

29 MARCH 2014

NME

**HEROES
SPECIAL**

**ROCK STARS
INTERVIEW
THEIR IDOLS**



Palma Violets

INTERVIEW

Johnny Marr

Wild Beasts

INTERVIEW

Swans

Savages

INTERVIEW

Wire

Courtney Barnett

INTERVIEWS

Billy Bragg

Gotcha!

Julian Casablancas

Cerebral Ballzy

bag a rare interview
with the **Strokes** legend

Interpol

Run-DMC

Chvrches

Temples

Franz

Ferdinand

"Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamp" CHUCK D

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NME Heroes: Chili Jesson & Johnny Marr

The Palma Violet and the Smiths guitarist chat about gateway bands

Honor Titus & Julian Casablancas

Cerebral Ballzy's frontman grills the Strokes star on Lou Reed and NYC

Tom Fleming & Michael Gira

The Wild Beast has a notebook full of questions for the Swans legend

Courtney Barnett & Billy Bragg

The Aussie newcomer and the bard of Barking talk backstage ping-pong

Gemma Thompson & Colin Newman

The Savages and Wire lynchpins mull over post-punk now and then

CONTRIBUTORS



Annie Nightingale
DJ
Annie speaks out about positive discrimination: "As Radio 1's first female DJ and longest-serving broadcaster, here's my take on how the gender playing field is getting... leveller."



Dan Boud
Photographer
Dan shot Billy and Courtney in Sydney. "I knew it was time to wrap up when Billy told this joke: 'How many photographers does it take to change a bulb? Just one more...'"



Huw Nesbitt
Writer
Huw explores the history of the 808 drum machine and 303 bass synth as they get a 21st-century makeover: "It was a huge honour to speak to Detroit techno pioneer Carl Craig."

THIS WEEK WE ASK...



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LETTER OF THE WEEK

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CLASSIC CASABLANCAS

My opinion on Julian's new solo music is that it fucking rocks. It sounds more rock and punk than his last solo album [2009's 'Phrazes For The Young']. I love all the electric guitars on his new songs – it just sounds awesome and different and something I definitely will be buying when it comes out. Julian's music has always been amazing and I cannot wait for this album. According to some people, his performance at SXSW sucked, but I loved every second of it.

Abby Long, via email

Ben Hewitt: Consider me stunned too, Abby. Julian sounded so spectacularly un-arsed on 'Comedown Machine' that I feared he'd fallen into some deep, narcoleptic slumber from which he'd never wake. But look! What rough beast slouches back towards us once more? It's Mr Casablanças, with some scuzzy, sexy rock'n'roll and a bunch of really quite excellent song titles such as 'Dr Acula' and 'Biz Dog'. So, like you, I'm excited. Excited because Julian seems excited again,



and it sounds like he's got the bit back between his teeth, doesn't it? For the last few years we've been crossing our fingers and patiently waiting for that classic Strokes comeback album, only for it to never quite come together. But maybe we've been looking in the wrong place all this time, and it's a solo Julian who'll be the one to make us go all giddy again? Is this finally it? Let's hope so.

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letter was written by a Russian living in Russia, who obviously has first-hand experience of the situation there. What right does Mark have to stick his beak in and take it upon himself to lay down the law on this subject? I am sure Nastya is far more up to speed on the issue than Mark. Gay rights and freedom of speech in Russia is an issue for Russian people. Lord knows we have enough censorship in this country...

Gareth Jones, via email

BH: Thing is, Mark Beaumont was just sticking up for Russia's LGBT community by suggesting a law that bans 'gay propaganda' might be a bad thing. I'm not doubting Nastya's got first-hand experience of what it's like in Russia right now, but you don't have to be carrying a bottle of vodka in one hand and a copy of Tolstoy in the other to see that forbidding under-16s to learn about homosexuality is crazy.

#SAVETYLER

Tyler, The Creator shouldn't have been arrested at SXSW; he was helping out fans who wanted to see him. It may have been dangerous, but it's not his fault they all came in.

Michael Houston, via email

I wasn't surprised at all when I heard that Tyler had been arrested for causing a riot. Anyone who has been to an Odd Future gig will know how hectic and energetic the atmosphere is. I've heard it was his intention before his gig to start a riot, but I'm not too bothered since his mugshot was priceless.

Liam Menzies, Scotland, via email

BH: The thing is, Michael, it sort of is Tyler, The Alleged Riot-Inciter's fault, given that he reportedly urged fans to storm past security into an already overcrowded venue. And it was a doubly bad idea considering that three festival-goers had been



killed in a car crash. After a tragic accident like that, it's no bad thing to err on the side of caution and make sure that everyone's safe and sound. I'm with Liam on that mugshot though: he looks like a man who has let a silent but deadly fart slip out in a crowded lift. Brilliant.

RILEY MILEY

I find this interminable Miley Cyrus hating boring. If people were having a go at her for her shameless appropriation of black culture then I would be more willing to accept the abuse she gets. However,

more and more I find people hating things because they are 'pop' rather than for any decent reason. Her music certainly isn't good but is much more palatable than, say, anything [Bob] Dylan has coughed up recently. I wonder if it is the blatancy of her sexual expression that people are uncomfortable with. I find it absolutely hilarious how all these 'indie kids' love to listen to 'new, exciting music' and what they actually end up listening to is antiquated, regurgitated crap. It's brilliant that Cyrus is covering The Beatles, because it shows the progression that pop music has made. The Beatles were what was exciting culturally back then. I might not like it and you might not like it, but Miley Cyrus is what's happening now.

Sam Fuller, Welwyn Garden City, via email

BH: There's nothing quite as boring as the whimpering 'sacred cow' gang crying because

someone from *The X Factor* covered a pop song they quite like. So I'm with you here, Sam: pop music is meant to be fun, isn't it? And Miley taking a crack at 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' is going to be fun, if nothing else. Let's not forget, either, that the Fab Four became legends because, among other things, they were risk-taking rebels. Granted, Miley's risks tend to be less about music and more about pushing the boundaries of science beyond their limits – anyone else's tongue would have gone slack by now and just hang limply outside their mouth like a dead dog's – but I'd rather hear her covering The Beatles than a slavish Lennon devotee.

FORWARD-THINKING RUSSIA?

I have to voice my opinion of Mark Beaumont's reply to Nastya Kazakova's email regarding the gay rights situation in Russia. This



LOOK WHO'S STALKING

I met Yannis two weeks ago (March 5) after Foals' Kuala Lumpur show. I talked to him until almost 4am and he gave me some life advice: "Don't be a lawyer... That would be horrible."

Natalie Rubic, Philippines

PRESS *pause.*



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NME TRACK OF THE WEEK

1. Peace
World Pleasure

Peace's debut 'In Love' was full of psychedelic indie pop, but don't expect album number two to sound the same. On 'World Pleasure', frontman Harry Koisser steps way out of his comfort zone to have a go at rapping, boasting, "*Maybe I was not born brave/Maybe I was born good looking*". His brother Sam, meanwhile, has his finest moment so far – a bass solo that bridges the gap between slinky funk and classic rock. Cheeky, inventive and cool.

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

2. Julian Casablancas and The Voidz
Dracula

Last time Julian Casablancas went solo, it was with the synth-heavy sound and '80s pop gloss of 2009's 'Phrazes For The Young'. This track – premiered live in the week of South By Southwest – is something quite different, with stark, Cramps-like verses followed by thrashing, screaming choruses and, later, Strokes-like guitar arpeggios. Wonder if he knows a New York deathcore band beat him to the titular vampire pun?

Dan Stubbs, News Editor

3. Sia
Chandelier

As a songwriter for Beyoncé, Rihanna, Britney Spears, Eminem and Katy Perry and a singer for Zero 7, David Guetta and Flo Rida, Sia's music has been filling the charts for years. She decided to keep 'Chandelier', the first track from her upcoming sixth album, to herself. Good decision. It's midtempo pop that erupts into the most ludicrously euphoric chorus of the year. Bring on the album.

Lucy Jones, Deputy Editor, NME.COM

4. The Acid
Creeper

Techno trio The Acid reckon they're an "unknown entity, a force in itself", which all sounds very airy-fairy until you hear what they're capable of. 'Creeper' is a brutal minimalist attack, pared back to depth-charge bass, piercing hi-hat and a machine-gun judder that increases in manic intensity. It's topped off by psycho whispers – "*I wanna break you with a Molotov*" – summoning thoughts of the apocalypse. Listen with the lights on.

Matthew Horton, writer

5. Sadie Dupuis
Just Pretend To Be Nice

Speedy Ortiz's Sadie Dupuis is a master at picking apart the facades of failed relationships. No surprises, then, that her cover of Josie And The Pussycats' 'Just Pretend To Be Nice' exposes something darker lurking underneath the original's sugarcoted pop. "*He disappears for a week at a time/And then he shows up just like everything's fine*", she sings bitterly over a fuzzy arrangement, as if trying to spit disappointment from her mouth.

Ben Hewitt, writer

**6. Wye Oak**
Glory

Baltimore's Jenn Wasner is one of American indie's most prolific new voices – since 2011, she's released albums fronting grungy brooders Wye Oak, dreampoppers Flock Of Dimes and dancey '90s throwback Dungeonesse. This new single from the former sounds like a collision of them all, ditching guitars for breathy synths and retro bass. "*I watch the clock as it turns backwards*", Wasner howls; 'Glory' is forward-thinking indie pop at its finest.

Al Horner, Assistant Editor, NME.COM

7. The Brian Jonestown Massacre
What You Isn't

Anton Newcombe's psych crew already announced their live comeback earlier this year but now they've revealed their first new music since 2012 album 'Aufheben'. 'What You Isn't' is five and a half minutes of mid-paced lysergic stomp with Newcombe setting out his steps to success: "*You've got to wake up and be a man and make a plan/You're gonna win it/You've got to do everything I said until you're dead*".

Rhian Daly, Assistant Reviews Editor

8. Wu-Tang Clan
Keep Watch

This first single from the Wu's upcoming 'A Better Tomorrow' LP isn't exactly about to turn rap on its head, but thanks to those familiar voices and that distinctive Shaolin stomp, it offers satisfying hip-hop comfort food. Method Man, in particular, sounds more energised and inspired than many younger buzzed-about MCs: his propulsive opening verse is as head-spinning as of his mid-'90s bars.

Joe Madden, writer

9. Ratking feat. King Krule
So Sick Stories

Ratking and King Krule are united in disaffection, and this woozy ride shines a light on their inner-city youth-hoods in New York and London respectively. Archy Marshall's hook lollops over stoned but erudite verses, while Wiki and Hak showcase electric lyrical prowess. "*My tongue rip, burns holes through pockets and drawers*", Hak shrugs, before this gritty beat fades into a tired groan. There's plenty to boast about here, if they can be bothered.

Ben Homewood, writer

10. The Black Angels
Diamond Eyes

You've just invented a time machine, but where do you go? Germany 1933 to kill Hitler? Hamburg 1961 to discover The Beatles? Or, like Texan psych fuzzsters The Black Angels, San Francisco 1968 to play them 'How Soon Is Now?' and totally fry the acid-blended hippy brains of a generation? 'Diamond Eyes' is as set in psych-era aspic as Temples' album, but you really should consider, in your more added moments, letting it be your mirror.

Mark Beaumont, writer

ESSENTIAL NEW TRACKS

► LISTEN TO THEM ALL AT NME.COM/ONREPEAT NOW

11. Patti Smith & Kronos Quartet Mercy Is

Written for the soundtrack to upcoming biblical epic and Hollywood blockbuster *Noah*, Patti Smith's collaboration with Kronos Quartet is as disquieting as you'd expect from the godmother of punk pairing with the neoclassical experimentalists to tackle the oh-so-light matter of the end of the world. Smith adopts a mournful growl for the occasion as she prophesises about the post-apocalyptic "healing wind that whispers as you sleep". Beautiful.

Jenny Stevens, Deputy News Editor

12. Lykke Li Du Är Den Ende

From music stage to movie screen, Lykke Li is branching out. She stars in new Swedish crime thriller *Tommy* – which sadly has nary a hint of a pinball wizard about it – and has contributed 'Du Är Den Ende' ('You Are The Only') to its soundtrack. Coming on like the world's saddest Bond theme, and sung in her native Swedish, Li's solemn vocal punctuates a melancholy mix of guitar, percussion and a haunting choir. Wonderfully depressing.

Hayley Avron, writer

13. Interpol Anywhere

A fairly notable stumble in 2010 (see their self-titled fourth LP) has done little to dispel the excitement surrounding Interpol's return. 'Anywhere' is the first taste of what's to come, debuted at a warm-up gig for the NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas. As sharp guitar arpeggios cushion a gloomy croon, you realise that Interpol haven't changed. The perfect excuse to wear nothing but black this summer.

James Balmont, writer

14. Jay Electronica Better In Tune With The Infinite

Despite no sign of the album he declared finished two years ago, Jay Electronica dropped this sublime orchestral track from it after a fan tweeted him at SXSW. Over samples of Nation Of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad, *The Wizard Of Oz* and dreamy strings, Jay rhymes: "The work is on the outside, staring out the window is for love songs and houseflies" before LaTonya Givens comes in with some serious vocals. Now can we have the rest please?

Hazel Sheffield, writer

15. Slow Club Complete Surrender

At some point during the recording of Slow Club's third album, the follow-up to 2011's 'Paradise', someone appears to have robbed the former twee-folk band of their acoustic guitars and flowered headbands and replaced them with a disco mixtape and a pair of sparkly hotpants. Subsequently, 'Complete Surrender' is the best thing Charles Watson and Rebecca Taylor have ever done – a breathy, heady dancefloor beast.

Lisa Wright, writer



16. The Black Keys Fever

The first song to appear from The Black Keys' eighth album isn't quite the bluesy juggernaut we've come to expect. 'Fever' loafs along with a sort of bleating, Beaker-off-*The Muppets* electric organ that sounds like the machine making it may be low on both batteries and self-esteem, while Dan Auerbach adds a layer of soulful melodrama: "Fever got me guilty, just go ahead and kill me". A rattler and a roller, rather than a shaker.

JJ Dunning, writer

17. Merchandise Figured Out

Released as part of a split album with tour buddies Milk Music and Destruction Unit for Record Store Day, 'Figured Out' sees Carson Cox going the full Morrissey on the US band's most Smiths-like tune yet. "Now you're back, like you ain't sneaking around", he sings over breezy guitars that belie the song's moody undercurrent. It all builds to a point of self-combustion, boding incredibly well for the band's new album, due later this year on 4AD.

David Renshaw, News Reporter

18. Sean C & LV Hand In My Pocket feat. Pusha T & A\$AP Ferg

NYC duo Sean C and LV are behind this third track to appear from upcoming mixtape 'Loud Dreams Vol 1'. The Clipse man does his street hussler thing, and keeps the pace steady so A\$AP Ferg can fly off the handle. His rhymes peak when he squeezes in a Mary Poppins reference to describe himself as "Supercalifragilisticexpious of my dosage".

Tom Howard, Reviews Editor

19. Childish Gambino What Kind Of Love

This unfinished track from the sessions for Childish Gambino's 2013 album 'Because The Internet' was being sold without his permission on iTunes. Thinking this to be "wack", Gambino has stuck it on SoundCloud as a free download. It's a Frank Ocean-like, heart-on-sleeve ballad that's stripped back and rough. There's guitar, verses sung and rapped, and a flash of interference that makes for an interesting effect rather than a disturbance.

Phil Hebblethwaite, writer

20. All We Are Feel Safe

Following last year's debut single 'Utmost Good', this Liverpoolian trio of self-professed "Bee Gees on Diazepam" return with more Gibb-like harmonies than you can shake a pair of '70s flares at. 'Feel Safe', however, treads a subtler path than its disco forefathers. All flickering Foals guitars, low-slung grooves and vocals reminiscent of Bombay Bicycle Club and Lucy Rose, it's dancefloor-friendly in the most understated of ways.

Lisa Wright, writer

The Week

► EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS IN MUSIC ■ EDITED BY DAN STUBBS

Royal Blood
Mike Kerr
(left) and
Ben Thatcher

Interpol
Daniel Kessler
(far left), Paul
Banks and
Sam Fogarino

All aboard

Our four-band dream team get acquainted at the opening night of the NME Awards Tour 2014 with Austin, Texas

With headliners Interpol previewing three tracks from their forthcoming new album, the NME Awards Tour 2014 with Austin, Texas kicked off in style at the O2 Academy Glasgow on March 18. Those songs – ‘Anywhere’, ‘My Desire’ and ‘All The Rage Back Home’ – plus a host of crowd-pleasing classics led to an uproarious reception for the New Yorkers, and even taciturn frontman Paul Banks was moved to declare, “I just want to thank *NME* for putting on this cool thing – and you all for being here.”

Further down the bill, Circa Waves, Royal Blood and Temples all wowed the crowd on their own merits. Before the gig, Temples were feeling the effects of playing 12 shows in the space of a week at South By Southwest, but a reunion with drummer Sam Toms, who couldn’t make it out to Austin because of visa problems, and the roar of the audience lifted spirits. “The Scottish crowd are

always really good,” said keyboard player Adam Smith. “And it’s really cool to be touring with Interpol – we all listened to them when we were younger.” Circa Waves frontman Kieran Shudall concurred: “We’ve been looking forward to this tour for so long – we’re excited that it’s finally here.”

The scope for the kind of tourbus japey the tour has become famous for is perhaps more limited than in previous years – Temples, Royal Blood and Circa Waves are all doing the tour in splitter vans, while Interpol have elected to take a more scenic route and travel from gig to gig by train. Nonetheless, as you can see from our group shot, a sense of camaraderie among the bands was already emerging by the end of the first night. Could a collaboration be on the cards by the time the tour rolls into the final leg at O2 Academy Brixton on Thursday? Not if Temples can help it: “We’d be too scared to share a stage with Interpol,” says Smith. ■ BARRY NICOLSON

Circa Waves
Kieran Shudall,
Sian Plummer,
Sam Rourke
and Joe
Falconer

Temples
(clockwise from
top) Adam Smith,
Thomas Warmesley,
James Bagshaw
and Sam Toms

Video games

Lizzo takes us behind the scenes of her 'Faded' promo

Minneapolis rapper Lizzo earned herself a place on *NME's* best videos of 2013 list with 'Batches And Cookies' – a clip that saw her riding motorbikes, protesting for gay rights and smearing butter over a shirtless male friend. She's managed to top it with the promo for 'Faded' – her new single, out April 14 – which ropes in Strokes associate Har Mar Superstar and child star-turned-Pizza Underground member Macaulay Culkin. "It's very important to portray yourself as an artist visually," she says. "I feel like people don't even buy singles any more – they just watch videos!" Here's her guide to the 'Faded' promo. ■ LEONIE COOPER



Lizzo at South By Southwest, March 14, 2014



Pappy & Harriet's

Partly filmed in the Mojave Desert, most of the video was made while Lizzo was gearing up to play a show at Pappy & Harriet's in Pioneertown, California. It's an isolated biker bar that has the honour of being Josh Homme and Arctic Monkeys' favourite drinking spot. "Pappy & Harriet's is this crazy bar in the middle of the desert. It's in a town that was a film set in the 1930s, and instead of tearing it down, people just started to live there," says Lizzo. "It has a very small population – it's like being on Mars. They say there's a lot of spiritual energy there. You can hear a pin drop at night."



The DILLIGAF crew

The video features some heavily bearded middle-aged dudes they met knocking back brews from jam jars at the bar. "That's the DILLIGAF crew!" beams Lizzo. "It stands for Do I Look Like I Give A Fuck? They all ride big trucks and drink beer every day." Lizzo gets to stroke one of the beards in the video. "It was very soft," she recalls.



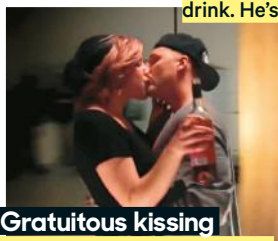
Macaulay Culkin

The *Home Alone* star was part of Har Mar Superstar's touring party, and he too took a turn before the lens. "He was kind of a roadie and he was amazing, just a great help," says Lizzo. "He was loading in and loading out, asking if we were OK, if we needed something to drink. He's a good friend, and he's hilarious."



Har Mar Superstar

The video was shot while Lizzo was on tour with the soul lothario, who was initially sceptical about appearing in it. "Macaulay Culkin and I worked together to get Har Mar to do a sexy dance," she says.



Gratuitous kissing

Much of the promo sees Lizzo getting her mates to kiss each other. "I got some of my closest friends in Minneapolis and made them make out, some of them for the first time. How? I bought them pizza, whiskey and beer. We were playing spin the bottle, essentially."



Topless men

Much like the 'Batches And Cookies' promo, 'Faded' features a selection of dancing shirtless gentlemen. "We had a karate master and one who was taking a lot of pills and freaking out," says Lizzo. "We loved it!"

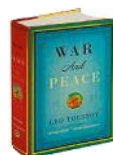
MY LIFE IN A SUITCASE

FIVE TOURING ESSENTIALS

James Righton



Klaxons



BOOK War And Peace by Leo Tolstoy

"It's a good tour book because it's so bloody long, and you might be away for a really long time. It's been a real battle reading it. It has been war and peace, quite literally – but I do love it."



BOXSET Breaking Bad

"I haven't watched it yet and I've spent the last few years trying to avoid any spoilers."

It sounds like such an insanely leftfield show – I'm surprised it's so popular."

FILM

This Is Spinal Tap

"I saw it yesterday with a friend who'd been on tour. It's so close to the bone it frightens a lot of people who are already in bands. Have we ever had a Spinal Tap moment? On a daily basis."

GAME

Ten Things

"When you're at an airport, you have to name the first 10 things that come into your head about the country you're in. Switzerland is good, which is surprising for such a small country."



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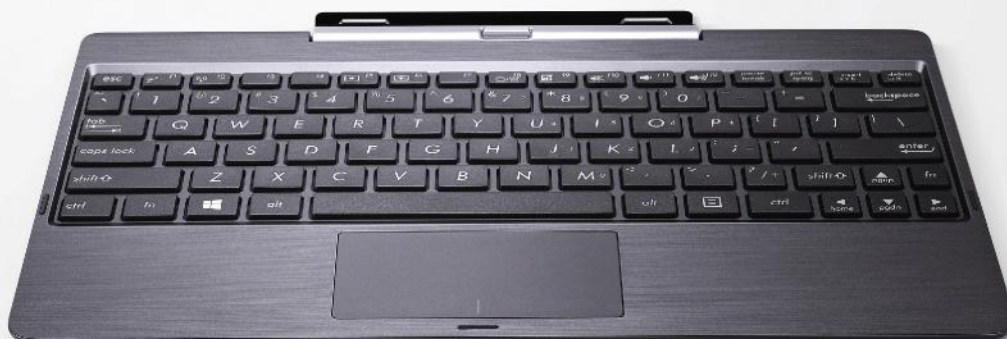
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John Lewis

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A numbers game

The instruments that created dance music as we know it are finally reissued



TR-808 fans the Beastie Boys in 1987

They're the 1980s electronic boxes that birthed electro and dance music, versatile enough to create the squelchy bass sounds in Orange Juice's 'Rip It Up', the intro to Whitney Houston's 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody' and the beats on Beastie Boys' 'Licensed To Ill', not to mention the bones of pretty much any techno, house or acid house song you can think of. So beloved are they, they're referenced in lyrics by OutKast ('I know y'all wanted that 808', from 'The Way You Move') and Beyoncé, and referred to in the title of Kanye's '808s & Heartbreak' album.

The Roland TB-303 Bass Line and TR-808 Rhythm Composer have long been essential pieces of kit for anyone making music of an electronic bent, but the problem is price. With 808s manufactured for just four years, from 1980 to 1984, they sell for around £2,000 second hand. Next month, the Japanese manufacturer will unveil a revived version that combines the drum machine, the bass synthesizer and the 808's successor, the TR-909. Named the TR-8, it will retail

for a slightly more wallet-friendly £400. "It's an iconic instrument and we want young people to access it," says Roland's Veijo Laine. "Only 12,000 TR-808s were ever made, so they're hard to find and expensive. Using new digital modelling technology, we're able to offer an identical reproduction at an affordable price."

