

DYLAN AT 80



MARVIN GAYE
SOUL'S MAGNUM OPUS



MOJO

The Music Magazine

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MARIANNE FAITHFULL
RICHARD THOMPSON
TINA TURNER
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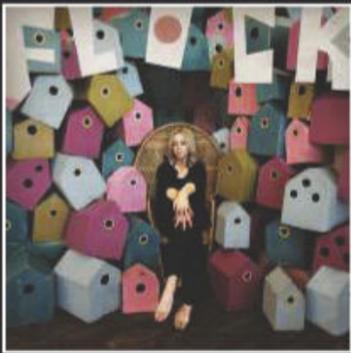
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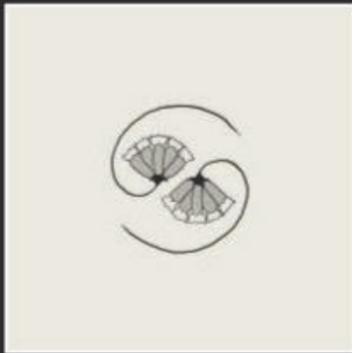


JANE WEAVER

FLOCK

FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Available on ltd cream LP, light rose LP and CD. "Flock" might prove to be the defining album in her career" Uncut "Weaver's version of pop is distinctly cosmic and deliciously skewed." The Guardian.

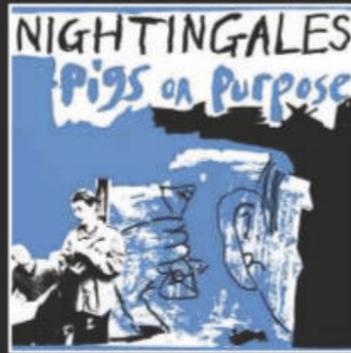


GOSPEED YOU! BLACK EMPEROR

G_D'S PEE AT STATE'S END

CONSTELLATION LP / CD

GYBE returns with a soundtrack for our times: two riveting side-lengths of noise-drenched post-rock spittle and grit, two shorter elegiac companion pieces. Deluxe vinyl is 180gLP + 10" in thermograph gatefold.

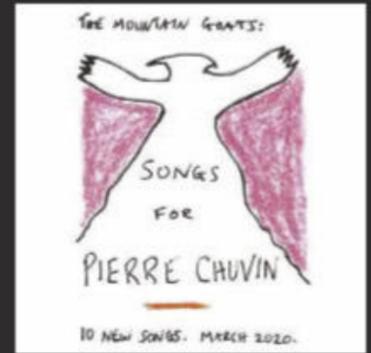


THE NIGHTINGALES

PIGS ON PURPOSE

CALL OF THE VOID 2LP / CD

First vinyl pressing since 1983 on double blue vinyl with new liner notes, includes early demos & non-album singles. The acclaimed debut album from seminal Birmingham post punk revolutionaries, coincides with new 'King Rocker' documentary.



THE MOUNTAIN GOATS

SONGS FOR PIERRE CHUVIN

MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

"Recording on the same boombox that launched his career, John Darnielle returns to his lo-fi roots for an album of alienation, ancient pagans, and making it through the year together." Pitchfork.

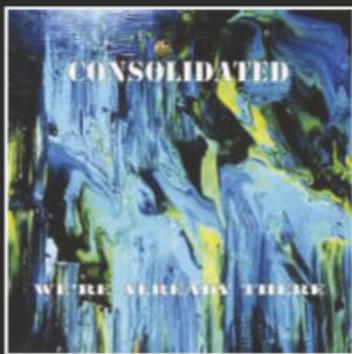


SACCADES

FLOWING FADES

FUZZ CLUB RECORDS LP

'Flowing Fades' is the 2nd Saccades album from The KVB's Nicholas Wood. The Manchester-based artist's solo material under the Saccades moniker is an exercise in escapist psychedelic pop.

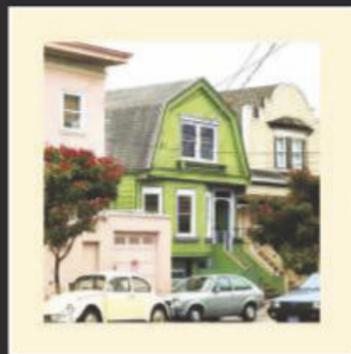


CONSOLIDATED

WE'RE ALREADY THERE

THE END OF RECORDS 2LP / CD

Consolidated, the political dance/industrial music band from the early 90's joined again for a studio session in San Francisco last summer, resulting in a new album. 'We're Already There'. First release on Consolidated's own label 'The End Of Records'.



THE REDS, PINKS AND PURPLES

UNCOMMON WEATHER

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Self-recorded & mostly self-performed, features pinnacle versions of songs Glenn Donaldson has honed since the beginning of the project. He imagines his listeners are just like himself: fascinated & addicted to the spiritual power of uncomplicated pop classics.



WILLIAM DOYLE

GREAT SPANS OF MUDDY TIME

TOUGH LOVE LP / CD

Born from accident but driven forward by instinct, Doyle showcases a unique exploration of pop, art-rock, ambient & idiosyncratic compositions, married with a voice that deftly glides from tender restraint to soaring peaks.



RENEE REED

RENEE REED

KEELED SCALES LP / CD

Dream-fi folk from the Cajun prairies, "an effortless, inspired union of the haunting folk music that Reed was raised on and a lilting, lost 60s French-pop gem".



CHA WA

MY PEOPLE

SINGLE LOCK RECORDS LP / CD

The next generation of New Orleans music shares a bold vision for the future with a reverence for the past. That future is Cha Wa. A Mardi Gras Indian funk band that takes the music of the streets into the 21st century.

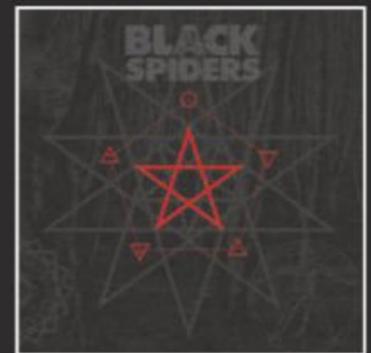


MINT JULEP

IN A DEEP & DREAMLESS SLEEP

WESTERN VINYL LP / CD

The husband-and-wife duo exudes a heavy fog of shoegaze sensibility, and infectious pop know-how on their new album. Clash says they're "Reminiscent of M83 or even...CHVRCHES.."

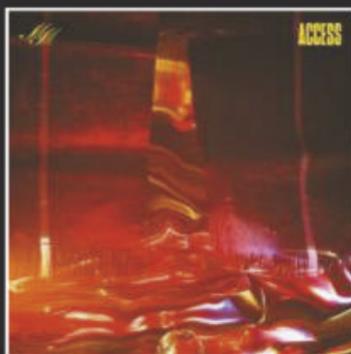


BLACK SPIDERS

BLACK SPIDERS

DARK RIDERS CD

This is Black Spiders back at their very best. 13 solid gold punches, hitting well above their weight, every time. Exactly how you want it. It's good to be back.

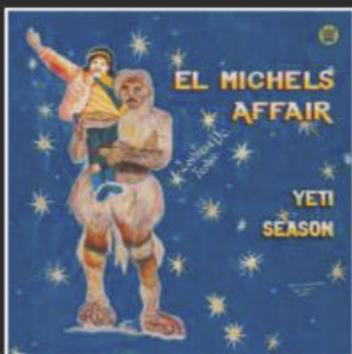


MAJOR MURPHY

ACCESS

WINSPEAR LP / CD

Access, the second album by Major Murphy, is full of heavy rock'n'roll sounds and hyper-creative jittery warmth - a remarkably cohesive relic in an age where true "album-making" is a fading art.



EL MICHELS AFFAIR

YETI SEASON

BIG CROWN LP / CD

A mind bending amalgamation of El Michel's Affair's trademark cinematic soul and Turkish Funk. Featuring vocals by Piya Malik and The Shacks.



MATTHEW E. WHITE & LONNIE HOLLEY

BROKEN MIRROR: A SELFIE REFLECTION

SPACEBOMB LP / CD

An assembly between two profoundly Southern U.S. artists, Broken Mirror: A Selfie Reflection is a callout to the power of collaboration, of kindred spirits connecting in crowded rooms.



THE ARMED

ULTRAPOP

SARGENT HOUSE LP / CD

The Armed return with their Sargent House debut ULTRAPOP, an album that seeks to create the most intense experience possible, a magnification of all culture, beauty, and things.

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LONDON ♦ MEMPHIS ♦ COOLSVILLE

MAY 2021

Issue 330



“A lot of people ask me that same question... ‘How did you put that damn album together? A nut like you.’”

MARVIN GAYE ON WHAT'S GOING ON, P52

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As a new memoir lifts the lid on her picaresque family, bohemian adolescence and wilful recording career, the Duchess Of Coolsville unburdens.

30 UNSEEN BEATLES

John, Paul, George and... Dennis? Mike McCartney's photographs evoke the dawn of the Fabs, with unexpected intrusions and an encounter over a Ouija board...

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The Michigan quartet proving they're more than Led Zeppelin's 'mini-me's, to the delight of Elton John and more. "Rock'n'roll is like the Circle Of Life," they tell Mark Blake.

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As the bard turns 80, we return to where it all began: Greenwich Village in 1961, in the words of the late Robert Shelton, whose pioneering Bob biography gets a reboot.

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Fuzz pedals, in-fighting and "ear-bleeding country": a cocktail that exploded with 1988's alt-banger *Freak Scene*. The band and their allies look back.

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It's 50 years since arguably *The Greatest Album Ever* broke the mould. David Fricke on its alchemy and legacy, plus the afterlife of the genius who made it.

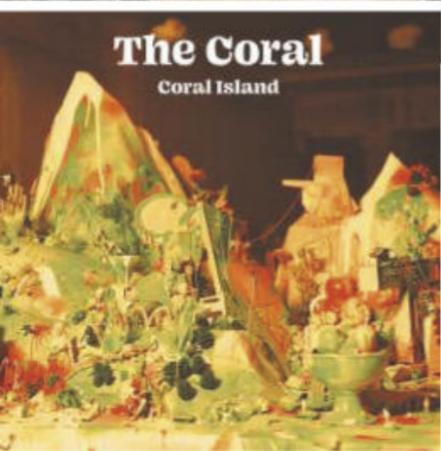
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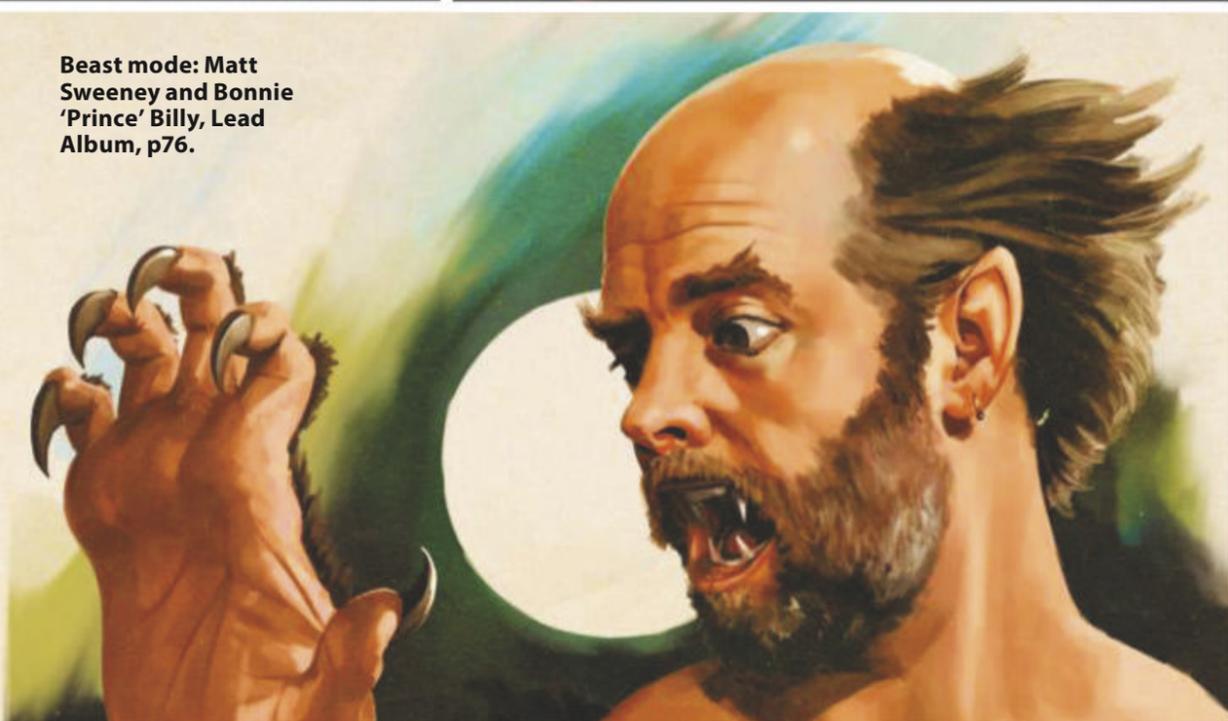
In *MOJO's* Kate Kompendium, the artist casts light on her creative urges in an unpublished interview. Plus: surprising new takes on *Hounds Of Love*, the *Tour Of Life* and a poignant window on her wilderness years.

Getty

Yasmin Williams' guitar magic, MOJO Rising, p20.



Richard Thompson prepares to set sail, Books, p102.



Beast mode: Matt Sweeney and Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, Lead Album, p76.

MOJO

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- 76 NEW ALBUMS** Matt Sweeney and Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's lupine interludes, plus The Coral, Nick Cave, Field Music and more.
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- 102 BOOKS** Richard Thompson's autobiog, plus Nick Cave, Steve Marriott and more.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



Lucy O'Brien
Lucy was a teenage punk when she saw Kate Bush's *Tour Of Life* in 1979, and was so inspired that she co-founded a girl band. She writes about Kate on page 67, and also in her book *She Bop: The Definitive History Of Women In Popular Music*, which has recently been re-published in a 25th anniversary edition.



Mike McCartney
Brother of *that* Paul, Mike scored '60s hits of his own as a third of Scaffold. This month, from page 30, he contributes photographs and memories from the dawn of The Beatles. They're drawn from Mike McCartney's *Early Liverpool*, a lavish new Genesis Books tome. Copies can be purchased from: www.mikemccartneybook.com



Alison Fensterstock
Alison has written about music, books and eccentrics for NPR Music, Rolling Stone, the New York Times, MOJO and more. She lives in New Orleans – where she interviewed Rickie Lee Jones for this issue – with Siberian husky Ziggy (after Beefheart's Zig Zag Wanderer, not you know who).

Mark Baker, Sonny McCartney, Courtesy of Richard Thompson, The Red Dress

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THE COLOURS OF SPRING



MOJO PRESENTS 15 SONGS FOR A NEW SEASON

THE WEATHER STATION, BONNIE "PRINCE" BILLY, BILL EVANS, DJANGO REINHARDT, MIGHTY BABY, REAL ESTATE AND MORE



1 REAL ESTATE DARLING

A rejuvenating burst of jangle-pop, from New Jersey's unassuming heirs to The Feelies and Felt. This tentative love song compares an intensifying relationship to the one between a pair of stoic finches. From Real Estate's fourth album, *In Mind*, from 2017.

Written by Real Estate. From *In Mind*. ©&© Holders: 2017 Domino Recording Co. Ltd. MCIV Publishing (SESAC), Alex Bleeker Music (SESAC), AEKBR (ASCAP), Domino Publishing Company USA (ASCAP), Copyright Control administered by Domino Publishing Company.



2 THE SKIFFLE PLAYERS COO COO BIRD

More spring birds at play, as the LA collective lock into a folk-motorik, cosmically choogling version of the ancient song, renowned in both English and Appalachian traditions (stick around for Track 13, and Jean Ritchie's much older version). Cass McCombs fronts this 2016 take, with assistance from Farmer Dave Scher, Aaron Sperske, Dan Horne and, on guitar, the late, great Neal Casal.

Traditional arranged and adapted by Cass McCombs. From *Skifflin'* (Spiritual Pajamas). spiritualpajamas.bandcamp.com



3 DJANGO REINHARDT SWINGTIME IN SPRINGTIME

Springtime in Paris now, as the legendary jazz guitarist brings his unique verve to proceedings. This version, from September 1947, finds Reinhardt playing with Hubert Rostaing on clarinet and, on piano, Jacques 'Jack' Diéval. Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Jerry Garcia, Carlos Santana, even Tony Iommi paid their respects to Django. But only Hank Marvin tackled the syncopations of *Swingtime In Springtime* himself.

Written by Django Reinhardt. PF Day.



4 CIBO MATTO ÁGUAS DE MARÇO

Not strictly a spring song, since *Águas De Março* (Waters Of March) heralds the end of the Brazilian summer. Still, this ravishing Antônio Carlos Jobim bossa has a lightness of touch to sit perfectly in our mix. Dating from 1997, it is impeccably handled by the Japanese-American band Cibo Matto, just after Sean Ono Lennon joined their ranks.

Written by Antonio Carlos Jobim. Published by Corcovado Music Corp., BMI, ©1996 WEA International Inc. USWB19601068, Licensed courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd.



9 BONNIE 'PRINCE' BILLY THERE WILL BE SPRING

Will Oldham's first version of *There Will Be Spring*, on 2011's *Wolfroy Goes To Town*, was stark and hushed. Revisiting it in 2014, he adds more warmth and steel to his vision of seasonal rebirth even as the world burns. An oft-overlooked gem in Oldham's deep and endlessly rewarding catalogue.

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10 JOHNNY HORTON WHEN IT'S SPRINGTIME IN ALASKA (IT'S FORTY BELOW)

Honky-tonk man Johnny Horton knew, to a degree, what he was talking about when he wrote this chilling murder ballad in 1959: before becoming a country star, he'd prospected for gold in Alaska. Horton died in a road crash the year after *Springtime* became a country Number 1. Johnny Cash made a reading at the funeral, and ended up covering *Springtime In Alaska* himself in 1965.

Written by Franks. Copyright Control.



11 CLIFFORD BROWN & MAX ROACH QUINTET JOY SPRING

A rather grim fluke of sequencing: like Johnny Horton, trumpet star Clifford Brown died young in a car accident – in 1956, just two years after he'd recorded the effortless swing of *Joy Spring*. The title was actually the pet name for his wife, Larue Anderson, a classical music student introduced to him by the drummer here, Max Roach. Pianist Richie Powell, tragically, died in the same crash as Brown.

Written by Brown. Brent Music.



12 MODERN NATURE MAYDAY

If *The Colours Of Spring's* cover art pays homage to Talk Talk, Modern Nature's *Mayday* is the track that most brings that band to mind. It's the current project of Jack Cooper, former frontman of Mazes and Ultimate Painting. From the 2020 *Annual* mini-album, *Mayday* melds the folk and jazz influences that fill this compilation. That's Jeff Tobias from US band Sunwatchers, exceptional, on saxophone.

Written by Cooper. ©&©2020 Bella Union, under license to [PIAS]. Publishing Copyright Control.

ON MAY 8 OF EACH NORMAL YEAR, HELSTON – THE MOST southerly town on the British mainland – is the setting for a peculiar ritual. Early in the morning, an ecstatic procession called the Furry Dance takes place through the town, an invocation of the new season that’s soundtracked by an ancient song, of uncertain meaning, called Hal An Tow. The rites of spring are not, of course, unique to small towns in Cornwall. All over, the end of winter has long provided a time for rejoicing, or at least for a tentative and possibly relieved re-engagement with the world. Breathe again: spring is here.

This month’s MOJO CD is a sequel, of sorts, to the *White Winter Hymnals* comp we put together for MOJO 315. This time, there are songs from France and Brazil, as well as from British and North American tradition; jazz and jangle as well as Beltane folk. It’s a soundtrack, we hope, to renewal. “The summer is a-coming in,” as The Watsons sing in the refrain of Hal An Tow, “And winter’s gone away O…”

THE COLOURS OF SPRING



MOJO PRESENTS 15 SONGS FOR A NEW SEASON
THE WEATHER STATION, BONNIE “PRINCE” BILLY, BILL EVANS,
DJANGO REINHARDT, MIGHTY BABY, REAL ESTATE AND MORE



5 THE WEATHER STATION FLOODPLAIN

Tamara Lindeman’s fifth album as The Weather Station, *Ignorance*, looks set to be celebrated as one of 2021’s finest albums, a masterpiece of climate anxiety. But *Floodplain* is from 2015’s neglected *Loyalty*; another song, like *Águas de Março*, about seasonal torrents of rain seen during a spring road trip across Lindeman’s homeland of Canada.

Written by Lindeman. Published by Mattitude Music (BMI), ©&©2015 Paradise of Bachelors. From *Loyalty* (Paradise of Bachelors); www.paradiseofbachelors.com



6 MIGHTY BABY VIRGIN SPRING

Fifty this year, Mighty Baby’s *A Jug Of Love* remains one of the great underrated British rock albums: bucolic psychedelia made by a gang of ex-Mods newly converted to Sufism. *Virgin Spring* is the centre-piece (this is the single edit), a free-flowing beauty that sounds like it was made at a Home Counties Big Pink.

Written by King, Powell, Evans, Whiteman, Stone. Copyright Control ISRC Code – GBBLY1903709 ©1971 Alan King, Roger Powell, Rabia Lemahieu, Ian Whiteman. Licensed courtesy of Cherry Red Records.



7 THE GO! TEAM WILLOW’S SONG

Though a pagan adherence to the Gregorian calendar seems unlikely, May 1 has long been the focal point of uncanny vernal activity – or that’s how it was portrayed in the classic 1973 folk horror movie, *The Wicker Man*. Paul Giovanni’s gorgeous *Willow’s Song* is here given a layered makeover by Brighton sampladelic crew The Go! Team: it surfaced as a bonus track on their 2007 album, *Proof Of Youth*.

Written by Paul Giovanni. Published by British Lion Music Ltd. ©Memphis Industries Ltd 2007.



8 THE WATSONS HAL AN TOW

Lal & Mike Waterson made the revered *Bright Phoebus* in 1972, but earned their folk bona fides as half of this family band. 1965’s *Frost And Fire* gathered a calendar year of seasonal songs, including this May marvel. “Halan” seems to mean “first of the month”, while a “tow” is a garland, alluding to adornments worn by spring ritual dancers.

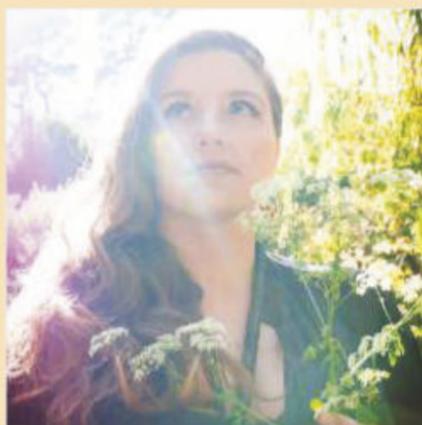
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13 JEAN RITCHIE THE CUCKOO

Our second version of *The Cuckoo* is radically different from the one essayed by The Skiffle Players. Jean Ritchie, a singer and Appalachian dulcimer player from Viper, Kentucky, was part of a famous ballad-singing family. She was teaching music in New York after World War Two when she fell in with the nascent folk revival scene, and was recorded by noted song-hunter Alan Lomax. You can hear Bob Dylan’s version on *Live At The Gaslight 1962*.

Traditional. Copyright Control.



14 JOLIE HOLLAND FIRST SIGN OF SPRING

The artist behind a 2006 album called *Springtime Can Kill You*, Jolie Holland was an early member of The Be Good Tanyas alongside Frazey Ford. But it’s solo that she’s made her name, with songs like this beauty from 2014’s *Wine Dark Sea*: a skewed, romantic jazz-folk song that presents the dance of two lovers on a frozen sidewalk as indication of better days ahead.

Written by Jolie Holland. Published by Zii-Nectic Music (ASCAP). ©&©2014 Anti, Inc. From *Wine Dark Sea* (Anti Records); www.anti.com



15 BILL EVANS TRIO SPRING IS HERE

And finally, one for the road. From 1959, the exquisite pianist Bill Evans, with Scott LaFaro on bass and Paul Motian on drums, makes tender capital out of the Rodgers & Hart standard. A staple in jazz repertoire at the time – Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Chet Baker, Frank Sinatra and many more had a go – but has anyone caught the bright melancholy of the song quite so well as the Evans trio?

Written by Rodgers And Hart. Robbins Music Corp.

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

STARTS ON PAGE 75

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Alex Winter

MOST EXCELLENT, FILM-MAKER

What music are you currently grooving to?

I was completely immersed in **Zappa** world until very recently – I listened to *Civilization Phaze III* a lot. Also a lot of jazz, **Herbie Hancock**, **Brian Eno**, **Harold Budd** and the **Shostakovich** symphonies, which are huge and speak to the cacophonous moment we've had in America. And **McDonald And Giles**, I love that album.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

My favourite album period is **John Coltrane**, *A Love Supreme*. My favourite rock album is **The Who**, *Live At Leeds*.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Kiss Alive, from the local record shop in St. Louis. I was in the Kiss Army! I thought they were amazing. I saw them in the St. Louis Checkerdome. It was fantastic because during **Peter Criss's** drum solo for *Beth the hydraulics* broke and were jerking him around

like he was on a broken carnival ride. And like a champ, he got through it.

Which musician have you ever wanted to be?

John Entwistle. I played bass and he was the greatest player in rock history.

What do you sing in the shower?

AC/DC, especially the **Bon Scott** era, at top volume. If I don't want to thrash my vocal chords, **Joni Mitchell**.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Elton John, Saturday Night's *Alright For Fighting*. And **Ziggy Stardust** – [it has] an epic quality that kicks you in the backside but isn't too dangerous.

And your Sunday morning record?

Not to be too literal, but I like Sunday Morning, **The Velvet Underground**. The quietness, the mournful quality.

ZAPPA is available now on altitude.film and will be on all streaming platforms in late March before coming to the BBC later in the year

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Branford Marsalis

SAXMAN, JAZZ DYNAST

What music are you currently grooving to?

Beethoven String Quartets. And a lot of early jazz. I just got turned onto a singer from the early '20s, **Sara Martin**. There are four volumes: volume one, she's very strong on personality and has a big voice, by volume four she's a very good singer of songs.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I don't have one. Since I started buying records, I was convinced there was not going to be a better record than that one, until the next one. If the Trump mob sent me to a re-education camp and said, "You have to

pick one record," I'd be screwed. Last year it would have been a compilation of **King Oliver** and **Paul Whiteman**.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Honky Château by **Elton John**, from a five-and-dime store. It's so soulful. I became an Elton John fan immediately. He had one of the best fucking bands I've ever heard, and the songs are incredible. He was clearly rooted on that church-gospel thing that was very popular in New Orleans, where I'm from. *Mona Lisas And Mad Hatters* is one of my all-time favourite songs.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Elton John!

What do you sing in the shower?

I don't participate. I'm the worst singer there is. I play music, very loudly.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

I'll go back to my youth for that. Elton John's Saturday Night's *Alright For Fighting*; **Prince**, *Kiss*; anything off **Earth Wind And Fire's** *Open Our Eyes*.

And your Sunday morning record?

Something along the lines of the **Bach** Christmas Oratorio, some **Billie Holiday's** sides, **Louis Armstrong's** early music, [with] **His Hot Five**. Sunday's an optimistic day for me. Definitely optimistic, and not too loud.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom is available on Netflix.



Bridgeman Images, Getty, Philip Cheung

Tune-Yards

FUTURE PILOT

What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm pretty obsessed with the stuff coming out on Soundway Records, particularly the **Batida** records. **Meridian Brothers'** latest LP gets constant play.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

I always go back to **Johnny Clegg**, *Cruel, Crazy Beautiful World*. I'm unashamed of my love of the '80s drum reverb, though I often reflect on what it means to have been 12 and so heavily influenced by South African music, including lyrics in a language I still don't understand.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

The cassette of **Björk's** *Human Behaviour*, at the long-gone Gramophone Records in my hometown in Connecticut. Both sides revolutionised my musical world... I long for B-sides like *Atlantic*, which is essentially a recorder ensemble with Björk on top. Every summer I went with my mother to an Early Music camp where I heard plenty of recorder ensembles, though, so it felt very familiar.

"I heard plenty of recorder ensembles."

TUNE-YARDS



Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

As a kid, **Debbie Gibson**. And difficult to admit now, but I used to put band-aids on my fingertips like **Michael Jackson**. Since I've been a musician I think I've tried hard to be in my own body, although all of my musical work is made from those who came before, on the labour of many black musicians in particular.

What do you sing in the shower?

The shower is the ideal place for vocal warm-ups.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Technically it's Friday night, but **Questlove** is blowing our minds with his weekly DJ set. Also **DJ Fitz**, on Kanal 103 in Macedonia!

And your Sunday morning record?

I was generously gifted some *Luaka Bop* vinyl lately, and *Afro-Peruvian Classics: The Soul Of Black Peru* has become our Sunday soundtrack.

Tune-Yards' Sketchy is out on March 26.

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Theories, rants, etc.

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JUST OVER A MINUTE INTO THE precision frenzy of *Sat In Your Lap*, there's a clue as to what it might be like inside Kate Bush's head. "I've been doing this for years," she observes, though at this point she has been a recording artist for less than four. "My goal is moving near/It says, Look, I'm over here/Then it up and disappears." How to capture that elusive sound? Clearly, the process can be long and exasperating. Since *Sat In Your Lap* came out as a single, 40 years ago this summer, Bush has released six albums of new songs: three more in the 1980s, then one per decade subsequently. The perfectionism, the innovation, the belief that pop music can be transformative and somehow magical, the strategic reticence – all of this contributes to Kate Bush's enduring mystery, accruing over time. This month, MOJO is once more emboldened to unpick that mystery. Hence a cornucopia of Kateness: a feast of profound lost interviews, insiders' confessions, esoteric digressions, eyewitness epiphanies and much more. It's a portrait of an artist on a relentless quest for the radically improbable – and we remain dedicated in our quest to understand what she's been chasing all this time. Coming through the trees...



JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

One might call it the poetry of motion

Like Stephen Gregory, I was also at the Swallow Falls Hotel for that hugely memorable gig Steve Marriott gave 31 years ago [MOJO 329]. Down from London visiting my brother and his wife in Betws-y-Coed, we too were incredulous at the possibility that this was THE Steve Marriott, but rocked up after a few drinks down the road at the Glan Aber Hotel. We were assured on the door that this was indeed the genuine article, so stuffed our 15 quid into a waiting hand and made our way to the bar. A third of a pint down, without warning, bang! – we were off!

The rest of the evening is both a blur and a crisp memory woven together: the raw energy and quality of Steve and the band, coupled with the most intimacy I've ever experienced at a gig by a performer of Steve's stature, made this a truly unique and totally unforgettable experience, one that we three have treasured for three decades since – sheer magic!

And to think, I was only visiting to help tile their bathroom and fit some taps...

Paul R Smith. London

...They say you should never meet your heroes, but my brief chat with Steve Marriott during the '80s more than lived up to any expectations I might have had. At that time he was in a hot Midlands R&B band called The DTs, and a friend and I had gone to see them at the Princess Charlotte, a great little pub gig in Leicester famous for booking name acts either on the way up or down in the punter-pulling stakes.

The band came on, did a number or two, before introducing 'Mr Marriott'. My mate, also called Steve, and I were stood near the front, our drinks on a shelf at the wall. Marriott bounced on and emitted a blood-curdling scream whilst whacking out a mighty power chord. Simultaneously, Steve's glass containing his whiskey & lemon, exploded. At half-time, I found myself standing in the Gents next to the culprit at a small and none too fragrant urinal and related the extraordinary incident to him. Marriott – who, by this stage of his too-short life, looked very like something that had dropped off a cathedral guttering – exploded into laughter, declaring in impeccable Cockney, "Ahh, fackin' far out, man – spontaneous fackin' cambastion, eh!"

Ian Roberts, Leicester

The music is all that matters. Nothing but the music

Well done for breaking the mould and putting a relatively new (and female) musician (Lana Del Rey) on your front cover [MOJO 329]! Also your Steve Marriott article reminded me to write to you and suggest you do a feature on Traffic, another band from that era. Last year I obtained a CD copy of Traffic's semi-officially released *Live In Stockholm 1967* and it's absolutely superb as a document of the early band, just before the release of their first album. An in-depth feature on early Traffic would be most welcome, including probing why we have had so little archive material released by the band.

John Bentley, North Yorkshire

For me, it is a religion

I do believe I may have cracked the intertitles thing for your letters bag [MOJO 329]. It's Wild At Heart, I think. If I'm right, I'd be astonished. I've read MOJO from the very beginning and have never come close to cracking the code. Enjoying the mag as much as ever. Lana Del Rey, Stevie Marriott, How To Buy Lovers Rock and Kris Needs' Sylvain Sylvain tribute were all first-rate.

David Holzer, Hungary

A great impression of simplicity can only be achieved by great agony of body and spirit

A massive thank you to Pat Gilbert for his wonderful interview with Captain Sensible [MOJO 329]. The fact that the guitarist shared his tales so openly made for a wholly refreshing read, and there was something quite moving about his childhood stories. Being sent to children's homes when his mum was unwell – and being named after a strip bar! – are things that could understandably leave a mental scar, but Captain Sensible's matter-of-fact acceptance, and how he simply made sense of it all through his music, was nothing short of inspirational.

The lasting message I took from this article is Captain Sensible's huge sense of contentment for all he has achieved. There are no regrets or signs of envy in relation to those who perhaps went on to see greater success. He simply played the game his way and he is a happy man. He absolutely embodies what punk is all about: being yourself.

Craig Isherwood, Poulton Le Fylde

They're going mad, sir. It's the students

What a pleasant surprise to see the article about The Edgar Broughton Band in MOJO 328. In my younger days the EBB were local heroes and good guys to boot. Myself and a mate went to a gig of theirs at Birmingham Town Hall and went backstage

after the performance to chat to the band. Not only were they welcoming and friendly but they even gave us a lift back to Leamington Spa in their famous psychedelically-painted van. Heady stuff for an adolescent wannabe hippy. We also, on another occasion, dropped in to see the Broughton parents, Joyce and Dennis, in the family home and were met with nothing but kindness and hospitality despite being two uninvited callow spotty teens turning up on their doorstep completely out of the blue.

Charlie Lambert, Warwick

...At the final party at the grammar school I attended in Derby, us long hairs had commandeered the corner of the sixth form common room and one of us did the DJing. As the evening progressed and the idiot dancing was in full flow, he put Out Demons Out on the turntable. Inspired, I then led the sixth form out into the corridor by the assembly hall and, with me leading, we danced along the corridors chanting Out Demons Out. I was not very popular with the head and deputy head, who had been looking on from the choir/organ balcony, and was summoned for a "conversation" the next morning.

Terry Maunder, Leeds

...Bessie Smith, The Edgar Broughton Band and Barry Gibb – it doesn't get more eclectic than that and that's what makes MOJO so bloody good.

Paul Murray, via e-mail

I think you can do even better than that

Just for the record, I enjoyed the feature on *Tapestry* and Carole King [MOJO 328]. I am delighted to be part of it – but I don't suppose anyone could explain to me why you changed my name to "Tony Asher" in the large lifted quote, while you referred to me (correctly) as "Peter Asher" throughout the text? Very odd.

Peter Asher CBE, via e-mail

And from now onwards, you will dance like nobody ever before

...As a buyer/subscriber of MOJO since Issue 1 it was great to finally see Robert Smith on the cover. Having first seen them [The Cure] at Wembley Arena, July 1989, and many times since, it brought back many memories. Speaking of memories, one of my tasks to keep me sane during lockdown was to go through all my old diaries and list on a spreadsheet all the gigs I have been to in my lifetime. From Adam & The Ants at Dominion in March 1981 aged nine to ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead at Tufnell Park Dome in March 2020 aged 47, it came to a total of 3,675 gigs. I'm sure gigs won't ever be taken for granted again.

Dan Wolff, via e-mail

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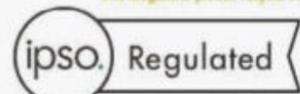
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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO



Nutty Gritty

Madness bring their early history to the screen. Plus! Co-writing with **Paul Weller** and trouser-less nightmares.

“I HAD THIS DREAM I was playing the Dublin Castle,” says Madness host Suggs, holed up in Whitstable as Covid drags on. “We were doing a load of new songs and I didn’t know any of the words, and I couldn’t find my trousers – my subconscious unconscious is replaying the things I should be doing!”

It’s suitable, at least, that this fit of the night terrors took place in the Camden venue where Madness first played in early 1979, back when they were The Invaders, and

where they’ve returned multiple times since. Suitable also because they’ve turned 2019’s early-years oral history *Before We Was We* into a three-part TV series. Begun 18 months ago, it’s a hybrid of material from the book, new interviews, complementary contemporary footage and interpolations from the 1981 Madness bio-pic *Take It Or Leave It*.

“It’s visualised what the book is and expanded it, augmenting our stories with something relevant,” explains Suggs. “I remember seeing Julian Temple’s *Sex Pistols* film, which juxtaposed people’s stories with what was on telly at the time, which was Bruce Forsyth, Tommy Cooper and Rod Stewart at Number 1. What seems prosaic at the time is actually a time capsule!”

Other well-selected archive film includes Madness’s first TV performance on *Magpie*, when Suggs didn’t turn up; street scenes and fashions; vibesman Cathal ‘Chas Smash’ Smyth explaining the intricacies of nutty dancing on French TV; ugly scenes of skins scrapping; and much gig footage, including 2-Tone peers *The Specials*. Among the insights are Smyth’s observation that, “the overriding impetus was, Let’s show how fucking nuts we are,” and guitarist Chrissy Boy Foreman saying he thought Madness was a “shit name”.

After *Take It Or Leave It* and *Before We Was We*, this is the band’s third tilt at their origins. What’s the appeal? “It’s more interesting to do that than to plough through the history of our success!” says Suggs. “We don’t want to do a big hagiography/discography... it’s more, How do we celebrate who we are, in a simple way? And that age, 16, 17, 18, being with your mates, playing gigs, going

One Step Beyond and back again: (from left) Mark Bedford, Cathal Smyth, Lee Thompson and Suggs on-stage with Madness in '79; (insets right, from top) Madness in *Before We Was We*: Suggs; Mike Barson; Dan Woodgate; Chris Foreman; Bedford; Smyth; Thompson.



on the 2-Tone tour, it's exciting, everything's moving... of course it's the best time!"

He does confirm that further band-endorsed books and documentaries might one day emerge, though. "We're not daft," he says. "there could be another two, three, five... I'd love to do one about what the excesses of rock'n'roll in the '80s were. But it's the naming and shaming of people, that's the problem. And we'd have to have a right good chat about what we could say about each other... but if it's interesting

to the public maybe it's worth looking at."

As for Madness, there's no news on whether Smyth might return to the active service in the band ("he seems in a good place," says Suggs). But the remaining six are "great, just bored and going up the wall. So there's going to be an album, a fucking quadruple one! Lee [Thompson, sax] has written a fucking brilliant song called Baby Burglar which is right up there in that great canon of Madness songs. And I've written a song with Paul Weller called Who Do You Think You Are Sunshine? You know those people who say they had one teacher who turned their life around? I didn't. I'm trying to couch that fact, not too negatively, that one makes one's own path. We haven't recorded it yet, no. But it's there."

Ian Harrison

Before We Was We premieres on BT TV and AMC this May. Suggs' *Love Letters To London* are on BBC iPlayer.

"What seems prosaic is actually a time capsule!"

SUGGS

WHAT GOES ON!

Rhythm come forward: (main) Pino Palladino (right) and producer Blake Mills; (insets) push-and-pull with D'Angelo and The Who's Roger Daltrey.



AFTER THE WHO AND D'ANGELO, BASS SUPREME PINO PALLADINO SAYS, THIS IS ME

CLOSE TO four decades after first making his sonic mark with rubbery fretless bass contributions to records by Gary Numan and Paul Young – and having gone on to play with disparate artists from The Who to D'Angelo – Pino Palladino has finally made an album with his name on the cover. *Notes With Attachments*, a collaboration with Fiona Apple/Laura Marling producer Blake Mills, is an instrumental exploration of atmospheric jazzscapes and tangential world music that is so assured it makes MOJO wonder: why has he left it this long to make an album in his own right?

"I never really had that ambition," he says, "or been that interested in being the virtuoso guy. But composition has always been what's really intrigued me."

Back in 1982, as a devotee of Danny Thompson and Jaco Pastorius, the Cardiff-born Palladino's entry into the session world came through chance, when a drummer mate advised him that Numan was looking for a fretless bassist. "Gary played me some ideas," he remembers,

"and just said, 'Do your thing on it.'"

The result was the famously elastic low-end riff on *Music For Chameleons*, which led to Palladino being pushed into the spotlight. Subsequently, he joined Paul Young's band, where his slinky bass line on the Number 1 reworking of Marvin Gaye's *Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)* made him almost as famous as the singer.

"It's to do with timing, I guess," he reasons. "People were ready to hear that sound. Once it was on the radio waves, other people would go, 'Let's give this guy a ring.'"

A flurry of invitations followed: for Elton John, Don Henley, Pete Townshend. "I couldn't believe some of the phone calls," Palladino marvels. "It was just, 'What? Really? Dave Gilmour?'"

In 2002, Palladino stepped into John Entwistle's shoes in The Who, only four days after The Ox's sudden death. "I didn't get much time to think about it until I'd done that first show at the Hollywood Bowl," he says. "Then I thought, Fuck me, what just happened?"

In a completely different groove, Palladino has also been responsible for the push-me-pull-me bass lines on D'Angelo's latter two albums.

"Playing with D'Angelo is always about space and time and where you put the notes and where you don't put them," he says. "It's a whole different universe." He won't, however, be drawn on whether there's another album due from the perfectionist R&B singer. "Even if I knew I wouldn't tell you," he chuckles. "But I don't know."

The secret to the bassist's multifaceted studio success is, he thinks, a combination of factors. "You need to have very thick skin," he says. "You have to have a laugh in the studio. When it gets into a bit of a strange situation or a disagreement, you just have to make a joke and get on with it. I think maybe that part of my character helped me a lot, actually."

Ultimately, though, Palladino is thrilled to be at last making his own music.

"It's just a huge bonus," he says. "I feel I'm gonna turn into a right fucking diva, actually."

Tom Doyle

"You have to have a laugh in the studio."

PINO PALLADINO

Notes With Attachments is out on March 26 on New Deal/ Impulse!

GIMME FIVE... "EAVESDROPPED" RECORDINGS

The Troggs The Troggs Tapes

(DJM, 1981)

The zenith of bands-arguing audio-voyeurism: Reg Presley and the boys bicker and swear in the studio in 1970, secretly taped by producer Clive Franks. For more in-band straight-talk go to Iron Maiden's *Mission From 'Arry* and The Byrds' *Dolphin's Smile* outtake.

Buddy Rich The Bus Tapes

(BOOTLEG, EARLY '80s)

Long-suffering musicians in the jazz drummer's big band get chewed out and called "bullshit jive artists" and "assholes". Apparently Buddy knew he was being recorded and his band loved him anyway. There's also a similar Paul Anka version.

Various 100% Genuine

(NO LABEL, 1998)

Allegedly released via Aphex Twin's Rephlex label, 40 unwitting "lonely hearts" on an old-fashioned telephone "dating service" seek new "romantic" "encounters". Sometimes warped, sometimes just sad, no one would admit it was them.

Raymond & Peter Shut Up, Little Man!

(ECTOPLASM, 1993)

Two hard-drinking San Francisco roomies shout and argue, secretly taped by their neighbours. At one point one says the other spoiled his meal by "talking about toenails". Devo, John Zorn and the creators of *Spongebob Squarepants* are fans.

Negativland U2

(SST, 1991)

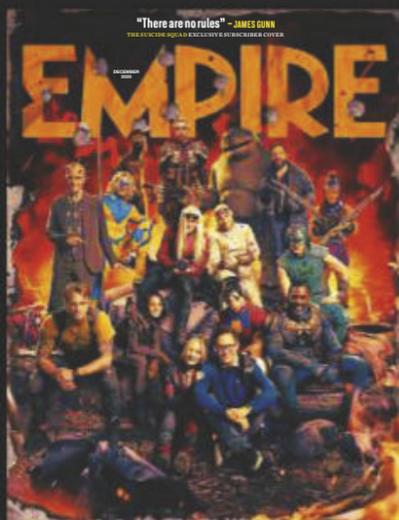
TV's Casey Kasem, unaware he is being recorded, rants about U2, which Negativland sample on a cover of *I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For*. See also *House Of Windsor's Squidgy* for a 1992 rave repurposing of the infamous 'Squidgygate' tapes.

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"It felt really magical": Dan Auerbach, feeding off the energy of Tony Joe White (inset above).



"We fed off that energy, everyone listening so intently to Tony Joe."

DAN AUERBACH

There were three reel-to-reel tapes White had made in one session; some compositions dated back to the '70s and some were more recent. Jody sent one, the slow-burning *Smoke From The Chimney*, to Auerbach. "And Dan said, 'Damn, son, do you have more things like this?'"

Smoke From The Chimney became the title track for that collection of nine songs, which were realised at Auerbach's Easy Eye Sound Studio in Nashville. "I pretended Tony Joe White was there," says Auerbach, who also hung newly discovered photographs of the late singer on the studio walls. "I had the band all come in and play together."

The session players who built the songs around White's unadorned voice-and-Stratocaster demos include Nashville legends Bobby Wood, who brings the same keyboard skills that once warmed recordings by Elvis Presley and Dusty Springfield, and guitarist Billy Sanford, who's played hundreds of sessions since the '60s.

The old hands played alongside rising stars like blues-rocker Marcus King and backup vocalists from the all-female mariachi band *Flor de Toloache*, underscoring the link between past, present, and the ghost of Tony Joe White. "We fed off that energy, everyone listening so intently to Tony Joe," says Auerbach.

The nine tracks are a sampler plate of White's singular, eccentric style: there are achingly tender tunes reminiscent of his biggest song, *Rainy Night In Georgia*, and bluesy boot-stompers like his classic *Polk Salad Annie*. Others, like *Bubba Jones* (a tale of man versus fish), evoke the wackier side of the man who penned *Even Trolls Love Rock And Roll*.

Auerbach hopes the record will prompt a deeper engagement with White's back catalogue. "I'm really surprised sometimes, I've got really heavy record-collecting friends into old soul and stuff, and they haven't heard of Tony Joe White," says the man who'll oversee 12 more albums on his Easy Eye Sounds label this year. "There's a disconnect there, and I don't know how or why. But they've got a lot of great Tony Joe White records to discover."

Alison Fensterstock

FACT SHEET

Title: *Smoke From The Chimney*
Due: May
Songs: *Boot Money / Del Rio, You're Making Me Cry / Scary Stories / Bubba Jones / Someone Is Crying*
The Buzz: "There's some heartbreaking ballads and some really raunchy carnal blues. But it all works together like scenes of a movie... It felt really magical when we were making it happen."
 Dan Auerbach

DAN AUERBACH TEAMS-UP WITH LATE SWAMP ROCK LEGEND TONY JOE WHITE

TONY JOE White didn't meet his Nashville-area neighbour and fan Dan Auerbach until both men were nearly 10,000 miles away from Tennessee, backstage at the Byron Bay Blues Festival in Australia in 2009. For years after, the Black Keys guitarist periodically tried to pitch White about working together. Three years after the swamp rocker's death, it finally happened.

"He was a home studio guy even back in the '70s," explains Jody White, Tony Joe's son and longtime manager. When his father died suddenly in 2018, his job changed, to

excavating and managing a substantial legacy. The home studio was stacked with reel-to-reel tapes dating back to the late '60s, songs not sold to another artist or right for Tony Joe's solo albums. As Jody made his way through, he found a cache of material that seemed like they knew where they were supposed to go.

"Dan and I had been talking for years about he and my dad doing an album together," Jody continues. "Somehow he had already put together all the songs that would be right for Dan."

ALSO WORKING

...last month **KEITH RICHARDS** (right) Tweeted the words "New music on the horizon!" alongside a picture of him playing a Hofner bass... speaking to Revolt TV's *Drink Champs* show, Mount Vernon rapper **DMX** revealed that his new album will feature **Westside Gunn, Snoop Dogg** and **Bono**. "The Bono joint is



Skyscrapers," he said. "Shit's crazy. It got a Miami feel to it" ... **JOHN MELLENCAMP** is making plans to finish his next album. Ten tracks were finished before Covid hit, and he's planning 17 more... last month **PAT SMEAR** told **Howard Stern's** Sirius XM show that, "Every once in a while me and **Krist [Novoselic]** and **Dave [Grohl]** get together and we do play as if we're Nirvana." Grohl, who

was also present, added, "We actually recorded some stuff" ... **WILLIE NELSON** confirmed to Slate his new collection will be "a family album with me and all the kids and everybody singing on it" ... **BAUHAUS** guitarist **Daniel Ash** has recorded a new LP as **Ashes And Diamonds**, alongside Sade bassist **Paul Denman** and PiL/Pop Group drummer **Bruce Smith**. "I must say it's working out really well,"



Ash told the *Bax & O'Brien* podcast: "We've had time to really craft the songs and get them produced as good as possible." He added the Bauhaus reunion will resume when pandemics allow... speaking to *Rolling Stone*, **KACEY MUSGRAVES** (left) said she'll release a new LP this year informed by classical Greek tragedy, her recent divorce and the travails of the USA and the world at large...

Alamy, Getty (2), Jim Marshall

Doing life: It's Immaterial's Jarvis Whitehead (left) and John Campbell in 1986; (below) the duo today.



AFTER 30 YEARS' SILENCE, AMBIENT POP EXILES IT'S IMMATERIAL FIND THE SPACES IN BETWEEN

“WITH THE process we have, it’s always evolving and we’re constantly modifying things,” says singer John Campbell, who, with instrumentalist Jarvis Whitehead, makes up Mancunians-in-Liverpool art-pop duo It’s Immaterial. “The problem is, where do you end? There’s these little misty areas in the music, these in-between places and in-between times... really, what we do could just be one long song that goes on and on.”

Sensitivity to time elongated and suspended is important in their story. Their most recent album, last year’s intricate and emotive *House For Sale*, was begun in 1993. It all started even longer ago: a student at Liverpool’s College of Art, Campbell was in Deaf School-inspired DIY art rockers Albert Dock, who Whitehead saw when they supported the Sex Pistols at Eric’s on October 15, 1976, and later, new wavers Yachts. 1980 brought the first It’s Immaterial single – a cover of The First Impression’s swinging London cash-in Young Man (Seeks Interesting Job), with Franz Kafka as cover star – followed by a series of striking, enigmatic 45s on labels run by their manager,

low-key Liverpool legend Pete Fulwell.

Then *Driving Away From Home* (Jim’s Tune), an oddball country and northern British road song, became a Top 20 hit in April 1986. Yet they were not natural pop stars, and September’s debut LP *Life’s Hard And Then You Die* peaked at Number 62. 1990’s remarkable mood-suite *Song*, recorded with Blue Nile producer Calum Malcolm, would fail to trouble the charts. “When you start out, you never wanted to end up being a one-hit wonder,” reflects Whitehead, “but as it transpires... you end up being a one-hit wonder.”

Then in 1993, Malcolm was asked to review the then-new Tascam DA-88 digital recorder, and suggested Whitehead and Campbell come up to East Lothian and bag some free studio time. The 10-song sessions were fruitful, but were followed, as Campbell says, by

“some difficult times”. Soon after, his partner was diagnosed with terminal cancer. “Things happen to people, don’t they?” he says. “People say, ‘What were you doing all this time?’ We were doing life.”

Yet, as the Tascam tapes gathered dust in the duo’s Liverpool studio, they continued to meet one day a week. “I don’t know whether it was professional, or a hobby, or we needed it as an escape from things, or maybe it was just good to see each other,” says Whitehead, “but we just went from year to year, writing.”

It was when they were moving studios six years ago that they rediscovered the tapes and decided it was a body of work worth finishing. After sourcing some now-obsolete kit to rescue the recordings, Campbell puts new lyrical additions to *House For Sale* at 40 per cent; Whitehead admits some once-modish drum loops of the Funky Drummer variety were excised. He approves of the removals: “You take something away and you’re somewhere else,” he reflects. “You’re left with this really rarefied space.”

There were other crisis points, such as original delivery method PledgeMusic going to the wall, and Campbell being diagnosed with cancer (he’s now in remission). Now *House For Sale* is on its second pressing, and another couple of albums “at least” await completion. Of the new material, Campbell suggests a “rhythmic, more ambient setting with key phrases”. “There are all these songs that haven’t been released,” says Whitehead, who’s keen to make the duo a live entity again. “And I think our best album’s there.”

Ian Harrison

Get *House For Sale* at burningshed.com/store/itsimmaterial

AIRY TALES

Itsy, in albums

Life’s Hard And Then You Die

(SIREN, 1986)



With themes of travel, rainy landscapes, salesmen, industrial decline and more, the band’s eclectic debut was, says Whitehead, “influenced by all kinds of world music, copied in a bad way.” The Laurie Anderson-esque Space and banjo-plucking Rope could have been hits.

Song

(SIREN, 1990)



A year’s collaboration with classically informed Blue Nile producer Calum Malcolm, which Whitehead calls “cerebral and thick with emotion”. Its lead track was beautifully sad seaside lament New Brighton. “I prefer the word ‘melancholic’ to ‘sad,’” says Campbell. “To get out of a maudlin state, blue music helps.”

House For Sale

(IT'S IMMATERIAL, 2020)



Sophisto-pop vignettes segue seamlessly from then to now. “After *Song*, we tried to get it a little bit more poppy, to rein it back a bit,” says Campbell, whose sometimes Wyatt-esque narrations echo his teenage soul years, via the English northwest. Note *Driving Away From Home* sort-of sequel *The Gift Of Rain*.

“We just went from year to year, writing.”

JARVIS WHITEHEAD



How soon is biff! bang! pow!: Alan McGee (front), on point with Liam Gallagher.



McGEE MIX Alan's five holy rock'n'roll scriptures.

1 T.Rex *Get It On* (FROM *ELECTRIC WARRIOR*, FLY, 1971)

2 David Bowie *Five Years* (FROM *THE RISE AND FALL OF ZIGGY STARDUST AND THE SPIDERS FROM MARS*, RCA, 1972)

3 Sex Pistols *Anarchy In The UK* (FROM *NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS... HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS*, VIRGIN, 1977)

4 Television Personalities *Part-Time Punks* (FROM *WHERE'S BILL GRUNDY NOW?*, KINGS ROAD, 1978)

5 Happy Mondays *Tart Tart* (FROM *SQUIRREL AND G-MAN TWENTY FOUR HOUR PARTY PEOPLE PLASTIC FACE CAN'T SMILE* (WHITE OUT), FACTORY, 1987)

this level of success." And they were laughing at me. But that was a moment of weakness. Overall, I fucking liked it.

The film is also cynical about New Labour. Was your venture into politics worth it?

I passed the New Deal, which meant that musicians could get benefits. That's what I did. It's probably not cool but I liked Blair and Brown overall. Compared to what came later, I loved them. Before he decided to start bombing Iraq, I think Tony Blair did good. I had a cup of tea with him about 18 months ago.

Who do you still see from the Creation days?

I'm still tight with Noel. I haven't seen Liam for years. I see [Andrew] Innes for walks. I actually ran into Bob [Gillespie] during lockdown.

Fact-check time. Did you really study Aleister Crowley's magick?

At one point, yes. Not any more. When I went to Wales in 2008 I was fucking about with magick. I was bang into it. You absorb yourself in the books.

Did you have a breakdown after visiting a crack den in LA (one of the film's most sordid tableaux)?

That scene? Not true. But crack dens in LA? One hundred per cent true. Three days into a bender, you end up in strange places like brothels and crack houses. I was terrible like that. I was addicted to prostitutes and shit. I was a fuck-up. And then I got sober.

Was it uncomfortable reliving that period through the film?

My whole life I've been troubled because I was beaten to fuck by my father when I was a kid. He jumped on my head when I was 14. I was put in hospital. So of course that affects you in later life. I don't need drugs to be mad but I was taking a shitload of drugs. I was a psycho, probably.

Did you actually meet Jimmy Savile at Chequers, as the film portrays?

That happened! October 1999. I was talking to Tony Blair and then the second guest comes in – "Now then, now then" – and it was fucking Jimmy Savile. I thought he was a sleazy guy towards my missus but I didn't know anything ultimately. I just thought he was a gangster. I thought, "You're fucking connected, mate." You'd think that bit was made up but that's the Creation story for you: the maddest bits are actually true.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

One of our A&R men, Ed Ball, used to come to work dressed as a priest for a few years. He liked acid because it was £1.50 and ecstasy was £20 but he didn't realise it was deranging him.

Dorian Lynskey

See *Creation Stories* from March 20 on Sky Cinema.

"Three days into a bender, you end up in strange places.

ALAN MCGEE

ALAN MCGEE

Creation's irrepressible music lover talks Tony Blair, crack dens and magick.

DURING CREATION Records' 17-year lifespan, Alan McGee was the biggest character in UK independent music. He discovered both The Jesus And Mary Chain and Oasis and released landmark albums by Primal Scream, Teenage Fanclub and My Bloody Valentine in 1991 alone. Following Oasis's colossal success, McGee went into rehab and worked with the Labour government on the New Deal for Musicians. Since shuttering Creation in 1999, he's founded three independent labels and his Creation Management company. New film *Creation Stories*, co-written by Irvine Welsh and starring Ewen Bremner, is based on McGee's 2013 memoir.

Is *Creation Stories* an objective account or your own version of events?

It's Irvine's version. I had to let go. What's the point of getting a genius like Irvine Welsh and telling him how to write a script? But you

asked about my version of Creation? Well, I am Creation! There's been different people I've partnered with but if it's me, it's Creation. So if I say that's what happened, that's what happened.

When, for you, was Creation's golden age?

Probably around '91 when Sony wasn't involved and we were doing *Screamadelica*, *Loveless*, *Bandwagonesque*. We were never better musically. But it was all good to be honest.

The film argues that it all went downhill once the big money came in. You don't agree?

I'm different to Irvine. I'm left of centre but I'm not *that* left. Thank fuck I got rich! Because it was shit being poor. There was a funny moment when the people who got me clean said, "What's wrong Alan?" And I said, "I'm fucking miserable." And they said, "Why?" And I said, "Oasis are Number 1 in 32 countries. (Sobbing) I never asked for

LAST NIGHT
A RECORD
CHANGED
MY LIFE

Rhiannon Giddens

Young old-timer hails **Sondheim's** *Sunday In The Park With George* (Red Seal Digital, 1984)



I was a senior in high school, and I'd gone to choral camp in Laurinburg, North Carolina. It was the first time I'd ever been exposed to musical theatre nerds, and they were obsessed with Sondheim, so I thought, Well, it must be good. I watched a video of a stage performance [of *Sunday...*] in college a year later and that was it, I was blown away.

Some people say he's not singable, or hummable, which is ridiculous. There are things you get right off the bat, and things you get with each successive listen, which is the mark of a deep piece of art, I think. There are so many beautiful tunes, his wordplay, the harmonies and shifts, the emotional content of the story between George and Dot, the way it moves back and forth in time – it has such a beautiful shape to it. And there are huge, important statements he's making about what it means to be an artist. I can hear, in my own writing, moments that are definitely Sondheim and specifically *Sunday...*

Dot is the role I would love to play. It frustrates me because the whole point is, Dot has to look like the person in the painting [the piece is inspired by Seurat's 1886 work *A Sunday Afternoon On The Island Of La Grande Jatte*], and I'm not white! Maybe this is how white people feel when they want to be in *Porgy & Bess*. But who knows? Sondheim's got close ties to Nonesuch, and I'm thinking, Wouldn't it be nice to shake his hand? But I met Aretha Franklin and spoke gibberish, and if I did that [to Sondheim] I'd be mortified forever, so I'd be happy to just be in the same room as him.

I showed it to my partner for the first time a week or so ago, and I was so nervous, like, if he doesn't like it, I don't know what I'm gonna do! He liked it.

Rhiannon Giddens with Francesco Turrisi release *They're Calling Me Home* on Nonesuch on April 9.

KOSMISCHE LEGENDS CAN BEGIN A NEW LIVE ALBUM SERIES! FIRST STOP, STUTTGART, 1975

"JAKI HATED editing," said keyboardist Irmin Schmidt of Can's late drummer Jaki Liebezeit. "He didn't take part. It's against his aesthetic, against his feeling. Cutting into the flow to him is awful amputation. He just wanted to *play*."

This is the strange tension at the heart of Can, the improvising superpower who, from 1968 to 1979, created such classic albums as *Tago Mago* and *Ege Bamyasi* by editing the jams they recorded at ritually charged studios in Cologne. The all-improvised live performances by Schmidt, Liebezeit, bassist Holger Czukay and guitarist Michael Karoli, plus vocalists Damo Suzuki and Malcolm Mooney, were a different matter. These legendary happenings could run for three hours, though so far official live releases have tended to cherry pick from shows rather than go for the full experience.

Can junkies will rejoice that this is about to change. A new album series will present entire, unedited, peak performances in all their evolving, telepathic majesty. The first instalment is a wired, grooving 1975 Stuttgart date by the core quartet. Spiced with fragments of familiar Can pieces, including *Vitamin C* and *Dizzy Dizzy*, it navigates, in-the-moment, from moments of relative calm into the thunderous wig-outs they dubbed 'Godzillas'.

"This was after Damo went, and we found out that just we four could do maybe the best concerts we ever did," Schmidt tells MOJO. "This was nothing against Damo, of course, but all of a sudden we were what you hear, an instrumental group. Actually, when I went through all these tapes, it's not by chance that I was choosing from '75. I think that was about the time

when, live, we were really at our best. Some of the best concerts, the recordings were so bad we couldn't use them, but yeah, I think this was a really good time with us four."

As with the others, the Stuttgart recording started life as a bootleg, many gathered by Can expert, archivist and favoured taper Andrew Hall (it's a recognised part of group lore that they had back luck when trying to record live shows themselves). With performances vetted and selected by Schmidt alongside long-time Can engineer René Tinner, advances in digital restoration techniques improved the sound hugely, while mastering came courtesy of Andreas Torkler and Dieter Denzer of the Music-Base studio in Bielefeld. Three more releases are planned, with the option of more. Additionally, Schmidt previously told MOJO how, "There are some radio and television recordings we did in England, France and Germany [which might be released], that might be called *Can On Air*."

Schmidt adds that, in keeping with Can's ever-forward philosophy, the release does not fill him with nostalgia. "I am everything else, but I am not nostalgic," he says, "and really, it doesn't bring back special memories or feelings back. I don't remember anything about Stuttgart, it was just a good concert! The only concerts I remember are when

something very, very special happened. One of the few shows that I remember was in Bristol. It was sort of at the same time, and that was where something really special happened. One day I might find the tape from that concert."

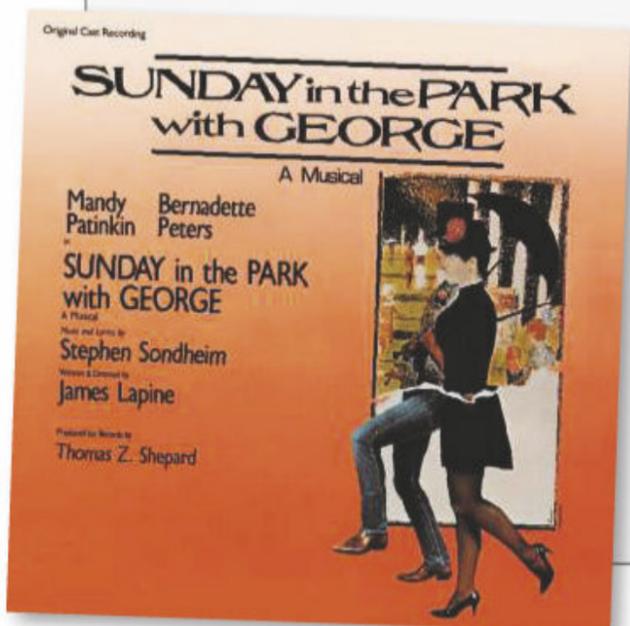
Ian Harrison

Can Live In Stuttgart 1975, available on double CD and triple orange vinyl, will be released by Spoon on May 28.

"That was about the time when, live, we were really at our best."

IRMIN SCHMIDT

Dizzy rascals: mid-'70s Can (from left) Michael Karoli, Irmin Schmidt, Jaki Liebezeit, Holger Czukay.





