

**THE IMMORTAL  
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**THE UNKNOWN  
SYD BARRETT**



# MOJO

*The Music Magazine*

**"THIS BOY  
IS NOT A  
BOY. HE'S  
A GENIUS."**

**BOB  
DYLAN**

**HOW DID HE  
GET SO GOOD?**

**PLUS**  
**THE CRAMPS**  
**CHEAP TRICK**  
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**BUCKINGHAM  
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**RETURNS**

**+**  
**TIME WARP! THE  
ROCKY HORROR  
PICTURE SHOW**





# From **ELVIS**

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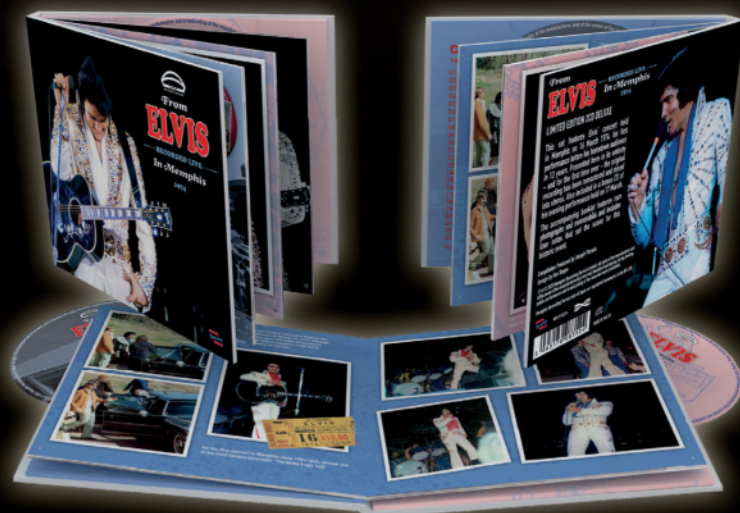
*In Memphis*

1974

This set features Elvis' concert held in Memphis on 16 March 1974, his first performance before his hometown audience in 13 years. Presented here in its entirety – and for the first time ever – the original recording has been remastered and mixed into stereo. Also included is a bonus CD of his evening performance held on 17 March

The accompanying booklet features rare photographs and memorabilia and includes liner notes that set the scene for this historic event.

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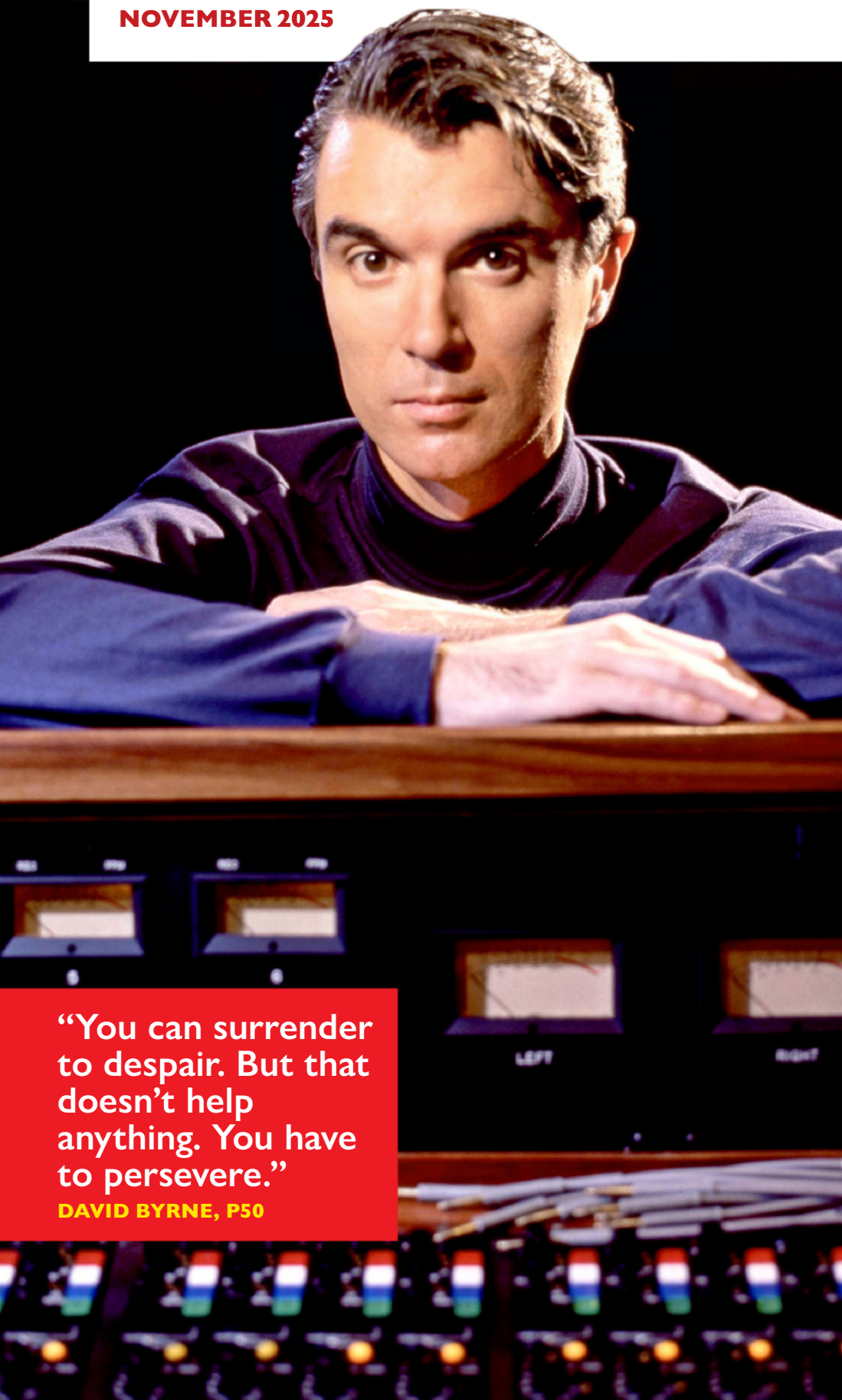


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LONDON ♦ MEMPHIS ♦ TRANSYLVANIA

NOVEMBER 2025

ISSUE 384



“You can surrender to despair. But that doesn’t help anything. You have to persevere.”

DAVID BYRNE, P50

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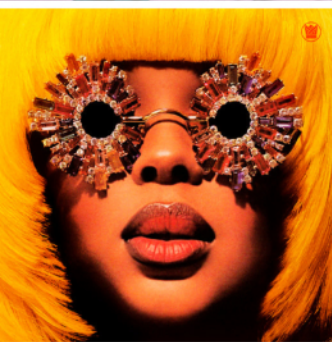
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# MOJO

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MOJO ISSN 1351-0193 (USPS 17424) is published 12 times a year by H Bauer Publishing Ltd, Media House, Peterborough Business Park, Lynch Wood, Peterborough PE2 6EA United Kingdom. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named World Container INC 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY 11256. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MOJO, Air Business Ltd, c/o World Container INC 150-15, 183rd St, Jamaica, NY 11413, USA. Subscription records are maintained at Bauer Media, Subscriptions, CDS Global, Tower House, Sovereign Park, Lathkill Street, Market Harborough, Leicester LE16 9EF, United Kingdom. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

## THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



### Barrie Wentzell

Described by Yes/King Crimson drummer Bill Bruford as the Francis Wolff of Britain's rock scene, Barrie shot for *Melody Maker*, *Disc & Music Echo*, among other publications. Amazing photographs from his book *Should've Been There...* are featured from p34. Born in County Durham, he lives in Toronto.



### Chris Catchpole

Chris (left!) is MOJO's Digital Editor and has been a contributor since he first wandered into the offices as an over-enthusiastic teaboy in the early 2000s. This month, he spoke to Tim Burgess for the MOJO Interview (see p28), an inquisition so thorough The Charlatans' frontman admitted to needing a lie down afterwards.



### The Red Dress

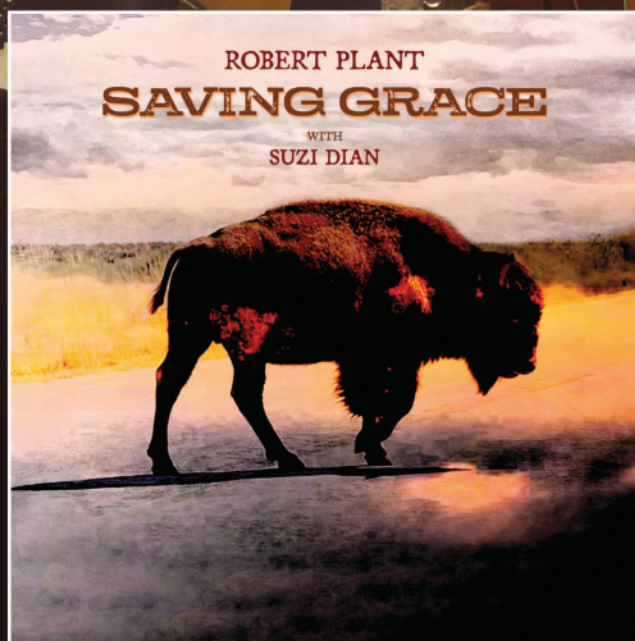
The Red Dress is a London-based illustration duo, Olivia Chancellor and Ollie Bland. This husband and wife team met studying Graphic Design and Illustration at Central St. Martins in 1996. A love of vintage posters spurred them to create their own unique style of imagery. [www.debutart.com/artist/the-red-dress](http://www.debutart.com/artist/the-red-dress)





# ROBERT PLANT SAVING GRACE

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# THE COMPLETE UNKNOWNNS

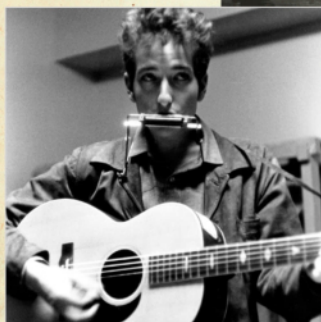
THE  
BEST OF  
GREENWICH  
VILLAGE  
1950-1965

UNHEARD  
EXCLUSIVE  
DYLAN  
TRACK!

MOJO



BOB DYLAN  
•  
ODETTA  
•  
WOODY  
GUTHRIE  
•  
FRED NEIL  
•  
JUDY  
COLLINS  
•  
PHIL OCHS  
& MORE



## 1 BOB DYLAN ONE TOO MANY MORNINGS (TAKE 1/ALTERNATE TAKE)

Recorded at the same session as the version on *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, here's an exclusive highlight of *The Bootleg Series Vol. 18* with a gorgeous harmonica solo.

Composer Bob Dylan. Lyricist Bob Dylan. Published by M. Witmark & Sons/Special Rider Music. Produced by Tom Wilson. ©2025 Columbia Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment USSM12501869, Copy Own Country: USA. ©Record Country: USA. Rec Period: 1963 Recorded at New York City, NY, USA. Repertoire Owner: Columbia. Samples: None



## 2 BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE COD'INE

Sainte-Marie began writing songs while a student at the University Of Massachusetts but the lure of Greenwich Village proved irresistible. Hanging out at Gerdes Folk City she met Dylan, who encouraged her to play the Gaslight. By 1963, her repertoire included this classic anti-drug song, based on her own experiences of codeine addiction after being prescribed the opiate for a bronchial infection.

Written by Buffy Sainte-Marie. Gypsy Boy Music Inc 1964. ©Vanguard Records 2025



## 3 PHIL OCHS TOO MANY MARTYRS

For all the camaraderie of the scene, rivalries were inevitably present, too, and Dylan and Phil Ochs brought out the most competitive instincts in each other. Dylan wrote *Only A Pawn In Their Game* about the murder of civil rights activist Medgar Evers in June 1963; this is Ochs' own response to the tragedy, from his debut album of "singing journalism", *All The News That's Fit To Sing*.

Written by Gibson, Ochs, Phil Ochs. 1964 WEA International Inc. Licence Courtesy Of Warner Music UK Ltd. USEE10182540



## 4 DAVE VAN RONK HE WAS A FRIEND OF MINE

Something of a father figure in the Village, Van Ronk and his wife Terri Thal also provided a sofa for Dylan and many others to sleep on. They shared songs, too: Dylan adapted this old folk-blues while recording his debut in 1961, only to leave it off the finished album; Van Ronk took Dylan's version and recorded it himself for *Dave Van Ronk, Folsinger* the following year.

Traditional. Tickson Music Co. Originally released 1962



## 9 MIMI & RICHARD FARIÑA CELEBRATIONS FOR A GREY DAY

An auspicious Greenwich Village couple, Mimi was a musician and activist like her older sister, Joan Baez; Richard a significant novelist as well as musician, and his best man at their wedding was an old friend from Cornell University, Thomas Pynchon. This is the title track of their 1965 duo debut – note the elaborate nod to Frère Jacques in the autoharp/dulcimer freakout.

Written by R Fariña. Whitmark Publ, ASCAP 1965. ©Vanguard Records 2025



## 10 SONNY TERRY & BROWNIE MCGHEE MIDNIGHT SPECIAL

The veteran blues musicians were Greenwich Village regulars, but like Odetta it was the impact of their earlier records on Dylan that was so crucial. In 1960 Dylan's then-girlfriend Bonnie Beecher (rumoured inspiration for *Girl From The North Country*) played him Terry & McGhee's *Get On Board*. Two years later, Dylan subbed for Terry as harmonica player on the session for Harry Belafonte's recording of *Midnight Special*.

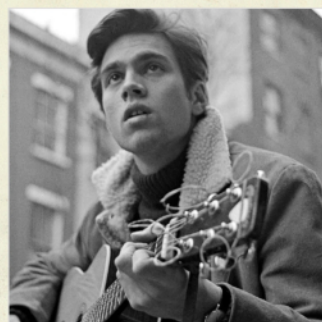
Written by Traditional arr Terry/McGhee. Copyright Control. Originally released 1960



## 11 FRED NEIL BLUES ON THE CEILING

The compere at Café Wha?, apparently the first venue Dylan played in the city, turned out to be a lot more accommodating than the character in *Talkin' New York*. This was Fred Neil, among the scene's most gifted artists but one who didn't release his own debut, *Bleecker & MacDougal*, until 1965. Neil's recording career proved brilliant but brief: from the early 1970s, he dedicated himself to dolphin conservation.

Written by Fred Neil. 1966 WEA International Inc. Licence Courtesy Of Warner Music UK Ltd USEE10182351



## 12 ERIC ANDERSEN THIRSTY BOOTS

Another song written in response to the civil rights struggle, Pittsburgh native Andersen found his way to New York a little later than most of his contemporaries. He soon made connections: Phil Ochs championed him and encouraged him to finish *Thirsty Boots*. The song impressed Dylan, too, who recorded it for *Self Portrait* in 1970 before shelving it until it emerged on *The Bootleg Series Vol. 10: Another Self Portrait (1969–1971)* in 2013.

Written by Eric Andersen. Deep Fork Music 1966. ©Vanguard Records 2025



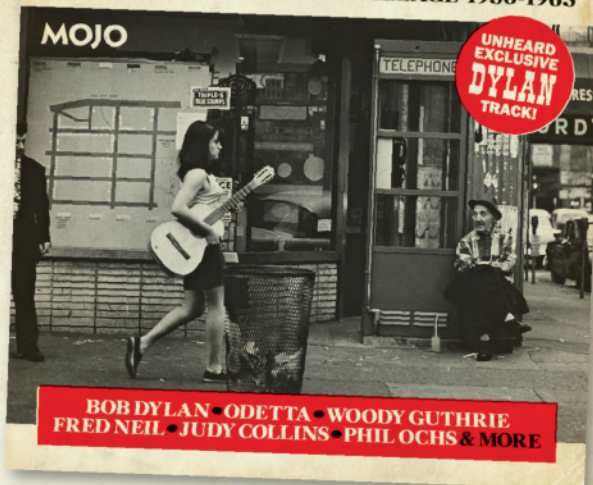
**I**N 1962's TALKIN' NEW YORK, BOB DYLAN SPINS A YARN OF coming to New York as a gauche young outsider. He takes the subway downtown to Greenwich Village, stumbles into a coffee house, and sings to a notably unimpressed audience. "Come back some other day," he remembers being told by the compere. "You sound like a hillbilly."

The reality, though, was a little different. Dylan arrived in New York's bohemian enclave in January 1961 at a cultural inflection point, and was rapidly embraced by a clique of idealistic, passionate fellow artists. "The folk music community was incredibly supportive," Dylan's first manager Terri Thal tells us. "Everybody was welcome."

Dylan, of course, would soon transcend his peers. But this month's MOJO CD, *The Complete Unknowns*, documents a tight-knit scene of uncommon talents – Judy Collins, Phil Ochs, Dave Van Ronk, Mimi & Richard Fariña, Fred Neil, Ramblin' Jack Elliott and more, as well as Dylan himself – inspiring each other to find new paths into and out of American musical tradition. It takes a Village to raise a child, goes the old saying; here's the one that nurtured Bob Dylan so well.

## THE COMPLETE UNKNOWNNS

THE BEST OF GREENWICH VILLAGE 1950-1965



### 5 ODETTA JACK O' DIAMONDS

"The first thing that turned me onto folk singing was Odetta," Dylan told Playboy in 1966. "I heard a record of hers in a record store. That was in '58 or something like that. Right then and there, I went out and traded my electric guitar and amplifier for an acoustical guitar." One of the songs Dylan learned from the folk revival trailblazer's 1956 debut, *Odetta Sings Ballads And Blues*, was Jack O' Diamonds.

Traditional. Progressive Music.  
Originally released 1956



### 6 WOODY GUTHRIE DEPORTEE (WOODY'S HOME TAPE)

A totemic figure in Dylan lore, Guthrie was hospitalised in New Jersey by the time his young fan arrived out East. His songs still resonated through the scene, though, not least *Deportee* (Plane Wreck At Los Gatos). This revelatory home demo dating from 1951 or 1952 is part of a stash that's only just come to light on *Woody At Home, Vol. 1 & 2*.

Words & Music by Woody Guthrie. Published by Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc./TRO Ludlow Music, Inc. (BMI).



### 7 PETE SEEGER PASSING THROUGH

*Deportee* was one of many Guthrie songs popularised by Pete Seeger, who had been "sowing the music of the people" through the 1940s and '50s to prepare the ground for the folk revival. Seeger began performing *Passing Through* in 1948, on the campaign trail for left-wing presidential candidate Henry Wallace; this version comes from eight years later, and the *Love Songs For Friends And Foes* album.

Traditional arr Seeger. Copyright Control.  
Originally released 1956



### 8 JOSH WHITE I'M GONNA MOVE TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN

A Seeger contemporary, White was another activist/musician who brought American folk and blues to a bigger audience. In the 1950s, political controversy in the States saw him relocate to London, where he hosted a BBC radio show, *My Guitar Is Old As Father Time*; his blacklisting only lifted in 1963, when John F Kennedy invited him on a TV special.

Written by Weldon. Leeds Music Ltd.  
Originally released 1950



### 13 JUDY COLLINS SAILOR'S LIFE

According to Judy Collins, Andersen actually wrote part of *Thirsty Boots* in her bathroom: "Then he sat down and sang it to me. I said, Great, I'll be recording that tomorrow!" (it figured on 1965's *Fifth Album*). This 18th-century English song, however, comes from Collins' 1961 debut, *A Maid Of Constant Sorrow*, introducing a voice of uncanny purity that endures to this day. Collins shares her first impressions of Dylan in our cover story on page 68.

1962 WEA International Inc. Licence Courtesy of Warner Music UK Ltd USEE10182156



### 14 RAMBLIN' JACK ELLIOTT SOUTH COAST

Brooklyn doctor's son Elliott Adnopoz ran away from home at 15 to join the rodeo, before falling in with Woody Guthrie. Dylan was introduced to Elliott's records while living in Minneapolis, and started imitating him, but he would subsequently make friends with his early influence. Elliott became part of the raggle-taggle Rolling Thunder Revue in 1975; he sings *South Coast* in *Renaldo & Clara*.

Written by Ross, Dehr, Eskine, Miller, Albert.  
Originally released 1961



### 15 CAROLYN HESTER DINK'S SONG

Carolyn Hester was an established figure when Dylan arrived in New York, having released her first LP in 1958. With her then-husband, Richard Fariña, they welcomed the newcomer into their circle, giving Dylan his first recording gig, playing harmonica on her third, self-titled album in September 1961. From that record, here's Hester's version of a folk revival classic (also demoed earlier that year by Dylan back in Minneapolis). "Fare thee well!"

Written by J Lomax/A Lomax. Chappel And Co.  
Originally released 1962

"HE IGNORED  
ALMOST  
ALL OF IT.  
BOB DIDN'T  
GIVE A SHIT."

THE  
EDUCATION  
OF BOB  
DYLAN  
BEGINS ON  
PAGE 68



# CAT

ON THE ROAD TO FINDOUT



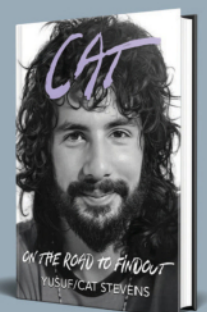
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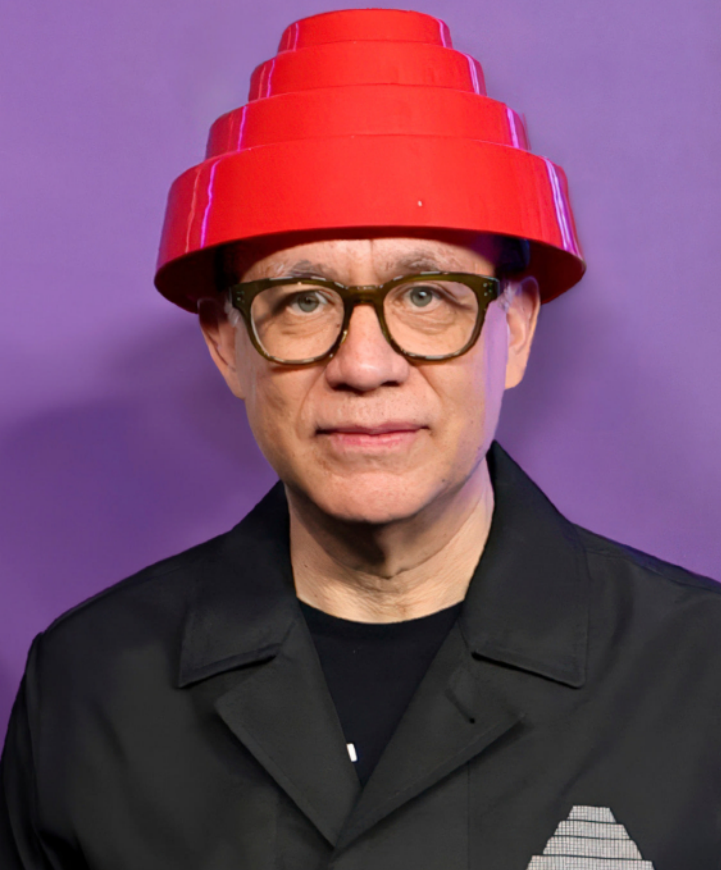
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# Fred Armisen

COMIC, ACTOR, PUNK DRUMMER

## What music are you currently grooving to?

**Atlas, Real Estate.** I've been playing this album all the way through a lot recently. Particularly on my iPod on flights. It feels like being in a dream or something. I love the guitars.

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

**Ram, Paul & Linda McCartney.** There are other albums that are strong contenders: *Sandinista!*, *The Hot Rock*, *Strawberries*. Whenever a song from *Ram* comes up, I sometimes say to myself out loud (quietly): "Oh, this is the best album ever."

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

**Eat To The Beat, Blondie,** from Korvette's at Green Acres Mall. Korvette's was a department store and they had a record section that had some new wave and punk LPs. It was after they played on SNL, and the local rock radio station in New York was playing their music. Clem Burke immediately became my favourite drummer.

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

**David Byrne.** I loved the way he made music and videos, and I still love how he approaches making anything. Always changing. Sometimes I want to be **Mark Mothersbaugh**, too.

## What do you sing in the shower?

**Sun Girl, Julia Holter.** It's not just the shower. It's also whenever I'm doing a task at home. I sing this to myself a lot, to accompany whatever errand I'm doing.

## What is your favourite Saturday night record?

**Exit, Def Rain.** Definitely. It sounds like nighttime in LA. Driving around and seeing all the twinkling lights in the hills.

## And your Sunday morning record?

**Sea Change, Beck.** It really does sound like the start of a day to me. When I thought of this question, this came up in my head right away.

*Fred Armisen's 100 Sound Effects is out on September 26 on Drag City.*

# ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

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

## Vernon Reid

LIVING COLOUR  
GUITAR AND BEYOND

### What music are you currently grooving to?

Another Life by **D'Angelo** And **The Vanguard**, **Geese's** Gravity Blues, **Jack White's** Archbishop Harold Holmes, All Blues by **Miles Davis**... what guides me is any artist that is trying to examine an aspect of the human condition, artists that are projecting or examining things in an imaginative framework. Also, **Joe Cocker's** Space Captain from *Mad Dogs & Englishmen*.



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

I have a pantheon of records I'd consider. If I was really on the spot... *Band Of Gypsies*, for Machine Gun. And *Mysterious Traveller* by **Weather Report**, because of Nubian Sundance. If anything felt like it's the sound of what would be called Afrofuturism, it's that, even though it was composed by an Austrian.

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

With my own money, *Cosmic Slop* by **Funkadelic**, which I bought at a store on Nostrand Avenue in Brooklyn.

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

None really. I mean, my whole thing is, I've always just wanted to figure out who the hell I am.

### What do you sing in the shower?

Oh man. Sometimes I sing *The Day I Tried To Live* by **Soundgarden**. That song had a huge impact on me, and *Superunknown* is one of my perfect desert island albums.

### What is your favourite Saturday night record?

The Humpty Dance by **Digital Underground**. Straight from the golden age of '90s hip-hop, absolutely. I wish there had been more of the hip-house genre. I thought there was a lot more stuff to get out of it.

### And your Sunday morning record?

**Doechii's** Boiled Peanuts. It's very theatrical and very, very fun. Saturday can be frenetic, so I'll just be calm.

*Vernon Reid's Hoodoo Telemetry is out October 3 via Artone/The Players Club Records.*

## Maddy Prior

STEELEYE SPAN'S VOICE

### What music are you currently grooving to?

I'm very taken with **Lady Gaga's** *Abracadabra*, that's amazing. Also, **Jonathan Byrd**, he writes Americana stuff, we did his song I Am An Oak Tree. And if I'm listening to traditional, I do like **Nic Jones**, **Martin Carthy** and **Paddy Tunney**.

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

Gor blimey. If anything, it would be one of my daughter **[Rose Kemp]**'s albums, *Golden Shroud* or *A Hand Full Of Hurricanes*, which I really like.

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

I think it was a **Kathleen Ferrier** record, bought for me by my parents. The first one I bought was **The Springfields'** *Island Of Dreams*, from Mark Greene's shop in St Albans – he was a brilliant guy. It was the first place I heard **Bob Dylan**, in a booth on a rainy Saturday afternoon – I was with **Donovan**, actually!

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

**"I first heard Bob Dylan, in a booth on a rainy Saturday afternoon, with Donovan!"**

MADDY PRIOR



When I was very young, I suppose I got a few tricks from **Joan Baez**, **Hedy West**, and Irish singers that decorate a lot. Then I sort of put them together as my own style. But I don't think I ever wanted to be somebody else.

### What do you sing in the shower?

I don't. I'm actually a very quiet person, I sort of sing in my head more.

### What is your favourite Saturday night record?

If it's for dancing, I'd go right back to *Baby Love* or trad jazz, **Chris Barber** or **Humphrey Lyttelton**. There was a jazz club in St Albans at the market hall, they all played there. It was a good town for an adolescence.

### And your Sunday morning record?

I've sung a lot of hymns in my time. Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind is a fantastic one.

*Steeleye Span's Conflict is out now. They tour the UK in November and December.*



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# Theories, rants, etc.

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## DID BOB DYLAN REALLY MEET PETE SEEGER

at Woody Guthrie's bedside, and sleep on his couch? Was Albert Grossman his first manager, not Terri Thal? Are we *entirely* sure that an audience member shouted "Judas!" at Dylan during his Newport Folk Festival set in 1965? For some of us, it was hard to watch *A Complete Unknown* without a residual weight of Dylanology complicating the experience. A good film, for sure, but one where the narrative arc sometimes took precedence over the details of what actually happened.

Does it matter? Maybe not, and of course Blind Boy Grunt has hardly been averse to the odd fabrication himself these past six and a half decades. Nevertheless, there are times when it's important to get the facts right, and none more so than in a MOJO cover story that coincides with a new edition of the *Bootleg Series*: a deep dive into Dylan prehistory tracking him from Duluth to Greenwich Village. Here, we find Terri Thal, Judy Collins, John Sebastian and more helping us reconstruct the real story of Dylan's quicksilver evolution. As the singer himself knew, knowledge is power: "He really paid attention," says Thal. "If you talked to him, he was riveted. He wanted to learn."



JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

## There was a time when the old songs were new, right?

It's not often I open up a magazine and am taken aback, but MOJO 383 was an exception. The article on Mike Taylor was most welcome. Having purchased second-hand copies of *Pendulum* and *Trio* from Dobell's back in the days when you could buy British jazz at sensible prices, the recent reissues of those albums – along with *Preparation* – saves me the stress of playing the originals. I can just sit and look at them now – is that weird?

I know it's difficult to fit everything into an article, but mention should be made of the album *Mike Taylor Remembered*. The story is that Jon Hiseman rescued a number of half-completed scores from Mike Taylor's brother's dustbin. Apparently, these had been thrown away by Taylor during one of his many personal crises. Neil Ardley, Dave Gelly, Barbara Thompson and Howard Riley took these fragments and arranged them as they thought Taylor would have envisaged. Of course there's no way of knowing if the works on this album would have had any resemblance to Taylor's vision, but the arrangements are marvellous and Taylor's genius shines through. Recorded at Lansdowne Studios in 1972, the finished album found no takers, and it wasn't until 2007 that it was released by Trunk. The album was reissued two or three years ago on the Lantern Heights label and can be obtained quite

reasonably if you can't track down the Trunk version.

*Jim Repper, via e-mail*

...Congratulations on publishing a fantastic article by Andrew Male about the life and work of Mike Taylor, whom I also wrote about. With regards to the tragic and mysterious events surrounding his death, when I interviewed the late Ron Rubin back in 2004, he believed that Mike may have tried to swim the Thames Estuary to get to his grandparents' house in Herne Bay and simply got overcome by the strong currents. As journalist Bob Dawbarn said of him in his obituary in the February 15, 1969 edition of *Melody Maker*, "he looked like a bank clerk, but acted like a mystic."

*Steve Ingless, Theddingworth, Leicestershire*

## Track some mud on a carpet

I thoroughly enjoyed your article on Robert Plant [MOJO 383]. What came over was what a thoroughly decent and down-to-earth guy he is. It reminded me of the time I (briefly) met him. My friend John and I went to see Emmylou Harris in Birmingham. We were having a drink before the show, and my mate said, "Look, Robert Plant's over there, go and ask for his autograph." Like an idiot I said, OK. I go over, and he's having a beer with some friends including Bev Bevan of ELO. I ask him to please sign the ticket for the show. He smiles at me, says, "Sure, no problem," and hands his beer to Bev. I



thanked him, and he said, “My pleasure.” I thought, that’s how it should be, a local guy enjoying going to see music he likes with mates, not a preening rock god with minders. Keep on doing what you do, Robert.

Steve O'Donnell, Westport, Ireland

...What a fantastic CD is *Higher Rock: A Robert Plant Compilation*, given away free with this month's MOJO. An absolute joy.

Gerald Cleaver, Chulmleigh, Devon

## These chords I learned from a cowboy named Wigglefoot

Great piece on the period encompassing Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* album [MOJO 383] – an artist I'd previously mistakenly thought to be more identified with the folk milieu. I only recently heard the album, after curiosity about how The Jungle Line originally sounded led me to seek it out. I'd first heard Thomas Dolby's live take years ago on the flip of *She Blinded Me With Science*, so hearing the jazz textures on the original was quite a surprise. I could hear echoes of *Hissing...* in the jazz inflections of some of David Sylvian's earlier solo work, too.

Rob Kirby, Hitchin

## They say no-one wants to hear what a kid wrote last month

As a loyal MOJO reader, let me say that Stevie Chick – while a talented writer – doesn't know his head from his you-know-what when it comes to King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's discography. At least five of the albums he includes in his *How To Buy* [MOJO 382] are among KGLW's worst, even among their most ardent fans. Please let me offer alternate selections.

Instead of the uninspiring Morricone pastiche of *Eyes Like The Sky*, exchange with *Float Along – Fill Your Lungs* from the same year (2013), which sees KGLW get in touch with their inner Brian Jonestown Massacre. Instead of the lightweight, phoney-Kraftwerk electro-pop of *Butterfly 3000*, much more inventive and satisfying is *Made In Timeland* (2022), which finds the boys weaving ambient techno in and out of spacey instrumental jams and mood pieces with indigenous Australian instrumentation.

Instead of the dire *Changes*, replace with *Sketches Of Brunswick East* (2017), where the band creates a perfect blend of folk, pop and jazz. While *PetroDragonic Apocalypse* is quite good, what makes *Infest The Rats' Nest* (2019) a much better thrash metal album is that (unlike the former) it isn't beholden to orthodox thrash. Instead of the needlessly complex prog rock of *Polygondwanaland*, exchange with *12 Bar Bruise* (2012): while it probably doesn't appease Mr Chick's obsession with complexity, it's an infinitely more fun record to listen to.

With the exception of *The Dripping Tap*, everything on *Omnium Gatherum* is an inferior rehash of everything KGLW has done much better on earlier records. Much better would be to include either *K. G.* (2020) or *L. W.* (2021), both of whom perfect their

microtonal forays, with the latter adding a little dash of doom metal to end the proceedings.

Arturo L Andrade, Gwangju, South Korea

## To quote Mr Freud, I get quite paranoid

Danny Eccleston's review of Paul Weller's *Find El Dorado* [MOJO 382] is fabulously evocative, pop culture-informative and beautifully written. It's amazing how many of these songs put the lie to Weller's repeated disavowal of hippy culture: Incredible String Band founder's Clive's Song; the Bee Gees' I Started A Joke; White Plains' When You Are A King; and Richie Havens' Handouts In The Rain. It can't be long before Weller surprises us all with an LP of post-Syd Barrett Floyd covers. It's a relief to us lesser mortals that the erudite Eccleston misnames Weller's glorious career reboot album '21 Dreams'. It had 21 songs but was titled 22 *Dreams*.

Bruce Marsh, Newbury Park

## I couldn't sleep, took a drive, saw the ocean

A thousand thanks for the excellent tribute to the late, great musical genius Brian Wilson [MOJO 382]. By coincidence, when reading your article, I was in the middle of compiling a mixtape (well, USB flash drive) of remastered Beach Boys tracks to play in the car. Due to the recommendations of MOJO writers, I've now added five Wilson songs I'd never previously heard but already adore – Summer's Gone, Gettin' In Over My Head, The Warmth Of The Sun, and 'Til I Die, ending the compilation, fittingly, with The Last Song!

Tony Smith, Kettering

## It was fun to be on the carnival train with you

Great to see a 4-star review for the Cardiacs' *On Land And In The Sea* [MOJO 382]. When it was released, the British music scene was still suffering from the hangover wrought by punk, and the musical nihilism that affected the music press for 15 years after 1976's year zero. The likes of NME weren't sure about Cardiacs: were they punk? Were they prog? ... Best say nothing. I certainly wasn't aware of them in the years they were active. Members of Blur were listening, fortunately, and that open-mindedness bleeds through the many branches of their work to this day. Music isn't perhaps as central to people's lives as then, but these are more accepting times for the wealth of sounds around.

Mr Chris Hill, Milton Keynes

## Damn it, if you didn't bring a shovel

I love the magazine, but I defy anyone without 20/20 vision to read the text on page 67 about Robert Plant [MOJO 383]. The font may look cool, the graphic design stylish, but it's so small us older people are struggling.

Mark Holt, via e-mail

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# WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET MOJO



Jumping for joy: Pink Floyd (from left) Nick Mason, Roger Waters, Syd Barrett, Rick Wright, Bob Klose, Stanhope Gardens, Kensington, London, January 1965; Barrett's comic sketch featured in Shine On.



# The Madcap Writes

A new oral history of Pink Floyd brings never-seen letters from Syd Barrett. “Twistravegroovey-groove,” as he says himself.

**I**NTERSTELLAR OVERDRIVE. Flaming. Scream Thy Last Scream. Long Gone. And the alternative title of Dark Globe: Wouldn't You Miss Me. From Pink Floyd's *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* in 1967 to Barrett in 1970, Syd Barrett's recording career only lasted three years. But within his songs, his tragic arc can be traced, from the blazing English psychedelia of *Piper*... to the lost-in-the-woods acid martyrdom of his solo work and the years of absence that preceded his death in 2006.

The myths around Barrett have been foaming for more than 50 years, but now fresh insights arrive with new Pink Floyd book *Shine On*. Subtitled *The Definitive Oral History*, it's written by preeminent Floyd historian and MOJO contributor Mark Blake, who has distilled a lifetime's fandom and a 33-year interviewing relationship with the band into a compelling retelling of the story, from the principals' origins

**“You can have too much of Roger, even though he's a good mate.”**

**SYD BARRETT**

to the present day. New, unpublished and rare discussions with all the main players and a dizzying plethora of intimates are now joined by something to astound: a stash of letters from Barrett to his former Cambridge girlfriend Jenny Spires, dating from January to September 1965.

“I met and interviewed Jenny about 15 years ago,” says Blake. “We hadn't spoken for a few years, but she got in touch and said, ‘I've got these letters that have fallen through the cracks, they'll fill in the gaps of '65.’ And what was such a revelation to me about them is that they actually do: you've got Nick Mason and Roger Waters, years later, talking about trying to get on Ready, Steady, Go! and then you've got Syd actually telling you about it in real time. He's the one person who would be underrepresented because he never gave an interview after 1971. So to have these unpublished letters is to have new interview material, effectively. I think it gives it a real lift. Everyone's talking about him, and then you've got him talking himself.

“They're an honest reflection of what was going through his head as a young man,” Blake continues. “There's one letter where he's slightly upset because the band had actually broken up — Nick Mason and Roger Waters were working as architects and getting on with real life, but they get together a few months later and play at a party with David Gilmour's group

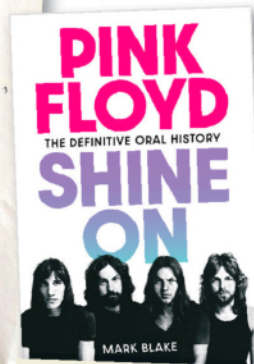






**Diamond in the rough:** (clockwise from main pic) Jenny Spires and Syd Barrett get close in 1965; Barrett's letter to Spires, telling her the band has split up; Barrett spotted in Cambridge, April 12, 2001.

and have a meal at Haverdon before we set up and start. Apparently it's a ball, so you'd better wear a dress or something, Jenny. Of course there will be lots to drink and eat, but if you'd rather do something else with your friends, then of course you must do so. As you know, you can see us at the Abbey, probably, on Saturday, so you needn't miss much, but I'd love you to come, if you want to. This week the group has split up, as I thought it would, and we're not playing together again after Cambridge, but that will probably make it more fun when we do play. Tonight I went to the 100 club, in Oxford Street. Twistravegroovegroove, and saw



◀ Jokers Wild. He talks about his first recording session as well — he hates the sound of his voice and feels quite intimidated being in a little studio in West Hampstead. There's also a lovely line which relates to sharing a room in London with Roger Waters: 'You can have too much of Roger, even though he's a good mate.'

Relaxed, lucid and playful, this is the young Barrett in the ascendant, as alive and vivid as any of the interviewees. As well as reflecting on matters Floyd, the letters find him digging the Small Faces, narrating bouts of toothache and chicken pox, and employing the excellent maxim 'twistravegroovegroove', and also decorating his letters with pop art graphics. 'It's just a shame he didn't talk more later, or that there aren't more letters about what was going on from 1967, '68 onwards,' says Blake, 'when things weren't going so well for him.'

In these carefree missives, the impending darkness of Barrett's mental illness, exacerbated by drug use, is implicit. This is a place *Shine On* goes to. Let go from the group in early 1968, Barrett's spectral afterlife in the saga includes turning up at Floyd studio dates in the 1970s, unreadable chance meetings with old friends, being sectioned and retreating to hermitdom in the family home in Cambridge.

Another interviewee is Barrett's youngest sister Rosemary Breen, who calls him by his real name Roger rather than his nickname. 'To me, that was a pivotal moment, to actually sit down and talk to a family member,' says Blake. 'You realise there's all this bullshit that has been built up over the years and you're confronted by a much clearer picture of the reality of it. She did say to me that her and her mum had blamed Pink Floyd in the past [for what befell], but she knew that there was a bigger problem. There's also Jenny, and Syd's other girlfriends who stayed in Cambridge, who were like, this is a guy I had a relationship with in the '60s, when he was this young, beautiful man, and now he's this damaged individual being shepherded around a department store by his sister, or pottering

around on his bicycle, and we're told not to talk to him.

'I'm not saying it's completely tragic, because he functioned, but he only functioned at a level,' says Blake. 'The success of Pink Floyd enabled him to live a comfortable life, but he never worked again and he never had relationships again. Something had gone awry, and all of that [creative genius] just stopped. So it is very poignant, and that sense of what could have been for Syd really came home for me with the letters.'

There is, of course, more to *Shine On*, which steers away from excessive detail to allow the conversation and impressions to flow, frequently into unexpected but illuminating directions. 'This book's full of grumpy old men, so it was great to talk to the much less grumpy and sort of eternally youthful girlfriends [including Barrett's other romantic interests Libby Chisman, Vivien 'Twig' Brans and Lindsay Corner], says Blake. 'They haven't got an agenda, they're not rushing out listening to anyone's latest album, they just judge it on how these young men were when they knew them, and that input is great.'

Elsewhere, future Floyd live guitarist Tim Renwick remembers Barrett as his boy scout patrol leader, lyricist Nick Laird-Clowes breaks cover to recall when he told Gilmour he was going to see *The Clash* (the guitarist's response: 'Why?') and Waters irately recalls Sinéad O'Connor suggesting 'Ice-T or one of those people' do a rap version of a song from *The Wall* live in Berlin in 1990.

Whatever the situation, it seems, Blake's been there and found articulate witnesses to

talk about it, with such important but now-departed voices as Wright, designer Storm Thorgerson, Barrett's artist pal Duggie Fields, counterculture catalyst John 'Hoppy' Hopkins and many more all present. Consequently, the familiar tale is reinvigorated, as we look upon post-Barrett transition and experiment, the huge coming-into-being of *The Dark Side Of The Moon*, *Wish You Were Here* and *The Wall*, on to serious money, fracture in the '80s and its aftermath. The band's non-communicating chemistry is also laid bare, and the dictatorial Waters emerges unsympathetically. When co-producer Bob Ezrin reacts to Waters' attempt to bully him with 'Read my lips, motherfucker. You cannot talk to me like that,' the reader might feel like cheering.

Another motivation for the book, says Blake, is that the end is closer than the beginning. 'They've sold their catalogue to Sony, which we talk about in the book,' he says. 'I think there's a feeling that they're letting it go, and a sense of relief that they're no longer shackled to this beast. There's also an element of wanting a final word — certainly in David Gilmour's case, to right a few wrongs and explain that his contribution was greater than it was sometimes made out to be, rather than the idea that it was Roger Waters that did it all. It will be really interesting to see how things pan out over the next few years, because Sony paid a fortune. It's not going to lie dormant, is it?'

*Shine On* will at least tie up the band's direct involvement in Pink Floyd, and ultimately the art, triumphs and sublime madness of their self-contained world should outweigh mortal rancour. 'It's easy to think that with all the bile and drivel that's gone on that there was never any companionship or joy to be shared amongst us,' says Gilmour, who admits he used Syd Barrett's birdfeeder in his garden for a while. 'But there certainly was.'

Ian Harrison

*Pink Floyd Shine On: The Definitive Oral History* by Mark Blake is published by New Modern on October 9.

**"The letters are an honest reflection of what was going through his head as a young man."**

**MARK BLAKE**



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Studio nut: Soft Cell's Marc Almond returns to his club roots, Dean St Studios, London, 2025.



“New York was quite a wild place then... we were partying quite a lot.”

DAVE BALL

Work began in the aftermath of a period of ill-health for Ball involving a fractured lower vertebrae, pneumonia, hospitalisation and sepsis (“I quite enjoyed morphine, but I wouldn’t recommend it as a way of life”). Recording in his home studio, Ball began sending vocalist and lyricist Marc Almond instrumental tracks two years ago. “I give things working titles, and one was Danceteria, because I’ve always loved the name. It wasn’t a concept, but it triggered something.”

Almond responded decisively to the challenge of the title, drawing from his memories of the club – “lost in time, drug-fuelled and full of ghosts.” More tracks began to be exchanged, with Ball in his 24th-storey eyrie overlooking west London and, from 2024, Almond recording his vocals in his favoured studio in Dean Street in Soho. “We have a strange, remote way of working,” says Ball. “We e-mail each other, there’s back and forth. He might say, ‘Can I put an extra eight bars there, or change the key?’ I’ll send it back until he’s happy. Marc’s very busy doing his solo stuff, so I send him things with no pressure. It could be six months before he gets back. Then Philip Larsen mixes it, and it all sounds great, like we’re all in the room together.”

One song, says Ball, was working-titled Giant. “I was thinking of the New York Giants,” he says. “It’s an epic, very futuristic Phil Spector sort of song. I was really into Phil Spector at that point in the early ’80s as well. I’m not trying to recreate that sound, it’s a modern album, but there are definitely moments when it could be a 2026 re-imagining of the early ’80s.”

When MOJO calls, Almond is putting down some final vocals. “It’s like a factory, a sort of production line,” says Ball. “Next year we’ll see what comes out of the end of the sausage machine.”

Ian Harrison

A super deluxe 6-CD box set of Soft Cell’s 1983 LP *The Art Of Falling Apart* is released on October 31 via Universal Music.

## SOFT CELL GO BACK TO DIRTY OLD NYC WITH DANCETERIA

**S**OFT CELL’s 2022 reunion album, *Happiness Not Included*, was a UK Top 10 hit but, like many groups of their vintage, they’re also curating the legacy. An expanded version of pioneering remix mini-LP *Non Stop Ecstatic Dancing* came out in June: recorded at New York’s Mediasound studio in cold February 1982, it was notoriously made under the influence of then-legal MDMA, years before acid house.

The group will imaginatively return to that time and place for their sixth full-length LP *Danceteria*, named for the famed early-’80s

Manhattan nightspot.

“New York was quite wild then,” says instrumentalist Dave Ball. “We were recording there and partying quite a lot. It looked like Scorsese’s *Taxi Driver*, with steam coming out of the manholes and Checker cabs rolling along.”

“We’d always wanted to return to our club roots, and to one of our favourite places,” adds Marc Almond. “In many ways it’s a return to *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*, which I always thought of as a song cycle to Soho. This time the theme is a trip through New York in 1982.”

### FACT SHEET

**Title:** *Danceteria*  
**Date:** 2026  
**Production:** Soft Cell, Philip Larsen  
**Songs:** TBC  
**The Buzz:** “The idea is roughly around when we were going to that club in New York, who we were seeing, what we were up to, and what was going on, but obviously, Marc’s lyric writing has matured and he’s writing from his real point of view now. And I’m definitely finding new tricks – you get better at what you’re doing.”

Dave Ball

### ALSO WORKING

...in early August **BOB DYLAN**

(right) and band spent two days at White Lake Studios in Colonie, New York. “We want every artist and guest to feel relaxed and at home,” said studio boss **David Bourgeois**. “This visit was truly special.” Details of what went down were not disclosed... **YOUTH** is recording “beautiful ambient textures



and music” with his **Chant Ambient** project, with help from **Brian Eno**, **Matt Black** from **Coldcut**, **Mixmaster Morris** and more. Expect it next year... speaking to the Vinyl Guide podcast, **DESCENDENTS’ Bill Stevenson** said, “we have to put a record out next year or I’m gonna blow my brains out... we already have like, 25 songs recorded”... “the final new studio album from **MINISTRY**” is

promised for next year. It will see **Al Jourgensen** reunite with bassist **Paul Barker** for the first time since 2003... **Chris Stein** has revealed that the next **BLONDIE** (right) album will be out in 2026 and that late drummer **Clem Burke**, “played the whole thing”... **Geoff Downes’** proggers **ASIA** have signed a deal to record a new album in 2026... The Sun reported that **THE ROLLING STONES**



have been working on a new record in London since April, saying, “They’ve got 13 songs they’re happy with and they are discussing when they can release it” and that **Andrew Watt** has produced... **BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN** told the New York Times that he’s written new songs that relate to his Catholic upbringing. “I feel like I’ve got plenty of work left in me,” he added...





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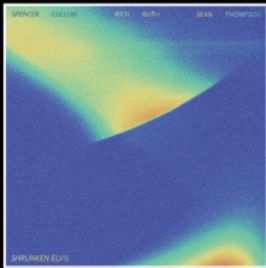
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**SHRUNKEN ELVIS**  
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**LADY WRAY**  
**COVER GIRL**  
BIG CROWN RECORDS LP / CD

Lady Wray makes her highly anticipated return with Cover Girl, her third album on Big Crown Records produced entirely by long time collaborator, Grammy-winning producer Leon Michels (Norah Jones / Clairo / El Michels Affair).



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**24 HR SPORTS**  
24 HR SPORTS LP / CD

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**CARSON MCHONE**  
**PENTIMENTO**  
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

Carson McHone's most audacious and compelling effort to date, arranged here in exquisite articulations of pastoral folk that build to moments of organic and tactile rock.



**GANSER**  
**ANIMAL HOSPITAL**  
FELTE LP

The most dynamic album yet from Chicago art punks Ganser, Animal Hospital stretches the confines of their sonic boundaries into new territories. It is a monument to observation & stray thoughts gathered while moving through crowds.



**PÔT-POT**  
**WARSAW 480KM**  
FELTE LP

The debut LP from the Irish/Portuguese quintet infuse krautrock grooves with psych-rock radiance, underscored by harmonium drones, deep layers of texture, and hypnotic male-female vocal harmonies.



**ASHER WHITE**  
**8 TIPS FOR CATASTROPHE LIVING**  
JOYFUL NOISE RECORDINGS LP / CD

Explodes self-help tropes into a chaotic, genre-jumping collage—power pop to doom metal to bossa nova—tracing avatars of unravelling women through slow apocalypse. It's mindfulness for a collapsing world, held together by duct tape & whippets.



**MARK WILLIAM LEWIS**  
**MARK WILLIAM LEWIS**  
A24 LP / CD

Mark William Lewis' timeless self-titled album moves between nostalgic, deep-rooted poems and upbeat, indie rock grooves. Presented as A24 Music's first independent artist release.



**WILL PAQUIN**  
**HAAAAHA**  
WILL PAQUIN MUSIC LP

Hahaha is a celebration of shared energy, of chaos, of the kind of laughter that erupts when you're fully alive in the moment. It's a guitar-forward, psych-faced, garage-rock catharsis.



**PICKLE DARLING**  
**BATTLEBOTS**  
FATHER/DAUGHTER RECORDS LP / CD

The 4th album by New Zealand's Pickle Darling pushes the boundaries of their outsider bedroom pop. An unruly counterpoint to the clear-cut songwriting of their previous albums, shaped by chopped-up production & the push-and-pull of experimentation.



**MICHAEL HURLEY**  
**BROKEN HOMES AND GARDENS**  
NO QUARTER LP / CD

The final studio album from Michael Hurley. Re-workings of older compositions ("Indian Chiefs and Hula Girls", "Abominable Snowman") alongside new songs ("Fava", "The Monkey") making for a brilliant final collection.



**JOAN SHELLEY**  
**REAL WARMTH**  
NO QUARTER LP / CD

Joan Shelley's 7th studio album recorded in Toronto with producer Ben Whitley (The Weather Station) and featuring many guests from the city's fertile music scene (Tamara Lindenman, Doug Paisley).

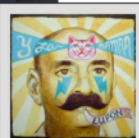
AN IRELAND: DUBLIN - SPINDRIZZY / KILKENNY - ROLLER COASTER / ISLE OF MAN: DOUGLAS - SOUND SCOTLAND: DUNDEE - ASSAI / EDINBURGH - ASSAI / EDINBURGH - THORNE RECORDS / GLASGOW - ASSAI / GLASGOW - LOVE MUSIC / GLASGOW - MONORAIL WALES: ABERYSTWYTH - ANDY'S RECORDS / CARDIFF - SPILLERS / NEWPORT - DIVERSE / SWANSEA - DERRICKS NORTH - WEST LIVERPOOL - 81 REKSHAW LTD / LIVERPOOL - PROBE / LIVERPOOL - ROUGH TRADE / MANCHESTER - PICCADILLY RECORDS / NANTWICH - AP-PLSTUMP RECORDS LTD / PRESTON - ACTION RECORDS NORTH EAST: BINGLEY - FIVE RISE / HARROGATE - P & C MUSIC / HEADINGLEY - VINYL WHISTLE / HUDDERSFIELD - VINYL TAP / LEEDS - CRASH LEEDS - JUMBO RECORDS / NEWCASTLE - J - J G WINDOWS / NEWCASTLE - BEATDOWN / NEWCASTLE - REFLEX / SHEFFIELD - BEAR TREE / SHEFFIELD - RECORD COLLECTOR / SHEFFIELD - SPINNING DISCS MIDLANDS: CAMBRIDGE - RELEVANT / COVENTRY - JUST DROPPED IN / LEAMINGTON SPA - SEISMIC / LEIGHTON BUZZARD - BLACK CIRCLE / LETCHWORTH - DAVID'S MUSIC / LOUTH - OFF THE BEATEN TRACK / NOTTINGHAM - ROUGH TRADE / OXFORD - TRUCK STORE / WINNEY TRUCK SOUTH: BEXHILL ON SEA - MUSIC'S NOT DEAD / BLANDFORD FORUM - REVOLUTION ROCKS / BRIGHTON - RESIDENT / BURY ST.EDMUNDS - VINYL HUNTER / CANTERBURY - VINYL STORE JR / GODALMING - RECORD CORNER / LEIGH-ON-SEA - FIVES / LONDON - BANQUET GRAVITY / LONDON - CASBAH / LONDON - FLASHBACK / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE EAST / LONDON - ROUGH TRADE TALBOT RD / LONDON - SISTER RAY / LONDON - STRANGER THAN PARADISE RECORDS / LUTON - VINYL REVELATIONS / NORWICH - SOUNDCLASH / NORWICH / VENUS VINYL / ROMSEY - HUNDRED / SOUTHSEA - PIE & VINYL / SOUTHEAST ON SEA - SOUTH RECORDS / ST ALBANS - EMPIRE RECORDS / WATFORD - PARADE VIBES / WIMBORNE - SQUARE RECORDS / WHITSTABLE - GATEFIELD SOUNDS / WINCHESTER - ELEPHANT RECORDS SOUTH WEST: BRISTOL - ROUGH TRADE / CHELTENHAM - BADLANDS / FALMOUTH - JAM FROME - RAVES FROM THE GRAVE / MARLBOROUGH - SOUND KNOWLEDGE / TOTNES - DRIFT MAILORDER AND INTERNET ONLY STORES: BLEEP.COM / BOOMKAT.COM / JUNO / NORMANRECORDS.COM / PEBBLE RECORDS CO.UK / RECORDSTORE.CO.UK

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**Fighting talk:**  
Neko Case knows  
the music is never  
going to stop.



## CASE'S HIGH Five Neko faves.

- 1 **The Damned**  
13th Floor Vendetta  
(CHISWICK, 1980)
- 2 **Des Demons**  
The South Will  
Never Rise Again (IN  
THE RED, 2017)
- 3 **Flat Duo Jets**  
Crazy Hazy Kisses  
(IRS, 1967)
- 4 **The 5.6.7.8's**  
Motorcycle  
Go-Go-Go! (TOKYO  
STIFF, 1989)
- 5 **Y La Bamba**  
Juniper (TENDER LOVING  
EMPIRE, 2011)

So I just pivoted. For me it wasn't especially heavy or cathartic in that I'm an open person. I've done a lot of talk therapy and I wasn't telling any stories that I had never told before, at least to my friends.

**Your new album is being described as a kind of homage to musicians you've known and loved, and in some cases, lost – including the Flat Duo Jets' Dex Romweber and The Sadies' Dallas Good. Did you have the concept in mind from the start?**

I had an idea going in, but it started to reveal itself as being a record about musicians and a lament, but also a tribute and a celebration. We're living in a time where so much is being taken over by AI and there's so much streaming stuff that we don't have any say in. Musicians, artists, are very commodified and in some cases, erased.

**The album also finds you working with a chamber orchestra.**

I wanted there to be real people there making those sounds. And maybe not everybody can hear it, but I can tell the difference between a live orchestra versus a keyboard symphony or synthesizer symphony. I just remember being in the room when all the musicians were playing and I was just bawling my eyes out because it was so beautiful.

**How do you find the prospect of a world filled with AI-generated music?**

Every single element of every single industry is scary right now. When I think about AI music, I'm like, Well, they're probably going to fill supermarkets with that. But I'm not threatened by it because I don't believe that there's such a thing as an AI song that will ever make you want to pull your car over and cry. So I know that musicians cannot be disappeared. Even though that's something that the big [tech] companies probably would like.

**You've been working on a stage adaptation of *Thelma & Louise*. What's that experience been like?**

I was definitely the film's target audience. I saw the movie a ton of times and stood up in my seat when they gunned the engine at the end. I got to know Callie through [her husband/record producer] T Bone Burnett years later. In 2016, she called me and said, "I want you to do it because you're not a musical theatre person, and the lyrics need to be different." I knew it was going to take a long time, and it's been almost 10 years, but it has been amazing. Even if it never makes it to Broadway or to the stage in London, it's been a masterclass in songwriting and storytelling for me.

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

Believe it or not, the sexiest thing anybody ever said to me, and it was really surprising, was: "I used your toothbrush."

Bob Mehr

*Neon Grey Midnight Green* is out on September 26 via ANTI-.

## Neko Case

The flaming indie-country talent talks memoirs, real strings and a *Thelma & Louise* musical.

**T**HE PAST YEAR has been busy for Neko Case, with 2025 bookended by a pair of major projects from the acclaimed dark Americana singer and songwriter. In January, she published her first book, the New York Times bestseller, *The Harder I Fight The More I Love You: A Memoir*. And this fall, Case will release *Neon Grey Midnight Green*, her first album in seven years. Her ninth studio LP – since launching her solo career in 1997 with *The Virginian* – is a self-produced affair cut largely at Case's own studio in Vermont. In addition, she's wrapping up work on a forthcoming *Thelma & Louise* stage produc-

tion, having been tapped by screenwriter and Academy Award-winner Callie Khouri to help adapt it. Despite all this, Case remains very much a working, and working-class, musician – one who's been outspoken about the growing threat to art of streaming and AI. "The music is never going to stop," notes Case, "but it's going to get harder."

**The *Harder I Fight* was an unflinching look at your life and childhood (distressingly, Case's mother faked her own death). What made you want to write it?**

I wrote it because I had to, because it was Covid, I couldn't tour and I needed the money. That sounds harsh. I thought maybe I'll get to write fiction or something. And [the publisher] was like, No, we want you to write a memoir.

**"An AI song will never make you want to pull your car over and cry."**

NEKO CASE



## LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

### Phil Manzanera

Roxy Music's guitar maestro on the world opened up by The Soft Machine's debut (ABC, 1968).



I WAS SENT from Venezuela to boarding school in Dulwich. My best friend was a guy called Bill McCormick. He wasn't a boarder like me, and every

day on the way home he would pop into Robert Wyatt's house where he lived with his mum and Soft Machine would be rehearsing in the front room [McCormick and Wyatt's mothers worked together]. This was when everything was kicking off in London. You'd be reading the International Times about the Roundhouse gigs with Pink Floyd and The Soft Machine – they were the hippest bands in London. It was a vicarious line for me via Bill to someone who was famous and in a band. We were obsessed with everything they did.

There's something particularly British about this LP. Robert is listed as the lead singer, but on the last three tracks you can hear Kevin Ayers and he becomes this Syd Barrett-like character. There's this whole Canterbury whimsical side there. The great thing about it, is it's got pop on it. There are recognisable songs. It doesn't go full-on jazz or anything, and lyrically it's got that witty, British side to it.

I met Robert. Having a mentor who you look up to spurs you on. It made it seem like being in a band wasn't an unreachable thing – you just needed a bit of luck. Me and Bill were later in a band called Quiet Sun. We supported Robert and Bill joined his band, Matching Mole. I thought it was curtains for me, but then I answered the ad in Melody Maker to join Roxy Music!

Because Robert has recorded at my studio, and also Kevin when he was alive, I've got my copy signed by both of them, which is just such a thrill for me.

