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IRON MAIDEN

POWERSLAVE AT 40

AND THE GREATEST ALBUMS OF 1984

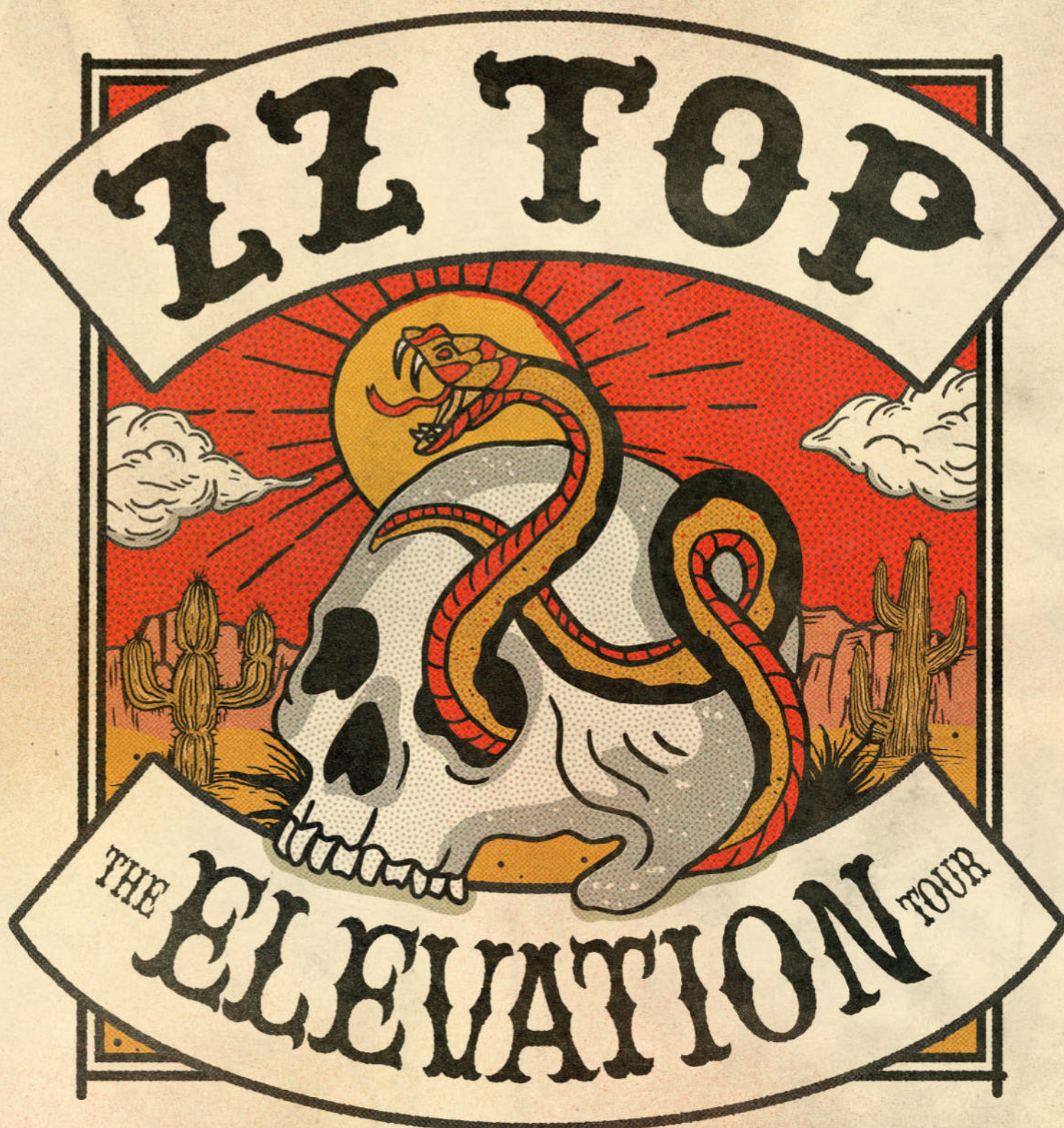
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ISSUE 324



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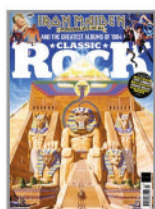
A

h, 1984. How can it possibly be 40 years ago? Frankly, I refuse to believe it. But the calendar tells us otherwise, so we've decided to begin 2024 by cranking up the time machine Doc Brown-style and revisiting a year that saw its fair share of

change in the world of music, technology and the planet at large. Iron Maiden's *Powerslave* (and attendant tour) was one of the biggest of that year; Van Halen released *1984* (well, duh!) and played their last ever show in the UK with Diamond Dave Lee Roth at the controls; the film *This Is Spinal Tap* was released and changed the rock world for ever; Black Sabbath had a year that nearly broke them... Not to mention all the amazing albums that were released from all of rock's different faces – from a reunited Deep Purple to the jangle-pop-rock of The Bangles, from R.E.M. to Dio and Metallica, and *so many more*.

In very sad news, shortly before we went to press the news broke about the passing of Magnum's Tony Clarkin. We remember him and pay tribute from page 8.

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors



JO KENDALL

This issue, much like everyone else involved in the mag, *Prog* magazine's Associate Editor (and longtime *Classic Rock* contributor) Jo Kendall got sent back to 1984. She revisited *This Is Spinal Tap*, the classic documentary – rockumentary, if you will – and explored just what an impact it's had on the way we talk about music, and rock in particular. I mean, it's one louder, innit? (p56).



MICK WALL

Mick is a former ed-in-chief of *CR*, and the author of the recent LA noir Eagles biography, *Dark Desert Highway*. This issue we sent him back to 1984 to uncover the making of Iron Maiden's *Powerslave* (p32). He writes for the *Sunday Express*, and hosts the *Mick Wall Podcast* with Jonnie James' Hotten. He'll be live at West Hampstead Arts Club in London on Feb 21, with special guest Steven Wilson.



BILL DeMAIN

This month Nashville-based writer Bill caught up with Bangle Vicki Peterson to discuss their powerful 1984 pop-rock debut album *All Over The Place* (p50), and also interviewed Don Henley to get the story behind his '84 classic *Boys Of Summer* (p22). When not writing about music, or leading his award-winning music history tour Walkin' Nashville, Bill can be found illustrating cartoons. Check 'em out at Instagram/bdmcartoons



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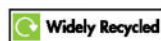
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TONY CLARKIN

November 24, 1946 – January 7, 2024

Dave Ling looks back at the life and music of the Magnum guitarist, songwriter and mainstay of the band across five decades.

Tony Clarkin, the guitarist, songwriter and producer of Birmingham band Magnum for more than 50 years, has died at the age of 77. At press time no cause had been announced.

In December 2023 Magnum cancelled all immediate touring plans, scheduled to have kicked off in Germany on April 4 and with UK dates to follow. After suffering pains in his neck and head for the past year, Clarkin had paid a visit to his doctor. The news wasn't good.

"I've developed a rare spinal condition," he revealed in a statement. "It's not life-limiting, but it can be degenerative, and sadly it's not curable. Treatments may help, but we don't know how good they'll be. It's gonna mean some changes."

Clarkin could no longer support the weight of an electric guitar on his shoulders.

"This isn't the end of Magnum, but the future might have to be a bit different, so please bear with

us while we try and figure out what I can and can't do moving forward," the statement continued, adding that the band had ruled out using a stand-in for the tour.

"I'm really sorry for those that bought tickets, it goes without saying that I'm gutted that I can't play for you," it concluded. "Cheers and I hope I'll be able to see you all again soon."

Although the mood of the statement was bleak, it at least provided cause for hope. Such optimism ended abruptly 22 days later when, on January 9, Clarkin's daughter Dionne broke the terrible news that her father had passed away "peacefully surrounded by his girls" some 48 hours earlier. Dionne revealed the family's intention to set up a charitable foundation for animals in her father's name. Three days later, Magnum's twenty-third, and now seemingly final, studio album, *Here Comes The Rain*, was released.

It's difficult to imagine how Magnum could ➤





Magnum in the early 80s: (l-r) Colin Lowe, Kex Gorin, Bob Catley, Mark Stanway, Tony Clarkin.

“Quite often I sit down [to write for an album], listen to the last one and think: ‘My god, how the bloody hell did I write that?’” Tony Clarkin

continue without Clarkin, who wrote every note and lyric of the band’s sizeable catalogue except for 1975’s debut single *Sweets For My Sweet*, a cover of the Searchers hit, and at the turn of the 1990s five tracks from their controversial album *Goodnight LA* (more of which later).

Tony Clarkin lived to write songs. “It’s an obsession with me,” he once told *Classic Rock*. “I’m always looking to improve.”

Deeply melodious and rich in depth and colour, a Clarkin composition was almost always instantly recognisable. Though he cloaked them in riddles and literary affectations, they could be inspired by real-life subjects that had made him stop to think, and that he believed might have the same impact on the band’s fans. Politics, the stupidity of war, the tenacity of the human spirit, the plight of Native Americans – all of these were

considered as subjects for a song. He was just as likely to take the piss out of himself with a song like *Rockin’ Chair*.

Maybe Magnum’s music stood out because Clarkin’s writing technique was not the same as other songwriters.

“When I write, I’m really lazy,” he told me in 2005. “I don’t write all the time, only when I’m putting an album together. Quite often I sit down, listen to the last one and think: ‘My god, how the bloody hell did I write that?’”

By his own admission, he found the process daunting. “Every time I begin on an album, I start off by thinking that I’ll never be able to do it again,” he admitted.

But he could, and he did. And from Magnum’s 1978 album *Kingdom Of Madness* onwards, Clarkin built up a body of work that is comparable to the best of the best.



Anthony Michael Clarkin was born in Shard End, a suburb of Birmingham, on November 24, 1946. His childhood was working class but happy, and his parents were supportive of his musical ambitions. After leaving school he trained to be a ladies’ hairdresser (“I thought it was a sure-fire way to meet girls”), but quit to join his first band, The Boulevards.

In 1972, having gigged around the Black Country, Clarkin’s life was changed by a knock at his front door. At the door was the man he would work with for the next 52 years, vocalist Bob Catley, along with a drummer named Kex Gorin. The pair were in a band called Magnum, and they were looking for a guitarist.

“This was so long ago, I didn’t even know that Tony wrote songs,” Catley told me in 2022. “All we wanted at the time was a guitar player.”

Magnum had a regular gig at The Rum Runner, the legendary night club on Birmingham’s Broad Street, and the gig brought them a wage of 30 pounds per week.

“It was the first money I’d earned as a musician,”



Read all about it: Tony Clarkin and Bob Catley in Los Angeles, April 1990.



Wally Lowe, Bob Catley and Tony Clarkin with Magnum at London's Hammersmith Odeon on the Vigilante tour, March 1987.



One guitar is never enough: Tony Clarkin in 1982.

Clarkin recalled in the same interview. "I went out and bought some purple trousers to join the band."

His first impressions of Magnum weren't great: "It was like being in a dance band. I thought: 'Oh my god, what have I got myself into?'"

A random slice of good fortune set Magnum on their way when Clarkin was invited to help with the building of the studio, at which the band would record their first demos.

Those were the songs that began an exhausting relationship with Jet Records. To give an indication of the problems that followed, when Magnum arrived at De Lane Lea studios in London to commence work on their debut album, Jet had neglected to book hotel rooms, so the group had to bed down in the studio's foyer. Having kept Magnum waiting almost two years to release it, assisted by tours with Judas Priest and Whitesnake, that debut, *Kingdom Of Madness*, took Magnum to No.58 in the UK chart in 1978.

Jet hired Ten Years After bassist Leo Lyons to produce *Magnum II*, and all were flummoxed when it flopped completely. Magnum's career was saved only by the live album *Marauder*.

As a huge fan of Kansas, Clarkin was thrilled when Jeff Glixman was brought in to produce their next record, *Chase The Dragon*. But what Jet gave with one hand, they took back with the other, and left the results on the shelf for two years.

Buoyed by its eventual Top 20 success in 1983, Magnum played in America for the first and only time, as support to label-mate Ozzy Osbourne.

After Jet strong-armed Clarkin into writing, engineering, playing the guitar and producing their fourth album, *The Eleventh Hour*, Magnum announced that their spot at 1983's Reading Festival would be a farewell.

"We were trying to pull a fast one," Clarkin admitted. It was a ruse for the benefit of Jet.

Free from the label, the engagement of a new, forward-thinking manager, Keith Baker, signalled a new start. Having financed the album themselves, 1985's independently released *On A Storyteller's Night* crashed into the chart at No.24, and Magnum appeared at the UK's Monsters Of Rock Festival.

Now signed to Polydor, for the following year's *Vigilante* the band had a superstar co-producer in Queen's Roger Taylor, plus a supporting cast that finally included stylists. (Early on in the band's career, *Sounds* magazine wrote that Magnum

looked "like a bunch of roadies at a fancy dress party", to which a grinning Clarkin replied: "That would be an insult to the road crew, really.")

Before too long Clarkin would shave his hair and dispense with the headwear that had earned him the nickname of 'The Hat', altering his

appearance so drastically that nobody recognised him when he entered the studio.

It's not generally known that Magnum have a controversial view of the album that provided their big breakthrough: *Wings Of Heaven*. Although it was fixed down the line, Clarkin initially "hated" the sound of it so much that when we discussed it recently he refused to mention its producer by name. That didn't prevent *Days Of No Trust*, *Start Talking Love* and *It Must Have Been Love*

becoming Top 40 hits, or the band from stepping up to headline the NEC in their home town and London's Wembley Arena.

Bob Catley, for one, loved the adulation. On one memorable occasion when we walked into a Carnaby Street pub, the ➤





Still bandmates after all these years: Tony Clarkin and Bob Catley in 2014.



Clarkin with Magnum in 2010.

“Even if we reached the point where everyone had wooden legs and stopped playing live, I’d still want to make records.” Tony Clarkin

singer chirruped to the bar staff: “We’re stars, we are. We’ve been on *Top Of The Pops*.”

Those were the days when record labels had budgets for the entertainment of journalists, and whenever the band had a flagship show in Birmingham, Keith Baker would pay for certain supportive writers to be a part of the experience, something we nicknamed ‘The Lost Weekend’.

In the early hours of the morning following a date at the NEC, yours truly found himself with Clarkin and a gang of well-wishers in the bar of a Holiday Inn. A very young rapper joined us, revealing that was in town for a spot on the lunchtime TV show *Pebble Mill At One*. These were the early days of sampling, and when the lad’s relaxed attitude to copyright – “If you like something, just steal it” – became evident, Clarkin fixed him with a steely glare: “No, man. You do not fucking steal music – ever. Learn to play an instrument.” The debate raged on into the night, and it’s fair to say that both sides of the generation gap probably learned a little.

While Catley revelled in his newfound status, years later Clarkin told *Classic Rock*: “I enjoyed that level of fame to some extent, but we didn’t start this band to do *Top Of The Pops* or whatever. The success was more important to the record company than it was to us. After *Wings Of Heaven* they said: ‘You will sell two million

records next time.’ And I’m thinking: ‘Who do you think we are?’

“It was crazy to me. Def Leppard, Whitesnake and Guns N’ Roses were selling tons of records, but we were nothing like those bands. Maybe I was stupid, but I always wanted Magnum to be an underground band, not a pop band. But we got pushed further and further into those slots, which I didn’t like at all.”

Sure enough, Polydor ramped up the machine with the next album, *Goodnight LA*, shelling out for the producer of the moment, Keith Olsen, and demanding that, for the first time, Clarkin should work with outside writers Russ Ballard, Jim Vallance and Sue Shifrin. It was reported that upwards of £350,000 was splashed out on *Goodnight LA*, only for the US bosses to veto its release. Clarkin’s only validation of the experience was the lessons he learned from his co-writers, Ballard in particular.



relieved Magnum left the world of corporate rock behind, and signed to the independent label Music For Nations for 1992’s *Sleepwalking*. Two years later they released *RockArt* via EMI Germany, but it was getting harder to keep things going, and arguments were more and more frequent. Clarkin broke the hearts of Magnum fans when he folded the band in 1995. “Magnum

takes up twenty-four hours of my life every day,” he told me at the time. “Now I just want to do other things. I’m going to write some songs that are a little different.”

With the faithful Catley at his side, the pair’s next project was *Hard Rain*, a band with a poppier approach that also included a female vocalist, Sue McCloskey. But after two albums progress remained slow, and, seeking a more familiar head-space Catley began performing as a solo artist.

The idea of rebooting Magnum came from the band’s long-time booking agent, Derek Kemp. “When Derek called me, my initial response was: ‘Are you mad?’ But I chewed it over, and eventually I rang Bob,” Clarkin told me when I attended a rehearsal session of the new line-up, which included Thunder’s Harry James on drums.

Catley was beside himself with glee, admitting: “I missed Magnum terribly. I never thought I’d have Magnum again, ever.”

Although line-ups changed along the way, Clarkin seemed more contented and relaxed during the second half of Magnum’s career. The reunited band were signed to the German label SPV, who allowed complete artistic freedom. This arrangement lasted for more than 20 years and a dozen studio records. No sooner had Clarkin unveiled one set of tunes and completed a tour, than the process of stockpiling material for the next began. It was a routine he genuinely loved. In 2014, when asked by *Classic Rock* what for him was the best feeling in the world, he responded: “It’s putting the last full stop after the last word in the last song of an album.”

At the Sweden Rock Festival in 2016, Clarkin had a heart attack and was airlifted to hospital, almost suffering another as medics moved him into the helicopter. “It was the day I discovered that I wasn’t invincible,” he told me.

“I’ve really no idea how much longer Magnum can continue,” he stated in another latter-day *Classic Rock* interview. “Until the Zimmer frames go rusty, maybe? Even if we reached the point where everyone had wooden legs and stopped playing live, I’d still want to make records.”

Tony Clarkin got to live his dream, and Magnum’s songs are destined to remain important to an army of fans. He will be missed very much. ●

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Jeffrey Foscett

February 17, 1956 – December 11, 2023

Singer and guitarist Foscett, who joined the Beach Boys' touring band in 1981 and also played a huge role in the development of Brian Wilson's solo career, has died of cancer. He was 67. "Jeff was one of the most talented guys I ever knew," Wilson said in a statement. "He was a great musical leader and guitarist and he could sing like an angel. We couldn't have done it without him."

Jim Ladd

January 17, 1948 – December 17, 2023

Influential US DJ, radio producer and writer Jim Ladd has died of a heart attack. The Californian is best known for the weekly syndicated programme, *Innerview*, which had guests such as Led Zeppelin, John Lennon and the Eagles, airing on more than 160 US stations for 12 years. He appeared on Roger Waters's '87 solo album *Radio KAOS* as a DJ, and played a similar role in Cameron Crowe's 1989 film *Say Anything*. Ladd was 75.

Russell Hunter

April 26, 1946 – December 19, 2023

Woking-born Russell Hunter was the drummer with The Pink Fairies, having played with most of the their numerous incarnations, and also played with The Deviants. He died in Eastbourne Hospital, having been admitted the day before with breathing difficulties. He was 77.

'Mad' Max Maxwell

April 29, 1958 – December 17, 2023

Raised in Coatbridge, Max Maxwell was the singer 'mad' and brave enough to take over from Alex Harvey in the Sensational Alex Harvey Band, decades after the latter's death in 1982. To his eternal credit, Maxwell didn't resort to copying his predecessor – who could? – during the five years he fronted the reunited band and appeared on their 2006 live album *Salvation*. He was 65 and had been suffering from cancer.

Bob Johnson

March 18, 1944 – December 16, 2023

London-born Bob Johnson was a guitarist, singer and songwriter with folk-rock group Steeleye Span from 1972 to 1977 and again from 1980 to 2001. He quit the group to work on a concept album titled *The King Of Elfland's Daughter* with bandmate Peter Knight. Despite leaving a second time, he retained an involvement. The 79-year-old had been in poor health for a while.



Les Maguire

December 27, 1941 –

November 25, 2023

Wallasey-born Les Maguire was a principal member of the Merseybeat band Jerry & The Pacemakers from 1961 to 1966, and played piano on their evergreen *You'll Never Walk Alone*. McGuire was 81 years old when he died following a short illness.

Jim Ayoub

Died December 10, 2023

Jimmy Ayoub was the drummer with Canadian hard rockers Frank Marino & Mahogany Rush from 1970 to 1982 and played on their best-known recordings, including 1978's *Live*. He was 70 years old.



David Soul

August 28, 1943 –

January 4, 2024

Besides playing detective 'Hutch' Hutchinson in the iconic 1970s TV series *Starsky & Hutch*, David Soul (pictured) also carved out a popular career in soft rock, and in the 70s had UK Top 10 hits including *Don't Give Up On Us* and *Silver Lady*. Soul was 80 years old.

Pete Lucas

December 16, 1950 –

December 16, 2023

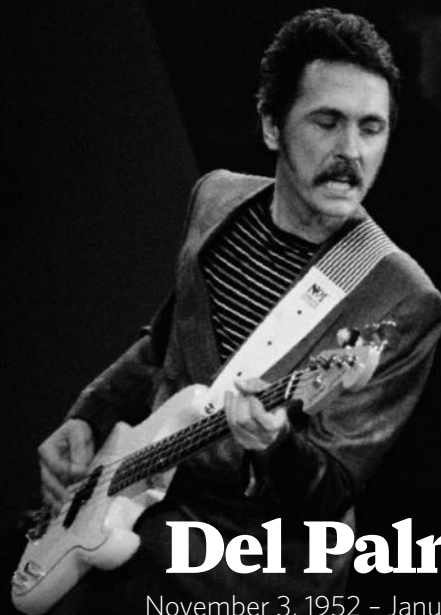
Salisbury native Pete Lucas played guitar for The Troggs as well as Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich. Having been diagnosed with cancer, he died on his 73rd birthday.

Chris Karrer

January 20, 1947 –

January 2, 2024

Bavarian-born Karrer was the violinist, guitarist, saxophonist and singer for the Krautrock band Amon Düül 2 between 1969 and 1981. He was 76 when he died of a covid infection.



Del Palmer

November 3, 1952 – January 5, 2024

TRIBUTES HAVE BEEN paid to the bassist and engineer who played an important role in the career of Kate Bush, as well as being the singer's partner for a number of years, after he passed at the age of 71. Del Palmer had battled several health issues over the past few years, and passed away at home surrounded by friends a family.

"We don't need to tell anyone out there the monumental role Del has always played in Kate's work and music – it's impossible to quantify," said the Kate Bush News website.

Greenwich-born Palmer joined the KT Bush Band, a group put together for

Bush by her brother Paddy, and became a vital part of her backroom team. After Bush and Palmer separated on amicable terms as a couple they continued to work together. He also released three solo albums between 2007 and 2015.

"I knew Kate was going to be huge, that was obvious to me when she was seventeen and still a very raw artist," Palmer told the *Irish Examiner* in 2018. "We had a residency at the Rose Of Lee, a pub in Lewisham, South-East London. On the first night there were about ten people. By the time the residency finished, people were out on the street [because] it was so jammed." **FL**

Colin Burgess

November 16, 1946 – December 16, 2023

AC/DC HAVE CONFIRMED the passing of their first ever drummer, at the age of 77. Colin Burgess joined the band in November 1973 and was fired in February of the following year.

AC/DC's statement said: "[We are] very sad to hear of the passing of Colin Burgess. He was our first drummer and a very respected musician. Happy memories, rock in peace Colin."

Born in Sydney, Burgess was axed from AC/DC after his bandmates accused him of being drunk on stage. He claimed that his drink had been spiked. A number of

percussionists filled the drum stool until the arrival of Phil Rudd in 1975. When Rudd injured his hand in a fight later that same year, Burgess was recalled as a temporary replacement. Burgess played on the original version of *Can I Sit Next To You Girl*, later re-recorded with Bon Scott on vocals for AC/DC's second album *TNT*.

Before his stint with AC/DC Burgess drummed with popular Australian band The Masters Apprentices, and returned to them in later years. They were inducted into the Australian Recording Industry Association Hall Of Fame in 1998. **SL**

Chad Allan

March 29, 1943 – November 21, 2023

CHAD ALLAN HAD a big role in the formation of not just one iconic band from Canada, but two. The multi-instrumentalist was an original lead singer with The Guess Who before teaming up with Randy Bachman in Brave Belt, the group that after two albums would morph into Bachman-Turner Overdrive. He was also the host of popular weekly TV music programme *Let's Go*. Allan was 80 years old at the time of his passing.

Born Allan Peter Stanley Kowbel, he adopted his stage name in honour of a singer he admired, Chad Mitchell.

His early band Allan And The Silvertones eventually became The Guess Who.

Problems with Allan's voice caused him to leave after their third album, 1966's *It's Time*.

Bachman and Allan formed Brave Belt five years later, and Allan sang many of their songs, but the arrival of singer/bassist Fred Turner upset the balance and he left and became a solo artist.

Allan was "a quiet, gentle soul with a peaceful voice," says Bachman. The Guess Who's leader Burton Cummings described him as "an inspiration to all of us in bands in Winnipeg".

Allan had suffered a serious stroke in 2017, but at press time the cause of death was yet to be announced. **DL**

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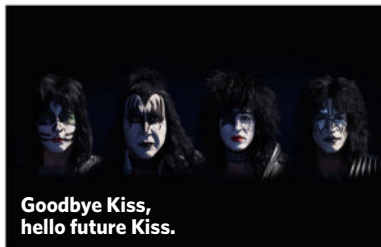
'Kiss For Ever' Plans Starting To Take Shape

ABBA Voyage team spend \$200m to begin a 3D rebirth

KISS HAVE REVEALED some detail on plans to continue their career in avatar form. Immediately after the group's final live show (see last issue's cover story), a message from the quartet, portrayed as digital images, appeared on the stage's video screens, proclaiming: "The end of this road is the beginning of another road. We're not going anywhere. A new Kiss era starts now!" However, fans may have to wait four years for the avatar Kiss to play their first concerts, with a new video teasing: "2027 – a show is coming."

Bassist Gene Simmons now says that "about two hundred million" dollars have been invested to bring the next stage of the group's existence to life. Kiss's virtual characters were financed and produced by Pophouse Entertainment, the Swedish company behind ABBA Voyage, the immensely popular show that has been running in a custom-built London venue for almost two years, depicting the Swedes in 3D as they appeared in 1979.

"There's so much being planned, Simmons adds. "It's even beyond my comprehension." **DL**



Goodbye Kiss, hello future Kiss.

Martin-Era Sabbath Box Due

Iommi also says he's writing new material.

TONY IOMMI HAS revealed that not only is he writing new music, but also that the long-awaited boxed set of Black Sabbath's Tony Martin-fronted is set to be unveiled in May.

Sabbath with Martin released three albums between 1987 and 1990 – *The Eternal Idol*, *Headless Cross* and *Tyr* – which at the time were under-appreciated. Iommi has long talked about packaging them all together, but said: "That was held up with paperwork and legal stuff, but it's coming out now if you're interested, and I hope you are."

It's still unclear whether the controversial *Forbidden* album – produced by Ernie C, guitarist with Body Count and released in 1995 – will be included as part of the package. Tony Martin has said he would also like some unheard jams with Edward Van Halen to be included among its bonus material.

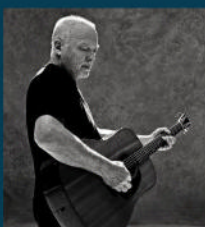
Iommi says he is currently "writing and doing plenty of stuff and it's sounding really good. I'm very happy with it." **DL**



Guitarist Joe Perry has told *The Boston Globe* that **Aerosmith** hope to resume their farewell tour, *Peace Out*, in the next few months. The band postponed the remainder of 2023's dates after just a handful of shows when singer Steven Tyler developed a serious vocal cord and larynx injury.

Four B-sides of singles by **David Bowie** are set to receive a limited-edition vinyl release by Parlophone Records as part of a new album, *Waiting In The Sky (Before The Starman Came To Earth)* on this year's Record Store Day, April 20. Each was originally recorded in 1971 during the sessions for *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust And The Spiders From Mars* but didn't make the album's final cut.

Ace Frehley predicts that his forthcoming new solo album, *10,000 Volts*, will make his former bandmates "look like imbeciles" (see feature, p24). "Kiss hasn't put out a record since 2012, and here I am, seventeen years sober, and it's my sixth record since leaving the band," the guitarist says.



David Gilmour (pictured) has been working on an as-yet untitled solo album, which is expected to be released later this year. More details to follow.

Down, the supergroup featuring members of Pantera, Corrosion Of Conformity and Eyehategod, are writing songs for what will be their first release since 2014.



WELCOME BACK

Robby Krieger

The former Doors guitarist returns with his new band and a new album of more instrumentals.

IF EVER THE story of a group has grown in the telling, it is that of The Doors. Robby Krieger, the band's guitarist and principal writer of many hits including *Light My Fire*, has since made his way primarily as an instrumental artist. His new group the Soul Savages started playing together "for fun" two years ago. Their self-titled debut album is a seductive collection of "cinematic groove music", which pulls together influences from soul, jazz, blues, psychedelia and more.

How did the Soul Savages get together?

Well, I have a new studio down in Glendale in Los Angeles. And I had some studio musicians come down there to do some gigs. One of them, Ed Roth [keyboards], happened to know Kevin Brandon [bass] who played on one of my albums a few years ago [*Singularity*, 2010], so we got back together, and eventually got hold of Franklin Vanderbilt [drums] to join us.

How do you write the songs?

They're mostly jamming. Sometimes I'll have an idea or one of the other guys will and we'll just start playing, and then as we go we add parts. We're all very accomplished musicians, so it just kind of flows. Our hope is to get people to use them in movies or TV-type shows.

The Soul Savages is a new group, but it's the latest in a long line of instrumental albums that you've done. What's different?

My goal has always been to have an instrumental hit like Booker T & The M.G.'s. So far I haven't had much success doing that. But I think with this band I might be closer to it, because most of my previous attempts, I think I've been too

much into playing jazz guitar licks and showing off. I think this record is more about the songs, and I think maybe we'll have a better chance to make a hit.

You recently published your memoirs about your time with The Doors [*Set The Night On Fire*, 2021]. Did it feel good to finally get the story told in your own words?

Yeah. It does. John [Densmore, drums] was the first one that wrote his memoirs, and then Ray [Manzarek, keyboards] wrote his, and the two of them kind of put each other down in each of their books. It made for a lot of problems. I didn't want to add to that, so I kinda kept putting it off.

Have you had any responses to what you wrote in your version?

Well, the only guy left is John [Densmore]. He complained about certain things. Not bad enough to cause a lawsuit or anything like that. In fact we've gotten together and done some musical things in the past year or so. Maybe you'll be hearing some of that.

You said in the memoir: "Writing with Jim [Morrison] was a uniquely inspiring experience, one that I haven't been able to replicate since." Does that have a bearing on your preference for instrumental music in the later years of your career?

Yeah, I think so, definitely. I mean, having a guy like that to write music with... I didn't realise it at the time, but it was amazing. It was tough to beat that. That's probably one reason why I concentrated more on instrumentals. **DS**

Robby Krieger And The Soul Savages is out now via The Players Club/Mascot Label Group.



★ HIGH HOPES

|||||
“My family were pastors and a lot of injustice was taught to me as a little girl.”

Lucifer

From Stockholm via Berlin, a new 70s-inspired occult-rock force is on the rise!

RECENTLY ON TOUR in the US – where they played with Coven and Pentagram – it was fairly easy to deduce where Stockholm rockers Lucifer are coming from, stylistically and musically. “I was born in Berlin, behind the Iron Curtain, and I started my journey with heavy music 31 years ago,” says founder Johanna Sardonis.

“My first rock concert was Guns N’ Roses, I then saw Metallica. But it was at the age of 14 when I saw Danzig that was the root of all my evil!” laughs Sardonis. “I was so impressed with the black jackets and black hair. Like the Ramones, but demonic.”

Sardonis soon found literature on Aleister Crowley, a satanic encyclopedia and an internship at an occult bookshop where like-minded folk of a gothic persuasion could gather. Her hair dyed, her room “pitch black”, with the discovery of the goth club Dark Friday, Sardonis’ cultural die was cast, fostered by her home environment. “My parents loved Deep Purple and ZZ Top, my brother was a punk and I was into extreme metal, and a cemetery tourist. I began to realise the bands I liked were inspired by the sixties and seventies – that’s where my songwriting comes from.”

Learning on an acoustic guitar before going electric – thanks to her parents – Sardonis started performing in underground bands, ending up in doomy hard-rockers The Oath (formed in

Berlin with Swedish guitarist Linnéa Olsson). The Oath was short-lived, and after dissolving in 2014, Sardonis’ own project Lucifer rose, prompting a move to Sweden.

Celebrating 10 years of existence in 2024 with a Satanic Panic UK tour – co-headlined with the legendary Angel Witch – Lucifer’s set-list will draw from their five-album catalogue, the latest release named *V*.

V’s themes are pretty descriptive by title (*Fallen Angel*, *A Coffin Has No Silver Lining*, *Slow Dance In A Crypt*...), comprising a mix of Sabbathian structures and black-humoured lyrics created by Sardonis with her husband, and Lucifer drummer, Nicke Andersson. Guitarist Linus Bjorkland also contributes because “we didn’t want to be like Sonny and Cher, it’s better for the music,” Sardonis laughs.

Sardonis’ look is similarly striking; a horror vamp, her blonde hair and red lips set off by black, caped clothing. “I was a very frail, scared and shy child,” she says. “It’s taken until I’m 44 – and I licked a lot of blood, ha ha – but I can finally say, ‘This is me.’”

We noticed the priest’s dog collar in your outfit...

“I’ve been dealing with a lot of sexism,” Sardonis notes, “I get remarks. But I want to say, ‘Fuck you, I’ll do what I want’ and show that just because I look like this, I can still write music. On the last album I was on a life-sized cross that I had made. My family were pastors and a lot of injustice was taught to me as a little girl. Now it’s my time to put on the collar and preach.” **JK**

V is out now via Nuclear Blast.

FOR FANS OF...



For all the riffy, Black Sabbath-esque textures on *V*, much of Lucifer’s darkness harks back to a relatively recent source of inspiration. “My dark humour, lyrics and love for seventies music is something that [Type O Negative’s] Pete Steele did,” she says. “We have a different sound, but you can hear ideas we both relate to in that record.”



NEWS

Def Leppard and **Journey** are teaming up for a 23-show summer tour of North America that begins on July 6 and ends on September 8. **Cheap Trick**, the reunited **Heart** and the **Steve Miller Band** will appear as special guests on select dates.

Rising international proggers **Big Big Train** release their sixteenth studio album on March 1. *The Likes Of Us* introduces new singer Alberto Bravin and keyboard player Oskar Holldorff, and is the band's debut for their new label InsideOut Music.

UFO frontman **Phil Mogg** releases a new solo album, *Mogg's Motel*, this month. In a social-media post, Mogg seemed to hint at the possibility of some solo gigs.

The collaborative track by British black metallers **Cradle Of Filth** and pop megastar **Ed Sheeran** – and what an eyebrow raiser that is – won't be heard until *Cradle Of Filth's* fourteenth album, scheduled for release in a year's time. "It sounds like Ed Sheeran, it sounds like *Cradle Of Filth*. There's a blast beat in it," reveals COF leader Dani Filth. "People [who] have heard it loved it."



Phil Manzanera (pictured) has his autobiography, *Revolución To Roxy*, out on March 22, published by Wordzworth. The book covers the guitarist's time with Roxy Music as well as his childhood in Cuba, Hawaii and Venezuela, and memories from "very cool 1960s London".



HALLELUJAH

Hallelujah Babe, Metronome, Germany 1971. £180



Hallelujah were a short-lived German-based band that included English drummer Keith Forsey and German guitarist Paul Vincent. Both had previously played

alongside legendary German saxophonist Klaus Doldinger in Motherhood.

Hallelujah Babe was recorded in the UK but released only in Germany, the core duo joined in the studio by future Steeleye Span bassist Rick Kemp, and keyboard player Pete Wood.

It's a mixed bag, and has definite moments of greatness. However, it's the epic opening track, *Hallelujah*, which pretty much eclipses everything that follows, making the album feel like it peaked a bit too early. At first you could be forgiven for thinking you're listening to a church choir chanting a chorus of "Hallelujah!", until the doomy, heavy guitar chords kick in, followed by pounding drums and eerie organ sounds. It's a glorious early-prog moment.

'The album is a mixed bag, and has definite moments of greatness.'

Waterloo is a strong contender for second-best track, with its ultra-groovy organ/guitar interplay on the opening riff coming across like a cross between early Sabbath and Purple, with jazzy drum breaks and frantic lead guitar key elements. Elsewhere, things are generally more laid back: *Signs Of Strange* is a piano-led prog ballad with catchy vocal melodies, while *Z.I.P.* and *The Winter Song* are dreamier spaced-out pleasantries.

Sadly *Hallelujah Babe* was the sole album from a band that showed promise.

Forsey would go on to co-write such hits as *Hot Stuff* for Donna Summer and *Don't You (Forget About Me)* for Simple Minds, and produce records for Billy Idol, Icehouse, Charlie Sexton and more. **LD**



WELCOME BACK

Philip Sayce

The resurgent bluesman on industry sharks, his werewolf obsession and the dangers of drinking at LA parties.

EVEN AFTER EIGHT solo albums, umpteen sideman gigs (including a bunch of albums with Melissa Etheridge) and untold air miles, Philip Sayce has never sounded happier to be packing for the road ("I wish you could see the living room right now, because I have shit everywhere"). Partly, says the Welsh-born, Toronto-raised, LA-based bluesman, this is because international touring still feels like a blissful release post-pandemic. But mostly it's down to the prospect of a set-list bolstered by his raging new blues-rock album *The Wolves Are Coming*.

How would you describe the musical vibe of *The Wolves Are Coming*?

A lot of times I'll call it 'earth music' – y'know, music that comes from the soil. It's definitely an album to get you pumped up to go out on a Friday night. Y'know, get things cooking, get the engines started. This was my first self-release. I didn't even know if I was gonna have the opportunity to release it. We recorded it during the pandemic, and it was like: "Are we done?" Being on a major label [Warners] was a great experience, but it ran its course. Ultimately I'm not an artist that needs to be micro-managed.

Who or what are the 'wolves' of the album title?

It maybe comes from seeing what was going on around me during the pandemic – a lot of self-destructive behaviour. But it's also a tip of the hat to the music industry and some of the trauma I've experienced. This is shark-infested waters. They'll eat you up and not think twice about it. That's why there's a song called *Backstabber* on there. Y'know, I didn't necessarily sign up for that when I had a poster of Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan on my bedroom wall.

What's your psychedelic recent single *Oh! That Bitches Brew* about?

I'd gone to a real wild LA party. A friend of mine was like: "Check out this drink." So I drink it – and about fifteen minutes later I was on board the space shuttle and I was gone. The next thing I know it was eight days later. I was fucked up. And I don't drink or use drugs. So it came as a surprise, and it was a gnarly, nasty experience. I don't know what was in it. I don't think it was anything

highly illegal, because I wouldn't be involved in anything like that. It was probably a THC-based something or other. But honestly, I don't know what it was.

What did you want your guitar to sound like on this record?

Sometimes I wanted it to sound like a huge, angry lion, or sometimes a spaceship lifting off. There's a song called *Intuition*, and at the end, that's the first guitar solo I'd played after being locked up for a year. I played it live, and it was so ragged, like I was trying to rip open everything I'd been caged in by. I wanted it to sound like an erupting volcano – or maybe a giant wolf busting out of its cage.

You're off on tour. What can't you live without when you're on the road?

Certainly my toothbrush. I always make sure I bring some audiobooks. Ever since I was a kid I've been obsessed with werewolves, because I got totally fucked up by [1981 film] *An American Werewolf In London*. So on the plane I'll probably be listening to weird supernatural stories. **HY**

The Wolves Are Coming is released on February 23 via Atomic Gemini/Forty Below Records.

This month *The Dirt* was compiled by Bill DeMain, Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Rob Hughes, Jo Kendall, Danni Leivers, Dave Ling, David Sinclair, Henry Yates



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Black Crowes Reveal Album

Happiness Bastards is the band's first new material since 2009.

THE BLACK CROWES release their new album *Happiness Bastards* on March 15 via Silver Arrows Records. It's their first new material since 2009's *Before The Frost... Until The Freeze*. The first single from it will be *Wanting And Waiting*.

"*Happiness Bastards* is our love letter to rock'n'roll," explains frontman Chris Robinson. "Rich [brother] and I are always writing and creating music. That has never stopped for us, and it is always where we find harmony together. This record represents that."

"This album is a continuation of our story as a band," adds Rich Robinson. "Our years of experience writing and making music and touring the world are represented in this record, and we were brilliantly guided by one of the best producers in the business, Jay Joyce [Halestorm, Brothers Osborne, Keith Urban]."

Look out for tour dates in North America, the UK and Europe. **FL**



"It's been an incredible ride."

Roger Daltrey's run with the Teenage Cancer Trust comes to an end.

ROGER DALTREY IS to end his 24-year stewardship of the successful Teenage Cancer Trust charity gigs with a series of bumper shows at the Royal Albert Hall. The Who will headline two nights at the iconic London venue, March 18 and 20, supported by Squeeze. Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds will headline on March 21, while Young Fathers and The Chemical Brothers will play on March 22 and 23, respectively. The final night of the season, March 24, will see Daltrey, Pete Townshend, Robert Plant with Saving Grace, Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder, Stereophonics' Kelly Jones, Paul Weller and more return to the West London venue for a special curtain-closer billed as 'Ovation' - A Celebration of 24 Years of Gigs For Teenage Cancer Trust.

Daltrey described his stewardship of the long-running concert season as "an incredible ride" when speaking to CR last summer. "I'm hoping that some of the popular people in this industry will want to take up the baton and curate nights."



Due to "unforeseen circumstances", lead singer Hayley Sanderson has been forced to withdraw from **Rick Wakeman's** Return Of The Caped Crusader Tour. Her place will be taken by Mollie Marriott, a solo artist and daughter of the late Small Faces and Humble Pie frontman Steve Marriott.

Former **Slayer** guitarist Kerry King tells *Metal Hammer* that he sees his long-awaited debut album, due in the summer, as "a definite extension, a follow-up to *Repentless* [Slayer's final album, released in 2015], for sure".

Corey Taylor has cancelled his upcoming North American tour due to concerns over physical and mental health. "After taking a hard look at where I am and where I was going, I need to pull myself back and be home with my family for the time being," explains the Slipknot frontman.

Although no official statement has been made, Brad Wilk says that **Rage Against The Machine** will not play any more live shows. "I'm sorry for those of you who have been waiting for this to happen. I really wish it was," the drummer commented in a social-media post.



On December 27, **Heart** (pictured) played their first show in more than four years when Ann and Nancy Wilson and co. performed at the Yaamava' Resort & Casino in California, followed by another date and a New Year's Eve show in their home town of Seattle.



WELCOME BACK

Ministry

Ministry return as a band rather than just Al Jourgensen, and there's venom in the new album.

THE UNSINKABLE Al Jourgensen has captained industrial rockers Ministry for more than 40 years now, and has survived severe drug and alcohol addiction to emerge as a voluble campaigner for social justice and systemic change. Ministry's new album *HOPIUM FORTHEMASSES*, featuring cameos from Jello Biafra, Gogol Bordello's Eugene Hutz and Corrosion Of Conformity's Pepper Keenan – is boisterous and ballsy, covering dirty politics, climate change, corporate bullies, media misogyny and much more.

There's a lot of socio-political venom in the songs on the new album, a prime example being *Goddamn White Trash*.

As the world gets crazier and crazier, *HOPIUM* is trying to address societal changes we're going through. Pepper [Keenan] sang back-ups on *Goddamn White Trash*. He's from the Deep South, and we had a really long, deep conversation before he agreed to do it. He's like: "Are you making fun of us?" Absolutely not. I'm trying to make people aware of the lack of education, the surplus of disinformation and how it affects different regions of the country. The message is we're all in this together, because we're all being fucked by everybody. I sent him a rough mix of that track afterwards. He called me from his porch somewhere in Louisiana, with all his hillbilly buddies, and they're going: "This is awesome!"

How come Ministry has returned to the band format for this album?

This current line-up has been together for almost eight years. And as we've gained trust in each other we've actually become a band in the studio too, rather than it just being me and my engineer, Michael Rozon. So this was a real jam.

Has that been liberating for you?

It's liberating in that I don't have to concentrate as much on the ideas and arrangements. I can trust my people to come up with something that Ministry would approve. It means I have to do a lot more production work, but less songwriting. It's kind of a trade-off, but I like it.

Anything else in the pipeline?

I just got done with a film score to a documentary by Greg Palast, which follows what happened to the Osage

Nation after Killers *Of The Flower Moon*, right up to the present day, and how they're still being fleeced by industrialists and state legislatures. It's called *Long Knife* and comes out in March.

Expect the title song from the movie to be played live, it's badass.

At various times in recent years you've threatened to wind down Ministry. Does the band still have legs?

Oh yes, but it's going to be different this year. Aside from the new album, we're doing the Cruel World festival in May at the Rose Bowl here in Los Angeles. The stipulation is we have to play stuff that's thirty-five years old or more [Ministry will play selections from 1983's *With Sympathy* and 1986's *Twitch*]. The problem is that I burned all those tapes in a backyard barbecue in Chicago in the eighties, so I have nothing to go on. But we've managed to work up some amazing versions of that stuff with the new band. It's a lot heavier, so I can now see where I was going forty-something years ago, when I just didn't have the resources. This early stuff is starting to sound like arena rock, which is cracking me up! **RH**

HOPIUM FORTHEMASSES is out on March 1 via *Nuclear Blast*.



★ HIGH HOPES

“We didn’t want to ride the hype rollercoaster and burn out too quickly.”

Sheer Mag

Philadelphians who kept their powder dry for an imminent fusillade of 70s noise rock.

MATT PALMER is reflecting on Sheer Mag’s early days of 2015-2019 when the Philadelphia power-pop band’s interpretation of peacocking seventies rock earned them a swift injection of buzz and exposure. But even then they had their eyes on the long game, and were wary of the attention being heaped upon them.

“We wanted to make sure that we didn’t ride the hype rollercoaster and burn out too quickly,” Palmer reasons. “We wanted to make sure it was something sustainable that we could keep doing for years and years.”

The quartet, made up of Palmer, powerhouse vocalist Christina Halladay and two brothers (bassist Hart and lead guitarist Kyle Seely) formed in 2014. By the end of the following year they had released two critically acclaimed EPs and were playing sold out, sweatbox shows across the world with only eight songs in their arsenal. All the while ignoring every label salivating to sign them.

“We could have signed earlier, or tried to make the jump into being a more mainstream band, but I think that it’s good that we held back,” shrugs Matt. “It was better to not flame out early, but get to know each other and realise how we wanted to represent each other, and what sort of music we wanted to make.”