ROBBIE BASHO RAISED ON HIP-HOP AND STING? IT'S DC'S NEW GUITAR HERO **YASMIN WILLIAMS**

WHEN YOU listen to the acoustic guitar style of Yasmin Williams, it's initially hard to place the influences. Lyrical, layered and optimistic, her new LP, *Urban Driftwood*, veers from the accepted path of the modern fingerpicker, eschewing ideas rooted in "American primitivism", and instead seems to reference the poignant pastoral spiritualism of Robbie Basho or the Windham Hill sound. Yet there is a percussive sweet-pick sound that calls to mind the electric shredding of Buckethead or Paul Gilbert. It's a puzzle, until the 24-year-old explains what led to the purchase of her first guitar.

"In middle school I got the video game *Guitar Hero 2*," she explains from her Virginia, DC apartment. "And after I got to Expert level my parents got me a real guitar."

Williams' rock influences – AC/DC, Nirvana, Jimi Hendrix – came from the game, but so did her unique percussive tapping style. "I wanted to incorporate that game-playing style into my playing," says Williams. "Shredding

was also a goal but it never happened. I realised I could do more with acoustic guitar and finger-style."

Self-taught, and playing with her acoustic guitar across her lap (another legacy of her *Guitar Hero 2* playing style), Williams also started to incorporate the music of her DC childhood, West Coast hip-hop, her dad's go-go music tapes, and the smooth sounds of Washington's quiet storm radio station, WHUR. "That influenced me a lot," explains Williams. "My favourite song growing up was Sting's *Fields Of Gold*."

After a short spell of guitar lessons, Williams realised she got more pleasure from teaching herself: "It's like trying to solve a problem. Weird ideas and techniques come from that."

Williams released her first EP while in high school before studying music composition at New York University. She listened to the unique downstroke fingerpicking of Elizabeth Cotten and the bowed guitar style of Sigur Rós and, to retain a rhythm throughout her playing,

"I liked thinking about music in ways that weren't Western."

YASMIN WILLIAMS

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Robbie Basho, Elizabeth Cotten, Marisa Anderson, John Abercrombie.
- Williams owns a custom-made Skytop guitar with a spruce soundboard, patterned with holes made by Tereido clams (shipworms), and hardwood sides patterned by wood fungus.
- The album title *Urban Driftwood* is an oxymoron. "A lot of black music is considered urban; why not me? It's also confronting preconceptions about where nature exists."
- Williams is uncomfortable with the term American Primitive and its de-facto frontperson, John Fahey: "You're implying that music inspired by black musicians is somehow primitive and he's a really problematic figurehead."

KEY TRACKS

- Adrift
- Urban Driftwood
- After The Storm

"It's like trying to solve a problem": Yasmin Williams, finding her own way forward.

began wearing tap shoes and using a kalimba. University discoveries such as Hindustani classical music and Ethiopian jazz also expanded her sound. "I liked thinking about music in ways that weren't Western," she says. "I relate to that."

Those influences can be heard in her 2018 debut, *Unwind*, which she describes as "me establishing my sound." By contrast, *Urban Driftwood* is more conceptual, its narrative modelled on the nightmare of 2020. "The first five tracks relate to how 2020 started," she explains,

"before the pandemic. Then things get a little weird. Side B is dealing with the political turmoil that was happening. I went to a couple of Black Lives Matter protests in DC, these horrible events unfolding, the Capitol fenced off, cops everywhere, me processing it; that's basically the second half of the LP."

While there is a sense of uncertainty and turmoil in these tracks, there is no anger, no aggression. They work as a balm. "That's not where I want to dwell," says Williams. "That's not a conscious decision. It's just what comes out. My music is autobiographical. There is definitely a voice in there, but it's not angry."

Andrew Male

Yasmin Williams' Urban Driftwood is out now on Spinster Sounds.

WHO NEEDS FRIENDS WHEN YOU'VE GOT **BILLY NOMATES?**

TOR MARIES – AKA Billy Nomates – has been visiting old phone boxes on the Isle Of Wight. “They’ve got their own whole weird thing that I like,” she smiles. “The way that they beep and the way they talk to you.” An adept bedroom producer, singer and songwriter, this is no retro techno fixation: Maries was scouting locations for a video for Heels, from her latest EP, Emergency Telephone. Written at her dad’s place on the island, the new songs are full of missed connections, inspired by how a raft of communication platforms (“I must be in about 20 WhatsApp groups; Zoom, Twitter, Facebook...”) falls short in terms of nuance or real emotion.

Emergency Telephone comes just months after her self-titled debut album, for Geoff Barrow’s Invada label, and a limelight-stealing cameo with mentors Sleaford Mods on Mork n Mindy. Nomates’ process of writing wasn’t much affected by lockdown (“guitar, bass and piano, Logic, a couple of mikes and that’s it”), but the feel of the new songs ended up being quite different. They’re more upbeat and melodic than the brio and bile of her debut.

“Essentially, they have all come out as pop songs,” she agrees. “I don’t know what you do about that, so I just leaned into it.” Her vocals, meanwhile, tend to favour conventional singing, soulful conduits for melody, and – with the notable exception of Heels – shifting away from the spittle flecked *Sprechge-*

sang taken from formative inspirations Sleaford Mods. “Or perhaps,” she chuckles, “my cold heart has melted?”

Billy Nomates’ creation story is set at a Sleafords gig in Southampton in 2018. A veteran of two failed bands, just out of a bad relationship and sleeping on her sister’s sofa, Maries identified strongly with the Mods’ cathartic rawness. “I thought, Why wouldn’t I have a go at that?” When someone she knew shouted: “It’s Billy Nomates!” at her, she even had a name for her solo venture. She sent demos, and got an enthusiastic reply from Andrew Fearn, as well as Jason Williamson’s wife Claire, who is now her manager.

The daughter of a school music teacher, Maries was brought up on Townes Van Zandt and Emmylou Harris. She loves Tom Petty and Devon Sproule as much as the ‘80s pop of her teens and “rinses Bowie”, particularly *Earthling*, whose drum’n’bass patterns, sirens and restless energy are all heard in Billy Nomates. “I like it when artists adopt other genres and make their own thing,” she confirms. “I don’t know how you get from John Denver to Billy Nomates... but still.”

Jenny Bulley

Billy Nomates’ Emergency Telephone is out now on Invada.

“Why wouldn’t I have a go?”

BILLY NOMATES GETS INSPIRED BY SLEAFORD MODS

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Sleaford Mods, Peaches, Primal Scream.
- Before Billy Nomates, Tor Maries played fiddle and mandolin in a math-folk band. “It was a bit awful, but I feel like it’s my rite of passage now.”
- Sleaford Mods appear on Supermarket Sweep on the *Billy Nomates* album.
- She recorded *Emergency Telephone* in one day during lockdown at Invada’s studios in Bristol. “Just me, Geoff [Barrow] and the engineer all in masks.” She is already writing a second album: “expect more narrative stuff”.

KEY TRACKS

- No
- Supermarket Sweep
- Right Behind You



Billy Nomates, in conversation with an Isle of Wight phone box.

MOJO PLAYLIST



Get down with the month’s funk, pop and electric jazz.

1 ST. VINCENT PAY YOUR WAY IN PAIN

Jaunty piano seems to herald a left-turn into Laura Nyro territory. Instead Prince and Beck tussle in the funky opener of May’s *Daddy’s Home* – Clark’s most engaging yet. **Find it:** streaming services

2 QUATERMASS III FOUND FOOTAGE

Shady Mancs bring the occult sound of Eno, Joy Division, Northern soul/glam beats, Robert Calvert vox and Open University synths. **Find it:** SoundCloud



3 PAUL WELLER COSMIC FRINGES

Not Weller’s latest hairdo, but a short, sharp, tuneful taste of his upcoming *Fat Pop (Volume 1)*. “I’m a sleeping giant,” insists the lyric. **Find it:** streaming services

4 SONGHOY BLUES WORRY (LIVE)

Emboldening version of *Optimisme’s* rallying missive (“Keep fighting today!”). Rawer, harder, even more furious fretwork. **Find it:** Amazon



5 ROSE CITY BAND LONELY PLACES

Ripley Johnson takes a beatific choogle into the Pacific Northwest wilds. Peak country-psych born of lockdown camping trips. **Find it:** Bandcamp

6 DAMON LOCKS & BLACK MONUMENT ENSEMBLE NOW (FOREVER MOMENTARY SPACE)

Incantatory Afro-futurist jazz, recorded in a Chicago back garden: star clarinetist Angel Bat Dawid shares the spotlight with a lot of rowdy cicadas. **Find it:** Bandcamp

7 CAOILFHIONN ROSE TO ME

Vibrant, subtly strange, this beautiful track from Durutti Column collaborator’s second LP, *Truly*, has an ‘edge’ to set it apart from the ethereal singer songwriter crowd (cloud?). **Find it:** Gondwana Records soundcloud

8 REAL ESTATE HALF A HUMAN

Wistful, leaf-kicking reflection from NJ quartet who have established a unique line in finely etched, lightly reverbed guitar pop. **Find it:** YouTube

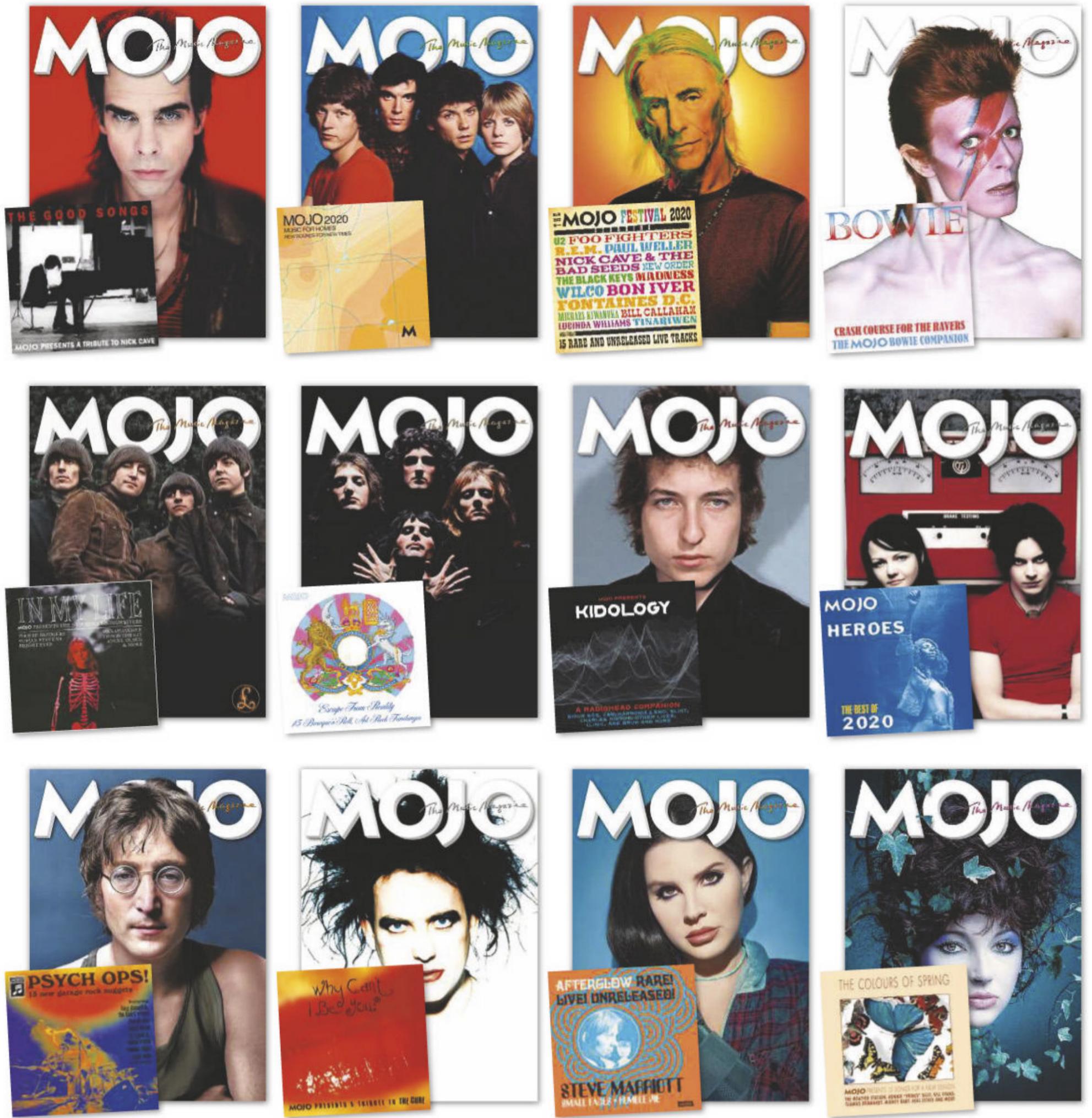


9 JAKE XERXES FUSSELL COPPER KETTLE

A languid, lovely take on the moonshiners’ anthem from the amiable singing folklorist. File alongside your Joni, Dylan and Baez versions. **Find it:** Bandcamp

10 DAFT PUNK DA FUNK

So farewell then Daft Punk, who split in February after 28 years. Remember them with this flavoursome piece of inarguable *house français* from 1995. **Find it:** streaming services



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Drugs, demons, Tom Waits, *that* beret; she's shaken them off to blaze her own bohemian trail. But as her new memoir reveals, some shades linger on. "Some people love people forever," says **Rickie Lee Jones**, "and I'm one of them."

Interview by **ALISON FENSTERSTOCK** • Portrait by **ASTOR MORGAN**

A FAMILY WITH ROOTS IN VAUDEVILLE that bounced from Chicago to Arizona to Washington state and back. A wild '60s adolescence thumbing her way up and down California, chasing rock festivals and rebellion. A youth spent riding shotgun around seedy '70s Los Angeles with Dr. John, Lowell George and Tom Waits, plus years living in New Orleans, New York City, Paris and on tour all over the world. Rickie Lee Jones's life has been one of such constant motion that it makes sense her new memoir, *Last Chance Texaco*, is divided into sections that evoke the road: The Back Seat for her childhood; Driver's Seat for her fast ride to stardom with her self-titled 1979 debut album and 1981's *Pirates* follow-up, coining her snappy, slinky jazz-pop persona 'The Duchess of Coolsville'. If she'd been willing to stay under that beret, she might still be as famous. But instead, she followed her ear, carving out an eclectic career that's careened from electronica to the Great American Songbook, and from Sunset Strip to the shadier end of Bourbon Street.

The big silver pickup truck parked outside a café in Bywater, east of New Orleans' French Quarter, on this late January afternoon just took Jones on another important ride: six hours each way to Houston, Texas, where the 66-year-old had wangled a Covid-19 vaccination. It's warm enough to sit outside and even shrug off our jackets, which in

Jones's case reveals a bright blue peacock tattoo, spangled with tiny stars, on her right upper arm.

Although her songbook overflows with cinematic character studies, it's taken years, says Jones, to get her own complicated life on the page. "I had to get over leftover bones to pick with people and using the book as a place to do that," she tells MOJO in a solid, husky voice – somewhat lower than her girlish tones on record. "It took quite a few writings before I got all that crap out and just told the story without saying, 'Oh, and then *she* said *this* . . .'"

What emerged is a tale more picaresque than any of her songs. An orphan mother. Her father the scion of a vaudevillian named 'Peg Leg' Jones. Her own creative swims against the tides of fashion. Plus doomed romance, heroin, motherhood, startling supernatural encounters and hundreds of thousands of miles of hard road.

"I sent the book to my friend, who's also a musician and a hard-living lady," says Jones. "She said, 'Your life is like Persephone – every time, you keep coming back and surviving every trip to hell.'"

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Ben Harper on physics class with Rickie Lee.



"From the first time I heard Rickie, the purity of her music, the clarity of her voice, struck me. Her voice can feel as familiar as a relative, but as new and revitalising as something you've waited for all your life. I learned so much about phrasing from her – she shifted my physics. She does not hold back."

Your family moved around quite a bit when you were growing up. Was music the only constant in that life?

My family always leaned towards the arts. Everybody took dance and everybody learned an instrument – that's what you were expected to do. It's part of how we were, because my grandfather was a musician, so my father and my uncle and aunt were singers. [My dad] had a guitar, and when he played, he played with his thumb, which is something I remember very well. You don't ➤

◀ see that too much. But you don't have to see a lot to take it in and make it be inspirational to you when you're a little kid – you only have to see it one time and you go, "That's what I want to do."

You write that there were always records in the house. It sounds like you had a pretty diverse list of early favourites.

I remember Nina Simone best. It was an orange cover, with Nina Simone on one side and Vince Guaraldi on the other – she was so unusual-looking, she had a long gown in a yellow shade, and I just stared at her picture, which went along with her very unusual voice. Tommy Dorsey, and calypso, Harry Belafonte. And Barbra Streisand later.

Films were a big influence on you, too: *West Side Story* and *On The Waterfront*, and their Leonard Bernstein scores...

That was how I felt, I was always in *West Side Story*. I was always dancing down the street, always my expression of my musical self and my inner world. And that's what the characters in the film are doing. They're oblivious to the ugliness, and the beauty of their youth is being expressed constantly with their dancing. Or their purity, or their love – it's always being sung and danced. On a very little-kid level, Riff was like the boy I would have wanted to sit with every day at recess. Tony was OK, but it was Riff who brought me in. And Anita's purple dress.

I just watched *On The Waterfront* again last night or the night before – that was a big movie in my life where they used music. When the priest and Marlon Brando are walking, in the distance are machines, and you can hear them in the score – they wrote the music of the sounds of the city. Oh my God, it was incredible.

There are a couple of moments in your memoir where you turn down an opportunity because it feels craven – going on a

pay-to-play local TV show as a young teen, and then later, in Los Angeles, working on contract as a songwriter. You write "When performances are used for anything other than the purity of the performance, bad things happen." What do you mean by that?

Every time I've used a show – like the famous LA Amphitheatre show [in 1984 on her Magazine tour] where I had a meltdown on-stage – for something like thinking, "Oh, I'm going to get an acting career from this, I'm going to get the cover of that," every time, I fuck it up. I don't know if it's a self-defeating thing, because I do have some of that, or if it's just that if you don't keep an eye on the reason you're there, then everything will crumble. A publicist might want you to say hi to Sting or something like that, but you can't. You have to focus, because you're the show, the artist is the show. And it goes deeper than that; then, the artist has to go, "No, I'm not the show, the song is the show." Then you'll radiate that thing that makes the people heal and feel joyful. The minute you start looking over their heads, it's trouble.

Still, it was a pretty brave move to turn down the job writing songs for Bud Dain, the record executive who had been married to Jackie DeShannon. That was 1977 and you were scraping by – but it turned out to be the right choice, because within a year Lowell George had recorded your song *Easy Money* and you got signed to Warner Brothers yourself.

It's like the voice of the future said, "We're waiting for you. Don't do this, or you'll never get here." It was an incredible pinnacle moment because I was dead broke. I needed that job. So to go, "Nope, over your shoulder I see destiny," took a lot of balls. But in my mind I could see that better things were to come, they just weren't here yet.

In the late '70s in LA the shadow of the

Laurel Canyon scene must have still hung heavy over a budding singer-songwriter.

I wanted to define myself as something different than what had been and I was decidedly more lounge, hanging out in the bar listening to jazz. None of them represented that. So I went, "This is mine, then. It's different and I'll come out with this, because I'll never make it if I'm another one of them – they're 10 years older than me and they're never going to let me in their group, I'm just never going to be one of them." Down to the details of how I looked. The way the white women looked then, they were thin-lipped, they all looked like Judy Collins. There was an ideal that I would never be – I'd never be thin, I'd never be flat-chested, I'd never fit in. So I just went, "I can make my own thing and be queen of it," instead of running after Joni Mitchell.

You did sound pretty pissed off about being compared to Joni Mitchell in your first big *Rolling Stone* interview, when you were on the cover in 1979.

Yeah, I was, but I was more trying to define myself distinctly. "Get this straight, I'm not like Joni Mitchell and I don't give a fuck about folk music," or whatever it was that I said that hurt her. I tried for many years to say, "Hey, I was just a kid and just starting out – you don't know what it's like to try to declare yourself as an equal when they won't let any other women up at the top." And there was the other thing that I felt; I liked a *song* more than a long folksy ballad. I wanted to tell a story and sing a direct three-minute song in the tradition of The Beatles. Man, if you can hit them in three minutes, you're a master at songwriting. That wasn't very popular at the time.

You wrote that as a young girl you wanted to be a Beatle, as opposed to having a crush on one.

I think it's about identifying with the person in charge, the thing that has the power. And the things that had the power were always guys.

A LIFE IN PICTURES

Got a Jones for you: Rickie Lee in focus.

1 The Joneses: (from left) Richard, Janet, Danny, Bettye and Rickie Lee. "My family leaned towards the arts."

2 "I do have quite a bit of prose left in me about that": Jones with Tom Waits in London, 1979.

3 And the winner is: Rickie Lee celebrates after being crowned Best New Artist at the 22nd Grammy Awards, Los Angeles, July 22, 1980.

4 "My audience is kind of smart": with Bob Dylan, who also challenges fans, 1980.

5 There's a ghost in my house: with Dr. John, sharer of both RLJ's hauntings and her affinity for New Orleans.

6 "Going from one thing to another": Jones on-stage circa 1990 as she changes styles between *Flying Cowboys* and *Pop Pop*.

7 On-stage with Bruce Springsteen at the New Orleans Jazz

And Heritage Festival, in the city where she lives, May 2014.

8 "I wrote it all over the place": on-stage in New York, where RLJ wrote much of *Pirates*, after singing at a David Bowie tribute, 2014.

9 In trademark red beret, as Chuck E.'s *In Love* breaks into the charts, 'The Duchess of Coolsville' tells the Saturday Night Live stage crew a "crude" joke, April 7, 1979.

2



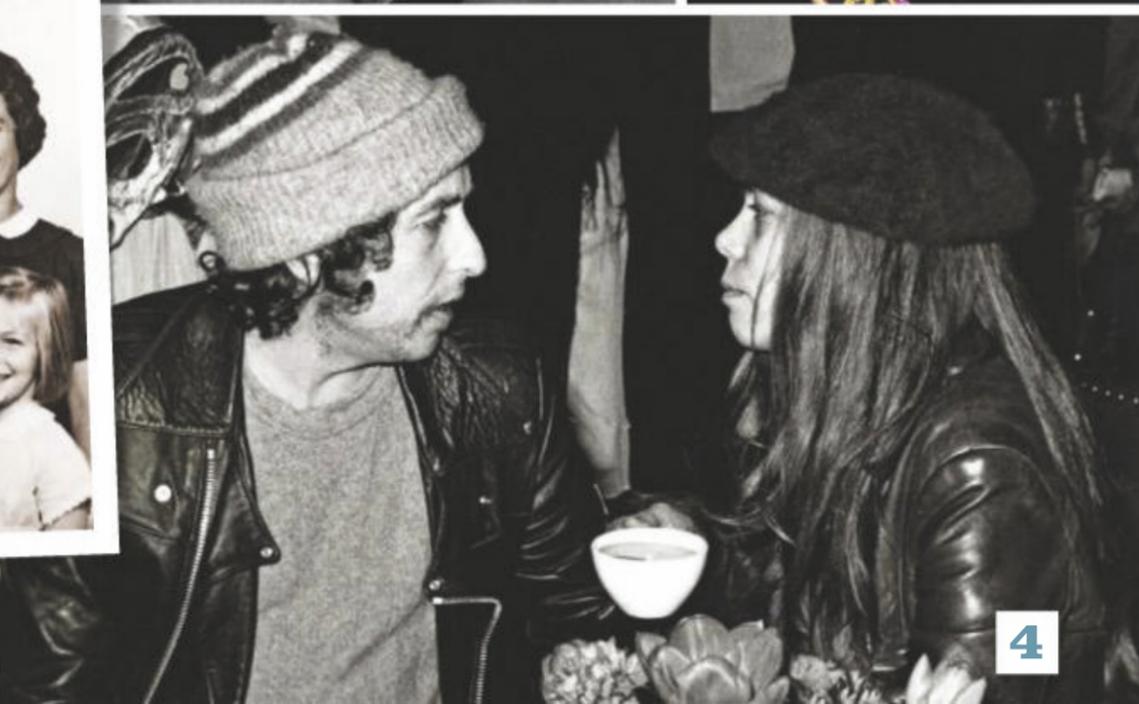
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The women's movement was very active as you were coming up in the late '70s. Did you feel like feminism was for you?

Oh, absolutely. It really did look like we were walking forward with dignity and equality. But it was really at a lull in the '80s. Warner Brothers brought Madonna out and you know what they showed me? They didn't show me her song. They showed me the costume she was going to wear for her video.

As a teen in the '60s, you hitchhiked around California going to music festivals, seeing all the big rock groups, but you've always been a bit of a lone wolf creatively. Did you never want to be part of a band?

When I first started working, I got some jobs in cover bands, and a couple of them did do their own stuff. But I was always too weird to fit into a group, even the weirdest Grateful Dead kind of thing.

Those relationships diminish as the years go by. I knew a lot of people, but who lasts in the long run? I think it's really hard because people are competitive. Or not so much people, but maybe artists are competitive, especially if they're in the same thing. In traditional Hollywood, you're acutely aware if you're below or above them. That's a really circumvented way to say I don't have any long-term relationships with musicians.

Warner Brothers signed you in 1978 after a bidding war, and you stipulated that Lenny Waronker produce your debut. He and Russ Titelman put together a murderer's row of first-call session players. Was that intimidating for a new artist?

Well, I didn't know anything about session players, so they weren't impressive to me. They liked Paul Simon's record, so they were going to ask for that drummer [Steve Gadd]. They

liked Steely Dan, so they're going to ask for that guy. OK, great. I worked with the greatest people and didn't know, so what a gift. But by "great", I mean willing to go wherever you want to go. They were jazz players first of all, and they loved improvising. Even though the first record might sound more contained, it's containment being played by some of the wildest spirits in music at the time. Victor Feldman, the greatest of them all – he came to us from Miles Davis. Holy Moses, that guy could play anything and loved going in any direction. He played piano, percussion, and every hand instrument.

“I just went, ‘I can make my own thing and be queen of it,’ instead of running after Joni Mitchell.”

I'm going to release the original demos this year with this double record I'm making, *Pirates* and the first record. You can hear how I heard them versus what the producer heard. It was just me and Alfred [Johnson] playing the songs and that seemed complete to me. You can still hear in me, when I produce something, it's very minimalist. But they made it big, and people like it big. I like it big, I just don't hear stuff that way. That was the real transition, hearing my stuff come into the physical world through them and back to me.

It sounds like working with Steely Dan's Walter Becker, who produced *Flying Cowboys* in 1989, was intense.

What Walter symbolised was a new producer, because I was so devoted to Lenny and Russ. Walter was in a hierarchy of bands that I loved and writers that had influenced me so much with their humour and intelligence, and that was the direction I wanted to go, but I did have to surrender to his will, and I'd never done that before. We had a couple of major arguments about that fucking clarinet and saxophone in *Satellites*. And I wanted credit for producing too, and he said, 'No way'. But he also showed me patiently again and again – we were both recovering addicts – how to be a human being.

Then we had to promote it and what happens? They want it on the radio. Well, those songs weren't really radio songs. It's a great record, beautiful music, great songs, but it would always feel like a failure because the people in charge regarded it as a failure. That led to me leaving record companies. I'll decide when I'm disappointed, not you.

Your catalogue has zigged and zagged. After *Flying Cowboys* you made *Pop Pop* [1991], a covers collection. Then a few years later came *Ghostyhead* [1997], an experimental trip-hop project. Do you ever feel like audiences, or record labels, get put off by that eclecticism?

Absolutely. Going from one thing to another, it's hard for the audience to keep up. I know I probably couldn't. And it's hard for them to decide who you are, because they're attracted to an idea, and if you keep changing... if you really change musics, it's very hard for people. When Bob Dylan did country, the hippy community didn't know what to do with it. Music represents neighbourhoods, and lifestyles, and histories. And I like that – don't get me wrong – but I'm attracted to music, first and foremost. And I like to sing different kinds of songs. So to stay with me, you have to ➤





“Because of heroin, I had dreams that I couldn’t wake up. I couldn’t get myself back into my body.”

◀ be a fan of more than any one record. Somebody might love *Pirates*, but if they’re still coming to see me all those years later, they must like the fact that I don’t do *Pirates* over and over again. I think my audience is kind of smart.

What’s it like when you do return to something from years ago, like *Pirates* – which you did a 30th anniversary tour for in 2011?

As long as it comes from my heart to do it. If somebody says, “We can’t get any money, nobody will book you, but if you do *Pirates*, we can get some money,” that takes a lot of wrangling with the invisible world. I have to find a way, because it has to be authentically coming from me. I have to feel everything I

sing. The songs are like rooms – you go in them. So if I don’t feel like going into Coolsville or going into *Pirates*, my voice is going to choke up or I’m going to cry or it’s going to be very, very hard for me. Any artist would almost rather move forward. Danny’s All-Star Joint, Chuck E.’s In Love – I didn’t do those songs for 10 years, because they weren’t mine any more, they didn’t represent who I am now. The girl who wrote them, sitting up in that little room in Hollywood, just isn’t me any more.

But if I feel like doing it, then I’ve made some forgiveness with the past. It can be... not cathartic, but it can be really helpful. And I’m an entertainer, it’s my job, and sometimes I like to make people happy. I’ve learned how to smile and I know what you want, I want to take care of it. This is fiction, what we’re doing. Let’s

make it so wonderful that when you leave, you’re lifted. The great part is that if you keep changing and growing and hopefully learning to care about other people, that will happen on the stage, and then you *do* feel really good, it’s not acting. You make peace with the fact that this is a profession and some of it is you watching me. That took a lifetime to do, but I’m OK with you watching me.

You wrote part of *Pirates* in New York City and part of it in New Orleans the first time you lived here, almost 40 years ago. Tell me about the characters who helped inspire it?

I wrote it all over the place. The title was inspired by people I met here. It starts out as a love affair, but the feeling of meeting all these wild groups of people is what *Pirates*

"I can raise my profile and put some money in the bank for going in to being old": Rickie Lee Jones, ready to seize that last chance.

anything – which probably made them want to buy me all the more. I did think they were funny, so when I decided to come back with my mother to visit, I called them, and that was how I got to know them better.

Of course, the love affair you mention as inspiring the beginning of *Pirates* was with Tom Waits. For a brief romance, it's loomed large over both of you.

I read this little review, the first one that came out [for *Last Chance Texaco*]. It said when it came to Waits, I still had some prose in me about that. I guess I do have quite a bit of prose left in me about that. That will never go away. Maybe some of the pain will go away and has, but the wound here, that's a lost love. It might be harder because we were famous. I can't tell – if we weren't famous, and people didn't ask me about him for so long, if it would heal. If I might have gone, "Ah, that was such a cool boy I knew a long time ago." But because it was all tied up with my success, it made it really hard to grow out of. In those years, an age ago, I felt like Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner. Some people love people forever, and I'm one of them. I really feel like writing the book is as

close as I can ever come to shoving that thing into the now and letting it be.

In the book, you write that the first time you played *Saturday Night Live*, you bonded with the stage crew by telling a dirty joke – but you don't repeat the joke in the book. Will you tell me?

It was a very crude joke, I'm sure that Tom [Waits] and Chuck [E. Weiss] told it to me – along the lines of, "How many pussies does it take to screw in a light bulb?" I just don't remember all of it. But one of the stagehands told me yes, you really endeared yourself to us all when you did that, because nobody speaks to the stagehands. My mother was a union girl, she always championed her waitresses' union, so when I started playing these places I would approach these union working guys as if they were my people, not the people in charge. I did that for many years and I think that won me friends I didn't even know about.

You mention several psychic or supernatural incidents in the book. You had a premonition of a terrible motorcycle accident your brother was in as a teenager. A few years later, a poltergeist broke a mirror in your family's house. And then you had an apartment in Santa Monica that felt haunted, although Dr. John told you that was actually a curse some witches put on him, which found you accidentally. Are you sensitive to the paranormal? Have you had other ghosts in houses you've lived in?

I think so. Not as active as those like in Santa Monica. But I think when you're taking drugs and you're near death, slipping in and out of the netherworld, maybe a person could be sensitive. I do have a sensitivity that I've always had, foretelling my brother's accident. Generally speaking, ghosts aren't interfering, they can't hurt you. But sometimes there's an unpleasantness when they reach out to you. That poltergeist thing was inexplicable. That entity, or spirit, or whatever it was, was not good. But the worst one was in Santa Monica. Dr. John believes that [it was a curse] but I also think it was heroin. Because of heroin, I began to have dreams that I couldn't wake up. I knew I was sleeping and I couldn't get myself back into my body to move. Each time it was harder to get back in. I don't know if there were really demons screaming – I think that was the sound of myself trying to breathe. I hope! I hope that it wasn't a fucking demon coming to get me.

You have the book, and you're working on the double demos album. It seems like 2021 could be a busy year.

It's potentially a year where I can raise my profile. That serves two things. For me personally, it makes me feel like my work might be acknowledged. What does that matter? I don't know, but it does. For a practical basis, I can put some money in the bank and it would be really great, going into being old, if I have some money stored away.

But remember what I said when we started. Whenever you do something for any selfish reason... (laughs) But no, I didn't do it for fame, although I was aware that if it was a good book it would have that potential. What my hope is is that the memoir is a different kind of memoir, that it tells another kind of story than just the story of what it's like to be famous. It tells what it's like to be this human being who lived in this time. In a hundred years when people read it they'll go, "Ah, is that what it was like to be a woman back then?" Like reading about a wagon train.

Rickie Lee Jones' memoir, Last Chance Texaco: Chronicles Of An American Troubadour is out April 6 on Black Cat/Grove Press.

JONES TO THE BONE

Three key shots from the Rickie Lee canon, by Alison Fensterstock.

THE INGENUE

Rickie Lee Jones

★★★★★

WARNER BROS, 1979



The new starlet in town came from the shadowy side of Hollywood, where she'd prepared for her close-up with sharp, jive-talking hipsters such as Tom Waits and Chuck E. Weiss – the latter immortalised in her debut album's big hit single, Chuck E.'s *In Love*. Rickie Lee Jones took the best new artist Grammy that year for her aching, playful and gorgeously vivid walk on the jazz side of life.

RICKIE GOES WEST

Flying Cowboys

★★★★★

GEFFEN, 1989



Hailed as a return to form, Jones's fourth full-length long-player revived the romantic, impressionistic storytelling and jazz-flavoured pop that characterised her smash debut and its follow-up, *Pirates*. With Steely Dan's Walter Becker as producer, she stretches musically and thematically, experimenting with reggae and the blues for a soundscape as warm and expansive as a frontier sunset.

SOUL SEARCHING

The Sermon On Exposition Boulevard

★★★★★

NEW WEST, 2007



On Jones's noisiest album, the raw rock'n'roll bang and clang stands in counterpoint to its searching spirituality. Inspired by collaborator Lee Cantelon's book *The Words*, which deployed Christ's comments from the New Testament, Jones contemplates the meaning of faith and reaffirms that her creative powers are, at the very least, something to believe in.

eventually became. One of them's still here, one of them's a Christian in North Carolina. One of them's in Costa Rica. I don't know what happened to them all, because I only met them briefly. I just thought they were wild, importing and exporting marijuana! That's a criminal enterprise. "I'm sitting with a criminal, that's kind of exciting..." But that was as close as I came to it.

How did you fall in with this criminal element in the first place?

They came to my show. I came here to play, checked into my hotel in New Orleans and went into my room and in my room was a dress. Next to it was a jewellery case with some diamond earrings in it, great big diamonds with doves or something. I went, "What the fuck?" Somebody called right away and said, "Did you get our presents?" I said, "I can't take your presents." I did not know who they were. And then they sent drugs to the band, which was totally not cool. They wanted in! I really thwarted their advances. Can't buy me with

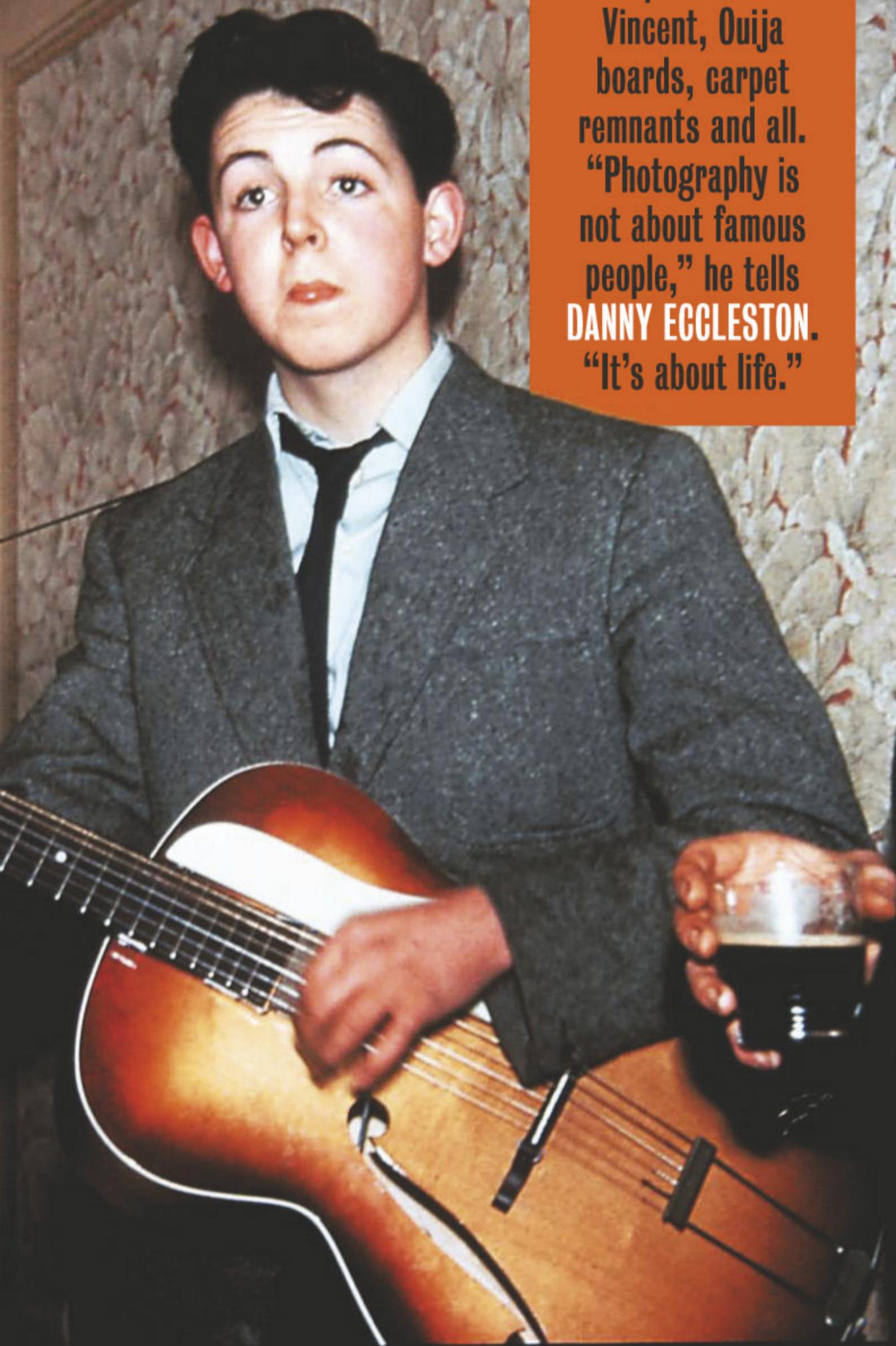
The Savage Young

BEATLE



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ES



A new book of photographs by Beatle Paul's brother **MIKE McCARTNEY** sheds new light on the band's early days in Liverpool — Gene Vincent, Ouija boards, carpet remnants and all. "Photography is not about famous people," he tells **DANNY ECCLESTON**. "It's about life."



I DON'T WANT TO SPOIL THE PARTY

147 Dinas Lane, Huyton, March 8, 1958

George Harrison (15), John Lennon (17), Paul McCartney (15) warm up while wedding guest Dennis Littler sups some stout. "They're just about to take the stage," says Mike McCartney. "Or rather, move along to the bit of the back parlour where they were going to play."

JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE... and Dennis? It doesn't trip off the tongue, but that was the scene immortalised in Kodachrome as a slimmed-down Quarrymen limbered up for a set in the back parlour of 147 Dinas Lane, Huyton, the home of Paul's Uncle Harry and Auntie Gin, on March 8, 1958.

"It was a wedding reception for cousin Ian and his wife Jackie," explains Mike McCartney, the picture taker. "Uncle Harry had quite a posh house, a big semi next to a bowls club – he was a joiner. Dennis Littler was cousin Ian's bezzie mate. I hate it whenever he gets cropped out of the picture. Photography is not about famous people – it's about life."

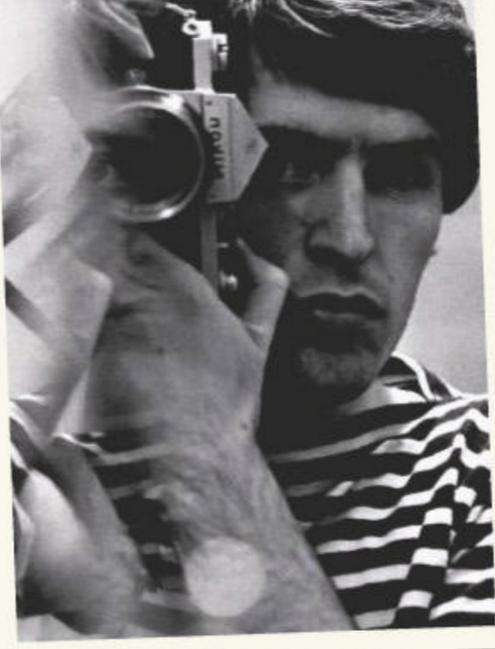
Life teems in Mike McCartney's *Early Liverpool*, a definitive collection of his photography published next month by Genesis Books. Inside, we encounter The Beatles' baby steps and plenty besides, much of it unseen. It would still be unseen if his wife hadn't insisted on a clear-out of Mike's "crap". "She said, we have to take some of these old books to Oxfam," McCartney recalls. "I picked out a blue hardback copy of John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, with a stamp from the Liverpool Institute High School For Boys. I threw it in the middle of the room and something popped out. It was a print of our kid. And I remembered: when you'd dried your prints you'd put them in books to flatten them out, otherwise they'd curl."

McCARTNEY FOUND SHOTS HE NO longer had negatives for, many redolent of life at 20 Forthlin Road, Allerton, the two-up-two-down behind the Police Training Academy where James McCartney and sons Paul and Mike strove to make ends meet after the death of midwife mum Mary. There's a shot of Paul talking to the cleaner Nora, sneakily taken from the boys' bedroom window ("She really didn't want me to take a picture of her – thought it was the devil's work!") plus photos of the nascent Beatles, at Forthlin Rd, the Cavern Club and elsewhere.

McCartney's evocative photography reminds the viewer that these were indeed different times. Monumental cityscapes, bomb sites and harbour views project romance atop the reality of late-'50s and early-'60s Liverpool. And there's a shot of Mike with rock'n'roll hero Gene Vincent at the Cavern, taken by Paul, in which Mike – then an apprentice hairdresser at Andre Bernard – holds a comb under his nose in an imitation of Adolf Hitler. "As you can see," says Mike drily, "Gene wasn't that impressed."

Mike, a hitmaker in his own right with Scaffold, hasn't always appreciated being considered a Beatle appendage. "I won't say it's boring because it was so dynamic," he says. "But I like to break away." Yet his lens can't help but fill in important aspects of the group's early story: lashings of their inborn character and burgeoning charisma.

"I'm like Rembrandt's kid brother," he chuckles. "While he's painting his masterpieces I'm doing his portrait in crayons."



↑ ↑ TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE

Mike with Nikon; Scaffold on bomb site, Liverpool

"Now you're talking about a *proper* group," laughs McGear. The Scaffold – (from left) John Gorman, Roger McGough and Mike McGear (AKA McCartney) – explore some local sights. Note inappropriate footwear. Their 1968 single *Lily The Pink* went to Number 1 in the charts in Britain, Ireland and Australia.

↑ ONLY A NORTHERN SONG

Paul and John, 20 Forthlin Road, November 1962

"I call this one 'Rodgers & Hammersmith'," says Mike McCartney. "They're rehearsing *I Saw Her Standing There*. You can see what it was like at Forthlin – offcuts of carpet because we couldn't afford a whole carpet – but it's important to see them at work. I just sent this picture to our kid."

➔ **I'M LOOKING THROUGH YOU**

Paul McCartney, the garden, 20 Forthlin Road, July 1, 1962

Portrait shot from inside the shed – one of many scenes of Paul and father James at Forthlin Road. Although Mary's death had shaken the household, there were more complex repercussions. "If mum hadn't have died there would have been no guitars and banjos in our house," says Mike. "Because she would have wanted us to go into one of the professions."

⚡ **BAD BOY**

George, with James McCartney, 20 Forthlin Road

"George was the quiet rebel," says McCartney. "At Liverpool Institute you weren't allowed to wear anything other than black and grey, nothing gaudy. Once he was walking along the corridor towards me, and as he passed he opened his blazer and underneath was a fluorescent bright green waistcoat. You know... just to show the dissent."



**WITH A LITTLE HELP
FROM MY FRIENDS**

**Paul, George and John,
147 Dinas Lane, Huyton,
March 8, 1958**

Another frame from Cousin Ian's wedding reception. "I must have done something right," says McCartney, "because dad would have shelled out for the colour film, and that would have been real money."





GETTING BETTER

John Lennon, backstage at the Assembly Hall, Mold, January 24, 1963

"They were always round the house rehearsing," says McCartney. "Songs that were later famous I'd recognise from our kid playing guitar in the bog."



ACT NATURALLY

Ringo and George, Mold, January 24, 1963

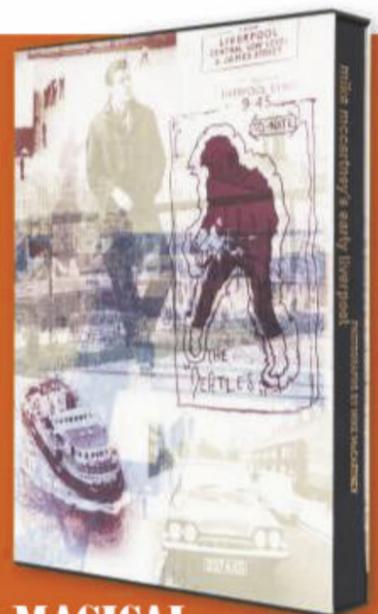
Mike McCartney remembers this being taken at the Assembly Hall in Mold, north Wales, and later printed in the Wrexham Leader. The Beatles were supported by The Chariots and were paid £50, well below their post-Love Me Do rate. "I told our kid about Ringo," says Mike, "how good a drummer he was, very different, and rock steady."



I CALL YOUR NAME

John, Paul and George, the Royal Iris, July 6, 1962

Between sets supporting Acker Bilk on a Riverboat Shuffle bill, The Beatles minus Pete Best try to contact the other side. They haven't worked out that you need to put your hands on the glass. The Royal Iris (known as 'the Fish & Chip Boat') steamed up and down the Mersey offering on-board entertainment.



MAGICAL HISTORY TOUR

Mike McCartney's Early Liverpool is published by Genesis Publications, £325. Shipping in May, purchase from www.mikemccartneybook.com



"There has been no other influence than the four of us": Greta Van Fleet (from left) Sam Kiszka, Josh Kiszka, Danny Wagner and Jake Kiszka.

Travellers of both time and space, GRETA VAN FLEET have sat with the elders of the gentle race (well, Elton John) and learned the secrets of supercharged classic rock. But as their world-conquering mission enters a new phase, will they ever escape the Led Zeppelin comparisons? “We’re honoured!” they tell MARK BLAKE.

Photography by **ALYSSE GAFKJEN**

IN APRIL 2018, WHEN GRETA VAN FLEET PLAYED LONDON’S ISLINGTON ACADEMY, the 800 people in the audience included one of their highest-profile fans, Sir Elton John. The band’s vocalist, Josh Kiszka, was backstage after the show when Elton strode into the dressing room, “like an endearing grandfather figure”, offering compliments and advice.

“He told us we should flaunt what we’ve got,” says Kiszka. “I think what he was getting at was we’re young and should use it.” Elton then told the band, already renowned for their assiduous recreation of a sound more attuned to 1970 than the 21st century, that they should brush up on their rock’n’roll history. “He said, ‘I’m going to get someone to send you these documentaries about George Harrison and Joe Cocker.’”

How much impact the Joe Cocker tutorial might have had is open to debate. Nevertheless, two-and-a-half years later, Greta Van Fleet are one of America’s biggest new rock bands, working out how to follow up one of the fastest-selling debut albums of recent times. Today, Kiszka lives near a railway station in the Michigan-raised band’s adopted hometown of Nashville. His open-plan kitchen/dining room, with its burnished work surfaces and wall-mounted flatscreen, are nicely lit by the Tennessee sun, suggesting there are worse places to live.

However, several times a day an express train thunders past, rendering all speech inaudible. Kiszka and his bandmates have nicknamed this ‘the Tequila train’, with the running gag that whenever it passes, you have to take a shot. “So I’m completely trashed right now,” he jokes, flashing pearly whites and a neatly-sculptured musketeer’s beard.

Josh is one of three Kiszka brothers in Greta Van Fleet, alongside his twin Jake, on guitar, and younger brother Sam on bass and keyboards; drummer Danny Wagner rounds out the quartet. Their 2018 debut album, *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*, unabashedly channelled the groove and swagger of ’70s rock, but with a cutting-edge tweak that made it accessible to a modern, prime-time audience. And it wasn’t just Elton John who acknowledged their chops. Robert Plant described Josh Kiszka as “a beautiful little singer, who borrowed his voice from someone I know very well.”

➤ Alysse Gafkjen





“ROCK’N’ROLL KEEPS REINVENTING ITSELF. IT’S LIKE THE CIRCLE OF LIFE. IT’S BORN, IT DIES, IT COMES BACK AGAIN.” Josh Kiszka

“Give us time, let us age a bit”: Josh (top left) and Jake; (insets) Greta Van Fleet’s 2017 EP and 2021 album.

◀ Others have been less coy. “I wish they didn’t sound so much like Led Zeppelin,” Slash admitted in 2018. “But still, the idea of fuckin’ four kids getting on-stage and playing their fuckin’ asses off with just a couple amps and a drum kit, and just playing their instruments as opposed to having all this other fuckin’ shit going on, I think that’s inspiring.”

THE SECOND GRETA VAN FLEET album, *The Battle At Garden’s Gate*, is unlikely to entirely banish the airship in the room. The first single, *Age Of Machine*, evokes Led Zeppelin’s *No Quarter*, from Jake Kiszka’s Jimmy Page-style guitar figure to bassist Sam moonlighting, John Paul Jones-style, on keyboards. But there’s more going on beneath the surface. Jake Kiszka describes the album, produced with them by Foo Fighters and Paul McCartney producer Greg Kurstin, as a “cinematic rock album”. “We grew up with great movies, like *Apocalypse Now*,” he explains from his Nashville residence. Sporting a sweeping curtain of hair and dapper navy jacket, the guitar-playing Kiszka could walk out of the room and straight onto a stage without having to check a mirror. “Our starting point was, Let’s score this film we’ve come up with in our heads.”

“The whole album is about war – wars of religion, wars of industry,” says Josh. But it also compounds the theory that Greta Van Fleet are a product of their environment: a dizzying mishmash of Francis Ford Coppola, Led Zeppelin, Henry David Thoreau, and a millennial childhood growing up in small-town Middle America.

GVF come from Frankenmuth, a town (population: approximately 5,000) north of Detroit, whose earliest settlers were German, and which is still nicknamed ‘Little Bavaria’. “Today it’s mainly Catholic and Lutheran,” explains Josh. “We were brought up in and around the church, but our schooling was progressive and our upbringing more bohemian.”

Their grandfather is an accordion player with his own plaque in the Michigan State Polka Hall Of Fame; their father has a bachelor’s degree in philosophy and a large music and film collection. Aged three, Jake Kiszka picked up his dad’s guitar “and never put it down again.”



rafting in their local creek and camping in the woods. Today, he names British theologian Alan Watts as his favourite philosopher: “There is optimism there, some cosmic and Eastern influences – and I like that.”

Greta Van Fleet formed in 2012, encouraged by their parents: “If we were interested in something,” says Jake, “they were like, ‘Go do it.’” Josh and Jake were 16, Sam 14. They spent their first four years juggling school with weekend gigs in saloons and biker bars, before signing to Lava Records off the back of *Highway Tune*, later released as their first single (and boasting 102,246,049 Spotify streams when MOJO last looked). Their 2017 EP, *From The Fires*, bagged a Grammy for Best Rock Album, before *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* became a Billboard Number 3 hit.

In 2018, Josh claimed Greta Van Fleet were “introducing a new generation to rock’n’roll”, and he’s been proved right. Their fanbase includes those discovering hard rock for the first time, plus an older audience in the market for a young band putting their own slant on familiar blues, metal and folk tropes. Like The Black Crowes, and Primal Scream’s roots-rock rebirth in the early 1990s, songs such as *Age Of Man* and *Highway Tune* reimagine the past through the prism of GVF’s relative youth and wider influences. Just as importantly, they also deliver live. The exultant show MOJO witnessed at London’s Forum in November 2018 proved how much their early years on Michigan’s club circuit had paid off.

“You have this group from a small town that just goes, Whoosh! to extraordinary heights very quickly – it can be strange,” explains Jake.

“We’d never been abroad before,” says Josh, remembering how they spent most of 2018 and 2019 on the road. “Where we come from, a lot of people don’t leave. But we always wanted to travel. Except when we did, people already knew who we were.”



IT WAS MARCH 2018, WHEN GVF realised how much their lives had changed. Elton John rang and asked them to play his annual AIDS Foundation Oscars party in Los Angeles. Josh: “He said, ‘Hello boys, it’s Elton.’ There was a moment of silence and the oxygen was sucked out the room. Is this actually happening?” A month later, he was backstage at their club gig in London.

Greta Van Fleet followed up on Elton’s recommendations from that night. “I’ve really gotten into George Harrison and Joe Cocker,” says Josh, who also has Miriam Makeba and Wilson Pickett on his current playlist. Jake, meanwhile, recalls studying recordings by his guitar heroes – “Hendrix, Beck, Page, Rory Gallagher...” – like sacred texts: “You have to do your work with the old masters.”

“Led Zeppelin are an influence,” Josh admits, with a Zen-like smile. “But it’s Jake who carries the torch. I am more folk, Sam is more jazz, but Jake is blues and rock’n’roll. It’s all Jake’s fault.” He laughs. “I didn’t hear Led Zeppelin until I was in high school. I remember thinking, What the fuck is that? It’s unique.”

“We are honoured by the affiliation,” says his twin, adopting a poker face. “You gather a bunch of influences at a young age. You’re not going to craft a sound straight away, so you begin by copying. It’s a natural progression, human evolution.”

Do you think critics will stop mentioning Led Zeppelin to you? “No, probably not,” beams Josh.

Zeppelin comparisons notwithstanding, Greta Van Fleet’s perceived authenticity is compromised in the eyes of some by their mainstream music connections: Lava Records’ boss Jason Flom helped break Katy Perry, for example. The speed of Greta Van Fleet’s rise has led to suggestions

FLEET FIXES!

You shook me!
The Kiszkas reveal their *other* musical inspirations to **MARK BLAKE**.

CREAM Disraeli Gears

(Reaction, 1967)



Jake Kiszka was six when he saw Eric Clapton in a Cream documentary, and told his father, “I want to do that.”

Disraeli Gears was his gateway drug, laying the foundations for Jake’s love of “guitar-centric music.”

THE JIM HENDRIX EXPERIENCE

Are You Experienced?

(Track, 1967)



“After Cream, I moved on to Hendrix,” says Jake, who found Jimi’s debut LP in their father’s

record collection. The dynamism and light and shade of *Purple Haze*, *Hey Joe* and *The Wind Cries Mary* re-materialises in *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*’s darker, deeper cuts.

GEORGE HARRISON All Things Must Pass

(Apple, 1970)



The ‘Quiet’ Beatle’s solo work was recommended to GVF by Elton John. Harrison’s third solo LP, a triple, is a

sprawling celebration of life, love, freedom (from the Fab Four) and – tapping into Josh Kiszka’s passion for philosophy – Vaishnavism, George’s favoured Hindu denomination.

THE BLACK KEYS Magic Potion

(Nonesuch, 2006)



GVF bassist Sam Kiszka has recalled how their father played them the Akron garage duo’s fourth LP. Its

spare riffs and blunt minimalism were a revelation to his sons. “After listening to the old masters, it felt like the next step,” says Jake.

THE WHITE STRIPES Icky Thump

(XL/Third Man, 2007)



Like The Black Keys, this Detroit twosome’s repurposing of classic rock moves, especially on this,

their final album, thrilled the Kiszkas, as Josh and Jake approached adolescence. “I was always into heavier music,” says Jake, “and this got me into the punkier side of things.”



Allow me to introduce you: Sir Elton and Jake, 2018; (below) with Rachel Brosnahan and Alec Baldwin on *Saturday Night Live*, 2019; (left, from top) Sam and Danny Wagner.



that their sound and look – a sartorial riot of silk scarves, ballet slippers and tailored jumpsuits – have been manufactured by outside forces.

Not so, apparently. “There has been no other influence than the four of us,” insists Jake. “The whole thing is crafted by us. But we are well protected and have a manager whose attitude is, ‘These guys are the creators.’”

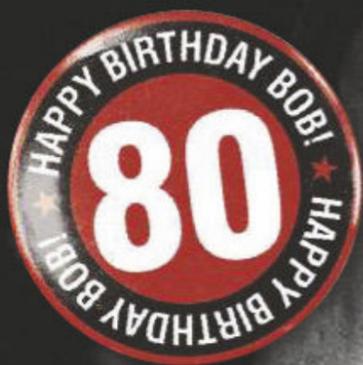
What Lava and GVF’s manager, Aaron Frank of AMFM Music Management, have done, though, is pitch the group at the mainstream. History is full of bands who sounded like Led Zeppelin, but never escaped the hard rock ghetto. Greta Van Fleet aren’t aimed at lapsed *Sounds* and *Kerrang!* readers. They’ve played Coachella and Download, covered Cream’s *White Room* and Adele’s *Rolling In The Deep*, and been beamed into millions of American homes via *Saturday Night Live* and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*. “Rock’n’roll keeps reinventing itself,” shrugs Josh. “It’s like the circle of life. It’s born, it dies, it comes back again...”

Greta Van Fleet’s ‘new Zep’ experience is also nothing new. In 1974, tracks from Canadian geek-rockers Rush’s first album were played on a Detroit radio station. Listeners jammed the switchboard asking when Led Zeppelin’s new LP was coming out. *The Battle At Garden’s Gate* fleshes out the sound of GVF’s debut, and, as Jake Kiszka puts it, suggests “natural progression and evolution”. Time, then, is on their side.

“What we do isn’t really classic rock – it can’t be,” says Josh, with a final grin. “Give us time, let us age a bit, and get a little fat and irrelevant first.”



Greta Van Fleet’s The Battle At Garden’s Gate is released on Lava/Republic on April 16.



A long way to the top:
Bob Dylan in the basement
of Gerde's Folk City, West 4th
Street, Greenwich Village,
New York, November 1961;
(opposite) Robert Shelton
(centre) and Dylan with
fiddler Clayton McMichen,
Newport Folk Festival, 1964.

The Dawn Of Dylan

Bob Dylan turns 80 in May – a landmark in our culture – but it was in 1961 that he came of age. Among the witnesses, the late Robert Shelton: Dylan’s first press champion and biographer. In this extract from a new edition of his pioneering No Direction Home, we hurtle back to New York’s Greenwich Village, where a new kind of folk singer – a new kind of artist – is being revealed...

Photograph: Ted Russell



I FIRST ENCOUNTERED DYLAN AT A MONDAY night hoot at Gerde’s Folk City in June 1961. Bob was doing his musical shaggy-dog story, Talkin’ Bear Mountain, inspired by routines that Noel (Paul) Stookey, later of Peter, Paul And Mary, was doing at the Gaslight. Bob looked like a European street singer or tumbler. He bobbed and swayed, played with his black corduroy Huck Finn cap, made faces, winced, and joked his way through the ridiculous narrative.

I walked over to Pat Clancy, the Irish folk singer, and said: “Hey, Pat, you have to catch this kid!”

Pat turned from his Jameson’s to watch Bob. “Well, what have we here?” he exclaimed, half-curious and half joyful. When the enthusiastic audience released Bob from the stage, I told him how much I liked his work. He appreciated my appreciation. I told him when he had his next job to call me and I’d try to review him in the New York Times. “I sure will, I sure will,” he replied. “I think you missed me when I was here last April.”

A week or two later, my phone rang and a thin, nasal voice said: “Hi, I’m Bob Dylan. You said I should call you if I got a job. Well, I got a job. I’m at the Gaslight for a week.”

Several days later, I arrived at the Gaslight to see the regulars listening to Dave Van Ronk and Dylan. At his usual table in the rear was Albert B. Grossman, who often held court in coffeehouses. He usually smoked a king-size cigarette the way an oil sheik would hold a hookah, making a circle of his thumb and forefinger, slightly crooking his little finger, and blowing the smoke out slowly through his hand.

I told Dylan the gig was too short to write up, but I introduced him to Albert, saying I thought this kid was going to be the next ➤

Ted Russell/Polaris/Eyevice, Jon Alper



Shock of the new: (left) Dylan prepares to upstage Ralph Rinzler (left) and John Herald of The Greenbriar Boys, Gaslight club, NYC, 1962; (right) Gerde's Folk City; (below) influences Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly; (opposite page) Dylan, January '62; (far right) with first love Suze Rotolo in his Greenwich Village apartment at 161 West 4th Street.



◀ sensation. Grossman, as usual, said nothing. After Dylan left our table, Grossman asked what I thought of Van Ronk. I was enthusiastic but I predicted that Dylan would go further. Grossman smiled, a Cheshire cat in untouched acres of field mice.

The Gaslight was then owned by a wild-looking bohemian, John Mitchell, who had fought many legal battles against police and fire authorities who had cracked down on the MacDougal Street coffeehouses. Mitchell found Dylan especially droll. Although Dylan was frequently nostalgic about the Gaslight, he also made fun of his first job there. His Gaslight stint ended inconclusively. Grossman said nothing. I hadn't written a word about him. Bob kept working at his music, at his western speech. Sometimes his mangled dialect made words virtually indistinguishable. He started to mumble about "ramblin' and tumblin' with his coat collar turned up high."

Dylan rambled and tumbled into his first New York concert appearance and radio broadcast on Saturday, July 29, 1961. The marathon was run by a new FM station, WRVR, operated by the Riverside Church. To inaugurate the station's live-music project, Izzy Young and Bob Yellin mobilised folk musicians. In those days, at a call for folk talent, youngsters like Tom Paxton and Molly Scott, and old-timers like the Reverend Gary Davis and blues singer Victoria Spivey, would rush to perform, even without pay. The studio audience was as restless and partisan as a high school assembly.

There were workshops on the blues, an Eastern Mediterranean segment organised by Jack Goddard of the Village Voice, and showcases for various banjo styles. No big-name stars, but the show was an impressive display of available talent around town. Midway through the afternoon, a slight musician who sang, looked, and twanged like Woody Guthrie made his way to the microphone. Dylan, with his harmonica in a holder improvised from a metal coat hanger, was on for five quick songs, joined on some by Ramblin' Jack Elliott and bluesman Danny Kalb. In the Times, I briefly described Dylan's style as a "curiously arresting, mumbling, country-steeped manner." Dylan's

little stint received warm applause, his circle making enough noise to simulate a crowd.

After he left the stage, he was introduced to a 17-year-old, wide-eyed, long-haired beauty named Suze Rotolo, and began two years of an ecstatic, erratic romance. Dylan's reputation was growing as another Jack Elliott or Woody Guthrie, yet recording seemed the only doorway to national recognition. In late summer, a bright pair of Village girls, Sybil Weinberger, who worked in TV production, and Suze's older sister, Carla Rotolo, then personal assistant to Alan Lomax, suggested a demo-tape of upcoming Village folk singers.

