

# plan b

plan b magazine

franz  
ferdinand

devendra  
banhart

folk music for machines

# BLACKDICE

PLUS vashti bunyan sufjan stevens k-os sons and daughters

issue 8

£2.95



october/november 2005



Spetto

BRAHMA

BEVENDO O BRASIL



HOTEL  
VIVIERA

LOPES  
1537

BRABMA

CERVEJA DO  
BRASIL

BRABMA  
DESDE  
1888

www.brahma.com

**BOARDS OF CANADA**  
**the campfire headphase**  
new album released 17th october

[www.boardsofcanada.com](http://www.boardsofcanada.com)  
[www.warprecords.com](http://www.warprecords.com)



# content

**'It's all pretty  
meaningless, if you  
don't get the chance  
to express yourself'**

– Comanechi, Pg 18

**08-09 PATTI SMITH** live  
**10-12 SUFJAN STEVENS**  
**14-16 VASHTI BUNYAN**

**18-37 THE VOID**

Comanechi, Electrum, *Don't Look Back*,  
Schoolyard Heroes, Patrik Fitzgerald,  
DJ Scotch Egg, Dennis Driscoll, Ladyfest,  
Volcanic Tongue, Magic Daddy, MIA, !!!,  
Battles, Klashnekoff, Ladyfuzz, Silver Jews,  
The Slits, The Research, Gay For Johnny Depp

**38-39 TOUR DIARY** Sons And Daughters

**40-44 DEVENDRA BANHART**

**48-54 BLACK DICE**

**56-57 K-OS**

**58-63 FRANZ FERDINAND**

**64-65 CRUNK** a female perspective

**66-67 MT EERIE**

**68-74 LIVE**

Yat-Kha, TDK Cross Central, Fuck Off Batman,  
Dr Dog, Jens Lekman, Bill Wells, The Stooges

**76-101 ALBUMS**

Franz Ferdinand, Fire Engines, *Run The Road*  
2, Afrirampo, Broadcast, Panthers, The Psychic  
Paramount, OIOIOO, Quintron, Minus Story,  
Tracy + The Plastics, Yacht, Greenhouse Effect,  
Minus Story, Calvin Johnson, Audion, Larkfall  
Recordings, The Young Gods, Neutral Milk  
Hotel, The Residents, Dan Sartain

**102-113 MEDIA**

Sophie Woolley, zine reviews, *Thumbsucker*,  
*Land Of The Dead*, *Battle In Heaven*,  
Gorgerous, *Firefly*, Joss Whedon, Geoffrey  
Jones, Chronic Fatigue, *Walt And Skeezi*,  
*Jessica Of The Schoolyard*, ABA Games

**114 WHY I LOVE** Bismillah Khan



ABSOLUT VODKA

Sparkling Water

Natural Citrus



Together in Spirit.

# editorial

As ever, a batch of fascinating CDs show up on the precise day I decide that yes, I definitely *have* finished writing for this issue: and no, I really *can't* slip in a mention of the new **Pipettes** seven-inch despite the fact it comes on pink vinyl in a hand silk-screened polka-dotted cardboard mini-skirt, and that its label Total Gaylord has also sent me a batch of such overly cute music it'd make Melody Dog blush. Not that that would be hard, but still. The skirt is entirely inappropriate – it's so short even my cat refuses to wear it – and...oh my God. They've called their seasonal album *Christmas Twee*. Do these people have no shame? Gah. I wish I had a radio show to vent some steam, and scorn, and support. Oh wait. I do. I just haven't shown up to it for months.

Sorry. One tends to get obsessed with minutiae, working on a magazine like *Plan B*.

More annoying was the late arrival *the very same day* of two CDs from artists that between them encompass everything I want from male music. I am of course talking about **Bod** and **Moondog**. Man, oh man. From the sublime to the ridiculous, and I have no idea which is which.

One is called *Words And Music* (Trunk) and is the first, and possibly only ever, aural celebration of a mesmerising, simple and unforgettable children's TV cartoon character. The music section of the CD (seven melodies) lasts two minutes, five seconds. Believe me. That's plenty. These tunes will haunt you for the rest of your life. The other is entitled *The Viking Of Sixth Avenue* (Honest Jon's), features precisely that on its cover, and is the first, but probably not only, overview of a New York City street performing legend. The music inside is a fascinating, exhaustive and hypnotic 36-track collection of street-level syncopation, chantsong, rudimentary overdubbing, American Indian swing and magnetic madrigals. It lasts just over 72 minutes. Believe me. That's not enough.

I'll leave you to work out which artist is which.

And here...right on cue...is an album that occupies the exact midpoint between Bod and Moondog. I do of course refer to **Twink** and DIY composer Mike Langlie's brilliant mashed-up collection of kids' music, *The Broken Record* (Seeland) wherein a ton of inane and vintage nursery rhymes get fucked with, sped up, slowed down, tweaked both creepily and kindly, and dance around entirely insanelly, like a plethora of stuffed teddy bears given the keys to Timothy Leary's forgotten medicine cabinet; only more so.

Damn, my son's going to grow up strange.

And I haven't even started him on my Residents collection yet.

**Everett True**

Just walked from one bit of Brighton to another, listening to **Richard Youngs'** new album, *The Naïve Shaman*, on headphones. Sun behind me and a wall of dark grey clouds in front. Final track 'Summer's Edge' shimmers in the early autumn heat that's like a last gasp of warmth before the rain and wind settle in for a few months. It's the day we go to print and I haven't written my editorial yet. I always leave it too late, writing it in a blur of sleep deprivation (with resultant paranoia) and excitement at having made another issue, and then I have to read it back a week later, at which point I invariably feel a bit uncomfortable. It's comparable to that feeling you have upon awakening from a night of drunk haranguing, when you know you should have just shut up and let the other person talk, but you just couldn't and oh the shame. And so on. That is what doing an editorial feels like.

And that isn't me. Which is kind of why I'm listening to Richard Youngs prior to writing this: maybe his music will help me to stop for a moment and look around me. Even if I am walking while I listen, the homemade pulses and rumbles cut through with slivers of layered guitar make me stop occasionally, to gaze at a brown- and yellow-flecked spider spinning a web between two branches of a rosebush or to observe the encroaching raincloud. Youngs's vocals – always direct and slightly hard to negotiate because of his directness – are especially *there* this time around. He chooses slightly arcane phrasing, and lyrics from the lexicon of New Age, but they're delivered with honesty and unflagging intensity, in modal melodies that could be either made up on the spot or excavated from the past.

His music, especially on *The Naïve Shaman*, reminds me of the later works of **Arthur Russell**. Russell's *World Of Echo*, for example, also has this weird, slightly uncomfortable sincerity to the vocals, which are set to similarly swimmy, immersive basic electronics and a solo instrument (cello, in Russell's case). I don't make this comparison to slight Youngs in any way, just to draw a connection between two musicians I love and admire. Both Youngs and Russell make music that – to me – is the purest kind of magic. I can see how it's made; I can hear the craft and the joins and the wrong notes. It's hewn by human hands and voices; it's 'real'. But I still can't fathom its inspiration, its core mystery. There's this beautiful space at the centre of *World Of Echo* and *The Naïve Shaman* (and most of Youngs's stuff to date), and I don't know what's in that space and I kind of don't want to know. Until that day that I manage to get there myself, through writing, or music, or perhaps just through living the right way. And knowing when to shut up.

**Frances May Morgan**

**plan b**  
plan b magazine

**Editor-In-Chief:** Everett True [everett@planbmag.com](mailto:everett@planbmag.com)  
**Art Director:** Andrew Clare [andrew@planbmag.com](mailto:andrew@planbmag.com)  
**Photography Editor:** Sarah Bowles [sarah@planbmag.com](mailto:sarah@planbmag.com)

**Editor:** Frances May Morgan [frances@planbmag.com](mailto:frances@planbmag.com)  
**Live:** Gracelette [grace@planbmag.com](mailto:grace@planbmag.com)  
**The Void:** Stewart Gardiner [stewart@planbmag.com](mailto:stewart@planbmag.com)  
Emily Graham [lightyears\\_awaay@hotmail.com](mailto:lightyears_awaay@hotmail.com)  
Daniel Trilling [daniel@planbmag.com](mailto:daniel@planbmag.com)  
**Film & DVD:** Nick Bradshaw [nick@planbmag.com](mailto:nick@planbmag.com)  
SF Said [sf@planbmag.com](mailto:sf@planbmag.com)  
Mark Pilkington [mark@strangeattractor.co.uk](mailto:mark@strangeattractor.co.uk)

**Comics:** Alistair Fitchett [alistair@planbmag.com](mailto:alistair@planbmag.com)  
**Art:** Pili and Galia [kollektiv.pilandgalia@planbmag.com](mailto:kollektiv.pilandgalia@planbmag.com)  
**Games:** Kieron Gillen [kieron@planbmag.com](mailto:kieron@planbmag.com)  
**Books:** Miss AMP [amp@ampnet.co.uk](mailto:amp@ampnet.co.uk)

**Publisher:** Chris Houghton [chris@planbmag.com](mailto:chris@planbmag.com)  
+44 7984 814 069

**Assistant Publisher:** Richard Stacey [richard@planbmag.com](mailto:richard@planbmag.com)  
**Advertising:** Amy Guthrie [ads@planbmag.com](mailto:ads@planbmag.com)  
**Events (London):** James Nichols [james@planbmag.com](mailto:james@planbmag.com)  
**Events:** Anna-Marie Fitzgerald [anna@planbmag.com](mailto:anna@planbmag.com)  
**Web Editor:** Alex Capes [alex@planbmag.com](mailto:alex@planbmag.com)

**Chief Sub-editor:** Robin Wilks  
**Sub-editors:** Beth Capper, Marianna Longmire, Alex Macpherson

#### Contributors:

Adam Anonymous, Hayley Avron, Chris Ballard, Dan Beirne, Dan Bolger, Natalie Boxall, Melissa Bradshaw, John Brainlove, Jim Cassius, Stevie Chick, Leonie Cooper, Merek Cooper, The Corpo, Jon Dale, Sam Davies, Tom de Ville, Dickon Edwards, Jonathan Falcone, Fiona Fletcher, Jamie Fullerton, Ana Garcia, Kieron Gillen, Hannah Gregory, Sophie Heawood, Joris Heemskerk, Andrew Johnston, kicking\_k, Mathew Kumar, Neil Kulkarni, Al Larsen, PJ Little, Alex Macpherson, David McNamee, Sophie Mayer, Nicola Meighan, Henry K Miller, Natalie Moore, Shane Moritz, Doug Mosurock, Ben Myers, James Nash, Alex Neilson, LJ Oddman, James Papademetrie, Louis Pattison, Amy Pryor, Alice Rooney, Aaron Shaul, Daniel Spicer, Richard P Stacey, Joe Stannard, sweetcheyanne, George Taylor, Matilda Tristram, Slobodan Vujanovic, Robin Wilks

#### Photographers:

Toby Amies [www.tobyamies.com](http://www.tobyamies.com)  
Sarah Bowles [sarah@planbmag.com](mailto:sarah@planbmag.com)  
Mark Connelly [www.photo.conn75.com](http://www.photo.conn75.com)  
Stuart Dayman [stuart@stuardayman.com](mailto:stuart@stuardayman.com)  
Simon Fernandez [simonfernandez@eml.cc](mailto:simonfernandez@eml.cc)  
Steve Gullick [www.gullickphoto.com](http://www.gullickphoto.com)  
Grant Peden [grant004@yahoo.com](mailto:grant004@yahoo.com)  
Pauliina Petit [www.pauliinapetit.com](http://www.pauliinapetit.com)  
Stan stannnn@gmail.com  
Cat Stevens [catstevens1@gmail.com](mailto:catstevens1@gmail.com)  
Brian Sweeny [sweenypix@bulletproofid.com](mailto:sweenypix@bulletproofid.com)  
Anthony Wallace [antwallace@gmail.com](mailto:antwallace@gmail.com)

#### Illustrators:

Hannah Barton [hannahbee@gmail.com](mailto:hannahbee@gmail.com)  
Booi [www.evildo.com](http://www.evildo.com)  
Jussi Brightmoore [jussi@bluedotdotdot.com](mailto:jussi@bluedotdotdot.com)  
Frances Castle [www.caperstreet.com](http://www.caperstreet.com)  
Genevieve Castrée [genevieve@departmentofsafety.com](mailto:genevieve@departmentofsafety.com)  
Andrew Clare [www.giantfierhand.com](http://www.giantfierhand.com)  
Nathan Fletcher [www.mybrokenshoe.com](http://www.mybrokenshoe.com)  
Richard Forbes-Hamilton [www.tallonebehind.co.uk](http://www.tallonebehind.co.uk)  
John Gambino [www.gambinojohn.com](http://www.gambinojohn.com)  
Bruce Ingram [mrbingram@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mrbingram@yahoo.co.uk)  
KAS [www.kasprojects.com](http://www.kasprojects.com)  
Lady Lucy [www.ladylucy.tk](http://www.ladylucy.tk)  
Soren Mosdal [s.mosdal@mail.tele.dk](mailto:s.mosdal@mail.tele.dk)  
Ben Newman [gray\\_pigeons@hotmail.com](mailto:gray_pigeons@hotmail.com)  
Marcus Oakley [banjo@dircon.co.uk](mailto:banjo@dircon.co.uk)  
Mini Padam [minipadam@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:minipadam@yahoo.co.uk)  
Matt Pattinson [www.culprit-art.com](http://www.culprit-art.com)  
Amy Richardson [lazy\\_amy@hotmail.com](mailto:lazy_amy@hotmail.com)  
Till Thomas [Till@tdthomas.de](mailto:Till@tdthomas.de)  
Vincent Vanoli [vincent.vanoli@free.fr](mailto:vincent.vanoli@free.fr)  
Daryl Waller [www.winterdrawings.com](http://www.winterdrawings.com)  
Nick White [nickbixby@msn.com](mailto:nickbixby@msn.com)

**Cover photography:** Sarah Bowles  
**Printed by** Stones The Printers [www.stonestheprinters.co.uk](http://www.stonestheprinters.co.uk)

#### Distribution:

**Lakeside** (Newsagents) **Worldwide** (Borders, HMV, Virgin, overseas)  
**Cargo** (independent record shops) **Dot** (Scandinavia)  
**Plan B Magazine** is published six times a year by Plan B Publishing Ltd  
[www.planbmag.com](http://www.planbmag.com) ISSN 1744-2435

#### PLAN B PRESENTS

**Wednesday 19 October**  
**The Spitz, London E1**

#### Comanechi

"Corrugated pop songs, wiry riffs and tumbling drums and frenzied yelping vocals"

#### Charlottefield

"Chainsaw-motored guitars and paranoid atmospherics"

#### Comasport

+ DJ Spykid and *Plan B* DJs

#### PLAN B PRESENTS

**Friday 21 October**  
**The Hanbury Ballroom**  
**83 St George's Rd,**  
**Kempdown, Brighton**

#### Kevin Blechdom

"Compulsive, repulsive, inspired"

**Planningtorock, Printed Circuit, Simon Bookish**  
+ DJs Jo Apps and Matilda

The Movie

#### PLAN B & TOMLAB PRESENT

**Monday 24 October**  
**The Spitz, London E1**

#### Final Fantasy

Acerbic violin and vocals from Arcade Fire arranger Owen Pallett + DJs Frances May Morgan (*Plan B*) and Jan Lankisch (Tomlab)

For more information on *Plan B* events, sign up to our mailing list at [www.planbmag.com](http://www.planbmag.com)

live



# starpower

Words: **Everett True**  
Photography: **Toby Amies**

## **Patti Smith**

**The Dome, Brighton**

How cool is this intoxication?  
She struts on stage dressed like a goddamn old-fashioned rock'n'roll star in her man's jacket and dirty boots. She

pirouettes a few times, bows, laughs, checks in her pocket for a pair of spectacles, starts to read poetry from a printed book. Hers. The band stands silent behind her, respectful. She reads 'Piss Factory' (1974), adapted and still changing, given extra vitriol, circumstance. Fever builds – words are relished, spat out and discarded. Girls reach out feverishly to touch her boots. Boys mouth slavishly every improvised sentence. Fever grows, grows, and grows. It grows. Sweat forms; real, and imagined: beads coagulate on the edge of reason as we wallow in distaste. We're there, back once more amid the scum-struck sweatshops and bitterly won cigarettes. We're there. Patti Smith, back in Brighton. Patti Smith, astride the beautiful stage like Elvis if only he hadn't stopped believing, like Johnny if only he'd refused that bittersweet black candy; like no one; like herself.

She is herself. Triumphant.  
"Andy, get me a job in Brighton," she pleads. "Get me a space opposite the palace, where I can watch the horses running, running around the Dome..."

Fever builds. 'Redondo Beach' (1975) flashes by with its beatnik charisma. 'Beneath The Southern Cross' (1996) spirals downwards, fuelled by the twin guitars of Richard Lloyd (ex-Television, seated, reclusive) and Lenny Kaye (ex-Patti Smith Band, lanky, smiling). 'Free Money' (1975) starts...and suddenly I'm lost wow like Jesus like fuck like someone hug me like this isn't real like my head's going to come loose like how and this staggering swaggering charged poetess howling red emotion, wrapping her arms around Lenny's guitar, like...where did the last four minutes go? What happened?  
A girl shouts out something in Japanese. "Send her to the Royal Pavilion," Patti draws insouciantly. "Send her to the correction room. The correction room is for bad girls. I'm already there..."  
Fever ebbs. Patti blows avant-garde fervour down a clarinet as Lenny trickles cool magic from the occasional note, as Richard defines the sound of NYC 1976 again. Two songs from Easter (1978), 'Privilege (Set Me Free)' and '25th Floor', follow – light and shade and all the pent-up, fermented emotion between. She's 60? Does she notice? Is that what informs her droll, mannish humour? She jokes

## **Not everyone gives up**

for English breakfasts and their effect on her constitution. It jars, slightly.  
"Don't you see when you're looking at me that I'll never end," she sings on 'Ain't It Strange' (1976). "Transcend, transcend..." Transcend.

How cool is this infatuation?  
How cool.  
She dances, like she's making love to Lenny's guitar. Graceful, a supple priestess charged with earthly desire. She dances, like people never lost faith in her beloved rock music, like it's still possible to change a life with a few scattered chords and a bellyful of passion. She dances, alone and awkward and so mesmerising. She dances, the way a sorceress proudly belt out a verse of 'Like A Rolling Stone' (introduced as "a classic American folk song") and I'm so close I could reach out and touch the hem of her garment, her boots...but I don't. I'm not a spell-breaker.

"How does it feel?" the crowd roar as one.  
"To be on your own?"  
She meditates on seagulls and chocolate. She prevaricates on her ancestry, slyly mocking her crowd's desire to cheer anything. She introduces two possible discoveries of a 14th planet. Her babelogue is riveting. The music sadly drew much of their inspiration from: Richard Lloyd, dude. Riffs are manna. She sings the unashamedly sacred love song 'Because The Night' (1978) with such fervour it could ignite a revolution.  
How cool is this sensation?  
How cool.

Not everyone gives up. Rock'n'roll still holds meaning. Not everyone succumbs to the lure of...wait, what the fuck is this? 'People Have The Power' my arse – this testosterone-pumping hippie singalong (taken from 1988's comeback album *Dream Of Life*) isn't worthy of you, Patti. Haven't you seen the news from Iraq or New Orleans recently? People most certainly don't have the power.  
The encores are a mostly throwaway version of Elvis Presley's 'One Night' – vocal duties mostly handled by the bassist – and...oh Jesus. Oh sweet mother of God. Patti. 'Land' segued into 'Gloria'.  
Thirty days later, I'm still star-struck, dreaming my own secret dreams. Dreaming my own secret desire.





# pocket full of stars

Words: **kicking\_k**  
Photography: **Sarah Bowles**

## Sufjan Stevens is a man on a mission

If you know only one or two things about Sufjan Stevens, the first will probably be that he is making a series of albums to represent every (United) State, an undertaking that he cheerfully acknowledges may last his entire recording career. A self-confessed (and successful) gambit to gather media attention has become a genuine challenge.

"Do I have any concern that the concept may overshadow the content?" asks Stevens. "Is the manufacturing and promotion of ideas more interesting than what they actually represent?"

"Well, this is the great tragedy of modern civilisation, isn't it?"

### signs and wonders

It's an epic, eccentric quest that started, naturally enough, with his own point of origin. On *Michigan* (2003), each song takes a location within the state as a focus, each location another chapter in his history, shuffling back and forth in time even as he skips across the map. Along the way, he borrows characteristics of the voices and perspectives he encounters, myths, stories and memories, folklore culled from the oral record, and historical events scattered through the narrative drift like so many signposts.

His own experiences are mixed down at the level of just another thread in the bigger picture – an unusually humble and wildly unfashionable approach when the singer-songwriter has become a watchword for a solipsistic and often exhibitionist introversion. As he puts it in a characteristically rhetorical email:

"Storytelling in song has become extinct. Or, more likely, it has been reduced to a vague plotline, set with archetypes, modified by cliché and language that exploits rather than evokes. There are no particulars or sensory details. This is because much of popular music is advertisement, and the work of the advertisement is to captivate the lowest common denominator through gimmick, jingle, flash and flourish."

On *Michigan*, he turns to traditional sounds that retain some non-standardised individualism, a sense of the hands that made them – and he plays most of these instruments himself, from banjo to oboe, xylophone to "wood flute and like-minded whistles", captured at home on a portable eight-track and later transfigured via the newfangled majesty of ProTools.

There are rarely silences between the tracks – more often the musical movement is akin to a screenwipe, a cinematic blur that better captures the idea of scenery passing by. We move from the downbeat solidarity of 'Flint (For The Unemployed And Underpaid)' – a thinning crowd of depressed piano keys and sighing brass in search of a real voice – to 'Oh Detroit, Lift Up Your Weary Head', in which the congested rhythms and clash of parts come together in a pretty, cacophonous reimagining of the city's bustle. The glockenspiel sparkles of 'Tahquamenon Falls' further suggest the thought

that's gone into an ambient, environmental attempt to somehow evoke the small worlds it covers.

By sidestepping through America, the songs escape a definite position in the kind of linear chronology that orders movements and breeds scenes. There is a suggested reconnection with something that lies beneath the comfort blanket of mass culture.

"It's important to approach all material, as a writer, with a sense of awe and wonder, regardless of its familiarity. The work of the writer is in upending conventional ways of seeing things. This is inherently more natural when your subject is,

## 'Much of popular music is advertisement'

in fact, foreign and unfamiliar. We are encouraged to look at the world, be it the New Jersey Turnpike or the Himalayas, with our mouths dropped, our ears cupped, our senses synchronised.

"There is the backyard, the suspension bridge, the waterway, the mountain range, the continent, the ozone, the celestial wonders, the universe, God inscribed in everything. But at the crux of it is a very small thing called you."

### beginning to see the light

If you only know one or two things about Sufjan Stevens, chances are the second is that he is a practising Christian who isn't afraid to let his beliefs impact upon his work. "If someone asked, I would say that I was born again. I would look you right in the eye and say it."

In 2004, he made this plain with the release of *Seven Swans*. The album was not part of the '50 States' project; Stevens instead turned to songs about the Transfiguration, about Abraham – biblical miniatures evoked with the barest of means – a tender minimalism that somehow makes a few keys, strings and voices billow out like backlit clouds. It's quite a trick, kind of awe-inspiring – which, I suppose, is the point.

I ask him if it bothers him that much of his audience here in the indie demographic would have no comparable faith, however much they might like his music.

I want to know if it worries him that he might be patronised, that people might be attracted to his spirituality more as an angle, a kitsch accessory than any shared sense of meaning.

I feel a strange unease sometimes when I catch myself singing along to a lyric celebrating something I haven't believed in since before I hit double figures. "He will take you, if you run/He will chase you/ 'Cause he is the Lord..."

Maybe I'm trying to provoke him.

He doesn't sink to my level.

"I don't think much about who listens to my music. I make no judgements against a listener based on his or her beliefs, or lack thereof. I'm honoured that anyone cares at all."

I should have let it go at that. I know he's sick of answering questions about his religion, the way one biographical detail leeches attention from his work. The low point is when he writes, tension tightening his lines: "I don't think I need to convince anyone. I find all this talk a waste of time."

### all good naysayers, speak up

I feel the need to ask him questions about his religion, because, seen from a long way away, the rise of the Religious Right in the US, and its enshrinement in the White House with the Bush administration, is one of those bewildering differences in American and British culture, as wholly alien as the gun laws. The pro-life, pro-death penalty senators attempting to roll back gay rights and affirmative action. The creationist pseudo-scientists advocating an end to stem cell research. The rise of Christianised creative industries that create bestselling thriller-cum-tracts about those left behind after the Rapture, and the inevitable films of the same showing not in cinemas but 200,000 churches.

Nowadays, there's a Christian answer for every mainstream musical genre – from nu metal through hip hop and all points in between. And, while the domestic music industry is in a period of relative stagnation at the moment, sales of CCM – Contemporary Christian Music – are marching onward.

"I don't know anything about CCM. I'm not an evangelist. I'm a songwriter and a storyteller. If that story happens to be about Christ, then perhaps, in some odd semantic way, the song could be termed 'evangelical'. I gladly accept that. I also sing about divorce. And murder. And adultery. I sing about chickens and war and bathrooms. In my mind, the gospel is not something to pander and pawn off like a diet soda drink. There is no product. There is no selling point."

*Seven Swans* was never embraced by the CCM media. Sufjan Stevens never will be. For all his undoubted sincerity and lyricism, he just plain ain't orthodox enough for a culture which mistakes openness for doubt, and doubt for weakness. Most CCM lyrics switch between quasi-fascist machismo, bastardised echoes of scripture and abject abasement, with only a seventh-generation riff in between.

"CCM is an easy target, as is Britney Spears, or Ashlee Simpson," Stevens states. "I wouldn't waste your time committing criticism to these things. I'm bothered by the advancement of CCM as much as I'm bothered by the prevalence of McDonald's. It's a terrifying phenomenon, but it really has nothing to do with me, so I leave it alone and let it live its own ugly, miserable, rich life."



## 'I also sing about chickens and war and bathrooms'

If you only know one or two things about Sufjan Stevens, the third should be that the first two things are less important than you'd think – more useful to a media which exists to sort and order than as any genuine key to understanding his work. Indeed, it's the clash between the size of the pigeonhole assigned to him and the complexity and expansiveness of the work itself that provides the best testing ground to uncover what we actually have here.

*Michigan's* shuffling of the narrative deck represented an intimate, homespun yet ambitious and sophisticated attempt to capture the ambience of a place in a way that transcended the limited perspective afforded by the straight ahead first-person confessional.

The recently released second album in the '50 States' series, *Illinois* (a place of which he has much less personal experience), sees him further refine his methodology. He assembles the material here almost entirely from letters to friends in the state, and from the public record; he also plays freely with techniques that are more often seen in literature, such as writing in character and the conflation (or contrast) of public fact and fictional experiences.

The occasional hesitant, unformed qualities of *Michigan* have ripened into a style that is quite capable of everything from cinematic soundtracks, bittersweet stories and even satire, from 'They Are Night Zombies!! They Are Neighbors!! They Have Come Back From The Dead!! Ahhhh!' (an inspired reimagining of Judgement Day as a zombie flick complete with cheerleader pastiche) to a close-up portrait of serial killer John Wayne Gacy Jr. Arrested in a whisper, Stevens's voice creeps about above a subdued nocturne, recounting the facts of the case with some horror – but judgement is reserved. Nothing could be further from Old Testament/CCM ideology.

Enlisting a troupe of musicians (pictured above) to colour his compositions live and on record has allowed much more flexibility in composition and arrangement – leaving the concept and mood free to dictate the sound. *Illinois* happily meanders from pseudo-jingoistic battle hymns to trilling, fanciful mini-symphonies before cutting right back to just the two of us – simplicity and solitude.

### to walk alone with you

Of course, I regret bugging him so relentlessly about which particular church he frequents. He's right. It really is just one element in a grand attempt to complete an anachronistically modernist project.

But I also think he underestimates how important it is to us in 'Old Europe' (Donald Rumsfeld, 2003) to have an example of a different kind of American Christian. Because it's not the liberal, progressive people quietly living out their faith, who have come to represent the soul of a nation on the international news.

And, as the Religious Right advance their agenda in Congress, I'm glad that, somewhere in the streets or prairies, scribbling in a back seat or reflecting by a riverside, Sufjan Stevens will be there, documenting and celebrating the 50 states, his faith not a scriptural straitjacket but a mode of feeling, an empathic connection, an exploratory urge:

"This is what it means to be born again: to fully and completely disengage with the preconceptions and preoccupations of the adult world and its religions, to dismantle all laws – of physics and society – and yield yourself to the birth canal, and what comes after, in which everything begins to shake and tremble with all senses fully turned to the centre of the universe, the creator, God the Father, in whose cultivation we begin to know and understand our true selves, our real selves, as a reflection of God's image, his creation, like newborn babies, full, fresh, suckling, elated, laughing at everything. But honestly, I have no idea how this relates to my music. I hate talking about this stuff."

As for what comes next:

"I have some broad musical ideas, an overarching vision that could very well be summarised and theorised, but even then, it is a futility of language to describe something in the future tense."

On the positive side: "We can certainly have a substantial conversation about this 20 years from now."

"I'd like to spend less time talking about God and more time being in God's presence. I think that would put an end to this conversation, once and for all."

Amen.

**BLACKALICIOUS**  
**THE CAMP**

"The pair's killer chemistry has produced another triumph... brilliant" - **NME** OUT

**THE NEW ALBUM**  
Includes the tracks "Your Move", "Powers" and "Rhythm Sticks"

**OUT NOW!**

**amazon.co.uk**  
and you're done.

**ANTI**  
ANTI.COM

**ACHADOS E PERDIDOS**

**GURUMIN**

"Achados E Perdidos brings together the best of many worlds, from samba rock to hip-hop and beyond, equal parts Jorge Ben and Mantronix."  
- **CHIEF XCEL/BLACKALICIOUS**

**IN STORES NOW**

**ANTI**  
ANTI.COM

*tim fite*  
Gone Ain't Gone

"Gone Ain't Gone" is a darkly whimsical inspection of their as a vehicle for cultural evolution."  
- **LARRYBUS Q. ROYEN** (1992 - 2004)

**ON TOUR SUPPORTING BUCK 65**

- 28 Oct **SALWAY** (Irl) Roisin Club
- 29 Oct **DUBLIN** (Irl) Village
- 30 Oct **BELFAST** (Irl) Livelight
- 5 Nov **PORTSMOUTH** Wedgewood Room
- 4 Nov **STOKE** Sugarhill
- 5 Nov **EDINBURGH** Cabaret Voltaine
- 6 Nov **LEEDS** Josephs Wells
- 7 Nov **NOTTINGHAM** Rescue Rooms
- 8 Nov **MANCHESTER** Academy
- 9 Nov **LONDON** Mean Fiddler

**ANTI**  
ANTI.COM

**out now**

**THEY THINK THEY ARE THE ROBOCOP KRAUS**

"Inspirational, ideas packed German post punk"  
- **NME**

"The Robocop Kraus are a thrilling prospect"  
- **KERRANG!**

"Smart, sexy, fast, fabulous! An absolute belter!"  
- **BANG**

**ON TOUR OCTOBER 2005**

- 18 LONDON - Artrock @ The Buffalo BAR (w/ The Chap)
- 19 LONDON - Metro
- 20 NOTTINGHAM - Liars Club @ The Social
- 21 LIVERPOOL - Evol @ The Academy
- 22 STOKE ON TRENT - Club NME @ The Underground
- 24 BRIGHTON - Komedia (w/ Tom Vek)

**THE NEW ALBUM**  
**IN STORES NOW**  
**INCLUDES THE SINGLE**  
**"You Don't Have To Shout"**

**ANTI**  
ANTI.COM

**Epitaph**  
EPITAPH.COM

# PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

Folk survivor **Vashti Bunyan** talks ego-surfing and musical rebirthing

Words: **Nicola Meighan**  
Photography: **Brian Sweeney**

I type in my name and discover this:

In Australia, there lives a Dr Nicola Meighan. She's a Pedigree Chum and Whiskas-endorsed authority on 'Pet-Friendly Gardening'. This is not me.

That is all.

Rewind a few years though, and witness Vashti Bunyan, as she executes a similar action: enters her name into an internet search engine. Her virtual mission proves more fruitful.

She learns, to her surprise, that she is a legend.

Having retired – retreated – from music three decades prior, stung by unfitting hype, ill-timing and indifference, Bunyan is gladdened, if perplexed, to realise that copies of her quietly released 1970 debut album now exchange grabbing hands for almost a grand. She's being lauded globally as songwriting royalty. She's the subject of lucrative bootleg tomfoolery. Little wonder.

A contemporary of the Incredible String Band, Fairport Convention and Donovan, and miscast in the Sixties as 'the new Marianne Faithfull' under the wing of Stones svengali Andrew Loog Oldham, Bunyan's late-Nineties cyber quest, prompted by that internet search, set off an overdue chain of events that saw her renege on her artistic retraction.

She has since made her first live appearance in 30 years, at London's Royal Festival Hall (at the fevered behest of Stephen Malkmus). She has collaborated with Devendra Banhart, Joanna Newsom, Adem, Four Tet and Animal Collective (among others). She has instigated the re-release of her aforesaid debut, *Just Another Diamond Day*, to effusive acclaim. She is on the eve of releasing her first album in 35 years – *Lookaftering*.

And here she is now: ambling across a Victorian spa resort, tracing the steps of Robert Louis Stevenson, scaling a 16th Century copper mine, flanked by a scampering, eager *Plan B*. And she is laughing.

Surprised? We sure should be. This very nearly didn't happen.

By the late Sixties, a young, determined, free-spirited Bunyan was disaffected and despairing with London and its recurring disappointments. Three times, had she released commercial singles: she had appeared on *Ready, Steady, Go!*; recorded Jagger/Richards

compositions; released on arch-pop imprint Immediate; and been touted as the next Bob Dylan. "And then..." she flatly discharges, as we breathlessly crunch leafy steps in the mine woods. "Nothing. Nothing." No sufficient support or response or reception.

She remained optimistic, however, and was buoyed by a colourful undertaking perpetrated by one Donovan Leitch, who was flying a quixotic flag for an artistic renaissance-cum-kibbutz in Scotland. Upon the suggestion that she join his creative rabble, Vashti Bunyan headed north: with a horse and a man and a ramshackle cart and a hope and a dog and a mouse in a basket. "But, by the time we got there," she sighs, matter-of-factly, into the Sunday sky, "most of the people had gone."

The long journey-inspired *Just Another Diamond Day*, however, is a haunting projection of daydreams intricately arranged by Robert Kirby (Nick Drake) and intimately produced by long-time custodian Joe Boyd. With cameos from Robin Williamson (Incredible String Band), Simon Nicol and Dave Swarbrick (Fairport), her classic debut conjures sunbeams and moondrops and rainbows and hope. But was it truly ever thus?

"I think a lot of the songs I wrote on my *Diamond Day* journey were written, you know, as a comfort to myself..." she ventures. "To reassure myself that it was OK – that *this* was OK – when a lot of the time I was just terribly, terribly homesick. And wet. And cold!" She visibly shivers.

In 1970, Bunyan "abandoned music for good", gave birth to her first son, and settled on farmland in Scotland. She spent years breeding horses, making furniture, painting, giving birth to a daughter and another son: "A life looking after people and animals".

And now she lives in Edinburgh where, you know, she's recently made the single of the year with Animal Collective (the 'Prospect Hummer' EP), and recorded one of 2005's most anticipated albums. How did the the Animal Collective collaboration arise?

"Well," she commences, as we stop for tea. "Kieran [Hebden, of Four Tet] came up to Edinburgh – we played together with Adem at the Festival Hall – and he brought these guys with him, the Animal Collective," she explains. "And we all went out to dinner before the show and I was AMAZED because Kieran said

to me – you know, these guys have all got your album." She throws herself back in her chair, reeling in surprise even now. "And I was like... [emits a resonant series of doubtful, repetitive guarded growls]...and it was really weird and really bad mannered of me, but I was just – my album? Why? What are you thinking?"

Haha, what – like, you must have got the wrong person or something?

"Exactly!" she agrees. "You know, I just still couldn't believe that anyone would've heard of *Diamond Day* – least of all anyone from Brooklyn. And then later I found out they wanted me to record with them. It was amazing!"

It must be cool for Vashti's offspring – having an in-demand avant-folk star for a mother?

"I never really talked about it; they never knew the story," she smiles. "But they're incredibly pleased and supportive now. My youngest, who's 19 – he's slightly embarrassed about it all, I think."

She continues, amber-toned, "Still, I embarrassed the older two by having another baby when they were grown up – I was 41 – so it's only fair I embarrass the youngest!" She laughs aloud at the sudden insight.

"My daughter, she's an artist," continues Bunyan, clearly delighted to speak of her family. "She painted the rabbit on the album cover – have you seen it? She usually paints dogs, and I was going to use a dog, but Piano Magic [with whom Bunyan has also collaborated] used one of her dogs, so..."

I haven't seen the cover, I tell her.

"Ah!" she says, raking in her bag. "I've printed one out – would you like this?" She extends a homemade CD. "It's got the, erm, the words – you know, the lyrics, and... everyone who was on it [Devendra, Joanna, Adem, Kevin Barker, Otto Hauser, Adam Pierce et al]. I made it up for you." I gleefully accept the CD: briefly believe she's lookaftering me.

If the essence of *Diamond Day* provided a means of validating and comforting Bunyan's life on the move, so *Lookaftering* is an existential progression: it extends a tender arm and a soothing voice of assertion towards the solace of others; and it braves to look backward and gradually embrace a quiet reassurance from a patchwork past.



**'The first new song came  
to me in the middle of  
Sainsbury's'**

The death of a brother, the break-up of a marriage, the aching experience of indifference – that word again – are all fondly chronicled here, but there is also faith and succour in the future: a devoted confidence and psychic certainty toward her three children in 'Here Before'; a knowing, admiring guidance bestowed in 'Lately'. ("The only things you should keep in rows/ Are your perfect teeth.")

The arrangements, aided by producer Max Richter ("such a clever, wise, gentle person"), are breathtaking; heartening. "They're still quite lullaby-ish, I suppose," muses Bunyan. "There's some of that in the new album. It's comforting – the sounds, the order of the notes; it feels, you know, *right*. I guess that's just the way I write."

But after 35 years, how did you start writing again?

"It's such a weird thing, writing songs. You never know when it will happen. In fact, come to think of it," she starts abruptly, "I think the first new song came to me in the middle of Sainsbury's!" I cackle at such light-hearted shattering of rosehip-tinted myth and dewy illusion. She chuckles along, enthused by my reaction – "I was *shopping*; I *know!*" – a kind-eyed ode to self-mockery.

And that's when I realise she's totally floored me.

As the Gaels have many ways to say mountain, as the Greeks have many ways to say love, so Vashti Bunyan has many ways to laugh. There's a gentle, self-deprecating, head-back cackle; a teeth-sucking, trilling inhalation; a graceful, low-pitched, slow-release chuckle. A delight.

And a gentle blow: she's really not all that 'folk', to be honest, folks. She demos all of her music on Cubase ("I've a computer full of absolute crap!"); she coins compositions in the supermarket; she endured grave persuasion from Richter to replace her home-faked laptop violins with real ones. Hell, she still doesn't even think she's a 'proper' musician.

"I was going to teach my guitar parts to a real guitarist on this album," she says. "But I don't really know chords, or what's right, so..." She trails off.

But surely that intricate, unrepressed technique is a trademark? "Hmm, well yeah, I guess I have a certain style," she concedes. "Out of tune...out of time...hehe. You know, even with the Animal Collective single, I thought it was just very, very brave of them to take me on," she confides, like she might be revealed as a fraud at any time.

It feels as if this album could only ever have been called *Lookaftering*, such is the title's abounding resonance. Did this influence the album's quintessence, or follow it?

"It came really last minute," hushes Bunyan. "A few days before we were mastering. One day, the word just appeared. It's something I've always used, when children are small, or animals. Plus, everything else I thought of, I'd check online and there'd be 60 of them already!"

It makes me wonder.

We hike home. I head for Google. Enter 'Lookaftering' and discover thus: hundreds of entries in hundreds of languages, championing Vashti Bunyan's forthcoming album; awaiting her songs with obsessive insistence. It's a timely uprising of upturned indifference.



"I've a computer full of absolute crap!"



**THE CRIBS**  
The New Fellas  
**OUT NOW**

Their highly acclaimed album is in stores now. Described by NME as an "awesome album", it contains the hit singles, 'Hey Scenesters', 'Mirror Kissers' and 'Martell'.

The band is about to hit the road with Kaiser Chiefs on these dates:

**OCTOBER**

- 14th Bradford St Georges Hall\*
- 15th Manchester Apollo
- 16th Manchester Apollo
- 18th Leeds Town Hall
- 19th Leeds Town Hall

- 20th Leeds Town Hall
- 22nd Birmingham Academy
- 23rd Birmingham Academy
- 25th Brixton Academy
- 26th Brixton Academy
- 27th Brixton Academy
- 29th Glasgow Academy
- 30th Glasgow Academy

**NOVEMBER**

- 3rd London ULU\*
- \* Headlining



**HER SPACE HOLIDAY**  
The Past Presents The Future  
**OUT NOW**

Marc Bianchi is back with his best album to date. Made in extreme isolation and creative re-evaluation, the Her Space Holiday sound and meaning became much broader than on his previous works, leaving the listener feeling like they have experienced a collection of parables rather than a stack of confessions.



**KID 606**  
Done With The Scene EP  
**RELEASED OCTOBER 24th**

To follow his highly acclaimed recent album, 'Resilience', Kid606 is back with a 7 track EP featuring remixes of album tracks from Mogwai, Dwayne Sodahberk, Her Space Holiday and bravecaptain along with a cover version of Annie's "Heartbeat".

See Kid606 on tour throughout Europe in October / November 2005.

[www.wichita-recordings.com](http://www.wichita-recordings.com)



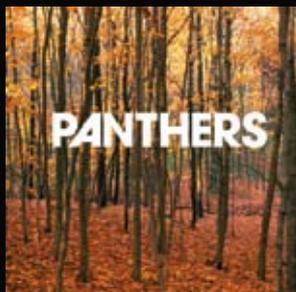
**OUT NOW...**



**Stars**  
Set Yourself On Fire  
CD and LP



**Nada Surf**  
The Weight Is A Gift  
CD, Limited Double Disc Edition CD and LP



**Panthers**  
Things Are Strange  
CD



**Lambchop & Hands Off Cuba**  
CoLAB EP  
CD EP

**Coming Soon ...**



**Broken Social Scene**  
BSS  
CD, Limited Edition CD and LP

[www.cityslang.com](http://www.cityslang.com)



# the void



## comanechi

Words: **Stevie Chick**

Photography: **Steve Gullick**

They came to my house, bearing cakes. Slouched across the sofa, they looked like rock star dolls, all detail-perfect: Simon clad in secondhand Levi's and appropriated boots and a yellow Seventies glitter tee; Akiko, tiny and glam, in an asymmetric chopped top and eyeshadow.

They're a two-piece, Simon on guitar, Akiko on drums and vocals. Like other two-pieces (Lightning Bolt, The White Stripes), their duo set-up both focuses and loosens them; there's no extraneous information to confuse us here, just riffs riding crashing drums.

"It's easier, in a two-piece," admits Akiko, who used to play with Emma [Scout] Niblett in a two-piece band called Novachichi, when she lived in Nottingham five years ago. "When I left university, I moved to London, got myself a job, and started up a band. My friend Paul joined, and he named us 'Comanechi', but he refused to play an instrument. So I sacked him."

Akiko sent out demos of her songs, and soon the 'group' were being offered shows; "I was like, oh

shit, I need to get a band together," laughs Akiko. Enter Simon who, thinking he was about to be laid off from his job, had recently blown a whole month's paycheck on a guitar.

He bumped into Akiko at a mutual friend's barbecue party, where they were told to form a band together, if for no reason other than their wildly contrasting heights.

## 'I stole my parents' karaoke microphone to record our EP'

Comanechi have progressed at breakneck speed: their third gig saw them play their corrugated pop songs, all wiry riffs and tumbling drums and yelping frenzied vocals, before a lamp bearing their Akiko-designed logo. Loose Lips Sink Ships offered to release their debut EP, which Akiko and Simon recorded in her bedroom, via four-track, in three hours (it was released two weeks after the gig).

"I stole my parents' karaoke microphone to record it," Akiko laughs. "They used to hold karaoke nights at their restaurant, but a neighbour complained, so they had to stop."

'Naked', their third single, sounds like Liliput covering Toni Basil's 'Mickey'; jerky weird pop music, alien and addictive. It was their first time in a proper studio, with a proper engineer. They brought in some 'research material', examples of what they wanted the record to sound like.

"I brought in Bikini Kill's 'Hamster Baby', and our first EP," grins Akiko.

"I brought in a bunch of grubby bootlegs," squints Simon. "They sounded atrocious, but I liked the guitar tone. And I brought in some Slayer."

Simon is quiet, bashful, where Akiko is buzzing with enthusiasm for their 'self-expression'.

"When I was a kid, I always made things; models, paintings, whatever," he says. "Then I grew up, got a job, tried to be normal. And when we started Comanechi, 18 months ago, I remembered just how great it feels to create something. How wrong it had gone, the previous years, trying to be a 'normal' adult. It's all pretty meaningless, if you don't get the chance to express yourself."

[www.comanechi.com](http://www.comanechi.com)



**electrum**

Words: **Stewart Gardiner**  
 Photography: **Mark Connelly**

Moving out of the cold and into the warmth. It's something you do as a matter of course up in Scotland, but that isn't to say it can't be used as the basis for art. Externalising what is already an externalisation of a state of mind, Electrum root about in the shift from wide expanses into intimate breathing spaces. This gives their music a tempestuous allure, but with an inner heart of glowing pop.

Electrum may be a two-piece, but they're a far cry from any jagged, stripped-down powerhouse. Astonishingly enough, theirs is a sound more akin to The Delgados, burying epic scope in waves of distorting lushness. Caireen takes care of keyboards, a guitar, the odd turn on the drums and sings in her plaintive, beatific voice. Jamie plays guitars, bass, drums and also produces. Although this has prevented them from playing any live shows, they have no immediate plans to do so anyway.

Both have emerged relatively unscathed from the ashes of the underrated Slowloris, that is if you don't view Jamie's recent urban mountain biking accident as some kind of divine payback. "I fractured a bone in my hand and ruptured two ligaments in my foot," he tells me. "I can almost fit a guitar in the cast on my hand," he continues, before Caireen dryly cuts in: "You can't tell any difference in the quality of guitar playing though."

Their only release to date is the exquisite 'Like I Said' single (through I Wish I Was Unpopular). Three songs of burning torches, sombre longing and the pinprick of adolescent winters, the EP displays an intangible undertow reminiscent of Kevin Shields. "The title came out of someone on a message board saying how much they liked the spoken 'like I said' bit in [first track] 'Interference'," says Caireen. "Then we saw another message later from the same person saying they didn't realise that's what the EP was called, when in fact we'd only just named it that because of his comment! It feels a real of-the-moment piece.

"The three tracks on it kind of represent different sides of what we do," adds Jamie. "'Interference' is a sort of summery pop single thing. 'It Was Summer' is big psychotic space rock and 'The Last Dance' is a gentle little romantic number."

These are songs to cuddle up close to, gripping perhaps a little too tightly in the rush of the moment. They suggest things that are about to happen, and the fear that they may not transpire. With an album in the works, the next step is to secure a label to put it out. But it's early days yet, and Electrum appear content to be as prolific as possible in the songwriting department. Electrum may not be bringing their world into yours just yet ("We might do some live shows after March," suggests Caireen, "when the smoking ban comes in, in Scotland"), but that's not to say you won't be going out to meet them in theirs.

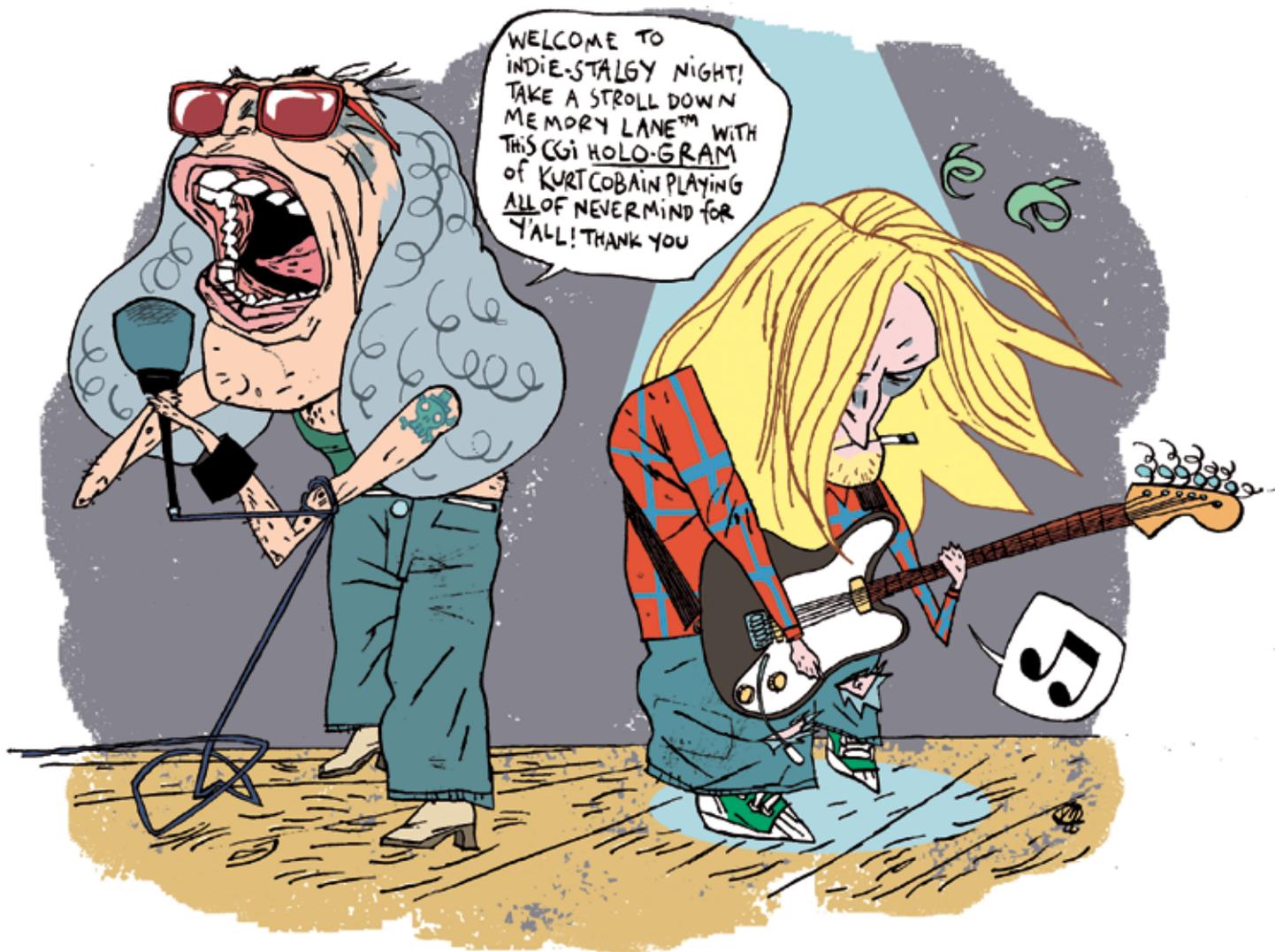
[www.thisiselectrum.net](http://www.thisiselectrum.net)



PlayStation 2



The R logo is a trademark and/or registered trademark of Take-Two Interactive Software. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, and the Xbox logos are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the US and/or in other countries and under license from Microsoft. All other marks and trademarks are properties of their respective owners. The Warriors ® & © 2005 Paramount Pictures. All Rights Reserved.



### why I hate...don't look back concerts

Words: Frances May Morgan

Illustration: Søren Mosdal

Fucking amazing. Just fucking...phenomenal. Just like the first time I heard it, only like a million times better. I mean, you could hear *everything*, like I always wanted to. God, it's such an amazing album.

## We haven't been to a gig for a bit

You've no idea of the subtleties until you really hear it like that, live, all the way through, over a good PA. It's like a total luxury listening experience. Magical. I mean, call it nostalgia if you like, but what a great idea. You're hearing the album the way the band would want you to hear it, all the way through, in a great venue, and *live*. Can't argue with that, can you? Unless you don't like good music.

But yeah, that album. I bought it the day it came out. It was just before I left home – yeah, good timing, totally. I took it to uni with me and I was like playing it to death that whole first term. So it's a bit of a trip down memory lane, sure. But I mean, those were good times.

Like – check this out, seriously – I'm playing it one day and this girl from down the hall says she likes it too, and so I made her this awesome mixtape of all this stuff she didn't have; you know, stuff that girls like: Tim Buckley, Mazzy Star, Galaxie 500, Tindersticks, Pavement. And you know who that was? Yeah, that was Emma! Isn't that fucking weird! Seriously. I mean, we didn't start going out

till the third year; she was seeing some guy from Bristol and I was too scared to let on that I liked her – apart from the mixtape! That was a total come-on, yup...there was that Lemonheads song on it too...wow...I'd forgotten about that... anyway, so you could say that it's this album that brought us together. Isn't that awesome? Yeah, she came to the show too.

We haven't been to a gig for a bit, just seems like there's not much around that we want to see, you know? We did ATP last year, wanted to see the Youth and all, but to be honest I didn't think that much of the other bands. I think Lightning Bolt are just taking the piss, frankly. Did lots of drinking, mainly. Didn't go this year. The first one, the Bowlie, back in '99, now that was great. Belle And Sebastian, man...yeah, course I'm going to that, got my ticket already! They never really did a better album than...*Sinister*, did they?

But yeah, the gig last night...wow. When you go to something like that it does kind of make you think, well, people just aren't making exciting music any more. I mean, it's all just same old same old, and you see all these bands who just can't play...oh god, I sound like my dad, shit! Sorry! But you know what I mean, yeah? We were so lucky to be around at that time; there were some great bands around. I feel really sorry for kids who are, like, 18 now. I mean, what have they got? I couldn't live without the internet, right, but I don't think it's been entirely good for music – there's just way too much stuff,

and it's all at your fingertips. I mean, do you remember the way we had to *wait* for records to come out? I think we valued music more, you know? I think you can hear that in the records, I really do. It's getting harder and harder to find that quality now.

I like some new stuff, yeah, sure. Arcade Fire, I mean, heard it all before, Neutral Milk meets Pixies meets whatever, but fair play, that guy can write a song. Joanna Newsom? Yeah, I think she's a bit hyped, you know? But bless her, she can really play, can't she? Emma's a big fan. But to be honest, in terms of what I've actually been buying, that reissue of *Goo*, Jesus, that's just fucking *amazing*, isn't it? That's the stuff. What else? Keep meaning to check out Gang Of Four. Supposed to be classic.

Me and Matt were arguing about this in the pub the other day, this whole 'selling out' thing; he's like, they'd never have done that kind of gig back in the Nineties. But that's such bollocks. Why shouldn't they make money out of their best record? I mean, let's be realistic. What's wrong with giving people what they want? Fair play to them, I reckon.

Yeah, I'm totally going to check out the Cat Power one, she is a fucking genius that woman. Beautiful. Great voice. Mad as a box of frogs, right, but that's part of the deal, isn't it?

*Don't Look Back* is a series of concerts in which artists perform their 'best or favourite' album in its entirety. For details see [www.atpfestival.com](http://www.atpfestival.com)



**schoolyard heroes**

Words: **Hannah Gregory**  
Illustration: **John Gambino**

Punk's a damn good place to start loving music, right? All that anger and violent emotion cast out into turbine intensity. It's the enthusiasm, the passion, the

Axl Rose and Freddie Mercury to Debbie Harry and T-Rex fit in there somewhere." Like Debbie Harry, Ms Donnelly is a lady who knows how to perform. I've heard she flails across the stage with microphone as victim and audience as pawns, her voice ranging between prototype punk bitch and gothic nightmare

**'The schoolyard of idols is full of misfits'**

fearlessness that draws you in. Then you discover there's far more than three loud chords waiting for your ears and heart, and soon you're condemning the whole jive as one-dimensional and self-destructive, flawed and idealistic. But when you hear that sound afresh, you want to apologise for leaving punk behind.

So it was when I put the Schoolyard Heroes' crushing second album, *Fantastic Wounds* (out now on The Control Group), on my stereo. There was sheet-metal guitar abrasion, a riot of kick-snare drumbeats and an unearthly howl. This young Seattle four-piece don't play straight-out punk, though. It's an element of their sound, sure, but one offset, if not overshadowed, by saucily screaming frontwoman: Ryann Donnelly.

I ask her, via email, who her schoolyard heroes were. "The schoolyard of idols is full of misfits," she says. "Everyone from

queen. Her lyrics, meanwhile, are tongue-in-cheek Troma film trash; their exaggerated pulp-gore recalls The Misfits' zombie-crazed mayhem.

Ryann reminds me of Gwen Stefani, back when she wore enviable polka-dot dresses and sung mirthful shout-and-pump choruses circa *Tragic Kingdom*-era No Doubt. Also, she's 19. I'd say age is irrelevant – largely, it is – but then Lydia Lunch was 16 when she started with Teenage Jesus, Ari Up 14 at the formation of The Slits. How can you argue with youthful vigour like that?

What do you want people to come away from your shows feeling? "Just excited! If they want to start a band – awesome, if they think they can change the world – fantastic, but if they just feel like making a tuna melt and kicking back, then that's cool too."

[www.schoolyardheroes.com](http://www.schoolyardheroes.com)



**New single out 17th October**

CD and 7" coloured vinyl both featuring exclusive tracks. Also available as a digital download

On tour in October check website for details: [www.theresearchgopop.com](http://www.theresearchgopop.com)



**Harold Budd/Brian Eno:**  
original masters

**The Pearl**

This companion to last year's re-release of 'Plateaux of Mirror' is autumnal and otherworldly in equal measures. (José Noir)

Luminous, sublime, gem-like. (Gerard Myers)

Using Hi Res Analogue to Digital converters, Brian Eno's collaborative work has been transferred from the 'Original Masters' using 'Class A' Analogue Electronics combined with the best Analogue to Digital conversion.

The album is released on 19th September.



# music that time forgot

Words: Everett True  
Illustration: Mini Padam

## PATRIK FITZGERALD

I recorded my first single, '73 In 83', in the presence of Patrik Fitzgerald.

After I'd done the vocals for my unformed rant against fame and glamour – topics that continue to preoccupy me two decades later – I sat down next to him in the West London studio where TV Personalities had recorded 'Part Time Punks'. He edged away, laughing, pretending he'd been scared by the intensity of my vocals.

Well, you taught me, Patrik! You taught me with your early EPs, 'Safety Pin Stuck In My Heart', 'The Paranoid Ward' and especially 'Backstreet Boys', a scary tribute to the teenage boys who'd hang out on the streets of suburban London looking for someone vaguely different to beat the shit out of. You taught me it was possible to get up on stage with the bare minimum of support and sing of your loneliness in front of a bunch of uncaring shitheads. I never saw you onstage until '81 or '82, however, and by that time you'd gone all arty in your disaffection, and even

### His words could be direct to the point of discomfiture, but that was much of the appeal

more suicidal; but it was obvious, hearing your voice cracking and holding notes, deliberately off-key and quavering, that to articulate my despair and intensity...yes, that was the one way forward.