As told to Chris Catchpole

Phil Manzanera & Andy Mackay's (ft. special guest Paul Thompson) AM PM Soho Live is out September 19 on Expression Records.



## WELCOME BACK, BELOVED WEIRDOS **CHEAP TRICK** AND THE RIFFS THAT WON'T QUIT!

“I ALWAYS SAY, Cheap Trick has *never* progressed,” says guitarist Rick Nielsen, Zooming from his Chicago-area home. “We were loud and noisy when we started. We still are.”

The forthcoming Cheap Trick album, jokingly titled *All Washed Up*, proves Nielsen's point. Standout tracks Twelve Gates and The Riff That Won't Quit, with Robin Zander's age-defying pipes wrapped around a blaze of Beatle melody and Slade stomp, could fit neatly on any of their previous 20 albums. But when your livelihood is touring and merchandising, why even bother making new albums? “Purely for our own enjoyment, that's what it's come to,” says bassist Tom Petersson. “It's like having a lottery ticket. Yeah, you *could* win, but probably not.”

Back in the mid-'70s, the band's oddball teen anthems (suicide and venereal disease, anyone?) and dreamboats-versus-nerds image hardly seemed like a winning ticket. “We played bars to survive, but we were freaks – people hated us,” Petersson says. “It was ‘Free Bird!’ all night.” Nielsen adds, “I was never cute. I was never gonna be Keith Richards. I was a wise-ass, what I called ‘a screaming chicken’, mouthing off and smashing ceiling tiles with my guitar.”

Three cult-ish albums in, they hit big in Japan. “When we landed in Tokyo, we thought there were some important dignitaries on the plane,” Nielsen recalls. “Tons of people yelling, chasing us in taxis. It's like, finally, somebody gets us!”

Live record... At Budokan's platinum success set them on a multi-decade ride of highs and lows.

Working with George Martin: “He made us sound better than we were,” Petersson says. Giving into record label demands to cut sappy outside material, like The Flame: “I threw the demo cassette down on the ground and stomped on it,” Nielsen says. “But Robin sang it great.” Playing on John and Yoko's *Double Fantasy* sessions: “Lennon said, ‘I wish I would've had Rick on Cold Turkey,’” Nielsen says. “Because Clapton choked up.”

And lowest of the lows – having to sack drummer Bun E Carlos in 2010 (Nielsen's son Daxx replaced him). “I love Bun E for what he is,” sighs Nielsen. “He was always a fuddy-duddy, but he got nasty. That made it bad for us.”

After a return to Budokan this fall, there's more roadwork in the US. Though Nielsen loves the 90 minutes on-stage each night, he says “travelling blows... Also, I can't throw my picks any more. I have a torn rotator cuff. Pisses me off.” With generations of artists from Nirvana to Weezer hailing them as influences, how do the seventysomethings view their legacy? “I don't really hear it musically,” Petersson says. “Maybe it's more just our spirit of perseverance and humour that's inspiring?”

“Let's just say, I think we're a lot of people's fifth favourite band,” Nielsen laughs. “And that's fine.” What he sees as more important is their ever-flying freak flag. “Flea from the Chili Peppers once told my son, ‘Cheap Trick were weird before it was cool to be weird!’”

Bill DeMain

Cheap Trick's *All Washed Up* is released by BMG on November 14.

**“I think we're a lot of people's fifth favourite band.”**

**RICK NIELSEN**



Weird science: Cheap Trick (from left) Rick Nielsen, Tom Petersson and Robin Zander continue to fly the freak flag.





## JOSH HADEN RETURNS TO THE BLUE MOODS OF SPAIN

**“THE BLUE MOODS** *Of Spain* is the only album I’ve made with such a definitive idea of the outcome,” says Josh Haden, the skipper of the changeable combo he called Spain after the name arrived in a dream. Released in 1995, he says his atmospheric, melancholic debut “came together magically: the perfect musicians and producer, and artwork. It was amazing and beautiful, and I still feel that way today.”

Spain’s subsequent six studio albums share moments of smoky, late-night intoxication, but none, he admits, had the impact of that first record. But rather than try to escape its long shadow, he’s embraced it. Following a series of archival releases from the period, a 30th-anniversary double vinyl reissue and a European tour to play it live are coming in the autumn.

**“I started teaching myself, through trial and error – mostly error.”**

**JOSH HADEN**

Steven Dwyall/Redferns

“I wouldn’t have a career without *Blue Moods*...” Haden says, zooming from his home in Thousand Oaks, north of L.A. Its successful ’95 world tour, he recalls, involved rapt gigs, limos and a Norwegian flight where the stewardess brought a tray of complimentary champagne. “‘From the pilot,’ she said. ‘We know who you are.’”

It had taken time, though, for Haden to discover who he really was. Like his be-bop eminence father Charlie Haden, Josh took up bass but, “rebellious against Dad – I still can’t read or write music,” he formed Treacherous Jaywalkers, a Meat Puppets-style punk trio. Yet over time, Haden circled back to his old man’s world by investigating his jazz and blues collection.

“I heard John Lee Hooker’s *It Serve You Right To Suffer*,” Haden recalls. “I thought, How do I write like this?” Discovering Cowboy Junkies’ *The Trinity Session* while working as assistant librarian at KCRW Radio in Santa Monica triggered the same reaction. “So, I started teaching myself, through trial and error – mostly error.”

### HADEN VOYAGE

Josh in three lethal doses.

#### Spain

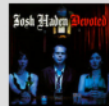
*The Blue Moods Of Spain*  
(RESTLESS, 1995)



A defining statement of slowcore, Spain’s signature LP is an aching, lovelorn masterpiece. Desolate yet warm, it’s an hour-long voyage into torch song, jazz and blues. Rick Rubin bought 30 copies to give away.

#### Josh Haden

*Devoted*  
(DIAMOND SOUL, 2007)



Guided by hip-hop savant Dan The Automator, Haden’s solo album hit the reset button. The mood remained blue and arrangements spare while trying on soul, trip-hop, even reggae, while his melodic songwriting held steady.

#### Spain

*Mandala Brush*  
(GLITTERHOUSE, 2018)



2012’s *The Soul Of Spain* featured his sisters The Haden Triplets and expanded Haden’s gritty rootsiness. This most recent album took things higher and deeper. Think miasmic jazz, burnished blue soul, North African and Latin fusion, and, inspired by an ocean liner-shaped hotel, the breezy Folkstone, Kent.

*Blue Moods*... saw, “every major label try to steal us,” including Rich Rubin’s American. Under Rubin’s direction, Johnny Cash covered the album’s peak country-gospel finale *Spiritual*. “A high-level record executive advised me: ‘If you want to make more money, write another *Spiritual*,’” Haden recalls. “But it’s got to be relevant to the present.”

Every Time I Try from 1999’s *She Haunts My Dreams* was featured on Wim Wenders’ movie *The End Of Violence*, but after 2001’s third album *I Believe* Haden broke up the band and got a Creative Writing MFA. Then Dan The Automator offered to produce 2007’s solo album *Devoted*. Spain soon reconvened, but with the limos long gone, Haden admits making a living through music is hard. He’s his own manager/

booking agent, and while Substack, Bandcamp and royalties help, there has been no new studio album since 2018.

“It takes time to organise things,” he sighs. “But I receive messages all the time, from people wanting more Spain. I want those people to know, I’m not giving up.”

Martin Aston

*The Blue Moods Of Spain* is reissued by Rhino on October 3. Spain tour Britain and Europe in November.



## CABARET VOLTAIRE

NOVEMBER 2025

- |    |                                   |                      |
|----|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 17 | GLASGOW SWG3<br>+ CURRENTMOODGIRL | SOLD OUT             |
| 18 | MANCHESTER GORILLA<br>+ I AM FYA  | SOLD OUT             |
| 19 | BIRMINGHAM XOYO<br>+ VANISHING    | LIMITED AVAILABILITY |
| 21 | LONDON ICA<br>+ SOBORGHOST        | SOLD OUT             |

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| 21 SEP CORN EXCHANGE / EXETER                      | SOLD OUT         | 12 OCT RNCM THE THEATRE / MANCHESTER |
| 22 SEP GUILDHALL / AXMINSTER                       |                  | 14 OCT FLORAL THEATRE / NEW BRIGHTON |
| 23 SEP KINGS THEATRE / PORTSMOUTH                  |                  | 15 OCT ALHAMBRA / DUNFERMLINE        |
| 25 SEP PALACE THEATRE / REDDITCH                   |                  | 16 OCT BARBICAN / YORK               |
| 26 SEP TOWN HALL / BIRMINGHAM                      |                  | 18 OCT THE FIRE STATION / SUNDERLAND |
| 28 SEP ROYAL & DERNGATE CONCERT HALL / NORTHAMPTON |                  | 19 OCT ORCHARD WEST / DARTFORD       |
| 29 SEP CHELMSFORD THEATRE / CHELMSFORD             | SOLD OUT         | 28 OCT THE STABLES / MILTON KEYNES   |
| 01 OCT CORN EXCHANGE / IPSWICH                     |                  | 29 OCT THE APEX / BURY ST EDMUNDS    |
| 02 OCT WHITE ROCK THEATRE / HASTINGS               |                  | 31 OCT PRINCES HALL / ALDERSHOT      |
| 03 OCT ASSEMBLY THEATRE / TUNBRIDGE WELLS          |                  | 01 NOV GROVE THEATRE / DUNSTABLE     |
| 05 OCT CHURCHILL THEATRE / BROMLEY                 | LOW AVAILABILITY | 03 NOV BRINDLEY THEATRE / RUNCORN    |
| 06 OCT CORN EXCHANGE / CAMBRIDGE                   |                  | 04 NOV THE COURTYARD / HEREFORD      |
| 08 OCT CORN EXCHANGE / KINGS LYNN                  |                  | 05 NOV MEMORIAL HALL / SHEFFIELD     |
| 09 OCT PALACE THEATRE / MANSFIELD                  |                  | 07 NOV THE FORUM / BATH              |
|  |                  | 08 NOV WILLIAM ASTON HALL / WREXHAM  |

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- |  |  |
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| WEDNESDAY 26 NOVEMBER<br>OVO HYDRO<br>GLASGOW  | SATURDAY 29 NOVEMBER<br>ALEXANDRA PALACE<br>LONDON |

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### APRIL

- |        |                                    |        |                             |
|--------|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Tue 7  | GLASGOW<br>ROYAL CONCERT HALL      | Tue 14 | SOUTHEND<br>CLIFFS PAVILION |
| Wed 8  | GATESHEAD<br>GLASSHOUSE INT CENTRE | Wed 15 | LONDON<br>PALLADIUM         |
| Thu 9  | MANCHESTER<br>OPERA HOUSE          | Fri 17 | BATH<br>FORUM               |
| Sat 11 | WATFORD<br>COLOSSEUM               | Sun 19 | BIRMINGHAM<br>SYMPHONY HALL |
| Sun 12 | OXFORD<br>NEW THEATRE              | Mon 20 | BOURNMOUTH<br>PAVILION      |

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ME  
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**“We’re watching the world’s corrupt systems begin to collapse. And they should.”**

**ANNAHSTASIA**

**FACT SHEET**

● For Fans Of: Nina Simone, Tracy Chapman, Bill Withers

● Annahstasia financed recording *Tether* with money from her side-hustle as a model. “It’s a chill way to make a quick buck,” she says. “But I quit in 2022. It was dehumanising. I make human, honest folk music that’s like, Let me show you every imperfection, every shadow of myself. Existing in both of those worlds didn’t make sense anymore.”

● She played her first tour in 2019, opening up for an old family friend: Lenny Kravitz. “Lenny’s vegan, he drinks a lot of water, he gets his sleep,” Annahstasia reports. “He was a good person to go on my first tour with, because he didn’t set an expectation that I was supposed to get wasted. To do this for your lifetime, you gotta take care of yourself. You’re basically an athlete. And it’s a marathon, not a sprint.”

**KEY TRACKS**

● Villain  
● Unrest  
● Believer

**Unleashed: Annahstasia cuts loose on her debut LP *Tether*.**

## FOLK RADICAL **ANNAHSTASIA** KNOWS, FINALLY, HOW IT FEELS TO BE FREE

“I’VE TRIED to quit music many times,” sighs Annahstasia, a 30-year-old Los Angeleno singer-songwriter who lost her patience for the entertainment industry’s machinations years ago. “I came out of the gate like this,” she adds, referencing the searing, forthright voice that makes her debut, *Tether*, such a compelling listen. “But I had to be merry-go-rounded through all the genres before I could come back to myself.”

She’d never hungered for stardom; her parents, both fashion designers, “made clear that the arts was a heavy commitment,” she says. “You were signing up for struggle, for torment.” But a summer with her musician uncle, touring with a big-name artist around Europe, started a fire within the 14-year-old Annahstasia. It wasn’t the prospect of fame and adoration that piqued her interest; it was the iPod her uncle gifted her when she confessed all she listened to was Disney Channel tween-pop. “He was like, ‘Hell, no’, and loaded the iPod with all the music on his laptop: Bill Withers, Son House, Funkadelic. I gripped onto Nina Simone in particular.”

Back home, she began writing her first

songs. “I was still going to go to medical school,” she adds. “Writing songs was fun, but it wasn’t my fantasy.” But then a friend’s big-time label-exec father heard the 17-year-old Annahstasia singing at high school. “They said, ‘Do you wanna be a star?’ And I thought, Well, do I?” Following several frustrating years of being refashioned as the next Adele or Rihanna – an experience that left her “emotionally devastated; I didn’t touch my guitar for years” – Annahstasia decided that, actually, she did not want to be a star, quitting the pop machine to study political science. A few years after graduation, however, she self-released her debut EP, *Sacred Bull*, in 2019. And then Covid hit.

“Touring and performing was off the table,” she says. “I spun into a deep depression. I was \$20k in debt. But then I picked up my acoustic guitar. Death was all around, and I kept thinking, What do I want to leave behind if I die? And I said, I’ve not made that

folk album I always wanted to do when I was 17.” A Bedford-Stuyvesant open-mike early in the creative process for *Tether* revived her self-confidence, as she performed the intense, heart-rending songs that would become *Tether* in public for the first time. “I’d felt so lonely, so isolated,” she remembers. “But those 20 people urged me to keep going, and when they passed the hat around, I made 200 bucks! That night changed my metric for success. It was no longer about stardom. I was a folk artist now, and what mattered was, did I communicate honestly? Has it translated to people?”

Now signed to Drink Sum Wtr, Annahstasia is harvesting the fruits of her remarkable debut, with recent performances on Later... With Jools Holland at the BBC Proms. She’s already thinking of

*Tether*’s follow-up, switching the focus from herself to the world around her, but relinquishing none of her righteous fervour. “I’ve started writing protest songs,” she smiles. “We’re watching the world’s corrupt systems begin to collapse. And they should.”

*Stevie Chick*

*Annahstasia’s Tether is out now on Drink Sum Wtr.*



# suede

## ANTIDEPRESSANTS UK TOUR 2026

### JANUARY

FRI 30 FOLKESTONE LEAS CLIFF HALL  
SAT 31 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL

### FEBRUARY

MON 02 BRISTOL BEACON  
TUE 03 GUILDFORD GLIVE  
THU 05 EDINBURGH USHER HALL  
FRI 06 LIVERPOOL UNIMOUNTFORD HALL  
SAT 07 YORK BARBICAN

MON 09 LINCOLN THE ENGINE SHED

TUE 10 NORWICH UEA  
WED 11 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE  
FRI 13 SHEFFIELD OCTAGON  
SAT 14 NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL  
MON 16 COVENTRY HMV EMPIRE  
TUE 17 BATH FORUM  
THU 19 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY  
FRI 20 SOUTHEAST CLIFFS PAVILION  
SAT 21 BRIGHTON CENTRE

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**SOLD OUT** CARDIFF TRAMSHED

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**SOLD OUT** BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY

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### NEW DATES ADDED FOR 2025

#### OCTOBER 2025

THU 02 IPSWICH CORN EXCHANGE  
FRI 03 BATH FORUM  
SAT 04 NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDERS  
THU 09 YORK BARBICAN  
FRI 10 LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY  
SAT 11 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDOME

THU 16 MIDDLESBROUGH TOWN HALL

FRI 17 LINCOLN ENGINE SHED

SAT 18 KEELE UNIVERSITY STUDENT UNION

THU 23 WORTHING ASSEMBLY HALL

FRI 24 BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY

SAT 25 CHESTERFIELD WINDING WHEEL

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SAT 22 NOVEMBER  
SHEFFIELD NETWORK  
SUN 23 NOVEMBER  
LEEDS O2 ACADEMY  
WED 26 NOVEMBER  
BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE  
THU 27 NOVEMBER  
NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY  
FRI 28 NOVEMBER  
LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY

SUN 30 NOVEMBER  
MANCHESTER O2 RITZ  
MON 01 DECEMBER  
OXFORD O2 ACADEMY  
WED 03 DECEMBER  
CARDIFF TRAMSHED  
THU 04 DECEMBER  
BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY  
FRI 05 DEC 2025  
LONDON INDIGO AT THE O2  
SAT 06 DEC 2025  
BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY

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Nov 12	NEWCASTLE O2 CITY HALL	
Nov 14	LEEDS O2 ACADEMY	2
Nov 15	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY	0
<b>SOLD OUT</b>	BRISTOL BEACON	2
Nov 18	CARDIFF UNI GREAT HALL	
Nov 19	BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY	
Nov 21	LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO	1
Nov 22	BRIGHTON CENTRE	
Nov 23	SOUTHEAST CLIFFS PAVILION	0
<b>SOLD OUT</b>	NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY	0
<b>SOLD OUT</b>	CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE	8
Nov 27	NORWICH UEA	0
<b>SOLD OUT</b>	MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO	1
<b>SOLD OUT</b>	LIVERPOOL O2 ACADEMY	

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# 45

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WHY DID YOU EXPECT FROM ME  
T H VACCINES  
ANNIVERSARY TOUR MARCH 2026

03.03  
02 CITY HALL, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE  
04.03  
USHER HALL, EDINBURGH  
06.03  
02 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE, MANCHESTER  
07.03  
02 ACADEMY, BIRMINGHAM  
09.03  
02 ACADEMY, LEEDS  
10.03  
ROCK CITY, NOTTINGHAM  
11.03  
THE PROSPECT BUILDING, BRISTOL  
13.03  
02 ACADEMY BRIXTON, LONDON  
PLAYING THE ALBUM IN FULL  
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS **BRIGITTE AND THE BABY**  
A CROSSTOWN CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH WASSERMAN

belle and sebastian  
30th anniversary tour  
performing one album in full each night followed by a second set of favourites

low tickets	london / royal albert hall	8th apr	low tickets
sold out	manchester / albert hall	11th apr	sold out
sold out	glasgow / kelvingrove bandstand	26th jun	sold out

uk 2026  
a crosstown concerts, day family & d of concerts presentation by arrangement with wme

FRANZ FERDINAND  
GREATER GLASGOW EUROPEAN CULTURAL EXCHANGE 2026

24.02 DUNDEE - LiveHouse  
25.02 LEEDS - O2 Academy  
27.02 MANCHESTER - Academy  
28.02 NEWCASTLE - NX  
02.03 NOTTINGHAM - Rock City  
03.03 NORWICH - UEA **SOLD OUT**  
04.03 BRIGHTON - Dome  
06.03 BIRMINGHAM - O2 Institute  
07.03 BRISTOL - Beacon **LOW TICKETS**  
08.03 CARDIFF - Great Hall  
10.03 PORTSMOUTH - Guildhall  
11.03 LONDON - O2 Academy Brixton  
A Crosstown Concerts presentation by arrangement with CAA

SIGUR RÓS  
performing with LONDON CONTEMPORARY ORCHESTRA  
ONLY UK SHOWS

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THE ROYAL ALBERT HALL  
A CROSSTOWN CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH CAA

JOHN BUTLER  
PRISM  
UK TOUR 2025  
SPECIAL GUEST NOAH DILLON

FRI 31 OCT  
02 ACADEMY BRISTOL  
SAT 01 NOV  
TROXY LONDON  
MON 03 NOV  
02 RITZ MANCHESTER  
A CROSSTOWN CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH CAA

EDWYN COLLINS  
The Testimonial Tour 2025 - A Last Lap Around The UK

27 Sep	Glasgow	Theatre Royal
29 Sep	Buxton	LOW TICKETS Opera House
30 Sep	Bath	LOW TICKETS Komedia
02 Oct	Southampton	Central Hall
SOLD OUT	Brighton	St Georges
04 Oct	London	LOW TICKETS Royal Festival Hall
06 Oct	Norwich	Epic Studio
SOLD OUT	Manchester	Albert Hall
08 Oct	Newcastle	Boiler Shop

IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT, YEAH  
with special guests **dodgy**

Fri 28 Nov Glasgow, QMU **SOLD OUT**  
Sat 29 Nov Newcastle, NX  
Thu 04 Dec Sheffield, Network  
Fri 05 Dec Wolverhampton, Wulfrun Hall  
Sat 06 Dec Bristol, Electric  
Thu 11 Dec Southampton, Engine Rooms  
Fri 12 Dec Brighton, Chalk **LOW TICKETS**  
Sat 13 Dec London, Electric Brixton  
Thu 18 Dec Norwich, Waterfront **LOW TICKETS**  
Fri 19 Dec Nottingham, The Level  
Sat 20 Dec Manchester, Academy

30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE CLASSIC ALBUM  
A CROSSTOWN CONCERTS PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH ILLA

Sleeper  
INBETWEENER TOUR 2025 plus special guests RIALTO

SOLD OUT	BRIGHTON CONCORDE2
25.09	CARDIFF TRAMSHED
26.09	BRISTOL ELECTRIC
27.09	LEEDS STYLUS
LOW TICKETS	LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
02.10	LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM
SOLD OUT	WOLVERHAMPTON WULFRUN HALL
04.10	NEWCASTLE NX
09.10	GLASGOW QMU
SOLD OUT	NOTTINGHAM THE LEVEL
16.10	OXFORD O2 ACADEMY
17.10	MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
SOLD OUT	BRIGHTON CONCORDE2

echobelly  
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS **babybird**

OCTOBER 2025  
THU 02 MANCHESTER NEW CENTURY HALL  
FRI 03 LEEDS PROJECT HOUSE  
SAT 04 SHEFFIELD LEADMILL  
THU 09 BATH KOMEDIA  
FRI 10 COVENTRY HMV EMPIRE  
SAT 11 OXFORD O2 ACADEMY  
SUN 12 SOUTHAMPTON ENGINE ROOMS

THU 16 LONDON ELECTRIC BALLROOM  
FRI 17 BRIGHTON CHALK  
SAT 18 SWANSEA SIN CITY  
NOVEMBER 2025  
WED 05 NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY  
THU 06 GLASGOW ORAN MOR  
FRI 07 STOKE SUGARMILL  
SAT 08 NOTTINGHAM THE LEVEL



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# STRAP IN! FOR THE FILM/LIBRARY MUSIC HYPER-TRIPS OF SVEN WUNDER

JOEL DANELL had a successful career writing music for Swedish TV and film, but by 2018 ennui had set in. "It's not the optimal place to be if you want to express your own ideas," he says. And so that year, instead of going on holiday, he retreated to his Stockholm base and worked intensely on what would become his debut LP as Sven Wunder.

Released in 2019, *Doğu Çiçekleri* (reissued as *Eastern Flowers*) mixed Turkish, psychedelic and soundtrack influences into a beguiling, instrumental whole. A mysterious word-of-mouth hit with film music/library heads, hip-hop sample fiends and beyond, it sparked a series of albums which, while shifting in their audio-geographic focus, drew on the golden age of late-'60s/early-'70s mood music. Adding to the score, 2020's *Wabi Sabi* looked to Japanese jazz, 2021's *Natura Morta* alighted on Italian library cues and 2023's *Late Again* was a night-themed filmic jazz set. Now we arrive at *Daybreak*, which traces dawn to sundown via emotive, deep and groovy orchestral arrangements which recall *Il Maestro* Morricone, Alessandro Alessandrini and David Axelrod, among others.

Born in 1984, his jazz drummer dad Nils ensured music was all around the young Joel, who recalls veteran sax eminence Lee Konitz dropping by to jam in the family basement in the late '80s. Studying double bass as a teen, the younger Danell began his musical explorations in high school, where a pal introduced him to Anatolian sounds. Immersion in movie soundtracks led to the shadow world of library music, where LPs never meant for public sale offered off-the-peg, escapist themes for travel, reflection and glamour, with frissons nostalgic yet timeless.

"You stumble on it and the madness begins – you can see the dollars flying out the window!" says arch-collector Danell. "I know

that some people have a problem with library music or cinematic music, that it's, like, wallpaper music. I always thought that that's a good thing... I just like to enter the universe of a song and maybe experience life in a different way, and to write atmospheres and worlds that I want to spend time in."

Harmonious and hypnotic, *Daybreak* is an easy space to occupy (its creator says it could accompany a '70s BBC documentary about the ocean). But it was recorded in challenging, old-school fashion, with the Swedish government funding the Stockholm Studio Orchestra conducted by Erik Arvinder. "To record the way they did back then, that knowledge has been lost a bit," says Danell. "But having string musicians play music that you have worked on for a couple of years is a wonderful gift to give to yourself."

Sven Wunder is now also a live proposition (his third-ever show, at Earth in Hackney in February, attracted library freaks from across Europe), and he'll be supporting Freddie Gibbs and The Alchemist on their North American tour this autumn. Release-wise, Danell's already prepared "heavier, more psychedelic" tracks with Dungen's Reine Fiske and Heliocentrics drummer Malcolm Catto. "I'm not like this perfect pitch-type of person," says Danell, who names Bruno Nicolai's *Love Birds* 1969 soundtrack as an all-time fave. "I still have that open, 'first time you hear music' listening ability," he says. "I'm very happy about that."

Ian Harrison

*Daybreak* is out now on Piano Piano Records.

"I like to enter the universe of a song and experience life in a different way."

SVEN WUNDER

Wunder kind: Joel Danell still has that open listening ability.

## FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Ennio Morricone, David Axelrod, Lalo Schiffrin
- Hip-hopsters who've used Sven Wunder's music include Danny Brown (on 2023's *Quaranta*), Tyler, The Creator (for his 2024 collection for Louis Vuitton) and Wu-Tang offshoot Czarface, whose The Czarlaac Pit also featured movie star Tom Hardy's rap alter-ego Frankie Pulitzer.
- Danell picked 'Sven Wunder' to differentiate from his commercial work and to follow the example of the greats of library music. "If you boil it down, it's like 10 different guys who made hundreds of records using different aliases," he says. "I was inspired by that – now, you can do whatever you want! And, it sounds like a good name. There's not much more logic to it than that."

## KEY TRACKS

- Red Rose
- Onsen
- Impasto

## MOJO PLAYLIST



Hey you! This month's prime hot takes from veteran rebels and new cowboys in town...

### 1 NEIL YOUNG BIG CRIME

Young's summer tour has been full of rabble-rousing deep cuts, but in Chicago he unveiled a molten new country-rock with unambiguous clout: "Got to get the fascists out!"

Find it: [neilyoungarchives.com](http://neilyoungarchives.com)

### 2 BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN LONELY NIGHT IN THE PARK

Punchy Jersey Shore elegy, mystifyingly left off *Born To Run* but released, finally, to mark the album's 50th anniversary.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 3 EDEN GRAY & CORNERSHOP AMSTERDAM VIA ROTTERDAM

Tjinder Singh and Ben Ayres break cover, in the company of singer and ethical AI expert Eden Gray, for a catchy, sneakily moving reflection on ageing.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 4 MAVIS STAPLES BEAUTIFUL STRANGERS

Staples' knack for making classic soul out of contemporary rock on show again, as she adds gentle gospel heft to a Kevin Morby nugget.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 5 MAKAYA McCRAVEN AWAY

Just the four new EPs coming from the jazz beat scientist, including this hazy beauty. Tortoise's Jeff Parker provides the guitar noodle.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 6 THE BELAIR LIP BOMBS HEY YOU

Fans of Rolling Blackouts Coastal Fever's jangle should enjoy these Melbourne kindred spirits, newly signed to Jack White's Third Man label.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 7 THE REPLACEMENTS ANDROGYNOS

An alternate, higher-fi version of Paul Westerberg's hymn to transcending gender. From forthcoming reissue of 1984's *Let It Be*.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 8 CHRISSIE HYNDE & RUFUS WAINWRIGHT ALWAYS ON MY MIND

The great Pretender previews her new duets set – also featuring Mark Lanegan, Debbie Harry and Alan Sparhawk – with this country torch sway alongside the rarely understated Wainwright.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 9 WESTSIDE COWBOY DRUNK SURFER

The Manchester outfit describe their sound as 'Britainicana' and started out covering Hank Williams, but this debut EP cut has more nervy post-punk to it than honky-tonk.

Find it: [streaming services](#)

### 10 BRIAN ENO & BEATIE WOLFE THE LAST TO KNOW

A taster of Eno's third album of 2025 with conceptual artist Beatie Wolfe, whose stately invocation floats over churchy ambience akin to *Apollo: Atmospheres And Soundtracks*.

Find it: [streaming services](#)





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From Cheshire village halls to LA Babylon, he's the obsessive music fan who rode the Hammond grooves of The Charlatans through baggy, Britpop and beyond. But how has his band remained together through 37 years of chaos and tragedy as well as triumph? "We had to get used to heaviness," says **Tim Burgess**.

Interview by **CHRIS CATCHPOLE** • Portrait by **CAT STEVENS**

**I**T IS A SUMMER OF REUNIONS FOR THE GOLDEN generation of Britpop and Tim Burgess, still uncannily youthful at 58, has just been to see Oasis play in Manchester's Heaton Park. Burgess's band The Charlatans have ties with Oasis that go way back: they supported the Gallagher brothers at Knebworth Park in 1996, and guitarist Mark Collins even sat next to his Oasis counterpart Bonehead at school.

The Charlatans, though, have negotiated the last few decades differently to the likes of Oasis and Pulp. Formed in the West Midlands in 1988, not only have Burgess's band stuck together, they've done so in the face of setbacks and tragedies that would've torpedoed other bands multiple times over. Perhaps, MOJO wonders half-jokingly, The Charlatans missed a trick by *not* splitting up and then lucratively reuniting?

"No way!" Burgess splutters. "I think it's a real credit to us that we never did. It's an amazing achievement. I'm really proud of it. There's not many bands that have done that."

This morning, Burgess is hanging out in his publicists' offices in Soho, his floppy bowl-cut now a salt and pepper grey rather than the bleached blond and jet-black shades of recent

years. Nowadays the ebullience that's built a social media empire on the back of his Tim's Twitter Listening Parties as well as sustaining a major rock group, is powered by black coffee and daily transcendental meditation sessions. The drug-taking detailed in his 2012 autobiography *Tellin' Stories* – one particularly memorable passage detailed the band's practice of rectal cocaine administration – is long in the past.

Ostensibly, Burgess is here to talk about The Charlatans' forthcoming fourteenth album, *We Are Love*. It's a record that frequently nods, on the likes of *For The Girls* and *Deeper And Deeper*, to the band's history as a band who could fuse jangling indie rock and Mod-friendly Hammond grooves with the dance music emanating from Manchester and beyond in the 1990s. But it's also the first time they've recorded at Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire since founding keyboardist Rob Collins died in a car accident during the sessions there for the *Tellin' Stories* LP in 1996.

"We went to Rockfield with a purpose," says Burgess. "Maybe to get over something and not have the past haunt us. But equally, we were going there to tune into something very special. We made some of our best records there." ➤

#### WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Author and Charlatans fan **Ian Rankin** speaks!



"Tim is a brilliant ambassador, passionate about music and how it can bring us together. More power to him! The Charlatans are a great band, and I was honoured to write a few lines for them [on 2017's *Different Days*]. I even opened for them with a DJ set in Edinburgh. My first DJing in over 40 years. Same songs, mind."



As his Listening Parties showed, Burgess is an individual still driven by a fanboyish enthusiasm for records including those he's made himself.

"A lot of people don't like talking about the past," he continues. "But as long as you're doing something new at the same time, I quite like the idea of looking back in order to move forwards."

Fortunately, that's precisely what MOJO is here to do...

#### Was there much music played around the house when you were growing up in Moulton, Cheshire?

As a kid, not much. I was into chart music, but back then that meant some amazing records. Before that, I was being fed music by my uncle, Andrew. He's my mum's youngest brother and only five years older than me. Every Sunday we'd go round their house in Bolton. The rest of the family would be downstairs, and me and Andrew would be upstairs listening to his records: Genesis, Jethro Tull, Hawkwind.

#### When did music become an obsession for you?

There've been so many different avenues and journeys, but a pivotal moment was rejecting Andrew's influence and getting into the Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks, Devo, The Jam, The Clash. I'd asked my mum for Buzzcocks' *Love Bites* for Christmas. Then, when my friend Gary came into school one day with *Bloody Revolutions* by Crass it was like nothing else. That was it, year zero.

#### Did you go full anarcho-punk?

I did, yeah! A lot of my mates are still involved in that whole world of being a crusty. I went to see Crass and Subhumans, both in Winsford which is a three-mile walk from where I grew up in Moulton. One was in the village hall, and one

was in a scout hut. I was 13 at the time and it was all anti-vivisection posters, 'fight war not wars'. I later found out that [The Cult's] Ian Astbury was roadie-ing for them. But at the same time, I was listening to stuff like The Monochrome Set and New Order.

#### After one of your teachers organised a school trip to The Hacienda in Manchester, Factory Records and New Order became your next obsession. Did New Order make being in a band seem achievable?

Yeah. They'd just made *Blue Monday*, this record that was massive in New York, but they were from Macclesfield just up the road. Hooky and Bernard were from where I was born in Salford. If you watch [1984 documentary] *Play At Home*, Hooky is riding a motorbike around this field right by where I grew up. I joined all these dots and New Order became my favourite band. I'd follow them around the country.

#### But unlike your average teenage New Order fan, [Factory co-founder] Alan Erasmus used to come into the shop where your mum worked and leave records for you after she told him her son was into music?

It was amazing. Alan Erasmus lived in Moulton. He gave me the Durutti Column, a white label of [1983 New Order single] *Confusion*... He was like a teacher, really, handing over records to my mum while buying his copy of the *Financial Times*, dropping off a signed copy of *Low-Life*. It made it seem possible.

#### Before joining The Charlatans, you were the singer in a band called The Electric Crayons who put out a single in 1989. How would you describe them?

We recorded two songs. The guitarist was into The Cult and The Stooges, which kept me interested, but he also liked the Red Hot Chili Peppers – and you can hear that on the A-side [Hip Shake Junkie]. But the B-side was called *Happy To Be Hated*, which I was more involved

in. That was much more like The Smiths. I was quite happy with that one.

#### You still left before the single was released to take up the offer to front The Charlatans.

It was a bit weird. I bought Section 25 records and was a fan of The Cult, but I was also a big fan of [Medway garage rock act] The Prisoners. When I first met Martin [Blunt, Charlatans bassist] he'd just left [80s Mod band] *Makin' Time* and had put out a single as Gift Horses, which was [Prisoners frontman] Graham Day, [Makin' Time singer] Fay Hallam, [Charlatans drummer] Jon Brookes and Martin. They put out one single and that was it. He was starting this new thing called The Charlatans which sounded interesting to me. We supported them at Northwich Football Club, and they had some uncertainty about their singer at that point, so Rob [Collins, keyboardist] suggested me. I'd heard some of their demos so got up on-stage and sang a couple of their songs and a cover of *Is Vic There?* by Department S. That was it.

#### Martin Blunt was an obvious example of it, but did a lot of the baggy/Madchester bands come out of that '80s Mod scene?

It was a mad scene. It was obviously very retro – Mod and psych, but there was other stuff like Guana Batz and The Tall Boys who were more rockabilly, Thee Milkshakes and Billy Childish. I liked *Makin' Time*, but Martin was much more into The Prisoners, he really wanted a Hammond in his next project, like The Prisoners had with James Taylor. Graham Day taught Jon and Martin how to record drums and all our early demos sounded like that – very raw and Milkshakes-y/Prisoners-y. I don't know what The Stone Roses were listening to at the time, but I imagine it would have been the same.

#### And then ecstasy came along...

If you were in a band, you would still go out and dance to dance music. Dave Haslam had a club on Thursdays, Mike Pickering at the weekends.

## A LIFE IN PICTURES

### Telling stories: Tim down the days

**1** Born lippy: the five-year-old Tim Burgess at his uncle Norman's house in Swinton, 1972.

**2** Full colour: The Charlatans in 1989 put newly-joined singer Burgess in the spotlight.

**3** Baggy front: Burgess gives double maracas on-stage in Warrington, 1990.

**4** Team spirit: The Charlatans backstage at Reading Festival, 1992 (from left) Mark Collins, Rob Collins, Burgess, Jon Brookes, Martin Blunt.

**5** What's the story?: Tim Burgess with Mark Collins and Noel Gallagher backstage at Knebworth Park, August 11, 1996.

**6** One to another: Burgess pays tribute to the late Rob Collins, 1996.

**7** Bowled over: Burgess at the

Q Awards, October 22, 2014, where The Charlatans were honoured in the Hero category.

**8** It's only rock'n'roll: Burgess enjoys a warm moment with Ronnie Wood at the Hero 2 Hero Concert, London Shepherd's Bush Empire, December 8, 2004.

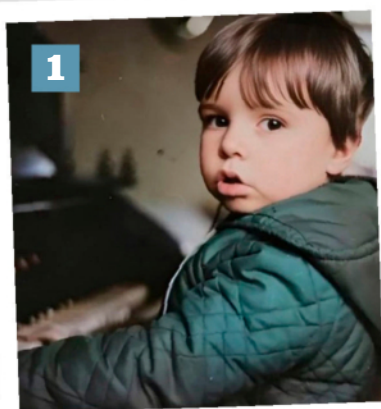
**9** Can't get out of bed head: Burgess in 1994 – "There's always friction, but under that a real love for each other."



2



3



1



4



Everything was mixed up. With New Order and what came out of The Hacienda, it was a huge cultural shift. It was great timing.

**At the time, Martin described The Charlatans as sounding like “The Spencer Davis Group on E”. After 37 years and 14 albums, is that still the core of The Charlatans’ sound? Would you ever consider making a Charlatans record that *didn’t* have Hammond on it?**

I might do, but I think there would be resistance to it. Whatever we’ve done, you push things and sometimes it’s too much and it needs pulling back.

**Are you the person in the band that pushes and wants to try different things, and the others who sometimes pull you back?**

Yeah maybe. I don’t mind that, though. I need to be put in my place.

**Too punk for Mod, too Midlands for Madchester, too baggy for Britpop. The Charlatans never quite fitted into whatever the scene was around you at the time. Looking back, do you think that might be one of the keys to your longevity, that it gave you more room to manoeuvre?**

It always felt fine at the time. With Britpop it was a bit like, Do you want to come and join our gang? We were like, Yeah, all right! [1995’s] Just When You’re Thinkin’ Things Over was our Britpop single, I suppose. It came out the same week as Roll With It and Country House and we got Single Of The Week in the NME, which wasn’t bad. It reached the dizzy heights of Number 12 in the charts.

**Prior to that, on your third album, 1994’s *Up To Our Hips*, you worked with Steve Hillage, who didn’t seem an obvious producer.**

It was purely down to vibes. Mark [Collins,

guitarist] had met him and said he had nice eyes! At the time, I was hanging out with Andrew Weatherall, and Steve was part of that world with The Orb, Youth and Jah Wobble, through his band System 7. So I was coming at it more from that than like, Gong. Although I do really love [1976 solo album] *L*. He was great in the studio. A master, really. He was really tuned into our sound. But it all came from the fact that we’d spoken to a few people and Mark really got off on his whole vibe. It must’ve been a guitarist thing. Or an acid thing. *Up To Our Hips* was done around the time Rob was getting his sentence

“From the time Rob died to the moment we finished our set at Knebworth, I don’t think we slept.”

[in 1993, Collins was sentenced to eight months in prison for his part in a bungled armed robbery]. We wrote it, not quickly, but we did get a move on because Rob thought he was going to prison for a long time. So he was on fire. If you listen to the *Up To Our Hips* outtakes it’s all these mad Hammond instrumentals.

**Were you surprised when you got the call saying Rob Collins had been arrested for armed robbery?**

(Pause) Sadly, no. It did surprise me, but it didn’t in a way.

**What impact did that have on you and the band as people?**

It was traumatising. It was very heavy. What we didn’t know was that we were about to get used to heaviness.

**The first thing Rob did when he got out of prison was go on *Top Of The Pops*.**

It was for [1994 single] Can’t Get Out Of Bed. Two days after he got out of prison. There’s nothing more rock’n’roll than that.

**Was he a different person after prison?**

He lost a lot of confidence. That’s what prison does to you; it takes everything away. Rob was different but he was still into it. He wanted to get into the next record [1995’s *The Charlatans*]. If you listen to his sound on that, on stuff like Bullet Comes, Nine Acre Court or Toothache, it’s heavy, heavy stuff. I think he walked with an air of darkness after that. He grew into it.

**At this point did the dynamic shift in the band? If it had felt like Martin was the leader at first, increasingly you and Mark became the driving force...**

Rob was the leader because he was the eldest and the hardest, but he got broken. Because of what was happening, me and Mark started thinking we might need to write together a bit more. Prior to that, we wrote together as a band and in the studio, lots of jams. That’s how [1990 debut] *Some Friendly* was written. Steve Hillage had said that after Rob gets out of prison we should go and write another album. So that’s what we did. Me and Mark went to the Costa del Sol and did the whole Mick and Keith thing of locking ourselves in a room until we had a song. On *The Charlatans* we took the bull by the horns. I was living in London and hanging out with Tom and Ed from The Chemical Brothers. Mark would come round my flat in Chalk Farm and we wrote all these songs together. If that album has 12 songs ➤





Us and us only:  
The Charlatans, 2025  
(from left) Tony Rogers,  
Tim Burgess, Mark  
Collins, Martin Blunt.



## “Our dressing room was this shipping container. Then Mick Jagger walked past with the President of Romania...”

◀ on it, then nine were instigated in that flat.

**After *Some Friendly*, *The Charlatans* was your second Number 1 UK album. Again, you pretty much jumped straight into the next one, went back to Rockfield Studios and started work on what would become *Tellin' Stories*.**

We were really on fire. We knew we were onto something with *Up To Our Hips*, and wanted to carry on building on it. Those three albums feel like a trilogy in a way. We felt like we could do anything.

**What do you remember of the night of Rob's car crash?**

Me and Mark were in the studio. It was a couple of hours after Rob hadn't come back [the band had gone to the pub that evening and driven back in separate cars] and the police showed up. They were asking, “How old was he?” I thought they said, “How *bald* was he?” But that's when Mark noticed that they'd said it in the past

tense. We couldn't believe it. We drove to the hospital. One To Another was playing in the car and that's when it resonated: fuck, he's dead. Mark ran into the hospital. He got confirmation and then we drove back to the studio. We went into Rob's room and all of his stuff was in there. We sat down and smoked his cigarettes. By first thing the next morning people started showing up. The whole place was surrounded by the press and TV. Then Rob's dad came down.

**How did you handle that?**

By all accounts, badly. I did most of the talking to people and [Rob's family] were upset with stuff that I'd said. I didn't say anything crazy or anything like that. I just didn't know what I was saying, I was grieving. It was very strange. People started coming down, [Stone Roses bassist] Mani was there. I remember lots of it vividly, but lots of it not at all.

**You must have surely come close to splitting up at that point. Was there a conversation?**

Not really. Everyone was mourning and as a group of twentysomething men you don't really talk about it. You just suffer in silence or talk about it to people who aren't in the band. That's certainly what I did.

**Three weeks later you supported Oasis at Knebworth. Even now, that seems unthinkable...**

We'd actually been booked to play two gigs with Oasis. Jeff [Barrett, Heavenly boss, and the band's then press officer] called us, it might have even been the next day, and asked, “Are you going to do this gig at Knebworth?” I was like, Are you fucking kidding me? Do you know what's just happened? It was Jeff who put forward [Felt/Primal Scream keyboardist] Martin Duffy.

**What was going through your head on the day of Knebworth?**

I was just determined. We all were. We didn't know how it was going to go. Duffy was a



genius, and we were ready, but it was kind of like, Who knows what's going to happen? We'd been on hyper-alertness from the moment we'd driven to the hospital. I can't remember whether me and Mark physically collapsed on-stage or if it was just after, but from the time Rob died to the moment we finished that set at Knebworth, I don't think we slept. It was constant: rehearsing with Duffy, press, Rob's funeral. It was so intense that I think we thought about giving up straight after, literally the moment we walked off-stage.

#### Why didn't you?

We travelled back and started to get over it a little bit. There were fleeting moments where I thought about giving up. But then Duffy stuck with us, and we managed to finish *Tellin' Stories*, which was the best record we'd done up to that point. Duffy allowed us that space, knowing that we were getting stuff done, and if we had to look for somebody else, then that could be around the corner.

**Rob played on *Tellin' Stories*, which made it a tribute to him in many ways. Was there something similar with *Modern Nature*, the album you started before Jon Brookes passed away [the drummer died of brain cancer in 2013]?**

We tried to make *Modern Nature* a few times when Jon was alive. His determination was there, but his capabilities were affected. He'd get really tired really quickly, even though he wanted to do it. So we didn't have much actually done with Jon for that album, but it was guided by what we thought he might like and his presence. When we were recording it felt like he was talking to us and hanging out with us in a different dimension.

**Prior to Jon's death, you published your autobiography *Tellin' Stories*. As someone well-versed in rock'n'roll myth, were you aware that you were living that cliché a lot of the time? Drugs, prison, tragedy, the band's accountant running off with all the money...**

Having the stories, that bit is OK. But living through them was exhausting. Especially when you're still writing all the time. But you can hear a lot of that energy in the music.

**You can hear a lot of that energy, and lifestyle, on 2001's *Wonderland*, which is an album that took a lot of people by surprise.**

It's a really chaotic-sounding record. It sounds like Jackson Pollock. I was living out in LA. I was completely obsessed with William DeVaughn's *Be Thankful For What You've Got* and Curtis Mayfield's *Back To The World*. Driving around LA on a total Curtis trip. The band came over and rented apartments. [Producer] Danny Saber had a studio on Wonderland Avenue, where Iggy Pop used to live. Danny Sugarman's *Wonderland Avenue* is one of my favourite books and every day we'd drive up Mulholland Drive, which was fascinating for a David Lynch freak like me. There was all this amazing folklore around us. It was fantastic. We were recording for three weeks. We'd start work later and later in the day. Then later and later. But we got [Dylan/John Lennon drummer] Jim Keltner to play on it.

#### How did that come about?

It had always been one of Jon's ambitions to play with Jim Keltner. He went up to the Valley to take some drumming lessons from him. We reached out to him and he played on *A Man Needs To Be Told*, *Love To You* and one other track. He'd just done [1997 Bob Dylan album] *Time Out Of Mind*, so I was asking him about that. He talked about the Plastic Ono Band, but we were on the third floor and he carried his own bass drum up the stairs. I was more

impressed by that than anything else!

**Does that teenage music fan come out when you work with these artists? Do you still get your albums signed when you meet people?**

Not so much these days, but I was excited to get *Kimono My House* signed by Sparks recently. I got Carly Simon to sign *Boys In The Trees*, Jean-Jacques Burnel signed *La Folie* for me, which was a very inspirational record.

**Would you say you have an obsessive personality?**

God yeah. I wouldn't have done 13,000 Twitter Listening Parties if I didn't have an obsessive personality.

**Outside of your own music, are those something you're particularly proud of?**

They'd started before Covid, but it was a time where people really needed to feel that connection. It brought back that thing of communally listening to records, which is something I used to always love: you'd bring your records round your mate's house, and

## TIM HAS TOLD ME

Three of the best albums from across Burgess's career, by Chris Catchpole.

### THE BRITPOP STONES!

#### The Charlatans

★★★★★

The Charlatans

(BEGGARS BANQUET, 1995)



1994's *Up To Our Hips* had realigned The Charlatans into Britpop's mainstream, and with Burgess and guitarist Mark Collins taking the tiller, the band's self-titled fourth album gave them their second Number 1. The pair's homages to Mick, Keef and Gram on the likes of *Just When You're Thinkin' Things Over* and *Tell Everyone* brought a country soul looseness that's weathered far better than many other LPs from the era.

### THE LA MADNESS ALBUM!

#### The Charlatans

★★★★★

Wonderland

(UNIVERSAL, 2001)



At a point where many of their contemporaries were slipping into Dadrock drudgery, The Charlatans pulled the most unexpected move of their career. Gorging on Curtis Mayfield – amongst other things – producer Danny Saber helped them pull together a mélange of '70s soul, hip-hop, funk and country. The final flavour no doubt helped by the presence of Jim Keltner and Daniel Lanois on drums and pedal steel.

### THE SOLO OPUS!

#### Tim Burgess

★★★★★

Typical Music

(BELLA UNION, 2022)



In the uncharacteristically long gap between The Charlatans' 2017 album *Different Days* and this year's *We Are Love*, Burgess focuses his "obsessive personality" on his sixth solo album. At 22 songs running to an hour and a half, *Typical Music* hurtles between sounds and genres with an eclecticism that befits an artist who, as chronicled in 2016's *Tim Book Two*, owns over 3,000 records.

you'd sit and listen to each other's music together. I think it did something for the artists, too. Kevin Rowland said he'd always hated the first Dexys album but started liking it again after doing the Listening Party.

**You've worked with some interesting people on your solo records, too. Kurt Wagner wrote the lyrics for your second album [2012's *Oh No I Love You*], and you made an album with saxophonist/composer Peter Gordon [2016's *Same Language, Different Worlds*].**

I was given a Love Life Orchestra record when I lived in LA and became obsessed with it. I didn't know Peter had played with Arthur Russell and all these people. Peter comes to all of our New York shows, he actually plays on the new album. It's very New York, that record. I went and stayed with him, and he gave me a guided tour of the Village. He took me back to 1975 when he first met Laurie Anderson, showed me where he used to hang out with Lou Reed... it was like working with a historian but he's still making all this amazing music.

**Whatever happened to the album you were making with Joaquin Phoenix in 2008?**

I have no idea. Pretty much straight after we made it, he went on Letterman and announced he was giving up acting to take up a career in hip-hop. I heard that some of the songs we did had been reworked for that. It was two weeks of my life, but it was a very interesting two weeks. He was very unassuming. He once told me, "I did this film where I played Johnny Cash..." I'm like, Yeah, I know, I've seen it.

**There's been a lot of surreal points in your story. What's been the single biggest pinch-me moment for you?**

When we were supporting the Stones in Romania in 2007, our dressing room was this sort of shipping container. We're in there, and Ronnie Wood walked in because he was looking for something. Charlie saw Ronnie in there, so he comes in and started talking to Jon. Then Keith came in. Mark had just taken his kids to see *Pirates Of The Caribbean*, so he started talking to Keith about that. Then Mick walked past with the President of Romania, so he came in too. You're stood there in this shipping container and Mick Jagger is holding court. I remember it was a hot summer's day, and Mick said I could use the big on-stage fan that he has. I was like, Oh, thanks!

**After all these years, what keeps bringing you back to The Charlatans? What is it that has kept you together despite everything that's happened?**

There's a million reasons. You don't want to be critical about your own work, but I think one of the things is in our heads we always feel like we haven't quite nailed something. Like with *Up To Our Hips*. When me and Mark were lying on our lilos in Spain we thought we were onto something there, but we hadn't quite nailed it. And that's what inspired us. Even the times when you think you've maybe pushed it too far you still want to go back and see what you can do. There's always friction when you make a record, but under that it's just real, real love for each other.

**In the very unlikely event that The Charlatans split up tomorrow, what do you think your legacy will be? What did you bring to the party?**

Action... adventure... believing that the stars can align. But maybe it is the records. *Tellin' Stories*, *Wonderland*, *Modern Nature*, *Some Friendly*... who would have believed we'd make what I think is our best record 35 years later? Not many bands can say that.

*We Are Love* is out October 31 via BMG.





# Being There

For 10 years, from 1965 to 1975, snapper **BARRIE WENTZELL** was the all-seeing eye of the UK music scene. His new book, previewed here, captures the biggest stars at their least guarded. **DANNY ECCLESTON** is agog.





**B**ARRIE WENTZELL'S FIRST DAY at work in London's seamy Soho was perhaps a premonition of a working life less ordinary. A product of Hetton-Le-Hole in County Durham, transplanted to Kent, then London and art school, he knocked on the door of Manhattan Displays, to be greeted by a "creature with lilac blue hair, dressed in a kimono over black tights".

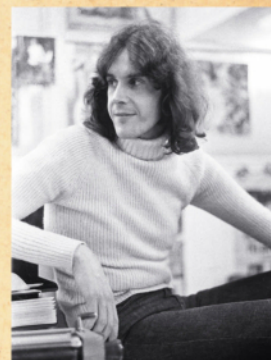
"I'm Mr Crisp," said the vision. "Let's have tea. Do you know how to play Scrabble?"

Quentin Crisp – the defiantly gay boulevardier soon to be famed for his 1968 memoir *The Naked Civil Servant* – rolled with the maverick crew who (barely) worked at Manhattan Displays, operators in a field that might be described today as marketing design. There was a similar measure of unexpectedness about Wentzell's induction into professional photog-

raphy. Working at Lord Snowdon's former studio in Belgravia, next to the Kray twins' club Esmeralda's Barn, Wentzell was lent a Leica – "a German spy camera kind of thing" – which he used to document his ramblings on London's music scene. One of those projects – an ad hoc shoot with Diana Ross of The Supremes in the BBC bar in early '65 – impressed musicians' bible the *Melody Maker*, and he was suddenly and unexpectedly on the fast track. "They said, 'Our photographer's just been arrested,'" Wentzell tells MOJO. "Would you like his job?" John 'Hoppy' Hopkins' loss would be Wentzell's 10-pounds-a-week gain.

Wentzell's work over 10 years at *Melody Maker* and other music mags – the cream of which graces 400-ish glossy pages of his new photo-memoir *Should've Been There...* – is an AAA pass to an era before hard lines were drawn between musicians and the media. As he explains, "I was using a 28 millimetre lens, about three to two and a half feet away from people like Pete Townshend. You've got to look in the eyes. The eyes have it."

But in 1975, having felt drugs and money sap the spirit of the scene, Wentzell (pictured below in the MM office, 1968) abruptly quit the rock snapper's life. He worked in his brother's fruit and veg shop on the Isle Of Wight, and ultimately found himself in Toronto, Canada, where he's lived for 43 years. But while he is retired, his pictures keep working in publications, including MOJO. Asked about the philosophy behind their unique energy, his answer is pithy: "I was just trying to show people in the best light."



Barrie Wentzell (3)

## MONEY TALKS

**Mick Jagger, Mayfair, London, 1968**

BW: "Melody Maker's publisher IPC had started this magazine called *Music Business Weekly* and there was this idea to interview Mick Jagger, because he was thought to have a head for business, went to the LSE, et cetera. I remember going down to the Stones' office – he was a bit embarrassed, and I was too. The artist Alan Aldridge came in to discuss the design of some poster. But I first saw the Stones in early '64 in Studio 51, Ken Colyer's club off the Charing Cross Rd, playing Sunday afternoon, for free, to about 30 people. You just knew they were going to be great."

## TOUGHER THAN TOUGH

**Nina Simone, Mayfair, London, 1969**

BW: "Some people you find immediately have a presence. Johnny Cash was like that and Nina Simone was certainly like that. I walked in the room where she was and just sat on the floor at her feet. With the head-dress I thought she looked like Queen Nefertiti. She was like royalty. It felt like an honour to be there. In one of the pictures I actually got a laugh out of her – which I think might have been a first!"



## UP IN SMOKE

**Bob Dylan, BBC Television Centre, June 1965**

BW: "The BBC press office rang to say Bob Dylan would be rehearsing at TV Centre so I whizzed along, clicked a couple of rolls of him playing then went to the bar. There was Dylan with Bobby Neuwirth, a lot of drinks in front of them. I asked him when his book, *Tarantula*, was coming out and he just went, 'Is it?' and I realised it was going to be like that. He was more than intimidating. I think they were both a bit high on amphetamines, sending everybody up."



## FAR AWAY EYES

**Diana Ross, BBC Television Centre, 1965**

BW: "I was at the Beeb to shoot Count Basie when I saw Diana being interviewed in the bar by a guy called Laurie Henshaw. I asked Miss Ross if I could photograph her, and I did a roll of pictures, very nervously. Then Laurie said, 'Why don't you drop in a picture to the Melody Maker – we could always use a snap.' Next week there it was on the newsstand – my picture on the cover of Melody Maker with a credit. And I was 12 and 6 better off."



## THE WIND CRIES MARIE

**Jimi Hendrix and Lulu, Europa Hotel, London, September 1967**

BW: "This is when Jimi won the Melody Maker Poll Winners Award for Best Musician, and Lulu had been voted Best Singer. I shot Jimi a few times, including at the Lulu Show where they did *Sunshine Of Your Love*. Did I shoot much colour? A fair bit – I was shooting for Disc & Music Echo, but you'd send out transparencies and you wouldn't get them back. Polydor had a bunch of my Jimi ones and I never saw them again."



## UNION BLUES

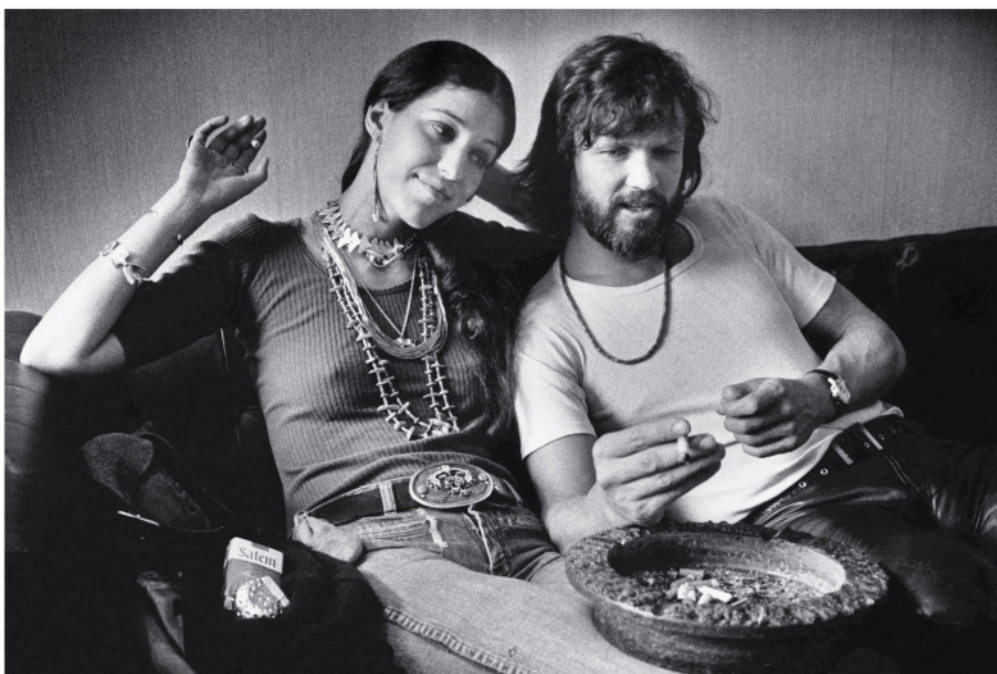
**Pete Townshend, Carlisle St, London, November 1970**

BW: "That was for a column Pete was writing for Melody Maker. Pete was always writing in about one thing or another, so one day the editor Ray Coleman said, 'Why don't you write your own monthly column?' So that's what he did. This one was about the Musicians' Union and the rules about bands having to re-record backing tracks for TV performances including Top Of The Pops. That was his beef that month."

## I'M YOUR PUPPET

**Elton John and friend, Surrey, 1972**

BW: "Elton had moved into this new place in Surrey and me and [Melody Maker writer] Chris Welch went down to visit him. He gave us glasses of champagne and I spilt mine on the carpet. 'Don't worry,' he said, 'we had Keith Moon here last night...' I remember him picking up the dummy and saying, 'and here's my manager Dick James – ('gottle of geer' voice) What a wanker, what a wanker.'"



## FOR THE GOOD TIMES

**Rita Coolidge and Kris Kristofferson, Regent St, London, 1972**

BW: "I had no idea who they were. But they were very chummy and friendly and relaxed. This was at Tony Barrow's office – he was The Beatles' press officer. How did I know when I had 'the shot'? Somehow the neg spoke to me. I didn't think about it much. I didn't think about it when I was taking pictures, either. It was automatic pilot. My finger did the thinking."





## THE BEER LIGHT

**David Bowie on a train, France, 1973**

BW: "Bowie was returning to the UK via the Trans-Siberian Railway and Paris, where me and [Melody Maker writer] Roy Hollingworth were sent to intercept him. We stayed in the George V Hotel and we ran out of money the first day. Bowie hadn't turned up and the paper wouldn't pay for us to come back. Anyway we decided to go down Gare Du Nord and suddenly, there's David – 'Oh hi! Great to see you!' Anyway, Angie sorts everything out and they pay for me and Roy to come back with them to London and interview Bowie on the train. We missed the boat but get the hovercraft, which Angie has to convince David isn't *actually* flying!"