BECAUSE OF THE URGINGS OF THE DYLAN COTERIE in general, Carla in particular, and my all but guaranteeing that I would review the show, Mike Porco booked Bob into Folk City again for two weeks: SEPTEMBER 25 THRU OCTOBER 8: GREENBRIAR BOYS, PICKING & SINGING THRU BLUEGRASS WITH THE SENSATIONAL BOB DYLAN. The Greenbriar Boys (Ralph Rinzler, John Herald, and Yellin) were city blue-

Courtesy CWAC, Getty (3), John Cohen/Getty, Ted Russell/Polaris/Eyevine x2), Robert Shelton

Young Gunn Bob Dylan, 1941-61



May 24, 1941

Robert Allen Zimmerman born in Duluth, Minnesota to (left) Abram Zimmerman and Beatrice Stone.

1944 Young Robert makes his first recording, talking and singing into a Dictaphone, aged three.

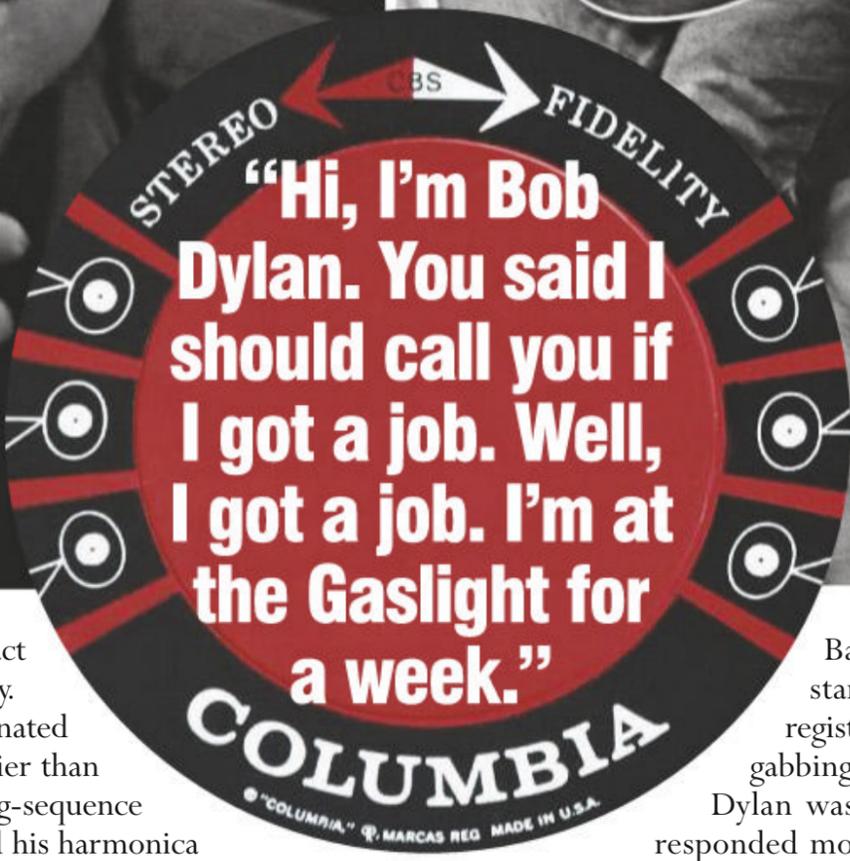
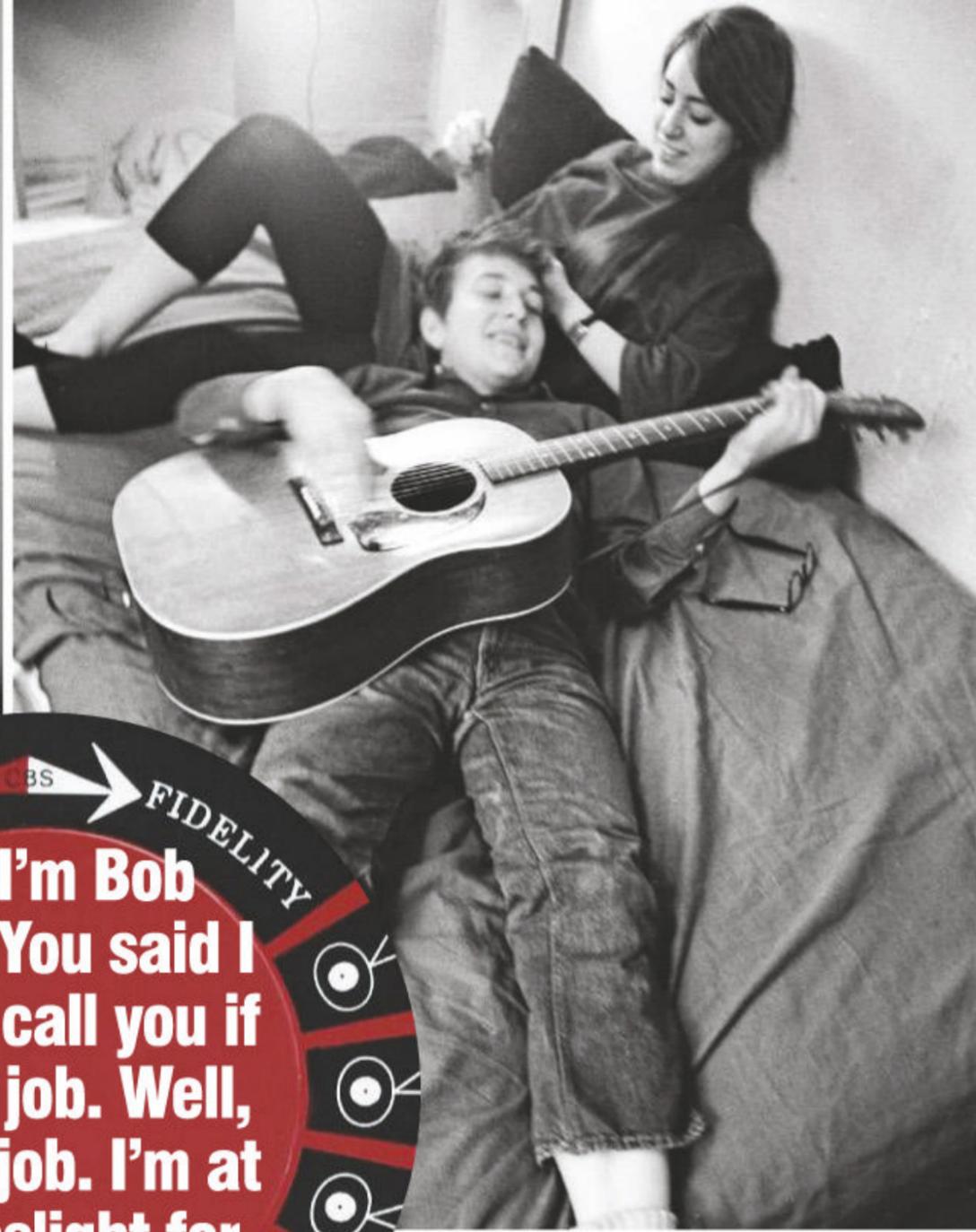
1946 Brother David is born. Aged five, Bobby sings Some Sunday Morning and Accentuate The Positive at a Mother's Day bash in Duluth.

1947 The Zimmermans move to Hibbing in Minnesota iron ore



country after father Abe contracts polio. Later, Dylan will claim the iron deposits boosted the signal of the Southern blues and country radio stations he was ensnared by. "Hibbing was a vacuum," he would tell Robert Shelton.

1955 Having tried trumpet and saxophone, the 14-year-old settles on guitar and piano, forms The Golden Chords with LeRoy Hoikkala and Monte Edwardson. Does stints in The Shadow Blasters and Elston Gunn & The Rock Boppers. "Bob really idolised Little Richard then," recalled Hoikkala.



grass wizards. They were not an easy act to follow, but Dylan followed superbly.

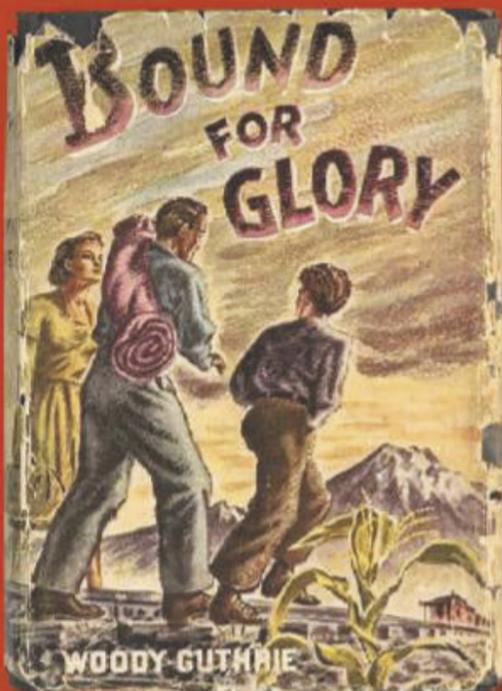
During those two weeks, he alternated between three costumes, each seedier than the next. His Gibson guitar had a song-sequence sheet pasted on its upper curve, and his harmonica holder hung around his neck. He looked studiously unkempt and very slight and frail – until he began to sing. His pinched, constricted voice seemed to be fighting its way out of his throat like a captive breaking jail. It was a rusty voice, suggesting Guthrie's old recordings. It was etched in gravel, like Van Ronk's. It sometimes crooned a bit, like Elliott's. Yet it was also a voice quite unlike anyone else's. You didn't think of it as something beautiful or sinuous, but as something that roiled up from the heart. He didn't sound a bit citified, but more like an old farmhand folk singer. Most of the audience liked Dylan those two weeks, regarding him as a masterly ethnic singer, but some thought he was just a bad joke.

In the background were the usual Folk City distractions.

Bartenders clinked and poured as if starring in TV commercials. The cash register rang. At the bar a few drunks were gabbing while others tried to silence them.

Dylan was all concentration. The audience responded more to Dylan's wit than to his slow, serious, intense material. Audience reaction led him to play the Chaplinesque clown. He closed with his own Song To Woody, suspensefully built to keep attention focused on each new line. After his set, we went back to the Folk City kitchen for his first press interview. The answers came fast, but I had a feeling that he was improvising and concealing.

Bob went on for another set. I told Carla that it had been a good interview and that I really loved his work and manner. But, I told her, I had the strange feeling he was putting me on. I told Carla to tell Bob there was a difference between kidding around with a Village guy and talking for publication. Minutes after Dylan's set Carla huddled with Bobby, and then we continued the interview ➤



1959 His Hibbing High School yearbook judges him most likely to "...join Little Richard". The same year, he plays two dates on piano with Bobby Vee as Elston Gunn ("With three 'n's," reported Vee later). Discovers Leadbelly.

Summer 1959 Now playing folk, performs solo shows in Denver and Central City, CO. Meets Jesse Fuller (below). Fails to impress Judy Collins: "He was pathetic, there's no other word for it."

September 1959 Enrolls at the University Of Minnesota in Minneapolis,

ostensibly to study liberal arts. Plays shows on the Dinkytown folk circuit. Hangs with fellow folkniks 'Spider' John Koerner and Tony Glover. Starts introducing himself as 'Bob Dillon' – after TV cowboy Matt Dillon, later adjusted to 'Dylan'. "He walked around like a young Shelley," said Koerner's roommate Harry Weber. "He was very self-confident."

1960 Reads Woody Guthrie's memoir Bound For Glory. Drops out of college.



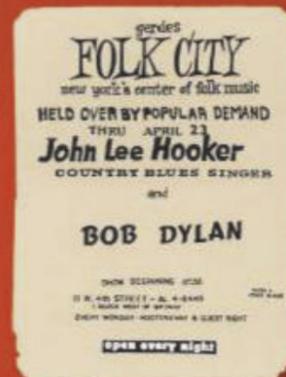
January 1961 Arrives in New York. Visits hero Woody Guthrie in Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital,

where he is dying of Huntington's chorea. On-stage at Greenwich Village's Café Wha?, he accompanies Fred Neil on harmonica.

April 11, 1961 Begins two-week residency at Gerde's Folk City, supporting John Lee Hooker. Bob Dylan has arrived.

June 1961 Meets New York Times critic Robert Shelton; shortly to be his key reviewer and, later, biographer.

May 24, 2021 Bob Dylan turns 80. Happy birthday, Bob!





Dylan recording his first album, *Bob Dylan*, with a Gibson acoustic and a harness harmonica, November 1961, Columbia Studio, NYC; (opposite) with producer John Hammond at the sessions; the LP and poster for his first major New York concert.

◀ at a table in between songs by The Greenbriar Boys.

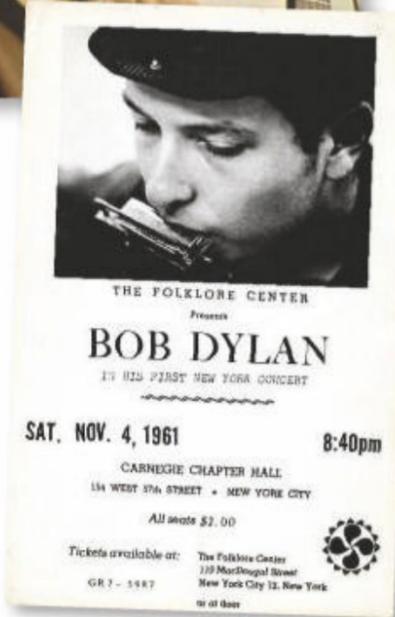
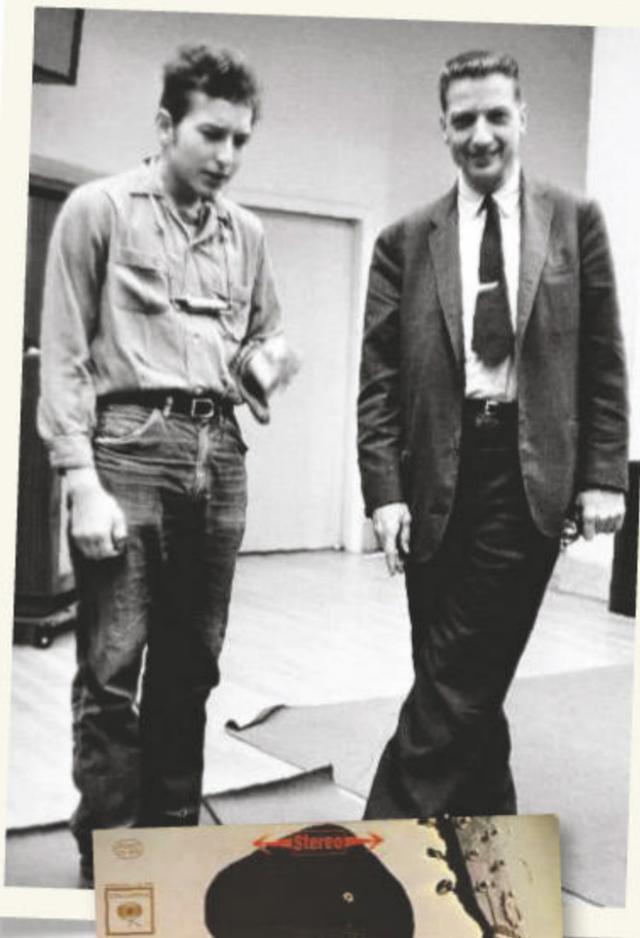
“Listen,” Bob told me, “I’m giving it to you straight. I wouldn’t tell you anything that isn’t true.” Did he want me to call him Bobby Dylan or Bob Dylan? He thought that one out, as if he were about to sign a contract. Half aloud, he repeated the two names to himself: “Bob Dylan, Bobby Dylan, Bob Dylan, Bobby Dylan... Make it Bob Dylan! That’s what I’m really known as,” he declared confidently. I wrote the review, which appeared in the Times on Friday, September 29, 1961. It said in part: *“A bright new face in folk music is appearing at Gerde’s Folk City. Although only 20 years old, Bob Dylan is one of the most distinctive stylists to play in a Manhattan cabaret in months... Mr. Dylan’s highly personalised approach toward folk song is still evolving. He has been sopping up influences like a sponge. At times, the drama he aims at is off-target melodrama and his stylisation threatens to topple over as a mannered excess. But if not for every taste, his music-making has the mark of originality and inspiration, all the more noteworthy for his youth. Mr Dylan is vague about his antecedents and birthplace, but it matters less where he has been than where he is going, and that would seem to be straight up.”*

This was followed by four laudatory paragraphs about The Greenbriar Boys. As good as they were, Dylan seemed to be the news. By chance, the entertainment section had a canyon at the top of one review page. Across three columns ran the headline: BOB DYLAN: A DISTINCTIVE STYLIST. A rough photo of Dylan with his hat, tie, and big guitar got three inches of space. The layout, the picture, and the headline, trumpeted Dylan even louder than my story.

REACTIONS COULDN’T HAVE VARIED more. Very few musicians were pleased. Elliott read the notice aloud in his best Dylanesque voice to a few drinkers at the Dugout on Bleeker Street. Van Ronk, cool but gulping hard, told me I had done “a very, very fine thing”. Pat Clancy and his brother, Tom, said, “Bobby has a lot of talent. He deserves to go places.” Izzy Young said he had discovered Dylan months earlier than anyone. Much of the Village music coterie reacted with jealousy, contempt, and ridicule. To a man, The Greenbriar Boys were hurt that this “kid” had eclipsed them. Fred Hellerman, a songwriter and arranger, formerly of The Weavers, was openly derisive: “He can’t sing, and he can barely play, and he doesn’t know much about music at all. I think you’ve gone off the deep end!” Manny Greenhill, Joan Baez’s kindly manager, said my review was “talking about Bobby in a year or two, not now.” Most enthusiastic, however, were Carolyn Hester and Richard Fariña. They liked Bob, personally and musically, and he was scheduled to play on Carolyn’s upcoming recording.

Dylan showed up at Folk City that Friday night stunned and shaken. There was a very big turnout. Bob looked uncertain that he could deliver, now that the order had been placed. And at the fourth night of his gig, Bob had an even more engrossed audience.

STEREO CBS FIDELITY
“You didn’t think of his voice as something beautiful or sinuous, but as something that roiled up from the heart.”



During that evening, Dylan steered me to a quiet corner and said: “I don’t want you to tell anybody about this, but I saw John Hammond Sr this afternoon and he offered me a five-year contract with Columbia! But, please, man, keep it quiet because it won’t be definite until Monday. I met him at Carolyn’s session today. I shook his hand with my right hand and I gave him your review with my left hand. He offered to sign me without even hearing me sing! But don’t tell anyone, not one single soul! It could get messed up by someone at the top of Columbia, but I think it is really going to happen. Five years on Columbia! How do you like that?”

Each participant in Dylan’s meeting with Hammond told it differently. A synthesis indicates that Hammond acted on instinct and reputation more than any objective proof of Dylan’s talent. Yet Hammond had the experience to trust his instincts. Carolyn Hester’s first recording for Columbia was a step forward for the young Texan singer, but proved an even bigger break for Dylan, who was just a walk-on with a mouth harp.

Dylan’s version was simply that he handed Hammond the Times review and went around the room doing his harmonica business. By the end of the session, at which Bob had not sung one note, Hammond said that he had heard a great many good things about Dylan from his son, John Hammond Jr, and others and wanted to sign him to Columbia for a “standard” contract – one album – with

options to do four more LPs for the next four years. Fariña generally substantiated this account, although he told me that he had huddled with Hammond during the session to say that Dylan was a first-rate singer and songwriter.

Hammond remembered meeting Dylan at a rehearsal at a West 10th Street apartment the Fariñas were borrowing. “I felt Bob was a poet, somebody who could communicate with his generation,” he said. “I remember the first album cost something like \$402 because he was the only guy on it, no arranging costs, no musicians to pay. While he was doing his second album for us, he came up to me and asked me about Albert Grossman, who wanted to sign him. I said we’d been on the board of the Newport Festival together and I thought I could work with him. I found out later I couldn’t.”

Once he began to do well, Dylan the performer was the object of both instant love and instant aversion. With each new

success, followers and detractors grew in number. There were converts, of course; some who had laughed at him went on to idolise him. Envy even reverberated back from Minneapolis, where folk circles were aghast at both his Times review and his Columbia contract. The pressures that later nearly destroyed him began that last week in September 1961. Could he live up to public praise? Could he ride out jealousy? ➤

THE FIRST ALBUM, SIMPLY entitled *Bob Dylan*, was recorded at three sessions in November 1961. After a brief run-through, Bob and Hammond were ready to move into Columbia Studio A on Seventh Avenue. For Hammond, this was almost effortless. All he needed was his singer-instrumentalist, an engineer, and himself. Dylan brought his talent, and the girl with the long brown hair.

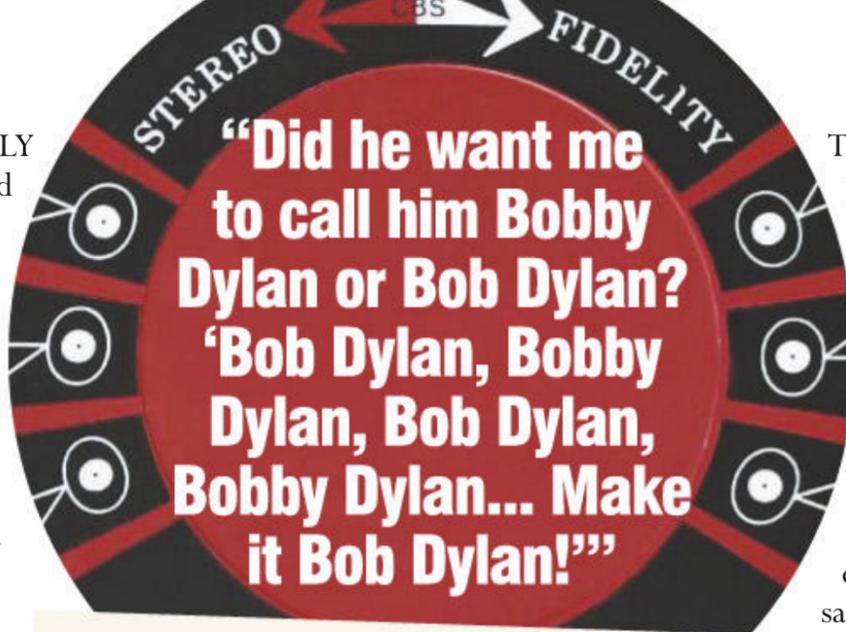
Suze sat admiringly at the sessions, yet their relationship was tempestuous, clouded by her mother's efforts to split them up. Many of the songs were clearly for her, and changes he made in traditional lyrics showed how strongly he wished to express himself to and about her. Dylan remained outwardly cool, putting down most of his songs in less than five takes. Hammond was delighted to be working with a kid who knew so much about the blues. Dylan told me the next day that while he was taping *Fixing To Die*, an old black janitor who was cleaning the hall stepped into the studio to listen. The tragic lament froze him, the janitor leaning on his broom, watching, listening. Bob never forgot it, for it impressed him more than anything Hammond said. Bob knew then he could get a lot more people to listen.

Despite what Hammond said later about the limits of Bob's guitar, harmonica, or mike technique, at the time he was openly rapturous about the album. Dylan's guitar work was strong for a 20-year-old's debut album. His harmonica work may not have been virtuoso, but it gave the album some of its flavour and texture, weaving the fabric of voice and guitar together. It helped stimulate the resurgence of interest in blues harmonica in the early '60s. Dylan's understanding of black blues remains the dominant impression of the album.

Hammond sent me the test pressings so that I could write the liner notes under the pseudonym of Stacey Williams, a name I pulled out of a hat. There was an unwritten rule, constantly broken, that members of the Times' music department should have nothing to do with the production of recordings they might review.

To prepare his official story, Dylan came to my pad one afternoon in December 1961 and spoke volubly and quickly, keen to praise his sources, but still not prepared to go far in discussing his early days. He said he had graduated from high school in Hibbing, "way up by the Canadian border". For a spell before graduating, he went on, he lived in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Gallup, New Mexico. "I went to the University of Minnesota on a scholarship, but I left after six months. I didn't agree with school. I flunked out. I read a lot, but not the required readings." Of his pilgrimage east to seek his hero Woody Guthrie, Bob said: "I headed for Greystone Hospital to see Woody. I talked with Woody, and it was an experience I'll never forget. Now, when I get depressed, I visit Woody in Brooklyn and then I get to feel better. I've visited Woody many, many times, but I would never want to be another Woody Guthrie."

Did he anticipate stardom? Dylan looked as modest as a hobo with a nickel in his pocket. "I never thought I would shoot lightning through the sky in the entertainment field." He sketched his influences: "I started to sing and play the guitar at the age of 10. Hank Williams had just died and I first liked country music – people like Jimmie Rodgers.



Many of the songs were clearly for her: Dylan with Suze Rotolo, September '61.

Then I got interested in old blues, and people like Jelly Roll Morton. I remember Leadbelly and See See (C.C.) Rider, but I also liked the country songs of Jack Guthrie. I really couldn't decide which I liked best, country or blues. So I suppose I ended by becoming a mixture of Hank Williams and Woody Guthrie."

What about his fascination with Charlie Chaplin? "He influences me, even in the way I sing. His films really sank in. I like to see the humour in the world. There is so little of it around. I guess I'm always conscious of the Chaplin tramp." Then what about death songs? "Well, I feel a closeness to songs like *See That My Grave Is Kept Clean*. I'm representing myself and a whole lot of people who sing in that manner." He was anxious to be in the very best company, song-swapping with Van Ronk and Elliott. He was a great fan of old rock'n'roll – Elvis Presley, Little Richard, and rockabilly singer Carl Perkins.

He linked his harmonica work to Jesse Fuller, 'Little Walter' Jacobs, and Sonny Terry. "Now I am 'blowing out' more in my own style." What did the future look like? "I would just like to keep on singing like I am. I just want to get along. I don't think about making a million dollars." He summarised his approach to songwriting: "Either the song comes fast, or it won't come at all." Some songs marinate for a long time. "I just jot down little phrases and things I overhear."

A GAP BETWEEN RECORDING AND RELEASE IS customary, but the album was not released until March 19, 1962, a long delay, caused by bureaucracy, that annoyed Dylan very much. He felt he was moving with such momentum that to have the record in limbo for five months was a cruel anticlimax. By the time the album was released, he was embarrassed, regarding it as early work best left in a bottom drawer. It was the last will and testament of one Dylan and the birth of a new Dylan.

Don Hunstein's cover photograph of the callow boy barely matches the performance by the old man within. Dylan looks almost delicate and tentative, yet the singing and playing are packed with bold assertion. But the photograph did show Dylan much as he looked in those days, the hat making him appear even younger than he was. The absence of a smile was also characteristic, for by then Dylan wasn't finding too much to smile about.

The recording received several fine reviews but, as they say in the record business, "nothing happened". Not until two years later did this creditable first recording begin to sell in quantity. Around Columbia, they began to call Bob Dylan "Hammond's folly". Only a handful of people thought Dylan had much promise. Suze did, but almost from the beginning she feared Bob's death-hauntedness. By November 1961, love was a four-letter word to Dylan, and so was Suze. Bob felt the romance was doomed – enough to make any 20-year-old sing an old man's song and think that life might be over.

Extracted from *Bob Dylan: No Direction Home*. Revised Illustrated Edition by Robert Shelton and Edited by Elizabeth Thomson, published by Palazzo.



It's A Good Little Thing



It's *another* Bobcentric birthday. Thirty years ago, Dylan's official Bootleg Series was born – and the genius of Blind Willie McTell was revealed. By Michael Simmons.

BOB DYLAN chronicler/friend Larry 'Ratso' Sloman had witnessed the work-in-progress that would become 1983's *Infidels* album when Dylan's *de facto* manager Bill Graham invited him to the studio to hear the mixed/sequenced end result. "Bob, Graham and I listened to the whole album front to back." When it was over, Dylan asked him what he thought. Sloman was knocked out by what he'd heard, but equally as mystified by what he hadn't: "It's great, but where the fuck is Blind Willie McTell?" He began sputtering, incredulous. "It's such a great song. One of your greatest songs. How can you not have put that on the album?" Dylan gently talked Ratso off the ledge. "Calm down, Ratso – it's only an album," said Bob softly. "I've made 20 of 'em."

Sloman was merely the first of many Dylan fans befuddled at the choice to omit the classic. And yet it's not unusual – examples of killer outtakes include *Let Me Die In My Footsteps*, left off 1963's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, and *Series Of Dreams*, not on 1989's *Oh Mercy*. But even by Dylan's mountaintop standards, *Blind Willie McTell* is at a looming, infrequently reached height.

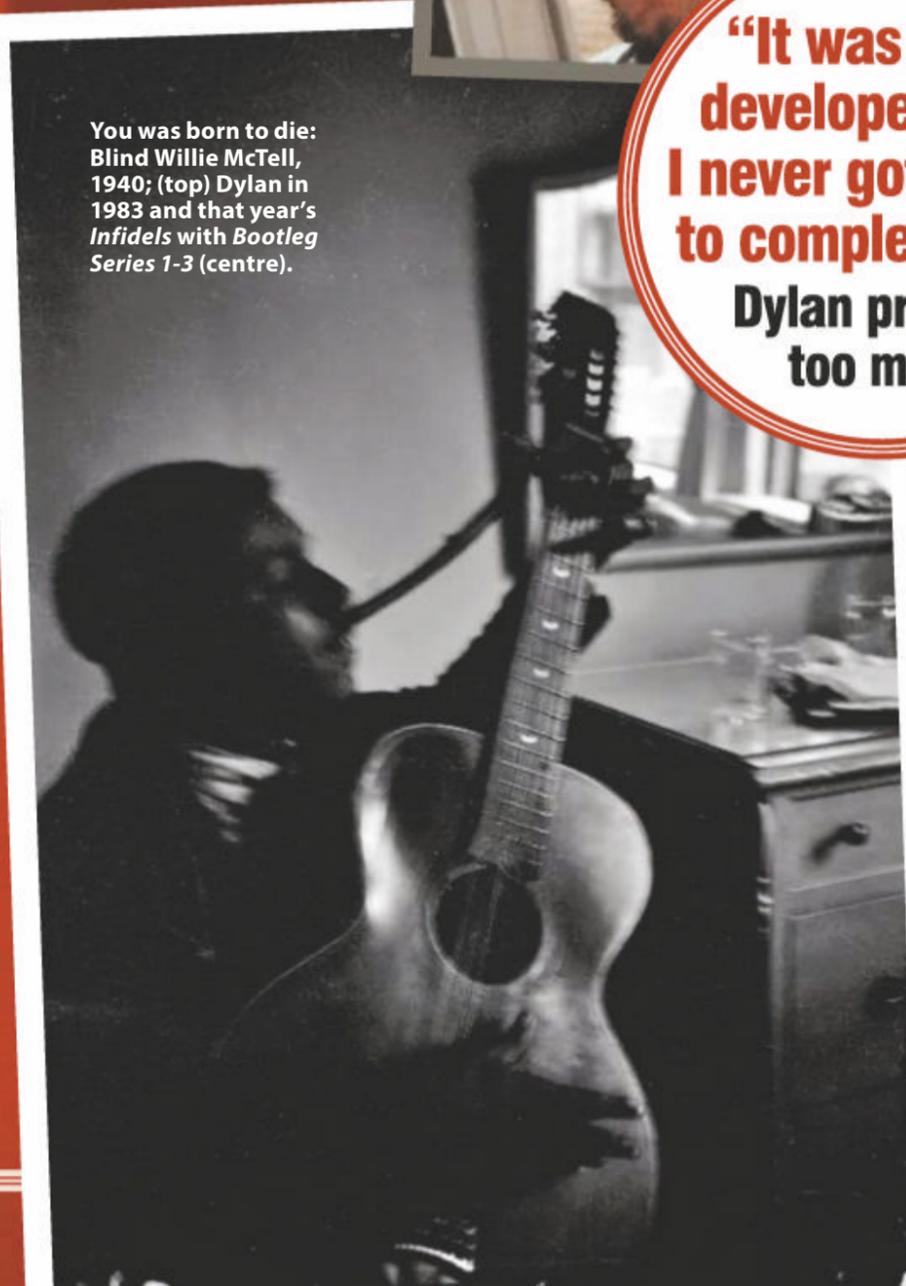
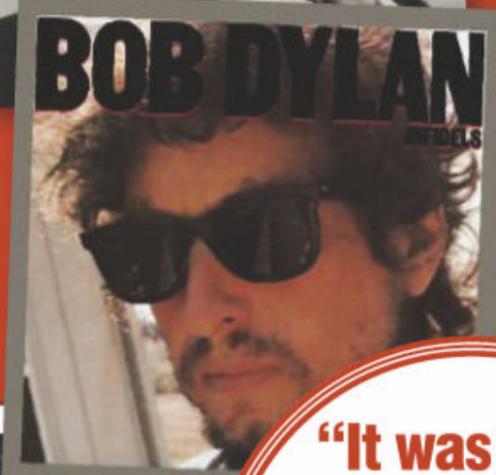
His reason for the omission has been quoted a few times. "It was never developed fully, I never got around to completing it," explained Dylan to Jonathan Lethem in *Rolling Stone* in 2006, echoing his earlier responses.

After enduring unauthorised – and illegal – copies, Dylan eventually self-bootlegged *Blind Willie McTell* on 1991's *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 [Rare & Unreleased 1961-1991]*, the debut of the ongoing archival collections. That version featured Dylan playing untutored parlour piano and *Infidels* co-producer Mark Knopfler repeating a hypnotic five-note hook on an acoustic 12-string guitar. The song's minor key and stark production emphasise the haunting lyrics that Dylan dramatically delivers, passionately rising in fury and descending in despair through the song's five verses. (Other takes have illicitly circulated,

including a full-band rendition with ex-Rolling Stone Mick Taylor's crying electric slide guitar.)

While it's been endlessly deconstructed by Dylanologists, what's remarkable is the song's simplicity: an evocation of America's legacy of slavery and built-in horrors that alternate with romanticised depictions of the antebellum South. "See them big plantations burning/Hear the cracking of the whips/Smell that sweet magnolia blooming/See the ghosts of slavery ships." Of the five verses, each ends with the line "Nobody can sing the blues/Like Blind Willie McTell."

On the surface, McTell's presence is unrelated to the larger story, but Dylan seems



You was born to die: Blind Willie McTell, 1940; (top) Dylan in 1983 and that year's *Infidels* with *Bootleg Series 1-3* (centre).

"It was never developed fully, I never got around to completing it." Dylan protests too much

to be making the point that transcendent beauty will rise up despite man's bottomless cruelty. McTell was an early 20th-century Atlanta, Georgia street performer and masterful 12-string and slide guitarist (clearly influencing both Knopfler and Taylor's instrument choices) who sang in a slicker, cheekier, more pop-like style than most country bluesmen of the era. His repertoire included ragtime, gospel and popular tunes as well as blues, but while he could

summon a ghostly moan that gave his blues the requisite lamentation, his key recordings transcend the years (the 1930s, mostly) in which they were cut. In time they would exert a powerful influence on the young Jack White.

The subject of America and race fascinated and troubled Dylan, a student of the Civil War. "The United States burned and destroyed itself for the sake of slavery," he told Mikal Gilmore in 2012, adding, "If slavery had been given up in a more peaceful way, America would be far ahead today." As Ratso Sloman tells *MOJO*, resuming his 38-year-old dialogue with the song, the line "power and greed and the corruptible seed" in *Blind Willie McTell* points to the universal problem of "the complete corruption of humans on the planet". He also compares the song to the recent *Murder Most Foul*, in which music appears to redeem tragedy. Sloman chuckles while emphasising a truth about all of Dylan's work. "He contains multitudes."

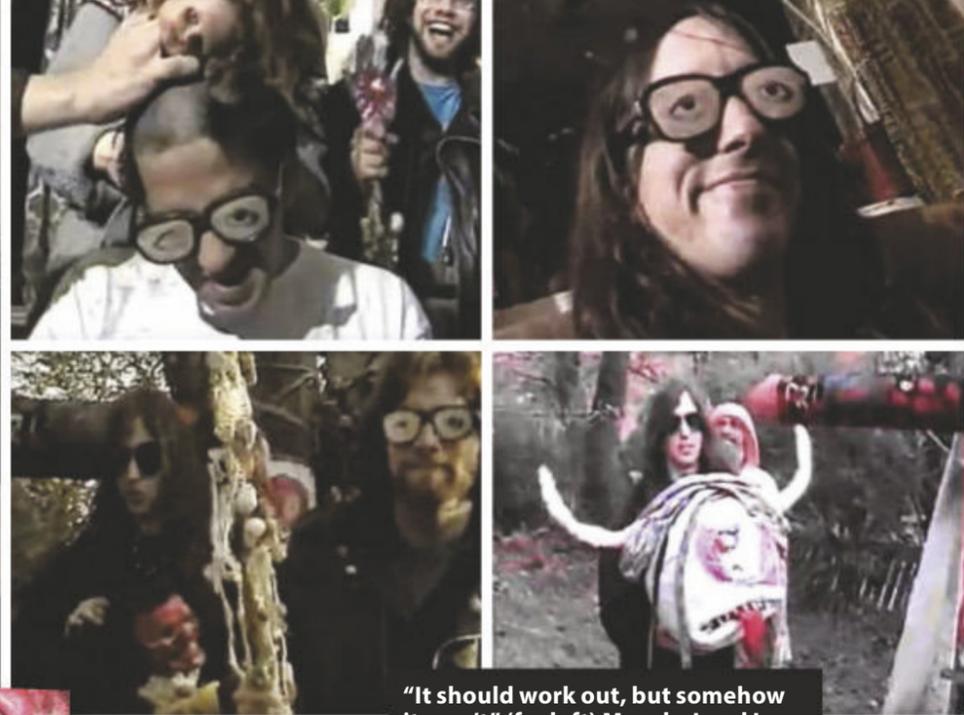
DINOSAUR JR. MAKE THE FREAK SCENE

From the wreckage of Massachusetts hardcore extremos Deep Wound, Dinosaur Jr. drew upon noise, metal, folk and more to concoct an *exceedingly* loud psychedelic punk rock that yielded 1987's masterpiece album *You're Living All Over Me* and '88's underground anthem *Freak Scene*. But fiercely dysfunctional personalities and the frictions of shoestring touring pushed them beyond breaking point. "I needed volume, lots of it," says J Mascis. "We weren't a buddy movie."

Words: **STEVIE CHICK** • Portrait by **DEREK RIDGERS**

Reptile on Main St.:
Dinosaur Jr. (from
left) Murph, Lou
Barlow and J Mascis
in North Kensington,
London, 1989.





"It should work out, but somehow it won't" (far left) Murph, J and Lou in London, 1989; (above) triple-bad acid antics in the Freak Scene video; (left) Freak Scene single; J at the desk on the European tour, 1988; (opposite) England gets a whiff of J Mascis, on-stage at Manchester University, April 29, 1989.



"I THREW MY BASS DOWN, SHOUTING, 'COME ON, LET'S FUCKING FIGHT!'"

Lou Barlow



◀ **J Mascis:** Hardcore was over, and I was figuring out what to do next. I had a concept: "ear-bleeding country". I switched from drums to guitar.

Lou Barlow: J loved The Zombies and Neil Young, and we were into The Birthday Party, post-punk, the Paisley Underground, '70s metal, and new metal bands like Venom and Raven. I'd just started smoking pot, and I'd get high and listen to J's demos for our first album [July 1985's *Dinosaur*], and his songs were fantastic. J was such a cool dresser back then – like this collision of Nick Cave and '60s-era, suede-wearing Neil Young, with a little Robert Smith thrown in. He had this fully realised vision for everything, and he was only 19.

J: We were obsessed. We wanted to make good music, that was all that mattered. We weren't some buddy movie, drinking beers and rocking out. We weren't friends. We loved the Minutemen, Hüsker Dü and the Meat Puppets, and our ambition was to tour like they did and sign to SST Records, the label they were on.

Murph: I was this happy-go-lucky slacker who'd found myself with these guys who were deadly serious and weren't very nice about it. They were like, "We need to make a mark and make it perfect."

J: I needed volume, lots of it. I liked that feeling of just being encompassed in sound. Guitar felt wimpy and unexpressive – I needed to recreate the feeling I got from pounding on the drums.

LB: We'd play New York, and Thurston Moore would whip out his portable tape recorder and start taping every time J played a guitar solo. He played through Marshall stacks, not as some macho heavy metal gesture – he did it to flatten everything and everyone, but *expressively*.

J: Sonic Youth passed tapes of our new material to [Black Flag guitarist and SST honcho] Greg Ginn, and they signed us for [second album] *You're Living All Over Me*. I heard the album in my

head, but it was hard to explain to engineers in Massachusetts, these clueless Journey fans. But then we met Wharton Tiers, the first sympathetic engineer who liked our music.

M: Working with Wharton in New York was all about pushing the envelope – lots of weird effects and experiments, a lot of jamming. We would play songs at normal tempo, then super-slow, then super-fast, and would experiment and re-mould the songs, get them really sounding perfect.

LB: *You're Living All Over Me* [released in December '87] was our absolute peak, combining psychedelia, industrial music like SPK and Throbbing Gristle, the shocking noise of Jesus And Mary Chain, and Neil Young. I wrote my first electric song, *Lose*, and we included my bedroom tape collage, *Poledo*, as our *Revolution #9*. I was taking my first forays into psychedelics at the time, and I'd sit listening to the tracks we were recording, having epiphanies, becoming even more convinced of J's genius. I thought, "We are knocking on the door of something epic here... We are as good as Sabbath!"

J: It was our best record. We'd achieved what we were hoping to do. But then we went on tour, and the album was supposed to have come out, but hadn't. Nobody knew who we were, and our van was breaking down every day. We started not getting along. Too much time in the van, with nothing to do but pick apart Lou's personality.

Jon Fetler: I roadied for *Dinosaur* on that tour. I didn't know what any of their gear did, but I could run interference between those three personalities. J called me the band therapist. It wasn't a light frolic through some Mötley Crüe shit. Girls would come backstage, register the psychic heaviness and just leave.

LB: J didn't have any problem openly criticising people. He was a jerk, and he embraced that. He was extremely intelligent, and extremely

intolerant. I'd be eating meals on the road, and he'd be criticising the way I eat. "How can anyone stand to be near you?"

M: I would get so bored that real-life drama that would stress people out was like a soap opera to him. Whereas I was like, "I'm in hell."

J: We were playing this club in a strip mall in Naugatuck, Connecticut. During *Severed Lips*, a pretty mellow song, Lou was sitting on his amp, just making feedback, to be annoying and get a reaction. I thought, "This is bad, Murph's gonna hit Lou..." Then, as the song came to an end, I realised, "Murph's not gonna do it. I guess it's up to me."

LB: J came at me, and I'm like, "Fuck yeah, come at me!" He hit me, and I threw my bass down, shouting, "Come on, let's fucking fight! Right now." And he walked off to the side of the stage. I was ready to beat the shit out of J. It would have been the end of the band right there – there would have been no recovering from that.

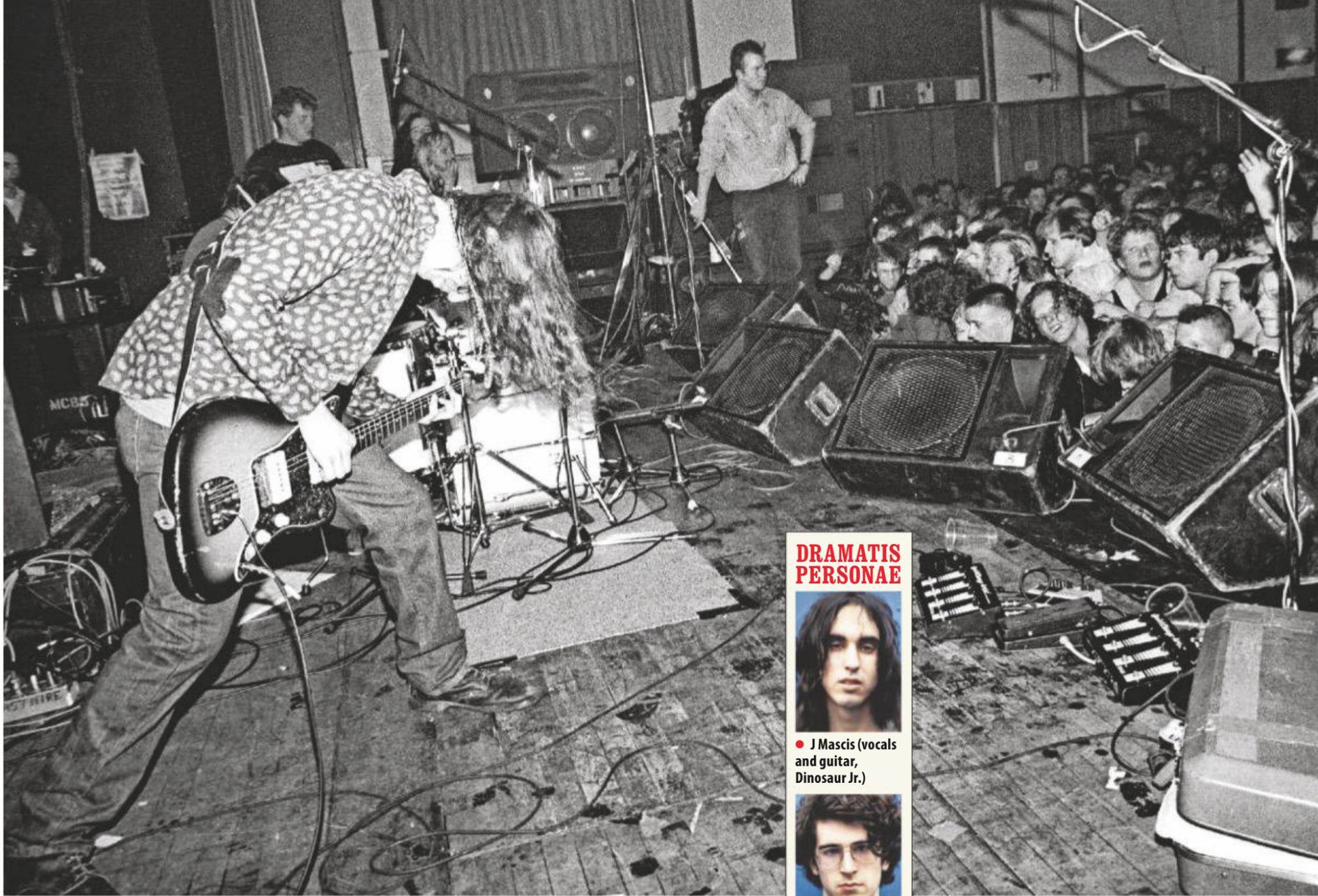
M: I remember thinking, "I really should have punched both of those guys, they can't get away with being this spoiled and self-centred." They needed a wake-up call.

J: I recorded our third album *Bug* mostly on my own. The other guys were in the studio maybe two days. We just wanted to get something out, capitalise on our momentum. It wasn't too good. There was no energy coming from Lou – he was completely checked out.

LB: I'd stopped talking to J. I had a girlfriend now, who would listen to me talk for hours. And I'd met [Sebadoh bandmate] Eric Gaffney, and we'd started swapping cassettes of our home-recorded music. I was finding my own voice.

M: We really thought we were flogging a dead horse as far as the three of us trying to exist together and get along. It wasn't working. But looking back at the tracks, they're really great.

Jon Fetler (2), Tom Sheehan, Peter Doherty/Retna/Avalon, Getty, Ian Tilton, Courtesy Ajay Saggarr



DRAMATIS PERSONAE



● J Mascis (vocals and guitar, Dinosaur Jr.)



● Lou Barlow (bass and vocals, Dinosaur Jr.)



● Murph (drums, Dinosaur Jr.)



● Jon Fetler (former tour manager)



● John Robb (bass and guitar, The Membranes)



● Ajay Saggarr (bass, Dandelion Adventure, later tour manager and soundman for Dinosaur Jr. and Sebadoh)

LB: Freak Scene [released September '88] became the anthem, but there are much better songs on *Bug*, like They Always Come, Let It Ride, No Bones... I was surprised Freak Scene was so simple, and I was also surprised by how much people embraced it.

J: Freak Scene is about a relationship with someone you wish it was easier to be in a relationship with – like, it should work out, but somehow it won't. No, it's definitely not about the situation in Dinosaur Jr. (sighs)

LB: I only sang one song, Don't. He said, "This is your song to sing, because you didn't bring any songs in." This is him prodding me. "Go sing 'Why don't you like me?' over and over again, because you don't know why I don't like you." It wasn't passive/aggressive, it was *totally* aggressive. And he was right. "Yeah – why *don't* you like me, J? You want me to sing that over and over again? I will. And I'm going to bring every bit of passion that I have in me." Because I still thought everything he did was great. So I sang that song until there was blood in my saliva.

John Robb: Dinosaur toured the UK in October 1988, just before *Bug* came out, and they were amazing. People talk about Pixies inventing the whole "quiet/loud" thing, but Dinosaur had that, every time J stomped on his pedal. Dinosaur were more like "loud/*really-fucking-loud*."

LB: England was really exciting, and the music weeklies were so sensationalistic and fickle and personality-driven. I just knew, "Once England gets a whiff of J Mascis..." We were getting great reviews, and people were latching onto J.

M: We'd spent so long in the States with people booing us because we were loud and we were sloppy. And in the UK, it was completely the opposite. We were so well-received, when we got back to the US, people thought we were a UK band, because they'd read so much about us in the British press.

Ajay Saggarr: *You're Living All Over Me* had blown me away. I'd seen them in Chester and charged in afterwards, yabbering, and we became friends. We went to The Membranes' house [in West Didsbury, Manchester] for the Freak Scene video shoot, which was like my second home. All the stuff in the video – the totem pole, skeletons, masks – is stuff we made, triple-bad acid art everywhere [also featured is a fisherman statue lifted from outside a Blackpool fish and chip shop].

LB: That was so fun. The Membranes were cool as shit, and our friend Ajay was there... I wanted to say, "See, J, it can be fun being in a band! It can be fun hanging out! Why can't we drink magic mushroom tea together? Why can't we all live in a crazy, fucked-up house together?"

AS: By 1989 [UK spring tour], there was a lot of tension, and they were like, "Come with us in the van for the whole tour, alleviate the misery of the black cloud hanging over us."

J: We just couldn't stand each other, so we decided to kick Lou out [Barlow's last show was May 13, 1989, at the John Anson Ford Amphitheatre, Hollywood]. Murph did the talking. Lou thought we were breaking up, but we thought we'd kicked him out. We were very bad at communicating. Two days later he called back, screaming – someone had told him we were planning an Australia tour. He screamed at us for hours.

LB: Then I began my long crusade against J Mascis... (laughs) It's hard to look back on it. It was a heartbreak. I loved the band.

M: Lou was angry for a long time, but it fuelled him to get Sebadoh off the ground.

J: One time I went to a Sebadoh show with Kevin Shields, and Lou just started freaking out. One second he was really happy we were there, the next he was screaming. We were walking out of the club, and his mom was like, "J, what happened?" (Laughs) "Mrs Barlow, I'm really not sure..."

LB: Slowly but surely, I came to the realisation that harbouring this thing against J was increasingly pointless.

J: In late 2002, I was playing with the Asheton brothers in England. Lou came backstage and finally apologised for his crazy behaviour. That had to happen before we could get the band back together, for him to let go of his anger [the band reformed in 2005].

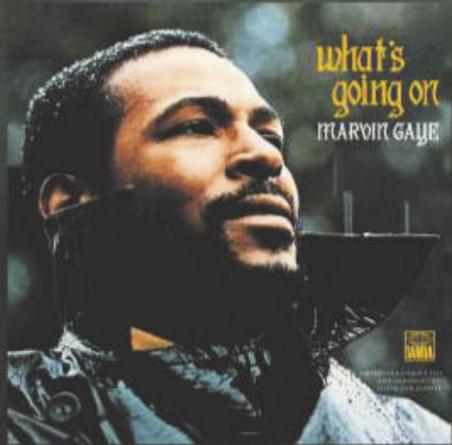
M: It's like leaving a puzzle alone for years, and then coming back and starting on it again – we just resumed where we left off, without the crazy dysfunction from when we were kids.

LB: I love the records. I love Murph. I love J. And what is fascinating is, the closer I step towards J, the more I get out of my comfort zone, the better it is.

J: Are we better friends than we were back in the early days? I don't know. But we recognise we have something cool when we make music together. **M**

Dinosaur Jr.'s Sweep It Into Space is out on April 2 on Jagjaguwar. Jon Fetler was speaking in 2004. Hear Ajay Saggarr's recordings with Bhajan Bhoj, King Champion Sounds and University Challenged at Bandcamp.

stubborn KIND OF fellow



OUT OF A MIASMA OF TRAGEDY AND SELF-DOUBT, IN THE

TEETH OF A SCEPTICAL LABEL, **MARVIN GAYE'S** **WHAT'S GOING ON** WAS BORN 50 YEARS AGO. BUT THE TORCH LIT BY THE TROUBLED SINGER'S PEERLESS SOUL SUITE BURNS AS FIERCELY TODAY, ILLUMINATING INJUSTICE AND HOPES YET TO BE FULFILLED. "*WHAT'S GOING ON* IS A VITAL ORGAN, LIKE YOUR LUNGS OR HEART. IT IS ALWAYS THERE, PUMPING," DISCOVERS **DAVID FRICKE**.

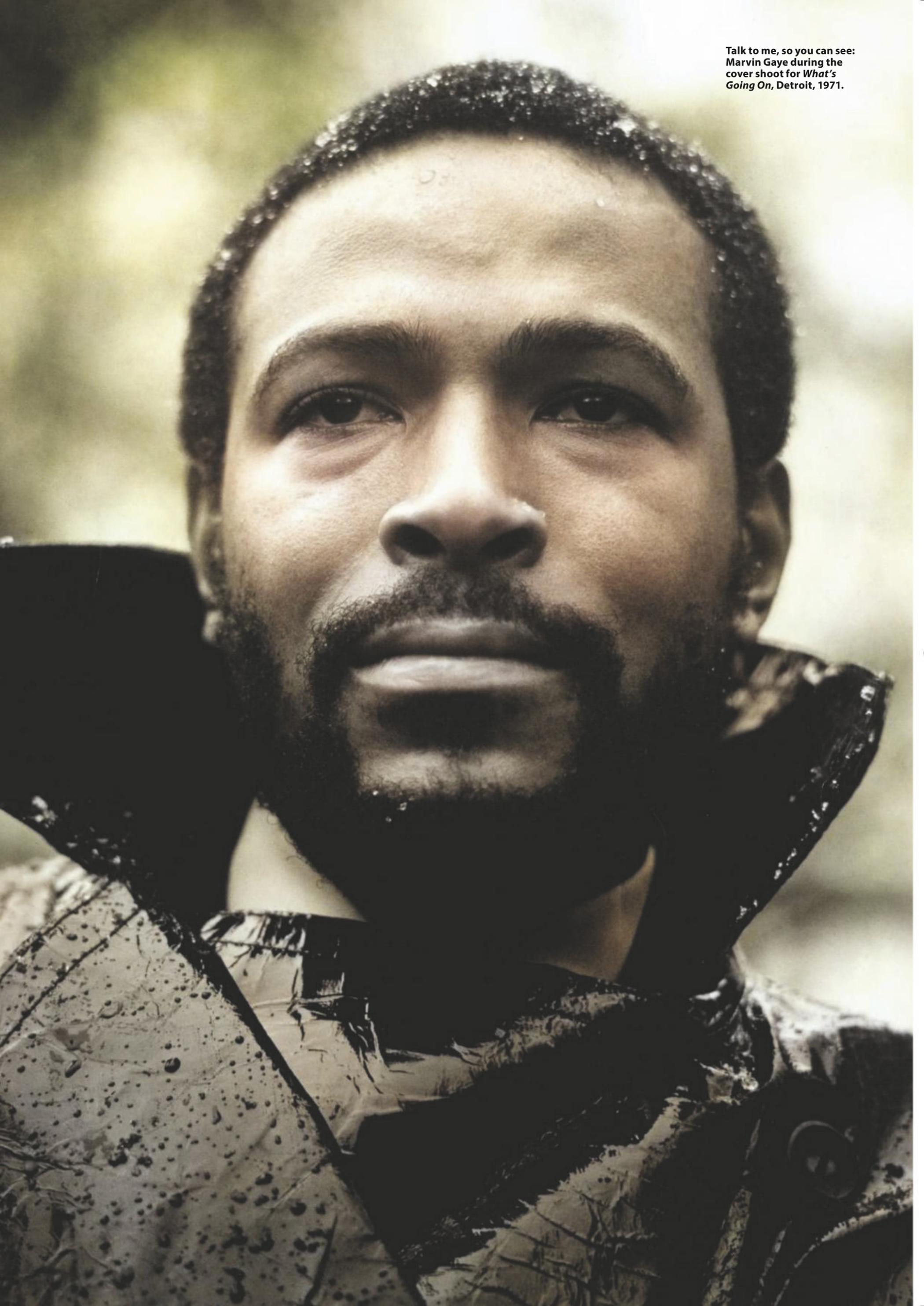
PORTRAIT: **JIM HENDIN**



IN MARCH 20, 1970, FRIENDS AND FAMILY gathered at the Janes United Methodist Church in Philadelphia to say farewell to singer Tammi Terrell, a once-rising star at Motown Records, dead at the shocking age of 24. In the autumn of 1967, Terrell was on a hot streak of duets with that label's vocal prince Marvin Gaye – *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*, *Your Precious Love* – when she collapsed into his arms during a concert at a Virginia college. Terrell, who suffered from paralysing headaches, was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She gamely returned to the studio after surgery, cutting more hits with Gaye, but additional operations could not save her.

➤ Getty

Talk to me, so you can see:
Marvin Gaye during the
cover shoot for *What's
Going On*, Detroit, 1971.



◀ At the funeral, many in the congregation “wept openly,” according to a report in *Jet*, the African-American weekly – including Gaye, who turned 31 that April. His relationship with Terrell was professional and, according to most accounts, platonic. It was also badly-needed sanctuary for Gaye, caught in a stormy marriage complicated by the familial ties to his career: Gaye’s wife Anna, 17 years his senior, was an older sister of his boss, Motown’s autocratic founder Berry Gordy. When Terrell died, “I did feel that I had somehow died with her,” Gaye later confessed to his biographer David Ritz.

Gaye had already withdrawn from touring, shattered by the Virginia incident. And after a decade as Motown’s reigning male idol – with a dozen US Top 10 R&B hits, half of those pop US Top 10s as well, including *Pride And Joy* (1963), *Ain’t That Peculiar* (1965) and *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* (1968) – Gaye was stone cold on 45, drifting through tunes previously done for Motown by The Isley Brothers and The Temptations. A 1968 project of standards in the manner of Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole, Gaye’s biggest influences, stalled when he lost confidence in his performances.

Closer to home, Gaye was shaken by stories his younger brother, Frankie, a draftee in the Vietnam War, brought back from his three-year service: the carnage on the ground; the institutional racism in the US military; and the crushing return to civilian life as black veterans were denied the civil rights they defended in the jungle. “I began to re-evaluate my whole concept of what I wanted my music to say,” Marvin reflected later. The singer, who did a year in the Air Force as a teenager, “realised that I had to put my own fantasies behind me if I wanted to write songs that would reach the souls of people.”

His lifeline came via Renaldo ‘Obie’ Benson of The Four Tops. In May 1969, the Tops pulled into San Francisco for a concert as police battled protestors across the bay in Berkeley, at People’s Park. Shaken by the violent response of the authorities, Benson poured his questions and anger into words and music with Al Cleveland, a Motown staff writer. As Benson put it years later to *MOJO*’s Ben Edmonds: “What the fuck was going on?... Why are they attacking their own children in the streets here?”

The Tops weren’t interested, skittish about the subject matter. Benson eventually got the song to Gaye, who was diffident, agreeing to cut it only after Benson offered him a piece of the publishing and Anna, a savvy businesswoman and songwriter, insisted it was perfect for him. Gaye then earned his writing credit, adding lyrics and, crucially, the title that bound his inner turmoil with Benson’s despair from that day in ’69: *What’s Going On*.

ON JUNE 1, 1970, 10 WEEKS after Terrell’s funeral, Gaye walked into the Snakepit – the basement studio at Motown’s Detroit offices, Hitsville USA – and started rolling tape for his resurrection with a select crew of sidemen from the now-legendary house band, the Funk Brothers. Gaye produced the record, his first for himself as an artist, over sessions into September; played piano and *cajón*, a box drum; then went to war with Gordy, who dismissed the mantra-like vocals, sensuous conga-driven undertow and haunting, impressionist strings arranged by David Van De Pitte as “the worst thing I’ve ever heard.” He refused to put it out; Gaye, in turn, refused to record another note for his brother-in-law.

Finally issued in January 1971, *What’s Going On* was sweet revenge: the single selling 100,000 copies on its first day; shooting to Number 2 in *Billboard*; and establishing Gaye as a full-fledged auteur within Motown’s hierarchical order of writers and producers



“I HAD TO PUT MY FANTASIES BEHIND ME IF I WANTED TO WRITE SONGS THAT WOULD REACH THE SOULS OF PEOPLE.”

MARVIN GAYE

– the equivalent of Bob Dylan and Paul McCartney in creative assurance and poetic independence. Eli Fontain’s plaintive entrance on alto saxophone was just a set of warm-up licks, caught on tape, that Gaye recognised as a perfect, opening cry for help, now as iconic as John Coltrane’s call to prayer in 1965’s *A Love Supreme*. The call-

and-response of Gaye’s vocals was another accident: two takes mistakenly combined in a playback that Gaye, son of a Pentecostal minister, turned into a dramatic conceit rooted in his childhood singing in his father’s Washington DC church and teenage boot camp with a local doo wop group, The Marquees.

What’s Going On – the album that followed in May 1971, with eight more songs recorded in just 10 days that March – extended Gaye’s achievement in the journalistic urgency of *Mercy Mercy Me* (*The Ecology*) and *Inner City Blues* (*Make Me Wanna Holler*), both

We've got to find a way: (clockwise from main) Gaye in the studio, 1971; "don't punish me with brutality" – California Governor Ronald Reagan sends in the National Guard, Berkeley, May 1969; "war is not the answer" – President Lyndon Johnson meets US troops at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, 1966; (inset) Four Top Obie Benson; (opposite) Gaye with Tammi Terrell, 1967; on-stage at the Apollo, 1962, with Martha & The Vandellas; (insets) the Prince of Motown's singles and covers album.



Top 10 hits; the street-corner code of *What's Happening Brother and Right On*; and a sustained tenement-blues melancholy evoking, all at once, Duke Ellington's 1943 suite *Black, Brown And Beige*, Miles Davis's 1959 modal landmark *Kind Of Blue*, and The Beach Boys' 1966 apex *Pet Sounds*. As Ben Edmonds wrote in his 2001 account, *What's Going On: Marvin Gaye And The Last Days Of The Motown Sound* (MOJO Books), the singer "found a way to channel his sorrow for Tammi Terrell, his empathy for his brother's plight and his own professional frustration into an artistic statement addressing the social and spiritual anguish he saw sweeping the real world, the one that existed outside Motown's candystripe walls."

