

# BEATLES ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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# INSIDE THIS WEEK

31/12/2011



**"A REMINDER THAT THE SIX-STRING'S AS HEALTHY AS EVER"**  
**THE VACCINES END AN EPIC YEAR BY SMASHING BRIXTON**



*"The whole place was beautiful, like ET's spaceship"*  
**KASABIAN DROP THE DINOS FOR A BIT OF ALIEN WORSHIP**



*Amazing free posters!*

SIX ICONIC IMAGES OF THE STARS OF 2011, INCLUDING LIAM, NOEL, FLORENCE, LAURA MARLING AND MILES KANE



**"GUITAR BANDS ARE ON THE WAY OUT"**  
**HOW WRONG CAN ONE MAN BE? MARKING 50 YEARS SINCE THE BEATLES WERE REJECTED**



**"TRIBES IN THE TOP 20? AWESOME"**  
**NME EXPLAINS WHY JANUARY ISN'T THE SHIT MONTH YOU THOUGHT IT WAS**



**"MORRISSEY AND MARR WILL REUNITE FOR AN ALBUM AND TOUR"**  
**MUSIC'S BIG NAMES PREDICT THE 2012 LANDSCAPE**

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# UPFRONT

WHAT'S HAPPENED AND WHAT'S HAPPENING IN MUSIC THIS WEEK

Edited by Rick Martin

2012

## THE BIG QUESTIONS

*The Stone Roses are gonna rule the summer, Adele's unlikely to relinquish her throne – but for the thornier questions surrounding music in 2012, we've picked the brains of bands, industry bigwigs and NME staff to make you sound dead smart in the coming year*

*Will we see artists engaging with the political unrest that characterised 2011?*



**KRISSI MURISON**  
EDITOR, NME

"The most famous cliché trotted out by people in bands used to be: 'We just make music for ourselves, and if anyone else likes it it's a bonus.' But in 2011 that got replaced by, 'It's all so complicated, I don't feel qualified to give an opinion' in response to almost any question about the modern world and the way it's run. It wasn't necessarily political apathy driving their reluctance to speak out, more the fear of saying something silly. Understandable, perhaps, given that most of them are rich rock stars with cushy label deals and a never-ending summer on the

global festival circuit. In 2012 though, we'll meet a new generation of musicians affected first-hand by the recession – anxious, jobless, degree-less and dole-less thanks to government plans to force long-term unemployed 16-25-year-olds into compulsory unpaid work placements (or slave labour, as we used to call it). For the first time in a decade forming a band will become a lifeline rather than a paid hobby, and burying your head in the sand to the world outside the studio window will no longer be a viable option."

## WHO'LL BE THE NEXT BIG ACT TO REUNITE? IS THIS A GOOD THING?



**JOHNNY LLOYD**  
TRIBES

"I'd love it to be Late Of The Pier, though I suppose Oasis would have a bigger effect... For bands like us, reunions can be negative because they totally absorb the headline slots at festivals. Having a band like The

Horrors at the top of a festival bill would be more important for British music than people getting to see The Stone Roses again. It'd be their moment, but it probably won't happen because of these reunions."



**HAMISH MACBAIN**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR,  
NME

"A Morrissey and Marr album and tour, I'd wager. Most Morrissey shows consist of a fair chunk of stodgy-sounding versions of Smiths songs; meanwhile recent Healers gigs have seen Marr passing lead guitar

duties to his skrvies while he does his best Moz impression on 'Shakespeare's Sister' and others. They both clearly have great affection for these songs, and an album would stop it being nostalgia – and probably be great."



CORBIS, DAVID EDWARDS, PETER M VAN HATTEN, TOM MARTIN, EMILIE BAILEY, DANNY NORTH, ROGER SARGENT, DEAN CHALKLEY

# How will festivals fare after a difficult 2011?



## MELVIN BENN MANAGING DIRECTOR, FESTIVAL REPUBLIC

"Reading and Leeds did take longer to sell out last year, but they did eventually – I'm not worried about 2012. I think it'll be slow again – the market that Reading and Leeds targets has been hit by government cuts. However, we have a great line-up. There's going to be a deposit sale introduced for the March main sale, which will be the first time we've done that properly."



## SIMON TAFTE DIRECTOR, END OF THE ROAD

"Festivals that really know their public will be fine in 2012. Our pre-sales are up by at least 25 per cent on last year and our new festival, No Direction Home, starting in June, has sold over 1,000 tickets already, and we haven't even announced a single band yet. And as for starting a new festival? Don't do it unless you're a) willing to lose some money, b) willing to sacrifice your soul, c) offering something new."



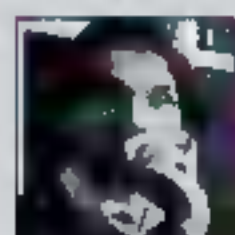
## EMILY MACKAY REVIEWS EDITOR, NME

"Last year, it began to feel like we were reaching festival saturation. There's just too many of the damn things. It's cruel perhaps, but tightened belts for festival-goers and organisers will allow unique events to thrive while quick-buck promoters won't bother. Plus, without Glastonbury, the big hitters will be able to spread out the names a bit better. 2012 might be a tough time for festivals, but they could well be better for it."



At the start of 2011, debates raged over class in music, with stats suggesting that 60 per cent of musicians were privately educated.

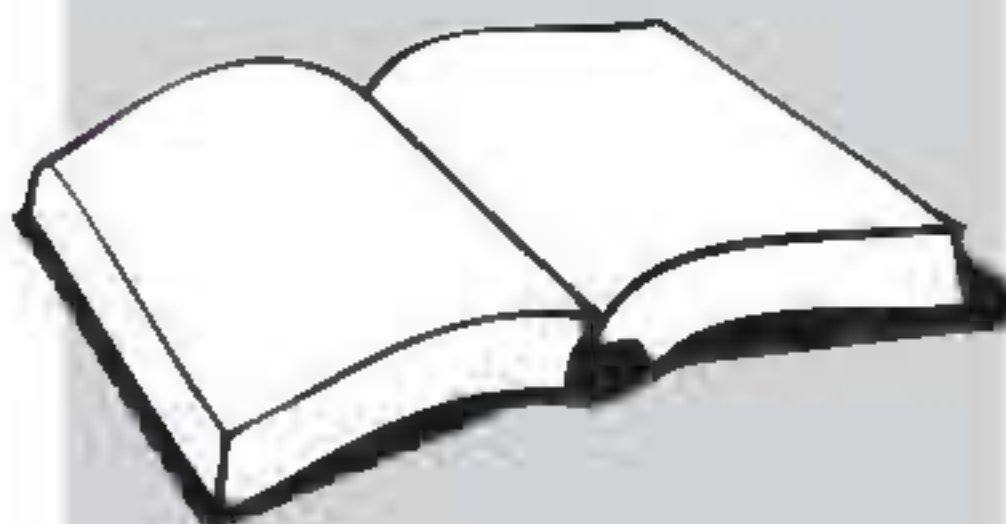
Will we see that balance redressed in 2012?  
Does it matter?



## DAVID BREWIS FIELD MUSIC

"In lots of ways, this isn't new. Culture has often been the preserve of those with time and money to spend making or consuming it. We're seeing a resurgence of the gap between those of us who are just trying to get by and what you might call the 'leisured classes'. We might have to start looking at the second half of the 20th century as a blip where music, art and culture was opened up to the working class, an

anomaly made possible by the welfare state, high employment, rising living standards and huge changes in the cultural establishment. It would be a travesty if cultural aspiration was only open to people with wealth. Inequality would become even more entrenched. Not to mention that so much great music was a result of wanting to understand and chip away at cultural and class boundaries."



## MORE BANDS ARE GETTING INTO ADVERTISING SYNCs AND SPONSORSHIP DEALS – IS IT WORTH IT?



### Frankie Francis Frankie & The Heartstrings

"If it wasn't for letting 'Hunger' be used on that Domino's ad, then six months ago we would all

have been back in our jobs. We'd have to be full time at work; we couldn't have done the festivals or supported bands like The Vaccines for a full tour. That money is paying for our second album, allowing us to be in a

practice space from 10am to 5pm. There's a lot of unemployment in the north east, so we really don't take it for granted."



## DOES THE CLOSURE OF LIVERPOOL'S MASQUE SPELL DOOM FOR SMALL VENUES THIS YEAR?



### LAURA SNAPES ASSISTANT REVIEWS EDITOR, NME

"Although it's incredibly sad to see any venue close, what's often not reported is just how many new ones are springing up – I'm always adding more to our gig guide. It's increasingly important for a venue to be more than just a stage and a bar – community co-operatives like Bristol's Cube Cinema and Norwich's Arts Centre demonstrate the importance of these spaces as cultural hubs with their own scenes and sounds. Venues must adapt to survive."



### EXAMPLE

"There's always going to be more females

signed than males. Labels want to find the next Tinie Tempah, Ed Sheeran, Example, but we're all so unique, it won't be easy."



### PRIYA ELAN ASSISTANT EDITOR, NME.COM

"I seriously doubt it. A lot of the great music coming in 2012 is being made by women. With debuts from the female-fronted Niki & The Dove and Azealia Banks forthcoming, not to mention new ones from New Young Pony Club, La Roux, Solange, The Knife and Madonna, the female-led assault on the charts is set to continue. Hurrah, I say."





# WHICH TECH DEVELOPMENTS WILL HAVE THE BIGGEST IMPACT - POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE - ON THE MUSIC INDUSTRY?



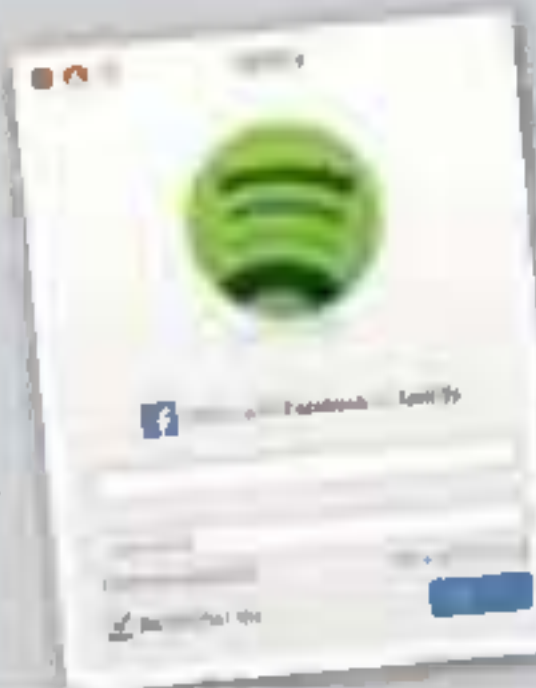
**LUKE LEWIS**  
EDITOR, *NME.COM*

**1** We'll see a big shakedown in the streaming market - Spotify will be the last man standing, expanding towards 100m users. Though whether it can flourish beyond 2012 depends on millions upgrading to a paid subscription, which I can't see happening.

**2** Companies such as The Echo Nest will continue to make cool, clever apps, but few of them will gain significant traction. Following Björk's lead more artists will release albums as apps, but they'll remain gimmicks, not mainstream.

**3** Technology will enable bands to cut out third parties and market direct to fans. And live-streaming gigs via Facebook is going to become a bit of a goldrush.

**4** Curated 'emotion-based' internet radio may well take off - Stereomood is particularly good, a potential challenger to Pandora's crown.



**EAMONN FORDE**  
MUSIC BUSINESS WRITER

**1** MP3s will become less important. Spotify will be rolled into your monthly phone or broadband bill, which will bring the relevance of owning music into question for a younger generation.

**2** Music and "the social" will go mainstream. By logging into sites like Spotify via Facebook, users are leaving digital breadcrumbs around the internet. These sites then use that information to improve their service in a way that's useful for advertisers.

**3** Open APIs (application programming interface) will be

where the innovation happens. Having open APIs means that different software and applications can talk to each other. It's software's hip-hop moment, where programs get mashed together and something completely new comes out of it that wasn't intended by either of the original independent companies.

**4** The Stop Online Piracy Act in the US could have a huge effect globally, if passed. A piece of legislation that dates from 1998, the 'safe harbor exemption' within the Digital Millennium Copyright Acts,

means that services currently cannot be held liable for the copyright infringements of their users, but if requested, have to take down illegally uploaded copyrighted material. SOPA would abolish that - YouTube would have to scan everything that went up on its site, which would be impossible. If SOPA goes through, services we take for granted will become very different. And for genres like hip-hop, where sampling and mixtapes are essential for the growth of the genre, SOPA could squash all of that.



## COULD 2012 BE THE FIRST YEAR WHERE NO INDIE SINGLES REACH THE TOP 10?



**Rick Martin**  
News Editor, *NME*

"The charts are certainly more unpredictable than ever, so it'd be short-sighted to rule out any indie singles charting in 2012. But I wouldn't be surprised if there were fewer this year, given the major label dominance over the Top 10 right now. Not that indie bands should be anxiously waiting for Reggie Yates to call - touring is the money-maker these days, not selling singles to vinyl-snuffers."



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Head to *NME.COM* to read a selection of these Talking Heads in full

## The Burning Question

Quiff: Yay or nay?



**SERGE PIZZORNO**  
KASABIAN

"Tom's rocking a James Dean haircut right now, but I dunno if I'd call that a quiff. I'm not sure about them, and I don't think anyone that has one is either. Tom looks like a movie star, whereas everyone else ends up looking like they've just stepped off a West End stage. You don't look like a movie star; you look like a stage star..."



Movie star? He looks more like a human ice cream



TALKING  
HEADS

# WHY INDIE FANS SHOULD LOVE JANUARY



The Maccabees' 'two heart' between stb policy makes for wild parties

## CHART ATTACK

What chance have these January-released albums got of getting in the Top Five?

### THE MACCABEES - 'GIVEN TO THE WILD'

Chances: Very good. Around the same odds as those you'd get for Orlando saying something 'endearingly awkward' during any ghoulish magazine interview.

### TRIBES - 'BABY'

Chances: Outside bet. Around the same odds you'd get for them replacing Johnny Lloyd with Johnny Borrell within the next year.

### CHAIRLIFT - 'SOMETHING'

Chances: Slim. Around the same odds you'd get for MGMT's comeback being more hummable than a wasp in a jam jar.

### THE BIG PINK - 'FUTURE THIS'

Chances: Next to none. Around the same odds as those you'd get for Adele winning Brit Awards' Got Talent.

*Yes, it's a grey, wet and dismal – but, as NME's Jamie Fullerton points out, it's a potential chart bonanza for alternative guitar rock*



January: the cold, miserable month in which we all mourn the £300 we blew on New Year's Eve, while contemplating a long four weeks of

boxsets and turkey sandwiches. No-one has ever had a house party in January. Everyone *hates* January.

Well, I don't. January's the best. Why? Because every year, without fail, it's the month in which the alternative nation infiltrates the Top 40. Following the compilation pop-slop that characterises the pre-Christmas release schedules, all the big, mainstream acts go quiet – the thinking being that the last thing yer casual music buyer has on their mind in January is buying an album.

Meanwhile, as their enemies pant

for breath, the alternative nation makes its move. The diehard fanbases are mobilised, people are wont to check out new, exciting things, and all of a sudden Michael Bublé and Rihanna are temporarily shunted aside. Last January, re-employing a tactic that got their debut album to Number One in 2009, White Lies again went early, sneaking their way to Number Three in the UK albums chart with 'Ritual', which was released on January 17. At the beginning of 2008, Radiohead managed to get the physical release of 'In Rainbows' to the top spot, despite it previously being available digitally on a pay-what-you-like basis. Two years later Vampire Weekend – long before they were playing tennis with Jake Gyllenhaal and getting sued by the record's cover star – got 'Contra' to Number Three (Number One in the US),

taking Gaga down a peg while Florence + The Machine's 'Lungs' hit the top spot.

And, this year more than ever, there's a chance for some of our finest guitar-wielding scammers to burst through the chart doors with the ferocity of the first day of an IKEA sale. Most prominently, there's The Maccabees. Their highly anticipated new album, 'Given To The Wild', comes out on January 9, which means that if the right HMV vouchers

*All of a sudden Michael Bublé and Rihanna are temporarily shunted aside*

are dealt, it could actually be Number One (rather than the Top 10 scrape it would inevitably get later in the year). And then there's Tribes. With their Razorlight-tastic stadium-destined indie debut out a week later, we could well see Johnny Lloyd ripping his jeans further as he bashes against the upper rungs of the

pop parade ladder. Meanwhile, at the more whimsical end of things, Chairlift have already made one of the pop albums of 2012 in their third LP, 'Something', out on January 24. Could they dispel the notion that MGMT killed any chance of skewy Brooklyn pop charting again due to the rectal nosedive of 'Congratulations'? Stranger things have happened.

What else? Well, there's Howler's 'America Grive Up', and The Big Pink's second, 'Future This', is out on January 16. OK, it's a stretch to imagine them keeping One Direction up at night in cold sweats, but you never know.

Whatever... January should still result in some deserved victories unachievable at any other time of year. So here's to the underdogs cheating their way into the nation's stuffing-stuffed, gym membership-wasting brains as the world gives birth to a new year. Until the Lana Del Rey album comes out, of course.

# YEAR OF THE ROSES: HOW IT'S SHAPING UP

*The Stone Roses signed two massive new record deals earlier this month – here's the inside track on what this means for their future*

## THE BIG QUESTION

Two months after announcing their huge reunion plans, The Stone Roses finally kicked into action this month. Ian Brown and

John Squire played onstage together for the first time in 16 years at Mick Jones' Hillsborough Justice Tonight gig in Manchester. And, then, a week later, the band announced they had signed two new record deals, a UK-and-worldwide deal with Universal, and a US-only one with Columbia. The latter was the strongest indicator yet that a new Stone Roses album is not some vague, far-off hope, but is actually inching closer to reality.