## LIZARD KING

**Bryan Ferry, Playboy Club, Park Lane, London, 1973**

BW: "Each year for the Melody Maker Christmas issue I was asked to shoot the cover. This year Bryan Ferry was the subject and he asked if we could do a shoot at the Playboy Club, as he wanted a shot with January 1972 Playmate Of The Month, Marilyn Cole, who was the cover star of Roxy Music's *Stranded* album. Marilyn was late turning up, so we had to do the shoot without her. Still, the head bunny at the Playboy Club, Serena, said the girls loved the photo and sent me a free membership. Not really my scene!"



## HOT PEPPER!

**Paul McCartney and John Lennon, Belgravia, London, 1967**


BW: "This was the launch of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, at Brian Epstein's house. The place was full of people. I remember Dezo Hoffmann was there with his Hasselblad, which I could never afford. I was using a little Pentax, cheap but very light – you could whiz around to find the best angle for a picture. And I liked to look for people when they relaxed, when they were talking."





## CAMERA-DERIE

**Keith Moon, Ronnie Lane, Viv Stanshall, Chris Welch, Chipping Norton, 1970**

BW: "Keith had rented this pub called the Crown & Cushion. I'm not sure how long that lasted for – not long, 'cos they must have drunk the place dry. Hanging out with Keith and Viv was always eventful. One day they turned up with Nazi uniforms and I shot them out and about – I had to tell people it was for a film. Later they got kicked out of a German bierkeller on Bond Street. So we went to the Duke Of York on Rathbone Place, but the landlady fainted and we got chucked out of there too." 

## THE CABLE GUY

**Keith Emerson, Chicago, December 1973**

BW: "It was a great thing, getting on the stage. It was a totally different perspective – as you can see here. It paid to get to know the roadies so they'd do you a favour. Towards the end of Bowie's Ziggy tour, when no-one was meant to be shooting him, his security guys – Fat Fred and Patsy – got me to the front of the stage at Earl's Court. One of my pics was the Melody Maker cover, May 8, '73."

## IT'S PLAID, DAD!

**Jimmy Page, Pangbourne, 1969**

BW: "This is in his boat house by the Thames – in a garden swing he had in the front room. The 'trews' are spectacular. Musicians didn't seem to have a problem back then inviting you into their homes. We spent a whole day at Eric Clapton's place, Hurtwood, and I swear George Harrison was hiding upstairs. Chris Welch spotted him looking out of an upstairs window!"



## EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY



All pictures are taken from *Should've Been There...* by Barrie Wentzell, published by Rufus

Publications this autumn. 392 pages with forewords by Jimmy Page, Pete Townshend, Ian Anderson, Ray Davies and Bill Bruford. Available to pre-order from [www.rufuspublications.com/photographers/barriewentzell/](http://www.rufuspublications.com/photographers/barriewentzell/)



**For 35 years, the sonic scientists of TORTOISE have toiled to redefine the scope and possibilities of indie music. Their influence has been pervasive, but their methods and results remain unique. So don't call them 'post-rock', OK? "Our genre is that there isn't a genre," they tell GRAYSON HAVER CURRIN.**

Photography by **YUSUKE NAGATA**

**T**HE FIRST TIME JEFF PARKER SAW TORTOISE, AT CHICAGO'S NEWLY OPENED Empty Bottle in the early '90s, he was stunned by the silence. Not, of course, on-stage: with their two drum kits and dual basses, Tortoise offered something the guitarist had never heard before. Their regimented rhythms harnessed dub reggae's magic but crystallised it in warped rock terms. No, it was the rapt crowd that fascinated Parker, how everyone seemed to be absorbing every note. They were noticing, Parker reckons, the same thing he did: new ideas.

"It sounded punky, but not in an aggressive way," Parker tells MOJO today. "It sounded experimental. Actually, when I heard them, I heard possibilities. I thought, You guys are looking at things in a different way, aren't you? It was powerful, in a subtle way."

Tortoise soon asked Parker to join their ranks. But as a working jazz musician in Chicago, playing with saxophonist Ernest Dawkins among others, he couldn't afford to tour, essentially, for free. Soon after lucrative festival offers began to arrive when Tortoise released their 1996 breakthrough album, the scintillating *Millions Now Living Will Never Die*, Parker enlisted. After all this time, he still calls himself the "newest member".

**F**OR THE PAST 35 YEARS, TORTOISE – A MOTLEY QUINTET RESEMBLING AN ASSORTMENT of maths teachers and music professors, hardcore punk survivors and roadhouse rock aficionados – have provided a compelling case study in perpetual newness at their own methodical pace. When bassist and guitarist Doug McCombs and drummer John Herndon first hatched the idea of the group in the late '80s, they agreed only that they wanted to be in a band without big, distorted guitars. Across seven albums, they've not only gone back on that vow but woven in threads of what they all love: spaghetti westerns and hard bop, luminous drone and pulverising techno, prog rock manoeuvres and punk rock outbursts. Tortoise reset the stage for what might fit within indie rock.

"We've always felt like we could just turn on a dime and do anything we wanted. We knew it was weird, but we loved it," says John McEntire, the multi-instrumentalist drummer who's also Tortoise's studio whizz. "The ➤







Coming out of their shell: Tortoise (from left) Dan Bitney, John Herndon, John McEntire, Doug McCombs and Jeff Parker, Tokyo, 2025.





## “70 PER CENT OF A TORTOISE RECORD IS MADE SITTING ON A COUCH BEHIND JOHN McENTIRE.”

Doug McCombs



Still in touch: Tortoise (above, from left) McEntire, Herndon, Parker, McCombs and Bitney performing at Big Ears Festival, Knoxville, Tennessee, 2025; (left) new LP *Touch*.

“sentiment was always, We’re going to keep doing this for ourselves, no matter what.”

After a nine-year gap, Tortoise have returned with *Touch*, a lean 10-track album that both simplifies and complicates the elements of their past, from the steely, rhythmic Rated OG to the gorgeous delicacy of *Works And Days*, suggesting sketches for some futuristic symphony. The record begins with the crunch of a big, distorted guitar, and ends with a radiant, blissed-out hum that conjures the score of a cowboy movie set in space.

During the last decade of Tortoise, there have been cross-country moves, dramatic shifts in family lives, a complicated tour revisiting 1998’s byzantine *TNT* album in its entirety, and enough side projects and solo endeavours to fill a record crate. Both alone and with his ETA IVtet, Parker has rightfully emerged as a modern star of jazz guitar. But Tortoise remain motivated by their shared search for possibilities.

“There is some pressure. We’re not the Ramones. If they’re working with Phil Spector, it’s still the Ramones,” says multi-instrumentalist Dan Bitney, laughing. “We have to be evolving, moving forward. And our genre is that there isn’t a genre, you know?”

THERE WEREN’T ANY GOOD CHAIRS AT 64 SOUND, a Los Angeles studio with warm wooden walls and hulking tape machines. Tortoise had gathered there at the start of 2024 for their fourth session in four years, trying to give *Touch* some shape.

In November 2021, Tortoise (sans Parker, who was recovering from surgery) had met for nine days in Portland, Oregon, at the studio of producer Tucker Martine. There were some early demos, but the loose plan was to jam, to shake the dust off after the pandemic break. They resumed in Portland in April 2022 and March 2023. When they arrived in LA to work for a week, they knew the time had come to lock in. Trouble was, no chairs.

“You have to realise that 70 per cent of a Tortoise record is made

sitting on a couch behind John McEntire,” says McCombs, frowning beneath his ursine white beard. “That’s where ideas come from – What if we tried this? There were no comfortable chairs anywhere, but we did make lots of great forward steps.”

For the first two decades of Tortoise’s existence, proximity was a boon. Everyone lived and worked near central Chicago’s Wicker Park. Rent was cheap. Service jobs and club gigs were abundant. And the city’s bustling music scene meant that jazz, punk, indie rock and electronica musicians rubbed elbows and swapped ideas. Rock guy Herndon dragged a vibraphone four blocks to an early rehearsal. When he told Jeff Parker he wasn’t good enough to play a solo on the instrument, Parker rebutted, “You know, a solo is just an expression of yourself.” There was time for their musicianship to catch up with their enthusiasms. (Although Parker says they’ve been trying to get rid of the vibraphone for decades.)

Now only Bitney and McCombs remain in Chicago. Herndon and Parker are in Los Angeles while McEntire arrived in Portland six years ago. “When every one of us lived in the same neighborhood, you could call somebody and say, What are you doing next Wednesday?” remembers Bitney. “But it’s so hard to organise now, and it can be a challenge to get people to present their ideas, to feel confident about them.”

Tortoise’s process, however, remains the element that every member most values. During Parker’s first sessions with the band, recording *TNT*, he remembers writing an indispensable bit of *The Suspension Bridge At Iguazú Falls*, a slinking weave of vibraphone and guitar melodies. He recorded it, left for a gig, and came back to find that the others had tweaked it. “I raised a stink, and they changed it back,” Parker admits, smiling. “But the lesson I learned is to present ideas that aren’t as fully formed, then let people find their way within it.”

For *Touch*, Parker remembers submitting the basic bass line for opener *Vexations*, backed by a “backwards James Brown kind of beat”. But the band immediately toughened up the tune, making it darker and heavier, climaxing in something akin to remixed thrash





Am scilicet ctiat  
Slow burn: (clockwise from top left)  
Tortoise Mx 2 (1994), Herndon, McEntire, Bitney, Herndon, McCombs, and original bassist David Pajo (1994);  
Tortoise Mk 2 (from left) David Pajo, McCombs, McEntire, Bitney, Herndon, 1996; on-stage at Lounge Ax, Chicago, 2000; playing musical chairs at Trans Musicales festival, Rennes, France, 1997.



## TURTLE RECALL

A Tortoise retrospective, by **Grayson Haver Currin**.

### TORTOISE

★★★★★

#### Millions Now Living Will Never Die

(Thrill Jockey/City Slang, 1996)



An epiphanic record: intricate, imaginative, influential. Opener Djed is a 20-minute fantasia of mutated drums and sculpted

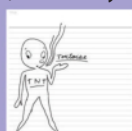
static, while Dear Grandma And Grandpa uses samples and synths to conjure an eerie sunset and The Taut And Tame is a masterclass in tension and release.

### TORTOISE

★★★★★

#### TNT

(Thrill Jockey/City Slang, 1998)



Temporarily a two-guitarist band with Jeff Parker joining Slint's David Pajo, Tortoise seemed capable of anything.

The electronic *Tropicalia* of The Equator, the minimal techno of Jetty, the Steve Reich-indebted repetition of Ten-Day Interval: none of it feels dogmatic or forced but, instead, like an ensemble enthused by every muse.

### TORTOISE

★★★★★

#### It's All Around You

(Thrill Jockey, 2004)



Wrongly maligned upon release, Tortoise's fifth LP was a testament to growth, its arrangements as lush and surprising as

the cover's surrealist forest. The vocal samples on The Lithium Stiffs conjure a heavenly gate, while Crest hinges on a sublime melody. New traces of doom and prog, especially on Unknown and Salt The Skies, make this riveting.

### TORTOISE

★★★★★

#### A Lazarus Taxon

(Thrill Jockey, 2006)



Tortoise have always been a living mixtape, blending interests to enhance them. Still, this 34-track box set, spanning a dozen

years and a dozen remixers (including Steve Albini and Jim O'Rourke), sounds unexpectedly cohesive. Their take on Yo La Tengo's Autumn Sweater is a wobbly carousel, Duke Ellington's Didjeridoo madcap math-rock.

metal. McEntire notes how the band improved his demo for Axial Seamount, Bitney and Herndon giving it flesh with synthesizers while Parker and McCombs added crisscrossing bass lines that lent spy movie suspense.

"When people say their work is egoless, it's definitely full of ego," says McCombs, laughing. "But the thing we all agree on is that the collective voice of the five of us makes this band interesting. We want *that* to be the focus of this music."

**T**HE FIRST TIME THE MEMBERS OF Tortoise heard the term 'post-rock', they were not impressed. The critic Simon Reynolds invoked it in print around the release of their self-titled 1994 debut; Tortoise's lack of vocals and plethora of shifting metres made them ostensible fits. "I didn't think there was anything 'post' about rock," Herndon says today. "I was super into punk and rock, and I didn't think it was over, that it had done all it could do. I would get mad when people called us that."

McEntire resented the way it worked as a cover for lazy listening and journalism; if you didn't want to engage with the strands of sound Tortoise were actually layering, 'post-rock' offered a convenient out. "Without getting into the minutiae of what's happening," he says, "you could slap this simple, fabricated term on it."

Now, though, their association with the term's origins has become a sort of honour. For McEntire, Tortoise helped suggest an alternative musical framework — "emphasis on textures, dynamics, alternative instrumentation," he says, "and not four-on-the-floor all the time." For

Herndon, it reinforces that they were able to move within the indie rock world without sounding like much else there, flinging doors open for those who followed. "But, honestly, I haven't done much research on it," Herndon says, laughing, "because I've got better things to do."

Indeed, the crush of time is something everyone in Tortoise mentions these days. Since the release of 2016's *The Catastrophist*, two members have crossed the threshold of 60; the other three are nearing it. One of the final sessions for *Touch* happened at Steve Albini's Electrical Audio, three months after the 61-year-old producer died. Herndon wishes Tortoise could make a record every year, admitting that *Touch* reached a point where he wondered, "What the fuck is going on?"

"We are always in this pattern where we finish something, and we're like, OK, let's get started on the next one," McEntire expands. "But that *never* happens."

He is not convinced, however, that this is a bad thing. If Tortoise were always working, he reckons, the records might become repetitive, plug-and-play efforts from members who hadn't taken time to evolve as listeners. In the gap since making *The Catastrophist*, McEntire has dived into library music. And Herndon has seen so many extravagant clips of show-boating drummers on Instagram that he wanted to eschew complexity this time, to ride a rhythm like The Heartbreakers' Stan Lynch or even the groove-pounding bluesman Hound Dog Taylor.

"Am I still surprised by Tortoise? Yes, I am," says Herndon. "Some things feel like well-worn paths, but not in a way that makes me want to avoid that path. It's almost comforting. But I really trust my bandmates' musical sensibilities, and I'm often surprised by ideas they come up with. I love that: being surprised by something. That makes me really happy."

M



TERRY REID 1949–2025

# SOME GUYS HAVE ALL THE LUCK

History decrees that **TERRY REID** missed the boat, to **Led Zep** legendhood, to solo riches. But, as he told **BOB MEHR** just two months before he passed, this great songwriter and supreme singer – loved and admired by superstars from **Robert Plant** and **Graham Nash** to **Aretha Franklin** and **Dr Dre** – didn't see it like that: "I've lived my life the way I wanted."

Portrait by **HENRY DILTZ**

**T**OM DOWD WAS NO STRANGER to geniuses. As a teenage physicist, he worked under J Robert Oppenheimer on the Manhattan Project during the Second World War, before joining Atlantic Records and becoming one of the most innovative engineer-producers in history – helping midwife the music of 20th-century titans from John Coltrane to Aretha Franklin. In later years, when Dowd was asked if there was ever an artist whose talent he was unable to realise, he offered just one name: Terry Reid.

"I couldn't do justice to the man, because I wasn't on his level," said Dowd of producing Reid in the early '70s. "I couldn't get to where he was artistically, or where he wanted to go."

Recently, when I reminded Reid of Dowd's comments, he seemed both flattered and a bit sheepish. In a strange way, his career was defined by what he chose not to do, and all the things that didn't happen. The British-born songwriter, guitarist and powerhouse vocalist known as "Superlungs" is best known for turning down the opportunity to front Led Zeppelin. A prolific writer and consummate artist, Reid somehow only released six albums over a 60-year career.

Perhaps he always had more in him than anyone – producers, peers, record companies, possibly even himself – could ever get out. "Maybe so," said Reid. "But I've lived my life the way I wanted.

Running around, chasing your tail, chasing after this, chasing after that, it'll do one of two things: it'll either drive you crazy, or it'll get you in a whole load of trouble."

As he said this, Reid was lounging comfortably in his parlour, spending a summer afternoon strumming away on an old Martin guitar, playing and singing with the unburdened ease that was in his blood.

"With music, if you feel like you have to be doing something, it never comes out as sincere as it should," he told me. "I see people on-stage that sing very well, play very well, and they've got the best intentions... but they try too damn hard. If you have to try that hard to play a song, you shouldn't be playing it."

At this, Reid flashed a knowing smile, as though he'd offered a kind of valediction. In a sense, he had. In just a few weeks Reid would pass at the age of 75 – a supremely talented enigma, a quicksilver soul, gone too soon.

**I**T WAS A SWELTERING AFTERNOON IN early June as MOJO arrived in the desert town of La Quinta, California to interview Reid ahead of his most extensive UK tour in years. The Santa Rosa Mountains cast a shadow over the entrance to his white-walled residence, affixed with a sign, "Casa de los Sueños", the House of Dreams.

A US resident since the early '70s, Reid

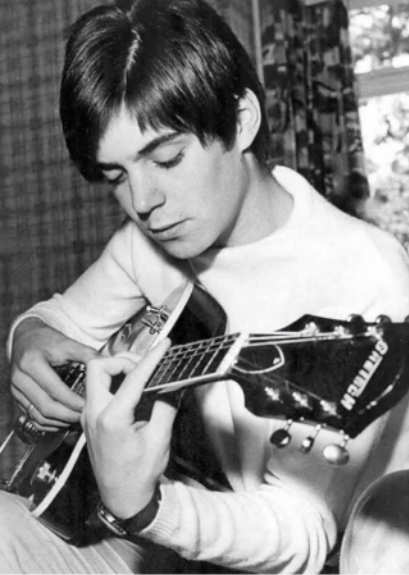
Henry Diltz





River man: Terry Reid  
in his house of dreams,  
September 1974.





settled in the Coachella Valley two decades ago. The arid landscape is a stark contrast to the Cambridgeshire countryside where he was born in 1949. “It’s quite rural where I come from,” he said. “Bluntisham is just a little village. When I was growing up there were maybe 800 people living there.”

Reid was an only child. His father Walter was a car salesman, his mother Grace managed a plum orchard. As an infant Reid would accompany her to work, where she would set him on top of a fruit crate with the radio playing.

“I don’t know exactly what it is with me, but for some reason I’m like a human sponge,” said Reid. “I’d be singing these songs I’d heard, and my mum and all the ladies she worked with are going, ‘Get a load of him.’ They’d go, ‘Terry, do you know this song? Do you know that one? Sing it for us.’ That was the beginning of it for me.”

As a teenager, Reid took up guitar, immersing himself in classical and jazz, blues and country, Motown and more. At 13, he formed his first band, the Red Beats, before being snapped up as a featured vocalist by north London instrumental combo Peter Jay And The Jaywalkers. From the start he was regarded as a prodigy. “That’s a pressure in itself,” he told me. “And it became more of a pressure, because everything happened so quickly for me.”

By the time he was 15, Jay had talked Reid’s father into letting him leave school and move to London, where he wowed audiences and fellow musicians. In 1966, on the strength of Reid’s singing, the band was handpicked by The Rolling Stones to open a tour with them, The Yardbirds and Ike And Tina Turner. “It was like getting struck by lightning,” said Reid. “Try telling your friends at school, which you just left a year ago, that you’re going on the road with the Stones. Nobody even

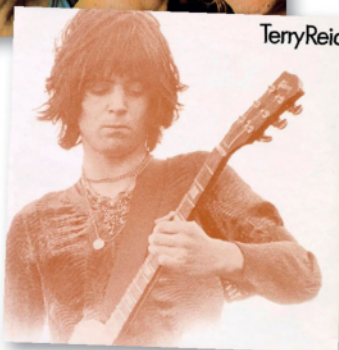
believed me. It was so alien to them.”

**R** EID QUICKLY FOUND HIMSELF A RISING STAR IN Swinging London and in the maw of the British pop machine. “To be popular and well-known at that time, you had to be socially adept and recognised,” says Reid. “Or you had to be doing something naughty. I mean, there was some bands that were bloody terrible. And they’d be in the [music] papers every fucking week. Everybody thought that every band out of England was great. But it was not like that at all.”

One group Reid rated was The Hollies, whose co-singer Graham Nash — seven years his senior — became a friend and mentor (“I knew from the very start he was going to have a great future,” Nash tells MOJO today). According to Reid, it was Nash who recommended him to RAK, the recording and publishing company founded by producer Mickie Most and manager Peter Grant. By 1967, Reid had decided to leave Peter Jay and form his own group with Peter Solley on organ and drummer Keith Webb. “I wanted a band that was more contemporary, more up-to-date, and could try different things,” says Reid. “We were looking for a record deal.”

Though Most and Grant had an impressive roster — The Animals, Herman’s Hermits, Donovan and The Yardbirds, among others — the two made for a strange combination. “Mickie wore these silk scarves and had the fancy hair. I wasn’t quite sure about him, thought he was a bit of a poser. Then he introduced me to Peter, this big guy, must have been 300 pounds. He’s wearing his chair and his desk, and he had to have the floor beneath him reinforced. You’ve got these two absolute characters, and I’m a kid thinking to myself — What have I gotten into here?”

Reid and Most had wildly differing visions of how his career should proceed. The producer saw Reid, with his boyish appeal and big voice, as a new Tom











## “THE SONGS YOU WRITE, THAT’S WHAT YOU ARE”

The broad reach of TERRY REID’s greatest compositions. By Bob Mehr.

### TERRY REID WITH PETER JAY’S JAYWALKERS

#### This Time

(Columbia, 1967)

Reid’s first official songwriting credit, co-penned with Jay, *This Time* appeared as the B-side to *The Hand Don’t Fit The Glove* single. A gem of horn-fuelled pop-soul produced by John Burgess (Manfred Mann; Freddie And The Dreamers), the track finds Reid’s young voice beginning to reach its full potential.

### THE OTHER SIDE

#### Writing On The Wall

(Kingston, 1969)

A strange Swedish/American/British band – that numbered Donovan sideman Mac MacLeod and, briefly, Boz Scaggs, among its ranks – the Stockholm-based *The Other Side* covered Reid’s *Writing On The Wall* as a two-part single in ’69, slowing the song, and turning it into a swirling organ-based slice of light psych.

### ARRIVAL

#### Friends

(Decca, 1970)

The debut single from Liverpool-rooted, London-based vocal group *Arrival* would prove to be one of Reid’s biggest commercial successes. Their version of his second album standout would become a Top 10 UK chart hit in the summer of 1970, partly thanks to Paul Buckmaster’s catchy gospel-esque arrangement, and singer Dyan Birch’s soaring vocals.

### CHEAP TRICK

#### Speak Now Or Forever Hold Your Peace

(Epic, 1977)

Reid’s driving proto-powerpop anthem lodged in the brain of guitarist Rick Nielsen when his band *Fuse* shared a bill with the singer in the late ’60s. In 1977, Nielsen and company released their self-titled debut as *Cheap Trick*, cutting this memorable version of the song. Reid would occasionally perform it live with the band.

### THE HOLLIES/CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

#### Without Expression (Horses Through A Rainstorm)

(EMI, 1993/Atlantic, 1991)

Based on a poem Reid wrote at 14,

the song’s fate was typical of Reid’s luck. Recorded by The Hollies during their final sessions with Nash in 1968, it was tossed from the *Hollies Sing Hollies* album when he bailed. A year later, a reworked version was destined for CSNY’s *Déjà Vu*, but again got cut. Both recordings would appear on later archival sets.

### MARIANNE FAITHFULL/ THE RACONTEURS

#### Rich Kid Blues

(Castle, 1985/Third Man, 2008)

Faithfull’s folkie version was recorded in 1971 but didn’t see the light of day until after her comeback success with 1979’s *Broken English*. The song was revived by The Raconteurs in 2008, with Jack White and Brendan Benson trading verses and building it into a monumental blues-rock burner on 2008’s *Consolers Of The Lonely*.

### RUMER

#### Brave Awakening

(Warner Music, 2012)

Another classic off Reid’s masterly *Seed Of Memory* given a fresh interpretation by Pakistani/British pop singer Rumer on her second album, *Boys Don’t Cry* – a collection of covers by ’70s male singer-songwriters – that brought a feminine perspective to Reid’s coal miner’s lament.

### CHRIS CORNELL

#### To Be Treated Rite

(UMG, 2020)

Posthumously released on *No One Sings Like You Anymore*, Cornell’s version of Reid’s *Seed Of Memory* centrepiece is one of the most haunting covers of his work, with the former Soundgarden belter one of few singers capable of matching Reid’s lungpower. The record also included Cornell’s take on *Stay With Me Baby*, heavily influenced by Reid’s 1969 version.

Faithfull fans: top Terry Reid interpreters Marianne and (above) The Raconteurs.

◀ Offord, Lindley left to go on the road with Jackson Browne, while White joined up with Yes, as the band and project fell apart.

Ertegun came to the rescue again, bringing Reid to America, and pairing him with Tom Dowd to restart the record. “I said, *the Tom Dowd!*? You’re putting me on,” recalled Reid. “He goes, ‘Aretha thinks it’s a great idea.’”

The Queen of Soul had become a prominent fan of Reid’s after visiting the UK in 1968. Franklin would famously name Reid as the best thing happening in British pop music, along with The Beatles and the Stones. “Listen, if Aretha says you’re a singer, then you’re a singer,” laughed Reid. “She came down to a couple of sessions with Dowd and blew everybody’s mind just being there. She’d go, ‘Come on, Terry. Sing for me!’ God, I wish I had that on tape.”

Reid’s Dowd-produced album *River* – an ethereal blend of blues, jazz, folk, R&B and Brazilian music – was beautiful, but Ertegun knew it was a tough sell. Rather than hold him hostage as Most had, he tore up Reid’s contract, setting him free, and sent him off with a \$20,000 pay-out.

“Ahmet didn’t owe me anything, but he gave me 20 grand, and a free leather briefcase to put it in,” chuckled Reid. “I got the cash at the bank, the security guard walked me to my car, and I drove off into the sunset.”

Staying in America on an expired visa, Reid spent the next couple of years laying low, living in the Santa Monica Mountains as he compiled a new collection of songs, eventually sending demos to old pal Nash, hoping to get his honest opinion. Reid didn’t hear from him for a couple months, and figured he wasn’t keen on the material. But then Nash rang him; not only did he love the songs, he also wanted to produce the project, and had already lined up a studio, a band, and a deal with ABC Records for the album that became *Seed Of Memory*.

“If I say so myself, *Seed Of Memory* is an outstanding record,” says Nash today. “Terry was a good record maker himself. All I really did was encourage him to be Terry Reid.” But Reid’s bad luck continued. Just prior to releasing his album, ABC went bankrupt.

Reid would bounce back a couple of years later, landing another major label deal in 1978 with Capitol Records and turning up the guitars on a mix of originals and reworked girl group classics for a powerpop-leaning platter called *Rogue Waves*. But a change in label leadership ahead of its release doomed the album.

The 1980s would prove to be a lost decade for Reid professionally. “I fell in love with this girl and then I moved up to Laurel Canyon and we had two children,” said Reid of his daughters, Kelly and Holly. “There was a whole decade or more between records. Sometimes life takes over. You’ve got to see the importance of things. I didn’t want to go on the road. I just wanted to spend as much time as I could with the children.”

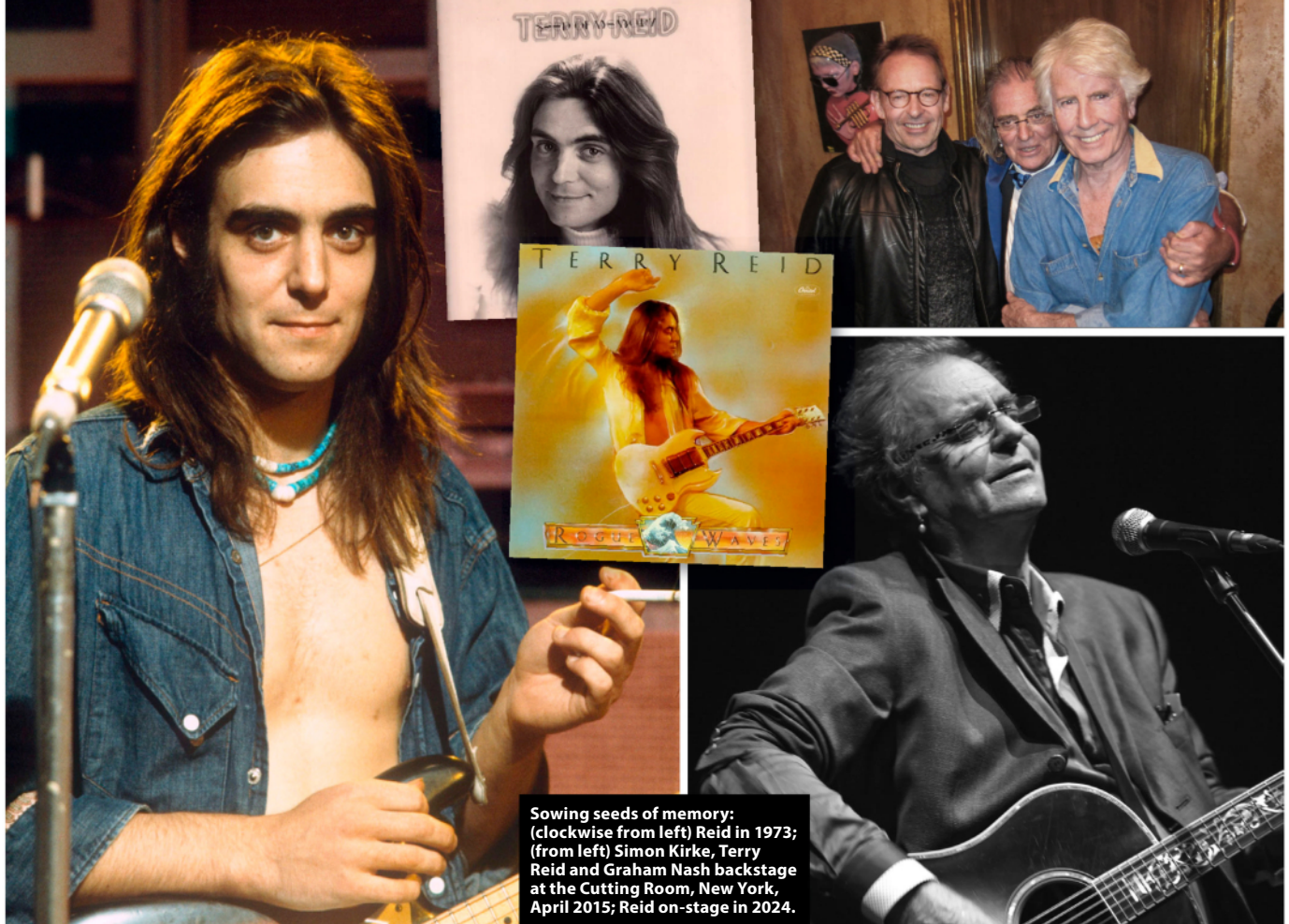
In between session work, Reid built a studio in his house and “cranked out a whole load of songs,” some of which would end up on his first album in 13 years, 1991’s *The Driver*, for Warner International. Though it was arguably Reid’s most complete record – and featured guest appearances by Joe Walsh of the Eagles, Stewart Copeland of The Police and Irish singer Enya – the record was ill-served by Trevor Horn’s overly distinctive production, and the album failed to chart.

**I**N THE 34 YEARS SINCE *THE DRIVER*, REID would not release another studio album. There would be a live record, several worthy reissues and expansions of his previous work, some notable soundtrack placements, but mostly a slew of unrealised if tantalising projects.

At one point, the legendary hip-hop producer Dr Dre had become fascinated with *River* and tried to have Reid rework the album in a hip-hop context (so far, nothing has emerged from those sessions). Then there was a decade-long effort to make a Reid documentary, *Superlungs*, by producer Richard Frias. But Reid butted heads with Frias over the direction of the film and eventually pulled out (it remains unfinished,

Stephen Berkman, Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images





Sowing seeds of memory: (clockwise from left) Reid in 1973; (from left) Simon Kirke, Terry Reid and Graham Nash backstage at the Cutting Room, New York, April 2015; Reid on-stage in 2024.

though Frias posted recently that the project is still moving ahead).

Reid's highest profile moment in recent years came in 2016 when The Washington Post ran a front-page feature on his career, following him as he palled around with celebrity admirers including actor Johnny Depp and Aerosmith guitarist Joe Perry. It proved a less than flattering portrait, however, depicting Reid as struggling financially with his guitars in hock and battling a drink problem.

After that, Reid took the initiative to tell his own story and share his new music, working on a memoir, releasing a handful of digital singles, and developing a concept LP, re-imagining some of his favourite cowboy and country songs. Meanwhile, for all his ups and downs, he was gratified that his old songs continued to find new life, consistently covered by a range of artists including Marianne Faithfull, John Mellencamp, The Raconteurs, Chris Cornell and others. "The songs that you write, that's what you are," Reid told me. "When you're gone, that's all that's left. So I take a lot of pride in them."

Reid noted some people – fans and journalists alike – expected him to be embittered at how his career played out. But as he sat with me in his House of Dreams in La Quinta, it appeared that nothing could be further from the truth.

"I love my life," he enthused, "I love it here. I mean, I know it's not a real big posh house. But it's ours. And [wife] Annette, I love her dearly. I mean, she's so good to me. God, I don't know what I'd do without her."

With the sun setting over the Santa Rosas, and the interview wrapping up, Reid finally put down his guitar. Before leaving, I remarked that he seemed to derive as much satisfaction playing for an audience of one, as for 100,000.

"Yeah, well, see, that's the thing," said Reid, his eyes twinkling. "It's no different to me."

**A**LTHOUGH HE SEEMED IN ROBUST HEALTH AND good spirits during our interview, just a couple of weeks after MOJO's visit with Reid the singer was admitted to hospital. He had battled against a variety of health issues, both publicly and privately, over the years, including heart surgery, kidney problems, and most recently a cancer diagnosis. Though the disease itself was in remission, complications from the treatment had suddenly laid Reid low.

**"RUNNING AROUND,  
CHASING AFTER  
THIS, CHASING  
AFTER THAT, IT'LL  
DRIVE YOU CRAZY,  
OR IT'LL GET YOU  
IN A WHOLE LOAD  
OF TROUBLE."  
TERRY REID**

In early July, his UK tour, set to start in September, was postponed. A few weeks later a GoFundMe account was set up to help defray his medical costs. Then, on August 4, the word came that Reid had passed.

There would be a sense of shock and sadness about his death, as well as warm remembrances from longtime friends including Graham Nash. "[Terry] was such a force. A talent beyond what I can express right now," Nash said. "That voice. That guitar playing. That wonderful person we will all miss so dearly."

Robert Plant paid emotional tribute, noting that Reid's "enthusiasm and encouragement were incredible. [As] teenagers we crashed each [other's] gigs and crucified Season Of The Witch time and time again... He was all of everything... such charisma."

Plant also acknowledged his eternal debt to Reid, whom he called his "brother in arms": "He catapulted me into an intense new world he chose to decline."

Flashing back to that June afternoon at Reid's home, it's hard to picture him ever having become rock's proverbial Golden God. Instead, the image that lingers is that of a precocious tot atop a fruit crate, singing to whoever wanted to listen.

"That's it," Reid had confided as we parted. "As soon as I start singing, I'm back there, I'm back in the orchard, a happy little boy once again."





# WHAT, ME WORRY?

Post-American Utopia, **DAVID BYRNE** is continuing to put a positive spin on the global omni-shambles. That includes engaging constructively with his Talking Heads legacy, but don't confuse it with looking backwards. "Even if something is going well and you know how to do this thing," he tells **DAVID FRICKE**, "I gotta leave it behind."

PORTRAIT BY **AHMED KLINK**

**D**AVID BYRNE WAS STILL IN THE middle of his greatest success since his old band, Talking Heads, broke up in 1991 – a five-year touring run with American Utopia, a sensory feast of new songs and freshly arranged Talking Heads hits performed with a wireless, perpetually dancing band – when he decided the end was near.

"I didn't think it was getting stale," says Byrne, ensconced in a stark workroom at the back of his office in midtown Manhattan. "But I didn't want to be the guy who just does that show, recognised for one thing, like Hal Holbrook," referring to the American actor who portrayed author Mark Twain on-stage for 60 years. "I thought, It feels good, but it's time to pull the plug and start thinking about what comes next."

On April 3, 2022, American Utopia closed on Broadway after 240 performances. "I'm of an age," says Byrne, 73, "where in the late '60s and early '70s, you saw all these bands changing with each record, sometimes radical changes. That was expected, what you're supposed to do."

"It's perverse," he admits. "Even if something is going well and you know how to write this kind of song, do this thing, you feel like, I gotta leave it behind."

That urgency became Byrne's new album, *Who Is The Sky?*, a buoyant, lyrically pointed defiance that extends the determined optimism of *American Utopia* – made amid the destructive lunacy of the first MAGA White House – for an even darker, more vengeful season. Some songs date back to the lockdown anxiety of 2020-21; *My Apartment Is My Friend* is an incongruous dance party for one guy and his four walls. But there is comfort and assurance in the small, communal moments and sunny gait of *Everybody Laughs* and *When We Are Singing* while teaching moments lurk in

unlikely settings. Byrne gets a lesson in finding heaven on earth in *I Met The Buddha At A Downtown Party*, a comic romp in which the Enlightened One has quit the mantra business and is more interested in the immediate peace of the dessert tray. In *A Door Called No*, a Kafka-esque cycle of autocratic whim is set in a contrary tenderness suggesting Harry Nilsson with the *Sunflower*-era Beach Boys.

Byrne made *Who Is The Sky?* with an entirely new supporting cast. Founded in 2006, Ghost Train Orchestra is a New York-based juggernaut with brass, strings and a nimble rhythm section, specialising in forgotten jazz repertoire and outsider composers. Byrne met the group via a mutual friend, Joan Wasser (AKA Joan As Police Woman), in October 2023 at the Brooklyn club Roulette. Ghost Train Orchestra were performing music from their new album with the Kronos Quartet, *Songs And Symphonies: The Music Of Moondog*, a tribute to the blind, bohemian polymath. That night, Byrne sat in as a guest vocalist for the madrigal *Be A Hobo*. Two months later, he was singing *Everybody Laughs* with Ghost Train Orchestra in their basement rehearsal space in Chinatown.

"I liked the chamber orchestra sound with drums, bass and guitar," Byrne explains. "It's a big band. But it's a *band*." He was so taken with Ghost Train's chops and instrumental reach that he asked director Brian Carpenter to assign arrangements for each song to different members, all top-drawer players with their own jazz, avant-rock and theatre gigs. At the same time, Byrne recruited British producer and multi-instrumentalist Kid Harpoon, a multiple Brit-and-Grammy winner for his hits with Harry Styles and Miley Cyrus.

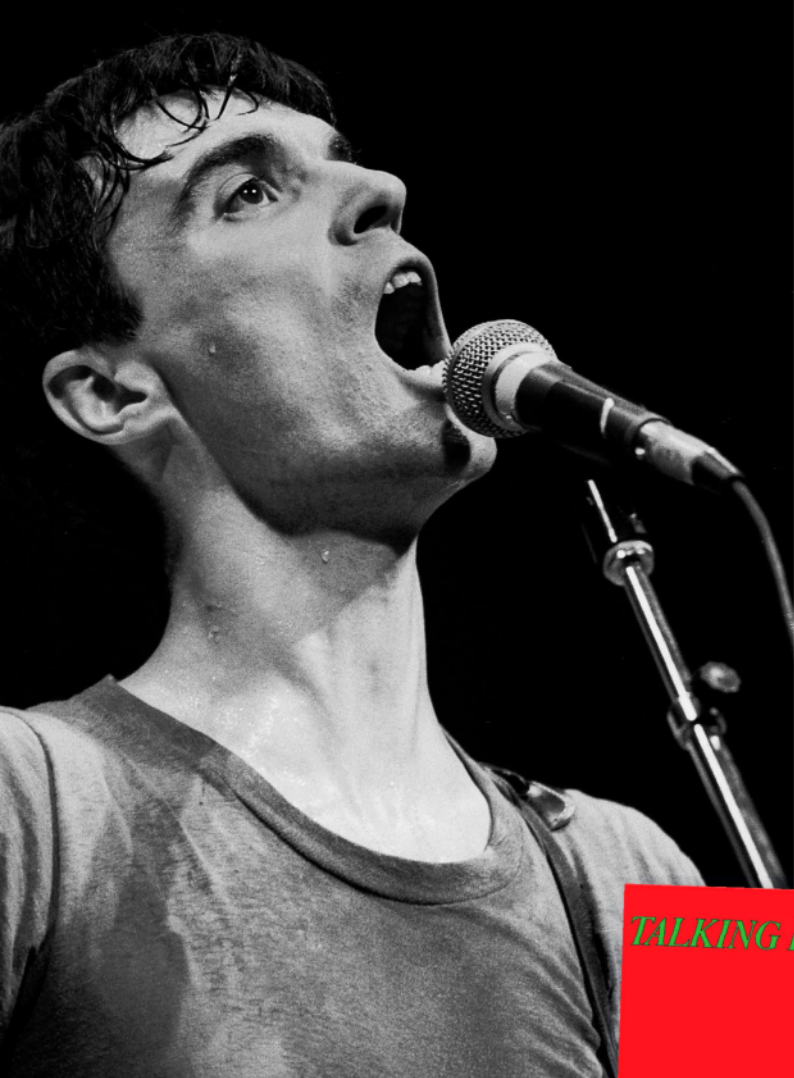
Byrne "often deferred" to Kid Harpoon in rehearsals, Carpenter notes. The producer "would ask, 'Why is there only one chorus in this song? We need a reprise.' I think ➤



Head honcho: David Byrne,  
still moving forward in 2025  
– Humanity is where you're  
gonna get your inspiration."







Talk show: (clockwise from left) Byrne gets "yelp-y" on-stage at Park West, Chicago, August 23, 1978; original trio (from left) Tina Weymouth, Byrne and Chris Frantz, Manhattan, 1976; Talking Heads performing at CBGB in 1977 (from left) Jerry Harrison, Byrne, Frantz, Weymouth.



◀ that's what David was looking for, making it accessible."

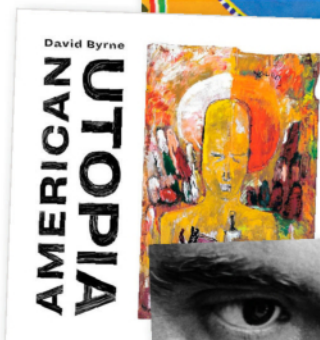
The result is improbably fluid and deliciously catchy, packing Byrne's lifelong restlessness – from the skeletal jump of *Talking Heads: 77* to that group's textural explosion on 1983's *Speaking In Tongues*; his revolving palette on solo albums such as 1989's Latin-inflected *Rei Momo* and 2004's philharmonic *Grown Backwards* – into two-and-three-minute bolts of pop lightning.

"These songs were therapeutic," Byrne acknowledges, "a counterforce to a lot of what I see around me. You can surrender to despair, happiness, anger and frustration. But that doesn't help anything. You have to persevere, to believe that things can be changed whether it comes from you or somebody else."

"It was very intuitive," he says of the new album during a wide-ranging conversation, punctuated with grins and laughter, that includes flashbacks of 1970s New York squalor, his discomfort with rock stardom and the current state of affairs with his former bandmates: drummer Chris Frantz, bassist Tina Weymouth and keyboard player Jerry Harrison (see sidebar over page). "It wasn't like I sat at my desk and said, I'm gonna write a record that does *this*. But in the end, you realise that's what you did."

#### How did these new songs start coming?

There were some – Everybody Laughs and What Is The Reason For It? [a duet with Paramore singer Hayley Williams] – where I had a wordless melody, a scat thing, then put that over a loop with some chords. I had that as a demo. Now I've gotta write words that fit. I've



done that before – those songs tend to be more groove-oriented.

Others would start with a title. I'd be talking to someone or thinking to myself, like I Met The Buddha At A Downtown Party. There's a story there. What happens next? And what happens after that? I fill up pages with all of the possibilities, the phrases he might say, what you might say back to him.

Moisturizing Thing came from something my fiancée often tells me – "David, don't forget to moisturise," in a very nice way (laughs). But what if it really works? Imagine that I woke up and really looked younger. How much younger?

**In the song, you turn back into a kid. You look like you're three years old, and nobody takes you seriously.**

They judge you by the way you look, so there is an implication of race, age-ism, other stuff, but told in an amusing parable.

**At the start of your career, how long did it take you to find your singing voice? You've always had some of the eternal child in your range and tone.**

My singing went through various stages. I sang in suburban Baltimore coffeehouses in the late '60s. I was a folkie. But I would sing literate rock songs, things by The Who and The Kinks. There's no recordings, so I don't know how well I was singing that stuff.

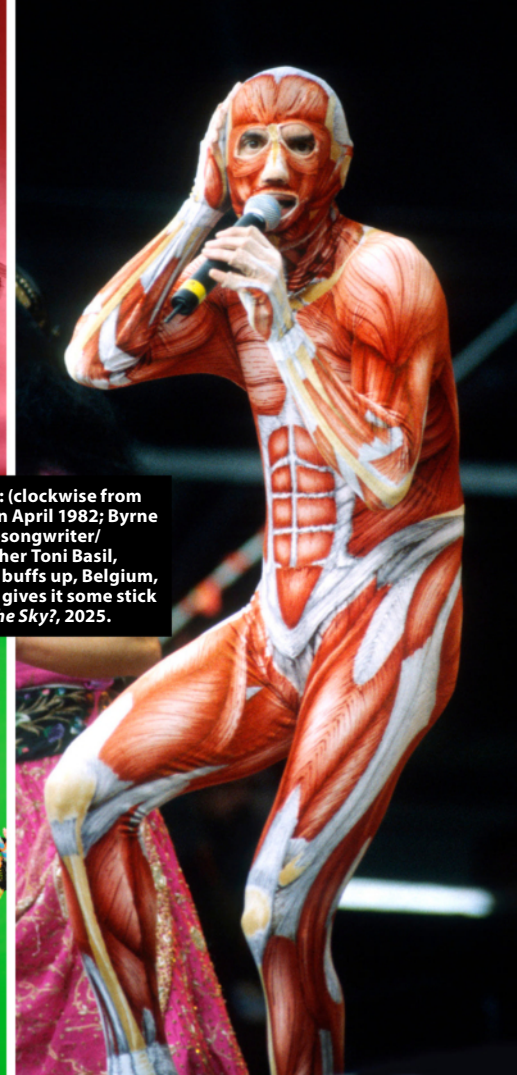
I'm aware that with early Talking Heads, my voice was very strident. [The late critic] Lester Bangs said it was very yelp-y. I was not

the only one doing that. It just seemed to be a natural form of expression. But when we started having a bigger band on-stage, the music was more transcendent and ecstatic. I realised that angst-ridden thing was not appropriate. In the '80s, I was listening to a lot of Latin and Brazilian music, and I would go see Celia Cruz at the Village Gate. I was amazed by these singers and their melodies and how they were saying things that were very profound and political. I thought, You





**A cool Head:** (clockwise from left) Byrne in April 1982; Byrne with singer-songwriter/choreographer Toni Basil, 1987; Byrne buffs up, Belgium, 1997; Byrne gives it some stick for *Who Is The Sky?*, 2025.



## “THE CHALLENGE [IN TALKING HEADS] WAS TAKING SOMETHING THAT IS ASSUMED TO BE INSINCERE AND MAKING IT SINCERE.” DAVID BYRNE

can say these things, and you don't have to yell. That led me to a different light.

**You have a song on the new record called *The Avant Garde* about how much you like it on the edge (“It’s a passionate life, it’s ahead of the curve”). You also point out how much jive is out there as well (“It’s whatever fits... And it doesn’t mean shit”).**

It’s a huge risk (*laughs*). If I go to a theatre or dance thing that’s on the fringe a bit – somebody trying something new – it can be revelatory, something that blows my mind. I didn’t know that was possible, and now I know it is. Not that I’m going to steal it, but it’s a great feeling.

But there’s always a chance you’ll see something and go, That was a good idea but not well executed. Or, It didn’t really work. I sometimes hesitate when I ask a friend, “I’m going to see this thing, you want to go with me?” “What’s it about?” “I don’t know exactly. It sounded really interesting in the description.” You’re trying to describe it to someone, but they go, “No, maybe I’ll go see George Clooney on Broadway.”

**My Apartment Is My Friend is such a New York scenario, so I will ask a New York question: where was your first apartment?**

I got my foot in the door by sleeping on the floor of a painter’s loft on Bond Street [west of the Bowery]. I could help with sanding floors, that kind of stuff. Then Chris, Tina and I moved into a loft on Chrystie Street [on the Lower East Side]. The rent was \$300 for the whole thing. For me, it was \$150, which meant I could support myself on a part-time job and still have money left over and time to write and perform.

When things got a little better, I got my own apartment on 5th Street between the Bowery and 2nd Avenue. Like I said in the *American Utopia* show, I took part of my advance [when Talking Heads signed to Sire Records] and bought a little colour TV. But the apartment was on the ground floor and it was noisy. People stopped on the sidewalk outside. Every time they walked by, having a conversation, you’d hear part of it.

**That’s good songwriting material. You have the parade of life right outside your window.**

Yes, and I think that was a little reminder. You might be tempted to

go out and live in the woods. But humanity is where you’re gonna get your inspiration.

ON JUNE 5, 1975, TALKING HEADS – THE ORIGINAL trio of Byrne, Frantz and Weymouth, newly resident in New York City – made their live debut at CBGB, opening for the Ramones. They were all alumni of the Rhode Island School of Design. Frantz and Weymouth graduated; Byrne – born in Scotland and raised in Baltimore, the son of an electronics engineer – left after his freshman year but formed a band, the Artistics, with Frantz. In a 2013 interview, Weymouth claimed that when Byrne and Frantz started Talking Heads in New York, the singer made her audition three times before she got the bass job.

“Memories are faulty,” Byrne suggests when asked about that first show. “I remember a small audience, mainly there for the Ramones. Some people liked us. [Critic and Patti Smith guitarist] Lenny Kaye became a champion. He’d tell people, ‘You should check out this group,’ or tell [CBGB owner] Hilly Kristal, ‘They’re good, you should bring them back.’”

A black-and-white film clip survives from another CBGB show two months later, on August 15: Talking Heads performing *Psycho Killer* with Byrne playing acoustic guitar – an unusual thing in that room – and glaring at the audience in a white dress shirt with rolled-up sleeves, like a draughtsman at the end of his rope. “The other members may have been a little more preppie than me,” Byrne cracks. “But I thought, That’s a cool look. And I knew I couldn’t do the Ramones’ leather-jacket thing. As much as I liked them, we were not going to pull that off.”

Byrne recalls initial press clips dismissing the group as “an ➤





True stories: (from left) Byrne, Harrison, Frantz and Weymouth talk up the restored edition of *Stop Making Sense* on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert*.

# SLIPPERY PEOPLE?

TALKING HEADS' PROMO TOUR FOR THEIR *STOP MAKING SENSE* REBOOT DREW SOME TRICKY QUESTIONS. LIKE WHY NOT PLAY AGAIN?

EVERYTHING WAS cool and cordial on-stage at the Ed Sullivan Theater in New York City on October 25, 2023 as David Byrne, Chris Frantz, Tina Weymouth and Jerry Harrison spoke about the restored edition of Talking Heads' landmark 1984 concert documentary *Stop Making Sense* on *The Late Show With Stephen Colbert* – until the host popped the forbidden question. “I legally have to ask,” Colbert said, “if there’s any possibility of protecting your legacy by playing together again,” pointing to his house band’s gear and adding, “It would be epic.”

“I thought, You promised you wouldn’t do that,” Byrne says, revisiting that moment with a grin. “Couldn’t resist, I guess.”

Byrne has maintained a diligent resistance to reuniting Talking Heads since they quietly split three years after their last studio album, 1988’s *Naked*, and seven years after their final performance in February, 1984 at a festival in New Zealand. Until the quartet’s round of TV appearances and screening interviews for the re-release of *Stop Making Sense* – filmed at the Pantages Theatre, Los Angeles, in December 1983 and directed by the late Jonathan Demme – the closest Talking Heads came to the impossible dream was their 2002 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. They all showed up; they did not perform.

Incredibly for a band named after television slang for a commentator or pundit, the members were put through media training ahead of that movie promo tour. “Someone was brought in,” Byrne reveals, “to go over with us, ‘What are your talking points? What are you going to say when they ask you this?’ It was soft suggestions: ‘

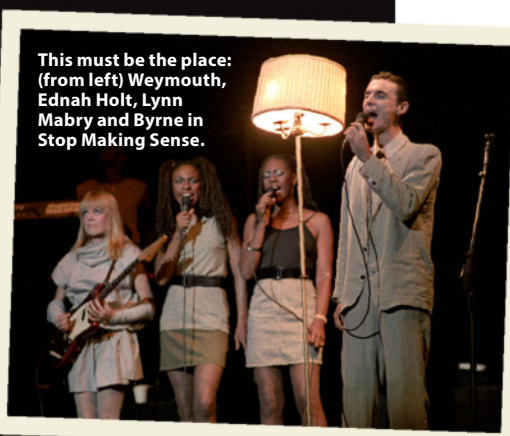
Don’t go here.’

“We stuck to that,” he says. “It made it easy to do and a lot of fun. And we were super-proud of the movie. Seeing the new print with the new sound mix, I thought, This holds up pretty well. And we’re witnessing a much younger generation experiencing this thing.” Byrne notes the 2024 album, *Everyone’s Getting Involved: A*

*Tribute To Talking Heads’ Stop Making Sense*, with songs from the film covered by 21st century fans such as Lorde, The National and The Linda Lindas. Byrne wasn’t so sure about the future of American Utopia live when the tour opened in March, 2018. It was “another leap” from *Stop Making Sense*, he says, “rethinking what a concert should be.” Byrne also considered “the possibility that people are going to hate it, think it is too worked out. ‘Where’s the spontaneity?’” Then he heard that some theatrical producers saw the first show in New Jersey. “The Bruce Springsteen thing on Broadway had just opened. Of course, it was a complete sell-out. So they’re going, ‘Rock music on Broadway – that can be a thing now!’”

“WE WERE SUPER-PROUD OF THE MOVIE. I THOUGHT, THIS HOLDS UP PRETTY WELL.”

DAVID BYRNE



This must be the place: (from left) Weymouth, Ednah Holt, Lynn Mabry and Byrne in *Stop Making Sense*.

◀ intellectual art project – ‘It’s not really a band.’ There were things that said I was aloof and cold, too ironic. There’s a little truth to that. Calling a song Don’t Worry About The Government [on *Talking Heads: 77*] is ironic. But the song itself was expressing a desire to live in a clean apartment with working appliances. We all want that.”

Byrne smiles when reminded of a bubblegum nugget Talking Heads covered in shows for a time: 1, 2, 3, Red Light, a Billboard Top 5 hit in 1968 for the 1910 Fruitgum Company. The striking thing about Talking Heads’ version, out there on bootlegs, is that it doesn’t sound ironic. They’re not making fun of the song. They’re enjoying it.

“The challenge was taking something that is assumed to be insincere and making it sincere,” Byrne says, effectively summing up his band’s moral and musical code. “Take all these clichés and find the heart in there. And put that out.”

**You sing about hanging out with the Buddha in New York. But who were the first heroes you met as Talking Heads started making waves?**

CBGB got a lot of attention quickly, so you had all these famous people checking it out. “Wow, Lou Reed’s here!” At one point, we met Andy Warhol: “Come to lunch at the Factory.” But the Factory was no longer the silver-foil place. It was a business. More impressive for us, having gone to art school, were people like Dennis Oppenheim, who did earth art.

We were friends with [composer-cellist] Arthur Russell. I went to a party Arthur invited me to and I remember being outside the apartment with Allen Ginsberg. And the door was locked. Allen decided to do some chanting, thinking maybe the door would open. He was kind of right. Eventually it did.

**Did you feel like you belonged? There’s a song on the new album, I’m An Outsider, written from the perspective of a guy desperate for a break – and to be accepted.**

I can easily write from that point of view. I think of myself as an outsider a little bit. I’m pretty functional these days. Back in the day, less so – I was socially more awkward. Now I can get by pretty well. But I still know that feeling.

My favourite part of that song is where he starts having this fantasy about what it’s like to be inside your head. “Is it like Las Vegas?” – all sparkling lights, very trippy. “Or a library?” – very quiet, academic and intellectual (*laughs*).

**Did you ever feel like a rock star with Talking Heads?**

Not really. I got to live part of it. There were drugs for a little while, at least for me. And we got treated like we were special sometimes. You’d go to a club to see a band, and they would put you in the DJ booth or in this VIP area. You’d get that stuff and realise a lot of it is meaningless.

**How would you characterise your fame now? Every time you change direction, you risk leaving people behind.**

Maybe you’ll get new ones. But you don’t know. I’ve had that happen where you leave a lot of people behind. Colleagues, musicians you work with – that changes too. Even with Talking Heads, each record was a little bit different from the one before. And I started doing scores for dance or a film, things that would branch off into different places.

People know your work or maybe work from a particular period, and that’s what they think of you. I’ve tried to counteract that by almost being available. (*Pauses*) That’s not the right word. It’s being as close to an ordinary person as I can – getting around by bicycle or going into grocery stores, not going out with bodyguards or making a big entrance. Act like everybody else, and they will treat you like everybody else – there’s a little bit of truth in that.

**How involved are you with Talking Heads reissues like the recent box sets for *Talking Heads: 77* and [1978’s] *More Songs About Buildings And Food*? It’s the band’s story but your songs.**

I’m surprised that recordings keep showing up, some tape that a radio station in Boston made or whatever it might be. Everything passes through here, and I have to sign off on it. So I am aware of all that. I feel like it’s for a particular set of fans who want all that stuff. I have occasionally been that fan. I bought some of the Miles Davis boxes where it was all these outtakes and improvisations, unedited versions of all that stuff. And after a while, you go, I’ve heard it. I’ll stick with the original version of *Bitches Brew*.

But there’s some nice surprises. Some of the live stuff – I’d completely forgotten that we’d stretch out the beginnings of songs for like three minutes before we’d get to the first verse. So there’s this groove, this thing going. We stopped doing it, but it was pretty nice. We were really tight as a band.





Outside looking in: (clockwise from right) Byrne barefoot in 2025; with his *Playing The Building* installation, The Roundhouse, London, 2009; Grammy-winning Byrne collaborator Kid Harpoon; performing *American Utopia* at the New Theatre, Oxford, June 14, 2018.



**“I’M PRETTY FUNCTIONAL THESE DAYS. BACK IN THE DAY, LESS SO – I WAS SOCIALLY MORE AWKWARD. NOW I CAN GET BY PRETTY WELL.” DAVID BYRNE**

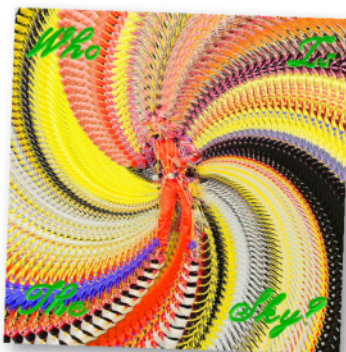
**B**RIAN CARPENTER CAN TELL YOU exactly where he was when he first heard Talking Heads: on Cale Street in his home town of Satellite Beach, Florida, blasting *Burning Down The House* from *Speaking In Tongues* on the cassette deck of his red Chevrolet Cavalier. “No one was singing with that sense of urgency,” he says of Byrne, “how high and expressive his voice was.”

Ghost Train Orchestra’s leader still marvels at how Byrne quickly heard the colours and swing he wanted for *Who Is The Sky?* at the group’s Moon-dog tribute show. At soundcheck, Carpenter recalls, “The first thing David said to me was, ‘I heard your new record. I really like it. That’s the approach.’ I thought he meant the approach to the show that night. What he really meant was, ‘That’s the approach for my new songs.’ I just thought he was a fan of Moondog.”

Kid Harpoon, in turn, was recommended to Byrne by singer-songwriter Maggie Rogers. In 2022, she e-mailed Byrne, whom she’d never met, asking if he would appear in a video for *That’s Where I Am*, a song on her second studio album, *Surrender*. Byrne said yes and was on set the next day. “I was aware of her records,” he says, and noticed Kid Harpoon among the producers. After turning up as a special guest that year on Miley Cyrus’s New Year’s Eve TV special, he spotted Kid Harpoon in the credits for her 2023 album, *Endless Summer Vacation*. “I didn’t know what he’d done with Harry Styles. But I kept asking Maggie, Do you get along with him? Did it work OK? She said yeah.

“I don’t want to be that legacy-rock guy who does an orchestral record,” Byrne insists. Bringing Kid Harpoon to *Who Is The Sky?* “kept it from going too far that way.”

Despite his enthusiasm for the group, Byrne won’t be taking Ghost Train Orchestra on tour for the new album. The members



have other commitments, and they are not dancers. The show “will be mobile again,” he says, with a new visual component. “It will be different” from *American Utopia*. “But I can’t see the musicians being planted in the traditional style, as long as I can afford to keep the mobile thing going.”

