commercial suicide. There was a deficit of the anthemic indie-rock of 'The Bends' and 'Pablo Honey' on it, and 'Paranoid Android', the first single, was a four-part epic that came in at over six minutes. Though Parlophone, the band's UK label, had more faith, no-one expected 'OK Computer' to catapult the band from major success to seismic fame.

Like *Animal Farm*, Philip Larkin's poetry and the art of Tracey Emin, Radiohead's 'OK Computer' crystallised a specific mood – in this case the fragile premillennial atmosphere of late-'90s Britain, with lyrics about

yuppie culture, political malaise, paranoia, escape, abduction and emotional isolation. Unshackled by deadlines and with a £100,000 recording budget, the Oxford band holed themselves up in an enormous country pile in Somerset. With the time to experiment, they eschewed traditional song structure, standard instrumentation and the introspective lyrics of their past for a mosaic of abstract fragments.

Released in the wake of Britpop and post-Nirvana and Pixies, the album ushered in a new alternative. It proved to bands at the time, and for years afterwards, that it was possible to experiment sonically and take risks away from the normal rock format. Though there are blissful, gorgeous moments, the album doesn't give a shit about being a nice listen. You have to be in the right frame of

mind to listen to 'Climbing Up The Walls', for example, a ghostly howl that scratches the deep reaches of the hypothalamus. The American label didn't need to fret, though: 'OK Computer' went double platinum in the US and quintuple platinum in the UK. More importantly, it was a startling expression of human existence, bringing form to chaos and raising the bar. ■ LJ

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** July 1996; September 1996–March 1997 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 21, 1997 ► **LENGTH** 53:27 ► **PRODUCERS** Radiohead, Nigel Godrich ► **STUDIOS** Canned Applause, Didcot; St Catherine's Court, Bath ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** Paranoid Android, Karma Police, No Surprises ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Airbag ►2. Paranoid Android ►3. Subterranean Homesick Alien ►4. Exit Music (For A Film) ►5. Let Down ►6. Karma Police ►7. Fitter Happier ►8. Electioneering ►9. Climbing Up The Walls ►10. No Surprises ►11. Lucky ►12. The Tourist

Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not

19

Arctic Monkeys 2006 DOMINO



Most folk would have buckled under the pressure: a bunch of sharp-tongued Sheffield teens turned into Myspace sensations with two Number One singles

already under their belts before they'd put out an album. But most folk aren't Alex Turner. Squaring up to the challenge of kicking off the most rabidly anticipated debut LP in yonks, he responded with the cheekiest of self-deprecating winks. "Anticipation has a habit to set you up/For disappointment in evening entertainment", he yelped on

'The View From The Afternoon', immediately establishing the album's two main defining characteristics: firstly, that 'Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not' would be a semi-

concept record based on the Great British night on the razz, with tales of drinking cheap booze, failing to pull, run-ins with bouncers and scuffles outside taxi ranks; and secondly, that it'd be full of a brazen bolshiness and arrogant swagger that ran roughshod over the hype.

To some extent, the numbers racked up by 'Whatever People Say I Am...' speak for themselves. It's still the fastest-selling debut album by a British band ever, shifting more than 360,000 copies in its first week. But no statistics can convey the giddy, gut-punch excitement of 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor' and 'When The Sun Goes Down', in which caustic put-downs of nightclub temptresses and seedy sorts prowling for prostitutes are turned into singalong anthems. Elsewhere, the frustrations and fripperies of being young and pissed off are laid out in all their gruesome glory: lust after sex ('Dancing Shoes', 'Still Take You Home') and thirsting for violence ('Riot Van', 'From The Ritz To The Rubble').

But amid all the testosterone flying around, it's the tenderness that stands out: the acutely observed relationship squabbles of 'Mardy Bum', and epic swansong 'A Certain Romance'. Since its release, the Monkeys have arguably outstripped the blueprint of their debut, releasing braver ('Suck It And See'), bigger ('Humbug') and better ('AM') work. But none of that would be possible without this hormone-drenched racket. This is where it all began. ■ BH

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Even if you've been fortunate enough to live with these tracks over the past year or so, they still sound more vital, more likely to make you form your own band than anything else out there."
Tim Jonze, 10/10

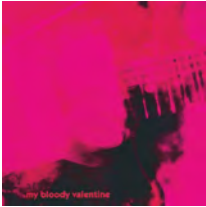
► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** June–September 2005 ► **RELEASE DATE** January 23, 2006 ► **LENGTH** 40:56 ► **PRODUCER** Jim Abbiss, Alan Smyth ► **STUDIOS** Chapel Studios, Lincolnshire; 2Fly Studio, Sheffield; Telstar Studios, Munich ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor, When The Sun Goes Down ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. The View From The Afternoon ►2. I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor ►3. Fake Tales Of San Francisco ►4. Dancing Shoes ►5. You Probably Couldn't See For The Lights But You Were Staring Straight At Me ►6. Still Take You Home ►7. Riot Van ►8. Red Light Indicates Doors Are Secured ►9. Mardy Bum ►10. Perhaps Vampires Is A Bit Strong But... ►11. When The Sun Goes Down ►12. From The Ritz To The Rubble ►13. A Certain Romance

Loveless

18

My Bloody Valentine 1991 CREATION



Greatness takes as long as it takes. Creation Records found that out the hard way with 'Loveless'. They originally thought My Bloody Valentine would be able to record their second album in five days; instead it took them two years and a rumoured £250,000, a sum that almost bankrupted the label (though it wasn't enough to stop them spending even more on Primal Scream's 'Give Out But Don't Give Up' a few years later). More than two decades on, it's hard to see what all the fuss was about – a couple of years and a quarter of a million quid seems a fair trade for something this magnificent.

Kevin Shields' mantra during the recording of 'Loveless', as he moved from studio to studio,

leaving a trail of dismissed and disgruntled engineers in his wake, was "I just want it to be decent". Needless to say, his standards of decency were (and are) a bit higher than most people's. Many records can be said to have a 'dreamlike' quality to them, but Shields' magnum opus sounds like an authentic field recording from its author's – or should that be architect's? – sleeping subconscious: immersive, mysterious and impressionistic, 'Come In Alone', 'Blown A Wish' and 'To Here Knows When' sounded as if they were being beamed in from another plane of consciousness, and the apocalyptic opera of 'Touched' from some classical hellscape. Little wonder that shoegaze swiftly petered out in the wake of it – 'Loveless' was the genre's

music of the spheres and the likes of Ride or Swervedriver had little hope of surpassing it. Even My Bloody Valentine would struggle.

"Kevin toiled over that record and by the end it had just about sapped the whole of him," says producer Alan Moulder, who helped shepherd the album to completion. That may be true, but not even Alan McGee's accountant would have denied that the end result was worth every last red cent spent on it. ■ BN

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1989–91 ►RELEASE DATE November 4, 1991

►LENGTH 48:36 ►PRODUCERS Kevin Shields, Colm Ó Cíosóig

►STUDIOS Various ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 24

►SINGLES Soon, To Here Knows When ►TRACKLISTING

►1. Only Shallow ►2. Loomer ►3. Touched ►4. To Here Knows When ►5. When You Sleep ►6. I Only Said ►7. Come In Alone ►8. Sometimes ►9. Blown A Wish ►10. What You Want ►11. Soon

17

It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back

Public Enemy 1988 DEF JAM



Perhaps the most striking aspect of Public Enemy's second album – regularly cited as one of the greatest ever made, more or less since the day it was released – is the way it still sounds like the future. Co-producer Hank Shocklee would memorably call the squealing assemblage of distorted horn stabs, clattering drums, sirens and audience screams "music's worst nightmare", and he had a point. Pop hadn't sounded like this before, and – even in PE's impressively nonconformist canon – it never would again. A quarter of a century on, it's still terrifying.

The record was a risk. The group's 1987 debut had failed to establish them with an American rap audience enjoying the music's first flush of stylistic maturity. The fact that Chuck D and his production cohorts – Bill Stephney, Eric 'Vietnam' Sadler and Shocklee – were nevertheless determined to follow in The Clash's footsteps and mesh revolutionary lyrics with music every bit as groundbreaking, meant that there was a real danger this follow-up would alienate that nascent fanbase. It's important to remember that, even at the height of rap's first 'golden age',

with sampling being not just accepted but expected, the kind of bricolage the as yet unnamed Bomb Squad were attempting was revolutionary and unique; and despite Grandmaster Flash's 'The Message', precious few artists were using hip-hop to speak about politics, much less to consider the music a viable medium for serious and in-depth protest. Still, there would be no compromises.

Noisier than punk, funk only in the most technical sense, and with Chuck's righteous sloganeering spliced between Flavor Flav's manic cackles and declamations, the record redefined the possibilities for rap, rock, soul and beyond. Public Enemy took fragments that were recognisable – a mellifluous piano riff from an old Isaac Hayes track; a Kool & The Gang guitar jangle; a lump of Queen in their sci-fi/prog pomp – and didn't just recontextualise them but also invested them with a thrilling, chilling new power.

More so than most albums in this list, it is impossible to imagine what music afterwards would have sounded like had it not been made. Its impact on popular culture has been incalculable. ■ AB

FIVE FACTS

- 1 PE's vision for the album was to make a hip-hop equivalent of Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On' – a politically charged state-of-the-nation declaration.
- 2 The album's working title was 'Countdown To Armageddon'.
- 3 The band intended the LP to be exactly an hour long. It fell two minutes short.
- 4 Hank Shocklee would stamp on records he was sampling to make them sound dirtier.
- 5 Nodding to Phil Spector's Wall Of Sound, PE called Shocklee's style "the Wall Of Noise".

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1987 ►RELEASE DATE April 14, 1988 ►LENGTH

57:51 ►PRODUCERS Chuck D, Rick Rubin, Hank Shocklee

►STUDIOS Chung King Studios, Greene St Recording, Sabella Studios, NYC ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 8 ►SINGLES Rebel

Without A Pause, Bring The Noise, Don't Believe The Hype, Night Of The Living Baseheads, Black Steel In The Hour Of Chaos

►TRACKLISTING ►1. Countdown To Armageddon ►2. Bring The Noise ►3. Don't Believe The Hype ►4. Cold Lampin' With Flavor

►5. Terminator X To The Edge Of Panic ►6. Mind Terrorist ►7. Louder Than A Bomb ►8. Caught ►9. Can We Get A Witness?

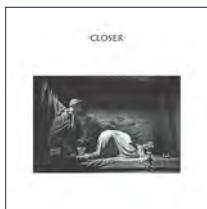
►10. Show 'Em Watcha Got ►11. She Watch Channel Zero?

►12. Night Of The Living Baseheads ►13. Black Steel In The Hour Of Chaos ►14. Security Of The First World ►15. Rebel Without A Pause ►16. Prophets Of Rage ►17. Party For Your Right To Fight

Closer

16

Joy Division 1980 FACTORY



Released two months after singer Ian Curtis' suicide, it's almost impossible to disentangle 'Closer' from the events that surrounded it. Stark, uncompromising and

lyrically bleak, it was a record with a singular vision, with no light at the end of the tunnel.

Despite assertions from the rest of the band that they had failed to draw parallels between Curtis' openly tormented lyrics and his internal struggles, 'Closer' teemed with broken, torturous existentialism. Whether in 'Atrocity Exhibition's' landscapes of death and destruction, 'Passover's' deflated nihilism ("When all's said and done/I know that I'll lose every time"), 'Colony's' isolated dislocation with the world or the final defeat of 'Decades', Curtis was a brutal storyteller whose vocals were as dark and unyielding as the messages he delivered.

Around them, Peter Hook, Bernard Sumner and Stephen Morris' post-punk tribalism danced a wry death disco of uneasy tension. Curtis' almost ghostly words sliced through

the undulating bass and clipped drum beats of 'Heart And Soul', leaving it feeling like a sordid end scene at a back-alley nightclub, while 'A Means To An End's' bass motif and major-key guitars offset Curtis' strangled bitterness to brilliantly uncomfortable effect.

In 'Closer', Joy Division produced a record that, perversely, thrived under the weight of its own burden; a record that writhed with an all-encompassing internal atmosphere that would go on to influence artists – from Interpol to Savages – to this day. But of all the tragedies coiled tightly in its grooves, perhaps the most heartbreaking of all is that 'Closer' was the sound of a band as brilliant as they would ever get the chance to be. ■ LW

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"For entertainment they watch his body twist/ Behind his eyes he says, I still exist" ('Atrocity Exhibition')

Widely agreed to be about Ian Curtis' increasing struggles with epilepsy, this was a starkly honest nod to the singer's condition.

"Stood by the gate at the foot of the garden/Watching them pass like clouds in the sky" ('The Eternal')

'The Eternal' dealt with isolation from a more character-based perspective. The song was said to be about a mentally impaired young boy who lived just down the road from Curtis when they were children, and who was not allowed to leave the yard.

"Just for one moment I heard somebody call/Looked beyond the day in hand, there's nothing there at all" ('Twenty Four Hours')

Recorded mere months before his suicide, many of the lyrics on 'Closer' hinted at Curtis' fragile and declining mental state. These lines are particularly poignant.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** March 18–30, 1980 ► **RELEASE DATE** July 18, 1980
► **LENGTH** 44:16 ► **PRODUCER** Martin Hannett ► **STUDIO** Britannia Row Studios, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 6
► **SINGLES** none ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Atrocity Exhibition ►2. Isolation ►3. Passover ►4. Colony ►5. A Means To An End ►6. Heart And Soul ►7. Twenty Four Hours ►8. The Eternal ►9. Decades

Let England Shake

15

PJ Harvey 2011 ISLAND



Sometimes, being a great artist is as much about acknowledging your weaknesses as your strengths. PJ Harvey had always wanted to make an

album about war. But she knew that to fully convey the horror of the bloody string that ties history together required a level of strength and depth as a writer that would take years to accomplish. After 19 years of honing her craft, she was finally ready.

The album wasn't tied to one specific time or place in history. The setting of World War I, in particular the devastating eight-month operation along the Anzac Cove, Bolton's Ridge and Battleship Hill, served as a historical lens through which she painted a wider view of war. Over 'Let England Shake's' 12 songs, she explored the violence, patriotism and futility that has engulfed every conflict throughout history. On 'The Words That Maketh Murder', she spelt out that

intoxicating brutality with the line "Soldiers fall like lumps of meat" and images of limbs hanging from trees. On 'All And Everyone', she spoke of fatality: "Death was in the staring sun fixing its eyes on everyone". On 'England' she delved into the undaunted patriotism that leads soldiers to march blindly to their death, and on 'The Last Living Rose', troops dreamed of the "the grey, damp filthiness" of their homeland.

'Let England Shake' was a masterstroke of lyrical poetry. She managed the rare feat of exploring the bloody horror of battle without sensationalising it. She wrote tenderly about

Britain without slipping into insipid nationalism. And it was all captured in her songcraft – lush, organic melodies met bleak soundscapes and rolling percussion surrounded by the soft, wistful vocal she adopted to narrate. It was almost an acknowledgement that the devastation of warfare needed no musical embellishment.

The album finished on 'The Colour Of The Earth', a story of a man named Louis who died in the Anzac trenches, where his bones still lie, surrounded by bloodied earth. His life was insignificant, like all the other billions who have died in conflict throughout the world. Its message is timeless. This was an album that not only had the mark of an artist at her creative peak, but through it Harvey managed that rarest of feats – the creation of a piece of work that will continue to live through the ages. ■ JS

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** April–May 2010 ► **RELEASE DATE** February 7, 2011
► **LENGTH** 40:15 ► **STUDIO** Eype Church, Dorset ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 8 ► **SINGLES** The Words That Maketh Murder, The Glorious Land ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Let England Shake ►2. The Last Living Rose ►3. The Glorious Land ►4. The Words That Maketh Murder ►5. All And Everyone ►6. On Battleship Hill ►7. England ►8. In The Dark Places ►9. Bitter Branches ►10. Hanging On The Wire ►11. Written On The Forehead ►12. The Colour Of The Earth

Low

14

David Bowie 1977 RCA



'Convalescence' is a boring word, isn't it? It evokes days laid up in hospital beds, all listless jigsaws, wan light and fortifying milk drinks. Yet it's the one word that

most invokes the spirit of Bowie's Berlin trilogy, and the seminal half-wired pop/half-instrumental experimentation of 'Low'. One of the most famous stories attached to Bowie's Berlin period is that of 'Always Crashing In The Same Car' from 'Low'. The title provides the perfect image of someone stuck in a loop of destructive behaviour, but it's no mere metaphor. Out carousing with Iggy one Berlin evening, Bowie had spotted a drug dealer who'd pulled a fast one on them. So irrational was his thinking at that point that the international megastar decided the best course of action was to repeatedly ram the man's vehicle. Later the same evening, he drove his own car at close to 100 miles per hour around the basement of his hotel, circling, circling, faster, faster;

the reckless, semi-suicidal behaviour of someone who's no longer even in stretching distance of their tether.

The mental depths to which Bowie plunged making his previous record, 'Station To Station', resulted in one of rock history's great cautionary tales: the malnutrition, the occultism, the coke. The car story reflects the nadir to which such habits drive you. The lush washes and flaming licks of the song it inspired, and the album that surrounded it, though, sang with the weird, hysterical exuberance of getting better; the rush and the struggle of coming out the other side.

Here's another boring, and often misused, word: 'experimental'. But the thrill of new collaborations and methods was the other energy that drove 'Low'. From new playmate Brian Eno's AKS suitcase synthesizer to the drum sound that Tony Visconti kept other producers guessing about for years, it vibrated with new ideas, new tricks. Eno and his Oblique

Strategies also encouraged a spontaneity and randomness that brought the best out of Bowie. And indeed, others: 'Warszawa' – one of the most acclaimed of the instrumentals dominating the second half of the album, to the shock and enlightenment of so many – was composed entirely by Eno on the basis of a chord progression played by Tony Visconti's four-year-old son. 'Low' is the most powerful and influential of Bowie's late-'70s records; it opened unimagined doors of possibility as to what a rock album, and even a rock song, could be, while the fusion of pain and joy in the process of healing beamed bright. ■ EM

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 1976 ► **RELEASE DATE** January 14, 1977 ► **LENGTH** 38:48 ► **PRODUCERS** David Bowie, Tony Visconti ► **STUDIOS** Château d'Hérouville, France; Hansa Studio By The Wall, West Berlin ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 2 ► **SINGLES** Sound And Vision, Be My Wife ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Speed Of Life ►2. Breaking Glass ►3. What In The World ►4. Sound And Vision ►5. Always Crashing In The Same Car ►6. Be My Wife ►7. A New Career In A New Town ►8. Warszawa ►9. Art Decade ►10. Weeping Wall ►11. Subterraneans

Funeral

13

Arcade Fire 2004 ROUGH TRADE



You have to hand it to Arcade Fire for tackling the big questions early on. Before 'Neon Bible' cast its eye on organised religion and 'The Suburbs'

saw band members thinking back to picket-fenced childhoods, the Montreal collective's 2004 debut saw them contemplating nothing smaller than life and death itself. Written and released while mourning several band members' relatives, 'Funeral' captured a broad, mature and considered philosophical spirit rarely found in popular music.

The album was completely at odds with the prevailing mood of the time.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"It will bind you up and kidnap you. It will overwhelm with its energy and bombast, put you through the full emotional mangle. For those of us who still believe in music's power to redeem, 'Funeral' feels like a detox, the most cathartic album of the year." **Imran Ahmed 9/10**

In 2004, guitar bands worldwide were largely still reacting to the success of The Strokes and The White Stripes, meaning post-punk and garage rock ruled. Arcade Fire came from a different place entirely, issuing an album with a symphonic, cacophonous sound and a list of songs that could have come from a King Crimson LP – there were no less than four numbered tracks titled 'Neighborhood'. Where, in the past, string instruments had been employed by indie bands to create a cinematic or romantic sound, here violins and cellos were thrashed like they were being roundly punished. The whole package sparked another shift in music, putting intensity, grandiosity and scale of ambition back on the agenda, and introducing the raw elements of the subsequent nu-folk boom.

Arcade Fire would find subtlety in future releases, but not on 'Funeral'. Beginning with the ever-building rush of 'Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels)', the

drama never lets up thanks to a clutch of songs so show-stopping, so deeply emotional that you suspect sequencing the album was the hardest job of all. Track after track provides gut-punch after gut-punch, from the arms-aloft anthem 'Wake Up' to 'Rebellion (Lies)', with its great sense of impending doom, and the elegiac wonder of 'In The Backseat'.

"We don't just wanna make people feel good," said frontman Win Butler before issuing the album. "Being scared or confused can be uplifting too." Job done. ■ DS

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** August 2003–early 2004 ► **RELEASE DATE** September 14, 2004 (not released in UK until 2005) ► **LENGTH** 48:02 ► **PRODUCER** Arcade Fire ► **STUDIO** Hotel2Tango, Montreal ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 33 ► **SINGLES** Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels), Neighborhood #2 (Laika), Neighborhood #3 (Power Out), Rebellion (Lies), Wake Up ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels) ►2. Neighborhood #2 (Laika) ►3. Une Année Sans Lumière ►4. Neighborhood #3 (Power Out) ►5. Neighborhood #4 (7 Kettles) ►6. Crown Of Love ►7. Wake Up ►8. Haiti ►9. Rebellion (Lies) ►10. In The Backseat

12

Horses

Patti Smith 1975 ARISTA



It began with the most disarming album opener in history. “*Jesus died for somebody’s sins, but not mine*”, Patti growled over a sultry piano

during her reinvention of Van Morrison’s R&B standard ‘Gloria’.

A scrawny girl from New Jersey with a trucker’s accent, Patti Smith was a punk poet like no other. Nobody has come close to her since. Probably nobody ever will. As a child, she devoured the work of French classical poets Rimbaud and Baudelaire. As a teenager, she befriended beat luminaries Ginsberg and Burroughs, whom she admired as much as the rock’n’roll icons of the day – Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison. These influences fuelled ‘Horses’ unique alchemy between rock, poetry and the spoken word, which in its wake inspired riot grrrl, PJ Harvey, Morrissey, Michael Stipe and countless others who hold her up as a hero and icon.

Patti never wanted to be a musician. She moved to New York in order to become a poet. But she found the staid poetry readings stifling and asked Lenny Kaye to join her. “Could you play a car crash with an electric guitar?” she asked him. It was the beginning

of what would become a generation-defining album, its improvised tracks ‘Birdland’ and the three-part epic ‘Land’ capturing the fervent energy of the ‘70s New York scene around CBGB, the Chelsea Hotel and all the artists, misfits and runaways who made the city their home.

The album roared with hunger; never for commercial success, but for art, for honesty, for beauty. But the magic of ‘Horses’ is that it also transports you away from reality, right into the depths of Patti Smith’s own imagination. Like the poets she so admired, Smith’s lyrics conjured mystical visions and metaphors alongside her own confessionals about her sister (‘Kimberly’ and ‘Redondo Beach’). The line “*I feel like just some misplaced Joan Of Arc*”, from ‘Kimberly’, read like a document of her first-ever gig, which tore the ears and eyeballs off an assembled audience that included Andy Warhol and Lou Reed. When John Cale later came to record the album, he struggled to tame the band’s almost feral magnetism, which makes it such an impassioned listen all these years later.

‘Horses’ is an album of wisdom, wit and grit. It is screeching and visceral. Raw with fury and full of desire. It’s chaotic poetry.

Rapturous rock’n’roll. And that’s exactly what music should be. ■ JS

FIVE FACTS

- 1 ‘Birdland’ was inspired by Peter Reich’s *A Book Of Dreams* (1973), which Smith was urged to read by William Burroughs.
- 2 In ‘Land’, the lyric “*In the sheets... there was a man*” is about Jimi Hendrix’s death in Notting Hill in 1970.
- 3 Patti wrote ‘Redondo Beach’ about an argument with her sister. Not, as was thought at the time, about two lovers.
- 4 Patti told an interviewer recently that Johnny, the boy personified in ‘Land’, is a “pre-punk rock kid. He’s entering the world, ready to take it on. It’s a metaphor for the birth of rock’n’roll.”
- 5 ‘The Hand That Rocks The Cradle’, from The Smiths’ self-titled debut album, is a reworking of ‘Kimberly’.

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1975 ►RELEASE DATE December 13, 1975, ►LENGTH 43:10 ►PRODUCER John Cale ►STUDIO Electric Lady Studios, NYC ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 157 ►SINGLE Gloria ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Gloria (Part I: In Excelsis Deo; Part II: Gloria) ►2. Redondo Beach ►3. Birdland ►4. Free Money ►5. Kimberly ►6. Break It Up ►7. Land (Part I: Horses, Part II: Land Of A Thousand Dances, Part III: La Mer(de)) ►8. Elegie

Nevermind

11

Nirvana 1991 GEFEN



Tackling subjects such as suicide, abduction and Kurt Cobain’s disintegrating relationship with his then girlfriend, Bikini Kill drummer Tobi

Vail, Nirvana’s second album ‘Nevermind’ would sell over 30 million copies worldwide, define the grunge era and bring the band a level of fame far exceeding that enjoyed by their peers in the Seattle scene. It was an acclaim they initially played for laughs – witness Krist Novoselic deadpanning, “We sold out, kill us,” to a backstage interviewer at the 1993 MTV Awards – but which would ultimately bring about the greatest tragedy in modern rock history.

Initially, though, ‘Nevermind’ sounded like a revelation. Moving away from the

scuzziness of their debut ‘Bleach’, the Butch Vig-produced second album was more polished, had more of a focus on melody-driven pop hooks and took cues from the dynamics of the Pixies. Its success stole US guitar rock back from the hair-metal honkers and canyon cowboys of the ‘80s and invigorated a new generation of slacker thrashers, even filtering back into the Britpop scene created to kill it, via 1997’s ‘Blur’ album.

Listening back to the record today, beyond the ubiquitous ‘Smells Like Teen Spirit’ and ‘Come As You Are’ that seem embedded in modern culture, it’s the quieter, more reflective moments that have really endured. Closing track ‘Something In The Way’ is the black sheep of the LP – with

the band accompanied by a cello, it gave fans a stark and melancholy glimpse into the poverty Cobain lived through before Nirvana’s success. ‘Polly’, meanwhile, adopted a stripped-back, gentler approach to its tale of abduction. Despite the band’s later criticisms of ‘Nevermind’ as a “one-dimensional” album, these tracks showed another side to the trio beneath the more familiar distorted dissonance. ■ RD

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED May–June 1991 ►RELEASE DATE September 24, 1991 ►LENGTH 42:38 ►PRODUCER Butch Vig ►STUDIOS Sound City Studios, Van Nuys, California; Smart Studios, Madison, Wisconsin ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 7 ►SINGLES Smells Like Teen Spirit, Come As You Are, Lithium, In Bloom ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Smells Like Teen Spirit ►2. In Bloom ►3. Come As You Are ►4. Breed ►5. Lithium ►6. Polly ►7. Territorial Pissings ►8. Drain You ►9. Lounge Act ►10. Stay Away ►11. On A Plain ►12. Something In The Way

10

Definitely Maybe

Oasis 1994 CREATION



Noel Gallagher once gave a telling quote about 'Definitely Maybe's totemic centrepiece 'Live Forever', somewhat typically coming in the form of him slagging off Starsailor. "Daddy was an alcoholic?" he sniffed, referring to the Warrington band's single 'Alcoholic'. "Well, my dad used to beat the shit out of me, and I wrote a song about living forever." With that line, Noel summed up the greatest balls-out rock'n'roll album of the 1990s dead on. Yes, Oasis' debut album came from a background of grit and graft, lager-splashed hedonism and domestic battles far more troubling than any French-festival-guitar-smashing that would estrange the Gallagher brothers later in life. But rather than wallowing in it all, they soared above the squalor.

'Live Forever' captures this perfectly. There's Noel's distinctive guitar sneer – the first thing you hear, on opener 'Rock 'n' Roll Star'. There's the guttural sludge of debut single 'Supersonic' and the euphoric-slash-downbeat heart flutterer 'Slide Away'. There's the funny-sad curveball divorce anthem 'Married With Children'. It's so difficult in music to balance grace and balls, but in all these songs Oasis sounded just as majestic as they did chest-beatingly bullish.

What makes 'Definitely Maybe' so ageless is that even when Oasis were writing about the grindingly mundane, they sounded as though they were doing it on mountaintops. 'Cigarettes & Alcohol' could have come across as a tiresome pub-life ditty in lesser hands. "When it comes on top, you've got to make it happen" is the payoff, after the weary trudge of weighing up whether it's "worth the aggravation, to find yourself a job when there's nothing worth working for". It's less looking at the stars from the gutter, more snorting a line the size of a fat caterpillar off the edge of the gutter, sprouting wings from your parka and swooping upwards. ■ JF

wrote them in a matter of minutes when the band jammed 'Supersonic', then decided to turn it into a proper song and record it on the spot. Elsa, however, was real: she was a Rottweiler owned by sound engineer Dave Scott.

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The room in the cover photo was in suburban Manchester and belonged to guitarist Bonehead – he plastered it himself, being a former painter and decorator. The sleeve, designed by Brian Cannon, featured pictures of Manchester City player Rodney Marsh, Manchester United's George Best and Burt Bacharach (Noel was a big fan). The film on the TV is *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly* and the wine in the glasses was actually Ribena.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 Noel said that much of the album's tone was a reaction to Nirvana's depression-soaked grunge. "Seems to me that here was a guy who had everything, and was miserable about it," he said.
- 2 Anthony Griffiths of Liverpoolian band The Real People sings backing vocals on 'Supersonic'.
- 3 Noel Gallagher revealed the melody for the intro to 'Live Forever' was stolen from the chorus of The Rolling Stones' 'Shine A Light'.
- 4 'Slide Away' was meant to be the album's fifth single, but Noel vetoed it. "You can't have five [singles] off a debut album," he said. It got to Number Three that year as the B-side of 'Whatever'.
- 5 Oasis paid Coca-Cola \$500,000 in damages after the company sued them, saying 'Shakemaker' was too similar to a Coke-advert version of 'I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing (In Perfect Harmony)'. "Now we all drink Pepsi," quipped Noel.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

**"I know a girl called Elsa/
She's into Alka-Seltzer/
She sniffs it through a
cane on a supersonic
train" ('Supersonic')**

Think these lyrics are a touch nonsensical? You're half right – Noel

FAMOUS FANS

James Skelly: "I once went for a job as an electrician. They said, 'Do you know how to change a fuse?' I didn't, so I left. Then I heard 'Definitely Maybe' and the next minute I was in a band."

Carl Barât: "Every tune is flawless... When I heard 'Live Forever' on the radio I instantly went, 'I want to do this.' It cut through all the dross with a flaming sword and is the record that made me buy a guitar."

THE AFTERMATH

People may squabble over whether 'Suede' or 'Modern Life Is Rubbish' invented Britpop, but there's no question that 'Definitely Maybe' made it a genuine cultural phenomenon, as Oasis became a staple of the tabloids. A generation of bands was inspired by the record and one of the healthiest periods in the history of British guitar music was created around it.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** December 1993–April 1994 ► **RELEASE DATE** August 30, 1994 ► **LENGTH** 51:57 ► **PRODUCERS** Oasis, Mark Coyle, Owen Morris, David Batchelor ► **STUDIO** Sawmills Studio, Cornwall ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** Supersonic, Live Forever, Shakemaker, Cigarettes & Alcohol ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Rock 'n' Roll Star ►2. Shakemaker ►3. Live Forever ►4. Up In The Sky ►5. Columbia ►6. Supersonic ►7. Bring It On Down ►8. Cigarettes & Alcohol ►9. Digsy's Dinner ►10. Slide Away ►11. Married With Children

The Beatles

The Beatles 1968 APPLE

Looking back on the '60s, years in music seem like dog years – so much happened in such a short space of time. In 1967, The Beatles were dressed up like the contents of a packet of Fruittella for the 'Sgt Pepper's...' cover. A year later, where there had been an explosion of psychedelic colour there was now the very essence of simplicity: plain white. 'The Beatles', released in November 1968, had an unblemished white sleeve. But while all was clean on the outside, everything was increasingly muddy on the inside.

The band's beloved manager and mentor Brian Epstein died in August 1967, creating ripples that shook the Fab Four to their core. They went to India in search of spiritual enlightenment but instead found scepticism and sleaze. John heard rumours about guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi propositioning actress Mia Farrow and wrote 'Sexy Sadie' in response. Missing home, Ringo found nothing but a longing for baked beans. Back home, The Beatles were embarking on the ill-judged business venture that was Apple Corps. Their personal lives were changing too: Yoko Ono was on the scene and entering the previously insular studio environment for the first time, carving out a future rock cliché in the process.

With opposition to the Vietnam War mounting in the US, students protesting in France and London and the people of Poland rising up against their communist government, worldwide social upheaval was reflected in the band's personal upheaval. As all was chaos around them, The Beatles made their most chaotic record yet, a wildly ambitious double album that

was as brave and bare as its famous sleeve. The greatest strengths and worst weaknesses of the four members were put on display for all to see. No wonder so much of the album seems like a cry for help: witness 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun', 'I'm So Tired' and the painfully sad 'Long, Long, Long'.

But The Beatles were more furiously creative than ever. Paul gave us 'Helter Skelter', considered by many to be the first example of a heavy metal song. John tripped further into the world of psychedelia with the Grimm fairytale-like 'Cry Baby Cry' and 'Glass Onion', a Rosetta Stone for fans of moustache-era Beatles ("Here's another clue for you all – the walrus was Paul", it revealed). He went too far with the unlistenable sound collage 'Revolution 9', a track that was surely placed on side two of record two in the hope that few listeners would make it that far. Those who do are rewarded with Ringo's lovely closer 'Good Night'.

At the same time, George was coming of age as a songwriter, 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' delivering impeccably on its title and the strange, baroque 'Piggies' expressing disdain at corporate greed. Politics and anti-establishment thinking were all over the album, most notably on 'Revolution 1', an acoustic version of the track that was smothered in fuzz guitar for its release on the B-side of 'Hey Jude', which was written during sessions for 'The Beatles' but released separately. Ringo had a turn at writing solo for the first time too, delivering the plodding 'Don't Pass Me By', unsurprisingly one of the sprawling album's inevitable lulls. Across 30 tracks, there

The BEATLES

was barely a style that wasn't covered, be it music-hall whimsy ('Martha My Dear'), folk (McCartney's gorgeous 'Blackbird'), blues ('Yer Blues') or surf rock (the Beach Boys pastiche 'Back In The USSR').

'The White Album' remains The Beatles' dark continent, vast enough to retain some mystery but varied enough to still surprise. The band rarely sounded properly happy again – 'Let It Be' and 'Abbey Road' providing an uneasy swansong. 'The Beatles' proved that the group were just as brilliant while unravelling as they were when everything was fab. ■ DS

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

An attempt by designer Richard Hamilton to emulate the emerging conceptual art movement, the plain white sleeve was the only Beatles album not to feature pictures of the band on the front. Only their name was embossed on the cover, with a serial number intended to give the impression of "the ironic situation of a numbered edition of something like five million copies".

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** May 30–October 14, 1968 ► **RELEASE DATE** November 22, 1968 ► **LENGTH** 93:35 ► **PRODUCERS** George Martin, Chris Thomas ► **STUDIOS** Abbey Road Studios; Trident Studios ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ► **SINGLES** None ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Back In The USSR ►2. Dear Prudence ►3. Glass Onion ►4. Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da ►5. Wild Honey Pie ►6. The Continuing Story Of Bungalow Bill ►7. While My Guitar Gently Weeps ►8. Happiness Is A Warm Gun ►9. Martha My Dear ►10. I'm So Tired ►11. Blackbird ►12. Piggies ►13. Rocky Raccoon ►14. Don't Pass Me By ►15. Why Don't We Do It In The Road? ►16. I Will ►17. Julia ►18. Birthday ►19. Yer Blues ►20. Mother Nature's Son ►21. Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey ►22. Sexy Sadie ►23. Helter Skelter ►24. Long Long Long ►25. Revolution 1 ►26. Honey Pie ►27. Savoy Truffle ►28. Cry Baby Cry ►29. Revolution 9 ►30. Good Night

8

Doolittle

Pixies 1989 4AD

It looked like a dusty Book Of Demons you might pull from under blood-rusted blades and skin masks in the torture dungeon of some rural Deep South serial killer. The symbolic numbers of God and Beast, the mystical geometry, the monkey with a halo, the hidden notes reading 'Gouge Away', 'There Goes My Gun', 'I Bleed', 'Wave Of Mutilation', 'Debaser'. Open it up and its pages were full of incantations about Biblical heroes and whores, visions of ecological apocalypse, ritually sliced eyeballs and cries of "THE DEVIL IS SIX!" Following the visceral, quiet/LOUD, semi-Latino collegiate lusts of 1988's 'Surfer Rosa', 'Doolittle' saw Pixies perfect their slasher-pop aesthetic and create an artefact that drew you into their clutches with the fatalistic fascination of horror-flick teenagers checking out the thumps in the basement.

Far more evil than any schlocky death-metal gorefest, 'Doolittle' was proof the devil clearly hadn't yet given all his best tunes to Stock, Aitken & Waterman. 'Monkey Gone To Heaven' cooed and enticed you towards its Satan-summoning bridge. 'Here Comes Your Man' was a surf-pop gateway to the gory delights of 'Wave Of Mutilation', 'Gouge Away' and 'Tame', a song as exhilarating as a werewolf attack. 'Debaser' got every student indie disco singing along to amateur eye surgery; 'Hey' had lovers smooching to broken babies and howling hookers.

Alongside 'Disintegration', 'Violator' and 'Psychocandy' – but more intense, consuming and seditiously melodic than any of them – 'Doolittle' set the tone for alternative rock as a dangerous, shadowy cult, a lifestyle to offer yourself as helpless sacrifice to. Black Francis would soon turn his attention from the underworld to the stars, but 'Doolittle' would remain dark pop's defining graven image. ■ MB



Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*, which features a woman's eye being cut with a razorblade.

"Cease to resist, giving my goodbye/Drive my car into the ocean" ('Wave Of Mutilation')

Referencing a phrase penned by Charles Manson for his song 'Cease To Exist', Francis wove a tale of suicidal Japanese businessmen driving their families into the sea to escape company crashes.

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Designed by Vaughan Oliver, responsible for much of 4AD's cover art, the imagery was closely tied to the album's lyrics.

The cover reflects the spiritual references of 'Monkey Gone To Heaven', while inner sleeve shots of a spoonful of hair represent the heroin in 'Gouge Away', and a bell with teeth was an interpretation of 'I Bleed'.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"I thought people were going to think I was some kind of anti-Catholic or that I'd been raised Catholic and was trying to get into this Catholic naughty-boy stuff. A monkey with a halo, calling it 'Whore', that would bring all kinds of shit that wouldn't be true. So I said I'd change the title." **Black Francis**

THE AFTERMATH

The tensions between Francis and bassist Kim Deal that emerged during the recording of 'Doolittle' would lead to a tense tour entitled *Fuck Or Fight*, and Francis limiting Deal's input into Pixies' two subsequent albums. The fracture would cause the band's initial split in 1993.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** October 31–November 23, 1988 ► **RELEASE DATE** April 18, 1989 ► **LENGTH** 38:38 ► **PRODUCER** Gil Norton ► **STUDIOS** Downtown Recorders, Boston; Carriage House Studios, Connecticut ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 8 ► **SINGLES** Monkey Gone To Heaven; Here Comes Your Man ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Debaser ► 2. Tame ► 3. Wave Of Mutilation ► 4. I Bleed ► 5. Here Comes Your Man ► 6. Dead ► 7. Monkey Gone To Heaven ► 8. Mr Grieves ► 9. Crackity Jones ► 10. La La Love You ► 11. No. 13 Baby ► 12. There Goes My Gun ► 13. Hey ► 14. Silver ► 15. Gouge Away

FIVE FACTS

- 1 Black Francis initially planned to call 'Doolittle' 'Whore', in reference to the Whore of Babylon. Producer Gil Norton quickly realised that the frontman "doesn't like doing anything twice".
- 2 Frustrated at Norton suggesting Pixies add extra verses to their songs, Francis took him to a record shop and bought a Buddy Holly best-of to point out that most songs were two minutes long.
- 3 'Crackity Jones' was based on Black Francis' "weird psycho gay roommate" on a Puerto Rican student exchange trip.
- 4 Francis insisted that drummer Dave Lovering sang 'La La Love You' in order to make it "like a Ringo thing".

