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Gary Moore

"Gary could play
literally *any* style."

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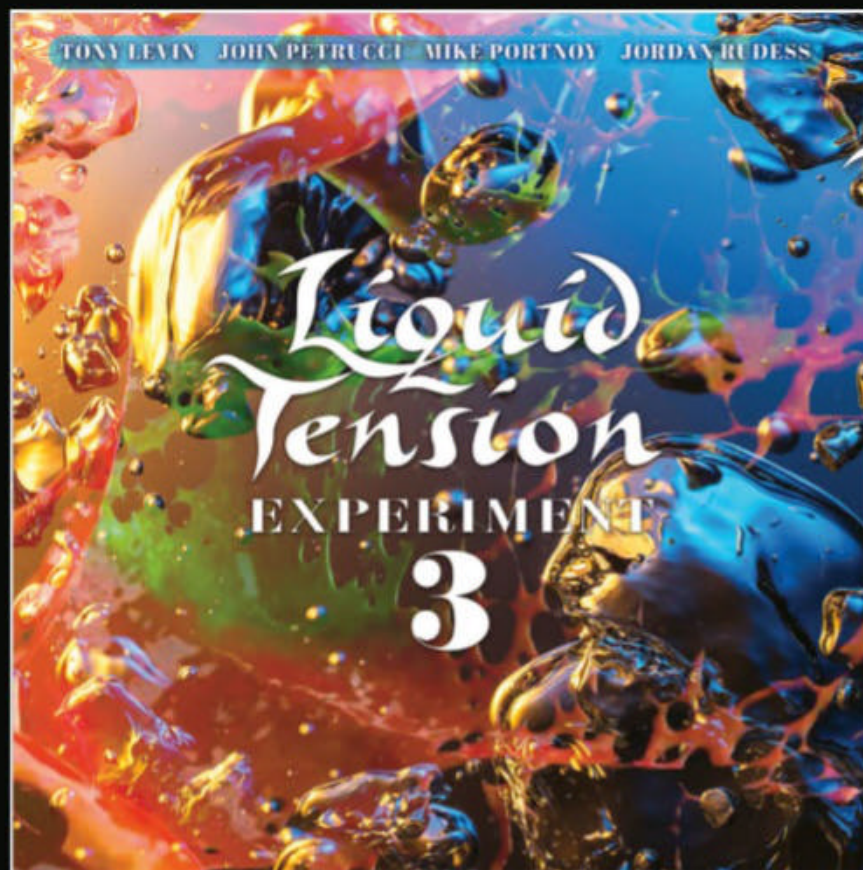
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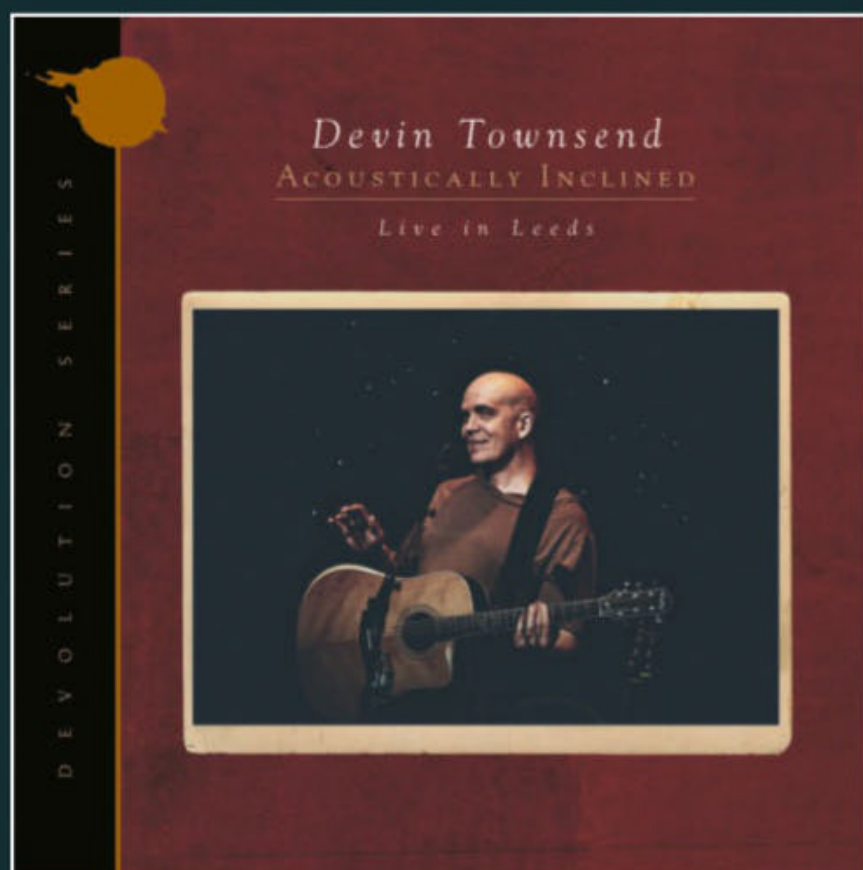


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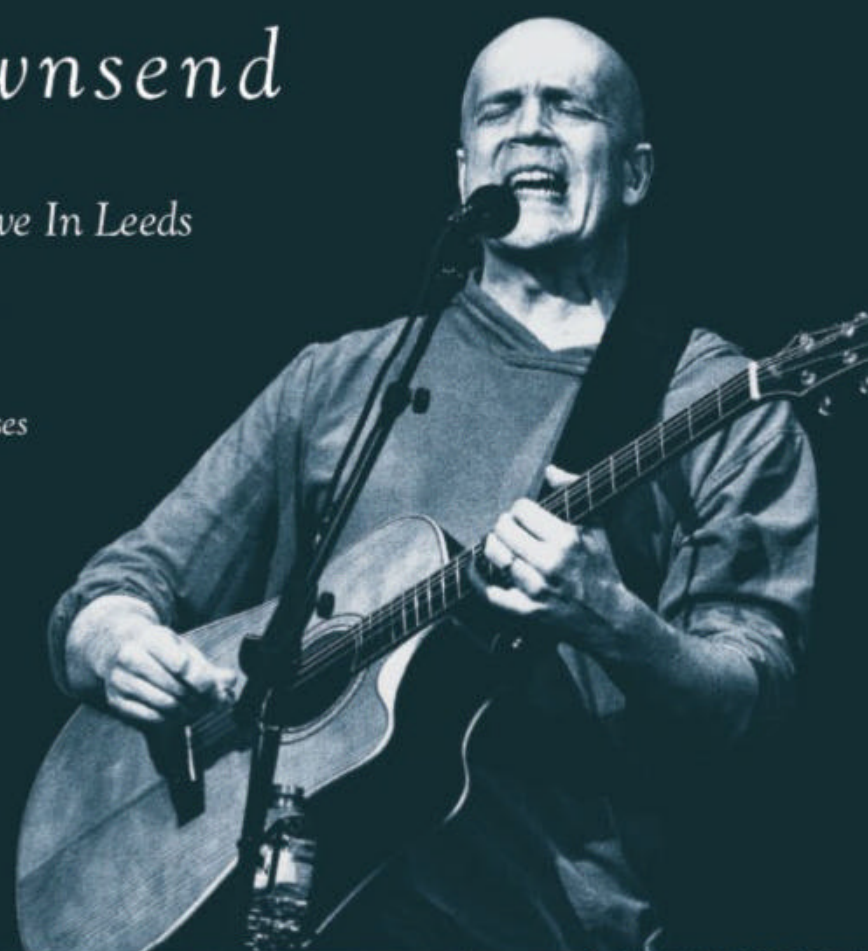
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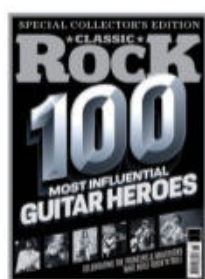


W here would rock'n'roll be without guitarists, eh? Answer: nowhere – there'd *be* no flippin' rock'n'roll. This month we take a look at some of the sonic architects without whom the musical

landscape would look (and sound) a helluva lot different. Join us in our deep dive (starting on p25) celebrating many of the players who don't always get the love and attention they deserve.

On a different note, hopefully by the time you read this we might be starting to come out from under the lockdown cosh and back into the world. But I thought I'd mention that should you not yet be venturing to the shops; don't forget that you can get *Classic Rock* delivered direct to your door (and grab a gift and save yourself some cash while you're at it) by subscribing! See page 92 for more info.

Siân Llewellyn,
Editor



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This month's contributors



PAUL HENDERSON

Paul has been CR's production editor since 2001. When not complaining about missing hyphens or... *anything*, he bangs on about the sound of Ginger Baker's drums, and tells stories such as auditioning for Sigue Sigue Sputnik, being covered in (real) shit on a boat mid-Atlantic, and appearing in panto with Ronnie Biggs. This issue he writes about guitarists for our cover feature (p25).



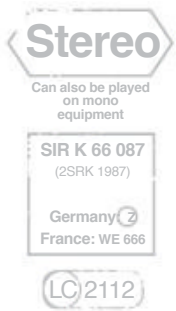
BILL DeMAIN

In quarantine, journalist-muso Bill DeMain contributed to *Go Further*, an upcoming collection of essays on power-pop (out May 18, Rare Bird Lit). He's also become an avid bird watcher and bird maker. For info about his line of Oddbirds cards and prints, visit www.instagram.com/oddbirds1. This month he spoke to Nancy Wilson for us, and wrote about the overlooked guitar genius of Joni Mitchell.



POLLY GLASS

Our features ed had an especially new music-heavy month, speaking to Royal Blood (p74), Greta Van Fleet (p62) and The Dust Coda (p22) about their respective (highly recommended) records and life in rock's fast lane. In between all that, she also managed to wrangle a load of our guitarist cover feature. She probably needs a holiday.



5150

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ABC January-December 2019: 38,021

Thanks this issue to Steve Newman (design)

Cover/wallet: typography by Steve Mitchell
Photos: Getty except Mick Jones/Shutterstock, Robby Krieger/Jill Jarrett (press)

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Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future.

Distributed by Marketforce, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London E14 5HU. Tel 0203 787 9001
ISSN 1464783

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Rock Rules The Top 20 Again

Guitar music back with a bang in a new renaissance.

HERE'S ONE IN the eye for those who bang on and on about rock and guitar music being dead – one of those being Kiss's Gene Simmons, who earlier this year repeated the often-spouted claim that “new bands haven't taken the time to create glamour, excitement and epic stuff”. He cites Foo Fighters as an exception to the rule, but points out that Dave Grohl and company are “a twenty-year-old band”.

This week's national UK album chart (week of March 5-11) suggests that Simmons's claim

about rock being dead is standing on very thin ice: up there in the No.1 spot are Brighton-based metalcore band Architects with their ninth release, *For Those That Wish To Exist*. Yes, a British heavy metal band has topped the albums chart. And Architects are not the only rock band to have achieved this memorable feat in 2021. Bring Me The Horizon, You Me At Six, Mogwai and the aforementioned Foo Fighters all did the same.

Lest anyone forgets, last summer Massive Wagons also gave rock a boost when they

charted at No.9 with their fifth album *House Of Noise*. And as this issue went to press, Scottish youngsters Mason Hill were standing tall and proud at No.6 in the midweek chart with their full-length debut *Against The Wall*. There are more success stories too. Of this week's Top 20, nine selections fall into the genre of rock music, with three occupying the top five in addition to Architects perched at No.1. Detractors looking at chart positions might point to the fact that Queen's *Greatest Hits* hasn't left the chart since the year dot, and other occupants include 'best of' releases from Fleetwood Mac, The White Stripes and Elton John, but the point remains that rock music is once again making its mark on the charts.

Classic Rock spoke to Dan Tobin, the man behind the recent campaigns for Massive Wagons and Mason Hill. Tobin, who until a year ago worked on behalf of Rivals Sons, The Temperance Movement and Blackberry Smoke at Earache Records, before going it alone, believes that the key to transforming a grass-roots following into



Mogwai



Foo Fighters



Mason Hill



Alice Cooper

crossover success involves long-term planning, loyalty and, most important of all, hard graft.

"Rock fans have a sense of community that doesn't exist anywhere else," Tobin believes. "If harnessed correctly it can allow a band to do a lot of damage, even with a relatively small amount of fans. The injustice of TV exposure and daytime airplay bestowed upon pop but which ignores rock infuriates me beyond belief. So what we must do is galvanise the loyalty of the fans."

"Rock fans, bless 'em, want to own the vinyl or the CD," he continues. "To outsiders that's nerdy, but it's in the DNA of rock fans. It applies long-term, and that's why trends come and go but rock bands never go away. It allows them to have extended careers."

Tobin also says that pre-order culture helps to give his clients a crucial leg-up. "The pop world is quick on consuming; the fans eat a song and it's gone," he notes. "But I still find it amazing that rock fans will commit to buying something six months in advance in the full knowledge that they must wait for it."

The bottom line is that the artist commits to very high levels of effort.

"Of course, any band has flogged its guts out to get that far. But I begin by sitting a band down and asking them which of their rivals they've seen on the chart and want to beat," Tobin says. "Mason Hill had a band they admired [and wanted to emulate], though I won't name names. I told them: 'We can do that,' and set out the numbers of their choice, in terms of gigs played, streams or records sold. Most think I'm an idiot and say: 'We can't do that.' But my reply is: 'Yes we can – if we give ourselves enough time.'"

A year ago the UK charts were rather different. Could the guitar-rock resurgence be attributable to lockdown?

"Quite possibly," says Tobin. "And I discussed the pros and cons of releasing a record during a pandemic

with Mason Hill. To me, covid has been a leveller. A smaller band shares the same predicament as U2 or Beyoncé. Everybody has the same problems. What you must do is work harder than the other guy."

However, the bottom line is and always will be talent. Alice Cooper, whose *Detroit Stories* album was at No.4, is of course no stranger to the charts, and he, for one, refuses to accept the pessimism of people such as Gene Simmons.

"I would like Gene to do my taxes, because he's a businessman, and that's valid. But I guarantee you right now that in London somewhere, in garages [young musicians] are learning Aerosmith and Guns N' Roses," Alice told NME. "There's a bunch of eighteen-year-old kids in there with guitars and drums and they're learning hard rock."

Long may that continue. **DL**



RIP

Thank you
and good night.



Bunny Wailer

April 10, 1947 – March 2, 2021

The last surviving original member of Bob Marley's Wailers, Bunny Wailer, has succumbed to a stroke. Born Neville Livingston in Kingston, Jamaica, the singer, writer and percussionist won three Grammys during his 73-year lifetime.

Rupert Neve

July 31, 1926 – February 12, 2021

Once referred to as the Steve Jobs of the audio world, British-born Rupert Neve had an illustrious career, and yet the inventor of the Neve recording console remained an unsung hero of the industry. 94 years old at the time of his death due to pneumonia and heart failure, Neve's contribution to music was monumental.

Elliot Mazer

September 6, 1941 – February 7, 2021

The long serving producer of Neil Young, Linda Ronstadt, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin, Santana and the Band among others has died of a heart attack at his home in San Francisco at the age of 79. Young called the native New Yorker a "master in the studio", adding that his 1972 album *Harvest* "happened because of Elliot Mazer".

Bob James

Died February 2021

Born in Ohio, Bob James was a successor to Sammy Hagar in Montrose, singing on *Warner Bros. Presents Montrose!* and *Jump On It*. During the late 70s he was asked about replacing Steven Tyler in Aerosmith. The 68-year-old passed away at home in Las Vegas, reportedly following stomach ulcer complications.

Gil Saunders

Died February 4, 2021

Multiple sclerosis and, more recently, lung cancer have claimed the life of Saunders, the singer of Harold Melvin & The Blue Notes. Philadelphia-born Saunders quit the Blue Notes for a solo career during the mid-1990s.



Michael Stanley

March 25, 1948 – March 5, 2021

Cleveland-born Stanley attained cult status by leading the Michael Stanley Band between 1974 and '81. In later years he became an actor and radio personality. The 72-year-old had been battling lung cancer for seven months.

Michael Gudinski

August 22, 1952 – March 2, 2021

Jimmy Barnes, Bruce Springsteen and Kylie Minogue were among those to publicly mourn Australian music industry stalwart and founder of Mushroom Records Michael Gudinski, who has died in his sleep at 68.



Tony Hendra

July 10, 1941 – March 4, 2021

Perhaps best known for his portrayal of cricket bat-wielding band manager Ian Faith in the mockumentary *This Is Spinal Tap*, actor and satirist Tony Hendra began his career in 1962 along with John Cleese, Graham Chapman and Tim Brooke-Taylor in Cambridge University's Footlights revue. Hendra, 79, had been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease in 2019.

Louis Clark

February 27, 1947 – February 13, 2021

The conductor, arranger and keyboardist who collaborated with Electric Light Orchestra throughout their glory years has died of a suspected stroke. The 73-year-old also worked with Ozzy Osbourne and Asia, among many others, going on to create the *Hooked On Classics* series with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Chick Corea

June 12, 1941 – February 9, 2021

THE VIRTUOSO JAZZ fusion keyboard player who was a member of Miles Davis' band during the late 1960s and went on to form Return To Forever has died of a rare form of recently discovered cancer at the age of 79.

Born Armando Anthony Corea (the nickname came from an aunt who pinched his cheeks and called him 'Cheeky' in childhood days), he grew up near Boston. During the 1960s Corea worked with jazz musicians such as Stan Getz and Herbie Mann before joining Miles Davis. His 1972 album *Return To Forever* morphed into the band of the same name. Their classic line-up was reunited for a world tour in 2008.

Known for his ability to improvise, Corea



was the fourth most nominated musician in Grammy history, having been shortlisted 63 times and picked up 23 awards.

Dream Theater keyboardist Jordan Rudess was among those to pay tribute on Twitter, describing Corea as a "legendary pianist, master of technique

and composition whose melodies reached down and grabbed our collective souls."

Geoffrey Downes of Yes added: "Sad to hear we've lost another iconic keyboard legend. I saw Return To Forever at Leeds University as a student in the early 1970s with that amazing line-up of Stanley Clarke, Al Di Meola and Lenny White. What an absolutely mind-blowing gig that was." **DL**

Chris Barber

April 17, 1930 – March 2, 2021

A SIGNIFICANT FIGURE

in the music scene of the 1940s, 50s, 60s and beyond, bandleader and trombonist Chris Barber has passed away at the age of 90. He had been suffering from dementia. Barber was an influential musician who linked New Orleans jazz with blues, rock'n'roll and R&B, his role in the skiffle movement bringing blues artists to British audiences during the 1950s and 60s.

"Without Chris Barber," Rolling Stones bassist Bill Wyman once observed, "the Stones and the Beatles would not be where they are now." In 1991, he was awarded an OBE for services to music.

Born in Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, Barber formed his first band



in London following the Second World War. He collaborated with many of music's biggest names, such as Muddy Waters and Mark Knopfler of Dire Straits. In 1972 Barber and his band teamed up with Rory Gallagher to record the album *Drat That Fratle Rat!* He

played live until retiring in 2019.

Hawkwind issued a statement declaring Barber "one of the jazz greats who brought some of the legends of blues to Britain." It continued: "His influence on rock, blues and jazz in this country is legendary."

According to Steve Van Zandt, of Bruce Springsteen's E-Street Band, Barber was "the Godfather of British rock". **DL**

LG Petrov

February 17, 1972 – March 7, 2021

THE MEMBERS OF Swedish heavyweights Entombed have paid emotional tribute to Lars-Göran Petrov, the former singer of their band who has lost a battle with bile duct cancer. The 49-year-old announced his incurable illness last summer, telling *Classic Rock*'s sister title *Metal Hammer*: "It's just very, very bad luck. Cancer doesn't have feelings."

A Swede with Macedonian roots, Petrov joined death metallers Entombed in 1988, appearing on eight of their most popular albums, including the genre-defining *Left Hand Path*. In 2013 he was part of the rebranded outfit Entombed AD.

In a statement, Entombed AD wrote: "Our brother, leader, vocalist, our Chief



Rebel Angel went on another ride last night. It's with the deepest sadness that we have to announce that Lars-Göran Petrov has left us. LG was (is!!!) an incredible friend, and a person that touched so many people. He changed lives with his voice, music, character and unique personality."

Countryman Johan Hegg of Amon Amarth said: "The word legend is too small to describe LG and what he meant for me as a friend and inspiration. Not only was he one of the best and original voices in metal, but the most kind, humble, funny and genuine person one could ever hope to meet."

Opeth, Orange Goblin and Volbeat were among others who paid tribute. **DL**

marillion

the light at the end
of the tunnel tour

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17 CARDIFF ST DAVID'S HALL
18 BASIN **SOLD OUT** E THE ANVIL
20 LOND **SOLD OUT** LADIUM
21 LOND **SOLD OUT** LADIUM
22 LONDON PALLADIUM
24 MANCHESTER O₂ APOLLO
25 EDINBURGH PLAYHOUSE
27 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
28 DUNDEE CAIRD HALL
30 SCUNTHORPE THE BATHS HALL

OCTOBER 2021

01 BRADFORD ST GEORGE'S HALL
02 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
04 CROYDON FAIRFIELD HALLS
05 GUILF **SOLD OUT** LIVE
07 BRIGHTON DOME
08 POOLE LIGHTHOUSE
09 BEXH **SOLD OUT** A WARR PAVILION
11 SOUTHAMPTON MAYFLOWER
12 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
14 CARLISLE THE SANDS CENTRE
15 STOCKTON GLOBE
16 NEWCASTLE O₂ CITY HALL
18 AYLESBURY FRIARS WATERSIDE
19 OXFORD NEW THEATRE
21 PETERBOROUGH CRESSET
22 HARROGATE ROYAL HALL

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A KILIMANJARO PRESENTATION BY ARRANGEMENT WITH SOLO

Mick Fleetwood Plans Farewell Mac Tour

Drummer says the band "owe it to the fans".

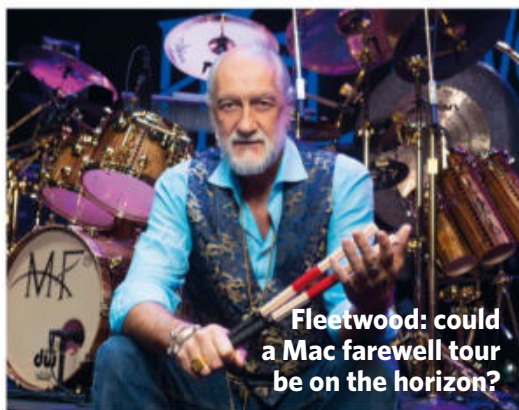
FOLLOWING A RECENT interview given by Christine McVie to the BBC, in which the keyboard player/singer implied that future Fleetwood Mac tours could happen without vocalist Stevie Nicks, her former husband bassist John McVie and possibly even herself, Mick Fleetwood has stepped in to soothe things. In an upbeat conversation with *Rolling Stone*, the drummer claimed to be mapping out the idea of a farewell tour.

"The vision for me is that we actually say 'this is goodbye' and go out and actually do that," he said. "We owe it to the fans."

Fleetwood was keen to dilute McVie's comments, saying: "I think she got out of bed on the wrong side that day. She meant to say: 'We've done so much. I don't know whether or not we can keep going'."

Meanwhile, Fleetwood and Mac's former guitarist/singer Lindsey Buckingham "re-connected" after a nasty split that saw the latter sue his old bandmates, and settled the matter in a low-key manner.

Asked if Buckingham could be a part of Mac's proposed farewell tour, Fleetwood replied: "Strange things can happen. I look at Fleetwood Mac as a huge family." **DL**



Fleetwood: could a Mac farewell tour be on the horizon?

Download 2021 Cancelled

But Iron Maiden re-booked for the 2022 event!

THIS SUMMER'S DOWNLOAD Festival has been cancelled. The 2021 event, which was set to take place at Donington Park on June 4-6, was forced to cancel for a second consecutive year due to covid-19.

In happier news, plans for Download '22 are already in place, and while Iron Maiden were unable to appear at this year's event their diary is clear for them to headline next year along with Kiss and Biffy Clyro. A full support bill for the weekend of June 10-12 will be announced at a later date. Tickets are on sale now.

As this issue went to press, the Reading and Leeds Festivals were optimistic for their August Bank Holiday weekend events (both are sold out), and both Ramblin' Man Fair and Steelhouse Festival are expected to go ahead in July.

Sadly this year's Cambridge Rock Festival is another of the many covid-casualty events that will not take place this year. **DL**



Black Sabbath bassist/lyricist Geezer Butler has confirmed the authenticity of a previously unheard Dio-era **Black Sabbath** track uploaded to YouTube by the estate of the band's late keyboard player Geoff Nicholls. Butler, who briefly quit the band in 1979, reveals that he did play on the track, titled *Slapback*. Guitarist Tony Iommi is "not at all happy" about the leak.

Vocalist **Frank Aiello**, bassist **Neil Murray** and keyboard player **David Stone**, all of whom worked with **Cozy Powell**, have joined Magpie percussionist **Garry Bowler** for a revision of late drummer Powell's 1974 hit *Dance With The Devil*. Now re-named *Dancing With The Devil*, it also features the last recording of **Bernie Tormé** on guitar. Buy it digitally via 3MS Music from April 23.

A limited double A-side vinyl single, *Play Don't Worry* and *Animal No. 9*, from **Mick Ronson's** 1974 appearance on BBC TV music show *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, is released on Record Store Day (June 12).



Alice In Chains guitarist **Jerry Cantrell** (pictured) has completed his third solo album, his first full-length release since *Degradation Trip* in 2002.

Axl Rose made an appearance in a recent episode of the long-running cartoon series *Scooby-Doo And Guess Who?* If you missed it, here's a spoiler: he'd have got away with it if it hadn't been for those meddling kids.



The Offspring

Dexter and Noodles on opioids, sex droughts and growing old disgracefully.

CITING CALI PUNK godfathers like X and the Dead Kennedys – but spinning that influence into a more palatable racket – The Offspring sold over 11 million copies of 1994's *Smash* to a post-grunge audience ready for something sunnier. You know them best for *Self Esteem's* ode to a flaky girlfriend and *Pretty Fly (For A White Guy)*'s skewering of a wannabe hipster, but singer Dexter Holland and guitarist Kevin 'Noodles' Wasserman tell us their tenth album *Let The Bad Times Roll* is more socially charged.

What's the significance of that title?

Dexter: It seems to wrap up our times right now. We've had a lot of shit over the last few years, but we're not out of the woods yet.

Noodles: Trump is gone, but Trumpism isn't. Trump is more a symptom than the cause. The main thing is people not looking at each other's viewpoints, they're just screaming at each other, largely over Twitter and Instagram. I think if people were looking at each other's faces it might not be so vitriolic. It'd be more like: "Okay, I see your point", instead of: "Fuck you, you suck!"

What things are you writing about on these songs?

Noodles: Well, there's *We Never Have Sex Anymore*. That's about when the passion in a relationship begins to wane.

Dexter: People always write about hooking up, right? I remember someone from the label saying: "Why are you writing about not having sex? A few years ago the biggest song in the world was *Get Lucky*. Who wants a song about not getting lucky?" But actually, not getting lucky, that's most of us.

What, even rock stars?

Noodles: Well, we've been married a long time now. Not to each other.

What's *The Opioid Diaries* about?

Dexter: Addiction is not a new story, but in America we've had this onslaught of prescription medication – we're talking about Oxycontin and stuff like that.

Noodles: And it's not the guys from Mötley Crüe. It's the church-going kids, the blond-haired, blue-eyed quarterback, right? They break their ankle one season, they're given Oxycontin. Next thing you know they're on heroin, because their prescription ran out and they can't afford Oxy any more.

Do you have any favourite memories from the sessions?

Noodles: Every once in a while we'd get in Dexter's plane and go to a punk show in Fresno.

Dexter: Is that bad – to fly a private jet to a punk show?

As a punk band, who are the role models for growing old gracefully?

Noodles: We've played with some iconic bands over the last two years, like Fear, X, the Dead Kennedys. I think playing this kind of music keeps us young.

Dexter: They're a little bit older than we are, but they look great.

How about the British punks – did you ever meet John Lydon, for example?

Noodles: We were in a documentary called *Punk*. Johnny Rotten was on a Q&A panel with me, talking about this documentary, and he was drunk and obnoxious. I was cringing from ear-to-ear, because it was such a beautiful, horrible experience.

Who are your own 'offspring' – do you hear your influence in modern punk?

Dexter: I don't hear a lot of bands that sound like us. So maybe no one wants to imitate us? **HY**

Let The Bad Times Roll is released on April 16 via Concord.



★ HIGH HOPES

Levara

|||||

“This music was about killer songs, loud guitars and ripping solos.”

Fusing rock-star genes with synth-rock jams, this LA trio have come for our stadiums.

THERE IS NOTHING more addictive, says Trev Lukather, than the roar of a sell-out stadium. “When I was twelve years old and had just picked up a guitar,” recalls the Levara gunslinger, “Toto had reunited with Bobby Kimball and my dad [Steve Lukather] took me on tour to Europe. Next thing you know, he brought me up onstage without me knowing and told me, ‘Play whatever you want’. Dad had to hold the guitar strap because I was too frickin’ short. But I had 20,000 people scream afterwards. And then I was hooked.”

With a first gig like that – not to mention a childhood where Eddie Van Halen “was just hanging out at the house” – it’s no wonder Lukather Jr has lofty ambitions for his own band. He’s inherited a few of the old man’s qualities: witness the motormouth interview style, flashy guitar skills and 80s synth-rock sound. “Back in that world of tape, you had to really play your ass off,” he says. “Those guys played like motherfuckers.”

But the Levara lineup (completed by French-born vocalist Jules Galli and sometime One Direction drummer Josh Devine) insist they’ll live or die on the merits of their self-titled debut album. “I look at our songs as very anthemic,” Lukather says of electro-rock screamers like *Automatic* and *Chameleon*. “Like a nice homage to the 80s music like Toto and Journey that I personally love.

Every time we wrote a new song, it was like, ‘I want to hear this in an arena’. Y’know, this music was about killer songs, loud guitars and ripping solos – and everything about it had to be real.”

The hooks might be universal, but that doesn’t mean Levara deal in empty platitudes. Dig into the lyric sheet and you’ll find an edge to raw moments like *On For The Night*. “That song was written after we got a message from a fan who was struggling with depression,” recalls Lukather. “It’s basically a suicide prevention song. But then there’s the happy ending at the end of such a dark song where everybody can just go nuts on the dancefloor.”

Elsewhere, the moody *Allow* is so personal that he hesitates to talk about it. “My sister, she’s now over a year sober, so it’s a happy ending, but at the time, she was struggling with alcohol. So we checked her into rehab, and it was a really emotional time. I came home and that riff just poured out of me. But the craziest thing is that Jules wrote the lyrics separately – and they matched.”

It’s tantalising to think how big these songs might sound live when Levara are finally let off the leash. And if you’re one of those cynics expecting a vanity project from yet another rock-star progeny, says Lukather, prepare to be proved emphatically wrong. “We opened for Toto back in 2019 and it was an amazing full-circle moment. But this wasn’t: ‘Aw, isn’t that cute?’ We were ready. We held our own. We fucking killed it.” **HY**

Levara is released on May 14 via Mascot.

FOR FANS OF...



“I look at our music as Toto or Journey-esque, but with a modern production and take,” says Trev Lukather. “An album like *Frontiers* [1983] by Journey was just fucking amazing. It’s just one of those records that I can listen to on repeat and I’ll never get sick of it, y’know?”

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has confirmed that they are officially investigating allegations of abuse made against **Marilyn Manson**. At least 11 women have come forward to accuse the singer of physical and mental abuse between 2009 and 2011.

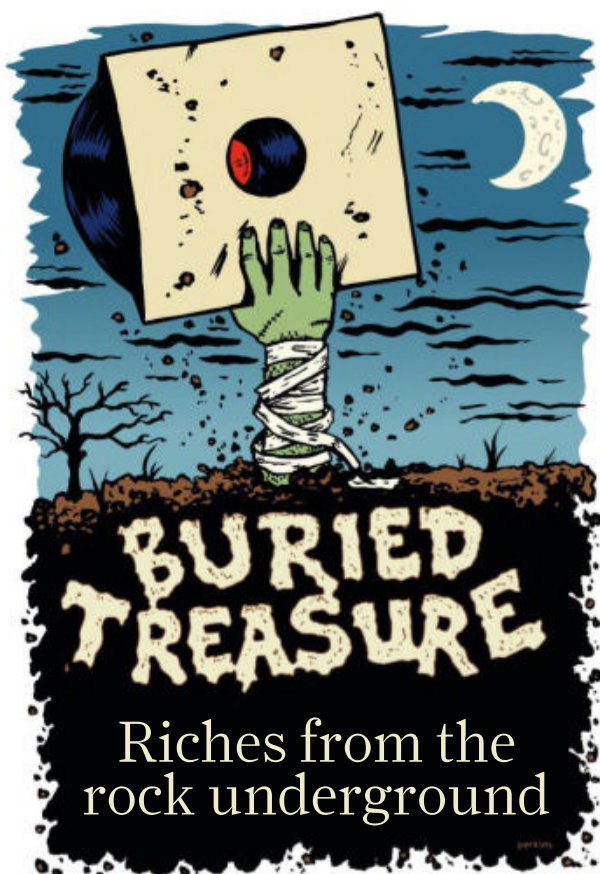
Brian May has revealed his all-time favourite guitar solo. When talking to *Total Guitar*, he chose Eric Clapton's solo on *Key To Love*, a track on John Mayall's 1966 album *Blues Breakers With Eric Clapton* (aka the Beano Album). "It's the hottest, burning, high-passion piece I've ever heard in my life," says May. "It totally rips, and I'll never get over that. It's one of my great inspirations."

Helloween release a self-titled album on June 18 via Nuclear Blast. It's their first since vocalist Michael Kiske and guitarist Kai Hansen re-joined the current seven-piece line-up.



Rainbow In The Dark, the long awaited, autobiography of **Ronnie James Dio**, is published on July 27. Dio (pictured) had been working on a memoir during the years before his passing in 2010. With his wife Wendy Dio's authorisation the book was completed by *Classic Rock's* Mick Wall.

The Wheatsheaf in central Oxford is the latest music venue to be threatened with closure. An online petition opposing plans for the space to be turned into student accommodation has been set up.



FELT

Felt, Nasco, USA, 1972. £800.



Felt were the brainchild of talented songwriter/guitarist/vocalist Myke Jackson, who formed the band in Huntsville, Alabama towards the end of the 60s. It's hard to

comprehend that Jackson was only 17 years old when *Felt* was recorded, as it has such an accomplished feel, full of tasteful musicianship and styles ranging from heavy blues to progressive pop and jazz rock. There's a slightly melancholic feel to the overall vibe, which is enhanced by slightly dark psychedelic touches.

Opener *Look At The Sun* has a sorrowful Beatles feel with piano, which doesn't really give an idea of what's to follow. *Now She's Gone* is a more upbeat progressive jazz-rock, with a reflective mid-section. *Weepin' Mama Blues* sets a heavier tone, with Jackson's soulful vocals becoming more apparent. *World* is where things get moving, encapsulating a heavier Traffic-type vibe, with vocals bringing to mind Steve Winwood and Steve Marriot. *The Change* is the album's

'A slightly melancholic feel, enhanced by psychedelic touches.'

centrepiece, clocking in at more than 10-minutes and moving between blues and funky rock. Unsurprisingly it's their most progressive track, but avoids sounding drawn out.

Lyricaly the album is the work of a deep-thinking teenage mind, with subjects including drug addiction, war, revolution, family breakdowns and relationship troubles.

The diversity of material makes *Felt* come across as not too dissimilar to many lesser-known early British progressive bands of the time, and while it can't be described as a masterpiece it did show immense potential, which unfortunately eluded them. **LD**



WELCOME BACK

Chris Holmes

The former W.A.S.P guitarist on Blackie Lawless, his new documentary, giving up booze, and *that* interview.

CHRIS HOLMES MADE his reputation during two stints with W.A.S.P, who the guitarist's maniacal personality helped to establish as a major force. After eight years he quit in 1990, then rejoined in '95 and was with the band for another six years. In recent times he's fronted his own band, Mean Man.

Most people probably remember Holmes from his infamous interview, while seemingly drunk in a swimming pool, for the documentary *The Decline Of Western Civilization: The Metal Years*. Now, he's opened up about his life and music in the documentary *Mean Man: The Story Of Chris Holmes*.

In the Mean Man documentary you say some harsh things about W.A.S.P's Blackie

Lawless. Was he asked to participate? Yes he was asked, but he said he didn't have the time. The way he looks now, I can't see Blackie ever wanting to talk on camera again. That's why this will probably be the only W.A.S.P. documentary you'll ever see.

Given your difficult relationship with Blackie, why did you return to W.A.S.P. in 1995?

It was a way for me to get out and see the world again. I was also told a lot of things I hated about the band had changed, and that Blackie was easier to get along with. That was all crap. Nothing had altered.

You allege in the documentary that your publishing rights to songs written for W.A.S.P. were stolen.

Have you taken legal action over this? No. I did consult a lawyer, who told me that by the time all of this was sorted, not only would it cost me a lot of money but I would probably be about ninety. It wasn't worth that much aggravation.

You now live in France. Why did you move there?

My wife is French, and we came down to Cannes because her father was seriously ill. We stayed to help out her mother. Then I met some musicians from the area, formed Mean Man and I'm still here.

Do you speak French?

Ha, no! I sit at the dinner table not understanding a word everyone is saying. But maybe that's a good thing.

You stopped drinking a while back. What prompted that? I gave up the booze twenty-five years ago. If I had carried on the way I was going, then I wouldn't have reached sixty-two, the age I am now. It was a question of survival.

What are your plans for 2021?

I have most of a new album called *Unbearable Influence* finished. It just needs a few touches added. But I'm not sure as yet when this will come out. Maybe towards the end of the year. There are also a few dates booked in England, Scotland and Ireland for November – if touring is possible.

So was the swimming pool scene in *The Decline Of Western Civilization* for real?

Yes it was. Nothing was staged. But that wasn't my pool. It was owned by Miles Copeland, who financed the film. And I was already messed up by the time the interview even started. My mum tagged along, because she hadn't seen me for a while. I'm not sure if people know this, but I actually recreated the scene in 2017 – only this time I did it sober. **MD**

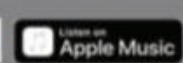
Mean Man: The Story of Chris Holmes is available now via Cleopatra.



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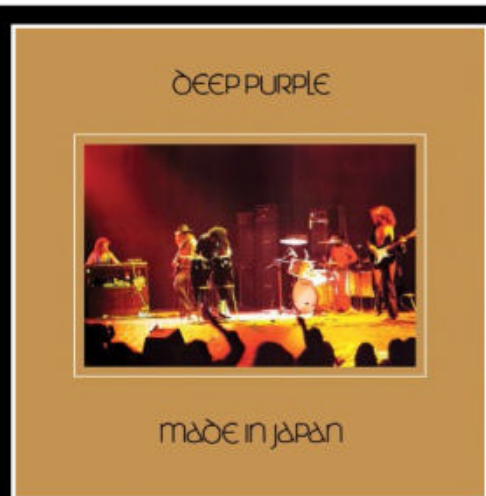


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MY FIRST LOVE

Deep Purple

MADE IN JAPAN

By Yngwie Malmsteen

The Swedish shred star reflects on the live album that impacted him more than any other.

"I was nine or ten years old when my elder brother brought home *Made In Japan*. I'd already heard Deep Purple's *In Rock* and *Fireball*, both of which



had affected me in Biblical proportions. I went out and got *Machine Head* because I had loved *Made In Japan* so much. But as a naïve little kid from Sweden I couldn't understand why *Lazy* and

Space Truckin' had suddenly become so short.

"No other live album had such a huge impact on me. *Made In Japan* had so much crazy energy, man. Back then, without the internet, MP3 players and thousands of radio stations to choose from, hearing a new record for the first time was such a religious experience. I actually wore out three or four copies of the vinyl edition.

"I often listened to the album with Blackmore's solos turned down, replacing them with my own and recording them on to this cassette player of my uncle's. I took the tapes into school saying: 'Listen to this.' My friends would go: 'Yeah, *Made In Japan*. So what?' But it was me playing the guitar! I had everything down so faithfully; I even knew when Blackmore touched his pick-up switch, so I did the same thing.

"Even now, when I put on *Made In Japan* in my car I still go: 'Fuck! This is an incredible album.'" **DL**

NEWS

Pete Townshend has used lockdown to write lyrics for The Who and says a new album could be released if financially viable. Townshend and frontman Roger Daltrey lost money on the critically acclaimed *Who*, released in 2019.

David Coverdale hopes to tempt **Jimmy Page** into collaborating with him on new music. The Whitesnake frontman has written a couple of bonus tracks to present to Page for a reissue of their Coverdale/Page album released in 1993. The expanded edition would also include the project's original home demos and possibly some live recordings.

Blackberry Smoke release their seventh studio album, *You Hear Georgia*, on May 28 via 3 Legged Records/Thirty Tigers. Produced by Dave Cobb, it includes guest appearances from Gov't Mule's Warren Haynes and American country music artist Jamey Johnson.

The first official **Jeff Buckley** biopic is on the way. *Everybody Here Wants You* is being co-produced by Mary Guibert, the mother of the singer who passed away in 1997, aged 30.



David Gilmour (pictured) insists he "absolutely" doesn't want to play with **Pink Floyd** again. Talking to *Guitar Player* magazine, he said: "[The band] has run its course, we are done." A live album of Floyd's 1990 Knebworth Park show is released for the first time on CD, double vinyl and digital platforms on April 30.



WELCOME BACK

Dropkick Murphys

Ken Casey on sobriety, stolen puddings, and the resurrected art of smashing TVs with sledgehammers.

THEY WERE FORGED in the white heat of Boston's mid-90s punk scene, but the Dropkick Murphys were always a breed apart, fusing blistering rock'n'roll tear-ups with folk flourishes that made every show feel like St. Patrick's Day. For now, the hot crush of their stage-front security rail might be off-limits, but for co-frontman Ken Casey, tenth record *Turn Up That Dial* is about "closing the door on 2020, looking forward and being optimistic."

Which dial should we turn up, exactly?

Well, that's why I like the album title. It could be the dial on anything. Making shit change. Speaking up. It could just be your stereo, y'know? Just don't sit back. Don't be a pussy!

Why is it important to play *Turn Up That Dial* loud?

It's been such heavy times. Our last album kinda documented a lot of overdose and death in our lives. Now [with covid] it goes to this super-heavy time, and who wants to lament about that? Music is obviously a tool for serious change at times, but even then it can be in the form of just kicking down the door and fuckin' screaming.

The song titles are brilliant. Tell us about *Mick Jones Nicked My Pudding*.

Our producer, Ted Hutt, was telling a story about how he was working on a record and Mick Jones from The Clash was in the same studio. There was a common area, and Ted had a pudding in the fridge – he didn't label it or anything, and Mick ate it. I got a real kick out of that, because he's one of my musical heroes. So everyone went to lunch, and I stayed back and wrote *Mick Jones Nicked My Pudding* in five minutes.

How about *Smash Shit Up*?

That's about how you can't always speak up as an adult, for fear of losing your source of

income. But it's still inside you. Someone told me you can rent a room now where they give you a sledgehammer, let you get in there and smash old TVs. My point is, everyone has that desire to rebel. And sometimes music is how you do that, because it takes you back to your youth, or maybe it makes you think of the people that had the balls to actually rebel.

The new record was begun during the Trump presidency but finished after his defeat. Can you hear both eras?

Trump is someone who I despise. There's definitely influences of him on the song *Chosen Few*. But at the same time, I also like Joe Biden's perspective of: 'Let's not give this guy life'. He was hopefully an anomaly that will never exist again. Let's

look onward to positive stuff. I've been guilty of it. If there's two things on TV – Joe Biden telling me how we can improve the future, or Donald Trump hopefully getting convicted in an impeachment – what do I want to watch? Well, my human nature says I want to watch Trump get fucked, y'know? But the reality is that we'd all be better off looking to the future.

People often describe the Dropkick Murphys as great drinking music.

I haven't had a drink in almost thirty years. But when you say something is drinking music you're essentially saying it's good-time music. For me, drinking isn't good times. But turning up the dial and listening to my favourite music gets me amped up in a way that drugs or alcohol never did. Ultimately our goal is to put a smile on people's faces. Or maybe put a scowl on their faces. But we're not making stand-on-the-sidelines music here. **HY**

Turn Up That Dial is out on April 30 via *Born & Bred Records*.

|||||
**“My mum was my
 biggest fan. We’d go get
 a 30-pack of beer and
 listen to Kid Rock
 all night!”**



★ HIGH HOPES

Jacob Bryant

Meet the North Georgia country rocker with a troubled past and a bright future.

IT’S BEEN A long road for southern rock’s rising star Jacob Bryant, paved with addiction, anxiety and loss – experiences he’s poured into debut LP *Practice What I Preach*, a meaty fusion of countrified soul and rock’n’roll grit.

His musical journey began when he was just eight years old, playing bluegrass on his grandparents’ porch in rural Georgia. “That was where it started, just enjoying hanging out with the family and making music,” Bryant says in his southern drawl. “Cos there wasn’t really anything else to do where I’m from!”

Bryant was a “dorky skateboarder kid”, who failed chorus in high school because he was too shy to sing. Instead, he would retreat to his bedroom to practise guitar in private – learning blues rock tunes by the likes of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Eric Clapton. “Music was very therapeutic, and helped me with some of the things I had to deal with growing up, like living in a split home – my parents split when I was four – and growing up in poverty.”

Singing in church finally gave him the confidence to share his voice. “That was the first time I’d ever stood in front of people and performed,” Bryant says. “Then I ended up leading the worship for a couple of years.”

After graduating high school, Bryant was ready to get going with his music career. Then, at 19, he had a heart attack after too many

Red Bulls on a night shift job. “That spun me into panic attacks and anxiety. Everytime my heart beat fast, I’d think I was having another heart attack.”

Just six months later, Bryant’s mother passed away. “My mom was my biggest fan, and she was also my drinking buddy. We didn’t have a normal mother son relationship, we’d go get a thirty-pack of beer and sit there and listen to Kid Rock all night! When she passed I went on a bit of a spiral. I self medicated and was drinking very heavily. But when I came out of that it made me understand that music can be something deeper, something

that can help somebody else. It lit a fire under my ass.”

This new fire led to Bryant playing gigs – including an opening spot for Dolly Parton – and releasing a self-titled EP in 2014. He then spent years working on his album, only for disaster to strike, again. “My producer’s house was broken into, and the computer with the album had been stolen,” he says. Thankfully, back-up MP3s were found. “They were close enough that we could call it done, master and realise it. So what we had was raw and real.”

Now coming out in the UK, the deluxe edition of *Practice What I Preach* has bonus tracks including *Save My Soul*, that Bryant wrote with Black Stone Cherry’s Jon Lawhon. And while Covid has halted his touring plans, there have been positive aspects, too.

“I’ve had the time to see my daughter grow, walk and talk for the first time, and now we have a new little boy on the way,” he smiles. “So it’s been a blessing and a curse.” **HMK**

Practice What I Preach (deluxe edition) is out via Snakefarm.

FOR FANS OF...



“This album has a mix of country, rock and blues, with some ass and grit behind it! I just love that he made an album that was so different from the mainstream ‘norm’ at the time, and it really grabbed me as well as many other fans who love that edgy side of country and southern rock.”

Michael Schenker

The influential guitarist on immortality, alcoholism and why he'll never make peace with elder brother Scorpion Rudolf.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

For better or worse, Michael Schenker's reputation precedes him. Born in West Germany in 1955, the wunderkind guitarist joined elder brother Rudolf for the Scorpions' 1972 debut *Lonesome Crow*, then split for UFO and a run of de-facto solo projects.

As he rightly points out, his influence is towering: without Schenker's melodic pyrotechnics on classics like *Another Piece Of Meat* and *Love To Love*, heavy-mob acolytes such as Dave Mustaine and Kirk Hammett might never have become the players they are.

Among the rock press, meanwhile, Schenker is infamous for semi-coherent rambles that leave them with not a lot to write about.

Today's conversation begins inauspiciously, with a shaggy-dog story about his move to Brighton threatening to swallow our entire allotted time. But, with a hard nudge, we finally get him on point.

How pleased are you with the Michael Schenker Group's new album, *Immortal*?

Oh, I'm absolutely blessed. It feels like a gift from heaven. Y'know, like: "Michael, this is what we give you for staying true to yourself for fifty years and being Michael Schenker."

What's the significance of the album's title?

It's from Mark Steiger, the head of Nuclear Blast in Germany [Schenker's label]. He said to me once: "Michael, if you wouldn't have been, Nuclear Blast would have never been, and all the other thrash metal categories would have never existed." I've been doing all these Australian interviews, and they told me the same thing: if I wouldn't have been, then thrash metal would have never been. Dave Mustaine told me that what he heard on [UFO's third album] *Phenomenon*, he'd never heard anything like that before. Kirk Hammett said the same thing. And the reason is because I'm going to the inner spring of infinite creativity, being Michael Schenker...

[Hopelessly tries to interject]

I am not chasing fame. In the eighties, lead guitarists copied what I did, and later, apparently, it led to the new school. Every generation, I have given something that was fresh. If everybody takes from the trend, it will eventually burn out, it will be dead. Most people are after fame, money, success, instant gratification. It was never important for me. What was important was the now, the moment, and to be happy as an artist. I couldn't have done that with Ozzy Osbourne. I had to decline Deep Purple, Thin Lizzy and Phil Lynott, Ian Hunter, Motörhead. So many asked me to join them as their number-one choice. I was tempted. But I always have to remember: Michael, you left the Scorpions and UFO because you had your own vision.

What's on your mind at the moment?

I must say, 2020 is a cluster of problems in my life. Not just the virus, but my partner's mother dying of cancer. So many complications. I was getting ready for the biggest Japanese tour ever. We would have sold out the Budokan. We had to cancel. I'd prepared for that for a whole year. It was a slap in the face.

It puts an empty spot into your life. Making an album, going on tour, that's the way it's been, all of these years. All of a sudden, it's: stop. And that is difficult.

You and your brother Rudolf have fought for years. Has the pandemic brought you closer?

The thing about Rudolf is simply this. In 2015 I found out about the *Lovedrive* story lies and I was so disappointed [Schenker argues that the reissue and sleeve notes of the Scorpions' 1979 *Lovedrive* downplayed his contribution]. It opened a can of worms. All of a sudden I found out all of these strange things that happened in the period of time since I left the Scorpions. I couldn't do the touring with them because I'd finished with UFO, and I had my own vision. I'm a kid in a sand box. I play and discover. I don't compete. I don't chase anything. I don't chase money. I never have. I'm an artist and...

But, given what's happening, isn't it time to forgive?

It has nothing to do with forgiving. Let me just finish. I love Rudolf as a brother. But social distance is needed, so I don't get tricked into any further inconvenient situations.

At sixty-six are you worried about catching the coronavirus?

I have a mask on, every time I go shopping. Sometimes I tell people off: "Oi! Two metres! I don't want your bloody virus! And I don't want to give it to you!" I have gloves on, mask on, my spray with me. To answer your question, of course I'm worried. I don't want to end up in hospital and, y'know, bye bye Michael!

Have you ever watched the notorious video of you performing drunk?

I don't watch anything. I don't want to know anything. Especially if I did something stupid or bad. Which one are you talking about?