Initially a commercial flop because of its sci-fi tones and whopping \$1,125 price tag, the 808 became popular in the mid-'80s, when members of Detroit's emerging techno scene found they could buy it cheaply in pawnshops. Detroit techno artist and DJ Carl Craig is still passionate about it. "What's great about the 808 is that you can make an entire record with it alone," he says. "If you need low-end, you've got the kick; if you want mid it's got toms – everything is within its spectrum. It's not just a drum machine, it's a music-making machine."

Three decades on, new generations of electronic musicians are still falling for the machines' retro-futuristic charms. Bristol-based Nick 'Ekoplekz' Edwards, whose debut album 'Unfidelity' is out this month, is one of them. "The thing about the 808 was that it just looked so cool; and if the 303 didn't exist, acid house would never have happened," he says.

With these sounds finally available to a mass audience for a more affordable price, the new release could inspire a new wave of electronic music. But, say critics, the availability of cheap music software doing the same job means they're already redundant. Laine disagrees: "Software can only offer a sampled sound, whereas this is the real thing," he says. "Also, musicians are never going to get tired of playing with actual instruments. It's just much more satisfying and intuitive." ■ HUW NESBITT



The original TB-303 (above) and TR-808

808 STATES

Four songs in which the iconic machine is the star

Afrika Bambaataa 'Planet Rock'

The genre-smashing electro hit from 1982 sounds like an eerie mix of Kraftwerk's 'Trans Europe Express' and Ennio Morricone's 'For A Few Dollars More' soundtrack.

Beastie Boys 'Paul Revere'

A cut from the NYC hip-hop trio's 1986 album 'Licensed To Ill', its warped 808 beat was allegedly created by mistake after someone played the loop backwards.

808 State 'Pacific State'

So central was the Roland drum machine to the Mancunian acid house group, they took their name from it. This expansive track was their finest moment.

Talking Heads 'Psycho Killer' (Live)

The New Yorkers' 'Stop Making Sense' tour began with David Byrne, alone onstage, hammering an acoustic guitar to an austere beat, courtesy of an 808.

NME COMPETITION

WIN! NME has an Roland TR-8 signed by Disclosure to give away, so you could soon be making beats and basslines yourself. To be in with a chance of winning, visit NME.COM/win.



THE MINI INTERVIEW



Trent Reznor

Nine Inch Nails

Your world tour hits the UK in May. What can fans expect?

"We're more aggressive and not as new-album-heavy as we were at Reading & Leeds last year. You have to keep switching things up now because people can tune in via streams and cellphones."

You're co-headlining with QOTSA in Australia and Soundgarden in the USA. Are you lonely?

"No, I like the friendly rivalry. It keeps you involved. Josh and I have been alternating who plays first."

Didn't you have a grisly Twitter beef with Soundgarden's Chris Cornell for having Timbaland produce his solo album?

"I have nothing against the guy. What I said had to do with label politics. My label were trying to get me to do a record with Pharrell or Timbaland because 'that's how you sell records'. I thought that was preposterous."

You've launched a music streaming service. Has Neil Young's PonoPlayer stolen your thunder?

"No, anything that elevates music back to where it should be is inherently cool. I have great admiration for Neil Young as an artist."

Will you get one?

"Probably. But as a device, I can't pretend it doesn't look a bit like a Toblerone."

■ GAVIN HAYNES



RIVER ISLAND

Unsung heroes

Backing singer Claudia Lennear
– star of *20 Feet From Stardom* –
on working with Bowie and Jagger

For decades, they've been stuck at the side of the stage. But thanks to a new, Oscar-winning documentary, some of music's most celebrated backing singers are getting their time in the spotlight.

Directed by Morgan Neville and documenting the joys, frustrations and rollercoaster fortunes of some of the greatest backing singers of all time, *20 Feet From Stardom* hits UK cinemas on March 28. Among its stars are

Darlene Love (whose credits include recordings by Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke and Frank Sinatra), Merry Clayton (voice of The Rolling Stones' 'Gimme Shelter') and Claudia Lennear (a former member of Ike Turner's 'Kettes', who sang with George Harrison and many others).

"Background singers are those who are comfortable with where they are," says Lennear. "They're used to having to blend their voices and support the lead singer. That's what music is all about: harmony and working together."

Issues of race and gender are never far away from the film's main narrative, reflecting a history of talented black women bolstering the performances of white men,

from the "coloured girls" on Lou Reed's 'Walk On The Wild Side' to the so-called 'plastic soul' singers on David Bowie's 'Young Americans' and the gospel makeover Joe Cocker gave The Beatles' 'With A Little Help From My Friends'.

"I certainly didn't feel cheated or exploited by it," Lennear says. "It was about acceptance.

Five more backing singers who made the walk to stardom



Cher
As a teenager, Cher performed backing vocals on Phil Spector productions, including 'Be My Baby' and 'You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'.



Sheryl Crow
Years before her 'Tuesday Night Music Club' debut, Crow was a backing singer on Michael Jackson's 'Bad' tour.



St Vincent
We know Annie Clark as wild-haired guitar virtuoso

St Vincent, but once upon a time she was part of Sufjan Stevens' touring band.



Jessie Ware
Prior to the success of 'Devotion', Ware sung backing vocals for her friend Jack Peñate, dubstep producer Joker and SBTRKT.



Luther Vandross
The late soul singer was a favourite of David Bowie, Chic, Todd Rundgren, Diana Ross, Carly Simon and many more.



(Main) Claudia Lennear in '73 and (far right) Darlene Love with Elvis, '68

"THAT'S WHAT MUSIC IS ALL ABOUT: WORKING TOGETHER"
Claudia Lennear

I'm really glad those stars came along, because they had no trouble crossing over and showing

our music to other people. The '60s and '70s were times of huge change, and it was hard to go from one way of being to another. It's still a man's world, but we were following [feminist activists] Gloria Steinem and Bella Abzug and others who had a lot to say about women being every bit as good as men. We were given an amazing opportunity to prove them right."

Lennear turned her back on singing, professionally at least, in the late '70s when she felt the tide turning towards hip-hop. It was then she began teaching French, Spanish and American-English literature in a California college. "It takes about three weeks for my students to work out what I used to do," she says. "Then they'll ask, 'You know Mick Jagger and David Bowie?!', so I use it as a negotiation tool. They do their homework, they get a story. If they're very lucky, I'll sing them a song."

There were also rumours of relationships with both Jagger and Bowie – the former's 'Brown Sugar' was partly inspired by Lennear, while the latter wrote 'Lady Grinning Soul' about her. "[David Bowie and I] got back in touch recently and it brought back all these great things I thought about him back in the day," she says, adding that Bowie suggested writing her some songs and bringing her out of self-imposed retirement. It's an idea Lennear's open to. "I'd love to! But if nothing comes of it, at the very least it would be great to hang out with an old friend and soulmate." ■ ANDY WELCH

GILLES PETARD, GETTY

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MESS ON A MISSION

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MESS



(Far left) Annie Nightingale on air in 1970. (Left) Canadian DJ B Traits took part in Radio 1's International Women's Day takeover

WHY GENDER QUOTAS WON'T HELP WOMEN DJS

BY ANNIE NIGHTINGALE

Equality needs to be achieved on merit, not tokenism, says Radio 1's first female DJ and longest-serving broadcaster



When Radio 1 devoted a full 39 hours to female occupation of the mics on the weekend of International Women's Day (March 7-9), it was generally hailed as a success. But in some quarters there were rumblings of 'tokenism'.

Every female DJ I've ever met wants to be judged on her merits and ability, not her gender. It's true that we have come a long way. When Radio 1 was launched in 1967, it wasn't because the BBC wanted a pop music station, it was because the government had shut down the pirate stations and a new outlet was needed as a sop to the now pop-deprived young listeners. You had the distinct impression that the powers at the BBC hoped pop music was a passing fad.

The original bosses at Radio 1 realised the only way to keep the station on air was to build massive listening figures, so they elevated the first wave of DJs into household names. But because they thought the audience was going to be mainly women during the daytime, they moulded the all-male team of DJs into (their term) "husband substitutes". That's why they decreed there would be no women DJs on Radio 1. They wouldn't even put two female artists consecutively on a playlist because they thought this would alienate women listeners. I was incredulous.

I began attacking the BBC in magazine articles for its blatant sexism. Eventually Radio 1 realised that there was a full-blown hue and cry emerging in all sections of the media. Because I'd been making a nuisance of myself and sending in demos and programme ideas, they let me have a go. Yes, it was tokenism. And no, I didn't expect to last. But I had fallen in love with music broadcasting. They put me on in the daytime to start with, but I realised that all the cool stuff happened in the evenings, so that's where I moved to and have remained. I play whatever I like, and feel I have earned that right. But even after I kicked the door in at Radio 1 and got a show on air, no more women joined the station for another 12 years. I began to think that maybe no-one else wanted this job that I so cherished.

Now, though, Radio 1 now has more female presenters than ever before – Annie Mac and myself have regular slots on Friday nights, and then there's B Traits, Monki and Heidi. I believe the station is correcting the previous imbalance. But, in my view, being a radio DJ is about aspiring to be super good at what you do, not being part of a quota. We should be broadcasting on merit and nothing else. There are a lot of bloke broadcasters who deserve a break too.

I cannot speak for other stations and their perceived reluctance to put more female broadcasters on air. So we and the would-be broadcasters must plough on and prove our case. My advice to anyone who wants a slot? Just be so shit-hot you cannot be ignored! ■

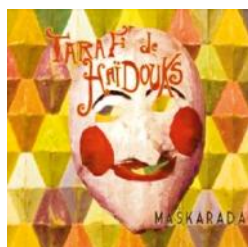
► For more opinion and debate, head to NME.COM/blogs

LOST ALBUMS

#22

Taraf De Haïdouks
Maskarada (2007)

Chosen by Terry Gilliam, director



"I'm a big fan of Hungarian and Romanian gypsy music. It's so vital, so real. It comes from an old tradition of people's simple lives where they express their loves, their hurts, their anguish... everything about life is there in this music. It's the most life-enhancing music I know. Taraf De Haïdouks became known outside the gypsy music scene, so they're a good entry point. 'Maskarada' re-imagines some of their old songs, so start there. From there, there's a whole world people can explore of bands like Parno Graszt, who are just wonderfully life-affirming."

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE**

June 25, 2007

► **LABEL** Crammed Discs

► **BEST TRACKS** In A Persian Market, The Missing Dance, Asturias

► **WHERE TO FIND IT** On CD or download

► **LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify

**Trips to Haiti
and turbulent US
politics inspired
Merrill Garbus'
third album**



Merrill Garbus
recording 'Nikki
Nack' in LA

Tune-Yards

I've really tried to turn my understanding of songwriting on its head for this album," says Tune-Yards frontwoman Merrill Garbus. She's not kidding. 'Nikki Nack', her third LP for 4AD, draws deeply on the Haitian drum music and dancing that Garbus has been studying since concluding tour duties for 2011's 'Whokill'. It led her to visit Haiti last spring, where she put her fledgling skills to the test with the locals. "You learn the dancing and the drumming together," she explains. "That way, you understand where the beats are supposed to hit and how to play them to make the body move."

Big-time producers Malay (Frank Ocean, Alicia Keys) and John Hill (Rihanna, MIA) have come on board to steer Garbus' vision, helping her whittle down 30 demos written in "patchwork" fashion across Haiti and various US-based getaways, and find a balance between modern technology and Garbus' folksy writing ethic. "The recording technology these days means some of those demos turned into actual recordings," she says. "'Wait For A Minute' started in my apartment with me on my 1986 Casio."

Rooting 'Nikki Nack' in a non-western music tradition has meant employing

a sensitive touch ("I don't want to pull directly from Haitian rhythms, because these are very sacred things") and forgoing the loop-pedal-and-ukulele writing formula behind 'Whokill' and 2009 debut 'Bird-Brains'. The resulting songs aren't easy, says Garbus, "but I think they're full of life. I don't quite understand some of them yet, and I like that."

The Haiti experience was part of a period of deep self-reflection for Garbus – as both an artist and a US citizen. "The trip got me thinking about the [colonial] relationship between America and the Caribbean. If you start digging around, there's a lot of dirt there." 'Whokill', written against a backdrop of riots in California, focused its gaze on the issue of social justice in America; 'Nikki Nack' – written under the ever-present whirring of the police helicopters that hover above Tune-Yards' new rehearsal space in downtown Oakland – follows suit, tackling gentrification, global politics and the rage that followed the fatal shooting of American teenager Trayvon Martin.

But songs such as 'Stop That Man', which refers to Martin's killer George Zimmerman, are meant to pose questions rather offer grand solutions. As Garbus says: "It's too complicated to have all the answers."

Heavy themes abound, but 'Nikki Nack' – named after a playground

skipping chant – has a fantastically playful sound, in part inspired by the puppet-filled world of 1980s US kids' TV show *Pee-wee's Playhouse*; one that verges on the surreal

in the spoken-word interlude 'Why Do We Dine On The Tots?'. The instrumentation – a bricolage of Moogs, drum machines and found objects – reflects this toybox vibe. "We'll go around the room tapping on lampshades to find the right sound," says Garbus. "It's a fun way of doing things."

With US a cappella ensemble Roomful Of Teeth guesting on opener 'Find A New Way', 'Nikki Nack' may be the most vocal-heavy Tune-Yards LP yet – so much so that Garbus is scouting for female backing singers to join her tour band.

Three albums in, says Garbus, she's still processing where her increasingly popular music is taking her. "I

can't say that all I want is to sit in a corner and sing to myself; I think it's clear that Tune-Yards has grown beyond that. I just know I need to follow this – to keep singing and see where it takes us." ■ CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON ANDREWS

▶ THE DETAILS

- ▶ **TITLE** Nikki Nack
- ▶ **RELEASE DATE** May 5
- ▶ **LABEL** 4AD
- ▶ **PRODUCERS** Malay, John Hill
- ▶ **RECORDED** New, Improved Recording, Oakland; M&M Studios, Oakland; Sonora Recorders, Los Angeles; Pink Mountain Studios, California; Ham Radio Hobby Room, New York; Electric Lady Studios, New York
- ▶ **TRACKS INCLUDE** Find A New Way, Water Fountain, Time Of Dark, Real Thing, Look Around, Hey Life, Sink-O, Interlude, Why Do We Dine On The Tots?, Stop That Man, Wait For A Minute, Left Behind, Rocking Chair, Manchild
- ▶ **MERRILL GARBUS SAYS** "I don't quite understand some of [the songs] yet. I like that."

**"WE'LL GO AROUND
TAPPING ON LAMP-
SHADES TO FIND
THE RIGHT SOUND"
MERRILL GARBUS**



ANATOMY OF AN ALBUM



"WE TOOK IT IN A ROCK DIRECTION"
Joseph Simmons



STORY BEHIND THE SLEEVE

The cover shot, with art direction from Dick Smith, exemplifies Run-DMC's no-frills approach. As hazy as DMC's specs ("I just go through life with my glasses blurred", he raps on 'It's Like That'), it's a perfunctory image that only serves to emphasise the music inside.

THIS WEEK...

Run-DMC: Run-DMC

Released 30 years ago this week, the New York trio's debut sowed the seeds of the rap-rock crossover

THE BACKGROUND

Starting out in 1981 and born of the block-party scene in Hollis, Queens, Joseph 'Run' Simmons and Darryl 'DMC' McDaniels represented a new breed of rapper. Together with their DJ, Jason Mizell – aka Jam Master Jay – they created literate hip-hop that put the lyrics front and centre with blunt beats that never muddled the message. "I thought I'd just tell people what the world is like, and how to improve themselves," said Run. Despite enjoying a career leg-up courtesy of Run's older brother Russell Simmons, who was in the process of launching the Def Jam label with Rick Rubin, it was their no-punches-pulled debut single 'It's Like That' – also included on 'Run-DMC' – and their Adidas-loving image that brought them to wider attention.

FIVE FACTS

1 The partnership of Run and DMC was in full swing by 1979, with the pair taking turns on the decks and the mic at local shows, but when Run asked his brother to help them cut a record, Russell told him he had to finish high school first.

2 New York session man Eddie Martinez plays guitar on 'Rock Box', "taking the record in a rock direction", according to Run. It would be a precursor to their 1986 Aerosmith collaboration, 'Walk This Way'.

3 Rapper Kurtis Blow's bassist Larry Smith created the drum-machine patterns and synth stabs in the blank, unadorned backing track for 'It's Like That', which carried over to the whole album.

4 The Blow connection ran deep. Run even called himself 'DJ Run Love – The Son of Kurtis Blow' when the pair played together. "Kurtis taught me about phrases like 'Rock the house, y'all' that you put in to fill the gaps," he revealed.

5 The inspiration for 'Rock Box' was the US band Riot, who were rehearsing in the same studios where 'Run-DMC' was made. "We're going to make loud shit too!" Russell Simmons decided.

LYRIC ANALYSIS

"Whatever happened to unity?"
– 'It's Like That'

Their debut single starts off sounding droll – "The next time someone's teaching/ Why don't you get taught?" – but any feelgood vibes are soon swept away in favour of a bleak vision of the future.

"Unemployment was at a record low/ And the presidents were chillin' at our show"
– 'Wake Up'

Run-DMC describe a utopia, then reveal it's all a dream. Unemployment was peaking at around 10 per cent at the time and President Reagan was up to his neck in the Cold War.

"So Larry put me inside his Cadillac/ The chauffeur drove off and we never came back"
– 'Sucker MC's'

"Everyone copies us, but that's OK, it don't matter," said Russell of the 'sucker MCs' his brother and DMC dissed. While kissing off their rivals, the track also tells the story of the group's rise from humble roots.

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"A load of awesome but two-dimensional DMX rhythms, occasionally emphasised by a bassline or prettified with bursts of keyboard or scratch effects." Simon Witter, NME, 23 February 1985

THE DETAILS

►RECORDED 1983 ►RELEASE DATE March 27, 1984 ►LABEL Profile/Arista ►LENGTH 39:27 ►PRODUCERS Russell Simmons, Larry Smith ►STUDIO Greene St Recording, New York City, USA ►HIGHEST UK CHART POSITION n/a ►WORLDWIDE SALES 1 million (estimated) ►SINGLES It's Like That, Hard Times, Rock Box, 30 Days, Hollis Crew (Krush-Groove 2) ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Hard Times ►2. Rock Box ►3. Jam-Master Jay ►4. Hollis Crew (Krush-Groove 2) ►5. Sucker MC's (Krush-Groove 1) ►6. It's Like That ►7. Wake Up ►8. 30 Days ►9. Jay's Game

WHAT WE SAY NOW

Kool Herc, Grandmaster Flash and Afrika Bambaataa were the pioneers, and Public Enemy's sample-rich collages superseded it in the second half of the 1980s, but 'Run-DMC' set a template of lyrical athleticism and punishing beats that retains a grim freshness three decades on.

FAMOUS FAN

"Run-DMC have done some great stuff. I enjoy them even more visually – that guy really turns me on, the way he stands there [crosses his arms] and stares them out." Curtis Mayfield, 1987

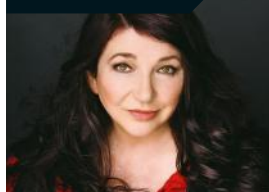
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"We've written almost all our own lyrics thus far, even a lot of the music... It's how we change up on each single that sets us apart from other rap groups." Joseph 'Run' Simmons, 1984

THE AFTERMATH

Despite their pioneering Adidas endorsement deal, Run-DMC managed to make hay without tarnishing their integrity. That's down to a succession of great, fearless records and a brutal sound that never softened. Run and DMC still make the odd joint appearance, but the murder of Jam Master Jay in 2002 brought a sudden end to the first great hip-hop trio.

NEWS DESK



THE NUMBERS

15

Number of live dates Kate Bush will play in London in August and September – her first sequential gigs in 35 years

£8,000

The sum Lily Allen claims she made from her chart-topping cover of Keane's 'Somewhere Only We Know'

250

Number of hours Kanye West will spend doing community service following a battery case involving a photographer

20,000

Copies of his own 'Comes A Time' Neil Young bought following a mastering issue. He used them as roofing shingles

BIG MOUTH



"You've got Grandmaster Flash and Run-DMC in the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame? You're killing me! They don't play guitar. They sample and they talk. Not even sing!"

'Grandpa' **GENE SIMMONS** of Kiss on why hip-hop artists don't belong in the Hall Of Fame



WHO THE FUCK IS...



Jaime Dunkle

Kurt Cobain's mother recently put his childhood home in Aberdeen, Washington up for sale. Dunkle is the journalist spearheading a fundraising campaign aimed at turning the property into a museum.

What does she need?

The house is on the market at \$500,000 (£313,000), even though it was last valued at less than \$67,000 (£42,000). Dunkle says she wants to "make sure this house doesn't end up in the clutches of capitalist greed".

And how is the campaign going so far?

At the time of writing, Dunkle has less than \$500.



THE BIG QUESTION

A MIAMI RADIO STATION PLAYED NELLY'S 'HOT IN HERRE' FOR THREE DAYS STRAIGHT. WHICH SONG COULD YOU LISTEN TO FOR THAT LONG?



Richard Reed Parry, Arcade Fire

"I could listen to the first track off

Brian Eno's 'Music For Airports' for a year."



David Renshaw, NME News Reporter

"Perhaps Nelly's music lends itself

particularly well to repeat listens. I'd pick either 'Country Grammar' or 'Dilemma'."



Gabrielle McGuinness, NME reader

"I like to fall asleep with 'Cigarettes And Coffee' by Otis Redding on repeat, so I've trained myself to cope with the song being played relentlessly."

GOOD WEEK ↔ BAD WEEK



Jo Whiley and Steve Lamacq

BBC Radio 2 will revive the DJs' *Evening Session* to celebrate 20 years of Britpop. Old pals including Supergrass' Gaz Coombes and Louise Wener of Sleeper will also contribute.



RockNess

The picturesque Scottish festival will not be returning in 2014, with promoters saying that competition from the World Cup and Commonwealth Games (taking place in Scotland) have led to the event taking a year off.

AND FINALLY

Forget me not

Elbow's Guy Garvey has admitted using a teleprompter to help him remember lyrics during the band's live shows. They could just do covers of 'Da Da Da' and 'La La La' instead.

Plane sight

Courtney Love thought she may have solved the mystery of the missing Malaysia Airlines plane after studying satellite imagery. But she concedes that she's "not an expert".

Reverse gear, still speeding

Liam Gallagher has been spotted jogging backwards in his local area of north London. The method is what's become known as 'retro running', which seems about right to us.

Find these stories and more on NME.COM

Official RECORD STORE Chart

TOP 40 ALBUMS MARCH 23, 2014



NEW
01

The War On Drugs

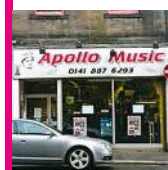
Lost In The Dream SECRETLY CANADIAN

Kurt Vile's former band step out of the singer's shadow and into the spotlight as their third album takes the Number One spot. A mix of '70s rock and Springsteen Americana, it's one of 2014's first great records.

