

NME

NOEL: "MY PENIS
TURNED BLACK!"
MIGHTY BOOSH
TOUR MEMOIRS



NEW ALBUM. NEW TOUR. NEW PETE

BABYSHAMBLES

The band that came
back from the dead



A DAY IN THE
STUDIO WITH
**MY CHEMICAL
ROMANCE**



"If you could see what I can see, 'When I'm clean' windows"

THE COURTEENERS
HOW INDIE'S BIG GOBS
QUIETLY GOT MASSIVE

+PLUS+

THE XX | ANIMAL COLLECTIVE | PHOENIX | OWL CITY | KASABIAN



IT'S AMAZING WHERE GOOD HAIR GETS YOU


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SINCE 1939

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SNAPSHOT

TABERNACLE, NOTTING HILL, LONDON

27/11/09



Different class

Back on home turf after a triumphant trip to America, Florence Welch invited a few of her best friends – and biggest influences – to perform with her at last Friday's NME Calling gig. Billed as 'Florence And Friends', Welch shared the flower-draped stage at the Tabernacle venue in west London with Jarvis Cocker, Patrick Wolf, Kid Harpoon and Jack Peñate, admitting afterwards that with so many of her favourite people in one place, the gig

almost proved too emotional for her.

"I was trying hard to hold it together," she explained backstage, barely believing she had just performed Pulp's classic track 'Underwear' with Cocker himself. "I first listened to that song when I was about 13 – I hadn't lost my virginity – and I was like, 'Wow! This is what it's going to be like!' And then suddenly I'm standing there with him, thinking, 'What the fuck?!' I was this naive teenage girl and now I'm onstage with my idol and he's singing that song at me!" Turn to page 8 now for news on the latest wave of NME Shows.

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WHAT'S ON THE NME STEREOS

1 NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB

They got plenty of time to talk to, and because James and Allen brought their own food, and brought their own beer, with a new album due in the near future they took and practicing was crucial. They talked around as much as the music, discussing business and the business, as they suggest in the second, somewhat, more serious, "My perfect moments are in the past or the end of the night when the sun comes down, when I can talk through to the moon."

Free download from December 14, on NME Radio now

FREE
DOWNLOAD



2 ERIK HASSLE AND ELLIE GOULDING

Be Mine

Our crush on Ellie worsens day by day, and this acoustic cover of Swedish pop genius Robyn's heartbreaking ballad will do us no favours. Ms Goulding is aided and abetted by Robyn's countryman and fellow pop traveller Erik Hassle, and by the time they're done with you you'll be a wreck.

On Popjustice.com



3 AN EXPERIMENT ON A BIRD IN THE AIR PUMP

For details of prices, check off prices, money ex. ch. 100 - see below for more details.
 100. We also have a few more in house, please, call around for prices.
 100. We also have a few more in house, please, call around for prices.
 100. We also have a few more in house, please, call around for prices.

On seven-inch and download December 7

4 LES CORPS MINCE DE FRANCOISE

Missing CSS? Cure your inexplicable pangs through a fling with Finland's Les Corps Mince De Francoise. They have a ridiculous name, they play minimal, danceable pop that channels Neneh Cherry, early Madonna and all other things that are fun.

On MySpace now



5 I WAS A KING

See what they've done there? Probably not, so let us explain. Huggable Scottish indie poppers Teenage Fanclub like Neil Young a lot. So much so, in fact, that they once released a song called 'Neil Jung', punning his name with that of psychoanalyst Carl Jung (still with us?). Teenage Fanclub's lead singer is called Norman Blake. Bleik, however, is a little village in Norway from which you can watch the Northern lights. Equally huggable indie-poppers I Was A King are from Norway. They really, really, *really* like Teenage Fanclub. The song, you ask? Why, it's absolutely brilliant, of course.

On NME Radio now



6 THE BOXER REBELLION

Evacuate

If boxers did rebel we wouldn't stand a chance, but, thankfully, there's no prospect of that in sight. Instead, this is the sort of urgent, surging guitar rock with a U2 backbone that you'll kind of hate yourself for liking but, none the less, it will suckerpunch you into submission.

On NME Radio now

7 JAMES YUILL

Indie troubadour Yuill is just about to head back into the studio to record a follow-up to his 2008 debut *'Turning Down Water For Air'*, but, before he does, he's gone back to the songs from that album and reworked them into two EPs, *'Earth'* and *'Fire'*. The latter features stripped-back, bare-bones versions, and the former, pepped-up electronic and dancey takes like this belter.

On NME Radio now



10 THE COURTEENERS

Using 1-year mortality as a proxy for the low survival, the researchers have also proposed a constant for future use of "100" in the new year, and that fact, together with the other evidence, suggests a time that would be well over 100 years from the present, or 100,000 years.

On Thecourteeners.com from Dec 7

FREE
DOWNLOAD



8 SURFER BLOOD

Labelmates to Grizzly Bear and fuzzed-up lo-fi scamps, Surfer Blood have a knack for penning tunes that sound like prime US radio rawk, but crumpled and distorted like you forgot about it and accidentally put it in the washing machine in your jeans pocket, and then you're really excited when you pull it out and it still works. Or, in this case, like Van Halen recorded in a bucket. But a good bucket.

On MySpace now

... AND WHAT ISN'T

THE VICTORIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMAN'S CLUB

Mr Fenton And His Photo Of Melrose Abbey

Written for an exhibition at Cardiff's National Museum we fully appreciate the 'arty fartyness' of this endeavour. Shame it's the aural equivalent of sitting next to a piss-stained pensioner on the bus.

FILTHY DUKES

**Nonsense In The Dark (Prins Thomas
Moonlight Macarena Mix)**

There are many tricks a shift band employs to sound less shit. Adding the dulcet tones of The Maccabees' Orlando Weeks certainly helps. Making it sound like '90s hit **"The Macarena"** not so much.

WEAVER

I'm Your Daddy

Oh my god, I hope not. Not any more at least.

DINOSAUR JR

Banana

There are many great things about Dinosaur. Singing about fruit on *Yo Gabba Gabba!* isn't one of them.

THE BIG PINK

Sweet Dreams

This Beyoncé cover isn't as good as the pizza song.



9 SOLANGE

[illegible]

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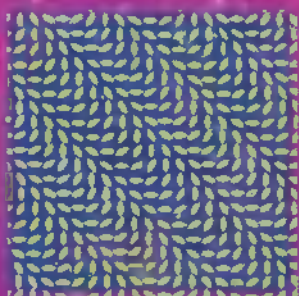
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My Chemical Romance,
Sunset Sound Studios,
Hollywood, Los Angeles



MCR: "This record is about strength and surviving"

Currently recording 'The Black Parade's long-awaited follow-up in Hollywood, My Chemical Romance invited *NME* to the studio for an exclusive sneak preview

My Chemical Romance's Mikey Way is in high spirits.

"Check it out," the bassist tells his brother Gerard as he squeezes his iPhone into the frontman's ear before triggering the sounds of a creaking door and evil laughter. "It's a new scary sounds app!" he grins.

It's an appropriate diversion for the darkly theatrical band, amusing themselves at the Hollywood studio where they're recording their fourth album, due for release next spring. The album's tracks and title are not yet finalised, but last week they invited *NME* along for a preview of several songs likely to make the cut.

Explosive, succinct and ambitious, the new tracks are, according to Gerard, a departure from MCR's gloom.

"I think it takes attention off the black humour on our last album that was maybe misconstrued as moping and moved it into a different spot," he suggests, comparing the songs with 2006's 'The Black Parade'. "This record is really about strength, surviving and, in a weird way, working your ass off. And [it] becoming something great because you work through it instead of just having something handed to you."

After "working their asses off" playing arenas and festivals worldwide on 'The Black Parade' tour, the New Jersey quintet laid down several new tracks the moment they got off the road, but then scrapped them.

"The first songs we did had a rushed feeling and when we started listening to them we knew, 'This isn't My Chem,'" says drummer Bob Bryar. The band agree they "devolved" on their first demos, or as Gerard explains:

"These songs are designed to be a little less polished and more reckless"

GERARD WAY

"We had to sound like a basement band for a while."

However, after regrouping, the songs they finally recorded couldn't be further from a basement.

Working with producer Brendan O'Brien, best known for his work with Pearl Jam and Bruce Springsteen, they've created a polished, no-frills album that reaches beyond the band's emo roots. Big sweeping choruses

and '80s-style guitars propel 'Save Yourself', while 'Black Dragon Fighting Society' is a two-minute punk explosion destined for moshpits. Elsewhere, 'Still Alive's Queen-esque pomp contrasts sharply with 'Death Before Disco' and 'Hail To The King', the only tracks to retain their raw, garage-rock skeletons.

"Those songs are designed to be a little less polished and more reckless," Gerard explains. "We didn't go and make a noise-rock record. We made a record that's actually catchier than the last ones. That's what I'm really proud of. It takes more courage to do that than to make 10 noisy songs that say, 'Fuck you'."

Having become a dad earlier this year, Gerard admits fatherly concerns do inspire his lyrics, but is adamant he's not writing about diapers.

"It influenced me in an unconventional way... I wasn't really writing a record about becoming a dad," he explains. "I was writing music for somebody when they grew up. It's like a time capsule for when this person turns 15 or 20."

"I'm glad it's not a bunch of guys searching for something that will make them cool again," he adds. "That's a hollow pursuit that makes for horrible music."

7 DAYS IN MUSIC



WELSH RARE BITS

Los Camp aren't boring

SEATTLE

Los Campesinos! are preparing for the release of new album 'Romance Is Boring', to come on February 1. The band, who will preview new songs when they hit the road with The Cribs this week, have finally admitted to themselves that the band is much more than just a revision-dodging pastime from their days at Cardiff University. "When we formed the band we never thought it would get anywhere - we thought it'd be a hobby to take up the last year of uni," explained frontman Gareth Campesinos!. "Then recently, seven out of 10 dates on our tour sold out and we played to around 500 people at the Leeds Cockpit. We thought about doing things small deliberately, then realised how ridiculous that is - it's something that's welcome."

Comeback single 'These Are Listed Buildings', showcased a step up from the band's twee indie-pop to more riff-led rock, in part helped by the fact 'Romance Is Boring' was recorded in America's alt.rock capital, Seattle. Produced by John Goodmanson (Death Cab For Cutie, Wu-Tang Clan), very wordy songs titles include 'We've Got Your Back (Documented Minor Emotional Breakdown #2)' and 'I Just Sighed. I Just Sighed, Just So You Know'. However, despite their growing rock star status, the band have promised that their lo-fi indie approach will not be ditched. "We still sell our own merch and have our website with our personal email addresses on it," declared Gareth. "I'm enjoying playing to a wider audience, but I guess maybe now just our email replies will get a touch shorter."

DOGGFATHER OF CHAT



LOS ANGELES America's daytime TV viewers: be cool. While Oprah has announced her retirement from the chat show universe, Snoop Dogg has volunteered to fill the void. "I can bring my wife on so we can have the women and the men on there discussing things," suggests the Doggfather.

AMY TOURHOUSE

LONDON It's the news no booking agent ever expected to hear again: Amy Winehouse is planning a tour. According to the singer's goddaughter Dionne Bromfield, the pair will hit the road towards the end of next year. "I am too young to tour at the moment but at the end of 2010 I should be the support act to a certain somebody," explained Bromfield. Winehouse is also set to release a new album next year.

ALL ABOARD!

ST ALBANS Friendly Fires are set to round off the year with a limited edition Christmas release. 'On Board' is coming out on vinyl and will be available at the band's London Coronet gig on December 11, before being sold in "specialist record shops". The limited edition features a new version of the track, the album cut and a Joakim remix.

KAP TO HIS OLD BAND



GLASGOW Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos and Paul Thomson plus 1990s' Jackie McKeown are reuniting their old outfit, The Yummy Fur, for some live shows. They will play Glasgow and London next January as well as some US dates.

STROKES GET IT WIGHT

SEACLIFFE PARK The Strokes have announced their first gig since 2006. Julian Casablancas and co will headline the Saturday night of the 2010 Isle Of Wight Festival, while Jay-Z has been signed up to headline the opening day of the event which takes place between June 11-13. Tickets go on sale this Friday, see NME.COM for more details.

SPEECH SILENCES LABEL

LONDON Speech DeBelle has given her record label, Big Dada, the boot for failing to capitalise on her Barclaycard Mercury Prize win in September, saying they didn't get enough copies of 'Speech Therapy' into the shops after she won the gong. "I wasn't disappointed that it didn't sell well, I was disappointed in the people I was working with," she told BBC 6 Music.

SPACED MOUNTAIN

LONDON Jason Pierce has said that playing Spiritualized's seminal 1997 album 'Ladies And Gentlemen We Are Floating In Space' live this year has inspired him to write a new album for 2010. "It's very weird to lay out something you did 12 years ago in all its complexity and not have that get into some of the newer stuff we're doing," he told *The Quietus*.



"He has to be good in bed and size matters. Know what I mean?"

THAT'LL BE RIHANNA'S NEW, ER, SEXY 'RATED R' PERSONA

U2 AND MUSE TOO?

SOMERSET

U2 have been confirmed as headliners for the Friday night (June 25) of Glastonbury next year - and according to rumours Muse may be joining them on top of the bill. There's a Worthy Farm-shaped gap in the band's schedule and though nothing is confirmed, Chris Wolstenholme previously said the band would be "busy all summer" with festivals.





NME NEWS

Award shows line-up revealed

LONDON

The first er, 'wave' of Shockwaves NME Awards Shows for 2010 have been announced. As is traditional, we're going to turn the whole of February into a month-long indoor festival, ahead of next year's ceremony which takes place at the O2 Brixton Academy on February 24. There will be plenty more dates, bands and support acts to be announced soon, plus details of the annual Big Gig and how you can attend this year's ceremony, but in the meantime, here's how the first batch of shows is looking:

Milke Snow, London Scala, Feb 2
Madouken! (above), London Scala, Feb 3
Slimian Mobile Disco, London Matter, Feb 20
New Young Pony Club, Islington O2 Academy, Feb 22
Yeastayer, London Heaven, Feb 23
Girls, London Scala, Feb 23

To get tickets and all the latest news on the awards, head to NME.COM/awards now, and stay tuned for a special announcement regarding voting for the 2010 Shockwaves NME Awards.



SINGLE PIER PRESSURE

CASTLE DOUGHTON Late Of The Pier are sailing back into view with new download single, 'Blueberry', on December 12. The song was produced by Erol Alkan and will come out on 12-inch vinyl in February along with new track 'Best In The Class'. "The past few years have given us a lot to think about and feel," the band said of the material they're working on for the album. "And now we begin to bring to life our imaginations." Deep!

"Went to scout studios in NYC for Jan recording! Mood = fucking excited"

THE STROKES' NIKOLAI FRAITURE IS LOOKING FORWARD TO NEW YEAR



PLAQUE LIFE

COLCHESTER The venue of Blur's first ever gig, the East Anglian Railway Museum, has been honoured with a 'blue plaque' by PRS For Music. Meanwhile, a documentary about the band's reunion will hit cinemas in early 2010.

TOM'S SHORT FUSE

LEICESTER Kasabian's Tom Meighan has attacked TV show *The X Factor*, likening the programme to an evil scheme that "The Riddler would do in *Batman*". He also registered his disgust at those who watch it: "I can't believe how low we have gone as a nation."

COURT IN THE ACT

MANCHESTER Having got the whole of Manchester out for their Christmas gig, The Courteeners are setting their sights on the rest of the country with a UK tour next spring. Frontman Liam Fray is hoping that the fans who attend will maintain their usual high standards. "There are no other fans in the UK that are as dedicated - or as well-dressed - as ours," he declared. "I really can't wait for the rest of the country to get the chance to hear our new songs live."

Tickets go on sale this Friday (Dec 4) at 9am, see NME.COM for full details. Turn to page 36 for more from The Courteeners.



JAMIE T-RIBUTE

WIMBLEDON Now that he's back on his feet after a bout of laryngitis, Jamie T is set to play even more gigs with a covers band. "Sometimes you need to collect your thoughts a bit before writing, so I think a covers band might be fun," he said, but added there aren't any plans to take the project into the studio.

JONNY TAKES FERRY

OXFORDSHIRE Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood and Flea from Red Hot Chili Peppers are among the guests on Bryan Ferry's new album. Chic's Nile Rodgers is also collaborating with the former Roxy Music man on the album, which is due out next summer.

Depeche mood

CALIFORNIA

Martin Gore from Depeche Mode has been called to testify in a bizarre lawsuit made by a man who claims the computer game *World Of Warcraft* has made him depressed. Californian Erik Estavillo claims Gore is a well-known authority in melancholy, and therefore is the ideal person to vouch for him on the subject. "He himself has been known to be sad, lonely and alienated, as can be seen in the songs he writes," he said of the Depeche Mode man. Winona Ryder has also been asked to appear.





COME WITH US NOW...

Boosh set sail to the future

A film? An album? No more TV? The Mighty Boosh tell *NME* why after 2010 they'll never be the same again

Having made their name with the TV series and live gigs before adding a band and a book to the potion, it seems the humble Zooniverse started by Noel Fielding and Julian Barratt is about to expand again.

There have been mutterings about a possible Boosh album and a film, but last week the duo along with Dave Brown (Bollo), Mike Fielding (Naboo) and Rich Fulcher (Bob Fossil) sat down with *NME* to discuss exactly what 2010 will hold for the Boosh.

It doesn't look like a fourth TV series is on the cards, but how does Boosh on the big screen or Boosh collaborating with the Beastie Boys sound? According to the men themselves, quite likely...

ON A MIGHTY BOOSH ALBUM

We hear the album's on the way. Full steam ahead?

DAVE BROWN: "We're writing it at the moment, actually. Right now."

MIKE FIELDING: "I'm playing harmonica as we speak."

JULIAN BARRATT: "Genuinely - we're laying down some heavy guitar tomorrow at a local studio called My Mate's House. We'll see what we've got when we've made a demo. We're thinking about spring [for an album release] - we'll go into a studio with a proper band, but some of the stuff is more electro-y. Dave Westlake [former Sneaker Pimps member who has been drumming live with The Mighty Boosh band] is helping produce the demos."

NOEL FIELDING: "There's weird bits and pieces, sort of freaky free-form poetry and we might put some weird music between the tracks, try and make it sort of strange concept. A narrator, even; we're thinking about getting someone like Michael Gambon to do a big weird story that probably has nothing to do with it."

Who would you like to produce the final album?

NOEL: "Rick Rubin is an Old Gregg fan. In meetings he apparently does Old Gregg impressions."

DAVE: "I emailed [Beastie Boys'] Adam Yauch and he went, 'When I'm well I'm interested.' This was in an email saying 'Hope you're doing well and everything,' of course [Yauch is recovering from cancer]. We met him after a Dead Weather gig. We just started talking about the music."

Will it just be old songs from the show?

JULIAN: "It's going to be about how it fits together. They [songs for the TV show] weren't made to be an album of songs. But we'll do them because people want to hear them. From then we were thinking of doing a 'Three EPs' [The Beta Band] type thing. Old Gregg could have a few songs, there could be some by another character, do it that way round."

NOEL: "Trying to write lyrics for Old Gregg was quite funny."

Any idea what the Boosh's debut single will be?

NOEL: "Yeah, and I'd definitely like to put out a single, I think we should do that. Make some progress. Maybe [Boosh song] 'Love Games'. make it like that Rick James one, 'Give It To Me Baby'."

JULIAN: "But you don't want to end up doing a 'Funky Gibbon', as much as I love [classic British comedy troupe] The Goodies. I talked to Graeme Garden [Goodies member] about that and he said, 'Make sure you don't end up on *Top Of The Pops* in an ape suit.'"

DAVE: "He said that to me and I was like, 'What are you fucking saying?'"

ON A MIGHTY BOOSH FILM

So are the rumours true, a Mighty Boosh film is in the works?

NOEL: "We've just been getting ideas together. In terms of environment, the Arctic has always been a really good place for us - we did a TV episode there. We like the idea of the Arctic at night, there's lots of stuff in the Arctic we never got a chance to explore. We just want to be stuck in an ice station somewhere so that we can concentrate on something that can still go magical but in a place that people know. There's a lot of magical elements connected to the Arctic."

Who do you want to direct it?

DAVE: "Coppola!"

NOEL: "It's too early to say. I might get Spike Jonze to do it. Obviously Paul [King, *The Mighty Boosh* TV show director] has just done a film himself [*Bunny And The Bull* out now] and he's lining up to do another one."

Any chance of getting some of your big-name fans in for a cameo?

NOEL: "It's not a ridiculous idea. When we met Robin Williams he was doing Crack Fox impressions. Then Ben Stiller was ringing us and was saying, 'I'm on set, I'm in a film, I can't come and meet you, but can you come for lunch?' We couldn't, we were going out. We were going, 'Oh my God.'"

ON A FOURTH MIGHTY BOOSH SERIES

Do the other projects mean you won't have time for another TV series?

NOEL: "I don't think so at the moment. A film instead, and an album, then maybe a live thing just to keep it fresh."

We've taken it as far as we could in terms of being on BBC Three and going out and touring. We need to mix it up."

DAVE: "There's films with less plot than those episodes! It's not your average sitcom where it's repeated jokes. These things are narratives and are pretty much like film scripts in every episode."



NOEL: "On TV, trying to make something like a film is quite difficult, but it's quite fun. We're thinking about approaching it [the film] in a more realistic way so maybe we could make it look more real. We love all that stuff and the back projection. But we've decided to do that instead [of a new series]."

JULIAN: "We had ideas for a different series."

NOEL: "We were thinking of a different kind of show. We like *The Muppet Show*. We were thinking about characters putting on a show and having guests. We've always wanted to do this Muppets thing and it's never gone away - sort of a live version with music and cabaret and an audience."

ON THEIR LAST UK TOUR - IMMORTALISED ON THE 'FUTURE SAILORS' DVD

What were the most memorable moments?

NOEL: "When my penis went black. It was hanging down by a strand. It was snipped with hairdressers' scissors."

RICH FULCHER: "Noel and I almost got arrested in Oxford."

DAVE: "Rich was playing the piano and Noel was standing on it."

NOEL: "I just wanted to get a better look at Rich's wrists. We'd met some girls and brought them back to the hotel to party. The staff were saying, 'You can't have other people in your room.' So everyone was hiding under the beds and in the bathroom. It was about two in the afternoon, we'd been drinking since about 11. The police made me and Rich come down and were like, 'What are you doing?' We said, 'Are you going to arrest us for standing on a piano?' The police thought it was slightly amusing."

JULIAN: "We all got kicked out of another hotel one night, the fire brigade came. It was 'cos Mike was smoking in his room..."

NOEL: "With Anthony [Rossomando] from *Dirty Pretty Things*."

JULIAN: "Everyone was out in front of the hotel in foil macs, holding babies."

NOEL: "We all came out last like *Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid*. We burst out with Pot Noodle down our chests. I remember it distinctly, sitting on the window sill smoking. We were in so much trouble. Paul, our director, looked up and went, 'You cunt!' He'd had about an hour's sleep."



Old Gregg and co.
Coming to a CD
near you soon

YEASAYER: the unlikely stars of 2010?

Ignore the hippy beards, it seems the newly shaven New Yorkers have already made the pop album of next year

A few weeks ago, a Yeasayer song did something unexpected: it got the world raving about the New York band. Released for free, 'Ambling Alp' became an internet smash rocking up over 55,000 downloads in a week. Its flesh-featuring, sci-fi video became a viral hit, with the track appearing on a series of influential MP3 blogs and going straight into the NME Stereo Chart.