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"If man is five/Then the devil is six/And if the devil is six/Then God is seven" ('Monkey Gone To Heaven')

Francis picked up the numerical attributions to earthly and spiritual entities as a teenage member of the evangelical Assemblies Of God church.

"Slicing up eyeballs/A-hahaha!" ('Debaser')

This refers to an early scene in Luis

7

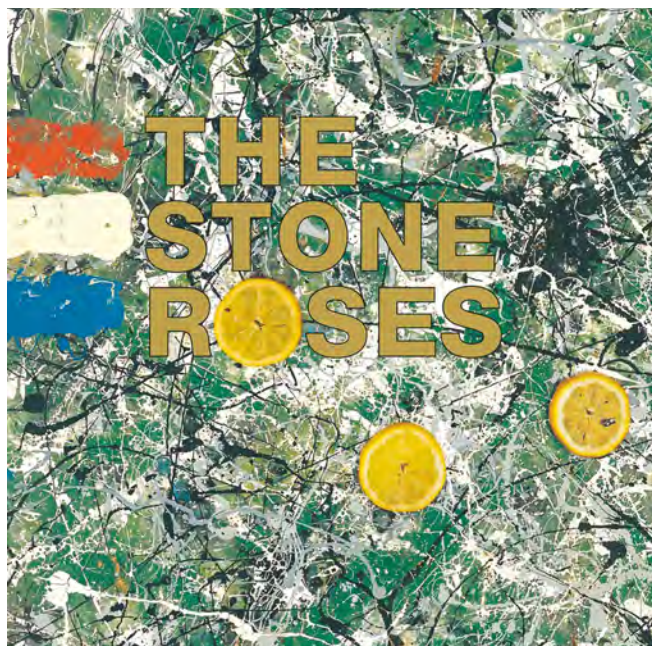
The Stone Roses

The Stone Roses 1989 SILVERTONE

With Manchester moving out of the shadow of indie titans like The Smiths and weaving through The Hacienda's drug-driven rave culture, The Stone Roses were a band for all seasons, pulling influences from dance music, psychedelia, indie and rock and fusing them into one effortless whole. Here was an album that managed to encapsulate the baggy Madchester scene of the time, and one that would continue to influence bands – from Oasis to Jagwar Ma to Peace – to this day.

From the opening hypnotic slow-build of 'I Wanna Be Adored' – John Squire's shimmering, Johnny Marr-esque guitar line breaking through before giving way to Ian Brown's devilish opening lines "*I don't have to sell my soul/He's already in me*" – 'The Stone Roses' is a masterpiece in apparent simplicity. Sure, there are more genres and influences colliding throughout the record's 11 tracks than you can moodily shake a tambourine at. Sure, the likes of 'Bye Bye Badman' and Squire's abstract-expressionist cover art show an intrinsic political stance that belies the initial laddish swagger. And sure, there's some actually pretty weird sonic shit going on – how many records have you heard lately with an entirely backwards track on them? But when you listen to 'The Stone Roses', that's not what you hear. When you listen to 'The Stone Roses', you just hear tunes. Tune after massive tune after monumental tune.

It may have taken a while for the world to really wise up to the genius of 'The Stone Roses' (it initially entered the UK album chart at Number 32), and the band may never have matched their first effort since, but there's a very good reason why 75,000 people flocked to Heaton Park for the band's first reunion shows, raving about the gig of their lives and acting like the Second Coming was finally upon them. It was because The Stone Roses' debut album is 49 minutes, two seconds of rare, unrepeatable magic, the sort of record that unites generations. The past was theirs... ■ LW



"Stone me, why can't you see/You're a no-one nowhere washed-up baby who'd look better dead" ('I Am The Resurrection')

According to Squire, '...Resurrection' is "a murderous attack on one individual. I don't want to tell who it is. It's someone both Ian and I know."

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Influenced by Jackson Pollock, the artwork – painted by guitarist John Squire – was a reference to the May 1968 Paris riots. "Ian had met this Frenchman when he was hitching around Europe. This bloke had been in the riots, and he told Ian how lemons had been used as an antidote to tear gas," explained Squire.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The only abandoned track from 'The Stone Roses' sessions was 'Where Angels Play', which turned up on the 1999 10th anniversary release.
- 2 'I Am The Resurrection' was, according to Reni, based on Mani playing Paul McCartney's 'Taxman' riff backwards.
- 3 When the band signed their record deal, they told their label Silvertone they'd written "30 or 40" songs for 'The Stone Roses'. They actually had "about eight".
- 4 The false ending on closing track 'I Am The Resurrection' was the product of a particularly successful bit of group improvisation.
- 5 During the sessions for the album, Page Three model and briefly successful pop star Sam Fox used to hang out in the studio.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Through the early morning sun/I can see her, here she comes/She bangs the drums" ('She Bangs The Drums')

John Squire: "[It's] about those brief moments when everything comes together. Like staying up 'til dawn and watching the sun rise with somebody you love."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Oh, yeah. I knew it was great when we were making it. I mean, we'd been playing the album for three or four years before we even recorded it, and we knew something big would happen with it." **Ian Brown**

THE AFTERMATH

Despite not initially landing with the same critical and commercial success we associate with it now, 'The Stone Roses' slowly gathered plaudits until the band's infamous 1990 Spike Island gig saw them cemented as one of Britain's most talked-about groups. An acrimonious split with Silvertone and another five years later, the quartet released their less-than-heralded follow-up 'Second Coming' before splitting in 1996. The Roses' real second coming would take place 15 years later.

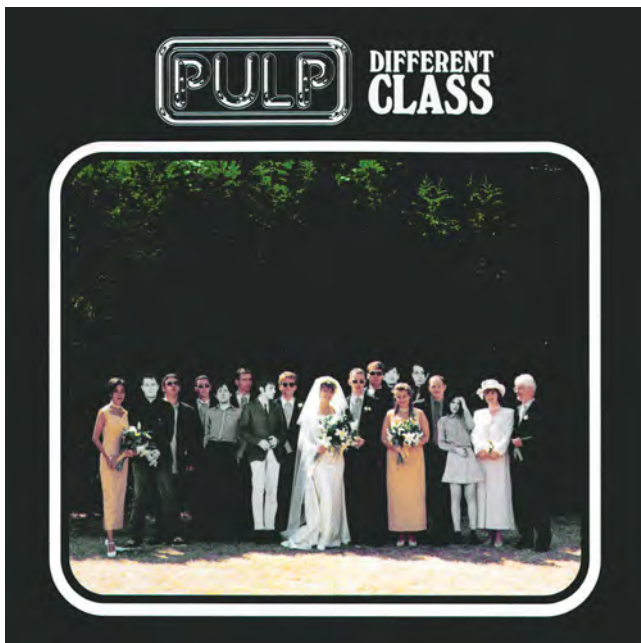
► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** June 1988–February 1989 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 1, 1989 ► **LENGTH** 49:02 ► **PRODUCER** John Leckie ► **STUDIOS** Battery & Konk, London; Rockfield Studios, Wales; RAK Studios, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 5 ► **SINGLES** She Bangs The Drums, I Wanna Be Adored, Made Of Stone, Waterfall, I Am The Resurrection ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. I Wanna Be Adored ► 2. She Bangs The Drums ► 3. Waterfall ► 4. Don't Stop ► 5. Bye Bye Badman ► 6. Elizabeth My Dear ► 7. (Song For My) Sugar Spun Sister ► 8. Made Of Stone ► 9. Shoot You Down ► 10. This Is The One ► 11. I Am The Resurrection

6

Different Class

Pulp 1995 ISLAND



What is it that makes 'Different Class' a cut above? On one level it's a brilliant pop record, made by a band at the peak of their powers and full of songs custom-built for the indie disco. On another it's full of Jarvis Cocker's idiosyncratic takes on those classic songwriter's preoccupations of fancying people and taking lots of lovely drugs. It's also much more than that. 'Different Class' is the sound of Pulp seizing the mechanisms of popular music to smuggle some deeply subversive truths into our record players and on to the radio. It is art as cultural resistance.

The punning title set up the theme that ran through the album like a red cord. As Jarvis put it on 'I Spy', this was a record that understood the British class system as "a case of *haves against haven'ts*". Nowhere was this more apparent than on the album's biggest hit. 'Common People' is still as astonishing today as it always has been and was the clear and undisputed choice when *NME* writers voted for Britpop's best single earlier this year. This is all the more remarkable given what an unconventional song it actually was by Britpop's own atavistic standards. Rather than a traditional verse-chorus-verse, this was an anthem built around a two-chord drone with an unstoppable motorik momentum. Over

this, Jarvis' delivery of his monologue built and built in intensity, from charming and casually dropped lines like "I'll see what I can do" to the raw anger with which he declaimed: "You will never understand how it feels to live your life with no meaning or control".

While 'Common People' set out social division in broad terms, 'I Spy' saw Pulp's class warfare turn darkly personal. The song's protagonist set about destroying the cosy lives of a privileged

couple through sexual revenge: fucking his nemesis' wife while smoking his fags and drinking his brandy.

'Mis-Shapes', meanwhile, was Pulp's clarion call to the outsiders who wanted to cast off the boorishness of some of their Britpop peers and instead take pride in being well-read. It was a song that saw the potential of education to provide an escape route from the dead-end jobs many felt fated to, with a promise to use "the one thing we've got more of – that's our minds". It was a revenge fantasy against those who would seek to bully or drag down anyone daring to be different.

Even 'Sorted For E's And Wizz' – on the surface a celebration of getting totally fucking amphetised at some illegal party in a field – can also be read as a paean to rave culture's promise to create a new community where men and women would be judged not by the brand of their trainers but by their shared dance moves. In another subversive move, the single sleeve featured 'fold your own speed wrap' instructions, earning the band a 'BAN THIS SICK STUNT' front-page splash from *The Daily Mirror*.

There was lots more sex too, of course, to go with the drugs, rock'n'roll and social

commentary. Tracks like 'Underwear' and 'Pencil Skirt' were Jarvis at his most lascivious. On the latter his priapic lust had gotten so bad he'd "kissed your mother twice and now [he was] working on your dad". Meanwhile, 'Live Bed Show' used a £10 bed to chronicle the end of a relationship, both sexually and otherwise.

It wasn't all carnal urges though; there was romance on 'Something Changed' and even, nostalgically, on 'Disco 2000'. There was

a certain romance about Pulp's own story too. After years spent finding their sound and honing their craft, 'Different Class' was the moment they not only broke into popular culture, but arrived with something to say as well. 'Different Class' was born out of years of living on the dole and struggling to get by. It spoke about both harsh realities and the opportunities for escape.

That's what makes 'Different Class' a social manifesto as much as a pop album. In a Britain in which David Cameron's government is using austerity to wage a systematic attack on the poor and the vulnerable, that makes it just as meaningful today as it was the day it was released. Different class indeed. ■ **KEGP**

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Original pressings of 'Different Class' came with three double-sided cards enclosed in the CD case, which could be arranged to feature whichever of the six potential covers the listener wanted. Thereafter, the wedding photo was used as the official album cover. It was taken at the marriage of Sharon and Dominic at St Barnaby's Church in East Molesey in August 1995.

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **RECORDED** 1994–1995 ▶ **RELEASE DATE** October 30, 1995
 ▶ **LENGTH** 52:50 ▶ **PRODUCER** Chris Thomas ▶ **STUDIO** The Town House, London ▶ **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1 ▶ **SINGLES** Common People, Mis-Shapes/Sorted For E's & Wizz, Disco 2000, Something Changed ▶ **TRACKLISTING** ▶ 1. Mis-Shapes ▶ 2. Pencil Skirt ▶ 3. Common People ▶ 4. I Spy ▶ 5. Disco 2000 ▶ 6. Live Bed Show ▶ 7. Something Changed ▶ 8. Sorted For E's & Wizz ▶ 9. F.E.E.L.I.N.G.C.A.L.L.E.D.L.O.V.E. ▶ 10. Underwear ▶ 11. Monday Morning ▶ 12. Bar Italia

The Velvet Underground & Nico

The Velvet Underground 1966 VERVE

The Velvet Underground & Nico has been worn smooth by the years. Nowadays, it is just the baptismal font of hipness. Black scowls. A record whose sweetness and nullity come equally shrinkwrapped by our expectations. It's hard to imagine how progressive and transgressive it was to 1967's ears. It's hard to see it as avant garde when it's become written into the DNA of everything we see around us. If you hate it and everything it stands for, then you hate all new-wave music. You hate post-punk, and logically speaking, you can't be digging anything Bowie did after 1974. What The Beatles were to the '60s and rock, this was to the '70s and punk. It's impossible to imagine a world without it, because so much of what happened afterwards was a response to the climate it established.

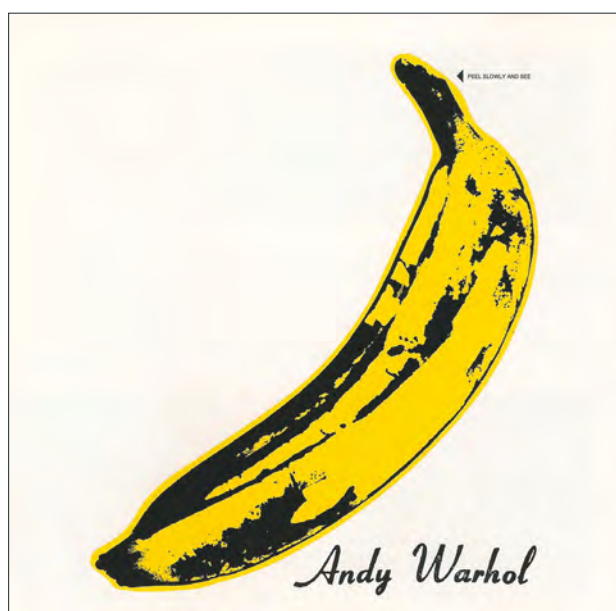
It took a man of Andy Warhol's advanced cultural antennae to see the Velvets for what they were – an art project masquerading as a rock band – and to push those talents to their logical conclusion. It was Warhol who ended up plucking them from obscurity and managing the band. He who curated the Exploding Plastic Inevitable art happenings at which they stretched out the template. He who ordered them to work with Nico: the chanteuse, model and muse who would take them even further away from garage rock and towards the avant garde. And yes, he who made them a nice yellow banana to feature on the cover. Warhol was interested in what would happen if rock'n'roll was

no longer rock'n'roll, and so were the Velvets.

Lou Reed's tales of beat-up bohemians arrived with a literary sophistication that crushed most of his contemporaries, and a directness that plugged him into the coming world. This, after all, was an album with a song that didn't piss about with coy metaphors about 'golden brown' or 'horse', but told you in one word that it was about the use and abuse of heroin. And then, over seven minutes, evoked a complex and unsettlingly nuanced view of the hopes and fears of an addict, the musical analogue of William Burroughs' *Junkie*.

Musically, John Cale's background in minimalist composition and the Fluxus art movement was taking him way beyond the pop ditties of 1966, experimenting with viola drones, feedback, alternate tunings and slippery, twisting rhythms. Add in Mo Tucker's primitive beats, which somehow seemed to mirror Lou's stilted, stop-start delivery style, and Sterling Morrison's, uh, competent guitar playing, and what you had was the sound of rock'n'roll ceasing to roll. Where it wasn't stately and classical, it was jumpy: the stab-stab-stab downward strokes that would become familiar through punk, but at the time often just disorientated their audience.

Like the pop art of its producer, 'The Velvet Underground & Nico' is not afraid to dish out disorienting contrasts. The gulf that exists between the fuzz fade-out of 'European Son' and the music-box gurgle of opener 'Sunday Morning' still seems dislocating. It's difficult to get a fix on it. You've got straight-up-'n'-down gang-chant garage pop like 'Run Run Run', you've got the sordid baroque grandeur of 'Venus In



Furs', the sad intimacy of the make-up mirror in 'All Tomorrow's Parties'. It took you from shitting yourself while waiting for smack on the baddest street corners of the Bronx, to the vampiest parties of the Warhol set, awash with pop-flavoured prescription pills. It's a swagger-in-your-step record that may not have made 'everyone who ever heard it back then go out and form a band', as the cliché goes, but certainly made a lot of them walk taller and maintain eye contact longer. It's both the ultimate Sunday morning record and a great Saturday night record, because it is tough, sophisticated and self-aware. And like black T-shirts or shades, these are poses you can put on anytime, anywhere. ■ GH

FIVE FACTS

1 Recording costs for the album are estimated at between \$1,500 and \$3,000.

2 Though Andy Warhol is credited as producer, his input was virtually nil beyond telling the band, "That's fantastic!"

3 'Venus In Furs' is a retelling of the 19th-century novel of the same name – the 50 *Shades Of Grey* of its day.

4 'All Tomorrow's Parties' and 'Venus In Furs' used a guitar tuning Reed dubbed *The Ostrich*, with every string tuned to the same note.

5 On early copies of the album you could peel off the banana skin ("slowly") to reveal a flesh-coloured banana inside.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** April–November 1966 ► **RELEASE DATE** March 12, 1967

► **LENGTH** 48:51 ► **PRODUCERS** Andy Warhol, Tom Wilson ► **STUDIOS**

Scepter Studios, New York City; TTG Studios, Hollywood, California;

Mayfair Studios, NYC ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** n/a

► **SINGLES** All Tomorrow's Parties, Sunday Morning ► **TRACKLISTING**

► 1. Sunday Morning ► 2. I'm Waiting For The Man ► 3. Femme Fatale

► 4. Venus In Furs ► 5. Run Run Run ► 6. All Tomorrow's Parties

► 7. Heroin ► 8. There She Goes Again ► 9. I'll Be Your Mirror

► 10. The Black Angel's Death Song ► 11. European Son

4

Is This It

The Strokes 2001 ROUGH TRADE

Albert Hammond Jr:

Basically, that was just the setlist we had been playing, so it was comfortable, it was underneath our fingers and the feeling was one of extreme excitement. It felt like it was going to work. There was something about the time; I felt like it would succeed to the point where we would be able to make another record. I felt like we were a really cool band playing really cool songs, like we were awesome. I still do, and so I just felt like we were in a gang.

"We recorded in the basement underneath the deli on Avenue A and 2nd Street. It was called Transporterraum. We would make mixes and run across the street to our bar called 2A and play them on the stereo there just to hear what it would sound like. You couldn't even hear us through my laughing through takes.

"Gordon [Raphael, producer] was the perfect person, because usually you're so used to it being like 'Oh, you can't do that' or 'You shouldn't do that' or 'Don't do it like that, that's not how people do it.' But we just did it and it sounded right, and we listen back to it now and it sounds like chaotic youth and I feel like that's what it was supposed to capture.

"It really felt like a change. We felt alone as a band. What we were doing... there was no-one else. We would go play in places and there was, like, these bands around us like 'Aha-ha'. You know? There was no community. But now, being in a band with a record that people love so much... that will stick with me forever."

FIVE FACTS

1 'New York City Cops' was removed from the US version of the album a few months after its release, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, and replaced by 'When It Started'. "The band [...] feels that, after witnessing the valiant response of the NYPD during last week's tragedy, that timing was wrong to release it in these sensitive times," read a statement at the time.



sordid meaning, as Casablancas croons about oral sex.

"Soma is what they would take when/Hard times opened their eyes" ('Soma')

Influenced by Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and its featured drug of choice, soma, the frontman narrates tales of dependency, from using as a coping method to trying to fit in with the cool crowd.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"A truly great statement of intent, one of the all-too-infrequent calls to arms that guitar music can provide, one of the best and most characterful debut albums of the past 20 years." **10/10**
John Robinson, NME,
July 28, 2001

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Undoubtedly the best debut of modern times, The Strokes' world of style and sex in New York City is brought to life via ramshackle riffs, drawled monosyllables and an effortless cool that's got scuzzy allure stamped all over it.

THE AFTERMATH

Despite their label's reservations, 'Is This It' was released unaltered in Britain and to great critical acclaim, topping album of the year lists (including *NME*'s) and going gold in the UK within months of release. Ending a period of late-'90s rock stagnation, The Strokes inspired a wave of new British bands such as The Libertines, and the record went on to be voted *NME* writers' album of the decade in December 2009.

2 Although the album was recorded with Gordon Raphael, the band first went into the studio with Pixies producer Gil Norton. But the sessions were soon halted, as the band dubbed the recordings "too pretentious".

3 The band hired guitar teacher JP Bowersock to give Julian Casablancas and Nick Valensi guitar lessons, and the musician also helped perfect some of the album's solos.

4 Although inspired by the likes of The Velvet Underground and Guided By Voices, Casablancas stated that he wanted The Strokes' debut to sound like "a band from the past that took a time trip to the future to make their record".

5 According to Raphael, when the band's A&R man, Steve Ralbovsky, heard the album for the first time he declared that it wouldn't sell and that the group would damage their career by releasing it.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Lisa says take time for me/Dropping him down to his knees/Chest down" ('Alone, Together')

The notion of being 'alone, together' pops up a few times on the album, possibly due in part to the sometimes solitary nature of a big city. Here, though, it takes on a more

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** March–April 2001 ► **RELEASE DATE** July 30, 2001
► **LENGTH** 36:28 ► **PRODUCER** Gordon Raphael ► **STUDIO** Transporterraum, NYC ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 2
► **SINGLES** The Modern Age, Hard To Explain, Last Nite, Someday
► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Is This It ► 2. The Modern Age ► 3. Soma
► 4. Barely Legal ► 5. Someday ► 6. Alone, Together ► 7. Last Nite
► 8. Hard To Explain ► 9. New York City Cops ► 10. Trying Your Luck
► 11. Take It Or Leave It

3

Hunky Dory

David Bowie 1971 RCA

If the message of 'Changes' was that nothing lasts forever, it's ironic that it has gone on to become one of Bowie's most enduring songs, and 'Hunky Dory' his most time-tested album. From the saloon-piano shimmy of 'Kooks' to the glorious, 'My Way'-apeing 'Life on Mars?', 'Hunky Dory' saw him rein in the cosmic histrionics of 1969's 'Space Oddity' in favour of something a little closer to Earth. Written in part during his first trip to America, travelling its Pacific Ocean coastline from Washington to California by bus, 'Hunky Dory' is the sound of a songwriter having his horizons blown wide open. "That was the first time a real outside situation affected me so 100 per cent that it changed my way of writing and the way I look at things," Bowie remembered in 1999. "The whole album reflected my newfound enthusiasm for this new continent that had been opened up to me."

Among the things that opened up to Bowie on the tour was American counterculture and its exciting new wave of cultural frontiersmen, inspiring not only the record's powerful one-two of 'Andy Warhol' and 'Song for Bob Dylan' but also 'Queen Bitch', his thrilling garage-rock tribute to New Yorkers The Velvet Underground. But it's Bowie, focused and intense, who rightly takes centre stage. "Got to make way for the homo superior", he sings on 'Oh! You Pretty Things' – echoing Nietzsche's philosophy of the *Übermensch* – under jaunty baroque-pop piano melodies and huge harmonies. There's no doubting how important 'Hunky Dory' was in laying the foundations for that next phase in Bowie's career. But it's the record's standing as a dazzling collection of immaculately crafted songs that we celebrate here – to this day it remains a uniquely stirring listen. Forget the glitter, forget the Spiders, forget the weird eyes; it was Bowie's incredible songwriting gifts on 'Hunky Dory' that convinced us he was beamed from the stars. ■ AH



"He's in the bestselling show/ Is There Life On Mars?" ('Life On Mars?')

Bowie has claimed the song is about a "young girl's reaction to the media", as she's given the impression there's a celebrity paradise out there somewhere that she can't access.

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Illustrator Terry Pastor designed the cover, based on a black-and-white photograph taken by Brian Ward during one of Bowie's cigarette breaks. Pastor then applied colour using photo-dyes with a DeVilbiss Super 93 airbrush.

FAMOUS FAN

Guy Garvey, Elbow: "When I got my first ghetto blaster, I found a tape of

'Hunky Dory' in my sister's room and played it to death. I was only 10. I listened to it again when I was 17 or 18 and I was like, 'Fucking hell.' I knew all the words and tunes but I didn't have any clue how poignant and revolutionary it was."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"'Hunky Dory' gave me a fabulous groundswell. I guess it provided me, for the first time in my life, with an actual audience. That hadn't happened to me before." **David Bowie**

THE AFTERMATH

'Hunky Dory' was a major confidence booster for Bowie. It was received well enough for him to dare tackle his next big concept, about an alien rock superstar. It was only after the success of '...Ziggy Stardust...', though, that a re-released 'Hunky Dory' would reach Number Three in the UK charts.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 When he started recording 'Hunky Dory', Bowie was without a record contract; it was only on hearing the early tapes that RCA picked him up.
- 2 Bowie's backing band was already The Spiders From Mars; they were just uncredited as such.
- 3 The album's production credit reads: "Ken Scott (assisted by the actor)". The actor in question was Bowie, who'd taken on the persona for the album sessions.
- 4 'Oh! You Pretty Things' is considered a direct precursor of 'Starman'.
- 5 The piano part on 'Life On Mars?' is played by none other than Rick Wakeman of 'King Arthur on Ice' prog-rock infamy.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Lay me place and bake me pie/I'm starving for me gravy..." ('The Bewlay Brothers')

Having previously claimed the lyrics to 'The Bewlay Brothers' "make absolutely no sense" to give the American market something to read things into, Bowie later stated: "I wouldn't know how to interpret the lyric of this song other than suggesting that there are layers of ghosts within it. It's a palimpsest, then."

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** April 1971 ► **RELEASE DATE** December 17, 1971
 ► **LENGTH** 39:04 ► **PRODUCER** Ken Scott ► **STUDIO** Trident Studios, London ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 3 ► **SINGLES** Changes, Life On Mars? ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Changes ►2. Oh! You Pretty Things ►3. Eight Line Poem ►4. Life On Mars? ►5. Kooks ►6. Quicksand ►7. Fill Your Heart ►8. Andy Warhol ►9. Song For Bob Dylan ►10. Queen Bitch ►11. The Bewlay Brothers

2

Revolver

The Beatles 1966 PARLOPHONE

T

hey named it because it revolves on a turntable, but 'Revolver' was a pistol to the head of rock music, demanding that it evolve or die. Until 1966,

The Beatles had been perfecting music as it already existed: beat pop, '50s rock'n'roll and folk rock. But they hit EMI Studios that April intent on forging ahead. They took Harrison's sitar, a clavichord, a tamboura, an eight-piece chamber orchestra and tape loops stretching out of the studio door. They took Peter Fonda's babblings, political ire, drug metaphors and some bollocks about submarines. And with it all they created the best album of rock's Phase One.

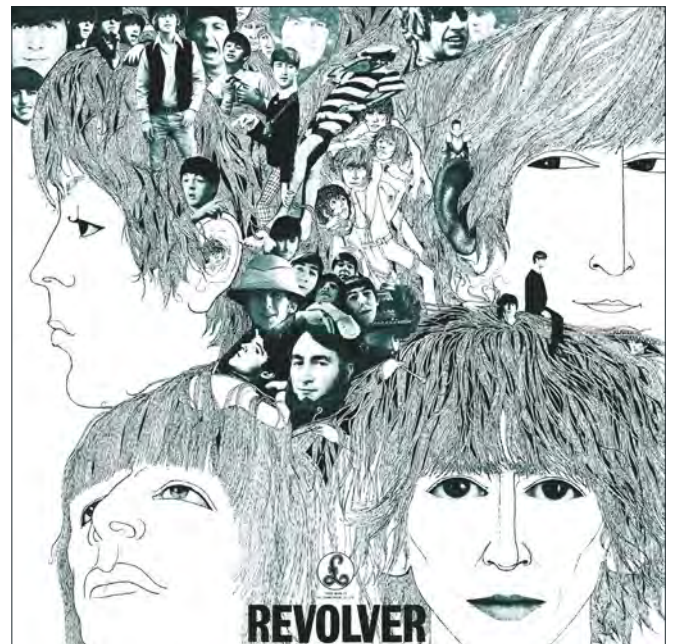
Every one of the record's 35 minutes brought a fresh revelation. The opening bars of 'Taxman' bit like a false widow, not only pre-empting new wave by 20 years but utterly

savaging the pop rulebook and killing off the early '60s. Pop music no longer had to be about girls, it could tackle social and political concerns with vitriol harnessed in discordant proto-punk guitar and rebellion embodied in funk bass. 'Eleanor Rigby' – the only Beatles song that none of The Beatles play on – expanded guitar pop's remit to embrace dramatic chamber music, a classical form in

Harrison was busy revolutionising studio techniques by recording his solo backwards. That's more stylistic innovation than any other band had achieved in their lifespan. And we're only 10 minutes in.

Paul's innovations on 'Revolver' were ostensibly melodic. To The Beatles' bubbling stew he added music-hall chirpiness ('Good Day Sunshine'), bold instrumentation ('For No One') and swooning romance ('Here, There And Everywhere') that would provide the colour and wit of the psychedelic era. Plus, he created arguably his greatest pop moment by embracing Motown on his ode to Sweet Mary Jane, 'Got To Get You Into My Life'. But Lennon's shift was in tone. 'Revolver' captured John at his imaginative peak, before the acid turned him into a surrealist and the heroin turned him angry. Drugs were opening his mind and darkening his mood, hence the morbid bent of 'She Said, She Said' – the line *"I know what it's like to be dead"* lifted from an LSD conversation with Peter Fonda in LA – and the pusherman slang of 'Dr Robert'. He was still capable of knocking irrepressible pop genius off the wrist in two minutes ('And Your Bird Can Sing') but his ambitions lay in recreating the mystical enlightenment of Timothy Leary and The Tibetan Book Of The Dead.

Which brings us to 'Tomorrow Never Knows', the anti-'Yellow Submarine'. If Ringo's kindergarten classic would lend the late '60s its cartoonish aura, 'Tomorrow...' blew its mind. Back then they'd never heard anything like these Arabian swirls, pummelling beats, bird caws and words of druggy epiphany, but we'd hear plenty of it later. Inspired by musique concrète and Eastern drones, they'd pasted together a series of tape loops containing found sounds and repeating



orchestral phrases, trailed them down the corridor, held them taut against the machine with pencils, shifted the volumes in and out on the mixing desk as they went and – live, and in one take – invented dance music.

By making 'Revolver' look so easy (let's not forget that they left off 'Paperback Writer'), The Beatles condemned all subsequent rock to decades of underachievement. It seems inconceivable that, in more than 40 years of ceaseless creativity, only one other album has managed to match the boundary-pushing brilliance of a 35-minute record that's got 'Yellow Submarine' on it. 'Revolver' is the fountainhead, and we're still drinking deep. ■ MB

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED April 6–June 21, 1966 ►RELEASE DATE August 5, 1966 ►LENGTH 35:01 ►PRODUCER George Martin ►STUDIO EMI Studios, London ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 1 ►SINGLES Yellow Submarine/Eleanor Rigby ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Taxman ►2. Eleanor Rigby ►3. I'm Only Sleeping ►4. Love You To ►5. Here, There And Everywhere ►6. Yellow Submarine ►7. She Said, She Said ►8. Good Day Sunshine ►9. And Your Bird Can Sing ►10. For No One ►11. Dr Robert ►12. I Want To Tell You ►13. Got To Get You Into My Life ►14. Tomorrow Never Knows

FAMOUS FAN



Regina Spektor:

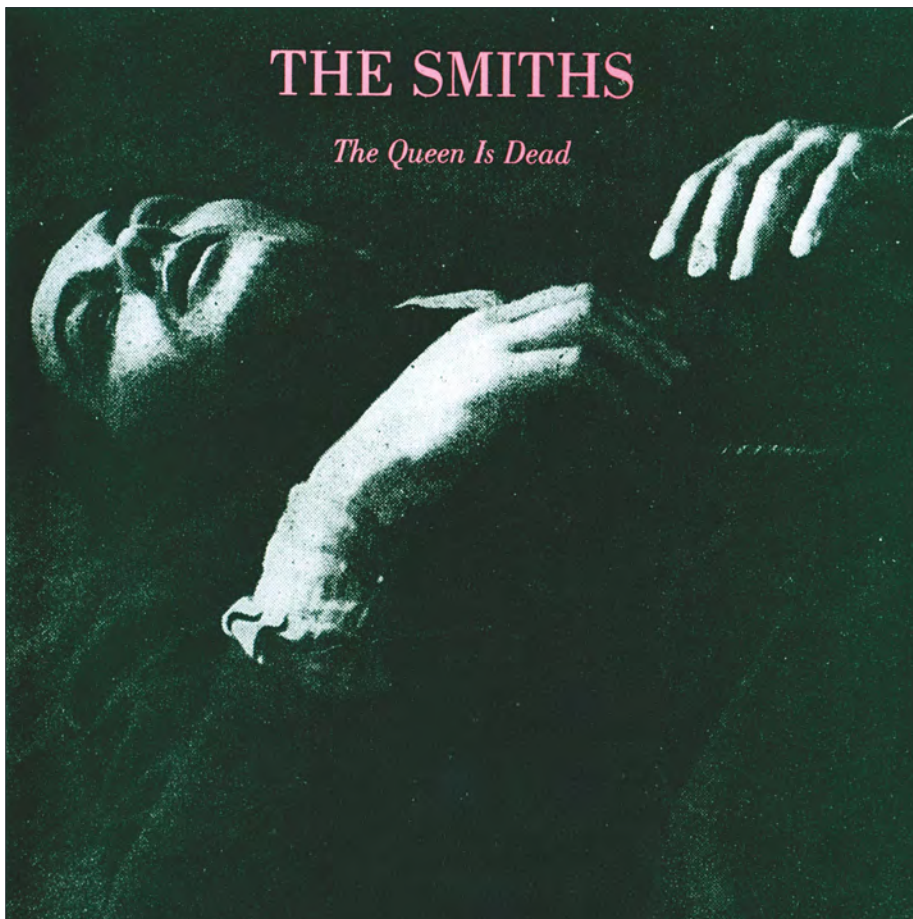
"From song to song it's so different, but every place it goes to feels right. I love everything about it. 'Eleanor Rigby' is probably my favourite – it has such a spirit to it with the strings; it's both sad and happy at the same time. It's a really passionate song. It was one of the rare Western music records that we had in the house."

an age awash with crooners commanding orchestras. 'Love You To' found George indulging his Eastern leanings with abandon, capturing the vitality of the Indian bandishes he was entranced by and, as the first pop song to use non-Western forms, opening the door for the Western assimilation of world music. Lennon's 'I'm Only Sleeping' reclined further into the tone of 'Girl' from 'Rubber Soul' and invented slacker-pop, even while

1

The Queen Is Dead

The Smiths 1986 ROUGH TRADE



The Queen Is Dead' opens with a snippet of 1920s comedian Cicely Courtneidge singing 'Take Me Back To Dear Old Blighty', a 1916 ditty about four Tommies longing to return to the motherland from the trenches of war-torn France. Forty-three seconds in, Morrissey grants them their wish, but the Blighty they are returned to is a hell of a different sort: *"Farewell to this land's cheerless marshes, hemmed in like a boar between arches/Her very lowness with her head in a sling/I'm truly sorry, but it sounds like a wonderful thing"*.

As apologies go, it doesn't exactly resonate with sincerity: he sounds barely able to suppress his laughter. This is England, he titters, where the Prince of Wales poses in drag on the cover of *The Daily Mail*, where palace security can be breached with *"a sponge and a rusty spanner"* and where civilisation is collapsing under the weight of the ruling classes' frivolity. Almost 10 years earlier, the Sex Pistols had addressed a similar undercurrent of bleakness and frustration with 'God Save The Queen'; then, to paraphrase the psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Szasz, the only sane response to an insane society had been indignation. In 1986, with Thatcher entrenched and the Left in tatters, it was irreverence. As Morrissey told *NME* on its release, "The whole thing seems like a joke. A hideous joke." He took it upon himself to make sure we were all laughing at it.

Summing up entire albums in a single word is a fool's errand, but if you were to put a gun to our head, 'irreverent' might be the one we'd use to describe *'The Queen Is Dead'*. It's a compliment, not a criticism: despite the portentous title and heavyweight reputation, whenever you listen to it you can't

help but admire how lighthearted and laugh-out-loud funny it often is. Across the 10 songs, Morrissey repeatedly thumbs his nose at institutions – the monarchy, the church, the media, even his own record label – while Johnny Marr displays a maverick's disregard for convention, resulting in something that sounds completely assured of its own brilliance, pledging allegiance to nothing and no-one.

The Smiths' legend is mostly founded on the 18 singles and assorted B-sides they released between 1983 and 1987, a body of work that defined British indie in the 1980s in much the same way that Morrissey's great *bête noire* Margaret Thatcher defined the decade's politics.

They knew that a three-minute vignette, when done right, could be more meaningful and impactful than an LP 10 times the length. The Smiths did it right with remarkable consistency too: it's no coincidence that 'Hatful Of Hollow' – a compilation of singles, B-sides and Peel Session tracks – almost always ranks above 'The Smiths', 'Meat Is Murder' and 'Strangeways, Here We Come' in lists like this.

Yet 'The Queen Is Dead' is an album that makes a mockery of the idea that The Smiths were predominantly a singles band. With bassist Andy Rourke sliding into heroin addiction and Morrissey barely on speaking terms with Rough Trade, the falling-apart process was already underway when work began on their third album, but 'The Queen Is Dead' somehow ended up sounding like a crystallisation of The Smiths, rather than the slow fracturing that might have been closer to the truth. As a lyricist, Morrissey had found his niche, striking the delicate balance between high- and low-brow, softening his devastating expressions of loneliness and melancholy with PG Wodehouse-worthy bon mots ("Sometimes I'd feel more fulfilled making Christmas cards with the mentally ill") and cementing his position as indie's pre-eminent outsider-laureate. Musically, Marr was blossoming as a composer and arranger, embracing (and sometimes seeming to invent) new styles – the perky northwestern swing of 'Vicar In A Tutu' being a case in point – and experimenting with a wider array of sounds and textures. Meanwhile, the

THE STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The iconic front cover was a Morrissey design using a still of actor Alain Delon from the film *L'Insoumis*, a 1964 noir set against the 1961 Algerian uprising. The shot that gripped fans, however, was the one on the inner sleeve, of the band posing outside Salford Lads Club, now a shrine/unmissable picture opportunity on many a Smiths tour of Manchester, and scene of David Cameron mugging into a camera and still failing to win over the indie vote. Picked from a range of shots of the band at Manc landmarks including the Free Trade Hall and Coronation Street, the shot now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The line "Driving in your car/I never, never want to go home/ Because I haven't got one" was inspired by the New York Dolls' 'Lonely Planet Boy'.
- 2 The 'female' vocals on 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' are actually Morrissey sped up and credited as Ann Coates. Kirsty MacColl's backing vocals for the song were scrapped for being "too weird".
- 3 Despite being one of The Smiths' best-loved songs, 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' wasn't released as a single until 1992.
- 4 'Frankly, Mr Shankly', 'I Know It's Over' and 'There Is A Light...' were all written in a single "mammoth" sitting.
- 5 Morrissey has said 'The Boy With The Thorn In His Side' is his favourite Smiths song.

If you didn't know the album was 27 years old, the only thing that dates it is a single throwaway reference to a Walkman. Indeed, there's a pinch of perverse national pride to be gleaned from the knowledge that Britain was just as broken in 1986 as it is in 2015. 'Never Had No One Ever', about an immigrant's unease on the streets of their adoptive hometown, is something millions of people can – unfortunately – still relate

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I didn't realise that you wrote poetry/ I didn't realise you wrote such bloody awful poetry" ('Frankly, Mr Shankly')

Allegedly aimed at Rough Trade boss Geoff Travis after he wrote a poem for Morrissey.