- NEW 2 Happiness Is **Taking Back Sunday** HOPELESS
- ▲ 3 Symphonica **George Michael** EMI
- ▼ 4 Love Letters **Metronomy** BECAUSE MUSIC
- ▼ 5 The Take Off And Landing Of Everything **Elbow** FICTION
- ▲ 6 A Perfect Contradiction **Paloma Faith** RCA
- 7 Morning Phase **Beck** EMI
- NEW 8 Kiss Me Once **Kylie Minogue** PARLOPHONE
- ▼ 9 Girl **Pharrell Williams** COLUMBIA
- NEW 10 Reality **David Bowie** COLUMBIA
- ▲ 11 If You Wait **London Grammar** METAL & DUST
- ▼ 12 Lost Forever/Lost Together **Architects** EPTTAPH
- ▼ 13 Atlas **Real Estate** DOMINO
- ▲ 14 AM **Arctic Monkeys** DOMINO
- ▼ 15 Present Tense **Wild Beasts** DOMINO
- ▲ 16 Bad Blood **Bastille** VIRGIN
- 17 Eagulls **Eagulls** PARTISAN
- ▲ 18 Love In The Future **John Legend** COLUMBIA
- ▼ 19 So Long See You Tomorrow **Bombay Bicycle Club** ISLAND
- NEW 20 Mirrors The Sky **Lyla Foy** SUB POP
- ▲ 21 You Can Do Better **Johnny Foreigner** ALCOPOP
- ▼ 22 Sun Structures **Temples** HEAVENLY
- ▼ 23 The Classic **Joan As Police Woman** PLAY IT AGAIN SAM
- ▲ 24 Days Are Gone **Haim** POLYDOR
- 25 Man On The Rocks **Mike Oldfield** MERCURY
- ▼ 26 English Oceans **Drive-By Truckers** ATO
- ▼ 27 St Vincent **St Vincent** LOMA VISTA
- NEW 28 Recorded Live On Stage In Memphis **Elvis Presley** RCA
- ▲ 29 Halcyon **Ellie Goulding** POLYDOR
- ▲ 30 Timeless **Dr Hook** UMTV
- ▼ 31 Pale Green Ghosts **John Grant** BELLA UNION
- ▼ 32 Settle **Disclosure** PMR
- ▼ 33 Warpaint **Warpaint** ROUGH TRADE
- NEW 34 Babel **Mumford & Sons** GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD/ISLAND
- NEW 35 World Psychedelic Classics 5 **William Onyeabor** LUAKA BOP
- ▼ 36 Sweet Disarray **Dan Croll** DERAM
- NEW 37 Whatever People Say I Am That's What I'm Not **Arctic Monkeys** DOMINO
- NEW 38 Piano Ombre **Francois & The Atlas Mountains** DOMINO
- NEW 39 Save Rock And Roll **Fall Out Boy** DEF JAM
- NEW 40 Vermont **Vermont** KOMPAKT

The Official Charts Company compiles the Official Record Store Chart from sales through 100 of the UK's best independent record shops, from Sunday to Saturday.

TOP OF THE SHOPS



THIS WEEK

APOLLO MUSIC PAISLEY

FOUNDED 1986

WHY IT'S GREAT Apollo host regular instores – local boy Paolo Nutini packed out the shop when he played there.

TOP SELLER THIS WEEK Elbow – 'The Take Off And Landing Of Everything'

THEY SAY "We've built up a strong reputation both in town and online. We pride ourselves on good service and value."

SOUNDTRACK OF MY LIFE



A-ha



The Beach
Boys



Mark Foster

Foster The
People
frontman

THE FIRST SONG I REMEMBER HEARING 'I Get Around' - The Beach Boys

"It was like it jumped off the radio and went right into me. I was about six years old and in the car with my mum. We used to listen to Majic 105.7 and they played Motown and loads of old soul and rock'n'roll. That's what I grew up on. But that was the first time I heard The Beach Boys and there was something about that sound that set them apart. They became my first musical obsession."

THE FIRST SONG I FELL IN LOVE WITH 'A Day In The Life' - The Beatles

"I have a special relationship with this track. Sometimes John Lennon's voice has such a raw quality that it's like paint stripper that just peels away a layer of your heart. That's what that song did to me; it stripped me raw. I couldn't

quite understand what he was singing all the time and I like that, because it gave me room to explore."

THE FIRST ALBUM I EVER BOUGHT 'Happy Nation' - Ace Of Base

"It was a cassette tape and I'd ride around on my bike,

"'GOD ONLY KNOWS' IS THE BEST SONG EVER"

going to the pool with my Walkman, thinking I was so cool. I'd play it over and over again. The melodies on it are so strong. It was music that made me feel good."

THE SONG THAT MADE ME WANT TO BE IN A BAND 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' - Nirvana

"I was 12 years old when I heard that song for the first time and it was the second really critical musical

moment in my life. The first was hearing 'I Get Around' and the other was hearing 'Smells Like Teen Spirit'. I listened to it 25 times in a row and it was probably about halfway through when I realised that I wanted to play guitar because trying to work out the chords on the piano didn't really have the same effect."

THE SONG I CAN NO LONGER LISTEN TO 'Hot In Herre' - Nelly

"It's one of my drummer's favourite songs and he loves to play it when he's DJing. It's become almost a joke because he knows how much I hate it, so he'll play it every time and I'll look at him from the dancefloor with disgust. A few years ago he used to DJ a lot, so I heard it a lot."

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME WANT TO DANCE 'The Perfect Kiss' - New Order

"I love the drums and when that guitar line comes in I feel like I'm about to fly. The melody and the feeling

I picked that song because the people before me had picked really depressing songs, so I wanted to get the party started."

THE SONG I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY HEAD 'Eleanor Rigby' - The Beatles

"I'm gonna say something weird now. I have had 'Eleanor Rigby' stuck in my head on and off for days at a time for 10 years. I wanna talk to a therapist about it because I'm starting to feel connected to it in strange ways. When I'm ill this song comes into my head and it'll be stuck there for days. It's soundtracked a lot of bad moments of my life. I don't know why it started happening. The 'All the lonely people' bit is just so memorable."

THE SONG I WISH I'D WRITTEN 'God Only Knows' - The Beach Boys

"I think this is the greatest song ever written. It's so perfectly simple and so deeply profound, lyrically and musically. It takes so many risks and yet you understand it on the first listen. It's a song that a five-year-old can understand, but it can also make a grown man weep."

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL 'Rock The Casbah' - The Clash

"What's that song that goes, 'Celebrate good times, come on'? [It's 'Celebration' by Kool & The Gang.] I'd have that. Something upbeat. Actually, I'd have 'Rock The Casbah'. It's one of my favourite songs, and the people that are closest to me would know why I'd chosen it."

MY KARAOKE SONG 'Take On Me' - A-ha

"I try my best to avoid karaoke because I get super nervous and get stage fright. But we went out for my friend's birthday last week and I sang 'Take On Me' and it broke the ice."



The
Clash

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THE BAND WHO...
OWNED SXSW

The Districts

THURSDAY, MARCH 13, BUFFALO BILLIARDS

The smalltown Pennsylvania pals making stadium-sized rock

Wide-eyed and grinning, with black crosses on their hands to show they're too young to drink alcohol, The Districts could easily pass for just another gang trying desperately to sneak into a bunch of SXSW shows. But everything changes the moment they all start playing, when they sound like boys possessed by the spirit of the great American rock'n'roll artists, from Neil Young to Nirvana.

All aged between 18 and 20, frontman Rob Grote, guitarist Mark Larson, drummer Braden Lawrence and bassist Connor Jacobus have already been playing together for almost five years. Back when they started, they were just another high-school band in the small Pennsylvania town of Lititz.

"We played a lot of cover songs," says Rob, "and argued a lot!"

"Rob and Braden wanted to cover 'Kick Out The Jams'," adds guitarist Mark. "But me and Connor weren't having it."

"We ended up just playing it without them," laughs Rob. "Since then we've slowly started agreeing on more things, and I guess that's how our sound developed."

What they agreed on was a shared love of blues, Tom Waits and local band Dr Dog, resulting in the full-throated rock they played to stunned crowds at SXSW. They released a self-titled EP in January, including three remastered tracks from 2012's full-length, 'Telephone'. These releases attracted the attention of indie label Fat Possum, and now they're working on a new album for them.

"We'd like to put out it out later this year," says Rob. "It's weird, because to us it feels like we've put out a bunch of music already, but to the greater world this one will be our first album."

They head to the UK for the first time at the end of April. Not bad for a bunch who only decided not to go to college last August. "We were halfway through a tour when we pulled out of the enrolment," says Rob. "There's no turning back now." ■ KEVIN EG PERRY

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galleries from SXSW

► THE DETAILS

► **BASED** Lititz, Pennsylvania

► **FOR FANS OF** Neil Young, My Morning Jacket

► **LISTEN NOW** thedistricts.bandcamp.com

► **SEE THEM LIVE** London Sebright Arms (April 30), Liverpool Sound City Festival (May 3), Glasgow Stag & Dagger Festival (4), Manchester Gullivers (5), Brighton The Great Escape Festival (8)

► **BELIEVE IT OR NOT** Rob and Braden have a side-project called John & Lars: The Greatest Techno Band In Sweden. "We pretty much just stand there with keyboards shouting 'We are John and Lars'," says Rob

► **THE BAND WHO...
 DEAFENED
 EVERYONE**
Diarrhea Planet

MARCH 12, LAMBERT'S
 Ordinarily, the most remarkable thing about a band like Diarrhea Planet would be their terrible name. With these guys, however, it's the sheer ear-fucking volume of their live show. "All y'all are about to be so deaf, man," warns frontman Jordan Smith at their first SXSW gig, and it's no empty threat. These Nashville punks boast four guitarists, and the dial is permanently stuck at 11. It's probably the only way to behave

when you've got songs called things like 'Ghost With A Boner'. Beyond the beer-soaked puerility, their harmonised guitar solos and technicality are a surprise. Diarrhea Planet play dumb, but they're far from stupid.
 ► **SOCIAL** diarrheaplanet.blogspot.com
 ► **HEAR THEM** facebook.com/diarrheaplanet



▲ **THE BAND WITH...
 AN AMAZING
 FRONTMAN**
Protomartyr

MARCH 15, BEERLAND
 Without a doubt, the best thing about Protomartyr is singer Joe Casey. Dressed in a rumpled suit and nursing a bottle of water, he looks like an agitated salaryman who had one drink too many at happy hour and somehow found himself

onstage with a punk band. Lumbering angrily around the Beerland stage, Casey has an anti-star quality that makes Protomartyr a joy to watch. The music is pretty damn good, too. Songs like 'How He Lived After He Died' and the brilliantly titled 'Scum, Rise!' are full of

characters and observations from their hometown of Detroit, and the whole thing is relentlessly dark and propulsive, with post-punk echoes of Joy Division and Wire. They paint a bleak picture, but it's a vital one.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/protomartyr
 ► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/protomartyr

▼ **THE SINGER WHO...
 DEFIED EXPECTATIONS**
Benjamin Booker

MARCH 12, CEDAR ST COURTYARD
 On paper it all looks so simple: a fresh-faced, blue-eyed soul boy from New Orleans, with Sam Cooke's looks and a voice to die for. The reality of Benjamin Booker is more electrifying though. Backed by drummer Max Norton, he takes the ripped, raw racket of The Dirtbombs and smothers it in fuzzy, inherently moody-sounding riffs that recall The Gun Club and T Rex in equal measure.
 ► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/benjaminbookerNOLA
 ► **HEAR HIM** youtube.com/user/benjaminbookernola



▼ **THE BAND WHO...**
POLARISED
OPINION
The Garden

MARCH 13, GYPSY LOUNGE

One way or another, you'll have an opinion on The Garden: you'll either embrace the LA duo's inherent weirdness or write them off as the emperor's new clotheshorses. One drunken bro in the crowd has already made his decision – "Fuck you, you fuckin' faggots!" he shouts – and that's the exact moment Radar abandons its scepticism and comes down on the Shears twins'

side. If this guy doesn't like them, they must be doing something right. Halfway through the set they switch from rudimentary 20-second punk-rock songs to full-blown hip-hop, and the irony dial starts spinning frantically. Love or hate them, you can't ignore them.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/thegardenvadavada

► **HEAR THEM** thegardenmusic.bandcamp.com



▲ **THE COLLECTIVE WHO...**
BLEW OUR MINDS
Yamantaka // Sonic Titan

MARCH 14, HOTEL VEGAS

Imagine Yoko Ono fronting Black Sabbath. Imagine each member of the band is dressed like a member of Kiss, facepaint and all. Imagine them playing the driving motorik rhythms of Neu! or Can, but speeding them up until the whole crowd is pogoing like they do at the best punk shows. Throw in an apparently classically trained pianist on keyboards. Give one of the two frontwomen a headdress that looks like it's made from the heads of fluffy bunny rabbits and a tiny bell to play while forming heavy metal horns with her other hand. Have the other frontwoman, the one who looks like a ghost from an anime film, jump into the surging moshpit while thrashing a tambourine. Either that's what Yamantaka // Sonic Titan are like, or Radar just took some really good acid.

► **SOCIAL** @YTST_Labs

► **HEAR THEM** yamantakasonictitan.bandcamp.com



► **THE DUO WHO...**
WERE SXSW'S
RAWEST POP ACT
Sylvan Esso

MARCH 12, HOLY MOUNTAIN

On record, North Carolina bedroom-electro duo Sylvan Esso's headphone-friendly music is soothing and cerebral. Live, Amelia Meath (who's also in Mountain Man) and producer Nick Sanborn (from Megafaun) are an entirely different animal. The pair are

sporting oversized T-shirts and bed hair, and turn in a set of nasty and savage interpretations of tunes from their as yet unreleased album. During dirty opener 'Hey Miami', the yearning club pop of closer 'Play It Right' and all the bits in between, Meath sends the crowd death gazes and delivers her smoky,

enigmatic croon. To her side, the intensely sinister Sanborn occasionally locks eyes with her, before suddenly breaking away from his laptop to dance to the music and flail his arms like a possessed marionette. Transfixing.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/sylvanesso

► **HEAR THEM** sylvanesse.bandcamp.com





► THE BAND WHO... EVERYBODY MISSED

Bully

MARCH 12, THE HOLE IN THE WALL
Fresh – if that's the word – from a 15-hour van ride from Nashville, Bully are probably wondering why they even bothered: the venue they're playing is so far from the downtown throng that only a handful of hardy souls have bothered to make the trek. The disappointing turnout is no reflection on Bully themselves, however, whose spiky but melodic punk rock keeps chords and frills to a bare

minimum, and puts you in mind of Veruca Salt or The Breeders. Frontwoman Alicia Bognanno apparently used to intern at Steve Albini's studio, and while the old curmudgeon would doubtless approve of their DIY aesthetic, he'd probably look less favourably on

the maddeningly catchy hooks of 'Faceblind' or 'Brainfreeze'. Like everyone else who didn't make it here, it's his loss.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/bullythemic

► **HEAR THEM** bullythemic.bandcamp.com



▲ THE BAND WHO... TOOK US BACK TO 1994

Alvays

MARCH 13, THE MAIN
Nostalgia can be a liability, but sometimes a band takes a very welcome trip down memory lane. So it is with Toronto quintet Alvays. The band revel in fizzy-fuzzy guitar pop circa 1994 – so much so that it feels at times like watching an early MTV clip come to life. Out front, Molly Rankin isn't

an instantly recognisable female archetype, but her unassuming air has a charm all of its own. At one point, she even asks the audience to come closer to the stage so it "feels less like a spectacle". Tonight isn't that, but she's definitely drawn us in.

► **SOCIAL** facebook.com/alvays

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/alvays

▼ THE BAND WHO... WOULD RULE (IF THEY COULD GET IT TOGETHER)

Twin Peaks

MARCH 12, HALF STEP
Chicago's Twin Peaks are kind of a mess: singer Cadien James is stool-bound thanks to a broken ankle, guitarist Clay Frankel keeps headbutting the microphone and the whole

band are stoned as hell from the spliffs being passed to them from the crowd. But their lackadaisical stoner-pop with killer hooks and attitude is great, in the same chaotic vein as their hometown buddies The Orwells. If they can put the bong down for long enough, big things undoubtedly await.

► **SOCIAL** @TwinPeaksDudes

► **HEAR THEM** soundcloud.com/twin-peaks-band-sf



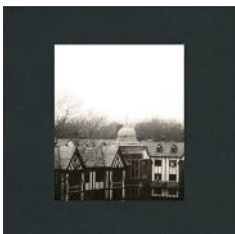
Reviews

► THE DEFINITIVE VERDICT ■ EDITED BY JJ DUNNING



Cloud Nothings Here And Nowhere Else

Endless touring and recording have taken their toll on the Cleveland band's disappointing fourth



years the 22-year-old from Cleveland has released three albums shrouded in fuzz, built Cloud Nothings from a solo lo-fi bedroom project into a grungy, venomous four-person assault on the senses and toured the globe almost nonstop, racking up over 400 shows since 2010. The Dylan Baldi who wrote 2009's low-key 'Turning On' and 2011's Vampire Weekend-with-the-dials-cranked-up breakthrough 'Cloud Nothings' in his parents' basement is long gone, along with his simple life.

► "A simple life can be so strange", laments Dylan Baldi over corkscrewing guitars on 'Now Hear In', the opening track on pop-punk scrappers Cloud Nothings' fourth album, 'Here And Nowhere Else'. Quite what Baldi still knows about a simple life is unclear: in just four

But each of his releases has eclipsed the last in terms of ambition and snot-nosed punk magnificence, and 2012's Steve Albini-produced 'Attack On Memory' was brutally and brilliantly superior to all of Cloud Nothings' previous work – a wiry '90s pop-punk throwback combined with Shellac-style noise-rock influences. So there was just cause to think 'Here And Nowhere Else' could be the record that sent one of American indie's most mercurial and adventurous young voices nuclear. Instead, it shirks away from the snarly edge and cutting cynicism of that last album and feels tame and unimposing by comparison.

It's not that Cloud Nothings have lost much of their ear-bleeding, window-shaking volume: riffs still come covered in crunchy distortion and drummer Jayson Gerycz still thumps his kit like he's competing in history's most ferocious game of whack-a-mole. And you can't pin the blame on the absence of Albini. He

was replaced after allegedly spending the entire 'Attack On Memory' recording session "playing Facebook Scrabble", but cult noisemaker John Congleton –

DYLAN BALDI ON...

...releasing four albums in five years

"People make a big deal out of us releasing an album every year, but hey, if I can't write eight songs a year – not even one a month – that's pretty fucked up, right? If I'm not writing an album I feel lazy."

...producer John Congleton

"I see why people might call him the new Steve Albini, having worked with both him and Steve. They both like things a little rough around the edges, with the imperfections kept in."

...writing each song in a different country

"I started 'Now Hear In' in a Paris apartment on this beaten-up guitar. 'Quieter Now' I wrote in a London hotel between shows as something to do that wasn't sightseeing. So it's a more 'worldly' album in that respect. It's not like the songs have accordion on them. I might have worn a beret making that one in Paris."

forward while I keep the past around me", Baldi sings with echoes of Kurt Cobain.

But there are too many tracks like 'Just See Fear' and 'I'm Not Part Of Me', which for all their bluster and noise are plain forgettable. 'Here And Nowhere Else' was written on the road ("I'm pretty sure each song was written in a different country," says their frontman), and it feels like Cloud Nothings' prolific work rate has caught up with them. For the first time, they sound tired and lacking in imagination. "I feel there's nothing left to say", Baldi growls on 'Now Hear In'. Maybe it's time to go back to that simple life. ■ AL HORNER

► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** March 31 ► **LABEL** Wichita ► **PRODUCER** John Congleton ► **LENGTH** 31:24 ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Now Hear In ► 2. Quieter Today ► 3. Psychic Trauma ► 4. Just See Fear ► 5. Giving Into Seeing ► 6. No Thoughts ► 7. Pattern Walks ► 8. I'm Not Part Of Me ► **BEST TRACK** Psychic Trauma

5

MORE ALBUMS

Manchester Orchestra

Cope Lorna Vista

COPE

This fourth album from Atlanta, Georgia's most

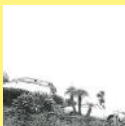
geographically misleading quintet abandons the prettier, quieter moments from their last album, 2011's 'Simple Math', and focuses instead on turbocharged power pop. Guitars are crunched, drums are hammered and silly synths add an OK Go sheen, and the result is like prime-era Jimmy Eat World or Weezer circa 'Maladroit' minus the crushing disappointment that it's not as good as 'Pinkerton'. Second song 'Choose You' is especially triumphant, a storm of joyful singing and gigantic riffs. Sustained power and little in the way of variety can make for quick fatigue, but at just 38 minutes long, 'Cope' has hooks and energy to spare.

■ THOM GIBBS

7

Timbre

Hot Dreams Full Time Hobby



Few artists could manage a trajectory as fine-tuned as Timber

Timbre: in developing a distinct identity for his swamp-folk project over five releases in eight years, Taylor Kirk has ensured each album feels more substantial than the last. Previously, Timber Timbre's creepy qualities conjured B-movie references, but 'Hot Dreams' feels distinctly film noir. Though there are fewer standout moments than on previous records, it is a wonderfully cohesive whole that renders brooding menace into graceful songcraft (as with the softly sung "Run from me, darlin'/You better run for your life" on 'Run From Me'). In evoking an unsettled mind yearning for simpler times, Kirk has warped the gothic-folk feel of his older work into something abrasive, and even nightmarish.

■ CIAN TRAYNOR

8



Coves

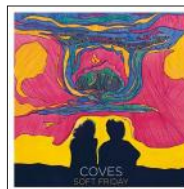
Soft Friday

Glacial duo's psych-garage debut casts a chilling spell

Far below the glass ceiling, sunk deep in the slime, lurk Leamington's Coves: one dusky demon in leathers as black as his eyes (John Ridgard, instruments) and one ice-cold chanteuse deadpanning like a zombie Nancy Sinatra (Beck Wood, vocals). Their electro-garage-rock wall of sound imagines The Velvet Underground force-feeding hallucinogens to The Ronettes, or The Jesus And Mary Chain coming over a bit Mazzy Star. So far, so Raveonettes/Kills/Cults, but Coves' debut is far richer and more immersive than most moody boy/girl duos who sound like they were thrown down a well in 1968 usually manage. Driving riffs mingle with propulsive electro beats, raga drones and glacial atmospheric to create a dank devil's dancefloor, and Beck Wood's chilling lyrics are wracked with heartache. This is cold-blooded revenge pop that strikes like a shard of shattered plate to the heart.

■ MARK BEAUMONT

9



► THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** March 31 ► **LABEL** Nettwerk ► **PRODUCER** Brendan Lynch ► **LENGTH** 38:01 ► **TRACKLISTING** ► 1. Fall Out Of Love ► 2. Honeybee ► 3. Beatings ► 4. Last Desire ► 5. Let The Sun Go ► 6. No Ladder ► 7. Cast A Shadow ► 8. Fool For Your Face ► 9. Bad Kick To The Heart ► 10. Wake Up ► **BEST TRACK** Honeybee

Lucius Wildewoman

Play It Again Sam



"She's no beauty queen but you'll love her anyways", sing Jess

Wolfe and Holly Laessig on the title track of their debut album. The line neatly reflects a record that's not flawless yet has enough charm and exuberance to suck you in. The Brooklyn

duo (backed by three further musicians for this LP) excel on the wistful, lush pop of 'Tempest' and the sprawling Haim-gone-folk closer of 'How Loud Your Heart Gets'. The moments of imperfection that let the album down come on 'Two Of Us On The Run' (as basic as acoustic songwriting gets) and 'Until We Get There' (which sounds like a Cults offcut), but there's promise here.

■ RHIAN DALY

6

VICKY McCURE

ROGER EVANS

MARTIN FREEMAN

MAXINE PEAKE

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Reviews

Kaiser Chiefs

Education, Education, Education & War Fiction



Lesser bands would have called it quits if they lost a

founder member, even more so if he was the one who wrote all their songs, but Kaiser Chiefs have rallied admirably on their fifth album. Initially, things seem positive: the epic 'Misery Company' twins theatrical flourishes with rock muscle, while 'Cannons' boasts a chorus custom-built for Ricky Wilson's energetic live singalongs. However, only the subdued, melodic 'Coming Home' steers away from the bluster and delivers something deeper. Overall there is a sense that this is the sound of a band brushing their hair and fixing their make-up, trying to convince the world they're OK while secretly crumbling on the inside.

DAVID RENSHAW

6

Dawn Landes

Bluebird Western Vinyl



If there's anything wrong with Brooklyn-

via-Kentucky singer-songwriter Dawn Landes' fifth album, it's that it's just too damn nice. With her sweet and airy candyfloss voice, she comes on like a do-gooding Neko Case, and although bluegrass-inflected love songs like the finger-picking title track and spacious 'Heel Toe' are undeniably beautiful, they lack a certain grit. She breaks free from the country-music-head-girl mould on 'Oh Brother', letting some Southern gothic creep into the languid, swampy verses and assuming the role of an extended member of The Handsome Family. It's this nod to the ominous that impresses over the somewhat wet piano-led balladry of 'Diamond Rivers' and 'Home'.