Joining her bandmate on Zoom, Halladay chuckles. “When

we didn’t immediately sign to whatever record label was hounding us, they were pissed off. People are still mad!”

Delayed by the pandemic, the band’s third album, *Playing Favourites*, is their most refined to date – distilling ass-kicking, beer-swilling sleaze, disco and triumphant nostalgia into a feral adrenaline shot.

“It’s a very meticulously crafted record,” says Palmer. “There’s a propulsiveness in the track listing that can move you through it on the first listen, but then there’s little sonic easter eggs that you can find on every song that will reward returning to.”

In theory, it could put them in front of a larger audience than ever. Ten years since they first emerged from the dive bars of Philly, Sheer Mag have done the unthinkable: agreeing upon a record deal, and signing with Jack White’s Third Man Records. “The entire process of making the art with them has been really smooth,” Palmer reflects. “They seem like a great fit for us.”

“Maybe we took too long, but we’ve just figured ourselves out and it feels like we’re very solid,” Halladay continues. “So, we’re trying out the next step of things we haven’t tried before.”

With a new label, the glare of the spotlight beckons once again – only this time, Sheer Mag are embracing it. “It was super weird the way things happened for us,” Palmer muses. “We were worried about overexposure before. But I think we’re ready for the attention now.” **DL**

Playing Favourites is out via Third Man on March 1.

FOR FANS OF...



Of the track *Mechanical Garden* on *Playing Favourites*, Matt Palmer says: “[Brothers Kyle and Hart Seely] did a great job recording that song. It’s extremely well produced. I can hear them just really trying to make a Steely Dan calibre-style instrumental where the bass line is interlocked with the drums and the rhythm section.”

Don Henley

The Boys Of Summer

How Don Henley turned a song from Tom Petty's reject pile into a generational anthem about lost innocence.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

The early 80s were a time of uncertainty for Don Henley. "I felt tremendous pressure, not to measure up to the success of the Eagles, but simply to write and record without them," he tells *Classic Rock*, in an exclusive interview. "Having a solo career was something I'd never considered. I felt unmoored, adrift."

The Eagles had split in 1980, and all the members began to pursue solo careers. Henley's debut album, 1982's *I Can't Stand Still*, had been a promising, if tentative, step forward. "I think it was a decent first effort," he says. "In retrospect, a couple of the songs don't hold up, but that's true of all my albums."

Around the time Henley started to gather material for the follow-up, in 1983, the drum machine was redefining the sound of music. "I had mixed emotions about the new electronic instruments," he admits. "But Danny [Kortchmar, his post-Eagles collaborator] was knowledgeable about all the modern gear and was keen to incorporate it into our writing and recording process."

Little did Henley know that a LinnDrum machine, acquired by Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell, was about to propel his solo career to a new high. On his YouTube channel, Campbell recalled how his first experiments with it inspired the track for *Boys Of Summer*. "I stayed up all night typing in tambourines and claps and snares. I got a little pattern going, then I came up with that melody line on the keyboard."

Campbell added guitar and bass, then a week later he played his demo for Tom Petty and producer Jimmy Iovine. But it was rejected as a possible Heartbreakers song for being "too jazzy". Campbell put the tape on the shelf, and there it might have stayed.

Although Henley and Campbell have different memories about how they first met, Campbell recalled bringing a cassette of the track to Henley's house. "We sat at opposite ends of a long table, and he put the cassette on. He didn't tap his foot or

move his head. Just sat there, with his arms folded. He listened all the way through. I thought he hated it. He goes: 'Okay, I'll see what I can do with that.' And I left."

Henley says: "People I work with will tell you that I'm not very demonstrative, at least until most of the pieces fall into place. I liked the percussion Mike had created with the machines. I liked the guitar sounds a lot, and the synthesiser lines. All the layers merged into a texture that was really evocative. It just needed a little arranging. Once I'd figured out what went where, the melody and the lyrics began flow pretty quickly."

The Boys Of Summer was the title of Roger Kahn's best-selling 1972 book about baseball. But Henley's reference reached back further. "Even though I am a baseball fan, I had never heard of that book. My inspiration came from the Dylan Thomas poem, which begins: 'I see the boys of summer in their ruin.'"

"The song is almost forty years old now. It's another reminder that life is short, but it's very wide."

Henley's lyric yearned with a similar ache of lost innocence and youth. Was it written to a specific person? "Some of my songs are, but not that one," Henley says. "Regardless of the inspiration, or the muse, I try to keep the themes universal. It's best if songs have an element of ambiguity."

In the final verse, the memorable line 'Out on the road today, I saw a Deadhead sticker on a Cadillac' effectively summed up a whole generation and how they'd squandered their hopeful vision.

"It was a gift," Henley says. "It came from that mysterious place that lyrics sometimes come from. I had been stuck on the bridge section; couldn't get the words, the melody. One afternoon, I was driving on Interstate 405, somewhere south of Sunset, the cassette of the track blaring through the sound system. I looked to my left and there it was: a 1979 Cadillac Seville with a 'Deadhead' sticker

on the back. It just struck me as ironic, paradoxical, with a little touch of nostalgia, and it went right into the song."

Working at Record One Studio in Los Angeles, Henley assembled a band of top musicians, including Kortchmar, Steve Porcaro, and Campbell on guitar. Artists can often grow attached to demos (it's known as 'demo-itis'), and Henley came in set on recreating Campbell's track, with all its quirky, offhand charm.

"Mike's one of those guys who doesn't like to do the same thing twice," Henley says. "And I'm one of those guys who, whenever I'm struck by a piece of music, and am inspired to write lyrics and melody, I want any recreation of that piece of music to be a clone of what moved me in the first place."

As they revamped the track, they encountered technical glitches—a hiccup with the LinnDrum's memory, an analogue tape malfunction that required meticulous gluing and pasting—but they finally got it down.

Then Henley decided to change the key. "Danny always pushed me to sing each song in as high a key as I could," he says. "He believed that more emotion got

transmitted that way, that it was more impactful." So they went back into the studio, trying to recapture that "first-pass magic" again. "Mike was not happy about that, either, but he came through," Henley says.

Released in October 1984, as the first single from Henley's second album, *Building The Perfect Beast*, it took off immediately. It went to No.5 in the US, and was Henley's biggest single in the UK, making it to No.12. It benefitted from the moody black-and-white video, directed by Jean-Baptiste Mondino. "He was the only video director I worked with who took the time to consult with me about the song," Henley says. The heavy-rotation clip swept the 1985 MTV Video Music Awards.

For Henley, his signature song remains "one of the best I've co-written".

"The song is almost forty years old now," he says. "It's just another reminder that life is short, but it's very wide." 🎧



WANNA JOIN IN?

The concept of the rock album with loads of guest artists was launched in the early 80s, and the credits for *The Boys Of Summer's* parent album *Building The Perfect Beast* read like a *Who's Who* of famous friends and strangers, including Lindsey Buckingham, Belinda Carlisle, Sam Moore and Patty Smyth. Henley, a self-described "good casting director", said: "I have a lot of nerve. I'll call anybody. I didn't know Patty, Sam and some of the others. I was afraid they weren't going to be into an old guy from the mellow seventies. Patty said: 'Are you kidding? I used to sing [the Eagles'] *Witchy Woman* when I was fifteen.'"

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE

October 1984

HIGHEST

CHART

POSITION

UK No.12,

US No.5

PERSONNEL

Don Henley

Vocals

Mike Campbell

Guitars,

synthesisers,

LinnDrum

programming,

percussion

Danny

Kortchmar

Guitars,

synthesisers

Steve Porcaro

Synthesisers

Larry Klein

Bass

WRITTEN BY

Mike Campbell

& Don Henley

PRODUCED BY

Don Henley,

Mike Campbell,

Danny

Kortchmar and

Greg Ladanyi

LABEL

Geffen

Don Henley: *The Boys
Of Summer* remains
his best-known hit.



Ace Frehley

The former Kiss guitarist on his old bandmates, early life, being sober and getting fit, and his latest solo album.

Interview: **Dave Everley**

“**H**eeeeey!” says Ace Frehley, by way of introduction. “The Ace is here!” Behind him on the Zoom screen, the room he’s sitting in is illuminated by purple, blue, red and white lights. “Where am I? I’m on a spaceship,” he says with a cackle. “Nah, I’m in my studio. Looks cool, right?”

The irrepressible former Kiss guitarist is on top form, and rightly so. His sizzling new album *10,000 Volts* keeps up the late-career hot streak that began with 2009’s *Anomaly* and continued through 2014’s *Space Invader* and 2018’s *Spaceman*, as well as the two-volume *Origins* covers albums.

We’re talking a couple of weeks after his former band played their last ever show, at Madison Square Garden. “I really don’t think that much about Kiss any more,” he insists, although it becomes evident that this isn’t strictly true. Still, if anyone embodies that band’s original rock’n’roll spirit, it’s the Space Ace.

How are you, Ace?

Better than most days [laughs]. Wait, I have some cough drops in my mouth, I need to get rid of them [leans over and disposes of them].

Your new album is called *10,000 Volts*. It’s got songs called *Walkin’ On The Moon*, *Cosmic Heart* and *Blinded*, which is about being ‘blinded by science’. Where does your interest in science and space come from?

My father was an electrical engineer. He designed some of the transformers that are in the rover that’s on the Moon. So my dad’s transformers are on the Moon as we speak. He bought me my first guitar – a cheap, twenty-five-dollar Japanese guitar. Once I hit the E-chord with the volume all the way up on the amp, it was love at first sight; or first hearing or whatever you want to call it.

On this record you worked with Steve Brown, formerly of the hard rock band Trixter. Where did you meet him?

My fiancée hooked me up with him. She said: “You gotta work with Steve.” He came up with this song, and one of the lines was: ‘*Walking on the Moon*.’ I said: “Steve, come over to my house, rewrite the song and make ‘*Walking on the Moon*’ the chorus.” And we came up with the song *Walking On The Moon*. Once we finished that we just kept churning ‘em out.

You’ve put out five albums in the past ten years alone. Most people are slowing down at this point in their career. You’re speeding up. Why?

I love to write songs, I love to record. My fiancée’s got me on a strict diet of organic foods. She’s got me working out, lifting weights and doing push-ups. I’m down to a hundred and seventy-five pounds; I’ve lost about forty pounds. I’ve never felt better in my life.

All your recent solo albums have been great. It doesn’t sound like you’re coasting. What’s the secret?

There is no secret. I don’t have any master plan. I’m just being me. Well, one of the secrets is that I haven’t changed the formula with the

way I record. I’ve always recorded with one or two other people in the room. What’s that old saying? Too many chefs in the kitchen spoils the... stew? [laughs] Something like that.

A few months ago you said: “My new album is going to make Paul Stanley look like an imbecile.” That sounds like fighting talk.

Well, in the last few months he put me down pretty badly. He even made a statement on *The Howard Stern Show* that if me and Peter [Criss, original Kiss drummer] got up on stage with them at Madison Square Garden, you might as well call the band *Piss* instead of *Kiss*. That got to me. We ended up having some words. But I’m really done with the tit-for-tat. They’ve supposedly done their last show at the Madison Square Garden. I heard some crazy rumour that they’re coming out of retirement again. I hope not.

If anyone in Kiss had a punk edge, it was you. Is that fair to say?

Way before punk, I was hanging out at the corner candy store and I ended up joining a gang called the Ducky Boys. I was always a streetwise kid. I’d been arrested probably half-a-dozen times before I was in Kiss. I learned the hard way, but I think it’s helped me in life to be a survivor. A lot of people don’t have street smarts. You gotta have street smarts to survive.

What do you miss about the New York you grew up in?

It was interesting. My family lived in a one-bedroom apartment. Me and my brother slept in bunk beds in my parents’ master bedroom, and my sister slept on the couch in the living room. Then we moved to the other side of the building, and that had two bedrooms. Eventually I started playing in bands and making money, and I moved up to Westchester, to a beautiful building on the Hudson River. At that point everything just started going up and up. Kiss started taking off. There was a lot of partying. I’m a recovering alcoholic and a recovering drug addict, and have been [sober] for seventeen years.

Congratulations.

Thank you. Since I stopped, it changed my life. It wasn’t easy to stop, but I had a lot of help from friends and people in Alcoholics Anonymous. In fact I still have the same sponsor as I did when I first joined AA. I spoke to him this morning. We were talking about [US politician] Bobby Kennedy Jr. Bobby Kennedy and me are very good friends. I’ve been to his house a dozen times. If he’s gonna do a rally and he needs a rock band, I’d be more than happy to perform.

Bobby Kennedy Jr is a pretty outspoken and controversial figure, especially when it comes to anti-vaccine stuff.

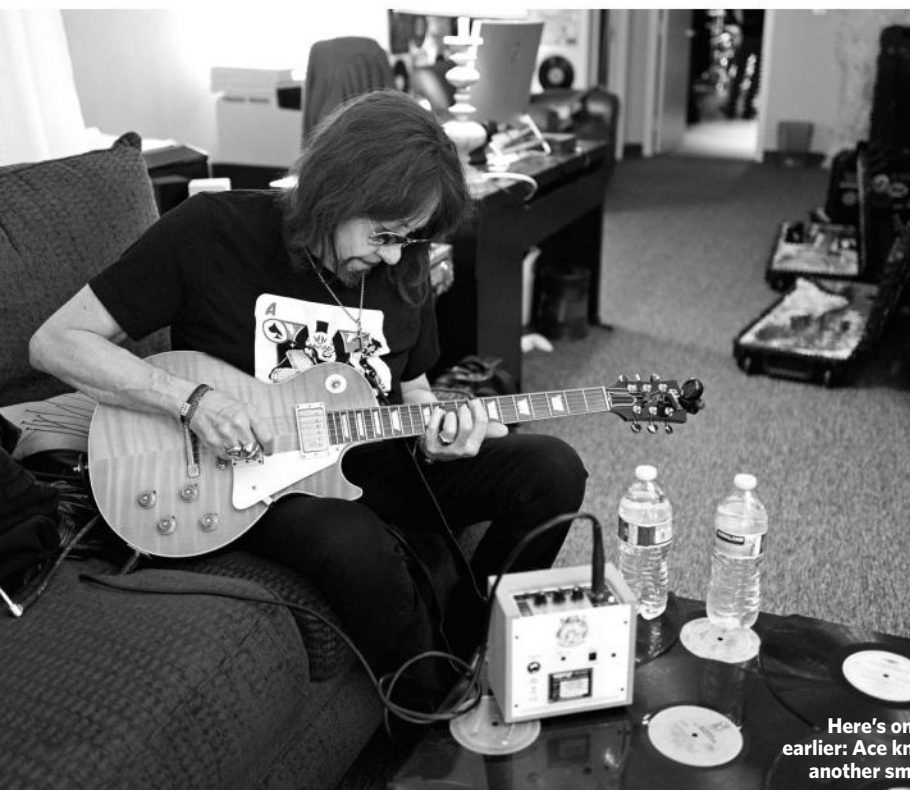
Yeah, but we’re dear friends. I’d do anything for Bobby. I’m just worried that he’s gonna get caught between the Democrats and Republicans, because he’s running as an independent.

You’ve dabbled in acting over the years, from *Kiss Meets The*





“I’d been arrested half-a-dozen times before I was in Kiss. I learned the hard way.”



Here's one I made earlier: Ace knocks out another smart tune.



No Kissing: Ace and his band.

Phantom Of The Park in 1978 to the 2005 crime thriller *Remedy*. Have you had many acting offers over the years?

A couple, but I turned them down. There's a scene in *Remedy* where me and the star of the movie are shooting up heroin. I'm a method actor—I didn't shoot heroin, but I took a handful of pain pills and I was completely loaded. The scene was very realistic, put it like that.

Who would you like to have play you in the movie of your life?

If there was gonna be an Ace Frehley movie, my first choice would be the kid that plays The Flash [Ezra Miller]. Can you imagine him with my hair? His eyes are very similar to mine. He's crazy as well.

As well as the release of *10,000 Volts*, February 2024 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first Kiss album. Are you going to celebrate that?

What's to celebrate? They have two impostors on stage with them. Six or seven months ago they were inviting me and Peter to play at Madison Square Garden, and in the last month [before the show] they started trashing us. I don't know if I'll ever get on stage with them, and I personally don't care. I'm very happy with the band I have now, I'm very happy with the new record, just moving forward.

When was the last time you spoke to Gene or Paul?

The last time I spoke to Paul was a couple of months ago. I was very pissed off at what he said about calling the group Piss. Come on, I've been making albums and touring for years, I could get up and play two or three Kiss songs flawlessly. But for some reason he insulted me. And I called him out on it. I said: "I demand an apology." He called me up and said: "Fuck you, Ace, I'm not giving you an apology" and hung up. Prior to that, me and Paul would talk on the phone three or four times a year.

What about Gene?

The last time I sent Gene an email was when he had to stop the show in South America [in April 2023] because he was dehydrated, and I was concerned about his welfare. I said: "I hope you're okay, Gene," ba-da-bing, ba-da-boom. He got back to me in five minutes. He said: "I'm okay, Ace. Thanks for caring." I'm closest with Gene.

last twenty years.

Do you think about a time when you will retire?

I don't give it any thought at all. I'm just gonna go till the wheels fall off. Even if I end up in a wheelchair, I can still write songs.

Will we ever see an Ace Frehley avatar?

No. Never in a million years. That is not what I'm all about. I'm about amps, guitars, singing. If I can't sing any more I'd hire a lead singer, no big deal. But my voice is stronger than it has been in a long time.

Where do you stand on bands using backing tapes at shows?

I myself wouldn't use them. When people come to see me, they deserve a live show. The groups that use backing tapes, I guess they use them because they can't cut it any more. I'm not gonna name names, but you know who I'm referring to [laughs].

If you could go back and change anything about your life, what would it be?

Nothing.

Honestly?

Yeah. My book [Ace's 2011 autobiography] was titled *No Regrets*. I made a lot of mistakes in my life. But my [AA] sponsor told me: "You had to make those mistakes to get to where you are today." If you look

at those old Kiss shows, I have a buzz on, but I'm still playing great. Even on the reunion tour [in the late 90s] I was still getting high, but I would save the crazy stuff for after the show. Now I don't need anything to perform. I enjoy performing sober.

How many more albums have you got in you?

As long as I can sing and write and play guitar, the sky's the limit. I could have two more albums in me. I could have five more albums in me. As long as it's fun, I'll keep doing it.

And is it fun?

It's more fun than it's been in a long time. 🎸

10,000 Volts is out on February 23 via MNRK Records.

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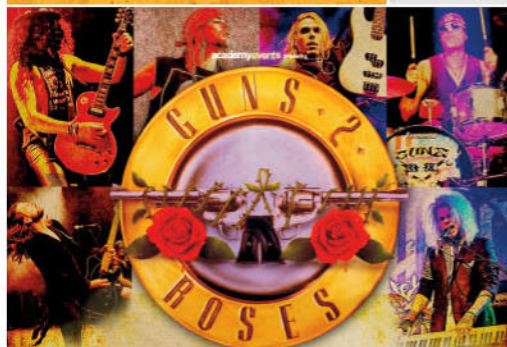
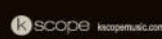
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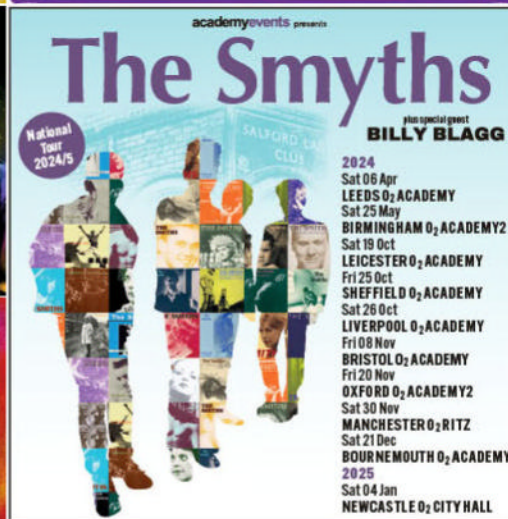
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Fri 20 Nov

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1984

THE YEAR WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED

Sitting between the heritage of the 70s and the glitzy, big-haired peak to which the 80s would ascend, **1984** was a quietly pivotal time for music, popular culture and the world as we knew it.

Words: **Paul Rees**

Thirty-five years before it came to pass, George Orwell's foretelling of 1984 was as a dystopian horror story; Big Brother, Newspeak, Room 101 and all that. In reality, the actual 1984 rolled around minus the all-powerful totalitarian Party of Orwell's nightmares – although a couple of formidable and divisive leaders – Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan – were both well into the process of bluntly reshaping Britain and the US respectively to fit their free-market, get-rich-quick dogma.

What Orwell could have set out as far back as 1949 was a prospectus for pop culture in 1984. He put the words into the mouth of one of his lead characters, O'Brien, the scheming Party official. "Our only true life is in the future," O'Brien tells the doomed Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "But how far away that future may be there is no knowing."

What is apparent from the distance of another 40 years is the springing up of the first shoots of the inter-connected, tech-dominated, globalised world we all now inhabit. Not that anyone was too troubled by the prospect of this Orwellian future at the time. Indeed, among the most feverishly covered news stories at the dawning of 1984 was the banning of a pop record by Radio 1 (Frankie Goes to Hollywood's propulsive ode to masturbation, *Relax* – which promptly vaulted to No.1), and Elton John's surprise wedding to his studio engineer Renate Blauel (somewhat less unexpectedly, the couple were divorced within four years).

Were one to have conducted a survey of the musical landscape in 1984, it would have appeared reassuringly fecund and fertile. Big and booming. Pleasingly pocked as well, with a variety of shifting scenes and movements. Landing somewhere between the grit of the 70s and the spandex-heavy feel of the latter 80s, rock bands reached turning points. Erupting out of the US were thrash-metal, hair-metal, hardcore and alt.rock, and with bands as diametric as Metallica, R.E.M., Ratt, and Black Flag ascendent. In the UK, Duran Duran, Spandau Ballet, Culture Club and Thompson Twins were at the vanguard of the New Romantics. Then again, there were their polar opposites – The Smiths debuting, and the protagonists of the so-called 'big music', led by U2 and with them Simple Minds, Big Country and The Alarm.

Yet towering over all else like Himalayan peaks were four artists in the process of redefining the notion of superstardom and towards it being a state of global ubiquity: Michael Jackson, Prince, Madonna and Bruce Springsteen. Even in spite of it coming out in late November '82, Jackson's *Thriller* turned out to be the best-selling album of 1984. Collectively, it and Prince's *Purple Rain*, Madonna's *Like A Virgin* and Springsteen's *Born In The USA*, all 1984 releases, went on to amass worldwide sales of more than 146 million and counting. Music scenes and tribes have since dissipated, or else vanished altogether, the earth bulldozed around them by the superstar juggernauts spawned by this original Big Four. For Jackson, Prince, Madonna and Springsteen, ➤

1984



Ratt released their debut album *Out Of The Cellar* in 1984.



Big Country: one of the protagonists of the emerging 'big music'.



Whitesnake: released *Slide It In*.



The Bangles released their debut *All Over The Place*.

then, read, say, Taylor Swift, Beyonce, Drake and Harry Styles now.

Essentially, the superstar Class of '84 were pop's first brand builders, their image, be it mores-baiting provocateur or working-class hero, entirely synonymous with their music. To this end they were indebted to another dominant factor in music in 1984 – MTV. Three years into its lifespan, MTV had progressed apace from upstart cable TV station to becoming the single most powerful and affecting agent of change for the music business. The pop video, initially dismissed by artists and their record companies as a pointless affectation, was now an all-important record-selling and career-making tool. Promo video concepts would grow ever more outlandish, with increasingly lavish sums thrown at them.

MTV's influence was already extending out across pop culture. Accelerating a trend begun with *Flashdance* in 1983, no less than four of the biggest hit films of 1984 – *Ghostbusters*, *Beverly Hills Cop*, *The Karate Kid* and *Footloose* – were shot like nothing so much as an extended pop video. Which is to say they regaled in slick, glossy visuals and fast edits. They each also had soundtracks of booming pop-rock. That September,

the same was true of the piloting TV series *Miami Vice*, its subsequent success establishing a template carrying on through everything from *Breaking Bad* to *Yellowjackets*, albeit in more refined form.

In *I Want My MTV*, their 2012 history of the station, authors Rob Tannenbaum and Craig Marks posited how "MTV was the first time that technology became a rock star". There was a second, and third example of this rising development in 1984. In September, North America's first compact disc manufacturing plant opened up in Terre Haute, Indiana to press copies of Springsteen's *Born In The USA* in this new recording format. By the following year the CD would be fast-tracking towards obliterating vinyl and cassette as the primary means of music delivery.

The CD promised to make the act of listening to music so much more user-friendly – better-sounding, durable, easier to access. If that meant all but doing away with artful packaging, then so be it.

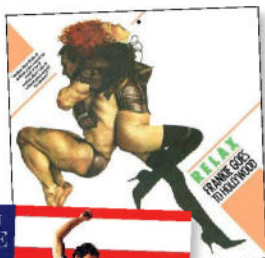
As it happened, of course, the CD didn't turn out to be eternally playable and never prone to either skip or scratch. Nevertheless, the brute starkness of its functionality-over-artfulness equation

1984, Bryan Adams's *Reckless*, *Synchronicity* by The Police, *Heartbeat City* by The Cars, and U2's *The Unforgettable Fire*, alongside Culture Club (*Colour By Numbers*), Duran Duran (*Seven The Ragged Tiger*) and many more.

Hard rock continued to adapt and thrive within its own self-contained universe. ZZ Top hit MTV-driven pay dirt with *Eliminator*, Twisted Sister with *Stay Hungry*. The established guard in general remained strong. There were rock-solid albums from Judas Priest (*Defenders Of The Faith*), Whitesnake (*Slide It In*), Dio (*The Last In Line*), Rush (*Grace Under Pressure*), and the Scorpions (*Love At First Sting*). Foreigner's *I Want to Know What Love Is*, REO Speedwagon's *I Can't Fight This Feeling* and John Waite's *Missing You* all topped the US Hot 100 singles chart. Iron Maiden became the first rock band to venture behind the Iron Curtain on their World Slavery Tour. The classic line-ups of both Deep Purple and Aerosmith reunited.

Within this bubble there was always something new and different brewing. There were debut albums from Ratt, Anthrax, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Black Flag. Both Metallica (with *Ride The Lightning*) and Marillion (*Fugazi*) got into their stride with their second ones.

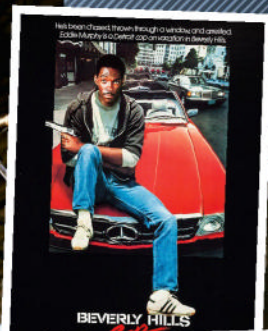
Outside of it, the first MTV Video Music Awards were held at New York's Radio City



DAVID COVERDALE: RICHARD E. LARSON/GETTY; RATT: PAUL WATKINS/GETTY; STUART ADAMSON: USA TODAY/MICHAEL LOCH ARCHIVES/GETTY; SUSANNA HOFFS: ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK



Metallica's second album *Ride The Lightning* came out in 1984.



Rush remained strong with *Grace Under Pressure*.



Music Hall on September 14. Dan Ackroyd and Bette Midler hosted, Herbie Hancock took home five awards. There was some way to go before the grunge and hip-hop hordes stormed the old order barricade.

On November 25, an all-star cast assembled at Sarm West Studios in London's Notting Hill to record a song conceived and written by Bob Geldof and Midge Ure to raise money for famine-stricken Ethiopia. Released just nine days later, *Do They Know It's Christmas?* had sold 2.5 million copies by the end of the year. Live Aid was to follow simultaneously in London and Philadelphia the next summer, sparking an undiminished appetite for mass pop culture events, ever grander stadium tours, music as blockbuster entertainment.

As well as all this there were the ups and downs, the triumphs and tragedies of any other year. The Police played their last show together for 23 years in Melbourne, Australia on March 4. Van Halen played their last show with David Lee Roth for 27 years in Nuremberg, West Germany on September 2. Styx, Kansas and Jefferson Starship all disbanded, each of them bound to return. So too did a never-were LA band, Hollywood Rose, freeing their frontman and guitarist, Axl Rose and Izzy Stradlin, to move on to Guns N'Roses. Getting together were Soundgarden, Sepultura, Screaming Trees, Primus, Warrant and Living Colour. Music bid farewell to Count Basie and Jackie Wilson. To Marvin Gaye as well, shot dead at 44 by his own father on April 1.

Two car crashes that December, both involving drummers, led to very different outcomes. On December 8, Hanoi Rocks drummer Razzle died in a car being driven by Mötley Crüe singer Vince Neil. Both men had been drinking all day. Neil's 1972 Ford Pantera spun on a patch of wet Hollywood road and ploughed headlong into an oncoming car. Neil escaped with minor injuries. Razzle died instantly. At the time, Hanoi Rocks were undertaking their first US tour in support of their heralded new album *Two Steps From The Move*, the



In 1984 both Prince and (right) Madonna were in the process of redefining the notion of superstardom.

world at their feet. They limped on for a while after Razzle's passing, but broken and without heart – their moment stolen from them.

On New Year's Eve 1984, Rick Allen, 21-year-old drummer with Def Leppard, was driving his Corvette C4 on a rural stretch of the A57, a few miles from his home city of Sheffield. His girlfriend, Miriam Barendsen, was in the passenger seat. A car in front of them began to slow down and then accelerate, taunting Allen. Eventually Allen accelerated to overtake, but lost control of the Corvette, hitting a dry-stone wall and overturning into a field. Flung from the car, Allen's left arm was severed at the shoulder by his seat belt.

Eighteen months later, Allen returned to the stage with Def Leppard, sitting behind an electronic drum kit custom-made to allow him to play his left-hand drum parts

with his feet. The album the band were working on, *Hysteria*, was released on August 3, 1987 and went on to sell more than 20 million copies. Such are the cruel vagaries of fate.

Twenty million sales is an amount beyond the wildest imagining of a rock band, or most anyone else, in the digital world 1984 telegraphed and begot. Forty years on, 1984 seems to exist in both sepia tint and Technicolor; at once the world as it used to be, and then again as a staging post on the way to the radical changing points of the future.

Much of its music has aged well. The best of the records from it remain indelible, hardly dated. Less so some of its more garish fashion statements – shoulder pads, leg warmers, the mullet (although even that has had a resurgence of late). Strikingly, so many of the acts that broke through during the period are prospering still, as if having to navigate the tumult of the 80s

was strengthening and emboldening. See, for example, Springsteen, U2, Madonna or Metallica.

See also the dominant corporate behemoths of today. So many of them grown up through, or else informed and shaped by, precedents and attitudes dating back to the so-called 'me' decade. As

Orwell, once again, wrote it in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "Who controls the past controls the future." 🗣️



POWER

When it came to making the follow-up to 1983's *Piece Of Mind* album, **Iron Maiden** knew they needed to come up with something a bit special. That was *Powerslave*.

Words: **Mick Wall** Photos: **Ross Halfin**



PLAY



1984

In January 1984, when Iron Maiden arrived at Le Chalet Hotel in Jersey, in the Channel Islands to begin writing material for their next album, they were five men on a mission. The previous 12 months had seen them accomplish a successful career transition from standard bearers for the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal into internationally recognised rock stars with their first headline tour of America, including prestige shows at New York's Madison Square Garden and Los Angeles's Long Beach Arena – and their first US Top 20 album with *Piece Of Mind*. Now it was time to bring the hammer down.

“For me, *Piece Of Mind* was the best album we’d done up to that point,” Maiden bassist and founder Steve Harris told me. “People still talked about [previous Maiden album] *The Number Of The Beast*, because of the title track and *Run To The Hills*, which were both big hits, and because it was Bruce’s [Dickinson, singer] first album [with Maiden]. But *Piece Of Mind* was the one for me.”

The first Maiden album to feature the classic line-up of Harris, Dickinson, guitarists Dave Murray and Adrian Smith and drummer Nicko McBrain, *Piece Of Mind* was also the first record to fully integrate Dickinson as a songwriter.

He had written *Run To The Hills*, Maiden’s first Top 10 single, but it was on *Piece Of Mind* that he began the songwriting partnership with Smith that would flourish more fully over the coming years, not least on the bugling, Dio-esque *Flight Of Icarus*, one of the album’s two chart singles.

“*Piece Of Mind* was the best album we’d done up to that point.”

— Steve Harris —

However, it was the other song Dickinson co-wrote with Smith that really demonstrated what they would bring to Maiden: *Sunlight And Steel*, which introduced an extra-large dose of rock groove to Maiden’s trademark galloping metal.

“I never saw myself as a heavy-metal speed merchant,” Smith told me. “Definitely not a shredder! I grew up listening to Eric Clapton and the sort of blues rock that bands like Zeppelin and Purple were doing. I loved rock guitar, but it had to have melody.”

“We both grew up loving *Machine Head* by Deep Purple,” Dickinson recalled. “It was definitely part of the appeal that Ian Gillan was such a great singer and Ritchie Blackmore was such an awe-inspiring guitarist, but it was the songs that mattered to us most – all the ones that got you first time, like *Smoke On The Water* and *Highway Star*. So when Adrian and I first started writing together it was natural we would gravitate more to that kind of thing.”

Steve Harris, of course, had his own mathematical notions of groove. Groove was good. Melody was welcomed, but unless it was sewn into the fabric of something more complex and high-wire, it simply didn’t resonate for ➤

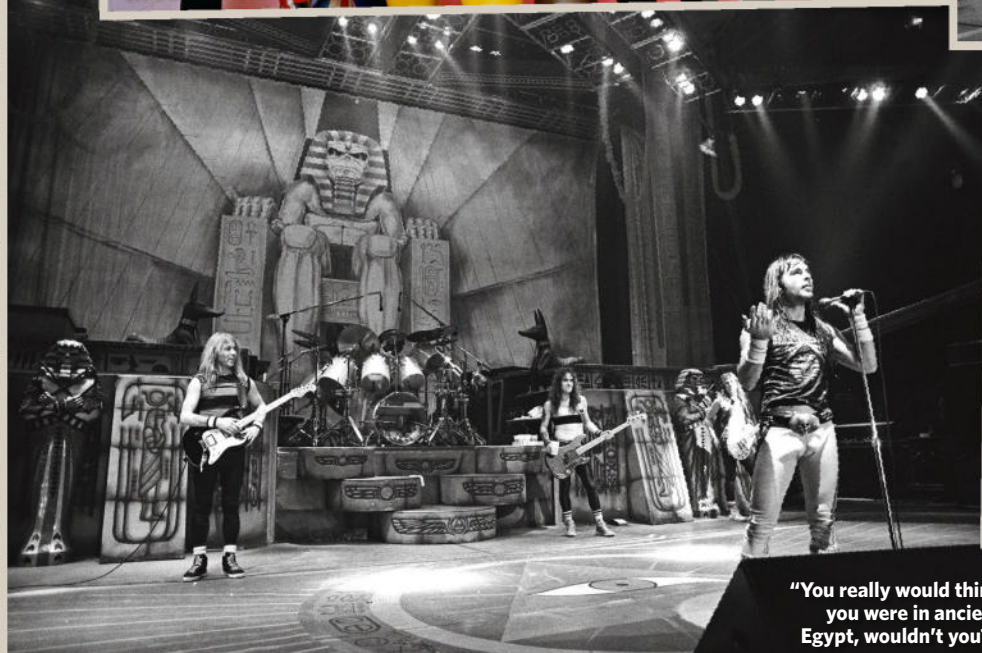
1984



The spandex years.
(It was 1984, after all.)



"It's behind you!"
Steve Harris and his
old mate Eddie.



"You really would think
you were in ancient
Egypt, wouldn't you?"



him. Harris had never really been into singles. He was into prog.

The evidence had been there from the band's debut album, in 1980, on the seven-minute-plus *Phantom Of The Opera*. It was there in excelsis on *Hallowed Be Thy Name* from *Number Of The Beast*, and as the epic grand finale to *Piece Of Mind*, in *To Tame A Land*. All epics written solely by Harris.

As founder, leader, chief songwriter and ultimate decision maker, 'Arry, as everyone except Bruce called him, ensured that Maiden's chief focus, musically, would always remain on the pure, unsullied force of the hardest, fastest, most technically acrobatic and undeniably heavy fucking metal you ever heard.

Frequent line-up changes – replacing a key guitarist, their drummer, even their singer – that would have killed the career of lesser titans seemed only to drive Maiden on. Harris was right: *Piece Of Mind* was their best album to date. All they had to do now was

follow it up with something at least as good, hopefully even better. No small task. Harris, though, refused to acknowledge that he and the band were under pressure.

"People kept talking about pressure, and looking back I can obviously see why. But the truth is I didn't really feel any at the time," he shrugged. "It wasn't arrogance. I just never

"I never saw myself as a heavy-metal speed merchant. Definitely not a shredder!"

Adrian Smith

worried about what we had done before or what other people – management, record companies, tour promoters, the music press – expected of us. Not when it came to writing new material.

"My priorities were simple. Number one, I have to like it. If I think something we've done is really good, then it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. Number two, the fans have to like it. If I like it and the fans like it, that's all that ever

matters to me. The critics can say what they like after that, it won't matter to me."

Dickinson also felt blissfully unconstrained by the weight of expectation that now sat on Maiden's shoulders. Still only 25, as he later told me: "My main memory of writing songs in Jersey is of excitement. We'd just come off a really successful world tour, and as a band we were still at peak velocity, as it were. Meanwhile, we were stuck in this out-of-season hotel. It was too bloody cold to go out, and there was nowhere to go anyway." Plus, as Harris pointed out, "the

hotel bar was open round-the-clock and it was free, so we probably spent the first week or so getting pissed!"

Another factor adding to their collective oomph was that Maiden's fifth album would be their first with the

same line-up as its predecessor. Harris always dictated that ahead of any new album, they commit to a designated writing period, which in this case was six weeks. "I don't write on the road," he explained. "I prefer to be with the band in the studio."

However, Dickinson had already come up with the song that was to give the album its title and conceptual theme: *Powerslave*. According to



Murray and Harris give it some foot-on-the-monitor action.



Smith: "He'd done the *Piece Of Mind* tour with this horrible little four-track machine full of ideas, riffs, arrangements and whatever, and the Egyptian thing was on there. Everyone he spoke to about it was really taken by the theme, so that's where we went."

Dickinson had written the song *Powerslave* alone. But it was the rock monster he and Smith came up with one night in Jersey that broke new ground for Iron Maiden.

The guitarist had been working on the riff in his hotel room when Dickinson knocked on his door. "I played him the music. He started singing, and we had *2 Minutes To Midnight*. We wrote it in about twenty minutes.

"I could knock out stuff like that all day. But it didn't always fit into the kind of fantasy-horror thing that Maiden had going for them. In the early days I needed Bruce to help me make things more how Maiden would want them. *2 Minutes To Midnight* is a perfect example of that. I had the right riff and Bruce had the right words."

With a flashing switchblade riff that could have come from the first Montrose album, and a chorus from Deep Purple's *Burn*, *2 Minutes To Midnight* was joyous, almost gleeful. Yet the

nuclear-doomsday lyrics were almost comically bleak: lots of killing 'the unborn in the womb', and warnings of 'demon's seed' and 'children torn in two'. In 1984 this was heavy metal at its zenith.

"*2 Minutes To Midnight* deals with a very gory subject," Dickinson agreed, "and some of the lyrics are distinctly unpleasant. But that's just as it should be, because [nuclear war] is a very unpleasant subject."

2 Minutes To Midnight was the obvious choice as the first single from the album, and, sure enough, it became a sizeable UK hit, fizzing to No.12. It was Harris who came up with what became the second single, a red-hot slab of peak Maiden titled *Aces High*, a soulful call-to-arms in the tradition of *Where Eagles Dare* from *Piece...*, only punchier, angrier.

Aces High was heavy artillery bass and whiz-bang, Spitfire guitars, machine-gun drums and air-raid-siren

vocals. Sure enough, that single also roared into the UK Top 20.

The most important new number begun in Jersey, however, was Harris's monumental musical retelling of the 18th-century Samuel

Taylor Coleridge gothic poem *The Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge was a notorious dope fiend, and *The Rime* is full of richly evocative verbiage about 'the wrath of spirits... from the land of mist and snow'. As a poem worth reading now, I wouldn't urge any hurry. Far too much about an albatross. Musically, however, in the hands of a dedicated metal music maestro like Harris, at 27 working at his absolute peak, Coleridge's trippy peregrinations took on a whole new dimension of gothic splendour – and horror.

The band sketched out another handful of songs in Jersey, but it wasn't until they arrived at Compass Points Studios in Nassau, in the Bahamas, with producer Martin Birch (or 'Pool Bully', as he would be credited) that things really began to cook.

It was clear from the start that the album's strength would centre on *2 Minutes To*

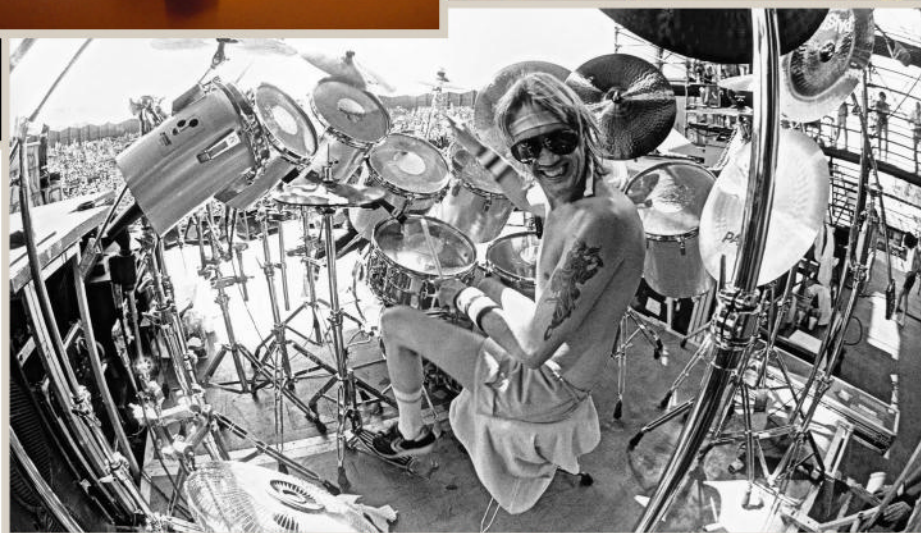


"*Powerslave* felt like the natural rounding off of *Piece Of Mind* and *Number Of The Beast*, that whole era."

Bruce Dickinson



Troopers on parade: (clockwise) Adrian Smith, Dave Murray, Bruce Dickinson, Nicko McBrain.



Midnight, *Aces High*, *Powerslave* and *Rime Of The Ancient Mainer*. Of the other four tracks, only Harris's suitably swashbuckling *The Duellists*, inspired by the 1977 Ridley Scott film of the same name, really cut muster, such was the elevated standard the band had now set themselves. Bill Hobbs, who had choreographed the film's fight scenes, coincidentally founded the fencing club of which Dickinson – an Olympic-level fencer – was a member. Dickinson's own *Flash Of The Blade* just about qualified, too, but surely one song about sword fighting per album was enough? No Maiden fan's life was going to be any the poorer, either, for having skipped Dickinson and Smith's blustering *Back In The Village* – revisiting the theme of *The Prisoner* from the *Number Of The Beast* album, only far less interestingly. Dickinson finished the lyrics for *2 Minutes To Midnight* only once they had begun recording in earnest in the studio. Everyone could hear straight away that this was another Maiden classic in the mould of early riff monsters like *Sanctuary* and *Wrathchild*.

Dickinson's personal best, however, was to be found in the mesmerising seven-minute title track, on which his use of Middle Eastern melodies, albeit rendered on a screaming electric guitar, and Egyptian mythology – both Horus, the falcon god, and his father Osiris, ruler of the underworld, are name-checked in the very first verse – created a brilliantly apt metaphor for the occult power of the rock gods, themselves 'slaves to the power of death'.

As Dickinson later explained: "*Powerslave* is more than just about the ancient Egyptians. It was also about us, the band, and what was happening to us. I'd been on a non-stop roller-coaster since joining the band two years before.

The tours were getting longer and crazier, and the expectations around us were astronomical by the time we came to *Powerslave*. We were slaves to the power, whether musically or in terms of just chasing success. In fact, we were both.

"There was an ironic message, too, in the lyrics. When you had amplifiers powering a big PA system, you had ones just generating power and nothing else, and they were called slave

have complete mastery of the moment. In fact, Smith told me he was so horribly hungover when he recorded his part, "it nearly killed me". He recalled how the night before, he and the band "were having a bit of a late night in the studio". "We were partying and doing guitar overdubs at the same time. Which turned more into just partying, to be honest. I went to bed fairly drunk at about three a.m., not expecting to

work the next morning."

Producer Martin Birch usually never called anyone into the studio before noon. This time he phoned the still delirious Smith at 10am. "He said come down and do some more work. My head was pounding, but I went down to the studio. It turned out the

reason Martin was ready to go was because he hadn't been to bed at all yet."

Birch had stayed up the rest of the night with singer Robert Palmer, who was about to make his fourth album at Compass Point. At the time, Palmer virtually lived on the island. No slouch himself when it came to "the playboy lifestyle", as Birch laughingly recalled, when Palmer heard his mate Martin was back in

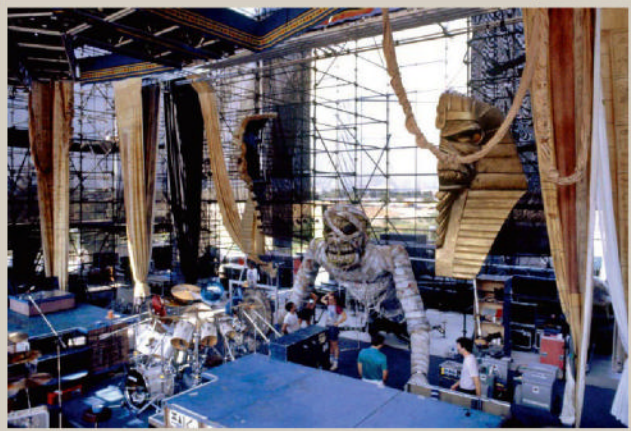
"I played Bruce the music. He started singing, and we had *2 Minutes To Midnight*. We wrote it in about twenty minutes."

Adrian Smith

amplifiers, because they were just slaves to the big amplifier. They were, literally, power slaves."

The track also included an unexpectedly moving guitar interlude where Dave Murray and Adrian Smith entwine their solos, going from silk desert evening breezes at the start, to full-thrust adventures among the pharaohs and pyramids as the guitars lead the band into pure metal mayhem. It sounds like both guitarists

1984



"We're gonna need a bigger stage..."

the studio with Maiden he'd come to say hi to some fellow Brits.