"Ere thrice the sun done salutation to the dawn" ('Cemetery Gates')

Moz nabs a line from the Bard's *Richard III* to illustrate the plagiaristic tendencies of his grave-reading companion.

"Who comes sliding down the banister? The vicar in a tutu" ('Vicar In A Tutu')

A comment on the hypocritical nature of gay clergy, though Morrissey based his vicar on a cross-dressing comedian he knew who'd once been a pastor.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Maybe the next LP... should be the quantum shift in musical emphasis that some expected from this set. But, for now, Britain's best band are sticking very agreeably to what they do best, simply being The Smiths." **Adrian Thrills**

rhythm section of Rourke and drummer Mike Joyce had never sounded more lithe or intuitive, regardless of Rourke's own personal problems. The artistry and intricacy of the music is unparalleled; the withering wit and brio of the lyrics is deserving of a wholesale reprint in the next edition of the *Oxford Dictionary Of Quotations*. Everything clicks, basically.

Still, you could probably say the same about each of the 499 albums behind it. What distinguishes this one as literally the greatest ever made? For one thing, timelessness. It is a state-of-the-nation address that seems oddly impervious to the passage of years. Its original title, 'Margaret On The Guillotine', would have shackled it to a specific time, place and political climate, but 'The Queen Is Dead' will continue to resonate even when little George Alexander Louis sits on the throne; in this country, the monarchy is as inevitable as death and taxes.

"The understanding between Morrissey and Marr is borderline telepathic"

to, with UKIP in the ascendancy and David Cameron's "Go Home" vans patrolling our streets. Meanwhile, Morrissey's assertion on 'Frankly, Mr Shankly' that "I'd rather be famous than righteous or holy, any day" seems to presage the modern culture of fame for fame's sake.

Throughout, Morrissey and Marr complement each other beautifully. Here, they are operating at the very peak of their powers, the understanding between them borderline telepathic. Nowhere is this more evident than on the album's two most remarkable songs. The almost unbearably melancholic 'I Know It's Over' features one of Morrissey's greatest vocal performances and is a triumph of Marr's talents as an arranger, the music seeming to ebb and flow with the song's mood, fluctuating from broken-down and defeated to resolute and defiant, determined to shake the soil from its head and carry on. 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out', meanwhile, is quite simply the greatest torch song ever written; has the gut-churning totality of love ever been more elegantly articulated than its chorus of "If a double-decker bus crashes into us/To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die"?

No album is made in a vacuum, but 'The Queen Is Dead' is one of the select few that seems to transcend its influences and synthesise them into something singular and new. Marr's ambition had been to make "something that was as good as what our idols had made. Not sounding like what our idols had made; as good a piece of art." Even he probably wouldn't have guessed that they would surpass them.

Morrissey might have, though. He seems to hint as much on 'Cemetery Gates', when he declares that Wilde is on his side, and on 'Bigmouth Strikes Again', where he compares himself to – of all people – Joan Of Arc. It wasn't what he meant at the time, but now, you suspect, The Smiths really do know how she felt: not martyred or misunderstood, but vindicated. Beatified. Immortal. ■ BN

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** Winter 1985 ► **RELEASE DATE** June 16, 1986 ► **LENGTH** 37:07 ► **PRODUCERS** Morrissey, Johnny Marr ► **STUDIOS** RAK, Jacob and Wessex Studios ► **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 2 ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. The Queen Is Dead ► 2. Frankly, Mr Shankly ► 3. I Know It's Over ► 4. Never Had No One Ever ► 5. Cemetery Gates ► 6. Bigmouth Strikes Again ► 7. The Boy With The Thorn In His Side ► 8. Vicar In A Tutu ► 9. There Is A Light That Never Goes Out ► 10. Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others

"We wanted
to make
something
as good as
our idols"

The myths. The secrets. The drugs. The Smiths tell Mark Beaumont the full story of how four boys from Manchester created one of the greatest British albums of all time

NME, JUNE 9, 2011



By all accounts, the recording of 'The Queen Is Dead' should have been *The Shining* with a vegetarian menu: bandmate against bandmate, rage-ways here we come. But, says Johnny Marr, it wasn't like that.

"Contrary to what some people may believe," he says now, "we were as close as you can be. We didn't really have other friends outside of the band because we didn't need any. We didn't need to have a day off. We were doing the thing we loved best."

Andy Rourke concurs. "It was lots of fun, no dark undercurrents. Any closer, we would've been like Goldilocks and the three bears, all in the same bed."

The working practices were bizarre, the enthusiasm unbridled, the creativity breakneck. Let us take you back to dear old Blighty, 1985, and see how these bigmouths struck their most legendary blow...

A RUSH AND A PUSH AND THE LAND IS OURS

The Smiths' first Number One album – 1985's 'Meat Is Murder' – catapulted them into the alternative rock stratosphere. A US tour proved them as



Morrissey in London, 1986, the year that The Smiths released the greatest album of all time

popular Stateside as in the UK, yet they were no laurel-loungers.

"We'd built up a momentum of success," says Johnny, "but it did feel like a chapter was about to come to a close and it was necessary to start a new one. No-one had to tell us that it was time to make the third album."

Hence, during soundchecks on the 'Meat Is Murder' tour, Johnny, Mike Joyce and Andy pieced together the framework of an enticing ditty which would eventually be titled 'The Boy With The Thorn In His Side'. Once back in Manchester more songwriting followed, with Johnny's house acting as band HQ.

"I knew that the next record had to be

even more of a step up," says Johnny. "Once I'd decided that, everything else became secondary. It meant battening down the hatches. We never went to the pub. That culture didn't suit us, and in my case you couldn't smoke 15 joints in the pub."

Moz'n'Marr's writing technique was unique – either Johnny would deliver Morrissey a homemade demo of a guitar piece to which Moz would often have written a melody and lyrics by the next day, or the two would sit inches away from each other, face-to-face, while Johnny played Morrissey each track on an acoustic, recording them on a tape player between his knees. One such

legendary night saw the emergence of three new songs: 'Frankly, Mr Shankly', 'I Know It's Over' and 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'.

"It was a productive evening!" Johnny laughs. "That's what my life was every day. I lived a life that was entirely dedicated to being Johnny Marr from The Smiths. I chose to be nocturnal and I lived off cigs and music and pot."

I STARTED SOMETHING...

Barely stopping for breath after returning from tour, The Smiths reconvened in August 1985 at Manchester's 16-track Drone studios to demo 'The Boy With The Thorn In His Side' →

► FROM THE ARCHIVE

Side' as a between-albums single.

"It was in the basement of a terraced house," Andy remembers. "The [owner] kept disappearing saying he had to talk to his accountant, then he came back stinking of whiskey. I don't think Morrissey was impressed; all the walls were made out of denim."

The band were so pleased with this 'demo', however, that they decided to mix it right there and release it, and a month later it hit Number 23. Not everything was running so smoothly, though: rifts were appearing between The Smiths and their record label, Rough Trade, and Andy's drug habit was becoming noticeable. "The drugs started controlling him and he danced to their tune," recalls Johnny. "You look around and one of you is missing for hours or non-communicative. [But] that didn't show in his musicianship on the record, far from it."

"I was hanging in there, just about," Andy nods. "Keeping my nose clean."

Yet with momentum established, the band hit RAK Studios in north London and reconnected with regular engineer Stephen Street. "It's where the band fully discovered what they were able to do in the studio," he says. "Johnny was prepared to start using other textures apart from the guitar – there was a keyboard called an Emulator, which was like a string sampler, and that was used throughout. It was trying to use colours and textures they hadn't touched on before."

The recording of 'Bigmouth Strikes Again' featured not only a rare guest appearance on a Smiths track – backing vocals by Kirsty MacColl – but also the fiddling of Morrissey's vocals through a pitch-changing harmoniser. When he could hold it together enough to sing, that is. "He could hear himself sounding like one of the chipmunks or Pinky & Perky and he was rolling on the floor laughing," remembers Andy. "Maybe in the end they just took a sample of him singing 'Bigmouth...' normally and tuned it up because he was laughing so much he couldn't pull it together."

B-side 'Asleep' and 'Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others' also went down at RAK. While Mike Joyce argues of the latter that "only Morrissey could get away with that lyric – vegetarianism, sexism, children being murdered", it has been said that Johnny was unhappy. "That's because 100 years ago I said I was surprised when the title came about," he counters. "It wasn't what I expected for the music, but who would expect that?"

BACK TO THE OLD HOUSE

As 1985 drew to a close, The Smiths played a short UK tour before ensconcing themselves in Jacobs Studio, a large Victorian mansion house near Farnham. Winter shrouded the windows to create what Johnny remembers as "a womb-like atmosphere, which is absolutely appropriate".

At Jacobs, The Smiths became a 24-hour musical production line working on wildly different routines that interlinked perfectly. First to rise would be Stephen and Morrissey,

The Smiths at the Factory-organised Festival of the Tenth Summer, Manchester G-Mex, 1986



"The whole thing seems like a hideous joke"

Morrissey on the Monarchy

recording vocals over the tracks laid down by the others the evening before. The rest of the band would rise early afternoon to listen to Morrissey's work before dinner. There'd be a down-hour listening to classic '60s records and then Morrissey would retire to his room or have "a cup of tea and get his head in a book" while his bandmates knuckled down to recording the next day's track.

Stephen's day would finish at 1am when, according to Johnny, "[he'd] be starting to hallucinate with sleep deprivation. We worked 'til we fell down and then started again. But if we ever had an evening off we'd watch [quintessentially British films] *Hobson's Choice* or *The L-Shaped Room* or *Saturday Night And Sunday Morning*, which is to say we watched pretty much exactly what people think The Smiths would've watched. All our [in-jokes] were lingo from films. Half of the time we'd be quoting Charles Laughton from *Hobson's Choice*."

Andy remembers a rather more raucous experience, for the rhythm section at least. "Lots of wine, lots of beer, lots of brandy, other things. I remember we were playing football once at five in the morning and we woke up in the afternoon and Morrissey had

left for a couple of days. He'd had enough of the noise."

The routine meant that Johnny and the band often had no idea what tune or lyrics Morrissey would sing until he was recording his vocal over the set-in-stone backing track. Hence the daily gathering to hear Moz's words provided much hilarity ('Vicar In A Tutu'), awe ('There Is A Light That Never Goes Out'), excitement and a frisson of danger ('The Queen Is Dead').

Then there was 'Frankly, Mr Shankly', a thinly veiled resignation note to Rough Trade honcho Geoff Travis calling him "a flatulent pain in the arse" and mocking his "bloody awful" poetry.

"I like that naughty schoolboy vibe," says Andy, though Johnny feels less strongly. "The first song I ever wrote with Morrissey for The Smiths was 'Suffer Little Children' about the Moors Murders, so 'Frankly, Mr Shankly' was, frankly, small potatoes."

The remainder of 'The Queen Is Dead' fell together remarkably smoothly. 'I Know It's Over' swept elegantly out of a low-lit evening: "We recorded it around about teatime," says Johnny, "but England

being England it was dark and wet outside. It was very beautiful and it reflected how I felt for a large part of my life, and particularly during that period. But I didn't see a despondency in that, there's an acceptance of melancholia being a part of life, that's why I don't think it's depressing."

The anti-monarchist sentiment of the title track came from Morrissey (he described the royal family as "like a hideous joke") but the music emerged from a pounding 13-minute jam session, complete with Mike's looped tom-tom rhythm and Johnny capturing accidental feedback from his wah-wah pedal. "I held my breath for 10 minutes while I was doing it. Conceptually I was trying to do that Detroit thing, the MC5 [and] garage rock and I just got it wrong – but if you're lucky that stuff comes out sounding like yourself anyway."

"The first time we played 'There Is A Light...', it was magical"

Johnny Marr

Both 'Cemetery Gates' and 'There Is A Light...' (the first time Johnny had allowed himself to strip away guitar tracks) seemed to play and record themselves. "We did [There Is A Light...] at the start of the day," says Johnny. "It was an enjoyable 40 minutes. When we all got together, one-two-three-four, it was the first time all four of us had heard what it sounded like. It was magical. Someone told me that if you listen with the volume really, really up you can hear me shout 'That was amazing!' right at the end."

Then came the true thorn in these boys' sides: the injunction lawyer.

"Rough Trade injunctioned 'The Queen Is Dead' while we were working on it," says Johnny (although Travis claims the injunction came after recording). "That was a knock to my motivation. We were in the middle of making this record – halfway up a mountain in the dark – when a lawyer came in and said 'When you get to the top there's gonna be another one. It ain't coming out.'"

YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING NOW

Legal wrangles delayed the album's release for seven months, but the final playback was a celebratory occasion. "We went through a whole crate of ales," Andy laughs. "[There Is A Light...] really stood out, when the hairs on the back of your neck stick up and you realise you've got something special."

Looking back, Stephen considers the album as "where Morrissey really found his voice, I'm amazed but grateful people still love it 25 years on". Andy recalls how well the record went down live, albeit with a few shocks in the crowd. "Morrissey came out with a placard saying 'The Queen Is Dead' and my mum's friend Ruth nearly fell off her chair. She thought it was literal – 'The Queen is dead?!'"

And Johnny? "I'd have never said to myself, 'I've made a seminal record that's

gonna define the times,' because that would mean I was a wanker. I felt like we'd won the European Cup or something, that we'd really achieved something. We wanted something that was as good as what our idols had made. Not sounding like what our idols had made, as good a piece of art. It had to be as good as the Velvet and The Stooges.

"Now, 30 years after 'The Queen Is Dead', British rock music is different, and maybe it

is because of records like 'The Queen Is Dead', and, say, 'OK Computer'. Records that take British rock into a more modern era and don't leave it stuck in the 1960s and 1970s, records that say something to the wider world about what it sounds like to live in Britain."

The Queen herself lives defiantly on. But the legacy of The Smiths' 'The Queen Is Dead' will long outlast even her parasitical reign... ■

TRACK BY TRACK

The band and famous fans pick their favourites

The Queen Is Dead

Mike Joyce



"We had to record it separately to keep the driving rhythm. It was to get the best sound for the song."

Frankly, Mr Shankly

Andy Rourke



"I didn't even know [when Morrissey first sang it] that Geoff had written him a piece of poetry. When we heard the lyrics it was amusing but a bit shocking too."

I Know It's Over

Graham Coxon



"All the 'If you're so funny, why are you on your own tonight' bit, it's great."

Never Had No One Ever

Graham Sampson,

Of Tribute Act The Smyths



"The privilege of singing these words live is how personal they become. From the stage, one sees their truth in the faces of many."

Cemetery Gates

Guy Garvey



"I love that there's a landmark in it, you see coachloads of Japanese kids dressed as Morrissey stopping by the cemetery gates."

Bigmouth Strikes Again

Theo Hutchcraft



"The greatest opening line to any song ever, along with 'Bigmouth, lah dada dahhh',

the most audaciously pompous indie hook of all time."

The Boy With The Thorn In His Side

Geoff Travis



"When they were writing things like this they were at a creative peak that very, very few other bands get to touch."

Vicar In A Tutu

Johnny Marr



"I think I was self-conscious about doing something so playful. I had slides going on it and all sorts of stuff but the lyrics being so funny really helped out with the rest of the recording."

There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

Ben Little, Wild Beasts



"It's The Smiths at the height of their musical and lyrical fertility. It conjures up memories of a time in my life where all I dreamt of was to be in a band that was half as good as The Smiths. Still trying."

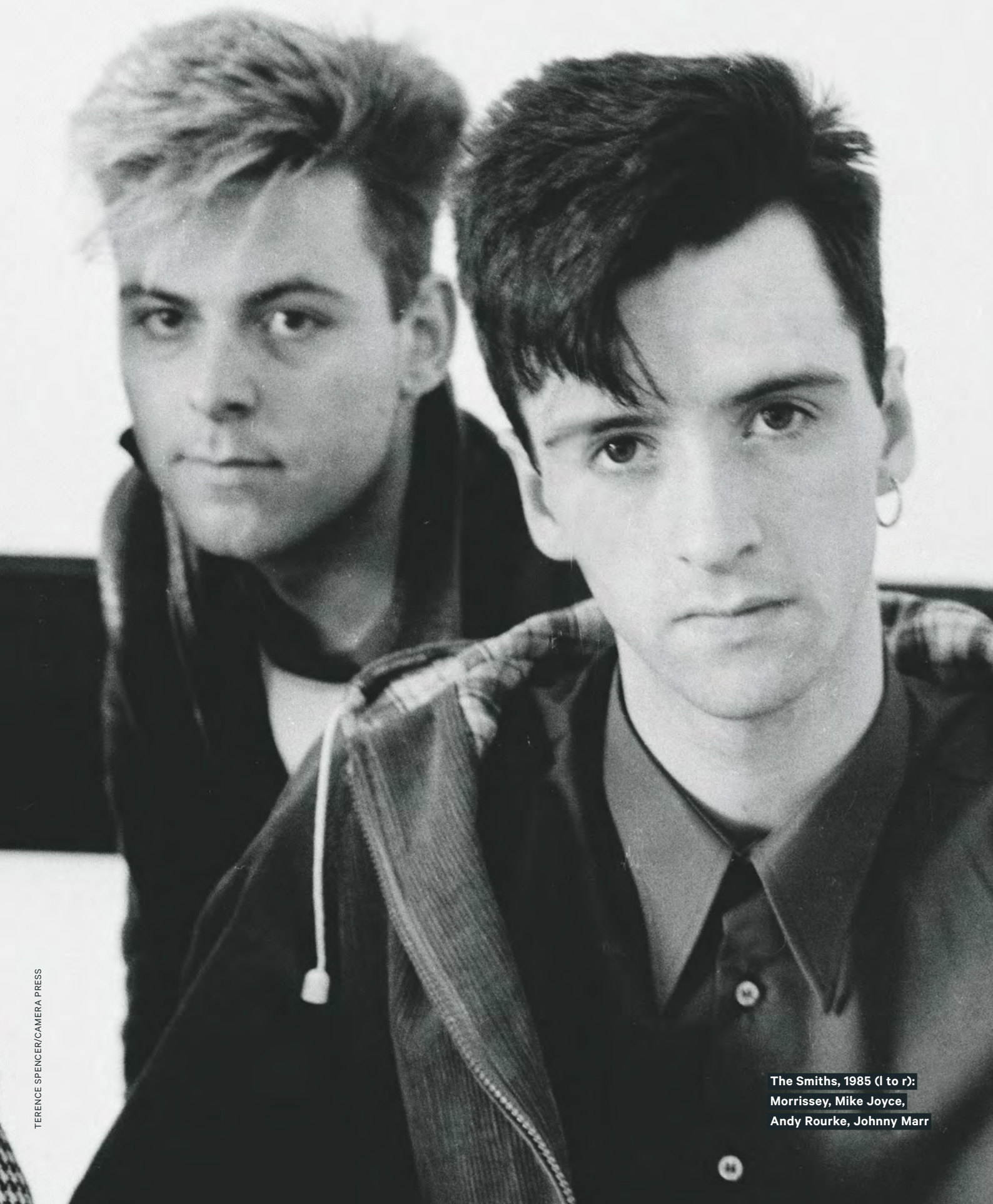
Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others

Stephen Street



"The last track of an album is so important. I had this idea of starting it off making it sound like it's clattery and distant, fading it out and then fading up this glorious, glossy arpeggiated guitar line and it drifts away at the end. I thought it was a lovely way to end the album."





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

The 500 greatest songs of all time

The joy of putting together a definitive list of the greatest songs ever is the vast array of music it throws up. The very best of the past 75 years is here, from freeway escape anthem to dancefloor smacker to class warfare in a supermarket...

500 Five Years
David Bowie
1972 RCA
499 Out Of Time Blur
2003 PARLOPHONE
498 Girl From Mars Ash
1995 INFECTIOUS
497 Kill All Hippies
Primal Scream
2000 CREATION
496 Hey Joe
The Jimi Hendrix Experience
1966 TRACK
495 Patio Song
Gorky's Zygotic Mynci
1996 FONTANA
494 Everybody Hurts REM
1992 WARNER BROS
493 Overload Sugababes
2000 LONDON
492 New York City Cops
The Strokes
2001 ROUGH TRADE
491 One Johnny Cash
2000 AMERICAN RECORDINGS
490 Riders On The Storm
The Doors
1971 ELEKTRA
489 Red Right Hand
Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 1994 MUTE
488 Golden Brown
The Stranglers
1982 LIBERTY
487 Suedehead
Morrissey
1988 HIS MASTER'S VOICE
486 Across 110th Street
Bobby Womack
1972 UNITED ARTISTS

485 Starman
David Bowie
1972 RCA
484 Some Might Say
Oasis 1995 CREATION
483 Come To Daddy
Aphex Twin
1997 WARP
482 Darts Of Pleasure
Franz Ferdinand
2003 DOMINO
481 The Killing Moon
Echo & The Bunnymen
1984 KOROVA
480 Ziggy Stardust
David Bowie
1972 RCA
479 Wouldn't It Be Nice
The Beach Boys
1966 CAPITOL
478 Highway To Hell
AC/DC 1979 ATLANTIC
477 Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang
Dr Dre
1992 DEATH ROW

475 Crazy
Gnarls Barkley
2006 WARNER BROS
474 Disarm
Smashing Pumpkins
1993 HUT
473 Lola The Kinks
1970 PYE
472 Best Of Friends
Palma Violets
2012 ROUGH TRADE
471 Sweet Child O' Mine
Guns N' Roses
1987 GEFFEN
470 Movin' On Up
Primal Scream
1991 CREATION
469 Buzzblood Ohio
The National
2010 4AD
468 Dreaming Of You
The Coral 2002 DELTASONIC
467 Star Sign
Teenage Fanclub
1991 CREATION

466 Push It Salt-N-Pepa
1987 FFRR
465 Goddess On A Hiway
Mercury Rev
1998 V2
464 About A Girl Nirvana
1989 TUPELO
463 I Will Survive
Gloria Gaynor
1978 POLYDOR
462 If You Wanna
The Vaccines
2011 COLUMBIA
461 Live And Let Die Wings
1973 APPLE
460 It's The End Of The World As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)
REM 1987 IRS
459 Lust For Life Iggy Pop
1977 RCA
458 Umbrella Rihanna
2007 DEF JAM
457 Firestarter
The Prodigy
1996 XL
456 What's My Name?
Snoop Doggy Dogg
1993 DEATH ROW/INTERSCOPE
455 One Way Or Another
Blondie
1978 CHRYSALIS
454 Race For The Prize
The Flaming Lips
1999 WARNER BROS
453 Town Called Malice
The Jam
1982 POLYDOR
452 Whole Lotta Love
Led Zeppelin
1969 ATLANTIC
451 Setting Sun
The Chemical Brothers
1996 FREESTYLE DUST/VIRGIN
450 I Am The Walrus
The Beatles
1967 PARLOPHONE
449 A New England
Billy Bragg
1983 UTILITY
448 The Scientist Coldplay
2002 PARLOPHONE
447 Do You Remember The First Time? Pulp
1994 ISLAND
446 Tumbling Dice
The Rolling Stones
1972 ROLLING STONES RECORDS

476 Imagine

John Lennon 1971 APPLE



Regina Spektor: "Knowing that his life was cut short and listening to those lyrics always makes me sad. My parents really loved The Beatles; they had all these recordings published officially in Soviet Russia. We always listened to The Beatles in the house, and my dad had a box of cassette tapes – things passed from hand to hand that were treasured."

445 Popszene Blur 1992 FOOD
444 Open Up Leftfield Lydon 1993 HARD HANDS
443 Sorted For E's & Wizz Pulp 1995 ISLAND
442 Witness (1 Hope) Roots Manuva 2001 BIG DADA
441 I Fought The Law Bobby Fuller Four 1965 MUSTANG
440 Where It's At Beck 1996 GEFEN
439 Pills And Soap The Imposter 1983 F-BEAT
438 Material Girl Madonna 1984 SIRE
437 Nelson Mandela The Special AKA 1984 2 TONE
436 The Bucket Kings Of Leon 2004 HANDMEOWN
435 R U Mine? Arctic Monkeys 2012 DOMINO
434 Sunny Afternoon The Kinks 1966 PYE
433 One Armed Scissor At The Drive-In 2000 GRAND ROYAL
432 The Drugs Don't Work The Verve 1997 HUT
431 Shame Shame Shame Shirley And Company 1974 PHILIPS
430 Up Town Top Ranking Althea & Donna 1977 LIGHTNING
429 Buddy Holly Weezer 1994 GEFEN
428 Golden Years David Bowie 1975 RCA
427 Hate To Say I Told You So The Hives 2000 BURNING HEART
426 Elephant Tame Impala 2012 MODULAR
425 Plug In Baby Muse 2001 MUSHROOM
424 Down By The Water PJ Harvey 1995 ISLAND
423 Paradise City Guns N' Roses 1987 GEFEN
422 The Book Of Love The Magnetic Fields 1999 CIRCUS
421 Holland, 1945 Neutral Milk Hotel 1998 BLUE ROSE
420 Yellow Coldplay 2000 PARLOPHONE
419 Start! The Jam 1980 POLYDOR
418 Come As You Are Nirvana 1991 DGC
417 Marbles Tindersticks 1993 THIS WAY UP
416 Chemical World Blur 1993 FOOD
415 You're So Vain Carly Simon 1972 ELEKTRA
414 Another Girl, Another Planet The Only Ones 1978 CBS
413 Watching The Detectives Elvis Costello & The Attractions 1977 STIFF

412 Paris Friendly Fires 2007 XL
 **Stephen Street:** "I heard that and thought, 'Wow'. It's so euphoric. It was a surprise hearing something like this from a very new band – it's not what you'd expect."

411 Waiting Room Fugazi 1988 DISCHORD
410 Nine Inch Nails Hurt 1994 NOTHING/INTERSCOPE
409 Baby, I Love You The Ronettes 1963 LONDON

408 Fake Tales Of San Francisco Arctic Monkeys 2005 BANG BANG
 "You're not from New York City, you're from Rotherham". Early, snarky lyrical brilliance from a teenage Alex Turner; jitterpop genius from his fellow Monkeys.

407 Sheena Is A Punk Rocker Ramones 1977 SIRE
 A punk band playing a surf-rock tune. Simple, really, but the world span a whole lot faster as a result.

406 Breezblocks Alt-J 2012 INFECTIOUS
405 Bad Girls MIA 2012 INTERSCOPE

404 Where The Streets Have No Name U2 1987 ISLAND
 Say what you like about Bono – and most do – he can certainly bawl out an unstoppable stadium anthem or two.

403 Reverend Black Grape Black Grape 1995 RADIOACTIVE
 The lyrics about the hypocrisies of the church were controversial, but the tune was one almighty funk hallelujah.

402 The Boys Are Back In Town Thin Lizzy 1976 VERTIGO
401 Television, The Drug Of The Nation The Disposable Heroes Of Hiphoprisy 1992 4TH & BROADWAY/ISLAND

400 Learn To Fly Foo Fighters 1999 ROSWELL/RCA
 The video showed Dave Grohl could act. The song, meanwhile, proved he could write guitar-pop firecrackers that stomped emo underfoot.

399 Slide Away Oasis 1994 CREATION

398 Us Regina Spektor 2004 SIRE
 The jittery piano rhythms, anti-folk aesthetic and Spektor's acrobatic voice conspire to make 'Us' a thing of rare beauty.

397 The Mercy Seat Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds 1988 MUTE
396 The Real Slim Shady Eminem 2000 AFTERMATH
395 Sheila Jamie T 2006 VIRGIN
394 No More Heroes The Stranglers 1977 UNITED ARTISTS
393 To The End Blur 1994 FOOD
392 I Feel For You Chaka Khan 1984 WARNER BROS
391 Paranoid Black Sabbath 1970 VERTIGO
390 Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard Paul Simon 1972 CBS

389 There's No Other Way Blur 1991 FOOD
 With their second single, Blur managed to out-Madchester most of the Madchester bands themselves. No mean feat.

388 The Boy With The Thorn In His Side The Smiths 1985 ROUGH TRADE
 Morrissey's persecution complex set to the most glorious of Johnny Marr guitar lines.

387 Oh, Pretty Woman Roy Orbison 1964 MONUMENT

386 Cut Your Hair Pavement 1994 BIG CAT
 A scathing attack on the image-obsessed music industry, as relevant today as it was 20 years ago.

385 Champagne Supernova Oasis 1995 CREATION

384 Typical Girls The Slits 1979 ISLAND
 Blending punk, reggae and rock, this brilliant track by The Slits might have been called 'Typical Girls', but they were anything but.

383 Lapdance NERD 2001 VIRGIN
382 While My Guitar Gently Weeps The Beatles 1968 APPLE

381 Kids MGMT 2008 COLUMBIA
 A twisted New Order-esque banger of a track, the kind you wished they still wrote.

380 Piledriver Waltz Arctic Monkeys 2011 DOMINO
379 I'll Feel A Whole Lot Better The Byrds 1965 CBS
378 Where The Wild Roses Grow Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds & Kylie Minogue 1995 MUTE
377 Bennie And The Jets Elton John 1973 DJM

376

Roadrunner

Jonathan Richman & The Modern Lovers 1975 BESERKLEY

One listen to 'Roadrunner' tells you that its writer, Jonathan Richman, was a fan of The Velvet Underground. The song bears more than a passing resemblance to Lou Reed and co's 'Sister Ray', but while the Velvets' tale examined the darkest sides of junkie living, Richman's 'Roadrunner' seems impossibly naive by comparison. It's about being in love, but not with a person, with life itself. It's about being behind the wheel of a car, nothing but the open road and unfulfilled dreams out in front of you and songs on the radio for company. It's *Thelma And Louise* and *Easy Rider*, a guide to a carefree existence, and it's utterly infectious. ■ AW

375 Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough Michael Jackson

1979 EPIC

The song that made the man a legend, with a disco-funk beat packed with personality.

374 Love Action (I Believe In Love) The Human League

1981 VIRGIN



Sexy and synth, this was the sound of a new decade, new technology and ostentatious haircuts.

373 Brianstorm

Arctic Monkeys 2007 DOMINO

Alex Turner took a turn for the metal with what was the Monkeys' heaviest song so far.

372 Don't Believe The Hype Public Enemy

1988 DEF JAM

A takedown of "false media", Chuck D's politicised hip-hop was one of the most important movements of the '80s.

371 Hyperballad Björk

1995 ONE LITTLE INDIAN

Poetry in electronica-driven motion. Björk's spiralling masterpiece was as thrilling as it was expansive.

370 The Wild Ones

Suede 1994 NUDE

Brett Anderson and Bernard Butler proved themselves a songwriting duo to be reckoned with on this stately ballad.

369 Half The World Away

Oasis 1994 CREATION

The B-side of 'Whatever' – and *The Royle Family*'s theme tune – saw the rock'n'roll stars do acoustic balladry with lashings of pathos.

368 You Made Me Realise

My Bloody Valentine

1988 CREATION

As heavy as they come, gauzy melodic mixed with punishing riffery and a minute of solid hell-chord in this beastly squall.

367 Voodoo Ray

A Guy Called Gerald

1988 RHAMI RECORDS



Acid house's breakout hit, throbbing with the soulful sound of getting off your tits in a field.

366 Friday I'm In Love

The Cure 1992 FICTION

Turned out you weren't the only one who loves the weekend. Irrepressibly joyful.

365 Teen Age Riot

Sonic Youth 1988 BLAST FIRST

Seven thundering minutes of the most exciting alt.rock the '80s had to offer.

364 Killing Of A Flash Boy

Suede 1994 NUDE

Superlative B-side that chugged with sleazy glam and a magnetic gang mentality.

363 Bad Moon Rising

Creedence Clearwater

Revival 1969 FANTASY

Mixing classic rock with Southern country, this honest hoedown paved the way for the '70s stateside stadium sound.

362 Enter Sandman

Metallica 1991 ELEKTRA



Heavy metal's answer to the nascent grunge movement was slick, riff-heavy and blisteringly mean.

361 Paid In Full

Erik B & Rakim 1987

FOURTH AND BROADWAY

The definitive journey into sound, via a masterfully curated selection of samples and Rakim's killer rhymes.

360 Pictures Of You

The Cure 1989 FICTION

The prettiest thing The Cure have ever done. A sparkling sonic expedition and, damn, *that* intro.

359 For Tomorrow

Blur 1993 FOOD

The moment Britpop got epic. Stunning strings, trips to Primrose Hill and Damon Albarn as everyman urban poet.

358 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll

Ian Dury And The Blockheads

1977 STIFF



An exemplary, funk-angled checklist that proved Ian Dury to be one of the most charismatic frontmen of the '70s.

357 The Sun Ain't Gonna Shine

Anytime The Walker Brothers

1966 PHILIPS

Scott Walker's velvety baritone made their version of this tune majestically heartrending.

356 Close To Me

The Cure 1985 FICTION

Through Robert Smith's confidential whispers, 'Close To Me' bristled with a jaunty yet longing romance.

355 Millionaire

Kelis 2004 ARISTA

Space-hop sonic soulmates Kelis and André 3000 created this slinky slice of electronica.

354 Loser Beck 1994 DGC



Beck's breakthrough was sublime folk-funk nonsense, like the Beastie Boys meets Muddy Waters.

353 Hey Boy Hey Girl

The Chemical Brothers

1999 FREESTYLE DUST



Documenting the rise of "superstar DJs" via the biggest of beats and a killer drop.

352 Cecilia Simon And

Garfunkel 1970 COLUMBIA

Simon and Garfunkel's soca-style single paired the duo's pop nous with their folk traditionalism.

351 Float On

Modest Mouse 2004 EPIC



Funk beats, psych squiggles and one brilliant chorus made for Modest Mouse's finest few minutes.

350 Rehab

Amy Winehouse 2006 ISLAND



The moment Amy transformed from MOR jazz singer into the witty voice of a generation.

349 Just Can't Get Enough

Depeche Mode 1981 MUTE

One of Depeche Mode's perkier electropop moments, before they went all pervy.

348 Eight Miles High

The Byrds 1966 COLUMBIA

When folk met psychedelia, bringing Laurel Canyon harmonies, jazz and eastern raga together.

347 Clint Eastwood

Gorillaz 2001 PARLOPHONE

Damon Albarn and his cartoon cohorts befuddled Blur fans with this genius acid-funk.

346 Only You Yazoo

1982 MUTE

Vince Clarke left Depeche Mode to make this beautifully sparse hit – and made Alison Moyet a star in the process.

345 Fluorescent Adolescent

Arctic Monkeys 2007 DOMINO



The depressing, but very danceable, tale of a relationship in a rut featured some of Alex Turner's best tongue-twisting lyrics.

344 Runaway

Kanye West 2010 MERCURY

Kanye's "toast to the douchebags" was a compelling takedown of everyone who'd ever trash-talked him.

343 California Dreamin'

The Mamas And The Papas

1965 DUNHILL

The defining sound of the hippy movement, folk harmonies chiming with the lure of the West Coast.

342 Club Foot

Kasabian

2004 COLUMBIA

Destined for stadiums from the start, this banging, electronica-driven lad anthem was Kasabian's potent calling card.

341 Caught Out There

Kelis 2000 VIRGIN/EMI



The Neptunes' purple patch was defined by Kelis' debut single and a new glitch direction for hip-hop.

340 Stan Eminem

2000 INTERSCOPE



Who'd have thought a bloody Dido sample would have such clout? Stunningly bleak.

339 Because The Night

Patti Smith 1978 ARISTA

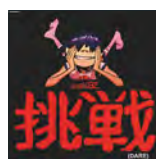


Patti's most well-known song, originally written by Bruce Springsteen, was a gothic, sexually charged power ballad.

Dare

338

Gorillaz 2005 PARLOPHONE



Roping Shaun Ryder into the equation for the second single from 'Demon Days' was something of a masterstroke. No stranger to the concept of "coming up", his lolling Mancunian drawl drew a line from the swagger of Happy

Mondays through to the nous of Blur, all feeding into the millennial party bounce of Gorillaz. With Damon Albarn on falsetto backing vocals and Danger Mouse taking care of production, a cartoon band became a very human prospect, complete with squelchy beats, scratchy synths and a global reach. ■ LC

337

All Day And All Of The Night

The Kinks 1964 PYE



Obsessive love rarely sounded so desirable. In two minutes and 22 seconds, Ray and Dave Davies crafted the lustiest sound of the '60s, harder and heavier than The Beatles had dared to go at this point in time and vastly more original than the Stones, who were still ripping off Delta bluesmen, yet to find a course they could truly call their own. In many ways a precursor to heavy metal, 'All Day And All Of The Night's' deceptively simple power chords and howling, hurtling vocal harmonies paved the way for everyone from Black Sabbath to Guns N' Roses. ■ LC

336 Come Together

The Beatles

1969 APPLE

An irresistibly sultry, bluesy shuffle, the opening track on 'Abbey Road' was as expansive as it was intimate.

335 The Man Don't Give A Fuck

Super Furry Animals

1996 CREATION

A Steely Dan sample was the sonic lynchpin in the Furies' delightfully swearsy call to indie arms.

334 She Bangs The Drums

The Stone Roses

1989 SILVERTONE

"The past was yours, but the future's mine" – a cocksure mission statement from the baggy overlords.

333 Go West

Pet Shop Boys

1993 PARLOPHONE

The Pet Shop Boys managed to turn a novelty Village People hit into a synthpop essential.

332 Rave On!

Buddy Holly

1958 CORAL

Less than two minutes long, but there was a world of rock potential here from the 21-year-old pioneer.

331 Karmacoma

Massive Attack

1994 VIRGIN

Mixing raps from Tricky with Russian opera and throat-singing samples, 'Karmacoma' was experimental Britpop at its finest.

330 Novocaine For

The Soul Eels

1996 DREAMWORKS

Brutishly bleak lyrics skipped over the top of stop-start college-rock perfection. Made cheering up seem stupid.



329 Two Steps, Twice

Foals

2008 TRANSGRESSIVE

Taken from their debut album, this slice of math-rock proved non-linear post-punk could still be stupidly catchy.

328 My Favourite Dress

The Wedding Present

1987 RECEPTION

Ragged, jagged guitars from the Leeds band's debut album. David Gedge did yearning and captivating with class.

327 Man In The Mirror

Michael Jackson 1987 EPIC

Gospel choirs and changing the world by bettering yourself made for one of the '80s pop's most powerful moments. Shamone, indeed.

326 Sexual Healing

Marvin Gaye 1982 COLUMBIA

It doesn't get raunchier than this – somehow steering clear of cheesiness, this slice of soul positively sizzled.

325 Strange Fruit

Billie Holiday 1939 COMMODORE

Immensely powerful blues ballad about lynching in the Southern states. The original protest song.

324 Destroy The Heart

House Of Love 1988 CREATION

Swirling psych from Camberwell's self-destructive LSD enthusiasts – perfect pop with plenty of inner turmoil.



323 Personal Jesus

Depeche Mode 1989 MUTE

Stomping sensuality on a tune that both Johnny Cash and Marilyn Manson later had their way with.

322 Big Time Sensuality

Björk 1993 ONE LITTLE INDIAN

House music rhythms bashed up against Björk's idiosyncratic squeal to create one of the biggest bangers of the '90s.

321 Itchycoo Park

Small Faces 1967 IMMEDIATE

Celebrating the summer of psychedelia were mod gang the Small Faces and their sunny stoner pop.

320 Brimful Of Asha

Cornershop 1997 WILLJA

Both the original and the Norman Cook remix blended British indie with multicultural beats, making for a crossover classic.

319 One Nation Under

A Groove Funkadelic

1978 WARNER

Seven and a half minutes of serious soul and a cornerstone for dance and hip-hop in the following decade.

318 Ring Of Fire

Johnny Cash

1963 COLUMBIA

Co-written by Johnny's wife June Carter, this mariachi country song was as tender as it was tough.

317 Zero Yeah Yeah Yeahs

2009 POLYDOR

Experimental art-disco vibes from Brooklyn's weirdest. 'Zero' was party punk of the highest order.

316 Here Pavement

1992 MATADOR

Proving that slackers have souls, 'Here' shook up the college-rock scene with its tender melodicism.