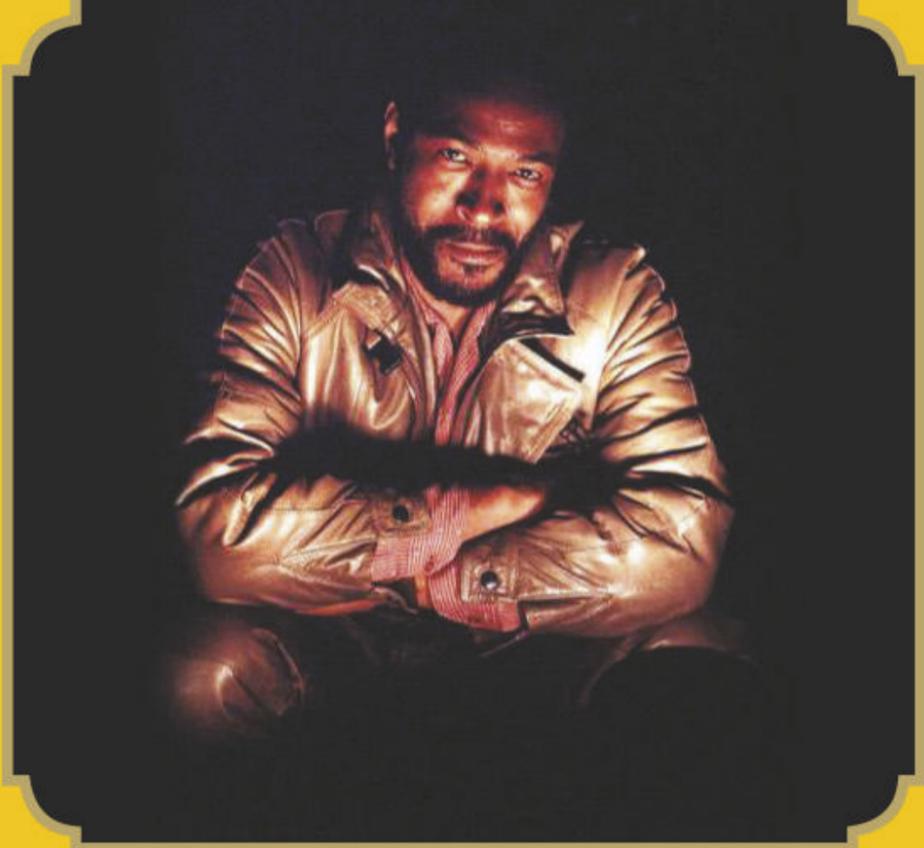
Gaye was more enigmatic as he talked about his masterpiece in a 1972 *Rolling Stone* cover story: "What you're trying to find out is am I really a genius or a fake. I think I'm a fake. A lot of people ask me that same question... 'How did you put that damn album together? A nut like you. I mean, really explain that.'

"I don't know, it just happened," he went on. "It really did. It happened through divinity; it was divine. And somebody said, 'OK, you're divine. You be divine, and I'll be rich.' I say I like it better. I'd rather be divine."

HALF A CENTURY LATER – AND 37 YEARS AFTER Gaye's tragic death in April 1984, shot by his father during a family argument the day before his 45th birthday – *What's Going On* and its title anthem have only grown in moral argument and inspirational force, celebrating their golden anniversaries in an extraordinary storm of pandemic suffering and American civil warfare: the crisis in police brutality; the nationwide response of the Black Lives Matter movement; the rise of white supremacists and the spectacle of a sitting president defying the electoral will of the people, triggering an assault on Congress itself.

For Jon Batiste, an acclaimed jazz pianist and the TV bandleader on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*, *What's Going On* "is a vital organ, like your lungs or heart. It is always there, pumping, no matter what you're doing. Obviously there are songs about activism and the black power generation. He was dealing with the political even in the lingo, the syntax of the lyrics."

But Batiste, who was on the streets of New York and Philadelphia last year, performing at protests and leading get-out-the-vote actions, says Gaye was "a humanist above everything. He found that space for himself, in that record, to seed that activism with humanism." ➤



“I’m Nobody’s Saint, But I’d Like To Be”

LESS THAN A YEAR BEFORE HIS DEATH, MARVIN GAYE DEBATED THE WORTH OF *WHAT’S GOING ON* WITH DAVID FRICKE.

In May, 1983, Marvin Gaye took over New York’s Radio City Music Hall for six sold-out shows. It was his first tour in five years; it was also his last. On the strange, uneven opening night that I reviewed for *Melody Maker* magazine, Gaye, backed by a 20-piece band, zigzagged between absolute control and distracted clowning. Despite a sore throat, he lit a deep, blue flame in Let’s Get It On and Inner City Blues but did not play *What’s Going On* – a stunning omission.

A week later, I interviewed Gaye for *MM* in his hotel bedroom as he was having breakfast – lamb chops at nine in the evening – after a long party the night before. He was wearing a blue-velvet bathrobe and surrounded by a small army of bodyguards and hangers-on. At one point I asked him if *What’s Going On* still held meaning for him. “Not really,” he replied, his voice receding into a sleepy growl. “I feel a bit apathetic about the world, that the song hasn’t done a great deal of good.”

With Gaye riding the Top 5 tailwind of 1982’s *Sexual Healing*, the conversation inevitably pivoted on the constant tug of war between sacred and secular – pure lust and higher love – in his life and records. “There is a struggle within me,” he confessed. “I’m nobody’s saint, but I’d like to be, frankly.” To reconcile those extremes on-stage, “I’d need mood-altering drugs to give to the audience. It would be easier to do it that way: ‘I just finished shaking it up for you, now why don’t you all come to church with me?’”

“It’s the only way I’m gonna reach the hard-core sinners,” Gaye

suggested. “You’ve gotta get ‘em on their own turf, say ‘Now that I’ve got ya, hear this from me.’”

Gaye also spoke bitterly about racism in the music business. “Soul music is last on the totem pole,” he said. “We make the music, and it seems like others are reaping the rewards.” When I suggested that he had turned white electro-pop to his advantage on his latest album, *Midnight Love*, Gaye looked at me suspiciously, his eyes narrowing into slits. “Hmmm. Would you imagine I’d do such a thing?” Then he relaxed. “It’s an interesting concept, taking that and turning it into soul. I suppose if anybody can do that, I could.”

At the end of our hour, I asked Gaye about his current life. He moved to Belgium in 1981 as a tax exile, recovering from heavy drug use and finally ending his rocky 20-year stay at Motown. “To be perfectly honest, I have no home,” Gaye said. “I don’t feel like I belong here – anywhere.”

Did that upset him? “No,” he responded. “That’s a revelation that is very positive and good for me to know. I’m simply here to do a job, and hopefully I’ll get my reward in my next incarnation period, be of a much higher consciousness and become so pure in my next incarnations that I can burn myself up without flinching.”

The music business, I noted, can burn you up too.

“The next time around,” Gaye said, “I don’t think I’ll be in this business.” A year later, he was dead.



“This album definitely went through my mind last year,” admits Yola, the British singer-songwriter whose great country-soul debut, 2019’s *Walk Through Fire*, earned her four Grammy nominations. “But what struck me from quite a young age was that Marvin Gaye was asking questions. You see a lot of question marks in *Mercy Mercy Me* [“Where did all the blue skies go? . . . What about this overcrowded land/How much more abuse from man can she stand?”].

“And every song is connected in some way,” she adds. “There is a philosophy tying it all together.” Gaye was “purposefully reaching beyond social and ethnic barriers, preaching his message and throwing it profoundly into the mainstream.”

“You have to think about the constancy of the issues raised on *What’s Going On*,” contends Vernon Reid, guitarist of the New York band Living Colour. “Because we refuse, as a society, to deal with the fundamentals – not just slavery but Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Marvin’s asking what’s really happening, and he’s asking that of anyone who’s listening – white, black. He’s trying to get behind our masks of indifference and objectivity, of cool and rage. He’s asking, ‘What are you afraid of?’”

Reid, who co-founded the Black Rock Coalition in 1985, notes that *What’s Going On* is “not a record that yells or screams. It’s laid-back on a certain level. That’s part of its power.”

After striking gold as independent writer-producers for artists like Jerry Butler, Dusty Springfield and Wilson Pickett, Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff were a year away from launching their own label, Philadelphia International Records, when Gamble ran into Motown’s Al Cleveland during a business trip to Los Angeles in 1970. Gamble knew the Motown crew well, including Gaye. Cleveland invited Gamble to stop by an LA studio where Gaye, in the middle of his standoff with Gordy over *What’s Going On*, played the unreleased song for his visitor.

“It was a spiritual moment,” Gamble recalls, underscored by the fact that Gaye was reading a Bible at the time – the Book of Revelation. Today, Gamble likens *What’s Going On*, the song, to the Old Testament story of David and the harp, a parable of healing through music. “Here’s a melody,” Gamble says, “that is more powerful than anything you could imagine, because the minute you hear that first note, it puts you in the nick of things where you say to yourself, ‘This is not right. Something’s going on which is not good for humanity.’”

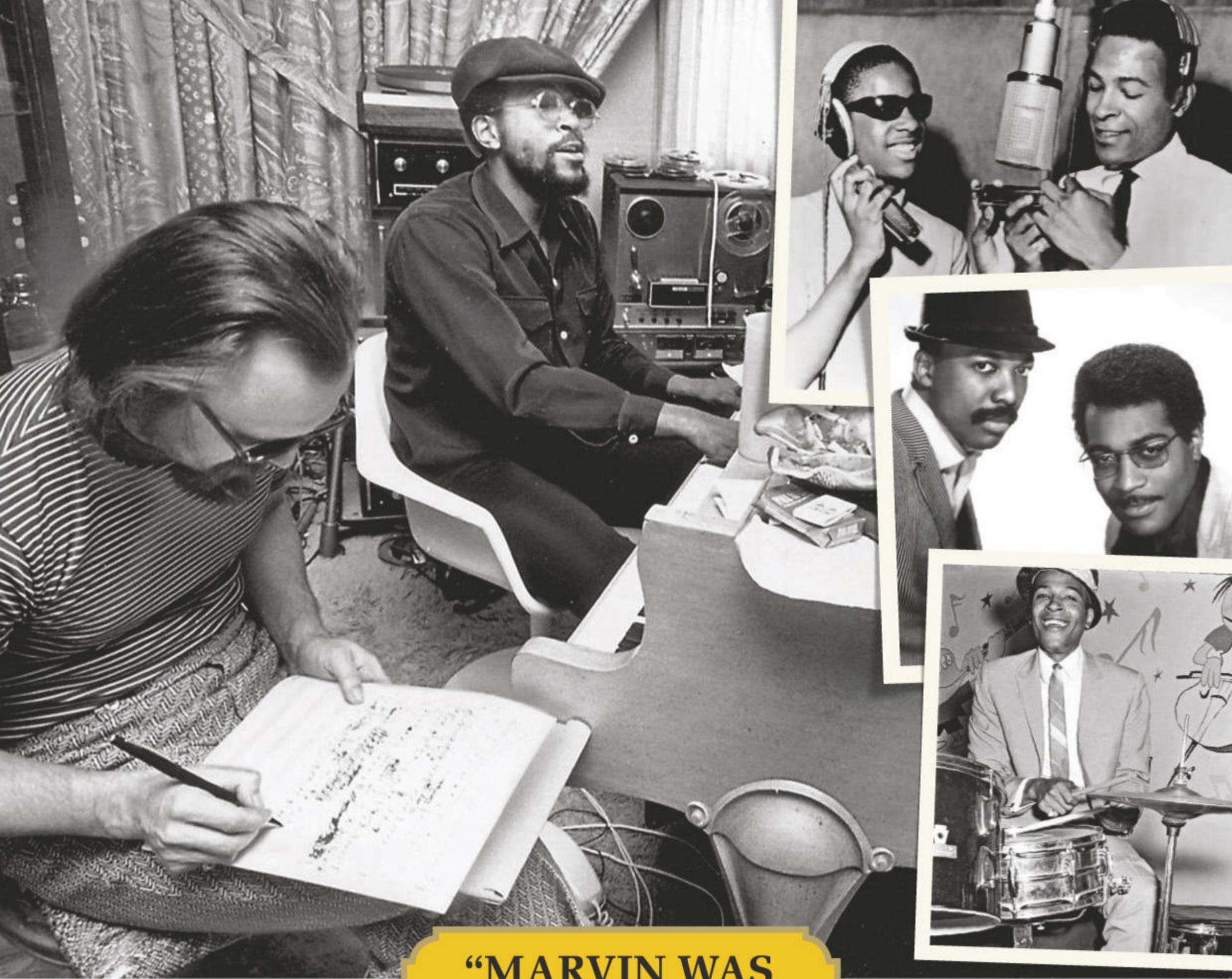
Gamble and Huff had been recording their own message songs; they wrote 1969’s *There’s Someone (Waiting Back Home)*, an early production for The O’Jays, from the viewpoint of a black soldier overseas. Motown released The Monitors’ draft-notice lament *Greetings (This Is Uncle Sam)* back in 1966. And Edwin Starr cut his biggest single for the company, *War*, at Hitsville two weeks before Gaye began work on his anthem.

But Gamble credits Gaye’s ambition across *What’s Going On* with encouraging the topical thrust at Philadelphia International: “We came up with *Ship Ahoy* for The O’Jays [1973], *Wake Up Everybody* for Harold Melvin And The Blue Notes [1975]. When you’ve got good music, it smooths everything out. You have no problems. All you gotta do is tell the truth.”

In the 1972 *Rolling Stone* interview, Gaye corrected what he considered a misconception about *What’s Going On*: “Somebody said the other day, ‘That’s a fine black album.’ I said, Wait a minute. The word ‘black’ is not in my album from the A side to the B side.”

He didn’t have to say it. “There’s not one black person in America who didn’t get what Marvin was talking about,” Mary Wilson of The Supremes told the *Los Angeles Times* a few months before her death on February 8 at 76. When Wilson, a close friend of Gaye’s at Motown, heard *What’s Going On* for the first time, “I won’t say I was thrilled – that’s not the right word. But I was happy that he could express what we were all feeling.”

GAYE WAS NOT THE ONLY STAR TO CHALLENGE THE finishing-school discipline and factory-floor rigour that, for all of Motown’s public face as a large, happy family, defined company life at “The Sound Of Young America” – an anachronism in the black, revolutionary era of Jimi Hendrix, Sly And The Family Stone and the electric Miles Davis. In 1970, as Gaye fought with



“MARVIN WAS ONE OF THE CATS. LIGHT UP A JOINT HERE, PASS IT OVER THERE.”

JACK ASHFORD

Flyin’ high: (clockwise from left) Gaye with arranger David Van De Pitte, April 1972; with the young Stevie Wonder in Motown’s Snakepit, 1965; Philadelphia songwriters Leon Huff (left) and Kenneth Gamble, 1968; Gaye, accomplished groove master, 1964; (opposite) Gaye off- and on-stage, 1983.

Gordy over *What’s Going On*, former *wunderkind* Stevie Wonder marked his 21st birthday by declaring his original Motown contract void (a renegotiation ploy) and taking complete control of his next LP, *Where I’m Coming From*, as composer (writing with his new wife, Syreeta Wright), player and producer. “These were Gordy’s kids,” Vernon Reid says of Wonder and Gaye, “and they were openly defying him. They’re talking back and getting off the assembly line.”

Gaye was not a natural rebel. Born on April 2, 1939, Marvin Pentz Gay, Jr grew up in a turbulent household, subject to the violent whims of his religiously conflicted father, and found his only consistent refuge in singing – in Marvin Sr’s services. Mentored by writer-producer Harvey Fuqua of The Moonglows, Gaye was a session drummer in Detroit before Gordy signed him in 1961. The singer added the ‘e’ to his surname before releasing his debut single, prophetically titled *Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide*. (It was written by Gordy.)

The hits began flowing – with *Stubborn Kind Of Fellow* in 1962 – when Gaye added gospel inflections and subtle, carnal heat to his silken delivery. But he remained an uneasy, self-conscious performer. Bassist Michael Henderson – a key figure in Miles Davis’s early-’70s-fusion bands who spent his

teens in Detroit studios and backing Motown acts on the road – saw Gaye in concert in the ’60s. “He was so shy on stage,” Henderson says, “he looked like he was afraid to go out there.”

There were flashes of resistance ahead of *What’s Going On*. “One of the most intriguing things I heard was when I worked with [ex-Cream bassist] Jack Bruce,” says Vernon Reid. “Jack told me that when the Motown crew toured the UK [in the 1965 Motortown Revue] Marvin said to Jack, ‘I want to start a band.’ He wanted Jack to be the bass player.” Bruce, then in The Graham Bond Organisation and a busy session musician, “had to turn him down – he really agonised over it. When it didn’t go down, Marvin went back to the Motown scenario.”

Describing the making of *What’s Going On* to Rolling Stone in 1972, Gaye made it sound like he’d stumbled into genius. It was “trial and error,” he said. “I do something and then I listen to it and say, ‘Wow, *this* will sound good on this... And this would sound good if I put some voices *here*.’

“You build,” he continued, “like an artist paints a picture. He starts slowly; he has to paint each thing at a time.” ➤



◀ But percussionist Jack Ashford, at 86 one of the sessions' last surviving players, remembered Gaye as both relaxed and decisive with the rhythm section at Hitsville. (Gaye's vocals and Van De Pitte's orchestrations were done a few miles north of the Snakepit at the former Golden World Records facility Gordy bought in 1966, known as Motown's Studio B.) "Marvin was one of the cats," Ashford said on radio in 2002. "He was happy running in and out of the rooms – light up a joint here, pass it over there." Gaye kept that vibe in the album mix of the title track, recruiting friends to sing and swap block-party chatter, including two American football pals from the Detroit Lions, Lem Barney and Mel Farr.

Gaye was also "using a few musicians we weren't accustomed to," Ashford noted, such as drummer Chet Forest, "a white guy who played a lot of the clubs." While out on the town one night, Gaye caught tenor saxophonist Wild Bill Moore, an R&B legend of the old school (1947's *We're Gonna Rock, We're Gonna Roll* on Savoy), and hired him to lay his fire on *Mercy Mercy Me*. Gaye played most of the piano himself, "and I could see why," Ashford said. The songs were "his creation... There's things he put in spontaneously that Earl [Van Dyke, Motown's keyboard master] would overlook."

Then after *What's Going On* was considered done – mixed in Detroit in early April and assigned a master number for pressing – Gaye took the tapes to LA and continued mixing to his own satisfaction. "The mission," Ben Edmonds wrote, "was not to make a record, it was to create a sonic environment... bringing intimacy to the universal."

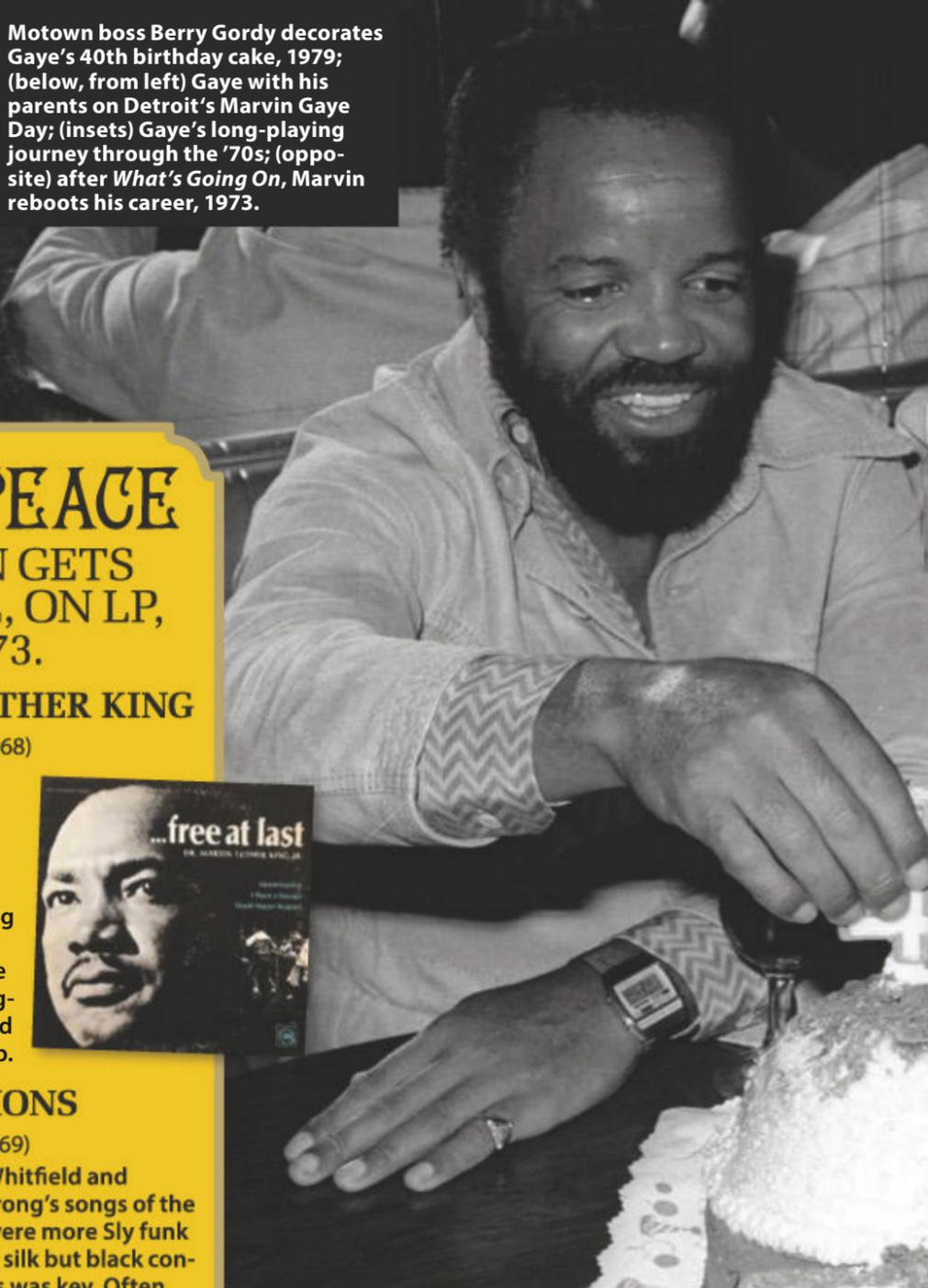
An exemplar would be side one's epic *Save The Children*, written by Benson, Gaye and Cleveland. "It's very interesting how that track builds," says Vernon Reid. "Marvin does this thing that is common in the church where a line is spoken, then sung" – as if by a preacher, then the choir. "The song starts out very calm. But as it progresses, it become impassioned: 'We're not gonna fix this. We can't fix this. We gotta save the kids because the next generation has gotta do it.'"

"The arrangements bring out the truth in the words," says saxophonist Kamasi Washington. "For many singers, the music is more of a hiding place. But Marvin is using the power and edges in his phrasing to deliver the message." Washington feels "a powerful connection" to Gaye: friends of his father, flautist Rickey Washington, played with the singer in the '70s. And Kamasi admits that he looked to "the humanity, the political, the bigger things" in *What's Going On* as he built his own 2015 spiritual-jazz mural, *The Epic*.

"The way Marvin Gaye was bringing what he sang to life, that was inspiring to me as a horn player," Washington says. "I wanted to make my instrument speak like Marvin's voice."

RELASED ON MAY 21, 1971, *WHAT'S Going On* was an instant Number 1 R&B album. On July 31, it peaked at Number 6 on Billboard's Pop LP chart. But there was

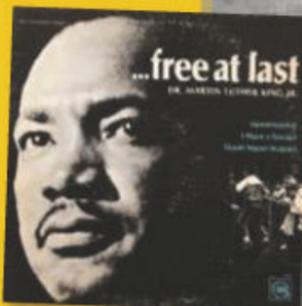
Motown boss Berry Gordy decorates Gaye's 40th birthday cake, 1979; (below, from left) Gaye with his parents on Detroit's Marvin Gaye Day; (insets) Gaye's long-playing journey through the '70s; (opposite) after *What's Going On*, Marvin reboots his career, 1973.



WAR & PEACE MOTOWN GETS POLITICAL, ON LP, 1968-73.

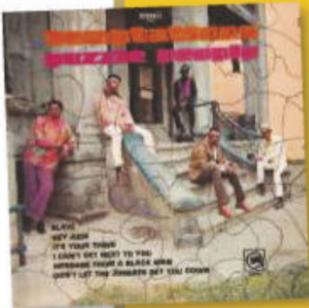
DR MARTIN LUTHER KING ...Free At Last (1968)

A recording of Dr King's April 3, 1968 address in Memphis, climaxed by the "I have been to the mountain top" passage. Assassinated the following day, Motown's memorial album included the I Have A Dream speech (Washington, 1963). Time the Sound Of Young America grew up.



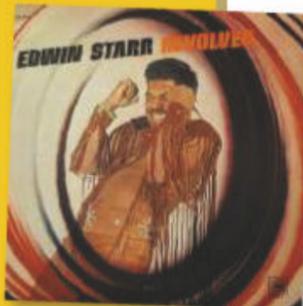
THE TEMPTATIONS Puzzle People (1969)

Norman Whitfield and Barrett Strong's songs of the late '60s were more Sly funk than Gaye silk but black consciousness was key. Often overlooked between *Cloud Nine* ('69) and *Psychedelic Shack* ('70), PP's *Don't Let The Joneses Get You Down*, *Slave* and *Message From A Black Man* have real bite.



EDWIN STARR Involved (1971)

Another Whitfield/Strong project, Edwin Starr's brusque, bold voice excelled on 1970 protest 45s *War and Stop The War Now*. In the wake of *What's Going On*, they were packaged with Starr versions of Tempts' hits *Ball Of Confusion* and *Cloud Nine*, strident slices of urban reality.



THE UNDISPUTED TRUTH Face To Face With The Truth (1972)

"A cross between Sly and The 5th Dimension," producer Whitfield wrote on the sleeve to the psych-soul trio's debut LP, its first track stating its allegiance to a protest agenda: *You Make Your Own Heaven And Hell Right Here On Earth*. Ends with *What's Going On* cover.



STEVIE WONDER Innervisions (1973)

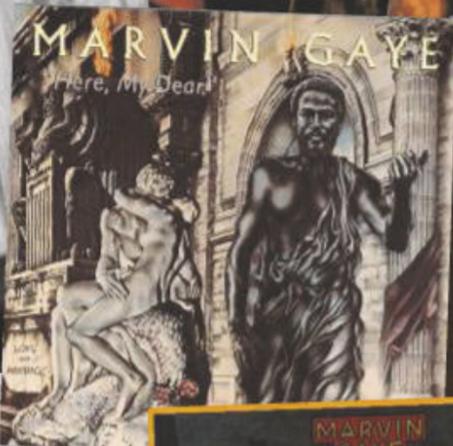
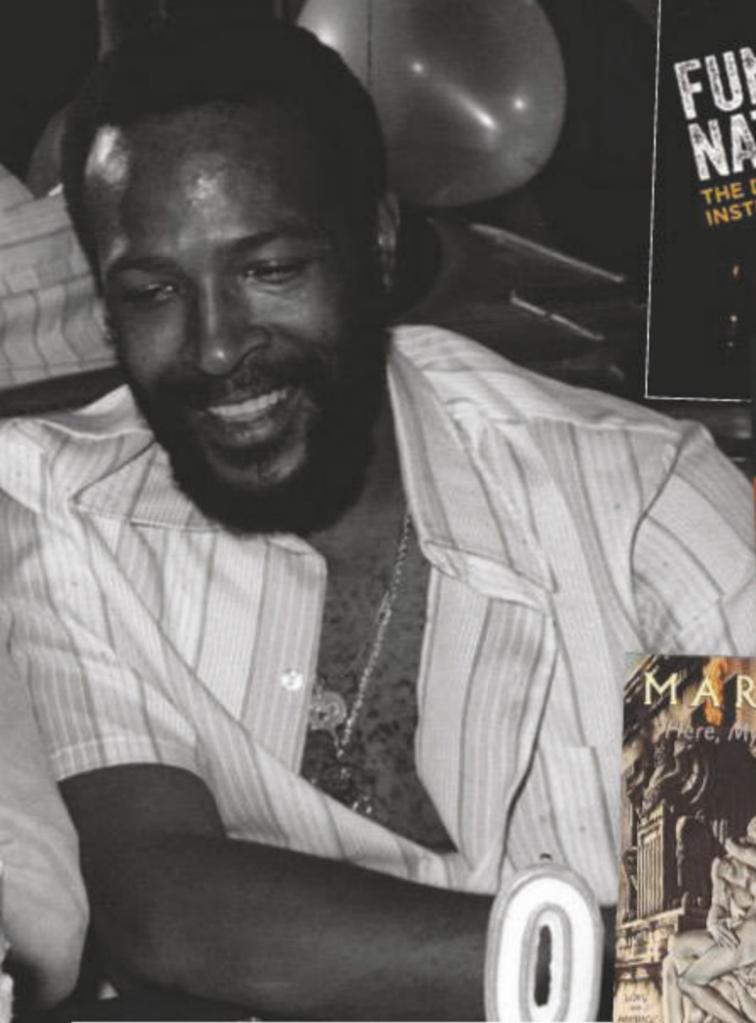
He recorded six outstanding albums from 1971's *Where I'm Coming From* to '76's *Songs In The Key Of Life*, but *Innervisions* crystallised his musical intelligence, as on socially and spiritually aware highlights *Living For The City*, *He's Misstra Know-It-All*, and *Higher Ground*.

Geoff Brown



no tour to mark Gaye's success or maximise his crossover. He went back to seclusion, at his home on Detroit's west side, as the marriage to Anna deteriorated further and Gordy gradually closed down his business in the city, moving to Los Angeles and recasting Motown as a Hollywood enterprise. Gaye's only concert-length performance of *What's Going On* was a benefit at the Kennedy Center in his native DC on May 1, 1972. And that nearly didn't happen. "I didn't want to really do this concert," he told the *Washington Post*. His mother, Alberta, "kept calling and asking me if I'd do it for her. Mothers are like that."

In fact, by the late summer of 1971 and again in December, Gaye was in Studio B, recording with a gritty, riffing combo anchored by drummer Hamilton Bohannon and drawn from the next generation of R&B session aces: guitarists Melvin 'Wah Wah Watson' Ragin, Leroy Emmanuel and Ray Parker Jr, the last only 17; Henderson, on bass, had just turned 20. Recently issued as a digital collection, *Funky Nation: The Detroit Instrumentals*, the tracks were a striking turn away from the jazz-inflected sweep of *What's Going On*, toward the cocksure stride and lowdown modernism of Funkadelic and the Ohio Players. In the immediate wake of his most elegant and personal – indeed, religious – album, Gaye was already headed for the grooves and sexual battlefield of 1973's *Let's Get It On*, his biggest



“THERE’S NOT ONE BLACK PERSON IN AMERICA WHO DIDN’T GET WHAT MARVIN WAS TALKING ABOUT.”
MARY WILSON

single; the 1978 double LP, *Here, My Dear*, a bitter chronicle of his divorce from Anna; and 1982’s triple-platinum *Midnight Love*.

“I could hear he was looking for a new approach – Marvin knew I worked with Miles,” says Henderson, who jumped from Stevie Wonder’s road band to Davis’s April 1970 session for *A Tribute To Jack Johnson*. “He was like Miles in leading the band, only he was playing piano. There were never charts. He’d get a feel going, then have something occur – me playing something or Wah Wah coming up with a line.

“We were cooking a meal,” Henderson suggests, “and he was the head chef. But Marvin also allowed you to be who you were.”

By then, *What’s Going On* was taking on another life in cover versions. Donny Hathaway, Quincy Jones, saxophone titan Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Motown psychedelic-soul trio The Undisputed Truth all recorded the title song in 1971 (Hathaway in concert for his 1972 LP *Live*; Kirk for 1972’s *Blacknuss* in a medley with Mercy Mercy Me). The same year, jazz singer Sarah Vaughan cut Inner City Blues and Curtis Mayfield produced the song for his former group, The Impressions. In 1972, Aretha Franklin took Gaye’s hymn Wholy Holy literally to church on her gospel classic *Amazing Grace*.

Jon Batiste, born two years after Gaye’s passing, claims that he played most of *What’s Going On* as he was growing up in the ’90s, with his early bands in New Orleans, before he ever listened to the full album. “Street musicians played songs from that era as much as they played our traditional music,” the pianist notes. “What’s

Going On was one of the top songs you heard covered by the brass bands: Rebirth, The Dirty Dozen...”

At the same time, “Marvin was one of the pillars of hip-hop,” says Kamasi Washington, a teenager when he first heard Snoop Dogg’s *Doggystyle*, and later toured with the rapper as a sideman. “Snoop looks to Marvin

in the way he phrases words – that smooth, slow ease, taking his time. It’s all there.”

To Vernon Reid, Prince’s 1987 *tour de force*, *Sign ‘O’ The Times*, was a direct descendant of *What’s Going On* “in its vibrations – the weight of what he talks about, the way he talks about it.” Both albums are also the work of an artist who “goes all over the place” yet “leaves nothing to chance.” More recently, Reid has heard Gaye’s legacy in hip-hop’s Frank Ocean, citing Super Rich Kids on Ocean’s 2012 album, *Channel Orange*. “The idea of black privilege, a generation of kids of NFL and NBA stars – he nailed that, a certain class that people don’t talk about.

“*What’s Going On* was a record that says this is possible – you can talk about this,” Reid declares. “I can’t think of another situation where someone was such a big star and made a record that was right at street level. It’s not a put-on. It was a gift.”

“This was a once-in-a-lifetime situation,” affirms Kenny Gamble. “This record about war and peace, people getting together, being in harmony with each other – it was all going on in Marvin’s mind. And the way he expressed it, the way he played that piano – I haven’t found anything to beat it.”



THE DIRECTOR'S CUT

SECRETIVE, RECLUSIVE,

THE OPPOSITE OF PROLIFIC,

KATE BUSH YET CREATIVELY BRAVE, **FIERCE AND SINGLE-MINDED,** REVEALS AS MUCH AS SHE HIDES, AND THERE ARE STORIES

STILL TO TELL ABOUT HER RICH AND COMPLEX *OEUVRE*. ALLOW MOJO TO PRESENT SIX FLASHES OF REVELATION — INCLUDING ONE STARTLING, NEVER-PUBLISHED INTERVIEW — THAT UNDERSCORE THE FACT THAT *THIS* WOMAN'S WORK IS NEVER DONE.

PORTRAIT BY **GERED MANKOWITZ**.

STRANGE PHENOMENA

- **THE LOST INTERVIEW**
BY MARTIN ASTON
- **THE TOUR OF LIFE**
BY LUCY O'BRIEN
- **SAT IN YOUR LAP AT 40**
BY VICTORIA SEGAL
- **KATE ON FILM**
BY TOM DOYLE
- **INSIDE HOUNDS OF LOVE**
BY YOUTH
- **KATE IN THE
WILDERNESS**
BY JOHN AZZLEWOOD





Symphony in red:
Kate Bush, from
the *Lionheart*
album sleeve
photo shoot, Great
Windmill Street,
London, 1978.

THE LOST INTERVIEW

“IT’S NOT AMBITION
THAT DRIVES YOU.”



Hello Earth: harvester
of ideas Kate Bush,
under the big sky,
Frieth, Bucks, 1983.

IT'S A DESIRE TO ESCAPE.”

IN 1989, **KATE BUSH** WAS BACK — PROMOTING HER EXTRAORDINARY SIXTH ALBUM, *THE SENSUAL WORLD*. IN AN INTERVIEW NEVER PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH AND MUCH OF IT UNAired ANYWHERE BEFORE, SHE TALKED FAME AND FOLK AND FEMININITY, AND THE PAIN OF MAKING RECORDS. “I DON’T THINK YOU CAN EVER BE REALLY HAPPY,” SHE TELLS **MARTIN ASTON**. “YOU LEARN TO BE DISAPPOINTED.”

PORTRAIT BY **BRIAN GRIFFIN**.

IT WASN’T QUITE THE “FLY THE WORLD’S JOURNALISTS TO NYC”-type stunt of old, but EMI Records’ PR exercise to spread the ‘Kate Bush returns!’ message was still ostentatious: a coach-load of European journalists (as the UK correspondent of the Dutch music magazine OOR, I qualified) were driven into the Kent countryside to Chilston Park, a former stately home reborn as a country hotel. Here we would be wined and dined and allowed to hear Bush’s new album, *The Sensual World* (with an authorised Q&A with BBC Radio 1 DJ Roger Scott to hand, but no lyrics). Four-poster beds awaited, and the next morning we were ushered in, in turn, to meet her regal Kateness.

Bush was many things in the years following the shock-of-the-new of 1978’s *Wuthering Heights*, but prolific wasn’t one of them. Having taken three years to make *Hounds Of Love*, Bush took another four to make *The Sensual World* (during which time Prince, for example, released four albums, one of them a double). So, the anticipation surrounding what was only her sixth studio long-player was understandable. With EMI’s other prized asset David Bowie wobbling from solo torpor to the indifferently-received *Tin Machine*, the label was bound to lavish attention on Bush, to treat her as the precious porcelain figurine she also appeared to be in the flesh.

Facing me with lioness mop of hair and dressed in undemonstrative black, she was charismatic in a subtle manner, with that paradoxical fusion you find in artists, of shyness (only fleeting eye contact) and forthrightness. Sitting opposite Bush at a table made sense; she’d have almost disappeared into one of Chilston Park’s armchairs. ➤

Brian Griffin

◀ Whether down to shyness, or the years of studio isolation with mostly only engineer/boyfriend Del Palmer for company, Bush didn't relish the exposing nature of interviews. Yet there was much in her extraordinary songworld we wanted to unpick, including the new album's tales of dancing with Hitler, a love affair with a computer, and childbirth – which prompted a question about motherhood that earned me an uncomfortable look (a decade too soon for that one). The fact that she considered the album to be her most “female” yet seemed the most intriguing place to start; could Bush qualify what she meant?

“I don't know what I mean in a lot of ways,” she replied, softly, “except that's how it feels to me. It feels like my most personal album. I suppose what I'm trying to say is some of the songs feel like I'm actually writing them as a female, which is not necessarily something I've really felt strongly before. A lot of my songs in the past have been written from a man's or child's point of view, but I've never necessarily felt like a ‘female writer’.”

How do you inhabit a man's point of view?

You can only write from a man's point of view as a woman, as men write women's points of view from a man's point of view. It's perfectly acceptable.

What is the attraction of writing from a man's point of view?

Because, in the past, I've very much enjoyed *not* writing as a female, I've enjoyed the idea of being something that can be lots of different things. I was more interested in other areas, like from a child's point of view, or someone in a very extreme situation. It's kind of like writing stories, so you don't want to be yourself. It can be much more interesting.

Can't women be lots of different things?

Yes, they can, but I am a female, and so most people presume that females write from a female point of view, and there are lots of things that I wanted to say, obviously, as a human. But this album has a much more female nature to it, in the sounds, certainly more than *Hounds Of Love*. Although that album was a female work of art, from a sound point of view I wanted to get the sense of power that I associate with maleness. Big drum sounds, very male-energy sounds, and that was something, with hindsight, I didn't feel the need to do on this album.

What do you hear as female energy?

I don't know, you tell me! Bulgarian music... What Trio Bulgarka are singing [on *The Sensual World's* Deeper Understanding, Never Be Mine and Rocket's Tail] is very female. What I'm saying is that rock music has been very male-dominated. Unfortunately, I think most female sounds in rock music are dissipated by males, because it's the men who are producing the records and playing the instruments. I'm not sure there is a strong female sound in contemporary music. I think there is in ethnic music. When you get to people like the Trio Bulgarka, it's very much from a strong female point of view. I think it has a tremendous intensity because of that, and it's very unusual to hear that kind of positive female strength that you don't really find in pop music. I also think that, without wanting to sound sexist, this album maybe means something to a few more women.

What influences your songwriting more: feelings, people, situations?

I think relationships continually entice me. I suppose films and books, particularly books, conversations with people, they're very much inspirational things.

Molly Bloom's final soliloquy from James Joyce's Ulysses informs the new album's title track...

When I couldn't get permission to use Joyce's original passage, the piece turned more into a song about Molly Bloom stepping out into the real world and her impressions of sensuality. This is a very sensual world, where you can touch things, smell things, and we're surrounded by all this sensuality. But we don't see it like that. The

whole of nature is designed for everything to have a good time doing what they should be.

It's interesting how most of these things do originate years ago, and then four to five years later, they regulate into ideas. Like *Cloudbusting*, which was originally from a book [Peter Reich's memoir *A Book Of Dreams*] I found on the shelf nine years before I wrote the song, so there was this huge time-delay. That book struck me very deeply, and it took me that long to be able to step back enough to be able to write it because it was such a powerful experience. Sometimes, the more powerful something is the more you're wrapped up in it, the more scared of it I am, and it takes time to move back and see how you can look at it differently.

The song This Woman's Work is about childbirth. Is the thought of motherhood appealing to you?

I think that's a bit of a personal question. The song is very much linked to a piece of film, by John Hughes, the American film director, who made *She's Having A Baby*, about a young guy who gets married and his wife becomes pregnant. The film is very light, very comic, until they're in the hospital and the baby is in the breach position, and she's rushed away, and he's just left there. It's a very strong piece of film. You get the impression it's the moment that he has to start growing up. Up until this point, he's been a kid and very happily so. It's a lovely piece of film when he's looking back on his life with the woman. It's an exploration of guilt, I guess.

Why do you think people are fanatical about your music?

I have no idea one way or the other. I think the wonderful thing about art is that it's a totally personal relationship between that piece of work and the receiver. I just continue to think how extraordinary it is that people *do* want to hear my stuff. It's very hard for me to see it other than how it is for me, and I spend a long time away from all these situations, in the studio, working on an album, and I don't know if people will like it. I hope they will, but the more time it takes to make, the more you think, “Oh my God, they're not going to think it's worth all this time.” Why do people still ask me if I'm going to tour? I haven't toured for 10 years. It's absolutely ridiculous.

You'll hate me for this, but... would you consider playing live again?

A lot of people think I hated touring, which is why I haven't toured since, but I enjoyed it very much.

You always said that it was the production: that each song was a performance in itself.

I was very much influenced by dance and theatre at that time, and we just wanted to do something special, to make a show of it. It was such a long time ago, it almost seems like a dream. I would like to but I'm scared of committing myself to something like that again. I found it really tiring. I found it difficult to do anything for a long time after it.

You don't feel the need to expand and visualise these new songs in the same way?

No, I don't really. Again, it's very important to me over these last few albums, to spend time as a songwriter. I didn't want to be, or feel like, a performer. I think I didn't want to be exposed any more, I just wanted to spend some time alone at home and be a songwriter, and not be out here in front of everyone. I was very exposed for a while. I've missed audience contact, because I don't get any at all.

You write about a sensual world, and contact with an audience could be a sensual experience.

I don't know about sensual!

OK, a broader, richer, more emotional connection with humanity.

You see, again, it's a very isolated thing, touring. It's not of the real world. Although you might have tremendous contact with an audience, which I sometimes miss tremendously, it's a very ego-centric thing as well. It's a very selfish thing to make an album, to lock yourself away, and to go on tour is the same. But it can be a lot of fun, so it's important to me that if I tour, it's something that I want to do, so I want to feel good about it, which I haven't up until now. It's very easy to do things to please other people, which is wrong: you have to listen to what you feel is right, because it's your life.

What would make it fun for you?

It wouldn't be fun for me and that's why I haven't done it. It's possible, I might. I've really wanted to work on albums, to be a songwriter, I haven't wanted to be exposed, I wanted to be at home and writing. It was just doing my head in.

When you're at home, do you keep an eye on the charts? Or do you keep a safe distance because of any influence – subliminal or otherwise – it might have?

I was saying to someone the other day, it's just as well I don't, because if I was trying to be hip, I wouldn't stand much chance, because by the time my record came out, three or four years later, it would be so *passé*! Or maybe it would have come right round again. Maybe I should leave it 10 years.

You have a tight control over the writing and recording process...

Yes, it's very important to me that I do that now. I feel that all that is part of the writing process, like a film. When you see a film, you take it all in as an image: the pictures, the acting and everything. An album is the same. It's not just the songs that you hear, it's everything that's on there that makes the songs what they are – the arrangements, the production, it's all part of the art of the songwriting process for me now, since we got our own studio, and I could experiment with as much time as I needed, without the pressures of studio cost, of all these people wandering around wanting to work. I just wanted to mess around by myself. It's very difficult to work through other people with such a personal medium as music. With film, you have to work through all these people, but for me, the less people involved, the more directly I can communicate with the tape and get more of what I wanted to say.

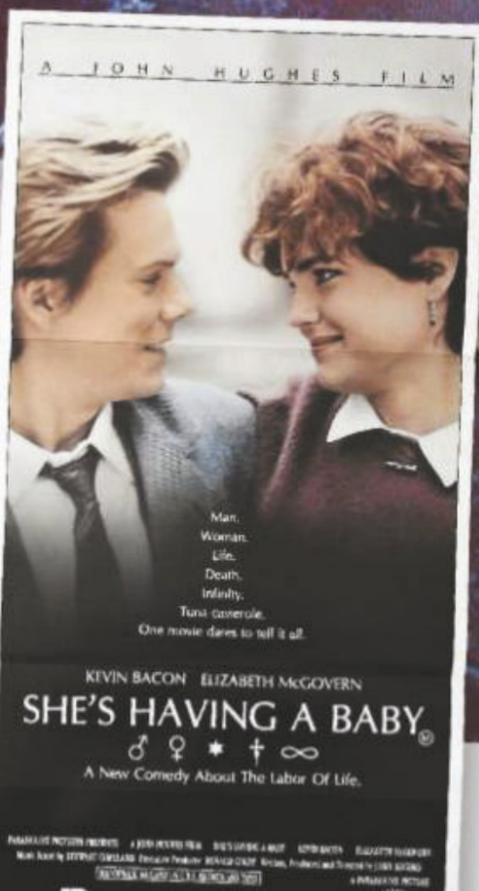
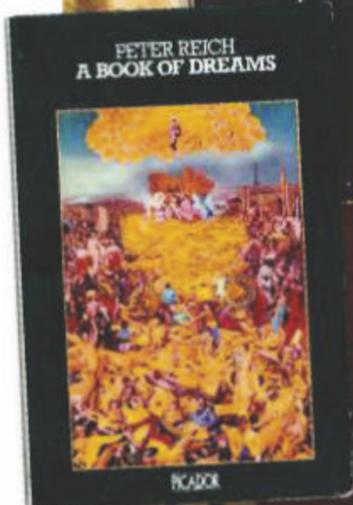
Eventually, you have to let go of the music, and release a record and allow other people in, to hear it, to judge it. Does ‘letting go’ haunt you?

I think ‘letting go’ is a key phrase for so many things in life. It's really difficult. I'm a very tenacious person, and I do not like to let go of something, but I think in terms of the album, I couldn't wait for this album to be finished, and for it to be out. The relief I felt when it was finished, I can't tell you. It's fantastic, because I never want to spend this amount of time on an album. I always go in with this completely

“FEMALE SOUNDS IN ROCK MUSIC ARE DISSIPATED BY MALES, BECAUSE IT’S THE MEN WHO ARE PRODUCING THE RECORDS.”



James Joyce Ulysses



Kate and the cold gun: Bush at the family home in East Wickham, south London, May 1978; (insets) her music, her muses and a trigger movie.



**“SOMETIMES,
THE MORE
POWERFUL
SOMETHING
IS THE
MORE YOU’RE
WRAPPED UP
IN IT, THE
MORE SCARED
OF IT I AM.”**

◀ absurd notion that it’s only going to take me eight weeks – you know, “Right, *this time...*” (*rubs hands together*) – and it might take me eight weeks to write the first few songs, and then I realise why it’s such hard work, because what comes out is rubbish. You have to work and work and push it through, and sometimes things come up very quickly, but it’s like you’re trying to get in touch with yourself, and there’s so much in the way. You have to try and get all that out, throw it all out.

Your music tends to be very layered. What about stripping things back? Perhaps even an acoustic record?

Yes, I have thought of it, but an acoustic record... a lot of people have talked about this, but I don’t want to do it. This is the problem. When you make a record, you’re expressing what you want to express, and I really feel I’ve done this on this album, in a way that I feel much happier about letting it go than any of the other albums, and I think a lot of that’s to do with the process I’ve gone through myself, to get to the end of this album. It’s done a lot for me, working on this album, working through a lot of blocks in myself that I feel have gone now.

Would the satisfaction be different if the music were stripped back?

I would probably never let go of it because I’d never be happy with it. To me, that would be incredibly boring, because what’s so exciting for me on this album was to write songs, and then to paint a picture, with sounds, so that you’re creating a mood somehow. Each song has its

own personality, it’s strange how they do, they just have their own little twists here and there. It’s a random and experimental process, putting things together, and trying and make them gel somehow, like putting Ireland and Bulgaria together on *The Sensual World*.

Are you ever happy with the final product, or are you too much of a perfectionist?

I don’t think you can ever be really happy, which is something you have to come to terms with gradually. You learn to be disappointed, but hopefully it’s a little less each time. This is how I see it. What I feel happy about is that I finished the album, and there were other things I could have done, but it wouldn’t have taken me anywhere, and I feel I’ve reached the logical conclusion to these tracks, and it was all put together in a way that I feel works. There were times with a few of the tracks, I feared they would never be finished, that the lyrics would never work, so there was a sense of personal achievement to get them finished.

When we’re young, we can be obsessive about stuff, like music, thinking it’s the only thing in life that matters. If you feel you have grown up, has music retained its importance or become more integrated into your life?

This is something I really had to look at on this album, that I don’t think I even cared about looking at before, because work was everything to me. It had been for a long time and meant such a lot to me, making music. It was a way for me to

work on myself as a person, to meet people, it was my vehicle in life, and on this album, I really started realising how obsessive I am when making a record, and how it shuts me off from so many things. That’s why I started taking breaks on the album, and hopefully I’ve got it much more in perspective now. You take time off to go away and then come back. There were times I just couldn’t go any further. The music would take a different shape each time, and I was so sick of listening to it, and not being able to get anywhere. Lyrics, I find so difficult, it’s a very long process of draft after draft. There were also periods on this album when I just couldn’t write. I found it difficult to know what I wanted to say, so I did take a break, and that’s all I needed. I spent time at home, I gardened, earthy sort of stuff, because all my work was coming from my head. But ultimately, it is just 10 songs, it’s just an album, and although it takes me far too long to make it, that’s all it is, and that’s how I am. Maybe it won’t always be like this, but it certainly looks like it.

You’ve reached the landmark age of 30. Do you feel that makes a difference?

Tremendously. In your early teens, you hit a physical puberty, but between the ages of 28 and 32, I think you reach a certain mental and spiritual puberty, where you do think differently about so much. You suddenly come to the top of this hill in your life that you’ve been climbing, and it always seems that it can always go up, and all of a sudden, you’re at the top, and thinking, “I’m not 18 any more.” It’s a very introverted process for a lot of people, including me. I had to look at a lot of things in myself, and think, “Is making an album that important to me?” Which I think was very healthy for me.

What else do you see as important?

The biggest thing is that I have friends and other situations to go into that aren’t just related to my work, even if making albums is still a very obsessive process for me.

What do you do with your spare time?

I like to get out to see people, or do the gardening, or just be at home, pottering, just being a human being, because if you’re not careful, you can reach a very isolated point in your head, not just physically, when it’s difficult to relate to people, and the more you throw yourself into your work, the harder that becomes. So many businessmen do it too, getting to that level of obsessiveness.

That’s the pitfall of ambition.

Yes, it is. But I think it’s not necessarily ambition that drives you to throw yourself into your work. It’s just a desire to escape.

Given what’s gone before, how much of a burden is all the expectation surrounding a new Kate Bush album?

What did worry me a bit – and still does, because the album isn’t out yet – is people’s presumptions that it will do so well. In some ways, I feel cheated by it, because if it doesn’t, it’s an unfair pressure. It’s just an album, and I honestly don’t know how people will receive it. Obviously, I would love them to like it, but again, it’s down to ‘Why do you make an album?’ I make an album because, for some reason, I feel I want to write songs and say certain things, and if I’ve done that, then that is a sense of achievement for me, and that’s where it has to stop. If the public don’t like it, OK, I did the best I could, which is all I can ever do. To really want to do something, and do the best you can – that’s really kind of my philosophy. I’ve been almost me for the last couple of years, but recently, people have been treating me like I’m this famous person, which is so surreal after being away for so long. Why are people so interested in me when I just make an album every now and then?

Entering the sensual world: Kate, ready to share the fruit of her labours, 1989:

CIRCUS MAXIMUS

Having the tour of her life: Bush on-stage during the eye-popping 1979 trek.

WHEN KATE BUSH'S TOUR OF LIFE REACHED SOUTHAMPTON IN APRIL '79, A TEENAGE PUNK'S LIFE WAS CHANGED. "SHE HAD AN UNTOUCHABLE QUALITY," REMEMBERS **LUCY O'BRIEN**.

OF COURSE, it nearly never happened at all. After lighting designer Bill Duffield died in an accident de-rigging the warm-up gig in Poole, Kate Bush was close to cancelling her first, full-blown tour. But she soldiered on and the show became a vivid celebration of life.

On April 7, 1979, that show reached Southampton Gaumont and I, a wide-eyed teenager who saw no contradiction in loving gritty punk and the wild reaches of Bush's soaring baroque pop, had a ticket. By then she had two hit albums and was a fully-fledged star, intent on creating a theatrical spectacle with rear-screen projection, vibrant set-design, poetry, mime, magic, and 17 costume changes. Apart from Bowie, few pop singers had attempted shows with such scale and ambition, and that contributed to the crowd's excitement. This was certainly the first time I'd seen a radio head-mike in operation, an invention that seemed like the very acme of technology. It enabled Bush to move expressively, from the sweeping, swooping opener *Moving*, to *Room For The Life*, where she was rolled around in a huge red satin egg. Bush was the fulcrum around which a carnivalesque mêlée of musicians and dancers turned, along with magician Simon Drake who popped up at unexpected moments, manifesting floating glasses of champagne.

But the show was innovative in structure, too. Kate's brother, John Carder Bush, delivered a spoken-word segue into the second part,

which centred on cinematic, piano-led songs including *Fullhouse* and *Kashka From Baghdad*. Here, the 20-year-old Bush really hit her stride, moving up and down the octaves with agility and grace, foregrounding the subtle, shifting patterns in her song-writing. Along with the rococo drama of *Hammer Horror*, this assured performance disproved critics who'd claimed she was a biddable EMI puppet.

And the ideas! There was mischief in the way Bush forged a connection between showbiz and murder, swerving from the nifty street-glam of *Don't Push Your Foot On The Heartbrake* to the deliberately arch crescendo of *Wow* and the Weimar-style cabaret of *Coffee Homeground* (complete with corpses falling into a prison cell stage set). One of the most feverishly delivered songs was *The Kick Inside's* *James And The Cold Gun*, as Bush, in a Wild West costume, armed with a shotgun, 'shot' her dancers with red ribbons. But just when the show felt a little too busy and frantic, the mood abruptly changed.

For the penultimate song the curtain lifted to reveal a dramatic tableau – Bush dressed as a



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KATE BUSH
EVENING 8.00
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THE SETLIST

Moving / *The Saxophone Song* / *Room For The Life* / *Them Heavy People* / *The Man With The Child In His Eyes* / *Egypt* / *L'Amour Looks Something Like You* / *Violin* / *In The Warm Room* / *Fullhouse* / *Strange Phenomena* / *Hammer Horror* / *Kashka From Baghdad* / *Don't Push Your Foot On The Heartbrake* / *Wow* / *Coffee Homeground* / *In Search Of Peter Pan* / *Symphony In Blue* / *Feel It* / *Kite* / *James And The Cold Gun* / *Oh England My Lionheart*
ENCORE:
Wuthering Heights

World War II bomber pilot, sitting on a parachute that spilled across the stage. Her aching rendition of *Oh England My Lionheart*, accompanied by Renaissance harpsichord and recorder, was the set's musical high point. "Give me one kiss in apple blossom/Give me one wish and I'd be wassailing," she sang, capturing an exquisite, mournful sense of pastoral England, and, in its historical and literary references, an indication, though we didn't know it,

of where she was heading next.

An encore of *Wuthering Heights* – wretched in dry ice – prompted a transcendent sing-along, but this had not been the traditional pow-wow of artist and audience. The fact that Bush had not addressed us once, staying in character throughout the show, lent her an untouchable quality.

The teenage me presumed she would be back soon, but it was 35 years before Kate Bush attempted another live production – the spectacular, belated *Before The Dawn*. At 20, with a triumph that was also a kind of a tragedy, she'd set her bar way too high.

"MAGICIAN SIMON DRAKE POPPED UP AT UNEXPECTED MOMENTS, MANIFESTING FLOATING GLASSES OF CHAMPAGNE."

Studio time: Bush at work during the recording of *The Dreaming*, April 1982.



“SHE WAS FLYING BY THE SEAT OF HER PANTS”

FORTY YEARS AGO, THE RELEASE OF SAT IN YOUR LAP SIGNALLED THAT ALL BETS WERE OFF. BUT IT INVOLVED A GIANT LEAP OF FAITH FROM TEAM KATE. “THE WHOLE RECORD...” THEY TELL VICTORIA SEGAL, “THERE’S NOTHING NORMAL ABOUT IT AT ALL.”
PORTRAIT BY GEORGE BODNAR.

THE VIDEO FOR SAT IN YOUR LAP INCLUDES a shot of the singer swooping around Abbey Road’s parquet flooring on the shoulders of a rollerskating minotaur. Bush’s imperious “onward!” gestures can’t disguise the shaky position she’s in, her will reliant on the masked figure beneath. “You need an enormous amount of strength to control your own musical work,” Bush said in 1985 – when, thanks to *Hounds Of Love*, that strength was beyond doubt. *Sat In Your Lap*, however, catches Bush seizing the reins of her work with new intent: a song about the search for knowledge, the battle between hubris, self-sabotage and despair. Released as a single in June 1981, it could be the mission statement for the experimentation to follow, over a year later, on *The Dreaming*: “Some say that knowledge is something that you’ll never have,” she sings, but there’s only one way to find out.

At west London’s Townhouse studios, the mood was less frenetic than the jester-filled, flamenco-dancing video suggested. Key



“GOING INTO THE STUDIO EVERY DAY WITH HER WAS LIKE ENTERING A FANTASY LAND.” NICK LAUNAY

tools for enlightenment were two large bars of Cadbury’s Dairy Milk and a quantity of hashish laid out each morning. Yet there was still a precarious wobble in the air. “I felt my writing needed some kind of a shock,” she said, recalling the post-release slump that followed 1980’s *Never For Ever*. Her creative enervation was lifted by seeing Stevie Wonder at Wembley Arena: she hammered out *Sat In Your Lap*’s frantic rhythms the next day.

More significantly, Bush wanted to produce *The Dreaming* solo, the endgame of a patient process that saw her assist Andrew Powell on *Lionheart*, then co-produce *Never For Ever* with Jon Kelly. In that febrile post-punk moment, Bush wasn’t the only musician to make a pilgrimage to Townhouse, intrigued by its state-of-the-art technology and the pioneering drum sound that had emerged from its “stone room”. This sonic boom had been heard on Phil Collins’ *In The Air Tonight* and Peter Gabriel’s third solo album (particularly Bush favourite *Intruder*). Public Image Ltd partly recorded their third album *The Flowers Of Romance* there. “The whole place had a real vibe

about it,” recalls producer and engineer Hugh Padgham. “The Goldhawk Road in Shepherd’s Bush was quite rough, so it was edgy in the studio and edgy outside it.”

Bush met Padgham when she was singing vocals on Gabriel’s *Games Without Frontiers* and asked him to engineer *The Dreaming*. Busy with Genesis’s *Abacab*, he devoted weekends to *The Dreaming*, recording backing tracks for three songs – *Leave It Open*, *Get Out Of My House* and *Sat In Your Lap* – before other commitments arose. “I felt bad about not carrying on with Kate but I couldn’t not go and work with The Police.”

Padgham suggested she instead use engineer Nick Launay, who had worked with Public Image Ltd. Bush, who loved the rhythmic abrasions of *Flowers Of Romance*, was sold. (The appreciation was mutual: the Ampeg bass used on tracks from *The Dreaming* belonged to PiL and was lent as “a favour” on Launay’s request). The engineer was 20 and still living with his mum when he started work with the 22-year-old Bush. “For me going into the studio every day with her was like entering a fantasy land that she had,” says

Launay. That, plus the “seemingly endless” budget, left them feeling “like kids let loose... any idea she had was possible.”

IT WAS A FREEDOM PADGHAM HAD FOUND LESS comfortable. “I felt a little bit that Kate was flying by the seat of her pants and just ‘Let’s put it all down and see what happens later,’” he laughs. “I’d probably be more tolerant of that now than I was then.”

Boundaries were also pushed by use of the cutting-edge Fairlight, technology that Bush first engaged on *Never For Ever*. She commandeered keyboardist Geoff Downes while he was overdubbing his supergroup Asia’s first album at the Townhouse, asking him to come in one weekend and provide “stabbing horn parts”.

“Most musicians don’t really start until gone one o’clock in the afternoon and this was 10 o’clock on a Sunday morning, which I thought was pretty weird because she was a pretty laidback kind of person,” remembers Downes. Yet the early start was not entirely out of character: “She really wanted to be ahead of the game technologically as much as she was artistically.”

Other oddities include the bleepy percussive gasps, also sampled into the Fairlight, and the less-advanced swish of bamboo sticks wielded by brother and backing vocalist Paddy Bush and drummer Preston Heyman. (Launay also remembers the hose-like toy known as a whirly tube or Corrugaphone making an appearance.)

The results are a song that mimics the clatter of competing ideas, in a post-hippy pick’n’mix spirituality: “Give me the karma, mama!” demands the final vocal swell, “a jet to Mecca... Tibet or Jeddah/To Salisbury/A monastery”. There’s a duality that the noise just holds together: forward motion undermined by self-lacerating descriptions of lazy entitlement; high-end technology and post-punk wildness; the philosophical confusion of heaven and hell. Even its B side suggests a splitting, a division – a cover of Donovan’s 1969 *Lord Of The Reedy River*, with backing vocals by the singer-songwriter himself. For watery atmosphere, the hippy fable was recorded in a stagnant abandoned swimming pool in the Townhouse basement.

Not for the first or last time, Bush had set a bar she’d struggle to meet, as sessions for *The Dreaming* dragged on, fraught with setbacks, until her fourth album finally emerged in September 1982.

“The drum patterns and the drum sound on *Sat In Your Lap* are uniquely bizarre and unlike any record you’ve heard,” says Nick Launay. “The angular rhythm of the piano with the drums is very unusual. The vocal is extraordinary and has all those backing vocals – that’s very weird. And then the Fairlight on top of it is very very odd. The whole record – there’s nothing normal about it at all.”

Yet *Sat In Your Lap* holds together through sheer force of will. It might seek the divine, but it stands as a monument to human frailty, to all those perched on the shoulders of a rollerskating minotaur, trying to tame the beast.

“TELLING A STORY, THAT’S A BUZZ FOR ME”

TAKING CONTROL OF HER VIDEOS WAS AS IMPORTANT TO KATE BUSH AS THE FIGHT TO PRODUCE HER MUSIC, BUT, AS TOM DOYLE DISCOVERS, IT TESTED HER TO THE LIMIT: “IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT I REALLY QUESTIONED MY SANITY.”

PORTRAIT BY GUIDO HARARI.

TOP OF THE POPS, FEBRUARY 16, 1978. THE BBC orchestra, likely fresh from accompanying the latest singing turn on *The Two Ronnies*, are murdering *Wuthering Heights*. Alone on-stage, 19-year-old Kate Bush looks equally terrified and mortified, as she gamely tries to sing over the lumpy live rendering of her soon-to-be-Number 1 song. It was, she would later assess with characteristic bluntness, “a bloody awful performance”.

Luckily for Bush, the fast-developing medium of the pre-filmed promo will become a far more natural home for her: a place to visually conjure the characters in her lyrics. In fact, two clips were made for *Wuthering Heights*. In the first (destined for the US market), wearing a red dress, she performed her carefully choreographed routine out on the MoD’s artillery range at Salisbury Plain. In the second, directed by former David Bowie/Black Sabbath sleeve designer Keith MacMillan and captured to video (not on film) in a TV studio, the singer dressed in white and floated in front of a dark background over a floor of dry ice, her moves often dissolving into trippy trails through proto-digital trickery.

“We set it up on a Monday morning,” MacMillan recalled. “We shot it in the afternoon, we edited all night and it was ready for *Top Of The Pops* the next morning.”

In Bush’s mind, this clearly offered a world of possibilities, in which she would revel over four decades. “Telling a story, that’s what’s really a buzz for me,” she told *MOJO* in 2005. “There’s a huge

amount of time and work goes into each video. My favourite thing is putting it together.”

That last sentence also revealed the untold battle of Kate Bush’s career. With vision as important to her as sound, her journey from performer to director involved a tussle for authority over her videography as defining as her battle for complete control of her music.

THE PLASTIC-BUBBLED FOETUS OF BREATHING, THE provocative swordmistress of *Babooskha*, the wide-eyed soldier heading into battle in *Army Dreamers*, these were the video characters Bush developed for her third album *Never For Ever* in 1980, reaching beyond the precise choreography of her early promos.

But it was with its successor *The Dreaming*, her first self-produced album, that Bush began to realise more ambitious ideas on screen. The roller-skating, dunce-cap-wearing moves in the clip for *Sat In Your Lap* may have been committed to video in a spare afternoon on the parquet live room floor at Abbey Road, but for the eccentric, Australia-themed title track/follow-up single, Bush flexed her creative muscles. “She had very specific ideas about what she wanted,” says *The Dreaming*’s director, Paul Henry. “She wanted the whole thing shot as a wide shot. Which obviously you don’t do, because you need other shots in order to make a film to move along. But she was very keen on showing off the dance routine.”