Smith: "So the two of them are sat behind the desk as I walk in. They said: 'Come on, then, what do you want to do?' And I said *Powerslave*."

A great singer, Palmer was also a formidable producer in his own right.

"Seeing him sitting there with Martin, waiting for me to play, I was pretty nervous, I have to admit. But I just went for the solo. It came off alright, and Robert Palmer really liked it too."

The twice-as-nice paradise they found themselves in in Nassau certainly lent itself to all sorts of shenanigans during the band's almost four-month stay.

Nicko McBrain told me that when he'd joined the band the year before, "everybody with the exception of Steve and Bruce was just fucking nuts! We were just going absolutely fucking crazy on everything we could possibly get our hands on! Nine times out of ten it was in the booze department, but, you know, we'd have a bit of 'taboo' and a bit of 'yahoo' and a little bit of livening up here and there."

ultra-highs he sought lay within the very fabric of Maiden's music. His music. Something he took very seriously, no fucking around.

Which is how he was able to turn his cathedral-like version of Coleridge's *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner* into such a monumental musical achievement. Even Smith, who admitted he was somewhat out of his comfort zone as a musician with such a demanding piece of work, recalled: "When Steve put *Mariner* forward I just knew we had to do it, because I'd never heard anyone do anything like it before. I remember how when we recorded it in the Bahamas, Steve had to hang the lyrics from the top of the wall all the way to the floor, there were so many for Bruce to learn. Steve was so fired up about it he convinced everyone else. It's so dramatic, how can you not like it?"

For generations of Iron Maiden fans, *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner* remains the most fully realised of all Harris's

"People kept talking about pressure, and looking back I can see why. But the truth is I didn't feel any at the time."

Steve Harris

Not Steve Harris, though. Not in 1984 and not since. The

cinematically epic rock masterpieces. There would be others – the eight-minute-plus *Alexander The Great* on their next album, *Somewhere In Time*, the almost 10-minute-long title track to their 1988 album *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*; and there had been others before, such as *Phantom Of The Opera*, *To Tame A Land* – but none that captured so eerily or so definitively the strange, other-worldly place Harris summoned forth in his version of *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*.

A masterful evocation of a complicated mood-piece that would become the dramatic cornerstone of the Maiden live spectacle for many years to come, it was also prophetic in terms of Maiden's musical evolution, and that of heavy metal itself, with the coming wave of thrash- and speed-metal bands (led by Metallica,

led by Lars Ulrich, who confessed in his youth to being "the biggest Maiden fan on the planet") all drawing inspiration from its outlandish disregard for musical norms.

Indeed, *Rime* was so layered, so multi-sectioned and





"Do you think we should open it? I mean, remember *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*..."

MOSHE BRAHA/PHANTOM

almost scientifically constructed, it became the blueprint for what just a few years later became known as progressive metal. Dream Theater, arch proponents of prog-metal, once described their early musical explorations as a fusion of *Powerslave* and Rush's *Hemispheres*.

"It's great that people love the more straightforward rock stuff, cos so do I," said Harris. "But I know a lot of our fans checked out Coleridge just on the strength of our version of *Rime*. For me, knowing lots of kids in their teens discovered Coleridge's work through our music is amazing. It was the same with *To Tame A Land* on *Piece*... So many people told me that after hearing it they went and read *Dune* by Frank Herbert, which inspired it."

Equally impressive was the ancient-Egyptian motif that the album sleeve and stage show would be based on. Dickinson's title song of power-lust among the pyramids had inspired Maiden's long-time sleeve designer Derek Riggs to create his most sophisticated artwork yet: Eddie's ghastly immortal visage replacing that of the ancient pharaohs, as he sits, Sphinx-like, on his enormous desert throne, a monument to megalomania, as self-absorbed as the Sun. On stage it was simply a question of bringing the album sleeve into three-dimensional life, topped off with a 30-foot mummified Eddie, eyes shooting fire. "Cos you think of Egypt and the pyramids, and really, how do you portray that without looking like Hawkwind?" said Harris. "But it was probably the best stage show we ever did."

Dave Murray later told me that he remembered the *Powerslave* album as "the moment when we first realised we'd have to start taking things a bit more seriously". "That was that start," he said, "of us being aware we weren't just young tearaways any more."

In 1984, with *Powerslave*, the band had begun their metamorphosis into seasoned pros. In this respect also, Maiden's fifth album would be a watershed in their career; the moment when, ready or not, the boys in the band were forced to step up and become men.

"Knowing lots of kids discovered Coleridge's work through our music is amazing."

— Steve Harris —

"It felt sort of like we had got to the top of the mountain with that one," said Harris. "We had never really felt that way before. Everything up to then had been about climbing the mountain. With *Powerslave* it felt like we were looking out over the rest of the world."

Released in September 1984, *Powerslave* was Iron Maiden's second British No.1 album, and their second million-selling album in the US, where it reached No.12. It also heralded the start of World Slavery, the biggest, most successful tour they would ever undertake.

"It was the best tour we ever did and it was

the worst," said Dickinson. "And it nearly finished us off for good."

Ultimately, *Powerslave* was a gloriously packaged, if somewhat patchy, collection of material: four absolute epics; four average joes.

"I think this album is superior to the previous one," Dickinson told me. "We took what was best in *Piece Of Mind*, while stressing the aggressive style of *Number Of The Beast*."

Harris felt the opposite. Looking back, he told me: "I still think of *Powerslave* as a really, really strong album. I think there are four stand-out tracks on there, all of which we did live,

and that's *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*, *2 Minutes To Midnight*, *Powerslave* itself and *Aces High*. Of the other tracks... there is some good ones. There's *The Duellists*, which I still think is good, you know, its musically interesting. But if you put *The Duellists* against *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner* and *2 Minutes To Midnight*... I mean, it's just no way. But they weren't filler songs or anything

like that, I just think those four particular songs were really strong."

Piece Of Mind would remain Harris's favourite Iron Maiden album for some years, until they made *Seventh Son Of A Seven Son* in 1988.

Years later, Dickinson said: "*Powerslave* felt like the sort of natural rounding off of *Piece Of Mind* and *Number Of The Beast*, that whole sort of era. I remember listening back to it and I thought: 'Um... this is great, but I don't know how much more we can do of records that sound in this kind of vein.'"

Um... Time would tell... ❶

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1984



GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/CONCERN

DEEP PURPLE

PERFECT STRANGERS

The reunited MkII returned with neither a wimper nor a bang, but something in between.



Bangkok. Barcelona. Beijing. Berlin. Bedford?!

Deep Purple have always been a contrary band but this is pushing contrariness to the limit. It's October 1984 and I'm travelling in cackling PR Roland Hyams's knackered old Saab 900 up the M1 to the markedly unremarkable capital of Bedfordshire, namely Bedford. My mission is to interview all five members of the reunited Deep Purple Mk II. In a pub. In Bedford.

The official word is that they want to rehearse their live show in an unassuming location, away from big-city scrutiny. So it is that I find myself loitering inside a Berni Inn (Google it), with the scent of cremated steaks and exotic gateaux lingering in the air.

Hyams ushers me into an annexe full of mock Tudor beams, horse brasses and paintings of fox-hunting scenes. There are no tables or chairs; no laminated menus offering Succulent Golden Fried Fillets Of Plaice. Instead the place is packed to the gills with musical instruments and amplifiers. Thick woollen blankets are stapled to window frames to absorb noise and keep Bedford's glistening sunlight at bay. Tellingly, there is a plaque above the entrance that reads: 'The Antico Room'.

Now, a lot of water has flowed under the bludgeon bridge since Mk II's acrimonious break-up in June 1973, shortly after the release of the *Who Do We Think We Are* album. The NWOBHM has come and gone. The likes of Mötley Crüe and Metallica – plus a bloodthirsty new combo called W.A.S.P. – are currently in the ascendancy. That's not to mention a recently released album titled *Purple Rain* (no relation).

Still, to compare Messrs Gillan, Blackmore, Lord, Glover and Paice to the aforementioned plaque – i.e. to describe them as 'antiques' – is harsh (Jon Lord is the eldest of the quintet, at 43.) Despite the lure of filthy lucre – each member reportedly pocketing \$1 million to partake in the reunion – the vibe in the Bedford badlands is overwhelmingly positive. Purple have a point to prove; a burning desire to inject a touch of class into mid-80s rock'n'roll.

As Lord states: "Most of the modern-day metal bands have taken Purple, Sabbath and Zeppelin as mentors, starting points... but in doing so have somehow become very insular and narrow-minded. They don't seem to be going anywhere."

Ritchie Blackmore adds: "Without wishing to revel in my own artistic values, there is an *art* to

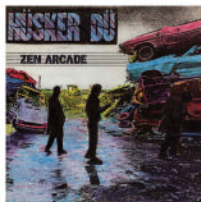
playing heavy music. It's no use just being *loud*. There's a trick to it. There are dynamics and certain progressions that you can play. You don't hear much of that today."

So to *Perfect Strangers*, Mk II's comeback album. Does it live up to the hype? Opening with *Knocking At Your Back Door*, the band step into their groove with deceptive ease and nary a creak of the knee joints. The dense *Under The Gun* follows, *Nobody's Home* keeps the temperature at boiling point, and *Mean Streak* recalls the lightning-fast glories of *Speed King*. The brooding and, yes, Zep-like title track is the undisputed highlight of Side Two. It remains a mainstay of Purple's live set-list to this day. But – here's a question for ya – is there a single song here to rival the mighty *Woman From Tokyo*, from 1973's maligned *Who Do We Think We Are*? Let the discussion commence.

To conclude, *Perfect Strangers* was, and remains, neither a major revelation nor crushing disappointment. It reached No.6 in the UK chart, No.17 in the US. The classic Purple line-up returned not with a bang, not with a whimper, but with something in between. We'd say a 'wang', but that would be a tad too Ted Nugent for comfort. **GB**



HÜSKER DÜ ZEN ARCADE



Formed in 1979, Minnesota power trio Hüsker Dü came up through the early-80s hardcore punk scene and gained a following in 1983 when their EP *Metal Circus*, with its yin-yang combination of ferocity and melody and mostly two-minute tracks, started picking up college radio play.

Then when *Zen Arcade* landed in July 1984 it caused a mighty, alt.rock splash. Although it included some of their most thrilling punk rock speed-rides, it was a hugely ambitious double-vinyl concept album.

Written and recorded quickly, and with most of the basic tracks put down in one take, *Zen Arcade* was based on a personal rite-of-passage story, from youth to manhood. It encompassed acoustic strums, piano miniatures, Indian-inspired psychedelia, and the 14-minute instrumental *Reoccurring Dreams*. Both drummer/vocalist Grant Hart and guitarist/vocalist Bob Mould were evolving as songwriters, and they showed they could turn out Beatles-y melodies and sing rough-hewn harmonies.

In 1983, Mould told Big Black guitarist/vocalist Steve Albini – then writing for *Matter* fanzine and later to become the 90s' go-to punk and alt.rock producer – that Hüsker Dü were expanding beyond punk and “going to try to do something bigger than anything like rock’n’roll”. He later likened *Zen Arcade* to a stage play or a movie.

The band looked like a bunch of misfits, but they enjoyed a rare musical chemistry. Hart pushed hard on the beat with busy snare rolls, his playing underpinned by Greg Norton’s limber bass, and Mould summoned an incendiary sound from his guitar.

Hüsker Dü never lost their edge and intensity but went on to make a series of more focused, commercially successful albums culminating in their swansong, 1987’s *Warehouse: Songs And Stories*. It was another double and their most streamlined, pop-oriented and high profile release. The band split in early 1988, but it signposted the way to Mould’s music with the highly regarded Sugar and Hart’s with Nova Mob.

Zen Arcade stands as Hüsker Dü’s most original statement. It influenced the music of Nirvana, Foo Fighters, Pixies, (who famously advertised for a bass player “Into Hüsker Dü and Peter, Paul And Mary”), R.E.M., Dinosaur Jr, Green Day, Melvins, Queens Of The Stone Age, and virtually any band from the 80s onwards who allied good tunes with seriously overdriven guitars. Hüsker Dü also helped establish the fashionability of the plaid shirt; alas they had less success with the waxed ‘tache. **MB**



METALLICA RIDE THE LIGHTNING



Metallica weren’t just expanding their musical boundaries on their game-changing second album. Lyrically they were rising above the juvenile concerns of *Kill ‘Em All*, engaging with political and literary topics. They tackled the destructive potential of the arms race on

Fight Fire With Fire, and capital punishment on *Ride The Lightning* itself; *Call Of Ktulu* wore the influence of horror author HP Lovecraft, while *For Whom The Bell Tolls* took its title and subject matter from Ernest Hemingway’s 1940 Spanish Civil War novel of the same name. *Metal Militia* it wasn’t.

Metallica’s *Ride The Lightning* album was released on July 27, 1984. The majority of their fans were thrilled by the growth that had taken the band from the adolescent thrash of the debut to this newer, more complex sound. Importantly, it also attracted the attention of some influential people. One was Michael Alago, a rising young A&R guy at Elektra Records, the hip label that had once been home to The Doors, The Stooges and the MC5. Alago was so impressed with the album that he persuaded his superiors to let him try to sign Metallica.

“I saw them at that Roseland Ballroom show,” Alago recalls. “I knew there were other A&R people there. So basically I bolted the door shut, and wound up being the only one backstage early in the evening. I said: ‘Look, I’m freaking out. I love you guys and you have to come to my office tomorrow.’”

“Well, they got there bright and early. I ordered Chinese food and beer for them, and we just sat there and talked. I think they liked that I was their age and that I was enthusiastic and that I’d take the right care of them. And I did, from day one.”

Thirty years on, *Ride The Lightning* remains Metallica’s most pivotal album. It was a gear change for the band themselves and for thrash metal as a whole, proving there was an audience for both outside the sweaty clubs of the Bay Area. Their hard-core fans might not have liked its more ‘commercial’ stylistic diversions, but the bands that followed certainly did – suddenly, every other thrash album started with an acoustic intro or had a weighty, introspective ballad in the middle of it. Even Metallica themselves ripped it off. *Master Of Puppets*, their big breakthrough album, followed exactly the same structural pattern when it came to pacing, from the opening thrasher to the complex instrumental towards the end. *Ride The Lightning* was more than just a stepping stone – without it, *Master Of Puppets* wouldn’t exist in the shape the world knows it. **JW**



BILL KENNEDY/GETTY

THE CARS HEARTBEAT CITY



I always wanted our songs to pop and kick,” The Cars’ Ric Ocasek told me in 2005. And on the band’s fifth album, *Heartbeat City*, they did just that.

You might think of the pop in Pop Art terms: bold colours, sleek lines; bang-room choruses, the kick of a lyrical subversion that sneaks up on you, hinting at fragile mental states, with elliptical drug references and some kinky S&M.

Of that contrast in his songs, Ocasek said: “One kind of holds you down to earth, while the other takes you somewhere else.”

After running the album-tour track annually from 1978-81, The Cars were looking to go somewhere else. The title of their fourth album, *Shake It Up*, hinted at just what they needed to do.

The first major shake-up for *Heartbeat City* was bringing in producer Mutt Lange, best known for his high-gloss hit-making on AC/DC’s *Back In Black* and Def Leppard’s *Pyromania*. “I thought that the combination of the sound he gets and what we do would mingle pretty nicely,” Ocasek said in 1984. “Mutt’s never done a band like us; he’s done a lot of heavy metal. But I thought the two could mix.”

While there’s an obvious Lange touch in the massive crunch of *Magic* and *You Might Think*, much of the album veers towards the moodier sounds of *Drive* and *Why Can’t I Have You*, forfeiting guitars for keyboards. (Ocasek’s 1982 solo *Beatitude* also provided a synth-y signpost).

Keyboard player Greg Hawkes said at the time: “You would expect that for a producer with his background there would be more guitar and less synthesiser. But I think Mutt was really intrigued with working with keyboards. It was a way for him to do something different.”

Hawkes set aside his usual analog synths for the then-groundbreaking Fairlight – the first digital sampling keyboard. It took him a month just to learn how to use it, and then at least 10 hours per song to prepare the programming. “You’d get a part, but then maybe it sounds stiff, so you have to try programming it a different way,” Hawkes recalled. “It’s not easy to change a sound, as with the twist of a knob. It takes a while to get it right.”

After eight months in the studio, they got it right. Released on March 13, 1984, *Heartbeat City* went No.1 in the US, No.25 in the UK, with six Top 40 singles and high-rotation videos on MTV.

When, 20 years on, asked what he thought of *Heartbeat City*, Ocasek said: “At the time, maybe it didn’t sound like a Cars record. But now it does, because the vocals are the same. But at the time, we needed a change. A change is always good.” **BDM**



TONY MOTT/RAH/ANLON

TWISTED SISTER STAY HUNGRY



Twisted Sister had their work cut out following the success of their first major-label album, 1983’s *You Can’t Stop Rock ‘N’ Roll*. After a decade’s worth of gigs on the East Coast’s Tri-State area of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, the band’s critically acclaimed visits to the

UK snagged them a deal with Atlantic, despite American label boss Doug Morris calling the band “the worst fucking piece of shit in the world”.

Accordingly, going into the making of *Stay Hungry* – which would go on to shift six million copies worldwide, fuelled by the group’s charismatic videos (with single *We’re Not Gonna Take It* and its video, in particular, making them megastars in their native United States) – wasn’t without its obstacles.

At the time, frontman Dee Snider admitted that producer Tom Werman wasn’t top of the band’s wish list, despite Werman’s reputation from working on Mötley Crüe’s *Shout At The Devil*. “I think our first choice for *Stay Hungry* had been Bob Ezrin [Alice Cooper/Kiss/Pink Floyd],” guitarist Jay Jay French said, but he was unavailable. “Failing that, we wanted Mack or Roy Thomas Baker [Queen]. The idea of using Tom came from [then Atlantic records president] Doug Morris. We were finally starting to get some respect from Atlantic after we sold 100,000 copies of *You Can’t Stop Rock ‘N’ Roll*, and in the Christmas week of 1983 Doug told me he had been mistaken about us.”

The entire *Stay Hungry* album was actually written during the sessions for *You Can’t Stop Rock ‘N’ Roll* at Sol Studios in Reading, Berkshire, owned by Jimmy Page. Being away from loved ones placed everyone under an extra degree of pressure, although it enabled Twisted Sister to pursue their goal.

“It was a great time for the band, but sometimes a very lonely one,” Snider told us. “I didn’t have the money to fly my wife and child in to be with me, so I wrote *The Price* about the way I was feeling. It came to me in the bathroom at Jimmy Page’s studio. It was the only place that Satan wouldn’t be hanging out.”

In 2004 Twisted Sister re-recorded *Stay Hungry*, renaming it *Still Hungry*. “When we got back together, we had twenty years of perspective,” French reflected at the time. “We thought: ‘God, this record sounds terrible. It would be so great to re-record it.’” **DL**

1984



THE REPLACEMENTS

LET IT BE

It aimed to subvert the underground scene they were in, but instead the scene praised it.

Prior to The Replacements making *Let It Be*, the basic blueprint for American alt.rock was set in stone. It was unrelentingly fast, loud and hardcore, as embodied by the likes of The Replacements' Minneapolis hometown rivals Hüsker Dü, Black Flag, Minor Threat and many more.

The Replacements had started out along the very same path. Their debut album for local indie label Twin Tone, 1981's *Sorry Ma, Forgot To Take Out the Trash*, was a mess of breakneck songs, all conceived in the basement of frontman Paul Westerberg's parents' house. That much might have suited guitarist Bob Stinson, his younger brother Tommy Stinson on bass and drummer Chris Mars just fine, but it was too confining for Westerberg. "I never really liked being part of a group or a team," he said in 1984. "I like to be alone."

His band's third full album was Westerberg's manifesto writ large. Titling it after a Beatles record spoke volumes. Westerberg was in thrall to the classic rock and pop canon, although his version was filtered through the prism of The Replacements' chaotic, drunken modus operandi, with songs that spoke of teenage ennui and suffocating sexual frustration.

With The Replacements having toured with

R.E.M. the previous summer, their guitarist Peter Buck was lined up to produce *Let It Be*. Typically, in the event Westerberg didn't have enough songs together by the time Buck was ready for them, and the moment passed.

Westerberg ended up overseeing the production instead, and Buck's contribution amounted to a guitar part on one track, opener *I Will Dare*. No matter. In total, *Let It Be* threw open the doors for the entire American underground rock movement.

From the surging jangle of *I Will Dare* and on through 10 more ragged but gloriously tuneful and heartfelt songs, Westerberg effectively tore up the rulebook. *Let It Be* revelled in its roots, but then gloried in breaking free from and confounding those same traditions. The furiously charging *We're Going Out*, *Androgynous* with its rolling piano, the bittersweet lament of *Sixteen Blue*, a desolate re-imagining of Kiss's *Black Diamond*... these were songs that were all at once so tumbledown in their rendering they

were forever on the verge of collapse and yet heroically vaulting in their scope and ambition.

Upon its release, *Let it Be* was met with glowing reviews from within the very same underground it sought to subvert. Writing in Seattle free sheet *The Rocket*, future Sub Pop label co-founder Bruce Pavitt opined: "[It]

could well shoot these regional boys into the national mainstream." It so nearly did. Major label Sire snapped up The Replacements for their next record, 1985's *Tim*. It and the three albums that followed hinted at greatness, without ever quite matching *Let it Be* or breaking The Replacements out. They were always too wilful, too self-

defeating to make like R.E.M.

The band finally fell apart around Westerberg in 1991. Bob Stinson drank himself to an early death four years later. By then Westerberg had already written his own epitaph, on another of *Let it Be*'s standout tracks. 'I'm so dissatisfied,' he sang on *Unsatisfied*, howling himself hoarse. 'I'm so unsatisfied.' **PR**



1984

THE MONSTER OF ALL MONSTERS

With a heavyweight line-up including Ozzy Osbourne, AC/DC, Van Halen, Mötley Crüe and more, **Monsters Of Rock 1984** is still revered in festival folklore, seen by many as the best, in large part due to Van Halen's incendiary (and ultimately foreshadowing) performance.

Words: Paul Elliott

In 1997, 10 years before David Lee Roth rejoined Van Halen, the singer recalled in his autobiography *Crazy From The Heat* a nasty little episode that occurred some time around the early 80s, when he overheard a conversation between Eddie Van Halen, his brother Alex and an unnamed music-business figure. Roth wrote of this in the bluntest of terms: "I once heard somebody say to the Van Halens: 'You guys play the music; the Jew sells it.' Well, you're fucking right."

Those words spoke volumes about the dynamic in the band during that era. And for British rock fans there was no greater exhibition of Roth's showmanship than when Van Halen played at the Monsters Of Rock festival at Donington Park on August 18, 1984.

When video footage of this performance resurfaced online in the summer of 2023, VH diehards proclaimed it "the Holy Grail". A pro shoot from side-stage, it includes the whole set, except for a few minor cuts, plus backstage scenes from before and after. It captures all the raw power of the band; the heated atmosphere generated in the 65,000-strong audience; the element of chaos as a small number of delirious fans made it onto the stage to make a grab at their heroes. Above all else, it captures the wise-cracking, high-kicking David Lee Roth at the very top of his game.

"As a frontman, Roth was untouchable that day," says promoter Andy Copping, who saw the show as a 20-year-old, and has run the Download festival at Castle Donington for the past 20 years in his role as Executive President of UK Touring at Live Nation. "The way that Roth

interacted with the audience was just brilliant. As the master of ceremonies, the orchestrator, he was the king."

But on that beautiful summer's day, as Roth ruled that stage, there was unrest behind the scenes. Within Van Halen's inner circle there was a growing sense that a split with the singer was inevitable, and for photographer Ross Halfin, working for the band at Donington and privy to what was going on backstage, the signs

"As a frontman, Roth was untouchable that day."

Promoter Andy Copping

were clear. "It was always a bit weird with Van Halen," Halfin says. "Roth was sort of separate from the rest of them. I didn't notice this on the first tours I did with them, but I certainly did by 1984."

Van Halen had come a long way since they first toured in the UK in the late 70s, when Roth famously declared that Lewisham, in south

London, was "the rock'n'roll capital of the world!". But at Donington the party was coming to an end. A British audience was seeing Van Halen with David Lee Roth for the last time.

Forty years on, the Monsters Of Rock show of 1984 is still remembered as the best Monsters of them all. The bill was incredible, with AC/DC headlining over Van Halen, Ozzy Osbourne and an impressive supporting bill featuring guitar hero Gary Moore, Californian rockers Y&T, German headbangers Accept, and, making their first appearance in the UK, the hottest new band out of Los Angeles, Mötley Crüe.

This was Monsters Of Rock in its classic form: one day, one stage, seven bands you *had* to see. At least that was the idea.

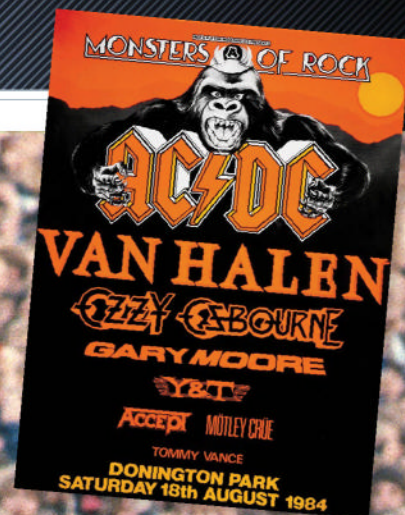
Most of those 65,000 people got there in time to see Mötley Crüe, and as Tim McMillan from Kettering remembers it: "The Crüe were loud, dumb, crude, with this snotty arrogance – everything that *Kerrang!* had promised!" But some people arrived late, this writer included. Eighteen at the time, I was en route from Guildford to Donington with my mate Graham

and 50 other denim-clad rock fans on a double-decker bus, which got hit by a passing car on the M1. Fortunately no one was seriously injured, but our bus was stuck on the hard shoulder for an hour, maybe two. By the time we walked on the grassy slopes of Donington Park, the Crüe were long gone and Accept were on stage, banging out their homoerotic anthem *London Leatherboys*.

Andy Copping arrived even later. Having spent the early afternoon DJ-ing a rock set ➤



Ready to thrill – and kill: (l-r) Eddie Van Halen, Alex Van Halen, Michael Anthony, David Lee Roth.



A kind of magic: David Lee Roth fronting Van Halen at Donington '84.

1984



"Are you ready to rock?!" Angus Young with AC/DC at Donington '84.

at a club named Lazers in his home town of Lincoln, he got to Donington just in time to see Y&T end their set with a hapless roadie dressed up as a sort of robotic knight in armour. "I was gutted to miss Mötley Crüe," he says. "But there was no way I was going to miss Van Halen. I'd seen them in 1980 at Leicester De Montfort Hall, and it was completely life-changing for me."

The 1984 Monsters Of Rock, more than any other before, had been hyped up as a battle of the guitar heroes – principally Gary Moore, Eddie Van Halen and Angus Young. As Copping recalls: "Gary Moore was on fire that day." Moore threw down the gauntlet with a blistering rendition of *White Knuckles*, his answer to Eddie's *Eruption*, and an epic version of his signature ballad *Parisienne Walkways* in which he held one high note that seemed to last an eternity.

The afternoon sky was a clear blue – save for the barrages of plastic beer bottles, most of them half-filled with piss, that flew overhead regularly as a form of entertainment between bands.

In sweltering heat, Ozzy Osbourne took to the stage. With a band that featured another emerging guitar hero, Jake E Lee, successor to the late Randy Rhoads, and a set that included *Crazy Train*, *Bark At The Moon* and Black Sabbath classics *Iron Man* and *Paranoid*, a shirtless and wild-eyed and clapping Ozzy overran his allotted time in what Copping describes as "a monumental performance".

Ozzy was a hard act to follow, but Van Halen were not to be upstaged. They were on a high following their US No.1 hit *Jump*, and a multimillion-selling album, 1984, that would also have made it to the top were it not for what turned out to be the biggest-selling album of all

time, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, on which Eddie Van Halen had ripped it up with the solo in *Beat It*.

The Donington crowd was buzzing, heaving, as Van Halen's set kicked off with an explosion of wild noise, Eddie bent over his 'Frankenstein' guitar, his fingers a blur, Alex Van Halen pounding the drums and Michael Anthony thumping his bass caveman-style. Eddie's trousers were as loud as the noise – banana-yellow with black tiger stripes. But the real razzle-dazzle came from David Lee Roth as he danced out to centre stage wearing a wide-

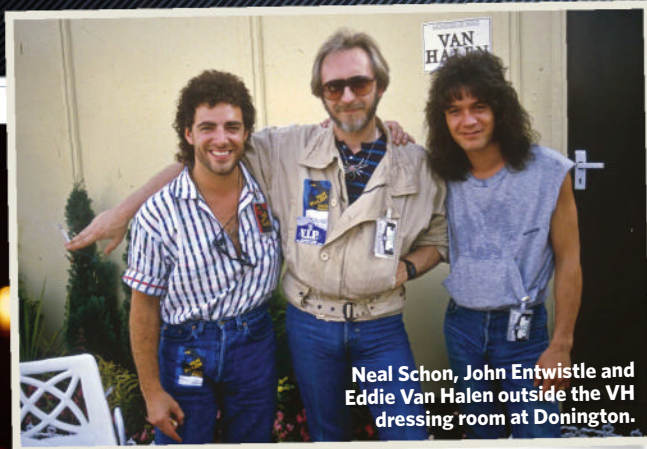
"Once you know the politics of a band it's very off-putting."

— Photographer Ross Halfin —

brimmed hat and a glittering coat over skintight gym-bunny pants and vest. Arms raised like a prize fighter stepping into the ring, Diamond Dave sparkled in the sunshine.

Eddie's guitar tech Rudy Leiren delivered the high-volume introduction. "Alright, Donington! Are you ready? For the first time in five years, the mighty Van Halen!" In all this excitement, Leiren had his timing a year out. The band's last UK tour was in 1980. But no matter. The heavyweight champions of American rock were here again at last.

With Leiren's voice still echoing, Eddie cranked out the



Neal Schon, John Entwistle and Eddie Van Halen outside the VH dressing room at Donington.



It's show time! Ozzy Osbourne and Mötley Crüe frontman Vince Neil.

riff to *Unchained*. It was all too much for one young woman standing close to the stage beside Mark Blake, then a 19-year-old university student from London, now an author and *Classic Rock*, contributor. He recalls watching as a teenage blonde was overwhelmed by the sheer force of David Lee Roth's charisma. "She let out a scream and then just keeled over," he says. "But she was back on her feet by the end of the song."

As the band tore into their second number, *Hot For Teacher*, they were flying, Roth throwing off his coat as they turned up the heat, Eddie breaking into a broad grin as they switched from frenetic all-out attack to teasing little breaks. But with the drum solo that followed, some momentum was lost – their first mistake, and not the last.

"If anything, the show was too solo-heavy," Andy Copping says. "Michael Anthony's bass solo was just boring and pointless, and even Eddie's solo didn't connect with me the way I wanted it to."

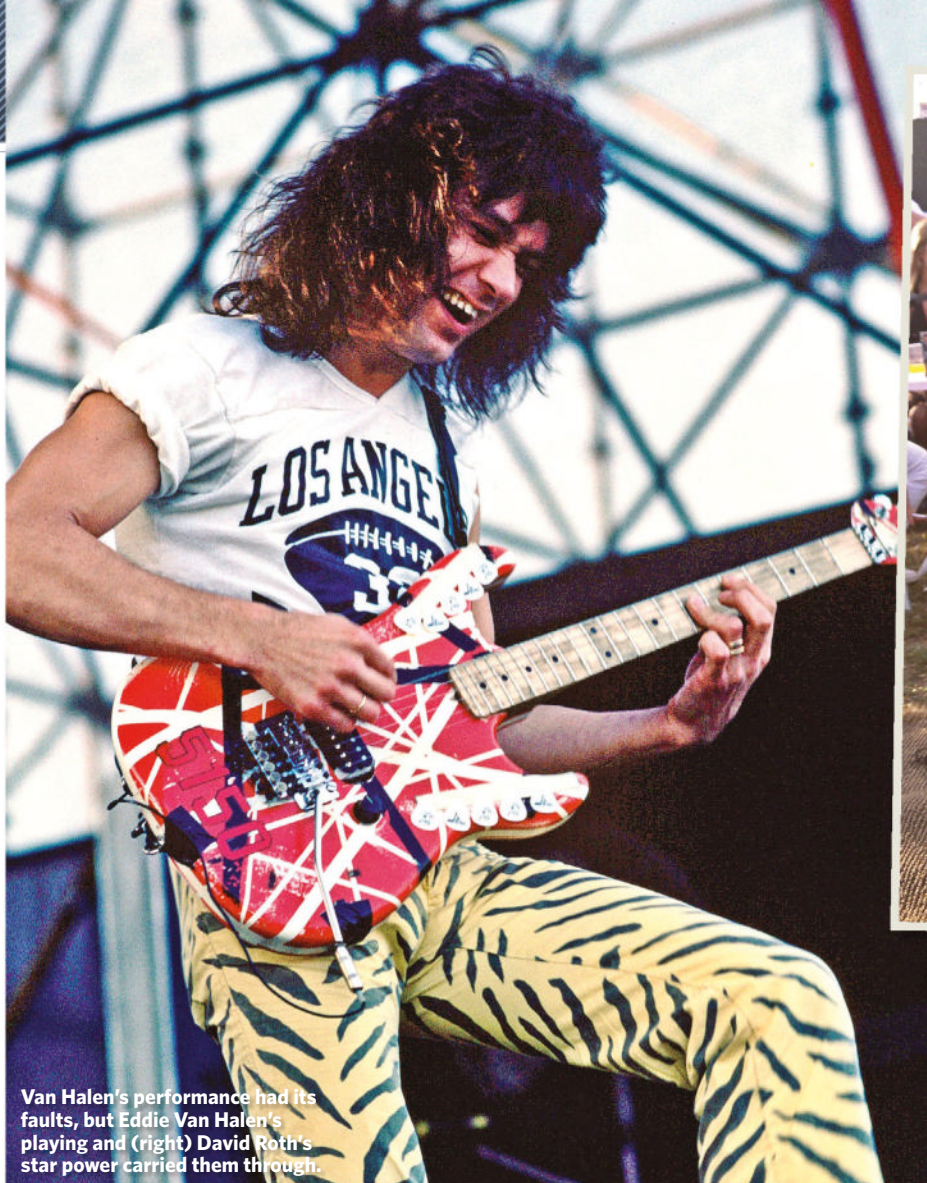
The latter lasted for more than 10 minutes, and felt like twice that. Everybody knew that Eddie was a genius. He didn't need to labour the point.

But even if they dropped the ball in these moments, the songs, and Roth's star power, carried them to victory. *Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love* was a glaring omission, but there were two other zingers from the debut album in *On Fire* and *Runnin' With The Devil*, the heavy hitters *House Of Pain* and *Everybody Wants Some!!*, the joyous *Little Guitars*, a playful version of Roy Orbison's classic (*Oh*) *Pretty Woman*, and a sizzling *Panama*. The peak moment came as the sun was setting and Eddie got behind his keyboard for *Jump*, the track with which he beat the synth-pop bands at their own game.

In the spiritual home of heavy metal, all tribalism was forgotten as massed ranks of rockers bounced and jumped with carefree abandon. And it was Roth, of course, who jumped highest. "When he stood on the drum riser, we all knew what was coming," Copping says. "He leaps up and does the fucking splits and hits the ground with his arms in the air. Magic!"

The image of an airborne Roth would become burned into the collective memory of everyone





Van Halen's performance had its faults, but Eddie Van Halen's playing and (right) David Roth's star power carried them through.



who watched that Van Halen that day. Equally unforgettable were the raps he delivered between and during the songs. "Don't stick your tongue out at me unless you're gonna use it!" "If you throw something at me I'm gonna come down there and fuck your girlfriend!" And an old favourite: "Look at all the people here tonight!" Copping still remembers every word. "All those lines are completely embedded in my skull," he says. "I would quote them like lines from *The Young Ones* or *Fawlty Towers*! For me, Roth's on-stage banter has never been equalled."

Van Halen's set ended with their signature version of The Kinks' 1964 hit *You Really Got Me*, powered by the riff that pretty much invented heavy metal. Then the four band members joined hands as they bowed out, all smiles...

When headliners AC/DC hit the stage, Donington was in darkness. There was a chill in the air, and some fans had lit fires using wooden pallets. The start was dramatic: Angus Young appearing on a platform high above the stage, soloing manically into opening song *Guns For Hire*. All the big numbers were rolled out, including *Back In Black* and *Let There Be Rock*, and the climax was a spectacular *For Those About To Rock (We Salute You)* ending with deafening cannon fire.

But on our ride home in that dented bus, the talk was all about Van Halen. More specifically, David Lee Roth. So cool, so cocky, and so funny. The Muhammad Ali of rock.

Andy Copping travelled home that night with mixed feelings. "My expectations had been so high, I just felt a bit flat," he remembers. Now, after watching the video of Van Halen's performance, he says: "I enjoyed it more than I did on the day. I thought: this is fucking great!" But, with hindsight, he adds: "As sad as it is to say it, you were seeing Roth going: 'I'm now superseding this band...'"

For Ross Halfin, the video had the opposite effect. "At the time, when I was shooting the show, I thought they were great. And I saw the 1984

"People still say it was the best Monsters Of Rock ever."

Promoter Andy Copping

show twice in America and it was phenomenal. But when I watched the footage from Donington, I couldn't believe how bad they were!"

What Halfin remembers most clearly is what happened after Van Halen's set, when things took an unpleasant turn.

"During the show, Ed would smile at me and I'd smile back," he says. "He had a really good smile. I went backstage afterwards to do some pictures. John Entwistle from The Who and Neal Schon from Journey were there. I was shooting them all together. And the first thing Edward said to me was: 'What were you smiling at, you

fucking fag?' I thought he was joking, but then he said it again with some venom. I started to react to it, and then Eddie Anderson, their security guy, stepped in between us. Michael Anthony said: 'Hey, just ignore Ed, he's been drinking.' In the past, Edward had always been really friendly with me, so when he turned nasty it really threw me. But he was drunk, and it's not fair to judge people when they're like that."

In the video footage, Roth is seen laughing with Alex Van Halen just before show time. But, as Halfin claims: "That's probably because Roth was stoned." If that's true, then the singer's on-stage acrobatics were all the more impressive.

What Halfin says in conclusion is that the bad vibes from Eddie were symptomatic of a general sense of tension in and around the band. As he puts it: "Once you know the politics of a band, it's very off-putting."

It was on September 2, 1984, just two weeks after Donington, that Van Halen played for the last time before the split with Roth, at a Monsters Of Rock show in the German city of Nuremberg. With a certain irony, that performance ended with the band huddled together for an a-cappella version of *Happy Trails*, a sweet little tune by the so-called 'singing cowboy' Roy Rogers. 'Happy trails to you,' they crooned, 'until we meet again.'

Twenty-three years later, after Roth had finally made his peace with the Van Halens for a reunion tour, Copping did everything in his power to lure them back to Donington to headline Download. "On two occasions I had them confirmed," he sighs. "I got so close, but it never happened. For me, that was the band that got away."

What he's left with are the memories of 1984. "People still say it was the best Monsters Of Rock ever," he says. "And every time I think back to that day, I think of David Lee Roth. The best frontman I ever saw. Nobody else came close." ●

1984



Whitesnake, August 1984: (l-r) Neil Murray, John Sykes, David Coverdale, Cozy Powell.

KOHASER/SHINO MUSIC/GETTY

WHITESNAKE

SLIDE IT IN

Their last album before MTV changed everything, it marked the end of an era for the band.

Whitesnake entered 1984 on a high, having headlined the Monsters Of Rock Festival at Castle Donington the previous summer, where their backstage area was decked out in the style of M*A*S*H, complete with barbed wire, sandbags, and security staff wearing army khaki. The band – David Coverdale's so-called 'Whitesnake Commandos' – were leaving blues rock behind, and their sixth studio album, *Slide It In*, introduced some new faces in former Trapeze guitarist Mel Galley, bassist Colin 'Bomber' Hodgkinson and drummer Cozy Powell.

By the time *Slide It In* was released in the UK in January '84, Neil Murray, Whitesnake bassist 1978 to 1982, had replaced Hodgkinson. At

Donington, Murray had been discreetly sounded out over his availability after Coverdale witnessed him playing with Gary Moore and wondered, as the singer told *Sounds* magazine: "Bloody hell, why did I let him go?"

Coverdale had set his sights on the US market, and *Slide It In*, tougher, leaner and more focused than its mediocre predecessor *Saints & Sinners*, represented a significant milestone on that path. However, almost none of the personnel that recorded it would remain for the album that finally smashed down the doors: 1987.

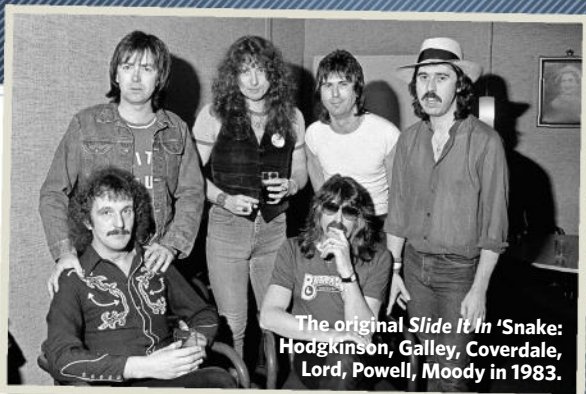
Coverdale considered *Slide It In* to be a positive step up because, he said, "the egos of people like Powell and Galley have been captured on tape".

"It was a very powerful line-up," Neil Murray says now. "With *Saints & Sinners* the band had

been losing its momentum, so *Slide It In* was an effective bridging point between the 'old' Whitesnake and the heavier, more American-sounding period."

Behind the scenes, guitarist Micky Moody had grown frustrated by the escalating importance of John Kalodner, the ambitious A&R director of the band's US label, Geffen Records. Moody had played on the album but quit before its release, lamenting that five or six years earlier Coverdale had been his best friend, but "now he acted like I wasn't there". It begs the question: could Whitesnake be a cold workplace?

"You must consider that things changed a lot since the band started, when everyone was kind of equal," Murray says. "Very slowly over the next five years, things became much less



The original *Slide It In* 'Snake: Hodgkinson, Galley, Coverdale, Lord, Powell, Moody in 1983.

democratic. By 1981/82, when we hadn't cracked America, David was put in a position where he had to be more hard-headed and ruthless, instead of 'Let's just have a laugh'. By *Saints & Sinners* it was starting to feel like the band had slightly run its course. David was under a lot of pressure from all sides."

Further changes were afoot. After a handful of shows, following a monster drinking session Mel Galley suffered a horrendous injury when he fell from the roof of a parked car in Germany, severing vital nerves. "I got the feeling that David felt Mel had been on slightly shifting sands," Murray continues. "He had been partying too much. And although Mel had written some of the album's songs, the accident gave David an easy 'out'." He adds sadly, but with a grin: "Cozy, [guitarist] John Sykes and Mel did bring the band a slightly hooliganish aspect."

In the spring of '84, keyboard player Jon Lord departed, too, as the Deep Purple reunion gathered momentum, with Alaska's Richard Bailey hired as a stand-in.

"I felt a little for Jon, who really didn't have much to do any more," Murray remembers. "The sound of the band had become guitar, bass and drums, plus David's vocals."

Was the subject of conquering America discussed often back then, or did it simply hover in the background?

"It didn't really need to be," Murray says. "This was 1984, and the sound of rock music was Van Halen. The band and everyone around us all knew that success there was imperative."

With John Kalodner dismissing the original production by Martin Birch as "dated", Keith Olsen was brought in by Geffen to remix *Slide It In*, allowing Sykes and Murray to contribute their own parts. As the new, US edition gained traction, Whitesnake supported the then red-hot Quiet Riot, followed by some dates with Dio, ending the year in Japan with Bon Jovi and the Scorpions. The line-up responsible for *Slide It In* ground to a juddering halt in early 1985 when Cozy Powell quit after a pair of sets at the original Rock In Rio Festival.

"The biggest of those two was around 350,000 people, supporting Queen," Murray recalls. "It was a real shame that the UK never got to see that line-up. Cozy left because he objected to the way David and his business advisors thought the money should be split up."

Nevertheless, with MTV embracing the singles *Slow An' Easy* and *Love Ain't No Stranger*, the fuse had been lit, and after three years of what Murray terms "power struggles and personality issues", Coverdale's all-new, image-friendly line-up introduced the video for *Still Of The Night*. The rest, as they say, is history. **DL**



AARON RAPPOPORT/GETTY

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN BORN IN THE USA

Springsteen originally meant for a version of what became his signature album to come out two years earlier than it did. In January 1982, he assembled the E Street Band at Power Station studios in midtown Manhattan to begin work on his sixth album. Over the next five months they put down the motherlode of material that Springsteen had demoed at his New Jersey home on a four-track tape recorder. Among these were all but four of the songs destined to comprise *Born In The USA* (*My Hometown*, *No Surrender*, *Bobby Jean* and *Dancing In The Dark* were recorded during sessions the following year).

The problem back then, as far as Springsteen saw it, was that he had two very different records going on. One was spare and spooked, the other made up of taut, punchy tracks with rallying choruses. Briefly he conceived of a double album, but decided against repeating himself after 1980's double *The River*.

Ultimately it was the more haunted record, shorn of the E Street Band's contributions, that came first.

Released in September 1982, *Nebraska* ended up being assembled from Springsteen's homemade demos. A literal solo record, it was bleak and brilliant.

Arriving two years after *Nebraska*, *Born In The USA* sounded at least like a roar of relief. Where *Nebraska* had been rough-edged and gnarly, *Born In The USA*'s surfaces gleamed. Its 12 songs were sleeked strategically for FM radio airplay, with Max Weinberg's propulsive drum volleys ricocheting off banks of driving guitars and pulsing synths.

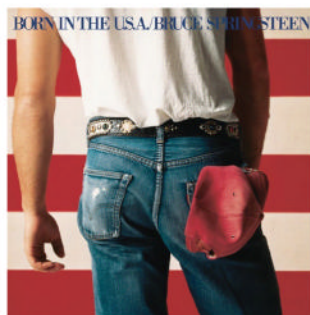
No track better illustrated that than *Dancing In The Dark*. The last to be recorded for the album, it was occasioned by Springsteen's manager/co-producer Jon Landau telling him they were missing an obvious hit. "Look, I've written seventy songs. You want another one, you write it," Springsteen shot back. He wrote *Dancing In The Dark* later that night in his hotel room, the giddy rush of the music in sharp contrast to his brooding mood. Soon enough it was accompanied by his first proper promo video. With the newly muscle-bound Springsteen plucking future *Friends* star Courtney Cox out of an audience to dance with him, it was lapped up by MTV and helped *Born*

In The USA to sell more than 30 million copies.