It was you, Patrik, who taught me that youth was nothing to be ashamed of, that social observation was as valid a form of love song as even the most acerbic of Buzzcocks singles; you with your tape recorder humming and clicking noisily off in the background, with your dropped aitches and swift, sweet, incisive blasts of punk rock. You, above all others, taught me that the most punk anyone can be is to lose

the amplifiers, lose the laddish inclinations and just present yourself, no bullshit. That was your fault, and ATV singer Mark Perry's, two harbingers of my future never allowed to turn into self-caricatures because no one was interested anyway: you didn't have pretty enough faces, nor did you have the boisterous backbeat of The Clash or The Stranglers. It was you who taught me: Jonathan Richman and Calvin Johnson and Scout Niblett I discovered later, after it mattered.

I hated your debut album (1979's *Grubby Stories*) when it appeared though, Me and my mate Ian thought you'd sold out, what with your 'proper' label and clichéd cover picture reading *The Star*, and your full band that included a member of Penetration and the incredible Buzzcocks drummer. We'd learnt well the lessons you'd taught us, and we didn't like anything that indicated a few corners were being rounded off. I say I hated it; I didn't really, I only pretended to the same way I did when I first heard strings on a Ramones song, in an attempt to swing peer approval. Peer approval is so important when you're young. Maybe I was jealous we had to share you.

In actuality, *Grubby Stories* contained 17 tiny, authentic vignettes of distrust, loss and despair, dripping with teenage sarcasm, sometimes embarrassing in their directness and honesty. The songs showed a boy obsessed by fame, as unable to deal with even his minor part in it as I was all those years later.

Patrik documented boredom better than anyone ('Nothing To Do') and the downside of relationships where they "Fuck infatuation and call it love" (as

Dexys once so memorably put it) on 'But Not Anymore', and even changing fashions ('Make It Safe', a killer counterpart to Mark Perry's 'How Much Longer?'). Sure, his words could be direct to the point of discomfiture, but that was much of the appeal. If the words don't embarrass, don't bother.

The centrepiece was the terrifying 'No Fun Football' with its cheese-grater guitars and methodical, relentless drums and words that perfectly captured the experience of going to see a football match in the Seventies: "It's no fun – getting chased down the road/When you find a blind wall/It's the back of a pub – crates of beer bottles and – That is all". Compared with the rest of Patrik's range, it's remarkably sophisticated, crowd noises and chanting heightening the tension it's impossible not to feel 26 years on.

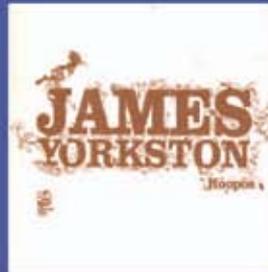
Later on, I recorded a version of the album's self-deprecating 'celebrity is shallow' song 'When I Get Famous', swamped with 20 guitars and a couple of vocals, as first-take as it's possible to get in those circumstances. "When I get famous/There'll be so many people wanna know me," I spat. "You'll be just one in line."

"Don't ask me to be your hero," Patrik warned on the album's final song, rather ironically, considering the fact the vast majority of punks would've sooner gone to a Pink Floyd show than suffer one of his records. "I will only let you down." I listened to him, and understood. Pop stars, even minor ones, are as shallow and useless as the rest of us. You bastard, Patrik. Thanks for fucking up my life.

This article first appeared on [www.dominorecordco.com](http://www.dominorecordco.com)

**2 BY BUKOWSKI  
YZORDDEREX**

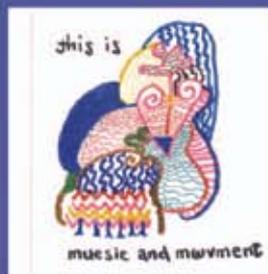
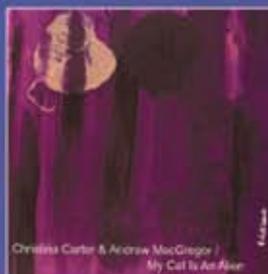
Sees 2 by Bukowski take their musical journey to another stage. Maturing in building their own unique captivating sound with spirits as uncompromising and inventive as ever.  
**VERY FRIENDLY - CD**



**JAMES YORKSTON - HOOPOE**  
Brand new mini album recorded exclusively for Houston Party. "Hoopoe" features five new and exclusive songs, plus one re-working of the song "Heron" from the album "Just Beyond The River" album.  
**HOUSTON PARTY - MCD**

**CHRISTINA CARTER &  
ANDREW MACGREGOR /  
MY CAT IS AN ALIEN**

**FROM THE EARTH TO THE SPHERES VOL 4**  
American queen of psyche-free folk music Christina Carter (Charalambides, Scores) with Andrew MacGregor (Gown) bring us "We know when we're thinking about each other" MCIAA's track "The circle of life & death" is probably the most melodic piece in all MCIAA's career to date.  
**VERY FRIENDLY - CD / OPAX - LP**

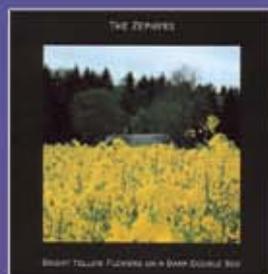
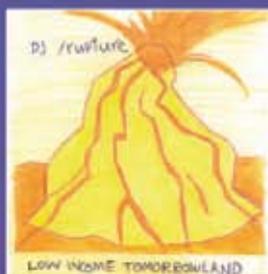


**MUSIC AND MOVEMENT**

**THIS IS...**  
Beautifully intoxicating debut from Glasgow boy/girl duo. Influences - Nancy and Lee, The Velvet's, Nico, JAMC  
**NEWTOWN RECORDS - CD**

**DJ / RUPTURE**

**LOW INCOME TOMORROWLAND**  
Latest mix CD from Dj/Rupture. Catching the influential underground turntablist & producer at the top of his game. A generous combination of regular CD audio and bonus data MP3s that totals over 2 hours of music, it's funky surprising, and progressive as f\*ck.  
**TAX RECORDS - CD.**

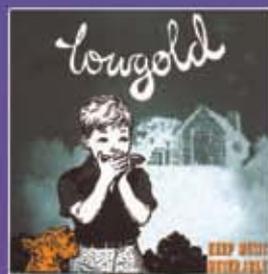
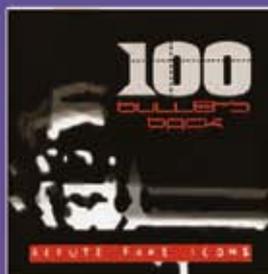


**THE ZEPHYRS  
BRIGHT YELLOW FLOWERS  
ON A DARK DOUBLE BED**

On their 4th album The Zephyrs display an organic and elaborate sound mixing influences (pop, country, folk, noise...) in an inseparable unity.  
**ACUARELA - CD**

**100 BULLETS BACK  
REFUTE FAKE ICONS**

"The most infectious trappings of electro-pop / post-punk / dance we have ever heard." **LOSING TODAY**  
Rodney Bingheimer (KROQ)  
**VELOCITY - CD**



**LOWGOLD  
KEEP MUSIC MISERABLE**

Britain's most underrated songwriters return with a monstrous double album featuring brilliant new tracks, rarities and the band's entire b-side collection.  
**DEDDED RECORDS - 2CD ONLY.**

**MAGIC CAR - FAMILY MATTERS**

Magic Car follow up their critically-acclaimed debut with this stunning new collection, which underlines their place at the very summit of the UK's burgeoning Americana scene.  
**TINY DOG - CD**

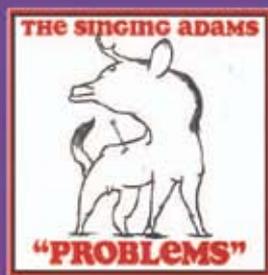
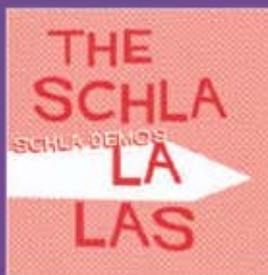


**THE BLACK MADONNAS  
HAVE STOLEN THE MOON TRUCK**

A unique brand of raw stylish noise, these gentlemen rockers have been planning the theft of the moon and from their lunar base, to rock the cosmos. For fans of Jimi Hendrix and LZ.  
**TRUCK - CD**

**THE SCHLA LA LAS  
SCHLA DEMOS**

This Piney gir fronted Truck girl-gang are ready to rock your house with some 60's garage-surf action. Are you ready? For fans of the 5678's and The Supremes.  
**TRUCK - MCD**



**THE SINGING ADAMS - PROBLEMS**

Steven Adams, genius singer/songwriter, & guitarist with The Broken Family Band. Stepping away from the cutting sarcasm & American vocal styling employed with TBFB, our hero has turned his hand to crafting honest, heartfelt songs about the intricacies of living, loving and losing in London.  
**TRACK & FIELD - CD**



Available NOW from all good record stores and mail order outlets. Also available from ....  
Distributed by CARGO RECORDS UK - [www.cargorecords.co.uk](http://www.cargorecords.co.uk) / [info@cargorecords.co.uk](mailto:info@cargorecords.co.uk)





## singles club

Words: **Everett True**

Illustration: **Hannah Barton**

**Malcolm Middleton** is clearly saving his best material for himself: compared to his solo single 'Break My Heart' (Chemikal Underground), the new **Arab Strap** short-play 'Dream Sequence' isn't lush or poppy or provocative, it's dreary. Still, music isn't a competition is it? Man, it becomes wearing, the way both Moffat and Middleton continue to put themselves down, swear gratuitously and whine about life, but at least Middleton does it to a swinging beat you can hum to.

See the Mercury Music Prize? How dire. A bunch of aging rockers dressed in skinny ties, all ploughing the same 1978 riff that served The Jags and The Vapours so well. Who? Exactly. **Bloc Party** differentiated themselves by sounding like Snow Patrol. Their new single 'Two More Years' (Wichita) is so dismal I can't find words to describe it. New Leeds hopefuls **O Fracas** sound like they've been closeted away with just two records for the last 12 months, one the Franz Ferdinand album. What a great idea! Bet no one else has thought of it. 'Zeroes And Ones' (Marquis Cha Cha) is almost entirely pointless. Indie bands. You gotta hate them. If only you could tell them apart.

**Dan Sartain** is far cooler than his debut UK single 'Tryin To Say' (One Little Indian) hints. Sartain is a troubadour from Birmingham, Alabama – rugged in a rejected recruit kind of way – with a voice like cable and flame. He's 21, and has already released three albums full of sparse, tumbledown rock 'n' roll brimming over with indignation. The

A-side is fine, in a Hives way (yawn): far better to switch to the B-sides, especially 'Cobras Pt II' which rocks like Jonathan Richman brought up watching *Rocky*. That good.

Next to Sartain, **Test Icicles'** lovely lurid green vinyl seven-inch 'Boa Vs Python' (Domino) – metal meets art house Scots rock meets *NME* – sounds overproduced. Sure, it ain't a competition. Maybe it should be.

Had to happen eventually, New York has discovered The Pastels. More specifically, NYC has discovered the echoed vocals and jangling guitars of 1983-era Pastels. Strange. Of course I dig this. The band is called **caUSE co-MOTION!**, and 'This Just Won't Last' (What's Your Rupture?) is all Pop Art sprightliness and twee anger. Hmm.

Even stranger is Boston outfit **Pants Yell!**'s seven-inch, '83 In '05' (Paper Cities). The title is a reference to my debut single '73 In 83': and the song is a plaintive ode to mid-Eighties Creation Records, namechecking Alan McGee, Momus and My Bloody Valentine. "I'll admit I'm no Jerry Thackray," the boy wistfully sings – and I think we can all be grateful for that. [www.unpopular-records.com](http://www.unpopular-records.com)

Also available from Unpopular is former *Plan B* cover stars, pre-teenage sisters **Smooch**'s debut UK seven-inch, 'Massive Cure'. Two short, melancholy-sweet snippets of what it's like to be a 12-year-old living in Seattle. 'Massive Cure' has the same naive magic as NYC street minstrel Marianne Nowotny.

Unpopular are also releasing a series of three-inch CD-r's, the very spit of DIY culture. The latest three are **Monster Bobby** (of The Pipettes)'s solo offering (rudimentary electronica matched to Sixties pop melodies and words), **Electrum**'s 'Like I Said' EP (melancholy femme-pop, lush and shimmering with MBV promise) and **Blind Cowboys'** self-titled four-track – another Pipettes' side project, this time featuring *Plan B* writer Jon Falcone's pastoral leanings. Man, this is getting incestuous! But that's the spirit of DIY for you: everyone knows everyone and it doesn't take much to join, just an enthusiastic email or couple of chords strummed together.

Some great summer singles here. **Dr Dog**'s 'The World May Never Know' (Rough Trade) suggests that The Rutles really were more talented than the butts of their wit. Forget The Beatles vs The Rolling Stones. True music aficionados have long been worrying over the Rutles/Beatles divide. When does a parody cease being a parody? Albertos Y Lost Trio Paranoias' caustic take-off of punk was far better than 90 per cent of its targets. Likewise, **Pete Doherty** – his single, 'Littl'ans'/Their Way' (Rough Trade), is an effortless swagger through ancient punk territory, half Clash and half cutie jangle. Why isn't it considered satire, though?

Sticking with summer, we have **Devendra Banhart**. Man, how great is 'I Feel Just Like Child' (XL) – false start, chugging Canned Heat groove, bluesy childish lyrics and all? There's also a split 5RC seven-inch, one part Devendra (a devotional cover

of 'Support Our Troops Oh!') and one part blipped-out US deconstructionists **Xiu Xiu** ('The Body Breaks'). He could recite the phonebook and make it sound like faeries plotting mischief by moonlight.

Quick! Over here! There's a new **Brakes** single, 'Ring A Ding Ding' (Rough Trade). This, I like. Imagine Hüsker Dü given over to amorphous Camper Van Beethoven mannerisms: lines repeated with growing passion, hooks that make me go weak at the knees. Not what I'd expect from members of British Sea Power and Electric Soft Parade. Maybe I should go back and listen to them...? Nah!

Even better is **The Research**'s outrageously poppy 'C'mon Chameleon/I Love You, But...' (At Large), but this isn't a comp... Right? Right. Two beautiful, wickedly crafted slices of melodious boy-girl pop that straddle several of my current favourites, not least Canada's The Diskettes, Franz Ferdinand, Herman Düne and even The Roches' mischievous early Eighties harmonies. I don't think I'll ever tire of it.

Likewise, **Misty's Big Adventure**'s magnificent 'Hey Man!' (SL). C'mon world, catch up why don't cha? They sound like The Specials doing *Sesame Street*, spooky and wired, the cubist chocolate hedgehog cakes dancing a jig with the Cookie Monster. The A-side is a frantic, horn-led blast of inspired madness. The B-side is even finer. The B-52s always were way more punk than The Clash.

OK. Here's what I was listening to mid-Eighties. Big Flame's frantic maelstrom of guitar noise: The Noseflutes' warped and deadpan funny take on Captain Beefheart: Bogshed's angular outsider dancing: The Nightingales' laconic post-punk drawl: The Fall. **Sarandon**'s seven-track EP 'The Big Flame'

## Indie bands. You gotta hate them. If only you could tell them apart

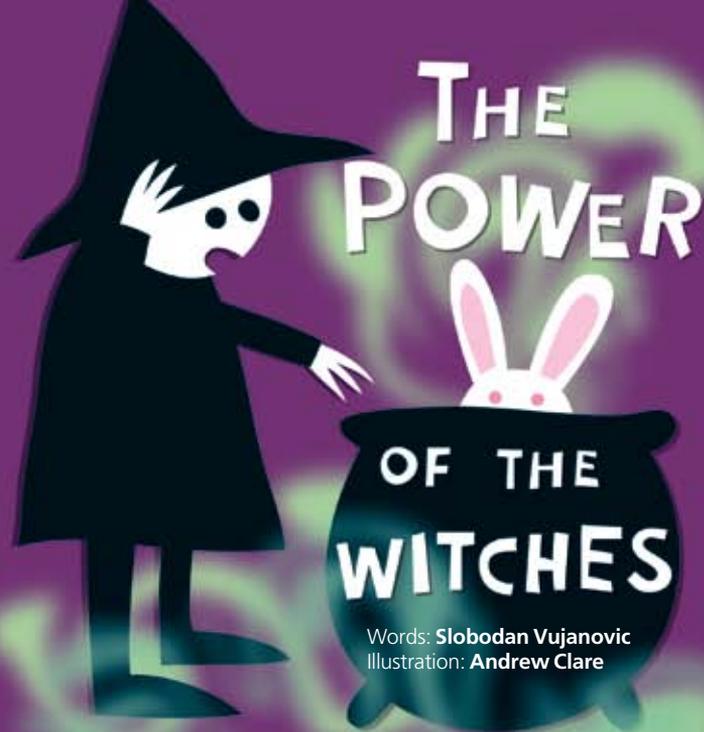
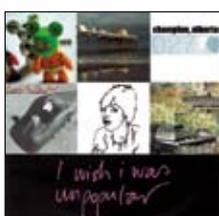
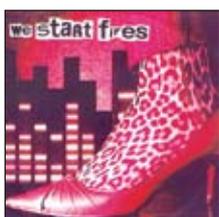
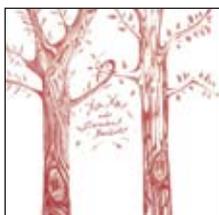
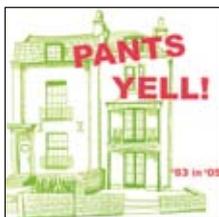
(Banazan) recalls the above, and more. "Three rehearsals, one gig, two recording sessions, 14 songs, 14 inches," they boast. This is articulate, quintessentially British pop.

In similar territory, **Shooting At Unarmed Men**'s debut 'The Pink Ink' (Too Pure) contains one-third of defunct Cardiff trio Mclusky, and is suitably brooding and malignant. More shouty, more obviously post-Riot Grrrr! – but still jagged and burning with attitudinal desire like a 2005 Go-Go's – is **We Start Fires** debut 'Strut' (Marquis Cha Cha). It rocks, the way The Chalets don't.

Want minimal, gentle, affecting, indiepop that draws upon Daniel Johnston, Television Personalities and Marine Girls? Me too. In moderation. So try these: Jeffrey's brother **Jack Lewis** debut solo release, the 'Hero Worship' EP (Smoking Gun) and the split **Lesbo Pig/Humosexual** single ([www.irrk.org](http://www.irrk.org)). OK?

**Umlaut**'s debut single has been compared to Death Cab For Cutie. Man, that's cruel. It's also not fair. 'Winter Coat' (Fantastic Plastic) is more like a Saddle Creek version of Pavement, via Sheffield.

Finally, London's **Skill 7 Stamina 12** occupy the fertile middle ground between someone all poised and exotic (Deerhoof, say) and a malleable post-punk outfit (Glaxo Babies or The Transmitters). Their self-titled split 12-inch single with **Socrates** (Junior Aspirin) is so fucking refreshing: not limited by genre or imagination, this is kinetic art punk at its finest. A girl shrieks fast and weird in a disjointed falsetto, the guitars and drums race around in rhythmic funky abandon like ancient p-funk kings Rip Rig And Panic (or Scotland's Life Without Buildings), and the mood is intense. Genius.



**Wolf Parade: Shine A Light (Sub Pop)** Remain In Light for a Funeral.

**Blowfly: Your Precious Cunt (Alternative Tentacles)** KKK Took My Pussy Away.

**White Rose Movement: Pig Hale Jam (Independiente demo)** Somebody Told Me About Confusion.

**Blackbud: Forever (Fierce Panda)** Goodbye And Hello To My Sweetheart The Drunk.

**Bark Psychosis: INQB8R (Alt Mix) (Fire)** Mogwai Feel Satan.

**Perry Keyes: 2nd Time I Saw You (Laughing Outlaw)** (I Don't Want To Go To) Chelsea, But Nashville.

**Cobra Killer & Kapajkos: Helicopter 666 (Monika)** Ukrainski Vistupi (German Edition).

**Devendra Banhart: Support Our Troops (5RC)** Break On Trout Mask Replica.

**The Young Knives: Coastguard (Transgressive)** Bone Machine In The Metal Box.

**War Against Sleep: Damaged Woman (Fire)** No Woman No Cry (Damaged Version).

**Tortoise and Bonnie Prince Billy: Love Is Love (Domino)** Love Hurts Even Silver Apples.

**Gravy Train!!! : I Wanna Wanna Wanna Wanna Wanna (5RC)** I Just Wanna Be Your Puppet On A String.

**Black Mountain: Buffalo Swan (Jagjaguwar)** There Is No One That Will Take Care Of You On The Led Zeppelin (aka The Best Fuckin' Song Almost 10 Minutes Long Ever Written).

**The Double: On Our Way (Matador)** Vivadixiesubmarinetransmissionokcomputerplot.

## MeDUuuuLlLa.a.a. On Drugs

**Paal Flaata: Right Next To Nothing (Glitterhouse)** Where The Wild Roses Grow In Norway.

**Aoki Takamasa & Tujiko Noriko: Nolicom (Fatcat)** MeDUuuuLlLa.a.a. On Drugs.

**Sam Shinazzi: Wyoming (Laughing Outlaw)** It's A Shame About Cold Roses.

**Holopaw: Holiday (Sub Pop)** Love Song For The Moon And The Antarctic.

**Wilderness: End Of Freedom (Jagjaguwar)** Down The Black Mountain.

**Dr Dog: Today (Rough Trade)** Yellow Submarine (Wyclef Jean Lo-Fi Mix).

**Sambassadeur: The Only Living Girl (Club AC30)** Darklands 500.

**Port Sulphur: Alex Discord (Diskomix) (Creeping Bent)** International Gigolo. Ghost Rider.

**Super Furry Animals: Oi Frango (Rough Trade)** The Man Don't Give A Whistle (The Fuck Song).

**Kill Yourself: Coffee (Gringo)** Song About Alice Donut And Rapeman.

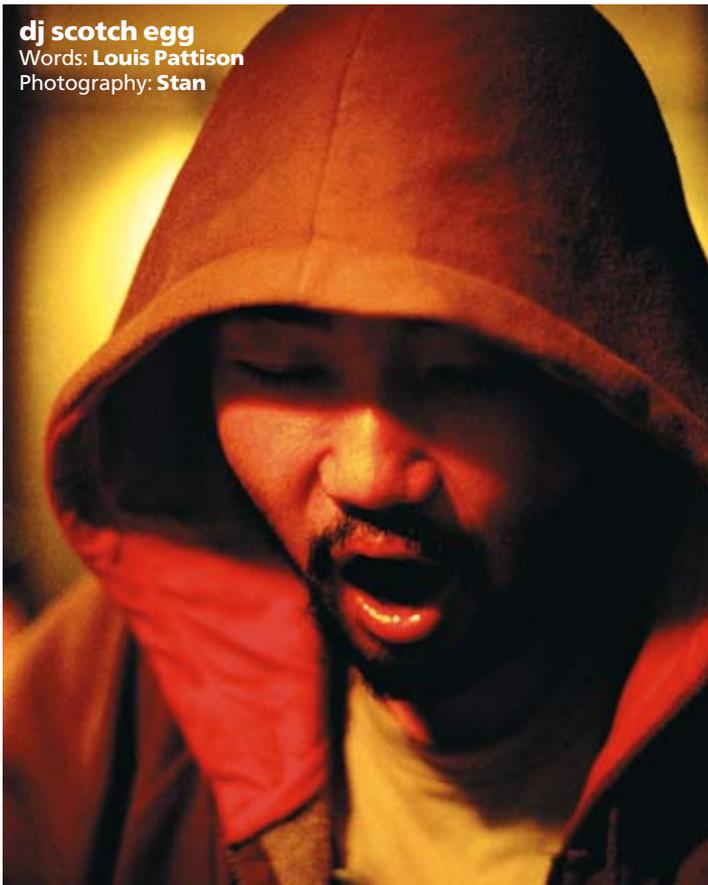
**P:ano: Storm The Gates (Mint)** In Case We Die Please Call Moldy Peaches. (This man is a genius. Certifiable, but a genius – Ed.)

**Radio 94.9**  
Sundays at 8pm till 10pm  
[mocvestica@yahoo.com](mailto:mocvestica@yahoo.com)

**dj scotch egg**

Words: **Louis Pattison**

Photography: **Stan**



Some believe in charms, some believe in angels – but Shigeru Ishihara has no need for either. A Tokyo resident now holed up in Brighton, as DJ Scotch Egg he's now identified his own personal totem. It's not a scotch egg. It's a fast food restaurant. It serves fried chicken. And now he's written an album about it.

*KFC Core* is 11 tracks of brutal Gameboy electronica and backyard singalong, a tribute to Ishihara's favourite foodstuff and a cardboard-boxed life philosophy. Kentucky Fried Chicken is everything to Ishihara. It's mental stimulation: "After I eat it, it gives me a psychedelic feeling! We jam and make good music." He claims it's the reason he moved to the UK: "The KFC's more juicy!" And one visit to the Brighton branch saw him form an immediate bond with friend and mentor Henry Collins, AKA breakcore alchemist Shitmat. "We ordered the same meal, combo meal," explains Ishihara. "And we order the same side-meal, coleslaw!"

Live shows see Scotch Egg hit the dancefloor in trucker cap and pulled up hoodie, hurling discounted scotch eggs and shrieking things like "KFCCKCK!" into a megaphone for 10 minutes. Sound-wise, it's the point where breakcore finally obliterates the last vestigial genetic trace of drum'n'bass and mutates into J-Pop novelty and pure Whitehouse-style noise. It tends to split audiences, and seldom more so than when Scotch Egg's friends in The Go! Team invited him to join

## 'After I eat KFC, it gives me a psychedelic feeling!'

them on their UK tour back in February. "I never played with such a pop band before this, I usually play with more noise-oriented musicians," explains Shigeru, "And I was wondering how it was gonna be. In Liverpool I had really good response, but in Glasgow people were throwing pints. I throw them back scotch eggs and shout at them to fuck off."

Scotch Egg is behind *Wrong Music*, a Brighton club night he runs with Shitmat and other likeminded souls that's a front for fellow artists like Countryside Alliance Crew, Phil Collins 3, DJ 100000000, and "anyone making good stuff to play out". Troublingly, however, Scotch Egg's role as Jester of the Brighton noise scene currently hangs in the balance. With his student visa due to expire, loyal fans have constructed [www.savethescotchegg.co.uk](http://www.savethescotchegg.co.uk) – an online petition dedicated to winning this "genius of wrongness" permanent leave to stay. "This is heavy stuff," admits Shigeru. But with 75 names and counting, what sort of hard-hearted ruler would deport this man?

[www.adaadat.com](http://www.adaadat.com)



**remote viewer: japan**

Words: **Aaron Shaul**

Illustration: **Vincent Vanoli**

From the earliest stages of planning my trip to Japan, I envisioned opening up the weekly events guide, where the names of excellent Japanese bands would stream out: the post-hardcore of Melt-Banana, New Age rockers OOIOO, even the saccharine pill of J-pop would satisfy my jones for authentic Japanese music. Abject horror was my reaction when I arrived, scanned the concert list for the upcoming two weeks, and found the most tepid pop shit from *my*

seminal Nineties noise-rock outfits Ground Zero and Altered States before breaking out on his own and becoming a conduit of sorts for the Kansai area's underground. Going solo for the first set, with the aid of a single electric guitar and a sequencer, he unfurled strands of sound into blankets of noise. The casualness with which Uchihashi tossed off his entirely improvised riffs and drones revealed a seasoned musician with a vision. Watching him cycle his errant noises through his sequencer while the amusement park's rollercoaster rocketed by the storefront windows behind him was mesmerising.

## He wove strands of sound into blankets of noise

continent clogging the Japanese club circuit. But a friend with the inside track ushered me away from Tokyo's bright lights and West worship into the shadowy congestion of Osaka.

Uchihashi Kazuhisa's unassuming club/art space, The Bridge, stands in downtown Osaka as part of a cluster of businesses that includes the 'Disneyworld of spas', Spa World, coupled with an amusement park. On entering, signs quickly indicated that this would be no 'rock' show. The first came in the form of rigid wooden seats designed more for scoliosis correction than concert slacking. The resounding courteous silence prior to the show was another clue: no obnoxious cell-phone conversations, no sceneric trash trolling the crowd – my jaded Detroit mind could barely handle the idea that people were attending shows to enjoy the music! Culture shock even struck at the 'bar', which was little more than a lone twentysomething dispensing Asahi beer into plastic cups.

The club owner, Uchihashi, was the featured performer. A mainstay of Japan's avant-garde scene for over two decades, he was a part of the

Following a brief intermission, Uchihashi again took a seat, joined this time by three additional musicians. Acoustic guitarist Bunsho Nishikawa took a seat beside me, while Satoshi Inoue and Yasuhisa Mizutani provided subtle percussive clacks from the as-weird-as-it-sounds contraption of saxophones with microphones fashioned in place of mouthpieces. Vocalist Sizzle Ohtaka occasionally wandered in from the audience to the stage to recite brief passages of poetry. None of the musicians directly faced each other; each member relied on the initiative of the other to propel the sparse sound in new directions. Very little amplification was used to enhance the ensemble's formless creations and, for a former master of cacophony, Uchihashi's evening exercise rarely rose louder than a whisper. To the unattentive ear, it would've sounded like errant ramblings, the ambient noise between bands at an average show, but in the context of that overwhelming city, at that unique moment, it proved to be an indelible soundtrack.

# AIDAN SMITH'S FANCY BARREL

*'Fancy Barrel'*  
the debut album from  
Aidan Smith is released on  
17th October 2005

Available on CD & LP  
on Analogue Catalogue

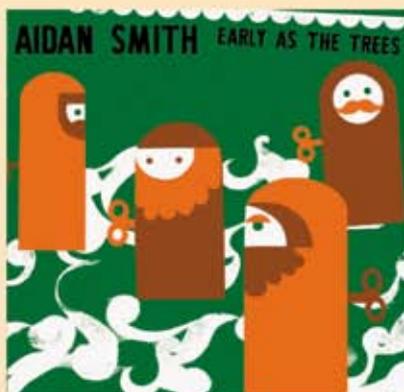
UK live dates during  
October & November 2005  
See press for details

[www.analoguecat.com](http://www.analoguecat.com)  
[www.aidansmith.net](http://www.aidansmith.net)

*"An unlikely collision of Deryck Guyler,  
the Penguin Cafe Orchestra and  
the Beta Band"*  
- Uncut

*"Aidan Smith is a beautiful talent  
out on his own"*  
- Word Magazine

*"It's not hard to imagine him  
becoming a household name eccentric"*  
- The Independent



'Early As The Trees'  
7 track mini-album out now

*"If Badly Drawn Boy had  
swapped his beanie for a  
thinking cap he might have  
achieved this skewed brilliance"*  
- NME



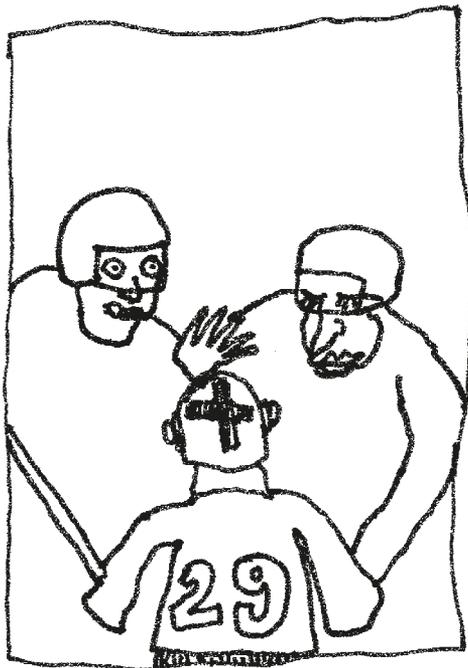
Frances McKee - 'Sunny Moon'  
The debut solo album from  
The Vaseline's Frances McKee  
Released January 2006

*"A songwriter of great power  
and gothic imagination"*  
- The Sunday Times



'Check Out My Rifle Range'  
the new single from  
Supreme Vagabond Craftsman  
Released 28th November 2005

'Just You, Me & The Baby'  
the long awaited second album  
Released early 2006



**dennis driscoll**

Words: **Everett True**  
 Illustration: **Dennis Driscoll**

I watch Dennis perform in a tiny Brighton coffee bar – no audience. Rain pounding, and he stutters and hesitates a lot between songs, but he’s singing his heart out. The songs are painful and acoustic. He sounds like Phil Ochs or Daniel Johnston, with the pathos of Kermit’s Muppet nephew sat green and forlorn halfway up the stairs. A drawing on his 1998 album, the 31-track *Hello Dennis Driscoll* shows him saying, “For my entire life I’ve been sad.” “Why have you been sad?” a duck asks. “I don’t know,” he replies. I watch Dennis perform on a couch in my basement – and he talks constantly, scribbles notes, clarifies meaning, informs me of the time he made

**‘When I was little I was really charismatic’**

a zombie horror movie in Olympia, WA, with Kurt Cobain’s sister, Kim.

His sincerity is disarming: 2002’s *Voices In The Fog* may sound slightly more polished in an Olympian way, but there’s still a desperate edge to the beauty.

“I identify with my audience in the way that I might as well be one of them. I enjoy talking to people. I like to learn. I can learn more things to replace other things in my brain that I feel might need a little more pizzazz or stimulus.

“When I was little, I stood on a platform in the back yard and sang ‘Pinocchio’. I’d sing and dance a lot. I was really charismatic. There was a play in the fourth grade, *The Pied Piper*, and when it came to my turn to try out I froze so I didn’t get the part. I had stage fright. Somehow I turned that inside out to feeling like there’s a shield onstage, where I’m protected by intimacy.

“In high school my aunt gave me a tape by Alan Sherman, a novelty artist who did ‘Hello Mother Hello Father’. I’d sing songs off that to the tune of *HMS Pinafore*. My dad sang to that a lot too, and Johnny Cash. My mum was of the Fifties generation, but my dad was a crooner. In high school I liked Megadeth, their album *Sweating Bullets*, where they talked about the environment and important stuff like that. I liked The Beatles and Metallica. A lot of old bands I want to hear again, but a lot I really don’t.”

[www.dennisdriscoll.org](http://www.dennisdriscoll.org)



**countdown to ladyfest**

Words: **Beth Capper**  
 Illustration: **Richard Forbes-Hamilton**

Picture this: an outlandish music venue on the outskirts of Tulsa, Oklahoma – a town situated in the middle of America’s Bible Belt. Here, being overtly gay or radically feminist is like a death sentence. There are some places where you just don’t admit those things, however anathema that might be to ‘the cause’. This isn’t the most likely location for a Le Tigre show; yet here we are.

Three girls, standing onstage in ‘Stop Bush’ outfits, are stepping in time to choreographed dance routines; their throwaway danceability mendaciously disguising their lyrical ferocity. Vocalist JD Samson steps up to the mic to introduce the next song: “This is about Butch Dyke visibility!” she proclaims.

This is a one-off night in Tulsa. Imagine Ladyfest in a place like this.

Ladyfest Is Happening! proclaims the flyer. It’s a Thursday night at Brighton’s Penthouse and the whole team are there, dancing, stumbling around drunk, throwing Bikini Kill records onto the turntable and eating cupcakes. You can’t move for people.

**Ladyfest incites antagonism**

This is going to be the best Ladyfest ever! Ladyfest is exhausting. It’s three-hour meetings; endless debates trying to reconcile individual attitudes; it’s constant voting, taking minutes, writing lists, making agendas; it’s time-consuming and for the most part, fucking tedious. We’re damned if we do and damned if we don’t. Ladyfest incites antagonism. Some view it as a venture perpetuating separatist politics; that we’re building an exclusive old boys’ club for girls out of hostility towards men. Others condemn us for not being extreme enough; through involving men, we’re acting in a way counter to our entire ethos.

It’s easier to view our intentions negatively. But Ladyfest aims to provide a celebratory platform to

promote women working in the arts. That’s the official line. It’s about change: instituting an environment where women are able to create without scrutiny; where female artists are taken as seriously as their male counterparts. Each Ladyfest has its own individual aesthetic; and mostly, they’re born out of radically disparate feminisms. Ladyfest Brighton is about fostering inclusiveness; involving both men and women, with the emphasis that women perform those roles where they have characteristically been marginalised.

“Ladyfest is important because it’s something that happens with flagrant disregard to the prejudices that abound within music scenes,” says Verity Susman, Electrelane’s vocalist/keyboardist. “When we started out, it seemed that people thought we were just doing what we were capable of, rather than seeing it, as we did, as the kind of music that we wanted to make. Now things have come full circle and people say to us, without a hint of irony, ‘Wow, you surprised me, you’re actually really good’. In the past, when people criticised us for not being able to play, we were simply indicative of ‘female inability’.”

“Middling girl bands are the rule, not the exception,” writes one reviewer, hastily trying to compensate for his adulation of Electrelane’s third album, *Axes*. When a myth is reiterated as many times as this one, you almost start to believe it. In reality, middling bands, in general, are the rule. Try sifting through the numerous demo tapes received on a daily basis by your average indie label. Logically – considering the bulk of these are created and produced by men – you would have to deduce that guys just can’t play their instruments. You could draw such conclusions: but you don’t.

JD Samson adds: “I think my interest in making music was definitely thwarted by my fear to be in front of people, expressing my gender non-traditionally. By being marketed within the mainstream music industry, while occupying a position outside of it; I hope to create a space for other butch lesbians within this scene. Ladyfest plays an important role in facilitating such spaces.”

*Ladyfest Brighton is from 20 to 23 October, featuring Afrirampo, Electrelane, Spider And The Webs and more.* [www.ladyfestbrighton.co.uk](http://www.ladyfestbrighton.co.uk)

www.firerecords.com

coming soon

MERCURY REV. TEXT OF LIGHT. MIKE WATT. JESSICA BAILIFF. MINUS 5. WILLY MASON. MONICA QUEEN. SILENT LEAGUE. GREEN PAJAMAS. GRAVENHURST

and many many more  
Chamber Music

LIARS. HOPEWELL. VIRGIN PASSAGES. BENDER. DAVE CLOUD & GOSPEL OF POWER

and many many more  
Keep Mother 10" Vinyl Series

NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL  
On Avery Island

TENEBOUS  
Tenebrous

GERRY MITCHELL & LITTLE SPARTA  
Scalpal Slice

TELLS  
Hope Your Wounds Heal

SANNA  
Remote

DAVID HURN  
How I Came To Hate My Saviour

THE GREAT DEPRESSION  
Prefix  
Preaching To The Fire

now showing

PUERTO MUERTO  
Songs of Muerto County

BARK PSYCHOSIS  
400 Winters  
Codename: Dustsucker  
The Black Meat parts 1&2

MATTHEW BAYOT  
Circling Buzzards

WAR AGAINST SLEEP  
Invitation To The Feast

TELEVISION PERSONALITIES  
The Complete Back Catalogue. Closer To God, The Painted Word, They Could Have Been Bigger Than The Beatles and more...



### volcanic tongue

Words: **Alex Neilson**

Illustration: **Marcus Oakley**

Since moving to Glasgow in 2001, I have witnessed a blossoming interest in wayward and improvised music and met scores of residents who are dedicated to unpicking the fabric of conventional music. The success of annual experimental music festivals such as Subcurrent, Instal, Le Weekend and Free Radicals has helped establish Glasgow as a place for renegade work and play. One of the most exciting things to emerge from this is the distribution label Volcanic Tongue.

Run by David Keenan and Heather Leigh Murray (of Taurpis Tula, Scorces and Charalambides), VT offers access to otherwise untraceable gems in underground art and ephemera and acts as a maypole for some of the worlds' most liberated and fanatical musical minds. Its attractive design, regular updates and columns from such experts as Matthew Bower, Tom Carter and Alan Cummings make it a refreshing antidote to the anal academicism often associated with avant-garde music. I recently picked up a few of their releases.

First on the CD player is *Moth Lake*, the second album by titanic free drummer Chris Corsano and guitarist Bill Nace, operating under the collective banner **Vampire Belt**. This is frenzied, no-fi rock music at its most charged and sounds like everything has been turned up to 11 and recorded through a telephone receiver. Nace conjures the spirit of electricity from his guitar in exultant, stroboscopic live wire riffs that are constantly propelled and obliterated by Corsano's brute drumming. In stark contrast is **Mirror's** *Viking Burial For A French Car*, which starts with a minute of silence and gradually ascends into glacial, sirenic murmurs like dual moons gliding towards the same horizon. The CD unravels very slowly with a forlorn and alien grace created by

## A maypole for the most liberated musical minds

ambiguous, heaving e-bowed sounds, sporadically interrupted by distant percussive clanks and proto-industrial whirring.

On **Black Boned Angel's** *Supereclipse*, New Zealand based musician Campbell Kneale offers vocal babbling behind a curtain of distortion and monolithic guitar chords. He's a key component of New Zealand's experimental music scene, which also boasts Alastair Galbraith, Peter Wright and Bruce Russell's *The Dead C*.

Volcanic Tongue's concerts in Glasgow have brought some of the brightest supernovas in this global alien noise constellation to the city: Keiji Heino, Jandek, Jack Rose, Hototoguisu, Scorces, Fursaxa and Josephine Foster. After this year's Instal festival, for which VT are acting as creative consultants, you can add Sun City Girls, Pauline Oliveros and Birchville Cat Motel to that list. [www.volcanictongue.com](http://www.volcanictongue.com)



### magic daddy

Words: **Nicola Meighan**

Photography: **Mark Connelly**

From the furtive party underclimes of Glasgow he surfaces, conjuring wack-pop as one might a string of pearly white rabbits from a festering hat.

Hey Magic Daddy! We like you, we do. We like yr juddering techno bleep-cantatas; yr Optimo-wangled split single with Truffle Club; yr creation of the finest, perkier genre that's yet to uplift our sagging millennium: *Microgoth*.

So, are you a real magician?

"Er, no... I lied about that part of my name. I don't really have strong opinions about magic, to be honest." Oh. But what about swede-headed warlock-cum-sickbag Paul Daniels? What of Burberry-swaggering rap sorcerer Dynamo? And wouldn't you just love a diamanté-pantied glamorous assistant?

"Hmmm. Definitely not that Debbie what's-her-face, anyway."

## 'I've no immediate plans for fatherhood, I'm afraid'

Oh. OK, cool! So – are you a dad, in that case? Sire to a harvest of angel-haired wunderkinds?

"Haha, no... no immediate plans for fatherhood, I'm afraid. I actually lied about that bit of my name too. I just thought it sounded good." Oh. "Some people love my recording name, some hate it – including my girlfriend. She thinks it makes me sound like a paedophile."

Or maybe just a handsome, tousled liar.

The untruths and misconceptions may fly like an airborne house of cards but let's forgive self-proclaimed charlatan and "hyper-intelligent aroma" Magic Daddy – one Greg Hurst from Glasgow via Nottingham via "the inner spiral arm of the Andromeda Galaxy", laydeez and gentlemen – because he makes "glitch-bitch-step-pop". And because he loves Fugazi, Timbaland and Akufen.

He's been making electronic music for a decade. "And I've finally convinced a couple of people to release the stuff," he flatly rejoices. What sort of stuff? Pop music made with weird noises. My music varies from hip hop paced electronica to breakbeat, techno and house," he elucidates.

So Daddy – can I call you Daddy? – what other miscellany tickles your fancy? "Hmm. The Clash, Notorious BIG, Stevie Wonder, The Smiths, Brian Wilson, Isolée. Oh – and soft synths – little programs that mimic classic synths like Moogs, Roland 101s, 303s – oh – and Bucks Fizz..."

Bucks Fizz? What – the band or the drink?

"Ruining good champagne with orange juice? Never. Give me 'Making Your Mind Up' any day."

[www.magicdaddy.tk](http://www.magicdaddy.tk)

# forte distribution

## NEW RELEASES OUT NOW!!



**The Immortal Lee County Killers**  
These Bones Will Rise To Love You Again

The third instalment from these explosive punk-blues insurgents. Recently expanding to become a three-piece, the ILCK3 have honed their blues with a punk snarl and take no prisoners!

Funhouse Recordings  
CD only



**Jack Rose**  
Kensington Blues

Fourth full length from Jack, an inspired mix of styles and sounds. His most diverse outing so far, with straight ragtime, heavy 12 string and that sweet sweet lap guitar all checking in. Includes a John Fahey cover.

Beautiful Happiness  
CD only



**Lightning Bolt**  
Hypermagic Mountain

All killer, no filler follow up to 2003's 'Wonderful Rainbow'. Hypermagic Mountain slams into hyperdrive for a full 57 minute ride. With just bass and drums this two-piece have created the densest sound imaginable.

Load Records  
Limited Deluxe Double Vinyl and CD



**Int'l Shades**  
Hash Wednesday

Formed by Bob Bert (Sonic Youth, Pussy Galore, etc) and Mark C (Live Skull, Spoiler), with Tim Foltahn (Two Dollar Guitar) and Dorien Cary. Creating a 'Foundation of Sound-Ation', this is modern day NYC psychedelia!

Cass Records  
Limited Orange Vinyl, and CD



**The USA Is A Monster**  
Wohaw

Second album for Load from this power duo, conceived of as a double LP. Moods on this opus go from quiet campfire drone to suntan lotion slippery cortex massaging of Phoenix all-star Meat Puppets.

Load Records  
Limited Deluxe Double Vinyl and CD



**The Hospitals**  
I've Visited The Island Of Jocks And Jazz

Second album guaranteed to confuse the garage rock crowd something powerful. This album has plenty of smothered spuzz like their debut, but there's more, hooks aplenty and the rawest guitar sound imaginable! UK tour at end of October.

Load Records  
LP and CD



**Prurient**  
Black Vase

Like a dense fog drifting over your village, Prurient has come to fuck you up. Dominick Fernow is Prurient, Black Vase is a dynamic sound, not a blurring fuzz. But sick symphony of sickness so grand the gods themselves have taken note.

Load Records  
Limited double vinyl and CD



**Neon Blonde**  
Chandeliers in the Savannah

Neon Blonde is the Alter ego of Blood Brothers vocalist Johnny Whitney and Bassist Mark Gajadhar. Less of the frantic hardcore of the Blood Brothers, a more eclectic, dancing and melodious venture.

Dim Mak Records  
LP and CD



**Numbers**  
We're Animals

Their first full length for Kill Rock Stars sees Numbers moving on from the premier party rock dance tag they are attributed to, they have "matured" now with a more singular sound, and epic mind driving sound.

Kill Rock Stars  
CD



**Various**  
The Enlightened Family

Inaugural release for this new label co-founded by Bianca Cassidy (Cocorosie), a delightful collection of exclusive songs including tracks from Devendra Banhart, Jana Hunter, Diage Cluck, Vashit Bunyan (unreleased track from 1968), and more besides.

Voodoo-EROS  
LP and CD

### FORTE MUSIC DISTRIBUTION EXCLUSIVE LABELS INCLUDE:

202020  
5rc  
azap  
ba da bing!  
beautiful happiness  
blackball  
boss tuneage  
broken rekkids  
buddyhead  
communion  
dead and gone  
dioristina stair builders  
dim mak  
emperor jones

and many more...

estrus  
flameshovel  
frenchkiss  
funhouse  
galaxia  
gern blandsten  
in-fidelity  
in the red  
jade tree  
kill rock stars  
latino bugger veil  
load  
merge  
newest industry

ny vag  
pattern 25  
recordhead  
shadrack & duxbury  
suicide squeeze  
vth  
voodoo-eros  
web of mimicry  
young god

## Available in all good record shops and mail orders

for wholesale info please visit  
[www.fortedistribution.co.uk](http://www.fortedistribution.co.uk)  
[info@fortedistribution.co.uk](mailto:info@fortedistribution.co.uk)

# fashion

MIA Photography: **Simon Fernandez**  
Necklace Photography: **Pauliina Petit**

## spotted: MIA

So *obviously* myself and Cis, one of my favourite people to team up with on a dancefloor ever, have positioned ourselves right in front of the DJ booth for Diplo's set, because he's like the cutest boy in London this weekend and my new crush and if we dance here we can perv on him and his astonishingly sharp cheekbones whenever we pause to catch our breath. Except there's none of that anyway because breathing is for pussies, pussies like the people who are only dancing tentatively instead of getting totally crunk like us, like that girl in the crappy too-large T-shirt next to us, and anyway why *do* people keep pushing past us to talk to her, is she Diplo's PR or something? OMIGOD it's HER, it's MIA, keepondancing keepondancing don't let on that we've recognised her cos we're not fanboys like the others and the only thing I'd want to say to her is that she went to the same middle school as me except seven years in advance, and to be perfectly honest both Cis and I own her ass in terms of dancefloor moves, and hang on is it sad or is it cute to scream along to every word of 'Bucky Done Gun' when she's *right there*?

**Alex Macpherson**



25:8:2005



**do it yourself: stylist's own**

New Zealand-based Estelle Stroud, aka Stylist's Own, creates personalised and sweet creations from your own hoards of leftover jewels and trinkets. Those broken bits of ornamentation that you can't throw away are the tools of her trade, as she combines lace, beads, animals, charms, keys, dice and fake fruit to make new pieces inspired by, "Buried treasure and ladies of leisure".

A staunch DIY fan, her current favourite bit of jewellery is, "A piece by designer Luke Sales. It's in issue 58 of [Australian design magazine] Oyster and it's mega: a neckpiece made out of watches, earrings, medallions, a tiny stuffed toy and more necklaces!"

Music-wise, Estelle says, "I listen to a lot of local Wellington bands, such as Fat Freddy's, Recloose, The Blackseeds, Scribes Of Ra, Deva Mahal, Ill Phonics and Team That from DGH studios. Also, my boyfriend's turntables are right next to my workspace so when he gets on the decks I can get down and be creative."

If you could design jewellery for one band or artist, who would it be?

"All independent female artists. And Boy George."

[stylistsown@graffiti.net](mailto:stylistsown@graffiti.net)



**a life in t-shirts: !!!**

"Here's a list of the band shirts I've had, in roughly chronological order, 1 Sammy Hagar, 2 Quiet Riot, 2 Ratt, 1 Def Leppard, 1 Van Halen, 1 Lynryd Skynryd, 3 Depeche Mode, 2 U2, 2 The Cure, 3 Siouxsie and The Banshees, 7 The Smiths, 3 Morrissey, 1 Replacements, 1 Jesus and Mary Chain, 1 REM, 1 Joy Division, 1 New Order, 1 Bauhaus, 1 Peter Murphy, 1 Johnny Rotten, 1 The Specials, 1 NIN, 1 Bad Brains, 1 Big Black, 3 Black Flag, 1 Bad Brains, 2 Dead Kennedys, 1 MDC, 1 Impetus Inter, 1 Subhumans, 1 Jumpstart, 1 Meat Beat Manifesto, 1 Killing Joke, 1 Struggle, 1 Spitboy, 1 Actionaries, 1 Sinker, 1 Current, 1 Copout, 1 Los Crudos, 1 Jawbreaker, 1 Jawbox, 1 Circus Lupus, 1 Crain, 1 Wreck, 1 Angel Hair, 1 Prince, 1 The Fall, 1 Slits, 1 Popesmashers, 2 The Yah Mos, 1 The New States, 1 D'Angelo, 1 Ice Cube, 1 The Rapture, 4 The Faint, 1 The Locust, 1 Arab On Radar, 2 The Feeling, 2 LCD Soundsystem, 1 Franz Ferdinand, 1 Ronnie Spector, 1 Aphex, 4 OutHud, 6 !!!, 1 OutHud!!!!/Popesmashers tour, 1 OutHud!!!! tour and I'm looking for a good Sonic Youth shirt."

(Nic Offer, vocals)



**battles**

Words: **Daniel Trilling**  
Illustration: **Matt Pattinson**

As the saying goes, if you get a thousand geek boys and lock them in a room chained to a thousand electronic widgets, eventually they'll produce the complete works of Shakespeare. Or something like that, my memory isn't too good. Want to know why? It's because I'm having my head twisted by Battles. And I'm not alone – in the words of head guitar/electronics/keyboard player Tyondai Braxton, "Music that twists me is the kind I enjoy the most."

One hot June afternoon in Barcelona, driven underground by bad Spanish rap and the summer sun, I stumble across a gloomy cavern, filled with international emo grown-ups; all straining to see four of their kind spaz out in an array of new shapes.

Three of them are clustered around a shiny metal drumkit, one crash cymbal perched unfeasibly high above the drummer's head. That's Battles. Later I find out that they are a kind of post-hardcore supergroup, but for the moment, all I know is what I hear: a chiming guitar loop, repeated until the notes turn into little voices, all ooh-ing and aah-ing together. Then comes the beat: five in a bar makes more sense than four. After that come

**klashnekoff**

Words: **Richard P Stacey**



## 'Each phrase is like a character in a play'

the synths, firing Michael Nyman-shaped phrases at one another. Grungy riffs inspire taciturn head-nodding before things get bouncier. Someone starts beatboxing and now I'm throwing faux-hip hop shapes.

Battles formed in 2001, as a collaboration between former members of Helmet, Don Caballero and Storm And Stress. Originally they planned to feature an all-girl choir, but eventually settled for guitars, drums and an arsenal of effects boxes. So far they've released a handful of EPs on Monitor Records. Battles dismantle post rock, hip hop and serial music, only to reassemble the pieces in the wrong order. They have a method: it's based on phrases. Someone plays one. Then he plays it again. Then again. Then someone adds another phrase. Then they play them together. Then again. And so on, until they have many phrases zipping back and forth across the listener's consciousness, reducing his or her brain to a quivering, joyful mush. According to Tyondai, "Each phrase is like a character in a play. We each have tiny lines and find ways for them to communicate – that's what makes the song."

Some weeks later, we cross paths again. This time things aren't so rosy. A sweaty basement in Stoke Newington plus poor sound makes for a fuzzy mess. I leave feeling confused, craving something more accessible: lyrics, perhaps. But as Tyondai later tells me, that's kind of the point. "You can be expressive without saying, 'I'm sad. I'm happy.' There's so much life in music that you don't need to tell the audience how to feel. The kind of music that I appreciate the most is where you leave feeling both ecstatic and depressed. Sometimes words don't do it justice."

[www.bttls.com](http://www.bttls.com)

## 'I could be a UK Tupac'

When the mood takes him, Klashnekoff can be one fuck of a scary dude. Sometimes he's charming and sensitive and alert to traces of beauty in our sick, sick world but sometimes he's just too... alert, angry, offended.

Klashnekoff sparks up a joint and inhales, deep.

"It's real, innit? Certain times, I sit down thinking about I'd like to put a fucking mask on and kill some of these jankro types, d'ya understand?"

And, not for the first time, you're forced to grunt in agreement. You can see how his righteous anger fits in with UK black music circa 2005, how he's one of the few rappers with roots in the trad-orientated boom-bap UKHH scene to be embraced by the new school. You can see how he ended up with a Joe Buddah-produced banger on *Run The Road 2*. But you still ask him to explain.

"Klashnekoff is a phenomenon, bruv. Jammer broke it down to me one time. To them, grime is road music that's repping. And that's what I am. Especially for a lot of black youths. It's a cold statement to say, but they didn't care about UK hip hop."

What level can he see himself taking it to, commercially?

"I dunno, I'm a funny guy cos I've got 'nuff character. Put it this way, when I was younger, when I was more... " Cocky?" Cocky, but less scared by life, I would've been in S Club 7 or some dumb shit like that."

You blurt out, incredulous, that he must be kidding. Is this the same man who, in signature tune 'It's Murda', described himself with disgusted, defiant panache, as "That black cunt from out of Stokey, banana boat mango munchin' monkey"? The same guy whose 'Black Rose' spoke of troubled love with such poetry, such soul? Then he invokes Tupac and it all begins to make sense. The anger, the ambition. Humanity in all its variegated, contradictory glory.

"I reckon I could take on that level. Could be a UK Tupac, man. With a bit more..."

He stops for a minute, trying to find the right word. You offer one up consideration: a bit more *intelligence*? But you don't want to knock Tupac. Klash agrees.

"I give him 'nuff respect because to me he's like alphabet soup. He broke it down to the most minimal degree you can. You have to have the ability to satisfy intelligent people, but then satisfy Joe Public."

What are you doing it for? The reloads or the money, or...?

"I started off on the love. Then it turned into self-expression. I'm aware that it has an effect. But I still want to be honest, and I'm not a great person at the moment. It won't always be 'Black Rose', it might be 'I want to blow your fucking head off' next."

[www.focusmode.com](http://www.focusmode.com)

## ladyfuzz

Words: Leonie Cooper

Photography: Cat Stevens

'Get a haircut, tuck your shirt in, be an artist.' So runs the fifth directive of the Ladyfesto, an inane but rather poignant bullet-pointed list of top tips on how to live a completely fulfilled Ladyfuzz life. Ladyfuzz are where art rock meets the Hit Factory, a trio of otherworldly electro botherers with cutesy names that make them sound like squishy-faced neon characters from an Eighties computer game – Liz is Lady Fuzz, Ben is, awww, Baby Fuzz, and erk! Matt is mighty Lord Fuzz.

Let's quash the indie incest rumours now. Yes, Liz used to live with Kele Bloc Party, and yes, he may have played one gig with her, and OK, Tom Vek used to dally about with the Fuzzers as well. But they are their own people – and self-confessed purveyors of fine "post-op/pre-pop".

With Ben found via an ad in the back pages and Matt poached from a "heavy country group", the band skipped off to Berlin for some bonding time and a chance to hone their sound. However, something rather different happened. "We ended up making an album with a German transvestite who turned out to be from Leicester," begins Matt. "She sounded a bit like Nico, but with a much deeper voice."

"It was a 24-hour album project," continues Liz, of the album eventually entitled *Sexy Cancer*. "We mixed it in a bar, had the release party in a photo booth and the after party at a karaoke night." Matt decided to wear his special leather skirt for the occasion, though it's normally Liz who's the one for outlandish stage wear.

The outfits are a little more toned down here in their sweaty Stoke Newington studio, a mess of album mixing and cigarette ends. Their current favourite track is 'Kerfuffle', though they're still working on the song names and arguing about the correct way to spell kerfuffle – with a c? an a? how many f's? "The song is about dying," says Ben, "which is the ultimate kerfuffle." Other tracks being worked on include, "An Eighties slow-dance disco number", and "A song all about dogs – we think".

Despite the confusion, there's nothing Ladyfuzz could see themselves doing, apart from making music. "I don't know, maybe I'd be a gardener," ponders Matt. "Designing dresses?" suggests Liz. "I know what I'd be if I wasn't in Ladyfuzz," says Ben. "I'd be a superhero. My special power? Making really good music."

[www.ladyfuzz.com](http://www.ladyfuzz.com)

## 'The song is about dying, which is the ultimate kerfuffle'



# things we like

## **synergy: adult.**

### **Your music's being used in a film soundtrack. Describe a scene from the film.**

"The protagonist has decided that she cannot keep her secrets completely concealed unless she leaves town – and fast. Yet her conscience won't let her leave completely. She quickly scratches a letter just out of frame, but the viewer knows that the letter is not completely legible, due to the speed of her handwriting. It's filmed in flatly lit colour or high contrast black and white."