A solo you played at the 2007 Rock & Blues Custom Show.

Well, of course, I had transition times, and I had ups and downs like every teenager had when they were sixteen, discovering what they couldn't do it at home and getting screwed up. Everybody gets screwed up. As a baby, we start making mistakes, right? You start trying to stand up, you fall over, you don't know better. Then you become a toddler and you start pulling on tablecloths and everything collapses. That's what life is, you go through crises.

During lockdown have you ever come close to falling back into bad habits?

I was so busy over the whole period. But I have to say that mentally it is definitely a strain. But I want to make sure that I stay the way I developed from 2008. I don't want to lose that stability. So I do whatever I can.

Thanks then, Michael...

[shouts] Take care and keep on rocking! 🎸

*Michael Schenker Group's *Immortal* is out now via Nuclear Blast.*



**“I don’t follow trends.
If anything, I have created
trends – and not just one.”**

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

The Dust Coda

They all like AC/DC, they're not always on 11, they spent lockdown getting a record deal, they've played some unusual gigs...

Words: Polly Glass

SOME SINGERS HONE their performances with hot beverage concoctions, for others it's yoga, breathing exercises, or necking a few shots pre-show. For John Drake, powerhouse vocalist with rock'n'roll four-piece The Dust Coda, it's boxing.

"I've been doing it for about seven months," he says. "It's very similar, for me, to performing on stage, because you have to think about what you're doing with your hands, playing the guitar, your feet, your focus..."

Right from the beginning, with their no-bullshit debut in 2017, The Dust Coda have punched consistently high. New album *Mojo Skyline* is a case in point. Songs kick, sway and swagger in all the right places without being formulaic, while hat-tips to Guns N' Roses and Soundgarden (softer moments and shitkickers) feel like extra spicing, not crutches.

This isn't any of the members' first band.

After moving to London from Brisbane, Drake started out playing low-key "Ryan Adams-y, Dylan-y" acoustic solo gigs all over Soho. "Which in London at the time was a pretty fucking miserable experience," he says with a laugh.

Meeting guitarist Adam Mackie in a rehearsal studio was the turning point. At the time, Mackie had fallen into the electro-pop world with Maxfield, enjoying mega-shows with first-class players but missing rock'n'roll. "I was like, I've got a Les Paul and a Marshall stack. I didn't buy that stuff to play dance music!" Bassist/classical veteran Tony Ho and seasoned covers band drummer Scott Miller completed the line-up.

They spent the first lockdown negotiating a record deal.

Unlike most of their peers, instead of cancelling tours The Dust Coda were cutting a deal with Earache, whose interest they'd piqued at the launch of the label's *New Wave Of Rock And Roll* compilation. Back then, in early 2020, *Mojo Skyline* was already all but finished. And the subsequent covid-induced delay hasn't dampened their enthusiasm for it. "We cannot wait to bring it to people," Drake enthuses. "That's quite exciting, sitting on an album for a year and then going: actually, it still kicks arse!"

AC/DC is what unites all four members.

"You're gonna love AC/DC if you have any interest in rock'n'roll whatsoever, aren't you?" Miller says of the band that has influenced

the meaty brightness of their own tunes. "AC/DC have that danceability as well."

"It puts us in a happy place," Mackie says. "I think of AC/DC when I think of The Dust Coda because we play it so much together."

They rock hard, but find softer songs easier to write.

If you've heard only TDC's singles, you'll likely have them pegged as a balls-out, all-rocking environment. On *Mojo Skyline*, conversely, the prettier, plaintive likes of *Bourbon Pouring* and *Dream Alight* bring to mind The Temperance Movement and GN'R's balladic moments.

"Between us we can bosh out lovely melodic numbers," Mackie says. "When you're a musician you spend most of your time playing stuff that sits nicely to play on your own. But we really work hard on the louder stuff, and making it good enough to sit on a TDC album."

Their roots include GN'R cassette tapes in Australia...

Growing up in Queensland in the 80s, Drake was crawling all over motorcycles in his father's store ("I still ride them when I go back"). A cassette of *Appetite For Destruction*, handed to him on the school bus, pushed rock'n'roll to the top of the agenda: "I went home, put it on the tape machine and... that was it!" Around this time another, rarer GN'R tape fell into his lap: "My brother had a cassette of Axl Rose at some bar in LA, doing an impromptu performance of *November Rain*. This was before *Use Your Illusion I* and *II* came out. I had this cassette for three years and I fucking lost it!"

...and classical concerts in North Korea.

In the UK their shows have taken them to a superfan's house in Yorkshire and the Brewdog brewery AGM at Aberdeen AECC ("I'd never seen ten thousand people hammered in a room before," Mackie recalls). For bassist Tony – who played upright bass with ensembles and orchestras back home in Moldova – these really weren't his first tastes of unusual gigs.

"He's played in North Korea," Miller says.

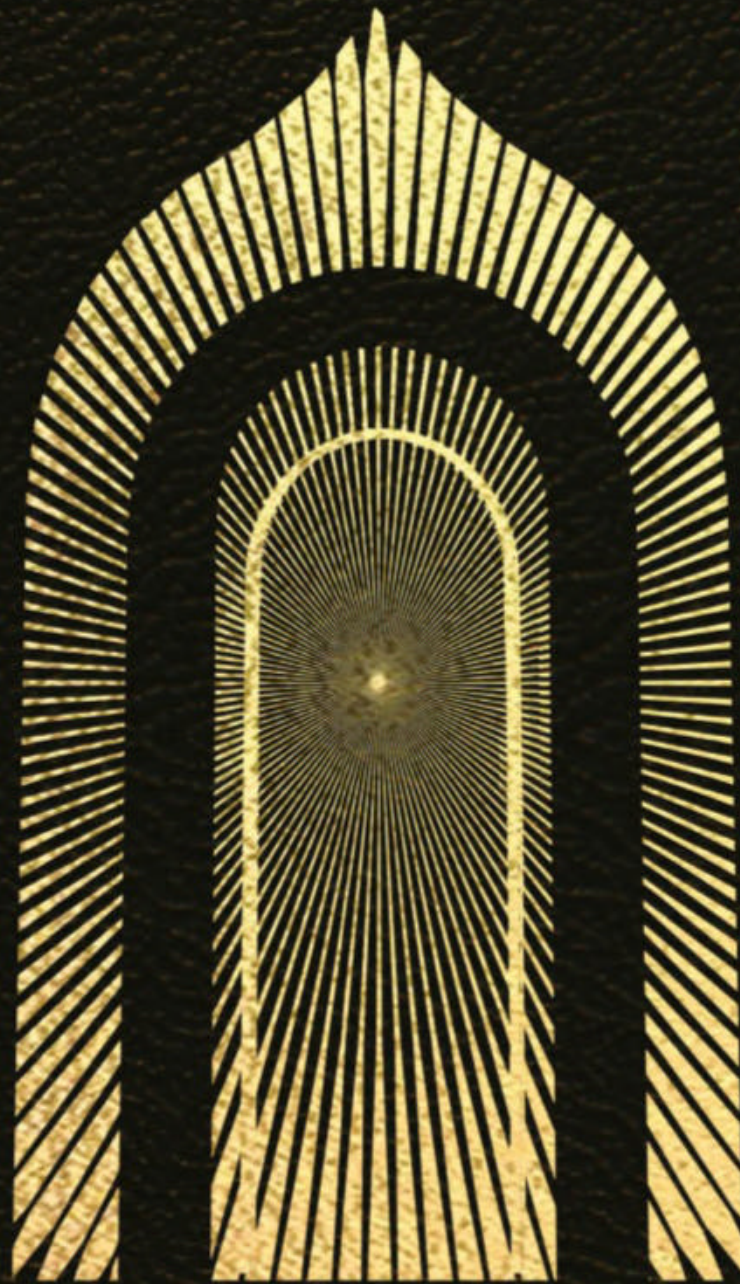
"Tony's very critical of himself, because he's an incredible musician," John adds. "So [after shows] he'll be going: 'Oh the third chorus, I really screwed that up...' and I'll be like: 'Tony! Let's get drunk! I screwed up all night. Forget about it!'"

Mojo Skyline is out now via Earache Records.



The Dust Coda: (l-r) Tony Ho, John Drake, Adam Mackie, Scott Miller.





THE BATTLE AT GARDEN'S GATE

FEATURING:

- ✕ MY WAY, SOON
- ☾ AGE OF MACHINE
- ☀ HEAT ABOVE
- ⚔ BROKEN BELLS
- ⚔ BUILT BY NATIONS

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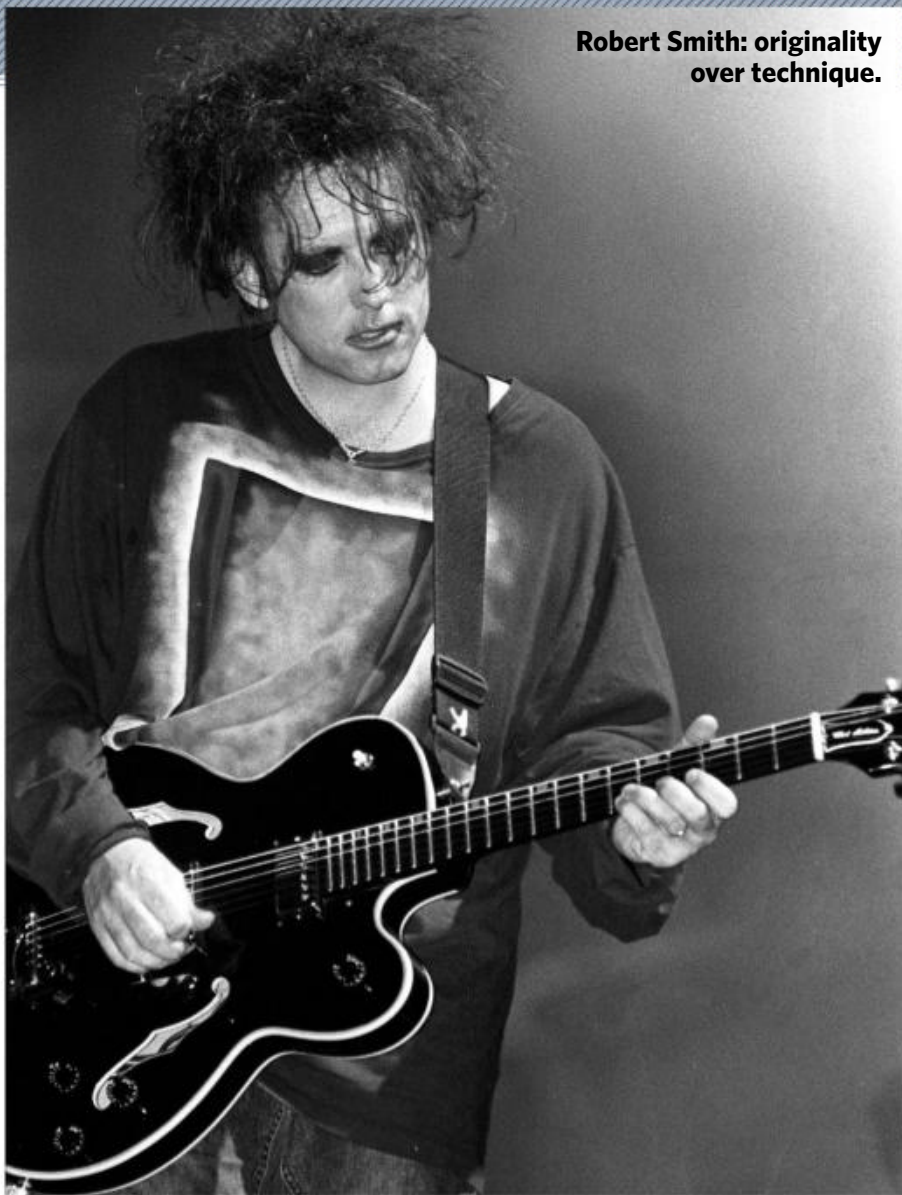
A few months ago, our sister mag *Total Guitar* ran a reader vote to ascertain the Greatest Guitarist Of All Time. It's a heady task, and one we'd wager most self-respecting music and/or guitar magazines and websites have had a stab at (we certainly have here at *Classic Rock* over the years in one format or another). Coming in at top of the shop for TG was none other than the Queen maestro Brian May. A superb choice, and certainly not one we have any truck with. But their list got us to thinking...

Rock'n'roll is littered with amazing, fascinating, genre-defying men and women who have picked up an instrument with six strings and reinvented the course of musical history. Players who have not only played and written the most amazing riffs, songs and solos, but who have used the guitar to create new sounds, or even invented new ways to play or tune it. What of those guitarists who have inspired and continue to inspire? Those who don't always get the kudos they deserve? And thus the idea of this issue's rundown was born.

So how did we do it? Well, first of all we took a look at many different 'Best Guitarist' lists and realised that the same half-a-dozen names always occupied the top spots. Deservedly. You can't deny the power and influence of Page, Hendrix, EVH, Beck, BB, Clapton or May (who rightly made the Top 10 of every 'greatest guitarist' list you could think of, from *Rolling Stone* to *Guitar World* and beyond), and they're included here, but they're not our focus. We wanted to celebrate those who don't usually make the top spots. The players who have influenced and continue to influence the course of rock'n'roll.

So, in consultation with the *Classic Rock* writers and experts from *Total Guitar*, *Guitar World*, *Guitarist* and *Guitar Player* magazines, we put together our list of influential players.

"I hope you don't mind me saying this, but the funny thing about guitar playing is that you can't really rate it," Dr May told TG. So this issue we haven't. We're just celebrating it!



Robert Smith: originality over technique.

ROBERT SMITH

All spidery substance and no “empty flash”, The Cure frontman makes the guitar sound like no one else.

When The Cure broke big with 1989’s *Disintegration*, and the world turned its attention to Robert Smith, the frontman’s guitar playing was always doomed to be a footnote. For wags it was all about the hair, the slap and the moan; for casual fans, it was the songs and the synths. By comparison, the sinister, spidery lines spun by Smith with a Fender Jazzmaster (or often a six-string bass) were a best-kept secret – although hugely influential to those that knew. When Smith played guitar, as Billy Corgan once put it: “The air gets heavier.”

Growing up in West Sussex, Smith’s formative influences weren’t as left-field as his outlier image suggested. He had taken (then dropped) classical guitar lessons, and has cited everyone from Jimi Hendrix to Rory Gallagher as touchstones. But the fact that he turned up at Morgan Studios in London to record The Cure’s 1979 debut album *Three Imaginary Boys* carrying a £20 Woolworth’s electric announced his refusal to play the archetypal guitar hero. (He eventually bowed to pressure from management and bought a Jazzmaster, but transplanted the cheaper guitar’s pickup.) “I used to abhor guitar solos,” Smith told *Guitar Player* in 1992. “I didn’t like the whole wanky idea of stepping to the front and saying: ‘Look at me!’”

Right from the start, his playing in The Cure was the opposite of empty flash. Revisit the Middle Eastern trills that open debut single *Killing An Arab*, for example, or the doomy string bends that perfectly mirror *One Hundred Years’* opening gambit ‘*It doesn’t matter if we all die*’. Even in the late 80s, as The Cure fell reluctantly into the mainstream, Smith remained a guitar player with a bolder plan, whether de-tuning his top string for a DIY chorus effect, or defying musty blues shapes with the haunted-house intro of *Lullaby* and the crystalline descending lick that opens *Just Like Heaven* – still two of the most icily brilliant singles to trouble the UK charts. “I’m not technically a good player,” he told *The Hit*. “But at least I don’t sound like anyone else.” **HY**

Listen to this: *Just Like Heaven* (The Cure, *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me*, 1987)

Les Paul

Jimmy Page: “I was just dazzled by the Les Paul recordings, and I think most young guitarists were. When I first heard *How High The Moon* I just thought: ‘Goodness gracious, what is that?’ Because it was so radically different from anything else that was going on; his whole guitar arrangements and orchestration. And the solos were just amazing.”

Listen to this: *How High The Moon*

Luther Perkins

Hugely influential Mississippian Luther Perkins (1928-1968) played a major part in Johnny Cash’s legend, establishing the twangy, ‘freight train’ rhythm that powered hits such as *I Walk The Line* and *I Still Miss Someone*.

Listen to this: *Folsom Prison Blues*



Pete Townshend

With all the arm-wheeling and his relative lack of noodly solos, The Who guitarist is sometimes overlooked in guitar-hero round-ups. Which is a gross oversight, as anyone who’s marvelled at his unique fusion of staccato ferocity and straight-for-the-gut soul will know.

Listen to this: *5:15*

Frank Zappa

Being so lauded as a composer and arranger often overshadows Zappa’s unique playing as a guitarist, but his head-spinning invention, mastery and syntax puts him in a category all on his own.

Listen to this: *Son Of Mr. Green Genes*

Steve Lukather

Appearing on Jacko’s *Thriller* and countless other mainstream hit records, Lukather remains the epitome of the ‘superstar session gun’, and as the linchpin of mega-selling AOR gods Toto he’s conjured some of their signature sublime melodic moments.

Listen to this: *Rosanna*



ELYSE STEINMAN

A founder member of southern-flavoured boogie band Raging Slab, who came together in New York in 1983, guitarist Elyse Steinman was their trump card in an already winning hand. Often playing distinctive guitars shaped like Texas, standing just so but not in a studied way, she exuded an enigmatic cool that had little to do with being a hard-rocking *female* guitarist who played amazing, dirt-under-the-fingernails slide, and everything to do with being just damn good.

Whether she was playing a shimmering solo or dragging full-chord slides, it was difficult to listen to Raging Slab and not zone in on what she was contributing. Like the best musicians, she had a knack of playing just the right thing in just the right place; she had feel. Had Raging Slab not remained one of the best bands you’ve probably never heard of, Steinman wouldn’t be one of the best slide players you’ve probably never heard of. Quietly way ahead of her time. **PH**

Listen to this: *What Have You Done* (Raging Slab, *Dynamite Monster Boogie Concert*, 1993)



LARRY LALONDE

Joe Satriani’s other students Steve Vai and Kirk Hammett are better-known, but Satch also taught Primus’s Larry LaLonde a thing or two back in the day. Unusually for a rock band, LaLonde’s formidable, catholic guitar skills have always played second fiddle to the bass of Primus linchpin Les Claypool. “It forces you to be more of a textural player,” LaLonde told *Guitar World*. “You end up trying to find holes to fit in. It definitely takes away from being a traditional rock player, but it can be pretty inspiring too.”

LaLonde’s left-field aesthetic is a many-headed beast: impressionistic, Hendrixian salvos, avant-garde, Fripp-like arpeggios, fleet-fingered, surfy psych-blues and more come at you filtered through imaginative tones. His oblique approach is as valuable as it is inimitable. As with Vernon Reid or Tom Morello, you’re never sure what he’s going to do next. **GM**

Listen to this: *Tommy The Cat* (Primus, *Sailing The Seas Of Cheese*, 1991)



Marc Ribot: not the fastest guitarist around, but he doesn't feel the need for speed.

MARC RIBOT

Meet the daring sonic chameleon (and a guitarist for Tom Waits, The Black Keys and others) whose playing has taken in rock, free jazz, classical, hardcore punk, Cuban music and more.

Interview: **Grant Moon**

Experimental New York guitarist Marc Ribot made his reputation early with his pioneering work on Tom Waits's 1985 album *Rain Dogs*. He's since gone on to make music under his own name, with his avant-garde outfits such as Ceramic Dog, and his long-rolling CV as a sideman includes stints with Fred Frith, John Mellencamp, The Black Keys and Robert Plant and Alison Krauss.

Ribot can also count fans from all parts of the musical spectrum, Kirk Hammet cites him a guitarist who rocks his world. "His playing is way outside," says the Metallica guitarist, "but it works because his sense of melody and swing pulls it back in."

Tom Waits and Steve Earle were among the artists on Ribot's politically charged latest project, *Songs Of Resistance 1942-2018*.

You were a teenager during the Summer Of Love. What was your first band called?

Mirage, then we changed it to Love Gun. We were four pimply white kids in a garage in the suburbs of Newark playing *Green Onions* by Booker T. & The M.G.s and *In The Midnight Hour* by Wilson Pickett. Then songs by Cream, Vanilla Fudge, Iron Butterfly...

How did your relationship with the guitar evolve from there?

When I really love something, I try to find out where it came from. So I pretty quickly understood that there's this guy called BB King, who Eric Clapton got a lot of licks from. That was great for me because

access the past, and to alter it. You could play an old blues lick, but with a certain effect that couldn't possibly have existed when that lick was first recorded. There's all these other things you can play with other than just the notes – loud or soft, hi-tech or lo-fi, European or South American. All these things are important and create new levels of meaning. It's a musician's job to do that.

“Part of the freedom of playing is the freedom to access the past, and to alter it.”

I was never the fastest guitarist, and BB and Chuck Berry taught me that if you could play with economy then you didn't have to be.

You're an influential player. Do you ever hear a guitar part and think: 'That sounds familiar!'

Every now and then I hear another guitarist playing terribly and then citing me as an influence! For some maybe I've been a gateway to a larger past. By the time I was recording, I'd heard Clapton and Hendrix but also Django Reinhardt, Hubert Sumlin, Duane Eddy. Part of the freedom of playing is the freedom to

With so much political turmoil in the world your album *Songs Of Resistance* couldn't have been more timely.

Part of the idea was to get great artists from many different parts of the music scene to come together to do something. I was also modelling the idea of a popular front: we can work together, make music together and make politics together to end this bad situation.

When someone asks Marc Ribot to play on their record, what do you think it is that they are after?

I have no idea. I'm just glad when they do. Out of nothing but helping the drums or the bass, my parts somehow emerge. It's a beautiful process.

Listen to this: *Way Down In The Hole* (Tom Waits, *Frank's Wild Years*, 1987)



SYLVAIN SYLVAIN

He had the look, the attitude, the talent, the desire. Had heroin not intervened, he reckoned his band the New York Dolls, not the Stones, could have been the Greatest Rock'n'Roll Band In The World.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

Sylvain Sylvain lost his long, courageous battle with cancer on January 13 this year. Egypt-born, Paris-raised, New York City-made, Sylvain was the heart and soul of the New York Dolls, the band he formed and named in 1971.

Sylvain's guitar provided the essential complementary ice to temper his Dolls sparring partner Johnny Thunders' singular proto-punk fire: insistent spiky shards of reliable rhythmic punch to propel the animalistic post-Dick Dale roars, yowls and caterwauls of the ungovernably mercurial Thunders.

While it's the libertine excess of the Dolls' rambunctious rock that lies at the heart of their enduring influence and appeal, it's the disciplined roll provided by Sylvain, frill-free bassist Arthur Kane and cooler-than-thou swing-specialist drummer Jerry Nolan that ultimately seals the deal.

Always cast as the loyal subordinate bridesmaid to Thunders' brassy bride, it was Sylvain who originally brought in, tutored and, with surprising team-player generosity, stood aside for the undeniable charisma bomb that was Thunders to occupy the senior guitarist's Keef-established stage-left spotlight.

Captured in London while promoting the reunited glam legends' *One Day It Will Please Us To Remember Even This* album of 2006, we join the cherubic, corkscrew-coiffed guitarist sinking ever deeper into a West End hotel bar's leather couch as he spools back through an engaging series of snapshots from a life well lived.

When were you first possessed by rock'n' roll?

I actually started early. I discovered I had talent when my parents moved to Buffalo, New York, next to Niagara. We'd come to America from France. It was cold, but the house we rented was furnished and, lucky for me, came with a piano. My uncle played accordion so he showed me a few

things. I started playing songs, showed them to my mom, so she was like: "Hey, he's talented, let's send him to music school." So they sent me to the local chapter of the New York School of Music, and I learned to play piano. I recommend it to everybody. Whatever instrument you learn to play, learn to play the piano also.

So piano lessons and fate brought music into your life, but where did you acquire the attitude to become a rock'n'roller?

When I was a little boy growing up in Paris, my uncles had the coolest American records. Uncle Victor had Gene Vincent records. And Ray Charles? Man, what a rock'n'roller. It turned you on, drove you nuts, and that's what really made me get into music.

"Every generation that came about post-New York Dolls was either borrowing or influenced by us."

When I moved to the States The Beatles were on the television and I loved them. The Beatles were everything to me. I grew my hair, started wearing mod clothes and cried for six months until my father got me a big Spanish guitar for seventeen dollars. And then the Rolling Stones came on television and I was like, fuck The Beatles, they're a bunch of wimps. Listen to these guys. I loved the fucking Rolling Stones, and wanted to be just like Keith Richards, Charlie Watts and, of course, Brian Jones. He was the best because he looked such a cool cat.

So then I took my guitar and started asking every black guy in New York to teach me how to play the blues. Then I had this friend at school called Joe who taught me all the best licks: BB King

stuff, Chuck Berry shit. He taught me a lot, and that's when I started getting good.

How did you come into the orbit of the other New York Dolls?

Well basically me, Johnny [Thunders] and Billy Murcia went to the same high school in Queens, and Billy and I wanted Johnny in the band because he was a cool-looking cat who had all the chicks. I said to Billy: "If this guy can't play, fuck it, we'll grab his girls." Because every little boy's dream was to get laid. So we put him in the band. He didn't know how to play, but took on the bass because it only had four strings.

So he started out playing bass, but I taught him how to play guitar, I taught him how to play the blues, three-chord progressions, barre chords, and power chords that were just barre chords cut down to two bass strings but sounded just as good when you're playing them through a cranked-up amp. Then his head got so damn big that he said: "I'm the lead guitar player now and you're gonna be the rhythm guitar player."

What was happening on the New York scene the Dolls arrived into?

It had all died, it was a big void. It was the era of stadium rock, so boring. It wasn't from the garage, the basement or the street any more. So when we came out we were subconsciously rebelling against it. We would perform where we could touch them and they could touch us. Audience and performer were one, and our songs were three minutes of magic. They didn't go on and on. The song was always just as long as the song needed to be. The song dictated everything. And the style? We were The Beatles of attitude, and New York embraced us. They were like: "Wow, this is so new." But all we did was go back a little, to the way it was, and the way it should be: short, sharp, live and in-your-face. When we performed at the Mercer Arts Center all hell broke loose and we ➤





New York Dolls in '74: (l-r) Jerry Nolan, David Johansen, Sylvain Sylvain, Johnny Thunders, Arthur Kane.

became that generation's band. Suicide were around but the Velvets had gone, Lou Reed was on his own, so that was the end of that. MC5 were still around but they'd had their moment.

Shortly before the Dolls signed to Mercury you suffered the tragic loss of Billy Murcia. He's since been defined by his early death, but how do you remember Billy?

We were brothers, both immigrants. He was from Colombia and I was born in Egypt, so when we met in New York we became a team because that's how surviving is done. But my best memory is all the clothes we made. We started [clothing company] Truth And Soul together in the sixties, and that gave us the privilege of coming to Europe. We'd work our ass off during the winter, then come here during the summer to shop for Marshall amps and shit, then go to Amsterdam to smoke hashish for three months. Just go into a fog for a little while absorbing music and styles.

Once back in NYC, and with Shaker's Jerry Nolan on drums, you're finally signed and presumably were given a guitar budget.

Jerry professionalised us because we were all over the place. Not putting Billy down, because Billy was much more inventive, but Jerry Nolan had the professionalism to tighten it all up. By the time we signed, Johnny had taken over as lead guitarist, which affected what we each got for our budget. As lead guitarist he got eight hundred dollars, and as rhythm guitarist I got three hundred. I went out and spent mine on an old yellow Gibson Junior,

the least expensive Gibson. It was called the TV model because the yellow looked good on black-and-white television. Johnny had spent his on a Gibson Black Beauty: two pick-ups, four buttons, it was basically twice the guitar and looked damn good too. Anyways, Johnny shows up late to the next rehearsal and I've already plugged in my yellow TV and got it really cranked up through a Marshall and that little baby's sounding fucking great. Now, me and Johnny used to trade everything; clothes, jackets, guitars, girls. He comes in, hears me playing, and straight away goes: "Syl, I'll trade you right now. I'll give you my Black Beauty for your TV." So, I said okay.

"I like to think that without heroin we would have been f*king ten times bigger than the Rolling Stones."**

Did you realise right from the beginning that the Dolls were too extreme for the American mainstream?

No, because when you're in it you never realise nothing. You're running a horse race and you're number one. You're galloping like a motherfucker, you've gotta kick some ass. If you thought that way you'd be too self-conscious to even make music.

While the Dolls' appearance on *The Old Grey Whistle Test* sowed the seeds of UK punk, your legacy altered rock's entire landscape.

Every generation that came about post-New York Dolls was either borrowing or influenced by us.

Everybody who bought the first album started a band, and we spawned a lot of stuff. That hasn't really changed, and every generation's kept our legacy alive."

Do you think that without heroin the first incarnation of the Dolls could have gone on to make more albums and enjoy a similar longevity and success to a band like Aerosmith?

Well, we were a pretty fine fucking band. We wrote some great tunes, started so many things. But we were living our lives and really living it. This was not a fate thing. We weren't doing it because we read somebody did it, this was the real deal. Going

back to that horse-racing analogy, we were running well ahead of the pack in the Kentucky Derby, but we fell down, we broke our leg and that was it. Everybody behind us and even behind them, they all went ahead and got to the finish line. I hate heroin so much, because it destroyed my band,

one of the most beautiful bands in the world: the New York Dolls. I don't know, but I like to think that without heroin we would have been fucking ten times bigger than the Rolling Stones.

The original Dolls' final act was to enlist Malcolm McLaren as manager, but you'd already known him personally for years.

Yeah, I knew him from the rag business. When I was with Truth And Soul, we met at a boutique trade show in 1970. On the Sunday night all the designers would meet to trade unsold samples. So I met Malcolm and Vivienne Westwood, who were Let It Rock at the time. Later on I introduced

The start of something good:
Sylvain Sylvain & The
Criminals at Max's Kansas
City, NYC, April 19, 1977.



them to Johnny and [Dolls vocalist] David [Johansen], and we bought some capped-sleeved ripped shirts with zippers, and Teddy boy jackets. All that rockabilly stuff was right up our alley. So we made our introductions and that was that.

How did this rag-trade acquaintance become the band's manager?

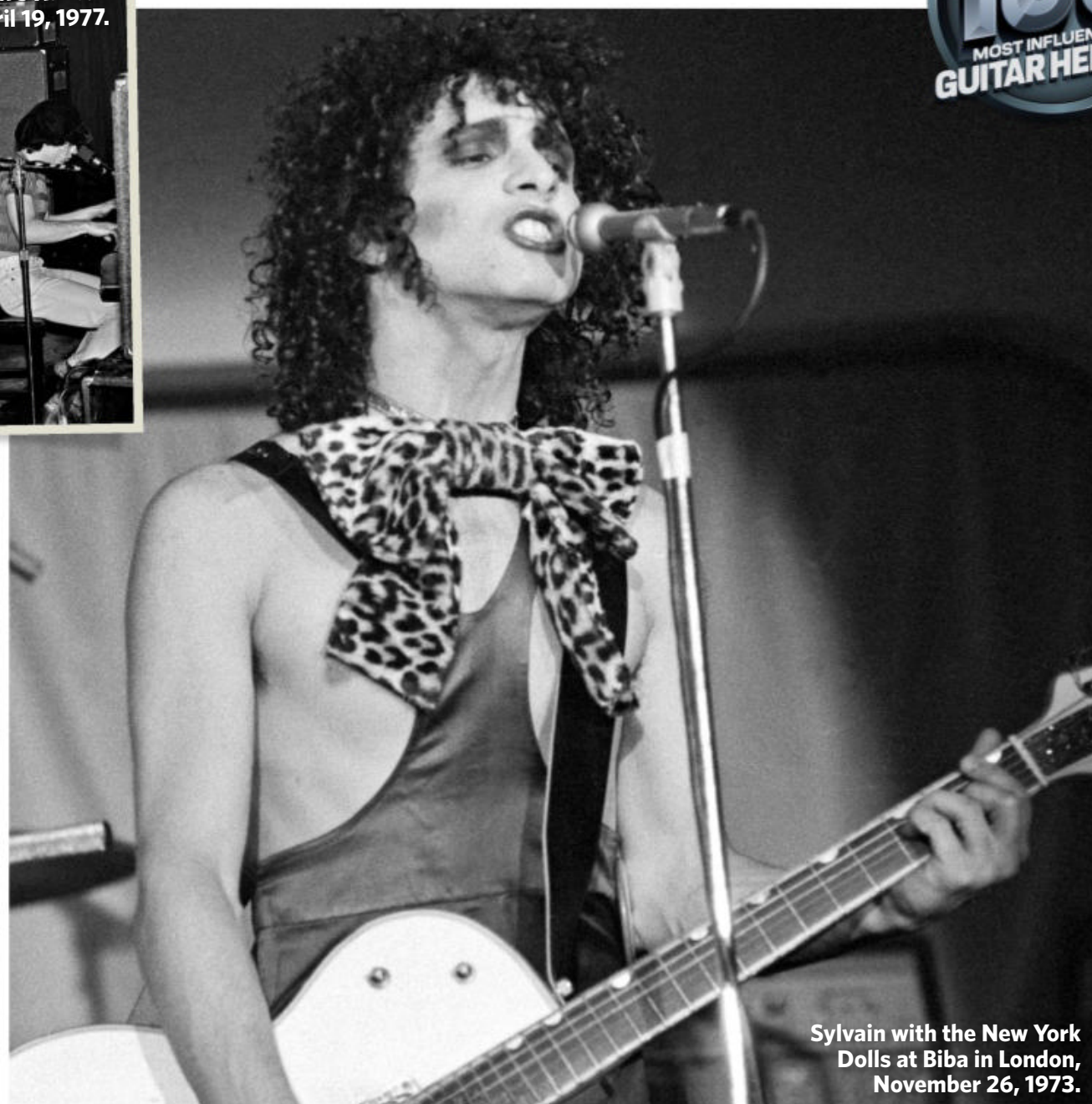
Because we were friends and he loved the Dolls. He was there every time we came to England. When we played at Biba's in '73, he and Vivienne were at every show. Then they followed us to Paris. They were part of our entourage, because they loved the Dolls. Vivienne always said: "You boys look so much better in women's clothing." So I said: "You know what? She's right." So they were both crazy about us. But Malcolm kept on coming to New York, and when we were having problems with our manager he helped out. He never had any actual paperwork, so he wasn't really our manager, but he did what a personal manager would do. He got us a loft to rehearse in, next to the Chelsea Hotel, and that's where we put the whole Red Patent Leather show together. He helped to detox Arthur [Kane, bassist], and tried to put Jerry and Johnny into a rehab programme with methadone and all of that.

Did they go?

Yes, but they didn't last long. They basically took the medicine and then went out on the street and took the other medicine. David likes to snap on Malcolm, say he never did much, but I think he sincerely tried to help. But he was too late, we were way overboard by then. We were gonna break up and that was that.

And through Malcolm you nearly became a Sex Pistol.

Yeah. When the Dolls broke up in Florida, I drove Malcolm to New Orleans in a rented station wagon we never gave back. When we weren't partying I took him to old record stores on Magazine Street and he was so excited; "Blimey, Sylvan [sic], you'd never get all these Huey Piano Smith records at home." Then we had to get back to New York. But even though I was the one driving, I didn't have a licence. So I said: "Malcolm, there's no way I'm going to fucking drive all the way from New Orleans to New York City without a driver's licence. You've gotta take me to the Louisiana Board of Motor Vehicles." And he did. He tested me from a book,



Sylvain with the New York Dolls at Biba in London, November 26, 1973.

"Our songs were three minutes of magic. They didn't go on and on. The song was always just as long as the song needed to be."

and I took the test with this big, piggy-looking, pot-bellied Louisiana cop. I asked: "Did I pass?" And he said: "Yes, you're the smartest white boy here today." So I was now on a temporary licence, driving a rented Plymouth Fury 3 station wagon, at 100 miles an hour in some places, totally fucking sad from the Dolls breaking up, while Malcolm's going: "Don't worry, Sylvan, there are all these kids that hang around in front of Vivienne's shop who are all musicians and we can put a band together."

Once we were back in New York I helped him sell some clothes that Vivienne had sent him so he could afford to get back home, and I gave him my white Les Paul that Steve Jones used to play in the Pistols.

As soon as he got back he started calling me. He sent me a seven-page letter with photo-booth photos: "We're thinking of calling this one Johnny Rotten. He can't sing, but he can definitely sing better than Johansen." He kept going on about the Sex Pistols. "This is your band,

Sylvain. Don't go to Japan with David." He was putting everyone down, saying he'd

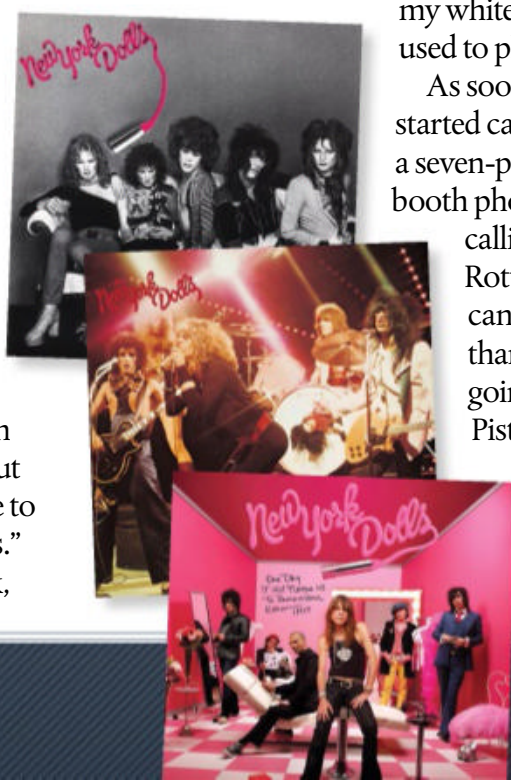
send me my plane ticket. But I wasn't waiting. He didn't pay me for my guitar, or my piano that I sent to him, so I did go to Japan with David. It was what I needed to do at that point, but I guess it would have been pretty wild to have been in the Sex Pistols. Jesus Christ, can you imagine?

After the Dolls, you signed a solo deal with RCA in 1979, formed The Criminals and would occasionally play a show or two with Johnny Thunders, but then you disappeared from view for a few years.

My kid, Rocky, was born in eighty-one, and that's what really saved my life. I couldn't come home stinking drunk any more. I became a single parent in the mid-eighties. He'd see his daddy coming home late, all fucked up, and cry: "Daddy, are you okay?" So I couldn't do that any more. I knew I was fucked up. So I started making clothes again, hats, even driving a cab. Anything where I would still be able to play music without getting fired.

How would you like to see the New York Dolls remembered?

We were always trend setters and never followers. I'll be a New York Doll as long as I live. Or as long as the kids want it. And the kids want the New York Dolls even more than the New York Dolls want the New York Dolls. 🗨️



Kurt Cobain: a magical ear
and a monster guitar sound.



KURT COBAIN

He's widely celebrated as a songwriter, but the Nirvana mastermind also changed everything for a new generation of guitar players.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Four chords. That's all it took to shatter the world order of electric guitar. Leading out Nirvana's watershed second album *Nevermind* in September 1991, the brittle intro to *Smells Like Teen Spirit* was almost laughably prosaic. The presiding lords of the hair-metal scene wouldn't even have deigned to play it as a sound-check warm-up. None of them could have realised they were hearing the gunshot to kill their careers stone-dead.

"They were ripe for the picking, for a cull, for death, and that was exactly what happened next," wrote Seb Hunter in *Hell Bent For Leather*, his memoir of life as a late-80s metallur. "I fell in love with Kurt Cobain straight away. I got it all, saw it all and knew that he was right – we had to die."

From a technical viewpoint, it seems perverse to wave Cobain into the pantheon, to the exclusion of history's blandly brilliant slew of shredders, with their highly evolved claws and dizzying modal solos. By his own reckoning, the Nirvana frontman was only a notch or two above a rank amateur ("We're just

musically and rhythmically retarded," he shrugged). The context of the times only amplified his brutalist style, built on power chords and infrequent early solos that often simply aped the vocal melody (see *Come As You Are*).

But Cobain possessed something more valuable than warp-speed fingers. He had a magical ear, always finding the perfect chords or fusing the perfect notes, and so leaving behind a catalogue of guitar gold worth more than a thousand dead-eyed finger-tapped solos. Revisit the indelible lick that slinks through *All Apologies*, or the Beatles-on-11 riff that rises from the cacophony of *Serve The Servants*. Consider the addictively angular verse of *Lithium*: a part that anyone could play, but nobody else had the vision to write.

Even the strum of *About A Girl* was more than the sum of its parts, Cobain's chord choices – dour in the verse, dreamy in the chorus – dovetailing perfectly with his vocal melody.

Whatever Cobain played, it was always steeped in attitude ("We play so hard that we can't tune our guitars fast enough," he said). And despite gear that looked like a rusting tugboat in comparison to the era's tiger-stripe super-Strats – "Junk is always best," he told *Guitar World* of his taste for beat-up Fender Mustangs – his tone was jagged and commanding. Consider the thrilling moment when he stomps the overdrive in *Rape Me*; the sickly sheen of hair-metal had never sounded so dated. "It was shocking to see Nirvana play," Billy Corgan once noted, "because it was like: 'Here's this little guy with a monster guitar sound.'"

Above all – and in parallel to the prog/punk gear-shift of a generation before – Cobain made the role of guitar hero seem attainable. He hard-wired a generation to believe the instrument was not a magic wand but a means to achieve the ends of a killer song. In his hands the guitar was little more than a hammer or a wrench – but few used the tools of their trade better.

Listen to this: *Smells Like Teen Spirit* (Nirvana, *Nevermind*, 1991)



Kurt Cobain And Me

Brothers Osborne guitarist John Osborne on his first guitar god.

"I started playing guitar when I was twelve or thirteen, and at that time Kurt Cobain was my hero. I loved Seattle grunge music. All I wanted to do was play Nirvana songs, and then that got me into Soundgarden, Pearl Jam, that's all I wanted to play. And I loved it, y'know? It was just fun to play in a band and play these kinds of things."



SISTER ROSETTA THARPE

Whichever way you slice it, Sister Rosetta Tharpe was an agent of pure revolution. Black, female, divorced, queer, singing the gospel and riffing on a distorted Gibson electric at nightclub guitar battles in downtown New York: these were not taboos to be busted lightly in the late 1930s, but Tharpe broke down the barriers with an easy smile.

In 1938, her early hits like *Rock Me* and *That's All* had caught the ear of a young Elvis. But it was her appearances on the blues package tours of the mid-60s – ripping up a televised performance of *Didn't It Rain* on a disused railway platform outside Manchester – that inspired the British invaders. As Bob Dylan pointed out on his radio show: “I’m sure there are a lot of young English guys who picked up an electric guitar after getting a look at her.” **HY**
Listen to this: *Didn't It Rain* (Sister Rosetta Tharpe, live recording, 1964)



DEVIN TOWNSEND

Having got his first break singing on Steve Vai’s 1993 album *Sex & Religion*, Townsend then went down his own, gleefully zig-zagging path. The Devin Townsend Project’s stock-in-trade is seriously oblique, oddball music, employing symphonic, thrash and prog metal, with avant-garde pop, ambient, psychedelic and orchestral elements in the mix too. His guitar style is extremely adaptable: swathes of fat, multi-tracked guitars make for a massive sound. He’s got the widdle when needed, but can spin melodic lines, and can give it some boom-chicka alt.country too.

Maybe he’s just too tough to pin down to get on to the same lists as nailed-on guitar gods, or perhaps his whole sci-fi schtick’s just too off-the-wall and zany for most. But then unique voices are often drowned out by the static of many, lesser ones.

A remarkable guitarist, a singular talent. **GM**
Listen to this: *Stormbending* (Devin Townsend Project, *Transition*, 2016)

Steve Hillage

The former Gong guitarist/hippie-in-chief seems to have flown under the radar of most who’ve never grooved to a bit of 70s prog, and the loss is theirs. A guitarist with tremendous flair and skill.

Listen to this:
The Salmon Song

Jimi Hendrix

Brian May: “It was a bit of a learning experience for me, and that’s the story of the Hendrix Experience. I don’t know if you ever saw him live, but it was like the earth moving. So warm, rich and huge.”

Listen to this:
Voodoo Chile

Joe Bonamassa

“Best guitarist of his generation!” cry the lovers (and there are plenty). “Nerdoid robot in a suit!” scream the haters, wilfully overlooking the dazzling array of rock, soul, blues and roots licks, chops and songs at his fingertips.

Listen to this:
A Conversation With Alice

Andy Summers

The Police’s musical identity owes much to Summers’s seasoned, jazz-informed approach to harmony and his judicious ear for tone, effects and embellishments. Without his chord voicings, *Every Breath You Take* and *Message In A Bottle* would’ve been pretty plain.

Listen to this:
Miss Gradenko

Jeff Beck

Jennifer Batten: “He’ll listen to stuff that’s really out there, like Ornette Coleman or some wacky jazz, and also I’ve been with him when the Spice Girls were on TV and he watches that. He’s one of those guys that can glean the cream of the crop from anything that he hears.”

Listen to this: *Cause We’ve Ended As Lovers*

James Williamson

It was hard to compete with the charisma of Iggy Pop’s “street-walking cheetah” on The Stooges’ *Search And Destroy*, but James Williamson ran the band’s frontman close with his equally feral guitar tone, inspiring everyone from Kurt Cobain to the Sex Pistols.

Listen to this: *Search And Destroy*



Mick Green: “How does he do all that?” wondered a young Wilko Johnson.

MICK GREEN

Wilko Johnson on the first time he heard The Pirates’ chief six-stringer.

“It was a Saturday, I know, because *Saturday Club* was on, which was a programme on at midday on the BBC, which was one of the only bits of pop music that you would hear then – it was before pirate radio even. Anyway, I was walking across the room and Brian Matthew said: ‘This is Johnny Kidd And The Pirates’, and it was their new record *I’ll Never Get Over You*. I heard the guitar and I just sort of stopped in mid-stride, and when the solo came in I just thought: ‘This is fantastic, it sounds just brilliant.’

“Then the next week they were on *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, a rock programme where the bands would come on and mime to their records, and there’s Johnny Kidd with his three-piece band. And I’m looking at the guitar player and I’m thinking that the lead guitarist must be sick or something, because this guy’s not doing all of that. And then I found out yes he was. So I wanted to be exactly like that.

“When the Stones’ first album came out, I remember taking the day off school, and when we went out to get the Stones album I was flicking through the old second-hand singles in there and I found *I Can Tell* by Johnny Kidd And The Pirates. We took them back to my friend’s house, and we sat there all afternoon listening to the Stones album, and I kept putting that on, and I was just like: ‘It’s all great. I don’t know which one I dig then most.’ So I was a fan from then on.” **IF**

Listen to this: *I’ll Never Get Over You* (Johnny Kidd And The Pirates, single, 1963)



Tosin Abasi: you'll believe a man can fly.

TOSIN ABASI

Anyone who thinks there's nothing new left to be done on guitar, watch this space.

Tosin Abasi once observed that "guitar is the skateboard of instruments" – and few young gunslingers have a bigger bag of tricks than him.

Coming of age on the Washington DC circuit of the early 90s, the Nigerian-American's eye-popping technique was forged at the crossroads of hair-metal and grunge; he recalls renting go-faster 'chop builder' tuition videos from his local music shop ("There'd be a dude on the front with an Ibanez and big hair"), but fell hard for the angst of Pearl Jam, Nirvana and Soundgarden. "It was the first music I'd listened to that had emotional complexity to it," he remembered.

By 2009, in the ascendancy as the mastermind behind US prog-metal instrumentalists Animals As Leaders, Abasi didn't have an Eddie Vedder, a Kurt Cobain or a Chris Cornell to give voice to the emotions behind his songs. Instead, as he explained to D'Addario, this most powerful of trios relied on a plate-spinning brand of musicianship to weave elaborate soundscapes and evoke anything from first love to blind fury, all without a frontman in sight. "There isn't 'a guy', y'know?" said Abasi, "but we convey anxiety harmonically or rhythmically."

To hear Abasi play guitar – particularly on 2014's standout Animals As Leaders album *The Joy Of Motion* – is to suspend conventional wisdom, as the 38-year-old navigates his fearsome-looking eight-string Ibanez signature model with all 10 fingers, dipping into the modern-jazz influence of cats like Kurt Rosenwinkel, while almost removing the need for a drummer with a percussive double-thumb slap technique borrowed from funk-bass great Victor Wooten. "The guitar is such a capable instrument when it comes to sounding like full-blown music," he told the *Reverb* website.

To describe him as a shredder is reductive ("That seems like a pretty worthless motivation"). Yet it speaks volumes of Abasi's stone-cold chops that he was able to not only hold his own on the Generation Axe tour of 2016, but also reduce stage-mates Steve Vai, Zakk Wylde and Nuno Bettencourt to goggle-eyed schoolboys as he aired his next-generation string-slapping (find the clip on YouTube). Instrumental guitarists rarely become household names, but don't bet against Abasi. **HY**

Listen to this: *Physical Education* (Animals As Leaders, *The Joy Of Motion*, 2014)

Ritchie Blackmore

Mikael Åkerfeldt (Opeth): "His crowning achievement was in Rainbow, I think. And the irony is that his playing ability then was... I can't say this for sure, but my idea is that he was a bit looser then. In 1971 he was the best in the world. He'd kill anyone."

Listen to this: *Stargazer*



Mick Taylor

The Bluesbreakers graduate brought a slide master's touch to the Stones when he joined, and there's a case that no wingman pushed Keith Richards further. But he quit too soon and didn't have the pizzazz to fly solo.

Listen to this: *Sway*

Brian May

Recently voted The Greatest Guitarist Of All Time by *Total Guitar* mag, you can't deny the influential power of this most distinctive player. From heavy metal thunder through his trademark harmonised solos to subtle melodies, he's got the lot.

Listen to this: *Keep Yourself Alive*

Dave Navarro

Largely seen as John Frusciante's replacement in the Chili Peppers, Navarro's greatest treasure lies in the innovative Jane's Addiction catalogue, whether on the chaotic alt.funk of *Been Caught Stealing* or *Three Days' tour de force* solo, spanning from Eastern motifs to scalded note flurries.

Listen to this: *Been Caught Stealing*

Kim Thayil

An architect of the 'Seattle Sound', the Soundgarden guitarist's textured and muscular tones helped set the template for Generation Grunge on era-defining classics.

Listen to this: *Like Suicide*

Joe Perry

Aerosmith just wouldn't have the swagger without Joe wrangling his effortlessly cool riffs. The epitome of 'tight but loose'.

Listen to this: *Mama Kin*



STEVE ROTHERY

Marillion's longest-standing guitarist regularly features in our sister magazine *Prog's* reader poll for Guitarist Of The Year, his cultured, tasteful and song-centric style having been a cornerstone of Marillion's sound since 1979. The echoing hook of *Kayleigh* and the anthemic lead line of *Lavender* may be obvious markers, but they do demonstrate three main elements of his often imitated style: Rothery plays beautifully textured arpeggios and chords; he is an absolute master of tone; and his most memorable solos are hummable. At its most soaring and lyrical, his lead style puts him in a lineage with Steve Hackett, Camel's Andy Latimer and especially David Gilmour, but he can also tug subtly at the heartstrings, and can render the chilling cacophony of war itself (*Gaza*, from *Sounds That Can't Be Made*). He is a master of his craft. **GM**

Listen to this: *This Strange Engine* (Marillion, *This Strange Engine*, 1997)



NITA STRAUSS

A technician from the start – she cites Steve Vai as her 13-year-old jam – Strauss made her mark 'playing' Dave Murray in all-female tribute band The Iron Maidens. "I actually said: 'Can I be Adrian Smith?'" she remembers, "but Dave's smoothness rolling from note to note in bluesy patterns ended up being a huge influence on my playing."