LEONIE COOPER

6

White Hinterland Baby

Casey Dienel's mix of '90s pop R&B with contemporary US indie makes for a piano-thumping party

It's become fairly on-trend for female indie artists with birth dates in the 1980s – Banks, say – to namecheck their influences as Mariah Carey, Janet Jackson and the rest of that cuddly, big-sweatered, early-'90s pop-radio R&B crowd. Yet, for all of that hip talk, few seem to show much evidence of it in their music, which is why Casey Dienel seems to be on to something here. Three albums in, her White Hinterland project has moved from a competent, slightly dry triangulation of Björk and Sia into something warm-blooded, rich and at ease with itself. Something that takes the bits of Mariah – 'Emotions', 'Fantasy' – that didn't make you want to kill children and wraps them up in the indie tastes of post-Dirty Projectors America.



It's a sound based around studio trickery: she uses swooping waves of vocal overdubs in the style of Dirty Projectors' 2009 album 'Bitte Orca' to build a one-woman choir, then sits down at her piano to bash out major chords in a major way. 'Ring The

THE DETAILS

►RELEASE DATE March 31 ►LABEL Dead Oceans ►PRODUCER Casey Dienel
►LENGTH 48:12 ►TRACKLISTING ►1. Wait Until Dark ►2. Dry Mind ►3. Ring The Bell ►4. David ►5. Baby ►6. White Noise ►7. Metronome ►8. No Devotion ►9. Sickle No Sword ►10. Live With You ►BEST TRACK Baby

Johnny Foreigner You Can Do Better

Alcopop!



Johnny Foreigner's 2011 third album 'Vs Everything' mutilated any notion that they'll ever deviate from frenetic bass-sucked 'art rock', so it's business as usual with the release of the spaghetti-mess fourth. The Birmingham band revel in their manically whipped froth of needly riffs and terrier-yap boy-girl vocals,

but while their energy gets them over the line live, on record the chaotic likes of 'The Last Queen of Scotland' and 'WiFi Beach' show little planning beyond, 'LET'S PLAY EVERYTHING AS FAST AS WE RUDDY WELL CAN!' They're living proof that hard touring, an indier-than-thou attitude and a frequently updated blog are no substitute for good songs, and as such the clamp attaching them to the toilet circuit shows no sign of loosening.

JAMIE FULLERTON

3

Annie Eve Feversome EP

Young & Lost Club



Opening with a guitar line matched in tone, tempo and timbre

to those of Daughter's Igor Haefeli, 'Shuffle', the first track on Annie Eve's 'Feversome' EP, borrows from the sound of the misty shoe-folk set. Plus, she's been taken into the Communion stable and has a singing voice with a European bent that masks

her north London roots. The second of the three tracks, 'Southern', is a melancholy affair, Annie's vocal verging on a mumble but always just pulling back from the brink of indecipherability. Ending with the sombre lament of the title track, the EP displays a solid foundation: a charming voice and inoffensively pleasant songwriting. What Annie Eve lacks, though, is the spark of distinction possessed by her modern folk peers.

HAYLEY AVRON

6



Bell' flags that up perfectly, opening with a Carey-like operatic flutter before settling on a punchy, Dave Sitek-style drum pattern and spray of sax to drive along its big-hearted R&B melody. 'Metronome' is pure Janet Jackson, up to and including its sappy lyrical conceit that "I'm a metronome – you've got to keep up with me". These, along with the more Alannah Myles soft-rock styles of pre-release single 'Baby', power the best of this new incarnation largely because the melodies work. But when your songs depend on soulful warbling and piano abuse, the lack of a good hook to match the drama is the quickest way to self-parody: five minutes of what sounds like a swarm of bees trying to get into a bottle of orange juice on 'White Noise' is shoot-the-radio annoying, and 'Sickle No Sword' ends proceedings with endless piano-thumping run-on lines that never quite run into a tune. These are quibbles, though, given how much Dienel seems to be pulling ahead of her overcrowded field. On previous incarnations, Dienel typified her school: those guarded, ball-achingly tasteful alt.pop records by artists such as Feist, Oh Land and MØ who seem to live in fear of being disapproved of by blogs. Now, she sounds like she's having a bathroom hairbrush-singing party to which we're all invited. These are sweet, sweet fantasies, baby.

GAVIN HAYNES

7

Reviews

Malachai

Beyond Ugly Domino



Opening with the dusty guitar riffs and Wild West

narrative of 'Sweet Flower', Bristol's experimental beats'n'samples duo Malachai complete their five-year 'Ugly' trilogy by bringing their rugged sound full circle. Moving away from the widescreen strings

of 2011's fine 'Return To The Ugly Side', singer Gary Ealey and producer Scott Hendy return to the short prog workouts of their earlier work. It's a funhouse of psychedelic bluster, battering drum loops and Bollywood flutters, riff-heavy rockers like 'Holes' and 'Down To Earth' rollicking with such muscle it sounds like the record might just snap in two. But despite the grubbiness of the production, there are earworms aplenty.

■ DEAN VAN NGUYEN

7

Band Of Skulls

Himalayan Electric Blues Recordings



Having supported Queens Of The Stone Age and

Muse in some of the world's vaster enclaves after 2012's 'Sweet Sour', it's little surprise that Band Of Skulls have returned with an album that sounds confident enough to fill those venues themselves. By turns more glam-indebted and more

evocative than anything they've previously offered up, 'Himalayan's aims are as monumental as its title. 'Asleep At The Wheel' and 'Hoochie Coochie' stomp by on sleazy '70s riffs, while the sweeping chorus of 'Nightmares' delivers huge harmonies from co-vocalists Emma Richardson and Russell Marsden. Best of all is 'I Guess I Know You Fairly Well', a slinking thing that erupts with riffs nothing short of – wait for it – mountainous.

■ LISA WRIGHT

8

Daniel Wilson

Young Rubbish EP Zap



It takes just a few seconds of Daniel Wilson's

debut EP before you're hooked. Opener 'Please Dream Again' begins with a gently wonky synth before his stunning, soulful voice, somewhere between TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe, Tracy Chapman and James Blake, chimes in. "Give me one single break, and I'll give you my heart", he pleads, as if Blake had adapted Wham!'s 'Last Christmas', minus the sleigh bells. Wilson, just 23, from Ypsilanti, Michigan, repeats the trick on 'Trigger Dance', while 'Will You' finds him returning to the familiar theme of asking a would-be lover to take a chance on him, in falsetto over a wobbly electric piano. On this evidence, as well as the Motown swing of the closing title track, they should definitely give him a go. As should you.

■ ANDY WELCH

7

S Carey

Range Of Light

Bon Iver's drummer makes an acoustic record that's as crisp as a winter's day. Achingly beautiful, in fact



There is an unwritten rule that you should never use the phrase "achingly beautiful" when reviewing pretty music. Writers love it. They use it to describe guitar riffs. Hit singles. Every song Lana Del Rey has ever breathed on. It's so nonsensical and overused that there is even a Twitter dedicated to its omnipresence (@solovelyithurts), run by the now defunct music paper *The Stool Pigeon*, which is still hilarious even after you've scrolled down it for the tenth time. If you see those words in these pages, burn them. Actually, don't. Because the thing is, despite all that, S Carey's second album is achingly beautiful. It is hurty and affecting and will make you feel things you don't want to feel because it's not cool to feel anything, and you can only communicate what little you do feel in 140 characters, or with a turd emoji. Its repetitive, sombre chords and lullaby-soft vocals knot themselves around your



THE DETAILS

► **RELEASE DATE** March 31 ► **LABEL** Jagjaguwar ► **PRODUCER** Self-produced ► **LENGTH** 35:25 ► **TRACKLISTING** ►1. Glass/Film ►2. Creaking ►3. Crown The Pines ►4. Fire-scene ►5. Radiant ►6. Alpenglöw ►7. Fleeting Light ►8. The Dome ►9. Neverending Fountain ► **BEST TRACK** Crown The Pines

sensitive parts, making you swoon and need a Lemsip at the same time.

A long-standing member of Bon Iver, Sean Carey has had the best education in aching beauty. He recorded 'Range Of Light' at Justin Vernon's studio in Wisconsin. Though his solo stuff chimes with Vernon's (shamelessly romantic, autumnal, lots of finger-pickin' acoustic goodness), it's crisper and glistens with ambient atmosphere and mellow beats. Opener 'Glass/Film' recalls Eno protégé Jon Hopkins' early piano-focused work and is as fresh as pink cheeks on a chilly day. Lead single 'Fire-scene', meanwhile, crunches like footsteps in snow.

It's nostalgic for the idyllic trips into the great Californian outdoors that Carey took as a young boy. But also, perhaps, mournful about outgrowing that sense of wide-eyed wonder, especially on 'Crown The Pines', which skitters into trip-hop, a gorgeous arc of strings swelling as if chasing that feeling. Other songs are hopelessly sweet, too: piano ballad 'Alpenglöw', for example, is about proposing to his wife, as innocent and warm as a dry hump in front of a log fire.

Is it all a bit *Twilight* soundtrack? Sort of. Emotional porn? Most definitely. Does S Carey need a big bag of manballs? Probably. But is it achingly beautiful? A hundred times yes.

■ KATE HUTCHINSON

8

Hurray For The Riff Raff

Small Town Heroes ATO



They've plied an old-time Americana sound over the course

of six albums, but Hurray For The Riff Raff aren't your usual white-boy revivalists – they're proudly gay, old-soul outsiders, fronted by Bronx-raised Puerto Rican vocalist Alynda Lee Segarra. After years spent on NYC's punk scene and rambling along the South's freight-train hobo routes, Segarra found her heart in post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans, and offers up an unvarnished paean to her adoptive home on this latest record. It's fine, mellow folk, rich with fiddle, banjo and slide guitars, Segarra's warm, shivering alto blending the personal and political like cherry juice and bitters in a perfect whiskey sour. Sublime.

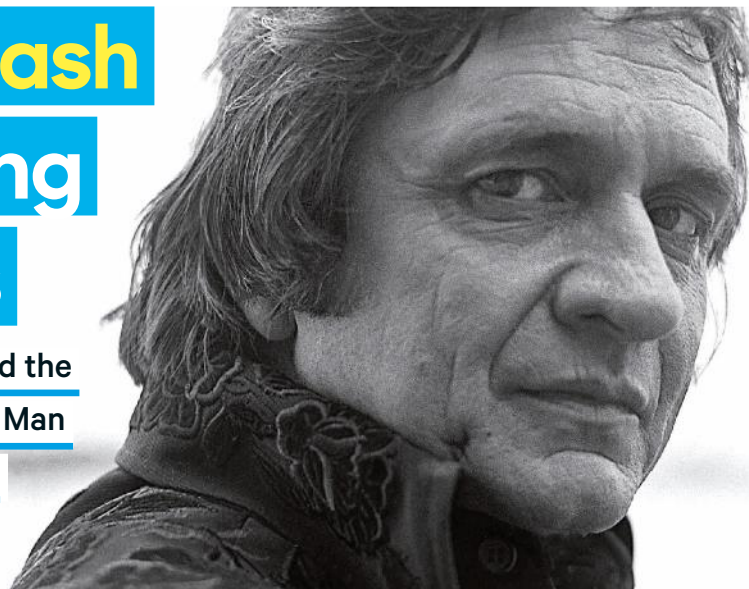
■ CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON ANDREWS

8

Johnny Cash

Out Among The Stars

A third release from beyond the grave – this time from *The Man In Black's* wilderness years



▶ Johnny Cash died over 10 years ago, but the music keeps on coming (this is the third album proper, alongside numerous reissues and compilations) and that's always been the subject of debate. You can argue that he's an important figure in American music and hearing new material helps us form a more complete picture of his craft and history; a cynic might suggest that his legacy is being milked by his estate, which is run by his family, and Sony's Legacy Recordings.

'Out Among The Stars' is music that Cash didn't complete during a fallow period of his career – the early '80s, when he was struggling with drugs, at war with his label Columbia and out of sync with music fans. The 12 songs were recorded in 1981 and 1984 by Billy Sherrill – a practitioner of the slicker 'countrypolitan' sound of the '70s (think Tammy Wynette and Glen Campbell) – then discarded, only for Cash's son, John Carter, to discover them in 2012. They've been worked on – digitised, remastered and tampered with. Parts that were



▶ THE DETAILS

▶ **RELEASE DATE** March 29 ▶ **LABEL** Columbia/Legacy ▶ **PRODUCER** Billy Sherrill
▶ **LENGTH** 36:56 ▶ **TRACKLISTING** ▶1. Out Among The Stars ▶2. Baby Ride Easy
▶3. She Used To Love Me A Lot ▶4. After All ▶5. I'm Movin' On ▶6. If I Told You
Who It Was ▶7. Call Your Mother ▶8. I Drove Her Out Of My Mind ▶9. Tennessee
▶10. Rock And Roll Shoes ▶11. Don't You Think It's Come Our Time ▶12. I Came
To Believe ▶ **BEST TRACK** Baby Ride Easy

missing have been added, sometimes by players who were there for the original sessions, and not every song from the sessions is included: 'Out Among The Stars' has been edited down and shaped to feel like an album, rather than a compilation or bootleg.

That, in fact, is its strength. It makes sense as a whole and, if it had been released in 1984 as it is now, it might have even done some business. 'If I Told You Who It Was' is a hilarious yarn in which the narrator cops off with a famous country singer who he won't name because no-one would believe him. It's a cheap song, but Cash nonetheless shows a lightness of touch and confidence you remember from his '60s recordings. 'Baby Ride Easy', a duet with his wife, June Carter, is fabulous too – a driving rhythm coupled with sparky vocal interplay – and there's a decent version of the Hank Snow classic 'I'm Movin' On', which Cash performs with Waylon Jennings.

Elsewhere, 'Out Among The Stars' is poor. 'After All' is a stinker of a ballad, and the two Cash originals on here, 'Call Your Mother' and 'I Came To Believe', are best forgotten, as indeed they once were. Aficionados will value hearing them, if only to be reminded that Cash was creatively (and personally) in the wilderness at the time. Indeed, whatever's been done to 'Out Among The Stars', it remains a 1980s Johnny Cash album; it wasn't until Rick Rubin got hold of him 10 years later that he came in from the cold. ■ PHIL HEBBLETHWAITE

PLAY IT AGAIN

RECENTLY RATED IN NME

Howler

World Of Joy

"It's no reinvention, [but] 'World Of Joy' sounds like a band straining themselves to top a personal best. Happily, they've managed it. Everything is that much bigger, faster, smarter and stronger." (NME, March 22)

8

Jimi Goodwin

Odludek

"'Live Like A River' recalls the Haçienda house of Goodwin's previous band Sub Sub; and the off-kilter 'Man V Dingo' makes this far more than Doves' unofficial fifth." (NME, March 22)

7

Sky Ferreira

Night Time, My Time

"Sky Ferreira makes the business of unrequited crushes and useless boys feel like high-stakes magic in much the same way that the late film director John Hughes did." (NME, March 15)

8

Shit Robot

We Got A Love

"DFA's Shit Robot (aka Marcus Lambkin) is a follower, not an innovator, but his taste is pure and his references precise. Ticks every old-school box in irresistible floorfilling style." (NME, March 15)

8

Sabina

Toujours

"For her first solo outing Sabina Sciubba has eschewed the electropop of her New York-based Brazilian Girls troupe to record a more lilting, guitar-based, Nico-esque collection in Paris." (NME, March 22)

9

HTRK

Psychic 9-5 Club

Ghostly International



Not that any band should have to apologise for their artistic

decisions, but Australian noir enthusiasts HTRK are more justified than most in taking this particular sonic sidestep. 'Psychic 9-5 Club' is their first album as a duo, Sean Stewart having died in 2010 during the recording of predecessor 'Work (Work,

Work)'. Jonnine Standish and Nigel Yang have voted against replicating Stewart's gnarly, lumbering basslines, so where HTRK once traded in clammy post-punk squall, a sparse sophisto-pop sensibility now dominates. Measured dub rhythms and minimal house shuffles are topped off with aplomb by Standish's yearning vocals. An abrupt turn from previous HTRK releases, yes, but into leftfield pop excellence.

■ NOEL GARDNER

8

lydes

Phase EP



Dandelion Lotus
If you want to hear how the intersection between moody bass music and techno can sound as exciting as a roller-disco with wolves, listen to the new Burial EP. If, however, you're after something that follows a far more demure path in that quadrant, then lydes could be your man. He's linked to both Kompakt and Mary Anne Hobbs, and

it turns out that's a very effective summary of his first EP. The crumbly, aqueous 'What You Got' doesn't so much build up as start slowly then gradually evaporate. 'Call To Reason' is so muted and delicate you'd need an endoscope to get a good look at it, while 'Aldkrome II' heads for the softly fizzing breaks of early Aphex Twin before opting instead for something even more low-key. Very subtle pleasures.

■ GAVIN HAYNES

7



30

(From left) Nick McCarthy, Alex Kapranos and Robert Hardy



Franz

Ferdinand

Roundhouse

London

March 14

Playful brilliance
from the Glaswegian
veterans still at the
top of their game

Four albums and 12 years into their life as a band, Alex Kapranos, Nick McCarthy, Robert Hardy and Paul Thomson are as energised onstage as they've ever been. Running through a setlist of indie-disco classics, from a singalong 'Do You Want To' to a deliciously dirty 'Michael', sporting coordinated grey and white outfits and leaping around making mock gun gestures with their guitars, the Glaswegians are all about exuberant, unashamed fun. Songs from 2013's 'Right Thoughts, Right Words, Right Action', meanwhile, demonstrate their recent return to songwriting form, with 'Evil Eye' and 'Love Illumination' as playfully brilliant as any of their older material. This is a band at the top of their game. ■ LISA WRIGHT

9

ED MILES

Reviews LIVE

The Glasgow trio
celebrate their
rapid ascent in
the company of
a loved-up audience

The Forum, London
Friday, March 14

Chvrches

Imagine if there was a tally of how many bands have come and gone in the grand scheme of music, ever. It'd be massive.

We tend not to think too much about the try-hards and chancers who've missed the mark, but it's wise to keep them in mind while Chvrches wind through the first of two celebratory nights at The Forum in London. Not because it's good to dwell on failure, but to remind you that it's rare when this music thing works out. Better bands have failed with more effort. But during tonight's hour of heartfelt electropop, which swings from the melancholic to the ebullient with the same earnest, erratic patter of a righteous teenager caught in the throes of unrequited love, two things are apparent: 1) this band have come a long way fast and are riding a peak; and 2) the element that makes them soar is that special something that is as ethereal as shadows or pixie dust.

Chvrches are one woman, two men and some synths, and there's nothing particularly zeitgeisty or eyebrow-raising about a setup

**THE ELEMENT THAT
MAKES CHVRCHES
SOAR IS AS ETHEREAL
AS SHADOWS OR
PIXIE DUST**

like that, especially in 2014. But zeitgeist is the last thing on the mind of Glaswegians Iain Cook,

Lauren Mayberry and Martin Doherty. And even though they've spent lots of money on a high-tech lightshow, as befits the size of tonight's venue, the band remain personable and chatty throughout the show in a way that breaks down the kind of po-faced showing off so many artists seek to achieve. With Lauren telling the crowd, "It's great, we've got a toilet in our dressing room on this tour and there's room for all of us to sit down!" before launching into 'Recover', you could

convince yourself that the law graduate with a journalism masters and her elder-statesmen bandmates, best known for their broody post-rock heritage (Iain was in Aereogramme, Martin played live with The Twilight Sad), are just having a bit of fun playing a few jams to keep them busy while they wait for more serious engagements to come along (like the Scottish referendum, perhaps).

Indeed, things err a little too far on the side of informality when Martin kicks his legs about like an upturned beetle and occasionally misses a note when it's his turn to sing 'Under The Tide'. It's in these

SETLIST

- We Sink
- Lies
- Lungs
- Gun
- Night Sky
- Strong Hand
- Science/Visions
- Recover
- Tether
- Under The Tide
- The Mother We Share
- You Caught The Light
- By The Throat

moments that you wonder how something can feel so off the mark when, moments before, the same musicians are coughing up the effortless, heart-rippling triumphalism of 'Gun' in a way that transcends the sum of Chvrches' parts and makes the whole room do a collective joy-weep.

It's off-balance, but when those joy-weeps hit it's a big deal that more than compensates. Somewhere between a funeral and a wedding, 'The Mother We Share' makes you want to burst out crying. The musical mess-about suddenly gets serious and the sound coming from the speakers cuts straight through the band, the crowd, the venue and the fabric of tangible reality, making a deep incision into the heart of melancholic electro that's a testament to the mythic power of pop music. It's a brilliant moment that flies so high above everything else going on that it seems





Chvrches (l-r):
Martin Doherty,
Lauren
Mayberry and
Iain Cook

THE VIEW FROM THE CROWD



Alice, 26, London
“They were great. They did a really good job of turning an incredibly smelly venue into a place that temporarily felt quite beautiful.”



Claire, 18, Guildford
“I can’t stop smiling. I bought these tickets last year when I didn’t know much about the band, but I’ve fallen in love with them. ‘The Mother We Share’ nearly brought a tear to my eye.”



Carly, 18, London
“I love Lauren’s attitude. She’s so friendly, you feel close to her even if she’s far away on the stage. It was absolutely brilliant.”

the band themselves don’t even know how they’re doing it. The humility of the players involved is encapsulated moments before, when Lauren wraps up the industrial pump of ‘Science/Visions’ by telling the crowd she’s going to “play a few more songs then go beat myself up backstage telling myself how I should be better”. You just want to shout: “YOU GUYS ARE KILLIN’ IT RIGHT NOW!” And when they start being openly self-critical about new tune ‘You Caught The Light’, saying they did “fine” but that it’s only an “8/10”, you want someone to give them a quick lesson in PR.

But, whatever. Maybe Chvrches are humble because they’re smart enough to know they’re just chancers like the rest of us. Smart enough to realise they’re fortunate to have happened upon that rare fuel of talent and coincidence that has turbo-boosted what could have been just a quite good indie electro band and turned them into something that, when the iron strikes hot, sears itself onto the collective consciousness.

■ ALEX HOBAN

8

MORE GIGS

Miles Kane Warrington Parr Hall

Monday, March 17

Today is St Patrick’s Day. It’s also Miles Kane’s 28th birthday. To celebrate, the Liverpoolian piles straight into a fizz-cracking triptych of ‘Inhaler’, ‘Counting Down The Days’ and ‘Kingcrawler’ to begin a set that draws mostly from his debut album, ‘Colour Of The Trap’. When he dips into 2013’s ‘Don’t Forget Who You Are’ it’s unexpectedly poignant, as ‘Give Up’ segues into The Rolling Stones’ ‘Sympathy For The Devil’ in a tribute to Mick Jagger’s partner L’Wren Scott. The acoustic encore of ‘Colour Of The Trap’ is less sensitive, dedicated to “all the lovely ladies in the audience”, and rousing closer ‘Don’t Forget Who You Are’ has the crowd terrace-chanting its chorus out into the street.

■ JAMIE CROSSAN

6

Trans Brudenell Social Club, Leeds

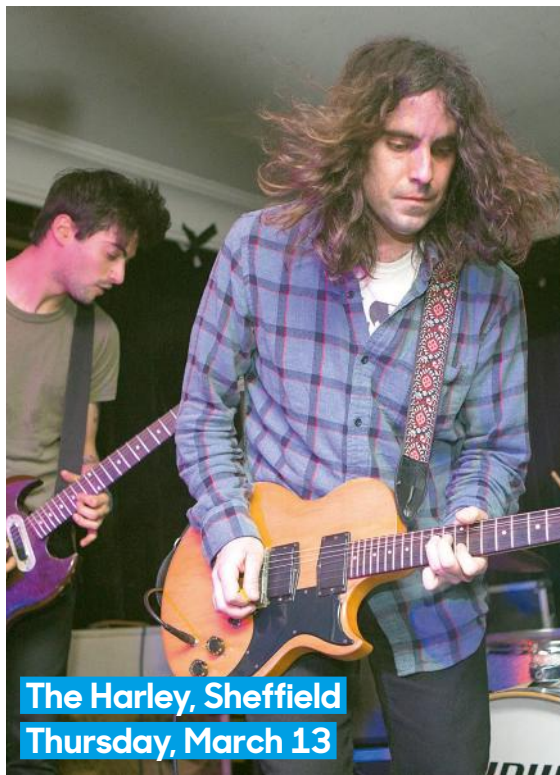
Saturday, March 15

It’s a ‘90s indie lover’s wet dream: Bernard Butler of Suede and Jackie McKewon of The Yummy Fur returning to band life. Tonight, playing on the floor of a social club games room, they make an unassuming pair as they trade guitar licks, loops and lyrics while, behind them, workmanlike bass and drums frame their indulgences. From the scruffy, Rolling Stones-esque riffs of ‘Lights’ to the post-punk angularity of ‘The Prince’ they’re in no mind to settle on a sound. If you can ignore the clichéd lyrics (“Now you got all the money, have a real good time” – ‘Dancing Shoes’), it’s easy to revel in the upbeat and head-nodding likes of ‘Rock Steady’.