With their impressive facial hair, obsession with world music and *Lion King* soundtrack-esque art-pop, Yeasayer are no strangers to blog hype and deserved critical acclaim. Their 2007 debut 'All Hour Cymbals' saw them praised alongside fellow Brooklyn residents Vampire Weekend, MGMT and Chairlift, though their status remained decidedly more cult. However, with 'Ambling Alp's' hyper-squelchy bass, gurgling rhythms and enormous power-pop chorus blazing a trail, this is something different. And that's just the start with early listeners to the forthcoming album 'Odd Blood', including NME.COM's initial assessment suggesting the record (out February 8) could be the first great album of 2010. So where did it all go right?

"We've been playing 'Ambling Alp' in some form

for quite a while and we started to notice that for that particular song people seemed particularly... pumped up. That seemed to be the one," explained frontman Chris Keating of the evolution towards 'Odd Blood'.

The album was recorded from February to April at a rented studio near Woodstock in New York County, one of the first times the band have worked on material somewhere other than their own homes. It was also their first big session since the group gave up their day jobs – bassist Ira Wolf Tuton recently quit as carpenter – and concentrated on the band full time.

"We had a bigger budget this time, so we wanted a crazy sound"

CHRIS KEATING

"The first album we mostly did in my basement," Keating said "We had a really small budget, but this time we were able to take our time. We wanted to use dance music production techniques, electronic music and that kind of Bristol sound from the

early '90s as well as the synthesized, crazy samples." Those dance influences have seeped into the likes of 'Love Me Girl', with its hazy atmospherics and ravey piano, while 'Madder Red' boasts hugely melodic 'whoa whoa' vocals and thumping 1980s-style drums.

While Yeasayer's forage into pop might have come as a surprise, the band say that despite a penchant for chanting, tie dye and Ira Wolf Tuton's waist-length hair



The band in their more hirsute days

(shorn while recording the album), they are determined to shake off the hippy tag.

"I'm down with free love and being peaceful to each other. I'm down with taking drugs when you want and having sex when you want, but we're city people!" declared Keating. "We got pigeon holed as those hippy guys but we're from New York City – and I grew up in Baltimore. 'Psychedelic' kept coming up too, but to me, Lil Wayne is the most psychedelic shit out there. Now we get people saying we sound like anything from Enya to Ace Of Base. I'm all for it!"

NME.COM

Head to NME.COM now to hear 'Ambling Alp' and read our track-by-track first listen to 'Odd Blood'. Plus turn to page 8 for details of Yeasayer's Shockwaves NME Awards Show

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WE WANT ANSWERS!

This week:

LUKE STEELE

Empire Of The Sun

NME: Your EOTS bandmate Nick Littlemore did a runner and ended up working with Elton John. You've got no dates planned. Is this it for the make-up and feathers?

Luke Steele: "Not at all. I've been hitting the studio recently, cutting a lot of new music with the guys who are playing in the live band. It's me, Tony Mitolo - he's the drummer - and Sid Sidhu on guitar. We've done 15 tracks, which we'll call sketches. We wanna get to about 40, so we can start going through them."

Is Nick involved at all?

"He's a part of it, I guess. Obviously, because we wrote the music together. But me and my wife, artistically, have kind of directed the whole Empire thing from the second video right through to the live show. There wasn't a fight [with Nick] or anything. He just disappeared and said, 'I don't wanna tour for five years.' I was like, 'Well, man, we've got to start touring so...'. As my dad says, 'You got to keep the show on the road.'"

So are you going to be bringing the Empire tour over here any time soon?

"We definitely want to play in the UK. We're just waiting for the right time. We finish in Australia in February, so I'm dying to get overseas. I've been saying to everyone - the management company - 'What's going on?' The company want us to do a few showcases, but we wanna come in with a bang and do a proper show. I think part of it is affordability. You know, there's 20 people in the crew, including the dancers and the musicians and the lighting people. It's quite an expensive job."

Tailor-made for the festivals, surely?

"When we first set out it wasn't to do festivals, but it seems like such a good way in retrospect, because you can play to a lot more people at one time and afford to do it. So yeah, we'll hopefully play some I think."

Things seem to have gone quiet with The Sleepy Jackson since EOTS' inception. Are they still in existence?

"Yeah, we've just about finished the new record actually. Writing it all and demoing it all, anyway. Basically, I want to record it over in the States as soon as I can, but I think the record company is still interested in milking the Empire cow for a bit longer."

"Nick just disappeared and said 'I don't wanna tour for five years'"



How do you feel about that?

"It's kind of good, I suppose, because it's bought me a bit more time. Even before Empire came out I had plans for a solo record and a Sleepy Jackson record, and now there's this punk-rock blues record I've been doing too."

Punk-rock blues record?!

"Yeah! It's this record I've been making that has no edits. It's my angry record. When I'm angry about something I'll blow all the mics and tune the guitar down to a C. It's got, like, really drunk lyrics like William Burroughs. It's about 90 per cent done. I just need to get a bit more angry over the summer. I put it to the label, and they were like, 'It's great! We'll release it!' So I was, like,

'Sweet!' The name of the band on it is Icon Python."

Who else is in Icon Python?

"Ah, it's just me! It's a mash of my blues and my spoken word and artistic tendencies. There was one track which was so heavy that I was thinking of sending it to Trent Reznor and seeing if he wanted to finish it. It's probably the heaviest song that I've written ever. It's called 'Dirt Town.'"

Have you ever met Trent Reznor?

"No, but when he was in Australia I heard he was an Empire fan. I was like, 'Shit!' I should probably follow it up, shouldn't I? They're [NIN] not doing anything any more, he might love it."



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NEW TO THE PLAYLIST...

Who will be fighting it out in future charts?

NME TRACKS OF THE WEEK...



SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO - 'CRUEL INTENTIONS'

"Everyone's favourite dance monkeys *finaaaalllll* give the Beth Ditto-abetted highlight of the summer's second album 'Temporary Pleasure' a long overdue single release. Trading on Beth's funky soul signature and SMD's meandering techno it's another gem from the boys that should sound massive as we raise a glowstick to 2010 at their Get Loaded In The Dark headline slot on New Year's Eve. Find out how this track fares in the NME Chart on NME Radio's Monday countdown from 10am."

**Luke Lewis, Deputy Editor,
NME.COM**



NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB - 'LOST A GIRL'

"They're back with a blonde Tahita and are just as irrepressibly ace as last time (which seems like an age ago)." **Tim Chester, Assistant Editor, NME.COM**



DOVES - 'HOUSE OF MIRRORS'

"Manchester swagger meets New York dancefloor in this sky-punching, lung-bursting anthem. Bliss." **Paul Sturges, New Editor**



SCHOOL OF SEVEN BELLS - 'HALF ASLEEP'

"One of the highlights of SVIBs' debut 'Alpinisms'. Is it too soon to call it a classic? Oh, I just did" **Nathaniel Cramp, Sub Editor**



DEVENDRA BANHART - '16TH & VALENCIA ROXY MUSIC'

"The follow-up to 'Baby' picks up the pace with a twist of Ferry glam." **Sarah Kerr, NME Radio**

THIS WEEK'S TOP 20

THE
NME
CHART

- 1 **FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE**
'YOU'VE GOT THE LOVE'
Island
- 2 **CALVIN HARRIS**
'FLASHBACK'
Gymfire
- 3 **MUSE**
'UNDISCLOSED DESIRES'
Heaven + Earth
- 4 **MUMFORD & SONS**
'LITTLE LION MAN'
Island
- 5 **BIFFY CLYRO**
'THE CAPTAIN'
14th Floor
- 6 **KASABIAN**
'UNDISCLOSED'
Gymfire
- 7 **ELLIE GOULDING**
'UNDER THE SHEETS'
Polydor
- 8 **LA ROUX**
'QUICKSAND'
Island
- 9 **JAMIE T**
'THE MAN'S MOUNTAIN'
Island
- 10 **ARCTIC MONKEYS**
'CORNERSTONE'
Domino
- 11 **DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE**
'MEE/MEE/WHIT/WHITING'
Island
- 12 **GROOVE ARMADA**
'I WON'T KNEEL'
Columbia
- 13 **EDITORS**
'PAPILLON'
Island
- 14 **THEM CROOKED VULTURES**
'NEW FANG'
RCA
- 15 **LA ROUX**
'I'M NOT YOUR TOY'
Island
- 16 **TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB**
'CANITALK'
Island
- 17 **BLOC PARTY**
'ONE MORE CHANCE'
Island
- 18 **GREEN DAY**
'21ST CENTURY DINOWHERE'
Reprise
- 19 **LCD SOUNDSYSTEM**
'BYE BYE BAYOU'
Parlophone
- 20 **PASSION PIT**
'LITTLE SECRETS'
Gymfire



MUSE
The Teignmouth three continue to stick around the upper echelons of the Top 10 with 'Undisclosed Desires' proving harder to shift than Kim Woodburn out of the jungle.



JAMIE T
The EP containing the third track out the traps from 'Kings & Queens' sees Mr T on top form again and flitting around the Top 10.



TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB
The Bangor boys have been bubbling under the surface of NME world all year. Now, with a new entry in the Top 20 it looks like their time might have come, and not a moment too soon, we reckon.

The NME Chart is compiled on a weekly basis from the sales of physical and digital singles, through traditional high street retailers, internet retailers and digital music service providers. Singles are eligible for the NME Chart if they have featured on the playlists of NME Radio or TV, or in NME Magazine.

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MY MUSIC

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JONATHAN PIERCE The Drums



My first record...

**'MELODY'
JOY ELECTRIC**

JOY ELECTRIC "That album made me fall in love with pop music; beautiful melodies and things that are melancholy. I fell in love with sadness and hopelessness, all of those beautiful things. I think I was 13 and I got it from a little shop called The Giving Tree. I was raised by two devout Christian parents; I wasn't allowed to listen to anything that wasn't Christian and this was, technically, but the music didn't talk about that."

Right now I'm loving...

**'FRENCH NAVY'
CAMERA OBSCURA**

CAMERA OBSCURA "Jacob [Graham, guitarist] is a little scavenger for young and obscure bands and he played me that song. I just love the chorus; I think it's mind-blowing. I have this crazy obsession with perfect pop and I think it's one of those songs – you can't ignore it, you just can't. I'm very much a song person; I'm not an album or an artist person. It really comes down to the song."

To make me dance...

**'KISS AND MAKE UP'
ST ETIENNE**

ST ETIENNE "It's a cover of a song by this band called The Field Mice; I discovered it on a blog. While we were writing our more beachy, '80s, Shangri-Las type of stuff I was searching out music to be influenced by. I came across this blog and they had playlists and that was one of the songs; I couldn't believe it. Every time the guys DJ I make them play it. I think it's this really underrated song that a lot of people have never heard before."

A record by a hero...

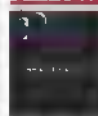
**'HOMOGENIC'
BJORK**



BJORK "I just think it's a perfect album. It's the album that let me know that it's OK to do whatever you want and be completely selfish. I was walking through a record shop when I heard 'Homogenic' and I went up to the guy and said, 'Who is this?' I took it home and it just completely changed my life. In my senior year of high school every single morning I would listen to that record on my two-hour bus ride."

I wish I'd written...

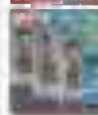
**'LANDSLIDE'
FLEETWOOD MAC**



FLEETWOOD MAC "It's hard to even talk about! Those lyrics, 'I built my life around you', I think it's something that everyone at some point in their life can relate to. I like songs about regret and not really knowing the future. If you hear Stevie Nicks sing it live, it's even crazier now she's an older woman – I heard some recent live performance; it just destroys me."

A big influence...

**'GIVE HIM A GREAT BIG KISS'
THE SHANGRI-LAS**



THE SHANGRI-LAS "Give Him A Great Big Kiss had such an enormous influence on The Drums, in the biggest way possible, really. I heard that track when I was in Baltimore, a friend of mine who's an art student was playing it in his car as we were driving around and I'd never heard it before. It was just as we were starting The Drums and it ploughed through everything and affected everything. I said, 'This is the sound – I want to get this into what we're doing.'"

A tearjerker...

**'THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOS OUT'
THE SMITHS**



THE SMITHS "Every time I hear it I get goosebumps. Great lyrics and a great melody... Joy Electric mentioned The Smiths were the greatest band in the world so naturally I bought their Best Of. I thought that'd be a great place to start. I absolutely hated it for a good six months, then I gave it another shot and I really sat down and listened to it – literally life-changing."



My first gig...

PEDRO THE LION, LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA, 1996

"He's a singer-songwriter and super, super indie. I went to college for about six days, but whenever I hear Pedro The Lion it brings me back to that time. We didn't go to concerts growing up, we didn't do any of that stuff, it wasn't allowed in my family; I had to just get older and learn how to be sneaky. I went with a bunch of friends from school and absolutely loved it."

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YOU WRITE IT, WE PRINT IT, EVERYONE ARGUES *Edited by Luke Lewis*

LETTER OF THE WEEK WINS A SAMSUNG Q2 MP3/MP4 PLAYER TO LISTEN OR WATCH THE LATEST MUSIC VIDEOS ON

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Letter of the week

Hot-headed fuss

Why wasn't The Killers' 'Hot Fuss' in the Top 50 albums of the decade (NME, 21 November)? It was a fantastic record, especially for a debut. Back when I first heard it, it restored my faith in modern music: I'd previously retreated into The Clash and The Jam. God knows how many times I played 'Mr Brightside' and 'Somebody Told Me'. What happened? Did the jury forget them? Or did they honestly think OutKast deserve to be on the list more?

William Conder, via email

We were expecting the usual combative comments, of course – "WHERE ARE BUMSNOGGER??", that type of thing. But we were taken aback by the sheer ferocity of debate this list generated. One online commenter threatened to burn our offices down, which seems a bit of an overreaction. A brick through the window would surely suffice... – LL

"YOU FORGOT THE BEST ONE!" -BASED ANGER

What the fuck, NME? You said Franz Ferdinand "will change your life" on your front cover back in 2004 and they won the Mercury Music Prize, and were voted the second best album of 2004 in your poll (after The Libertines). Yet they don't make your list of 100 albums of the decade. You really proved yourselves with this one.

Lexytron, via email

Not including 'Hot Fuss', I can put down to indie snobbery. Not including 'Franz Ferdinand' in the Top 5, let alone the Top 50 – and failing to mention them at all – made me feel slightly ill. Good job at ignoring the most fun band in Britain today.

Alex Bartram, via email

This was the most common criticism we received: the absence of Franz. But what can I say? NME writers simply

didn't vote for them, and neither did our wider panel of industry figures. Perhaps the other two LPs sullied the debut's memory... – LL

Top 50 albums of the decade? Why were bands like OutKast and The Walkmen in there when albums like 'Franz Ferdinand' and 'Hot Fuss' were overlooked? We should get to vote and have it published rather than the music industry people who are just in there promoting stuff.

Stevie Footman, via email

Oh Stevie! Ye of little awareness. You can vote! Your voice shall be heard at WWW.NME.COM/rate/albumsofthedeade/start. Thing is, 'Is This It' is winning the reader poll too. Better get voting OutKast down, buddy – LL

SOME PRAISE, THEN MORE RAGE

A lot of your albums of the decade list is spot on, and I am thrilled that 'XTRMNTR' is so high, and 'Turn On The Bright Lights'. But two YYs albums in the top 50? Vampire Weekend higher than 'Absolution'? Meanwhile, 'Is This It' at first seems like a reasonable choice for album of the decade, but compared to the greatest albums of the previous decades, is it really the best the 2000s can do? It's not the White Album, is it? *Washington Irving, via email*

You mean you'd rather sit through the entire White Album than 'Is This It'? Honestly? Even the last few tracks including Yoko's crowning moment of glory 'Revolution 9'? With a (warm) gun to your head? Boom-tsssh... – LL



Take them out (of the album of the decade list)

STALKERS

It can't be illegal if it's love... right?



SONDER, LONDON

"This is my daughter Grace with Ryan Jarman. Give a proud dad and NME reader some cred and print it"



STEVE, LONDON

"This is my gorgeous wife Lisa with Tom and Serge from Kasabian. What a pretty picture"



RACHAEL, SHEFFIELD

"This is me and my mate meeting Calvin Harris after a gig. It made my year, he was so lovely"

Personally I felt shafted at the glaring omission of Pringle And Floppycocks' seminal debut 'Flopping All Over The World' - LL

Has something gone horribly wrong over at NME? Did somebody forget you were the NME, and instead thought you were Smash Hits? First of all how the hell are the likes of Girls Aloud and Sugababes in the Top 100 alone? They're commercialised popstars. Yet they make it in instead of The Courteeners. Why didn't you just put Bob The Builder in while you're at it? And then to kick every reader in the balls, you put Beyoncé at Number 1. What about [Kasabian's] 'Fire', pretty much one of the biggest-sounding tunes ever? I could go on and on and on and on. Point is, this is CRAZY.

Sean Atkinson, via email

Ah, Sean. You again. All you've done here is remind us what a massive tune 'Can We Fix It?' is. Banger - LL

NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

Is it me, or are bands forgetting where they came from? For example, I went to see Arctic Monkeys the other day and met Matt Helders. When we were talking to him he showed little enthusiasm. Also, we saw Dizzee Rascal a few weeks back and he didn't even bother to have a photo with us, he simply walked past and said, "In a bit". These famous bands and singers need to remember who got them there in the first place: the fans.

Vicki Collins, via email

I know what you mean. I've been camped out in Natasha Khan's back garden for weeks now, and she can barely even be bothered to call the police - LL

I would like to say to Edna who said 'put Jonas Brothers, N-Dubz and Shakira in the magazine' (NME, 21 November): go read Chav Weekly and fuck off because The Horrors and Bombay Bicycle Club are BARE SHIZZLE.

Eden Challenger, Southend

Ah yes, Chav Weekly. I hear Zoo magazine needs a new reader or two - LL

NOUGHTY WORDS

I enjoyed your Noughties Dictionary, but there were a couple of glaring omissions. Eg 'Twang', meaning a boorish male individual, as in, 'Look at that guy throwing beer around and listening to the Fratellis, what a complete an utter Twang'. Also, 'Skinner', a verb

meaning to squander one's talent, as in, 'I ought to be working, instead of Skinnering about on Twitter'. Tessa Hersh, London

I'm also hoping Jedward might take off as a noun, meaning endearingly fun to laugh at. The Rev, for example. He's increasingly been revealed as a total Jedward - LL

THE LATEST GREATEST

I really enjoyed reading your rock stars of the decade piece (NME, 28 November). OK, there were a few too many tragic drug casualties - what's so great about Winehouse and Doherty anyway? But kudos for recognising the towering greatness of Interpol's Carlos D. The man is a rock colossus, and we are all his disciples. New Interpol album next year - can't wait!

Gina Ell, via email

I've just read your 25 greatest rock stars of the decade feature. Dominic Masters? Andrew WK? Joe Lean? I see what you've done there - you've confused being a 'great rock star' with being a 'talentless, self-promoting chancer with a big mouth'. It's an easy mistake to make.

Alex Hutchence, Brighton

Andrew WK talentless? Dude, once you've completed a tour in a wheelchair get back to me - LL

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What on earth? Right first of all, Jay-Z's 'The Blueprint' in the Top 50. Are you even serious? Like one bit? It's the biggest pile of rubbish I've ever heard. Second of all, where is The View's 'Which Bitch??' That was absolutely quality, it should easily be in there. And where are Mumford & Sons, Florence & The Machine, and Busted? But most of all, WHERE THE BLOOMING HECK ARE THE COURTEENERS?

Sean Atkinson, via email

Busted? The Courteeners? Sean, you have the worst music taste in the world. Even worse than mine, and I bought the Hot Leg album - LL

I'm disappointed that Wolves Of Flatbush's, 'Razed by Wolves' was not on that list - they're quite rad. Also, The Verve, 'Forth'.

Scotty Checkbooks, via NME.com

AND ANOTHER THING...

In case you've still not made your point



SHUT YOUR BOOSH

Don't you think Julian Barratt looks just like John Bonham? MAX, HALIFAX
No. Not at all - LL

NOT DOING IT FOR THE KIDS

Get Jedward in NME! FLORIAN, KENT
No. If we wanted a pair of whey-faced ghouls with ludicrous hair, we'd put Faris and Coffin Joe on the cover again - LL

WHO DO YOU THINK WE ARE?!

How come you've done nothing on Twilight? RAE, BRISTOL
As if. Next we'll be putting Paramore on the cover - LL

ARGUING THE TOSS

Top 50 albums, no Eminem or Pitman? You lot are missing something, tossers. ANTONY PALIN, VIA EMAIL
Of course! How could we forget Pitman? - LL

MONKEY BUSINESS

What's up with Alex Turner? He looks like something from menwholooklikeoldladies. blogspot.com these days. SAM DAVIES, SOUTHSEA
It's always creepy when couples start to look like each other - LL

JUST CALL US CRAZY

'Crazy In Love' the best track of the decade? It isn't even Beyoncé's best song. It's pretty mediocre compared to some of her other work. VISITOR, VIA NME.COM/BLOGS
I take it you mean mediocre. Or is that a new genre? - LL

POETIC JUSTICE

Lord Byron one of your most rock'n'roll figures from history? Morons! Everyone knows Percy Bysshe Shelley was better. SAL, VIA EMAIL
(Ties noose) - LL

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NME LOVES

Lurking in the shadows, basking in unrest, it's...

ESBEN AND THE WITCH

Television tells us young people are idiots - breakdancing in hoodies that match their iPods, or erupting en masse into Britney Spears gurn-along vainglory for mobile phone companies. There's something too wholesome about TV's young people. They're always smug and fresh-faced, 'smiley' and colourful; as generic as the product they're trying to plug.

Esben And The Witch aren't into all that. They're young, but never sound like they're having much fun at all. The three of them live in Brighton, writing songs which find empathy with out-of-season coastal towns or woods where people 'dispose' of things. 'Marching Song' is doomed and 'Corridors' deserted, both beleaguered by synth and distortion that lash like storm weather. "It's very introspective. An exploration of things that trouble or worry us," says Daniel Copeman (electronics, guitars). "Fear, claustrophobia, unhappiness. If you can get them out in a song, hopefully you won't walk around moping all the time." Fair point.

Describing their sound as 'Nightmare Pop', Esben feed those nightmares with ancient Greek literature, the work of medieval Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch and, it would seem, Beyoncé Knowles' thighs. "They're huge," raves Copeman. "That video for 'Sweet Dreams' is the most immense yet terrifying thing you'll ever see. It's mostly thighs. They

look robotic." Esben can 'do pop', too - a cover of Kylie's 'Confide In Me' on YouTube proves it. They don't spend all their time searching for secret doors in haunted libraries, despite the stuffed owl ('Gemma') that joins them onstage. Copeman, guitarist Thomas Fisher and singer Rachel Davies first gathered at a house party. "Me and Dan had been looking for a singer for ages. It was awful," Fisher complains. "We tried Gumtree." Isn't Gumtree full of perverts and Australians? "Yeah, we got a 40-year-old post whose sole influence was Eurythmics."

The influences you'll hear on Esben's debut single, out in February, aren't so far away from Annie Lennox's spinster blues - Portishead, Radiohead, Björk, The Cure; more recently Burial and The xx, with whom they inhabit mutual sonic turf. "I shared a room with my big brother," Copeman explains, "so I got into those bands earlier than was healthy - 10, 11. Everyone at school thought I was a bit odd."

Some might say naming your band after a Danish fairytale involving murderous hags and child slaughter was odd. Do you enjoy light comedy, Esben? What do you think of *Friends*? "I love it!" Davies exclaims, before Fisher interjects, "I find it quite distressing. If you aren't seeking *Friends* out, it's usually seeking you out." Do you lead particularly unenjoyable lives? "No not at all..." laughs Davies. "But we like the gloom." **Rev Kharas**

NEED TO KNOW...