Bigger was to follow in 2014, when Alice Cooper recruited her to play the blonde dervish to his old crow ("I never had to teach her anything. She was on top of the ramp, spinning the guitar around..."). She pricked up ears with the savage gymnastics of 2018's debut solo album *Controlled Chaos*, but for Strauss the pinnacle might be her status as the first female player with an Ibanez signature model. "To see my name up there with Vai, Satriani and Gilbert," she says. "That's what I've dreamed of since the very beginning." **HY**

Listen to this: *Our Most Desperate Hour* (Nita Strauss, *Controlled Chaos*, 2018)

Joni Mitchell's guitar playing has influenced a generation of singer-songwriters.



JONI MITCHELL

She's best known as one of the greatest singer-songwriters of her generation, but her mostly open-tunings one-of-a-kind guitar playing occupies a field of its own.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

In Martin Scorsese's documentary *Rolling Thunder Revue*, there's a great scene from a picking party at singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot's house in 1975. Lightfoot, Dylan and Roger McGuinn, guitars in hand, are gathered around Joni Mitchell, who's trying out a new song of hers called *Coyote*. As she starts, you see the guys doing what guitar players do, checking her hands to get their bearings. But it's like trying to throw a lasso around a meteor. Mitchell's left hand moves through unfamiliar shapes. Her right hand brushes and flicks the strings in a deceptively non-linear rhythm. By the second verse the guys have given up and are noodling quietly behind her. They look slightly embarrassed. 'We just come from such different sets of circumstances...' she sings.

When it comes to guitar, those different circumstances started flowering in the folk clubs in the late 60s, as she distanced from garden-variety strummers and finger-pickers. From the first song on her debut album, *I Had A King*, Mitchell was tuning in to her own guitar style. Literally. Everyone knows she uses open tunings. But she's developed her own distinct harmonic

lexicon with them. "In the beginning, I built the repertoire of the open major tunings that the old black blues guys came up with," she said on her website. "Then going between them I started to get more 'modern' chords, for lack of a better word."

But why open tunings?

"It's only through error that discovery is made," she said. "And in order to discover you have to set up some sort of situation with a random element. The more I can surprise myself, the more I'll stay in this business. You're constantly pulling the rug out from under yourself, so you don't get a chance to settle into any kind of formula."

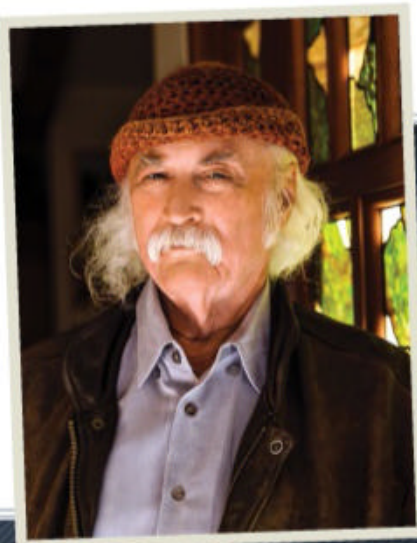
Mitchell eventually developed more than 50 unique tunings. It has

allowed her to play the guitar more like a piano. Or more like an easel. The connection between her talents as a painter and a guitarist is tangible. Those 'modern' chords she mentioned often sound like the bursts of color and overlapping washes on her canvases. And watching the fluidity of her right hand, you can almost imagine it holding a brush. The overall effect is perfectly complementary to her octave-ranging voice. Just listen to the languid syncopations and offbeat accents on *Don't Interrupt The Sorrow*, the ethereal finger-picking of *Amelia* or the lively stringed conversation with Jaco Pastorius's bass on *God Must Be a Boogie Man*.

Because she's such a formidable songwriter and singer, her guitar playing often gets overlooked. But that hasn't prevented it from influencing a generation

of singer-songwriters, including Patty Griffin, Shawn Colvin and, most recently, Madison Cunningham. But Mitchell's greatest torch-bearer may have been Prince. Prince advised budding guitarists to learn rhythm chops by listening to Ike Turner, then said: "Put any colours you've learned from Joni Mitchell on top of that, and then you've got something!"

Listen to this: *Amelia* (Joni Mitchell, Hejira, 1976)



David Crosby On Joni Mitchell

"I think she is the best writer of our times. I think Bob [Dylan] is certainly as good a poet, if not better, but she's a much better musician and singer than he is. And so I think it comes down to she's my favourite singer-songwriter in the world."



TODD RUNDGREN

From using a guitar to simulate motorbikes on *Bat Out Of Hell*, and the sound of strangled chickens on *A Wizard, A True Star*, we revisit the case for the singer, songwriter, producer's guitar genius.

Interview: **Henry Yates**

If Todd Rundgren isn't at the pinnacle of the guitar-hero pantheon, then he only has himself to blame. The 72-year-old wears too many hats, and too damn well. He's the legendary producer who worked on Meat Loaf's *Bat Out Of Hell* album and the New York Dolls' scuzzy-arsed debut. He's the golden-touch hit maker who broke big with his 1972 album *Something/Anything?*, and the visionary who forked left into the wilds on 1973's *A Wizard, A True Star*.

As a guitarist, though, Rundgren is a self-confessed part-timer. It says it all that on his recent Clearly Human virtual tour he "only plays guitar on about four songs", while this year's upcoming *Space Force* album sees him lighten his load with cameos from Steve Vai, Rick Nielsen and more.

Rundgren's refusenik tendencies are a curious thing, because when he plugs in he's untouchable, from the mathematically complex playing of his avant-garde 70s prog outfit Utopia, to his glorious solo on *Bat*'s title track (described by Meat Loaf as "one of the most mind-blowing moments of my life to watch"). Rundgren simply shrugs: "I just never had the focus to be a guitar hero."

How did you fall for the guitar?

I was just a natural born musician. Music was my thing, as soon as my hands got big enough to play. I had a little bit of interest in guitar with Duane Eddy and Lonnie Mack. But then [in 1960] The Ventures came out with *Walk, Don't Run* and I was smitten, I had to play the guitar. I hectored my parents into getting me a twenty-five-dollar acoustic. It came with three months of lessons at the local music store, which I hated. I counted the days until the lessons were over. I could pick out a song in ten minutes, but I hated reading sheet music. When I got serious I was super-heavily influenced by Eric Clapton, and in trying to to play like him I developed half a dozen vibrato techniques, all of which I still use. I once jammed with John Mayall on a blues cruise, playing *All Your Love* from the classic Bluesbreakers album [1966].

Afterwards, he told me, 'You played it just like Eric.' Well, of course I did!

You were a big Who fan. Did it matter that Townshend wasn't a virtuoso?

No, it did not. Pete Townshend redefined the guitar. Most people think of the guitar as their love interest. For him it was the object of his anger.

There's a theory that because you're such an esteemed producer, singer and songwriter, your guitar skills often get overlooked.

Well, it's probably accurate. There was a time when the guitar was my principal instrument. It was everything that I cared about. For a little window there, between Woody's Truck Stop and the beginning of The Nazz, I was a local guitar hero, considered the best player in downtown

"I just never had the focus to be a guitar hero."

Philadelphia. By the time we got to the second Nazz record my mind was already wandering musically, and I was being influenced as much by Laura Nyro. I began to notice that the guitar was becoming secondary, because it wasn't as flexible an instrument to compose on. As time has gone on, my instrument is actually the studio, and the guitar will be a component of that.

Your playing on *Bat Out Of Hell* is incredible, though. What do you remember about it?

I'd worked out a few melodies, but most all the guitar parts were improvised, and many of the solos were done live. On that album I was playing a Fender Mustang, which has a slightly reduced scale, so the strings are really loose. If you push down the tailpiece they're actually sagging, and if you pull it up you just go into the stratosphere.

So I was getting all sorts of weird noises, and becoming more noise-oriented than note-oriented. That's how that whole 'motorcycle' guitar solo thing came about. [*Bat Out Of Hell* writer] Jim Steinman wanted to get a pre-recorded motorcycle sound effect. But I said, 'Let me try.' It only took two takes to convince him.

Most guitarists say they play better straight. How did LSD affect your playing?

Taking psychedelics gave me a generally more adventurous attitude about music, and I started to think of the guitar as not simply something that plays notes, but sounds and textures. I started using guitar synths to change the sound into something more electronic, or like birds being strangled. It's funny, five years ago I worked with two Swedish electronica artists called Hans Peter Lindstrom and Emil Nikolaisen. When I came to the studio, they had that same EMS guitar synth I'd used, and said: "Can you make some of those weird strangling-chicken noises?" So I just did a lot of screeching around.

We're paying tribute to underrated and influential guitarists. Which players do you think deserve to be included?

I've worked with so many amazing players. I'm sure that most of them have been rated. One of the first players I worked with that knocked the socks off me was Amos Garrett. He was substantially a country player, and I hated country music, but the things he could do with the guitar were so amazing. Like bending two strings in opposite directions. I did an Australian band called Dragon and they brought in Tommy Emmanuel. I was totally amazed. He works everywhere – he's a real workhorse – and if people don't know who Tommy Emmanuel is, they should.

On the flip side, you didn't rate the New York Dolls as guitar players?

Well, there was a certain ethos in the New York

Todd Rundgren: his instrument is the studio, and the guitar is "a component of that".



Dolls, and the punk music they presumably inspired, and that was: if you learned to play your instrument too well you were a poser. It wasn't about your skills as an instrumentalist, it was more about your limitations. In that sense, if Johnny Thunders aspired to be anything, it was Keith Richards. And we all know that Keith Richards doesn't really play that much, y'know? Half of what he does is open tunings, and he does an occasional solo, and they all sound the same. So there were never any aspirations to be a great guitar player, either in the New York Dolls or any of the bands that emulated them. One of the reasons why music critics were so into the Dolls was because it was finally a kind of music they could imagine playing themselves.

When were you doing the best guitar playing of your career?

My technique was probably at its best in the heyday of Utopia, the large six-piece band. I realised that I went to a lot of trouble to learn how to play guitar, but now I wasn't playing it any more. We were emulating acts like the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and also I had a lot of keyboard virtuosos in the band, and they were kind of challenging me. It's easy to play really fast on a keyboard. It's a little harder on the guitar, because you have to synchronise both hands. So that kind of drove me to improve my technique. Since then the largest commitment I've made to recovering my playing technique was *Todd Rundgren's Johnson* [2011], an album full of Robert Johnson covers done in a sixties manner.

You're halfway through your virtual tour. How does it affect your playing when there's no physical audience?

It took me a little while to get used to performing again. The hardest thing is not having gigged in over a year and a half, and just generally slowing down and your fingers getting soft. But once I got things tuned in, it actually doesn't make a whole lot of difference to me whether there's an audience there. A lot of times, I just close my eyes and go off. I look to see where I'm going, so I don't fall off the stage, but otherwise I tend not to be focusing that much on the audience. I'm just trying to remember what to play [laughs].

Todd's virtual tour is reviewed on p104.

High five! Rick Nielsen with Cheap Trick at the Classic Rock Awards November 10, 2010.



RICK NIELSEN

Behind the oddball exterior and the daft guitars is someone who could show guitar heroes a thing or

Given his oversized personality and goofy stage demeanour, it's easy to overlook Rick Nielsen's musical ability. The Cheap Trick linchpin has never been one for self-aggrandisement either. "I'm a songwriter, not a guitar player," he recently told *Classic Rock*. "I wish I would've practiced forty years ago, because I might be pretty good by now."

But don't let him fool you. Beneath the cartoon exterior lies an exceptional guitarist whose bold, voluble style encompasses a vast range of licks, trills and slides that pull from classic pop, glam and riffy British rock of the late 60s and early 70s. And while his nerdy image (flip-brim baseball cap and bow tie) is the antithesis of anyone's notion of a guitar god, it also serves as a parodic celebration of the whole rock business.

Nielsen's role as class clown involves making the difficult look easy. He understands that it's about having a good time. And finding your own space. "I never wanted to be Jimmy Page or Jeff Beck or any of those greats," he says. "Those people have already been taken, so I grew up being me."

Capable of switching between lead and rhythm with enviable fluency, Nielsen is also big on experimentation. This is partly down to the use of a dizzying arsenal of gear, from Les Pauls to Fenders to his treasured Hamer guitars, including his famous five-neck model. As an avid guitar collector and an advocate of vintage amps, he's an ongoing exploration of texture, sound and feel. There's always an element of the unknown with Cheap Trick: primal garage band one minute, power-pop royalty the next.

The fact that Nielsen isn't as celebrated as he ought to be may be down to his other creative skills. As the band's primary songwriter, it was the prolific Nielsen who powered Cheap Trick's rise to superstardom in the late 70s, peaking with *Dream Police* and the heroic *At Budokan* live album. All of which means that he's doubly influential. Just ask famous admirers such as Foo Fighters, Kid Rock, Guns N' Roses, Green Day, Pearl Jam, Smashing Pumpkins and more. **RH**

Listen to this: *Surrender* (Cheap Trick, *Heaven Tonight*, 1978)

Slash

Through his illustrious career with GN'R through his recent albums with his *Conspirators*, Slash has proved to be a master of instantly memorable, titanic riffs and scorching solos. "All of my playing is basically influenced by blues players," he said. That's as maybe, but in turn his fiery, innovative style has influenced a whole new generation.

Listen to this: *Paradise City*

Albert Collins

The Master Of The Telecaster's highly influential funky style of guitar playing was partly down to his unique right-hand finger-style and the bizarre way he would tune and capo his trademark Tele. A showman with rare feel and flair.

Listen to this: *I Ain't Drunk*

Jimmy Page

Myles Kennedy: "I was definitely a Page man. The first Zeppelin song I learnt on guitar was *Rock And Roll*. It was so empowering. When I heard *Friends*, from the third record, that helped me discover alternative tunings, and Jimmy's solo on *Since I've Been Loving You* is just brilliant."

Listen to this: *Stairway To Heaven*

Adrian Smith

Surely the best guitarist is the one in your favourite band? If so, then the numbers fall in favour of Iron Maiden's inspirational, often undervalued MVP. Smith's often dizzying epic guitar lines have played a major role in the imperious British metal band's most spellbinding moments.

Listen to this: *The Wicker Man*



Albert Lee

Eric Clapton has called Albert Lee "the greatest guitarist in the world". But while the British country ace's hybrid picking is unfeasibly good, his long stretches as a sideman mean he has never quite commanded the full glare of the spotlight.

Listen to this: *Country Boy*



RODRIGO Y GABRIELA

"Nothing is more beautiful than a guitar," Chopin once said, "except maybe two." He'd have liked

Rodrigo Sánchez and Gabriela Quintero. They started out in Mexico City as metal fans, and ever since their 2006 self-titled album the Grammy winners have created their own unique niche, blending flamenco, rock and, later, prog. Their intense guitar duets have been leaving audiences agog ever since. Together they've brought new dimensions to *Stairway To Heaven*, Metallica's *Orion* and even Pink Floyd's 20-minute epic *Echoes*. Incredible speed, tone, articulation and artistic telepathy are here in abundance, with that irresistible hand-against-wood flamenco percussive element adding to their wonderfully exciting dynamics. This is mainly acoustic goodness with barely a fuzz box in sight but, as Quintero told us recently: "We get everyone from punks to metal guys to grannies enjoying what we do, and we embrace that." **GM**

Listen To This: *Echoes* (Rodrigo Y Gabriela, *Mettavolution*, 2019)



THURSTON MOORE & KIM GORDON

They may have been the Led Zeppelin of noise-rock, but Sonic Youth chucked *The Big Book Of Guitar Heroics* out of their NY apartment window on day one. Not for them all that ersatz-Hendrix malarkey – this trio's influential brand of rock came with its own punky logic and arty aesthetic, their tough, twisted take on music informed by punk and the avant-garde experimentalism of Glenn Branca. Right from track one, album one – (*She's In A Bad Mood* on 1983's *Confusion Is Sex* – Moore, Gordon and co-founder Lee Ranaldo used strange tunings, dissonant chords, feedback squalls and grungy drones to make their point. They'd gouge the innards out of their guitars; like John Cage with his pianos they'd 'prepare' them, with screwdrivers, with drumsticks. They could purvey ragged, minimalist nuance, and later fashioned college rock hits while members of My Bloody Valentine, Pavement, Dinosaur Jr and Nirvana furiously made mental notes. **GM**

Listen to this: *Stalker* (Sonic Youth, *Dirty*, 1992)



Gary Clark Jr: bringing a 21st-century sound to an old musical form.

GARY CLARK JR

He might be a relatively new kid on the blues block, but his Grammy-winning combination of guitar playing, music and lyrics has fast-tracked him to its top table.

Words: **Johnny Sharp**

The blues has always been a fertile genre for producing great guitar players, and Gary Clark Jr ranks prominently among its more recent graduates. But few have branched out so effortlessly into other genres and added a contemporary edge so seamlessly to their sound as Clark. And despite that stylistic versatility, his strikingly soulful, richly emotive guitar playing remains a constant major feature.

Why isn't he a more celebrated figure among guitar aficionados? Well, in the US he is – having three Top-10 albums and winning four Grammys will help on that score. In the UK his profile isn't as high, but if he hasn't crossed your radar yet then consider this a wake-up call.

As a teen prodigy releasing a clutch of albums on indie label Hotwire Unlimited in his native Austin, Texas, he showcased a raw, prickly way with traditional blues rock, and his major-label debut *Blak And Blu* (2012) showed that his horizons were considerably wider. Gutsy acoustic slide guitar (using a Dobro Hound Dog) lends a Delta feel to *Nextdoor Neighbor Blues* as stirring as *When My Train Pulls In*

erupts in a volcanic Hendrixian firestorm. Elsewhere Stax-style horns beef up the rock'n'soul of *Ain't Messin' 'Round*, but Clark still gets the chance to let rip with a startlingly agitated solo. Then the straight-up boogie of *Travis County* shows he can still raise the roof with bread-and-butter blues rock.

He's also not short of skills as a vocalist, as the half-rapped delivery over *The Life's* hip-hop beats shows. That track's tale of addiction also reflects a social conscience that seems to lend his guitar playing extra righteous fuel.

Clark's 2015 album *The Story Of Sonny Boy Slim* drew on a similarly broad range of styles, but his guitar is still at the heart of his sound, even if it's not always screaming in the spotlight. The southern-fried fuzz of his Epiphone Casino and Gibson SG riffs adds a delicious layer of grease to his sound, recalling Muddy Waters at his most electrified, and lends the grubby twang of *Shake* a satisfyingly filthy feel. At the same time, his ability to echo the understated funky motifs of Muscle Shoals soul before adding Clapton-esque licks and Santana-ish paroxysms helps create a winning blend of classic R&B groove and rock snarl.

His lyrical concerns also seem anything but outdated, as the title track to his Grammy-hoovering 2019 album *This Land* reflects. Wah-wah-soaked guitar wails form sonic metaphors for age-old cries of black suffering, as Clark relates a raging tale of being 'paranoid and pissed off... in the middle of Trump country' when he is told 'n***a run, n***a run, go back where you came from'. Rhythmic volleys of vocals form a hip-hop flow over a rhythm that is almost reggae-like in its tempo but heavy in its sonic intensity, while more soaring licks rise above the defiant chorus 'This land is my land'.

Just as those words from Clark's *This Land* repurpose the sentiments of the classic Woody Guthrie folk standard *This Land Is Your Land*, his guitar fires up a 21st-century sound that is rooted in a familiar but fiery expression of the blues. If rock guitar isn't often heard as the soundtrack of protest these days, here is a searing exception, from a player who's showing that six strings and the truth is still a powerful combination.

Listen to this: *When My Train Pulls In* (Gary Clark Jr, *Blak And Blu*, 2012)



Glenn Tipton: melodic with guts, speed and real edge.

GLENN TIPTON

As half of Judas Priest's twin-guitar firepower he's one of the architects of heavy metal.

With KK Downing his vital and equally undersung counterpart, Glenn Tipton was half of Judas Priest's highly influential twin-axe attack, helping to forge the sound of heavy metal as it moved into the 80s.

Like many players of his generation, Tipton's lead technique hasn't always been Yngwie-precise, but, more importantly, his parts are delivered with guts, speed, and real edge. Priest has always been a band greater than the sum of its parts, and Tipton's heavy, nimble playing and squealing adds heft, intensity and excitement to their irresistible slabs of genre-defining metal. Tipton can bring the shred (*Screaming For Vengeance's Electric Eye*; *Painkiller's A Touch Of Evil*), but his melodic, lyrical side is too often overlooked (see *Dream Deceiver*, from *Sad Wings Of Destiny*). It's also a tribute to him that he has continually improved as a player – *Painkiller*, 2018's *Firepower* (with Richie Faulkner) and Tipton's 1997 solo album *Baptism Of Fire* are master classes in metal melodics. **GM**

Listen to this: *Beyond The Realms Of Death* (Judas Priest, *Stained Class*, 1978)

Albert King

This revered, hugely influential Mississippi bluesman flipped his Gibson Flying V over to play it left-handed, and his unconventional tunings added fresh flavour to the gutsy phrases powering the likes of *Born Under A Bad Sign*.

Listen to this: *Don't Throw Your Love On Me So Strong*

Allan Holdsworth

Straddling the worlds of jazz, prog, fusion and rock, Holdsworth sublimated his vast musical knowledge into complex, fast-flowing improvisations, and played as if he were a conduit to another dimension entirely. Eddie Van Halen for one thought Holdsworth was the best there was.

Listen to this: *Devil Take The Hindmost*

Steve Howe

The Yes guitarist's erudite, progressive ethos traverses many genres and styles. Whether he's playing acoustic or electric, his imagination and musicality brings any piece he plays to vibrant life, from seminal prog staple *Roundabout* to later proto-prog metal opus *Machine Messiah*.

Listen to this: *The Clap*

Keith Richards

Driving the Rolling Stones for almost six decades, and writing some of rock'n'roll's definitive songs, the band's most enduring guitarist also pioneered altered tunings and introduced the world to the distortion pedal. They don't call him The Human Riff for nothing.

Listen to this: *Gimme Shelter*



Eric Gales

Fiery, instinctive and evocative of Hendrix, the Memphis bluesman could fill a cuttings file with the praise of his A-list peers ("Epic in every way!" reckons Joe Bonamassa). But due to the disruptions of Gales's early years – drugs, weapons, jail – he remains a cult hero.

Listen to this: *Whatcha Gon' Do*



FREDDIE KING

While his name is spoken in respectful tones in blues circles, Freddie King's not as widely celebrated as his unrelated namesakes BB and Albert, partly because he died in 1976 at just 42 – too young to become a true grandee of the genre. But for a taste of his utterly enthralling blend of Texas and Chicago blues, delve into the Texan Cannonball's deep studio catalogue, from 1961 debut *Freddy [sic] King Sings*, and watch him live online. By turns joyfully upbeat and tearfully expressive, King's guitar style has informed Clapton to Black Stone Cherry's Chris Robertson and countless more. A soulful singer and an imposing figure, he would strap his guitar over just his right shoulder, and use mainly his thumb and index finger to pick bluesy notes, wringing every ounce of feel out of them. A big man with a big attitude, this King was the real deal. **GM**

Listen to this: *Going Down* (Freddie King, *Getting Ready*, 1971)



MYLES KENNEDY & MARK TREMONTI

It's a revelation for you to find Myles Kennedy on this list, then you won't be the first to overlook his guitar talents: even Mark Tremonti didn't realise his new singer could play until the final stages of Alter Bridge's 2004 debut album *One Day Remains*. Both in the Bridge and as Slash's chief Conspirator, the frontman suffers from what an earlier generation might have called 'Sammy Hagar syndrome'. Like the Red Rocker upon his 1985 arrival in Van Halen, Kennedy is one hell of a guitar player, flanked by a better one. Even so, evidence of his fluid lead skills is all over early band The Mayfield Four, while his feel for acoustic roots was laid bare on 2018's solo album *Year Of The Tiger* (try the lap-steel solo on *Love Can Only Heal*). Best of all is Kennedy's epic tag-team solo alongside Tremonti on 2007's *Blackbird*, voted the greatest in history by *Total Guitar*. **HY**

Listen to this: *Blackbird* (Alter Bridge, *Blackbird*, 2007)



Terry Kath: aggressive, fluid technique and creative musicality.

TERRY KATH

If Hendrix said the Chicago guitarist was the best, who are we to argue?

Whether, as is often reported, Jimi Hendrix really did call Terry Kath the “best guitarist in the universe” or that he was Jimi’s favourite guitarist, doesn’t really matter. The fact that Kath was good enough for people to say Hendrix said so is praise enough.

A self-taught player among a group of schooled musicians with the collective chops to deliver a jazz-rock landmark with their first album – and the balls and self-confidence to make it a double – in a complimentary way it could be said that Kath was perhaps the ‘loose canon’ who put the rock into his band Chicago’s jazz rock; the tight but loose into the otherwise just tight. On the first couple of Chicago albums in particular there are flashes of his brilliance and playing style, when his aggressive, fluid technique and creative musicality is delivered often via a valve-shaking overdriven sound as big and imposing as Kath himself. Few examples are better than his first solo on the first track on the self-titled first album by Chicago Transit Authority (as they were originally called), a masterful build from a ‘Here we go!’ dragged chord to a sonic wind blowing muscular rock licks, jazzy flurries and controlled feedback. The track is titled *Introduction*, and for the whole band but especially Kath, it’s a hell of one.

“I spent a lot of time wondering: ‘How in the world does he get a guitar to sound like that?’” said Joe Walsh, adding that Kath was “a brilliant musician. He was a songwriter and a great singer. He was such a monster on guitar... He was just a total experimenter.”

Kath’s tragic death (the consensus is that he playfully put what he thought was an unloaded gun to his head and pulled the trigger) at just 31 robbed the world of a tremendously talented guitarist who didn’t get the opportunity to achieve his full potential. **PH**

Listen to this: 25 Or 6 To 4 (Chicago, Chicago, 1969)

Bert Jansch

Want an appreciation of Bert Jansch? Ask Jimmy Page. As you’ll probably go straight to his voicemail, we can tell you that this leading figure on the 60s British folk scene was, and remains, hugely influential. **Listen to this: Angie**

Peter Frampton

You don’t get to be a touring guitarist for David Bowie if you don’t know your way around a fretboard. The former Herd singer also showed some fine chops with Humble Pie and as a soloist. A perplexingly underrated guitarist. **Listen to this: Lines On My Face (live)**

Dimebag Darrell

Mark Tremonti: “He’s had a huge influence on everybody... He wouldn’t let you sit there and daydream at a show, he’d wake you up every two seconds. He was such an exciting player.” **Listen to this: Domination**



Phil Manzanera

Enormously influential as Roxy Music’s guitarist, Manzanera has also inspired generations as a solo artist and producer. When you’ve been sampled by Jay-Z and produced a David Gilmour record, you know your outreach is wide. **Listen to this: All I Want Is You**

Kirk Hammett

The Metallica legend has a style and sound that’s been widening the horizons and flooring the jaws of listeners for nearly forty years now. His melodic nous and attacking zeal have motivated countless aspiring players to pick up a six-string. **Listen to this: One**

Eric Clapton

Jason Isbell: “I was a huge Clapton fan. That opened it up for me. When I was eleven or twelve years old, I listened to Eric Clapton all the time and got all the recordings and really studied his playing.” **Listen to this: Crossroads (live)**



GUTHRIE GOVAN

Coming of age as the fastest gun in Chelmsford, Govan had hoovered up everything from Cream to Joe Pass, and when he made his first ripples, winning *Guitarist* magazine’s annual star search in 1993, he was already a complete player.

Govan’s amazing technical solo work has never quite hit the mainstream, but the respect he commands on the prog scene has led to some eye-opening collaborations, from Asia headhunting him as an “affordable” stunt guitarist on 2001’s *Aura* album, to soundtrack king Hans Zimmer tapping into his mastery of mood on 2019’s *The Lion King* reboot. Of these, it is perhaps nu-prog kingpin Steven Wilson who has pushed Govan furthest, on 2015’s immersive *Hand. Cannot. Erase* album and the dizzying slow-build solo on *Regret #9* – a tour de force that, incredibly, was tracked in a single take. **HY** **Listen to this: Regret #9 (Steven Wilson, Hand. Cannot. Erase, 2015)**



MEMPHIS MINNIE

One of the first blues artists to experiment with an electric guitar, the ‘queen of country blues’ paved the way for the likes of Chuck Berry and the Stones, not to mention countless guitar-slinging female acolytes for whom she rewrote the rule book. Memphis Minnie played just as hard and just as well as the guys, and did it all wearing a fabulous frock, all the while chewing tobacco and taking shit from no one – unheard of in the 1920s

Born Lizzie Douglas, she had a tough life (running away to Memphis at 13 and playing on street corners, supplementing her income with prostitution) which she poured into passionate chops that evolved from her country blues prime in the 20s to electric tunes in 50s Chicago.

Over the years her work has been covered by artists from Led Zeppelin to Mazzy Star. **PG** **Listen to this: Me And My Chauffeur Blues (single, 1941)**



NANCY WILSON

It's a true but sorry state of affairs to say that there are still relatively few high-profile female guitarists. The Heart guitarist is one of those, helping to inspire others to fight for their right.

Interview: **Bill DeMain**

If someone had told the 12-year-old Nancy Wilson that one day she'd have her own signature model electric guitar in stores, she might have laughed. Then again, she might have taken it in stride. At that age, Wilson was already three years into pursuing what she calls her "life's calling". "I was possessed," she says. "I would walk down to the local music store and look at the guitars, because I didn't have a good one yet. One of the reasons I got really strong is because my first guitar was unplayable; learning how to bar an F-chord was really painful. So I'd pick up a good guitar in the shop, sit down and play *Anji* by Paul Simon. People would stop and their jaws would drop and be like: "Whoa, look at that little gal go with that big guitar!"

Wilson relates that story with several hearty laughs. In conversation the younger Wilson sister has an appealing blend of self-effacing humour and serious-music-nerd scholarship. The humour has come in handy over the past year, when the nearly 50-year momentum of Heart's classic-rock ride came to an unexpected pause, along with the rest of the world. Nancy took the time off to realise two long-deferred projects: the signature Epiphone Fanatic guitar that she designed; and her first-ever solo album, *You And Me*, featuring contributions from Sammy Hagar and Duff McKagan, covers of Bruce Springsteen and Pearl Jam songs along with original rockers and acoustic beauties. "I don't know why it took me so long to do this," she says. "Maybe I was stuck in the Heart vortex of it all."

When you designed the first draft of the Epiphone Fanatic in the eighties, what was your vision?

The basic idea was to make a Les Paul

Junior-sized guitar, easier for a woman to handle. Not a big heavy Les Paul. Those are the classic kings of Gibson. But I wanted something lighter-weight, with a cutaway that is the echo of a female's silhouette. And still with all of its rock'n'roll authority.

Why did it take so long to come to fruition?

After I submitted my design, Gibson had a big

sustaining, with distorting capability and a five-way switch. Also, I didn't want gold hardware, I wanted silver [laughs]. So we finally got what I re-titled the Fanatic. At that time Heart was working on an album called *Fanatic*. I thought it was way more of a rock name. 'Nighthawk' sounded too generic. For a new guitar it really sounds more like a classic guitar. It's got that beefy dirt that you want.

"For a lot of my life, I'd hear, 'Pretty good for a girl.' But I didn't care."

reorganisation, and my project got lost in the shuffle. Then some people from Epiphone [part of Gibson] came to a Heart show about five years ago and said: "We heard that you once designed a guitar. Do you want to look at that again?" They still had my drawings. So they made a prototype, and called it the Nighthawk. I thought it was pretty perfect, but I just wanted to make it a bit more

Classic Rock is doing a feature on influential guitarists.

Who is your top underrated guitar hero?

Paul McCartney, because he plays amazing lead and incredible

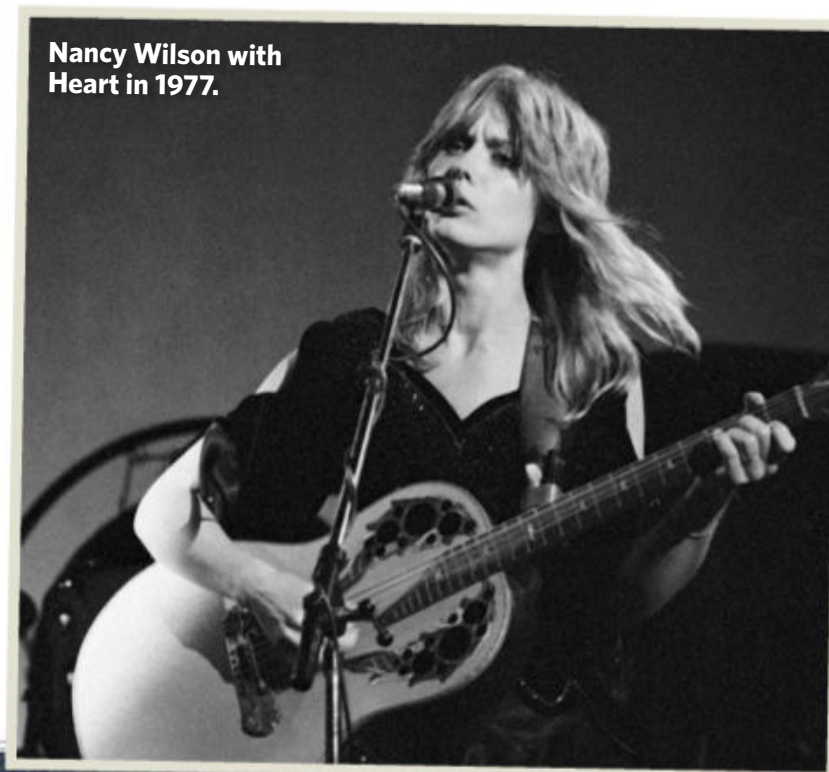
acoustic. He might just be the most-underrated all-around guitar player. People probably don't stop to appreciate that, because they concentrate on his songwriting and singing. But listen to his latest album, the way he accompanies himself on acoustic, the lead playing. It's incredible.

Paul has such a distinctive vibrato as a lead guitarist that you can tell it's him from just one note.

Isn't that wild? There are a lot of players where you know who it is immediately – David Gilmour, Stephen Stills, Neil Young – and Paul McCartney is one of those guys.

You're also a Joni Mitchell fan. Can you tell us a bit about her playing?

Her whole approach to the tunings, and her positions within those tunings, are really not even like guitar playing. It's more like an orchestra. It's a whole language that no one else can even speak [laughs]. Her playing sounds like she's painting landscapes. The tunings, along with her lyrics and melodies, are so sweeping. It's like a bird's eye view of being a human.



Nancy Wilson with Heart in 1977.

“I’d worked really hard at learning how to play, from the age of nine.”

When Heart first broke through in the seventies, how did you feel about the perception of you as a female guitar hero?

I just felt special and accomplished. And kind of like a show-off [laughs]. I was showing off my skills that nobody expected to see. Because I’d worked really hard at learning how to play, from the age of nine when I saw The Beatles on TV. For a lot of my life I’d hear: “Pretty good for a girl.” But I didn’t care. I was just so proud, and I kind of had an ego about it. That’s what helped me get more proficient, and eventually get into the band and do all the showboating that I like to do [laughs].

How did being off the road in 2020 shape the sound of your first solo album?

It was almost like an enforced assignment, in a way, to get back to my pre-Heart self. I joined Heart when I was twenty-one. It’s been such a whirlwind in the decades since: tour, album, tour, album... That was the way to bring home the bacon, and a really good job to have. The travel part is difficult, but the two hours on stage are worth all the exhaustion of getting there.

Along the way people would always say: “When are you going to make a solo album?” I did a live album called *Live At McCabe’s Guitar Shop*. That was kind of an afterthought. I’d done score work for various films, and a lot of that was like putting out a solo acoustic instrumental record. So finally I had this year, having just moved up to Northern California, and for the first time ever my own music space. It allowed me to go: why don’t I put my fine amplifiers and fine guitars into this room where I can leave everything set up and I can make all the racket I like [laughs].

You’ve reunited with Sue Ennis, who you’ve collaborated with before.

We’ve always had a great experience writing music together, and with my sister Ann along the way as well. For example, on the title track *You And Me*, both of us had a different song that we’d written to our moms, who are no longer around. Mine was called *You And Me And Gravity*, hers was called *Follow Me*. Sue had this really cool music, so I said why don’t we make a hybrid of both of our lyrics? So we stitched them together and called it *You And Me*. We texted and had phone calls, sending each other lyrics and snippets. The whole album, no one was in the same room at all. But the guys who played on the album were all on the road with me and with Heart, so we all know each other’s way of playing.

You’ve done four covers, including Bruce Springsteen and Pearl Jam songs. What moves you to want to cover a particular song?

I had gone to see Springsteen on Broadway, and those songs pared down to guitar and a voice were so powerful. I kind of vowed that night that I was going to sing one of those songs. And I thought since *The Rising* was originally written for 9/11 and

we were in kind of a new nine/eleven situation, where a lot of people’s souls were departing, it would have resonance. I love how it turned out. The woman’s viewpoint gave it a different, motherly aspect that I didn’t expect it to have.

4 Edward is a beautiful instrumental dedicated to Edward Van Halen.

We were on tour with them in the eighties, and Eddie told me one night after a show that he didn’t own a single acoustic guitar. So I took my favourite Ovation and walked it up to his room and handed it to him. At the crack of dawn the next day – obviously he’d been up all night [laughs] – he called my hotel room and he said: “Hey, I wrote something for you on the guitar you gave me. Check it out!” He was probably sitting cross-legged on his bed with the receiver of the phone there, and I was just lying there and listening. It was a really beautiful acoustic piece. I so wish

I could hear it again. Maybe it exists someplace. So on this album I thought I’d return the favour with an acoustic instrumental for him. It was such a sad day for rock’n’roll when the Einstein of guitar players had to disappear. Eddie always played with such joy. He had that three-mile smile.

What’s ahead for you in 2021?

My husband and I just had our first shots of the vaccine, so we’re both feeling hopeful and relieved. It’s been so dire for so long. Now we finally have a proactive guy in office, things are starting to change for the better. I wish I could tour to support this album, but there are still a lot of unknowns, right? I think live music is going to happen again, but maybe not until next year. I’m gonna be really happy when I can get on stage again. 🎸

The Epiphone Nancy Wilson Fanatic is available now. You And Me is out on June 4.





Lindsey Buckingham:
his playing is all heart,
ears and instinct.

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

His guitar playing and songwriting ("Lindsey's work with Fleetwood Mac is faultless," says Mick Fleetwood) helped take Mac from almost washed up to world domination.

Words: **Henry Yates**

If losing the talismanic Peter Green was, in the words of Mick Fleetwood, "the most devastating thing that could happen to us", then filling his shoes in Fleetwood Mac was at the time the most daunting gig in rock'n'roll. By late '74 Bob Weston and Bob Welch had tried them on and passed through the band, with some creative success. (Green-era guitarists Jeremy Spencer and Danny Kirwan had also gone.)

But there was something about the guitar playing on *Frozen Love*, the drummer considered, as he overheard the standout track by the LA folk duo Buckingham Nicks: the way that forlorn but defiant acoustic finger-style tumble broke into a stormy electric lead in the sublime mid-section. Fleetwood had just heard Lindsey Buckingham for the first time.

Unlike the early years of the Green reign – when blues lead was the currency, and its architect a fixture in Best Guitarist polls – the Mac of the *Rumours* era was a more nuanced pop-rock animal; a traditional guitar hero – legs spread, spraying solos – would have been incongruous and obnoxious. But it was within

this broader canvas that Buckingham thrived, drawing on a palette of influences that made his peers look positively myopic.

Born into money in San Francisco, Buckingham had come from a background of vintage rock ("Probably the first player I was emulating was Scotty Moore"), had played banjo because of the Kingston Trio ("I got some chops that carried over into things like *World Turning*") and evolved the intricate finger-picking patterns of masters like Merle Travis (try *Landslide* or his solo arrangement of *Big Love*, with dovetailing bass/melody filling the mix).

Eschewing a plectrum, even when Buckingham played electric guitar he wove parts on *Rhiannon* that were more like an acoustic tapestry than another big, dumb 70s riff. "My finger-picking on the electric is a direct outgrowth of my formative period of playing the acoustic as a young teenager," he told *Guitar World*. "When I first joined the band, they tried to get me to start using a pick. I said no, I don't think so."

Adding to Buckingham's off-kilter style was the

fact that he had never taken a lesson, and couldn't (can't) read music. His playing was all heart, ears and instinct. As such, when he took a solo, it seemed almost led by the lyric, the wide-open-road feel of the break on his masterpiece *Go Your Own Way* being the perfect example. He once shrugged: "The song is all that matters."

Back in 2011, Buckingham scraped into *Rolling Stone's* 100 Greatest Guitarists Of All Time (propping up the poll in last place). He deserved better. As a musician, his contribution took Fleetwood Mac from near-penury to the zenith, driven by a raft of head-turning guitar parts that never once resorted to cliché. Even knowing how it would all end – with Buckingham fired in 2018, the guitarist no longer able to rub along with Stevie Nicks – Mick Fleetwood would do it all again in a heartbeat. "One thing for sure," the drummer told *Classic Rock*, "is that Lindsey's work with Fleetwood Mac is faultless."

Listen to this: *Go Your Own Way* (Fleetwood Mac, *Rumours*, 1977)



BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Nobody – *nobody!* – rocks a Fender Telecaster like Bruce Springsteen. Sure, he delegates the flash stuff to the likes of Nils Lofgren, but over the years The Boss has bossed that Tele tone himself. On record the early stuff is fertile ground for his own gutsy, no-bullshit lead playing.

There's something universal about his bluesy feel, vocal-like vibrato and squealy, soul-drenched tone. Even when he's knocking out the raggedy-assed intro to *Glory Days*, his playing fits his overall narrative and character. And when he wails in concert, it's goose-bump time.

There are kids on YouTube who can easily out-shred him, but who will grow never earning the hard-won spirit that fuels Bruce's own guitar playing. If you could bottle *that*, you'd have the ineffable essence of rock'n'roll itself. And that's what we're all here for, isn't it? **GM**

Listen to this: *Streets Of Fire* (Bruce Springsteen, *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, 1978)



RANDY RHOADS

Technically gifted, with a scholarly appreciation for classical guitar that he had only hinted at on record with the *Blizzard Of Ozz* instrumental *Dee*, it's fascinating to think where Randy Rhoads might have taken the art form had he not died at the age of just 25. Some argue that his slim legacy – just two full albums apiece with Quiet Riot and Ozzy Osbourne's band – has held Rhoads off the top of the podium. Others counter that his early death has distorted his true abilities ("He became an even better guitar player after he died," Lemmy observed dryly). Perhaps. But the impact and influence of Rhoads's best solos has nothing to do with the sympathy vote; the multi-tracked neo-classical starburst of *Crazy Train*, with its tapping, divebombs and surgical picking, still sounds utterly alive. "He did on two albums what most guys can't do on twenty," Zakk Wylde told *MusicRadar*. "That's pretty remarkable." **HY**

Listen to this: *Crazy Train* (Ozzy Osbourne, *Blizzard Of Ozz*, 1980)

Chris Stein

With Debbie Harry at the mic, Blondie's guitarist was always going to be overshadowed. But Stein's catchy, crunching riffs (*One Way Or Another*, *Atomic...* take your pick) are the perfect blend of pop savvy and CBGB cool.

Listen to this: *Picture This*

Jack White

He re-envisioned the blues – and the way a guitar could sound while playing it – for a whole generation. Oh, and wrote the last truly universal riff.

Listen to this: *Seven Nation Army*

Billy Gibbons

No technical showboater, the ZZ Top gun is a master of spit-'n'-sawdust blues rock, in time given an 80s, chart-conquering sheen (starting with *Eliminator*). Through it all, Gibbons has retained an inimitable, bearded charisma.

Listen to this: *Fool For Your Stockings*

Eddie Van Halen

Eddie Kramer: "He was an absolute genius. The finger tapping, the fire, the stage presence. He was a brilliant player, and it's a terrible loss for the musical world."

Listen to this: *Hot For Teacher*

B.B. King

He lived to the age of 89, inspiring some of rock's biggest stars (Hendrix, Keith Richards...). Armed with the Gibsons that he affectionately named 'Lucille', B.B. earned his 'King of the Blues' nickname and then some.

Listen to this: *The Thrill Is Gone*



Poison Ivy

Inspired by Bo Diddley guitarist The Duchess, The Cramps' Poison Ivy Rorschach brought psych flair to rockabilly classicism. Yet despite intensifying Link Wray menace for the punk generation and distilling rock'n'roll to its very essence, she rarely receives her due respect.

Listen to this: *What's Inside A Girl?*

100
MOST INFLUENTIAL
GUITAR HEROES



Elmore James's influence stretched far and wide.

ELMORE JAMES

Jimmy Page said James's slide tone "knocked you flat". He was far from being the only one floored by it.

The few surviving photographs of the sharp-suited young man with the easy smile (now a long-term resident of Newport Baptist Church Cemetery, Mississippi) are old and faded now. But the sound of Elmore James attacking a slide guitar remains one of the most neck-tingling experiences the blues genre has to offer, still unsurpassed by the celebrity covers that sought to leave their thumbprint on what was already perfect. As Jimmy Page – who had once wrestled with *Dust My Broom* in a teenage shift with Neil Christian And The Crusaders – once noted: "It knocked you flat."

For James, necessity was the mother of invention. As a child he'd played his first notes on a traditional diddley bow (little more than a length of wire stretched between two nails). After US Navy service interrupted his early career – leaving him working in a Mississippi electricals shop – James reclaimed the lost ground by pimping his acoustic guitar with a DeArmond pickup, pairing it with a small valve amp, and creating the fit-to-burst tone from the near-mythical 1951 session for Trumpet Records. Suggesting not so much a guitar lick as a freight train racing past with its whistle screaming, there are few more thrilling tones – then or now – than James's overdriven slide intro to *Dust My Broom*. Frank Zappa's affectionate snipe ("He only had one lick, but you had the feeling that he really meant it!") wasn't quite accurate. Slower in tempo but perhaps more intense was 1959's *The Sky Is Crying*, featuring sublime shivers of slide that not even Stevie Ray Vaughan could eclipse with his version a quarter-century later.

A hard drinker with a heart condition, James knew he wouldn't make old bones, but when he perished in May 1963, at the early age of 45, his spirit might have seethed at the cruelty of the timing. A year earlier, the inaugural American Folk Blues Festival had brought the forgotten US originators back from obscurity to a European audience, with acolytes including Eric Clapton and Keith Richards paying forward the influence as the British blues boom erupted. But Elmore missed the party – and the plaudits. **HY**

Listen to this: *Dust My Broom* (Elmore James, single, 1951)



STEVE CROPPER

At the very least, if you've ever heard anything on the Stax Records label, then you've heard his masterful guitar playing, and he might well have also written it and produced it.

Interview: **Rob Hughes**

The guitarist with Booker T. & The M.G.'s, Stax Records' house band, Steve Cropper backed scores of soul greats during the 60s as well as being a go-to producer. He's also a songwriter whose compositions include classics such as Wilson Pickett's *In The Midnight Hour*, Eddie Floyd's *Knock On Wood* and Otis Redding's (*Sittin' On*) *The Dock Of The Bay*. He has also done studio work with John Lennon, Rod Stewart, Roy Orbison, Jeff Beck and many more, and was a founder member of the Blues Brothers band. He's still in great shape at 79, as evidenced by his latest solo album, the groove-laden *Fire It Up*.

How did *Fire It Up* come about?

It wasn't contrived or conceived, it's just something that came about during lockdown. I consider it my first real album since [1969 debut] *With A Little Help From My Friends*, because that was very spontaneous too.

So it wasn't planned?

Some of the tracks were begun three or four years ago. Jon Tiven [co-producer and multi-instrumentalist] suggested we work them up and write some new ones. I told him he needed to find a singer, and he said: "We got one – Roger C Reale. Let him do a couple of sides and I'll send them over." I listened to them and called him back: "My god, where's this guy been all my life?" I'd never heard anybody sing like that before. He's awesome.

It seems that the groove is still king in your world.

I'd start most of the songs with a rhythm and we'd just go with it. For me, the groove means something. In the days of Stax I used to say, with all due respect, that if you took the singer away you still had the song, you could still dance to it.

The track *One Good Turn* has a particularly timeless feel.

The guitar on that is very old-style, back to the late fifties/early sixties. I think probably someone like Chet Atkins or Reggie [Young] or Chips [Moman], one of those guys, might've been better playing it than me.

Talking of other guitarists, what's the story behind a young Jimi Hendrix turning up at Stax Records' studios one day in 1964, when

he was still just a session player, to ask you for advice?

I happened to be mixing in the studio that day and didn't want to be disturbed. But the secretary came in and said: "This guy's driven all the way from Nashville to see you." I told her I couldn't see anybody right now. Eventually, around five, I came out to get a cheeseburger, and he was still standing outside. I don't know if he was looking for a job or not, but we started talking and he said he'd just played on a Don Covay session for Mercy,

Mercy up in New York. I said: "Really?"

That's one of my favourite licks. Can you show me?" So I took him into the studio, handed him a guitar and he turned it upside down. I said: "Damn, man, I can't learn it that way!" Jimi and I became very good friends.

"I've been paid for over a hundred and fifty versions of *In The Midnight Hour*."