315 All Along The Watchtower

Jimi Hendrix

1968 POLYDOR

Jimi HENDRIX took Bob Dylan's ballad and turned it into a decade-defining guitar anthem.

314 Kick Out The Jams

MC5 1969 ELEKTRA

Invented punk with one deftly dealt "motherfucker". The compelling, caustic sound of angry America.

313 1999 Prince

1982 WARNER

An entire soul-funk party in six minutes – the moment Prince became a king.

312 History

The Verve

1995 HUT

One of the greatest break-up songs ever; grown men were blubbing by the end of the string intro.

311 Ticket To Ride

The Beatles

1965 PARLOPHONE

Jangling their way to yet another Number One, this single hinted at the heaviness in The Beatles' future.

310 Papa Was A Rollin' Stone

The Temptations

1972 GORDY RECORDS

Motown went the psych route with this multi-layered and symphonic sunshine-soul jam.

309 Outdoor Miner

Wire 1978 HARVEST

Post-punkers Wire souped up their second album with piano plinks and keening harmonies.

308 Spanish Sahara

Foals 2010 TRANSGRESSIVE

Yannis Philippakis and his skyscraping falsetto added an otherworldly edge to this pulsing electronic anthem.

307 Going Underground

The Jam

1980 POLYDOR

The Jam's first ever UK Number One single blasted the British government via taut mod riffs.

306 Beetlebum

Blur 1997 FOOD

Chugging and emotional, Damon Albarn's rumoured ode to taking heroin with girlfriend Justine Frishmann of Elastica was dark pop perfection.

305 Tainted Love

Gloria Jones

1964 CHAMPION

Northern soul's finest moment from the woman who was later to give birth to Marc Bolan's only child.

304 Something

The Beatles 1969 APPLE

Penned by George Harrison, this cooing, guitar-solo-laced ballad was more than a match for Lennon and McCartney.

303 Suzanne Leonard Cohen

1967 COLUMBIA

Originally written as a poem, the wholehearted 'Suzanne' is melancholy, melodic and desperately graceful.

302 Fake Plastic Trees

Radiohead

1995 PARLOPHONE

An acoustic heart with a stadium soul – the sound of Radiohead becoming one of the most respected bands of the '90s.

301 Enjoy The Silence

Depeche Mode

1990 MUTE

Electronica with a human face, the second single from 'Violator' mixed sex with serious beats.



293

300 20th Century Boy**T Rex 1973 EMI**

Characterised by possibly the most recognisable riff in glam rock, '20th Century Boy' showcased T Rex at their decadent, glamorous best.

299 Crash**The Primitives****1988 RCA**

The Primitives' only real hit was an indie-pop earworm of hummable "na na na"s, coy vocals and simple riffs that the quartet never topped. The sweetest motorway pile-up on record.

298 Jump Around**House Of Pain 1992 XL**

Introduced by an instantly recognisable fanfare (sampled from Bob & Earl's 'Harlem Shuffle'), House Of Pain's squealing pogo-starter became an instant club smash.

297 You Can't Always Get**What You Want****The Rolling Stones****1969 DECCA**

A gospel choir, a universal sentiment, some choral kids and a redemptive finale were all the Stones needed to create one of the sleekest gospel-blues numbers of the '60s.

296 The Words That**Makeh Murder****PJ Harvey 2011 ISLAND**

The first offering from 'Let England Shake' was a telling hint of the dense narratives and chilling war stories that would follow, and the spectre that lingered long after the album had finished.

295 Fashion**David Bowie****1980 RCA**

Bowie's ode to designer fakery and frivolity strutted at catwalk pace alongside purposefully hollow lyrics and sonic references to 'Golden Years'.

294 Family Affair**Sly And The Family Stone****1971 EPIC**

The first Number One to feature a drum machine, 'Family Affair' displayed a more downbeat direction but provided the group's most timeless tune.

For Lovers**Wolfman feat. Peter Doherty****2004 ROUGH TRADE**

Back in a time before Kate Moss, before all the cancelled gigs and before that occasion when he turned up at a party with a top hat full of kittens, Pete Doherty was primarily known for being able to knock up a generation-uniting tune. 'For Lovers', the singer's first non-Libertines endeavour, written alongside friend and fellow class-A enthusiast Wolfman towards the tail-end of The Libs' lifetime, was a gloriously romantic example. A wistful slice of nostalgia, swept up in gentle strings and lyrical poetry that earned the pair an Ivor Novello nomination for songwriting. ■ LW

292 Mr Blue Sky Electric Light**Orchestra 1977 JET**

Jason Lytle, Granddaddy: "Jeff Lynne, who was ELO's main guy, is my musical hero, definitely. In fact, I spend most of my time trying desperately hard not to rip him off when I'm writing my own music, though you can hear he is an inspiration. I never get tired of hearing ELO's songs – his lyrics and arrangement are just incredible."

291 Shipbuilding**Robert Wyatt****1982 ROUGH TRADE**

Written for him by Elvis Costello, the combination of Wyatt's affecting vocal and Costello's poignant lyrics made 'Shipbuilding' a touching exercise in restraint.

290 Daddy's Gone**Glasvegas****2007 SANE MAN**

Glasvegas' niche of peculiarly masculine melancholy reached its pinnacle on 'Daddy's Gone' – a terrace anthem for the lost, abandoned and disenfranchised.

289 Rebellion (Lies)**Arcade Fire****2005 ROUGH TRADE**

On their debut album 'Funeral', these mourning maniacs did soaring power-phant epics better than anyone, as 'Rebellion (Lies)' and its carnival of bawl and clatter attests.

288 It's A Man's Man's**Man's World****James Brown 1966 KING**

A thought-provoking sentiment combined with Brown's soulful, guttural howl ensured the long-lasting impact of this cultural critique.

287 Get Lucky**Daft Punk****2013 COLUMBIA**

Daft Punk's ubiquitous 2013 return, with Chic's Nile Rodgers revving up their disco diodes, made the biggest splash of any track in recent years.

286 Band On The Run**Wings 1973 APPLE**

Part harmonic spine-tingler, part rolling blues stomper and part soaring pop hit, 'Band On The Run' combined three songs into one complete behemoth.

285 Crimewave**Crystal Castles Vs Health****2007 TROUBLE**

Like a video-game soundtrack dragged into the darkside, 'Crimewave' somehow made electronic glitches and icy detachment danceable.

284 Caught By The Fuzz**Supergrass****1994 PARLOPHONE**

This two-minute tale of youthful exuberance in the face of interrogation by the cops introduced Supergrass as the hedonistic, hyperactive little brothers to Britpop's elder statesmen.

283 Bigmouth Strikes Again**The Smiths****1986 ROUGH TRADE**

Easily the finest song about bludgeoning people in their beds, 'Bigmouth...' combined Morrissey at his most caustic with Marr at his most melodic.

282 Connection**Elastica 1994 DECEPTIVE**

A stuttering explosion of juddering riffs, the swagger from Wire's 1977 track 'Three Girl Rhumba' and Justine Frischmann's insouciantly cool vocal made 'Connection' way, way more than "that song off *Trigger Happy TV*".

281 One Day Like This**Elbow 2008 FICTION**

Chosen to soundtrack the London 2012 closing ceremony, Elbow's blustery modern standard had the positive message and rousing atmosphere to prove an absolutely perfect fit.

280 She Loves You**The Beatles****1963 PARLOPHONE**

On which The Beatles proved that, in the right hands, the simplest sentiment said in the simplest way is all you need.

279 Velouria Pixies 1990 4AD

Pixies' first UK Top 40 hit was a spidery attack of characteristically quiet-loud-quiet dynamics that announced the band's fresh fascination with all things UFO with a hook like a raygun to your temples.

278 Hounds Of Love**Kate Bush 1985 EMI**

Released in '85 and later given a spiky makeover by The Futureheads, Kate Bush's Hitchcock-inspired tale of being hunted by (metaphorical) carnal canines was as tumultuous and passionate as its singer.

277 Tangled Up In Blue**Bob Dylan 1975 CBS**

Exhibiting Dylan's exemplary lyrical skill, 'Tangled Up In Blue' was more poetry than song, a contorted, masterful story underpinned by a simple acoustic backbone.

276 My Name Is**Eminem 1999 INTERSCOPE**

A bold introduction to 'The Slim Shady LP', this Dre-produced confessional teamed deadpan witticisms with overtly personal rhymes to form a controversial and groundbreaking cartoon-rap major-label debut.

275 Little Fluffy Clouds**The Orb 1990 BIG LIFE**

Initially released in 1990, 'Little Fluffy Clouds' euphoric beats and spoken-word samples quickly became the defining moment of ambient house, eventually breaking the Top 10 in '93.

► PICTURE SPECIAL



After rejecting Berlin as a base to record 2011 LP 'Let England Shake', PJ Harvey opted for Eype Church in Dorset; 'The Words That Maketh Murder' came from the sessions

274 Reach Out I'll Be There**The Four Tops**

1966 TAMLA MOTOWN

Featuring the best grunts/roars in the Motown canon, 'Reach Out...' showcased The Four Tops on righteously romantic form.

273 Leave Them**All Behind Ride**

1992 CREATION



The hypnotic opener to 'Going Blank Again' was arguably the most expansive sonic panorama of the shoegaze era, moving from prickly beginnings into a layered, reverb-laden crescendo that bent, but didn't quite break, the brain.

272 Hallelujah**Happy Mondays**

1989 FACTORY

Arriving during the Mondays' undisputed purple patch at the turn of the decade, 'Hallelujah's' ephemeral dance beat and worshipful lyrics almost made baggism a certified religion.

271 You Love Us**Manic Street Preachers**

1991 HEAVENLY



With the music world already polarised by the Manics' outsider politics, 'You Love Us' struck a beatific snarl and stuck two fingers up to the doubters with glorious irony.

270 My Sweet Lord**George Harrison**

1970 APPLE



Probably one of the most joyful tracks ever committed to tape, Harrison's first solo single – a UK chart-topper twice – was a blissful slice of spiritual positivity.

269 Perfect Day**Lou Reed**

1972 RCA

Taken from the seminal 'Transformer' album, 'Perfect Day's' gentle nostalgia provided one of Reed's more straightforward offerings, but one that would ring through the ages.

268 Only Love Can Break Your**Heart Saint Etienne**

1990 HEAVENLY

Bob Stanley and Pete Wiggs turned Neil Young's 1970 ballad into in a dubby, dance-orientated stomper, with vocals from Faith Over Reason frontwoman Moira Lambert.

267 Trash**Suede 1996 NUDE**

Suede had always been the decadent outsiders to Britpop's Albarn/Gallagher monarchy, and nothing summed up their gritty/glamorous manifesto as well as 'Trash'.

266 Shake Your Body (Down To The Ground)

1978 EPIC



The key release of The Jackson 5's disco period, this dancefloor buzzbomb helped transform a then 20-year-old Michael from child superstar to adult icon.

265 Empire State**Of Mind Jay-Z**

2009 ROC NATION

Trumping ol' Blue Eyes, Jay-Z and Alicia Keys' 2009 serenade to NY already chimed like the ultimate Big Apple tribute anthem.

264 Paperback Writer**The Beatles**

1966 PARLOPHONE

The Fab Four's tale of a struggling scribe was an early-career highlight, full of melodic nous, lyrical playfulness and multi-harmonic skill.

263 Music Sounds Better**With You Stardust**

1998 ROULE

Stardust – who featured Daft Punk's Thomas Bangalter – sampled Chaka Khan's 'Fate' to produce 1998's spangliest one-hit wonder.

262 Born Slippy NUXX**Underworld**

1995 JUNIOR BOY'S OWN

Originally an instrumental, 'Born Slippy' soon transformed into 'Born Slippy NUXX', taking its place on *Trainspotting's* bar-raising soundtrack and becoming the unifying chant of every lads' bar crawl around Ibiza forever.

261 Sexx Laws Beck

1999 GEFEN

An eclectic party fusion of funk beats, a brass section and pedal steel guitar that was as odd and inspired as the Jack Black-featuring video that accompanied it.



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260**Hound Dog**

1956 RCA VICTOR



A product of the Leiber and Stoller songwriting partnership that also birthed 'Jailhouse Rock', 'Hound Dog' was first recorded by Big Mama Thornton as a classic 12-bar blues track before Elvis changed the lyrics and the tempo, contorting Thornton's offering into a hip-swivelling, sexually charged slice of teen-bait rock'n'roll. Condemned by critics at the time for being crass, loud and badly played, it has since been widely accepted as one of the pioneering tracks to shape the genre, with its groundbreaking attitude and dynamics racking up more than 10 million sales and an induction into the Grammy Hall Of Fame. ■ LW

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Got Your Money**255****Ol' Dirty Bastard 1999 ELEKTRA**

With 'Enter The Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)' and his subsequent solo debut 'Return To The 36 Chambers: The Dirty Version' catapulting him to large-scale success, Ol' Dirty Bastard's 1999 follow-up 'N***a Please' – predominantly written during a prison stretch – spawned a stone-cold killer in 'Got Your Money', a knowingly crass, Neptunes-produced boast depicting the star's ludicrous lifestyle drenched in money and women. Notably, the track also featured the first released vocal from a then-unknown Kelis, who would put out her own debut later that year. ■ LW

259 Waterfalls TLC

1994 LAFACE/ARISTA

Tackling difficult issues surrounding the drug trade and HIV, 'Waterfalls' was a classy slice of undulating R&B that would cement the trio's musical legacy.

258 Walk This Way**Run-DMC feat. Aerosmith**

1986 LONDON

Injecting new life into Aerosmith's 1977 original, Run-DMC's cover smashed through the basement wall between rap and rock to pioneering and hugely influential effect.

257 Feel Good Hit Of**The Summer Queens****Of The Stone Age**

2000 INTERSCOPE

"Nicotine, valium, vicodin, marijuana, ecstasy and alcohol... C-c-c-c-c-co-caiiiiine": QOTSA's class-A manifesto was as addictive as the sledgehammer riffs that surrounded it.

256 Sea Within A Sea**The Horrors**

2009 XL



'Sea Within A Sea' was the track that changed everything, instantly elevating The Horrors from east London goths to genuine sonic innovators.

254 This Is Hardcore**Pulp 1998 ISLAND**

A seedy, six-and-a-half-minute tale of sexual depravity, Jarvis' anthem to society's pornographic underbelly was a parallel to the singer's increasing discomfort with fame.

253 Come On Eileen Dexys**Midnight Runners**

1982 MERCURY

Serge Pizzorno: "We played one night with Arctic Monkeys in Japan. They were in a karaoke bar and Alex was like, 'Come down and have a go.' They were all doing R Kelly's songs, which was quite surreal. The only one I could muster was 'Come On Eileen' – I remember it not going down too well. Everyone was just looking at me going, 'You knob, what are you doing?'"

252 Still DRE Dr Dre**feat. Snoop Dogg**

1999 AFTERMATH



Co-written with Jay-Z and featuring Snoop Dogg, Dre's 1999 hit centred around the most famous piano chords in hip-hop.

251 Oliver's Army**Elvis Costello & The****Attractions 1979 RADAR**

The most successful single from the second-most-famous Elvis, 'Oliver's Army' mused on class and the Northern Ireland conflict in the most infectiously jaunty 'Dancing Queen' fashion.

250 Space Oddity**David Bowie 1969 PHILIPS**

Bowie's classic about a pre-smack Major Tom stranded in space – written partly to coincide with the Apollo 11 moon landing – became a Top Five hit and then a Number One single when re-released in 1975.

249 Sexy Boy**Air 1998 VIRGIN**

Their first full-length album, 'Moon Safari', introduced the world beyond France to the new Parisian electronic sound, and 'Sexy Boy' was its sophisticated brainworm of a first single.

248 My Girls**Animal Collective 2009 DOMINO**

A revolution in global-beat experimental pop, 'My Girls' kicked off the modern age of Foalsian mathtronics with a dancefloor destroyer built from tons of squelchy handclaps and deep-cavern rave.

247 Intergalactic**Beastie Boys 1998 GRAND ROYAL**

The first single from the Beasties' fifth album 'Hello Nasty' restated their claim to old-school hip-hop authenticity, even while battling gigantic robots in Tokyo.

246 Voodoo Child (Slight Return) The Jimi Hendrix**Experience 1968 TRACK**

After recording the mammoth 15-minute blues 'Voodoo Chile', Hendrix got his regular band and had another crack the next day. The tighter, more focused 'Voodoo Child (Slight Return)' was instantly legendary.

245 Fuck Forever**Babysambles****2005 ROUGH TRADE**

Pete Doherty's first post-Libertines single railed against those who try to build a future, but found him still dreaming of a happy ending. Ramshackle, but thrillingly impassioned.

244 Motown Junk**Manic Street Preachers****1991 HEAVENLY**

They were still stencilling their own T-shirts and playing to half-full pub back rooms, but this icon-skewering single showed that the Manics meant business.

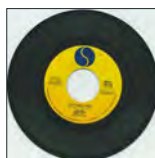
243 Dry The Rain**The Beta Band 1997 REGAL**

This track from their first EP delivered everything The Beta Band promised, melding folk with hip-hop, an anthemic 'Hey Jude'-ish coda and a trumpet.

242 Public Image**PiL 1978 VIRGIN**

For his first single after leaving the Sex Pistols, John Lydon wrote a song about how nobody in his old band took a blind bit of notice of him. The world took notice.

237

Blitzkrieg Bop**Ramones 1976 SIRE**

The first track on the Ramones' debut album was a thrilling statement of intent. From the pounding drums and "Hey! Ho! Let's go!" chant, it channelled all

the brash brattiness the bruvvas made their stock-in-trade, and the only cogent response was to pogo. But the lyric – essentially meaningless, despite the World War II title – was the kind of teenage dance-craze party fluff that could have quite happily sat in Danny & The Juniors' setlist alongside 'At The Hop'. On one level, the Ramones' song pastiched that style; they took the clean-cut '50s cutesiness and dressed it down in ripped jeans and scuffed leather. But there was a reverence for, and a love of, old-time rock'n'roll that was impossible not to hear. If punk was a revolution, its foot soldiers made sure they didn't destroy everything that had gone before. ■ AB

236 In Between Days**The Cure 1985 FICTION**

With the doomy goth aspect of his oeuvre set to one side, Robert Smith and chums were inspired by the breezy pop of New Order for this huge worldwide hit.

235 Jailhouse Rock**Elvis Presley 1957 RCA**

America had already found difficulty dealing with Elvis' suggestive gyrations; good job nobody noticed the homoerotic lyrics in this evergreen Leiber/Stoller movie theme.

234 Psycho Killer**Talking Heads 1977 SIRE**

Although it's possibly Talking Heads' best-known song, this murderously catchy early single was never a hit, only reaching Number 92 in the US.

233 Get It On**T Rex 1971 FLY**

The glam starship lifted off the second that Marc Bolan banged his glittery gong, and the early '70s instantly became the age of the stomping, sequinned sex rocker.

232 (Don't Fear) The Reaper**Blue Oyster Cult 1976 CBS**

A huge '70s hit with a '60s feel that may be best known in the 21st century for inspiring the infamous Will Ferrell/Christopher Walken "More cowbell!" sketch on *Saturday Night Live*.

231 Do I Wanna Know?**Arctic Monkeys****2013 DOMINO**

Alex Turner's sleaziest song was as pervy as Jarvis Cocker in his 'This Is Hardcore' days – the perfect foil for those disgustingly rigid riffs.

230 Ms Jackson OutKast**2001 LAFACE/ARISTA**

The hit that broke OutKast worldwide took the form of an open letter from André 3000 to the mother of his former girlfriend, Erykah Badu.

229 Oblivion**Grimes 2012 4AD**

Drawing on her own experiences, Claire Boucher's breakthrough track couched its lyrics of fear and assault inside a bright, light electro-pop setting.

228 Temptation**New Order****1982 FACTORY**

It should have been little more than a waystation as New Order morphed from doomy proto-goths to full-on disco monsters, but the swirling chaos of 'Temptation' still mesmerises.

227 Sympathy For The Devil**The Rolling Stones****1968 DECCA**

Over congas and insistent backing vocals, Jagger told the history of the world from Satan's point of view. It's as powerful as it is eerie and hypnotic.

226 Respect**Aretha Franklin 1967 ATLANTIC**

Aretha's titanic cover became an anthem of female empowerment, and reputedly gave us the hip-hop slang for kudos ('props', deriving from her "proppers"). But the original version was released two years earlier by its writer, Otis Redding.

225 Get Up (I Feel Like)**Being A) Sex Machine****James Brown 1970 KING**

The nascent JB's – with Bootsy Collins on bass – lay down a groove so heavy that even its place on the playlist of a thousand wedding discos couldn't dilute its power.

224 Birthday
The Sugarcubes
 1987 ONE LITTLE INDIAN



The world outside Iceland's first exposure to the singular Björk was an apt taster: a bizarre song about a five-year-old girl's feelings for a 50-year-old male neighbour.

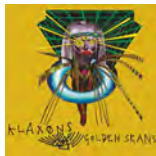
223 Electricity Spiritualized
 1997 DEDICATED

Jason Pierce's way of lulling his listeners with orchestral loveliness before beating them with volcanic punk thrash was never better executed than on this brutal assault from the 'Ladies And Gentlemen...' album.

222

Golden Skans

Klaxons 2007 RINSE



They'd been around a little while – one single had charted; earlier ones had been praised in these pages and elsewhere – but after a triumphant set at the 2006 Reading Festival, Klaxons looked set to make a big impact the following year. 'Golden Skans' didn't disappoint, earning them a Top 10 hit, getting everyone talking up a scene they started calling nu rave, and setting the London-based band's debut album on course for Number Two. Frenetic and insanely catchy, the song talked about holding light in your hand, and was inspired by a revolutionary piece of disco equipment: the Golden Scan projects fast-changing, computer-controlled patterns, beams, strobes and visual effects into dry-ice-filled rooms. It was as much a part of the noughties acid house experience as repetitive beats and dropping Es – so, fittingly, Klaxons' stunning day-glo breakthrough nodded back to the first rave era their sound evoked. ■ AB

221 Mrs Robinson
Simon & Garfunkel
 1968 CBS

Contracted to write three songs for Mike Nichols' movie *The Graduate*, Paul Simon came up with a small part of just one. It was about the wife of wartime president FD Roosevelt, until Nichols insisted it hymn a different Mrs R.

220 End Of A Century
Blur 1994 FOOD

Always keen to get in on the next big thing before anyone else, Damon Albarn started mining pre-millennial tension six years early.

219 You Really Got Me
The Kinks 1964 PYE

Musicologists maintain this was the first hit based on power chords. Everyone else just reckons it's ace.

218 Straight To You
Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds
 1992 MUTE

Tempering Nick Cave's bar-brawl furies with some world-beating heartbreak, 1992 ballad 'Straight To You' was his thundering, stately ode to devotion.

217 Faster Manic Street
Preachers 1994 EPIC



High controversy at the Beeb when the Manics dropped in to play this 'Holy Bible' single on *Top Of The Pops*: James Dean Bradfield wore an IRA-esque balaclava; 25,000 people complained.

216 Rip It Up Orange Juice
 1983 POLYDOR



Adding synths and funk to the mix, Edwyn Collins' band enjoyed their biggest hit, bridging the gap between new wave and '80s alternative pop so snugly it felt machine-tooled.

215 Lithium
Nirvana 1991 DGC

One of the few songs Kurt Cobain completed without having to add in fragments of other pieces of writing, 'Lithium' was about a man who used religious faith to get over a break-up.

214 Solsbury Hill
Peter Gabriel 1977 CHARISMA

This folksy tale of mystical interventions amid an Iron Age hill fort inspired covers by everyone from Erasure to Mercury Rev, since it's roughly a billion times catchier and more life-affirming than a song about leaving Genesis should rightly be.

213 Here Comes Your Man
Pixies 1989 4AD

Pixies weren't forced into recording this early song for their second full-length album, but it was close: they originally felt this surf-pop wonder was too conventional. But, sequestered between the raging Biblical squalls of 'Doolittle', that was precisely its masterstroke.

212 Radio Free Europe
REM 1981 HIB-TONE

The band hated their debut single. There was a good reason for Michael Stipe's famously indecipherable lyrics: he hadn't finished them. They re-recorded it two years later, when the same excuse surely was not available.

211 You Keep Me Hangin' On
The Supremes
 1966 TAMLA MOTOWN

The unmistakable guitar intro to this explosive landmark of cut-the-crap dude-ditching was variously said to imitate Morse code or radio news stings.

210 Hit The North
The Fall 1987 BEGGARS BANQUET



When The Fall followed a Top 30 hit cover version of the Motown standard 'There's A Ghost In My House' with a glossily produced single boasting an actual hummable melody, some cried "sellout". As if.

209 Jealous Guy
John Lennon 1971 APPLE



It was Roxy Music who first had a hit with this 'Imagine' track only three months after his death; Lennon's original wasn't released as a single until several years later.

208 Da Funk Daft Punk
 1995 SOMA

You may have thought it sounded like a 1970s disco tune recorded in outer space, but Thomas Bangalter said it was hip-hop, inspired by Warren G.

207 Levi Stubbs' Tears
Billy Bragg 1986 GO! DISCS



A breathtaking song about the power of pop: Bragg's female protagonist wept for her lost love as she listened to The Four Tops in her caravan.

206 Rise Pil 1986 VIRGIN

Lydon wrote this song about police torture in South Africa back in the Pistols days. He fired his second band, recruited Tony Williams, Steve Vai and Ryuichi Sakamoto, and turned it into an unlikely hit.

205 Reptilia
The Strokes
 2003 ROUGH TRADE



The tune that proved 'Is This It' was not mere fluke, the propulsive garage roar of 'Reptilia' had the band accelerating towards the dark side of town with no brakes, pouting all the way.

204 Fairytale Of New York
The Pogues
 1987 POGUE MAHONE



It sounds so natural, but 'Fairytale...' took nearly two years to write, the band couldn't play it, and Kirsty MacColl's vocal was only supposed to be a demo.

203 Crazy Patsy Kline
 1961 DECCA

Seeking a comeback hit after almost dying in a car crash, Cline was persuaded to try this Willie Nelson composition, which she initially hated. It came to define her.

202 What's Going On
Marvin Gaye
 1971 TAMLA MOTOWN

"With the world exploding around me, how am I supposed to keep singing love songs?" asked Gaye after the 1965 Watts riots, the police brutality of Bloody Thursday in Berkeley and his talks with his brother returning from Vietnam. The result was soul's defining social-protest anthem, lushly rendered.

201 I'm Waiting For The Man
The Velvet Underground
 1967 VERVE

If Lou Reed's dealer had arrived on time, this chugging riff monster may never have been around to inspire countless time-rich but talent-starved indie hopefuls.

200 Where Is My Mind?**Pixies 1988 4AD**

Inspired by Frank Black's experiences scuba-diving in the Caribbean, its eerie sense of mental dislocation saw this song played over the closing credits of *Fight Club*.

199 Light My Fire**The Doors 1967 ELEKTRA**

Willy-waving rock sorcerer Jim Morrison frothed himself to transcendence, but it was Ray Manzarek's organ freakouts that made this a Doors highlight.

198 This Is A Low**Blur 1994 FOOD**

Radio 4's early-morning shipping forecast inspired this lonely pan around the British Isles, the sound of Blur at their melancholic best.

197 Monkey Gone To Heaven**Pixies 1988 4AD**

God was dead, the planet was set to follow, but trust Pixies to make the apocalypse sound beautiful. Also featured one of rock's coolest ad libs: "Rock me, Joe".

196 Made Of Stone**The Stone Roses****1989 SILVERTONE**

John Squire told *NME* 'Made Of Stone' was about "making a wish and watching it happen". Certainly, the Roses seldom sounded dreamier, nor bigger of heart.

195 Atmosphere**Joy Division****1980 FACTORY**

Released after Ian Curtis' death, this cold swirl of liquid-marble synths and pattering toms sounded like a post-punk funeral procession; a final testament.

194 Alright**Supergrass****1995 PARLOPHONE**

The Oxford nippers rolled out the old Joanna for a song about simple pleasures. Hanging with friends. Smoking cigarettes. Extinguishing cigarettes. It's all there.

193 Sign 'O' The Times**Prince****1987 PAISLEY PARK**

The Purple One made like a psychedelic Marvin Gaye on this haunting testament to modern life, touching on Aids, addiction and gang warfare.

192

Tender**Blur 1999 FOOD**

There remains a tendency in some quarters to regard Blur as musical tourists, trying on class and cultural positions for sport, but a bit too distant to really commit. Perhaps there's a little truth in that, too, but it does overlook the fact that some of Damon Albarn's most touching and emotive songs have come from exploring positions foreign to that of a firmly middle-class chap who grew up in a fairly dull place in Essex. On 'Tender', we heard Blur do gospel, and they did it beautifully. At the time, of course, Albarn was hurting from his split from Justine Frischmann, and it all came out in this track's bruised but euphoric six minutes. Damon and Graham sang with a wobble, but the London Community Gospel Choir were on hand to play booming counterpoint, and slowly, gradually, the sorrow faded to be replaced with a simple, life-affirming truth: "*Love's the greatest thing/That we have*". There was no smart-assery here, no clever-cleverness. Just a whole lot of feeling. No surprise, then, that during Blur's 2009 reformation, this was the song the crowd sang to lure Blur back on for an encore. ■ LP

191 Nowhere To Run
Martha & The Vandellas**1965 TAMLA MOTOWN**

One of Motown's most heart-rending singles, and its boldest production; a metallic Detroit stomp that employed snow chains as percussion tools.

190 Shoot Speed/Kill Light**Primal Scream****2000 CREATION**

The Scream team capped the incendiary 'XTRMNT' with an ecstatic, krautrock-inspired closer featuring Kevin Shields in the producer's chair.

189 Don't Look Back
Into The Sun**The Libertines****2003 ROUGH TRADE**

Pete and Carl at their shamolic, off-the-cuff best – a playful lurch of raucous chorusing, ragtime piano and big, beautiful heart.

188 Mardy Bum**Arctic Monkeys****2006 DOMINO**

A lyrical portrait of a moody girlfriend with a smile "*like looking down the barrel of a gun*", this was one of Alex Turner's finest kitchen-sink song sketches.

187 The Concept
Teenage Fanclub**1991 CREATION**

"She wears denim wherever she goes/Says she's gonna get some records by the Status Quo..." A wistful highlight of the Fannies' excellent 1991 album 'Bandwagonesque'.

186 Subterranean Homesick**Blues Bob Dylan 1965 CBS**

Regina Spektor: "I love how his mind works, love his voice and I just think he's so fucking funny – he's got such a great joy."

185 There Goes The Fear**Doves 2002 HEAVENLY**

Life philosophy from Jimi Goodwin's atmospheric post-Britpop troupe – a gentle encouragement to let go of youth and grow old with grace.

184 Under Pressure**Queen & David Bowie****1981 EMI**

Yes, it was co-written by Queen and Bowie, but what everyone recalls 'Under Pressure' for is the bassline: one of the most memorable in rock history.

183 No Good
(Start The Dance)**The Prodigy****1994 XL**

A highlight of Liam Howlett's magnum opus 'Music For The Jilted Generation', twisting Kelly Charles' 'You're No Good For Me' into a queasy adrenaline rush.

182 I Can See For Miles**The Who****1967 TRACK**

Paul McCartney once dubbed this slab of bruiser psychedelia the "heaviest" song he'd ever heard, and set out to write 'Helter Skelter' shortly after.

181 Protect Ya Neck**Wu-Tang Clan****1993 LOUD**

Straight outta Staten Island, a new generation of New York hip-hop landed in a ninja stance, katana sword at your throat.

180 Shake Some Action**Flamin' Groovies****1976 SIRE**

A lilting power-pop gem from this San Francisco quartet, harking back to the flower power '60s, but with a muscular edge that endeared it to the punks, too.

179 Never Understand
The Jesus And Mary Chain**1985 BLANCO Y NEGRO**

East Kilbride's finest took a song fit for one of Phil Spector's girl groups and strafed it in ear-lacerating feedback. The result: noise-pop in excelsis.

178 The Tracks Of My Tears
Smokey Robinson**& The Miracles****1965 TAMLA MOTOWN**

Covered by everyone from Bryan Ferry to Linda Ronstadt to, er, Peter Andre – but no-one can top the raw sorrow of Smokey's original.

177 Roll Over Beethoven**Chuck Berry****1956 CHESS**

The St Louis singer-guitarist ushered out the old order and waved in the new with this genre-defining cut of primal, rocking rhythm and blues.

176 Can't Stand Me Now**The Libertines****2004 ROUGH TRADE**

The Libs' penultimate single dwelt on Pete and Carl's fraying relationship – but no soap opera in history felt this romantic, this poetic, or this raw.

175 Won't Get Fooled**Again The Who**

1971 POLYDOR



It has an anthemic air, but the eight-minute closer of 'Who's Next' was a cautionary tale, warning of false revolutions and how power always corrupts.

174 Yes**McAlmont & Butler**

1995 HUT



To celebrate his freedom from Suede, Bernard Butler teamed up with soul singer David McAlmont for some Motown-tinged guitar pop with a barb in the tail.

173 Rebel Without A Pause**Public Enemy**

1987 DEF JAM

The opening salvo from '...A Nation Of Millions...' saw The Bomb Squad working with new intensity and Chuck D hitting the mic with righteous fury.

172 Someone Great**LCD Soundsystem**

2007 DFA



Is it about a break-up? A death? A miscarriage? 'Someone Great' was one of James Murphy's most cryptic songs, but everyone could identify with its wrenching loss.

171 A-Punk**Vampire Weekend**

2007 XL

The smartie-pants New Yorkers in pastel-shade pullovers announced their arrival with this breathless and erudite Violent Femmes jangle.

170 Higher Than The Sun**Primal Scream**

1991 CREATION



A dreamy highlight of 1991's 'Screamadelica', Bobby G sang of spiritual transcendence and ego death as he sailed off on waves of ecstasy bliss.

169 Green Onions**Booker T & The MGs**

1962 STAX

From one of America's first multiracial soul groups, a Hammond jam so named, says Booker T, because 'Green Onions' are "the nastiest thing I can think of".

168 Daniel**Bat For Lashes**

2009 PARLOPHONE



Natasha Khan got her Kate Bush on for this evocative electro-pop melodrama, a memory of first love told under "marble movie skies".

167 Temporary Secretary**Paul McCartney**

1980 PARLOPHONE

From 1980's home-recorded 'McCartney II' came this odd gem: wonky electro-pop that didn't sound so much ahead of its time as out of it altogether.

166 (You Gotta) Fight**For Your Right (To Party!)****Beastie Boys**

1987 DEF JAM

The snotty, not yet socially conscious New Yorkers teamed up with Rick Rubin and spray-painted their punk-rock manifesto all over rap's facade.

165 Cannonball**The Breeders**

1993 4AD



Former Pixie Kim Deal one-upped her former band with this feast of candied hooks and fizzy quiet-loud dynamics. About the Marquis de Sade, apparently.

164 Fix Up, Look Sharp**Dizzee Rascal**

2003 XL



Oiii! Dizzy Diz showed there was more to him than grime on this UK rap stomp sampling Billy Squier's 'The Big Beat'.

163 I Want You Back**The Jackson Five**

1969 TAMLA MOTOWN



Five kids from Gary, Indiana, made their Motown debut, and what an introduction: youthful infatuation channelled into the purest pop imaginable.

162 Changes**David Bowie**

1971 RCA

The rock'n'roll chameleon ushered in fourth album 'Hunky Dory' with this manifesto for artistic reinvention: "Oh, look out, you rock'n'rollers!"

161 Son Of A Preacher Man**Dusty Springfield**

1968 ATLANTIC

Dusty got sinful with the titular Billy-Ray on this highlight of 1969's 'Dusty In Memphis', revived for a new generation after appearing in *Pulp Fiction*.

160 Transmission**Joy Division**

1979 FACTORY



Ian Curtis surveyed the collapse of his relationship to a crackling, propulsive post-punk backing that slowly angled down into the abyss.

159 Purple Haze**The Jimi Hendrix Experience**

1967 TRACK

James Ford: "The first record I really connected with was 'Purple Haze'. I remember being blown away by its wild and unhinged energy. It was also the first thing I ever tried to work out on a guitar."

158 Tiny Dancer**Elton John**

1972 DJM

A six-minute epic penned by Elton's lyricist Bernie Taupin about the beautiful women of California – but it's Elton's delivery that makes this soar.

157 Louie Louie**The Kingsmen**

1963 PYE INTERNATIONAL

The Portland garage band reworked Richard Berry's reggae-tinged 1957 hit as a crude beat-group howl, making it one of the most covered records ever in the process.

156 I Want To Hold Your Hand**The Beatles**

1963 PARLOPHONE

Lennon and McCartney wrote this sweet entreaty "eyeball to eyeball", and its raucously pretty harmonies made it the Fabs' first US chart-topper.

155 Ace Of Spades**Motörhead**

1980 BRONZE



Three minutes of breathless, sulphate-snorting thrash to make even the meekest online poker player feel like a dangerous rock'n'roll nihilist.

154 Papa's Got**A Brand New Bag****James Brown**

1965 KING

A horn-powered funk jive to shaking your shit on the dancefloor, and Brown's first song to crack the Billboard Top 100.

153 Freak Scene**Dinosaur Jr**

1988 BLAST FIRST



Grungy hymn to outsider bonding with a lyric to swoon to: "Don't let me fuck up will you/Cos when I need a friend it's still you..."

152 Dancing In The Street**Martha & The Vandellas**

1965 TAMLA MOTOWN

This 1964 anthem, co-written by Marvin Gaye, became an anthem for the civil rights movement and a jewel in Motown's crown.

151**Follow The Leader****Eric B & Rakim 1988 MCA**

Eric B & Rakim were far from the first hip-hop group to emerge from the New York projects, but they have as good a claim as anyone for having made the sound into an artform. Their 1987 album 'Paid In Full' was boundary-

breaking both in terms of lyricism and production: Rakim matched a storyteller's eye with a talent for limber internal rhymes, while Eric B's dense, sampled creations pointed the way forward for a legion of turntable innovators. It wasn't until 1988's 'Follow The Leader', though, that the pair really came of age. This was hip-hop not rooted in ghetto tales and ego-driven one-upmanship, but music of substance and boundless imagination. The title track was a raw bass jam that twinkled with expansive, cosmic jazz strings, while Rakim hit the mic with a flow both relaxed and utterly assured, boasting of "rhyme displays that engrave deep as X-rays" before taking the listener off on a metaphorical journey across the cosmos. Hip-hop moves quickly these days, but 'Follow The Leader' still sounds untouchable. Well, duh: the fundamentals of science never go out of fashion. ■ LP



150 (Sittin' On) The Dock Of The Bay Otis Redding

1968 VOLT/ATCO

Redding was killed in a plane crash just days after recording his timeless ode to keeping busy doing nothing. Tragic, but what a song to end on.

149 All The Young Dudes Mott The Hoople

1972 COLUMBIA



It doesn't matter if you get old and it doesn't matter if the good times stop. Such was the moral of

Bowie's greatest gift to the Hoople, and the foundation of at least three Oasis songs.

148 West End Girls

Pet Shop Boys 1984 EMI



And so Neil and Chris arrived, exquisitely bottling gender politics and the social tension of encroaching Thatcherism in their sublime synthpop, then scattering it on to rainy streets. Still perfect.

147 #9 Dream

John Lennon 1974 APPLE

Could this have been Lennon's most hypnotically gorgeous, ethereal moment ever? Try to figure it out before you inevitably pass out from its wooziness.

146 Soon My Bloody

Valentine 1990 CREATION

The magnificently sprawling seven-minute track from the 'Glider' EP, 'Soon' pushed the band in a dance direction as Shields' guitar created the sound of Madchester melting.

144 Atomic Blondie

1979 CHRYSALIS

A gleaming glitterball that still knew how to rock, amid a catalogue not shy of amazingness. New wave's most devastating disco A-bomb.