What: Synth-beaten siren songs for dark-eyed souls
For fans of: Portishead, The xx
Download: 'About This Peninsula'

RADAR

OTHER STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT



RE-INVOKED FOLK

Comin' straight outta Orkney with a campfire ERLAND AND THE CARNIVAL

On the isolated Orkney Islands, Erland Cooper and his school mates would hurl themselves, naked, off a deserted pier head and into the freezing ocean. "Now, it seems curious, and slightly gay, but there was nothing else to do," he says. Even today, Erland has the air of someone who spent their insular life strumming round a campfire and eating green shoots. The same cannot be said of his bandmates. Guitarist is Simon Tong, who you may remember from such Britpop temp jobs as augmenting Nick McCabe in The Verve or standing in for Graham Coxon in Blur. And drummer David Nock has spent the past year with one Paul McCartney in The Fireman

Together they ply psychedelic interpretations of trad Scottish folk shanties. Erland talks about "vibes" a lot and the influence of early '70s folk legends Pentangle. Yet what you hear on record couldn't be further from itchy woolies and cloudy ale. Its moody organ trenches and messy distortion are instead filled with the desolation of island living. Thing is, now Erland's reached the mainland, he doesn't appear to be returning anytime soon. *Sam Wolfson*

NEED TO KNOW...

What: Musty folk on a vintage micro-dot tab
Download: 'My Name Is Carnival' from the Radar blog

HOOD STARS

Rhymin' jerks in thigh-hugging denim

NEW BOYZ

It's hard not to raise your eyebrows at Californian rap duo New Boyz. For example, in a move not too far off a black metal band calling their album 'God's Ace', the first offspring of LA's jerk-dance scene have named their debut 'Skinny Jeans And A Mic'. "The skinny jeans represent the beats, the whole jerkin' feel, and then the mic represents, er, y'know, like we got lyrics for days, man," deadpans 18-year-old rapper Ben J Also. Instead of being influenced by your usual list of respected rap standards, they say their dreams of rap stardom began when they saw a video by tween-hop hero Bow Wow. In it, the diminutive rapper was being chased by a pack of excitable girls. Bandmate

Legacy says he decided he wanted "summa dat action". Now his wish seems to be well on its way. The pair invoke riotous scenes when they perform to young fans in their home state and beyond, and their debut video, 'You're A Jerk' has had over 20million views on YouTube. New Boyz may be an easy target, but really the only people who could genuinely be offended by these guys are stuffy hip-hop nerds. Bring on the slim fits. *John McDonnell*

NEED TO KNOW...

What: Postmodern party-rap pissing off the purists
Download: 'You're A Jerk'



UNDERGROUND UPSTARTS

Biting punk'n'rollers, heavy on the Brylcreem

SHARKS

What's in a name? In the case of Sharks, it would appear the Midlands four-piece have hit upon that rarest of troves: a genuinely apt moniker. Having just been aptly plucked by Gallows as tour support, Leamington Spa's James Mattock, Chris O'Reilly, Andrew Bayliss and Sam Lister are as stealthy and determined as their aquatic namesakes.

"We are definitely ambitious. It's all or nothing. I don't have anything else going on in my life apart from this," says Bayliss. "I would rather be the poorest and loneliest man alive for the sake of keeping our music pure." And it's that steely we-will-not-compromise 'tude that might leave them open to accusations of po-facedness, but which gives them such snap "If a label says,

"We'll give you a million quid if your record sounds like this', we wouldn't be happy. If they want to give us a million quid for the record that we want to put out then that's fine." Well, obv.

It's fair to say neither sharks nor Sharks are known for sophistication; so far, their quiffs-down punk'n'roll aggression hasn't yet translated into, say, a Nick Cave-like midnight depth (Bayliss cites him as a major influence) but when there's such ferocity it doesn't matter. Give 'em a) a year and b) a million quid and something special might just happen. *Ben Patashnik*

NEED TO KNOW...

What: Jet-black Midlands rock'n'roll
Download: 'Brassneck' from the Radar blog

Family Portrait,
living out their
name in style

SCENE REPORT

Jersey boys

Jack Shankly tends to the Garden State's freshest blossoms

With New York's trend-setting well apparently running dry, square-eyed bloggers have been forced to set their co-ordinates for another destination in their quest for nerdy pop nirvana. Step forward neighbouring New Jersey in all its sterile, sprawling suburban glory.

It seems the state that gave us FM radio, the ice cream cone, *The Sopranos* and most importantly *The Boss* has usurped NYC as the East Coast's foremost talent reserve.

The newest and most prominent plaid-clad heroes are Ridgewood's *Real Estate*. Rather than the business of selling land, it's evergreen cuts of reverb-drenched pop nostalgia that Martin Courtney and co offer up. Their recent, eponymous debut LP is a perfect

autumn record – an organic and easy collection of feel-great jams. It refracts the more melodic moments of treasured NJ flagbearers Yo La Tengo and seminal New Zealand din-makers The Clean through a prism of breezy, romantic, almost classic rock. The RE members write and perform as both *Ducktails* and *Alex Bleeker And The Freaks* in their spare time. The former craft underwater, hypnagogic psych-rock wig-outs, while the latter deal in dusty, damaged and beefy blues. Other notable Ridgewood residents are *Big Troubles*, who trade in slightly sad, glazed-over campgaze

that is as noisy and succinct as it is purely infectious.

There's a laidback, throwback, melody-first ethos that unites all these acts despite their stylistic differences. They reinterpret what could be crushing

suburban malaise into space and freedom. It is a genuine community too, with band members regularly filling

in in each other's live set-ups and releasing an almost constant flurry of split singles together on various bedroom boutique labels. The most notable of these is DC-based *Underwater Peoples* – home to most of the above (as well as the label's

own house band *Family Portrait*) and a whole host of other gold lovingly collected on their zeitgeist-owning *Summertime Showcase* compilation.

Finally, every movement needs its defining song and, if our new favourite state has its core of torn-knee torch-holders already, then it also has its anthem. The song in question is *Fluffy Lumberjacks*' bedraggled and beautiful 'Cruisers', a gloriously off-kilter slice of slacker sunshine that is much less 'Born To Run' and far more 'Born To Probably Just Hang Around Here And Huff Some Glue And Generally Have A Load Of Fun'.

**THERE'S A LAIDBACK
MELODY-FIRST
ETHOS THAT UNITES
ALL THESE ACTS**



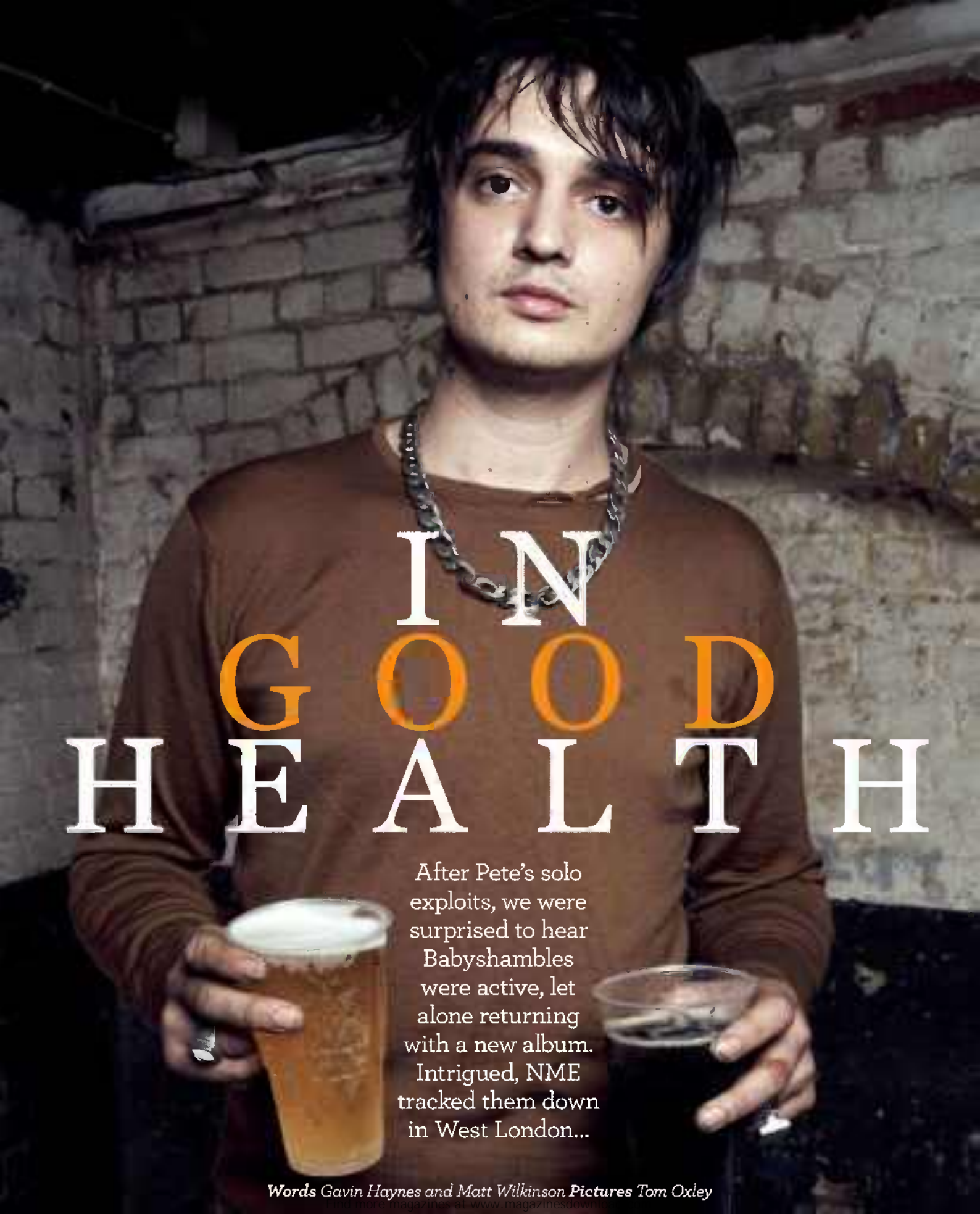
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Gentlemen
of the Road

A man with dark, slightly messy hair and a thin mustache is looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt and a thick, dark metal chain necklace. He is holding a tall glass of beer with a thick head of foam in his right hand and a small, clear glass in his left hand. The background is a rough, grey brick wall.

IN GOOD HEALTH

After Pete's solo exploits, we were surprised to hear Babyshambles were active, let alone returning with a new album. Intrigued, NME tracked them down in West London...

Words Gavin Haynes and Matt Wilkinson *Pictures* Tom Oxley

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fter a year of going solo, folk had begun to suspect that Peter Doherty might have enjoyed spreading his wings a bit too much. Big egos crave freedom – and for a certain type of self-willing auteur, going it alone is like a steady supply of really awesome drugs – hard to give up. Was this the end for Pete's knockabout r'n'r gang? Was the 'shambles about to find itself booted onto the slagheap of history that had already claimed Dirty Pretty Things? And, moreover, would anyone care?

Worse, it seemed like the man in the street had already taken this trajectory of events as read, and that itself was really starting to piss Drew McConnell off..

"Loads of people ask, or mention in a cursory way about 'Oh, Peter used to be your singer.' I'm like, 'What are you talking about? Used to be?'" And it's, you know, 'shambles have split up haven't they?' Any other band, if they spend a year not doing something, people wouldn't assume they'd split up."

So it was a surprise when, one morning in early November, the 'shambles announced a same-day show at Camden's Proud Galleries. The marketing was so low-key that the show still hadn't sold out by that evening. There, they debuted a wedge of new songs, while knocking out a ranting, rambling cover of Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean'. Another club show, this time in Lewisham, and another dose of new songs, followed soon after. By the back half of November, Peter had declared that he would be bringing Babyshambles along with him to honour a commitment he'd flaked out on last time round: a small club date at Kingston's New Slang night, scheduled for June, but nixed after he'd had to undergo medical treatment. His bionic body was, at that moment, being fitted with a new drug-repelling implant, as part of his new bail conditions after a new round of court hearings (heroin possession and dangerous driving: the usual).

But beyond the fact that they were back together, there was a secondary question mark here – as to what the division of power was within the band these days. Reports had started to make it back that, far from being merely a vehicle for The Songs Of Pete Doherty, there were shades of Oasis Mk II taking hold on the songwriting credit of Babyshambles 2010 – with the odd 'A Quick Peep' or 'Nature Of Reality' due to turn up on the next record.

It was February since we'd last spoken to Pete, in Paris, back when 'Grace/Wastelands' was finding its feet, and he was buddybuddy about with Graham Coxon – so, it seemed like here, now, would be the moment to give him and his bandmates' new show the once-over. We went in search of the truth about Babyshambles' third album; we went to find out where The Poet's head was at these days, we went to tap the temperature on his creative spark; we went to Kingston...

Even if you've never been to New Slang, you've been there. Trust us. The clientele cleaved neatly into two

factions: the overdressed and the way-overdressed. Girls in vicious tights. Boys in vicious trousers.

Someone's even turned up in a proper red 'Boys In The Band' British Army tunic. In the gents, the attendant is joyously rattling through his sales patter... "No spray no lay! No Armani no punani!" A pair of chunky eyebrows flit up into reflection in the mirror. "Nah, mate," comes the reply, "we're just here to get fucked." And that, pretty much, is the size of it. Basically, if Kingston were Pompeii, as the low ceilings of Mclusky's Nightclub filled with lava, future archaeologists would be gifted the most textbook example of what indie youth did after The Libertines but before Klaxons.

Onstage, a support band are grinding through their limited garage band punk gears with dutiful squalor. Then, wading through the beer-soaked carpet back towards the leatherette sofas, a girl in a blue, hooped dress calls back to her mates. "Quick! Pete Doherty's playing!" And there he is. Bawling lobotomically into the microphone, stomping up and down the stage, clad in the classic 'black T-shirt and spivvy gold necklace' combo. "Bleaaaaaaargh!" over two minutes of punk racket he excretes glottal screams, then he and the support band troop offstage.

Within 10 minutes, Babyshambles, un-soundchecked,

"People say, 'Oh, Peter used to be your singer'. I'm like, 'What are you talking about? Used to be?!'"

DREW MCCONNELL

un-practised, are back to blast it out, opening with a sleazy snippet of Happy Mondays' 'Kinky Afro'. It's all ragged, raw, teetering on the edge of dissolute stuff from 'Carry On Up The Morning' all the way to the inevitable big bang of 'Fuck Forever'. New songs make their mark: the 'Johnny B Goode' rewrite of the Griffin-bashing 'BNP Blues'. The melancholy mid-tempo 'Stranger In My Own Skin', and 'Fireman' – a skinny little punk song which sounds like the Buzzcocks until it rasps into Sham 69 in the chorus. "Rangers 'til I die", Pete chants, as he sparks his fourth outlaw cigarette of the night, nearly bashing it back out against the low roof. "I'm gonna be Rangers 'til I die..."

For a man whose heart apparently 'stopped beating' in early October, just before he was due to play some solo shows in Ireland, Peter looks remarkably well. His face is neither post-rehab jowly nor hollow-cheeked and haunted. His new implant is apparently doing the trick. For now at least, the pendulum has swung back to 'off the drugs'. But this heart thing has stoked the sort of deathwatch journalism he's often been a victim of. "When you get a scan of yourself... it's horrifying," he relates, and for a moment we visualise an x-ray revealing the white outline of a big bag of drugs, needles, a hamster on a wheel, a crack pipe, loose change and a pocketwatch, all submerged between his ribs. "I just woke up and the doctors were asking, 'Do you know your name?'" And I said 'Yeah – Peter.' And they just said, 'Do you know

where you are?" and I said, 'Well, I'm in a hospital.' It was like 20 questions. It was easy, the whole thing."

Since the solo stuff tailed off, in recent months Pete's spent quite a lot of time up in Wiltshire – in the country mansion he's leased off the Earl Of Cardigan for the past couple of years, still exiled from London by his probation conditions. The rest of Babyshambles have been visiting to work on songs, Drew having to fight against his cat allergy (Pete: "I've got quite a few cats"). "The songs are all in embryonic stages," Drew confirms. "The lyrics are just starting to crystallise into existence and we're just ironing the creases."

Far from losing interest when Pete went his own way, in fact, the glut of time that the rest of the band have had on their hands has meant that they've ploughed a lot of it back into Babyshambles. Guitarist Mik Whitnall especially, has spent the entire solo-phase holed up for a year in a studio he rented in Old Street. He bought a heap of vintage gear, and wrote and wrote...

Whether or not the fans will welcome them with the same begrudging enthusiasm they did Noel Gallagher's decision to farm out his oeuvre to Andy Bell *et al*, Pete himself is supportive of the idea of turfing over some songwriting credits to his bandmates, who seem equally keen to take up that responsibility.

"Yeah, Mik spent a year on eBay buying shitloads of equipment, and to everyone's astonishment he's written loads of amazing music which mostly just needs lyrics. So, one by one, they're getting turned into songs, and they're beautiful, some of them."


Mik: "I've just been sat on my arse doing that. Going down there every day – I was living there. My missus got really pissed off."

Pete: "He's got a lot of music. It's becoming embarrassing because I'm starting to doubt my lyrics prowess now. It's cheating words."

Adam: "There's some Drew songs as well, which are really good, coming out."

Eighteen songs are so far on the slate for a new album, due to happen next year, 'though there's no timeframe yet'. The only ones you'll know about thus far are Pete compositions. 'Stone Me What A Life' will already be familiar from NME's 2007 Love Music Hate Racism compilation CD. Behind it, there are a few other things that have been skulking in the background for a while that they're now looking to revive – the brilliant, brittle 'Cuckoo 1440', the jaunty, folksy '352 Days' and the soft-focus 'Tinker's Daughter'. On the pile marked 'still missing, but definitely do exist' are: 'Fixing Up To Go', 'Bonjour Trieste' and the alleged big





Babyshambles
(l-r): Drew, Pete,
Mik and Adam

“We always wanted our own
version of ‘My Way’.
A fuck-off big Sinatra
one-off hit”

PETE DOHERTY

'un – the song that the 'shambles suspect might take them to the next level, tentatively titled 'After He' and described by Pete as "a fucking belter... It hasn't really got a title, but we're calling it 'After He' for now. Well Mik, years ago, when we first started writing together, he took me aside and said, 'Look, you know, if we're really gonna bother with this we're gonna have to come up with, like, a 'My Way' or something. Like a fuck-off big Sinatra or Barry White style, one-off, big hit'"

"Yeah baby," Mik pitches in.

"So I've been trying... and I've had a couple [that have come close]. 'Albion' was good, I felt that was quite big. But this could be the one."

Mik "It's got a really big chorus."

Pete: "Musically it's the perfect – I won't say rip-off – but combination of classic ska and the riff from 'This Charming Man'."

"It's a bit of a Babyshambles-sounding vibe though – a bit punky as well."

Peter glances across at Mik: "Cos I've got you on my phone in a dressing room in Holland – going up to Johnny Marr and saying, 'How the fuck did you write that riff?' And he goes, 'I was just sat in my bedroom and it just came out in five minutes.'"

"I felt a right twat though. I said to him, 'I feel like a knob asking you this, but can you play 'Jeane' for us?'"

"He did though!" Pete returns to the new material "A couple of songs I've got that I played the boys that are kind of on that 'Harvest', Neil Young-vibe. Like 'Tinker's Daughter' and that one 'Bonjour Trieste' – they're kind of along that vibe." Pete pauses. "And also, if you slow down 'The Circle' by Ocean Colour Scene – you know that?" He sings a snatch of it. "You get one of the greatest songs ever written. No offence to them, but they never actually did a decent version of it."

Are you finding it easy to write lyrics at the moment?

"Yeah. You know how it is."

"It is when he's not paying attention!" Drew trills. "The other night we were just sat around his laptop watching old YouTube clips. And we started jamming and he started improvising these lyrics, and I thought it was someone else's song. And I was like, 'What's that?' and he goes, 'I dunno, I was just fucking around.' I was like 'Do it again!' and he's like 'I can't remember it now.'" He addresses Pete directly. "Sometimes things fall out easier when you're not paying attention..."

"The thing is, it's annoying now because there's a lot of songs as well, there's a lot of new songs that we love

and we're dying to get out there but there's songs that are just lying by the roadside. Stuff like 'Stone Me What A Life', 'Fixing Up To Go'."

In the 42 days between the Kingston show and the end of the era he made in his own image, Peter may be compelled to ponder where he stands at this turnstile between the past and the future. The results are in, and he made more Top 50 Albums Of The Decade than anyone else, but music has changed. The New Slang crowds still adore him, but they already feel like a relic. Romantic-jangle, skronk-punk and ska-tinge are his own personal hallmarks – and also those of the past 10 years. How can you be a part of the next generation when you're a standard-bearer for the last one? This is the question Pete is going to come up against more and more. And, like everyone else who's scaled similar heights, he's going to be pitched more and more against answering the question of what role is there for those who've built a career on being young and misunderstood once they're not-so-young and pretty-thoroughly-mapped-out. He's wiley, for sure. But only a handful of greates have ever held sway on more than one era. Is he that wiley?

As ever, it's difficult to know where things truly stand with him and his talents. 'Grace/Wastelands' riffed through his bottom-drawers to dig up several few tracks from the archives, while the fact that he's prepared to let his bandmates dig in on songwriting duties also suggests that he's not got quite enough material to be getting on with by himself. But at the same time, Pete's making out that there are still a ton of old sessions he's just sitting on until he meets someone with a soldering iron and one of those tiny screwdrivers...

"If you've got a bloke at NME who knows how to fix Macs, I've got fucking shitloads. Shitloads of broken Macs with shitloads of sessions on that you can have... We've got, like, a Mac graveyard basically... I dunno what to do. I'm trying."

Uh... Take them to a shop?

"It's not as easy as that though, is it?"

No, it's never quite that easy in the land of Pete. That congenital inability to look more than 12 minutes into the future that is 80 per cent of his personal magnetism by the same token also ensures that he'll never get a mortgage, return a library book, or, perhaps, take a fucking sack of Macs in for a few simple repairs. "Me and the future," as Pete once had it, "have a very bad relationship."

When your charm is a hazy chaos, people asking about your plans should always be aware that plans are subject to change. Whether or not he's destined to be a Morrissey-style wordsmith for Mik's new choons, in a way asking the 'shambles about The Future is always going to be like asking a jellyfish about Mount Olympus. "The thing is," Pete continues, "'Shotters Nation' doesn't sound anything like it sounded when we were recording it. I never go anywhere with a plan, though, really."

Drew "It's easy to say after the facts, once you've done something. A year later it's easy to say 'This is what happened.' But in the midst of it, it's an organic thing and it's changing and evolving as the days go by."

Mik: "I like the idea of getting a few different sounds, because there's a massive, different range in different music styles this time. It's like, last time we did one of the songs when we were recording 'Shotters Nation' and we tried one of them and Steve Street went 'Oh, it sounds like baggy or something', and we were like 'Well, yeah it's supposed to...'"

Get on the Groovy Train. Pete Doherty owned the noughties. It'll be fascinating to see what's coming next.

GET YOUR HANDS ON 'NME: THE ALBUM 2009' INCLUDING PETE'S TRACK 'LAST OF THE ENGLISH ROSES' OUT NOW

THE LIBERTINES, IMPLANTS AND AMY WINEHOUSE

Everything that's happened to Pete since we last spoke. Take a deep breath...

FEBRUARY

After Pete reveals that he and Carl Barât had been offered millions to reform The Libertines and headline Reading and Leeds, but that Carl had turned it down, Carlos pears further cold water on all those rumours, announcing that any reunion would distract him from carving out his solo career.