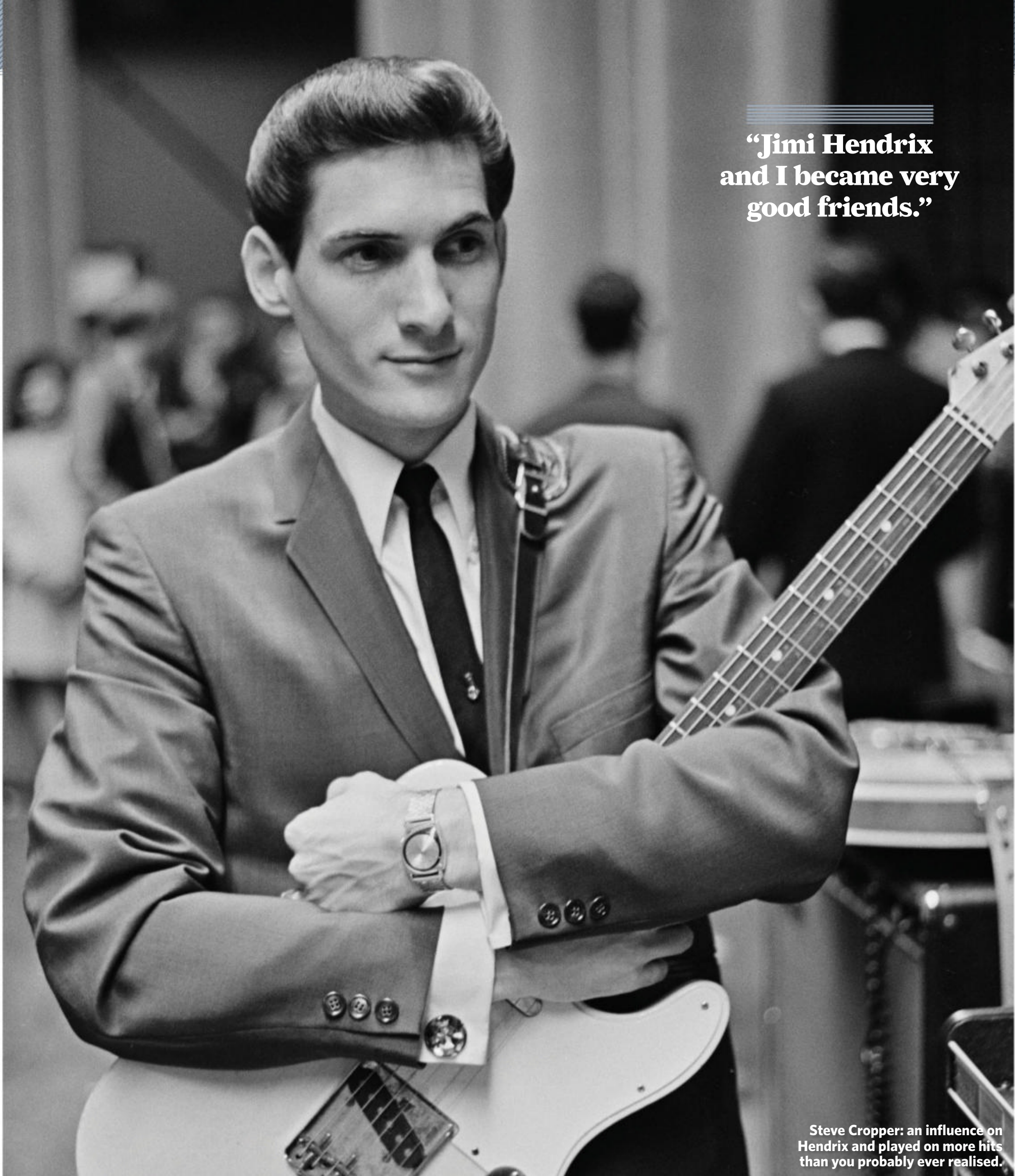


Another friend of yours was the late John Belushi, who you backed in the Blues Brothers band. Is it true that initially he thought you were a roadie?

That's right. He was riding in a limo with [record label executive] Phil Walden, talking about putting the band together. Phil told him not to forget me, and Belushi said: "Steve Cropper? That guy with the beard and the long hair? He's a roadie, not a guitar player!" I don't know if he was kidding or not – you never knew with Belushi. But we got to be pretty good friends and hung out some. He was something else. Being in the Blues Brothers band was so much fun. We were thinking if only we could do this for the rest of our lives, but unfortunately we didn't get to do that.

Going back to your early days, what made you follow a musical path?

We didn't really have music when I was growing up, basically because there was no electricity. And in West Plains, Missouri, all



**“Jimi Hendrix
and I became very
good friends.”**

**Steve Cropper: an influence on
Hendrix and played on more hits
than you probably ever realised.**

you'd hear on the radio was stuff like *How Much Is That Doggie In The Window?* But we moved to Memphis when I was around ten years old. I found a gospel station on the radio and never looked back. I just stayed with it, even though I ended up playing R&B. It's that same rhythm. It just makes you move.

Your songs have been covered so many times. Do you ever get blasé about it?

You hear so many versions that you do get a little jaded sometimes. Somebody once asked me how many times *In The Midnight Hour* has been re-cut over the years. I said: "I don't know, but I've been paid for over a hundred and fifty versions." That's

a lot when I think about it now, especially when it was one of three songs that Wilson [Pickett] and I wrote in one night.

British TV viewers of a certain age grew up hearing Booker T. & The M.G.'s' *Soul Limbo* as the theme tune to BBC TV's Test cricket. Eric Clapton was the one who first told us about that. I couldn't believe it. Here's a trivia question for you. I get everybody with this one. Who's playing cowbell on the intro?

No idea.

Isaac Hayes. In the studio I remember saying the song needed a cowbell. Isaac came over and said:

"I can do it!" So he picked it up, grabbed a stick and played it in one take.

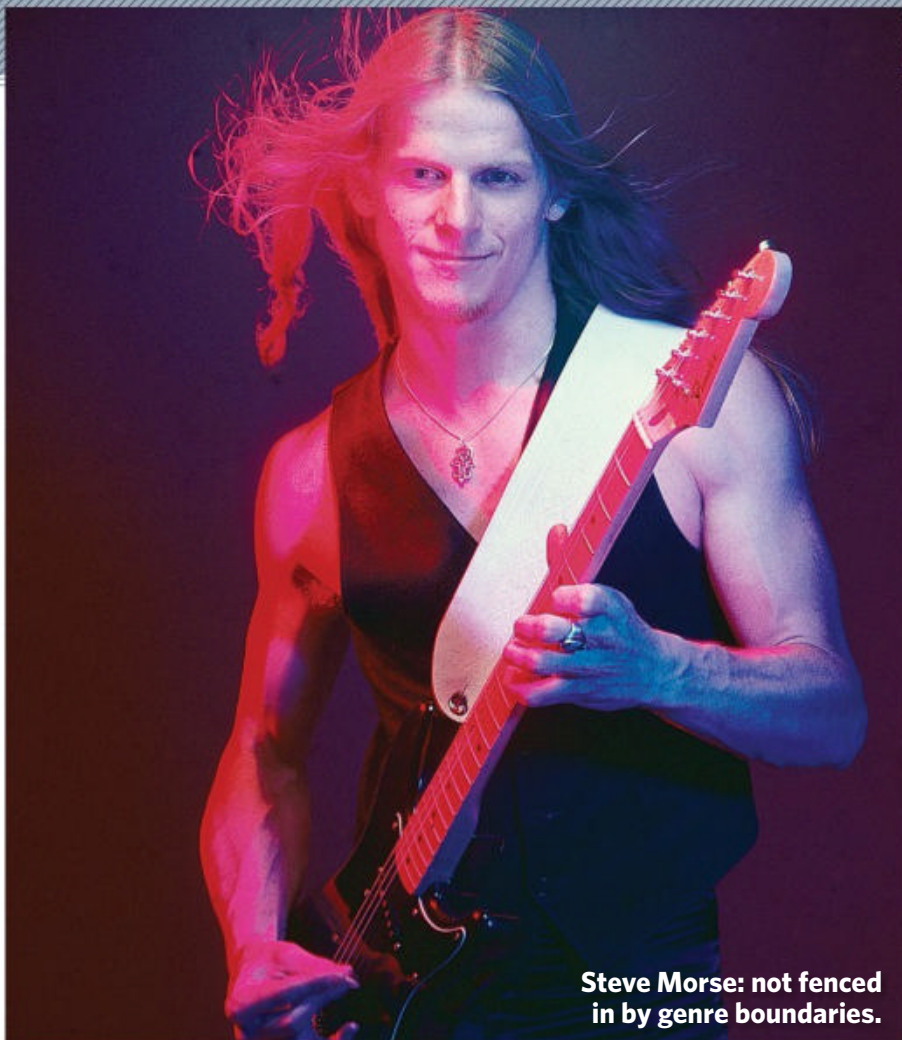
Do you still have ambitions left?

If there's anybody I would've liked to produce that I never got around to, it's Tina Turner. Twenty-five years ago might've been a good time to do it, but it's too late now.

It's never too late!

I think it is! [laughs] People ask when I'm going to retire, and I say: "When they can't wheel me up to the microphone any more." 🎱

Fire It Up is released on April 23 via Provogue.



Steve Morse: not fenced in by genre boundaries.

STEVE MORSE

The Deep Purple guitarist scores guitar-mag polls, but is often overlooked by the mainstream.

A 'guitarist's guitarist', Steve Morse has topped numerous guitar magazine polls over the years. Dream Theater's John Petrucci has cited this Ohio-born star as his favourite player of all time, and even his predecessor in Deep Purple, Richie Blackmore, has called him a fantastic guitarist. Praise indeed, from him.

Morse studied music at the University Of Miami in the early 70s, and his genre-mashing style was first heard with the Dixie Dregs, a virtuosic collective drawing on everything from fusion to funk, from southern rock to prog to country. Like his contemporaries Brian May and Eddie Van Halen, Morse fabricated his own guitar, his 'FrankenTele', to accommodate his bespoke needs, and his signature tone and extraordinarily agile, adaptive playing is centre-stage on that band's records, from 1977 debut *Free Fall* to the aptly titled *Unsung Heroes* ('81), *Industry Standard* ('82) and beyond. Dixie Dregs are still a strong, if rare concert draw, and back then they were also successful commercially. Morse's code comprised amazingly fast yet controlled playing and smoothly expressive moments; down-home and bluegrass 'chicken picking'; violin-like volume swells and a facility for classical. He pricked the ears of guitar nerds across the world. And although he could shred with the best of the Shrapnel Records stable he largely steered clear of that particular marketplace, eschewing that more travelled perm-and-spandex route.

Morse continued to innovate and explore under his own name, and after a brief stint with Kansas – and alongside his current membership of prog supergroup Flying Colors – the Deep Purple gig has kept him in front of big audiences since he joined in '94. On his first studio album with them, 1996's *Purpendicular*, the grinding intro of opener *Vavoom: Ted The Mechanic* couldn't be anybody else, and he has continued to make his mark with them over the decades since. Check him out on *Live In Olympia '96*, matching Jon Lord on those near-impossible arpeggios of *Highway Star*; on their excellent 2020 album *Whoosh!* he gives old-school rock'n'roll licks to *What The What*, and adds sparkling harmonics to *Man Alive*.

Morse's *Power Lines* instructional video on YouTube is a good and humbling insight into the almost aberrant talent of this once-in-a-generation guitar player. **GM**

Listen to this: *Tumeni Notes* (Steve Morse, *High Tension Wires*, 1989)

Peter Green

Peter Green was thrust into a competitive scene in mid-60s London. No matter how deep that talent pool ran, however, the former Bluesbreaker and founder of Fleetwood Mac seemed to understand the music that little bit more. He was able to say so much and with as few notes as possible.

Listen to this: *Need Your Love So Bad*

Page Hamilton

Best known as the guitarist in alt.metallers Helmet, jazz school-trained Hamilton is a perfect example of how to bring flair, finesse and stylistic variation to heavy-as-fuck shit without blowing your own trumpet.

Listen to this: *Bad Mood*

Stevie Ray Vaughan

Gone far too soon, the shovel-handed Texan's exhilarating loose-cannon licks and chops can be heard in just about every bluesy rocker that's followed him. A rare master of aggression, technique and melody, with tunes to boot. Talented bastard.

Listen to this: *Tightrope*

Peter Banks

Yes's original guitarist never really fulfilled his potential after he was 'let go' after two albums, but with that band he helped draw the blueprint for progressive rock and especially for guitarists in the genre.

Listen to this: *Dreams Of Heaven*

Duane Allman

He died at just 24, in a motorcycle crash, but by then the Allman Brothers Band's prodigious guitarist had already written the southern rock blueprint that would set the likes of Derek Trucks, Blackberry Smoke and countless others on their merry way.

Listen to this: *Mountain Jam*

Joe Satriani

Satriani is the former guitar teacher (to Vai and Hammett, among others) who made instrumental albums cool, mixing Albert King blues and Jimmy Page rock and sending it through outer space. Seldom has virtuosic playing sounded this fun.

Listen to this: *Satch Boogie*



BONNIE RAITT

In a 50-year career, singer-songwriter and demon bottleneck guitar player Bonnie Raitt has battled booze, fought against The Man, and created a rich catalogue of music drawing deep from the wells of rock, folk, blues and R&B. She broke through to mainstream fame with her Grammy-winning album *Nick Of Time* ('89) and follow-up *Luck Of The Draw*, with her guitar-playing skills a charm alongside her rootsy vocals. Dig beyond the evergreen ballad *I Can't Make You Love Me* and cheeky radio hit *Something To Talk About* and you'll find some real down-home gems.

Like her early hero Mississippi John Hurt, Raitt plays guitar finger-style (no plectrum), and although her approach is too understated to get the face-melter brigade excited she brings heaps of heart and a journeywoman's soul, especially when she brings out that slide. **GM**

Listen to this: *Love Me Like A Man* (Bonnie Raitt, *Give It Up*, 1972)



ROBERT FRIPP

In late 1968, with the British blues boom in full swing, Hendrix, Clapton, Beck, Page and Green were the guitarist names on most rock fans' lips. In October that year, King Crimson's debut album – arguably the first ever true prog-rock album – flew in from left field. And on its (still) jaw-dropping opening track, *21st Century Schizoid Man*, from Robert Fripp came one of the most remarkable and iconic guitar solos of the era. Jarring, atonal, anti-melodic, it eschewed anything even close to bluesy structures and progressions.

Since then, through at least three distinct phases of King Crimson and elsewhere, notably on some of David Bowie's albums, Fripp has continued to thrill by being utterly unpredictable yet very recognisable. Whether playing beautifully and elegantly in a more conventional or simplistic style, or creating imposing sound sculptures, he continues to experiment and push the envelope of all facets of guitar playing. An true innovator and a huge influence. **PH**

Listen to this: *Baby's On Fire* (Brian Eno, *Here Come The Jets*, 1974)



RORY GALLAGHER

Forget the money, forget the fame, forget the acclaim, He was in it for just one thing – the music. And when this Irish wizard played it, he was one of the greatest.

Words: **Mick Wall**

Bono called him “one of the top ten guitar players of all time”. When asked once how it felt to be the greatest guitarist in the world, Jimi Hendrix replied: “You should ask Rory Gallagher that question, sir.”

In which case, how come Rory Gallagher’s name is nowhere on the list of first names out of the mouths of so-called experts when discussing that age-old question: who is the greatest guitarist of them all?

Perhaps this story will shed some light on that murky injustice. When Mick Taylor walked out of the Rolling Stones in 1974, Rory Gallagher was top of the list of suitably gifted replacements they invited to audition, which also included Jeff Beck, Steve Marriott, Ronnie Wood and Peter Frampton.

Gallagher wasn’t the first through the door, but from the moment he strapped on his bruised and bloodied Strat and began chugging out the badass riff to *Midnight Rambler*, Keith Richards was in no doubt over who should get the gig.

Stopping the song halfway through, Richards turned to Gallagher and said: “Hey man, you’ve got the job.” To

which Gallagher replied: “No man, I don’t want the job. I’ve got a band of my own. I just fancied a jam.”

And there you have it. Fame was not the burning bush Rory Gallagher knelt before. He really did not give a fuck whether your girlfriend thought he was cute, or if the radio wouldn’t play his records much. And neither did you the moment he lit into that poor, bedevilled guitar.

Music was Rory’s god – and devil. All rolled into one eight-bar blues, transfused with wild gypsy rock, smoke rings and whiskey, occult love l-u-v. But it was delivered in such a bad-penny, journeyman fashion – the battered jeans, the minging check shirts, the roguish Irish charm – that his image became almost Christ-like. Musically, Rory’s spirit always remained pure, his mission noble, his miracles there to behold night after night for more than 30 years.

But although he sold nearly 20 million records worldwide during his short life, Rory Gallagher was never even close to becoming a household name.

I recall an evening spent in his company, along with singer Frankie Miller, backstage after a show in

Germany in 1979. Miller was a one hit wonder, in terms of chart success; Rory was the guy who’d seen his albums comb the charts but only occasionally wound them. But they sat there like kings of their thrones, drinking whisky and telling stories as we all sat and laughed and occasionally cried.

I was Gallagher’s eager young publicist, in awe of his immense talent, embarrassed that I hadn’t been able to entice more media attention for his shows.

“Sure, none of that matters,” he assured me in his soft Donegal brogue. “Did you see the show tonight?” Of course.

“Did you enjoy yourself?”

Yes!

“And are you enjoying yourself now?”

Fuck, yes!

“Then that’s all that really matters.”

Was he for real? Actually, he was. When I heard he had died, aged just 47, after a failed liver operation, life I knew then for sure was simply not fucking fair.

Listen to this: *Shadow Play* (Rory Gallagher, *Stage Struck*, 1980).



Hank Marvin: the man who made a generation of kids want to play guitar.

HANK MARVIN

Brian May on the profound influence the underrated Shadows leader and prototype guitar hero.

“Guitar was the work of the devil to our headmaster at Hampton Grammar school. And we actually had to hide, y’know? We would play in the cycle sheds after school round the back. Or we actually managed to make a little guitar club in the library, where nobody ever went [laughs]. So we had kind of a little guitar clinic, I suppose, of people who wanted to bring in stuff that they’d heard and wanted to play. We’d be like: ‘Who played the new Shadows record first?’

“We were lucky, really, because we were around at the beginning of rock guitar. It didn’t exist when I was a young kid. People like James Burton, I didn’t know who James Burton was. But I knew there was a guitar solo on a record made by Ricky Nelson called *Hello Mary Lou* – and that’s what I wanted to do. Cos he made the guitar talk; he did this bending thing. Everybody up to that point played [takes his Red Special guitar and strums a couple of chords and some simple notes], each fret for each string has a particular note. But James Burton was doing [bends], which takes the guitar to a completely different place once you’re bending strings, so that any fretted note can become almost any other fretted note depending on how much pressure you put on it. So to me that was like a door opening. And that’s what I wanted to do. I would find guitar music wherever it was, and there wasn’t very much, so it would be people like Chet Atkins, Django Reinhardt, Charlie Bird... I would just go through the record shops and pick up anything with a guitar in it.

“But then along came The Shadows, with Hank Marvin. And Hank Marvin is still one of the most underrated guitarists, in my view. Just a magnificent player. And what he did was quite simple for The Shadows, but just beautifully played, every single piece of the note, the way he left the note, was treasured. He’s a wonderful player, with a wonderful sound. Sound is vital. To me there’s no use playing very clever guitar if it sounds crap. It has to have a beauty to it, there has to be a voice.” **PG**

Listen to this: *Apache* (The Shadows, single, 1960)

Alex Lifeson

Lauded as an inspiration by artists from Paul Gilbert and John Petrucci to Voivod and Faith No More, the Rush guitarist has an blend of imagination, power and skill that’s resulted in music that appeals not just to the progosphere but also way beyond.

Listen to this: *Limelight*

Chuck Berry

An often controversial character, but an irrefutable pioneer who inspired everyone from Keith Richards to AC/DC – musically and also as a livewire performer. Bottom line: no Chuck, no rock as we know it.

Listen to this: *Johnny Be Goode*

Danny Gatton

Joe Bonamassa: “Eighty-eight, nine, this was the height of the hairspray, and guitars ruled the world. But he was on a different plane. He was also playing instrumental music that was based on stuff that was done in the forties and fifties and sixties. He was playing jazz and country and hybrid kinda things, and that was new to people.”

Listen to this: *Nitpickin’*

Mike Oldfield

The *Moonlight Shadow* solo remains astonishing, but for a late-period taste of Oldfield’s peerless melodic instincts, try 2017’s *Return To Ommadawn*, an album whose autumnal note choices and poignant phrasing ache with the tragic circumstances that inspired it.

Listen to this: *Moonlight Shadow*

Carlos Santana

A true innovator, a fiery fuser of rock, Latin and jazz tones who also knew the power of a great melody, his music is etched into the minds of generations rock fans and way beyond.

Listen to this: *Black Magic Woman*

Stephen Stills

Hugely underrated, Stills is so much more than just his CSNY work. A true guitaristic chameleon, equally at home tearing off a ferocious rock solo, getting his Latin groove on or fingerpicking an elegant folkly refrain.

Listen to this: *Crossroads / You Can’t Catch Me* (live)



DEREK TRUCKS

Listening to Derek Trucks, whether he’s in full-bore flow or just adding subtle flecks of colour, is listening to someone who combines a high level of guitar mastery with a quite wonderful musicality. Every note and chord is there for valid musical reasons rather than for flash, and he never overplays. He has the right DNA, of course, literally and figuratively, being the son of Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks and having spent years with that legendary band.

By all reports something of a child prodigy, perhaps it was an angel-on-the-shoulder moment that led to him first picking up a guitar slide because his hands were too small to play guitar conventionally. Today, as a slide player, there are few who can touch him, and even fewer whose solos can seem to lift the listener off the ground. **PH**

Listen to this: *Midnight In Harlem* (Tedeschi Trucks Band, *Revelator*, 2011)



SCOTTY MOORE

While releasing a solo album titled *The Guitar That Changed The World* could be considered as indefensible hubris if it was from any other player, the claim holds water when it’s from Scotty Moore. When Keith Richards first heard Moore’s guitar on Elvis Presley’s *Heartbreak Hotel* it certainly changed his world. “Everyone wanted to be Elvis; I wanted to be Scotty,” he said.

Deft country picker Moore was first paired with Presley by Sun Records’ Sam Phillips at the age of 22 in 1954 for an upbeat version of *That’s All Right*. Against a driving rhythmic, Moore cannily melded and simplified country and blues methodology to lay down foundations for all subsequent guitar-driven rock’n’roll.

As Moore’s guitar echoed around the world, inspiring and influencing countless players, he honed his craft and played on global hits (*Hound Dog*, *Heartbreak Hotel*). Others may have been louder, faster and flashier, but Moore was first. **IF**

Listen to this: *Heartbreak Hotel* (Elvis Presley, single, 1956)



Mick Ronson: so much more than just a great guitar player.

MICK RONSON

While all around him sang his praises, he was a reluctant rock star, the quiet genius who just wanted to play music the way it was meant to be played.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

Mick Ronson had what it took to be huge: striking good looks, on-stage charisma, stupendous musicianship. Yet he was the reluctant rock star, his personality more inclined to the role of sideman rather than being the main event. It's no exaggeration to say that Ronson changed the course of David Bowie's career, sparking his transition from acoustic folkie to androgynous electric spaceman. "Mick was the perfect foil for the Ziggy character," Bowie said in 1994. "He was very much a salt-of-the-earth type, the blunt northerner with a defiantly masculine personality, so that what you got was the old-fashioned yin and yang thing. As a rock duo I thought we were every bit as good as Mick and Keith or Axl and Slash. Ziggy and Mick were the personification of that rock'n'roll dualism."

Ronson was so much more than just a guitarist. A classically trained pianist who was also proficient on violin and cello, he excelled as an arranger and producer too. His intuitive grasp of harmony and structure fed directly into his guitar playing, which

prized melody and feel over flashy pyrotechnics. It was no coincidence that his biggest influences – Jeff Beck, George Harrison, Duane Eddy, The Shadows – all shared the same trait. Ronson was a great technician, but that was a by-product of his prodigious talent, not a goal. Serving the song was paramount. "It must be good in an emotional way," he once said, considering the job of the guitarist. "It must have the right feeling."

Ronson cut an unassuming figure. When drummer John Cambridge returned to his native Hull from London in early 1970, with the intention of introducing Ronson to Bowie, he found him marking out a rugby pitch for the local parks department. Auditioning for Bowie and producer Tony Visconti, the shy and self-effacing Ronson gave no indication of just how good he was until he plugged in his Les Paul. "He just floored us," Visconti marvelled.

His know-how was invaluable. Ronson's guitar dictated the proto-metal of Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World*; his arrangements illuminated Hunky

Dory's baroque shadings; he oversaw strings and synths on *Ziggy Stardust*; he brought two-fisted glam and fucked-up R&B to *Aladdin Sane*.

As a mark of his quality and the esteem in which he was held, Ronson was always in demand, be it playing lead and co-producing Lou Reed, or working with Mott The Hoople. Bob Dylan enlisted him for his Rolling Thunder Revue. Ian Hunter adored him so much that they embarked on a decades-long collaboration that lasted until Ronson's death from cancer, aged just 46, in 1993. Hunter paid tribute to his old friend on the moving *Michael Picasso*, its opening verse – "People used to stand and stare, at the spider with the platinum hair/They thought you were immortal" – perfectly capturing the essence of Ronson's otherworldly mystique. For him, he was just doing his job. For others he elicited awe. Mick Ronson was a genius. He just wasn't interested in shouting about it.

Listen to this: *The Width Of A Circle* (David Bowie, *The Man Who Sold The World*, 1970)



GARY MOORE

A gifted guitarist who could turn his hand to any style of music, “he just happened to come along after all the guitar heroes, so he never really got the acclaim,” says Bernie Marsden.

Words: **Mick Wall**

He was one of the greatest rock guitar players of his generation, but Gary Moore would squirm and pull a face if you ever dared suggest as much. “I don’t even listen to rock music any more,” he shrugged disdainfully the last time we spoke, shortly before his death in 2011.

Never mind that he’d been an influential member of Thin Lizzy, one of the greatest rock bands of all time. “I’m too old for dressing up,” he snapped.

Surely, then, one of the greatest blues guitar players of his time? “Wrong again,” he insisted. “BB King, that’s a great blues guitarist. Not some white guy from Belfast.”

Not known for going out of his way to please people, it was exactly this indifference – hostility, even – to others’ opinions that made Gary Moore such an astonishingly accomplished and distinctive guitar player. And, paradoxically, one of the most overlooked.

As guitarist Eric Bell, Moore’s predecessor in Thin Lizzy and another Belfast boy, who first met Moore when he was just 11, says now: “There was never any half-measure with Gary. Such a nice guy when we were on our own, laughing and joking. But if he didn’t like something he’d soon tell you to fuck off.”

Indeed he would tell Lizzy to fuck off, in effect, no less than three times. This, in spite of the fact that nearly all of Moore’s significant commercial successes came from his love-hate relationship with Lizzy mainman Phil Lynott.

“Phil was like an older brother to me,” he recalled of the pre-fame days when the two of them shared a flat in Dublin. “He was such a workaholic you wouldn’t believe it.”

That alone, though, wasn’t enough of a draw to keep Moore in the band for long. “Gary always had his own thing going on,” says former Lizzy drummer Brian Downey. “He didn’t see himself playing second fiddle to anyone, not even Phil.”

At the time Moore was brought in to replace Eric Bell, in 1974, Lizzy were seen as a busted flush. Having failed to follow-up their novelty hit *Whiskey In The Jar*, while Moore was happy to play on demos for their next album, *Nightlife*, he was already busy fronting his own Gary Moore Band, whose album, *Grinding Stone*, displayed a range of Moore’s talents, from rock

innovation. It was also, certainly in the case of *Colosseum II*, a commercial flop.

Three very ‘thought-provoking’ albums, three stiffs, by the end of 1977 when the band broke up, Moore felt justified in, as he put it, “putting my feet up for a while in Thin Lizzy”.

With Lizzy let down again by another errant guitarist – this time the flame-haired (and tempered) Robbo – Moore had stepped in to help the band through an all-important US tour opening for Queen.

“Finding myself in the back of limousines and being treated like a rock star definitely appealed to me at that point,” he told me. “Honestly, I needed the money.”

But not so much that he took Lynott up on his offer to become a full-time member. “For guys like Phil, turning every night into a party is just how they were. But it destroys me after a while.”

“Ah, man, Gary was so serious,” says Lizzy’s most famous guitarist, Scott Gorham. “Me and Phil used to beat the shit out of ourselves with all the drugs

and the drink and the women. Gary was totally on the other side. No drinks, no drugs. He was all about the guitar, all about the music. I remember we were in the Bahamas, and Phil and I were constantly out by the pool in our swimming trunks, and Gary would walk down in black trousers, black T-shirt, sitting under the umbrella. ‘Gary, loosen-up. Come on, buddy!’ ‘No, I’m gonna go back up and play my guitar.’ ‘Oh, jeez, all right.’”

His talent, though, was never in question. Gorham recalls their first rehearsal: “When he strapped on the guitar and started playing, it was: ‘Holy shit, man! I gotta keep up with *that*? This guy’s gonna dust me!’”

When Robbo bailed on Lizzy for the second ➤

“With Gary every night had to be spot on. But very few shows ever are. That would torment Gary.”

Brian Downey

and blues to piano ballads and dreamy, Santanaesque instrumentals.

When the album failed to hit, and with Lizzy now luxuriating in a blazing new direction with the addition of twin-leads Brian ‘Robbo’ Robertson and Scott Gorham, Moore joined progressive jazz-rock ensemble *Colosseum II*.

“Gary could play literally *any* style,” says his old friend Bernie Marsden, the former Whitesnake guitarist. “But that whole area where it’s more jazz than rock, I think that’s probably where he felt most comfortable, musically speaking.”

It was the era of the Mahavishnu Orchestra, of all-of-one-side-of-the-record musical exploration, of a great big melting pot of ideas and risks and



Gary Moore (right) in Thin Lizzy with Brian Downey (left) and Phil Lynott in 1974.



and last time, in 1978, Moore finally agreed to join permanently. Their first album with him was *Black Rose*, the only Lizzy studio album Moore ever fully worked on, now regarded as one of the band's best, and it's certainly their biggest-selling.

Moore was still unhappy, though, and, just three weeks after the Bahamian holiday Gorham speaks of, walked out on the band mid-US tour. "He couldn't have picked a worse time," Phil Lynott told me, still clearly furious, not long after the band returned home.

Lizzy had just wowed 60,000 people at Oakland Coliseum, opening for Journey on the annual Day On The Green show. But what looked like a major opportunity from the outside had begun to feel to Moore like the ultimate cop-out.

According to Brian Downey, "there were some nights, Christ, man, I don't know how Phil got up and played, he was so out of it."

Or as Moore told me: "Phil was still okay when I re-joined the band and we did the Queen tour in seventy-seven. But by the time of *Black Rose* the drugs had definitely kicked in and I saw a big change in him. He'd lost a lot of his energy and it was very difficult. I left the band [again] basically because of all that shit. I just couldn't stand it any more."

The manner of the final split, however, would taint Moore's reputation for ever. While before he was seen as being a little too 'serious', he was now viewed as a rat fleeing a sinking ship.

"Gary broke the code of the road," says

arching guitar solo, *Parisienne Walkways* owed its success equally to Lynott's purring, instantly recognisable vocals.

Indeed it took a while for it to sink in even for long-time Lizzy fans that this wasn't just the latest production-line hit from their favourite badass band. When it became known that Downey also played the drums, and that Lizzy had included it in their live show, it only added to the belief that *Parisienne Walkways* was actually a Thin Lizzy track. The implication was that it would never have been such a sizeable

hit had Moore, not Lynott, been on lead vocals. The fact that the album it came from, Moore's *Back On The Streets*, released nine months earlier to little interest, also featured Lynott and Downey on several tracks, in what at the time was considered to be an act of fraternity, now appeared almost an embarrassment.

There was a war of words in the music press in which Lynott was said to be considering having his vocals wiped from Moore's records. To which Moore responded that he might also insist that his guitar work be removed from *Black Rose*.

But this was not a feud Moore was ever likely to win. Reviewing his *Back On The Streets*, *Creem*, then the hippest rock magazine in America, quipped: "The ex-Thin Lizzy guitarist and no-show is a rare case of an artist saving all his worst material for his solo LP."

Neither side really recovered. But while Lizzy slid slowly downhill, becoming a parody of themselves, before throwing

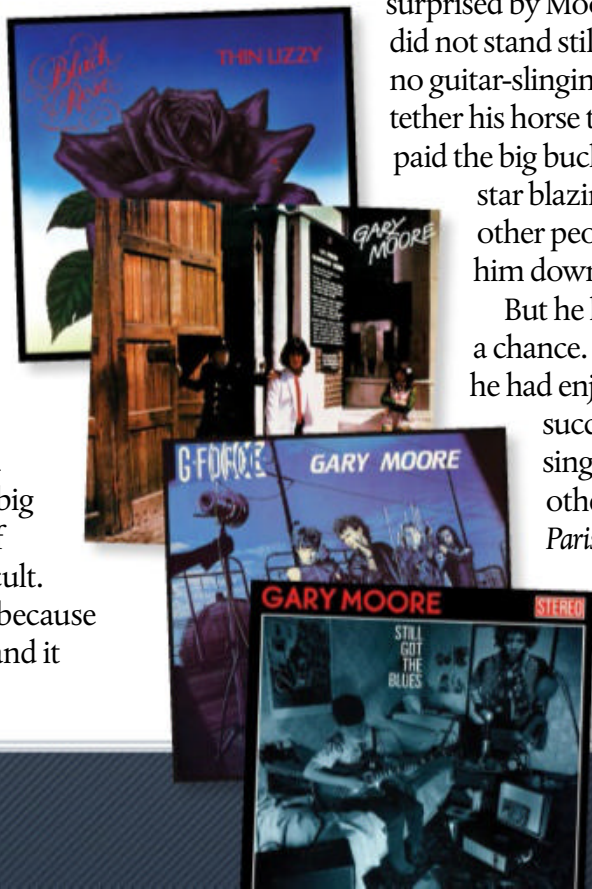
"In Thin Lizzy, Phil was the leader – except when Gary joined."

Brian Downey

Gorham. "You're unhappy, okay, we get it. But you don't leave the band in the shit. No way."

In retrospect, no one should really have been surprised by Moore's actions. He simply did not stand still for anyone. This was no guitar-slinging gun-for-hire, happy to tether his horse to any passing wagon that paid the big bucks. This was a shooting star blazing its own trail. If only other people didn't keep letting him down.

But he had a plan. Well, a chance. In the UK that summer, he had enjoyed an unforeseen success with his first solo single, the misspelled but otherwise perfectly poised *Parisienne Walkways*, which reached No. 8 in the UK in June. Although it became known for its impressively back-





The short-lived, post Glenn Hughes G-Force, 1980: (l-r) Willie Dee, Gary Moore, Mark Nauseef, Tony Newton.

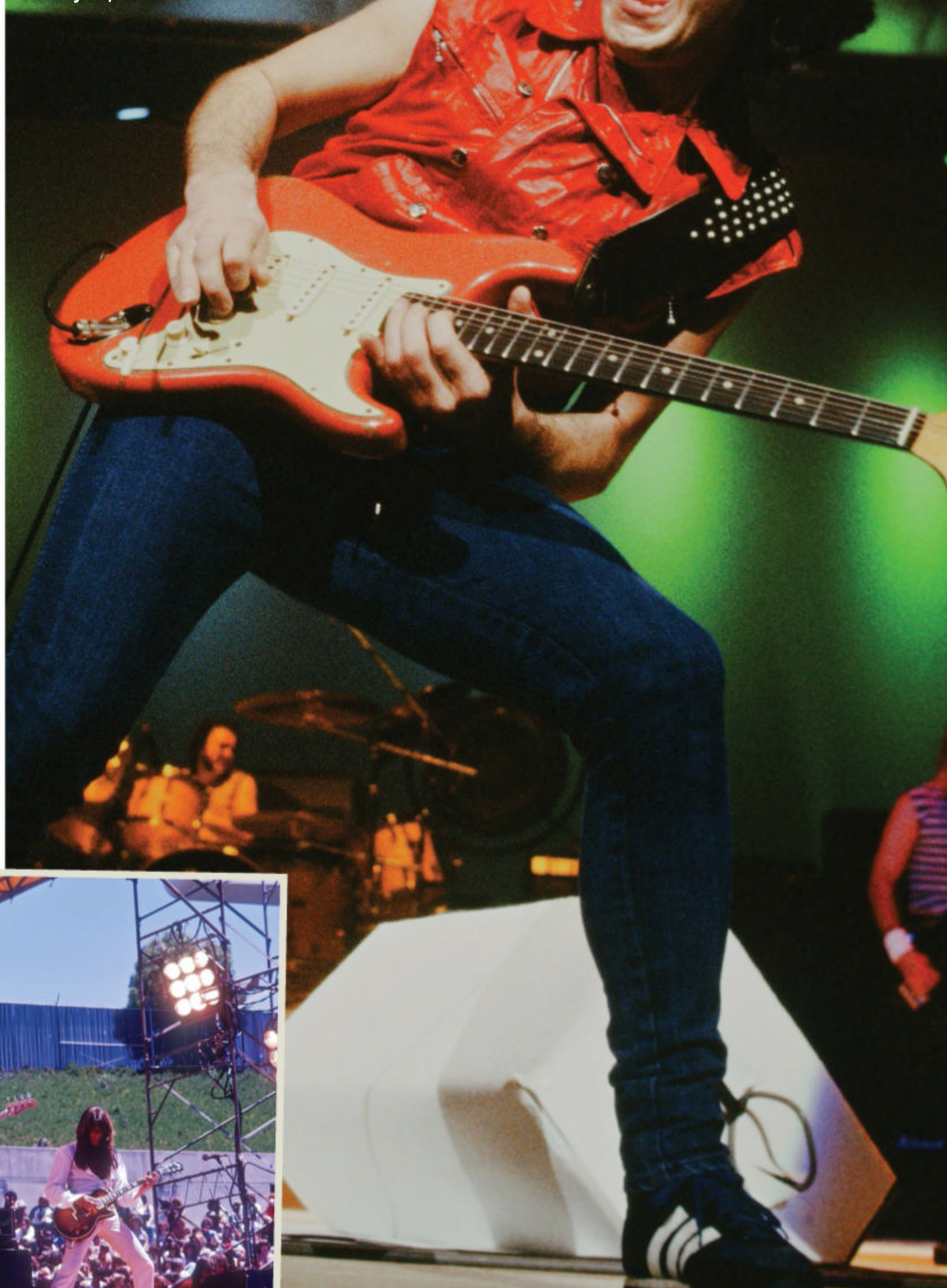
in the towel just four years later, Moore appeared energised, revved-up by the challenge. He still wanted the money and the fame, he just wanted it on his terms, or as close to that as he could manage and still look himself in the mirror.

"Gary knew he wanted to succeed," says Don Airey, "but he was so good I don't know if he was ever really happy. He was a perfectionist, but it was often to his own detriment."

Holed-up in Los Angeles, there was talk of him joining Ozzy Osbourne, newly sacked from Black Sabbath, in a solo venture. But he'd tired of, as he put it, "being second banana". What really moved him now was fronting his own band, G-Force.

Hooking up with ex-Deep Purple singer/bassist Glenn Hughes, this was going to be Moore's full-

'Ave it! Moore at Kosei Nenkin Hall, Tokyo, January 24, 1983.



"Gary could play literally *any* style."

Bernie Marsden

on assault on the early-80s rock and metal scene, replete with Van Halen-style shredding and monster riffs. But then the two G's fell out after a drunken row and, despite a successful tour opening for Whitesnake (with Hughes replaced in the line-up by Willie Dee and Tony Newton), Moore was gone again within months of the album's release in 1980. First to joined Greg Lake for his debut solo album, then even more swiftly pivoting back to revive his solo career with the album *Corridors Of Power*, the first of a series of formulaic 80s albums that ➤



Moore (left) with Thin Lizzy at Day On The Green at Oakland Coliseum, California, July 1979.

took Moore into the Top 10 everywhere in the world, it seemed, except America.

Success, when it came, always seemed to surprise Moore. Despite his apparently limitless talent on the guitar, he always seemed like he was trying just a little too hard to keep the show on the road.

His second big singles success, the 1985 hit *Out In The Fields*, was yet another hook-up with Lynott. No matter how many times they released his generic power ballad, *Empty Rooms*, it never quite became the hit Moore seemed convinced it was – or rather thought it *should* be.

As Downey explains: “With Gary every night had to be spot on. But very few shows ever are. That would torment Gary.”

Even when Moore finally seemed to find his true musical identity with the multi-platinum international success of his 1990 album *Still Got The Blues*, the shadows never left him entirely. The album’s title track was itself an almost identikit sonic template for his original – and

“Once he got the guitar on, he seemed to connect. But without that guitar he had no peace.”

Don Airey

still best – hit, *Parisienne Walkways*. All that was missing was that laconic lead vocal from Lynott, who had died four years earlier.

“Gary was so talented I think it actually haunted him,” says Don Airey. “Once he got the guitar on, he seemed to connect. But without that guitar he had no peace.”

Certainly there seemed to be something dragging Gary Moore down in the last years of his life.

“The last time I saw Gary was about a year before he died,” Airey recalls, “and he looked terrible. I was shocked.”

While Airey was reluctant to speculate on what the cause of the Moore’s distress might have been, others I have spoken to in the years since allude to a serious drinking problem. Despite a fondness for pills and dope when he was younger, Moore had never been a serious drug man; Eric Bell recalls nearly being thrown out of Moore’s Brighton home for having the audacity to light a hash pipe.

“Gary hated drugs,” says Bell. “Drink was his thing. But I’d never thought of it being anything serious. Until I heard he’d died.”

“Every time I saw Gary, he hogged the stage,” says Downey. “Even in Thin Lizzy. Phil was the leader – except when Gary joined. Now it was like we had two leaders, which wasn’t very clever.”

“He could be very moody,” says Airey. “The trouble with Gary was he wasn’t really in control of what was coming through him. He couldn’t stop it. He was a genius, really. And I suppose that sort of thing always comes at a price.”

How Blue Can You Get is released on April 30 via Provogue.



“He played at my wedding, and all the other guitar players went and hid”

Bernie Marsden and Don Airey remember their old friend.

To mark the tenth anniversary of his death, a new Gary Moore album, *How Blue Can You Get*, is released in April. It contains previously unheard and unreleased material, including Moore’s stupendous version of the BB King classic from which the album takes its title.

Here two of Moore’s oldest friends and musicianly contemporaries, guitarist Bernie Marsden and keyboard player Don Airey, recall the guitarist who could “play anything”.

“If Gary had been from that same age group, he would have been in there with Clapton, Beck, Hendrix,” says Bernie Marsden. “Even as a young guy, Gary could do a Jeff Beck thing, do a Hendrix thing, and instantly change his persona. He would do a Hendrix piece, and he’d throw a little bit of Jeff into that Hendrix piece. I would say: ‘Where are you in all this?’ And he’d say: ‘I don’t know! I’m just doing my thing.’ He was a natural player. He just happened to come along after all the guitar heroes, so he never really got the acclaim.”

“Gary knew how good he was, what he was putting down, and he knew what he was doing to other people. He played at my wedding, and all the other guitar players went and hid.”

“One night I saw him playing with George Harrison at the Albert Hall. He played *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*, and of course he could soak up that Clapton persona. But if he’d been

doing *Man Of The World* or *The Green Manalishi* it would have been the same deal. Gary could literally play anything.”

According to Don Airey, “Gary was so good, every time I ever worked with him I found something astounding happened. I saw him a year before he died. He came to do a couple of tracks on one of my solo albums, and that was the last time I saw him. He was in an awful state, I have to say. I don’t know what it was. I just think everything had got a bit much for him. I remember coming home to my wife and saying: ‘God, Gary’s not looking good.’ She said: ‘Well what’s causing it?’ But we didn’t know how he’d got into that state.”

“I think Gary’s problem was [that] all the music didn’t give him any peace. It never left him alone, and he wasn’t quite sure how he was doing it or where it was coming from. But it always was. As soon as he put that guitar around his neck he was a man possessed. As soon as it rested on his chest he became a different kind of being.”

“I miss him every day. I always think: ‘What would Gary think of that?’ He’s still there in the back of my mind. I can still hear him.”

“When he died it came as a terrible shock. It was strange the day he died. I’d just said to my wife: ‘We must go and see Gary.’ Then [former Moore bassist] Neil Murray called with the terrible news. I was devastated by it. A lot of people were.”

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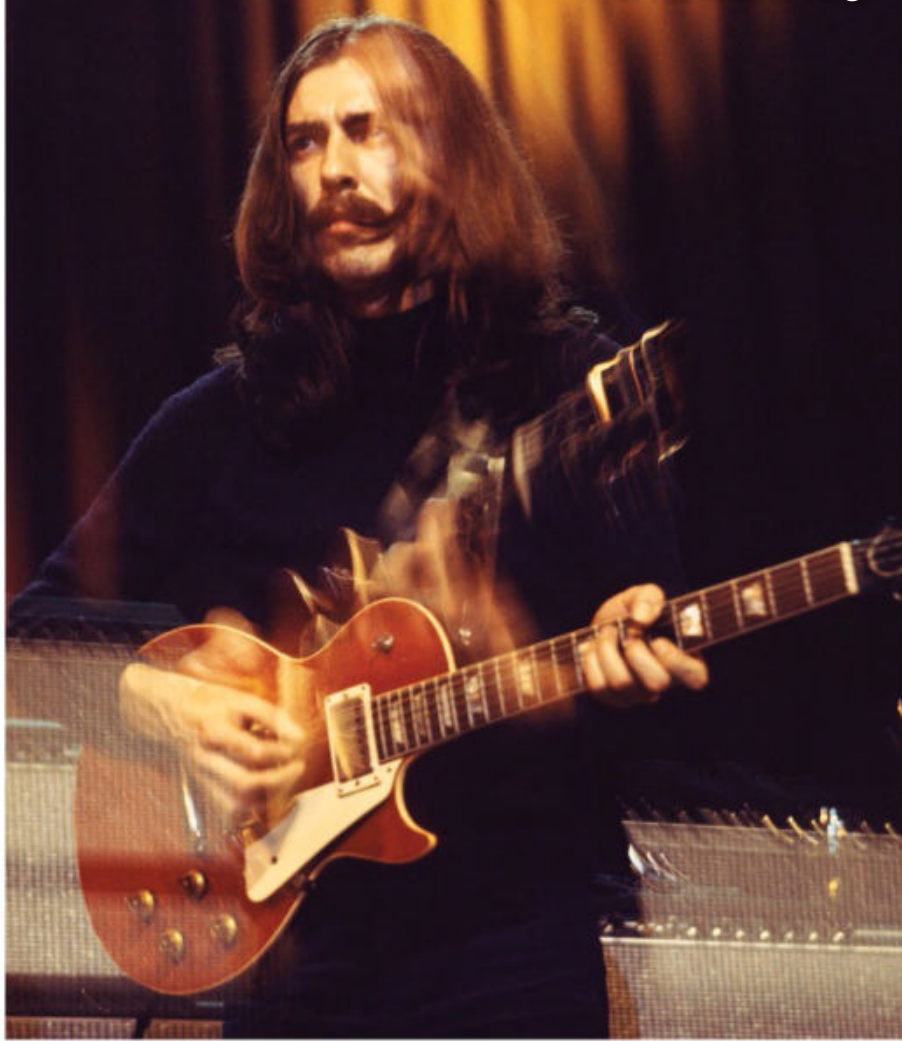
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George Harrison: added the magic touch to many of The Beatles' songs.



GEORGE HARRISON

Overlooked in The Beatles' early days, he has since been reappraised as one of the great stylists.

As 'the quiet Beatle', George Harrison was always that group's secret weapon. Lennon and McCartney wrote most of the Fab's hits and sang their way into your heart, but it was sullen George who gave the songs their transcendent guitar moments. Witness the supple elegance of his solo in *Till There Was You*, his Carl Perkins-channeling double-stops on *All My Loving*, or the plangent chiming of his Rickenbacker 12-string on everything from *A Hard Day's Night* to *If I Needed Someone*. He plied his magic even without a guitar. What would 1965's *Norwegian Wood* be without Harrison's lysergic sitar lines buzzing sinuously beneath Lennon's tale of adultery, auguring the coming psychedelic era and driving up demand for sitar players on pop recording sessions.

By 1966, however, he was overshadowed by his flashier guitarist contemporaries. He lacked Beck's dazzle, Clapton's blues virtuosity and Hendrix's alien sex-god mojo. That autumn he did the unthinkable: he gave up guitar to study sitar with Ravi Shankar. From then until summer 1968, Harrison picked up a guitar only when Beatles recording sessions required it. Playing sitar changed the guitarist in him. Its demanding technique taught him to slow down his fret hand, use larger string bends and tune in to the source of his innate sense of melody.

When he returned to guitar in June 1968, having decided he was too old to master the sitar, Harrison was a much different player. His fretwork was brawnier, his lines tougher and his tone more cutting. Part of that was down to Lucy, the cherry-red 1957 Gibson Les Paul his pal Clapton gave to him. It was also due to the skills he'd honed on his sitar sabbatical.

By the time he copped his liquid slide technique from a young country-rock guitarist named Delaney Bramlett in early 1969, George Harrison, guitar hero, had arrived. Fifty years on he remains the guitarist of choice for melody-minded players like Johnny Marr, John Frusciante and Dave Grohl, the latter having paid tribute to Harrison's slide style on *Oh, George* on the Foo Fighters' debut album. "He was always my favorite," Grohl says. "And always will be." **CS**

Listen to this: *Octopus's Garden* (The Beatles, *Abbey Road*, 1969)

Clem Clempson

A much-travelled guitarist (Colosseum, Humble Pie, Jack Bruce, Billy Cobham, Roger Waters...) who's comfortable playing in a range of styles, Clemson is a surprisingly unsung player of his generation, although, tellingly, not among his peers.

Listen to this: *Lost Angeles* (live)

Jeff Buckley

The multi-octave vocal swoop overshadows all. But Buckley also had the chops of a Guitar Institute alumnus ("He was technically a virtuoso," says bandmate Michael Tighe), and had the vision to spice his material with everything from polychords (*Grace*) to diminished intervals (the intro to *Hallelujah*).

Listen to this: *Hallelujah*

Joanne Shaw Taylor

A superb player with as much of a heart for soul as for blues and rock, the Black Country native-turned-Detroit maestro is effectively Britain's answer to Joe Bonamassa.

Listen to this: *Diamonds In The Dirt*

Angus and Malcolm Young

Individually they're masters. Together they were a four-armed monster of frills-free hard rock, Malcolm hitting the hardest rhythm chops in the west and Angus nailing mighty solos with ease. 'Influential'? That barely covers it.

Listen to this: *Highway To Hell*

Clarence White

A country-rock pioneer, the former Byrds guitarist's key claim to fame is as the inventor of the B-bender (a device that enables the player to mechanically bend the B string up a full tone, and emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar).

Listen to this: *You Ain't Goin' Nowhere*

David Gilmour

Grant Nicholas (Feeder):

"You probably wouldn't think of Feeder sounding like Pink Floyd, but a lot of the dynamics and ideas are influenced by listening to them... David Gilmour is a great guitar player. *Animals* and *The Dark Side Of The Moon* definitely influenced me as a writer."

Listen to this: *Comfortably Numb*



PRINCE

He could do it all. His musical world drew on styles including hard rock, blues, soul and R&B, and after him there wasn't a funk guitarist around without a 'Prince' patch on their pedal board. His diverse style was reflected in his guitar work: he could grandstand with emotional lead lines, or get the ladies dancing with percussive wah-wah licks. He could get down and dirty, or thrill a room with just a snatchy acoustic guitar and a banger like *Cream*. A naturally gifted player, Prince had a fresh idea for every song, and whether he was playing one of his gaudy custom guitars or his trademark budget Hohner Telecaster he had a highly individual sound; through his tone and feel you could always tell it was him, and that's incredibly rare. To the end, the guitar was central to Prince's world, and you were never quite sure how he'd use it next. **GM**

Listen to this: *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*, (live, *Concert For George*, 2002)



MICK JONES

A cosmopolitan ear and an open mind saw lead guitarist Mick Jones embrace elements from a diverse range of musical disciplines into his work with The Clash and Big Audio Dynamite, yet, crucially, he never forgot priceless lessons learned poring over the music of Mott The Hoople. With The Clash, Jones specialised in short, sharp solos that, while succinct, sparked with tangible and infectious passion. Here was the heroic drama of the glam era's ultimate practitioners (Ralphs and Ronson) stripped to its bare bones for an impatient epoch, yet losing none of its inspiring uplift.