The structure of the deals is intriguing and suggests some shrewd bargaining on the Roses' part. Split-territory deals are not unheard of, but labels aren't keen on offering them because it means they miss out on money from overseas sales. When they *are* offered, they tend to be between a major and an indie. As one insider, an A&R at a prominent indie label, points out: "This deal is weird because it's between two majors, who are in competition and will do anything to put one over on the other. Both labels must have been desperate to work with the band and offered massive

amounts of money.

They've had their cake and eaten it."

But our source reckoned there was "every chance" that no-one at either label had yet heard a note of new music: "Major labels are desperate for surefire Number Ones, and the Roses are that. They'll have seen how many tickets they sold for Heaton Park and near enough let them write a blank cheque."

Any lingering fears about how seriously the Roses were taking things were recently assuaged by film-maker Shane Meadows – who's currently directing a documentary about the band – when he said, "They're all fucking intelligent and very proud, and they wouldn't go out there to the slaughter. I saw them rehearsing one verse of 'Bye Bye Badman' for an hour yesterday. I looked at that and thought, 'They are taking this fucking seriously.'"

But John Robb, a journalist and longtime confidant of the band, has cautioned that, "The third album, if it gets finished, will be 2013 unless they are moving very quickly..."



Which naturally raises questions about the future beyond next year. Brown has already declared that, "We'll ride it 'til the wheels fall off," and this Saturday (December 31), Mani will bid adieu to Primal Scream and become a full-time Stone Rose again.

Ultimately, 2011 has seen The Stone Roses put the groundwork in. Now it's time for them to deliver with a truly seismic 2012.

**NME.COM** Head to [NME.COM/video](http://NME.COM/video) to see Ian Brown on the making of 'The Stone Roses', plus a clip of the reunion press conference and a photo history of the band



## CHECK OUT THE YEAR'S BEST MUSIC PHOTOGRAPHY

*NME photo award winners' work to be showcased at gallery*

NME has been the place to see the greatest live photography for the past 60 years – and if the 2011 NME Music Photography Awards with Nikon proved anything, our future is in safe hands too. To showcase our finalists' work – including winner Layla Smethurst's portrait of Matthew Whitehouse from The Heartbreaks – we're holding an exhibition at the printspace venue in London next month.

There's an opening ceremony on January 5, ahead of the main January 6-11 run. Check out [NME.COM/photoawards](http://NME.COM/photoawards) for more information and to see a gallery of the finalists' photos.



## THE TIMELINE OF A RESURRECTION



### APRIL 2011

Rumours of a Stone Roses reunion surface after Ian Brown and John Squire meet up at Mani's mum's funeral. Mani in particular describes reports as "total fantasy island".

### AUGUST 8

The band plan to announce their reunion after the riots across England, but change their minds, instead deciding to play together first at a number of secret rehearsals.

### OCTOBER 18

The band confirm reunion gigs and plans to record new material at a press conference in London. Three huge homecoming gigs at Manchester's Heaton Park sell out in record time.

### OCTOBER 26

Rumoured dates for a full UK and Ireland arena tour – including two dates at The O2, and a date at Liverpool's Echo Arena, posted on a Roses fansite – are exposed as a fake.

### NOVEMBER 7

Appearances at T in The Park (July 6-8), Benicàssim (July 12-15) and Japan's Fuji Rock (July 27-29) are confirmed, as a tabloid reports David Beckham played a part in the reunion.

### DECEMBER 1

Dates at Sweden's Hultsfred (June 14-16) and Denmark's NorthSide (June 15-17) pencilled in – meaning Heaton Park will no longer be the first full live dates of the reunion.

### DECEMBER 10

The Stone Roses announce they've signed two new record deals, a UK and worldwide deal with Universal and a US-only one with Columbia, confirming that new material is on the way.



PENNIE SMITH, REX, LAYLA SMETHURST, MARKY BANE, ANHARA RODRIGUEZ, ANDREW TAYLOR

# PIECES OF ME HONOR TITUS

*Cerebral Ballzy's hellraising frontman on forming sentimental attachments to old Mary Chain cassettes and watching The Simpsons with his mum*

## My first album

**'ENTER THE WU-TANG (36 CHAMBERS)' BY WU-TANG CLAN**

"I was probably 12 or so when I bought it. It was just a quintessential New York album when it came out. It opened everyone's eyes. I liked how raunchy and raw and rugged it was. The beats were really active and awake."

## My first gig

**BLACK SHEEP**

"My dad was a musician, so I was in and out of many venues early on, when I was like four or five. He was in a hip-hop group called Black Sheep. It's great to see your dad doing what he loves."

## The first song I fell in love with

**'TIME OF THE SEASON' BY THE ZOMBIES**

"I remember my mom playing that. I later searched them out, and they became one of my favourite bands of all time. I liked the tune of it. The singing is different. It reeked of cool, before I even knew what cool was."

## My favourite lyric from a song

**'SUNNY SUNDAE SMILE' BY MY BLOODY VALENTINE**

"It goes, 'I'm gonna make your mouth a sunny sundae smile'. It's such a great American imagery line. I really like lyrics like that - they're really simple, really topical and it paints a picture."

## The book that changed me

**THE CATCHER IN THE RYE BY JD SALINGER**

"I remember reading that in school and just thinking, 'Whoa'. There's something about the isolation, and the social dynamics expressed in that book - it's something any boy or girl can relate to. It's just an eye-opening book, especially at the time when you read it - I was like 14 or 15. It totally captures a lot of stuff that you're going through at that point, and it lasts with you forever, no matter how old you are."

## My favourite piece of art

**RAYMOND PETTIBON'S ARTWORK FOR 'STILL IN LOVE'**

"I actually own that piece. We used it for a record, our first official seven-inch. We saw him doing it, and he gave it to me - wrote my name on the back and just handed it over. He's such an amazing person to do something like that."

## Right now I love

**MILK MUSIC**

"They're doing something really cool. I don't want to bracket them as a Dinosaur Jr



revival kind of band, but they're introducing something really cool, which has got a real '90s sound to it. But they're doing it without sounding pretentious or trying too hard."

## My favourite possession

**A CASSETTE OF THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN'S 'PSYCHOCANDY'**

"I bought it recently while we were on our American tour, and I've been carrying it since I got it. I don't have a cassette player with me, I just carry the cassette around in my jacket. It just really stokes me out. Is that whack?"

## Favourite TV show

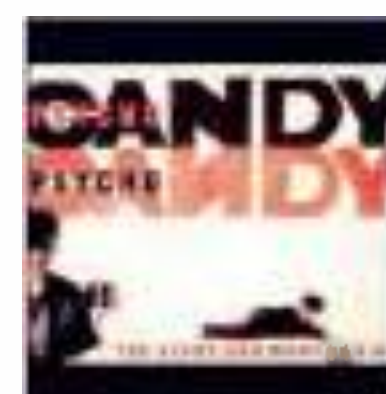
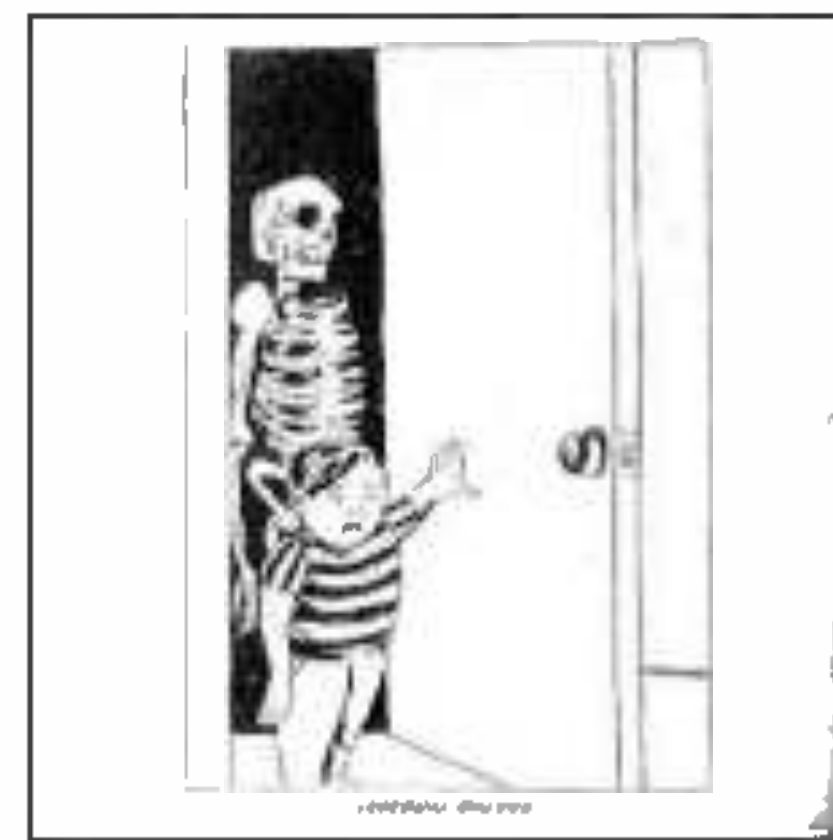
**THE SIMPSONS**

"I've been watching it forever. The writing just keeps getting better, and it's always been a great show. It's been a staple, awesome, tight show. I used to watch it with my mom growing up. Bart's definitely my favourite, but Marge is underrated - she's a beacon of sunshine."

## Favourite film

**HARMONY KORINE'S KIDS**

"I saw it in New York as a young New Yorker, and I was like, 'Whoa, kids are causing a ruckus.'"



Clockwise from main: Honor runs into difficulties with his Drumstick; Chloë Sevigny in *Kids*; *The Simpsons*; Raymond Pettibon's 'Still in Love' sleeve; three big influences: Salinger, The Mary Chain and Wu-Tang



George, John and Paul early in 1962, in between their leather and jumper periods



# THE WORLD'S GREATEST REJECTS



## ROCK IS DEAD

It sounds today like something an Oxford Circus nutter with a megaphone and a 'Same Shit, Different Day' T-shirt might rant. But this apocalyptic pronouncement has rattled down through the past 50 years of popular music, from Dick Rowe thinking rock'n'roll would be a flash in the pan to rival the twist, the hula hoop and rickets, to the art-tronic disciples of Animal Collective considering the guitar to be as prehistoric as a pterodactyl chow mein.

Every 12 to 14 years – the classic trend cycle – pop pundits have predicted guitar music has run its course. But, for the clattering danger, sex and fire the lusty thrum of wire against wood has inspired in the belly of every generation's youth, it's become the sound we can't let die. In the late '70s, with The Beatles' genius contorted into prog rock, blues metal and Wings, the rock fans burning Bee Gees albums and waving placards saying 'DISCO SUCKS' looked like the pall-bearers of a scene that had jazz odyssey'd itself to death. But just as it flat-lined, the Sex Pistols gave it a hepatitis-flecked kiss of life. In 1983 punk's flame had fizzled and the charts were awash with the sound of expensive white trousers flapping against the rudders of yachts as the new romantics ruled with their keytar staffs and thrones made from banks of blinking Yamahas. Even The Cure, Depeche Mode and New Order were giving in to synth pop – who could save the ailing guitar now? The Smiths could, by flying in the face of the synthetic aesthetic, choosing a name that was as unpretentious as possible and playing guitars as frantic and jangly as to angry cats stuck in a sackful of keys. Suddenly indie was born and Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark

looked quite the twats.

By 1991 rock had eaten dance culture whole, digested it into 'Screamadelica' and belched out the '90s. Ten years later, with Starsailor and Travis hammering the nail into guitar music's coffin one seated acoustic encore song at a time, The Strokes swoop in at the last minute, like

leathery garage Supermen. After 50-plus years of rock'n'roll's dominance as the pivot of western music culture, its extinction seems as overdue as a meteor strike, but every decade throws up a vital reinvention.

And in 1961, aware they were here to save rock'n'roll from a bunch of poor man's Elvises (yes, you Cliff), The Beatles knew it was only just beginning.

*On January 1, 1962 The Beatles auditioned for their first recording contract. Hungover and hapless, they tanked and were told they'd never make it. This is the story of the worst decision in history*

**W**e've all gasped at the myths, soaked in the schadenfreude. The most unfortunate people the world has ever known: the winning lottery numbers accidentally unregistered, the early Microsoft shares sold at a loss, the laughing bellows of "yeah right, who'd want to co-found something called The Facebook...?" History is littered with these nameless could have-beens, men blanked by their own destiny.

But one man more than any other is widely renowned as the wrongest man in the world. Ever.

In January 1962 Dick Rowe, head of A&R at Decca Records, sat in his office listening to several acetates of 45rpm records cut from two two-track tape reels. The recordings, made in Decca's own audition studio in West Hampstead on New Year's Day – 50 years ago this week – were raw, rushed and frazzled by nerves, 15 songs laid down in under an hour by a new band fresh from the Reeperbahn bar rooms and causing a stir in the provinces. But Rowe was unimpressed. The three original songs showed promise, sure, but the rest were covers of well-worn standards by the likes of Chuck Berry and Buddy Holly,

and although the band gave them a fresh, youthful punch, the potential he saw was limited, their sound too reminiscent of The Shadows. Plus, they lived an awfully long way away – imagine the travel expenses...

So, one chilly February afternoon, Rowe sat down with the band's manager at an executive club on the Albert Embankment to couch Decca's rejection of the band as politely as possible. With barely a flutter of regret, he delivered his killer blow: "Guitar groups are on the way out, Mr Epstein."

With that unpleasant task out of the way, he turned to the more positive business of contacting Brian Poole And The Tremeloes – auditioned that same New Year's Day and conveniently from Dagenham – to give them the good news that they'd passed the audition and had landed themselves a recording contract.

Thus was settled by far the worst decision ever made in the music industry. Dick Rowe would forevermore be dogged by an inauspicious epithet: he was The Man Who Turned Down The Beatles.

**"THERE WAS NOBODY TO TOUCH US IN BRITAIN"**

*John Lennon*



The Fab Five: (l-r) Sutcliffe, Lennon, McCartney, Best and Harrison

## THE STORM BREWS

"Hamburg totally wrecked us," Paul McCartney said. "I remember getting home to England and my dad thought I was half-dead. I looked like a skeleton, I hadn't noticed the change, I'd been having such a ball!"

It was a 'wrecked' but excited Beatles – John, Paul, George and then drummer Pete Best – who loaded their tattered road amps into their roadie Neil Aspinall's van around midday on New Year's Eve 1961 for the drive to London for their Big Break. Having earned their chops playing seven-hour sets between stripper acts around Hamburg's Reeperbahn red light district for the past two years, their virtually uncredited backing for a German single by a close Hamburg cohort Tony Sheridan on the trad/novelty pop number 'My Bonnie' (they were called The Beat Brothers on the record as 'Beatles' sounded too similar to the German slang word for 'many penises') had gained them a manager in the shape of the well-spoken, camp music columnist and record store manager Brian Epstein. Epstein had been so amazed at the streams of excited teenagers demanding copies of 'My Bonnie' at his North End Music Store that he decided to check out the buzz going off down at The Cavern for himself. "It was pretty much of an eye-opener," he told Mark Lewisohn for his book *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*. "They were fresh and they were honest, and they had what

I thought was a sort of presence and, this is a very vague term, star quality."

Envisioning the teen mania of The Cavern multiplied across the globe, Epstein dedicated his every waking moment to first securing a management deal with The Beatles, and then to getting them signed. Epstein's many initial forays to London to convince record labels to sign his act met with indifference. Columbia, Philips, Oriole, Pye and several more companies all beat Decca to the chance to spurn The Labs and their eventual billions. But he eventually lured A&R assistant Mike Smith from Decca Records, the UK's second biggest label of the age after EMI, to The Cavern on December 13 to see them play before a lunchtime audience of office workers. The tunes ricocheted from the vaulted ceiling, Lennon tore through 'Money (That's What I Want)' with a feral fury and McCartney crooned out a 'Till There Was You' that had hearts fluttering even under business suits. But Smith saw a great band with potential, not one that was

immediately contract-worthy. Instead, he agreed to set up an audition for them on New Year's Day 1962

## "WE SAT THERE IN THE STUDIO AND WE TRIED TO PERFORM..."

*Paul McCartney*

at Decca's studio at 165 Broadhurst Gardens in West Hampstead, less than two miles from Abbey Road. If The Beatles could prove themselves in the studio, they might be able to win over Smith's superiors.

So, under strict

instructions to get an early night and not get hammered for New Year, The Beatles set off from Liverpool upbeat, excited and confident. Having spent so many months holed up in tiny German living quarters together as they drank, drugged, shagged and puked their way through riotous Hamburg stints, they were a close brotherly unit: John had developed into a brash and confident frontman, Paul was the doe-eyed cute one cooing ballads to the girls in the front row and George had grown from shy teenager into fledgling guitar god. Ironically, though, they were all in danger of being overshadowed by Pete Best, the "mean, moody and magnificent" heartthrob at the back. Their Hamburg rock 'n' roll boot camp had honed them into a lean, mean, future rock machine, and they knew it. "What we generated was fantastic when we played straight rock," Lennon would later say. "There was nobody to touch us in Britain."

In 1961, though, the motorway routes of today were still some years from completion, so The Beatles' journey



Onstage in Hamburg, 1961



took them cross-country. Major snowstorms were roiling in from the west, and by 3pm, somewhere near Wolverhampton, Aspinall became hopelessly lost in deep blizzards. The band grew restless as their big chance disappeared in a cloud of thick Midlands fog. By the time they'd negotiated their way through the snow-clogged roads and made it to London it was 10pm, "just in time to see the drunks jumping in the Trafalgar Square fountain", Lennon noted. The band were in no mood for cocoa and jim-jams. "Two o'clock in the morning in Trafalgar Square," Pete Best recalled at a Beatles conference called The Fab Fourum, "there were four pissed-arse Beatles running around like lunatics." On *The Beatles Anthology*, Epstein also relates the evening's events: "They came to London and stayed at the Royal Hotel, paying 27 shillings a night for bed and breakfast. They were poor and I wasn't rich, but we all celebrated with rum and scotch and Coke, which was becoming a Beatle drink even then." It was one or 10 too many Beatles drinks that night that may have changed the course of rock music forever...

