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Black Sabbath

"The whole point of this last show was to finish with the original four of us playing together."

RICHARD E. AARON/GETTY

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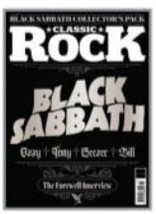
Granted, we're a fair few months away from our Best Of The Year issue, but if I was a betting girl I'd lay money now on knowing what the event of the year is going to be. Yes, you already know what I'm talking about... the reunion of the original line-up of Black Sabbath for their mighty last hurrah (with the esteemed company of rock and metal's best in support to celebrate) in their home city of Birmingham.

To mark this momentous occasion, *Classic Rock* spoke with the four men who, let's face it, invented heavy metal – Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward – ahead of what most definitely will be their final time on stage together. I have a suspicion July 5 is going to be a very emotional day for all involved.

I hate to end this editorial on a very sad note – and I seem to have written a variation of this final paragraph far too many times recently – but shortly before we went to press on this issue we learned of the passing of The Alarm's Mike Peters. We will pay tribute to him properly next month...



Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors



JO KENDALL
Prog magazine's Associate Editor Jo put on a different hat this issue to sit down for an in-depth conversation with Masters Of Reality's Chris Goss to get a handle on his world view in our Gospel According To... feature (p64). Among many things, Jo was able to unearth what Chris has been hiding under "layers of esoteric bullshit" (his words, not ours!).



SYLVIE SIMMONS
Sylvie has been a rock writer since 1977, when she left London for LA and became a correspondent for *Sounds*, *Creem* and *Kerrang!*. These days she writes for *MOJO*. Among her books are biographies of Neil Young and Leonard Cohen and Debbie Harry's memoir. This issue she takes us back to 1986 and into Lemmy's home (p56). In her other life Sylvie is a ukulele-playing singer-songwriter. Her last album was *Blue On Blue*. More at sylviesimmons.com



DAVE EVERLEY
The first time Dave spoke to the four original members of Black Sabbath, in 1998, drummer Bill Ward had a heart attack a few hours later. Thankfully there were no medical emergencies in the making of this month's cover feature (p26), just four men looking back on their epic career and revealing whether the Back To The Beginning farewell show really will be the end.

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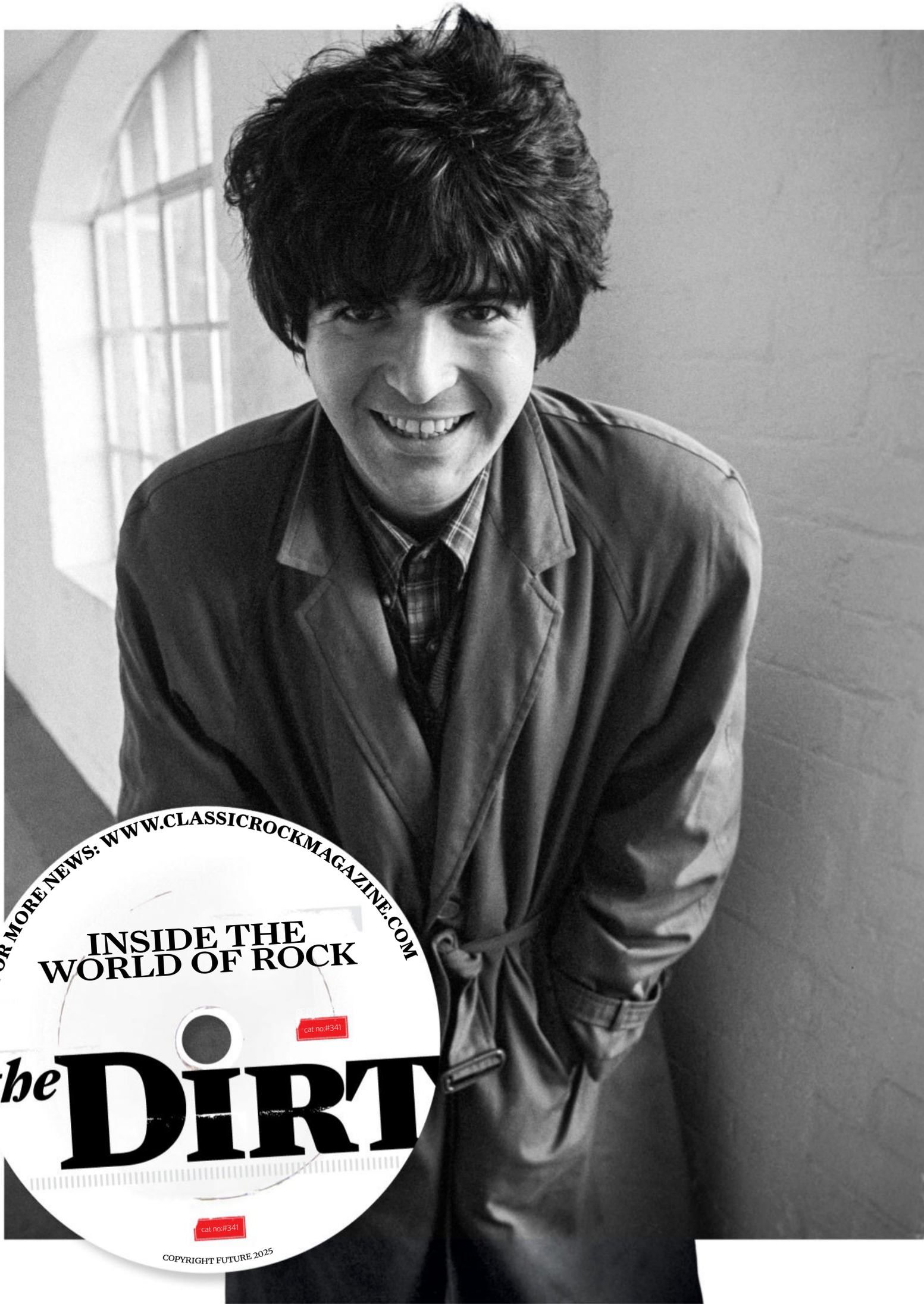
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CLEM BURKE