■ HAYLEY AVRON

7

The Men



The Harley, Sheffield Thursday, March 13

After a faltering start, the prolific punks from Brooklyn deliver a breathless set of roaring rock’n’roll

“It’s the first night of our tour. Can you tell?” deadpans guitarist Nick Chiericozzi as The Men amble onstage and spend a long minute tuning up. But what follows suggests the New York quintet aren’t the slightest bit rusty. Blazing through a set drawn largely from latest album ‘Tomorrow’s Hits’, The Men also make a mockery of the notion that they left their punk days behind them with 2012’s ‘Open Your Heart’. Here, they’re rough and raw with both guitars set to ‘power tool’. Those at the back might not even notice founding member Mark Perro hunched over a keyboard at the rear of the stage. With the amps roaring and guitar solos flying around, you certainly struggle to hear him. Ragged renditions of ‘Pearly Gates’ and ‘Dark Waltz’ improve on their recorded counterparts by virtue of being a little bit looser, while

a driving take on ‘Going Down’ sparks the crowd into action: first, there’s a circle pit, then a hapless punter attempts to empty a can of lager over his head before realising it’s empty. Marks for effort, though. Neil Young, whose work with Crazy Horse is clearly a key influence on this band, told us that rock’n’roll will never die. Tonight, at the hands of The Men, it’s in rude health. ■ ROB WEBB

SETLIST

- ▶ Lotus
- ▶ Lazarus
- ▶ Different Days
- ▶ Pink Frost
- ▶ Electric
- ▶ Supermoon
- ▶ Going Down
- ▶ Dark Waltz
- ▶ The Brass
- ▶ Pearly Gates

7

Maximo Park

O2 Academy, Oxford
Tuesday, March 18

Frontman Paul Smith defies
medical advice to remind us
of his band's enduring appeal

Paul Smith makes a great forlorn indie poet. He makes a very witty Geordie comedy turn. When the fresh electronic Maximo moods take him, which is often tonight, he even does a pretty decent robot. But he is not, let's be very clear, a good Bono. When he arrives on the Oxford stage with his trademark Trilby matched with actual Ray-Ban shades – indoors, at night – and begins doing nipple-tassel mimes and arm-thrusting gestures to the electro-rock riot of 'Give, Get, Take', many wonder if they've stumbled into a risqué am-dram production of *The Blues Brothers* by mistake. His shades make it impossible for him to read his setlist and, as the gig gets hotter, blind him with actual retinal perspiration. They may not be an attempt to adopt a new rock-god persona – he's recently had eye surgery, he explains, and would've had to cancel the tour without them – but the way they mock and thwart him serves to prove what an adorably awkward figure he cuts.

Which is precisely Maximo's lasting appeal. Almost 10 years after debut album 'A Certain Trigger', they've just scored their fifth Top 20 album with the Number Seven 'Too Much Information'. Much of their enduring success can be credited to a gradual, drip-drip broadening of their spasmodic, hyperactive guitar-pop palate; the frenzied neo-Devo jolts and jerks of 'Graffiti', 'Limassol' and 'Our Velocity' merge seamlessly with the literary,

**SMITH IS UNDER
DOCTOR'S ORDERS
NOT TO STAR-JUMP**

Smithsonian sweeps of 'Lydia, The Ink Will Never Dry' and 'Books In Boxes'. 'Too Much Information', played virtually in full tonight, continues the job, stretching their remit to cover minimalist doomglitch Hurtswave (their Invisible collaboration 'Brain Cells'), stylish synth homages to the sophisticated '80s electronica of Depeche Mode, OMD and Black (the sublime 'Leave This Island') and mature steps towards Zorro-era REM ('Midnight On The Hill'). They've kicked their way out of the indie-rock cage and are cheerfully feasting on 2014's all-you-can-eat stylistic buffet. They are, if you will, post-schmindie.

But just as crucial to the band's longevity is Smith's Moz-like refusal to loosen his grip on the comforting insecurities of youth, even as his lyrics grow in depth and substance. When he isn't weeping by monuments in the rain for his library lover, he's dissecting the minutiae of the disaffected backpacker on 'Leave This Island', dropping references to suicidal feminist poets like Audre Lorde or spouting bold but vague political polemic in 'The Kids Are Sick Again' and 'The National Health'. "Would you like to go on a date with me?" he pleads on 'A Fortnight's Time', although, from

SETLIST

- Give, Get, Take
- Our Velocity
- Signal & Sign
- My Bloody Mind
- Brain Cells
- Hips And Lips
- A Fortnight's Time
- Graffiti
- The Kids Are Sick Again
- Lydia, The Ink Will Never Dry
- Leave This Island
- Books From Boxes
- The National Health
- I Recognise The Light
- By The Monument
- Drinking Martinis
- Limassol
- The Undercurrents
- Girls Who Play Guitars
- Her Name Was Audre
- Apply Some Pressure
- Midnight On The Hill
- Where We're Going
- Going Missing

the sound of it, the rendezvous would take place in a major earthquake zone and involve some kind of maths exam – "Five times five equals 25/Don't you know your times tables by now?"

Physically, although he's under doctor's orders not to star-jump, he veers between the Pobot, the world's unluckiest stripper and a man on the verge of an amphetamine breakdown, all the while throwing so many theatrical gestures it's as if he's singlehandedly trying to make up for Bowie not touring. And between songs he's a self-effacing comedy compere, telling a fan who wants his trousers that "as a very dull-looking man, at least I can dress to impress" and blatantly plugging the merch stand by describing their T-shirts as "like a beatific Russian religious painting, but with a man shaving his tongue instead of God". Unlike so many self-pitying whiners, Smith is a Jarv-style hero for the inwardly confident misfit, a brotherly beacon for the weird and proud. Traditional rock arrogance would be his undoing; his future's so bright he'll never again need shades. ■ MARK BEAUMONT

MORE GIGS

Cults

Village Underground, London

Monday, March 17

Since their glockenspiel last twinkled in London in 2011, Cults have suffered heartbreak, drugs and natural disaster. When Madeline Follin and Brian Oblivion's relationship ended, Oblivion lived up to his name and spiralled into narcotic release before, in 2012, Hurricane Sandy interrupted recording for last year's 'Static'. Onstage, they look damaged and their performance is harsh yet oddly compelling. Thunderous new cuts 'Always Forever' and 'So Far' offer deathly noise and 'Go Outside' still resounds, but Cults' sugary past has turned sour. It's a positive change and the crowd are delighted as the long-haired, eyes-down exes depart, edgy, bruised and awkward after a combustible return.

■ BEN HOMEWOOD

7

White Fang

The Hope, Brighton

Friday, March 14

With their lank ringlets and bumfluff 'taches, Portland punks White Fang look like they've tumbled out of an '80s skater video, bringing a far from straight-edge interest in whisky and weed with them. "That song was about getting drunk. As. Fuck," clarifies singer Erik Gage as hedonistic metal anthem 'Wrecked' piles to a halt. Taking lessons from Andrew WK's 'Party Hard' and the gross maleness of Pissed Jeans, White Fang spew out dumb genius like 'Bad Boys' to a riot of teenage moshing. From faking stoned phone calls to riding bassist Chris Uehlein like a pony, Gage's theatrics are hilarious. Right now, this is the best party in town.

■ STUART HUGGETT

8

Paul Smith on...

Risking his health to tour

"There's not much option really, it's either that or cancel the tour. We rescheduled the first two shows because my eye was a pulpy mess. We played four or five days later and I had to be as still as possible. I've moved around a bit more each night. It's probably the most rock'n'roll thing I've done in terms of actually endangering my health – it's a little bit dicey."

Going Top 10

"It's easy to get caught up in being competitive. That's not how I want to live my life; I want to make music that's good. But to be 10 years into playing live as a band together and have five records that have all gone Top 20, it's obviously very gratifying."

Staying relevant

"[We do it] just by expressing ourselves. Someone playing a synthesizer or singing their heart out will always have an appeal if it's coming from a pure and honest place. That's what we're doing; we've got conviction in what we do. The songs are about something tangible and they're very melodic, and it means you can get away with talking about things that are more melancholy."

Drake/The Weeknd



Motorpoint Arena, Sheffield
Friday, March 14

Toronto hip-hop titans deliver an arena show rich in sky-high extravagance



Drake's Would You Like A Tour? adventure is a well-travelled beast. Now on UK soil, it's a masterclass in presentation, pace and pyrotechnics. It's also an exercise in giving a leg-up to his mates – support comes from collaborator The Weeknd.

Drake

SETLIST

- ▶ Tuscan Leather
- ▶ Headlines
- ▶ Crew Love (feat. The Weeknd)
- ▶ Tuscan Leather (reprise)
- ▶ Furthest Thing
- ▶ Wu Tang Forever
- ▶ Pop That
- ▶ Love Me
- ▶ No Lie
- ▶ Trust Issues
- ▶ Versace
- ▶ Trophies
- ▶ Pound Cake
- ▶ The Motion
- ▶ Come Thru
- ▶ Too Much
- ▶ Hold On We're Going Home
- ▶ Worst Behaviour
- ▶ The Language
- ▶ 305 To My City
- ▶ Fuckin' Problems
- ▶ HYFR (Hell Ya Fucking Right)
- ▶ All Me
- ▶ 99 Problems
- ▶ Started From The Bottom

Pogoing atop a raised carpeted stage with a simple lighting rig, Abel Tesfaye readies the throng for Drake's arrival. His way of engaging the crowd in cheering contests is pure panto, and not always the best match for the squalid intensity of his tunes. The bounce of 'House Of Balloons'/'Glass Table Girls', both from his debut mixtape, suits the arena scale, while the upbeat funk of 'Wanderlust' is equally lively. Only the shame-drenched 'Wicked Games' loses its sleazy allure in this vast setting.

After a set upgrade revealing a giant, deconstructed glitter ball sliced into two halves, Drake rises onto the lower section and begins to prowl. He's barely done with opener 'Tuscan Leather' before the first set of fireworks is released.

It's a cue to pick up the beat, and he does so with 'Headlines', before The Weeknd joins him for 'Crew Love' and they leap about like adolescents.

Drake is the captain of the tempo: the rudimentary groove of 'Pop That' marks a contrast to the slow burn of 'Trust Issues', while the smooth flow of 'Versace' keeps the crowd locked into his gaze. A member of the audience is invited onstage and serenaded with 'Hold On We're Going Home'. He's a man on a mission to connect with his 11,000-strong crowd, even if he has to take them one by one.

Then things get ridiculous. A huge metal structure is lowered from the ceiling and he clambers aboard. It's not for singing in, though. It's to give him a better look at his public. There follows a solid 10 minutes of Drake simply *noticing people*. "I see you, girl, with the sparkly phone. I see you," he declares before moving on to the next fan baying wildly for his attention. If your life's ambition is to be eyeballed by an airborne Canadian rapper, then this is a pulse-racing highlight. Otherwise it's a baffling spectacle, completely devoid of purpose.

Thankfully he soon reverts to what he does best. With bass shaking the stands, he gives a beat-perfect rendition of 'Started From The Bottom'. Fittingly, he ends the show with arms aloft, riding on top of his stage prop, reminding everyone just how far he's come.

■ HAYLEY AVRON

35

8



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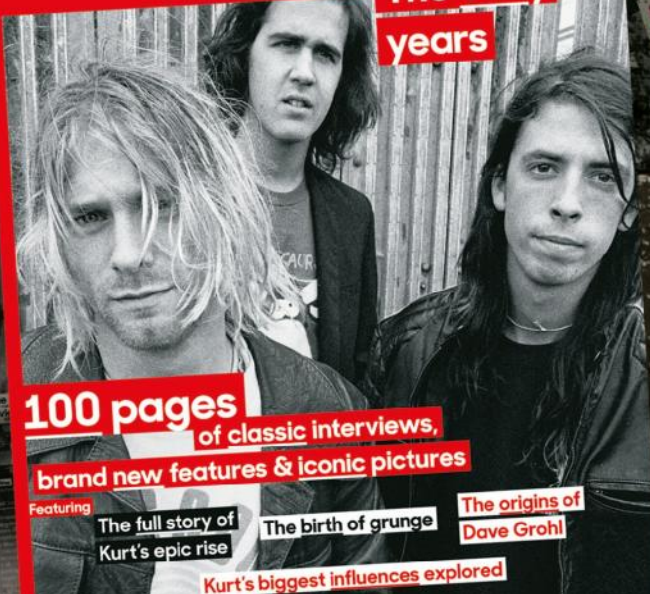
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NME Guide

► GOING OUT. STAYING IN. MISSING NOTHING ■ EDITED BY RHIAN DALY



Childhood

Ben Romans-Hopcraft, Leo Dobsen, Daniel Salamons and Jonny Williams have been the rising indie band's go-to support act over the past year, opening for the likes of Palma Violets and Temples. Now they're headlining their first UK tour, with their as yet untitled debut album in tow.

► **DATES** Nottingham Spanky Van Dykes (April 19), Hitchin Club 85 (20), Leicester The Cookie (22), Night & Day (23), Edinburgh Sneaky Pete's (24), Liverpool Leaf (25), Leeds Belgrave Music Hall (27), Bristol Exchange (28), Birmingham Hare & Hounds (29), Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (30), Southampton Lennon's (May 1)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
 ► **PRICE** £7; Hitchin and Southampton £6
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with 70p-£1 booking fee

Conor Oberst

The Bright Eyes singer returns in May with a new country album, 'Upside Down The Mountain'. Songs from it will be premiered at a trio of UK dates.

► **DATES** Manchester Cathedral (July 8), London KOKO (9), Glasgow O2 ABC (21)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** Dawes
 ► **PRICE** £20; London sold out
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £2-£2.50 booking fee

Glass Animals

On debut album 'Zaba' the Oxford quartet take inspiration from William Steig's book *The Zabaraba Jungle* and the exotic wildlife it portrays. Hear what that idea sounds like as they celebrate the record's release in three cities.

BOOKING NOW

The hottest new tickets on sale this week

Peace

The Birmingham boys will preview tracks from their eagerly awaited second album, due later this year, with a run of dates in some of the towns and cities bands often overlook.

You posted a photo on Twitter of strings being recorded for the new album – will you be taking an orchestra with you on tour?

Harry Koisser [vocals/guitar]: "I wish! I doubt we'll get allowed – they only appear on two tracks but it's quite nice having a bit o' strings. People said it was an unnecessary cost now that we can do fake ones but I was like, 'Eff that, we need to get the lads in with the cellos.'"

What's the idea behind going to smaller towns that aren't tour staples?

"I guess it's pretty much that. I was interested in it because I grew up in a small town and it was impossible to see anyone. I don't think I've been to any of the places except for Leamington Spa." **Anywhere you're excited to go for the first time?**

"Falmouth. I like the word Falmouth. I like the word Wrexham as well. I wonder what happens in Wrexham."

How much of the new album are you going to be playing?

"Not all of it. Probably just a few. There's a song called 'Blue' and it just sounds like it's off [Justin

Timberlake's] 'Justified'. I dunno how we're gonna do that live."

► THE DETAILS

► **DATES** Keele University Ballroom (May 27), Warrington Parr Hall (28), Kendal Brewery Arts Centre (29), Dundee Fat Sams (31), Inverness Ironworks (June 1), Middlesbrough Empire (2), Wrexham Central Station (4), Aberystwyth Arts Centre (5), Leamington Spa The Assembly (9), Bath Komedia (10), Falmouth Princess Pavilion (11), Swansea Sin City (12), Worthing Pavillion (13)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** Drowners (May 27–June 5), Big Deal (June 9–13)
 ► **PRICE** £13.50
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** ticketweb.co.uk

► **DATES** Bristol The Lantern (June 16), Leeds Belgrave Music Hall (20), Manchester Ruby Lounge (21)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
 ► **PRICE** £8; Leeds £7
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with 70p booking fee; Bristol from gigantic.com with £1.25 booking fee; Manchester from alt-tickets.co.uk with 80p booking fee

The Great Escape

Birmingham indie kids Superfood, singer and producer Javeon, New York rapper Le1f and Liverpool disco-pop trio All We Are are among the latest to be announced for the annual Brighton weekender.

► **DATES** Brighton, various venues (May 8–10)
 ► **OTHER ACTS** The Amazing Snakeheads, White Hinterland, Trans, Twin Atlantic, Sylvan Esso, Clean Bandit, Brolin
 ► **PRICE** Three-day passes £54; two-day passes £42; one-day passes £25–£32
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £2–£5.25 booking fee

Kendal Calling

For the ninth edition of the Lake District festival, Kendal Calling's organisers have pulled in Suede and Frank Turner to top the bill. De La Soul, Bondax, Gorgon City, Miles Kane and Happy Mondays all perform too.
 ► **DATES** Hackthorpe Lowther Deer Park (August 1–3)
 ► **OTHER ACTS** Newton Faulkner, Mr Scruff, Clean Bandit
 ► **PRICE** £119



Fucked Up

► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £7.50 booking fee

Benjamin Booker

Rough Trade's newest signing is a live act to keep your eye on. Booker, plus drummer Max Norton, will bring his distorted glam scuzz across the Atlantic for the first time this May.
 ► **DATES** Brighton The Green Door Store (May 18), London Water Rats (19), London Old Blue Last (20), Manchester Soup Kitchen (21)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
 ► **PRICE** £7; Brighton £5
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1–£1.25 booking fee

Drowners

The New York indie band made their UK live debut earlier this year supporting Cage The Elephant. Now they're packing out their own headline shows, which come before a stint opening for Peace.
 ► **DATES** Leicester The Scholar

album 'Glass Boys' on June 2. They'll play a series of live shows soon after its release.

► **DATES** Manchester Gorilla (June 15), Newcastle The Cluny (16), Leeds Belgrave Music Hall (17), London Koko (18)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
 ► **PRICE** Newcastle £14; Leeds £13; London £17.50; Manchester £15
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 ► **FROM** NME.COM/tickets with £1.30–£3.40 booking fee

Merchandise

Carson Cox and his band are currently working on their first album for new label, 4AD. They'll take a break from those sessions to return to London and preview new material.
 ► **DATES** London Islington Assembly Hall (June 9)
 ► **SUPPORT ACTS** TBC
 ► **PRICE** £12.50
 ► **ON SALE** now
 ► **FROM** dashtickets.co.uk with £1.50 booking fee

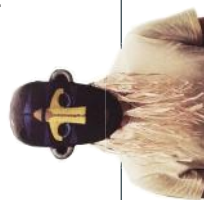
FESTIVAL NEWS

Live At Leeds

NME will host a stage at this year's Live At Leeds festival, taking place on May 3 in the Yorkshire city. Drenge, Wolf Alice, Darlia and The Bohicas will all take over The Cockpit, and The Midnight Beast, Little Matador, Carnabells, The Mexanines and George Barnett will also appear at the event. Wristbands for the whole day's proceedings cost £25 and are available from NME.COM/tickets now.

Optimus Alive

After previewing new songs during their headline slots on this year's NME Awards Tour with Austin, Texas, Interpol will make the trip to Lisbon to play Optimus Alive. Joining them will be Au Revoir Simone, Elbow, Parquet Courts, SBTRKT and The War On Drugs, while Arctic Monkeys and The Black Keys have already been confirmed to headline the event, which takes place in July. Weekend passes cost £104.10 and day tickets are £45.60 from NME.COM/tickets.



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GOING OUT

Everything worth leaving the house for this week

Wild Beasts

Hayden Thorpe, Tom Fleming, Ben Little and Chris Norman aimed to sound "like a gang" again on their fourth album 'Present Tense', released earlier this year. The results were a spectacular mix of lyrics about class conflict and awestruck romance, and new electronic influences that marked previously unexplored territory for the group. See them recreate those sounds live this week.

► **DATES** Manchester Albert Hall (March 26), Glasgow The Arches (27), Bristol O2 Academy (30), Cambridge Corn Exchange (31), London O2 Academy Brixton (April 1)
► **TICKETS** £15; Manchester £16.50; London £18 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.50-£3.40 booking fee; Glasgow £14.50 from ticketmaster.co.uk

Klaxons

The London band road-tested a handful of tracks from their third record 'Love Frequency' at overseas festivals last year, but Klaxons have yet to play any fresh

cuts in the UK since last year's The Great Escape festival. James, Jamie, Simon and Steffan will play a few intimate venues this week and next, where they'll give fans the skinny on what to

expect from their eagerly awaited third album.

► **DATES** Birmingham Hare & Hounds (March 31), Glasgow King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (April 1)
► **TICKETS** Birmingham £12 from theticketsellers.co.uk with

£1 booking fee; Glasgow £13 from ticketmaster.co.uk with £2.25 booking fee

Howler

"We're going to be able to put on a really powerful, good live show for the first time in the history of the band," Jordan Gatesmith told *NME* recently. Find out if he's right as Howler bring second album 'World Of Joy' to the UK for the first time.

► **DATES** Cardiff Clwb Ifor Bach (March 26), Nottingham Bodega (27), Birmingham The Institute (28), Manchester Deaf Institute (30), Glasgow King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (31), Newcastle Cluny (April 1)

► **TICKETS** £10 from NME.COM/tickets with £1-£1.20 booking fee; Glasgow £10 from ticketmaster.co.uk with £2 booking fee

Tinie Tempah

The rapper plays the arenas he was meant to hit in December, but postponed because he hadn't had enough time to rehearse. He's had a few more months of practice, so expect him to be on storming form.

► **DATES** Wolverhampton Civic Hall (March 26), Manchester O2 Apollo (28, 29), London O2 Arena (30), Brighton Centre (31)
► **TICKETS** £25; London £28.50 from NME.COM/tickets with £4.75-£6.50 booking fee

Tokyo Police Club

The Canadian indie-rock quartet return with new album 'Forcefield' this week, and will play the best bits from it across four cities.

► **DATES** Glasgow King Tut's Wah Wah Hut (March 27), Manchester Ruby Lounge (30), Leeds Cockpit (31), London Scala (April 1)
► **TICKETS** £11; £13.50 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.10-£2.25 booking fee

65daysofstatic

This year marks 10 years since the release of the post-rock band's influential debut album 'The Fall Of Math'. The Sheffield group are marking the occasion by playing it in full at the following dates.

FIVE TO SEE FOR FREE

Thrills don't come cheaper than this

1. Oliver Wilde

A Nation Of Shopkeepers, Leeds
Psych man plays new LP in Leeds.
March 26, 8pm

2. Fist City

Start The Bus, Bristol
Canadian punks take their fierce live show to the southwest.
March 26, 8pm

3. Dan Croll

Rise, Bristol
The LIPA graduate airs the sweet guitar hooks of his debut album.
March 28, 6pm

4. The Pearl Harts

The Old Blue Last, London
Grungy duo rock debut single 'Black Blood'.
March 31, 8pm

5. Jimi Goodwin

Rough Trade East, London
Doves man unveils his solo debut 'Odludek'.
April 1, 7pm



See Dan Croll for free in Bristol



Klaxons

► **DATES** Southampton The Brook (March 26), London KOKO (27), Norwich Arts Centre (28), Glasgow The Arches (29), York Fibbers (30)
► **TICKETS** York £14 from NME.COM/tickets with £1.40 booking fee; Southampton £12.50 from seetickets.com with £1.75 booking fee; Norwich £13.50 from norwichartscentre.co.uk with £1.20 booking fee; Glasgow £14 from ticketweb.co.uk with £1.75 booking fee; London sold out

François & The Atlas Mountains

Watch the French/British Domino signings bring the dark narratives of new album 'Piano Ombre' to life on the stages of five venues across the country.

► **DATES** London Hoxton Square Bar & Kitchen (March 26), Bristol Colston Hall (27), Liverpool Leaf On Bold St (28), Glasgow Stereo (29), Manchester Roadhouse (30)
► **TICKETS** £8 from NME.COM/tickets with 80p-£1 booking fee; Bristol £9 from colstonhall.org with 67p booking fee; Glasgow £9 from ticketweb.co.uk with £1.20 booking fee

Darlia

The grungy Blackpool trio unveil latest EP 'Candyman' on March 31, and will be hitting the road around its release.