## BEERY-SHAMBLER

"We sat out there in the studio and tried to perform," said Paul in a 1997 biography by Barry Miles. "Tried to perform" indeed. Only Brian Epstein and session producer Tony Meehan (ex-Shadows) made it to Broadhurst Gardens for 10am on New Year's Day 1962. The Beatles hiccupped and groaned their way through the doors half an hour late, but luckily it turned out Smith himself had been plastered the previous night and didn't make it to the studio until 11am. By then The Beatles - nursing nerves and hangovers - were in a pretty terse state: they had only one hour to record before Brian Poole And The Tremeloes were due to arrive to record their own audition, so there'd be no overdubs and few second takes for The Beatles. Their 15 tracks went straight to two-track tape absolutely live. Smith also felt their battered equipment wasn't up to scratch, so insisted they use Decca's own amps. So The Beatles' first ever session alone in a real recording studio was a churned-out nightmare, playing unfamiliar equipment, an hour on the clock, allowed nowhere near the mixing desk, and their heads feeling like bowling pins mid strike. Tentatively, they struck up their first tune, 'Like Dreamers Do', the first ever Lennon/McCartney original song ever played in a studio. Paul's rich crooning voice

# The Decca Session

TRACK-BY-TRACK

*Songs from musicals, comedy accents and the first Lennon/McCartney originals. Would you have signed them?*

## LIKE DREAMERS DO

The first Beatles original of the session, written in 1957. Paul's Dion And The Belmonts croon sounds almost proto-Morrissey.

Epstein gave the song to another one of his acts, The Applejacks, who hit Number 20 with it in 1964.

## MONEY (THAT'S WHAT I WANT)

The very first Tamla Motown hit by founder Berry Gordy from 1959, basically about preferring cash to shagging.

John's gravelly voice cracks under the strain of dragging Best's shuffling drums along for two and a half minutes.

The Beatles re-recorded it for 1963's 'With The Beatles'.

## TILL THERE WAS YOU

A saccharine, schmaltzy ballad from 1957 musical *The Music Man*.

Paul's sweet trill melds with George's cack-handed solos. Also on 'With The Beatles', with added Ringo.

## THE SHEIK OF ARABY

A jazz standard composed way back in 1921.

George's comedic surf guitar noodle sounds like a Babyshambles outtake. Blessed obscurity.

## TO KNOW HER IS TO LOVE HER

Phil Spector number originally recorded by The Teddy Bears, inspired by the inscription on Spector's father's grave.

John tackles it straight on, but the concrete slab of a tune refuses to buckle.

Not even Dolly Parton or Gary Glitter could make it sound more appealing than watching a politician have sex with a pig.



## TAKE GOOD CARE OF MY BABY

A 1961 US Number One for Bobby Vee, written by Carole King and Gerry Goffin.

The Beatles were gaining confidence by this point.

A smaller hit again in 1968 for Bobby Vinton. Now used to flog baby food. So give that sync man a Nobel Prize.

## MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

A rousing rock'n'roll rattler from Chuck Berry circa 1959.

Spirited but distant. Might well have invented Fleet Foxes decades too soon.

## MCCARTNEY SOUNDS LIKE A PROTO-MORRISSEY

Covered by everyone, ever, Johnny Rivers took it to the US Number Two in 1964.

## SURE TO FALL (IN LOVE WITH YOU)

Carl Perkins' follow-up to 'Blue Suede Shoes'. Paul and John pull out their twangiest country vocals. The Beatles were all over this shit, recording it four times for BBC sessions.

## HELLO LITTLE GIRL

The first song John Lennon wrote, based on songs his mother used to sing to him. Displays an early spark of pop invention in its hiccupping hook.

Gerry And The Pacemakers bagged it in 1963 and took it to Number Nine.

## THREE COOL CATS

A skat-pop Coasters B-side from 1958. Brian's choice.

The Beatles as suave ladies' men try to pull by doing bad Pakistani and Mexican accents.

The Beatles revisited the song during the 'Let It Be' sessions, but political correctness pretty much did for it.

## CRYING, WAITING, HOPING

Another B-side, this time from 'Peggy Sue Got Married' by Beatles hero Buddy Holly.

George only fucks up the solo once. Result! Cat Power got her claws into it.

## LOVE OF THE LOVED

The last Lennon/McCartney song of the session.

Hitting his stride, Paul gives this melodic pop swinger some not inconsiderable welly. Epstein gave it to Cilla Black for her debut single.

## SEPTEMBER IN THE RAIN

Another musical number, from 1937 and appearing in the film *Melody For Two*.

Paul is seemingly possessed by the spirit of Elvis. A standard for pub singers to this day. And Rod Stewart.

## BESAME MUCHO

A 1940 Spanish song by Consuelo Velázquez which The Beatles invented their own lyrics to.

The sound of the band settling back and having fun with a mariachi surf novelty. Again, to pay homage to their origins, The Beatles rolled it out again during 'Let It Be', as seen on the documentary.

## SEARCHIN'

A Searchers song from 1957 - there are claims that they also performed The Searchers' 'Young Blood', but it wasn't recorded.

Paul, George and John pull out their C&W accents and throw in some "woooo"s and Goons-ish mucking about.

McCartney chose it as one of his Desert Island Discs in 1982.

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES

was yet to warm up and George's guitar fingers were hitting the notes awkwardly, but they muddled through. Simply opening with a song of their own was startling enough.

When John's voice started cracking during second number 'Money (That's What I Want)', Epstein and Smith began to realise this wasn't the rock'n'roll mecha-Godzilla they'd come to record. Lennon was frustrated too – he'd wanted The Beatles to hammer out a session full of the hi-octane rock'n'roll that was setting The Cavern alight every night, not the novelty songs, C&W standards and '50s dancehall numbers that Epstein had insisted on to show their 'range'. From this point on, Lennon promised himself, he'd never compromise on his music again.

Yet, despite their fragile state, the retro slant to the song choices and the faltering, ramshackle delivery, their raw-throated energy and naive charms shone sporadically through those muddy reels. John's voice was shot, George's solos stumbled and the bristling fire of The Cavern was snuffed by the rushed studio environment, but on original tunes 'Hello Little Girl' and 'Love Of The Loved' The Beatles revealed their melodic spark, mimicking '50s pop with sly and inventive harmonic twists. Come the latter half of the hour-long session The Beatles were finding their groove, knocking out a cheeky version of Leiber & Stoller's 'Three Cool Cats' complete with dodgy Pakistani and Mexican accents and a slick sweep through Buddy Holly's 'Crying, Waiting, Hoping' that would've been worthy of 'Please Please Me' at least. By the close of the session, John was letting out 'She Loves You' "woooo"s and hinting at the global musical maelstrom that was only months away.

## THEY LOVED THEM? NO, NO, NO

The clock ticked down; The Beatles' time – and maybe that of guitar bands as a whole – was up. Dead on midday The Beatles were ushered out of the studio to make way for Brian Poole And The Tremeloes. They were confident they'd done enough. "We thought we had it in the bag," Pete recalls. "After the audition Mike Smith gave us the unofficial wink, 'You've got the contract', so we went out and celebrated."

When the opposite news was delivered on February 6, 1962 Epstein, having only signed a management contract with the band weeks before, was distraught. "The recording test came and went," he says on *Anthology*. "The people that decide about these things at Decca said no. Well, you can imagine, I was more worried about what to say to the boys, having built up their hopes."

The band, awaiting Epstein's arrival with the news in the Punch & Judy café opposite Liverpool Lime Street station, were equally destroyed. "We would rush up to him, 'Well, well, what's the news?'" Paul remembers in Barry Miles' biography. "I'm afraid it's not very good. They don't want you'. The devastation! 'Oh God, when? Do you think it will ever happen for us, man?' 'Come on, keep your spirits up, it'll be alright'. He always said 'Well, I did see someone who might be interested' or 'I've got a new idea of who to approach...' He would always give us hope."

The way Epstein tells it, finding The Beatles their record deal post-Decca was an effortless affair. "I allowed myself a final 24 hours to exhaust the remaining disc companies and I booked into the Green Park Hotel. In the morning I took a cab to the EMI office block in Manchester Square, London to meet the man who would, within less than two years, produce 16 Number One discs by my artists."

The man was George Martin, head of A&R at EMI, but Epstein's route into his office was slightly more

## "WE RUSHED TO HEAR THE NEWS. IT WASN'T GOOD"

Paul McCartney

Lennon was always the main focus of the band in Hamburg

convoluted than simply flagging down a carriage. His first thought on being rejected was to negotiate further with Decca, offering to buy the first 3,000 copies of any Beatles single they released. "I was never told about that at the time," says Rowe. "The way economics were in the

record business then, if we'd been sure of selling 3,000 copies, we'd have been forced to record them, whatever sort of group they were." Then, around February 8, he turned to Martin, whom he'd met via a convoluted series of chance encounters: an HMV store disc cutter called Jim Foy suggested him to Sid

Coleman of an EMI subsidiary music publishing wing called Ardmore & Beechwood, who offered The Beatles a publishing deal and set up Epstein's meeting with Martin, who gave them their second audition.

By August 1962 The Beatles were signed to EMI subsidiary Parlophone, had used Martin's suggestion of

getting in a session drummer for the studio to oust Best and hire a new drummer – a guy out of Rory & The Hurricanes by the name of Ringo something – and were readying to release 'Love Me Do' into the Top 20. The world teetered on the edge of a climactic musical shift.

## THE FOOL WITH THE BILL

But who really *did* turn down The Beatles? Dave Munden of The Tremeloes has his theory as to why Decca chose them over Lennon's motley bunch. "I think there are probably two reasons. One is the fact that when we did our audition for Decca, I think we were probably a little bit more rehearsed, more professional. We had our music together. Maybe The Beatles weren't totally professional. They never put their tracks together very well, as well as we did. That's maybe one reason. And also, they came from Liverpool."



The Fabs, with added Starr power, 1962



result. Noting that only three rock songs appeared in the top 100 best-selling hits in the UK in 2010 – and one of those was by Florence + The Machine – the prophet and scholar Paul Gambaccini declared: “It is the end of the rock era. It’s over, in the same way the jazz era is over... rock as a prevailing style is part of music history.” Then came the new album from The Pigeon Detectives. After 50 years rock’s number, they told us, was finally up. Again.

Then the cycle began again. The Vaccines came along, gave their fans a rejuvenated Ramones chord, then another, then a third, and they went off and started more bands. “We’ve had kids coming up to us telling us that we’re the blueprint for their own rock’n’roll bands, and that’s a great thing,” says Justin Young. “I feel that rock’n’roll is an artform in a way that electronic music just... isn’t. I find that kind of music quite scientific, almost devoid of personality, in a way. Whereas there’s nothing sexier than just getting up onstage and beating the shit out of your guitar, is there? Saying what you fucking think, doing what you fucking feel...”

Within months, Bombay Bicycle Club, Noah & The Whale and Two Door Cinema Club had stolen the summer with grass-roots hype and support, Arctic Monkeys had knocked the ball out of the park (again), Yuck, Smith Westerns and Iceage were beating at the barricades and Radio 1 was forced to about-turn, playlisting Two Door and BBC, and, by the end of the summer, A-listing the frickin’ horrors. Which isn’t even to mention the NME Albums Of The Year list 2011, in which incredible albums by White Denim, Girls, Black Lips, St Vincent, Kasabian, Wild Flag, SCUM, Anna Calvi, WU LYF and, of course, PJ Harvey dominated the rankings.

So, welcome back, readers, to January 1962: that glorious time when rock’n’roll proves The Doubters wrong and shifts back up a gear. It may not twist so much anymore, but it still knows how to shout.

Find out 100 things you never knew about The Beatles at [NME.COM/photos](http://NME.COM/photos)

We came from London, which was a lot closer to Decca’s studio.”

Rowe’s own recollection of events muddies history’s waters further: “I told Mike he’d have to decide between them. It was up to him – The Beatles or Brian Poole And The Tremeloes. He said, ‘They’re both good, but one’s a local group, the other comes from Liverpool.’ We decided it was better to take the local group. We could work with them more easily and stay closer in touch as they came from Dagenham.”

Pete Best, however, claims to have the definitive answer. “Everyone turns round and says it was Dick Rowe who turned The Beatles down from Decca. It wasn’t, it was Mike [Smith]. Brian Poole And

The Tremeloes were Mike Smith’s favourite band in London, they did a lot of work for Decca unofficially. So the choice was between The Beatles and getting Brian Poole And The Tremeloes, and when Dick Rowe turned round and went, ‘I’m not making that decision, you make that decision’, Mike Smith chose Brian Poole And The Tremeloes instead of The Beatles. We were the dummies. He

kept that quiet for many, many years. And no wonder he kept it quiet.”

Which may explain why the next time Smith saw The Beatles, outside a BBC recording session in Manchester, his warm greeting was met with a hail of V signs. And why, when Rowe appeared alongside George Harrison on an episode of *Juke Box Jury*, he took serious notice when George recommended he check out a new band of rising stars, a bunch of London kids calling themselves The Rolling Stones. And Rowe, for his one historic failing, wasn’t a man to make the same mistake twice.

## AND IN THE END...?

But was Rowe ultimately correct? Were guitar bands, at some far-off point in the future, on their way out? At the start of 2011, the rally went up again: guitars were outdated, defunct, an anachronism. The Radio 1 playlist compilers had already stopped playing guitar bands, claiming the scene was burnt out and unoriginal to its listeners; rock and indie acts faded from the charts as a direct



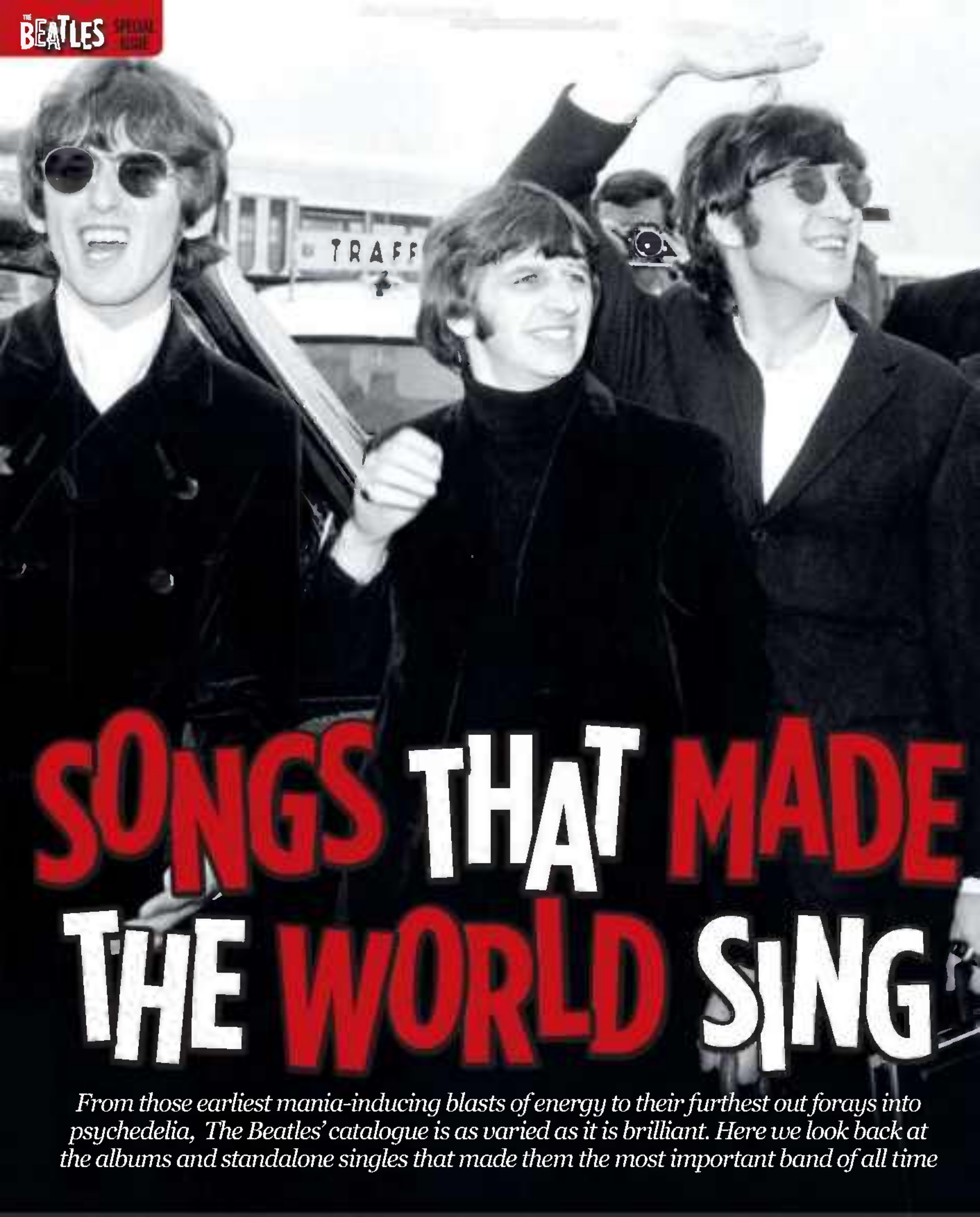


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# SONGS THAT MADE THE WORLD SING

*From those earliest mania-inducing blasts of energy to their furthest out forays into psychedelia, The Beatles' catalogue is as varied as it is brilliant. Here we look back at the albums and standalone singles that made them the most important band of all time*



The Fab Four en route to Boston Airport in 1966, one week after the release of 'Revolver'

## PLEASE PLEASE ME

Album, 1963



Five hundred and eight-five minutes: the total amount of time spent on the 10 new songs on The Beatles' debut album (with both A and B-sides of their first two singles making it up to 14). In what is essentially a document of their live act, you can hear the heavy colds they were all fighting – by John's throat-shredding vocal on 'Twist And Shout', there is nothing left to give.