Henry’s task was to create a dusty antipodean environment within the walls of Ewart Television in Wandsworth – a feat accomplished by shooting through landscape-painted glass. “It wasn’t an easy track to visualise,” he stresses. “So that sort of slightly grungy look that it ended up having, with lots of dust and smoke and so on, was a departure really for her.”

The director remembers the shoot being relatively pain-free. The editing, less so. “In the end, she just didn’t want the closer shots,” he says. “So, the edit was a compromise and caused a lot of problems with EMI. They were unhappy with the cut. There was no support forthcoming from EMI. Plenty of criticism, of course, but no support.”

Bush’s label paymasters instructed Henry to take a firmer stance on the video for her next single, *There Goes A Tenner*. “I’d been told by EMI, ‘Don’t be bamboozled,’” he recalls. “So, I had to be a lot tougher, if you like, on the second one.”

The storyboard for *There Goes A Tenner* mirrored the Ealing Comedy-style bungled heist outlined in the song’s lyric. Bush was keen to look ➤

“KATE WANTED TO BE A BOY. I SAID, ‘YOU CAN’T BE A BOY. PEOPLE ARE NOT GONNA ACCEPT THAT.’”
DIRECTOR JULIAN DOYLE ON CLOUDBUSTING

A real departure: Bush promotes *The Dreaming* in a "slightly grungy look... lots of dust and smoke" on Italian TV, Riva del Garda, 1982.

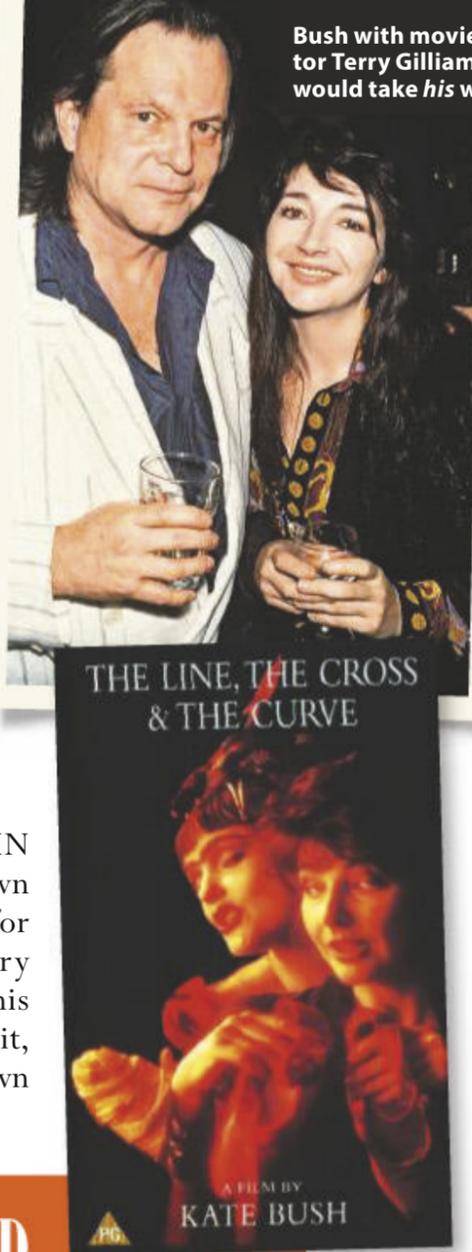


◀ like a grubby robber. “She ended up with that sort of smudging on her face,” Henry says. “She was really excellent in that. I thought her acting skills were terrific.”

Nonetheless, as Bush’s directorial aspirations came alive on the set during the making of the video, they caused problems for its actual director.

“It’s confusing for crew if there are two lots of instructions being passed around,” Henry stresses. “I just insisted that I had to have a lot more control as the director. The consequence was that the film she shot after that [Suspended In Gaffa], she had every member of my crew except me (*laughs*).”

IN 1985, KATE BUSH APPEARED IN what has endured as her best-known promo, the seven-minute-long film for *Cloudbusting*. Initially, she asked Terry Gilliam (at the time busy completing his dystopian sci-fi satire *Brazil*) to direct it, before Gilliam in turn suggested his own editor, Julian Doyle.



Bush with movie director Terry Gilliam: “She would take *his* word.”

“She had some funny ideas, which I had to try and interpret into something possible,” says Doyle now. “She had a storyboard that had the sun being a face that came over the landscape and sang some of the lines. I just thought it wasn’t gonna work.”

The singer also wanted to flip genders and portray Peter Reich, whose *A Book Of Dreams* – detailing his father Wilhelm Reich’s rain-making experiments – had inspired the song. “She wanted to be a boy,” Doyle remembers. “I said, ‘You can’t be a boy. People are not gonna accept that. Let’s just be androgynous so that we don’t know whether you’re a boy or a girl.’”

To play Wilhelm Reich, Doyle remembers Bush originally had in mind the second *Doctor Who*, actor Patrick Troughton (“Who was a lot like her father,” he says). Then the singer approached Donald Sutherland, who at first turned down the cameo. Undaunted, Bush knocked on the door of Sutherland’s suite at The Savoy and talked him into it.

The main shots for *Cloudbusting* were filmed in the Vale of the White Horse in Oxfordshire. In one hilltop embrace scene, where Bush pulls a copy of *A Book Of Dreams* out of Sutherland’s jacket pocket, Doyle wanted the already foot-long difference in their heights to be exaggerated to make Bush appear more childlike.

“I put Donald on a box,” the director laughs. “He said, ‘This is the first time I’ve ever been on a box.’ Normally the short actors get boxes to stand on. But he’s enormous.”

On location, Doyle says that Bush sometimes felt she was being pushed away from having directorial input. Particularly when Reich/Sutherland is seen being arrested and driven off in a car.

“Me and the cameraman got in the front of the car with the driver and Donald sat in the back between the two [arresting officials],” says Doyle. “I came back and Kate said, ‘You left me here.’ But there was no way we could actually fit her in, except for on Donald’s lap (*laughs*).”

In the editing suite, the director found he had enough material to cut together a seven-minute video and chopped up the five-minute-long audio track to expand it. Screening the result for Bush, Doyle coughed in a vain attempt to cover up the edit. “She said, ‘You didn’t hide it with the cough,’” he chuckles now. “So, she wrote another section to go in there.”

Ultimately, Doyle handed the final editing of *Cloudbusting* over to Terry Gilliam. “That way it stopped her messing it up too much,” he reckons. “Y’know, she would take *his* word.”

TELLINGLY, BUSH STEPPED UP AND SELF-DIRECTED her next two promos, for *Hounds Of Love* and *The Big Sky*, and rarely employed a director again. In 1993, however, she over-stretched herself in the making of the 50-minute film *The Line, The Cross & The Curve*, featuring songs from *The Red Shoes*.

While it yielded some successful standalone clips, particularly the demented fantasia of the album’s title track and the elegant, spiralling imagery in *Moments Of Pleasure*, Bush was dismissive of the film when talking to MOJO in 2005.

“There was no story, it was too rushed, I had no money,” she said. “I had to be in it a lot in order to make it cheap. It was very difficult. One minute you’re directing and then you’re acting. It was really disappointing, y’know. I think it’s a load of old bollocks actually.”

Unarguably more brilliant was Bush’s most recent onscreen work, the *And Dream Of Sheep* film made for her *Before The Dawn* shows in 2014, and subsequently released onto YouTube in 2016. Singing live while floating on her back in a 20-foot deep tank at Pinewood Studios, Bush confirmed her ongoing dedication to the visual medium by ending up with a mild dose of hypothermia.

“It was the first time in all my years of nutty ideas that I really questioned my sanity,” she admitted in the *Before The Dawn* programme. “It really was my most challenging performance yet.”

“THERE WAS NO STORY, I HAD NO MONEY. I THINK IT’S A LOAD OF OLD BOLLOCKS ACTUALLY.” KATE BUSH ON THE LINE, THE CROSS & THE CURVE

“In all my years of nutty ideas”: Bush during the making of *The Line, The Cross & The Curve*, Black Island studios, London, 1993.





Bush performs *Running Up That Hill* on Extratour, Bremen, 1985 with then partner Del Palmer (right).

BIG SKY THINKING

HOW DID THE BASS PLAYER FROM POST-PUNK MADMEN KILLING JOKE END UP ON *HOUNDS OF LOVE*, AND WHAT DID HE LEARN OF KATE BUSH'S "DRUID PHILOSOPHY"? OVER TO YOUTH...



KATE AND I FIRST entered each other's orbit around 1981-82 because we were both recording at the Townhouse studio in Shepherd's Bush – I was with Killing Joke doing *What's This For...!*, and then she went in for *The Dreaming*. We subsequently heard she was a big fan of ours, which was surprising, but maybe not.

A year or two after the Townhouse, I was living in Wandsworth with [sometime MOJO writer] Kris Needs, and I got a call from Kate. I don't know how she got my number. I didn't believe it was her. By that time I'd left Killing Joke and was doing *Brilliant*, with more of a New York funk-disco influence from people like Steve Arrington. Maybe that was what she was after, because Kate likes juxtaposed extremes. She was assembling her army of sessioners for what became *Hounds Of Love*.

She sent a car to take me over to her family's house in Welling. My bass rig was basically half a PA, so we loaded it all into the back of this Volvo estate and I think Kate was quite impressed. I'd shared a rehearsal space with Motörhead, and I was trying to sound like 'Family Man' Barrett [from Bob Marley's *Wailers*] crossed with Lemmy, who played it

more like a guitar, and if you hear my one part that got used, on *The Big Sky*, it's got a quite a fierce, metallic sound. And then, if you hear the drum overdubs towards the end, they're very tribal, very Killing Joke.

Kate really pushed hard. She was fierce. Once she's had an idea, she won't let go of it, but she does it in a very nice way. I never heard her raise her voice once. She was in it for the long haul. She made Dónal Lunny play a one-note bend on a whistle for three hours until she was satisfied he'd got the right one.

You would never really have known that she was together with Del Palmer. They were very professional when they were working together. He was her partner, her engineer and her bass player, and he was so selfless about it. Some of the bass tracks I was doing, he had obviously already had a go at and she wasn't happy with his parts, so he was engineering me while I was replacing them. Not many musicians, with their vast egos, would be able to handle that. Without him, I don't think she could have made that album. I have got a massive respect for him now.

I learned so much from *Hounds Of Love*. A big part of the records I was making in the late-'80s and '90s was informed by

that experience. How she used to prepare the SSL console was like a glimpse into the future. That's how everybody makes records now, whether they are on Logic, ProTools, or some other digital desktop.

Listening to *Hounds Of Love* again today, I understand intuitively what she is saying, but when I read the lyrics, I'm totally lost. Only she really understands her records. That's beautiful, because it forces you as a listener to use your imagination and try and work out what it is.

To me, that all comes down to Kate's mysticism. I've been quite active in the pagan community for 20 or 30 years, and I've been to many ceremonies – Wicca ceremonies, Druid ceremonies – and you see very experienced people trying to lead one, and it is not easy to get into that mythological archetype and make it come alive. Very often it becomes quite Alan Partridge, because you're standing in a wet field, and people are holding their shopping bags – about as far from mystical as you can get.

It's hard to command that energy, let alone in the arena of pop, and recorded music, but Kate is incredibly adept at that. Those Hammersmith shows in 2014 were essentially her unique strand of Shivaism, Dionysian and Druid philosophy, loosely wrapped up in a song-and-dance show.

I never talked about any of this with her. She's either totally intuitive, or she is well studied and knows exactly what she's doing.

It's probably the latter, because she comes from an Irish family, and her brother's a musician, and all of that is imbued in Irish traditional music, the Bardic tradition and Irish literature. Even with her LinnDrum, her Fairlight and the rest, she exemplifies that mystical quest.

As told to Andrew Perry

Fotex/Jens Meyer



“KATE REALLY PUSHED HARD. SHE WAS FIERCE. ONCE SHE'S HAD AN IDEA, SHE WON'T LET GO OF IT.”

EIGHT YEARS SINCE SHE'D LAST RELEASED AN ALBUM, AND FOUR BEFORE *AERIAL* WOULD MATERIALISE, KATE BUSH AGREED TO AN INTERVIEW WITH MOJO'S SISTER MAGAZINE, Q. AS JOHN AIZLEWOOD DISCOVERED, IT WASN'T AS RANDOM AS IT SEEMED.

HAPPY SHOPPER?

Buying time by biding time: Kate with John Lydon at the Q Awards, London, October 2001.

WHY DID SHE DO IT? Since she had nothing to sell, it wasn't clear. What was clear is that towards the end of 2001, Kate Bush decided to end eight years of media silence and speak to a music journalist, but as she would say herself: "Doing an interview when I have no work out doesn't make any sense."

Having let it be known she was nervous, she assuaged those nerves in the only way she knows: by taking control. She decided we would take lunch at one of the Harrods restaurants. This presented a problem: I'd no idea what she looked like any more; would I have to ask every woman diner, "Excuse me, are you Kate Bush?" before security asked me to leave? In the end it was easy: she looked like a slightly older version of herself. The place was heaving, but, as she had surely calculated, nobody gave her a second glance. She was hiding in plain sight.

She wasn't alone. In the most Kate Bush gambit of all, she'd scheduled her first major interview for almost a decade in the middle of a family shopping trip. Her red-headed *amour*, Danny McIntosh, and Bertie, their red-headed three-year-old, were with her. I chanced a game of peek-a-boo with Bertie, figuring that if he giggled, his mum would relax. And bless him, he giggled.

Father and son fled and we began to chat. I ventured that with the hiding and the perfectionism, she was the Stanley Kubrick of pop. "I admire Kubrick," she replied, flattered.

"God knows how he kept all that control on his movies. And without having his heart broken..."

Bush's most recent significant creative act had been to direct and star in a movie of her own: 1993's *The Line, The Cross & The Curve*. It hadn't worked out so well.

"I shouldn't have done it," she said. "I was so tired. I'm very pleased with four minutes of it, but very disappointed with the rest. I had the opportunity to do something really interesting and I completely blew it. Also, I was viewed in a negative light at that point, more so than after *The Dreaming* where I was viewed as some kind of nutter. It dissipated my energy severely and threw me into a state of severe exhaustion. You just get worn down."

"THERE WAS A PART OF ME THAT DIDN'T WANT TO WORK. IT WAS SOMETHING I DIDN'T FEEL GOOD ABOUT."

After the film, she retreated from public view, mourning her mother Hannah, who'd died in 1992, and the end of her long-term relationship with bassist Del Palmer. She said her hibernation had been spent sleeping and watching "rubbish" television. "There was a part of me that didn't want to work. It was something I didn't feel good about."

But there was renewal, the newish relationship with McIntosh and, in 1998, Bertie. "People say that magic doesn't exist," she told me, "but I look at him and I know it does."

She had, she acknowledged, begun to make music again. "I'm not sure what it's like. I don't get to listen to it. Because of Bertie I don't have the time. I'm quite pleased with it though."

And what chance of her son joining the family business?

"If he wanted to do music, I couldn't stop him, could I? Music is the most wonderful thing, but it can be very painful. I just want him to be happy."

Has music made you happy?

"Yeah, sort of..."

In the event, *Aerial* was four years away, two more than the generous timeframe she allowed herself. Bertie would become Albert, appear on *Aerial*, study physics at Oxford and join her on stage in 2014's *Before The Dawn*. Meanwhile, at a time when few other channels were available to her, our interview signalled to her label and fanbase that their patience would be rewarded. She had bought herself time, time with Bertie. And that's surely what she really wanted. That's why she did it.

M

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

EDITED BY JENNY BULLEY jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

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“A kind of Brigadoon of transcendent English tat.”

DANNY ECCLESTON, MAROONED ON CORAL ISLAND, ALBUMS P81

Call of the wild

Guitar and vox lycanthropes go forth and multiply, to febrile effect. Lambs are wooed, lawns set alight. Stay on the road, says **Ben Thompson**. Illustration by **The Red Dress**.

Matt Sweeney & Bonnie 'Prince' Billy



Superwolves

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

A SENSE OF drama seems to be one of the defining characteristics of Superwolf/Superwolves music, both in writing and performance. How and when the pre-conditions for that drama are fulfilled, and whether the phase of the moon has a place in them, only Matt Sweeney and Will Oldham (Bonnie 'Prince' Billy in his work-clothes, or on his workhorse) seem to know. But the union which coalesced so effectively between three songs played for the first time on a figurative high wire at the Shepherd's Bush Empire in 2003, and a Saturday night headlining set at the Green Man festival in August 2005, has reconvened 16 years later with its musical and lyrical potency miraculously intact.

"When I come to your streets, make worry for me," is the lethal injunction of an opening track which seethes with menace and libidinal energy. It's a vintage piece of Bonnie 'Prince' Billy ambiguity, as the archaic directness of that formulation leaves you

in a moment's doubt as to which of the protagonist or the antagonist really has the most to be concerned about, before the rest of the song resolves that uncertainty through the erection of a transparent fourth wall. "I build worlds in the sky/I've got blood in my eyes/I've got melody on my mind," the singer proclaims, making the transition from Oppenheimer to Bacharach in three simple steps. His climactic insistence that "I've got monsters inside me that must be born" is backed up by a blazing guitar break from Sweeney, setting fire to the barn in which that unearthly nativity has taken place.

Make Worry For Me is a classic "Here's Johnny" moment (in a *The Shining* sense rather than the Johnny Carson original greeting, with Matt Sweeney's axe-work every bit as devastating as Jack Nicholson's was in Stanley Kubrick's movie), as the exact nature of the neighbourhood threat *Superwolves* poses is laid out. If these canines moved in next to you, your lawn would die.

But this album is not all *Sturm und Drang*, and the next two songs celebrate the tender licks of the lair, albeit with a tongue that rasps. Good To My Girls is not just the anodyne celebration of the joys of family life that its title suggests, but instead posits parenthood as a cover story for adult failings ("We all have ways to make it seem we are not hard or bad") and a don't-read-the-small-print insurance policy against mortality. That metaphysical theme – "I fear the fact that after life complete emptiness swirls" – carries over into the



"Sweeney's vibe is very much John Renbourn plays Joseph Spence here."

next song, God Is Waiting, whose courtly meditation on the ageing process sets the listener up for an almost self-parodic Bonnie 'Prince' Billy lyrical mike drop, "God can fuck herself and does – hardcore!"

Matt Sweeney's commitment to supply Bonnie 'Prince' Billy with "guitar parts that hold his voice like a chalice holds wine" is fully delivered upon here. And one of the two main joys of *Superwolves* is hearing Sweeney get to run the full gamut of his formidable arranger/accompanist repertoire in the interests of that act of communion. The former Chavez guitarist has played with (among others) Adele, Johnny Cash, Run The Jewels, Neil Diamond, the Dixie Chicks and Tinariwen (not to mention Billy Corgan), and this collaboration offers him a rare opportunity to push all those envelopes at once.

Hall Of Death brings in Tuareg back-up with a lovely loping guitar riff contributed by Ahmoudou Madassane, rhythm guitarist with Mdou Moctar's band, and freewheeling support from the rest of his band. If you've ever wondered what the second Meat Puppets album might have sounded like had it been

recorded in the African desert, this song has your answer. And if this exhilarating plateau necessarily marks the high point of the album, the descent to the coastal plain of the last few tracks is anything but vertiginous.

Shorty's Ark is an uncharacteristically sentimental animal list-song which somehow steers clear of the icky territory Donovan or John Martyn might have taken it in their early career determination to keep their dark sides in check. I Am A Youth Inclined To Ramble is a splendid, more or less straight (and none the worse for that) version of an Irish folk standard which Paul Brady previously made his own. Sweeney's vibe is very much John Renbourn plays Joseph Spence here, which is great news, as that's one of the best vibes there is.

Alongside Sweeney's freedom to roam, the other main joy of *Superwolves* is hearing Bonnie 'Prince' Billy needing to rise to the occasion. He's spoken of the first *Superwolf* record giving him the confidence to approach subject matter he would feel "hesitant or intimidated about addressing lyrically if I was working on my own – because Matt's there too, I can be vulnerable in certain ways that I can't be normally." And *Superwolves* offers supporting evidence for this proposition in both the unabashedly autobiographical feel of My Popsicle ("Times Square once was dark and wild and frightening to a guileless child") and the chaste, blasted mood of My Body Is My Own.

I don't agree with the YouTube commenter who observed regretfully of one of Bonnie 'Prince' Billy's larky recent lockdown outings with old sparring partner Bill Callahan (Young to his Dylan, or is it the other way round? I can never remember) that "the faerie of genius has long since left his shoulder". But there have undeniably been points in the long interval between his and Sweeney's two lupine excursions when the variety of elaborate ruses Will Oldham has come up with to keep his creativity fresh have threatened to become (to misappropriate the words of John Updike) the mask that eats the face. *Superwolves* – like the best of the Bill and Billy songcycle – suggests that, far from going on hunger-strike to protest the non-availability of organic food in prison, the Shaman of alt country might still have it in him to found a new republic in the ruins of Capitol Hill.



BACK STORY: STUFF OF NIGHTMARES

● In the Faber book of Bonnie 'Prince' Billy interviews, Will Oldham describes the beginnings of *Superwolf* as a therapeutic intervention, beckoning Matt Sweeney "back into the real world" in the aftermath of an unhappy sojourn in Billy Corgan's ill-fated alt-rock supergroup Zwan (above). The initial plan was to write three songs together (but separately) and then perform them for the first time with minimal – or, as it turned out, no – rehearsal at a Bonnie 'Prince' Billy show at the Shepherd's Bush Empire. Sweeney looks back on that experience as being "as close to the dream where you have to go on-stage unprepared as you could get, without it being an actual nightmare".

Getty

WOLVES HOWL! MATT AND BILLY TALK SEQUELS, S-DANPHOBIA AND CRISP DUST.



SUPERWOLVES



Barking at the moon: Bonnie 'Prince' Billy (left) and Matt Sweeney.

“We want to align with the horror.”

Matt Sweeney and Bonnie 'Prince' Billy speak to Ben Thompson.

Did the template for the transition from your first album as a duo – 2005's *Superwolf* – to the follow-up, *Superwolves*, 16 years later, come from the films *Alien* and *Aliens*?

Bonnie 'Prince' Billy: “Yes. Because we wanted to align ourselves with the horror tradition, and also because we are multiplying...”

Will the next one be *Superwolf 3*?

Matt Sweeney: “In our minds it's already ‘Superwolfing’, which has a kind of *Unhalfbricking* feel to it...”

BPB: “It'll be out in 2047.”

You've mentioned Garcia/Hunter as role models for your joint enterprise. Were there any other songwriting combinations whose example you sought to emulate?

MS: “Taupin/John – we'd be happy with that.”

BPB: “Or the Gershwins...”

MS: “The songwriting scenes in the movie *Ishtar* are probably the closest description of how we work together. Also, Black Sabbath. We're not demonstrably derivative of Sabbath, just closer to them than a lot of other people, in that their songs often contain observational advice based on life experience, and when they delve into the fantasy realm it's always with the intention of illuminating that reality – there's always dirt under the nails, potato chip crisp-dust on their jeans – whereas when, say, Led Zeppelin go into the fantasy realm, the jeans are clean, or at least clean of crisps”.

Was there a chronological overlap with the recent Bonnie 'Prince' Billy and Bill Callahan duets?

MS: “This record was tracked before the virus came, but we ended up having to mix it separately – although the timing was synchronised – with me doing a third in New York and Will doing the rest in Nashville”.

The version of Hank Williams Jr's *OD'd In Denver*, which Matt arranged and plays on, is one of the highlights of the Callahan sequence.

BPB: “It was the only song we had to swap. We had 18 collaborators we wanted to work with and Bill and I picked nine songs each, then [Drag City boss] Dan Koretsky came up with a mechanism whereby his dog Spaulding would choose who got asked to arrange which one. Unfortunately, Spaulding picked the Steely Dan song [Deacon Blues, eventually taken on with some aplomb by Bill McKay] for Matt. I can reveal that neither Matt nor I are Steely Dan supporters, but while I was having to take on Bill's suggestions with a smile, Matt emphatically would not do it.”

MS: “Covid was upon us and it was really scary and awful in New York – people were dying in the streets. When I first got news of the project I was thinking how lucky I was to still be able to do something I loved, but then when they assigned me a Steely Dan song, it was such a terrible feeling – the dog had to go back to the drawing board”.

Rhiannon Giddens with Francesco Turrisi

★★★★★

They're Calling Me Home

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

North Carolinian folk singer's heartfelt love letter to her homeland.



Though she rose to fame playing old-time music with Grammy-winning group the Carolina Chocolate Drops in the 2000s, since going solo multi-instrumentalist Giddens has blossomed into a recording artist whose exploration of American folk music has shed light on its forgotten African roots. Recorded while locked down in Dublin last year, this is Giddens' second collaboration with her romantic partner, Italian jazz multi-instrumentalist Turrisi, following in the wake of 2019's *There Is No Other*. The pair's musical chemistry is a potent one and best illustrated by the swirling *Avalon* with its layered vocals and the couple's enthralling version of *Amazing Grace*, where Giddens moans plaintively over Turrisi's bubbling hand drums. Bewitching, too, is the ambling instrumental *Niwel Goes To Town*, featuring Congo-born guitarist Niwel Tsumbu's fretboard filigrees.

Charles Waring



Ryley Walker

★★★★★

Course In Fable

HUSKY PANTS. CD/DL/LP

Master guitarist turns it on again...



Walker shared his love of '80s Genesis with MOJO last year, and the Tony Banks-like synth fanfare that opens his fifth solo album of original songs certainly proves that ardour – though on *Striking Down Your Big Premiere*, and elsewhere in these seven complex, affecting tracks, Walker's soft Midwest tones are closer to Peter Gabriel than Phil Collins. For all its deft homage, the elaborately rococo'd prog-folk of *Course In Fable* is still very much Walker's own trip. It flits between rigorous, tricky composition and kinetic improv, is lent post-rock *bona fides* by Tortoise's John McEntire on keys and production, and puts the singer-songwriter's worldview – at once antic and self-flagellating – into high definition. Amid the hallucinatory terrors, there's even a glimmer of hope: “Fuck me I'm alive,” he notes in gorgeous *Rang Dizzy*, not a little surprised. For those who prefer him in instrumental psych mode, there's also *Deep Fried Grandeur*, a new live album in the company of

Japanese jammers Kikagaku Moyo. Get both.

John Mulvey



Tom Jones

★★★★★

Surrounded By Time

EMI. CD/DL/LP

Unforeseen challenges aboard the game knight's 43rd outing.



With 2010's *Praise & Blame*, Sir Tom, then 70, about-turned from 20-plus years

of sappy pop to reconnect with his gospel-R&B roots. Three such albums conceived alongside producer Ethan Johns perhaps never resonated as universally as Johnny Cash's *American Recordings* series, but successfully rebranded the erstwhile Sexbomb as a senior voice of authority and acumen. Here, Jones and Johns finesse a substantial goalpost shift, from live-in-the-room authenticity to a spooked, digitised sound doubtless necessitated by current circumstances, capturing the unsettled contemporary mood. Floaty '60s standard *The Windmills Of Your Mind* is recast as something terrifying, with blooping synths, wavering strings, an unsteady beat, and Jones robust yet disembodied, as if beaming in from another dimension. After an otherworldly satire on Trump (*Talking Reality Television Blues*), a more ruminative atmosphere descends (*I'm Growing Old*), until a wild tilt at Terry Callier's *Lazarus Man* proves that this lively Welshman isn't rolling over just yet.

Andrew Perry



Willie Nelson

★★★★★

That's Life

LEGACY. CD/DL/LP

Willie sings Sinatra.



One is a country star from Texas, the other a pop idol from New Jersey, but the *Red Headed Stranger* is the perfect interpreter of *Ol' Blue Eyes*. Beginning with 1978's *Stardust*, Willie Nelson's been

mining the same Great American Songbook gold and chart hits that Frank Sinatra made great to begin with. What's astonishing is that at the age of 87, Nelson has not lost any of his breath control and singular phrasing. The swing-a-ding-ding arrangements owe a debt to the late, great Nelson Riddle, although he never used a pedal steel guitar. Classics include entries from the Gershwins and Cole Porter, and the vulnerable but fighting spirit of the title track. Diana Krall joins Nelson for a wonderful *pas de deux* on *I Won't Dance – and yet dance they do!*

Michael Simmons



Gareth Sager

★★★

How Can I Help You When You Don't Want To Help Yourself

CREEPING BENT. CD/DL

Mercurial post-punker's dive into scuzzy lounge/exotica.



Since helping coin The Pop Group's radical punk-funk in the late-'70s, Edinburgh-born Sager has beaten a haphazard path, through madcap jazz (in *Rip Rig + Panic*), proto-trip hop (*Head*) and, on 2017's *88 Tuned Dreams*, Satie-inspired solo-piano minimalism. The following year's *Juicy Rivers* rousingly invoked indie-rock's Postcard roots – fittingly via torch-carrying Pictish imprint Creeping Bent, itself newly revitalised thanks to Spotify-defying subscription platform Patreon. If that record had ‘Saturday night West End bender’ written all over it, Sager's fourth for CB represents its Sunday morning aftermath, the mood whacked and fitful. All *You Put Me Through* opens with (non-Postcard) Scots alt-royalty Davy Henderson crooning a country-ish lament whose bitter refrain (“They should name a disease after you”) feels socio-politically current. While ex-Katydids singer Susie Hug sings two other cuts, the rest staggers along like malnourished Axelrod – soundtrack music-cum-exotica, from which arise numerous ramshackle guitar hooks that elevate the soul.

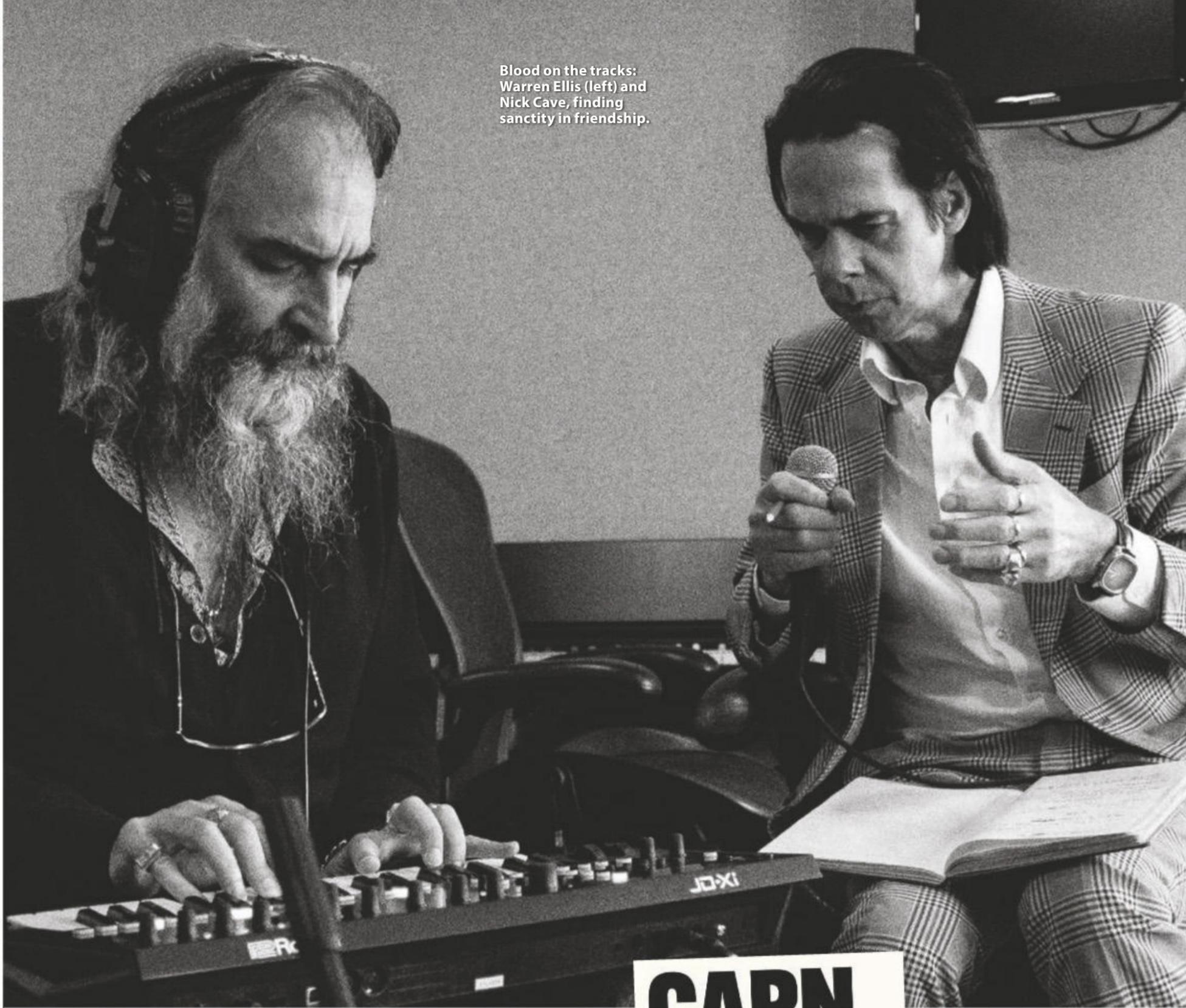
Andrew Perry



Ryley Walker: he seems to have an invisible touch.

Jonah Freeman & Justin Lowe

Blood on the tracks:
Warren Ellis (left) and
Nick Cave, finding
sanctity in friendship.



Straight to you

An agitated, yearning quarantine feat from the singer and his savant.
By **Grayson Haver Currin**.

Nick Cave & Warren Ellis

★★★★★

Carnage

GOLIATH RECORDS, LTD. [CD/DL/LP](#)

NICK CAVE IS NOT shy about the fellow feeling he shares with Warren Ellis. When the multi-instrumental Ellis first played with The Bad Seeds in the early '90s, he was just starting life alongside The Dirty Three. Cave spotted in Ellis a ceaseless swirl of ideas and inspirations, leading to Ellis's near quarter-century as a Bad Seed, a string of scores together, and an enduring bond with the famously fractious songwriter. "There is a certain sanctity in this friendship in that it has traversed all manner of troubles," Cave wrote in his Red Hand Files in 2018. "When one of us is in trouble, the other comes a-running."

Has this year of quarantine, social upheaval, and prevailing unease been anything if not

trouble? Cave and Ellis ran toward each other, it seems, ruminating on the headlines, and writing and recording their first studio album as a pair while in the throes of lockdown. The eight-song result, *Carnage*, is a jarring and gorgeous reminder that our suffering is neither new nor negligible, or, as Cave growls during the gothic paroxysm *Old Time*, that "history has dragged us down to our knees." Yet, no matter how tired we are of cancelled plans or the humdrum view from our window, we keep reaching for the sanctity of friendship, for the promise of anything better than now.

Despite the limited line-up, the palette of *Carnage* feels familiar from 2019's harrowing *Ghosteen* – throbbing electronics, abrasive strings, warped voices, occasional lullabies. The title track is a world-weary tone poem, its minimalist lurch repeating "like a raincloud that keeps circling overhead." With its woozy synthesizers, somnolent strings, and tired croon, the balladic Albuquerque laments our homebound existence, looking for escape and romance in our dreams.

**CARN
AGE
E**

Nick Cave & Warren Ellis

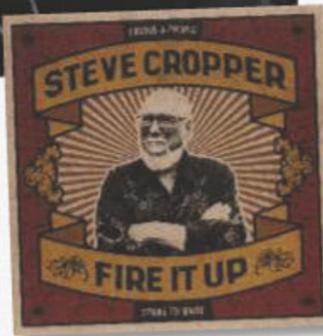
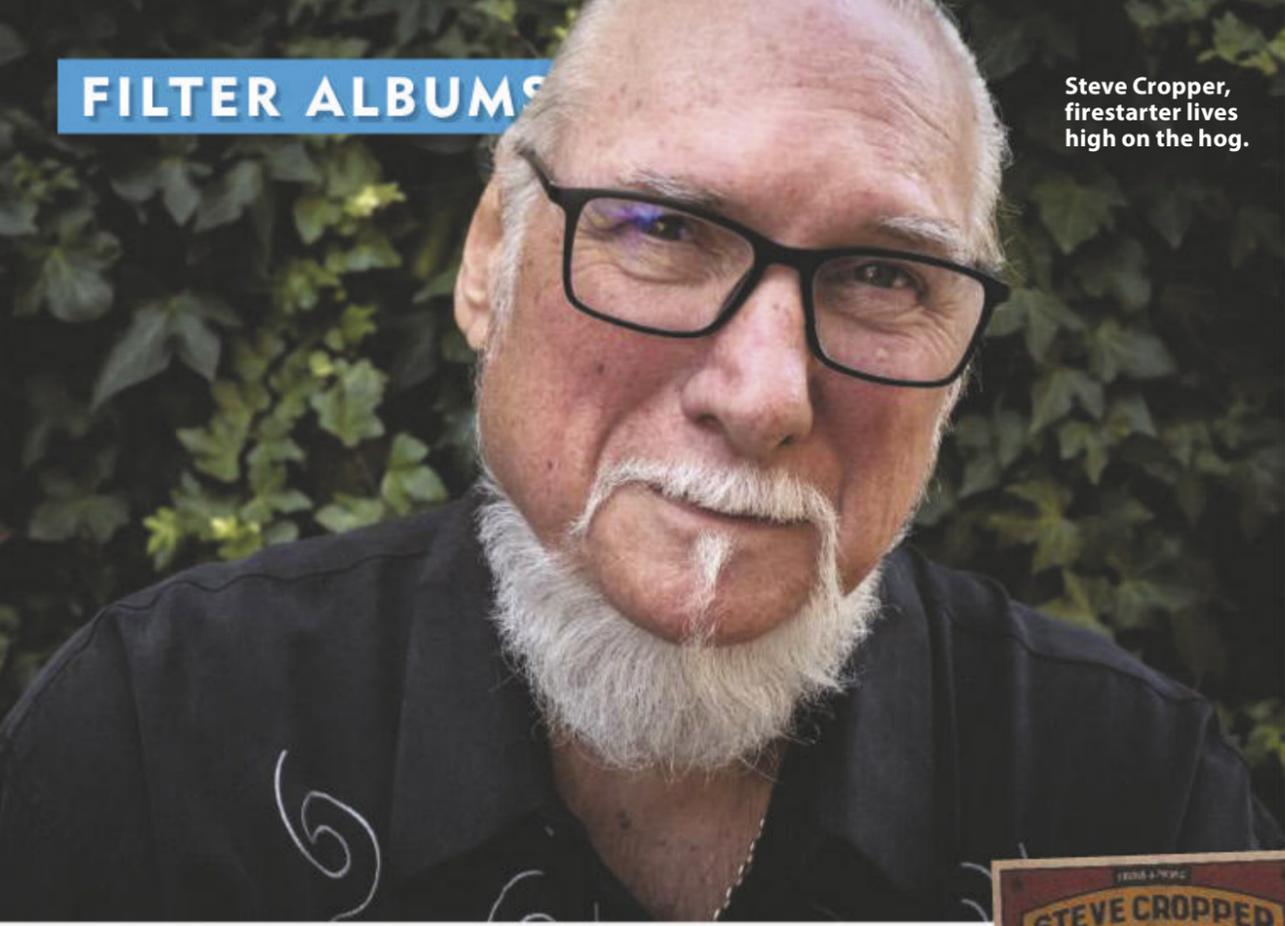
But the true power of *Carnage* comes when the pair puncture those clouds. Cave enters demented Pentecostal mode for *Scattered Ground*, his anguished voice trying to will him into being whole. In the back half of the seething *White Elephant*,

Cave and a gospel choir reach for redemption: "We're all coming home/For a while," they assure us, jubilant with the word.

More than clashing sonics or soaring hymns or pervasive anxiety (and the quest to overcome it), the quality that best defines *Carnage* might be Cave's reckoning with the unknown, or his recognition of the unknowable. "There are some people trying to find out who/There are some people trying to find out why," he mutters, over Ellis's inquisitive drone. "What am I to believe?" he sighs, to start the finale.

Indeed, what should you make of the fallen statue uttering the last words of George Floyd in *White Elephant* only to be kicked into the sea, or the violent "Botticelli Venus with a penis" one verse later? And to what do you cling when everyone has vanished, perhaps including you, as in *Lavender Fields*? In their case, at least, you run to each other, in hopes of making any sense of any of this.

Steve Cropper, firestarter lives high on the hog.



Inflammable material

A rare solo album from the Memphis guitar great. Play it Steve. Please! Says **Geoff Brown**.

Steve Cropper

★★★★

Fire It Up

MASCOT. CD/DL/LP

ECONOMICAL AND exact, punchy and decorative, guitarist supreme Steve Cropper's

rhythm parts and lead lines were pillars of the M.G.'s style on their group recordings for Stax during the '60s and early '70s, and as the resident house band they provided the drive and colouring on innumerable soul classics recorded in that storied era in Memphis. A prolific songwriter and busy producer then and later, it's perhaps no surprise that Cropper's solo work has been limited. His previous album, 2011's *Dedicated*, a generous tribute to The 5 Royales, featured guest vocals from many, including Steve Winwood, Lucinda Williams, Dan Penn and Bettye LaVette. In 2006 and 2008, the two

long-players he recorded with former Rascal Felix Cavaliere had produced a bulk of unfinished material, some of which he's now brought to the table on *Fire It Up*, declaring it his "first proper studio album" since 1969's *With A Little Help From My Friends*, which rather negates a pair of MCA albums, *Playin' My Thang* and *Night After Night*, released in 1981 and '82 respectively.

Fire It Up is a slow burner. The disappointment is that there's only one instrumental, albeit the funky Bush Hog is visited three times. Part 1 makes for a strong if brief opening statement, as much Markeys as M.G.'s. Thereafter, the vocals of Roger C Reale rarely transcend the standard blues-rock lyric ideas and rhymes of the material, while the arrangements push few envelopes.

That said, after revving up through the title track, One Good Turn takes the ear, with its prompting horns, a bed of organ and typically frugal yet nourishing guitar lines from Cropper's inimitable touch on a Fender. The fuller horn arrangement on Far Away is welcome, as Cropper's guitar riffs asides to Reale's vocal, who near the end offers a "fa-fa-fa- far away". Wonder where that idea came from? But no amount of guitar decoration can rescue the clichéd lyrics of Two Wrongs and some of the other rather by-the-numbers, mid-tempo blues-rocking that's going on.

Famously, Sam Moore of Sam And Dave interjected "Play it, Steve" during the recording session for *Soul Man*, and one yearns for someone to holler a similar instruction at some point during *Fire It Up*. For example, the strong opening horn riff to The Go-Getter Is Gone sounds like the perfect introduction to a storming Markeys instrumental until the lyrics break that particular spell, an impression not diminished by the Bush Hog Part 2 and Bush Hog tracks that follow to close the album on a high note.



Jason McNiff

★★★★★

Dust Of Yesterday

TOMBOLA. CD/DL/LP

Seventh album from superb finger-picking folkie.

It's easy to hear in Jason McNiff's intricate acoustic guitar picking the eight-year shift he put in as a London bar's resident flamenco player. It's also no surprise to anyone listening to *Dust Of Yesterday* that one of his heroes is the late great Bert Jansch, both influences redolent in the peeling chords and tinkling lifts that flow from his fingers with instinctive ease. Lyrically, too, it's the Britfolk greats of the '60s and '70s that he aspires to, *Dust Of Yesterday* looking back on his life to explore how we all carry our past in our present. On *Damaged Woman*, for example, McNiff discovers how that flamenco residency

impacts his more recent life on the South Coast. And, just as the songs drag the past into the present, so McNiff updates the legacy of his heroes for a modern audience and does them proud.

Andy Fyfe



Imelda May

★★★★

II Past The Hour

DECCA. CD/DL/LP

Classy balladeer with rock aspirations offers muddled stylistic mix.



Two albums after abandoning her rockabilly roots, Imelda May continues to attempt to straddle the line between '60s showstoppers and fuzzy rock. The title track opener is great and assured in a Julie London visits Twin Peaks style, while the slow-burning and lavishly orchestrated Breathe has Bond theme dimensions. But May is less successful on the rockers – not so much through lack of 'oomph' or authenticity, but because the songs aren't great. The woke gonk-hammering in Made To Love is clunky ("I'm gay, I'm straight, I'm bi, I'm

trans"), while Ronnie Wood's guitar chops can't save Just One Kiss, in which a duetting Noel Gallagher comes over as uncharacteristically lascivious. Way more subtle, convincing, and apparently deeply felt are the tumbling country soul of Different Kinds Of Love and the lovely *Dusty In Memphis* vibes of Diamonds.

Tom Doyle



Bobby Lee

★★★★★

Origin Myths

TOMPKINS SQUARE. CD/DL/LP

Zoned-out Americana/Krautrock hybrid. From Sheffield.



A word-of-mouth sensation among discerning heads in late 2020, Bobby Lee's *Shakedown In Slabtown* seemed to be the work of a psychedelised JJ Cale, lost in the desert with only his drum machine and guitar for company. In fact, these parched, slow-motion boogies had a stranger backstory: this cowboy-hatted outsider, it transpired, came from Sheffield, but had made occasional jaunts out West to play bass in

Californian country-rockers Gospelbeach. *Origin Myths*, a pleasingly swift follow-up to ... *Slabtown*, is mellower still, recorded at home during lockdown with a new baby in the house. And while Lee is still a master at conjuring vast American expanses with a few deft gestures – Paris, Texas again seems a core text – he's also adept at describing inner space. Looking For Obsidian And Pine, in particular, harnesses kosmische vibrations akin to Manuel Göttsching's *Inventions For Electric Guitar*.

John Mulvey



The William Loveday Intention

★★★★★

The Dept. Of Discontinued Lines

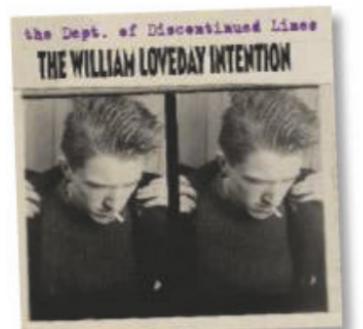
DAMAGED GOODS. CD

Billy Childish mines his inner mid-'60s Dylan on four albums at once.

"To be alive, you have to remain a moving target," opines Childish in the liner-notes, revealing that William Ivy Loveday (not Hamper) is his real name, after the maternal grandmother who registered his birth. For some tastes, there's been more movement

around his *noms-de-guerre* these past 40-plus years than in his actual music. Under this latest alias, however, there's a clear progression beyond ultra-basic garage-punk fury. On three of four simultaneous debut LPs here assembled from the Intention (his latter-day CTMF augmented), Billy goes Bob, channelling Dylan's initial electric period, complete with withering put-downs, Hammond organ and The Wave Pictures' ace guitarist David Tattersall cast as Mike Bloomfield. On *Blud Under The Bridge*, 'Loveday' rattles off an acoustic Simple Twist Of Fate, while *The Bearded Lady Also Sells The Candy Floss* is even more *Blonde On Blonde* than *Nuggets*-era tea-leaves Mouse And The Traps. Contrarily, *People Think They Know Me...* explores Southern roots idioms with equal gusto.

Andrew Perry





Cheap Trick

★★★★

In Another World

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Still a tonic on studio album number 20.

Like Angus Young, Rick Nielsen is still carving mileage from a guitar-hero image less orthodox, his lanky geek in a bowtie shtick lending a cartoonish dimension to Cheap Trick's enduring, fail-safe powerpop. Four decades on from their *Cheap Trick At Budokan* zenith – and with the well-preserved Robin Zander still fronting the operation – *In Another World* cleaves to the telegraphed, lighters-aloft choruses that make Cleveland and other places rock, a palpable Beatles influence pervading *Quit Waking Me Up* and *So It Goes*. Though Nielsen's quip in the accompanying notes that "We just try to knock it out" rings a little too true on *Final Days*, the nagging guitar hook of *Boys & Girls Rock 'N' Roll* redeems matters, as does an ardent take on John Lennon's *Gimme Some Truth*, aided by the Sex Pistols' Steve Jones.

James McNair

Death From Above 1979

★★★★

Is 4 Lovers

SPINEFARM. CD/DL/LP

Unprolific disco-punks stray from the blueprint on brief but diverse fourth LP.



Death From Above 1979's fourth album in 20 or so years is a slight thing – 10

tracks in half an hour – but it covers some ground. The first half rifles through their familiar bag of production tricks, dropping out from the din for passages of breathy vocal and bristling hi-hat, and finding infinite inspiration in super-distorted bass lines. The sleek thrills of *Modern Guy* (like *QOTSA* playing through a crappy transistor radio) and the slithery dancefloor riffage of *One + One* are highlights. The weirder and more diverse second side is where stuff gets interesting. The disco overpowers the rock on *Glass Homes*, its jumble of strobing primitive synth lines and sly Beck-playing-Prince vocals conjuring a triumph, while the exquisite gloom of the goth-y *Love Letter* and the windswept dime-store Marc Almond-isms

Andrew Cotterill

of closer *No War* broaden their dance-punk palette.

Stevie Chick

Hedvig Mollestad Trio

★★★★

Ding Dong, You're Dead

RUNE GRAMMOFON. CD/DL/LP

Norway's power-jazz-metal threesome set off into new terrain.



Ding Dong, You're Dead is released to coincide with Hedvig Mollestad Trio's

10th year as a recording unit. Over six previous albums – including one live set – the wilful Norwegians have blurred the boundaries between jazz and heavy metal. John McLaughlin and Miles Davis are in the mix. So are AC/DC and The Melvins. After last year's solo Mollestad outing *Ekhidna*, Hedvig Mollestad Thomassen, Ellen Brekken and Ivar Loe Bjørnstad incorporate abstraction and transform what's become familiar with a fresh precision. The instantly compelling *All Flights Cancelled* is emblematic of the latter, with Thomassen's staccato one-string riffing underpinned by Bjørnstad's panel beater drums and Brekken's walloping bass. Then, the guitar heads into outer space. In the fresh territory there's the wispy, foreboding title track and album closer *Four Candles*, a cousin of Sonic Youth's *Providence*.

Kieron Tyler

Ted Barnes

★★★★

17 Postcards

MORNINGTON. CD/DL

Master craftsman's first album in 12 years, an exquisite filmic folk odyssey.



Barnes is one of those lesser-spotted journeymen of British folk rock: Beth

Orton's right-hand man for a decade, a cornerstone of melancholic troupers Clayhill alongside the late singer Gavin Clark, a soundtrack composer (notably for director Shane Meadows). Solo albums are rare, just three in 20 years, almanacs of instrumental miniatures and occasional songs all sharing quintessentially autumnal hues – and these 17 tracks are no departure. Barnes says that Clark's presence looms large over the album, and *Way Beyond This*, sung by Clark's son Michael, has his dad's gruff, aching presence, but *17 Postcards'* mood-board is still more wistful and calm than oppressive and dark: life goes on, after all. The record brings the equivalent of a beautiful view: the feeling that, however temporary, all's right with the world.

Martin Aston



Island life: The Coral enjoy another time and another place.

Fair play

Oddbod Merseysiders' left-turn into audio theatre entrances.

By Danny Eccleston.

The Coral

★★★★

Coral Island

RUN ON. CD/DL/LP/MC

"IN A BAR called the *Calico Girl* a jukebox plays an echo of music from another time, another place maybe..."

We're used to The Coral going their own way – which in truth rarely takes them far from where they started: an otherworld of dramatic '60s pop that's part Mersey Beat, part proto-psych, part Johnny Remember Me. And since the Wirral group's self-titled 2002 debut, there have been few attempts to inveigle new constituencies. Thus they remain a cult concern, but also unique; it's hard to imagine, for instance, many of their contemporaries attempting a double concept album about a fantastical seaside ghost town with vocals by their grandad. A hauntological *Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake*.

Coral Island is a place of falling-down fairgrounds and mothballed dance halls: a kind of Brigadoon of transcendent English tat. And the place has a sound: a spectral pop filtered through a vintage jukebox, laced with skeins of cinema organ, twangy rock'n'roll guitar and Joe Meek atmospherics. It has a script, too: fragments of magical realism penned by Coral keyboardist Nick Power and narrated by Ian Murray – grandad to The Coral's two Skelly brothers, singer James

and drummer Ian – in a voice like sticky fruit cake.

Inspiration, says James Skelly, came from a documentary about Springsteen's *The River*, and *Coral Island* has a comparable duality. Part 1 buzzes with life, housing the ecstatic organ-led groove of *Lover Undiscovered*, *Change Your Mind's* 12-string twangle, and *Mist On The River*, a thrilling cousin of *Mamas & The Papas*-style harmony pop. Skelly's voice is undemonstrative, like a humbler Ian McCulloch, but it suits these small-scale dramas.

Part 2 is quirkier and more reflective, matching the reveries of the Island resort's fictive vaudevillians – Luna the Fire Eater and 20-stone strong man The Great Lafayette – adrift in their phantom zones. Of its key songs, *The Golden Age* is a fairground polka; *Take Me Back To The Summertime* choogles like a jug band. Murray's spoken interludes add colour but also dark shadows – in *The Last Entertainers*, *Coral Island* is "no longer a ghost town, now a purgatory" – backed by the band's warped transmissions from the ether.

But while *Coral Island's* concept is unusually robust – some formats come with a delightful 196-page book by Power that fills in more of the stories – it's the melodic strength of its 15 'proper' songs that's the real mindblower. *The Game She Plays*, a sad-eyed Walker Brothers shuffle with an epic baritone guitar riff, will linger longer with listeners than any of the album's narrative inserts.

And that's not to besmirch the latter. If imagining themselves the bar band in the *Calico Girl*, inhabiting the dreams of its enchanted clientele, has woken The Coral up, then good. They can do anything, maybe go anywhere now.



Wholly impressive: Field Music's Peter (left) and David Brewis.



Good grief

Sunderland siblings refract the ache of loss through baroque pop rock. By Tom Doyle.

Field Music

★★★★★

Flat White Moon

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES. CD/DL/LP

THE BREWIS brothers, Peter and David, are nothing if not grafters, as underscored by their 2010 single *Them That Do Nothing* and its rallying cry to “get your keys and get to work”. Years of devout independence and dogged lo-budget touring have never slowed them down, and so it is no surprise

to find that neither did a global pandemic.

Flat White Moon, their eighth album, was started pre-spring 2020 lockdown and then completed by the pair while separated in isolation. Their initial plan had been to simplify their sound – in the wake of 2018’s Brexit-gnarly *Open Here* and last year’s World War I aftershock-themed *Making A New World* – and in many ways it finesses the styles of early Field Music (at least in their poly-rhythmic, carefully-layered production world).

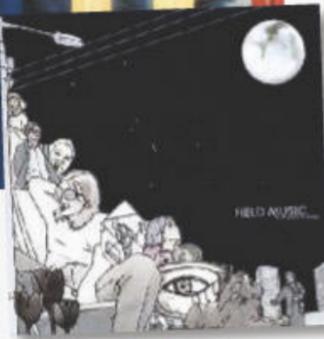
Continuing to pull off the trick of overtly displaying their core influences (1966-67 Beatles, Free, XTC) while sounding like no one other than themselves, their multi-instrumental and self-production skills shine here more than ever. No Pressure is the kind

of stripped funk that attracted Prince to endorse them (although here it sounds like it’s played by Big Star), while *In This City* imagines a world in which Stevie Wonder jammed with Talking Heads, as *Revolver*-era George Harrison guested on guitar. Elsewhere, they evoke two eras of Fleetwood Mac in two different songs – the breezy strumming of Lindsey Buckingham in *Do Me A Favour* and the tangential blues of Peter Green in *Meant To Be*.

Thematically, the Brewises have declared that *Flat White Moon* is concerned with “loss and grief” and “the guilt which comes from that”. There are a lot of absences in these songs: the individual in *Out Of The Frame* who always ended up on the periphery and so is missing from photographs. The woman who is “impossibly far away” in the *Sgt. Pepper*-ish *Invisible Days*. The lonely, but hard-to-reach figure in *Last Time You Heard From Linda*, whose sad retreat from the everyday is rendered in an inventively baroque arrangement that sounds like an old 45 of XTC’s *Senses Working Overtime* being played at 33⅓ rpm.

Best of all is soul-stirring opener *Orion From The Street*, with its re-angling of the *Tomorrow Never Knows* beat, rubbery bassline and twinkling constellations of treated piano loops, as Peter Brewis memorialises someone with whom he clearly had a complicated relationship. Here the ache of incomprehensible grief is succinctly and movingly summed up in two short lines: “To never meet again/Forever long to see.”

Always wholly impressive, Field Music’s brilliance has become undeniable with *Flat White Moon*. Having grown in style and confidence with each album and displayed a flair for charting life’s ever-changing weather patterns, here they do so with real, deeply-lived insight and dazzling pop expertise.



King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

★★★★★

LW

FLIGHTLESS. CD/DL/LP

Prog-psych-punk sextet take satisfying third bite of the microtonal cherry

Their third exploration of “the notes between the notes” – following previous excursions *Flying Microtonal Banana* (2017) and last year’s *KG* – finds the locked-down Gizzards operating at their most effortlessly eclectic. *Static Electricity* and *East West Link* play closest to their Turkish psych sources, with circuitous tempos powered by dervish energy and mystical portent, showcasing King Gizz Stu Mackenzie’s mutant guitar/bağlama hybrid. Elsewhere, however, the sextet lovingly apply their bastard-

ised Middle Eastern sounds to brittle synth-pop (If Not Now, Then When?), cobwebby Tull-esque prog-folk (Pleura) and moodily magnificent psych-rock (Ataraxia), bending super-complex, coiling riffs to their wanton will. But while their well of microtonal inspiration appears inexhaustible, the epic, climactic *KGLW* (reimagining the opening track of *KG* as colossal sludge-metal) suggests the end of this phase of Gizzard. Where they go next is anyone’s guess, but it’s bound to be wild.

Stevie Chick



Noga Erez

★★★

Kids

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Second album of dynamic electro-pop from Tel Aviv singer and producer.



“My trip is mad,” spits Noga Erez on *Kids*, “I ain’t finished/I got loads.”

the follow-up to the Israeli musician’s 2017 debut *Off The Radar*, underscores her claim with a bold flourish, its high-energy rush of ideas zig-zagging through pop and hip-

hop. Snapping her words like gum, Erez ricochets smartly against bright, blocky beats, enlisting collaborator Ori Rouso on the sticky vocal hooks of the satirical *Views*. Even when the themes of her songs become darkly political, dealing with violence, sickness and kids who aren’t all right – on *End Of The Road* or the title track (“Peace is dead now/Rest in peace”) – she doesn’t slow down or lose agility. Occasionally, the lyrics veer into fuzzy abstraction, but the music never does. With *Kids*, Erez’s mad trip is well underway.

Victoria Segal



Greta Van Fleet

★★★

The Battle At Garden’s Gate

EMI. CD/DL/LP

Sequel to 2018’s *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* parties like it’s 1972.



Named for an elderly resident in their tiny home city of Frankenmuth, Michigan, Greta Van Fleet – three brothers Kiszka and drummer Danny Wagner – have a near-

perfect back-story. With Foo Fighters enabler Greg Kurstin shepherding the unapologetic histrionics of LP number two, a magisterial, slightly eccentric mood prevails, *Tears Of Rain* unabashed enough to end with the sound of thunder and *Heat Above* initially bubbling under like Jon Lord’s Hammond hello on *Made In Japan*. Though the swaggering riffage of *Built By Nations* and John Bonham-like pocket of *Stardust Chords* will draw more Zeppelin comparisons, *GVF* are evolving here, Joshua Kiszka an astounding talent whose sky-scraping voice conjures a castrato Noddy Holder, or Robert Plant gatecrashing Valhalla. He and his bandmates have grasped the flaming torch of ’70s hard-rock pomp – but how to make it their own?

James McNair



Royal Blood

★★★★★

Typhoons

WARNERS. CD/DL/LP

Brighton heavy-rock duo wittingly inject dancefloor euphoria.

Royal Blood, like T.Rex and Led Zeppelin in the ’70s, are critically ill-favoured, deemed too poppy for ‘serious’ considera-

tion. Yet they remain the only British rock *arrivistes* to buck the 2010s’ synth-pop trend, and that upward curve will only steepen with this third LP, whose symbiosis of heaviness and modernist accessibility verges on genius. Once decompressed from fame psychosis (*Who Needs Friends* reveals road-burnt paranoia), for this outing singing bassist Mike Kerr and sticksman Ben Thatcher resolved to assimilate their penchant for dance titans like Daft Punk and Justice. Cue synth textures around the fringes of Kerr’s ever-beefy riffing and Thatcher’s Bonzo wallop, to the point where *Million And One* all but bursts into a cover of *Eye Of The Tiger*. Funky as early-’80s Judas Priest, the title track and *Trouble’s Coming* will become era classics in flat-out over-amplified party music.

Andrew Perry



Ed Dowie

★★★★

The Obvious I

NEEDLE MYTHOLOGY. CD/DL/LP

Erstwhile child chorister crafts synth pop/folk soundscapes.



In this follow-up to his 2017 debut *The Uncle Sold*, Dorset-raised Ed Dowie has tastefully expanded his sonic palette, citing the influence of Philip Glass and Steve Reich for his minimal arrangements, which layer sparse electronics with acoustic touches. The result is nine songs that are certainly diverse in their styles: the handcranked folk sounds of *How Light I* moving into the monophonic synth pulses of *Number Eight Wire*, which sounds like something that might have been released on Mute in 1981. Elsewhere, a touch of Tangerine Dream-ish atmospheric burbling ushers in *Under The Waves*, before it slips into a Harold Budd-like treated piano wash topped by Dowie's voice – think a more cantor-styled take on Robert Wyatt – in a curiously hit-and-miss performance. But if Dowie's melodies sometimes overstretch his vocal capabilities, it's intriguing stuff and he's certainly onto something.

Tom Doyle

Elizabeth King

★★★★★

Living In The Last Days

BIBLE & TIRE. CD/DL/LP

Superb debut from the Memphis-based gospel singing septuagenarian.



Bruce Watson set up Bible & Tire in 2019 to reissue Elizabeth King's early-'70s gospel sides. He also persuaded King, now 79, to come out of retirement to record this long overdue debut – she'd spent the past five decades raising her 15 children. Working out of Delta-Sonic Sound

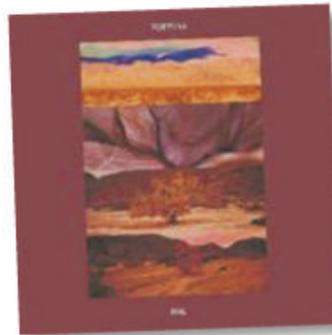


Elizabeth King: powerful and commanding.

Vicki Sharp

in Memphis with Watson producing and the four-piece Sacred Soul Sound Section behind her, King's vocal is deeper than it was in her youth, but still powerful and commanding, kept in shape, one suspects, by Sunday morning singing in church. Much of the album sounds as if it could be a lost '70s Stax recording – an excellent thing – in particular *Reach Out And Touch*, *Testify* and *A Long Journey*, all driven by King's mighty energetic life force, and not unlike something The Staple Singers might have sung.

Lois Wilson



Tortusa

★★★★★

Bre

JAZZLAND. CD/DL

Nordic ambient music worth your full attention.

It opens with a blast of Arctic wind before a melancholy saxophone starts up and crunchy electronic beats trudge across the frost-bitten sonic landscape. Wind chimes shimmer over sub-bass synth – yup, we're a long way from an Ibiza beach party. This is the ambient world of John Derek Bishop, a Norwegian-American electronic musician who's inspired by Flying Lotus and Nils Frahm. He creates sonic tapestries blending field recordings – bird cries, street noise – with acoustic and electric instruments, often warped into strange new shapes. Collaborators include Arve Henriksen, whose breathy trumpet recalls Jon Hassell's music with Brian Eno, and the guitar maestro Eivind Aarset. There are plenty of soundscapers whose work eventually noodles off into narcolepsy, but Tortusa creates

12 striking, distinct pieces that culminate in the gorgeous *Ørten*, where hypnotic waves of guitar ebb and flow on some (chilly) faraway beach.

John Bungey

The Brother Brothers

★★★★

Calla Lily

COMPASS. CD/DL/LP

Gentle second album from indie-folk balladeers.