► **DATES** Manchester Sound Control (March 28), Oxford Cellar Bar (31), London Water Rats (April 1)
► **TICKETS** £7.50; London £9 from NME.COM/tickets with 90p-£1 booking fee



Kurt Cobain's life is examined in a documentary on Sky Arts, March 31

STAYING IN

The best music on TV, radio and online this week

Kurt Cobain

All Apologies: Kurt Cobain

As the 20th anniversary of the Nirvana frontman's death approaches, this documentary (originally created to mark 10 years since his death) looks back at his life and influence on alternative music. Friends, family and music industry figures discuss the icon's talent and troubles.

► **WATCH** Sky Arts, 9pm, March 31

Circa Waves

The Evening Show with Danielle Perry

As the NME Awards Tour 2014 with Austin, Texas draws to a close, Circa Waves take some time out from filling the coveted opening slot with their raw indie-pop to make two appearances on Danielle Perry's show, where they'll play a different song each evening.

LISTEN XFM, 7pm, March 26-27

Pet Shop Boys

Discovering...

Formed in 1981 after Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe met in an electronics shop in Chelsea,

Pet Shop Boys have gone on to sell over 50 million records worldwide and be listed as the most successful duo in UK music by *Guinness World Records*. Over 30 years since they began working together they're still playing festivals, like Stradbally's Electric Picnic in August. Find out



Superfood

more about their career in this new documentary.

WATCH Sky Arts, 8.30pm, March 29

Superfood

X-Posure

After keeping their cards close to their chest for ages, the Birmingham quartet finally released their debut record, the 'Mam' EP, earlier this year. They'll stop off at the XFM studios to play some songs and talk to John Kennedy about their first steps as a band.

LISTEN XFM, 10pm, March 26

Kiran Leonard

Marc Riley

The 18-year-old singer-songwriter from Oldham released his debut album 'Bowler Hat Soup' last year and, in February, wowed crowds at the inaugural BBC 6 Music

Festival with his schizophrenic, experimental pop. He makes the short trip to Salford to perform in session for Marc Riley this week.

LISTEN BBC 6Music, 7pm, April 1



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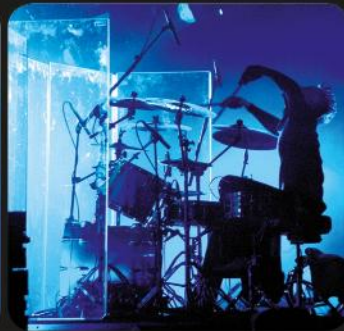


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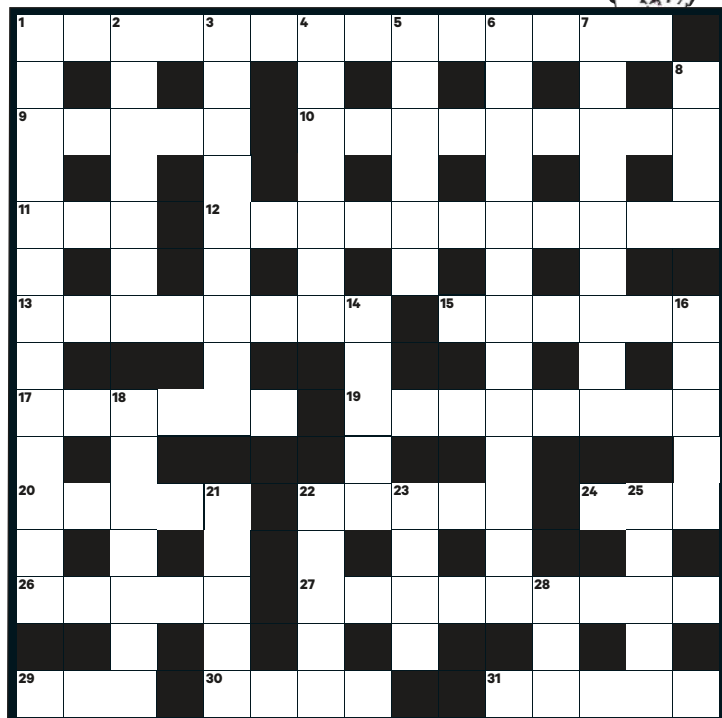
THINK TANK

NME CROSSWORD

Compiled by
TREVOR HUNGERFORD



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CLUES ACROSS

- 1** The customary Peter Crouch dances performed to Damon Albarn music (8-6)
9 All-girl group fronted by Belinda Carlisle (2-3)
10 A surprise drink with Jimi Goodwin on going solo from Doves (2-7)
11 Beastie Boys' album giving '___ Communication' (3)
12+31A "Well, she didn't care what it's worth/ She's living like it's the _____", U2 (4-5-2-5)
13 Homely menfolk who came from Savages (8)
15 Dutch Uncles become rotten over a period of time (6)
17 A more intimate album from Joy Division (6)
19 That's much better from Frank Turner (8)
20 (See 8 down)
22 The 'She Bop' singer,

- ____ Lauper (5)
24 In 1979 their music came in a 'Metal Box' (1-1-1)
26 Gigs I arrange for drummer with Björk's old band The Sugarcubes (5)
27 (See 18 down)
29 Abba's song that had an important message (1-1-1)
30 (See 16 down)
31 (See 12 across)

CLUES DOWN

- 1** There is actually a 'Channel' only on this side of the Atlantic for the Drive-By Truckers (7-6)
2 Post-punk band from Leeds fronted by George Mitchell (7)
3 Sleep easy, somehow, through Happy Mondays' music (3-6)
4 Adore US version of Tom Vek number (7)
5 The Stereophonics take the tape back (6)
6 "I've been sleeping

- 1000 years it seems/ Got to open my eyes to everything", 2003 (5-2-2-4)
7+21D Enter Shikari got off to a flying start with this album (4-2-3-5)
8+20A Before going solo in 2000 he was a member of alt.country band Whiskeytown (4-5)
14 (See 25 down)
16+30A Ray so calm about this successful Steely Dan album (5-4)
18+27A XTC album rings out a London nursery rhyme (7-3-6)
21 (See 7 down)
22 Federal US bureau have part of the ransom for female singer (5)
23 Radiohead had nothing on, so they recorded a single (4)
25+14D Minor story rewritten by The Pigeon Detectives (2-3-5)
28 The maker of 'Paper Planes' (1-1-1)

FEBRUARY 15 ANSWERS

ACROSS 1+12A So Long, See You Tomorrow, 8 Nightcall, 9+26A Never Stop, 11 Tatay, 14+33A Underneath Your Clothes, 18+19A Terra Firma, 21 Ego, 22 Roy C, 23 Sick, 24 Siren, 27 INXS, 29 DISCO, 32 Edith
DOWN 1 Sun Structures, 2+16D Light Years, 3 Natty Dread, 4 Scar, 5+23D Elliott Smith, 6+17D Oingo Boingo, 7 Overture, 10 Rowe, 13 Neff, 15 Dirty Gold, 20 Rakes, 25 I Wish, 28 XTC, 30 CSS, 31 Go

Normal NME terms and conditions apply, available at NME.COM/terms. Cut out the crossword and send it, along with your name, address and email, marking the envelope with the issue date, before Tuesday, April 8, 2014, to: Crossword, NME, 9th Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Winners will be notified via email.

QUIZ

Compiled by ALAN WOODHOUSE (answers on page 67)

1 What was the first rap album to top the US Billboard chart?

2 Which rapper's real name is Dwayne Michael Carter?

3 What is Belle & Sebastian's highest-charting UK single?

4 True or false: Damon Albarn was born in London.

5 Which Morrissey album was produced by Tony Visconti?

6 Which British band have released the albums

'A Hyperactive Workout For The Flying Squad', 'On The Leyline' and 'Saturday'?

7 Which band's current world tour has seen them cover Prince, INXS and Stevie Wonder?

8 Kylie Minogue has appeared at Glastonbury once - guesting with which band?

9 What does the 'E' stand for in Mark E Smith?

10 Karen O of Yeah Yeah Yeahs wrote the lyrics to 2003 track 'Maps' about her then boyfriend, who was the singer in which band?

11 Meg White is married to the son of which legendary singer?

12 What's the name of the Velvet Underground album that does not feature Lou Reed?

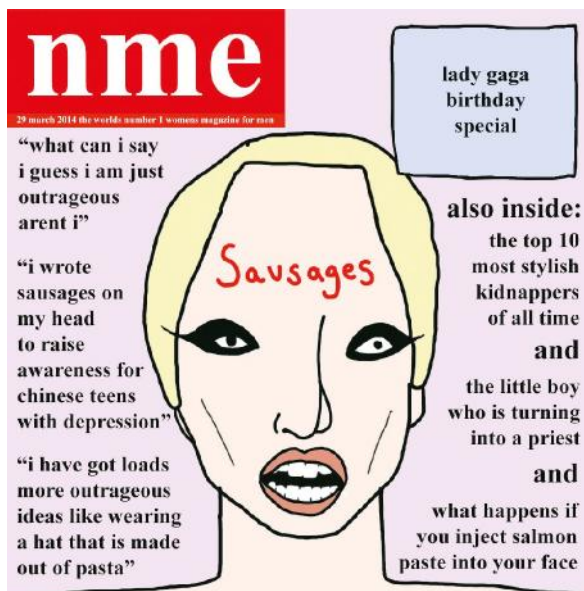
13 Maximo Park take their name from a piece of greenery in which US city?

14 In which year did Record Store Day start?

15 Madonna, Massive Attack and Rod Stewart have all released a single with the same title - what is it?

THE NME COVER THAT I GONE AND DONE

by CHRIS SIMPSON'S ARTIST



she is outrageous
 lady gaga writes sausages on her forehead and eats
 a 10 pound note live on television
 people all around the world cant actually believe it

NME

HEROES

ROCK STARS

INTERVIEW

THEIR IDOLS

46

Honor Titus:
"Manhattan is so
dark. They're about
to close a homeless
shelter and turn it
into a fancy hotel"

A photograph of Julian Casablancas standing outdoors next to a green classic car. He is wearing a black bomber jacket with red '44' on the chest, blue jeans, and multiple necklaces. He has long dark hair and is looking off to the side. The background shows trees and a house.

Julian Casablancas:

"Dude, that's why I think I had to fucking hit eject"

Honor Titus
and Julian
Casablancas
in East Austin,
Texas, March
15, 2014

Ever wondered what the new generation would like to ask their musical heroes? We set up five meetings of minds to find out. First, Matt Wilkinson hosts a Strokes/Cerebral Ballzy summit at SXSW

PHOTOS BY JENN FIVE

Titus and
Casablan-
cas: firm
friends
since
Julian
signed
Cerebral
Ballzy

Julian Casablan-
cas and Honor
Titus couldn't arrive at the chosen
location for this *NME* heroes
summit – a house in suburban
Austin, Texas, on the final day of
SXSW – more differently if they
tried. The former? A huge people carrier laid on
by the festival at which Julian has been playing
with his new backing band, The Voidz. The
latter? Spread-eagled on the roof of Cerebral
Ballzy's battered, toaster-on-wheels tourbus,
having sacrificed his place inside the van so
I can squeeze in among the skateboards, bongos
and Honor's sweaty bandmates.

The incongruity of getting this perma-
stoned Manhattan street punk to interview
the still-reigning king of NYC isn't lost on
anyone, but once the two frontmen spot each
other, it's big smiles and brotherly hugs all
round. Julian has just signed Ballzy to his
label, Cult Records, and they've become
fast friends – just check the more hardcore
elements of The Voidz' new music for proof of
that crossover. What's more, despite playing
no less than four shows the day of our meeting,
Honor has spent the afternoon working up
a series of questions to put to his new boss...

Honor Titus: "I wanted
to talk about some New
York stuff today. Let's
start with The Velvet
Underground. What was
the first Velvets song that
you heard and you were
like, 'Oh my god'?"

**Julian Casablan-
cas:** "'Rock
& Roll'. That one. And it
just sounded like one of
those '60s bands who
were *trying* to make a hit.

I just felt like it was a one-
hit-wonder song. I was young, man! Some of
that shit is incredible. Those lyrics, he was
a genius. I mean, that fucking guy – you know
I met him, Lou Reed?"

Honor: "That's so cool. You met Lou?"

Julian: "Yeah. We were at some bar, I don't
know, just hanging out one day and someone
was like, 'Oh, Lou Reed is signing books at
Barnes & Noble', so we went over there. This is
when I was, maybe, 20 or something. He was
so fucking cool. We went but of course we
didn't have anything to sign, so we grabbed
one of his books and just trounced up. He was
super appropriately weird."

**"I turn around and
it's Richard Hell...
He's really tall"**

Honor Titus

Honor: "Which is what you
want, right?"

Julian: "Yeah. He said some weird
shit that still to this day haunts my
nightmares. He said 'Son of a stroke'
to me, because I asked him to sign it
to The Strokes. I also remember he
was like, 'Pen?', but we didn't have
a pen either, which was awkward,
so then he turned around to his
assistant and went, 'I'll sign with
the blood off my back...'"

Honor: "He was super New York, gay,
Jewish, all at the same time. I had
a similar story with Richard Hell.
I met him maybe four months ago or
so. I was at the St Mark's Bookshop
just chilling and looking at the
magazines, and I see a stack of his
new books hit the table. And then
I turn around and it's him putting
this stack of his own book down!
I was like, 'Wow, Richard Hell!' He's
really tall, which freaked me out,
because on his covers he's always holding
a bass and it looks so long, or there's a girl in
the corner or whatever. But he was really nice."

Julian: "Talking about books, that
Lou Reed lyric book [*Pass Thru Fire*]
– man! I didn't even know his lyrics
were that good."

Honor: "Yeah. And it's weird how
allusive his lyrics are, you know?
I picked that book up, *The Velvet
Underground* [by Michael Leigh],
the one that they based the name
on. It's a 'sex underground New
York lifestyle culture' thing from
the early '60s."

Julian: "I've not read it, but yeah,
Lou stayed good for a while. Oh
dude, dude – here's something. I had

this in my dreams! Me and Lou Reed had the
same booking agent, OK? I had this dream we'd
get together. I was going to be like, 'I gotta do
a fucking song with him!' It was on my list, you
know? Top of my list of shit that I really wanted
to do. I just thought, 'If we get him for a final
song at a show...', and then play something
with an old Velvet Underground vibe."

Honor: "That would have been mental."

Julian: "It was so fucking sad when Lou died.
I fucking was genuinely
upset. He's everything
– the reason I started the
label, music... I just felt the
injustice, of how amazing
he was. But he wasn't
really mainstream. I think
he may have done too
many drugs, to be honest.
But also the live thing –
I was thinking that what
I liked about him is that
he didn't try to make it all
sound the same. There was



a disconnect. I also think that's why he didn't
even get a sense maybe of how loved he was.

I mean, he must have had some idea, he must
have heard people talking about Bob Dylan and
him, but he wasn't mainstream really. But for
me he's on the Mount Rushmore of rad dudes."

Honor: "So what was your favourite club in
New York when you first started playing
shows with The Strokes?"

Julian: "Oh, the first show ever was at Spiral.
Man, that was a place! You didn't even need
a demo to play, you just called up and asked!
That was our first show, but I think Mercury
Lounge was what we were really gunning for.
That was the good music spot where legit
people played. There were loads, though.
I mean, that place Mars Bar was super sketchy,
they played horror films and stuff there."

Honor: "They just closed it, did you know?"

Julian: "Yeah, it closed. It's sad and bad."

Honor: "Dude, I've got a fucking crazy satirical
one for you: they're about to close Bowery
Mission [a well-regarded homeless shelter
in the middle of Manhattan] and turn it into
an Ace Hotel!"

Julian: "Oh, no, no, no, no!"

Honor: "It's so dark!"

Julian: "Dude, that's why I think I had to
fucking hit eject."

Honor: "I'm thinking the same."

Julian: "Oh, man."

Honor: "Has Manhattan become
gentrified to the point of no return
now, do you think?"

Julian: "Yeah, pretty much. It's pretty
bad now."

Honor: "Yeah. You know, I don't
want to refute the idea of New York;
it's not done, you know, but it's
a different beast now. That's the
thing about New York. You do meet
people who live by Central Park who





pay \$250 a month. But that's just random. I think that still exists, but it's not as evident as it once was."

Julian: "It's a loaded question, what you asked. It's so complicated. I guess the Bloomberg thing of making New York so tourist-friendly, so corporate-friendly, it just went too far."

Honor: "You read about the New York of yesteryear and in different literature, and I long for that time so much, it's so different."

Julian: "Well, that's the thing. You know, with music I noticed that if you don't play music in New York and record it in New York it definitely affects it. People used to ask me about that and I was like, 'I don't know', which was kind of stupid of me, because yeah, if you're in a sunny place and you pick up a guitar...

it's just not the same. Anyway, should we get back to the corporate takeover of the world?! It's happening!"

Honor: "Right! What I actually wanted to talk to you about next was literature. Rumi: you like Rumi a lot, don't you? Another great writer."

Julian: "Dude, you fucking remind me of his shit. But yes! You know, he's legit, man. Legit fucking writing. I don't even know if people know about him, but they need to know."

Honor: "Who were some writers growing up in New York who influenced you?"

Julian: "Oh, I think I know what you're kind of alluding to, but I don't know. I mean Al [Ginsberg] and shit, all that. There's just such a long line of great writers from there."

Honor: "The Beats. Yeah, man."

Julian: "I'm always fascinated by them. I was

young boys living with older dudes."

Julian: "Sex slaves!"

Honor: "Pretty much, right. And so they show photos of them like while Burroughs and Ginsberg were younger together, and then they interview them now, presently, and they are fucked up! It's dark. New York starts fucking with you... Don't marry an old author or

you'll go crazy!"

Julian: "There's just such a long line of great writers from there though, it's incredible."

Honor: "I wanna talk about songwriting a little. Like, I'm a bass guy – when I hear a song, I look for a rhythm in the bass, and I'm like, 'That's a tune.' What is one of the signifiers that you look for that makes you go, 'Oh my god, I love that?'"

Julian: "That's a good question. There are several different ones, I guess. You know – drum, bass, tone, a hybrid of those three. And a vibe. I guess I have such an eclectic taste though. I like weird, crazy stuff. Intent, that's something I look for. Actually, the truth is it has to be powerful. Does it move me in a quiet place? Do I listen to it and go, 'Fuck?'"

Honor: "I think you have such a definitive eye for detail and style that's integral to you and your music. Would you agree? I think it's so cool."

Julian: "Mmm, maybe. It took me a while, though."

Honor: "It's such a New York thing, to work in such an abstract way, and I can totally see how

watching all these political shows, like the Bill O'Reilly show, interviewing all these people, and it was so interesting. Ginsberg was so cool, because he was so brilliant but so subversive and counterculture. A very smart dude who did fucking Indian yoga and weird crazy shit. He was homosexual, and he embraced it really early in the counterculture scene, you know. He was a fat, bearded, bald, yogi homosexual!"

Honor: "There's a documentary on Burroughs that Ginsberg is in, and Burroughs is in it too. They both have to be 65, 70, and they're with these 18-year-old little boyfriends. It's really strange. That's a super New York idea, you know – these

"Lou Reed is on the Mount Rushmore of rad dudes"

Julian Casablancas

that affects what you're into. It's cool. And it affects what I'm into too."

Julian: "Yeah, but I mean the shit that *you* show me on email is the coolest shit."

Honor: "I'd better start doing that again, the fucking email back and forth."

Julian: "Oh yes, please."

Honor (to NME): "We were exchanging jams, it's cool."

Julian: "Yeah. I remember most of them."

Honor: "You liked that Outcast song a lot, that random '60s band [not André 3000 and Big Boi]."

Julian: "Yeah, totally. And [80s thrash band] DRI. That was cool, because that was the first thing you ever recommended to me. And you were just like, 'This is *it*!' and I checked it out and it's the most aggressive, insane thing ever.

I assumed that was all you listened to! They had such an awesome, eclectic thing going on. Like I said before, a song has to have a certain intent."

Honor: "I agree. To close, I wanted to ask you something quite deep about songwriting: Can you name me one attribute that you think is paramount to making substantial, great work which lasts forever?"

Julian: "Wow. Wait, I need to think about that. Right – I would say working harder than everyone else. Or having a genius, super robot mind and writing it all down, and then figuring out a smart way to deliver it in a way that will somehow benefit 50 per cent of others and 50 per cent of you, or whatever the natural human balance of way-to-be-ism is!"

Honor: "You're talking about effort then?"

Julian: "I am. But maybe that's not happiness. Maybe the fucking greatest mind of all time is like, 'I really want to kill myself.'"

Honor: "That's definitely true."

Julian: "So maybe I'll change what I said to this: just slow it down enough to enjoy the ride. That would be my advice to you." ■

The hero's hero

Julian Casablancas on Bob Marley



"I'm going to choose Bob Marley. He's the shit! Have you seen *Time Will*

Tell, that old documentary? It really blew my mind as a kid. I got it on VHS; I still have it, I think. I mean, not to be weird, but in my mind I don't even count 'Jamming', 'Get Up, Stand Up' and those famous songs as his best. They're a good fucking vibe, but when you say Bob Marley to people, they misunderstand. They know the hits and they're like, 'Yeah, the reggae', but it's so much more than that. It's not just the fucking music – it's the emotion, the political aspect, the fucking insane righteousness on all levels. Like I said, he's the shit!"



Johnny Marr: “The vibe you bring onstage, it really reminds me of Joe Strummer”

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Johnny Marr and
Chilli Jesson at
Blueprint Studios,
Salford,
March 18, 2014



Chilli Jesson:

"The Clash, The Bad Seeds and The Smiths were the three bands that made me pick up a guitar, so to get that comparison from you means the world"

The Smiths legend and the Palma Violets man are such big fans of each other it's hard to work out who's actually the hero here. Al Horner joins the love-in...

PHOTOS BY ED MILES

"This is the first time I've ever seen this kid without needing to be all like, 'RURGGHHH RURRGHHH FUCKING RURRRGHH!'" says Johnny Marr, gripping Chilli Jesson and pretending to scream in his ear. Deep in the belly of a Salford industrial estate, cramped into the practice space of Marr's Manc pals Elbow, the Smiths legend is meeting with the Palma Violet away from the noise and bustle of the backstage-at-a-festival setting they usually cross paths in. As he pelts the Londoner with questions about the Palmas' incoming second album, there's a strange sense of role reversal. Usually when a fresh-faced indie pretender meets a generation-defining musician he considers "the greatest ➔

**NME HEROES:
PALMA VIOLETS MEET
JOHNNY MARR**

guitarist there is", it's usually a hushed, reverential encounter with the elder hero imparting wisdom from his years of service to rock'n'roll. But today Marr – who's recovering from a broken hand after tripping while on one of his daily 20-mile runs – seems as excited to see Chilli as the other way round...

Johnny Marr: "When an older guy like me starts raving about a new artist, there's an expectation that he sees a bit of his younger self in them. To be totally honest, I don't actually see a lot of myself in you. I wish I did. (*Turns to NME*) Have you seen this guy onstage? No-one jumps around with quite as much energy and finesse and beauty as Chilli – I can't even go for a fucking jog without landing myself in a cast, for fuck's sake! I wouldn't even attempt what he does. Seriously though, I see you having more of a spiritual heritage to Joe Strummer, you know what I mean? The vibe you bring onstage and the sense of democracy between you and your bandmates, your bandmates and the audience, it really reminds me of Joe."

Chilli Jesson: "Man, you're making me blush... The Clash, The Bad Seeds and The Smiths were the three bands that made me pick up a guitar, so to get that comparison from you means the world. I remember being 13 and my uncle David handing me down these old Smiths records of his and them changing everything for me. We might not sound much alike, but I'd definitely say we owe a lot to your music, your ethos and your story. There are maybe some similarities, our end. We've definitely ripped you off at least a bit. You're the greatest guitarist there is, in my opinion – everyone's influenced by you."