However, look beneath its polished hood and Springsteen's biggest-selling album was as rage-filled and despairing as *Nebraska*. For all the joy it signalled, *Dancing In The Dark* actually communicated Springsteen's own

self-loathing. 'Man, I'm just tired and bored with myself,' he sang. *Darlington County* and *Working On The Highway* mourned dead-end lives going from bad to worse; *Downbound Train* and *I'm On Fire* seethed with pent-up frustration. Then there was the title track, widely misunderstood as a jingoistic call to arms (not least by then-US president Ronald Reagan's campaign team), when in reality it was a damning indictment of such blind patriotism.

Annie Leibowitz's iconoclastic cover-photo may have knowingly cast Springsteen as an all-American hero, but he was never more its doubting conscience than on *Born In The USA*. **PR**



1984

THE (OTHER) FAB FOUR

They jangled, they spangled, they sang harmonies... This is how four Beatles-crazed California girls, aka **The Bangles**, wooed 1984 with their power-pop debut *All Over The Place*.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

Growing up in the 60s and early 70s, all the future Bangles were mad for The Beatles. And they were no ordinary fans. Susanna Hoffs used to pose in front of the mirror, pretending she was on stage with the Fabs. Michael Steele wore a mop-top wig and did skits in school. Sisters Debbi and Vicki Peterson dreamed of forming a band that would be the next Beatles.

"As I grew up, instead of wanting to marry Paul McCartney, I wanted to be him," guitarist/vocalist Vicki Peterson tells *Classic Rock*. "And it was kind of magical that the four of us found each other, because we all shared the same obsession with the British Invasion, and The Beatles especially. They were our musical school. Their songwriting structures, harmonising, and even the fact that there were four strong personalities, with three lead singers, we wanted to emulate that."

By the early 80s they were doing just that, as The Bangs (a lawsuit from another band with the same name forced them to add 'les'). On the back of an indie-released EP, they carved out a tuneful niche in LA's Paisley Underground scene, gigging at clubs like The Music Machine and Cathay de Grande. When they signed with Police manager Miles Copeland, one of his first moves

was to put them on the road, ultimately building chops that would feed into their 1984 debut album *All Over The Place*.

"That was a magic moment," Peterson recalls of the shift to touring life. "He said: 'How would you like to go on tour with The English Beat?' It was the opportunity we'd been waiting for. Debbi and I were still sharing a one-bedroom apartment in Hollywood, and I was sleeping in the living room. I was still driving a beat-up Volkswagen. So we all quit our day jobs and went on tour. And we toured non-stop."

But it wasn't always easy being an opener.

"It was either no sound-check, or the promoter didn't bother telling anyone you were on the bill," Peterson recalls. "Then we'd face an audience of pseudo-punkers wanting to hear ska, and they're looking at this group of girls, thinking: 'What the fuck is this?' But it built character."

Back in LA in late 1983, the quartet signed with Columbia, who put them in the studio with David Kahne. Working in Hollywood, at Crystal Sound and Soundcastle, Kahne was mostly hands-off, letting them experiment with arrangements. "We were not experienced studio musicians by any stretch," Peterson says. "So we were kind of finding our way as we went. Even though we were building a foundation of what we wanted to sound like instrumentally, we

knew we wanted to do a lot of harmony vocals. That was really important to us."

But with three strong vocalists in the mix, how did they decide who took the lead?

"The Bangles was a democracy, which is a flawed system, as we know," Peterson says with a laugh. "But usually whoever brought the song in would end up singing lead. That said, it became clear that David preferred Susanna's voice, so more songs got shifted over to her."



Although Peterson says the album's title reflected the band's feeling that it was stylistically all over the place, today, forty years on, she says she can hear "more through lines and continuity". Indeed, with standout tracks *James*, *Hero Takes A Fall* and *Dover Beach*, along with a cover of Kimberly Rew's *Going Down To Liverpool* (the video for which featured Leonard Nimoy, *Star Trek*'s Mr Spock, as The Bangles' chauffeur — "He was quite stoic, not unlike Spock," Peterson says), it's one of the 80s' most tightly constructed debuts — a distinct calling card.

At the same time, it's easy to forget just how out of step The Bangles' retro-pop sound was with prevailing trends. In May 1984, when the album was released, US radio was spinning glossy hits such as Duran Duran's *The Reflex*, Thompson Twins' *Hold Me Now* and Madonna's *Borderline*. "The early eighties hadn't fully achieved that critical sonic landscape we



The Bangles with chauffeur Leonard 'Mr Spock' Nimoy during the video shoot for their 1984 song *Going Down To Liverpool*.



The Bangles in '84: (l-r) Vicki Peterson, Debbie Peterson, Susanna Hoffs, Michael Steele.

associate with the eighties yet," Peterson says, "but I didn't love what was on the radio at all. So we were kind of fighting against that sound. Listening to *All Over The Place* now, I love how we approached it in a naturalist way. No synthesisers or drum machines.

"At the same time, we sweated over every single moment," she continues. "We were all so exhausted by the end of it. I remember saying to my boyfriend at the time: 'I don't know how anyone ever makes a second record!'"

Of course, The Bangles did make several records, including their 1986 commercial peak *Different Light*, its singles *Manic Monday*, *Walk Like An Egyptian* and *If She Knew What She Wants* propelling them to stardom via MTV and Top 40 radio.

In the 21st century they have remained busy, mostly with solo pursuits. Last year, Hoffs published her first novel, *This Bird Has Flown*, while Peterson continues to record and tour with two bands: Continental Drifters and Action

together – just two albums and tours in the past 20 years – Peterson says they're "still very much in each other's lives", and currently working on two legacy projects. "There's an authorised biography and a documentary, both hopefully

coming in 2024," she says. "I think they will help solidify our history."

Because of those projects, she's been looking back more than usual. "I feel most nostalgic for the earliest version of the band, when we made the EP but hadn't gotten signed to Columbia yet,"

Peterson says. "We were at our purest and just doing what felt very natural to us. It's musically valid and very interesting, with a really great spirit to it. And *All Over The Place* still has a lot of that in it." 🎸

"We'd face an audience of pseudo-punkers, and they're looking at this group of girls, thinking, 'What the fk is this?'"**

Vicki Peterson

Skulls (with husband John Cowsill). Her sister Debbie does studio work and plays with the Minus 5. Steele retired from music in 2005 and now has a career as a painter. Although they haven't been recording or performing regularly

1984



AARON RAPPOPORT/GETTY

THE PRETENDERS

LEARNING TO CRAWL

Their third album was a career zenith in both commercial success and songwriting skills.

The Pretenders might easily have folded after lead guitarist James Honeyman-Scott's sudden death in June 1982—two days after the sacking of bassist Pete Farndon (who would also expire within months). But Honeyman-Scott's influence continued to shape the band's immediate future. "For a long time afterwards, I had such a strong sense of him," Chrissie Hynde explained to *Classic Rock* in 2014. "All my musical decisions were still based on what he would do. 'Who would Jimmy get to play this? He'd get Billy Bremner.' I always knew the kind of thing Jimmy would like."

So ex-Rockpile guitarist Bremner was duly commandeered to play on both sides of comeback single *Back On The Chain Gang/My City Was Gone*, alongside Big Country bassist Tony Butler. And while a further makeshift line-up cut a soulful cover of The Persuaders' *Thin Line Between Love And Hate*, it was another Honeyman-Scott tip-off—Robbie McIntosh—who served as guitarist on its parent album,

Learning To Crawl. An inspired choice; McIntosh brought renewed verve and adaptability to the band's sound with bass player Malcolm Foster also signing on permanently to join Hynde, and regular drummer Martin Chambers.

Named in honour of Hynde's baby daughter Natalie, *Learning To Crawl* was also an applicable metaphor for Pretenders 2.0. Yet any teething problems were minimal. The album found the quartet taking a more linear approach, with McIntosh and Chambers punching high in the mix, while Hynde's vocals had never been better. Musically and lyrically, opening song *Middle Of The Road* was the perfect primer. A lean, vivacious rocker with a crisp McIntosh solo and a great harmonica coda, it's the new-look Pretenders in full effect. Hynde is caught between a sneer and a confession, decrying global economic inequalities while surveying life from a new perspective: 'I'm not the cat I used to be/I've got a kid, I'm thirty-three, baby.'

Aside from rebirth and taking stock, loss is a theme too. *Time The Avenger* is an R&B vamp,

ostensibly about a philandering captain of industry who gets his comeuppance. It also doubles as an existential meditation. 'Nobody's permanent/Everything's on loan here' sings Hynde, leaning into the verses with a new sense of purpose. 'Even your wife and kids/Could be gone next year'. Nothing stands still. On the loping funk of *My City Was Gone*, Hynde returns to her hometown in Ohio only to find it unrecognisable, landmarks and old haunts pulled down to make way for car parks. Her childhood home is empty too, her memories swirling past 'like the wind through the trees'.

This idea of transience is dotted throughout. A mother and child seek a fresh start on the highway-hugging *Thumbelina*, a persecuted wife dramatically shifts her reality on *Thin Line Between Love And Hate*, the ache of separation (rooted in Honeyman-Scott's absence) is examined on the majestic *2,000 Miles*, led by McIntosh's chiming guitar figure. From new beginnings to sad farewells, *Learning To Crawl* is an indestructible triumph of sheer will. **RH**





NEW MODEL ARMY VENGEANCE



The last time Justin Sullivan sat down and listened to *Vengeance*, the debut album from his band New Model Army, he was surprised to realise “I sound like I’m about fifteen years old”. The guitarist, singer/songwriter is now sixty-seven, but while his voice would inevitably mature, the searing resonance of *Vengeance* has diminished little.

In those days, Sullivan operated under the handle of Slade The Leveller to protect his unemployment benefits. “In the punk scene back then, many musicians used other names, but you’re right, the last thing we wanted was for the dole office to see our names in the local paper,” he explains. “‘You appear to have done a gig, Mr Sullivan’. None of us wanted that so we used pseudonyms. I didn’t get caught, but I signed off in 1984.”

Along with Stuart Morrow on bass and drummer Robb Heaton, Yorkshireman Sullivan had come to London to lay down the band’s debut album with Ray ‘Mond’ Cowie – co-founding guitarist of the Angelic Upstarts – as producer. “It was recorded at Alaska Studios, beneath Waterloo Station,” he reveals. “Listen carefully and you can hear the occasional train going by. We had five days and pleaded for two more, which we got. It was our first time in a studio – exciting but nerve-wracking. Mond was good to work with, he had some great ideas.”

Vengeance was an angry album, its original eight songs (further down the line, two more tracks were added) fired up by the frustrations of growing up in *Smalltown England*, the Falklands war and, in the case of its powerful title track, which roared: ‘I believe in justice/I believe in vengeance/I believe in getting the bastard’, World War II criminals.

“I had watched a documentary about Klaus Barbie, and that song [*Vengeance*] was written in five minutes,” Sullivan reveals, adding: “The early eighties was the beginning of something we’re seeing now – the moving of money, resources and power from public hands into the private sector. Forty years later we’re still doing the same fucking thing.”

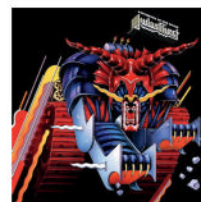
Sullivan still rues the fact that the term ‘punk rock’ became corralled into a specific form of music. “That was terrible,” he sighs. “People like Garry Bushell [journalist at weekly music paper *Sounds*] were responsible for that. Punk was never a genre. It was a cultural revolution. How perfect a musician you were didn’t matter. What were the rules? There weren’t any. With that in mind, these bands from the period – The Cure, Killing Joke, Depeche Mode, The Sisters Of Mercy – all went off in different directions.”

Just before the album’s release on April 4, New Model Army appeared on Channel 4 weekly music show *The Tube*. “Early on, every band has its stroke of luck and when those things come along you’d better be ready,” Sullivan theorises. “We had a couple of those opportunities, being on *The Tube* was one of them, and we were ready.”

Vengeance knocked the The Smiths’ self-titled debut off the top of the independent chart and EMI snapped them up. “All the major labels came knocking, but our contract with EMI allowed us complete control,” Sullivan replies. “One of the best things was that when we signed, they had to make a donation to the Miners’ Strike which they probably wrote off as a tax loss. Overall, it worked out okay.” **DL**



JUDAS PRIEST DEFENDERS OF THE FAITH



In January 1984, Judas Priest unveiled their ninth album, *Defenders Of The Faith*; long since acknowledged as a heavy metal classic, but at the time, judged a relative failure. Two years earlier, its

predecessor, *Screaming For Vengeance*, had transformed the Brummie quintet into superstars, especially across the Atlantic where US audiences couldn’t get enough of their marauding, twin guitar-embellished anthems, voiced by the banshee-like Rob Halford, and a leather, studs, whips and chains image that – just like their music – would be copied and copied.

But where do you go once you’ve crafted one the finest heavy metal albums of all time?

Priest were seemingly on a creative roll, and with Tom Allom reclaiming the producer’s chair, *Defenders Of The Faith* adhered closely to the blueprint of *Screaming For Vengeance*. With hindsight, though, one thing was missing. While *Screaming...* had boasted *You Got Another Thing Coming*, a sizeable Stateside single and MTV hit, the best that *Defenders Of The Faith* could offer in the crossover stakes was the aforementioned opening track; a blinder of a song, but in commercial terms, an almost thrash metal-style workout of a track in comparison.

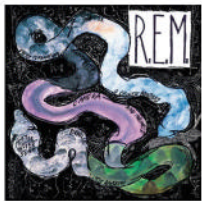
By 1984’s end, *Defenders...* had stalled at 800,000 copies – a Herculean amount by today’s standards but half a million less than *Screaming For Vengeance* which continued to fly out the door. “I’d be a liar if I said I wasn’t disappointed with those figures,” admitted Rob in an interview at the time, conceding: “We simply didn’t have a strong enough single.”

For Judas Priest – and indeed heavy metal as a genre – 1984 can be seen as a watershed year. Many a battle-torn hero cast an eye over their shoulders in the summer as Metallica unveiled a game-changing second album, *Ride The Lightning*, and the thrash metal movement that Priest themselves would embrace several years later with the *Painkiller* album began to take a firm hold. One era was coming to an end and another about to begin.

And the album title? ‘Defenders Of The Faith’ has become a motto adopted by generations of metalheads – a definitive title awarded to those who are steeped within metal’s history, values and core ethics – its definitive statement of intent. **DL**



R.E.M. RECKONING



R.E.M. were the band to watch come the turn of 1984. Issued the previous April, debut LP *Murmur* had put the Athens, Georgia quartet at the forefront of a new strain of alternative American guitar-rock: raw, mysterious and strangely melodic. On one level, R.E.M. were leftfield classicists,

drawing from The Velvet Underground, Patti Smith and 70s post-punk. But they were also markedly different, refracting their influences through a murky Southern prism that involved disjointed narratives and, in the case of enigmatic singer Michael Stipe, inscrutable lyrics.

Despite selling less than 200,000 copies, *Murmur* made R.E.M. darlings of US college radio. Critics tended to adore the band too, with *Rolling Stone* declaring them winners of both Best Album and Best New Artist in their end-of-'83 polls. Their profile was further spiked by debut shows in London that November and their first national TV spot, *Late Night With David Letterman*.

Refusing to let the grass grow under their feet, R.E.M. were already recording a follow-up album by the time the plaudits rolled in. *Reckoning* was nailed fast, taking little over a fortnight. The production team of Mitch Easter and Don Dixon, retained from *Murmur*, sought to bottle the wiry energy of the band's live shows, putting greater emphasis on REM's rockier side. Songs weren't a problem. New compositions were pouring out at a prodigious rate. Guitarist Peter Buck later claimed that *Reckoning* was recorded quickly to avoid any bothersome interference from their I.R.S. label.

The *Letterman* appearance had seen REM preview their most commercial idea to date – an unnamed midtempo tune that took form in the studio as *So. Central Rain*. Its lyrics alluded to Stipe's late friend, photographer Carol Levy, who died in a car crash. Alongside a more overt Levy tribute, the moving, slo-mo *Camera* ('Will she be remembered,' sings the mournful Stipe), these two songs represent the more elegiac side of *Reckoning*.

At other times, R.E.M. seem positively joyous. *Second Guessing* fizzles, powered by Buck's trusty Rickenbacker and drummer Bill Berry's delirious thump. Stipe seems to take aim at cultural faddishness, while also offering a simple declaration of arrival in the chorus: 'Here we are, here we are.'

Pretty Persuasion had been in R.E.M.'s setlist since 1981 and had initially been cut during the *Murmur* sessions. In its revised form it positively leaps from the speakers – quintessential R.E.M. with bassist Mike Mills driving the harmonies. Mills is the instigator of another mothballed early song, (*Don't Go Back To*) *Rockville*. It shakes off the punky thrash of its origins in favour of a more measured groove on *Reckoning*, its melodic sophistication serving as a pre-echo of the band's 90s success. For now though, R.E.M. were still very much a cult concern. **RH**



HANOI ROCKS TWO STEPS FROM THE MOVE



Would *Appetite for Destruction* have happened without *Two Steps From The Move*? Axl

Rose became enamoured of Hanoi Rocks in the early 80s while piecing Guns N' Roses together and he took particular note of this, Hanoi's fifth album. After all, the chorus of one

standout song, *Underwater World* included the lyric, 'Welcome to the jungle/Deep inside of me.'

Formed five years earlier in their native Finland, Hanoi seemed for a moment to have it all, only for everything to be spirited away from them in the cruellest of circumstances. They, too, were blessed with a magnetic frontman (teetotal Michael Monroe with his cut-glass cheekbones) and a trailblazing lead guitarist (Andy McCoy, the ragged look of Izzy Stradlin married to the chunk of Slash's playing). Their stock in trade was the same potent blend of classic rock shapes and punk-glam insouciance.

Each of their four albums prior to *Two Steps From The Move* faltered, although 1983's *Back To Mystery City* – made after they'd migrated to London – flickered with enough promise to land them a deal with major label CBS. Monroe, McCoy, fellow guitarist Nasty Suicide, bassist Sam Yaffa and drummer Razzle decamped to New York's Record Plant to make *Two Steps From The Move*. The result was Hanoi's lightning bottled and captured.

Here, for the first and only time, they were shown off in all their technicolour glory. Scuzzy and stomping on *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams*, beautifully damned on *Don't You Ever Leave Me*, probing deeper, darker depths on *Underwater World*. They set their sights high in the rock pantheon. Besides Ezrin's presence in the control room, the lyrics to *I Can't Get It* were co-written with Ian Hunter and the album was kicked off by a faithful cover of John Fogerty's Creedence standard, *Up Around The Bend*.

The lead-off single, Fogerty's song landed them on MTV. Andy Warhol turned up for their New York coming out party. As they embarked upon their first American tour in the winter of '84, Hanoi's momentum appeared unstoppable. Yet in a flash it was stopped dead. At a gig in Syracuse, New York on November 29, Monroe slipped on stage and fractured his ankle. The rest of the band billeted themselves in LA while Monroe healed. There, on December 8, they fatefully decided to party with Mötley Crüe. Singer Vince Neil was dispatched to the local liquor store in his 1972 Ford Pantera to replenish their stocks. Razzle went along for the ride. Neil had been drinking too much to have been at the wheel of a sports car. The Pantera skidded on a wet patch of road, ploughing headlong into another oncoming vehicle. Neil escaped with minor cuts and bruises. Nowhere near so lucky in the passenger seat, Razzle was killed instantly in the collision. The will and spirit of his band died with him. **PR**

1984



NEIL ZIDONER/ATLANTIC.COM

DIO

THE LAST IN LINE

Unencumbered by the curse of the second album, it was the first Dio album to go platinum.

Recorded in spring 1984 at Caribou Ranch, high in the Rocky Mountains (made famous by Elton John who named his 1974 album after the studio) expectations around the second Dio album, *The Last In Line*, ran high. The debut Dio album, *Holy Diver*, was on its way to platinum status in the US and the feeling at the record label was that with just a little tweaking the follow-up could be huge.

For that reason, the label chiefs wanted Van Halen producer Ted Templeman to oversee the recording. Ronnie James Dio, however, had other ideas. "We had done everything on *Holy Diver*, from production to promotion, even to the album sleeve. Because the label wasn't interested. When that became so successful, now everybody wanted to get in on the action. Well, no. I wasn't letting that happen."

The singer had already decided on the title of the album, *The Last In Line*, after one of the new numbers the band had been working on which Dio considered "the perfect classic rock song."

"I already had the lyrics," he explained. The music was very much a band collaboration however, as were seven of the album's nine tracks. Guitarist Vivian Campbell had come up with the beautiful 50-second arpeggio intro while bassist Jimmy Bain had come up with "the monster riff," as Ronnie described it.

The recent addition of classically-trained keyboardist Claude Schnell also added another thick layer to the sound of the album.

"It always felt better to have the centerpiece of the album in place before recording began," Ronnie opined. "With the song *The Last In Line*, I knew we had that."

The song was later covered by Jack Black's Tenacious D for the 2014 Dio tribute album *This Is Your Life*, and it was not a joke. Jack is a diehard fan of the band. It later won the Grammy for Best Metal Performance.

Opening with one of the greatest all-out rockers of the era in *We Rock*, written solely by Ronnie, for many Dio fans, *The Last In Line* would be considered an even greater

achievement than *Holy Diver*. The album also ended with an epic Dio cornerstone track in the near-seven-minute *Egypt (The Chains Are On)*. This time all four of the original members received a co-writing credit, with Schnell heavy on the atmospheric keyboards. What was it about? Well, 'the land of the lost horizon' for a start, where 'the magic was strong and blue'.

Other standouts on an album loaded with career highlights include *Mystery*, one of the catchiest songs Dio ever recorded, although its poppy chorus is veined in verse lines about 'a storm on the edge of the sky'.

Every track came cloaked in atmosphere – desert winds, a wolf's melancholy howl, even the sound of breathing. It all added up to one of the most momentous metal albums of the 80s. Something reflected in the fact that it became an even bigger worldwide smash hit than *Holy Diver*.

Dio would never be so big or so cool or so downright heavy again. **MW**

1984

ALL THE WAY TO 11

Eleven ways in which the 1984 film **Spinal Tap** changed the lexicon of rock.

Words: **Jo Kendall**

Coining the term ‘rockumentary’, *This Is Spinal Tap*’s timeless spoof followed a hapless British rock band on their doomed US jaunt promoting their album *Smell The Glove*. The key band members – David St Hubbins, Nigel Tufnel and Derek Smalls – were played by comedian-performer friends Michael McKean, Christopher Guest and Harry Shearer, their all-improvised lines assimilating into common rock parlance and beyond.

Here are just 11 (well, naturally) of the film’s most far-reaching utterances:

Bizarre gardening accident/ exploding drummers

At the time of the film, Spinal Tap had had two drummers cark it by exploding, or combusting, on stage. These days the concept may spring to mind when a drummer’s demise is announced. Stumpy Joe Pepys’s death by ‘bizarre gardening accident’ unfortunately did seem to foreshadow Toto drummer Jeff Porcaro’s passing, and was mentioned when Brian May had a nasty rough-up at home in 2020.

The numbers go up to 11

Tap’s greatest idiom occurred as Nigel Tufnel gave documentary director Marty DiBergi (actor-director Rob Reiner) a tour of his prized guitars and Marshall amp. Traditionally, maximum volume is pegged at 10. “The numbers all go to eleven,” Tufnel said, pointing to the amp’s knobs. “It’s one louder.” Subsequently, Soldano and Friedman amps ran with the idea, as did, among others, SSL mixing consoles, the BBC iPlayer volume, and the tachometer on a Porsche 911.

None more black

When the cover for Tap’s album *Smell The Glove* is deemed offensive, the solution is to release it in an all-black sleeve with no type. Smalls is mesmerised by the “black mirror” effect (er, the shrinkwrap), St Hubbins is horrified as he feels

it’s “like death”, and Tufnel embraces how black it is: “none more black”. A few years down the line Metallica revisited the idea for their self-titled 1991 release.

The ‘Where Are They Now?’ file

Summoned by Smalls to hear Tap’s previous incarnation, The Thamesmen, on the radio, the band are crushed by DJ Johnny Q’s relegation of Tap to “currently residing in the ‘Where Are They Now?’ file”, seeing as they’re on a US tour. Writers and broadcasters have endeavoured to be a bit more clued-up and tactful about vintage artists since then, but the term still abounds.

Hello Cleveland!

Inspired by footage of Tom Petty losing his way to a stage in Germany and arriving at an indoor tennis court instead, Tap get lost in an under-theatre maze of passage ways, with only a confused boiler engineer to help them find their way from the dressing room to the stage. For artists such as Blink-182, Ozzy, Robert Plant and many more real-life disorientees, “Hello Cleveland!” is the cry of optimism in the face of “Where the fuck are we now?”

What’s wrong with being sexy?

Smell The Glove is compromised by its cover art: an oiled-up naked female on a leash. Band manager Ian Faith tells the band that the label thinks it’s “sexist”. Tufnel’s innocent response after mishearing the word is actually rather endearing. It would become a knowing catchphrase, and title a pretty good 2006 compilation featuring Tokyo Dragons, Candlemass, Bodycount and more.

Too much fucking perspective

Stood around Elvis’s grave trying, unsuccessfully, to harmonise an impromptu *Heartbreak Hotel*, Smalls, Tufnel and St Hubbins are forced to refocus after St Hubbins notes how depressing the situation is. “It really puts perspective on things, though, doesn’t it?” says

Tufnel. “Too much,” says St Hubbins. “There’s too much fucking perspective.” And who hasn’t brought this line to mind in moments of quiet, or noisy, reflection since?

Lick My Love Pump

Tinkling on his piano in D minor, “the saddest of all keys”, a gum-chewing Tufnel creates a pretty refrain that’s a mix of “Mozart and Bach... a Mach piece” and informs DiBergi of its title without batting an eyelid. It’s difficult to not hear any poignant piano ballad these days without expecting its title to be a variation on a theme of *Lick My Love Pump*.

Stonehenge

The band decide to entice flagging US audiences by going Druid and adding some Stonehenge scenery. But Tufnel mislabels instructions for an 18-foot trilithon prop, and what arrives is 10 times smaller. During the show, with two people of restricted growth celtic-jigging around it, an unforgettable scene ensues. St Hubbins later fumes: “There was a Stonehenge monument on the stage that was in danger of being crushed by a dwarf.” Now shorthand for all theatrical boobos, any act planning a construction now has to make sure: a) it’s dimensions are stated in feet, not inches, and b) it’s not drawn on a napkin.

Recording in Dobly

When St Hubbins’s partner Jeanine suggests that *Smell The Glove* is flopping is because “it should have been in recorded in Dobly”, jealous bandmate Tufnel is in fits of laughter. From this moment, the state-of-the-art Dolby Stereo system was re-monikered – and now lives on as Dobly Atmos.

Have a good time, all the time

As the film credits roll, this philosophy is proffered by Tap’s spaced-out keyboard player Viv Savage (played by Rare Bird’s David Kaf). It’s something we at CR concur with. 🎧

**“There was a Stonehenge monument
on the stage that was in danger
of being crushed by a dwarf.”**

— David St Hubbins —



Tap's Derek Smalls, Nigel Tufnel
and David St Hubbins, aka Harry
Shearer, Christopher Guest and
Michael McKean.



PHOTOGRAPH BY TIM O'NEILL

RUSH GRACE UNDER PRESSURE



Rush's sound had evolved and transformed over the course of their first eight albums, but 1982's *Signals* was a clean break with the past, pivoting away from the great guitar epics of the 70s towards a state-of-the-art keyboard-oriented sound – to the chagrin of some of their hard-core fans.

Not that Rush themselves were concerned. Rather than retreat to familiar ground, the trio instead doubled down on their controversial new approach and fully embrace new sounds and technologies. And it really took hold with 1984's *Grace Under Pressure*, taking them far from their roots. It was also the first album where longtime producer and mentor Terry Brown wasn't behind the desk.

"We had to start right from the ground up in making things as different as we could," said Neil Peart of the decision.

To find a new producer, Rush began scouring the credits of albums they liked, and drawing up a list of potential candidates. Eventually they opted for the British-born Peter Henderson, best known for his work with Supertramp. He found a band knee-deep in new gadgets. Peart had begun using electronic drums, while bassist/vocalist Geddy Lee and guitarist Alex Lifeson spent more time than ever playing keyboards.

But Henderson proved to be a poor fit for Rush, and sessions stretched on for four months, longer than on any previous album.

"It seemed like this album took years to finish," Lifeson said at the time. "We started in the beginning of November and finished on the twelfth of March, 1984. It took two months to lay down the basic tracks; it's a mystery to me why it took so long. We were so prepared and had twice as long as usual to write, rehearse, arrange and refine the material."

The arduous process partly inspired the album's title: *Grace Under Pressure*. "Not only was it relevant to many of the songs, it was also rather fitting to the way this album was going," said Peart.

The finished album dialled back *Signals*' synthesised sheen a little, making more space for Lifeson's guitar. Songs such as *Red Sector A* and *Distant Early Warning* became staples of the band's set throughout the 80s, but *Grace Under Pressure* ultimately wasn't the album Rush wanted it to be.

"It was a pretty low time," Lee said later. "We weren't sure of the kind of band we wanted to be. There was a lot of experimenting. We ended up pretty much producing that record on our own, and it was hard." **NJ**



GEA IMAGES/CONCREX

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN OCEAN RAIN



Everything seemed to open up for Echo & The Bunnymen in the latter half of 1983. Singles success with *The Cutter* and *Never Stop* and gold-selling third album *Porcupine* had elevated them above their post-punk rivals, at least in commercial terms. But instead of taking the

prescribed route into vast arenas, the Liverpool four-piece instead kept it relatively micro, opting to play tours that supposedly followed ley lines from their home town to Scandinavia and the Outer Hebrides.

"We were at the peak of our powers as a group," singer Ian McCulloch told us in 2013. "Everyone else was wearing cowboy hats and playing stadiums, while we were rocking the cobbled streets. It was significant that we'd play small islands on the west coast of Scotland rather than stadiums."

That attitude extended to their music too. Rather than following the anthemic guitar bluster of U2 or Simple Minds – who would come to signify what became known as 'big music' – the band headed to Paris to make the lush, brooding *Ocean Rain*. "It felt like we were taking the whole guitar/bass/drums idea of the band further," guitarist Will Sergeant told *Classic Rock*. "We were really into [Love's] *Forever Changes* and Scott Walker records at the time, so we wanted to make some sort of grand work. That's why we got all the strings in. We wanted to make a classic."

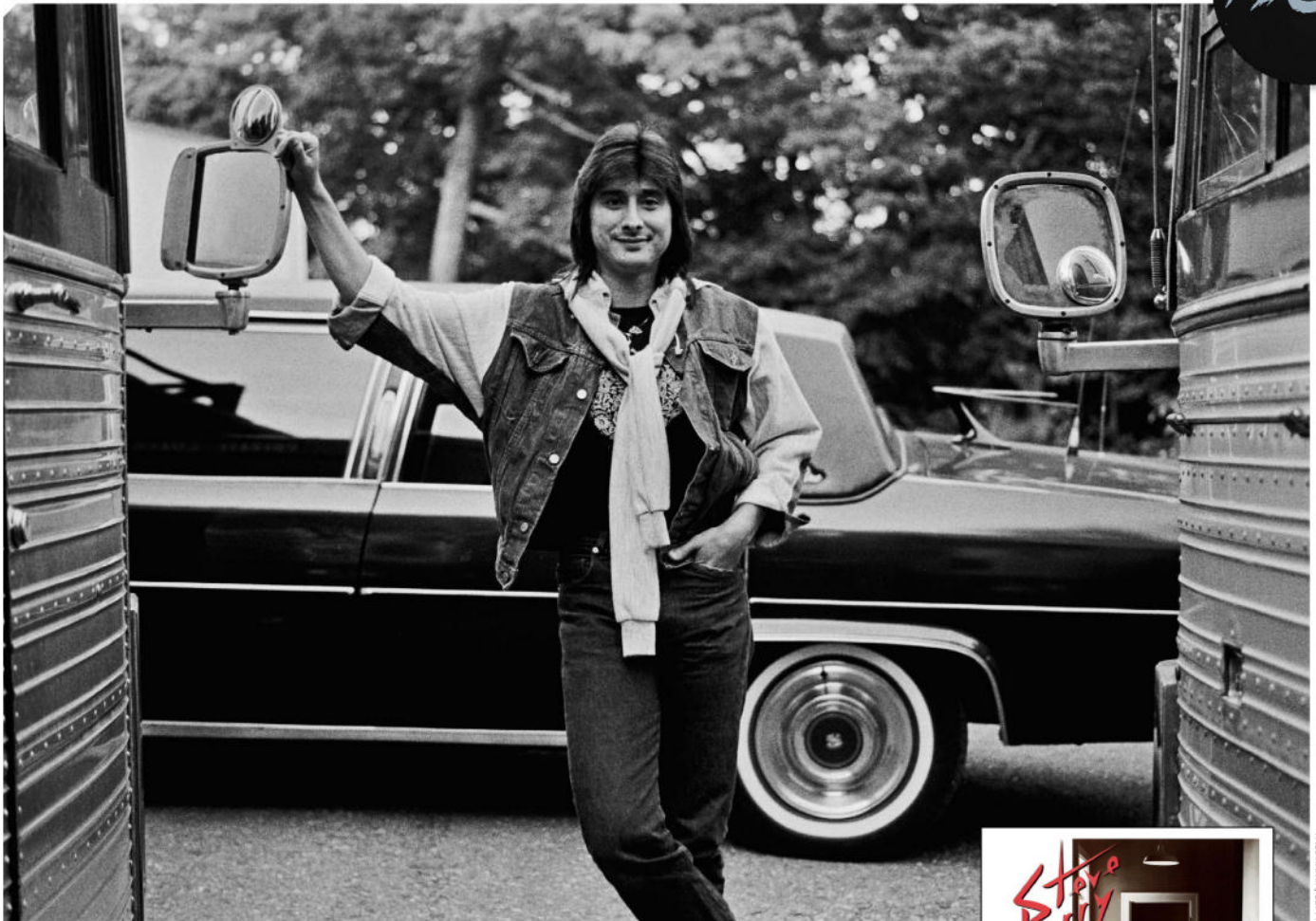
Released ahead of the album in January '84, *The Killing Moon* was a perfect primer. The band were stretching towards the epic, with McCulloch's rich baritone vocal addressing fate and a divine kind of power. "It's the greatest song of all time," said the frontman, true to his cocky reputation.

Ocean Rain was conceived very much in the same spirit as *The Killing Moon*. McCulloch saw the album belonging to a European lineage of Jacques Brel and Édith Piaf – music with a dark and intensely dramatic reach. Bassist Les Pattinson scoped out his sound with a vintage reverb machine; Sergeant used various effects to heighten his textural brilliance; drummer Pete de Freitas tempered his usual approach with brushes and cymbals, plus xylophones and glockenspiels.

Seven Seas and the equally sublime *Silver* feel like semi-symphonic raptures, the latter suggesting that the quartet had found some kind of creative release. Rooted in an eastern scale, *Thorn Of Crowns* feels like *Porcupine*-Bunnymen, only with renewed ambition and self-belief. *Nocturnal Me* is all Brel-like melodrama, with inky shadows of Brecht-Weill. The sumptuous title track is a twilight ballad worthy of Scott Walker.

Ocean Rain divided opinion upon release in May '84, but time has only deepened its supernatural beauty. It still stands as the Bunnymen's greatest moment. **RH**

1984



PAUL MARINI/GETTY

STEVE PERRY

STREET TALK



Moonlighting from his day job, Perry delivered one of the greatest AOR albums of all time.

It was a golden year for melodic rock. In January 1984 came the debut album from a young band out of New Jersey named Bon Jovi, and in the months that followed, so many other great albums arrived. Survivor, with new singer Jimi Jamison, hit a new peak with *Vital Signs*. Bryan Adams released *Reckless*, the album that would make him a superstar. Pat Benatar's *Tropico* was a thing of beauty.

There were also fine albums that somehow flew under the radar or slipped through the cracks, but which later become cult classics – Dakota's *Runaway*, and self-titled debuts from Giuffria, White Sister and Boston spin-off Orion The Hunter.

At the other end of the spectrum there were huge hit singles for Night Ranger with *Sister Christian* and John Waite with *Missing You*. And at the end of the year came the release of two monumental power ballads, both of which would top the US chart: Foreigner's *I Want To Know What Love Is* and REO Speedwagon's *Can't Fight This Feeling*.

For AOR connoisseurs it was the best of times. There was, however, one great record from 1984 that had a sting in the tail: Journey singer Steve Perry's solo album *Street Talk*.

Perry wasn't the only member of Journey who was moonlighting that year: guitarist Neal Schon hooked up with his buddy Sammy Hagar in the brief-lived supergroup HSAS, while drummer Steve Smith busied himself with his jazz project *Vital Information*. But Perry's record would have a huge impact on Journey's career.

Street Talk was heavily influenced by the soul and R&B he had loved since he was a teenager, and after the album hit big – selling two million copies in the US alone – Perry steered Journey in a similar direction on the band's subsequent album, *Raised On Radio*. As a result, Schon ended up sidelined in what had always been his band, and the definitive Journey line-up that made the classic albums *Escape* and *Frontiers* fractured with the exits of Smith and bassist Ross Valory.

But while *Street Talk* might have been a problem for Journey, it was a total triumph for the singer – as both a soft-rock masterpiece and a deeply personal statement. The album was written and recorded with a cast of famous and not-so-famous musicians, including guitarist Waddy Wachtel and drummer Craig Krampf, the latter from Perry's pre-Journey band *Alien Project*.

At the absolute peak of his powers, for *Street Talk* Steve Perry put everything he had into a series of perfectly crafted songs: *Oh Sherrie*, written for his then partner Sherrie Swafford, became a massive hit single; *Captured By The Moment*, a beautiful eulogy for lost heroes such as Martin Luther King and soul legend singer Sam Cooke; *Strung Out*, a heartbreak song that rounded off the record in a hard-rocking fashion that Neal Schon might have found a little ironic.

In a year so full of amazing music, Steve Perry delivered one of the greatest AOR albums of all time. **PE**

1984

THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY

With new vocalists lasting five minutes and even founder members quitting amid the chaos, 1984 was a worrying time for **Black Sabbath**. Far from *Born Again*, they were almost obliterated.

Words: **Mick Wall** Photos: **Ross Halfin**

By the end of their *Born Again* tour, in March 1984, Black Sabbath were in a career death spiral. Having pulled off the previously thought impossible – successfully replacing singer Ozzy Osbourne, with former Rainbow vocalist Ronnie James Dio – they made a giant misstep when replacing Dio with former Deep Purple frontman Ian Gillan.

Dio had bent over backwards trying to maintain the integrity of the band, and the two Sabbath albums he recorded (*Heaven And Hell* in 1980 and *Mob Rules* in '81) both restored the band's musical credibility and returned them to platinum-selling status in America. Gillan, by contrast, admitted he had never even liked Sabbath's music. That was brought home by his unwillingness to even learn the lyrics of classic Sabbath numbers like *War Pigs*; he had the words to the songs scrawled on the pages of a scrapbook concealed behind his vocal monitors.

When, during their debut UK show at the Reading Festival in August 1983, Sabbath encoired with the old Purple warhorse *Smoke On The Water*, there was disbelief, then disdain, then ridicule. It later emerged that they had also considered playing Purple's *Black Night*. More astonishingly, with ELO's Bev Bevan having become the latest drummer to replace Bill Ward, at short notice, guitarist Tony Iommi (at Bevan's quiet urging) had actually suggested they have a crack at ELO's *Evil Woman*. "But every time Iommi counted it in, it would make us all fall about laughing!" recalled Sabbath's keyboard player Geoff Nicholls.

The world tour, stretched over seven excruciating months, would become legendary for all the wrong reasons. A week before Reading, bassist Geezer Butler narrowly avoided arrest when he threw a Molotov cocktail from his hotel room window, destroying another guest's Ford Cortina. Three

weeks after Reading, cops were called to a fight at a club in Barcelona, begun after the bouncers took exception to Gillan 'jokingly' setting fire to one of their waiters. Running to escape the mass brawl, Butler was arrested after jumping into the back of a police car, mistaking it for a taxi.

The most eye-wateringly embarrassing aspect of the *Born Again* tour, though, was the stage set. Ostensibly built around the portentous two-minute instrumental *Stonehenge*, the stone models were so huge they couldn't fit them into more than a handful of venues. "The bloody things were forty-feet high," Gillan snorted.

Adding to the sense of the absurd, they had a dwarf dressed as the red devil-baby on the *Born Again* sleeve. The dwarf was told to crawl atop the Stonehenge pillars, before falling backwards with a scream onto (unseen) a pile of safety

Purple reunion that summer, a sense of betrayal was added to the growing realisation that Sabbath were becoming a joke.

Gillan feigned astonishment. "Myself, Tony and Geezer all knew that once the world tour was over I would be teaming up with Deep Purple... The Purple thing was always there from day one and pretty much on schedule for when I came out of Sabbath. It all slotted in very nicely, as it happens." He added: "We all parted on amicable terms."

Not quite. Butler, who now insisted that it was never part of their original plan to call the hook-up with Gillan Black Sabbath, publicly accused the singer of staying just long enough to raise his profile in America before rejoining Purple. Disillusioned and depressed, Butler also threatened to leave the band.

Only Iommi, stone-faced and coked-out, was prepared to try to keep the show on the road. The last original Sabbath member still standing, he was now living in a penthouse apartment on Sunset Boulevard with his new girlfriend, former Runaways guitarist and now solo artist Lita Ford. They had begun an affair when Ford

supported Sabbath on some of the *Born Again* dates and had moved in together in 1984.

Despite the guitarist still being married to his second wife, Melinda, with whom he'd had a daughter, Toni, in 1983, then split from soon after, Iommi now proposed to Ford, who accepted and began making plans for a wedding in which the bride would be resplendent in a black wedding dress. She even made an album, with Iommi producing, tentatively titled *The Bride Wore Black*, but it was never released.

Ford was not a coke fiend like Iommi. "It was a shame," he admitted, "because I messed up the relationship by being constantly out of it." He knew he'd gone too far, he said, when he and Sabbath's keyboard player Geoff Nicholls were writing in the penthouse one day and decided they should chain the front door and place ➤

"Myself, Tony and Geezer all knew that once the world tour was over I would be teaming up with Deep Purple."

Ian Gillan

mattresses. A tolling bell was then the cue for a parade of roadies dressed as monks to drift across the stage, as if in prayer. At the very first show, Gillan recalled, when "the dwarf-baby fell backwards his screams didn't stop. Someone had forgotten to put the mattresses out! I was looking out from the side of the stage and you could see people turning to each and going: 'What the fuck?'"

That ludicrous situation was made immortal when producers of the film *This Is Spinal Tap*, released as the *Born Again* tour finally ended, spoofed it in reverse when the fictitious Tap discover their Stonehenge models have been built so small that a dwarf towers over them.

When it was announced at the start of 1984 that Gillan would be leaving Sabbath after the tour in order to participate in a full-on Deep



The short-lived Sabbath line-up of
(l-r) Geezer Butler, Bev Bevan,
Tony Iommi and Ian Gillan.

1984



...Sabbath's 'Stonehenge' stage set turned out to be too big to fit into many of the venues they played on the *Born Again* tour.

furniture up against it, "because you get paranoid when you do a lot of coke. We were working on this song when we heard a loud bang. It was Lita."

When Iommi later invited Ford's regular drummer Eric Singer to join Sabbath, it was the last straw. They split soon after.

Back in April '84, with drummer Bill Ward fresh out of rehab and Butler reluctantly agreeing to return too, the search for a new singer was back on. This time, instead of moving for an established star singer – before calling on Gillan they had approached and been turned down by both Robert Plant and David Coverdale – they invited hopefuls to send in tapes, which Iommi and Butler would then listen to, and invite any that really stood out to come for an audition. This led to the farcical situation of one singer who, Iommi recalled, "we thought was amazing" being invited on the strength of a tape that, it turned out, he didn't actually sing on.

"We were in the rehearsal room," Iommi remembers. "Me and Geezer are looking at each other going: 'What's this? This guy can't sing! But he sounded so good on the tape!'"

It wasn't until later, when they played back the cassette, that their prospective new singer informed them that it wasn't actually his voice on the tape, and that they'd been listening to the wrong side of the cassette.

Next it was announced on MTV that 24-year-old American singer/guitarist Ron Keel was the new singer in Black Sabbath. Another mistake. According to Keel: "I demoed some of the material and we hung out for a few days. They went through a bunch of other singers, but all they really wanted was Ozzy."

Finally, in May 1984, they thought they'd

found The One when a 30-year-old former male model named David Donato auditioned. Tall, toned, LA-tan, with long ringlets of hair running down his back, if he sounded as good as he looked he was in, Iommi decided.

Unfortunately he didn't, his voice somewhere between a downscale Dio and an asthmatic Gillan. Donato looked better than either of them, though, and was significantly younger, and Iommi felt coke-confident enough to schedule a full-scale announcement of Donato's appointment as Sabbath's new singer, via a soon to be notorious interview with *Kerrang!* featuring a spread of glamour shots of a pouting, hair-teased Donato, who told the writer: "It all seems to be going very smoothly.

"I demoed some of the material. They went through a bunch of other singers, but all they really wanted was Ozzy."

Ron Keel

I always had a picture of what the right singer in Sabbath should be – and it was me!"

A month later, Donato was out of the band. Embarrassed, Iommi then claimed he'd never really been in it. "The Donato thing never should have gone that far," he said. "We went public before we were sure about it."

It didn't really matter what had happened, the fallout from the Donato debacle was intense. "Everything turned into chaos," Iommi said.

That chaos escalated still further when Bill Ward – yet again – walked out, vowing that this time it was for good. "I had the same feelings I'd had when Ronnie and Ian were in the band," he later explained. "It just didn't feel the same as it had with Ozzy. I knew there was no way back."

When Butler, exasperated by the shambles,

While even the dwarves dwarfed Spinal Tap's inches-high 'Stonehenge' stage set...



followed Ward out the door, it seemed like that was it.

"Geezer had been writing stuff that didn't sound like Sabbath at all and he was just fed up and wanted to try that stuff out somewhere else," Iommi claimed, trying to save face.

When Butler then began shopping around a demo he'd made with David Donato to major labels, it only brought more confusion to the increasingly bedraggled Sabbath saga.

Even hard man Iommi now began to falter, no matter what Geoff Nicholls might have told him as they sat there at Tony's penthouse doing coke all day and night and writing songs for a Sabbath album the guitarist now knew in his bones was not going to happen.

By the end of 1984, Iommi was working with 34-year-old singer Jeff Fenholt, who'd starred in the title role of the original Broadway production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Some of their demo material would later surface as finished Sabbath tracks – but with Fenholt's voice and lyrics excavated.