(Adam Lee Miller)

## **my first record: crack village**

"The first record I ever bought was the soundtrack to the movie of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. It was shit, even to a nine-year-old. I do remember

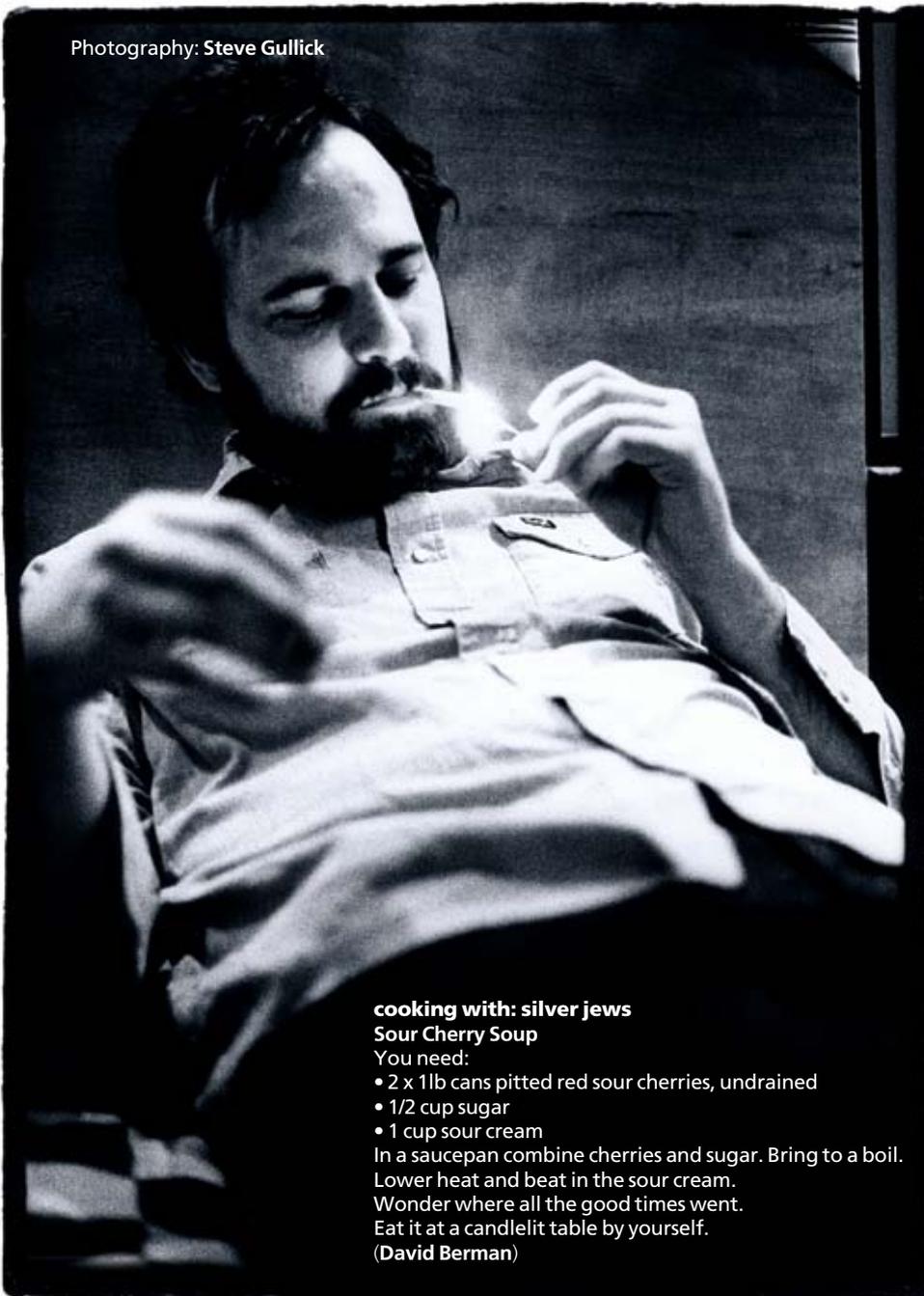
wondering what kind of kryme lead act Partners In Kryme were involved in, and why our deformed vigilante heroes would endorse such crooks. In their defense, 'T-U-R-T-L-E Power' was not only the first hip-hop record to get to Number One in the UK, but also a whole load better than Vanilla Ice's piss-poor effort for the sequel. The film was rubbish too." (PMO)

## **my first concert: her space holiday**

"The first show that I ever, ever went to I think was a Guns 'N Roses/Aerosmith concert. I had an older sister, so she decided it was time to take me to my first concert and that was it. I was about 12 or 13 at the time. It was a huge stadium rock show so at that point I expected all shows after it to be like that!"

(Marc Bianchi)

Photography: Steve Gullick



## **cooking with: silver jews**

### **Sour Cherry Soup**

You need:

- 2 x 1lb cans pitted red sour cherries, undrained
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup sour cream

In a saucepan combine cherries and sugar. Bring to a boil.

Lower heat and beat in the sour cream.

Wonder where all the good times went.

Eat it at a candlelit table by yourself.

(David Berman)

## **pick-me-up mix: lotek hifi**

### **Prince: Strange Relationship**

"This song always makes me smile. It's quite strange actually, because it's not always happy songs that make me smile. Sometimes it's angry songs or sad songs that make me happy, because it makes you glad that you're not going through what they are!"

### **Red Hot Chili Peppers: Give It Away**

"This one reminds me of being at my old work and tidying up at the end of the night as everyone used to sing to me, 'Give it to Wayne, give it to Wayne now...'"

### **Whigfield: Saturday Night**

"I don't know if I want you guys to publish this, but this song is an absolute guilty pleasure and always gets me dancing!"

### **Monkey theme tune**

"'With a little bit of monkey magic, there'll be fireworks tonight/With a little bit of monkey magic, every thing will be all right!'" This is such a funky song!"

### **Beach Boys: Good Vibrations**

"Perhaps a bit of a cheesy choice. But you can really tell that Brian Wilson worked hard at and enjoyed producing this track."

### **Bob Marley: Rainbow Country**

"This is just such a beautiful song, it's probably my favourite song to make me happy."

### **Bob Marley: Running Away**

"I wouldn't put this on if I was already happy, this would be the one song that I put on to make me happy. As I was saying before, songs that are sad can make you smile as you can feel the musician's pain. You know someone else is going through what you are. Then two tracks down, when I was feeling happier, I'd have Whigfield blatin' out!" (Wayne Bennett)

## **disco damaged: the slits**

"The Slits were attacked on stage literally in 1976 or '77. We were attacked by the whole audience, the whole front audience, just charging on the stage, because of our bouncer, our musician friend, he actually had a group with John Lead and Mick Jones, he's now in the group Dreadzone, his name is Leo and he was also in Big Audio Dynamite. He wasn't even a musician yet; he was just hanging out with us and just basically helping us doing bodyguard stuff. Suddenly it wasn't enough any more, people were freaking out. It wasn't a typical Slits audience, don't get me wrong, it wasn't our punks or Slits people. It was just some random, crazy gig with people were still very racist against punk.

"They were freaking out that Leo, who was at the front of the stage, was a black guy, a Rasta actually. They were just flipping out. The audience just charged the stage and Palm Olive, our drummer at the time, she had to run off the stage with the drums in her hand! It was crazy!

"Another thing that happened to me was when I used to go to Jah Shaka. I used to follow a lot of dub sounds, heavy dub sounds. And Jah Shaka, long before it got very big with white people, I was one of the only white girls and I was a dancer, they called them Steppers. I was in front of the speaker box most of the time; a lot of people surrounded the speaker boxes as the heavy bass would be vibrating and would be

vibrating everywhere, in your stomach and through your whole body. I don't know how I survived it but once the whole fucking big, big tweet box fell on my head. It was this huge reggae big, no-fucking-around sound box and it fell on me. It was huge! I probably survived because of my locks. I had my locks protecting me. They protect me from a lot of shit, come to think of it!"

(Ari Up)

**i love: my latest novel**

"I love lots of things. One thing I really love is when you wake up on a sunny day with a hangover and you go through what we call the 'euphoric' stage, when the hangover hasn't really settled in and you're still hyperactive. Like all musicians, and sorry this isn't particularly original, I love music. The music that I've been listening to lately is Northern Soul and garage like Georgie Fame, The Velvelettes... but I always fall back on things like The Smiths, Joy Division, Bob Dylan and Low.

"I guess I also like the things most people like such as ice cream, spending days in bed, and the moment you realise you've written a lyric or guitar part which you like."

(Chris Deveney)



**fear and loathing: gay for johnny depp**

"Sometimes I wake up thinking that my skin is all itchy and that I'm covered in a rash. Then I realise it's just bedbugs and fall right back to sleep nestled in the jaws of my little blood sucking buddies."

(Sid Jagger)

Illustration: Daryl Waller



Photography: Cat Stevens

**(it's just) a little crush: the research**

What do you do when you're crushing on someone?

- 1) Listen to 'That Summer Feeling' by Jonathan Richman
- 2) Put some petrol in the lawnmower and cut the small amount of grass that I rent
- 3) Ignore subject of crush to avoid anything bad happening
- 4) Spoil my cat, Angus, with coley fish steaks
- 5) Open 'special' bottles of Scotch whisky and toast my grandpa on my father's side

(Russell)

- 1) Do that name thing where you write your name and then 'loves' and then his name, count up the number of letters in each name (i.e. how many Ls, etc), get a total and then keep adding up the numbers till you get two numbers, and that's the percentage you love him!
- 2) Write a song about them
- 3) Put their surname with mine, eg 'Georgia Jagger' (good one, eh?)
- 4) Put their name in Google and see what happens (normally just dull stuff like sports day achievements from school!)
- 5) Turn up at places I know he'll be but pretend it was an accident

(Georgia)

- 1) Record a mixtape of songs listened/ danced to when together
- 2) Try to 'conveniently' be in his fave bar on a night when he's there
- 3) Become great friends with his buddies to ensure they say nice things about you to him
- 4) Find out about his interests, then learn a bit about them so as not to seem totally clueless in his presence
- 5) Compliment him - flattery gets you everywhere!

(Sarah)

# The adventurous four

Tour Diary: **Sons And Daughters**  
Illustration: **Vincent Vanoli**



## **Afisha Festival, Russia** **29–31 July**

After three days of melted cheese sandwiches in New York delis, I hunger for the exotic delights – culinary and otherwise – that await me in the beautiful city of Moscow.

My knowledge of Russian history extends to } the writings of Karl Marx and cult Eighties Brit-flick *Letter To Brezhnev*, so I'm a little apprehensive. We are met at the airport by a rather charming fellow named Peter. He checks us in to what we think is a government building. It is, in fact, our hotel.

We play to an incredibly receptive crowd in a large city-centre park the next day. Scott and I are given early birthday gifts by a nice Russian girl named Lana. Back at the hotel bar, I start to feel burning stares from the table next to us. Four scantily clad ladies are looking at me in a rather disparaging fashion. Campbell (tour manager and Aereogramme bass monster) points out that they probably see me as moving in on their territory.

I make a mental note to tone down red lipstick and spike heels, and never again to wear that red dress that I thought made me look Fifties Hollywood, but that actually makes me look like a hooker instead.

On our final day in Moscow, Peter takes us for some authentic Russian market shopping. Much to everyone's delight, we find a stall that appears to sell the entire works of every famous recording artist in history all on one CD and all for just three pounds! I don't know that I need that much Diamanda Galas, but I buy it anyway just to make sure. Scott picks up the entire works of The Beatles and the Stones. It's so weird, this shit is actually legal over here.

On our visit to the Red Square, I am secretly relieved to discover that we can't see Lenin's corpse today because his body is having some adjustments done to it.

## **Adele Bethel**

## **Frequenze Disturbate Festival, Italy** **6 August**

At Stansted Airport, we spy Robin and the rest of our friends in Sophia struggling with some ridiculously huge flight cases for their double-bass and cello. For any other band (eg: us), this would guarantee a humping at the check-in desk, but somehow Robin manages to Jedi mind-trick Ryanair into overlooking it all.

Check-in desk lady: "Your excess luggage comes to 500lb, sir."

Charming, smiley American man: "Yeah, but you're gonna be cool about this, aren't you?"

Check-in desk lady, suddenly hypnotised: "Yes, sir, that won't be a problem."

Motherfucker either knows magic or he is the Paul McKenna of rock.

We are greeted in Italy by the festival promoters and taken for a long country ride to a small village called Urbino. Dave and I fall asleep on the way, while Lou Reed's *Transformer* plays on the car stereo. The glimpses of the countryside are beyond beautiful; rolling hills and vineyards, olive trees and ancient-looking cottages.

The festival takes place in the centre of the old fort in the village. Only a few bands play each day (today it's Echo And The Bunnymen, Sophia, ourselves and two Italian bands). But that's why a lot of European festivals are inevitably much friendlier

and more relaxed than Glastonbury or Reading, without all the beer sponsorship everywhere.

There is a record fair at the festival, and I waste no time in getting myself a birthday present. I opt for a 180g vinyl copy of The Scientists' excellent *Blood Red River*, together with a great Lydia Lunch/Birthday Party split 12-inch for Adele's birthday, which I unsuccessfully try to hide from her. Incidentally, whatever happened to record fairs? Has the internet killed them dead, or are the ones in Glasgow just shit?

The gig goes great. There is a lot of applause for the blood. I've got a few little callouses where I keep accidentally slashing my fingers open on my guitar strings. They form little scabs, and just as soon as you think they've healed, you play a gig and, bang, there's blood everywhere. It's not painful, just unpleasant-looking. I gash them pretty bad again tonight, and the kids in the front row seem a little freaked out by all the red stuff spraying all over my silver Telecaster.

Later, Adele gets lost in her 16-year-old self during the Bunnymen's set, dancing away to 'Lips Lips Like Sugar', while some guy at the front loses it and cries his eyes out during 'The Killing Moon'.

I am given a massive ice-cream cake by the festival promoters at the end of the night. I give some to the Bunnymen, and Will Sergeant gives me a few pointers on winklepickers:

"Hey, I used to wear them shoes too! You should stick cotton wool in the toe to stop them turning up at the end!"

It's a good tip. I tried it and so far they've resisted the urge to go all 'Aladdin shoes' on me.

**Scott Paterson**

**Öya Festival, Norway****13 August**

We're on a flight to Oslo, listening to some song about 'The Wind Of Change' by The Scorpions. Nobody can whistle right, which means nothing, but we're all mildly scared about the flight anyway. People don't seem to be scared of flying any more. No one claps at the landings, because everyone else sneers. We'd come from Stansted airport, which resembled a refugee camp due to the strikes at Heathrow. Everyone's lying around in sleeping bags and moaning at 4am.

We get to Oslo and are allowed a few hours in bed before going to the Öya festival site. We have a bunch of interviews to do, and we meet a few of our friends from Franz Ferdinand's crew. The site is in a grimy industrial area in the middle of Oslo, next to some creepy abandoned railway; it looks great.

After a fancy barbecue dinner, we do a couple more interviews, then get down to the stage for our show. It's a pretty stage next to either a small lake or a huge puddle, I can't tell. We manage to pull a really respectable audience, which totally fires us up. Afterwards, there are a few bikes lying around behind the stage. I stupidly decide to do a 'stunt' skid on one, and, thinking the front brake is the back one, I end up flying over the handlebars and into the ground like a sack of tatties. Much to everyone else's delight.

Skinned knees and all, we're back at the artist area, where we blag free pairs of jeans from some kind folks. We then blag our way to the side of the stage for a dance to Franz Ferdinand. The guys play a really good show and the audience go apeshit.

Afterwards, we hang about with Franz for a drink or two, then it's time for bed. Everyone's exhausted, and we need to get up at 4am for a flight to Portugal. It's a nice walk back to the nearby hotel. The festival crowd is heading the same way, so it's really busy with people in good spirits. No one is rowdy or drunk; there's just a relaxed, cool atmosphere, everyone having fun. I wish UK festivals were more like this.

**David Gow****Parades de Coura Festival, Portugal****15 August**

We arrive absolutely shattered after our second 4am start in a row, and are overjoyed to find that you can smoke at baggage reclaim in Porto airport. Small things make such a difference when you're on tour.

The festival is a long drive from the hotel through the Portuguese countryside, past beaches and

## Will Sergeant gives me a few pointers on winklepickers

through forests up twisty mountain roads. Worryingly, but also quite spectacularly, we pass some forest fires that we had seen from the plane. We all make a mental note not to throw cigarette butts out the window.

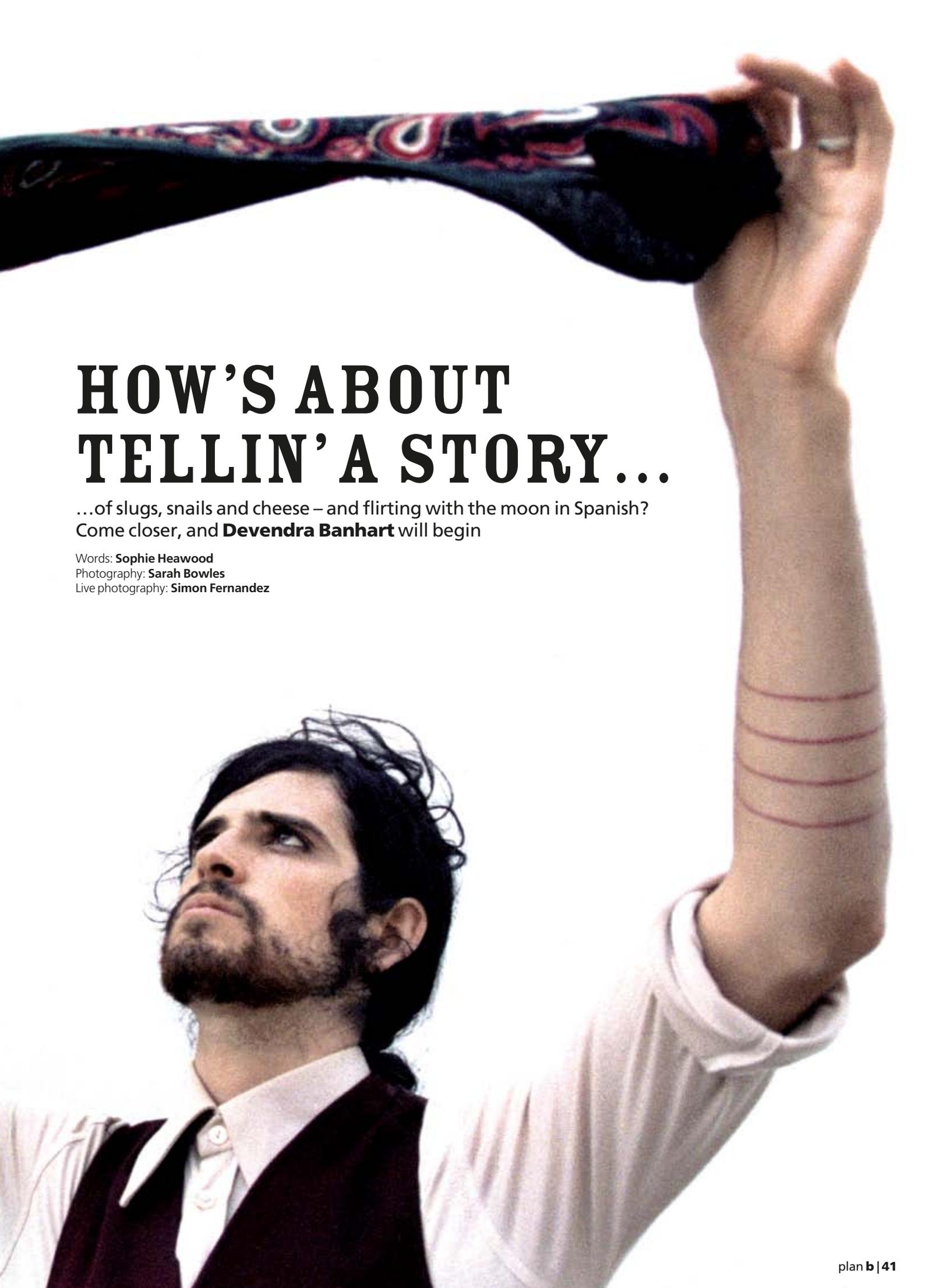
The festival is situated in a small village in the middle of the mountains, and is one of the nicest sites we have seen all summer; it makes us all wish we could actually spend some time here. We are the only band playing on the opening night; it's a kind of camper's reception.

We cut the soundcheck short as people are already arriving. We head to the local primary school for our tea of fish and rice, where we are given brown, unmarked bottles of locally produced fizzy wine to drink. It's absolutely delicious, but total rocket fuel. We get back to the stage and are surprised to see about 4,000 kids waiting for us to play them songs – we didn't think anyone had even heard of us in Portugal. The show goes really well and we all praise our agent's ingenuity for getting us to play the opening night as opposed to being the second band on in a small tent.

On the way back to the hotel we see more forest fires. They look incredible in the dark, but are scarily close to the petrol station where we stop. There are police cars and fire engines everywhere. Back at the hotel, we have a nightcap at the bar and it looks like everyone else that is playing the festival has had the same idea. Frank Black is there talking about how he wants to go to the beach and perhaps take off his top. Hot Hot Heat are holding up the bar and Scott has a chat with the Kaiser Chiefs. I go to bed, turn up the air conditioning and phone my boyfriend.

**Ailidh Lennon**





# HOW'S ABOUT TELLIN' A STORY...

...of slugs, snails and cheese – and flirting with the moon in Spanish?  
Come closer, and **Devendra Banhart** will begin

Words: **Sophie Heawood**  
Photography: **Sarah Bowles**  
Live photography: **Simon Fernandez**

**'I am not a hippie in any way,  
just so you know'**



Where do you begin when interviewing a shape-shifting musician like Devendra Banhart? Do you start with the obvious questions about how he gets the inspiration to create such beautiful and fluid songs, and how he combines American parentage with a Venezuelan upbringing and an Indian name? Or do you tackle the rumours, like the one about how he took a load of ecstasy before going on the Jools Holland show and did the whole performance spun off his face, or that he's split up with his girlfriend Bianca Casady from CocoRosie? Do you hope that he'll answer them truthfully this time, rather than field them with his comic smokescreens that have thrown so many other journalists off the scent? Or do you just go for the jugular and ask him if he's a sell-out hippy fakester for flogging his music to an advert for cheese?

### you know what you could be

"Yup, I am a sell-out, I went door to door," he smiles. "No, I just feel like it's..." he slows down, his brow furrowing thoughtfully. "The definition of selling out is when you're changing what you do because people *told* you to. Not making your own decisions. That's when you're selling out."

Devendra and I are curled up on a sofa backstage at London's Koko club. His recently formed band The Hairy Fairy, made up of members of Vetiver and The Pleasid, among others, are pottering around. Later tonight they will play a show in which Devendra will shake like an eel and throw shapes like a slinky, strumming his guitar and breaking and making the audience's hearts in equal measure. But right now, he's got his feet up and is swigging from a plastic cup of Jameson's, with the bottle stashed precariously between his knees.

"You know, me and Andy wrote that song together," he continues, gesturing to his friend and now bandmate, Andy Cabic. "I'm lactose intolerant but he's a cheese freak, and he was like, we gotta do this! We actually had to buy a fridge for the cheese because they gave us so much, you have no idea. They even gave us a bunch of different brands." He's getting into his stride now. "I think it's totally hilarious, I think it's so *funny* to have your song on a cheese advert, really, really funny," he says, not laughing much, then deadpans: "We played the Bush inauguration a couple of months back; we're doing the crayfish convention sponsored by Clear Channel; we're doing Shell, Nike, Pizza Hut. In fact all our songs are written for specific markets, that's the kind of band we are."

Do you think if you were Destiny's Child, you wouldn't get such a hard time? Is it because people want you to stay in your hippie box?

"What? Who? Would I go in the hippie box with Destiny's Child? Yes, I would, of course! That's fantasising, man, that would be great. But I am not a hippie in any way, just so you know. I don't know anything about hippies. I am a new age child of the dolphin. I'm a whale. I'm a wolpin."

### very cellular songs

Devendra Banhart is a year shy of 25 and has just released his fourth album. It's called *Cripple Crow* and is a luxurious collection of more than 20 songs, on which his voice seems less self-conscious than on the last; less *weird* and more soulful. I ask him how he feels about the record as a whole.

"It's kind of closer to a full meal. Trying to make records is like cooking. On the first record I made, *Oh Me Oh My*, I was cooking but it was really shitty ingredients, you know. Then on the other two records there was no cooking involved, it was just recipe books, like, this is how the melody goes and this is how the lyrics go, and that's it, no cooking involved at all. This is an analogy for things just being more musical. That's why there aren't many drawings on this record either, because they're not needed any more to begin or complete the songs.

There will always be some drawings, but they used to be intertwined and now they're separated."

So was all that artwork masking a musical gap?

"No, no, it wasn't, it was like, whenever anything comes from a source outside of yourself, which I call the creative spirit, it comes in a formless state, a soundless state. It's up to you to tailor it where it fits best. Is it a dish? Is it a sculpture? Is it a painting, a song, are they words? You're given fabric and then you tailor it to whatever outfit suits it best. While making the last two records that creative spirit would be split. But I think you need to start in a simple space and then build on it so then you can always return back to that space."

Recently, Devendra has been listening to a band from Lisbon called Caveira, Animal Collective's collaboration with his friend Vashti Bunyan, Calvin

## 'Once in a while, I want a desk so bad. And a dog, and a fridge'

Johnson's new record *When The Dream Faded*, Bobby Birdman and Little Wings doing a cover of 'Dreams' by Fleetwood Mac, Jamie Lidell's new stuff, his beloved R Kelly (no, really) – "and I like that band Maximo Park."

Er, you do?

"I think their lyrics are good, we hung out with them at a festival. But just about my all-time favourite kind of music is tropicalia." So we talk about Brazil, about Caetano Veloso, Jorge Ben, Os Mutantes, Gilberto Gil, Gal Costa, Antonio Jobim. Devendra finds their music inspiring because of their Cannibalist Manifesto, all about going off and soaking in another culture and returning with it, "Which to them meant making it Brazilian. It's about being open and it's about exploring. With Caetano, it isn't like he tipped me off towards African rhythms, because he is actually playing them himself. Just by listening to his catalogue, you can travel, and I think that's how people should make music. It should always change. If it doesn't change then, to quote Miles Davis, you'll end up like an old musician, playing museums and motherfucking."

Devendra says he can't truly be sure of tropicalia's political impact – indeed, he has yet to visit Brazil, despite his fascination with it – but he knows first-hand that political change is always misrepresented, as the country in which he grew up is currently undergoing changes that are viewed as positive only by outsiders.

"People read the newspaper and they're pro-Chavez and shit like that, they don't know what the fuck's going on," he says, "but I've been and I know what the fuck's going on, and you can *not* be pro-Chavez if you've ever actually been to Venezuela."

### cousin caterpillar

When pressed for more details of his childhood in Venezuela, however, Devendra claims he can remember nothing, except, "Standing on some stairs and seeing the light through a stained-glass window. I can only remember the stained glass." Memory is something he has problems with: he

recently lost track of an album's worth of lyrics in a notebook in Amsterdam, and then in Manchester he mislaid his computer containing the tunes. Yet it's his very childlike nature that pushes his memory away, as he explains.

"I have this thing where I try to forget everything I've done, so then I can return to it and be objective, but it gets to the point of obsession, where I'll get on an aeroplane and *totally convince* myself that it's not going to fly anywhere, it's just gonna go up and then land right back in New Jersey."

At this point he leans in towards me, his voice hushed and intimate as if he's telling me a bedtime story, as if he's telling himself one.

"It's just so exciting! I really pretend and I really start believing I'm gonna land in New Jersey and then I'm like, WOW, I'm in Morocco!"

This childlike ability to suspend disbelief is clearly what fuels Devendra's unparalleled creativity, but it also seems to be nagging at him, clawing him back in a tug-of-love between juvenilia and adulthood. Much of *Cripple Crow* flows between the admiration of the young and the confession that he is still one of their number himself. 'Long Haired Child' is about how he wants his future progeny to be, while on 'Little Boys' he sings about seeing "So many little boys I want to marry". 'I Feel Like A Child' states that he needs help blowing his nose and counting his toes, because "From being my daddy's sperm to being packed in an urn, I'm a child".

Devendra seems to be caught at a stage where he's ceased to be a caterpillar but he's not quite wrestled off that cocoon. He plays with passivity – pretending that he's been magically flown to Morocco, or writing songs about being made to take a nap – but he's annoyed that his record label have taken his idiosyncratic handwriting, a beautiful but barely legible sprawl that adorns his albums, and turned it into a font that they can use to write publicity material. You can imagine a schoolteacher trying to coax him out of that script, and now another authority figure has cloned it, turned it into the Devendra brand, to write with as if it were a speech bubble coming straight from his mouth.

In a similar fashion, he did the cheese advert but transfers the desire for it to his cheese-loving friend. When I admire the food mountain provided for the band in their dressing room, he starts to complain that he never gets the food he wants but then interrupts himself to stress that he is really super grateful to be given anything at all. In his latest video he is beguiling, shaking his arms and legs like they're too long for his body, as though a man's limbs have sprouted from the belly of a babe. He's a changeling; it's a condition that provides both his beauty and his cage.

### waltz of the new moon

Devendra is also caught between more than one tongue. Native in both English and Spanish, his new album features songs in both languages, and he is also said to be working on an album of Portuguese

### Devendra Banhart Cripple Crow (XL)

Take a seat, he's been expecting you and your cheerleaders. "Give me a One, give me a Trick, give me a Pony!" Right? Not this time: with *Milk-Eyed Mender* producer, Noah Georgeson, and – get this – a real studio, Devendra Banhart easily shifts to another level. Yet he's still the quirky phantom we want him to be – a quivering voice from our inner conscience singing tales about little boys, Chinese kids and, well, facial hair, of course. Songs like 'In Niel' and 'Pensando En Ti' evoke late nights on tropical beaches where Caetano Veloso's children reach for Banhart's whimsical spirit. Elsewhere 'I Feel Like A Little Child' is joyous bossanova boogie-folk; there's soulful elegance in 'Some People Ride The Wave', and a miniature Creedence Clearwater Revival stomp on 'Chinese Children'. *Cripple Crow* could certainly have been so much more. The most far out moments aren't that far out and the exuberant sitars and entrancing bongos on 'Lazy Butterfly' recall a generic Incredible String Band impersonation. But it's a step forward – and, possibly, the most rewarding folk album you'll find this year.

Joris Heemskirk



## 'I feel different things in Spanish'

music with Arto Lindsay. The linguistic switching is liberating, he explains, because he can say things in one language that cannot be said in another.

"I feel different things in Spanish, it just doesn't translate. In English, you can write a song about pizzas, about rubber erasers on the end of your pencil, about licking lead maybe, changing your money...but you switch to Spanish and suddenly you're writing these romantic stories. 'Santa Maria da Feira' is about searching for someone you love, going everywhere and feeling happy but never satisfied. It says, 'I'm eating a pear, I'm thinking about you every day, every hour, I'm walking around collecting boogers in my basket for you.' It's what the person's doing to get to this you. It ends with: 'I stumbled upon a river and I drowned in that river, and as I was dying I finally saw you, *por fin te vi.*'"

Devendra goes on to explain the story behind 'Quedate Luna', a haunting, wolfish song featuring some compelling strumming and shimmering percussion. It's a song about somebody trying to seduce the moon.

"First of all he says he hasn't had a drink but maybe he'll have a couple, then he gets to three, six, eight drinks. He thinks, maybe if he tells her his name, so he turns to the moon in more poetic terms, telling her, 'Hey, you know who I am? I'm the little dog that's nibbling at your ribs', and the moon comes and sits down in her seat, and he says, 'Hey, pretty, what are you drinking, and why are you so yellow?' She goes, 'Well, my skin is kinda wrinkly

and my hair is matted, my daughters call me Old Lady', and he says, 'But the whole world is yours, and tonight you're mine, so stay, moon.' Then she says, 'Look at God in the air, look at God in the sea,' and he says he'll give his whole life just to hear her sing. She tells him to feel God in the wind, taste God in the honey, God lives outside and inside. And he asks her to tell him more, and at this point it's like something almost might happen between them, and, and...and...I don't know if I could write a song like that in English."

The album's third Spanish song, 'Luna de Margarita', is a cover of a song by Venezuelan songwriter Simon Diaz.

"He's made records since the Sixties, and the government made him an icon; they had to because the people dug him. But he doesn't have a single lyric about a manmade thing, he's always talking about nature. He goes on about Venezuela but he never mentions a single thing that the government did, and that, to me, is truly subversive."

### you get brighter

Devendra also enjoys listening to the recordings that people give him. I ask if he means his fans.

"Well, I wouldn't call them fans, just other songwriters who wanna share their music."

Does it embarrass you that you have fans?

"No way, of course it's not embarrassing!" he booms in a loud voice, and then mumbles, "I just refuse to actually believe it."

So I ask about fan letters and he says he gets really beautiful ones but that he doesn't feel the need to share that with me.

"They are intimate things and it's just...the circle widens a little bit and that's it." He is quiet again.

"I don't know, it's hard not to be a snail, or a slug. You know what I mean?" he asks, pleading, sighing desperately when I say that I don't.

I explain that I'm not trying to be difficult, it's just that I really like snails.

"Oh, I love snails, I want to make a documentary about them. I'm gonna go all over the world filming them, it's gonna be hours, long, in real time. Real slow, with close-ups and everything. I'm gonna get Sir Richard Bishop and the Sun City Girls, I'm gonna ask all kinds of people to do sound pieces to accompany the footage. It might be called *Snails: Our Hidden Allies*. I'm not sure."

He fiddles with his ring. I tell him I like it and he seems genuinely grateful, but says that the ring makes him sad.

I ask if it was a gift from somebody, and he replies that everything he has is a gift from someone who's gone.

"Everybody I know is gone. But you know what? They're not. *I'm* always gone."

Are you homesick?

"I don't know where I would be homesick for. I don't live anywhere; I don't have a house. When you're gone for so long, you have to find a home within yourself."

"I've definitely found it, but still, once in a while, I want a desk so bad. And a dog, and a fridge. A fridge would be good for all that cheese I've got."



**^ Tribes of Neurot**  
*Meridian*  
 Melodic noise and filtered soundscapes... the latest sonic report from Tribes of Neurot. (NR040)



New releases



# Latitudes

GMT-0:00  
 Edition of 1000

**GRAILS**  
 Interpretations (Of Three Psychedelic Rock Songs From Around The World)

OUT OCTOBER 3RD

Interpretations captures Neurot artists Grails in complete ecstatic abandon, covering three of their favourite psyched-out mantras by Gong, The Byrds and Flower Travelling Band. The ultimate 4am 'all-back-to-mine' moment for a post heavy night out session.

.....

GMT-0:01  
 Edition of 750

**SHIT & SHINE**  
 Ladybird

Shit & Shine are a real take-no-prisoners noise trip to a very dark place, a deranged stew of Skullflower, PIL, early Surfers and the drummer parts of the Boredoms. Ladybird is one single epic 42 minute track of heathen drumming and holy crap vocals - who could want for more? Sadists?

OUT OCTOBER 10TH

.....

Latitudes is an ongoing series of never-to-be-repeated limited edition session recordings, capturing the innate transience of our modern world. All lovingly housed in handcrafted packaging.

Forthcoming in the Latitudes series: Ariel Pink, Dalek, Sir Richard Bishop, Sole & Pedestrian & Telephone Jim Jesus.

.....

Latitudes is manufactured & distributed by Southern Records  
 PO Box 59 London N22 1AR England >>  
[www.southern.net/latitudes](http://www.southern.net/latitudes)



**^ Tone**  
*Solidarity* (NR039)



**^ Harvestman**  
*Lashing the Rye* (NR037)



Visit [neurotrecordings.com](http://neurotrecordings.com) for complete catalog information and release dates, as well as tour info, MP3s, artist bios, band photos, and the full Neurot Recordings online store. [www.neurotrecordings.com](http://www.neurotrecordings.com)

DISTRIBUTED EXCLUSIVELY BY SOUTHERN RECORDS

Making people sick since 1999



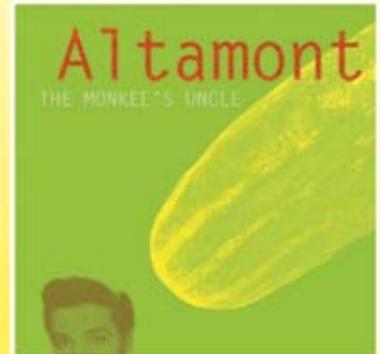
**Ennio Morricone**  
 "Crime and Dissonance" 2CD (IPC66)

An exceptional double CD collecting together Italian spaghetti western soundtrack king, Ennio Morricone's rare and previously unreleased material from 1969 through 1974. Compiled by Mike Patton and Alan Bishop (Sun City Girls), liner notes by John Zorn. A wild sonic journey from an uncompromising talent.



**Messer Chups**  
 "Crazy Price" CD (IPC67)

Crazy Price is a patchwork mash-up of horror scores, house, techno, exotica and sci-fi samples, in short... your perfect soundtrack to the witching season. Includes several mpeg videos from the band too!



**Altamont**  
 "Monkee's Uncle" CD (AA995)

Altamont is the brain-child of Dale Crover, drummer extraordinaire for the MELVINS. This is their first major album, filled to the brim with 70's rock attitude, bearing ZZ, Sabbath and Cooper on their bloodied sleeves. Eye-popping artwork and ear-popping sounds. Released on Ipecac sister label AntAcidAudio.

[www.ipecac.com](http://www.ipecac.com)

Ipecac Recordings are manufactured and distributed in Europe by Southern Records [www.southern.net](http://www.southern.net)

# UNHOLY MODAL ROUNDER

Words: **Joe Stannard**

Photography: **Simon Fernandez**

Through murk, mist and cobwebs of doom, blues and hardcore, we spy the Stygian folk loops of **Alexander Tucker**

Alexander Tucker and I are chatting, post-interview, about such luminaries of Nottingham's legendary Earache label as Godflesh, James Plotkin and Napalm Death, both boyishly excited to discover a fellow aficionado, and revelling in the gory details of our misspent youths. It's a dream come true, friends: a brilliant, intuitive musician who weaves together folk, blues, drone and noise, but who can also talk – with some authority – about metal.

Folk and metal are musical forms with much in common, especially thematically. The twin obsessions of Eros and Thanatos. The harking back to halcyon days. The myth of righteous violence. The dedication to myth and magic. While purists of either stripe may dispute this claim, Alexander Tucker is no traditionalist, having collaborated with Bardo Pond, Jackie O Motherfucker and Stephen



the first two words in a circulation, then adding another and another and another. My background was in hardcore or post-hardcore."

I'd like to point out that Alex was the first to bring doom metal (ah, my beloved Vinum Sabbathi!) into the conversation. I merely asked if his formative experiences in a post-hardcore band informed his more meditative solo work.

"I was always into bits of metal, and the stuff I do now has doom riffs. Definitely with Unhome, even though no one was using loop pedals, everything was very repetitive and knitted together in that sense, so I guess that definitely rubbed off."

Aside from his obvious talent and ingenuity, Alex's grounding in metal and hardcore makes him a more interesting proposition than many of the artists currently attempting to sound all archaic and

harmonies. You might describe it as a darkness that contains the seed of its own salvation, if you were given to saying such things.

"Because I had lots of friends who were great guitar players, or they knew what they wanted to do with the guitar, I imagined that all this complicated stuff was going on, so I was very afraid and quite embarrassed by the way that I played," he says.

"I thought it was cheesy, or too obvious. But then one day I just realised, hey, I do this all the time, there must be something in this. So I started recording it."

Alexander Tucker shames many of the current acoustic crop by attempting something new with old materials; something that could never be described as fey, twee or winsome. There's a sense that he's arrived at his sound through experimentation and instinct, rather than by leafing through the well-thumbed songbooks of old.

"The one thing from classical guitar lessons I always remembered was the three walking fingers, and I was getting into these things like Bill Fay and bands like Faust who did a lot of beautiful things with that. It wasn't so much that I wanted to do a folksy thing, it was more like blues than anything."

So where does the noise element come from?

"The guitar I use now is my dad's 12-string; that was the first guitar I used to strum, and I'd just drone. I had a few classical guitar lessons but I'd always get pissed off because there's a lot of math involved. I sold my classical guitar and bought a cheap electric and a cheap amp. The first thing I did was put the guitar on top of the amp, turn everything to 10 and just play with the whammy bar, much to the distress of my mother..."

**'The one thing from classical guitar lessons I always remembered was the three walking fingers'**

O'Malley (both live and on Ginnungagap's record for Southern's *Latitudes* series). Nor is he a johnny-come-lately purveyor of avant folk. He's been cutting himself up, looping the fragments and spilling the results since the dissolution of his Tunbridge Wells post-rock outfit Unhome in 1999.

"Our music was quite angular, quite mathematical," he explains. "I used to do these vocals over the top, taking one sentence, singing

eldritch-like. His second album, *Old Fog*, released this month on ATP, may boast little in the way of drop-D riffage, but it is heavy, like the first Sabbath album or *Morbid Tales* by Celtic Frost. Those records are not dependent solely on volume and distortion for their impact, but also on mood, atmosphere and texture. *Old Fog* is similarly mist-wreathed and Stygian, but it's also frequently beautiful, due to Alex's chiming, looped picking and choral

**MODULAR**  
presents



## LEAVE THEM ALL BEHIND

brings you a snapshot of the sound that has defined Indie clubland in 2005.

**DOUBLE CD** - CD1 mixed by Modular DJs, CD2 full unedited versions and exclusives featuring tracks from **Bloc Party, Cut Copy, The Rakes, Tom Vek, The Killers, Death From Above 1979** and remixes from **Phones, Mylo, Whitey and Tiga**

*"The indie dance revival starts here as Bloc Party and The Long Blondes get rewired by Mylo and Epworth" - NME*

Mixmag album of the month

**RELEASED 10TH OCTOBER**

 [www.v2music.com](http://www.v2music.com) [www.modularpeople.com](http://www.modularpeople.com)



[WWW.XLRECORDINGS.COM](http://WWW.XLRECORDINGS.COM)



# metronomism underground

folk music for machines

Words: **Frances May Morgan**  
Photography: **Sarah Bowles**

## Brooklyn's electronic collage freaks **Black Dice** construct intricate noise exotica that incites audiences to total immersion and hypnotised dancing

I went to sleep with the window open and dreamt of New York City. In the dream, I'd journeyed out to the suburbs to visit an American scientist friend, who lived in a dark bungalow ringed by trees; Seventies-style living room and low afternoon light.

Spiders scuttled into the room under the door.

"You can't keep spiders out," apologised the scientist. "It's cool," I said, unfazed, even when one of them leapt through the air and onto my face.

"So do you want to help with this Putrefaction Test?" the scientist asked.

"Sure!" I said.

Dream-style, a few minutes or an age later, I stood in a (switched-off) walk-in fridge, watching and sniffing as food decayed around me. Flies buzzed and more spiders appeared, climbing the walls in jerky stop-motion style. I got dizzy.

"Can I come out now?" I asked the scientist.

He played me a track recorded on an antiquated version of Cubase: a cut-up thing that reminded me of Steve Reich's soundtrack for Gunvor Nelson's film *My Name Is Oona*. He told me that the voices on it were my dad and my younger sister.

Back in the city, I got lost in a maze of travelers, escalators, elevators. I dropped tickets and money; people ran after me to give them back. At the hotel, there were more spiders. The receptionist told me that as I hadn't come back for my bag on time, they'd given it away to someone else. I cried.

The hotel receptionist told me there was no point in crying. I tried to think what was in the bag, and all I could remember was the records: a Black Dice/Animal Collective twelve-inch and a very rare Oneida album in a beautiful yellow sleeve.

I looked at my plane ticket and it was green and handwritten. I checked my phone for numbers, but nothing worked. The Putrefaction Test, evidently, had affected more than just the food in the fridge.

It was darker than a city ought to be. I could hear mosquitoes, trains, pneumatic drills and my own heartbeat.

### third ear band

It may be because I have dreams like this that I dig the music of Black Dice. Or it may be because I like to fill my head with such music that I have such dreams. Either way, the experimental Brooklyn trio's recently released fourth full-length, *Broken Ear Record*, their first on DFA/EMI, would have made a fine soundtrack to the jetlag-induced episode of entomological encounters, decaying cities, cut-up voices, machine percussion and necro experiments recounted above.

*Broken Ear Record* is a hard record to describe. There are weirdly tribal rhythms and filtered chants, at times like an urban voodoo ceremony heard through a vent in a factory wall. There are the characteristics I've come to associate most with the band: a weirdly ambiguous, shifting texture to their sound – a sound built out of layers that overlap like the edges of snakes' scales rather than pile up like sediment. There's a playful arsenal of noises that, while they're obviously hewn from basic electronic tools, always come as a gentle shock to the system. Talking of arses, the album's cover is dominated by a collage showing a woman's bottom with the band's initials emblazoned on each buttock in red plastic beads.

Because it's a Black Dice record, there's a glaring rainbow background, the woman is up to her knees

transition time that people don't see, unless they're seeing us play regularly."

Why are people so attracted to darkness in experimental or noise music? Why's there this notion that it has to be punishing?

"I think it's just that some of the first sounds you discover with noise-generating set-ups, like tape delay, are really harsh ones," says Bjorn.

"And with that method of making music a lot of it comes down to playing until you find something that appeals to you, so a lot of it has to do with the equipment."

Aaron adds, "I think, especially in Western culture, there's a lot of interest doing one idea to the most extreme level. Like bands will want to be the fastest band or the loudest band, or the most abrasive band."

**'For Black Dice songs, there's a lot that we avoid doing' – Eric**

in cut-out clouds, and her head is a mess of what look like fabric swatches and tassles.

"I think it's important to be playful," says Bjorn Copeland, who started the band in 1997, in Providence, Rhode Island, with his younger brother Eric and friends (and now ex-members) Hisham Bharoocha and Sebastian Blanck.

"One thing that we realised early on was that a lot of the music that was being made through similar methods tended to be really nihilistic and dark and harsh-sounding, which is great, but none of us wants to be living in a sea of dark thoughts all the time."

"I guess we've had music that reflected more that sort of vibe," counters Aaron Warren, who joined Black Dice in 1999, after moving from LA to NYC, where the band were by then located. His background was in West Coast hardcore; he first heard of the Black Dice boys via shows with Mindflyer, Lightning Bolt, Forcefield. "I still like heavy, tough-sounding music, sure," he says.

"But over nine years, your interests change, and you change as a person," continues Bjorn. "A lot of times it seems like there's these huge stylistic jumps between our records, but really there's so much

Black Dice are no strangers to extremism: reports of early gigs tell of fights kicking off; injuries sustained – as well as, of course, punishing levels of noise. This lasted, says Bjorn, up until about 2000. He notes, "After a while you just...you felt like you were doing theatre or something." The band's subsequent shift to a more immersive and linear sound, with 2002's shimmery/scratchy *Beaches And Canyons* album, reflected their need to move away from the cliché of the provocative noise band and into the terra incognita that they're still exploring.

### black lagoon

It's hard to envisage Black Dice as the Whitehouse of Rhode Island. The first time I saw them play – supporting Lightning Bolt and Boredoms in London, 2004 – the counterpoint they provided to the Bolt's mosh frenzy (then at its most feverish) and the Boredoms' joyous trance-rock was elegant and elusive and sensual. As they played what I later found out were tracks from their next album, the much underrated *Creature Comforts*, I recall traversing the venue, ostensibly looking for a friend, but really just enjoying swimming through the Black Dice sound. It was surprisingly tiki: like being stranded on some post-apocalyptic paradise island



l-r: Aaron Warren, Eric Copeland, Bjorn Copeland

inhabited by newly mutated birds. Like 'Diamond Head' by The Beach Boys, pushed through a giant colander. I found my friend sitting on the balcony, hypnotised. A few weeks later, at ATP, I watched not only Black Dice's mid-afternoon set but also a beautiful man in the audience who was dancing with his eyes closed. Anyone can make guys jump up and down, but there's not much music that can make them dance like that, like their bodies are made from quicksilver. It was the about furthest from fighting you could get.

#### unsettling scores

The ghosts of hardcore music are especially far away this afternoon, as Aaron, Bjorn and I settle down in Bjorn's apartment in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Bjorn's enormous tabby cat is basking like a seal on the kitchen floor and an Alice Coltrane CD is playing in the background; *Universal Consciousness*, I think.

Bjorn has just revealed that his and Eric's father was briefly a member of Lothar And The Hand People, heads from Denver, Colorado whose cult late Sixties album featured a ghostly theremin. Meanwhile, Eric has gone to mix some recordings by Terrestrial Tones, his project with Animal Collective's Dave Portner, who's also his flatmate. He seems glad

to have an excuse to leave: out of the three, he seems the quietest, the most caught up in a private world of sound, of which explanations aren't necessary or desirable. He'll later email me from Black Dice's US tour.

After a morning spent doing photos around Williamsburg – an area that reminded me of parts of east London injected with growth hormone and glossed with a sheen of industrial Americana – the band look a bit beleaguered by the attention. We've even intruded upon their rehearsal space, a basement filled with *stuff*. That was my fault: I wanted to see the stuff, in particular Bjorn's sequencer-in-a-suitcase, custom-built by DFA synth magus Gavin Russom. They played for a short while so that we could take photos, earplugs in and a spliff going round. The noise was mighty and rough-edged, blasting out of PA speakers, but it felt a little strange to be there. When I play music, I wouldn't want a journalist or a photographer standing right next to my bandmate and I in such a confined space.

How much is your music dependent on jamming and improvising? I ask, expecting it to be a pretty high proportion. After all, one of the most attractive qualities of Black Dice's music – its mischievous spontaneity – suggests this.

Bjorn sets me straight. "The way the sounds are arrived at is through that, but the way things are structured in the end is pretty much the opposite."

Does the sound suggest the structure to follow?

"To some extent, but often we talk about the structure ahead of time."

How do you express how a track's going to be shaped? What name do you give your sounds?

"That's actually one of the steps we've gotten good at doing now," Aaron says. "Now we name all the different sounds because at least that way we can be like, where is the frog part? Or something stupid like that! And then sometimes we'll write out long schematics and timelines of what everyone is gonna do at different points, so that visually we can be like, no, the frog part is *here*."

"The idea of making schematics and drawings sounds anal and academic, but it's rudimentary," says Bjorn.

"Yeah, it's very childlike," Aaron agrees. "They look cool, too. They're like these funky little maps."

"These are the first ones, here..." Bjorn shows me a notebook with carefully drawn symbols scored in black pen. The schematics do have a childlike quality, something of the physics class about them – but they're also reminiscent of graphic scores by



## 'None of us wants to be living in a sea of dark thoughts all the time' – Bjorn

early electronic composers like Stockhausen (whose score for *Spiral Für Einen Solisten* is a veritable circuit board of pluses, minuses and enigmatic arrows).

The minimal nature of Black Dice's music owes a lot to this approach, as does the considered use of pauses and silence in their music. Even episodes of full-on freakout, such as *Beaches And Canyons'* Boredoms-ish epic, 'Big Drop', are paced so that they never bludgeon the listener, instead keeping them on a taut leash. And the gleeful creepiness of new single 'Smiling Off' suggests all kinds of things that *aren't there* as it shuffles and barks through the speakers. It's a similar sensibility to that which you hear in early Can albums: the avant garde filtered back through a pop sensibility that tightens the experimentation. Polishes it to an iridescent, holographic gleam (sometimes).

"Well, after playing sort of loose music for so many years, there's just some things that you start to realise happen easily, and one is for shit to get really dense," says Bjorn.

You mean, like adding lots of layers?

"Yeah. In general, I would say that the philosophy is each person plays just about enough to get the idea across, or for their part to achieve what it's meant to achieve. A lot of that has to do

with the fact that people have this misconception that it's improvised, so that's why we're focused on trying to keep things sparse or at least under control: eventually it alludes to the fact it's got a real structure."

In the practice room, as on stage, each member has his own collection of instruments and effects arranged like cooking ingredients in front of him: sequencers, pedals, mixers, drum pads, drum machines, one guitar and a couple of vocal mics. Everything appears patched together with a kind of DIY logic borne out of much open-minded messing about, but refined into a language that's spoken only by the members of the band.

Aaron continues: "I feel like the amount that we jam is the amount that The Allman Brothers would jam or something like that, where everyone knows the song, and if someone wants to do a variation on that for up to 10 minutes, we can do that, but we know where we are. We're not just making everything up.

"If we play a set a lot, we get to have that kind of elasticity within it, but it's extremely rare. I would say only if something was going really wrong would we just have to make everything up on the spot. And that can be amazing."

When I ask Eric about sound and structure, he emails back:

"For Black Dice songs, there's a lot that we avoid doing. So the structure often is in place to avoid some of the musical pitfalls offered by improvisation. When someone's good at improvising, it's unmistakable. But I don't play music to master that talent; I don't even think I'm that good at it. But I am interested in songs."

### form and function

The music in the next room changes to Harry Nilsson's 1971 album *The Point!*, a record that my boyfriend loves because, "It makes you feel it's OK to be pointless." Written for a feature-length cartoon and conceived, apparently, when the songwriter was tripping, it's that late-Sixties/early-Seventies vaudeville psych; precious and unsettling, and very, very composed.

"With live music, I really only see stuff that's our friends, right now," Aaron comments. "And with records, I buy the most functional music, because it's all for when I'm getting stuff done. It has to be simple and catchy, and so opposite to the nature of our music. There are parts of what we do that I have to turn off, because I wouldn't be able to get



**Black Dice**  
 Broken Ear Record (DFA/EMI)  
 Black Dice redefined a genre by dropping *Beaches And Canyons* on an unsuspecting public in 2002. Its huge tectonic waves of sound and bliss were among the initial birthing cries of a movement now safely drawn together under the New Weird America umbrella. Since then, they've moved away from that record's lush organic palette and increasingly focused on the more mechanic aspects of their blustering noise.

*Broken Ear Record* is a coldly battering record, a wrestling match between machines in an endless landscape of factory production lines. And fantastic as this is, it's when the human voice, albeit processed, is allowed to intervene that this record really coheres into something special. 'Heavy Manners' is the best example, approximating as it does being high on Quaaludes inside in your mother's womb while she drives the Indy 500. A strange, beautiful moment; a moment that gives you hope that whenever Black Dice get to wherever they are presently going, you're going to want to be there.

**Merek Cooper**

anything done if I had it on. But then I have a whole other section of music that's just music I listen to. Music that you don't do email to and shit like that. Personally, I aspire for our music to also be that kind of music that you can just do stuff to and hang out with your friends to, and not just be this private thing where you have to have headphones on."

"Your mom gardened to 'Miles Of Smiles'," Bjorn says to Aaron, referring to the Dice's 2004 EP. Aaron nods. "Yeah, and *Creature Comforts* she really liked too."

**up and over**

In my notebook it says 'Highlife by way of Bridget Riley'. Wishful thinking, perhaps, but that's what went through my head as we watched Ara Peterson's video for 'Treetops', from *Creature Comforts*. Like many people, I never saw it at the time of release, 2004, and am leaning forward in my chair, fascinated. The dancing stripes and peels of colour, edged with psilocybin-trace sparkles, feels familiar and alien simultaneously. As in much of Black Dice's visual work, the crude and the sublime are juxtaposed – the video for new single 'Smiling Off', is a mesmerising meld of grotesquerie and prettiness; weird aerobics and rainbow birds.

'Treetops', though, is something else. It conjures up Tony Conrad's Sixties experimental films and cheap pop motifs and meshes them into a beautiful, brief video poem.

It's psychedelic in the most basic sense of the word; that is, it's redolent, both sonically and visually, of altered states. The colours, the flickers, the filtered West African-style guitar that bubbles in the background and the weirdly humanoid sounds that call and respond, all suggest a phasing in and out of everyday consciousness; a kind of crystallisation of the atmosphere around you. The sound of closing your eyes and opening them to see another world. The hinges of reality creaking, through a broken delay pedal. That kinda thing. Hell, Black Dice make intensely psychedelic music; it's disingenuous to say they don't. Right?

"The term is too loaded to talk about right now," says Aaron. "Sort of the way that punk used to be a few years ago. But then there's tons of awesome music that I'd consider psych that I'm a total fan of, from music from the Sixties up through certain kinds of techno and stuff like that."

I guess I take it to mean that it's transformative music, that it propels you up and over and into another space. It's kind of *there*.

Aaron replies, "If people think about psychedelic music in the terms that you're talking about it, then that's cool, but I feel like that there's this way cheaper version of it, where it's just music to smoke pot to, or music that sounds trippy."

"The idea of intentionally making drug music seems so cheap when you realise that you could be making music that is like the drug," Bjorn interjects. "You can do something with sound that affects people physically and emotionally, via volume and frequency and things like that. That seems a lot more relevant than singing about some clichéd bullshit with a flange on the vocal. I do like a lot of stuff that probably is what I just described, but –"

That has a lot to do with the time the music's from – context and so on.

"Right now, it's at its worst. I feel like everybody is some stoney hippie troubadour."

I concede that, out there as the Black Dice aesthetic is, there's little hippie flakiness to be found in either their sound or their visual work. On their self-designed record sleeves, shapes tessellate and refract, and lines of tiny dots spiral outwards. But there's often a glaring harshness to the colour scheme, or some wry, humorous touch that turns the prettiness on its head.



## 'Folk music is about taking a really DIY approach to an instrument' – Aaron

Bjorn shows me a pile of collages he and the band have made; they're collecting them together for a book. Again, the images are jarring and funny and lovely. There are lots of eyes, or places where eyes should be. Lots of stripes and lots of water: idyllic waterfalls and islands interrupted and corrupted by judicious use of coloured paper and uncomfortable visitors from other magazine dimensions. Nor do the band escape: one photo of Aaron playing has been altered so that his eyelids bleed a trail of red spots that drip down onto his drum machine.

"Our music's really transitional," Bjorn says. "It's in a state of flux, like the relationship between the sound is always changing. That has a lot to do with the visual aesthetic too: collaging things is an effective way of achieving the same thing. You can be referential in what you're using, and you can pull from any area; it's an amazing way of doing things."

What about other extra-musical things? What else influences you?

"TV. TV and radio. Those are the biggest things," they both assent.

"I work in television, in post-production," says Aaron. "For a while, I would work on a TV show for eight hours and I'd come home to unwind and

watch four hours of TV and then go and jam for four hours, and I would listen to no music. And you'd be a fool to say that doesn't influence you."

Working with TV must give you a weird perspective on it.

"I have appreciation for the craft, even if the content is totally fucked, you know? I can see if it's well made; I can appreciate it on that level."

Could you actually hear the influence of TV in your music? To me, TV has a very particular quality of sound.

"The thing about TV that's amazing is how much craft goes into the smallest moments, the fact that people spend weeks and months working on something that's 30 seconds long, like a commercial," Aaron explains. "I feel that's what we do with our music sometimes. We spend a lot of time making these stupid little sounds, and it might just go by you and be this annoying thing, like a commercial, but we take it very seriously."

"But Eric doesn't watch any TV really," he adds. "So it's not across the board."

"Eric has watched massive amounts of TV. We grew up on it," says Bjorn.

"But right now, he's not in that place," Aaron replies. "So I feel like, to be fair... he will sit and read

a whole book in an afternoon, or watch three movies in a row. He has a different kind of rigour."

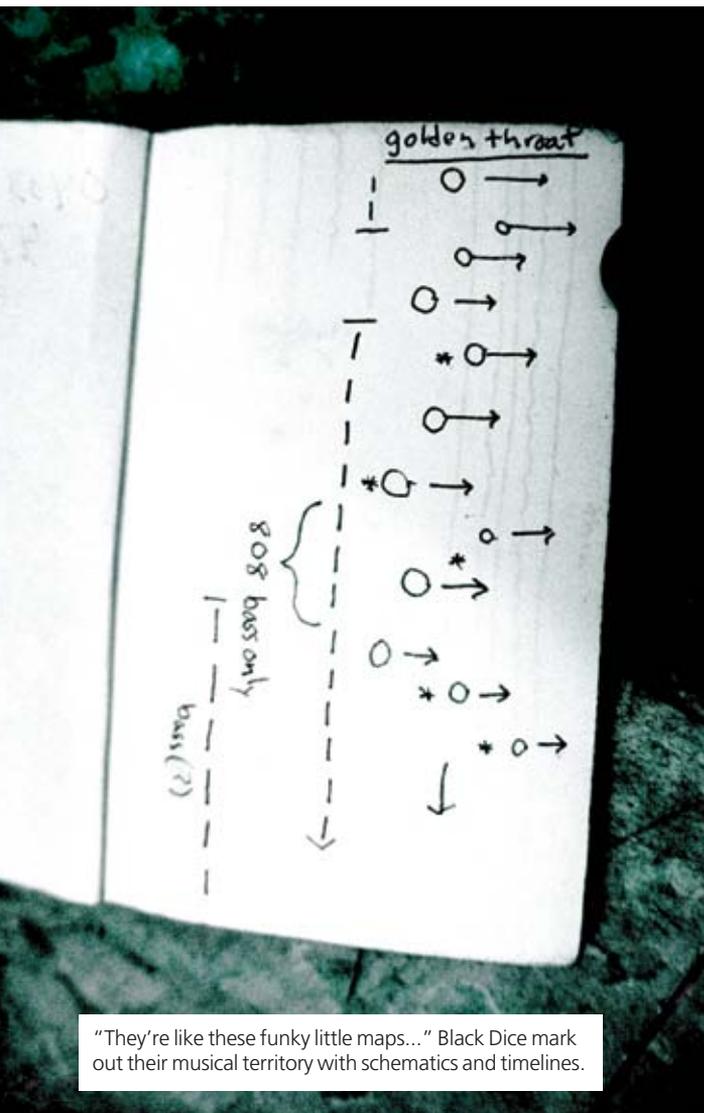
Eric concurs by email:

"When I do watch television, I find it strange. Everything moves so fast and advertisements are everywhere. I prefer movies, I guess. I read a lot and play music with the rest of my time."