**NME review:** "All the tracks have the vocal-instrumental drive that has put this Liverpool group way on top in a very short time."

**John Lennon:** "By the end of the day, all we wanted to do was drink pints of milk."

**Your mother should know:** The total cost of the album session was £400.

## FROM ME TO YOU

Single, 1963



The first Beatles single to make Number One in all of the British charts simultaneously. Nowhere near as good as 'Please Please Me' but it kept the fire burning.

McCartney noted that it was the first of his and John's songs that he later heard an actual milkman whistling.

**NME review:** "The tune is not anything like as good as on the last two discs from this group."

**Paul McCartney:** "We were on the coach, travelling from York to Shrewsbury. We'd already written 'Thank You Girl' as the follow up to 'Please Please Me', and this new number was to be the B-side."

**Your mother should know:** Features the first minor chord in a Lennon/McCartney song.



**"‘LONG TALL SALLY’ IS A GOOD ‘UN. IT’S BASIC ROCK’N’ROLL, AND YOU CAN’T BEAT THAT”**

John Lennon

## I WANNA HOLD YOUR HAND

Single, 1964



The best early Beatles single. Contains about 1,000 attention-seeking ideas all competing: handclaps, mania-inducing crescendos, twanging Bo Diddley guitar, a strong gang vocal that is essentially one long hook. It was written to snare US listeners, at the behest of Brian Epstein, and it worked, staying at Number One for seven weeks and signalling the start of the British invasion.

**NME review:** "Repetitious almost to the point of hypnosis, with an easily memorised melody, and some built-in hand clapping to help along the infectious broken beat."

**Paul McCartney:** "We're tickled pink over all this American interest, of course."

**Your mother should know:** Was re-recorded in German as 'Komm, Gib Mir Deine Hand'.

## LONG TALL SALLY

EP, 1964



Intended to fill the gap between albums, here were three cover versions and a Lennon original. In truth, only the title song impresses, with a hysterical

Macca vocal and a firecracker, tight-as-shit take from The Beatles as a whole. 'I Call Your Name' is John's most ordinary songwriting hour, while 'Slow Down' positively pales in comparison with his other cover versions. Ringo's 'Matchbox' isn't great, either.

**NME review:** "After tremendous demand, EMI have put out this collection of three rocking covers, and one calmer original."

**John Lennon:** "I always like the latest record we have for obvious reasons, but '... Sally' is a good'un. It's basic rock'n'roll, and you can't beat that."

**Your mother should know:** 'I Call Your Name' was originally given to Billy J Kramer.



## SHE LOVES YOU



The big bang of Beatlemania: Ringo's brief drum roll, then those gang harmonies...

this is the sound of a formula being perfected, a formula to which the whole world would collectively lose its mind. Less celebrated is John Lennon's macho man flip 'I'll Get You', its arrogant lyrical bent showing the difference between him and his writing partner.

"It wouldn't need a remarkable prophet to predict that the new release from The Beatles is going to be another Number One."

"It was Paul's idea: instead of singing 'I love you' again, we would have a third party."

George Martin was initially unconvinced by the song ending on a major sixth chord, describing it as "corny".

## A HARD DAY'S NIGHT Album, 1964



The songs from the film are all genius, of course – the title track, featuring George's new 12-string Rickenbacker, might just be Lennon's finest pop song. Just as important, though, are the six songs that make up the second side, that usher in an introspective lyrical bent for both John ('I'll Cry Instead') and Paul ('Things We Said Today'), as well as some heavier-than-hell guitar on 'You Can't Do That'. **NME review:** "Doesn't have the uninhibited, joyous drive of the former Beatles LPs, but is still way ahead of its rivals."

**John Lennon:** "We've always been the kind of people who didn't like musicals because they were embarrassing when all of a sudden a song started. So we tried to get away from all that."

**Your mother should know:** This is the first Beatles album to feature no Ringo lead vocal.

## I FEEL FINE Single, 1964



Another first for The Beatles, a song that begins with guitar feedback (actually the A string on McCartney's bass). After this adventurous opening, mind, it's a joyously straightforward affair, with a soaring Lennon chorus and a spidery guitar motif in the verses. The flip, 'She's A Woman', is nowhere near as good, and a rare moment of melodic mediocrity from Paul McCartney. **NME review:** "A tremendous rhythm and a catchy melody. Arresting and ear-catching."

**John Lennon:** "I said to Ringo, 'I've written this song, but it's lousy'. But we tried it – complete with the riff – and it sounded like an A-side, so we decided to release it just like that."

**Your mother should know:** 'I Feel Fine' was the first of six Number One songs in a row on the American charts, a record at the time.

## BEATLES FOR SALE Album, 1964



Often called the weakest Beatles album, '...For Sale' is in truth full of quality cuts. 'No Reply' is a great story; 'I'm A Loser' is a better take on the themes of 'I'll Cry Instead'; 'Baby's In Black' is a genuine Macca/Lennon head-to-head; 'Every Little Thing' is perhaps the most underrated Beatles song of all; 'I'll Follow The Sun', 'Tight Days A Week', 'I Don't Wanna Spoil The Party'... all fine songs.

**NME review:** "This LP is overflowing with absorbing and distinctive Beatle trademarks. It's rip-roaring, infectious stuff, with the accent on the beat throughout."

**Paul McCartney:** "We don't record as fast as we used to, we take more time now. Got to keep getting better."

**Your mother should know:** 'I'll Follow The Sun' actually dates from when Paul was 16.

**"ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE" WAS PERFECT, IF YOU'RE GOING TO SAY ANY MESSAGE"**

*Paul McCartney*



## HELP! Album, 1965



Aside from George's first encounter with a sitar, the *Help!* film was not of much use to any of The Beatles.

What saves it is its magnificent set of songs. During filming, the Fabs were sneaking off to smoke weed, and this was seeping into the writing. The title track and 'You've Got To Hide Your Love Away' ushered

in the self-analytical Lennon, while 'Ticket To Ride' aided his heavy rocker credentials; McCartney proffered his strongest quintet of songs on an album ever (not least 'Yesterday'), and Harrison was finding his voice: 'You Like Me Too Much' an example of his black, brutally honest humour.

"It's a gay, infectious romp, which doesn't let up in pace or

sparkle from start to finish – with the exception of one slow track."

"It was Epstein's idea that we didn't do any TV before 'Help!' came out. We wondered what it was all about – but the record got to Number One, didn't it?"

The last Beatles album to feature any cover versions until 'Maggie Mae' on 'Let It Be'.



## DAY TRIPPER/WE CAN WORK IT OUT

Single, 1965



A cast-iron riff ushers in the start of the Beatles' second phase proper: 'Day Tripper' – a dig at "weekend hippies" – was conjured up to deadline for a Christmas 1965 single, Lennon's guitar line a direct riposte to 'I Can't Get No' Satisfaction', which had recently gone to Number

One. Here though, was a far more intricately arranged, out-there song than the Stones' signature. 'We Can Work It Out' was a beauty, too – considered more commercial, it was supposed to be the standalone A-side, but John's inner rocker quickly put a stop to that.

"Day Tripper" is not one of the boys' strongest, but generates

plenty of excitement – the other side is much more startling in conception."

"We don't like protest songs because we're not the preaching sort and in any case, we leave it to others to deliver messages of that kind."

'Day Tripper' is the only Lennon-written Beatles song sung by McCartney.

## RUBBER SOUL

Album, 1965



We're a long, long way from 'Twist And Shout' here. From the flashy raunch of 'Drive My Car', through the sitar-augmented 'Norwegian Wood', to the Byrds jangle of 'If I Needed Someone' to beautiful, drugged introspection ('In My Life' and 'Nowhere Man') and out-and-out bitterness ('I'm Looking Through You'), this was the first time The Beatles made "an album", and it prompted Brian Wilson to create 'Pet Sounds'. **NME review:** "The great thing about this LP is, The Beatles are still finding different ways to make us enjoy listening to them."

**George Harrison:** "We were very pleased with the way everything's turned out. We all think it's just about our best LP! I can't wait for it to come out. The sleeve's finished too, and the picture on the front is pretty good!"

**Your mother should know:** Closing track 'Run For Your Life' was Lennon's least favourite Beatles song.

## PAPERBACK WRITER/RAIN

Single, 1966



Another double-headed blockbuster that preceded 'Revolver' by two months and became The Beatles' 10th UK Number One. The A-side had their most ambitious harmonies and heaviest riff to date. The flip was something else entirely, Ringo's scattershot fills high in the mix for once, blending with McCartney's upper-octave bassline (to become one of the most copied grooves ever) and Lennon's droning psychedelia. **NME review:** "Some of the most startling harmony chanting even The Beatles have ever come up with."

**Paul McCartney:** "I love the word 'Paperback'. We wrote the words down like we were writing a letter. There's no story to it, and it wasn't inspired by any real-life characters."

**Your mother should know:** It was cut louder than any other Beatles record up to that time, due to a new piece of kit referred to as 'Automatic Transient Overload Control'.

## REVOLVER Album, 1966



To many, their most perfect album, balancing Paul's relatively straight pop ('Here, There And Everywhere', 'Good Day Sunshine') and his more adventurous writing ('Eleanor Rigby' and 'For No One'), John's best LSD songs ('She Said She Said', 'And Your Bird Can Sing'); George's first foray into Indian music ('Love You To'), and the experimental 'Tomorrow Never Knows'. Even 'Yellow Submarine' couldn't spoil it.

**NME review:** "Certainly has new sounds and ideas, and should cause plenty of argument among fans as to whether it is as good or better than previous efforts."

**Ringo Starr:** "We all sat round trying to think of a name and Paul thought of 'Revolver', and we hadn't thought of anything better. And, if you want to be clever, it also means revolving, because the record goes round."

**Your mother should know:** A mooted title included 'After Geography' – a Ringo joke in response to the Stones' 'Aftermath' LP.

## STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER/PENNY LANE Single, 1967



The Beatles locked themselves in Abbey Road with this song taking 45 hours (over five weeks) to record: full of all kinds of tape effects, strange instrumentation,

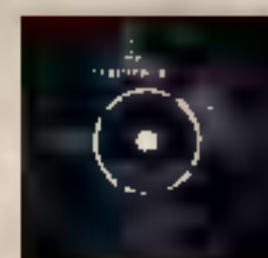
tempo changes and the kitchen sink. 'Penny Lane' was poppier, but no less a sign of a band about to change things forever.

**NME review:** "The most unusual and way-out single The Beatles have yet produced – both in lyrical content and scoring. Quite honestly, I don't know what to make of it."

**John Lennon:** "Strawberry Fields... Penny Lane. They were just groovy names. Because Strawberry Fields is anywhere you want to go."

**Your mother should know:** George Martin described the fact that these songs didn't appear on 'Sgt Pepper's...' as "a dreadful mistake".

## ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE Single, 1967



Beamed around the world as part of *Our World*, the first ever live global television link when 400 million people in 26 countries experienced it simultaneously,

this song needed to be good. It was. They were asked to come up with a message that could be understood by all nationalities. They did.

**NME review:** "Pop history was made on Sunday, when a new record was plugged to the whole world at the same time! The honour rightly went to The Beatles, with an upbeat, joyous sounding, simple-lyricised song."

**Paul McCartney:** "All You Need Is Love" was perfect if you're going to say any message. That's a wonderful message to say, really."

**Your mother should know:** The performance on *Our World* featured a pre-recorded backing track.



## SGT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

**R**emember Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band is The Beatles" proclaimed an advert on the cover of *NME*, the week of release. The reminder was not necessary, as the world queued up in droves to experience what was almost immediately accepted as a drastic game-changer. Reviews called it "a decisive moment in the history of Western civilisation" and

claimed that "listening to the Sgt Pepper album, one thinks not simply of the history of popular music, but the history of this century". The Beatles' place as the most important band on the planet was reasserted.

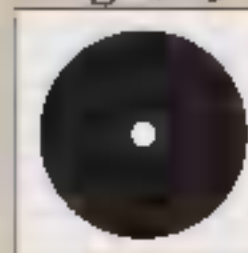
"No-one can deny that they have provided us with more musical entertainment, which will both please the ear and get the brain working a little bit, too!"

"The people who have bought our records in the past must realise that we couldn't go on making the same type of music forever. We must change and I believe those people know this."

Adolf Hitler and Jesus Christ were initially suggested by Lennon for Peter Blake's cover montage, but they were vetoed.

## HELLO, GOODBYE/ I AM THE WALRUS

Single, 1967



Written to demonstrate to Beatles helper Alistair Taylor how to write a song, Paul here conjured a tune that infuriated John because a) it was "three minutes of

contradictions and meaningless juxtapositions" and b) its sunshiney chorus meant that it would usurp 'I Am The Walrus' as the A-side. To be fair, it's pretty easy to empathise with him. **NME review:** "Supremely commercial, and the complete answer to those who feel The Beatles are going too way out."

**John Lennon:** "That's another McCartney. An attempt to write a single."

**Your mother should know:** There were actually three videos made for the song, all directed by McCartney.

## MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

Mini-album, 1967



The (colour) film that gave the critics a stick with which to beat The Beatles was not in any way the disaster it was claimed, though its scattershot blasts of

stupidity were not quite as earth-shattering as what had immediately preceded it. And the EP collecting the songs that featured in the film showed they were still in a rich vein of form.

**NME review:** "This is the Beatles out there in front and the rest of us, a cast of millions, in their wake. This is 'Sgt Pepper's...' and beyond, heading for marvellous places."

**Paul McCartney:** "We wanted to do this because we couldn't think of anything to buy people at this price [19s 6d]. The only things you could get were ties, or soap and talcum powder."

**Your mother should know:** 'Flying' is one of the few songs credited to all four Beatles.

## LADY MADONNA

Single, 1968



Where to go when you've done everything? Back to the sounds that made you want to start up in the first place, of course. Here Paul was going for a Fats Domino

feel at the piano, and doing as mighty fine a job as you might expect. Here was the release that introduced the era of Beatles singles being a celebration of the music they truly loved rather than all about innovation.

**NME review:** "The Beatles cycle turns full circle, and here we are back to square one again with a rocker!"

**Ringo Starr:** "It sounds like Elvis, doesn't it? No, it doesn't sound like Elvis... it IS Elvis. Even those bits where he goes very high."

**Your mother should know:** The saxophone solo was played by famous jazz club owner Ronnie Scott.

**"“LADY MADONNA”  
DOESN'T SOUND LIKE  
ELVIS. IT IS ELVIS”**

*Ringo Starr*



## THE BEATLES (AKA THE WHITE ALBUM)

**T**he end was nigh: everyone in the band was sick of the sight of each other, moving in vastly different directions, mixing in vastly different circles. It was 'Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da' versus 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun', versus some quite brilliant George songs that no-one else really gave a shit about. 'Birthday' and a couple of others aside, there is little in the way of unity ('Why Don't We Do It In The Road?', for example, featured McCartney on all instruments), but it matters little: there is still an embarrassment of riches brought to the table by all on 'The White Album'.

**NME review:** "Thanks to Harold Wilson and Roy Jenkins and the new extra purchase tax, the price of the Beatles double album now tots up to £3 14s 10d, a hefty sum which seems to have had no effect whatsoever on its phenomenal placing in this week's chart."

**Paul McCartney:** "There is no central theme to the songs, they aren't even about a thing in particular. They're just songs. They're not even particularly connected."

**Your mother should know:** Due to Ringo leaving The Beatles temporarily, McCartney plays drums on some songs.

# A FAB LEGACY

*So what did The Beatles ever do for us? Apart from revolutionise the worlds of fashion, music and culture, obviously – we run through the A-Z of the Fab Four's impact on modern civilisation*



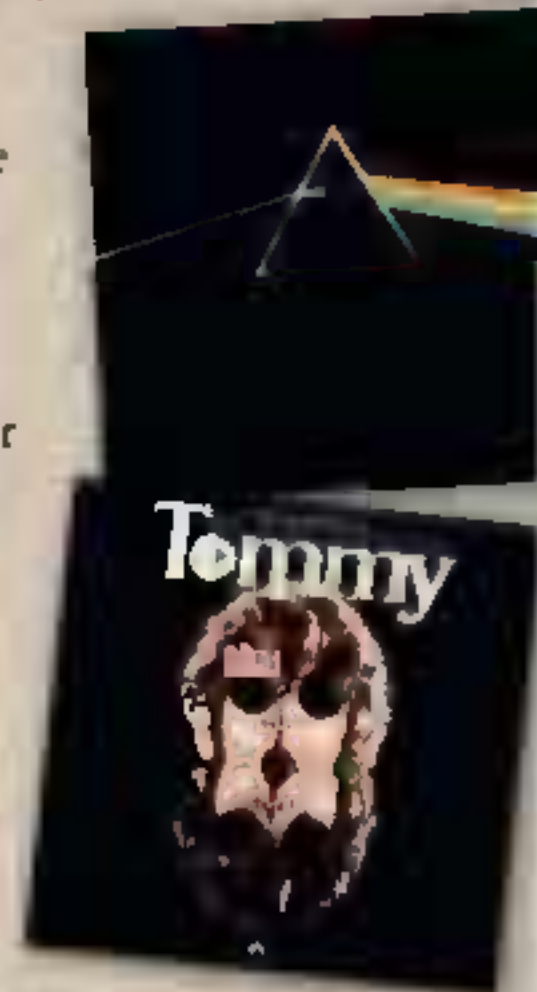
## A THEISM

Or at least a far more mainstream acknowledgement of the humanist argument, anyway. Following the bonfires of Beatles albums in the wake of Lennon's "bigger than Jesus" quote in 1966 came the point at which the establishment lost its last grip on the clued-in counterculture youth: a Beatle-worshipping generation began thinking for itself and, from a position of almost blanket moral authority in the US, the church began a steady descent towards its current standing, outside the Midwest and Southern states, as an anachronistic quasi-cult. Lennon – a liberal deity in his own right by the end of the '60s – put the boot in further by sweetly imagining no religion and cooing "God is a concept by which we measure our pain". If Lennon was the devil, the reasoning went, he sure was backing it up with all the best tunes.