It was later claimed that Fenholt – who soon after "found God" and became a TV evangelist – was forced to drop out of the project after becoming conflicted with the band's supposedly 'satanic' image. Fenholt countered those claims by suggesting it was a row with

Sabbath manager Don Arden that almost led to the pair brawling that spurred his exit. Again, Iommi attempted to cover his tracks by insisting Fenholt was never a fully fledged Sabbath member.

The toxicity surrounding the Sabbath name was such that they would spend the remainder

of the 80s reduced to a blur of line-ups, a string of forgettable albums, and the end of their viability as a touring act in the US.

Rubbing salt into the wound was the huge success in 1984 of all three of Sabbath's former singers. Ozzy's *Bark At The Moon* album, released in November 1983, was another multi-platinum hit, his '84 US tour, with newbies Mötley Crüe in support, the most lucrative of his career. Sales of Dio's *The Last In Line*, released in July, also left Sabbath in the dust. Even Ian Gillan's album with Deep Purple, *Perfect Strangers*, outdid Sabbath by some distance, hitting the US Top Five in December.

Far from born again, Sabbath now appeared to be dead. But, as the following 40 years have proved, appearances can be deceptive... **1**



MARILLION FUGAZI



Marillion's debut album, 1983's *Script For A Jester's Tear*, which had muscled its way into the Top 10, had turned them into one of the most talked-about new bands in the UK. Big things were therefore expected of the follow-up, not least from their label EMI.

"We were riding on the back of *Script*, we'd done our first American tour, it was all wonderful," says Fish, Marillion's original singer and lyricist. "And then we hit *Fugazi*."

The band's second album, *Fugazi* was a lesson in how not to make a record. "We used up all the material we had on *Script*," says keyboard player Mark Kelly. "We needed to come up with an album's worth of material, and we pretty much had to start from scratch."

Marillion's approach to songwriting involved writing fragments of music and then trying to work out how to fit them together like a jigsaw, a taxing process for everyone involved.

"We felt like we were under a lot of pressure to come up with an album's worth of material," Kelly continues, "and we weren't making a very good fist of it, to be honest."

By the time they entered Richard Branson's £1,000-a-day Manor Studio in Oxfordshire with producer Nick Tauber in November 1983 to start recording, they still had only two-thirds of the album written. The next three months would see the band frantically trying to complete the record. They burned through several expensive studios, sometimes using two simultaneously to finish it off. At one point an aggrieved producer whose time they were eating into threatened to attack them with a machete.

Fugazi came in just under the wire. It was far from the disaster its painful creation suggestion. *Assassing* was a venomous rejoinder to those who mischaracterised Marillion as bloated prog copyists, *Punch And Judy* set a bleak tale of domestic abuse to a queasily upbeat tune, and the masterful title track remains a brilliant slice of shapeshifting 80s urban paranoia.

Released in March 1984, *Fugazi* peaked at No.5 in the UK. But their paymasters at EMI were looking at the balance sheet – the album had cost £120,000 to make but didn't produce the massive hit singles they wanted. "It was like going into the bar and running a tab and having a fantastic party and never for one moment thinking at the end of the night you'd be given the bill," says Fish.

Fugazi's relative under-performance saw EMI putting Marillion on blast: deliver the goods next time, or you're in trouble. Eighteen months later, they delivered *Misplaced Childhood*, a record that briefly turned them into unlikely pop stars and assured their future.

"It's a transitional album," says Fish. "It could have been stronger in places. But we were young guys, for fuck's sake. You just think: 'This is fucking fantastic, we're making albums and travelling the world, this is the life.'" **DE**

FURTHER HIGHLIGHTS IN A TRANSFORMATIVE YEAR



With its simmering mix of new beginnings, endings, cultural shifts and innovations, the year 1984 was quietly pivotal, a densely layered meeting point of one period and another. Twelve months that, in many ways, ushered in the modern age.

In a year so full of landmark film soundtracks, you can't overlook Prince's *Purple Rain*, a game-changing epic that saw its mercurial mastermind shapeshift between pure pop icon, jazz genius, guitar hero, oddball experimentalist, funky MC and more – occupying the US No.1 spot for 24 weeks in the process. The title track is its shiniest calling card, but with precision-honed, ahead-of-their-time pieces like *Take Me With U* and *Computer Blue* it's a record with many high points.

In the fullness of time, The Pogues would be immortalised by omnipresent Christmas classic *Fairytale Of New York*. But in 1984 they threw down their Irish folk-



punk gauntlet with debut LP *Red Roses For Me* – not as big a hit as *Fairytale*, but beloved by critics and fans alike. The Smiths made a similarly sizeable opening statement with their self-titled debut (creating a new brand of indie romanticism that subsequent generations still subscribe to). It was raw, and hinted at the greatness to come, from the post-punk rush of *Miserable Lie*, its insidious Johnny

Marr riff anchoring Morrissey's falsetto vocals, to the urgent stomp of *What Difference Does It Make?*. And they'd only just got going.



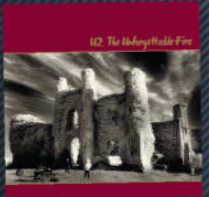
U2 began their creative alliance with production duo Brian Eno and Daniel Lanois, and released *The Unforgettable Fire*, a brilliant distillation of modern rock marrying shoegaze and post-punk sonics. It was the album that gave us *Pride (In The Name of Love)*, a timeless anthem. Europe began the countdown to... you know the one, with *Wings Of Tomorrow*, a marriage of beefy hard rock and echoes of the synths that would make them superstars in another two years.

Another successful second album came from Stevie Ray Vaughan, proving that his fireball first, *Texas Flood*, was no fluke with *Couldn't Stand The Weather* – killer tracks all through, and his Hendrix cover *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)* that budding guitar stars still emulate in their zillions. Meanwhile, German metal stalwarts Scorpions had a major breakthrough with *Love At First Sting* (featuring *Rock You Like A Hurricane*, still their biggest anthem) and Foreigner enjoyed their first and only UK No.1 with *Agent Provocateur*, the mothership of mega ballad *I Want To Know What Love Is*.

Over the course of the rest of the decade (and beyond), there would be more ripples from 1984's footsteps. 'Power ballad' would become a ubiquitous term. Music and film would forge a deepening relationship, the role of looks, of branding, beginning an ascent that's still going. Rock'n'roll would swim into uncharted waters, honing different tropes, tricks, subcultures. Technological advances, seeds planted in '84, would forever change the course of communication, collaboration and innovation.

The world was becoming a much bigger, and much smaller, place. **1**

Words: Geoff Barton, Mike Barnes, Bill DeMain, Niall Doherty, Paul Elliott, Dave Everley, Polly Glass, Stephen Hill, Rob Hughes, Neil Jeffries, Dave Ling, Paul Rees, Mick Wall, Jon Wiederhorn





THE
★CLASSIC★
Rock
INTERVIEW

MICK MARS

He put together arguably the most hedonistic metal band of their era, but shunned much of their outrageous excess. Now out of Mötley Crüe, he's starting a solo career. Lived a life? You could say that.

Interview: **Dave Everley** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

Years ago, guitarist Mick Mars read a review of a gig by his band Mötley Crüe that stuck in his mind. It wasn't what the journalist wrote about the show that stood out, it was what they wrote about him.

"It said: 'Mick Mars comes out to the front of the stage with his little troll body,'" he recalls. Other people might have been offended by that, but not the guitarist. "I thought: 'Cool!' It sounded creepy." He laughs. "I'm the little goblin guy."

What the reviewer didn't mention, or more likely didn't know, was that in his twenties Mars had been diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis (AS), a genetic condition that over time fuses bones in the body together.

"What I have now is bamboo spine," he says, referring to his spine now effectively being one single bone – something borne out by his rigid

posture and the occasional grimaces of discomfort during our chat.

Yet despite his physical condition, he's funny, wry and far more self-deprecating and egoless than any man who spent 42 years as member of Mötley Crüe should be. In many ways, Mars – born Robert Alan Deal in Indiana in 1951 – was an unlikely 80s-metal superstar. He was 29 and had already been around the block several times when his future bandmates responded to an ad he'd placed in local newspaper *The Recycler* in which he described himself as a "loud, rude and aggressive guitar player".

But it was Mars who helped get the band off the ground, via financial backing from a mysterious benefactor he refers to today only as "Alan". And it was Mars, hunched and glowering, who brought a malevolent edge to the Crüe's cartoon glam-metal pirate ride.

He can't talk about last year's messy departure from the band, amid claims and counter-claims ➤





Excess All Areas - *Theatre Of Pain*-era Mötley Crüe in 1985: (l-r) Vince Neil, Nikki Sixx, Tommy Lee, Mick Mars

of backing-tape use and general inability to play. This is partly due to impending litigation, but also partly due to an unspoken sense that he's still hurt by it. Instead his attention is focused on his imminent, and long-gestating debut solo album, *The Other Side Of Mars*. Co-written with former Winger keyboard player Paul Taylor, it's a blast of melodic yet surprisingly convincing modern metal. Not that the man behind it is about to toot his own horn. "My number-one rule has always been never, ever believe your own hype," he says. "That will wreck everything."

When did you decide to make a solo album?

A long time ago. When we did the final tour [in 2016, which turned out not to be the final tour] was when I really started dedicating myself to coming up with a solo record. But it kind of got stopped. I didn't like the direction it was going. I said: "No, it's gotta be more than that." It came together a little slow, but it was growing - crunchy songs, cinematic songs. It's not progressive rock, but it's progressing me. I'll never be able to do what Steve Vai or any of those guys do. I'm just me. I play very simple stuff.

Who made you want to pick up the guitar in the first place?

Way, way, way back, when I was maybe three or four years old and we lived in Huntington, Indiana, we went to a fair. This guy named Skeeter Bond happened to be playing. He had this bright orange suit with sequins and stuff, he was wearing a big white Stetson, the old country-and-western thing. He got up there and did this stuff. I was, like: "Wow, that's what I wanna do."

sitting five feet away, going [cups ear, mimes straining to listen]. The first band I played a gig with was The Jades. We copied a lot of British Invasion stuff. It was when bands still had 'The' in front of their name - The Beatles, The Stones. The Jades...

What were the teenage Mick Mars's ambitions? Were you fixated on becoming a successful musician?

I went through surf music and British Invasion, and then I discovered blues and jazz. All the drummers in those days were into jazz, so I thought, okay, I'll listen to some jazz. I listened to Wes Montgomery, Miles Davis, all those people, just learning a lot of

different ways of doing things and different kinds of music. And stumbling on King Crimson and Gentle Giant was pretty eye-opening for me. When I heard [King Crimson guitarist] Robert Fripp, and the way that he played, I went: "How can you do that and do it so fast?" It was so different. Everybody knows *21st Century Schizoid Man*, but when you hear something like *Cat Food* [from 1970's *In The Wake Of Poseidon*] you go, this is really off, but it's so cool.

"I did my share of partying, but I'd stay out of trouble and play my guitar instead of being a clown."

When was the first time you played guitar on stage?

I had a school band that I did in junior high school, right around the seventh or eighth grade. There was this talent show thing, so I borrowed my cousin's electric guitar and this teeny-tiny amp, and wrote a surf song called *Conflict*.

Did you win the talent show?

Heck no. They couldn't even hear me. They were

Shouting at the devil?
Vince Neil and Mars with
the Crüe in '81.



Did you ever have your own progressive rock phase?

I listened to it. I couldn't grasp it. Well I could grasp it, but I couldn't do it. I went to see Gentle Giant in California, and you've got them lined up across the stage, Kerry Minnear here and Gary Green there, and they'd go: 'da-da-da-da-da' and it would go straight across the stage – this guy plays three notes, this guy plays four notes, this guy plays one note. My jaw dropped. I was thinking: "How do you do that?" But I loved it *because* I couldn't do it.

What kind of guy were you then?

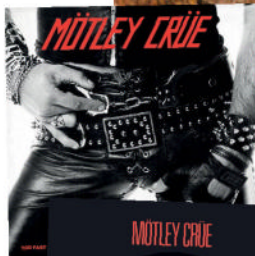
I did my share of partying, but I'd stay out of trouble and play my guitar instead of being a clown. I was kind of a comedian, but I was never the dominant person in a roomful of people, never a 'Look at me!' kind of person. But I liked to laugh and have fun. Everybody does. Well, not everybody, there's some miserable bastards out there.

You had a son with your first girlfriend when you were nineteen. How hard was it to balance a young family with your rock'n'roll ambitions?

We were both on a different page. I wanted to do this, she wanted me to work. We didn't fight, we didn't get in arguments. We decided we weren't a match. So I went my way and she went her way. I made my child support payments.

Before Mötley Crüe happened, you were the textbook struggling musician, playing in a string of bands in the seventies. How tough did things get?

Pretty tough. No money, living on Bennies [Benzedrine, an amphetamine] on the street,



"I try to be pretty honest about who I am. I'm just a musician. I'm not a 'Look at me!' kind of person."

sleeping on floors using my guitar case as a pillow. One band I was in, we all lived in the same apartment. I used to sleep behind my Marshalls, using them as a wall. I used to hang out with... I don't want to say gangs, but biker-type people. I was doing a lot of partying with those guys.

A lot of musicians must feel that void: "Is this the way it's going for be? Am I going to do anything

with my life?" What I learned is, if the chance to do something comes up, you gotta take it. You gotta keep at it. That's what I was thinking all the time.

Did you ever come close to quitting?

Never. Not once. It was a lesson I needed to learn, I guess. I was being tested; you really want this this bad? Like the blues guys, you gotta pay your dues.

What kept you going?

Determination. I was obsessed: "I need to do this." I wanted it so bad. No matter what the conditions were, I'm still doing this. I'd get afraid sometimes. I had a few jobs that were dangerous. I smashed my hand in one place. I was working at an industrial laundromat on the extractor, the ones that wring out the clothing in this six-hundred-pound tub. One day this tub came back and hit me in the left hand. It could have crushed my hand if it had hit a bit harder. It would have been the end of my career. I was like: "That's it, I'm done," and I walked out. And that night, at two o'clock in the morning, I played an after-hours show.

You were playing on the same circuit as Van Halen in their early days. Did you know Eddie Van Halen back then?

I'd known Edward since he was nineteen years old. When I first met them, they'd pretty much just got David [Lee Roth] in the band. I knew they were ➤



Fans, fans, fans: Mötley Crüe at the US Festival in Devore, California, May 29, 1983.

going to make it the first time I heard them. I was like, man, what a great band. We'd play in places like Gazzarri's and the Golden West Ballroom. Me and the drummer from White Horse would go: "God, I hope Van Halen's playing with us tonight, those guys kick ass." Watching Edward grow into different areas was great.

Is it true that you almost joined Sparks before Mötley Crüe got off the ground?

What happened with that was that the guy from Sparks with the moustache [Ron Mael] called me from the ad I'd put in *The Recycler*. I told them straight up that it wasn't the kind of music I played and they would be disappointed in me. They were more of a glam-rock band – David Bowie, T.Rex. I love that stuff, but I don't play like that.

What would Sparks with Mick Mars on guitar have sounded like?

Oh, it would have been a train wreck [laughs].



Another person to answer your ad was Nikki Sixx. What did you make of him the first time you met him?

I already had 'Mötley Crüe' in my mind as a band name. I'd had it since 1977, maybe 1976. So I went up there and auditioned them. I liked the way Nikki was playing – no amp, just slapping around and stuff. It was pretty cool. He said: "I've got a drummer too." Ironically enough, Tommy Lee had been in a band called Suite 19, and we had a mutual friend named Freddy who gave me his

number when I said I was gonna put an original band together. But I lost the number, so I never met him. And now here's this guy who I was supposed to meet a long time ago, with Nikki. When we started playing it just went 'Woof!' Instant. Kind of like the same story as Cream with Clapton and those guys.

"Stumbling on King Crimson and Gentle Giant was pretty eye-opening for me."

The story goes that you wanted to get rid of their original singer, O'Dean Peterson, because he was "a fucking hippie". What was your problem with hippies?

With O'Dean it was just that I didn't feel he was right. Not that he sang horribly, he just had a more Roger Daltrey-type voice. I told Tommy and Nikki that I wasn't sold on O'Dean, and they were stumbling around going: "Well, whadda we do?" And I go: "That skinny kid that I saw on stage last night in Rock Candy? Did you see those girls? They were going nuts over him. Sex sells." And they went: "Oh yeah..." So that's how we got Vince [Neill]. He fit well.

When did Bob Deal become Mick Mars?

It was before Mötley. I was calling myself Mick Mars in a cover band called Vendetta. 'Bob Deal' didn't fit. I thought: 'Mick Mars, that's me.'

Did you become a different person when you renamed yourself Mick Mars?

Nope. I only have one personality. Two names, one personality. I try to be pretty honest about who I am. I'm just a musician. I'm not a "look at me!" kind of person. Listen to me. You don't have to look at me.

You were twenty-nine when Mötley Crüe started. Did it feel like it was your last roll of the dice?

No. If Mötley hadn't panned out the way it did I would have moved on to something else. I'd still move on. I'd become stagnant if I didn't.

What was it like being in Mötley Crüe in the early days?

There was electricity. We were feeding off each other like... I dunno, a rat with cheese. One of the first songs that came out when we were first getting together was *Live Wire*. There were a few that were pretty good, but when we did *Live Wire* we went: "Oh shit!" It went: 'Kaboom!'

What do you remember about recording the first Mötley Crüe's album, *Too Fast For Love*, in 1981?

Working with [engineer and former Accept guitarist] Michael Wagener. I'd met Michael when



Mars with Ozzy Osbourne on his *Bark At The Moon* tour in 1984, on which Crüe were the support.

I was still in my cover band Vendetta. Anyway, we recorded *Too Fast For Love* with this bonehead who didn't know how to record anything, and he messed it up. I told the guys about Michael, and he fixed it all up. People loved that record. Michael lives up the street from me. He did the first Mötley Crüe album, and he did this new album. He's done my first and last records.

Were you hanging out on the Sunset Strip in the early days of Mötley Crüe?

No. Whenever I would go up to the Strip and hear the bands, I don't think they'd got away from what was going on. They all just wanted to be Van Halen or something. When we came out, it changed – the sound of the Sunset Strip, the look and the music and the rest of it. It's like, 'Oh, there is different music.' That's how it see, anyway.

Did you hear a lot of bands suddenly sounding like Mötley Crüe?

Yeah. Not exactly trying to copy us, but... I'm not saying that Mötley Crüe changed the world, but the sound was taking on an awareness. Mötley did well, and a lot of record companies were searching for that again. When we were going on an incline like this [draws sharp upwards line in the air] they were still like that [draws level line]. There was a lot of [jealously].

What was it like being in the eye of the hurricane? Did it screw with your head?

No. It was cool to go: "I'm finally doing it." And it was climbing and climbing. Seeing all these people going [makes cheering noise] is pretty



Ready to rock: Crüe preparing for their upcoming tour, February 2005.



Crüe backstage at the Moscow Music Peace Festival in Moscow, August 1989.

[Laughs] Quite a bit. But then I went: "Hmmm... I don't think this is for me."

Did you enjoy being in Mötley Crüe in the eighties?

It was two-thirds fun. There's always that part where it's: "Get away from me, you're bothering me."

What were the best bits?

Playing all these places you never, ever thought you'd play in, things escalating until they seem almost

overwhelming. We played the US Festival in 1983, there were 300,000-plus people there. Going out on that stage and playing was just... wow.

The band toured with Ozzy in 1984. What do you remember about that?

Not much, ha! I remember Ozzy being in my room. He was pretty high. He goes: "Mick, don't answer the door if Sharon knocks."

And did she knock?

Oh yes. There was no way I was answering it.

Mötley Crüe took hedonism to the extreme in the eighties, but it seemed like you didn't go as all-in as the other three. Is that accurate?

Yeah, I did live in my own little world. I'd already done what they were doing. I was a few years ahead. Did I drink?

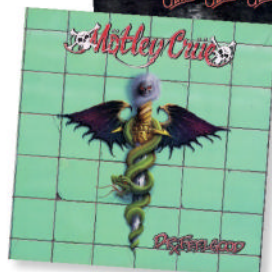
bigger than life. You're just some guy sitting there, and people are looking at you, going: "Wow, there he is!" I remember in Mexico City being in a car with bulletproof glass and there were a few hundred people surrounding it. I don't think they realised what it was like for us.

What about the bits that weren't so great?

Well, sometimes it was younger guys being younger guys and an older being: "I just wanna sleep." Pouring hairspray on my door and setting it on fire, that wasn't fun. Though it's kind of funny now. Tommy running down a corridor naked and all these old women popping their heads out the doors. Looking back it's funny, but at the time it's like: "Can you guys be a little bit more mellow?"

You were diagnosed with ankylosing spondylitis in your twenties, but you started experiencing symptoms even before that. How did it impact on your life?

In my early teens my lower back would hurt. ➤





Always look on the bright side of life: Mick Mars the solo artist in 2023.

I thought it was from sunburn, crazy as that sounds. Later on it felt like somebody had come up and hit me on the back of the neck with a bat. And it really frigging hurt. I'd look around and there'd be nobody there.

Gradually it did its thing. As time went on, everything stopped. My head stopped moving, walking stiff... Not too long ago I couldn't look at any film of myself, I didn't like the way I was looking. It's so hideous. You see yourself on film and go: "Oh my god, no."

You can't help that.

Yeah, it's my body beating me up.

How did you cope with the AS?

It was a little difficult. I'd drown some pain in alcohol, that sort of stuff. But I ended up getting hooked on opiates. I was so badly hooked on them. I would recommend never going down that street, ever.

That was in the early 2000s. How did you end up in that place?

We were touring, and I was in a lot of pain. You couldn't imagine how much pain. If I stood up my whole back would just go into tension, what I call a Charlie horse [a cramp]. How you get it in your leg or on your thigh, my whole body, my whole back would get like that. A lot of times I would just stay in my bed, it was very hard to get up. This particular doctor was giving me Oxycontin, and I was taking way too many, of course. They gave me Vicodin, and this particular opiate called Lortab...

I got so addicted to those. I just wanted the pain to stop. That stuff's brutal.

How did you clean up?

I went to a bunch of doctors, cos we were going back on tour. The band and the manager was helping me, because I was helpless—I'd be a hundred pounds or something, I couldn't drive a car, I'm an addict. They came in and helped me get clean cos they needed me.

"I was calling myself Mick Mars in a cover band called Vendetta. 'Bob Deal' didn't fit."

I go to the doctor's and he says: "He needs a double hip replacement." I ended up getting one hip replaced. But the time I spent in the hospital, they ended up giving me morphine for the pain. That helped me a lot with getting off that stuff. When I got out of the hospital they gave me something that acted in the same way that a Vicodin would do but wasn't really addictive. I'd have one, then a half, then a quarter. It took me four months to totally get off of that. It was difficult. Don't go there.



How do you manage it now?

Advil. Only four a day. I'm not a youngster any more.

You gave forty years of your life to Mötley Crüe. Is there part of you that misses it?

It's a difficult one to answer. I got a little too beat up touring... I wanted to do my solo thing. Do I miss touring? It's one of those kinds of things that there's a time to step back, and it was my time to step back.

Despite everything that's happened with Mötley Crüe recently, are you proud of what you achieved with the band?

Absolutely. My whole studio is covered with all our albums—quadruple-platinum, hundred-million albums, all our stuff from the US Festival and the Moscow Peace Festival.

Do you wish you'd been given more respect as a guitarist?

I wouldn't say so. It's like this: do you like Coke, or Pepsi? Some people really dig me, some people don't. It's all good to me.

Do you think you'll ever play live again?

I would say if I don't get too old first I could do a one-off show easily. I could do a residency easily enough, you just go downstairs and play. If I needed it I could sit on a stool or chair, then go back to my room and relax and watch a monster movie and go to sleep. But the intense travelling, I just can't do that any more. It's too much. I guess it was a choice. You can be a guitar player with AS, or a worker with no AS.

Do you wish you could go back and swap it?

I got the deal I got. There was no choice. 🍌

The Other Side Of Mars is released on February 23 and will be reviewed next issue.

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TWIN GUITARS - CLASSIC ROCK



FEATURING SONGS FROM LIVE DATES II

21:09 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS	07:10 BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
23:09 LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION	09:10 LINCOLN DRILL
24:09 SOUTHPORT ATKINSON	10:10 WALSALL ARENA
26:09 CARLISLE OLD FIRE STATION	11:10 RUGBY BENN HALL
27:09 GLASGOW ORAN MOR	21:10 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
03:10 LEEDS BRUDENELL	22:10 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
04:10 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME	23:10 NEWBURY ARLINGTON ARTS
05:10 BURY MET THEATRE	24:10 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL

ASHCON 2024 WISHBONE ASH CONVENTION
CHESTER LIVE ROOMS - SATURDAY 21 SEP (MIDDAY)
TICKETS PURCHASED FOR ASHCON INCLUDE ENTRY TO EVENING SHOW





THIS MORTAL COIL

Album number eight *Be Right Here* is a rebirth for the southern country rock family of **Blackberry Smoke** as they reflect on almost a quarter of a century of keeping their dream alive.

Words: **Polly Glass**

For all their quintessential southernness, Blackberry Smoke have always hit on a universal level. Lyrical blends of observation and autobiography, their songs hinge on timeless themes: characters we've all known; feelings we've all had; the endlessly fascinating lives of others; incisive musings on divorce, bar fights, life on the road, sex, heartache, parenthood and more, their honeyed tones born in country, gospel and bluegrass, then marinated in the rock and metal records of the band's teenage years.

"But that story never really ends," says Charlie Starr. "There will never stop being love songs, and there will never stop being songs about home, either going home or leaving home, men singing songs about women, and vice versa, and the relationship or lack thereof. I don't know. The blues. I need it. Where's my woman? Where's my man? It continues to happen generation after generation."

At home in Atlanta, Blackberry Smoke's chief architect has the manner of someone whose wildest days are behind him – even if the memories have never faded.

Kind eyes, thick-rimmed glasses, chunky silver at his wrists and fingers, hair grazing slim shoulders. Electric guitars and a small crucifix hang on the walls behind him.

Back home from a hefty bout of touring, he's here to talk about the band's eighth studio album, *Be Right Here*. A lot of things about it advocate living in the moment. The title itself. Lyrics peppered across the track-list. The raw, minimalist nature of its production (in late 2022/early 2023). The aggressive brain cancer that hospitalised drummer Brit Turner, imbuing subsequent recording sessions with a fresh imperative. A sense that our time on this mortal

coil isn't endless, with on-the-money, fat-free songs to match.

"It gave the recording process, and then everything after, sort of..." Starr searches for the words. "I say a sense of urgency, but it didn't put us in a hurry. It just made all that time really precious. Everybody took a long hard look at it, like: 'We get to do this, we get to make music and make records and work with Dave Cobb and work together'. And it just made it seem really special."

Dave Cobb might be Nashville's producer du jour, but his roots are in Savannah, Georgia. His new studio, in an old house in the swamps there ("you can literally walk out

the back door and go fishing," Starr says with a grin, "it's very low country there"), brought a level of escapism to the *Be Right Here* sessions; the rural spirit that's such a core part of Blackberry Smoke's sound. It can be heard in the rattle'n'roll twang of boot-stomping single *Hammer And The Nail* and the outlaw mystique of *Whatchu Know Good*, the latter a co-write with singer-songwriter and fellow Georgia native Brent

Cobb (he and Dave are cousins).

Four fertile days in Savannah were juxtaposed with the cavernous, hi-spec environs of RCA Studio A in Nashville. Recording live, they created the same feel that Cobb engineered on Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators' 2022 album 4: raw, roomy, old-school.

"Dave said: 'think about the James Gang and the Layla record by Derek And The Dominos,'" Starr says. "I want all the amps around the drums in the room, I want everything in the big room this time, no separation."

Mixed in Atlanta at West End Sound (the studio owned by Mastodon, neighbours and old ➤

"I revisit them often, the ten thousand hours we spent together being crazy, being wild..."

Charlie Starr



“You could give us ten dressing rooms and we always wind up in one. We enjoy each other’s company.”

Charlie Starr

friends of Blackberry Smoke), the finished product feels like a loose, organic sum of the band’s American South parts. It’s an open-topped contrast to 2021’s *You Hear Georgia*, all big heart, big sound and wry smiles.

“We all started to grin,” Starr says of the first time they listened to it. “Because I remember thinking: ‘This is going to be different. It’s like making a sixties record, we’re all in here and it’s warts and all.’ We walked into the control room to listen to the first track, and everybody was grinning, like: ‘Okay, this will work.’”

Now over a year on from recording, and from the surgery that saved his life, drummer Brit still receives treatment. He designed the album sleeve

artwork (as always) centred on a butterfly over an urban landscape, hinting at a rebirth of sorts.

“He acted like a big brother to all of us,” Starr says of the band’s early, hellraiser days spent tearing across the US in a van – and taking just about everything they were offered. “Paul Jackson [guitarist] and I were the youngest, I guess you would say we were also the wildest – the hardest to herd, I think. And Richard [Turner, bassist] too. But Brit... yeah, he took that job on. And when I got sober, he was emotional about it. He was like: ‘Oh, my god, thank you! I’m so tired of chasing after you!’”

He laughs, a glint of that former wickedness surfacing, just for a second.

“God bless him for all the work he put in, keeping us all safe.”

Like so many of their favourite groups (the Allman Brothers, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Little Feat, Tedeschi Trucks Band), the Blackberry Smoke family constantly expands. Since the beginning they’ve routinely acquired new limbs in the form of players and Starr’s network of co-writers. Guitarist Paul Jackson completed the original foursome in 2001. Brandon Still joined in 2009 when they needed (and could afford) a full-time organist. Guitarist Benji Shanks played duet shows with Starr for more than a decade before joining the band full-time in 2021.



Blackberry Smoke: part of an extended family as well as a band.

Other roots go even further back. Percussionist Preston Holcomb (who also joined in 2021) was an old high-school friend of the Turner brothers. While playing in Atlanta jam-band The Grapes, he became a regular at Blackberry Smoke's first gigs. All their paths started to cross.

"And then he wound up playing with Benji and Richard at this Allman Brothers jam at this pizza place on the side," Starr says. "So then he comes in and starts to play with Brit... It just kind of naturally all filled together."

Most recently, backing vocalists the Black Bettys (aka twin sisters Sherie and Sherita Murphy, Atlanta locals with Outkast, T-Pain and Keith Sweat among their credits) have charged new

upbeat numbers like *Little Bit Crazy* and *Don't Mind If I Do* with the Rolling Stones-y, gospel-meets-rock'n'roll harmonies that Starr adores. Not to mention the Tom Petty-esque *Whatchu Know Good*, imbued with smoky mystique thanks to the sisters' below-the-surface purrs.

"I was looking for [something like] Venetta Fields, Clydie King and Merry Clayton, the way they would sing on the Stones songs," he says. "Anyway, we put the songs on, and they knew exactly what to do. Their instincts are impeccable."

Starr loves all this. One of arguably few frontmen with a true team-player's mind-set, his passion for group dynamics runs deep. He grew up with bluegrass jams and church music. He's

written for other artists (Joe Bonamassa, Rich Robinson and Tyler Bryant among them). The guitar heroes he gets most excited about are duos or trios (Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, Joe Perry and Brad Whitford, Gary Rossington/Allen Collins/Ed King).

"We've all seen bands that don't speak between songs. It's kind of lame, in my opinion."

Charlie Starr

Does the more spotlight side of life – lead singer, chief songwriter, main interviewee – come easily, then? The singular aspects of his job, versus that instinct for collaboration?

"I had to work at it," he says of being a frontman. "It puts you into sort of a televangelist kind of situation, because I've never been in a band full of shoegazers. We've all seen bands that don't speak between songs, and it's really kind of lame, in my opinion. Maybe it's what some people like, but I always enjoyed seeing Steven Tyler, and even Tom Petty, who was a very graceful frontman. Chris Robinson was very good at it. Bruce Springsteen, especially when he was younger. So that was sort of a challenge: can I be not just a musician, but an entertainer? But I love it. The whole 'every hat to wear' thing, you know?"

In a way, *Be Right Here* is all about opposing states, and the emotional spaces that fall in between. Happiness with heartbreak. Dependability flecked with juicy left turns. Sonic enforcers of the record's unpretentious heart, beating with a blend of tenderness, deft twists and life-affirming gusto. The sort of feelgood nuance that's boosted by their inimitable mix of country, hard rock, gospel and more.

The album title *Be Right Here* comes from a line ('Home will always be right here') in *Azalea*, a gorgeously brooding, acoustic-based highlight – if *Led Zeppelin III* had been recorded in rural Georgia it might well have sounded like this. At one level the song is about parenthood, drawing from Starr and co-writer Travis Meadows's experiences as fathers. But it also follows the soul-search of a restless character that emerged as they wrote. 'Getting by don't mean getting strong/ Coming back don't mean your leaving here was wrong,' Starr sings, perhaps echoing a paternal voice in 'Azalea's ear.

"That song basically says: 'You do you,' you know? Whatever makes you happy, and whatever makes you feel at home. Maybe it's not out there. [He taps his chest] Maybe it is here."

In his own life, it took Starr a while to figure this out. He moved to Atlanta after high school, but California was the goal. Coming out of the 80s and heading into the 90s, the dream for Starr and so many of his peers was to go to Los Angeles, get signed, do everything their heroes did.

Aged 23 he took a shot at that. He went to LA and New York with the Turner brothers to make a record with their old band Buffalo Nickel (fronted by a different singer). At the same age, ➤



Charlie Starr with Blackberry Smoke at Denmark's Tønder Festival in summer 2023.

Starr became a father for the first time. By the standards of his high-school friends back home in Lanett, Alabama, he was a late starter. Having babies young was just... well, what people did.

"Nobody I knew went to college," he explains. "We couldn't, our parents couldn't afford it. And none of us were good enough students to wind up with a scholarship opportunity. So it was literally, 'Okay, I graduated high school', if you did – most of my friends didn't, they quit – and you get a job, probably marry your girlfriend and start having children. That was the small-town poverty model... [thinks about this] I don't even want to compare what I lived through to actual poverty, people who don't know where their next meal is coming from. But it was lower middle class, living Friday to Friday. 'Can I afford to pay the power bill? Well no, but I can pay the water bill and the phone bill.' But anyway, I remember thinking I've waited pretty late to start having kids at twenty-three, not at nineteen!"

For a time he seemed to settle into it. He and his first wife had a son. He got a job in a car-body shop, a house, a car. "I was like: 'Okay, well this is what you call settling down. This is life.'"

It wasn't until 2001, with the birth of Blackberry Smoke, that they all took the plunge, quitting their jobs for one last shot at making a band work. By then Starr was divorced, with bills to pay and a child to support. It was a precarious situation. He decided to go for it.

"We're like: 'Alright, well, we're getting too old to have much more of a shot at this, so now it's go all-in or nothing.'"

The idea that we only have one shot at life – and should grab it while we can – is one that most of us zone in and out of. Some days it's easy to swallow, while others we can't even think of it. Of course, there are those who bypass such internal conflict, or seem to. On *Be Right Here*, the sun-kissed boogie *Don't Mind If I Do* finds Starr revelling in the innocence of an eternal optimist. 'We ain't gonna live forever,' he sings. 'Reach up and grab a fistful of everything/Don't mind if I do.'

"Yeah, and I'm not that guy, really," Starr shrugs. "I think I wrote it wanting to be that guy. Because we all know people like that. It doesn't matter

Other Side Of The Light. Living in the present and missing the past, but keeping pockets of it alive in your memories.

Do you ever miss those wild, on-the-edge formative days of Blackberry Smoke?

"I do, yeah, I love those memories," he says, a little wistfully. "And I revisit them quite often. The ten thousand hours that we spent together being crazy, being wild. Not everything is funny. I have some horrible memories of us fighting, and of horrible situations that we put ourselves in, but at least eighty per cent of it is fun to remember."

They still tour extensively, but less so than in previous years (around 150 shows a year, compared with the 200-plus they were doing for "about a decade"). They have loved ones at home, waiting for calls after shows, between meet-and-greets, media commitments, sound-checks, gas station stops. Life is still busy. A different, less heated kind of busy, their drummer's health clearly in mind.

Something keeps them all close. Like brothers, after all these years. Backstage, Starr says, they always end up in a room together.

"You could give us ten dressing rooms in a venue, and we always wind up in one. We enjoy each other's company. Maybe not every second of every day, but we're friends. I constantly get asked: 'How do you keep a band together this long?' I'm like: 'I don't know how, but I know we love each other'. And it's... it's real. You know?"

Be Right Here is out on February 16 via 3 Legged Records/Thirty Tigers.

"I don't really think about addiction. I was lucky, I didn't have to work hard at putting things down."

Charlie Starr

what they've been through, they walk in the room and light it up. And you don't even know if it's real or not. Like [in Blackberry Smoke] Paul Jackson is the smiling one, you know? And I'm like: 'Is that muscle memory? Because you are not that happy!' He laughs. "He is a happy fella, but he's not the 'don't mind if I do' guy either."

At this point, Blackberry Smoke seemingly have a lot to be happy about. Sold-out theatres and arenas across the world. Supportive friends, collaborators and families. Stability. And perhaps it's this additional space to reflect, to ruminate a little, that comes out in *Be Right Here*.

PHILIP SAYCE

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P **88**

Kate Bush

Almost 40 years on,
Hounds Of Love returns in three
new editions to howl again.



CLASSIC ROCK RATINGS

■■■■■■■■■■	A CLASSIC
■■■■■■■■■	EXCELLENT
■■■■■■■■	VERY GOOD
■■■■■■■	GOOD
■■■■■■	ABOVE AVERAGE
■■■■■	AVERAGE
■■■■	BELOW PAR
■■■	A DISAPPOINTMENT
■■	PANTS
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EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM

12 PAGES

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THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Green Day

'Saviors' REPRISE

The punk pop masters return to formula, with the odd sprinkle of Gallagher.

Once more back to basics, dear friends. Green Day may have strayed a little from the path to *Welcome To Paradise* over the past three decades – into punk opera, grandiose rock balladry or, as on 2020's last album *Father Of All Motherfuckers*, garage rock'n'roll – but eventually they always steer back into their melodic punk hammer lane. Frontman Billie Joe Armstrong has described 'Saviors', their fourteenth album, as bridging the gap between 1994's *Dookie* and 2004's *American Idiot*, and there it certainly sits, part hurtling punkarama, part political rock drama. It's a style that Green Day pioneered and epitomised, and they don't wander too far from it.

Opener and first single *The American Dream Is Killing Me*, held over from *Father* to avoid making that album too political, firmly stakes out the territory. 'My country under siege,' Armstrong sings in his gung-ho punk bawl, pinpointing the issues of unemployment, homelessness and conspiracy acceptance, over swashbuckling stadium punk and chamber-pop interludes. But this touch of *American Idiot*'s political charge doesn't stampede across the album. *Strange Days Are Here To Stay*, *Living In The '20s* and the full-throttle *Coma City* – power punk tracks as catchy as Green Day have ever been – reference widespread racism, gun violence and the billionaire space race (or "assholes in space", as Armstrong puts it succinctly).

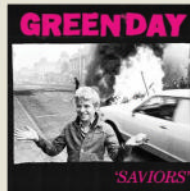
Otherwise, 'Saviors' is as personal as a therapy confession.

Emotionally, the record ricochets from the Weezer-like meet-cute *Bobby Sox*, full of first-flush romance, to far darker fare. *One Eyed Bastard* is pure vengeance, a wronged Armstrong declaring 'vendetta is a friend of mine' and telling his adversary to 'get on your knees, you are kissing my ring'. *Dilemma* appears to confront the demons at the bottom of the bottle: 'I was sober, now I'm drunk again... I don't wanna be a dead man walking,' Armstrong sings, imitating at times a 1950s red-eyed crooner. He ends up, on the theatrical finale *Fancy Sauce*, bouncing from the walls of a 'rubber room' for his own protection, punk's most famous basket case finally tipping over the edge.

If the record largely reads like a howl of desperation at all political and personal control being lost, though, it sounds very much in cruise. When it veers stylistically from melodic punk's centre line it's only as far as dreamy folk pop or, quite charmingly, Oasis; the title track could be an emo rewrite of *Some Might Say*, and *Father To A Son*, a heartfelt tribute to Armstrong's children, rises to a Beatledelic climax as if auditioning for the next Liam Gallagher solo album. For the most part, though, 'Saviors' is the sound of reassuring rebellion from the midst of the 21st-century breakdown.

■■■■■■■■■■

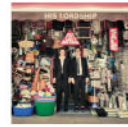
Mark Beaumont



His Lordship

His Lordship PSYCHONAUT SOUNDS

Like your rock'n'roll to bounce in the red? You'll love this.



If you're yet to be thoroughly electrified by the high-voltage rock'n'roll

tumult of His Lordship, the top-line facts are that jack-plugged lead maniac James Walbourne also supplies guitar services to The Pretenders, and drummer Kristoffer Sonne isn't above manning the traps for Chrissie Hynde's solo band. If you think this information tells you everything you need to know about His Lordship, you're wrong. It tells you nothing.

His Lordship are a monster. They may look like a couple of blokes in cheap suits and a bassist no one likes to talk about, but they've taken every hyper-twanged note of snaggle-toothed, fat-guitared, Link Wray-ed, Dick Dale-ified, Erick Lee Purkhiser-ated, wanton hillbilly mayhem you've ever heard, distilled it, got it drunk, left it for dead in a back alley, shot a 1,000 volts through it, slapped a smile on its face and propped it in front of a mic.

From the manic *All Cranked Up* to the borderline satanic *I Live In The City*, via Lux-on-a-tear-jerked-moonshine-jag hangover-guilt epic *The Repenter*, His Lordship have coughed up a debut for the ages.

■■■■■■■■■■

Ian Fortnam

The Fallen Leaves

Simple Songs For Complex People PARLI

More punk rock for gentlemen.



Formed in 2004 by former Club Left singer Rob Green and Subway Sect

guitarist Rob Symmons, The Fallen Leaves remain a rare oasis of class-of-'76 UK punk attitude filtered through mod's inspiration and arcane studio processes.

The pair's fifth studio album, and their first since 2019's live *Maximum Minimum*, catches the duo (plus revolving-door rhythm section) further refining their compact bolts of pure garage-punk magic, eight of its dozen tracks less than three minutes. Early Who dynamics charge *Rosalina*, *So Much More* and *Stay Where You Belong*, while Green is unflinchingly soul gouging on *I Don't Like Me (Most Of The Time)* and *I'm Feeling Fine*.

Symmons's distinctively dissonant guitar, often recalling Lou Reed's clipped, discordant economy, sends tingles throughout, even stretching out on anthem closer *Closer To Me*.

In defiantly charting their own defiant path, The Fallen Leaves have become a subterranean national treasure.

■■■■■■■■■■

Kris Needs

Plantoid

Terrapath BELLA UNION

Infectious jazz-prog from the seaside.



With the perfect name for a wonky, jazz-fuelled prog band,

Plantoid have arrived fully formed. *Terrapath* is a mad, gorgeous and bewildering debut, full of tracks that frequently sound like everything happening at once. Opener *Is That You* breaks listeners in gently, with a loping, syrupy groove and spaced-out atmospherics straight from The B-52's' *Planet Claire*, before surrendering a flurry of lop-sided avant-rock riffs. *Pressure* is a spiky and infectious psych-pop riot. *Dog's Life* morphs from white-knuckle funk to exuberant, psychedelic metal with a hint of Voivod. *Softly Speaking* is half lullaby, half descent into madness.

Modulator brings fleet-footed dream-pop with a dose of the fidgets. *Insomniac (Don't Worry)* is sprightly indie rock for hyperactive Magma fans. Through it all, guitarist Thomas Coyne is a mischievous, virtuoso force, and absurdly versatile singer/guitarist Chloe Spence leaves no spine untangled.

A fiercely original first foray.

■■■■■■■■■■

Dom Lawson

Neil Young

Before And After REPRISE

Let's try that one again.

Another month, another Neil Young album. This one is a little different, though. For his new album, Young covers a variety of songs from his vast back catalogue – from Buffalo Springfield's plaintive *Burned* (1966) to his recent plea for harmony *Don't Forget Love* (2021) – on acoustic, solo, one song merging into the next. The overall effect is hypnotic, mesmeric – a musical montage that has no start or end point.

This is Young's forty-fifth studio album, co-produced with

Lou Adler (think Carole King's 1972 album *Tapestry*), and his flame shows no sign of dimming. Old favourites such as *Mr. Soul* and *Comes A Time*, alongside lesser-known cuts, become almost mantra-like, droning and highly resonant, imbued with the aching of years. *Birds* stands out, with its cascading harmonies, as does *A Dream That Can Last* (from 1994's Kurt Cobain-inspired *Sleeps With Angels*), and there's one new song, *If You Got Love*, that wails like a good 'un.

Perhaps not the new studio recording some were hoping for, but a fascinating and compelling deep dive into Young's past.



Everett True

South Of Salem

Death Of The Party

Brit rockers deliver energetic modern anthems.



South Of Salem may have the sleeveless T-shirts and heavily inked

skin of a central-casting modern metal band, but their second album beats with an 80s hard-rock heart, the Bournemouth band leaning into the kind of keyboard-assisted melodies and great walloping chorus that never truly go out of fashion.

Death Of The Party doesn't bring anything new to the table, but what it does bring is nothing

if not entertaining. *Vultures* and *Jet Black Eyes* dial up the tuneage, while *A Life Worth Dying For* even has the temerity to parachute in a few old-school "whoah-ohs" like grunge, nu metal, emo and about a dozen other musical trends never happened.

A few tweaks would be helpful, not least someone having a word with otherwise impressive singer Joey Draper about his occasional slips into an unconvincing mid-Atlantic twang, but mostly it's good, solid hard-rock fare.



Dave Everley

Idles

Tangk PARTISAN

All you need is love?



An album of love songs? Surely not? While the world

continues to burn in the flames of a cost-of-living crisis, the last thing you'd expect from Idles is an album chock-full of love songs. Fear not, Joe Talbot and his band of misfits haven't gone all soft on us just yet. Despite its subject matter, the Bristol tykes are still sonically and vocally as visceral as ever. *Gift Horse*, for example, with Talbot spitting angry bars before declaring: 'Fuck the king, he ain't the king', is as incendiary as anything they've done. The LCD Soundsystem-assisted *Dancer*

may be about love on the dancefloor, but it's still served with a brutal bark. Having said that, Radiohead mastermind Nigel Godrich has tamed Talbot to a degree; opener *Idea 01* comes on like a schizophrenic cousin of Thom Yorke and co's *Pyramid Song*, while *A Gospel* is Idles at their most peaceful. Love songs they may be, but not as we know them.



Damian Jones

Lord Of The Lost

Weapons Of Mass Seduction

NAPALM

Industrial-metal covers album from holders of Eurovision wooden spoon.