**You have a comfort level with contemporary pop music and younger pop stars that is rare for your rock’n’roll demographic.**

I’m aware that there’s an era where to have integrity, you had to separate yourself from being a mere pop artist. I always thought, No, there’s plenty of great

artists who have had successful songs. It doesn’t have to be mutually exclusive. There’s definitely formulaic pop, then and now. But there are people who have managed to slip through, do interesting things and have a hit.

I can’t be completely in that world. I can write an accessible melody, have a song that sounds really good and fits in there. But I’m an older guy (*laughs*). I don’t swim in social media as easily as younger folks do. They are native to that. But as far as the writing and the music, I can do that. And I can work with people... How are we going to dance on this? Who’s gonna play that? That’s part of their world too.

**The freedom you have now – is that what you always sought in music and art, even before the success of Talking Heads made it possible?**

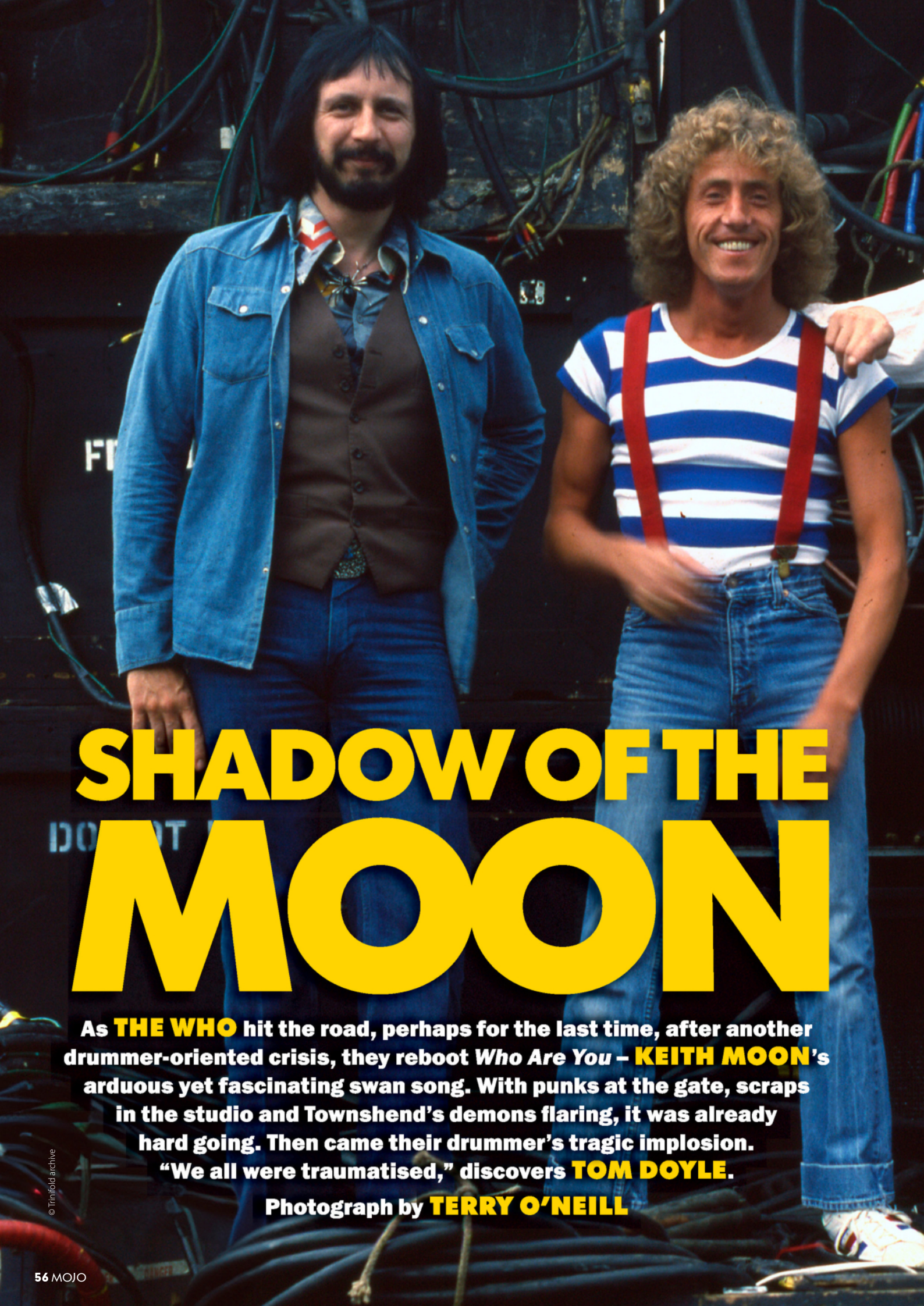
This goes back to the very beginning of our talk. In my formative musical years, artists would experiment, try all these different things. And you realise, Oh, you can do that, all of these different styles, subjects and musical approaches. As long as you make it accessible in some way, you can pull it off. Not everyone’s going to love it all. But you can get away with it. Judging from my own experience, people will respect you, and they are happy to go on that journey. They realise, “There’s a chance I might get something I wouldn’t get otherwise” – the same way I do with artists I follow.

**You are always looking for the door that says yes.**

(*Laughs*) And sometimes it works.







# SHADOW OF THE MOON

As **THE WHO** hit the road, perhaps for the last time, after another drummer-oriented crisis, they reboot *Who Are You* – **KEITH MOON**'s arduous yet fascinating swan song. With punks at the gate, scraps in the studio and Townshend's demons flaring, it was already hard going. Then came their drummer's tragic implosion. "We all were traumatised," discovers **TOM DOYLE**.

Photograph by **TERRY O'NEILL**



Demolition men: The Who at Shepperton Studios during the *Who Are You* cover shoot, 1978 (from left) John Entwistle, Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend, Keith Moon.





HE WHO WERE ONLY TWO SONGS INTO THEIR SET at the Boston Garden when Keith Moon collapsed. The date was March 9, 1976, the opening show of the second US leg of the band's tour in support of *The Who By Numbers*, released five months before.

Ominously, the forever unpredictable drummer had sounded shaky from the start – muddling through *I Can't Explain*, before his playing turned sloppy during *Substitute*, then descended into troglodyte thumping, as the rest of the band noisily attempted to cover up the mess. In the last chorus, Moon stopped playing altogether, before briefly rousing himself back to consciousness and then passing out.

"We've got a little bit of a problem," Pete Townshend calmly informed the crowd. "Keith Moon is in very, very bad shape."

"He's got the flu, he's out of it," Roger Daltrey added, only half-truthfully. Protesting voices began to rise from the audience. "Nobody wants to play more than The Who, I'll tell ya that now," the singer forcefully stressed in the face of the growing uproar. "But we don't want to kill Keith Moon, right?"

"The official explanation was that he had flu," Daltrey later elucidated in his 2018 memoir, *Thanks A Lot Mr Kibblewhite*. "The real reason was the usual one. Brandy and barbiturates."

Unlike three years before, at the Cow Palace in Daly City, California, on November 20, 1973, when Moon had similarly keeled over behind his kit after scarfing tranquillisers, there was no Who fan hero to save the day. That night, Townshend had hopefully asked, "Can anybody play the drums?" Up stepped local amateur sticksman Scot Halpin to help push the band through three more numbers.

The Who's 1975-76 tour of Europe and America – their longest and most ambitious yet, boasting an expensive and elaborate laser display – was turning out to be a grind. It involved the group performing a strictly crowd-pleasing set that John Entwistle jadedly referred to as the "same old stage act": a variety of their '60s hits and a suite of songs from *Tommy*, with only a few selections from *Who's Next* and the latest LP they were supposed to be promoting.

While Moon quickly recovered and the jaunt continued two nights later at Madison Square Garden, the drummer's playing remained unreliable. By the summer, at the close of a four-date third leg culminating on August 9 at Miami Stadium, as Townshend noted in his 2012 autobiography, *Who I Am*, "Keith's tempos were sliding, and some of his most ambitious drum fills were falling short." Post-gig, Moon collapsed again at his hotel, and was hospitalised for eight days. "He returned," the guitarist grimly noted, "drinking a bottle of Rémy [Martin] a day on top of his medication."

Townshend was never able to understand the root causes of his bandmate's outré behaviour and apparent death wish. "He was a fucking pain in the arse, Keith was... just a pain in the arse," he told this writer, with a grin, in 2019. "You look at his childhood and there's no tragedy. There's no difficulty. I can't work out what the fuck he was doing."

All the more remarkable, then, that in the dying moments of the final show of the tour at Toronto's Maple Leaf Gardens on October 21, '76, The Who dramatically sparked into life, jamming on a simple three-chord riff with a kosmische groove. Moon pummelled the

kit with Klaus Dinger-like minimalist intensity, driving the band along a precise straight line, before his playing characteristically morphed into rolling thunder. No one was to know that it was to be his last appearance with The Who on a North American stage.

Throughout this purgative wig-out, Townshend improvised a simple chant involving the phrase: "Who are you? Who are you?" It was an existential question that was to haunt Townshend, Moon, and The Who as a whole, during the horribly eventful period that was to immediately follow.

THE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING UP TO THE recording of *Who Are You* – fatefully the group's last album with their pyrotechnic, if problematic drummer – found a tired and disillusioned band flying in the face of punky musical fashions. As evidenced by a new and vastly expanded 89-track box set reissue of the album – featuring demos, rehearsals, live performances, rejected Glyn Johns mixes and new Steven Wilson Atmos remixes – it saw Townshend double down on the synth experiments he'd first dabbled in circa 1971's *Who's Next*, and lean into FM rock, while lyrically blaring his creative torment in *Guitar And Pen* and his music biz disenchantment in the cynical *New Song*.

If Townshend was troubled, then Moon seemed lost. When the '75-'76 tour was over, he stayed behind in Los Angeles, mainly to escape Britain's 83 per cent tax for high earners. "They're driving out all those people who make the money," Moon moaned to NME, while fretting about the instability of music careers. "What so many people fail to appreciate," he stressed, "is that in many cases a person may only ever have a single opportunity to make it."

During this period, a frequent visitor to Moon's Malibu beach house was his young godson, Zak Starkey, son of Ringo Starr.

"My dad used to send me to stay with Keith in Malibu quite regularly for the weekend," Starkey told MOJO last year, "...in retrospect (*laughs*)... not the greatest babysitter ever, right?"

"We sat and drank beer together, even though I was 10 or 11. He got me into The Beach Boys, and he talked about surfing and girls. It turns out he'd only ever been surfing once, and he nearly drowned, and he never did it again."

All the while, not playing drums and largely idle, Moon's extreme imbibing only worsened during his time in California, particularly in an era where the LA music scene was characterised by wild overindulgence. "It was settling into a 'nothing to do' lifestyle that messed him up," reckoned Entwistle. "He had a pill for every time of the day."

In one moment of desperation, the drummer's girlfriend, Swedish model Annette Walter-Lax, sought the help of the couple's neighbour in Malibu, actor Larry Hagman, who had shared the screen with Moon – typecast as feral drummer J.D. Clover – in 1974 rise-and-fall rock film *Stardust* (reprising his role from 1973's *That'll Be The Day*). Moon duly checked into a Cedars-Sinai treatment facility for three days in February 1977, in another failed attempt to clean up.

An ongoing film career was clearly in the drummer's plans, leading to perhaps the strangest movie cameo of his brief and ➤

**"YOU LOOK AT KEITH'S  
CHILDHOOD AND  
THERE'S NO TRAGEDY.  
THERE'S NO  
DIFFICULTY. I CAN'T  
WORK OUT WHAT THE  
FUCK HE WAS DOING."  
PETE TOWNSHEND**



Animal magic: (clockwise) Keith Moon cuts loose in 1975; Moon during the filming of *Tommy*, 1974; (from left) Moon as 'J.D. Clover' alongside David Essex, Karl Howman and Billy Fury in *That'll Be The Day*; The Who, circa 1965 (from left) Daltrey, Entwistle, Townshend, Moon.





◀ chequered screen career (which had included playing a harpist nun in Frank Zappa's 1971 mind-boggler *200 Motels*). Appearing alongside octogenarian film star Mae West – and a supporting cast that included Tony Curtis, Ringo Starr and Alice Cooper – Moon hammed it up magnificently as a camp fashion designer.

A different movie crew arrived at the Malibu beach house in August '77 to film interstitial scenes for director Jeff Stein's mosaic Who documentary, *The Kids Are Alright*. Interviewed in tandem with his booze buddy Ringo (slurring throughout), a bearded Moon was totally wired, and sharply funny.

Canvassing his opinions on the other Who members, Starr cheekily enquired of his relationship with Daltrey, "What about the little singer? What's your opinion of him?"

"Well... I think he does a damn good job out there," Moon averred, before praising the frontman's mike-whirling talents. "He manages to revolve it so fast that when people throw things, he gets a sort of desiccated egg and a sliced tomato. At the end of the night I have a salad mixed. I just sprinkle some salt and Italian seasoning on it."

Back in England, the other members of The Who were not seeing the funny side and grew increasingly concerned about their self-exiled drummer. Townshend flew to LA in autumn '77 and convinced Moon to return to the UK and rejoin the band for their next venture. Keith didn't need much persuasion.

"I was really drifting away with no direction," he subsequently confessed. "I'd try to do things and get involved with projects. But nothing ever came close to the feeling I get when I'm working with the guys."

**H**AVING BRIEFLY RECONVENED in July 1977 at Shepperton Studios in Surrey – where The Who had leased two enormous sound stages and an office building to use as the nerve centre of their music and film operations – the future of the band looked altogether positive. Performing for the benefit of Jeff Stein's cameras, they powered through some of their standards and indulged in semi-piss-taking renditions of The Beatles' *I Saw Her Standing There* and The Beach Boys' *Barbara Ann*, a sweaty Moon attempting falsetto lead on the latter from behind his kit.

And yet, two months later, recording what would become *Who Are You*, the drummer was in worryingly bad shape. Ahead of preliminary sessions, beginning in September '77 at the band's Rampart Studios in Battersea, the drummer had been suffering from seizures due to sudden alcohol withdrawal.

Nonetheless, on day one, he appeared to be back to his old devilish self, likely since he'd reacquainted himself with the brandy bottle and other familiar substances. Firstly, he took a strange dislike to a new message board that had been bought for the studio and set it alight. Next, he tested out the drum

# IDENTITY PARADE

Five stand-outs from the eight-disc *Who Are You* box set, selected by Tom Doyle.

## WHO ARE YOU

(Disc 2, track 16. October 1977. Early run through with Townshend guide vocal, mixed by Steven Wilson)

This early attempt featuring Townshend's snarly vocals reveals deeper punk roots than previously appreciated. Taped at Rampart in October '77, it rings with a certain authenticity – see his screw-faced delivery of the line, "I remember throwing punches around," at 1:01. Maybe he should have kept lead vocal duties on this one for himself.

## NO ROAD ROMANCE

(Disc 3, track 5. April 1978. Session outtake)

Previously available only on the 2011 Japanese reissue of *Who Are You*, this piano-led, Townshend-fronted ballad (from Goring Studios in April '78) is a lost beauty. Sailing along on a dreamy Elton-via-Joni vibe, the singer – writing in the third person – laments the incompatible natures of touring life and stable relationships.

## TRICK OF THE LIGHT

(Disc 3, track 12. Date unknown. Entwistle demo)

Recorded at his own Hammerhead Studios in Stow-on-the-Wold, Gloucestershire, the solo demo of John Entwistle's *Trick Of The Light* is fully designed in blueprint form: twisty, gnarly riffing soundtracking his tale of going-with-a-sex-worker inadequacy. If The Who hadn't had it, he could have sold it to Rainbow.

## SHAKIN' ALL OVER

(Disc 4, track 10. July 1977. Previously unreleased Shepperton rehearsal, mixed by Jon Astley 2024)

A highlight of the summer '77 Shepperton warm-up rehearsals filmed for *The Kids Are Alright*, ahead of the sessions for *Who Are You*. The Who sound (back) in their element – ie, like a bunch of west London bruisers – with this sludgy, heavier take on the Johnny Kidd & The Pirates rocker they'd previously made their own on *Live At Leeds*.

## MUSIC MUST CHANGE

(Disc 5, track 9. April 1979. Previously unreleased Shepperton rehearsal)

Proof that Kenney Jones joining The Who had its upsides. In this Shepperton-taped rehearsal from April 1979, the month before the band's return show at the Rainbow, the new drummer deftly handles the 6/8 beat that was beyond Moon's capability. Also soars to fresh heights with the swirling Hammond organ of John 'Rabbit' Bundrick.

sound that Jon Astley – engineering for producer Glyn Johns – had spent the previous day perfecting. Once Astley declared himself satisfied with the stereo balance, as later he recalled, Moon "stood up and walked through the bloody kit", wrecking the set-up.

Such unhinged antics were easier to tolerate when Moon was on top musically form. But when the tapes rolled, it quickly became apparent that the drummer's timing was all over the place. Part of the problem was that Moon was being pushed by the others to lay down straighter beats (at the time in vogue on US rock radio) that inhibited his inherently frenetic style.

Given other current musical fashions, it might have been a better idea to allow Moon completely off the leash. The drummer, like the rest of The Who, had a complicated attitude towards punk, which he and his bandmates had clearly inspired. Paul McCartney later told MOJO's Paul Du Noyer, "I know people like Keith Moon were not so much threatened, as just pissed off, that the people who were emulating his drum style were calling him a boring old fart."

Roger Daltrey was characteristically beligerent about the new upstarts, deciding, "Fuck you, you can't out-punk The Who." Pete Townshend reacted by drinking harder, one night meeting Steve Jones and Paul Cook of the Sex Pistols at the Speakeasy club in London's West End, ranting at the pair about the financial unfairness of the music business and then conking out in a Soho doorway, before being woken by a policeman – thus finding inspiration for the verses of the work-in-progress *Who Are You*.

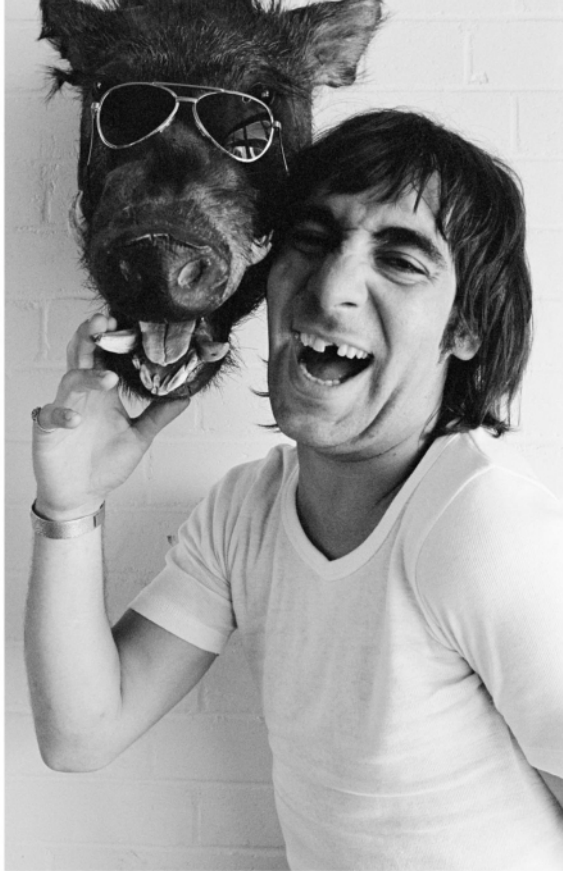
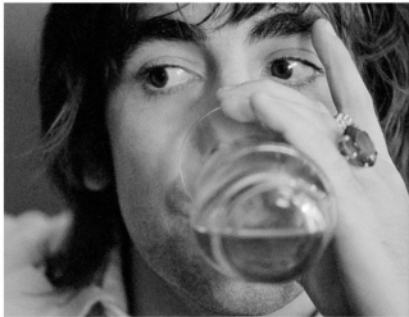
Moon, meanwhile, taunted the punks, turning up at the Vortex on Wardour Street in his Rolls-Royce and conspicuously playing the big spender at the bar. "They threatened Keith," remembered Townshend of the drummer's fellow club-goers, "and he laughed at them, inviting them to come out and ride around in his car. I wasn't so brave."

**A**LTHOUGH, IN TRUTH, ALBEIT in private, The Who could be just as lairy as the punks. In October 1977, tempers erupted in the studio when Glyn Johns played Daltrey synthesized string parts that had been added to two tracks, *Sister Disco* and *Had Enough*. The singer bluntly told the producer he thought the results were "crap". An argument broke out and the two spilled into a corridor. Johns apparently called Daltrey "a little cunt". The singer responded by headbutting him. Johns stormed out of the studio and refused to work with The Who's frontman for the remainder of the record (with Jon Astley assuming a co-producer role).

The turbulence continued into December. On the night of the 15th, at the Gaumont State Cinema in Kilburn, north London, during a show staged for Jeff Stein's cameras, a flabby Moon underper-







**Who's fooling who:** (clockwise from top) Pete Townshend meets Sex Pistols Paul Cook and Steve Jones at the Speakeasy Club, London, 1978; Keith Moon has a friend for dinner, 1972; (from left) Ringo Starr, Zak Starkey and Moon on the beach in Malibu; Moon keeps his glass half full, 1972.

formed, and Townshend lashed out at his perceived punk enemies in the crowd. “Well, this wasn’t fucking worth filming, Stein,” the guitarist huffily declared into his microphone. “Might as well send the cameramen home.”

Townshend’s anger didn’t abate over the Christmas period and, at home with his parents in Ealing, an argument provoked him to punch his hand through a window, causing lacerations that were to delay the album’s progress by two months. Then, just as the sessions were set to recommence, the band’s new keyboard player John ‘Rabbit’ Bundrick broke his arm after falling out of a cab following a drinking session with Moon (requiring the emergency drafting of erstwhile Zombie, Rod Argent).

In March ’78, at RAK Studios in St John’s Wood, Moon struggled to get to grips with the 6/8 time signature of Townshend’s *Music Must Change*. The difficulty, from Entwistle’s perspective, was that the drummer “couldn’t think of anything to play”. Daltrey later said of the song, “Keith couldn’t play to it. Keith could play great Moon drums, and that was it.”

For Townshend, the problem was more acute. “He did actually physically stop playing,” the guitarist told me in 2019. “We were recording the song, and he couldn’t play, and we ended up using footsteps as the rhythm.”

Townshend held an emergency summit at a nearby restaurant, reportedly threatening to sack Moon if he didn’t sort himself out. Moon insisted, “I can do triplet jazz!” then comically announced, “I am the best... Keith Moon-type drummer in the world!”

Still, Moon heeded Townshend’s warning, and most of the drummer’s parts for *Who Are You* were far more capably overdubbed in April ’78, back at Rampart, in the final two weeks of recording. Somehow he managed to find a middle ground (particularly on the stomping, synth-led *Had Enough* and *Sister Disco*) be-

tween straight-ahead, four-on-the-floor rock beats and his baroque drum fills. His old fire had suddenly returned.

**“I** T WAS JUST FUCKING PHENOMENAL,” enthused John Entwistle of the explosive drum solo that Keith Moon played, for the benefit of only the other members of The Who and their crew, at the end of a particularly productive day of filming and recording at Rampart, on May 4, 1978. The plan had been for Jeff Stein to film the band miming to the title track and first single from *Who Are You*. Spontaneously the group began jamming on top of the master tape, in spur-of-the-moment performances quickly captured by Jon Astley and subsequently cut into the video.

In the footage, Moon typically looned around, his headphones gaffer-taped to his head, but also played brilliantly. Three weeks later, on May 25, The Who returned to the stage, at Shepperton, performing for an invited audience what would be the classic line-up’s last show together. Jeff Stein was lacking decent film takes of Baba O’Riley and Won’t Get Fooled Again and the gig was set up expressly for this purpose. But in the end—as revealed in the new box set’s previously unreleased *Who Are You* outtakes—the band played for far longer, hitting peaks and sliding into troughs.

Moon pummelled through opener *Baba O’Riley*, then began flailing more wildly, erratically pushing and pulling the tempo of Entwistle’s *My Wife*, losing the plot several times as the band threatened to fall apart. Periodically, he broke out into—as if to prove a point—nifty triplet jazz rolls, before a messy *Who Are You* prompted Daltrey to apologise to the crowd, promising that the upcoming recorded version of the song sounded “absolutely nothing like that at all”.

Later, Moon experienced a surge of energy (the result, reportedly, of a hefty double shovel of cocaine) and turned in a charged performance of *Won’t Get Fooled Again* that was both solid and flashy. At its close, Moon, for one more time, climbed over his ➤

**“I WAS REALLY DRIFTING AWAY WITH NO DIRECTION. NOTHING CAME CLOSE TO THE FEELING I GET WHEN I’M WORKING WITH THE GUYS.”**

**KEITH MOON**



Love hurts: Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend open The Who's final US tour in Sunrise, Florida, August 16, 2025.

**"YOU NEVER REMEMBER THE PERFECT SHOWS"**

THE SIGNS were not good when The Who began the opening concert of The Song Is Over US tour at Amerant Bank Arena, Sunrise, Florida on August 16. Pre-tour, Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey had already struggled to present a united front. In May, Zak Starkey – The Who's drummer since 1996 – was fired, re-hired, then fired again. Daltrey had complained of Starkey's on-stage volume making it difficult for him to pitch his vocals, while Townshend tried to mediate between the pair before thanking Starkey for his services and characterising the drummer's exit as his own choice, something Starkey denied.

At the group's Florida opener, volume was a bone of contention from the off, with Daltrey wincing as Townshend checked his guitar was live. Subsequently, drummer Scott Devours, Daltrey's preferred option on solo projects since 2009, impressed on an opening combo of I Can't Explain and Substitute, but later there were bumpy landings, and Daltrey's voice sounded strained on I Can See For Miles. Reviewing for the Miami New Times, David Rolland noted Daltrey's "guttural roar" on Won't Get Fooled Again, and wrote that it was "like seeing Michael Jordan hit one final buzzer-beater of a jump shot." Daltrey may have seen it differently. "You never remember the perfect shows – [only] the fuck-ups!" he spat

Whatever went down during the lay-off was clearly beneficial, for the good vibes continued at the Jones Beach Theater in Long Island's Wantagh, on August 28. A poignant airing of *The Song Is Over* underwent lyrical tweaks reflecting the Who's North American farewell, and at its close Daltrey turned to applaud each of his bandmates in turn. Any intra-band tensions appeared – at least at time of going to press – to be gone.

Townshend subsequently released a media statement. “No one could ever take Keith’s place,” he stressed. “But we’re more determined than ever to carry on.”





**Final flight:** (clockwise from left) Moon during The Who's last show, Shepperton Studios, May 25, 1978; Moon with Annette Walter-Lax, September 6, 1978; one week later, floral tributes at Moon's funeral; Kenney Jones, 1979; Moon bids adieu, Rotterdam, October 27, 1975.



Moon's funeral was a private ceremony, with the details kept secret from the press, on September 13 at Golders Green Crematorium in north London. When it came to the many floral tributes, Daltrey had one commissioned in the shape of a lobbed champagne bottle poking out of a TV screen. Kenney Jones was there, but sneaked in and out unnoticed.

"I didn't want to see anyone," he explained. "So I crept up, I did a little poem, little bunch of flowers, and I just left it and nipped out, so no one knew I was there."

**I**N A DARKLY RESONANT JOKE – ONE THAT HE SURELY would have appreciated – Keith Moon had been photographed with the group on the cover of *Who Are You* amid cable clutter and in front of their gargantuan PA system, straddling a chair with the words "Not To Be Taken Away" stencilled on its back. As Townshend had acknowledged in his missive, the Moon-shaped hole in The Who was to prove impossible to fill.

"Pete turned to drink," Daltrey told MOJO in 2018. "Pete never did drugs, all the way through, 'til Keith died. I think that was from heartbreak. We all were traumatised by that. That was hard to get over. Keith was only 32. It's young, innit."

"The worst thing was we were expecting it any time with him. 'Cos he had nine lives, and he lived nine lives as well (*laughs*). The shock became even greater for some reason."

In November 1978, Kenney Jones – who had previously played on seven tracks on 1975's *Tommy* film soundtrack (while Moon was filming *Stardust*) – was revealed as the new drummer in The Who.

**"I SAID TO PETE,  
WE DON'T HAVE TO  
STOP. YOU CAN'T  
REPLACE KEITH, BUT  
YOU CAN KEEP THE  
MUSIC GOING."**

**ROGER DALTREY**

"When I said I would join," Jones recalled, "I said, I'm not going to copy Keith Moon. I can only play me. That's all I can do. I'm a completely different drummer. I'm straighter. But I like certain things Keith did, so I want to do them. I'm going to complement them if I can, but I'll have to do it my way."

This new version of The Who debuted at the Rainbow Theatre in Finsbury Park, north London, on May 2, 1979. Their return coincided with a Mod revival at least part-ignited by The Jam, as evidenced by the packs of youths

arriving at the venue on scooters and wearing parkas. It was a resurgence further fuelled in the summer of 1979 by the cinematic release of the film version of *Quadrophenia*.

But, for Roger Daltrey in particular, something was irretrievably lost from The Who with the death of Moon. "Without Keith, we weren't the band we were," he said. "But then I was in a strange place myself. So it was hard." In many ways, the singer has remained the keeper of the drummer's flame, pushing for decades to have a Moon biopic (provisionally titled *The Real Me* and still in development) brought to the screen.

"The thunder of Moon's drums," Daltrey told me, still awed by his long-gone pal's unique playing, "that will reverberate for ever."

Moon himself, too, it seems, always kept one eye on his legend. Writer/publicist Keith Altham later remembered visiting the drummer on an unspecified date in a London hospital "after a suspected stroke". Altham voiced aloud his hope that Moon would take this particular health scare as a warning to slow down.

"You know me, dear boy," the drummer announced. "Mortality, I never consider. Now *immortality* I take quite seriously."

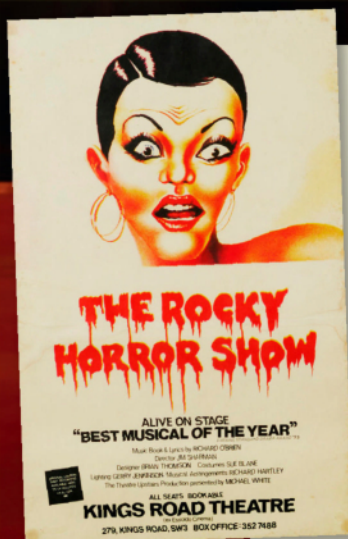




# THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW BEGINS

It started on the London stage in 1973. Depicting squares Brad and Janet ending up in the laboratory of mad scientist/trans alien Dr. Frank-N-Furter, Richard O'Brien's comedy musical lovingly parodied sci-fi, Frankenstein and glam to packed houses. Then the 1975 movie version with Meat Loaf flopped... until gleeful audience participation turned it into a self-sustaining movie cult of global proportions. Fifty years on, its creators recall the notion, "this could run for a long time... maybe for ever."

Interviews by **WILL HODGKINSON**



**Richard O'Brien:** I was playing Herod in Jesus Christ Superstar in 1972 when its producer Robert Stigwood gave me the thumbs down. Suddenly I was unemployed, our son Linus was just born, and I was seriously thinking of returning to New Zealand and getting a job. That's when I did Rocky Horror. The Royal Court gave me £200 just for writing it. In 1973 you could live for a while on that. We approached Rocky Horror in a Brechtian fashion, but our intention was to have fun.

**Jim Sharman:** Rocky Horror followed the experimental traditions of the Royal Court but we brought a punk attitude, echoes of glam rock

and Weimar cabaret, a new language for musical theatre. That's why we were in the attic, where the children were sent to play.

**Sue Blane:** Harriet Cruikshank, who took over the 60-seat theatre upstairs at the Royal Court, called to say she was desperate. This director was plaguing her to find a costume designer for an odd musical, but she had tried anyone who was any good and they all turned her down. That's a compliment, isn't it?

**Richard Hartley:** Jim Sharman said to me: "Richard's got this idea for a rock musical." Yeah, like everyone and his dog.

**JS:** I had done Hair and... Superstar. When Riff-Raff sings, "Frank-N-Furter, it's all over" [from soundtrack number Wild And Untamed Thing], it was the end of the Age Of Aquarius. ➤



Loving the alien: (from left) Little Nell (Columbia), Patricia Quinn (Magenta) and Tim Curry (Dr. Frank-N-Furter) give themselves over to pleasure in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, 1975; (below, left) a poster for the original musical.





**Different strokes, for different folks: (from left) Little Nell, Tim Curry and Rayner Bourton (Rocky Horror) performing at the Chelsea Classic Cinema, London, August 14, 1973.**



**“GIVE A BOY HIGH HEELS  
AND YOU DON’T KNOW  
WHERE IT’S GOING TO LEAD.”**  
**Patricia Quinn**

**SB:** We all met at Richard’s flat in Pimlico. Richard strummed the songs on guitar and we tried to discuss it, but it was a nightmare because we were sitting on his waterbed and kept bouncing around everywhere.

**RO’B:** Rocky Horror is Adam and Eve, with Frank-N-Furter as the snake.

**RH:** Like Marc Bolan and the Sweet, Richard used old rock’n’roll chord progressions and it was all pretty simple, but he had a unique talent for a story. He knew not to overcomplicate things.

**Patricia Quinn:** I had seen Little Nell [Nurse Ansalong] because she was a busker on the King’s Road, tap-dancing in a top hat and shorts. Apart from the fashion designer Zandra Rhodes, Nell was the only girl in London with pink hair.

**RO’B:** Little Nell was cleaning Jim Sharman’s flat, so she was on our doorstep. Seemed silly not to include her.

**SB:** It was the glam era but the real influence was the budget: £400, minimal even then. I got Tim Curry’s corset from a Glasgow production of Genet’s *The Maids*, which Tim and I had done, which had been donated from some elderly lady in the Gorbals. It was designed to flatten the body, not lift it. I turned it upside down and back to front and painted it black. I had some fox furs from my great grandmother, the pearls were the middle-class bit, and that was Frank-N-Furter.

**PQ:** The set at the Royal Court consisted of a wooden chair for [Dr. Frank-N-Furter’s muscly creation] Rocky Horror to stand on and make his muscle pose, and a screen at the back.

**SB:** I had no idea what to do with Nell, but she was a great performer so I based Columbia on her. Magenta was Yvonne De Carlo from *The Munsters*. A lot of people have credited Rocky Horror with punk, probably because I went for a beaten up, broken down, decrepit look. Partly out of necessity.

**RH:** We had three weeks to do the whole thing. Tim Curry and Julie Covington [Janet] were the only singers in the cast, but Jim Sharman and I were great fans of The Velvet Underground and Nico can’t really sing but she tells a story. So Pat, dressed as an usherette, told a story about all these films she’d seen. That was Science Fiction.

**PQ:** I had been an usherette at Notting Hill Gate cinema so I based it on that. And Tim transformed after putting on his high heels. Give a boy high heels and you don’t know where it’s going to lead.

**RH:** Barry Humphries wrote in his review, “Impossible to overpraise.” Then Jonathan King put out the soundtrack, which we recorded in a single day. A few weeks later, we went into a restaurant and they were playing it.

**JS:** I had to give my seat up to Rudolf Nureyev.

**RO’B:** The gay men of London came in their swathes, and Rocky emerged from a wonderful explosion of freedom and newness. A year earlier or later, we wouldn’t have had the same response.

**JS:** Gay representation had been about self-hatred, like *The Boys In The Band*. Rocky comes along and it is an unapologetic extravaganza.

**PQ:** Mick Jagger was interested in playing Frank-N-Furter, Bowie was interested, everybody was interested. Within two weeks we were the talk of the town and Mick and Bianca were queuing up to get into the little room above the Royal Court. I walked past them with my nose in the air, pretending I didn’t know who they were, before running into the tiny dressing room and shouting, “Jagger’s in!” That’s when I heard someone groaning. Rayner Bourton, who played Rocky, was in agony after getting glitter under his foreskin. It was powdered glass in those days. We had to cancel.

**SB:** I always felt guilty about it but I must say,

Rayner applied the glitter, not me.

**RO’B:** The word of mouth was astonishing, Vincent Price on the first night and Elliott Gould on the last. Remarkable given the Royal Court wanted muscular theatre, not lowbrow entertainment.

**PQ:** Rocky Horror worked because it was short: one hour 10 minutes. But that meant it couldn’t go to the West End so we went to the Classic Cinema and then the Essoldo, both on the King’s Road. When the film came along, Jim Sharman, brilliantly, said he wanted the original cast. That’s why the budget was so small and why we could do it in such a short time.

**Lou Adler:** Britt Ekland and I have a boy, Nikolai, who is as old as Rocky Horror: 1973. I went to London to visit them and she said I had to see this show. The ambience, the usherettes, the outfits... it was an event. I thought: This could run for a long time in LA. Maybe for ever.

**RH:** At the Roxy in LA, Lou Adler found Meat Loaf, an Eddie who could really sing. Then he took it to New York and it all went wrong.

**LA:** I made two mistakes. A show that played in LA before Broadway was thumbs down as far as the critics were concerned, but I took out a full-page ad in *Variety* that said, “Give our regards to Broadway and tell them Rocky is on its way.” The other mistake was taking over an iconic theatre, the Balasco on 44th Street, and trying to make it a rock’n’roll event. They didn’t like that.

**RO’B:** New York sees itself as chic and LA as a tart. They have the Met, after all.

**PQ:** When they told me I couldn’t do Science Fiction, I said, Then I’m not doing your film. John Goldstone, the producer, told me to come round to his house and look at the set, where I see a pink laboratory, 20 Transylvanians [the formally attired guests for the Rocky creature’s reveal] on motorbikes, and all my dresses by Sue





## DRAMATIS PERSONAE



● Richard O'Brien:  
writer, Riff-Raff



● Jim Sharman:  
director



● Sue Blane:  
costume designer



● Patricia Quinn:  
Magenta



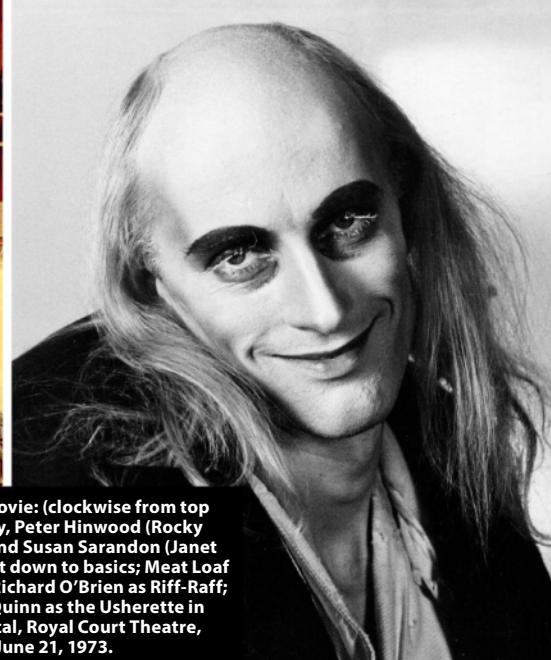
● Richard Hartley:  
musical director



● Lou Adler:  
executive  
producer



Horror movie: (clockwise from top left) Curry, Peter Hinwood (Rocky Horror) and Susan Sarandon (Janet Weiss) get down to basics; Meat Loaf revs up; Richard O'Brien as Riff-Raff; Patricia Quinn as the Usherette in the musical, Royal Court Theatre, London, June 21, 1973.



Blane. And I go, Oh, I'm doing this!

**JS:** The original plan was to go from black and white into colour, like a dark version of *The Wizard Of Oz*.

**RH:** Barry [Bostwick] and Susan [Sarandon, who played Brad and Janet] were sweet. They were a bit like Brad and Janet, although they would be mortified to be described like that. Meat Loaf was a big baby with a fantastic voice.

**PQ:** We worked day and night because it was a stupidly short period to make a musical. There is a photo of me as Magenta, surrounded by Transylvanians, out cold. There was no time to get to know Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick so they came and left as Brad and Janet.

**RO'B:** It was exciting, to see how we could get around problems. [Brad and Janet's science teacher] Dr. Scott burst through the wall simply because we forgot we didn't have a door.

**SB:** I had a raw deal, staying overnight at Bray Studios to work. It was a bit unnerving, being in this huge set with nobody else there. Then the cast started to get ill.

**PQ:** Only the Americans got ill. Susan Sarandon has dined out on her pneumonia for 50 years. If she mentions it again, I shall scream.

**LA:** Barry and Susan had a horrendous time, wet, cold and sick. They were thrown into a collection of people who had been friends since the Royal Court, so it was rough on them. Maybe that helped the film, though.

**SB:** The look for Brad and Janet was Middle America, 15 or 20 years behind Europe in fashion: crimplene and polyester. I bought a new hat for Janet, cheap because it was dented on one side.

You can see the dent in the film.

**PQ:** Jim directed using two faces: a slight smile and a slight frown. He said it was the only way to goad Curry into being more extreme.

**JS:** I have a quiet way of going about things. With loud results.

**RH:** We were all deflated because the play had been so much fun and the film was slow by comparison. There is a theory that the audience started shouting at the screen because the film has so many longueurs.

**PQ:** On the last day of filming, Jim said: "Just a moment." Oh God, what now? I had a three-year-old to get home to. He wanted to create Man Ray's lips as an animated mouth. I'm at Elstree, miming to [opening song] Science Fiction/Double Feature, but the mouth kept going out of frame so the cameraman screwed a lighting clamp onto my head. Then my husband Don phoned for a divorce. I said, Tell him I'm clamped. Now I've got the most famous lips in the world.

**SB:** The film came out in 1975 and it was a total flop.

**LA:** [VP of advertising] Tim Keegan was the only person at 20th Century Fox who believed in the film. He previewed it at Santa Barbara and half the audience left, but 15 college kids loved it. Then in 1976 we had bookings at the Waverly in New York and a cinema in Austin, Texas. I'd call the managers each Monday and they'd say, "We did 45 people. But it's the same 45 as last week." That's when I knew we had a film.

**RO'B:** The film seemed a bit dreamlike to me. I couldn't understand why it was so long, why we weren't picking up the cues. Years later a Rocky fan said, "Mr O'Brien, did you leave those gaps so we could say our lines?"

**PQ:** It was all forgotten until Lou Adler said, "You know they're talking to your film and dressing up as you?" Sal Piro, master of ceremonies at the Waverly, started the whole shadow cast phenomenon.

**RO'B:** In 1978 a teenager got us over to Long Island, God knows how, where

1,500 people were answering the lines and throwing things at the screen.

**RH:** I turned to Richard and said, This is funnier than the film.

**PQ:** I did a Rocky Horror tour recently, 15 states in the USA, grandest theatres in the land. This girl, bigger than anyone I'd ever seen, came up and said, "Rocky Horror is the only place where I have ever been accepted."

**RO'B:** Look at the Transylvanians in the film. They are tall, short, fat, thin, no standard norm, and Brad and Janet look just as freakish alongside them. Rocky Horror has enabled the audience to say: "That's me." It's not a hymn to beauty. It's not a hymn to perfection. It's a hymn to the ordinary person.

**JS:** With Rocky Horror, a spell was cast. In some strange way, it remains.

*Strange Journey: The Story Of Rocky Horror* will be in UK and Irish Cinemas from October 3, and on DVD, Blu-Ray & Digital from October 20.

## ONE MORE TIME WARP

### Director Linus O'Brien on Rocky doc *Strange Journey*.

I WAS FOUR years old when I saw Rocky Horror at the Essoldo, and they let me sit up in the balcony and control the lights at the end. The cast came out in clear plastic masks, so you couldn't quite see their faces, and led everyone to their seats. There was a real sense of dread and scariness because it wasn't normal. As Jim Sharman says in the movie, this was immersive theatre before there was such a thing.

I started the documentary in May 2022, and once my dad knew there was a professional crew behind it he was on board. I knew that there was a story here about the fans, the midnight screenings, the effect on the LGBTQ community, alongside my dad's personal journey. Here was a film that unlocked the door for people and yet it took him 30 years to come to terms with who he was, which he says is 30 per cent female and 70 per cent male.

Something in Rocky Horror will not let it die. There is my dad's great music, his love of '50s rock'n'roll and B-movies, Tim's performance, but also the fact that Rocky allows everyone to feel something outside of themselves, to enjoy their sexuality, to feel liberated, to feel they're not alone. When you think of it in those terms, it is overwhelming.











# YOUNG BUT DAILY GROWING

**BOB DYLAN'S 18TH BOOTLEG SERIES INSTALMENT – THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW – IS AN AUDIO ANALOGUE TO A COMPLETE UNKNOWN: AN UNFURLING DOCUMENT OF A SEARING YOUNG TALENT IN THE ACT OF BECOMING. BUT BECOMING WHAT? ROCKER? FOLKIE? LOVER? POET? POLITICIAN? DIGGING INTO PREVIOUSLY UNRELEASED MUSIC FROM 1956 TO '63, MOJO MARVELS AT DYLAN'S FIRST GREAT PHASE ALONG WITH ITS STILL-STUNNED EYEWITNESSES. "IT WAS EARTH-SHAKING," THEY TELL** **DORIAN LYNKEY.**

**PICTURE BY DON HUNSTEIN.**

**T**HE FIRST TIME DAVE VAN RONK HEARD Bob Dylan perform A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, at the Gaslight Café on MacDougal Street in New York's Greenwich Village in September 1962, he had to leave the room and take a walk around the block to process it. "It was unlike anything that had come before it," he recalled in his memoir, "and it was clearly the beginning of

a revolution."

Since Dylan's arrival in New York 20 months earlier, Van Ronk had been a friend and mentor. Though not yet 25, he struck Dylan as "ancient, battle tested. Every night I felt like I was sitting at the feet of a timeworn monument." More than just a talented folk and blues singer, the so-called 'Mayor of MacDougal Street' seemed to know everyone and everything. Van Ronk had taught Dylan songs, let him crash at his apartment, and waged long wine-fuelled arguments about music and politics in the Kettle Of Fish bar upstairs from the Gaslight. His wife Terri Thal had even managed the kid for a few months. The couple had watched Dylan evolve ➤

Dawning of a new era: Bob Dylan and Suze Rotolo walk the line on Jones Street, Greenwich Village, New York, February 1963. 1963.

Don Hunstein/Sony Music Ent.





◀ from a jittery novice into the star of the Village scene, with an album for Columbia Records under his belt. Even so, what Van Ronk had just heard astounded him.

Dylan once claimed that *Blowin' In The Wind* had only taken him 10 minutes to write but *Hard Rain* took almost 10 minutes to *sing*. Reading poetry and performing epic ballads like Barbara Allen had extended his songwriting horizons. Both songs took the form of lists, but whereas *Blowin' In The Wind* was sweet and plaintive in the region of Pete Seeger's *Where Have All The Flowers Gone?*, *Hard Rain* was a blood-curdling onslaught of nightmarish imagery: dead oceans, burning bodies, broken tongues. Lashed to the tune of the Anglo-Scottish Child ballad *Lord Randall*, this unprecedented fusion of folk music, symbolist poetry and Biblical scripture felt both ancient and modern. Dylan later lied that he had composed *Hard Rain* during the Cuban Missile Crisis at the end of October, but in reality the song appeared to prophesy it.

Van Ronk wasn't the only listener who would be thunderstruck by *Hard Rain*. Joan Baez and Allen Ginsberg both said that it made them weep the first time they heard it. "It made everyone go, Holy shit, this is a new thing," recalls the *Lovin' Spoonful*'s John Sebastian, who was at the Gaslight that night. "This was a very real assessment of the future. I was absolutely gobsmacked."

The question going around the Village that autumn finds some answers in the exhaustive eight-disc set *The Bootleg Series Vol. 18: Through The Open Window*, which tracks his breakneck progress from his earliest Minnesota fumbblings to his triumphant Carnegie Hall show in October 1963. How did Bob Dylan get so good?

**D**YLAN ARRIVED IN "GREEN-WITCH VILLAGE", AS HE put it in the self-mythologising *Talkin' New York*, on Tuesday, January 24, 1961, in a season of snowstorms. He was 19. The streets were cold and white and full of promise.

"Notable for its genuine sophistication and tremulous innocence," according to the *New York Times*, Greenwich Village was a multiracial hotbed of jazz, comedy, beat poetry, off-Broadway theatre, abstract expressionism and, increasingly, folk music. With more than 50 coffeehouses and Sunday afternoon jams around the fountain in Washington Square Park to play at, it magnetised folk singers from everywhere but there: Karen Dalton and Tom Paxton from Oklahoma, Carolyn Hester from Texas, Judy Collins from Colorado, Tim Hardin from Oregon. "I was meeting people from all over," says Sebastian, one of the few native Villagers

on the scene. "I was meeting people who didn't want to *tell* me where they were from. It was a time when people were reinventing themselves, the most obvious being Mr Zimmerman."

That first day or thereabouts, Dylan dropped in to Café Wha? on MacDougal Street and played harmonica for compere Fred Neil, who was sufficiently impressed to ask him to accompany him that night. Café Wha? was a 'basket house', where a wicker bread basket was passed around for donations (with limited success), and its hootenanny nights were open to all comers. Folk was just part of the mix; Dylan would perform between comedians, poets and magicians. Never without his black corduroy seaman's cap, he played a coffeehouse almost every night, sleeping on couches and floors.

Van Ronk caught Dylan at Café Wha? that first week and urged Thal to check him out. "He was not a great guitarist and he wasn't a great singer, but he was fascinating," she recalls. "He was stumbling around, grinning and doffing his cap. Later I realised I had just seen a reincarnation of Charlie Chaplin's Tramp figure. I went home and said, You're right, there is a touch of genius there. I can't put my finger on it. Nobody could."

Half the songs Dylan was playing had been written or popularised by Woody Guthrie, the roughneck icon of American folk music and catalyst in Dylan's transformation from aspiring rock'n'roller to hardcore folkie during 1959. Arriving at the University of Minneapolis that autumn, he had traded his electric guitar for a double-O Martin acoustic, his greaser's leather jacket for a blue work shirt, Elvis for Odetta, and the name Bobby Zimmerman for Bob Dylan. Folk was the music of outlaws – death-haunted, mysterious and true. "Folk music was a reality of a more brilliant dimension," he wrote in *Chronicles: Volume One*. "I had no other cares or interests besides folk music."

When Dylan began playing coffeehouses in Dinkytown, Minneapolis's haven for beats, freaks and folkies, Guthrie's songs were the cornerstone of his repertoire, and discovering Woody's colourful 1943 autobiography *Bound For Glory* only intensified his obsession. "You could listen to his songs and actually learn how to be," he said in the documentary *No Direction Home*. Paul Nelson and Jon Pankake, Dinkytown's purist gatekeepers, played him records by Guthrie's former sidekick Ramblin' Jack Elliott to show that nobody needed another imitator, but it backfired: Dylan stole the records and started imitating Elliott, too. A tape of Guthrie songs made when he visited friends in Madison, Wisconsin included on *Through The Open Window* captures a young man who hasn't yet found his voice but has mastered someone else's. When he left for New York with a guitar, a knapsack and \$10, he told his friends: "I'm going to New York. I'm going to see Woody. And I'm going to make it big."

**M**AKING IT BIG WOULD TAKE A WHILE BUT DYLAN wasted no time making pilgrimages to Greystone Park Psychiatric Hospital in New Jersey, where Guthrie had been confined by his debilitating Huntington's chorea since 1956. He kept coming back, bringing packs of Raleigh cigarettes and playing Woody's songs at his request. One day Dylan brought him a gift better than cigarettes: the musical fan mail of *Song To Woody*. "I did not consider myself a songwriter at all," he claimed in *No Direction Home*, "but I needed to write that and I needed to sing it." Not for the first time, he would attribute a song to compulsion rather than ambition, as if he had become a songwriter against his will. As an early Gaslight Café recording reveals, in writing about Woody he found himself.

Guthrie spent Sundays at the East Orange home of his old friends, where Dylan ➤



**"HE WAS  
NOT A GREAT  
GUITARIST AND  
HE WASN'T A  
GREAT SINGER,  
BUT HE WAS  
FASCINATING."**

**TERRI THAL**



The changeling: Dylan at the  
microphone in Columbia Recording  
Studios, New York, 1963;  
(opposite page) Terri Thal  
with husband Dave Van Ronk  
on the roof at 190 Waverly  
Place, New York, 1961.





# THE NAKED GUNNN

**WHAT BOB DYLAN'S FIRST RECORDING TELLS US ABOUT A LIFELONG OBSESSION.**  
BY **DORIAN LYNSEY.**

"I PLAYED all the folk songs with a rock'n'roll attitude," Dylan told Cameron Crowe in 1985. "This is what made me different and allowed me to cut through all the mess and be heard." True enough, but at the time Dylan went out of his way to avoid talking about the flamboyant teenage greaser from Minnesota whose ambition in his high-school yearbook was "to join Little Richard".

Looking back, Dylan related his adolescent obsession to the looming spectre of nuclear war, framing it as a protest against death: "Rock'n'roll made you oblivious to the fear." More prosaically, it was thrillingly new, all wrapped up with girls, motorbikes and getting out of Hibbing. On Christmas Eve 1956, 15-year-old Bobby Zimmerman walked into a booth in a music shop in St Paul, Minnesota, with his friends Larry Kegan and Howard Rutman and made his first ever acetate recording, a rock'n'roll medley under the name the Jokers, a fragment of which – a crackly stab at Shirley & Lee's 1956 hit, *Let The Good Times Roll* – kicks off the *Through The Open Window* box. That was just a lark but soon he was fronting high-school bands: The Shadow Blasters, The Golden Chords, The Satin Tones, The Rock Boppers. He played piano standing up like Little Richard and dressed like James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause*. His confidence was inexplicably bulletproof. His high-school girlfriend Echo Helstrom recalled that he "lived in his own world... playing like they were

**"HE LIVED  
IN HIS OWN WORLD...  
PLAYING LIKE THEY  
WERE CLAPPING,  
WHEN THEY WERE  
REALLY BOOING"**  
ECHO HELSTROM

clapping, when they were really booing".

On January 31, 1959, Dylan saw Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens and the Big Bopper play the Duluth Armory. Within days, all three were dead in a plane crash but his rock'n'roll ambitions survived a few months longer. That summer, he played piano for Fargo, North Dakota's very own aspiring teen idol Bobby Vee under the aggravating pseudonym Elston Gunnn. (At one point, he outrageously claimed that he had also played for Elvis and Little Richard.) Then, almost overnight, he converted to folk music and dismissed his former favourites as unserious. "Life is full of complexities," he later said, "and rock'n'roll didn't reflect that."

The truth, as Dylan later admitted to Robert Shelton, was that he still listened to Elvis records in Greenwich Village but only "when nobody else was around". It was a private indulgence, unhelpful to his career. His disastrous debut single *Mixed-Up Confusion* (an outtake features on *Through The Open Window*) must have cemented this belief. John Hammond pushed him into his first recording with a full band (Dylan goes electric!) but this misguided trifle evaporated upon release in October 1962 and scared off Dylan from trying again until 1965. The explosive fusion of folk and rock'n'roll, so latent within him, would have to wait a while.

Mixed-up kid: Dylan in 1961 during the cover shoot for his self-titled debut; (opposite, from left) Bob patron Izzy Young outside his Folklore Center at 110 MacDougal Street, New York, October 1963; Dylan and Rotolo, September 1961.



actually met him for the first time. His evident affection for Guthrie endeared him to the older man's intimates, including Pete Seeger and Jack Elliott. Sid Gleason recorded a demo tape of Dylan singing Guthrie songs (a spellbinding, road-weary *Pastures Of Plenty* makes it onto *Through The Open Window*) and even lent him one of Woody's old suits to wear on-stage. "That boy's got a voice," Guthrie told the Gleasons. "Maybe he won't make it by his writing, but he can sing it. He can really sing it."

During the daytime, Dylan's home from home was Izzy Young's Folklore Center at 110 MacDougal Street, a narrow shop stuffed with records, books and musical instruments. Young's fellow folk maven Oscar Brand called it "a social centre, like an old Eastern European town square, and just as profitable". Its soft-touch proprietor was happy to lend records to penniless moochers like Dylan, who read magazines without buying them and played his guitar to anyone who would listen. "He used to hang around and be a pain in the ass," Young affectionately recalled. "He was a hustler, always asking me questions, wanting to meet everybody."

"The folk music community was incredibly supportive," says Thal. "Everybody was welcome. But I have never seen anyone get the support Bob got." With a baby face and the dress sense of a Victorian urchin, the young Dylan was not conventionally cool. When he ingratiated himself with older musicians, he chainsmoked and pumped his knees up and down like pistons, vibrating with nervous energy. But he possessed that strange magic we call charisma. "He really paid attention," says Thal. "If you talked to him, he was riveted. He wanted to learn." Judy Collins had crossed paths with Dylan when he was playing at a bar in Colorado the previous year and met him again in New York. Though sorely unimpressed by his repertoire ("poorly chosen, poorly sung"), she found him "sweet and fun and funny – a good, charming man. He was someone you'd like to get to know."

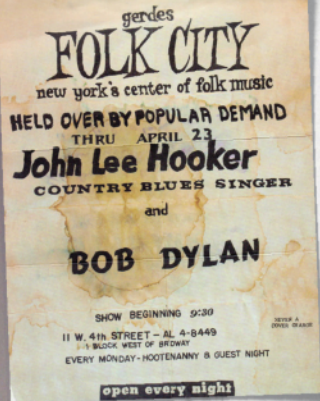
The Van Ronks soon noticed that Dylan told a lot of tall tales that he couldn't keep straight. The young man was a phenomenal bullshitter: that colourful species of liar who lies compulsively and outrageously with little effort to make his stories credible. The one about hailing from Gallup, New Mexico, running away from home and spending his teens in a travelling carnival remained part of his



SEPT 1958

Bob who?: 17-year-old Hibbing High School student Robert Zimmerman, ready to rock, September 1958.





self-made lore deep into 1963. "At the time it bothered us a bit," says Thal. "Later we shrugged and said people come to New York and they reinvent themselves. It wasn't unusual." After all, Ramblin' Jack Elliott was actually Elliott Adnopoz, a Jewish doctor's son from Brooklyn. When Dylan learned this, he fell to the floor laughing.



Richard Fariña, and Fariña's folk singing wife Carolyn Hester. She gave Dylan a chance to open for her at Cambridge's Club 47 and offered him his first ever studio gig, playing harmonica on her first album for Columbia. That would prove to be a much bigger break than he could have imagined.

Meanwhile in New York, Dylan's life was revolving around Suze (pronounced "Suzie") Rotolo. She was only 17 but she had lived in New York her whole life and lost her father so she was worldly wise, not to mention cultured, artistic and politically active. Dylan and Rotolo met when he played at an all-day hootenanny at Riverside Church on July 29 and fell hard for each other. According to their respective memoirs, she found him "funny, engaging, intense, and... persistent" while he thought her "the most erotic thing I'd ever seen". They became the quintessential boho couple, visiting art galleries, watching *nouvelle vague* movies, reading Byron and Rimbaud. Rotolo lured Dylan out of the silo of folk music. "Bob wasn't an ignorant guy," says Thal. "But I don't think he had much of a background in art and poetry. Suze took him places that he might not have gotten to without her."

**I**N APRIL 1961, DYLAN PROUDLY WROTE to Abraham and Beatty Zimmerman back in Hibbing, Minnesota that he was earning \$100 a week: "That's not bad, considering that three months ago I was unknown." His first paying gig was a two-week residency opening for John Lee Hooker at Gerdes Folk City on West 4th Street, a converted Italian restaurant where musicians performed amid maroon flock wallpaper, red check tablecloths and oak beams. That's where Dylan first met Joan Baez, whose debut album had made her the new folk generation's first celebrity. "That she was the same age as me almost made me feel useless," he wrote in *Chronicles*. Baez, too, was struck by the maturity gap. "I felt like his mother," she wrote in her own memoir. "He was absurd, new, and grubby beyond words."

Thal dropped out of a PhD in political science to manage her husband and happily took on Dylan, too, without a contract. She secured a few out-of-town gigs but it was hard going, even after she recorded a demo tape at the Gaslight in September. "He sounded weird," she explains. "What I heard from everybody is: 'Why should I hire him when I could hire Jack Elliott?' They could not see the performer; they could only hear this odd vocal style."

The Massachusetts folk scene that launched Baez was an especially tough nut to crack. But on his two visits there over the summer, Dylan made some influential friends: the human songbook Eric Von Schmidt, the roaringly charismatic writer

**"FOLK MUSIC WAS A REALITY OF A MORE BRILLIANT DIMENSION. I HAD NO OTHER CARES OR INTERESTS BESIDES FOLK MUSIC."**

**BOB DYLAN**

Riverside also introduced Dylan to Robert Shelton, the New York Times folk critic who flouted the paper's ethical guidelines by writing liner notes under pseudonyms and running his reviews past Van Ronk and Young before publication. They began talking about when to get Dylan into the paper.