MARCH

Tour's 'Grace/Wastelands' with Graham Coxon. Gets in trouble with the law again when he's issued with a fixed-penalty notice for littering in London's Regent's Park – less than 24 hours after checking into a rehab centre 200 miles away in Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

MAY

The Libertines (minus John Hassall) reunite for a one-off surprise show in honour of recently-deceased promoter Johnny Sadassy. This is followed on the same evening by a Babyshambles reunion with 'Down In Albion'-era guitarist Patrick Walden.



Pete back with Carl...

JUNE

Pete is arrested and fined by Swiss police for 'heroin consumption', after he collapses in the toilets of the British Airways flight ferrying him to Geneva. Days later, Pete appears at Gloucester Crown Court, after being charged with dangerous driving and drug possession, shortly after playing a gig at the town's Guildhall. The judge decides that he will return to court for trial on December 21, and must be fitted with a new anti-heroin under-skin implant.

AUGUST

During a show at V Festival, he's joined by Amy Winehouse. The pair send pap shutters into meltdown by kissing onstage.



...and with Amy at V

SEPTEMBER

Pete tells French Elle magazine that he attempted suicide during his stint in Paris back in March – by trying to throw himself off the top of his hotel after a bout of heavy drinking during his 30th birthday celebrations.

OCTOBER

'Heart stops' just before he's due to fly to Ulster for a solo gig at Belfast's Mandela Hall. Is taken to hospital, with what is initially reported as 'exhaustion'. He's released soon after.

NOVEMBER

Babyshambles return with a series of low-key gigs across London.



Pete's back on the horse, then



The 'shambles playing the Dirty South gig

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Well, muses **Leonie Cooper**, there must be *something* behind **Owl City's** baffling rise

Under a rattling freeway in Houston, Texas sits the shonky Meridian venue. Yet despite its corpse-like appearance on the outside, inside the place is buzzing with hundreds of giddy teenage girls, all of them in a right old flap about Owl City, the stratospherically successful tweemo project of Adam Young, a God fearin', middle-American, boy next door.

You'd be forgiven for thinking that new music in America comes exclusively from either Silver Lake, LA or Brooklyn, NYC, but believe it or not, something actually goes on in the landlocked states in between. And that something has just got very, very big indeed. Owl City's out-of-nowhere platinum-selling electro-lite single 'Fireflies' has not only topped the American Billboard chart – twice – but has also made the Number One spot in Canada, New Zealand and Denmark, and could very well do the same when it's released over here in February. At the time of writing this piece, its saccharine 'toys-come-to-life' video has had a whopping 14 million YouTube views while a 30-second MySpace clip of the track has done even better, with over 50 million plays. And it's not just an empty online buzz: Young's actually *selling* his robo-voiced, auto-tuned tracks by the shedload too, which, given the current state of the industry, is pretty damn spectacular. As to why 'Fireflies' became such a sensation, that's less clear. It's not exactly the kind of thing you would have expected to set the world on fire. However, it certainly ticks all the right 'US youth trend' boxes, marrying

soft-edged emo sentiment and Mr Hudson-style electro pop, and wrapping it up in a nice fluffy box of melody.

As Young bounds onto the Meridian stage, the girls start screaming and don't stop. It's fitting that we're watching Owl City in Houston because, like most of America, Houston is not cool. Adam Young isn't cool either, and he'd probably be the first to admit it. When *NME* asks what he thinks about becoming a heartthrob to yelping teens, he offers a nervous giggle. "That's really foreign to me because I'm not really about that; in high school – and still to this day – I'm always really terrified of talking to girls, and I'm really awkward and shy around them."

A bedroom-based crafter of tracks called cutesy things like 'Vanilla

"I'm always really terrified of talking to girls, and I'm really awkward and shy around them"

Twilight' and 'The Bird And The Worm', and writer of irony-free lyrics about trips to the dentist, Young is non-threatening to say the least. "I think it's just really uplifting and it's light and I think that's the kind of thing that maybe, at least in our culture, they're looking for even more than guys, maybe," ponders Young when we ask him if he knows why the girls are going gaga for him.

Now 23, until last summer Young had been working in a warehouse, stacking trucks at 6am in his deathly dull

sounding hometown of Owatonna, Minnesota. A small town full of "regular people", Owatonna is known for commercial welding, construction work and bugger all music. "I think growing up here has sort of preserved kind of an innocent outlook or innocent perspective," says the wide-eyed Young, who self-released an EP and album of his squidgy, soft-centred emotronica online, before he was approached by major label Universal Republic in 2008. They released the album 'Ocean Eyes' this

the looming presence of another lifelong friend is hard to avoid; the Big G-man. We talk about the rather intense 'Meteor Showers', which, despite what some listeners think, isn't about Young's soppy ways with the ladies. The song is instead a tribute to his quite hardcore Christian faith. "For the most part I try to never really be too pointed about it, but it's definitely a part of the writing, abstractly," he reveals. Low key and underlying however, is far from the way it comes across on his MySpace page. Top of his list of inspirations is 'God', and elsewhere, under a picture of white fluffy clouds is written: "I follow Jesus Christ wholeheartedly. He is my life, my strength, my all."

Like Paramore before him, Young is hardly typical of the Christian rock scene, but equally, makes no bones about the importance of religion in his life. "My faith is kind of the reason why I do what I do, and so that provides a lot of inspiration and motivation," he says, adding, in a stock, media-trained tone, "I certainly don't want to force anything down anybody's throat but I love the idea of not being ashamed of that."

Overt Christianity in music has never been as much of a problem in the States as it has back home. Middle America has certainly bought into Owl City, but will the UK be as ready to follow suit? That's up to you.



PAMELA LUTTY

After one of their number dramatically quit, **Jude Rogers** followed **The xx** to New York for their first US headline show. She found a band infusing their music with grief

Night time is glowing on the Lower East Side. New York City's latest favourite band have just left the Bowery Ballroom stage, their smoke machines whirling white ghosts in the air. They try to find solace upstairs, but peace won't be theirs tonight. Instead, an immaculately dressed blonde shimmers into their room, and her drawl cuts the silence like a knife. "You were amazing tonight," she beams, shaking the hands of Oliver Sim, Romy Madley Croft and Jamie Smith, as their faces, one by one, blanch disbelievingly. "You totally make doing-it music. God, I love you so much."

Courtney Love crumples into a sofa, The xx give their thanks, and a few minutes later, start moving out to the corridor, another appointment clicking hard at their heels. "Have you seen...?", Oliver boggles, thumbing the air. He then smiles shyly, shakes his head, and walks out into Manhattan.

In the four months since they released their debut album, unimaginable things have happened to The xx. The gushing reviews arrived first, praising a sound that pared down R&B to its base elements, and merged romantic, indie lyrics with the glower of dubstep and the sigh of country guitar. Michael Stipe saw them in Paris, Solange Knowles became their friend, and long before she turned up to fess her fandom in the flesh, Courtney left a comment – "you're amazing" – on their MySpace page.

When nothing could get better, everything fell apart. Two hours before their homecoming gig at London's Village Underground on October 28, guitarist and keyboardist Baria Qureshi walked away, severing a friendship that began, nine years earlier, at the Elliott School in Putney, southwest London. That night, the band managed a stirring set regardless – sharing Baria's parts between them – but their sadness was unmistakable. When Oliver spoke, his voice broke with emotion. "It's devastating not having Baria here with us," he said, "but you all being here has made us feel better."

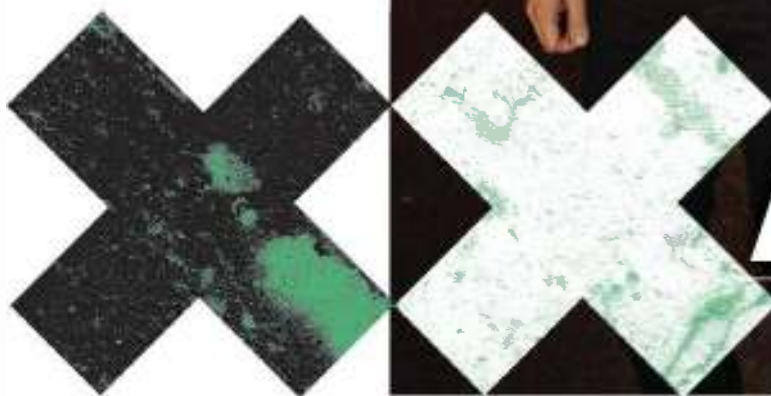
His words showed the human side of this most mysterious of groups, and made us curious to find out more about the people behind the songs. So to New York we go, and the first headline show of their first US tour, to find out what went wrong, and what's going so right.

Hudson Street, SoHo, 2.30pm. The xx have just flown in from Paris, where they performed on *Taratata*, France's biggest music show, and on the country's top current affairs

programme, *Le Grand Journal* – following Robbie Williams and Whitney Houston as that week's musical heavyweights. This is their third time in New York, after a week of gigs in the summer and hype-heavy performances at October's CMJ festival. So it feels, in a way, that they're coming home.

"It's like home, because we haven't slept," Oliver laughs. He is as striking offstage as he is on it – a surly James Dean draped in R&B bling – but his hazel eyes are soft rather than stern; his quiff floppy and wayward under a beanie hat. Romy and Jamie are similarly gentle and sleepy, quite appropriately for a band who made their debut album at night (Oliver and Romy wrote songs under their duvets as their parents slept, Jamie produced them in the XL Records garage while the office was closed). They are far warmer in the flesh than the eerie characters you encounter onstage, but to meet them is to feel you have wandered, unbidden, into a very private world.

Jamie, Oliver and Romy were born between the summers of 1988 and 1989, when the dark shapes of underground dance music started hitting the mainstream. Jamie was born on



October 28 – it was his birthday on the day that Baria left the band. Oliver followed him on June 15, while Romy came last on August 18. She turned 20 – XX – a day after their album came out.

All three of them grew up surrounded by music. One of Jamie's earliest memories is hearing Booker T & The MG's while his family ate dinner, Oliver's the sound of his parents singing 'Dream A Little Dream Of Me' by Mama Cass; Romy's sitting in the back of a car, asking her parents for that "missing" song, which she now realises was 'Missing' by Everything But The Girl. They were all reclusive children, preferring their own company with books, paint-pots and records. The original four members came together

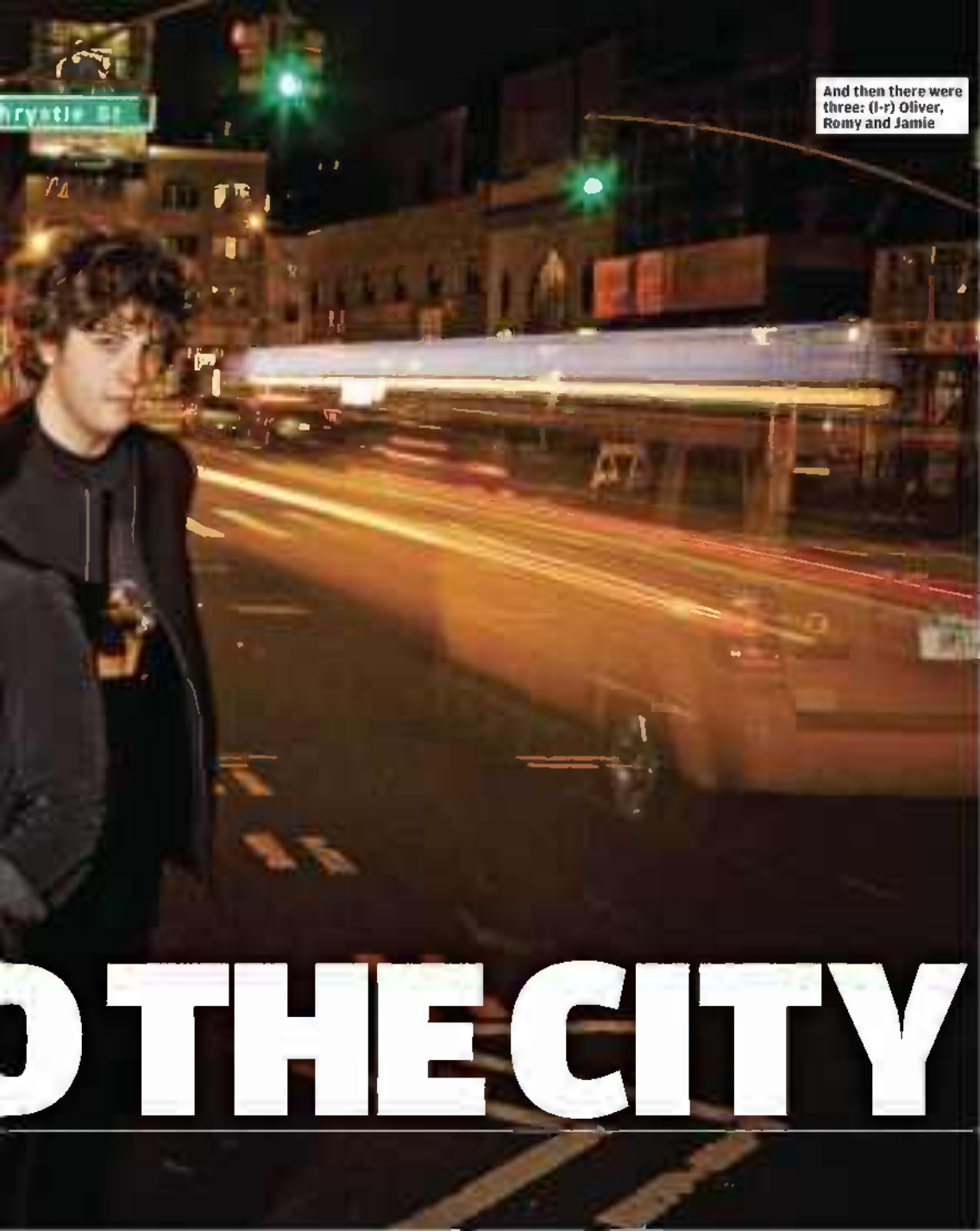
as teenagers, listening to the mixtapes Jamie passed round the schoolyard, while Romy and Baria bonded over bands such as Hole and The Distillers.

Still, Oliver and Romy were always the group's core, two friends who had known each other since they were three. Their liberal, arty parents – Oliver's father a boxer, his mother a social worker; Romy's mother a teacher, her father, a librarian – had pushed them together as toddlers. They were inseparable instantly, says Oliver. "We've both got progress books from nursery – pictures we'd drawn, conversations we'd had – really in-depth, as if we were being studied or something. My book's all about Romy," Romy continues. "Romy has a best

friend called Oliver. They spend most of their time together.' That's what they said. We looked exactly the same, too." She pushes her dyed black hair behind one ear quite shyly. "There's always been a funny thing between us."

The dynamic between Oliver and Romy is still innocent and young. They finish each other's sentences and look to each other for clarification when they're speaking. It's certainly not love – questions about their sexuality, hotly debated by fans, are always met with no comment – and there is a distance between them, they say, in the way they write songs. When they started doing this four years ago, they did so over iChat; and while finishing songs in the studio earlier this year, they spoke to





And then there were three: (l-r) Oliver, Romy and Jamie

childhood friends, and then you grow up to be 20 and you grow apart? That's what basically happened. The social dynamic wasn't working between us – we'd become different people. Our conversations weren't gelling..."

She breaks off; Oliver rescues her. "We'd never toured as intensely as this, so our arguments became heightened, and it all came to a head in London that afternoon. It made us realise that things had really changed between us."

Baria left of her own accord. The xx cancelled a few European gigs and headed back to their rehearsal space, a dingy room under a railway bridge. What happened there was revelatory. "To have the chance to go back to where we'd started at that time, after all that touring... and realise there were things we'd wanted to do that Baria hadn't." They now had the chance to be more spontaneous, says Oliver, and the break forced them to be much better musicians. Jamie also had to become much busier onstage. "That's one of the reasons I was reluctant to stop us being a four-piece," he shrugs, hiding under his cap. "But it wasn't just about covering buttons, I know that now. It was sort of like starting again."

Will they see Baria again? "I don't know," sighs Oliver. "To be honest, very shamefully, we've just been trying to concentrate on the show. It's the only thing we can do." Romy looks at me, and smiles a little sadly. "It's a bit like a divorce, really. You've got to take some time apart. And when you can't make up, it's time to move on."

The evening falls quickly on SoHo. The lack of rush hour cabs means that the band drag their cases halfway across town, which they do with little complaint. An hour later, as they soundcheck, two young men come into the venue, begging us for spare tickets – two had gone on Craigslist that day for \$200. Straight after, the band run to a traffic island for the NME photographs, the lights of the traffic blurring them in the dark. Then it's their hour of reckoning – their first time in America without their old friend; the first time in this country at the top of the bill.

The gig is astonishing. The band's famous glowing xs are now centre-stage with Jamie behind them, giving his live beats a greater intensity. The songs now have longer outros and the riff from Bronski Beat's 'Smalltown Boy' makes an appearance. But some things don't change. An atmosphere of intimacy still crackles through the venue like the kiss of a lover, and it is obvious that we are still watching two soulmates singing to each other, singing for us. Their star continues to shine; the city becomes theirs, their new world becomes ours.

NME.COM

Head to NME.COM/artists/the-xx to buy tickets for the band's forthcoming UK tour dates

PHOTOGRAPH BY VAN HATTEN

"THE SOCIAL DYNAMIC WASN'T WORKING BETWEEN US..."

OLIVER ON BARIA'S DEPARTURE

each other over microphones to make their words seem less intimate. And intimate they are. Take 'Stars', a power struggle of a song about giving "it all on the first date", which Oliver wrote when he was 16, or 'Islands' study of obsession, on which Romy sings, "I am yours now/ So now I don't ever have to leave".

So what's it like singing to your best friend about sex? "When I listen to the lyrics now," says Romy, "I didn't know what I was writing. I was into love songs,

but not necessarily happy ones. I'd get my head into that space and throw words out, like some sort of therapy."

Oliver carries on her sentence, not missing a beat. "The four years we've just been through are massive ones... and when I began, I wasn't writing so much from observation, but from expectation. But now I've actually gained experience..." He raises an eyebrow suggestively, laughs out loud at his phrase, and Romy shakes her head

like an embarrassed sister. Suddenly the distance between them becomes very obvious. "Well, the songs have gone a bit darker," he says, biting his lip.

"Because we've all started to change."

As time has moved on, Oliver and Romy's tastes in lyrics have changed too. Oliver currently loves The Smiths and The Cure's 'Disintegration', while Romy is fixated with Stevie Nicks and Leonard Cohen. Nevertheless, they still love pop and R&B, as proved by their brilliant recent covers of Kyla's 'Do You Mind', and Florence And The Machine's take on 'You Got The Love'.

But something has definitely shifted. And it's got a lot to do with Baria.

Why did Baria leave? Romy breathes in, breathes out. "You know you have



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ANARCHY IN THE UKE

A new generation of bands are putting aside guitars in favour of the little instrument that can, says **Tessa Harris**

It's been gathering momentum for a while now: in 2006 it got its first poster boy in the form of floppy-haired Zack Condon of Beirut, whose Balkan-inspired, lilting ukulele laments such as 'Postcards From Italy' have since garnered nearly a million hits on YouTube. It even made its debut on the cover of this very magazine back in 2007 in the clutches of Scottish indie tearaways The View at the same time as Patrick Wolf was using it to full effect on his third album, 'The Magic Position'. It was the unusual instrument of choice for emo popsters Panic! At The Disco for a track on their 'Pretty Odd' album, and last year it was championed by west London folkies Laura Marling and Noah And The Whale. Bret McKenzie plays one in *Flight Of The Conchords*. Even bloody *SpongeBob SquarePants* is in on the act.

This year, it's all come to a head – with a slew of new folk-indebted bands. Yes folks, 2009 has been the year of the ukulele. It's definitely the new black and it's (possibly) the new electric guitar.

The popularity of the instrument has rocketed over the last few years, with Hank's Guitar Shop in central London now selling more than 350 every week. Matthew Reynolds, owner of Duke Of Uke, London's only ukulele shop, says this year it's more popular than ever. He puts this down to the internet. "People are completely obsessed with filming themselves and putting it on YouTube. What better instrument is there to sit in front of a computer with and be completely in frame?" It's true, YouTube might just as well be renamed UkeTube, so infested has it become by ukemania.

There's some real talent out there, like Peyrson's YouTube channel, two beautiful French girls who play the most ridiculously lovely covers – check out their version of Tom Waits' 'Green Grass' for a fine example.

Another factor in its popularity is the instrument's affordability. You can pick one up for less than 30 quid and they're easy to play. The King Blues agree: playing Clash-esque rootsy ska-punk, they use a ukulele to put across an anti-capitalist and anti-racist agenda (pub fact: Joe Strummer's name actually alludes to his early days spent busking on his uke in the London Underground). Singer Itch says there's more depth to it than just a funny little instrument you can look cute playing: "I bash things, I won't pick out a nice pretty melody. I think it sounds great as an aggressive punk rock instrument, it's raw and earthy. You don't have to strum a nice 'When I'm Cleaning Windows' on it, you can really thrash it out."

He also feels there's a stigma of middle-class boys playing shiny guitars, which the uke doesn't have. "There's no pretension, you can pick it up and you can know three chords in five minutes flat."

The ukulele feels like a poetic, musically sincere way to make music today, especially now that the traditional

guitar icon has done itself to death. Take *Guitar Hero*; the idea of a guitar 'hero' has been almost reduced to the level of a Wii game. And that's not the only field where the uke flexes its superiority over the guitar.

"The ukulele's got an inherently joyful sound that the guitar doesn't have," explains Mississippi-born Dent May, who conjures swooning romances and Prince covers on his album 'The Good Feeling Music Of Dent May & His Magnificent Ukulele'. "But you can also play sad songs on it – for me it evokes emotions other instruments somehow don't. Young musicians are now aware there are more options than your traditional guitar, bass, drums formula and are looking elsewhere to make music."

In July this year the debut album of ukulele band The Bobby McGees was even described by a heavy metal magazine as being "pure fucking genius". Further proof that people are truly cottoning on to its rock'n'roll credentials. Frontman Jimmy thinks we have a lot to thank pioneer George Formby for. "There are some new ukulele players that are getting described as the Hendrix of the ukulele but, in reality, Hendrix was the George

Formby of the guitar. He was around 30 years before and doing just as amazing stuff."

If you're still not convinced of the ukulele's credentials,

consider this: Morrissey was a huge disciple. His favourite Formby song, 1933's 'Why Don't Women Like Me?', has lyrics including, "I saw a lot of lovely girls, attractive little dears/ Arm in arm with ugly men with cauliflower ears/ If women like them like men like those/ Why don't women like me?" – remarkably similar to 'How Soon Is Now?'s miserablism.

The ukulele's capabilities are endless, and it hasn't even really gone electric yet. Just wait 'til you get some pedals on that bad boy.

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Ever wondered what Eminem sounds like on a uke? Go to NME.COM/blogs



“WE ARE READY FOR **BIGGER** THINGS...”

Thought you knew **The Courteeners**? Think again. On the eve of their Christmas mega gig, **Hamish MacBain** joins the Mancunians in the studio to discover how their bold new record will change the way they're perceived

Sometime in the summer of this year, midway through the recording of the follow-up to The Courteeners' debut album 'St Jude', and Liam Fray is sat in the office of his band's management. He's here to tell his 'people' that he wants to do a Christmas gig. This, everyone present agrees, is a good idea: been away a while, show off some new tunes, test the water, make sure people still care. Various venues with a capacity around the 1,500 mark are mooted: King's College, London, that type of place. The singer, though, has other ideas – namely Manchester's G-Mex (or Manchester Central, as it's now known). The capacity is 10,000. Management look nervous, and ask their charge whether he's being serious. "Fuck it," he tells them. "It goes one of two ways. Either people aren't interested and we sell a thousand tickets – in which case at least we know. Or maybe..."