Truth be told, despite anything the Stranglers' Hugh Cornwell might tell you, Mick Jones was every punk's guitar hero. And as we sit here stroking our chins, studiously comparing technical brilliance, let's not lose sight of the importance of image, and that no one ever looked more stylish behind a heroically spanked plank than a fag-dangling Mick Jones. **IF**

Listen to this: *Stay Free* (The Clash, *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, 1978)



Tony Iommi: triumph from adversity.

TONY IOMMI

He's the Iron Man – in more ways than one. In terms of influence, the Black Sabbath guitarist is full of it. We talk to the man who wrote the heavy metal guitar rule book.

Interview: **Neville Marten**

After a serious hand injury (losing the tips of two fretting fingers) that would have halted most players in their tracks, Tony Iommi ignored the doubters, stuck with his guitar, used his ingenuity and went on to both directly and indirectly influence every hard rock and heavy metal guitarist who has come along since.

"Before the accident, I could play regular chords like everybody else," he tells us. "But after the accident I had to think of different ways to approach the thing. I used to work on a way to make the sound bigger and get as much out of the guitar as I could. It was really a struggle. You had to be dedicated."

You're known as the Dark Lord Of Riffs, but you could have played in many different bands, because your playing style is broad enough.

Thanks. It's hard for me to see. I tend to set myself in that vein with what we do. I've always been a bit, not scared, to jump out of my field. I do on my own, but if you shoved me in the Eagles I'd go: "Oh Christ, what

do I do here?" Much like when I was with Jethro Tull. I did that short thing with them, after Mick Abrahams and before Martin Barre.

When metal happened, which you and your SG were fundamental to, was it a natural evolution from, say, Cream and Led Zeppelin, or was it the chemistry between the four of you in Sabbath?

Yes, absolutely [the chemistry]. When we first got together we'd just learn twelve-bar songs. On the first gig we did, I didn't even know what they were going to wear. Geezer came in in this long hippie dress. I've got my leather jacket on. Ozzy came with a shirt, and a tap round his neck. We were a right odd bunch. But it brought us together and it just worked.

Was there a decision to go that dark route? Was it that you wanted to be scary?

Well, I was always interested in horror movies and stuff like that, and so was Geezer. We had this interest in the supernatural. We said: "Imagine how people

get frightened, get that excitement from a horror movie, that fear. It would be nice to do that in music." And that's how it took hold.

What about your influences? Given the era in which you grew up, presumably Hank Marvin was high on the list?

Absolutely. Me and Brian May both loved Hank. We're not widdly-diddlies. We were in the studio together once and we started playing Shadows stuff. So it was mainly Hank, then Chuck Berry and a bit of Buddy Holly.

Did anybody else turn you on later?

Van Halen. We took Van Halen on their first big tour. They were with us for eight months. Eddie was playing things I'd never seen before. Of course, he set off a whole new load of players playing like that, and now I can't believe some of them. I certainly couldn't do it.

Listen to this: Black Sabbath (Black Sabbath, Black Sabbath, 1970)

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1 Steve Lukather Serpent Soul



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The Sun Again puts cathouse piano front and centre – but Toto's resident motormouth finds space for an all-feeel guitar solo where his fingers do the talking.

From *I Found The Sun Again*

2 DeWolff Yes You Do



The Covid-era genesis of *Yes You Do* might sound like a dystopian nightmare ("We wrote

it in a Zoom meeting!"). But this strutting soul-psych highlight from new album *Wolffpack* is steeped in the old-school, and will be one to shout back at the Dutch power-trio when the masks come off.

From *Wolffpack*

3 Steve Cropper Far Away



The Stax silverback still has a way with a money lick, and his first 'proper' solo album

since 1969 peaks on this escapist rhythm'n'blues rug-cutter. Horns blart and ivories clink, but at the heart of *Far Away* is that immortal right hand. As the Colonel says: "I set the groove..."

From *Fire It Up*

4 Kenny Wayne Shepherd Diamonds & Gold (Live)



Last year's *Straight To You Live* release showed just how hard the blues can kick in the hands of

a master, but the Louisiana gunslinger doesn't neglect the swing on *Diamonds & Gold*. Between the 'whoa-whoa' hook and the addictive horn lines, you're all set for earworms.

From *Straight To You Live*



Black Stone Cherry

5 George Benson I Hear You Knocking (Live)



Back in 2019, the jazz scene's smoothest operator drizzled honey over a select crowd at

Ronnie Scott's, and this standout from the resulting *Weekend In London* live album catches the atmosphere. Dave Bartholomew's 1955 standard has previously been rocked up by acts like Dave Edmunds – but it's never lolloped quite so lazily as here.

From *Weekend In London*

6 Vandenberg Hell And High Water



Just a blues label? Don't bet on it. Mascot's dizzyingly eclectic roster means that Adrian

Vandenberg's Dutch-American heavy mob also have a seat at the table – although the jackhammer riffs of *Hell And High Water* mean you're more likely to be moshing on top of it.

From 2020

7 Marty Friedman Makenaide



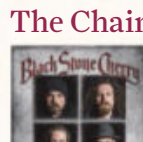
Shaking off that 'formerly of Megadeth' tag a little more with every solo release, Friedman's third

instalment of *Tokyo Jukebox* opened with a hyperactive, harmony-drenched

instrumental seemingly plucked from the soundtrack of *Bill & Ted* (it's actually a cover of an obscure 1993 single by Japanese pop-rockers Zard).

From *Tokyo Jukebox 3*

8 Black Stone Cherry The Chain



As the emotional fulcrum of last year's *The Human Condition*, *The Chain*'s unifying chorus was a

reaction to "the fucked up mess of the world" – while the verse took a cheeky steal from the Kentucky band's heroes. "We were like, 'What would be heavy Aerosmith?'" smiles guitarist Ben Wells. "So if you listen closely, there's a little *Walk This Way* tribute in there."

From *The Human Condition*

9 Joe Bonamassa I Didn't Think She Would Do It



Writing alongside Bernie Marsden and Pete Brown for the unashamedly Anglophile *Royal Tea*

album, Bonamassa had Hendrix's *Fire* in mind as he birthed this wah-heavy psychedelic squall. "I Didn't Think She Would Do It" was just something uptempo," remembers the guitarist, "and the title sang well."

From *Royal Tea*

10 The Georgia Thunderbolts Spirit Of A Workin' Man



From Skynyrd to the Allmans, there's a little stir of every Southern great in these Georgia

longhairs, but this highlight from last year's self-titled debut album sums up their blue-collar ethos. "That's our anthem," says frontman TJ Lyle. "It's got a deep lesson to it. You can't knock down the little man."

From *The Georgia Thunderbolts*

11 Walter Trout Final Curtain Call



A tough twelve-bar with a faintly celtic-sounding guitar hook, *Final Curtain Call* was a gut-punch

among the tracklisting of *Ordinary Madness*, and 70-year-old Trout's acknowledgement that there's more behind him than ahead. "That song is about realising that my time is running out, man," he says. "I gotta deal with it and be ready for it. That's one of the conditions of being alive."

From *Ordinary Madness*

12 Robby Krieger The Hitch



After a decade's silence, The Doors guitarist reopened his solo account with last year's *The Ritual*

Begins At Sundown – and relit the fire with this irredeemably funky, brass-decorated instrumental where it feels like everyone gets a solo. Somewhere out there, a 70s cop show is looking for its stolen theme tune...

From *The Ritual Begins At Sundown*

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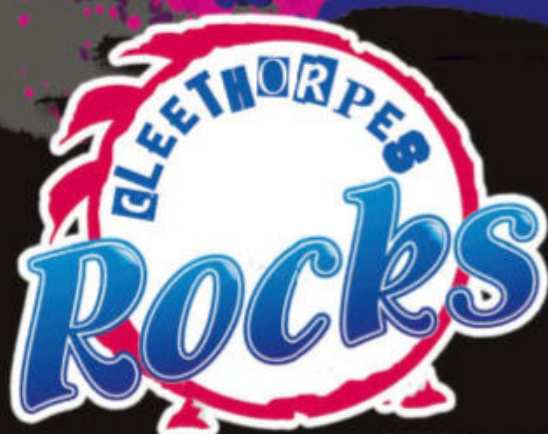
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THE ONLY WAY IS UP

Had you blinked in 2019 you might have missed **Greta Van Fleet** on their flight to the stratosphere. With a new album about to turbo-charge the engines, they're getting even closer.

Words: **Polly Glass**

How do you survive lockdown with your twin brother? For Josh and Jake Kiszka, Greta Van Fleet's singer and guitarist respectively, it's all about space. Happily their capacious Nashville pad, where they've hunkered down for the past year, has plenty of that. Listening to them chat about their living situation over Zoom – with a curious mix of schoolboy gusto and the self-assurance of two worldly hippies – it's hard not to think of childhood sleepovers (with a bigger budget).

"We have a rehearsal space here and we've just been non-stop jamming around," quietly earnest guitarist Jake says with a grin. "Testing out new material and stuff and playing it ourselves and bringing new things in."

"I'm surprised Jake and I haven't killed each other!" Josh says in a separate call the next day. "But it's three storeys, so he has his floor, I have mine, and there's this sort of middle ground. It's like a battlefield, if you want to look at it that way."

When we talk, the pint-sized singer (the eldest of the two by five minutes) is sitting in their large, stylish kitchen nursing a hangover. "A world of hangover!" he declares good-naturedly. Josh declares things a lot – it's a bit like watching a young, moustachioed hybrid of Ron Howard and Owen Wilson holding court at a cocktail

party. "We had a long meeting last night, and I thought: 'Oh, I'll get through this by *drinking!*' And now I regret it!"

What's your poison?

"I like a good red wine. I think that's where it's at."

Currently they're renting, although Josh has his eye on a swishier place in town. "I almost bought this house, a *beautiful* house," he enthuses, "this mid-century modern which I really love. So at this point I'm kinda rolling up my sleeves going: 'Alright, we'll design this thing!' So right now I'm looking for architects."

Josh Kiszka is 24.

But then everything has happened so quickly for the Michigan band (completed by younger brother Sam on bass and keyboards and Danny Wagner on drums) that the young frontman's architectural aspirations are arguably just in proportion with the world he currently inhabits.

"We're touring with all this equipment, all of these people, all of this gear... It's been wild."

Jake Kiszka

In any case, the roots of Greta Van Fleet's old-world side – poured luxuriantly into their grandiose new album *The Battle At Garden's Gate* – go way back. But we'll come to that.

Several years ago, Greta Van Fleet were playing bars, biker gatherings and other small-time gigs in and around their rural home town of Frankenmuth. Then in 2017 everything blew up with a magnitude that seemed to come out of nowhere. Armed with ➤







Ain't no stopping us now:
(clockwise) Sam Kiszka, Danny
Wagner, Jake and Josh Kiszka,
Josh Kiszka.



a pocketful of Led Zeppelin-esque bangers and a wardrobe to match, they went from being a bunch of promising newbies to a world-touring, Grammy-winning colossus in what felt like no time at all. Since then they've played Elton John's Academy Awards bash (at his personal request), done shots on tour with Dave Grohl, and had Tom Hanks show up at a studio session and declare himself a fan – all the while drawing both rapturous praise *and* scathing criticism in the sort of measures that confirm you have definitely 'made it'.

That kind of shit isn't supposed to happen to new rock bands any more, surely?

"You fly to Europe for the first time and you play at places like [London's] the Black Heart or something," Jake reflects, smiling but more serious than his frontman twin. "And then you're in a sprinter van, and you come back and then you have a tour bus, and then you have two, and then you have a semi-truck, and then two semi-trucks, and then you have this crew. It sort of spirals, and at some point you go: 'Wow, when did it get to this point?!' When has it evolved to

such a degree where we're touring with all this equipment, all of these people, all of this gear... So yeah, it's been wild."

There are *some* traces of celebrification. In conversation the Kiskzas are friendly and thoughtful but audibly media-trained (a little averse to specific tales, prone to slightly worthy waffle). A woman from their management sits in on both interviews (when we ask Josh if this is the norm he replies "Yes" a little sheepishly, before adding smoothly: "That way they can stop me cursing too fucking much!").

"You become a little more private, a little bit more secluded from all the madness that's going on around you," the singer

concedes. "So in one way it's like: are you staying in the reality of things? Are you being too protected? But yeah, it's a huge group of people that are working to make what we're doing possible. It's great that we have that, but it's very different from the way that probably a lot of people live."



To be fair to them, it's the sort of glorified babysitting that often comes with artists at a certain level. Plus, going from small-town life to having thousands of fans singing your songs back at you, from Europe to South America and beyond, in the space of a couple of years... That must change you as a person?

"It's one of the strangest things," Josh says, nodding. "You go around the world and you're meeting friends you've never met before. They know quite a bit about you, sometimes more than you would ever imagine, and they talk to you just like you're old friends, and that's incredibly beautiful. But yeah, I suppose there's... a *swelling* of confidence that comes from that. It's generating a lot and it's fuelling you and... it gives you the ability to give that back to so many people. So it is really an incredibly spiritual process. I've been able to grow on an intellectual level, on a spiritual level, in so many ways. I always have to be conscious of the ego too! Which is an impossible task."

Rural children at heart, they gravitate to nature for solace. On the road "taking [our] clothes off and jumping into the water or something" has been a favoured way of staying grounded. These days in Tennessee, driving out to the Smoky Mountains has a similar effect.

"We wanted to create something that was orgasmic and cinematic."

Jake Kiszka on GVF's new album



Has your ego run away from you at all?

“Yeah, I think a little bit sometimes. Especially when you’re so exhausted that you kind of feel... I suppose you resort to using... that kind of process when you’re so exhausted. Sometimes you’re like: ‘Clearly something’s disconnected here. Why am I taking out all of this frustration on other people or things?’ But I think ultimately it comes back around when you step back and take a breath, and realise what’s actually going on.”

Staying at home for the past year, like the rest of the world, has given the band the chance to do just that. After three years of non-stop touring, there was a lot to digest.

Seemingly they’re still digesting it.

“All of a sudden it’s like: ‘Wow, we get to actually identify with what’s going on,’” Jake says, “and be creating in an alternative aspect, I guess.”

“That would never have happened if the world hadn’t stopped,” Josh observes. “I don’t think we would ever really have gotten the time to take a moment and reflect. I think ultimately it’s really healthy, but in retrospect, looking back at everything that’s happened in the last three and a half, four years is just madness.”

One could argue that Greta Van Fleet had ground to a bit of a halt *before* covid struck. At the start of 2019 a throat infection put Josh out of action and forced them to postpone a full European/UK tour and shows in Australia and the US. Were they burning out? Perhaps this unexpected year at home came at a good time?

“It was so natural at that point,” Jake says of touring life circa 2019. “It was so, and it is kind of

natural to us, more now. Again it’s this thing with evolution. I think we were really road-trained at that point that we were sort of, y’know, pirates of the road, really! We kind of were trained to exist out there and tour. But there’s a sort of exhaustion. Sometimes it can get around to you, but if you have one day off you come right back around. There were bouts of exhaustion, yeah, but I think ultimately we were pretty used to it.”

Burning the candle at both ends?

“Yeah, it felt like that,” Josh agrees. “It was extraordinary and exhausting. And that’s really how it goes when you’re trying to do so much all

“Hasn’t rock’n’roll always been a cult, in a way?”

Josh Kiszka

the time. And again, a good reason for this year to rest, recollect, regather.”

Serendipitously, 2020 was also a chance to round off their second full-length album, *The Battle At Garden’s Gate*. If debut *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army* was to some degree an exercise in classic-rock parroting – albeit a particularly good one – *Garden’s Gate* is the layered, expansive sound of a band doing what they *really* want to do, safe in the knowledge that their now-established, devoted fan base won’t leave them in a hurry.

Recorded in hi-spec studios in the rolling

canyons of Hollywood, with producer Greg Kurstin (Paul McCartney, Adele, Foo Fighters) and a string quartet at their disposal, it’s a cinematic Aladdin’s cave of past riches. The swooping, densely packed stuff of classic rock, folk, blues and prog fever dreams made by people who *really* love this music. Josh’s raspy cries will still likely divide opinion (not wholly unlike, say, Geddy Lee or Jon Anderson in that regard), but they sit comfortably in the grandeur of their musical surroundings.

“It is a vastly dynamic album and it’s very intense,” Jake says, nodding. “We wanted to create something that was orgasmic and cinematic to a certain degree, which I suppose is an ode to our childhood as well.”

Lyrically there’s Huxley-esque dystopia (*Age Of Machine*), 15-century vessels (*Caravel*), Old Testament fire and brimstone (*The Barbarians*) and thoughts on the human condition, among other things, creating an artistic, at times unwieldy parallel universe.

Where does all this come from? Books? Films? Mind-altering drugs? Something else?

“Years of contemplation, I guess,” Josh replies. “And some self-reflection. A lot of reflection and meditation. But it is borrowing from a lot of literature, some motion pictures... and yes, some vices [laughs], some... er, yeah, some secret sauce, if you would.”

Led Zeppelin might be Greta Van Fleet’s most exhaustively cited comparison (not entirely unreasonably), but further listening reveals touches of the Eastern, African, Kirtan and other world music that Josh in particular laps up. There’s Hindu



Light entertainment: GVF
have come a long way
– fast – from playing
a London pub in 2017.

chanting in *Trip The Light Fantastic*, and epic album closer *Weight Of Dreams* has a mournful melodicism that nods as much to Demis Roussos as to Robert Plant.

“He’s one of the best,” Josh enthuses of the Greek star. “His stage performance, well it was probably on some television programme, but he was in this extraordinary dress, a big hairy man singing like that. It blurred so many lines and broke so many rules.”

The old-world, old-soul nature of Greta Van Fleet goes back to their rural upbringing in Frankenmuth (population: five thousand and something). The three Kiszka brothers grew up in a house filled with highbrow literature, records and films. Ingesting it all was encouraged. Their father was a chemist and a blues musician, with degrees in philosophy. Their mother was a science teacher and “quite the rebel”. Between them they created a “unique” upbringing and an “intellectual playground” of sorts for their kids.

“Everything was basically laid out,” Josh explains. “It was like, if you had a question about things that were intriguing to you, it was pretty straightforward. It’s like, the word ‘sex’ was not taboo, so to speak. Jake said ‘orgasmic’, right? [we’d relayed his brother’s description of the new record] It’s like, this is biology. I think the upbringing had a lot to do with where we are now.”

So, in case you were still wondering, no they’re really *not* just a bunch of Zeppelin fan boys. Sam is more of a jazz guy, in fact. Josh and drummer

Danny love folk music. A glance at their bookshelves reveals Romantic classics, works by noted Zen philosopher Alan Watts, Paulo Coelho’s magical realist vision *The Alchemist*, the films of Kubrick, Tarantino, Coppola...

“Hopefully this acts as an invitation for people to go out and delve into all those beautiful works of literature,” Josh says with a smile, and he’s being totally sincere. “We cannot lose that, ever. Read, read, read. Write, write, write. Y’know? It’s a little cheesy but it’s so true.”

It would be easy to write off such cultural grandstanding as baseless ego-flexing; the

“Now it’s our generation’s turn to sort of toy with rock’n’roll, create these new ideas, bend and break the rules. It’s exciting.”

Jake Kiszka

chatterings of jumped-up wunderkinds with a lot of people telling them how brilliant they are. Clearly there’s an element of that, but talking to them (and listening to the new songs) it’s even clearer that all these sensibilities, these instincts of theirs, run bone-deep.

With *Garden’s Gate* now under their belt, and heaps of other songs up their sleeve, Greta Van Fleet are more ready than ever to return to the road, only this time, it appears, with a more sober appreciation of what that life really entails.

“I haven’t experienced illness this year at all,” Josh says. “Which means what I was doing before was so physically and psychologically exhausting that I was taxing myself and I was getting ill, because my body couldn’t keep up with the speed of things. But yeah, it was burning the candle at both ends.”

He stops, then continues with a grin: “Part of me, the masochist in me, is going: ‘Oh yes, but that was so good! Let’s do it again!’ You’ve got to love that.”

Greta Van Fleet are not stupid. They know that most of the world seriously doubts rock’s capacity for genuine freshness circa 2021 – that it’s far more

common, even among rock fans, to find those who’ll sigh wearily that ‘It’s all been done already’. But the band don’t care. They are admirably, wholeheartedly convinced of rock’n’roll’s ability to reinvent itself, and are excited to be among those doing it.

Whatever your views in that regard, it’s hard to resist such commitment.

“There’s so much more that can be done,” Jake says. “Now it’s our generation’s

turn to sort of toy with rock’n’roll, create these new ideas, bend and break the rules. It’s exciting.”

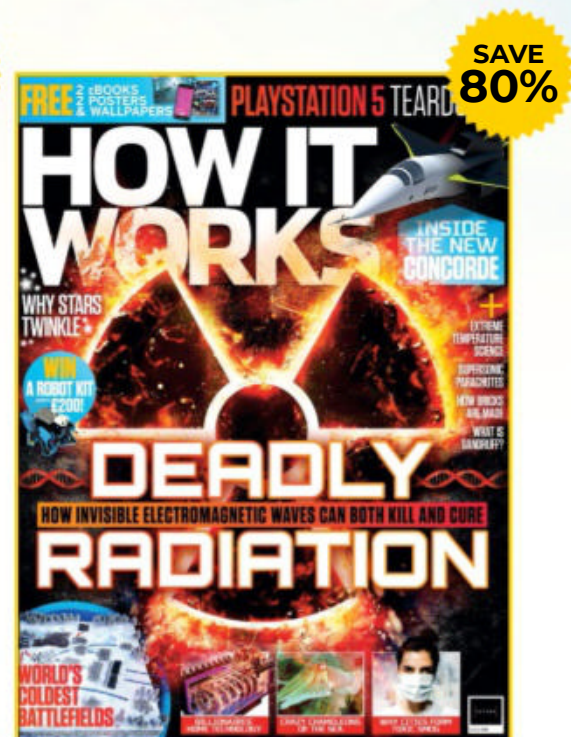
“We have so much more to do,” Josh agrees, “and we’re really excited to do it. And we’re excited to see other people doing it. It’s kinda special. A special sacred kind of... family. Cult-ish? Yes! Hahaha... Hasn’t rock’n’roll always been a cult, in a way?”

The Battle At Garden’s Gate is out on April 16 via Lava/Republic Records and EMI Records.

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AND FOR OUR NEXT TRICK...

The Illinois Anglophiles “didn’t plan for any of this to happen” but, deep into their fifth decade of existence, **Cheap Trick** are enjoying a late-career surge of creativity.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

“**R**ock’n’roll moves like a roller-coaster, the same way our career has gone,” offers Robin Zander, Cheap Trick’s lead singer and rhythm guitarist. “We’ve had our ups and downs over the years. We never had goals, we just keep on doing what we do because we love it. What can I say? I like rock songs with good energy.”

Zander is trying to account for a couple of things. Firstly, the longevity of Cheap Trick, the band he’s fronted with

dashing elan since 1974. Then there’s the uncurbed intensity and verve of the band’s latest album *In Another World*, which distils everything that Cheap Trick do best – punchy pop-metal, great ballads, hooks, harmonies, glam-bam rock’n’roll – into 50 wondrous minutes.

The album also crowns a prolific late-career surge that has yielded four albums in nearly as many years. “We actually enjoy the challenge of recording,” explains flamboyant lead guitarist Rick Nielsen, he of the trademark baseball cap, ➤



Live at Nippon Budokan, Tokyo:
(l-r) Robin Zander, Tom
Petersson and Rick Nielsen.



bow tie and crazy stage moves. “There’s thirteen songs on *In Another World*, and we probably had at least another half dozen on top of that. In the same time frame we also did a Beatles track for Howard Stern, a David Bowie track with [producer] Jack Douglas and a song for a Harry Nilsson tribute album. So we like to work. And we never seem to be searching for things to do — things search us out.”

Cheap Trick actually started recording the album while still with Nashville label Big Machine, who released 2016’s return-to-form *Bang, Zoom, Crazy...Hello* and the 2017 double whammy of *We’re All Alright!* and *Christmas Christmas*. They’re now signed to BMG. *In Another World* was initially down for release in 2019, but was disrupted by covid. Opening track *The Summer Looks Good On You* (aka *Here Comes The Summer*), all burst lungs and power chords, came out as a taster single as early as 2018.

The album’s longish gestation is sometimes reflected in the subject matter. For all the zip and pep of effervescent tracks like *Here’s Looking At You* or *Boys & Girls & Rock ’N Roll*, Cheap Trick have catalogued the Trump era in their own special way; *Another World*, *The Party* and *Final Days* all hint at darker, troubling times.

“I think they’re a reflection of how everyone feels,” contends Zander. “This was before covid, so we were talking about the United States in general, about politics and how things are going. I guess we all felt like we were being run by a mob.”

Pessimism, however, has never been a Cheap Trick trait. Zander is keen to point out that the song *Another World* “may paint a dark picture, but notice the words in the chorus: *We could be happy, in another world we could be free!*”

There will be peace for you and me. It’s about finding the balance,” Nielsen adds. “I think we’re more realistic about things in a rock context. We’re not trying to do a Springsteen and preach to anybody, we’re just showing a slice of our lives. It’s three and a half minutes of stuff we’ve observed, that we feel.”

The album closes with a biting cover of John Lennon’s protest anthem *Gimme Some Truth*. Conceived in the era of Nixon and Vietnam, its message hasn’t diminished, or become any less relevant, in the 50 years since Lennon recorded it. “That song was one of the first things I thought of for this record, because of the lies that were happening in our country,” Zander says. “It sort of permeated the whole record after we’d recorded it. Everything seemed to fit within that realm.”

The Lennon connection feeds into a specific memory for Nielsen, especially in light of the fact that *Final Days* yanks on a riff from his *Cold Turkey*.

“I worked with John and Yoko on the *Double*

a long time and Cheap Trick always loved the Sex Pistols,” Nielsen explains. “Their approach was so alien from what we were doing, but it still had that raw power. So I was showing him a guitar that I’d brought to the radio station and we were playing along to something that was on air. Then I asked if he wanted to play on a track with us. He liked the idea of the song, and it worked out perfectly. Now we can’t get rid of the guy.”

“As bands, the Pistols and Cheap Trick came out around the same time, so I guess it made sense to him,” adds Zander. “We’re a totally different group, going from simple ballads to full-on *Auf Wiedersehen* stuff. That’s why I think people like Steve Jones appreciated us, because he liked the intensity and diversity of it.”

The assimilation of Jones and Lennon on *In Another World* loops back to Cheap Trick’s lifelong Anglophilia. The band might have formed in northern Illinois, a stud in America’s Rust Belt, but their spirit was forged from the music that emanated from the UK in the 60s and early 70s.

Zander sees the band’s sound as a natural reaction to the music of The Beatles, the Stones, The Kinks, The Animals and The Who. “It was that sort of secondary blues

influence that turned me on,” he remembers. “It was energetic, louder and more exciting than the kind of blues we had over here. I was really truly influenced by the British Invasion and I loved the guitar playing of The Yardbirds or early Fleetwood Mac. There was some extraordinary stuff. It gave me that feeling of: *That’s what I want to do.*”

Nielsen’s obsession was just as deep, perhaps more so. Anxious to keep abreast of what was hip across the pond in the UK, he had weekly music paper *Melody Maker* sent to his home in Rockford, Illinois. “I think it was around a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a year to get it air-mailed,” he recalls. “That was expensive in the sixties, but it

“We’ve basically never improved and we’ve never progressed. But luckily we started off pretty good.”

Rick Nielsen



Fantasy sessions, doing a song called *I’m Losing You*,” he recalls. “I was in the studio, playing, and John looked at Jack Douglas and said: ‘God, I wish I’d had Rick on *Cold Turkey*. Clapton choked up.”

Joining Cheap Trick on the cover of *Gimme Some Truth* is former Sex Pistol Steve Jones, who plays some suitably spiky guitar. He took up their invitation after Zander and Nielsen appeared on his LA radio show *Jonesy’s Jukebox*.

“I’ve known Steve for



Nielsen and Zander with Cheap Trick supporting Def Leppard at London's O2 Arena in 2018.



meant I got my copy six weeks earlier. I wanted the news as it was happening.”

Excited by what he was reading, Nielsen made his first visit to London in 1968, along with future Cheap Trick bassist Tom Petersson. The guitarist is still enthused by the memory of his time there.

“We got off the plane and went to stay in the Bayswater area, at the Inverness Court Hotel, where you had to put shillings into the meter,” he says. “As we walked in they were playing *Sabre Dance* by Love Sculpture. I remember buying a used Mellotron from Cliff Cooper at Orange Music, and also the very first Orange amp, which I still have today. Later that week I went to the Marquee and saw Love Sculpture with Dave Edmunds, then I bought four Sound City [amplifier/speaker] stacks, because that’s what he used. It was all so exciting.”

At that juncture, he and Petersson were playing together in Fuse, having previously been members of the Grim Reapers. The latter’s main claim to fame – in an act of tragic symmetry, considering the band’s chosen name – was being on the bill as support to Otis Redding and the Bar-Kays on the night Redding and four members of the band were killed in a plane crash.

“I had to go up and announce to the crowd that they’d crashed into Lake Monona and wouldn’t be appearing that night,” says Nielsen, referring to the fatal accident near Madison, Wisconsin in December 1967. “I told them that the show would not go on, although the band I was in still had to play. That was because our manager was like Ozzy Osbourne’s old manager, Don Arden. We did as we were told.”

Zander’s route to Cheap Trick also came via a trip to the UK. “I was in a band with the original singer of Cheap Trick, Randy Hogan, for about a year,” he says. “Then I went to upstate Wisconsin and performed up there for a while. When I was eighteen I moved to Scotland for a year, because I thought I could get a record deal. So I took the train into London, went to Pye Records and played

a few songs for them. They basically told me to go back home and practise. Which is what I did. When I came back I joined Cheap Trick.”

Apart from absorbing the music he loved, Zander’s time in Britain also brought him into contact with the people who made it: “I went to Alex Harvey’s birthday party in London, which turned into a drunk fest. But I loved his way of singing, all that very theatrical stuff. I think Bon Scott was influenced a lot by Alex too.”

That formative experience also plugs into *In Another World*. One of the most wistful moments on the album is the heartsick *So It Goes*, with Zander intoning over picked acoustic guitar and gentle ambience. The song dates back to his time as a struggling wannabe.

“*So It Goes* was written a long time ago, probably when I was living in Scotland,” he says. “Pye Records passed on that one. It needed work on the melody and lyric. So it was one of those things

“Rock’n’roll moves like a roller-coaster – the same way our career has gone.”

Robin Zander

that I dug up and decided to finish for this record. Sometimes it works out like that. I’ll go through my old stuff and think: ‘That’s really kinda cool.’”

In many ways, then, *In Another World* finds Cheap Trick riding that same roller-coaster that Zander alluded to earlier. They’ve enjoyed the steep ascent of late-70s landmark albums *In Color*, *Heaven Tonight* and *Dream Police*, peaking with 1979’s multi-platinum *At Budokan*, endured the commercial dip of the following decade, and climbed again with their 1988 comeback *Lap Of Luxury*. And for all the difficulties of the 90s and early 00s, the band are now, unquestionably, back on the rise.

Crucially, throughout it all Cheap Trick have always been true to themselves. Keep at it long enough and you become an intrinsic part of the culture. In 2016 they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Last year, their album *At Budokan* was placed into the US Library Of Congress for being “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant”.

“We never tried to be something that we weren’t,” says Nielsen. “For the people who still don’t really know who we are, it kind of validates us: ‘You’re in a rock band? Oh good. You’re seventy-two years old and play in a rock band? Oh Jesus! What’s wrong with you?’

People used to say that if you can make it in New York you can make it anywhere. I say if you can make it in Rockford, Illinois, you can make it anywhere.

“I didn’t plan for any of this to happen,” he continues. “We’ve just worked hard and we’re too dumb to quit. Music has been our hobby and our love the whole time. One of the things I’m always proud to say is: ‘We’re Cheap Trick. We’ve basically never improved and we’ve never progressed. But luckily we started off pretty good.’”

In Another World is out on April 9 via BMG.



WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU...

Shedding band members but swaggering on, **The Treatment** are betting on their fortunes taking an upturn with fifth album *Waiting For Good Luck*. All this while telling tales of liquor, vampires, serial killers and getting pranked by Alice Cooper.

Words: **Henry Yates**

A decade is a lifetime in rock'n'roll. Back in 2011, we first met The Treatment on the heels of their cracking debut album *This Might Hurt*, and got friendly with a juiced-up gang of longhairs who shared a love of AC/DC, a squalid flophouse outside Cambridge and dreams of world domination. Back then, as they opened for Alice Cooper and treated the title of debut single *Drink, Fuck, Fight* like a to-do list, it seemed that the universe was destined to

bend to The Treatment's will. "We love doing this, and we're always going to be doing this," singer Matt Jones told us, with an easy grin.

"I remember doing the Alice Cooper tour," drummer Dhani Mansworth says now, "and it was the worst thing I've ever experienced on stage. We went out, and all my gear was covered in talcum powder, we had a geezer in a chicken suit chucking eggs at us. They even put double-sided gaffa tape on the floor. So, like, none of us had any shoes on by the second song."



Ten years on from when we first met them, The Treatment are emphatically still “doing this”, with their fifth album *Waiting For Good Luck* the finest distillation yet of their crunchy, hooky, Leppard-harmonied vibe. But while you can set your watch by the music, it’s harder to predict who’s going to show up for interviews. So here we are in February 2021, talking to the latest new-look Treatment line-up, headed by Cornell-lunged MkIII singer Tom Rampton (the 2017 successor to Mitchel Emms, who himself replaced Jones back in 2015).

The Spinal Tap comparison doesn’t quite fit: our second interviewee today, drummer Dhani Mansworth, has been there since the start. And for all the shuffles in personnel, the chemistry remains intact.

“We’re still waiting for the phone call to front the vaccination campaign,” Rampton jokes. “There’s going to be a big poster of Dhani with a massive bushy beard, pointing his finger at everyone, going: ‘Get fucking vaccinated, you idiots!’”

Still, with original bassist Rick Newman jumping ship just last year, you have to wonder if that album title is a flash of gallows humour.

“I think this is the strongest position the band has ever been in,” considers Mansworth. “But we’ve faced a lot of adversity. People like original line-ups, and we’re a band that’s had a lot of members. I don’t blame Rick for

taking the course he has. Because who wants to be sat in a van eating a Meal Deal in Grimsby on a Thursday night? Not everyone is cut out for life on the road and the long haul. But we absolutely love what we do. It’s what we live for.”

“If you haven’t gone through some bullshit, what do you have to write about, what do you have to sing about, what do you have to make jokes about?” Rampton offers. “The bands that have had an easy run all the way through will never be one of the greats.”

Right now, you suspect that this galvanised line-up wouldn’t say no to a gig in Grimsby (or anywhere else) on a Thursday or any other night of the week. But Rampton points out that during the time they haven’t been allowed to play gigs, they’ve had more time to write, and in fact have written their best batch of songs yet.

“You’re stuck in the same place for four months, what else are you gonna do?” he says. “Don’t get me wrong, I still think the first album I did with these guys, *Power Crazy* [2019], is great. But this is definitely the best the band has ever sounded.”

“On every album we’ve done, we’ve gradually got closer to the sound we wanted to be, and on this one we finally nailed it,” says Mansworth. “Obviously you’ve got AC/DC and Def Leppard in there. The Cult are another massive influence. As for songs, *Eyes On You* is a great one. That’s about a geezer strangling a bird underwater.”

“There’s a bit of a serial killer vibe to that one,” says Rampton. “Then there’s *Let’s Make Money*. That’s just about that little dream that deep down we all want to make a bit of green. But it’s very satirical and sarcastic, taking the piss out of people who think money is the be-all and end-all.”

“*Vampress* is basically about a vampire bird going around massacring everyone,” Mansworth explains, straight-faced. “Obviously we’re all massive horror movie fans. *Tough Kid* is essentially what every kid has gone through being a rock fan at school – you’re always seen as the outcast, the weird one, because you’ve got long hair or whatever.”

Rampton considers the mid-tempo, piano-plonk blues of *Barman* to be the new album’s odd man out, but says it was probably the most fun to record during a session snatched at Rockfield Studios when the lockdown abated.

“The first thing we did when we decided we were doing *Barman* that day was have a dram of whisky. It got us in the right mind-set. This is a guy who is absolutely lamenting his entire life. He’s just sitting at the bar, drinking away his sorrows. I’m never going to sound like a Freddie Mercury or a Myles Kennedy; I’m always going to sound rough-and-ready. But I think it fits the music.”

The other noteworthy thing about *Barman* is the repeated line that plays out the song: ‘*We might as well just carry on.*’ That’s not just a lyric, it’s a band manifesto, right?

“We’ve gone from playing one of the biggest tours in the world, with Kiss and Mötley Crüe, to losing a singer and guitar player a year later.”

Dhani Mansworth

“Hard times show you who you are, don’t they?” offers Mansworth. “We’ve gone from playing one of the biggest tours in the whole world, with Kiss and Mötley Crüe, to losing a singer and guitar player a year later, then having to regain our momentum again. But we’ve always stuck in there, and what we’ve been through has only strengthened us as a band. We’ve still got the same passion for this. All for one and one for all, y’know?”

“It’s the perfect chorus for this band,” Rampton replies. “If you love what you do, which all of us do, what else is there? Why would you ever stop doing something that is the first thing and the last thing you think about every day? Sometimes all you need is that little spark, that one little thing to go right for you, and that can set off a chain of events that you can’t even imagine.”

Waiting For Good Luck is released April 9 via Frontiers Music.

IF YOU WANT BLOOD

Hard-hitting British turbo-duo **Royal Blood** return with a new album – their most danceable, most feelgood album yet – and, more importantly in the long term, one member's new sobriety.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Two years ago Mike Kerr became a different person. The Royal Blood singer/bassist was in Las Vegas when the dark shadow that had followed him for some time crystallised in one simple decision: he was done with drinking. Amid the neon and noise of the world's gambling capital, he experienced a moment of clarity and downed the espresso martini that would be his last alcoholic beverage to date. Although that martini was technically a relapse of sorts.

"I kind of had this moment where I was like: 'Wow, I think that's it, I think I'm done,'" he remembers today. "And then I was so drunk I forgot I'd already ordered an espresso martini, and the guy gave it to me and I was like: 'Maybe one more.' And that was my last one," he says with a wry half-chuckle. "But I basically immediately failed. It was quite funny."

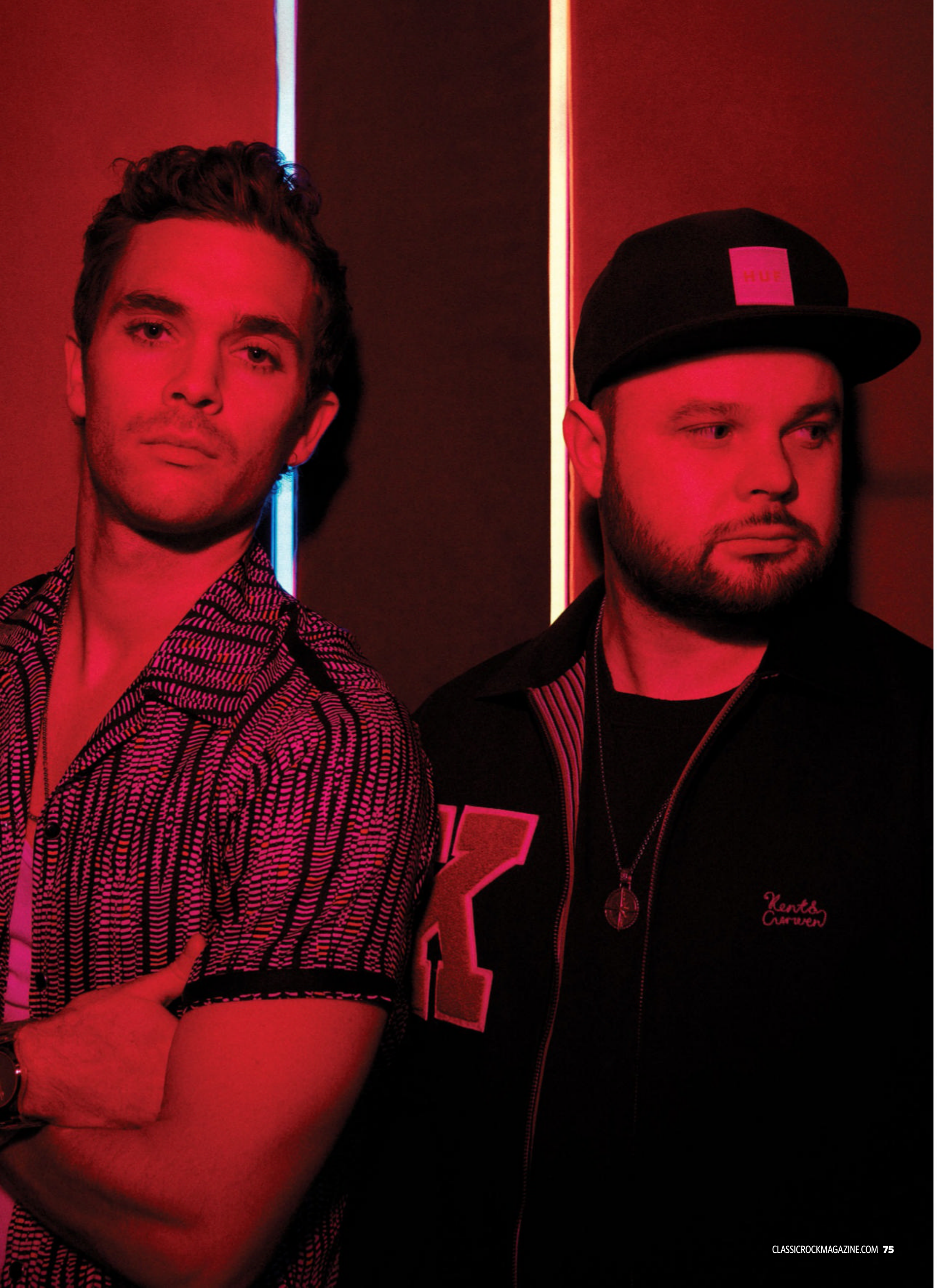
Looking fresh and serious, Mike Kerr has the polite, if slightly short manner of someone you expect to make a sarcastic comment at any given moment. Which he does at times, in the sort of deadpan tone that makes even the daftest remarks fleetingly believable. But he's an engaging interviewee, pausing to consider his answers and seldom fluffing his words. The solemnity of his personal shift, and the weight of the dark places that led to it, sit somewhere behind his eyes.

"I think there came a point where I was... sick and tired of being sick and tired, and bored of the same internal monologue, and I just... Yeah, I guess [pause, small laugh] ironically I gave up, and I had to tap out, you know?"

Ben Thatcher, Kerr's permanently baseball-capped bandmate, is easier company. Immediately flouting a wealth of 'silent drummer' stereotypes, today he's the warmer, chattier of the two. "I'm quite tame when it comes to all that stuff," he says when asked about his extravagances since Royal Blood made it big. "I mean, I have a lovely car and a lovely house... and I have a dog. Her name's Penny, I'll get her for you if you want?" He darts out and returns with a panting, tail-wagging armful of cuddly cockapoo.

It's easy to see how Thatcher could be considered to be the rock of Royal Blood. The friendly stabiliser. The anchor for Kerr's off-the-wall, bass-that-sounds-like-a-guitar theatrics. The propulsive beat-keeper of British rock's most incendiary two-piece of the last decade, with a slew of hits to their name that were too heavy for radio – then got played on the radio. A lot.

"I think it was just needed," Thatcher says simply, of Kerr's decision to get sober. "We were so in the moment and having a lot of fun with it all, it was just something that we knew was coming, and we knew he had to make some changes." ➤



ROYAL BLOOD

Ultimately, it was Kerr's lifestyle change that paved the way for the duo's most danceable, most feelgood album yet, this year's monstrously groovy *Typhoons*. You could imagine QOTSA and Muse cooking it up in a disco, with Chic and Daft Punk on the decks and (in the psych-infused *Either You Want It*) Tame Impala popping in for a dance and a spliff. Where their head-turning self-titled debut and 2017's similarly successful follow-up *How Did We Get So Dark?* leaned on relatively familiar, grizzled blues rock tropes, *Typhoons* pushes a more colourful mix of buttons. It's still heavy as hell, but this time that weight comes at least as much from French electronica and 70s disco as from rock and metal.

"We've found that heavy music isn't just in rock music," Thatcher reasons. "Actually the heavier stuff, most recently, is hip-hop artists, and people like Kendrick Lamar who, when certain shifts [happen] in the music, it sits and the bass becomes larger-than-life and it gets into you. Actually in rock music, in the early stuff which we're really influenced by, there's hardly any bass in those songs. Sonically, anyway."

Effectively 'completed' pre-covid, with songs tracked in California in 2019, *Typhoons* was half-recorded when the world shut down in March of 2020. Figuring out what they actually wanted to

"We were essentially on a seven-year stag do."

Mike Kerr

do with the album hadn't been easy. A lot of "searching" was involved. To put it simply, they were worn out. Not surprising when you consider that they hadn't had any real time off since starting out in 2013.

Lockdown provided a rare, unexpected opportunity to reflect and reassess. Writing additional songs (including boot-stomping, hip-shaking single *Trouble's Coming*) and producing it themselves, the two friends gave the whole album an invigorating facelift. Excess tweaking and preening of demo versions was kept to a minimum, much like their debut. It was fun.

"The way Mike's riffs were sitting over the top of the drums became this quite euphoric music," Thatcher enthuses. "It made us smile, it made us dance, it made us move. But then... it gave us this opportunity to write darker lyrics, but which don't bum you out so much with the music. So there are real messed-up things going on, but also you can't help but dance to it."

Indeed this buoyant framework gave Kerr the freedom to write his darkest words yet. Allusions to the build-up to his sobriety – the hazier, shadier side of show business – are peppered throughout the album's muscular yet sassy tracks. There were extremes to reflect on; in a career that's involved a robust quota of red carpets, A-list praise and rivers of tequila with longtime friend/fan Josh Homme, among other things, the highs have been very high and the lows... well, very low.

"I felt like I was functioning at an incredible level," Kerr remembers. "I could play a show, pretty well, and you would have no idea, you know? You just evolve to your surroundings. You rewire some

things, so you're able to do this for an hour and a half every evening."

Now, he says, he can't see himself having a drink again. So how excessive did things get?

"It's hard to measure, because everyone in my industry does it to such excess that..." he pauses. "I mean look, I'm in a rock band that's been on tour for seven years so [laughs]. I've drunk more than anyone will ever drink in their entire lives. We were essentially on a seven-year stag do. But I guess what I'm getting at is even if I hadn't done it to such excess, it wasn't making me feel very good. It wasn't making me feel alive. If anything it felt like it was slowly killing me."

That kind of confessional depth pours into the slick beats and grooves of *Typhoons*, bringing to mind the minor-key drive of, for example, Chic's classic *Le Freak* – no doubt boosted by his sharpened, booze-free senses.

"We realised it was quite an interesting counterpoint," the singer says thoughtfully, "because danceable music tends to be... the

subject matter tends to be quite fleeting and quite fancy-free, about 'let's have a good time' and 'let's dance all night'. And I guess for us those kind of beats weirdly gave me more confidence to be more vulnerable, because I felt like there was more of a mask up."

Tellingly, as the writing process progressed the songs were transposed on to piano, and it was here where Mike wrote many of the lyrics. "That helped bring out a vulnerable side of me that perhaps wouldn't reveal itself when everything's really loud." That vulnerability embeds itself in the pensive tone that comes through even on such disco-ready toe tappers as *Million And One* and *Trouble's Coming*, shifting gear slightly in full throttle rockers like *Boilermaker* (a co-write with Homme) and *Limbo*.

All of which makes *All We Have Is Now* a surprise. A quietly devastating Marc Bolan-come-Gaz Coombes piano ballad – that Kerr had had in his back pocket during their last tour – it's dropped in, without warning, at the end of the album.





The Royal family: Mike Kerr and (right) Ben Thatcher in 2017.

“There are real messed up things going on, but you can’t help but dance to it!”

Ben Thatcher on new album *Typhoons*

always get slapped on the wrist for making something catchy. It’s so fucking stupid. We have no interest in that. We like music that kind of keeps you up at night.”

Right from the beginning, Kerr and Thatcher understood each other. They both came from churchgoing families (Thatcher’s early drumming inspiration was his brother-in-law who played in the successful Christian rock band Delirious?). They are both the odd ones out in sets of five siblings; Thatcher’s are all much older, while Kerr has only sisters (“Yeah, I haven’t got that far with the therapist yet,” he says, grinning. “I’ll have to read up a bit more on Freud to see where that puts me”). They grew up in small, dozy towns on the south coast, Kerr in Worthing, Thatcher in Rustington. Prior to forming Royal Blood, they’d played together in a wedding band and other short-lived groups. Kerr had been gearing up for a career in catering; rock-stardom was genuinely not on the cards.

“I think it’s a...” Kerr pauses, choosing his words carefully, “unique experience that is shared by few, and I think it can be an isolating experience. There’s very few people I can go to the pub with and moan about the same shit with. And it’s also such a fantastic way to live your life; you get to see the world and it’s such an exhilarating experience. But I certainly felt like there was no room to complain about it, cos no one wants to hear me moaning about anything when, from the outside, everything’s going great. And I think people around me abandoned how I was feeling as well. So I just didn’t really look after myself.”

Has there been a moment where the surreal ‘celebrity’ side of the business really hit you?

“I guess so. You have moments of it,” Thatcher says. “But my friends and family and girlfriend bring me down to earth so quickly. I know who I am and where I’ve come from.”

It’s an odd kind of fame that Royal Blood, and others like them, experience. Kerr tells us he doesn’t get recognised anywhere. At shows he’s able to go out front and watch the support band, unbothered by anyone in the audience, without hiding at all.