The opportunity came on September 26, when Dylan opened his second Folk City residency, supporting the Greenbriar Boys, a bluegrass trio. He tailored his wardrobe and setlist accordingly — both were ragged. As Shelton observed, Dylan was "both comedian and tragedian". He would introduce himself with rambling soliloquies and physical routines that flirted with chaos before casting his spell. Antic Woody-style narratives like ➤



# BLOWING AND SUCKING

**THE UNLIKELY PRE-CAREER OF BOB DYLAN, "HARMONICA VIRTUOSO". BY DORIAN LYNKEY.**

AFTER ROBERT Shelton's seismic New York Times review, Dylan's next press appearance was in a syndicated newspaper gift guide for Christmas 1961, quoted as "noted harmonica virtuoso Bob Dylan". Virtuoso is not the word most people would have used. Like his singing and guitar playing, his harmonica playing was loud, abrasive and not to everybody's taste. "Most of the time, I would blow on the harmonica because everybody sucks in," he once explained, citing blues star Jimmy Reed and Woody Guthrie sideman Sonny Terry as inspirations for his hectic, agitated style.

At college, Dylan's playing was actively repellent. His ex-girlfriend Bonnie Beecher recalled that when he played at her sorority house, her friends would say, "Uurgh! Who is this geek?" Even in Greenwich Village, some contemporaries thought that it was simply terrible, although Dave Van Ronk thought it had a "gung ho, Dada quality to it that cracked me up".

John Sebastian remembers playing Dylan's debut album to his father, a master of the classical harmonica. "He listened closely and when it came to the harmonica break he began to giggle. It became a chest laugh, and then a belly laugh, and by the end of the song he was crying with laughter. I think I shared his opinion."

Yet it was his harmonica that got Dylan a hearing at Café Wha? upon his arrival in the Village and that facilitated his first recording session, for Carolyn Hester, on September 29, 1961. His playing on I'll Fly Away (an outtake closes Disc 1 of *Through The Open Window*) has a bright, dancing energy quite different

from the frantic buzzing heard on that year's live recordings, but it's so relentless that it almost crowds out Hester. Perhaps he knew this was his chance to make an impression on producer John Hammond.

Dylan's next session gig, on February 2, 1962, was as a last-minute substitute for the incapacitated Sonny Terry on the title track of superstar Harry Belafonte's *The Midnight Special*. The recorded evidence reveals Dylan played straightforward blues harmonica (the Take 17 unearthed on *Through The Open Window* sees him fit more successfully around Belafonte than he did around Hester), though his methods were unorthodox. Belafonte remembered him dipping his cheapest harmonica in water to get the right sound and dropping it in the trash when he was done. "Strangely enough, this was the only memorable recording date that would stand out in my mind for years to come," Dylan wrote in *Chronicles*. Exactly a month later, he was doing similar work on two songs with blues veterans Big Joe Williams (Wichita) and Victoria Spivey (It's Dangerous).

Dylan's fourth and final appearance as a sideman was pure chance. Finding himself in London in January 1963 at the same time as two friends from Cambridge, Richard Fariña and Eric Von Schmidt, he fell into contributing harmonica and backing vocals to their self-titled album, credited as 'Blind Boy Grunt' to get

around his exclusivity deal with Columbia. From then on, he would play harmonica only for himself, and nobody was laughing.

**"MY DAD LISTENED CLOSELY AND WHEN IT CAME TO THE HARMONICA BREAK HE BEGAN TO GIGGLE."**

**JOHN SEBASTIAN**



◀ Talkin' Bear Mountain Picnic Massacre Blues got laughs, too. According to John Sebastian, Dylan had similarly eccentric energy off-stage: "He talked really fast. I enjoyed this Chaplin-esque character and was sorry to see him go as time went on."

**W**HEN SHELTON'S REVIEW RAN THREE DAYS LATER, Dylan and Rotolo stayed up late to grab the first edition from a kiosk on Sheridan Square, savoured it in an all-night deli and went back for more copies. Headlined 'A Distinctive Folk-Song Stylist', the career-making rave described Dylan as "a bright new face in folk music" who was "bursting at the seams with talent". The next day, Dylan walked through the Village with a rolled-up copy in his back pocket so that he could read the review to anyone he bumped into.

As luck would have it, September 29 was the day Dylan was booked to play harmonica on three songs for Carolyn Hester. Either in the studio or during rehearsals, producer John Hammond heard something he liked. Shelton's review can't have hurt. Hammond, who had signed Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin and Pete Seeger to Columbia, invited Dylan back to play a few songs and inked a contract within the month. "This is the beginning of what I have always known," Dylan told Rotolo. "I am going to be big."

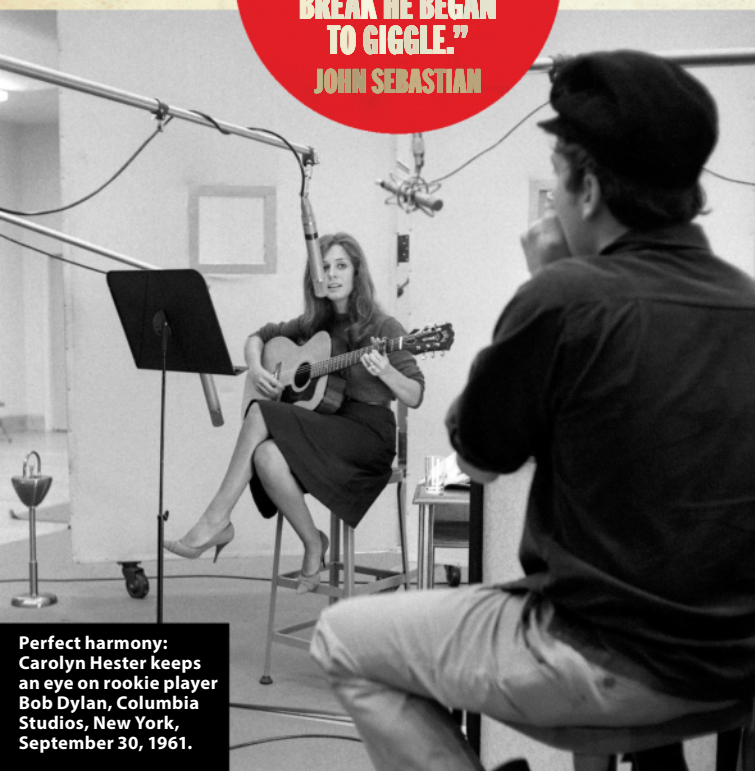
The first session for Dylan's debut album took place on November 20, the day Rotolo turned 18. Dylan didn't like to sing a song more than once, and Hammond wasn't too fussy. "I swear if Dylan vomited into the microphone Hammond would have said, great bob, but try it again with harmony," Rotolo wrote in lower case to her friend Sue Zuckerman. Most of the songs that made the final cut were about death and one of them almost killed a friendship. It took months of diplomacy on the part of Rotolo and Thal before Van Ronk forgave Dylan for stealing his signature arrangement of House Of The Rising Sun – the one The Animals would take to Number 1 in the UK and America in 1964. "It was a typical Bob action," says Thal. "Bob wanted to be a star." Unlike Van Ronk, he would do whatever was necessary.

Shelton's review also caught the eye of Albert Grossman, the intimidating folk impresario from Chicago who had co-founded the Newport Folk Festival. Known as "the floating Buddha" for the way he used silence as a negotiating tactic, Grossman was haunting the Village looking for recruits for a slick new folk trio – which would become Peter, Paul And Mary. He also saw Dylan's potential and replaced Thal as his manager. "Albert understood the Zeitgeist," says Sebastian. "He was a club owner. He understood how to sell tickets. And he liked Bob Dylan."

Grossman prodded Izzy Young into promoting Dylan's debut solo show, at Carnegie Chapter Hall in midtown on Saturday, November 4, but it was either the wrong place or the wrong time. Reportedly only 53 people showed up and most were his friends. Still, not a bad first year in New York. Dylan used his Columbia advance to rent his own third-floor apartment above a furniture store at 161 West 4th Street and invited Rotolo to move in.

Back in Minnesota with old friends for Christmas, he played a set of gloomy, Van Ronk-endorsed blues songs including Po' Lazarus (taped for posterity by Tony Glover) and brandished his New York Times review. "He talked with great velocity," recalled his friend Gretel Hoffman. "He got out his guitar and said: 'Listen to what I have done. Listen to what's happened to me!'"

**P**ROTEST SONGS MADE DYLAN A SERIOUS SONG-writer but for several years after 1963, he would disparage the songs he wrote, his reasons for writing them, and the whole enterprise of what he called "finger-pointin' songs". They



Perfect harmony: Carolyn Hester keeps an eye on rookie player Bob Dylan, Columbia Studios, New York, September 30, 1961.



Wind power: Dylan performs at a voter registration rally in Greenwood, Mississippi, July 6, 1963, a month after the murder of local NAACP leader Medgar Evers.



represented everything he no longer wanted to be. He singled out the first of them for particular contempt: “I wrote a song about Emmett Till, which in all honesty was a bullshit song... I realise now that my reasons and motives behind it were phoney. I didn’t have to write it.”

Nobody but Dylan himself has claimed that his protest songs were pure opportunism. Perhaps one reason for his scorched-earth policy was that they were tangled up with his relationship with Rotolo. The daughter of Italian-American communists, she had been an activist since high school and was already the subject of an FBI file. When she met Dylan, she was stuffing envelopes for the Congress Of Racial Equality (CORE), in the thick of the civil rights movement. She booked Dylan for a CORE fundraiser in Harlem on February 23, 1962 and inspired him to write an appropriate song by telling him about the racist lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till in Mississippi in 1955.

The Ballad Of Emmett Till, being seven years late, wasn’t so much a topical song as a murder ballad, giving recent history the colour of myth. When Dylan recorded it for Cynthia Gooding’s WBAI show *Folksinger’s Choice*, she gushed, “This is one of the greatest contemporary ballads I’ve ever heard. It’s *tremendous*.” It was certainly an improvement on generic underdog songs like *Man On The Street*. Dylan wasn’t faking his empathy with the powerless and anger at their persecutors, but he also saw a career opportunity when Pete Seeger’s old comrades Agnes ‘Sis’ Cunningham and Gordon Friesen launched *Broadside*, a magazine billed as “a handful of songs about our times”.

For two years, Dylan would be *Broadside*’s most prolific (and talented) contributor, his lyrics often illustrated by Rotolo. The first issue featured Talking John Birch (later *Talkin’ John Birch Paranoid Blues*), a brutally funny parody of red-baiting cranks. Issue three’s *I Will Not Go Down Under The Ground* (AKA *Let Me Die In My Footsteps*) mocked the short-lived craze for building nuclear fallout shelters. Issue six featured on its cover *Blowin’ In The Wind*.

Written to the tune of the anti-slavery spiritual *No More Auction Block*, this litany of unanswerable questions had a stately, hymnal quality that stuck out when he debuted it at Folk City in April. “It ain’t a protest song or anything like that,” he insisted, “cos I don’t write protest songs.” While it wasn’t universally beloved (Tom Paxton compared it to a shopping list; Van Ronk called it “incredibly dumb”), many early listeners recognised it as the first new song with the timeless grace and power of *This Land Is Your Land* or *We Shall Overcome*. *Broadside* declared him “the nearest composer we have had to a Woody Guthrie in recent years”. Indeed, Guthrie had compared himself to a message on a “blowing” scrap of paper in *Bound For Glory*. When Judy Collins read the lyrics, she couldn’t believe it was the same Bob Dylan. “I thought there must be some mistake,” she says. “I thought, This boy is not a boy, he’s a man. And he’s a genius.”

**B**LOWIN’ IN THE WIND MADE DYLAN’S SELF-TITLED album, released on March 19, feel like yesterday’s news. Much is made of “Hammond’s Folly”, the snarky nickname for Dylan at Columbia when *Bob Dylan* sold only a few thousand copies in its first year. But that was no disgrace for a new folk artist in early 1962, especially not with a recording budget of just \$402, and it was well reviewed. Yet the record made Dylan “highly disturbed”, he recalled in *No Direction Home*: “I thought I’d recorded the wrong songs.” He commenced the follow-up the next month with 15 songs in two days, although none would last the distance. Velocity was everything.

Dylan’s single-minded ambition was hard for Rotolo to handle. A talented artist, she needed to be more than Dylan’s “chick”, so she took an opportunity to spend the rest of the year studying in Perugia, Italy despite his protests. “She was having a lot of second and third thoughts,” Thal remembers. “Could she do her own work? Bob was bereft. It got to be silly almost. He was losing weight. He was very unhappy.” Dylan licked his wounds on his second truly great song, *Don’t Think ➤*

**“HE USED TO HANG AROUND AND BE A PAIN IN THE ASS. HE WAS A HUSTLER, ALWAYS ASKING ME QUESTIONS.”**

**IZZY YOUNG**



◀ Twice, It's All Right – “a song I wrote to make myself feel better,” he later said.

In August, Grossman advised Dylan to return to Hibbing to legally change his name, allowing Tony Glover to record new songs Long Time Gone and Tomorrow Is A Long Time – compellingly personal performances included on *Through The Open Window*. For Dylan's early supporters, Grossman was Satan, luring him from the righteous path with neon dollar signs, but he knew what he was doing. Incentivised by his deal with publisher Witmark Music, whereby he received 50 per cent of his clients' royalties, Grossman mailed out demo discs to singers and their agents to fast-track Dylan's songs into the folk repertoire in every city in America. A tape recorded at the Gaslight that October added the revolutionary A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall and the flinty, chilling Ballad Of Hollis Brown to the mix.

Until then, traditional songs had enjoyed such prestige that folk singers would often pass off their own compositions as trad. In a stroke, Dylan made writing your own material prestigious – and lucrative. His poetic style was the way forward. “I saw folks beginning to try to imitate this,” Sebastian recalls, “maybe without all the mental equipment they needed to write that way.”

Ramblin' Jack Elliott told Dylan he was “the Woody of today” but Dylan shot back that he'd gone “far beyond” Woody, which was true. “He was writing lyrics that nobody else was touching,” says Collins. “It affected the entire folk movement.” She attributes it to Dylan's year of sofa-surfing through the homes of well-read older friends like the Van Ronks. “Wherever he went he would find libraries and he would start reading. If you soak up these things, you're bound to have something come out of your brain that's different to what you were doing a year ago.”

Dylan himself appeared to confirm the theory in his first major interview. “I seem to draw into myself whatever comes my way, and it comes out of me,” he shrugged to Seventeen magazine. “Maybe I'm nothing but all these songs I soak up. I don't know.”

**S**EVERAL OF DYLAN'S CONTEMPORARIES COMPARED him to blotting paper or a sponge: ultra-absorbent. But that suggests he was indiscriminating. Thal describes a brain more like a sorting machine. He knew what to use right away, what to retain for later, and what to discard.

His talent for harvesting material was evident when, a week before Christmas 1962, he flew to London to appear in Evan Jones's BBC drama *Madhouse On Castle Street* as a folk singer called Bobby with more songs than lines. Thus was the British public introduced to *Blowin' In The Wind*. Dylan seized the chance to learn English and Scottish folk melodies from London-based singers including Martin Carthy and Bob Davenport and quickly repurpose them for his own songs: Scarborough Fair yielded the lovelorn Girl From The North Country and Boots Of Spanish Leather; Nottamun Town the murderously vengeful Masters Of War.

This flurry of creativity meant that when Dylan performed his first major solo concert, at New York's Town Hall on April 12, 1963 he could at last play nothing but his own songs and explicitly close a chapter with the florid prose poem Last Thoughts On Woody Guthrie. One song in particular was much bigger than he was. In a masterstroke of managerial synergy, Grossman got Peter, Paul And Mary to record



**Pawns in the game:** (from left) Dylan, Albert Grossman and producer Tom Wilson recording *The Times They Are A-Changin'*, Columbia Studios, October 1963; (opposite, clockwise from top left) Dylan at the Singers Club, London, December 22, 1962; rehearsing John Birch on the Ed Sullivan show, May 12, 1963; united with Peter, Paul And Mary, Joan Baez and Pete Seeger & Freedom Singers, Newport Folk Festival, July 26, 1963.

*Blowin' In The Wind*. Reaching Number 2 on the Billboard charts and winning two Grammy awards, the trio's version was iron-clad evidence of folk's commercial potential, Dylan's songwriting and Grossman's instincts.

One night at Club 47 in April, another protest song succeeded in cracking Joan Baez's sceptical shell. Based on *The Patriot Game*, one of his London discoveries, *With God On Our Side*'s bitterly sarcastic denunciation of nationalism and war at once transformed Baez's assessment of Dylan's talents and inspired her to pursue her own political convictions. “It was [as if] he was giving voice to the ideas I wanted to express but didn't know how,” she told writer David Hajdu. When she saw Dylan struggling at the Monterey Folk Festival on May 18, she joined him for that song, commanding the audience to pay close attention to its message.

Advertised by Don Hunstein's famous shot of Dylan and Rotolo walking down Jones Street, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* came out on May 27 and sold in its first week twice what his debut had managed in a year. It had been a long slog, culled from three dozen songs recorded over 12 months. At the last minute, Columbia's lawyers had balked at Talkin' John Birch Paranoid Blues, delaying the album and allowing Dylan to shake it up for the better: out with five older songs, in with *Masters Of War* and *Girl From The North Country*, recorded in April with new producer Tom Wilson. Dylan then chose John Birch for his debut on the Ed Sullivan Show, leading to a showdown and a walkout. A perverse choice or a canny one? There's nothing better for a protest singer's reputation than getting censored.

The previous autumn, Dylan had cameoed in a Time cover story on Baez as a “promising young hobo”. Now he merited his own write-up. It was still condescending, calling him a “citybilly” whose voice “sounds as if it were drifting over the walls of a tuberculosis

**“I SEEM  
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ALL THESE  
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SOAK UP.”  
BOB DYLAN**





# "ALL MY SONGS ARE PROTEST SONGS"

**WHEN THE FINGER-POINTIN' STOPPED, WHAT HAPPENED TO PROTEST DYLAN? DORIAN LYSKEY INVESTIGATES.**

TO HIS evident dismay, Dylan was still being quizzed about protest songs during his European tour in 1966, three years after he had finished writing them and one year after the last of them had fallen out of his live shows. "All my songs are protest songs," he shot back during a press conference in London. "Every single one of them. All I do is protest."

Perhaps this was not merely exasperated sarcasm. It was possible to read a great deal into his impressionistic denunciations of anything that stood in the way of personal freedom. Pete Seeger reportedly considered Maggie's Farm to have a solid anti-capitalist message, the far-left militants of Students For A Democratic Society – AKA Weatherman – took their name from Subterranean Homesick Blues, and It's Alright, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding) appeared to be protesting against politics *in toto*.

In 1964, producer Tom Wilson made an astute observation to the New Yorker's Nat Hentoff:

"He's not a singer of protest so much as he is a singer of concern about people." Miscarriages of justice were a consistent theme, especially when they involved black people – Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Hattie Carroll – and that instinct survived his finger-pointin' era. In 1971, Dylan finally wrote another topical song – a

single, no less, though not a great one. George Jackson bluntly romanticised a Black Panther who had been shot dead by prison guards while attempting to escape from San Quentin. "Political Dylan is back," Cash Box declared, a tad prematurely.

Four years later, however, came a more successful tribute to a black man up against the state. After reading the prison memoir of Ruben 'Hurricane' Carter, a boxer unjustly convicted of triple homicide, Dylan wrote Hurricane as a cinematic narrative in the vein of The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll, with a similarly freewheeling approach to the facts. Unlike George Jackson, it was a significant hit that Dylan took to the stage, if only briefly.

Those songs may have been anomalous throwbacks but most of Dylan's early protest songs, minus the time-locked talking blues numbers, re-entered his repertoire during the 1970s. In 1974, at the behest of Phil Ochs, he even played Blowin' In The Wind at a benefit concert for victims of General Pinochet's military coup in Chile. Once Dylan had found God and considered Armageddon an imminent probability rather than just a poetic mood, he reanimated Masters Of War and A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall with burning conviction.

After this decade of reclamation, it was not so shocking when Dylan chose to play only protest songs at Live Aid in Philadelphia in July 1985: Ballad Of Hollis Brown, Blowin' In The Wind and (for the first time in 21 years and, as far as we can tell, the last time ever) When The Ship Comes In. His turn may have been an infamous dud, but for one night only Broadside Dylan was back.

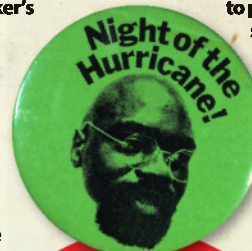
sanatorium", but recognised the significance of Blowin' In The Wind: "an anthem for the whole lost crowd he speaks for."

**N**ONE OF DYLAN'S FRIENDS considered him a sophisticated political thinker, especially not the Marxist Van Ronks. "We lectured him interminably about politics and he ignored almost all of it," says Thal. "Bob didn't give a shit. Liberal? Sure. Anti-racist? Sure. Everyone was. He was not going to be a Marxist but he did understand that there were different sides to be on, starting with civil rights."

Dylan became friendly with members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which represented the younger generation of the civil rights movement. On July 6, Pete Seeger and his confrère Theodore Bikel took him down to Greenwood, Mississippi to support a SNCC voter registration drive with a concert on the farm of a courageous desegregationist family named McGhee. Mississippi was a dangerous place, where volunteers had been beaten by far-right vigilantes and local police alike and activist Medgar Evers had been murdered a month earlier. "The concert was a reward for locals that had the courage to show up at the courthouse to register," explains former SNCC photographer Danny Lyon.

"I just want to sing one song because I haven't slept in two nights and I'm a little shaky," Dylan began. "But this is about Medgar Evers." As the box set reveals, he was shaky enough that he had to start Only A Pawn In Their Game twice. Far from being a stirring civil rights anthem, it provocatively suggested that both Evers and his murderer were victims of a racist system. "I knew who [Dylan] was," says Lyon. "I doubt any of the audience did. I was struck by their complete lack of response. There was a huge cultural gap between the sharecroppers and Bob Dylan. The movement affected Dylan more than Dylan affected the movement."

More successfully, Dylan sang Blowin' In The Wind with the SNCC Freedom Singers and We Shall Overcome with everybody – a tableau of multiracial, cross-generational unity which was recreated at the Newport Folk Festival later that month. ➤



**"DYLAN'S NOT A SINGER OF PROTEST SO MUCH AS HE IS A SINGER OF CONCERN ABOUT PEOPLE."**

**TOM WILSON**

Storm force: Dylan greets Ruben 'Hurricane' Carter at Clinton State Prison, New Jersey, December 7, 1975.





Master of ceremonies:  
Dylan heralds the end  
of the beginning at  
Carnegie Hall, New  
York, October 26, 1963.



typewriter and produced the songs that would complete his third album, including Pirate Jenny's vengeful offspring The Lonesome Death Of Hattie Carroll and The Times They Are A-Changin'.

When *The Times They Are A-Changin'* was released on February 10, 1964, seven of the 10 tracks were protest songs so listeners reasonably assumed that Dylan was still in a "finger-pointin'" mood. In fact, the title track was the last explicitly political song he would record for eight years.

**D**YLAN'S LANDMARK SHOW AT CARNEGIE HALL ON October 26, 1963 fills the seventh and eighth discs of *Through The Open Window* and displays a talent in full flower. Whether tender, hilarious, charming or chilling, he's in complete control of the room. You can hear the brand new Hattie Carroll cast its spell in real time: his introduction gets no response but by the end, the applause is explosive.

"It was earth-shaking," remembers Collins. "When an artist comes through with something that vibrates with the whole community, it's extraordinary." To Thal, the mob of fans outside was a premonition of Beatlemania – not to infect America 'til the following February. After the show, she and Rotolo served as decoys, climbing into Dylan's car while he sneaked out the back. "It was weird. Literally there were little girls crawling all over, bouncing on the car. I understand why famous people are terrified."

The show itself was clearly the end of the beginning for Dylan. "What happened to this kid who came to town a couple of years ago?" says Thal. "Where is he moving to? He was beginning to be a different person. There was a little bit of envy and a sad recognition that he was going someplace else."

Three events explain Dylan's rapid departure from both the Village scene and the role of "a moralist, a pamphleteer, an angry young man with a guitar, a social protest poet," as Shelton put it in his review. The first was a Newsweek hit piece that publicly exposed Dylan's origins. Although few people cared that Dylan was a middle-class Jewish kid rather than a boxcar-riding carny, he was mortified and spat out the bitter, valedictory *Restless Farewell*: "The dirt of gossip blows into my face."

A second blow was the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22. Opening a show that week with *Times*, Dylan told biographer Anthony Scaduto, "I couldn't understand why they were clapping or why I wrote that song, even." Trying to change the world, he told friends, gets you killed.

In that dark frame of mind, he collected the Tom Paine Award from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee at the Americana Hotel on December 13, where an FBI informant drily reported that a "young beatnik-type entertainer" named "Bobby Dillon" was "not well-received". Surveying a room full of well-to-do liberals, Dylan rambled uncomfortably about his sympathy for Lee Harvey Oswald and his estrangement from the political scene. "There's no black and white, left and right, to me any more," he said. "There's only up and down, and down is very close to the ground. And I'm trying to go up without thinking of anything trivial, such as politics."

Something snapped that night. Nineteen months before the legendary electric heresy of Newport '65, this prickly monologue was Dylan's declaration of independence from the orthodoxies of the folk scene that had been so good to him. The years of flight, repudiation and creative wildfire were about to begin. **M**

*Through The Open Window: The Bootleg Series Vol. 18 1956-1963* is released by Sony Legacy/Columbia Records later this year. Terri Thal's memoir *My Greenwich Village: Dave, Bob And Me* is published by McNidder & Grace. John Sebastian & Arlen Roth *Explore The Spoonful Songbook* is out on BMG. Danny Lyon's photography is available at [bleakbeauty.com](http://bleakbeauty.com) and on Instagram @dannylionphotos2

**"WE LECTURED  
HIM INTERMINABLY  
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AND HE IGNORED  
ALMOST ALL OF  
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GIVE A SHIT."**

**TERRI THAL**

◀ Grossman ensured that Dylan was the main character of Newport '63. He played nothing but protest songs, three of which he promptly recorded for his next album, and sang *With God On Our Side* on each of the three days, twice with Baez. Headlining Friday night, Dylan appeared to close with *Hard Rain* but returned mob-handed with Peter, Paul And Mary, Baez, Seeger and the Freedom Singers to sing *Blowin' In The Wind* and a spontaneous encore of *We Shall Overcome*. Bikel called it "the apogee of the folk movement", proving that the idealistic, communitarian spirit of Pete and Woody had weathered the storm of McCarthyism and entranced the rock'n'roll generation.

Folk was now the favourite music of pre-Beatles America but Dylan's importance was not yet obvious beyond New York and Newport. In the summer of 1963, when the word 'hootenanny' was slapped on TV shows, movies, magazines, candy bars and pinball machines, his own version of *Blowin' In The Wind* didn't even scratch the charts. When Baez invited Dylan to join her on a short tour of the East Coast, she soon noticed that her audience only perked up when she was singing with him, so she started joining him for more songs, shrinking the gulf between their styles: Baez sounded harsher and Dylan sweeter.

One night on the tour, Dylan overreacted to a run-in with a snotty hotel clerk with spectacular results. When *The Ship Comes In*'s rolling menace came about because Suze Rotolo had been designing the set for an off-Broadway revival of *Brecht On Brecht*. While visiting her during rehearsals, Dylan had seen the black soprano Micki Grant sing Brecht and Weill's *Pirate Jenny*, in which a put-upon hotel maid fantasises about being rescued by a crew of pirates who massacre her oppressors at her command. Dylan was agog and channelled its apocalyptic violence, via the Bible, into his songwriting. "Woody had never written a song like that," he gasped in *Chronicles*. "It wasn't a protest or topical song and there was no love for people in it."

Although it was an awkward fit for Martin Luther King Jr's philosophy of nonviolence, Dylan debuted *When The Ship Comes In* with Baez at the March On Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28. The pair also sang *Only A Pawn In Their Game* and joined black folk singer Len Chandler on the civil rights anthem *Keep Your Eyes On The Prize*, all to a crowd of a quarter of a million people. Baez maintains that this was the only time they actually sang eye to eye. "It was just too moving to look out at that sea of faces," she told Hajdu. As his relationship with Rotolo crumbled, Dylan headed straight for Baez's place in Carmel, California, where he glued himself to his



# MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC

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"Patti Smith, a rock'n'roll futurist with a classicist's soul."

DAVID FRICKE CELEBRATES THE MOST NOBLE OF HORSES. REISSUES, P94



# Altogether now

Wilco dynamo's fifth solo LP is a wildly eclectic triple that celebrates collective creativity and freedom. By Tom Doyle. Illustration by The Red Dress.

## Jeff Tweedy



### Twilight Override

DBPM. CD/DL/LP

**B**EING A DRIVEN and prolific writer, making records since the early 1990s, Jeff Tweedy has on occasion enjoyed a song splurge. The Wilco frontman and bandleader is already responsible for no less than three double albums – '96's sweeping twin-disc statement *Being There*, 2022's genre-corrupting *Cruel Country*, and 2014's *Sukierae*, his literal dadrock LP with son Spencer on drums.

Even so, a triple album is quite the stretch, *Twilight Override* boldly joining the exalted/dubious company of *All Things Must Pass*, *Sandinista!*, Prince's *Emancipation* and, more recently, Joanna Newsom's *Have One On Me* (2010) and Kamasi Washington's *The Epic* (2015). Especially in this age of ever-lowering boredom thresholds, it's a decidedly chin-first artistic statement.

But, weirdly, given Wilco's standing as the American art rock equivalent of Radiohead, Tweedy's songwriting arguably remains underrated. Free of their production bells and whistles – as proven on his first, 'unplugged' solo album, 2017's catalogue set *Together At Last* – his standout tunes, such as *Jesus, Etc.*, *Ashes Of American Flags* and *Via Chicago*, have the distinct ring of modern classics. Often, though, Tweedy's LPs issued under his own name have come across as merely investigative or fun side-projects. *Twilight Override*, however, sounds decisively like a Wilco-quality album, and one that walks tall alongside their best records.

Befitting a three-disc set, it's also wildly eclectic, veering between slanted acoustic tracks, glammy '70s rock and even '80s dream pop. Clearly evident in certain parts is the influence of The Velvet Underground, most pointedly in Lou Reed's *Was My Babysitter*, a homage to White Light/White Heat (via Queen Bitch) in which the singer colourfully details his lifelong fealty to rock'n'roll, and continuing urge to feel the thumps of a bass drum "kickin' in my teeth".

Here, Tweedy is aided, as he generally is on his solo LPs, by both of his sons, Spencer (drums, percussion) and Sammy (everything from synths to vocals to 'harmonic oscillator'), along with a host of ancillary voices (see *Back Story*) and secondary guitarist/acclaimed artist in his own right, James Elkington. Still, electric guitars are only selectively utilised. When fuzzy solos do arrive they are often artfully frenetic and sometimes even sound untethered to the music. Meanwhile, the breezy acoustic strum of *Out In The Dark* handbrake-turns in its final seconds into a grinding, Sabbath-y riff.

It's this kind of jump-cut eclecticism, over a span of 30 tracks – and even a song named *Cry Baby Cry* – that means that *Twilight Override* almost inevitably evokes *The White*



"There's a thrill of communal creativity on *Twilight Override* that colours almost everything."

*Album*. The Beatles aside, the gradual disintegration of the hypnotically droning *One Tiny Flower*, with its serene appreciation of small wonder in a scene of urban decay, also references Wilco themselves, in recalling the disorientating band-breakdown of 1999's *Summerteeth* version of *Via Chicago*.

Here, though, the confusion is partly caused by a lyrical blurring of the present and the past. The title of the staccato violin-driven *Caught Up In The Past* seems straightforward, but the timeline is slippery: Tweedy lying in his bed at the Ace Hotel in LA, in an indeterminate moment that could be today or back when, listening to the sounds of a party on the roof, and hearing "people in love with a love that just can't last".

If it's a song that speaks of middle-aged ennui, or more generally feeling like an outsider, then the flashbacks to incidents involving the younger Tweedy are more acutely awkward. Recalling the gauche teenage reminiscence of *Yankee Foxtrot Hotel*'s *Heavy Metal Drummer*, the prettily melodic *This Is How It Ends* finds our narrator stuck at the top of a Ferris wheel, evocatively being dumped by a girl with a "butterfly tattoo" and "too-tight denim dress".

*Forever Never Ends* – think Lou Reed jamming with Mott The Hoople in '72 – offers a vision of his prom night, real or imagined, where he's ended up in a wintry lay-by, wearing a tuxedo and "red cummerbund", puking peppermint schnapps and having to call his father to come pick him up. Now, the painful incident has become an inescapable memory loop in the singer's mind: "I'm always back there again and again."

At the same time, at the age of 58, perhaps inevitably, Tweedy's thoughts are turning further to mortality, even if they've been recurrent since his adolescence. In the mysterious and allusive *Ain't It A Shame* – a reverse image of Terry Jacks's '74 deathly pop lament *Seasons In The Sun* – he's a young guy lying "on a beach in the sun" welcoming thoughts of his imminent demise, yet accepting "that's just not how dying's done". Even in the throes of this dark rumination, there's clearly some force pushing him on.

Sometimes, Tweedy simply succumbs to his dissociation. In *Mirror*, over a heavily distorted bass line, he's caught staring at his reflection and wondering whether it "will be the person taking your place". Other times, as in the spoken-word short story *Parking Lot*, he's imagining a parallel version of himself – a confident petrolhead examining a car engine and surrounded by admiring buddies. He's the version of Tweedy, perhaps, who never found music, and his reason for being, even if that now sounds shaky too. Breaking from his reverie, he references, of all people, The New Seekers and exasperatedly declares, "I'd like to teach the world to sing... fuck... anything."

But what ultimately lingers is a sense of music-led liberation. The seven-minute-long disc two closer *Feel Free* (similar in its sentiment to the beautiful, Wilco-covered Bill Fay song, *Be Not So Fearful*) offers multiple playful ways to maintain a breezy outlook: "kick a ball at a tree", "spin around and get dizzy", argue about bands ("*Let It Be* or *Let It Bleed*") and most significantly, "make a record with your friends".

In the end, it's this thrill of communal creativity that colours almost everything here. As a triple record, there are tracks that are less necessary than others, but remarkably it all flows as a cohesive whole, and never loses the listener's attention. Tweedy's message appears to be that, for him, a sense of purpose, and a state of joy, can be found in ongoing song and sonic exploration. Sometimes, it seems, more is more.



#### BACK STORY: PERFECT HARMONY

• "A lot of the material on this record was written specifically for the voices," Jeff Tweedy tells MOJO. Having toured for some years with a solo band featuring the harmony vocal support of both of his sons, along with Chicago's Finom (Sima Cunningham and Macie Stewart) and keyboard player/guitarist Liam Kazar, Tweedy wanted to hear these collaborators singing on an album, as opposed to as a live show afterthought. "I always come home feeling, like, I wish that those voices were on the record," he elucidates. "So I started writing for that idea of the vocal arrangements actually being on the recordings."

Rachel Bartz

**JEFF SPEAKS!**

TWEEDY ON BEING PROLIFIC, BAND IDENTITY AND THE JOY OF SLOWING THINGS DOWN.



# Seaker







Triple take: Jeff Tweedy suggests you slow things down with his new opus.

## “The White Album made a huge dent in my mind.”

Jeff Tweedy speaks to Tom Doyle.

**Apart from the people involved, how does the process differ between making Wilco albums and solo records?**

“They’re both pretty open-ended processes, starting with me making something in the studio, and then showcasing it to everybody. It’s just mostly about what songs Wilco resonates with... there’s a band identity.”

**You’re remarkably prolific – what do you attribute that to? Partly work ethic?**

“I mean, it has to be partly that. I like going to work every day. I think when you’re lucky enough to have something that you enjoy doing, and then you get to do it for a living... Y’know, my dad went to work every day.”

**Any lyrical themes that developed – or became apparent to you – as you were writing the songs?**

“I think that the same obsessions are there from probably when I first started writing songs – like identity, mortality, connection, the difficulties of communicating. What I have to write from is how I’ve aged through that obsession. I have all of the perspective of the past ‘me’s also swimming around in there (*laughs*). That’s a lot of what I think this record seems to be... reconciling a lot of that with maybe a newer outlook.”

**You might even call it maturity?**

“I think it’s actually the opposite. Like you’re learning how much you really were right as a kid to value a childlike and frivolous profession.”

**Thirty tracks, like *The White Album*, a song called *Cry Baby Cry*. Was *The Beatles’* double opus on your mind?**

“That probably made a huge dent in my mind a long time ago. So I don’t think I’ve ever shaken that idea. That’s always been an aspiration. There’s something I’ve always really loved about the eclectic nature of that record. The scope of *Helter Skelter* and *Dear Prudence* being on the same record. It always felt more honest to me than some narrowed-down or curated single viewpoint.”

**Any other triple albums that were an inspiration? *All Things Must Pass*? *Sandinista*?**

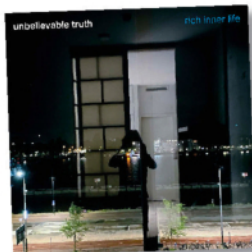
“Yeah, those are the two really big major ones. Y’know, *The Concert For Bangladesh*. We were originally calling the record *Triple Rainbow*. Maybe half-joking, like, Am I really going to make a triple record? It’s part of my lifelong dream of leaving them wanting less, y’know.”

**Does this song splurge clear the decks for the next Wilco album? Is there much left?**

“Yeah, there’s always a ton of Wilco stuff started and in various degrees of being finished. And I continue to write. At the moment, I’m writing with a specific idea in mind about what I would like the next Wilco record to be. Right now, I think that the limitation might be to avoid acoustic instruments for a while. But I think one of my deepest fears, if I’m being completely honest, is to have a completely clear deck.”

**Any tips on how to listen to this record?**

“Well, I think ideally it’s... if you can... slow yourself down. That’s kind of the point, is to go against the societal momentum of being shorter and quicker and faster. If you can settle yourself down for two hours, I do think it propels you along. I mean, I listen to it all the way through, and I will say I’ve made other records that are shorter that have felt longer to me (*laughs*).”



## Unbelievable Truth

★★★★

Rich Inner Life

NOOSPHERE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Thom Yorke’s kid brother’s first album in 25 years.**

“To be part of the crowd/You just have to shut down,” Andy Yorke warns in *Find Your People*, a typically aching, warbly beauty from the reunited *Unbelievable Truth*. Yorke always voiced his uneasy relationship with commerce; after various vanishing acts (after 2000’s second album *Sorrythankyou*, after a one-off show in 2007 and after 2008’s solo album *Simple*), he can’t shake the bond with bassist Jason Moulster and drummer Nigel Powell. Radiohead comparisons are too easy (OK, *Funny Peculiar* at a pinch); rather, imagine a more melancholy, and English, *Crowded House*, with Yorke’s lovelorn resignation balanced against the acceptance, even optimism, that comes with age, peaking on *Citizens Band* – “I know we are scattered/But we are many” – and *A Clear Line*: “A clear line to follow... a real life to call my own.”

Martin Aston



## Emma Swift

★★★★

The Resurrection Game

TINY GHOST. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Australian singer-songwriter rises up again with first album of original material.**



“The world’s a spinning time bomb/That there’s no denying,” sings Emma Swift on

*The Resurrection Game*, “there are no happy endings/But baby, I’m trying.” There’s a hard-won clarity to the Nashville-based musician’s new album, arriving five years after her Dylan covers collection *Blonde On The Tracks*. Recorded in the aftermath of an acute mental health crisis, these precise, unsentimental songs (especially the languorously stringed *Nothing And Forever*) acknowledge both the darkness of the universe and the wonder of finding love and meaning in it regardless. A crew of Nashville musicians – including pedal steel player Spencer Cullum – open up the space around Swift’s confiding voice, letting in the ghosts on *For You And Oblivion*’s delicate

unchained melody or suggesting a folk rock Lana Del Rey on *Going Where The Lonely Go*. Happy endings are for fairytales, maybe, but *The Resurrection Game* has a real-world beauty of its own.

Victoria Segal



## Glenn Hughes

★★★

Chosen

FRONTIERS MUSIC SRL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Former Deep Purple singer/bassist counts his blessings.**



Pretty much the last man standing among septuagenarian rockers

who’ve retained their range and power, Glenn Hughes still has the life force, is still in demand. Like The KLF before him, Robbie Williams is a fan, and had Hughes sing on his recent single, *Rocket*. Ever mindful of mid-’80s addictions which almost sunk him, Hughes has exuded a New Age-ish spirituality in recent years while fronting groups such as *California Breed* and *Black Country Communion*. Now here’s solo LP Number 14, a no-frills hard rock outing with nods to Purple’s ’70s pomp, Hughes’ criminally underrated ’80s duo Hughes/Thrall (Chosen), and Foo Fighters (Heal). As ever, soulful flourishes borne of the Stax and Motown music Hughes absorbed as a kid in Cannock, Staffordshire bring colour, as does his ever-classy falsetto. Not for nothing did Stevie Wonder once call him his “favourite white singer”.

James McNair



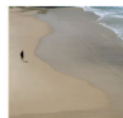
## The Autumn Defense

★★★★

Here And Nowhere

YEP ROC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Wilco off-shoot return after a decade, better than ever.**



Essentially the vehicle for two of Wilco’s core members, John Stirratt and Pat Sansone, The

*Autumn Defense* is no mere side-project. Now five albums

old, since their 2000 debut the duo have consistently delivered fascinating, deeply emotional and gorgeously crafted albums. Far less rooted in Wilco’s country rock origins than in the breezy haze of ’60s and ’70s California, the lines from The Byrds, Big Star, Bread, America and even *Meddle*-era Pink Floyd to *Here And Nowhere* aren’t difficult to trace, but Stirratt and Sansone are masters at redrawing those lines in sharp, crisp new ways. Songs dip and swell on graceful piano and guitars, melodies accented by cellos and even flute, gliding into highlights such as the chorus of *Underneath The Rollers*, which shimmers and sparkles like glassy late-afternoon surf on a SoCal beach. An album that simply drips with elegance.

Andy Fyfe



## Charles Lloyd

★★★★

Figure In Blue

BLUE NOTE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

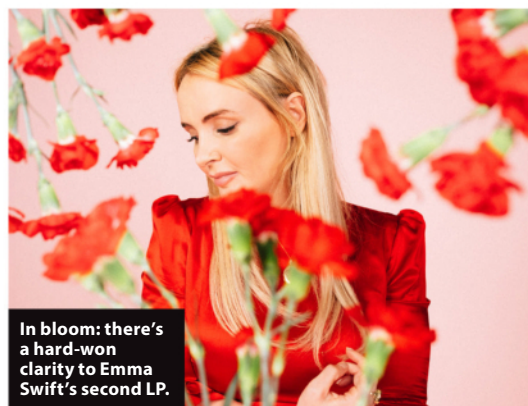
**Jazz legend in a reflective mood.**



With his gorgeous saxophone tone and its feathery, tremulous

timbre, Lloyd continues to play beautifully at 87, showing no sign of creative entropy. Time, of course, will eventually catch up with him, but for now, the Memphis musician who helped put Keith Jarrett on the map and once played with The Beach Boys is basking in an inspired twilight period. Lloyd is joined by pianist Jason Moran and guitarist Marvin Sewell, who prove highly empathetic collaborators, creating delicately nuanced backdrops that are conducive to the saxophonist’s poetic storytelling. Highlights include a heavenly *Abide With Me*, where Lloyd’s fluttery saxophone floats above Sewell’s gossamer guitar chords and Moran’s filigreed piano, and the haunting, highly lyrical *Desolation Sound*. The only outliers are *Chulahoma* and *Blues For Langston*, both raw, rustic blues spotlighting an edgier side to Sewell’s fretwork.

Charles Waring



In bloom: there’s a hard-won clarity to Emma Swift’s second LP.

Shervin Lainez



# Shadow play

Fourth solo album from former Delgado brightens the corners.  
By Victoria Segal.

## Emma Pollock

★★★★★

### Begging The Night To Take Hold

CHEMICAL UNDERGROUND. [CD/DL/LP](#)

IT'S BEEN nine years since Emma Pollock released *In Search Of Harperfield*, her third solo album after Glaswegian indie heroes The Delgados disbanded in 2005. While fans of her quietly unpredictable songwriting might find that an undesirable gap, it makes sense that *Begging The Night To Take Hold* should have taken so long to hatch: these songs are very much about life, and what happens when it gets in the way. Her last record was shaped by the death of her mother and subsequent complicated stock-taking; this time, tectonic shifts included the loss of her father, the 2023 live re-formation of The Delgados, and a diagnosis of autism.

Pollock's gift is to turn that turbulence into these measured, nuanced nocturnes, their core expertly processed without being deadened or defused. While she deals with the personal, she is not one for diaristic dates-and-times detail. Smooth edges, soft landings, easy answers: these don't catch her interest. Instead, with the robust



In the heat of the night: Emma Pollock turns the dark on.

backing of Pete Harvey of Modern Studies on cello and Graeme Smillie on piano and bass, she often seems to creep up on a memory or mood from an unexpected angle, throwing a song over it like a blanket, containing it in an intricate Elliott Smith-style waltz (Black Magnetic), or a brilliantly precise rhyme scheme ("Almost woke you up last night/To tell you I was frightened," she sings on old-country parlour song I Used To Be A Silhouette. "But silence got the better/And you slept on unenlightened").

That tension between craft and emotion builds throughout *Begging The Night To Take Hold*, the latter always threatening to poke through. It's a palpable energy on the heavy guitar escalation of Something Of A Summer, Future Tree's Street Hassle strings, or the greenstick fractures of Prize Hunter, while Rapid Rush Of Red's meditation on long-term conflict management has a touch of Joni

Mitchell in its paintbox metaphors. Sometimes, there's a little more distance: Marchtown wanders through the world of Mary Queen Of Scots for a blast of historical perspective, while Jessie My Queen, a salute to the Glaswegian artist Jessie M. King, declares "you know you have the most ironic of the surnames". It's an awkward line, but it's delivered with a poise that suggests Pollock could write about anything – the collector's sense of being crushed by their own collection (Prize Hunter), for example, or haunting midlife ennui (Fire Inside).

"I feel like I have paid my dues a wee bit again," said the modest Pollock around the release of *In Search Of Harperfield*. "I hope I've shown there is something after The Delgados that I can offer." *Begging The Night To Take Hold* is again abundant proof of that. Pollock might not take up space often, but when she's finally front and centre, you don't want the lights to go down.



## Sven Wunder

★★★★★

### Daybreak

PIANO PIANO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Summoning the music that plays in uncanny valley, the Swedish sonic forger strikes again.

Now established as a one-man source for eerily accurate tributes to classic library musics – having previously undertaken excursions into Anatolian funk, Japanese jazz and spaghetti westerns – Sven Wunder, in reality Swedish screen composer Joel Danell, son of jazz drummer Nils Danell, turns to the lush allure of Italian soundtracks or ad-friendly works such as John Barry's *Girl With The Sun In Her Hair*, to deliver a suite of cool breezes. The title track features a legato string part that sounds like the sigh of someone leaning back into long, sun-dappled grass. OK, it may all be ersatz, but Danell's

affection for the sound and attention to detail is clear, his compositions are solid and arrangements ingenious; so relax, go with it and enjoy rubbery bass lines, funky flutes and nimble xylophone breaks just like Ennio Morricone, Lalo Schiffrin or David Axelrod used to make.

Jim Irvin

## Biffy Clyro

★★★★★

### Futique

WARNER MUSIC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Kilmarnock, Ayrshire's inked chart-toppers re-bond on tenth studio album.



Biffy Clyro were close to imploding when frontman Simon Neil deployed his emergency parachute/extreme-metal side-project Empire State Bastard in 2023, but now he and rhythm-section twins James and Ben Johnston are tight again, as is abundantly clear from their skin-on-skin tai chi workout in the video for recent single A Little Love. The trio's opaquely-titled latest *Futique* – it's a neologism grasping at perceptions of memory, apparently – seems primed to fill the current Foo Fighters-

shaped hole in stadia-friendly alt rock, its choruses huge, but also peppered with the thundering algorithms of contemporary pop on breathless, emotive winners such as Hunting Season and True Believer. Band kiss-and-make-ups can seem contrived, unconvincing; but this one feels genuine and sparky, Biffy's urgent, passionate music oxygenated by time away. Their fans are hungry for them and their fourth UK Number 1 LP may be imminent.

James McNair

## Marcus King Band

★★★★★

### Darling Blue

AMERICAN/REPUBLIC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

A reunion with his full band revitalises the neo-Southern rocker.

Returning to the comfort of his full band after spending half a decade dallying with superstar producers Dan Auerbach and Rick Rubin, hotshot guitarist Marcus King feels loose and liberated on *Darling Blue*. Unconcerned with genre authenticity, he rambles with the freedom of a grizzled old rocker, falling back on country more than blues this time around – a shift underscoring



by Jamey Johnson growling alongside Kaitlin Butts on Here Today. As much flavour as the guests add here – Noah Cyrus assists with the supple sigh of the soulful The Shadows, too – this is a record that belongs to the Marcus King Band as a collective. The group allows his music to breathe, relaxing through the ballads and working up a real head of steam on Honky Tonk Hell, coming within spitting distance of prime Little Feat.

Stephen Thomas Erlewine

from 2022, was how compact it was, just four tracks of bright ambient kosmische that seemed purposefully designed for sale as a meditative aid in some Sausalito crystal shop. *Inland See* is similarly focused, but whereas the sound for *Bajascillators* was bright and optimistic, reminiscent of the trebly, pastoral minimalism crafted by German duo Cluster, the groove here is mostly grainy, organic, natural. Largely written on the road, and recorded in Chicago's Electrical Audio by key Baja Cooper Crain, this is the sound of late-night highway zone-outs and Green World processional space-jazz. That is, until side-long album-closer, Graut, which morphs from a hazy weightless drift into a hyperactive Animal Collective club groove taking everyone, including the band themselves, completely by surprise.

Andrew Male

## Bitchin Bajas

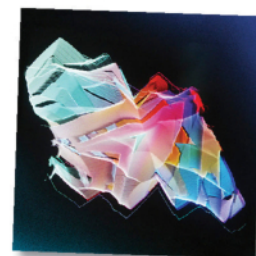
★★★★★

### Inland See

DRAG CITY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

Chicago's ecstatic drone trio keep things tidy on album number 10.

Perhaps the biggest surprise about *Bajascillators*, Bitchin Bajas's previous studio LP





Love is the drug:  
Evan Dando's new LP is  
scrappy, vulnerable and  
heartfelt, but also loose,  
exuberant and animated.

# Wild at heart

Evan Dando returns with 11 new songs that capture his many untamed aspects.

By Andrew Male.

## The Lemonheads

★★★★★

### Love Chant

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

AUGUST 13, 2025. An Evan Dando in-store appearance at Rough Trade Records, East London. It's a mix of old originals (Confetti, My Drug Buddy) and covers plus anecdotes about Jackson Pollock and a word-perfect rendition of Peter Cook's Coal Miner sketch ("I didn't have the Latin"). Looking simultaneously bedraggled and regal, like a lion surprised by a sudden rain shower, Dando is scrappy, vulnerable, heartfelt, and enervated. You sense he feels uncomfortable singing his own songs. In fact, the only Dando composition delivered with complete ease and self-belief is a new one, In The Margin. Written with Massachusetts friend and collaborator Marciana Jones, it's an eviscerating break-up song ("If periphery is what you give/I'll leave you in the margin") reinforced on the album by a series of gnarly Dinosaur Jr-style riffs. Yet,

in the context of that evening's performance it felt like modern Evan parting ways with old Evan ("I'd rather die than let your thoughts confine me"). That's certainly an argument that gains weight listening to *Love Chant*.

Produced in São Paulo by Brazilian composer Apollo Nove and centred around a core trio of Dando, bassist Farley Glavin and drummer John Kent, *Love Chant* might also be described as scrappy, vulnerable and heartfelt, but it is also loose, exuberant and animated in a manner that seems faithful to who Dando is today. Album opener 58 Second Song, another Marciana Jones co-write, is brisk, bittersweet powerpop about a toxic relationship that might also be a song about Dando escaping his own past. But it's not all clear sailing. With its J Mascis guitar solo and Juliana Hatfield backing vocal, Deep End is a Tom Morgan co-write mired in the brown murk of old habits ("coughing up a ghost... Better double down the dose") while the riff-stealing Wild Thing takes us deep into the world of coercive cults and Charles Manson ("If you really love me

then you'll do this/And you won't begrudge me if I do that") before the swaddled and slurred Be In finds Dando freeing himself from an abusive past with a new love ("I needed a new world to be in... This world is you"). Side two, by contrast, begins to feel like that



## "A semi-murderous Godspell Jonestown Manson theme."

Evan Dando speaks to Andrew Male.

**This album feels very close to the real Evan Dando: up and down, dark and light, funny and melancholy...**

"Automatic poetry. [My wife] Antonia's dad [Brazilian singer-songwriter Renato Teixeira] does that on his albums and I guess I picked up on a little of that. I can't believe how well the album came out. It's got quiet bits, loud bits, some riffs... I'm constantly trying to write more riffs into my songs. Once you become friendly with Keith Richards, you gotta put in some riffs."

**What did recording in Brazil add to the process?**

"I just love being in Brazil. People just let you get on with what you're doing. It's a really good place to focus. The studio sounds great. They have some really great old gear from the Record Plant plus the compressor from *Imagine*."

**Did writing the memoir influence the LP?**

"The memoir was a lot of pain and suffering but we got there in the end. I don't think it really influenced the music as the music was always gonna happen once I got myself back into living in Brazil and away from dope. I think of the book more like a promotional item for the album rather than the other way round."

**There are some lovely pop songs on the album but it has a darkness as well.**

"You've got to balance things out. It's an album that's meant to be listened to over and over again, where you discover stuff in there you didn't notice the first time. There is a semi-murderous early Christian Godspell Jonestown Manson theme running through a lot of it if you can spot it."

**The last song, Roky, which you wrote with Nick Salomon of The Bevis Frond is partly about Roky Erickson but also feels autobiographical...**

"Yeah. I mean, Nick helped me with the words and maybe it's a little bit more honest than I would have been willing to go on my own."

release. Togetherness Is All I'm After and Marauders are stoned memorandums on the importance of being in the moment, while the title track is hypnotically motorik positivity based around the repeated phrase, "Tell 'em the way I feel." However, with escape comes self-awareness. Penultimate track, The Key Of Victory, is a laid-back country-rock drift that shines a light on Dando's inescapable flaws ("life's too short to live a sparkling lie"), while the gloriously euphoric melancholy of album closer Roky brings lacerating honesty about the singer's own 2019 slide back into junk ("I just renewed my membership/To a club that I joined/With a casual flip of a worthless coin"). In the past, that song might have felt like resignation but, like the rest of *Love Chant*, it now feels like a defiant escape from the traps of a dark past.



The day today:  
Wednesday are in  
total control of the  
world they've built.



## Geese

★★★★★

**Killed**

PARTISAN. CD/DL/LP

**Shape-shifting avant-rock from freewheeling Brooklyn quartet.**



Formed at high school and fronted by Cameron Winter, a startlingly

expressive and erratic singer (whose voice was recently described as "glorious" by Nick Cave), Geese have over the past four years carefully shaped their Pavement-go-Beefheart contours with the help of producers Dan Carey and James Ford. Here, they enlist the help of Kenneth Blume, AKA Kenny Beats (Idles/Vince Staples), on a third album bursting with intense energy and sparkling invention. The lovely, slow-burning *Taxes* builds a muted, polyrhythmic groove before surprisingly jump-cutting into chiming, widescreen guitars; *Half Real* evokes a wonky bar-room atmosphere and the title track's syncopated woodblock patterns explode into a cubist *Exile On Main St.* If Winter's voice may be a tad tart for some tastes – weirdly, part Thom Yorke, part Mick Jagger, with flashes of Van Morrison – there's no mistaking there's mercurial brilliance at work here.

Tom Doyle



## Hollie Cook

★★★★★

**Shy Girl**

MR BONGO. DL/LP

**Excellent follow-up to 2022's *Happy Hour* from 'the queen of modern lovers rock'.**

Almost 15 years on from her self-titled debut on Mr Bongo, Hollie Cook continues apace, returning to the label for this first-rate fifth album. Put down over three years with her band General Roots and their drummer Ben McKone at the controls, she says it was "a struggle" but it sounds light and effortless. Recording for the first time live in analogue studios in London, *Vejer de la Frontera*, New York and Los Angeles, with the 12 songs worked up from spontaneous jams, most, like the title track and *Ooh Baby*, are heart-on-sleeve sumptuous lovers rock with easy-going vibes. The exceptions are *Night Night* and *Frontline*, the latter a stirring roots ballad, the former infectious

## Wednesday

★★★★★

**Bleeds**

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

**Superb sixth LP from North Carolinian country/alt-rock collective.**

WEDNESDAY'S 2023 album *Rat Saw God* set singer Karly Hartzman's wry tales of smalltown America against a backdrop that lurched between

woozy country and alt-rock thrash. It's a trick repeated on *Bleeds*, only the contrast is intensified: the latter more ferocious, the former more aching and bittersweet – see Elderberry Wine's weeping interplay between pedal steel player Xandy Chelmiss and guitarist/Hartzman's ex, MJ Lenderman. Unexpected shifts and arresting mental images abound. "We watched a Phish concert and The



Human Centipede," she sings sweetly on *Flying Burrito Brothers*-like *Phish Pespi*, "...two

things I now wish I had never seen." Whether picking apart a morbid fascination with true crime on *Carolina Murder Suicide* or detailing how her landlord got his teeth smashed in on Gary's II, Hartzman and Wednesday sound in total control of the world they've built here.

Chris Catchpole

pre-digital dancehall featuring MC Horseman.

Lois Wilson



## Immersion

★★★★★

**WTF??**

SWIM-. CD/DL/LP

**Pedigree collaborative duo ask the big questions.**



That extravagantly punctuated title makes this record's concerns clear:

how to survive, thrive and create in a world that is spinning rapidly off its axis? *Immersion*, the long-standing electronic partnership between Wire's Colin Newman and Minimal Compact's Malka Spigel (Holy Fuck drummer Matt Schulz is also on board), explore the issues over eight questing tracks, half of them elegant, deep-dive instrumentals, half unfolding like illustrated lectures on art and meaning. The band aren't afraid to put all the tensions of their process on display, stripping away any artistic insulation: "I am of course aware that talking over music is not necessarily the best way to make a point," says an endearingly tetchy Newman on the *Stereolab* groove of *Timeline*. Volatile instrumental *Defiance* or the dreamy breathing-space pause of *On The Longest Day* can't help but confirm his suspicions: agile, reactive, expressive, they say it all.

Victoria Segal

## Soulwax

★★★★★

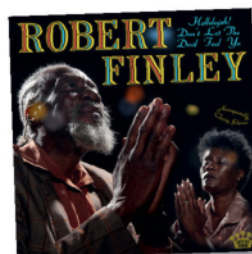
**All Systems Are Lying**

DEEWEE/BECAUSE MUSIC. DL/LP

**Fraternal Belgian duo deliver electro-rock opus.**

Beginning life in Ghent in the mid '90s as a rock band, the Dewaele brothers – Stephen and David – soaked in the dance music influences that would set their trajectory to stardom. Whether as Soulwax, their mash-up project 2 Many DJs, or their hook-up with LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy as *Despacio*, by the early 2000s they were ubiquitous on club and festival circuits. *All Systems Are Lying* is their first album for eight years – this time made without any guitars – and a vibrant tour de force. From the Reichian motifs percolating through *Pills And People Gone* to the title track's squealing acid and *Idiot's In Love's* Daft Punk-like electro-rock swagger, it struts with confidence. Like their pal Murphy, the Dewaeles – with Stephen's vocals a potent weapon throughout – continue to balance emotional songwriting and dance music energy with aplomb.

Stephen Worthy



## Robert Finley

★★★★★

**Hallelujah! Don't Let The Devil Fool Ya**

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

**Louisiana late-starter testifies, gospel-style, as if putting his affairs in order.**

In the decade since the 71-year-old Finley debuted with *Age Don't Mean A Thing*, the blind, ex-street performer has been hailed "the greatest living soul singer" (by his Black Keys label boss/producer Dan Auerbach) and reached America's *Got Talent*'s semi-finals. Written and tracked within a single day, a reckoning with mortality is a recurring motif through *Hallelujah's* god-fearing, bluesy ruminations; whether relating, "I wanted to write a book but I'm out of time" on horn-spattered *Confessional Praise Him* or wondering if he'll ever wake again on bruising spiritual *I Wanna Thank You*. Finley's revelations are given added gospel resonance by their moody call-and-response exchanges with his daughter Christy Johnson – peaking on the standout seven-minute, groove-led strut of *His*

Love – on a soul-cleansing suite that further enhances his charismatic gifts.