As it turns out, off the back of just two small adverts (one in the *Manchester Evening News*, one in *NME*) it takes The Courteeners five days to sell out their Christmas show. "I was in America when the call came through," Liam recounts. "And I always think it's a wind-up. You know, like, 'You sold it out!' Fucking brilliant. I watched Morrissey there a few years ago and I remember being at the bar, looking to the back and being like, 'Fucking hell, it's massive in here.' I still pinch myself a little bit. Because I still go and watch bands at little venues in town and think, 'Only a year and a half ago we were doing this.' It feels pretty fast."

Worth noting: of all the bands featured in *NME*'s 'New Noise 2008' issue – despite much more wittering on about and much more radio play for Glasvegas, MGMT, Friendly Fires, Foals and even Joe Lean – The Courteeners are the only ones who have made it, effortlessly, to arena level ('But it's only in Manchester!'). Their critics respond, as if, say, Jamie T filling Wembley Arena would not be a big deal. In the tradition of bands from their hometown, they matter more to The People than they do to the hip, who pegged them early – thanks largely to them having a self-aggrandising singer called Liam – as... well.

"Every single review or interview mentioned Oasis," Fray recounts. "Yeah, I'm a little bit lippy but, you know, I got fucking three As at A-level and no-one mentions that. It was, 'Oh, he's from Manchester.' Right, great. I mean, I fucking love Oasis but... I think it was pretty inaccurate. But it was always gonna happen. I'm not daft, I knew straight away, and we just got on with it. And the kind of support we had – you know, the size of the gigs and stuff – that was really warming for us. We knew we were doing it right, 'cos it was like, 'Look, we haven't been blasted over the radio, the press don't necessarily fucking love us, but people know that we're a real band.' We're not like... you know..."

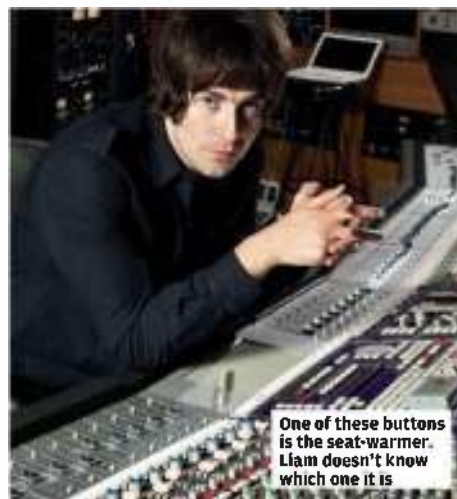
Liam Fray stops short of inserting the name of another band. He doesn't need to any more. The public have voted with their feet.

At present, Liam Fray is in Electric Lady studios in New York City, mixing the second Courteeners album. He is immensely pleased with it. Gone are the ramshackle, live-in-the-rehearsal-room dynamics of 'St Jude', in their place a multi-layered, delicate-yet-expansive sound reminiscent of Elbow at their most romantic. It is a giant leap forward. It is also the sound of a band not viewing the Manchester Central show as a last foray into arenas and unashamedly shooting for The Big League. The song they're this week making available to download free from their website is called 'Cross My Heart And Hope To Fly', and is based around a heartbeat kick drum custom-built for lots of people to clap along with, tumbling pianos and echoing guitar riffs. Its opening line runs "How can I create a work of art/ Over a dishwasher that will not start". Its writer, this makes clear, is intent on elevating himself out of normality. Liam wants to, as he puts it, "fuck right off into the middle of the sky/Where no-one can find me and no-one can see/That would be my ecstasy". Initially appearing to reinforce this point, another song is

someone. Or not up to their standards because they might know people you don't or whatever. I just thought that was kind of... good."

To be fair to Liam, although he admits his new love has given him "a renewed sense of vigour" in spite of 'Take Over The World' she isn't central to the album. Other songs are awash with streets-of-Manchester-on-a-Saturday-night imagery, notably 'You Overdid It, Doll', whose lead character has "dark rings around the eyes" and "a random on your throat". With its 'Barbarism Begins At Home'-style funk, though, it's tinged with sadness (the "You'll carry on until you're dead and you drop" pay-off particularly tender) rather than sneering. It's the same sentiment as 'Not Nineteen Forever' but – like much of this record – is the work of grown ups, not teenagers.

The other factor central to the album, it transpires, is the producer. And not in a wholly positive way. The legendary Michael Brauer, who has worked with everyone from Dylan and The Rolling Stones to Wilco and Coldplay, and about whom Liam gushes ("He is fucking



One of these buttons is the seat-warmer. Liam doesn't know which one it is

"EVERY INTERVIEW MENTIONED OASIS. YEAH, I'M A BIT LIPPY, BUT I GOT THREE As AT A-LEVEL"

LIAM FRAY

called 'Take Over The World', though on closer inspection this one is about Liam's girlfriend. He met her in New York. She's a documentary maker. He refuses to reveal her identity, although a key line – "There's a glossy magazine on the table/And you've held court with all the culprits in there" – suggests she is, shall we say, connected. We ask again who she is, pointing out that writing a line such as this means you're going to be asked about it. Liam Fray seems, genuinely, not to have considered this. "That line just kind of passed me by," he says. "Now that you've said it, it's like... really weird. I've been listening to these songs for so long without any external kind of say. I love hearing what people think of the songs and stuff, and it's great you picked up that line and I was like, 'Oh fucking hell, yeah!'"

We ask again. He won't budge. "I just kinda thought about that predicament – say you walked into a room full of fucking film stars. I'd be like, 'Fucking hell, man, I'm in this little band and I feel like... a bit.' But it wasn't necessarily. You know, she doesn't know anyone fucking mega famous or owt like that. It's more like a metaphor for feeling you're not good enough for

NAILING it") is mixing the album. Recording, though, took place in Belgium, with Ed Buller (Suede, Pulp, most recently White Lies) at the controls. He became involved after Liam heard some work he'd done on new band The Cheek's demos. "After half a minute I was like, 'Who the fuck's done this? Ed Buller? Let's do it with him.'" Initially, it seems, the vibes were great. "The studio is in a little part of Brussels called Ixelles," Liam begins, "and it was great to be out the way, out of the town, out of London, out of Manchester, 'cos there are too many distractions. But..."

Liam hesitates, chooses his words. "...he's based in the studio, and is used to kind of getting up and having his breakfast and having a routine. Now, I am a workaholic, and I'll do 14-hour days for eight weeks if I have to. And I sometimes felt that... wasn't reciprocated. You know, I feel like the producer should be banging on your door getting you out of fucking bed..."

And it was the other way around? "Well, I wouldn't go that far, but I was fucking wound up sometimes. I'd be going to bed like, 'Fuck me, am I the only one that wants to make this

happen?' You know, 'I'm fucking trying me balls off here and I'm not going to bed until something's done.' And that wasn't reciprocated, and I don't mind saying that 'cos that's the fucking way it was. I'm not shitting on anyone's doorstep. Sometimes I'd be there with the engineer until two in the morning, and he wasn't. The last night I was there 'til four in the morning with the drummer doing cymbal crashes and we had to be out by 10am. We had a fight."

Was there a point at which you thought you might have to call it quits?

"It didn't run smoothly. But then that can be good. I'd rather have a discussion with somebody and get out exactly what you want to say. There was times he'd be like, 'Fuck off and I'd be like, 'Right, fuck you, see you in a bit,' and walk off. I said this when we worked with Stephen Street: being a good producer is 90 per cent people skills..."

And Ed's weren't up to scratch?

"Well, he'd probably say mine weren't (laughs)! I think it was just a personality clash, that was all it was. You know, I'll probably look back in 10 years and laugh about it and say, 'Yeah, you know. We got on.' It wasn't smooth, that's for sure. But the bottom line is what we've got out of it in the end is great."

Now, though, that is all in the past. Now Liam Fray is focused on the homecoming show, and the next 12 months. He is aware of the position his band are in. With not too much focus on them, the stage is set for The Courteeners to surprise people. "It's like, we did just enough to keep our head above water last time," he says. "And the timing feels right for this one. Like, people will be like, 'fucking hell!'"

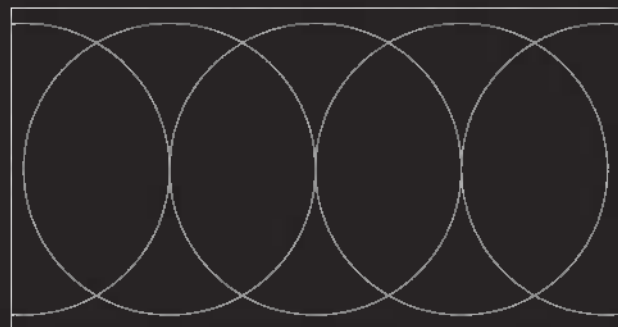
You get the impression he could enthuse forever about his band's new record. But there is one final statement from this confident young man.

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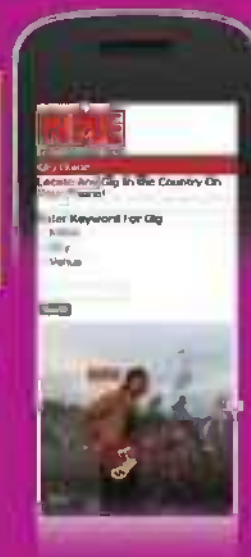


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WHAT ROCK'N'ROLL HAS TAUGHT US...

by **KASABIAN**

Tom and Serge on
drummers, heroes
and why they'll
dress as clowns for
the cover of *NME*

IF YOU'RE IN A BAND WITH YOUR BEST MATE, KEEP YOUR DISTANCE. Tom: "When we go home we keep a distance because I tend to drive Serge mad; my need for attention, it gets on his nerves. When I'm at home I see him every now and then, but he does his thing, I do mine, it's best like that." Serge: "On tour it's a pretty intense environment, I don't think you can survive if you're not real close. If you've been mates before you start a band, I think that helps. There's something about knowing someone when they weren't a fucking rock star that helps everyone out."

STAY IN CONTROL. Tom: "Try and control yourself. In everything, in every way you can easily jump over the edge, can't you? I've lost control a few times, especially in the old days. Just my weight, my lollipop head. I weighed about nine stone back in the old days. It was a good time. I suppose the only way you can cut it off is by getting DVD boxsets and books. I'm a big believer in books. Honest to God, that's the only way you can tempt the devil. DVD boxsets and eating early. *King Of The Hill*, *Entourage*, *Emmanuelle* - all seven films, it's delicious mate, just boxsets."

WEAR COSTUMES TO FEND OFF THE RAVAGES OF FASHION. Serge: "With a photo on the front cover of an album, if you're dressed in the clothes you were in that day they might be really cool for six months, but as the years pass you look very much of that time. Now, if you dressed up as Napoleon or a pagan God it's timeless; in 30 years' time you won't look back going, 'Gah'. You might look back going, 'How the fuck did they persuade me to wear that fucking costume?' but at least you're not gonna go, 'That jacket was from fucking 2008 that's the worst bobbie jacket.' So that's where that came from. It's also because we're still Leicester piss-takers at heart." Tom: "We should do a clown one!" Serge: "I loved the *NME* cover we did [*NME*, 30 May, shoot pictured above] because it straight away looks really different and you wanna read what the hell's going on."



TRUST NO-ONE. Tom: "Don't trust yourself. Everyone's full of shit. Even I'm full of shit. I think everyone's full of shit, really. When it comes down to the nitty gritty everyone likes it, don't they?"

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE MUSIC. Serge: "Be ambitious and don't worry about whether this is the last one. It's far better to fall on your own sword than be killed by anyone else. That's the best way to see it. I'm playing a fucking bit of wood with my friends, so don't worry, make something where you'd be happy to fall on the sword if it didn't work. Then you can go home and go, 'Yeah, but I made it, I did what I wanted to do, if they didn't like it they didn't like it.' It gets serious on the third record. People start going, 'Imagine if you did this...'" Tom: "We don't see it as serious, but it's become serious." Serge: "That's half the reason that we made the record like we did."

IT'S GREAT TO PLAY TO PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE YOU. Tom: "I've had a couple of bad gigs where I didn't get to bed at the right time or anything, it affects the next day. I'm talking about two or three times I've ever done this, when it comes to playing live

"IF YOU DRESS UP LIKE A PAGAN GOD YOU'RE NOT GONNA LOOK BACK GOING, 'GAH'"

I'm a complete professional. We'll have a few drinks and that before we go onstage, but it doesn't mix with when we play live. When we were 22, 23 we were bruisers and we could take that. We'd play for 20 minutes and scream on the mic, we were a proper punk band." Serge: "When the crowd's with you you get this euphoric feeling, it's massive. But when they're against you there's..." Tom: "...something good about it, it spurs you on." Serge: "We've had gigs where the crowd don't like you and there's something really fucking great about that. There's something that's equally as fantastic as when they do. We've had some mad shows in America where we've played festivals and it's been a real battle, but there's something liberating about people fucking hating you."

DO MEET YOUR HEROES, THEY LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS. Tom: "They've been everything I'd expect." Serge: "Of all the heroes we've met there's not been one disappointment

In a way you kind of always knew deep down, just by reading about them. Obviously Noel and Liam have been incredible, beautiful. Keith Richards said the greatest thing: 'It's nice to meet fellow working musicians.' That brought it down to the fucking core of what we do. It was basically saying, 'Remember kid, if you're playing guitar and getting paid for it, you're doing good.' Tom: "He was basically saying 'I dig it, well done.'"

TREAT THE FANS WELL. Serge: "They know more about the band than you do, or they think they do." Tom: "They really get a kick out of life when they meet you. They tell you how much they love you and what amazing music you make, and they've been to so many shows. It's a nice feeling."

LIVING IN LEICESTER IS LIKE A FORCE-FIELD TO PAPARAZZI. Serge: "Living in Leicester helps a great deal in not having any of that to worry about. I went out in London the other night and I went into a bar and I was with some people and they walked out and there was a fucking crowd of paparazzi. I walked out behind and not one snapped me. I was like, 'Still got it!' That's not in my life yet." Tom: "Have I been mobbed in supermarkets? It does happen. I'm in Leicester quite a bit and I go around town and people don't believe it's you. I keep saying I'm my brother John. It's not mobbing, but our lives have changed."

ALWAYS APPROACH WILD AND ANGRY DRUMMERS WITH GREAT CARE. Serge: "Definitely make sure you have a net and a tranquilizer. They're their own species." Tom: "With a fucking Taser gun. They're weird. They belong in cages." Serge: "There's something wired up completely different to keep rhythm, to have octopus limbs and do eight things at once."

DID YOU KNOW? ■ Tom used to be a regular on the notorious *Libertines.org* forum, posting details of early gigs and releases.

■ Serge decided on a career in music after his careers adviser told him he'd never be able to play for Leicester City.

■ Tom was apparently offered a role in Sofia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* but turned it down to focus on the band.



ALBUMS

ALL THE RELEASES THAT MATTER *Edited by Emily Mackay*

Blogger's delight

ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
FALL BE KIND
(DOMINO)

8

The most debated band on the web are back, with an EP that defies easy digestion

Imagine for a moment that the internet is something you can hold in your hands. You pick it up and, ignoring mother's pleas to leave the mucky thing alone, you set about building a scrapbook for every band ever blogged about, by anyone, anywhere. When you're done, a billion volumes of yack-stack tower and teeter above you like an ironic and never-ending forest of corpse trees, but it's Animal Collective whose music has inspired the most virtual 'column inch'; their book of clippings is so thick Yuri Gagarin can see it, and he's not just flung out in space any more, he's *nowhere*.

And that's strange, isn't it? Not that

they attract praise, or that Gagarin's dead (it's a dangerous profession), but that so much blather surrounds the quarter when the noises they make – slippery, absurd, familiar yet future-new – are so hard to talk about. Taking this record apart is like diving into the sea and trying to glue water together. Better to let it wash over you, because the sound of 'Fall Be Kind' is one of a band fast running out of context.

Baltimore-born, Brooklyn-based, Animal Collective already seem to exist on no-one else's terms but their own. This EP looms into life with 'Gaze', a track that begins by stealing Walt Disney's strings and disappears while

playing electric panpipes on a medieval waltzer. Where did it go? Where did the electricity come from? Is Walt Disney still frozen in the past? *Gluing Water*.

That absurd, time-defying hoedown somehow bleeds seamlessly into 'What Would I Want? Sky', which has been in Animal Collective's live set for over a year, and as such is already more famous on the internet than Tyson the skateboarding bulldog. Sun-baked and blissed out, it's just as warming and impressive as watching Tyson roll around California's oceanfront and mocks the band's assertion that what's here was "too dark" for their last album. It contains the first legal Grateful Dead sample, sounds a bit like Lemon Jelly's 'The Staunton Lick' and still manages – through its hook's hypnotic repetition – to be the best thing you'll hear all day.

The surprises continue to gather. 'On A Highway' and 'I Think I Can' are the most 'standard' Animal Collective fare here, the former guided through a lonely night drive by Avey Tare, his eyes picking out pissing workmen, pretty lady passengers and dreaming bandmate Noah Lennox. The latter, the EP's final track, is Noah's, and as such loops and lopes along, his throat trailing cascades across strange, quacking synths and war-march drums as he harmonises with sampled versions of himself. It's good – everything on 'Fall Be Kind' is good – but it's not something we haven't heard done better before, either in Animal Collective's past or in 2007, on Lennox's full-length 'Person Pitch'.

That's not to say their past is becoming a curse. This EP's centrepiece, a stunning hymnal called 'Bleed', ranks alongside anything Lennox, Tare (real name David Portner), Brian 'Geologist' Weitz and Josh 'Deakin' Dibb have ever put their names to. Slow-motion and sparse, it'll widen your eyes and put an ache in your gut, consisting of little more than Tare's cooing, Lennox's wailing and the sombre drone of a lone cello. Stripped of all the sonic flotsam that usually surrounds them, Animal Collective come into their own – if you can ignore the chatter to listen with innocent ears, they surpass 'good' and remain bewildering. *Kev Kharas*

DOWNLOAD: 1) 'Gaze' 2) 'What Would I Want? Sky' 3) 'Bleed'

DID YOU KNOW...

The title of the EP comes from the fact that the band initially wanted it to come out in the autumn, whereas they felt 'Merriweather Post Pavilion' had a more summery sound

FATHER MURPHY
AND HE TOLD US TO TURN TO THE SUN
(A&G)

7



I'll put an extra shilling in the collection plate if Reverend Freddie Murphy has been ordained. That's not to say this Italian trio's

second album doesn't echo with religious overtones. There's chanting and banging and bells a-plenty, a peculiar hymnal to the dark arts of noise. 'Go Sinister' is aptly titled, sounding like convent girls in full chant and without any habits save for wafting opium-stuffed censers about their denuded persons. Throughout, the percussion, strangled sounds, epic songtitles and conceptual doom is as if the world's faiths are administering the last rites over the rattlin' bones of Liars. If the papists hear this, there'll be excommunication for Reverend Fred. Amen to that. *Luke Turner*
DOWNLOAD: 'Mr Operator'

THE DUTCHESS AND THE DUKE
SUNSET/SUNRISE (HARDY ART)

8



Their second album finds Seattle duo The Dutchess And The Duke in transition. Frontman Jesse Lortz is

struggling to reconcile his talent for anguished self-analysis with the optimism of first-time fatherhood, relating his hopes and fears to us over the course of 10 minor-key ditties. By track three, 'Let It Die', Lortz is already thinking about abandoning his wife and child, before reminding himself on the autumnal ramble of 'New Shadow' that, "You've made someone you love, now keep them warm". At its core lies basic, inescapable humanity: we're all fucked up, we're all wracked with doubt. But by the time closing track 'The River' waltzes out of earshot, it's wonder, not woe, you'll be experiencing. *Barry Nicolson*
DOWNLOAD: 'New Shadow'

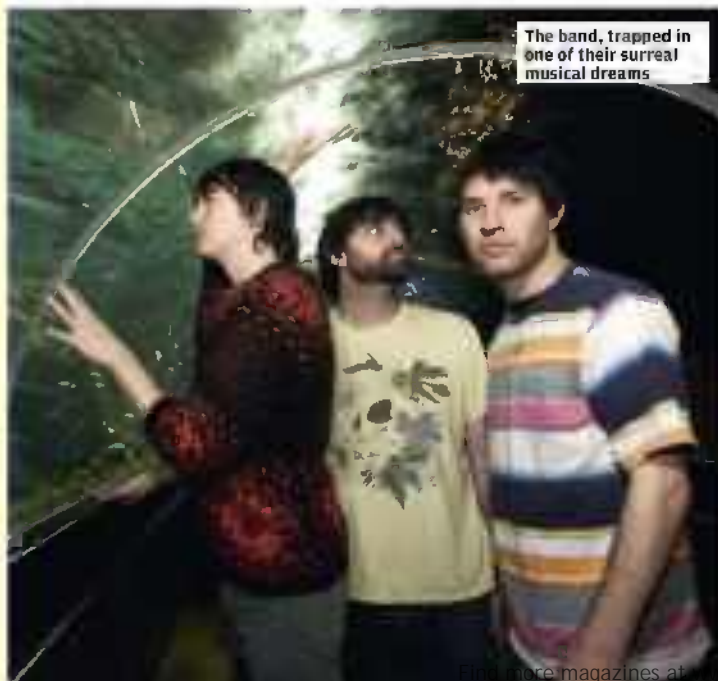
SOPHIA
THERE ARE NO GOODBYES
(THE FLOWER SHOP)

8



Your rational mind knows the heart is deceitful, so it's with wariness you approach the fifth studio album from Sophia, the

brainchild of Robin Proper-Sheppard. After all, the God Machine veteran has long since exchanged dense noise for introspective analysis of relationships. Still, 'There Are No Goodbyes' and the accompanying live recording 'The Valentine's Day Session' are just as raw and intense as Proper-Sheppard's previous offerings. And while the musical archives brim with documents detailing 'the one that got away', it'd be one cold fish who wasn't moved by Proper-Sheppard's searingly insightful lyrics and quivering vocals. When a broken heart sounds like this, it's easy to lose your head. *Ash Dosanjh*
DOWNLOAD: 'Obvious'



The band, trapped in one of their surreal musical dreams

WETDOG
FRAUHAUS! (ANGULAR)

6



God bless Angular Records – the south London label that gave us The Long Blondes and These New Puritans are

still putting out wiry post-punk records with an almost perverse emphasis on authenticity. It's difficult to imagine a better home for Wetdog. Their 2008 debut boasted 21 songs, suggesting that for this east London all-female trio even quality control represents some kind of lapse in artistic integrity. Thankfully 'Frauhaus!' is more concise, the band bolstering their scratchy racket with rich harmonies and ideas that see them crawl out of the cul-de-sac of Slits comparisons. Take 'Lower Leg' for example; it sounds like early Fall with a souped-up, cowbell-embellished bassline worth of cult New York punk-funk females Bush Tetras, while drummer Sarah Datbygu chops between time signatures.