Johnny: "Well, we're both a product of our environments, there's that similarity. The Smiths couldn't have come from any other place – we very specifically reflected something going on in Manchester at the time. It's the same with Kraftwerk, the same with The Beach Boys – those bands sound like the places they come from, like they're opening a door to that place for you to step on into, you know? And it's the same with the Palmas. How in 2013 you guys made a record that got across the idealism and romance of London and squat culture and all of that just really struck me. The Libertines had it to an extent, but you guys, man, you've got it all of your own."

Chilli: "The Libertines were a great gateway to bands like The Smiths for us and our

**"We owe a lot to
The Smiths' music,
ethos and story"**

Chilli Jesson



**Johnny and Chilli
definitely have a
similar approach**

generation. I never got to experience them live, but reading about them and the records they were into put me onto The Smiths. Your old records were what bonded me and Sam [Fryer, Palma Violets] in the first place. That was a big part of our relationship. I went to a comprehensive school in Wimbledon. Everyone there was into Top 40 chart stuff. But I felt alienated. I wanted something different. When I met Sam, we'd chat for hours about every detail of those tracks, man. It was amazing. It brought us together."

Johnny: "See, for me, that's the best answer to a question I get asked all the time – and

(adopting a grandad voice, placing his arm round Chilli) you will too when you're my old age, young lad – 'Do you think guitar music is dead?' The exact same thing you're describing happened to me there, happened to the Jarmans in The Cries, happened to Pete Shelley and the Buzzcocks, and even now is happening with new guys like Childhood, who I think are about to do something really great. Kids who feel alienated at school from the mainstream types and want something different from life will always bond over guitar bands. It's happened too long to think it'll ever be any different. It'll never change."



Chilli: "It'll never change, but it'll evolve and be different."

Johnny: "Yeah, it's like how we were saying The Smiths and Palma Violets are actually really different just now – we were all about alienation, making quite solitary-sounding records, whereas the first time I saw you, stood at the back of the stage watching you at Reading Festival, it was so inclusive. Your music's like a celebration of your friendship. You really get the impression you guys can live together! I'd heard 'Step Up For The Cool Cats' on the radio and really liked it, but seeing you then, it was electric in there. I was on after you and supposed to be getting ready, tuning my guitar and that. Instead I just stood and watched like this (*pulls a gawping face*)."

Chilli: "You dedicating 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' to us that day meant so much. It was the most touching thing – you should have seen our faces! Not that we actually got to hear you do that – we were doing a signing tent thing and had to miss your set, which I was gutted about – then some kid at the back of the queue shouted to us, "You know Johnny Marr just dedicated a song to you?" We were like, 'Fuck this, we have to go!' For me, the really big moment came a little later, seeing you in Japan while stood at the side of the stage. Seeing your solo stuff and you singing and it

being so upbeat and inspiring, fucking hell, it raised the bar for me. Was it a conscious thing to do something so fast and energetic when you started out solo?"

Johnny: "You know what, it was pretty natural. Quite often when musicians have been around for a long time, there's this expectation they should be making quite 'clever' mid-tempo music with loads of 'depth'. (*Pauses*) I'm not interested in depth. I want really loud drums! Flash riffs! Good slogans that make you feel ALIVE! Get that done in three-and-a-half minutes, then do another one! Bang bang bang bang bang. That's me. Sitting around

strumming acoustics? Nah, it's not my thing. No thanks."

Chilli: "I know what you mean – we never overthink things. You can't. Being in a band, you've gotta live it with some irony, some laughs, have fun with it. That's what rock'n'roll is supposed to be. And that's what 'The Messenger' was. You're working on the next solo album now, aren't you? How's it coming along, man?"

Johnny: "I think I've got all the songs written now. Luckily it's just vocals I've got to do now – managed to get the guitars down before this (*raises his cast*). It's cool. It's got a real London feel, this album. I'm recording it down there at a studio near the river – I want to capture this busy, loud, very modern place. You've been in the studio working on your own album number two, haven't you?"

Chilli: "Yeah, it's getting there. We've got the songs and we know the sound we want. The songs are so much bigger than before. We're really experimenting with doing a lot more stuff on our own. We'll have to swap demos! Any tips?"

Johnny: "Well, the great thing about being signed to Rough Trade is their trust in you – they'll let you do what you want because they signed you knowing you're a great band who'll deliver great songs. Their ethos is fantastic – it hasn't changed over the years at all. You were destined to be on Rough Trade like me. There's something spiritually right about it. The politics are right."

Chilli: "Do you think the idea of indie has changed in the years since?"

Johnny: "It's a funny thing. Indie bands are traditionally about saying something their audience wants to hear. I don't think Top 40 bands have the same mission at all, really. The same thing unites great indie bands then and now – they're just trying to do something they

"We're both a product of our environments"

Johnny Marr

and their mates think is cool. It was like that for us – ask Bernard Sumner and he'll tell you the same about Joy Division, and I'm sure it's the same for you."

Chilli: "Yeah. We're actually playing some new songs to mates next week, because you know they're the people that are honest for you – just gonna have some people round, see what they

reckon. They give you the truth. You can be rolling around London with all these A&R men patting you on the back, but that's not real. It's such a great gauge for me."

Johnny: "We did the exact same thing. The thing about being indie is you don't have someone in the way telling you what to do. In the Smiths days, when we faded out on 'That Joke Isn't Funny Anymore', then faded back in, we thought that was really cool. If we'd have had a conventional producer there with us, instead of a mate as an engineer who looked, dressed and thought just like us, he'd have told us we were off our nut – which, alright, we were! But it sounded new. It sounded cool."

Chilli: "It's important not to lose sight of that, isn't it? Your roots."

Johnny: "Absolutely. For 'Meat Is Murder', I wanted to move back to make that second record in Manchester because, even though we'd had a great time in London

making a string of hit singles, I wanted to be back in that tiny community of mates, who'd stay up all night listening to The Gun Club and rolling joints. That's where we'd make a great record. Not in some place where I was stuck in fucking traffic all the time round Kings Cross. You need to be near your mates, your scene. The Libertines had it, Palma Violets have it

and there'll be other bands who learn that from you."

Chilli: "It's gotta be 100 per cent band driven, I know what you mean. Just finally, you know you know released 'The Messenger' on the same day as we released [debut album] '180'? Should we do the same again next time with our new albums?"

Johnny: "We've got to – you charted higher than me last time and I need revenge! You haven't seen my dark side yet, Chilli. Watch your back..." ■

The hero's hero

Johnny Marr on Chic's Nile Rodgers



"He's an all-time great and a constant source of inspiration to me. They

say never meet your idols, but I've gone one step further and played with a lot of mine – I played with Paul McCartney when I was 23, taught him everything he knew, don't ya know – but Nile is the pick of the bunch. He's as incredible a guy as he is a musician, and that's really saying something. Chic really changed things in a way so few bands are able to. He's a genius in ways I'll never fully wrap my head around."



"So, Johnny, that Smiths reunion... Ah, forget it"

Courtney Barnett
and Billy Bragg
at the University
of Sydney's
Manning Bar,
March 18



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Courtney Barnett:

"I imagine it's a really special feeling, to be able to connect with so many people for so long as a songwriter"

We're down under for our third encounter, as Andrew P Street witnesses the candid Melbourne singer talking to the UK's elder statesman of politically active folk-punk

PHOTOS BY DANIEL BOUD

"Does it ever just, you know, go away?"

There's a beautiful moment midway through this late-afternoon chat in and around the University

Of Sydney's Manning Bar. The photos have been taken and Billy Bragg has bought himself and Courtney Barnett a coffee and a piece of cake ("You don't think I'd get you something bloody *healthy*, do you?") when Courtney asks the above question.

It's then that you see the affectionate respect between these two artists at very different points in their career: the young Australian singer taking her first steps into making a go of this international music career lark, and the 30-year veteran offering counsel from a life on the road.

They've spent the last week on the road together around Australia and Barnett is looking ahead to the rest of 2014: recording, touring, international festivals – including

Coachella and Glastonbury – and... well, then what? It's a fair question. After all, she's only just officially quit her day job.

"Well, what have you wanted to do with your life?" Bragg asks.

She smiles, gestures at the room the pair will play later that night, where Bragg's band are currently soundchecking. "This."

"So, that's what you do," he grins, "Don't overthink it. You just have to go, 'I'm doing what I love, this is pretty fucking great.'"

She smiles. "I know, I just think about what happens if it ends tomorrow."

He shrugs. "You can't know what's in the future. I mean, a few years ago I did five nights with Hard-Fi, and I remember they sold out every one of them. *And where are they now?*"

Billy Bragg: "How did I first hear about Courtney? Well, word went around that there was this new hip gunslinger in town. So I checked her out, was very impressed with her songwriting, and we met in London when she came up to do an NME show. And it seemed to me that she was doing that interesting thing where you're breaking outside of your own

country and starting to get some purchase in another country, which was what I was doing 30 years ago when I first came to Australia."

Courtney Barnett: "I first heard Billy on 'Mermaid Avenue' [1998 album of Woody Guthrie interpretations with Wilco], which I loved – there's something about discovering someone without it involving someone shaking you, like, 'Oh, you've got to hear this guy!' The first shows you did in Australia were with Weddoes [Melbourne folk-punkers Weddings Parties Anything], right?"

Billy: "Yeah, and it was around the university circuit as well. So based on the strength of the songwriting, I thought she'd connect with my audience."

Courtney: "And you seemed to laugh at my jokes."

Billy: "They were jokes? I thought they were heart-rending stories of human frailty!"

Courtney: "Yeah, there's that too. That's enough of a joke as well, I guess."

Billy: "This is what I like about tonight's gig: after the Sydney Opera House last night, it's back to reality. A proper stand-up student bar."

Courtney: "Yep. Beer on the floor."

Billy: "At least I'll be able to spit on the stage. There's always some point during the gig where you loosen something up and you want to let one go. I normally let one go over the back of my amp, because I try to be a little bit polite. But there's carpet everywhere at the Opera House."

Courtney: "You can't spit at the Opera House. It's sacrilege!"

Billy: "I think they have the Joan Sutherland Memorial Spittoon."

Courtney: "I did a tour with [Melbourne band] Something For Kate last year which was a lot ➔

Billy Bragg:

"It never loses its thrill. It's still exciting to me"

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**NME HEROES:
COURTNEY BARNETT
MEETS BILLY BRAGG**

of uni shows. They're really fun, everyone jumping around."

Billy: "It won't be like that tonight, obviously. It'll all be professors who were students here in 1986, turning up in their 'Brewing Up...' T-shirts. And I have no problem with that."

Courtney: "Did you go to uni?"

Billy: "Nope. I left school when I was 16. I don't know anybody in my year that went to university. For about 80 per cent of the kids where I lived, you were encouraged to go to work in a car factory."

Courtney: "I did two years at art school in Tasmania."

Billy: "Well, that doesn't really count, does it?"

Courtney: "Nah. And I dropped out anyway. That's when I moved to Melbourne, got a full-time job and hated my life for a bit."

Billy: "You gotta do something you really hate doing. That'll spur you on, wanting to never do that again."

Courtney: "I sold shoes. And I worked in bars."

Billy: "I worked in an all-night petrol station. I really hated it. I got free Fruit Pastilles, though – in the middle of the night I'd get an entire package, squish 'em together and eat 'em whole. That was my revenge."

Courtney: "I did pizza delivery, too, and random little jobs."

Billy: "I was in the army for a while, did a little bit of random tank driving."

Courtney: "Yeah, I didn't do that. I haven't really travelled, so it's exciting to be able to go and play shows and see places for the first time."

Billy: "I envy you all of that. I wish I was exactly at that spot again, when it's all in front of you. I still remember the first time I walked out at [Melbourne's] Tullamarine Airport: I remember how warm it was, the light, the strange trees, I remember the whole adventure, and how wonderful it all was. And still is."

Courtney: "(Quietly) Do you lose that?"

Billy: "No. I still get a vibe from it. But not like that very first time."

Courtney: "You're glad that you came here though, right?"

Billy: "Oh yeah. The audience here has always been very supportive of what I do, both musically and politically. The fact there's still a roomful of people in Sydney who give a shit, I think, is amazing."

Courtney: "I imagine that'd be a really special feeling, to be able to connect with so many people for so long, as a songwriter."

Billy: "It never loses its thrill. It's still exciting to me, what we're going to do tonight."

Courtney: "(Gesturing at the recorder) And there are all these serious things that happen in downtime."

Billy: "Yeah. Actually, on the Big Day Out in 1996, I was running a mini-golf betting scam, which involved beating the shit out of The



Courtney to Billy:
"You seemed to
laugh at my jokes"

Prodigy. Except Keith, who had never played before but won every time! No matter how I set it up and how I scammed it, Keith always managed to play that path. I was making a fortune – but unfortunately it was superseded on the last time I did Big Day Out by Rage Against The Machine's ping-pong tournament. Zack [de la Rocha] is deadly at ping-pong. The tournament culminated backstage in Perth, where I was knocked out in the semi-finals by Big Win [Butler] from Arcade Fire."

Courtney: "That sounds serious."

Billy: "And I was able to say, 'It's a Win-win situation!' and nobody fuckin' laughed. I thought it was comedy gold. And the final was good, because Win doesn't like losing, and Zack doesn't like losing, so it became

one of those 'clash of the titans' type events, in which each band's road crew were fervently betting on the opposite guy to beat their lead singer. (Laughs heartily) Oh, it was great!

"What I like about your songwriting is the detail. It's up close and personal. You get geographical detail, you get personal detail, and you get occasional graphic sexual detail. And I admire that."

Courtney: "(Laughs) Wow! Thank you, that was a very art-school explanation."

Billy: "And then you go and drop the m-bomb in the first line ["I masturbated to the songs you wrote", 'Lance Jr']. I didn't know there were so many Australian euphemisms for masturbation."

Courtney: "Well, sometimes you just have to go for it, instead of beating around the bush."

Billy: "And there's one!"

Courtney: "(Bows) Thank you."

Billy: "'Choking the chicken', that's another good one. 'Gallop the lizard', that one's Australian. Euphemisms are helpful for songwriters. You should always carry a packet with you."

"We've got to make what we do sound... mysterious"

Billy Bragg

Courtney: "I remember all those old children's books, like *Captain Pugwash*, that were all very sexually... um, heavy (laughs)."

Billy: "Well, Enid Blyton wrote a couple of books about a guy called Mr Pink-Whistle. I think there was even one called *Mr Pink-Whistle Comes Again*." (It's actually *Mr Pink-Whistle Comes Along* – Enid Blyton ed.)

Courtney: "You can see why we're all so messed up."

Billy: "I'm just trying to help you out. We've got to make what we do sound... mysterious. That's what The Beatles did: make it sound like it's mystical. If you make it sound like a hobby..."

Courtney: "...everyone will bloody do it."

Billy: "Exactly. And then what will we do? I do wonder how young artists like Courtney are going to get a chance to develop. I think it takes at least three albums before you do something definitive. 'Born To Run', third album. 'London Calling', third album. I know, for me, it wasn't until 'Talking With The Taxman About Poetry' that I really hit my stride."

Courtney: "I've only done EPs. I mean, they've been squished together, so you could call it an album."

Billy: "My first album only had seven tracks, so I guess that counts as an EP. But that's only because the other five songs I recorded were shit. That's not why you put out an EP, is it?"

Courtney: "Maybe (laughs). But I like the idea of doing actual albums."

Billy: "Are you going to make one, then?"

Courtney: "Yeah! In a couple of weeks. I like the idea of going in and not over-rehearsing it. You capture the time, I reckon."

Billy: "Is it going to be lo-fi, fi or hi-fi?"

Courtney: "Fi."

Billy: "Fi?"

Courtney: "(Nods) It's going to be fi-fi."

Billy: "So you don't miss art school?"

Courtney: "No."

Billy: "(Nods approvingly)

You can't be too smart as a musician. Otherwise you'll miss out on all the fun." ■

The hero's hero

Billy Bragg on Johnny Marr



"The third time I toured America, I was opening for The Smiths. They originally

had three transvestite singers [as the opening act] – I think they were from San Francisco – and after the second night, when they got bottled off again, Johnny Marr said, 'Fuck this, I'm ringing Bragg. He's in America somewhere, so he's gonna come do the tour.' And Morrissey was like, '(Sulk, theatrical sigh) Ohhhhhh, alright then.'

"So I got a call from the boy Marr saying they needed me on board, so I rendez-voused with them in Royal Oak, Michigan and I remember that night standing on the side of the stage, watching The Smiths, drinking free beer and getting paid for it. That whole experience was just amazing."

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Tom Fleming: “When you’re immersed in the music of Swans, it makes your daily vanities look a little bit silly”

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**Wild Beasts’ co-frontman has
always bigged up Swans.
Angus Batey looks on as fan
becomes interviewer...**

PHOTOS BY ED MILES

A small, austere room above an east London church is the unexpectedly fitting venue for a summit meeting between two very different but very similarly inclined musicians. Read any in-depth interview with Wild Beasts and their joint frontman Tom Fleming will find a way to namedrop Swans’ Michael Gira as his three bandmates laugh from the sidelines – clearly, Gira is a regularly employed reference point in Tom’s musical arsenal. Today, he’s come armed with an A5 black notebook full of thoughts and ideas he wants to discuss with his hero.

Gira founded Swans in New York in the early 1980s. Famed for their crushingly loud gigs featuring often very slow songs, Swans were able to move between the post-new-wave rock clubs where friends like Sonic Youth played, and the arts centres and concert halls where works by composers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen would be performed. His Young God label released acclaimed albums by everyone from ‘acid-folk’ singer-songwriter

Devendra Banhart to minimalist composer Charlemagne Palestine.

Gira disbanded Swans in 1997, but continued making music under names including Angels Of Light and The Body Lovers, before re-establishing Swans in 2010. The band’s 13th album, ‘To Be Kind’, is released in May, and a European tour has brought him to Hackney for a solo show in Hackney’s Church of St John.

Fleming and Gira haven’t met before, but there’s an immediate and intuitive connection, one musician to another, and their hour-long chat ranges far and wide. There’s little at first listen to connect the music Gira and Fleming make – Wild Beasts’ new album, ‘Present Tense’, is indebted to ‘80s pop and adorned with falsetto vocals, while the centrepiece of the new Swans record is a 32-minute track



Tom Fleming
and Michael Gira,
Hackney, London,
March 2014



Michael Gira:

"It's fucking great to hear that. I don't set out to be profound, but I wanna be inside this experience"

based around a grinding, blues-derived riff. But both men's work resonates on a very human level, with a living, breathing heart powering everything. This means both bands seem to sit to one side of today's prevailing musical norms. "It's a little unfashionable, isn't it?" Gira smiles.

Tom Fleming: "A lot of your work is so naked and appears so personal, and is so visceral, but it's also very, very communal. There seems to be a kind of friction there, and I wanted to ask about how that feels. How communal is Swans?"

Michael Gira: "Well, I've obviously been entirely averse to communal things – people kind of give me the creeps, if I'm honest! Heheheh. But, by the same token, I throw myself in the pot. I guess what we try to do is just make something happen that erases everything else, and we're all inside of it, you know? I don't want to insult you, but you Europeans seem to have an intellectual bent towards analysing the experience before you experience it. Whereas in America – and it's hard to generalise; we have some astute intellectuals as well – I think we

kind of throw ourselves into it then figure the shit out later. That's what I do, anyway."

Tom: "I got your new record yesterday and it's excellent; exactly what I wanted to hear next."

Michael: "Oh, great! Thanks. It's hard, isn't it? To move on."

Tom: "Well, forgive me: this isn't meant in a disrespectful way – but I think you achieve it by kind of standing still and bringing people to you. When you listen to the records and you're immersed in it, or when you come and see it live, it happens and it makes your daily vanities look a little bit silly."

Michael: "It's fucking great to hear that. Thank you. I don't set out to be profound or anything, but I wanna be inside this experience – and when people get the real thing it means a lot to me. It's not been tremendously financially ➔

NME HEROES: WILD BEASTS MEET SWANS

successful, and so it's great to hear that the music has an effect on people."

Tom: "I wanted to ask about the context of the beginning of Swans, and the early '80s. I was just in New York and I guess I wanted to know what it was like, trying to get a band like that off the ground back then, and what kind of environment you came from."

Michael: "I was a construction worker – I did demolition work also, going into an apartment building, gutting the walls, the ceilings; dusty, really filthy, pretty hard work. I started out in New York carrying sheet rock up the stairs, three or four flights, with other grunts. Got into construction work and doing plastering, painting – the hard stuff, basically, because I never really developed great skills as a construction person. And then I met my band members, just gradually along the way, and we needed a place to rehearse. I found a storefront on 6th Street and Avenue B in New York City. It's now a fancy restaurant. It was a big space, about 900 square feet. I got it for 100 bucks a month, divided it in half, built a wall, and then put a rehearsal space on one side and a tiny living space on the other side. We proceeded to rehearse there, much to the horror of our neighbours, because we were extremely loud."

"We rehearsed there eight hours a day, all the time. But I would work eight or 10, sometimes 12 hours in construction, and we would rehearse afterwards. It was really fuckin' hard, and there was no money for anything. That neighbourhood, at the time, was mostly

"It was really fuckin' hard, and there was no money"

Michael Gira



"Son, this is how you wear a hat!"

crumbling, abandoned buildings, like you see in documentaries – burned-out cars everywhere, gunfire in the streets every night."

Tom: "Do you notice yourself as an influence on younger bands?"

Michael: "Well, I noticed a lot of the post-industrial bands taking from it. I never considered myself to be part of that. And then I noticed Godspeed! You Black Emperor having taken a great deal from our middle-period records. Hopefully they take good things! It's always distressing when you hear someone singing (*puts on exaggeratedly guttural voice*) LIKE THIS!"

Tom: "I think people do take a cartoon view of Swans – 'Big bad Michael!'"

Michael: "It's really sad. To me it's actually soul-crushing to have that cartoon expression be what people – or bands, anyway – get from it. But I'm happy to meet someone who's an accountant or a doctor or a nurse or someone after a show, and they just frankly say that the music helped them at a certain point in their life."

Tom: "I wanted to know, if it's not a disrespectful question, how much of Swans is collaboration, and how much is led by you?"

Michael: "That's not disrespectful at all – that's a very fair question. It is a constant flux, a constant tension, a constant conflict. I'll start, often, with songs, just writing: the song 'Oxygen', I wrote that riff on acoustic guitar, playing with my thumb; then it became a bass part which grew into the drums and everything. That was pretty much my song guiding people. But then for other songs I'll have a riff, or even just a notion, then bring it in to [the other musicians] – then they'll start playing and I'll say, 'This, not that; that, not this,' and just gradually build it. It's always a constant process of just being inside the thing, and trying to figure out how it works. I pretend that I have a vision beforehand, but usually it's just what's in the moment! And I figure out what works."

Tom: "One of my favourite things about your music is the sounds you draw in. I'm obviously thinking of the huge sound of Swans, but I'm also thinking of the really delicate sounds of Angels Of Light – the dulcimers and the vibraphones and the harmonicas and the little toy organs and stuff. It's not something that can be easily recreated, that kind of atmosphere – because I've tried! Is there a way you go about it, or is it piece by piece?"

Michael: "It's intuition. Angels Of Light was a rejection of Swans, because that was, at that point, 15 years of this massive undertaking, with this volume, and the touring and everything. I was completely fed up, and decided, 'No, I just wanna write on acoustic guitar, and then I'll just put details or atmospheres around the voice, and that'll be the central thing.' So naturally I started

thinking about small sounds – hence, little toy pianos and melodicas and things."

Tom: "I know you're not releasing any new stuff by other artists, but I'm glad that Young God is an ongoing concern. For a while it was my favourite label, and I'm sure somewhere there's

an unsolicited demo from me sat under your desk! You put out all these really, really good records – Devendra Banhart, Akron/Family, Lisa Germano, Windsor For The Derby..."

Michael: "I'm unable to pursue Young God as a label for other people now. It's just not possible. You can't do that if people don't buy the records."

Tom: "No, exactly. We've had to do stuff that we would never even have considered before, just to pay rent. It's really sad, and I feel like it makes us look bad as artists, because our options are to do that or oblivion really."

Michael: "It sucks, doesn't it? In all humility, the kind of success we've had over the last three years at our shows, if that translated into what that meant in record sales 15 years ago, I'd be doin' great. But it doesn't exist any more."