Time was, performers lamented the weariness of a life spent touring. Brooklyn-based twins Adam and David Moss don't seem to feel that way, recording this tribute to love, simple pleasures and the catharsis of travel just as the world shut down. On *The Road Again*, hitched to the brothers' sweet blood-close harmonies and finger-picked acoustic, comes from the same sunny place as Simon & Garfunkel's *Feelin' Groovy*, and celebrates the joy of forward momentum. The mellow title track hymns countryside and city, robin and whippoorwill against hipster streets where "everyone checks out your shoes". With vocals as pure as the Everlys, fiddle so eloquent it might be singing, *The Chase* admits escape is a need: "It's the way you gotta pack up and go..." Still, country waltz *Waiting For A Star To Fall* sounds like Buddy Holly in love: nostalgic, committed, rooted.

Glyn Brown

For Those I Love

★★★★★

For Those I Love

SEPTEMBER. CD/DL/LP

Dublin producer's vivid homage to best friend.



When his *Burnt Out* bandmate Paul Curran took his own life in 2018, David Balfe

re-routed the long-playing ode to friendship he'd been working on. While the loss of innocence central to *Birthday/The Pain and Top Scheme* hit hard against the backdrop of post-austerity Dublin, it's Curran's all-consuming grief that cuts deepest on half-rapped tracks as resonant as *The Streets*, candid as early Arab Strap and viscerally poetic as *A House*. Yet the music is far from mournful – looped, invigorating, acidic electronica evoking illegal raves, Mount Kimbie and Kanye West's chipmunk soul, frugging through the pain with nimble sample flicks of Smokey Robinson and snippets of Curran's laughter saved from WhatsApp. Haunted and intimate, Balfe's deep brogue ultimately salvages hope from the wreckage.

Andy Cowan



Peggy Seeger

★★★★★

First Farewell

RED GRAPE MUSIC. CD/DL

Seeger's Indian summer is growing ever warmer.



SHE MAY BE 85 and the *grande dame* of folk song, but this doesn't sound like farewell. Unfeasibly prolific in recent years, Seeger clearly still has much to say and, with a voice miraculously dodging the ravages of time and a close family circle of musicians working to her strengths, this is affectingly intimate. The entirely original material – a couple of songs composed with sons Neill and Calum MacColl and two with daughter-in-law Kate St John – tackles pertinent modern issues (growing old, suicide, social media, children in care and... love) without remotely sounding stern or preachy. Broadly set to piano arrangements, it references her mother's classicism, with smatterings of concertina, accordion, organ, oboe, cor anglais and guitar which, with the odd comedic aside, adds warmth to its fragility. "We may not have a choice, but we still have a voice, the invisible gals love a fight," she sings defiantly on her song for the aged, *The Invisible Woman*. Long may it be so.

ALSO RELEASED

Edward II

★★★★★

Dancing Tunes

E2. CD/DL



As the gloom descends, here come Edward II with the perfect antidote to our times. A set of sunny West Indian mento and calypso songs laced by the foot still dangling in the English folk tradition that's made them such unique multi-cultural mavericks for so long. Old school favourites abound (*Banana Boat Song*; *Island In The Sun*; *Yellow Bird*) and joyous nostalgia may make this one of E2's most timely LPs.

Dowally

★★★★★

Early Bird//Night Owl

DOWALLY. CD/DL



Edinburgh duo use the multi-instrumental talents – particularly guitar – of Dan Abraham and the beguiling voice/fiddle of Rachel Walker in intriguing ways. Sleek Balkan rhythms and jazz harmonies seep into a style that, while rooted in Scottish tradition, moulds a distinctive, frequently unnerving character: hear Walker's breathy enunciations on *Turkish Reverie* and *Two Sisters*. Without resorting to grandiose gestures, they have a gift for entrancing mood music.

Cohen Braithwaite-Kilcoyne

★★★★★

Rakes & Misfits

GRIMDON. CD/DL



With infectious enthusiasm, CBK is much loved on the grass-roots scene, both solo and with the group *Granny's Attic*. Strictly old school – this could have come from the '70s – he hurls himself into concertina and squeezebox arrangements on a range of colourful tales about outsiders and ne'er-do-wells, with a passion for traditional song that evokes Tony Rose and Peter Bellamy. This is a strong second album.

Patterson Dipper

★★★★★

Unearthing

PD. CD/DL



Singer/guitarist James Patterson and fiddler John Dipper unite to create a record of explorative wonder. On the surface, a folk album pure and true; a baritone voice beautifully accompanied. But with Dipper playing specially tuned viola d'amore and a decisive classical edge to some challenging material – including a riveting version of Alastair Hulett's classic *He Fades Away* – folk song is rarely more sophisticated. *C*



Whatitdo Archive Group

★★★★★

The Black Stone Affair

RECORD KICKS. DL/LP

Nevada trio's high concept homage to old Italian film soundtracks.

The soundtrack-for-a-movie-that-doesn't-exist concept has been tried many times since Grace Slick took a heady trip into psychedelia on 1974's *Manhole*. Nevada's Alexander Korostinsky, Mark Sexton and Aaron Chiazza have rolled with the concept deeper than most, even shooting a scratchy trailer to its mythical lost reel. From the second a harpsichord taps out the Main Theme's nagging melody, *The Black Stone Affair* feels authentic. While shades of Stefano Torossi surge through the menacing pulse of *Il Furto Di Africo*, and Piero Piccioni haunts Ethiopian Airlines' funky wah wah jazz, the clod-hopping climax of *The Return Of Beaumont Jenkins* comes on like *The Menahan Street Band* attacking prime Morricone. In all, a labour of love right up there with the real thing.

Andy Cowan

Nick Waterhouse

★★★★★

Promenade Blue

INNOVATIVE LEISURE. CD/DL/LP

Transportive Paul Butler-coproduced fifth album.

Recorded live in Memphis and Los Angeles in February 2020, the Californian singer/musician's fifth album creates another musical world to slip inside. Indebted to the vintage sounds that make up his DJ box – '60s girl groups, doo wop, birth of soul R&B, cool jazz – it's colourful and imaginative while exerting a familiar pull. The opening track, *Place Names*, is one of the best songs he's written; wistful lyrics about San Francisco, where he spent much of his time growing up, conjure bygone images while bass, drums, guitar build for violin and cello to come together in a euphoric rush, a little bit *Spector*, a little bit *Meek*. Other tracks feature backing vocals by the Sensational Barnes Brothers, the Memphis sanctified soul outfit, lending a gospel flavour, while still others feature a dynamic brass section conjuring noir-ish atmospherics.

Lois Wilson



The Antlers

★★★★★

Green To Gold

TRANSGRESSIVE. CD/DL/LP

Sixth album from elusive New Yorkers.

It's been tough for Antlers leader Peter Silberman since 2014's *Familiars*. First, a hearing condition forced him to flee noisy Brooklyn. Then, following his quiet 2017 solo album *Impermanence*, vocal cord surgery meant he had to learn to sing again. Book-ended by instrumentals (the closing *Equinox* almost slips into Cyndi Lauper's *Time After Time*), *Green To Gold* finds Silberman in unsurprisingly ruminative mood. Influenced by his new hobby of meditation, the results (similar to his group's 2009 album *Hospice* or *Is A Woman-era Lambchop*), take a little time to unfurl their charms, but it's time well spent. For all that *Wheels Roll Home* evokes Coldplay's *Fix You*, Silberman takes an intimate turn on *Solstice* and the languid *It Is What It Is* adds late-night saxophone. There's real beauty here and Silberman marries eventual accessibility with gentle

boundary-pushing to create his own, thoughtful world.

John Aizlewood



The Still

★★★★★

Got It

SERIES APHŌNOS/BRONZE RAT. DL/LP

Second from Berlin-based quartet featuring Chris Abrahams of The Necks.



Seriés Aphōnos began in 2013 as a vinyl offshoot of Andrew Zammit's *Bronze*

Rat label, releasing everything from '60s soundtracks (Krzysztof Komeda's *Dance Of The Vampires*) to re-scored Ray Bradbury short stories (Zarelli's *Soft Rains*). However, amid all that retro eclecticism came *The Still*, a collaboration between *The Necks'* pianist Chris Abrahams, fellow Antipodean Steve Heather on percussion, Canadian double-bassist Derek Shirley and German Rico Repotente on guitar. Here was mood music that brought to mind the *Dirty Three* in contemplative mood or the shimmering instrumental passages of late *Talk Talk*. That spirit continues with their second release. Head music for *doldrum* calms and baffling winds, yet at the centre of it all stands 15-minute epic *The Chunk*, where Heather locks himself into a robo-Dingerbeat, allowing Abrahams, Shirley and Repotente to play with shifting cyclical patterns of piano, bass and guitar.

Andrew Male

Suzi Quatro

★★★★★

The Devil In Me

STEAMHAMMER/SPV. CD/DL/LP

Back in the jumpsuit for a second collaboration with son Richard.



Still possessed of the most emphatic "Ow!" since James Brown, certified live

performance addict Suzi Quatro here pleads for "One more gig before I die!" Still, if *Get Outta Jail* finds her doing lockdown porridge, and *Isolation Blues* reports upon the consolations of gin & tonic, her second collaborative LP with Richard Tuckey, her son by Nashville Teens/'70s Quatro band guitarist Len Tuckey, channels her spare energy with obvious relish. The gutsier tracks are the real winners, Quatro channelling her Detroit and glam roots on *Motor City Riders* and the title track, but there are surprises, too. Betty Who ultimately morphing into something akin to a remix by the late Andrew Weatherall is fun; but Chi-Lites-like Christmas song *My Heart And Soul* jars a bit heard in March. All that said, Quatro's force-of-nature status is wholly intact.

James McNair



Paul Stanley's Soul Station

★★★★★

Then And Now

UMC. CD/DL/LP

Kiss co-founder/singer/guitarist goes back to his first love.



All those years as Kiss's frontman/singer, 'Starchild' had a guilty secret. He was a

soul boy. When the Kissing stopped, Paul Stanley went straight back to his '60s-'70s roots, first indulging his passion on-stage and now recording the band with this surprisingly good, affectionate and enjoyable homage. Surprising simply because, who knew? Nine well-chosen covers and five originals are graced by Stanley's light, accessible tenor, a well-drilled band and a cushion of backing vocalists. Starting strongly with *The Spinners' Could It Be I'm Falling In Love*, Stanley is most at home on sweet soul favourites such as *The Delfonics' La La Means I Love You*, *The Stylistics' You Are Everything* and *The Five Stairsteps' ebullient O-O-H Child*, while *Al Green (Let's Stay Together)* and *The Four Tops' powerhouse Levi Stubbs (Baby I Need Your Loving)* get the least convincing covers. Good originals too: try *Save Me (From You)*, the *Motowny I, Oh I* and duet *Whenever You're Ready I'm Here*.

Geoff Brown

Pooneh Ghana

Dry Cleaning

★★★★★

New Long Leg

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Cerebral, caustic: exhilarating John Parish-produced debut from art-schooled Londoners.

HUMAN BRAINS seek to make order from chaos, finding faces in inanimate objects, hearing music in random noise. Piecing together meaning in *Dry Cleaning's* songs, however, risks a synaptic short-circuit, as singer Florence Shaw deadpans cut-up found lyrics in a wild game of verbal *Consequences*. "I've come here to make

a ceramic shoe and I've come to smash what you made," she shrugs on *Scratchcard Lanyard*, joining dots between Mark E Smith and Barbara Pym. Guitarist Tom Dowse, bassist Lewis Maynard and drummer Nick Buxton, meanwhile, amplify the echoes and free associations: *The Fall*, inevitably, but



The freely associating Dry Cleaning.

also *Magazine*, *Blue Aeroplanes*, *Life Without Buildings*,

Sonic Youth. Comic, sinister, suddenly moving, it feels like real-time psychological excavation,

digging for truth. Or, as Shaw says on the post-punk *Time Team of Strong Feelings*, "Let's look at the geophys/Let's wait for the results." You know it makes sense.

Victoria Segal



Ballaké Sissoko

★★★★★

Djourou

NØ FØRMATI. CD/DL/LP

Malian kora maestro seeks out the unexpected.

Eleven albums in, there's a chance an artist has used up their fair share of inspiration. Not so here. Sissoko, hoping to stretch himself, invites a selection of notable fans to collaborate, with results that lack for little in the way of surprises. The opener, Demba Kunda, suggests a straight-forward instrumental set; but French singer Camille's hymn around the sound of the word "kora" is transcendent; Piers Faccini's vocals take you one step higher; and there's a slightly hoarse-sounding Salif Keita thrown in as a bonus. Even when the risks aren't to the fore – a duet with Gambia's Sona Jobarteh is lush, but not groundbreaking – the effect is still spellbinding. But the best is saved for last, the glorious Un Vêtement Pour La Lune with Arthur Teboul (of Paris's Feu! Chatterton) departing on a dreamlike excursion you'll never want to end.

David Hutcheon



Dean McPhee

★★★★★

Witch's Ladder

HOOD FAIRE. CD/DL/LP

Fourth full-length album from the Yorkshire kosmische guitarist.



The later work of German-born symbolist Agnes Pelton attempted to capture the "spiritual reality" that she experienced in moments of meditative stillness. It's therefore no surprise that her 1933 painting, The Primal Wing,

forms the cover of McPhee's new LP. Ever since his 2008 single Water Burial, McPhee has been making music that embodies that elusive ethereal world beyond the physical. Using his bank of effects as a kind of divining instrument, McPhee crafts luminous long-trail abstractions of electric guitar, transcendent dub-like excursions that suggest states of well-being hovering on the edge of unease. Here, that unease is suggested in the album title (named after a knotted cord that aids in the chanting of spells), but also in each live-recorded track, McPhee's bright finger-picked melodies repeatedly echoing into dark abstraction, like a flickering campfire in a pitch-black night.

Andrew Male



Nitin Sawhney

★★★★

Immigrants

SONY MUSIC MASTERWORKS. CD/DL/LP

Composer tackles perceptions of identity on sequel to 1999's Beyond Skin.



After the explicit politics of his 2019 Barbican stage spectacular about Brexit, guitar-playing polymath Nitin Sawhney hits a more nuanced polemical groove on *Beyond Skin's* belated sequel. With the world having caught up with that winding borderless blend of Indian classical, flamenco, hip-hop, drum'n'bass and R&B, the greater focus here is on Sawhney's writing and interactions with a lengthy roll call of collaborators. Neither disappointing. Spek's almost Q-Tip-like rap flow on Lifeline and Natacha Atlas's understated vocal on Exile enliven typically mercurial grooves just the right side of global mood music, although it's the less forthright tracks showcasing Gina Leonard (Box), Nina Miranda (Vai) and YVA (You Are) that prove most affecting. Carefully spliced with voiceovers from hopeful emigres and needled dissenters, this worthy and humane sequel lacks only the original's pioneering force.

Andy Cowan

United State Of Mind

★★★★

United State Of Mind

MANHATON. CD/DL/LP

Robin Trower and Maxi Priest: together at last.



It's an unlikely union: the balm-encrusted vocals of Maxi Priest and the appealingly jagged squallings of guitarist Robin Trower, who was making Procol Harum albums while his future partner was attending primary school. Along with Kylie Minogue and Corinne Bailey Rae's bassist Livingstone Brown, they are United State Of Mind. Sometimes the results are as adventurous as the pairing promises to be, not least on the opening title track, where Trower guitar-bombs Priest's smoothness. Elsewhere, though, it's surprisingly seamless. Priest sets the pace and for the most part that's languid – though not reggae – while Trower complements rather than competes on the gentle swirl of Sunrise Revolution and the slinky On Fire Like Zsa Zsa. Sometimes, though, the whole project is too laidback for its own good and the respective parties could surely have been less polite, but, as oddities go, it's no disgrace.

John Aizlewood



Xiu Xiu

★★★★

Oh No

POLYVINYL. CD/DL/LP

Polymorphous band draw new collaborators into their negative space.



Artists who settle on a "duets album" for their next project are often seeking a way to open out their sound, both creatively and commercially. Unsurprisingly, that's not quite the case with Xiu Xiu's twelfth album, where core members Jamie Stewart and Angela Seo catch Owen Pallett, Shearwater's Jonathan Meiburg and Deerhoof's Greg Saunier in their highly strung web of noise. The music still mainly tilts around their Coil-Anohni axis: a cover of The Cure's One Hundred Years, featuring Chelsea Wolfe, is very much on transgressive brand, while Sharon Van Etten's appearance on Sad Mezcalita renders the duet format down into emotional slurry. More startling is the nearly playful Rumpus Room, with Liars' Angus Andrew bubbling under the corrupted hip-hop, and the title track's Granddaddy-like outbursts. As always with Xiu Xiu, though, it's a lot, two heads just as intense as one.

Victoria Segal



Binker Golding, John Edwards, Steve Noble

★★★★★

Moon Day

BYRD OUT. DL/LP

Experimental scene giants in rulebook-ripping form.

RECORDED BETWEEN last year's lockdowns and loosely themed around 1835's Great Moon Hoax (when the New York Sun published fake news about lunar life, to soaring sales) this trio of UK wild cards evoke suitably fantastical landscapes. More than mere timekeepers, Steve Noble's sharp snare snaps and obdurate rhythms combine with John Edwards' arcing drones and unearthly bass orchestrations across the five fluid parts of One Giant Step, where Binker Golding's tenor sax growls and warmly sighing exhalations give way to fluent, probing solos. Golding hits wailing top notes on Reflection, as drums and bass fall about him like shooting stars, before negotiating stark vicissitudes of tone and pace on Lunar Wind (and 20-minute digital bonus For SK). If, as Othello posits, the moon makes men mad, for once we should be grateful.



ALSO RELEASED

Dr Lonnie Smith

★★★★★

Breathe

BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP/MC



Captured in the same live sessions that yielded 2018's *All In My Mind*, the chicly turbaned Hammond B-3 ace Smith maintains his late form. His band's cultured chops enliven World Weeps' velveteen melancholy and Track 9's train-like propulsion, a funky inversion of Monk's Epistrophy matched by two Iggy Pop duets (covers of Why Can't We Live Together and Sunshine Superman) custom built for his mature register's growling nuance.

Dopolarians

★★★★★

The Bond

MAHAKALA MUSIC. DL



The second meeting of this multi-generational avant-jazz sextet builds on 2019's *Garden Party*. Led by the rhythmic pathfinding of Brian Blade and William Parker, they cycle through styles in unhurried fashion, the intertwining melodies of Chad Fowler's alto and Marc Franklin's clear-toned trumpet offset by Christopher Parker's piano runs and Kelley Hurt's cooing wordless vocals.

Timo Lassy & Teppo Mäkynen

★★★★

Live Recordings 2019-2020

WE JAZZ. CD/DL/LP



The Finnish sax/percussion duo skirt similar improv territory to Binker & Moses across the slow and low Follow, ambient shadowplay of Kobi and slowly unravelling freeness of Liberty on a live set that opens up the tone poems of 2019's tightly-wound debut to let them breathe more freely. The simplicity of Lassy's tenor with Mäkynen's rhythmic hooks is seductive.

Evan Parker Quartet

★★★★★

All Knavery And Collusion

CADILLAC. CD/DL/LP



Golding forefather Evan Parker – a master of phonics, microtonal scales and circular breathing – has rarely left his envelope-pushing route. With Paul Lytton, John Edwards and Alexander Hawkins' grasp of space and suspense, the sax innovator's touchstones and turns cleave mostly to a softer, fuller tone here, but run the gamut on moody, trippy The Weather Set In Hot. AC



Ballaké Sissoko: tales of the unexpected.

In good hands:
Marianne Faithfull
and Warren Ellis.



New romantics

Bad Seed and Grand Dame united through poetry.
By **Victoria Segal**.

Marianne Faithfull With Warren Ellis

★★★★★

She Walks In Beauty

BMG. CD/DL/LP

THANKS TO Lady Caroline Lamb's description of Lord Byron as "mad, bad and dangerous to know," the core matter of romantic poetry – revolution, revelation, the eternal quest for the sublime – has long been considered a young man's game, an attitude that filtered down to the flamboyant rock seekers of the '60s. It's a joy, then, to hear a 74-year-old woman – one so often overshadowed by her male contemporaries – taking on the legacy of Byron, Keats and Shelley on *She Walks In Beauty*, staring them in the eye with an unflinching gaze, showing how completely she can inhabit their world.

Troubled by illness, addiction and homelessness across the decades, Marianne Faithfull has come closer to the porous extremes of life than most. She found herself on that unsteady ground again when she became ill with Covid-19 half-way through the recording of this spoken-word album. As she recovered in hospital, she discovered her medical notes had marked her down for palliative care only. That she returned to record Shelley's monolithic, merciless Ozymandias – a dread-filled reminder that all human endeavour is destined for dust – or Byron's dying fall So We'll

Go No More A-Roving, adds a sharp unscripted poignancy to the album.

Yet even without those circumstances, *She Walks In Beauty* would have been an emotional collection. Faithfull has loved these poems since she was at convent school, encouraged by an English teacher called Mrs Simpson: as a girl, Faithfull says, she liked to imagine they were all about her. Viewed in that light, Thomas Hood's *The Bridge Of Sighs*, about a doomed young woman, or the references to Camelot in Tennyson's *The Lady Of Shalott* (inspiration to Mick Jagger as he wrote *As Tears Go By* for Faithfull), land with the bittersweet impact of someone looking back at their past selves.

Now, though, the burnished patina of her voice carries all the experience needed for Wordsworth's heart-breaking *Surprised By Joy*, or Keats's *Ode To A Nightingale*, every word delivered with sculpted clarity. It's not the only magical instrument here, though. Bad Seed Warren Ellis, displaying his usual impressive balance of eloquence and restraint, creates music that hovers on the right side of tremulous awe, never saccharine or sentimental. Nick Cave's piano silvers these songs, too, alongside palely loitering cello and violin, while Brian Eno disrupts and distorts a starkly gothic *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*.

This is music that seems to inhale and exhale around Faithfull, making space for wonder to unfurl without crassly signposting it. To Autumn, *Ode To A Nightingale*, *She Walks In Beauty*: these are familiar – even over-familiar – poems. In these settings, however, Ellis and Faithfull hold them up to the light again, letting it stream through. Mrs Simpson, you hope, would approve.



Andrew Tuttle & Padang Food Tigers

★★★★★

A Cassowary Apart

BEDROOM SUCK. DL/LP

Ambient Americana fellow travellers keep their distance.



Music For Airports might have long been a conceptual reference point for ambient

artists, but this balmy collaborative set takes inspiration from a very Covid-era bit of departure lounge etiquette. Last summer, Cairns Airport in Queensland instructed passengers to keep "a cassowary apart" from each other – the fierce, emu-like birds measuring roughly 1.5 metres. Safe distance is critical here, too, with Tuttle in Brisbane and the Padang Food Tigers duo in London. But the eight graceful pieces, constructed by e-mail, flow seamlessly, Tuttle's banjo drifting in and out of heat-hazed digitalia in much the same way as it did on his terrific 2020 solo set, *Alexandra*. An impressionistic rethink of Americana predominates, not least when a lazy guitar line cuts through Broadbeach Talbot Intersection, and the beatific air is reinforced by the gentlest lap steel washes – hence the best Eno analogue for this lovely album is actually *Apollo: Atmospheres And Soundtracks*.
John Mulvey



Flyte

★★★★

This Is Really Going To Hurt

ISLAND. CD/DL/LP

London trio's second outing, but their first break-up LP.



After 2017's *Loved Ones*, London-based, Winchester-bred quartet Flyte (as in Brideshead Revisited's Sebastian Flyte) became a trio and leader Will Taylor was dumped by his girlfriend of six years. In response, they took themselves off to Los Angeles shortly before lockdown to record the follow-up. The strengths of *Loved Ones* remain: super-tight harmonies course through the Crosby, Stills & Nash-esq *There's A Woman* and *Mistress America*; a complex musical fragility underpins the catchy *Easy Tiger* and *I've Got A Girl*. Like Noah & The Whale's *The First Days Of Spring*, it's a bereft break-up album ("My life falls apart just as yours begins to start," Taylor sighs on the percussive *Under The Skin* with a weariness that suggests she probably did the right thing), with eventual green shoots of emotional recovery, but relentless musical invention takes it beyond self-indulgence.
John Aizlewood

Daniel Lanois

★★★★★

Heavy Sun

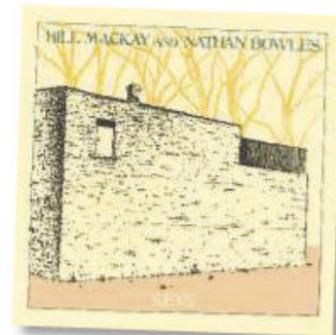
MISSING PIECE. CD/DL/LP

"Our goal was to be a force for good," says Lanois of his latest offering.



Partly crafted at Lanois' Buddhist temple-turned-studio in Toronto, *Heavy Sun* is a

salve against pandemic blues; a joyous gospel record largely built on the Hammond of Johnny Shepherd, sometime organist at Zion Baptist in Shreveport, Louisiana. It's a bold work of divine and nourishing textures, Shepherd and guitarist/vocalist Rocco DeLuca singing with uplift on unifiers *Dance On*, *Please Don't Try* and *Tumbling Stone*. If the mood recalls that of 2018 Aretha Franklin live doc *Amazing Grace*, Lanois' nuanced production brings gospel to other, sometimes dubbier realms. The Afrobeat of *Every Nation* and *Angels Watching* cements the sense of a master mood-maker at work, while *Tree Of Tule* celebrates a 1,000-year-old site of under-the-branches meditation in Oaxaca, Mexico.
James McNair



Bill MacKay And Nathan Bowles

★★★★★

Keys

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Spiritual avant-roots from guitar and banjo masters.

Crude though it may be to judge people by the company they keep, it's useful to bone up on the credits of Bill MacKay – who mostly plays guitar – and Nathan Bowles – mostly banjo – upfront of their first duo album. Besides their own fine solo records, Chicagoan MacKay is a regular collaborator with Ryley Walker, while the North Carolina-based Bowles has turned up alongside Steve Gunn, Joan Shelley and Jack Rose, among many. A good indication, perhaps, of the open-minded approach to folk and roots music displayed on *Keys*, beginning as it does with a 19th century Appalachian hymn. Fearsome pickers both (check the superb backwoods motorik of *Joy Ride*), the prevailing atmosphere is calmer, even sepulchral: often hesitant singers, they make a lovely job of E.C. Ball's country gospel meditation, *I See God*, on an unaffected and experimental, homely yet transcendent set.
John Mulvey

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY



Julia Stone

★★★★★

Sixty Summers

BMG. CD/DL/LP

Stone comes into her own with St. Vincent-assisted pop triumph.

Both as part of the indie-folk sibling duo Angus & Julia Stone and on two previous solo efforts, Sydney native Julia Stone has enjoyed moderate success over the past 15 years or so. She takes a leap forward here, though. Recorded with US producer Doveman and pop polymath St. Vincent, *Sixty Summers* is a record of imagination and scope. There are songs that sound like dancefloor hits slowed-down and stripped for parts (spell-binding ballad *Easy*), jubilant pop (title track) and snarling electro-glam anthems (the Goldfrapp-ish *Fire In Me*). Almost every song boasts an indelible hook and a sense of longing at odds with Stone's take-it-or-leave-it vocals. It's the sort of effortless delivery a singer finds when they've been doing this for a while.

Niall Doherty



Alan Vega

★★★★★

Mutator

SACRED BONES. CD/DL/LP

Lost album found in the Vega Vault, recorded 1995-96.



Alan Vega applied a similar aesthetic – a tense, exclamatory vocal style steeped in the reverby world of early rock'n'roll – to all his work, from *Suicide* in the early '70s through numerous collaborations, until his death in 2017. His wife and long-time collaborator Liz Lamere has described him going into the studio with his notebooks and freestyling

over her backing tracks, which he also manipulated sonically, and on *Trinity*, *Mutator's* brief opening prayer, he sternly incants the title over a babel of voices and electronics. *Fist* follows, with its ominous beats, siren-like hooks, and Vega declaiming "Destroy the dominators/Destroy the mutators", punctuated by the occasional shriek. *Samurai* is a cheesy teen ballad similar to those written by David Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti, where Vega gives us bulletins on the Magi and unsolved murders. It's typically unsettling and helps give the album some welcome structure.

Mike Barnes



Floating Points, Pharoah Sanders And The London Symphony Orchestra

★★★★★

Promises

LUAKA BOP. CD/DL/LP

Rapturous, harmonious spiritual jazz/electronic/classical hybrid.



The idea of Pharoah Sanders working with an electronic music producer seems a bit of a reach, even for a musician with such a restless questing imperative. But Sam 'Floating Points' Shepherd is a creator with a masterplan, and form in this zone, having incorporated the resonances of spiritual jazz into his earlier sound designs and mentored the young Nubya Garcia. Here, he focuses his playing on a short recurrent phrase, redolent of both harp and harpsichord, and artfully manoeuvres the London Symphony Orchestra around it in movements that recall both Henryk Górecki symphonies and Alice Coltrane's strings-assisted *World Galaxy*. It's a subtly sophisticated piece, but it also creates space for Sanders to showcase his tender, measured, lyrical phrasing, abstracted scatting and, 34 minutes into this 46-minute marvel, a brief sputtering blast of free saxophone energy that proves, at 80, his fire remains potent.

John Mulvey

Pino Palladino & Blake Mills

★★★★★

Notes With Attachments

NEW DEAL/IMPULSE!. CD/DL/LP

Who bassist and Dylan guitarist join up for amniotic funk jams.



Ever since his fretless bass line opened Paul Young's *Wherever I Lay My Hat* in 1983, Pino Palladino has been first call bassist to the rock and soul elite. His first long-player with headline billing, though, finds him making limber, spacey music, pitched somewhere between jazz, funk and ambient, in the company of an innovative new class of sessioners. Chief among them is Blake Mills, whose 2020 recorded output included an Elliott Smith-ish solo album (*Mutable Set*) and shifts on Bob Dylan's *Rough And Rowdy Ways*. But it's a testament to their discretion that the spotlight on these eight instrumentals is shared with woozy sax player Sam Gendel and drummer Chris Dave, among others. Conventional solos are strictly verboten; much happily recalls one of Palladino's old co-writes with D'Angelo, *Sugah Daddy*. Fretless fans, meanwhile, are directed to Man From Molise, for an update on Palladino's foundational plangency.

John Mulvey



Tune-Yards

★★★★★

Sketchy.

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Further evidence of once-lacking "tunes" emerges in Tune-Yards' sound.



Initially a solo vehicle for New York's singer/drummer Merrill Garbus, before morphing into a duo with the addition of bassist Nate Brenner, Tune-Yards, like *Dirty Projectors*, have specialised in a cut-up art funk whose freneticism is sometimes a bit much. After becoming a shade more accessible on 2018's *I Can Feel You Creep Into My Private Life*, they continue the trend with *Sketchy*, built up by initially eschewing computers in favour of groovesome live jams. In the soaringly poppy *Hold Yourself*, Garbus examines the legacy of imperfect parenting, while *Nowhere*, Man gets on the good foot with – like a number of the tracks here – variations on the Funky Drummer beat. Ultimately, by opening up melodically as well as rhythmically, Garbus and Brenner better reveal the big heart at the centre of Tune-Yards.

Tom Doyle



Clark

★★★★★

Playground In A Lake

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON. CD/DL/LP

Dystopian epic from lo-fi beats maven-turned-cinematic sound auteur.



TWO DECADES on from his debut of frenzied bedroom electronica for *Warp*, Chris Clark now records for the world's most famous classical label. This haunting, sonically ambitious album was recorded, in part, with string orchestras in Berlin and Budapest. Clark's recent success in soundtrack composition is evident from the first note, played by go-to cellist Oliver Coates on *Lovelock*, a gorgeous lament – part Vaughan Williams, part Jóhann Jóhannsson. From here, storm clouds gather – appropriately, as *Playground In A Lake's* loose theme is an angry treatise on climate change. On *Small*, Clark unfurls a backdrop of muted synths and saturnine bass, over which 12-year-old choirboy Nathaniel Timoney drops a vocal that seems to pause time. Timoney appears again on the Hitchcockian avant-chamber music of *Emissary*, part of a closing suite that, through crushing synths, scowling feedback and brutal drone, seemingly scores the demise of the planet itself. These are big themes that provoke corresponding emotions.

ALSO RELEASED

Lost Girls

★★★★★

Menneskekollektivet

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND. CD/DL/LP



Long-time collaborators Jenny Hval and Håvard Volden muster for a new project named after Alan Moore's graphic novel. You'll scent strong hints of Arthur Russell's twisted marginal disco within *Menneskekollektivet* ('The Human Collective'), as Hval's folkish vocals and poetic framing deliciously counterpoint a fusillade of muscular beats and Volden's jabbing guitar.

Cabaret Voltaire

★★★★★

Dekadron/BN9Drone

MUTE. CD/DL/LP



Richard H Kirk says this pair of drone albums – presented as amorphous, mutating single tracks – weren't specifically a response to the past year. Yet it's difficult not to be overwhelmed by their restless, oppressive nature. With its portentous pulse and skirls of feedback, *BN9Drone*, sounds like nothing less than a call to mobilise.

Hannah Peel

★★★★★

Fir Wave

MY OWN PLEASURE. DL/LP



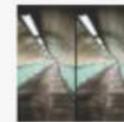
Hannah Peel uses bold, bubbling modular synths and glacial drone to explore the recurring patterns and cyclical nature of life on earth for *Fir Wave*. A contemporary interpretation of Delia Derbyshire and The Radiophonic Workshop's landmark 1972 KPM 1000 series LP *Electrosonic*, it's another sonically sumptuous milestone for the Northern Irish composer/producer.

Grasscut

★★★★★

Overwinter

LO RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP



For their fourth studio album, Grasscut's gentle electronics and wispy strings trace the ebb and flow of England's wintry countryside. It flutters and eddies like February snow showers (*The Return Of The Sun*), slowly unfurls like a floral carpet in a forest glade (*Coprolite Tip*). These calming sounds offer comfort from the cold. *SW*



Julia Stone, ready to leap forward.

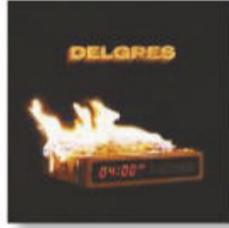


Balkan Taksim

★★★★★

Disco Telegraf
BUDA MUSIQUE. [DL/LP](#)

Bucharest duo's debut meshes ancient Anatolian instruments (darbuka, doumbek, elektro-saz) and Eastern melodies with electronica. Beyond the vibrant Balkan psych of Zalina and Usak Expressi, melancholic Anadolka merges Anatolian '70s acid rock with Massive Attack's menacing creep. *AC*



Delgres

★★★★★

4.00AM
LE LABEL/PIAS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Personal themes with universal resonance on Pascal Danaë-led trio's second LP: his father's hazardous emigration from Guadeloupe to France informs the muddy blues of Aléas, while the pain of separation is belied by the sousaphone's bouncing bass line in Ban Mwen On Chanson. *JB*

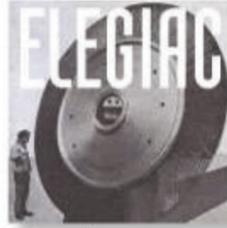


Mike Edison And Guadalupe Plata

★★★★★

The Devil Can't Do You No Harm
EVERLASTING. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Folk, gospel and rock'n'roll mangle on this scuzzy love-in between GG Allin veteran and Spanish blues wizards. From trad Go Down Moses to original Who Ya Gonna Call, passions bristle brightly. *AC*



Elegiac

★★★★★

Elegiac
UPP. [DL/LP](#)

Diehard contrarians Graham Lewis (Wire) and Blurt's sax-strangling poet Ted Milton unite for this eccentric yet accessible avant-electronica. With Milton's droll verbiage to the fore, standouts Vous Et Ici, and One Two suggest George Melly and Jason Williamson tap-dancing with Can. *KC*



Flock Of Dimes

★★★★

Head Of Roses
SUB POP. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Jenn Wasner (of indie sophisticates Wye Oak) is an empathic singer, whose supple vocal sounds are partly obscured here by loops and electronics or resonant layers of Eno'd guitars, which take the edge off this raw and heartsore break-up LP, her second as Flock Of Dimes. *JB*



Masabumi Kikuchi

★★★★★

Hanamichi
RED HOOK. [CD/DL/LP](#)

The Tokyo pianist's final recordings offer two radical inversions of My Favorite Things, warp Gershwin's cadences on Summertime, and showcase his own ballad Little Abi. Kikuchi's meditative jazz reverberates with beauty. *AC*

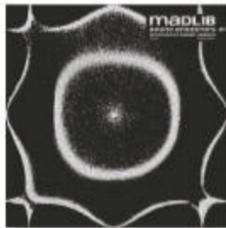


Loney Dear

★★★★

A Lantern And A Bell
REAL WORLD. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Short (27 minutes), immersive, Emil Svanängen's latest echoes the sounds of the sea near his Swedish home. Simple arrangements – just his warm falsetto and piano, with water sounds and seabirds passing overhead – foster a reflective, bonfire-on-the-beach spirit. *JB*

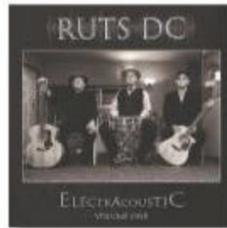


Madlib

★★★★★

Sound Ancestors
MADLIB INVAZION. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Nourishing batch of beat collages from the leftfield hip-hop auteur, assisted here by Kieran 'Four Tet' Hebden. Among the multitudes sampled: Young Marble Giants, Renaldo & The Loaf, Cliff Richard songwriter Terry Britten. *JM*

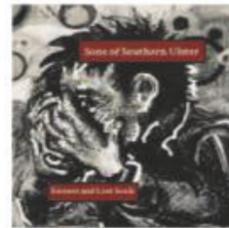


Ruts DC

★★★★

ElectrAcoustiC Volume One
SOSUMI RECORDINGS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Come for unplugged pogos to Babylon's Burning and H Eyes, plus a dip into 1981's *Animal Now*; stay for new views of 2016's *Music Must Destroy* cuts Soft City Lights and Kill The Pain. Proof that In A Rut always was an ageless folk-blues. *KC*



Sons Of Southern Ulster

★★★★

Sinners And Lost Souls
HANGING TREE. [DL/LP](#)

Titles like The Fall and New Day Rises hint at the inspiration for the County Cavan post-punks' second LP. Songs fall mostly within a wistful/disappointed range, occasionally livid, told in Justin Kelly's expressive Irish *Sprechgesang*. *JB*

EXTENDED PLAY

Podcasts

The Guardian's excellent *Reverberate* series connects music to moments of historical upheaval. In a pleasingly geeky but accessible style, presenter Chris Michael locates each episode in a different city: how a specially commissioned Shostakovich symphony helped turn around the siege of Leningrad in 1942; Egyptian rocker Ramy Essam's song *Irhal* became the rallying cry that unseated the dictator Mubarak in Cairo; or Rick Astley's key role in US black ops in Panama City. Less insightful, but enthusiastic, Tom Cridland's *Greatest Music Of All Time* features loose chats about music with an array of guests. The current series features William Bell and Jason Williamson. Past guests have included David Crosby and Smokey Robinson. Equally well connected, slicker and more musicianly, drummer Joe Wong, host of the long-running *Trap Set*, speaks to Gang Of Four's Hugo Burnham in a ruminative, entertaining hour-long chat around the new GO4 boxset (see *Reissues* p96). Burnham is great value, particularly on John Fogerty (the take-home: never meet your heroes), and the band's early days in Leeds.



Banging on: Trap Set host Joe Wong.



MF Tomlinson

★★★★★

Strange Time
MF TOMLINSON. [DL/LP](#)

A pleasing baritone allied to intricate fingerpicking and interweaving trumpets, cornets and flutes, elevates candid storytelling to a higher plane on Brisbane pop classicist's debut. Quiet nods to '60s/'70s folk, but Tomlinson's lyrical focus is very much of the times. *AC*



Joe Wong

★★★★★

Nite Creatures
DECCA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Brimming with baroque pomp, pastiche and peculiarity, the audacious debut by composer/podcaster Wong tips its cap to Walker Bros, The Zombies and idiosyncratic '60s songwriting generally. Two orchestras and countless US indie guests join the high-concept fun. *JB*



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Begin the Benin

Three legends of the southern Nigeria sound bring the beat. **William Onyeabor** fans queue here, says dancing fool **David Hutcheon**.

Various



Edo Funk Explosion Vol. 1

ANALOG AFRICA. CD/DL/LP

“YOU ARE dancing like the white man,” observes Osayomore Joseph on *Africa Is My Root*, the opening cut on this collection of 1980s rarities from southern Nigeria. “You are dancing like a goat ... You are dancing like a fool.” If the three artists featured – Joseph, Akaba Man and Sir Victor Uwaifo – spent much of this past decade looking on enviously as their elusive contemporary William Onyeabor became a feted auteur on the electronic dance scene, they are well advised to be packed and ready when international tours recommence.

Uwaifo really ought to be as big a name as King Sunny Adé already. As the leader of the Melody Maestros, he had been the recipient of Africa’s first gold disc when, while at a beach bar in Lagos in the mid 1960s, he met a mermaid – bear with me here – whose musical instruction would turn his career on its head. He became “Guitar Boy Superstar” (also the title of a Soundway compilation covering his inspired 1970-76 output), one of the fiercest showmen of the age, playing an 18-string guitar. In his own words: “Sir Victor Uwaifo does not only play the guitar with his fingers, which is normal, but also with his jaw, his toes, his teeth, from behind his neck and back; then he spins the guitar 360 degrees, suspending in the air with amazing speed, faster than sound.”

By the end of the decade he had returned home to Benin City – to the south of Lagos, in Edo State, and not in the country of Benin, which is to the north – opened a 16-track studio, Joromi, named after the single that gained the aforementioned gold record, and formed a new group, The Titibitis. It was still boom time in

Nigeria: the Biafran war had ended in 1970 and entrepreneurs and hustlers were filling the spaces created by the conflict and by the colonial retreat a decade earlier. Independent record labels – Emperor, Supremedisk, Why Worry – sprang up overnight; oil money was turning backwaters into megalopolises and prosperous Nigerians could look outwards. At the same time, however, ethnic groups were consolidating themselves around distinct cultures.

It was out of this confluence of events that Edo funk first made waves: the rhythms of the region, played by musicians conversant in rock, in disco and in soul. A consistent sound wasn’t quite there when Uwaifo released the first Titibitis album, *5 Days A Week Love* – unsurprisingly, given reggae’s global popularity in 1978, the musicians wanted some of that action. But on that long-player’s *Sagolomayo* and *You’re My Fire Extinguisher*, two *tour de force* organ workouts, it was clear Uwaifo was going his own way. If you want to get



“If Lagos had the superstars, Benin City knew how to strip away the complexity and party – it’s impossible not to move.”

your hands on the original vinyl, the likes of *Roots*, *Jackpot* and *Back To Town* – *Superstar* are reasonably easy to find.

Uwaifo appears on a third of the dozen tracks here, all of them likely to have you dancing like a fool with a sizeable grin across your face. If Lagos had the superstars, the jazz-inspired maestros, the troublemakers, Benin City knew how to strip away the complexity and party. Sonically, however, Uwaifo is no less audacious than any of the producers working wonders in Jamaica at the time. *Iranm Iran*, released in 1980, is the perfect place to start: nothing complex in the rhythm at all, but while the keyboards take the solo, there’s a guitar that can best be described as “squelching comically” its way through the five minutes.

Right behind Uwaifo came Joseph – or to give him his most common self-appointed honorific, Ambassador Osayomore, who led The Ulele Power Sound. A decade younger, he’d paid his dues in an army band and the nightclubs of Lagos, including Fela Kuti’s Shrine, and returned to Edo with his head full of Afrobeat. That influence is immediately apparent on *Africa Is My Root*, from the 1980 album *Life Is War*: despite the horns and guitar, and the

bandleader’s flute solos, your ears are drawn to the percussion, a thumping four-on-the-floor it’s practically impossible not to move to.

Released four years later, *Who Know Man* demonstrates how that Tony Allen beat had spread through the country. Joseph is also – more shades of Fela Kuti – unapologetically political in his lyrics, and once he turned on the authorities he regularly found himself detained at the government’s pleasure. *My Name Is Money*, released around 1989, opens with the sinister yet intriguing lines: “I am the minister of peace, the minister of creaminess, the father of the devil.”

The third of the trio featured here, Akaba Man, led the Nigie Rockets through the 1980s, breaking big locally in 1981 with the album *Obo*, which simply boils the ingredients down to their essentials. The two tracks from that outing highlight his love of disco: *Ta Gha Hunsimwen* has an instant rhythm guitar and three-note keyboard groove throughout, while *Ta Ghi Rare* could almost be an Onyeabor cut – though with a bigger band – such is the sense of joy at finding a killer groove. A year later, the *Jealousy* album fleshed out his ideas, Ogbow Omwan being a full-throttle slice of disco-highlife. By 1991, however, with the band now known as The African Pride, *Popular Side* is straight out of Onyeabor’s *Fantastic Man* playbook: synths to the fore, motorik groove – it’s that good.

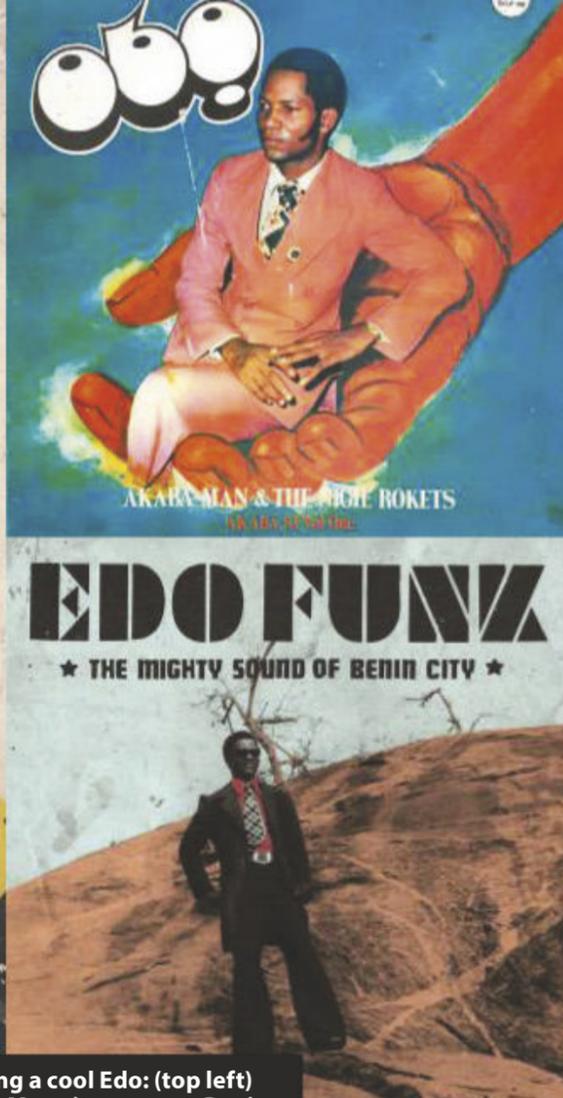
But the biggest thrill, perhaps, is learning that all three bandleaders are still with us and remain active musically – Uwaifo just turned 80 at the start of March, so may no longer play guitar faster than sound – meaning the tantalising prospect of a triple-header live revue comes into focus, with the Analog Africa team promising more unknown gems to follow.

These are early days and there will be all manner of archive glories dangled in front of you during the rest of 2021, but I doubt this year will uncover a more glorious way to spend 79 minutes in your kitchen disco. Perhaps you’ll dance like a goat, perhaps you’ll dance like a fool. But whatever colour or gender you are, you’ll definitely dance.

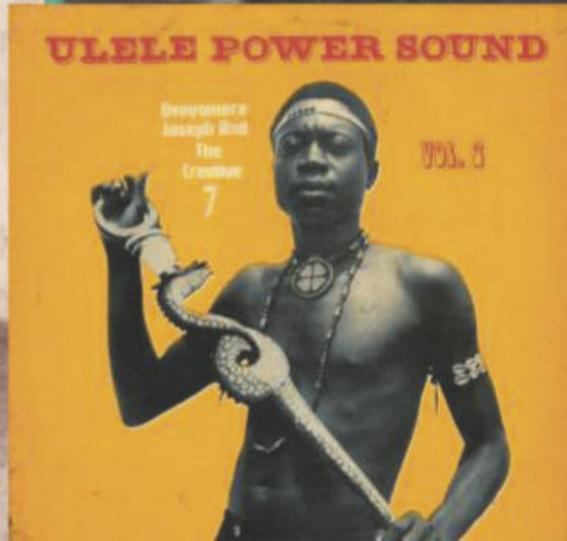
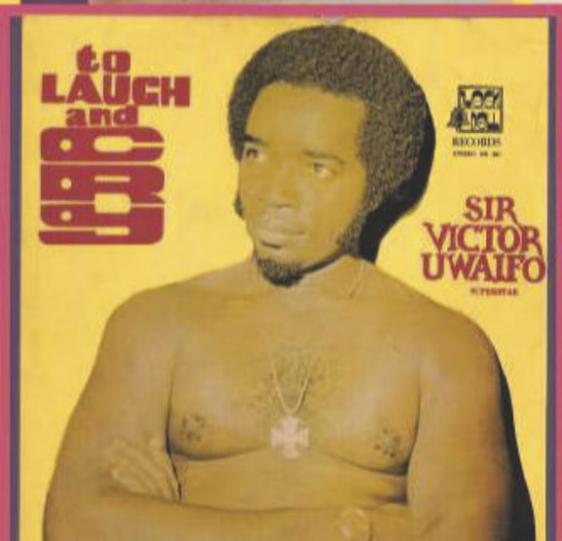
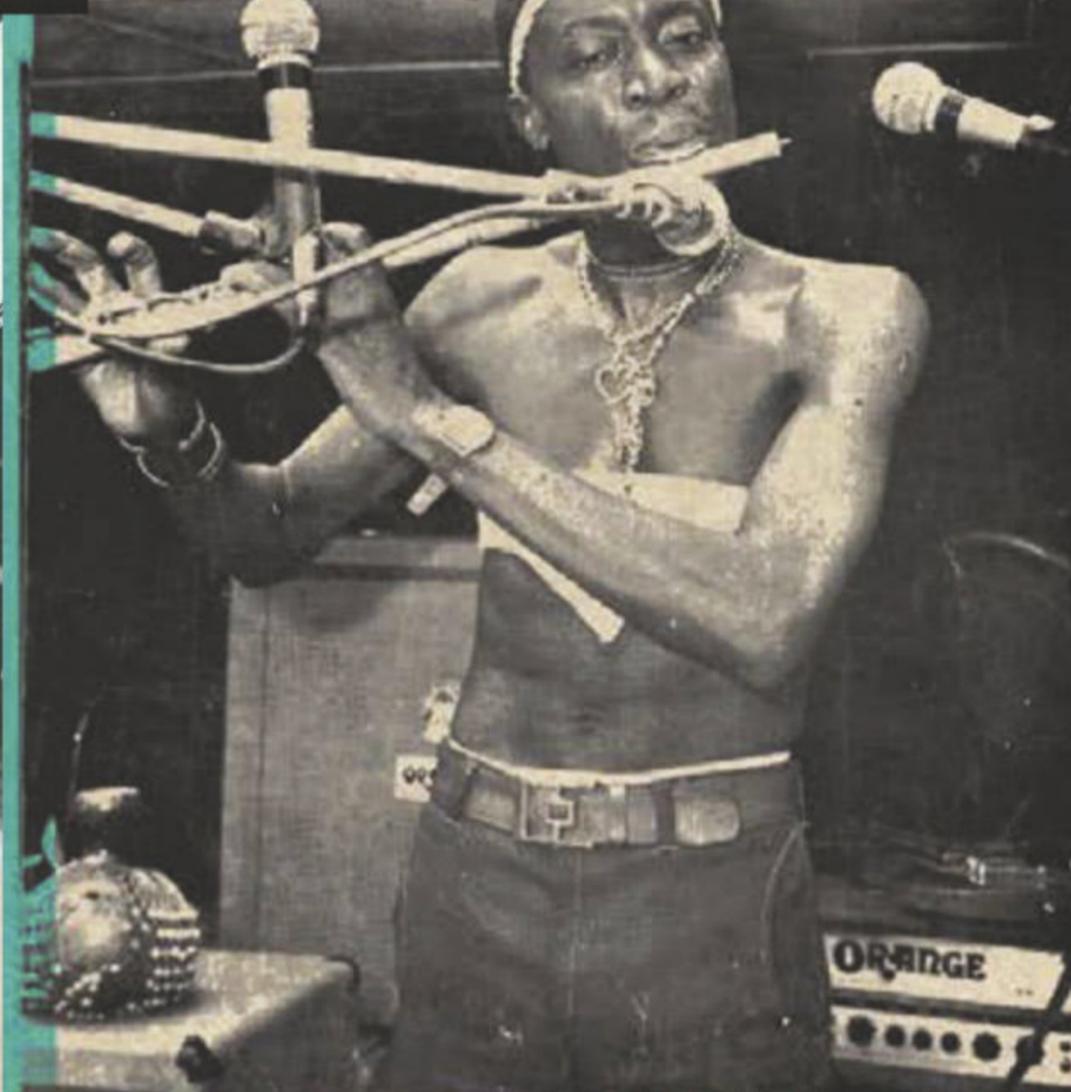
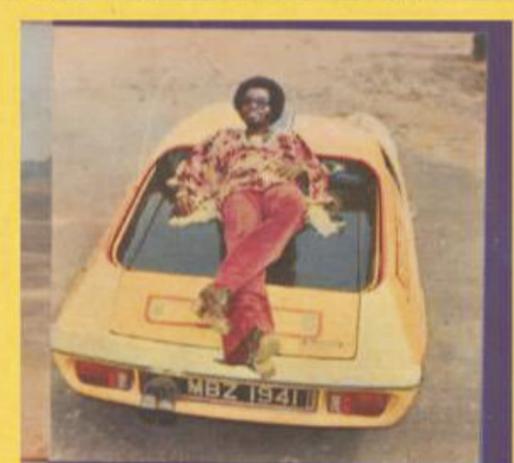


BACK STORY: OFF THE MAP

● The Edo kingdom of Benin, its bronzes in The British Museum, was conquered by Britain in 1897, and has been part of Nigeria ever since – except for that one day in 1967 when it seceded, calling itself the Republic of Benin. Today’s actual Republic of Benin, meanwhile, known as Dahomey until 1975, was a French colony west of Nigeria. Got that?



Keeping a cool Edo: (top left) Akaba Man sits one out, Benin City, 1977; (top right) Victor Uwaifo "squelching comically"; (right) Osayomre Joseph in 1980; (below) Albert Edozor, sound engineer and producer; (bottom) Akaba Man's mother, Benin City, 1980; (left) Victor Uwaifo; LPs sleeves also inset.





simultaneously fox your brain and lift your soul.
Andrew Male



Various

★★★★★

Soul Power '68

DOCTOR BIRD. CD/DL

Two discs of rare Treasure Isle rock steady, reggae and soul.



Studio One ruled Jamaica in the ska era, but the 1965 breakup of The Skatalites

shifted the power to Treasure Isle, where saxophonist Tommy McCook led an ace team of players that included bassist Jackie Jackson, who was heavily influenced by Motown's James Jamerson, and expressive organist Winston 'Brubeck' Wright. *Soul Power '68* was compiled for Graham Goodall's Doctor Bird label just as rock steady gave way to reggae, but was never released, and appears here with 30 thematic bonus tracks, some of which are previously unreleased. The Silvertones' rendition of *Midnight Hour* and The Conquerors' *Lonely Street* remind that Duke Reid's rock steady was unbeatable; Wright's *Black Power* and McCook's *Uncle Sam* are among the grooving instrumentals, while The Termites' take on Alton Ellis's *Breaking Up and Soul Love* by Joey And His Group are unknown pleasures, awaiting discovery.
David Katz

Make no mistake, it's The Soul Children.



Various

★★★★★

Everybody Makes A Mistake: Stax Southern Soul Volume 2

KENT. CD/DL

Follow-up to 2012's *Nobody Wins*, another excellent set of rare post-'68 Stax soul.

SEVERAL OF the songs making their debut here should have hit the

jackpot. For instance, Eddie Floyd's title track, co-written with Al Bell and first recorded by Roy Arlington, then by Otis Redding. Floyd's reading updates Otis's, combining raw soulfulness with sweetening strings to stirring effect. William Bell's *I'll Do Anything For Your Love*, similar in style to his *I Forgot To Be Your Lover*, is another treasure: plaintive,

imploing, it tugs at the heart strings. There's also the other Floyd track here, *How Can I Win Your Love*, that places him in a smooth,

romantic setting and hints at his Malaco future. As for those tracks that have previously been released as bonuses: the Mavis Staples outtake *I'm Tired* and Shirley Brown's *Ain't No Way* deserve fanfaring.

Lois Wilson

Barbara Thompson

★★★★★

Live At The BBC

REPERTOIRE. CD/DL

Stunning box set chronicles Oxford-born jazz pioneer's Beeb radio sessions.



At a time when British jazz was an all-male domain, Barbara Thompson was a beacon of hope for female musicians. A virtuosic saxophonist and flautist, and an accomplished composer, she served her apprenticeship in Neil Ardley's groundbreaking New Jazz Orchestra in the 1960s before launching two bands, the most successful being the popular and long-running *Paraphernalia*, that pushed the jazz envelope without sacrificing Thompson's instinctive lyricism. The group, melding jazz with rock, Latin and even prog flavours, features heavily on this fine 14-CD collection of British radio broadcasts, which spans 1969 to 1989 and includes studio sessions as well as thrilling live concerts. Sadly, Thompson, now 76, no longer performs due to Parkinson's disease, but this absorbing collection captures her at her brilliant best.

Charles Waring

Chas Hodges

★★★★★

Right At Home: Selected Unreleased Home Recordings 2007-2017

DEMON. CD/DL/LP

Final recordings from half of the pride of north London.



Recorded on his Portastudio over the last years of his life, *Right At Home* at times stalks familiar Chas Hodges territory – *Daisy Rag*, *What You Got You Got To Show* and *Trigger* all recall his work with Chas & Dave – yet it excels when it strays. *You Can In The Summertime* evokes bayou blues. *Rock'n'Roll Allotment* is superb: instead of signalling the virtues of women and fast cars, Hodges praises cabbages, pak choi and hoeing. Chazzajig sounds like something off *McCartney III* and demonstrates Hodges' capabilities as an instrumentalist. Over a bossa nova-style drum machine, the call-and-response acoustic guitar is entralling. While we're talking Beatles, *Right At Home* closes with Hodges' version of *I'm So Tired*. Whereas John Lennon sounded weary with the excesses of his era, Hodges just sounds weary – it's a poignant

listen from one of UK popular music's great constants.

Daryl Easlea



Keith Mansfield

★★★★★

Vivid Underscores

BE WITH. LP

Instrumental library music for crime-busting moods.



Original KPM pressings of 1977's *Vivid Underscores* fetch up to £100, partly because it's so sample-friendly, but also as the High Velocity track actually was sampled for Memphis Bleek's Jay-Z-featuring *What You Think Of That*. So there is a market for what is, strictly speaking, this first issue – it was a subscription-only library album not for sale in shops. UK arranger/composer Keith Mansfield had been at this sort of thing since 1968, and his other library work has been sampled by Danger Mouse and Fatboy Slim. Tagged on the sleeve as "Contemporary scores for visual effect", the 17 cuts are funky in a TV crime show way, or atmospheric in a Lalo Schifrin-scored cop film way. Titles like *Espionage* and *Matter Of Urgency* play to this vibe. Great for soundtracking a living-room car chase.

Kieron Tyler

Various

★★★★★

Somewhere Between

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/LP/MC

Wordy explanatory subtitle is: *Mutant Pop, Electronic Minimalism & Shadow Sounds Of Japan 1980-1988*.



So far, LITA's Japan Archival Series has travelled from early-1970s folk rock (2017's *Pacific Breeze*) via aspirational minimalism (2019's *Kankyō Ongaku*). This latest instalment exists somewhere between those loose spaces, a wonky landscape of urban pop and ambient drift where edges bleed, genres melt and oddity rules. This is the sound of major label pop giving way to independent label culture, with a majority of the tracks overseen by the members of Yellow Magic Orchestra. The results are a surreally engaging mix of clever and naive, otherworldly and familiar. Highlights include Perfect Mother's ultra spooky Enesque drone pop *Dark Disco-Da-Da-Da-Run* (sic), and Akatere's *Takami Wha Ha Ha* which shifts from slowcore drone metal to Hello Kitty sugar-pop. Simply put, there is nothing here that won't



Various

★★★★★

Lost Innocence: Garpax 1960s Punk & Psych

BIG BEAT. CD/DL

Glorious West Coast garage punk misses from maverick producer Gary Paxton.



Gary Paxton had a production vision so wide it could accommodate both Bobby 'Boris' Pickett's *Monster Mash* and The Association's *Along Came Mary*. *Lost Innocence* narrows the focus to spotlight his garage band recordings, all sneery failures with a couldn't-care-less attitude, rama-lama energy and fuzz-drenched primitivism. The Buddhas thrill on the classic title track. Issued on Shell-Dee in 1967, it's all mutated Chuck Berry guitar, Brit Invasion harmonies and bubblegum exuberance. Limey And The Yanks' *Guaranteed Love* from 1966, meanwhile, is frenzied excitement, the group smothering the Bo Diddley beat in whoops and screams. Previously unissued outings from The Fog, Mental Institution and The New Wing bring sublime-to-ridiculous reveries too. No wonder Phil Spector feared him or that Brian Wilson is a fan.

Lois Wilson



Ngozi Family

★★★★

45,000 Volts

NOW-AGAIN. LP

Bovver-boy aggro from mid-'70s Zambia.

Few countries in Africa adopted rock with more gusto than Zambia, and Now-Again's searching of the Zamrock archives has uncovered classics that would sound at home among the hairy Brit stoners on Jon Savage's *Rock Dreams On 45* compilation. Led by Paul Ngozi – felled by AIDS in the 1980s – the Family could adapt traditional rhythms (Timwenge), but at their best (Hold On, with its Sympathy For The Devil bass line, or Nizakupanga Ngozi, six minutes of gonzo madness you need in your life), they straddled hard rock, glam and proto-punk. Not a blend that was likely to make waves abroad, sadly, and the final mixes reduced the sonic punch of House Of Fear and Every Thing Is Over, but had they been living in a west London squat, their place in history would have been assured.

David Hutcheon



Various

★★★★

She Wants You! Pye Records' Feminine Side 1964-1970

ACE. CD/DL/LP

More '60s beat, soul and pop from Pye and Piccadilly.



Petula Clark's cover of The Beatles' Rain begins this follow-up to 2016's *Scratch My Back: Pye Beat Girls*. Produced by Tony Hatch and arranged by Johnny Harris, the song gets a swinging London treatment, Clark's pristine vocals matched to swirling Hammond and bold brass. Hatch oversees several of the other tracks here, such as Stop by Julie Grant, the Blackpool singer's dramatic take on The Moody Blues; Jackie Trent's show-stopping Hollywood; the poppy You Can Be Wrong About Boys by Mally Page, Trent's younger sister; and Your Kind Of Love, a swooning cover of the Marty Wilde song by The Breakaways, the label's go-to session vocalists. More nuggets are provided by Sandie Shaw's splendid Reviewing The Situation, Jeannie & The Big Guys' beatty I Want You and Lorraine Silver's Northern soul cover Lost Summer Love.

Lois Wilson

Shintaro Quintet

★★★★

Evolution

BBE MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Seventh set of BBE Music's Jazz Master Class Series of post-1940s Japanese jazz.



Close your eyes and you're at Van Gelder Studio in 1961, listening to a tight young

quintet playing a smouldering set of pulsing modal compositions. Not standards, but five fresh new elegant explorations that call to mind the quiet melodic grandeur of McCoy Tyner, Freddie Hubbard or Kenny Dorham. No matter that this record was actually made in 1984, by a crack Japanese-American quintet led by bassist Shintaro Nakamura and recorded at New York's Hi Five Studios, home to hardcore punk act the Cro-Mags. Inspired by bassists Paul Chambers and Red Mitchell, and briefly mentored by post-bop trumpeter Woody Shaw, Nakamura has a compositional style that is warm, assured, yet unafraid to stretch out into wilder post-bop territories. Originally released on his friend's label, with 1,000 copies pressed, this beautiful reissue means that this dream session finally reaches the wider audience it deserves.