Andy Cowan



## Lorelle Meets The Obsolete

★★★★★

**Corporal**

SONIC CATHEDRAL. CD/DL/LP

**Mexican shoe-gazing duo head for the dancefloor.**



*Corporal* recasts the Mexican duo of Lorena Quintanilla (Lorelle) and Alberto

González's (The Obsolete) hammering shoe-gazing by placing it in a dance-oriented context. Sequencer rhythms evoking New Order's *Temptation* colour curtain-raiser *Regresar/Recordar* (To Remember/To Return). Next up, *Ker* has an MF Doom darkness, a pulsing relentlessness which envelops the listener. The pair consciously keep one foot on the dancefloor here; a result of DJing after the completion of their last world tour – a time when an injection of fresh energy was needed. At its most minimal – *Dilación* is barely more than a beat, just Quintanilla's disembodied voice and spacey synth – the effect is hypnotic. At its most sinuous – the Patrick Cowley-esque *Casi No Estar* – it's energising. While *Corporal* is recognisably Lorelle Meets The Obsolete, their seventh LP is evidence for a reinvigoration; one which may bring fresh ears their way.

Kieron Tyler





## Kassa Overall

★★★★★

Cream  
WARP. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Futurist jazz drummer re-imagines a clutch of hip-hop classics from the inside.**

Taking Herbie Hancock's *Rocket* as the starting point, the dialogue between jazz and hip-hop is now in its fifth decade. Blessed with a magpie eye, Seattle-based producer/drummer/arranger Kassa Overall has always had a foot in both camps, peaking on the intricate edits and inspired bricolage of 2023's *Animals*. *Cream* applies the opposite method – live band, same-room recordings, no overdubs. This approach transforms Juvenile's bounce anthem *Back That Azz Up* into painterly swing, Dr Dre's G-funk opus *Nuthin' But A 'G' Thang* into a slow-rolling wonder of deep yearning, and the anthemic Wu-Tang Clan title track into an exquisite chamber piece, reanimating RZA's original chopped-up *Charmels* sample. Overall delves so deep into these songs' hidden harmonic corners and untapped rhythmic potential you

may never hear the originals the same way again. The dialogue continues.

Andy Cowan

## Cécile McLorin Salvant

★★★★★

Oh Snap  
NONESUCH. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**A jazz singer goes rogue.**

"I want to be a river, a frog jumps in a river..." Yup, the opening lines of *I Am A Volcano* signal that even by this artist's adventurous standards, her latest promises an eccentric 33 minutes. Three acoustic jazz tunes sung with free-wheeling verve remind why she has bagged three Grammys. They are sprinkled amid a self-composed mix-up: a lovely folk tune (*Take This Stone*), a pop banger (*Chaos*), intermittent shots of R&B, plus 27 seconds of the Commodores' *Brick House*. The title track sounds like a club hit – beats, synths, airy melody – that has been dismantled and reassembled slightly askew. Salvant says the album, much DIY-fashioned with Logic and GarageBand, was a reaction to industry



expectations. Lots here is clever and fun, and maybe *Oh Snap* is an album she needed to make, but heard end to end it's a bumpy ride.

John Bungey



## Beat

★★★★★

Beat Live  
INSIDE OUT. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Adrian Belew and heavy friends rock up 1980s King Crimson.**

Former Crimson frontman Adrian Belew did not receive a call-up for Robert Fripp's valedictory line-up but he's not about to be written out of band history. This four-man group with KC bassist Tony Levin, guitarist Steve Vai and drummer Danny Carey toured the Americas in 2024-25, performing muscularly virtuosic takes on the music of *Discipline*, *Beat* and *Three Of A Perfect Pair*. The fierce originality of this unique prog-meets-new wave hybrid is stirringly recaptured. You pretty much forgive the shortage of what used to be known as "a good tune" as the quartet bring an all-American swagger to the knotty rhythmic manoeuvres. While there's some added acrobatic

fret-wrangling, nothing is pulled out of shape. Only *The Sheltering Sky* is significantly enlarged, blossoming into a mesmeric 14-minute guitar masterclass. The best Crimson tribute band yet.

John Bungey

## Alex ET

★★★★★

Color Of Strange  
CURATION. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Dark, moody neo-psychedelia from LA.**



Quitting Cleveland for California, Alexandra Elaine Tapié's 2021 debut

was a hazy, lo-fi meander recorded in her bedroom. Then, pulling her band around her, she found a producer in Howlin Rain visionary Ethan Miller, who appreciated her psychedelic vibes; LP number two is a soup of electric guitar howl, paisley-coloured grunge and brooding intensity. A sunset mantra with echoes of Jane's *Addiction*, *Summer For Now* features vocals as grainy as Mazzy Star's *Hope Sandoval*, already nostalgic for this moment she's living. The Elephant is hallucinogenic, with sitar-like guitars and lyrics like an incantation; *Calico II* kicks off spookily hypnotic, a bullet of Velvet Underground menace, before exploding into a hothouse rock-out. The eerie final track is languidly intoned: "Happiness is a place you wanna be/Go on and plan your trip, it's gotta be somewhere."

Glyn Brown

## TOPS

★★★★★

### Bury The Key

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Montreal indie band's fifth album keeps their sound locked in.**



Spend too much time with TOPS and you might start to feel as

if you need a little more oxygen: there is something airless in their carefully synthesized, high-shen retro-pop, a floor-to-ceiling lushness that quickly starts to become oppressive. That sense of all exits being blocked is, however, part of *Bury The Key*'s appeal, the *Cupid & Psyche* 85 sighs and crashes of *Annihilation*, the ominous piano-bar intoxication of *Chlorine* or the Y2K Prefab Sprout of *Standing At The Edge Of Fire* underlining their long-term interest in all-enveloping emotional states. Jane Penny's aerosolised voice is deceptively light, songs that initially feel like a silvery, helium-filled Fleetwood Mac (*Your Ride*), the fluting *Mean Streak* landing with a crunch. Like the relationships in these songs, it's all a little too much, but if you have the time to succumb, *Bury The Key* is a fine way to be overwhelmed.

Victoria Segal

## Donny McCaslin

★★★★★

Lullaby For The Lost  
EDITION. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Rock energy courses through hard-hitting return of Bowie's Blackstar saxophonist.**



An attempt to channel pain and grief into something meaningful, Donny

McCaslin's latest sails thematically close to his work on Bowie's swan song. It's perhaps no coincidence that album's chief players – Ben Monder (guitar), Jason Lindner (keyboards) and Tim Lefebvre (bass) – are also present and correct on tense, bass-driven delights such as *Wasteland*, the *Psychedelic Furs*-ish *Blond Crush* and rugged Neil Young-inspired title track, marrying sinister synth oscillations and gothic six-string motifs with McCaslin's confident, trance-like solos. His gift for summoning joy from darkness pierces through the forceful *Tokyo Game Show*'s woozy strangeness and *Solace*'s moody *Nine Inch Nails* dynamics, with melody a generous hug amid *Mercy*'s deep symphony of Glenn Branca-like distorted guitars. Future-proof and intense, this is art-jazz-rock at its most cathartic.

Andy Cowan

Brett Warren

## Amanda Shires

★★★★★

### Nobody's Girl

ATO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Grammy winner's eighth solo album, her first post-divorce.**

JOINING THE Texas Playboys at 15, Amanda Shires has been at the musical coalface for almost 30 years. Yet the last couple of years saw her father and grandmother die, and a divorce from fellow singer-songwriter Jason Isbell. Pain oozes out of every pore of *Nobody's Girl*, not least on the tellingly titled *The Details*, where she snarls with restrained bitterness, "no matter how clear I keep the memories, you rewrite them so you can sleep"; on *Lately*, where she listens to Billy Joel's *The Stranger* album for emotional salvation; or on *Not Feeling Anything* where she declares, "I don't care if nobody wants me ever again." It's a strange, intense collection with barely a whiff of the country she was raised on and mere hints of the Americana which made her. Instead, Amanda Shires has made the year's most emotionally raw album.

John Aizlewood



Raw deal: Amanda Shires gets intense on her eighth.







## Trio Of Bloom

★★★★★

Trio Of Bloom

PYROCLASTIC. [CD/DL](#)

**ECM-meets-Wilco in a new power-jazz trio.**

Incredibly, with more than 200 LPs between them as leaders and sidemen, guitarist Nels Cline, pianist Craig Taborn and drummer Marcus Gilmore had never met before recording this explosive, collaborative debut. But they were made to rage together. In a cover of drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson's *Nightwhistlers*, Gilmore's opening, eruptive soliloquy kicks off a seesaw of tonal detail and raw warfare in Cline's singing-shrapnel harmonics and Taborn's rusted-garage keyboards. The band's name alludes to the 1979 McLaughlin-Pastorius summit *Trio Of Doom*, and producer David Breskin presided over a similar firepower on a 1987 album by Power Tools, anchored by Jackson. But there is a greater, empathic spectrum here in the swing from droning spell to pop-bright urgency in *Unreal Light*; the avant-Cream *Afrobeat* of *Queen King*; and the alternating drama of menacing pulse and Robert Fripp-sized guitar seizure in the 10-minute improvisation *Bloomers*. Gentlemen, more soon, please.

David Fricke



## The Milk

★★★★★

Borderlands

WLS. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Essex quartet find their groove with cinematic fourth album.**



When The Milk (singer Rick Nunn, guitarist Dan Le Gresley, bassist Luke Ayling, and drummer Mitch Ayling) dented the UK Top 40 with their 2012 debut album *Tales From The Thames Delta*, the band's pent-up new wave-like energy and expression of suburban angst drew comparisons with The Jam. Since then, they've evolved by drawing inspiration from the worlds of psychedelic soul, jazz, and funk, as is the case with *Borderlands*, a satisfying sonic adventure defined by rousing refrains framed with epic choral arrangements and dramatic, widescreen orchestration. It finds the Chelmsford band ruminating on themes ranging



**Back and forward: Cochemea imaginatively immerses himself in his roots.**

from nostalgia (the stomping Motown-esque *Destiny Calling*) and bereavement (*Time To Let Go*) to healing a polarised society (*The Middle*). The most exciting track is the thrusting *I Need Your Love*, quoting Pearl & Dean's cinema ad theme, which grooves like Marvin Gaye fronting a string-enhanced Santana.

Charles Waring



## Johnny Marr

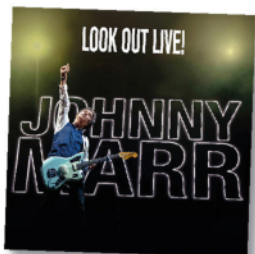
★★★★★

Look Out Live!

BMG. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Marr's second full live outing, recorded last year at Hammersmith Apollo.**

Marr's four solo albums since 2013 – all dreamy/sawtooth post-punk guitars and moody techno-rock – have been studded with pearls. The Whirl and Human, the last tracks on his lockdown LP, *Fever Dreams Pts 1-4*, may even rank among the finest things he's ever recorded. Yet live, commercial expediencies have seen the balance of his live sets shift in a decade from one-third Smiths/ Electronic material to around two-thirds. This album amply demonstrates that if you want to bellow along to This



Charming Man or Big Mouth Strikes Again, played better technically than they ever were (and Johnny's burnished croon now almost indistinguishable from Moz's), then a Marr gathering is the go-to place. But frustratingly for JM solo-heads, as well as Neil Tennant hanging around for a superfluous Rebel Rebel, instead of The Messenger we get The Passenger. Top-notch performances, though.

Pat Gilbert



## Elinodiablo

★★★★★

The Downey Groove

EL NIÑO DIABLO MUSIC. [DL/LP](#)

**Smoky beats, forged in the hills, set in a shimmering haze.**



Stephanos Pantelas's journey to co-founding Berlin's cult queer night, Lunchbox Candy, has taken in a youth on Cypriot pirate radio, DJing at London's biggest clubs and a successful music PR career. As Elinodiablo, his club-adjacent grooves mix swaying danceability with a languid smokiness. The making of *The Downey Groove* saw Pantelas head back to Cyprus's mountains, where locals escape stifling summer heat. It's reflected in the LP's pervading mood. Tempos are notched at head-nodding levels – Purple Hypnotic, wrapped in a cocoon of ponderous cowbells and dazed chords, being a prime example. Pantelas's musical

palette is broad; Rodeotheque thrums with the post-disco stylings of '80s boogie and Brit funk, the title track rides along a classic electro rhythm before *Rise In Dub*, doused in echo and soulful harmonies, settles into a pleasing, ambling pace. With *The Downey Groove*, Elinodiablo offers a comforting embrace.

Stephen Worthly



## Crayola Lectern

★★★★★

Disasternoon

ONOMATOPOIEA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Cardiacs fellow traveller hits Rock Bottom again.**



From a calmer corner of the Cardiacs' prog-punk universe, Chris Anderson specialises in a sombre brand of English pastoral that has been branded melanchodelia. His third outing as Crayola Lectern has a sleeve designed by Alfreda Bengel, and its debts to her partner Robert Wyatt are unmistakable: Stars Over Louth even goes as far as namechecking his hero's home town. However, if Anderson's dolorous pianos, celestial mellotron and dying pre-Raphaelite vocals can come across like the art-rock equivalent of fan fiction, *Disasternoon* is a more profound record about personal connection. The Judee Sill chord changes help to bring out themes of earthly despair and cosmic hope on *Sad Cornetto*, *Dissolve* and closer *Coscoroba*. *Atom Heart*

## Cochemea

★★★★★

Vol 3: Ancestros Futuros

DAPTONE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Past and future merge in percussion-heavy meditation from veteran saxophonist.**

A LONG-SERVING member of Sharon Jones' Dap-Kings who's played with everyone from Run The Jewels to Amy Winehouse, composer-arranger Cochemea Gastelum has been imaginatively immersed in the roots of his Yaqui heritage since he kicked off this earthy yet dreamlike trilogy with 2019's *All My Relations*. Recorded live to analog-8 track by Daptone boss Gabriel Roth (Bosco Mann), this latest instalment vividly conjures into life half-forgotten or imagined communal rites, sometimes ecstatic, sometimes melancholic, perfectly pitched between the mystic and blaxploitation tropes. Over a dense bed of loping, percussive grooves powered by a trio of percussionists in constant dialogue, Cochemea presides like a master of ceremonies, blowing haunting horn riffs and topline melodies that often draw upon the kind of incantatory vocal chant that begins the mesmeric *The Land Swallowed Them Whole*.

Mark Cooper

*Mother-era Floyd, but with healing powers.*

Jim Wirth



## Griff Lynch

★★★★★

Blas Melysa'r Mis

LWCUS T. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Proud Cymru: James Dean Bradfield features on Welsh language delight.**

Thanks to records from Gruff Rhys, Gwenno and others, pop music isn't a stranger to the Welsh language. You don't need to know your Bore da from your Blaenau Ffestiniog to appreciate Griff Lynch's first solo LP, though. Formerly of Aberystwyth's Yr Ods, Lynch finds an almost tactile pleasure in the texture of his mother tongue, whispering, rolling, and growling its sounds and syllables through a set of gently off-kilter psych pop. James Dean Bradfield makes a bilingual appearance on *Same Old Show*, and while he might come across like Super Furry Animals doing ELO on the title track, a West Walian Sparks on Kombucha's fruity disco glam, or Bill Ryder-Jones on the teary-eyed Os Ti'n Teimlo, Lynch weaves his own singular spell here.

Chris Catchpole







## The Necks

★★★★★

Disquiet

NORTHERN SPY. [CD/DL](#)

**Three CDs, three hours, four tracks of the Antipodean abstract acoustic trio's hypnotic, expansive sound.**

Thirty nine years extant, The Necks have become part of the furniture for any lover of jazz, ambient or improvisational music. That may seem like a put-down but it's rare praise, for the music made by Tony Buck, Chris Abrahams, and Lloyd Swanton over these past four decades has become integral to the environment of any music-loving household working, as Erik Satie wrote about his own photo-ambient "furniture music", as "part of the noise of the environment". On this, their 20th LP, the trio stretch their fine-spun, shape-shifting piano/bass/drums sound across three discs, the four tracks ranging in length from 26 minutes to 74. However, as with all Necks recordings, it's essentially one long piece of music, a slowly unravelling fabric that continues to delight, surprise and beguile but never repeat.

Andrew Male

## Robert Plant & Saving Grace With Suzi Dian

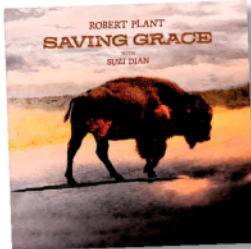
★★★★★

Saving Grace

NONESUCH. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Led Zeppelin legend brings it all back home.**

Birtherd via a Black Country communion which saw Plant and his new, largely unknown bandmates enjoy a lengthy courtship off-radar, *Saving Grace* feels guileless, almost serendipitous. What might happen, Plant mused, if he shipped what he'd learned from T Bone Burnett, Alison Krauss et al home and duetted on choice blues, alt-country and folk covers with Brum-born former music teacher, Suzi Dian? Across 10 intimate songs deftly ornamented by guitarists Matt Worley and Tony Kelsey and cellist Barney Morse-Brown, magic happens. As much avuncular vibe-master as Golden God, Plant cedes some lead vocal terrain to Dian (Too Far From You) and Worley (Blind Willie Johnson's Soul Of A Man) while bringing extra gravitas to The Low Anthem's Ticket Taker, blowing raw harp, and re-inventing Low's Everybody's Song as a psychedelic raga. This



is Plant as enthused musicologist, sharing inspirations, passing batons. James McNair

## James Yorkston And Friends

★★★★★

Songs For Nina And Johanna

DOMINO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Fife polymath goes 'Cowboy In Sweden' for 16th LP.**



Folky, smart and very much your 21st-century Mike Scott, Fence Collective multi-tasker James Yorkston was punching above his weight when he persuaded Cardigans singer Nina Persson to accompany him on 2023's *The Great White Sea Eagle*. Persson was a little less available for this latest outing, with First Aid Kit's (heavily pregnant) Johanna Söderberg acting as Yorkston's musical foil for the other half of a likeable collection of songs about family and companionship, recorded in the guest singers' native Sweden. Passions explode unexpectedly on Love That Tree ("friendship flew out of the window, and manners flew out of the window"), parents beg the fates to spare their child on Oh Sparrow, Up Yours, while bad habits prove hard to break on Oh Light, Oh Light ("I made it 28 days so far with no crosses in the diary"). The happy point where Belle And Sebastian meet Stephen Sondheim.

Jim Wirth



## Bar Italia

★★★★★

Some Like It Hot

MATADOR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Indie ducklings blossom into dark and compelling pop concern.**

This London-based trio's earlier recordings were shadowy and enigmatic, their pale and interesting pop concepts not yet cohering, but two years of touring have sharpened their vision and emboldened their sound. There's a succinctness to *Some Like It Hot* – not to mention Jezmi Fehmi's Damon Albarn-adjacent vocals – that recalls Blur as they exited Britpop for more challenging ground. But pleasingly, they've not junked their angsty edge amid this pop-oriented realignment: the boy/girl vocal interplay between Nina Cristante and Fehmi on the uneasy waltz of Bad Reputation – Fehmi murmuring "I'll be in your life for a long time", as both threat and promise – crackles with the anguish and erotic complication of early Blonde Redhead, while the noir-ish longing of The Lady Vanishes is the kind of exquisite, viola-scored gloom you could lose yourself in.

Stevie Chick

## Neko Case

★★★★★

Neon Grey Midnight Green

ANTI-. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Fearless singer-songwriter calls it as she sees it in dramatic ninth solo outing.**



Hot on the heels of her unflinching autobiography, *The Harder I Fight The More*

I Love You, Case delves ever deeper into its emotional terrain, distilling her sometimes contradictory yearnings for love and independence into a lyrically rich and musically colourful set of songs which is as emotionally exhilarating as it is often rawly painful. A self-producing Case allows her lyrical vision pre-eminence, aided by guitarist and frequent collaborator Paul Rigby, with the result that the pensive testament to the departed Dexter Romweber of the Flat Duo Jets, Winchester Mansion Of Sound, suddenly breaks into a swooning gallop, while the title track explodes into a thrilling prog punk rifferama. There's the latent euphoria of truth breaking the surface throughout, notably as Case faces off the unreachable mother who looms so darkly in her memoir in An Ice Age, or dismisses clichéd romance in Rusty Mountain.

Mark Cooper

## Nation Of Language

★★★★★

Dance Called Memory

SUB POP. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Super-hip New Yorkers' fourth album of charismatic synth-pop.**



Led by Ian Richard Devaney, who moonlights as singer for Strokes

drummer Fabrizio Moretti's Machinegun, Nation Of Language have carved out a niche by merging pert synth-pop with a more ethereal, dream-like air, pitching them somewhere between the New York sass of The Rapture and the more contemporary Working Men's Club. At their best, on the spacious I'm Not Ready For The Change, the metronomic Inept Apollo, the hook-drenched Under The Water and acoustic lullaby Nights Of Weight, they offer a seemingly contradictory melancholic uplift. Devaney's vocals are alluringly distant, while his wife, Aidan Noell, provides the band-defining synthesizer swirl and the backing vocals which add yet another layer of loveliness, as Alex MacKay anchors the whole package. Yes, they're flavour of the month, but they're the real deal too.

John Aizlewood

## Say She She

★★★★★

Cut & Rewind

DRINK SUM WTR. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Third album of politically-charged disco from NYC trio.**

IF THIS record has a significant flaw, it's that it's being released in autumn, depriving this summer of a natural soundtrack. Like its predecessors – 2022's *Prism*, 2023's *Silver* – *Cut & Rewind* is luxe modern disco, Nya Gazelle Brown, Sabrina Cunningham and Piya Malik's satiny vocals lightly snagged by the sharpest hooks and harmonies. Shop Boy's Sharevari-synths and ESG grooves should ensure a live Neil Tennant guest spot at some point in the future, while Under The Sun's iridescent soap-bubble swirl conceals a defiant message in its easy listening reverie. There's a polished political edge to *Cut & Rewind*, She Who Dares tackling the erosion of women's rights, Disco Life recalling

Here comes the sun: Say She She spread light with luxe modern disco.



the 1979 "Disco Demolition" night at Chicago's Comiskey Stadium with unapologetic luxur-and-lip-gloss bass

lines. Seasons change, but *Cut & Rewind* is portable sunshine, a pop power-pack to light darker days.

Victoria Segal



## Faten Kanaan

★★★★★

Diary Of A Candle

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Pastoral instrumental elegance from deft, cosmopolitan composer.



German-born, Brooklyn-based, but with Syrian/Palestinian and Jordanian/Lebanese heritage, Faten Kanaan's immersive music marries classical minimalism and drowsy electronica with an ineffable (Middle) Eastern sensibility. *Diary Of A Candle*, her fifth album, finds Kanaan's signature counterpoints, essayed on grainy, woodwind-like synths, sporadically supported by acoustic guitar or electric piano, summoning an emotional edgeland, everything seemingly poised between contemplative étude and wistful art-house film score. Fans of Virginia Astley's bucolic 1983 instrumental benchmark *From Gardens Where We Feel Secure* will surely delight in the interwoven melody lines of yearning opener Afternoon and the ensuing dolorous Celadon. Elsewhere, the burbling, Wurliitzer piano-propelled Supercore teases poignancy from ribbons of overlain synth, while Sondol Baram, named for a chilly Korean wind, pares back the album's palette to a fragile ambience, equal parts Zen meditation and shimmering mirage.

David Sheppard

windswept rush of guitar and piano studded with small revelations. There's a directness to the songwriting (maybe more The National and Interpol than R.E.M. these days) but it's still full of unexpected tender patches and never-saw-it-coming hooks: a reference to Under Milk Wood on (I Can't Help) Back Then You Found Me; the crunching alertness to mortality on Writers Of The Present Time ("time stops for you and starts for someone"); Make It Happen's resurgent '90s guitar frustration. Don't head here for untrammelled novelty, but *Idlewild* is a record worthy of the name.

Victoria Segal



## The Cardiacs

★★★★★

LSD

ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN. CD/DL/LP

Heartfelt farewell: prog-punks' final LP forensically reconstructed

Frontman Tim Smith had barely started work on the new Cardiacs LP when he suffered the strokes in 2008 which left him incapacitated until his death, aged 59, in 2020. However, he gave permission for his exploratory lyrics and sketches to be used by his brother Jim, fellow bandmate Kavus Torabi and arranger Craig Fortnum to complete *LSD*, approving some initial versions from this 17-song set. From labyrinthine opener Men In Bed, the material is inimitably Smith-esque, and if it is tempting to dig for premonitions of mortality, the Frank Zappa-via-Hanna-Barbera thrills of Busty Beez or Skating feel like the work of a very much living artist. Massed voices join in for the valedictory chorus of Pet Fezant: "Glory lies on the ground, all pointing our beaks up into the sky." Not exactly a tearful farewell, but a suitably perverse sign-off.

Jim Wirth

## Eiko Ishibashi &amp; Jim O'Rourke

★★★★★

Pareidolia

DRAG CITY. DL/LP

Tokyo-based companions deliver shapeshifting electronic vistas.



'Pareidolia' is the phenomenon of perceiving images in amorphous forms, such as faces in clouds. It's an apt title for this kaleidoscopic, multi-textured collaboration between lauded experimental composer and soundtrack artist Ishibashi and her creative (and domestic) partner, American O'Rourke (Gastr del Sol, Sonic Youth). Based on live improvisations captured during the couple's 2023 European tour, the album's four extended pieces reconfigure their original extemporised interchange, with sounds emanating from live synthesis, harmonica and Ishibashi's flute subsequently processed, sifted and reassembled in the studio. The results are sometimes sublime, like the numinous drones and electronic eddies of Do, at other times unsettling and vaguely dystopian, as on restless, brooding opener Par, which seems to evoke the inchoate thrumming of a vast city at night, here and there punctuated by dancing flashes of sound – like the flickering synapse activity of its sleeping citizens.

David Sheppard

## Lady Wray

★★★★★

Cover Girl

BIG CROWN. DL/LP

Brilliant Leon Michels-produced third album.



"This is a let your hair down, love yourself, treat yourself, colourful fun awakening explosion," Lady Wray gushes about these 11 bright and joyous songs rooted in classic soul and gospel effusion. You can hear her church-raised upbringing in Portsmouth, Virginia when The Fabulous Rainbow Singers choir join her on the good times dancefloor groove of You're Gonna Win, or when she reaches for her highest notes on the organ-driven My Best Step. The prayer-like title track, just voice and piano, brings a vulnerable moment as she sings: "I lost myself trying to please someone else." Wray found fame in 1998 as a 17-year-old protégé of Missy Elliott's but only started to get the recognition her distinctive voice and lyrical honesty deserved with 2022's *Piece Of Me*. *Cover Girl* deserves to raise her profile higher.

Lois Wilson

## Idlewild

★★★★★

Idlewild

v2. CD/DL/LP

First album in six years from Scottish indie stalwarts.



"I wish I could have wrote it down," sings Roddy Woomble on Idlewild's tenth album, expressing his band's 27-year mission to capture complex, confusing moments before they gallop away unexamined. The Iona-based singer sounds rueful, but the follow-up to 2019's *Interview Music* is another constellation of tiny pivots and pinprick emotions, the grand



Tickled pink: Lady Wray is bright and joyous on her third LP.



## Benedicte Maurseth

★★★★★

Mirra

HUBRO. CD/DL/LP

Deer diary: Hardanger ace runs with the caribou.

Stalking that sexy hinterland between trad folk, *musique concrète* and ECM aromatherapy jazz, Norwegian fiddler Benedicte Maurseth won a Nordic Music Prize for 2022's *Hårr* – a magical nature walk through her native Hardangervidda plateau. A sequel of sorts, *Mirra* is a wordless musical exploration of that landscape from the viewpoint of the native reindeer. Those who know The Residents' 'hokey concept album *Eskimo* may raise a weary eyebrow, but *Mirra* (a local dialect word describing how reindeer circle for warmth and to ward off predators) feels chillingly soulful, clacking antlers and reindeer grunts giving way to head shop mood music (Sommarbeite), elegiac sawing noises (Nysnø over reinlav) and snowy reverie (Simleflokk under månen). Fans of Robert Wyatt's *Rock Bottom*, mid-'70s Bert Jansch and Popol Vuh's *Aguirre* soundtrack will get the idea. A thing of wild beauty.

## ALSO RELEASED

## Katie Spencer

★★★★★

What Love Is

LIGHTSHIP. CD/DL/LP



Speaking of mid-'70s Bert Jansch, the third album from Katie Spencer is a rueful, pedal-steel-and-woodwind-speckled set. The moody Humbersider plays guitar like Michael Chapman and writes classy, John Martyn-esque songs which nod to the tradition but go their own way. Ideas old as the hills, but fresh as a sweet Sunday morning, regardless.

## Cerys Hafana

★★★★★

Angel

TAK:TIL. CD/DL/LP



An old man goes out for a walk and is so transfixed by the sound of an angel singing that he doesn't realise until he gets home that 350 years have passed. So goes the traditional song threaded through Welsh harpster Cerys Hafana's fourth LP, a melange of twinkling strings, austere improv and Henry Cow side-project vibes. Enchanting.

## DUG

★★★★★

Have At It!

CLADDAGH. CD/DL/LP



"All my money has been spent on ketamine and beer," sing Ireland-based US duo DUG on their debut LP's title track, encapsulating their modern folk stylings. Old-timers Katie Cruel and Cumberland Gap get upgrades, while In Memoriam and Fields Of Plenty put old dustbowl methods to sombre new use. Handsome, hairy, headed somewhere good.

## Jon Wilks

★★★★★

Needless Alley

GRIZZLY FOLK. CD/DL/LP



A Brum trad expert and Pentangle-ish fingerpicker, Jon Wilks's follow-up to 2023's moody *Before I Knew What Had Begun* I Had Already Lost veers deeper into Gen X Al Stewart terrain. His Montagu Whaler swings, and Wilks explores his thing for knotty romances (You'll Do Right By Me) and '70s pop melody (Mine Is The Sun). Barely folk, but classy. JW



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**Full throttle:**  
Tav Falco, still in  
the saddle at 80.



## Kathryn Williams

★★★★★

Mystery Park

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**The Liverpoolian songwriter has moved beyond folk, but not beyond expert songwriting.**

Since being nominated for the 2000 Mercury Music Prize, Liverpool's Kathryn Williams has carved out a steady career based around breathy vocals, grown-up lyrics and a sense of intimacy that elevates her work beyond its folksy roots, towards a more confessional '70s singer-songwriter plain. Here on an album where she painted the striking cover, she's back with regular collaborator Ed Harcourt, but she co-wrote the sensual Gossamer Wings with Paul Weller, who adds organ and surprisingly sultry backing vocals. Meanwhile, Personal Paradise suggests Williams wouldn't be overwhelmed by a band; Sea Of Shadows pays tribute to her oldest son's broadening horizons; and the near-title-track This Mystery deals with her father's dementia as it remembers "dancing round to Paul Simon, learning all his rhymes". It's the high point of yet another Kathryn Williams album where emotional heft meets songwriting craft.

John Aizlewood



## The Orb

★★★★★

Buddhist Hipsters

COOKING VINYL. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**London ambient duo still offering prime musical value.**



If there was a price per unit for albums, The Orb would offer stunning VFM. The

interplanetary musical travellers' 19th outing of ambient/dancefloor therapy since 1988 checks in at 10 tracks and 76 minutes. It was inspired, says Alex Paterson – who since 2019 counts producer Michael Rendall as his right-hand man – by a dream come true, in which Roger Eno beckoned him from a celestial elevator. Come morning, Eno had contacted him in real life. Featuring regular collaborators including Youth and Steve Hillage, *Buddhist Hipsters* embarks on a trademark hazy expedition through electronica. Spontaneously Combust

Eugene Baffie

## Tav Falco

★★★★★

Desire On Ice

ORG MUSIC. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Panther Burns linchpin hits the jackpot with 14th studio album.**

AT THE 1979 performance that launched his music career, Tav Falco played the Bourgeois Blues on a \$5 secondhand Silvertone guitar, then reduced the instrument to splinters

with a chainsaw. Now, aged 80, he has delivered one of his finest albums to date, cutting fresh versions of some of the songs from his past (plus a couple of new ones), expertly backed by sympathetic players including Chris Spedding, Boz Boorer and Charlie Musselwhite. Falco's nuanced re-imaginings of Garden Of The Medics and Chamber Of Desire outshine their original versions, while the harmonica-led new reading of



standout early track, Cuban Rebel Girl, takes the song in a different and equally enjoyable direction to the 1986 recording. Bookended by a cinematic pair of spoken-word guitar themes, the material blends together seamlessly as if written in one sustained burst of creativity. Here's to the next one.

Max Décharné

wanders with Wobble-esque, Blue Room-era bass across 10 epic minutes, P~1 locks into a seductive drum'n'bass chug, while Arabebonics is an intriguing rai-meets-hip-hop mash-up. The swooshing, intricate Doll's House might be The Orb's purest house moment yet, preceding a closing brace, Under The Bed and Khàron, that represent ambient Orb in excelsis.

Stephen Worthly



## Sister Nancy

★★★★★

Armageddon

ARIWA. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Dancehall star's enjoyable comeback, produced by Mad Professor.**

Emerging on the Kingston sound system scene of the early 1980s, Sister Nancy voiced immortal dancehall anthem Bam Bam for Winston Riley but faced a 40-year battle to receive royalties. It's been over 20 years since her last long-player and on *Armageddon* the female MC sounds as fresh as ever, attacking the microphone with equal parts grit, wit and swagger; she keeps things

conscious on the opening title track, which attacks the dramatic disparities that define rich and poor, makes a repatriation call on Africa The Motherland and salutes the black sisterhood on Mother of Civilization. Elsewhere, Ready Or Not sets phrases from the Delfonics classic to a spongy Ariwa lovers rock rhythm and Moving Away is a loose reworking of Ken Boothe's Studio One gem. Throughout the proceedings Mad Professor and son Joe keep dub elements pulsating in the mix.

David Katz



## Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram

★★★★

Hard Road

RED ZERO. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Clarksdale, Mississippi singer/guitarist's first own-label album.**



winning 662 a "statement of purpose" and when he hot-wires his dependable Buddy Guy/B.B. King blues with exuberant funk (Hendrix soloing; rhythmic Hammond organ), he really goes for it. As on Truth, one of several tracks recorded in Nashville with erstwhile Buddy Guy producer Tom Hambridge, where he explores themes of honesty, legacy and family through a familiar tale in which playing

guitar provides a way out of poverty, delivered with a lived-it urgency and feeling. Tracks put down with Nick Goldston in Memphis's Royal Studios, meanwhile, are clearly influenced by its hallowed history; evidenced by Bad Like Me, an infectious shot of Southern R&B.

Lois Wilson



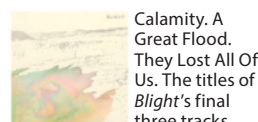
## The Antlers

★★★★

Blight

TRANSGRESSIVE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Peter Silberman registers his uneasiness about our mutual destiny.**



reflect the despairing title of Peter Silberman's seventh LP as The Antlers. Opener Consider The Source begins with the lines, "I don't think about what I can't see/It don't help if it ain't staring at me." A statement seemingly counter to the reactive anxiety suffusing Silberman's latest missive on the world as he sees it. Antlers' previously apparent shoegazing edge is mostly eradicated in fashioning an intimate frame for Silberman's delicate voice, with sparse arrangements dominated by piano, finger-picked guitar, a subtle electronic wash and understated rhythms. In case it seems too restrained, the devotional Something In The

Air is interrupted by a blast of orchestral noise. Herewith, *Armageddon*. *Blight* is powerful, but hermetically airless.

Kieron Tyler



## The Barr Brothers

★★★★★

Let It Hiss

SECRET CITY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Brad and Andrew's fourth LP. Pigeonhole at your peril.**



Since their self-titled 2011 debut, it's been fiendishly tricky to pin down the Montreal-based Barrs. Their first LP in eight years does little to clear things up. There's a touch of folk, a touch of Americana and a touch of indie. Yet when they share Run Right Into It with Land Of Talk's Elizabeth Powell they're blissful pop in Noah & The Whale territory, before Upsetter ends proceedings as if the brothers were garage-dwelling punks. This musical catholicism makes *Let It Hiss* less a cohesive album, more a collection of songs, where My Morning Jacket's Jim James adds divine harmonies to English Harbour and She Doesn't Sleep With The Covers On offers some distinctly Black Keysian delights. The brothers are so mercurial that even Brad's vocals shapeshift, but the one constant is quality control. Therefore it's a job excellently done.

John Aizlewood



# THE BOOMTOWN RATS

**LIVE IN CONCERT**



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY BOOMTOWN**

**CELEBRATING 50 RAT YEARS 1975-2025**

10 OCT NOTTINGHAM	ROYAL CONCERT HALL
11 OCT BIRMINGHAM	SYMPHONY HALL
17 OCT ABERDEEN	MUSIC HALL
18 OCT GLASGOW	BARROWLANDS
24 OCT SHEFFIELD	CITY HALL
25 OCT CAMBRIDGE	CORN EXCHANGE

**50TH BIRTHDAY CONCERT NIGHT**

31 OCT LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO 

01 NOV SOUTHAMPTON	O. GUILDHALL <b>SOLD OUT</b>
07 NOV MANCHESTER	BRIDGEWATER HALL
08 NOV GATESHEAD	THE GLASSHOUSE
14 NOV YORK	BARBICAN
15 NOV LIVERPOOL	OLYMPIA

+ EXCLUSIVE BOOMTOWN RATS DOCUMENTARY SCREENING

# AU PAIRS



**'Playing With A Different Sex' 45th Anniversary Tour 1981-2026**  
+ GINA BIRCH & THE UNREASONABLES\*

Fri 16 Jan <b>SOUTHAMPTON</b> The 1865**	Sat 28 Feb <b>LINCOLN</b> The Drill*	Fri 17 Apr <b>CARDIFF</b> Y Plas**
Sat 17 Jan <b>CAMBRIDGE</b> Junction**	Sat 7 Mar <b>BELFAST</b> Limelight II*	Sat 18 Apr <b>LIVERPOOL</b> Grand Central Hall**
Fri 23 Jan <b>BATH</b> Komedie**	Fri 20 Mar <b>NEWCASTLE</b> Wylam Brewery*	Fri 24 Apr <b>GLASGOW</b> Barrowland Ballroom**
Sat 24 Jan <b>BIRMINGHAM</b> The Crossing**	Sat 21 Mar <b>SHEFFIELD</b> Network*	Sat 25 Apr <b>EDINBURGH</b> Queen's Hall**
Fri 30 Jan <b>EXETER</b> Phoenix*	Thu 26 Mar <b>COLCHESTER</b> Arts Centre*	Thu 30 Apr <b>BRISTOL</b> Trinity Arts Centre*
Sat 31 Jan <b>BRIGHTON</b> Chalk**	Fri 27 Mar <b>LEEDS</b> Beckett University**	Fri 1 May <b>LONDON</b> Electric Ballroom
Fri 27 Feb <b>NOTTINGHAM</b> Metronome*	Sat 28 Mar <b>MANCHESTER</b> o2 Ritz**	

\*\* with The Skids

# MY GENERATION WEEKENDER



## OCEAN COLOUR SCENE

**THE DUALERS THE RIFLES**  
**FROM THE JAM PP ARNOLD**

SECRET AFFAIR	THE STYLE COUNCILLORS
PURPLE HEARTS	NEW STREET ADVENTURE
RHODA DAKAR	THE CHORDS UK
NINE BELOW ZERO	THE SPECIALS LTD
SMALL FAKERS	ORIGINAL GRAVITY
EDDIE PILLER	SOUND SYSTEM
SHARP CLASS	WENDY MAY
THE CIRCLES	DAVID EDWARDS
SQUIRE	LEE GRIMSHAW
BLOCK 33	OUT ON THE
LAURIE WRIGHT	FLOOR DJ'S
THE THREADS	

FILM SCREENINGS - EXHIBITS - MERCHANDISE

**9 - 12 JANUARY 2026**  
**BUTLIN'S MINEHEAD**



*Butlin's*  
BIG WEEKENDERS


# TOOTS AND THE MAYTALS

FEATURING **LEBA HIBBERT**

★★★★★★★★

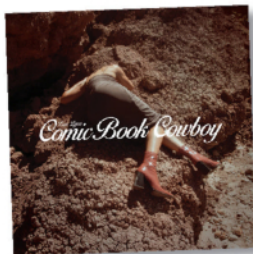
**'REGGAE GOT SOUL'**

**50TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR 1976-2026**



Thu 7 May	<b>CARDIFF</b>	Y Plas
Fri 8 May	<b>BRISTOL</b>	Trinity Arts Centre
Sat 9 May	<b>BRIGHTON</b>	Chalk
Sun 10 May	<b>MARGATE</b>	Dreamland
Mon 11 May	<b>SOUTHAMPTON</b>	The 1865
Wed 13 May	<b>LONDON</b>	Electric Ballroom
Thu 14 May	<b>LEAMINGTON SPA</b>	The Assembly
Fri 15 May	<b>LEEDS</b>	Beckett University
Sat 16 May	<b>GLASGOW</b>	QMU
Sun 17 May	<b>EDINBURGH</b>	Queen's Hall





## Lera Lynn

★★★★

Comic Book Cowboy

RUBY RANGE. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Shapeshifting Nashville-based singer-songwriter explores early midlife angst in dream-pop confessional.**

Seven albums into a restless career on the fringes of Americana, Georgia-born Lynn is probably still best known for True Detective 2's My Least Favorite Life. A seasoned road warrior and now a mother approaching 40, Lynn has clearly been existentially questioning her calling and life choices. The alienation of early middle age is perfectly framed in lyrics like Beige or Laundry, as Lynn catches herself disappearing like the heroine of Miranda July's *zeitgeist* novel All Fours. Lynn and partner Todd Lombardo have fashioned a suitably interrogative sonic landscape for these meditations on uncertainty, blending keyboard lines, stuttering drums and a textural pedal steel into an intimately breathy hauntology. The uptempo Cherry Tree's phrasing recalls Joni Mitchell's early-'70s confessionals as Lynn concludes she "no longer feels like me". Maybe not, but this is a brave new beginning.

Mark Cooper



## Sloan

★★★★★

Based On A True Story

YEP ROCK/MURDER. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**The Canadian power-poppers sound playful and fresh on their fourteenth album.**



Sloan long ago aligned themselves with old-fashioned rock'n'roll values, trading smeary overdriven noise for precise pop hooks at the height of the

1990s alt-rock explosion. Three decades later, they stay true to their original values on *Based On A True Story*, another album that places equal emphasis on harmony, hooks, and crushing volume. The form is familiar and, at times, so are the titles, and part of the fun is hearing how Sloan subvert expectations: the first single, the sprightly Live Forever, has nothing to do with the supersonic power ballad from Oasis. The humour enhances the band's vigour: loud and ragged, they sound like a band much younger than their years, although the high quality of songcraft is a giveaway of their veteran status.

Stephen Thomas Erlewine



## Powell

★★★★

We Do Recover

DIAGONAL. [DL/LP](#)

**Discordant yet cathartic exercise in grief-managing electronica.**

Experimental Brit composer Oscar Powell crafted this emotional treatise on grief and addiction following the suicide of a friend, and its resonances are felt throughout. We Glimpse A World, for instance, is a ghostly, outré take on church organ music that segues into Af, Reopened, a disconcerting yet oddly comforting influx of white noise (imagine being trapped in the hold of a passenger jet) that eventually breaks into unsettling skirls. Beats are rare and when they appear – as on Relapse © 2024 – they buzz like furious wasps. Yet proceedings conclude in optimistic fashion with The Bitter End. Here, a sonorous synth solo stops and restarts, as if convincing itself that the pursuit of beauty is always worth the perseverance. *We Do Recover* is part of a process of personal recovery for Powell, with a singular approach to be admired – even if the journey is a challenging one.

Stephen Worthly

## Speed Of The Stars

★★★★

While Italy Dreamed... Through Summers Of Haze

EASY ACTION. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Aussie/Irish rockers assemble none-less-rock album.**



For the writer of some of Australia's most melody-focused music,

Church frontman Steve Kilbey has a huge capacity for also making extraordinary non-linear albums. *While Italy Dreamed...* is one of the latter. Originally a 2016 collaboration with Frank Kearns of Cactus World News whose self-titled debut took years to coalesce, this second album was mostly recorded on a house boat on a Tuscan lake over two weeks, along with fellow Australians Barton Price (The Models) and one-time Bad Seed Hugo Race. The album meanders through tracks – there are few 'songs' in a traditional verse-chorus sense – in much the same way Kilbey, the lead writer, meandered through local towns and mountains during that fortnight. Stories and characters float in and out, Price's string arrangements and Kearns' orchestral guitars glue everything together, and it sounds like everyone had a jolly nice lakeside holiday.

Andy Fyfe

## Sons Of Sevilla

★★★★

Street Light Moon

UBIQUITY. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Leeds-born brothers reconfigure laid-back '70s summers in an Austin analogue studio.**



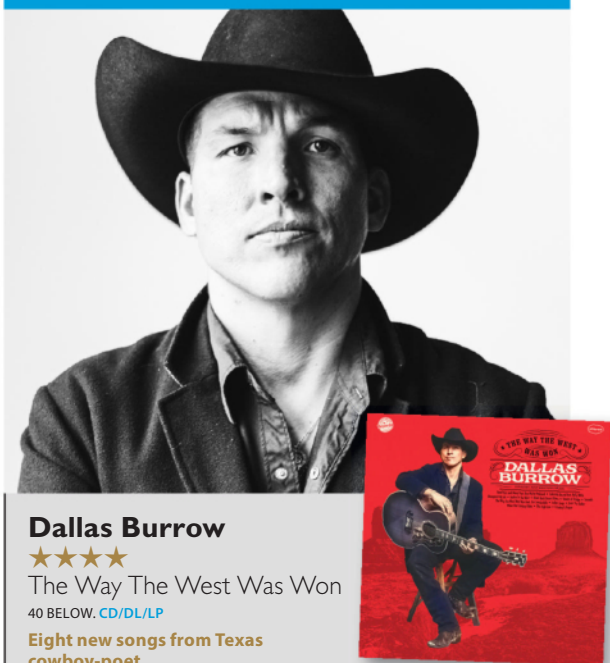
Building on last year's lo-fi debut, *Lullabies For A Wildcat*, brothers Henry and Reuben

Smith hooked up with Black Pumas' guitarist and producer Adrian Quesada and a rhythm section of drummer/flautist Geoff Mann, son of Herbie, and guitarist/bassist Marcos Garcia for an altogether more vintage set: loping grooves, anchored around deep bass lines while heavily reverbed vocal harmonies evoke eternal summer breezes of the mind. While the vibe is sun-kissed yacht rock and '70s soul, the vocals are hypnotically back in the mix à la Jungle, while the chill-out vibe and melody of the title track is reminiscent of Groove Armada's At The River. The tempo is unhurried throughout, slowing even further for the soaring acoustic ballad Birds Fly and the closing sweet soul of Tenderly.

Mark Cooper

# AMERICANA

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS



## Dallas Burrow

★★★★★

The Way The West Was Won

40 BELOW. [CD/DL/LP](#)

**Eight new songs from Texas cowboy-poet.**

Burrows keeps impressive company. The producer of his new album is Lloyd Maines, Texas country music royalty, an inductee into no end of country music halls of fame whose CV includes Guy Clark, Terry Allen, Wilco, and the Dixie Chicks. The guest artists are impressive too – Jim Lauderdale, Kelly Willis, and Ray Wylie Hubbard. The last of these, a favourite of this column, joins Burrow on the album's opening track Read 'Em And Weep, a gambling song that's so good you'll want to stick around and listen to the rest of the record. In style it ranges from storytelling cowboy songs (The Way The West Was Won; Tornado) to gentle folk (Colorado Bound) and more than a dash of Townes Van Zandt. A fine album by a young musician with an old soul.

## ALSO RELEASED

### Fruit Bats

★★★★

Baby Man

MERGE. [CD/DL/LP](#)



A tough one to rate and so very different from his luxurious last record, *A River Running To Your Heart* (2023), *Baby Man* finds Eric D Johnson alone at the piano or on solo guitar, playing music stripped to the bone. There's some really good songs here – Creature From The Wild is classic Fruit Bats, Moon's Too Bright is a beauty, and so is his moving cover of the Incredible String Band song First Girl I Loved – but the overall feeling is of an abandoned demo album.

### Dean Johnson

★★★★★

I Hope We Can Still Be Friends

SADDLE CREEK. [DL/LP](#)



A Seattle singer-songwriter and bartender, Johnson was a late starter, aged 50 when he made his first album. His songs sound similarly unhurried and unforced, with a warm, familiar, retro feel – country, but more often in an Everly Brothers or Roy Orbison way. And he has a hell of a good singing voice, high and clear. Highlights: Before You Hit The Ground; Carol; So Much Better; and A Long Goodbye.

### The Pink Stones

★★★★★

Thank The Lord... It's The Pink Stones

NORMALTOWN/NEW WEST.

[CD/DL/LP](#)



The second album from this self-described 'cosmic country' band from Athens, Georgia leans more towards slow, sad songs, yet somehow makes them sound uplifting – like the instantly likeable, exhilaratingly mournful title track. They've got the rich sound you'd hope for from a six-man band, including mandolin, pedal steel and multiple harmonies. Check out the Hank Williams-y Such A Sight, and classic country Hometown Hotel.

### Blue Lake

★★★★★

The Animal

TONAL UNION. [DL/LP](#)



Ambient Americana is having a moment, and what a strange, lovely thing this is. Blue Lake – AKA Jason Dungan, a multi-instrumentalist Texan based in Scandinavia – worked with a band on 10 evocative instrumental soundscapes that are both textured and atmospheric. Flowers For David, with its folk guitar intro, sounds like the sun coming up. I'd bet fans of early Fleet Foxes would like it. SS

Mid-life confessions: Lera Lynn's brave new beginning.



Alyse Gaffgen, Joshua Black Wilkins



# Rein supreme

The punk rock landmark that keeps on giving celebrates half a century with an expanded anniversary edition produced by bassist Tony Shanahan. By David Fricke.

## Patti Smith



### Horses: 50th Anniversary Edition

SONY LEGACY: CD/LP

ON FEBRUARY 3, 1975, ex-Animals singer Eric Burdon headlined two shows at the Main Point, a 250-seater coffeehouse in Bryn Mawr, a Philadelphia suburb. The opening act was singer-poet Patti Smith, making her first hometown appearance (she partly grew up in the city) after a year of New York nights with guitarist Lenny Kaye and pianist Richard Sohl and a 45 of primal blues and incantation, Hey Joe/Piss Factory, released at the end of '74. Smith was also showing off a combo with more groove and boom; bassist Ivan Kral joined four days earlier. I was there as the Main Point's PR guy and keen to see what I had wrought after urging my boss to book Smith for the gig (see *Back Story*). I wish I'd taken setlist notes but I vividly recall Smith, a rock'n'roll futurist with a classicist's soul, standing at the back of the club while Burdon was on-stage, spellbound by his blues and vocal fury.

Three days later, on February 6, Smith was headed for her own transcendence, her debut LP, *Horses*, recording demos at RCA's 6th Avenue studios with Kaye, Sohl and Kral, an event so newsworthy in the early ferment of New York punk that John Rockwell of the New York Times mentioned it in his column the next day. RCA barely got a chance to pass on Smith. Rockwell soon reported that Arista's Clive Davis had swooped in and signed her. There was another demo session with the quartet – then, in June, a drummer, Jay Dee Daugherty. Over five, sometimes contentious weeks with producer John Cale that fall, the quintet made *Horses* – eight tracks of electric medicine dance, Brill Building yearning and frenzied, improvised levitation – at Jimi Hendrix's 8th Street sanctuary, Electric Lady, where Smith cut Hey Joe. On the final day of mixing, as “dawn broke over lower Manhattan,” Kaye wrote in his memoir, *Lightning Striking*, “we walked up the stairs, out of the studio, into the future.”

Released on November 10, 1975, *Horses* is the punk rock landmark that keeps on giving, a raging, renewing magic and dreaming made with rock's fundamental bones by an insurgent bard who found her voice and mission at the crossroads of *Leader Of The Pack*, *Like A Rolling Stone* and *Howl*. Smith's infamous refusal of easy salvation at the front of Van Morrison's *Gloria*; the nine-minute passage through grief to escape in the wah wah mourning and doo-wop scatting of *Birdland*; the combined invocation of Smith's pole star, the French poet Arthur



“This was an album forged in the fug of war at CBGB and Max's Kansas City, built for eternal life and transfiguration.”

Rimbaud, and Wilson Pickett in *Land*, the band reading her vocal moods and soaring with empathic stampede: this was an album forged in the fug of war at CBGB and Max's Kansas City, built for eternal life and transfiguration.

“I aspired to that,” Smith told me in 1996, “in a grateful way,” citing the truth and communion she found as a young woman in *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Electric Ladyland*. “When we did *Horses*, I was really conscious of that responsibility.” Note the “we”. It was her name on the front, her iconic confrontation in Robert Mapplethorpe's cover portrait. But *Horses* was the work of a band, still being born as they wrote and recorded together.

And it was a long road to satisfaction as revealed in the quartet demos, *Horses* outtakes and songs left for later in this 50th-anniversary reissue, produced by Smith's longtime bassist Tony Shanahan. Three tracks from that day at RCA are very close to the eerie skeletal momentum I remember from the Main Point, with a surprising emphasis on ballads at this session: the Miracles' 1966 hit *The Hunter Gets Captured By The Game*, then a club-date fixture, and *We Three*, a plea to save a doomed relationship, revisited on 1978's *Easter*. Gloria, at this point, is the near sum of familiar parts, probably like hearing The Rolling Stones before they got Charlie Watts. Smith's sliding

half-chanted notes in the opening lines (from a 1970 poem, *Oath*) are akin to her blues-hymn delivery in *Hey Joe*, Sohl leading the rave-up like Little Richard firing McCoy Tyner chords. But her vocal asides (“Uh-uh, make her mine”) don't quite score without Daugherty's affirmative kick, and this version ends without the false stop and blitzing reprise on *Horses*. It's literally *Take 1*, a vibrant, committed performance – and just short of breakaway.

A second quartet session in May 1975 at A-1 Studios, a facility run by Herb Abramson, an original co-founder of Atlantic Records, included a pass at Redondo Beach – Smith on a reggae stroll by the ocean, coming upon the scene of a young girl's suicide – with more swagger and Jamaica (in Kral's dubplate bass) than the Cale-tooled poise on *Horses*. Incredibly, *Snowball*, another song from that date, was on ice until now. Maybe it felt like minor dynamite next to Gloria and *Land*, Smith's whooping vocal and the clattering frame of guitar and piano suggesting 1960s ESP-Disk primitives the Godz (who made their records at A-1). Fifty years later, it's eccentric fun, like Ronnie Spector shooting for a spot on Kaye's next *Nuggets*.

The *Horses* outtakes reflect the duality of Cale's pressing for “a more arranged record,” as Kaye put it, and the band's “collective will to take flight.” *Birdland* is shorter, not ready for takeoff (it's only *Take 2*) but no less intense – Smith hewing to an edited text with palpable impatience – while Kimberly, Smith's present for her little sister, has more hit parade in the guitars. *Break It Up* lacks the album's shouted title chorus but has more room for the hallelujah spires of guitar by Smith's co-writer, Television's Tom Verlaine. Distant Fingers sounds caught in the middle, too playful yet not pop enough. Smith, who wrote it with then-boyfriend Allen Lanier of Blue Öyster Cult, saved it for 1976's *Radio Ethiopia*.

These differences, omissions and songs set aside do not change or challenge the history Smith made with *Horses*. She knew what she had when it was done. “An artist wears his work in place of wounds,” Smith once wrote of her early poems. “Here then is a glimpse of the sores of my generation. Often crude, irreverent – but done, I can assure, with a fierce heart.” *Horses* was that promise on a record. Now there is more of it.



#### BACK STORY: BRUCE AND BROWNIES

● On February 5, 1975, two days after Patti Smith's Main Point debut, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band played a legendary, epic gig, broadcast on local radio, to benefit the club which was struggling financially. Renowned for its intimacy and brownies, the coffeehouse – which opened in 1964 and closed in 1981 – was a favourite pre-fame stop for folk artists and singer-songwriters such as Joni Mitchell, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne and Tom Waits. Springsteen started as an opening act in January 1973, returning seven times over two years including one date when he played with a 103-degree fever. “Any other place but the Main Point,” saxman Clarence Clemons said, “we would have cancelled.”





Dig the new steed:  
Patti Smith in 1975 –  
“a rock’n’roll futurist  
with a classicist’s soul.”



Joined at the hip:  
Lindsey and Stevie  
jumped in at the  
deep end with  
*Buckingham Nicks*.



# Choose love

Debut LP by the Mac's golden couple – pre tantrums and tiaras – gets reissued. By James McNair.

## Buckingham Nicks

★★★★★

Buckingham Nicks

RHINO. CD/DL/LP

"IT WAS just a one-off moment," Stevie Nicks recalled of her and Lindsey Buckingham's duet on The Mamas & The Papas' California Dreamin' at a San Francisco Christian youth party in 1966. Two years later she'd joined the Fritz Rabyne Memorial Band, Buckingham's psychedelic rock act. The pair weren't yet an item, but support slots with Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin seeded their romance with rock's mythos. "I would stroll through San José State University with my guitar, thinking, Does everybody know who I am? Because I'm a rock star," Nicks told this writer in 2013. "I felt it and really believed it."

Despite the best efforts of Fritz's manager David Forrester, no record deal was forthcoming. It was Keith Olsen, already a producer for The Millennium and Joe Walsh's pre-Eagles band The James Gang, who helped secure Buckingham and Nicks's contract with Polydor – but only after he'd persuaded them to ditch the rest of Fritz and make some demos as a duo. Recorded sporadically through much of 1973 at Sound City, Los Angeles, *Buckingham Nicks* proved to be one hell of a debut. Given that Nicks was working hamburger joints and as Olsen's cleaner to support herself and Buckingham while making it, Long Distance Winner, a brilliant Nicks song about "living with a difficult musician" seems a wholly valid inclusion.

Though best known as their serendipitous conduit to tenure in Fleetwood Mac after Olsen played Mick Fleetwood its magnificent closer Frozen Love on a whim, it seems astonishing that *Buckingham Nicks* is only now gaining re-release after languishing online in bootleg form for decades.

Quoted in David Fricke's new sleeve notes and mindful, perhaps, that it was he and Nicks's first experience of 'proper' studio recording, Buckingham understates that *Buckingham Nicks* "stands up in a way you hope it would."

Buoyed by their precocious gifts and aided by such stalwarts as drummer Jim Keltner, Elvis's TCB band bassist Jerry Scheff and sometime Everly Brothers session guitarist Waddy Wachtel, they clearly relished jumping in at the deep end.

Throughout the record, there are audible seeds of the sublime AOR sound that Nicks and Buckingham-era Fleetwood Mac would further finesse. Stephanie, a pretty instrumental love-gift Buckingham reportedly wrote for Nicks while laid-up with glandular fever, is one of several songs deploying the fine claw-hammer fingerpicking technique he would later bring to Never Going Back Again, while Lola (My Love) has shades of The Chain (and a sexist lyric Buckingham would likely blush about today).

*Buckingham Nicks* often juggles familiar, sometimes slightly competing interests. Buckingham seems torn between facilitating pretty, drivetime-friendly Nicks doozies such as Crying In The Night and more 'musicianly' indulgences such as his cover of US jazz pianist John Lewis's nod to the king of gypsy jazz, Django. That said, some of these Nicks songs also pack more quirk than was later usual. Her vocal melody on Races Are Run has gorgeous, slightly unusual modulations, as does that on the aforementioned Long Distance Winner, a fabulous thing with prominent, itch-scratching guiro. There, as elsewhere, Keith Olsen and engineer/future *Rumours* overseer Richard Dashut's rich, vivid sonics give a mighty leg-up. It's also easy to hear why Frozen Love – the proggy, shape-shifting holy grail of Fleetwood Mac's most combustible couple – so impressed Mick Fleetwood.

*Buckingham Nicks* wouldn't make the big splash they'd hoped for, but prior to its September 5, 1973 release, Nicks had one last hurdle to jump, namely the album's nude cover-shot of herself and Lindsey, as conceived and photographed by Waddy Wachtel's brother Jimmy.

"Everybody will tell you I'm modest," Nicks told this writer in 2013. "I could not have been more horrified if they'd said, 'We want you to jump off a speeding train.' Meanwhile, Lindsey was like, 'Come on. Don't be a child – this is art.' My dad didn't like the photograph of course, and when he asked why I did it and I told him I was under pressure, he said, 'Stevie, you always have a choice.' That was a big lesson for me – a very useful one for my time in Fleetwood Mac."



Jimmy Wachtel



Glory days: Spandau Ballet, beautiful and clean in 1980.

## Junior Murvin

★★★★

Cool Down The Heat  
GREENSLEEVES/JAMMY'S. **DL/LP**

Soulful reggae singer's  
King Jammy-helmed '80s  
recordings revisited.



So popular was Murvin's 1976 roots anthem Police & Thieves that it became the unofficial theme tune to that year's Notting Hill Carnival (which ended in riots) and was covered by The Clash on their debut LP. Produced by Lee Perry and showcasing the singer's distinctive, Curtis Mayfield-influenced falsetto, the song was so perfect it overshadowed Murvin's subsequent output. Such as his '80s digital dancehall material, as rediscovered here by 77-year-old producer King Jammy who has "rejuvenated and embellished" highlights like Police & Thieves, the title track, World Inflation and Cool Out Son, the latter a buoyant version of the evergreen Real Rock rhythm. Less successful are the dancehall-lite Tear Dem Up and Dancehall Girls, the synths a tad too tinny sounding, but not enough to spoil a solid set which successfully spotlights Murvin's supremely soulful warble.