Elsewhere, the viscous, globular bass and fuzzy keys on 'Fist Face' are the right shade of black to accompany Rivka Gillieron's disturbing assertion that she's "stroking your hair while I smother your face", while the band swap garage rock for GarageBand on 'Snapper', a lo-fi shanty that marries dissonant chords with an oompah sensibility. But for all the idiosyncrasies swilling about, the band are still hampered by the limitations of their form. At less than two minutes, many of the songs remain as sketches neither punchy enough to work as snotty punk songs nor ever developed into anything more. A case in point is 'New Year', where lush harmonies and atmospheric Hammond organ chords should have *Ipso Facto* soiling their little black dresses, but it fades out after 70 seconds. Wetdog, stop restricting yourselves: it's 2009 for heaven's sake. **Louise Brailey**
DOWNLOAD: 'Lower Leg'

MARTIN REV
STIGMATA (BLAST FIRST PETITE)

7

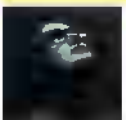


Martin Rev is old. He is probably older than all three of the non-Marr Cribbs added together.

This doesn't alter the fact that, as one half of sleazy electro-rock pioneers Suicide, he has the kind of NYC cool that Julian Casablancas can only aspire to. As an old dude his tastes have turned to religious-themed, synthesizer-generated, neo-classical instrumentals that nod to the repetitive modern compositions of Michael Nyman and the lightly brushed film music of Bernard Herrmann. But there is a sublime air of unease to this that stops it from ever being kitsch or easy listening. Echo is manipulated as if by the spirit hand of cult disco cellist Arthur Russell and Rev himself occasionally sings like a melancholy whale lost in Japanese or Norwegian waters. **John Doran**
DOWNLOAD: 'Sinbad's Voyage'

ETIENNE JAUMET
NIGHT MUSIC (VERSATILE)

8



It's a pretty bizarre and confusing path that leads a young Frenchman from tooting a saxophone in a '90s indie band to

heading an epic psychedelic synth voyage with Detroit techno legend Carl Craig. Impressively, though, Etienne Jaumet has walked it without accident. Even more impressively, he's still got his saxophone. Jaumet we know as one half of Zombie Zombie, kosmische-minded Parisians who force-fed horror-flick greats Goblin with fromage on 2008's 'A Land For Renegades'. 'Night Music' cuts the cheese: opener 'For Falling Asleep' is synth and sax sighs powered by a pulsating techno heart, while 'Through The Strata' tosses a hurdy-gurdy in the mix. The future never sounded quite like this. **Louis Pattison**
DOWNLOAD: 'For Falling Asleep'

THEE VICARS
PSYCHOTIC BEAT!
(DIRTY WATER)

8

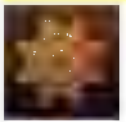


NME last clapped eyes on Thee Vicars when they supported The Horrors in March. That night, swarthy mop-tops and

a decent taste in winklepickers gave way to annoyingly tuneless guitars and a piss-poor cover of 'All Day And All Of The Night'. On record, however, the Bury St Edmunds quartet (average age: 18) are something approaching a revelation. They know their Meek from the majority, and wear their influences well – from The Easybeats ('Feel So Good') to 'Mr Operator' (AKA The Standells with Jared Swilley). Even with the nagging suspicion that at least one of them probably owns an iPhone, there's more than enough here to justify adding to the collection box. **Matt Wilkinson**
DOWNLOAD: 'Mr Operator'

JOSEPHINE FOSTER
GRAPHIC AS A STAR (FIRE)

7



Foster has created an enthralling patchwork of recordings from a conceptual album comprised of her original

renditions of 19th century German art songs to an album of children's songs. Here, skeletal arrangements of voice and guitar are laced with the words of American poet Emily Dickinson. Poems such as *Who Is The East and I See Thee Better In The Dark* are bent into spare, willowy folk songs. Foster's voice – part Karen Dalton, part Joan Baez – flickers like a flame, from gentle and sedate to strong and operatic, around tales of purple sunsets, Massachusetts mountains and William Tell. Dickinson's lyrical style tangles beautifully with Foster's compositions and majestic voice into a timeless, supernatural dance. **Tessa Harris**
DOWNLOAD: 'In Falling Timbers Buried'



Vital signs

THE BRAVERY
STIR THE BLOOD
(ISLAND)

6

They haven't exactly moved on, but The Bravery remain pleasingly weird

The Bravery's second album famously failed to come out over here, despite the band having at one time been neck-and-neck with The Killers in the new new romantic stakes. While they've slipped out of view for us, (and, indeed, you'll only be able to buy this album on import for now) apparently they've been doing pretty well in the States, and after singer Sam Endicott recently came out as the writer of Shakira's striptease backing track 'She Wolf' we were quite looking forward to hearing where The Bravery have gone since we last heard from them.

Well, turns out they've just stayed as still as Endicott's jet-black quiff. Their sound remains Visage meets Sisters Of Mercy meets Haircut 100. Which actually is no bad thing, as their big hit 'An Honest Mistake' proved, it's just that when 'Song For Jacob' or 'Adored' occupy such a similar template, it's almost self-parodic. Except their Future Sailors shtick isn't tongue-in-cheek.

This is part of their problem; being so po-faced on songs such as 'I Have Seen The Future' makes it almost impossible not to ridicule them (as with Marilyn Manson's 'Mechanical Animals', the future is apparently filled with rubbish synth-metal). Another one of their problems is Endicott's voice, which sounds like a friendless Gary Numan being pushed on a swing by a stranger; it grates, and when it reaches new levels of shrillness on 'Red Hands And White Knuckles', it tortures.

And yet if you can overlook such stylistic clunkings and immerse yourself in the 'Blue Steel' of Bravery-world, there's much fun to be had. 'Slow Poison' and 'Jack-O-Lantern Man' are Spandau Ballet in their choruses, and

New Order in their basslines, and slowies 'Sugar Pill' and 'She's So Bendable' add touches of Soft Cell to the obvious Jesus And Mary Chain aping that we now associate with The Horrors.

Also, Sam Endicott is quite pathological in his imagery, and on this album casts himself as a masochist who wants to be punished for being a bad little boy. The nicely unpleasant 'Hatefuck' has him squealing, "If I put my fingers in your mouth would you bite them", while on 'I Am Your Skin' he sings "I want to be your skin/I want to feel everything you feel/I want to be your covering". Sam Endicott is almost certainly a serial killer and we wouldn't want to be his next-door neighbour, but this does mean The Bravery are still one of the weirdest bands around. They're out of step, out of time, out of place, and have completely gone off on one in their own strange little world; as such, there's much to admire about The Bravery. Just never go down to Endicott's basement. **Martin Robinson**

DOWNLOAD: 1) 'Slow Poison'
2) 'Jack-O-Lantern Man'
3) 'Sugar Pill'

DID YOU KNOW...

The band recorded the album in a deserted church in upstate New York, which had formerly housed the Pkides and The B-52's

NME.COM

Head to NME.COM/artists/the-bravery for the latest from the band



Dogg days are over?



SNOOP DOGG
MALICE N WONDERLAND
(PRIORITY)

6

Blunted by domestic bliss, the OG is now usurped by the young pretenders

Aha, Calvin Broadus: last seen in slippers on a football pitch in his reality TV show *Father Hood*, being trained in one-touch by Beckham.

It is a powerful image, one of many in Snoop's hard-hustling 38 years. From the early-'90s foul-mouthed menace to society the *Daily Star* campaigned to keep off British soil, to the foul-haired West Coast gangsta rap godfather, to the wackjob space-alien/media mogul and movie-cameo franchise, he's one of hip-hop's most entertaining chameleons.

Surely, though, once you've raffled off your surreal, aging domestic life for TV, you can't return to trailblazing G-funk. On studio album 10, Snoop's taking the cartoon parody he sold to the E! network and attempting to convince us it can still be all the things we want from gangsta rap: hard, cool, catchy, sensationalist.

Unsurprisingly, it's a stalling start. An introduction by his littlest lil 'un inviting you to "listen to my daddy's new album" sets the danger levels to 'staggeringly mild'. That's not to say Snoop shouldn't step outside the gangsta stereotype; it's not all a thug-off contest. It's just once you've painstakingly detailed pre-meditated homicide on-track, it's hard to turn PG without seeming watered-down. And so 'I Wanna Rock' and '2 Minute Warning' safely bob along, with job-doing Westside production serving a flow that's never sounded wearier.

The other side of Snoop's usual bread'n'butter, the ridiculous filth-fest, is

now replaced by an all-new addition to the G-funk canon: the tribute to greying marital bliss. On 'Different Languages' it's like you've accidentally walked in on your ma'n'da. Pillow talk is interjected with suggestions that "maybe we can make another baby or two".

Nonetheless, something Snoop is still better at than many of his fellow OGs is keeping a toe in the genre's breaking trends. It is thanks to guests like Atlanta bucks Soulja Boy and The-Dream that 'Malice...' retains some freshness. The former's 'Pronto' has crushing slabs of druggy-trance synths, with SB's ringtone drawl grinding out groovy, lolling refrains. The latter's 'Gangsta Luv' serves as a slick update to the mainman's R&G (rhythm'n'gangsta) legacy, especially in light of a prevalent absence of any trademark Dre beats. The fact that it's unmistakably the young guests who shine here confirms the feeling that while we'll always have a soft spot for Snoop, these days he's far better suited taking on Becks in his jam-jams than he is sipping on gun and juice. *Jaimie Hodgson*

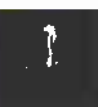
DOWNLOAD: 1) 'Gangsta Luv'
2) 'Pronto' 3) 'Pimpin Ain't EZ'

DID YOU KNOW...

'Pimpin Ain't EZ' also features an appearance from R&B legend and 'Trapped In The Closet' star R Kelly

A GRAVE WITH NO NAME
MOUNTAIN DEBRIS (NO 1 IN POP)

8



Not nearly as bleak as their *nom de plume* would suggest, *A Grave With No Name* have conceived a debut album littered

with tiny sparkling flecks of cheer. 'Mountain Debris' shoots its peculiar payload from the same beat-up musket as US cult favourites The Microphones and Thae Oh Sees, opting to shunning prolonged experimental wig-outs for psych-pop inclinations. It's a uniquely 21st century take on lo-fi that compels spectral washes of sound to tussle with fuzzy guitar breaks in a considered game of cat and mouse. While desolate in its cavernous melancholy, flourishes of hopefulness are scattered throughout Alex Shields' lyrics and melodies which suggest a closet optimist might just be lurking beneath the cool. *Tom Edwards*
DOWNLOAD: 'Sofia'

TODD
BIG RIPPER (POST SEASON)

7



These London boys really don't fuck about. They appreciate the exhilaration of raw noise in the same way a child screaming and

thrashing its way round a playground does, only with adult-sized lungs and limbs. The rolling, riotous 'Black Gold' and the churning 'Country And Western Super Posters!' adhere to the "YAAARGH WHACKA WHACKA WHACKA RRAAAGH" Lightning Bolt/Locust noise-rock template, but with a grindcore nastiness and disturbing bottom-of-the-mix wails and growls, Butthole Surfers-fashion. Although their second album holds little in the way of surprises, it's undeniably brilliant fun in the way mindless unprovoked irritation of others is. So, nyah nyah, basically. *Emily Mackay*
DOWNLOAD: 'Country And Western Super Posters!'

TRASH TALK
SHAME (KNUCLEAR)

8



If you're after a loud dose of cock rock, best have your next birthday party at KFC 'cos Trash Talk only deal in the bare essentials

of punk. And if this double-disc release wasn't enough of an introduction to their earlier work then the insane nine-second 'The Mistake' will certainly blast them into your memory forever. Old-fashioned aspects of hardcore are thriving in this young band who certainly deliver live what they promise on record. If you have any affection for the grassroots of the movement, TT will be your saving grace in 2010. 'Shame' isn't simply a case of Californian swagger; it's the aggressive dimension to hardcore that most modern punk has forgotten. We're scared to death and beyond excited, so if Sacramento is dead, long live Sacramento. *Kelly Murray*
DOWNLOAD: 'Walking Disease'

TWIGGY FROSTBITE
THROUGH FIRE (DESPITE)

5

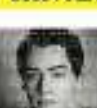


You're thinking a Swedish all-girl trio called Twiggy Frostbite are going to be electronica-tinged melancholic twee, right?

Well, we're not going to lie. Mixing Elin Lindfors' piping voice, twinkling keys and clattering, pattering drums, the stew is not unlike Bat For Lashes with a reduced Chronic Björk Fixation. There are some fantastic heights - like the unexpected eruption of shoegaze guitar in 'Eye For An Eye', and 'Grime Star', which matches The Delgados' beautiful sadness. But much of the album melts into aural slush as yet another slow starker ballad, such as 'Chimera', drifts by. In the right downbeat, nocturnal mood, 'Through Fire' is a pleasure but in the cold light of day there are only flashes of brilliance. *Tom Plinck*
DOWNLOAD: 'Eye For An Eye'

RENEWAL
BOBBY DEE BOBBY DEE (DOWNTOWN)

8



This Washington DC singer-songwriter meshes the sounds of Pavement, doo-wop and T.Rex, then overlays twisted playful

lyrics like a giddy Tom Waits. The glam-blues 'Pisstopher Christopher' crystallises things nicely, a song as raucous in its power chords as it is silly in its name-calling. 'Big Business' is a jaunty re-working of T.Rex's 'Telegram Sam' aimed at corporate executives; 'Blown Out (Gold Doubloons And Pcs Of 8)' is Jack White recast as a horny pirate and 'Fear' is like Bobby Darin crooning away and hoping no-one's noticed he's pissed his pants. Ferree really is great company, and this jumble of genres packs in more fun than any other album in sight. *Martin Robinson*
DOWNLOAD: 'Pisstopher Christopher'

WARPAINT
EXQUISITE CORPSE (MAMMAL WORLD)

7



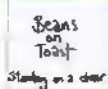
Having spawned Cocteau Twins and Swervedriver, the UK is the heartland of ethereal/shoegaze/dream pop. But the past few

years have seen the US play catch-up, with LA's Warpaint being the latest outfit imitating the sounds of passive Brits in big jumpers. What sets this quartet apart from the Vivian Girl-types of their own generation is their ability to fuse psych-pop melodies with vocal dexterity. 'Krimson' sees Björk's tribal wall paired with the jaunty defiance of The Runaways; while 'Billie', an ode to Ms Holiday which samples Mary Wells' Motown classic 'My Guy', wouldn't sound out of place on one of Cat Power's covers albums. Warpaint may be no substitute for the originals, but there's a serene quality to this EP that draws you in. Watch these spacers. *Ash Dosanjh*
DOWNLOAD: 'Billie'

BEANS ON TOAST

STANDING ON A CHAIR (XTRA MILE)

5



We like to think that the original plan behind this 50-track album was to have 57 songs – like Heinz, see? But, if that was

meant to happen, we can't blame this Essex acoustic-basher from running out of steam a mere seven songs from the finishing line. It's not that his whimsical ditties, like Kid Carpet meets Billy Bragg via comedy song titles like 'I Shot Tupac Shakur And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt', are bad, it's just that they soon outstay a fairly short welcome. A welcome dramatically curtailed, it must be said, by worthy lines like, "We keep on blaming Esso, we keep on blaming Shell/We keep on blaming leaders, but we never blame ourselves". Still, his heart's in the right place – just look at all those pulses. Sorry. *Duncan Gillespie*

DOWNLOAD: 'I Fancy Laura Marling'

LAURA GIBSON

BEASTS OF SEASONS
(SOUTERRAIN TRANSMISSIONS)

7

If seasons were houses and people were deciduous, then autumn would be a hospice. And Laura Gibson would be supplying the rustic soundtrack to its inhabitants' last days ahead of a bleak winter. The Portland-based singer-songwriter's second full-length studio album 'Beasts Of Seasons' seems, with an assured simplicity, to languidly transcend the fragile line between life and death. From the plaintive strum of 'Shadows On Parade' to the brooding thrum of strings that evocatively gather on 'Where Have All Your Good Words Gone', Laura's serene folk-guitar clarity is only bettered by her euphonious lilt that cascades with a celestial quality throughout. *Thomas A Ward*

DOWNLOAD: 'Shadows On Parade'



Frat chance



3OH!3

WANT
(PHOTO FINISH/ASYLUM)

0

Looking for the definition of 'rock bottom'? We've found it...

Sean Foreman and Nathaniel Motte – aka 3OH!3 – are two boys from Colorado who dared to dream. This second album answers questions no sane person ever thought to ask. What if you could splice MGMT, Limp Bizkit and porno-rappers 2 Live Crew? What if the world's greatest injustices were perpetrated against idiotic frat boys by evil, predatory women?

As if the bandname weren't a giveaway, confirmation of 3OH!3's intellectual shortcomings arrives quickly. During 'Punkbitch', they need a rhyme for 'corner' and come up with, "You were freezing, I was warmer". Couldn't someone have shouted stop? Presently, we're confronted with 'Don't

Trust Me', the sex-pest anthem which broke 3OH!3 in America, with its chorus of "don't trust a ho". You might bother to argue that the song's misogynistic, if it weren't such a compelling argument to put women in charge of everything immediately. It's certainly hateful, however. After the second chorus, it offers this attempt at a witticism: "Do the Helen Keller and talk with your hips".

To her shame, Katy Perry pops up later to guest on 'Starstruck', a song based around an alarming lyric: "I think I should know how to make love to something innocent without leaving my fingerprints...". Elsewhere, we must contend with the macho posturing of 'Chokechain' ("Fuckin' with me and you get bitten, most likely") and the

silver-tongued charm of 'Richman' ("Talkin' to a rich skank filled up like a sperm bank").

There's no level on which to enjoy this loathsome record. Its music is a uniform blare of tinny, gauche electro mixed with weak hip-hop. The vocal style evokes the nightmare of nu metal. There's not even any unintended comedy value, except when 'I'm Not Your Boyfriend Baby' angrily proclaims, "I ain't your cute little sex toy..."

Dream on, boys. *Niall O'Keefe*

DID YOU KNOW...
There's seriously nothing you need to know here

UNSPUN HEROES

DIGGING UP BURIED TREASURE FROM THE DEPTHS OF OUR COLLECTIONS

THIS WEEK...

Mark Beumont creates some buzz (sorry) around the schmildest of indie side-projects

THE 6THS

WASPS' NESTS (LONDON, 1995)



Before anyone outside of the gay piano bars of Manhattan's Lower East Side had heard of his main band The Magnetic Fields – and long before anyone thought of dubbing him 'the 21st century Cole Porter' – Stephen Merritt was already concocting tribute albums to himself.

The cream of the US lo-fiscenti circa 1995 had heard whisper of this cranky East Village artisan making records that resembled Abba's 'Arrival', Erasure's 'The Circus' and The Pastels' 'Sittin' Pretty' being crushed together by heavy machinery and flocked (or, more likely, shambled) to perform guest vocals on his first side-project – 15 Merritt songs each sung by a different cult rock luminary. Mitch Easter, Lou Barlow, Dean Wareham from Galaxie

500, Yo La Tengo's Georgia Hubley, Stuart Moxham from Young Marble Giants and other such revered US indie pioneers gathered to form The 6ths, all presumably standing around wondering who forgot to invite Bob Mould.

The most huggable and plain brilliant project of the age

With Merritt's trademark baritone (his vocals are seemingly mined rather than sung) gracing only the wonderfully wonky 'Aging Spinsters', 'Wasps' Nests' rooted his immaculate songwriting in the quirk-pop underground by layering it with every imaginable fuzzy/gossamer texture from the indie vocals sample

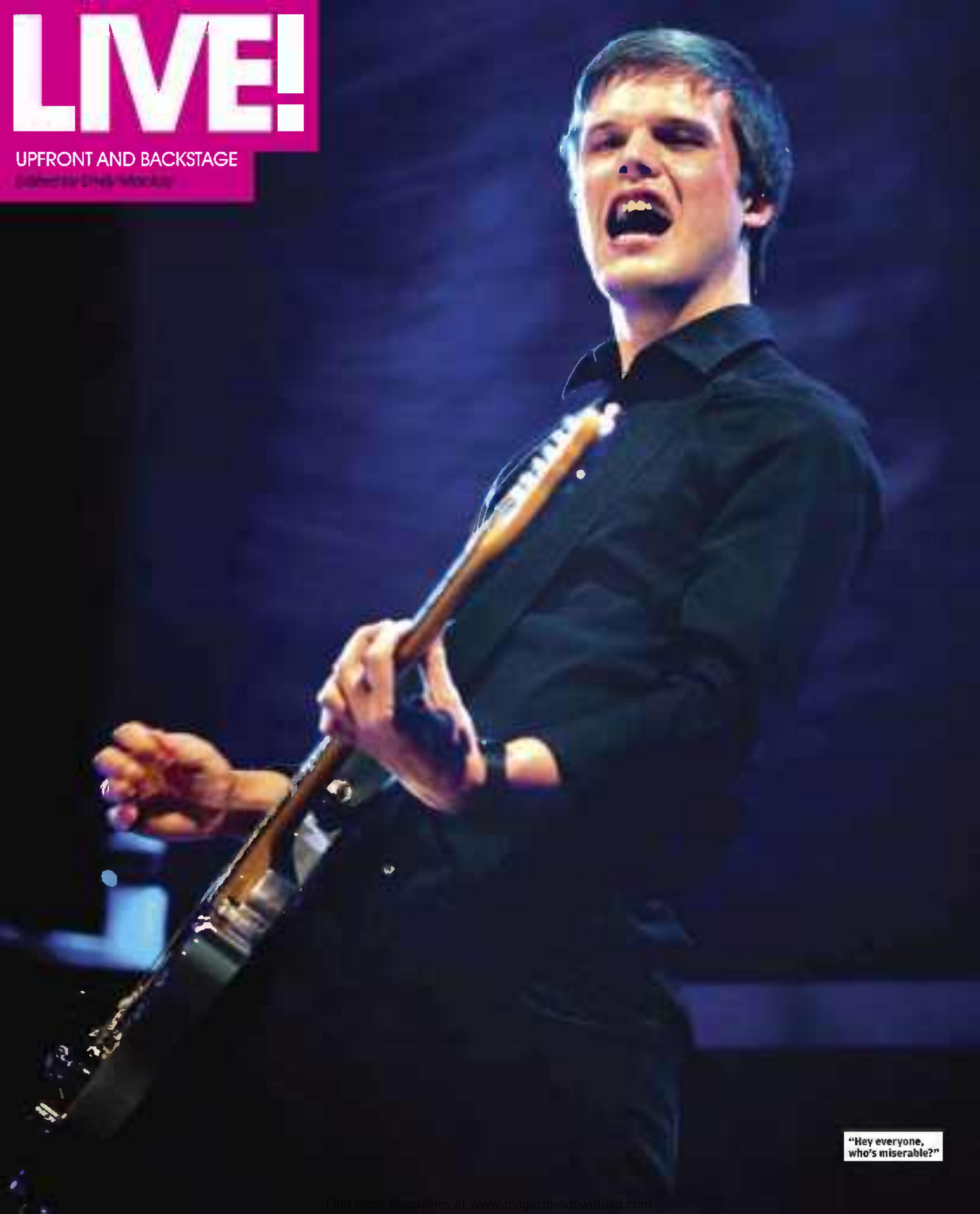
sheet. Lou Barlow reeled out his most languid Stoned Nerd for 'In The City In The Rain', Amelia Fletcher did Cute Girly-Girl With Speech Impediment to a (t)wee on 'Looking For Love (In The Hall Of Mirrors)' and Ayako Akashiba's 'Winter In July' was so delicate it made butterflies' wings look like twats.

Slap these onto vivacious showtunes such as 'Here In My Heart' and 'Puerto Rico Way' – iridescent pop melodies apparently played on canyons full of metal pianos, bursts of steam, boxes of robot fleas and xylophones made out of Terminator ribs – and you had one of the most charming, inventive, jubilant, skronky, huggable and plain brilliant alternative projects of the age, conceived by its most leftfield emerging genius. Needless to say, Bob Mould turned up for the follow-up.

LIVE!

UPFRONT AND BACKSTAGE

Edited by Emily Mackay



"Hey everyone,
who's miserable?"