143 Hello Goodbye

The Beatles 1967 PARLOPHONE

Nick Frost: "When I was 17 and working in the City, I did karaoke quite a bit. My song was 'Hello Goodbye' by The Beatles. Me and my friend Peter Ashton would work out which bits we'd do. It worked. We had a thing going on."

142 Creep Radiohead

1992 PARLOPHONE



Radiohead's albatross was and is also their monument. 'Creep' was the moment grunge reached the UK and turned into something smoother, and the band's later resistance to it would fire all their subsequent innovations.

141 Alone Again Or

Love 1967 ELEKTRA

A haunting lesson in psych-folk that resonates through the ages. Few songs can so poetically marry the despair of a moment with hope for the future.

140 Windowlicker

Aphex Twin 1999 WARP

Richard D James' glitch-techno mainstay, the sound of pure evil, left you feeling violated by the end.

139 No Woman No Cry

Bob Marley

1974 ISLAND

Looking back to his younger days in the ghettos of Trench Town, Jamaica, Marley's lilting reassurance to a distressed lover must go down as his most effortlessly beautiful four minutes.

138 Monster

Kanye West

2010 ROC-A-FELLA

Getting the boys (and his gal Nicki) over for an apocalyptic jam, Kanye proved his genius was still developing at the same rate as his mania. This is how you do a supergroup.

137 Men's Needs

The Crips 2007 WICHITA



The moment when Team Jarman graduated from awesome chaotic scrappy indie boys to awesome chaotic scrappy indie boys the world would take seriously.

136 Paint It Black

The Rolling Stones

1966 DECCA

Social upheaval, Vietnam, satanism, goth-sex... whatever 'Paint It Black' was about, it exposed the dark voodoo soul of the Stones.

135 The Only One I Know

The Charlatans

1990 DEAD DEAD GOOD



The original blast of baggy from Warrington's finest might be the aural equivalent of a gawky slouch, but what a slouch. The blueprint for louche indie psychedelia.

134 Over And Over

Hot Chip 2006 EMI

In which they graduated from east London clockwork wimps to the era's ultimate cocks of the dancefloor walk. Who knew clubbing could get so sensitive?

133 Gigantic

Pixies 1988 4AD



It says a lot about the deranged majesty of Kim Deal that a song sung by a person who wasn't the singer sits among a great band's most definitive tunes. But such is the heartswelling uplift of her romantic rock nursery rhyme. Big, big love.

132 Pretty Vacant

Sex Pistols

1977 VIRGIN



Rhys Ifans: "It was my first record. I got it by swapping it for a Damned armband that I ordered from the back of *Melody Maker*. I think it was an American import because it had a picture of Frank Sinatra on the cover with his eyes cut out – yeah, really rare. I've still got it somewhere."

131 Jumpin' Jack Flash

The Rolling Stones

1968 DECCA

If you had to describe the Stones to an alien in one song, you'd choose this horny old throbber about Keef's gardener to best encapsulate their itchy brand of sex-blues.

130 Wichita Lineman

Glen Campbell

1968 CAPITOL



Not for nothing described as "the first existential country song", this otherworldly classic pushes not just the limits of genre, but of song itself.

129 A Change Is Gonna Come

Sam Cooke

1964 RCA VICTOR

Not released until after Cooke's death, and only a modest hit by his standards, this yearning, hopeful croon came to exemplify the struggles of the civil rights movement.

128 The Eton Rifles

The Jam 1979 POLYDOR

In a career not exactly lacking in seething, righteous charges, this mod-punk rally against class inequality is the most seething, righteous charge Paul Weller ever made.

127 Regulate

Warren G & Nate Dogg

1994 DEF JAM

A towering totem of '90s hip-hop, the sleek 'Regulate' also cannily described itself, as G-funk went "tweaking into a whole new era... funk on a whole new level".

145

Some Velvet Morning

Lee Hazlewood And Nancy Sinatra 1967 REPRISE



There may have been stranger duets committed to tape in the history of pop music, but surely nothing that can match its dementedness with such big-time sensuality. Hazlewood and Sinatra had worked together before, of course, generally on more trad country and western laments. But this psychedelic odyssey stands out as Exhibit A of why it must have been fucking brilliant to have been around in the '60s. Even Kate Moss wanted a go when she covered it with Primal Scream. Lee and Nancy gallop around a dreamscape, effectively singing two different songs, and it didn't matter. Just don't try to fathom much of what's actually going on. Who is Phaedra? And what's all this talk of opening up Nancy's gate? Actually, don't answer that. We think we can probably imagine for ourselves, you old rascal, Lee. ■ DM

126

Just Like Honey

The Jesus And Mary Chain 1985 BLANCO Y NEGRO



The standout track from the Mary Chain's outstanding debut saw Bobby Gillespie scatter the drum beat from The Ronettes' 'Be My Baby' across its opening chimes. Tipping the hat to such an iconic pop emblem could have been risky, but the Reid brothers created something just as beautiful, an enveloping chasm of narcotic fuzz that you could never fully scrape off your eardrums. It's a song of small beginnings that ricocheted down the generations, ending up on the soundtrack to *Lost In Translation* almost 20 years later. ■ DS

125 Disco 2000

Pulp 1995 ISLAND



If 'Common People' marked Pulp out as the true masters of all Britpop surveyed, then 'Disco 2000' was their victory lap, a neon-flooded anthem to millennial optimism.

124 Teenage Kicks

The Undertones 1978 GOOD VIBRATIONS

John Peel's favourite song was basically the heady thrill of hormonal whoopee put on tape. The picture of Dorian Gray that resides inside every rock fan's heart.

123 Purple Rain Prince

1984 WARNER BROS

Somewhere in all of the billions of possible alternate universes, every one of us stands on a cocktail table, drenched in sambuca, glitter everywhere, shrieking 'Purple Rain'. That's the mark of a song with legs.

122 Hotel Yorba

The White Stripes 2001 XL



Light relief from all the lightning-bolt blues, 'Hotel Yorba' was Jack and Meg's wild, thigh-slapping hoedown. Pop fact: the Hotel Yorba actually existed in southwest Detroit and the track was recorded in Room 206. It's now used as subsidised government housing.

121 Celebrity Skin

Hole 1998 GEFENN

"Oh make me over/I'm all I wanna be/A walking study/In demonology". From this defiant statement of rock luminescence, Courtney's rep as the grunge Yoko was buried forever.

120 Virginia Plain

Roxy Music 1972 EG

Roxy Music's rollicking ode to the jet-set high-life has become so influential that it has a Virgin Atlantic Boeing 747 named after it. Fact.

119 Waterfall

The Stone Roses 1989 SILVERTONE

A romantic baggy glide that sounded so effortlessly stratospheric you'd imagine Ian, John, Mani and Reni were spinning hazy melodic gold in their sleep. Masterful.

118 Someday The Strokes

2002 ROUGH TRADE

In little more than two minutes, rock'n'roll was saved from navel-gazing gloom. 'Someday' was indecency personified, plus crooning, twangs and leather jackets. Win.

117 Geno Dexys Midnight

Runners 1980 EMI

Dexys' second single and first UK Number One paid tribute to Indiana soul singer Geno Washington with a loving pastiche that turned into a basement soul revue all of its own.

116 Mr Brightside

The Killers 2003 ISLAND

Fronted by a dandyish Mormon with a thing for new-wave Brit miserablism, The Killers should not have worked. Then you heard this freewheeling hate-ride of bitterness and infidelity and they made immaculate sense.

115 Bitter Sweet Symphony

The Verve 1997 HUT

That a song so completely lacking in hope ("You're a slave to money then you die") ended up as one of the most rapturous of the '90s was testament to the madness of both the decade and the band.

114 Step On

Happy Mondays 1990 FACTORY

Still the signature tune of Madchester hedonism, despite the Roses' towering legacy. Listening to this psych salad, it was hardly surprising to learn that Shaun Ryder ended up hunting UFOs.

113 When Doves Cry

Prince 1984 WARNER BROS



This taut funk wail against domestic tension was the white-hot peak of Mr Prince Rogers Nelson's imperial phase. The lead single from 'Purple Rain' and his first Number One single, topping the US charts for five weeks.

112 Supersonic

Oasis 1994 CREATION

A real chop-slap of mountainous riffs, glorious fuzz, cocky drawls and narcotic nonsense lyrics, 'Supersonic' was Oasis' big introduction and the early signature tune that sent weedy old Britpop reeling. Gin and tonics all round.

111 Rescue Me

Fontella Bass 1965 CHESS



The definitive slice of rhythm and blues ardour that set the dial for late-'60s Motown and R&B to 'pained elation'.

110 Ice Hockey Hair Super

Furry Animals 1998 CREATION

A lugubrious hot bath of woozy psychedelia, SFA's magnum opus 'Ice Hockey Hair' built to a finale as uplifting as any opera.

109 Standing In The

Way Of Control

Gossip 2006 KILL ROCK STARS



Feeling helpless and cheated after gay people in the US were denied the right to marry, Beth Ditto bellowed out her anger on this, which married riot grrrl politics with disco escapism. A classic modern protest anthem.

108 Running Up That Hill

Kate Bush 1985 EMI

The moment when Queen Kate graduated from wispy ingénue to bona fide good witch. Let's just try to forget the Olympics remix though, eh?

107 House Of Jealous Lovers

The Rapture 2003 DFA

The early-noughties punk-funk explosion preserved in gleaming aspic. More cowbell!

106 Don't Look Back In Anger

Oasis 1995 CREATION

The song that marked Noel G's emergence from his brother's formidable shadow, the 'Hey Jude' of the Gallagher canon stands up well against its inspiration.

105 Song 2 Blur

1997 FOOD

It didn't make much sense – "feeling heavy metal" should involve goblins and Jägerbombs really – but this buzzing firecracker instantly became Britpop's moshing war-cry.

104 The Drowners

Suede 1993 NUDE



Brett and co sashayed on to the scene with this swooner and soon turned indie an androgynous shade of jaundiced yellow.

103 Superstition

Stevie Wonder 1972 MOTOWN

Of all the precious gifts bestowed on the world by Motown's grinning prince, 'Superstition' was by far the catchiest.

102 Motorcycle Emptiness

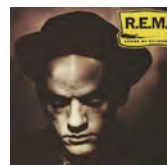
Manic Street Preachers 1992 SONY

Every ounce of loathing, glamour and hope the Valley Clash ever stood for condensed into four ludicrous minutes. Ambition, filth, pomposity and romance; stadium rock never sounded cooler.

101

Losing My Religion

REM 1991 WARNER BROS



REM entered their golden years by bending the mainstream to their own ever-so-slightly twisted shape. 'Losing My Religion' was a track with no chorus, adopted as a totem by a generation of students who'd decided that choruses were for the clumsy and ill-educated. Instead, dynamics, minor-chord tension and spiritual disenfranchisement were the order of the day, forcing literate, collegiate indie rock deep into daytime radio and laying the foundations upon which REM's dark benchmark 'Automatic For The People' could be built. 'Shiny Happy People' frolicked through a 'Near Wild Heaven' nearby, but these more opaque pools ran deeper. ■ MB

100 I Am The Resurrection The Stone Roses

1989 SILVERTONE



In case you hadn't realised that there was something quasi-religious about the Roses by the end of their seminal debut album, here was Ian Brown declaring himself the second coming over Manchester's funkier ego hymn, culminating in a climax so ecstatic and triumphal it turned a billion indie dancefloors into Christ-posing moshpits overnight. ■ MB

99 No One Knows Queens Of The Stone Age

2002 INTERSCOPE

Like all the best QOTSA songs, 'No One Knows' was equal parts danger and serpentine temptation, like stumbling across a suitcase full of money that's surrounded by bullet-ridden corpses: you know you shouldn't, but you will anyway. And with that maddeningly infectious riff and a mid-section that successfully attempts to be desert rock's 'A Day In The Life', how could you not? ■ BN



98

Killing In The Name

Rage Against The Machine 1993 EPIC

As America reeled from the Los Angeles race riots of 1992, sparked by the acquittal of four white police officers videotaped beating black construction worker Rodney King to within an inch of his life, Rage Against The Machine condensed the subject of a thousand newspaper thinkpieces into 12 incendiary words, repeated over a guitar riff simmering with fury: "Some of those who work forces/Are the same who burn crosses".

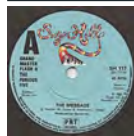
Few expected it to become such a huge global anthem – even without the hugely controversial lyrics comparing cops to members of the Ku Klux Klan you've still got a free-noise breakdown and one of the most viciously swearsy bridges in chart history

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED April–May 1992 ►RELEASE DATE February 1, 1993 ►LENGTH 5:14 ►PRODUCER Garth Richardson ►STUDIOS Sound City, Scream Studios and Industrial Recordings, all Los Angeles ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 1

97 The Message Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five

1982 SUGAR HILL



A track that single-handedly changed the direction of rap by pointing out that, in 1982, the true sound of the streets wasn't braggery MCs patting each other on the back for being awesome. It was that hollow little laugh that closes off the hook – a strained sound somewhere between sarcasm and dumb disbelief – of a man trapped at the bottom of the pile in Reagan's America. ■ GH

96 What A Waster The Libertines

2002 ROUGH TRADE

The Libertines seemed bound for doom from the start, not that the macabre lyrics – "You pissed it all up the wall, you two-bob cunt", snarled at some useless Whitechapel loser – made 'What A Waster' any less rollicking though. It subscribed to all the classic pop single rules: under three minutes, catchy-as-hell, banned by broadcasters the world over. ■ MW

95 Fight The Power Public Enemy

1989 MOTOWN

Public Enemy's thumping, bouncing tank of a theme song for Spike Lee's angry 1989 film *Do The Right Thing* lays furious waste to white-dominated cultural history with a call to mental arms: "Elvis was a hero to most/But he never meant shit to me, you see/ Straight-up racist that sucker was". ■ EM

94 Do You Realize?? The Flaming Lips

2002 WARNER BROS

Sweeping choirs of angelic Busby Berkeley swing-divers, stirring swells of *Wizard Of Oz* harp and some basic human truths – we're lost, we're a miracle, we're screwed up and we're doomed. It takes a visionary like Wayne Coyne to make such simple connections and come out with four-minutes as moving, life-affirming and universally attuned as the ending of *It's A Wonderful Life*. ■ MB

93 Gold Digger Kanye West

2005 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM



Jamie Foxx picked up an Oscar for playing Ray Charles in 2005, but it took the brilliant mind of Kanye West to get him to reprise his version of 'I Got A Woman' for Yeezy's instructional tale about the importance of prenuptial agreements. Needless to say, it was a pop smash. ■ KEGP

92 Toxic

Britney Spears 2004 JIVE

Five years after Britney took pop stardom to the next level with 'Baby One More Time', she landed herself some much-needed dynamite. 'Toxic' reinvented popular dance music with its piercing strings, hip-hop beats, eastern flavour and a dangerous brush with a boy that's romantic poison. A modern pop benchmark. ■ EB

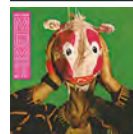
91 All My Friends LCD Soundsystem

2007 DFA

Released the year its creator James Murphy turned 37, 'All My Friends' was a song about many things: ageing, friendship, getting battered, the moment you realise you've been behaving like a bit of a dick for a while now. Built around two piano notes, it is the most poignant and danceable moment from a band who specialised in poignant and danceable moments. ■ TH

90 Time To Pretend MGMT

2008 COLUMBIA



Few bands loudly renounce the tired hedonistic clichés of rock'n'roll so early in their career and manage never to succumb. But MGMT – besides the odd model girlfriend – have largely left 'Time To Pretend' untainted as their big anti-rock statement with its monumental, psychedelic skew-pop chorus and glorious postmodern sneer at the Harry Styles set. Still stunning. ■ MB

89 Hallelujah Jeff Buckley

1994 COLUMBIA

It was Leonard's tune, but Jeff's heart. Taking Cohen's cold and stilted original, Buckley pumped this stark song of desolation full of tremulous desperation and soul to make it the shiver-inducing spiritual monolith it should always have been. Alexandra Burke's soporific *X Factor* version was like varnishing the Mona Lisa. ■ MB

FAMOUS FAN



Serge Pizzorno, Kasabian:

"Where they sing 'Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me', I think that's a really nice line. It's pretty obvious for a rock'n'roll band to sing those words, but it's great for anyone to sing in someone's face, y'know. I've never seen them play it live, but I'd fucking love to. They remind me of Black Sabbath, and that's a compliment."

to keep it far away from US mainstream radio. Nevertheless it reached Number 26 in the UK charts in 1993 and its powerful protest message was soon adopted by disenfranchised youths the world over. Its surprise victory in the race for 2009 UK Christmas Number One, after an internet campaign to get the song to the top spot instead of another *X Factor* winner's single, proved that it remains the counterculture rallying cry of choice, even for those who happily do what Facebook tells them. ■ AH

82

Crazy In Love

Beyoncé 2003 COLUMBIA

88 Lose Yourself Eminem

2002 SHADY/INTERSCOPE

The moment Eminem silenced the doubters who criticised him as reliant on cheap shock tactics, 'Lose Yourself' was as visceral and inspiring as hip-hop came – its carpe diem-via-Detroit ghetto message ("You've only got one shot, do not miss this chance to blow") spat with ferocity over a grinding, unforgettable rap-rock beat. ■ AH

87 Video Games

Lana Del Rey
2011 STRANGER

Forget the backstory, the lips, the disappointing album and even the Adam Curtis-esque video. In isolation, Lana Del Rey's debut was absolutely mesmerising; an unsettling, instantly familiar heartbreaker. With its chiming church bells, piano chords of doom and lyrics of failed romance, it was a torch song fit for the apocalypse. ■ AW

86 Get Ur Freak On

Missy Elliott
2001 ELEKTRA

It's no wonder 'Get Ur Freak On' propelled Missy onto a far bigger stage. It was too daring to miss, boldly mixing bhangra, rap, dance and some Japanese spoken words to boot. "Me and Timbaland been hot since 20 years ago" she rapped, as the dynamic duo capitalised on a working relationship that would redefine hip-hop in the noughties. ■ EB

85 Everyday Is Like Sunday

Morrissey 1988 HIS MASTER'S VOICE


Moz's second solo single saw him suitably bored and outraged at being trapped in "the seaside town that they forgot to close down". Dropping his bucket and spade in a puddle, he wished for Armageddon over a chugging orchestral backdrop as languid as a month of wet weekends in Bognor. Such dreariness, infused with such wistful magnificence. ■ DR

84 Anarchy In The UK

Sex Pistols 1976 EMI

Few revolutions have had a starting pistol as perfect as this one: the sound of a deranged hobgoblin putting a curse on Britain. Despite the tractor-beam pull of its call to mayhem, it has, sadly, still never soundtracked the guillotine blade falling on Buckingham Palace lawns. But it has at least been used for every single montage ever of punk-pogoing, barricade-burning, late-'70s an-ar-CHAI-st behaviour ever made. ■ GH

83 Complete Control

The Clash 1977 CBS

Annoyed by their label releasing 'Remote Control' off their self-titled debut album without bothering to ask them, The Clash used their understandable ire about the situation positively by spitting out this tuneful, Lee 'Scratch' Perry-produced blast of righteous indignation. The result was one of the era's finest singles, and proof that punk rose to its best when roundly fucked with. ■ AW

It's strange to think now that she's the biggest pop star in the world, but back in 2003 Beyoncé's ascent to solo stardom was hardly assured.

Venturing out alone from Destiny's Child was a risky move, and she needed to lay down a marker that she could make it as an independent woman. She needed to find the precise sound that would establish her as a pop superstar. So she did.

Producer Rich Harrison, who was also behind Amerie's '1 Thing' and Jennifer Lopez's 'Get Right', was initially told by Beyoncé that she worried the track was "too retro" and that the horn sound was too dated. Fortunately she eventually came round to it, and her then boyfriend, now husband, Jay-Z arrived at 3am to record a rap that he reportedly finished in 10 minutes flat. It's an undeniably charismatic cameo, but there's no question who the star of

the show is. It took about four and a half seconds of watching Beyoncé strut down the road in the video to the sound of the horn sample from The Chi-Lites' 1970 track 'Are You My Woman (Tell Me So)' to tell that the next decade would belong to Queen Bey.

Whether it's down to the lovers' chemistry oozing from between the lines or the fact that this single captured her at the precise moment a star was born, her debut solo single would go on to top the charts in both America and the UK, pick up a pair of Grammy Awards and go on to be one of the biggest-selling tracks of the next 10 years. In 2009 *NME* named it the best track of the last decade. Job done. ■ KEGP

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** December 2002–March 2003 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 18, 2003 ► **LENGTH** 3:56 ► **PRODUCERS** Rich Harrison, Beyoncé ► **STUDIO** Sony Music Studios, New York ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 1

81 Niggas In Paris

Jay-Z & Kanye West
2011 ROC-A-FELLA/ROC NATION/DEF JAM


By the time of their 2011 'Watch The Throne' tour, this single was so big that crowds were demanding they perform it on repeat as the climax to the evening. Nine times in Chicago was the record. Rhymes about the

Olsen twins and fish fillet sandwiches, blazed out over nasty bleeps from Californian producer Hit-Boy, created what has become the new blueprint for arena-sized hip-hop. One more time... ■ TH

80 Taxman The Beatles

1966 PARLOPHONE

One of The Beatles' first forays into politics saw them taking edgy, biting and scintillating aim at the supertax system introduced under Harold Wilson's Labour government. "If you try to walk I'll tax your feet", sniped George Harrison over a rumbling bassline and dissonant guitar stabs that added a sense of urgency to his economic fury. ■ RD

79 Fell In Love With A Girl

The White Stripes 2001 XL

Dur-nur-nur-nur-nur-nur-THUMP! "FELLINLAV-WIVAGAAHRRRL!" With all the frenzy and fire of a 21st-century Ramones, The White Stripes' breakthrough indie stormer crash-landed like a kung-fu punk alien, kicked 58 shades of shite out of your stereo inside two minutes and five straight off again, having made garage blues sound like the most passionate and exciting noise since the jet engine. Pow. ■ MB

78 Into My Arms Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds

1997 MUTE


Most songs that open with a proud declaration of semi-atheism – "I don't believe in an interventionist God" – are unlikely to tug on any existential heartstrings, but Cave

twisted the religious conceit into a piano masterwork of such overarching delicacy, poetry and romance that it still stands as his grandest ballad and, probably, Richard Dawkins' first wedding dance. ■ MB

77 Hey Jude The Beatles

1968 APPLE

Blah, blah, blah, blah-blah-blah-blah... So much has been written about 'Hey Jude' that its brilliance has begun to seem almost commonplace: you were probably humming that refrain in the womb. Nevertheless, it was rock music's first arm-around-a-stranger's-shoulder mega-anthem, and it's still an absolute masterclass in the form. ■ BN

76 Wuthering Heights

Kate Bush 1978 EMI

The first self-penned track by a female artist to nab the UK Number One spot, the debut single by Kate Bush – then only 19 years old – was a goth-pop classic that doffed its cap to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* and channelled the doomed spirit of Catherine Earnshaw, shivering and shrieking as she banged on Heathcliff's window. ■ BH

75 Dry Your Eyes

The Streets 2004 679

So rare has it been for urban cult acts to show any hint of vulnerability that Mike Skinner's weepy admission of big-girl's-blouseness in the face of getting dumped struck to the heart of the front-heavy culture and shattered conceptions, pretensions and glass ceilings galore. It's also a source of immense pub amusement if you simply replace the chorus with the words "wipe your arse, mate..." ■ MB

74 Take Me Out Franz

Ferdinand 2004 DOMINO



Franz Ferdinand famously said they wanted to make "music for girls to dance to". With this, their irresistible, undeniable worldwide breakthrough hit, they achieved that and more as the misleading

Pixies-esque buzzing guitar intro gave way to an almost perfect amalgamation of disco and the funk-punk indie that ate the Noughties. ■ AFW

73 Sheela-Na-Gig

PJ Harvey 1992 TOO PURE

Referencing statues of naked women with crudely exaggerated vulvas in its title, 'Sheela-Na-Gig' was a scathing, scalding put-down of male double standards, all gritty blues-rock and Harvey's acid tongue. "He said, 'Wash your breasts, I don't want to be unclean'", she sneered, mocking some dope who was peddling the patriarchal angel/whore dichotomy. ■ BH

My Generation

The Who 1965 BRUNSWICK

You don't get many more direct invitations to write an anti-establishment anthem than the police towing away the vintage hearse you've used

as a car from its regular parking place in Belgravia – on the personal orders of the Queen Mother, who'd been offended by it. On the train to Southampton necessitated by the lack of motor, Pete Townshend channelled his rage into something that would end up as the slick, aggressive, R&B heartbeat of mod culture, as defining of its time as the sound of a pair of Cuban heels on Brighton cobbles. It has swagger coming out of its swagger, possibly a function of the band's decision to vastly speed up what had, at one point, been a more traditional piece of blues. As the years went by, its once-specific meaning became more general – Patti Smith claimed it for punk, Iron Maiden for metal, Green Day for a different punk, Oasis beat seven bells out of it, and even Hilary Duff changed the lyrics to "hope I don't die before I get old", proving that certain generations actually do deserve everything they get. ■ GH

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED October 13, 1965 ►RELEASE DATE November 5, 1965 ►LENGTH 3:18 ►PRODUCER Shel Talmy ►STUDIO IBC Studios, London ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 2

72 Venus In Furs The Velvet

Underground 1967 VERVE

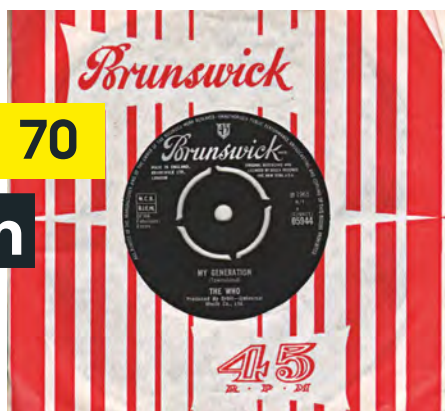
One of rock's darkest, sexiest dungeons, The Velvet Underground's tribute to masochistic domination bent viola and guitar into sinister submission – a lush, Arabic-toned twanging netherworld of a track in shiny boots of leather that knew just exactly what you wanted, you filthy bitch. ■ EM

71 Ever Fallen In Love

(With Someone You Shouldn't've) Buzzcocks

1978 UNITED ARTISTS

Allegedly inspired by a line in the musical *Guys & Dolls*, seen by the band on TV while staying overnight in Edinburgh, Pete Shelley's ode to a love that's more harmful than beneficial was, like many of pop's greatest songs, simple and direct, almost to the point of being throwaway. But the way it's made us pogo in euphoric despair at the idiocy and folly of humanity has rendered it punk legend. ■ RD



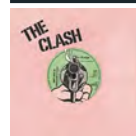
FIVE FACTS

- 1 The stutter Roger Daltrey affects was "just one of those happy accidents," according to the song's producer, Shel Talmy.
- 2 The BBC didn't appreciate the effect, though, and famously refused to play it at first as they didn't want to offend stutterers.
- 3 Pete Townshend wrote the song on his 20th birthday.
- 4 He later suggested that when he wrote "Hope I die before I get old", he'd meant 'old' as in 'rich'.
- 5 It remains The Who's highest-charting UK single ever.

69 (White Man) In

Hammersmith Palais

The Clash 1978 CBS



After visiting a roots-reggae night at the famous London venue of the title, Joe Strummer claimed to have left a little disappointed at the lightweight fare on offer. This gave him the inspiration to pen one

of the band's most-loved songs, a ska-influenced rumination on the aforementioned concert and the decaying state of the UK. ■ AFW

68 Blackbird

The Beatles 1968 APPLE

Reputedly recorded in Abbey Road's backyard after McCartney told engineer Geoff Emerick he wanted it to sound "outdoorsy", the singing blackbird was added later. The Beatle only wrote a handful of political songs, but here was his show of support for the Civil Rights movement. Simple, effective and immensely powerful. ■ AW

67 Cigarettes & Alcohol

Oasis 1994 CREATION

As if the line "Is it worth the aggravation to find yourself a job when there's nothing worth working for?" wasn't timeless enough, Noel Gallagher's rawest single was also his most reckless, splicing together T Rex's 'Get It On' and the "No future" outro from 'God Save The Queen' with astonishing audacity. ■ MW

66 Straight Outta Compton

NWA 1988 PRIORITY/RUTHLESS

With pneumatic might, the title track from NWA's gangsta rap odyssey chronicled life as a black youth trapped in America's undertow and persecuted by police. The group weren't just telling that story, they were living it – the song's booming beat came from Dr Dre in return for Eazy-E, a teenage drug dealer looking to get into the music business, paying his bail after a drug bust. ■ AH

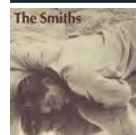
65 Stand By Me

Ben E King 1961 ATCO

There's magic in the genesis of Ben E King's 1961 classic. Adapted from a gospel standard that can be traced back to 1905 (though it's likely to have been written earlier), legend has it that producers Leiber & Stoller came up with *that* bassline within just 15 minutes of starting the session with King. Over half a decade later, the track is still every bit as enchanting. ■ MW

64 This Charming Man

The Smiths 1983 ROUGH TRADE



Written within 12 months of Morrissey and Johnny Marr becoming a songwriting team, the first genius spark of their partnership seems so much bigger than its meagre chart

placing: Number 25, with a whimper. It really is all about Marr's jaw-dropping riff – perhaps the most distinctive in all of British pop. ■ MW

59 Loaded

Primal Scream 1990 CREATION

Primal Scream's self-titled second LP is not one of their best. That said, it may be one of the most significant: not only did it herald the end of their short-lived days as anaemic, knock-kneed indie-poppers, but in the coda of its fifth song – a countrified ballad atypical of the rest of the album's brutish garage-rock, lay the seeds of a far more successful reinvention to come.

'Loaded' was essentially just a remix of 'I'm Losing More Than I'll Ever Have', but to describe it in those terms is to do it a grave injustice. For one thing, the single sold more copies than Primal Scream's entire recorded output (up to that point) combined; for another, despite being comprised of secondhand components, 'Loaded'



was something entirely new, a rave-rock singularity from a band who were better known as parroters of old ideas rather than intrepid forgers of new ones.

Of course, much of the credit must go to producer Andrew Weatherall, a DJ who was approached on the strength of a favourable review he'd

written in a fanzine, and whose work on 'Loaded' (and 'Screamadelica', the album it spawned) creatively and commercially rejuvenated the band. Even before that, however, the wheels had been set in motion by Bobby Gillespie and Alan McGee's "religious conversion" to ecstasy and acid house. Like most groundbreaking records, 'Loaded' arrived like a bolt from the blue, but with an inevitability that seems obvious in hindsight. Dance culture and drug culture were dovetailing in a way they hadn't since the '60s, and such events always require anthems. What no-one could have foreseen then was that the task of writing them would fall to a group of leather-trousered rock'n'roll classicists. ■ BN

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** Late 1989 ► **RELEASE DATE** February 1990

► **LENGTH** 7:01 ► **PRODUCER** Andrew Weatherall ► **STUDIO** Bark Studio, London ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 16

63 Unfinished Sympathy

Massive Attack 1991 VIRGIN

The laidback, cool classiness of '90s neo-soul and R&B met the harder sounds of Bristol's flourishing trip-hop scene in Massive Attack's melancholy high point, Shara Nelson's heart-wrenching, distraught vocal pleading with the chilly brittleness of the beat to no avail. ■ EM

62 Young Americans

David Bowie 1975 RCA

It's testament to Bowie's status as pop's pre-eminent chameleon that a translucent Limey once described by guitarist Carlos Alomar as "the whitest man I've ever seen" could deliver such a thrilling musical pastiche of black-American culture. The album it came from may have been one of his patchier '70s efforts, but the title track is simply outrageous. ■ BN

61 True Faith New Order

1987 FACTORY

Who else but New Order could write such an aching paean to getting out of your box on ecstasy? It gave them one of their biggest hits, and helped them break America, but only after the lyric "they're afraid of what they see" was added to replace "they're all taking drugs with me". ■ KEGP

60 Babies Pulp 1992 ISLAND



An irresistible opening salvo begins Jarvis' simple yet creepily captivating tale of a boy and a girl, her older sister Neve who had "boys in her room" and the fateful day when he gets caught becoming one of those boys. "I only went with her 'cos she looks like you, my God", he cries. An excuse that has never once been known to work in the history of all relationships ever. ■ JS

58 Suspicious Minds Elvis

Presley 1968 SCEPTER



The best thing to come out of The King's post-'68 Comeback Special career, and his final US Number One hit, the brassy pomp of 'Suspicious Minds' was Presley showing a world – that by now had

Frank Zappa – why it still needed him. The peanut butter-fried-everything figure of fun was around the corner, but for one last moment at least, the man and his rhinestone jumpsuit could still soar. ■ GH

57 Billie Jean

Michael Jackson 1982 EPIC

There are introductions to songs, and then there's 'Billie Jean'. Those beats, that bassline and Jacko. Gesticulating, moonwalking, sharp-shooting Jacko, who is irrefutably not going out with a girl, even though she's telling the world and its dog that he's knocked her up. 'Billie Jean' will only age if the globe stops spinning. ■ EB

56 Sabotage Beastie Boys

1994 GRAND ROYAL

One of the Beasties' most pronounced rock moments, harking back to the NY trio's thrash-hardcore roots, 'Sabotage' came boasting thundering bass and wailing guitars that begged to be played at ear-bleeding volume. Don't be fooled by its comedy Spike Jonze-directed video in which Ad-Rock, MCA and Mike D japed around as '70s coppers, the track itself was tenser than a bank heist gone awry. ■ AH

55 The Model Kraftwerk

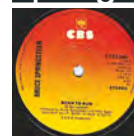
1981 EMI/KLING KLANG



'The Model' sounded like the future in 1978 – and in 1981, when it was reissued to become a UK Number One – and it still sounds like the future in 2014: an electronic world narrated by androids and populated by haughty clothes-horses that hinted at the seductive allure of fame, success and celebrity. ■ BH

54 Born To Run Bruce

Springsteen 1975 CBS



The lyrics to this ultimate elopers' anthem lunge between hopeful, desperate and lustful, while the sax solo, and the "one, two, three, four" that follow it, are born out of pure exhilaration.

'Born To Run', from its opening drum clatter to its closing "oh oh oh oh ohhhhh oh" is an air-punch in aural form. Not a person alive wouldn't get on Bruce's bike and ride. ■ AW

53 Paper Planes

MIA 2007 XL

Produced by her then boyfriend Diplo, the glimmering pop diaspora of 'Paper Planes' made a superstar of Sri Lankan provocateur MIA in 2007, by meshing a sample of The Clash's 'Straight To Hell' with eastern echoes and unconquerable downtempo rap swagger. Deliciously breezy, it sold four million copies in the US alone. ■ AH

52 One More Time

Daft Punk 2000 VIRGIN

Simply the perfect dance tune: a compressed, slowed-down house loop, an early extended breakdown and then a runaway acceleration towards a perfect orgasmic moment of pure bliss, as the words "Music's got me feeling so free/We're gonna celebrate/Celebrate and dance so free" reverberate around your soul. ■ KEGP

51 Ashes To Ashes

David Bowie 1980 RCA

David Bowie's second UK Number One single was essentially a follow-up to his first, but by now Major Tom from 'Space Oddity' was a junkie "strung out on heaven's high, hitting an all-time low". Awash with synthetic strings and surprisingly non-annoying slap-funk bass, it's both an incredibly weird art rocker and an undeniably addictive pop song, a balancing act that very few manage. ■ AW



Walk On The Wild Side

Lou Reed 1972 RCA

Much as the redoubtable Lou Reed was both a prince of darkness and a fountain of bile, the former songwriter-for-hire could also muster an unbearable sweetness of melody, and the contrast between his light and shade was rarely more delicious than on 'Walk On The Wild Side', which nonchalantly served up the salacious side of Reed's New York *demi-monde* on a honeyed, sunny, doo-doo-dooing platter.

The song was – and remains – a masterpiece of musical smuggling, its gentle amble and that wonderfully warm sax solo concealing a strung-out darkness at its heart. RCA were sharp enough to edit out the blowjob reference on the US single release, but the airwaves still hummed to its little vignettes of drug abuse, prostitution and transgender transformations. Produced, as was the rest of Reed's second solo album 'Transformer', by David Bowie, it was a thing of doe-eyed but deceptive beauty. It pulled you close only to tell you a little story that you might not like in your white-bread, apple-pie, strait-laced world. Like saxophones, do you, square? Yeah, well, listen to *this*. In Reed's tale, NYC starred as the blinking lightbulb drawing various beautifully damaged Warhol superstars such as Candy Darling and Jackie Curtis towards it. Reed drew neat little sketches of

their streetwise, strung-out, sharp and superficial world, but stood apart, sounding endlessly ambivalent as he lackadaisically drawled faint encouragement in their abandonment of decent society: "Heeeeeeey, babe". The original jumping-off point for the song's

lyric was a 1956 novel of the same name by Nelson Agren, a dark tale of lost souls in Texas. Reed's song transposed the novel's basic idea to the world and characters around him with deft and

concise skill, but the question remained the same. As Agren put it, "The book asks why lost people sometimes develop into greater human beings than those who have never been lost in their whole lives." ■ EM

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The Sugar Plum Fairy in the song was the nickname for Warhol cohort Joe Campbell.
- 2 The song's saxophone part was played by Bowie's childhood sax teacher, Ronnie Ross.
- 3 The girl group put together to sing the legendary "doo-de-doo"s were named Thunderhighs.
- 4 Bassist Herbie Flowers reportedly only came up with two interlocking bass parts on upright and electric instruments so he'd get paid twice for the same song.
- 5 '...Wild Side' was famously sampled for A Tribe Called Quest's 'Can I Kick It?'

►THE DETAILS

►RECORDED July 1972 ►RELEASE DATE November 8, 1972 ►LENGTH 4:12 ►PRODUCERS David Bowie, Mick Ronson ►STUDIO Trident Studios, London ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 10

49 Like A Rolling Stone

Bob Dylan 1965 CBS



Do you remember the first time you heard 'Like A Rolling Stone'? Perhaps not. It's just there. That sort of familiarity, as if it were a piece of furniture nestled in the corner of a living room, makes it easy to take for granted, but stop a moment to examine it with fresh ears and it's as revelatory as the day it was recorded, six minutes of bitter vengeance directed at privileged rich kids dropping out to live the hippy dream. Musically it was no less fascinating: rookie session musician Al Kooper, a guitarist, couldn't really play the Hammond organ but managed to lay down one of the all-time great riffs regardless. Just 24 when he wrote it, it's been Dylan's calling card ever since. ■ AW

48 Boys Don't Cry

The Cure 1979 FICTION

Boys don't cry, but before Robert Smith most didn't wear lipstick and eyeliner either. Released in 1979, the year in which broad-brush musical history tells you punk had given way to spiky new wave, The Cure's second single instead employed an insistent riff and guitar jangle to forge the template for the following decade's British indie boom. It's a formula that's still going strong to this day – which is exactly why 'Boys Don't Cry' still draws self-consciously un-macho indie boys to beer-soaked dancefloors three and a half decades later. ■ DS

47 Like A Prayer

Madonna 1989 SIRE



Singers seldom come shrewder than Madonna when it comes to media manipulation – it's 25 years since she released 'Like A Prayer', and it's still impossible to discuss it without focusing on its Catholic-baiting, Pepsi-ostracising video. Screw the controversy, though; the song itself remains a bona-fide classic thanks to an unashamedly bombastic production that sounded like a spiritual disco in a fruity house of worship, and Madge's saucy come-ons, the barefaced cheek of suggesting a quick tumble with Christ and the knowing wink of lines like, "I'm down on my knees/I wanna take you there". Sometimes it's hard to remember why Madonna is still anointed as the Queen Of Pop; 'Like A Prayer' is the ultimate reminder of why no-one else deserves the crown more. ■ BH

46 I Heard It Through The Grapevine Marvin Gaye

1968 TAMLA MOTOWN

Written by Barrett Strong and Norman Whitfield in 1966, 'I Heard It Through The Grapevine' was an emotional depth charge of pure pathos, the wounded, primal cry of a man having discovered, via the titular rumour mill, that their partner has been cheating on them. Understandably hurt and upset, Gaye's impassioned vocal uniquely conveyed the depths of his pain – Gladys Knight & The Pips had a hit with this the year before Gaye's version was released, but given the conviction of his performance, it's little wonder it became known as Marvin's signature song. ■ BH

45

Paranoid Android

Radiohead 1997 PARLOPHONE

P

lease could you
stop the noise,
I'm trying to get
some rest/From

all the unborn chicken
voices in my head", seethed
Thom Yorke's falsetto,
kicking off this disgusted
howl against modern life.