Latex-clad Germans Lord Of The Lost took coming last at

Eurovision 2023 in such good humour that it's hard to begrudge them doing a covers album, usually the last refuge of the creatively bankrupt and/or terminally desperate to impress.

The choice of songs for *Weapons Of Mass Seduction* is intriguing, ranging from the semi-obvious (Judas Priest's *Turbo Lover*, Billy Idol's maligned-at-the-time *Shock To The System*) to the unexpected (Sia's *Unstoppable*, Michael Jackson's *Give In To Me*, Bronski Beat's *Smalltown Boy*). Unfortunately the inventiveness of their

choices isn't always matched by the delivery. 'Diet Rammstein' is the factory setting, heavy on the iron-foundry guitars, martial rhythms and growled vocals, lending the whole thing the air of karaoke night at the local fetish club. Given how vivid their own music is, this feels like a missed opportunity.



Dave Everley

J Mascis

What Do We Do Now

SUB POP

This is beautiful, as you've come to expect from the Dinosaur Jr mainman.



On a record full of sprawling guitar solos, textual

acoustics and steady drums, J Mascis's plaintive-howl of a vocal tops off everything, adding one more layer of poignancy. If he sounds broken, it's only because he's finding a new way to express himself. *What Do We Do Now* is only his fifth solo studio album since 1996, but it's not like he doesn't have a welter of other projects.

Started during final days of lockdown, it may sound like a full band, but really it's just Mascis following his own lead and adding then adding some more. Guest musicians include Ken Mauri of The B-52's on

keyboards and Matthew 'Doc' Dunn on steel guitar. Standout track is the full-blown power ballad *Right Behind Me*, featuring a classic wailing Mascis guitar solo. Excellent.



Everett True

Robby Krieger and The Soul Savages

Robby Krieger and The Soul Savages

THE PLAYERS CLUB

Blissed out, beautifully rendered jazz free-form from The Doors guitarist.



It must have been a rare treat to wander past the Love Street Studios

in Glendale last summer and hear The Doors' Robby Krieger and his band's easy, languid jams piercing the blue California sky. At points it's jazzy, then psychedelic, then with the sort of undulating groove that makes you wonder what it might have sounded like if Booker T jammed with the Average White Band.

Krieger, unsurprisingly, can make most anything sing, at points dropping that deft, ringing *LA Woman* tone through the floor to give it a Zappa ring. It's a rare and clever thing, much like the rest of this album, not least in the lilting *Math Problem* or the airy *A Day In L.A.*



Philip Wilding

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

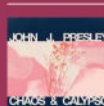


John J Presley: as close to the sound of apocalypse as any artist out there.

John J Presley

Chaos And Calypso

GOD UNKNOWN



It takes a certain mental fortitude to listen to John J Presley's second album on headphones, the Brighton multi-instrumentalist coming as close to the sound of apocalypse as any artist out there. But

there's beauty in the darkness here too. The glib comparison is Nick Cave, Presley also favouring a well-cut suit and intoning vocals in fathoms-deep spoken-word style, like a Southern preacher gone rogue. But the music is all over the map. On *Silhouette* the horns are so pulverising they threaten to shatter your bones, before the track melts into plaintive piano. The claustrophobic *Sinnerman* is a highlight, Presley's vocal

coiled with that of Blood Red Shoes' Laura-Mary Carter, while *Gold* is a hypnotic death march.

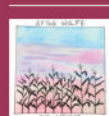
More chaos than calypso, then, and despite closer *Into The Fire*'s seemingly cremation-themed lyric it's the closest thing to a chink of light, with Presley really, truly singing over clouds of echo-chamber guitar. If you can handle it, you'll love it.



Afton Wolfe

The Harvest

GRANDIFLORA



This Nashville roots master can do spooky southern gothic as well as anyone, but *The Harvest* announces itself as a breezier prospect with the opening title track, an open-hearted country jangler. With its swoon of gospel harmonies, *Lost Prayers* is similarly blissful, while *Mississippi* is an immediately hummable piano pounder.



Garret T Willie

Same Pain

SELF-RELEASED



Kingfish isn't the only supernova youngster coming across the water. At 23, British Columbia's Garret T Willie is also the finished article, with shades of Bonamassa in his stinger guitar work on single *Make You Mine Tonight*, and a grizzly vocal that makes *Love Hangover* feel like a believable lament, not a kid's theoretical posturing. Stream those two tracks and watch that man.



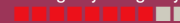
Hassan Bin Rashid

My 21 Grams

MY 21



Bahraini prince Hassan Bin Rashid skilfully splices both sides of his cultural identity on this fantastic fifth album, channelling the alt-rock motifs of his US upbringing with the Middle Eastern note choices of *Wicked Smile*. *Thick Skinned* is the standout, with its visceral blast of trash-can guitars and Rashid's freestyled outro operatics recalling the yearning of a young Vedder.



Long Road Home

Are We Invisible?

SELF-RELEASED



With a line-up soaked in Brit-blues pedigree, Long Road Home inevitably play like demons. But while the five-piece can kick around a 12-bar, these self-written songs are more imaginative than you're probably expecting: check out the stalking funk of *I Don't Belong Here* or the buoyant Bad Company-evoking *Eye On You*.

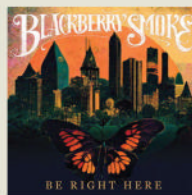




Blackberry Smoke

Be Right Here 3 LEGGED RECORDS

Eighth album delivers stomp, soul, country, and rock and roll in equal measure.



Can it really be 20 years since Blackberry Smoke rolled up to the back porch looking like they'd just fallen off the back of a pick-up truck and were willing to work for food? As the adage goes, they've come a long way since then, although geographically they're still based pretty close to the homes they grew up in.

Which might go some way to explaining how and why they've retained their rootsy charm. That sounds like the most backhanded of compliments, but Blackberry Smoke take a term like 'rootsy', and reimagine it – country, folk, hard rock, a hint of gospel. It's no surprise to find that they're still one of the most unlikely looking arena acts tearing it up on whichever continent they happen to find themselves on.

Be Right Here retains the simple formula that has made the band such a success: songs, tons of songs. Regular co-writers, a band unafraid to experiment, surprising tones and textures, but the fundamentals are intact; listen to a tune, and three minutes later you're whistling the damn melody and mangling the lyrics. Swampy-sounding opener *Dig A Hole* sounds as perfunctory as you might imagine an opening song on a Blackberry Smoke album could be, before taking a left that feels right, with a middle section that

elevates the whole song, confounding the melody and introducing us to soulful backing singers and lush keyboard chords.

It might feel like a rare treat, but it pales by the time we get to *Like It Was Yesterday*. A surprise shot of pure country pop, it strides in on the back of some slide guitar and some loose soloing before drilling down into the tight melody line and zipping along for a tight three and a half minutes, not an ounce of fat on it. Better still is the psychedelic whirl of *Be So Lucky*, laconic and easy – with a hint of a woozy Black Crowes in one of their more laconic, spangled, spaced-out moments – that chimes on a downbeat note and then lifts like the tide for the hook, built around a rueful lyric but shimmering with life still. The chiming, Zeppelin-like *Azalea*, wistful, rich and full of yearning, is simplicity itself; a rich vocal, beautifully picked guitar, the basic tenets of most songs, but the result is simply magical. As is the shining *Other Side Of The Light*, a little more Led Zep III juxtaposed with some delicious slide guitar, while *Whatchu Know Good* is a tip of the hat to Tom Petty and his Heartbreakers.

Pretty remarkable, then, that 20 years in, Blackberry Smoke are still reinventing their very own musical wheel.

Philip Wilding

The Smile

Wall Of Eyes XL

Radiohead's breakaway trio return with psychedelic sambas and rule-bending jazz rock.



More prolific than their now rarely sighted mothership band

Radiohead, Thom Yorke and Johnny Greenwood's new trio project with drummer Tom Skinner are back, releasing their second album in just over 18 months with minimal advance fanfare. *Wall Of Eyes* is full of virtuosic style-hopping, from the title track's alluringly wonky avant-samba groove to the super-nimble math-rock gyrations of *Under Our Pillow*. A couple of makeweight Kraut-leaning numbers fall short of greatness, but the standouts here rank alongside Radiohead's best, their alluring aura of late-Beatles psych-pop underscored by a handful of orchestral arrangements. One is the gorgeous, tumbling, melancholy *Friend Of A Friend*, a classic slice of Yorke-ish misanthropy couched in warm brassy ambience. Another is mesmerising former single *Bending Hectic*, a dreamlike ballad that freeze-frames on a vintage sports car hurtling towards a deadly Alpine precipice; imagine *The Italian Job* remade by David Lynch. Quality workmanship.

Stephen Dalton

The Rods

Rattle the Cage MASSACRE

New York rockers expand their sound.



The Rods are America's first true heavy metal band, banging heads

that would not bang all the way back in 1980. Their last album, 2019's *Brotherhood Of Metal*, was perhaps the most gloriously Rods album of all time, a snarly, street-metal gang fight of an affair. *Rattle The Cage*, in contrast, is altogether more refined. The core band of singer/guitarist Rock Feinstein and drummer Carl Canedy remain, joined here by ex-Quiet Riot bassist Freddy Vilano. This new combo lean fearlessly into the galloping tropes of power metal, peppering the album with soaring belters like *Now And Forever* and *Cry Out Loud* that are more in line with Jag Panzer than

with AC/DC. Even Feinstein's usual bag-of-gravel vocals are smoother than usual. Deeper cuts like *Play It Loud* and *Metal Highways*, however, bring back their signature grit and gristle.

Something for everybody, then, all of it fiercely and undeniably metal as fuck.

Sleazegrinder

The Gems

Phoenix NAPALM

Ex-Thundermothers rise again.



Returning to the fray as they promised upon their departure from

Thundermother, singer Guernica Mancini, drummer Emlee Johansson and guitarist/bassist Mona 'Demona' Lindgren do not disappoint, delivering a fistful of seriously hard-rocking tunes, predictably defiant and bristling with determination. Without the back story, tracks like *Silver Tongue*, *Send Me To The Wolves*, *Like A Phoenix* and *Undiscovered Paths* would stand purely on their own merit as fist-banging anthems to positivity and punching adversity in the face, but knowing the circumstances of their genesis gives them an extra edge of authenticity. As for performances, they take no prisoners, Mancini in particular absolutely nailing it, sounding like a rock'n'roll Valkyrie leading the battle charge, with Johansson and Lindgren coming into their own on the killer *P.S.Y.C.H.O* and driving *Domino*, the riffs landing with unerring precision.

Statements of intent are a dime a dozen, but *Phoenix* leaves no room for doubt.

Essi Berelien

Vambo

Vambo II

A confident second record from these versatile London hard rockers.

Vambo II arrives almost four years after its predecessor *Vambo*, and what a relief that the London quartet remain a going concern. They're a colourful hard rock combo with a strong identity, and these dozen new songs (okay, *This Is Your Life* was a single in 2021) suggest that Vambo are continuing their development into a bloody great little band.

Minute Of Madness, *Hey Willy* and *Shake It Woman* are sleek and assured in every regard, from the magnetic voice of Jack Stiles to the slick performances

of the individual players, Pete Lance's singalong guitar lines complemented by a gold-star production from Jack's dad Ray, a former member of 70s pop band Mud, from whose track *Vambo Rools* the lads pilfered their name.

Vambo II blends the best of both worlds: the youthful zest of the songs and performances, and Stiles Senior's everything-and-the-kitchen-sink sonics, enhanced by strings and brass.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Dave Ling

Shed Seven

A Matter Of Time

COOKING VINYL

Daddies of northern indie guitar rock show 'em how it's done.



With Shed Seven, only the band name has ever been small-scale.

A Matter Of Time, the Yorkshire guitar rockers' sixth album and their first since 2017's *Instant Pleasures*, typically aspires to the bombastic and euphoric with every power chord, orchestral sweep and cloud-busting chorus. Whether blasting through escapist glam-punk opener *Let's Go* (to 'somewhere with the purest snow', Rick Witter suggests, such as, curiously, Argentina), cruising *Sunset* on the breezy pop *Kissing California*, or repurposing *Pinball Wizard* as a Wonder Stuff-y jig on *Talk Of The Town*, they relentlessly aim for the maximum melodic high. Hence there's a joy-seeking vibe throughout, even on their gospel-blues-folk ode to pot and during the many bittersweet billow ballads worthy of a *Voice* finale. *Let's Go Dancing* waltzes in the face of mortality, the austere orchestral *Starlings* revels in sumptuous nostalgia for a lost love, and *Throwaways* ropes in Peter Doherty to add rebel kudos to an anthem of outcast glory.

Watch and learn, Fender.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Mark Beaumont

Lucifer

Lucifer V NUCLEAR BLAST

Classic rock, if rock'n'roll really is the devil's music.



It's probably not the most obvious rock'n'roll fantasy out

there, but what if Stevie Nicks sang for Black Sabbath? That question is answered on this

and every other Lucifer album. Why they are not the biggest sensation since Ghost is a mystery to me.

With *Lucifer V* the satanic Stockholmers have returned with another powerhouse of an occult rock album. Frontwoman Johanna Platow is a leather-bound death goddess with the voice of a fallen angel, and she wails over some masterful Swedish doom'n'roll here with thick, meaty hooks born and bred for arenas. Whereas previous instalments have mined the hazy world of underground 70s rock for inspiration, *V* adds a decidedly 80s approach, from the Crüe-esque pop-metal riffs of *A Coffin Has No Silver Lining* to the hard radio rock of *Riding Reaper* and the over-the-top power balladry of *Nothing Left To Lose But My Life*.

Lucifer V is a deliciously subversive collection of dark should-be-hits.

■■■■■■■■■■■

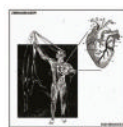
Sleazegrinder

Dermabrasion

Pain Behaviour

HAND DRAWN DRACULA

Goth rock lives - run for the tombs.



This debut by Toronto's Dermabrasion delivers a moody mix

of the Sisters Of Mercy and Bauhaus, topped with bassist Kat McGouran's Siouxie Sioux vocals. That's no mean feat, given that Dermabrasion are just a duo, completed by Adam Bernhardt on guitar - and ubiquitous electronic percussion.

While *Pain Behaviour* includes re-recordings of all five songs from October 2021's *Lunate EP* (but not their cover of Rob Zombie's *Dragula* released a year ago), these are improved by better production and being in the company of five newer tracks that collectively sound as raw and spiky as a coat-hanger piercing.

The pounding, sinister *Halberdier* opens proceedings with a surprisingly effective rawk guitar sound (although they will hiss at me for saying so). *Proving Ground* is one of a clutch of tracks leaning on post-punk/industrial stylings, but all 10 are unmistakably gothic, with older one *Magic Missile* and newer ones *Betrayer Moon* and *Psychic Event* the most impressive.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Neil Jeffries

Kula Shaker

NATURAL MAGICK STRANGE FOLK

Into the mystic.



Shaker-in-chief Crispian Mills was only a twinkle in the cosmos when

The Beatles decamped to India in February 1968, a fruitful period in which they wrote around 30 songs and introduced Indian spirituality to Western rock music.

Natural Magick, the seventh album from Kula Shaker and the first in 25 years from the band's original line-up, continues the fascination with psyched-up mysticism, laced with protest songs against the Blue Meanies of the modern world. The furious opening blast of *Gaslighting*, with shades of Gil Scott-Heron's *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised* repurposed for the social-media age gives way to the more celebratory *Waves* and *Happy Birthday*, laden with sitar and finger cymbals. There's a whiff of 'things were better in the 90s' along with the incense, but infectious tunes save the day, notably on *Whistle And I Will Come*, and *Something Dangerous* which is reminiscent of *Village Green*-era Kinks.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Claudia Elliott

Hearts And Hand Grenades

Where I Begin ECLIPSE

Buffalo gal.

Three albums in, and this hard rock/metal quartet from Buffalo, New York have a clear idea about the style and attitude they want to put across. Singer and bassist Stephanie Wlosinski is not backwards in coming forwards, but her aggression is controlled and she doesn't need any rock-chick tricks to make her point.

There's also a growing confidence within the band, both individually and collectively. Their sound is clean and not compressed. They keep up a hard and heavy beat while the two guitars chop out the riffs. Most of all they're not afraid of a strong pop hook to make their songs memorable.

Big-sounding opener *Burn* (By My Fire), catches their controlled fury, focusing on the track's dynamics, but *Better Off Alone* says it better as Wlosinski gets pissed off at being taken for granted in a relationship and angrily decides to opt out.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Hugh Fielder

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Placebo

Placebo Live SO

Surprisingly devoid of signature 90s hits, this multi-format (vinyl, Blu-ray, CD) suite of recent sets from Mexico, London and Spain captures a satisfyingly confident collection of career-wide deep cuts, covers and crackers from an assured and seasoned Brian Molko. **8/10**

Smouldering Fire

Affection Place AFFECTION PLACE MUSIC

Sounding like a demo recorded for a major label in '81 but ultimately passed over for Duran Duran, this new-wave, near-goth, Eldritch-voiced, Adamson-bassed, nu-romantified confection from the Lyon post-punk vets adds Magazine's Dave Formula for authenticity. **6/10**

Bolts Of Melody

Film Noir OUTER BATTERY

While a 'star'-studded (J Mascis, The Besnard Lakes) Adam Franklin side-project, punters shouldn't expect Swervie-alike riff-storms, just a series of largely instrumental, soporifically ephemeral song sketches that are divertingly pleasant enough, if outwardly half-finished. **5/10**

Electric Black

Late Night Lightning TMR

Classic Rival Sons/BSC-styled trad-rock tropes from hotly tipped quartet effectively midwived by Sabs/Priest producer Mike Exeter, if ever-so-slightly choked by a desire to meet generic expectations and never venture far outside accepted rawk boundaries. **7/10**

Red County Jail

Up In Arms BUG VALLEY

Despite an unfortunate tendency to go frightfully lighters-aloft (*Red*) on occasion, this debut from the Koblenz quintet built around ex-Blind vocalist Steve Joachim walk a canny line between classic and southern. Dynamic, emotional, it's all about the big tunes. **7/10**

Screaming Eagles

High Class Rock 'N' Roll FTF

More than a decade in, Northern Ireland's Screaming Eagles may well have hit their peak with this full-on, foot-to-the-floor *Will* (The Answer) Maya-produced barnstormer. Awesome frontman Chris Fry leads a rolling Stones/'DC charge that'll not disappoint. **8/10**

Black Bombers

Vive La Révolution EASY ACTION

Birmingham's BBs have been around the block, and sound it. Proto- and orig. punk chops are as hand-me-down as they're authentic. There are ex-Prefects, Godfathers and LAMF sidemen here, and while hardly original it's certainly genuine and largely pretty excellent. **7/10**

Sprints

Letter To Self CITY SLANG

With a blazing post-punk assault intensified by edgy dynamism, tangible anxiety and raw emotion, Dublin's Sprints (specifically exquisitely anguished charisma-bomb front-emoter Karla Chubb) are so engaging, you might even forget your phone for 40 minutes. **8/10**

Folly Group

Down There SO YOUNG

Incredibly, London's Folly Group have honed, broadened and contemporised a sound most readily associated with vintage Gang Of Four. Post-punk/alt.funk, Afro-Cuban rhythms, irresistibly crooked agita beats. An inspired, refreshing 21st-century gumbo. **8/10**

Smalltown Tigers

Crush On You AREA PIRATA

Punk-indebted Italian trio Smalltown Tigers (who some may recall from their bill-bottom support slot with the original Damned) deal in a particularly hamfisted strain of Ramonic popcore ram-a-lam, but they're not without a sub-Donnas/Shonen-esque charm. **6/10**

Joecephus & The George Jonestown Massacre

Call Me Animal SAUSTEX

Subtitled 'A Tribute To The MC5', that's exactly what it is. With guest spots from Cherie Currie, J Mascis, Alice Cooper, Jello Biafra, Zal Cleminson, Steve Stevens, Kim Thayil, Wayne Kramer et al, it's incendiary stuff: passionate, heartfelt, but there's only one MC5. **7/10**

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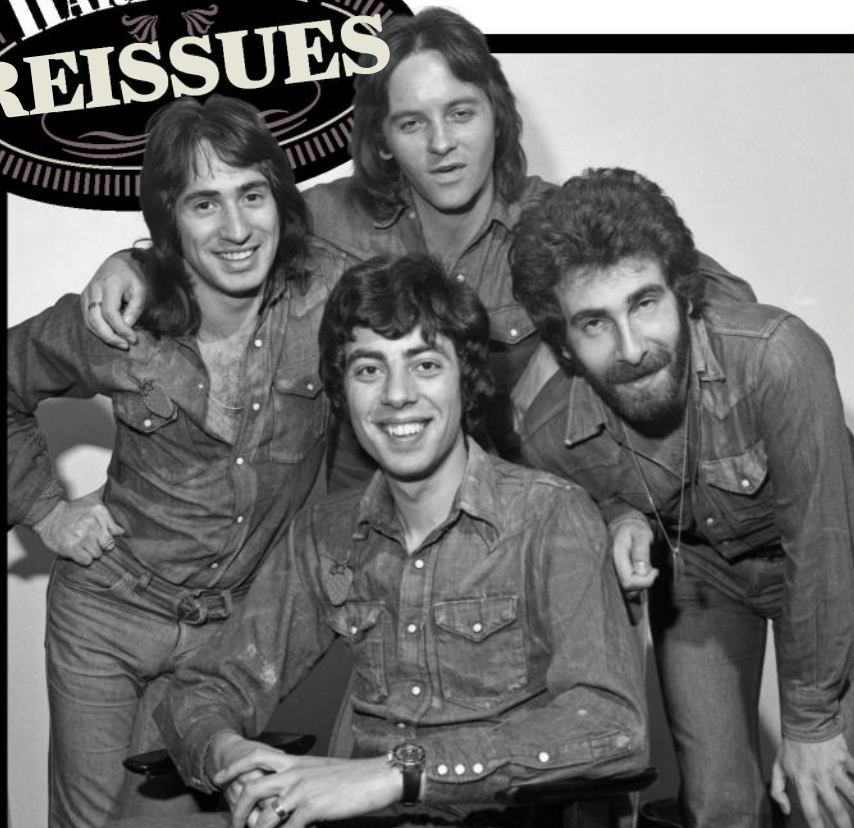


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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



10cc

20 Years: 1972-1992 —EDSEL

A 14-disc celebration of an English institution packaged with superior sleeve-notes.



In the words of former 10cc man Kevin Godley: "People like their rock stars to live like rock stars. 10cc didn't wear make-up, kill anyone, do smack... or commit suicide. No dysfunctional mythology equals unmemorable. That's how it is."

10cc didn't live the clichéd rock-star life, and this 14-disc, 145-track collection shows that, musically, they dealt in clichés only for the sake of parody. Otherwise their arty, progressive and beautifully produced English pop-rock was richly diverse, melodically/lyrically imaginative and vividly memorable.

20 Years: 1972-1992 covers all their album releases from the self-titled debut to ... *Meanwhile*, their damp-squib reunion record from '92. Completists may whine that their final LP *Mirror Mirror*, released three years later, isn't here. But two discs of single edits, alternative mixes and B-sides are.

10cc's catalogue is fresh, inventive, delightful, given context here through an insightful essay by Liam Newton, author of the acclaimed biography *10cc: The Worst Band In The World*. Newton covers a lot of ground: Eric Stewart's time with The Mindbenders; Graham Gouldman knocking out hits for The Yardbirds and more, and the pair, along with Godley and Lol Creme, cutting their teeth as the

house band at their own Strawberry Studios in Stockport, backing the likes of Neil Sedaka.

Inspiration was there from the off. 10cc includes Godley and Creme's 50s doo-wop pastiche *Donna* – written as a B-side but later the first of 10 Top 10 singles – the band's first No.1 *Rubber Bullets*, and the brilliant, Beach Boys-infused *The Dean And I*, a marker of the creativity to come.

This was a group of four talents, and two creative factions. Mega-hit *I'm Not In Love* (from 1975's *The Original Soundtrack*) was written by the more traditional song stylists Stewart and Gouldman, but Godley and Creme's art-house approach led to its innovative vocal arrangement. After the latter pair's departure, 1977's *Deceptive Bends* offered more mellow material such as *The Things We Do For Love*, but gutsy concert album *Live And Let Live* shows what a punchy unit the new, extended 10cc line-up were.

Things tapered off after *Bloody Tourists*, with creative low-point *Look Hear?* and the fine 1983 sign-off *Windows In The Jungle*, but in their pomp 10cc were reliably sublime and just *sounded* great. And when you can cook up something as whackily perfect as *Life Is A Minestrone*, who needs the make-up and smack?



Grant Moon

Baker Gurvitz Army

Neon Lights – The

Broadcasts 1975 CHERRY RED

A power trio with knobs on.



The original trio of Ginger Baker, songwriter/guitarist Adrian and his bass-playing brother Paul Gurvitz sounded more Blind Faith than they did Cream. The addition of frontman Mr Snips (aka Stephen Parsons, blessed with a Michael Chapman-like voice) and keyboard player Peter Lemer brought more soulful and jazzier leanings to the textured hard rock of their second album *Elysian Encounter*. This all-live collection – three CDs and two region-free DVDs – showcases them promoting it.

The highlight is the 90-minute, 12-song Radio Trent set from the King's Hall in Derby on CDs 2 and 3, first released in 2005. CD1's one-hour *In Concert* show from the BBC's Paris Theatre in London sounds stilted in comparison, although it does include two songs, *Love Is* and *People*, not in the Derby set.

The DVDs feature an *Old Grey Whistle Test* spot, a different BBC set, and a show for German TV's *Musikladen*/Radio Bremen, including two numbers not originally broadcast.

The impressive Derby discs prove that Baker Gurvitz Army were a musicians' band best heard live. The album material comes alive, while non-album single *Space Machine*, *Neon Lights*, two Cream covers and Hendrix's *Freedom* are good extras. Better still, Baker's drumming and Adrian Gurvitz's guitar playing are consistently top-notch.



Neil Jeffries

Family

It's Only A Movie ESOTERIC

Cut!



Worn down by constant personnel changes, no real sense of direction and seemingly nobody to offer any guidance, signed to an American record label who never understood them, by 1973 Family were running on empty. They'd got it together to form their own label, Raft, at the beginning of the year, but by the time they got down to recording an album that summer they'd pretty much decided it would be their swansong.

At least they went out in style. The ideas might not have sparkled as they once had, but you have to chuckle at Tony Ashton's saloon-bar piano running through the title track, a surreal soundtrack to an imaginary cowboy movie, and the country-and-western parody *Leroy*. Their rowdy brand of art-rock takes a defiant final bow on *Buffet Tea For Two* (singer Roger Chapman and guitarist Charlie Whitney would go on to form Streetwalkers).

The original album is here bolstered by five bonus studio tracks, plus two Radio 1 *In Concert* sessions from '73, the longer, 10-track one comprised mostly of songs from previous album *Bandstand*, which show that Family could still cut it live.



Hugh Fielder

No-Man

Housekeeping: The OLI Years 1990-1994

ONE LITTLE INDEPENDENT

August assemblage from prescient duo's early years.

With Steven Wilson and Tim Bowness now doing rather well, this five-disc collection of their youthful strivings together is a sumptuous reminder that they always had something. No-Man couldn't catch commercial waves, but their merging of art-rock, trip-hop-foreshadowing grooves and David Sylvian-esque poetic angst now sounds less weird but equally wonderful.

The first two releases, *Lovesighs – An Entertainment* and *Loveblows And Lovecries – A Confession*, are spiritual siblings, where a sense of straining swiftly yields to a successfully seamless sound. Bowness's hushed vocals and Wilson's all-round versatility enjoy a telepathic dialogue. Working with their ex-Japan heroes Barbieri, Jansen and Karn on *Sweetheart Raw* inspires all involved.

By 1994's *Flowermouth* (featuring Robert Fripp and Lisa Gerrard) they're ploughing their own furrow, brimming with confidence. So much so that they possibly alienated floating voters with a 10-minute opening track, *Angel Gets Caught In The Beauty Trap*.

The discs of singles and radio sessions here, while still slick, hint at the workings behind the lavishly appointed big-screen sweep of the albums.

At the time, the British music scene was too tribal and

reductive to find a place for them. All these years on, happy endings have happened, and *Housekeeping* is more revelation than relic.



Chris Roberts

Jim Capaldi

The Outside Years CHERRY RED

Remastered four-CD compilation of one-time Traffic man's solo output.



The death of Jim Capaldi at just 60 in 2005 robbed rock of one of its

most prodigious talents. A fiendishly funky drummer and philosophically minded songwriter – as well as a piratical purveyor of good vibes – his contributions with Traffic alone established him as one of rock's greats. His subsequent solo career delivered more than its fair share of treasures.

Spanning the years 1993–2004, this lovingly curated collection includes studio albums *Living On the Outside* (with contributions from Steve Winwood, Paul Weller and Gary Moore) and *Poor Boy Blue*, along with 35 mostly unreleased tracks including out-takes,

demos and live recordings from Capaldi's personal archive. A solo acoustic version of Traffic's *Low Spark Of High-Heeled Boys*, recorded live in 1999, and a demo of *Love's Got A Hold On Me* featuring George Harrison will set fans' pulses racing, but it's a scorching live set from Cologne from 2002 that reminds you that Capaldi in full flow was a match for anyone.



Paul Moody

Jack Bruce

Smiles And Grins, Broadcast Sessions

1970–2001 ESOTERIC

Jack of all trades.



Best known as the bassist/vocalist with Cream and for being one of

the most celebrated bassists of that era, Jack Bruce deserves more recognition as a songwriter. His art is demonstrated amply on this four-CD, 42-track collection of radio sessions plus some TV audio and video, spanning three decades, taking in rock, blues, various shades of jazz and more with various collaborator collectives.

Highlights include the

smouldering *We're Going Wrong*, powerful in its simplicity, an elegant reading of Bruce's (with lyricist Pete Brown) songwriting peak *Theme For An Imaginary Western*, and, of particular interest, an un-broadcast 1970 session for German TV show *Beat Club* by Lifetime (Bruce, Tony Williams, John McLaughlin and Larry Young) that sparkles with virtuoso chops.

Some of the music might sound like it was recorded on a mobile phone with a knackered mic, but put that to one side and there's plenty here to paint a revealing and colourful portrait of Bruce the songwriter, and performer outside the studio.



Paul Henderson

Swervedriver

99th Dream OUTER BATTERY

Three-disc reissue of 1998 album by guitarscape specialists.



After this typically excellent album, Swervedriver were dropped by their label.

That ill fate is at odds with the surging, electric, blissful spirit of *99th Dream*, emitting clouds of

psychedelia at every turn. The title track bends and swoons with the sort of incandescence abandoned by My Bloody Valentine earlier in the decade; *Up From The Sea* is elemental, woozy. Tracks like *Electric 77* and *Stellar Caprice* feel almost self-descriptive, states of epic rock grace, bubbling and oozing with beauty. Additional tracks include *Why Say Yeah*, further evidence that Swervedriver had hardly run out of steam.

Swervedriver feel like a group who in a more just universe should have been as big commercially as the sound they made. It's sad to think how prevalent and mainstream trad Brit rock was in 1998, and how diminished it was when compared with the likes of *99th Dream*.



David Stubbs

The Fall

The Real New Fall LP (Formerly Country On The Click) CHERRY RED

Fall album number 23 returns as five-disc set.

Just as promo copies of *Country On The Click* were sent out in 2003, frontman Mark E Smith decided he hated the mixes –

"Sounds like *Dr. Who* meets Posh Spice," he grizzled – and demanded a do-over, hence its ultimate title.

For all that, it's one of the more direct and instantly enjoyable Fall records, even if his lyrics on it are about 15 times as convoluted as that back-story. The riffs are mostly recycled from Iggy (*Open The Boxoctosis #2* pillages *The Passenger*) and garage rock, while *Mountain Energei* is (im)pure Glitter Band. And wow, that's *The Man Who Sold The World* being robbed blind on *Green Eyed Loco-Man*. None of that dulls the fun, though, Smith's streams of whatever it is he's banging on about providing lively twists and tangents. *Theme From Sparta F.C.* was, implausibly, adopted by BBC football program *Final Score* for a few years.

This completely inappropriate yet fascinating box includes the original Smith-disowned mix, singles and B-sides, and a real treat with a New York 2004 live show that delivers banging versions of *Telephone Thing* and *I Am Damo Suzuki*. Under any title, this is one of the spkiest things ever recorded at Lisa Stansfield's Rochdale studio.



Chris Roberts



Pink Floyd

Atom Heart Mother (Special Edition)

PINK FLOYD

A bit of love given to an unloved Floyd album.

Famously, Pink Floyd claim not to be too fond of their fifth studio album (their first to go to No.1 in the UK). "A really awful and embarrassing record," said Roger Waters. "[It was] a load of rubbish," said David Gilmour, in a rare show of solidarity.

Released in October 1970, *Atom Heart Mother* – Floyd's first album not to have the band or their name anywhere in the album packaging – makes for odd but compelling listening 50 years later, and must be one of the oddest albums ever to top the UK chart.

The first side/half is a six-part instrumental orchestral suite, spliced together from Gilmour's layered guitar, choral vocals, pulse-beat keyboards and various sound samples. Due to studio restrictions, Waters and Nick Mason played bass and drums for the entire 23-minute track in one take. There's plenty to explore and spark the imagination here, though, not least because in its dense, encrusted magical melee the listener can hear distinct traces of what was to come – specifically, the side-long *Echoes* on follow-up album *Meddle*, and various sounds

and motifs later used on the monumental *The Dark Side Of The Moon*. (No, not the French horn-led brass sections. Which are ace, by the way.)

The second side/half begins exquisitely with Waters's ballad *If* – channelling the Velvet Underground through a folk filter into a quite beautiful lament – followed by the Kinksian *Summer '68* and a forgettable Beatles-esque Gilmour track, before trailing off into the 11-minute, frankly unlistenable *Alan's Psychedelic Breakfast* – a 'humorous' track inspired by and featuring roadie Alan Styles discussing and eating breakfast. In fairness, some fans list this as among their favourite Floyd songs, loving its doleful English whimsy. There again, fans will love anything, right? Either way, it's a rather peculiar end to a rather peculiar album.

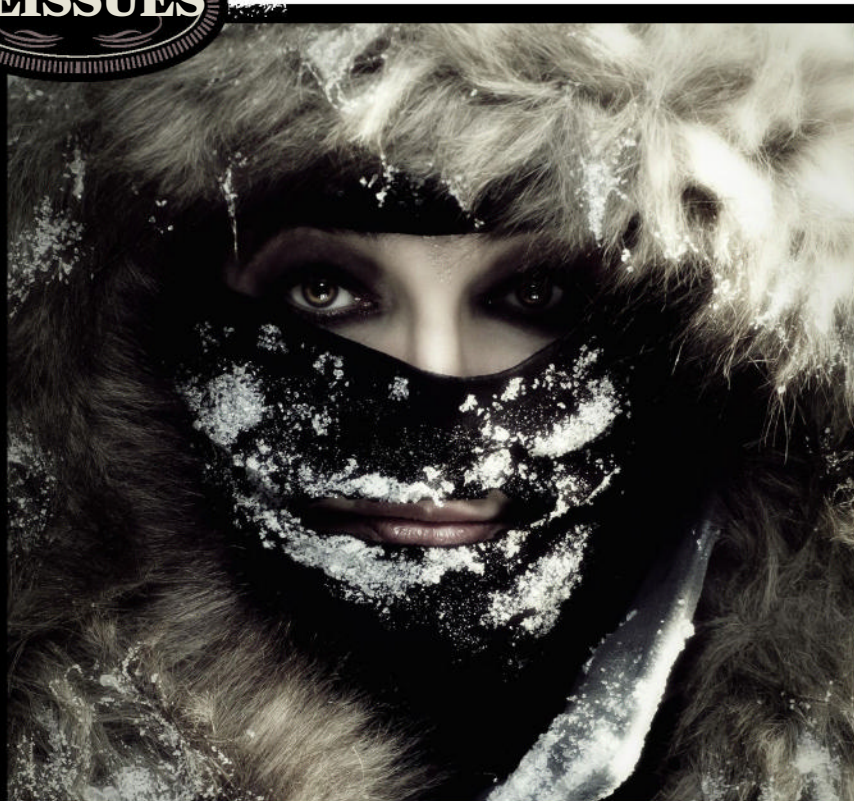
The reissue comes as a lovely two-disc package in a seven-inch gatefold sleeve, containing the album on CD, and a Blu-ray disc



featuring a (long thought lost) concert film of Floyd playing at Japan's Hakone Aphrodite in August 1971 and a behind-the-scenes mini-documentary. The package includes a replica Hakone Aphrodite pamphlet, show poster etc, and a 60-page photo book.



Everett True

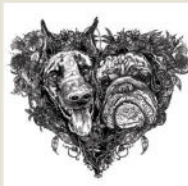


Kate Bush

Hounds Of Love (The Baskerville Edition)

FISH PEOPLE

Reissue of 1985 album, with new artwork and illustrations.



Kate Bush cut a peculiar figure in the early 80s – somewhere between post-punk and TV magazine programme *Pebble Mill At One*, between pop and prog. When *Wuthering Heights* was a hit in 1978, her vocals pitched way over the top, it would have been forgivable to predict one-hit-wonder status for her. Instead she made her histrionic style work, and by 1985 she was at the peak of her powers.

Although they contain no new audio, the three new editions of *Hounds Of Love* are the Baskerville edition, with new artwork from design studio Timorous Beasties, with an LED light inside the gatefold, and two *The Boxes Of Lost At Sea* editions, each containing one side of the album, with UV illustration on white vinyl, and an LED to create what Bush describes as “a hybrid of an album and a piece of artwork”.

Recorded using all of the state of the art apparatus of the mid-80s as well as more traditional Irish instruments, *Hounds Of Love* is at once highly contemporary but exuding a misty, mystical sense of the land. *Running Up That Hill*, ever-ascending, is an immortal classic, demonstrating the absolutely perfect, balletic poise Bush had attained at this point, balancing paradoxical elements. It also showed an awareness of

the best of what was happening around her, reminding as it does of the Blue Nile's *Tinseltown In The Rain*.

There are other reminders. *Watching You Without Me* is Japan-esque, another group who journeyed from pop to the sublime. But the qualities of *Hounds Of Love* are unique to Kate Bush alone, in their diversity, their arrangements and the sense of femininity she projects as a counterpoint to the ubiquitous male perspective dully prevalent elsewhere, the wonderfully disconcerting passions of *Under Ice* and *Waking The Witch*.

Cloudbusting is emblematic of the album as a whole, melding the force of nature with impossible techno-pop dreams, bursting with potential. In a year in which both pop and rock found themselves in a sort of hiatus, uncertain of what was going to happen next, *Hounds Of Love* represented a standout achievement. It was almost too good for its own good – Bush would never quite attain the extraordinary heights she attained here. But in its cinematic sweep, its projected intensity, its balladic grace, its evocation of the natural and the eternal, its artistic shrewdness, *Hounds Of Love* remains an album for evermore.



David Stubbs

Carter USM

1992: The Love Album

CHRYSLIS

Bittersweet, optimistically Eurocentric 90s chart topper gets boxed.



1992 was Carter's year, and they knew it. Their previous album

30 Something had climbed as high as No.8 in the big boys' chart. Not only had it captured the zeitgeist for the unprecedentedly acquisitive Slade/Jam record-buying demographic who were now, quite literally, 30 something (i.e. just hitting that cynical, politically aware age of nostalgic self-examination that the tears-in-the-beers duo so skilfully dealt in), but the cheekily likeable Sarf London duo were also the very best live band in the country (witness this set's newly included Glastonbury performance).

Carter USM (essentially two blokes, a fringe, some shorts and a drum machine) may have given the impression that they were easy-going everymen, but they knew their own worth and were steely determined to seize their day, so they pretty much duplicated the feel of *30 Something*, while ramping everything up to 11. *The Only Living Boy In New Cross* was as obvious a hit as *After The Watershed* had been before it. Melodically, dynamically flawless, it was clever, socially astute and emotional, if arguably not a patch on *While You Were Out*, a fabulously personal anthem for touring musicians' long-suffering road widows.

But it's the closing one-two of *Skywest And Crooked* and *The Impossible Dream* that's the exquisitely overblown gold here. There were even hopes in the ranks that the latter cover would provide the pair with a Christmas No.1 single. A ludicrous ambition for a track released in May, but they could dream.

A neat package, completed by a packed CD of B-sides and a *Top Of The Pops*-heavy DVD.



Ian Fortnam

Kevin Ayers

Joy Of A Toy ESOTERIC

Avant-pop '69 classic now back on vinyl.



John Peel described Kevin Ayers's talent as “so acute you could

perform major eye surgery with

it”, while after a gruelling US tour together Hendrix gave the former Soft Machine singer/bassist/guitarist a high-end Gibson acoustic on condition he write songs instead of retiring from the music business.

Repairing to Ibiza, Ayers wrote the songs for *Joy Of A Toy* then recorded the album for EMI's new Harvest label, with David Bedford arranging, and a band including Soft Machine's Mike Ratledge, Robert Wyatt and Hugh Hopper. Released in November '69 among Harvest's first crop, *Joy Of A Toy* launched Ayers's gloriously idiosyncratic, if ultimately self-sabotaged, solo career with its liberated melange of avant-psych collisions, from the tempo-surfing *Stop This Train (Again Doing It)* and *Oleh Oleh Bandu Bandong's* discordant mantra to vivid social observation (*Song For Insane Times*). His trademark louche ballads still sparkle, including *Girl On A Swing*, *Eleanor's Cake (Which Ate Her)* and the timelessly evocative *The Lady Rachel*.

It's oddly reassuring to have one of the last classic 60s debut albums back on gatefold vinyl, mastered where it was recorded 54 years earlier.



Hugh Fielder

Opeth

Damnation

20th Anniversary Edition

MUSIC FOR NATIONS

A return to plastic for a mellow milestone.



It may be reassuring to be reminded that music fans were

overreacting to everything 20 years ago too. Now widely regarded as a classic, Opeth's seventh album was greeted with a mixed response, as grumpy fans of the Swedes' previous records bemoaned loudly the absence of crushing riffs and blasphemous growls. Everyone else deduced correctly that Opeth were simply being their badass, radical selves.

Still the most beautifully bleak record in a bounteous catalogue, *Damnation* was a bold move, as hazy acoustic strumming and breathy Mellotron supplanted the death-metal grandeur of its heavy counterpart *Deliverance*, released six months earlier. But from the gently rolling groove of *Windowpane* onwards, Opeth's mellow detour made immediate and exquisite sense. Produced

by the band and Steven Wilson (whose 2015 remix/remaster returns to vinyl here), everything from the crestfallen *In My Time Of Need* and the crazed raga-psych of *Closure*, to the ghostly minimalism of *Weakness* exerted an emotional pull that Opeth had previously only hinted at. *Hope Leaves*, in particular, remains best avoided if one is feeling a bit fragile.

Elegantly against the grain, *Damnation* is as timeless and magical now as it was two decades ago. And yes, it does sound ruddy great on vinyl.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Dom Lawson

Avenger

Steel On Steel – The Complete Recordings

DISSONANCE

Avenger assembled.



Newcastle destroyers Avenger rose from the ashes of fellow

Geordie band Blitzkrieg in 1982, at the tail end of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. This 44-track, three-CD set includes their first two albums – *Blood Sports* and *Killer Elite* – plus bonus tracks. A third disc

comprises an unreleased live show from Brooklyn's legendary L'Amour club in 1986.

Avenger might be a footnote in NWOBHM history, but this collection is an absolute blast. *Blood Sports* is as low-budget as they come, its production as ham-fisted as a pair of pugilistic piglets. Guitars grind and drums clatter, while the vocalist (Ian Davidson Swift, a quick-fire replacement for NWOBHM stalwart Brian Ross) shouts at the devil. It's brutal, basic, and seethes with naked aggression. But Avenger weren't dunderheads. Their influence on Metallica is obvious, and their caustic cover of Montrose's obscure *Matriarch* betrays a connoisseur's approach to metal.

Bonus tracks include leftover Blitzkrieg ditties *Too Wild To Tame* (no, The Boyzz aren't back in town) and *Hot N' Heavy Express*, both offering Priest-style slugs of commercial bludgeon. But if you listen to only one song, it's got to be *N.O.T.J. (Night Of The Jackal)*, with its flesh-peeling chainsaw intro and air of stalking menace.

American guitarist Greg Reiter was brought in for *Killer Elite*, a glossier, speedier record. The

gambit didn't quite pay off; some of the magic was lost. Thankfully *Live At L'Amour* puts the world to rights. As the man demands: "Are you ready to fight for the right to rock?!" Cue full-frontal Patrick Macnees-up.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Geoff Barton

Alcatrazz

Rock Justice: Complete Recordings 1983-1986 HNE

What Graham Bonnet did after Rainbow and MSG.

Few rock singers could match him for power, but in the 80s Graham Bonnet had terrible trouble with guitarists. After falling out with Ritchie Blackmore, he quit Rainbow. After falling out of his trousers on stage, he was fired from the Michael Schenker Group. Subsequently, while leader of Alcatrazz, he couldn't hold on to a guitarist for more than one album. The resulting turmoil is clearly documented in this box set.

The highlight here is the band's 1983 debut *No Parole From Rock 'N' Roll*, on which a young Yngwie Malmsteen's showboating shred guitar connected powerfully with Bonnet's melodic instincts on

standout tracks *Islands In The Sun* and *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. *Disturbing The Peace* (1985) had another emerging guitar hero, Steve Vai, playing out of his skin on the minor hit *God Blessed Video* – essentially his audition for David Lee Roth. On 1986's *Dangerous Games*, Danny Johnson, a less flashy guitarist, was simply baling water on a sinking ship.

A fourth disc of previously unreleased material is uniformly grim, a horribly overcooked version of the classic soul ballad *When A Man Loves A Woman* proving that when the band split in 1987, escaping from Alcatrazz was best for all concerned.

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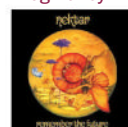
Paul Elliott

Nektar

Remember The Future – 50th Anniversary Edition

ESOTERIC

Prog honey.



Formed in 1968 by four English musicians working in Hamburg

who'd been gobsmacked by Pink Floyd's *Saucerful Of Secrets*, Nektar set out to exploit the growing German market that

album was creating. It mattered little that they didn't begin to compare to the Floyd, ELP, Yes, those bands rarely toured

Germany, Nektar did, constantly. And they got better. Their third album, 1973's, *Remember The Future*, was the breakthrough. A concept album divided into two side-length pieces and with a convoluted story involving a blind boy (ring any bells?). By now the prog market was huge, and the album was a massive hit in Germany and the rest of Europe. It even cracked the US Top 20 before the band had set foot there. Only Britain remained snootily immune.