### sound archives

Characteristic of many musical communities in cities at the beginning of the 21st Century is a sense of the musician as collector and archivist, soaking up and cataloguing the disparate influences flowing in and out of the metropolis. It's one way to navigate city life, via shared musical discoveries – the parameters of which grow wider and wider. Bjorn and Aaron are telling me about White Magic and Blood On The Wall drummer Miggy Littleton's in-house record shop, now no longer operating. It was just in his flat, right?

"Yeah, it was the shittiest flat ever, it was like rat-infested, it was the size of this but filled with thousands of records that he'd find all over Brooklyn," Bjorn explains. "Old German psych records for a couple of bucks, or original dub plates..."



"They're like these funky little maps..." Black Dice mark out their musical territory with schematics and timelines.

## 'Each person plays just about enough to get the idea across' – Bjorn

"Tons of Jamaican records and hip hop and dance music..." Aaron interjects.

"John Cage, Alvin Lucier..." reminisces Bjorn.

Aaron: "It was a community centre, every musician and music person was there, every weekend, and everybody from Black Dice, we would run into each other there, without knowing we were going to – Animal Collective, White Magic, Blood On The Wall, TK Webb – you could find the coolest stuff."

Your new album has a folky feel that taps into that feeling of community, even though it's not ostensibly 'folk' music.

Aaron concurs: "The last record had a real folky feel to it. For me, folk music is about taking a really DIY approach to an instrument, even if it's like a banjo or a mandolin or harp or harmonica, and teaching yourself how to play something that sounds good. It can become pretty ornate, with time, and I feel that's sort of what we've done with our instruments."

It's more an approach than an actual sound. You make folk music for machines, or folk music for cities.

"Other people have made that comparison before," says Bjorn. "I guess in the way that Aaron

articulated, there is something real basic about the way we make music, because we're trying to figure out a new thing with every song. So in a lot of ways it is similar to how self-taught musicians work."

### night flights

I'm reluctant to find common threads between musically divergent bands who merely share a postcode, especially when they originally hail from Maine (Eric and Bjorn) and northern California (Aaron). A city is somewhere you come to in order to lose connections, as well as to make them. As Eric prosaically puts it,

"A lot of my friends play music, touring and recording at similar levels. But I feel like Black Dice has a somewhat private musical direction. I know what my friends do some of the time, but we try to isolate ourselves to some degree."

But if there's one thing that does link these musicians, it's a sense of a *lack* of place. Gang Gang Dance's fifth world disco and TK Webb's itinerant blues, say, are poles apart but are equally 'other', equally at home in their fluidity and equally evocative of imaginary spaces – albeit completely different ones.

So, you could say, are Black Dice, with their shape-shifting but always recognisable landscape of neon-sweet tones and volcanic rumbles and insectoid hums and buzzes. It's a hard space to gauge, being alternately midnight dark or fluorescently dawn; inside and outside. It's filled with creatures, that's a given, but whether those creatures are amplified crickets, giant cats, partying ghosts or as-yet unnamed things with many eyes is as yet unclear. (It's an ongoing cryptozoological experiment, the findings of which are inconclusive.) Records line the walls of this space, but as you pull them out they could be anything: Caetano Veloso; Throbbing Gristle; Cluster; Neubauten; Ghanaian funk; Sumatran pop. The air is greenhouse-humid and there are ferns coming up through the floorboards. I try to go to sleep there sometimes; it rarely works.

"That's the worst thing," sympathises Bjorn. "I hate it when I listen to shit and fall asleep and then get woken up by some really harsh part..."

I don't know. With dreams like mine, being interrupted by one of Black Dice's squeal of feedback, mews of ring modulation or eerie, echoing chants kind of makes perfect sense. And is never entirely unwelcome either.

# BROADCAST TENDER BUTTONS

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

'GORGEOUS SPACE AGE DREAM POP'  
NME.

BROADCAST LIVE  
IN SEPTEMBER..

26TH - ABC2 - GLASGOW

27TH - ACADEMY 3 - NIGHT AND DAY

28TH - KOKO - LONDON

29TH - THE OCEAN ROOMS - BRIGHTON

30TH - THE SOCIAL - NOTTINGHAM

WWW.BROADCAST.UK.NET



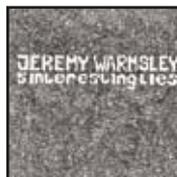
## Transgressive records



### Battle - 'Demons' Single

Enthralling, anthemic debut proper for long-term home Transgressive, from epic and introspective Luton-ite four-some, currently embarking upon debut headline UK tour. Chipping guitars, acerbic, impassioned vocals and a song destined for an immediate sell-out.

Limited to 1,000 3"-CD copies, 500 7"-vinyl copies, and download. Out 26th September.



### Jeremy Warnsley -

#### '5 Interesting Lies' EP

Debut, five-song bludgeoning from the bespectacled, half-French, half-London wunderkind. Searing, bedroom-produced folk-tronica with loops and melodies that soar and engulf upon instant impact; timeless, yet unmistakably modern pop to romance and challenge a generation.

Limited to 500 copies - 10"-vinyl. Coming soon.



### Larrikin Love - 'Happy As Annie' / 'On Sussex Downs' Single

Debut single proper from the confusingly young, agit-urchin London poet laureates, who'll (musically) try out anything, as long as it could shake the soul. Lyrically sinister misdealings in the summery British countryside are afoot, and this is sure to be a club classic in the making. Limited to 500 copies - 7"-vinyl, and download. Coming soon.



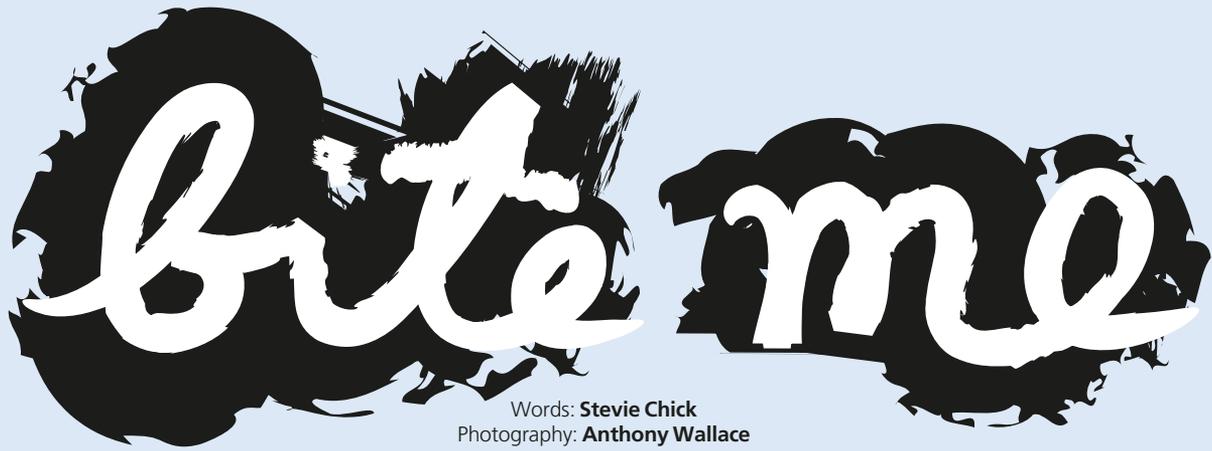
### Regina Spektor - 'Mary Ann Meets The Grave Diggers & Other Short Stories' LP

Lavishly-packaged amalgamation of classical-punk, NYC-via-Bronx songstress Regi Spektor's much-acclaimed, yet limited, first three albums, complete with DVD. The first ever Transgressive album-release is, quite simply, tear-inducingly good; brittle, piano-based paens of characters so far, yet so near, to our everyday orbits, it's here to enchant, bewilder and overjoy all with ears. Released on 12"-vinyl/DVD and/or CD/DVD digi-packs, and download. Coming soon.

Forthcoming on Transgressive : 'Monster' single by Ladyfuzz, 'Two Words Two Syllables' single by burningpilot, 'The Decision' single by The Young Knives, 'No Soul' / 'Motorcycle' single by The Rumble Strips, and the debut Transgressive Records: Singles #1 LP, compiling the first, five sold-out seven-inch releases from the Transgressive catalogue, plus bonus-tracks and a comprehensive DVD.

[www.transgressiverecords.co.uk](http://www.transgressiverecords.co.uk)





Words: **Stevie Chick**  
Photography: **Anthony Wallace**

## Hip hop theosophist **K-os** fights venom with venom

"When you get bitten by a snake, the cure is taken from the poison itself. A lot of artists need to realise that this is an interesting situation God or whatever has set up."

K-os clears his throat a moment, and focuses. It's 11am, a hotel just off Trafalgar Square. Too early to be thinking so deep, perhaps.

"I think that metaphor extends to pop music," he continues. "Some people see pop as a venom, something that might destroy the fibre of your persona, or turn you into a superficial individual. But you can use pop music to cure the same people who are suffering from the superficiality of pop, use it as a chance to influence society in a progressive way. How you do that separates knowledge from wisdom – you might have musical knowledge, but do you have the wisdom to bring it back to the barbecue, so everybody can enjoy it?"

Kheaven Brereton, aka K-os, talks in riddles sometimes, but that's only because he knows everyone loves something to unravel. Other times, he gets straight to the point: same destination, just a different route. He's a seasoned traveller, hailing from Whitby, a tiny car-factory city just outside of Toronto, but flung across the globe by his dad's job as a telecommunications engineer with the airline BWIA. Aged nine, Kheaven and his family moved to Trinidad, where they lived for five years.

"It was hard for us to fit in with the other kids," he remembers. "Because of our accents, or whatever. So five years later, we moved back to Toronto with our mom; our parents agreed we should go to Canadian schools, to get our education. Dad stayed on, which was what men did in those days, a very masculine thing to do: to put your career before your family. We travelled a lot as a family, to make the distance easier to bear: we'd go on holidays to Europe, meet up in New York, visit London and Amsterdam."

They say travel broadens the mind.

"The only thing I remember from those trips, really vividly remember, was being in Paris, and seeing this black man wearing a suit and smoking a pipe. It was a culture shock. I'd grown up in Toronto and Trinidad, and made these summer trips to America, where black people follow a certain protocol, about how they're supposed to behave. But then you're in Paris, and this black man walks past you with a completely different demeanour. It made me think, as a child, 'Wow, maybe everything in my world isn't how it should be. Maybe I haven't seen everything yet.' I know I started thinking differently after that."

Kheaven's music – as K-os, he's released two albums, 2003's *Exit* and last year's *Joyous Rebellion* – is a subtly rebellious thing, the poison of pop adulterated by a lyrical approach you could call 'conscious', if that term didn't conjure up worthy but dull brown-rice rappers, the antithesis of K-os' flavoursome, sorbet-light music. Inveigling all manner of reggae, soul and pop influences into a hard-edged, live hip hop sound, K-os' music is sun-splash subversion, revolution with joy in its heart; music for pleasure, as well as education.

Kheaven soon abandoned the protocols that dictated his listening habits.

"Just before high school, I became very self-conscious about how black I was. I was one of about three black kids in my smalltown school, so I tried hard to be the funniest kid in class, to keep up on the music that was cool, to fit in. My best friend Derek, this Ukrainian kid, he had an older sister, Laura, and she was *hot*. She would listen to The

**'Kids will find their parents, whether or not they're in the house'**

Specials, and Strawberry Switchblade, and Siouxsie And The Banshees, all this new wave mod shit. And I would play my hip hop, and she'd tell me it wasn't cool. It didn't matter what she played me, I was into it – mostly because she was hot, but that was the beginning of me throwing away my cultural defences. I took those tapes home, and would feel confused: I was loving Kid Creole And The Coconuts, I was loving Grandmaster Flash and UTFO, and I was loving The Police and all this pop shit, and also all this new wave stuff. It was the beginning of me being, as my mom would say, 'wrong and strong' about the musical choices I've made. It's been part of my music ever since."

Kheaven started making his own music when his friend got himself the hip hop tools of two turntables and an SP1200 sampler. Kheaven and various friends would rap over the looped beats, battle-rhyming in their basements in the suburbs: black, Hispanic and white kids all discovering and exploring music and their egos.

"The male competitive instinct translated directly into talking about someone's mom on the microphone," he laughs. "I already sang, and could play my grandma's melodica. But singers don't really compete. Battle-rhyming was more interesting than harmonising with someone."

The limitations of battle-rhyming soon exhausted, Kheaven turned his eye elsewhere.

"I didn't like making other people feel bad," he sighs. "Hip hop allowed me to assert my personality. My father wasn't around a lot, so these guys became father figures; Rakim was like my dad, Q-Tip my older brother, KRS-One became a father figure. There's a saying that kids will find their parents, whether or not they're in the house. That's where idols and symbols come from; when you're a teenager, putting posters up on the wall, it's mostly because you don't see those people in your parents. And my dad grew up a rude boy, listening to music, but he wasn't around to assert that. Hip hop was partly about finding someone to look up to, and partly wanting to be dope at what I did, to excel."

He talks of subversion in his music, using a "Dalí-esque approach, as opposed to just drawing a picture of someone punching someone in the face". He's certainly one of few artists to link to the theosophical teachings of Krishnamurti on his website.

"It wasn't like I was assertively, actively searching out philosophy," he explains, of the beliefs that inform *Joyful Rebellion's* lyric sheet so strongly. "It came to me through this woman, who was Greek, and who prided herself on being a philosophy major. I was a huge complainer, a slacker, a cynical individual. I was dating this girl, our relationship was dying. She said, 'You should read this guy'. She threw it on the bed, and I read it in three days, it was amazing."

He begins to grin warmly, and continues.

"Krishnamurti was propped up to be a messiah, but gave up on it all because he believes there is no real organisation or truth that can bring you to the reality of life. I stand by that, as my 'religion': you can't tell someone the 'truth'; they have to experience it themselves. But you can point to it; you can create an atmosphere that brings it closer to people."

And that's where the poison of pop comes in, putting it to good use, to cure the sickness somehow?

"I certainly think that should be your aim, as a musician, as an artist. I know it's mine."

# T.V.O.D.

Words: **Everett True**  
Photography: **Sarah Bowles**  
Live photography: **Cat Stevens**

In the green room with **Franz Ferdinand**







L-R: Paul, Alex, Bob, Nick

For sheer ennui and inertia, waiting in a Channel 4 green room for a band to finish 40-minute takes for a TV show so you can snatch 10-minute bursts of conversation is hard to match. It's nobody's fault, the downside of glamour and all those perky award shows you avoid so assiduously.

Everyone's nice. Everybody's friendly. Everybody has a job to do – except you. You sit there and feel a fraud, banter with the security dude about Coldplay, chew on an occasional celery stick and chocolate biscuit, drink bad coffee. Occasionally, the band pop their heads in, lively and smiling; Alex at pains to make sure I'm looked after, Paul swapping stories about various *Plan B* sorts, Bob and Nick looking just like you'd expect Bob and Nick to. Yeah, they all have their roles to play – them and the dolly grips, the cameramen, the make-up girl, the manager (who I first met over 20 years ago, as part of Alan McGee's Living Room crew), the runner who fetches us from reception to help navigate the circular maze of metal and plastic.

Us? We're just here to observe, to comment, maybe grab a few sentences with the affable Scots pop stars – and what kind of job is that? We're not even being paid.

So, what do I know about Franz Ferdinand before meeting them?

I know that a few weeks back I was sent a CD sampler for their new album, *You Could Have It So Much Better* – watermarked 'Everett True, *Plan B*' – and more out of amusement than anticipation, I listened to it, and was surprised at its intelligent inanity, the sprightliness and bite of its hooks, especially the stop-start, ultra-sharp single 'Do You Want To', which reminds me of Scissor Sisters' glam stomp. The dark chirpiness of opening song 'The Fallen' recalls crazed Midlands ska-heads Misty's Big Adventure, while 'Evil And A Heathen' is like a 2005 'Stray Cat Strut'... and that's enough for me to realise I'd been missing out.

I knew they'd walked off with the Mercury Music Prize some time back for their debut album *Franz Ferdinand*, and that 'Take Me Out' was ubiquitous. I knew, too, that said album had sold three million copies worldwide, and helped catapult the band's label Domino into the big time, richly deserved: now, label boss Laurence Bell can release all the Orange Juice and Fire Engines and Television Personalities collections he desires. And this pleases me, greatly.

I know that drummer Paul Thomson kipped on former *Plan B* live editor Sophie Heawood's floor for a few months earlier this year, and that he was once in ace post-Fall Glasgow band The Yummy Fur, also dark electro trio Pro Forma; and used to write to *Plan B* designer Andrew Clare for advice. I know that singer Alex Kapranos looks sexy and elegant, and mopped floors at Glasgow's 13th Note venue, booking a variety of artists there, including Policecat (which included former *Plan B* media editor Katrina Dixon). I know little about Nick McCarthy (guitar, vocals) and Bob Hardy (The Bass) except that the former is lean and once had a fight with Alex over a bottle of vodka, and the latter reminds me of one of The Loves, ultra-cutie school-type band from Wales. I am, of course, aware the band is named after the Austro-Hungarian archduke whose assassination sparked World War I. I also know that the success of Franz Ferdinand has spawned a generation of skinny-tie guitar bands, beloved by magazine editors but not by me, rather fed up that the most unimaginative aspects of 1978 new wave have been recast as a musical future for the UK.

I try not to let this bother me.

It's not these lads' fault that others seek to gain success by imitating what they do.

The interview starts in a smaller room. There's a fresh plate of biscuits, some bottles of water,

a shower and toilet. Alex leads me there, solicitous. We start preliminaries. I remark upon the strong Scots link Domino has – Franz Ferdinand, Stephen McRobbie's Geographic label, Bill Wells, the Fence collective, Sons And Daughters. He feels it's the best label Franz could be signed to. Not just for the Glasgow connection, but because it continues a British independent tradition that's been behind some of the most innovative, adventurous and thoughtful music of the last 30 years. "There are usually maverick characters behind each label," the singer explains, "Alan McGee [Creation] or Geoff Travis [Heavenly] or Tony Wilson [Factory]." I nod, grateful for common ground.

"We've worked with a lot of independents before," he adds. "But they didn't have the same sense of grand adventure that Domino does." Adventure or a sense of mischief, it amounts to the same thing. "A lot of people don't get Glasgow the way Lawrence does," he muses. "They think they're going to find the next Franz Ferdinand there, when what it's really great at is producing idiosyncratic bands. There isn't another Belle And Sebastian or Delgados; that's what I love about it."

Alex talked constantly with John from The Yummy Fur about the idea of not being scared to be in a pop group. Much as he loved independent labels like Guided Missile or Vesuvius, he wanted more. He wanted to be in a pop group – not a pop group like... what are they called, he asks, the tune goes like this... S Club 7 or Steps... but a band like Nirvana. A girl pokes her head round the door: 45 seconds to the next take, OK? Alex nods, and continues. "You can label 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' whatever way you want: grunge or rock or

discovery." So what do you miss about your old life? "My friends. Having long periods of time with my own thoughts, being able to just contemplate."

If I were a 'professional' critic, we'd be talking about the album by now. But I'm not. In my world, spontaneity matters. Ask what comes into your head: the sunlight flirting with trees and lampposts, the tenacity and temperance of classic Eighties independent band The Nightingales, whether people really are scared of travelling on the Tube. Or, failing inspiration, keep it contemporary. Keep it current. Did you see this year's Mercury Music Prize? Were you surprised by the preponderance of bands in skinny ties? "Uhhh... No comment!" Aren't you to blame for some of that? "Definitely..."

"Think of Nirvana," he says. I've been doing little bloody else for the last year. "I love Nirvana, but they were responsible for over a decade of dross: and more than that, the state of American radio today, dominated by turgid, self-referential rock music that has none of the wrongness Nirvana had. But I don't like to slag off other bands..."

So you're telling me the next Coldplay album is going to be a classic?

"Uhh... well, according to Q magazine the last one was a classic, so..."

Damn. I knew it. He's a natural diplomat. You can't attain certain levels of success by mouthing off at every opportunity. You need to practise, repeat, press flesh, smile, press more flesh, practise... write a few catchy hooks. Kylie once complained it took her whole weekends to recover from the strain of smiling 16 hours a day. Can't imagine that's a problem for Alex: the smile is natural. I'm not saying he suffers fools gladly... just won't make them feel

## 'When I was in The Yummy Fur, you did one tour and that was your holiday' – Paul

alternative, but essentially that's the greatest pop song of the Nineties." I assent. When I grew up in the late Seventies, pop music was punk rock. There was no differentiation. "That has been, for me, one of the greatest tragedies of recent years," Alex says, rising from his chair. "This idea that if you position yourself outside of the mainstream then you can't play a pop melody."

I go back into the Green Room. *Plan B* photographer Sarah Bowles has arrived. "I've never done a shoot before where the band has its own security man," she remarks. She's hung over, clutching her head – helpless, the way only extremely hungover people can be. Not fully functioning. Perfect for today.

*Plan B* writer Melissa Bradshaw, along for the ride, twiddles her glittery legwarmers, decides they'd look best on her arms, apologises abjectly by mobile to a hip hop magazine editor whose deadline she's missed by being here. Who wouldn't want to meet Franz Ferdinand, though? Popular, good-looking, friendly... we chat briefly about fashion. I tell Sarah she's not allowed to take snaps inside the building – she might stumble across the mascara Judy Finnigan uses, a soiled seat cover discarded from *100 Most Unwatched TV Shows*. A television set bumbles happily to itself on one wall. I drink more coffee. Alex reappears. We adjourn again.

I was watching a Nirvana video. There was a poignant moment when Kurt was asked about success. He said he missed going into thrift stores and finding something for a dollar. "That's weird." Alex stops, and considers. "I still go shopping in charity shops." You don't need to. "Exactly. I'm not on the dole any more, but I like the element of

too embarrassed for being that way. Does that include me? No point getting paranoid. The TV girl will be back soon, time to ask my one question: motivation. What made you want to make music?

"I liked the sound of my dad's guitar," he replies. What kind of sound was that? He can't explain it. He remembers his dad holding down chords and letting him hit the strings. "It was the most amazing thing," he sighs, "that you could hit this funny thing and a sound would come out of it." He didn't start writing songs till he was 14 or 15 when he used to walk home from school with his friend Andrew. "We wanted to learn how to play Beatles songs. We got these chord books and I couldn't understand it – I could make the chord sound on the guitar, but I couldn't make the songs sound like they sounded on record, so we started writing our own songs."

What were the first lyrics you wrote?

"It was all very introspective..."

Can you remember any lines?

"Uhh, yes..."

Can you tell me them?

"No! No, absolutely not..."

Both he and Andrew hated pop music, so they began to create their own internal world, making 45-minute long albums on a four-track, inspired by Dead Kennedys and The Specials. They decided they didn't want to play live after going to see Huey Lewis And The News: "Andrew thought we should see them," explains Alex, "because they had one of the songs in *Back To The Future*, which I loved." The friends didn't see any live shows after that until they were 18, and started going to gigs at King Tut's... "Gallon Drunk and local bands like Lungleg and The Yummy Fur. It was a very exciting scene,



made more exciting because it was like a secret kept from the rest of the world." Did he dance down the front? "Of course. That's one thing I miss. We can never dance down the front now."

Oh. Is that the time already? The TV girl is standing by the door, waiting patiently for Alex.

So now we're standing outside, photo time, waiting for Nick to materialise. Sarah's off round the corner, scouting for locations, a pub, street corners... I'm talking to Bob – mysterious Bob, who doesn't leap around or grimace as much as Nick or Alex on stage, not this afternoon. He's perched on railings outside the entrance to Channel 4. To enter the building, you have to cross what looks like a drawbridge: is this how they rid themselves of unwelcome Z-list celebrities and critics? I only have a few seconds with Bob. Let's make them count.

**Tell me a story about the last time you fell off your bicycle.** "About two years ago, I was being chased down the street by a drunk and he pushed me and I fell over a car bonnet. Then he punched me and kicked me."

**Do drunks chase you much?** "Not really. Nick also got punched off his bike in Glasgow."

**Why did you start making music?** "I was friends with Alex and he asked me if I wanted to learn to play the guitar, and I was free that afternoon so I just started."

**What bands were you into at the time?** "The Magnetic Fields, The Fall, Sparks, Roxy Music."

**What did you study at art school?** "Painting. Architectural/structural stuff, and towards the end of my degree I was making videos. I wrote a play that Alex was in for my degree show..."

Bob passes the tape recorder to Paul. I suspect Paul and me could talk about music for ages, given the right circumstances. These aren't the right circumstances.

**Why did you start making music?** "A friend bought a guitar and he said I should buy a bass, so I did. I was in a band with having two bass guitars and a drum machine with loads of FX pedals, and it sounded all dreamy like My Bloody Valentine, but having two bass players was a bit too Ned's Atomic Dustbin so we wanted a drummer. I knew a guy at school. We were round at his house when he nipped off to the toilet and I got behind the drums and started playing. I've been the drummer ever since."

**Were you always into the idea of being in a pop band?** "I didn't think it would ever happen. When I was in The Yummy Fur, you did one tour and that was your holiday. Then you bummed around for the rest of the year and occasionally got a cheque for £600 for doing a Peel Session."

**What do you miss most about your old life?** "It wasn't as much hard work as this. There was a lot more hedonism involved. I'm glad we don't have to do some of that any more, like sleeping on people's floors on tour."

Nick reappears, and we shuffle off down the street to a stairwell. Photographers like stairwells. I've noticed it before. A few curious passers-by stare, not through recognition, more to see if we're someone famous. Hey! We are someone famous, dude! We're Franz Ferdinand! Been on numerous front covers, sparked a guitar revolution, sold a few million CDs, helped rejuvenate UK independent music, got our own security man... ah forget it. We'll just wait for you to walk past, then. "I was in

so many photographs at the Mercury Music Prize last week," laughs the TV girl. "Every time I turned round, I was in shot again. Beamed instantly across the world via Reuters."

Shoot over, time for another take. Cerne the manager invites me into the studio: I watch impressed but also a little nauseated. What? Bands have to play songs *four times over*? Doesn't that become wearing – especially when you're recording an entire set, like Franz Ferdinand today? No wonder days feel so long. Technicians wheel giant Channel 4 reflectors around so they catch the light and cameras through an array of strobe, brilliant white and darkness. "OK, five-four-three..." The producer silently gesticulates the last couple of numbers on her fingers. Paul crashes in on a beat. Wow! This sounds great. Sharp and dynamic, and I love the way Alex takes time to slick back his hair between verses, Nick all eagle-grace and poise. Every inch the pop stars... oh, wait. They are.

Earlier, Cerne had been telling me about the weird habit John Peel had of sometimes picking up on bands – Gene, for example – years after everyone else because he so existed in his own world. Man. Why hasn't anyone told me about Franz Ferdinand before? Stop this musing. Time to meet Nick. He's standing over there by an amplifier, all casual elegance and welcoming smile.

Oh boy. I feel guilty for intruding on his downtime. So I keep the questioning brief – too brief. Here's a précis of our chat: "I lived in the middle of absolutely nowhere, so it was either the metallers or the rappers for me. I listened to Run DMC and The Beastie Boys and did lots of



## 'Glasgow's really great at producing idiosyncratic bands' – Alex

skateboarding. My brother was in a hardcore band and he taught me to play guitar; 'Louie Louie', 'Foxy Lady' and the blues scale. I showed some friends and we started our first band. It's so exciting the first time you play something you've written yourself."

Yeah, way too brief.

It's late. Sarah and Cerne and Melissa have long disappeared. I've been here for hours now. I'm thinking of my wife and son; back in Brighton, it's bath time. Everyone is very nice, accommodating – jeez, dude, you think magazines like *Plan B* usually interview pop stars? – but this knowledge makes me feel even more curmudgeonly. Damn. How do people keep up their enthusiasm levels for such protracted periods of time? The band is building up for the big one, 'Do You Want To'. I'm sure you've heard it by now. Infectious, bouncy, smart, aligned with enough chutzpah to ensure a few more million sales. Hold on. Why aren't we putting them on the cover? I get it. We're not a *pop* magazine.

Fortunately, Alex is a trooper. Eight hours in, and we finally get to have the chat I wanted. I've had plenty of time to think of a few questions: I start with the band's artwork – I love the uniformity of approach, it reminds me of post-revolution Russian posters or early Buzzcocks sleeves.

He nods agreement. "A lot of the design comes from the Russian constructivists," he says. "That approach to aesthetics is something I think applies well to pop music: this idea of a reduction, this cutting away of the irrelevant. The idea of cutting out a 10-minute guitar solo is just as appealing as cutting out the self-indulgent, extravagant detail. I love design that is simple and bold and direct. It

doesn't mean that the sentiment you are trying to communicate is necessarily simple. I love the idea that you can have a depth of emotion or complex ideas, and communicate them in a simple way. Both art and music are plagued by people with bland ideas who try to communicate them in a complex way..."

**Now that you're famous, do you feel that you have a platform to talk from?** "It works the other way. I'm a lot more guarded. I never could stand preaching, though. I used to put on lots of great punk bands in Glasgow, but many of them would preach at the audience in the same way that a Christian rock band might. I didn't like being told that the state was bad or that I shouldn't vote – no matter how honest the motivation might have been. There are more subtle ways of doing it. Dead Kennedys were subversive because they were satirical. The best way to point out something is wrong is to laugh at it."

**Do you object to politicians?** "I think politicians are... necessary. I don't find myself particularly drawn to spend time in their company."

**Well, if you object to being preached to...** "I'm not certain it's a rule. Something happens to the ego of the front guy of a band sometimes. It's as if they get a rush off the adulation – like they're these great characters who have been placed in the world to do all this important stuff and suddenly the truth comes out of their mouths. It doesn't mean I won't address particular subjects or issues. I just don't want to do it to influence other people."

**Are you into football chants?** "I'm more into football chants than I'm into football. I like the sound of lots of people singing in unison, but

I don't mean like a good choir, because I don't like good choirs. I like it when there's a little bit of that wonky wobble."

**Like when you double-track your own voice?** "Exactly, and also when you get a singer who isn't that good double-tracking their voices. George Harrison always sounded much better than the other Beatles because he didn't have such a good voice."

**Do you view yourselves as punks?** "The punk attitude was amazing and revolutionised what it was to make music... but to call myself a punk? All those American bands that call themselves punks are about as mainstream as you can get."

**Did you make up stories when you were young?** "All the time. Different things for different points in life; there was a time when I was into the idea of being a soldier, so I used to write about that. I also used to write poetry. At first it rhymed and then it didn't. What's more important than direct rhyme is the rhythm, but I love the idea of totally exaggerating it, so you're twisting words that shouldn't rhyme. I like the idea of playing with the conventions of songwriting."

"Lyrics should be like one long snaking line, like the way your thoughts flow, rather than snippets joined together. I write longhand. I use a laptop like a four-track. One of the most important things that anyone who is creative can do is keep a notebook of ideas. It's like if you're writing a novel. It'd be impossible to suddenly come up with complex plots and characters. I remember reading a Graham Greene biography and it's similar: it's all notebooks, so you have a sketch of a character, a sketch of a location, a sketch of a sub-plot."



# WHAT THE DEAL?

Words: **Melissa Bradshaw**

Illustration: **Lady Lucy**

## Why did crunk make a perfectly decent woman want to be a man?

Help me. I'm confused. I think I might be angry. I can't tell who the enemy is. No one wants to answer my questions.

It started in a club. I was beer drunk, some dirty heavy offbeats were trying to smash us in, and some super-aggie dudes were shouting shouting shouting. A loop of a bikini-clad, well busted skinny girl – a body without a head – wiggled circles on a projector screen. I turned to my companion, and said, "Dude, crunk makes me want to be a man."

That's not cool. If it's frustrating sometimes being a woman, I'll never *want* to want to be a man. Not just because I spent the first 10 years of my life with Maggie as my political backtrack (we had a *Spitting Image* Maggie candle on our dining table, that dribbled and slobbered down itself as the years melted its face away); not just because it would be a horrible betrayal of my personal beliefs; not because I was always more comfortable around men than around women; but simply because women – real women – are amazing. So there.

But wouldn't you rather be a crunk mans, spreading your thing all over the world, than be a little bitty crunky boy's booty? I would. So there.

Crunk, then. It confuses me. I like it. Sometimes I like to get pissed out of my head and hurl my limbs around the dancefloor, let all my aggression be absorbed in the super-electro thump. I might even thrust my bust and wiggle my hips. But I'd never do it like the girl in the video, all giving you up my body. That thing is mine; I give it to special people. Then I wonder why that girl in the video pisses me off. Or maybe it's not her; it's the ugly dude with the long dreads and the gold teeth grin-grimacing at the camera. Lil Jon in his big baggy baseball top, Lil Jon with his crunk juice. Lil Jon this, Lil Jon that. Man, it's as if he was the only rap musician in the world right now. And I've got *no* idea what his body looks like under that baseball top. Ugly dude, why don't you get your kit off and wiggle around for me?

So with this girl in mind, and lyrics like Pitbull's "*I'm be running her out/When I'm finished paramedics gone be taking her out*" in my head, and a host of life tings distracting me, I set off to ask some crunk people what the deal with their sexist crap. My main aim (to get an interview with the 'conscious' man of crunk, David Banner) went down like some bitch in front of his dick: his label SRC never replied to my emails. My contact (their UK PR rep) wouldn't give me their telephone number. And I couldn't get nothing off them 118 boys.

I emailed UK king-crunk-DJ Semtex (1xtra, *RWD Magazine*, Dizzee and Sway official DJ), who told me he'd love to answer my questions, and then oddly never replied to me once I'd sent him them. Surely it wasn't because I asked him why crunk womens like Ciara and Missy are so fit, and crunk mens are so damn ugly?

Have you seen Ciara's 'Goodies' video? It's this beautiful queen, who must spend hours in the gym, surrounded by fat, fat mens. That's sexism, man, that's an assumption that viewing desire is purely

male, and an indication that while production and rhyming talent can get men a long way, women aren't as likely to get there unless they're fit fit fit. Missy might be an exception, but how many Missies are there per Lil Jon/Banner/Pitbull/Ying Yang Twins/Crime Mob/Oobie/Lil Scrappy?.

And TVT Records – the majorest crunk label in the world, home of Lil Jon, Pitbull, and The Ying Yang twins – failed to get back to me, notably on the question of why Lil Jon boasts on 'Nothing On' about fucking girls with no condom on when the worst rate of increase of HIV/AIDS in America is among heterosexual African Americans (especially women – hey, it only takes one promiscuous infected man).

And then, just when I was thinking my 25 years were starting to take their toll on my feminazi

## Ugly dude, why don't you get your kit off and wiggle around for me?

righteousness, I spoke to Excalibah. Long time UK rap championing DJ, MOBO winner and actor, and he doesn't like crunk. He thinks it's "disrespectful and disgraceful", besides being more than a little bit musically spastic. He doesn't care if it's about reclaiming racist stereotypes, because "that's no excuse." He thinks Ying Yang Twins' 'Wait (The Whisper Song)' (a sum total of "*Wait til you see my dick*" whispered in the ear of some random nightclub girl, with "*beat that pussy up*" as its charming refrain) is utterly unacceptable. Oh my god I think I love this guy.

I hang up the phone all flustered. Is he real? I mean, even Common, when I said I was uncomfortable with crunk's attitude to women, said "What's wrong with it?"

Banner and Lil Jon and Pitbull are all articulate and keen to point out their music is a reflection of their own experience in the worst of racist America.

Banner, in particular, has got a point, as the US government's reaction to the Hurricane Katrina response has most recently suggested. Although, as Banner said to *Ozone* magazine, the lack of appropriate urgency is as much to do with rich and poor as black and white.

Crunk's defence is that it's a hyper-aggressive hip hop posturing, an excremental splurge of mindlessness that comes from excremental, mindlessness-inducing contexts. Hattie Collins, editor of *RWD* magazine, says: "I think crunk embraces both racial and southern stereotypes. Long considered the poor cousin, 'too country' and essentially hokey by East Coast rappers, crunk artists are now having the last laugh as everything they were once ridiculed for becomes cool. So...they aggressively celebrate certain stereotypes – violence, sexism, overtly sexual wordplay, gold teeth – in a way that makes it perhaps senseless or pointless to attempt to argue why they do this...Having been to Atlanta strip clubs, crunk lyrics are certainly a reflection of Atlanta residents' incredible appetite for sex and or sexual suggestion and this is heavily related to women. There are no male strip clubs."

There's also the other old arguments – 'bitch' doesn't just refer to women, it's not real, it's just party, how women react to it is up to them.

All this is just fine, but it doesn't go far enough for me. I've got why crunk artists do their hyper-masculinity shit. I know that sex and violence are often interrelated. I don't want my art boring; I like aggression, subversion and unacceptability. In the right mood, I think 'The Whisper Song' is funny (but I'd fucking smack any mans who came up to me and said that shit). I've had a love-hate relationship with The Rza's 'Domestic Violence' for f-ing years.

So, if crunk is about reclamation, how do the women fit into it? Or do they just not? Do they just get disclaimed again? There are some fighting crunk womens out there; but is there one that didn't start off by sexualising herself? Maybe it's not that it's exclusive to crunk. Maybe it's that it's everywhere, and crunk puts it most explicitly in relief. Ciara is onto something with her shooing away the Lynx man – it takes new forms, and it's gonna take some new feminist strategies. Expressions of confusion and anger included.

### Protest music: Diplo on crunk

to be making the decisions about it."

#### Is crunk about reclaiming racist stereotypes? If so, where do women come into it?

"It's an industry that boomed off of independent labels, so if one scene can control its own music and output that's only positive. Now that it has taken over the US, it's too bad that a lot of people that don't understand it are going

#### Is crunk misogynist?

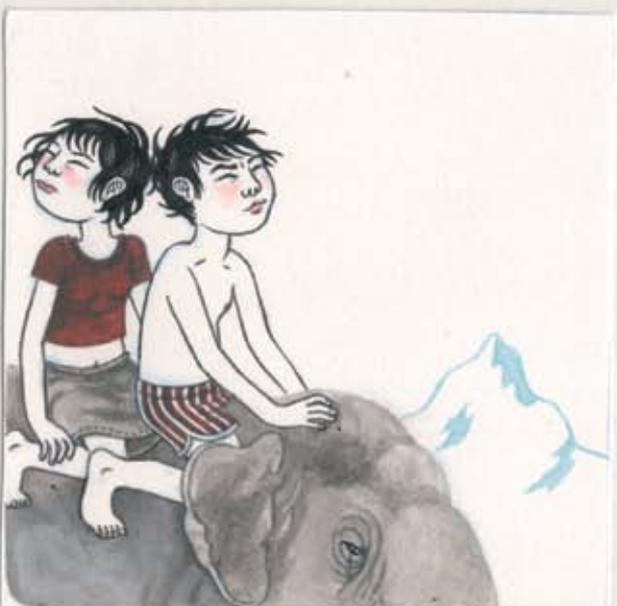
"Crunk is just like protest music. It's like punk without a solid message. Rap music in general is misogynistic, and if you go to any strip club in the south, it's all southern music, and the girls are the ones getting paid off it."

#### People tell me I shouldn't talk about sexism/ misogyny in rap because 'that's hip hop'.

"It's always a problem in any form of music that's been based on bragadoccio since it started."

#### Who are crunk's feisty girls?

"Check lots of stuff by Trina (on Slip And Slide) and Jackie-O. Lil' Kim also did a good job dissing guys and bragging."



# MOUNTAIN notes

Words: **Everett True**  
Illustration: **Geneviève Castrée**

## Escape above the cloud line with **Mt Eerie's** joyful, compelling wilderness music

He calls his band Mt Eerie, not The Microphones.

He did this after a trip to northern Norway in 2002. He returned to nature, and died. And was reborn. And sang his wonder at rediscovering life anew, and his pleasure at being told he has exceptionally smooth skin. And returned to his hometown of Anacortes, Washington – over which the original Mt Eerie looms, mysterious, right in the middle of the islands, a big rock. There, to hide and create among the fragrant lakes and sprawling fields of the Puget Sound.

Last time I saw Phil Elverum, he was playing an upturned water cooler in a hushed art gallery as percussive accompaniment to his wife Geneviève Castrée's spooky, magical songs in WOELV. And he was smiling secret happiness to himself.

I type these words as the wind across the Downs gusts and eddies, sending the clothes horse on the patio reeling.

### location recordings

"When I was a kid I played tuba in the school band and piano at my great grandma's house," he recounts, the noise of an Olympia coffee house ebbing about us. "The time when it became something I was interested in doing was...gosh, I don't remember exactly. I faded into it. I got into the drums and there were local bands like Gravel, practising across the lake. So the idea that normal people could have bands wasn't foreign to me. When my friends came over, we would draw. 'Let's build a weird...fort!' Playing in bands in high school was an extension of that."

Mt Eerie have just released an album. It's called *No Flashlight*, but no one's sent me a copy yet – probably because it comes with a full-blown atlas to give it geographic context. I can only imagine the content – tormented with confusion and the desire to articulate new visions that don't translate very easily. I hope it recalls 2004's intimate and rewarding CD, *The Microphones Live In Japan Feb 19th, 21st and 22nd, 2003* (which included two of my favourite cover versions, 'Silent Night' and 'My Favourite Things', not to mention the affecting tribute to Portland songstress Khaela Maricich, 'The Blow Pt 2') but I'm worried. I saw him play Seattle last Christmas in a venue where every word spoken in laughter at the bar was louder than even his most climactic of acoustic chord changes.

I'm concerned that the hubbub might have somehow affected his new recordings.

I type these words with a baby on my lap, left-handed, and every sentence takes an age.

### thrifty behaviour

"I was about 15 when I started playing drums in bands, back in 1993," he recalls. "I'd write stupid, funny punk songs – songs about food, nonsense words, inside jokes. I didn't write the music. I didn't consider myself a songwriter or a singer. To me, if you sang you had to play the guitar. Everyone had an acoustic guitar and everyone's first song was something from *Nevermind*. Bret [Lunsford, ex-Beat Happening, D+ and founder of Knw-Yr-Own records] had a store and we'd hang out there and not buy anything. We asked him for a job, and he said 'no'. He said, 'You should make a zine instead,' and gave us this big plastic bag full of zines. They had a photocopier at the store, so we made a zine of music reviews of promo cassettes he got from Sub Pop. We'd never seen a zine before."

I've never been to Anacortes, but I've stayed in Astoria, Oregon – the places are similar. Small, cool hippie communities bordering on the water,

**'I'd write stupid, funny punk songs about food, nonsense words, inside jokes'**

surrounded by fog, outgoing roads treacherous in the wintertime. Trees, thrift stores and a Safeway. One or two individuals make the town more palatable for outsiders and hipsters: a basement for bands to play here, a community-owned theatre there. Washington is littered with these beautiful, medium-sized towns – big snowy mountains, islands all around. Anacortes is more exposed to the Pacific Ocean weather patterns, so it's windier. Parts of *Snow Falling On Cedars* were filmed there. *The Goonies* and *The Ring* were filmed in Astoria.

I type these words, a finished banana-and-honey smoothie on my desk, next to a stack of Microphones records. A straw hangs limply.

### holy mountains

"I did a lot of painting projects. I was the founding member of the Anacortes High School Art Club. My big ambition was to be an animator. I saved up and got a video camera and made claymation movies. One friend made gothic vampire movies. There was

a coffee house in town that had music, so we had movie nights where we brought a big TV in. All our friends came, we showed our videos and everyone laughed.

"When I went to the grocery store with my mom, I would always read *Mad* at the magazine rack. It was a treasure, but 'Spy Vs Spy' was the thing I savoured. I had this old math textbook about an inch and a half thick that I cut all the pages out of and filled with comics. I was going to bring it to school. Totally *Mad*-style humour. I was never into superheroes. Bill Watterson [creator of *Calvin And Hobbes*] is the Ian MacKaye of comics."

Confusingly, the subtle, beautiful *Mount Eerie* (K, 2003) was released under The Microphones' aegis: a coming-of-age concept album that was as joyful and compelling as a flock of starlings in mid-swarm. Phil climbs the mountain, confronts God and death, with Calvin Johnson giving deep voice to the Eternal Mystery of Life. And he knows how to use tape rumble. And he knows the importance of wind sound on microphones. And he knows the value of silence. This record sounded everything and little like what Phil had released before – dub experimentalism, hushed acoustic guitars and psychedelic minimalism, best exemplified by the fuzzy overload on 2000's brilliant *It Was Hot. We Stayed In The Water*.

I type these words, head pounding from the heat, memory of Robert Crumb leering at girls working out on last night's *Arena* fresh in my mind.

### tunnel visions

"When I was young I was into drawing contraptions and mazes, or diagrams of underground tunnels. For a long time, I wanted to be a painter. I liked Leonardo and Michelangelo. I took art class, but our teacher didn't care about art. When he'd give an example, he'd have an easel and a fat red marker – 'Here's how perspective works!' – but he couldn't even draw lines. And he couldn't remember your name either. 'Nate, come over here.' 'My name is Nick.' 'Nate! Nice drawing, Nate.' 'It's a painting.'"

When was the last time you fell off your bike?

"Probably the last time I rode it."

Do you have any balance?

"I like to think of myself as graceful. My parents don't. They say, 'You walk really loud, do you know that?' 'No, I'm really graceful. I walk like the wind!'"

[www.knw-yr-own.com](http://www.knw-yr-own.com)

[www.pwilverumandsun.com](http://www.pwilverumandsun.com)

# live

## minor throat

Words: Pil and Galia Kollektiv

Photography: Grant Peden

### Albert Kuvezin and Yat-Kha

Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, London

"RUSSIA WAS ALWAYS NOTORIOUS FOR THE GAP BETWEEN CULTURE AND CIVILISATION. NOW THERE IS NO MORE CULTURE. NO MORE CIVILISATION. THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINS IS THE GAP."

In *Babylon* by Russian author Viktor Pelevin, a failed poet gets a job for one of the fast-growing ad agencies of the post-Communist era. Every day he receives Western ad campaigns that he is expected to Russify, producing a translation to reflect the Russian character, or Dostoevsky's famous Eastern spirit, if you will. Thus, banal company sales mottos become musings on the unattainability of happiness, or modern ideologies as manifestation of a Manichean balance of good and evil. The above quote is from the protagonist's proposal for the Gap chain, and also involves a trouserless Chekhov and a gothic hourglass.

Sitting in the battered, seen-it-all wooden chairs of Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club in Soho, this is the first thing that comes to mind – Yat-Kha's rendition of American and British rock classics in the style of Tuvan throat-singing functions as a similarly arch critique of late capitalism's omnivorous globalisation.

We discover, for example, that The Rolling Stones' 'Playing With Fire' is actually about the horrors of the new-found wealth of the Russian Oligarchs ("But we have music," proclaims Albert Kuvezin from beneath his mountainous beard. "And that's better, because the oil will soon dry out"). Santana's corny 'Black Magic Woman' receives a similar treatment, becoming a respectful chant for the female shamans of Siberia.

Considering that all this is coming from a man sounding like he just swallowed a didgeridoo, a big black bassist, a drummer called Rasputin and a sequin-hatted pipsqueak on a tiny stool cradling a traditional string instrument with a little horse at the end of its neck, you'd be excused for consigning this to the novelty bin. But, light years away from the cynicism of Edelweiss' yodel techno, there is an earnestness and craft to Yat-Kha that makes their live show surprisingly profound.

Pelevin's book ends with the protagonist reaching some kind of Zen perfection through television, finally gaining knowledge and serenity. On CD, Yat-Kha's *Re-covers* seldom elicits much more than a smirk of recognition on realisation that a droning gypsy romp is actually Mötorhead's 'Orgasmatron', or that a Gulag forced labour soundtrack is actually Kraftwerk's 'The Man Machine'.

Live, however, the thrumming voice that rises from the belly of the earth to Albert Kuvezin's throat resonates with such intense Russian feeling that it wipes that smile right off your face. No longer a misguided transnational ad campaign for Post-It notes, 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' resurfaces triumphantly as a devastating account of how love can be destructive not just on the level of a dysfunctional relationship but also in a much more introspective sense. Suddenly, Ian Curtis is exposed as an egocentric bastard and Joy Division are co-opted into a rich folklore tradition that transcends post-punk Manchester by several millennia.

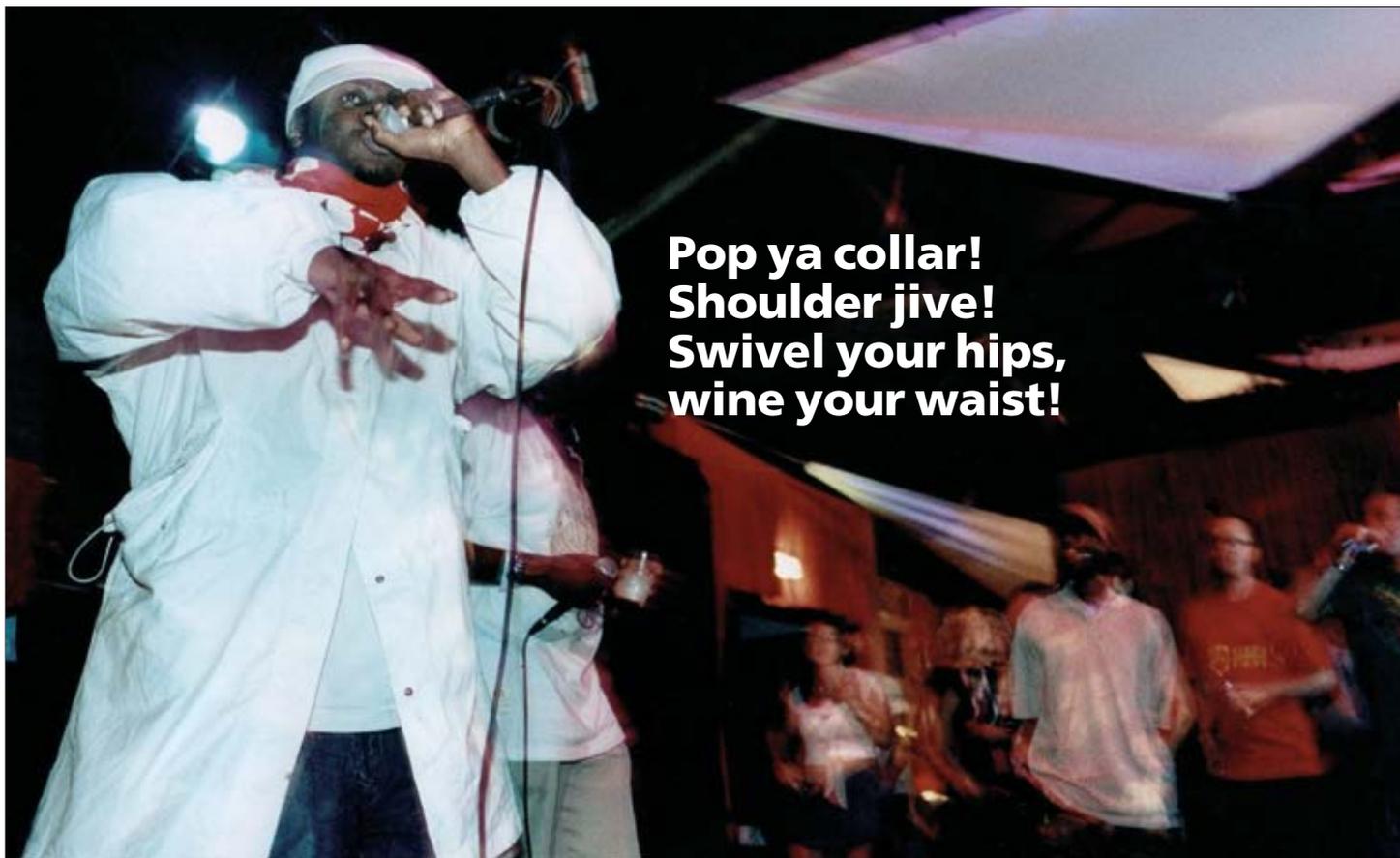
There is a long-established tradition of East European novelty pop, from Laibach's disquisitions on the totalitarian underpinnings of Western popular music to The Wedding Present spin-off, The Ukrainians' linguistically and sonically brilliant reworkings of Sex Pistols and Smiths classics. But Yat-Kha have more in common with the Tuvan traditions of wrestling, sheep-bone games and carnivorous appetites than with any sophisticated insider critiques.

The effect is ultimately destabilising. We know that we are out of our comfort zone and out of our depth on this metaphysical plane of pure music. On getting home, we rush for our battered old copy of 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' to make sure it's still as magical, meaningful and romantic as we remembered. Having been sucked into this alternate reality, this Babylonian underworld of thunderous harmony and tenebrous sound, we want to reaffirm our prejudices – the West is the best, we are inside culture and civilisation, never mind the gap.



**'Black Magic Woman' becomes a respectful chant for the female shamans of Siberia**





**Pop ya collar!  
Shoulder jive!  
Swivel your hips,  
wine your waist!**

### diplosions in the sky

Words: **Alex Macpherson**

Photography: **Simon Fernandez**

#### **TDK Cross Central Festival King's Cross Depot, London**

**Grace Jones** turns up an hour late, stretches six selections from her catalogue into epic mini-universes of rhythm and raunch with a costume change for each, and touches her crotch a lot. The return of Ms Jones has been a definitive reminder of what the word 'diva' means. Even Beyoncé would cover.

Elsewhere, **Sway**, triumphant at the Jazz Café one month before, is reduced to playing the graveyard slot for a handful of rave kids too wasted to pick up on his subtle drollery. **Jamie Lidell** plays a set so tame and safe that you start thinking that maybe he *wants* to be the Joss Stone of the electro set, rather than the gorgeous genius with a penchant for sonic skullfucking that he's been in the past. And, in a fit of insanity, rising MC **Plan B** plays his entire set on an acoustic guitar, and it's like the very worst bits of Eminem's 'Cleaning Out My Closet'.

The **Optimo** DJs drop crowd-pleaser after crowd-pleaser, drawing pop-culture connections between the stars in the night sky, and Get Physical supremo **M.A.N.D.Y** plays a set of warm, lush minimalism.

I push my way to the front of **Kiki's** set expecting to see a daughter of Ellen Allien feeding the frenzy around her. But finding out that he's a floppy-haired Finnish boy with cheekbones so sharp they could cut your heart in two is no disappointment.

**Nicky Siano** reminds me that my weekend dancing isn't just about munging out to banging electro, but that you always need a place for classy Motown and funk that requires slinky, deliberate moves and a little self-control.

**Felix Da Housecat** swigs tequila while fucking with the heads of the sunglasses-at-night crowd, pulling the beat from under their feet and leaving them with nothing to hold onto but screaming high end. He audaciously stretches out Jacques Lu Cont's remix of The Killers' 'Mr Brightside', the anthem of 2005, to near breaking point, catapulting 1,000 lost souls into a state of catatonic climax.

Ultimately, though, the party belongs to **Diplo**. He plays all the hot street genres: Rio funk and grime and crunk and reggaeton and – fuck it, you don't need to know any of that. What you need to know is what to do, and here are your instructions for the next two and a half hours: Booty shake to the bass. Get low with leg glides and knee bends. Pop ya collar. Shoulder jive. Swivel your hips, wine your waist, *twerk, baby, twerk!* Get crunk, faster and wilder and harder, even – *especially* – when he speeds 'Hollaback Girl' up so fast that it's impossible to keep in time but too damn good to stop moving. Keep this up without stopping to breathe or wipe the sweat from your brow or notice that for 15 minutes back there you were dancing with MIA.

Don't you dare flag at the end, because Diplo's just announced his last song, and it's a half-hour mix of about 20 different songs including fucking 'I Like To Move It' and 'Cotton Eye Joe' (work that spontaneous do-se-do!) and will leave you half-dead from exhaustion and half-crazed from the need to never ever stop shaking to this cornucopia of delights.

### **Cadillac**

**Metro, London**

Four Norwegian dudes with excellent facial hair formations doing guilty rock songs about New York City?

Gigantic techno basslines scuzzing through three-minute concertos with three-second movements?

A drummer who pulls several commendable metal faces and holds one drumstick aloft in glory at the end of several songs?

Waymore fun that the pale, underfed support band who play for twice as long and sound like Michael Bolton doing Peter Gabriel covers with Led Zeppelin haircuts. From song one, Cadillac shame us with how

good they are and how much the support band sucks.

The drummer has a gorgeous blonde moustache that stretches from upper lip to the jawline midpoints between ear and chin. Another has a proper miniature handlebar moustache (he's the bassist). His shoulders remain absolutely level and motionless as he fires the neck of his bass in all directions to songs from new album *Magnetic City*.

It's very hard to dance when you're completely sober and completely on your own and nobody else is dancing and the place is half empty, but we're talking about a band whose singer is unashamed to reference late Smashing Pumpkins songs

in his lyrics ('*We'll crucify the insincere tonight*'), while keeping a straight face.

I dance. They play.

Norway 1, England 0.

**Gracelette**

### **Crayon Fields**

**Rob Roy, Melbourne**

The DJ plays The Clean and The Clean tell Crayon Fields to 'Point That Thing Somewhere Else'. Thankfully, they aren't listening. They know right where to put it.

They hit us with 'Lovers in Your Carpets', 'I Spent The Summer In The Shower' and a new one that begins with eight lovely handclaps. It's the most heavenly of arrows shot into our hearts.

The drummer is a cool cat and it's not often you get to call someone that, but he is and his jumpers are as bright and colourful as the sun-striped sounds he snares.

The floppy-haired bassist has a supple way with his instrument and his harmonies can make any sad punk's day. The Asian lad on keyboards provided crucial crayon chemistry.

Singer Geoff sings about the "*Sweet little kids in your sad little town*" and plays guitar, which continually goes 'POP' 'POP' and then STOPS before the band resumes its beautifully layered rhythms.

Precise, devastatingly tuneful and, indeed, swell.

**Shane Moritz**



## puppy love

Words: **Stevie Chick**

Photography: **Simon Fernandez**

### Dr Dog

#### Camden Barfly, London

We're slumped in the Barfly, shielding ourselves from the identikit flyers plugging identikit showcases by identikit industry hopes, visibly blanching at the sexless river of torn tees and flashy belts and pre-stressed denim. A slab of macho meat throws ironic shapes to ironic records. And in the corner stand the bedraggled post-gig members of Philadelphia quintet Dr Dog, laughing and catching their breath by the door.

An hour or so earlier, they were beaming and stumbling across the stage, casting their tunes before an audience who somehow knew every word to their new album, *Easy Beat*. The bassist stomped and sang with passion in a sugary McCartney meets Marriott warble. The guitarist, looking like Tom Petty after a hefty bender, rasped with affection and crooned vulnerably, and fell into the audience whenever he felt like it.

Sometimes they resembled early Pavement in their shambolic, savant, sketchy ideas that casually hatched into jerky, affectionate pop. Other times they stepped away from the microphones to yell and squawk with gadding, giggling frenzy; hillbilly geni like The Band before them. Still other times they happened upon a ramshackle perfection that sounded like Flaming Lips playing 'Octopus's

completed *Grand Theft Auto*, picked up all the weapons, and now just wander the landscape, lingering where we want and skipping over what bores us. Yet we never quite lose that love for simple melody, the lilting sounds of childhood: nursery rhymes, Beatles songs, whatever you grew up with. It takes a certain sincerity to charm us into a recovered

## All sincerity seems suspect in our surface shallow world

Garden' and 'Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da' at the same time, the keening high register vocals relishing every kink in the melody.