Tom: "That's the same for us. Again, with all humility, we had our first Top 10 record just this last week, which was brilliant. I was over the moon. It sold, like, seven-and-a-half thousand."

Michael: "That's Top 10? You can't live on that."

Tom: "Nowhere near! A broken amplifier would cost that, almost. I always try to be very diplomatic whenever somebody asks me about streaming and illegal downloading and stuff, but I feel like, erm..."

Michael: "I don't think you should be diplomatic. You should just say what it is."

Tom: "Well, I think when it's jeopardising... For example, someone like yourself, who a lot of people go and see, a lot of people have records by you, and it's still difficult? That's not right. It's like anything: if you don't use your local cinema it's going to shut down, and in one sense it serves you right. On a more positive note, I'd defy anyone to listen to any of your records in a passive way. Even the sheer duration is a fuck-you to that kind of attitude, and it's one of the things I really like, because it is becoming rarer and rarer – not just demanding the attention, but *all* of the attention."

Michael: "Well, what else is there? You have to do what you think is right. Otherwise you're just a fuckin' little Barbie doll." ■

Our hero

Michael has no heroes, but he's a hero to many

Jehnni Beth, Savages



"People waste so much time and energy with unnecessary things. Swans

is the essence of music. It seems so important to have them around these days, to remind people that music is magical and sacred."

Annie Clark, St Vincent



"Working with Gira changed the way I think about music [Clark is on Swans' new

LP, 'To Be Kind']. I'm a massive Swans fan so I was very nervous – and he has a very strong presence. He was very kind, though. He called me 'madam.'"

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Colin Newman
and Gemma
Thompson,
London,
March 12, 2014

She's the driving force
behind Savages and her
hero is a member of
post-punk progenitors
Wire. They got along
like a house on fire while
Mark Beaumont took notes

PHOTOS BY ED MILES

Colin Newman:

**"Wire's identity is all we have
- we have to make that count
on different levels. How the
industry does things is dull"**

When two equally uncompromising art worlds collide, the expectation is that they'll either clash like unwavering glaciers or come together in a flurry of sparking ideas. Today, meeting on a bleak concrete walkway in what's perhaps their natural habitat – London's artfully inclined Southbank Centre – are two iconoclastic art-rock musicians of opposing vintages. There's Colin Newman of Wire, the prickly post-punk pioneers known for getting a support band to play their popular songs so they didn't have to and unwittingly inventing *Elastica*. Then there's Gemma Thompson, original mastermind behind Savages, the French/British four-piece known for their slabs of brutalist post-post-punk, animated videos of backwards blitzkriegs and refusal to succumb to the age of the selfie.

What you don't expect is to turn up to find them already hugging like old friends, bonding over Australian toilet venues and their favourite tables in the Festival Hall bar. The seed for today's meeting was sown in February 2013, when Savages played their first London headline show at Camden's Electric Ballroom. Rather than follow any notion of standard gig protocol, Savages took direct inspiration from Wire's 1981 live album, *'Document And*

Eyewitness', which captured Wire's show at the same venue over three decades before: a sort of Dadaist cabaret that sincerely pissed off the audience, which was largely comprised of skinheads, by playing half-formed new songs rather than their known hits. Not an easy sell, then, but that's not to suggest that Wire themselves are difficult fellows. "I usually try to undermine any expectation they have of me by being as normal as possible, so they're probably a bit disappointed," says Colin.

Gemma Thompson: "When we did that show at the Electric Ballroom, the idea was to create something where people would walk in and everything was from your own creation. We had a choreographed dance to our track 'Dead Nature', which is just like a chime and a guitar. The idea was to map the space where the audience would be standing as the crowd walked in. We created the sound in-between the bands and the dancers too – the idea came from when Wire had that Dada intervention in the 'Document And Eyewitness' show."

Colin Newman: "We did one the previous year that was probably a bit more successful than the show that became 'Document And Eyewitness'. It was more like you described it – different sections. There was definitely this thing of interacting with the audience on their way in and on the way out, taking them a little bit by surprise. By the time we did the Electric Ballroom the band was falling apart and I don't think really everyone quite understood what was going on within the band, never mind the audience. I think if you'd have been there, you'd have been more annoyed than pleased."

Gemma: "What I found interesting was reading about the audience, because obviously when you compare an audience in 1980 to an audience today, it's very different."

Colin: "Back then you had this very specific, very narrow thing that was going on. There was a group of bands, the most famous of which was

Sham 69, who were part of this thing called Oi!. Some of it went into the skinhead Nazi section, but it was lads' music. They had these devoted fans who would turn up to any gig to do with punk and start shouting 'Sham, Sham, Sham' all the way through it. Of course, they would all shout [for Wire favourite] '12XU', which we refused to play for years, but we played it that night – we did a comedy version. The whole show was really ridiculous. It was quite funny, but it was all new material as well, most of which was barely written.

"That's why we did [new album of now-completed 'Document And Eyewitness' material] 'Change Becomes Us' last year, because we thought it would be interesting to actually finish it. So we've been through the process of making it a proper record. Rather than going back, it's going forward. Ultimately, for Wire, it's about the material, it's about how the band interacts with the material. I like new things – I don't really like old things, they're boring. I want to do new things. But at the same time, it's about being curious about stuff. When we do a live set, we'll look around and see what from the past we could include."

Gemma: "That gig was amazingly brave."

Colin: "It was brave and stupid at the same time. I was quite confused at that point, the band was literally falling apart."

Gemma: "[Beyond that show] we never went into a rehearsal room with a Wire recording saying, 'We should sound like them' – our ideas are based on sound. There's a shared minimalism there. I've listened to Wire since I was a teenager; I connected to that process of taking things apart, questioning them and then putting them back together. We're all ➔

Gemma Thompson:

"From the very beginning, it's been an instinctive thing for us to do that, to have control over every aspect"

about processing a whole sound. Instead of separating things, everything becomes the same idea. It doesn't matter what you do with it or what venue you're putting your music in, you approach every part of it in the same way. There's not many bands who do that. All of these details are a whole part of the sound you create, which is the most important thing."

Colin: "You've made me think about how Wire is not just a band. We have had our own label for a number of years now and we just started doing our own festival – those things are about wanting to take every element that's involved with the life of a band and make that interesting. We were just talking about Australia and New Zealand – I got really pissed off with the guy who booked our recent shows as he didn't consult us on the support bands. Everybody knows we do our own festival now, we curate all our support bands. How do Apple sell so many computers? If you go into their store it's the whole appearance, it's not just going into some place to buy something. I know it's a very corporate way of looking at it, but I think when you have something that has a strong identity – *that's* what we're playing on. The identity of Wire is what we have – we have to make that count on lots of different levels. How the industry does things is quite dull."

Gemma: "It's always been an instinctive thing for us to do that. From the very beginning, having control over every aspect – it's always been common sense. Just as you described Wire as kind of a sentient being, it becomes this other thing. Communicating with the audience that way is really important."

Colin: "[Before we finished 'Change Becomes Us'] we didn't have any plan at all. I said, 'Why don't we do a festival?'"

I thought our management would say, 'You're mad, you're just gonna lose your arse, don't bother.' Instead they were going, 'Who should we have on?' We put that together and I thought the show should be a classic Wire thing – it took place the day before the album was released, so no-one had heard it. The fact we managed to fill [London venue] Heaven on the basis of performing an album that the audience hadn't heard before – that is classic Wire. Then I didn't want to play most of the album then do the last song as an encore, that's really pissy. We thought, we have to play the whole set and then we'll do an encore, we're bound to get one. What will we do? Well, why don't we have a guitar orchestra playing 'Pink Flag'? It's incredibly easy to play, and if you have 30

Gemma tries the
'Chairs Missing'
joke on Colin



guitarists playing, it's gonna sound like a big fuck-off noise. It's really fun to do. We have a few festivals planned this year. If you want Savages to play one, you only have to ask!"

Gemma: "I think I might be interested in that!"

Colin: "Good! Well, I don't have any contacts for you, so we can exchange after this. Because we're Wire, there are certain things we can get away with. So we're gonna do it 'cos we can. We don't want to make too much of pairing with bands of a different generation, otherwise we sound like sad old tossers who need some younger bands to make us look OK."

"Something like a guitar orchestra *is* a festival on a stage. You see people who are quite well known and completely unknown; it's male, female, young, old – that's how it should be. I find making that connection helps with the accepted framework of how the industry is set up. We just had the 6 Music festival and everybody wets themselves over these things. It is mainly fairly unimaginative stuff and most festivals are terrible. We need them for exposure, but..."

Gemma: "I find festivals difficult."

Colin: "My original idea was that festivals are crap, so why don't we do a festival that isn't? I've met you now, I'm sure we'll meet each other in another situation, and if something presents itself then maybe there will be something. I knew about Savages really early on because a friend of mine from *The Quietus* told me that there's two young bands in London you need to pay attention to: Savages and Toy. There's a certain kind of minimal-ity, but it doesn't sound like Wire. It has maybe some of the same spirit, but the problem is once you start talking about post-punk, you're

saying it sounds like the late '70s or the '80s and that's dismissive. I don't think that's a very good way of looking at music."

Gemma: "The original ideas behind it are so, so open. To just compare by music alone doesn't seem like an open way to look at it at all."

"You don't sound like Wire, but have some of the same spirit..."

Colin Newman

Colin: "For a start, there was no post-punk in 1978. It was either punk or it wasn't. Post-rock was the first time that 'post' was applied to music and that was in the '90s."

Gemma: "I never thought of you as 'post-punk', 'cos you had other tags at the time."

Colin: "It was because they couldn't handle Wire, they couldn't place us. We obviously weren't a punk band, but at the same time, we weren't entirely *not* a punk band. A year in pop time is 15 years in regular time, things change so, so quickly. Wire – and other bands who came later on – have become victors in history. In 1980 nobody would have given any thought to Wire, they didn't care about Wire until years later. We were too weird and pretentious."

Gemma: "It's like what we know as New York new wave was never New York new wave at the time. It's almost like this alchemised version."

Colin: "I remember talking to a journalist who was roughly my age with my similar kind of prejudices, and I said, 'Talking Heads' first album's alright but anything after that's rubbish.' He said, 'What do you mean 'first album' – first *single*!' I don't think anybody looking at it 15, 20 years later will have that kind of view as it's so specific. I think any period is as good as any other period, really. I think it's a bit unhealthy to be over-concentrated on the past. If the only way that someone can make rock music is by somehow imagining that they have to do something to sound similar to what someone has done in the past, maybe they shouldn't be making music."

Gemma: "That's it, as soon as you start thinking about what you're creating in terms of that, you're kind of contradicting yourself. You have to work with everything you have around." ■

The hero's hero

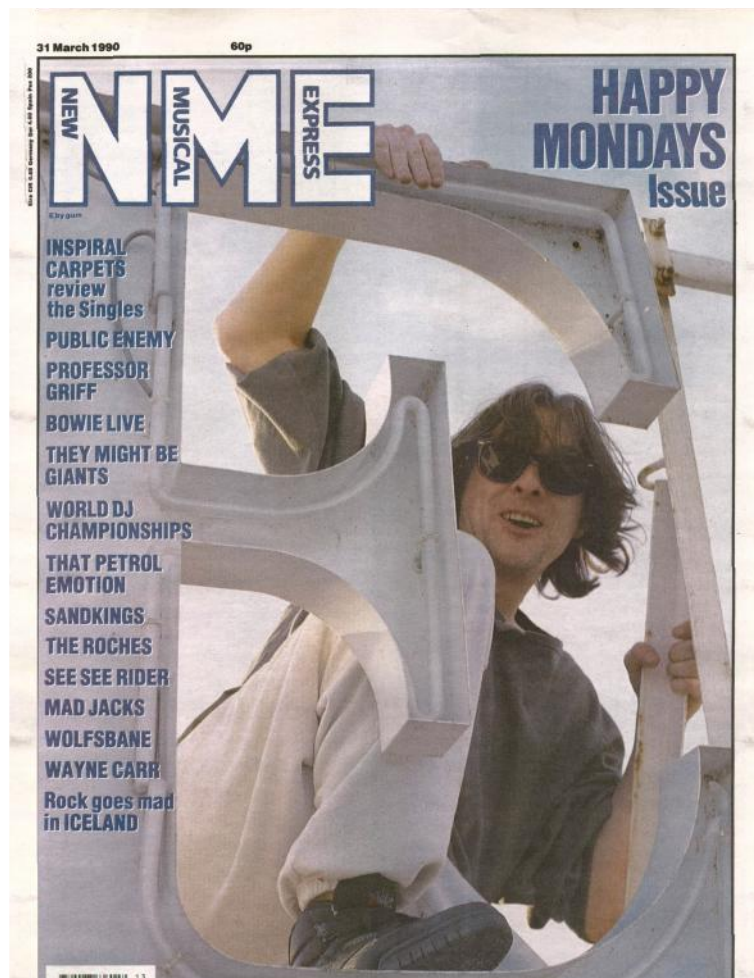
Colin Newman on his "missus", Malka Spigel



"I come from a generation that didn't have any heroes. Lots of people

that I liked became quite disappointing when they got older, which I hope isn't true in what I'm doing. My hero is probably my missus [Malka Spigel, formerly of the band Minimal Compact] – she's talented, strong, funny and a brilliant person."

THIS WEEK IN 1990



'E'-ASY RYDER

Happy Mondays' wild Spanish trip leads to a photograph that defines a generation

While filming the video for new single 'Step On' on a Mediterranean rooftop during their European tour, Shaun Ryder of "intuitive pranksters" Happy Mondays steps on – and breaks – the hotel sign's huge 'E', resulting in an iconic and generation-defining image. It's all part of a wild and ruinous trip by the Mancunians to Sitges, one that includes crashing their minivan into BMWs on the seafront, spiking their bus driver's beer with acid, and complete and utter disorientation on the part of guitarist Mark Day. "I'm not sure where we're going," he tells *NME*'s Jack Barron, "where we've been, what country we're in or what the time is and really I'm not worried, although I would like a shag." Shaun Ryder's only bedmate on the trip, though, is his PA Muzzer's vomit. "Is this mine? Did I puke on myself?" Shaun asks. "No, don't worry," Muzzer reassures him. "I tried to make it to the toilet but couldn't, so I puked over you instead." "Oh that's alright then," says Ryder. "I didn't disgrace myself."

GRIFF'S GAFFE

Public Enemy have sacked 'Minister of Information' Professor Griff over anti-Semitic remarks he's reported to have made in interviews. Described as "a continual thorn in the group's side", Griff tells *NME*'s Steven Wells that he's "sick of being misquoted" and denies saying many of the things attributed to him, including "If the Palestinians took up arms, went into Israel and killed all the Jews, it'd be alright" and "How come we don't talk about how the Jews finance experiments on AIDS with black people in South Africa?"

STANDING IN THE BIRDHOUSE OF GIANTS

With latest single 'Birdhouse In Your Soul' doing well, college-pop duo and "super-literate tune machine" They Might Be Giants tell Stephen Dalton that they haven't sold out: "There was no masterplan," they say of their signing to Warners and subsequent breakthrough, "we're like London – totally unplanned and sprawling."

REVIEWED THIS WEEK

FUGAZI **'Repeater' 9/10**
"A tangled wreck of smashed glass, twisted razor-wire, concrete slabs and broken guitars. Fugazi are sculptors." ■ STUART BAILIE

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

► Depeche Mode cause a riot at a Los Angeles record store as 5,000 fans descend to see the group in person. Riot police are called and the group issue an apology, stating that "no autograph is worth an injury".
► Madonna previews her next film *Dick Tracy* with new single 'Vogue'.
► The Rolling Stones' highly anticipated first British dates in eight years sell out in under an hour despite poor UK sales of latest album 'Steel Wheels'. Having sold 120,000 tickets to the initial Wembley Stadium shows in London, additional dates have been added due to massive demand.

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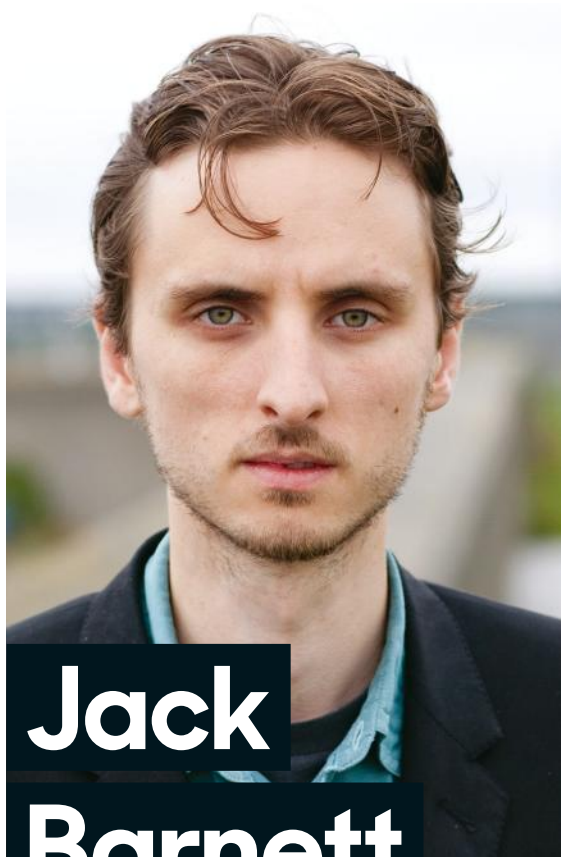
KEVIN CUMMINS

DOES ROCK 'N' ROLL KILL BRAINCELLS? Vs THE FANS

WE FIND THE ROCK STAR, YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS



Kanye West



Jack Barnett

Frontman, These
New Puritans

1 According to Wikipedia, your first album, 'Beat Pyramid', was influenced by the Wu-Tang Clan, Aphex Twin and who else?

Veronica Lee, Plymouth, via Facebook

"The Smurfs. I had to deny liking them for about four years after someone put that up, but I used to like them when I was about nine."

CORRECT. Is there much



The Smurfs

Smurfs to be heard in your musical output?

"They did a Christmas album that was pretty good."

2 What does it say on the front cover of the 'Now Pluvial' EP from 2006?

Jack Price, Manchester, via Facebook

"We've been moving our headquarters and I came across a stash of these. Someone asked me what it means. It says, 'I know something about Mr M:'"

CORRECT. Who's Mr M?

"It was a kind of doodle I did. It sounds good though, doesn't it? It sounds Lynchian."



The 'Now Pluvial' EP artwork

3 TNP contributed a song to a 2006 compilation, the title of which claimed 'I Want To Be...' which famous artist?

Frankie Taylor, Manchester, via email

"Tracey Emin! 'I am Kirchner, I am Turner but I want to be Tracey Emin' - comedy genius. It was recorded in my parents' shed. I don't know why it never made it onto the album."

CORRECT

4 Where did you come in NME's Cool List 2010?

Paula Braithwaite, Aberdeen, via Facebook

"Was I even in it? 100?"

WRONG. Eight - cooler than James Murphy (17) but not as cool as Kanye West (3)

"That sounds about right."

5 What is on the back of the seven-inch picture disc version of 'Numbers'?

Conor Lamb, Warrington, via email

"One on side there's a numerology chart; on the other there's a colour chart."

CORRECT

6 If you add up the numerical song titles in your Glastonbury 2010 set, what do you get?

Martin Richardson, London, via email

"There's '5', '3000'... oh, and 'Infinity'. So, Infinity and 3005."

CORRECT

7 How many people are credited with playing an instrument or singing on 'Field Of Reeds' - 36, 46 or 56?

Helen Arthurs, Bristol, via email

"There are quite a lot of other people credited as well, like paramedics and glaziers. Is it 36?"

WRONG. It was 46. Wasn't that expensive, paying 46 musicians?

"It's better than spending it on 46 guitars or something."

8 What jacket were you wearing when you played London's ICA in July 2008?

William Lancaster, London, via email

"That's back in the dark ages. Was it the armour era?"

CORRECT

"Bits of it started to fall off so I couldn't wear it



Jack in his chainmail

any more. Then we got some proper heavy-duty chainmail, which was really difficult to play and sing in."

Not surprisingly. What's wrong with a T-shirt? "Well, I'm back in plain clothes now."

9 'Hidden' was NME's album of the year in 2010, but what number did it reach in the UK album charts?

Gail Higson, Daventry, via email

"God knows. Four hundred, or something like that."

WRONG. 100.

Were you disappointed?

"It didn't sweep the globe like a plague like I'd planned."



10 Name three of the cannibalistic crudités (pictured below) that are served on crackers in the video for 'V (Island Song)'.

Imogen Walker, Belfast, via Twitter

"There's an eye, a finger and a toe."

CORRECT. Plus tongues, teeth and ears



SCORE = 7

"That's pretty good. I'm quite pleased with that."

NEXT WEEK

**"People got into us
because of Nirvana."**

We're thankful"

Dave Lovering, Pixies



**"I became famous
because of Kurt"**

Daniel Johnston

20 years after Kurt Cobain's death

**Personal tributes from
the bands who inspired him...**

**"Kurt was an amazing
person and talent"**

Greg Sage, Wipers

**"A lot of shit is half-real.
Nirvana was completely real"**

Darryl Jenifer, Bad Brains

...and the return of Courtney Love

**"Remember I said I'd never do a Kurt musical?
That's not exactly true..."**

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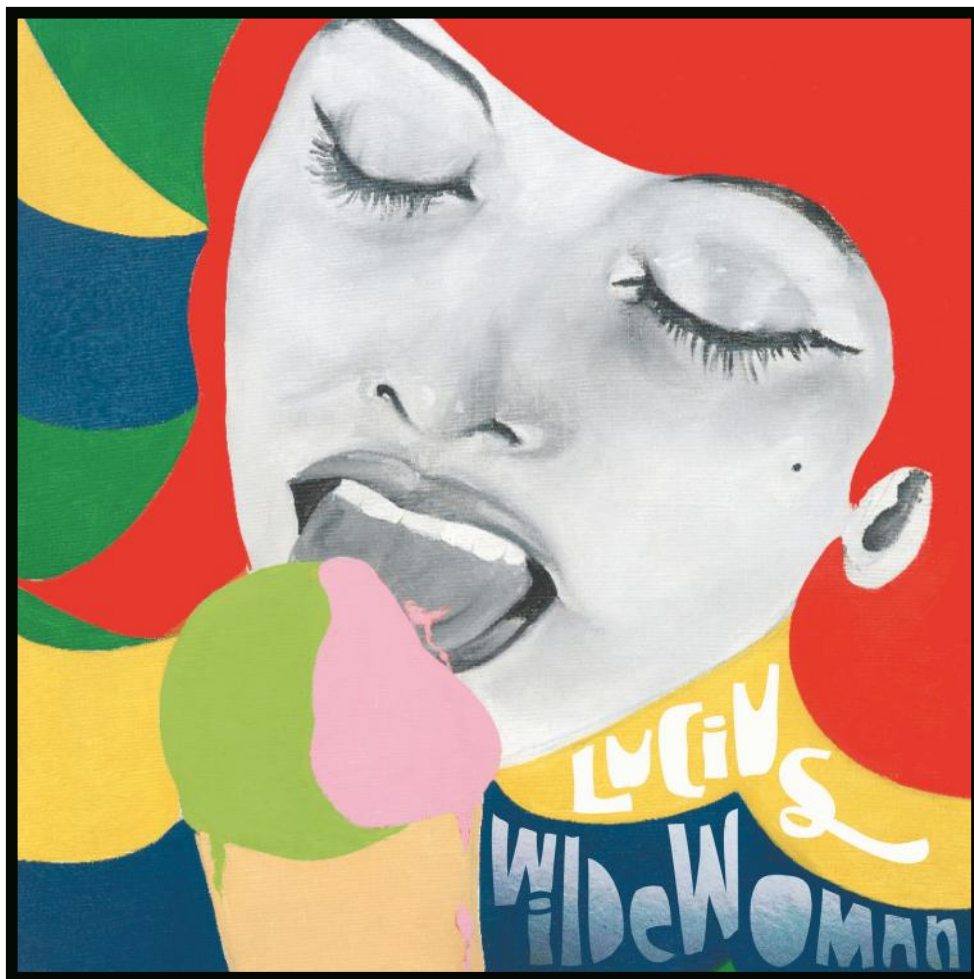
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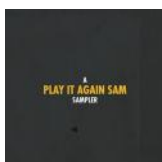
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