Andrew Male



T2

★★★★

It'll All Work Out In Boomland

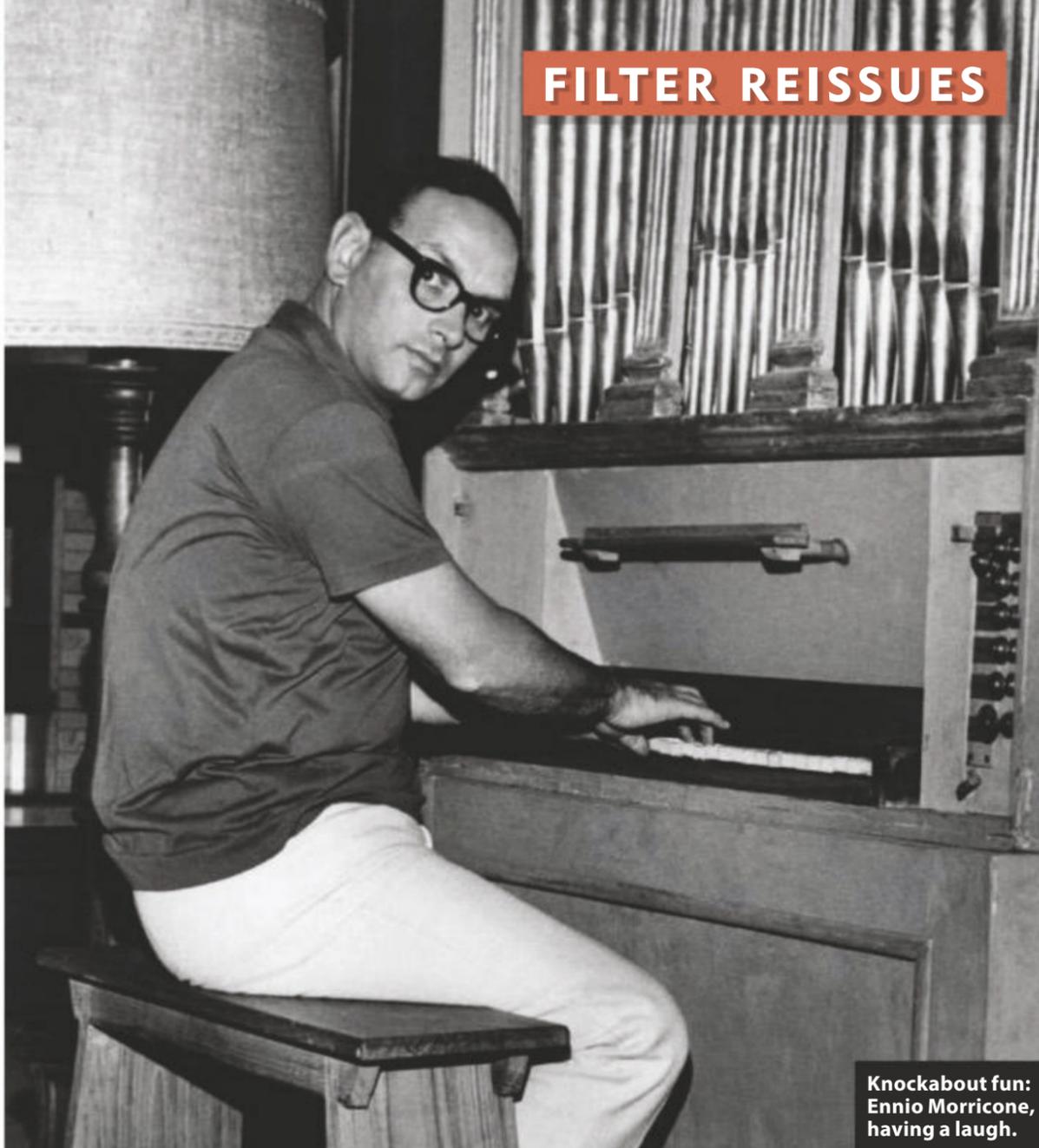
ESOTERIC. CD

Remastered 3-CD version of an exceptional 1970 buried treasure.



Fifty-one years on, British trio T2's debut album still dazzles and thrills, a fluid and riff-heavy distillation of psych, hard and prog rock tropes. T2's set-up was unusual: Peter Dunton was both vocalist and drummer; guitarist Keith Cross was just 17, apparently "the new Clapton", but egos were sublimated for a communal vision. The 21-minute Morning aimed to "communicate the LSD experience... open and closed textures, metres, tempo changes and contrasts between lyrical and more rock-inspired moments." Cue a mash-up between Cream's blistering power trio fuzz, a levity more aligned to the Canterbury scene and occasional jazzy veracity à la King Crimson. Alas, it didn't work out. Original label Decca botched the distribution, Cross bailed, leaving behind demos for a second album (the centrepiece of the excellent extras here) and only belated cult status when first reissued in the 1990s.

Martin Aston



Knockabout fun: Ennio Morricone, having a laugh.

For a few dollars less

First commercial release of *Il Maestro's* soundtrack to a forgotten 1964 Lucio Fulci comedy. By Andrew Male.

Ennio Morricone

★★★★

I Due Evasi Di Sing Sing

SONOR MUSIC EDITIONS. DL/LP

BY 1964, Ennio Morricone had already been working as an arranger and composer for 14 years. A Rome-born child prodigy, who wrote his first compositions when he was just six years old, he had moved from pop and jazz through theatre and radio, ghosting for other name composers before working on his first official film score in 1960. In 1961 he worked on three films. By '64 that number had risen to at least 13. The next year it would rocket to over 20. However, as any true fan of *Il Maestro* knows, alongside recognised masterpieces from this period such as *A Fistful Of Dollars* and Bertolucci's *Before The Revolution* sit lesser works that were compromised by time, genre or the aesthetic demands of the director. Still, Morricone, who aligned himself more with avant-grade composers such as Luciano Berio and Luigi Nono, insisted that he approached every assignment "with the highest professionalism and

commitment [finding] room for quality and... a personal touch."

So, what are we to make of this rediscovered score for a little-seen Italian slapstick comedy from a director better known for horror and giallo films, music only ever previously released on an impossible-to-find library record promo in the late '60s? Well, there are gems here. Bracketed by the big-band orchestral Bernstein jazz blasts of *Titoli* and *Finale* you'll find lonesome Mel Tormé-style ballad *Oh Little Birdie* (sung by frequent Morricone collaborator Maurizio Graf), some slinky Chico Hamilton-esque noir jazz with vibraharp (*Incontro Die Boss; Fuga*), a flute and guitar bossa (*Bossa Per Gloria*) and an eerie minute-long harp glissando (*Il Tempo Che Passa*).

Sadly, you also get two of Morricone's least enticing sub-genres, ragtime piano roll (*Ballerine*) and three Sousa-style military marches (*Le Sedie Elettriche, Marcia* and *Marcia No. 2*). Of course, we're dealing with a comedy film, and both styles suggest a certain kind of knockabout fun, but similar deadening pastiches are even found in Morricone's finest scores. They amused him, even if they no longer amuse us.

Morricone completists won't care, arguing historical importance and the fact that the highs outweigh the lows. They're right, but this is a reminder that not every long-lost album is a rediscovered classic.



Teeming with question marks: Beverly Glenn-Copeland.



FILE UNDER...

Cabin fever

Music made in a Canadian log cabin in the 1980s finds its audience in the 21st century. By Jim Irvin.

SIX YEARS ago, Beverly Glenn-Copeland was living with his wife in obscurity, Canada, blissfully unaware that a species of fame was about to descend upon him. In 2015, Ryota Masuko, a collector in Japan, discovered a cassette of his music and traced him via e-mail to ask if there were any more hard copies of his work available. Masuko's public enthusiasm for the music sparked a run on available copies of the two excellent self-titled albums Glenn-Copeland had released early in the '70s, while that cassette, 1986's *Keyboard Fantasies* (Transgressive) ★★★★★ – now freshly served on CD and vinyl following a recent live album and best-of collection – became a touchstone for collectors of small-run electronica, private pressings and curious origin stories.

Born into a Quaker family in Philadelphia, Glenn-Copeland, raised female, went to McGill University, Montreal to study choral music, aged 17, and entered into a same sex partnership in 1961 when homosexual relationships were still illegal in Canada. His parents attempted to literally change his mind with electroconvulsive therapy, but Glenn-Copeland rebelled. On leaving McGill, he began making music for herself, resulting in the self-titled folk and jazz albums of 1970 and '71. In 1973, he

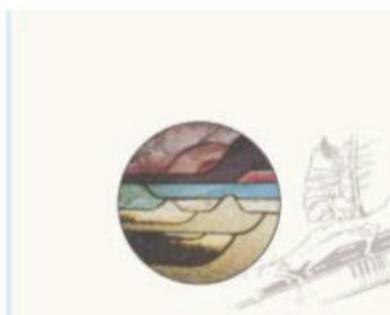
appeared in the cast of a Canadian children's TV show, *Mr Dressup*. Thirteen years later, seeking a new creative outlet, he locked himself away in a snowbound cabin in northern Canada with just an Atari computer, a Yamaha DX7 keyboard and a Roland TR-707 sequencer for company, and made *Keyboard Fantasies*, six lengthy, circling tracks pitched somewhere between '80s TV theme tunes, Afro-jazz and head-shop lullabies.

Finally transitioning in 2002, Glenn-Copeland says that he made this music while still in a state of innocence about why the world felt wrong to him. It's tempting to read too much into the result – and many have – but these compositions do seem to teem with question marks and feel like they're urgently pulling away from the project's technical limitations: "Let us dance down the road." (In)famous DX7 presets, bells, marimbas and log drums, are used liberally, like big splashes of primary colour. The voice is low and woody like Nina Simone's on *Let Us Dance* and *Ever New*, compositions with a familiar, ancient feel, like folk songs from childhood. There's a ritual, ageless quality to instrumentals

Winter Astral and *Slow Dance* too, while the ubiquitous bell-like DX7 piano sound that dominates *Old Melody* can't help but plant you firmly in the 1980s. Closing song *Sunset Village* is dominated by another pre-loved kalimba-like preset over which, in a lighter, more ethereal tone, Glenn-Copeland welcomes the sun's temporary departure: "Let it go down, it's OK."

It's this latter song's sense of embracing the unknown that appears to resonate most deeply with Glenn-Copeland's newfound enthusiasts. *Keyboard Fantasies*, altogether more tentative and unpolished than some of his other work, is being hailed his 'masterpiece'. I'm not entirely convinced by that (the honour may go to the startling *Primal Prayer*), but I can understand why people are charmed, sometimes floored,

by this music that presses forward without knowing what's ahead, bristling with something nameless its maker had yet to identify. In YouTube conversations with him, Glenn-Copeland is revealed to be one of the sweetest, most sage and thoughtful musicians you'd ever hope to meet, which makes the sudden, unexpected burst of activity and attention he's clearly enjoying all the more heart-warming. *Keyboard Fantasies* represents one crucial step on that long, eventful dance down the road towards himself, undoubtedly a destination worth reaching.



"One of the sweetest, most sage musicians."



Joe Strummer, lamenting life's beautiful confusion.

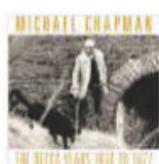
Michael Chapman

★★★★★

The Decca Years 1974-1977

MOONCREST. CD/DL

Three of Thurston Moore's favourite Brit-folk troubadour's Decca albums.



Still at the coalface in his ninth decade, Michael Chapman never threatened to embrace the mainstream. Dropped by Harvest after four albums, he arrived at Decca with his gifts intact: morose lyricism; the rueful, appealing mumble of JJ Cale, and understated, Davy Graham-style guitar wizardry. Curiously, while this collection adds an extensive selection of demos, it omits 1973's acerbic *Millstone Grit*. 1974's *Deal Gone Down* and 1977's *The Man Who Hated Mornings* (which features Mick Ronson on Danny O'Keefe's I'm Sober Now) are a late-night pair revealing Chapman in his grumpy pomp. They sandwich 1976's *Savage Amusement*, a different beast entirely. It's less folksy, more band-orientated, and if Bob Dylan's Changing Of The Guards owed a little to both the exuberant Shuffleboat River Farewell and Lovin' Dove, the first two Dire Straits albums owed a little more to Crocky Hill Disaster and Devastation Hotel. Excellent.

John Aizlewood



Fred Neil

★★★★★

38 MacDougal

DELMORE. CD/DL/LP

A home recording by folk rock's missing link.



Fred Neil was a mighty songwriter (Everybody's Talkin') with a booming baritone who blended blues and a neo-psychedelic jam vibe in the 1960s Greenwich Village folk scene. This unreleased 1965 recording by Neil on 12-string acoustic and accompanist Peter Childs on acoustic, electric and dobro, was taped at the latter's place on MacDougal Street that he shared with John Sebastian. It's proof of Neil's visionary sound that influenced Bob Dylan, David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Tim Buckley – and consequently everyone else. Many of Neil's signature originals are here, from Bo Diddleyish rockers (Candy Man – covered by Roy Orbison – and Country Boy) to the rueful ballad Little Bit Of Rain. The traditional Blind Man Standin' By The Road And Cryin' highlights the low rumble of a voice that remains unequalled. Nobody captured loss better than Fred Neil.

Michael Simmons

Sun Ra

★★★★★

Lanquidity

STRUT. CD/DL/LP

Sun Ra's biographer John F. Szwed labelled this the "revisionist disco album".



Recorded over one night in New York in July 1978, *Lanquidity's* five tracks were originally released in two slightly different masters. The one dubbed 'alternate' here is actually the earlier, pressed for sale at a live show at Georgia Tech, before exception was taken to sonic adjustments made to accommodate its extended running time; the next pressing was remastered with four minutes shaved off. Both versions are here, but as different facets of the same jewel rather than rivals for the crown. From the vertiginously open-ended title-track, though the dense funk undergrowth of Where Pathways Meet, to the unabashedly confessional That's How I Feel, then on via the celestial jazz-funk of Twin Stars Of Thence to the concluding alien susurrations of There Are Other Worlds (They Have Not Told You Of), *Lanquidity* is a spookily addictive five act play on words, bottling Sun Ra's otherworldly allure in an intoxicatingly palatable suspension.

Ben Thompson



Various

★★★★★

J Jazz Volume 3: Deep Modern Jazz From Japan 1969-1983

BBE. CD/DL/LP

Latest volume of BBE's series exploring the cool sounds of post-war Nihon jazz.



Launched in February 2018, this ongoing series is something of a poisoned chalice. While amazing to hear tracks like Koichi Matsukaze Trio's wailing Earth Mother or Teru Sakamoto Trio's Mwandishi-style Teru-Teru Bozo for the first time, it's also painful to discover how rare original releases are. Luckily, curators Tony Higgins and Mike Peden have accompanied these triple-disc samplers with reissues of original LPs. Amazingly, there is no letting up in quality with chapter three, and standouts include the fuzz-guitar Miles squelch of Tatsuya Nakamura's ¼ Samba II and Yasuhiro Kohno Trio's private press piano and vibes gem, Song Of Island. Just as Higgins and Gilles Peterson's *Impressed* series helped revolutionise attitudes to British jazz two decades ago, the *J Jazz* series is freeing minds and enlightening heads about another overlooked source of musical genius. Preach, teach.

Andrew Male

Planet rock

A blurred, 16-track snapshot of Strummer's solo years as a global visionary. By Pat Gilbert.

Joe Strummer

★★★★★

Assembly

DARK HORSE/BMG. CD/DL/LP

BACK AT the start of punk in 1976, Joe Strummer gave an interview to Sniffin' Glue magazine that emphasised the need for urgent and sustained political action. "Maybe when we're 55 we can play tubas in the sun, [it's] all right then to enjoy yourselves," the Clash firebrand allowed. Tragically, Strummer would never make it to his dotage, succumbing to a heart condition in 2002, aged 50. But towards the end of his life brass instruments and revivifying solar beams were still on his mind. In the 1999 song Tony Adams, Strummer hears the evocative sound of "saxophones and beach trombones" drifting down Broadway, while he stands "waiting for the rays of the morning sun".

Released via George Harrison's resurrected Dark Horse label, *Assembly* judiciously includes Tony Adams, a cornerstone of Joe Strummer And The Mescaleros' *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, his 1999 'comeback' album after a decade in the wilderness. That the song's lyrics are suffused with mournful anti-nostalgia – a gnawing suggestion that, for all The Clash's electrifying attempts to change the world, the new dawn had yet to arrive – should come as no surprise to fans familiar with Strummer's post-Clash work.

Slow to rediscover his muse after The Clash split in 1985, and ever reliant on musical collaborators, it would be four years before a Strummer solo album appeared; and when it did,

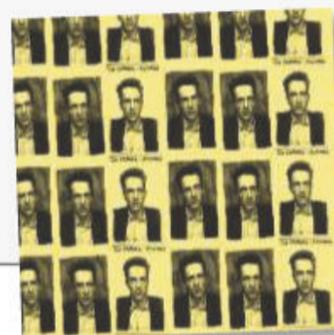
1989's *Earthquake Weather* presented an adrift and melancholy artist, self-exiled in a bubble of reggae, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon's *Graceland* and contemporary rock, while EDM and hip-hop raged all around him.

Earthquake Weather's final track, Sleepwalk, a ballad of exquisite sadness – "Matchbooks of lonely places I'll never find," it begins – clearly signalled that Strummer needed to go away to find himself, a 10-year odyssey that would take in new friends such as Keith Allen and Damien Hirst, Glastonbury campfires, and, critically, hours spent in his 'woodshed' in Hampshire making electronic recordings with The Grid's Richard Norris, Bez and percussionist Pablo Cook.

But, really, when he eventually emerged for The Mescaleros' *Rock Art...* (1999), *Global A-Go-Go* (2002) and posthumous *Streetcore* (2003), nothing much had changed except the dub, electronica, piano and percussion seeping into the mix. Strummer's opaque, visionary lyrics still painted him struggling with a dystopian world – in the *cri de coeur* Yalla Yalla, broken for at least another generation – all the while lamenting life's beautiful confusion in that singular, hangdog slur.

Global A-Go-Go's rousing work song Johnny Appleseed and doleful, cinematic Mondo Bongo suggested Strummer's solo best was still to come – a notion borne out by *Streetcore's* freewheeling Coma Girl, finished like the rest of the album after his death by fellow Mescaleros Martin Slattery and Scott Shields.

Assembly is, then, an edifying spin, baited for hardcore fans with an unreleased acoustic Strummer strum through Junco Partner and two live Mescaleros Clash covers.





Various

★★★★★

Jon Savage's 1972-1976: All Our Times Have Come

ACE. CD/DL

Strong selection spanning powerpop, pub rock, glam, kosmische, and proto-punk.

This latest instalment in the superb series mapping the writer/compiler's own musical journey is a joy, the focus on a five-year span in rock that's too often described as a post '60s, pre-punk cultural wasteland but here proving to be incredibly abundant, with groups, such as cover star Rod Melvin's Moodies, exploring concepts surrounding identity, gender and sexuality through thrilling high-concept pop. The 44 tracks are a tantalising mix of big hitters (Alice Cooper's School's Out, The Sweet's Blockbuster!) cult heroes (New York Dolls' Trash, Jonathan Richman's Roadrunner, Flamin' Groovies' Slow Death) and under the radars, such as The Wackers, who made perfect powerpop. Also includes tracks by Hawkwind, The Move, and Faust, whose So Far, a brilliant piece of brassy drone funk, provides yet another highpoint.

Lois Wilson

Neil Young

★★★★★

Young Shakespeare

REPRISE. CD/DL/DVD/LP

Twelve songs recorded and filmed live in Stratford, Connecticut, January 1971.

How Young, touring his new album *After The Gold Rush*, wound up playing at a Shakespeare festival in the US isn't explained, but he describes it as "the best ever. One of the most pure-sounding acoustic performances we have." Better, he says, than the brilliant Massey Hall gig three days earlier, released in 2007. Both have a coffee-house intimacy, Young chatting with the audience (here urging them to join in with Sugar Mountain and Dance Dance Dance). They also share several songs, including an early version of A Man Needs A Maid. Besides opener Tell Me Why and Don't Let It Bring You Down, Neil ignores the album he's meant to promote in favour of songs from two other albums he'd just begun recording: *Harvest* and *Journey Through The Past*. The biggest applause is for songs people recognise, like a Crazy Horse-less Cowgirl In The Sand and CSN-free Ohio. But for the warmth of the recording and the excellence of the singer and the songs, this is up there



with *Massey Hall* – just five songs shorter.

Sylvie Simmons



The J.B.'s

★★★★★

Food For Thought/Doing It To Death/Damn Right I Am Somebody

ROBINSONGS. CD/DL

The band that launched a thousand samples, on 2-CDs.



Rigorously drilled by James Brown, The J.B.'s rewrote the groove hand-

book both accompanying the Godfather of Soul and on these 1972-4 band albums. A who's-who of funk pioneers – among them drummers Jabo Starks and Clyde Stubblefield, guitarists Jimmy Nolen and Phelps Collins, Bootsie Collins (bass), Maceo Parker (saxes) and Fred Wesley (trombone, outstanding throughout) – the riffs conjured during this explosion of activity are timeless. Album one highlights are Pass The Peas, Gimme Some More, Hot Pants Road and Escape-ism; album two has Doing It To Death Pts 1 & 2, More Peas and You Can Have Watergate Just Gimme Some Bucks And I'll Be Straight, with jazzier tracks like Sucker that really swing; the third, credited to Fred Wesley And The J.B.'s and recorded while Brown was cutting *The Payback*, features freer playing, as Brown adds synthesizer to the mix for the first time on Blow Your Head, and even covers Marvin Gaye's You Sure Love To Ball.

Geoff Brown



The Gorillas: their time has come at last.

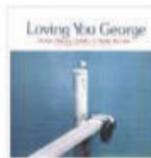
George Ohtsuka Quintet

★★★★★

Loving You George

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

UK debut for cult Japanese jazz album from the '70s.



A dexterous Tokyo-born drummer who started out in saxophonist Sadao Watanabe's band in the 1950s,

Ohtsuka had become one of his country's most famous jazz men by the early '70s. Visiting American musicians that played with him – including fellow drummers Roy Haynes and Jack DeJohnette – were impressed by his blend of raw energy and rhythmic sophistication, qualities present in abundance on *Loving You George*, an album recorded live at the Nemu Jazz Inn in 1975. Ohtsuka's propulsive poly-rhythms impress on the high-octane modal cuts Something Everywhere and Miles Mode, but it's his subtlety that catches the ear on the set's satisfying finale, an inspired funky soul-jazz take on Minnie Riperton's iconic ballad Loving You. Sadly, Ohtsuka died last year but this fine reissue will undoubtedly help to keep his memory alive.

Charles Waring

recording. On I'm Old Fashioned he's crooning right in front of you, the breeze of Philly Joe Jones's brushed drums over his left shoulder and Kenny Drew's piano rippling over his right. The key of My Heart Stood Still puts his voice somewhere in the vicinity of buttered velvet. He takes a muted solo here but doesn't play on every track. Occasionally he scats a solo. Crystalline remastering and the beautiful original sleeve make for a treat. Best of the ensemble albums may be *Chet*, featuring supreme accompanists Bill Evans, Herbie Mann and Kenny Burrell. Reliable melodies such as September Song and How High The Moon hug Baker like the woman on the cover.

Jim Irvin



Mark Fry

★★★★★

Dreaming With Alice

NOW-AGAIN. DL/LP

British acid-folk nugget from 1972, beloved of Four Tet and Mercury Rev.



That Mark Fry ostensibly drifted into the recording of *Dreaming With Alice* in Italy in

1971 while nominally in the country to study painting, seems entirely apt for a record hallmarked by a kind of fairy-tale, bohemian languor. Captured on a pair of Revox tape recorders in a Roman basement belonging to itinerant Scottish popsters Middle Of The Road, it's a thing of blissful detachment, Fry's wistful, Nick Drake-ish delivery framed by plucked acoustic guitar and daubs of sitar, flute and percussion. With era-typical whimsy, the Lewis Carroll-indebted title track is chopped up and woven between the other songs, of which the urgent, bad acid blues The Witch and the Donovan-esque Lute And Flute are arguably the standouts. The latter benefits particularly from the pristine clarity of this remaster, cut, unlike previous hisshrouded reissues, using analogue transfers from RCA Italy's original master tapes.

David Sheppard

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Gang Of Four 77-81

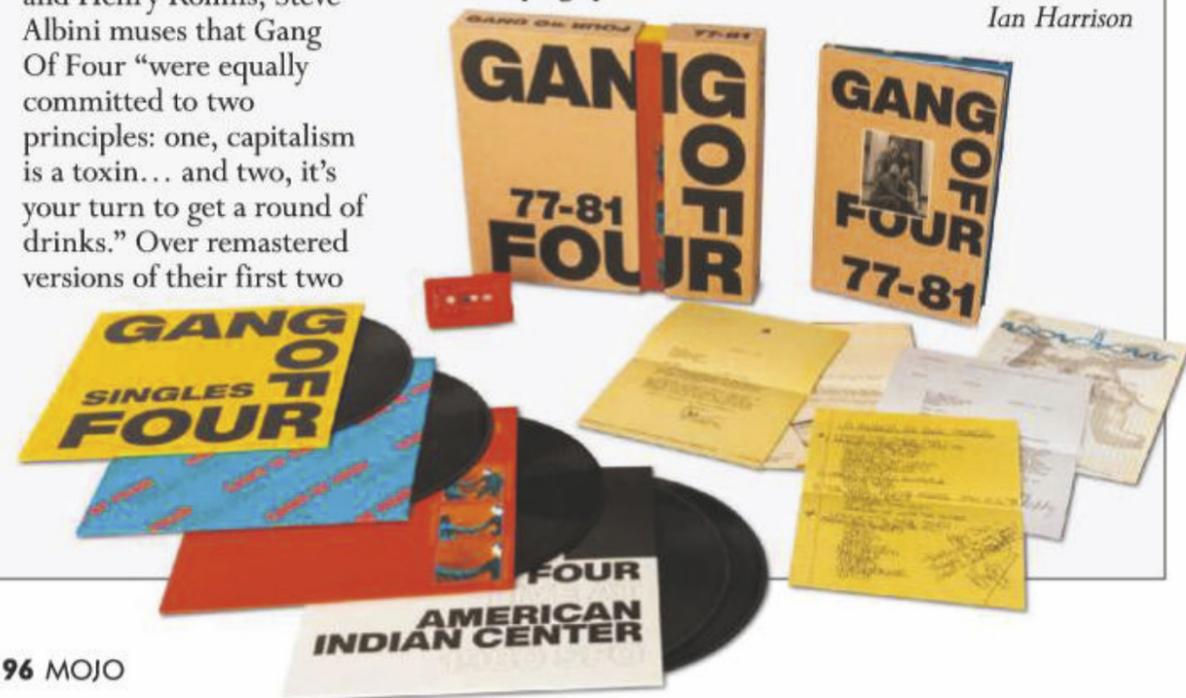
MATADOR. LP

Contributing to a beefy book packed with commentary, memorabilia and testimonies from admirers including Pylon, R.E.M., Mission Of Burma and Henry Rollins, Steve Albini muses that Gang Of Four "were equally committed to two principles: one, capitalism is a toxin... and two, it's your turn to get a round of drinks." Over remastered versions of their first two

albums, the critical *Entertainment!* and the still-fiery *Solid Gold*, plus a singles LP, the double vinyl *Live At American Indian Center 1980* and a C90 cassette(!) of contemporary demos and outtakes, the duality remains acute, as their funk up agitpunk

continues to ask the hard questions while the do-it-now sounds – Andy Gill's stuttering, scything guitar remains a thing of wonder – raise the hairs on your neck. As the group, who dedicate this box to fallen comrade Gill, say themselves, they were never better than this.

Ian Harrison





Conrad Schnitzler

★★★★

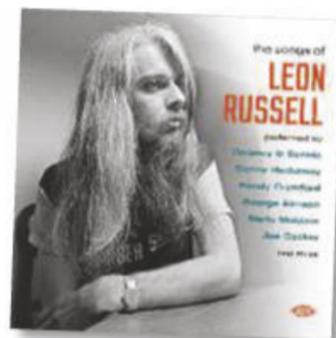
Paracon (The Paragon Session Outtakes 1978-1979)

BUREAU B. CD/DL/LP

Forward-looking previously unreleased cuts from the German electronic explorer.

Paracon collects 10 hitherto unheard Conrad Schnitzler tracks from immediately after the release of his 1978 album *Con*. Recorded at ex-Tangerine Dream keyboard player Peter Baumann's Paragon studio, the album differed from what had come before by embracing rhythm and melody. The closest Schnitzler came to the mainstream, it was licensed worldwide. Up to this point, the solo work of the former Kluster member (when he left, they became Cluster) was heard only on barely available albums and cassettes. Still at Baumann's facility, and on what are titled Paracon 1, Paracon 2, etc, Schnitzler balances serpentine ambience and pulsing beats. While less direct than those on *Con*, each fully-formed track underscores how much he prefigured the spacey side of techno. Schnitzler died in 2011 and this – *Paracon* amounts to an unreleased album – is a fine tribute a singular sonic auteur.

Kieron Tyler



Various

★★★★

The Songs Of Leon Russell

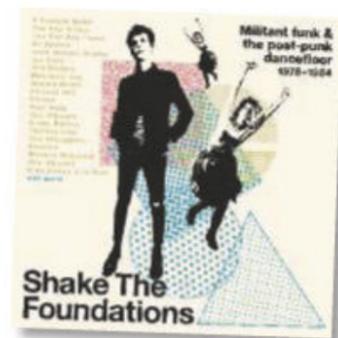
ACE. CD

Diverse covers of Russell's songs highlight the writerly side of *The Master Of Space And Time*.

When Leon Russell moved to Los Angeles from Tulsa in 1958, he became a first-call studio musician with The Wrecking Crew. He played keyboards and wrote arrangements for artists in every genre. Consequently, it's no great shock that his songs have been covered by a similarly eclectic list: elegant classics (This Masquerade by George

Benson), country (You Look Like The Devil by Willie Nelson) and rootsy rock (Delta Lady by Joe Cocker; Superstar by Delaney & Bonnie). There are plenty of surprises on this collection, including Rumer's lovely *My Cricket*, and psychedelic lite, disco, even heavy metal (Nazareth's *Alcatraz*) and sunshine pop (future Domino Bobby Whitlock's *Raspberry Rug*). A few clunkers too, but they're redeemed by the generally excellent quality – particularly Donny Hathaway's superb rendition of *A Song For You*, Russell's greatest song.

Michael Simmons



Various

★★★★

Shake The Foundations: Militant Funk & The Post-Punk Dancefloor (1978-1984)

CHERRY RED. CD

Three CDs comprehensively chart post-punk's dancefloor dalliances.

Affectionately compiled with crate-digging author Bill Brewster, this deeply rhythmic round-up doesn't mess about, mangled early strikes from *A Certain Ratio*, *The Higsons*, *23 Skidoo* and *Simple Minds* sounding far ahead of the populist groove. While there's hints of what's yet to come amid the honking horns of an old *Quando Quango* B-side (enter *M People's Mike Pickering*) and in the pumped-up biker chic of *Nightmares In Wax* (Pete Burns), lesser names and more lugubrious bass lines resonate loudest in this deep dig: be that *Maximum Joy's* screaming funk inversion, *Jesse Rae's* Caledonian take on P-funk, a US-only *Modern Romance* 45 that's effectively hip-house Mk 1, or two blasts of *Wide Boy Awake's* durable spidery funk. Hours of fun at your lockdown kitchen disco.

Andy Cowan

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Bob Mould, Sons Of Kemet, Tony Allen, Spiritualized, The Selecter, Dinosaur Jr. (below), Plastic Ono Band, Gruff Rhys, Colleen, The Black Keys, The Chills, Fleetwood Mac, Toumani Diabaté and more



Laurie Anderson

★★★★★

Big Science

NONESUCH. LP

On ravishing red vinyl, your guide Anderson's prescient 1982 debut tunes into 2021 fears and neuroses, with an avant-soundtrack out of a lucid dream. O Superman (For Massenet) still the hands-down weirdest chart hit ever. *IH*



Brian Bennett

★★★★

Voyage (A Journey Into Discoïd Funk)

STRAWBERRY/CHERRY RED. CD

From 1978, *The Shadows'* drummer grooves while *Sky's* Francis Monkman layers on synths. It's cosmic, even if Bennett never liked the term "discoïd". Has a second disc of sparer 'Working Mixes'. *IH*



The Clean

★★★★★

Mister Pop

MERGE. LP

From 2009, the Kiwi pop pioneers' most recent LP is a concise précis of their naïve organ riffola and psych guitar twang'n'droll. It gets none more bittersweet than *In The Dreamlife U Need A Rubber Soul's* bucolic VU groove. *KC*



Steve Cradock

★★★★

Peace City West

KUNDALINI. DL/LP

Veteran Paul Weller guitarist spring-cleans 2011 solo album to bring added colour to '60s-splashed folk and psych pearls like *Kites Rise Up Against The Wind* and hymnal *Lay Down Your Weary Burden*. Last Days Of The Old World adds Jam-like oomph. *PG*



Henry Franklin

★★★★★

The Skipper

REAL GONE. CD/LP

Varied, deep 1972 session from Oakland's Black Jazz label, led by Masekela/Shepp/Basie bassist Franklin. Frantic opener *Outbreak* merits the electric Miles comparisons, but generally this is a more accessible set of funky post-bop players working towards new frontiers. *JM*



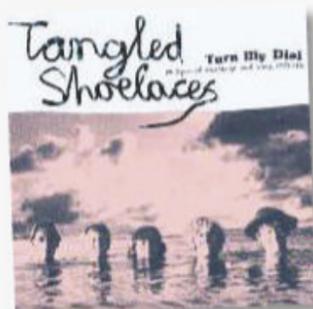
Tame Impala

★★★★★

InnerSpeaker

FICTION. LP

A 10th anniversary reissue, and a reminder of when Perth's Kevin Parker blew minds, before he blew up the charts. Steeping melodies, cymbal sizzle and trippy whooshing evoke a poppier Dungen (sigh) while the add-ons (lavish booklet, demos, Floydian jams) are A-1 fan bait. *DE*



Tangled Shoelaces

★★★★

Turn My Dial

CHAPTER MUSIC. LP

Vinyl anthology of '80s Aussie teen band as a parallel history of Brisbane indie. *Girl/boy* vocals, pathos and melodies evoke *The Go-Betweens* but TS were eccentric, veering from humour and politics to the sounds of wheezing synths. *JB*



Various

★★★★★

La Ola Interior

BONGO JOE. CD/DL/LP

Subtitled *Spanish Ambient & Acid Exoticism 1983-1990*, this set reflects two frontiers of post-Franco musical invention: enabled by tech, youngsters like Madrid's Miguel A Ruiz took Eno templates towards modern ambient electronica; a hippier strand embraced the global reach of synths. *JB*



Bobby Womack

★★★★★

The Poet/The Poet II

ABKCO. CD/LP

Remastered for vinyl, 1981's *The Poet* re-established Womack as one of the last surviving soul greats through a side of deep ballads (If You Think You're Lonely Now the pick) and one of up tempo R&B. *Poet II*, from '84, played it safer. A Patti Labelle duet hit big; George Benson also guested. *GB*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★ MOJO CLASSIC

★★★★ EXCELLENT

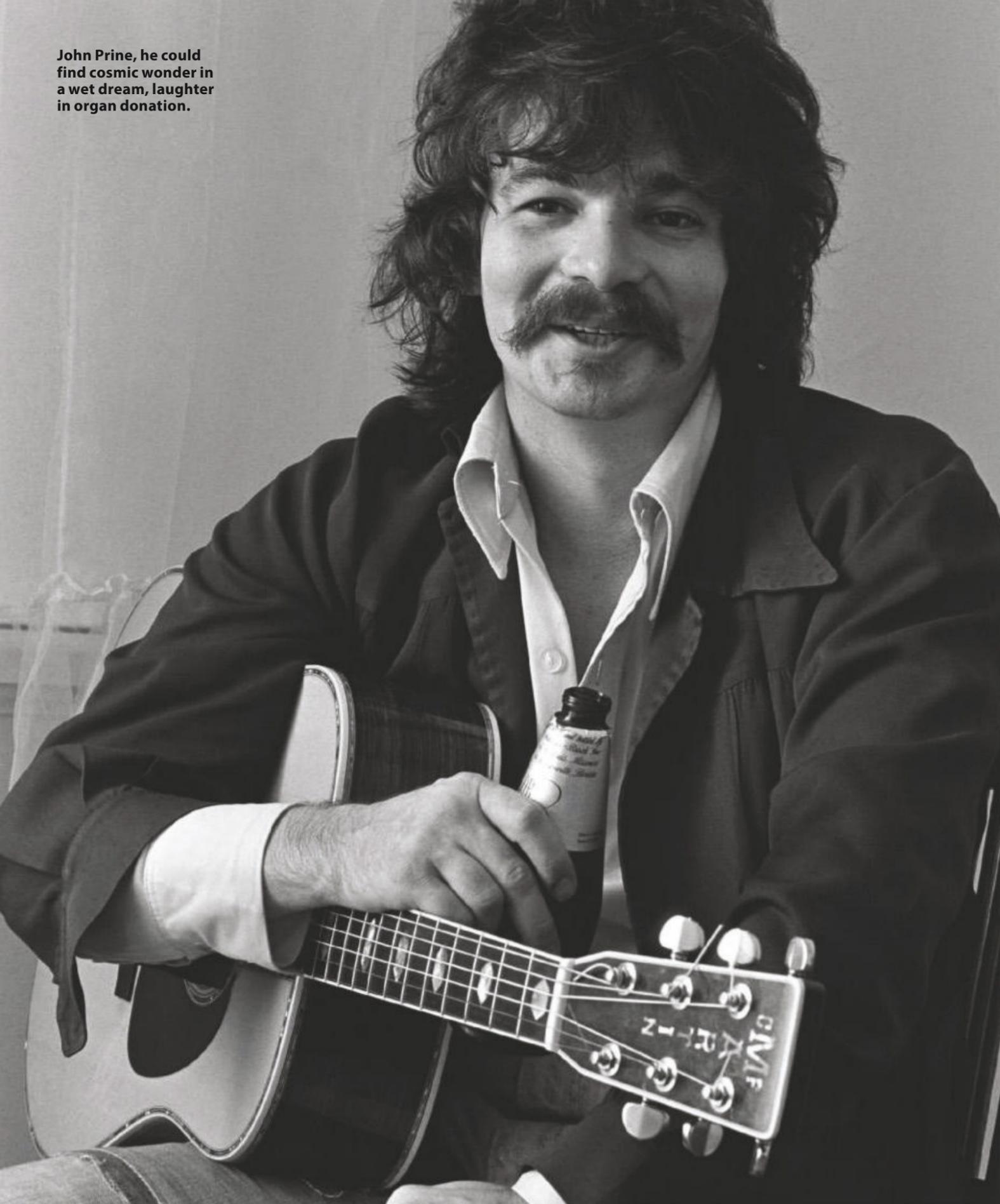
★★★ GOOD

★★ DISAPPOINTING

★ BEST AVOIDED

☆ DEPLORABLE

John Prine, he could find cosmic wonder in a wet dream, laughter in organ donation.



10 John Prine September 78

OH BOY 2015, £8.50

You say: "The band are total session assassins. And John is clearly having a blast!" @NilsEriksson12, via Twitter

When people talk about Prine in the context of rock, it's usually accompanied by a prefix: folk, country, or roots among them. Fair enough, but this blistering outing from Chicago's Park West, captured during a transitional moment in his music and marriage and rescued from his basement, obviates the hyphenate. This quintet gets rowdy like the Stones and ragged like The Band, kicking and screaming with these protest songs against the mundane. Their taunting take on The Righteous Brothers' Try To Find Another Man is a rollick, but the honky-tonk race through Please Don't Bury Me is an enduring testament to Prine's lust for life.



4 John Prine The Missing Years

OH BOY 1991, £12

You say: "Picture Show gets to the heart of his wide-screen vision of possibility and resigned faith in hope." Matt Laferty, via Facebook

Prine recorded several fine songs in the '80s, but the new decade's first batch represents a fresh beginning. Thanks to production from Howie Epstein, the credits are astounding – Springsteen, Petty, Raitt, an Everly Brother. More important, the songs are Prine's sharpest in years. All The Best is a damning sequel to Dylan's Don't Think Twice, while Everything Is Cool reconciles staggering hurt without fully accepting it. But it's closer Jesus, The Missing Years that reiterates Prine's place as an imaginative visionary: a hypothetical chronicle of a mysterious span of Jesus' life, these six minutes are hilarious, heretical and reverent, a sympathetic study into the death of a guy who barely had a chance to live. Getty

John Prine

Laugh until you cry...
by Grayson Haver Currin.

FOR HALF a century, John Prine found novel ways to elucidate the small triumphs and staggering tragedies of human existence. A mail deliverer-turned-Army mechanic-turned-songwriter, Prine commiserated with the veteran mortally wounded by what he'd seen overseas while lampooning the government that made him do its dirty work. A romantic who was married three times, he captured the endorphin rush that comes with new love and the depressive wash that comes with losing it. A survivor of dual cancer diagnoses, he reckoned with the inevitability of mortality (and doubts about what comes after) while extolling the thrills of living.

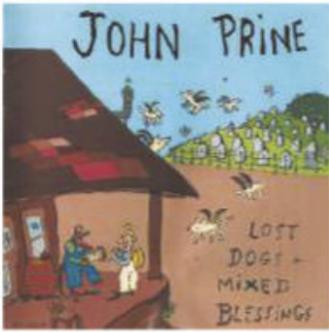
And then, at the start of the second verse of Boundless Love, the eighth track of what would become

his final album, 2018's *The Tree Of Forgiveness*, he nailed exactly what it meant to be John Prine. "Sometimes my ol' heart is like a washing machine/It bounces around 'til my soul comes clean," he sang, his age-thin voice buoyed by glowing organs and gentle guitars. "And when I'm clean and hung out to dry/I'm going to make you laugh until you cry."

From his astonishing self-titled debut in 1971 to *The Tree Of Forgiveness*, Prine meted out sorrow with humour in miraculous fashion, forever finding the absurd underbelly of some existential disaster. He could find cosmic wonder in wet dreams and a belly laugh in organ donation. He might have chuckled, too, at the irony in the demand for his records following

his April 2020 death, at the age of 73, from Covid-19. The surge was so strong that Oh Boy – the label he launched 40 years ago after leaving the majors – raced to keep the catalogue in print to avoid price-gouging on dead man's souvenirs. "That's the way that the world goes 'round," he might have noted, quoting one of his classics. "You're up one day, the next you're down."

"Prine meted out sorrow with humour in miraculous fashion."

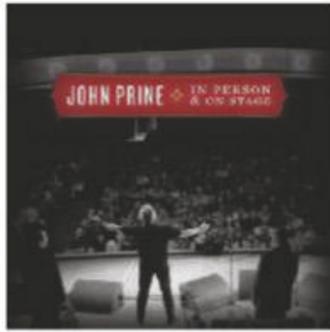


9 John Prine
Lost Dogs And Mixed Blessings

OH BOY 1995, £10

You say: "Lake Marie has so many twists, from a time in Native American history to a present day love to a crime scene. His storytelling was phenomenal." Willa Stein, via Facebook

Across his 50-year career, Prine rarely sounded singular – but he was an instantly identifiable writer, his accompaniment turned with the times. Produced by Heartbreaker Howie Epstein, *Lost Dogs And Mixed Blessings* sounds little like its humble cover sketch suggests, alternately creeping toward mid-'90s radio rock or modern country. But his snapshots of a love's gruelling end (*Quit Hollerin' At Me*; *This Love Is Real*) apply his front porch surrealism to typical situations. "Perfectly crafted popular hit songs/Never use the wrong rhyme," he quips, extending his middle finger to stardom and showcasing his jolly defiance.



8 John Prine
In Person & On Stage

OH BOY 2010, £10

You say: "The best place on earth was where he was performing." Deb Valentino Arment, via Facebook

At the start of the century, Prine's songwriting slowed down considerably – a few new tunes here, a covers set there. But his charm as a live performer grew inversely, as he took on the role of a favourite uncle who never ran out of fables or friends. This is a reliquary of that spirit and his standards, delivered with a glow bright enough to keep you warm. *Iris DeMent's* angled country air slides smoothly into the groove of his round tone, while Emmylou Harris gives *Angel From Montgomery* the sweet ache it deserves. If you never went to a Prine concert past 2000, this will take you close to his endless on-stage embrace.

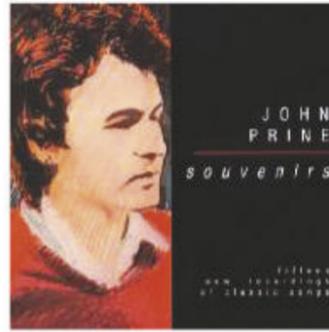


7 John Prine
In Spite Of Ourselves

OH BOY 1999, £11

You say: "He highlighted so many amazing women artists. I would not have Iris DeMent in my life if it weren't for that album." @altmma, via Instagram

If you're going to write just one song on what's only your third album of a decade, it might as well be the title track – and a masterpiece. A duet with Iris DeMent, *In Spite Of Ourselves* is an ode to the eccentric ways of the heart and a testament to the weirdness that makes us love. DeMent and Prine trade compliments that double as critiques ("I caught him once, and he was sniffin' my undies"), and vice versa. It's perfect. Elsewhere, Prine – his voice tired but kind – shares country classics with Emmylou Harris, Melba Montgomery, and Trisha Yearwood. His duet with confidante, muse, and manager Fiona Prine is a balm for the heartsick.



6 John Prine
Souvenirs

OH BOY/ULFTONE 2000, £11

You say: "Souvenirs collects the best, dusts them off, and puts a new spin on the old classics..." @HatrickPatrick3, via Twitter

To reclaim rights from an old label or attract a young crowd, an ageing songwriter records mellow versions of early staples – sound familiar? Albums made under such pretenses are often critically dismissed but popularly embraced; *Souvenirs*, originally intended for German release, is no exception. Outlined by pastel acoustic traces, these 15 cuts reinforce the profundity of Prine's early words. This take on the devastating break-up hymn *Blue Umbrella* is definitive, while *Donald And Lydia* winks with a sense of play just right for a tragicomedy about masturbation. And in a time when a pandemic has sequestered ailing elders, *Hello In There* is timely advice from someone empathetic enough to express someone else's sadness.

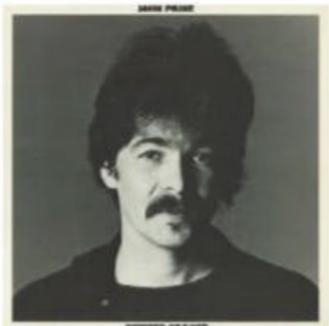


5 John Prine
Diamonds In The Rough

ATLANTIC 1972, £10

You say: "Everything is so close-miked and bare-bones it sounds like John is popping his head into your room to play you something new." Al Riggs, via Facebook

Prine's career often felt like a sonic seesaw, swinging from extravagant studio sessions to back-to-basics intimacy. That pattern emerges with his second album, an endearing acoustic affair that could have been cut on the front porch with friends, family, fiddle, and a few guitars. The uncrowded arrangements defer to the emotion of these songs, where even Jesus gets the blues and the United States is an unfaithful ex-lover. These songs are bound by betrayals of time, partners, and even the world as it turns away. A vivid snapshot of nostalgia's bittersweet sting, *Souvenirs* is Prine at his most incisive, making you pine for lives you've left behind.

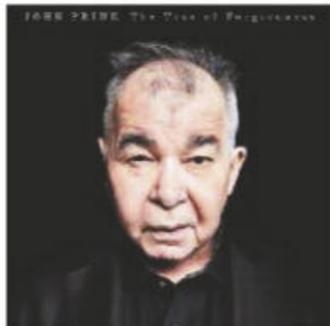


3 John Prine
Bruised Orange

ASYLUM 1978, £12

You say: "The beginning of a lifelong friendship with a genuine person I never met." Angie Simms, via Facebook

At the age of 32, Prine squeezed more experience into a 33-minute album than most people manage in a lifetime. Inspired by childhood experience of seeing a man hit by a train, the title track reckons with the cruel whims of the universe, only to conclude, "It don't do no good to get angry." He reaffirms that dogma with *That's The Way That The World Goes 'Round*, built with a hook so strong it will hold the heaviest of your burdens. Fittingly for his first album without Atlantic's aegis, there's an intimate portrait of the entertainment industry's exploitation and a romantic kiss-off penned alongside Phil Spector. *Bruised Orange* brightens your blues by validating them – and letting you sing along.



2 John Prine
The Tree Of Forgiveness

OH BOY 2018, £12

You say: "His most autobiographical: an album full of songs that John Prine wrote about John Prine, rather than Sam Stone." Michael Venutolo-Mantovani, via Facebook

The strangest things happen in Prine's world of words, with coincidences that feel cosmic and scenarios that suggest surrealism. *The Tree Of Forgiveness* presents a situation so unlikely he might have scripted it in a tune: his first LP of new songs in 13 years – soul-deep reflections on grace, God, love, and acceptance at the end – was his final one, too. Cut with a cast of his Nashville spiritual progeny – Jason Isbell, Brandi Carlile – it's full of wisdom, tragedy, and humour on a par with his earliest work. The prescient finale, *When I Get To Heaven*, is a last act of ecumenical encouragement to be a little more alive before you're dead.

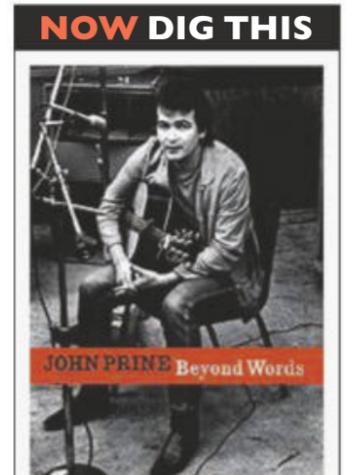


John Prine
John Prine

ATLANTIC 1971, £7

You say: "Has there ever been more wisdom, sorrow, truth, and humour packed into a debut album? Often all in the same song." John Massengill, via Instagram

A fully formed debut. Though these unassuming 13 songs, cut by a band of Memphis ringers, hit the half-century mark this year, they remain poignantly and painfully germane, reminders not only of our basic human condition but the inhumane conditions that modernity creates. Sam Stone isn't just an overdosing war veteran – he's anyone whose fealty to an uncaring system becomes a death sentence. Mixing gospel's aspirations with country's clarity, *Angel From Montgomery* details the way capitalism and gender roles lobotomise a good love. Jingoism, loneliness, escapism, existential despair, environmental calamity, and the uncanny delight of mere existence: there are unknowable lifetimes tucked inside these 44 minutes.



In 2019, Sony acquired the rights to a forthcoming documentary about Prine, while Erin Osmon's 33½ entry about his astonishing debut is due this autumn. In the meantime, there may be no quicker way to fall for Prine than *The Road To The Tree Of Forgiveness*, a charming six-minute promotional film made by the same pair behind the documentary. Find it on YouTube. And Prine himself offers up anecdotes and candid photos in 2017's *Beyond Words*, a lovingly curated anthology of his compositions.





CREDITS

Tracks: In Ancient Days / Way To Power / Come To The Sabbat / Conjuraton / Seduction / Attack Of The Demon / Sacrifice

Personnel: Kip Trevor (vocals), Jim Gannon (lead guitar, vibes), Bob Bond (bass), Zoot Taylor (organ), Clive Jones (flute, sax, clarinet), Clive Box (drums)

Producer: Patrick Meehan Jr, Roy Thomas Baker (engineer)

Released: March 1970

Recorded: IBC, London

Chart peak: 32 (UK)

Current availability: Repertoire CD/DVD

Black Widow and friends: (from left) Zoot Taylor, Bob Bond, Clive Jones, advisor Alex Sanders (top), Maxine Sanders (on-stage Lady Astaroth), Clive Box, Kip Trevor, Jim Gannon.

and sees tragic hero Trevor demanding, “I conjure thee appear/I raise you mighty demon,” the full-moon Come To The Sabbat gets down to business with a folk rock, clothes-free outdoor meet with Satan. Elsewhere Latin rhythms depict a rather suave and jaunty Beelzebub, while, adding to the Dr Faustus-in-swinging Soho vibrations, succubus Lady Astaroth grooves to wah wah guitars and sax. Live, the climactic, jamming title track was accompanied, says Trevor, by “the actual sacrifice of Astaroth the demon, and then the curtain comes down. Does he get his wife back? No one knows.”

The live presentation was crucial to the experience, it seems, though the group were banned from the Mecca circuit after a date at London’s Lyceum. “Pat Meehan Jr said to me, ‘We absolutely *cannot* have any nudity on-stage,’ but he winked when he said it,” says Trevor. “When the girl was relieved of her gown someone got a shot... we got into big trouble. We made the News Of The World! But it was a lot of fun.”

To add authenticity, they took advice from Alex Sanders, the Birkenhead-born self-styled King Of The Witches. “Jim and I used to go and see him in his dark and dingy flat on Portobello Road,” says Trevor, who adds that Sanders’ wife Maxine would sometimes portray Astaroth on stage. “He used to come up with things to try and spook us. I think he gained more publicity from it than we did.”

Sacrifice would make Number 32 on the UK charts in April 1970, though the occult concept was absent from the group’s second, self-titled album (now with Showaddywaddy’s Romeo Challenger on drums) and their Isle Of Wight festival appearance later in the year.

“The musicians didn’t like being seen as a novelty band,” says Trevor. “You start to try and become a normal rock band.” However, the *Sacrifice* live show was resurrected one more time for Radio Bremen’s TV show Beat-Club in 1971. Trevor is happy film exists, but adds, “Normally we used dry ice, the roadies built a lighting set-up, we had strobe lights... it was much more colourful, powerful and exciting than the film suggests.”

The group fragmented after 1971’s *III* (a version of Black Widow led by reedsman Clive Jones released new LP *Sleeping With Demons* in 2011). In 1972, Trevor and Gannon’s occult-themed concept Cottonmouth would

not reach fruition, despite the support of the backers of the Hair musical. Gannon, who now lives in Sydney, later found success with Fox and Yellow Dog; Trevor would go on to work in music publishing. The vocalist remains keen for them to revive the *Sacrifice* album and live show. “I can see it happening,” he says. “It would be so lovely to re-do it.”

Ian Harrison

Black Widow IV and See’s The Light Of Day are available via Genova’s Black Widow label.



“He said, we cannot have any nudity on-stage.”

KIP TREVOR

Whole Lotta Satan

This month’s forbidden text: jazz-occult thrills from Leicester.

Black Widow Sacrifice

CBS, 1970

JUST AS joyful noises were made unto the Lord from the dawn of recorded sound, so Satan had walk-on parts throughout the blues age and into the rock’n’roll era. Then, at the close of the ’60s, in time for The Rolling Stones playing *Sympathy For The Devil* at Altamont, a more explicitly diabolic aesthetic manifested. In the US, Chicago’s Coven released their horns-throwing *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls* in 1969. From Birmingham, early the following year, Black Sabbath’s mighty debut pictured Satan coming ’round the bend and Lucifer falling in love.

Another fascinating and pioneering album was released in early 1970: *Sacrifice* by Leicester’s Black Widow. A jazz-rock concept LP concerning the occult and demonic obsession, it was accompanied by an elaborate stage show featuring nudity, sacrifice and the anthemic core track *Come To The Sabbat*, which found a wide audience on the *Fill Your Head With Rock* budget sampler.

Black Widow started life in 1966 as R&B act Pesky Gee!, who released their sole album *Exclamation Mark* in 1969. Vocalist Kip Trevor remembers how the group, minus singer Kay Garrett, shapeshifted into Black Widow later that year: “I think we were getting bored with doing the same old same old. The drummer, Clive Box, was an interesting character – a bit

of a nutter, and I say that in the nicest possible way – and he used to fascinate us with his ideas about black magic. He triggered the idea, and Jim [Gannon, guitar] decided that he was going to write an album and a show based on the occult. We were all into Dennis Wheatley books, so it was all very exciting! It probably took him about a month, which I still look at in wonderment.”

They put the choreography together with help from the Phoenix Theatre in Leicester, where they played their first show. Now managed by Don Arden associate Patrick Meehan and his son Patrick Jr, they signed to CBS. Trevor recalls recording the album “in a few days” at IBC studios in central London, with overdubs done at other capital facilities. Production was credited to ‘Pat Meehan Jnr’, though Trevor says the real work was done by Gannon and engineer Roy Thomas Baker.

Concerning a would-be sorcerer attempting to resurrect his dead wife, battling the forces of darkness and raising the demon Astaroth in order to sacrifice her, the soundtrack at first seems unfamiliar for palates used to heavy metal demonology. Yet the swinging jazz-rock with flutes, saxes and fat Hammond organ – not unlike Graham Bond’s magickal output – communicates the tension and portentousness of soul-selling with aplomb. After *In Ancient Days* lists pre-Christian deities



To the limits: (main) Tina Turner and The Ikettes at Bolic Sound Studios, May 1973; (insets, from top) Tina with her '80s dancers Ann Behringer (left) and Lejeune Richardson; Tina and Ike Turner, 1965; on-stage with The Ikettes, 1976.



Nirvana via Nutbush

How *A Fool In Love* became the Queen of Rock'n'Roll, content Buddhist and survivor.
By Andrew Collins.

TINA

★★★★★

Dir: Dan Lindsay, TJ Martin

ALTITUDE. BR/DVD/S

HAVING TURNED 81 last Christmas, less hectic dawns now gently break on Tina Turner's ninth decade. This handsomely presented, sanctioned valediction offers a walk-through of a world-beating rollercoaster life that takes us all the way back to the cottonfield shorthand of Nutbush, Tennessee, a birthplace described by the ghostwriter of the Queen of Rock'n'Roll's first official biography, as "a sparsely inhabited mile-long burp". There would be ups and downs on the way to Buddhist peace in her autumn years as a Swiss citizen in Geneva.

Baptised Anna Mae Bullock in 1939, destiny for the youngest sister of three required a reorientation to St Louis, where the high-school single mom fell under the spell of future husband, Svengali and bandleader Ike Turner, who'd control his tail-feather-shaking

protégée while privately knocking the hell out of her. What might've ended in bitter pills saw Turner twist again in 1981, when – safely divorced – she agreed to open up to *People* magazine about the mental and physical abuse meted out by the man who supplied her name. (Ike's belated 1999 autobiography would be petulantly titled *Takin' Back My Name*.)

At nearly two hours, this surefooted portrait is divided into five acts, re-told with Tina's blessing after a shot of extra Zen to counter the ever-circling irritation of being asked about Ike, again and again. Co-directors Dan Lindsay and TJ Martin fetishise archival authenticity with close-ups of cassette wheels turning while Tina's disembodied supermarket mag testimony reveals she'd been "living a life of death". It's ironic her brave confession means she's still asked about her abuser, who died in 2007. "The goodness," she recalls, "did not balance the bad." She had little option but to tough it out and save the children.

On a more self-empowering note, it's fascinating to hear Midas-like Australian manager Roger Davies unpack the early-'80s comeback, casting her between Olivia Newton-John and Toni Tennille on TV spectacular *Hollywood Nights*

in 1979 despite worries she'd be dismissed as cabaret ("I didn't think I could do anything with her"). Tina dreamt of "filling the rock stadiums like Mick and Keith", but Capitol dropped her (with, we discover via whispers through an answerphone, a shocking racial slur), so she hopped it to merrie England ("Europe got her"). Wary of the poppy Bucks Fizz cast-off *What's Love Got To Do With It*, written by Terry Britten and Graham Lyle, Tina turned something "terrible... awful" into her first Number 1. Parent LP *Private Dancer* sold 20 million and in 1988, the then-oldest female solo artist to top the Billboard Hot 100 notched 230 shows in 18 months, playing to 186,000 people in Rio.

She lives a contented lakeside retirement in Switzerland with partner of 35 years, German record-label executive Erwin Bach, 16 years her junior. They met when he was sent to pick her up from the airport in 1986, then virtually fell in love on the drive back to the office.

"She hopped it to merrie England – 'Europe got her'."

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Phil Spector paid an irascible Ike to leave the studio while he worked with Tina on *River Deep Mountain High*.
- After a physical in-car row in Dallas 1976, Tina left Ike with just 36 cents and a Mobil credit card in her pocket.
- Tina promoted 1993 biopic *What's Love Got To Do With It*, but couldn't bear to watch it.
- Terry Britten, co-writer of the initially-rejected song *What's Love Got To Do With It*, encouraged Tina to slow the pace and imagine she was jogging. A smash hit followed.

Richard Thompson (centre) with Fairport Convention, circa 1970 (fast fiddler Dave Swarbrick, far left).



WHAT WE'VE LEARN'T

- Thompson recently discovered he was a distant cousin of Syd Barrett. Their shared ancestor was Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, Britain's first female doctor.
- At Detroit airport in 1970, the Fairports were called "goddamn hippies" and "girlies" by six men in cowboy hats who turned out to be Buck Owens And The Buckaroos. A big fan, Thompson confounded them by asking for autographs.
- Disco passed Thompson by. "The whole idea of dancing to records seemed bizarre to me," he admits.
- During the Fairports' set at 1970's Yorkshire Folk, Blues & Jazz Festival, Dave Swarbrick urinated through a hole in the plastic sheeting at the side of the stage – directly into the press enclosure.

Liege and flyleaf

The glory years of British folk rock, as recalled by the scene's unassuming kingpin. By **John Mulvey**.

Beeswing: Fairport, Folk Rock And Finding My Voice 1967-75

★★★★★

Richard Thompson

FABER. £20

“THE MUSIC world is full of arseholes,” writes Richard Thompson, in a combative tone at odds with much of this convivial first memoir. “Absolute, arrogant, self-serving dickheads who imagine it all revolves around them.” He is remembering a time in the early ’70s when he left Fairport Convention and spent a year or so playing in other people’s bands. A return to the spotlight was planned, but not one where the audience wanted to see “self-confidence and egotism up there on stage, manifesting as showmanship.” Thompson’s terms were, and remain, rather different. “Give me a folk club,” he continues, “with 30 people who treat you as nothing special.”

Thompson, of course, is extraordinarily special: a singer-songwriter of rare bite and insight; an empathetic moderniser of ancient traditions; a guitarist with few equals. But while discretion, self-effacement and restraint

have long been vital to his art, are they ideal tools for a memoirist? That’s the question posed by the often charming, sometimes frustrating Beeswing.

Arseholes are carefully circumnavigated, as Thompson observes the 14-Hour Technicolor Dream with “detached amusement” and feels adrift from both psych and pop, before he and Fairport Convention locate their core fanbase at Belsize Park Tennis Club. He is good at capturing the exquisitely awkward middle-class world of the early Fairports: snootily turning down an invite to Paul McCartney’s birthday party; struggling to chat with the even more inhibited Nick Drake (“I asked if he thought Delius was too much under the shadow of Debussy”).

Other stars have fleeting cameos, but Thompson has clearly never been a social gadfly, and that reticence limits the number of extended yarns he has to tell. His focus is on the folk rock clique that evolves around Fairport Convention: cosy, genteel bonhomie; the odd alcohol-fuelled escapade of stout yeomanry; incredibly nourishing music. Foundational bandmates Ashley Hutchings and Simon Nicol are barely fleshed out, while first wife and creative partner Linda Thompson is scarcely less elusive. Those who’ve passed

on have more colour: Sandy Denny, fond of playing Scrabble stoned; the incorrigible fiddler Dave Swarbrick, whose accelerating tempos – driven, in part, by diet pills – lead Thompson to quit the band. The schism is handled with a determinedly British lack of fuss. Thompson

continues to live in the communal band house in Hertfordshire, though he is away the night a lorry ploughs into Swarbrick’s bedroom. Even his conversion to Sufism is told with measure, emerging as it does out of a dilettante-ish taste for the esoteric and eastern: at one point, he ponders becoming an oriental carpet dealer.