## C CONCEPT ALBUMS

OK, so it wasn't the most tightly plotted exploit ever – believe us, if anyone could fathom a storyline to connect 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' to 'Lovely Rita' via 'When I'm Sixty-Four' then Lloyd Webber and Ben Elton would've milked it for billions decades ago – but by enfolded 'Sgt Pepper's...' in the atmosphere and aesthetic of an archaic British brass band right down to the Technicolor costumery of the sleeve art, The Beatles created one of the first concept albums. And its visionary musical expansions and widespread acceptance as the greatest album ever made (for the next three decades at least) inevitably spawned imitators: cue 'Tommy', 'The Dark Side Of The Moon' and Rick Wakeman dressed like Gandalf.



## D 'DIFFICULT' SECOND ALBUMS

It's all in the time scale. Between 1963 and 1965 The Beatles released six albums and leapt from populist 'Please Please Me' pop to the revolutionary proto-psychedelia of 'Rubber Soul'. In today's money, that's as long as the average band gets to finish touring their debut album and make their second one. And every band on Earth wants to be the next Beatles. So the dilemma for the ambitious young rock 'genius' wishing to revolutionise music is thus: you're never going to get six albums to make such a gigantic leap, you're going to have to attempt it in two. So goodbye having a muck about with your mates, hello 'musical differences', ferocious drug abuse, inadvisable dubstep experiments and 'Second Coming'.

## E ENIGMATIC GUITARISTS

Before George Harrison, any guitarist who didn't also sing could be identified onstage by the goofy teeth, thick-rimmed spectacles and air of a studio technician roped in to make the singer look sexier. After George – not just the quietest but by some stretch the coolest Beatle – guitarists became swarthy, sizzling fire gods of pouting mystique and allure, their attention shunning languor seeming to say 'Who needs adulation when you've got the talent of a twangy Titan and are hung like a Trojan horse?' Keef, Page, Marr, Zinner: were it not for Harrison, none of them would be short-cut enough to



Swagger Jagger, and the rest of the Stones

## B BOYBANDS

There were all male groups before The Beatles, of course, but they were generally backing bands to the likes of Buddy Holly or Cliff Richard cutting the cord and making a dash for the spotlight, yet forever hobbled by the massive ampersand like an albatross around their necks. And, let's face it, Marvin-mania was never going to sweep the globe. Within 10 minutes of *The Ed Sullivan Show* credits, however, the charts were rammed with The Animals, the Stones and The Dave Clark Five – and the age of endless gangs of chart molesting, gusset-clampening pop beefcake was upon us. Fifty years later we arrive at One Direction, and can only blame the banality-craving churn of industry and commerce for our by now less little sis



## FANATICAL DEATH THEORIES

During the lifespan of The Beatles, Paul died twice. Once it was signalled by him having his back to the camera on the back cover of 'Sgt Pepper...', and then of course there was the time they dragged his clearly decomposing corpse out of the ground to be propped up shoeless on the 'Abbey Road' sleeve, dead as a bastard. There's even a rumour that when someone spotted they were spelling the letters NUJV rather than HELP in semaphore on the 'Help!' cover, a theory circulated that it must stand for New Unknown John Vocalist. Bullshit but bloody good fun, it was the start of decades of rock'n'roll conspiracy theories that, once they collided with the online fan messageboard phenomenon, means you can barely log on these days without someone trying to convince you that Lady Gaga is pregnant with the ebola virus because her Taj Mahal was on wonky at the VMAs.



If eclecticism hurts that much, count us out

## GENRE-HOPPING

After 'The White Album' emerged, taking in every genre from Wild West gothic to '30s Charleston to punk rock, Elizabethan baroque, reggae and psychedelic pop, it became a sign of great talent to be able to turn your hand to any style, and a mark of cretinous one-trick ponyism to stick unwaveringly to what you're good at. Which is why the Sex Pistols couldn't last, Radiohead are considered geniuses and Blur were better than Oasis. Sorry.

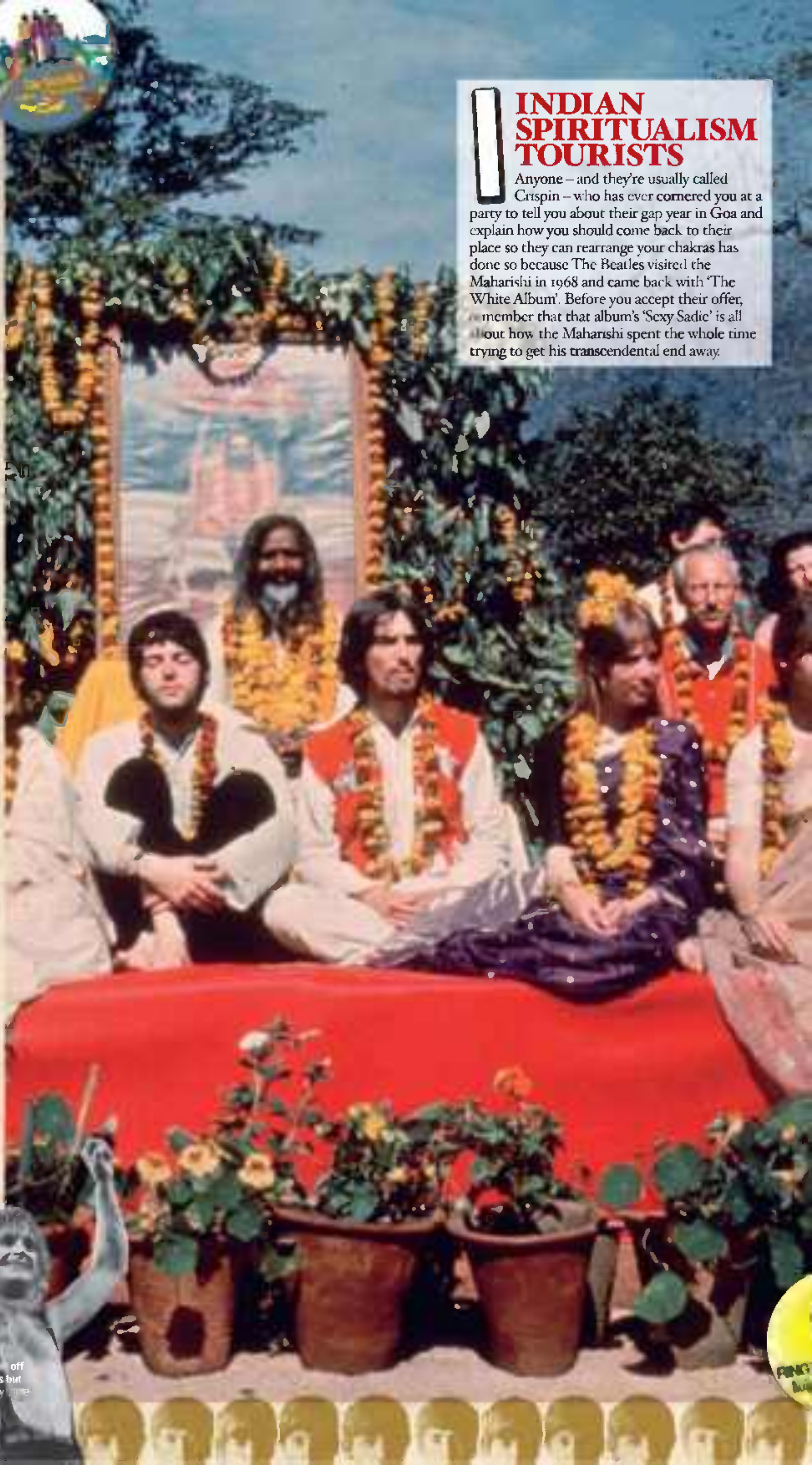
## HEAVY METAL

Again, it's not their fault it inspired generations of stinking greasy virgins to gargle about goblins, but Macca's legendary bass Cloverfield 'Helter Skelter' is regarded as the first metal song, with its low end like a planet cracking, its choir of demonic Georges and its wild wolfman howlings over riffs like sheet metal being bandsawed to oblivion. Somewhere in Birmingham, you imagine, a kid called Osbourne spat out his mouthful of gothic mac a f... d... d...

Ozzy off bat heads but loves 'Hey'

## INDIAN SPIRITUALISM TOURISTS

Anyone – and they're usually called Crispin – who has ever cornered you at a party to tell you about their gap year in Goa and explain how you should come back to their place so they can rearrange your chakras has done so because The Beatles visited the Maharishi in 1968 and came back with 'The White Album'. Before you accept their offer, remember that that album's 'Sexy Sadie' is all about how the Maharishi spent the whole time trying to get his transcendental end away.



The Fall on a precursor to An Idiot Abroad

## JUDICIAL INQUIRIES

Besides Lou Reed & Metallica's 'Lulu', the other worst thing to evolve from 'Helter Skelter' was the vague idea that rock music might want to make people kill themselves or others. With HELTER SKELTER scrawled over the walls of their victims' house in blood by the members of Charles Manson's 'family' cult, the suggestion arose that the darker edges of rock music, as found on 'The White Album', may induce psychotic or suicidal episodes in the previously charming and well-balanced. Before long Black Sabbath and Judas Priest would both be defending themselves in court against charges of inciting suicide in their fans when, as Ozzy would later point out, if he had the power of subliminal suggestion over his audience his secret messages would actually be: 'Buy more Black Sabbath records...'

## KIDS' MUSIC

Before The Beatles, novelty pop was largely confined to music halls, Goons albums, Eurovision and Christmas compilations with pictures of grinning air hostesses dressed as sexy elves on the cover. Once 'Yellow Submarine', 'Octopus's Garden', 'All Together Now' and 'Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da' had been granted credibility by association, however, there was a kiddie pop boom that shaved 10 years off the single buying demographic and made about eight out of 10 Number Ones in the '80s one-hit-wonder playschool songs in a made-up language.

## LOOPS

And electronica in general, in fact. All down to McCartney again. In 1966, while piecing together the ground-breaking tribute to *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead*, 'Tomorrow Never Knows', to close 'Revolver', Paul struck upon the idea to add a warped, mystical atmosphere to the tune not, as John suggested, by getting a hundred Tibetan monks to sing on it and record the vocals swinging from a rope, but by putting together 30 loops of quarter-inch tape, including the repeated sounds of backward sitar, a Sibelius symphony and what sounds like Satan's own seagull, playing them all at once all over the Abbey Road PA and mixing them live and at random. And thus the world's first electro song was recorded with technicians kneeling in corridors holding the tapes taut with pencils. FACT.

## MODERN CIVILISATION

Not in the sense of electricity, aqueducts and TK Maxx, obviously, but the sense of 21st-century civility. Governments may still wage colonialist wars to justify defence budgets or protect oil supplies, and railway staff in Reading may still be cunt

THE BEATLES

SPECIAL ISSUE

but western society got through the moral and cultural minefields of the late '60s because at the very heart of flower power sat The Beatles in a psychedelic garden of flowers and hippies, blasting 'All You Need Is Love' across the world on the first ever live global television link-up, after which no right-thinking person could ever be racist, sexist or homophobic again. Imagine, if The Rolling Stones had had that slot, we'd all be fighting and copulating in the streets right now.

## NOVEMBER MOUSTACHES

Pre-1967, only Errol Flynn, Charlie Chaplin, Vlad The Impaler and Hitler had moustaches.

It was a mark of military authority, swashbuckling panache, slapstick comedy or evil, but never rock'n'roll. Then came the lip warmers of the 'Sgt Pepper's...' sleeve – a full range from semi-walrus (George) to minor lieutenant (John) to perky spiv (Paul) – and all that changed. Charity our arses, Movember is all about living out 'Penny Lane'.

Errol Flynn: a 'Shoreditch moustache' pioneer

## OASIS

And not just the Lennon shades and 'Strawberry Fields...' riffs of the Gallaghers, all of Britpop: 'Beetlebum' and 'Coffee & TV' were just as indebted as anything off 'Definitely Maybe'. And, come to think of it, Britpop precursors The La's were as Merseybeat as anything. And the whole Madchester thing before that owed a heavy debt to The Fabs' brand of melodic psychedelia, finally wrestling the lineage of The Beatles away from the prog-pop dinosaurs of the '70s and making them cool for the baggy generation. Oh, bugger it, let's just give The Beatles credit for all great rock and pop music of the last 50 years and have done with it. ▶

One of Beady Eye, and some chap called



THE BEATLES

BEATLES FAN

44 years on, and we're still not sure what's happening. .

## P PSYCHEDELIA

Fleet Foxes, The Flaming Lips, Animal Collective, Grizzly Bear, Spiritualized, Super Furry Animals, Neutral Milk Hotel, Suede, My Bloody Valentine, The Stone Roses, Blur, Mercury Rev – all of these acts would be mere buskers farting into kazoos had The Beatles not taken psychedelic sounds into the mainstream as early as the feedback fuzz of 'I Feel Fine'. And MGMT would be hedge fund managers



**Q QUORN**  
For all John and Yoko's bed ins, acorns in bags and Dangles Out For Peace protests, the most lasting ethical shift prompted by The Beatles was in catering for the discerning (and secretly meat-craving) vegetarian. The Lovely Lady Linda's veggie bangers raised the bar for gourmet faux-flesh, forcing the Quorn people to make their product taste more like actual chicken and less like squishy urinal cakes.

**R ROCK SMACKHEADS**  
The dark allure of The Beatles' later work – 'The White Album', 'Abbey Road' and 'Let It Be' – was due in no small part to the copious amounts of heroin Lennon was shovelling into himself in the late '60s, giving his once-shiny pop songs an air of tortured exhaustion ('I'm So Tired', 'I Want You (She's So Heavy)'), devil-may-care snarl ('Revolution', 'Glass Onion', 'Yer Blues') and surrealist narcotic insight ('I Am The Walrus', 'Happiness Is A Warm Gun', 'Come Together'). But by digging his pony, playing toe jam football and goo-gooing his job so creatively, he set a precedent for hard drug 'inspiration' to which we've lost so many promising 27-year olds.

**S SINGING DRUMMERS**  
There may have been blackmail involved, or perhaps The Beatles were hoping to qualify as a charity for the terminally atonal for tax reasons (and what was 'With A Little Help From My Friends' if not the first ever charity single?), but on virtually every album they let Ringo sing one. The thing is, by 'Don't Pass Me By' he'd got reasonably good at it, and thus in future we could never completely deny the likes of Phil Collins, Dave Grohl or Andy Burrows their chance to prove themselves 'up front'.



Oi, Grohl, get back on your drum stool!

**T THE RUTLES**  
And, by extension, all rock spoofs from Spinal Tap to The Darkness. Eric Idle and Neil Innes' masterful 1978 mockumentary about the 'Prefab Four' – Nasty, Stig, Dick and Barry – and their timeless classics 'All You Need Is Cash', 'Ouch!' and 'Cheese And Onions' set the bar for comedy rock films, and was all the more in-joke for the fact that George was involved in the project throughout. And while we're on Beatles inspired comedy, let's not forget that Harrison also funded *Life Of Brian*, and Alan Partridge wouldn't be the icon he is today if he didn't think Wings were "the band The Beatles could've been".

**U UK MUSIC DOMINANCE**  
Being British in 2011 sucks, right? We're crap at sports, crap in bed, crap at voting, crap at containing civil unrest and we can't even find a coherent presenter for *Sing If You Can*. But one thing gives every one of us a swell of patriotic pride: we're from the same country as JPG&R. It's what's kept global ears trained constantly on our tiny island's tribal noises ever since, and inspired generations of musicians to strive to uphold our rock scene's impeccable name. That, and the propulsive effect of a vibrant, chaff-chopping weekly music press, has kept the UK at the epicentre of the most innovative and brilliant new music for half a century. Chars! "And did those feeeeeet..."

**V VIDEOS**  
*A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* were little more than music videos linked together with spliff-cobbled 'plots' about errant granddads and magic rings, but by 1965 The Beatles had become so in-demand (and frankly knackered) that they ditched the scripts altogether. They were the first act to film promotional footage of their performances for distribution and broadcast around the world, so they didn't have to go play the Bolivian *Top Of The Pops* every time they had a single out (which was roughly 732 times a year). By 1966 they'd stopped touring and taken to using colour film and psychedelic imagery. Dylan, The Who and The Kinks had caught on, even though MTV was a sparkle in Procol Harum's eye.

**W WIFE SWAPPING**  
The cry was all 'free love' in the '60s, but nobody really took it as seriously as George Harrison. When Eric Clapton confided in him that he was in love with George's wife Pattie Boyd – the muse for George's 'symphonic something' – and wondered if he'd mind him having a crack at her, George's reply was along the lines of "Nobody owns anybody else". George's subsequent sanguine attitude (in public at least) to Clapton stealing his wife (they stayed close friends) may well have influenced whole reams of '70s suburbanite to chuck their keys in the

bowl, and today the result is Louis Theroux standing awkwardly in the corner of a room while bulbous housewives and tattooed plumbers go at each other like barn doors in a hurricane.