Some might dismiss Dr Dog as retro. But pop is an untidy eater, always belching back the past in unrecognisable, half-masticated chunks. Pop is no linear timeline that renders obsolete what came before, and we're chasing no final destination.

But since technology has failed to deliver genuine instrumental innovation beyond the sampler and the sequencer, it's as if we've

innocence. But get it right and what floods out is poignant and profound.

It's this art that Dr Dog have perfected, unabashed, with wide eyes, wide grins, and belief in magic of *some* kind.

Their adult nursery rhymes sing of perfect love with valiant naivety; valiant because all sincerity seems suspect in our surface shallow world. Dr Dog are as brave as can be, wizened, open-hearted dreamers, offering you *everything*. If you really wanna question a gift like that, well, I can't do nothin' for ya.

### The Dresden Dolls/ Lapsus Lingae

#### The Exchange, Edinburgh

In these musically saturated times, one must invent one's own genre, or die.

Lapsus Lingae's genre lies somewhere between Satie, Philip Glass and Metallica, as played by four slender white-clad Scottish boys.

Tonight they rein in their rockier side for a more ghostly, piano-led atmosphere.

Boston's Dresden Dolls sport an anti-fashion format (Hazel O'Connor-esque damaged-girl vocal, frantic piano, jazz-rock drums) with an anachronistic look (Thirties Berlin vaudeville). Their fanbase anthem is even called 'Girl Anachronism'.

Though Mr Drummer Doll is absent, the charismatic Ms Palmer still dazzles and captivates on her own.

As she slides, crawls and sprawls over her flower-splattered Kurzweil, I imagine an alternate ending of *The Breakfast Club*, with haughty Molly Ringwald receiving a makeover from depressed goth Ally Sheedy.

Momus' 'I Want You But I Don't Need You' is an unexpected show-stopper, while her version of Bright Eyes' 'Lua' upstages the original. Familiar hit 'Coin-Operated Boy' is beautifully acted out by trumpeter Andy Moore and tap dancer Ruby Boukabou, while apocalyptic shanty 'Hold Me' is sung by a third local guest star, its author Nathaniel Slade.

Whenever Amanda Palmer performs, whether solo or accompanied, whether crowd-pleasers or unfamiliar songs, she never knowingly under-entrances.

As her own maxim says, punk cabaret is freedom.

### Dickon Edwards

#### Hello Cuca

#### The Fenton, Leeds

Walking home, I mumble a few phrases nervously into my own voicemail service. Partly to remember and partly to cover the somewhat disappointing silence that follows Hello Cuca.

As it happens, I should have more faith in Hello Cuca. A week or more later, I still trip

to work on their surf waves and still tap my feet to their non-stop relentless rhythms...

The Cuca rash spreads slowly: it starts with a head nod, sharing a wry grin with a room full of strangers, wondering why they look more like sailors than surfers. This is meant to be punk surf or surf punk, after all. Then the disease takes hold: head will not stop nodding, feet will not stop tapping, eyes drawn to small, sultry chick playing large, sultry guitar. Like a good/bad drug moment, the drums don't seem to stop for a week.

I blink to check the gig is still going on around me. It is.

I'm just being carried away by the surf.  
**Hayley Avron**

## cookie monsters

Words: Nicola Meighan and Alistair Fitchett

Photography: Mark Connelly



**Jens Lekman, Isobel Campbell, Bill Wells, Uter**

Plan B @ Mono, Glasgow

Here he is – Sweden's 15th sexiest dude – with impossible hairline and quaintly high waistline and natty ukulele handsomely strapped to a swelling, burgundy Tin Man chest. He is performing, in earnest, to an audience of cakes: raspberry kisses, blueberry crispies, cocoa-bean pastries. Let me tell you: they *love* it.

It's Sunday afternoon in boho Shangri-La Mono, which has become a cake-filled pop den and candlelit *Plan B* grotto for the day: magazine artwork enlivens the brickwork; banana beer brightly enriches our spirits.

And all the while, Jens gently jams to the home baking – perched by the entrance, musing upon his imminent set – as electro-pop krautrock renegades Uter take to the stage and startle our wits with their compelling, dense, irrepressible instrumentals.

And who needs vocals anyway? Certainly not Bill Wells – a brilliant, local jazz agitator variously described as “Stirling's answer to Sun Ra” and “the go-to man on the Glasgow scene”. Joined here by sometime collaborator Isobel Campbell (ex-Belle & Sebastian) on cello and a hirsute pop-squad of jazz musketeers, the Zen-like Wells calmly commands vibrant psalms of quiet wonder.

Lekman joins the rabble – tinkering gently alongside Wells and co with chunky computer breaks and fuzzy calypso shapes. There's a big-band ukulele parade, there's a moon-drop piano serenade: it's

## Chunky computer breaks and fuzzy calypso shapes

a gorgeous, remarkable, avant-jazz redraft of *The Commitments*.

All the better to fall for Jens: he takes to the stage and the amber-flushed room collectively swoons. His scampering wordplay and rascally crooning bely unmatched talent. He is Franks Sinatra and Sidebottom rolled into one. And when he sings, his bursting heart gets bigger, his curious stature ever taller; his celestial talent so much the brighter: his elated arias catch the eye of the moon and the ear of the sky and their stars collide.

**NM**

Electro trio Uter open the night and are fantastic. Very motorik chic, at times they remind me of Simple Minds circa *Sons And Fascination*, but without Jim Kerr's pomposity and with even more of a rhythmic dynamic. They tread the heady lines between Krautrock, trance techno and space-rock textures with aplomb. Watch out for the great 'Accordination' on a forthcoming seven-inch from OSCarr Records.

Bill Wells is bolstered by a two-man horn section, Isobel Campbell on cello and Jens Lekman on some kind of electronic noise-making doohicky. Together they make sounds that leap and skip and scowl and weep. Bill strikes me as a quiet and almost mythic figure who pops out of the woodwork every now and again to perform genius before blending back into the shadows. The crowd is treated to some lovely jazz-tinged moments that flourish with a tint of Os Mutantes' mad genius.

Jens Lekman closes the event with a startlingly fresh set that is utterly captivating. He is such an unlikely star, yet onstage he is mesmerising, both otherworldly and rooted in the earth, an urbane fairy-tale folk genius.

Moments I want to remember forever include 'Do You Remember The Riots?' where Jens plays karaoke to his own disc on the portable record player, harmonising and adding exquisite ukulele parts; a ravaged and ravishing 'You Are The Light', supported by Isobel on the cello; the gorgeous rendition of the Swedish folk song his mother used to sing to him as a child; and finally the set-closing 'Julie' where Jens steps away from the mic, unplugs the uke, and plays unamplified, the pixie bells on his shoe shooting fairy kisses that land with dextrous, giggling delight on our lips, sparking torrents of love coursing in our hearts.

Yes, he really is that special.

**AF**



## gig diary: looking sideways

Words: **Fiona Fletcher**  
Photography: **Cat Stevens**

### The Stooges

#### Don't Look Back @ Hammersmith Apollo, London

I was 16 when I first heard *Funhouse*, isolated, alienated, filled with rage, stuck in a small-minded small town in upstate NY. Dare and I were transplants, her from Brooklyn and me from North London. We had two goals – start a band and get the fuck out, not necessarily in that order. Even the cool kids, the skinny punk boys at the local hardcore shows looked down on us.

Once a punk boy 'borrowed' my leather jacket. When it was finally returned, a battered cassette was in the pocket. *Funhouse*. Iggy's howl, Ron Asheton's prowling guitar lines gave me an outlet. Dare and I spent hours teaching each other to play guitar, trying to duplicate the glam descends.

So it's ironic that 15 years later, Dare and I are at the Dorchester Hotel, sipping Merlot with Ron Asheton.

To be honest, I grew out of punk rock like I grew out of Albany. Dare's life and mine took divergent lines. I returned to London, became a writer, composer, IT consultant, while Dare moved to Detroit, joined His Name Is Alive, released avant-garde albums with Thurston Moore, and took a day job as roadie on The Stooges' crew. So I tag along on tour.

What can I say about the gig? You know the setlist, you know how a grizzled, limping old man named Jim gets onstage and becomes a whirling, crowdsurfing dervish howling "*I'm*

## Ron Asheton is interested in history, *Time Team* and *Wreck Detectives*

*you! And you! I'm you!*" at every dirtbag loser in the audience, as the Asheton brothers kick up an unholy tangle of free jazz and pure proto-garage jungle punk.

But this isn't what stays with me. It's the disparity of sitting in a posh hotel with Ron, a quiet, dignified man with the gracious charm and understated presence of a Victorian archduke or a mafia don. He's interested in

history, *Time Team* and *Wreck Detectives*. My dilemma of how to entertain my teenage icon is solved – we visit the HMS Belfast, tour the Tower of London and retrace the steps of Jack The Ripper.

Dare and I look up the boys of our youth on the interweb. If they're not in jail, they're fat, thwarted, middle-aged men working dead-end jobs, still stuck in upstate NY. "Fuck you!" I howl at the computer. "I got out!"

And that's what I feel, letting the blistering onslaught of sound wash over me at the

Apollo. The Stooges were dirt, loose, the lowest of the low, not just surviving but thriving, enjoying fine wine and Cuban cigars in posh hotels in leather jackets and dirty hair – on their own terms. So when Iggy stabs a finger at the crowd, insisting "*I'm you!*", I think of the 'cool kids' who beat me up in high school, I look around at my life, and at Dare, and I wink back. "Yes, you bloody well are."

### Chris Mills

#### 12 Bar Club, London

I don't care if no one pays attention to the man with the acoustic guitar, climbing onto the small stage. They can stay in the bar; it just means more room for me. But then I worry that he thinks that no one cares he's on that stage. Well I do care, and I'm sure the people stood here with me do as well.

He begins with 'Tooth and Nail', starting quietly, singing, "*There's something in your chest that I want.*" And that one line holds enough tender menace that those at the bar are drawn in here.

He tells stories of how he found himself, after finishing his last album, back at his parents' house, folding pizza boxes. It's not

told to elicit pity. It's maybe told to fill in time while he tunes up. He sings "*I heard you're a drunk*", and causes burning ears in those at the bar. It's these moments that set him apart, these moments that make me care.

Originally from Chicago, Chris Mills resides in Brooklyn, where he runs a Here Be Monsters night for musicians, comedians and artists. He's back in October for the release of his fourth album, *The Wall To Wall Sessions*. Give him a few moments of your time.

### P J Little

### Om

#### Camden Underworld, London

Who needs Matt Pike? In fact, who needs guitars at all? Certainly not Pike's ex-Sleep

bandmates Al Cisneros and Chris Hakius. While Pike indulges his Motörhead fantasies with the admittedly brilliant High On Fire, these fuckers choose to continue the transcendental crawl to ascension they started a over a decade ago, putting my gig-mate (the estimable Dr Wommm) and I into a trance using just the bare essentials of one bass, one drum kit and one voice, plus amplification.

They only seem to use one riff, too, but that's OK. Actually, that's more than OK. It's perfect. Om are not building on the legacy of Sabbath, or faithfully reproducing it (as did Sleep), they're reducing it, refining it, until all that remains is one endlessly recreated moment of cosmic sublimity that forces your

body into the ground as it sucks the soul from your solar plexus.

Human bass loop and vocalist Al Cisneros is our spirit guide tonight, coaxing us towards The One while mystic pulse-pounder Chris Hakius gleefully kicks the corpses left behind. There's nothing grim here, nothing to fear or ridicule, no pantomime of evil. This is healing music, these vibrations are designed to assist the listener in shaking off the petty aches and pains of existence in order to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

It works. Dr Wommm and I exit into the Camden night suitably refreshed and emboldened.

### Joe Stannard



## gig diary: calendar man

Words: **Dan Bolger**

Alexander Tucker Photography: **Cat Stevens**

The jobless have no concept of dates. No need for them, either. Targets and files and deadlines and week numbers – lose all that and there’s little point, really. Just plough on through an endless succession of days, nights, weeks and weekends. No one keeps diaries. So where were we again?

Tuesday, wide-eyed on a revolving floor beneath Shoreditch: **Sudden Infant** dropping a big hunk of sound, waiting a second or two, then doing another, and another and...yep, that was it, right. **Jessica Rylan** vocalising into some high-frequency staccato unit. And **Prurient**, mics in hand, bracing himself in the wind tunnel of his own feedback, like an infant school drama class but with white noise instead of Holst’s *Planets Suite*.

## Did pagans bother with dates?

Wednesday at the Spitz: *Plan B*’s night of whispery picking spiralling out with **Alexander Tucker**’s metal-Masonic folk. His voice, many times looped, layered and all-powerful. Over-the-top omnidrone? Yessss...crushing, slo-mo riff-kill. And on an acoustic guitar! It’s a feeling that is many centuries old. Did pagans bother with dates? Of course not. They just waited for the sun to be in the right place and did their thing.

Thursday: South London, for Hugh Metcalfe’s outcast cabaret the Klinker Club.

**Sylvia Hallett** caresses her delay, bows her bicycle wheel and whispers sweet somethings, holding those assembled rapt as she finds successively more astounding notes on her singing saw. And Metcalfe’s semi-legendary **Fuck Off Batman**, words of one syllable over ravaging free rock.

The weekend was the north Norfolk coast, swimming in the sea, secretive musics in tents, children dressed as fairies and Raincoats songs around the summer fire. So it was a while before London could again be faced.

Wednesday. A slightly desperate but nicely decorated mag-sponsored pub in East London, watching Brighton’s **The Sticks** ham their fists in a mucky Sixties garage barrage and Brighton’s **Flesh Failure** juddering and spasming in a firefield of rattling, tating drums and ceiling-ripping noise. Everyone laughs at this, not in derision or spite but with an inclusive, liberating joy.

Tuesday. Sound art, expanding tubes of air-blowing pipes fixed at one end, a big disconnected drone and a box of electronic key-ring-sounding to guitars, followed by a show involving the knocking together of bricks and the wiggling of a Dictaphone. More effective than you’d imagine. Then **Dylan Nyoukis** and **Stefan Jaworzyn** wind and crash and shriek with power violin, guitar, and drums until the venue gets shirty.

So as summer ends, the timeframe changes. New job, date knowledge, not comforting but necessary. A solid reminder that the grey is on the way. Deep in The Garage, hyped-up London support act **Test Icicles** fail to destroy themselves or their audience. “Anyone who bought this next single is a fucking retard,” they announce, to general rapture. New York’s fucking **Ex Models**, headlining, teach them a thing or two about audience disdain as they inflict serious treble damage on the rapidly-dissipating crowd of confused, Trash-bound kids, pushing the squalls ever onward in an act of defiance so strong and so convincing that the remaining 60 or so observers are left weak, broken, and extremely satisfied. A date. The first in the diary, the last in the diary. No one really keeps diaries anyway, do they?

## Pit Er Pat

**Bunkers Hill, Nottingham**

It’s fascinating, their comfortable awkwardness. From the spindly keyboard fingers and tightrope-balanced syllables of Faye Davis Jeffers’ pursed mouth (like she’s peashooting her words), through Rob Doran’s earthy bass, to Butchy Fuego’s frisky, flexible drumming (the very best kind), Pit Er Pat know just how to work the tension of being a trio.

Sometimes, at the loud parts, they come together in voice, now open-mouthed, now all-powerful; the most beautiful call through a rainstorm ever hereby witnessed in plinkety plonkety boundary-pushing sound. Then, instead of ceasing where you think it might, their call gets bigger and bigger, all the time expanding. “*I Am The Junngle! I Am The Junngle!*” they boom, Fuego’s manic arms racing each other from one end of his kit to the other, emphatically pushing the rhythm out, further out.

It touches you somewhere way back in your chest, behind the bone. They creep up on us with these loud parts, though, at first fooling with maraca-tossing introductions and Latin percussive sways. It’s like they know exactly where they’re going to bring us, but won’t let us until the last hairpin time change, teasing us forward, “*Like the Pleased Pip-er*”.

**Hannah Gregory**

## Alisdair Roberts

**Stormy Records, Dearborn**

“Paddy Tunney did it better.” These are among the handful of words spoken by Alasdair Roberts to the 15 people attending his show at drone-rock purveyors Windy & Carl’s Stormy Records. At odds with both the experimental, noise and avant-garde releases on the shelves, and with pretentious freak-folk openers Matt Valentine and Erika Elder (who reach a new low tonight when their sonic journey leads them to moaning into a sealed wooden box), Roberts feels like the sole bastion of normality in a paisley puppet show. He gives in to no theatrics, occasionally relating the history of the particular ancient ballad he’s just played, foregoing nearly all of his own material.

There’s an awkwardness in his demeanor, in his aversion to looking at the crowd, which belies his nerves. Roberts is not a natural-born performer, but that doesn’t make him any less of a troubadour.

His lack of stage presence only adds to the intimacy so that, in the end, when he and the audience part ways, it’s on a personal level. Paddy Tunney might have done it better back then, but one has to wonder when the hipsters will extricate themselves from Devendra Banhart’s billowy robes and realise that Alisdair Roberts is doing it better right now.

**Aaron Shaul**

## Shooting At Unarmed Men

**The Louisiana, Bristol**

Two weeks before the gig, I’m double-taking at the poster outside the Louisiana. It’s the same day that a bunch of cops pile into a Brazilian in the Underground and shoot him through the head for the sins of not wearing a jacket, picking up a copy of *Metro* and living in the wrong tower block. So I’m double-taking, as it’s the first I’ve heard of ex-McLusky bassist Jon Chapple’s new band, Shooting At Unarmed Men.

And, immediately, everything makes the best kind of sense of all: no sense at all. I call up *Plan B* and demand the review.

And two weeks later, it’s the gig. AND THE GIG WAS AMAZING.

Two weeks after the gig, I find myself reminiscing about it. They’re a step on from McLusky, with all the gawky fury and brutal comedy remaining, but...what on earth am I wasting your time for? Imagine if a colon, instead of being full of shit, was full of multi-flavoured Toffos and Space Hoppers, that’d be Shooting At Unarmed Men. Don’t you understand? You don’t? Good.

They’re called Shooting At Unarmed Men. AND THE GIG WAS AMAZING.

**Kieron Gillen**

## Stars

**King Tut’s Wah Wah Hut, Glasgow**

Sure, the pussy-tickler puts me off. I prefer a fuller moustache: Tom Selleck-style, preferably with beard, to be perfectly honest. But I must say the accompanying pork-pie hat offsets bassist/trombonist Evan Cranley’s clipped facial foliage nicely tonight. And that’s Montreal’s magical Stars all over: an unexpected fancy that slays you unawares.

Although Broken Social Scene-ster Amy Millan’s sweet, hushed vocals err on the cute side, and the drummer wears wacko pink headgear, and talk of their music as ‘pretty’ and ‘indie’ and ‘witty’ and ‘clever’ wildly abounds, Stars are livid live. Tonight, under a slashing emerald light, in a strident blaze of high-school fervour, they rock. ROCK, I SAY.

Their set, largely derived from current hit-jammed third album *Set Yourself On Fire*, is a surefire, pop-ignited glare of thundering drums, baggy trouser brass and ‘Dear Jessie’ violins – all avidly embraced by the everyday freak-folk openers Matt Valentine and Erika Elder (who reach a new low tonight when their sonic journey leads them to moaning into a sealed wooden box), Roberts feels like the sole bastion of normality in a paisley puppet show. He gives in to no theatrics, occasionally relating the history of the particular ancient ballad he’s just played, foregoing nearly all of his own material.

They’re like Shane McGowan and Kirsty MacColl bickering at the kitchen sink; like the Postal Service on poppers run amok in a morgue. With much better moustaches and hats, of course.

**Nicola Meighan**

## Therion

**The Red Room, Vancouver**

Therion lists over 200 people as part of the sound. When I witness the spectacle of black and lace and ribbon and gothic chorus, it is a pared-down grouping. Seven men and three women implore us in a strange tongue to wave our heads in tandem circles.

This is the first time they have ever played in Canada and our intimate crowd of exceedingly polite boys will not let the moment be forgotten as anything less than momentous. And, though I’ve never been to Sweden, I see them coming from caves and darkness, drunk on their country’s grandiose landscapes. Metal has never been so operatic as it is tonight, the gallop taking us to realms where we easily imagine us all as warriors. To the call heroic, we give a frenzied bodily response; evidence of our bravery. I’ve never seen metal live in the grace and good spirit that these people manage to pull off. Chug chuga chug chugga chug chugga...  
**sweetcheyanne**

**F\*Y\*R** presents...

# MELT BANANA

Playing their only North East date in 2005!

With Special guests

Help She Can't Swim!  
Red Pen Letter  
Flamingo 50  
Dartz!  
Penny Broadhurst  
Kraig  
+ more

I'm only here for the cake stall...

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November 5-1030pm

The Georgian Theatre, Stockton

£7/£6 adv from Sound It Out Records  
01642 860068

In association with  
**plan b** magazine

**plan b** magazine PRESENTS

PLANNING TO ROCK PRINTED CIRCUIT SIMON BOOKISH

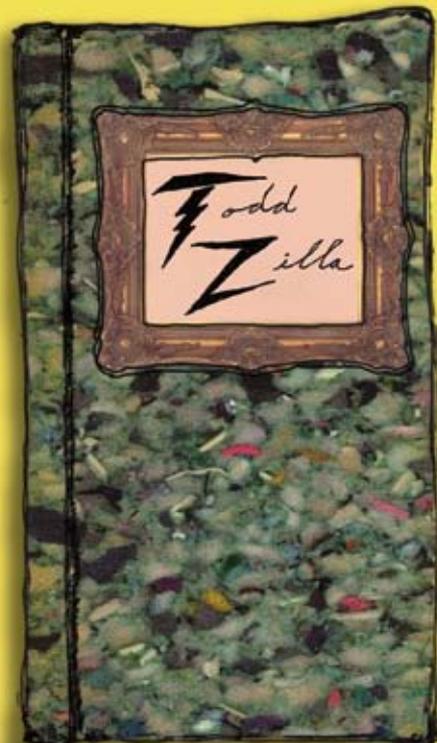
WITH DJs  
JO APPS  
&  
MATILDA  
THE MOVIE

# KEVIN ECNDOM

Friday 21st Oct  
The Hanbury Ballroom, 100 St Georges Rd Brighton 8pm till late  
www.planbmag.com £6 (£5 Concs)  
www.ev.levi.com/antidote

# GRANDDADDY

*Excerpts  
from  
the  
diary  
of*



Out 3rd October on CD & Vinyl



*Albums*

# they shoot, they score!

Words: **Stewart Gardiner**

Illustration: **Andrew Clare**

## **Franz Ferdinand** **You Could Have It So Much Better... With Franz Ferdinand (Domino)**

You're not adverse to pop – not in the slightest. You love Blondie and Talking Heads, but they just don't make them like that anymore. Or at least they don't appear to turn up in the charts. So you look elsewhere for your pop thrills, the atrophying corpse of the Top 40 prostrate before your sacrificial hands.

But Franz Ferdinand prove an exception to the rule. They may be a confluence of Fire Engines, Josef K and The Yummy Fur, but that doesn't prevent them from displaying a gleaming pop surface: all come hither indie boy eyes, those tight, stripy tops and hooks to die for. That they've been consumed by considerable numbers of people comes down to their transforming the personal – by way of their progenitors – into the stuff of universality. This isn't a cheapening process. It's the point at which the obsessive fan's point of view becomes, at a pinprick, one with that of popular consciousness.

You might have some experience of this from Franz's debut album. Or maybe you dug first single 'Darts Of Pleasure' before superstardom beckoned them away and your self-serving indie preciousness kicked in. "They no longer belong to me, so they can't be any good," you whined. That's the worst kind of snobbishness, and misses the point as to why you had an ear toward the underground in the first place. The simple fact of the matter is that Franz Ferdinand do appeal to a wider audience, and why shouldn't they? OK, so they're pretty huge these

indefinitely preferable to the banalities of The Stone Roses (one of the most overrated bands in history), and at least there's a trajectory into the past through Franz that may lead you to Postcard Records, The Pastels and yes, The Yummy Fur.

Deal with it. The pertinent question now is whether they can stay that way. I mean, as much as I enjoyed the second Strokes LP, they weren't quite able to pull off the trick of retaining what was inherently 'them' in their early material while pushing forward into new territories. But where they failed, Franz have gone and outdone themselves.

Opener 'The Fallen' cuts straight to the chase with a ripping art rock stomp. It's the Warhol-inspired party in *Midnight Cowboy* recast as super-ironic lambasting of the rock'n'roll star's lifestyle. International jetsetters are given a luminosity that is hard to miss, the tale of despair becoming all the more lurid for it. "If you judge us we're all damned," warns Kapranos, as if everybody's and nobody's lives depended on it.

Is it the heartfelt disguised as arch, or are they simply setting out the field of play? It's certainly left wide open for first single 'Do You Want To' and its upside down, back to front movements. Like one of those plastic, jointed snakes you used to get as a kid, you don't quite know what angle it's headed for or how it's going to fit. Approaching the *modus operandi* behind 'Take Me Out' from another geometric side, they manage to fuse at least two different songs together into something that makes perfect sense, although probably not on a first listen.

It's all fun and intricate games before we move into the irreducible firing-through of 'This Boy,' which comes on like Franz covering themselves covering Fire Engine's 'Get Up And Use Me' (from recent tour-only split featuring Franz Ferdinand and Fire Engines doing each other over). Of course they take the coruscating thump, and bash out something rather more palatable than the Fire Engines' falling apart bile-pop. But they somehow don't lose that edge, partly because this stuff hasn't been overly polished in the studio. They've thrown down the kernels of these songs, and the songs speak for themselves.

'You're The Reason I'm Leaving' will, at the very least, act as lubricant to just-sexualised students, surely soundtracking as many fumbles as it will pseudo-poetic moments of shared desire. Listening to Franz down the local student disco is

## **Like one of those plastic, jointed snakes you used to get as a kid, you don't quite know what angle it's headed for or how it's going to fit**

bastardised children of John and Paul. The imagery is powerful, perhaps at odds with what they have sung before, but it all fits aesthetically:

*"I know it isn't dignified to run/But if you run, you can run to the Coney Island rollercoaster/Ride to the highest point and leap across the filthy water". We're no longer in Scotland, but why should we be? Elsewhere, 'Well That Was Easy' chord shifts like Blondie's 'Atomic' while cutting back into introspection between times, and 'You Could Have It So Much Better' is indiscriminate in its beckoning onto the dancefloor.*

Franz Ferdinand have arrived at a point where they seem perfectly at ease tangling with the classics. Blondie, The Beatles, even fucking Bob Dylan (the penultimate 'Fade Together') all get a look in, and it's a winning gamble: they come out on top, referencing past works but never getting tethered down to them.

As a result, *You Could Have It So Much Better... With Franz Ferdinand* has been conceived on a much broader canvas than its predecessor, but the attention to detail remains, the particularity of their sound isn't lost through overshooting.

Franz have aimed much higher this time around – which is the only thing they could possibly have done. The danger is in missing the mar: thankfully, they haven't.

**burn baby burn**

Words: **Everett True**  
Illustration: **Booi**



**Fire Engines**

**Codex Teenage Premonition (Domino)**

The title comes from Fire Engines' own label, Codex Communications – on which they released their debut, 'Get Up And Use Me'/'Everything's Roses', in the summer of 1980. And if you've never heard their blistered, temple-pounding groove before then you're in for a treat – as *Plan B's* Alistair Fitchett puts it, Pop Art heaven indeed.

Famously, an entire Fire Engines live set lasted less time than it took to play a Grateful Dead guitar solo – 15 minutes of jagged fury and incomprehensible shrieks, the twin guitars of Davey Henderson and Murray Slade

**Blink, and you may as well be dead**

wrenching out shards of broken melody, the drums a whiplash blur. Blink, and you weren't there.

Blink, and you may as well be dead.

James Chance reinvented funk in the late Seventies with his New York band The Contortions as a peculiarly asexual and brittle musical form, movements rooted in the James Brown school of dance minimalism, songs of repetitive allegory and distaste at modern waste. This funk wasn't rooted in love, far from it. But it sure made you want to twist your body into demented shapes. Henderson and his gang of scrawny post-punks and stripped Chance's brutal rhythms down even further, turning the sound ear-piercingly tinny and unrelenting, the rhythm section a blister of sped-up disco madness.

During the briefest of careers (1980-1981), the Edinburgh quartet released three singles, and one eight-track mini-album *Lubricate Your Living Room* packaged in a customised plastic bag. Along the way, they inspired... Oh man. You want a list? Alan McGe

named his legendary mid-Eighties London club after their LP. Primal Scream and the Mary Chain stole their idea of short sets (and became boring when they discarded it). A generation of fanzine writers and independently minded bands (Big Flame, Erase Errata, Franz Ferdinand) were in thrall to their slogan, "boredom or Fire Engines, you can't have both". Brevity in art is important. Ask Sex Pistols, *Careless Talk Costs Lives*, Kurt Cobain – stop, before everything turns to shit. Burn baby burn.

Fire Engines' peers were fellow Scots: early Scars, Orange Juice and their Postcard Records brethren Josef K, but next to Fire Engines these bands could have been Pink Floyd for all that it mattered. Fire Engines existed in a world of their own: a world where stuttered false starts and flashes of fiery emotion held sway. So what does this new compilation add to the mix? You mean aside from introducing Fire Engines to an entire new generation of slack-jawed gawpers? It's new! Unreleased! Rare! Sweet.

This album contains much unpredictability and few repeats. There are the early Codex sessions: the astonishing, scary 'Hungry Beat' taking centre stage, 'Everything's Roses' carving an astringent new expressway into yr skull. There's a live Edinburgh bootleg from August 1981, with 'Meat Whiplash' and 'New Things In Cartons' and 'Plastic Gift' thrashing around spasmodically, caustic and blood-red pure. There are three songs taken from their very first show, 'The Untitled One', 'Insert Yourself' and 'Discord' – as totalitarian and emotionally testing as even the pre-Joy Division band, Warsaw. There's no sign of second single, 'Candy Skin', or final lacerating outing 'Big Gold Dream'... damn it. I don't care. I have them several times already.

Now, if only Gang Of Four had split after their second single (before the first album), maybe we'd be venerating them the same way...

**Adult.**

**Gimmie Trouble (Thrill Jockey)**

Urine infections are awful, the worst pain. And listening to *Gimmie Trouble* is much like a painful pee. I want to give Adult. another try: their first album, *Resuscitation* was so good – just tough enough, euphoric, not too many words, not trying too hard. But just as

too much sex = punishing urine infection, too much enjoying of *Resuscitation* = terrible mistake of buying Adult.'s punishing second and third albums.

Sharply uncomfortable, Nicola Kuperus squeaks and squirts one note of atonal complainery over a whole lot of lost in a lift shaft guitar. I know electroclash has become

something of a dirty word, but it was awesome too, in parts. Adult. should stop being so staple-faced and give in to their hit making ability. "You're as pretty as boiling blood"? "Saliva scalds, oozing out"? Oh please. It's clattering, howly, nervous and unbearable. A bad joke.

**Matilda Tristram**

**The American Analog Set**

**Set Free (Morr Music)**

Free of the need to bludge home apocryphal emotional truths, the American Analogue Set are all about resonances in blurry motion.

Their last LP played out like The Carpenters hidden beneath MBV, soundtracking the early days of my relationship with wife, means they at least have past importance for me. Upon hearing this latest chapter in honing their inimitable breathing under of a sound, all I can think is how many other people are going to fall in love over and through this band. Because *Set Free* is one of those rare records that inspires hope through the auspices of both death and procreation.

**Stewart Gardiner**

**Animal Collective**

**Feels (Fatcat)**

Muddled melodies swarm thick and fast. It's hard to keep up with the changes on opener 'Did You See The Words'. 'Grass', perhaps the most accessible song Animal Collective have ever written, is even better. Criminally catchy vocal passages are smashed into walls of cacophonous din, pummelled by crash cymbals and unhinged screaming, only to emerge maintaining their perfect pop poise.

The Collective play with a full complement of members and the celebratory party atmosphere is apparent. Everything chimes with the same kind of helium-voiced West Coast wonder that has driven white pop groups from The Beach Boys, through Neutral Milk Hotel, to Flaming Lips.

This may just be Animal Collective's definitive pop record, but it's no sell out, songs like 'Bees' and 'Banshee Beat' retaining the trademark weightless whirling etherium. While the Collective may be aiming for a mainstream breakthrough, we can count on them to come up with a unique and interesting way of getting there.

**Merek Cooper**

**Apache Indian**

**Time For Change (Revolver)**

It's like being alone in front of the telly on Friday night watching *The Magoons* with a tumbler of whisky; you don't know whether to laugh or cry. Laugh, because it's a tacky multicultural pastiche, or cry, not because you're on your own in front of the telly on Friday night, but because you're watching *The Magoons* and it hasn't got anything better to say for itself.

But I shall remain immensely fond of this silly dude who sings about the world being wrong and wanting to go and escape among the trees and mountains, because he's just, well, silly. His r'n'b girl songs are better than Sean Paul's; some of the beats would go down beautifully in a club between, say, MIA and Truth Hurts; he has nice eyes; and he does stuff for Oxfam.

**Melissa Bradshaw**

**Arpanet**

**Quantum Transposition (Rephlex)**

Arpanet's name is derived from the computer system that was the founding blocks of the Internet. Fittingly, *Quantum Transposition* flits between and explores styles and approaches, offering minutely sculpted rhythms as the conclusion. Certain songs are minute-long spells of digital doom and gloom ('Innershell Shielding'), low end pixels



**it's your time**

Words: **Richard P Stacey**  
Photography: **Anthony Wallace**

**Various**  
**Run The Road 2 (679)**

It's not about grime anymore, if it ever was. It's about getting scrubbed up nice, or not, darting about like a fool on a mini motorbike: crash, laugh, bob your head to the beat. It's about clarity, communication, elevation.

It's about Kano, the most stylish man on the planet, Han Solo, the man y'all want to be, a man so slick and confident he makes Kanye look insecure. Never stealing the show, he just sets it up so others can get their shine. "Who's gonna be next with 16 lines?" Uh-oh, here comes everybody.

There's Demon, dripping with incredulity like a man who's just discovered he's got go-go gadget shoes, (already) two miles ahead of you, devilish breath igniting everything he breathes on. Twenty seconds of exhausting exhilaration, unnecessary threats, unintelligible words from a man who

**'Who's gonna be next with 16 lines?'**

doesn't need them. There's rising star Doctor: now clipped, deliberate; now flirtatious, so seductive, sly, funny. Gotta man? It don't matter, the good doctor'll have ya anyway, like Dead Prez with psychokinetic mind sex.

There's superproducer DaVince providing fully inflated bouncy castles of sound. There's Crazy

Titch spitting acid on DaVince's plastic, watching the whole mess fly around like a hydrogenated bus of fun. "It's a big space and I feel like a kid in it," he cries and you know exactly what he means.

"I'm gonna make my money, stack that cheese, set goals and plans that I can achieve," croons Titch; "Major labels don't want killers" echoes JME. It's about sorting shit out and taking over the world.

It's Klashnekoff schooling his children and forefathers, a nation acknowledging and rejecting its ancestral debt. And Plan B rubbing our noses in the noxious diarrhoea of a mythical 'society'; quasi-intellectuals getting their throats slit for talking to him like he's thick. And No Lay slicing off your dick, unorthodox chick slaying all opposition. It's about all of us, pissing in the wind, trying to work out what's going on. It's about writing our future.

howling through the inner ear; whereas others ('Sonic Crystals') are a breeze of high end scrapes and dance beats.

Titles are blunt, synthesising sensation and granting the album a clinical air. Like early Warp releases there's a natural detachment to the music: it makes no claim to stir the soul into motion, instead offering head music forged from electronic rhythms. You can dance if you want to, but the effort lies with you.

**Jonathan Falcone**

**As Mercenárias**  
**O Começo Do Fim Do Mundo**  
(Soul Jazz)

As Mercenárias are an all-female Brazilian post-punk band, widely compared to ESG and The Slits. Back on the scene 25 years after they first started recording, perhaps to ride the growing resurgence of new wave, they are due in the UK in late 2005. Preceding that is a fantastic compilation album of 16 of their short, sharp shocks. Rhythmically tighter than The Slits, these songs don't stick around. Even their titles

are short: they include 'Panic', 'Enemy' and 'Memories' (in translation from Portuguese).

The compilation spans from 1982 to 1988 and opens with a couple of two-minute wonders. 'Me Perco' ('I Lose Myself') has one main lyrical thrust which translates as "I lose myself in this time, I don't know how to get back", while 'Policia', barks out the refrain "The police come and go! The police come and go!". A slower one, 'Imagem', sees the band members singing in unison that they are image, they are beauty, they are success, they are progress – calling to mind the Brazilian flag's entirely unwarranted boast of "Order and Progress". Overall, it's excellent, meaty stuff that would sound bloody brilliant down the pogo disco.

**Sophie Heawood**

**Baby J Presents...**  
**FTP (All City)**

J provided three of the beats to Skinnymann's *Council Estate Of Mind*, so it's apt that 'None Of Them' opens up with lush piano, and Skinny digging deep like no one else in UK hip hop. Elsewhere, *FTP* transcends the usual

producer-guest comp in that the lack of lyrical focus just concentrates your mind on the sheer guts and glory of the sound. Highlights galore: the Motown wheelspins of Mpho Skeep's 'Holla', and the freakishly dreamy posse cut 'Let It Go'. Laurissa's 'Shorty', sharp like prime Mary J, and Shystie's machine-gun chatter prettier than ever before on 'The Rain'. The minimal pops and cuts on 'Ride For Me', the best Neptunes rip since 'Topsy'; the *Sketches Of Spain* meets *Reasonable Doubt*-plush 'Let Them Know'. Devour this.

**Chris Ballard**

**Beautiful Skin**  
**Everything, All This, And More (GSL)**

They say this NYC duo sounds like Wire. I say Punishment Of Luxury. They say, "Post-punk electronic not exportable to UK, France". I say, no it's spookier than that. They say, "Remarkable consistency and sonic depth". I want to know what 'sonic depth' is meant to mean. What say we call this whole thing off?

**Siobhan Marshall**

**Big Star**  
**In Space (Rykodisc)**

Oh dear. Sometimes having one's expectations fulfilled is so fucking depressing. Did anyone really have high hopes for this?

I didn't, and I have a lot of time for *No. 1 Record* and *Radio City*, those two albums of pristine-yet-troubled Seventies power pop beloved of record-collecting 50-year-olds the whole world over. Of course, *Sister Lovers* shits on both of 'em from its vertiginous heights of zoned-out itchy bliss, but surely even the most optimistic devotee wouldn't have been as foolhardy to anticipate anything as good as that. So, what's *In Space* like?

To summarise: some OK songs. Some really, really bad songs. Underachievement. Emptiness.

Oh, and in 'Love Revolution', the most embarrassingly anaemic attempt at funk you've ever heard. Alex Chilton actually sings, "Shake that funky thing". Jesus Christ... and no, I don't mean the song.

**Joe Stannard**

**demon seed**

Words: **Frances May Morgan**  
Photography: **Simon Fernandez**



**Afrirampo**

**Kore Ga Mayaku Da (Tzadik)**

Afrirampo are Oni and Pikachu, two young women who play drums, guitar, mouths, throat, teeth, tongues and tricks. They take their clothes off, paint their bodies red, and twist themselves into poses reminiscent of Sixties horror-psych movies, like succubi from a lost Coffin Joe necro-nightmare, in which he'd somehow managed to get some Japanese chicks to Brazil. They're on John Zorn's Tzadik label, female pop renegades on the New Japan list that includes Ruins and Merzbow. They fill in the musical gaps between Acid Mothers Temple and Ex-Girl; they're a basement jam take on the Boredoms' ecstatic rhythm tsunamis. To detach them from the Japanese underground cell cluster for a minute (don't worry, I'll put 'em back), they're the missing link between Can and Riot Grrrl; a synthesis of Slayer and Babes In Toyland; at a pinch

**The missing link between Can and Riot Grrrl**

– and not just because I like the alliteration – Luciano Berio\* and Lightning Bolt.

So, then, my album of the year? Well, no. It's not like when you see them live. Then, there's no question. There's no anything, just two Osakan *oni* (yes, one of them is named after the Japanese for demon or devil) creating a forcefield of energy you can't help but bounce off. On record, the forcefield is dimmed somewhat, Pika's astonishing drumming is slightly subdued (except when they chuck in loads of reverb on 'Hadaka', which reminds me of both Blue Cheer and Sonic Youth, and therefore rules), and the lack of other sound sources is suddenly obvious. Oni opts for simple, scale-like guitar lines and

skronky riffs – admirable, yes, but Yoshimi P-we's playing in OOIOO (Afrirampo's shamanic aunties) is equally basic and yet so much more fascinating and individual.

To really love this album, your focus has to be on the vocals. And the vocals are truly fucking astonishing, to the point where I'd love to hear Afrirampo do an a cappella record, something truly deranged, like Maja Ratkje's *Voice* but without the digital manipulation. Because Afrirampo can scream and roar and pant and even do a death metal grunt. They chant like cheerleaders and intone like oracles. They do this thing where they harmonise without actually singing any notes.

The album starts with one of their deranged vocal duels, before launching a warlike chant that's something like a huge, mentalist, Japanese version of one of Joe Meek's *I Hear A New World* alien 'marches', then descending into monkey chatters and pitch-shifted baby coos. Of course, it helps that they're singing in language that has a strange, percussive sound to Western ears, all stop-start words and deliciously sing-y vowels, but there are definitely made-up words here: secret languages and glossolalia. And some healthy piss-taking too: pouting like stropky schoolgirls on 'Want You', they descend into full tantrum mode before sliding back to coochie-cooing again. If they do want you, it's purely so that they can put frogs in your bed and run away, laughing. The album ends thus: after a harmonised "sayonara" interlude, "Bye bye", lisps one, in English. "Bye bye" deadpans the other. "Bye bye!" they both cry. "BYE BYE!" shrieks one. The other whoops, "BYE BYYYYYYYYYEEEE!!!" And so on, until a throat-shredding "BYYYYYYYYYEEEEEEAARGGGHHHHH" sees them – and you – run out of breath, exhilarated.

\*Berio's wife, opera singer Cathy Berberian, given to flamboyant gasping, yelling and squeaking, would have loved Afrirampo.

**Blackalicious**

**The Craft (Epitaph/Quannum)**

Sure, this is hip hop, rappers are supposed to be cocky, but Gift Of Gab really takes it someplace else this time. "MCs are puppets, me I'm Jim Henson," he claims on opening track 'World Of Vibrations' as a nation of discerning former children demand his conviction on charges of blasphemy. But wait! Perhaps his claims aren't so far fetched after all. If, with their third full-length, the Gabmeister and his Chief Xcel don't quite equal The Muppets album, at their best they manage moments on a par with *The Dark Crystal*.

Moments such as 'Lotus Flower' and its slinky celebration of juvenilia through maturity, complete with a typically addictive George Clinton guest chant. And the hypnotic 'Ego Sonic War Drums' with its generously medicated two-way free association. Or, most pertinently, the title track's optimistic space age pulse and sigh: a celebration of industry, concentration and, yeah, the craft. Fraggletastic.

**Richard P Stacey**

**Blood On The Wall**

**Awesomer (Social Registry)**

Remember those kids at parties who used to get so drunk they'd puke their guts out and then, instead of sneaking home shame-faced, they'd wipe their shoes and hair and keep on trucking? Gross and yet strangely cool at the same time, right? Well, that's exactly how I'd describe Blood On The Wall. This band drink till they puke.

*Awesomer* doesn't really expand much on the band's self-titled debut, which was released last year, but it sure is blissful. Scratchy, distorted melodies and out-of-tune guitars are the foundations for some freakish yelling and sultry cooing courtesy of (real) brother and sister team Courtney and Brad Shanks, backed up by badass Miggy Littleton (most recently heard in *White Magic*) on drums.

They're like the sticky, grubby lining of a Velvet Underground bag and, right now, couldn't actually be any awesomer.

**Natalie Moore**

**Boards Of Canada**

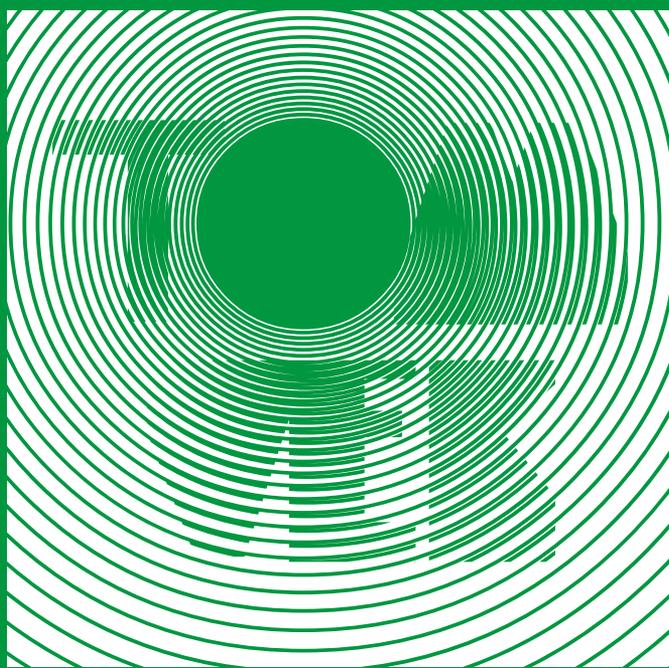
**The Campfire Headphase (Warp)**

Maybe it's me. Maybe in the three years since *Geogaddi* embedded itself in my brain, that organ has been so stretched, beaten, fried and fizzled by sound, that Boards Of Canada have lost their power to amaze. No longer do wobbly guitar loops and Aeolian chords spark off the same interest; nor does a loping breakbeat send me into the reverie it once did.

Or maybe it's them. Maybe they've failed to develop their sound – to realise that the ubiquity of Boards-style droning (on adverts, BBC trailers etc) and a hundred lesser imitators have robbed their music of its otherworldliness. What could once have been esoteric and hypnotic is now forever tied to that most banal of experiences – the shopping mall.

Whatever the case, listening to *The Campfire Headphase* leaves this reviewer with the kind of disappointment usually experienced upon the realisation that you didn't quite rinse all the Fairy Liquid from the mug before making the tea. Sorry guys, better luck next time.

**Daniel Trilling**



## NOTHING BUT GREEN LIGHTS

THE NEW SINGLE OUT OCTOBER 24TH ON CD / 7" / 12"  
WITH REMIXES FROM CLOR, PHONES, KAOS & DIGITALISM

TAKEN FROM THE ALBUM 'WE HAVE SOUND'  
OUT NOW ON TUMMY TOUCH / GO BEAT

SEE TOM VEK ON TOUR IN OCTOBER  
GO TO [www.tomvek.tv](http://www.tomvek.tv) FOR DETAILS



RICHARD SWIFT  
The Novelist /  
Walking Without Effort  
2xCD






GIVING UP THE GHOST  
WINDSOR FOR THE DERBY  
**SECRETLY CANADIAN**





MAGNOLIA ELECTRIC CO. SWELL MAPS  
*Hard To Love A Man* cdep *A Trip To Marineville* cd

DAMIEN JURADO MAGNOLIA ELECTRIC CO.  
*On My Way To Absence* cd/lp *What Comes After The Blues* cd/lp

MAILORDER: CD/LP/2xCD: \$12 AIRMAIL: \$5 DISTRIBUTED BY VITAL IN THE UK  
1499 WEST 2nd STREET BLOOMINGTON, IN 47403 USA WWW.SECRETCANADIAN.COM INFO@SECRETCANADIAN.COM

# 50pbadges.com



# 50pbadges.com

# JAG JAGUWAR

WORD OF MOUTH. WE DEPEND ON IT.

**MINUS STORY**  
*No Rest For Ghosts* CD/LP  
If we could hear the angels singing about us, they would be in harmony with these chosen sons of Boorville.

**RICHARD YOUNGS**  
*The Naive Shaman* CD/LP  
Deeply personal song cycle performed with heavy bass, throbbing sonics and a plaintive voice.

**OKKERVIL RIVER**  
*Black Sheep Boy* CD/LP  
This is a love story and an adult fable, and it is their most ambitious and cinematic record to date.

**BLACK MOUNTAIN**  
*self-titled* CD/LP  
This brilliant debut charts territories unknown yet remains grounded by the roots of prog and psych rock.

**WILDERNESS**  
*self-titled* CD  
Conjures images of *Metal Box-era* Johnny Lydon fronting *Savage Republic* or *Explosions in the Sky*.



Coming out in November: OKKERVIL RIVER "Black Sheep Boy Appendix" CDEP/12"

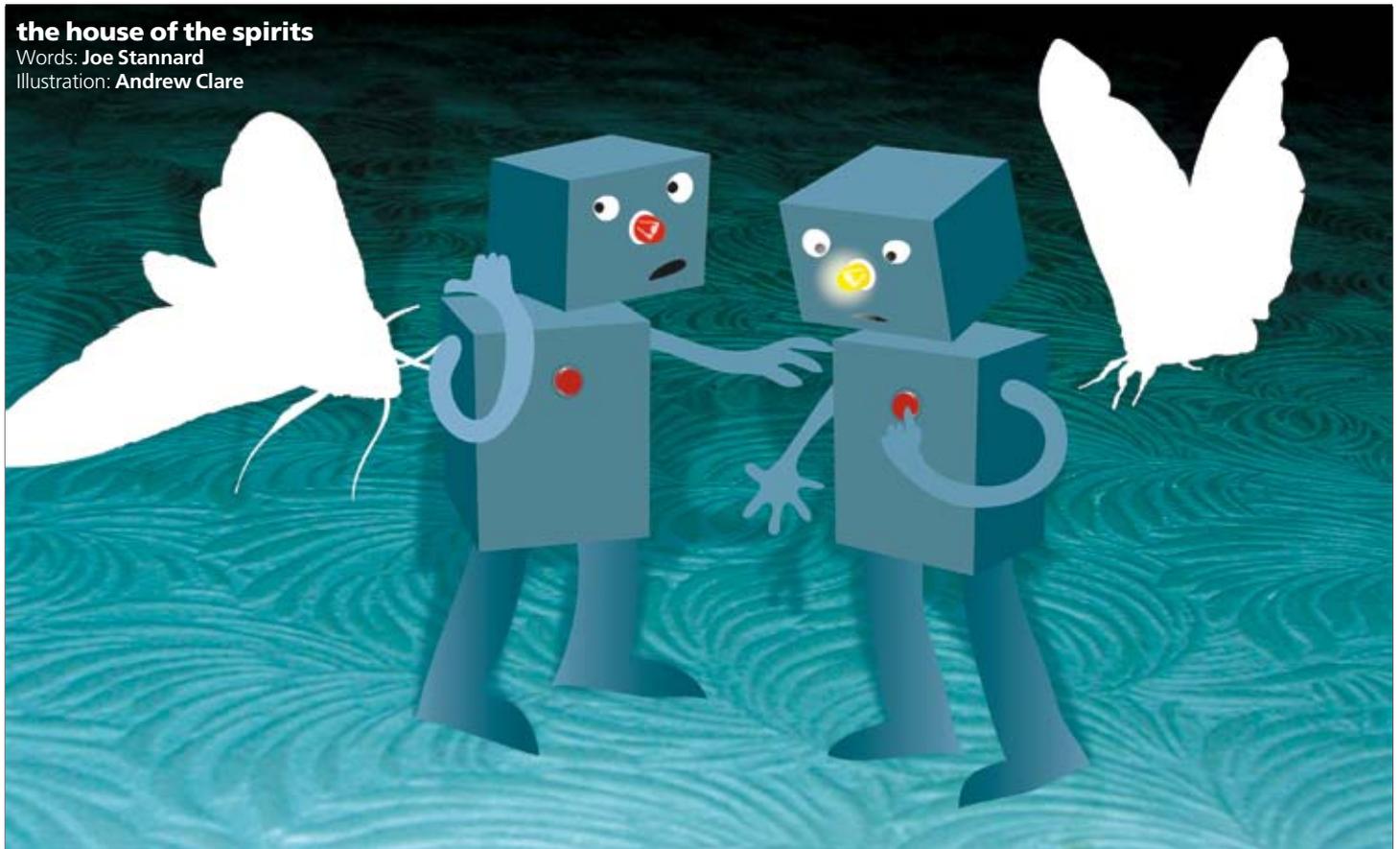
[WWW.JAGJAGUWAR.COM](http://WWW.JAGJAGUWAR.COM)

CDs \$12, LPs \$12, CDEPs \$7 • 1499 West 2nd Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47403 USA  
Add \$9.00 for airmail • Distributed by SC Distribution. By Vital in the UK.

**the house of the spirits**

Words: **Joe Stannard**

Illustration: **Andrew Clare**



**Broadcast**

**Tender Buttons (Warp)**

This is an album of ghosts, a record that only half-exists in this world. It is faint, smudged, only partly legible; and like a fond recollection, any shape it assumes is fleeting and mutable. If this album were a material, it would be ectoplasm, that hypothetical substance beloved of many a Victorian medium. I am a believer. I hear voices in the ether that invite unanswerable questions about long-lost friends. Like Michelle. Whatever happened to her? She was once the brightest star in the northern sky. An aesthete on good terms with the uncanny, she once recalled to me the time she and a friend saw the miniature ghost of a geisha girl in her attic. She also told me she had foreseen her own death in a car crash.

Broadcast use technology to summon forth the spirits, and they do this in order to understand the past and gain knowledge of the future. But they do not seem to control what they communicate from the other side. All gates open. *"Curiouser*

**Absence makes the mind work harder**

*and curiouser,*" intones Trish Keenan while spectral shapes dance around her words, paradoxically nailing the elusive, vague nature of these songs, assembled as they are from pulses and tones that delicately degrade as they travel. Memories drifting into obscurity, their shapes altering, some evaporating altogether. In some ways, this album is the sound of forgetting what you were about to

say, and never remembering. It was on the tip of your tongue, but the moment has passed forever.

*Tender Buttons* is magical and banal like one of Joe Meek's séances. Keenan channels the hopes and fears of those suspended between past and future without an anchor in the now, presenting them in a calm yet disorganised fashion, barely edited. Is that Michelle's voice in the polyphony? She's in there somewhere. Perhaps in the analogue crackle that tickles the eardrums then scours the brain cells, dislodging scraps of reminiscence. Absence makes the mind work harder.

Late last year I received an email from Michelle, hinting at a bizarre synchronicity that compelled her to get back in touch after seven years. "Coincidence is often more glamorous," she wrote. I replied, and heard nothing back.

**Cage**

**Hell's Winter (Definitive Jux)**

The handy bullet-pointed list of misfortunes that's Cage's press bio is one pissing contest that you're not gonna win, self-haters, so don't even try. Best to plunge straight into the slough of brittle, brutal despond that's Chris Palko's second solo outing. An addict father, mental illness, breakups and breakdowns, epilepsy and crashed cars are presented in a voice laconic and whiny from having screamed too hard into the void. El-P's tight-wound production creates a tense but sonically generous template for Cage's verses: vague orchestral sweeps coupling with steely beats like November clouds spilling out hailstones.

*Hell's Winter* jars when it looks outside the personal and into the political, even if the anti-Bush 'Grand Ol Party Crash' does feature Jello Biafra on Dubya-impersonating duties. Cage is at his best when dissecting the darkness within, reaching a spectacular level of ugliness on 'Scenester', an everyday tale of love/hate for a narcissistic Suicide Girl, sneering, *"Funny how you never*

*opened a vein,*" at her photogenic pain. The glamorisation of depression and self-harm is always ripe for satire; you never once doubt that Cage is more than qualified for the job.

**Frances May Morgan**

**viewing pleasures: cage**

"During the making of *Hell's Winter*, I watched: *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, *American Psycho*, *The Doors*, *Ong Bok*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Revenge Of The Ninja*, *Fistful Of Dollars*, *The Weather Underground*, *Cannibal Holocaust*, *Orca*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Harold And Kumar*, *Cannonball Run*, *Steal This Movie*, *Ichii The Killer*, *Vampire D*, *Blood Lust*, *Toxic Avenger*, *Suicide Club* (for the 10th time), and a whole lotta World War II documentaries."

**John Cale**

**Black Acetate (EMI)**

The long-faced intellect dons his finest, most surprising falsetto and creates a sonic millefeuille worthy of any chicklings clucking about the current chart wastelands.

'Brotherman' is a dark and brooding call to Uncle Sam, like Paul Westerberg dragging Chuck Prophet through unknown electronic pastures. 'Hush' has the audacity to sound like a Jamie Lidell tune lightly dosed with valium. And how a song about footsteps on a gravel drive can be lifted beyond Christmas Number One flippancy is beyond me: here is a man to bow down to.

**Hayley Avron**

**Capitol K**

**Nomad Junk (Faith & Industry)**

Capitol K has one of the keenest senses of place in music, and deftly uses it to create new worlds from fragments of existing ones. Field recordings from around the globe are woven into his scratchy, lo-fi electronica, but this is no What I Did On My Holidays collage. Though the samples are recognisably Hong Kong traffic and Barcelona café chatter, they don't so much evoke particular places as use aspects of them to shoot off at tangents and imagine new topography into being.

Thus, the destination of the 'Pan Continental's train journey isn't Paris but the middle of the desert, or another planet, depending on your mood; highlight 'Hong Kong' paints a vision of Hong Kong Plus, brash brushstrokes of sound reflecting an ideal rather than a reality. It's comforting to crawl into these five-minute mini-worlds, to be soothed by the recognisable and enraptured by the unfamiliar.

**Alex Macpherson**

**The Chalets**

**Check In (Setanta)**

From the opening shifty electro disco rampart of 'Theme From Chalets' (about making a bad post-club party choice) to 'No Style' with its sparkling guitars and lush harmonies, and the lilting Irish accents of 'Two Chord Song', like an indie episode of *Ballykissangel* with extra sauce, The Chalets' happy-go-lucky punk rock is the aural equivalent of a funfair. With the added bonus of not making you vomit if you go on it too many times.

**Leonie Cooper**

SONIC YOUTH "GOO"



Super Goo! Two CD Sonic Youth Extravaganza!  
Original classic remastered with b-sides,  
demos, previously unreleased rehearsal  
blowouts and lost tracks galore.

[www.sonicyouth.com](http://www.sonicyouth.com)



## Delia Gonzalez Gavin Russom

present their debut album for DFA

## The Days of Mars

Released October 10th  
on CD and double vinyl

Limited free poster at selected  
independent retailers

i-D "Tune in, switch on and get ready for a  
heady voyage deep into stratosphere...  
a visionary listening experience of sadistic  
synthesizers and mesmerizing beats"

[www.deliaandgavin.com](http://www.deliaandgavin.com)  
[www.dfarecords.com](http://www.dfarecords.com)



**pits of despair**

Words: **Stevie Chick**  
Illustration: **Till Thomas**



**Panthers**

**Things Are Strange (Facial)**

The Supremes once sang of a ladder that led to a roof where they could “*See heaven much better*”. Of course, this ladder leads down as well as up, to a murky and mirrored passage where one must confront one’s own demons or, ultimately, drown. Kinda like that forest on Dagobah in *The Empire Strikes Back*, where Luke duels

**Ugly icebergs of riffage that jolt hard like licking power sockets**

Darth Vader but, on beholding the Dark Lord, discovers his own face gazing back from behind the fearsome grille.

It isn’t a nice place. Vultures of self-doubt circle overhead, while the ugliest and most pathetic moments of your life beam back at you from scuzzy reflective surfaces hiding among the debris. The bonus is, of course, that many artists do their best work here, their introspection – or what it in turn produces – ultimately enabling their escape. And it is here where we find Brooklyn five-piece Panthers on *Things Are Strange*, their second album.