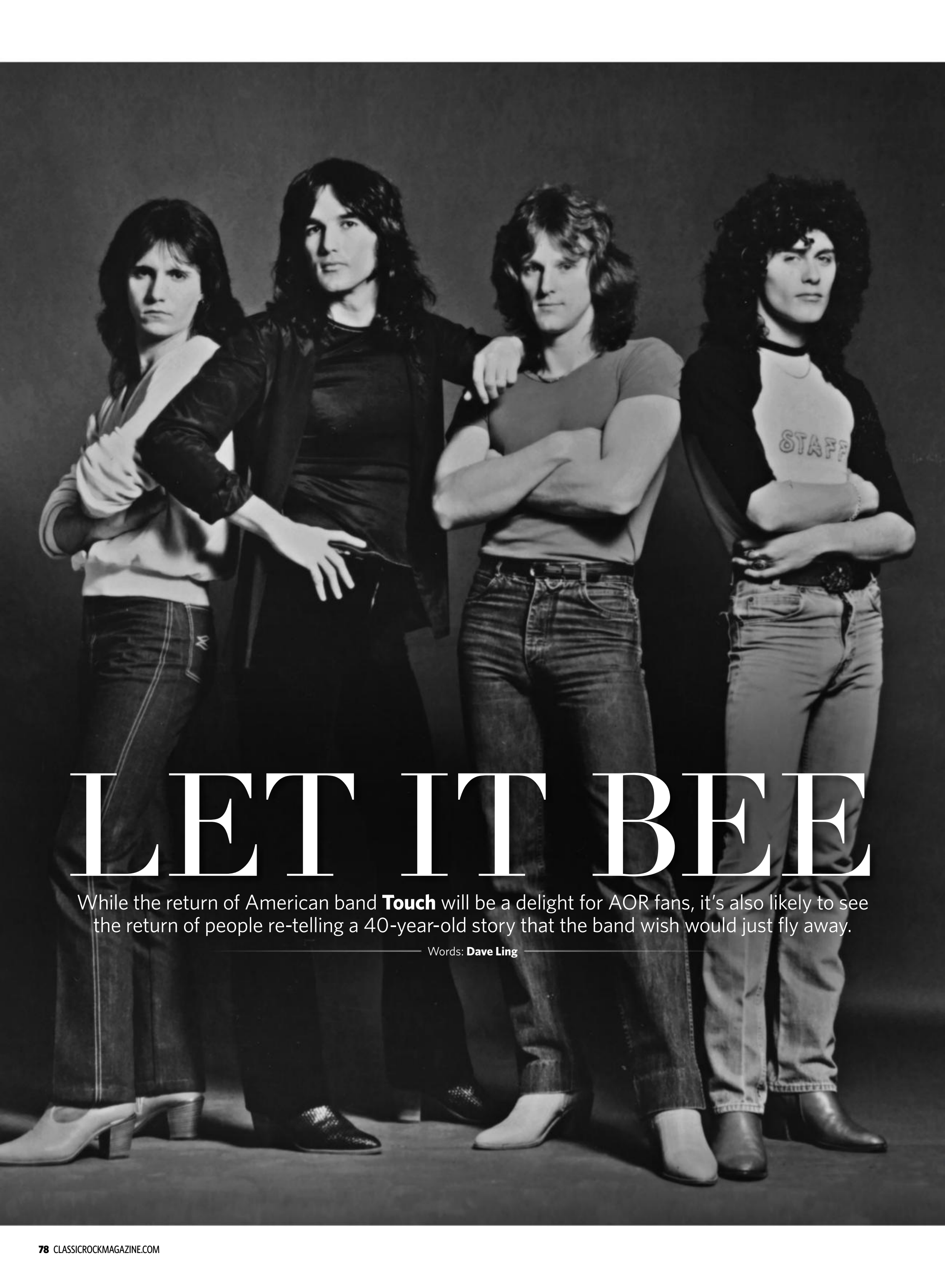
“I think the band is more famous than us,” Thatcher observes, very reasonably, “and the music is way more famous.”

“I have a nice place to live in, I have enough, and that to me is incredible,” Kerr says. “I didn’t really grow up expecting to make anything of myself, so to have more than forty pounds in my bank account is always a relief.”

For the singer, going sober (and then having to stay at home for the first time in years) has perhaps offered him a chance to come back to that mindset. To face, clearly, what does and doesn’t make him happy.

“I think being creative makes me happy, and being happy makes me really creative so... [he thinks for a moment] I think in times like these, it couldn’t be more relevant for me personally, because I began making music out of sheer boredom. I grew up in a pretty boring town, there was nothing to do. And it was like... access into another realm, you know?”

Typhoons is out on April 30 via Warners.



LET IT BEE

While the return of American band **Touch** will be a delight for AOR fans, it's also likely to see the return of people re-telling a 40-year-old story that the band wish would just fly away.

Words: **Dave Ling**

O h dear. *Classic Rock* has just gone and mentioned the 'B' word (or in this case should that be the 'Bee' word?), and for the first time during an otherwise lively conference call with Touch's Mark Mangold and Craig Brooks the atmosphere cools. We are recalling the potentially life-threatening moment in 1980 when, during their band's performance at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock festival at Castle Donington, bass player Doug Howard took a swig from a bottle of beer, unaware that a bee had crawled into it. And of course it stung him on the tongue.

After a moment or two of a sudden and uncomfortable silence during our conversation, Mangold responds: "The reason we are being coy is that we worked *so hard* for many years to reach that point, and here we are all these years later talking about that bloody bee."

Just as quickly, the awkwardness subsides when the keyboard player recalls stone-faced band manager Bruce Payne leaving the First Aid tent and declaring: "Hey everybody... the bee's going to be just fine."

Touch were born out of a New York-based trio called American Tears that began by releasing a pair of guitar-less, keyboard-drenched albums in the mid-1970s.

"American Tears were a virtuoso band – we had bass solos and huge drum kits," recalls Mangold, whose trademark was to perform handstands on his Hammond organ. After support tours with the likes of Gentle Giant, John McLaughlin and Peter Frampton for American Tears' third album, 1977's *Power House*, they added co-frontman and guitarist Craig Brooks. When sales still didn't materialise, Mangold, Brooks and drummer Glenn Kithcart brought in a new bass player, Doug Howard, and evolved into a new and far sleeker band that retained the proficiency of American Tears yet presented the songs in a more succinct manner.

Mangold and Brooks reckon that *Classic Rock* is perhaps guilty of over-thinking things when we propose that in 1980 Touch unwittingly pioneered what Asia would achieve on a grander scale two years later: breaking down a progressive rock formula and rebooting it to sound modern, fresh and commercial.

"There was no plan," Mangold says. "We were just doing our thing. All we wanted was to write cool songs."

However it was achieved, Touch fashioned a gleaming, majestic style that added new shades of drama and colour to the tried and trusted accessibility of AOR and arena rock. After they captured the essence of this on a demo tape, heavyweight managers were queuing up to take them on.

"Bruce Payne had industry clout and our instinct drew us to him," Mangold says. Payne, who looked after Rainbow and later became Deep Purple's long-term representative, signed Touch to Ariola Records, who put the band into the Atlantic Studio in New York. The producer they worked with was Englishman Tim Friese-Green, who went on to work closely with art-rockers Talk Talk. "We knew of Tim due to his background with Queen; he had been an engineer to Roy Thomas Baker," Brooks explains.

Recording the album that became *Touch* was a fairly painstaking process, and after a few days the band switched to a less expensive studio. The final song written by the band for their debut, *Don't You Know What Love Is*, would become the band's best-known tune.

"We wanted a song to sum up the album in three and a half minutes, and suddenly there it was," Mangold recalls. "We had no idea it would become a hit. It was Doug Morris, who became king of the world as boss of Universal Records,

other bands he worked with at that time – we were there in his back garden with a very nice engineer, but Todd wasn't there," Mangold sighs.

Touch disintegrated but "pretty much morphed into" the band behind the premullet AOR kingpin Michael Bolton, who had been without a deal at the time. "Although it had started out as a song for Touch, Craig, Michael and I all played on and we co-wrote *Fool's Game*," Mangold says of Bolton's first hit single.

The members of Touch went on to play with Utopia, Edgar Winter and Roger Glover, among others. Mangold forged on with the melodic hard rock of Drive, She Said and The Sign, and also wrote for the likes of Bolton, Cher and Laura Branigan. Doug Howard wrote Utopia's 1983 hit *Feet Don't Fail Me Now*.

In 2018 Mangold reactivated American Tears. For the keyboard wizard, backed by Swedish musicians but billed as his former band, it was a surprise one-off appearance in 2014 at the late,

lamented AOR event Firefest that set mental cogs turning. "The fans going mad at Firefest served as reinforcement of a hunger for Touch – hey, that's a great title for a song," he says, laughing.

Although very much aware of the bullshit-o-meter, Mangold insists that the Touch reunion owes as much to pleasing the band's older followers as attaining closure for themselves.

"It's true, I promise," he says. "I sent one song out to the guys, saying: 'Could we at least do a teaser? It'll take ten minutes of your

time.' And gradually the project snowballed. But we really wanted to do this for those that refused to let the band's name die."

Released 41 years after their debut, the long-awaited third Touch album is titled *Tomorrow Never Comes*. One thing's for sure: there won't be too many records like it in 2021. Tracks like *Swan*

Song and *Glass* are heroically overblown – and that's meant in a good way.

"Heroically overblown?" Mangold says, laughing. "Yeah, that's exactly what we are."

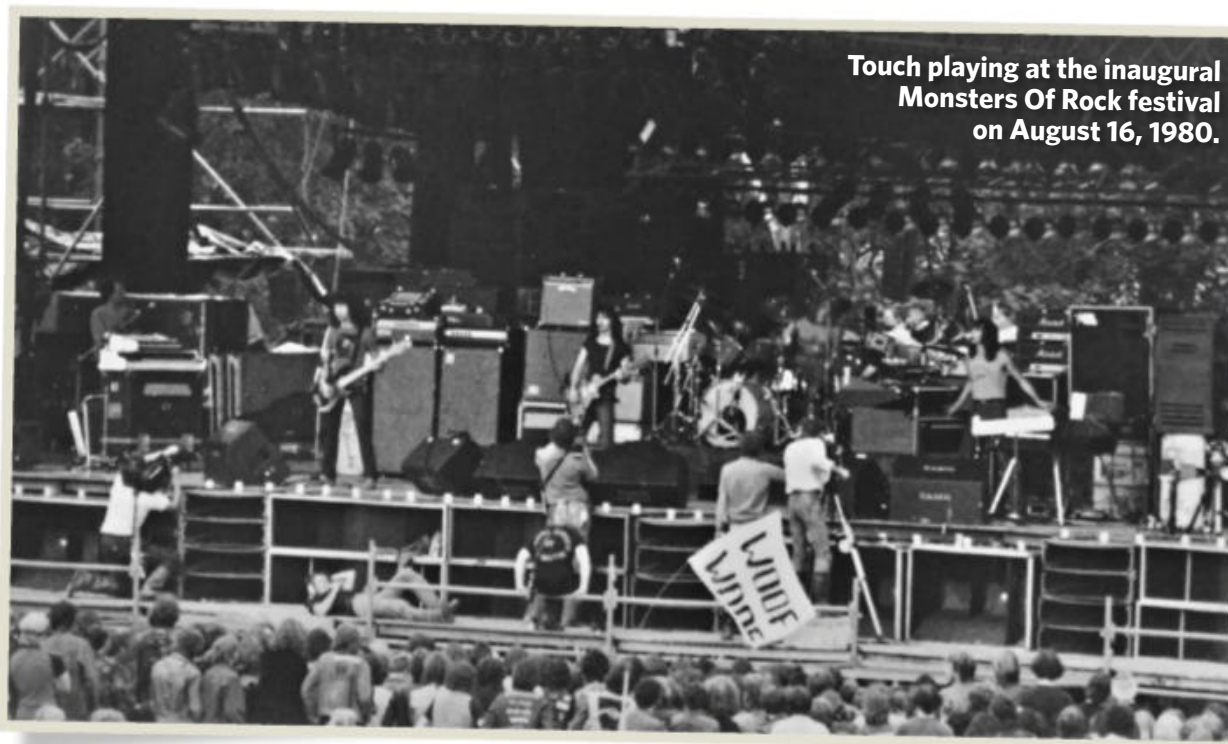
So do you object to being called pomp rock?

"Oh man, I'd have to look that up," Brooks deadpans.

So is the new album *Tomorrow Never Comes* a convenient full stop for Touch, or a new beginning?

"Of course, it's all down to sales," Brooks responds. "But the sharing of this creative experience with my friends has been revelatory. It has shown that there is no end, only new roads to explore." 🎧

Tomorrow Never Comes is available now via *Escape Music*.



Touch playing at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock festival on August 16, 1980.

that picked that song as the first single. The band would have chosen *When The Spirit Moves You*."

In the end, both songs went on to be released as singles, reaching the US Top 75 in America.

The summer of 1980 saw Touch undertake a European tour with Rainbow that included that now often talked-about appearance at the Monsters Of Rock on a stellar bill that also included Judas Priest, Scorpions, April Wine, Saxon and Riot. A version of *Don't You Know What Love Is* ended up on a live album from the event.

"My main memory of that day is that it was really, really muddy, and we didn't bring boots," Brooks says, laughing. "Backstage it felt a bit chaotic, but we went down okay with the crowd."

Returning home, budgets were approved and Todd Rundgren agreed to produce Touch's second album. Regrettably, his heart wasn't in the project and, despite it being remixed by Bob Clearmountain, the results simply didn't match the audio fidelity of the debut. The tracks were shelved until being released in 1998 as part of a double set titled *The Complete Works*.

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|||||
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The members of Touch went on to play with Utopia, Edgar Winter and Roger Glover, among others. Mangold forged on with the melodic hard rock of Drive, She Said and The Sign, and also wrote for the likes of Bolton, Cher and Laura Branigan. Doug Howard wrote Utopia's 1983 hit *Feet Don't Fail Me Now*.

In 2018 Mangold reactivated American Tears. For the keyboard wizard, backed by Swedish musicians but billed as his former band, it was a surprise one-off appearance in 2014 at the late,

lamented AOR event Firefest that set mental cogs turning. "The fans going mad at Firefest served as reinforcement of a hunger for Touch – hey, that's a great title for a song," he says, laughing. Although very much aware of the bullshit-o-meter, Mangold insists

that the Touch reunion owes as much to pleasing the band's older followers as attaining closure for themselves.

"It's true, I promise," he says. "I sent one song out to the guys, saying: 'Could we at least do a teaser? It'll take ten minutes of your time.' And gradually the project snowballed. But we really wanted to do this for those that refused to let the band's name die."

Released 41 years after their debut, the long-awaited third Touch album is titled *Tomorrow Never Comes*. One thing's for sure: there won't be too many records like it in 2021. Tracks like *Swan Song* and *Glass* are heroically overblown – and that's meant in a good way.

St Nicholas Hospice Care

Mangold says, laughing. "Yeah, that's exactly what we're."

So do you object to being called pomp rock?

"Oh man, I'd have to look that up," Brooks deadpans.

So is the new album *Tomorrow Never Comes* a convenient full stop for Touch or a new beginning?

"Of course, it's all down to sales," Brooks responds. "But the sharing of this creative experience with my friends has been revelatory. It has shown that there is no end, only new roads to explore."

Tomorrow Never Comes is available now via *Escape Music*.

Touch playing at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock festival on August 16, 1980.

JUST PUSH PLAY

that picked that song as the first single. The band would have chosen *When The Spirit Moves You*.

In the end, both songs went on to be released as singles, reaching the US Top 75 in America.

The summer of 1980 saw Touch undertake a European tour with Rainbow that included that now often talked-about appearance at the Monsters Of Rock on a stellar bill that also included Judas Priest, Scorpions, April Wine, Saxon and Riot. A version of *Don't You Know What Love Is* and *When The Spirit Moves You* were released as singles from the album.

"My main memory of that day is that it was really, really muddy, and we didn't bring boots," Brooks says, laughing. "Backstage it felt a bit chaotic, but we went down okay with the crowd."

Returning home, budgets were approved and Todd Rundgren agreed to produce Touch's second album. Regrettably, his heart wasn't in the project and, despite it being remixed by Bob Clearmountain, the results simply didn't match the audio fidelity of the debut. The tracks were shelved until being released in 1998 as part of a double live album, *The Live Years*.

It was the same with New England and some

"Heroically overblown? That's exactly what we are."

Mark Mangold

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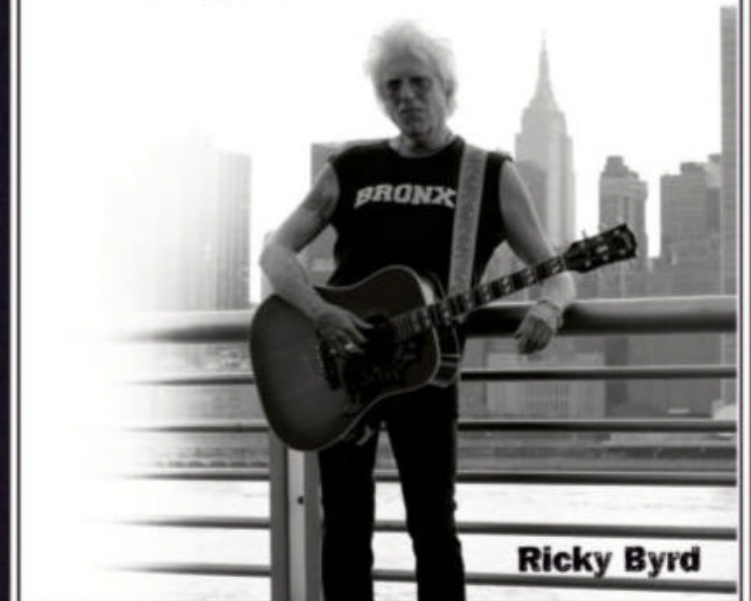
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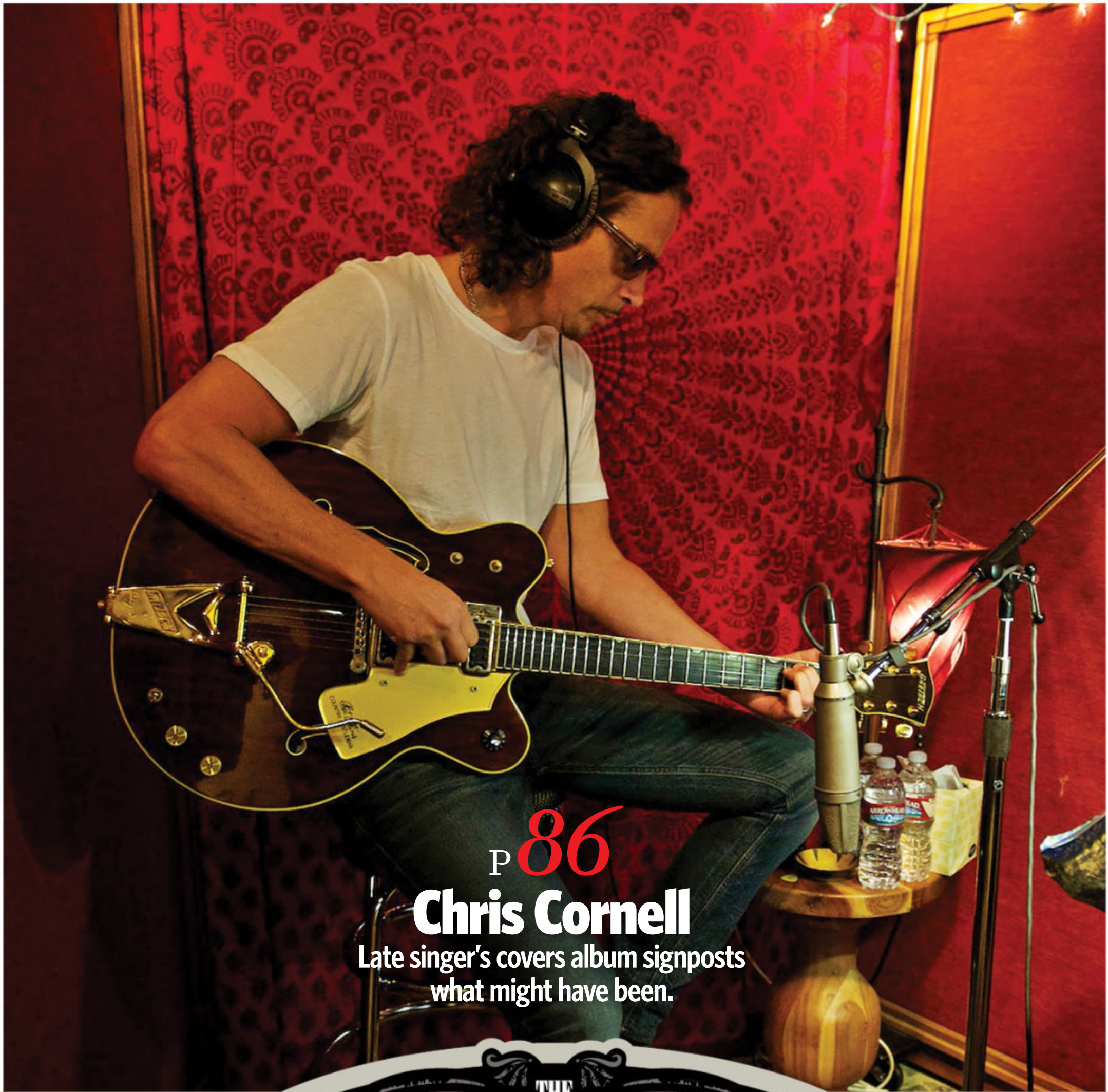
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P **86**
Chris Cornell
Late singer's covers album signposts
what might have been.

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- A CLASSIC
- EXCELLENT
- VERY GOOD
- GOOD
- ABOVE AVERAGE
- AVERAGE
- BELOW PAR
- A DISAPPOINTMENT
- PANTS
- PISH

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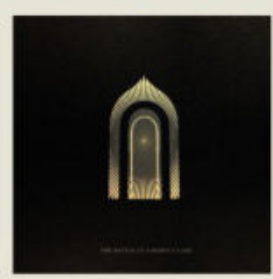
THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Greta Van Fleet

The Battle At Garden's Gate LAVA/REPUBLIC

Much-hyped Michigan siblings diversify successfully on second album.



There was a rich irony missed by the many observers who criticised Greta Van Fleet's early output for bearing too much of a Led Zeppelin influence. After all, Zep themselves didn't start out as paragons of originality; their approach was not so much to take inspiration from blues and folk tunes, more that they just took them, frequently without credit (until the lawyers came calling).

So if we concede that most new bands, especially those formed by musicians barely out of their teens, are likely to still bear their formative influences pretty noticeably, how long do we give them to develop a sound that's more identifiably their own?

The Battle At Garden's Gate, GVF's follow-up to 2018's *Anthem Of The Peaceful Army*, showcases an undeniably more varied sonic palette, even if that just means there are more classic bands that its 12 songs remind you of. On opening track *Heat Above*, the high-register voice of Josh Kiszka combined with an acoustic-based anthem throws up echoes of REO Speedwagon. Or you could be hearing Geddy Lee keening his way through *Trip The Light Fantastic* and *My Way, Soon*, a feeling strengthened by gutsy Lifeson-like guitar chords and the lyrics 'I've packed my bags and I've got my freedom... I'll throw out the plans and live with no burden' echoing

Neal Peart's libertarianism (thankfully without the Ayn Rand philosophising). But rarely do those similarities overshadow the album, even when those oft-mentioned Zep-isms are evident once again. *Built By Nations* is punctuated by an archetypally Page-style shuffle riff and a crunching, Bonham-esque rhythm. But, as with much of this album, the gutsiness of the playing and the top-line vocal melodies are just as likely to grab you – and those are qualities that can't be begged, stolen or borrowed.

Are there weaknesses? Not many musically. But, as with the band's debut, while intriguing titles suggesting epic, Tolkien-esque tales of adventure and mystical wisdom, *The Battle At Garden's Gate* is full of lyrics that are invariably so difficult to decipher that keeping track of any narrative is a fool's errand. 'We need some healing... you have been cheated,' Josh howls on *Age Of Machine*, one of relatively few full lines we can make out without a lyric sheet.

So it's very loud, and you can't hear the words. But since when has that been a reason not to dive into a rock album? Make all the comparisons you like, but Greta Van Fleet are rapidly coming into their own.

★★★★★★ Johnny Sharp

Paul Stanley's Soul Station

Now And Then UME

Soul side of the Star Child.



If you're expecting anything resembling a Kiss album

from Paul Stanley, then forget it. This is all about his love of Motown, Otis Redding and other soul icons.

Stanley has never hidden his adoration for this style of music, so as you'd expect everything is approached with care and a sense of authenticity. Covers of The Temptations' *Just My Imagination* and The Miracles' *Tracks Of My Tears* are breathtaking, Stanley's caressing voice striking the right mood and his backing band delivering beautiful instrumental balance.

There are nine covers and five originals, each delivered with feeling. The standout moments come on *Could It Be I'm Falling In Love* (originally by The Spinners) and *Ooo Baby Baby* (Smokey Robinson). Both are stunning tributes to the originals, as well as having a modern varnish.

This is Stanley's best non-Kiss album since his '78 self-titled solo record.

★★★★★★ Malcolm Dome

Neil Young

Way Down In The Rust Bucket /

Young Shakespeare REPRISE

Essential live sets from Young's deep archive, two decades apart. Both with accompanying DVD film.



In November 1990, two months after the release of his *Ragged*

Glory, Neil Young and Crazy Horse pitched up at the 800-capacity Catalyst club in Santa Cruz, where they proceeded to tear through songs old and new for the next three hours or more. *Way Down In The Rust Bucket* (8/10) is an exhilarating, blustery document of a night that debuted *Fuckin' Up*, *Mansion On The Hill*, *Love To Burn* and others, with the more familiar likes of *Cortez The Killer* and *Like A Hurricane* stretched into fierce epics of quaking intensity.

In contrast, *Young Shakespeare* (9/10) is from a solo-acoustic Young show in Stratford, Connecticut in January 1971. Initially recorded for German TV (the film is the earliest live

footage of a solo Young known to exist), it's an astonishing set that largely bypasses his latest album *After The Gold Rush* in favour of songs from the yet-to-be-released *Harvest*. A medley of *A Man Needs A Maid* and *Heart Of Gold* is a thing of luminous wonder, as is the wistful cadence of *Journey Through The Past*, while *Down By The River* is little short of heroic. Rob Hughes

Gary Hughes

Waterside FRONTIERS

Ten frontman's first solo album since 2007.



It's been heartening to see Gary Hughes enjoying

a resurgence with melodic hard rockers Ten in the past decade, after the band boldly stuck to their guns musically in the musically hostile climate of the 90s and early 00s.

Hughes was equally steadfast as a solo artist, and *Waterside* continues in the AOR direction he's known for, with Ten guitarist Dan Rosingana on hand to add weighty riffs and eloquent solos. Hughes's smoky, lower-register vocal tone cuts a distinctive dash within the genre, his power and control impressing on both up-tempo rockers (*Seduce Me*, *The Runaway Damned*) and melodramatic ballads (*When Love Is Done*). His songwriting deftly avoids AOR cookie-cutter cliches, and although occasional moments have an air of familiarity (*Lay Down*), *Waterside* itself freshens things up with a country-rock influence.

A feast for fans, an ideal primer for the uninitiated.

★★★★★★ Rich Davenport

Epica

Omega NUCLEAR BLAST

Excess all arias from the shamelessly overblown Lowlanders.



Shortly before covid locked down most of Europe, Dutch symphonic

metal veterans Epica managed to record their eighth album with both a full orchestra and a children's choir. As ever, the key dynamic tension here is the beauty-versus-beast contrast between crystalline mezzo-soprano Simone Simons and the guttural grunts of chief songwriter Mark Jansen. But the densely layered widescreen

arrangements on *Omega* also impress, from the gargantuan Rammstein-play-Eurovision melodrama of *Skeleton Key* to the mighty disco-metal stampede of *Freedom – The Wolves Within*. For hard-core fans, the key nerdgasm here will be 13-minute centrepiece *The Antediluvian Universe*, which concludes Jansen's Kingdom Of Heaven trilogy in a marathon orgy of crashing orchestral power chords, massed vocal histrionics and skyscraping turbo-wank guitar solos. Of course, Epica's brand of Wagnerian uber-kitsch defies conventional notions of good taste, which makes them both preposterously silly and hugely exciting, recalling Queen or Muse at their most gloriously baroque.



Stephen Dalton

Nick Cave & Warren Ellis

Carnage GOLIATH

Bad Seeds duo ejaculate lockdown classic.



Nick Cave's prolific lockdown period has seen *Idiot Prayer's* concert/album, *L.I.T.A.N.I.E.S.* opera and esoteric nick-nacks for his online store. Unexpectedly, 2019's *Ghosteen* has been followed by this self-described "brutal but very beautiful record nested in

a communal catastrophe", which "fell out of the sky" through online exchanges with lieutenant/soundtrack partner Warren Ellis.

Lyrical and vocally, Cave's on fire over Ellis's shimmering soundscapes, describing his suicide on *Shattered Ground*, declaring: 'I'm a Botticelli Venus with a penis' on sinister redneck vamp *White Elephant*. Classic Bad Seeds tropes get resprayed with luminous restless energy on *Old Time's* ominous bible rumble or exquisite ballads like *Carnage* and *Albuquerque*, and the optimistic dawn of *Balcony Man* ends this remarkable set declaring: 'This morning is amazing and so are you.'

In his sixth decade as our most fascinating, ever-shifting genius, Cave remains inspirational working widescreen miracles from cataclysmic events.



Kris Needs

NOFX

Single Album

FAT WRECK CHORDS

Longstanding LA punks return to remind you that everything sucks.

He may be well into his fifties, but NOFX's Fat Mike isn't willing to give up his veneer of adolescence easily. A short, sharp blast of sarcastic negativity, marbled with the odd aside about drinking pee, it comes as no great shock to

learn that their latest record was written in the shadow of a massive coke comedown. *Birmingham* details the frontman snorting his way around the UK – one bleeding ulcer and a stint in rehab later, and this is the result.

Even in the face of eventual redemption, *Single Album* makes it hard to love Fat Mike, a wilfully obnoxious cartoon of a character who, on *My Bro Cancervive Cancer*, appears to be strong-arming a terminally ill friend into a night of drug-fuelled debauchery. Meanwhile, reggae-flecked *Fish In A Gun Barrel*, about a mass shooting, is a bold choice of subject matter, given the ill-judged jokes he's made on stage about the 2017 Las Vegas massacre.

It all flies by in the usual ramshackle punk-rock manner, so fans will lap it up, but whether *Single Album* will bring in any new converts is questionable.



Emma Johnston

Blackmore's Night

Nature's Light EARMUSIC

More 16th-century musings on album number 11.



Anyone expecting Ritchie Blackmore's return to hard rock with a fully electric Rainbow (2016-18) to have curbed his Renaissance

troubadour inclinations take note: it didn't. Although for anyone who remembers those old instrumental Rainbow B-sides, on *Nature's Light* there are hints of a past abandoned: the Hammond organ-laced trio of *Darker Shade Of Black* (a slow-paced masterpiece that sounds like Procol Harum covering *Fools Rush In*), slow blues shuffle *Der Letzte Musketier* and closer *Second Element* (with a melody approaching latter-day Fleetwood Mac) all feature swaggering guitar workouts.

But it's clear that in 2021 Blackmore is a guitar hero content to deliver little more than efficient folky picking (*Once Upon December*, *Four Winds* et al), while some tracks add jollity with a penny whistle (*Going To The Faire*) or rousing brass (*Nature's Light*). Which means the fabulously voiced Candice Night is the true star on this album, never better than throughout the sublime Blackmore's Night original *Wish You Were Here*.



Neil Jeffries

The Alarm

War SELF-RELEASED

A rapid response to modern life from the Welsh classic rockers.

At a time when delays with records are par for the course, you have to admire The Alarm's dedication to instant

gratification. Their new album, written and recorded in isolation, will arrive physically with fans six weeks after its inception thanks to a pre-ordered CD-Rom they can burn themselves. In the age of streaming it's adorably quaint.

War is very much a snapshot of the covid era, created by a man who knows more than a thing or two about survival against the odds. After months of governmental "hands, face, space", frontman Mike Peters's simplistic sloganeering on opener *Protect And Survive* ('It's the only way to stay alive') seems like a reasonable response. Black Crowes riffs, and synths doing their best impression of Led Zeppelin's string sections, bolster the rallying cry of *We Got This*, while the message of *Tribes (Stop The War)* – a track so U2 it practically sneaks on to your iPhone without permission – is obvious but one you really can't argue with.

Glossing over an odd cover of Massive Attack's *Safe From Harm* featuring Skindred's Benji Webbe, which strips out the soul of the original in favour of baggy early-90s *Top Of The Pops* vibes, *War* is at its best sticking to its tried and trusted pop-rock path, one unencumbered by notions of cool but paved with plenty of heart.



Emma Johnston

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling



Joel Hoekstra's 13: some mouth-watering moments.

Joel Hoekstra's 13

Running Games FRONTIERS



In 2014, seeking a replacement for guitarist Doug Aldrich, Coverdale plucked Joel Hoekstra from Night Ranger to play on *The Purple Album*, and he's been a 'Snake ever since.

Six years ago Hoekstra released *Dying To Live*, an album fronted jointly by Jeff Scott Soto, Symphony X's Russell Allen, Toby Hitchcock from Pride Of Lions and Trans Siberian Orchestra's Chloe Lowery. *Running Games* retains many of the same instrumental protagonists, including a rhythm section of Tony Franklin and Vinny Appice, plus keyboards from Derek Sherinian. This time there's a lone singer, Russell Allen. It's a more focused follow-up, that manages to avoid sounding like the handiwork of a glorified sideman. Driven by the fluent, punchy performance of its star attraction, the likes of *I'm Gonna Lose It* and *Hard To Say Goodbye* and the insistent *Reach The Sky* are simply mouth-watering. Allen also sounds fantastic throughout, while Soto's understated presence at times brings to mind his former band Talisman.



The End Machine

Phase 2 FRONTIERS



The End Machine (aka Dokken fronted by Robert Mason of Warrant and Lynch Mob) return with a second album, this time with drummer 'Wild' Mick Brown succeed by his brother Steve. There's much to enjoy here, and George Lynch shreds magnificently during *Blood And Money*, but if you crave the classic Dokken sound, well... this is something different.



Radar

Lost In The Atlantic

ESCAPE MUSIC



Radar guitarist Gary Stevenson produced some of Go West's biggest hits, sadly to the detriment of his own career. Recorded for and shelved by Atlantic Records (hence its title), this album has echoes of the then tech-friendly synth-pop of Go West, and that band's Peter Cox adds backing vocals to *Olympic Runner*. It's classy stuff.



Chez Kane

Chez Kane FRONTIERS



Along with her two sisters, Chez Kane is a vocalist with Welsh band Kane'd. She was spotted by Crazy Lixx frontman Danny Rixon, who wrote the songs for and produced this solo debut. Its 10 songs present an unpretentious, vivacious and fun-loving vibe, defiantly turning back the clock to the 1980s. Fans of Vixen will adore *Rocket On The Radio*.



Art Of Illusion

X Marks The Spot AOR HEAVEN



Experience has taught us that any band featuring Lars Säfssund is worthy of investigation. In this brand new project, the Work Of Art and Lionville frontman teams up with Anders Rydholm, leader of the fellow Swedes Grand Illusion, wrapping his silken tones around an utterly delightful collection of tunes coloured dreamily by Queen-isms and pomp-rock extravagance.





Chris Cornell

No One Sings Like You Anymore

UME

Covers from the late, great singer.



The fifth and final studio album from Chris Cornell, *No One Sings Like You Anymore* is songs chosen and sequenced by the singer himself. It was recorded in 2016, a year before his death, with the aid of multi-instrumentalist and producer Brendan O'Brien, and it indicates new directions that the former Soundgarden and Audioslave frontman intended to take: a range of covers, songs originally made famous by artists as disparate as Harry Nilsson (*Jump Into The Fire*), electro-dance duo Ghostland Observatory (*Sad Sad City*) and Prince (*Nothing Compares 2 U*). It's near impossible to listen to without the pointed barb of the album title (drawn from a lyric in Soundgarden's *Black Hole Sun*) prickling the listener. A melancholy, bittersweet listening experience indeed.

Forget Cornell's scream for one moment. The dude could sing. He had soul in abundance. Forget the Black Sabbath and Zeppelin comparisons. The artist this posthumous collection recalls most is Otis Redding – another singer who died too early. Like Redding, Cornell had the knack of taking songs – famous songs at that – and making them his own. Some he sings straight and powerful: the Prince cover, which is far closer to Sinéad's raw rendition; Lorraine Ellison's almighty torch song *Stay With Me Baby*. He also had

the breadth of vision (some might term it audacity) to mess with the form – so the Janis Joplin song (*Get It While You Can*) becomes a quirky new-wave synth-fest, ELO's *Showdown* is turned into a soul stomper, Lennon's slightly cynical *Watching The Wheels* becomes oddly translucent, upbeat, refusing to be cowed by the depression that clearly plagued Cornell.

Like the classic bluesmen of old, like the first wave of hard rock bands that drew directly from the blues, Cornell inhabits his songs. His vocal on *You Don't Know Nothing About Love* is extraordinary – as far-reaching and (in all the best senses of the word) shrieking as Soundgarden at their considerable height, with horns and guitars adding layers of emotion.

While *Showdown* and the Lennon cover feel almost jaunty in their lightness of touch, his cover of Guns N' Roses' *Patience* is a broody, brooding acoustic ballad, lonely and haunting.

His family have said this record is his last fully completed studio album (while revealing that a second collection of covers is already in the works, drawn from the same sessions). Whether or not anyone sings like Chris Cornell any more is irrelevant. What matters is that he is no longer around.

★★★★★★

Everett True

Moonspell

Hermitage NAPALM

Goth-metal masters still hold court.



Nearly 30 years into their career, Moonspell are showing little

sign of fatigue. This is the Portuguese band's twelfth studio album, and while you can hear occasional hints of earlier records such as *Wolfheart* and *The Butterfly Effect*, in texture it relates most to 2015's *Extinct*.

Led by the haunting vocals of Fernando Ribeiro, they have come up with dark, unrelentingly gloomy music, with Ricardo Amorim's downtrodden guitar parts crucial to the sound. This is best illustrated on *All Or Nothing*, which mixes a simple melodic phrasing with a doomy atmosphere. There are occasional more metallic moments, such as on the robust title track, but much of the album is deliberately low-key, and that generates a feeling of unease suited to the Moonspell mentality.

Hermitage is a welcome reminder of the hidden depths that can still be mined in the goth sphere.

★★★★★★

Malcolm Dome

Saxon

Inspirations SILVER LINING MUSIC

NWOBHM veterans play us some favourite tunes.



Lord knows we've all needed to make our own escapist

entertainment over the past year, and that's surely been particularly true for musicians confined to barracks while touring is off the agenda. So who could blame Saxon for choosing to follow up 2018's originals collection *Thunderbolt* with a covers album, promising "some fun in these dark times"?

"It was interesting to see what my voice could do," Biff Byford told *Classic Rock* about some of the less obviously Saxon-esque tracks chosen, such as the Stones' *Paint It, Black*, on which his lower register gets a relatively rare airing, and there is something curious about the dreamy take on The Kinks' *See My Friends*. For the most part, though, Biff and co. are clearly at their best on heavier home territory. Motörhead's *Bomber* is tackled with gleeful, speeding abandon, and AC/DC's

Problem Child is a thumping, chant-along delight.

An essential purchase within the Saxon canon? Possibly not. Worth a hard-rocking half-hour of your time? Definitely.

★★★★★★

Johnny Sharp

The Black Angels

Live At Levitation

THE REVERBERATION SOCIETY

Roky Erikson's fucked-up grandchildren spread the kaleidoscopic gospel.



Taken from performances at their own Levitation festival (née

the Austin Psych Fest) in 2010, '11 and '12, this six-track live mini-album captures Texan psychedelicists The Black Angels in full flight as they bleach the third eye. And, much like Albert Hofmann's mind-boggling chemical creation LSD, these disciples of the 13th Floor Elevators can make a little go a hell of a long way.

The comparisons to the Angels' home-state forebears aren't too off the mark, what with vocalist Alex Maas's tremulous and high-pitched timbre, but what seriously counts in their favour is their dedication to the drone. Witness the sitar-powered hypno-monotony of *Manipulation*, on which the band mine a repetitive groove to strike glittering prizes. Best of all is a killer reading of *Young Men Dead*. Drenched in haunting reverb and shaded by a wall of fuzz, it confirms what converts already know while ushering in the neophytes.

★★★★★★

Julian Marszalek

The Dropkick Murphys

Turn Up That Dial

BORN & BRED

Good time music for good times to come.



It's tough being a party band with no party to go to, but the Dropkick

Murphys aren't letting circumstances get in the way of having a blast.

The Boston boozers' tenth album is a triple shot of euphoria with a Guinness chaser. *Middle Finger's* tin-whistle punk could have come from The Pogues' first album, if Shane MacGowan was a nightclub bouncer with a season ticket to the Red Sox, and Mick Jones *Nicked My*

pudding ('Oi! Mick Jones. Leave my pudding alone!') is hands-down the funniest song you'll hear about an aging punk icon pilfering someone else's dessert.

The Dropkicks are no spring chickens themselves, and they revel in the role of middle-aged curmudgeons shouting at clouds: *HBDMF* is a gleefully unreasonable take-down of anyone who has the temerity to celebrate a birthday. Like the rest of the album, it's the sound of a piss-up waiting for a brewery to reopen.



Dave Everley

Ringo Starr

Zoom In EP UMC

Capsule collection takes Ringo's popular mantra 'peace and love' to extremes.



The peace: *Zoom In, Zoom Out* reminds us that our human connection

transcends all barriers. The philosophical *Waiting For The Tide To Turn* is rooted in reggae and features Tony Chen on guitar, while Starr ties up an impressive groove with Nathan East on bass. *Teach Me To Tango* is an easy-going musical shrug towards going with the flow.

The love: *Here's To The Nights*, Diane Warren's nostalgic ode to friendship best suited to the rowdy conclusion of a night at the pub. 'Here's to the nights we

won't remember with friends we won't forget.' Such friends include guest singers including Paul McCartney, Dave Grohl and Sheryl Crow. *Not Enough Love In The World*, written by Steve Lukather and Joseph Williams, is reflective but delivers its sentiment with aplomb.

In these fraught times, Ringo has given us expertly produced and pensive meditations on the bigger picture.



Phoebe Flys

Touch

Tomorrow Never Comes

ESCAPE MUSIC

Long-lost US pomp-rockers scratch their 41-year-old itch.



Notwithstanding a second album so poorly produced (by

Todd Rundgren) that their label were forced to shelve it, *Touch* are back in business more than four decades after their cult favourite self-titled debut and appearing at the inaugural Monsters Of Rock Festival.

Featuring all four original members, *Tomorrow Never Comes* is a varied, thrilling and completely unexpected return. It's so pomp-tastic that over the course of a half-dozen spins this reviewer wore out two sets of air keyboards and had to send a third for an MOT.

Epic pieces such as *Swan Song*

and *Frozen Ground* are micro-symphonies in their own right, but let's get one thing straight: *Touch* can rock; *Let It Come* is forged on a riff reminiscent of their best-known tune *Don't You Know What Love Is*. They also wave that fact in our faces with a ditty called *L'il Bit Of Rock 'N' Roll*.



Dave Ling

Budderside

Spiritual Violence

MOTÖRHEAD MUSIC/SILVER LINING MUSIC

Second album from Lemmy-approved rockers.



More of a relaunch than a second album, really.

A four-year gap between debut and follow-up basically means building from the ground up again. Yet this revamped line-up with main man Patrick Alan Stone leading from the front sound like they mean business and then some as opener *Wide Awake* blasts into life.

As a statement of intent it couldn't be clearer, and the 10 tracks here crackle with confident energy, not least the hook-laden *Zen* and the potent *Soul Searchers*, while *Amber Alert* has one of the meanest riffs on the album. The band were originally signed to Motörhead Music by Lemmy, so it's perhaps not surprising that *Pardon Me* is

Lemmy-inspired or that it features Phil Campbell on guitar. Elsewhere the band uncover some decent cash in the attic with a rattling cover of *Folsom Prison Blues*.

Focused and ambitious, Budderside are back for another crack of the rock'n'roll whip.



Essi Berelian

Black Spiders

Black Spiders DARK RIDERS

Get ready to feel the doom all over again.



Hefty Sheffield doom rockers Black Spiders bid us all an unceremonious

adieu back in 2017. Then while you and I spent the past few years desperately trying to piece our shattered lives back together, they went ahead and got the band back together. With tears wiped and knobs turned forcefully to the right, the good times are most definitely back.

Black Spiders is the sort of comeback album you always hope for but rarely receive: a confident and positively feral return to form, a full-barrel blast of their gnarly Sabbath-on-speed gut munchers that sound, crazily, like Kiss playing Pentagram covers. Or vice versa. Either way, if you're not bowled over by the corrosive super-doom of *Wizard Shall Not Kill Wizard*, furious headbanger

Death Comes Creepin' or the sleazy hell-yeah of *Rock N' Roll*, then you're probably reading the wrong magazine.

Something for everybody, and all of it a total monster.



Sleazegrinder

Devin Townsend

Devolution Series #1:

Acoustically Inclined,

Live In Leeds INSIDE OUT

The calm before the storm



While Devin Townsend ponders his next big thing – and frankly

the cosmos is his oyster – he's launched a *Devolution Series* of albums with this acoustic gig from his 2018 tour. The show has already been released on Blu-ray on the somewhat pricey *Ultimate Edition* of *Empath*, but it deserves a wider hearing.

Most of the songs come from albums released between 2000 and 2010, although there's a couple from 1997's *Ocean Machine: Biomech*. And while you couldn't call Townsend's acoustic guitar intimate, on account of all the gadgets he puts it through, it's certainly more up-close than the original album versions. His self-assured voice has a greater clarity too, uncannily reminiscent of Jeff Buckley at times.



Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Julian Taylor Band

Desert Star APORIA



With a track record that goes from Neil Young to The Weeknd, there's no such thing as a typical Torontonians, and Julian Taylor is fast becoming one of the square-peg city's favourite refusenik sons. On 2019's hard-funking *Avalanche* album, we feared for the health of his wah-wah pedal, and here again the bandleader revisits those dread-shaking flavours on early struts like *Heard Good Things*, complete with Kravitz-like soul-man bark.

But he's palpably grown, too. Try the title track's easy-on-the-ears country soul, *One Time*'s exploration of the haunted end of Americana, or the standout *House Is A Garden*, with its almost gospel slow-bloom balladry. True, Taylor may not be immune to commercial considerations: the hip-hop-informed *Hot Heels* and *That Spice* are potential crossovers that could drop right into the Radio 1 'A' playlist (and it's not often you hear that round these parts). But *Desert Star* always feels authentic – if a touch overlong (at 22 tracks, Taylor might want to have a quiet word with his muse).



Ghalia Volt

One Woman Band RUF



Locked down and bandless, Volt powers up convincingly on this solo third album on which she does everything short of strapping cymbals to her knees. Stomping cheap drums under dirty-sounding slide guitar, there's a magical rattle and shake here, with moments like *Espiritu Papágo* coming on like a locomotive slicing through a field of magic mushrooms.



Curtis Salgado

Damage Control ALLIGATOR



Musical mentor to John Belushi, sometime Santana vocalist and three-times cancer survivor, Salgado has been around the block (a fact wryly acknowledged here on the infectious *The Longer That I Live*). But it all boils down to the blues, and while *Damage Control* throws traditional shapes on some bouncers, few preach the gospel with such joy and character.



Kat Danser

One Eye Open BLACK HEN MUSIC



While blues tourists hang around the Clarksdale crossroads, *One Eye Open* finds singer-songwriter

Danser more interested in the intersection between Afro Cuban jazz and the flavours of New Orleans. The concept sounds starchy and academic, but this is music for the good times, with *Frenchman Street Shake* alone enough to spark a street party.



Geoff Everett

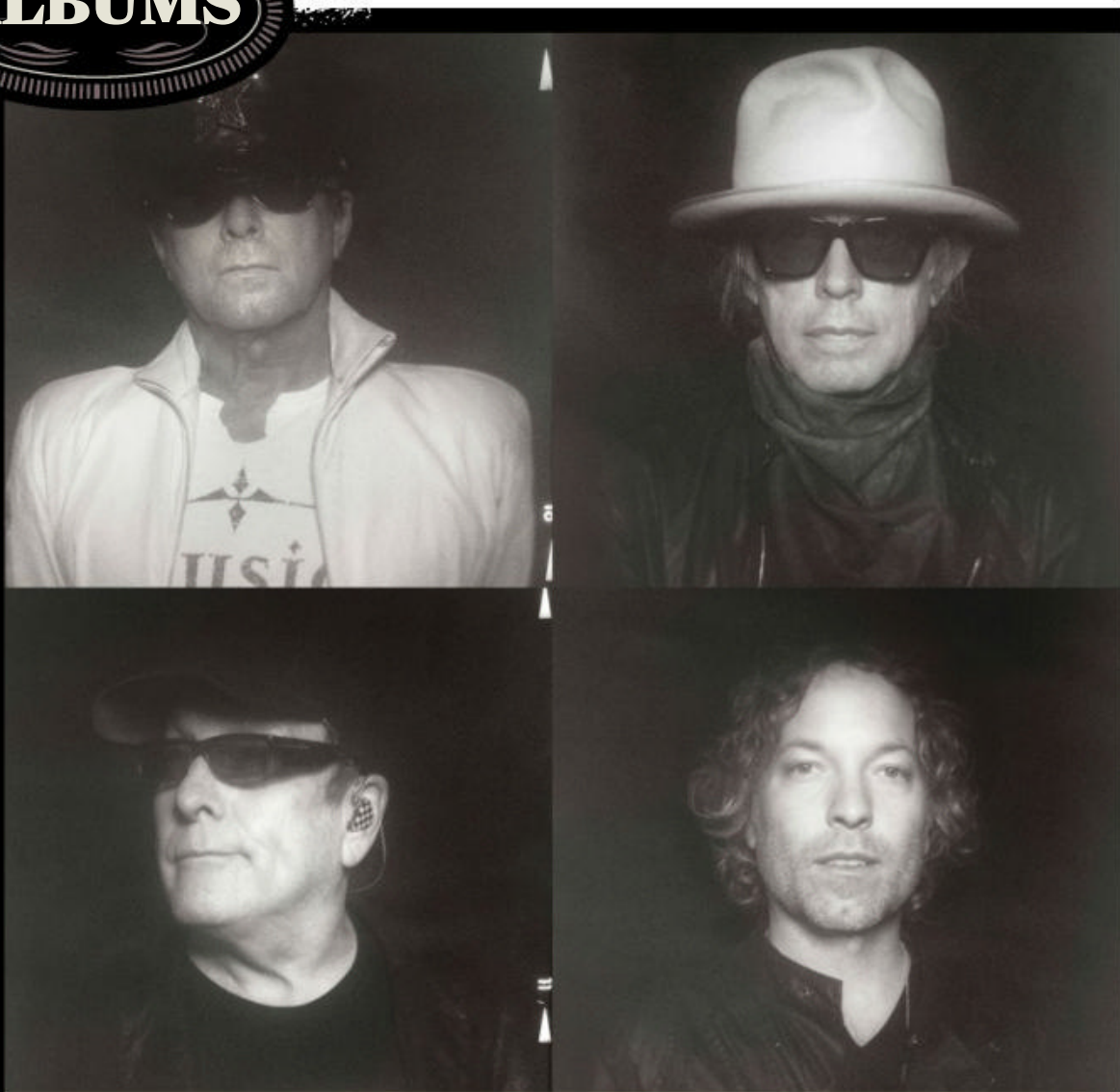
Swamp Frog SELF-RELEASED



Having hidden behind the Eldon Backhouse alias for his previous release, Everett's name is back on the tin, and the British blues veteran's musicianship remains of the highest calibre. *Can't Go On Too Long* is woven through with a guitar line that Mark Knopfler would be proud to claim, while *You Can't Catch Me* twists a little of The Beatles' *Come Together* into a stellar strut.



Julian Taylor Band: different musical styles but always sounding authentic.



Cheap Trick

In Another World BMG

Veteran American genre leaders continue to fuse power and pop with panache.



Has there ever been a lamer genre than power-pop? New wave without the experiment, harmonies without melodies and middle eights without choruses, power-pop always seem to hark back to a time when everyone, not just power-pop's ageing purveyors, had hair.

Of course, there were exceptions, and one of the few bands to survive this label are America's Cheap Trick. On material like *Surrender*, *Dream Police* and the great hit *I Want You To Want Me*, Cheap Trick showed that, alone among their contemporaries, they understood how to transmute the 60s stylings of The Beatles to the 70s without sounding like ELO (or indeed ELO Kiddies). Guitarist Rick Nielsen's slashing power chords merged perfectly with Robin Zander's keening vocals to create a sound that was both timeless and new. A sound that came to the ears of John Lennon, who used the band on his *Double Fantasy* album sessions.