**X XEROSIS**  
n. An abnormal dryness of the skin, such as hordes of Japanese tourists might suffer after spending lengthy periods of time posing on a cold London zebra crossing with no shoes or socks on. Look, come on, you find a sodding X. I mean, we're hardly going to blame The Beatles for *The X Factor*, right? If they'd ever laid the foundation stone of a Chinese port, we'd be laughing. Can we have XTC? Yes? Done.

**Y YOKO**  
Love her or ha... OK, hate her, but Yoko Ono is a legendary figure in rock history. Yes, she might well have destroyed the band by hanging around the studio going "John... John... JOHN! What this album *really* needs is more nine minute repetitive avant-garde soundscapes that sound like a buggered wireless from 1939". But over time she proved that, no matter how limited your own talent, you can inspire some of the most magical music known to man and, given half a double album all to yourself, knock out at least one decent tune of your own. In fact, in retrospect, Yoko's part on 'Double Fantasy' may have been a natural escalation from John's 'Let Ringo Sing' project.



Ono! It's Yoko again



**Z ZUMBA**  
From the first sitar thwryaaaanggg of 'Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)' – the first ever use of the instrument in a western pop song – world music influences began infiltrating pop culture and rock stars opened their ears to global sonic possibilities. The Concert For Bangladesh, WOMAD, 'Down Under', 'Graceland', 'Brimful Of Asha', 'Mambo No 5' and Ricky Martin later, your mum is grinding away the pounds like a Colombian pole-dancer in a Harvester backroom as we speak.

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**HEROES**  
**OF 2011**  
**THE**  
**VACCINES**

**HEROES  
OF 2011**  
**FLORENCE  
+ THE  
MACHINE**



**NME**

*Photo by Tom Oxley*

**HEROES  
OF 2011**  
MILES  
KANE



Photo by *dress@willton*

**HEROES**



**NIME**

*Photo by Dean Chalkley*

**HEROES  
OF 2011**  
**NOEL  
GALLAGHER**



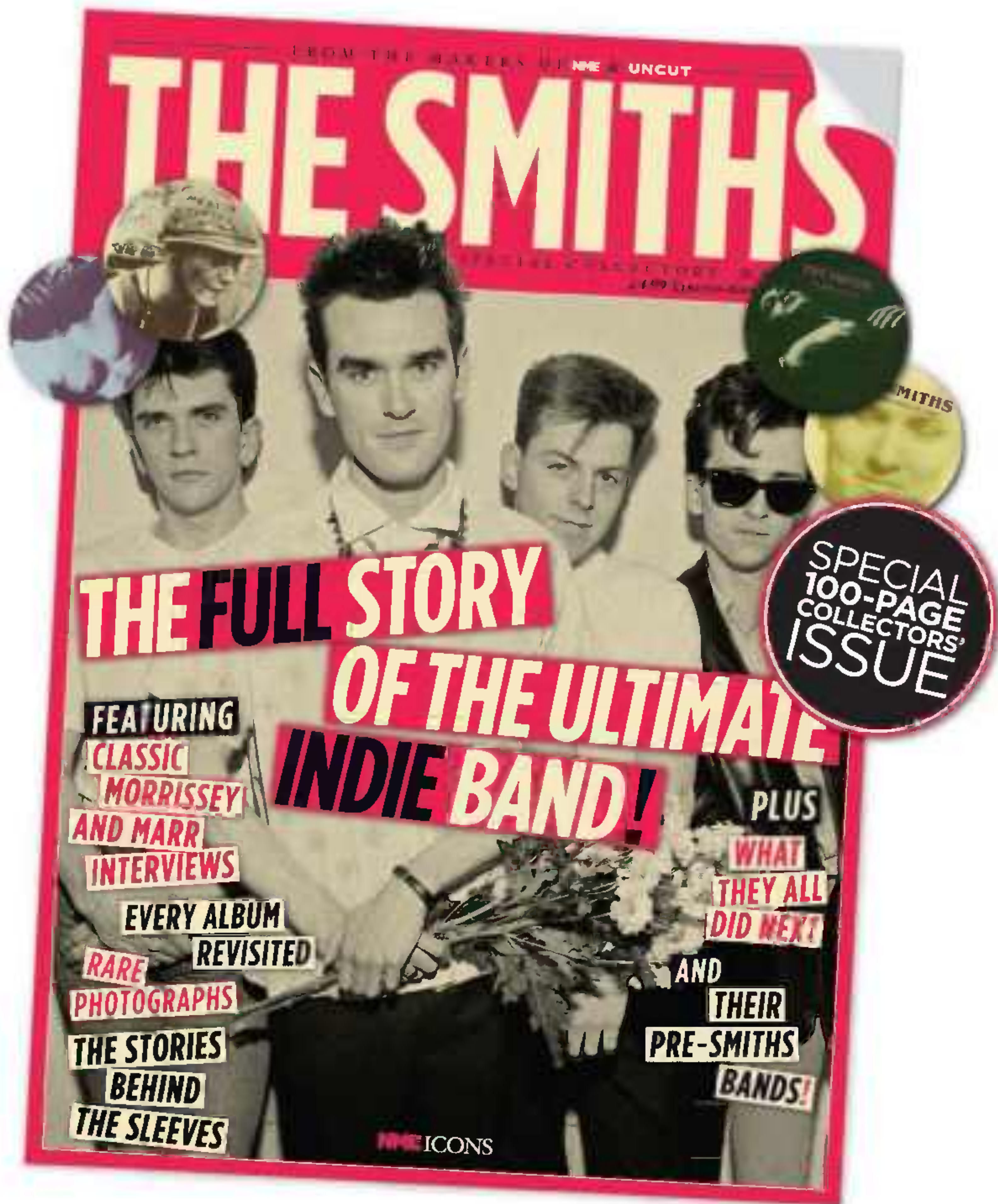
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# DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

*Moptops, matching suits, flower power flares, moustaches, round specs, bloody massive beards... The Beatles' many looks are as iconic as their sound — but what did their approach to fashion tell us about the Fab Four themselves?*

**T**he Beatles were not rock'n'roll's first style icons; for as long as rock'n'roll has existed, it has been deeply intertwined with fashion, from Elvis' quiff to Buddy Holly's horn rimmed glasses. But they were one of the first bands to understand that fashion, like times and tastes, is wont to change, and that the key to longevity is

to ensure that you always stay ahead of it – a lesson perhaps only David Bowie ever learned as well as them. A new book, *Fab Gear: The Beatles And Fashion*, by former NME writer Paolo Hewitt, takes a different approach to the Fab's familiar story, examining John, Paul, George and Ringo through the prism of their ever-evolving image. As Hewitt recalls: "When I started looking into it, I found that their clothes tell their own story: with their music, as they got more and more successful, they got more and more adventurous. It was like that with the clothes, too. In many ways, the clothes actually mirror the music."

Hamburg, at the turn of the '60s, was where The Beatles learned how to be a band, and it was where they began experimenting with their look, thanks to their friendship with Astrid Kirchherr and Jürgen Vollmer. As Hewitt puts it, "Astrid turned up at the Top Ten Club wearing leather, and they were all very struck by her – she was a very good-looking woman. And so they got into that all-leather look through her. The 'Beatle' cut came from Jürgen, who was combing his hair forward around the time they were all wearing their hair up, like teddy boys. The really important thing that Astrid contributed, though, were those early photographs of them. No band had been photographed like that before. If you look at band portraits from the time, the direction really was a

case of, 'Right, everybody smile!' Astrid was shooting them in a very innovative way."

The band cherry-picked from the fashions they found in Europe – from Kirchherr's leathers to the collarless Pierre Cardin jackets popularised by young French existentialists

– but not everything stuck: "On a trip to Paris in 1961," says Hewitt, "John and Paul each bought a pair of 14 inch loon pants. A lot of kids in France were wearing them, but because they were used to wearing drainpipes, they felt quite weird. They also realised that if they went back to Liverpool wearing them, they'd probably get killed!"

Luckily, the flares stayed buried at the back of the wardrobe. But the leather look was short-lived, too; upon returning to Liverpool and encountering Brian Epstein for the first time, their soon-to-be manager informed them that, if they wanted to be taken seriously by promoters, they'd have to start wearing suits. It was a fairly standard look for bands of the time but in later years, Lennon was known to snipe that the moment they stepped out of the leather was the moment they sold out. McCartney, meanwhile, "didn't remember anyone having to be dragged kicking and screaming".

"When they got into the suits," says Hewitt, "as in anything they did, The Beatles said, 'We'll do this, but we'll do it our way.' I spoke with the tailor in Liverpool who made their first suits, and he said they kept sending them back, asking for the trousers to be tighter, because they wanted them to be more like drainpipe trousers. When they moved to London, they hooked up with Dougie Millings, who became famous as 'The Beatles' tailor,' and they would very specifically dictate to him what they wanted; four buttons, collarless jackets, and so on..."

**T**he band's look in those early years – identical suits, mop-tops, Cuban heels – created a powerful image of togetherness that served them well. They knew it, too. Ringo recalled that, when he joined in 1962, "They changed my image. I used to have my hair right back, like a teddy boy, with a Tony Curtis cut and sideboards and suddenly it was, 'Shave them off and put your hair down.'"

After moving to London in 1963, they became the capital's pre-eminent fashionistas. If one bought a shirt, the others would rush out to get the same one. Fans and rival groups would soon do the same, which for The Beatles was always the cue to move on to something else, a few months after the appearance of those iconic grey collarless jackets, Gerry And The Pacemakers had themselves a set made – The Beatles never wore them again. With fashion as with music, their great strength was in fusing trends from the underground and taking them to the mainstream. On tour in Holland in the mid-'60s, for example, they were intrigued by a local sporting a black cape – a few days later, they had a tailor in Hong Kong make four of them and wore them onstage that night. They did much the same thing with moustaches, which, in the '60s, were something worn only by old men and sprvs. As soon as The Beatles started sporting

them, everyone downed razors and started growing one.

As Hewitt says, the clothes tell their own story. They're a useful visual metaphor for the state of band relations: after the touring stopped in 1966 and the matching suits were binned, each member began expressing themselves in subtle ways, still shopping from the same sources – usually the King's Road – but dressing differently. Leading up to their break-up, they became four sartorially distinct, separate personalities.

Paul, the band peacock and Beatle-about-town, was usually the catalyst: as one

Apple employee told Hewitt, McCartney was one of the first people into the flower power look in 1967, but he was also the first one out of it, even before the rest of the

band. George, who later said he learned never to dress "in styles that hurt: winklepicker shoes that cripple your feet and tight pants that squash your balls", put his own spin on things by wearing ornate Indian clothes. With the opening of the Apple Boutique in Marylebone, London, they became the first

band to curate their own fashion range, a precursor to the likes of Pretty Green, Kings Of Leon and every rapper ever.

**A**fter the break-up – something, in retrospect, that the cover of *Abbey Road* signposted, with McCartney in a tailored Savile Row number, Harrison in double denim and Lennon in his messianic white suit – people felt a natural desire to seek new icons for a new decade, and The Beatles gradually became something to rebel against (the hideous clothes the four of them wore throughout the '70s might also have had something to do with this). "There was definitely a sort of denial of them after they split up," says Hewitt.

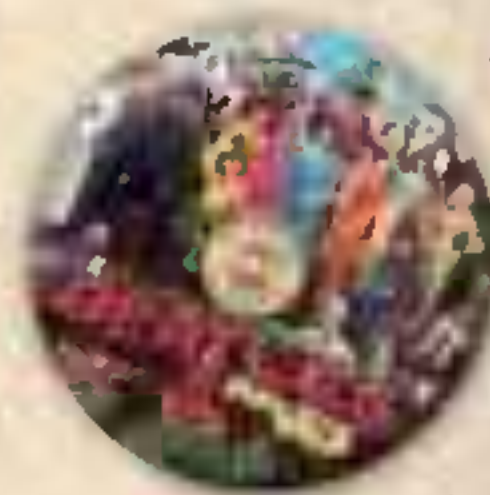
"People wanted to move on to the next thing, which was bands like Led Zeppelin, and then later the Sex Pistols. The Beatles slipped out of fashion a little bit until Britpop came around and revived that look."

Of course, stylish as The Beatles were, their clothes will never overshadow their musical accomplishments, but they do augment them. So much of The Beatles' legend is visual – the mop-tops, the Cuban heels, the synchronicity of their suits, the 'Sgt Pepper's...' Day-Glo military outfits. In the same way that their music broke the boundaries of pop, their clothes pushed the envelope of fashion, providing the baby boomers with a clean break from the sartorial conventions of their parents' generation and blazing the trail for rock'n'roll bands to go with the dressing up box.

*'Fab Gear: The Beatles and Fashion' by Paolo Hewitt is published by Prestel for December price £29.99 in hardcover, 240 pp, 300 col illus (ISBN 978-3-7913-4563-5)*



## THEY TOOK TRENDS FROM THE UNDERGROUND INTO THE MAINSTREAM





  
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## LIVE

THE DRUMS, KASABIAN, JAMES BLAKE

Emma &amp; Emily Mackay



## THE VACCINES

O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON, LONDON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

*From NME Awards Tour openers to homecoming kings – 2011 belongs to Justin Young and co*

**T**ake a quick glance through the BBC's 'Sound Of 2012' poll and you'll discover one particularly notable absence: guitars. At a time dominated by potty mouthed rappers and electronic whizz-kids, it seems even the faithful few are proclaiming guitar music, once again, dead. Except it's not. At all. From the ballsy, Strokesian stomp of Howler, to Frankie & The Heartstrings' wry indie jangles (which, tonight, are on gloriously jubilant form, filling out the none too tiny venue with ease and showing off a winning new addition in 'Berlin Calls') to The Vaccines – undoubtedly *the* band of the year – tonight's a reminder that the six-string cause is healthier than ever.

Let's not forget that, a mere 10 months ago, The Vaccines were opening the NME Awards Tour, on first out of four, at this same venue. Now they're heading up two sold-out nights to a crowd that's tangibly rabid and they're revered like homecoming heroes. It's an insane rise to the big leagues but one that's wholly deserved because the quartet still sound just as viscerally thrilling as they did back in February.

Entering to 'Blow It Up's' pounding, four-note charge, Justin and co are a driving force of no-nonsense rock'n'roll, spitting out three-minute bursts of

energy with practically no banter, on and off in barely an hour. 'If You Wanna' and 'Post Break-Up Sex' are greeted with a sea of flailing bodies

***Tonight is a reminder that the six-string cause is healthier than it's ever been***

hungrily singing back every word, while newbie 'Tiger Blood's' taut riffs go down like an old classic. There's further hints, too, at where the band are headed in the form of 'No Hope' and 'Teenage Icon', both high-octane firecrackers that stick firmly to the 'if it ain't broke...' rule, and are all the better for it. Then there's the

anthemic 'Wetsuit', 'Wolf Pack's' skittering guitars and rolling drums, a final, exuberant 'Nørgaard' – all brilliant, raw slabs of rock'n'roll that fizz with excitement, thrown out with the enthusiasm of a man paying far too little care to his ailing larynx. But then you know that, it goes without saying, because The Vaccines have more than proved their credentials and hurdled every barrier of 'hype' thrown at them. 2012's hopefuls better get worried, because the true sound of 2011 is only getting stronger. **Lisa Wright**



Yet another Howler from the support act

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# THE COURTEENERS

**O2 APOLLO MANCHESTER** THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

*New material gets a warm reception from an adoring home crowd as Liam and co prepare for a crucial year*

## VIEW FROM THE CROWD

*What the punters thought*



**Nige Hammond, 30, Wigan**

"It was incredible, wasn't it? The atmosphere was awesome. Everyone knows all the songs. The new material was good. Some of it was less anthemic, but I think people will hear lots more of 'Lose Control' and 'Welcome To The Rave'."

Closing the year with three sell-out shows at one of your hometown's most iconic venues – most bands would take that, right? Well, it's something of a stop-gap if the band in question is The Courteeners.

Sure, the scenes of communal, inebriated devotion – at times, it's like being at that final orgiastic scene from *Perfume*, only reimagined by Hieronymus Bosch – are something to behold. But let's wipe the froth from our beer-smudged lenses: this isn't new territory for Liam Fray and his mates. Just two albums in, they've already filled both of Manchester's largest indoor venues. Even in this supposedly fallow year they managed to sell out a show at Delamere Forest in record time. So, while for thousands tonight is a celebration, for the four on stage there's a bigger picture.

And they are nervous. Not jeans-soakingly so – those puddles are from all the airborne Tuborg, nothing worse – but nervous nonetheless, as this set will feature four of the songs that The Courteeners hope will push them to new heights in 2012. Fray heads the charge through a reliable burst of 'The Opener', 'Cavorting' and 'Acrylic', punching the skies after each victory. However, within those clenched fists hide a handful of chewed nails.

That familiar strut returns once they've crashed through the startling

garage rock of 'Save Rosemary In Time' – the sound of The Last Shadow Puppets if Miles Kane was subbed off for Anton Newcombe. "This will be fucking massive," Fray whispers (OK, bellows) by way of introduction to 'Lose Control'. He may be right – its endless beat tramples the Apollo underfoot, propelled along by circling piano chords – but even that is dwarfed by the aerodrome-size 'Welcome To The Rave'. This isn't the pill-munching epiphany its title suggests, but it's still an impressive sonic departure, swinging seamlessly between plaster-cracking volume and the barest piano backing.