It’s an *angry* record, as the dagger-wielding blast of atonal brass that opens ‘We Are Louder’ announces, as the slow-burning snarl of singer Jayson Green suggests. Songs bleed for minutes before exploding in ugly icebergs of riffage, as potent and pointed in its subverted anthemicism as Icarus Line’s *Penance Soirée*. Where previously they flailed like Nation Of Ulysses locked in combat with The Mars Volta, *Things Are Strange* channels all Panthers’ dissonance, all their squall, with stark focus. In places (psych-garage closer ‘The Nile Song’ in particular), they sound like Mark Arm fronting ‘End Of The Universe’-era Screaming Trees, all bruised wah-wah excess and strangled snot vocals. For ‘Stroke My Genius’, they rock like a caveman NIN, pounding out malevolence with clubs and stones.

Epic ‘Weird Birds’ twists personal betrayal with a larger, more political sense of deceit, swapping its chiming, mournful murmur of “*The truth is fine in small amounts*” for an unashamed rawk-out four minutes in, all swooping Maiden guitars and Sonics squall and drumsticks pounding through skin and inchoate howls and scattered, splintering destruction. “*We trust you, you fake it,*” howls Green from this furnace, as the tape threading through the machine is enveloped in its own flames. This is the darkest of places, but it hides the most incandescent of lights.

The collective energy of these two underground legends (Dangermouse and MF Doom) makes Voltron look like a cheap, car-boot tainted, toddler-trashed Transformer rip-off. And that’s just on the first track, ‘El Chupa Nibre’, and its 40-odd bars of dense psychedelic mythologising.

But don’t take my word for it, listen instead to the great Cee Lo Green on ‘Benzi Box’ as he warbles an ode to Doom worthy of the great Cosgrove Hall. “*When it comes to poetry*”, Green croons, “*He’s got plenty a la la la la la la*”. Uh...yeah. Right. Listen up. Fellas grab yer nutsacks, girls squeeze yer breasts, it’s time to party till you piss.

**Richard P Stacey**

**Death Cab For Cutie**

**Plans (Atlantic)**

Shit. I think I like Death Cab For Cutie. Like it? *Love it*. Fuck. It can’t just be the Seth Cohen effect, can it? Him sitting there, his long body crumpled into the angle between wall and bed, skinny fingers fondling Captain Oates’ mane as his lower lip does that cute pouty thing boys do when they’re having a mini-crisis. Can it? CAN IT? Dark hair, striped sweaters, comic-book scribbles, a broken heart – is that enough? Am I so led by my pudenda that the sight of Seth’s stupid-long lashes whispering ‘cross his peachy cheeks is enough to make me throw a million raucous electro stabbings to the four winds and embrace instead the reedy, whimpering, querulous tones of a geeky engineering student; the soft pluckings of acoustic strings, lines such as “*Sorrow drips into your heart through a pinhole*” and the gentle shuffle of the gayest drums this side of Gay Avenue, Gayland? It is, isn’t it! Seth Cohen, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ME? You utter bastard.

**Miss AMP**

**guilty pleasures: death cab for cutie**

“I kind of refuse to have any guilty pleasures when it comes to lots of music, or to even refer to music as a guilty pleasure. Something that I really like, though, that is probably the least cool to a lot of people, is Hall & Oates. I’ve always loved Hall & Oates: ‘Sara Smile’, ‘Private Eyes’, all those old tunes...”

**(Ben Gibbard)**

**Dirty Three**

**Cinder (Bella Union)**

When Warren Ellis was a very young man – before he became a Bad Seed or one third of Dirty Three – he awoke one morning to a startling find: out of his left arm, he was growing a violin. Out of his right arm: a snaking bow. Not one to take such a Kafka-esque transmutation lying down; Ellis elected to become the most inborn virtuoso of all.

His seasick panache is all over this seventh album from the Dirty Three, but look out also for bagpipes! And bouzoukis! And check out the souk-soaked driving gypsy rock of ‘The Zither Player’. Woah!

The Mekons’ Sally Timms strikes a cameo on ‘Feral’, while the Cat Power-voiced ‘Great Waves’ is heart-stopping, apocalyptic, beautiful, brilliant. And both are embellished, of course, by Jim White’s ambling brush drums, Mick Turner’s sparse guitars and a cool *col legno* from Warren, The Human Violin.

**Nicola Meighan**

**Cigarettes**

**All Is Well (Slag)**

Cigarettes are one of my most cherished Brazilian bands; I have been following founder Marcelo Colares, since his 1994 cassette *Foolish Things*. It was love at first sight – sweet and sad Brazilian-accented pop songs with unpretentious lyrics. Later, Marcelo gathered all his best recordings and released his debut album, *Bingo*. But then he disappeared. And to see this record be released so many years later is quite amazing and a surprise – all this time he was hidden in Itaperuna, a suburb of Rio, recording new music, writing about falling in and out of love – and proving that all is well.

**Ana Garcia**

**Cobra Killer & Kapajkos**

**Das Mandolinorchester (Monika)**

The future of electro? How about Cobra Killer’s Annika and Gina joining forces with mandolin orchestra Kapajkos? The result? As funny and sexy as something only the CEO of Lo Recordings could come up with.

**Slobodan Vujanovic**

**Constantines**

**Tournament Of Hearts (Sub Pop)**

Constantines have never been afraid of harnessing the power of a teenage riot: their self-titled debut – a paean to Fugazi – was fiercely punk and unashamedly political. One track even quoted Rod Stewart’s ‘Young Turks’ and managed to sound incendiary.

*Tournament Of Hearts* is more grown up and more subversive, less overtly political than either their debut or 2003’s *Shine A Light*. With a more varied musical heritage in place – snatches of Springsteen and The Replacements – it preens, rattles, whipsers and hollers like all good rock’n’roll should.

**Natalie Moore**

**Dangerdoom**

**The Mouse And The Mask (Lex)**

Dangerdoom are so hot they could make me drink my own piss. It’s their bounce, the viral joy of the beats. One listen to their ‘Vats Of Urine’ would be enough to make me kneel next to the bowl with a huge grin on my face and liquid gold dripping off my stubble.

## DJ Scotch Egg

### KFC Core (ADAADAT)

He's from Brighton. He has a couple of Gameboys, a speakerphone and serious issues about the state of fast food. He's DJ Scotch Egg and he's here to annihilate your humerus with techno. 'Tetris Wonderland' is the Soviet Puzzle game reimagined by a man carved from crystal meth. 'Scotch Heads' is less of a song than a twitch. Aside from the playfully childish KFC song, the album is a full bore electronic weapon aimed at your nervous system. There's a moment half way through 'Scotch Forest' – eight-bit Spectrum classic *Jet Set Willy* fired through a Digital Hardcore filter – where he shouts "TECHNO! TECHNO! FUCKING TECHNO!" which is worth the price of entrance alone.

TECHNO! TECHNO! FUCKING TECHNO!

Kieron Gillen

## Dr Dog

### Easy Beat (Rough Trade)

There's a lot to recommend in Dr Dog's debut – namely their concessions to keep one cheek in the Seventies, when its members were no doubt still in diapers, if they existed yet at all. The pop arrangements on this thing are too busy and eccentric to have worked back then – and those eccentricities provide the bulk of both the whimsy and the distraction that keeps these songs both unique and just shy of unforgettable. But beneath them live mostly intact remnants of the Spector/Nitzsche wall of sound having its way over influences as deep and rich as Paul McCartney, Emmitt Rhodes, Bryan Hyland's debut LP with Del Shannon, Todd Rundgren, and Crazy Horse, amongst others. They can sing, they can play interesting and memorable songs, and as summer is blown away by fall, they present a lasting and warm late afternoon countrified soundtrack tumble through dead leaves.

If they learn to rasp off some of the weird edges, their next one will be a classic.

Doug Mosurock

## Earth

### Hex: Or Printing In The Infernal Method (Southern Lord)

With Sunn O))) pipping out the Earth sound for their own nefarious purposes, it makes sense that for Dylan Carlson's comeback album (a recent remix and live records don't count) the drone-rock magus has opted for a somewhat different approach. While some things on Planet Earth never change – funereal pace; skeletal, sparse drumming; overwhelming guitar – the Sabbathesque fuzz that helped make *Earth 2* and *Phase 3: Thrones And Dominions* so influential is conspicuous by its absence. 'Raiford' provides a gratifying boom of bone-rattling doom, but for the most part *Hex...* is an album of gothic country blues, the strongest influence on which being *Dead Man-era* Neil Young (the album's alternate title is derived from a William Blake poem quoted both in Jim Jarmusch's film and on Young's soundtrack).

It's traditionally beautiful stuff, the highlight being 'An Inquest Concerning Teeth', which interrupts a bone-dry, cyclical guitar figure with unexpected, radiant arcs of solo guitar, hinting at a redemption glimpsed just beyond the storm clouds. No longer hiding behind a wall of distortion, Carlson has located the heart and soul of his music.

Joe Stannard

## what I witnessed

Words: Doug Mosurock

Illustration: Andrew Clare

Oh my, the things I've seen and heard.

I nearly wrecked a rental car rocking out too hard to **The Psychic Paramount's** frenetic *Gamelan Into The Mink Supernatural* (No Quarter), five songs of forward-thinking instrumental tape-burn, muscular psychedelic prog rock with a flair towards the theatrical. They contain ex-members of Laddio Bolocko and Panel Donor, and blaze all-in-the-red, tape-destroying rock velocity in ways that'll satisfy fans of My Bloody Valentine, Acid Mothers Temple, Sunroof! and Don Caballero alike. Saw these guys playing a show with **Pissed Jeans** some months back, whose debut album *Shallow* (Parts Unknown) definitely merits mention; raw, festering, uglified punk sludge from northeast Pennsylvania, in line with Flipper, No Trend and Drunks With Guns. Americans haven't kicked out this sort of brazen stupidity so smartly in a decade or more, and with songs about banks, boring girls, and one called 'Ashamed Of My Cum', it's unlikely they will again anytime soon.

Traversing the corners of the state to Pittsburgh (Southwest corner, and my hometown), we find challenging music and community projects of a different stripe. One of the more exciting pieces is a comic anthology and CD entitled *Unicorn Mountain #1*, a deeply resonant and thoughtful collection of graphic art and narrative by some of the city's most talented

and creative individuals, and a CD featuring 20 bands from town, including Modey Lemon side-projects **Midnite Snake** and **Minister Squid**, the Lightning Bolt-ish grind of **Slices**, anthemic bar-rock by **Fangs Of The Panda**, and the epic metallic rock of **The Sea, Like Lead**, among many others. Wrapped in a beautiful silkscreened cover by burgeoning postermaker Michael Budai, this is one of those projects that transcends the sort of locals-only trappings of "good enough" art and music, and gives an insight into the intense creativity the region has spawned.

Landing in my hands upon a recent visit to town was the debut album by **Centipede E'est** (self-released), a complex and rewarding affair into stonky, artsy territories, exhibiting some of the same looseness that blessed The Magic Band, but with jauntier and more direct songs, and laden with one of the tightest and most in-sync rhythm sections performing today.

Wackos like Les Savy Fav and Flaming Lips could stand to learn many lessons from these folk, made up of members of many a former and current band... including **Dirty Faces**, who intend to break the curse of geographical entrapment with their third release, *Superamerican* (Brah/Jagjaguwar). Oozing sweat and attitude, they combine elements of all things cool, from The Fall to Royal Trux, from the Velvet to The Modern Lovers, spilling caustic concoctions of addiction and loss amid the best times ever known

to man. Their effortless ability to rock with conviction put them easily ahead of Black Mountain and The Hold Steady and all other comers in the authentic rock champion sweepstakes of 2005.

The 'Faces have an ally in *Plan B* faves Oneida, whose Brah imprint,

## Raw, festering, uglified punk sludge

just launched, is releasing their album, as well as a limited edition split 12-inch between **Oneida** and **Plastic Crimewave Sound**.

Oneida offer up a lost psych-folk frigid breeze in 10 minutes, while Chicago's PCWS hold onto icy robotic drug-psych noise chords for an entire album side, recalling the finest moments of Baiterspace and Chrome.

That band's leader, **Steve Krakow**, has been busy as well, offering up issue #6 of his *Galactic Zoo Dossier* zine (Drag City), which features two CDs of lost, rare and live psychedelic rarities by everyone from Michael Yonkers to Hototogisu and a set of 72 Lost Guitar Hero trading cards. The entire affair is painstakingly hand-drawn by Krakow himself, containing features on John Renbourn, Exuma, Sixto Rodriguez, and dozens more, along with a special look at how psychedelia touched comic book and superhero art and storylines of the Sixties and Seventies. It'll unlock your mind, man.

Until next time...



## tongue sandwich

Words: **Nicola Meighan**  
OOIOO Photography: **Sarah Bowles**

Foreign tongues? I've known a few. There was Thorsten, the blonde and unlikely Italian; Henri, the fragile tree surgeon from Finland; Danny, the Bono-clad octogenarian from Japan, whose only thrill was blowing smoke up my ass. None could have prepared me for these albums however; or correctly pronounced their creators, alas.

But music, they say, is the universal language and with this in mind I forage onward, unsure as

## A giant patchwork crocodile, clad in a gingham tank top

to how to enunciate these artists, but eager to translate them into forms I can understand.

First on today's unpronounceable salver is the considerably more discerning countrywoman of smoke/ass interface enthusiast Danny: avant-psych priestess, Boredoms' drum sorceress and Sonic Youth/Flaming Lips deity Yoshimi P-we – here at the wondrous helm of **OOIOO**.

*Green And Gold* (Thrill Jockey), originally released in Japan in 2000, is hypnotic, incessant, brain frying, brilliant. A turbulent maelstrom of primitive psych-lullabies ('Grow Sound Tree'), and juicy, reedy krautrock grooves ('@@@Tune') and panting tribal progressions ('Fossil'), the album features guest

appearances from Seiichi Yamamoto (Boredoms), Yuka Honda (Cibo Matto) and Sean Lennon, while Yoshimi effortlessly presides over the flute, guitar, voice, percussion, trumpet and eye-melting artwork.

This is pop as performed through the medium of acid – flying beasts and giant eyes and buzzing skies and pterodactyls. It's as menacing and gentle as a giant patchwork crocodile, batting its eyelids with a wide-toothed smile, clad in a pink gingham tank top and flared slacks: exactly, then, like the cover of US bonkers organ-merchant **Quintron's** latest offering – *Quintron And Miss Pussycat* (Rhinstone).

Like the The Stranglers on space-dust, like Bis high on rabies, like The B52s on hot wax and Rolf Harris, Quintron's allure here is widely embellished by the feline intervention of the luscious Miss Pussycat. The bubble-powered 'Swamp Buggy Badass' is ace, while the dark electro fable of a wolf in sheep's clothing – or rather of "An eel/That dresses like a squirrel" ('Squirrel Gardens'), closes with the curdling sound of rodents screaming: it's the absolute sound of vampire bats with laser eyes, and carries through to the piercing salutation of *Where There Was Nothing* by the rawhide-insinuating, tongue-tying **Bovaflex** (Highpoint Lowlife).

A quietly snaring, gently orchestral cycle of paeans to sparkling glitchtronica, Bovaflex's protagonist Eddie Symons may spend his days working on a Pac Man revival but he's at best when touting a digital, snare-driven re-enactment

of The Bit With The Rocket from *Koyaanisqatsi*, ('Ohne Namen'), or fostering fragile, bleep-spattering requiems that sound like pickled onions and daydreams and wind-chimes. The latter of which may, or may not, depending on pronunciation, rhyme with **Amandine** – a gentle, jangling, Swedish combo, whose debut album *This Is Where Our Hearts Collide* (Fatcat) is a pleasing sweep of puffy harmonium and eiderdown harmonies and heart-drop piano: most notably on opening track 'For All The Marbles' and the down-home serenade of 'Finelines'.

It ambles like Sunday and whistles like twilight and whooshes deep like autumn leaves – whooshhh! – and – woohoooo! – spiralling whirligig guitars at the ready as the two-drumming, prog rock, math pop, formula known as **updownleftcrightcabc+start** emergeth.

With riffs as big as fillet steaks and pastoral passages straight outta *Middlemarch*, updownc's debut album, *And The Battle Is Won* (Tapntin), is a symphonic sprawl of bucolic tinkering and prolonged colossal feedback that has me reaching for my mathematical dictionary to make sense of it all. And it has me realising, to my chagrin, that I've never known a man who spoke the *other* universal language – that being, of course, the mathematical tongue.

And that, my friends, and no matter how you say it, is called a tragedy, in every patois known to man.

## Exile

### Pro Agonist (Planet Mu)

On his record label's message board, Tim 'Exile' Shaw declared he'd never release another record, due to (misread) opening sales figures of 'Pro Agonist'. And it would've been a genuine loss. Hailing from the home of mash-up, Brighton, along with Shitmat, Chevron, and the irrepressible DJ Scotch Egg, Exile is more concerned with dark drum'n'bass dancefloor action, somehow straddling the middle ground between n ear-violating Valve punch and wobbly experimental edginess. And, with superb titles like 'Big Bad Purple Bad Boy', and the pupil-dilating high of 'Broken Language', it bangs louder than a million sales.

### Adam Anonymous

## Jason Forrest

### Shamelessly Exciting (Soniq)

The artist formerly known as Donna Summer used to have more tricks up his sleeve than a great gimmick for a name. He used to have great gimmicks for music too – laser-spliced cut-ups of frantic infinity disco that set the senses, if not the limbs, spasming. For his inevitably shit 'I'm a real artist, me' album he's roped in David Grubbs, Laura Cantrell and Maja Ratkje for tunes that display all the artistry of a software tester expertly tapping CTRL+C on 'vocal' before kicking in the masterstroke of [right click/paste] over 'grating lounge music sample'. When it works, however, like on fabulously irreverent 'My 36 Favourite Punk Rock Songs' – where every crappy pub punk anthem is re-edited into Ritalin rock – the results are as pleasurable base and addictive as orange Calippos, sunshine and self-harm.

### David McNamee

## Fursaxa

### Lepidoptera (ATP)

Fursaxa's music swallows great gulps of time and spits them back out all wrinkled and ruffled, as though temporal concerns are the world's oldest lies. Tara Burke sings heavy breaths of angel-sigh into the microphone as her harmonium and acoustic guitar flutter around simple chord changes and arcing melodies. There is something graceful about Burke's pace; her movements are elegant and sure-footed and that's what makes *Lepidoptera* an affecting listen: its ability to transcend the concerns of musical automata and tap into some kind of quotidian revelatory experience. References are few, but I can hear the woodland drone of Kendra Smith's *Guild Of Temporal Adventurers*.

If you ever wanted to will your world into a maze, an endless end, here is your ticket.

### Jon Dale

## George

### A Week Of Kindness (Pickled Egg)

You've got your marching drums, a gentle bass, little bells and brooding piano notes that disappear into the gloomy fog of Manchester's haunting musical history. Suzy Mangion treads ground between Hope Sandoval's hypnotic vocals and Low's spine-tingling serenity. In fact, when the duo drop their brooding harmonies over while doomy drums and slowly plucked chords, it's hard not to think of a certain band from Duluth... Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna curl up in a nice, warm blanket and pretend it's winter. George, will you come with me?

### Joris Heemskirk

**TEAM PING PONG**

new album 31st OCTOBER '05  
www.bearsoul.co.uk

**ON TOUR**

07 OCT LONDON Buffalo Bar  
08 OCT WARWICK University  
27 OCT NOTTINGHAM Stealth Club NME  
28 OCT LANCASTER Farmers Arms  
29 OCT GIG 1 CARDIFF UWIC 7.30pm  
29 OCT GIG 2 BRISTOL Louisiana  
30 OCT BRIGHTON Freebutt  
31 OCT LONDON 93N East  
01 NOV DERBY Bar Vida

help she can't swim  
ON TOUR

**OCTOBER**

- 11 LONDON Go Native @ the LSE Quad
- 12 BRIGHTON Freebutt
- 31 SOUTHAMPTON Joiners

**NOVEMBER**

- 01 LONDON White Heat @ Madam Jojo's
- 02 EXETER Cavern
- 10 MANCHESTER Music Box
- 11 EDINBURGH Unknown Pleasures @ Teviot Underground
- 12 LEEDS Faversham
- 13 STOCKTON-ON-TEES Georgian Theatre w/ melt banana
- 14 BRISTOL Louisiana
- 15 NOTTINGHAM The Social
- 16 SHEFFIELD The Room
- 17 GLASGOW Barfly



check [www.helpshecantswim.co.uk](http://www.helpshecantswim.co.uk) for more details and further shows t.b.c  
fashionista super dance troupe  
the album out now.  
new EP coming soon

ALSO COMING SOON FROM FANTASTIC PLASTIC RECORDS new releases by

**KUBICHEKI** **guilleMOTs** **THE IMMEDIATE**

**UMLAUT** — THE VICTORIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMENS CLUB —

FANTASTICPLASTICRECORDS.COM

Debut album 'Swords' released 10 October 2005  
Includes the singles 'Albatross Waltz' & 'Fifteen Hundred Years'



for tour dates - see [www.raffeband.com](http://www.raffeband.com)

"an excellent debut album." *MUSIC WEEK*  
"appealingly wonky acid-folk" *THE GUARDIAN*  
"a wonderland of its own. Very English, fairground, twisted folk" *FLUX*  
"charming and lovably sbambolic" *GOOD FOR NOTHING\*\*\*\**  
"strangely addictive" *DAZED & CONFUSED*

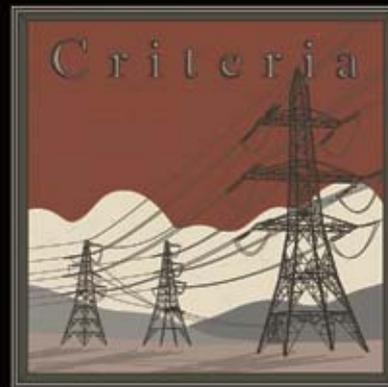
[www.skint.net](http://www.skint.net) & [www.brassicbeats.com](http://www.brassicbeats.com) **SKINT**

# AVAILABLE NOW ON SADDLE CREEK

[www.saddle-creek.com](http://www.saddle-creek.com) | [europe@saddle-creek.com](mailto:europe@saddle-creek.com)



**CURSIVE**  
The Difference Between Houses and Homes



**CRITERIA**  
when we break

CRITERIA, ORENDA FINK, AND MAYDAY ON TOUR SOON



**ORENDA FINK**  
Invisible Ones



**BROKEN SPINDLES**  
inside/absent



**MAYDAY**  
Bushido Karaoke

**the identity charge**

Words: **kicking\_k**  
Illustration: **Andrew Clare**



**Tracy + The Plastics**

**Culture For Pigeon (Too Pure)**

I don't know what it is about energy and mood, the precise relationship. I guess it's the way they relate – that energy is fuel, is speed, is action – and, at the opposite end, of the spectrum, when that fails we're left with entropy and isolation, slowing down and stopping dead.

All I know is slow songs are often sad songs, fast songs are often angry songs and here you have an album that

**An obsessive microcultural shimmy-slash-shudder**

mixes those elements up like the ivy round the oak, a legion of musical tics bundled together in an obsessive microcultural shimmy-slash-shudder. Take the neurotic disco of 'Henrietta', where the rising tempo betokens not euphoria but an anxiety attack. Or, from the electronic growl of abstract agit-prop 'Knit A Claw': "*Your writing is subtly changing/The shape of your letters is shifting...*"

For those playing catch-up, Tracy + The Plastics are a virtual band (one person, three personae, live performance and projections) that plays lo-fi DIY queer disco and stage no-budget conceptual art shows. But their sophomore album *Culture For Pigeon* edges away from the dancefloor and back to the bedroom, a small

corner of the world bathed in 40W lamplight – or maybe a magic charm to keep the world out on a road trip, as the scenery rolls by like a discoloured VHS copy of itself.

Its stories of sickbeds, stray dogs and burning buildings suggest a world reconstructed from the corners of photographs – conceptual art has long since staked out the personal for almost microscopic exploration, taking fantastic voyages inside the everyday – but how often do you hear any band with the first clue what identity politics is, even? A generation of songwriters are still trapped in the sensationalist excess of the confessional mode. What they don't realise is that authenticity doesn't count for much when you're a walking fucking cliché.

At one point, earlier in the year, ultra-minimal dirge 'Oh Birds' topped my Most Played in iTunes. It's only 2:03 but there is more emotion compressed into its spaces and hollows than anything I've heard since. And I have this secret fear, this is me Embracing The Other, patronising somebody else's struggle, appropriating the gestures and emotions of an alienation that is not my own, not really, neither female nor queer, a long way from Washington State, but maybe a little lost too, functionally speaking.

Here's my defence. I think I can relate 'cause this album makes the self a crossroads, rather than the ego a terminus. It doesn't forcefeed sentiment, it asks difficult questions. So, why don't you buy this record?

**Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom**

**Days Of Mars (DFA)**

If a thousand happy fireflies got caught in your hair, it might sound something like this. At first I'd have called Delia and Gavin "approachable drone wafters". Then they made me wish I was taking a trip instead of a tuna melt and some M&Ms. Gently howling synths and whinnying organs call to each other, and seem to forecast impending doom. But it's somehow comforting, as if the layered baying could be translated as, "Fear not, busy, anxious humans, doom will be the best thing that ever happened to us!" I would suggest listening to it while not doing anything else at all. Don't walk. Don't work.

Don't get the bus or go to the park. Do see if you can find an escape pod. Then sit back and let dimension hoppers Delia Gonzalez and Gavin Russom send you slipping into an oily cat's cradle of constellations.

**Matilda Tristram**

**Gravenhurst**

**Fires In Distant Buildings (Warp)**

What's enough? Nothing. It's never enough. Got to be more. More band members, more influences, more. Nick Talbot's folk core remains, often acting as a gossamer skeleton over which these songs are draped. It stinks of class and good taste. In fact – and this may be its main problem – a bit too much class and good taste. Too confident and sure-

footed, they sound at home in the studio, and it sounds at home on the stereo. When it's such a digression from Gravenhurst's previous work, to sound entirely natural is no small achievement. From its opening 'Down River', which borrows Slint's stances to create the sound of a deserted catwalk at midnight, to 'See My Friend's' meditative and medicated torpor, it convinces. Sounds rise and fall, and all the while the words self-lacerate with elegant prettiness: "*People like me: just parasites.*" Later: "*Tonight we'll drink the sewers dry.*" Gravenhurst makes me want more words with which to build a temple. I'd ask, but it'll make no difference. There's never enough.

**Kieron Gillen**

**Richie Hawtin**

**DE9: Transitions (M-nus)**

I wish the sight of buttons and rows of LEDs didn't fill me with the overwhelming desire to go down the pub and let someone else sort it out. Because otherwise, I might be able to make music like this. *DE9: Transitions* is the latest in a series of mix albums on Richie Hawtin's M-nus label that pushes DJing beyond the ordinary constraints of vinyl, adding digital effects and a 909 drum machine. With beguilingly minimal techno, Hawtin orchestrates sonic chaos using the skill of a DJ who knows how to make things go pop in the heads of his audience at just the right moment. The album's not as good as the real thing, of course, but damn close.

**Daniel Trilling**

**Her Name In Lights**

**Into The Light Again (Laughing Outlaw)**

"*To break a promise is a deadly sin,*" sings Mary, formerly of Sarah stalwarts Even As We Speak. "*But I'm a wicked girl and I'm after him.*" "Dreary," exclaims my wife. Ha. Way to break the spell. There I was thinking this winsome Field Mice/Smiths-esque pop had a delightful lilt similar to early Go-Go's. Now I realise it's the Australian Velocity Girl. Can I claim this as a guilty pleasure?

**Everett True**

**Her Space Holiday**

**The Past Presents The Future (Wichita)**

Honestly, poor men. We tell you to get in touch with your feelings and lose the stiff upper lips, and then when you finally let all your emotions out and make delicate-drippy little albums about it, it turns out that your feelings are just really rubbish non-fun things like guilt over cheating on your girlfriend which makes you do a massive cry after sex – sometimes even starting the cry when your cocks are still in the person you're cheating with – or just really dull shit about how you just can't feel the same way about someone as you did about that girl who you kissed that time at that thing on the pile of anoraks when you were 18 and she made you do a come without even touching you but luckily she didn't notice and honestly that was the best orgasm of your entire life and nothing is ever ever going to get close ever again so you just can't really open up to any other women even though you'd really like to and you really like us and we're really really like your best friend and lover too but honestly nothing will ever be the same as that sorry, you wish you could feel but you can't and that's just how it is and isn't that so horrible for you. Seriously dudes. REPRESS. Burn the emo. Jam bubblegum in your tear-ducts. Sorry we fucking ASKED. Bye now!

**Miss AMP**

**In The Country**

**This Was The Face Of My Heartbeat (Rune Grammofon)**

In The Country is the piano trio of Morten Qvenild, ex-member of Jaga Jazzist, member of The National Bank and collaborator with Solveig Slettahjell and Susanna And The Magical Orchestra. It's a pretty straightforward set; it eschews the free jazz/fire music blow-outs from which most of Qvenild's contemporaries draw inspiration to concentrate instead on excursions into muted, mellow dissonance. It has a certain cerebral interest, but also some of the chilly

**material worlds**

Words: **Al Larsen**

Illustration: **Frances Castle**

**Yacht**

**Mega (Marriage)**

**Thanksgiving**

**The River (Marriage/Hive Five)**

**Various**

**Orange Birds (Marriage)**

In the US, the perennial grocery-buying question is "paper or plastic?" The same holds true for the Portland, Oregon homemade music scene.

**Thanksgiving** is Adrian Orange, a gangly scarecrow of timeless youth with an acoustic guitar and wisp of a voice that occasionally collides with a melody. He's paper through and through, like a bit of scrofula that attaches itself to your shoe. Crumbled and faded and stained and smudged, with just enough mystery to intrigue. You have to slow down and look at it. Unfold it carefully. Check the faded colours. Read the fragments. Pin it to your wall and maybe it stays there for 10 years. This album is so loose and tenuous, so fragile, that halfway through when suddenly there's a band pounding electric, it sounds like the Smashing Pumpkins! By comparison, I mean. Which is a powerful thing. I mean, it's a powerful thing how the songs are so personal, oblique and gentle that two contrasting minutes of two-chord basement grunge comes on like an overproduced pop epic.

**Yacht** is Jona Bechtolt. Yacht rocks decidedly plastic. Over-spiced samples and slabs of distended bleeps held together by a tenuous logic. Like a whole programme made entirely of the good weird bits that get winnowed out when the laptop beat-maker goes for the crossover with guest vocalists. Short songs. Relentlessly fractured beats. A bedroom recording project so classic you can almost smell the dirty socks and Sega cartridges. As broken as Thanksgiving, but shiny and brittle and you can play it loud in public.

*Orange Birds* collects artists from the Marriage roster and its close family so **Watery Graves**, **Yacht**, **Mise En Abyme** and **Thanksgiving** sit next to their better-known pals **Little Wings**, **Mt Eerie** and **The Blow**. They're all great, but the biggest single joy is OR with a digital backdrop spoken word bit. Here, with poet Tom Blood piloting things, the shorebirds turn to sand and it all unfolds visually.

Marriage Records shows us that the paper-isms and the plastic-isms can get down together, that it's not so much about how it gets done, but that it does get done, that the necessary business of creating personal art on your own terms happens.



detachment of ECM's output – not too surprising given Qvenild's music college background and prizes from the Norwegian jazz establishment.

Qvenild is backed up by drummer Pal Hulsken and Roger Arntzen on double bass, and their mutual understanding sparks some warmth: the groove on 'Beaver Creek' is as well-worn and just-so as an original Eames chair. But over the album, the plangent chords turn vinegary and your attention threatens to wander out of the room.

**Sam Davies**

**Jackson And His Computer Band**

**Smash (Warp)**

French technology and gravity-increasing bass assist in the infection of playful sense of French house with sinister, Plunderphonic nanobots of alien origin, affecting tempo, structure, and sound sources. Jackson is the man behind this invasion, pushing computational resources to their limits, making them swing, tumble, and collapse upon one another. In essence, he's solved the problems created by Daft Punk's *Human After All* by forcing technology to cave in on itself and spit up fractious and delightful electropop. Grinding back rhythms and shimmering fronts work to excellent effect on the hyper-compressed 'Rock On', the childlike stumble of 'Oh Boy', Mike Ladd's sci-fi screeds on 'TV Dogs' and the schaffelist deconstruction of 'Teen Beat Ocean'.

Fantasy-driven, off-kilter drops in a sea of uniquely jagged edges, where no two sounds are ever alike.

**Doug Mosurock**

**King Creosote & The Earlies**  
**KC Rules OK (Names)**

"I gave up half of my heart/And you gave a half-hearted shrug/It's not good enough," wavers the wonderful King Creosote, cracked vocal chords a-tremble, on the opening track.

While the King – Kenny Anderson – sets to affirming his stellar songwriting talent, The Earlies impart their psychedelic astral madness to subtle, striking effect. Crammed with blissful squeezebox ditties and warm tavern shanties, it's nonetheless the slow ones that are best: *KC Rules OK* is bookended by a couple of heart-dropping ballads – the exquisite 'Not One Bit Ashamed' and the breathtaking closer 'Marguerita Red' (replete with tear-jerking extension of the opening sentiment: "I could be crying my eyes out/ Still don't think you'd hold me"), and these alone evince this union as quite divine.

**Nicola Meighan**

**Le Volume Courbe**  
**I Killed My Best Friend (Honest Jons)**

Think Harmony Korine. Think Orson Welles, for his long shadows. Think of Yoko Ono, for the intrigue. Think of musical boxes, play acting, innocence and a child crouching in the attic alone. Imagine the paths Serge Gainsbourg's cigarette smoke used to take

as it curved its way lazily upward. Speak coyly, or not at all. Flirt with your voice, breathily. Bat an eyelid, muse upon CocoRosie. Recall the mystery and magic of the debut Mazzy Star album (Roback and Sandoval contribute here), the splendour of My Bloody Valentine before they lost their humour (Shields also contributes). Imagine a Nina Simone cover, loved not betrayed.

That's what this album's like. Sorta. **Siobhan Marshall**

**Veronica Lippgloss**  
**& The Evil Eyes**

**The Witch's Dagger (GSL)**

This is brilliant. This is everything I hoped Tracy + The Plastics would be – but they're far too refined, too dislocated. Saxophones squall. An echo-laden female voice bites fury. Guitars duel and clash in abandonment. Some minimal synth farts and layers confusion, similar to fellow San Francisco heads, Numbers. Bodies writhe on the floor, half-naked and lustful. The beat is fluid, nasty, nurturing. "What's in a body if you don't have a spine?" Rhani Lee Remedés spits, all insouciance and bravado, like prime Prag VEC or early Siouxsie. "Let's cut up boxes and spit on clones/Just for fun."

You're thinking Glass Candy. Good call. Add Poison Girls, anyone with a heart, and venomous streak.

Man this is great. **Everett True**

**Teairra Mari**  
**Roc-A-Fella Records Presents Teairra Mari (Roc-A-Fella)**

Seventeen-year-old Jay-Z protégé Teairra Mari glares defiantly from the cover of her debut, daring you to fuck with her. She wears her bejewelled visor low, like British teenagers wear hoodies: both sullenly hiding from the world and giving it the middle finger. She's pouting, but it's a sneering curl of the lip, not the come-hither coquettishness of other r'n'b divas-in-waiting.

Don't mistake this for the usual 'sassiness' permitted to women in this genre: Teairra is colder and harder than that, and she's been through too much shit to care about hiding it. She swears like a rapper on the stark opening cut 'Make Her Feel Good'. She spits fire and anger over explosive beats in defending all her girls who "Strip in the club and trick in the club" on the anthem for dispossessed females, 'No Daddy'. It's not just a reclamation of words like "bitch" and "ho", but a reclamation of the acts they signify: "So my girls that's gettin' the dough the best way you know/Don't hate, girl I got you".

Elsewhere, she gets kicked out of home over a boy she knows damn well is unsuitable, revels in making wrong and inappropriate decisions, and sounds pissed off even when balladeering. Hers is the sound and fury of disaffected teenage ghetto princesses.

**Alex Macpherson**



**gold soundz**

Words: **Neil Kulkarni**  
Illustration: **Andrew Clare**

Albums? Don't have the time mate. Don't fit with my biz. What, so I've got to sit still for 70 minutes? And listen rather than just hear?

Sorry pal. I've got hats to block, dolls to play with, much radish to harvest. And if someone dares be presumptuous enough to think that just because they've pressed themselves onto mirrored plastic I've got to pay solemn attention while they stumble around the dimly lit

And, while we're learning to love our Inner Greaser, let's wave through **Opeth's** stunning *Ghost Reveries* (Roadrunner) and **Most Precious Blood's** *Merciless* (Trustkill) for FORCING you to concentrate, filling out every corner of your head with noise and beauty.

And if you ain't got that **Throwdown** album yet, you've had since spring and you should be suicidal with shame. But that's it, OK?

Oh shit, actually, yeah, as ever, hip won't fucking let you be: dig **Micall Parknsun's** *The Working*

and half an album of snoozeworthy filler, I suggest you hie yourself along to the reggaeton joy of **Chosen Few's** *El Documental* (EMI), **Maspyke's** *Static*, **Cesar Comanche's** *Squirrel & The Aces* and **Big Tones** *The Drought* (all on ABB).

And, fuck me, you goddamn well better clear a huge space in your tiny mind for **Greenhouse Effect's** *Columbus Or Bust* (Weightless): my rap album of the year so far and therefore bound to become a great lost classic that condemns its creators to a life of penury

**Columbus Or Bust is bound to become a great lost classic that condemns its creators to a life of penury and ignominy**

bog-cubicles of their soul, they can kiss my callipygous arse.

Except: **God Forbid** whose none-more-metal *Constitution Of Treason* (Century Media) peels your face off nice and cruel and military. Except: **Lightheaded's** *Wrong Way* and **Giant Panda's** *Fly School Reunion* (both Tres), cos Tres is looking good for San Fran psychedelic hip hop rightaboutnow; **Big Shug's** *Who's Hard* (All City Music), cos it's half produced by DJ Premier and that's all you need to know.

Except **Beecher's** *This Elegy: His Autopsy* (Earache) simply for being able to do titles like 'It's Good Weather For Black Leather' and '...On The Day He Became A Human Plumb Line' with both gusto and aplomb.

**Class Dad** (Lowlife) for showing us the past and the future of one of the UK's finest, freakiest labels.

And take a step back into some wonderfully unsettling nostalgia with **Prince Paul's** *Hip Hop Gold Dust* (Antidote) and **Blufoot's** *The Old Testament* (Wu).

Avoid the calumny and fib of the new Franz Ferdinand album by dosing yourselves heavily with **Beefeaterz's** *Badge Of Honour* (SFDB), **Lowkey's** *Key To The Game 3* (Sensory Overload), **Baby J's** *FTP* (All City) and **Delegates Of Culture's** *Patchwork Gideon* (Peppe Mintay), all a little closer to life in Blighty as we know it.

While Kanye makes critics who should know better cream their shorts with half an album of genius

and undeserved ignominy. Sorry lads, my reverse Midas touch can't be stopped.

Maybe a little bit of charity to assuage the guilt – I better pick an indie album.

There's only one that counts for the mouses round our houses and that's **Minus Story's** untouchably great *No Rest For Ghosts* (Jagjaguwar) because it makes you believe in love all over again everytime it swims so sweetly into your fog.

But that's pissing well it for the year, y'hear? I've got oysters to shuck and albums can go fuck until Xmas. I'm listening to nothing but Heart FM for the rest of 2005 and I'll see you all in hell.

From heaven.

**Masayo Asahara**

**Saint Catherine Torment (Discus)**

At the Fragrant Rebirth Studio, Osaka, composer Masayo Asahara, preparing to edit the sounds of vioelectronic and prepared piano, plugs her headphones into the mixing desk. She is transported from the studio, straight through the upper atmosphere, out past whistling satellites, deeper into the frozen void where nebulae hang and matter begins to unravel. She is lost. Her body dissolves. She is pure consciousness now, hurtling; a single thought of joy, pounding, pulsing, throbbing, beginning to overwhelm, as the distances stretch and warp and she sees that these cosmic wastes are really sub-atomic expanses and she's no longer far outside but deep inside the place she's always been, coursing up through molecular clusters, capillaries, riding the synapses, bursting through the living brain, scorching the pulsating tissue until she's reborn, only now as Martin Archer, minimalist, prankster and improviser, locked in a darkened studio in Sheffield, chuckling.

Daniel Spicer

**Misty's Big Adventure**

**The Black Hole (TARGO)**

A jubilant eight-piece from Birmingham playing mini-pop melodies with big band power, they announce themselves with boundless energy, brandishing trumpets and saucepans, decks and theremin. Theirs is a dizzying circus of sound. They bring us cacophonous brass sections, sedate Broadcast-like epiphanies, instrumentals to soundtrack comedy capers. They make screwy jazz orchestration seem like a playschool ditty, screwed-up love seem like it's the most natural thing on the planet. They have a dancer named Erotic Volvo. They catapult us to the moon, the stars and the floating meteorite matter in between. And they make us believe that everything's going to be alright.

Hannah Gregory

**Mother And The Addicts**

**Take The Lovers Home Tonight (Chemikal Underground)**

First off – this is supremely derivative. It brims with formulaic songs that draw from rock's safe and venerated past. Let's talk in formulae, then: New York Dolls' stage-show + The Damned's swagger = bodyrocking rifforama; Sham 69 punches + Ramones 'hey-hos!' = garage-punk staple; Roxy Music's grandeur + The Yummy Fur's guitar-shapes = R.E.T.R.O smash!

Hannah Gregory

**My Morning Jacket**

**Z (BMG)**

With Z, Jim James wanted to make a "really sad, mysterious kind of dance music". Next to the golden swirl of Disneysound that was 2003's *It Still Moves*, the results are a little stilted. Still, producer John Leckie has made some unexpected amendments to James' glowing, autumnal palette – see the off-pop ska of 'Off The Record', and the way that Z summons a country music that never really happened and a strange, sad, compressed AM rock that got lost in the ether. Threaded throughout it all is Jim James' lovely tenderlion voice, sounding like he's singing from within a slow hurricane of memories, duetting with reverb and drunk on light.

David McNamee



## the telescopes #4

distributed by shellshock uk, tonevendor usa and backs world wide.  
10 new studio recordings seasoned from live performances between 2002 & 2004 using unseen forces and home made / improvised instrumentation.  
shape shifting audio druidry. stone age free drone repetition.  
on tour with fūxa + sonic boom september /october 2005  
see website for details.

"O" - numero 0 [antenna003] the debut album  
from french minimalists "O". ltd. edition. out now. . . .



antenna004CD

antennarecords.com

# GRAVENHURST

## FIRES IN DISTANT BUILDINGS

THE NEW ALBUM  
RELEASED 24TH OCTOBER

FEATURING NEW SINGLE 'THE VELVET CELL'

'GRAVENHURST HAS UPPED THE GAME FOR ALL THE OTHERS'  
NME 8/10

'IMPRESSIVELY, UNEASY LISTENING'  
WORD

'MESMIRISING, UNIQUE MAGIC THAT HAS LIFTED GRAVENHURST  
MILES ABOVE HIS FELLOW MINSTRELS'  
4.5/5 GIGWISE.COM

WWW.WARPRECORDS.COM  
WWW.SILENTAGERECORDS.CO.UK/GRAVENHURST

*Future Sound Of London Presents:*

*Take a trip to Ultraland and  
experience the real sound of  
modern psychedelia*

*The only album you need this year*

*The Brand New Album  
Released September 26th*

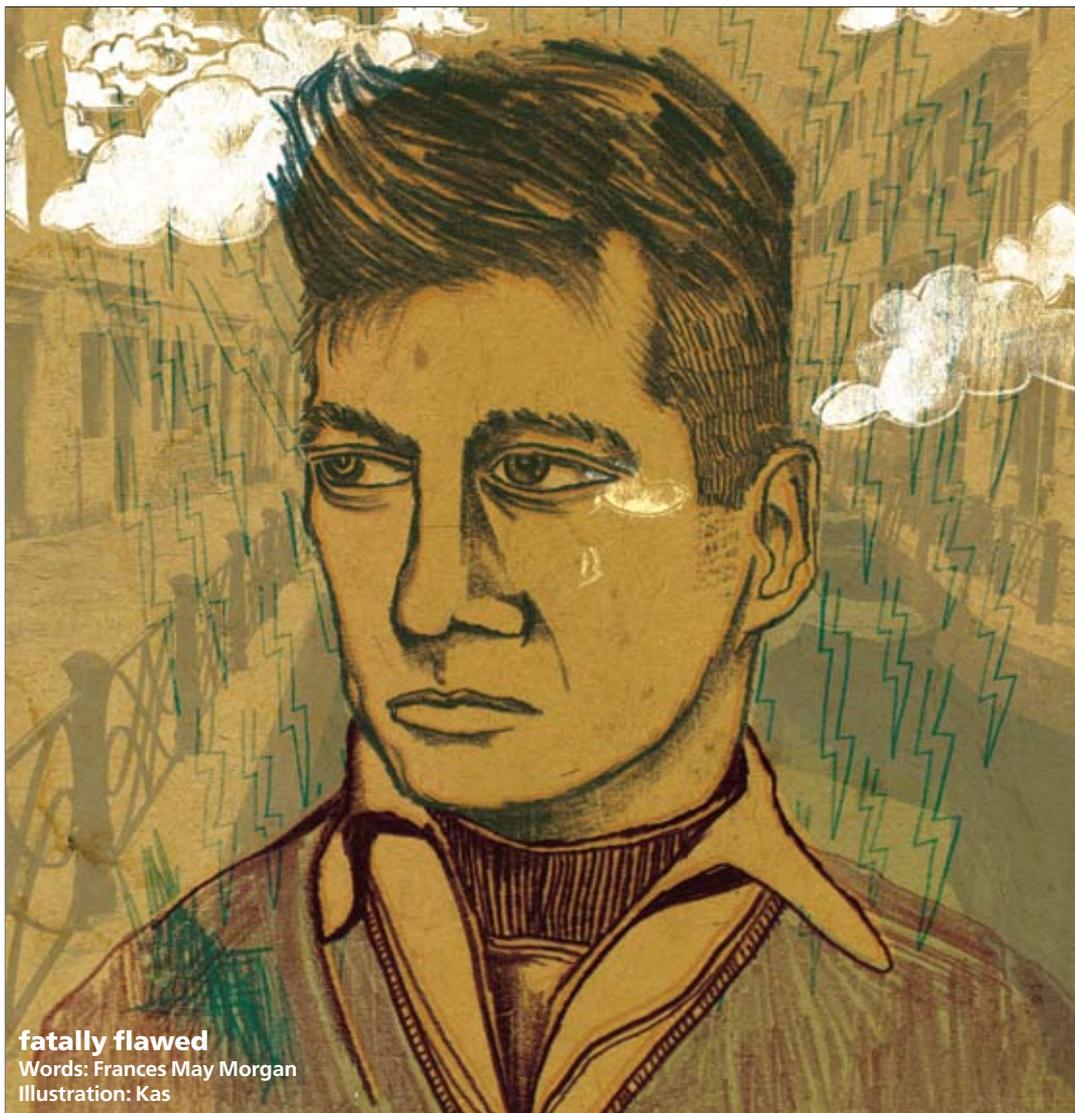
*Available on Special Edition CD  
and individually numbered  
double gatefold vinyl*



*the Amorphous Androgynous  
Alice In Ultraland*

www.futuresoundoflondon.com





**fatally flawed**

Words: Frances May Morgan  
Illustration: Kas

**Calvin Johnson  
Before The Dream Faded... (K)**

OK, let's get this out of the way so I can stop feeling bad about it. Calvin Johnson, right. He's a really unpleasant singer, and I think he does it on purpose. No, it's not that he's got an 'idiosyncratic' voice. It's not that he's an outsider, a naïf, a waif or an idiot savant. It's that he writes and arranges skilful, harmonious, *good* pop songs, and then booms over them in a voice that's consistently – at

**This DIY lo-fi picnic party is a hard one to gatecrash**

least whenever he hits a note for longer than one beat – about a semitone or so out of tune, as if he can't hear the music accompanying him. There's an aggressiveness about the way he does it: he sounds loud, stubborn, obstreperous. He gives the listeners the aforementioned songs and some lovely playing, but just as they're on the brink of actually losing themselves in the fantastical, suspended world that pop music creates, his singing skews the melodic balance so that they're spat out, half-satisfied, chastened for wanting such a selfish, immersive experience. In his lyrics, too, he throws out both Stephin Merritt-worthy killer lines and clumsy phrases with confusing insouciance, daring you to get too involved.

And it's a win-win situation for the librarian emperor of Olympia – that much is obvious by the quiet confidence with which he delivers his songs. Because you either love this stuff without thinking about it, which is cool and all, and you're probably real good at knitting too. Or – if you're me, and you love Jandek and discordance and frequencies that make people shit themselves, and you align yourself with all that's subterranean and homemade – you feel bad about not loving it. Since when did you insist on perfect tuning and good ol' *proper* singing, Frances May? Since when did you get all exclusionary?

Granted, there's fun to be had in the cheeky rockabilly kicks of 'Rabbit Blood' (one style of music Johnson's suited to: "Stop by my hutch!" he growls, and you would, y'know) and the bruised psychosexual lollop of 'I Am Without', beautifully recorded by Glass Candy's Johnny Jewel. There are the heartfelt and lovely voices of guest producers Mirah and The Blow's Khaela Marich. There's a gorgeous, heart-melting surf guitar clanging away on 'Your Eyes', which gives honourable mention to his lover's eyebrows – an underrated erogenous zone. Oh, there are sweet, lonely pop fruits to be grabbed, for sure, and quickly savoured before they turn to this weird, self-sabotaged bitterness in your mouth. But this DIY lo-fi free-for-all organic picnic party is a hard one to gatecrash, or even show up at if you're not already invited.

**Neenor**

**Neenor (Electrify)**

Neenor's last will and testament is this debut album, released posthumously after the Brighton via Whitby group were overtaken by day jobs and the responsibilities of real life. A shame, as these songs now scan like sun-bleached photographs – coloured in by

charming cello, bucolic electronics, handsome Northern vowels and wondering-what-if words – of glorious summers that could have been. These wide-eyed "ballads about computers and the countryside" flicker with imagination, analysing modes of work and play and suggesting better ways. "You've been working such long

hours..." croons Rohan Chadwick, gently commanding a remedy for wageslave ennui: "Go and frolic in some real snow."

It's the two bonus tracks included here that most accurately code Neenor's essence. On 'Lightcycle', we find them tinkering with tiny pianos and twinkling electronics till all the coldness and cynicism has been rewired

to a quiet amazement at everything. In the closing 'Going Out', music box guitars and dreamy-sweet choirboy vocals spiral up and away, dreaming of escape and the simple pleasures.

This album is lovely. Like falling asleep at a computer and waking up – your head uncreased – in a field, in snow, in love.

info@neenor.co.uk

David McNamee

**New England Roses**

**Face Time With Son (DoggPony)**

Could it be that JD Samson is the talent behind Le Tigre?

This side-project – also featuring Barr's Brendan Fowler and Sarah Shapiro – is an array of stripped-back melodies and cover versions (Dave Matthews, George Michael, Tracy Chapman) treated straight and with emotion, the beat barely audible, the electronics only there to add gossamer texture. Phrases are picked out and discarded. Often, the voices sing unaided, using silence as the accompaniment. The playground chant of 'Kids In The City' is the closest the trio come to Le Tigre territory – otherwise, New England Roses operate in a similar way to Chan Marshall, but with layered harmonies and stilted heartbeats.

Siobhan Marshall

**Nicky Spesh**

**The World I Know (Soul Prolapse)**

The problem with 'UK hip hop' being this whole counter-cultural way-of-life thing is that people make all these records about smoking weed and having no money and chasing girls in the club, which are so familiar that even though they oppose themselves to the mainstream, they end up regurgitating it and themselves, and so lose any potential to be counter-cultural at all. Indeed they just remind you that a lot of UK rap is only different because it doesn't have any money behind it.

So it is that while Nicky Spesh is a pretty good UK rapper, with a good dry wit and even some standout-ish electronic beats, who certainly has got requisite skills, he is also nothing special. Sorry.

Melissa Bradshaw

**Ninety-nine**

**Chapter 99 (Strange Ones)**

Check this strange sensation: Ninety-nine, from Melbourne. They've released four albums in the 10 years since Laura MacFarlane quit drumming for Sleater-Kinney – 10 years of humanity, clattering drums, Casio keyboards, and the odd rustle of the xylophone. There's space within their grooves, moments to breathe – and if the songs seem dark and alien, it's because they come from the hidden underbelly of Australia.

This is a collection of their finest, most uplifting moments. A Bontempi beat sounds out during 'Cois Il Hamdu Lillah', like a cross between James Brown's 'Popcorn', Pac-Man and Flowered Up's 'Weekender'. Elsewhere, there are traces of Portland Riot Grrrl, the turbulent Long Blondes and the angered politics of the early Eighties. Sweet.

We've all been there, caught in cities on the edge of the world where it rains and rains, and there's no one to catch you if you fall. Don't ever stop moving.

www.strangeones.net

Everett True

**NMS**  
**Imperial Letters Of Protection**  
**(Big Dada)**

The Form: samples that drop like plummeting scaffolding; breakbeats that pulse forever or stop dead like a heart attack; strangled strings from the *Star Wars* soundtrack multiplied into suffocating chasms of anxiety; words of a bruised purple that pound past any punctuation; husks of ghostly harmonies; sulphurous distorted guitar; pointed surreal juxtapositions; a child struggling with the Pledge Of Allegiance; kamikaze war birds plunging forever into the depths of hell; breathless fearless leaps of logic and blasts of blood-splattered wisdom that straddle and stride across grooves like the beats just weren't there;

The Content: Big Justoleum and Orko Elohiem hate George Dubya and his legion of liars, and articulate this venom more lucidly than any of their contemporaries. But their Content should *not* obscure their equally revolutionary Form.

**Stevie Chick**

**OCS**  
**Songs About Death & Dying:**  
**Vols 3&4 (Narnack)**

This is the sound of Clementine getting snuffed way up a fool's gold mountain, her pretty air bubbles bursting the surface in a muted gurgle of bells, drums, electronics, clarinet and acoustic guitar. Slumped against the rock face, a few feet away, her 49er croons ducky-voiced death threats into the echo of some mineshaft folly to nowhere and tells himself she pushed first. Oh yeah, she pushed back. She said, "I hope you hate me just a little bit." And you're more scared of her than she is of you. He sucks the carbon dioxide from her bursting bubbles and turns them into alluring songs because only one of you ever gets to walk away from the ex-lover at the end of the kitchen knife.

But nothing good can ever come from being "At my feet again", however much some of us want to be there, however prettily boys like him sing the words. Not even if he does also front the sick blue noise of Coachwhips. Not even if he does here play a pink acoustic guitar.

**Gracelette**

**The Rebel**  
**Prawns (Junior Aspirin)**

Never immersed myself fully in Country Teasers' world. The snippets I heard made me imagine them to be similar to a more hardcore Coachwhips (frantic jitterbug garage) or less lovable Yummy Fur (dislocated Fall quirkiness).

Wasn't prepared for this, frontman BC Wallers' solo work, a literary nosebleed of a record album: rustic, distorted by the same tinny synthetic electronics as prime Residents, and filled with enough confusion, home-recorded piano and dementia to entertain for hours. It's a concept piece involving Hitler and Churchill and God's Chosen Fish (The Skate) but beyond that, I wouldn't hazard a guess.

At a time where skinny tie late Seventies second-rate powerpop is all the rage, I'm so glad to hear some representation of that era's more cutting edge sound: playful electronica and acid-fried lyricism.

**Everett True**

**Refree**  
**La Matrona (Acuarela)**

Yep. Raúl Fernández plays lush orchestral Catalan pop that references Van Dyke Parks and The Dirty Three but isn't dull. You heard me right. An artist influenced by *Smile* (Beach Boys) and Morricone's mellow Sixties jazz moods who isn't insipid. Maybe the heat's getting to me...

**Graham Wiveney**

**Jack Rose**  
**Kensington Blues**  
**(Beautiful Happiness)**

Oh! To have 100 fingers, to have a guitar with 100 strings, to have a drone that stretched for 100 years. To have 100 ears, all over my head: all the better to hear him.

This hair-raising fourth album from Jack Rose — sometime Dr Ragtime and Pelt's hypnotic axe-master — is a finger-picking, ear-pricking, skin-prickling wonder: a heady mesh of porch-swing ragtime and snaggle-blues downtime and psych-folk marvel. There's a precious rendition of John Fahey's 'Sunflower River Blues' (to whom Rose inevitably owes a debt), but all other compositions are his own, from the glinting 12-string lilt of 'Cathedral et Chartres' to the deceptively upbeat hammer-on ranch song 'Flirtin' With The Undertaker' — which sounds like bourbon and amber and summer, and renders this ace in 100 ways.

**Nicola Meighan**

**The Schla La Las**  
**Schla Demos (Truck)**

Of course I'm going to fucking love this! London band matches the pop swagger of early Headcoatees to the fuzzed-out surf sounds of all those excellent *Girls From The Garage* Sixties compilations, throws in several barely in-key shouted harmonies and... man, this sounds like The Fizzbombs! Whoa. Respect.

The Schla La Las are undoubtedly The Whyte Boots to The Pipettes' Shirelles.

C'mon, c'mon!

We need a Shangri-Las next.

[www.theschlalalas.com](http://www.theschlalalas.com)

**Everett True**

**Sigur Rós**  
**Takk... (EMI)**

Beneath its strings-epic grandeur and moments of cacophonous power-chord bravado, *Takk...* is, in fact, an acutely shy record. Given time, patience, a tomorrow or two, its subtleties begin to flourish. What shrank back yesterday, swells today.

Yesterday I didn't notice a brief brass band march out from behind a fluttering curtain of glockenspiel then dissolve in a cauldron of strings; today I do. Yesterday I rolled eyes at the post rock crescendo cliché of 'Glósólí'. Today I dig beyond the Godspeed guitars and discover — gosh — this enchanting seam of choring falsetto vocals. Yesterday, in frustration, I asked my speakers: "Yes, but where are the exhilarating bumblebee electronics of 'Ba Ba Ti Ki Di Do'?" Today, in the closing moments of 'Sé Lest', they reply: "Here." Yesterday I skipped through self-indulgent rambling outros; today, quivering tightropes of violin guide me between songs. Yesterday I resisted the too-catchy strings and piano pop of 'Hoppipolla'; today I cave, swoon and sing.

**Andrew Johnston**

**MILLIONAIRE**  
**Paradisiac**  
**ALBUM**  
**OUT NOW**  
**PRODUCED BY**  
**JOSIE WORME**

[www.millionaire-theband.com](http://www.millionaire-theband.com) [PIAS] RECORDINGS

SJM Concerts & ATP present

**DIRTY \* THREE**

**Plus Guests JOSH PEARSON & MY LATEST NOVEL**  
 (Except London & Glasgow) (Glasgow only)

**OCTOBER**  
**WED 5 LONDON BARBICAN** (PERFORMING OCEAN SONGS) 020 7638 8891

**NOVEMBER**  
**WED 9 PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS** 023 9286 3911  
**THU 10 LIVERPOOL CARLING ACADEMY 2** 0870 771 2000  
**FRI 11 STOKE SUGARMILL** 01782 206 000  
**SUN 13 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 3** 0161 832 1111  
**MON 14 BRISTOL FLEECE** 0117 929 9008  
**TUE 15 BRIGHTON KOMEDIA** 01273 647 100  
**FRI 18 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS** 0115 958 8484  
**SAT 19 GLASGOW ABC 2 PCL** 0870 0600 100  
**SUN 20 NEWCASTLE CARLING ACADEMY 2** 0870 771 2000  
**MON 21 BIRMINGHAM CARLING ACADEMY 2** 0870 771 2000  
**TUE 22 LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB** 0113 244 4600

24hr cc hotline: 0871 2200 260 or buy online: [www.gigsandtours.com](http://www.gigsandtours.com)  
 New Album CINDER out 17th Oct on Bella Union [www.dirtythree.com](http://www.dirtythree.com)



**death on mars**

Words: **Daniel Trilling**  
Illustration: **Jussi Brightmoore**

**Audion**  
**Suckfish (Ghostly International)**

When the sun finally went supernova, Earth's remaining inhabitants bundled what few possessions they could gather into a spacecraft and headed for Audion, that gleaming mass which had long hung over the heads of the dying embers of humanity. As the spacecraft drew

**Razor-sharp technoid jolting**

closer to Audion, so did a noise grow in the heads of its passengers. It wasn't sound as such; no one could hear it, yet it was there.