Simon McEwen



## Various

★★★★

Telepathic Fish:  
Trawling The Early 90s  
Ambient Underground  
FUNDAMENTAL FREQUENCIES. **DL/LP**

Influential mid-'90s  
post-club haven celebrated  
on rapturous 2-LP comp.



Characterised in Simon Reynolds' authoritative rave history, Energy Flash, as "a wombadelic sound-and-light bath", Telepathic Fish's ambient parties gravitated from south London house party to counter-cultural phenomenon in its three-year existence. Run by four-person collective Openmind, which included Mira Calix and DJ Food, from 1992 to 1995, Telepathic Fish was a place to lounge semi-recumbently and imbibe soothing sounds and visuals. Supported by key figures like Mixmaster Morris, and the groundbreaking VJ sets of Coldcut's Matt Black, its mash-up of bubbling electronica, shoegazey washes and global rhythms proved pivotal. This 2-LP set acts as a '90s ambient Who's Who, including Nightmares On Wax, The Orb and Aphex Twin. Fellow kingpins Global Communication provide Incidental Harmony, pitter-pattering like summer rain, while Morris – in The Irresistible Force mode – blissfully skews Barbarella's



## Spandau Ballet

★★★★★

Everything Is Now  
Volume 1: 1978-1982

PARLOPHONE. **CD/DL/LP**

The early years over six CDs, one  
Blu-ray, two vinyl LPs and a book.

TODAY THEY'RE chiefly remembered as purveyors of pop cheese, but it's unfair to underestimate Spandau Ballet's early revolutionary creden-

tials. A working-class but unashamedly elitist, fashion-conscious, Bowie/Roxy-influenced collective, they were the dandified reaction to punk, prog, disco and metal. This whopping set (just the 11 versions of To Cut A Long Story Short and its line which became their mission statement: "I am beautiful and clean") comprises the *Journeys To Glory* and *Diamond* albums, plus assorted contemporary remixes, demos, two

full-length concerts and assorted new remixes from the ubiquitous

Steven Wilson. It's overkill of course, but it's also an eloquent, swaggering re-statement of their case, from the cold thrill of The Freeze and the homoeroticism of Musclebound to Instinction and Paint Me Down, their first tentative dips into the pop-soul that would become their bridge to True and Through The Barricades.

John Aizlewood

Barbarella into a twinkling, all-back-to-mine anthem. Thirty years on, it still has serious defrag capabilities.

Stephen Worthly

have lost none of their formidable groove and power.

Mark Blake

Sessions are available individually or as part of a very limited 10-disc box set.

Andy Cowan



## Led Zeppelin

★★★★★

Live EP  
RHINO. **CD/DL/LP**

Four-track live memento  
from Page, Plant and co's  
golden age, 1975-1979.



Celebrating the 50th anniversary of Led Zeppelin's sixth album, *Physical Graffiti*, this EP brings together live versions of four of its signature songs for the first time on any format. It's a thrilling snapshot of the band at their most regal: all smoke and mirrors and guitarist Jimmy Page swaggering around the stage in a black silk dragon suit. In My Time Of Dying and Trampled Underfoot from London's Earl's Court in 1975 sound positively biblical; "Gabriel let me blow your horn," implores vocalist Robert Plant on the former, before tossing in ad-libs from Zeppelin's Gallows Pole on the latter. The silk suits were gone, and a chemical imbalance and bad juju had crept into the band by '79. But here, Sick Again and Kashmir from that year's Knebworth Festival date



## Gary Numan

★★★★★

BBC Radio Sessions  
Vol. 2

BEGGARS ARKIVE. **LP**

Limited-edition clear vinyl  
edition of Numan's second  
John Peel session, recorded  
in May 1979.



Are 'Friends' Electric? was just starting its ascent to UK Number 1 when Gary Numan laid down his second John Peel session at the BBC's Maida Vale studios. Despite the upcoming name change from Tubeway Army, it was a band affair, the machine rock of *Replicas* continued on booming instrumental Airplane, elevated by Cedric Sharpley's funky backbeats and Paul Gardiner's melodic bass-runs. Their combined muscularity underpins looser versions of soon-to-be breakdance anthem Films and a stop-start Conversation enhanced by Billy Currie's searching violin. Cars is more curious, a prototype that lacks the single's menacing Minimoog intro or relentless impact, due to a slightly fussy bass note, but still feels like an unstoppable force. The *Radio*



## Dead Famous People

★★★★★

Wild Young Ways

TINY GLOBAL PRODUCTIONS. **CD/LP**

Celebration of New Zealand  
indie-poppers' UK sojourn.



After releasing an EP on New Zealand's Flying Nun records, Auckland's Dead Famous People moved to London and were picked up by Billy Bragg's label, Utility – which issued a further EP, teaming Flying Nun tracks with material taped in London. It was going well: a Peel Session followed in 1990; the band's frontperson Dons Savage guested on Saint Etienne's cover of the Field Mice's Kiss And Make Up and The Chills' Heavenly Pop Hit. Savage's yearning voice, lyrics reflecting her sexuality, and the band's clean, guitar-focused pop marked out DFP as special. But after an album on indie imprint La-Di-Da, it was back to NZ. *Wild Young Ways* focuses on the UK period with selections from the La-Di-Da LP, comp *Secret Girl's Business* and a few unheard tracks. Lovely stuff, and a



## Various

★★★★

Spiritual Soul  
NUMERO. **LP**

A collection of rare tracks,  
many from private presses,  
that strive for enlightenment  
and emancipation.



This latest in the crate digging series isn't spiritual soul in the genre sense of gospel-influenced R&B, but rather music for 'spiritual souls'. Most are from the late-'70s, early-'80s period and fall into the jazz funk/fusion category, as typified by the smooth horns, rippling synths and carefree vibes of La Bimini by Spunk, a short-lived vehicle for producers Jesse Boyce, Jimmy Levine and Rich Tufo operating out of Chicago. Other highs include Calvin Key's You Are All I Need and Kalima's (Where Is The) Sunshine Pt. 1. The former builds around Key's intricate fingerpicking and guitar lines inflected with easy warmth. On the latter, over flute trilling, fluttery percussion and mournful piano, vocalist Sabreen Sharif seeks a world free of prejudice.

Lois Wilson





## Various

★★★★★

Latin Fire! Cumbia, Salsa, Afro Funk: Tropical Dance Music From Discos Fuentes, Colombia 1956-83

SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

**A celebration of Colombia's longest-serving record label.**

Still releasing albums in its 10th decade, the Medellín-based Discos Fuentes imprint was at the forefront of a post-war revolution, when cumbia, salsa and mambo dominated the dancefloors of Spanish-speaking America and even topped the US hit parade. This collection finds the label's stars absorbing and adapting as tastes changed: Wganda Kenya, for example, were an Afro-funk band that barely existed outside the studio, but you'll be convinced it's Fela Kuti alumni on 1984 cut Shakalaode. Fruko Y Sus Tesos may be the best known of all the label's stalwarts – and the opening cut, El Vidriero, was side one, track one of their 1970 debut LP – but arguably the most interesting were Afrosound (another made-up ensemble) who switched styles constantly through the

1970s, inspired by rock and – just possibly – Joe Meek. A more fun collection will be hard to come by this year.

David Hutcheon



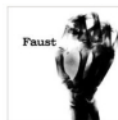
## Faust

★★★★★

Faust

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

**Hamburg insurgents' 1971 debut; a lesser-celebrated peak of Krautrock.**



While Kraftwerk, Neu! and Can's DNA was entwined around a

pulsebeat, Faust – at least initially – surged the opposite way, splicing sonic fragments into jarring, but intuitively flowing collages, fusing spiky rock, electronics and *musique concrète*: the most radical expression of the German underground's urge to remake and remodel. Following copyright-daring Beatles and Stones samples rising and falling inside white noise, album intro Why Don't You Eat Carrots – the first of three lengthy tracks – zigzags between what resembles drunken Schlager music and a Zappa-esque jam, threaded with chants, needling guitar, between-stations static and piano peals. Meadow Meal thrillingly transitions between ugliness and beauty, between call-and-response voices, church organ and thunderstorms; 16-minute finale Miss Fortune even more haphazardly illustrates Faust's uncanny internal logic,

sounding as exhilarating, mind-bending and revolutionary today as it did 54 years ago.

Martin Aston

## Tedeschi Trucks Band And Leon Russell

★★★★★

Mad Dogs & Englishmen Revisited (Live At Lock'n')

FANTASY. CD/DL/LP

**Intergenerational tribute to a classic rock tour.**



In 1970, renaissance rocker Leon Russell organised dozens of musical giants to accompany Joe Cocker on tour as Mad Dogs & Englishmen. Current roots rockers Tedeschi Trucks Band paid tribute to the original crew in 2015 at Virginia's Lock'n' Festival by combining their band with 1970 vets and it was a strong, inter-generational celebration of secular gospel-rock. Joining powerhouse singer Susan Tedeschi and her husband and slide guitar virtuoso Derek Trucks were old-timers Russell, Rita Coolidge, Claudia Lennear, Chris Stainton, Dave Mason and others, as well as contemporary guests Chris Robinson, Warren Haynes and Anders Osborne. They covered tunes originally sung by Cocker, notably The Letter, She Came In Through The Bathroom Window, Let's Go Get Stoned and Feelin' Alright.

Particularly exquisite standouts were Coolidge's Bird On A Wire and Lennear's Girl From The North Country.

Michael Simmons

## Spain

★★★★★

The Blue Moods Of Spain

RHINO. DL/LP

**Thirtieth anniversary reissue of Los Angeles slowcore band's vulnerable debut.**



With its sultry cover shot and Blue Note livery, the jazz frisson permeating

Spain's first LP is reined in rather than let loose, bandleader Josh Haden (son of Ornette Coleman bassist Charlie) exploring heartache via minimalist nods to the Velvets, Red House Painters and aggressively spare poetry. With Haden's bass as an anchor, the slow but steady burn of Untitled #1, simple blues of Ray Of Light and constant drones of 14-minute centrepiece World Of Blue reveal unobtrusive craftsmen blessed with the lightest of touches. Out of kilter with grunge, Spain fell into the limelight when Johnny Cash transformed Spiritual's bleak plea ("Jesus, I don't wanna die alone") into Depression-era gospel on *American II: Unchained*. This sustained hour of heartbreak, more party-pooper than party-starter, has arguably aged even better.

Andy Cowan

## Terry Hall

★★★★★

Laugh

DEMON. CD/DL/LP

**Expanded reissue of 1997 album includes second disc of bonuses – live, acoustic, B-sides – on vinyl for the first time.**



"I was feeling very raw, very broken," Terry Hall told MOJO in 2021 about his mindset

during the making of his second solo album. "But friends got me through." *Laugh*'s 10 songs, wry, catty, desolate, are some of his most gripping. All deal with his then recent divorce, while the music – jangly, melancholy, beautiful – was made with some of those friends including the former Colourfield/Smiths guitarist Craig Gannon, the High Llamas' Sean O'Hagan and Stephen Duffy. Highpoints include the woozy Damon Albarn co-write A Room Full Of Nothing and Sonny And His Sister, a stinging tale smothered in Beach Boys harmonies. Another touchstone is Todd Rundgren, and the album concludes with a cover of I Saw The Light, Hall, vulnerable but finding solace in the song's warm rays.

Lois Wilson



## Pharoah Sanders

★★★★★

Love Is Here: The Complete Paris 1975 ORTF Recordings

TRANSCENDENCE SOUNDS. CD/LP

**Pharoah's buried treasure sees the light.**



Following a fruitful eight-year spell at Impulse Records, which began in 1966

when he was still in John Coltrane's band, Pharoah Sanders was label-less in 1975 when he travelled to Paris to play a concert for French radio. Parts of the performance have been issued before, but this is the first time the complete gig is commercially available. It's a revelation, revealing how the Little Rock saxophonist (sympathetically supported by pianist Danny Nixon, bassist Calvin Hill, and drummer Greg Bandy) was able to balance his avant-garde explorations with nostalgic nods to his hard bop roots. Alongside a couple of hard-swinging Coltrane covers (Moment's Notice and Lazy Bird), Sanders revivifies his classic anthem, The Creator Has A Masterplan, with piquant Latin spice before ending his set with a furious take on Love Is Everywhere, transforming the concert into an exultant church meeting. Transcendent and then some.

Charles Waring

## Genesis

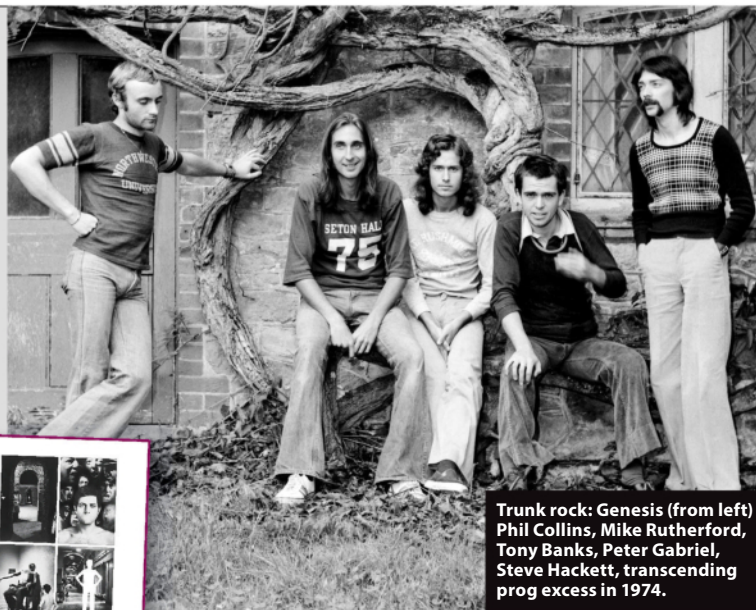
★★★★★

The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway – 50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition

RHINO. CD/LP

**British art-rockers' barmy, sometimes brilliant, double album revisited.**

THIS DELUXE box set has been gestating for so long that it missed the actual anniversary. Genesis's 1974 album was vocalist Peter Gabriel's swansong, and he and keyboard player/schoolfriend Tony Banks have overseen this new mix (hence the delay, perhaps). It's a stunningly polished new take on their heavy concept album (Pilgrim's Progress meets West Side Story with a soupçon of Jungian psychodrama, apparently, but even Gabriel isn't sure). There's some dead wood, but its finest moments – Broadway



Melody Of 1974, The Carpet Crawlers and Silent Sorrow In Empty Boats – transcend prog rock excess for glimpses of the future Genesis's slick pop-rock and Gabriel's odder solo work. Alternate takes and a perfor-

mance from LA's Shrine Auditorium complete the picture, with the atonal freestyle jam, The Waiting Room, allowing drummer and frontman-in-waiting Phil Collins to play like a man with four arms.

Mark Blake

**Trunk rock: Genesis (from left) Phil Collins, Mike Rutherford, Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel, Steve Hackett, transcending prog excess in 1974.**



## Joan Baez

★★★★

Farewell, Angelina  
CRAFT RECORDINGS. DL/LP

**The moment she went electric. But not too electric. On 60th anniversary vinyl.**



By autumn 1965, Joan Baez's relationship with Bob Dylan was over, but

for her sixth album she was smart enough to continue covering his songs (four out of 11 here, two of which Dylan would never properly record) while evolving musically. That evolution chiefly came from Bruce Langhorne's electric guitar. It sounds minimal to the point of near-invisibility in 2025, but in 1965 it was the equivalent of having Joe Satriani provide fretboard fireworks and it heralded Baez's broader instrumental backing as the decade progressed. The inevitable star is her voice, whether declaiming in French on the adapted 13th-century poem *Pauvre Rutebeuf* or German on a gentle trawl through *Where Have All The Flowers Gone?*. This remastered version omits the 2002 edition's extra tracks, but the powerful clarity of her takes on *Wild Mountain Thyme* and *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* remains undimmed.

John Aizlewood

## Various

★★★★

Dream A Dream With Studio G: Cratedigger's Archive (1970–2009)

JAZZ DISPENSARY. DL/LP

**Trippy compilation collates 25 mood-music cues from UK music library.**



Split into distinct morning and night sections, *Dream A Dream...*

showcases the range of talents powering John Gale's Studio G music library – a sample-hunter's treasure trove willingly plundered by The Chemical Brothers, Aphex Twin and Saint Etienne. With a wide, quixotic remit creating music for local TV stations and adverts, its composers were allowed to let their imaginations run riot, epitomised here by the robotic sparseness of James Harpham's *Asian Dolls*, percussive spookiness of David Stoll's *Tight Corner* or the stringy tension suspending the soothing trumpets of Harry Wild's *Barcarolle Blues*. Even when these spacey, mood-enhancing miniatures straddle a fine line between pastiche, novelty and blandness, it's countered by a penchant for heavy reverb and delay, further distinguishing Studio G from squeaky clean library contemporaries KPM, Sonoton or Bruton.

Andy Cowan

## Lee 'Scratch' Perry

★★★★★

Crucial Cuts From The Heart Of The Ark (1973–1978)

SHANACHIE. LP

**Killer 11-track vinyl showcase of the Jamaican sonic guru's roots heyday.**



Given the depth and quality of producer Lee Perry's output during his

Black Ark studio's brief lifespan, any single-disc vinyl compilation will inevitably omit classics. Beyond this caveat, however, *Crucial Cuts...* is a superb entry point for the curious that will also satisfy Scratch-heads. Black Ark's crown jewels are all definitively represented: Max Romeo and Junior Murvin by the title tracks of their 1976/77 LPs *War Ina Babylon* and *Police & Thieves*, The Heptones by *Sufferer's Time*, while The Congos' *Fisherman* features in dub style. Perry's otherworldly mix hallmarks – wild phase; fathomless reverb; Congo Watty Burnett moo-ing down a cardboard tube – are further showcased with Upsetter treatments of Junior Byles' *Curly Locks* and Augustus Pablo's *Vibrate Onn*. The first cut of *Carlton And The Shoes'* *Better Days* is the essential rarity, but every one's a winner on this handsome package.

Keith Cameron

## Feeder

★★★★★

Comfort In Sound

BMG. CD/DL/LP

**The Welsh rockers' biggest album. The point where euphoria and grief met.**



When drummer Jon Lee took his own life in 2002, Feeder's bereft singer/songwriter Grant Nicholas and bassist Taka Hirose almost stopped. Eventually, they decided to continue and the immediate results became their biggest seller. The appositely titled *Comfort In Sound* played to Feeder's chief strength: Nicholas's tight, melody-laden songs, but unfettered grief brought new lyrical depth. *Come Back Around*, *Child In You* ("you feel there's no sense in going on") and *Moonshine* directly dealt with Lee's passing, and the sweeping emotional catharsis of *Forget About Tomorrow* proved to be their finest. All these years later, Feeder LPs are still capable of reaching the UK Top 10, but *Comfort In Sound* remains their peak. Accompanied by a slew of B-sides and extra tracks, the combination of euphoria and pain still packs a mighty punch.

John Aizlewood

Heaven sent: Nirvana's Alex Spyropoulos (left) and Patrick Campbell-Lyons, gauche and grandiose in the late '60s.



# Just like heaven

Thorough retrospective for wobbly-voiced baroque poppers. By Jim Wirth.

## Nirvana

★★★★★

The Show Must Go On

MADFISH. CD/DL

LISTENING TO Patrick Campbell-Lyons' quivering delivery on Nirvana's 1967 debut single *Tiny Goddess*, Disc & Music Echo's Penny Valentine enthused: "The singer has a funny little voice of incredible sadness... It grows and grows on you."

Pop insiders warmed to the studio-bound duo of Irishman Campbell-Lyons and Greek adventurer Alex Spyropoulos in their initial 1967–72 lifespan, Nirvana able to record five studio LPs despite peaking commercially when their phasers-set-to-stun *Rainbow Chaser* single made it to Number 34 in the UK charts in 1968. This 12-CD anthology features all of their first incarnation studio recordings, plus a mothballed musical (*Secrets*), Campbell-Lyons' coy 1974 solo record *Me And My Friend*, comeback disc *Orange And Blue* and a bucketload of single sides and outtakes.

The Bee Gees struck gold with a comparable brand of tremulous orchestral pop, but Nirvana aspired to something more sophisticated, gaining a vindication of sorts when they got to hang out with Salvador Dalí, while their quirky, wistful songs were covered by Françoise Hardy and Kenny Ball And His Jazzmen, among others.

One of Chris Blackwell's first non-reggae Island signings, Nirvana set out their stall with 1967's "science fiction pantomime" *The Story Of Simon Simopath*. Monstrously twee but dreamy, it tells the tale of a disaffected office worker who has a nervous breakdown and flies away to find happiness with a

friendly centaur and the staff of the Pentecost Hotel. Sales were not encouraging, but Nirvana doubled down on the session players and Rive Gauche pretensions for 1968's *All Of Us*. The Touchables is a wide-screen rhapsody, Spyropoulos's sultry *You Can Try It* a gorgeous psychedelic samba, while the demo version of *Melanie Blue* reveals the deep well of melancholy that underpinned (or possibly undermined) their work.

Nirvana moved cautiously with the times – outtakes here include a version of non-album single *Oh! What A Performance* recorded with labelmates Spooky Tooth. However, Island passed on their third album, with *To Markos III* (named in honour of Spyropoulos's relative who helped to bankroll the final mixes) eventually released on Pye. The World Is Cold Without You, *Black Flower* and *Excerpt From 'The Blind And The Beautiful'* are splendid artists' garret fantasies, but a terrible sleeve and worse promotion spelled more disappointment.

Campbell-Lyons forged on alone for messy divorce album *Local Anaesthetic* (1971) and *Songs Of Love And Praise* (1972), and was still releasing new Nirvana material in the 1980s, but received little attention until an out-of-court settlement with Kurt Cobain's band for accidentally stealing his group's name.

'UK' Nirvana, however, smelled nothing like Teen Spirit. Gauche and grandiose, they matched the wistful romanticism of The Left Banke or the *Odessey And Oracle*-era Zombies, but with extra café crème sophistication. Their sad, fey, funny little voices were not suited to mainstream success, but *The Show Must Go On* shows what a spectacular partnership Campbell-Lyons and Spyropoulos were. Just the one hit, but so many wonders.





Renaissance man: Bowie in 2002, after releasing the seriously undervalued *Heathen* album.

FILE UNDER...

## 21st century boy

Bowie's final era, rebirth to death, caught in another large, expensive box. By Jim Irvin.

EARLY IN the 1990s, I witnessed David Bowie play to a half-filled, half-interested students' union in Wolverhampton with the lamentable Tin Machine. He performed as if it were a packed Wembley, which somehow made things worse. It seemed impossible to come back from such a wilderness, such a lengthy inability to hold the room. Incredibly though, in the 21st century, he did it. Maybe the hits weren't as big or as important as they had been previously, but his confidence had returned. Having apparently recalibrated his expectations, Bowie began making some of the best music of his life. He was looking forward. He'd embraced the internet and understood its implications. In 2002, as Napster was imploding, he told Jon Pareles of the *New York Times*: "The absolute transformation of everything that we ever thought about music will take place within 10 years, and nothing is going to be able to stop it... Music itself is going to become like running water or electricity. So it's like, just take advantage of these last few years because none of this is ever going to happen again. It's terribly exciting."

The final box set in the series covering Bowie's various eras focuses on this late-breaking renaissance. *I Can't Give Everything Away*

★★★★ (ISO/Parlophone) begins with 2002's seriously undervalued *Heathen*, the debut on his own ISO label – the equal IMHO to several of his most celebrated albums – and closes with the tragic triumph of *Blackstar*, released in 2016, days before his death.

As we know, a lot of his music has been unearthed or repackaged since then. This box, containing 163 tracks, occupies 13 CDs and a whopping 18 discs on vinyl retailing at around £400. One could argue that 68 tracks of live material and multiple versions of certain songs – five of *Heathen* opener Sunday, for example – might be overkill. Also, for this kind of outlay I'd expect a deluxe design. But this looks budget-priced, to be frank. A lot of "choose a picture, find a font" style artwork, including the box itself. No foil, no embossing, no fancy stuff. Casual rather than monumental.

The exclusive four-disc *Live At Montreux Jazz Festival*, recorded on July 18, 2002, has a weak sleeve, but the music is blistering. Bowie seems very jolly between songs: "Old man will now sing old song" and "Let's go back in the anal of time" [sic], checking to see if the crowd

knows his earlier work. Of course they bloody do. He performs 31 songs, including an encore comprising the whole of *Low*, which is excellent and fascinating, but arguably misplaced here.

Bowie was so enamoured of this band that he created his next album, *Reality*, with them in mind; a live album of the shows, *Reality Tour*, another 32 tracks, was released on CD in 2010 and is here for the first time as a triple LP. There was, of course, a 10-year pause between *Reality* and *The Next Day*, which dropped suddenly in 2013. "I write about misery," he told Pareles in 2002, cheerfully. Suddenly, it seemed so. Here's a world bathed in "blackened sunshine" while up above, the stars are "waiting to make their move."

A prime lure in all these boxes are the

collections of singles, B-sides and rarities named *Re: Call*. This one includes gems like Wood Jackson, the first song recorded for *Heathen*; Air's remix of A Better Future; and covers of Arnold Layne, Waterloo Sunset and Love Missile F1-11 (cue MISS klaxon). And then there's the posthumous No Plan EP: its title track, set in Bowie's final days and delivered in his most wavering, vulnerable voice, is truly heartbreaking. "This is no place, but here I am. This is not quite yet." And then it was.

As Bowie said earlier: none of this is ever going to happen again.



"His wavering, vulnerable voice is truly heartbreaking."





## Brigitte Fontaine

★★★★★

Brigitte Fontaine Est... Folle!

WEWANTSOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

**Deluxe treatment for Stereolab-approved baroque chanson album.**

Bridling at comparisons with Serge Gainsbourg in a 1968 interview, restless chanteuse Brigitte Fontaine snarked: "He wants to be a cynical observer of the myths of the time: the trendy boys, the plain girls, gadgets, money. But he's not really against any of it. I am." Arranged by Jean-Claude Vannier (who did a similarly spry job on Gainsbourg's *Histoire De Melody Nelson LP*), Fontaine's 1968 album is an eclectic, cerebral collection of modernist chanson, with this deluxe new edition (featuring sleeve notes from Stereolab's Lætitia Sadler, among others) including a wealth of bonus single sides, demos and live material. *Scott 3* lovers will appreciate the existential gloom of *Il Pleut or Dommage Que Tu Sois Mort*, but Fontaine also does crazy-good tunes (*Une Fois Mais Pas Deux*; *Je Suis Inadaptée*) as well as an eccentric sidestep into Tropicália on *Blanche Neige*. Space age bachelor pad music, but with a more distinct, radical voice breaking through. *Jim Wirth*



## Various

★★★★★

When The 2000s Clashed – Machine Music For A New Millennium

DEMON. CD/DL/LP

**Eighty-one-track box set marks 25th anniversary of electroclash.**



Compiled by Nag Nag Nag DJ Jonny Slut, this 5-CD set captures that 2000s era when cheap technology and software led to an explosion of DIY electronic club music. At first glance it's a bewildering feast, but thoughtful curation shows development of the genre: from the giant, hedonistic manifesto of Peaches' *Fuck The Pain Away*; to the pristine synths of Ladytron's *Seventeen*; to the intersection with rock and psych-pop in LCD Soundsystem and MGMT. Also brilliant is the fragmented techno of Gothenburg duo

The Knife, and the disorderly Auto-Tune of Hamburg's Egoexpress. CD5 shows how deeply the scene drew on post-punk godfathers, with foundational tracks like Kraftwerk's *Numbers*, and of course Cabaret Voltaire's *Nag Nag Nag*. Brimming with energy, this is a welcome retrospective.

*Lucy O'Brien*

## Hüsker Dü

★★★★★

1985: The Miracle Year

NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

**Rediscovered live tapes from Minneapolis punks' transformational year.**



Hüsker Dü's 1982 debut *Land Speed Record* documented their amphetamine-fuelled, near-incoherent early shows – 17 songs in 26 minutes! – while 1994's *The Living End* chronicled their final, tragedy-shadowed tour, their inevitable implosion imminent. But these newly rediscovered concert tapes capture the Dü at their height, outgrowing their punk roots and readying for major-label life. A complete set from Minneapolis's First Avenue in January 1985, powered by the sulphurous char of Bob Mould's guitar and Grant Hart's heart-attack drumming, showcases their alchemical blend of classic pop melodicism and punk velocity, closing with apocalyptic Beatles and Byrds covers. A second disc of stray recordings

previews their 1986 Warners debut and burgeoning maturity – the stark, reeling *Hardly Getting Over It* is astonishing. The vibe was clearly still gnarly, however, Mould telling the kids to calm down "else I won't have any teeth to sing with".

*Stevie Chick*

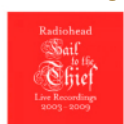
## Radiohead

★★★★★

Hail To The Thief Live Recordings 2003-2009

XL RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

**The band's most combative LP performed across the world during their pomp.**



Having first road-tested the material, Radiohead recorded much of 2003's *Hail To The Thief* during a two-week blitz. Integrating the Warp-prompted electro soundscapes of their previous two sets, the band had found, said guitarist Ed O'Brien, a new "swagger". Since then, this dense, angry, hybrid set has been quietly overlooked. Thom Yorke certainly thinks so: while working on new arrangements for the recent *Hamlet Hail To The Thief* theatrical production, he sifted through numerous live takes of the material. "I barely recognised us," he enthuses. Fans may disagree. This title – mirroring the original running-order minus *Backdrifts* and *A Punchup*... – captures Radiohead during their majestic 2000s, delivering muscular, meticulously detailed material to an

audience eager for rousing, off-kilter anthems (*There, There*) and piano-led laments (*We Suck Young Blood*) alike. It's ever-relevant too, as the twilight *I Will* reveals.

*Mark Paytress*

## Supertramp

★★★★★

Crime Of The Century: 50th Anniversary Edition

UMC. CD/DL/LP

**Half-speed remaster of the idiosyncratic pop-prog band's 1974 breakthrough.**



Together with some judicious personnel changes, *Crime Of The Century*'s new emphasis on hooks helped Supertramp become household names after their first two LPs had stiffed. Listening to this subtly pimped remaster, what's striking is the lack of window-dressing; how much space Roger Hodgson and Rick Davies' Wurlitzer electric pianos are afforded as these super-strong songs (*Dreamer*; *School*; *Bloody Well Right*) fly sans gubbins. Exploring themes of loneliness, madness and paranoia via a loose concept structure charting the life of alienated school kid Rudy, *Crime*... also had string-laden epics such as the title track, but what a beautiful curio Supertramp were among prog acts. Wurlitzers instead of Mellotron, a slight whiff of musical theatre and dinner-jazz, and Hodgson's penetrating, instantly

recognisable counter-tenor. Odd, if potent, ingredients those – yet they wooed legions, including Princess Diana before she got into Duran Duran.

*James McNair*

## Waylon Jennings

★★★★★

Songbird

SON OF JESS/THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

**Unreleased recordings from the legendary outlaw's glory days are brought to the public thanks to his son.**



Combing through new digitisations of private recordings his father cut between 1973 and 1984, Shooter Jennings realised he had enough material to assemble three records of unreleased Waylon Jennings music. *Songbird* is the first of the trilogy, a lean collection of blues and ballads accentuated by discreet overdubs by the surviving members of Waylon's backing band the Waylors, along with some occasional new blood: Ashley Monroe and Elizabeth Cook harmonise on Christine McVie's title song, enhancing its tenderness. Much of the album's charm lies in how relaxed Jennings seems: he sounds vulnerable on its sweeter moments but, just as importantly, there's an ease to his signature swagger. That familiar ramble helps *Songbird*, against all odds, feel like a lost album from Waylon's prime. *Stephen Thomas Erlewine*

## My Morning Jacket

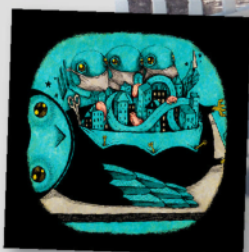
★★★★★

Z

ATO. CD/DL/LP

**Lush 20th-anniversary reissue for MMJ's grief-stricken but life-affirming fourth LP**

MY MORNING Jacket entered their fourth album – and major-label debut – in a fugue state. The exit of guitarist Johnny Quaid and keysman Danny Cash a year earlier had shaken their foundations, while frontman Jim James was struggling with critics pigeonholing them as 'classic rock' – and, more profoundly, the recent suicides of two close friends. It speaks to this group's alchemical magic, then, that from such heartache they wrought this sublime, life-affirming masterpiece, steeped in loss but so joyful and uplifting. Its numerous peaks – the tenderly psychedelic *It Beats 4 U*, the Morricone skank of *Off The Record*,



Gen Z: My Morning Jacket fly high on their fourth LP.



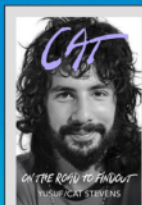
the luminous, Floydian mourn of *Dondante* – have lost none of their magic, masterfully navigating turbulent emotional waters. The generous addenda to this

20th-anniversary reissue, meanwhile, includes a suite of intimate Jim James demos and B-side *Chills*, one of the all-time great MMJ obscurios.

*Stevie Chick*



Cat on the beach: Stevens, a seeker from the beginning, in 1971.



#### WHAT WE'VE LEARN'T

- The teenage Steven forged a membership card to The Scene Club in Ham's Yard where DJ Guy Stevens spun R&B imports.
- The key melody of I Love My Dog was 'borrowed' from Yusef Lateef's The Plum Blossom, the opening track of his 1962 *Eastern Sounds* album. Stevens later confessed to Lateef and shared the publishing.
- In spring 1967 Stevens toured the UK on a package that also featured Jim Hendrix, The Walker Brothers and Engelbert Humperdinck. Hendrix and co squirted Stevens with water pistols through the stage curtain when he performed I'm Gonna Get Me A Gun.
- Noel Redding turned Stevens onto LSD at his Clapham flat. Cat had a bad trip but was inspired to write Lilywhite by the snow that had appeared when he emerged the next morning.
- Father & Son was initially composed for a musical entitled *Revolussia* co-written with Nigel Hawthorne of Yes Minister fame.
- Stevens enjoyed a relationship with Carly Simon, his support act at The Troubadour in 1971, and is confident that he is the subject of Anticipation, Legend In Your Own Time and You're So Vain.

# Top Cat

The '60s pop star, '70s troubadour and life-long spiritual seeker who can't keep it in.  
By Mark Cooper.

## Cat On The Road To Findout

★★★★★

Yusuf/Cat Stevens

CONSTABLE. £25

STEVEN DEMETRE GEORGIU may not have enjoyed nine lives, but he's certainly had his share. There's the post-war, 'street-loose' West End kid who encounters the pull of God and the tug of guilt at his Catholic primary school; the besuited teenage pop star who tours with Hendrix and The Walker Brothers but is the plaything of the old-school music biz; the acoustic authentic in beard and jeans, a post-Beatles British singer-songwriter to match Carole King or Neil Young; the tyrannical megastar who loses his rag when John and Yoko are excluded from his end-of-tour NYC soirée; the zealous convert who changes his name, marries into a Muslim family and still seems somewhat equivocal about the Rushdie fatwa, albeit while utterly condemning violence; the

school chairman and tireless charity worker who is refused entry to Israel and turned away from the US; the peacenik patriarch who returns to music in 2006 and played the Glastonbury Legends slot in 2023.

Inevitably, it's the early chapters of this chronological saga that grip tightest, as our hero surfs the '60s in an adjective-heavy prose that tends to the purple. The first Cat is a driven pop star who argues that he should headline over Jimi Hendrix at a fairground in Gothenburg because he's had more hits and his mother is Swedish. When he's offered the part of Buttons in a 1967 pantomime, he realises his career is already over. TB forces him into an extended convalescence in West Sussex where he experiences a transcendental flash of light and returns to the guitar he'd played at Les Cousins' floor spots mid-decade.

That brief pop ride has made Stevens profoundly wary of this wild world and those "fine-feathered friends" whose friendliness depends on how you do. Alone above his father's café off Shaftesbury Avenue in a white-carpeted room which shares a toilet with another flat, the tunes pour out. Stevens' telling blend of vulnerability and intensity and those naive early album covers brilliantly surf post-hippy idealism in a manner only matched by John Lennon's *Imagine*.

Now a megastar, Stevens is

ambitious and only intermittently self-aware but he always knows his soul must come first. He's a seeker from the beginning, a classic '60s pilgrim who reads Be Here Now and always yearns to find and obey his God. The albums and the tours keep coming but as the '70s wear on, the songs become more elusive. When Stevens nearly drowns while visiting label boss Jerry Moss in Malibu, the clock is ticking...

As Dylan embraces Christianity, Yusuf finds Allah and turns his back on music. Unfortunately, he's found his spiritual home on the eve of the Iranian fundamentalist

revolution and the emergence of Islamophobia. His commitment to his faith is steadfast, his good works admirable and Western hostility unrelenting. It will take Yusuf a mere 28 years to return to music and reclaim his crown, now a smiling if guarded moderate, finally able to enjoy his faith and his gift. Morning has broken.

**"The first Cat is a driven pop star who argues that he should headline over Hendrix."**



## Our Secrets Are The Same

★★★★★

Jim Kerr & Charlie Burchill With Graeme Thomson

CONSTABLE. £25

**Joint memoir tracing the Simple Minds leaders' creative journey and enduring bromance.**



While mirroring the solid, decades-long partnership of Bono and The Edge, Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill's association goes back further, having met as kids on a building site playground in their Toryglenn neighbourhood of Glasgow in the late '60s. Taking turns to relate their brilliantly entertaining tale (expertly guided by previous Simple Minds biographer Graeme Thomson), from artfully-minded working-class hopefuls to stadium fillers, they prove candid and funny while admitting that they've had to be hard-nosed in the past, especially when it came to discarding band members along the way. "The risk of appearing to be heartless bastards from time to time was an unspoken necessity," assesses Kerr. Of the two, the clearly affable Burchill still remains something of an enigma. "I know him better than I know anyone, including my own family," the singer states at one point, before later adding that "there are levels to Charlie that I don't know at all."

Tom Doyle

## Blitz: The Club That Created The 80s

★★★★★

Robert Elms

FABER. £20

**Drive straight to the heart of the dance with insider's look at Soho's own Factory.**



Last year, Blitz club DJ Rusty Egan released the enlightening *Blitzed!* compilation, his corrective to outsiders' mangled version of history. Robert Elms takes a similar stance with this delightful book about the ur-New Romantic hangout, so rich in ostrich feathers, theatrical wigs and army surplus that you can almost smell the hairspray. Elms, then an LSE student and writer of "preposterous poetry", was there from the start, attending Steve Strange's first "David Bowie night" in a brothel basement in 1978 before their tiny crew of working-class dandies (Spandau Ballet, Boy George, Sade, Grayson Perry) decamped to a Second World War-themed wine bar in

Covent Garden for 19 giddy, influential months. There are high-grade celebrity stories – trange turning away Mick Jagger, David Bowie's surprise appearance, Roland Rat's fetish-scene links – but Elms is also good on youth culture's tangled threads, dismal late-'70s London and the equally bleak political landscape, underlining just why Blitz was such a vital escape hatch.

Victoria Segal

## Here Beside The Rising Tide: Jerry Garcia, The Grateful Dead And An American Awakening

★★★★★

Jim Newton

RANDOM HOUSE. £35

**The Dead vs The Man.**



Thirty years after Jerry Garcia's death, perhaps only Dylan and The Beatles can rival the Dead for the weight of scholarship they've generated on rock bookshelves. This latest hefty addition shoots for something a little different, putting Garcia front and centre as avatar of the counterculture. It's a decent idea and works to a degree, but Newton's premise is hobbled by how Garcia may have embodied an alternative to conservative America, but generally shied away from articulating an ideology. In the absence of graphic examples of political commitment, Newton (whose background is in news more than music) tells the familiar Dead story, but juxtaposes it with lengthy digressions about, for instance, Ronald Reagan's governorship of California. An elegantly written book, with a noble aim, but Dennis McNally's *A Long Strange Trip* remains the definitive work on this most endlessly fascinating of subjects.

John Mulvey

## Shadowplayers: The Rise And Fall Of Factory Records

★★★★★

James Nice

FABER. £16.99

**Epic Factory history revised and enhanced; foreword by Jon Savage.**



Overflowing with cultural wonder – and both tragedy and comedy – Factory merits outstanding documentation. With this revised and reissued book it

has just that. Nice is amazingly placed here. He's a Factory expert and a lawyer – and a writer capable of wrangling an astonishing, litigation-rich narrative; from the profundity of Joy Division to Shaun Ryder in Barbados, selling Eddy Grant's studio furniture to buy crack. If that wasn't enough, Nice's label LTM has reissued numerous Factory albums. But Nice is no Factory yes-man. Having worked with Tony Wilson, he understands the label linchpin's compulsive mix of aesthetic daring and fabulism. Fascinating nuggets abound. It seems that, before Wilson conceived the band name The Durutti Column, Malcolm McLaren considered calling the first Sex Pistols album *Where's The Durutti Column?* (sic). As Nice ponders, does that mean the Factory Durutti Column might have been called Bollocks? Great asides. Superb history.

Roy Wilkinson

## Living In The Present With John Prine

★★★★★

Tom Piazza

W.W. NORTON & COMPANY. £20

**An intimate snapshot of the singer/songwriter in winter.**



Tom Piazza befriended John Prine while writing a magazine profile on the Americana legend on the occasion of the release of *The Tree Of Forgiveness* in 2018. Their bond deepened over the next two years, prompting Prine to ask Piazza to help him co-write his memoir. The pair didn't get far. Prine died in the early days of the Covid pandemic in 2020, not long

after completing the second set of interviews for the project. Piazza pairs transcripts of Prine rummaging through his back pages with his own memories of road trips, guitar pulls, and a dinner party interrupted by a smouldering Wurlitzer. Knowing that Prine left many stories untold lends *Living In The Present With John Prine* a wistfulness that adds depth and sweetness to a vivid, affectionate portrait of a musician who made the most of his idiosyncrasies.

Stephen Thomas Erlewine

## Bob Dylan: Things Have Changed

★★★★★

Ron Rosenbaum

MELVILLE HOUSE. £25

**A quirky examination of Bob Dylan's artistic lives.**



Few have conversed with Bob Dylan in as much depth as Ron Rosenbaum. He spent 10 days with the artist for an essential 1978 *Playboy* interview and calls himself a "Bobolator" – a term he prefers to the airless "Dylanologist". (The legendary "thin, wild mercury sound" self-description came from that dialogue.) This collection focuses on Dylan's many artistic incarnations (hence the book's title) – a crucial subtext being "theodicy" and Dylan's relationship with God when evil was perpetrated. The author is particularly peeved with the dogmatic Christian period and "Jesus-freak scold" persona. Rosenbaum gave up on Dylan until he belatedly caught on that the songwriter was still writing extraordinary classics that had nothing to do

with Jesus: Blind Willie McTell, Every Grain Of Sand, Dark Eyes, Dignity, Things Have Changed and others. While often fascinating and engaging, the author's writing is erratic, dry and repetitive elsewhere.

Michael Simmons

## Prince: A Sign 'O' The Times

★★★★★

John McKie

BONNIER. £25

**Exhaustive examination of Prince's grandest opus.**



For this deconstruction of Prince's 1987 landmark double album – which also explores the Purple One's entire mythos – journalist McKie interviewed 220 subjects, including former musical foils, hairdressers, Paisley Park underlings and the artist formerly known as Terence Trent D'Arby. There are revelations – Prince's generosity as a secret philanthropist, his love for windmills. But much here simply draws into tighter focus what we already knew or assumed: that Prince was insanely driven, had unforgiving expectations of his musicians and preferred to draw a veil over his private life (though a number of ex-girlfriends shed some light on this last theme). Haphazard pacing and structure – the story often zips from era to era, LP to LP, in a single chapter or even paragraph – prevent a compelling narrative from cohering, and McKie's often knotty prose doesn't help. His deep-dive exegesis of the lore within *Sign O' The Times* itself is strong, but the bigger picture remains hazy.

Stevie Chick



**True bromance: Simple Minds' Jim Kerr (left) and Charlie Burchill backstage at The Venue, London, March 3, 1981.**





# In the weeds

Extended 2021 documentary gets first physical release.  
By Sylvie Simmons.

## Tom Petty: Somewhere You Feel Free – The Making Of Wildflowers

★★★★★

Dir. Mary Wharton

WARNER. BR

IN 1992 Tom Petty started work on his second solo record. Two years later he released the album that many consider his masterpiece. Petty was pleased with it too. A timeless album, *Wildflowers* sounds as compelling now as it did in the last millennium. I checked; one effect of watching the film is an urge to play the album as soon as the credits roll.

This is a quiet, unobtrusive documentary. It doesn't ask nor answer too many questions. We get to watch Petty wandering around for no apparent reason in a big pair of shades in what might or might not be his garden. And on-stage, and in his studio, working on songs or mucking around with the band. The last of these is where Petty looks happiest. Given the movie's general undertow of melancholy, it's good to see him smile.

The documentary's title comes from the lyrics of the title track, a folk-Americana song that Petty says fell out of him whole. It's addressed to someone, maybe himself, who deserves to be free and untroubled.

He'd sloughed off at least one of his troubles: his problematic relationship with MCA Records, who he'd left and signed with Warners. Making a solo album freed him from what he called the

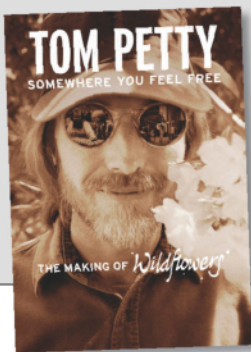
"politics" of a band. Back when I interviewed Petty and The Heartbreakers in the '70s, he got mad at me for asking him more questions than the rest of the band. But at this point he was done with democracy. He wanted to make decisions alone. And yet for a solo album, *Wildflowers* has a whole lot of Heartbreakers on it – except drummer Stan Lynch, whom Petty fired towards the end of the album-making process and replaced with British drummer Steve Ferrone. Whoever was on it, it was *his* album.

Having Rick Rubin as producer freed Petty from the studio strictures of the last two albums made with Jeff Lynne. Rubin encouraged an "organic" approach focused on the song – less band, more acoustic singer-songwriter. When a song was done, he told Petty to write another. Enough to fill two albums even if Warners only wanted one.

A more painful break was leaving his wife and family. In the movie's most personal moment, Petty's filmmaker daughter Adria says her father was disenchanted with his marriage at this time. When she heard the song Don't Fade On Me, she says, she knew her parents' marriage was over.

*Wildflowers*, Petty said, was made "piecemeal". In many regards the documentary seems to have been made that way too. Among the biggest pieces here is footage from the recording studio and largely unseen material shot in the '90s by Petty's longtime photographer Marty Atkins. Holding it all together, and linking

the story to the present, are contemporary conversations with Rubin and Petty's bandmates. Chief among them are Benmont Tench and Mike Campbell, who, as ever, played on the album. You can see that they still miss Tom like hell.



## Ellis Park

★★★★★

Dir: Justin Kurzel

CONIC. C

Dirty Three's violin hero walks on a different kind of wild side.



It's testament to its subject's untrammelled creative energies that there are at least three different films folded into this documentary. That's no problem, given Warren Ellis – violinist, composer, one-third of Dirty Three and a long-time Bad Seed – has enough unbounded charisma to carry at least another dozen films. Director Justin Kurzel accompanies Ellis on a transformative journey from his Australian hometown of Ballarat – where he plays with his country singer father, confronts his complex family dynamics, and recalls his mystical back-garden vision of clowns – to the Sumatran jungle, where he co-founded the wildlife sanctuary Ellis Park with the campaigner Femke den Haas. Rich in Ellis's questing music, it's a film that reckons – sometimes harrowingly – with different kinds of damage and abuse, but it also brims with moments of mysterious grace, empathy and salvation.

Victoria Segal

## Strange Journey: The Story Of Rocky Horror

★★★★★

Dir: Linus O'Brien

KALEIDOSCOPE. S

Fascinating tale of how Rocky Horror became a cult classic.



"It was a moment of fun," says Richard O'Brien, who, in the wake of Hair and Jesus Christ Superstar, decided to write a hit n'roll horror show. The rock musical was made into a Hollywood movie, but director Jim Sharman resisted studio attempts to make it too polished. "I remember saying, The special effects are too good, they've got to be really bad!" Though it flopped on first release in 1975, the film picked up velocity with punk and LGBTQ crowds who turned each screening into an immersive event. In this touching documentary, O'Brien's son Linus interviews fans and cast members, including Tim Curry, Susan Sarandon and Barry Bostwick. It also focuses on his dad's personal story, experimenting with gender fluidity at a time when it was dangerous to be gay. "I was in a no man's land," O'Brien recalls, "but I realised that people lonely on the fringes can come together."

Lucy O'Brien

## Spinal Tap II: The End Continues

★★★★★

Dir: Rob Reiner

SONY PICTURES. C

This one doesn't quite go to 11.



Possibly the last thing the creators of 1984 'mockumentary' This Is Spinal Tap foresaw is that the hard rock culture it brilliantly lampooned would be with us 40 years on, as would demand for the fake band at its heart. The strength of the original was that Christopher Guest, Michael McKean and Harry Shearer's metal morons were too close for comfort, but over subsequent revivals that "thin line" has all but erased. On Tap's sequel the septuagenarian rockers return for one last show, and hilarity ensues, but the humour trades on our affection for these now-familiar figures, bolstered by cameos from 'real' rock royalty – notably Macca and Sir Reg – and the actual satire is saved for the cold, small hearts of PRs and marketers. Ultimately, Tap II charms not because the 'band' are ridiculous – that's taken as read – but because their infatuation with the pageantry of rock, the mystery of roll, is weirdly infectious, and that of its makers plainly genuine.

Danny Eccleston

## It's Never Over, Jeff Buckley

★★★★★

Director: Amy Berg

MAGNOLIA PICTURES. C/S

Likely the most intimate portrait of Buckley you'll see.



This curious, fascinating documentary largely leaves the telling of Buckley's story in the hands of the important women in his short life. Chief among them his mother, Mary Guibert, 17 years old when she gave birth to Tim Buckley's baby. Brilliant singer, dreadful dad, Buckley died from heroin aged 28, leaving his son nothing but that otherworldly voice. Jeff told a buddy they'd never find him with a tag around his toe. By accident they did. Jeff's closest girlfriends paint a picture of his emotional life. We also learn he adored women singers – Judy Garland, Nina Simone, Piaf – and Led Zeppelin too. Oddly, the significant roles played in his early story by Gary Lucas and Hal Willner go unnoticed. But there's unseen photos and uplifting archive footage, including Jeff's Kick Out The Jams. And, of course, there's the heartbreaking ending.

Sylvie Simmons





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**LUNGA**

The debut solo album from the founder  
of Working Men's Club — Out Now



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King of comedy:  
Tom Lehrer performing  
at the Hungry I club,  
San Francisco, 1965.



# We Will All Go Together

Tom Lehrer, urbane pioneer of musical satire, left us on July 26.

**A**LTHOUGH HIS musical footprint is slight – three original albums, 50 or so recordings and a little more than 100 concerts – the New York-born satirist Tom Lehrer is worthy of a place among the most influential talents of the post-war comedy boom, inspiring countless writers to shrug off the shackles of taste and deference to the establishment. Lehrer always considered himself a mathematician and teacher, however, preferring lecturing to performing.

A childhood fan of Danny Kaye and Gilbert & Sullivan, Lehrer (born 1928 in New York) was a maths prodigy, entering university aged 15. His earliest song, *Fight Fiercely*, Harvard, poked fun at how his alma mater's refined ambitions clashed with the rough and tumble of college sports; once the institution got the joke, it would be performed before every home football match. While working towards a PhD

he never realised, Lehrer gained a reputation playing Boston nightclubs and, in January 1953, spent an hour recording an album, *Songs By Tom Lehrer*, to sell at shows, pressing 400 copies. By the end of the decade, sales had passed 350,000, with a significant proportion of them in the UK, where the BBC banned 10 of the LP's dozen songs, thus making it an essential purchase.

In 1959, Lehrer released two albums: one a 10-inch studio collection, *More Of Tom Lehrer*; the other a 12-inch live set, *An Evening Wasted With Tom Lehrer*. The first album contained

exactly the same songs but, Lehrer wrote in the sleevenotes to *An Evening Wasted...*, "spares you Mr Lehrer's soporific spoken commentary as well as the live audience reaction which mars this recording. Also it's cheaper."

However you heard them, *Poisoning Pigeons In The Park*,

**"Lehrer's songs skewered the hypocrisy of his homeland's leaders."**



## THE LEGACY

**The album:** *Songs By Tom Lehrer* (Trans-Radio Recordings, 1953; Decca, 1958)

**The sound:** "His lyrics, his music, his so-called voice, and his piano." The UK release came in a mock newspaper sleeve, creating a conceptual album about a small town of plagiarising mathematicians, murderers, white supremacists and Boy Scouts who pimp out their sisters. You want it darker? Lehrer, the sleevenotes say, "earns a precarious living peddling dope to local school children".

The Masochism Tango and *We Will All Go Together When We Go* pushed the envelope as far as possible in the 1950s. Lehrer, though, had had enough of live performance – his 1960 tour of New Zealand and Australia led to a backlash from extremist conservatives – and dedicated himself to mathematics.

In 1964 he submitted songs to the US version of the topical TV show *That Was The Week That Was*, releasing most of them himself on the 1965 album *That Was The Year That Was*. By now, satire had caught up with Lehrer, but songs such as *National Brotherhood Week* and *Wernher Von Braun* still skewered the hypocrisy of his homeland's

leaders. Beyond that, however, with the exception of songs for children's educational TV, and the occasional recording of lost songs – 1952's risqué *I Got It From Agnes* was only officially recorded in 1996 – he had retired from music. "If an idea came to me, I'd write, and if it didn't I wouldn't," he explained. "Gradually, the second option prevailed over the first."

In 2020, Lehrer moved all his music and lyrics into the public domain, meaning there's no charge if you want to attempt *The Elements*, his *Pirates Of Penzance*-inspired tour de force. See [tomlehrersongs.com](http://tomlehrersongs.com) for words and music.

David Hutcheon

Ted Streshinsky/Getty Images



# The Guilty Men

## 2025 TOUR DATES

**Thu Oct 16, 2025**

**Huddersfield**

The Parish

**Sat Oct 18, 2025**

**Lytham St Annes**

The Lowther Pavillion

**Thu Oct 23, 2025**

**Manchester**

The Carlton Club

**Fri Oct 24, 2025**

**Hull**

Wrecking Ball Arts Centre,

**Sat Oct 25, 2025**

**Darwen**

Darwen Library Theatre

**Thu Oct 30, 2025**

**Morecambe**

The Platform

**Sun Nov 02, 2025**

**Sheffield**

The Greystones

**Wed Nov 05, 2025**

**Diss**

The Corn Hall

**Thu Nov 06, 2025**

**Cromer**

Cromer Community Centre

**Fri Nov 07, 2025**

**Tetbury**

Tetbury Goods Shed

Arts Centre

**Sun Nov 09, 2025**

**Shoreham By The Sea**

Ropetackle Arts Centre

**Wed Nov 12, 2025**

**London**

229 Great Portland Street



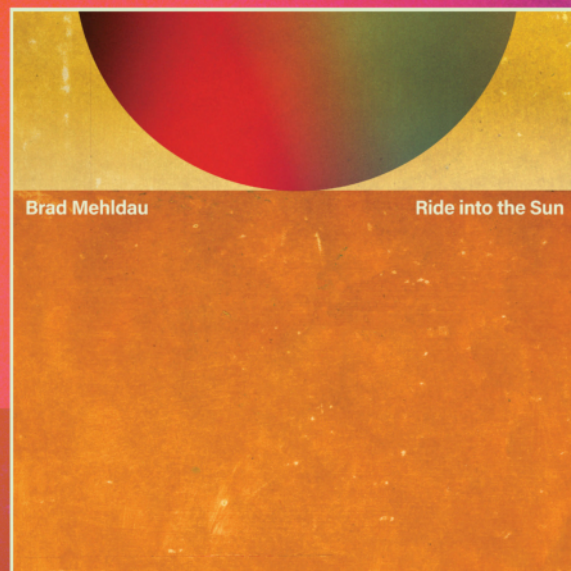
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Brad Mehldau

Ride into the Sun



The acclaimed new album out now

Brad Mehldau performs songs  
of and inspired by Elliott Smith

with Chris Thile and Daniel Rossen  
Orchestra conducted by Dan Coleman

‘Widely considered one of the greatest living jazz pianists. A stunning collection. Much of the album feels like it’s throwing open the windows on Smith’s music, bringing fresh light to a songwriter too often painted as a tragic figure.’

— **Uncut** ★★★★★

‘The restlessly inventive pianist takes on Elliott Smith. On this warm, folksy set Mehldau revives the music of a singer-songwriter whose path he sometimes crossed in the LA music scene. A deeply satisfying tribute to a great lost talent.’

— **Mojo** ★★★★★

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SAT 04 | BASINGSTOKE THE HAYMARKET % SAT 18 | POOLE LIGHTHOUSE %  
SUN 05 | LINCOLN THE DRILL % SUN 19 | ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY %  
THU 09 | GATESHEAD THE GLASSHOUSE % THU 23 | LEEDS CITY VARIETIES %  
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## Bobby Whitlock

Rock'n'soul's elite sidekick  
BORN 1948

BETWEEN 1968 and 1973 there was no hipper sound than rollicking, sanctified Southern rock'n'soul, and deep in its network grooved keyboardist, guitarist, singer and songwriter Bobby Whitlock.

Unlike the Stones, Van Morrison, Joe Cocker, Elton John and many more who adopted the idiom as their own, Whitlock was the real thing. The son of a Baptist preacher in Memphis, Tennessee, he cut his teeth as a white boy welcome on the soul scene, contributing handclaps to Sam & Dave's *I Thank You* and landing a record deal with Stax.

Whitlock was reluctant to be pushed in the blue-eyed pop-soul direction of The Box Tops, and jumped aboard when Stax labelmates Delaney and Bonnie Bramlett assembled their rambunctious soul-style revue. For Eric Clapton on tour in the US in 1969, his Blind Faith were so upstaged by support act Delaney & Bonnie And Friends that he wanted in, alongside pal George Harrison who likewise craved organic, funky music-making. "When I came to England it wasn't yet about slammin', drink and drugs," Whitlock told MOJO in 2014, "it was about music, and I was all ears and eyes."

Whitlock was all over Harrison's classic *All Things Must Pass* and, as co-writer with Clapton on six

lovesick-for-Pattie-Boyd songs on Derek And The Dominos' *Layla And Other Assorted Love Songs*, Whitlock fully made his mark. But slammin', drink and drugs did for the Dominos, and despite Whitlock's terrific self-titled, star-studded 1972 solo debut (whose *Song For Paula* serenaded Pattie's sister) and excellent subsequent albums, disco did for his career – or so he claimed.

Talent undimmed, he re-emerged in 1999, happily marrying fellow musician CoCo Carmel – previously Delaney Bramlett's second wife – and leaving us buried treasure aplenty. "It's only when everyone is in the room that you all find your place in the music, like the cogs in a watch," he told MOJO. "One wind of the stem and it starts ticking."

Mat Snow

## Eddie Palmieri

The "Messiah of Latin Music"

BORN 1936



"I JUST didn't want to play the piano at all... I wanted to play drums," confessed eight-time Grammy winner Palmieri in 1994, a

Bronx-born Puerto Rican who gave a classical piano recital at Carnegie Hall when he was 11. By his teens, he was playing timbales in his uncle's band, but returned to the piano to lead his groundbreaking band La Perfecta, who took New

York by storm in the early 1960s. Palmieri (whose elder brother Charlie was also a notable pianist) became a key figure in the evolution of Latin jazz, fusing percussive piano lines with advanced harmonies and salsa rhythms.

In the '70s, he led the socially conscious Latin soul and funk band Harlem River Drive, before launching La Perfecta II in the 2000s. Palmieri's final solo album was 2018's *Mi Luz Mayor*, a tribute to his late wife Iraida.

Charles Waring

## Leonardo 'Flaco' Jiménez

Tex-Mex accordion maverick

BORN 1939



THOUGH HE followed his father and grandfather into a musical family dynasty, the Texan accordionist Flaco Jiménez was never content

playing polkas. He was well into his thirties, however, before he got his chance to reshape the music of Spanish-speaking North America: his participation in 1973's *Doug Sahm And His Band* bringing him to

the attention of Bob Dylan and Ry Cooder, the latter partnership bearing significant fruit on Cooder's 1976's *Chicken Skin Music* and *Pull Up Some Dust And Sit Down* in 2011. Jiménez also worked with Dwight Yoakam, Linda Ronstadt, The Mavericks and (on *Voodoo Lounge*) The Rolling Stones, blending Mexican conjunto with rock'n'roll and country.