It really shouldn't work.
Completely overambitious,
it sprawls through different
key changes in four
sections, slowing down
and speeding up like a mad
bucking bull. The Radio 1
DJ who decided to play it
had to have a lie down after
he first heard it. "'Paranoid
Android' is just about
chaos, chaos, utter fucking
chaos," explained Yorke
when it was first released.
But in some kind of magic
alchemy the cantos gelled
perfectly, recalling *The
Waste Land* or 'Bohemian
Rhapsody' – although
it made the latter look
like child's play.

Were they totally high when writing it?
Reports say they were banjaxed in some
15th-century mansion near Bath, but Colin
Greenwood claims they only had one vodka
and orange each. Yet somehow they managed
to write a song that encapsulated the universe
(and their diverse career), something so
brazen and wild it took them over a year
to learn how to play it live. It was entirely
depressing but utterly thrilling, hilarious and
savage, beautiful and grotesque, ridiculous
and unmatched. As Johnny's guitar solo
zig-zagged out of all control towards the
end like an electrocuted snake, you wanted
this sprawling masterpiece to go on and
on, desperate to discover where on earth
they'd take it next. ■ LJ



► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 1996–97 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 21, 1997 ► **LENGTH** 6:23
► **PRODUCER** Nigel Godrich ► **STUDIO** Canned Applause, Didcot;
St Catherine's Court, Bath ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 3

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The back cover of 'Paranoid Android' featured sketches of a pig and two figures shaking hands, leading some commentators to draw links to Pink Floyd's 'Animals' and 'Wish You Were Here'. CD1 came with this baffling sleevenote: "To kill a demon made of wet sawdust. This sort of demon is almost impossible to kill the only way to do it is to cover its face with wet bread and karate chop its head off otherwise you are in trouble and so is the neighbourhood. Wet sawdust demons like to terrorise. NB pressing its face into wet bread that is on the ground works best though you can get a result just by throwing the bread at its face." Essential advice, we've found.

44 Debaser Pixies

1989 4AD

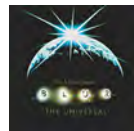

The Pixies were always adept at marrying high art with trash culture, and 'Debaser' – an effervescent power-pop thrash that was rooted in Salvador Dali's surrealist short *Un Chien Andalou* and went from "Slicing up eyeballs" to "Girlie so groovy" in the blink of a bisected orb – was perhaps the best example of it. Throughout, Black Francis sounded in need of four soft walls and a rabies shot, the foam from his mouth seeming to ooze out of the speakers. This was pop music debased by lunacy, and it sounds as righteous today as it did in 1989. ■ BN

43 A Design For Life Manic Street Preachers

1996 EPIC

Interviewed before the release of *Journal For Plague Lovers*, which used the final lyrics of missing guitarist Richey Edwards, Manics bassist Nicky Wire admitted, "Deep in my heart, probably, I know I could never write lyrics like this." Having said that, Richey probably couldn't have written 'A Design For Life'. Just as New Order bravely shouldered out of Ian Curtis' death and burst into colour, so, too, the Manics became a more nuanced band, for worse and better, post-1995. This song goes way beyond survival, though, being one of the most profound statements of working-class culture, intellect and politics the 20th century produced. Yeah, you heard. ■ EM

42 The Universal Blur

1995 FOOD


In its day, 'The Universal' was a glorious, statuesque work of sheer architecture; an edifice of all-conquering Britpop cast in marble and silver and hoisted high above the churning morass, the era's lasting monument, a megalith in brass and string. Rising serenely above the throwaway cartoon Britpop of 'The Great Escape', it was Blur Mk II's defining statement, a poignant dissection of blank populist submission in a drugs-and-TV-sedated world and easily one of modern pop's towering achievements. A travesty, then, that these days it's basically an orchestral lubricant to help British Gas fuck us all as hard as they like up the arse. ■ MB

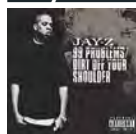
41 Back To Black Amy Winehouse

2006 ISLAND

Some songs are not just sung, they are *lived*. Amy Winehouse was no mere jazz singer telling old tales of heartache. Amy, while in the eye of the storm, sucked up the pain and poured it into frank confessionals that she'd deliver with a wry smile, a wicked sense of humour and lots of mascara. In her best imitation of her beloved Phil Spector girl bands, the title track from her second and final record ominously set the scene for what was so tragically inevitable. "And I tread a troubled track/My odds are stacked/I go back to black..." Fuck addiction. ■ EB

40 99 Problems

Jay-Z 2003 ROC-A-FELLA/DEF JAM



True story, of course. Back in his hustling days, Jay-Z gets pulled over by the rozzers with a serious stretch's worth of drugs secreted in the roof of his car, but the dog unit took so long to come that the traffic cop just let him go. The result, with the help of Rick Rubin, was a rock/rap crossover that crushed 'Walk This Way' in terms of gritty, raw power, with Jay smartly baiting critics of his misogynistic lyrics by using the word "bitch" to refer to sniffer dogs and snitches but never, he claims, women. ■ MB

39 Maps

Yeah Yeah Yeahs 2003 POLYDOR

'Maps' was a triumph of combining tear-strewn longing and fragility with roaring great riffs like The Wedding Present throwing themselves nobly into a volcano. Written about the strain of seeing her then-beau Andrew Angus of Liars head out across the globe on tour, the tear on Karen O's cheek in the video and the ragged rage spewing from Nick Zinner's guitar in elephantine chunks merged into a unique and visceral concoction that united soppy indie romantic and grunting ATP noisenik in one big alt.pop weep-along. Misery at its most righteous. ■ MB

38 Nothing Compares 2 U

Sinead O'Connor

1990 CHRYSALIS

Usurping Prince is no mean feat. But, with her bare-bones cover of 'Nothing Compares 2 U', Sinead O'Connor relegated the Purple One's original version of the song to a mere afterthought. Co-produced by Björk and Smashing Pumpkins cohort Nellee Hooper, O'Connor's take on the song seized a simple break-up anthem and turned it into life-and-death heartbreak, her voice switching from hushed whisper to anguished bark as she chewed over lines that, famously, reminded her of her dead mother. "All the flowers that you planted, mama, in the backyard", she sang, tears rolling down her face in that iconic video, "All died when you went away". Abandoned love has seldom sounded so poignant or powerful. ■ BH

37 River Deep - Mountain High

Ike And Tina Turner

1966 PHILLES



Declarations of elemental love have been 10-a-penny in popular song as long as there have been rivers, mountains, stars and oceans to incongruently compare that tingly feeling in your guts to. But hardly

anyone ever makes their love song *sound* like the crashing of tectonic plates. Not like Phil Spector and Tina Turner. Having convinced the controlling Ike to keep out of the studio, Spector loosed a rollicking, sexy, triumphant Wall Of Sound upon Tina, 42 musicians deep and \$20,000 high. He forced her to take and retake the vocal until her desperation and frustration gave the song a truly death-or-glory quality, a woman bawling her passion as the mountains crash down around her and the rivers rise over her head. ■ EM



36

Wonderwall

Oasis 1995 CREATION

Let's be frank, the third single taken from the 'What's The Story) Morning Glory?' album is not the greatest song by Oasis. It's not even the greatest song by Noel Gallagher and his High Flying Birds. Is 'Wonderwall' by Oasis even the greatest version of 'Wonderwall'? Noel himself has adapted his performance to make it sound more like Ryan Adams' cover. The most memorable use of 'Wonderwall' was by Jay-Z at Glastonbury in 2008 when the rapper retaliated to jibes from Noel by hoisting him by his own petard.

No, 'Wonderwall's success and popularity is a matter of sheer cultural pride and communion. Like 'Auld Lang Syne' and 'God Save The Queen', 'Wonderwall' is in the highest league of obligatory affection, but unlike those traditional national anthems, 'Wonderwall' is the song every Brit knows the words to. There isn't one acoustic strum of Bonehead's, one drum roll of Alan

White's, or one vocal echo of Noel's that hasn't been committed to public memory. 'Wonderwall' has joined the pantheon of songs that all of us could happily never hear again, but distinct from, say, 'Everything I Do (I Do It

For You)' by Bryan Adams, 'Wonderwall' (with imbecile lyrics such as "backbeat the word is on the street..." or "and all the roads we have to walk are winding/ And all the lights that lead us there are blinding") has kept generations of friends chanting "maybuuuuuuh" like nitwits with glee in their hearts. We are all each other's heroic Wonderwalls.

It's an institution because even your neighbour's tone-deaf donkey can sing it. See, somewhere deep inside every one of us is a desire to really be *somebody*. That somebody is Liam Gallagher, sitting with his crotch facing the camera, Lennon sunglasses on, not even playing his own tambourine. ■ EB

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Inspired by Magritte and shot on London's Primrose Hill by Brian Cannon, who held the picture frame, the model was Creation employee Anita Heryet, a stand-in for Liam, who was nixed from the sleeve at the last minute by Noel.

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED May 1995 ►RELEASE DATE October 30, 1995
►LENGTH 4:18 ►PRODUCERS Owen Morris, Noel Gallagher
►STUDIO Rockfield Studios, Monmouthshire, Wales
►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 2

35 Strawberry Fields Forever The Beatles

1967 PARLOPHONE



It's rarely attributed as such, but 'Strawberry Fields Forever' really is one of The Beatles' most awe-inspiring group efforts. Recorded in an unprecedented 55 hours at London's Abbey Road, their first completed song after the groundbreaking 'Revolver' sessions took the Fabs into the stratosphere. Spurred on by the multi-layered brilliance of Brian Wilson's 'Pet Sounds', the studio trickery used to bring John Lennon's folksy, childlike masterpiece to life is still jaw-dropping: from Ringo Starr's astute (and meticulously rehearsed) drumming to the Paul McCartney-penned mellotron intro and George Harrison's dreamlike, post-chorus raga scale. The whole thing saw The Beatles, along with George Martin and chief engineer Geoff Emerick, gel in a way that had never been witnessed before – and rarely has since. ■ MW

34 Life On Mars?

David Bowie 1971 RCA

So, basically, there are all these Neanderthal sailors fighting over a new John Lennon album in Ibiza, someone's mother is a dog-faced clown, a screenwriter is bored by his own film and Mickey Mouse turns into a prize heifer. Look, even Bowie admits 'Life On Mars?' was largely bollocks – a vague story of a girl finding fame disappointing is all he'd admit to – but what fabulous bollocks. A bombastic orchestral chorus that was among the most dramatic and breastbone-busting hooks in popular music, Bowie's landmark ballad and at least, ooh, the sixth or seventh best Rick Wakeman piano performance ever. Joookke... ■ MB

33 Animal Nitrate

Suede 1993 NUDE



Thumbing their noses at humdrum convention and wiggling their arses in the face of boorish bravado, Suede never gave a toss about fitting in with their Britpop contemporaries: they were a band for outsiders, intent on celebrating the seedy outer fringes of life. And so 'Animal Nitrate', their third single, was a filthy and fucked-up paean to illicit sex and nose-bursting narcotics, fuelled by Brett Anderson's sleazy yelp of, "Well he said he'd show you his bed/And the delights of his chemical smile" and a monstrously dirty riff courtesy of guitarist Bernard Butler: it's like being sucked headfirst into a grubby, glamorous underworld while some ne'er-do-well spirit makes sport with your bones. ■ BH

32 London Calling

The Clash 1979 CBS

Fittingly for a song that concluded with Morse code spelling out SOS, 'London Calling' portrayed a world filled with doom. Laying out their apocalyptic vision with funeral-dirge guitars pulsating throughout, The Clash created an image of a bleak city heading for disaster. In their sights was a world where rising tides flooded the Thames ("London is drowning and I live by the river"), police used brutality to control civilians ("See we ain't got no swing/Cept for the ring of that truncheon thing") and accidents at nuclear power plants like Pennsylvania's Three Mile Island offered yet more catastrophe to come ("A nuclear error but I have no fear"). ■ RD

31

Fools Gold

The Stone Roses 1989 SILVERTONE

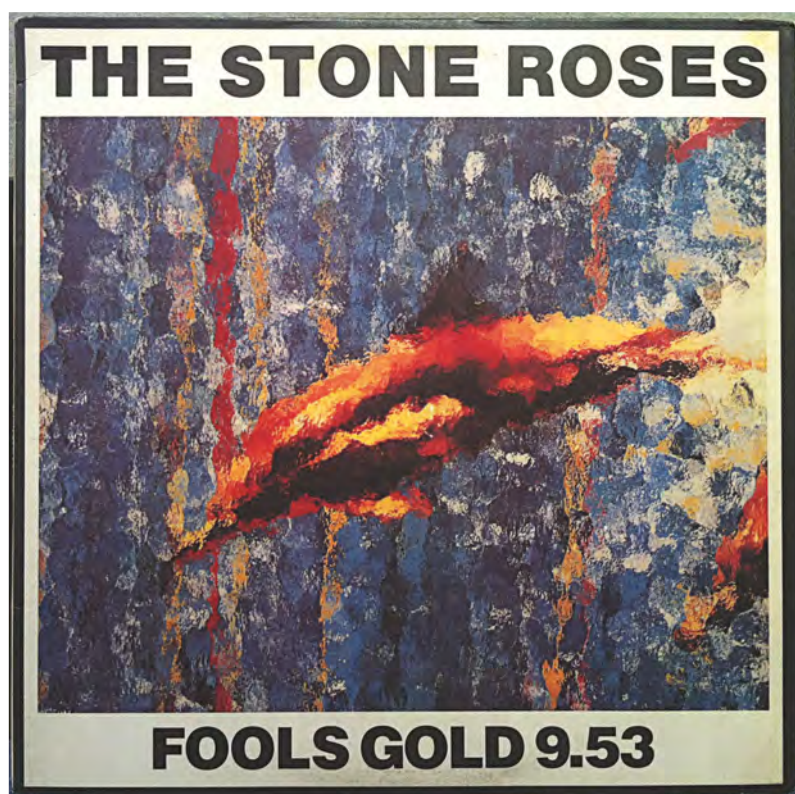
Knowing what we now know about 'Fools Gold', it seems unthinkable that The Stone Roses initially only deemed the track good enough to be a B-side. After the intervention of an A&R from their label, the band agreed 'Fools Gold' would be a double A-side along with 'What The World Is Waiting For'. The latter is a typically good Stone Roses song, safe and conventional. But compared to the Technicolor 'Fools Gold', it's positively dull and boring. Let's start with the slinky drumbeat, sampled from Bobby Byrd's 'Hot Pants – I'm Coming, Coming, I'm Coming'. Anyone who listened to 'The Stone Roses' knew the rhythm section of Mani and Reni could play, but this was another level, the pair locked in tight, laying down a bed for John Squire's choppy, wah-wah guitar to lie on. The lyrics, meanwhile, with that enigmatic opening line of "The gold road's sure a long road/Winds on through the hills for 15 days", referenced Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots Were Made For Walkin'" and saucy French

aristocrat the Marquis de Sade. The verses were inspired by the 1948 adaptation of *The Treasure Of The Sierra Madre* starring Humphrey Bogart, a film about three down-at-heel friends who go up a mountain searching for gold only to turn on each other as greed and insanity set in.

Isaac Hayes' 'Theme From Shaft' had already been updated once thanks to Young MC's 'Know How', and here it was again, given a special Manchester makeover. While the seminal debut album was packed full of scintillating tunes, it was 'Fools Gold' that ended up defining the baggy generation. Emerging from the dazzling daze of the album, it was the point where the nation came together to celebrate Madchester. If you didn't get the fuss about the band's 2011 reformation and subsequent live shows, have another listen to 'Fools Gold'; it'll tell you everything you need to know and more. ■ AW

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1989 ►RELEASE DATE November 13, 1989 ►LENGTH 9:53 ►PRODUCER John Leckie ►STUDIO Sawmills Studio, Cornwall ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION 8



30 Once In A Lifetime

Talking Heads 1980 SIRE



While listening to Talking Heads' signature track you may ask yourself – probably more than once – 'Just what the hell is going on here, anyway?' And that, of course, is the whole point. From David

Byrne's boggle-eyed evangelising to the slippery Fela Kuti cross-rhythms that powered it, 'Once In A Lifetime' was pop music's greatest ode to the feeling of discombobulation: a song that lacked what producer Brian Eno calls a "centre of gravity", about reaching a point in your life at which everything that led you there no longer seems to make sense. ■ BN

29 Gimme Shelter

The Rolling Stones 1969 DECCA

Rarely does a song speak so directly to the precarious nature of the human condition as 'Gimme Shelter'. Written at the time of the Vietnam war, it dealt with love, murder, war, children, family and the basic need for protection in four and a half minutes of unsettling gospel blues, from the moment Keith Richards' genius riff unfurls and the ethereal vocals appear. A brimstone boogie, Merry Clayton's indomitable vocals communicated an apocalyptic desperation that reached its tipping point when her voice cracked. A hurricane of a track, and as Greil Marcus once wrote, the Stones have never done anything better. ■ LJ

28 Time For Heroes

The Libertines

2002 ROUGH TRADE



Based on his experience at the May Day protest in London in 2001, the lyrics for 'Time For Heroes' were quintessential Pete Doherty as he combined images of police brutality ("Wombles bleed, truncheons and shields") with analysis of the English class system ("We'll die in the class we were born/But that's a class of our own") and his forever-romantic outlook ("You know I cherish you, my love"). The Libs' crowning moment, it brilliantly captured the thrill of fighting for a cause. As Doherty said: "I felt like there were so many things wrong, and I didn't know where to channel it. For that moment I was with people who believed the same thing." ■ TH

27 God Save The Queen

Sex Pistols 1977 VIRGIN

Banned by the government, blasted by the police and loved by righteous yobs everywhere, the Sex Pistols' grand statement of class hate and establishment repression set punk alight, creating a UK counter-culture that burns to this day. Without this record you'd be a Snow Patrol fan, by law. ■ MB
Nicky Wire, Manic Street Preachers: "When there's no future/How can there be sin/We're the flowers in the dustbin/We're the poison in your human machine/We're the future, your future'. It's still so powerful, so situationist and so real. For that to come from a 20-year-old John Lydon is quite staggering, really."

26

Losing My Edge

LCD Soundsystem 2002 ROUGH TRADE

It's well documented that in 1992, when he was 22, LCD Soundsystem leader James Murphy turned down a writing job on what would become one of the most successful TV programmes of all time: *Seinfeld*. This is telling, because not many people in the history of music have been capable of writing lyrics as funny, cutting and of-the-moment as Murphy. Take a moment to read the words to 'Losing My Edge' with no music and you'll find yourself giggling, then agreeing, then disagreeing. But above all, engaging. Because James Murphy is human too.

So human, in fact, that before he went about becoming one of the most knowing and influential artists of the decade as LCD Soundsystem, he felt washed up. He'd gone nowhere in the bands Falling Man, Pony and Speedking, but was doing OK as the co-founder of Death From Above Records and as a rock DJ playing dancier records by Can, Liquid Liquid and ESG in his sets. People thought he was cool, and they started copying him. So much so that he became "afraid that this newfound coolness was going to go away", and decided to write a song about how stupid that was.

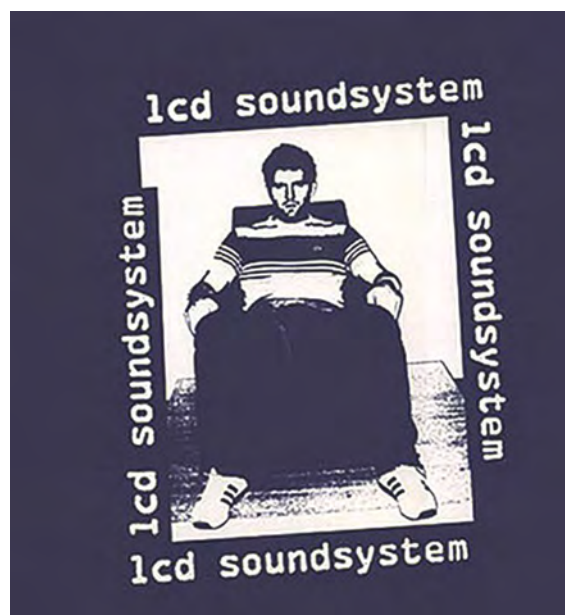
He called it 'Losing My Edge', it was sort of krautrock and sort of disco, and its lyrics about everyone knowing everything defined the way that modern music tastes were changing. Over the next 10 years, the internet would develop into a place where all music was readily available. Owning a bootleg of the first ever Modern Lovers show no longer mattered. What mattered instead was writing original music.

The irony, of course, of James Murphy writing a song about becoming out of touch and behind the times was that it was this very tune that gave hipster disco a new musical lexicon and lease of life; the muffled, scuzzy beats, tinny vocals and nonchalant attitude dragged dance music out of the metallic claws of the DJs and into the grubby hands of the Williamsburg indie crowd.

Which brings us to the only line in 'Losing My Edge' that Murphy gets wrong: "I'm losing my edge to people with better ideas and more talent". Turns out, the ideas and talent were all his. ■ TH

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"It is about being horrified by my own silliness. And then it became a wider thing about people who grip on to other people's creations like they are their own. There is a lot of pathos in that character, though, because it's born out of inadequacy and love." James Murphy



► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 2002 ►RELEASE DATE July 8, 2002 ►LENGTH 7:51 ►PRODUCER James Murphy ►STUDIO One "in Western Massachusetts" ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION n/a

25 Wake Up**Arcade Fire 2005** ROUGH TRADE

The fact is, Arcade Fire could come onstage, play a lacklustre ping-pong tournament for 90 minutes, have a short nap, do their tax returns and *still* turn in the gig of any year as long as they finish with 'Wake Up'. An almighty, celestial wail-along, it's the sound of God's cry-wank and by far the most uplifting song ever to warn kids never to grow up because every hope and dream they hold dearest will crumble to a lifeless husk before their eyes the minute their first graduate loan demand drops on the doormat. Choke on Satan's cock, Thatcher. ■ MB

24 Hurricane**Bob Dylan 1975** CBS

The opening track of Bob Dylan's 1976 album 'Desire' brought worldwide attention to the trial of American middleweight boxer Rubin 'Hurricane' Carter, who was falsely imprisoned in 1967 for a triple murder. In eight and a half minutes Dylan employed some of his strongest language to tell the story of the arrest, trial and aftermath of the crime – his use of the word 'shit' was the only time he's ever sworn in a song, and he rammed home the extent of the crude and blatant racism involved in the conviction in the frankest possible terms. Dylan's first protest song for a decade genuinely made a difference: although it would be 12 years before the charges were dropped, 'Hurricane' helped secure Carter a retrial. ■ TH

23 Waterloo Sunset**The Kinks 1967** PYE

Still the great London song, 'Waterloo Sunset' was also the 1960s' most successful stab at classic pop subversion. Written not about actors Terence Stamp and Julie Christie but the "imagined people" that Ray Davies used to dream up while walking along the South Bank with his first wife Rasa, it's a fragile, lonely song that's more than just aware of life's pitfalls; indeed, it's fascinated by them. By pairing those wounded words with brother Dave's sprightly, optimistic guitar lines, Davies coined British psychedelia's most alluring moment: a pop song that, despite initially appearing steeped in optimism, was actually drowning, not waving. ■ MW

22 There She Goes**The La's 1988** GO! DISCS

Among the most beautiful songs in the whole of British pop's vast canon, 'There She Goes' is as close to perfection as any English songwriter has got since the '60s. Lee Mavers always said that the songs came to him, and that he was merely their vessel to wider public consciousness; but it's hard to take that seriously when you consider just how faultless his greatest achievement really is. Even ignoring the timeless riff and its split-personality vocal (Mavers veers tantalisingly between star-crossed choirboy and scally reprobate), the tumbling Merseybeat melody of 'There She Goes' is as masterful an execution of classic pop songwriting as you'll ever hear. Some say it's about smack; it's certainly addictive enough. ■ MW

Ghost Town**21****The Specials 1981** 2 TONE**FAMOUS FAN****Tom Watson MP**

"'Ghost Town' spoke to me and every other teenage kid. I remember the school careers officer telling me that if I didn't smarten up I wouldn't get a job in the local carpet factory. My 'Ghost Town' was Kidderminster, but it could have been any Midlands town. We all wore our Fred Perrys and worshipped The Specials. A quarter of a century later, Conservative Sir Peter Tapsell said what Thatcher and Howe did in 1981 was 'intellectually and economically illiterate'. 'Fuck you,' I thought when the careers office door closed. I joined the Labour party."

It probably goes without saying that, more than 30 years after its release, the "impending doom" that Jerry Dammers sought to convey on 'Ghost Town' still hangs over modern-day Britain like a rusty guillotine. There's a depressing permanence about The Specials' 1981 chart-topper, which could just as easily soundtrack the age of austerity and inequality we find ourselves in today. It may have been written about a specific time and place, but somewhere along the way, through the repetition of the same old mistakes, it's become the 'Blowin' In The Wind' of societal decay.

The time and place in question, of course, was Britain in the first few years of Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister. Disgusted by scenes he had witnessed while on tour – little old ladies selling their possessions on the streets of Glasgow; rows of boarded-up shops in Liverpool; rioting in Bristol; the decline of Coventry's auto industry – Dammers

set about putting his indignation to music. The result was an apocalyptic skank macabre through what no-one had yet thought

to call 'Broken Britain', where "all the clubs have been closed down" and the government are "leaving the youth on the shelf".

The history of 'Ghost Town' is complicated, and mirrors the rot the band were singing about: they were falling apart as they were recording it, and Dammers had to fight to realise his vision for the song, which he'd painstakingly crafted over the course of a year. Shortly after his persistence was validated by a Number One chart placing, Terry Hall, Lynval Golding and Neville Staple left The Specials to form Fun Boy Three. But 'Ghost Town' was worth all the anguish it caused them, and then some. As for the rest of us, we're left to wonder why, now more than ever, they just don't make 'em like this any more. ■ BN

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** April 1981 ► **RELEASE DATE** June 12, 1981

► **LENGTH** 3:40 ► **PRODUCER** John Collins ► **STUDIOS** Woodbine Studios, Leamington Spa; Collins' home in Tottenham, London

► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 1

20

girls&boys.



Girls & Boys

Blur 1994 PARLOPHONE

By 1994, Damon Albarn had refined the jaundiced eye on latter-day British obsessions he'd been developing on 'Modern Life Is Rubbish'. His attack was thick with sarcasm. But, crucially, it was also celebratory. Nothing sums up the tension between the two quite like 'Girls & Boys'. It went for the jugular of the Chris Evans/*Loaded* magazine/Club 18-30 culture of the era, skewering the STD-acquiring Costa Del Sol fun-pub classes. But it also made it all sound like the best thing ever, plying the old trick of fetishising the essentially carefree

nature of the proles, and worshipping blank aggressive hedonism as a kind of spiritual honesty.

And so, strapped to that preposterous disco beat that their label boss reckoned was "a big mistake", these slightly obscure former baggies, already drinking in their own personal career last-chance saloon, rocketed up the charts, thereby marking the exact start of Britpop's imperial phase. When you could sell songs taking the piss out of the masses to the masses. When smart and dumb became two sides of the same coin.

Damon found his inspiration on holiday in Magaluf. "All these blokes and all these girls meeting at the watering hole and then

just copulating," he later recalled. "There's no morality involved; I'm not saying it should or shouldn't happen." This was the first song for 'Parklife' to be completed, and a breakthrough in terms of what that album should be. The rest of its tales of British neuroses all flow from him standing on the streets of Majorca, anthropologising the wildlife. ■ GH

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** October 1993–January 1994 ► **RELEASE DATE** March 7, 1994
 ► **LENGTH** 4:18 (single version) ► **PRODUCER** Stephen Street ► **STUDIOS**
 Maison Rouge, Fulham; RAK Studios, St John's Wood, both London ► **HIGHEST**
UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 5

19

Heart Of Glass

Blondie 1978 CHRYSALIS

On its release, 'Heart Of Glass' caused controversy among the New York new wave community for adopting the sound of the increasingly popular disco scene, with bands and audiences accusing Blondie of selling out. In reality, it should have come as no surprise to keen fans of the band; they'd covered the likes of 'I Feel Love' at their gigs and Debbie Harry had openly stated her admiration for Giorgio Moroder in *NME*. It wasn't just their fellow musicians who were up in arms about the band's diversion from the punk aesthetic, though – drummer Clem Burke originally refused to play the track live until its popularity led him to begrudgingly change his stance.

The song didn't always exist in such divisive form. One of the earliest songs in Blondie's canon, Harry and guitarist Chris Stein wrote it in the mid '70s as 'Once I Had A Love' and later transformed it with a disco beat, Burke finding rhythmic inspiration in The Bee Gees and *Saturday Night Fever*. The track very nearly didn't see the light of day – the band had such little confidence in it that, when presenting ideas for 'Parallel Lines' to

producer Mike Chapman, they played him every other song they'd written before resorting to 'Heart Of Glass'.

Despite the accusations and uproar surrounding the track, it was a sign that Blondie had far from lost their bite. Though Harry has said the song was written about no-one in particular, 'Heart Of Glass'



tackles a break-up, with the singer reminiscing about a love that "was a gas/Soon turned out to be a pain in the ass" – a line that would be censored by radio. It was the perfect example of the polarised emotions experienced at the end of a romance, with Harry going on to describe the euphoric peaks ("Riding high on love's true blue-ish light") and lingering regrets ("We could have made it cruising") in an ice-cool, immaculate coo that never lets on about any pain she could be feeling.

Alongside 'I Will Survive', it was disco at its most defiant in the face of romantic disaster, but 'Heart Of Glass' glinted so much brighter, shimmying on to the dancefloor with understated poise. ■ RD

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** June 1978 ► **RELEASE DATE** September 1978 ► **LENGTH**
 5:50 ► **PRODUCER** Mike Chapman, ► **STUDIO** Record Plant, New York
 ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 1

18

Hey Ya!

OutKast 2003 LAFACE



In late 2001, André 3000, on tour with a man he'd spent 11 years building a hip-hop empire with but was now barely speaking to, began concocting a screenplay. A whimsical Woody Allen-inspired drama about a young romantic who moves to 1950s Paris, and the women he meets there, the film was supposed to be an outlet for the Atlanta rapper, whose recent creative differences with collaborator Big Boi had left him unsure whether there'd be another OutKast album after the pair had finished promoting 'Stankonia', released a year earlier to critical acclaim. The movie never made it into development, but one of its chapters – a scene of uncertainty over a collapsing affair – lingered in his brain, eventually sparking arguably the

most infectious and electric pop song of the 21st century so far.

'Hey Ya!' is a giddy Technicolor pop explosion, like staring down the barrel of a kaleidoscope on a nuclear sugar rush. Instead of the slinking rap sound found on OutKast favourites like 'So Fresh, So Clean' and 'Ms Jackson', the song was four minutes of big-chorused, radio-bait pop à la The Beatles at their perkier. Its video even mimicked the Fab Four's famous *Ed Sullivan Show* appearance that broke them in America – with a twist, of course, that included an eight-piece band comprised of clones of André, three decked in green and black jockey outfits.

The first song to ever reach one million paid downloads, 'Hey Ya!' was, in iTunes' first year of existence, its most downloaded song. A better measure of its cultural impact,

though, is how many of the song's surreal lyrical turns rasped by André over sunny strums of guitar have become household phrases: "*Lend me some sugar, I am your neighbour*", "*What's cooler than being cool? ICE COLD!*" and most famously, "*Shake it like a Polaroid picture*" – much to the bemusement of Polaroid themselves, who issued a statement advising consumers that shaking can distort and damage the retro film. To André, that's probably the kind of nit-picking the song rails against: "It's a 'get up and go' kinda tune," he explained to MTV in 2004. "'Hey Ya!' is really about saying, 'Fuck it. Live life, you know?'" ■ AH

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED December 2002–2003 ►RELEASE DATE September 9, 2003 ►LENGTH 3:55 ►PRODUCER André 3000
►STUDIOS Stankonia; Tree Sound, both Atlanta; Larrabee Sound, Los Angeles ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 3

17

A Day In The Life

The Beatles 1967 PARLOPHONE



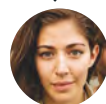
No one person could have 'A Day In The Life'. It's a song that's only made possible by the coming together of a pair of seismic geniuses, the sort of universal alignment that usually heralds the birth of the Antichrist or the opening of a long-dormant Stargate. But fortunately for The Beatles, by some cosmic stroke of fortune they could count the two greatest songwriters in the history of pop music among their number, and nowhere did they collaborate more successfully than on the closing track of 1967's 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'.

The song takes Lennon's darkly psychedelic meditations on death and splices them with McCartney's first-person portrait of the daily commuter. Lennon's verses were inspired by real-life newspaper

reports. Tara Browne, a 21-year-old Guinness heir who died in a road accident in December 1966, is thought to have been the man who "*blew his mind out in a car*", and Lennon really did read a *Daily Mail* story about 4,000 potholes in Blackburn, Lancashire. While it was Lennon who sketched out the bare bones of the song, it was McCartney who came up with what producer George Martin later called the song's "orchestral orgasm". The classical musicians brought in to record this climax were asked to wear party hats, rubber noses and even fluffy gorilla paws, and were joined in the studio by guests including Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Marianne Faithfull and Donovan. The

final touch was the reverberating piano crash that lasts nearly a minute. To achieve this, Martin had every spare piano in the building dragged to the studio, where Lennon, McCartney, Ringo

FAMOUS FAN



Caroline Polachek, Chairlift:

"My dad played 'Sgt Pepper's...' in the car for six months straight when I was young. I was amazed by how 'A Day In The Life' switched songs midway through. I was pretty ADD and spacey as a kid, so I related to the line 'somebody spoke and I went into a dream.'"

Starr, Martin and roadie Mal Evans all played the same E-major chord.

As with all good things, it wasn't long before the powers that be attempted to ban 'A Day In The Life'. Its crime, according to the BBC, was the line "*I'd love to turn you on*". They thought this was a drug reference – correctly, as it turns out. McCartney later admitted they were stoned out of their trees when they wrote most of the album. Still, two heads and their third eyes worked this time round; as the experimental showpiece of an album that was the grandest studio achievement of the time, 'A Day In The Life' raised

rock's bar and threw down a gauntlet that their peers and progeny would spend decades trying to lift. The dictionary definition of 'awesome'. ■ KEGP

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED January 19–20 and February 3 and 10, 1967
►RELEASE DATE June 1, 1967 ►LENGTH 5:35 ►PRODUCER George Martin ►STUDIO Abbey Road, London ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION n/a

16

Seven Nation Army

The White Stripes 2003 XL



By 2003 it felt like the world had The White Stripes sussed. The red-white-and-black duo knocked out a bluesy motif with a dum-thwack drumbeat behind and a howling Detroit shriek from Jack over the top. Simple. Imagine, then, when the first song from 'Elephant' emerged from our speakers and a low, muted sound wobbled the rafters. Was that – sacrilege! – a bass guitar? No, Jack White had not embraced the four-string but, thanks to some effects-pedal wizardry, made his guitar sound that bit lower and tricked us with a riff that will ring through halls-of-residence corridors for evermore. Seven simplistic notes that went dur-de-duh-duh-de-dur-dur lifted The White Stripes from underground status to radio-owning, festival-headlining megastars.

The song was filled with lyrical gems, with White tipping his hat to his British

FIVE FACTS

- 1 Seven Nation Army was what Jack White called the Salvation Army as a kid.
- 2 Around the country, football fans sing different words to the riff. In Falkirk it's "We're the navy blue army"; in Oldham, the less imaginative "We're following Oldham".
- 3 At one notorious Scottish Cup semi-final in 2006, the winning Hearts fans chanted "all the Hibeas are gay" to the tune at their Hibernian rivals.
- 4 Jack refused to use any computing equipment during recording.
- 5 An X Factor contestant (Marcus Collins) received plenty of abuse from White Stripes fans for covering the song for his first single.

surroundings at Toe Rag, the London studio where the song was recorded, as he sang: "Everyone knows about it/From the Queen of England to the hounds of hell". Clearly frustrated with the music industry, which had made him its darling in 2003, White kicked against the gossips and ass-lickers and chastised the "opera" he found himself cast in. Hence,

'Seven Nation Army' was a late-night paranoid rant dressed up as a blues-pop beast, wrapping its bullshit-cutting message around a riff that once heard is never forgotten.

In fact, the song is so big it arguably doesn't even belong to Jack and Meg any more. You're more likely to hear it boom around football stadiums across Europe, having become an unlikely terrace anthem years after its release, the mark of a modern folk classic. 'Seven Nation Army' was even adopted as a protest anthem in Egypt, where it was heard during the massive pro-democracy demonstrations of 2011. With the opening line, "I'm gonna fight 'em off/A seven nation army couldn't hold me back", it's not hard to see why. ■ DR

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED April 2002 ►RELEASE DATE April 1, 2003
►LENGTH 3:52 ►PRODUCER Jack White ►STUDIO Toe Rag, London
►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 7

"Heroes"

15

David Bowie 1977 RCA



The list of things that are wrong with "Heroes" is a short one. In summary: those quotation marks. They seem to provide a song of such unrestrained emotion with a get-out-of-jail-free disclaimer of irony. Beyond that, however, there's nothing you would want to change about this song. If listening to "Heroes" doesn't move you, doesn't make you want to punch the air in exultation, doesn't have the hairs on the back of your neck standing to attention... then you're quite clearly bereft of some vital component or other. Assuming you have ears, let's for argument's sake call it a soul.

Unquestionably the quintessential Bowie-in-Berlin track, "Heroes" was not – as the party line used to go – about an anonymous couple Bowie spotted one day embracing in

the shadow of the Wall; it was about producer Tony Visconti and backing vocalist Antonia Maaß, who were having an affair behind the back of Visconti's wife, Mary Hopkin. Yet that gossipy titbit did nothing to diminish the song's power. In truth, there wasn't much that could: "Heroes" moved with the unyielding and inexorable force of a tectonic plate, ceaselessly propelled by a musical backing that's not so much a wall of sound as a four-chord cliff-face of it.

In the middle of it all, Bowie delivered what was arguably his greatest vocal performance, running the gamut from half-whispered utterances to a full-blown rage against the dying of the light. The lyrics might have dripped with fatalism, but the cumulative effect was one of optimism: a fitting metaphor for the inhabitants of the divided city in which it was written.

Bowie recorded three separate versions of "Heroes" during the sessions for the album – there was one in English, one in French and one in German. To be honest, it doesn't really matter which one you choose to listen to, because the song was so perfectly realised, language isn't necessary to convey its

underlying sentiment: love conquers all, if only in moments. The triumph of "Heroes" itself, however, is a little more permanent than that. ■ BN

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"When we did "Heroes" [at Hansa Studios in Berlin] it really felt anthemic, almost like a prayer. However well we do it these days, it's almost like walking through it compared to that night, because it meant so much more. That's the town where it was written, and that's the particular situation that it was written about. It was just extraordinary."

David Bowie

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED July–August 1977 ►RELEASE DATE September 23, 1977 ►LENGTH 3:32 (single version) ►PRODUCERS David Bowie, Tony Visconti ►STUDIO Hansa By The Wall, Berlin ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 24

14

God Only Knows

The Beach Boys 1966 CAPITOL

It opened with what must be the most famous oxymoron in pop: “*I may not always love you/But long as there are stars above you/You never need to doubt it*”. And the line, teetering on the edge of elation and panic, summed up this delicate, beautiful track. Taken from Brian Wilson’s only *completed* opus, 1966’s ‘Pet Sounds’, ‘God Only Knows’ was romance tinged with desperation, the butterflies-in-the-stomach feeling that love is a house of cards and tragedy is always around the corner. “*God only knows what I’d be without you*”, said its pivotal line.