Left in the dark



WHITE LIES

O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON, LONDON
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

One man's uplifting anthemic gloom-rock is another's plodding, hollow fakery, it seems...

In the infinite murk of this cold November evening, and with a gruelling tour schedule ahead, White Lies are plodding through their Top 40 single 'To Lose My Life'. Suddenly frontman Harry McVeigh winces the line "But a desperate fear flows through my blood/That our dead love's buried beneath the mud". It's a line I've heard delivered a hundred times, but never like this, seven seconds that sum up every problem I have with this band. So sick with the sad, sad memory of that "dead love" is McVeigh that he then throws his arms in the air, hollers "Come on!" through a 20-tooth-thick grin and attempts to lead the crowd in a mass clapping through the song's chorus, a cheery 'til-suicide-do-us-part invitation to "Grow old together" and, of course, "Die at the same time".

And herein lies my essential White Lies sticking-point: I don't believe him. Even as colleagues thrilled to their drivetime-dark debut, and the cover of this very magazine declared them to be 'painting the indie world black', I didn't buy it. There's a difference between painting something black and just shutting your eyes. And as their live show grows ever bigger and more triumphant, it becomes more and more apparent there's no 'real' darkness here. All the words McVeigh sings tonight fail to connect, beheaded from deeper meaning like a bush of ruined roses, trite images of gloom and emotional strife piling up like a mound of posed photographs. 'Unfinished Business' begins with a plea to

"Just put down those scissors, baby, on this single bed", while the first thing he lets us know in 'From The Stars' is "I saw a friend that I once knew at a funeral". It's beyond just being tired or obvious - the hollowness with which McVeigh invokes slit teenage wrists and dead friends borders on the psychopathic.

You could excuse all that if there was enough theatre here. People sling a lot of shit at American emo bands, but at least with their peacock haircuts and heavy kohl there's the silent admission in their ridiculous melodrama that ultimately this could never really be real. White Lies, though, with their glum monochrome garb and the way they seem to rip off every decent band that ever thought about death in the '80s (The Cure, Echo And The Bunnymen, Teardrop Explodes) persist with their delusions of authenticity. It's like emo for dads.

The band come onstage at a sold-out Academy to deafening cheers. Lurching into opener 'Farewell To The Fairground', drummer Jack Lawrence-Brown, aloft with his kit on a circular pedestal some 10 feet above his bandmates' heads, draws thunder from his toms and drizzle from his hi-hats, while McVeigh's guitar and bassist Charles Cave contrive a cut'n'thrust rapport that recalls Franz Ferdinand circa 2004.

The problem is there's nothing else. There are influences and an aesthetic (black), the songs are well-built and they can all play in time, but there are no surprises, even less original ideas. There's nothing real, and nothing fake-entertaining enough to keep your ears, mind, guts, balls or heart interested, so what's the point? If the bands that influence them were clocks, White Lies tick in my skull like a metronome, irritating, meaningless and ignorant of time's greater context. I should have heard the ticks in those seven seconds. Seven seconds, in one song, that could have spared me this hour-long exercise in victimless non-tragedy and vague, weak angst. *Kev Kharas*

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SHORT SETS

TEAM BRICK

THE WINDMILL, LONDON, 21/11/09
Matt Williams - the bespectacled man behind Team Brick - has gone on record to say that he doesn't really understand the music he makes. By the reaction of some attendees tonight, it's not just him who's baffled. Hunched over a plethora of devices, Williams' actions mean his songs rarely emerge in their original form. Screaming into the mic, his vocals are twisted, shattered and looped into a spectrum of discord that he builds upon with a lysergic sheen of guitar, clarinet and drums. The result: a one-man band that defies convention and defines experimental - albeit inexplicably. *Thomas A Ward*

TICKLEY FEATHER

CAFE OT3, LONDON, 21/11/09
Philadelphia's Tickley Feather - or Annie Sachs, when she's not being twee - offers a digital take on early-'90s bedsit indie-pop of The Sundays and their forerunners Cocteau Twins. The effect is occasionally hypnotic, but this show is marred by Sachs' kooky stage persona and over-chattiness. The gaps between songs grow ever wider as the whiskey-sipping chanteuse giggles her way through anecdotes and trades in-jokes with her bandmates. Cat Power already exists, Annie. Just play your songs. *Niall O'Keefe*



FRENCH KISS



PHOENIX
HUXLEY'S, BERLIN
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Too fully appreciate the rebirth of the appropriately named Phoenix, it's worth remembering that the underachieving Frenchman had been consigned to music history in many people's minds. The height of louche, loose-limbed, electro-tinged indie chic in the early 2000s, they'd sailed slowly into the critical doldrums prior to 'Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix'. That album's success led to enthusiastic appearances on major US shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and the *Late Show With David Letterman*, which proved the band had peaked commercially as well as artistically. It also spawned a flurry of blog activity and a rash of killer remixes, so much so that the band recently put out their own remix version of 'Wolfgang...' where the likes of Devendra Banhart, Animal Collective and Friendly Fires flocked to work them over.

This evening in West Berlin, with tracks such as the rollicking '1901' and the radiant, hip-flicky 'Lisztomania', it's clear just why Phoenix are soaring once more: simply that 'Wolfgang...' marked the moment where the band matured in their sound to the point that they could no longer remain underrated.

They dropped the aloof French cool, stepped beyond the Strokes and Air influences, grabbed their own sound and wrote hands-in-the-air bangers that demanded attention. Tonight, they're at their most potent when they keep well away from the stifling new wave guitar rulebook. 'Love Like A Sunset', which begins like Kraftwerk and concludes like Elliott Smith, is a prime example of how self-indulgence can be a good thing, while the moody disco groove of 'Fences' is one of their finest tracks so far.

Still, they might not want to get too full of themselves. Encouraging the audience to clap in unison, stadium-rock style, is hardly the height of Parisian chic, while their lengthy encore, in which they instigate an Iggy Pop-style stage invasion, shatters any sense of remaining enigma. Though they're understandably keen to put their newly swollen audience through a vigorous musical workout, they should take care to remember that it's their unruffled sense of European sophistication that really sets them apart from the musical herd. *Mark Fernyhough*



Harry gives it some welly



Down at heel

BLOOD RED SHOES

THE CROBAR, LONDON
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 25

Brighton's noisy duo suffer failure to launch at their packed and intimate comeback show

Like an unexpected Facebook poke or an old flame texting a wee "hiya", this week, from out of nowhere, Blood Red Shoes suddenly popped up on our radar once more. After a jam-packed 2008 which saw the release of their ace first album and a constant stream of gigs around the country, the Brighton two-some took a well-earned rest and have been working on a big batch of new material, emerging only to debut bits and bobs from it at festivals.

Until this cosy little comeback shindig was announced, if we're honest, we've been so inundated with new music this year that we... well, we kind of forgot about them a bit. And despite nagging sound problems from start to finish in this grotty rock hole – the muffled

vocals irritating the crowd so much they're on the verge of baying for blood – this show is a pertinent reminder of their brilliance. Well, sort of. When they're on form, you see, Blood Red Shoes are a thrilling live prospect. And there are definite flashes of that tonight, as drummer Steven Ansell pounds the hell out of his poor kit from opener 'It Is Happening Again' onwards and Laura-Mary Carter teases squeals and growls from angular, ragged riffs.

The new tracks, which make up the majority of the set, sound aggro and punchy yet still sweet. And Ansell is clearly feeling cheeky: demanding whiskey from the front row (which he never gets), making jibes about Johnny Borrell and generally entertaining us with super-cute banter.

From what we can hear, newbies such as 'Light It Up' and 'Colours Fade' showcase a darker, more thrashy direction for the band, while fan-favourite 'Doesn't Matter Much' is a wonderfully monstrous choice for such an intimate setting, but despite all of this Blood Red Shoes' performance never quite fully ignites tonight. It's odd, because people have been crammed down the front for three hours, shuffling around in anticipation and waiting for the night to explode... yet for some reason it just doesn't. Blame the dreadful sound or the miniscule, uncomfortable setting, but after this damp squib of a show we really need to hear more from the duo before we can say with conviction that we definitely need them back in our lives again. *Camilla Pia*



In sheep's clothing

WOLF GANG
THE CORNER, MANCHESTER
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21

Between art and success, the singer picks safety

It's initially hard to picture London oddball Wolf Gang's new single, the baronial pomp-pop of 'The King And All Of His Men', making sense in the grotty shoebox that is The Corner. Intriguingly, however, the first half of this six-song showcase comprises far edgier, scuzz-friendly music than it and previous single 'Pieces Of You' hunted at. The influences are obvious: David Byrne's itchy guitar, a Bowie-like vocal yelp and a Teardrop Explodes rumble are all evident from the off.

Wolf Gang – or Max McElligott to his mum – seems like a project that has been carefully incubated by management or label. Dropping out of nowhere fully-formed with a couple of slick singles and videos, and a backing band that combine pallid *Brideshead Revisited* aesthetics with discreet session-player anonymity: organically formed gangs of mates with guitars neither look nor sound like this.

Not that there's anything wrong with that. Tedious dues-paying already skipped, the shameless ambition on display tonight is highly seductive. What's less appealing is the audible struggle between the abrasive and unusual, and a lust for mainstream success that seems to have filed down many of the sharp edges.

That said, the show certainly has powerful moments. 'Nightflying' straps a giddy rush of a chorus to a vogue-ish krautrock backing and launches it like a firework. Another unnamed song – McElligott doesn't go in for banter – features a spiralling Ryuichi Sakamoto-like piano line and bombastic falsetto vocal that Muse would kill for. Tonight's other piano-led track, though, is a Proper Songwriting snooze, straying further into Snow Patrol territory than was presumably intended.

When 'The King And All Of His Men' comes around at the end, it illustrates the problem

perfectly. Yes, there are moments that recall the majesty of early Echo & The Bunnymen, but these are interspersed with worrying echoes of the Four Tops and Phil Collins' horrific 'Loco In Acapulco'. Of course, the collision between art and commerce is at the heart of most great pop, and McElligott certainly has the voice, the looks, and the wunderkind skills to make some. Whether he has the chutzpah to play it a bit less safe remains uncertain. Someone should advise him to stop listening to advice *John Tatlock*



SHORT SETS

MEN

BARFLY, LONDON

23/11/09

It's a canny display of Men's stone-cold brilliance that they can introduce a song by saying, "This one's about the economy!" (the brilliantly new-wavey 'Calculators') and not sound dull. They're almost as entertaining between songs as during, but when the likes of 'Re: Your Rebranding' takes flight in all its throaty glory and 'Big Fucker' struts around all cocksure, they go from being an amusingly charming band to something really quite special. Plus, it simply never gets boring nudging the person next to you and saying, "Crikey, I love Men." *Ben Patashnik*

I WAS A KING

SONIC CATHEDRAL

THE SOCIAL, LONDON

23/11/09

There's a case for I Was A King being to Teenage Fanclub what The Rutles were to The Beatles. It's a pretty watertight one too – their (genius) new single 'Norman Bleik' is a tribute to the Scottish songsmith, both in sound and in (intentionally misspelt) title. Yet there's nothing funny about the Norwegian Teenage Fanclub fanclub; songs like 'Not Like This' are moving stuff, made all the more likeable by the fact most of their tunes contain only a verse and a chorus. Oh, and all of them are better than anything on the last two albums that Norman and co have filed. *James McMahon*



SOLE SURVIVORS



GOOD SHOES

KING TUT'S WHISKY BAR, GLASGOW, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

A lot of it is undoubtedly down to perspective – we are on the cusp of a new decade, after all – but just two albums into their career, and there's already something awfully nostalgic about reacquainting yourself with Good Shoes. The Morden quartet's scratchy, scrappy judder-pop can't help but evoke a time – 2007, roughly speaking – when every new band seemed to sound like Razorlight trying hard to sound like XTC. The cider may have sloshed joyously around the nation's toilet venues to the sound of their debut album that summer, but like fluorescent jeans or Libertines tattoos, it's not something people found themselves aching to revisit during the unusually long three-year wait for their second. Still, that doesn't deter frontman Rhys Jones from gamely spurring on the Scottish crowd by declaring his love for Buckfast and Tennent's lager, and wading in among them like a drunken wedding reveller to sing old favourite 'All In My Head'. Tonight's set, however, is much more geared towards showcasing new material from new album 'No Hope, No Future', of which the elastic, Gang Of Four-esque punk-funk piledriver 'Under Control' is undeniably the standout. The tubular guitars and new-wavey jerk of 'The Way My Heart Beats' also impresses greatly, but you sense some of the others need to be played live a bit more; they sound a little lightweight and half-realised, and Jones' voice – an affected, puppyish yelp that makes it hard to believe anything he says in his (frequently quite interesting) lyrics – doesn't do them proper justice.

They peak with the pogo-limbed 'We Are Not The Same' and an almost-winsome 'Small Town Girl' ensuring they do just enough to keep you intrigued for the future. Ultimately, if The Maccabees can make a second album as great as 'Wall Of Arms', there's no reason Good Shoes can't follow suit. Here's hoping they're up to it, because they deserve to be more than a footnote. *Barry Nicolson*

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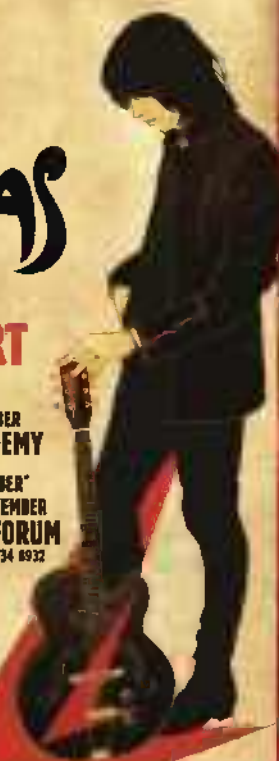
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"We've got a song called 'Stealing Hearts' that'd do well on radio. 'Mad Dog And Glory' and 'Taxi' would do well too. They're our best songs anyway."

WHAT'S YOUR PUSSY CATCHMENT LIKE?

"Our drummer has a new tattoo almost every week, so girls are quite interested in him. Girls like our music, and if they do, then the guys will follow."

THIS TOTALLY AMERICAN APPAREL-CORE BAND GOT SOME MAD MEDIA TAKE-UP WITH A HARDCORE PORN VIDEO, WOULD YOU ACTION THAT?

"Er, probably yeah, we're not introverted in any way. One thing I'd like to do: Mötley Crüe did this thing where Nikki Sixx had photos with his bass guitar covered in blood. That'd be good."

WALLOP. ANY LAST BLUE-SKY THOUGHTS?

"I know any band can have their mates tell them they're brilliant, but I don't like compliments. Given the chance to do it properly, I think we could do a really decent debut album."

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"Punchy, energetic indie style" - Last.FM



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NME SAYS: Urgent Yorkshire jerky indie

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I WANT TO SOUND LIKE... THE FLAMING LIPS



Andy Hobbins, 18, Colchester: "The Flaming Lips' new album has made me want to make my own music. How do you create sounds like that?"

THE SOUND

Twelve studio albums in and the experimental natures of Wayne Coyne and the chaps show no signs of letting up. Among the Lips' many influences are The Beatles, the Butthole Surfers, My Bloody Valentine and Hawkwind.

THE GEAR

A Squier Tele Custom, an Epiphone ES-335 and a Stagg MB300 bass is a fine and affordable start to emulating The Flaming Lips' setup. It will also be handy to get a couple of drumkits (more on this later). If space or money are issues then get a couple of junior kits from Argos. Get a Vox VT30 for low-cost amplification. You're going to need a lot of fuzz, reverb and distortion, so get a Behringer V-Amp 2 to give you it all in one little box.

IN THE STUDIO

'Embryonic' was produced by the band along with Dave Fridmann and Scott Booker. Pro Tools software was employed, as well as a Tascam DR-1 portable recorder. The Lips are always up for weird ideas, so if you're recording as a band into one microphone use parallel EQ (ie mucking about with the sound levels). For example, duplicate the take a number of times onto a computer and then move the EQ on each so that a different instrument sounds the best, and then bring them together as you wish. Another favourite is panning. Keeping most things static while having one or two things rushing around will create a swirling, trippy feeling in the listener's earholes.

THE TECHNIQUE

Don't think - just do. Wayne keeps everything around him so if he has an idea he gets it out there. There'll be plenty of time later to think about whether to use it, improve it or bin it.

BEST TRICK

The Lips are big fans of drum jams (hence the two kits), often building the songs up from these sessions. Getting creative with rhythms will suggest other ideas and, before you know it, you're an experimental outfit.



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Kevlin Shields rallies the troops for the classic indie festival. With the likes of Primal Scream, De La Soul, The Horrors, Sonic Youth, Dirty Three, A Place To Bury Strangers, Swervedriver and, of course, the mighty My Bloody Valentine, you'd be wise to take along a lifetime's supply of earplugs.

WWW.NME.COM/festivals



DON'T MISS

THE HORRORS

WHERE: NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS (THURS), OXFORD O2 ACADEMY 2 (FRI), MINEHEAD ATP (SAT), BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY 2 (SUN), BIRMINGHAM LG ARENA (TUES)

Faris Badwan and his experimental goth rock cohorts continue to paint a brighter picture with their exquisite album 'Primary Colours'. Do not miss.

WWW.NME.COM/artists/the-horrors

EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

ARIEL PINK



WHERE: MINEHEAD ATP (SAT), CARDIFF BUFFALO BAR (SUN), NOTTINGHAM BODEGA SOCIAL CLUB (MON), LONDON THE REST IS NOISE (TUES)

LA-based surrealist Ariel Pink hits the UK with his freshly 4AD-signed group, Haunted Graffiti. WWW.NME.COM/artists/ariel-pink



PICK OF CLUB NME

THAT PETROL EMOTION

WHERE: LONDON KOKO (FRI)

Going out in a blaze of glory. Seminal Northern Irish outfit That Petrol Emotion set the dancefloor on fire at Club NME London this week.

WWW.NME.COM/artists/that-petrol-emotion

RADAR STAR

BIG NED

WHERE: GLASGOW O2 ABC, (FRI)

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0113 203 1861

The Johnny Storm Band New
Roscoe 0113 246 0778

Rome Burns The Subculture
0113 245 0689

Thomas Dydbahl Cockpit Room 3
0113 2441573

16-Bit Revival Cockpit 0113 244 3446

David Tyrrell 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Aurelio Martinez Union Chapel
020 7226 1686

The Beat Rhythm Factory
020 7247 9386

Billy Vincent 12 Bar Club
020 7240 2622

The Bromptons 229 Club
020 7631 8310

Bull See Red 93 Feet East
020 7247 6095

Christopher Cross Jazz Cafe
020 7916 6060

Dreadzone Garage 020 7607 1818

Falch Child ULU 020 7664 2000

Frankmusik KOKO 020 7388 3222

Fuzzy Logic The Victoria
0871 230 1094

Gay For Johnny Depp Borderline
020 7734 5547



Hollywood Undead 02 Shepherds
Bush Empire 0870 771 2000 WA

Ian Brown 02 Brixton Academy
0870 771 2000

King Kandy Bull & Gate
020 7485 5358

Madball Underworld 020 7482 1932

The Mundens/Milk Hope & Anchor
020 7354 1312

New York Dolls Forum
020 7344 0044

A Grave With No Name/Ice Sea
Dead People/Ono Palindromes
Catch 020 7729 6097

Regina Spektor Apollo
0870 606 3400

The Rileys Barfly 0870 907 0999

Sam Isaac Band/Chris T-T
The Lexington 020 7837 5387

School Of Seven Bells ICA
020 7930 3647

The Screenbeats Good Ship
020 7372 2544

Six Organs Of Admittance Bush Hall
020 8222 6955

The Sundogs Underbelly
020 7613 3105

Them Is Me Monto Water Rats
020 7837 4412

This Beautiful Thief/Pistola Kicks
Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

Dutch Uncles Night And Day Cafe
0161 236 1822

Good Shoes Ruby Lounge
0161 834 1392

The Lancashire Hotpots Club
Academy 0161 832 1111

Lightning Dust Roadhouse
0161 228 1789

N-Dubz Evening News Arena
0161 950 5000

The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart
Academy 2 0161 832 1111

Shed Seven Academy 0161 832 1111

ATP: My Bloody Valentine/Primal
Scream/De La Soul/Witch/Josh
Pearson/Wounded Knees/Yo
La Tengo/Buzzcocks/Television
Personalities Butlins Holiday Camp
0871 230 1094

Codename Velvet Club 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Stalkers Roadmender Centre
01604 604222

Mar Mar Superstar Bodega Social
Club 08713 100000

In Isolation Old Angel Inn
0115 947 6735

The Horrors 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Exit Ten Met Lounge 01733 566100

Martyn Joseph The Studio
01730 263119

Grammatics Drift Bar 02392 779 839

Ian Broudie 53 Degrees
01772 893 000

Attention Thieves Rising Sun Arts
Centre 0118 986 6788

Pretty Boy Floyd Corporation
0114 276 0262

Tarka Dawn 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

UB40 Hallam FM Arena
0114 256 5520

Out Of Sight Joiners 023 8022 5612

Gallows Sugarmill 01782 214991

Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings Arena
01727 844488

Wilprute The Vic 01793 535713

The Soffburys The Rolleston
01793 534238

Wheres Billy The Forum
08712 777101

The Dharma Escobar 01924 332000

The NinePlan Snooty Fox
01924 374455

Bless The Fall Fibbers 01904 651 250

Mr Scruff Warehouse 0844 847 2319

The Volt Esquires 01234 340120

Propagandhi Queen's University
028 9024 5133

Psycastron Stiff Kitten 028 90238700

Tina Hart Warehouse 028 9023 0394

The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart
02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

Random Hand 02 Academy 3
0870 771 2000 WA

White Lies/Asobi Seksu 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Erland & The Carnival Freebutt
01273 603974

Part Chimp Engine Room
01273 728 999

Future Of The Left Thekla
08713 100000

Good Shoes The Cooler
0117 945 0999

Groovy Babies 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Hollywood Undead Anson Rooms
0117 954 5810

Yes Rebels Louisiana 0117 926 5978

Descendents Portland Arms
01223 357268

James Taylor Quartet The
Farmhouse 01227 456118

Blind Ambition Barfly
029 2066 7658

Silbrydon Club Ifor Bach
029 2023 2199

Foy Vance Cyprus Avenue
00 35321 427 6165

Jim Conlet The Pavilion
00 35321 427 6228

Bltz Kids The Box 01270 257 398

Hospital Of Death The Victoria Inn
01332 74 00 91

Electric Six Academy
00 3531 877 9999

Hadouken! Tripod 00 3531 4780225

Horslips The 02 01819 8888

The Pogues Olympia
00 3531 679 3323

Joe Bonamassa Picture House
0844 847 1740

Lau Queen's Hall 0131 668 2039

Pete Molinari Sneaky Pete's
0131 225 1757

Elliot Minor Rosin Dubh
00 35391 586540

Athlete ABC 0870 903 3444 WA

Bless The Fall King Tut's Wah Wah
Hut 0141 221 5279

Codename Velvet Club 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Hammonds Folly Nice'n'Sleazy
0141 333 9637

The Lava Experiments 13th Note
Cafe 0141 553 1638

Vic Godard Stereo 0141 576 5018

60 Persons ABC2
0141 204 5151 WA

SATURDAY

DECEMBER 5

Mr Scruff Warehouse 0844 847 2319

The Volt Esquires 01234 340120

Propagandhi Queen's University
028 9024 5133

Psycastron Stiff Kitten 028 90238700

Tina Hart Warehouse 028 9023 0394

The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart
02 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 WA