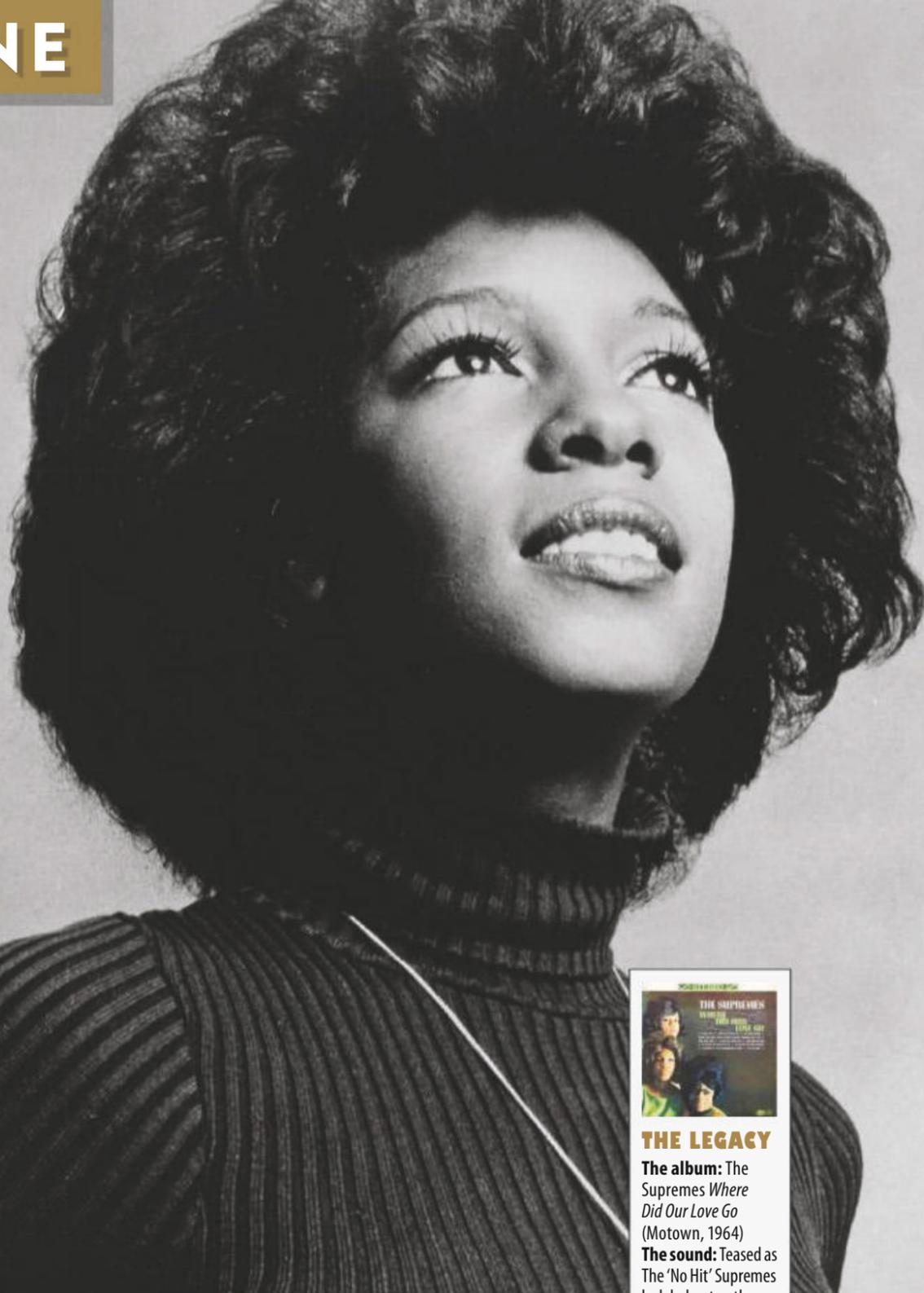
Thompson’s stoicism does have its limits, though, and it’s a shock to find him, as a teenager, “weeping with emotion” to Wagner. It is less of a surprise to discover the trauma caused by the 1969 road accident which kills Fairports drummer Martin Lamble and Thompson’s girlfriend of a fortnight, Jeannie Franklyn. The actual crash is described with awful precision, but it’s the aftermath that provokes the best writing in all of Beeswing, as these reserved young men and woman attempt to carry on with their lives after tragedy.

“When I tried to write something to articulate my feelings,” he says, “I didn’t recognise my handwriting – it seemed to belong to someone else. As a result, I stopped writing longhand and went back to printing, slowly and deliberately.”

“He ponders becoming an oriental carpet dealer.”

Getty

Automatically Sunshine: Mary Wilson, a Supreme "peacemaker".



THE LEGACY

The album: The Supremes *Where Did Our Love Go* (Motown, 1964)
The sound: Teased as The 'No Hit' Supremes by labelmates, the group's fortunes changed when Holland-Dozier-Holland got on board, hitting stride with the hand-clapping fizz of *When The Lovelight Starts Shining Through His Eyes*. The title track, *Baby Love* and *Come See About Me* were US Number 1 pop hits. On other tracks – *Long Gone Lover* – each Supreme is audible, distinct.

Love Supreme

The guardian of Motown's greatest female group, **Mary Wilson** left us on February 8.

THE LONGEST-serving member of the most successful girl group of all time, Mary Wilson was a tireless flag-waver for The Supremes, proud of their achievements in the '60s as the epitome of Motown boss Berry Gordy's vision for black American artists. She was also aware of the damage wrought during the trio's evolution, as the focus shifted onto lead singer Diana Ross, which saw Wilson and third Supreme Florence Ballard slowly sidelined, until they were no longer singing on their own records.

"It got to a point where a ballad came along and, 'Oh, I'm not gonna sing that one?'" she explained when we last spoke in 2019. "Or if there was a really rock'n'roll song, like an Etta James, I was, 'Flo should be singing that.'" However, Wilson's unspoken role in the group was as peacemaker, not troublemaker. "I'm a pretty even-minded person. I can see both sides... but I learned to speak up for myself."

Born in Greenville, Mississippi on March 6, 1944, Wilson was mostly raised by

an aunt, but when her mother, Johnnie Mae, reappeared on the scene they moved into Detroit's Brewster Project housing. Wilson joined schoolfriends Ballard, Ross and Betty McGlown in a group, The Primettes, sister act to The Primes, a source of The Temptations.

With McGlown replaced by Barbara Martin, the 15-year-old Primettes recorded for Lupine, pestered Motown and eventually signed in January 1961. Trimmed to a trio of Diana, Mary and Flo, they became The Supremes, struggling until up-and-coming songwriter/producers Brian and Eddie Holland and Lamont Dozier hit a stride. In 1964-65 they had five consecutive US Number 1s, including *Where Did Our Love Go*, *Baby Love* and *Stop! In The Name Of Love*, 12 US pop chart-toppers in all, success unmatched by any girl group.

The US hits were duplicated abroad. Schooled in etiquette by Maxine Powell, in dance by Cholly Atkins, and boasting a showbiz-elegant wardrobe, they were Motown's pin-ups, but had fun too. (Mary had a relationship with Lamont Dozier and was engaged to Four Top Abdul 'Duke' Fakir.)

Yet Gordy's absorption with Ross was rupturing the trio. Ballard began drinking, and she was replaced by Cindy Birdsong. In 1967, the group's name was tweaked to Diana Ross & The Supremes for the single *Reflections*. It was the prelude to full separation in 1969.

Wilson fought to keep The Supremes on top. Frank Wilson's productions *Up The Ladder To The Roof* and *Stoned Love* were US and UK Top 10 hits, even as Gordy concentrated on both Ross and his ambitions as a movie mogul. Ironically, Wilson could at last sing lead on hit singles such as 1972's *Floy Joy* and *Automatically Sunshine*, both written and produced by Smokey Robinson. But it was an uphill struggle, and Wilson announced she was leaving the group from the stage of London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1977.

After a squall of litigation, Wilson signed a solo contract with Motown for 1979's *Mary Wilson*, when I first interviewed her as a solo act. After all that had happened, I'd wondered, why sign to Motown? "If I've got to fight," she said then, "at least I'll know who I'm fighting."

Still a popular and busy Motown icon – her 2019 UK visit was to promote *Supreme Glamour*, a coffee-table book of the trio's gowns to join biographies stretching back to 1986's *Dreamgirl: My Life As A Supreme* – Wilson died at her Los Angeles home on February 8 of heart disease.

"I can see both sides... but I learned to speak up for myself."

MARY WILSON

Geoff Brown Alamy

U-Roy

The Originator
BORN 1942

Raised by his grandmother in the Jones Town slum which bordered Trench Town in western Kingston, Ewart Beckford was dubbed U-Roy by his brother, the nickname becoming his stage name on the burgeoning sound system circuit. Inspired by deejay pioneer Count Machuki, U-Roy began his career in 1961, MC'ing with a variety of Kingston soundsystems. But he found greater fame in 1968 as the star toaster of King Tubby's Hi-Fi, quickly shaking up the soundsystem scene with his sense of melody, lively delivery and lyrical inventiveness. After inconsequential early recordings for Lee Perry and Bunny Lee, in 1970 U-Roy scored the top three songs on the Jamaican Top 10 with *Wake The Town*, *Wear You To The Ball* and *Rule The Nation*. The combination of his fluid toasts atop Duke Reid's vintage rock steady rhythms transformed him from an incidental sound system figure to a recording and performing artist as important as any singer. "A deejay is just a person who talks over the mike, puts records on and reads the invitation where the next dance is going to keep," he told me, at his home in Cockburn Pen, near Waterhouse. "Who could ever tell that this thing would ever reach like this, people having Number 1 on the chart!"

After the influential *Version Galore* LP, issued by Trojan in the UK

in 1971, U-Roy signed to Virgin in 1975. Popular albums *Dread In A Babylon*, *Natty Rebel*, *Rasta Ambassador* and *Jah Son Of Africa* followed in that decade, leading to successful tours of Britain and Europe. Later, after a fallow period in Los Angeles, collaboration with Mad Professor revitalised his career in the 1990s, the albums *True Born African*, *Smile A While*, and *Babylon Kingdom Must Fall* leading to high-profile festival appearances long into the new millennium.

David Katz

Danny Ray

James Brown's cape man
BORN 1935

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Danny Ray was the instantly recognisable voice that introduced countless James Brown shows – "Are you ready for Star Time?!" – from the early '60s until Brown's death in 2006. A snappy dresser, Ray became Brown's valet in 1960 then, in '62, the show's MC, listing with power and cadence the hits *The Hardest Working Man In Showbusiness* would be performing that night. As well as being responsible for backstage discipline and making sure the band was immaculately turned out, at the show's end Ray was also bearer of The Cape. Carefully matched to the night's stagewear, he would drape it gently around the Godfather Of Soul's exhausted shoulders as *Please, Please, Please* climaxed, only for Brown to break



If the cape fits: Danny Ray, "the second-hardest working man in showbusiness."

free for another chorus or four. Ray would also fulfil this duty at the singer's memorial service in 2006, cloaking the open-topped casket. James Brown's estate paid tribute to him as a "legendary emcee... the second-hardest working man in show business."

Geoff Brown

Your Head in 1969, reunited with The Animals several times over the years, forming The Animals II in the '90s. During that same decade he emigrated to Connecticut, and since then he returned to where it all began with Skiffledog, played with The Yardbirds and toured with The Animals' singer Eric Burdon in 2007 and 2008.

Clive Prior

Hilton Valentine

Animals guitarist
BORN 1943



Born in North Shields, skiffle convert Hilton Valentine played with The Heppers and The Wildcats – where he was known for ripping

his shirt off and rolling about on the floor while "wailing away" on guitar – before joining The Animals in 1963. An early adopter of the Echoplex effects unit, his moment of immortality came with the dramatic arpeggio that ran through the group's 1964 transatlantic smash version of *The House Of The Rising Sun* (The Animals adapted their version from Bob Dylan's 1962 cover; Dylan was reputedly so struck by it he was inspired to go electric himself). Further hits, including *Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood* and *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place*, followed before the original group's split in 1966. Valentine, who released the LSD-informed solo album *All In*

Louis Clark

ELO's arranger
BORN 1947



Born in Shropshire, Louis Clark played bass and wrote string arrangements for Raymond Froggatt before formally studying

orchestration as a mature student in Leeds. Clark first worked with Jeff Lynne when he conducted the strings on ELO's 1974 breakthrough album *Eldorado*, a role he held, as well as arranger, on all the group's long-players until 1980's *Xanadu*. Clark stayed on as a synth player for 1981-82's *Time Tour*, returning to conduct on 1983's *Secret Messages* and play "string keyboards" on 1986's *Balance Of Power*. In 1981, meanwhile, he found chart success with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, re-arranging the classical repertoire in medley form with a disco beat under the banner *Hooked On Classics*. Interpretations of The Beatles, Abba, Queen and others would follow. Clark also arranged for Ozzy Osbourne, Roy Wood, Roy Orbison, Kelly Groucutt, Kiki Dee, Asia, Renaissance and others, worked with ELO offshoot ELO Part Two and that group's successor outfit The Orchestra, and was an honorary lifetime member of the RPO.

Ian Harrison

"Who could ever tell this thing would reach Number 1!"

U-ROY



U-Roy: the original version deejay.

Chick Corea: a breathtaking clarity of execution and aesthetic purpose.



THE LEGACY

The album: *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* (Blue Note, 1968)

The sound: A game-changing trio album, with bassist Miroslav Vitouš and drummer Roy Haynes, which deliriously juggles thematic coherence and untethered freedom. The rhythm section's skittering swing and energy fuse with Corea's propulsive, crystalline playing into a thrilling whole, persuasive enough to be the stylistic benchmark for many a contemporary trio.

Romantic Warrior

Style-traversing jazz piano giant **Chick Corea** passed away on February 9.

THE PRODIGIOUS output and artistic rigour of legendary jazz pianist, composer and fusion pioneer Chick Corea inspired and delighted audiences and fellow musicians alike for over 50 years. Blessed with a crisp, singing keyboard technique, Corea invested all his music – whether glittering post-bop improvisations, bombastic jazz-rock, lilting Latin jazz-pop or classical-influenced magnum opuses – with a breathtaking clarity of execution and aesthetic purpose. Yet, at the heart of his genius was humility. “I continue to be interested,” he once said. “I don’t want to be a master. When I’m learning something, I’m in my element.”

Born on June 12, 1941 to Italian parents and raised in Boston, Armando ‘Chick’ Corea received classical tuition from a family friend and initially aspired, thanks to his father’s jazz records, to

play like Bud Powell and compose like Horace Silver. Relocating to New York, he dropped music studies at Columbia and Juilliard universities to pursue his freelance career, appearing with Blue Mitchell and Herbie Mann, among others. His dazzling work on Stan Getz’s *Sweet Rain* (1967) led to his magnificent first albums as leader – *Tones For Joan’s Bones* (1968) and *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* (1968) – and an invitation in the late 1960s to replace Herbie Hancock in Miles Davis’s band. Here the pianist discovered the Fender Rhodes piano and for the rest of his career vacillated happily between electric keyboard and acoustic piano.

In 1971 he formed avant-garde combo Circle with Dave Holland and Anthony Braxton, but by 1972, after his Scientology convinced him to communicate more accessibly with an audience, he formed the sunny, melodic Latin-fusion group Return To Forever (featuring vocalist Flora Purim). Later 1970s RTF albums with a different line-up pursued a grandilo-

quent, increasingly synth-adorned Mahavishnu-style jazz-rock, which found a crossover audience while dividing contemporary critics.

The ensuing decades revealed a steady stream of Corea-led combos. His Elektric Band with John Patitucci and Dave Weckl updated RTF’s fusion approach in the 1980s and 1990s, Akoustic Band and New Trio (with Avishai Cohen and Jeff Ballard) were scintillating traditional piano trio settings, and Spanish Heart gave a home to Corea’s interest in flamenco. He began a life-long duo partnership with vibraphonist Gary Burton in 1972 and had substantial duet partnerships with banjoist Béla Fleck, vocalist Bobby McFerrin and pianists Herbie Hancock and Hiromi Uehara. He composed several jazz standards (*Spain*, *500 Miles High*, *La Fiesta*, *Windows*), as well as a piano concerto and string quartet.

Winner of 23 Grammys, Corea was grateful (“Gee thanks, I’m humbled by it,” he said in 2019), but undistracted. “A competition is not part of the basic nature of an artist,” he said the same year. “Now, I just have to go out and write my next piece of music.”

Chris Ingham Getty

“When I’m learning something, I’m in my element.”

CHICK COREA

Sophie

Electronic seer

BORN 1987

Glaswegian electronic producer and influential 21st century pop star, Sophie took euphorically pitched, sonically adventurous pop such as 2014's *Hey QT* to a mainstream audience. An in-demand collaborator, Sophie produced both stars like Madonna – who sought her out to co-produce 2014 single, *Bitch I'm Madonna* – and more idiosyncratic acts like Norwich twins, *Let's Eat Grandma*. Sophie initially remained anonymous, until the video for 2017 single *It's Okay To Cry* revealed a trans artist who chose largely to forego gendered pronouns and to capitalise their name; an act of both authentic personal expression and refreshing iconoclasm borne out on singular 2018 debut album, *Oil Of Every Pearl's Un-Insides*. In January this year, Sophie's electronic heroes Autechre remixed her 2013 track *Bipp*. Sophie's tragic, accidental death in Greece on January 30 is a huge loss; Christine And The Queens' Heloise Letissier paid tribute to "a stellar producer, a visionary, a reference... an absolute triumph."

Jenny Bulley

Milford Graves

Jazz's cardiac specialist

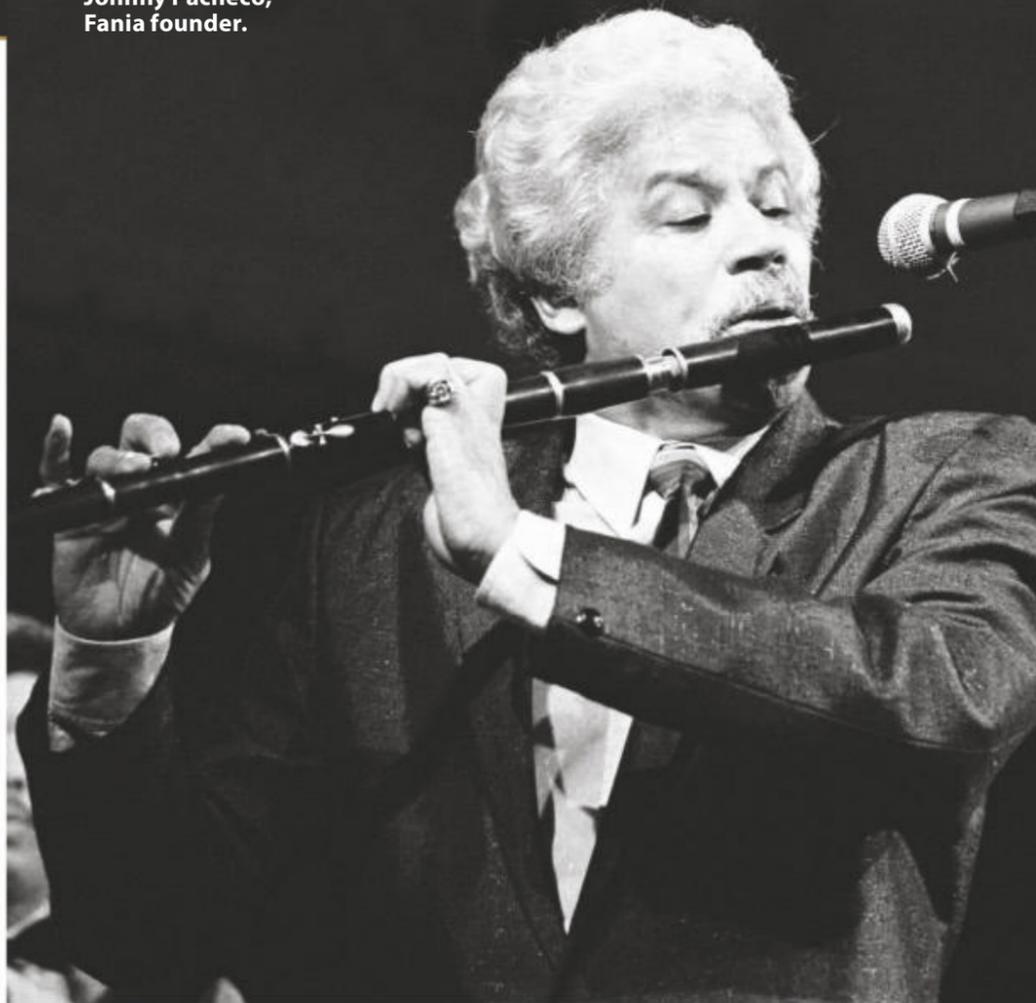
BORN 1941



"Throw away your metronome and listen to your heart" was the mantra of New York-born Graves, a virtuosic sticksman who liberated drumming from a time-keeping role and whose polyrhythmic vitality prompted the late US writer Amiri Baraka to call him "some kind of natural phenomenon". Inspired by Coltrane's drummer Elvin Jones, Graves joined NY's avant-garde scene in the early '60s, played with trombonist Roswell Rudd in the New York Art Quartet, and went on to record with Albert Ayler and, later, David Murray. Besides playing music, Graves actively participated in scientific endeavours (he was involved in pioneering stem cell research), studied botany, practised natural healing and invented 'Yara', a martial art based on African dance rhythms. Diagnosed with a terminal cardiac condition in 2018, Graves turned his plight into research, notating his heart's arrhythmic beats and translating them into music.

Charles Waring

Johnny Pacheco, Fania founder.



Johnny Pacheco

Salsa apostle

BORN 1935

Born in the Dominican Republic, Juan Azarías Pacheco Knipping studied percussion at New York's Juilliard School then paid his dues with Tito Puente and Charlie Palmieri before setting up his own group in 1960. It was his next move that cemented his place in history, however, when he and Jerry Masucci founded Fania, the label for salsa, in 1964. It became home to Celia Cruz (with whom he recorded the five-star classic *Celia Y Johnny* in 1974), Willie Colon, Ray Barretto, Ruben Blades and the supergroup Fania All Stars. "I'd start a night playing in Brooklyn for the Italians," he told MOJO in 2006. "From there I went to the Jewish crowd, then I played Harlem, and I'd finish off in the Bronx for the Latinos. Everywhere I went, I played my repertoire. I didn't have to change a thing, everybody loved what we did."

David Hutcheon

Stefan Cush

A Man They Couldn't Hang

BORN 1960

Born in Llandeilo in south Wales, Stefan Cush was roadieing for The Pogues when he met Phil 'Swill' Odgers, his future co-singer/

guitarist in folk-punks The Men They Couldn't Hang, in 1983. After honing their skills busking in the capital, and with the addition of guitarist/songwriter Paul Simmonds, the band's debut single – a cover of Eric Bogle's *The Green Fields Of France* – and 1985's debut album *Night Of A Thousand Candles* became indie chart hits and favourites of John Peel. Always on the side of the working people, over five roots-rocking albums the group's *oeuvre* took in the miners' strike, the World Wars, football hooliganism, Napoleon, the Battle of Cable Street and matters of the heart: they broached the Top 40 with 1989's *Silver Town*, supported Bowie at the Milton Keynes Bowl in 1990 (they delighted the crowd with their cover of *verboden* song *The Laughing Gnome*), disbanded in 1991 and returned to gigging and recording in 1996. Cush also played with The Feral Family, whose album *Brough Superior* was released in 2012. The Men They Couldn't Hang were planning a new album when Cush (below) died suddenly: in tribute, Odgers called him, "a passionate soul who cared deeply about music and politics and people... he could ruffle feathers too, but he was always forgiven."

Ian Harrison



"Everybody loved what we did."

JOHNNY PACHECO



Charlotte Wales, Getty (3)

Sophie: stellar producer, visionary.



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Elliot Mazer

Harvest producer

BORN 1941



When Neil Young rolled into Nashville in February 1971 to guest on Johnny Cash's TV show, making a new album did not

appear to be part of his plans. At a dinner party, though, he met Elliot Mazer, a New York transplant and self-described "long-haired Jew intellectual" who'd recorded Linda Ronstadt, Big Brother And The Holding Company, Gordon Lightfoot and more. Swiftly bonding, the two rapidly moved into the studio, backed by a band of Nashville outsiders corralled by Mazer who Young would soon christen The Stray Gators. The sessions resulted in *Harvest*, Young's biggest solo hit, and the pair would reconvene for *Time Fades Away* and *Homegrown*, as well as *Everybody's Rockin'* and *Old Ways* in the 1980s, when Mazer introduced the notoriously analogue Young to digital

recording. Mazer remained a technical innovator throughout his career, designing the world's first all-digital studio, and combined academic work with hands-on assignments: he was one of the engineers who worked on The Band's *The Last Waltz*.

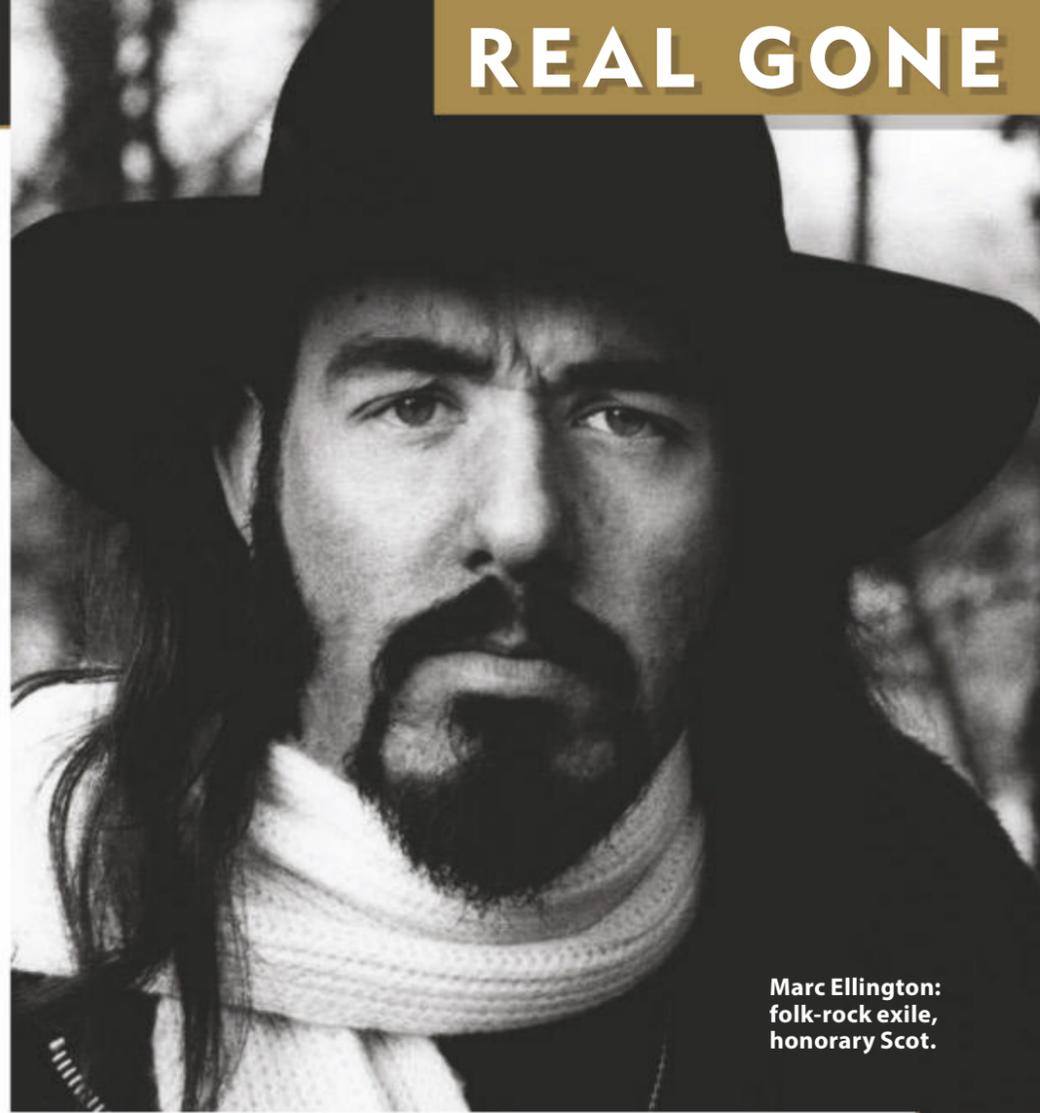
John Mulvey

Marc Ellington

Folk singer, Laird

BORN 1945

Singer, songwriter, guitarist and multi-instrumentalist Marc Ellington moved from Boston, Massachusetts to Britain in 1967. Integrating with the folk rock scene, he appeared on Fairport Convention's *Unhalfbricking* in 1969 and on the debut album by Matthew's Southern Comfort in 1970. He also released six solo albums between 1969 and 1975, including 1971's collectable *Rains/Reins Of Change*, counting Richard Thompson and Sandy Denny among many its guests, as well as Flying Burritos Sneaky Pete and Chris Hillman. In the late '60s, Ellington and his wife began the restoration of the 16th century



Marc Ellington: folk-rock exile, honorary Scot.

Towie Barclay Castle in Aberdeenshire. Soon an establishment figure, he became non-executive director of Historic Scotland and a trustee of the Scottish National galleries. In 2002

he reunited with the Fairports at Cropredy and played his final gig at Richard Thompson's 70th birthday concert at the Albert Hall in September 2019.

Jenny Bulley

THEY ALSO SERVED

ACTOR **CHARLOTTE CORNWELL** (below, b.1949) had already appeared in the 1974 David Essex film *Stardust* when

she starred as Anna Wynd, one of female trio the Little Ladies, in the 1976/77 TV series *Rock Follies*. The fictional band released two albums produced by Roxy Music's **Andy Mackay**, the first of which was a UK Number 1 in April 1976. She later enjoyed stage and screen success, including stints with the RSC. Her half-brother David was better known as the espionage novelist John Le Carré, who died in December.

BASSIST **MATT HARRIS** (b.1969) played with SF punks **Overwhelming Colorfast** before pursuing a more psych-rock sound with **Oranger**. After their well received 2000 LP *The Quiet Vibrationland*, Harris was joined cult powerpoppers **The Posies**, playing bass on *Every Kind Of Light* in 2005 and 2010's *Blood/Candy*, as well as **Ken Stringfellow**'s 2004 solo LP, *Soft Commands*. Harris also joined Pavement's **Scott Kannberg** on **Preston School Of Industry**'s *Monsoon* album and his debut as **Spiral Stairs**, 2009's *The Real Feel*.



SAX PLAYER **GRADY GAINES** (b.1934) was a session man for Texas blues label Peacock Records before joining

Little Richard's Upsetters in 1955. After Richard temporarily retired in 1957, Gaines played with **James Brown, Jackie Wilson, Sam Cooke, Joe Tex, Curtis Mayfield** and **Millie Jackson**. He retired in 1980 to work in the hotel industry, but was back in the mid-'80s leading **The Texas Upsetters**, cutting new albums and gigging.

VOCALIST, instrumentalist and "anti-diva" **FRANÇOISE CACTUS** (below, b.1964) played in West Berlin garage punks **The Lolitas** before forming Franco-German retro-pop eccentrics **Stereo Total** with **Brezel Göring** in 1993. Debuting with 1995's *Oh Ah*, they hit biggest with 2001's *Musique Automatique*, toured internationally, appeared on the soundtrack to Adam Curtis's 2011 series *All Watched Over By Machines Of Loving Grace*, and released a final LP *Ah! Quel Cinéma!*, in 2019.

TV AND FILM arranger



JEREMY LUBBOCK (b.1931) was a jazz club pianist when he recorded *Catch A Falling Star* for **George Martin** in 1953. He went on to work as a freelance arranger for the BBC before relocating to the US in the late '70s, where he worked with **Minnie Riperton, Chicago, Barbra Streisand, Leonard Cohen** and, famously, **Joni Mitchell**, on 1979's *Mingus*. He also worked with **Quincy Jones** and **David Foster** and penned *The Best Of Me*, a Number 2 UK hit for **Cliff Richard** in 1989.

AKRON/FAMILY co-founder, multi-instrumentalist and voice **MILES SEATON** (b.1979) played on six albums with the cult Williamsburg folk-experimentalists, from their 2002 beginnings until their hiatus began after 2013's *Sub Verses*. He released two solo LPs, *Functional Music Vols. 1 & 2* (2015) and *Phases In Exile* (2017). He also contributed to **Michael Gira**'s *Angels Of Light* project.

PHOTOGRAPHER **RICKY POWELL** (b.1961), dubbed "the fourth **Beastie Boy**", was a regular chronicler and intimate of the group from 1986 to 1995 (he's one of the bespectacled patsies in the

1987 *(You Gotta) Fight For Your Right (To Party!)* video). A positive vibes man with "scorpionic magnetism" (sic), he was well-connected on the New York music scene, hosted his own public access TV rap show, published several books of his work, was the subject of 2020 film *Ricky Powell: The Individualist*, and sold his own 'Lazy Hustler' bong/statuette of himself.

AUTHOR **JOHNNY ROGAN** (below, b.1953) studied literature, and wrote his first book, 1980's epic **Byrds** history *Timeless Flight*, while a mature student in Oxford. It was the first of a forensically researched series of biographies of **Neil Young, Van Morrison, Ray Davies, The Smiths** and others, each one revealing their subjects in all their ambivalent humanity (Morrissey later wished death on the author). His last book, *Byrds: Requiem For The Timeless, Volume 2* was published in 2017; he was a friend to MOJO and will be greatly missed.

AUDIO ENGINEER **RUPERT NEVE** (b.1926) served in the Royal Signals during World War Two, and formed Neve

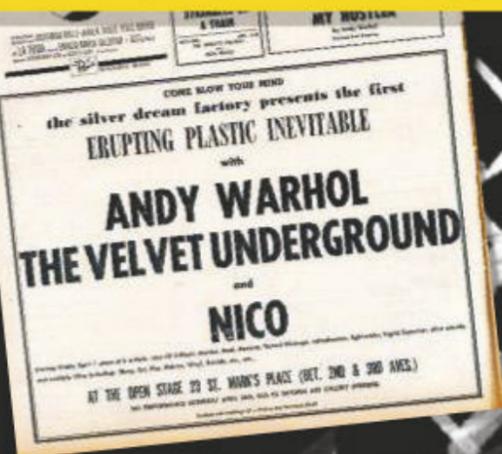
Electronics in 1961 to design and manufacture groundbreaking mixing desks. His Neve consoles remain highly prized, and were used by **The Beatles, Fleetwood Mac, Neil Young, Nirvana** and others. Relocating to Texas in 1994, Neve continued to design and collaborate, launching his first digital design, the RMP-D8 microphone preamp, in 2018.

NASHVILLE SONGWRITER **JIM WEATHERLY** (b.1943) wrote for **Ray Price, Glen Campbell** and **Kenny Rogers**, and penned *Best Thing That Ever Happened To Me* and *Neither One Of Us (Wants To Be The First To Say Goodbye)* for **Gladys Knight & The Pips**. He's best known for *Midnight Train To*

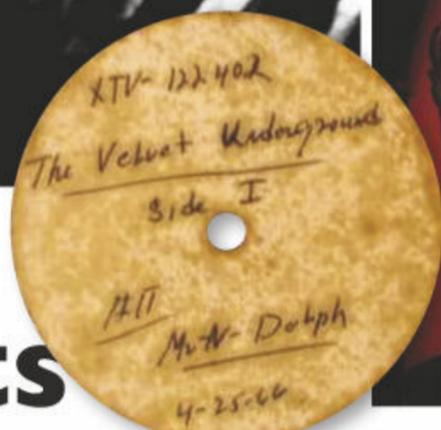
Georgia, the 1974 hit for Knight that won its author a Grammy. The song was inspired when Farrah Fawcett, the then-girlfriend of his actor pal Lee Majors (TV's *Six Million Dollar Man*), mentioned she was taking "the midnight plane to Houston". Weatherly wrote a country song that would eventually morph from Houston to Georgia, country to R&B, and Gladys Knight's first Number 1 US pop hit.

Clive Prior and Jenny Bulley





When midnight comes around (clockwise from main): with advert, the Velvets on-stage at the Dom on the EPI's opening night; in red and white (from left) John Cale, Gerard Malanga, Nico, Andy Warhol; acetate of the VU's first recording date.



APRIL 1966 ...The Velvets play the Exploding Plastic Inevitable

APRIL 1 "COME BLOW YOUR MIND," read the advert in the previous day's Village Voice. "The silver dream factory presents the first ERUPTING PLASTIC INEVITABLE."

Andy Warhol quickly tired of the 'Erupting' part. He was still smarting from his split with muse/anima Edie Sedgwick, who'd recently left his orbit for Bob Dylan. But he had to attend to his latest project, The Velvet Underground and the multimedia production he called "the biggest discotheque in the world". He decided to let the creative universe which revolved around him explode instead.

After its original venue in Queens elected to put on The Young Rascals instead, the Exploding Plastic Inevitable would debut at the Open Stage, an East Village space above Polish community hall the Polski Dom Narodowy, AKA the Dom. Warhol conspirator Paul Morrissey rented it for a month from April 1. Velvets viola player/bassist John Cale remembered it as a dump that smelt of urine. Nonetheless, on the opening afternoon, the group set up their gear, walls were white-washed, and a light show was assembled.

"It was a show by and for freaks, of which there turned out to be a great many more than anyone had suspected," said VU guitarist and main songwriter Lou Reed in 1975. A typical night at the EPI involved simultaneous showings of perverse/banal Warhol movies including *Empire*, *Sleep*, *Blow Job* and *Kiss*. Slide projectors threw manipulated coloured patterns across surfaces and performers, who were also illuminated by mirror ball, strobe and spotlights. DJ Norman Dolph played soul and R&B. The main draw was the Velvets: with vocalist Nico in white and the rest of the band in black, they played two loud, distorted sets per night of avant-garde rock'n'roll, articulating deviant life in all its vivid glory.

With film of the group rehearsing projected over them as they played, narcotic drama and S&M kink were added to the sensory overload. Excited reports described the band's performance of *Venus In Furs*, as

Warhol Superstars Mary Woronov (in leather) and Gerard Malanga (in a zebra skin outfit) danced suggestively on-stage brandishing leather whips before he kissed her boots. For *Heroin*, Malanga feigned intravenous injection using a large pink cake-icing syringe, as Reed generated purging feedback. British broadcaster Charlie Gillett, then studying in New York, went along and wrote in 2007, "I wondered if this was the first time [the VU had] ever played together, as they hammered the same chord relentlessly... I was horrified, but fascinated."

For the next month, bar the occasional night off, it was *the* place to be in New York City, with approving press notices, healthy receipts and eminent attendees including Salvador Dali, Allen Ginsberg, Jackie Kennedy and Walter Cronkite. (Catching them at the Village Gate later in the month, however, Frank Sinatra reputedly left immediately). Occasional hiccups – Reed was nearly electrocuted one night, and rumour has it that drummer Moe Tucker had to play miked-up garbage cans for a few gigs after her kit was stolen – were all overcome.

That month also saw the group enter Scepter Studios in midtown Manhattan (later the site of the Studio 54 disco) for four days. Produced by Warhol, and engineered by Columbia employee Dolph with John Licata, Reed told *Musician* magazine in 1989, "[Andy] didn't know anything about record produc-

"It was a show by and for freaks."

LOU REED

tion... he just sat there and said, 'Ooh, that's fantastic.'" Cale, meanwhile, who remembered Scepter as dilapidated with only four working microphones, described the experience as enjoyable but also the point, thanks to Reed, at which the group began to fracture. Dolph, who was paid with one of Warhol's 'Death and Disaster' prints, took the resulting acetate to his superiors at Columbia and was told, he paraphrased, "Are you out of your fucking mind?"

The Velvets still had ground to cover. The EPI crossed the States to The Trip on Sunset Strip in Hollywood in May, and later to Chicago, where they played without a hepatitis-stricken Reed, before the concept was retired in May 1967. Band cornerstones Heroin, I'm Waiting For The Man and Venus In Furs were re-recorded during the Hollywood stay, appearing beside remixed tracks from the Scepter sessions on debut album *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, released on Verve in March 1967.

Largely ignored, it sold little, and by 1971 the band was no more. Posthumously, of course, they would be recognised as one of the most influential groups in rock'n'roll and the Exploding Plastic Inevitable as one of their finest hours.

"April 1966 was our best month with [Andy]," Cale reflected in his 1999 memoir *What's Welsh For Zen*. "If I could freeze a moment that symbolised the positive

character of our work together, it would be on-stage at the Dom."

Ian Harrison



Katastrophe averted: Ray Davies (right) and band admire the swinging wallpaper.

KINKS KARRY ON

APRIL 6 The Kinks' Carnaby Street satire *Dedicated Follower Of Fashion* peaks at UK Number 4, where it remains for two weeks. But all is not well. Exhausted by constant activity, mainman Ray Davies suffered a breakdown the previous month – he later recalled running six miles into central London to punch his press agent Brian Sommerville

– and was replaced by Mick Grace on Kinks dates in France and Belgium. After more cancellations in the north of England, by April 16 he's back in the saddle at the Locomotive in Paris. As shown by June's 45 *Sunny Afternoon*, his songwriting has evolved significantly: that month, the group will finish work on their landmark long-player *Face To Face*.



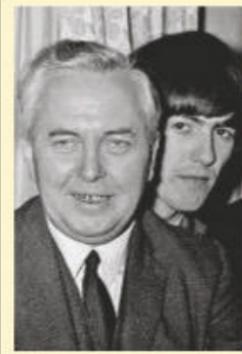
Texas fever: Bobby on the beat.

Fuller Fights The Law

APRIL 27 Already a Top 10 hit in the US, Texan rock'n'rollers

The Bobby Fuller Four's version of Sonny Curtis' *I Fought The Law* enters the UK Top 40. This month it's also announced that the band will make their New York debut on May 2, are planning a British tour, and will feature alongside Nancy Sinatra in new beach party movie *The Ghost In The Invisible Bikini*. But three months later, 23-year-old Fuller is found dead in suspicious circumstances in his mother's Oldsmobile outside his Hollywood apartment. *I Fought The Law* will be covered by The Clash on their 1979 EP *The Cost Of Living*, and remain in Joe Strummer's live repertoire until his death.

ALSO ON!



WILSON WINS IT

Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson is victorious in the UK general election. From April 20, **The Beatles** begin work on *Taxman* (songwriter **George Harrison**, above, behind the PM), their critique of the government's 95 per cent tax rate for high earners.

SUPES SINGS

The first week of comic-book musical *It's A Bird... It's A Plane... It's Superman* ends at Broadway's Alvin Theatre. It closes after 129 performances, but its song *You've Got Possibilities* will be covered by **Peggy Lee** and **Matt Monro**.

CRASH TRAGEDIES

12 **Jan Berry** of **Jan & Dean** is seriously injured in a car accident in Beverly Hills. On April 30, folksinger **Richard Fariña** dies in a motorcycle smash on Carmel Valley Road, California.

DYLAN DOWN UNDER

13 **Bob Dylan's** world tour arrives in Sydney, Australia. On April 22 in Adelaide, he tells reporters, "If people are nice to me, I'm nice to them. But if people got something else in the back of their mind, then I can destroy 'em."

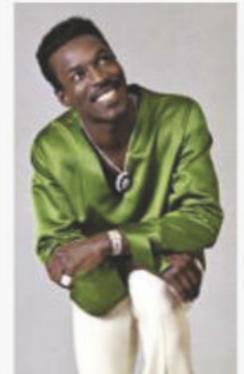
MILLER FRIGHT

30 A clanging novelty version of *Downtown* by California amateur **Mrs Miller** enters the US Hot 100. Her for-laugh debut LP, *Greatest Hits*, sells a quarter of a million.

TOP TEN

U.S. R&B SINGLES APRIL 9

- 1** **634-5789 (SOULSVILLE U.S.A)** WILSON PICKETT (ATLANTIC)
- 2** **GET READY** THE TEMPTATIONS (GORDY)
- 3** **BABY SCRATCH MY BACK** SLIM HARPO (EXCELLO)
- 4** **ONE MORE HEARTACHE** MARVIN GAYE (TAMLA)
- 5** **SHAKE ME, WAKE ME (WHEN IT'S OVER)** FOUR TOPS (MOTOWN)
- 6** **THIS OLD HEART OF MINE** THE ISLEY BROTHERS (TAMLA)
- 7** **LOVE MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND** DEON JACKSON (CARLA)
- 8** **SATISFACTION** OTIS REDDING (VOLT)
- 9** **AIN'T THAT A GROOVE PART I** JAMES BROWN AND THE FAMOUS FLAMES (KING)
- 10** **DARLING BABY** THE ELGINS (V.I.P.)



Wickedest sound: Wilson Pickett is the Number 1.

AD ARCHIVE 1966



'TERYLENE' GOES DOTTY!

Joe Brown sensibly left his bravures behind him for his date with this dotty pair. No spots in front of his eyes! The girls wear 'Terylene' lawn – and that's top of the Hit Parade, it's a number one fashion fabric. Looks as if it would turn into a limp rag at the end of a long summer's day – but oh no, stays crisp and fresh as it started. Look for the lovely dresses in 'Terylene' lawn.

Joe Brown and friends exult in the made-from-petrol drip-dry and stretchy fabric of the future (warning to all-nite fruggers, can be sweaty).



Who were the fantasy rock transfers?

Let us answer your questions and unpick those nagging brain teasers.

I enjoyed the list of eminent rockers joining other bands (MOJO 329), and it got me thinking about the times Rory Gallagher, Shuggie Otis and Steve Marriott were up for membership of The Rolling Stones, and what that might have sounded like. What are the most outlandish examples of these impossible pairings?

Mark McCormack, via e-mail

MOJO says: The 'what if?' file is a curious place, where Pink Floyd asked Jeff Beck to replace Syd Barrett ("He was doing OK at the time so he turned us down," said Rick Wright) and Brian May was unsuccessfully headhunted by Sparks ("it obviously didn't work out," said Russell Mael). John Lydon's post-Pistols offer to join Can in 1978 is also a doozy: "He said, 'I would like to sing,'" Irmin Schmidt told MOJO. "I had to say, I am extremely sorry, but we are separating... John was very disappointed." (According to Mark Mothersbaugh, that same year Richard Branson suggested Lydon join Devo, too.) Other novel could-have-beens include when Tommy Hall suggested Janis Joplin sing with The 13th Floor Elevators in 1966, a plan for Deep Purple voice Glenn Hughes to front Earth, Wind And Fire ("It was horrible," Hughes admitted of rehearsing), Scandal's Patty Smyth being asked to take David Lee Roth's place in Van Halen, and Patti Smith almost joining forces with Blue Öyster Cult. But one of the most unlikely would-be pairings must be when Robert Fripp was considering new King Crimson vocalists in late 1969: as well as Bryan Ferry, Elton John was in the running. Someone have a word, there's still time.



MORE ON THAT VINCENT VOCAL

Regarding Clive Roberts' e-mail in the October edition, I also saw Gene Vincent sing Be-Bop-A-Lula from the auditorium before introducing Little Richard onto the stage at the Brighton Hippodrome on Sunday, October 14, 1962. I published a couple of poor-quality photographs of the event on page 140 of my book Gene Vincent: A Companion. The show also featured the great Sam Cooke, who closed the first half of the show. The concert was opened by Sounds Incorporated, who backed Gene and Little Richard (together with a young Billy Preston on organ). Also appearing in the stellar line-up was Jet Harris, providing his 'first solo performance' according to the programme.

Derek Henderson, via e-mail

Fred Dellar says: Ian Wallis's invaluable book American Rock'n'Roll – The UK Tours 1956-72 notes that Sam Cooke missed the final gig of the tour, a Liverpool Empire date where he was replaced by chart newcomers, The Beatles.

DID WARP TAKE THE STAIRS?

Years ago I was told that the Warp label was part-funded by Stannah Stairlifts. Rubbish or incredible fact?

John Bligh, via e-mail

MOJO says: The former. But, in the late Martin Lilleker's superb Sheffield overview Beats Working For A Living, he does quote Chakk manager Dave Taylor, who explained, "I had met this highly persuasive enthusiastic musician Rob Mitchell who was in a not-very-good band Aitch with Steve Beckett. Rob was selling Stannah Stairlifts but was desperate to get into the music business. It was an



Rotten Luck (clockwise from top left): John Lydon ponders which other bands to join; Brighton rocker Gene Vincent bops; tonsorial offender Peter Gabriel; The KLF's inbuilt-obsolescence collection *Shag Times*.

easy decision to set up the FON record shop with Rob in charge." Mitchell, who died in 2001, and Beckett later took over the shop and renamed it Warp, the label following soon after. It's not the only musical endeavour helped on its way by unorthodox means, however circuitously: Nick Saloman kicked off The Bevis Frond with compensation from a motorbike accident, The Jesus And Mary Chain used their dad's redundancy money to buy a Portastudio, and as Fredric Dannen's Hit Men book recounts, Mafia influence helped Morris Levy spin his web of labels and clubs. Maybe stick with the stairlifts?

'CD ROT' – IS IT REAL?

I know CD-Rs are not forever, but do factory-made CDs fade out over time? I have been buying them since the '80s without a problem but I do fear hauling out an old favourite and hearing nothing.

Alan Jaeger, via e-mail

MOJO says: Often accompanied by discoloration, the dreaded CD rot is actually very rare. But if your disc was produced at the old PDO plant in Blackburn, get ready to be heartbroken: from the late '80s to around 1991 there was a manufacturing flaw which means disc "bronzing" and unplayability is inevitable. One notable sufferer is The KLF's 1989 comp *Shag Times*, which bizarrely promised on the sleeve 'Short Self Life Guaranteed.' Did Drummond and Cauty know?

BARNET FORMULAS

Re: the letter about group members with unsuitable haircuts (MOJO 328), I elect the following: '90s C.J. Ramone (normal long rock-band hair), Madness's Chris Foreman in 1985 (again, long), Peter Gabriel's 'Reverse Mohawk' in Genesis, and Ralf & Florian-period Kraftwerk, when Ralf Hütter is still a longhair compared to Florian Schneider's neat trim with suit.

Carl Flynn, via e-mail

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.



Cheers Ears!

Win! A set of **Meze Audio Rai Solo** in-ear headphones.

MEZE AUDIO Rai Solo are beautifully made in-ear headphones that offer an immersive listening experience and a meticulous design that's suited for long-lasting comfort. The Romanian-based headphone manufacturers employ high-quality materials and serious craftsmanship: inside the headphones is a new unified piston motion driver with a wireless membrane, which results in an audio performance that has minimal distortion, a clear mid-range and outstanding reproduction of the low frequencies. To ensure maximum comfort, a metal

injection moulding technology ensures the earbuds sit naturally in the ear – so you get a perfect and comfortable fit for long listening sessions. The stainless steel surface of each earbud is individually hand-brushed by Meze Audio craftsmen.

Their RRP is £179 and we have five pairs to give away! So get the crossword of The Main Man Fred Dellar filled in and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 330 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number.

Closing date for entries is **May 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

<https://mezeaudio.com>

ANSWERS

MOJO 328

Across: 1 John Lydon, 6 Mirage, 9 Message In A Bottle, 10 Mr. Gone, 12 Desmond Dekker, 15 Rory, 16 Nimrod, 17 Remedy, 18 Avalon, 20 Ali, 22 D-Train, 23 Valens, 26 Eva, 27 Ewan, 28 Enya, 29 Love Train, 30 Harp, 31 Lee, 32 Gong, 34 Alone, 35 Nile, 37 Bela, 38/43 Isaac Guillory, 39 Nut, 40 Anam, 41/21 Kate Bush, 42 Ingenue, 45 Mute, 47 Ian, 48 True, 49 Bee, 50 Moby, 51 Alamo, 52 Australiana, 54 Nile, 55 Rooted, 56 Ida, 57 Rio, 58 I Am, 59 Amyl, 60 R.C.A., 61 Run, 62 Shy Boy.

Down: 1 Jim Morrison, 2 Hüsker Dü, 3 Leader Of The Pack, 4 Dread, 5 Nina Simone, 6 My Bloody Valentine, 7 Ruts D.C., 8 Golden Vanity, 11 Rainbow Country, 13 Kala, 14 Roni, 17 Ready For The Floor, 19 Oldfield, 24 Level, 25 Drama, 31 Len, 33 Gimme, 36 Eye, 37 Blue Monday, 44 Maybelle, 46 Telstar, 47 Its A Sin, 49 Barbra, 52 Asia, 53 Arms.

Winner: Mark Waller of Willenhall wins a pair of HD6 speakers and a S8 subwoofer from Audioengine.

ACROSS

- 1 Drummer with Dain Bramage and Screem (4,5)
- 6 ----- *Of Love* (Elton John album) (6)
- 9 Gordon Lightfoot's famous weather forecast (5,7,4)
- 10 Randy Newman's kind of science (9)
- 12 Jazz singer Laine (4)
- 13 Their debut long-player was *Trace* (1995) (3,4)
- 16 Marty Robbins' Grammy-grabbing gunfighter ballad (2,4)
- 17 See photo clue A (6,6)
- 18 ZZ Top's chart limbs (4)
- 19 Gibbons, Strayhorn or Cox, maybe (5)
- 20 Stax star Isaac (5)
- 23 Duran Duran's 1984 album (5)
- 26 Poetry In ----- (Johnny Tillotson) (6)
- 27 It was Tammy Wynette's biggest hit (5,2,4,3)
- 29 Horace, US jazz composer-arranger (3)
- 32 Two channel sound (6)
- 33 See photo clue B (5,3,4,5)
- 35 The surname is Arie (5)
- 36 It's a keyboard instrument (5)
- 38 He was coming for Laura Nyro (3)
- 39 Manfred Mann's sweet vegetable (3)
- 40 Baby Please Don't Go, this '60s band pleaded (4)
- 41 The Sutherland Brothers Band's water-tight album (8)
- 44 How to address the conductor of an orchestra, perhaps? (7)
- 45 Nancy Wilson's sister and Heart co-member (3)
- 46 *The* ----- was a Stan Getz long-player from the late-'50s (7)
- 48 *Two* ----- *In England* (Everly Brothers album) (5)
- 49 --- ----- Boat To China (Emile Ford & The Checkmates) (2,1,4)
- 52 Gary, Rick or Fred maybe? (4)
- 53 Heroic label launched by Columbia in 1953 (4)
- 54 Muppets' drummer, dubbed by Ronnie Verrell (6)
- 55 Nine ----- Zero (5)
- 56 Barry Dransfield's 2005 album sounds untidy (6)
- 57 Weavers' founder member Lee (4)
- 58 Did Giant Sand change direction with this album? (6)

DOWN

- 1 See photo clue C (6,5)
- 2 Phonogram's prog-rock label had no head for heights (7)
- 3 Elbow's front man (3,6)
- 4 Delicate reed instrument favoured by Kate St. John (4)
- 5 A Black Keys' single or an Andrew Gold album (6,3)
- 6 He was once a member of 40 across (3,8)
- 7 He's sung with Kanye West, Avicii and Ron Sexsmith (5,6)
- 8 It's Status Quo's way of offering an apology (1,5,4,1)
- 11 Nocturnal arrival for Kings Of Leon's fourth album (4,2,3,5)
- 14 It's that time for a hit by The Strokes (4,4)
- 15 The Louvin Brothers' was on the barrelhead (4)
- 21 They introduced a Sexy Boy (3)
- 22 The album with which Prince announced his 'freedom' (12)
- 24 "Let me inside you, into your room" (Pretenders) (4,2,3)
- 25 Award-winning Australian guitarist (5,8)
- 28 The music they demanded in New York at Studio 54 (5)
- 29 Roy – the Big O (7)
- 30 Petty or Waits (3)
- 31 ----- *Dip* (Alan Price album) (7)
- 32 Mark Perry's renowned punk fanzine (7,4)
- 34 Paul Revere And The ----- (7)
- 37 These Scots offered a Hair Of The Dog (8)
- 42 Swedish folk-rockers formed by the Bondesson sisters (7)
- 43 Pink Floyd – the beasts! (7)
- 47 Ill-fated jazz guitarist Remler (5)
- 50 Jazz flautist Hubert (4)
- 51 Al Green's was Hot (4)

Getty (3)

Far East Lightning: Japan publicise 1978's debut LP *Adolescent Sex* (from left) Rob Dean, Steve Jansen, David Sylvian, Mick Karn, Richard Barbieri; (bottom right) the '82 line-up, with Masami Tsuchiya (far left); (below) Jansen today.



Steve Jansen and Japan

They started out digging T.Rex in Catford. The end came at their pinnacle, in their spiritual home.

HELLO 1973

My brother [David Sylvian, né Batt] and I played music together in any free time we had. I started out with guitar, but approaching it left-handed, I found the chord shapes really difficult on a right-handed guitar. So I gave up and decided to focus on the rhythm department. I was a big fan of Tyrannosaurus Rex at that time, and the guitar and percussion partnership of Bolan and [Mickey] Finn seemed like a good road to take for two brothers learning about music.

Mick [Karn] was a school friend in my brother's year, two years above mine. He was already fairly musical and decided he'd join us by learning to play the bass. When we did our first gig [on June 1, 1974 at Karn's brother's wedding] Mick and I had only been playing bass and drums a couple of months, so I can only imagine how awful things must have sounded. I think we were just loud and young! We played the music we'd jammed, so it must have had very little form apart from attempted covers. David had always been the singer [it's often reported that Karn abandoned plans to be frontman just before going on stage]. I think Mick just backed out of co-singing.

We had a choice of three group names, of which Japan was one. We had to choose one before going on in order for us to be introduced, but always intended to improve upon it. Bowie's flirtation with things Japanese was the primary influence. Maybe.

Either way, it seemed a colourful, inspired, far-away place to a 14-year-old, poorly educated south Londoner growing up in Catford.

I was still at school when we started gigging and so inevitably dropped out. I was also still underage when we signed our first record deal [in 1977], commencing work on the first album at 17, so it was my first real career option. But the rest of the group were equally committed to it. David being my older sibling meant that by default he was 'leading' his younger brother, and I think that since the other members effectively joined him and I, he took on the role of band leader very comfortably.

GOODBYE DECEMBER 1982

We were all in a good place in '82. Japan had effectively split up in '81, post the UK tour that year, after the completion of [1981 LP] *Tin Drum*. We had no intention of ever working together again. It took about six months to get over the divisions which had occurred immediately prior to that tour.

Then our manager dangled a large carrot in the form of a sell-out world tour, a live album and video, as well as all the various merchandise opportunities, and a healthy bank balance at the end of it – then split up. By the time rehearsals started we were all quite happy to head off down that road one last time. We were not businessmen, and always entrusted our finances to management.

The most basic answer I would cite [for the final split] was a clash of egos between David and Mick. However, it's not a conclusive one [Karn's girlfriend left him for Sylvian]. Ultimately, it did boil down to prioritising personal

ambition. Which is fair enough. Working relationships can't last forever, and we didn't owe one another a living.

Since we'd planned to split for about a year, the end came as no surprise and was a welcome change in a way [their last show came in Nagoya on December 16, 1982]. My next creative project was with Richard [Barbieri, keyboardist], recording an ambient album *Worlds In A Small Room* in Japan [the country].

Rain Tree Crow [1991 reunion] was the same creative people making music together, but it wasn't the same band. The process was different, and the indulgence of abstraction was much greater. Had David come to us with eight songs and said, 'Let's make an album together', it would have been Japan revisited. But that's not what happened.

Today, I regard Japan with affection and a degree of curiosity. Affection because we were enjoying the journey and really loved being in one another's company. Seeing photographs or recalling memories from that journey can be emotional. Curiosity because we managed to become relatively successful with some rather peculiar music. But I think the end came at a good time. Better to quit as near the peak as possible.

Japan's Quiet Life Deluxe Edition is out now on BMG. *Book Of Romance And Dust* by Exit North is out now exitnorth.bandcamp.com



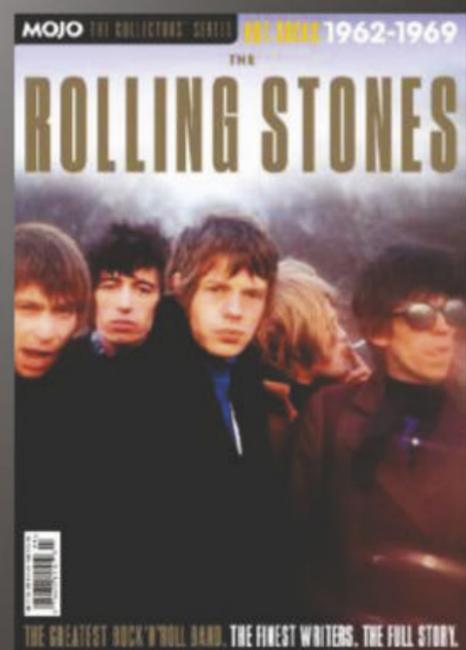
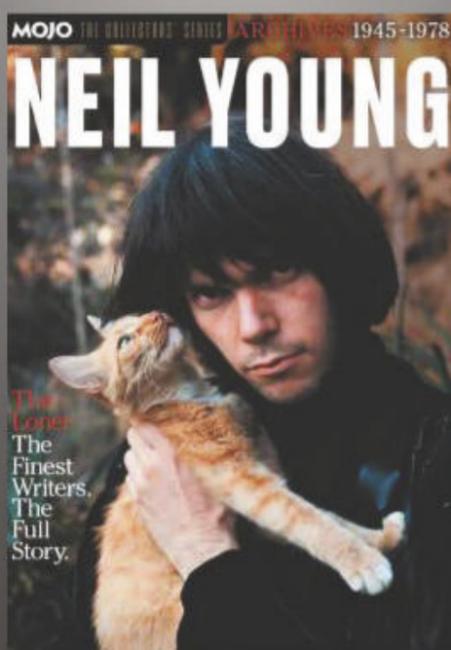
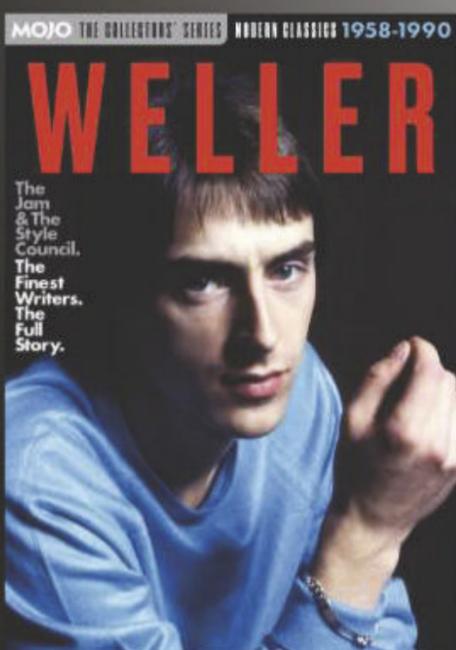
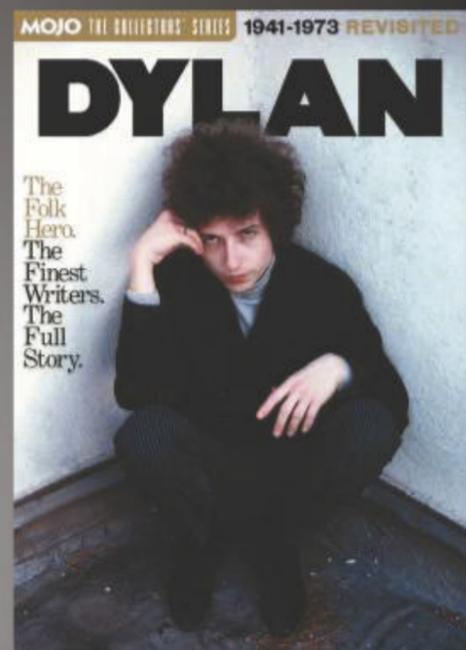
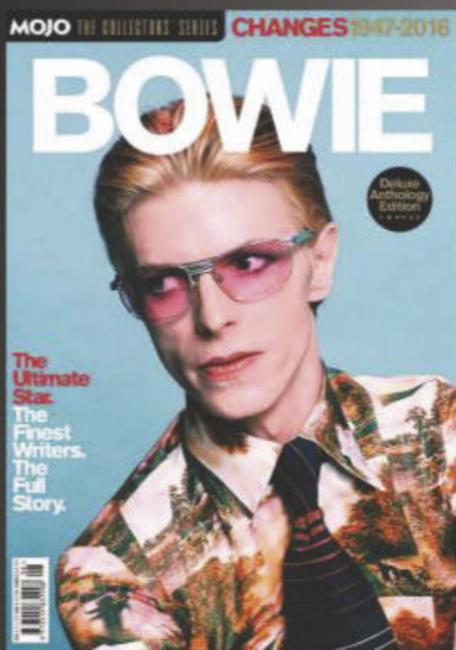
“Our manager dangled a large carrot.”

STEVE JANSEN



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