He could play old-style, of course, but throughout his seven-decade career, his goal – perhaps best represented by his Grammy-winning eponymous 1994 album – was always something else: "You have to mix it up."

David Hutcheon

## Cleo Laine

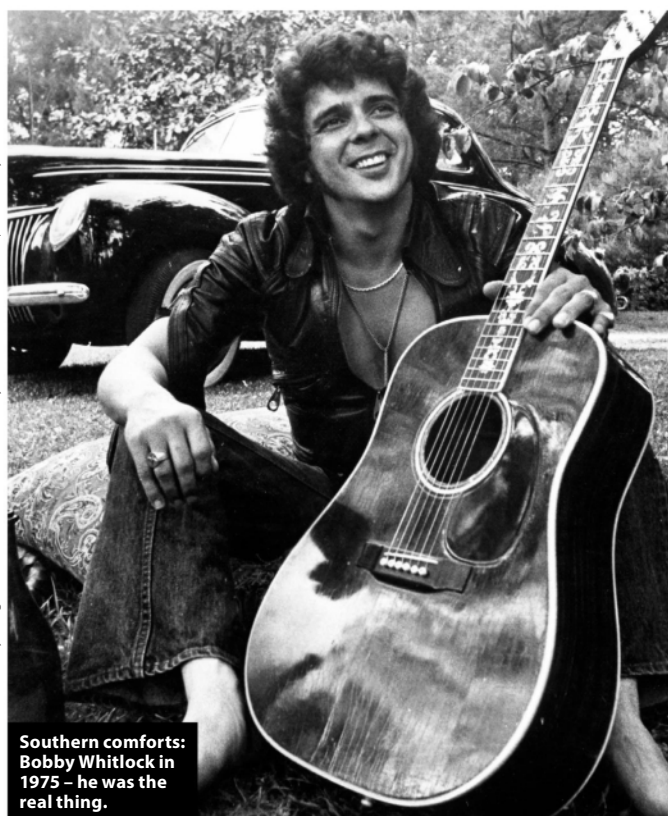
Brit jazz's scatting superstar

BORN 1927

BORN CLEMENTINE Bullock and raised in Southall, husky-voiced scat singer Cleo Laine was blessed with a four-octave range which she used to sing jazz, classical, opera, pop and musical theatre. She first broke through with the Johnny Dankworth Seven in 1951 (she married their bandleader in 1958) and in 1961 hit the UK Top 5 with *You'll Answer To Me*. An album with Tubby Hayes that same year marked her as a UK modern jazz ambassador, while a series of poetry-based recordings with her husband began with 1964's *Shakespeare And All That Jazz*. Her range was also manifest on the Grammy-nominated *Sings Pierrot Lunaire* from 1974, and *Porgy And Bess* with Ray Charles in 1976, while *Cleo At Carnegie: The 10th Anniversary Concert* won her the 1985 Grammy for Best Female Jazz Vocalist. By then she'd already received an OBE, and in 1997 she was made a dame.

Lois Wilson

"With Doug Sahm and Ry Cooder, Jiménez reshaped the music of Spanish-speaking North America."



Southern comforts: Bobby Whitlock in 1975 – he was the real thing.



Scat's entertainment: Dame Cleo Laine was a UK modern jazz ambassador.



Smooth operator: Chuck Mangione honking his horn in the mid-'70s.



## Chuck Mangione

Smooth jazz pioneer  
BORN 1940

RENOWNED FOR his sonorous flugelhorn sound, which seduced the ear with its velvety caresses,

Chuck Mangione became a US household name in 1978 when his breezy instrumental *Feels So Good* was a surprise million-seller. The son of a jazz-obsessed grocery store owner, Rochester-born Mangione learned the trumpet after seeing the movie *Young Man With A Horn*. In 1960, he co-led a bebop sextet, The Mangione

Brothers, with his piano-playing older sibling Gap before playing alongside Keith Jarrett in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. In the late '90s and '00s, Mangione's hilarious, self-deprecating cameos in the animated TV show *King Of The Hill* won him a new generation of fans. "My goal was never to sell a million records," he once said. "My goal was to honk my horn and hope there were some people out there who would keep me alive."

Charles Waring

## Graham Fenton

Rockabilly rebel  
BORN 1949

GRAHAM FENTON (pictured right) first sang with rock'n'rollers The Houseshakers in 1969, backing Gene Vincent on his final UK tour and releasing *Demolition Rock* in 1972. The Houseshakers became The Hellraisers by 1974 LP *Remember When?* Then, when they disbanded, Fenton joined Middlesex wildcats Matchbox in 1977. Their big break came backing



Bo Diddley and supporting Carl Perkins on a sell-out tour of Europe that got them signed to Magnet Records. 1979 single Buzz Buzz A Diddle It began a chart trajectory that peaked with worldwide hit *Rockabilly Rebel* and tours with Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry. After their Kirsty MacColl-featuring swan song *I Want Out*, Fenton regrouped with Graham Fenton's Matchbox, recording six albums before the 'classic' '80s Matchbox line-up re-formed in 1995. Over subsequent solo LPs, collaborations and a monthly magazine column, Fenton's commitment to rockabilly authenticity remained undimmed.

Jenny Bulley

## THEY ALSO SERVED

GUJARATI **BRENT HINDS** (below, b.1974) helped found Atlanta metallers *Mastodon* in 2000. With their second LP *Leviathan* (2004), a concept set based on Moby Dick, the band became heavy rock trailblazers in the new century, folding prog and avant-garde influences into their imposing sound. They released eight LPs, up to *Hushed And Grim* (2021), before Hinds departed acrimoniously in March this year.

PUNK CAMPAIGNER **JOCK McDONALD** (b.1956) formed 4" Be 2" in 1979 with *John Lydon's* brother *Jimmy*, and recorded two singles with *Youth of Killing Joke* and Lydon senior. The band then mutated into *The Bollock Brothers*, becoming known for their religion-preoccupied LPs, eccentric covers and getting Queen Elizabeth II's bed chamber in 1982, to appear on their 1983 synth-rock cover of the Pistols' *Never Mind The Bollocks*.

TV PRODUCER **VINCE CALANDRA** (b. 1934) booked *The Beatles'* landmark appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964. At rehearsals,

Calandra, along with Neil Aspinall, donned a Beatles wig to stand in for George, confined to his hotel bed with tonsillitis. The Beatles returned twice more, and Calandra stayed on the show until its final episode in 1971.



HOLLYWOOD STUNTMAN **RONNIE RONDELL JR.**

(b.1937) was famously set on fire in 1975 for the cover of *Pink Floyd's Wish You Were Here*, shaking hands with fellow stuntman Danny Rogers. Despite being covered with flame retardant gel, Rondell had justifiable concerns. "A gust of wind blew the flames right into Ronnie's face and he got burnt," Hipgnosis's *Aubrey Powell* admitted.

MIME ARTIST AND DANCER **ANNIE STAINER** (below, b.1945) was one of *The Astronettes*, *David Bowie's* backing troupe at the 1972 Ziggy Stardust shows at The Rainbow. Wearing spider web-covered body suits by Natasha Korniloff, Stainer, alongside choreographer *Lindsay Kemp*, scaled ladders and performed across high scaffolding. Two years earlier Stainer had played alongside Bowie in a

1970 film of Kemp's *The Looking Glass Murders*.

HEART MANAGER **MICHAEL FISHER** (b.1948) dated the group's singer *Ann Wilson* for much of the 1970s and inspired the Seattle rock group's first hit *Magic Man*. The brother of founding guitarist Roger Fisher (who dated Nancy Wilson), Fisher played in the band's early, all-male line-up as *Hocus Pocus*. When he met Wilson in 1970 she moved to Vancouver where he was avoiding the Vietnam draft. With Ann in the band and Fisher managing, the group became *Heart* in 1972, adding Nancy to their line-up and signing to Canada's Mushroom Records for 1975 debut *Dreamboat Annie*.

MANCHESTER SCENESTER **TOSH RYAN** (b.c.1950) worked in the city's collective *Music Force* with *Martin Hannett* before co-founding *Rabid Records* in 1977, and releasing singles by *John Cooper Clarke*, *Slaughter & The Dogs* and *Jilted John*. Ryan also memorably went to the Factory offices with a video camera to capture the action when Tony Wilson's label went bust in 1992.

JAZZ SINGER **SHEILA JORDAN** (b. 1928) became known for her scat singing and fearless improvisations to double bass accompaniment. Hailed by her

friend and mentor *Charlie Parker*, she said, as "the lady with the million dollar ears," she grew up poor in Pennsylvania and moved to NY in 1951 to sing in the clubs. On Blue Note, 1963's debut *Portrait Of Sheila* was warmly received, but she would not make a follow-up until 1975. Jordan also worked as a jazz educator and was made a National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Master in 2012.

GUJARATI AND SINGER **HONEST JOHN PLAIN** (b.1952) joined post-Hollywood Brats/London SS punks *The Boys* in 1976, making four LPs before their 1981 split (they also recorded Yuletide rock'n'roll as *The Yobs*). He also played in *Ian Hunter's Dirty Laundry*, *The Crybabys* and fronted his own band *The Amigos*. In 1999 he rejoined The Boys, who released *Punk Rock Menopause* in 2014.

LOUISIANA SWAMP POPPER **TOMMY McLAIN** (right, b.1940) had a US Number 15 with his celestial 1966 single *Sweet Dreams*. McLain went on to release albums throughout the '70s, and wrote songs like *If You Don't Love Me (Why Don't You Leave Me Alone)*, a 1977 hit for Freddy Fender. His fans

included *Joe Strummer* and *Elvis Costello*, who both appeared on 2022 comeback LP, *I Ran Down Every Dream*.

HARD ROCKER **PAUL MARIO DAY** (b.1956) was the original vocalist of *Iron Maiden* for 10 months from 1975 to 1976, playing London's pubs. He later sang with *More*, who played *Monsters Of Rock* and supported *Maiden* on tour in 1981, *Wildfire* and, for a time, the reunited *Sweet*. In 2019 he joined his old bandmates from the '75 line-up for a one-off gig in London.

ACTOR **RAY BROOKS** (b.1939), best known for narrating '70s children's television animation *Mr Benn*, cut unreleased pop single *Run Around* in the early '60s and later turned down an offer from Andrew Loog

Oldman before starring in Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home*. Returning to music in 1970, his sole LP, *Lend Me Some Of Your Time* (Polydor, 1971), cast Brighton-born Brooks as an introspective, out-of-season seaside singer-songwriter, buoyed by strings and horns. Produced by *Ray Cameron*, the album didn't sell but its title track made the Top 100 in America for a week.

Jenny Bulley, Ian Harrison and John Mulvey





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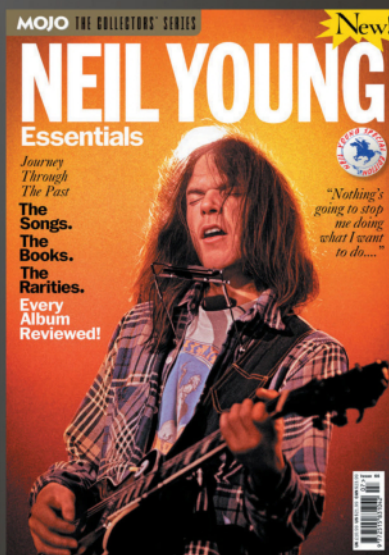
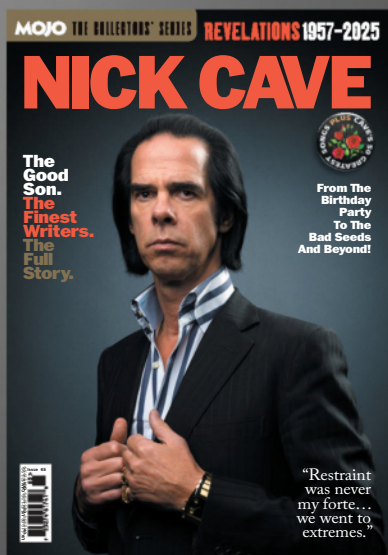
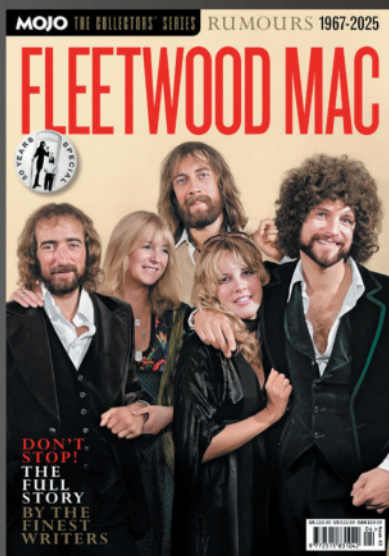
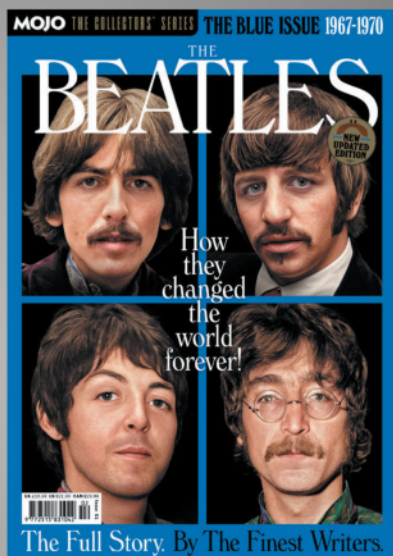


# MOJO THE COLLECTORS' SERIES

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Shake, rattle and revolver: Elvis and his gun licence application form; (right) wired for sound: the fetching Prince bodywarmer-and-Walkman combo.

## All Shot Up

The rarest vinyl and objects from the globe's finest collections: this month, Zappa's Baby Snakes guitar, celebrity flight cases and an anonymous Nick Drake credit.

### Elvis's gun licence (and a Prince bodywarmer)

Value: £20,000 – £40,000 (est)/£1,000 – £2,000 (est)

Omega Auctions of Newton-Le-Willows always come up with the good stuff. And September's Audio Equipment and Music Memorabilia/Rare & Collectable Vinyl Records sale was no exception. One extraordinary item was an October 1970 gun licence application from noted firearms

enthusiast and King Of Rock & Roll Elvis Presley, complete with regal signature, fingerprints and home address. And, alongside signed albums and exquisite posters, the sale also included a remarkable promotional item for 1986's Prince And The Revolution album *Parade*: a logo'd-up silver bodywarmer with

in-built speakers and a (presumably glued shut) Walkman to play a cassette of the LP on. Looks quite stylish, actually, and it is cold in Minneapolis. Enter the Aladdin's cave at [omegaauctions.co.uk](http://omegaauctions.co.uk).

### The Beatles

From Me To You/Thank You Girl promo 7-inch

PARLOPHONE. 1963

Value: £1,744.19



'Not For Sale' are printed on the label. There is some crackling but no jumps when it is played. Parlophone sleeve with it. "Is it worth anything?" It is, Wayne. Fabs promos are always popular,

Reader Wayne Kemberly sent word of his tasty Beatles promo single of From Me To You/Thank You Girl. "It's a white label 45 on the Parlophone label. 'Demonstration Record' and

especially early ones: a promo 45 of Love Me Do sold for £11,249.99 in 2023. Regarding From Me To You, a 'Good-Plus' example is on sale on Discogs for a not-to-be-sniffed-at £1,999.99, while another sold last year for £1,744.19. Who else has got one lurking around?

### Genesis flight case

Value: £100

Says reader Garry Drain, "Please find enclosed a photo of a flight case I purchased a few years ago. It cost me, at the start, £100. Until I read the small print. Collect only. So I travelled, round trip, 18 hours drive, 680 miles. Total cost, around £500. Was it worth it? Oh yeah. Genesis are still

#### ATTENTION COLLECTORS!

Have you got unique and covetable rock booty or records hidden under the bed? Send us your selections to [mojocollections@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojocollections@bauermedia.co.uk)



MY BAND." Right on, Garry. And what a handsome item it is (below). An arguably niche collectable, the flight case has its followers. With the all-important owners' name stencilled on, one owned by Jimi Hendrix was recently on sale for \$11,000, a once-thought-lost Joy Division flight case went for £21,000 in 2019, and in June, Dee Dee Ramone's road case raised \$11,575. Others are more affordable, with one owned by TV On The Radio going for \$180, and a variety owned by Argent/Kinks drummer Bob Henrit all going for less than £100 on eBay at press time.

## Frank Zappa's Baby Snakes SG

Value: TBC

Coming on November 19 to Heritage Auctions, courtesy of Ahmet Zappa, the celebrated guitar (right) Frank played on the 1979 *Baby Snakes* film and its soundtrack. It famously came into being when teenage Arizona luthier Bart Nagel took a damaged guitar and gave it an ebony fretboard with 23 frets instead of the normal 22, plus other decorative custom touches. In Phoenix in July 1974 he sold it to Zappa, who then had further modifications made by guitar craftsman Rex Bogue. Zappa had previously had Bogue restore the Stratocaster that Jimi Hendrix famously smashed and set on fire at the Miami Pop Festival in 1968. See [ha.com](http://ha.com) to be in it to win it!

## Various Interplay One

LONGMAN. 1972

Value: £500

What's this educational record for early-'70s junior school kids doing in the MOJO Collections page, you may ask? Because,



among the music (jazz, classical, the Wehrmacht), poems and spoken word are three songs that feature Nick Drake on guitar. He's there on Australian bush song *With My Swag All On My Shoulder* with *Five Leaves Left*/Bryter Layter arranger Robert Kirby singing, and on hard luck Appalachian folk song *I Wish I Were A Single Girl Again*, sung by Vivian Fowler. But the real find is his grave accompaniment to *Full Fathom Five* from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where the words of death, sea-change and transformation hit home. With only an estimated 200 copies in existence, it's an intriguing oddity indeed and is available on Discogs.

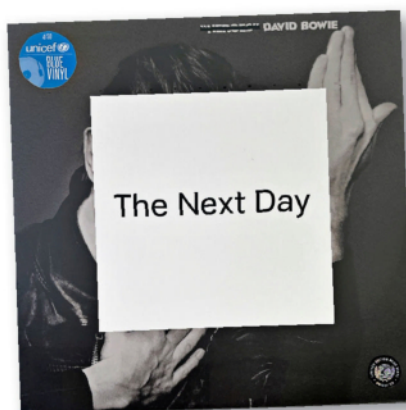
## David Bowie The Next Day

ISO/COLUMBIA. 2018

Value: £4,500

Bowie's 2013 comeback was repressed on blue vinyl in a numbered limited-edition of 50 – and 10 per cent of them are now on Discogs.

It's one of the rarest Bowie releases, up there with mint Davy Jones 45s or the infamous 'gonads' *Diamond Dogs* cover. It was part of Unicef's 2019 campaign where pressings of classic LPs by King Crimson, Kate Bush and others were made available in a shade of fetching azure for a charity prize draw. Another batch followed in 2022, including blue'd-up versions of LPs by Dylan, Carole King and The Clash (who'd have thought in 1982 that one day *Combat Rock* would be available in red, clear and 'green moss' varieties too?).



## SHOP TALK

### Action Records

Head to Preston, where vinyl treasures and a warm welcome are assured.

Writes Ian Spence, "I've been buying from there for over 35 years. Staff knowledge and service is second to none. Like a big family." Action Records began on a market stall in Blackpool in 1979 before assuming its bricks-and-mortar form in Preston in 1981. At the wheel is founder Gordon Gibson, who found his spot when hitching to the Lincoln Folk Festival in 1971 from Scotland. Action stocks 75 per cent new releases, but, says Gordon, "I love doing second-hand too. We're all over the place – metal, hip-hop, indie, Prince, Grateful Dead, Oasis... we just sell a real good cross-section of good music for all tastes, and we want to appeal to people without being opinionated. I used to hate it when you went somewhere and they were downright rude!" A big Byrds and Hawkwind fan, he also runs the Action label (releases include records by The Fall, The Boo Radleys and Dandelion Adventure), hosts listening parties ("the one for Pulp's new album was absolutely packed") and has been selling actual paper tickets you can keep to local events ("the ticket revival starts here!"). "I'd like to think we are part of the community as well," he says.

### IN THE RACKS

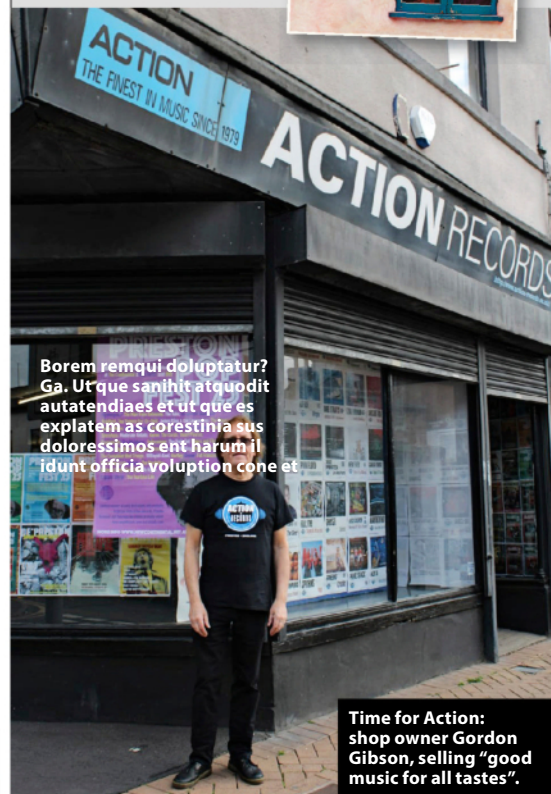
#### Tim Hardin

Tim Hardin 2

VERVE FORECAST. 1967

Visit Action Records at **46 Church Street, Preston, PR1 3DH** and at [actionrecords.co.uk](http://actionrecords.co.uk). Watch The Action Records Story: Chased By Nuns at [vimeo.com/125335358](http://vimeo.com/125335358)

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**Time for Action:** shop owner Gordon Gibson, selling "good music for all tastes".



Trash city rockers: The Cramps (from left) Nick Knox, Bryan Gregory, Poison Ivy and Lux Interior get primitive in December 1977.



## 10 The Cramps Look Mom No Head!

BIG BEAT, 1991 £7.50

**You say:** "Bought it on the strength of their phenomenal Halloween London show that year – my ears have never quite recovered." Hipsville Dave, via e-mail

Both longtime stalwart Nick Knox and bass player Candy Del Mar left in 1991 (or were sacked, according to Ivy), then future Bad Seed Jim Sclavunos joined briefly on drums, with Slim Chance on bass, for this LP cut at Ocean Way Studios in Hollywood. The mood is largely one of full-throttle, punky energy and lyrics about hot-rods, disembodied eyeballs and multiple sexual obsessions, with Iggy Pop joining in on a cover of The Flower Children's 1967 LA garage tune, Mini-Skirt Blues. Even so, the most effective moment is probably the sparse, downtempo cover of The Runabouts' 'When I Get The Blues, renamed The Strangeness In Me.



### CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Cramps LPs. Next month we want your Electric Miles Davis Top 10. Send selections via X, Bluesky, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to [mojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:mojo@bauermedia.co.uk) with the subject 'How To Buy Electric Miles Davis' and we'll print the best comments.

# The Cramps

Get primitive, with Max Décharné.

IN 1980, WHEN The Cramps released their debut LP, *Songs The Lord Taught Us*, record departments of the British newsagent chain W.H. Smith would routinely display the weekly pop charts in white plastic letters on a black pegboard for the benefit of customers. One teenage patron gleefully sent the music press a snapshot of the Top 20 Independent LPs display at his local branch which had rendered the album title as *Songs Of The Lord Tortoise*, conjuring up images of a cult who worship a giant all-powerful turtle. In The Cramps' own particular universe, that would hardly come as a surprise.

Ever since Poison Ivy Rorschach (Kristy Wallace) and Lux Interior (Erick Purkhiser) met in California in 1972 they had shared an appreciation of the weird underbelly of US popular culture: the Z-grade movies of Edward D Wood Jr.; the cartoons of Charles Addams; radio deejays such as Ernie 'Ghoulardi' Anderson and Pete 'The Mad Daddy' Myers; pulp novels and horror comics. This was the exaggerated flipside of the American dream: two cars in every garage and a selection of dismembered victims hidden under the back porch. Above all, though, it was primitive rock'n'roll that lit the couple's fuse.

Relocating in 1973 to Lux's home town Akron, Ohio, they came up with the idea of The Cramps based on their collective obsessions, and by the time they moved to Manhattan in 1976 and debuted at CBGB – slotting effortlessly into the tightknit, mutually

supportive early scene of bands like the Ramones, the Dead Boys and Blondie – they were fully formed. As Lux later recalled, "Even before we went to New York we had thousands of records we'd been collecting in junk stores – rockabilly and blues stuff, this was our life. We had a really strong idea of exactly what we wanted to do before we started." According to Ivy, it was the Ramones who first gave them their proper start, inviting the band to open for them.

Emerging in the early punk days when individuality was still prized, The Cramps cut a pair of uncompromising, perfectly realised and very scarce singles at Ardent Studios in Memphis in October 1977, produced by Alex Chilton. These were collected and released in the UK in 1979 as a 12-inch entitled *Gravest Hits*, just as the band returned to Memphis with Chilton to record their first LP, treating the process like a live show. Eyewitness Tav Falco described the scene for me in 2003: "After a while one lost count of the chairs, stand-up ashtrays and metal coat racks that Lux twisted, tossed, and smashed around the studio in the recording of a single track, leaping about on the tops of amplifiers, piano lids and Leslie cabinets during the course of a take."

Throughout the group's career, the best of their recordings bottled and retained that spirit. When asked to describe their music, they would usually just call it rock'n'roll, as Lux once explained: "It brings a certain kind of people together. It separates the squares from the cool people. Pop music doesn't do that, pop music is just for everyone's entertainment. Rock'n'roll is something more than that."

"[Our music] brings a certain kind of people together. It separates the squares from the cool people."

LUX INTERIOR



## 4 The Cramps Psychodelic Jungle

IRS, 1981 £34

**You say:** "The covers make you want to listen to the original, then listen to the cover again, then listen to the original again...."

Damon Wise, via Facebook

Recorded at A&M Studios, Hollywood, with new member Kid Congo in January 1981 for a record company they were desperate to leave, and advertised with the slogan, 'Sit Right Down And Make Yourself Uncomfortable', Lux later stated that the record was made in a hurry, used some left-over recordings that were lying around, and that others, like *Beautiful Gardens*, were simply made up in the studio. Despite that, it's some people's favourite Cramps album. For a lo-fi taste of this line-up live, see YouTube for their May 8 gig at Cherry Hill, NJ. Their final strobe-lit gallop through Surfin' Bird will leave you wishing you could have been there.





## 9 The Cramps Flamejob

CREATION/EPITAPH, 1994 £35

**You say:** "Classic front cover shot – Ivy demonstrating what a real torch singer looks like. Scorching." Zontar, via e-mail

In places something of a return to the group's rockabilly roots, with a very satisfying reading of Alabama rocker Junior Thompson's 1956 rarity *How Come You Do Me?*, while their own Sado County Auto Show also leans heavily in that direction. Cut in Thousand Oaks, California at the Psychedelic Shack owned by early Halfnelson/Sparks member Earle Mankey, who engineered the album, its lead single *Ultra Twist!* featured a music video packed with dancers that paid homage to the original 1988 John Waters film *Hairspray*. The band also performed the song live on *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*, an almost unheard-of slice of national TV publicity in their home country.



## 8 The Cramps Big Beat From Badsville

EPITAPH, 1997 £22

**You say:** "Only original songs on it, wonderful guitar playing and great lyrics. Totally fun." Christer Boberg, via Facebook

Having returned to Earle Mankey's studio in May 1997 for an entirely self-penned slew of tunes, *Cramp Stomp* found the band back in a Drug Train groove, with a brutal cutting guitar sound that is mostly sustained throughout the album, although Hypno Sex Ray sees Ivy straying into Scotty Moore territory. The lyrics of songs like *Devil Behind That Bush* remained as ever firmly at crotch height ("Just one peek, got me rattled/Up the creek without a paddle"), and the similarly obsessed *Super Goo* may owe a debt to the Del-Mars' 1962 raucous rocker, *Snacky Poo*, but hits the spot in fine fashion. A late-model fan favourite.



## 7 The Cramps Rockinn Reelin-In-Auckland-New Zealand XXX

VENGEANCE, 1987 £19

**You say:** "Blistering live show. Makes your fur stand up on end." St Pauli Bat Man, via e-mail

Taped August 30, 1986, at the Galaxy, Auckland, New Zealand, on a night when The Cramps were firing on all cylinders, this is a perfect souvenir of the *Date With Elvis* tour. Live albums frequently fail to capture the excitement of even the best shows, but this is an exception, a particular highlight being the speeded-up cover of Heartbreak Hotel inspired by Cleveland rocker Buddy Love's sought-after 1964 version. Ivy's savage slashing lead guitar is well to the fore, Lux channels Sun era-Elvis vocal hiccups on songs like *Aloha From Hell*, and Knox's snare sounds like a pistol going off in a grain silo. Electrifying.



## 6 The Cramps Stay Sick!

ENIGMA, 1990 £20

**You say:** "Stay Sick! is a filthy masterpiece and was my gateway to The Cramps' wonderful back catalogue." Dan Wolff, via X

The Cramps' fourth studio album was produced by Poison Ivy and recorded at Music Grinder Studios on Hollywood Boulevard with Candy Del Mar on bass, who had joined in June 1986 just as the band entered a dormant phase. They played no gigs at all in 1987, a one-off on Halloween 1988 – the month LP sessions began – and only resumed touring in 1990 to coincide with the record's February release. Stomping lead single *Bikini Girls With Machine Guns* showed the band at their very best, while *Bop Pills* injected 50,000 volts into a song originally cut in 1956 at Sun Studios by St Louis rockabilly Macy 'Skip' Skipper.



## 5 The Cramps Smell Of Female

ENIGMA, 1983 £10

**You say:** "Because Mary Whitehouse even complained about The Cramps being on The Tube at tea time!!!" Mark Dolf Dolphin, via Facebook

Short, sweet and right on the money, a beautifully judged selection of new songs, cut live at New York's Peppermint Lounge over two nights in February 1983. "This one's dedicated to all you Gucci bag carriers out there, it's called *You Got Gooood Taste*," says Lux, introducing one of rock'n'roll's most appealingly dancable hymns to cunnilingus. There's a judicious one-note guitar solo on *I Ain't Nuthin' But A Gorehound*, *Call Of The Wighat* offers a masterclass of grunts, ape-calls and howling, and the cover of *Psychotic Reaction* is a thing of real power, with Ivy and Kid Congo dealing out shimmering slabs of garage guitar and Lux wailing on harmonica.



## 3 The Cramps A Date With Elvis

BIG BEAT, 1986 £22

**You say:** "Something of an apex, exuding a newfound confidence and a sense of nothing more to prove." Mark Rubenstein, via e-mail

Recorded by the three-piece of Lux, Ivy and Nick Knox, following a revolving door of temporary guitarists since the departure of Kid Congo Powers in 1983, yet betraying no sign of those upheavals. Standout track *What's Inside A Girl* – with Nick's hypnotic clicking snare replicating a slap bass – had already been a feature of the band's set for two years. Meanwhile, their single-entendre re-purposing of Dall Raney and the Umbrellas' 1964 downhome country/rockabilly obscurity *Can Your Hossie Do The Dog?* into the growling, slathering beast renamed *Can Your Pussy Do The Dog?* is up there with the best work in The Cramps' entire catalogue.

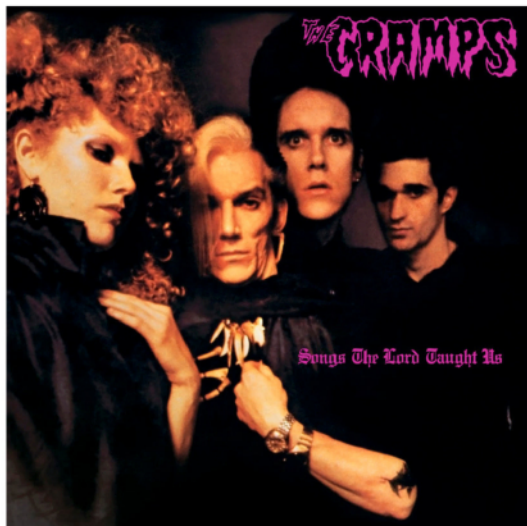


## 2 The Cramps ...Off The Bone

ILLEGAL, 1983 £43

**You say:** "I loved its 3D cover. I knew when I was too drunk as I didn't need the glasses to see the picture in focus!" STEVE™, via Bluesky

A superb UK comp of early Cramps singles, 1978-81, some never originally issued in Britain, mostly featuring the classic late-'70s twin-guitar line-up including bone-wearing, flying V-toting Bryan Gregory, who split in 1980. It came packaged in a 3D sleeve and matching red/green spex, with the message "What colour panties are you wearing?" etched into the run-off groove. The band's 1978 opening statement, *Surfin' Bird/The Way I Walk*, nailed their colours firmly to the mast – one side garage trash, the other rockabilly – while a mint first pressing of that single's magnificent follow-up, *Human Fly*, complete with glow-in-the-dark sleeve, won't leave you much change from £500 these days.



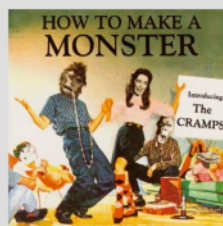
## The Cramps Songs The Lord Taught Us

IRS/ILLEGAL, 1980 £25

**You say:** "The Limit Club in Sheffield, March 1980: Lux destroying the ceiling above the stage so that the whole place felt like some weird snow-storm, before being dragged off by the bouncers." John Boulter, via Facebook

Produced by Alex Chilton at Sam C Phillips Studio, The Cramps' debut LP brilliantly captured the razor-sharp set they had been honing for four years. *TV Set* is a twisted love song with a novel approach to household appliances, *Sunglasses After Dark* effortlessly marries Dwight Pullen's 1958 rockabilly tune to Link Wray's *Fatback*, while *The Mad Daddy* tips the hat to late-'50s Akron deejay Pete Myers. The band disliked the original mix – Lux claimed it was his least favourite Cramps album and he and Ivy remixed it for the 1989 reissue – but as a hugely influential record that defined a genre, there is really nothing else to touch it.

## NOW DIG THIS



For a band who pre-dated smartphones, it is astonishing how much footage of The Cramps exists, all the way back to their CBGB days when they were caught during a soundcheck at the club in 1977. For a comprehensive timeline and links to an extensive selection of video and audio clips, visit the Hang Ten website ([hang10.de](http://hang10.de)). Or if you're short of time, their legendary 1978 gig at Napa State Mental Hospital, captured using a half-inch Sony Porta-Pak black & white video camera and single microphone, remains one of the most primal examples of live rock'n'roll ever filmed. For an excellent 2-CD tour through the band's early demos and history, there's *How To Make A Monster* (2004), compiled by The Cramps themselves. There are also many books, starting in 1990 with Ian Johnston's now rare title, *The Wild Wild World Of The Cramps*.





Goodness, it's...: Gracious! (above, from left) Sandy Davis, Martin Kitcat, Robert Lipson, Tim Wheatley, Alan Cowderoy; (below) live in Trafalgar Square.

## CREDITS

**Tracks:** Super Nova (Arrival Of The Traveller/Blood Red Sun/Say Goodbye To Love/Prepare To Meet Thy Maker)/C.B.S./What's Come To Be/Blue Skies And Alibis/Hold Me Down.

**Personnel:** Sandy Davis (vocals, 12-string guitar), Alan Cowderoy (guitar), Martin Kitcat (keyboards), Tim Wheatley (bass), Robert Lipson (drums).

**Producer:** Hugh Murphy.

**Released:** 1972.

**Recorded:** Olympic and Philips Studios, London.

**Chart peak:** N/A.

**Current availability:** 3-CD box set *Gracious! The Recordings 1970-1971* (Cherry Red, 2025)

**Original, near-mint secondhand price:** £262.50

Spirits rose when Vertigo gave *Gracious!* an extended run at a second album. Again, the complex, spacey epic *Super Nova* – also the album's original title – was bravely sequenced to open proceedings. The album wasn't all chop-and-change invention; flexing their considerable abilities, side two opened with funky-jam instrumental *C.B.S.*, *Blue Skies And Alibis* alternated between West Coastal pastoral and chugging blues, while the finale *Hold Me Down* was rockier and trickier, with Davis and Cowderoy wailing away, Lipson rolling around his kit and the band's late-'60s psych-pop roots gleefully peeking through.

Despite hiring go-to sleeve designer Roger Dean, Vertigo bailed on releasing the album. It eventually "fell out", says Cowderoy, on Vertigo's parent company Phillips' *This Is...* budget series. "We had this great Roger Dean cover, but on the back was advertised other *This Is...*

releases, like *This Is... Val Doonican*.

Anyway, we'd split up by then."

Lipson was first to leave: "Robert's family basically blackmailed him into joining the family firm," says Davis, who went next – "I wanted to go solo, with my pop songs" – followed by Kitcat, who joined song publishers Burlington as a plugger. "We had a really good bond, always laughing together," says Cowderoy. "Once that bond disappears, it's almost impossible to replace."

*Gracious!* reunited on-stage at the Marquee club the night before *This Is... Gracious!!* was released in April 1972. "Emotionally, that took some beating," says Cowderoy. In 1974, Davis released the oddly titled solo album *Inside Every Fat Man* and moved to Saarbrücken, Germany in 1980, becoming "a bit of a local hero", while writing with Boney M producer Frank Farian. When Kitcat moved from Burlington to EMI (and subsequently to Capitol in the US, where he died in the late '90s), Cowderoy replaced him, kickstarting four decades in the music business, including 10 years at Stiff Records, where Barney Bubbles was the in-house designer. Cowderoy admits he kept schtum about his proggy past.

In 1996, Wheatley and Lipson organised a third *Gracious!* album, *Echo* (no Davis and Kitcat, but Cowderoy on one track), but there won't be another stage reunion. No matter, says Cowderoy, the *Gracious!* saga has one last chapter, with a new box set on the Cherry Red label, including the audio – tuning traumas magically resolved by AI – and video of the Isle of Wight performance.

"*This Is... Gracious!!* got a US reissue, then in Japan, it got pirated, and now the box set," Cowderoy concludes. "It's extraordinary, these little waves of interest we've had."

Martin Aston

# Practical Mellotronics

This month's dusted-off gem: loon pants prog, harmonies and jams rise above the hard luck.

## Gracious!

*This Is... Gracious!!*

PHILIPS INTERNATIONAL SERIES, 1972

THE ISLE OF Wight festival in August 1970 was a traumatic experience for British progressive rock hopefuls *Gracious!*. Arriving late, the quintet from leafy Surrey were put on last. They had boldly decided to open with side one of their as-yet unreleased second LP *This Is... Gracious!!* – an inspired five-part, 25-minute jigsaw of Pink Floyd, Camel, Genesis, Vanilla Fudge and Moody Blues called *Super Nova*. The huge stage, massive crowd and presence of film cameras gave them pause, however. "I was terrified," recalls guitarist Alan Cowderoy, "crapping my pants."

"We'd never played *Super Nova* live and we were terribly out of tune," he adds. "Well I was." Then, halfway through the song (whose full, kitchen-sink title was *Super Nova (Arrival Of The Traveller/Blood Red Sun/Say Goodbye To Love/Prepare To Meet Thy Maker)*, keyboardist Martin Kitcat's temperamental Mellotron packed up. Playing *Once On A Windy Day*, their beauteous but non-charting Moody Blues-rivalling single released a month earlier, attempted to save matters.

It had all begun in a Beatles-triggered boom of merriment and ambition in Esher in '64, when Catholic schoolfriends Cowderoy and singer/drummer Paul 'Sandy' Davis

formed a Beatles covers band. Named, with nun-baiting mirth, *Satan's Disciples*, they were soon joined by locals Kitcat and bassist Mark Laird (replaced by Tim Wheatley) before drummer Robert Lipson freed Davis to concentrate on singing. Daily rehearsals helped fast-track the renamed *Gracious* – then minus the exclamation mark – to a debut gig supporting The Who, but more crucial was their support to King Crimson in 1969, when Kitcat had his mind blown by the Mellotron and *Gracious* transformed into a fearless prog band with a two-album deal with Vertigo.

"Listen, man, I said," recalls Davis of their big rethink. "Let's get descriptive. Singing 'I love you, you love me,' goes down great, but let's get *descriptive*." Descriptive and imaginative, it seemed: in *Super Nova*, he says, "an astronaut returns to his planet to find everything has been completely destroyed."

The self-titled first LP's cover by Teenburger Designs – AKA legendary graphics visionary Barney Bubbles – added the exclamation mark to the band's name. "Kid Jensen at Radio Luxembourg was a big fan of the LP," says Cowderoy, "but it didn't sell, and gradually there were less gigs and less money. But I wasn't prepared to quit. After school, I'd worked as an insurance broker in the city, which was quite Dickensian then. That wasn't going to be my life."



"I was terrified, crapping my pants... we were terribly out of tune."

ALAN COWDEROY



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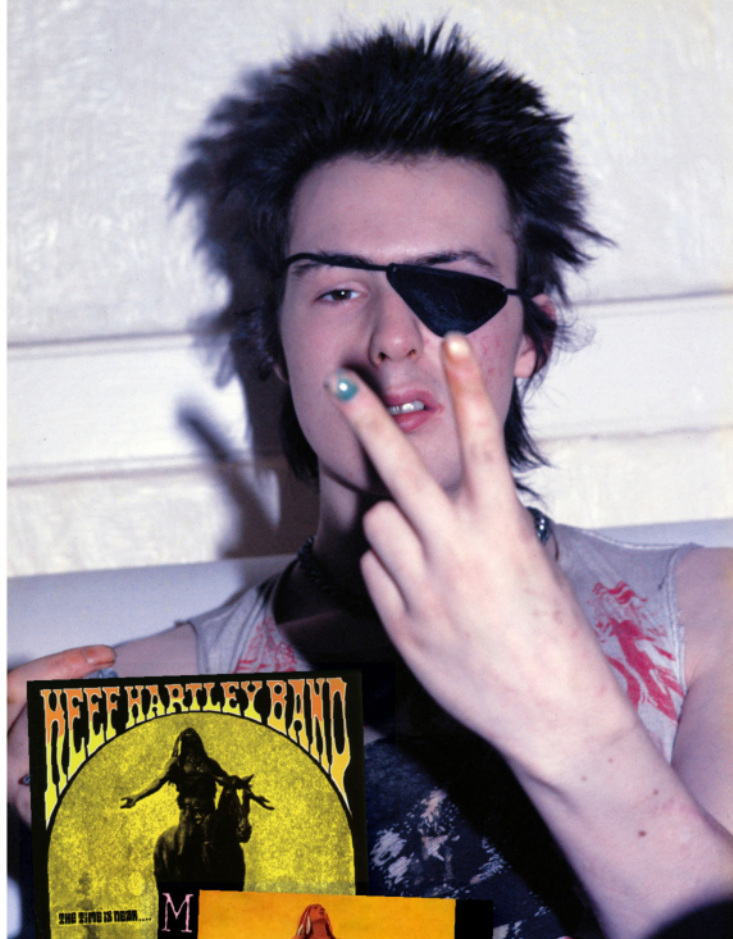
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# Whose samples were the wackiest?

Let us answer your rock questions, and resolve nagging musical issues.

I was unaware that Lil Nas X's *Old Town Road* was based on a sample of the Nine Inch Nails song *34 Ghosts IV*. This made me think of other surprising sample records, like The Orb's *Little Fluffy Clouds* using Steve Reich, Rickie Lee Jones and Ennio Morricone. Who else borrowed weird and incongruous bits of other people's records?

Andrew Marsh, via e-mail

**MOJO says:** Unexpected samples that protrude, eh? In no rational order, and aware that context is all, AC/DC fans hearing LL Cool J's *Rock The Bells* back in '85 would have immediately recognised Angus Young's guitar sound from *Flick Of The Switch* being scratched. Staying with hip-hop, Kanye West got in trouble for lifting King Crimson's *21st Century Schizoid Man* on 2010's *Power*, while Jay-Z's use of It's The Hard Knock Life from the Annie musical on 1998's *Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)* raised more than a few B-boy eyebrows. Props should also go to Death Grips for using *Astronomy Domine* by the Floyd on 2011's *I Want It I Need It (Death Heated)*. The Prodigy have also proved themselves adventurous cut-and-pasters, with 1992's rave-charged first LP borrowing Arthur Brown, the 'Charly Says' kids' road safety ad and Kate Bush, among others, and for our money, Big Audio Dynamite's 1989 LP *Megatop Phoenix* is an unsung treat of wacky lifts, with snatches of Noël Coward, George Formby and Bernard Cribbins (twice). It's not a lost art, as Dua Lipa proved when she sampled 1932 Lew Stone and Al Bowlly song *My Woman* for her 2021 single *Love Again*, while in 2017 Taylor Swift's *Look What You Made Me Do* interpolated a nugget of Right Said Fred's *I'm Too Sexy*. Now, over to you, but first, pray silence for



Coil's sombre 2006 track *Going Up*, which samples Ronnie Hazlehurst's theme for TV comedy *Are You Being Served?*, and Congo Natty/The Rebel MC, who juxtaposed choirboy Aled Jones and ragga rudeboy Cutty Ranks on X-Project's '92 track *Walking In The Air*.

## SLEEVE IT OUT

Re: Same Sleeve, Would You Believe (Ask MOJO 382). Funny that you printed a photo of King Buzzo next to the topic – you could have mentioned the cover of the Melvins' landmark 1992 sludge epic *Lysol*. The drawing used for the artwork is based on a sculpture from 1908, *Appeal To The Great Spirit* by Cyrus Edwin Dallin, and had already been used by the Keef Hartley Band on *The Time Is Near* in 1970.

Dieter Ehnss, via e-mail

Dire Straits' 1985 single *Walk Of Life* used the exact same photo, and a very similar layout, as did their band member John Illsley's 1984 album *Never Told A Soul*.

Mike Hamilton, via e-mail

**MOJO says:** Thanks, gents! And to Gerry Clarke for hiping us to the dozens of '60s US 'no label' vanity pressings with the same grainy sleeve of a man standing in a river in the mountains collated by Colorado collector Lisa Wheeler (if you dare, see [tinyurl.com/9rh9kt6](http://tinyurl.com/9rh9kt6)).

## BANDS WHO LEFT NO TRACE

Re: Who only recorded live? (Ask MOJO 382). Ex-Stone Roses drummer Reni's band *The Rub*, the original line-up of *Rocket From The Tombs*, the five-piece *Clash* with Keith Levene, and *Radio Birdman*/*Stooges*/MC5 supergroup *New Race* can only be heard on concert recordings. This also made me think of bands who were never recorded at all, like Bob Dylan's

Choice cuts: (clockwise from above left) LL Cool J sampled AC/DC on *Rock The Bells*; Flowers Of Romance member Sid Vicious; LP sleeves featuring the *Appeal To The Great Spirit* sculpture; Pete Townshend covered *The Beat* in 1986.

teenage bands *The Golden Chords* and *Elston Gunn* And

*The Rock Boppers*. Who else has attained legendary status for being un-hearable?

Chris Palmer, via e-mail

**MOJO says:** '76 punks *The Flowers Of Romance*, whose line-up included Sid Vicious, Viv Albertine, Keith Levene and Marco Pirroni, didn't play any gigs or record any songs. Apparently, they did Ramones covers and featured Sid on sax, as well as bequeathing the song *Belsen Was A Gas* to the Sex Pistols and their name to PiL, who used it to title their third album. Another good example is short-lived rehearsals-only Ian McCulloch/Pete Dinklage/Julian Cope group *The Crucial Three*. But one band we'd really like to have heard were *The Beale Streeters*, who in the early '50s in Memphis numbered Bobby Bland, B.B. King, Johnny Ace, Little Junior Parker and Rosco Gordon in the ranks.

## HELP MOJO

*The Beat*'s 1982 song *Save It For Later* is superb and has been covered by Pete Townshend, Eddie Vedder, Susanna Hoffs and Matthew Sweet over the years. Now I read the Wiki page where Dave Wakeling says the title is "a dirty schoolboy joke!" [*'Save It, Fellator'*] Who else has smuggled naughty words into their pop songs like this?

Graham McCoy, via e-mail

**MOJO says:** Intriguing question! *Ebenezer Goode* by *The Shamen* and its chorus that sounds suspiciously like "E's are good" and Van Halen's 1991 LP (rude acronym alert) *For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge* spring to mind. Any more?

## CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail [askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk) and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.





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*The Crosley C65 is available at HMV and independent record stores.*

## ANSWERS

### MOJO 382

**Across:** 1 Fred Schneider, 8 Toto, 10 Anywhere I Lay My Head, 11 Ozomatli, 12 Ladysmith, 15 Nik, 17 Vie, 18 Aspic, 19 Era, 20 Oblivians, 22 Rot, 23 AED, 24 Nin, 26 Error, 27 EQ, 29 Skyhooks, 30 OCS, 31 Nutty, 32 Me, 35 Effigy, 37 Ibibio, 39 Amsterdam, 40 A.N.T.S., 41 Panther, 42 Soho, 45 Tolerance, 46 Nudie, 47 Eddy, 48 Duel, 49 Vibes, 50 Our, 52 Yo-Yo, 53 Be, 54 Ork, 55 Pye, 56 R.E.M., 58 Odorono, 61 Maximum, 62 Ernie K Doe, 63 Angst

**Down:** 1 Flamin' Groovies, 2 Enya, 3 Schizophrenia, 4 Harum Scaram, 5 Exit To Eden, 6 Dear Ivan, 7 Ramble On, 8 Tchad Blake, 9 Tears, 13 Main Offender, 14 Ten, 16 Kate Smith, 21 Sassy, 25 I'm The Problem, 28 Questlove, 33 Easter, 34 Adonis, 35 Emperor, 36 Grey Day, 38 One Day Soon, 43 Opus, 44 Only Love, 51 UK Subs, 53 Ben, 54 Orion, 57 Man, 59 One, 60 Old

**Answer:** Stinky Turner

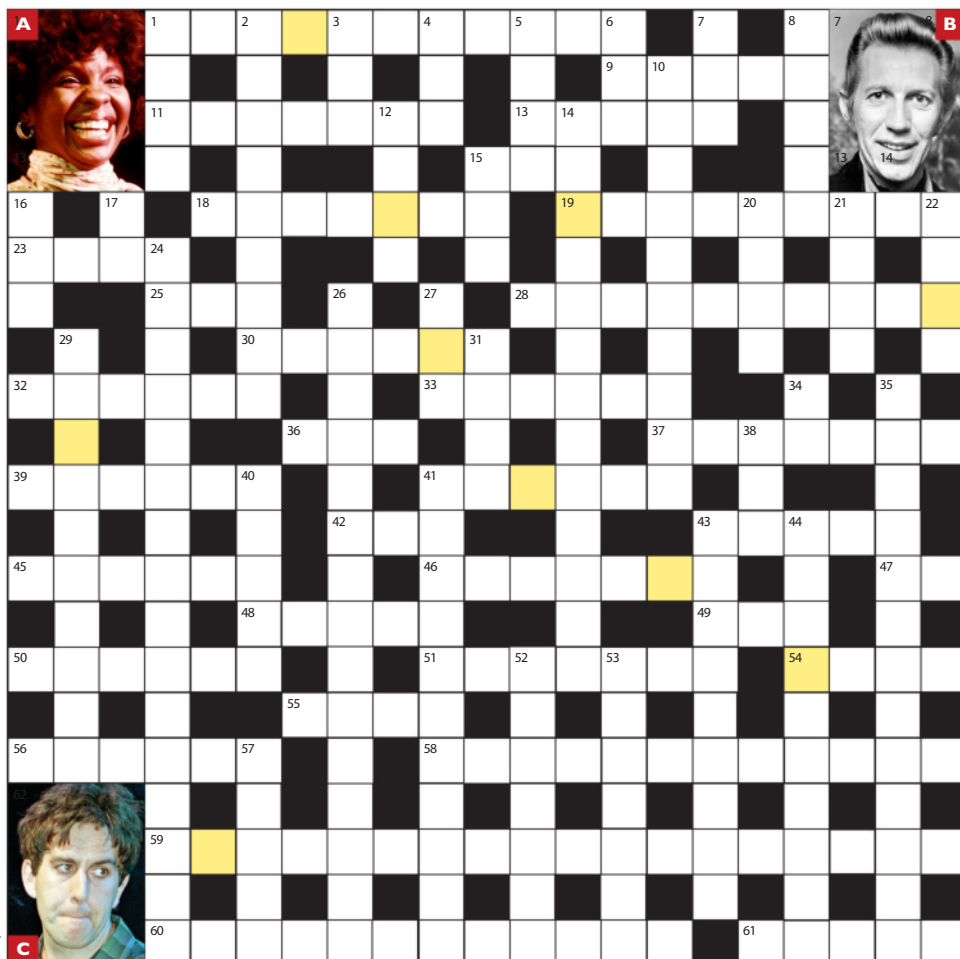
**Winners:** Philip Minhinnett and Hugh McCole win 'O' Edition MKII Noise Cancelling Headphones from Orange.

## ACROSS

- 1 Bono and The Edge's song for Roy Orbison (7,4)
- 9 Cybotron's 1983 debut (5)
- 11 Buddy Miles sang for this fictional band, The California ----- (7)
- 13 Can's hit theme for German TV thriller Das Messer (5)
- 15 '70s label, home to Heatwave and Donna Summer (1,1,1)
- 18 Robert Forster swelters in 2019 (7)
- 19 French artist whose work appeared on the non-sandpaper cover for *The Return Of The Durutti Column* (5,4)
- 23 They rocked and rolled all night and partied every day (4)
- 25 The Sea And Cake say sure (3)
- 28 *Marquee Moon* broadcasters (10)
- 30 They spent *Seasons In The Abyss* (6)
- 32 King, Ayler or Hammond (6)
- 33 Beach House pine for the fjords? (6)
- 36 Michael Jackson's LP after *Thriller* (3)
- 37 "Down from the glen came the marching men/With their shields and their swords" (Thin Lizzy) (7)
- 39 NRBC serve up leftovers? (6)
- 41 Le -----, or proof of Brigitte Fontaine's sweet tooth (6)
- 42 Streaming giant with musical output (1,1,1)
- 43 Neil Young's difficult synth LP (5)
- 45 Cowboy Junkies comp from '96 (6)
- 36 Debbie and Chris's iconic group (7)
- 47 Peter Gabriel reasons in '86 (2)
- 48 Fleetwood Mac's night-time dance (5)
- 49 Rap reverend prone to *Raising Hell* (3)
- 50 Jim Thirlwell's main alias (6)
- 51 Cat Power's debut (4,3)
- 54 Frida from ABBA duets with BA Robertson (4)
- 55 Byrds-related curio by Roger McGuinn & Chris Hillman Featuring Gene Clark (4)
- 56 Come's Ms Zedek (6)
- 58 1979 Costello classic reimagined, Iberian-style (7,5)
- 59 Sinatra's 1955 concept LP (2,3,3,5,5)
- 60 See photo clue A (6,6)
- 61 The Black Dog's memories from '93? (5)

## DOWN

- 1 Sumner Crane's NY noise rockers (4)
- 2 Alias of dub operator Hopeton Brown (9)
- 3 Laura Nyro's protagonist of *The Thirteenth Confession* (3)
- 4 Pet Shop Boys' LP for prog giants? (3)
- 5 Shorthand for wordless versions (4)
- 6 Kottke, Sayer or Nocentelli (3)
- 7 Sheffield band in The Nursery's label (1,1,1)
- 8 Make It With You/Baby I'm-A Want You/ Everything I Own hitmakers (5)
- 10 Grace's unfinished 1995 hit? (3,4,3)
- 12 Neptunes side-project (1,1,1,1)
- 14 See photo clue B (6,7)
- 15 Rip Rig & Panic consider the Almighty (3)
- 16 Pre-reggae Jamaican music form (3)
- 17 Andy Sheppard and John Parricelli add thoughts in 2003 (1,1)
- 20 James LP featuring Sometimes (Lester Piggott) (4)
- 21 Philip K Dick novel namechecked in song by Richard Pinhas, Sterling Roswell and Timo Maas (4)
- 22 Galaxie 500's Naomi ---- (4)
- 24 The Jesus And Mary Chain's first Top 20 hit (4,5,7)
- 26 Rod Stewart mega-hit in '78 (2,2,5,2,4)
- 27 Boothe, Burns or Hensley (3)
- 29 King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard's plea for oral hygiene (5,5)
- 31 Music press-devised '90s micro-movement starring Dex Dexter, Plastic Fantastic, Orlando etc (4)
- 34 Detroit techno mystery men (1,1)
- 35 Miles Davis reputedly called her "The Only White Woman Who Had Soul" (7,6)
- 38 The Waterboys banged this organ (3)
- 40 Sex Pistols' mystery gigging alter-ego (1.1.1.1.1)
- 41 DJ Shadow/Run The Jewels collab (6,5)
- 43 See photo clue C (5,4)
- 44 Rufus and Chaka Khan's hit of 1983 (4,6)
- 52 He recorded the first version of Killer with Seal (7)
- 53 Early Giorgio Moroder side-project (7)
- 57 Asia look to the stars in 1985 (5)







As big as it got: Gentle Giant (from left) John 'Pugwash' Weathers, Gary Green, Ray Shulman, Kerry Minnear and Derek Shulman ponder the end of things.

# Derek Shulman and Gentle Giant

It began with an escape from pop into progressive new horizons. And ended when the writing was on the wall.

## HELLO FEBRUARY 1970

I was the frontman of the band Simon Dupree & The Big Sound with my brothers [Ray and Phil]. We'd had one major Top 10 hit [Kites, UK Number 9, January 1968]. We were being booked into these scampi and chips places making very good money playing pop songs, wearing ruffled shirts.

During that period of time, in the late '60s, the whole musical culture was changing and moving in new directions, and we felt we were part of that. We'd started discovering other kinds of music – Elton John had been part of the band and he'd played us Spirit and Zappa and other things which were different, and he saw the Shulman brothers had more musicality to them than just playing to a pop audience. [Manager] Don Arden told us, "Stay as Simon Dupree, you're making great money, who cares where you're playing?" But we did. We wanted to venture forth and felt stymied from progressing musically and personally – it was very soul-destroying.

We did a single as The Moles [We Are The Moles, 1968] when we had some studio time, it was kind of a tongue in cheek but people in the press thought it was a Beatles outtake and it started charting. Then Syd Barrett said, "That's not The Beatles, that's that shitty band, Simon Dupree." We

knew we were going to break up and we were lucky that we had a manager, Gerry Bron, who understood.

We morphed into Gentle Giant in February of 1970, and on May 9 we played our first gig in Portsmouth. I think it was a festival and about 15, 20 people showed up. It was a decent show. Tony Visconti producing our first couple of albums was incredible, he got it immediately and was intrinsic in defining the sound of Gentle Giant, and sort of getting it from the gestation period to the childhood period. Also, he was recording Bowie and T. Rex at the same time as us, so we got to hang out with them. We were very naive, but we loved it in the early days.

## GOODBYE JUNE 16, 1980

We were workaholics for 10 years – touring, rehearsing, recording. No time off. Towards the mid to late '70s, we became a pretty big headliner all over Europe and North America. Then punk came along and, honestly, it did scare a lot of bands.

Audiences started shrinking. Also, you become an adult, get married, have kids. And, to be honest, we started drying up. There was a couple of albums, one in particular [*Giant For A Day!*, 1978], where we did things that we should not have done. I thought our last album, *Civilian* [1980], was great and we all hoped it would revitalise us, but it didn't.

Me and Kerry [Minnear, multi-instrumentalist] decided that this was going to be our last tour. We got together in New York, I believe it was in Premier

Talent's offices, and told the guys. Gary [Green, guitar] and John ['Pugwash' Weathers, drums] weren't very happy, Ray kind of felt the same way.

In a lot of ways, it was a fantastic tour. It lifted a load of stress off everyone's backs. On June 16, we played our last show at The Roxy in Hollywood. I felt both incredible joy that the audience and band were still having incredible amounts of fun and musicality, and also relief that we could now ease up and think of what we wanted to do in our next chapter [Shulman became a successful music business executive]. Afterwards we all packed our bags, said, Great show, see you later, and then home. And that was it.

I'd been on the road for 14, 15 years. I didn't go back on-stage and I didn't regret it. I can't tell you how many offers we had to re-form but it's something I just couldn't imagine doing. The level of intensity, of what you can do, it starts to decline. And wearing the spandex, but rather than size 32 waist it's size 42 waist... it kind of scared me a little. We didn't become a parody of what Gentle Giant were, and we left some kind of legacy which still has validity to it. The Giant had a dignified burial – exactly that.

As told to Ian Harrison

Derek Shulman's *Giant Steps: My Improbable Journey From Stage Lights To Executive Heights* is published by Jawbone on October 7.



"Syd Barrett said, 'That's not The Beatles, that's that shitty band, Simon Dupree.'"

DEREK SHULMAN



Starting small: Simon Dupree & The Big Sound, with keysman Reg Dwight (second left); (left) Derek today.





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