Fifty years on, how does the album stack up? Well, *The Dark Side Of The Moon* is safe, but it gives Genesis's *Foxtrot* a run for its money. And it makes more sense than Yes's *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. The original, somewhat flat recording has been remixed for the better and the surround-sound mix gives it depth. A 1974 German gig shows they were better live than in the studio. There's also a couple of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* clips that put faces on the anonymous band.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Hugh Fielder



UFO

Lights Out – 2024 Remaster Deluxe Edition CHRYSLIS

Lights Out, all out.

Don't be duped by the PR bluster: "Lights Out is UFO's seminal breakthrough album." That honour, natch, goes to 1979 double-live masterwork *Strangers In The Night*. Additionally, the claim that the title track offers "an urgent portrayal of dystopian London" on a par with The Clash's *White Riot* is a claim too far. Yes, *Lights Out* (the song) might at its core be about the Notting Hill riots of '76. Its anti-authoritarian vibe is undeniable. But equally – and you can imagine frontman Phil Mogg saying this, with a wicked glint in his eye – it could've been inspired by the singer's hunt for a Zippo after he unwittingly spilled a can of Stella over his, er, fuse box. Certainly, album-cover design supremos Hipgnosis plumped for the electric option, depicting Mogg and guitarist Michael Schenker lurking inside London's Battersea Power Station.

Regardless, *Lights Out* is a very fine album indeed. It reached No.23 in the US upon its release in '77, but surprisingly didn't trouble the UK Top 50. Its lush sonics, by producer Ron Nevison, are a big improvement on previous

flaccid efforts by Leo Lyons, and are further improved here. *Too Hot To Handle* and the twinkling *Love To Love* have more than stood the test of time, and the less renowned *Electric Phase* is a chunky personal fave, but a dodgy cover of Love's *Alone Again Or* smacks of a cheroot-chewing exec demanding: "We need a hit single from you boys."

This remaster comes in two-CD or three-LP formats and includes an April '77 show from London's Roundhouse. The gig is vivacious and vital, despite the recent culling of *Boogie For George* (a track that makes Status Quo sound like Supertramp) from the set. The three bonus tracks are CD-only, a sure sign of a fading format. Sadly, said tracks are barely worth having, being edits of *Too Hot To Handle* and *Try Me* along with a rough acoustic version of *Alone Again Or*.

The vinyl is the gold. Given the relatively

small number of tracks spread across three 12-inch platters, the grooves are so deep and wide they could double up as a Scalextric set. Thus the sonics are out of this world, as deep and resonant as Mogg's tonsils at the top of their game.

■■■■■■■■■■■

Geoff Barton



The Undertones are just one band who owe a lot to Terri Hooley.



Terri Hooley: Seventy-Five Revolutions

Stuart Bailie DIG WITH IT

Photo-led biography of the inspirational Belfast punk scene entrepreneur.

TERRI HOOLEY:
BY STUART BAILIE
SEVENTY-FIVE
REVOLUTIONS



The story of how Terri Hooley eschewed the prejudice, violence and killings of The Troubles during the Northern Ireland conflict and instead helped create the 70s Belfast punk scene is already well documented – the 2010 biography *Hooleygan*, and the 2013 biopic *Good Vibrations* (later adapted into a stage play). *Seventy-Five Revolutions*, described by Hooley in his foreword as “the definitive account of my life”, takes the form of an extended photo-book, with illuminating and in-depth interviews with the scenesters and bands Hooley championed, to describe how he was instrumental in the careers of The Undertones, The Outcasts, Rudi and Belfast’s wider live scene.

Put simply, there’s no one better to write it than Belfast music journalist and ex-NME writer Stuart Bailie, who’s been a friend of Hooley for 40 years. Bailie uncovers the real Terri Hooley, who he describes as “a poet, a fool, an upsetter and a hallion”. The author’s 40-year friendship, love and admiration for a man who channelled his passion and obsession to create an artistic enclave while the immediate world around him literally crumbled into destruction and devastation is clear from the outset.

Featuring stylish contemporary portraits by Bailie as well as period photos of Belfast-scene bands and gigs, the book charts Hooley’s ownership of Good

Vibrations record shop, established in 1980 in central Belfast, which also became a label, releasing debuts by bands such as Derry’s The Undertones and Belfast’s Rudi and Protex. When Hooley visited indie distributor Rough Trade in London with The Undertones debut single *Teenage Kicks*, he was turned away and told it was “the worst record they ever heard in their life... I took it to EMI and CBS and everybody else that I could get a meeting with and they all told me the same thing”.

But the persistence paid off, and John Peel’s fandom and airplay led to the band signing to Sire Records. The Undertones were on *Top Of The Pops* within weeks.

But any attendant financial success was anathema to the fiercely independent Hooley. “I’ve always said the worst thing that could ever happen to an independent record label was to have a hit single,” he tells Bailie. “I would have made money, but it wasn’t what I was all about... I was more interested in putting Belfast on the music map.”

While the movie biopic bent the facts, *Seventy-Five Revolutions* redresses the balance to document Hooley’s heroic focus for recognising an opportunity for fertile creativity and grasping it amid sectarian hatred and political upheaval.

Alex Burrows

Phew, Eh, Readers? The Life And Writing Of Tom Hibbert

Edited by Barney Hoskyns and Jasper Murison-Bowie

NINE EIGHT BOOKS

Biographical compendium from late iconoclast.

Tom Hibbert, according to *Phew* editor Barney Hoskyns, was “the funniest writer to apply his Wodehouse-on-amphetamine wit to the subject of popular music”, and, having repeatedly howled at this bumper collection of his work, who are we to argue?

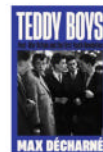
An erudite ex-public school boy with bone-dry smarts and an enduring dislike of Graham Nash, Hibbert stumbled into rock journalism “by mistake”. Invited to bash out copy for *New Music News* (an opportunistic title that arrived in 1980 to fill the void left by striking *NME/Melody Maker* writers), he thrived at *Smash Hits* (where his biting cynicism helped shape a playful, 80s-defining vibe) before coming into his own at *Q* with his no-holds-barred ‘Who the hell...?’ interviews. In those republished here he asks Roger Waters if he’s “the gloomiest man in rock?”, and is informed by an uncharacteristically enraged Ringo Starr that he’s “talking shit”. *Phew* (rounded out with reminiscence from former colleagues: Mark Ellen, Sylvia Patterson) can be a laugh riot: “You look terrible,” Hibbert tells Morrissey. “Are you under the doctor?” before cheerily advising the committed vegetarian that “a good McDonald’s quarter-pounder would put you back on your feet in no time.” That said, Hibbert’s unfiltered style ultimately reveals most of today’s rock ‘criticism’ to be depressingly toothless by comparison. When did we all get so bloody nice?

Ian Fortnam

Teddy Boys

Max Décharné PROFILE BOOKS

The leather forecast.



If you visited a fairground in the 70s, chances are you encountered Teds, the bequipped leather boys whose beefy tattooed arms viciously spun the waltzer cars and rode the dodgems to the sound of *The Wanderer* by Dion.

The once-feared founders of Britain’s first teenage tribe, the foot soldiers of the rock revolution, Teddy boys became

a parody of themselves, at least in popular imagination. It’s an injustice crying out to be righted, as the author explains in his introduction ‘Don’t Fear The Creeper’.

Youths in long drape jackets and with Tony Curtis quiffs rose from London’s post-war rubble to take over dance halls, cafs and streets. Observers were both fascinated and repelled by their style. In 1955, Teddy girls were photographed by *Picture Post*, but mostly the boys made headlines for the wrong reasons, labelled “spineless young hoodlums and warped ninnies”. And then came rock’n’roll...

Expert research, insider knowledge and love for the subject all make for a thumping good read. Ted Carroll (co-founder of Ace Records) vividly describes the absolute mayhem and excitement when Bill Haley And His Comets played in Dublin. It’s life-changing stuff, and illustrates why, from Danny & The Juniors to Neil Young, ‘Rock and roll can never die’.

Claudia Elliott

Simple Minds

Everything Is Possible

LONESOME PINE/BMG

Feature-length doc about the rise, fall and recovery of the Scots post-punkers.

For close friends Charlie Burchill and Jim Kerr, who grew up in Glasgow, the bottom of the street wasn’t where the world ended, but where the world began. This documentary illustrates how Simple Minds were at once made by Glasgow but also wanted to escape it.

They took refuge in books, European travel, before punk offered them a way out and a means of channelling their hankering for transcendence. Their early albums, especially 1980’s *Empires And Dance*, showed how they were made not by American but by European dreams. When they attained success in the US, almost inadvertently, with *The Breakfast Club* soundtrack song *Don’t You (Forget About Me)*, it was the making of them commercially but the un-making of them critically. By the late 80s, Simple Minds had run out of relevance and disintegrated.

Featuring interviews with band members and associates as well as Bobby Gillespie, David Gahan, Sharleen Spiteri and Bob Geldof, this documentary shows

how Simple Minds reconciled themselves to their decline following the supposed zenith of Live Aid, rebuilding themselves around the nucleus of singer Kerr and guitarist Burchill and rediscovering the joy of being in a band more than 40 years on.



David Stubbs

Darker With The Dawn: Nick Cave's Songs Of Love And Death

Adam Steiner

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD

A deep dive into the works of an alt.rock icon.



From the Birthday Party to the Bad Seeds to Grinderman, from screenplays to poetry to novels, from wild, drug-addled punk to dignified elder statesmen with a renewed sense of duty in communicating with his followers... There are few musicians as complex, scholarly, erudite and contradictory as the great Nick Cave. As such, his work is ripe for the kind of in-depth analysis Adam Steiner undertakes in this book.

Rather than a straight biography, Steiner takes individual songs as a starting point to explore the Cave mentality, spreading out to explore the wider topics of everything from Delta blues to religion and spirituality, misogyny, art, literature, drugs, notions of good and evil, the history of the United States, Elvis Presley, grief, family, love and redemption. Exhaustive and fascinating, Steiner treats these familiar titles – *Tupelo*, *The Mercy Seat*, *Red Right Hand*, *Deanna*, *Stagger Lee* – like a biologist shining a torch under lifted rocks to see what lives and thrives underneath, in the darkness. For fans it's a joy to unpick and give a wider context to songs that are dear to their hearts, for a casual listener it's a clever and entertaining introduction to Cave's brutal and beautiful world.



Emma Johnston

Billy Idol

State Line: Live At Hoover Dam

LASTMAN MEDIA

Caricature 80s artefact on vintage form.

Aside from *100 Punks*, Billy Idol ventures nowhere near the back catalogue of Generation X for this inspiringly staged, Vegas-style rock show, on a helipad

overlooking the Hoover Dam (basically a 350 million-ton concrete plug in the Colorado River). So you can write the set-list yourself: *Dancing With Myself*, *Rebel Yell*, *Hot In The City*, *White Wedding* et al.

Aside from a couple of ace newbies (*Cage*, *Running For The Ghost*), Billy does what he's been doing since he was the sneery, spiky, peroxide prince of 80s MTV. To an intimate audience of 250 hard-core fans, with a front row of what can probably be best described as gyrating Stifler's Moms, Sir William of Idol effortlessly delivers. His voice is flawless, Steve Stevens's guitar histrionics on point and his band (including guests Steve Jones and Alison Mosshart) drilled, but reliably rocking. You may well like it a lot more than you expect.

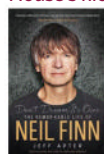


Ian Fortnam

Don't Dream It's Over – The Remarkable Life Of Neil Finn

Jeff Apter JAWBONE PRESS

Heart-warming bio of Crowded House's nice-guy hit maker.



New Zealander Neil Finn was born into a musical household and had his head turned by The

Beatles and The Stones. When his tastes broadened to include Neil Young and Sandy Denny, all the touchstones were in place. But as Australian music writer Jeff Apter asserts in this book, Neil's defining moment came aged 18, when his elder brother Tim phoned home inviting him to join his band Split Enz on tour in Europe, as a replacement guitarist. Neil never looked back, and when Split Enz folded in 1984 he launched Crowded House, whose first four albums showed him to be one of the world's best songwriters.

In measured detail, Apter retraces Neil's every move and "campfire singalong" catalogue. He highlights friendships, frictions and (above all) the importance of family – most of whom Neil has since enlisted into a restyled Crowded House.

As the book's cast expands to include Finn fans-cum-collaborators Eddie Vedder, Radiohead, Johnny Marr and Fleetwood Mac, Apter maintains affection but never gets mawkish.



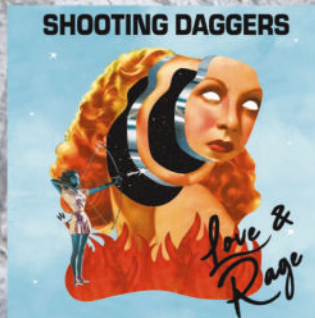
Neil Jeffries

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS



GUHTS
REGENERATION
LP/CD/DL

From New York, GUHTS are a unique musical proposition. Combining expansive post metal and doom, with shoegaze. A maelstrom of heavy and intense songs with a strong feminist streak. A formidable debut from one of the coolest new bands out there.



SHOOTING DAGGERS
LOVE & RAGE
LP/CD/DL/MC

The much anticipated debut from these three London punks who have been tearing it up all year. Defiant, feminist hardcore. Catchy, kick ass shards of pent up fury and melody, infused with 90's shoegaze and grunge. Meet SHOOTING DAGGERS your new favourite band.



THEY WATCH US FROM THE MOON
CHRONICLE, ACT 1: THE ASCENSION
LP/CD/DL

Cosmic space metal outfit TWUFTM are a band with riffs as heavy as Osmium shot through with melodic lead guitar and sublime twin female vocals. Think ABBA with riffs.



DEATH PILL
DEATH PILL
LP/CD/DL/MC

The stunning debut album from DEATH PILL, an all-female hardcore punk power trio of considerable muscle from Ukraine combining metalcore, punk, thrash metal and oodles of 'Riot Grrl' vibe. A 'force majeure' that even war will not silence.



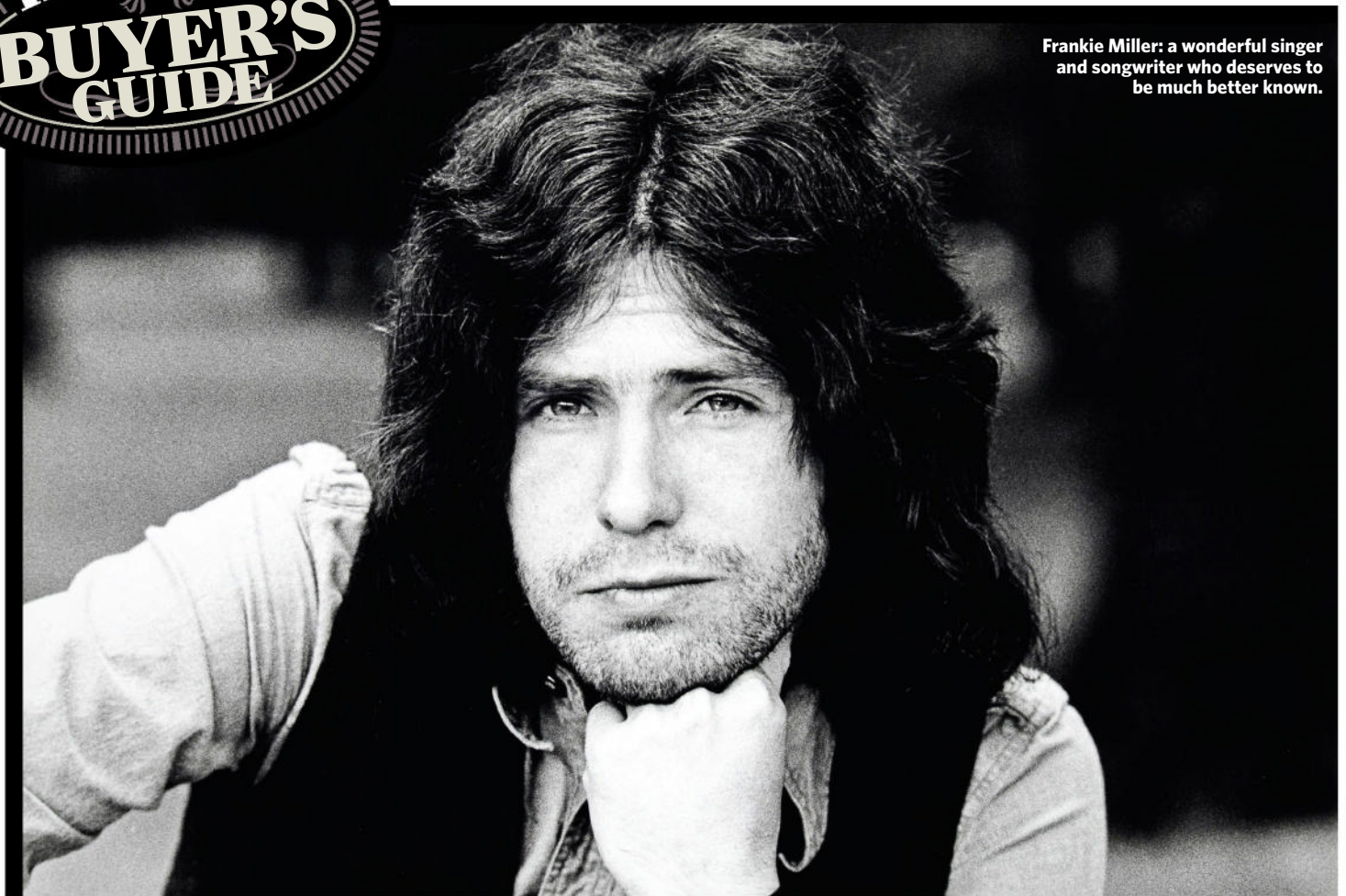
GRAVE LINES
COMMUNION
LP/CD/DL

In a nutshell 'Communion' is a violent descent of bile-soaked intensity spiralling between filth laden swagger, and fragile mournful lament. Owing as much to Bauhaus and Killing Joke as it does to Black Sabbath or Neurosis the album captures GRAVE LINES' distinctive dynamic perfectly.

COMING SOON

New albums from EYE, featuring Jessica Ball, singer from Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard with her new project. Plus the much anticipated second album from 'stone rock 'n' rollers' SKY VALLEY MISTRESS





Frankie Miller: a wonderful singer and songwriter who deserves to be much better known.

Frankie Miller

Before his career was ended tragically by injury, his records show just how good a songwriter and great a singer he was.

Rod Stewart once paid a beautiful tribute to Frankie Miller, an acknowledgment from one great singer to another. "He's the only white guy that's ever brought a tear to my eye," Rod said. "He was that good."

It's a long time since Frankie Miller has been able to sing. That wonderfully soulful, gritty voice was lost for ever when he suffered a near-fatal brain aneurysm in 1994. But Miller always considered himself lucky to have survived it, and what remains is a rich legacy in the albums he made in his pomp in the 70s and early 80s.

Born Francis John Miller in 1949 in Bridgeton, an impoverished district of Glasgow, his education in music came via the rhythm-and-blues classics in his mother's record collection. After stints with various local groups, and a brief spell in a band named Jude that also included guitarist Robin Trower, Miller struck out as a solo artist in 1972, and over the course of that decade he made his reputation as one of the finest singers and songwriters of his generation.

Unfortunately Miller never made it big the way Stewart did. The only major hit he ever had was *Darlin'* in 1978, and, to his chagrin, it was a song he didn't write. But

over the years his songs would be recorded by an array of famous artists, including Stewart, Bob Seger, Roy Orbison, Ray Charles, and Miller's friends in the Eagles, whose guitarist Joe Walsh said: "The world needs to be aware of Frankie Miller more than it is."

As a guest vocalist, Miller was featured in one of the greatest rock ballads of all time, performing a duet with Phil Lynott in the original 1974 version of Thin Lizzy's *Still In Love With You*. Many years later, long after his voice had been lost and his career tragically ended, a collection of his early demos were fashioned into two new albums: *Long Way Home* and *Frankie Miller's Double Take*. Then in 2014 more of his previously unreleased songs were recorded by Quireboys singer Spike for the album *100% Pure Frankie Miller*, which featured performances by a stellar cast of his friends including Ronnie Wood, Ian Hunter, Bonnie Tyler and ex-Free stars Andy Fraser and Simon Kirke.

Now, at the age of 74, Miller lives out of the spotlight. What he's given the world, in these great albums is more than enough – the songs, and that voice, full of soul, power and depth.

Paul Elliott

Essential Classics



The Rock

CHRYSLIS, 1975

It was officially credited to The Frankie Miller Band, but *The Rock* was very much a personal statement. Now, it stands as his definitive album.

The title track's heavy lyrics refer to Alcatraz, on which sits the former penitentiary, which was visible from the studio in San Francisco where the album was recorded. Miller always said he might have ended up in prison were it not for music.

The realities of his life – the hard times and hard drinking – were also expressed in *Bridgeton* and *Drunken Nights In The City*. Upbeat tracks *A Fool In Love* and *Ain't Got No Money* would become signature songs.



Full House

CHRYSLIS, 1977

Miller sang as soulfully as Paul Rodgers, and that similarity wasn't lost on Andy Fraser. Formerly a bandmate of Rodgers in Free, Fraser had wanted to put a group together with Miller. That came to nothing, but it was Fraser who wrote *Be Good To Yourself*, the standout track on *Full House*, one of Miller's best-known tracks and his first chart single, which rocks with all the funky swagger of classic Free.

A mix of Miller originals and covers, it's an album on which Miller exhibited his full range as a singer, emoting all the pain and regret in John Lennon's *Jealous Guy*, and belting it out as only he could in *Down The Honky Tonk*.

Superior Reputation cementing



Once In A Blue Moon

CHRYSLIS, 1973

This, his first album, included his first great song, *I Can't Change It*, a confessional ballad with a beautiful melody and deep lyrics. Miller sang it with raw emotion, as did Ray Charles, the legendary singer who covered it in 1980.

Fittingly for someone who was fond of a drink or two, Miller had the quintessential pub rock band, Brinsley Schwarz, backing him on *Once In A Blue Moon*, and they hit a well-oiled groove on funky tracks such as *Candlelight Sonata In F Major*. The album also included another heartbreaker of a ballad, *After All (I Live My Life)*.



High Life

CHRYSLIS, 1974

Miller ventured into America's Deep South to make his second album with producer and songwriter Allen Toussaint, the New Orleans R&B maestro famed for his work with Dr. John, Labelle and The Meters.

Things didn't quite work out as Miller had planned. *High Life* was released in remixed form without his and Toussaint's approval. Their original version was only released belatedly, on the 2011 box set *That's Who*. But on either version there is some great stuff, most notably two heavily atmospheric songs on which Miller channels southern funk and soul: *The Devil Gun* and *I'm Falling In Love Again*.



Falling In Love

CHRYSLIS, 1979

There was always a whiff of chicken-in-a-basket about Miller's one big hit single, *Darlin'* (UK No.6 in 1968), a jaunty pop song written by Q-Tips saxophonist Oscar Blandamer and first recorded by Poacher, a country act from Warrington, of all places.

But there are better songs on the *Falling In Love* album (titled *A Perfect Fit* in the US). *When I'm Away From You* is one of Miller's finest – the hit that never was. And on the ballad *If I Can Love Somebody*, written by singer-songwriter John Hiatt, the croak in Miller's voice recalls another hero, legendary American soul singer Otis Redding.



Standing On The Edge

CAPITOL, 1982

For his first album after leaving the Chrysalis label, Miller returned to the Deep South to record at the fabled Muscle Shoals Studio in Alabama with their shit-hot in-house band, plus several guitarists, including Wayne Perkins, who almost joined the Rolling Stones before Ronnie Wood got the gig.

Andy Fraser was again heavily involved in the songwriting, but the album's standout tracks were all Miller's own: *Danger Danger*, a filthy boogie; *Jealousy*, a gut-wrenching ballad; and *To Dream The Dream*, which swings like the Bob Seger classic *Night Moves* and is every bit as irresistible.

Good Worth exploring



Double Trouble

CHRYSLIS, 1978

On his fifth album Miller went for a harder rock edge, with Aerosmith producer Jack Douglas at the controls, Steven Tyler guesting on backing vocals and harmonica, and another song written by Andy Fraser, *Double Heart Trouble*, on which Miller again sounded like Paul Rodgers, with more of a late-period Bad Company feel.

He also had another great British singer, Paul Carrack, as co-writer and backing vocalist on half of the songs, including the bittersweet *Good Time Love*. And the old Motown classic he covered, a song by Marvin Gaye, had a title that was entirely apt for this singer: *Stubborn Kind Of Fellow*.



Easy Money

CHRYSLIS, 1980

After the success of his single *Darlin'*, Miller drifted a little further into middle-of-the-road territory with *Easy Money*. Recorded in Nashville with some of the best session players in the business, the album was a smooth blend of soul, country and pop. What elevated it above mere blandness was that magical voice.

It included a great version of *Why Don't You Spend The Night*, but it was country singer Ronnie Milsap who had a hit with the song. Again, the best song on the album was one of Miller's own – *Tears*, another stinging ballad. The song was later reworked as a duet with Bonnie Tyler.



Long Way Home

JERKIN' CROCUS, 2006

At the time he was struck down in 1994, Miller had been working on new material with Joe Walsh and keyboard player Nicky Hopkins, famed for his work with the Rolling Stones. Twelve years later, those recordings finally emerged on Miller's album *Long Way Home*. The highlight was *Guilty Of The Crime*, with a typically ballsy vocal from Miller and searing slide guitar from Walsh, who later sang it with the Eagles.

Similarly, on the 2016 album *Frankie Miller's Double Take*, more of his final recordings were formed into duets with Walsh, Rod, Elton John and others. As Elton said in tribute: "Frankie's music should be revered."

Avoid



Dancing In The Rain

VERTIGO, 1986

In 1984, when Frankie Goes To Hollywood ruled the pop charts, kids in 'Frankie Says...' T-shirts were everywhere. Two years later, Miller's album *Dancing In The Rain* was promoted with cheeky T-shirts emblazoned with the title of his 1978 European 'best of' set: 'Frankie Who? Frankie Fucking Miller, That's Who!' The joke backfired when *Dancing In The Rain* promptly bombed.

Miller had some famous friends helping out on *Dancing In The Rain* – drummer Simon Kirke, ex-Thin Lizzy guitarist Brian Robertson – but the songs were mostly forgettable, the production too slick. Miller was so much better than this.

Essential Playlist

I Can't Change It

Once In A Blue Moon

After All (I Live My Life)

Once In A Blue Moon

The Devil Gun

High Life

I'm Falling In Love Again

High Life

Ain't Got No Money

The Rock

The Rock

The Rock

Drunken Nights In The City

The Rock

A Fool In Love

The Rock

Be Good To Yourself

Full House

Down The Honky Tonk

Full House

Double Heart Trouble

Double Trouble

Good Time Love

Double Trouble

When I'm Away From You

Falling In Love

If I Can Love Somebody

Falling In Love

Darlin'

Falling In Love

Tears

Easy Money

To Dream The Dream

Standing On The Edge

Jealousy

Standing On The Edge

Caledonia

Single

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FRI 19TH - KINROSS GREEN HOTEL
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SUN 21ST - LONDON HOLBORN PIZZA EXPRESS
TUE 23RD - RAMSGATE RED ARROW MUSIC CLUB
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SUN 5TH - CARDIFF ACAPELA STUDIO
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TUE 7TH - BARNOLDSWICK MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE

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LIVE!

THE HIGH-VOLTAGE
WHAT'S ON GUIDE

EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM (REVIEWS) AND DAVE LING (TOURS)

P **102**

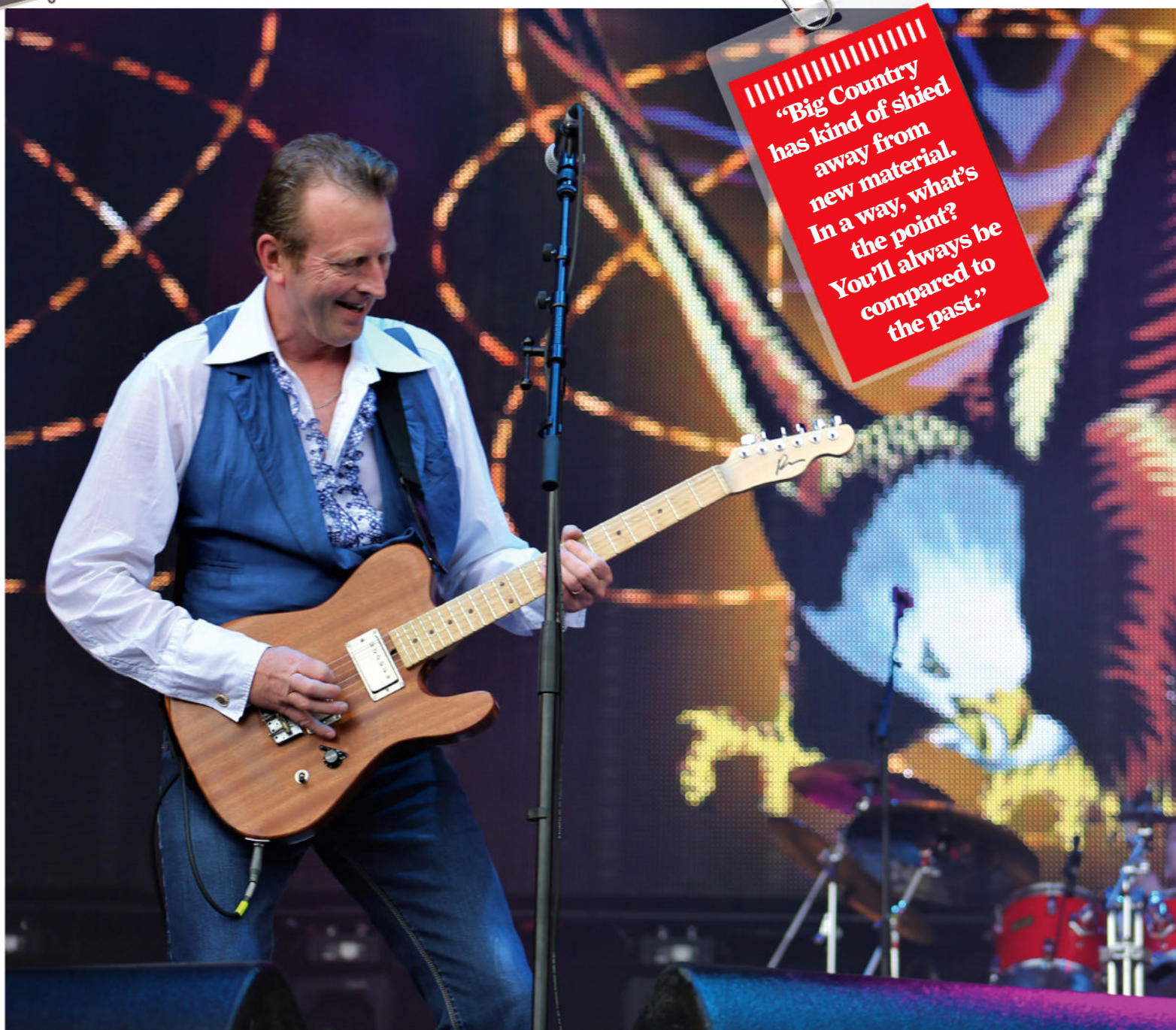
Living Colour

Rock And Roll, vivid guitar solos,
dancing and balcony climbing
in Wolverhampton.

P **96** INTERVIEWS

P **99** TOUR DATES

P **102** LIVE REVIEWS



“Big Country has kind of shied away from new material. In a way, what’s the point? You’ll always be compared to the past.”

Big Country

On the eve of an in-its-entirety tour, guitarist Bruce Watson recalls ‘difficult’ second album *Steeltown*.

As their 40th-anniversary tour for debut album *The Crossing* is coming to an end, a similar tour for second album *Steeltown* is not far away, kicking off in February.

Straight from one anniversary into the next. Those first three albums came in quick succession. Time goes so fast; I still remember touring for the twentieth anniversary of *Steeltown* and thinking: “Bloody hell.”

***Steeltown* was recorded during the miners’ strike of ’84. Your father was a miner.** *The Crossing* had been the first bit of success I’d had, and that made things difficult. My dad was a miner

on strike and so were many of my mates. It was a strange time to be in Dunfermline. Half of the people I knew wanted to pat me on the back, and the rest to punch me in the face.

Steeltown was a textbook example of ‘second-album syndrome’. We were so busy touring *The Crossing* that we hadn’t written anything new. [Producer] Steve Lillywhite was earning so much money, he had to spend a year outside of the country, so we worked at ABBA’s Polar Studio in Stockholm. We spent six weeks in probably what was the most expensive city in the world.

You’ve described Steve Lillywhite as a “genius”. What’s so good about him?

I was the youngest in the band. Stuart [Adamson, guitar] had been in The Skids, and Tony [Butler, bass] and Mark [Brzezicki, drums] had made albums with Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey, but everything was still new to me. Steve helped me to relax and was willing to listen to my ideas. He was up for just about anything. I learned so much from him and Bill [Gosling], the engineer.

With digital recording still in its infancy there were technical problems at Polar.

From a technical viewpoint, that was a hard album to make. We kept getting spikes and clicks that drove Bill Gosling crazy. Nowadays you can erase them with the push of a button, but back then it had to be

done manually. *Steeltown* has got some great songs and performances, but sonically it's the one album of ours that deserves a modern helping hand. It's a harsh record, but then again it reflected harsh times.

Stuart Adamson wrote some great, enduring lyrics. Among the album's most fascinating moments is the title track, inspired by the flux of Scots who came to England to work in a foundry in Corby during the depression. Yeah. The first album had been romantic, we left things open to interpretation. With *Steeltown* nothing was abstract. If you've ever been to Corby it is full of Scots. It was a horrible time for a lot of people.

With its political undercurrent, reflecting the Falklands War and unemployment, was *Steeltown* too dark for the US market? It probably was. To me it's a UK-centric album. It wasn't even released in a lot of other territories. It's very much of its time.

In the UK it went straight in at Number One. It's Big Country's only British chart-topping album. I seem to remember that we knocked U2 off the top of the charts [with *The Unforgettable Fire*] for a week, and then they went back up again.

Overall, though, it didn't sell anywhere near as well as *The Crossing*. No. That album had a lot more longevity. *Steeltown* was Number One, and then it was gone [laughs].

Will you perform the album's ten songs from top to bottom, or sprinkle them throughout the set? All of the songs will get played, though not in the original running order. When you've got songs that are just as important, or perhaps even more so, it tends to ruin the dynamic.

Liverpudlian alt.rockers the Icicle Works are special guests for the tour. While frontman Ian McNabb has kept that band very much alive, this will be the first time in twenty-five years that he and bassist Chris Layhe have played together. I love Icicle Works. We first met them decades ago in Newcastle for [Channel 4 TV show] *The Tube*. I'm really looking forward to having them out with us.

Will there be a new Big Country album? My son Jamie is in the band [as rhythm guitarist], and we've written some stuff, but we're also both a part of The Skids with Richard Jobson. Big Country has kind of shied away from new material. In a way, what's the point? You'll always be compared to the past.

Stuart Adamson took his own life more than twenty years ago. From what you know of him, do you think he'd approve of Big Country's continued existence? That's so hard to answer. When Stuart wanted to leave and park the band up, he told us to get someone in [to replace him]. That's what we did. We rehearsed with Mike Peters and Simon Townshend together, and Stuart, who was out in Nashville doing his own thing, knew about that. It [the reunion] didn't happen for a while when Mike ended up joining us, and Stuart had already said go ahead and do it. So I suspect he'd be okay with the idea. **DL**

*Big Country's tour for *Steeltown* begins on February 9.*



Florence Black

Wales's latest rock export take to the road in February.

Guitarist and frontman Tristan Thomas checks in as the latest breakout band from Wales undertake their biggest headlining tour so far, in support of latest album *Bed Of Nails*, the follow-up to 2021's *Weight Of The World*.

How did you come to form the band, with bassist Jordan Evans and drummer Perry Davies?

Perry and I met at infant school and started playing music together in covers bands, but it really all began when we found Jordan. It's taken a while, but we're finally making some movement.

Who is, or was, Florence Black?

She was a woman from a village called Aberfan, where the disaster happened [in 1996 a colliery spoil tip collapsed, killing 116 children and 28 adults]. She used to ride around on her bike carrying coal. My dad told me about her story when we were looking for names, and we all liked it.

Has the name caused some confusion?

Maybe a little. Some people expect us to be a woman and instead they get three greasy boys playing rock music, but we still think it's cool.

On your album there's some serious wallop behind *Don't Hold Me Down* and *Bed Of Nails*, but *Warning Sign* and *The Forest* bring fragility, and your vocals are a mix of clean singing and some that fall short of actual growls. It's all about light and shade.

Yeah, I like to hear a lot of different things on an album. My taste in music ranges from heavy metal to country, pop and R&B. I try to mix in a bit of everything.

So who were the band's earliest musical heroes?

I started with the classics – Peter Green and Zeppelin – and during my teens I moved on to heavier stuff. But my mum used to play Shania Twain as she cleaned the house, and sometimes I'd turn around and say: "That's quite good, actually" [laughs].

Few bands can claim to have racked up more than a million streams on Spotify before even releasing a record, which *Florence Black* achieved. We had a big push on Spotify during lockdown. *Bird On A Chain* hit six million streams.

You've also had two wins on Tracks Of The Week at the *Classic Rock* website, with *Look Up* and *Sun And Moon*. It all helps.

That's right. Lot of people say they were fans of other bands and discovered us that way.

Didn't you receive a personal request to open for Corey Taylor in Paris?

That was surreal. Back in 2017 we were working for Deep Purple as crew members, when we received an email from his management inviting us to play with Corey at the Bataclan. That was mind-blowing.

Benji Webbe from Skindred sang on a track of yours, and joined you on stage at *Maid Of Stone*.

Benji is awesome. He sang on *Gunshot*, which brought us a lot of attention at the time [in 2019]. He's a big icon in the rock scene, especially now, and whenever we have a question we ask him and he replies straight away. He's always up for giving us a hand.

You've toured with Steel Panther, who are a bit of a Marmite band. Where do you stand on their authenticity, or otherwise?

I've loved Steel Panther for years, though some people don't get it. Touring with them was crazy, because all of their fans are girls. Some would get up on stage with their tops off.

Why do you think so much good music comes out of Wales these days?

I don't know, but since Those Damn Crows and Scarlet Rebels, people take the place more seriously. Wales is running the show at the minute. **DL**

The eight-date run ends in Cardiff on February 10.



|||||
"My manager recorded [the Palladium 2023 shows] without telling me because he didn't want me to either panic or play it safe."

Rick Wakeman

The keyboard maestro and his band revisit Yes and solo material at two London shows in February.

On February 22 and 23, 2023, billed as The Return Of The Caped Crusader, Rick Wakeman and his band the English Rock Ensemble played a pair of concerts at London's Palladium. The keyboard wizard's set mixed classic Yes standards with material from his solo albums *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* and *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur* (on the first night) and, 24 hours later, *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*. Things worked so well that Wakeman is now taking something similar around the country.

You rested the Grumpy At Christmas routine in Decemberrd 2023.

My management and agent both thought it would be beneficial to skip a year and come back bigger and better in 2024, and who am I to argue?

Nevertheless, your November blog revealed a month stuffed with awards ceremonies, prog-rock dinners, benefits to raise money for stray dogs, and, last but not least, sorting out your music archive.

Yeah. We moved house this year and everything was in piles and piles of cardboard boxes, so I enlisted my son Adam. It still isn't finished, but I want to get the whole thing archived because at the moment it's like my brain – in no particular order.

That same blog said 2023 was "a real mixture of good and not so good".

The aftermath of covid hit me really badly. I'm a busy person, and having that taken away from me for more than two years was mentally difficult. Plus the fact that I wasn't earning. I would cheerfully have strangled anyone that told me: "You can catch up on touring." I'm seventy-four! I can't catch up! Besides everything else there were health issues and we lost some family members.

These regional Caped Crusader shows reprise the concerts at the Palladium in January 2023.

I'll be completely honest, when the idea of those gigs was first presented to me I wasn't sure. My manager had to talk me into doing them. But although I wasn't convinced, they sold out instantly, and musically speaking they were tremendous.

In fact an additional date at London's Theatre Royal in Drury Lane has been added.

I was surprised by the demand for extra shows. We could have done an awful lot more.

A four-CD boxed set recording from the Palladium shows is released on February 16 via Esoteric Recordings.

My manager recorded them without telling me

because he didn't want me to either panic or play it safe. [Laughing] I may correct a few of my mistakes.

How does this unashamed nostalgia sit with you?

A while ago a young kid in Brazil taught me an important lesson. He was at the hotel with a copy of *Six Wives* that he wanted signed. He said he was sixteen years old. When I asked: "What do you like about this old music?" he got really angry and retorted: "Mr Wakeman, this may be old music to you but it's new to me. I only heard it two weeks ago. You should learn to remember that when you play music on stage, some people are hearing it for the first time." That was real food for thought.

What does the future hold for you?

For a while now I've planned to not necessarily retire, but to calm things down a little. I do know that 2024 and 2025 will be my last touring years in America. My good friend Jon Lord [late Deep Purple keyboard player] and I were planning on doing something together before he died [in 2012], which made me realise how short time can be. I've a list of those things, but I'm very aware that some are completely unviable in a commercial sense. That really doesn't matter. I'm going to do them anyway. **DL**

The tour begins in Glasgow on February 15.

Tour Dates

BRYAN ADAMS

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 13-15
Coventry	Building Society Arena	May 17
Sheffield	Utilita Arena	May 18
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	May 19
Dublin	3 Arena	May 21
Belfast	SSE Arena	May 22

Recommended

THE ALMIGHTY

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Nov 29
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Nov 30
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Barrowland	Ballroom	Nov 30

KRIS BARRAS BAND

Torquay	The Foundry	Apr 6
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Apr 12
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 13
Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 14
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 17
Newcastle	Boilershop	Apr 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Apr 20

BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE

Blackburn	King George's Hall	Feb 2
Blackpool	UK Blues Festival	Feb 4
Cardiff	Acapella Studios	Apr 5
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Apr 16
Leicester	The Musician	Apr 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 18
Kinross	Green Hotel	Apr 19
New Marske	Institute Club	Apr 20
London	Soho Pizza Express	Apr 21
Ramsgate	Red Arrow Club	Apr 23
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Apr 24
Aldershot	West End Centre	Apr 25
Hampshire	Forest Arts Centre	Apr 26
Stockton-On-Tees	Blues At The Bay	Apr 27
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Apr 29
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	May 1
Hastings	Black Box	May 2

BIG COUNTRY, THE ICICLE WORKS

Bristol	Academy	Feb 9
Nottingham	The Level	Feb 10
Bradford	Nightrain	Feb 15
Gillingham	Great Hall	Feb 16
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 17
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Feb 23
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 24
Norwich	Epic Studios	Feb 29
Northampton	Roadmender	Mar 1
Leeds	Beckett University	Mar 2
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Mar 7
Cambridge	Junction	Mar 8
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Mar 9
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 14
Liverpool	Hangar 34	Mar 15
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 16
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 21
Southampton	1865	Mar 22
Sunderland	Fire Station	Mar 29
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Mar 30
London	IndigO2	Apr 20
Leicester	Academy	Apr 26
Bath	Forum	Apr 27

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, THE STEEL WOODS

Glasgow	Academy	Sep 9
Edinburgh	Academy	Sep 10
Manchester	Apollo	Sep 12
Birmingham	Academy	Sep 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 14

BLIND GUARDIAN

Dublin	Academy	Apr 10
Glasgow	SWG 3	Apr 12
Manchester	Academy	Apr 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 14

JOE BONAMASSA

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 4, 5
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BRAVE RIVAL

London	Soho Pizza Express	Feb 4
Coulson	Tuesday Night Music Club	Feb 6
Portsmouth	Guildhall Studio	Feb 16
Staines	Thameside Brewery	Feb 18

Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Feb 23
Barnoldswick	Music Arts Centre	Feb 24
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 25
Ramsgate	Red Arrow Music Club	Feb 27
Great Yarmouth	Legends Of Rock	Mar 1
Poynton	Club 42	Mar 31
Leighton Buzzard	Library Theatre	Apr 26
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Apr 27, 28
London	Putney Half Moon	May 4
Tring	David Evans Court Theatre	May 6
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	May 10
Tring	David Evans Court Theatre	May 16
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	May 17
Birmingham	Jo Jo Jims	May 18
Fareham	Ashcroft Arts Theatre	Jun 15

OLI BROWN & THE DEAD COLLECTIVE

Leeds	Key Club	Apr 5
Manchester	Retro	Apr 6
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Apr 11
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Apr 13
Southampton	1865	Apr 17
London	Camden Assembly	Apr 19
Nottingham	Bodega	Apr 21
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 25
Crumlin	The Patriot	Apr 26
Bristol	The Louisiana	Apr 28

BUCKCHERRY, THE TREATMENT, RUBIKON

London	Islington Academy	Feb 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 3
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Feb 4

BULLETBOYS, GARDEN OF EDEN, ALPHA SISTER

London	Camden Underworld	Mar 6
Nottingham	Ghost	Mar 7
Gt Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell	Mar 8
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Mar 9
Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 12
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 13
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 14
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 15
Glasgow	Audio	Mar 16
Belfast	Deer's Head	Mar 17

THE CADILLAC THREE

Dublin	Academy	May 4
Belfast	Limelight	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 8
Newcastle	NX	May 9
Manchester	Academy	May 11
Leeds	Academy	May 12
Nottingham	Rock City	May 14
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 16
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 17

FRANCK CARDUCCI & THE FANTASTIC SQUAD

London	Balham The Bedford	Feb 28
Swindon	The Victoria	Feb 29
Port Talbot	Seaside	Mar 1
Stourport	Fusion	Mar 2
Southampton	1865	Mar 3
Leicester	The Musician	Mar 6
Liverpool	Cavern Club	Mar 7
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Mar 8
Newcastle	Innisfree	Mar 9
Oundle	Queen Victoria	Mar 10

CATS IN SPACE

Stockport	Forum Theatre	Mar 1
Bathgate	Regal	Mar 2

ERIC CLAPTON

Newcastle	Utilita Arena	May 9
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	May 11
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 13
Dublin	3 Arena	May 16
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 20, 21

COLOSSEUM

London	Camden The Forge	Feb 4
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THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN

Huddersfield	Parish	Apr 24
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DEWOLFF

Newcastle	Cluny	Mar 13
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Mar 14
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Mar 15
Glasgow	Hug & Pint	Mar 16
Manchester	Night & Day Café	Mar 17
Bristol	Louisiana	Mar 19
Oxford	Bullingdon	Mar 20

THE CADILLAC THREE



The Tennessee trio's songs are enjoyably hooky and stuffed with southern charisma, and well worth experiencing live.