Cheap Trick's first flush of fame was, admittedly, a while ago, but like all great bands they have a knack of revitalising themselves through the years. The repurposing of an old Big Star song for *That '70s Show* brought Cheap Trick back into the limelight in the early 2000s, while last year's unambiguously titled Christmas

album *Christmas Christmas* saw them lay out their roots in Christmas song form brilliantly. Like Cleopatra with power chords, Cheap Trick cannot be withered by age, nor does custom stale their infinite variety. They just continue to rock (despite being inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2016, normally the sign of a career's fatal plunge).

In Another World, their twentieth studio album, is one of their best yet. As ever the band appear to have listened to both every record ever made and nothing at all since 1977. Riffs pile upon riffs like dogs in a basket, harmonies are layered upon other harmonies, and everything sounds like polished thunder. On songs like *The Party* (as close to metal as this band will ever get) and the by-no-means unself-explanatory *Boys & Girls & Rock'n'Roll*, Cheap Trick sound not so much like stadium rock as stadiums made of rock, while *Final Days* welds John Lennon to glam rock, and *Gimme Some Truth* actually is the John Lennon song, here performed by Cheap Trick with guitarist Steve Jones from the Sex Pistols.

In Another World is a remarkable album and another marvellous continuation: power and pop.



David Quantick

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

L.W. FLIGHTLESS

Lizard Kings? Crazy fakirs, more like.



On this, their seventeenth album in nine years, the Wizards from Melbourne pick up where last year's *K.G.* left off, still heading for a parallel Middle-Eastern universe, where Turkish taffy, metronomic drones and massed guitars fight to the death on the self-explanatory *East West Link*.

At first hearing it all sounds like nine songs rolled into one, a heady driving experience so relentless you gasp for air. If *Not Now, Then When?* sets the bazaar scene. Hopping on their magic carpet they explore the blood-rushing *Supreme Ascendancy* and the mysterious raga *Static Electricity*. Tame Impala might be a touch point for Stu Mackenzie's space cases, but so might Santana's *Caravanserai*, although when they, ahem, rock you know it's them. *Pleura* and *K.G.L.W.* are meta metal in freaky time, locked and loaded and fired out as a glorious shape-shifting mass of deep noise.

Great modern music. Get on your camel and ride.



Max Bell

Smith/Kotzen

Smith/Kotzen BMG

Unlikely pairing makes a harmonious partnership.



Funk and rock have been snug bedfellows since Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone and Funkadelic pioneered the crossover in the late 60s. Guitarists Richie Kotzen (Poison, Mr. Big) and Adrian Smith (Iron Maiden) may initially appear to be a less obvious pairing, but this album tells a different story.

Neighbours in California, the pair's decision to make music together flowed naturally after they struck up a friendship. The same natural flow permeates their vocal duets and the organic, rootsy chemistry of their songwriting, splicing the funky feel of Kotzen's solo work with a warm, heavy guitar tone on *Taking My Chances* and the Free-style *Glory Road*. Smith co-wrote some of Maiden's more memorable singles, and several tracks here land hooks like Muhammad Ali (*Solar Fire*,

Running). Sparks frequently fly as the pair trade tasteful, bluesy guitar licks and solos, each spurring the other on to elevate the songs.



Rich Davenport

Grande Royale

Carry On THE SIGN

Swedish rock'n'roll, pure and simple.



A bit of an antidote to the experimentation of previous album *Take It*

Easy, according to the band, *Carry On* is a deliberate attempt to strip things back a bit and make a straight-ahead garage-rock album – no frills or fuss, just high-octane riffing, plenty of pinball energy, and guitarist Gustav Wremer sounding raspier than usual at the mic.

The no-messing blueprint serves them well as, like a sort of Swedish Ramones or Motörhead, they zip through the mostly sub-three-minute songs with a fervour designed to get bodies slamming with abandon – *Headbanger's Ball*, *Troublemaker* and *Just As Bad As You* are probably the pick of the bunch for high-speed thrills and spills, and the bluesy mid-paced closer *Schizoid Lullaby* brings a welcome level of sophistication after all the pedal-to-the-metal intensity.

Catchy good-time rock'n'roll delivered with power and passion.



Essi Berelian

Death From Above 1979

Is 4 Lovers SPINEFARM

Canadian tech-rock pioneers further demolish desert rock. Just as Daft Punk press the self-destruct button, a similarly secretive, revolutionary and electro-heavy duo prone to lengthy career silences find a fresh creative tail wind.

The romantically inclined (for them) fourth album from Toronto tech-rockers Death From Above 1979 consolidates the shift towards sounding like Queens Of The Stone Age being uploaded to the (thunder) *Cloud* begun on 2017's *Outrage!* *Is Now*: the synthetic power riffs, corrupted-file vocals and computer-virus guitars of *Modern Guy* and *Totally Wiped Out* are lashed to tunes of pure gothic desert rock. But more new ground is broken: the suavely sozzled *Glass Homes* appearing to have been

constructed on a drunk laptop playing *Pong*; *No War* ('the whole world is hard to believe') reaches Muse levels of corroded pomp and circumstance; and on the volcanic *Mean Streets* someone lets them loose on a piano, foolishly expecting to get their deposit back. The past is acknowledged (*One+One* is rabid LCD Soundsystem funk-punk; *NYC Power Elite Pt. 1* a satire on American high society seemingly written by the world's first hardcore AI), but only to ruin in the name of future-trash progress.

4 lovers of gloriously degraded punk pop.



Mark Beaumont

The Dust Coda

Mojo Skyline EARACHE

NWOCR comes of age.



There was always going to be an album that would come along and

lift the much vaunted New Wave Of Classic Rock to a new level. And this could be it.

The Dust Coda channel Led Zeppelin, Bad Company and Humble Pie in a mélange of 70s blues and funk rock. You can hear it all taking shape on high-flying opener *Demon*. From here the flow is forthright and charismatic. *Dream Alright* sounds like Lynyrd Skynyrd interpreted by Trapeze, *Jimmy 2*

Times and *Bourbon Pouring* have a sleazy attitude that recalls the Faces, *It's A Jam* is a rousing smoker reminiscent of Nazareth.

Predicated on John Drake's massive vocals and Adam Mackie's guitar slickness, *Mojo Skyline* is an exciting ride.



Malcolm Dome

Jason Ringenberg

Rhinestoned

COURAGEOUS CHICKEN

He used to be a Scorchers but he's alright now.



As the frontman of Jason And The Scorchers, Jason

Ringenberg was singing Americana before it even had a name, and he still has the voice to dominate the twanging guitars around him.

Behind *Rhinestoned*'s solid-rock production there's an old-fashioned glint to his country stylings, but none of the redneck sentiments that can often creep in. Indeed *The Freedom Rides Weren't Free* is a heartfelt tribute to the civil rights campaigners of the 60s who got a good kicking for their efforts. On *Nashville Without Rhinestones* Ringenberg adopts a Dylan-esque spoken vocal as he chronicles the musical changes to the capital of country. *Stoned On Rhinestones* is about the day he first heard Hank Williams, a point he

reinforces by covering Hank's *You Win Again*. The only track that doesn't work is his rendition of *Christ The Lord Is Risen Today*.



Hugh Fielder

Saint Agnes

Vampires DEATH OR GLORY GANG

Horror-flick mini-album fantasia from London's dark dockland hopes.



On their 2019 debut album *Welcome To Silvertown*, Saint Agnes

populated their run-down corner of East London wasteland with secret witches, devils and death-or-glory gangs, painted in shades of vivid noir-rock. For this lockdown mini-album follow-up – six tracks plus horror-mood interludes – the human masks come off. 'You call me evil, but baby I'm so much worse,' singer Kitty A Austen snarls on *This World Ain't Big Enough*, and so it transpires. *Repent* finds her indulging in vengeful torture porn, *Vampire* details her propensity for emotional blood-sucking, and she yowls the title of I'm *With You Everywhere You Go* as half promise, half undead threat. Between bursts of bubblegum melody, her façade of innocence melts away like a demon's babydoll disguise, just as her band also expose their true face: visceral, corroded, dynamically

hypnotic industrial slaughter-rock. Witness them turning Grinderman's *No Pussy Blues* into an electro-punk barrage akin to intrusive laser surgery going very wrong indeed, or pummelling through *Wish*, the gruesome slash-'em-up finale that no one survives. Talk about going for the jugular.



Mark Beaumont

Greenleaf

Echoes From A Mass NAPALM

Is post-stoner prog a thing? It is now.



Greenleaf's humble beginnings as the cinematic offshoot of

Swedish dune buggy riders Dozer is so far in the dusty rear-view mirror at this point that you can barely call this stoner rock at all. *Echoes* clearly has loftier aspirations. Building on the expansive, lush soundscapes of 2018's *Hear The Rivers*, *Echoes* is post-everything, really. And while you might hear, say, a proggy Soundgarden in the bulldozing *Needle In My Eye*, or primordial, *Rocka Rolla*-era Priest in the melancholic desert-chug of *On Wings Of Gold*, it's a fairly unique specimen.

Greenleaf's secret sauce is Arvid Hällagård's haunting vocals. His forlorn wail is so icy it will leave lasting shivers. He sounds like he's been singing

these songs for a thousand years, and the band do an admirable job of providing the perfectly bewitching soundtrack for his dramatic incantations, especially on the cosmic swirl of closer *What Have We Become*.

This album is heavy in all the weirdest, sexiest ways.



Sleazegrinder

Sunstorm

Afterlife FRONTIERS

Decent but run-of-the-mill melodic rock.



After five albums with Joe Lynn Turner on vocals, Sunstorm

brought in Rainbow's Ronnie Romero for *Afterlife*. The result is enjoyable, but the album lacks a little individuality.

Romero delivers with energy and vitality, and adds much to tracks like the majestic *Stronger* and the power ballad *Lost Forever*, but too often the songs fail to ignite. This is the case with *One Step Closer*, where Simone Mularoni's guitar work should have been the stairway to magnificence, but falls short.

Perhaps the closest comparison to what Sunstorm try to do are AOR heroes Zeno, and in Romero they have the singer to make this work. But it doesn't quite come off.



Malcolm Dome

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder



Devil Dog Road: doing what the album title says.

Devil Dog Road Keep Rock 'n' Roll Alive

SELF-RELEASED



Here's some good news: Scandinavian action-rock still lives and seethes. The fourth album from these pleasantly grizzled Finnish lifers finds 'em stoking the flames of sweaty 70s arena-boogie à la AC/DC sprinkled

liberally with the melodic scream-along magic of the Hellacopters. So, you know, it's familiar, but in that perfect rock'n'roll way, like sex, or pizza, or falling down a flight of concrete steps after chugging a bottle of stolen whisey.

Opener *Downtown Train* sets the pace with a sound that is somehow both melancholy and gritty, garage-y but stadium-bound, as the band lay out one tight rocker after another, culminating in

an entirely and beautifully over-the-top take on Velvets/Lou Reed's *Rock N' Roll* in the bonus section of the album. Biggest winners are the most obvious headbangers in the bunch, the total foot-stomping, hell-raising crunchers like *Swing The Bat*, *Man* and *Leave This Town*, but, honestly, the record's all business. All you need is a good Saturday night to light it up.



Hot Breath

Rubbery Lips THE SIGN



A couple of years back, Swedish riff-rockers Hot Breath released a fairly magnificent EP that reproduced

all the action and excitement of mid-70s proto-metal with their own unique occult rock vibes. Well, now they've gone and doubled down on a whole album's worth of the stuff. And it's a monster. Just imagine if the coolest mustache ever was a Swedish rock'n'roll band.



The Dry Look

Take Me to the Dive

SELF-RELEASED



Dry Look don't just sound like a bar band, they sound like they were all conceived in bars, like they've lived on a diet of pickled eggs and cigarette butts their entire lives. This is their first album in a couple years and it's a rocker, part Replacements, part Big Star, all hooky, low-budget, late night kicks.



The Bad News

Take It Out SELF-RELEASED



French budget-rockers return with a pretty incredible collection of hooky punk rock of the '66-meets-'77

variety, full of snot, spit and attitude. The band's genre ping-ponging is probably best summed up by the destructo-rock of *I Wanna Get High* and the new-wave keyboard thrasher *Take Drugs With You*. Same message, two different delivery systems. Both rock like fuck.



Das Ghoul

Trip The Light

Phantasmic SELF-RELEASED



Das Ghoul is a mysterious masked man from Oxford who's obsessed with gory video nasties and Bat Cavey death-rock. Entirely satisfying five-songer *Trip The Light Phantasmic* is all cobwebs and ripped fishnets, like Specimen with a dash of late-60s psych. If you wanna liven up your next funeral, this will do the trick.





Suzi Quatro

The Devil In Me STEAMHAMMER/SPV

Possessed of the past, the treasured pioneer rocks into the present.



Making a seismic impact in the 70s on this side of the Atlantic by combining the slam-dunk chart-toppers *Can The Can* and *Devil Gate Drive* – as well as Top 10 smashes *48 Crash*, *The Wild One* and *If You Can't Give Me Love* – with the era-defining imagery of low-slung bass guitar and leather catsuits, Suzi Quatro proved that rock'n'roll wasn't just the preserve of excitable lads and their dads, as she also inspired multiple teens of her own gender. Indeed such has been her indelible mark on British rock and pop culture that it's entirely understandable that she's viewed as one of our own. Lest we forget, she was the only non-domestic performer to be declared one of a dozen Queens Of British Pop by the BBC in 2009.

And yet, for all that, if her latest album *The Devil In Me* proves anything it's that you can take Suzi Quatro out of Detroit, but you'll never take Detroit out of Suzi. With a legacy that includes the MC5, The Stooges, the Amboy Dukes and others, the Motor City has always rocked harder and louder than most. Factor in its blues heritage in the shape of John Lee Hooker, the R&B of Andre Williams and the pop colossus that was Motown Records, and

the influence of Suzi's home town still reaches across the ages.

That proves to be both a blessing and a curse on this, Quatro's seventeenth studio album. As with its predecessor, *No Control*, its dozen tracks were written and recorded with her son Richard Tuckey, and they make considerable nods to her roots and inspirations. There's an undeniable sense of comfort to be had as a howl of feedback gives way to the deliciously crunchy riff of the title track that opens the album. The righteous soul rocker *Betty Who* is a fist-pumping blast, while elsewhere the hard-driving and funky chops of *Hey Queenie* display Quatro's domination of the bottom end.

Alas *You Can't Dream It* sounds way too much like the theme to an 80s cop show to be entirely convincing, while *Isolation Blues* is as surprising as Monday following Sunday. But all is not lost; Quatro is on safer ground cranking up the volume and kicking out the jams with the filthy rock'n'roll of *Motor City Riders*.

If the devil does have the best tunes, then Suzi Quatro is grabbing enough of them here.



Julian Marszalek

The Vintage Caravan

Monuments NAPALM

Behold the glory of the riff.



It would be difficult to imagine a more appropriate title for album

number five from this Icelandic trio; *Monuments* is immense, primal heavy rock, with the influence of Sabbath, Cream, Zeppelin and sundry proto-metal bands running deep within its groovy veins. Much like their earlier albums, really, except that this time round there seems to be an even greater focus on strong melodies and songcraft.

Full-flight opener *Whispers* reels around an instantly memorable riff and chorus; *Dark Times* blazes like a psychedelic Iron Maiden; *Torn In Two* seems, basically, to be a wonderful excuse for a ferocious guitar solo. At eight minutes-plus each, the two cosmic yin and yang standouts, though, must be middle track *Forgotten* and closer *Clarity*, the former fast and thrashy with bags of old-school attack, the latter lysergically mellow and dreamy, with a lengthy instrumental ending.

The Vintage Caravan just get better and better.



Essi Berelian

FM

Tough It Out Live FRONTIERS

Melodic Brits' classic second album, live and lively.



Yet another wretched drawback to these grim times is that

FM have yet to properly tour last year's glorious *Synchronized* album. Fortunately, the finest AOR band the UK has ever produced were sensible enough to capture their 2019 European tour for posterity. A faithful but impassioned saunter through 1989's much revered *Tough It Out*, with an extremely generous extra helping of deep cuts, it sounds as immaculate as fans have come to expect.

From its bullish and strident title track to the shiny soul pomp of closer *Feels So Good*, *Tough It Out* is almost comically overburdened with massive tunes, and Steve Overland's ageless voice making every last melody sparkle and soar. After a nourishing main course it's particularly sweet to hear a brace of songs from 1992's

underrated *Aphrodisiac*, while FM's *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* is arguably the third-best version ever (after Marvin and The Slits, natch).



Dom Lawson

Liquid Tension Experiment

LTE 3 INSIDE OUT

Tapping into their flow again – 20 years later.



Having released two albums of breakneck prog-fusion instrumentals

in 1998 and 1999, Liquid Tension (aka Mike Portnoy, John Petrucci and Jordan Rudess from Dream Theater, plus Tony Levin from King Crimson/Peter Gabriel) never found the time between day jobs and side projects to hook up again. But last summer the four of them quarantined, tested and got down to business.

It's a seamless continuation. They may all be 20 years older, but age has not dimmed their nimble fingers or their musical wits, and the well they're drawing from is apparently inexhaustible, although they have branched out with a meticulously arranged cover of Gershwin's *Rhapsody In Blue*.



Hugh Fielder

The Treatment

Waiting For Good Luck

FRONTIERS MUSIC SRL

Cambridge rockers double down on boogie-metal basics.



Now on to their fifth album, The Treatment would have been forgiven

for experimenting. Instead they seem to have focused on their core strengths and simply tried even harder not to bore us, and to get to the chorus.

The opener's hook '*We're in the rat race, and there ain't no escape*' won't win any literary prizes for lyrical wit. But when it's performed like Def Leppard without the production sheen, and then followed with *Take It Or Leave It*'s defiant determination to sound like a hairsprayed headliner at the Sunset Strip Cathouse in 1985, you'll have no qualms about signing up for some dumb fun. The boogie-infused romp of *Lightning In A Bottle*, built around funky Aerosmith-style riff knots, is also hard to resist. In truth, not all these dozen songs can match

that opening trio for immediacy, but they're still served well by similarly unpretentious trad-rock tricks, most memorably on *No Way Home*'s chunky swagger.



Johnny Sharp

Kitten Pyramid

Koozy!! FLIP FLOP

Excellent Brit neo-psychedelia, underpinned by covid sadness.



Despite their chirpy use of exclamation marks, Kitten Pyramid do not

flinch from the gradual pain of human existence. Their 2013 debut *Uh-Oh!* was dedicated to principal songwriter Scott Milligan's uncle, who lived with mental illness his whole life, while *Koozy!!* is in memory of Milligan's mother, an MS sufferer who succumbed to covid.

From the just-off-kilter brass and chug of the title track to the Van Dyke Parks-like strings of *Leggy Friend* and throughout, each of these jewel-like songs is individually crafted and coloured, full of appropriate twists and turns. No more so than on *Aunty Mabel*, which bursts into life at Wire-like drill-rock pace, then slows into a rumination on old age. Joyful and sombre, playful and solemn, the album culminates in *Needles*, presumably a tribute to Milligan's mother.

A beautiful album.



David Stubbs

Sweet Oblivion feat Geoff Tate

Relentless FRONTIERS MUSIC

All 'Rÿche now.



It's quite a commercially nifty idea, giving Geoff Tate a vehicle

that harks back to Queensrÿche's early career. And with the fans' hunger for the classic sound at least partially sated by 2019's first album, *Relentless* continues the delivery of songs that could have bridged the gap between the Queensrÿche pair *Empire* and *Promised Land*. This time round, virtuoso guitarist/producer Aldo Lonobile is Tate's songwriting collaborator. Not that this makes a huge difference to the direction. Lonobile and a completely new line-up are perfectly adept at conjuring up the required vibe, and *Relentless* hits the spot time and time again with *Remember Me*, *Anybody Out There*, *Wake Up*

Call and excellent single *Strong Pressure*. Lonobile even conjures up a 'Rÿche-style tune in *Aria* with Tate singing in Italian.

Strong songs, and Geoff Tate at the front giving the fans what they want? A (guilty?) pleasure indeed.



Essi Berelian

The Pineapple Thief

The Soord Sessions

Volumes 1-4 KSCOPE

Acoustic re-imaginings of Pineapple Thief songs and Bruce Soord solo material.



Last year, Pineapple Thief mainman Bruce Soord did four acoustic

livestreams from his home studio, showcasing both the band's material and some of his own stuff. These have been collated here.

Soord is clearly talented, and does a fine job adapting the music to the solo acoustic environment. In doing so he does bring out new colourings and shadings. However, by definition this way of presenting material means that he can occasionally sound somewhat one dimensional. In a livestream, under the current restrictions, this is acceptable. But will it bear out even occasional playing of these CDs? In the case of certain tracks, probably not. Inevitably, doing such acoustic performances has positive and negative aspects.

The CDs come in a 48-page hardback book that includes Soord's notes on each song, plus photos from the livestreams and the studio set-up.



Malcolm Dome

The Offspring

Let The Bad Times Roll

CONCORD

SoCal punks dig deep for their tenth album.

They're quite the conundrum, The Offspring. Here's Dexter Holland, brain the size of a planet, PhD in molecular biology, yet they've been responsible for some of the most gleefully dumb songs of the past three decades, *Pretty Fly (For A White Guy)* and a recent cover of Joe Exotic's *Here Kitty, Kitty* very much included.

There is a genuine darkness at play on their tenth album, though. Long delayed (they started work on it in 2013), it's been percolating all the way

through the Trump presidency, BLM and covid, so the darker-than-usual edge is no coincidence. The ultra-catchy pop-punk of old is there in spades, but they're taking a cold hard look at America on *This Is Not Utopia*. And amid all the full-pelt bluster, *Gone Away Requiem* is a jarring, mournful, *Mad World*-style tribute to a lost loved one.

Not all the gambles pay off. A rock take on Grieg's *In The Hall Of The Mountain King* is less original than they might imagine – everyone from The Who to The Wombles has done it – while *We Never Have Sex Anymore*'s lounge-lizard ode to middle-aged angst is basically Victoria Wood's *Ballad Of Barry And Freda* in a pair of Dickies shorts.

A fun romp with a serious undercurrent, then, and a reminder that there's just one man on the Warped Tour who can save us all when the next pandemic hits.



Emma Johnston

Heavy Feather

Mountain Of Sugar THE SIGN

Swedish fuzz rockers stand out from the retro crowd.



Chuck a meatball into the air in Sweden and the likelihood is

that on the way down it will hit at least two retro-minded heavy rock musicians. As a result, standing out from the crowd is no mean feat. But Heavy Feather have upped their game on their second album and delivered a gently quirky manifesto for bluesy, riff-driven nourishment.

As ever, it definitely helps that frontwoman Lisa Lystam has an astonishing voice, with shades of both Janis Joplin and Ann Wilson, and could probably sing any old rubbish and pin discerning people to the nearest wall. Fortunately, Heavy Feather have crafted their finest batch of tunes to date here, too, with both strutting starter *30 Days* and the swaggering *Lovely Lovely Lovely* standing out as prime examples of the Swedes' wonky take on a cherished formula. Meanwhile, the title track is a near-perfect 140-second burst of pumped-up rhythm 'n' fuzz, *Let It Shine* is exquisite, blissed-out psych, and *Asking In Need* whips up a gentle storm of Stonesian languor.

It turns out that vast amounts of sugar is good for you after all.



Dom Lawson

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Ruts DC

ElectrAcoustiC

Astutely re-imagined for the trio's acoustic live sets, The Ruts' cannily constructed chart hits (*Babylon's Burning* et al) take on new life when stripped back and allowed breathing space thanks to a clean Pat Collier production. **8/10**

Jaded Hearts Club

Live At The 100 Club BMG

Unlikely supergroup featuring Matt Bellamy, Graham Coxon and Miles Kane brutally, brilliantly and enthusiastically assault the classics (*Gloria*, *Paint It, Black*) in irresistibly raucous Pebbles-era garage-band style. **8/10**

Birdpen

All Function One JAR

An album about 'living a cyber life' that covers isolation, sadness, loneliness and paranoia: the full post-millennial package, but in a good way. Superb electro alt.prog with lashings of en-vogue existential misery. **7/10**

Starmen

By The Grace Of Rock 'N' Roll MELODIC PASSION

Coming on like a Swedish Paul Stanley-based cheese dream, this slick if image-hobbled quartet have raided vintage melodic rock's songwriting style guide (and its make-up bag) to surprisingly satisfying effect. **7/10**

iDestroy

We Are Girls CD BABY

A gloriously hook-driven mash-up of sparky pop-punk, surly attitude-drenched alt.rock and Huggy riot grrrl bite from a Bristol trio with Bowery swagger and similar crossover potential to vintage Elastica. **8/10**

Reflection Club

Still Thick As A Brick MADVEDGE

Unlikely German Canterbury scenester Lutz Meinert (Margin) delivers a double concept work (complete with newspaper) that's such a precise, loving homage to Tull's *Thick As A Brick* that any committed Tull fan would be a fool not to seek it out. **8/10**

Cobra Cult

Second Gear GMR

Eight winning tracks on which relentless Motörhead blazing collides head-on with punk pace and Johanna Lindhult's distinctly Swedish take on strident Runaways-era Cherie Currie vocals. Unashamedly trad, but not at all bad. **7/10**

Ed Cosens

Fortunes Favour DISTILLER

The Reverend & The Makers guitarist's command of classic songwriting tropes, en-vogue blend of modern indie-folk manners with orchestral scope and Sheffield origins all invite comparisons to Richard Hawley. Engaging and assured. **7/10**

Tomahawk

Tonic Immobility IPECAC

An unnerving but relentlessly rewarding fifth album from Mike Patton (Faith No More) and Duane Dennison (Jesus Lizard) reflecting lockdown intensity with brink-dwelling vox and gloriously agitated riffs. Prime uneasy listening. **8/10**

The Members

Bedsitland ANGLOCENTRIC

There's a vast breadth of ambition here from the Camberley post-punk vets (now led by JC Carroll). Additional hands – Guy Pratt, John Perry, brass, pipes etc – do what they can, but it's not enough. Clumsily produced, surprisingly shambolic. **4/10**

Goodbye Mr MacKenzie

A Night In The Windy City

Having re-formed in 2019 without Shirley Manson, Edinburgh's Martin Metcalfe-led, genre-nonspecific MacKenzies took their major-label-friendly pre-grunge indie rock to Glasgow's Barrowlands, where they clearly triumphed. **6/10**

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



L7

Wargasm: The Slash Years (1992-1997) CHERRY RED

Fun, feminism and big, fat riffs from grunge's most fearless band.



Alternative rock enjoyed a magical year in 1992, but even amid an avalanche of classic albums L7's *Bricks Are Heavy*, their third, managed to rise above the grunge noise and make its presence known in grand style. As weighty as the title suggests, clever, melodic and deeply, deeply sarcastic, L7's best record is the peerless starting point for this beautifully presented reissue of the three albums they made for Slash Records.

Pretend We're Dead was the big hit, an instant Proustian return to 90s rock-club dancefloors that was poppier and less threatening than the rest of the album, but it's opening track *Wargasm* – a diamond-solid heavy charge that fights fire with fire, an uncompromising, adrenaline-fuelled feminine attack on masculine aggression – that sets out L7's stall as fearless rock warriors. Holding grudges has never sounded cooler than on *Shitlist*, while *Mr Integrity*, all vintage rock'n'roll drama, is a witty knock-down of mansplaining hipster guardians of the scene. But it's the bonus tracks that reveal some long-forgotten treats, particularly a wry cover of Guns N' Roses' *Used To Love Her*, in which they gleefully expose and take down the extreme misogyny of the original by turning around the gender roles.

What follow-up *Hungry For Stink* lacked in obvious chart fodder it made up for in

glorious filthy noise. Bassist Jennifer Finch and drummer Dee Plackas take their moment to shine, providing a rumbling, groove-driven bottom end to *Baggage*, on which Donita Sparks threatens to shred her own throat open from the inside. While there's still a sense of fun in the louche *Stuck Here Again*, the Suzy Q cool of *Fuel My Fire* and the full-tilt punk-rock drag race of *Shirley*, there's a darkness lurking beneath, demons creeping their way to the front of the band's consciousness in *My Sanity* and the paranoid, heavy drone of *Talk Box*.

The Beauty Process: Triple Platinum starts with a feral scream but shows a lighter side, *Bad Things* revealing an almost bubblegum pop melody, *Off The Wagon* offering a ramshackle joyride, while the sunny *Moonshine* shares the surprising sweetness previously perfected on Pixies' *Gigantic*. It was made under difficult circumstances – Finch left the band during the recording – and without a big hit it flopped and they were dropped. A shame, as it fizzles with character and the main players' irrepressible attitude. As part of this flawless set it's a vital part of the puzzle.

Still electrifying after all these years, there's no midweek slump that can't be shaken with a blast of these magnificent calls to arms.

Emma Johnston

Jon Anderson

Olias Of Sunhallow:
Remastered And
Expanded Edition CHERRY RED

Yes singer's solo classic
foreshadowed later indie icons.



When Yes took a break after 1974's *Relayer* tour to record solo albums, singer Jon Anderson ensconced himself in his garage studio and dreamed up a concept record about aliens travelling towards a new planet after a volcano decimates theirs. So far, so Yes. Nobody, however, thought Anderson would play everything on it himself, turning limited musicianship skills to harp, sitar, flute et al. Or that he'd make such a success of it that Vangelis's record company would scold their man for guesting on keyboards (he didn't). Or that Anderson would create an oxygenated, Oldfield-esque blend of light and shade, as if Yes had learned to breathe between relentless peaks.

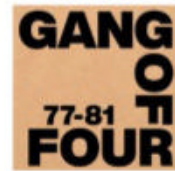
Forty-five years on, the album sounds both slightly twee and indefatigably fresh, with phases like *Solid Space* or *Moon Ra* as cosmically avant-garde as cooler, canonical albums. The epiphany on this hi-res stereo upmix is how frequently one hears a blueprint for heyday 80s 4AD. That label's original supremo Ivo makes no secret of his love of prog, and magical spells here seem uncannily Cocteau Twins, or Dead Can Dance, or even Le Mystere Des Voix Bulgares. (Once you make the connection, you can't stop.) Anderson says he's been working on the sequel since 2004.

Chris Roberts

Gang Of Four

77-81 MATADOR

Post-punks' glory years.



They came out of Leeds and student politics, they came out of Wilko Johnson and The Pirates' Mick Green, they came out of punk and funk. And they were so influential that for a time in the early 2000s their music was pretty much a genre: from Bloc Party to the Red Hot Chili Peppers, bands were riddled with their sound.

Coming along at a time when everyone was original except mods, Gang Of Four stood out above almost every other band. From their earliest recordings on

Fast Product – *Armalite Rifle*, *Love Like Anthrax* – to club-friendly final singles like *I Love A Man In Uniform*, they gave the world politics, social commentary and a general sense of deadening alienation that you could dance to.

This epic new collection contains the band's first two albums for EMI, *Entertainment!* and *Solid Gold*, an "exclusive singles LP" (which to avoid repetition leaves off those singles included on the aforesaid albums), a double LP of live material from 1980, and a cassette tape of out-takes, rarities and demos. Despite the omission of radio sessions and later work, this is a blistering collection of songs by a band at their peak, and a fan-set by and large without compare (the live set alone being a fantastic time machine into a world where cool bands played Mekons covers and swore a lot). Invest, investigate and continue into the depths of their back catalogue.

David Quantick

The Almighty

Welcome To Defiance:
The Complete Recordings
(1994-2001)

CHERRY RED/HNE RECORDINGS

Ricky Warwick-fronted
Britrockers' under-appreciated
mid-period collected.



It wasn't just the Warrants and Poisons of the world that Nirvana holed beneath the waterline. On this side of the Atlantic a bunch of leather-trousered longhairs were forced to swiftly correct their course before they found themselves swept away by the rising tide of grunge.

Post-Cult biker-rock hairies The Almighty fared better than most, at least initially. Their transformation into a convincing mid-90s rock band is documented in this seven-disc box set. Their fourth album, 1994's *Crank*, was taut and muscular, hitting hard when it needed to and deploying terrace choruses when required. By 1996's equally impressive *Just Add Life* they had branched out even further – Top-30 hit *All Sussed Out* came loaded with its own horn section.

The Almighty may have survived grunge, but Britpop proved too much, and things went wobbly soon afterwards, although the inevitable split was followed by an equally inevitable

reunion, which produced 2000's decent *The Almighty* and the following year's laboured *Psycho-Narco*.

All four albums are brought together here, along with three more discs of live tracks, remixes and B-sides. Overkill for all but mid-90s British rock completists, perhaps, but it's also a nice snapshot of a band and a time that deserve a little bit more love.

★★★★★★

Dave Everley

Mark Knopfler/Dire Straits

Reissues UMC/EMI

New vinyl spins for the Straits' mammoth hit and Knopfler's warm-up soundtrack.



Showcased on *Sultans Of Swing*, fancifully decorated on *Romeo And Juliet* and really let fly down *Telegraph Road*, by 1983 Mark Knopfler's guitar work was revered enough in its own right to make his soundtrack album to Bill Forsyth's Scottish comedy drama *Local Hero* (6/10) as much of an event as the film itself. Despite the record's cinematic forays into Celtic folk

(*The Mist Covered Mountains*), easy listening jazz (*Boomtown*) and ballroom balladry (Gerry Rafferty gives *The Way It Always Starts* his best Scott Walker), it acted as the guitarist's solo album, particularly on hell-for-leather hoedown *Freeway Flyer* and the glorious final theme *Going Home*, a track marrying euphoric sax rock to an entrancing ceilidh melody (and which empowers Newcastle United's home games to this day).

Expanding his atmospheric palette on *Local Hero* brought added depth and texture to the fifth Dire Straits album *Brothers In Arms* (9/10) too. *Your Latest Trick* continued the soundtrack's occasional lounge and jazz inflections, while the title track, the weightless *Why Worry* and the bombastic moments of *The Man's Too Strong* benefited from a similar big-screen vision. Lashed to plush 80s production and the band's most MTV-friendly tunes yet (*Money For Nothing*, *Walk Of Life*, *So Far Away*), Knopfler's guitar became a core characteristic of the 80s mainstream and sold 10 million copies as the cover star. The definitive, they say, doesn't date, and *Brothers In Arms* has lost none of its

substance and standing in 35 years as soft rock's Olympus.

Mark Beaumont

Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel

The Best Years Of Our Lives CHRYSLIS

Forty-fifth anniversary double vinyl reissue of camp rock classic.



It's curious that Steve Harley's back catalogue is rarely lauded in the manner

of his more celebrated rivals Marc Bolan, David Bowie and Bryan Ferry.

A case in point is 1975's *The Best Years Of Our Lives*. Featuring a hastily assembled line-up that includes ex-Family guitarist Jim Cregan, the third Cockney Rebel album is a melodic master class, Harley's waspish lyrics and snooty vocal delivery perfectly suited to intricately arranged songs about everything from unlikely one-night stands (*Mad Mad Moonlight*) to fictional thief AJ Raffles (*Mr. Raffles*). While the variety of musical styles is impressive – it switches seamlessly from swaggering glam boogie (*Panorama*) to

proto-Blockheads-style funk (*49th Parallel*) to shimmering synth soundscapes (*It Wasn't Me*), it's Harley's pop smarts that make it sparkle. Best of all, of course, is the timeless *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)*, which finds the singer delivering a cynical broadside to the former bandmates he felt had deserted him ('You've broken every code, and pulled the rebel to the floor') over one of the era's most memorable tunes.

★★★★★★

Paul Moody

Conflict

Statements Of Intent 1982-87 / Statements Of Intent 1988-94 MORTARHATE

Two collections from punks who manned the barricades.



Spanning two decades on anarcho-punk's frontline, *Statements Of Intent* reissues Conflict's studio albums (except 2003's *There's No Power Without Control*) plus live sets and bonus EPs as two box sets, both of which include detailed sleeve-notes based on new interviews with frontman Colin Jerwood.

Crass had the ideas, but their weedy clatter underwhelmed, whereas the power and ferocity of Conflict's sound matched the lyrical fury. Revitalising the movement, classic belters like *Mighty & Superior* and *This Is Not Enough, Neither Is This* were unrivalled for brutality and, unlike generic hardcore punk, still maintained memorable melodies. Their musicianship meant Conflict could also deliver emotional poignancy with the likes of *The Serenade Is Dead* and *A Message To Who*.

1982-87: the aggro punk of debut *It's Time To See Who's Who* was eclipsed by blistering studio/live hybrid *Increase The Pressure* and then again with the career-defining apocalyptic *The Ungovernable Force*. Also includes live albums *Turning Rebellion Into Money* and *Only Stupid Bastards Help* EMI.

1988-94: *The Final Conflict* and *Against All Odds* saw Conflict experiment with pop, dub and even acid house before resetting with 1993's *Conclusion*. Also includes live album *In The Venue* and the reworking of their debut album as *It's Time To See Who's Who Now*.

Both ★★★★★★

Alex Burrows



The Georgia Satellites

Ultimate LEMON

Earthy southern rockers' first three albums, now laden with extra tracks.

They came and went in an instant. In 1986, Atlanta's Georgia Satellites reached No.2 in the United States with the single *Keep Your Hands To Yourself*, as sizzling a slab of cheery southern rock as they come. The attendant self-titled album went platinum, and it seemed like the missing link between Lynyrd Skynyrd and Aerosmith had been found. Three years and no hits later, third album *In The Land Of Salvation & Sin* stumbled to No.130 in the US chart and the game was up, except for a current reincarnation that features only one original member, guitarist Rick Richards.

What happened? *Ultimate* comprises the core line-up's three albums, all for Elektra, plus 19 live tracks, B-sides and barely tweaked remixes, and suggests that while never world beaters the Georgia Satellites deserve more than footnote status. In one sense it's easy to see why they never took hold. Dan Baird's voice was appealingly gritty, Richards's guitar always soared and the engine room never faltered, but the good-time albums are essentially rewrites of each other. The band could hardly have

conquered the world when their own was so small.

But dig a little deeper and a more complex picture emerges. At their best – on the debut's *Railroad Steel*, second album *Open All Night's Cool Inside* and *Salvation & Sin's Bottle O' Tears* – they were a turbo-charged rhythm machine licensed to thrill. And then there was their claim to immortality: Terry Anderson's *Battleship Chains*. That swaggering, irresistible follow-up to *Keep Your Hands To Yourself* sounded like a massive hit back then, and the passage of time has only enhanced its charms. It scraped to a baffling No.86 in the US, and at No.44 was their biggest UK hit.

And they did gently evolve. For all that Baird dismisses the rushed *Open All Night* in the sleeve notes ("I hadn't written many good songs... I suffered from head up rectum syndrome"), it features Faces keyboard player Ian McLagan and is a stepping stone to *In The Land Of Salvation*

& *Sin*, which also feature McLagan and which both Baird and Richards agree is the Satellites' best work. They're right, too. The twinkling, almost bluegrass *Another Chance* should have been the signpost to better musical days. It wasn't to be, but the Georgia Satellites have nothing to be ashamed of.

★★★★★★

John Aizlewood





Joe Strummer

Assembly DARK HORSE

Post-Clash 'greatest hits' heralds new Dark Horse label reissue deal.



Strummer's sudden passing in December 2002 still hurts as the cruellest tragedy, robbing our culture of his incandescent spirit, Joe from realising his late-life Mescaleros masterpiece *Streetcore*, and much more for those who knew him.

Although propelled to becoming a posthumous rebel icon alongside Lennon and Marley, Strummer's solo endeavours have still been overshadowed by The Clash joining The Beatles and Stones as relentlessly repackaged national treasures, bereft of worthwhile compilations until 2018's rarities-stuffed *Joe Strummer 001*.

Assembly follows 2020's announcement that George Harrison's son Dhani had resuscitated his dad's Dark Horse imprint and acquired Strummer's catalogue. Boasting liner notes by Bob's son Jakob Dylan, it's the nearest Strummer has had to a 'greatest hits', replicating six tracks from 001, bolstered for diehards by a previously unreleased acoustic demo of *Junco Partner*, and 2001 Brixton Academy versions of The Clash's *I Fought The Law* and *Rudie Can't Fail* that so faithfully replicate Mick Jones's complex arrangements it sounds like Joe giving it some welly over a well-drilled tribute band.

But Strummer shouldn't be denied celebrating the shit-hot band he'd craved since The Clash's ignominious disintegration fifteen years earlier sent him, guilt-ridden at sacking Jones and Topper Headon, into endless movie roles

and one-offs. Those Strummer-described "wilderness years" are marked by 1986's *Love Kills*, the rocker he wrote for director Alex Cox's movie before it was retitled *Sid And Nancy* (Jones's participation showing how easily The Clash could have survived), and the softly sashaying *Sleepwalk* from 1989's solo *Earthquake Weather*.

The rest is drawn from the Mescaleros' soul-saving multi-cultural hot sauce, 1999's *Rock Art And The X-Ray Style*, represented by *Yalla Yalla*, *Tony Adams*, *Forbidden City* and the title track. More a team effort, 2001's rollicking *Global A Go-go* sees Strummer continuing to find his feet on *Johnny Appleseed*, *Mondo Bongo* and *At The Border*, Guy.

After Strummer's death, Mescaleros Martin Slattery and Scott Shields brought home *Streetcore* as his bittersweet epitaph. Electrifying festival romp *Coma Girl* and the reggae-rocking *Get Down Moses* are joined by the two Rick Rubin-produced acoustic tracks that stand among Strummer's greatest statements through his heart-searingly defiant reading of Bob Marley's *Redemption Song* and *Long Shadow*, the latter written for Johnny Cash on a pizza box. Like everything here, they now carry an unfathomably deeper emotional resonance as Strummer's untameable rock'n'roll spirit rears vividly back to life.

Now how about some box sets, Dhani?



Kris Needs

Allman Brothers Band

Down In Texas '71

ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

RECORDING COMPANY

Duane, Gregg and company explore the heartland.

Two months after their epic '71 live album *At Fillmore East* and a month before Duane Allman took his fateful motorcycle ride, the ABB moseyed into Austin's Municipal Auditorium for one of their final shows as a six-piece. Word in the camp was that while they wouldn't forsake their high-octane southern blues gospel, they were ready for something a little more country, evidenced by the contemplative parts of the following year's *Eat A Peach*. But you wouldn't guess that here, as *Down In Texas '71* is a classically framed Allmans set, including staples such as *In Memory Of Elizabeth Reed*, *Statesboro Blues* and *Stormy Monday*, when they picked up a lick and a jam and headed where the muse took them.

The nine-song set doesn't usurp the East Coast concerts, nor does it really offer any improvement, as it appears to be a reasonable-quality audience recording, which lacks the sonic ability to reproduce Gregg Allman's vocals. Indeed the Hammond organ maestro sounds somewhat refreshed.

But whatever the Bennies and the booze the band enjoyed, they turned it on musically. By now ABB were adamant that Rudolph 'Juicy' Carter sit in with his soprano sax (Fillmore producer Tom Dowd hated the intrusion). And while he's responsible for giving Johnny Lee Johnson his nickname 'Jaimoe', Juicy's presence isn't always conducive to a coherent listening experience.

It never took these boys long to muddy the waters. When they were on song their propensity to switch from free-form modal R&B to a kind of rock jazz fusion was coloured by a sense that Duane was itching to spread his wings, having recently fallen into Eric Clapton's clutches on the *Layla* collaboration, a liaison that never sat easily with Betts, or the rest of the band, who could see their mercurial leader disappearing into the heady ether of superstar grandiosity. The best bits are *You Don't Love Me*, where Duane threatens some heavy metal mayhem, and Elmore James's *One Way Out*, the kind of souped-up blues they could knock off blindfolded.

The addition of a taped interview with Duane and the equally doomed bass player Berry Oakley adds some contemporary authenticity, but *Down In Texas '71* is for diehard Allmans fans only.



Max Bell

David Bowie

Look At The Moon!

(Live Phoenix Festival 97)

ISO/PARLOPHONE

Bowie Trojan-horses his drum-and-bass flirtation between hefty hits.



1997 was a peculiar year for Bowie. His gigs in support of *Earthling*

often saw token hits followed by unfocused jam sessions, which either experimented boldly with electronica or jumped on the drum-and-bass bandwagon, depending on your generosity.

At Phoenix, he knew he had to lean into crowd-pleasing, and this better-than-remembered set offers accessible anthems aplenty, wrapped around the 'challenging' bits; warm, vibrant takes on *Quicksand*, *Fashion* and *Fame* seduce one into being more kindly disposed towards *Battle For Britain* or *Little Wonder*.

So it's a blast, and slightly shaming to recall how picky we critics were during that era. Bowie's voice is ridiculously great - if he's bored with trotting out *Stay* it doesn't show - and his exuberant shout of "Look at the moon!" during *The Jean Genie* is a pop moment for the ages. A nine-minute jungle version of Laurie Anderson's *O Superman*? We didn't know our luck.



Chris Roberts

Big Big Train

The Underfall Yard

ENGLISH ELECTRIC/RSKX

The grandest British prog album of the 21st century gets even grander.



Big Big Train are proof that good things come to those who wait; the British prog

flag bearers claimed their first Top 40 album with 2019's *Grand Tour*, nearly 30 years after they formed.

The Underfall Yard, released a decade earlier in 2009, was a key staging post on their long crawl to success. BBT had already released five albums by that point, to various levels of

acclaim from the prog cognoscenti, but this pushed things to the next level. Part of this was down to new frontman David Longdon, a man with a stellar, soulful voice, the range of which was matched by the emotion it carried – a scarce commodity in post-millennial prog. But a bigger reason for its success was musical. BBT were prog traditionalists, and *The Underfall Yard*'s six tracks evoked the graceful musical world building of Genesis and Yes, not least on the 12-minute *Victorian Brickwork* and the 20-minute title track.

This luxurious three-disc reissue adds re-recorded versions of those two songs plus a pair of brand new tracks to the original album. They're welcome additions, although *The Underfall Yard* didn't really need any further burnishing.



Dave Everley

Ultravox!

Live At The Rainbow 1977

UMC/ISLAND

The Foxx 'Vox!



Any sub-quin-quagenarian who grew up in the extensive shadow of the towering electro-pop edifice that is *Vienna* could be forgiven for believing that Ultravox are stern, pencil-moustached monochrome men in belted raincoats who would far rather be icily glamorous spies than joyless musicians. But Ultravox were not always thus.

Prior to being dropped by Island Records in 1980 they were one of the most exciting live bands on the punk-era gig circuit. They featured the singularly charismatic John Foxx on lead vocals, dealt in a futuristic guitar-driven brand of glam-literate, dystopian sci-fi post-punk not unlike Magazine on steroids, and appended their name with a richly deserved exclamation point.

Ultravox! were brilliant. It's as simple as that. But they couldn't deliver a hit record if their lives depended on it. All three of their Foxx-era albums died on their arse, but you could do a lot worse than purchase the lot. Ultimately, Ultravox! were the Roxy Music Santa Claus forgot.

Recently, while cleaning out their cupboards, UMC discovered this exhilarating, seat-of-the-pants nine-song live set from March '77. Three of the tracks are previously unreleased,

and it's only an utter joy. Especially for existing fans with long memories and an enduring aversion to gabardine macs.



Ian Fortnam

Toe Fat

Bad Side Of The Moon

ESOTERIC

Dipping their toes in.



Formed in 1970 by powerful soul singer Cliff Bennett (who was moving on from his Rebel Rousers) with Ken Hensley, Lee Kerslake and John Glascock from The Gods, Toe Fat chose the most disgusting name they could think of, and for their self-titled debut got an album cover to match from Hipgnosis.

Toe Fat was an unexpectedly bracing slab of heavy R&B, with Bennett's rasping vocals and Hensley's fuzzy guitar laying a solid foundation, notably on *That's My Love For You*, *Bad Side Of The Moon* (an Elton John song), *Nobody* (covered by Three Dog Night) and *I Can't Believe*.

Unfortunately Hensley and Kerslake were fired by management for various misdemeanours as the album came out, destroying any chance of building on the good reviews. *Toe Fat Two* was a rushed job, with the band unsure whether to go heavier or bluesier. But there's a fine, uncredited, guitar solo from Peter Green on *There'll Be Changes*.



Hugh Fielder

Kreator

Under The Guillotine: The Noise Records Years

NOISE/BMG

German thrashers' early years.



This chunky box set really goes the extra 666 miles, with its lid designed like a guillotine blade and glorious attention to detail. The main contents are the German thrash veterans' first six albums, all on vinyl that's been coloured to reflect the lurid album covers.

The records follow a trajectory common to so many great thrash bands of the period. Their first two albums (1985's wonderfully reckless *Endless Pain* and the following year's solid-gold classic *Pleasure To Kill*) are raw and brutal, the next few grow cleaner and more melodic (1988's *Extreme Aggression*

especially so), and the sixth (1992's thrillingly industrial *Renewal*) flies off on an experimental tangent. All of these albums, with the exception of 1990's less memorable *Coma Of Souls*, are superb examples of extreme metal.

The box also includes a replica cassette tape of the band's *End Of The World* demo (recorded when they were called Tormentor), a coffee-table hardback photo-book, a DVD of doc/live bits, and a demonic figurine USB stick that gathers the previously released Expanded Editions of each album. The box set is not cheap, but for the devotee it's worth every penny.



Jason Arnopp

Michael Chapman

The Decca Years

1974 To 1977 MOONCREST

Early postcards from renowned English part-time folkie.

Michael Chapman, like so many artists, seems likely to be forever defined by his very first album, in his case 1969's *Rainmaker*. Perhaps even by the album's first, title, track, a shimmering, other-wordly, acoustic guitar instrumental with which the Yorkshireman pitched his tent in the same field as lauded English folkies Bert Jansch, John Renbourn and John Martyn.

This collection brings together his mid-70s Deram/Decca albums *Deal Gone Down*, *Savage Amusement* and *The Man Who Hated Mornings*, by which time Chapman had added rockier elements, at the expense of tracks built from just his lived-in voice and his masterful steely finger-picking.

While much of his music recorded with other musicians or a full band has its merits, as much again lacks real individual character, too often with prosaic lyrics that possess nothing of the sparkle of his guitar playing. On his own, however, with just an acoustic and some moody chord changes for company, his music can be hypnotic, whether warm and inviting or ringing with raw overtones as chilling as a bleak moorland winter.

Thankfully, among the generous extras here, including a number of fascinating demos, are plenty of solo instrumentals that add fuel to Chapman's deserved reputation as a masterful musician.