Just a few years before ‘Pet Sounds’ and ‘God Only Knows’, The Beach Boys were singing about piffling matters like the importance of being “*true to your school*”. The angst on display here was a major shift, and not one that came by accident. Advertising copywriter Tony Asher had been drafted in to help Brian move away from their previous fixations of girls, hot-rods and surfing, and the writer, casting himself as Brian’s “interpreter”, clearly tapped into the fragility that would eventually lead Wilson to mental and physical collapse. Though it may not seem like it in retrospect, the song was controversial in its time for the use of the word God in a non-religious context, something that Wilson himself felt uncomfortable with. “He said, ‘We’ll just never get any airplay,’” Asher has recalled. “But it worked.”

The song was more than a marriage of songwriter and lyricist – it was a tour de force of musicianship capped off by a perfect lead vocal. Like the rest of the album, the track was recorded not with the band, who were on tour minus Brian for much of 1966, but with 23 crack session musicians providing brass, woodwind and more to create that lush, lustrous sound. The band brought the harmonies and baby brother Carl Wilson’s angelically pure vocals. “He brought dignity and the words, through him, became not a lyric but *words*,” said Wilson at the time. Amen to that. ■ DS



FAMOUS FAN



Paul McCartney put the song at the top of his all-time Top 10 when asked by a Japanese radio station, saying, “It’s a really, really great song – it’s a big favourite of mine... It’s very deep. Very emotional. Always a bit of a choker for me, that one.”

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** March 10, 1966; April 11, 1966 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 16, 1966 ► **LENGTH** 2:51 ► **PRODUCER** Brian Wilson ► **STUDIO** United Western Recorders; Columbia Studios, both Los Angeles ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 2



13

Live Forever

Oasis 1994 CREATION

Oasis’ debut album ‘Definitely Maybe’ began with ‘Rock’N’Roll Star’, a snarling five-minute mission statement of a song. If you hadn’t already got the message from reading their early interviews, the

Gallaghers weren’t short on swagger, confidence or ambition. If that track told you a lot about the Burnage-born brothers, then ‘Shakermaker’, the album’s second song, gave away a fair amount too – mainly that Noel wasn’t too concerned about ‘borrowing’ a melody from a Coca-Cola advert or wherever else he fancied.

‘Live Forever’, however, was something entirely different. If there had been any doubt before, it was the first song on that seminal debut that marked Noel out as one of the greats. Written in 1991 in a building site storeroom while Noel was laid up with a broken foot, the song is emphatically optimistic, the repeated line of “*I want to live, I don’t want to die*” an obvious counterpoint to the grunge movement’s perceived mantra of doom, gloom and self-destruction. Where US bands sang about feelings of loneliness and isolation, ‘Live Forever’ was defiantly inclusive. It was the musical equivalent of best friends embracing at closing time, three sheets to the wind, and declaring their love for one another. In one line – “*I think you’re the same as me/We see things they’ll never see*” – Noel summed up childhood friendship, with all its in-jokes and shared understanding, better than lesser songwriters manage in a career. Let’s not overlook the guitar solo, either. Producer Owen Morris wasn’t a fan and cut a second section of Noel’s solo because it “sounded a bit like fucking Slash from Guns N’ Roses”. What was left of it was every bit as vital to the song as Tony McCarroll’s opening drumbeat, Liam’s falsetto and the swirling, extended outro. ‘Live Forever’ was so much more than a song on an album. It was a blueprint for life. ■ AW

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 1994 ► **RELEASE DATE** August 8, 1994 ► **LENGTH** 4:36 ► **PRODUCER** Owen Morris ► **STUDIO** Clear Studios, Manchester ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 10

12

THE SMITHS

There Is A Light That Never Goes Out

The Smiths 1986 ROUGH TRADE

No song captures the essence of The Smiths as perfectly as 'There Is A Light...' and its brilliant clash of Johnny Marr's sunny guitar jangles with Morrissey's dark, stormy sense of melodrama, riffing on mortality and violent death with wit dryer than an African desert. Segueing from one emotion to the next in a flicker of violin or a lash of Morrissey's tongue, a joyous tale of youth and freedom (*"Driving in your car, I never ever want to go home..."*) is transformed into a gloomy story of homelessness (*"...because I haven't got one any more"*) in an instant, before its knockout line: *"And if a double-decker bus crashes into us/To die by your side is such a heavenly way to die"*.

Morrissey's love story – said to be a spin on 1955 Nicholas Ray movie *Rebel Without A Cause* – was famously written in the single sitting that also spawned 'Frankly, Mr Shankly' and 'I Know It's Over', though its world-beating stature was hobbled for some years. A disagreement between the band and their label Rough Trade meant the track didn't get a single release until 1992, when it was issued to promote a Smiths compilation album and reached Number 25 in the UK. But, tucked away as the glorious swansong of 'The Queen Is Dead', it was this statement of blissful fatalistic romance that became the cornerstone of their enduring influence. Not a year passes without speculation as to whether or not The Smiths will eventually reform to do one last hurrah at Glastonbury. Should that ever happen, this will be the track every fan wants on the setlist. ■ AH

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED September–November 1985 ►RELEASE DATE June 16, 1986 (single release October 12, 1992) ►LENGTH 4:02 ►PRODUCERS Johnny Marr, Morrissey ►STUDIO Jacob Studio, Farnham ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 25

11

Eleanor Rigby

The Beatles 1966 PARLOPHONE

The shower curtain wrenched back. The silhouette of an old woman. The knife blade glinting. The screams of the naked starlet as her blood spirals down the drain. And the EEK-EEK-EEK! of the vicious strings, mirroring every stab and slash, as insane as the killer him/herself. Not exactly the 'Eleanor Rigby' we knew and loved.

It seems incredible now that The Beatles' string-octet masterpiece was inspired by Bernard Herrmann's dramatic and terrifying score for *Psycho*, but that's what George Martin has claimed: McCartney wanted a Vivaldi backing, Martin added the shadows. But then, with the arrival of 'Revolver' in 1966, everything about The Beatles seemed incredible. Previously known for a peace-and-love attitude and songs about the coy courting of many a chaste lady friend, the band opened their seventh album with a savage and bitter complaint about paying way too much tax, then followed up with a bleak

melodrama on which none of them actually play. Yet it's that *Psycho*-stark string section that has kept 'Eleanor Rigby' – ironically, considering its vivid portrayal of the loneliness of British pensioners – from showing any signs of aging. It's an Undateable.

At the time, this true Beatles collaboration – every member contributed lyrics and melody ideas, including George



Martin – was an eye-opening shock to the pop system. A song describing two lost souls swimming hopelessly around each other – with a cruel and tragic ending in which *"no-one was saved"* – sat at Number One for four weeks. Eleanor dies, Father McKenzie remains alone – so much for *"she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah"*. The age of the rock'n'roll Hollywood ending was over; music, for the first time, became all-ages and utterly unpredictable.

Today 'Eleanor Rigby' rises above the monumental Beatles canon (and let's face it, the only reason they haven't claimed every spot in the Top 20 of this list is pure Fabs-voting fatigue) by dint of spending almost 50 years as a fulcrum of popular culture without ever veering towards cheesiness or obsolescence. 'A Day In The Life', 'Tomorrow Never Knows' and 'Strawberry Fields Forever' were technically more adventurous and influential, but over time everyone's realised their lyrics are the drug-addled babble of one too many nights round Peter Fonda's gaff, rooting the songs firmly in the psychedelic era. 'Eleanor Rigby' was their first real shift from Shea Stadium moptop boyband to studio visionaries dragging prehistoric pop into the modern age; it still has the sombre, through-the-ages resonance of a musical Kafka or Dostoyevsky. If Hitchcock had rocked... ■ MB

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED April 28–29 and June 6, 1966 ►RELEASE DATE August 5, 1966 ►LENGTH 2:06 ►PRODUCER George Martin ►STUDIO Abbey Road, London ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 1

10

Good Vibrations

The Beach Boys 1966 CAPITOL

M

aking it nearly sent a man mad. It took six months, 17 separate sessions and 90 hours of magnetic tape to produce. The Theremin overdubs alone cost the obscene sum of \$15,000, and after so many sessions with top producers the total cost of recording the song mounted to a staggering \$75,000. 'Good Vibrations' was meant to be the first page of a new book in American music, the imaginative keystone of The Beach Boys' 'Smile' project – one that would knock 'Pet Sounds' into a cocked hat and show Lennon and McCartney that they weren't the only ones who could twist rock into surrealist new shapes. As it turned out, 'Good Vibrations' was so fantastically complex to make that following it up sent its creator, Brian Wilson, close to the asylum, forcing him to shelve his masterplan.

By 1965, while his bandmates were out on the road, Brian had been left at home, becoming increasingly insular and isolated while conducting his own experiments in brain chemistry. 'Good Vibrations' was the result of all that fresh inward gaze, the sound of the first sleepy, innocent buds of the psychedelic revolution, rather than the grungy cosmic tumble-dryer noises that would come later.

Instead of opening a new chapter, the song ended up as the high-water mark of Wilson's talent. And how high that mark was: a pocket symphony in a dozen parts that had as much in common with Tchaikovsky as Chuck Berry, it captured everything that was light and dreamy about The Beach Boys, yet stretched their template into the deep new galaxies of sound. For all its legendary complexity, it still sounds like it all came together in an afternoon, one beautiful daydream later. Across the Atlantic, the ever-competitive Lennon and McCartney sat up and took note, adopting Brian's innovative section-by-section editing approach for tracks like 'Strawberry Fields Forever'. The '60s were finally born. ■ GH



reference to San Francisco's increasingly prominent hippy culture.

"I'm picking up good vibrations/She's giving me excitations"

Apart from this line, Love claims to have written most of the lyrics at the absolute last minute of his deadline: in the car, on the way to the studio.

"Close my eyes/She's somehow closer now"

Love also took the decision to give the lyric a more straightforward girl/boy angle. He was worried that the song's already experimental nature would further alienate their fanbase if it didn't have an easily explicable lyric.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The central idea of 'good vibrations' came from something Brian Wilson's mother had once said to him, about not showing fear in front of dogs because "they can pick up the bad vibrations".
- 2 This would be the last US Number One hit for The Beach Boys until 'Kokomo' turned up 22 years later – at the time a record for the longest gap between Number One singles.
- 3 When Wilson finally finished his previously aborted 'Smile' album in 2004, he included a remade version of 'Good Vibrations'.
- 4 Carl Wilson sings the main vocals, but the rest of the parts were recorded with session players the Wrecking Crew – including 'Wichita Lineman' star Glen Campbell on lead guitar – rather than the actual Beach Boys.
- 5 During the famously lengthy sessions, many alternate versions of the song were recorded in different styles. The earliest takes reportedly had much more of a Motown feel.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I love the colourful clothes she wears"

The memorable opening line was a late addition, after band member Mike Love decided he'd like to include a more direct

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Brian Wilson: "I wanted something with real merit to it, artistic and smooth. Some people say it was written on acid. But I don't accredit it to LSD, I accredit it to marijuana. I smoked marijuana just before I wrote it. I was playing at the piano and began singing about good vibrations, just fooling around. Then I came up with a little melody at the piano. Tony Asher had written some original lyrics, but my cousin Mike Love had some great ideas. He came up to the house and said, 'What if I went: "I'm picking up good vibrations"? And the rest is history."

FAMOUS FAN

Dev Hynes: "This is a weird one, but the first 26 seconds of 'Good Vibrations' make me very emotional. I like the whole song – I'm a big Beach Boys fan – but that first bit is the most sadly beautiful moment in music I've ever heard."

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** February 17–September 21, 1966 ► **RELEASE DATE** October 10, 1966 ► **LENGTH** 3:39 ► **PRODUCER** Brian Wilson
 ► **STUDIOS** United Western, CBS Columbia, Gold Star, Sunset Sound, all Los Angeles ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 1

Be My Baby

The Ronettes 1963 LONDON AMERICAN

Still ubiquitous, never tiresome. A bittersweet tale of teenage romance that speaks through the ages, 'Be My Baby' was the jewel in the crown of Phil Spector's catalogue, the most successful product of the '60s wunderkind's Wall Of Sound production technique in which he redefined the recording studio as an instrument in its own right. Dense and full of drama, its layer upon layer of clunking piano, castanet trills, echo-chamber vocals and gigantic drum tumbles still disorients. It's just as disarming now as it was in 1963, when The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson had to pull over his car when he first heard it on the radio.

The Ronettes weren't girls next door. While The Crystals and The Chiffons donned pretty skirts and bobs, The Ronettes wore their dresses tight and their backcombs high. A perfect blend of sass and sweetness, grit and gloss, they were cut from a different cloth. They were to '60s girl groups what The Rolling Stones were to The Beatles. Raised in Spanish Harlem by their black-and-Cherokee mother and white father, lead singer Ronnie Bennett and her sister Estelle were always outsiders because of how they looked. Joined by their cousin Nedra Talley, the trio had performed together as teenagers, earning their crust in front of the toughest crowds in New York at the weekly amateur night at the Harlem Apollo.

This background gave Ronnie's voice a street-corner lustre that rang with a giddy mix of adolescent angst and pubescent drama, and cut clean through Spector's echo chamber. It was a voice that spoke of crushes and bad kisses and sweaty-palmed flirtations. "I want to look like Ronnie Spector sounds," Madonna once said.

'Be My Baby' also flutters with the excitement and drama of the recording process itself. The Ronettes were just teenagers when they were flown out to Los Angeles to record at Gold Star Studios,



after Spector proclaimed that Ronnie's was "the voice I've been looking for" in their audition for him. "I was so much in love," she said. "That energy comes back to me every time: when I'm singing 'Be My Baby', I'm thinking of us in the studio." But it's a song as much about power as it is about romance. It documents a pivotal moment for female empowerment in pop music – crucially, it was the woman making a play for a man, infantilising him, making him her baby, and not the other way around.

The bitter irony would come later, when Ronnie's marriage to Spector coincided with the sudden decline of his short-lived but spectacular success. He became increasingly reclusive. For five years, he held her a virtual prisoner in their home, until she left him in 1973. His bouts of violence, which famously saw him shoot holes in the ceiling when recording with John Lennon, and hold a loaded gun to Leonard Cohen's head, are well documented. While Ronnie Spector still sings the song live, she was refused permission to perform it in her *Beyond The Beehive* musical. Even from Spector's prison cell, where he is currently serving 19 years to life for the murder of actress Lana Clarkson in 2003, his grip over the song still holds firm.

The dark side of the Wall still haunts the candyfloss jangle of 'Be My Baby' even now. It's no accident that Martin Scorsese used it to soundtrack the start of his gritty noir gangster film *Mean Streets*, this impossibly sweet pop song with echoes of violence. But despite what happened later, 'Be My Baby' is still, at its core, the lynchpin of modern pop music. From the moment the drumbeat kicks in, its dizzy blend of saccharine love notes and heart-trodden melancholy still sound like sheer perfection in songcraft. Or maybe it's just the fact that we never do find out whether the girl got the boy she pleaded with, over and over again, to be her

baby that makes its appeal so enduring. Either way, it is, unequivocally, one of the greatest songs ever written. ■ JS

FIVE FACTS

- 1 Cher made her debut appearance as a backing singer on the track. Her boyfriend Sonny Bono (the pair would later become Sonny & Cher) was working for Spector and Cher was asked to step in when one of the backing singers didn't show up.
- 2 It's Brian Wilson's favourite song; he wrote The Beach Boys' 'Don't Worry Baby' as a tribute to it.
- 3 Even though Ronnie Bennett had rehearsed the song for weeks before the final recording, Spector – a perfectionist – recorded the track 42 times before he was happy with it.
- 4 The drum intro was devised by the song's co-writer Jeff Barry while he was drumming on a metal filing cabinet in Spector's office.
- 5 The first Ronettes single was originally going to be 'Why Don't They Let Us Fall In Love', but it was pushed back for 'Be My Baby'.

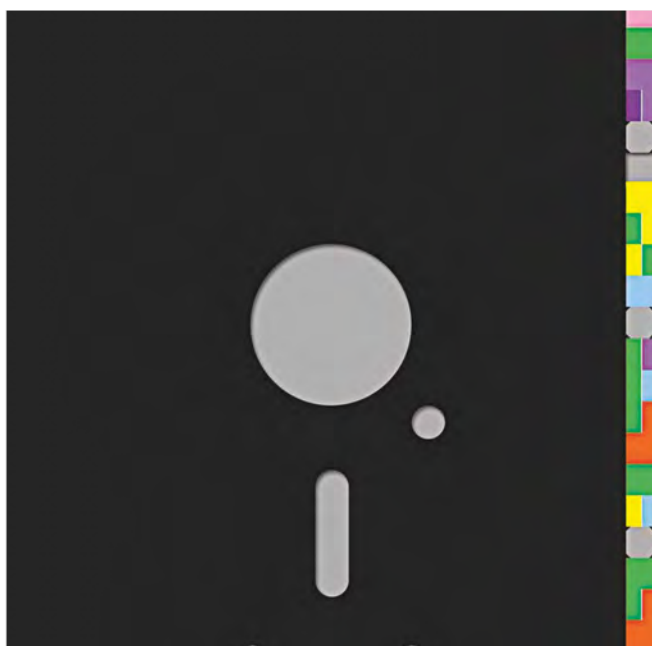
► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** July 1963 ► **RELEASE DATE** August 1963 ► **LENGTH** 2:41
 ► **PRODUCER** Phil Spector ► **STUDIOS** Gold Star Studios, Hollywood
 ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 4

8

Blue Monday

New Order 1983 FACTORY



A

fter the post-punk gloom of Joy Division had lurched to a sudden halt with Ian Curtis' death in 1980,

many thought his bandmates would fade respectfully away. Certainly no-one expected Bernard Sumner, Peter Hook, Stephen Morris and new recruit Gillian Gilbert to start taking pioneering steps in electronic music; no-one could possibly have predicted 'Blue Monday'.

For a song that helped mould modern dance music, 'Blue Monday's' conception is littered with stories of accidents and complicated experiments that may never have come off. While there wasn't the technology readily available to easily create electronic basslines and rhythms back in 1982 when the single was recorded, Sumner soon got around this. "I'd built this sequencer from an electronics kit," he told *NME* of his solution. "It was... complicated."

It wasn't just building the instruments that caused New Order problems. They had to rope in scientist Martin Usher to design a circuit that would link up Sumner's hand-built sequencer with the Oberheim DMX drum machine the band were using – something the group's frontman later said manager Rob Gretton thought was "witchcraft".

As with so many pivotal and visionary records, however, 'Blue Monday' wasn't an entirely original beast. After frequenting New York clubs, the group wanted to recreate the bass drum sound they'd heard on those nights out, specifically the "instantly recognisable thud" of Donna Summer's 'Our Love'. Peter Hook has also stated the track was inspired by Kraftwerk and ripped off a riff from Ennio Morricone. Where 'Blue Monday' excels is in how the band put those pieces together, creating something robotic and devoid of all emotion that still sounds as brilliantly timeless and futuristic now, despite decades of advancing technology and electronic invention. ■ RD

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I see a ship in the harbour/I can and shall obey"

'Blue Monday' was the first instance of Sumner inserting nautical references into his lyrics. Here, his envisaged ship could be a perceived escape from abuse – substance or physical.

"Tell me how do I feel/Tell me now how do I feel"

The line was born out of frustration at journalists constantly asking Sumner how he felt. As a subtle dig at the music press, it was originally intended to be sung by a robotic voice rather than any of the band.

FIVE FACTS

1 The song is one of the longest tracks to chart in the Official UK Singles Chart, clocking in at 7:29, and is the biggest-selling 12-inch single of all time. Despite this, the record wasn't eligible for a gold disc because Factory Records wasn't a member of the BPI.

2 The band name and title track aren't featured on the sleeve – instead the coloured blocks around the edges spell out 'FAC 73 Blue Monday and The Beach New Order' in code. The key to decipher the code was printed on the back of the group's album 'Power, Corruption & Lies'.

3 Kraftwerk allegedly booked the studio where 'Blue Monday' was recorded in the hope of emulating the track. In an interview with *The Guardian* in 2006, Peter Hook said they "gave up after four or five days".

4 New Order took the title from an illustration in the Kurt Vonnegut book *Breakfast Of Champions* that reads "Goodbye Blue Monday", referring to the invention of the washing machine improving housewives' lives.

5 The initial idea was for the song to play on autopilot at the band's gigs, with one of the group pressing play before all four left the stage with the track still running.

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Made to look like an eight-inch floppy disk and created by renowned graphic designer Peter Saville, the sleeve famously cost more to produce than the price of the record. The original pressing came packaged in a die-cut sleeve with a silver inner sleeve, which meant Factory lost five pence on every copy sold. In an attempt to reduce costs, later versions came in cheaper sleeves.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Peter Hook: "I thought the songs we wrote around it were better... but 'Blue Monday' has a sonic impact that very, very few records have. It really was a gift, and it was quite ironic that we stole it off a Donna Summer B-side."

THE AFTERMATH

New Order's next album, 'Power, Corruption & Lies', followed in May 1983 and hit the Top 10 in the UK Albums Chart. 'Blue Monday' was re-released in remixed form in both 1988 and 1995 and has been reworked and covered by countless artists, including Nada Surf and Richie Hawtin.

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 1982 ► **RELEASE DATE** March 7, 1983 ► **LENGTH** 7:29
 ► **PRODUCER** New Order ► **STUDIO** Britannia Row, London
 ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 9

7

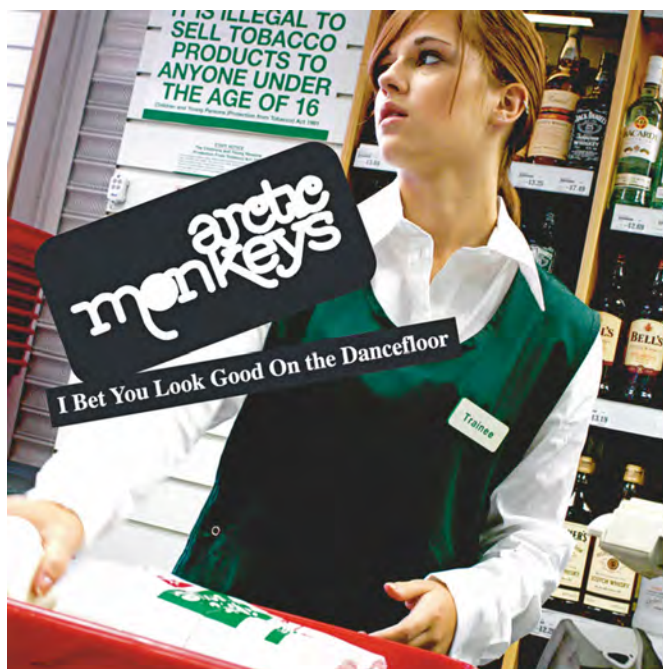
I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor

Arctic Monkeys 2005 DOMINO

We were trying to cut this single in one room and it was on telly in the other," Alex Turner recently

told *NME*, still wide-eyed all these years later about just how quickly things were moving for Arctic Monkeys right at the start. One of the standouts from their much-downloaded 'Beneath The Boardwalk' demo tape, 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor' managed to do the impossible by sounding both fresh and unique at a time when guitar bands were 10-a-penny. The Strokes, The White Stripes, Franz Ferdinand and Bloc Party all ruled the roost at the time of its release, but '...Dancefloor' instantly opened a huge creative chasm between its creators and everybody else. The general public agreed, sending it to the top of the UK Singles Chart instantly – a feat that none of the aforementioned acts ever managed to achieve, despite having mountains of record label cash, press and hype on their side.

It's also one of the simplest songs Turner has ever written, primarily taking shape in Arctic Monkeys' Sheffield rehearsal room in mid-2004 and relying on – irony of ironies – a series of descending US-influenced pop-punk chords. Matt Helders' machine-gun drum roll sowed the seed initially, becoming the perfect foundation for Turner's exhilarating guitar solo, which he played at breakneck speed three times – just in case you didn't quite catch it. Lyrically, it's still among his most remarkable achievements. Confrontational, bitter and deftly sarcastic in its depiction of a snarly young tyke getting a nightclub brush-off, it heralded a major new songwriting talent in its opening six lines alone. He may wince at it these days, but 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor' is still *the* perfect encapsulation of what it is to be young, pissed, lusty, bored, angry and skint in modern-day Britain. In hindsight, the competition may as well have just given up. ■ **MW**



WHAT WE SAID THEN

"For all those Libs fans out there for whom 'Fuck Forever' was the final straw, look to Sheffield's Arctic Monkeys: the perfect combination of unfettered yooof and relative sobriety."

– **Mike Sterry, *NME*, 2005**

WHAT WE SAY NOW

It's still the bollocks for anyone who likes fun on a Friday night and prefers the Stones' style of R&B to Rihanna's.

FAMOUS FAN

P Diddy: "I am probably the biggest Arctic Monkeys fan – we're having a bromance. I am part of the crew. I'm part of the entourage. So if y'all fuck with the

Arctic Monkeys then y'all got to fuck with me."

FIVE FACTS

1 The video was filmed live in the style of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* – the band even hired old cameras that were used on the programme for it (although they stopped short of wheeling out 'Whispering' Bob Harris).

2 "Dancing to electropop like a robot from 1984" refers to bandmate and confidant 'Reverend' Jon McClure, who once had a band called 1984. Both Turner and Helders played in his old band, Judan Suki.

3 Despite distancing himself from much of Arctic Monkeys' early material these days, Alex Turner said in 2011 that he could "never imagine" not playing this track live.

4 It took three studio attempts to get the song right. First it was demoed with producer Alan Smyth. Then came a version recorded at "300 miles an hour" with James Ford and Rich Costey. Finally, with Jim Abbiss at the recording desk, they got the keeper.

5 Other new entries in the UK Singles Chart the week '...Dancefloor' went to Number One in October 2005 included Pete Doherty's collaboration with The Litt'lans, 'Their Way' (new in at Number 22). McFly had the second highest new entry, reaching Number Three with 'I Wanna Hold You'.

COVERED BY

Sugababes, The Vines and – excruciatingly – Tom Jones. Back in 2013, comedian Bill Bailey joined them, performing an ad hoc version in the style of The Wurzels for *NME.COM*.

HATED BY

Former Depeche Mode man Alan Wilder, who in 2008 said the song's production amounted to "a bombardment of the most unsubtle, one-dimensional noise".

AFTERMATH

The track laid the foundation for Arctic Monkeys' entire career. The bar was raised considerably on British indie too, and we finally had a new band who managed to shift impressive numbers across the pond without being completely shit. Still a regular in their setlists, proof of the song's enduring appeal came in 2012 when Arctic Monkeys performed it at the London Olympics Opening Ceremony.

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **RECORDED** Summer 2005 ▶ **RELEASE DATE** October 14, 2005
▶ **LENGTH** 2:54 ▶ **PRODUCER** Jim Abbiss ▶ **STUDIO** Chapel Studios, Lincolnshire ▶ **HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION** 1

► PICTURE SPECIAL



During the Arctic Monkey's set this bar will be closed. Please use the downstairs bar!!!

JARAD
Don't use any
jumps or drums
or I will kill
you or Amps
if you can help
me to be a
to be a band while

Arctic Monkeys, May 2005,
in Sheffield (l-r): Jamie
Cook, Alex Turner, Matt
Helders, Andy Nicholson

Common People

Pulp 1995 ISLAND



who was studying at Saint Martins College, and she really did tell him she wanted to “sleep with common people like you”. She didn’t study sculpture in real life, however – although it was through an outside course in the subject that Jarvis met her. As he tells it, in real life he didn’t get the girl. What he got instead was one of the most powerful, least

preachy political statements made in the last two decades.

The song is a statement of cultural rebellion reconfigured as a motorik pop tune, and an unconventional one at that. Rather than a traditional verse-chorus-verse structure, Pulp’s defining anthem is built around a two-chord drone with an unstoppable juggernaut momentum. There are skittering synths and touches of treated violin, but the focus is always Jarvis’ monologue. His delivery builds and builds in intensity as he grows less guarded towards the woman and more and more angry about her patronising attitude. And the real-life Jarvis had had plenty of time to get angry: Pulp had been playing together since 1978, and part of what makes ‘Common People’ so thrilling is the fact that Jarvis is giving voice to a decades-old grievance. The tragedy is that those same grievances have only increased in the two decades since the song was released.

Interestingly, Pulp didn’t realise at the time that they were making something that would prove to be timeless rather than just timely. When the song was originally rush-released, it was because Jarvis had identified “cultural slumming” as a

dominant theme in popular culture – one that he wanted to rail against. “It seemed to be in the air, that kind of patronising social voyeurism,” he said. “I felt that of ‘Parklife’, for example, or *Natural Born Killers* – there is that ‘noble savage’ notion. But if you walk round a council estate, there’s plenty of savagery and not much nobility going on.”

Yet instead of making its point and then vanishing, ‘Common People’ turned into a perennial favourite. The track became an unprecedented pop hit for Pulp, although the version that was played on the radio omitted the song’s most savage verse: “*Like a dog lying in the corner/They will bite you and never warn you/Look out, they’ll tear your insides out*”. Indeed, the song sounds as important and alive today as it ever did. In a Britain run by the children of privilege, in which austerity has become simply another tool for waging a systematic attack on the poor and the vulnerable, ‘Common People’ remains both one of the greatest songs of all time and somehow underrated by the world at large. It’s a song that’s so much more than five minutes and 51 seconds of the most exciting and thrilling indie pop ever written; it has also transcended its era to become an angry, biting and incisive snapshot of Britain in the 21st century. ■ **KEGP**

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The single was released on two CDs that each featured slightly different artwork. On the first the band were shot through the glass frontage of Frank’s Sandwich Bar in west London during the daytime on November 30, 1994; on the other they were pictured in the same location at night. The cover, by The Designers Republic, came with a brief sleevenote: “There is a war in progress, don’t be a casualty. The time to decide whose side you’re on is here. Choose wisely. Stay alive in ‘95.”

In 1995, Pulp were at the peak of their powers. Their defining record, ‘Different Class’, was coming together and they were asked to step in to replace The Stone Roses as Glastonbury headliners. They more than made the step up. As Jarvis told the crowd, this felt like a door opening to many people in the audience or watching at home. “If a lanky git like me can do it, and us lot, yeah,” he said, “you can do it too.” Jarvis saw the word ‘common’ as pejorative, an insult laid at the door of the unwelcome, similar to the way ‘chav’ is used now. This song, the centrepiece of that legendary kicking down of the mainstream’s barricades, reclaimed the word, making it a sort of commoner’s pride anthem.

But ‘Common People’ wasn’t about escapism. Quite the opposite. ‘Common People’ is a rejection of escapism. It’s a vicious attack on class tourism that ultimately challenges us to engage with society and reject the entrenched beliefs that so often guide us. It’s a narrative in the best singer-songwriter tradition, in which Jarvis tells a tale of unrequited love that was all too familiar to him. According to interviews, he really did meet a woman

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** 1995 ► **RELEASE DATE** May 22, 1995 ► **LENGTH** 5:51 ► **PRODUCER** Chris Thomas ► **STUDIO** Townhouse, London ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 2

► PICTURE SPECIAL



STEVE DOUBLE/CAMERA PRESS

Pulp, 1994, in London
(l-r): Russell Senior, Nick Banks, Jarvis Cocker, Steve Mackey, Candida Doyle

5

Last Nite

The Strokes 2001 ROUGH TRADE

Sceptics might argue that The Strokes were little more than shrewd musical recyclers who found themselves in the right place and time with the right look and sound, but I'll wager that most of those sceptics weren't teenagers in the summer of 2001. If they were, they'd surely remember hearing 'Last Nite' for the first time – that hoarse-as-a-crow clarion call with liquor on its breath and boldness in its timbre, a basin of ice water thrown over a sedated indie rock scene that had not only misplaced its mojo, but which thought it perfectly acceptable to dress like suburban dads who'd been given BHS vouchers for Christmas – and rethink their words.

Nevertheless, it does seem appropriate that the song which served as The Strokes' introduction to the world – first on 'The Modern Age' EP and later as their first hit single – should be so strikingly reminiscent of something else. Quite a few something elses, as it happens. There's the wholesale lift of the intro to Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers' 'American Girl', of course: an act of musical larceny as shameless as it was inspired. Then there's the more than passing resemblance to The Doors' 'Touch Me', which Julian Casablancas' vocal – equal parts Lou Reed, Iggy Pop and Jim Morrison – only serves to accentuate. Albert Hammond Jr's swinging-dick guitar solo was a knowing invocation of the late, great bluesman Freddie King, while the entire song seems to

vibrate with an energy and self-assurance that's as authentically 'New York' as a crazy lady on the subway. Broken down into its constituent parts, 'Last Nite' amounts to nothing less than a three-minute 15-second primer on all that is vital about American rock'n'roll; a song that tingles the primordial nerve centres in a way that – like the song says – all girlfriends, grandsons and spaceship inhabitants could never understand.

Even if you were predisposed to loathe the band – with their Swiss boarding-school backgrounds, studied New York nonchalance and irrepressible hype – as a sort of indie rock illuminati, 'Last Nite' was undeniable, and its effect was instantaneous. It's an oft-repeated fallacy that music was dying on its arse before The Strokes came along, yet while there were certainly alternatives to the nu-metal/sadsack-indie duopoly of the age, at a time when the internet hadn't quite become the democratising force it is today, they were that much harder to seek out. Besides, none of those alternatives had the combination of style and substance that The Strokes possessed. The 'Last Nite' video alone – a warts-and-all live take that begins with a veneer of professionalism and ends in collapsing mic-stand chaos – must have been responsible for the formation of more bands than the entire Stereophonics oeuvre. From the lit cigarette tucked between the strings of Albert Hammond Jr's headstock, to the way Casablancas mischievously launches his microphone at the floor, to the half-drunk bottles of beer that are littered around the set, that video captured the classic rock'n'roll iconography and gang mentality in a way that felt new and exciting. It made being in a



band with your handsome, lank-haired mates look like the easiest, most effortless thing in the world; imagine the surprise of the Jets, the Louis XIVs and the Tokyo Police Clubs of this world when it turned out to be rather more difficult than The Strokes made it seem. 'The Modern Age' really hit the nail on the head: "Work hard and say it's easy".

Of course, even The Strokes struggled with being The Strokes, and it's been a while since being in that band looked like anything other than a particularly cruel and unusual form of torture. Back in 2001, it seemed inconceivable that a group who came up with something as instinctual and off-the-cuff as this song would ever fall prey to wasted years of procrastination and petty animosities, but if they've occasionally been guilty of over-thinking things, we can probably forgive them that much: after 'Is This It', the bar couldn't have been set much higher for them. They may never rediscover that early exuberance and vitality, but while all teenage infatuations inevitably come to an end, whatever happens, we'll always have 'Last Nite'. ■ BN

FIVE FACTS

1 The 'Last Nite' video was directed by Roman Coppola, son of Francis Ford Coppola and brother of Sofia.

2 The video was parodied by Sum 41 in their promo for 'Still Waiting', which featured the band playing in front of a similar backdrop.

3 The song has been covered by Ryan Adams, Weird Al Yankovic, POP ETC, Vitamin C and Adele.

4 Tom Petty took the theft of the 'American Girl' intro in his stride, saying bigheartedly, "It made me laugh out loud".

5 Julian Casablancas told producer Gordon Raphael he wanted it to sound "like a band from the past that took a time-trip into the future".

► THE DETAILS

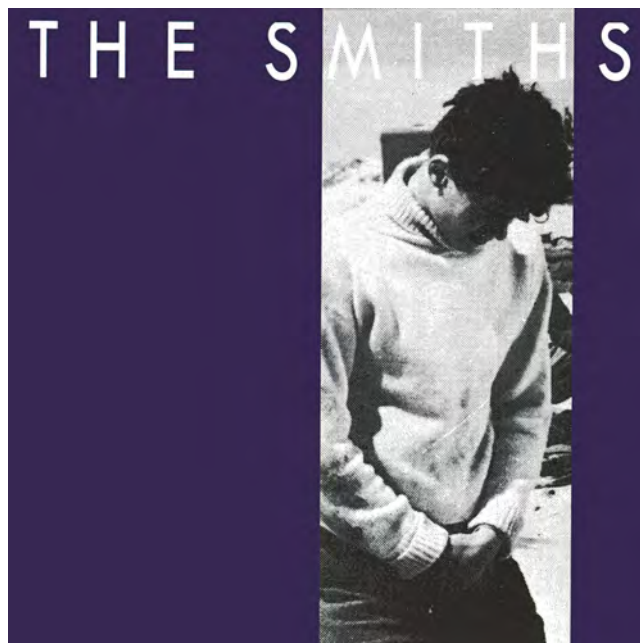
► **RECORDED** Spring 2001 ► **RELEASE DATE** July 30, 2001 ► **LENGTH** 3:15 ► **PRODUCER** Gordon Raphael ► **STUDIO** Transporterraum, New York City ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 14

How Soon Is Now?

The Smiths 1984 ROUGH TRADE

Had Morrissey ever seen *The Magaluf Weekender* he might have realised the error in his approach to clubbing. Done right, 'How Soon Is Now?' should go, "*There's a club if you'd like to go/You could meet somebody who'll try to drug you/So you go and you down neon shots/And you dance round a pole/And you go home/And you puke/And you shag the rep*". But of course, Moz's chronic wallflowerdom formed the heart and soul of The Smiths' ultimate hymn to the ill-fitting and heavy of heart. In the ego-driven, leather-panted, sex-Trojan world of pop it was rare indeed to hear a singer admit to being "*the son and the heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar*"; to declare themselves desolate, bereft of hope and socially dysfunctional. Most other vulnerable musicians sang of temporary heartbreak or vague melancholia; here was a man beautifully wailing a line as broken and honest as "*I am human and I need to be loved, just like everybody else does*". It was, and remains, a clarion call to the terminally fractured.

If Morrissey's everyloser sentiment was destined to chime with generations of depressives struggling to find their way, Johnny Marr's subterranean waves of oscillation and Doppler-effect hookline have likewise kept decades of guitar hero wannabes gasping and guessing. Emerging from a studio jam of Elvis' 'That's All Right', it was dank and cavernous, perfectly describing the interior of an empty, decayed soul. Fittingly, 'How Soon Is Now?' would be a misfit among Smiths songs – it was too difficult to be attempted live too often and Rough Trade at first considered it too unusual for its own single release. Hence it was shunted from the flip of 'William, It Was Really Nothing' to 'Hatful Of Hollow' to its own single release once fans already had it twice, and found its natural place in history as the gorgeously deformed cousin in The Smiths' attic – and The Best B-side Ever. ■ MB



need to be loved/ Just like everybody else does"

Journalist Jon Savage argued that the chorus, and other sections of the song, related to Manchester's gay club scene.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Johnny Marr: "The vibrato sound is fucking incredible, and it took a long time. I put down the rhythm track on an Epiphone Casino through a Fender Twin Reverb without vibrato. Then we played the track back through four old Twins, one on each side. We had to keep all the amps vibrating in time to the track and each other, so we had to keep stopping and starting the track, recording it in 10-second bursts... I

wish I could remember exactly how we did the slide part! We did it in three passes through a harmoniser set to some weird interval, like a sixth. There was a different harmonisation for each pass. For the line in harmonics, I retuned the guitar so that I could play it all at the 12th fret with natural harmonics. It's doubled several times."

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"For the most part, Morrissey is the Hilda Ogden of pop: harassed, hard done by and constantly surrounded by woe. On 'How Soon Is Now?' Johnny Marr has put in some great work creating a febrile, pulsing presence as well as revitalising the Bo Diddley guitar sound. But Steve can't keep his mouth shut and his mock opera wail has an aura of gaudy campness."

– Gavin Martin, *NME*, February 9, 1985

FAMOUS FAN

Nick Frost: "When I was 16, falling in love for the first time, I identified with them. I'd sit with my headphones on listening to The Smiths. Morrissey's voice in particular was a real comfort to me."