A pulsating growl shook the craft and its contents from top to bottom. Warning lights flickered and alarms beeped as the spacecraft began to vibrate. The first system to go was the gravity machine. Heads lolled and arms flailed, while hips gyrated uncontrollably. A glass of milk smashed against a bulkhead, the liquid forming an amorphous blob in the centre of the zero-gravity dancefloor. By now the spacecraft was down to emergency lighting. Silver and amber flashes lit up the whorls of smoke emitting from a burning fuse box. As the helpless bodies began to drift

**Silver Jews**  
**Tanglewood Numbers (Drag City)**

Gratuity isn't free, and neither is David Berman. He calls *Tanglewood Numbers* a "hard rock album", but we know what it really is: the hardest he could rock given a specific set of circumstances (namely, being a perennial poet, a writer of interesting

towards one another, the passengers could only watch in horror as they swiftly became a single, spasmodic unit. Wrists, knees, ankles, elbows were thrown at right angles; hair was pulled and twisted. The gurning, grunting bodies were shaken right down to their very atomic components by razor-sharp technoid jolting.

After a while, the chaos abated. A little less frenzied, but no less helpless, the passengers caught their breath as they gently throbbed and rubbed up against one another. The noise morphed into twisting strands of rhythm that curled themselves, double helix-like, around the passengers' tired limbs. Glimpsed through one of the cracked portholes, Audion could be seen across the void, colours flitting over its surface in mesmerising patterns.

But this was only the eye of the storm. A few moments later, the spacecraft bucked and strained as the noise took on a terrifying intensity. It pounded and it thrusted, syncopated with discordant sweeps of distortion. The reflected sound of the music of a thousand spheres tore rivets from their sockets and prised apart the hull. With a sickening shudder, the spacecraft disintegrated and the passengers were thrust into the vacuum of space. CRACK! That was the sound of lungs bursting through ribcages. SPLAT! That was the sound of eyeballs popping.

Or perhaps it was the sound of evil techno genius Audion – aka Matthew Dear – making a toe-curlingly good album.

Why not find out?

country music, and a lover of all things truly human). This album is deeply sad, but in that good, these-are-all-the-things-mother-did-and-didn't-tell-me kind of way that all good sad art seems to be. It seems to be particularly pertinent on birthdays and New Year's Eve, because sometimes it's nice to hear that other people get old too.

To get specific, 'K-Hole' is the best piece of melody on the album. And the best song, the one that will make a fan out of your friend, and make you smile for what you've loved for so long, is 'How Can I Love You (If You Won't Lie Down)?' It's a song to march in the street and bang pots together to.

**Dan Beirne**

**Langhorne Slim**

**When The Sun Comes Down (Narnack)**

Sometimes when I'm feeling blue all I need to hear is a bunch of likeable, wonky songs about the awkwardness and frustration of being in love, sung in a sweet shaky voice that makes me laugh with affection rather than spite. Not that this is some sick-making travelogue through tweesville – Slim is sincere enough not to tell girls how much he hates being a boy; he's not one to write cheques his ass can't cash. This is someone man enough to be upfront about his desires, brave enough to put his heart in the firing line. And you know what? I'd imagine he does pretty well as a result.

**Joe Stannard**

**Songs Of Green Pheasant**

**Songs Of Green Pheasant (Fatcat)**

The first Songs Of Green Pheasant album is a major pass from an unknown corner. While there is something unassuming about these 10 songs, they're shrouded in such a heavy mist of reverb and susurruration that each gently placed note takes on great import. Guitars are caught in fogs of delay; sweet tone banks unfurl into infinity; the Green Pheasant's voice hovers above, an angel trapped in a deadlock with the known world, gesturing at places beyond. What sounds fey and a little precious at first reveals itself to be gilded with unlocked knowledge. The parameters for these songs take in variant phenomena, from Marc Bolan's hippy gumbo era to the weeping stars of Glenn Donaldson's Ivy Tree to Flying Saucer Attack's green hazed daze, but this is a singular, unaffected, sunblind document.

**Jon Dale**

**Soulwax**

**Nite Versions (PIAS)**

Apart from the Nancy Whang-added 'NY Excuse', the Dewaele brothers took their Cartesian split with 2 Many DJs far too seriously; mainly because their own rock songs didn't engage the mind nearly as much as mashing up 'House Of Jealous Lovers' with Josh Wink's 'Higher State Of Consciousness'. *Nite Versions* is pretty much 'Soulwax + ecstasy'. Rarely, they're infinitely more interesting for it: an electro-rock hybrid dealt with a precious understanding of how certain sounds trigger off goosebumps in your brain. Overplayed, sure, but the handclaps on 'E Talking' are still reminder of nights waiting for Tomas Andersson's 'Washing Up' to shiver you through to the morning. 'I Love Techno' braces itself with savage ticks and twists until it admits defeat and embraces Big Beat. 'NY Lipps' has James Murphy adding cowbells to an already delirious mix.

At its best, *Nite Versions* is a timely reminder of a summer spent killing yourself to prove that you're alive.

**Chris Ballard**

**Sutekh**

**Born Again: Collected Remixes 1999-2005 (Leaf)**

Seth Horvitz, aka Sutekh's mixes reveal some of the obsessive attention to surface sonic detail that Autechre are famous for. The reworking of Kammerflimmer's 'Absencen' is typical: techy, fidgety beats overlaid with scuttling, insectile patinas of

noise. He also avoids another pitfall of many remix collections: too many tracks that seem to have nothing to do with each other. There's a consistent crispness of musical thinking behind these mixes, and his programming is distinctively his own.

Having said that, it's the odd ones out I like most. The Ammoncontact mix clicks from tiny snippets of sound into something aimed more at the dancefloor than the headphones, and the Dapayk rethink has a nicely monochrome tone, with oscillations of scratchy static that become pleasantly maddening.

**Sam Davies**

**The Telescopes**

**#4 (Antenna)**

The Midlands-based Creation Records escapees' fourth album comes with the weight of shoegazing history heavy on its bowed shoulders. But because I was too young for it first time round and am now too old and ornery to give much of a shit about the early Nineties 'canon', I intend to indulge The Telescopes' still far-reaching visions right here and right now. For it is sublimely present music, knowingly spontaneous. I can report back from the outer edges of bed with tales of delicious interference and suggestive radiophonic foreplay; of FX pedal mastery and stubbly ticklings of white noise. I can tell of bubbling E-drone currents upon which drift bursts of trumpet amid Wasp synthesiser flotsam. And yes, of indulgences melodic and textural (post-rock's empty threats and coyly submerged vocals), but indulgences that are as necessary to The Telescopes' soporific charm as delay is to their sound. Most of all, I can tell of ominous pulses – loping footfalls of mallet and bass – that anchor the flow of feedback and overtone: like channels in old rocks, carved deep by the regular application of time.

**Frances May Morgan**

**reading pleasures: the telescopes**

"Some books I enjoyed: *The Life And Times Of Sun Ra* by John F Szwed – a courageous and inspired view of spaceship earth from Saturn. Sun Ra's *Strange Strings* is one of my favourite albums. Also, *Sonic Doom* by Jack Sergeant. It's about the uses and abuses of infrasound and its ability to create 'ghosts' and arouse animal passions."

**(Stephen Lawrie)**

**Ali Farka Touré And Toumani Diabaté**

**In The Heart Of The Moon (World Circuit)**

It was in a mobile studio on the banks of the river Niger that this pair – two of Mali's greatest stars – set about collaborating.

What followed were twelve entirely improvised duets, in which plucked strings dance in circles, courting each other serenely. The interplay between Farka Touré, and his lissome, desert blues guitar, and Diabaté, with his centuries-old kora, (a 21-stringed West African harp) seems so effortless, so natural, that any suggestions that improvisation should be something daunting are cleanly dispelled. Their music is both worldly and otherworldly, like the moon; flowing from trickle to torrent, like the river. It's a work of love: uncertain, devotional, sublime.

**Hannah Gregory**

**Tussle**

**Kling Klang (Smalltown Supersound)**

This San Franciscan four-piece channel the late Seventies/early Eighties NYC dance sound so purely that it's a wonder they aren't named Tussle Tussle, but there is a lot more going on here than Optimo-approved minimalist punk-funk. So while the two-note lead riff of opener 'Here It Comes' throws ESG shapes in the mind, the song slowly morphs into a discofied Krautrock number, not unlike Neu! getting down at Studio 54. Further numbers synthesise the sound with dub echoes and radioactive pulses.

**George Taylor**

**Various**

**Freeness (Icebox)**

*Freeness* is for people who respond to the fact that there's a section in HMV called 'urban' like, 'wot?!?'; or for people who respond to Joss Stone's winning the Brits 'urban' award like, 'WOT?!?' It's a response to that 'urban' by the 'urban' that is Asian as well as Black, and by the Black that is traditional, and by the Chinese that raps to Black music and the Rasta that lives in Wales and...you get the flex now innit?

It's not an aesthetic whole; it's just tasty creativity enabled by some supportive, non-commercial organisations who want to support creativity, not package it. Like Chris 'Elephant Poo' Ofili's new Icebox, and Blacktronica, and CDR. It's a lot about the fact that the best artists are self-funded, and enabling those artists to get together and be innovative. *Freeness* doesn't deserve a review by a middle class media brat, but a good listening to.

[www.freeness.co.uk](http://www.freeness.co.uk)

**Melissa Bradshaw**

**Various**

**Inner City Sumo: Modern Rock N' Roll From The Mersey Delta (Spank)**

If only because there are enough people to believe the Mersey hype, Liverpool music comes from a different angle. So, fittingly enough, on this compilation there's plenty to enjoy – Zombina & The Skeletones, 28 Costumes, The Cordettes, Mugstar. Best of all, in Lovecraft's choral a cappella and the sadly departed Victor FME's Dexys-style fun, we're treated to two of the best pop writers around announcing themselves proudly. There's certainly a history to continue – tunes as big and intimate as the delta and all that – and here might just be people to do it.

**LJ Oddman**

**Various**

**Life Before 40 (Low Life)**

Braintax's artistic credentials are impressive, rapping in a broad Yorkshire accent since '93 like a cross between Vic Reeves and KRS One. But his greatest achievement has been the success of his Low Life label, taking a sound so underground it exists in the earth's core tantalisingly close to the mainstream with Jehst, Skinnyman, and Rodney P.

This here's not the whole story, but there are choice tracks from all of the above plus overlooked gems (Ricochet's 'Mad Runningz') and alternative anthems (Asaviour's 'Money In The Bank') from elsewhere on the roster. Thirteen tales of underfunding, overachievement, and electric herbal relaxation from the pissy stairwells of 21st Century England.

**Richard P Stacey**

**magnetophone**

**THE MAN WHO ATE THE MAN**

**24 October**

limited edition digipack with art cards • digital download

features guest appearances by james yorkston, kim deal, kelley deal, king creosote, hms ginafore and pg six

[www.4ad.com](http://www.4ad.com)

**4AD**

Distributed by Loutham Records Distribution

Booking Contact: A QU JUNKTION

**Kevin Blechdom + Planningtorock**

**Livedates:**

- Mon., Oct. 10 - London @ The Underbelly
- Tue., Oct. 11 - Cambridge @ CB2
- Wed., Oct. 12 - Manchester @ The Kolondyke Club
- Thu., Oct. 13 - Sheffield @ The Cricketers
- Sat., Oct. 15 - Aberdeen @ Peacock Arts Centre
- Sun., Oct. 16 - Glasgow @ Stereo
- Mon., Oct. 17 - Newcastle @ Cineside
- Tue., Oct. 18 - Hull @ The Adelphi
- Wed., Oct. 19 - Leeds @ Brundell Social
- Fri., Oct. 21 - Brighton @ Plan B @ The Ocean Rooms
- Sat., Oct. 22 - Bristol @ The Cube Cinema
- Sun., Oct. 23 - London, Fertiliser Festival @ Cargo
- Mon., Oct. 24 - London, Mixing It Session @ ICA

**New Releases:**

- LE TIGRE** THIS ISLAND REMIXES Digipak CD - CSR050
- SUSANNE BRODEUR** EMERALD STARS Digipak CD - CSR070
- ANGIE REED** XYZ FREQUENCY Digipak CD - CSR070
- ANGIE REED** HUSTLE A HUSTLER INCD / 12" - CSR090



**should we go outside?**

Words: **Frances May Morgan**  
Illustration: **Nick White**

Down the metal ladder to the Thames' muddy beach, directly below the Ballardian balconies and yuppie bars. Bones, china, oyster shells, rusted metal spars, pebbles with holes: treasures out of oily mud. We are walking my London, by way of canal and river and woodland. Hiding in the marsh grass as warm-lit train carriages rattle past the Lammas moon and coming home with mosquito bites on our backs. Hampstead Heath is coral reef and rock pool; spiders swim through the black-

**The cosmic postman is bringing me ever more oddities**

dotted air, and he's pouncing at grasshoppers like a cat going after a frog, tawny-hued and laughing.

It's late summer, the latest it gets before it bursts: the look is *Quatermass*-inspired; the mood heavy with meaning. The city is ours: like all psychogeographers in newly minted love, we're a little arrogant; a touch paranoid.

Music that comes from north Yorkshire and sounds like weather accompanies our sleep. Phil Legard's **Xenis Emputae Travelling Band** (Larkfall) has been in operation a while: *New Etheric Muse* is from 2003. But it's new to me and highly appropriate for the time of year.

Tipped off by a post on the *Plan B* forum, I visit the Larkfall site and am half delighted and half dissuaded by the wonderfully psych titles on offer: a 'Chapel

Of Infinite Echo', there is; a 'Hieroglyphic Mountain' and a 'Cosmic Rubicon' too. I'm a sucker for such epigraphs, believing them to be an essential stage in trying to express the inexpressible, and right funny too. But XETB's connection to all things earth mysterious, and Legard's photographic accounts of excursions to the Moors, place this music somewhere more interesting than the collective altered consciousness: it belongs in the soil, under the sea, ingrained in rocks, spreading like slow lichen. It belongs in our footsteps on the toptowpath and trances in the long grass.

Strange, then, that XETB's sound is so airy. It's drone-based, but synthetically so, and heavy on delay and ring modulation. It's quiet, too; occasionally like electricity humming. Interestingly, although this peace is interspersed with effected banjo, flute and occasional vocals, the recording that draws me in the most is 2002's *The Suffolk Working*, which holds back on the extra stuff (bar a spoken vocal that puts one in mind of Michael Moorcock intoning over Hawkwind, or – crapes! – the dreaded David Tibet) to create a delicate, tense drone-scape dedicated to the weird wilds of Suffolk: setting of the scariest ghost story ever, MR James' 'Whistle And I'll Come To You', to which this would make a beautiful soundtrack.

Newer recording *Pyrognomic Glass* (2005) is a step up in structure and scope, but relies heavily on digital effects, perhaps more than I'd choose. 'Rorasa', though, is quite lovely. Like Cylob's underrated *Mood Bells* a few years back, it works with chimes, scrapes and clangs to form an eerie, temple-like structure, and goes on for a very generous 20 minutes. Legard's vocal and banjo on 'Awd Wench' is a sweet surprise: understated and hushed, and righteously tremulous.

There's something delightfully unsure about XETB's music, even as the aesthetic is so strong and well-defined, and this works in its favour: it's properly underground, without the arrogance and self-referentiality that soon typified Coil and C93 and other proprietors of the British Wyrld of the Eighties and Nineties. It's a beguiling mix of indoors and outdoors – the outdoors brought indoors; the indoors going even further in, until it expands right back out again.

To celebrate my summer of signs and wonders, the cosmic postman is bringing me ever more oddities. As well as all the usual shit, sure, but psychogeographers know to ignore what they can't explain – like Wolf Parade and We Are Scientists. Back on the other side, Antenna Records, set up by Telescopes' Stephen Lawrie, is percolating more strange brews in the north of England. French heads <<O>>, with *Numero O*, make stop-start guitar-based reveries that delight in detuning and radiophonic interference. One of the best purveyors of silence I've heard in a while.

Add to the guitars some swathes of noise and a poor cello being squeezed through an envelope filter (not usually to be recommended, but it works great here), and you'll find ex-Guru Guru dude **Luigi Archetti** joining cellist **Bo Wiget** for *Low Tide Digitals II*. On Rune Grammofon, who, by my estimation, have only released one not-amazing record, ever, this is an accomplished and elegant thing, with just the right mix of beauty and cruelty, smoothness and crackle. I listen to it when I want to be in the safe hands of abstraction, indoors and alone, remembering a summer of whale gravestones and sacred geometry: a summer soundtrack in my heart by shifted pitches, radio static, atmospheric oscillations and bat-detector blips.

**Venetian Snares**

**Meathole (Planet Mu)**

Legend has it that Venetian Snares protagonist and free-jazz-gabba lord Aaron Funk was played *Tubular Bells* on repeat in the womb. Whether he is rebelling against said innate aural atrocity or simply taking his lead from the predestined *Exorcist* correlation remains unclear, but either way *Meathole*, our Canadian protagonist's latest endeavour, is a head-burling, drill-spewing symphony for the devil. From churning parp'n'bass opener 'Aanguish' – all grrrrl-phantasm breakcore hoodoo; to the scything, sickening aria 'Contain' – like the pop-eyed bastard child of Queen's 'One Vision' and Dido's personal hell – this album is a cloying, torrential delight.

**Nicola Meighan**

**Alex Ward**

**Hapless Days (Copepod)**

Imagine Foetus. The pounding groove, the darkly sarcastic worldview. The lacerating rhythms laced behind jazz-influenced time changes. OK. Think dynamics, the way most rock bands lazily (or unknowingly) avoid using any. OK. Recall how Swans' layers of sound would almost buffet you out the door: unrelenting, sinister, bleak.

Now imagine an album that understands all the above, hails from the UK avant garde but sounds left-field mainstream and throws in an array of technique – from cabaret to funk wah-wah to rapid-fire instrumental to Sixties space age. Add to this lyrics that shred in the face of valueless procrastination and you have, pretty much, *Hapless Days*.

**Rachel Sweet**

**Whomadewho**

**Whomadewho (Gomma)**

My problem with Whomadewho, a Danish three-piece that make hybrid live band disco trax, is that their ability matches – and sometimes even exceeds – their ambition, lovingly wrapping every inflection in finely-nuanced flourishes, and cushioning every wild idea in a bed of sumptuous musicianship. The tension and incongruity that should mark their genre clashes are boiled away, leaving something that sounds wholly organic but smacks of a computer-generated animation, so complete it doesn't leave much for the listener to do. They're always in control. It's kind of a turn-off.

**kicking\_k**

**Why?**

**Elephant Eyelash (Anticon)**

PM: I got home and looked in the mirror to see if my eyeliner had run and spotted about a fiver's worth of cheap amphetamine on my lapel. Licked myself clean, smoked a five-skin joint and threw on *Elephant Eyelash*. It was so awesome I forgot about wanking.

AM: I scraped myself off my sheets and confronted my heaving wardrobe to the strains of what I'd been listening to the night before. And fuck me, it's mediocre, it's a mess, it's a little too pleased with itself This ain't just the comedown, it's the realisation that Anticon are fallible and that without the correct ravishment of sound that Odd Nosdam and Clouddad manage, the whole Built-to-Spill meets Blak Moon vibe just don't work. One for the DJ Shadow fans. Get the hell away from me.

**Neil Kulkarni**

this is



# MUSIC AND MOVEMENT

debut album out 31st oct  
'little dogies'  
download single 14th nov



[www.musicandmovement.co.uk](http://www.musicandmovement.co.uk)

[www.normanrecords.com](http://www.normanrecords.com)



new & used independent music mail order

## southern winter (northern summer)

A Feral Media sampler FM15

FERAL MEDIA: innovative Australian  
electronica, post rock, electro pop,  
indie, gentle pop and left-field hip hop,  
available in the UK for the first time.

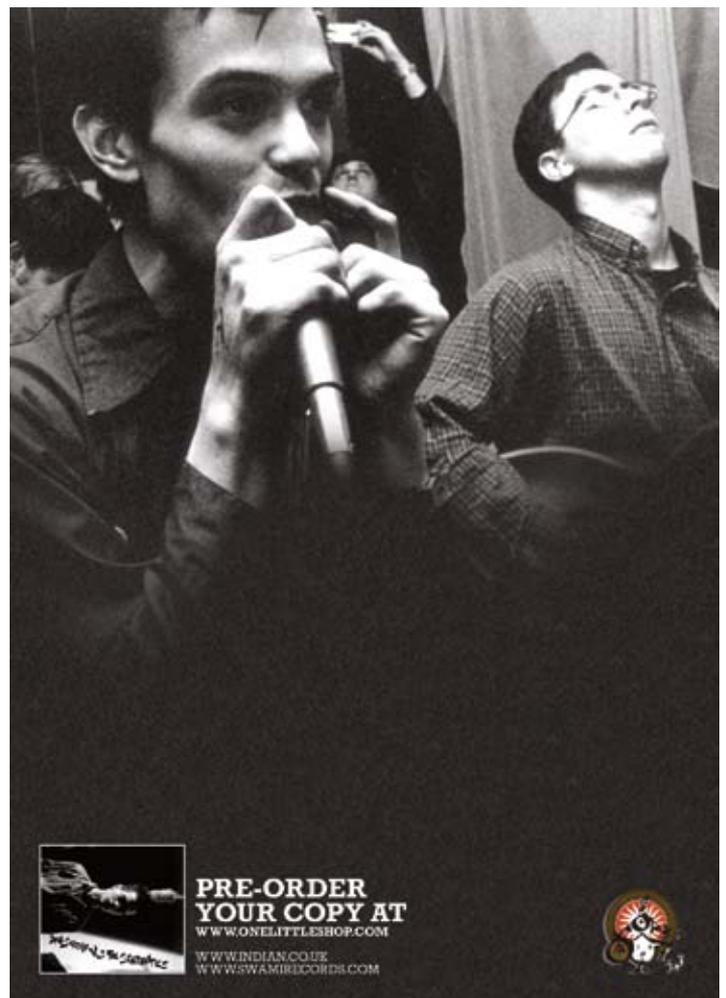


- Alpen
- Barrage
- Catnip
- Comatone
- David Elliott Incigneri
- found: quantity of sheep
- Gauche
- Ill Bravados
- Miel
- Plankton
- Scissors For Sparrow
- Sparrow Hill
- The Emergency
- The Rich
- The Tigers
- Underlapper

Southern Winter Northern Summer is available in good retailers  
via Cargo Records Distribution. [www.cargorecords.co.uk](http://www.cargorecords.co.uk)

BUY THIS CD AND WE'LL PLANT A TREE!

feral media Online shop: [www.feralmedia.com](http://www.feralmedia.com)



PRE-ORDER  
YOUR COPY AT  
[WWW.ONELITTLESHOP.COM](http://WWW.ONELITTLESHOP.COM)

[WWW.INDIAN.CO.UK](http://WWW.INDIAN.CO.UK)  
[WWW.SWAMIRECORDS.COM](http://WWW.SWAMIRECORDS.COM)



**life in wartime**

Words: Neil Kulkarni

Illustration: Ben Newman



**The Young Gods**

Twenty Years: 1985-2005 (PIAS)

Adrenaline's a weird drug. Easy to stimulate, less easy to maintain in the system. Probably a good thing too, because even though it's in you and on tap, it can invest even the most sloping-shouldered weedling with a boundless Promethean verve and energy that can so easily lead to split lips, shameful beatings or a bad asthma attack at the least. As a 15-year-old PE freak (and I don't mean physical education) I was pointed towards The Young Gods by *Melody Maker*; within a week I was stomping into fifth-form centres putting on 'Envoyé' at top volume and feeling like I'd dipped my dick in a pot of PCP.

Forget about The Young Gods' relationship to rock'n'roll. They were always postulated as both saviours and destroyers when in fact they were less concerned with rock history and more concerned with burrowing into the earth and shaking it till the pips squeaked. Helped that the Gods were never scared, helped that the Gods sounded not quite so simplistically 'like the future' but absolutely beyond time,

**Less concerned with rock history and more concerned with burrowing into the earth and shaking it till the pips squeaked**

able to leap all the way from the 55th Century back to the first yelp of primal man. It helped that Franz Treichler's lyrics and voice made him a seductive yet scarifying lovechild of Gainsbourg and Iggy, a poetic traducer of Rilke and Hendrix, with his band able to play Varese riffs while thumping like the Sex Pistols. Oh so manly, but all the more honestly perfect for adolescent dreams to drift on and be driven by.

And of course, even now, things like 'Pas Mal', 'L'amourir', 'Did You Miss Me' and 'Envoyé' fucking rock – make you holler along in the best sub-bass profundo baritone you can summon up. But it was the mystical and romantic pulse of The Young Gods that kept you so addicted – and though represented on this 20-track retrospective with 'Charlotte' and that divine skin-close cover of 'September Song' I'd have liked to have heard bigger chunks of *L'eau Rouge* (especially 'La Fille De La Mort'). This comp is the raft of Medusa, but you should really start with *L'eau Rouge* and then go forward and backward through the ages with the Gods as your whims take you. As this music testifies, you are a young god as well. Freedom and love never sounded so all-conquering.

**Wingdale Community Singers**

David Grubbs Presents... (Agenda)

These people must be from somewhere like Arkansas or Wisconsin. To record this album holed themselves up in a log cabin for weeks in winter eating stews and wholemeal loaf cake. In the photo on the back of the CD they sit on a sofa in hiking boots and flannel shirts, cradling mugs of coffee. They go walking in the country to get inspired for They go walking in the country to get inspired for lyrics about bears and nightingales and ferns.

Except look inside the back cover of the CD booklet and you'll see that the Wingdale Community Singers – Rick Moody, David Grubbs and Hannah Marcus – recorded this album in Brooklyn. Moody, who wrote most of the lyrics, is one of the edgiest, most experimental fiction writers in New York. His territory is the warehouses of Hoboken, the lights of the East Village. Sometimes he remembers this. 'Dog in Winter' effortlessly rambles from creeks to kids on porn sites. 'Indira's Lost and Found' weaves together pillbox hats, violins and crack gangs. This is folk, but not quite as we know it. Folk with guitars, harmoniums and the odd explosion of modernism.

But the rural Americana they sing about doesn't exist anymore. This is faux folk and faux is for pussies. These people should be making beautiful folk songs about the city. Someone should be doing that.

Amy Prior

**XBXR**

Sixth In Sixes (Polyvinyl)

After five years of thriving in the self-contained, say-no-more medium of the 45 rpm seven-inch, the unpronounceable XBXR return with a second full length album of apocalyptic mayhem, if you can call 18 songs clocking in at 25:30 minutes full length. Despite exaggerated claims of a new found maturity (they are at least all out of high school now), their thrashcore noise still sounds satisfyingly juvenile. But it is only when they break the mould of throat burning barks, fuzzed up guitars and manic drums, on exotic synth snippet 'Euphoria' or on the no-wavey 'Pigs Wear Blue', that they really justify the long player format. Media shy, they have been photographed in a blur, appearing to nod both yes and no. Live, their souped-up shows have been banned in entire countries. On record, their speed riffing hardly sounds threatening, but it is definitely the sound of yes and no, confusion as sex, love in spurts, and, yes, it hurts.

Pil and Galia Kollektiv

**Xiu Xiu**

La Forêt (Acuarela)

I know this boy, he has antimatter for a voice. Xiu Xiu: cartographer of the heart and bestial, savage cardiothoracic surgeon. He'd trace the lines under our sleeves, mapping them and kissing them better, only to carve crueller corresponding topographies into himself to better understand.

The sound on *La Forêt* is sparser, delicate and more fractured than the black hole pop of 2004's *Fabulous Muscles* – words and cadences barely breaking through the mumbled, sighing patina of Jamie Stewart's voice. *La Forêt*'s pop songs though – the psychosexual 'Muppet Face' and 'Pox' – are moments of cold, unblinking lucidity, delivered with unnerving conviction.

Although masterfully bleak, Xiu Xiu's songs are never obvious, encouraging when you consider obsessions with scatology in avant music almost always relate to grating Coil-isms.

Throughout this album, the music is a liquid, iridescent beauty, flowing around Stewart's sinking central protagonist and adding sparkle to his anguish. Lyrically too, his expression now is often submerged in subterfuge. 'Saturn' may, reportedly, be about "Wanting to rape the president to death and eat his body as inspired by the Goya painting of Saturn eating his sons", but like 'Support Our Troops' from *Fabulous Muscles*, this politicised death-ray hate could be a device he's employed in which to legitimise and abstractly vent his own internal angst.

Sometimes someone singing the simplest things scans like the most violent hate fuck in the world. On *La Forêt* it isn't even sung by Stewart, but by the slow, eroding waveforms of his pauses, and by the dashes of interference and fragments of melodyless, necessary glockenspiel.

I never complain; it never gets you anywhere.

I love him and hate him for it: "I'm fucking lonely; it hurts."

David McNamee

**Yob**

The Unreal Never Lived (Metal Blade)

An incredible record that may offer some consolation to those disappointed by Pelican's recent and dismal offering *The Fire In Our Throats Will Beckon The Thaw*, the title of Yob's fourth full-length is highly appropriate. There's something about this sound that sets it apart from the granite-hard riffing of yer average doom merchants. It's somehow less solid; more liquid magma than quick-setting concrete. Terrifyingly immersive music.

*The Unreal Never Lived* does not beat you about the head with a series of slow and torturous (but nevertheless unavoidable) blows. Instead, it engulfs, it consumes, it digests. Chords roll out like vast waves, assimilating and incinerating all in their path. This is liquid annihilation of the ego, metal without the sharp edges required to keep it within neatly defined boundaries.

Mike Scheidt's extraordinary vocals are mixed low enough to ignore if you so wish, but the alert may hear their own cries mirrored within his submerged wail. Yob advance the concept of cosmic doom to an impressively preposterous new level.

Joe Stannard

# TESTICLES

**FOR SCREENING PURPOSES ONLY**  
OUT 31ST OCTOBER ON LP & CD

FEATURING THE SINGLES  
**BOA VS PYTHON & CIRCLE.SQUARE.TRIANGLE**



[www.dominorecordco.com](http://www.dominorecordco.com) [www.myspace.com/testicles](http://www.myspace.com/testicles)

# BLOC PARTY.



## TWO MORE YEARS.

THE BRAND NEW SINGLE  
OUT 3RD OCTOBER

CD - TWO MORE YEARS / BANQUET (THE STREETS MIX)  
CD MAXI - TWO MORE YEARS / HERO / TWO MORE YEARS (VIDEO) / BANQUET (THE STREETS MIX VIDEO)  
LTD EDITION 7" - TWO MORE YEARS / HERO  
DOWNLOAD - TWO MORE YEARS (LIVE FROM XFM)  
TO PRE-ORDER SIMPLY TEXT BLOC PARTY TO 81330\*



[www.blocparty.com](http://www.blocparty.com)  
[www.wichita-recordings.com](http://www.wichita-recordings.com)

\*COST IS £1.59 PLUS USUAL NETWORK RATE. DOWNLOAD WILL BE AVAILABLE TO REDEEM ON OCTOBER 3RD VIA [WWW.BLOC PARTY.COM](http://WWW.BLOC PARTY.COM). FOR FULL T & CS VISIT [WWW.BLOC PARTY.COM](http://WWW.BLOC PARTY.COM).

# KANO



679®

## HOME *Sweet* HOME

THE DEBUT ALBUM OUT NOW  
CD / TRIPLE VINYL

FEATURING: P'S AND Q'S, TYPICAL ME, NITE NITE  
AND RELOAD IT PRODUCED BY DIPLO

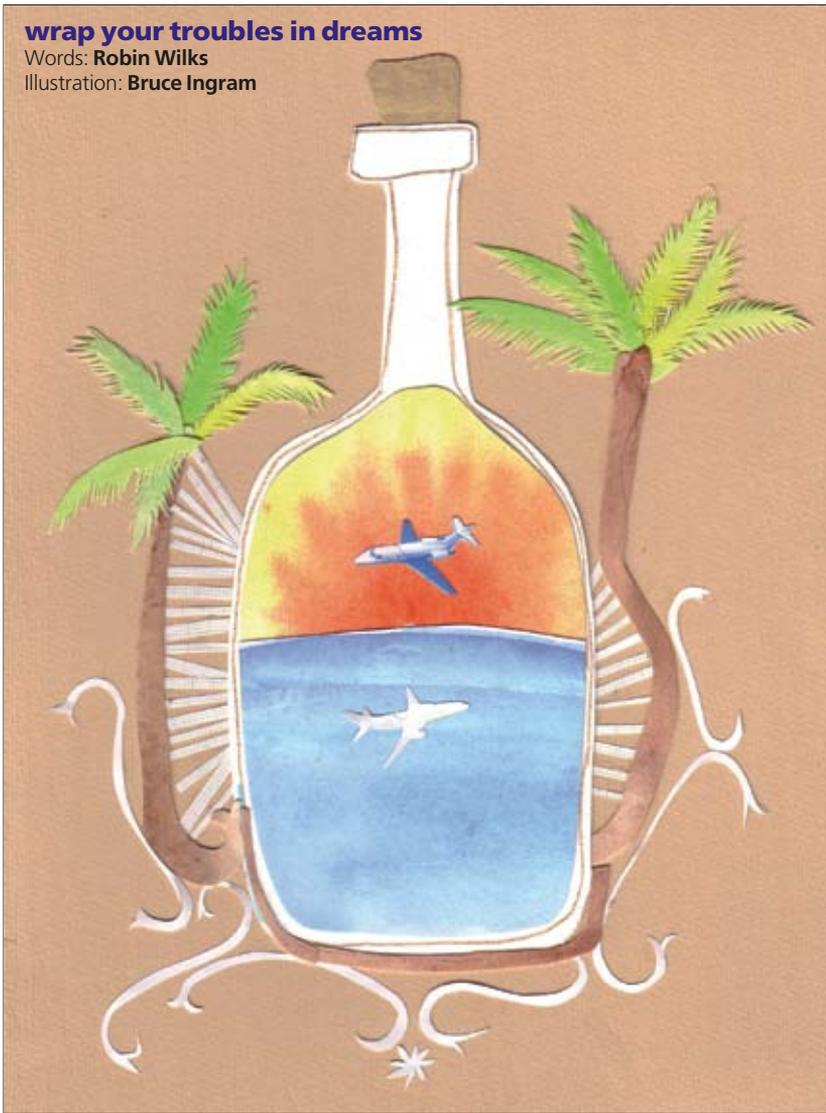
"With an album so lyrically lucid and sonically exciting, it seems that if anyone can do it, Kano can" 9/10 - NME

[WWW.KA-NO.COM](http://WWW.KA-NO.COM)

## wrap your troubles in dreams

Words: Robin Wilks

Illustration: Bruce Ingram



## Neutral Milk Hotel

## In The Aeroplane Over The Sea (Merge)

The other day I fell asleep typing at my keyboard, and kept on typing as I dreamed. When I awoke, the page was full of the strangest sentences – completely nonsensical, from a bizarre place I didn't even know existed in my own head. That's the thing about dreams: the fact that your own imagination is capable of creating something that strange, beautiful, frightening and inspiring night after night without your own volition is still incomprehensible. And more than any other record or work of art I can think of, *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*, first released in 1998, encapsulates the nature of these twisted and awe-inspiring brain-vomits: in its sound, a unique meld of psychedelia, folk, rock and some naive new organic musical genre that hasn't even been properly defined yet; in the disturbing and disturbingly beautiful lyrics, combining

## Anne Frank-inspired terrors and moments of sweet, boundless euphoria

surreal, hallucinatory images with childhood nightmares, Anne Frank-inspired terrors and moments of sweet, boundless euphoria, that make no sense but hit the heartstrings dead-on every time; in Jeff Mangum's singing, which is brash and rasping and unsubtle but which still achieves a heartbreaking tenderness throughout.

It's a record that fits perfectly into those moments when sense runs hiding and when all you want to do is to feel something true, that goes beyond the everyday into that odd place where the dreams live; where the surreal takes total precedence over the real.

The dysphoric childhood tales of 'The King Of Carrot Flowers Part I' blend into a frenzied fuzz-guitar spiritual on 'Part II'. The title track is blissful, hallucinatory and makes the disturbing sound beautiful ("Oh, how I remember you/How I would put my fingers through your mouth to make those muscles move/To make your voice so smooth and sweet"). 'Two Headed Boy' is the most comforting song ever ("There is no reason to grieve/The world that you need is wrapped in gold silver sleeves/Left beneath Christmas trees in the snow"). 'Communist Daughter' and 'Oh Comely' are astonishing tour de forces of unworldly imagery. And a delirious meld of trumpets, bagpipes, accordions, snarling guitars and all manner of other objects evoke a unique, enchanting dreamlike vision better than anyone else ever could.

## Clutch

## Pitchforks &amp; Lost Needles (Megaforce)

This is the sound of satisfied resentment. All you've ever been promised, recanted upon and reprocessed through a filter of tortured male aggression. The sexual frustration of rock'n'roll – that filthy old fart – amplified to screaming pitch, so much so that it hurts more than your ears. This pierces your skin and irradiates you, the curse of the ugly and bearded acted out with acute attention to detail yet with enough brains to avoid any of the easy misogyny this type of thing often tends to revel in. A brilliant lyricist as well as one of the most formidable rock singers in the world, Neil Fallon is Captain Beefheart shorn of the whimsical pastoralism and sentimental pantheism. All that remains is the fiery-eyed bluesman of the apocalypse, genetically modified and riff-fucking-crazy.

Clutch: wholly, unapologetically masculine and all the more seductive for their complete lack of irony. Grrr.

Joe Stannard

## The Red Krayola

## Coconut Hotel

## Corrected Slogans

## Kangaroo?

## Amor And Language (Drag City)

The Red Krayola's music is the largest question mark in the firmament. Devoted listeners learn to relish that brief moment of clarity when the question is answered, because it invariably leads to a set of new

and puzzling concerns, that are as prickly and confusing as leader Mayo Thompson's critical aesthetic.

*Coconut Hotel* is the Krayola's most conceptual pass – their unreleased second album, it is pure form, the content designated by whatever pleasure you can gather from 36 'one second pieces'. But there's an internal logic to the album; if it sounds confusing, you're just not listening hard enough.

*Corrected Slogans* and *Kangaroo?* come from the group's mid-period work with the heady, theory-dense Art And Language collective. *Corrected Slogans* forced oblique and unwieldy lyrical conceits into equally thorny song structures. *Kangaroo?* saw Thompson collaborating with the Rough Trade post-punk milieu on one of his strongest albums, the politics affixed to pop songs (of sorts) crammed with left-handed signals. By the Nineties, Thompson was working with the Chicago/Drug City cabal: *Amor And Language* is one of their defining sets, full of non-pro pop that in retrospect feels a whole lot more prescient than one would imagine. Listen to this – and hear Tori Kudo weep tears of joy.

Jon Dale

## Chris Smither

## Honeysuckle Dog (Forever Heavenly)

I'm singing! I don't even know the song! I've got headphones on! It probably sounds terrible to the poor man in bed upstairs!

Never mind! Blue skies, and all that, bottle of Jack in hand, guitar slung over my shoulder heading down south to do whatever one does when one feels compelled to head down south. There's a sweet smell of Tim Buckley in the air and screw me for never realising how good an album is until I put the headphones on.

Chris Smither? Nope, me neither.

And OK, half these songs aren't his own... but look at Elvis, eh? And we travelled to Memphis just to swim in the heart-shaped swimming pool, didn't we? Huh? So trust me. This guy's got something.

There's something compelling about 'lost' albums: like Chris Bell's *I Am The Cosmos*, there's a relaxed elegance about *Honeysuckle Dog*: a gentle knowing; the confident charm. Like an old man sat on his porch, rocking gently in his chair, happy with his life's work. Hallelujah.

Hayley Avron

## Smog

## Forgotten Foundation

## Sewn To The Sky (Drag City)

"I was a teenage smog..." he would sing, years later – the key line in his best song – "...sewn to the sky."

And we would listen and think, Yes. Yes you were. And so am I. But our bedrooms probably didn't reek of clamouring rusted metal guitar and disembodied mantras, fermenting angrily among the cardboard-hard greyed gym

socks and permanently etching a frown in the musty atmosphere.

From 1990, *Sewn To The Sky* and *Forgotten Foundation* are the first Smog albums. They're unlistenable to anyone who considers simply the way Smog sounds these days to be at least 60 per cent of his charm. Embedded in their random muck, though are the assorted musical and vocal tics that Bill Callahan would later develop into beautiful, cast iron songs-as-armor. It's fascinating, if difficult, to hear in these scrapbooks the Smog we love shattered to fragments, and left for us to pick about the rubble. Still, Callahan has never sounded more at home than here, snug in this smog of static and tape hiss.

David McNamee

## Sonic Youth

## Goo (Geffen)

Turns out we lost our virginity to a prostitute. Following an unholy mix of Sixties beat groups and death metal, Sonic Youth's *Goo* was the first 'proper' indie record we bought. We were accidentally exposed to the video for 'Kool Thing' on a new Israeli TV channel desperate to fill broadcast time with whatever it could lay its hands on, and that was it – Sonic Youth were officially the coolest band ever – black cat, tin foil Chuck D and Kim Gordon dancing to the squeakiest of guitar feedbacks; a whole new meaning to Phil Spector's Wall Of Sound idea.

Listening to the demos included with this reissue, though, it becomes clear that *Go* was originally far more in keeping with the sublime smears of earlier Sonic Youth records and that the gussied up sound we fell for was the same one that would ultimately kill the scene it begat, Butch Vig taking his first shot at the Nirvanaesque noise that would become the soundtrack of suburban skater wannabes throughout the Nineties.

Mainstream whore or pop genius, *Go* remains as beautiful today as it is controversial among fans. We are all prostitutes anyway, and we may as well enjoy the ride.

**Pil and Galia Kollektiv**

### The Stooges

**The Stooges (Deluxe Edition)**

**Funhouse (Deluxe Edition) (Rhino)**

The distance between *The Stooges* and *Funhouse* is that between the first night you stayed out late, and the realisation you stay out late every night, but can't remember why. It's a shorter distance than you might think.

*The Stooges* is a restless, snotty teenager of an album, pouting that there ain't "nothin' to do". When Iggy sings 'No Fun', he's actually calling for More Fun; when he sings 'Not Right', it's a leery declaration that that which feels Not Right often feels Very Alright. Accordingly, *The Stooges* is a great rock 'n' roll album.

*Funhouse's* first side is party-rock in excelsis, but the flip switches the game. The riffs clang with the same glummy, metallic fury, but they get stuck in endless downer grooves, so heavy and sustained they leave welts, drowned out by hellish sax and Iggy's lying howl of "I feel alright". He's imprisoned in the priapic rutfuck of the Funhouse, telling his girl he loves her while his cock's in another's mouth, feeling sick about not feeling sick about that. He's pretty fucking *not* "alright"; grounded again, but this time stuck in very neon honey-trap he once dreamt mostly of. The irony is not lost on Iggy. Accordingly, *Funhouse* is the greatest rock 'n' roll record of all time, articulating all the mercurial joy and self-destructive fury of the art form.

**Stevie Chick**

### Tom Verlaine

**Warm And Cool (Thrill Jockey)**

Let's crack out the dog-eared French poetry editions and get down to an evening of instrumental Spanish-tinged, surf wrangled guitar music. It may be what The Shadows would have sounded like pumped full of existentialism and made over as louche New York hipsters.

It sure ain't Television, so it's appropriate that what unravels over the record would be more at home in a Tijuana drive-in. 'Sleepwalkin' at least reveals itself to be the source for Primal Scream's elongated contribution to *Trainspotting*, whereas 'Please Keep Going' simply slips in and out of consciousness. The spirit of UFOs, ramrods and forgotten desert service stations elsewhere dominate the track titles, giving voice to unspoken connections hinted at in the music. Tom allows us our conspiracies and youthful exuberance, suggesting we take our idealism and let a little fear bleed through it.

**Stewart Gardiner**

## The True Report

Words: **Everett True**

Illustration: **Andrew Clare**



Isn't it time  
to move on?

"The problem with **The Residents** is that like most avant-garde projects, their vision has been realised in ways more horrific than they could possibly have imagined," write Pil and Galia Kollektiv. "Listening to these late night infomercials on 1976's *Third Reich 'N' Roll* (Mute) that string together medleys of crap ballads and crazy frogs, you can't help thinking that we are already living in a third reich 'n' roll, a psychotic dictatorship of bad taste and commerce. Predating Richard X and Negativland, this two-track masterpiece of mashed-up Fifties and Sixties classics with a little moustache thrown in the mix eloquently put what many early punk bands were starting to feel: that America may have won the war, but the liberal democracy it presented as an opposition to fascist dictatorship was hardly standing up to the land of the free standards it had set itself. 'Swastikas On Parade' and 'Hitler Was A Vegetarian' may sound almost pleasant to contemporary ears, but their message has lost none of its edge."

*Third Reich 'N' Roll* was only about the third record I heard: a deliciously warped, skewed and free distillation of the previous 30 years of rock culture boiled down to approximately 36 minutes of music – kind of like my own bad Beatles piano renditions, if only I'd been post-modern enough to realise it. Floating voices dipped in and out of the mix, spooky instruments played spooky music. There were crazy rhythms, nursery rhyme chants... and controversy. I was hooked – lock, stock, the fucking lot! We formed a band, based around The Residents' experimental sound, called Blowjob. My life never recovered.

Certainly it wasn't helped by my fondness for bad punk. Well I recall being

accosted by a skinhead in Brentwood High St, me in my poncey school uniform. He wanted to congratulate me on buying the new Sham single because, you see, if the kids are united then they'll never be... Oh, you got it. Sanctuary have rather unnecessarily reissued the first five **Sham 69** albums as a box set, *The Albums* – worth the price of admission alone for 1979's naively brilliant 'concept' album based around the day in a life of a kid, but not for most of the rest – simplistic two-chord sloganeering that gives simplistic two-chord sloganeering a bad name. "So what's it all about?" sneers our Jim on the opening track to *Hersham Boys* (also 1979). "It's money, work it out."

Neither did my life improve through my fondness for abrasive post-punk, or my nascent scorn for any band perceived to have 'sold out'. To this day, I have never forgiven **Gang Of Four** for cleaning up the sound of their first two singles for their debut LP *Entertainment!* (1979). The fact that the new Virgin retrospective *Return The Gift* sees the band re-recording their own early songs – run out of inspiration, have we? – doesn't decrease my distaste. A second remix CD increases the sense of inertia: bands like **Y.Y.Y.**, **Ladytron** and **The Rakes** proving their fidelity to a diseased sound. Isn't it time to move on?

Two reissues and one new album from the ever-prolific Billy Childish this month, all on Damaged Goods: the three-chord Kinksian *Nothing Can Stop These Men* (1983) and slightly rawer *In Germany* (also 1983), both by **The Milkshakes** – and the bluesy, primitive *Heaven's Journey* from **Wild Billy Childish & The Chatham Singers**. All rock, don't ever doubt it. "I do not like whitewall galleries, large rock venues or

offstage mixing," Childish writes. "I do not read newspapers or go to music concerts." How can you not admire him?

On the same label comes a new **Television Personalities** collection, *And They All Lived Happily Ever After*. Even by notoriously self-hating singer Dan Treacy's standards, this is a testing collection to sift through – an evocative live rendition of 'Smashing Time' is more than offset by the dire joke song 'Another Rainy Day In Manchester' – but there are moments of tenderness and beauty among the warped tape recordings and bad cover versions. 'Give Me The Gun' is particularly disturbing.

Finally, three recent albums get the reissue treatment – **The Go!** **Team's** debut *Thunder, Lightning, Strike* (Memphis Industries, 2004), **Dan Sartain's** 2004 compilation *Vs The Serpientes* (Swami/One Little Indian) and **Electrelane's** stunning 2002 debut *Rock It To The Moon* (Too Pure). Guess which record I wrote the following about?

1) Guitars are enveloping with a certain passion. The all-enveloping Farfisa organ is struck with monotonous regularity. Off-mic noises – the odd shard of feedback, disembodied voices, the occasional fretboard run – help increase the feeling of unease.

2) He's 21, and looks perfect framed in grainy black and white, singing greasy laments about urban decay and no-good girls, driving down some dusty road in his '72 Ford station wagon. He's 21 and so far ahead of his retro-reverential peers it's terrifying. No, not terrifying. Exhilarating.

3) Their music leaves me struggling for words to describe its riot of colour and energy – as Sonny put it, "Like a Northern Soul neon colour block party with extreme horns and string bombast."

# media

## typical girls Words: Miss AMP

Industry blokes, DJ birds, charity shop clothes and fake Gucci jewellery: **Sophie Woolley** writes about young women because they are funny



*In the beginning I told my DJ boyfriend Dave: "If you piss me about, I'll fuck all your mates". But 'industry' blokes don't always understand what I mean by this. Because a nasty kind of niceness has corrupted us all and DJs forget that the bird can only swallow so much shit before she starts regurgitating, giving as good as she gets...*

Ah, DJ bird. She's got inner fortitude. If her DJ boyfriend Dave won't cancel a gig in Birmingham on Valentine's Day to be with her then she'll just go through his address book and find some French DJ mate of his instead. She'll go and visit the French DJ and he'll take her out and they'll end up in a seedy little hotel doing lines off the crumbling window-ledge while he fucks her up the arse. She'll do a sick out the window at the same time, but that's OK because a French sausage dog will eat it. DJ Bird may be trashy, grubby and brutal, but she's also high-spirited and resourceful. My kind of lady!

Writer and performer Sophie Woolley is the person behind the persona. She mainly writes about young women and how they go about life, because she thinks they're funny. She first published her satirical monologues in the style mag *SleazeNation* and east London fanzine *Shoreditch Twat*, short magazine pieces that painted pictures of the kind of girls you might see around London: falling over on the dancefloor at Mother, heads tilted to the side as though dragged down by the weight of their asymmetric mullets, wearing Eighties charity shop clothes and fake designer jewellery, trying to pull T-shirt designers (Shoreditch royalty) in the Bricklayers Arms, dodging the advances of drunken coked-up city boys on a night out. They were painfully accurate, very amusing and sometimes a little bit sad.

### DJ Bird does a sick out of the window and a sausage dog eats it

Woolley's hipster vignettes have now developed into short stories (she's been published in *New Writing 12* (Picador) and several journals), plays and performances. She performs in galleries, at parties and at nightclubs, second-hand dresses and sometimes puts feathers in her hair; and most everyone knows feathers are just about the glamorous thing there is. When she performs she'll do the voice of the character narrating the story, whether it's a starfuckery Manc indie boy, Jennifer Herrema on Quaaludes, the chavvy, overexcitable teenagers of Stinkyman, or the stropky glottal stops of the ubiquitous DJ Bird.

Woolley's work has been hard to get hold of in the past – magazines end up in the trash, fanzines become beer mats, and you might not find out about a nightclub performance till it's too late – but she's currently writing a full-length play for the Soho Theatre, and you should be able to check out her funny, sharp monologues at her one-woman UK tour next year.

[www.sophiewoolley.com](http://www.sophiewoolley.com) or [www.renaissanceone.com](http://www.renaissanceone.com)

### From 'Epic Slinky', a short story by Sophie Woolley

#### King's Cross

I was beautiful. I was slinky. In high, high Jimmy Choo boots. I had a ponytail and everything. It was Saturday. I went to the disco.

The promoter said hello to me and we climbed the stairs. He was my friend. He was a kind man.

My heels clopped up the winding stone staircase and my hamstrings tugged.

I was slinky. My thighs were glistening trunks, my knees were snow-capped volcanoes, my smooth shins encased in spike boot heels, poised step by step as if to puncture chests, and my dusty soles to crush faces.

The promoter was out of breath. "I'm going to die on these stairs one of these days."

"That's a good idea," I said.

"Thanks," he said and meant it. He liked good ideas.

I met my friend at the bar. She hated her boyfriend. He was in the toilets. He was a DJ, but she wished he was in a band. The promoter bought us drinks and we got drunk.

There was a band on downstairs. They were girls. They were called Emergency Girls. They were dressed in fake Gucci jewellery and charity shop clothes circa 1985. The promoter managed them.

The singer was called Police, the guitarist was called Nurse, bass was Fire and the drummer – who was so drunk she wet herself during the second song – was called AA.

The song was raw, but sort of catchy. Police introduced it saying:

"This one's for all the accidental fathers in the house. You can run, but you can't hide. The CSA will find you, and I will be waiting, for the weekend."

And then she screamed. And sang the song.

*From 'Epic Slinky', published in New Writing 12 (Picador)*

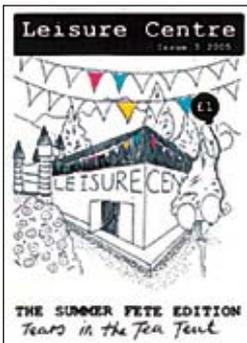
## fanzine frenzy

Summer fêtes, masturbation diaries and Byron's hats: the new crop of independent publications shows there's life beyond Borders

### Leisure Centre 3: summer fete edition

[poolside@leisurecentre.org.uk](mailto:poolside@leisurecentre.org.uk)

Is it just me or is the humble village fete just the *demier cri* right now? I don't seem to be able to walk down the street without being invited to another bunting-bedecked do, where the guests arrive wielding jars of jam instead of cheap red splosh and keep as tight a grip on their raffle tickets as they once did on their wraps.



This makes *Leisure Centre 3* especially timely, with its exploration of nu-skool face-painting templates: Christina Aguilera, kabuki and Darryl Hannah in *Blade Runner* are the big hitters in the *Leisure Centre* camp. Also rosette-worthy are some adorable pictures of dogs in fancy dress, and a brilliant exposé of Japanese fete games.

**Alice Rooney**

### Full Moon Empty Sports Bag

£20/year subscription, free bi-monthly copies round London, [www.fullmoonemptysportsbag.com](http://www.fullmoonemptysportsbag.com)

'SHORTS? Short stories? Shorts don't sell!' So scoffs a character in a *Full Moon Empty Sports Bag* short story. We read it, and smile in collusion.

Because these are shorts. These are poems. These are masturbation diaries and odes to Byron's hats. These are bulletpointed, timestamped, patchworked tales that reject plot, shit all over convention, take chainsaws to chronology. These are impassioned anti-pop culture polemics that segue into cake recipes. These are full-page A5 colour photographs of glorious summer countrysides juxtaposed with exquisitely grim captions describing models catfighting in vodka bars.

And these strange stretches widening our faces? These are smiles. And these curious spasms our heads are making? Approving nods. Even the occasional Everything But The Girl lyric or a piss-streak of poetry by a certain Peter Doherty fails to blunt our glee. Because in a time of shorts-don't-sell, of predictable shortlists and televisual book clubs, of publishers that value profit over talent, such original independent writing as this has never been so essential.

**Andrew Johnston**



### Stellar

[editoratstellar@hotmail.com](mailto:editoratstellar@hotmail.com)

*Stellar* takes the fanzine-as-art-object route. Made in a quarterly A4 photocopied edition of 300, issue 16 offers an account of the career of video art siblings Jane and Louise Wilson, told in fragments of

drawing, garbled snippets of art theory, photocopied reviews and invites to the sisters' shows. It's jumbled and incoherent, and it's difficult to tell if the whole thing is a sarcastic take on the Wilsons' work, or just a self-conscious school project/potted history cut-up. But I like things that resist immediate interpretation.

**John Brainlove**

Want to see your publication reviewed here? Email [amp@planbmag.com](mailto:amp@planbmag.com)



## binge reading

Words: **Miss AMP**

Illustration: **Richard Amyson**

### Hate your local bookstore? Build your own!

Randie thought the women's studies section of her local bookstore sucked, so she decided to open her own bookshop on the web. FeedYourHeadBooks.com now sells everything a word-hungry third-waver might need, from books on obscure feminist theory and histories of clandestine illegal abortion services to graphic novels by chicks and cuddly skull and crossbones tampon cases.

#### starting up

"The first thing I did was to see if I could actually get places to sell me books at wholesale costs, then my friend and I designed the website, and that's it, really! Feed Your Head operates more like a zine distro than a business because it's definitely run by the rules of the underground. I only work with distributors and suppliers who don't require things like references and a business ID number. I keep at least one copy of everything that's for sale on the website on hand at all times, but that may be all I have: one copy."

#### pro-choice

"I aim to provide as wide a selection of books as possible. Potential customers are at all different points in their feminist studies: some may be

just beginning to investigate feminism, while others may have specific types of feminism that they're interested in."

#### your history

"I always try to include books that record history because so much of what's currently going on is informed by the past. For example, I sell a zine about Jane (a clandestine abortion service operating out of Chicago in the Sixties) and a Jane poster, because those of us who have come of age during a time when abortion was always legal may have no idea what a risk there is of abortion becoming illegal. With Bush in office, this is a possibility, so it's important to be educated that it wasn't always this way, and that we need to fight for our rights."

#### citizen's advice

"My advice for a fledgling indie bookstore or company would just be to go for it. Find a way to make it happen, however small-scale. I've always wanted to open a feminist bookstore, and I envision Feed Your Head morphing into a bricks and mortar structure in the future. With FeedYourHeadBooks.com, I'm one step closer to making it happen."

[www.feedyourheadbooks.com](http://www.feedyourheadbooks.com)



### suck it and see

Words: **SF Said**

## Mike Mills talks drugs, depression and digit-fixation in his debut feature *Thumbsucker*

"What I'm really interested in," says Mike Mills, "is people who feel fucked up, people who feel emotionally disenfranchised."

Aha. So when do you stop feeling like a fuck-up? What does it take to become a proper grown-up? Me, I've been married and divorced, I've published two books and more articles than I can count. Yet there's a part of me that still feels like an eight year

old, with a head full of children's stories and impossible dreams. Then there's another part that's forever 15, a part that knows the world is utterly wrong. That part seeks transformation and transcendence in sex, drugs & rock'n'roll; gets glimpses sometimes; but doesn't find the answer in any of them.

### 'Adolescence is an incubator for all your adult behaviour'

old, with a head full of children's stories and impossible dreams. Then there's another part that's forever 15, a part that knows the world is utterly wrong. That part seeks transformation and transcendence in sex, drugs & rock'n'roll; gets glimpses sometimes; but doesn't find the answer in any of them.

Maybe that's why I like Mills' film *Thumbsucker*: because it speaks to all these different parts of me. It's a bittersweet coming of age story, poised between deadpan humour and deep melancholia. At its heart is a teenage boy called Justin (Lou Pucci). He's gawky and awkward, not helped by parents with their own hang-ups and neuroses (Tilda Swinton and Vincent d'Onofrio). On the sly, he still sucks his thumb for comfort. His orthodontist (Keanu Reeves, in a brilliant self-parody of his stoner dude persona) decides to hypnotise him out of the habit, but once he's quit thumbsucking, Justin becomes addicted to anything he can get: Ritalin, debating, dope-smoking, blindfold kissing. And yet none of it really works.

As a portrait of adolescence, it's as sharp and true as anything I've seen lately. Perhaps that's because it's based on actual experience, in the form of Walter Kirn's autobiographical novel. "It just smelled real," says Mills. "From reading the book, I felt, 'This is too interesting and quirky, it must have happened'. And I was attracted to it because I think adolescence is an incubator for

all your adult behaviour. High school is the construction site for the rest of the your life. The walls aren't totally up yet, so you can see where the wiring and the plumbing is – it's exposed."