Random Hand 02 Academy 3
0870 771 2000 WA

White Lies/Asobi Seksu 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Erland & The Carnival Freebutt
01273 603974

Part Chimp Engine Room
01273 728 999

Future Of The Left Thekla
08713 100000

Good Shoes The Cooler
0117 945 0999

Groovy Babies 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Hollywood Undead Anson Rooms
0117 954 5810

Yes Rebels Louisiana 0117 926 5978

Descendents Portland Arms
01223 357268

James Taylor Quartet The
Farmhouse 01227 456118

Blind Ambition Barfly
029 2066 7658

Silbrydon Club Ifor Bach
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00 3531 877 9999

Hadouken! Tripod 00 3531 4780225

Horslips The 02 01819 8888

The Pogues Olympia
00 3531 679 3323

Joe Bonamassa Picture House
0844 847 1740

Lau Queen's Hall 0131 668 2039

Pete Molinari Sneaky Pete's
0131 225 1757

Elliot Minor Rosin Dubh
00 35391 586540

Athlete ABC 0870 903 3444 WA

Bless The Fall King Tut's Wah Wah
Hut 0141 221 5279

Codename Velvet Club 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

Hammonds Folly Nice'n'Sleazy
0141 333 9637

The Lava Experiments 13th Note
Cafe 0141 553 1638

Vic Godard Stereo 0141 576 5018

60 Persons ABC2
0141 204 5151 WA

Arms Of The Man Club 85
01462 432767

Bianca Gerald Elbow Rooms
0113 245 7041

Dub Pistols Joseph's Well
0113 203 1861

Elephants On Acid Fenton
0113 245 3908

Jeff Mills Mnt Club 0113 244 9474

Midnight Special The Owl
0113 256 5242

Milk White White Teeth Nation Of
Shopkeepers 0113 203 1831

Rock It Science New Roscoe
0113 246 0778

Sawsond Cockpit Room 3
0113 2441573

Sound Of Sirens Royal Park Cellars
0113 274 1758

Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings
De Montfort Hall 0116 233 3111

The Pineapple Thief Muskrant
0116 251 0680

The Xcerts Firefly 0116 255 1228

The Blizzards Dolans Warehouse
00 35361 314483

The Beat 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Yusuf Islam Echo Arena
0844 8000 400

SUNDAY

DECEMBER 6

Poppy's The Tunnels 01224 21121

Del Bonafant Esquires
0134 340181

Florence And The Machine Ulster Hall 028 9032 3900
Joe Bonamassa Waterfront 028 9033 4455

Gunfire 76 O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Acoustic Ladyland Audio 01273 624343

Goldie Lookin Chain Thekla 08713 100000

The Horrors O2 Academy 0870 771 2000 **WA**
Phoenix And The Turtle Louisiana 0117 926 5978

Ariel Pink Buffalo Bar 02920 310312

Frightened Rabbit Cyprus Avenue 00 35321 427 6165

Mark Chadwick The Victoria Inn 01332 74 00 91

Elliot Minor Academy 00 3531 877 9999

The Pogues Olympia 00 3531 679 3323

Sonic Youth Vicar St 00 3531 889 4900

The Crips Corn Exchange 0131 443 0404
Propagandhi Studio 24 0131 558 3758

Modest Mouse Radisson 00 35312 186000

Casino City ABC2 0141 204 5151 **WA**
Har Mar Superstar King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

Sunn O))) Stereo 0141 576 5018
WASP Garage 0141 332 1120

Pretty Boy Floyd Yardbirds Club 07771520374

The October Game Club 85 01462 432767

Homecut Hi-Fi Club 0113 242 7353
Jon Strong Band New Roscoe 0113 246 0778

Kang Nation Of Shopkeepers 0113 203 1831

Random Hand Cockpit 0113 244 3446

Rodney Fisher The Library 0113 2440794

Trash Talk Rios 0844 414 2182

Heavens Basement Barfly Loft @ Masque 0151 707 6171 **+14**

Telegraphs Cavern Club 0151 236 1964

UB40 Echo Arena 0844 8000 400

Alice Cooper Apollo 0870 606 3400

The Dirty Ugly Punk Monkeys Fighting Cocks 020 8546 5174

Early Day Miners The Lexington 020 7837 5367

The Exploited/US Bombs O2 Islington Academy 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Indios Bravos Cargo 0207 749 7840

Kate Rusby Indigo @ The O2 Arena 0870 701 4444

Kevin Devine Borderline 020 7734 5547

Left With Pictures Slaughtened Lamb 020 8662 4080

Living Colour Garage 020 7607 1818

The Metrotones 100 Club 020 7636 0933

Monster Magnet KOKO 020 7388 3222

The Ocean Bottom Nightmare Band/Ghostlight/The Junction

Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

The Sans Pareil George Tavern 020 7790 1763

Sigue Sigue Sputnik Underworld 020 7482 1932

Slide Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358

Stars Of Sunday League Good Ship 020 7372 2544

Hollywood Undead Academy 0161 832 1111

Sonic Syndicate Roadhouse 0161 228 1789

ATP: My Bloody Valentine/The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart/School Of Seven Bells/Brightblack Morning Light/The Robert Coyne Outfit/Dirty Three/Mum/No Age/Tin Faith Healers/Bob Mould/A Place To Bury Strangers/Gemma Hayes/The Lillys/Swervedriver Butlins Holiday Camp 0871 230 1094

A Rescue Rooms 0115 958 8484

Alice In Chains Rock City 08713 100000

Lowline Bodega Social Club 08713 100000

Paul Barrere Maze 0115 947 5650

The Answer Pyramid 023 9235 8608

Codeline Velvet Club Leadmill 0114 221 2828

Galkows University 0114 222 8777

Status Quo Hallam FM Arena 0114 256 5520

Tyske Ludder Corporation 0114 276 0262

New York Dolls Talking Heads 023 8055 5899

Ringo Deathstarr Joiners 023 8022 5612

Porcupine Tree Civic Hall 01902 552121

Breathing Space The Duchess 01904 641 413

Rose Elzior Dougal Fibbers 01904 651 250 **+14**



Florence And The Machine Ulster Hall, Belfast

MONDAY

DECEMBER 7

Tune into the NME Chart Show with Jon Hillcock as he guides us through the latest indie tracks hitting the airwaves, from 10am

NME
RADIO

Battles, Academy 2, Manchester



Hayley Westenra Ulster Hall 028 9032 3900

Snow Patrol Waterfront 028 9033 4455

That Petrol Emotion Spring & Airbrake 028 9032 5968

Codeline Velvet Club Glee Club 0870 241 5093

Natalie Imbruglia O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Sonic Syndicate O2 Academy 3 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Propagandhi O2 Academy 01202 399922

Ben Howard Komedia 01273 647100

Mum Concord 2 01273 673311

Tweak Bird Freebrett 01273 603974

Sam Russo Portland Arms 01223 357268

Cuba Cuba Barfly 029 2066 7658 **+14**

Kyoto Drive The Victoria Inn 01332 74 00 91

Thomas Dybdahl The Royal 01332 36 77 20

Florence And The Machine Olympia 00 3531 679 3323

Modest Mouse Academy 00 3531 877 9999

Tubelord Sneaky Pete's 0131 225 1757

The Grave King Tut's Wah Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

The Gotthendburg Address/Aidan Moffat Mono 0141 553 2400

Go Go Bots ABC2 0141 204 5151 **WA**
Gunfire 76 Cathouse 0141 248 6606

Monster Magnet Garage 0141 332 1120

Eliza Carthy Guildhall Arts Centre 01452 503050

Play Dead Sister Boilerroom 01483 440022

April In Paris/Marhequin City Cockpit Room 3 0113 2441573

Kevin Devine Cockpit 0113 244 3446

Electric Six O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Alice In Chains O2 Brixton Academy 0870 771 2000

Asobi Seksu Cargo 0207 749 7840

Bob Mould Bloomsbury Ballroom 020 7404 7612

Brightblack Morning Light Luminaire 020 7372 7123

Cars On Fire Old Blue Last 020 7613 2478

Danville Train Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358

Dirty Three/Josh T Pearson Queen Elizabeth Hall 020 7960 4242

God Devil Skin/Tres Retros/Kill The Young Dragon & Anchor 020 7354 1312

Gwyn Ashton/Every For The Kill/The Night Code/Third Light Dublin Castle 020 7485 1773

Honeykill 93 Feet East 020 7247 6095

Horse Feathers Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen 020 7613 0709

Il Divo Apollo 0870 606 3400

Jason Ringenberg Borderline 020 7734 5547

Little Dragon Rhythm Factory 020 7247 9385

Little Harlem 100 Club 020 7636 0933

London Blackmarket Queen Of Hoxton 020 7422 0958

Manna 12 Bar Club 020 7240 2622

Mirtorkicks Barfly 0870 907 0999

Nell Erva Troubadour Club 020 7370 1434

The Pains Of Being Pure At Heart Garage (Upstairs) 0871 230 1094

Ringo Deathstarr Windmill 020 8671 0700

Skin O2 Islington Academy 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Submission Orchestra Jazz Cafe 020 7916 6060

The Yeah You's Monto Water Rats 020 7837 4412

***Bach** Slaughtered Lamb 020 8682 4080

Battles Academy 2 0161 832 1111

Har Mar Superstar Ruby Lounge 0161 834 1392

Reggie Watts Academy 3 0161 832 1111

Rodriguez Deaf Institute 0161 330 4019

Malcolm Middleton Cluny 2 0191 230 4474

Shed Seven O2 Academy 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Bless The Fall Roadmender Centre 01604 604222

Bad Manners Waterfront 01603 632717

Ariel Pink Bodega Social Club 08713 100000

A Wedgewood Rooms 023 9286 3911

Alestorm Corporation 0114 276 0262

Goldie Lookin Chain O2 Academy 2 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Yeah Yeah Yeahs O2 Academy 0870 771 2000 **WA**

Goldhawks Joiners 023 8022 5612

South View Juniors Escobar 01924 332000

The Unthanks Wulfrun Hall 01902 552121

Cancer Bats Fibbers 01904 651 250 **+14**

Lowline The Duchess 01904 641 413

TUESDAY

DECEMBER 8

BELFAST

Snow Patrol Waterfront
028 9033 4455
White Lies Queen's University
028 9024 5133

BIRMINGHAM

The Horrors LG Arena
0121 780 4133
Lightning Bolt Vivid 0871 230 1094

BOLTON

UB40 International Centre
0870 111 3000

BRIGHTON

Stephen Malkmus & The Jicks
Komedia 01273 647100
Thomas Gydahl Freeburt
01273 603974

BRISTOL

Rodríguez Thekla 08713 100000

CAMBRIDGE

The Answer Junction 01223 511511

CARDIFF

Bless The Fall Barfly
029 2066 7658 +14
Kutosis Club for Bach 029 2023 2199

DUBLIN

Basement Jaxx Olympia
00 3531 679 3323
Joe Bonamassa Vicar St
00 3531 889 4900

Lily Allen The 02 01 819 8888

GALWAY

Lisa Hannigan Radisson
00 35312 186000

GLASGOW

Reggie Watts King Tut's Wah Wah
Hut 0141 221 5279
Rip in Reality 13th Note Café
0141 553 1638

LEAMINGTON SPA

New York Dolls The Assembly
01926 313774

LEEDS

Box Elders' Nation Of Shopkeepers
0113 203 1831
The Hydropaths Mine 0871 230 1094
Little Dragon Hi-Fi Club
0113 242 7393

Madball Joseph's Well 0113 203 1861

LIVERPOOL

Absolence 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

LONDON

Ariel Pink The Rest Is Noise
0871 230 1034
Athlete 02 Shepherds Bush Empire
0870 771 2000 WA

Ben Howard Monto Water Rats
020 7187 4412

The Bookhouse Boys The Lexington
020 7837 5387

The Grave Barfly 0870 907 0999

The Dead Orchestra 229 Club
020 7631 8310

Deer Tick Windmill 020 8671 0700

Dot Allison Cargo 0207 749 7840

Foy Vance Union Chapel
020 7226 1686

Jo MacGregor 100 Club
0113 7636 0933

Laura Jenkins/Rachel Rabin Hope &
Anchor 070 7354 1312

Little Death Buffalo Bar
020 751 96191

Melody Nelson 12 Bar Club
020 7210 7177

Melvins Garage 020 7607 1818

Mum Tabernacle 020 7243 4343

The Palms Of Being Pure At Heart
Scala 020 7813 2017

Pink The 02 Arena 0870 701 4444

Princip Bull & Gate 020 7485 5358

Staraffentand Queen Of Hoxton
020 7422 0958

Yusuf Islam Royal Albert Hall
020 7589 8212

MANCHESTER

Broadcast Deaf Institute
0161 330 4019

The Cribbs/Echo & The Bunnymen/
Frank Turner/Delphic Academy
0161 832 1111

Frankmusik Club Academy
0161 832 1111

NEWCASTLE

Porcupine Tree 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

NORWICH

Skin Waterfront 01603 63217

NOTTINGHAM

Propagandhi Rock City
08713 100000

OXFORD

Seth Lakeman Town Hall
01865 249811

Set Your Goals 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

PORTSMOUTH

Juliette Lewis Wedgewood Rooms
023 9286 3911

SHEFFIELD

Electric Six 02 Academy 2
0870 771 2000 WA

Har Mar Superstar Plug
0114 276 7093

Ian Brown 02 Academy
0870 771 2000 WA

SOUTHAMPTON

Heavens Basement Joiners
023 8022 5612

ST ALBANS

Propeller Horn 01727 853143

YORK

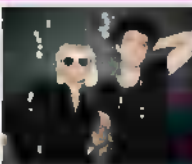
Malcolm Middleton City Screen
Basement Bar 01904 541144

Pete Molinari Duchess 01904 641 413

GIGS

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
NME.COM/TICKETS

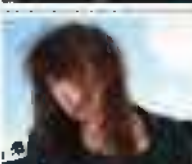
BOOKING NOW



THE RAVEONETTES

STARTS MANCHESTER MONTI SLANGE, DEC 14

The Danish duo head back to the UK following the release of fourth studio album 'In And Out Of Control'.
NME.COM/artists/raveonettes



VASHTI BUNYAN

STARTS GLASGOW CYTIL CONNECTIONS, JAN 28, 2010

A rare outing for the elder stateslady of twisted folk.
NME.COM/artists/vashti-bunyan



MIIKE SNOW

STAR 3 LONDON IN BERNACLE, JAN 27

The Swedish three-piece bring their intelligent and sharp pop music to these shores.
NME.COM/artists/miike-snow



30 SECONDS TO MARS

STARTS NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY, FEB 2

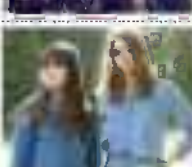
Despite various label legal battles the US pop punkers prove they're fighting fit with third album 'This is War'.
NME.COM/newmusic



FANFARLO

STARTS NOTTINGHAM THEKLA, FEB 2

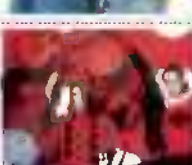
The London-based indie popstarts tour following the release of their charming debut 'Reservoir'.
NME.COM/artists/fanfarlo



FIRST AID KIT

STARTS LONDON THE ARK PETE'S, FEB 19

Teenage siblings Klara and Johanna Söderberg have shaken the folk world with their EP 'Drunken Trees'.
NME.COM/artists/first-aid-kit



GIRLS

STARTS SOUTHAMPTON TALKING HEADS, FEB 25

San Franciscan stoners Girls are here to regale us with tales of heartache and friendship.
NME.COM/artists/girls



THE DRUMS

STARTS NOTTINGHAM ACADEMY, MAR 3

The lo-fi indie rock sensations support The Maccabees on the Shockwaves NME Awards Tour '09.
NME.COM/artists/the-drums



CHRIS T-T

STARTS LONDON CLUBBING SCENE, MAR 10

The socio-political songsmith hits the road following the release of last year's 'Capital' album.
NME.COM/artists/chris-t-t



The Cribbs, Academy, Manchester

If you're on O₂ you can get Priority Tickets to The O₂ and O₂ Academy venues up to 48 hours before general release. Text PRIORITY to 2020 to register.

Tickets are subject to availability. Exceptions apply.

O₂

GEAR

STUFF WE LOVE Edited by Leonie

KAP BAMBINO JEWELLERY

Screechy French razor-electro duo Kap Bambino have branched out into the world of pricey bling with this solid silver ring and necklace, the latter of which is gold-plated. If you eat blank Coultis cheques for breakfast and want to up the ante, then why not consider the version of the icosahedron pendant with a black pearl in it? Contrasts well with wasted hipster chic.

Digitariaworld.com

SEX PISTOLS T-SHIRT

Sex Pistols clobber will never go out of fashion and this shirt is a prime example of why. Emblazoned with the name of the Russ Meyer movie that never was, you can almost hear Walt Disney spinning in his cryogenic freezing pod upon finding out about the safety pin in the poor deer's ear.

Trufflesuffle.com

£200

£60

£20

£13.95

MIXTAPE BOOK

Cassette From My Ex is, put simply, a quite gorgeous book. Edited by *FOUND* magazine co-creator Jason Bitner, it lists love letters rendered onto C-90 and the sweet, sad and downright lovely stories behind them. If you want to go gooey over the combined power of pop and romance, you need this book in your life.

Cassettefrommyex.com

GOGOL BORDELLO

AXIS MUNDI

£9.99

GOGOL BORDELLO DVD

Headed up by the charmingly insane Eugene Hutz, over the past 10 years Gogol Bordello have made a name for themselves by being one of the most compelling and straight-up punk rock live bands around. *Live From Axis Mundi* is proof taken from two hectic nights at NYC's Irving Plaza back in 2007. There's a CD stuffed with unreleased studio tracks, demos and a Radio 1 session in the package too.

Roughtrade.com

NME
ONLINE STORE

JAIL GUITAR DOORS T-SHIRT

Show your support for Billy Bragg's Jail Guitar Doors project, which uses the power of rock'n'roll to help rehabilitate prison inmates, with this rather dapper T-shirt. The profits of their sale goes back into the initiative, helping to fund recording sessions and the roadshow of *Breaking Rocks* - the JGD documentary - which kicks off next year.

NME.com/store

£15

PETER ROBINSON VS

ANDY FALKOUS (Future Of The Left)

Rock's Mr Happy on baguettes, the Berlin Wall, monkey wages and wank anniversaries

Hello, Andy. What are you doing on this Monday morning?
"I'm reading a newspaper from Saturday, and I'm about to go out and get a baguette."

What a highfalutin start to a Monday.
A baguette! Whatever next?
"Every day is a baguette day for me."

What do you make of Saturday's news?
The piling up of newspapers is terrifying.
"I read the front page. I always start with the front page, then I move to the sport - I'm a heterosexual male. Then from the sport it's over to the review, I wanted to see what Martin Amis had to say about Nabokov. It was as textually rich and pretentious as I was expecting"

In many ways I suspect reading a Martin Amis piece on Nabokov was a lot like reading the NME reviews section.
"Um, a little. That's a keen parallel."

Well, I think there are probably more similarities than you might at first suspect. For example, you hold them both the same way up in your hands.
"Yes. Absolutely."

What's been happening in world news?
"There's a huge rise in birth defects in Falluja. But the big news was the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall. Which is not so much about the fall of the Berlin wall but the sickening anniversary-based culture we live in at the moment."

People like an anniversary - a chance to think about what you've been up to.
"What you've been up to since Europe fundamentally changed! Yes, and it's been 53 years since I first remembered World War 2 when I was in the bath. It's 15 years since! It's 20 years since! It's eight-and-a-half minutes since! We'll be celebrating our sex lives soon. The 15-year anniversary of my first handjob in a car!"

Well these are the things that sadly do go by unmarked. For many people these events aren't acknowledged on a Wiki entry and for that reason it's important that people do remember first handjobs.
"No, we shouldn't forget. Personally I feel people should make more of an



Falco: "Anyone got a kirby grip?"

"IT'S 53 YEARS SINCE I FIRST REMEMBERED WORLD WAR 2 WHEN I WAS IN THE BATH"

effort to update their Wikipedia pages with these significant dates."

Do you have your own Wikipedia page?
"I don't know. I would guess that it just states I'm the singer in a couple of bands but which then leads on to more detailed pages for the bands I've been in."

Well, I'll tell you what, I've just called up your page while you've been talking - and it's bad news.
"I see. Is it?"

Yes it is. Now, your band has its page...
"I see."

But for individual members... Well, I don't know how to say this but this is possibly the first recorded instance of

a band's bassist having his own page, while the singer has none.

"...you know what? I can cope with that. I find a delicious fruitiness in that. I'm struggling to be annoyed."

I don't want you to be annoyed. I don't want you to be upset. It's a Monday morning! You were looking forward to a baguette.
"I know. You don't need to light a fire under my ass and surround me with Red Hot Chili Peppers fans, do you?"

Do you ever feel like a performing monkey?
"A performing monkey is, at the very least, waged."

Is your job easier than you'd like it to be or harder than you'd like it to be?
"This makes me sound like Old Father Time with creaky knees and a distended arse, but I learned a long time ago that it is what it is, and how you want it to be is largely irrelevant. It continues at its own

pace, dictated by such factors as I don't even care to think about any more. Some nights it comes together and something approaching magic ensues, and other nights you're packing in your equipment and there's tumbleweed everywhere. A sadness carries you home."

If you were on a chat show - let's say that awful Piers Morgan vehicle - how would you win over a prime-time audience?
"For a start, if it was Piers Morgan I'd probably come out in a rash. Most people have a story which is either interesting or has been practised and told so much that it has the trappings of being interesting. Let's see. Well, my best-paid day as a musician was the first time Melusky were flying to Australia. We had a six-hour layover in LA because as a bunch of cheapskates we were flying the long way. When we got to Heathrow we were informed that the plane was overbooked and that if anyone would accept a later flight we'd be paid £170 each. And they didn't know that we were having to stop over in LA, and that by taking the later flight we'd just end up having to spend less time in LA. And we got £170 to simply sit in a different airport, buying CDs. I think I had three different meals. Some Mexican food, a salad and a baguette."

Well, that's not the best anecdote. I can picture you telling it and the credits starting to roll, and then you finishing. And the interviewer just looking at you. Then the audience just filing out. In silence. I'm not very good at anecdotes."

"IT IS WHAT IT IS"

In this interview Falco revealed that his job "is what it is". What other things are what they are? Here's a top five:

CROP ROTATION

Like waking up at night and turning your pillow to get the cold side, except with wheat in a field. It is what it is.

SHOUTING

A popular hobby for consumers of booze. It's different from yelling. It is what it is.

TABLES

They have four legs. Sometimes three. Sometimes, if one edge is attached (sometimes by a hinge) to something else there are only two legs. Regardless of leg count, tables are what they are.

NEXT TUESDAY

It doesn't really matter what happens next Tuesday. "Whatever will be will be" someone once sang.

'ONE WAY TICKET TO HELL... AND BACK'
The Darkness' second album. It was what it was. What was it? It was shit.

NEXT WEEK IN NME

On sale
Wednesday
December 9

1975 BOB DYLAN – BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

1978 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN – DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

1981 GRACE JONES – NIGHTCLUBBING

1986 PRINCE & THE NEW POWER GENERATION – PARADE

1989 DE LA SOUL – 3 FEET HIGH AND RISING

1991 NIRVANA – NEVERMIND

1993 BJORK – DEBUT

1998 MERCURY REV – DESERTER'S SONGS

2001 THE STROKES – IS THIS IT

2004 FRANZ FERDINAND – FRANZ FERDINAND

2007 KLAXONS – MYTHS OF THE NEAR FUTURE

2009?

THE 50 BEST ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

{PLUS}

Lil Wayne | Gossip | Florence And The Machine | The xx

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