See below for dates. Currently May 4 to May 17.

Nottingham	Bodega	Mar 21
Hastings	Black Box	Mar 22
London	London Bridge Omera	Mar 23

BRUCE DICKINSON

Glasgow	Barrowland	May 18
Manchester	Academy	May 19
Swansea	Arena	May 21
Nottingham	Rock City	May 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	May 24

DIRTY HONEY

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Feb 7
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 8
Leeds	University Stylus	Feb 9
Birmingham	Academy 2	Feb 11
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Feb 12
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 13

THE DIRTY NIL, MICROWAVE

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Apr 15
Manchester	Gorilla	Apr 16
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 17
Sheffield	Leadmill	Apr 19
Guildford	Boilerroom	Apr 20
Bristol	The Fleece	Apr 22
Brighton	Patterns	Apr 23
London	King's Cross Scala	Apr 24

DRAGONFORCE, AMARANTHE, INFECTED RAIN

Bristol	Academy	Mar 22
Manchester	Academy	Mar 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 24

ENSLAVED, SVALBARD, WAYFARER

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Mar 6
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 7
Manchester	Club Academy	Mar 8
Glasgow	Slay	Mar 9
Dublin	Opium	Mar 10

FEEDER

Cambridge	Junction	Mar 2
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 3
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Mar 5
Torquay	The Foundry	Mar 6
Bristol	Academy	Mar 8
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 9
Oxford	Academy	Mar 11
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 13
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Mar 14
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 16
Liverpool	Academy	Mar 17
York	Barbican	Mar 19
Manchester	Albert Hall	Mar 20
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 22
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 25
Sheffield	Leadmill	Mar 26
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 28

FIGHTSTAR, TWIN ATLANTIC, LOATHE

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 22
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FILTER

Manchester	Gorilla	Mar 12
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Mar 13
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 15
London	Islington Academy	Mar 16

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 23
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FLORENCE BLACK

Newcastle	University	Feb 2
Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 5
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 6
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Feb 8
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Feb 9
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 10

FM

Nantwich	Civic Hall	Mar 30
Brighton	Concorde	Apr 5
Wavendon	The Stables	Apr 6
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 3
Gateshead	The Sage	May 4
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 5
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	May 10
Birmingham	Asylum	May 11
Cardiff	Tramshed	May 17
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 18
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	May 19
Southampton	1865	May 24
London	Camden Dingwalls	May 25
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 30
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 31
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Jun 1

FOO FIGHTERS

Manchester	Old Trafford	Jun 13, 15
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jun 17
London	Stadium	Jun 20, 21
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 25
Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 27

FOZZY, THE HOT DAMN!, PISTOLS DAWN

Newport	Neon	Feb 16
Bradford	Nightrain	Feb 17
Manchester	Academy 2	Feb 18
Glasgow	QMU	Feb 20
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 21
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Feb 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 24
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 25
Northampton	Roadmender	Feb 26

THE GASLIGHT ANTHEM

Glasgow	Academy	Jun 18
Sheffield	Academy	Jun 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 22
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Jun 25, 26
Dublin	3 Olympia	Jun 29
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 10
Cheltenham	2000 Trees Festival	Jul 11

GINGER PLAYS THE WILDHEARTS

Nottingham	Ghost	Feb 17
Harlow	Burnt Mill Social Club	Feb 23
Leicester	The Musician	Mar 30

GREEN LUNG

Colchester	Arts Centre	Apr 30
Liverpool	Arts Club	May 15
Belfast	Limelight 2	May 16
Limerick	Dolan's Warehouse	May 17



LIVE!

Dublin	Grand Social	May 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 19

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Swansea	Grand Theatre	Mar 12
Weymouth	Pavilion	Mar 13
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Mar 14
Reading	Hexagon	Mar 16
Birmingham	Town Hall	Mar 17
Northampton	Derngate	Mar 18
Bury St Edmunds	Apex Theatre	Mar 19
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Mar 21
London	Cadogan Hall	Mar 22
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Mar 24
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Mar 25
Darlington	Hippodrome	Mar 26

JUSTIN HAWKINS

Norwich	UEA	Mar 18
Bristol	St George's Hall	Mar 19
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 20
Glasgow	Glee Club	Mar 21
Gateshead	Sage Two	Mar 22
London	Bloomsbury Theatre	Mar 24
Hayes	Beck Theatre	Mar 25
Birmingham	Glee Club	Mar 27
Salford	The Lowry	Mar 29
Liverpool	St George's Hall	Mar 30
Leeds	City Varieties	Mar 31

HAWKWIND

Manchester	Academy	Apr 4
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Academy	Apr 6
Glasgow	Academy	Apr 7

THE HIVES

Leeds	Academy	Mar 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 29
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Mar 30
Glasgow	Barrowland	Apr 1
Bristol	Academy	Apr 2
Brighton	Dome	Apr 3
Cardiff	Great Hall	Apr 5
Manchester	Academy	Apr 6
Dublin	Olympia	Apr 8
Norwich	UEA	Apr 10
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Apr 13

JACK J HUTCHINSON

London	Islington Academy 2	Feb 8
Blackpool	Love Live Festival	Feb 9
Bedford	Esquires	Feb 10
Leicester	The Musician	Feb 11
Winchester	The Railway	Feb 14
Newark	Flying Circus	Feb 22
Sittingbourne	Rockin' The Blues	Feb 23
St Austell	Band Club	Apr 24
Bosworth	Blues Festival	Apr 28
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 1
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	May 2

IVY GOLD

Glasgow	Hard Rock Café	Mar 15
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 16
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 17
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Mar 18
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Mar 19

Recommended

JANE'S ADDICTION

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 27, 28
Glasgow	Barrowland	May 31
Manchester	Apollo	May 3

JETHRO TULL

Bournemouth	Pavilion	Apr 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Apr 20
London	Palladium	Apr 22
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Apr 23
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Apr 29
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Apr 30
Gateshead	The Sage	May 2
Sheffield	City Hall	May 3
Salford	The Lowry	May 5
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 6

LAURENCE JONES

Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Feb 4
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Feb 9
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Feb 10
Cannock	Station	Feb 16
Faversham	Old Brewery Store	Mar 2
Pontardawe	Arts Centre	Mar 22
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Mar 27
Lyme Regis	Marine Theatre	Mar 28
St Helens	Citadel	Apr 12
Sedgefield	Rock And Blues Club	Apr 13
Sheffield	HRH Blues Festival	Apr 14
Cranleigh	Arts Centre	Apr 20

JUDAS PRIEST, SAXON, URIAH HEEP

Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 11
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 15
Bournemouth	International Centre	Mar 17
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Mar 19
London	Wembley Arena	Mar 21

KID KAPICHI

Brighton	Concorde 2	Mar 28, 29
Bristol	SWX	Mar 30
Oxford	Academy	Apr 1
Norwich	Waterfront	Apr 2
Newcastle	University	Apr 4
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 5
Manchester	New Century Hall	Apr 6
Leeds	Metropolitan University	Apr 8
Sheffield	Foundry	Apr 9
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 10
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 12

KIRA MAC

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Apr 25
Manchester	A3	Apr 26
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 27
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Apr 28
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 2
Southampton	1865	May 3
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	May 4
Norwich	Waterfront	May 5
Bristol	Lost Horizon	May 8
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 9
London	Camden Underworld	May 10
Stoke-on-Trent	Underground	May 11
Korn, Denzel Curry, Spiritbox		
London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 11

LINDISFARNE

North Shields	The Exchange	Feb 10, 11
Berwick upon Tweed	The Maltings	Feb 16
Yarm	Princess Alexander Auditorium	Feb 17
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 3
Leicester	Academy	Apr 4
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Apr 5
Emsworth	St James' Church	Apr 6
Bournemouth	Academy	Apr 7
Clitheroe	The Grand	Apr 13
Wetherby	Engine Shed	Apr 14

LORDI

Manchester	Academy 2	Apr 1
Birmingham	Institute 2	Apr 2
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Apr 3
Cardiff	Y Plas	Apr 4

ERJA LYYTINEN

Faversham	Old Brewery Store	Apr 4
Newcastle	The Cluny	Apr 5
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Apr 6
York	Crescent Community Centre	Apr 7
Southampton	1865	Apr 9
London	Putney Half Moon	Apr 10
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 11
Melton Mowbray	Eastwell Village Hall	Apr 12
Sheffield	Academy	Apr 13
Dudley	Lamp Tavern	Apr 14

MANIC STREET PREACHERS, SUEDE

Llangollen	International Musical Eisteddfod	Jun 28
Dublin	Trinity College	Jul 2
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 5
Edinburgh	Castle	Jul 10
Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jul 12
Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 13
London	Alexandra Palace Park	Jul 18

RICHARD MARX

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 22
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MASSIVE WAGONS

Warrington	Parr Hall	Mar 9
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DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

London	Royal Albert Hall	Apr 24, 25
Dublin	3 Arena	Apr 27
Manchester	Apollo	Apr 29

CHANTEL MCGREGOR

Blackpool	Love Live Festival	Feb 10
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Feb 15
Lichfield	Arts Centre	Feb 17
London	Kensington Nells Club	Feb 22
Howden	Shire Hall	Mar 9
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 23
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Mar 24
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jul 5

CHANTEL MCGREGOR, THE CINELLI BROTHERS

Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 4
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 16
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 24
Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 2

MIDNITE CITY, CONTINENTAL LOVERS

Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Apr 5
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MANIC STREET PREACHERS



On record they're always great, and live arguably even better, punching out top tunes with heart-felt and gutsy performances.

See below for dates. Currently June 28 to July 18.

Newcastle	Trillians	Apr 12
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Apr 13
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Apr 26
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 27
Birmingham	Billesley Rock Club	May 3
Nottingham	Ghost	May 4
Bradford	Nighttrain	May 10
London	Tufnell Park Dome	May 11

MR. BIG

Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 19
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 20
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 22
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 23

MOTHER MOTHER

Sheffield	Network	Feb 17
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Feb 18
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Feb 20
Dublin	Olympia	Feb 22, 23
Newcastle	City Hall	Feb 25
Leeds	Academy	Feb 28
London	Limehouse Troxy	Feb 29
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 3
Cardiff	Great Hall	Mar 4
Brighton	Dome	Mar 5
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 7

NEW MODEL ARMY

Northampton	Roadmender	Feb 27
Dublin	Opium	Apr 18
Belfast	Mandela Hall	Apr 19
Glasgow	Garage	Apr 20
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Apr 21
Cambridge	Junction	Apr 23
Southampton	1865	Apr 24
Bristol	Marble Factory	Apr 25
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Apr 26
Leeds	Academy	Apr 27
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 11

NICKELBACK

Glasgow	Hydro	May 16
Manchester	AO Arena	May 20
London	O2 Arena	May 21
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	May 23

JOHN OTWAY & WILD

WILLY BARRETT

Barnsowlswich	Music & Arts Centre	Mar 31
Nantwich	Jazz, Blues & Music Festival	Apr 1
Frome	Merlin Theatre	Apr 6
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Apr 7
Cambridge	Storey's Field Centre	May 4
Hull	Social	Jul 28

THE PINEAPPLE THIEF

Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 20
Bristol	SWX	Feb 21
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Mar 16

PIXIES

Dublin	Olympia 3	Mar 8-10
Manchester	Albert Hall	Mar 12-14
London	Kentish Town Forum	Mar 16-18

THE PRETENDERS

Gateshead	Glasshouse	Feb 24
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Feb 25

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Feb 26
London	Palladium	Feb 28, 29
Oxford	New Theatre	Mar 2
Bristol	Beacon	Mar 3
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 5
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Mar 6

QUIET RIOT, TIGERTAILZ

London	Islington Academy	Mar 10
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RAVEN, GIRLSCHOOL, ALKATRAZZ, AIRFORCE

Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Feb 14
Newcastle	Trillians	Feb 15
Manchester	Academy	Feb 16
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Feb 17
Birmingham	Asylum	Feb 19
Southampton	1865	Feb 20

THE RESIDENTS

Glasgow	City Hall	Apr 2
Manchester	Albert Hall	Apr 3
Birmingham	Town Hall	Apr 5
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Apr 6
London	Barbican Centre	Apr 8

ROMEO'S DAUGHTER (UNPLUGGED)

Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	May 22
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DARIUS RUCKER

Manchester	Apollo	Apr 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Apr 28
Birmingham	Academy	Apr 30
Bristol	Beacon	May 1
London	Hammersmith Apollo	May 3
Leeds	Academy	May 5
Glasgow	Academy	May 6
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	May 9
Belfast	Waterfront Hall	May 11

SARI SCHORR, MATT PEARCE & THE MUTINY

York	The Crescent	Apr 17
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 18
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Apr 19
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Apr 20
Leek	Foxlowe Arts Centre	Apr 21
Grimsby	Docks	Apr 24
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Apr 25
Gloucester	Guildhall	Apr 26
London	Highbury Garage	Apr 27
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Apr 28

SCORPIONS, EXTREME

London	Wembley Arena	Jun 8
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SEPULTURA, JINJER, OBITUARY, JESUS PIECE

Manchester	Academy	Nov 8
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Nov 9
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Nov 10
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Nov 11
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 12
Joanne Shaw Taylor, Connor Selby		
Manchester	Royal Northern College Of Music	Feb 17
Glasgow	QMU	Feb 18
Leeds	City Varieties Music Hall	Feb 19
Sunderland	Fire Station	Feb 21
London	IndigO2	Feb 22
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Feb 23

Norwich	Waterfront	Feb 25
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Feb 26
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Feb 28
Southend-on-Sea	Palace Theatre	Feb 29

CHRIS SHIFLETT

Dublin	Academy	Mar 20
Belfast	Limelight 2	Mar 21
Glasgow	QMU	Mar 23
Manchester	Academy 2	Mar 24
Birmingham	Academy 2	Mar 25
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Mar 27

SIMPLE MINDS, DEL AMITRI

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Mar 15
Manchester	AO Arena	Mar 16
Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 18
Belfast	SSE Arena	Mar 19
London	O2 Arena	Mar 21
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Mar 23
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Mar 24
Bournemouth	International Centre	Mar 26
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Mar 27
Glasgow	The Hydro	Mar 29

SKINDRED

Manchester	Academy	Mar 14
Birmingham	Wembley Arena	Mar 15
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 16

SLASH FEAT. MYLES KENNEDY & THE CONSPIRATORS, MAMMOTH WVH

Dublin	3 Arena	Mar 28
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Mar 30
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 31
Manchester	AO Arena	Apr 2
Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 3
London	Wembley Arena	Apr 5

SMASHING PUMPKINS, WEEZER

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 7
London	O2 Arena	Jun 8
Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 10
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 12
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 13
Cardiff	Castle	Jun 14

SONS OF LIBERTY, MIKE ROSS

Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 1
St Austell	Band Club	Mar 2
Bristol	Thekla	Mar 3
Hastings	The Carlisle	Mar 7
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Mar 8
Birmingham	Asylum	Mar 9
Bradford	Nighttrain	Mar 10
Newcastle	Trillians	Mar 21
Buckley	Tivoli	Mar 22

SPIKE'S QUIREBOYS

Sheffield	Corporation	May 9
Newcastle	Riverside	May 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	May 11
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	May 12

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Cardiff	Principality Stadium	May 5
Belfast	Boucher Road	May 9
Kilkenny	Nowlan Park	May 12
Cork	Páirc Uí Chaoimh	May 16
Dublin	Croke Park	May 19
Sunderland	Stadium Of Light	May 22
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25, 27

STATUS QUO

Belfast	Botanic Gardens	May 28
Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	May 29
Swansea	Arena	Jun 4
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jun 5
Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 13
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 15

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS, GLEN MATLOCK

Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 11
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 12
Bristol	Academy	Mar 13
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 15
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 16, 17
Leeds	Academy	Mar 21
Manchester	Academy	Mar 22
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 23

THE STRANGLERS

Glasgow	Clyde Auditorium	Mar 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Mar 9
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Mar 11
Dublin	Olympia	Mar 12
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 14
Manchester	Apollo	Mar 15
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Mar 16
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Mar 19
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Mar 20
Sheffield	City Hall	Mar 21
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Mar 23

Bristol	Beacon	Mar 25
London	Royal Albert Hall	Mar 26

STRAY

London	Stratford Cart And Horses	Feb 24
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SUNN O)))

Dublin	National Concert Hall	Mar 25
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 26
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Mar 27
Manchester	New Century Hall	Mar 28
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 30
Bristol	Marble Factory	Mar 31
London	Barbican Centre	Apr 1
Coventry	Empire	Apr 2

TESSERACT

Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 20
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 21
Bristol	Academy	Feb 22
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 23
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 24
Glasgow	SWG3 Studio Warehouse	Feb 25
Dublin	Academy	Feb 27

THIRTY SECONDS TO MARS

Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 16
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Apr 17
Manchester	AO Arena	Apr 19
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Apr 20
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Apr 22
London	O2 Arena	Apr 23

TIGERTAILZ

Southampton	1865	Mar 5
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 6
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell AOR Fest	Mar 7
Birmingham	Asylum 2	Mar 8
London	Islington Academy	Mar 10
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 10

TOOL

Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	May 30
Manchester	AO Arena	Jun 1
London	O2 Arena	Jun 3

TRIXTER (UNPLUGGED)

Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 7
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell	Mar 9
London	Camden Black Heart	Mar 10

Recommended

ROBIN TROWER

Southampton	The Brook	May 27
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 28
Gateshead	Glasshouse	May 30
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	May 31

TYGERS OF PAN TANG

Preston	The Continental	May 2
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Room	May 3
Merthyr Tydfil	The Crown	May 4
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven Club	May 5

VILLE VALO

London	Royal Albert Hall	May 10
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RICK WAKEMAN

Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Feb 15
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Feb 17
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Feb 18
Brighton	Dome	Feb 20
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Feb 21
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Feb 23
York	Barbican	Feb 24
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 25
London	Drury Lane Theatre	Feb 27
Bristol	Beacon	Feb 28

HANNAH WICKLUND

Chester	Live Rooms	May 24
Sheffield	Corporation	May 25
Cardiff	Globe	May 26
Dublin	Grand Social	May 28
Belfast	Ulster Sports Club	May 29
Glasgow	G2	May 31
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew Co	Jun 1
Leeds	Headrow House	Jun 2
Bristol	Strange Brew	Jun 4

DAMIAN WILSON & ADAM WAKEMAN

Leicester	The Musician	Feb 7
Southampton	1845	Feb 8
Windsor	The Old Court	Feb 9
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Feb 10

YES

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	May 23
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 24
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	May 26

SCORPIONS



It's ages since they said it was all over, but thankfully the German rockers are coming round again to deliver some classic rock gems.

London	Wembley Arena	Jun 8
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York	Barbican	May 28
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	May 29
Bristol	Beacon	May 31
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 1
Gateshead	The Sage	Jun 2
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 4

HANS ZIMMER

Glasgow	The Hydro	Apr 6
Manchester	AO Arena	Apr 7
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Apr 9
London	O2 Arena	Apr 10

ZZ TOP

London	Wembley Arena	Jul 11
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Festivals

2000 TREES

Cheltenham	Ucote Farm	Jul 10-13
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BEARDED THEORY JANE'S ADDICTION, DINOSAUR JR, NEW MODEL ARMY, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Hall	May 23-26
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BLOODSTOCK

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 8-11
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BRADSTOCK SOUTH OF SALEM, CJ WILDHEART, EMPYRE, MORE

Bradford	Nightrain	May 4
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CALL OF THE WILD TYKETTO, BAD TOUCH, SOUTH OF SALEM, MORE

Lincolnshire	Showground	May 24-26
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CROPREDY

Rick Wakeman, Big Big Train, Focus, More	Oxfordshire	Cropredy	Aug 8-10
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DESERTFEST

Masters of Reality, Godflesh, More	London	Camden [various venues]	May 17-19
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DOWNLOAD

Queens of the Stone Age, Avenged Sevenfold, Pantera, More	Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 14-16
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FIREVOLT

Vandenberg, Gun, Stone Broken, More	Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 9-11
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GLASGOW BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL CARDINAL BLACK, ELLES BAILEY, MORE

Glasgow	Oran Mor	Apr 28
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HARD ROCK HELL AOR QUIET RIOT, BULLETBOYS, AUTOGRAPH, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Mar 7-10
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HIGHWAYS

The Cadillac Three, Brett Young, Shane Smith & The Saints, More	London	Royal Albert Hall	May 17, 18
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ISLE OF WIGHT THE DARKNESS, GREEN DAY, THE PRODIGY, MORE

Newport	Seaclose Park	Jun 20-23
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KENDAL BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL ALICE ARMSTRONG, BLUE NATION, JAMES OLIVER, MORE

Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Apr 13
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LATITUDE DURAN DURAN, KASABIAN, KEANE, MORE

Suffolk	Henham Park	Jul 25-28
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LINCOLN BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK THE ANIMALS, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, BRAVE RIVAL, MORE

Lincoln	Drill Hall	May 12
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LOVE LIVE PRAYING MANTIS, CHANTEL MCGREGOR, DARE, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Feb 9-11
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LOVE ROCKS THE ANSWER, THE TREATMENT, SCARLET REBELS, MORE

Dorset	St Leonards Farm	Jun 20-22
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NORTHERN KIN HAWKWIND, CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN, WATERBOYS, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall Farm	Jun 14-16
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SOUNDLE WEEKEND SOLSTICE, THE EMERALD DAWN, JOHN HACKETT, MORE

Peterborough	Key Theatre	Jun 1, 2
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STEELHOUSE MR. BIG, SKINDRED, JARED JAMES NICHOLS, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 26-28
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TAKEDOWN CREEPER, TERRORVISION, DINOSAUR PILE-UP, MORE

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Apr 13, 14
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UK BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL ERIC BIBB, WHEN RIVERS MEET, CARDINAL BLACK, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Feb 2-4
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WIDE AWAKE KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD, MORE

London	Brockwell Park	May 25
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WINTERS END FESTIVAL MASSIVE WAGONS, THOSE DAMN CROWS, STONE BROKEN, MORE

Trecco Bay	Holiday Park	Feb 2-4
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LIVE!

Extreme / Living Colour Wolverhampton The Civic

A healthy double dose of funk-flecked rock'n'roll.

★ Given their shared love for flamboyance and a funk-straddling take on rock'n'roll, it's astounding that Living Colour and Extreme haven't shared a bill more often.

Living Colour kick things off with a hale rendition of *Rock And Roll* that sets the tone for an energetic, if all too brief, set. Vernon Reid's guitar solos fly thick and fast, but rather than pulling focus they provide an ever-present wail that underpins perfectly the funky bounce of songs such as *Middle Man* and *Ignorance Is Bliss* while vocalist Corey Glover dances his way around the stage and, during *Cult Of Personality*, up onto an amp and then into the balcony.

Extreme might not be as physically acrobatic, but their music is no less boisterous. *It ('s A Monster)* and *Decadence Dance* soon have the room bouncing, while newer songs like *#Rebel*, *Rise* and *Banshee* – complete with a *Fat Bottomed Girls* intro – show that the band are still producing top-tier rockers, giving vocalist Gary Cherone plenty of chances to strut and preen. Admittedly there's a little too *much* preening going on with Nuno Bettencourt's guitar solos taking up more time in the set than some songs, but when the band get back to massive singalongs like *More Than Words*, *Hole Hearted* and *Get The Funk Out* you can't help but forgive any transgressions.

Rich Hobson

Let's dance: Living Colour's Corey Glover.



'It ('s A Monster) and Decadence Dance soon have the room bouncing.'

Extreme's Gary Cherone: plenty of strutting and preening.



The Inspector Cluzo

London Hackney Oslo

Gascony farmers rip into East London with fun, fire and feeling.

★ Nate Bergman (formerly of reggae-rockers Lionize) has had a rough 2023, coming out of a 10-year relationship and figuring out life on the other side. It shapes the meat of his support set, creating an arresting display of raw soul and Americana storytelling, like an East Coast Jason Isbell coalescing with Sam Cooke. Just him, a guitar and the truth.

The Inspector Cluzo, conversely, sweeten their messages with loose-limbed, bluesy rock'n'roll that slips down with ease. Opener *Act Local Think Global* is a ZZ Top-meets-Clutch boogie that manages to be smart, funny and riotously entertaining in the same breath. A 'dynamic duo' in the truest sense – shaggy-bearded singer/guitarist Laurent on the one hand, livewire drummer Mathieu with his Poirot 'tache on the other – they walk a thoughtful line between self-aware humour and powerful environmentalism. There are jokes about Paris, themselves, public apathy (see the rip-roaring *The Armchair Activist*). *The Outsider* is all Led Zeppelin-via-Seattle mystique. *Horizon* mixes delicate sunlight and ragged Stone Temple Pilots-y emotion. *Swallows* turns eyes glassy at the plight of the dwindling swallow population. Honestly.

How rare and refreshing to find a band who preach from such a real, lived-in place – and do it so likeably. Go and see them.

Polly Glass

Babymetal

London The Roundhouse

All Babies grow up.

★ Tom Morello's gigantic, shit-eating grin beams down from the video screen as Babymetal tear into *Metal!*, a thunderous late-set highlight. The Japanese Barbie-punks are on reliably gonzo form on face-melting classics like the Ramones-meets-Slayer gabba-fest *Gimme Chocolate!!* and industrial nu-metal beast *BxMxC*. And yet compared to the hilariously extreme sense-blitzing bubblegum riot of the band's early UK dates almost a decade ago, this feels like a fairly conventional pop-metal performance. The blast beats, turbo-shredding guitars solos and wacko sci-fi visuals have been toned down, while newer, emo-adjacent power ballads like *Mirror Mirror* and *Monochrome* are more prominent in the mix.

Clearly there have been changes in Babymetal's creative chemistry in recent years, perhaps a consequence of vocalist Yui 'Yuimetal' Mizoni departing, and the tragic death of guitarist Miko Fujioka, both in 2018. Or maybe it's just the result of vocalists Suzuka Nakamoto, Moa Kikuchi and newly promoted Momoko Okazaki hitting their mid-20s, an age when their cheerleader-from-hell image no longer has quite the same unsettling horror-porn avant-punk shock value.

Ending with their anthemic Dragonforce collaboration *Road To Resistance*, this was a more mature and melodic Babymetal. Still pretty great, but less exhilaratingly weird.

Stephen Dalton

Gong / Ozric Tentacles

Brighton Chalk

Gong is dead, long live Gong.

★ Yes, this is indeed 2023, and Gong and Ozric Tentacles are on the road – again as a double-header. Tonight it's the turn of the latter to perform first. Still led by guitar hero Ed Wynne, their act is still founded on Wynne's guitar histrionics and a series of fluid, monster grooves. Their 75-minute set feels at least half an hour too long, but the Ozrics go down an absolute storm with the huge audience.

Gong are everything that Ozric Tentacles are not, channelling not only moods that elevate from a whisper to a roar but also a thrilling variety of tempos. And, of course, their songs have actual words.

In a decision informed purely by vibes received from the former Cardiacs guitarist, Gong veteran Daavid Allen chose Kavus Torabi to replace him in the group almost two years before the Gong leader's own demise in 2015. Four albums later, and still surrounded by faithful Gong alumni Dave Sturt on bass, saxophonist and flautist Ian East and guitarist Fabio Golfetti, Allen's intuition now seems uncanny, confirming his oft-asserted belief that Gong was always an aesthetic and not a favoured line-up.

Thanks to perfect sound and lighting, the climax of tonight's show presents a full-on shamanistic experience, Torabi's dedication of *Choose Your Goddess* to Killing Joke's recently fallen Geordie Walker a lovely, human gesture.

Dave Ling

ROBERTO RICCIUTTI/GETTY

Shy, retiring Justin Hawkins: one of rock's most entertaining frontmen.

'Fireworks, leaping high-fives... this show has it all.'

Just two songs in and already Justin is doing handstands.



Oh, brother: Dan finds it hard not to smile at Justin's antics.



The Darkness

Dublin Olympia Theatre

Permission granted.

★ Many years ago, The Darkness came along from nowhere (well, Lowestoft) to make our lives better. Award-snaring, cash-register-troubling debut album *Permission To Land* remembered a central tenet of the rock and the roll: it's supposed to be fun. Hit singles, videos with spaceships, riffs that you could confidently send off to war, a frontman who embraced all the proper clichés with unquenchable gusto – what a breath of fresh air they were.

Despite several fine records since, it's that first album that most people identify them with, and it was celebrated in 2023 with a suitably monumental box set. This anniversary tour sold out instantaneously because The Darkness are a phenomenal live act who would sell their souls, or at the very least some ropy holiday headgear, to put on a great show.

A great show is what we get. Walking on stage to the strains of ABBA's *Arrival* is a good omen, then there's a guttural "Uhh!" and we're into the riff rock, ton-heavy *Black Shuck*, which is very much the dog's bollocks despite lyrics that are some bollocks about a monstrous dog.

Hark at the cut of Hawkins the elder, sporting the kind of spandex catsuit previously outlawed under the Cobain UN Convention of 1991. He is ably abetted by

brother Dan in regulation Lizzy T-shirt and leather jacket, and world's coolest bassist Frankie Poullain in a multi-hued business suit; if your business happens to be the hawking of hallucinogens. The depressingly handsome Rufus Taylor lives up to his royal lineage by hitting the drums like someone working on a particularly tricky coal seam with a sledge hammer.

A mere two songs in, after warning phone jockeys that he isn't having it, Hawkins is already doing handstands and conducting a clap-along using his feet. Hard to believe this man is nearly 49 years old.

Along with every album track, from the lighter-in-the-air delight of *Love Is Only A Feeling* to a *Givin' Up* that has us all headbanging like crash-test dummies encountering an unforgiving barrier, the band also deliver excellent *Permission* B-sides *The Best Of Me* (Quo with a rocket up their collective arse) and *Makin' Out* (which may owe the firm of AC and DC a few bob). A version of Radiohead's *Street Spirit* likely troubles dogs in the next county and would surely make Thom Yorke weep for the band he could have been in.

Fireworks, leaping high-fives, Justin carried through

the audience as he continues to play his guitar, shout outs to "Ireland's greatest writer", swear call-and-response sections, this show has it all. Then it gets better with the Bolany boogie of *Friday Night*, a gracious nod to the late Shane MacGowan with the audience being led through – and then taking over completely – the opening of *Fairytale Of New York*, and a joyous *Christmas Time (Don't Let The Bells End)*, a few bars of Led Zep's *Immigrant Song*, and a truly marvellous *I Believe In A Thing Called Love*, which had to be restarted due to Justin berating another would-be Scorsese, but it still rocked hard.

How do you follow that? You encore wearing kimonos (you could clearly see what Poullain had for breakfast), swap instruments for *I Love You 5 Times*, and finish with a literally explosive *Love On The Rocks With No Ice*. As evidenced by the smiles on the faces of the audience, clearly The Darkness still rule.

Pat Carty

Ginger and sidekick Maggie the collie, and occasional guests Ben Marsden, Baz Francis (right) and Carol Hodge.



Ginger Wildheart

Birmingham Hare And Hounds /
Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

The Wildhearts frontman conjures the spirit of Christmas past.

★ The first of Ginger's two West Midlands shows over the Christmas period, the Birmingham one comes barely five months after his country-rock side-project The Sinners were forced to perform without him at the same venue due to a mental health crisis. Thankfully that all seems to be firmly in the past as he arrives on stage looking chipper, and gives a one-man-and-his-guitar performance of Wildhearts songs, with his beloved border collie Maggie by his side.

"I hope you brought your voices," he says, kicking off with an energetic *Weekend (Five Long Days)* encouraging the audience to sing along, before switching in the chorus of *Livin' On A Prayer* and eventually requesting they scream any song to the melody. The resulting chaotic din effectively breaks the ice, ensuring the gig feels informal.

Taking requests, from the off there's a sense of freedom to the set-list that hasn't been apparent in recent Wildhearts gigs; live rarities such as *Bad Time To Be Having A Bad Time*, *Urge* and *Two-Way Idiot Mirror* sitting alongside fan favourites *The Miles Away Girl*, *Sick Of Drugs* and *Everlone*. Even in stripped-back form, the songs' infectious hooks prove irresistible,

and as the set offers ever-more bizarre delights – Maggie barking along to *Do The Channel Bop*, a heavily abridged performance of *Sky Babies* – it feels like the most fun Ginger has had on-stage since the turn of the decade.

By the time the tour makes its second stop in the Midlands, at KK's Steel Mill in Wolverhampton, the experience has become a well-oiled knees-up. Billed as an "Xmas special", Ginger and co.'s Christmas spirit goes beyond the fireplace-and-stockings backdrop and tinsel-decorated mic stand. Magic Eight Ball frontman Baz Francis returns after an opening set to narrate an especially festive rendition of *Geordie In Wonderland* and the place is soon filled with the sounds of enthusiastic singalongs.

"Welcome to our intimate little Christmas gathering," Ginger says as he greets the sold-out 2,000-capacity venue. "Fuck me, I was booked to play a pub!"

Once again fan favourites mingle with B-sides and choice selections; *Beautiful Thing* You makes an early appearance, while more recent song *Diagnosis* shows that even as The Wildhearts were coming apart at the seams the inherent magic and potency of their music remained.

Further in, Ginger's set-up changes as Francis once again joins him alongside fellow supports Carol Hodge & Ben Marsden, bringing piano and the only acoustic guitar in the not-quite acoustic ensemble. The songs the collective play, ranging from *Greetings From Shitsville* and *Suckerpunch* to a cover of Hodge's own infectiously brilliant *The Price* come with a more fleshed-out sound.

Returning for an encore, the 'band' offer their own rendition of *Fairytale Of New York* in tribute to Shane MacGowan, before rallying for final roar-along renditions of *29 X The Pain* and *I Wanna Go Where The People Go*, the latter seeing the band switch the lyrics for a Christmas theme as fake snow sprays from the rafters.

It's a triumphant end to a turbulent year for Ginger, but one that once again shines a spotlight on his brilliance as a songwriter, as even in threadbare and anarchic form the sheer jubilant energy of Wildhearts songs remains apparent. The Wildhearts themselves might once again be in flux – for now, at least – but Ginger Wildheart still prevails. God bless us, everyone.

Rich Hobson

Halestorm

London Wembley Arena

Some things just seem to get better.

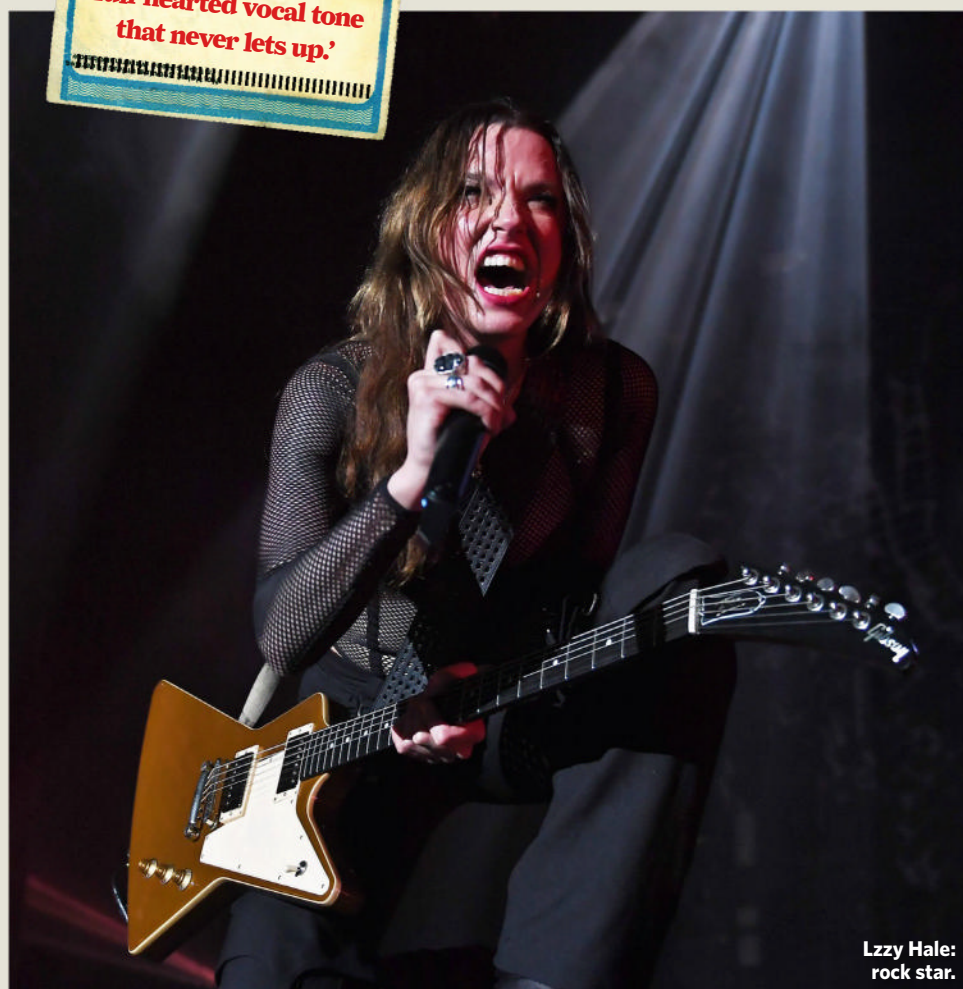
★ Halestorm have played UK arenas before, always with other slick, strapping American bruisers (Alter Bridge, Black Stone Cherry, Shinedown...). But can they hold their own as headliners? Tonight's full house suggests they can.

There are things about Halestorm that separate them from their fellow arena veterans. They're weirder, in a good way. They can rage with the heaviest, and laugh at themselves. Lizzy Hale, now 40, has fronted Halestorm since she was 13, and tonight she feels like a rock star in a way that few of her contemporaries do.

Opening with an acapella roar of *Raise Your Horns*, she sets a fiery, full-hearted vocal tone that never lets up. *I Miss The Misery* is big, snarky and fun. *Love Bites (And So Do I)* packs crunchy riffage from Lizzy and fellow guitarist Joe Hottinger. But there's a new breath of darkness – a hint of the demons of recent years. A spine-tingling solo interlude in *I Get Off* finds Hale on her knees, in rapture or at war with something, somewhere. *Bombshell* stirs a layer of edgy thunder into the room, all pummelling guitars and withering notes on industry misogyny. For a moment it looks like Arejay Hale won't do his batshit drum solo with the giant sticks (a long-running 'bit' that feels like a well-worn dad joke)... but of course he does.

Closing with an explosion of streamers and freaknik call-to-arms *The Steeple*, the band leave a rapturous audience, and their reputation – as affable, heavyweight entertainers with an edge – rubber-stamped.

Polly Glass



Lizzy Hale:
rock star.

Therapy?

London Electric Ballroom

Explosive set that balances the old with the new to devastating effect.

★ While Therapy? had problems slotting in back in the day – too punk for metal, too metal for punk, too pop for both – there are no qualms for the veteran trio today. With current album *Hard Cold Fire* securing them their first Top 30 placing since 1998's *Semi-Detached*, tonight's show is a victory lap that sees their new material fitting in like a hand in a velvet glove among the long-time favourites. The coruscating goth metal of *Bewildered Herd* is the very antithesis of the festive season, while the damning *Poundland Of Hope And Glory* recalls the grandeur of the 90s thanks to Andy Cairns's crunching guitar and melodic sensibility, Michael McKeegan's elastic bass playing and the martial drumming of Neil Cooper.

A song from deep in their back catalogue, *Stories* detonates the venue to dial up the atmosphere by several notches, while their covers of Hüsker Dü's *Diane* and Joy Division's *Isolation* are as much theirs as they are their authors'.

Therapy? don't so much return to the stage for an encore as play a six-song set, with half of them dedicated to the recently departed. Geordie Walker's influence is acknowledged with *Opal Mantra*; *Die Laughing* nods to Sinead O'Connor and Terry Venables; *Potato Junkie* salutes Shane MacGowan. The double whammy of *Screamager* and *Nowhere* brings the show to a breathless close.

Julian Marszalek

New Model Army

Nottingham Rock City

Formerly clogged alt icons' reliable festive fandango.

★ A late-December gig at Rock City has become New Model Army's equivalent of the office Christmas party. This is their twelfth time here in the past 13 years (late 2020 was a blowout for obvious, pandemic-related reasons). Band and venue suit each other – both were founded in 1980, and both have weathered the subsequent decades, unbowed in the face of creeping corporate greed.

Actually, NMA aren't really an institution. There's too much of a connection with the 2,000 people packed into the venue tonight. The image of the band as severe and serious is a holdover from the days when they were severe and serious; there's a communal joy to tonight's three-hour, 31-song, two-part set, hitting pretty much every part of the NMA back catalogue, together with an electric atmosphere.

The first set is weighted towards their early days – *Notice Me*, *Bittersweet*, *1984*, *225*, *The Ballad Of Bodmin Pill* – but passion trumps nostalgia. The second part mixes it up a little more, dropping in songs from *Winter*, *Between Dog And Wolf* and *From Here* – 21st century albums that stand shoulder to shoulder with their 80s classics. They end with the undying *Green And Grey*, a song that elicits a host of emotions – sadness, anger, joy and the urge to stand on someone's shoulders and spin your arms.

Time may march on, but the passion is undimmed.

Dave Everley

Bring Me The Horizon

Cardiff Utilita Arena

Oli Sykes's electro-metalcore rockers return in triumph.

★ Bouncing back after a wobbly few months, further delays to their belated ninth album *Post Human: Next Gen*, and long-standing keyboard player Jordan Fish's shock departure, Bring Me The Horizon greet 2024 with defiant confidence and humour at the start of their biggest tour to date. Oli Sykes is on hyperkinetic form, growling and screaming and pogoing through the Sheffield band's full spectrum of hook-heavy anthems, from old-school metalcore skull-splitters like *Diamonds Aren't Forever* to the shiny electro-pop sugar-rush blast *Die4U*, the giddy rave-punk gallop *Kingslayer* and the soaringly romantic soft-rock power ballad *Can You Feel My Heart*.

The tour comes with a dystopian sci-fi horror back-story featuring retro computer-game graphics. These extraneous plot elements feel clunky and dated, but the accompanying IMAX-sized video graphics are undeniably spectacular. Extra points to the female AI avatar narrator for her gloriously incongruous Yorkshire-bloke swearing, notably leading a mass crowd chant berating Sykes as "a fucking knobhead". "That's going on the next album," he says, grinning.

There are a few stumbles, notably during the live debut of recent single *Kool-Aid*, which the band have to curtail while venue staff attend to a dangerously frenzied moshpit. Otherwise this is a polished, high-energy, state-of-the-art pop-metal triumph.

Stephen Dalton



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Ex-Moody Blues frontman **Justin Hayward** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Rob Hughes**



“The emotion in Nina Simone’s voice was just tremendous.”

It’s nearly 60 years since the teenage Justin Hayward became Marty Wilde’s guitarist, after which he established himself as singer, guitar player and focal point of the Moody Blues, writing enduring classics such as *Nights In White Satin*, *Tuesday Afternoon*, *Question* and *The Voice*. The Moodies may be no more, but the evergreen Hayward’s solo career continues to flourish. Ahead of his forthcoming *Blue World* tour of the UK, he tells *Classic Rock* about his musical passions.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

I come from a family with quite strong faith, so I’d always go to church every Sunday. Most of it was boring, but I really liked singing from *Hymns Ancient And Modern*. To this day I can still go to church and have that same feeling. Then Johnnie Ray was the first pop singer that I liked: *Cry* and *Just Walkin’ In The Rain*.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

I have an acetate of the first band that I was in, The Woodpeckers, during my first year at high school in Swindon. We played The Coasters’ *Charlie Brown*.

THE GUITAR HERO

During Van Halen’s *Jump* era, we were playing at the same big music festival in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I watched Eddie Van Halen and it was like: “How can you do that on a guitar? Where does that come from?” You can’t possibly learn that or teach what he did.

THE SINGER

When the Moodies were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame [in 2018], Nina Simone was posthumously inducted with us. She meant a lot to the group in the early days. I was lucky enough to see her once. The emotion in her voice was just tremendous.

THE SONGWRITER

From *Homeward Bound* onwards, Paul Simon was somebody to aspire to. The way he put lyrical ideas together in such a simple way, with just an acoustic guitar. When I first saw Simon and Garfunkel at the Albert Hall in the late sixties, I’d assumed he was the lead voice, because he was the writer. But then I realised Art was singing lead and Paul did all those amazing little harmonies.

THE CULT HERO

In the sixties there were lots of people who you thought were bound to make it, but it just didn’t happen for them somehow. [Guitarist] Roy Buchanan was very special. His playing just really turned me on.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

The Beatles were so important to me. I remember hearing *Love Me Do* for the first time and thinking life

is going to be totally different from now on. When it came to *A Hard Day’s Night*, every song was a winner. I know they made it quickly, and the songs are only two-and-a-half minutes long, but that album always resonates with me. They opened the door for everyone.

MY FAVOURITE LIVE BAND

The best live band I ever saw was The Who at the Saville Theatre [London]. The sound was superb, especially the balance of guitars between John Entwistle’s bass and Pete’s SG. And of course it was so loud. There was nobody to beat them.

THE BEST RECORD I MADE

There’s two Moodies albums, actually: *Days Of Future Passed* [1967] and *The Other Side Of Life* [1986]. The second one put us back on top in America. To go around again in our career, like we did in the US during the eighties, was such a great gift. And I’d kind of missed it in the sixties, because my mind was elsewhere – chemically, mystically and emotionally.

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

Before the Moodies, I did a couple of things on [label] Pye that weren’t the greatest thing. There’s also *The Present* [1983], where we’d take for ever to do one song. We’d gone into that kind of universe. It was a terrible temptation to just turn up, play football in the studio and make one song every few weeks.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I love really beautifully crafted pop records – Stock Aitken Waterman, the Spice Girls and the boy bands. Should I be guilty about loving all of those things? I just love music.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT/ PARTY SONG

If I’m sitting down and hear *September* by Earth Wind & Fire, I have to get up. It’s one of those records that, before you know it, you’re jigging around the room to. I always loved Maurice White’s voice and groove, and the band’s message of universal harmony.

MY ‘IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE’ SONG

I was privileged to know Danny Williams when I was playing with Marty Wilde. Danny did the English version of *Moon River* [1961], and those three minutes taught me how to sing – or at least how I wanted to sing. I’d recommend everyone listen to it.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

I wouldn’t say it makes me cry, but Christopher Cross’s *Sailing* always stops me in my tracks.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

There’s several recordings of Richard Strauss’s *Four Last Songs*. One is by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra [1966], and that gets me every time. The fourth song is called *At Dämmerung*. It’s just so beautiful. 🎧

Justin Hayward’s Blue World Tour runs from March 12 to 26. Details at justinbayward.com

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