Lou Pucci plays Justin with all the naked vulnerability and intensity of a young Johnny Depp, and he's won acting prizes at Sundance and Berlin. But really, it's the adults around him that make this film stand out: each of them as uncertain and confused as he is, and trying desperately to look like they're in control. "We're just scared little animals," one of them observes; and it's this wider perspective that makes *Thumbsucker* something more than an indie teen movie.

"To me, it isn't just about this teenager's coming of age," says Mills. "It's also a coming of age for the 40-year-olds. There's this idea that they're not done, that adulthood isn't about being finished. Both Tilda and Vincent said to me independently, in character, 'How can I be the adult, the parent, when I feel like I'm still 18, and my 18 year old isn't done?' I find that very true; I think it's how we live our lives."

*Thumbsucker* is Mills's first feature. Until now, he's been best known for the music videos and artwork he's created for people like Air, Yoko Ono, Sonic Youth. Music is a huge part of this film's distinctive tone; with songs by Elliott Smith and The Polyphonic Spree, it's at once fragile and uplifting, dreamy and hyper-real.

"Originally Elliott was going to do the whole thing," says Mills. "I was beside myself that he wanted to work on the film, because he's one of my heroes. So he started it – but then he died, you know? So we were stuck without anybody and pretty depressed. Then I saw a Polyphonic Spree show, and I was not in a happy state, but it really just vibrated the sadness out of me, and I thought, 'This is what I want people to feel like when they walk through the door of *Thumbsucker*.'"

Next up, Mills is making documentaries. "I'm doing one about anti-depressants in Japan. The whole idea of depression really didn't exist in Japan, until American pharmaceutical companies introduced the idea – and the so-called cure. They did this advertising campaign called 'Does Your Soul Have A Cold?' and it caught on like wildfire. To me, pharmacology is more dangerous than Bush, and more complicated than corporate globalisation. I'm sort of Luddite myself, I'm almost Christian Scientist about it, but I have friends on anti-depressants who speak very positively of it."

There's a coherent project taking shape here. And somehow, I can't help but find this vision of a world populated by scared little animals strangely hopeful. Maybe I'll always feel like a fuck-up – but then maybe that's what being a grown-up is all about.



### all that heaven allows

Words: Nick Bradshaw

## Olympian visions of a Mexican morass in Carlos Reygadas's metaphysical monument *Battle In Heaven*

"There is something interesting in pornography in the way that bodies physically react – the way the bloke's skin moves, and the fat bounces backwards and forwards," says Carlos Reygadas. "I like to see that."

He also appreciates the broader curves of a fine Rubens, and suggests that detractors of the nakedness in his films are, "Hypocrites with complexes, who probably hate themselves. Flesh is beautiful," he says.

As voluble as they come, Reygadas seems to have taken a large bite of the apple, and like the eagle who sits on his national Mexican flag clutching a serpent in its talons – one of many

ethereal, the film marks another notch on the bedpost of sexually brazen art cinema, in which the body is levered, depending on your point of view, either as a map of the soul and its wanderings, or as a magnet for controversy.

"What I'm trying to do is concentrate on the essential," Reygadas testifies. "That is, to see the person first, and try to get some knowledge out of him directly, like a tree you observe with great care and concentration. If you watch a tree you can learn something from it."

There's certainly something arboreal about the paunchy,

### 'If you watch a tree you can learn something from it'

potent images in his new film – he surveys the world beady-eyed and unbedeviled. *Japón*, his debut, tracked a lugubrious suicide-case through some sort of assuagement in the arms of a kindly crone in a desert-canyon hamlet, before dismantling its fourth wall and turning its cast on its camera. *Battle In Heaven* portrays a Mexico City chauffeur, Marcos, whose spirit is at a crossroads. He and his wife have kidnapped a child that has died on their hands, a crime that sends him reeling out of the brute city, away from a cold coupling with his boss's libertine daughter, on a mystical, visceral, and terminal pilgrimage of reckoning.

Reygadas posits this through epic sculpted shots, imbued with the textures of bodies and landscape, music, space and time. Fleshy and

impassive Marcos – played by non-pro actor Marcos Hernandez, a chauffeur who worked for Reygadas' father, in another instance of the film's conflagration of art and life.

"Physically, I subject the film to reality, but in other respects it's in a realm above," the director muses. "I believe in physical theories of the world, but I still think there's an energy in every atom. Out of realism comes magic."

"This is why I think the film is full of hope," he reflects. "In so many films, for example, a Coca-Cola advert, you see people laughing and partying – this superficial optimism, but no communication below. Then I feel really depressed. In my film, you feel horrid things on the surface, but always this powerful energy beneath."



### back from the dead

Words: Mark Pilkington

## George A Romero's zombie army returns in *Land Of The Dead*

Edmonton, London, February 2005. Police and firefighters are called in as 7,000 bargain hunters storm a new Ikea megastore on its opening night. Hundreds suffer minor injuries in the melee, five are hospitalised. Security guards described being "under siege" and that some people "behaved like animals".

The message of Romero's zombie films has never been obscure: the dead are us and we are them. If we give in to our mechanised impulses – eat, want, shag and buy – at the expense of our empathy towards the living world around us, then we may as well be dead.

His portrayal of the zombies, our machine selves, evolves with each film. In *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968), the zombies could be seen to

mind the lurching gaits, flapping jawbones and the odd missing eyeball. Suddenly all hell breaks loose as the living arrive; a motorised Viking raiding party who maim, steal, kill – and clearly enjoy it. Zombie, we understand, is the new human, and the living exist more like animals.

Stocked with supplies, the raiders return to their fortress city, a ring of slums at the centre of which sits Fiddler's Green, a luxury skyscraper cum shopping mall, lorded over by a restrained Dennis Hopper playing Donald Trump crossbred with George W Bush.

The metaphor is brash, but it rings true: Fiddler's Green is deadworld's rough-hewn pastiche of what passes, or passed, for civilised society in our world.

### Lurching gaits, flapping jawbones and the odd missing eyeball

represent conservative America. By *Dawn Of The Dead* (1978) they were American consumers, to be pitied rather than feared, until confronted *en masse*; by *Day Of The Dead* (1985), with its civilised, Pavlovian zombie soldier, "Bub", the dead were threatening to get organised.

Now, 20 years on, the land is theirs.

*Land Of The Dead* opens with a bleak but affectionate portrait of zombie Americana that is part Norman Rockwell, part Joe Coleman. Strolling couples in the park, a hollering Dixie band, a nostalgic Sixties diner and gas station. It's a cheerful enough scene, as long as you don't

As in Romero's previous zombie outings, this microcosm of living society is portrayed in its last stages of collapse; tensions bubble over into mutiny as the dead, now communicating and using weapons, draw ever nearer...

It may not resonate in the same way that *Night or Dawn* do – and, next to them, its 90 minutes feel short – but *Land Of The Dead* is a superior horror film. Romero revels in showing the new kids how it's done, sneaks in some genuinely disturbing moments and provides plenty of meat for you to chew on as you shamble back from the multiplex.

## film

filmmaker's dispatch:  
should know better

Words: Tom de Ville

Illustration: Nathan Fletcher

In the last 36 hours I've licked the face of a stranger, picked a fight with Soho street trash and gone swimming in the Trafalgar Square fountains. I've barely slept, I've barely eaten, I've barely stopped thinking about my next scene.

Screenwriting is a dangerous profession.

I often daydream about manufacturing one of those 'how-to' books on screenplay structure. The cover would cheerfully promise a handy-dandy step-by-step guide to writing your way to Hollywood fame and fortune (the

I was the antichrist  
of liggering

blurb quote would be by Akiva Goldsman). Inside, however, each chapter would painstakingly list the mind-numbing, hideous manias each and every screenwriter has bubbling under their skin at any one time. Without doubt, my absolute favourite is one I like to call The Method. A sharp little get-out clause to the stifling dictum, 'Write what you know', this is the voice at the back of my head that quietly murmurs 'If you don't know it, do it', at every given opportunity.

I first fell in love with it on a blurry trip to New York that kicked off with me throwing my credit card into the Hudson on the first night (booze-related incident). I survived the next week by swaggering into every book launch/record launch/club launch I could find and sucking up as much free bar

as was humanly possible. Fuelled by desperation, hunger and a sense of diminished responsibility, I said everything I wanted to say and did everything I wanted to do. I was the antichrist of liggering.

*Kill Your Darlings* – the movie adaptation – should be hitting theatres next year. In the film, I'm a vampire, literally living out my fantasy of snacking on media whoredom. The producers are pushing the BBFC to reinstate the X certificate for its release.

Since then The Method has pushed me into any number of unusual situations. I've attended séances and autopsies. I've found the place where pigeons go to die. I've ridden up a mountain on the outside of a cable car. The last one was an accident, but it'll come in handy if I ever get to write a Bond movie.

Sometimes I'm worried I'll go too far. Sometimes I'm worried that that little voice is really just latent schizophrenia, and at any moment I'm going to descend into the same miasma of porn and alienation that inspired Schrader to write *Taxi Driver*. (Actually, that would be a good thing, wouldn't it?)

Then I remember an anecdote that has always annoyed me. On the set of *Marathon Man*, during the dental torture sequence, Dustin Hoffman would get into character by running himself into a sweaty mess. Somewhat bored of waiting around for him, Sir Laurence Olivier leaned over and asked, "Dear boy, why don't you just try acting?"

Because it's less fun, Larry. It's less fun.

*Tom de Ville has recently finished writing Dark Young Things for George A Romero. He is currently working on The Quiet Ones, a ghost story with polar bears in it. This involves spending a lot of time at the zoo.*



**round-up** more autumn film highlights. From left: *The Beat That My Heart Skipped*, *Broken Flowers*, *Life Is Sweet*, *V For Vendetta*

**The Beat That My Heart Skipped**

Super-stylish remake of James Toback's classic *Fingers*, directed by Jacques Audiard (*Read My Lips*). Romain Duris plays a small-time thug who gets a chance at redemption in music – a performance that's up there with the young Keitel or De Niro.

**Black Orpheus**

Marcel Camus's still-singing 1959 classic, relocating the Orpheus myth to contemporary Rio in the midst of the Carnival's riot of festivity, death and renewal. Music by Antonio Carlos Jobim and Luis Bonfá.

**Broken Flowers / Bill Murray season**

Bill Murray does his thing in Jim Jarmusch's road movie about a fading Don Juan searching for his son. Meanwhile the NFT showcases a whole season of Murray, from *Ghostbusters* to *The Life Aquatic*.

**Factotum**

Norway's Bent Hamer brings the deadpan discernment of his *Kitchen Stories* to this adaptation of Charles Bukowski's down-and-slovenly novel, with Matt Damon as the writer's drinking, womanising alter-ego, 'Hank' Chinaski, and Lili Taylor, Marisa Tomei and Adrienne Shelley on the receiving end.

**4**

Attention-grabbing debut from Russia's young gun Ilya Khrzhanovsky, scripted by controversial writer Vladimir Sorokin. Full of bizarre imagery and alcohol-soaked ranting, it's absurd, surreal and banal in turn. Makes Moscow look like hell on earth.

**Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence**

Mamoru Oshii's psychedelic sci-fi noir is the cutting edge of Japanese animation, and the most visually stunning film of the year. We're

not sure about the plot's finer points, but it's got cyborg detectives, robot sex workers and weird philosophical debates. What more do you want?

**Mike Leigh season**

Mike Leigh films are sometimes bitter and twisted, often scaldingly funny, always worth watching. Here's a chance to see them all, from early TV work (*Nuts In May*, *Abigail's Party*), through mid-period masterpieces (*Life Is Sweet*, *Naked*), to mature prize-winners like *Secrets And Lies*.

**Raindance Film Festival/ Uncontainable season**

A deluge of music documentaries for October. As part of its annual preview of up-and-coming independent cinema, Independent film festival Raindance is showing *The Devil And Daniel Johnston*, *Billy Childish Is Dead*, and Don Letts' *Punk: Attitude*. Meanwhile, the ICA is screening movies about the

Minutemen, Vashti Bunyan and Klaus Nomi, as well as features on alt country, Detroit techno, and the Sheffield post-punk scene.

**V For Vendetta**

One for Guy Fawkes' Night. Alan Moore's Eighties graphic novel about a political terrorist at large in a police state seems disturbingly resonant today, so hopes are high for the film version, written by the Wachowski brothers, starring Hugo Weaving and Natalie Portman.

**William Eggleston In The Real World**

Michael Almereyda's documentary about the brilliant American photographer screens at the ICA in November, accompanied by Eggleston's extraordinary video feature, *Stranded In Canton*, and a season of films influenced by him, including *The Virgin Suicides* and *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*.



### Sounds Like Drawing

13.10.05-20.11.05 The Drawing Room, Tannery Arts, Brunswick Wharf, 55 Laburnum Street, London E2 8BD

If seeing is believing, then perhaps hearing is about doubt and the need to reorder, reorganise and reformulate the underpinnings of everyday experience. In a series of sonic art experiments, Sounds Like Drawing invites artists like Steve Roden and Kaffe Matthews to transform maps of London into hidden musical scores and bicycle route symphonies. The exhibition also offers the opportunity to revisit Tom Marioni's seminal "one minute sculpture", a coil sprung into the air for 60 seconds of aural and visual effect. The whoosh of metal slicing through air, which resonated for that short period of time in 1969, continues to resonate strongly in the live, conceptual sculpture genre which it helped to create.



### British Art Show 6

24.09.05-08.01.05 Baltic, South Shore Road, Gateshead NE8 3BA

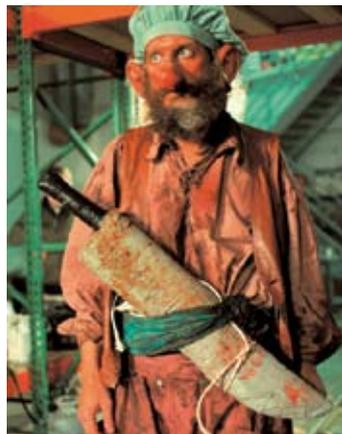
Featuring the cream of the crop, or rather the froth at the end of a warm bottle of Beck's – as 90 per cent of these artists have participated in the yearly Beck's Futures Award exhibition – the sixth British Art Show is underway. A selection of art from the first British art show of 1979 was recently shown at the Bloomberg space in London. Judging by the selection of artists being shown at the Baltic art centre, later to tour the rest of the country, the dry, formal work of that era has been discarded in favour of a more relaxed, post-YBA approach to appropriation, media hopping and an obsession with early Modernism. Quietly intelligent, funny and sometimes beautiful, this is art that doesn't need tabloid exposure, drunken antics and bovine bisection to engage and attract.



### Jake & Dinos Chapman

19.10.05-03.12.05 White Cube, 48 Hoxton Square, Shoreditch N1 6PB

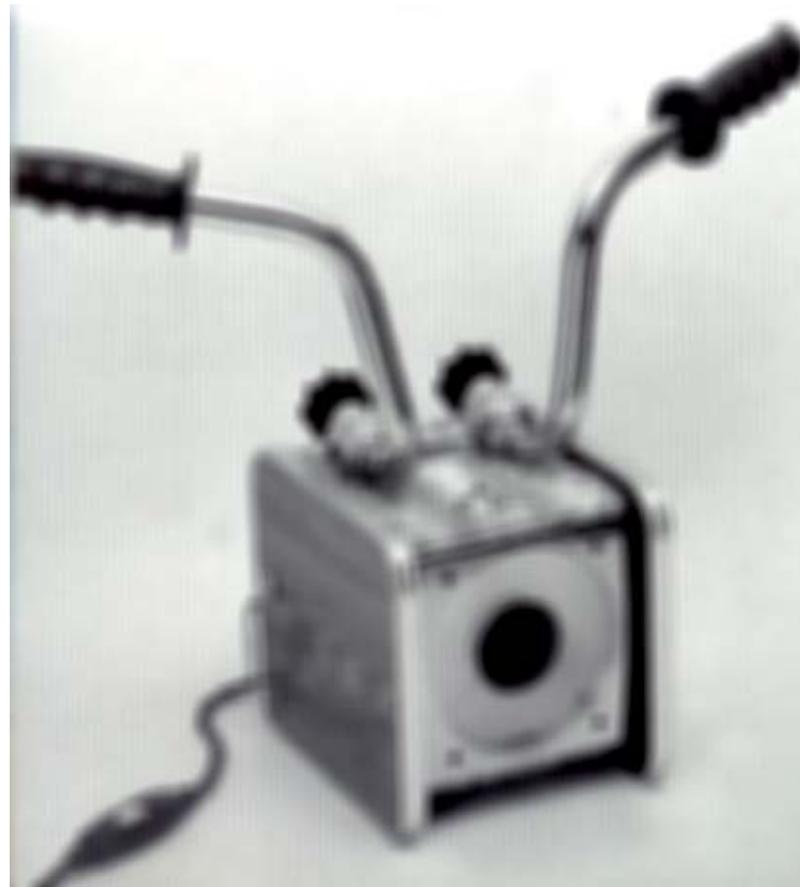
That even the Chapman brothers don't seem to know quite what they are doing for this show shouldn't be of concern, considering their previous show at White Cube consisted of a top secret anthropological research project that saw the iconography of McDonald's represented as the native ritual totem of our time. In the last decade, the Chapmans have graduated from *The Evening Standard's* favorite paedo-pornmongers to serious artists who get to be invited to curate music festivals and live in Islington. But fear not, Dinos is reportedly working on soundtracks for imaginary horror films in his spare time, while the brothers still claim that their only aim in creating art is to produce "moral panic". With such high standards and noble aims, the new show is bound to impress.



### Paul McCarthy: LaLa Land Parody Paradise

23.10.05-08.01.06 Whitechapel Gallery, 80-82 Whitechapel High Street, London, E1 7QX

Paul McCarthy's videos, in which the artist wears grotesque masks, moves about hysterically, sexually assaults random objects from popular American culture and generally oozes bodily fluids, are often seen as a clever critique of stereotypes of masculinity. But his insistence on presenting the artist as a kind of dirty mac-clad park pervert could also be seen as an attempt to reinforce a new kind of masculinity that feeds on the rage that lie beneath popular culture. Alongside a very comprehensive retrospective of works from the last four decades at the Whitechapel gallery, McCarthy will exhibit a new offsite installation that takes its inspiration from the *Pirates Of The Caribbean* ride at Disneyland. Blood, guts and swashbuckling ahoy.



### gorgeousness!

Words: Pil and Galia Kollektiv

A gorgeous dinosaur, a dangerous gorgon – the evocative name of Japanese art/noise duo Gorgerous immediately conjures a mega-menacing manga monster, ready to take over the world using Tokyo as its ground zero and bad English as primary mode of communication. Looking at Munetaro Ujino and Hiroyuki Matsukage's work, this impression doesn't seem far off the mark. Whether feeding the sound of broken glass through sky-high amps or wielding their super-phallic love arm instruments, photographing cute Harajuku girls or commemorating their inventive linguistic borrowings in calligraphic neon

## In Japan, art and pop coexist at an equal level

pop art sculptures, Gorgerous are as loud, brash and toxic as an oversized radioactive lizard.

Japan's war traumas and complex relationship with the west seems ever present in their work, but there is more to it than bad emulation. "The new generation in Japan do not want to be Western people," explains Ujino. "However, all Japanese artists must face the dilemma of one culture being within another at the start. In the past, the Japanese fascination with extreme techno-prosthetics might have been a response to the trauma of the war and the rapid modernisation of Japan, but in the future, it may change."

Hal Foster once said that the battle over cultural hegemony between postmodern art and more traditional forms simply hides the fact that the real culture of our time is TV commercials.

"In Japan, art and pop coexist at an equal level, because there is no hierarchy. In a museum, though it is spacious and pleasant, it is not good for sound. In a nightclub I feel good with a fat and punchy sound, although I am always complaining about the dirty and dark environment. Then again, it is not possible to tell about essences of things if you are not on the site. In the same way, equipment becomes genuine when it is actually used on the site. If you plug in your 'hot machine' to a power amplifier and turn it on at full volume, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING."

By hot machine, of course, Ujino means one of his bike/axe hybrids, an instrument that expresses the speed, sex, freedom and death implied by the guitar in ways JG Ballard and Marinetti would drool just thinking about. Shouldn't all guitars be replaced by love arms?

"Every tool has a proper function, decoration and correct handling instructions. The Love Arm boosts each element to the maximum level, based on the electric guitar which is the best cultural invention in the USA in the 20th Century. It is the only instrument which is allowed to be treated emotionally."

dvd



### shiny, cap'n

Words: Sophie Mayer

## How I lost my mind and joined the crew of *Firefly*

Wave intercepted by Alliance cruiser Magellan from *Firefly* transport *Serenity*.

First voice heard is that of Captain Malcolm Reynolds, Independence fighter in the war against the Alliance. Now a petty thief.

Known aliases: Captain Tightpants.

Second voice is unknown.

"So, what makes you think you'd be an asset to my crew? What's your story?"

"Violence and crime on the fringes of space."

"Should fit right in. We travel a lot – how're your language skills?"

"I enjoy witty repartee during gunfights and can swear proficiently in Mandarin."

"How do you feel about killing folks?"

"Much the same as they feel about killing me."

"How about killing folks – for example, me – when offered a large sum of money?"

"Wouldn't do that to you, captain."

"I'd take that as a kindness. Can you take orders from a woman?"

"Didn't notice you'd become a woman, sir."

"This here's my first mate, Zoë, been by my side since the war. She's in charge when I get kidnapped or, say, shot for a large sum of money. Would you back her up?"

"If her plans involve shiny special effects, daring stunts and witty repartee, I'm in."

"Well, then. You, new recruit, you are not, by any chance, an Alliance mole, an old army buddy pretending to be dead, or a demented, but beautiful, confidence trickster?"

"No, sir."

"Good, because we've taken those on board. Never works out pretty. Also, you're not a psychic assassin?"

"No."

"Or pretending to be a preacher?"

"Again with the no."

"The preacher's pretending, cap'n?"

"Sorry Zoë, that must have been in the half of the season after we got canned by Fox."

"We were canned, cap'n?"

"Those [swearing in Mandarin] at Fox humped us good just when things were heating up with the psychic assassin."

"But the ship's still flying, right? You got a second chance?"

"Just like in all good stories. Took some finagling, but we found a job. Change was required – TV to DVD to comix to film, but this boat's skyworthy yet."

"That's 'cos you have a genius mechanic who's also very pretty. Right, cap'n?"

"Right, young Kaylee. Now, back to the engine room and fire her up. We've got a movie premiere to catch and I for one want to see what happens next. Are you with us for the ride, new recruit?"

"Shiny, cap'n. I'm in."

"Take us out of the world, Wash. Everyone's on board."

## 'Television is feminine and movies are masculine'

Episodes 1-13 of *Joss Whedon's Firefly* available on DVD from Fox. *Serenity* comics (three part series) available from Dark Horse. Feature film of *Serenity* released this month



## welcome to the whedonverse

Words: SF Said

## A conversation with Joss Whedon

With *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, Joss Whedon has made iconic TV and DVDs. Now with *Serenity*, based on his sci-fi western series *Firefly*, he's directed his first feature film. We caught up with him at the premiere.

### What's the difference between films and TV?

"I've recently come upon a theory that television is feminine and movies are masculine. Because television likes to examine something from all angles and talk about it for a long time. Movies just want to get to the point – they want to get their jollies off, and then fall asleep. Girl fighting vampires: that's a movie. High school as a horror movie: that's a series."

### Your TV shows are brilliant at those long-term story arcs.

"I look back on the shows that I loved, and they were continuing stories – *My So-Called Life*, *Twin Peaks*, *Hill Street Blues*. It was hugely influential, to watch how people would change. And that's something TV can do – but the problem is, most TV is re-set TV. I eventually couldn't watch *The X-Files*, because it's like, 'Scully, you're retarded! How many times do you have to do this before you figure it out?' The experience that changes people can drive viewers away from a show – networks don't want it; they want every episode to be flash-bang-here-we-go – but it's the only thing that really interests me."

### What's your writing process?

"I am a plotter. I am an absolute outline freak. I make charts and graphs, with colours: where is it scary, where is it funny? What do we know, what does the character know, when do they intersect? When I'm breaking a story for a TV show, the writer does not go off and write until every single scene and every single important moment is on the board."

### When did you figure out what you were doing?

"When I was writing *Alien: Resurrection*. There's a moment in the movie that I look at now and see the germ of everything I've tried to do in my career. It's the moment when Winona Ryder, who is such a porcelain beauty, looks at herself and says, 'Look at me, I'm disgusting.' And *Buffy* came right after that."



### Crime Story

**Dir Michael Mann (USA, 1986)**

Produced by Michael Mann (*Heat*, *Collateral*), *Crime Story* is 21 episodes of moves, scores and takedowns, recounting the unending struggle of cops versus robbers in Chicago and Las Vegas. At this distance it's overlaid with two coats of nostalgia, first for its Sixties setting, second for the Eighties version of same: the show has a feel almost as distinctive and iconic as Mann's earlier (and bigger) hit, *Miami Vice*. If the latter tended towards short story arcs, *Crime Story*, as David Thomson has it, "A true American epic", building from episode to episode in a manner not unlike *The Sopranos*. Like that programme, *Crime Story* has time for what would in movie terms be digressions, most importantly racial politics in the era of Martin Luther King. Mann fans will find in it a compendium of obsessions that recur throughout his films.

Henry K Miller



embittered and penniless writer Dan Ashcroft, series anchor and Barley's would-be nemesis, could be the 'real' Brooker inserted into his own fiction, stranded between Hoxton cool and Fleet Street money, his righteous-seeming ire revealed as hypocritical resentment.

Among the pleasures on offer are the ludicrous patois the denizens of Nosegate converse in ("technically a Polanski", "awesome fuckin' Welles"), and supporting characters like Jonatton Yeah?, the most sarcastic magazine editor that ever lived.

Made for DVD, *Nathan Barley* is all about the details – the soundtrack, a veritable mixtape of hipster standards, is spot-on. Series two NOW.

[www.killacommunications.com](http://www.killacommunications.com)

Henry K Miller



### Julia Vorontsova: Our Garden Circle

**Abaton Book Company (USA, 2005)**

Listening to folk songs sung in a foreign language is all about context. I decided this face-down on a marble floor in Barcelona, as Finnish folk lovely Islaja warbled over a shy guitar. A sardonic friend whispered, "Would we still like her if we knew what she was singing about?" Those words haunted me as I watched Russian-born, NYC-relocated singer Julia Vorontsova, shot hand-held in a dimly lit room, plucking out simple songs on a nylon-string, tumbler of wine to hand, raven hair a-toss, eyes open and expressive.

Vorontsova's music is cited as being in the bard tradition, which in Russian terms means not ancient poetry but mid-20th Century storytelling songs, sung in a melodic style similar to French *chanson*. In a British context, she'd essentially be singing in a wholesome late-Fifties folk revival style – which, given the trends for Sixties psych-folk, blues and Mediaevalism both here and in the US – is a brave, interesting move. However, she's an rudimentary guitarist, her 23-year-old voice, while lovely, is slightly clichéd, and it's impossible to gauge whether or not she's a good lyricist. The DVD gives a round-up of the original bards, and pages from Vorontsova's notepad, but no translations: her recent album did at least provide some notes. And yet, were I in that dim room too, listening to her sing, maudlin with red wine, I wouldn't care. It's all about context: this DVD provides almost none, but, in the same way I can groove to Alan Stivell's *a capella* Breton hoedowns on Sunday mornings, there'll be nights when Julia Vorontsova's mysterious songs will make perfect, dark-eyed sense.

Frances May Morgan



### Dominion: Prequel to The Exorcist

**Dir Paul Schrader (USA, 2005)**

Paul Schrader directed this prequel to *The Exorcist* in 2003. It was buried by the studio that financed it. Not gruesome enough, they reckoned, so they brought in a new director (Renny Harlin), some new actors, and pretty much reshot the whole thing. To nobody's great surprise, it sucked.

But this is the DVD era, so Schrader's version has been exhumed and released into the world. It turns out to be a tough-minded meditation on faith – recognisably the work of the man who wrote *The Last Temptation Of Christ*. Stellan Skarsgård plays a younger version of Max Von Sydow's character from the first *Exorcist* film: a priest haunted by his experiences under Nazi occupation, struggling with the moral and spiritual dimensions of what seems to him a godless world – until he meets the devil. It may not be up there with Friedkin's original – but it's a damn sight better than Harlin's remake.

[www.warnervideo.com](http://www.warnervideo.com)

SF Said

### Nathan Barley

**Dir Chris Morris (UK, 2005)**

After years in the daaark, this sitcom about trendy East London media folk was a bold move that paid off for Chris Morris. Reinventing Barley as a more sympathetic character than his interweb original, Morris and Charlie Brooker manage to turn the series' fans into objects of satire ("stupid people think it's cool"). Meanwhile the



### poetry in locomotion

Words: Nick Bradshaw

## Trainspotting as fine art in the short oeuvre of Geoffrey Jones

*"He was revered by those in the know, but hardly noticed outside the tight circle of documentary and railway enthusiasts"*

– Geoffrey Jones's *Guardian* obituary, August 2005

Orson Welles may have quipped that RKO studios were,

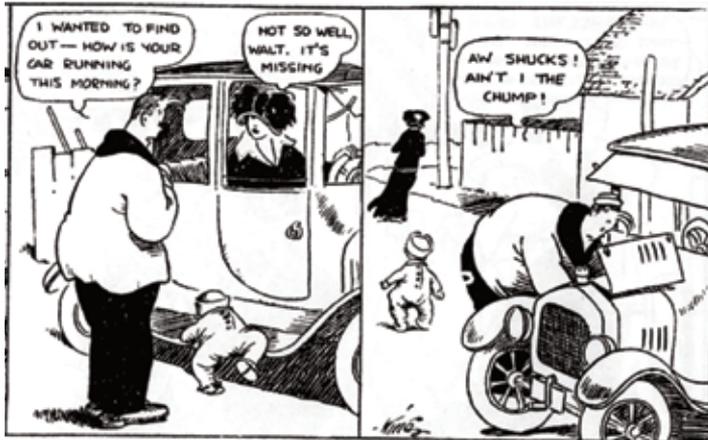
innovations of Norman McLaren and Len Lye, painting and scratching moving shapes directly onto exposed film in time to a musical soundtrack. He was then courted by the Shell Film Unit, and later British Transport Films.

## A poetic encyclopedia of train and track imagery

"The greatest electric train-set a boy ever had," but it was Geoffrey Llewellyn Jones who took the idea most literally, and out on location. His films hymned our bygone rail age in form as well as in substance: dynamos of rhythm and motion that offered a window on to wondrous fleeting vistas, they deserve rank among the glories of British public transportation. Jones spent the Eighties and Nineties in the celluloid sidings, and was just beginning to regain attention when he disembarked this life, aged 73. But, as they say, it's the journey, not the destination that counts, and in his BFI-produced compilation DVD *Geoffrey Jones: The Rhythm Of Film*, he bequeathed us his season ticket.

Jones's budding film career took in a couple of detours before building a head of steam. Inspired by Dziga Vertov's visionary Soviet documentary *Man With A Movie Camera*, he sketched a proposal for a satire of City commuters, only to be hired by an advertising agency – one, moreover, without a movie camera. Instead he applied the

Propelled by transport patronage and oil money, the films he made between 1959 and 1975 make art of the work of industrial and transport documentaries and travelogue. Set to pennywhistle street sounds of South African Kwela – music would always remain his films' 'shooting script' – and edited with a crisp concision that shows up the flatulence of most 'MTV editing', *Shell Spirit* collages a road trip from a patterned motion-blur of telegraph wires, picket fences and plough furrows, a style decelerated for Trinidad and Tobago. *This Is Shell* is a more monumental project, a cine-census of the globe-spanning machinery underpinning the company's operations. But the heart of the disc is the triptych of train studies: *Snow*, about the effects of the white stuff on wintry tracks in the West Country; *Rail*, a poetic encyclopedia of train and track imagery; and *Locomotion*, a teleological journey through rail history that pays touching tribute to the Victorian builders of the network.



**to be frank**  
words: Alistair Fitchett

## An everyday story of cars and babies

**Frank King**  
*Walt And Skeezi* (Drawn And Quarterly)

We live in a world of cultural recycling. Pop continues to eat itself, regurgitating gleaming gems, and the salvage industry is booming. In comics it's also a fascinating trend, with recent years giving us an explosion of *Essential* Marvel collections and the fabulous *Chronicles* series from DC, of which my personal favourites would be the *Batman Chronicles* and Will Eisner's *The Spirit*.

Then there have been Fantagraphics' huge undertakings: *The Complete Robert Crumb* and *The Complete Peanuts* (and now Hank Ketcham's *Complete Dennis The Menace*). The *Peanuts* collections make for beautiful artefacts in their own right, with packaging design by Seth – watch out for his great *Wimbledon Green* comic book coming soon from Drawn And Quarterly.

## Frank King's stories are about celebrating the small pleasures of life

And speaking of the Canadian imprint, they've also taken the plunge into the world of salvaging the classics, with *Walt And Skeezi* being the first step in collecting the complete *Gasoline Alley* daily strips by Frank King.

There are a quite a few things in the world that I really have no interest in. Sport is probably top of the list, but cars and babies are right up there too, so it's perplexing that I've been thoroughly seduced by King's strips, given that the main premise of 'Gasoline Alley' (or at least the 1921–1922 strips collected here) seems to revolve around a motor mechanic (Walt) and his friends' obsessions with automobiles and an adopted, abandoned baby (Skeezi). But even as I find it difficult to get excited about Skeezi or the finer points of distributor caps and spark plugs, the strip has drawn me in.

Frank King's drawings and stories are as much about celebrating the small, everyday pleasures of life as they are about anything else. It's also a fascinating contextual study of Americana in the Twenties, and works as an insight into the way that the automobile cemented itself as such an integral element of the collective American psyche.

Another intriguing element of the *Gasoline Alley* strips is that, unusually for strip comics, they acknowledge the passing of time and its effect on the extended narrative. Future editions of the collection will show Skeezi grow up, go to school, join the military during World War II, get married and have kids of his own.

With wonderful packaging design and preface by Chris Ware, an excellent introduction from Jeet Heer and a wealth of supporting photographs and original newspaper reproductions, *Walt And Skeezi* promises to be another yearly delight to add to the bookshelves.

**horror pop**  
Words: Jonathan Falcone

## Chronic Fatigue's abhorrent creations

Don't you love things that are cute and cuddly? Like rabbits and kids? In the comic series *Mixy* and *Our World*, those cute and cuddly things turn psychotic. Chronic Fatigue's initial creations were Looney Toons for Romero fans, ably mixing buckets of blood with puppy dog eyes.

After the success of the series, CF's style was both demolished and developed: *Ending Time* concluded the trilogy in a bleak landscape of shredded limbs. Then followed *Nine Days They Fell*, an illustrated poem based on Milton's *Paradise Lost*, while in *Wilderemere*, the latest comic, 24 realities collide, leaving one universe in tatters, trying to rebuild itself and discovering its history.

CF suffered from ME and fibromyalgia for five years (throughout the initial period of comic writing), and as a result, *Mixy* and *Our World* have distinctly personal connotations.

"The creation of those comics was all about me coming to terms with my life and my illness," he says. "They followed my struggle; the zombified rabbit representing my illness and my various attempts to deny



existed in a *Frankenstein*-esque world, where fear kept them alive."

It is a progression from *Mixy* and *Our World*, yet the underlying themes are still fear, despair, beauty and horror. Does this stem from a love of Gothic romance?

"I think the word 'gothic' has been turned into a brand. I'm a fan of Edward Gorey and Gustave Doré, as opposed to modern gothic. I think there's a massive divide between horror and gothic horror. The *Mixy* and *Our World* comics are straight up splatter horror; they're about despair

## 'The comics followed my struggle; the zombified rabbit represented my illness'

it, accept it, let it overtake me and then finally kill it off. Once I had finished them I saw fit to move on and write about something I really cared about."

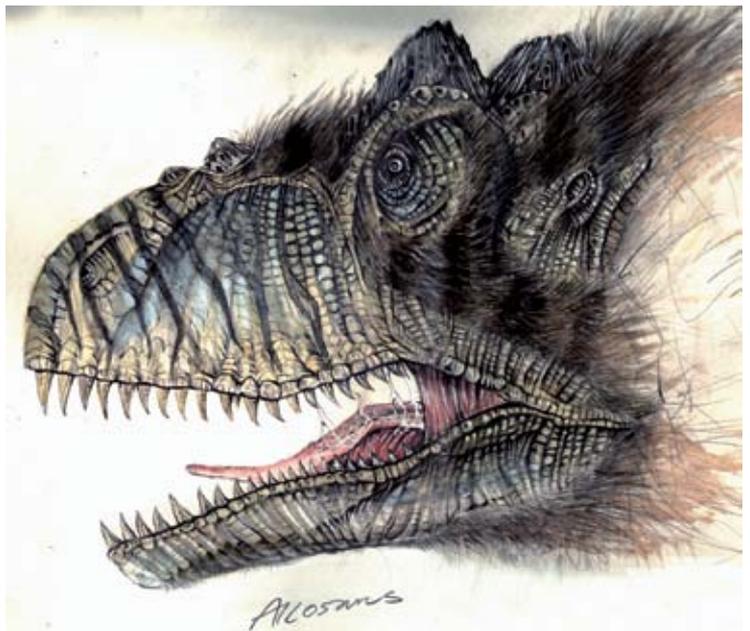
The result was *Wilderemere*, a series of ashen worlds inhabited by ghosts and amphibians, each trying to discover their pasts amid a utopian landscape.

"I'd just moved to Brighton. I realised that the structure of the town is very odd, new houses tacked to old ones as though someone had grown them from seeds. I instantly had these ideas where inhabitants

and hopelessness, simply because I wasn't very happy when I wrote them. When I felt like being nice to a character, I would give them a break, only to tear down their world around them. It's a great way work out your own problems."

With figurines in the pipeline, further adventures of *Wilderemere* and CF starting his own publishing company (The Glass Shore Press), it seems that the Chronic Fatigue world of tragic beauty is becoming an increasingly popular temptation.

[www.manydeadthings.com](http://www.manydeadthings.com)



## denting the sofa

words: Alistair Fitchett

### Our comics editor catches up with some reading

So what have you been reading lately? I've been spoilt by too much time on my hands, so here's what's been causing me to leave a dent in the sofa.

First up there's Thomas Dowse's *Roses In Tarwater*, which immediately gets my attention thanks to the black and white photos of half-submerged shopping carts gracing the tracing paper front- and endplates. Dowse has a loose, expressionist style that harbours a grim edginess reminiscent of Otto Dix and Georg Grosz. The content fits with the drawing style, being all grim contemporary realities fuelled by the ennui of booze and isolation, I look forward immensely to future work. Email [thom1million@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:thom1million@hotmail.co.uk).

The pilot issue of Andy Johnston's *Kayak* is another small self-published treat. Through its 24 inkjet printed pages Johnston weaves an imaginary letter of introduction that blends handwritten text with drawings and collage. With ideas clearly still in their infancy, it gives off an air of being work in development, but it works as a way into what will inevitably be a larger universe. For details, email [andyowenjohnston@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:andyowenjohnston@yahoo.co.uk).

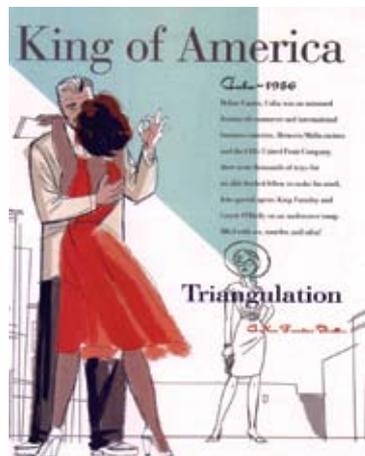
Issue two of *Zirp* (right) fell through my postbox recently having flown over from Germany. Like *Roses In Tarwater*, this one recognises the quality of tracing paper endplates. But where Dowse's comic celebrates the energy of expressionism, *Zirp* creator Till D Thomas instead favours the silent strip approach, where animal and human characters interact in a baffling universe rendered in sharply drawn strips that pull their emotion from the slightly surreal and mildly psychedelic scenarios. Check [www.tdthomas.de](http://www.tdthomas.de) for details.

I also like Issue three of Kevin Huizenga's *Or Else* (Drawn And Quarterly), mostly because I love the whole idea of 'confessional' writing. The story of Al and Matilda, for example, is told with a delicate, carefully measured melancholic charm that can't be faulted, while the illustration of part of Kafka's *Diaries* is knowingly funny and poignantly knowing.

Over at DC, there's a new issue in the *SOLO* series. This one (Issue five) is a showcase for Darwyn Cooke, perhaps best known for his work in the Batman universe, having created the *Batman: Ego*

title as well as graphic novel *Selina's Big Score*. This *SOLO* is no *Batman* or *Catwoman* offering, despite including a great *Batman* strip based on the Seventies classic 'Night Of The Stalker' story. Rather, it's a wonderful mixture of illustration styles and stories. Best for me are the late-Fifties Cuba-based 'King of America' piece (think James Bond finally getting his comeuppance from the women) and the Slam Bradley strips (think Robert Mitchum playing Mike Hammer hanging out in an all-night bar) that thread through the whole comic. You'd be crazy to miss this one.

And speaking of the Batman universe, for a while now my favourite of all the Caped Crusader comics has been the *Gotham Central* series, the premise of which is



## Imagine *The Belles Of St Trinians* directed by Tarantino

From the smack-down japes of 'Jessica And The Junkie' through to the sci-fi fantasy of 'Jessica vs Megapotamus' (in sensational 3D, no less!), there is never a dull moment.

Each issue comes with a colour cigarette-style card featuring one of the cast (my favourite is Alice Daiquiri whose "apathy towards schoolwork is a high contrast to her zeal for socialising and consuming alcohol"), and you can pick up all the issues collected as a neat set. A new batch has just been printed (they originally appeared between October 2001 and October 2004), and I heartily recommend you track them down.

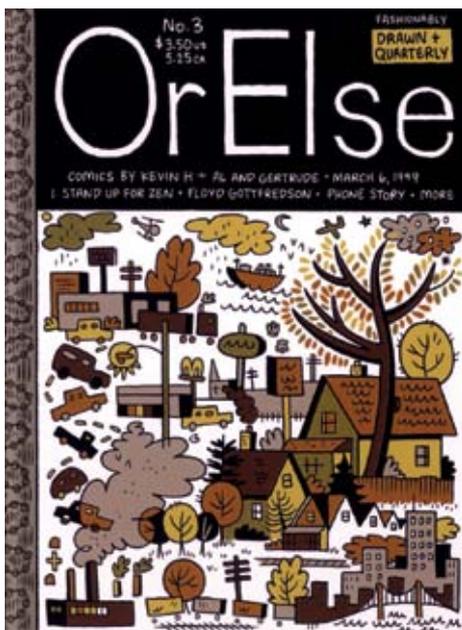
And while you're at it, why not check out the forthcoming 'Cutie Pie' seven-inch by Jessica And The Jawbreakers.

The Archies of the 2005?  
Well, why not?

that this is Gotham as seen through the eyes of its police force. And with Greg Rucka's masterful writing and Michael Lark's heavily shadowed art, it's a real treat of modern Urban Noir. Issues six through ten have recently been collected into the compelling *Half A Life* book (the adventure quite rightly won Eisner, Harvey, Eagle and Prism awards), and if you haven't already checked it out, I urge you to do so soon.

Finally, imagine *The Belles Of St Trinians* directed by Tarantino as a comic drawn by Herge. Got that? Great. You've just pictured the classic *Jessica Of The Schoolyard* series of mini-comics by Karl Wills for The ComicBook Factory ([www.comicbookfactory.net](http://www.comicbookfactory.net)). The reality is even finer.

In this series of 12 eight-page minis you'll find feisty, ultra-violent, chain-smoking and swearing Jessica Flowers in all kinds of terrific capers.



# subscribe

The first 20 subscribers will also receive a copy of **Ai Records' 5 Year Sampler**



"My goal is to make music that sounds familiar but is totally different," said Ai's Michael Manning in *Plan B* #7, and it's an apt description for the label as a whole. Ai's *5 Year Sampler* collects essential tracks from their first half-decade of inventive electronic sounds, while also offering fresh directions for the future.

To qualify for this offer, please mention **PB08** with your cheque, or in the Paypal comments box.

UK – 6 issues for £20  
EU airmail – 6 issues for £27.50  
Rest of the World airmail – 6 issues for £35  
Send cheques to: Plan B Publishing, PO Box 5047, Hove, BN52 9WY, UK  
Or visit [www.planbmag.com/order](http://www.planbmag.com/order) and pay by credit card, debit card, or Paypal

Check out [www.planbmag.com](http://www.planbmag.com) for web-exclusive interviews, reviews, articles and staff weblogs, stockist information, gig guide, secure ordering and discussion forums

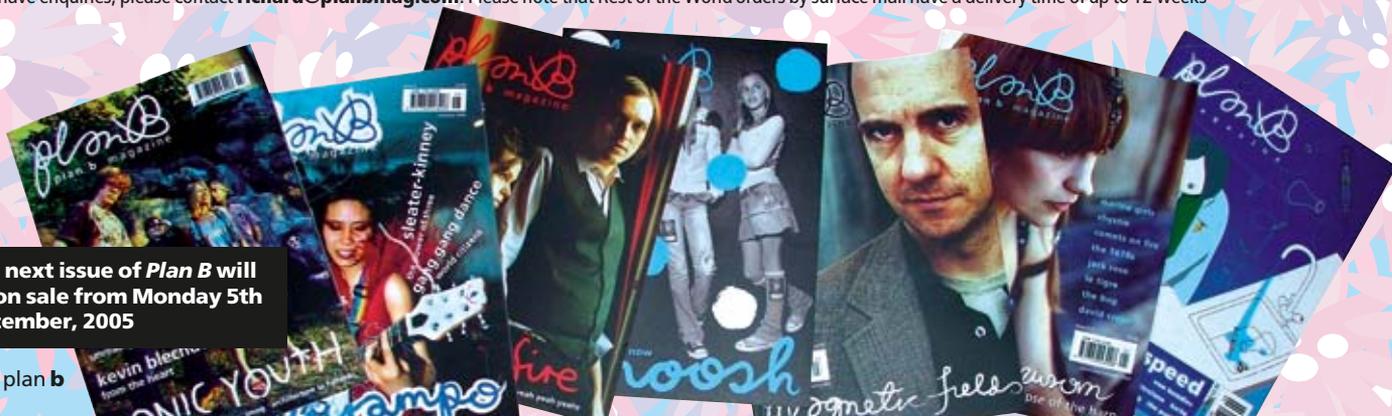
## back issues

UK – £4.00, EU airmail – £5.50, Rest of the world surface mail – £5.50, Rest of the world airmail – £7.00

Send cheques to Plan B Publishing, PO Box 5047, Hove, BN52 9WY, UK

Or visit [www.planbmag.com/order](http://www.planbmag.com/order) and pay by credit card, debit card, or Paypal

If you have enquiries, please contact [richard@planbmag.com](mailto:richard@planbmag.com). Please note that Rest of the World orders by surface mail have a delivery time of up to 12 weeks



The next issue of *Plan B* will be on sale from Monday 5th December, 2005

## games

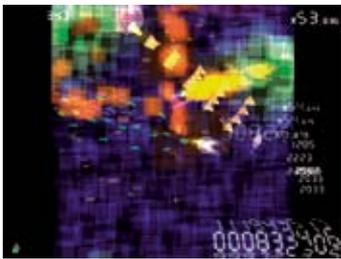


## the forever apocalypse

Words: Kieron Gillen

Kenta Cho (aka ABA Games) makes videogames as your gran would understand them. That is: a small ship faces off a horde of enemies and their accompanying wall of bullets. It's the videogame archetype that has been dominant since *Space Invaders* took over from *Pong* as the quintessential image of a game. But Kenta Cho makes videogames with the capacity to make you feel like your gran might if she actually sat down at the controls. His games are the sublimation of the sound of the foot against the accelerator pedal. The noises you hear when you play aren't sound effects, but the snap, crackle and pop of the neurons in your mind splitting wide open. They're a little bit on the intense side.

Videogames are rife with subcultures, devoted to genres that are mostly abandoned in mainstream culture. Where they vary from other retrophile forms of cultures, like pop music, is that they're often much more than conservative retreats: the community continues with increasingly



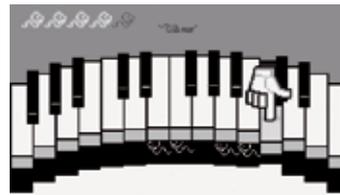
## Here is the lost note of videogaming

experimental games. Similarly, even in the simple ultra-death shooters, new approaches and themes are experimented with,

then released for free download online. While far from the only figure in the scene, Kenta Cho's catalogue of games show a rare ingenuity for understanding the implication of these Zen apocalypses.

While each of his games are wildly different, design themes emerge. We see crystalline and cubist aesthetics, like the Tokyo skyline turned into animation, which give the games a touch of the abstract. While there's violence, it's only a conflict between things which are more like *ideas* of a weapon. Even when the game has a setting, like his most recent triumph, *Gunroar*, which takes the classic WW2-set upwards scrolling shooter *1942* and runs it through his filters, the abstract graphics remain. While veterans of the game it was inspired by will recognise analogues to fighter planes or warships, they're vessels of shining diamond. This makes the old thrilling and unusual, like Pathé footage filtered through a mind laden with DMT.

Then there's the intensity. Not just in sound and vision, but in mass. Before you understand the convention of his games, panicked death occurs constantly, as you try to find a way for your ship to pass between more bullets than the average war. The trick is that only the very centre of your craft is a vulnerable spot, with the rest being safe to pass through. Still,



## WarioWare Twisted (GBA) Nintendo

The specialist press complains endlessly about this game. By virtue of its requirements that you twist and contort your GBA to control the actions on screen (the cartridge contains a sensor for rotational movements) they complain you look stupid playing, and therefore, you can't play it on the bus.

I'm sorry, but it's just not possible to look cool playing games on the move. As much as the techno-fetishists would like you to believe otherwise, even playing a 'sexy' PSP makes you look like a drooling, anti-social tool, your tongue lolling out as you try to beat your lap times on *Racing Game 7* ("now with added lense flare") while juddering on your way to work. But we don't have to legitimise gaming by making it cool. Why don't we embrace its stupidity, by waving our GBAs like lunatics while playing a wide variety of three-second mini-games that confuse and amuse in equal amounts. It's a game that's good enough that you forget that you're grinning like an idiot and rubbing your shoulders excitedly against geriatric bus denizens. Sure, the cart sticks out and looks stupid, but why can't we look stupid?

Mathew Kumar



## Façade (PC) Auto Mata

Grace and Trip's relationship is on the rocks. You're going over for a dinner party. Just you and them. You know what to expect: embarrassed pauses, seemingly meaningless small talk carrying a hidden payload of hate aimed at their other half and a few bottles of white wine. You're old friends, but can you make a difference?

It's a usual situation in life. It's an extremely unusual one in a game.

*Façade* is exactly that – a one-act play and a highly experimental game of social mores. You move around this small 3D environment, rendered to seem suitably reminiscent of an indie-comic, listen to Grace and Trip's loaded banter and interject comments by hammering them into the

keyboard. It's a game that's more interesting than enjoyable, as a high watermark in attempting to make a specific, dramatic art game and for the possibilities inherent therein.

That attitude will see you through when the game misunderstands something you've said, in a way that simply breaks context rather than the standard misunderstandings of social chat.

When it works, it's still not enjoyable. Then again, it's not meant to be. You didn't enjoy most of Chekhov's short stories either and it's into this family of literature that *Façade* attempts to insert itself.

It's a failure. But it makes you suspect that one day something like this won't be. That's a real triumph.

[www.interactivestory.net](http://www.interactivestory.net)

Kieron Gillen



## Fate (PC) Wildstudios

Hit things. Get more powerful. Hit more powerful things. Get even more powerful things. Get even more powerful. Hit grossly powerful things. Get grossly powerful. Hit ludicrously powerful things. Get ludicrously powerful. Hit impossibly powerful things. Get impossibly powerful. Hit things so powerful their existence warps the fabric of reality. Get so powerful that your existence warps the fabric of reality. Hit things so powerful that extra dimensions have to merge to form one über-reality to provide a resilient context for their extreme powerfulness. Become so powerful that extra dimensions have to merge to form one über-reality to provide a resilient context for your extreme powerfulness.

*Fate* takes the underground action-RPG of *Nethack* (or *Diablo*) and makes it accessible to anyone with an index finger. The body of the genre, stripped away to leave just the circulatory system, which is then sealed in sugar. It's plan driven.

It understands. You hit things. You get more powerful. That's all.

[www.fatethegame.com](http://www.fatethegame.com)

Kieron Gillen

the impossible grace you have to summon to waltz through these dances of hypothetical violence requires a hypnotic concentration.

I've been playing videogames so long that my first words were, "Pass me the jypad, fucker". But the first time I experienced the ludicrously fast-into-the-screen blur of *Torus Trooper*, I got motion sickness. Never happened before.

Think about that again. Cho has made games of a type seen for as long as there's been games, and creating sensations that have *still* never happened before. Here is the lost note of videogaming, and it sounds like the world ending, 60 times a second.

[www.asahi-net.or.jp/~cs8k-cyu/](http://www.asahi-net.or.jp/~cs8k-cyu/)



## Revolving doors to nebulae; trapdoors into galaxies

# why i love... ustad bismillah khan

Words: Neil Kulkarni

It starts with a drone, then summons up eternity: get yourself blessed by the celestial ragas of India's shehnai master

*"Is there no joy in music – is it all to be this foolishness? Money is nonsense. So long as the shehnai is with me, what need do I have for anything else? Musicians should be heard and not seen. See this shehnai? This is such a thing that when I lift it, I start thinking from my heart"*  
– Ustad Bismillah Khan, 2005

Born in 1916 in Bihar into a family of court musicians, Bismillah Khan was trained in the art of playing the shehnai, a small oboe/recorder style reed instrument that in Khan's hands can summon up eternity. More than anyone else, Khan helped bring what was essentially a folk instrument into the more formalised world of classical raga. A devout Shia Muslim, he's curiously also a staunch devotee of Saraswati, the Hindu goddess of music. His music and his religion are a divine unity. He lives in Benares and has eschewed much of the wealth and trappings of success, picked up innumerable state honours, and spent his life making heaven in sound.

Were I an expert, I could explain how Khan's meld of drone, tetrachord and powerful ornamentation combine to make magic. But I didn't *learn* this music; rather, it came to claim

me. My dad would listen to him and it percolated through. When I'd take him a beer in the room with the stereo in it, I'd see him nearly in tears. Ever hungry for drone, I stole my dad's tapes and jammed along with a cracked Les Paul.

After my dad died, I inherited the vinyl – beautiful records pressed up by the Gramophone Company Of India, mainly from the Sixties – and listened even closer and the tears began to flow seemingly from my dad through Khan's music and out of my own eyes. I realised that precisely the fucked-up beats, vocal freedom and anti-melodies I was digging in early Seventies Miles and Tim Buckley and drum'n'bass were being lashed down by these guys in the Twenties, never mind being played by innumerable geniuses since raga's inception since the 3rd Century BC. But it was Bismillah's glorious voice, Bismillah's soul that he spilled out through his shehnai (I own a shehnai, and can't even get a squeak out of it, let alone spend the two hours it takes Khan to tune the thing up), that pulled me back to a fragile sense of belonging in Indian music.

Within – on the plastic, in the grooves – were revolving doors to nebulae, trapdoors into galaxies, turnstiles into a seemingly infinitesimal self-

awareness. This music, basically a drone set up by tanpura and tabla, and Khan's rich rolling improvisations around the mathematical complexities of raga form, is so vivid with colour, so deep in spirituality, yet always touched by a love and longing for life, it's devastating. The shattering twists and unique idiosyncracies of his playing transport you out of yourself, closer to God, and closer in on the wonder locked in your own heart.

There's a peace to be found in Khan's music, but there's also anger, a celestial fury, the darkest blues and the bloodiest reds and the most tranquil yellows. It's an alternate universe where emotion finds clear expression and the sculpting of sound enfolds you. There's a soul-shaking *humanity* to his music, and that's maybe the most brave and beautiful thing about the 91-year-old maestro's undying art. The balance between restraint and abandon, surprise and fulfillment, and the sheer joyful melodic invention are inspirational, no matter what music you're into. But find any of the albums he did with the incredible violin player VG Jog, especially the Ragamala series of 'Morning To Midnight' ragas, and get yourself blessed by them, soon as. Because only beauty can save us now.

And only tears can wash us new.



**Jackie-O  
Motherfucker**

**FIG.5**

"One of the most breathtaking junk-histories of American music in recent memory"

**STYLUS MAGAZINE**

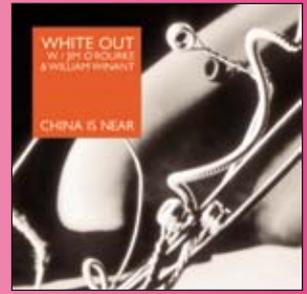


**Jackie-O  
Motherfucker**

**LIBERATION**

"The consistently amazing quality of Jackie-O Motherfucker is their ability to color experimental music and noise with more candor and emotional sophistication than most turtle-necked troubadour"

**PITCHFORK MEDIA**



**White Out  
with Jim  
O'Rourke  
and William  
Winant**

**CHINA IS NEAR**

"China is Near is an album for those interested in hearing what it would be like if Sun Ra and Miles Davis jammed TODAY with Pauline Oliveros and Supersilent."

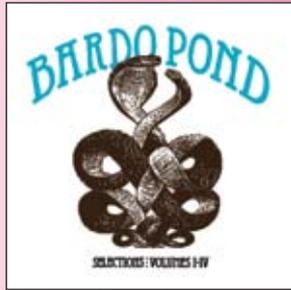
**OTHER MUSIC**



**Fursaxa  
LEPIDOPTERA**

"Comparable with Nico's first post-Velvets ventures, the otherworldly turns of Animal Collective and the ecstatic voice/drone meditations of Double Leopards, Lepidoptera is psychedelic in the truest, most wondrously mind-expanding sense"

**MOJO UNDERGROUND  
ALBUM OF THE MONTH**



**Bardo Pond  
SELECTIONS:  
VOLUMES I - IV**

"It's a must for fans of the band, or for fans of chilled out psychedelic musings"

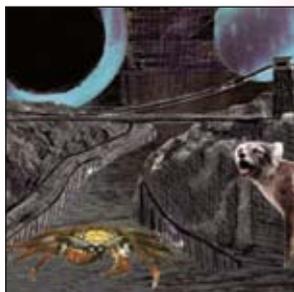
**INDIEWORKSHOP**



**Alexander  
Tucker  
OLD FOG**

"A wintery and wonderful new discovery"

**TIME OUT**



**Deerhoof  
GREEN COSMOS**

"If you don't find at least 50 things you like about this record, go ask a doctor to remove the huge testicle that's grown where your brain should be"

**8/10 NME**



**Deerhoof  
THE RUNNERS FOUR  
OUT OCTOBER 17**

"No band since Sonic Youth has been more capable of making otherwise difficult or esoteric art seem like a mass consumer product."

**DELUSIONS OF ADEQUACY**



**The Drones  
WAIT LONG BY THE  
RIVER AND THE BODIES  
OF YOUR ENEMIES WILL  
FLOAT BY  
OUT OCTOBER 24**

"The Drones are more than salvation for the waiting faithful"

**ROLLING STONE**



**FRANZ  
FERDINAND**

**YOU COULD HAVE IT SO MUCH BETTER**

LP, CD & LTD CD / 03.10.05

[www.franzferdinand.co.uk](http://www.franzferdinand.co.uk)



[www.dominorecordco.com](http://www.dominorecordco.com)