Reprising his role as the after-hours troubadour, Fray treats Manchester to the first-ever live performance of 'Last Of The Ladies', as well as perhaps the most predictable of the new songs, 'Why Are You Still With Him?'. By the time his band rejoin him for 'Not Nineteen Forever', this old Ardwick theatre is ready to erupt, the air decorated with voices, plastic pint glasses and, er, lost shoes. This is a boisterous bosom for the band, but The Courteeners know that, for now, comfort must be cast aside. *Neil Condron*

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## KATE JACKSON

**HOXTON BAR AND GRILL, LONDON**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

**T**his will make you feel old: it's five years, one month and a day since The Long Blondes' debut album was released. It now seems a quaint memory of small town indie discos, with lynchpin Kate Jackson as the dream girl who knew about cinema and s-e-x and promised to whisk you away for a better life. She's back with a solo project, still with one eye on the open road, but her getaway vehicle doesn't seem quite as inviting at tonight's single launch. 'Date With Dawn' opens with a ripping twang, Kate threateningly yelping about how she's "gonna love that guy" as four hired lunks reimagine the Blondes as a glam band, all T Rex riffs rather than austere spindle. Single 'Wonder Feeling' heads straight for Kate's comfort zones – skipping work for the motorway – her face an agog snarl.

So far, standard. But whoever made the rest of her material sound like the worst bits of The Killers – ahem, Bernard Butler – needs a good slap. The overblown sound doesn't suit her, and she acts up to compensate – screeching, "You still wake up and think of me" at the end of 'Leaving Me Easily'. Catherine AD comes on for 'Weightless', adding a FLUTE SOLO, and joining Kate in a drab chorus. 'Homeward Bound', a chugging slump about "slowly turning into sand" and needing to be carried home is distinctly unrighteous, and closer 'Metropolis' ends with Kate and the hired hands bellowing "This city pulls me into pieces" with all the finesse of an Enemy B-side. Oh Kate, where did it all go wrong? We hate to break it to you, but we've moved on. *Laura Snapes*



## THURSTON MOORE

**CAMDEN ELECTRIC BALLROOM, LONDON**

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

**T**he latest incarnation of clued-in promoters All Tomorrow's Parties Don't Look Back series sees Thurston Moore revisit his 1995 solo breakthrough LP 'Psychic Hearts', in its entirety. Well, almost. The fact that the gangly Sonic Youth frontman plays most of the instruments on the original recording means he'd have to clone himself to do the tracks full justice. So, he assembles a crack alt-rock band with drums, viola, acoustic guitar and harp to accompany himself on vocals and guitar, and then extends, extemporises, and subverts said tracks.

The results are a hall-of-mirrors reflection of Sonic Youth crunk-rock and shimmy gone pastoral, laced with Yoko Ono and Patti Smith references, and double-dosed with half-forgotten teenage angst. The title track essays a reflective lovesong that, for once, doesn't come in quotation marks of irony. 'See-Through Playmate' is bolstered by insistent drums as the various instrumental frequencies mimic rhythm. And the extended 'Elegy For All The Dead Rock Stars' rushes and courses in waves of plaintive sonic noise. Even the snootiest of indie snobs present are moved by the amount of sheer life and emotion left in the old warhorse. *Dele Fadele*



## THE DRUMS

**O2 ABC, GLASGOW** SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3

*The setlist may inspire some grumbles, but Jonathan and the boys are right at home*

You'd imagine that The Drums would be counting down the days till 2012 after 2011's bust-ups, split rumours and an album that was greeted by a shrug, but tonight they're in good spirits.

Skipping onto the stage and giving the most overly camp wave we've seen all year, Jonathan Pierce looks sprightly – a welcome change from his frequently intense, dead-behind-the-eyes look.

Of course, he's still got a huge diva complex, and the inexplicable omission of the group's breakthrough single, 'Let's Go Surfing', from tonight's set is a show of power that, frankly, we could do without. Just play the fucking song, guys.

Anyway, with guitarist Jacob Graham now moved to the back to play about on synths, it opens up the stage for Pierce to show off a bit more and flash his twee-as-fuck moves. We'd quite like to see him on *Strictly Come Dancing* – his Ceroc-like shapes shift over anything McFly's Harry Judd can flash, particularly during an energised 'Best Friend', when the frontman weaves his way around the winding bassline. Then, as he hits his stride, darkness descends with 'Me And The Moon', a brilliantly broody song with lashings of attitude.

A Drums gig is akin to an amateur dramatic performance: at times it can be nauseating but sometimes, such as during 'If He Likes It Let Him Do It', it's beguiling. And when Pierce tells the crowd that they're "sick in the head", it's treated not as offensive but as a compliment: Glaswegians like being told they're mad, especially on Saturday night.

**VIEW FROM THE CROWD**  
*What the punters thought*



**Ally Graham, 23, Perth:**

"They were really good. At times it did lag a bit but they're fun to watch – especially Jonathan's dancing. I'm pissed off that they never played 'Let's Go Surfing', though. What's that all about? Are they embarrassed by it?"

pondering the band's future. There's life here yet. **Jamie Crossan**

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## JAMES BLAKE/JAMIE WOON/JAMIE XX

**RAZZMATAZZ, BARCELONA**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8

*Woon underwhelms, xx knows how to party, but it's Blake who proves the pick of 2011's pioneers*

For the three Jameses who would go on to define the year in British electronic music, 2011 started well: Woon and Blake were shortlisted for the BBC Sound Of poll, while Jamie xx was just at the start of the journey that would take him from the most boring member of The xx to arguably the most interesting, courtesy of some razor-sharp remix, production and DJ work.

This one-off Barcelona gig, part of the Razzmatazz club's 11th birthday celebrations, provides a convenient opportunity to find out how it has all gone since then.

Things certainly augur well: Blake's name is plastered all over town and Razzmatazz is packed to the brim with the city's great, good and oddly fashionable.

First up, though, is Woon, arguably the one of the three to profit least from 2011. Sadly, his performance shows why: it's not that he's bad as such, just that he lacks charisma, oomph and star quality. Admittedly, he's not well served by the warm-up DJ, who dulls the crowd with layer upon layer of 130 BPM beats before dinner has settled, but there's still a sense of ambivalence to the 28-year-old's fragile set: he may have a lovely voice, but his music sounds like a

sound in search of a song. When he does find one, in 'Night Air', he shines – but otherwise his performance is remarkably underwhelming.

Blake is often thought to be cursed with the same malaise. Few people would doubt his production skills, but the intense, repetitive focus on wimpy vocal lines on his debut album made many hipsters who had tipped him for success rapidly regret their choice.

Tonight, though, such arguments seem academic as he's greeted like a hero by the crowd. The difference from

*Blake hasn't written a song as good as 'Night Air', but live he's stunning*

Woon is marked: while Blake may not have written as good a song as 'Night Air', the live recreation of his obtuse electronic noises is stunning. 'I Never Learnt To Share', annoying on record, is an entirely different beast live, with pummelling bass, strafing beats and epic keyboards bringing the crowd to a head-banging peak. It's up to Jamie xx to end the night, with a funk-filled DJ set which reassures you that UK dance music goes into 2012 in safe – if filthily bass-infested – hands. **Ben Cardew**



James addiction (l-r): Woon, xx, Blake

Walls, minds, personal space boundaries: none shall stand against the  
creaceous onslaught of the fearsome four and their dapper wingman

# MILES KANE & KASABIAN *On The Road With*



## BIRMINGHAM NIA TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

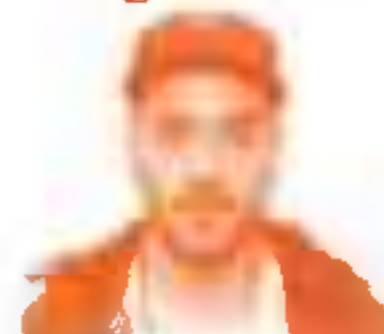
It destroys plasterboard walls and terrorises neighbouring Vaccines. It dominates every room it's wheeled into and requires its own roadie. It could well house the entire internet, control much of the West's thermonuclear defence system, beat Garry Kasparov at chess and crack the enigma code. They call it The Snorf and it's 1.7 billion fuck-o-watts of pure, unadulterated 'Come On Eileen'.

Yes, as the arena crowds of Kasabian's end-of-2011 UK blitzkrieg stagger from the venues – dazed, amazed and with their retinas fried by a light show that makes the Chinese Olympic opening ceremony look like Florence frigging Nightingale – chanting the “laaaaa-la laaaa” bit from ‘Club Foot’ like a modern day ‘Hey Jude’, backstage one of the band's many dressing rooms will be rammed and rocking to the stamping of feet and the yodelling of “too rai-ooo-rai-YAY”s.

“I tell you what's been going down massive,” says Serge, the only man

brave enough to operate Kasabian's monstrous dressing room sound system, “the Bowie live version of ‘Starman’ and fucking ‘Come On Eileen’ by Dexys Midnight Runners. Undeniable. Undeniable. But everyone's looking at me. I roll out P Diddy's ‘Bad

### VIEW FROM THE CREW



**Aitor Throup,  
Creative  
Director**

“I designed the England kits for the World Cup and by coincidence we ended up working with Kasabian on the launch of the away kit. The live show was arguably the most challenging part of the process because there are so many specialist areas. We started talking about the ideas of cathedrals, that feeling of being overwhelmed by architecture. So the domed screen is supposed to be a concave structure that's wrapping around the band and over the audience.”

Boy For Life’ and DJ Shadow's ‘Organ Donor’ just to freak the indie crowd out, and then I do like knocking out *Another World* by The Chemical Brothers. But ‘Come On Eileen’ is just instant, you get all the crew in there, everything goes off.”

Not content with the mid-range iPod docking speakers shaped like a massive cock ring that most bands prefer, then? “You do these festivals,” says Serge, “and the walls are really thin, so we bought the fucking biggest sound system, just to terrorise everyone! So we fucking pile that in, it's frightening how loud it is, we must be the most annoying bastards, but that's part of it. If anyone says ‘Turn it down’ you go ‘Fuck off, you're in a band!’ We put bird noises and monk noises through it and shit, everyone's going, ‘What the fuck's going on in there?’”

When Kasabian are in town, insure against subsidence. And brush up on your linguistics too: as *NME* jumps into a van whisking Tom and Serge to a nearby radio station, they jabber at each other at light speed about their past few days, communicating using a combination of English, Leicester slang,

invented language, codewords and bizarre knocking patterns developed since childhood. It feels at times like infiltrating an Amazonian tribe, but we pick up the basics. Tom feels “fresh” after spending yesterday off buying every single *Police Academy* film on DVD and passing out in front of the footie, but he's still riled about the fact that Kasabian's on-the-road parties always wind up in his room. “It's because you'll always be awake and having it and that's where the birds are,” Serge points out. Tom still looks remarkably glum.

At the station, the fragrant Kate Lawler from *Big Brother 3* and her less than fragrant dog Baxter greet the duo like old mates; on air, Serge fields most of her questions (his winter fashion tip? “Future mod”; the tour? “Our best one ever”) while Tom is distracted by twisting Baxter about on his back on the studio floor. Back in the van, Serge's enthusiasm is still brimming. “The Dublin show was blinding. It wasn't even a show, it was a galaxy. It's been another planet of how big it is. It feels like this is what we've been working to, up until this point.”

Tonight they take 13,500 Midlands minds to the new planet of Velociraptra (surely that's what NASA spotted, right?). Beneath a curved dome screen full of hypnotic spinning lizard men and rising mystical eyes (Tom: “That's nothing to do with me, I turned up and went, ‘Is that ours?’”) and boasting enough blazing ▶

Far left: the tourbus is spacious, but also kinda sparse; this pic: Tom tells Serge his cloak was caught in a shredder; below: up, up and away in Manchester



**Birmingham, Tuesday, 4.30pm**  
Serge adjusts his undies as Tom pretends his hasn't noticed

Above: a backstage singalong and (this pic) Miles shows that boys can wear blouses too



spotlight firestorms to blind the Hubble telescope, Kasabian set out to prove just how broad and varied their palate has grown. From the crowd-pleasing indusro-tech-rock early hits 'LST' and 'Club Foot' have grown such dancefloor demolishers as 'Underdog' (the song 'Second Coming' could have been) and 'Switchblade Smiles' (a floor-quaking mecha Pendulum). From the mystical Arabian edges of 'ID' – bathed in green tonight, casting Serge as a sexy Sauron – has crept the Indian strings of 'Where Did All The Love Go?' and prog-psych blowouts like 'Take Aim', watched over, on the dome screen, by a 50-foot Eyeball Of The Ancients. The effect is a new evolution of arena rock'n'roll, with a Jurassic bite.

Backstage after the show, the band pile into the rider elated at the reception and relieved nothing broke. "At the second Nottingham gig, the PA went," says bassist Chris. "We came back on for the encore, 'Switchblade Smiles', no PA, we were playing to ourselves. It felt horrible. So we've overcome some shit." Not least, in Liverpool, the lighting rig sparking out during 'Empire', leaving the band in total darkness besides Tom's two spotlights.

"It was fucking beautiful because I just asked everybody to put their phones on," Serge grins. "I said, 'Right, could you help us out and light the stage for us?' and before you knew it the whole place was beautiful, like ET's spaceship. It happened so naturally and beautifully. It's stunning. I want to do it every night but I don't know how to do it without looking like a prick."

As we head off to the Friends and Family room, where the band do the rounds to the tune of a distant cousin playing their own songs repeatedly, *NME* gives Serge a few handy tips on arena-level crowd participation, gleaned less from personal experience and more from watching Robbie Williams Nikon adverts...

## MANCHESTER MEN ARENA WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

"Wow!" says Mary Anne Hobbs in her charmingly enthused-child voice. "You look smart!"

Miles Kane, as a man who wouldn't be seen dead in public without his multi-button mod leather jacket and the spray-on white jeans of a young Pete Townshend, gets this a lot. He is *always* the smartest – and most personable – man in any room, and today he sweeps smiling through the XFM Manchester offices dripping classic rock'n'roll stardust, a still from *Quadrophenia* come to life. After an on-air chat taking in how smart he looks, his love of the new Black Keys album and his overwhelming desire to rock the MEN's tits off tonight, we jump back in his splitter van to the venue, 'El Camino' blaring, the talk turning to classic soul, which one of The Saturdays we'd shag first and the most bizarre pan-cultural meeting of minds ever conceived: "I once met the



Manchester, Wednesday, 10pm  
That's right, Miles, keep those dance moves backstage where they belong

Above left: "Help me out here... S-E-R-what?"; below left: you don't have to hide, Tom, you're allowed backstage

Below: even the guy in the hat is under 5ft 3, but hey, there's the rules in the Kane backstage



orange bloke from the Tango adverts in the Groucho..."

Chuck Berry and Aretha Franklin mingle with psychedelic Turkish soundtrack music from his (rather more modest) dressing room stereo as we uncover how he's landed Kasabian's coveted main support slot. Turns out he and Serge have been close mates since bonding at the bar after an iTunes gig in 2006. "He kept going to me, 'I can see it in your eyes, I can see it in your eyes'. Then we went out and got pissed. We

stayed mates since then. On this tour we've had some big nights and we've had some fun. They're lovely lads, it's a happy, easy vibe, a great match. Instead of going out we've just been in their dressing room, blasting tunes and having it. It just ends up with everyone having a dance-off."

As we catch up with Serge before The Snorl pre-gig to listen to a couple of new Miles tracks, the familial bond between the pair is clear. "It's rare in this game," Serge agrees. "You meet a load of

people and the majority are really difficult or boring or up themselves. I suppose it's the nature of being in a band, a lot of people are knobs. So when you meet someone you really like and you've got that connection, a spiritual thing with the music, you hold on to them people."

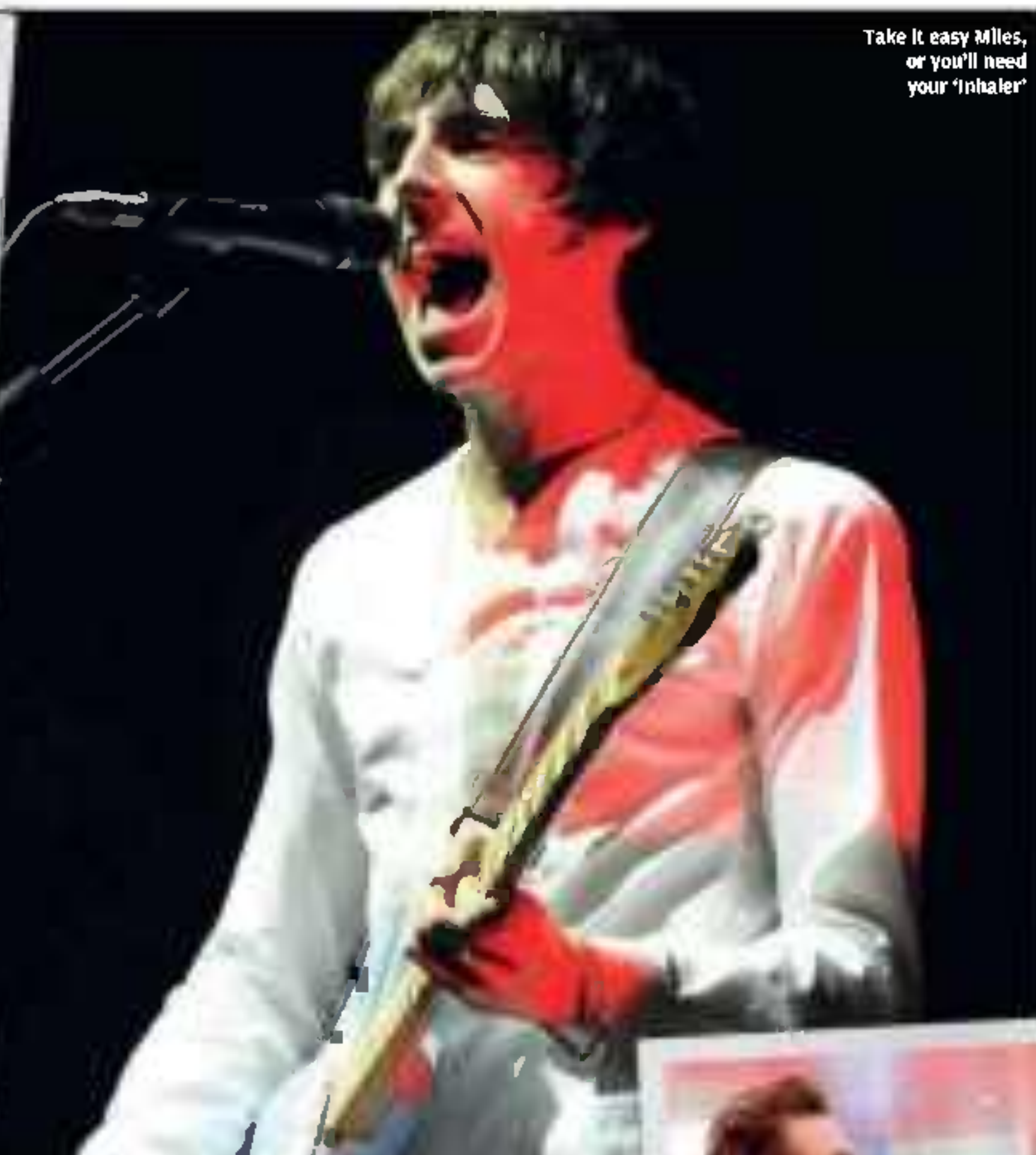
Onstage, Miles roars through his set, whipping insanity from an early-doors crowd with the passion of a steroid-pumped weightlifter. "Let's lose our fucking minds!" he yelps as the deviant



Leeds, Friday, 9.30pm  
Tom insists on only being filmed in profile



They're missing a trick without 'Come On Eileen' on the setlist



Take it easy Miles, or you'll need your 'inhaler'

Tom's 'Oops I dropped the soap' routine is camp but fun

Left: Miles and Serge psych each other out before the dance-off; below: fans hate getting stuck behind the world's tallest woman; below right: "Good we don't have many chords, this is hard work"; right: Tom onstage in Birmingham



Don't get the giggles, Miles



Birmingham, Tuesday, 4.30pm  
Tom and Baxter the dog – the newest member of Kasabian



Chris is a brave man... you don't want to see what Tom's firing those balls out of

mariachi of 'Counting Down The Days' explodes like a spaghetti Dresden. 'Rearrange' (despite strongly resembling Rod Stewart's 'Young Turks') blasts The Last Shadow Puppets into *Space 1999* and a new tune, 'Woman's Touch', blisters with ferocious, reborn Northern Soul.