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The song was recorded with a hangover, the day after Johnny Marr, Andy Rourke and Mike Joyce had celebrated the recording of 'Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want'.
- 2 That same night they posted Morrissey a copy of the rough mix. He recorded his vocals in two takes the next day.
- 3 When the song was finally released as a single, the sleeve shot (above) from the film *Dunkirk* was banned in the US because actor Sean Barrett looked slightly as though he was holding his crotch.
- 4 The video includes a shot of Marr showing Morrissey how to play the guitar.
- 5 Marr's memorable guitar sound was sampled for 1991 pop hit 'Hippychick' by Soho.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"I am the son and the heir of a shyness that is criminally vulgar/ I am the son and heir of nothing in particular"

Adapted from a quote from George Eliot's *Middlemarch*: "To be born the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer, and inevitable heir to nothing in particular."

"You shut your mouth/ How can you say/ I go about things the wrong way/ I am human and I

▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **RECORDED** July 1984 ▶ **RELEASE DATE** August 24, 1984
▶ **LENGTH** 6:46 ▶ **PRODUCER** John Porter ▶ **STUDIO** Jam Studios, London ▶ **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 24

3

I Feel Love

Donna Summer 1977 GTO



Time present and time past/Are both perhaps present in time future/And time future contained in time past", wrote TS Eliot in *Burnt Norton*, the first of his *Four Quartets*. Old TS wasn't known for his raving, but surely he'd have been able to get with 'Giorgio By Moroder', from Daft Punk's 2013 beast of an album, 'Random Access Memories'. In it, band hero, album co-producer and electronic music pioneer Giorgio Moroder tells the story of his incredible career over a smooth, loungey disco backing and wine bar chatter.

Daft Punk are the robot-helmeted kings of retro-futurism, lovingly stroking their cryogenically frozen disco-era visions of a bright new technological utopia with a sense of sweet nostalgia. That they should worship at

FAMOUS FAN



David Bowie:

"One day in Berlin, Eno came running in and said, 'I have heard the sound of the future.' He puts on 'I Feel Love' by Donna Summer... He said, 'This is it. This single is going to change the sound of club music for the next 15 years.' Which was more or less right."

survive. "I wanted to do an album with the sounds of the '50s, the sounds of the '60s, of the '70s and then have a sound of the future", Giorgio explains. "And I thought, wait a second – I know the synthesizer. Why don't I use the synthesizer, which is the sound of the future".

the mixing desk of Moroder, the undoubted high priest of future disco, is no surprise whatsoever. But still, as Moroder explains how he invented Daft Punk's past-future over a rankly retro backing on an album made by men who look like movie androids dressed as '70s stunt-bike riders, shit gets so meta it's surprising that the space-time continuum could

The album Moroder was talking about was Donna Summer's 1977 concept album 'I Remember Yesterday', whose final track, Moroder's bold leap into the sonic future, was 'I Feel Love'.

While this most ubiquitous of tracks now comes laden with a bell-bottomed truckload of '70s fancy-dress baggage, at a time when most disco tracks came sweeping in with strings and vamped around with your olde worlde instruments made of metal and wood, the alien ziggurats of arpeggiating synth that adorned 'I Feel Love' must really, genuinely, have been the sound of the future on first hearing. So said Brian Eno, himself no slouch in the evolution of electronic music, as he rushed into Berlin's Hansa studio to play the record to a surprised David Bowie, predicting – correctly – that it would change the face of dance music.

More than that: the erotic, electronic explorations that revolutionised disco also birthed techno and a new breed of electronic music that's still evolving to this day. The bass-driven machine groove of 'I Feel Love' added an explicit sexiness to dance music that just couldn't be contained. The trio of Summer, writer Peter Bellotte and Moroder had already enjoyed worldwide

success in the early months of 1976 with the even more explicit, orgasmic and tantrically long 'Love To Love You Baby', but 'I Feel Love' was a megahit. Summer's vocals, ethereal yet unboundedly hedonistic, made a delicious contrast, floating in gossamer wisps around the song's rampant robot thrums.

Moreover, the key sound of the track was a complete accident, one of those freak mutations that so often propel musical history. "When we mixed it, by accident the engineer added a delay at the same tempo as the beat, which suddenly doubled the

speed of the synth pulse," Moroder later revealed. "That became the key sound of the record."

The other key sound – Summer herself – initially wasn't so sure that this was the path the future should follow. In fact, she was completely flummoxed by it. "Giorgio brought me this popcorn track he had recorded," she recalled of the sessions for her 1977 album 'I Remember Yesterday'. "And I said, 'What the hell is this, Giorgio?'"

Yet if an electronic prophet is often without honour in his own studio, Moroder's instincts proved true as the track romped up the charts and through the clubs, razing preconceptions with its insistent, addictive pulse and bulldozing broad new avenues for gape-mouthed musicians.

"I didn't realise how much the impact would be", Moroder notes with Germanic understatement on the Daft Punk track. Well, you can't predict the future, can you? But with an adventurous spirit and a bit of blind luck, you can certainly shape it. ■ EM

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1976 ►RELEASE DATE May 13, 1977 ►LENGTH 5:53
►PRODUCERS Giorgio Moroder, Pete Bellotte ►STUDIO Musicland, Munich ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 1

2

Love Will Tear Us Apart

Joy Division 1980 FACTORY

Joy Division were supporting the Buzzcocks on their UK tour in 1979 when they debuted a brand new song. It sounded unlike anything they'd ever written before: sadder and sweeter, more human and more vulnerable, their gloomily oppressive post-punk replaced by chilling synthesizers and Ian Curtis' fragile croon. "I remember standing in the audience at London University," Factory Records' sleeve designer Peter Saville recalled in Grant Gee's 2007 documentary *Joy Division*, "and thinking, 'Oh, fuck – now they've got a single.'"

If, today, it's hard to appreciate just how startling it must have been to hear 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' for the first time – those initial guitar chimes, the soft splash of drums, that broken and almost timid bass rumble – it's because the past 34 years have transformed it into something more than a mere song. It's Joy Division's defining statement, their parting shot, the swansong to the score that plays over the final credits in their story. The song which, still, is linked to Ian's life, troubles and suicide after his widow Debbie had it transcribed on his memorial stone.

And yet, for all the cult of personality now attached to it, 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' is a pop song – or, as Peter Hook described it to *NME*, a song which "masquerades as this cute little pop song" but is actually a wolf in sheep's clothing, its contagious catchiness disguising its bitter brittleness. Recorded in 1980 and released a month after Ian's death, it doesn't fit snugly alongside either the dark dystopian cityscapes of 'Unknown Pleasures' or the harrowing resignation letter of 'Closer', two albums that are explicitly and excessively

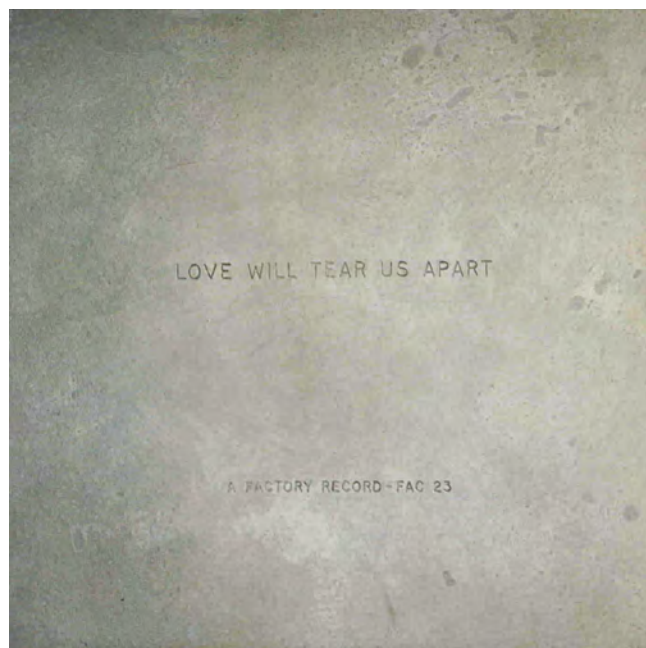
morose. Instead, it's an exercise in insidious betrayal, marrying a whistle-while-you-work melody to a sad, sombre tale of a dying relationship.

It's that strike-a-chord-with-all-and-sundry bite that fuels 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' and ensures it stings the skin of anyone who hears it – because, once its hooks are in, it's impossible to shake the words. And those words are both narrowly specific and widely resonant. On one hand, the song details the torment Curtis endured as he found himself torn between two existences, two lives and two loves: the domesticity of his life in Macclesfield with his wife, and daughter Natalie, and the glamorous appeal of his Belgian girlfriend, Annik Honoré.

Adding to the pressure was the increasing burden of the singer's epilepsy, and his fear that it would hamper what he could achieve with Joy Division. Here was someone who was being pulled in different directions by opposing forces, and felt himself breaking under the pressure.

But you don't need an autobiographical reading to recognise the emotional heft of 'Love Will Tear Us Apart'. At its core, it's a weary rumination on something everyone can relate to: two people stuck in a rut, sharing a bed but neither talking nor touching, aware that the end is nigh but too afraid to hasten the demise. "You cry out in your sleep, all my failings exposed", sighs Curtis. "And there's a taste in my mouth, as desperation takes hold". It's the distressed confession of a renowned musician trying to juggle a family, an affair and a debilitating illness; equally, it is the exasperated cry of anyone who's at the end of their tether.

It's that undercurrent that gives 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' its



greatness: for the majority of people, the oblique terror of 'Shadowplay' or the cut-and-paste gruesomeness of 'Atrocity Exhibition' are never going to resonate as much as the straightforward world-weariness of an opening salvo like "When routine bites hard, and ambitions are low/And resentment rides high, but emotions won't grow".

Since Curtis' death, 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' has taken on a life of its own: the band's first chart hit (Number 13 in the UK Singles Chart), covered by everyone from Björk and Thom Yorke to Fall Out Boy and Jamie Cullum, and destined to be rolled out for every Joy Division retrospective from now until the end of time. Love tore Ian Curtis apart, but in the process birthed something immortal and indestructible: a song with an appeal that's endured far beyond his lifetime and is unlikely to ever dim. ■ BH

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Stephen Morris, Joy Division and New Order: "I just thought, 'Yeah, this is a good song, someone might like it.' It was a great period for the band, but Ian's personal life – that was all going badly. In retrospect, when you listen to it in light of what happened, it seems bloody obvious. I honestly didn't realise he was writing about himself. I just said, 'These are great lyrics, Ian.' That makes it a bit difficult to listen to now."

► THE DETAILS

► **RECORDED** March 1980 ► **RELEASE DATE** June 1980 ► **LENGTH** 3:18
 ► **PRODUCERS** Martin Hannett, Joy Division ► **STUDIO** Strawberry Studios, Stockport ► **HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION** 13

1

Smells Like Teen Spirit

Nirvana 1991 DGC



S

mells Like Teen Spirit' defined a generation and made an icon out of one Seattle slacker, Kurt Cobain. But things could have ended in a very different kind of infamy for the Nirvana frontman. "I was so withdrawn, so antisocial that I was almost insane," he told writer Jon Savage in 1993 of his teenage years, marred by intense fantasies of violence. "I always felt [my classmates] would vote me most likely to kill everyone at a high school dance. I fantasised about it, but I would have always opted to kill myself first."

Growing up in the sleepy Washington suburb of Aberdeen, performing Beatles songs solo at the town's taverns and warehouses as refuge from the unrelenting rain, the teenage Cobain developed an emptiness he'd never shake, a feeling that would shape the savage nihilism of his sharpest, most volatile moment of songwriting – five minutes and one second of razorblade vocals, thundering drums, mangled grunge guitars and lyrics that puzzled like a Rubik's Cube. Now, 23 years on, no other song electrifies quite like it.

Its release in September 1991 sparked a cultural revolution. After all the ugly optimism of Ronald Reagan's 1980s America and its "greed is good" mantra, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' gave a voice to a new class of young people overcome by apathy: Generation X, the newspapers called them, as if apathy was something new. The truth was, that feeling had simply never been given a voice, never been made socially acceptable or culturally tangible. Nirvana, with this snarling anthem, their messy

misfit thrift-store clothes and smirking sense of abandon, wisecracking through interviews and shrugging off the media outlets fawning over them, made it real. If the murky brown colours of the '...Teen Spirit' music video, set in a high school auditorium complete with slow-motion ironic cheerleaders, reminds you of the filthy brine at the bottom of a blocked drain, it's because that's how Cobain saw himself and his generation.

One of the last tracks written for 'Nevermind', '...Teen Spirit' began as a taunt scrawled on Cobain's bedroom wall apartment by Bikini Kill riot grrrl Kathleen Hanna in August 1990: 'KURT SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT', referencing a popular brand of deodorant for teenage girls. The pair had spent an afternoon drinking, leaving his rented apartment to drunkenly picket a right-wing pregnancy centre, on which Kurt sprayed "GOD IS GAY" in six-foot letters. Returning to Cobain's apartment, they "got a little more drunk, and I threw up on someone's leg," recalls Hanna. "I passed out with a marker pen in my hand and I woke up with one of those hangovers where you think if you go into the next room there could be a dead body in there... Six months later, Kurt called me to say, 'There's this thing you wrote on my wall and it's kind of cool. I want to use it as a lyric in one of my songs.'"

When Kurt took his combative four-chord riff to a rehearsal in early 1991, drummer Dave Grohl instantly loved its energy but had "no idea" it would spawn such a monstrous hit. A pop song wrapped in punk aggression ("Boston's 'More Than A Feeling' with the lyrics changed," as former *Melody Maker* writer and Cobain's close friend Everett True called it in 2008), it had a simple verse-chorus structure inspired by the Pixies and was the only cut on 'Nevermind' on which all three band members received a songwriting credit. And rightly so – what would 'Smells

STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

Resurrecting the watery theme of the 'Nevermind' cover, the 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' artwork features a deliberately blurry photo of the trio on a rippling blue background. Details about the image are scarce, but it's said the shot was a mistake that the photographer intended to throw away. Cobain, however, liked the way it tied into the brown, gutter-water hues of Samuel Bayer's video for the track, and how, as in the promo, it obscured his face totally.

FIVE FACTS

- 1 The track's chart success caused sales of antiperspirant Teen Spirit to soar, much to anti-capitalist Cobain's bemusement.
- 2 When Cobain took the song to a rehearsal for the first time, the trio jammed the main riff for 90 minutes uninterrupted before turning it into a song.
- 3 The track was debuted at Seattle's tiny OK Hotel on April 17, 1991 – with different lyrics as Kurt was still working on them.
- 4 Kurt grew to despise the track. "I literally want to throw my guitar down and walk away. I can't pretend to have a good time playing it," he told *Rolling Stone* just months after its release.
- 5 The song might have been lost had Dave Grohl not brought a boombox with him to rehearsals. "So many songs got thrown away, until we finally said, 'Maybe we should start recording them on a cassette,'" the drummer later recalled.

Like Teen Spirit' be without the drum fill that jolts the song into action like a chainsaw revving into life, or Krist Novoselic's bass slurs, slinking seductively around Kurt's vocals?

The song's impact was swift, crashing a demolition ball through pop culture. Danny Goldberg of management firm Gold Mountain admitted that no-one at Sub Pop or in Nirvana's management thought it had the potential to be a mainstream smash – the hope was to "sell roughly half what Sonic Youth sold on their last album, if we're lucky". 'Come As You Are' was seen in the Sub Pop camp as the best chance of a crossover hit. However, US college radio latched on to '... Teen Spirit' and crowds of hundreds were soon gathering at sold-out

Nirvana shows without tickets.

Everywhere the song reached, it inspired vicious anarchy. Nirvana gigs became mauling grounds the moment Kurt

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Load up on guns and bring your friends/It's fun to lose and to pretend"

Controversy from the very first line, which took on an eerie resonance in the '90s as the US was struck by a spate of school shootings, including the 1999 Columbine massacre.

"I'm worst at what I do best/ And for this gift I feel blessed"

A nod to Kurt's contempt for the fame being hoisted on him and also his musical ethos – his style wasn't about virtuoso guitar trickery, but raw power.

"With the lights out/It's less dangerous/Here we are now/ Entertain us"

Seen by some as a biting indictment of TV and mainstream media, which Cobain saw as ignoring real-world problems for glitzy gameshow nonsense.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Smells Like Teen Spirit' has a 'Goo'-ey feeling inherent in its lurching structure... While other US grunge bands seem content to slosh around in their respective hardcore genres, Nirvana have opted out of the underground without winking out in the process... A shock to the system."

– Steve Lamacq, *NME*, September 21, 1991

strummed the track's intro. A teenager in a US mall was reportedly seriously injured in a fall from a balcony when the track came on the Tannoy, sending him into a moshing fit. Even the filming of a promo for the track caused chaos. "We took kids from a Nirvana show to be in the video," remembered director Samuel Bayer in 2008. "The first take sparked a near riot. I was there with a megaphone screaming 'STOP! STOP!' thinking, 'Oh my god, we're going to have to get the police.' People were going that crazy for the song."

As the months rolled on, its popularity refused to diminish, with record sales for 'Nevermind' continuing to skyrocket on the back of the song, pushing Michael Jackson from the top of the US Billboard chart. In fact, the only person who grew tired of 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' was Cobain himself. "I can see it's a good record from a commercial point of view, but it's too slick for my tastes," he told a TV crew in 1993. He began refusing to play it live and often toyed with its tempo, deliberately performing it sloppily, just to mess with the audiences he cynically saw as flocking to Nirvana shows simply to hear that song while it was flavour of the month. He wouldn't make that mistake again – writing the next album, he concentrated on sounds too scuzzy for a mainstream audience, because – as former *NME* journalist Keith Cameron saw it – he was selling records to precisely the kind of person who left him feeling so alienated and alone in his own teenage years: "Kurt didn't want to sell records to cunts."

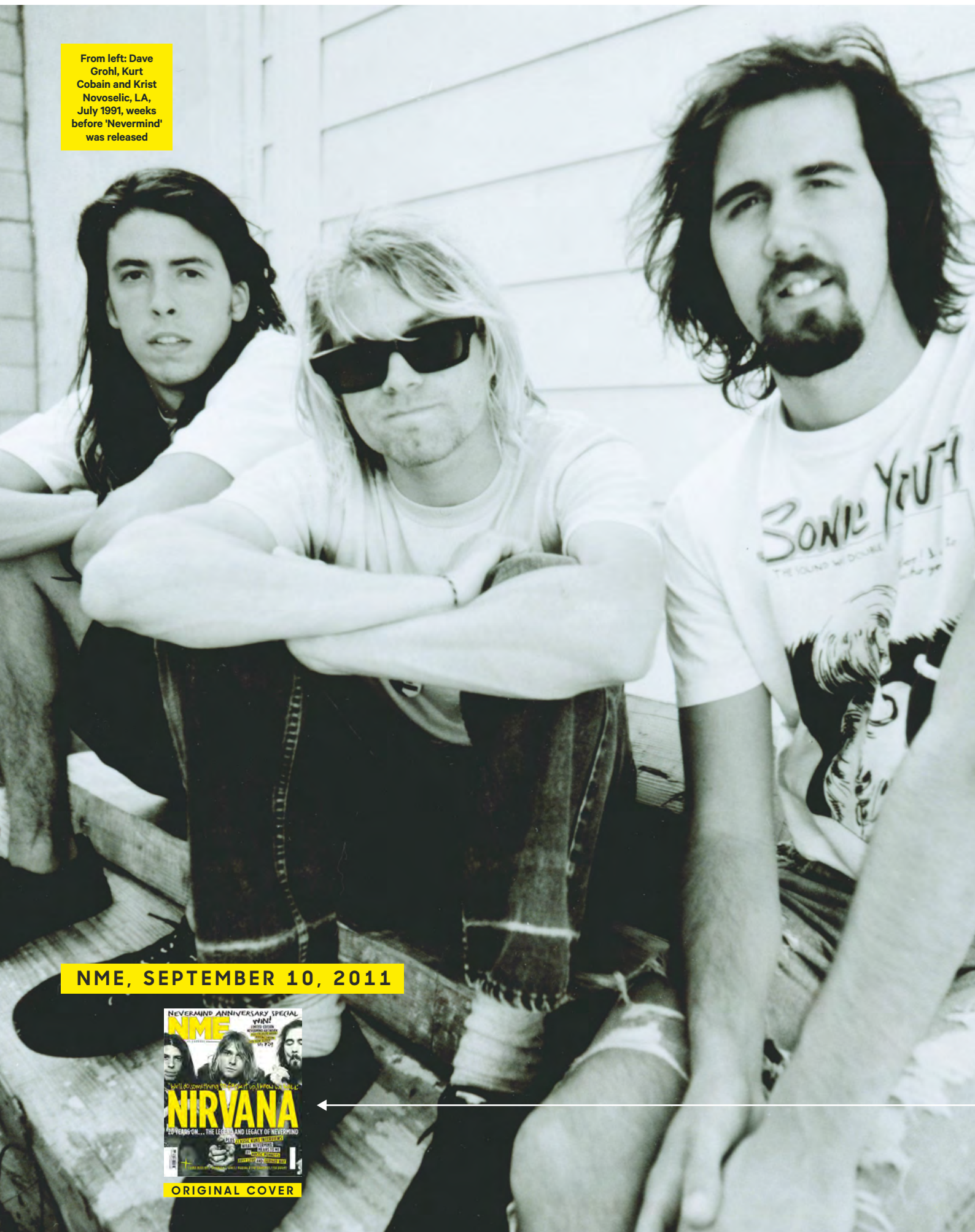
It was, at once, the unifying breakthrough anthem and death knell of grunge; in its wake everyone from Pearl Jam to Alice In Chains sold millions by recreating the song's filth and dynamics for the soft-metal crowd who wanted in, and the Seattle sound quickly became ubiquitous. Yet virtually all credible modern rock firebrands – from The Black Lips to Biffy Clyro to QOTSA to Menace Beach – bear its hallmark, and almost 20 years on from Cobain's suicide, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' continues to entertain us, relevant as it ever was. Everyone from Miley Cyrus to Kelis has covered it, and Jay-Z paid homage on his 'Magna Carta Holy Grail' album. It's referenced constantly in film and TV, and is so ingrained in the fabric of modern pop culture you probably know its warped, fuzz-flecked guitar solo better than you know your closest friends. It encapsulated not just a generation, but a feeling that had never been captured so truly in song before – an angry disdain for the establishment, a churning eruption of nothingness at an increasingly corporate world. That's why it remains so powerful, and why, here we are now, still celebrating it today. ■ AH

► THE DETAILS

►RECORDED May 1991 ►RELEASE DATE September 23, 1991 ►LENGTH 5:01 ►PRODUCER Butch Vig ►STUDIO Sound City, Los Angeles ►HIGHEST UK SINGLES CHART POSITION 7

Its impact was swift, crashing a demolition ball through pop culture

From left: Dave
Grohl, Kurt
Cobain and Krist
Novoselic, LA,
July 1991, weeks
before 'Nevermind'
was released



NME, SEPTEMBER 10, 2011



ORIGINAL COVER

**" 'SMELLS LIKE
TEEN SPIRIT'
SYMBOLISES
A WHOLE
GENERATION
OF LOSERS "**

NME's Dan Martin looks back at the single and album that defined the '90s, while indie nobility from Alex Turner to Nicky Wire pay tribute to the '...Spirit'

A

nyone can make a great album. Honestly, they can. You'd need years and suitable blackmail material for the world's most on-trend songwriters and producers, but it's possible – all those things can be acquired.

What's harder is to make a seismic album. One that leaves the world irrevocably different, a fixed point in time around which all other experience will pivot. An entire course of history set thanks to an event – like John meeting Paul, or Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil (which didn't happen anyway). It isn't really possible to plan it.

Neither is it really possible to work out quite what that event was that caused 'Nevermind' to inform every aspect of pop music, and so by proxy, the lives of people who love it. As much as anything else, born into a pre-internet age where an artist's every move wasn't tweeted, evidence itself is sparse. Was it drummer Chad Channing leaving Nirvana to make way for the ambitious Dave Grohl? The meeting where a Geffen A&R dude convinced his boss to poach the band from Sub Pop? The day Kurt Cobain's parents separated?

Whatever it was, the event led Cobain, bass player Krist Novoselic and Grohl into Butch Vig's Devonshire Studios in spring 1991, where they would resume work on the album they had begun with Channing and demoed at Smart Studios, Wisconsin while still with Sub Pop. Of these early results, *NME*'s Keith Cameron wrote: "Musically, Nirvana spring from the same pool as their ex-Sub Pop colleagues Mudhoney – a raw-boned mix of '60s garage pop and '70s punk and metal – but they infuse it with an unsettling intensity far removed from the Mud boys' tongue-in-cheeky rifling of the history books. Nirvana's music shudders with frustration born out of small-town ennui and disgust at the reactionary nature of mainstream American culture."

It had been Kurt's intention to break out of the often stifling restrictions of the earnest Seattle grunge scene that had created them, channelling the psycho nursery rhymes of his beloved Pixies. This move to a more inclusive sing-along is just one facet of his ambitious, playful side that, in the years that have passed, has been written largely out of history. Yet even he couldn't have predicted what was to come – the album's lead single, the crisp, energetic, eventually blood-curdling 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. Strange to think that nothing much was expected of a song now so ingrained as the anthem of a generation. People thought it might garner alternative acclaim, before the more radio-friendly follow-up 'Come As You Are', which maybe, the logic went, could puncture the mainstream. That 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' became the hit it did, at such speed and scale, would change the face of popular music forever. Punk rock had earned legitimacy.

Yes, the impact 'Nevermind' had was instant and, that word again, seismic. Before, music had existed in some sort of order that would make little sense to a post-'Nevermind' world. Radio stations were exclusively playing, as a random sample from that year, sunshine-soul standard 'I Love Your Smile' by Rihanna prototype Shanice. In the masculine, money-making sphere known as rock music, hair metal reigned, popularised by Guns N' Roses, but more adequately represented by a slew of LA bands, snorting through the last days of Rome. And it was a curiously muted form of hedonistic rebellion. As Kurt told *NME* as the gasket was about to



Nirvana blew the old order apart, made rock and indie into one entity and ate mainstream radio

be blown: "I'm sure once Guns N' Roses got as big as they did, the government checked up on them and realised they didn't have the brains to be a threat to anyone."

Then there was the alternative, heralded most famously in Europe by The Smiths, in the US by a slew of conscientious bands on UK labels like 4AD. A culture populated mainly by men embracing their femininity – as Kurt, a vocal defender of women's rights, only did after his initial macho-rock obsessions were diverted. "I was always more of a feminine person when I was young, I just didn't know it," he said in November 1991. "Then, when my hormones started swinging around and I started getting facial hair, I had to let off my male steam somewhere, so I started smoking pot and listening to Black Sabbath and Black Flag. It took the Pixies to put me back on the right track and off the whole macho punk-rock trip."



Sound effects:
Nirvana (seen
here in 1991),
'arguably the last
great innovation
in guitar music'

If these different styles of pop had been bleeding into each other for long before 'Nevermind', this was the album that blew the old order apart completely. The album, and the movement it created, turned rock and indie into one entity, and it ate mainstream radio. This might be a pretentious, over-analytical way of looking at things 20 years on when the man who wrote the album has died and been deified, but apparently, it was obvious at the time as well. In November 1991, *NME*'s Mary Anne Hobbs wrote: "With 'Nevermind', Nirvana have cut the masturbatory elements out of hard, insane guitar music. Instead, the record haemorrhages with an almost female sense of calamity and vulnerability of sweet, sweet abandon." And that was something new.

"I never understood [other] bands saying Nirvana had anything to do with derailing their career," said Mötley Crüe's Nikki Sixx earlier this year. "Maybe those bands didn't have the goods. You can't pee like a puppy if you wanna run with the big dogs." But the

truth was, the cultural change was brutal. Plenty of those hair-metal outfits who were dominating rock, went from being Top 10 artists with commercial clout and credibility, to being dropped. Rock could not stride around with quite so much boorish machismo again; indie could never be so insular, pop never so blind to the power of subversion – even, years later, when the rise of Britney and the Mickey Mousers worked hard to undo a lot of this record and this movement's work. And it can't be overstated how suddenly that happened. Geffen had initially pressed 40,000 copies of 'Nevermind'. Within six weeks, it had sold a million. Geffen halted production of all their other releases, so their pressing plants could meet the demand. As the label's then-president Ed Rosenblatt would tell *The New York Times*: "We didn't do anything. It was just one of those 'get out of the way and duck' records."

After 'Nevermind', never again could rock be so boorish and macho, and indie so insular

WHAT NEVERMIND MEANS TO ME

Jonathan Pierce,

The Drums



"At the time they were having their heyday, I wasn't actually into them. At the time, I was listening to a lot of

electropop, stuff like Kraftwerk, Wendy Carlos, I wasn't primed for that sound. Nirvana didn't affect me until way after. But later, due to 'Nevermind', Nirvana were the only grunge band that I cared about. They were into bands like Beat Happening that I liked too. Looking back now, the rebellious spirit of the band changed an entire generation. 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' symbolises a whole generation of losers. The jocks and the cheerleaders weren't the cool people; the winners are the losers. Nirvana spearheaded that idea."

Alex Turner,

Arctic Monkeys



"I'm a massive fan of 'Nevermind', it's an amazing album. I can't pretend I was listening to it when it came out,

when I was in school or anything, because I was a bit young for all that – I got on it a little bit later, but I think it's brilliant. It's a fucking amazing album from an amazing band. I just think that the drums on that album sound so fucking top. When we went to Sound City [studio where Nirvana recorded 'Nevermind'] to record 'Suck It And See', that's what we wanted, to get something like that. 'Nevermind' was the big draw when we were choosing the studio, but also it had been recommended by Josh [Homme] because he's recorded loads in there too with Kyuss and the first couple of Queens albums. There's this engineer who is still there [since the 'Nevermind' days], a serious guy, who we respected. We had such a good time in LA doing the last one, we wanted to go back there – the 'Nevermind' studio! We had to really try and not break out into messing around with any Nirvana covers. 'Polly' or 'Drain You'. I remember when we recorded in Electric Lady, I started playing 'Purple Haze', and everybody was, 'Ah, come on, fucking leave it out.' So this time, I thought maybe not. But if we were going to do a cover of a Nirvana tune, it wouldn't be a 'Nevermind' song, it'd be 'Very Ape' from 'In Utero'. That would be the best Nirvana song for us to cover." ➡

Ritzzy Bryan,**The Joy Formidable**

"I remember where I heard it for the first time; a testament to its impact. Lots of kids at school were going crazy

for the cult of Nirvana while I was gobbling up Hendrix, Elvis Costello and Bruce Springsteen records. I wanted to know what all the fuss was about and that first listen made it clear, got me very excited and soon I started gobbling up Cobain, Grohl and Novoselic's back catalogue too, even if I didn't join in the midnight vigils to sing 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' up the local mountain. There was grunge before Nirvana, but these songs and the production by Butch Vig memorialises Nirvana at their very best; a band focused and confident and special."

Simon Neil,**Biffy Clyro**

"'Nevermind' was the most important album to me growing up. Biffy would not exist if not for Nirvana. They were

the first band I fell in love with, they made me realise you didn't have to be a drug-addled sex alien singing about the Sunset Strip or scientific experiments to play and write songs. You could be a normal kid from any rainy town. It's easy to forget how 'Nevermind' changed all aspects of culture. I can't imagine a band or record ever having the same impact."

Serge Pizzorno,**Kasabian**

"I came to it really late because when it was out, I was sort of into rave music. But in 2001 or something, I actually

sat down and listened and it fucking blew my mind. The melodies on that album... it's heavy, but laced with just genius melody. Perfect pop songs really, they are. It's in my Top Five of the greatest albums ever written – it's a beauty."

Nirvana in 1991 at a scuba school in North Hollywood – not the Pasadena pool used on the 'Nevermind' cover



A little history everyone knows: the '60s were about grand liberation. The '70s were arguably the crash from that decade's excesses. But by 1990, a new gap was forming, as the baby boomers of that generation became the establishment. A new kind of angst was bubbling under. As Nirvana biographer Michael Azerrad wrote: "'Nevermind' came along at exactly the right time. This was music by, and for, a whole new group of young people who had been overlooked, ignored, or condescended to." To quote the song 'Drain You', the album "taught [me] everything about a poison apple". The new decade was wafted in as some kind of new epoch, with the word 'caring' bandied about. But as Thatcherism stretched beyond its creator and the first Gulf War unfolded, a generation chose not to react but to retract.

If the angst and awkwardness of the slacker era brought about a generation known for its apathy, then they found some damn energetic, creative ways in which to channel that apathy. Pop culture was allowed to become smart, and pre-internet, it was

devoured and obsessed and internalised in ways it simply never had been before; not so much, 'Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me' as 'Fuck you, I'm going to hide in this cupboard and read *Less Than Zero*.' It seems likely Kurt could tell what had been going on and, whether wittingly or not, he was instrumental in what was to change – perhaps what needed to. Of the world 'Nevermind' was born into, he said: "MTV really does try and be as subversive as it can, especially [with] the news. They're constantly exposing all the rights that are being taken away from Americans. But no-one gives a fuck. They just wanna see that damn Warrant [mullet-sporting glam-metal band] video!"

'Nevermind' created a landscape where angst-ridden yet fearlessly intellectual pop artefacts like Radiohead's 'The Bends' and seminal teen angst drama *My So-Called Life* could rise to prominence. 'Creep' was a 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' for the UK, whereas it could have been a fêted curiosity without that groundwork. Outsiders could suddenly become the mainstream – today, Slow Club get sampled on *Dancing On Ice* idents and Pitchfork bands are on ...*Jay Leno*.

And this was the point of what was changed by 'Nevermind'; being serious

Without 'Smells Like Teen Spirit', Radiohead's 'Creep' would have just been a fêted curiosity



retreated from the American influences, into Britpop and commercial dance, railing against whatever was wrong by having a good time, all the time.

Yet, unlike its creator, 'Nevermind's influence would neither burn out or fade away. Even taking away everything it did for social, cultural and gender politics, arguably the last great innovation in guitar music has simply... remained.

It's fashionable every couple of years for trendspotters to predict a 'grunge revival', which is to miss the point. When things got as silly as they did after '91, it was possible to buy something called 'grunge hairspray', surely the ultimate misunderstanding of anything, ever. Yet Biffy Clyro, a band who embody Nirvana's misanthropy as much as their squall, have become one of Britain's biggest bands without those trendspotters noticing. And still, even though its sound has been appropriated by bands ever since, Nirvana's second album still sounds explosively vibrant 20 years on.

'Nevermind' changed the world alright, in ways that no album has in the two decades after. And since the idea of what an 'album' is changes faster with every passing minute, it's pretty safe to say that no album ever will again. ■

Kurt was instrumental in allowing pop culture to get smart in the '90s

about rock music stopped being the rarified pursuit of the record collector. Some people treat rock'n'roll like a museum. But not so many of them love 'Nevermind'. It's testament to this record's incredible vivacity that disciples of that smiley face still appear every year. It's testament to the same that 20 years on, this record remains alive, not trapped in formaldehyde.

Yes, 'Nevermind' created a landscape where Radiohead could cross over with a rough-hewn, pulverising yet tender song like 'Creep', and use that platform to grow into a force that would dominate the musical conversation until the present day. Maybe if someone else had been the catalyst, Nirvana might have had the chance to do something similar. But just as crucial as the things that happened because of 'Nevermind' were the things that happened as a reaction against it.

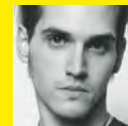
That record was phenomenal for music, but it sparked off a chain of events that we know ended in April 1994. The world's obsession with Nirvana was such that the fallout from Kurt's death sparked a knee-jerk reaction. Fun and silliness were embraced. Angst and introspection survived in the States, but in the cartoonish form of Green Day. British music fans

Cobain and Grohl meet fans during a 'Nevermind' store signing at Off The Record, San Diego, October 1991



Mikey Way.

My Chemical Romance



"'Nevermind' is probably one of the most important records in modern music.

It changed the way people viewed the electric guitar, and changed the way people saw the rock'n'roll drummer. Basically any conventional instrument in the world got turned upside down after that. And those videos, wow, 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'..."

Gerard Way.

My Chemical Romance



"It made the entire world finally understand punk, but in a really pure way because they didn't

look like punks, which was the best part. And they legitimised it. It took itself seriously, and it just did huge things for music. It could never be the same again. Even, like, distortion pedals. Everybody has a distortion pedal now because of them."

Nicky Wire.

Manic Street Preachers



"It fills me with fear and deep admiration, because I knew at the time it was just blowing everything away. It was

a beast that could not be stopped. I prefer 'In Utero' as a record, I have to admit, but that's not the point sometimes, it's just the ultimate statement. I remember feeling pretty redundant, writing songs like 'Motorcycle Emptiness' and looking like the New York Dolls, and then this just purely underground music takes over the world. Probably a thing that will never ever happen again. Richey used to play 'Territorial Pissings' all the time. He absolutely adored that song, and it's such a brilliant title. And 'Lithium', as well, I think is pretty amazing. 'Nevermind' is just like 'Never Mind The Bollocks' – one of those certain records that retain their power, lyrically and musically. You've just got to bow down to some records; they just pulverise you into submission. We could do with something like that now."

How

We

made the list

When a magazine with 60-plus years of history behind it decides to mark its new era with a definitive list of the best 500 albums and songs ever made, just what does ‘definitive’ mean? It means inviting alumni from across the *NME* generations – from the ’60s swingers through the hip young gunslingers of the ’70s, right up to the journalists of today – to submit lists of their favourite 50 albums and songs of all time. From those lists, each Number One was allotted 50 points, 49 points for Number Two and so on until our teams of number-crunchers began having numerical nightmares and spreadsheet breakdowns, waking up sweating and screaming, “MARQUEE MOON 37 POINTS!”

Add in an identical scoring system for *NME*’s Top 50 albums and singles of the year for every year there’s been one and you have the lists you’ve just devoured: angelic monkeys, neon bananas, Berlin breakthroughs, ecstasy anthems, rap riot-starters, psychedelic town bands and wild and varied genius as far as the eye can see. Thanks to everyone who contributed, here they are in full...

Jeremy Allen

Hayley Avron

Julie Barber

Eve Barlow

Henry Barnes

Angus Batey

Mark Beaumont

Max Bell

Simon Butcher

Ben Cardew

Roy Carr

Pete Cashmore

Simon Jay Catling

Johnny Cigarettes

Greg Cochrane

Andrew Collins

Leonie Cooper

Chris Cottingham

Jamie Crossan

Andy Crysell

Elizabeth Curran

Rhian Daly

Johnny Dee

Fred Dellar

Paul Du Noyer

Barbara Ellen

Mark Ellen

Tony Ennis

Dele Fadele

Ian Fortnam

Jamie Fullerton

Harriet Gibsone

Gavin Haynes

Ben Hewitt

Al Horner

Martin Horsfield

Matthew Horton

Barney Hoskyns

Tom Howard

Stuart Huggett

Kate Hutchinson

Damian Jones

Lucy Jones

Danny Kelly

Ben Knowles

Nick Levine

Marc McLaren

John Mulvey

Krissi Murison

Kris Needs

Huw Nesbitt

Barry Nicolson

Andre Paine

Louis Pattison

Mischa Pearlman

Ben Perreau

Kevin EG Perry

Hardeep Phull

Tom Pinnock

David Renshaw

Hazel Sheffield

Dan Silver

Edgar Smith

Paul Smith

Laura Snapes

Mat Snow

Neil Spencer

Jenny Stevens

Dan Stubbs

Amy Sumner

Gill Sutherland

Mark Sutherland

Anthony Thornton

Tommy Udo

Ian Wade

Karen Walter

Andy Welch

Matt Wilkinson

Mike Williams

Simon Witter

Alan Woodhouse

Lisa Wright

Also, many

thanks to:

Ben Lifton

Chad Male

Jack Chown

Amy Wheelhouse

Emma Snook



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