Paul Henderson

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Various

Oh! You Pretty Things: Glam Queens & Street Urchins 1970-76 GRAPEFRUIT

A three-CD encapsulation of a mid-70s best exemplified by the proto-punk glamsploitation of the Hollywood Brats (if only there were more like them). A mad hotch-potch (Slade, Dolls, Jobriath, Eno, Mott), but ludicrous fun. **7/10**

Ngozi Family

45,000 Volts NOW-AGAIN

Led by guitarist/vocalist Paul Ngozi and featuring drummer Chrissy Tembo, Zambia's Ngozi Family fuse classic, if upbeat, primal Black Sabbath riff rock with elements of psych-funk, on this re-vinyl'd '77 second album. **6/10**

Colosseum

Transmissions: Live At The BBC REPERTOIRE

Sixty tracks, more than six arduous hours, from the initial '69-'71 line-up of Graham Bond alumni Jon Hiseman and Dick Heckstall-Smith's progressive fusion of blues-based rock and jazz. Nice. **6/10**

Waysted

Vices ROCK CANDY

Famed for UFO, fresh from Fastway, bassist Pete Way formed Waysted in '82, and the quintet's debut, though creakingly archaic now (*Women In Chains*, anyone?), perfectly suited its post-NWOBHM times. Affectionately expanded with six bonus tracks. **7/10**

Stereolab

Electronically Possessed (Switched On Volume 4)

WARP DUOPHONIC/UHF DISCS

Covering '99-08, this two-CD/triple-vinyl set collects three albums and apposite era odds 'n' sods from Tim Gane and Laetitia Sadier's motorik-literate Gallic electro-lounge pop experimentalists. **6/10**

K:

K:93 CADIZ/SO36

A reanimated EP of hitherto unreleased material from Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman and Geordie Walker and New Order's Peter Hook that suffers from a lack of uplifting drums and low-end oomph. **6/10**

The Fall

Live At St Helens Technical College '81 CASTLE FACE

As spiky and confrontational as any man can be in a V-neck sweater and open neck shirt, an in-form Mark E Smith leads the five-piece Mark Riley/*Rowche Rumble*-era Fall through 13 acerbic blurts. **7/10**

Papa Roach

Greatest Hits Vol. 2: The Better Noise Years

Twenty-one tracks (including 12 Top 10s, three new remixes and two unreleased acoustics) from the enduring Jacoby Shaddix-fronted nu-metal-sheened Californians. Reliably formulaic 21st-century chart fodder. **7/10**

Iggy And The Stooges

From KO To Chaos SKYDOG

It's Metallic KO again. The 'legendary' final Stooges show with all its attendant wincingly un-PC profanity, lightbulbs, eggs, sub-verité audio, now extra-ed to eight discs. An essential listen, yes, but once heard, never repeated. **6/10**

Al Stewart

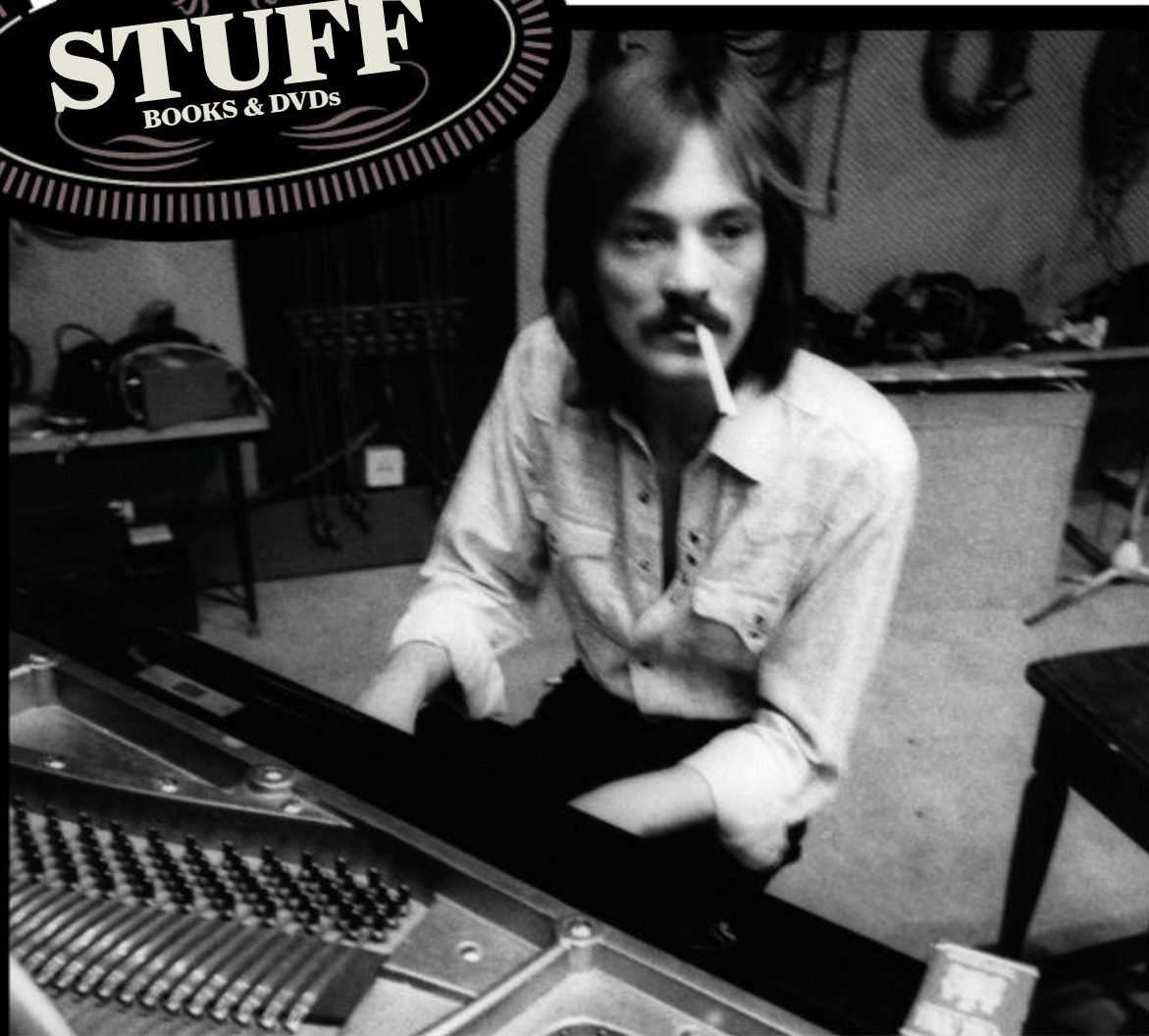
Year Of The Cat 45th Anniversary Deluxe ESOTERIC

Hugely expanded (with double-disc'd '76 Seattle show, 5.1 mix and an extra track) this bedsit classic finds Glaswegian folk-rocker Stewart shining brightest on its once inescapable title cut and *On The Border*. **7/10**

Various

Riot City: Complete Singles Collection CAPTAIN O!!

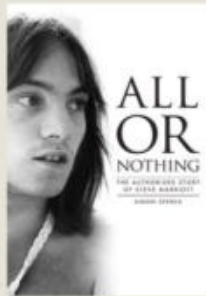
A triple set of all 31 singles (plus *Riotous Assembly* compilation) produced by the early-80s Bristol label that Garry Bushell once called 'the dustbin of punk'. Vice Squad, Varukers, Chaotic Dischord. Disorderly and raw with a scrumpy aftertaste. **6/10**



All Or Nothing: The Authorised Story Of Steve Marriott

Simon Spence *OMNIBUS*

Warts-and-all biography of the Small Faces and Humble Pie frontman.



“No one denied the fact he was a great vocalist... but they didn’t particularly like him,” Small Faces drummer Kenney Jones recalls in this hair-raising biography of arguably British rock’s most gifted singer.

While there is never any question about the epic scale of Marriott’s talents, the diminutive frontman’s music tells only half of his story.

Amassed from 125 interviews, this fascinating new oral history fills in the gaps. So we learn of the irrepressible Marriott’s path from child star to mod icon with the Small Faces to stadium-slaying rock god with Humble Pie, before a self-destructive tsunami of drug addiction and chronic alcoholism combined to destroy his career, finances, talent and personal life.

While it’s a gold mine of trivia for fans – who knew, for example, that the young Marriott and David Bowie hatched plans to form a band called David And Goliath? – its greatest value is in its unflinching portrait of Marriott as a man who, as Humble Pie drummer Jerry Shirley points out in the foreword, was “hard-wired to be confrontational”.

This self-destructive streak helped Marriott blow countless opportunities to achieve the stardom his talent deserved. An audition to join the Rolling Stones

goes wrong when he upstages Mick Jagger. A lucrative world tour supporting AC/DC, who idolised him, is nixed when they overhear Marriott describing them as “ungrateful midgets”. A chance to join Bad Company following the departure of Paul Rodgers is squandered when he turns up at drummer Simon Kirke’s house late and coked-up. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s offer of the role of Che Guevara in *Evita* is drunkenly turned down with the words: “I’m not a puppet.” The list goes on.

This volatile nature manifests in a coke-crazed alter ego who the singer dubbed ‘Melvin’, a psychotic, bald-headed wrestler.

For fans, these episodes are particularly difficult reading. Abusive to girlfriends and a notorious philanderer, a punk period during the Small Faces’ re-formation sees the out-of-control singer punch Ronnie Lane in the face following an argument. “He thought it was cool to act like a prick,” recalls the long-suffering Jones.

While rumours of foul play concerning his death at 44 in a house fire are sensibly dismissed (“It was an accident,” says Jerry Shirley. “I’d taken a cigarette out of his hand when he fell asleep hundreds of times”), you’re left with the impression that Steve Marriott was always going to burn out rather than fade away.



Paul Moody

Excavate!: The Wonderful And Frightening World Of The Fall

Edited by Tessa Norton and Bob Stanley *FABER*

Scholarly scrapbook celebrates Mark E Smith’s rich cultural legacy.

Tarnished by decades of boozy excess, ugly bust-ups and uneven albums, Fall frontman Mark E Smith’s reputation as a visionary post-punk genius was in decline before his untimely death in 2018.

Curated by Tessa Norton and St Etienne co-founder Bob Stanley, this wide-ranging anthology of scholarly essays, sleeve artwork, lyric sheets and other ephemera is a satisfying reminder of Smith’s scabrous wit, unique visual style and rich literary hinterland. Stanley himself ruminates on The Fall as rock’s greatest amateurs, drawing amusing parallels with minor-league football teams.

Standing out among several reprinted archive pieces, the late left-wing cultural critic Mark Fisher locates Smith in the “pulp modernism” canon of occult weirdness alongside HP Lovecraft, TS Eliot and the League of Gentlemen. Siân Pattenden rightly celebrates Brix Smith’s contribution to The Fall: “Bigger riffs. Brix riffs. Briffs.” A few more female writers and angles would have been welcome in this generally excellent but testosterone-heavy tome.



Stephen Dalton

Stranded: Australian Independent Music 1976-1992 (Expanded Edition)

Clinton Walker *VISIBLE SPECTRUM*

Update of the best book in its field.



For those able to cope with the concept that the writer can only ever hope to document flawed, personal existence, this book has long since been the bible of Australian independent music, number one in a (admittedly extremely narrow) field. Indeed one could argue that without the efforts of documenters such as Walker and Melbourne label Au-Go-Go’s Bruce Milne there would be little to no history of Australian independent music

to speak of from before the mid-90s

Walker doesn’t shy away from the back streets and hidden alleys, the social and economic climate of the times, the drugs, the despair, and this document is all the stronger for it. It does what it claims to: records the period between punk/post-punk and grunge (ending inevitably with Nirvana’s appearance down under); narrative, interviews, compulsive prose and scattergun memoir jostling together to help present a dissolute cast of chancers, DIY gurus, community radio stations, venues, and of course musicians: the godlike Saints, the almighty triumvirate of the Birthday Party, Laughing Clowns and the Go-Betweens, The Scientists, Dave Graney’s chiding Moodists...

This new edition is much expanded and comes with 175 new photos. Yes, of course it’s all about his mates, but... damn it, shouldn’t all rock memoirs be like that? In places this is Greil Marcus great.



Everett True

A Band With Built-In Hate: The Who From Pop Art To Punk

Peter Stanfield *REAKTION*

Who were The Who and what were they trying to do?



The Who have always been a bundle of contradictions, always a mismatch

between theory and practice and always unsure whether to look at the gutter or the stars.

Here Professor Of Film Peter Stanfield proudly takes the intellectual high road – a move that Pete Townshend would regard as ludicrously pretentious or highly appropriate, depending on mood. As Stanfield notes: “The Who made the simple things complicated and the complicated simple.” And, although he’s no rock maven, he views them through the tiny prism of both the Pop Art movement and the sometimes inspired, sometimes silly writing of 60s pop critic Nik Cohn. Along the bumpy way, he cites everything from Bugs Bunny to Batman via Eddie & The Hot Rods, whom Townshend refused to produce on account of them being “a particularly obnoxious little outfit destined for stardom”.

At the end of it all you'll be none the wiser but you will have been royally entertained.



John Aizlewood

Poly Styrene: I Am A Cliché

Dir: Celeste Bell and Paul Sng

Tender personal portrait of a troubled post-punk icon.



Ten years after Poly Styrene's cruelly premature death, this heartfelt and moving documentary pays overdue tribute to one of post-punk's most original talents.

Born Marianne Elliot-Said, Poly experienced a teenage epiphany at a Sex Pistols gig, propelling her to new-wave chart success fronting X-Ray Spex. But mental health issues and spiritual dissatisfaction led her to shun pop fame and join a Hare Krishna commune. Partly crowd-funded by her daughter Celeste Bell, who also narrates and and co-directs alongside Paul Sng, *I Am A Cliché* traces Poly's erratic journey from mixed-heritage working-class misfit to punk-feminist icon, drawing on a rich private video archive plus audio commentary from the likes of Pauline Black, Don Letts, Neneh Cherry and Thurston Moore. Besides celebrating Poly's potent music and defiant 'up yours' attitude to racism and sexism, this film is clearly an emotional journey for Bell, who memorialises her troubled mother with a mix of pain, love and forgiveness.



Stephen Dalton

They Just Seem A Little Weird: How Kiss, Cheap Trick, Aerosmith And Starz Remade Rock And Roll

Doug Brod HACHETTE

Wildly entertaining story of late-70s US rock deviants.

Between them, notes Doug Brod, the four bands whose rise is covered in this excellent volume sold a quarter of a billion albums and are still touring 40 years on. Starz are the ones who didn't quite make it. Songs such as *Pull The Plug*, about assisted dying, and one from the viewpoint of a serial rapist might have hampered them, but they were influential. As for Kiss, to listen to them

may be hell to rock critics who shunned them, but to read about them is heavenly, and Brod gives an eloquent account of their garish, naked commercialism, culminating in a Marvel comic penned in ink that included their own blood. Cheap Trick disdained Kiss's excesses but supported them live. For all their own new-wave wackiness, they were fastidiously tight, insisting that the Cheap Trick live and album experience be practically as one. As for the initially out-of-tune but indisputably charismatic Aerosmith, their competition with Simmons & co. propelled them to their own stratosphere.

With a wonderful mix of anecdote and analysis, and inclusion of key players such as the late Sean Delaney, the unofficial fifth member of Kiss, Brod depicts these groups in all the colour they deserve.

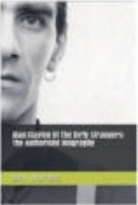


David Stubbs

Alan Clayton Of The Dirty Strangers: The Authorised Biography

John Wombat SELF-PUBLISHED

Keef-splattered tribute to Dirty Al.



The author might call his irrepressible force of nature subject "rock 'n' roll's forgotten man", but luminaries lined up to offer glowing thoughts and affectionate memories in this much-deserved tribute biography, including lifelong mate Keith Richards, Stash Klossowski, MC5 guru/poet John Sinclair, Brian James and many more.

While leading the Dirty Strangers as the UK's last true rock'n'roll band since 1978, Clayton finds himself hanging at Richards's Redlands mansion, travelling the world with the Stones' elite road crew, recording with Keith or Sinclair, and much more. The bond with Richards may be at the book's cross-eyed heart, but beneath the mirth, music and mayhem lies the touching tale of the London-bred family man who enlisted his mates to realise his crooner dad's dream of making an album before he passed away.

Recommended to anyone in love with the rock'n'roll world.



Kris Needs

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23 October - The Tivoli, Buckley
24 October - Bannerman, Edinburgh
27 October - Nighttrain, Bradford
29 October - Trillium, Newcastle

05 November - Chelmsford City Football Club
06 November - Leo's Red Lion, Gravesend
07 November - Esquires, Bedford
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20 November - St Austell Band Club
27 November - Mad Hatters, Inverness

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Tour Dates

TOCC

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Sep 1
Dublin	Vicar Street	Sep 2, 3
Cork	Opera House	Sep 4
Halifax	Victoria Theatre	Sep 29
Hull	City Hall	Sep 30
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Oct 1
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Oct 2
Perth	Concert Hall	Oct 4
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 5
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Oct 6
Rhyl	Pavilion	Oct 8
Sheffield	City Hall	Oct 9
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 11
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Oct 12
Buxton	Opera House	Oct 13
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Oct 15
Northampton	Derngate Theatre	Oct 16
High Wycombe	Swan Theatre	Oct 17
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Oct 18
Colchester	Charter Hall	Oct 20
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 21
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Oct 22
Margate	Winter Gardens	Oct 23
Weymouth	Pavilion	Oct 25
Reading	Hexagon	Oct 26
Stevenage	Gordon Craig Theatre	Oct 28
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 29

BAD TOUCH, PISTON

Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Nov 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 19
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Hut	Nov 20
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 21
Manchester	Bread Shed	Nov 22
Nottingham	Bodega	Nov 23
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 24
Leeds	Key Club	Nov 26
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 27
Newport	The Patriot	Nov 28
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Nov 19
Exeter	The Cavern	Nov 30
Southampton	Joiners Arms	Dec 1
London	Islington Academy 2	Dec 2
Gravesend	Red Lion	Dec 3

BRYAN ADAMS

Bristol	City Centre	Jun 26
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 27
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 1
Widnes	Halton Stadium	Jul 2
Telford	QEII Arena	Jul 3
Cornwall	Eden Project	Jul 5
Powderham	Castle	Jul 6
Canterbury	Spitfire Ground	Jul 8
Cornbury	Music Festival	Jul 9
Leeds	Harewood House	Jul 10

ALL THEM WITCHES

Brighton	Chalk	Sep 27
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 28
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Sep 29
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 30
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 1

IAN ANDERSON: JETHRO TULL'S THE PROG YEARS

Bath	Forum	Sep 17
Reading	Hexagon	Sep 18
Aylesbury	Waterside	Sep 20
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Sep 21
Brighton	Dome	Sep 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 24
Poole	Lighthouse	Sep 25
Perth	Concert Hall	Sep 27
Glasgow	Pavilion Theatre	Sep 28
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Sep 29
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Sep 30

A NEW DAY FESTIVAL JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST, THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN, MORE

Faversham	Mount Ephraim Gardens	Aug 20-22
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ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL OPETH, CULT OF LUNA, SWANS, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 19-21
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ARENA

Liverpool	Academy	Oct 1
London	Camden Dingwalls	Oct 2
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 3
Kinross	Backstage At The Green Hotel	Oct 4

BEHEMOTH, ARCH ENEMY, CARCASS, UNTO OTHERS

Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Sep 28
Glasgow	Academy	Sep 30
Manchester	Academy	Oct 1

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 2
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 3

BILSTON BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS, KYLA BROX, XANDER AND THE PEACE PIRATES, MORE

Bilston	Robin 2	Aug 29
Bradford & Bingley	Rugby Club	Aug 6-8

THE BLACK CROWES

London	Brixton Academy	Oct 23, 24
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 26

BILSTON BLUES FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS, KRIS BARRAS, KYLA BROX

Bilston	Robin 2	Aug 29
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BLACK DEER FESTIVAL SAVING GRACE FEATURING ROBERT PLANT & SUZI DIAN, WILKO, MORE

Kent	Eridge Park	Jun 18-20
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BLACK FOXXES

Exeter	Cavern	Sep 22
St Albans	The Horn	Sep 23
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Sep 24
York	Fulford Arms	Sep 25
Edinburgh	Mash House	Sep 27
Hull	Adelphi	Sep 29
Liverpool	Loft	Sep 30
Sheffield	Academy 2	Oct 1
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Oct 2
Leicester	Academy 2	Oct 4
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Oct 5
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 6
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	Oct 7

BLACK STONE CHERRY, KRIS BARRAS BAND

Bristol	Academy	Sep 9
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 10
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Sep 11
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 13
Leeds	Academy	Sep 14
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Sep 17
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Sep 18
Newcastle	Academy	Sep 20
Liverpool	Academy	Sep 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Sep 23
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 24
Exeter	Great Hall	Sep 25
Southampton	Guildhall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 28

BLACKWATER CONSPIRACY, THESE WICKED RIVERS

Liverpool	Arts Club	Sep 8
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 9
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Sep 10
Carlisle	Brickyard	Sep 11
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 12
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Sep 14
Leeds	Warehouse	Sep 15
Oxford	Academy 2	Sep 16
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 17
Newport	The Patriot	Sep 18
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 19
Leicester	The Musician	Sep 21
Birmingham	Academy 3	Sep 23
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 24
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Sep 25
London	Islington Academy 2	Sep 26
Belfast	Empire	Oct 22
Dublin	Whelans	Oct 24

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL JUDAS PRIEST, KREATOR, DEVIN TOWNSEND, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 11-15
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BRING ME THE HORIZON

Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 21
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Sep 22
Sheffield	FlyDSA Arena	Sep 24
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Sep 25
London	O2 Arena	Sep 26

BURY ST EDMUNDS BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS, KRIS BARRAS, KYLA BROX BAND, MORE

Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Aug 28
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CALL OF THE WILD FESTIVAL PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS, MASSIVE WAGONS, WARRIOR SOUL, MORE

Lincoln	Lincolnshire Showground	Sep 18-20
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BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL



Judas Priest (pictured), Kreator, Devin Townsend and more have enough of a collective clout to blow away the festival cobwebs.

Derbyshire

Catton Park

Aug 11-15

PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 4
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 6
Aberdeen	Unit 51	Nov 8
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 9
Carlisle	Brickyard	Nov 10
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 13
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 14
Dublin	Grand Social	Nov 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 17
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 18
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Nov 19
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 20

CARAVAN

Basingstoke	Haymarket	Oct 6
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 7
Gloucester	Guild Hall	Oct 8
Brighton	Old Market	Oct 9
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 14
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 15
Bury	The Met	Oct 16
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 17
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 21
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 22
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Oct 23
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 27
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 28
Dover	Booking Hall	Oct 29

CATS IN SPACE, VAMBO

Lancaster	Grand Theatre	Aug 26
Nottingham	Stonedead Festival	Aug 27
Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 2
Wavendon	The Stables	Sep 3
Hexham	Queens Hall	Sep 9
Sheffield	Rockin' The Bowl Festival	Sep 10
Norwich	Epic Studios	Sep 15
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 23
London	Highbury Garage	Oct 2

CHELSEA BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL CHRIS FARLOWE, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, MORE

London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	July 10
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ERIC CLAPTON

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 14, 15, 17, 18
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CLEETHORPES BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS & FRIENDS, THE BLOCKHEADS, MORE

Cleethorpes	Beachcomber	Jun 26
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CLEETHORPES ROCKS STRAY, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, SKAM, MORE

Cleethorpes	Moon On The Water	Jul 3, 4
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CORNWALL ROCKS THE WILDHEARTS, PRAYING MANTIS, FOCUS, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Oct 15-17
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CROPREDY FESTIVAL STEVE HACKETT, CLANNAD, TREVOR HORN, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy Village	Aug 12-14
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CROWDED HOUSE

Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 9
Birmingham	Arena	Jun 11
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jun 12
Cork	The Marquee	Jun 28
Limerick	The Castle	Jun 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 14-16

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jul 9, 10
Birmingham	Academy	Jul 16
Glasgow	Academy	July 17
Manchester	Apollo	Jul 18

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

Manchester	Arena	Oct 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 3
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 5
London	O2 Arena	Oct 7
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 8

EAGLES

London	Wembley Stadium	Aug 28, 29
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ENSLAVED, INTRONAUT, OBSIDIAN KINGDOM, CROWN

Birmingham	Institute 2	May 12
Glasgow	Slay	May 13
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 14
London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	May 15

ESOTERICA

Birmingham	Actress & Bishop	Sep 1
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Sep 2
London	Camden Black Heart	Sep 3
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 9
Bournemouth	The Anvil	Sep 10

Recommended

EVANESCENCE, WITHIN TEMPTATION

Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 30
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 1
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 3
London	O2 Arena	Oct 4

EVERGREY, WITHERFALL, DUST IN MIND

London	Gt Portland Street 229 Club	Oct 9
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 10
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 11
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 12
Newcastle	St Dom's Social Club	Oct 13
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 14
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Oct 15
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Oct 16

EXPERIENCE 1970 JOHN LODGE, PENTANGLE, ARTHUR BROWN, MORE

Freshwater (IoW)	East Afton Farm	Sep 3-5
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FAITH NO MORE

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7, 8
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 9
Birmingham	Academy	Jun 11
London	Brixton Academy	Jun 12, 13

CLASSIC
Rock
RECOMMENDS



LIVE!

SAMANTHA FISH

Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Sep 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 23
Bath	Komedia	Feb 3
Manchester	Academy	Feb 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 5
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 6
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 7

THE FLAMING LIPS

Galway	Big Top	Jul 17
Liverpool	Invisible Wind Factory	Jul 19
Leeds	Stylus	Jul 20
Aylesbury	Waterside Theatre	Jul 21
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Jul 25

FOCUS

Whitby	Pavilion	Jun 17
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Aug 19

GENESIS

Dublin	3 Arena	Sep 15, 16
Belfast	SSE Arena	Sep 18
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Sep 20, 21
Manchester	Arena	Sep 24, 25
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Sep 27, 28
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Sep 30, Oct 1
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Oct 3, 4
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 7, 8
London	O2 Arena	Apr 11-13

GONG

Brighton	Chalk	Mar 1
Southampton	1865	Mar 2
Reading	Sub 89	Mar 3
Guildford	Boilerroom	Mar 4
Colchester	Arts Centre	Mar 5
Manchester	Gorilla	Mar 8
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Mar 9
Carlisle	Brickyard	Mar 10
Stockton-On-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Mar 12
Norwich	Arts Centre	Mar 13
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 14
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Mar 15
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Mar 16
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 17
York	Crescent	Mar 18
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Mar 19
Bethesda	Neuadd Ogwen	Mar 20
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Mar 22
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 23
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Mar 24
Hitchin	Club 85	Mar 25
Ramsgate	Music Room	Mar 26

GRAND SLAM, STARSEED

Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 7
Bradford	Night Train	Oct 8
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 14
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 15
Glasgow	Cathouse	Oct 16
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 17
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 20
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 21
Swansea	Hangar 18	Oct 22
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Oct 23

GRAVITY FESTIVAL
THE TREATMENT, PRAYING MANTIS,
HELL'S ADDICTION, MORE

Cannock	The Station	Oct 15-17
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GREEN DAY

London	London Stadium	Jun 25
Huddersfield	John Smiths Stadium	Jun 26
Glasgow	Green	Jun 28
Dublin	RDS Arena	Jun 30

GUN

Cambridge	Portland Arms	Sep 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 14
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 15
Manchester	Night People	Sep 16
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Sep 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 18

GUNS N' ROSES

London	Tottenham Hotspur Stadium	Jun 18, 19
Dublin	Marlay Park	Jun 22
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 24

STEVE HACKETT

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Sep 10
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Sep 11
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 14
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 15
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 17
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Sep 18
London	Palladium	Sep 20-22
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 24
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Sep 25
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 27
Dundee	Caird Hall	Sep 28
Scunthorpe	Baths Hall	Sep 30

Bradford	St George's Hall	Oct 1
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 2
Croydon	Fairfield Halls	Oct 4
Guildford	G Live	Oct 5
Brighton	Dome	Oct 7
Poole	Lighthouse	Oct 8
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 9
Southampton	Mayflower Theatre	Oct 11
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 12
Carlisle	Sands Centre	Oct 14
Stockton	The Globe	Oct 15
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 16
Aylesbury	Waterside	Oct 18
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 19
Peterborough	Cresset Theatre	Oct 21
Harrogate	Royal Hall	Oct 22

HARD ROCK HELL GOTH
& INDUSTRIAL
FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, MY DYING BRIDE,
MORE

London	Kentish Tow Forum	Sep 11, 12
Leeds	Academy	Sep 11, 12

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
DAVE BROCK, COLOSSEUM, THRESHOLD,
ATOMIC ROOSTER, MORE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Sep 4, 5
Sheffield	Academy	Sep 4, 5

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
MICHAEL MONROE, QUIREBOYS,
L.A. GUNS, MORE

Sheffield	Academy	Aug 28, 29
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Recommended

H.E.A.T, VEGA, MASON HILL,
COLLATERAL

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 7
Leeds	Warehouse	Oct 8
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 10
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 11
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 12

HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES,
KILLING JOKE

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Aug 5
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Aug 6
Glasgow	Hydro	Aug 7
London	O2 Arena	Aug 9

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Cardiff	Globe	Sep 16
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Sep 17
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 19
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 20
Manchester	Night & Day Café	Sep 21
Nottingham	Bodega	Sep 22
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Sep 23
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Sep 24
Aberdeen	Drummonds	Sep 25
Hartlepool	Durham Steel Works Club	Sep 26

KARNIVOOL

Birmingham	Institute	Sep 25
Leeds	Stylus	Sep 26
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 27
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 29
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 30
Bristol	SWX	Oct 1

KINGDOM OF MADNESS
FEATURING TONY MARTIN

Newcastle	The Cluny	Nov 3
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 4
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Nov 5
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 11
Leicester	Y Theatre	Nov 12
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 13
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 19
Swindon	Level III	Nov 26
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 4
Colchester	Arts Centre	Dec 10
Havant	Spring Arts Centre	Dec 11
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 12

CORKY LAING PLAYS MOUNTAIN

Great Yarmouth	HRH Blues Festival	Nov 11
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 13
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 14
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 16

LARKIN POE

Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 19
Bristol	SWX	Nov 20
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 21
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Nov 23
Dublin	Vicar Street	Nov 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 26
Brighton	Chalk	Nov 27

BRYAN ADAMS



Rockers, rollers, ballads, belters, he's got all those and more in a hit-studded back catalogue.

See previous page for dates. Currently June 26 to July 10.

Oxford	Academy	Nov 28
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 30

JOHN LEES' BARCLAY
JAMES HARVEST

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 14
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 15
Leeds	City Varieties	Oct 16
Manchester	RNCM	Nov 20

LINCOLN BLUES FESTIVAL
DR FEELGOOD, KRIS BARRAS, BIG DADDY
WILSON, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 8
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LONDON ROCKS
KEN PULSTENIK'S GROUNDHOGS,
JOHN VERITY BAND, XANDER & THE
PEACE PIRATES

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Mar 12
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MAGNUM

Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 16
Sheffield	Leadmill	Sep 17
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Sep 20
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 22
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 24
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Sep 25
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 27
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 29
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 30
Dublin	Voodoo Lounge	Oct 2
Belfast	Limelight 1	Oct 3

MAN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jun 9
Doncaster	The Leopard	Jun 11
Grimsby	Rocks	Jun 12

MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jul 16, 17
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MASSIVE WAGONS, THE LAZYS

London	Islington Academy	Sep 11
Sheffield	Rockin' The Bowl	Sep 12
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 13
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 15
Exeter	Cavern Club	Sep 17
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 18
Manchester	Club Academy	Sep 19
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Sep 21
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 22
Newcastle	Riverside	Sep 23
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Sep 25
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 26

CHANTEL MCGREGOR

Kinross	Green Hotel	Jun 17
Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Jun 18
Aberdeen	Café Drummond	Jun 19
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Jun 21
Cleethorpes	Rocks	Jul 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Aug 6
Ruislip	The Tropic	Aug 13
Doncaster	The Leopard	Aug 21
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Aug 27
Sheffield	Greystones	Oct 15

Morcambe	The Platform	Oct 22
Hull	Adelphi	Nov 13
Looe	Blues Festival	Dec 4
Tavistock	The Wharf	Dec 5
Derby	Flowerpot	Dec 9

NEW MODEL ARMY

Dublin	Temple Bar	Oct 1, 2
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 26, 27
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 4, 5

NHS THANKYOU CONCERT
THE BILDHEARTS, BIG COUNTRY,
THE BREW, MORE

Cleethorpes	Meridian Park	Jul 31
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THE NIMMO BROTHERS

Clitheroe	The Grand	Jul 13
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Jul 14
Wavendon	The Stables	Jul 15

MIKE OLDFIELD'S TUBULAR BELLS
IN CONCERT

London	South Bank Centre	Aug 7-15
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OPETH

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 16
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PARTY AT THE PARK
KAISER CHIEFS, GUN, ASH, MORE

Perth	Lesser South Inch Park	Jun 26, 27
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PEARL JAM

London	British Summer Time Festival	Jul 9, 10
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THE PINEAPPLE THIEF
WITH GAVIN HARRISON

Dublin	Button Factory	Oct 5
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Oct 6
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 7
Bristol	SWX	Oct 8
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 30

POWERWOLF

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 8
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PRAYING MANTIS, VAMBO

Southampton	The Brook	Oct 6
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 7
Gravesend	Red Lion	Oct 8
London	Raynes Park Cavern	Oct 9
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 10
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 12
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 13
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 14
Loo	Cornwall Rocks Festival	Oct 15
Cannock	The Station	Oct 16
Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 17
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 18

PRETTY BOY FLOYD

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Aug 23
Belfast	Voodoo Lounge	Aug 25
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Aug 26
London	Camden Black Heart	Aug 27
Sheffield	Hard Rock Hell Sleaze	Aug 29

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS,
PAULINE MURRAY

Bristol	Academy	Sep 27
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CLASSIC
Rock
RECOMMENDS

Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 28
Glasgow	SWG	Sep 29
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 1
Liverpool	Academy	Oct 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Oct 3
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 5

PURE REASON REVOLUTION, GAZPACHO		
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 17

QUIREBOYS, MASSIVE		
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 14
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 15
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 18
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Sugarmill	Nov 20
Manchester	Academy	Nov 26
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 27
Brighton	Concorde 2	Jan 21
Birmingham	Institute	Jan 22
Oxford	Bullingdon	Jun 11
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Jun 12
Bristol	Thekla	Jun 17
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jun 18

RADAR FESTIVAL DIRTY LOOPS, HAKEN, INTERVALS, MORE		
Guildford	Guildford Park	Jul 30, 31

RAMBLIN' MAN FAIR EUROPE, MONSTER MAGNET, CLUTCH, BIG BIG TRAIN, FOGHAT, MORE		
Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 16-18

RAMMSTEIN		
Belfast	Boucher Road Playing Fields	Jun 12
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 16
Coventry	Ricoh Arena	Jun 19

READING/LEEDS FESTIVAL QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE, LIAM GALLAGHER, MORE		
Reading	Richfield Avenue	Aug 27-29
Leeds	Braham Park	Aug 27-29

REDD KROSS		
Brighton	The Albert	May 3
Bristol	The Exchange	May 4
Manchester	Deaf Institute	May 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 6
Glasgow	Broadcast	May 7
London	Islington The Lexington	May 9, 10

ROCK AND BLUES CUSTOM SHOW MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS, MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, MORE		
Pentrich	Coney Grey Showground	Jul 29-31

ROCK AT THE BAY SON OF MAN, BUCK & EVANS, BUFFALO SUMMER, MORE		
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Jun 5

ROCKIN' THE BOWL DORO, MASSIVE WAGONS, CATS IN SPACE, MORE		
Sheffield	Don Valley Bowl	Sep 10-12

ROSE TATTOO		
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Jul 19
Birmingham	Institute 2	Jul 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Jul 21

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP, DORO		
Leeds	Academy	Oct 28
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 29
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 31

JOHN SCHOFIELD TRIO		
London	Cadogan Hall	May 29
Sepultura, Sacred Reich, Crowbar		
Dublin	Academy	Nov 24

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD		
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 15
Salisbury	City Hall	Oct 17
Gateshead	Tyne Theatre	Oct 19
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 20
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 21

SISTERS OF MERCY		
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Sep 10, 11, 12

SKINDRED, ROYAL REPUBLIC		
Cambridge	Junction	Sep 23
Oxford	Academy	Sep 24
Northampton	Roadmender	Sep 25
Leeds	Academy	Sep 30
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 1
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 2
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 7
Bristol	Academy	Oct 8
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 9
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 10

Southampton	Guildhall	Oct 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 22
Newcastle	University	Oct 23
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 29
Manchester	Academy	Oct 30
Norwich	UEA	Oct 31

SLAM DUNK FESTIVAL SUM 41, NOFX, PENNYWISE, MORE		
Leeds	Temple Newsam Park	Sep 4
Hatfield	Hatfield Park	Sep 5

SOS FESTIVAL MYKE GRAY FEAT KIM JENNETT, PISTON, HANDS OFF GRETTEL, MORE		
Prestwich	Longfield Suite	Jul 2-4

SOUTHPORT BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL THE ANIMALS, HENRIK FREISCHLADER, KYLA BROX, MORE		
Southport	The Atkinson	Oct 10

SPIKE		
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	May 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 27
Chesterfield	Real Time	May 28
Cannock	The Station	May 29
London	Raynes Park The Cavern	May 30
Bedford	Esquires	Jun 5
Leicester	The Musician	Jun 6
Norwich	Brickmakers	Jun 18

STEELHOUSE FESTIVAL EUROPE, ANTHRAX, THERAPY?, H.E.A.T, MORE		
Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 23-25

STONEDEAD FESTIVAL BLACK STAR RIDERS, H.E.A.T, GUN, TERRORVISION, MORE		
Newark	Showground	Aug 28

GEOFF TATE		
Bilston	Robin 2	Aug 12
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 13
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Aug 14
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Aug 15
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Aug 16
London	Camden Underworld	Aug 17
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Aug 18
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 19
Glasgow	Cathouse	Aug 21
Inverness	Mad Hatters	Aug 23
Edinburgh	Bannermans Bar	Aug 28
Newcastle	Trillians	Aug 29

THERAPY?		
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 19
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 20
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 22
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 23
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Oct 24
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 26
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 27
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 29
Bristol	SWX	Oct 30
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 31
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 2
Leeds	Warehouse	Nov 3
Newcastle	Riverside	Nov 4
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 5
Dublin	Olympia	Feb 4
Belfast	Limelight	Feb 5

RICHARD THOMPSON		
York	Barbican	Oct 25
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 26
Perth	Concert Hall	Oct 27
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 28
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 30
Manchester	Opera House	Oct 31
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 1
London	Palladium	Nov 2
Dublin	Vicar Street	Nov 3

GEORGE THOROGOOD & THE DESTROYERS		
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jul 23
London	Shepherds Bush Empire	Jul 25
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Jul 26
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jul 28
York	Barbican	Jul 30
Glasgow	SEC Armadillo	Jul 31
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Aug 1

THUNDERMOTHER, BETH BLADE & THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTERS		
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 22
Carlisle	Brickyard	Sep 23
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 24
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 25
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 27
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 30

LARKIN POE



Grab yourself a plateful of sisters Rebecca and Megan Lovell's southern-spiced, sweetly harmonised roots rock.

See previous page for dates. Currently November 19-30.

Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 1
Newport	Patriot	Oct 2
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 3

Recommended

ROBIN TROWER		
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 3
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 5

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH		
Twickenham	Eel Pie Club	Sep 2
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Sep 5
Havant	Spring Arts & Heritage	Oct 2
Hull	Hessle Town Hall	Oct 9
Chiselhurst	Beaverwood Club	Nov 4
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Nov 5
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 11

URIAH HEEP		
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 29
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 30
London	Palladium	Oct 3
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 4
Gateshead	The Sage	Oct 5
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6

WAYWARD SONS		
Dublin	Opium	Nov 6
Belfast	Limelight 2	Nov 7
Manchester	Academy 3	Nov 9
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 10
Newcastle	Riverside	Nov 11
Leeds	Wardrobe	Nov 13
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 14
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 15
London	Islington Academy	Nov 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 18

WHITBY BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL DANA GILLESPIE, KAYLA BROX, CINELLI BROTHERS, MORE		
Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 9

WHITBY ROCKS MARTIN TURNER, PISTON, JOANOVARC, MORE		
Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 8

THE WILDHEARTS		
Cardiff	Tramshed	Sep 3
Bristol	SWX	Sep 4
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Sep 5
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Sep 6
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 8
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Sep 9
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 10
Brighton	Chalk	Sep 11
Bournemouth	Madding Crowd	Sep 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 15
Gloucester	Guildhall	Sep 16
Newcastle	Boiler House	Sep 17
Leeds	Stylus	Sep 18

Galashiels	Mac Arts	Sep 20
Stirling	Tolbooth	Sep 21
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Sep 22
Sheffield	Foundry	Sep 24
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 25

STEVEN WILSON		
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Sep 8
Sheffield	City Hall	Sep 9
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 11
Glasgow	Concert Hall	Sep 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Sep 13
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Sep 15
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 17

WINTERSTORM FESTIVAL HARDLINE, VANDENBERG, GLASS TIGER, MORE		
Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 26, 27

WISHBONE ASH		
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 17
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 22
Bury	The Met	Oct 29
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 30
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Nov 3
Newbury	Arlington Arts	Nov 6
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 11
Honiton	The Beehive	Nov 13
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 14
London	Islington Academy	Nov 18

Y&T		
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 26
Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 27
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 29
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 30
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 31
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 4
Newcastle	Academy	Nov 5
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 7

YES		
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 16
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	May 17
York	Barbican	May 19
Gateshead	The Sage	May 20
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 22
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	May 23
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 24
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 28

THE ZOMBIES		
Exmouth	Pavilion	Feb 10
Wimborne	Minster Tivoli Theatre	Feb 11
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 12, 13
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Feb 17
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Feb 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Feb 19
Bristol	The Fleece	Feb 24
Taunton	Brewhouse Theatre	Feb 25
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Feb 26
Bury	The Met	Feb 27
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Mar 3
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Mar 4
Harpenden	Public Halls	Mar 5
Wavendon	The Stables	Mar 6



LIVE!

Todd Rundgren

Clearly Human virtual tour,
Nashville, USA

If it's Saturday it must be Chicago. Again.

★ 'My world is something you can't see, but it's still very real to me,' Todd Rundgren sings on the classic *Real Man*, which opens his show in 'Nashville'. He's in the middle of the 25-city Clearly Human virtual tour, for which he and his band remain in residence in a Chicago theatre, and pepper each concert with localised banter and video of the city they're 'playing' in.

It does somehow feel very real. And much more engaging than the usual guy-in-front-of-a-bookcase pandemic gig. An ace nine-piece band decked out in matching outfits, with colourful lighting, choreography and multi-camera shots keep the show moving. And in a decade-spanning set that included faves such as *Love Of The Common Man*, *Compassion*, *Rock Love* and eight songs from his 1989 album *Nearly Human*, Rundgren dances, paces and lets his still-supple voice soar up into the falsetto stratosphere before stair-stepping down with Philly soul grace. Seventy-two looks and sounds good on him.

Towards the end of the two-hour set, during a singalong of *Hello It's Me*, he gently scolds one of the 25 or so actual live attendees who wasn't wearing a face covering: "It's not your fault, we are conveying a false sense of normalcy." The show makes normalcy feel true. And a bit closer.

Bill DeMain

Crowbar

OCD Recording And
Production, Metairie, USA

Relentless claustrophobic brutality.

★ No frills. No respite. New Orleans sludge pioneers Crowbar deliver what fans expect and want. Heavy riffs pound as frontman Kirk Windstein wails and growls with venomous enthusiasm. The only visual elements of what might be loosely called a production is a red 'Crowbar' sign above Tommy Buckley's drum kit. In these cramped conditions – none of the band move, except to make occasional amp setting adjustments – that never matters. The band – also featuring lead guitarist Matt Brunson and touring bassist Shane Wesley – are fearless exponents of an extreme metal approach of which they've long been masters.

Crowbar could easily have just knocked out an hour of obvious favourites. But while much of the set fits into that category, there are some surprises. *Waiting In Silence* (introduced by Windstein as "The first song we ever wrote"), *I Feel The Burning Sun* and *New Man Born* have rarely been performed live; all are welcome additions, alongside the inevitable, glorious grind of *Self Inflicted*, *Planets Collide* and *All I Had (I Gave)*. Maybe the absence of an audience emboldened the band to be more adventurous than could otherwise have been the case?

Songs are preceded by the titles flashing up on screen, thereby cutting the need for much talking, which enables the menacing music to flow viciously. As it should.

Malcolm Dome



Todd Rundgren: staying in the same place while playing a different city each night.

528
B
"The show makes
normalcy feel true.
And a little bit closer."



JIM SNYDER/PRESS

Jimmy Eat World

Phoenix Sessions

Final instalment of livestream trilogy.

★ Facing each other across neon-lit warehouse spaces drenched in visuals, Jimmy Eat World have spent 2021 so far deconstructing their career in reverse. In January, with the Phoenix Sessions they revisited 2019's slick, refined (and occasionally electro-pop) *Surviving* and the haunted mix of muscle and mist that was 2004's *Futures*. Now the series ends with a full run through 1999's masterpiece *Clarity*, considered to be the foundation stone of emo's third wave, thanks to its dabblings in corroded electronics, post-grunge moodscapes and unvarnished emotional truths.

Two decades of pop-rock polishing later, the band give the record a sophisticated upgrade and more clarity. *Table For Glasses* sounds more oceanic than somnolent, *Lucky Denver Mint* more compulsive than clattered, *A Sunday* even more like the sweetest comedown song ever sung. They clearly revel in the raw power-grunge angst of *Crush* and the title track. The added glower and harmonic wash that the more mature Jimmy Eat World bring to *For Me This Is Heaven*, alcoholic's romance *Ten* and a truncated eight-minute-odd *Goodbye Sky Harbor* enhances the album even as it erases some of its grimy charm.

"I'm gonna go ahead and assume you think this is amazing," Jim Adkins tells the internet. Feel free.

Mark Beaumont

The Hold Steady

NYC Brooklyn Bowl

Annual four-day Weekender, condensed to two nights.

★ Perhaps the strangest eventuality of the pandemic is watching hundreds of Americana bar-rock fans from exotic locales around the globe gathering virtually in a Brooklyn bowling alley to dream of being at London's Electric Ballroom. In a normal year The Hold Steady would be holding their annual four-day Weekender there. This virtual replacement – performed over two days to a bank of screens showing kids, grandparents, drunks and scary clowns dancing along at home – is as misty-eyed and celebratory as Craig Finn's mile-a-minute beer gossip lyricism.

Opening on the Floyd-like atmospherics of *The Feelers* from their brilliant album *Open Door Policy*, they construct a set showcasing the moves they've made far beyond the charging blue-collar rock of their 00s breakthrough records. *Magazines* is pure drama rock, *Blackout* Sam urbane country, *T-Shirt Tux* a drug-dirty swing, and in *Stevie Nix* street poetry is drenched in Zep riffage and downbeat jazz segments. They really fly, though, when finding majesty in sawdust; when a brass section joins them for canyon roof choruses on *Spices*, *Sequestered In Memphis* or *Your Little Hoodrat Friend*. In this vein they have showstoppers aplenty. *Stuck Between Stations* and glorious gambling anthem *Chips Ahoy!* are so transportive that we could be standing on Camden's stickiest floor once more.

Mark Beaumont



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Glam-rock icon **Suzi Quatro** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to her.

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**



“My guitar hero is my bass hero, which is James Jamerson from Tamla Motown.”

Since first exploding into all our lives in 1973 with the now evergreen *Can The Can*, Suzi Quatro has exemplified the ultimate rock’n’roll frontwoman. From the pioneering Chinnichap hellcat in skin-tight black leather to the time-honoured living legend of today, Suzi Q has retained an attitude and swagger that’s as quintessentially Detroit as it is Motown.

Currently enjoying something of a career renaissance, Quatro has used enforced lockdown downtime well, producing *The Devil In Me* (in collaboration with her son Richard Tuckey), an album that some, including Suzi herself, are already calling a career highlight.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

That would very probably have been my mother singing to me. I always remember that she used to sing [Doris Day’s] *Que Sera Sera* all the time. It’s still one of my favourites, with great lyrics that I still believe: ‘*what will be, will be*’.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

That would have been when I was seven and playing bongos in front of my father’s band the Art Quatro Trio. He took me to his gig and I played *Mack The Knife* on the bongo drums.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

It’s Bob Dylan’s *Blonde On Blonde* for me. I first heard it when I was about fourteen or fifteen when it first came out. I totally and utterly fell in love with it and I’ve been a lifelong Bob Dylan fanatic from that moment on. Bob Dylan clarified my love of writing lyrics.

THE SINGER

Nat King Cole. I like the tone of his voice, the smokiness of it and that it goes straight to the heart. What he sings, you believe.

THE SONGWRITER

Well, the first person that springs to mind is Carole King, so I’d have to say her.

THE GUITAR HERO

It would have to be my bass hero, which is James Jamerson from Tamla Motown [Jamerson appeared on literally hundreds of 60s and early-70s hits by The Supremes, Steve Wonder, The Temptations, Marvin Gaye, the Four Tops et al]. I’m from Detroit, so how could Motown not be a part of my life? I was weaned on it. It’s huge and in my DNA forever.

THE BEST LIVE BAND I’VE SEEN

I would have to say that the first live band that I really loved were the Blues Magoos. I went to a downtown club in Detroit called the Chess Mate Club and they were the first psychedelic rock’n’roll band from New

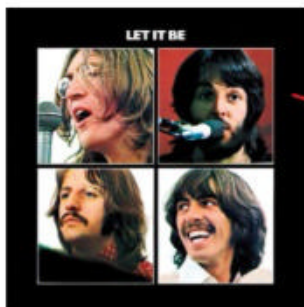
York that I had ever seen, and the noise and the craziness of it just blew me away.

MY BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT

The one that came to mind was when we were snowed in here [Essex] and we had a gig up in Scotland. So we took the Range Rover, got all the way up to Scotland and the gig had been cancelled. As biggest disappointments go, that was pretty shitty.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

I don’t know who that would be. Not even one comes to mind, probably because if they were that underrated I wouldn’t have been interested or have even heard of them.



THE ANTHEM

I really like *Let It Be* by The Beatles. A great anthem to close the sixties. It’s just a great, great number.



MY SATURDAY NIGHT/PARTY SONG

Runaround Sue by Dion And The Belmonts. Such a great vocal.



THE BEST RECORD I’VE MADE

My new album, *The Devil In Me*, is my best work. And I’m not the only one saying it, it’s coming from every single reviewer. Since *No Control* [2019] I’ve been on a songwriting surge, just non-stop. My fire is lit. My son Richard has really made every song on the album count. *My Heart And Soul*, a Christmas song, is just one of the best, most beautiful things we’ve ever written. It was from missing my husband. I was two and a half months without him when that one came out.



THE WORST RECORD I’VE MADE

I really try not to be involved in anything bad. If it’s bad I’m not doing it. Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman wrote songs specifically for me, but there was one song called *Some Girls* that Mike had written for Debbie Harry. She didn’t want it, and he played it for me. I said: “No, this is pop. I’m not pop.” It ended up with Racey [who had a UK No.2 hit with it in 1979].

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

My most guilty pleasure is watching *Coronation Street*. Not any more, but I used to love to watch the original *Coronation Street*. I thought it was really indicative of British life.

MY ‘IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE’ SONG

When I Fall In Love by Nat King Cole. My favourite song of all time. It had a huge emotional impact on me.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

That same song, Nat King Cole’s *When I Fall In Love*. I first heard it back in the fifties when it first came out. My dad used to play it a lot.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Same song again. I’ve actually already had it written into my will that it’ll be played at my funeral. 🕯

Suzi Quatro’s The Devil In Me is available now via Steamhammer/SPV.



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