Sweat-drenched and ecstatic, Miles races offstage, plying *NME* with several celebratory lagers, and heads out into the stands to get mobbed for photographs while trying to get to his seat. Smart. Which leaves Kasabian to marvellously

mop up the mess. With Serge decked out in an Evil King Of The Crows cape and Tom air-guitaring and flinging rambourines into the crowd through 'Re-Wired', they demolish the Greater Manchester area. They're bedecked tonight with a string section, adding lush depths to tunes such as the wonderful 'Goodnight Kiss', a paean to the ruinous aftermath of rock'n'roll that's probably the closest Kasabian will ever get to writing a Neil Diamond ballad. Tonight, everything connects. during

'LSF', fans' faces are circled, labelled 'soul', linked to others and photographed by cameras sweeping the front row, a match-making visual of sublime connectivity; a stagediver connects heavily with the moshpit during 'Fire' and at one point Serge – on *NME*'s advice – relates the story of the Liverpool blackout and gets Manchester to recreate it. It is, in no uncertain terms, a galaxy.

After the show, a wave of concern about the injured young girl the

stage-diver landed on sweeps the Kasabian dressing rooms, but the buzz of the best gig of the tour is irrepressible. Before long the pink champagne is flowing. Tom is forcing Miles to grab his arse while they sing Miles tunes, The Beatles and 'Ferry Across The Mersey' in each others' faces and it's all back to Kasabian's hotel to drink the night away. Looking for Tom's room? Just follow the deafening Snorf-like warble of "Poor old Johnny Rayyyy". **Mark Beaumont**



# NME AWARDS 2012 SHOWS

**CHARLI XCX**  
ICONA POP  
WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON LEXINGTON**  
020 7403 3331

**SLOW CLUB**  
PLUS GUESTS  
THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
0844 847 2351

**THE BLACK KEYS**  
BAND OF SKULLS  
SATURDAY 11 FEBRUARY  
**ALEXANDRA PALACE**  
020 7403 3331

**PURE LOVE**  
PLUS GUESTS  
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BUSH HALL**  
020 7403 3331

**BAND OF SKULLS**  
DALE EARNHARDT JR JR  
WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON AYO**  
SOLD OUT

**tUnE-yArDs**  
PLUS GUESTS  
WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY  
**O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE**  
0844 477 2000

**TOTALLY ENORMOUS  
EXTINCT DINOSAURS**  
WILLY MOON  
THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
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**CLOUD CONTROL**  
PLUS GUESTS  
FRIDAY 17 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM**  
020 7403 3331

**THE BIG PINK**  
MOZART PARTIES  
MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON GARAGE**  
0844 847 1678

**KURT VILE**  
SONIC BOOM  
TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON KOKO**  
0844 847 2258

**ALABAMA SHAKES**  
JESSIE WARE  
WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BOSTON ARMS**  
SOLD OUT

**THE JEZABELS**  
DRY THE RIVER + KAI FISH + HEY SHOLAY  
WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON KOKO**  
0844 847 2258

*Oh Land*  
PLUS GUESTS  
THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HEAVEN**  
0844 847 2351

*Little Dragon*  
PLUS GUESTS  
FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON HMV FORUM**  
0844 847 2405  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH MEAN RECORDS

**S.C.U.M**  
PLUS GUESTS  
FRIDAY 24 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON BUSH HALL**  
020 7403 3331

**MARINA  
AND THE DIAMONDS**  
PLUS GUESTS  
SUNDAY 26 FEBRUARY  
**O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE**  
0844 477 2000

*the* **DRUMS**  
SPECTOR  
MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY  
**LONDON ROUNDHOUSE**  
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**THE CRIBS**  
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## BOOKING NOW



### OUTFIT

**STARTS:** Brighton Green Door Store, Feb 11

DON'T  
MISS

As we reach that time of year in which debut albums are haphazardly rushed out to keep baying tipsters placated, it's a joy to find bands comfortable enough with their own output that they'll take their time over their releases. It's just one of the reasons that Liverpool's Outfit are such a tonic – we've been geed up about them since March, yet they've still only one official single to their name, the slinky, creepy 'Every Night I Dress Up As You'. Of course, we're itching to hear more, and a few gigs in late 2011 whetted our appetites, so it's welcome news that the five-piece are headed out on a countrywide jaunt this February, a debut tour proper after months of tiny shows. They're teases, dripfeeding us like this – but we'll happily comply, mouths agape for every morsel...



### CASIOKIDS

**STARTS:** Birmingham Hare & Hounds, Jan 19  
The Norwegian electropoppers release debut British album, 'Aabenbaringen Over Aaskammen', following ace recent single 'Det Haster!'.



### VERONICA FALLS

**STARTS:** Norwich Arts Centre, Jan 27  
There's no sleep until June for the quartet, who finish January in Norwich and Leeds before starting a new UK tour in March, and then heading to Europe...



### ROUNDHOUSE RISING

**STARTS:** London Roundhouse, Feb 9  
The Camden new music festival features 10 days of bands, including The History Of Apple Pie (above), and heated panel discussions.



### ACTIVE CHILD

**STARTS:** London St Giles-In-The-Fields, Feb 20  
After support slots with M83 and rave reviews for debut 'You Are All I See', Pat Grossi lugs his harp to these suitably reverent environs.



### MARINA & THE DIAMONDS

**STARTS:** Cambridge Junction, Feb 24  
Prior to her NME Awards show at the O2 Shepherds Bush Empire (26), Marina gets into Electra Heart mode in Cambridge and Brighton (25).



### LAURA MARLING

**STARTS:** Cambridge Corn Exchange, Mar 1  
Following her recent tour of the country's cathedrals, Marling gets back to grittier venues – and plays her largest ever UK headline show at the HMV Hammersmith Apollo (7).



### CASS MCCOMBS

**STARTS:** Manchester Band On The Wall, Mar 5  
Cass released two albums in 2011, the glorious 'Wit's End' and 'Humor Risk'. We very much doubt "increase productivity" is on his list of New Year's resolutions...



### LIANNE LA HAVAS

**STARTS:** Brighton Coalition, Mar 8  
The BBC-stamped smooth dame adds four new March dates in Brighton, Oxford, Dublin and Birmingham, after her London Scala show sold out so promptly.



### HELMET

**STARTS:** London Electric Ballroom, Apr 2  
John Stanier of Battles' alma mater tour in honour of the 20th birthday of their underrated classic album 'Meantime' – if you've not heard it, change that.



### THE RAPTURE

**STARTS:** O2 Academy Oxford, May 1  
The New York funk fiends return with a new single, 'Sail Away', from third album 'In The Grace Of Your Love', and live dates in Oxford and London (May 2).



### DRY THE RIVER

**STARTS:** London Electric Ballroom, May 2  
Earnest, beardy London folkies headline their biggest UK show to date, two months after the release of their debut album, 'Shallow Bed'.



### PLAN B

**STARTS:** Suffolk Thetford Forest, Jun 15  
Ben Drew plays a series of gigs in the nation's forests and woodlands. Let's hope he doesn't fall into a Belmarsh (that's enough of that – Bad Puns Ed).

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# O<sub>2</sub>

## WEDS-FRI

December 28-30

## WEDNESDAY, DEC 28

**ABERDEEN**  
Fridge Magnets Lemon Tree  
01224 642230

**BIRMINGHAM**  
Micky Greaney Kitchen Garden Cafe  
0121 443 4725

**BRISTOL**  
The Baronesques/Area 51 Fleece  
0117 945 0996

**COVENTRY**  
The Blackout Kasbah 024 7655 4473

**GLASGOW**  
The Hazy Jones King Tut's Wah Wah  
Hut 0141 221 5279

**LEICESTER**  
El Pussycats/Kingsize Musician  
0116 251 0080

**LONDON**  
Teeth Of The Sea/Devilman The  
Lexington 020 7837 5387

**PORTSMOUTH**  
County Line Cellars 0871 230 1094

**TUNBRIDGE WELLS**  
The Virgin Soldiers The Forum  
0871 277 7101

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BEFORE THE  
GIG DATE

## THURSDAY, DEC 29

**BRIGHTON**  
Wide Eyed Order/Black Cat Bone  
Cobblers Thumb 01273 605 636

**BRISTOL**  
Freddie Draper & The Summits  
Fleece 0117 945 0996

**CARDIFF**  
Hondo MacLean/Johanny Mental  
Clwb Ifor Bach 029 2023 2199

**CARLISLE**  
Birds Vs Planes Brickyard  
01228 512 220

**GLASGOW**  
Davey Horne King Tut's Wah Wah Hut  
0141 221 5279

Dave Arcari Captain's Rest  
0141 331 2722

The Wedding Present Garage  
0141 332 1120

**LEICESTER**  
Joel Owen Musician 0116 251 0080

**LIVERPOOL**  
Howler Mojo 0844 549 9090

Notion Picket 0151 708 5318

**LONDON**  
Endless Barfly 0870 907 0999

Left With Pictures/Eyes & No Eyes  
The Lexington 020 7837 5387

**OXFORD**  
The Blackout/Attack! Attack!/  
Revoker O2 Academy 0870 477 2000

**PORTSMOUTH**  
Mark Morriss Cellars 0871 230 1094

Howler,  
Mojo,  
Liverpool

## STOKE ON TRENT

Operation Error Sugarmill  
01782 214 991

## TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Yaaks The Forum 0871 277 7101

## YORK

Fraser The Duchess 01904 641 413

## FRIDAY, DEC 30

## ABERDEEN

APB Lemon Tree 01224 642230

## BRISTOL

Jebo Croft (Main Room) 0117 987 4144

## CARDIFF

The Blackout University

029 2023 0130

Hondo MacLean/Shaped By Fate/  
The Dead Wretched Clwb Ifor Bach

029 2023 2199

## EDINBURGH

Dem Slackers/One Dollar Dave The  
Lane 0131 629 9891

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## LEICESTER

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0116 270 5042

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0191 269 3001

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## TUNBRIDGE WELLS

Matty D Pound The Forum  
0871 277 7101

## YORK

The Dykeenies Fibbers 01904 651 250

## SAT-TUES

December 31-January 3

## SATURDAY, DEC 31

**ABERDEEN**  
The View/White Lies AECC  
0170 169 0100

**BIRMINGHAM**  
Chase & Status/Annie Mac HMV  
Institute 0844 248 5037

Lobster/Generic Eric Wagon & Horses  
0121 772 1403

**BOURNEMOUTH**  
Zion Train Old  
Fire Station  
01202 503888

**BRIGHTON**  
Peter & The Test  
Tube Babies  
Prince Albert  
01273 730 499

Teenage Grandad &  
The Mimic/Not Yet  
Dead World's End  
01273 692311

**EDINBURGH**  
Julio Bashmore  
Liquid Room  
0131 225 2564

Primal Scream/  
Mark Ronson/  
Friendly Fires/  
Kassidy City Centre  
Mark Ronson  
HMV Picture House  
0844 847 1740

Tiger & Woods  
Cabaret Voltaire  
0131 220 6176

**GLASGOW**  
The Dead Sea Souls King Tut's Wah  
Wah Hut 0141 221 5279

2ManyDJs O2 Academy 0870 477 2000

**LEICESTER**  
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Koko 0870 4325527

The Dykeenies Monto Water Rats  
020 7837 1412

Joker Electric Brixton 020 7274 2290

Kasabian/Chase & Status/Zane



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KOKO  
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Molotov Jukebox Bedroom Bar  
020 7613 5637

Shed Seven/The Rifles Vibe Bar  
020 7377 9880

Toddla T Nest 020 7354 9993

Tribes/Slow  
Club/Bones/  
Caan HMV Forum  
020 7344 0044

The Wedding  
Present Dingwalls  
020 7267 1577

The Winter  
Olympics Windmill  
020 8671 0700

**MANCHESTER**  
Darren Hayes/  
The Candle  
Thieves Academy 2  
0161 832 1111

Mr Scruff Band  
On The Wall  
0161 832 6625

**MILTON KEYNES**  
Tim Ten Yen  
Watershed  
07935 641 660

**PORTSMOUTH**  
The Targets Cellars  
0871 230 1094

**ST ALBANS**  
The 88's Horn  
01727 853 143

## SUNDAY, JAN 1

## BRIGHTON

Joy Orbison Digital 01273 202407

## LEEDS

Ame Faversham 0113 245 8817

## MONDAY, JAN 2

## BATH

Fiasco Brothers Pavilion 01225 447770

## HATFIELD

The Risk The Forum 0844 477 2000

## TUESDAY, JAN 3

## BRISTOL

Axial View Fleece 0117 945 0996



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NME

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## TRIPLE TROUBLE

I don't think your average punk fan should bother to buy it." Over drinks in a Soho pub ("Let me get 'em, I'm supposed to be the big pop star around here") Joe Strummer is talking 'Sandinista': The Clash's sprawling fourth album that finds them veering off "in about 35 directions". Their record company CBS isn't keen on it but the feeling's mutual ("They go out to lunch, they have meals that you or I would freak out if we saw them on the table"). More frustratingly for Strummer, some fans of The Clash are hostile. "They wanna hear, y'know, DA-DA-DA, that burst of energy," he says. "But there are plenty of groups doing it. The Ramones probably don't get people coming up to them and saying, 'You've sold out'. But I wouldn't listen to a Ramones LP unless you tied me to a chair."

"We've carried straight on. We've done what the hell we wanted to do," he says. "I mean, there's no 'musical direction', y'know? People in America, they go 'What musical direction?' And I always think, can't they see we're just a bunch of idiots who'll do whatever we wanna do?" As a parting question, he's asked how The Clash have stayed together while everyone else has split up. "Sometimes you think, 'I never wanna hear the word Clash again!' Then you think, 'We're not gonna leave it to The Jam, are we?'"

Read the full interview in *The Ultimate Music Guide: The Clash*, out now

ALSO IN THE ISSUE  
THAT WEEK

• Jon King of Gang Of Four is asked to sum up his band's year: "Er... unproductive".

• Among the 'Quotes Of The Year' is Lux Interior of The Cramps: "The best thing about our audiences is they're usually a mixture of the terminally unhip and the terminally hip. So you get a guy in a suit and tie next to someone with a nail through his head."

• It's reported that Phil May of The Pretty Things is working on a ballet version of 'SF Sorrow'.

• It's predicted that the big film of 1981 will be Scorsese's *Raging Bull*.

• Paul Morley interviews The Fire Engines. They wish to talk about "that fucking Clash crap, that triple album. I'd rather pay seven quid for a great single record than £4.99 for three albums of fucking shite."

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the Clash zone;  
Strummer talks  
from the hip.



## THE DURY'S OUT

Ian Dury And The Blockheads are reviewed live in Islington. Writes Barney Hoskyns: "Any band that comes up with this kind of sound deserves a more adventurous leader than Dury. What are we supposed to feel when he's doing his sob-sob bit on 'Sweet Gene Vincent'? Or do we just ignore it and wait for Wilko's incredible solo? Perhaps the condition of having a blocked head is that of having nothing besides a memory."

## 52 IS THE MAGIC NUMBER

The B-52s fight back against the idea that they're a caricature. "We have always dressed this way," says frontman Fred. "We don't try to capitalise on our clothes any more than on some sort of '60s thing." Keyboardist Kate adds: "We're more likely to go out thrift shopping, all buy high heels, and end up having a soccer game in the mud. We're concerned with getting people up on their feet."

OUT  
WEDNESDAY  
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4

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