November 24, 1954 – April 6, 2025

"Clem was not just a drummer; he was the heartbeat of Blondie," wrote Debbie Harry and Chris Stein on the passing of their "beloved friend and bandmate" following a private battle with cancer.

Words: **Ian Fortnam**

You'd think that the top-line epitaph 'much-loved Blondie drummer' would be more than enough for most musicians, but for Clem Burke it only seems to sell the man short. Obviously the mod-sharp, skinny-tied, suited 'n' Anello & Davide Beatle-booted, precision coiffed, stick-spinning apparition from behind the Blondie kit enjoyed stratospheric levels of fame and success with the CBGB-weaned NYC phenomenon across their half-century in harness. Six UK No.1 singles, a brace of chart-topping albums, similar figures Stateside and across the planet only tell half the story. Blondie were huge, ubiquitous, unavoidable. As the 1980s dawned and global record sales reached their zenith, the band's image stared from every newsstand, every screen, and aside from face-of-the-decade Debbie Harry, Clem Burke was their focal point.

As superstar drummers went, he was in a class of his own. Others might have let such celebrity go to their head, repair to an up-state mansion, wile away off-tour down-time collecting antiques, playing polo or putting their name to a fragrance, but Clem Burke was a drummer. That was what he did and that was who he was. A devotion to his craft, a technical fusion of the very finest chops of Keith Moon, Hal Blaine, Earl Palmer and Ringo Starr, an instinctively performative flamboyance, a surfeit of unaffected everyman charm and a work ethic that was second to none guaranteed that Clem was never out of work, rarely off the road and as comfortable in a ratty Transit as in a stretch limousine. So, no, 'much-loved Blondie drummer' doesn't quite cut it. 'Much-loved Blondie, Bob Dylan, Ramones, Eurythmics, Iggy Pop, Romantics, Pete Townshend, Joan Jett, Chequered Past, Fleshtones, Johnny Thunders, Wanda Jackson, Dramarama, Nancy Sinatra, Empty Hearts, Slinky Vagabond, Adult Net, International Swingers, Mark Owen, Magic Christian, Walter Lure drummer' is closer to the mark, but ultimately, 'much-loved drummer' probably says it best.

Clement Anthony Bozewski was born on November 24, 1954 in Bayonne, New Jersey. His father (also Clement) was a professional drummer, and young Clem, inspired by Beatles, Who and Kinks, followed him onto the stool, playing left-handed on a right-handed kit (like Ringo). After mastering fundamentals under the tutelage of his dad, he gradually mastered his percussive craft, first in the ranks of his Bayonne high school's Saint Andrew's Bridgemen Drum and Bugle Corp and then with numerous cover bands around Jersey. In 1975, having crossed the George Washington Bridge for New York City to seek his fortune, Clem was subsisting on the modest income of a part-time postal worker when he answered an ad in the *Village Voice* that read "freak energy rock drummer wanted". Fetching up at a fifteenth-floor Garment District rehearsal space, he first encountered Chris Stein and Debbie Harry, who were looking to replace Blondie's recently departed original drummer Billy O'Connor. The last of 50 auditionees, Clem got the job. "He looked good and he could play," is how Debbie Harry succinctly recalls her first encounter with Clem. And as for Clem? "I'd found my Mick Jagger."

Getting Blondie off the ground was nowhere near as simple as subsequent history might suggest. In fact, shortly after Clem's arrival into the band, bassist Fred Smith announced he was leaving to join Television. "I might have thrown it in then if it weren't for Clem," Debbie Harry recalls. "He was so enthusiastic, a real cheerleader." But enthusiasm was merely the tip of the Burke iceberg (he'd already adopted the surname Burke by then, because it sounded sharper than Bozewski, "more rock'n'roll").

Not only did he provide the band with a replacement bassist, in Gary Valentine, he also afforded them a sense of style. Early Blondie, barely evolved from their initial Stilettoes incarnation, were still in thrall of the increasingly outré New York Dolls-indebted thrift shop glam look. There was a surfeit of hedge-backwards hair in the band until Valentine set the ball rolling by finally shearing himself contemporary. But it was committed Anglophile (and mod evangelist) Clem who ultimately found the way forward while on a record- and clothes-buying pilgrimage to London in the winter of '75. He discovered Dr Feelgood and the effect was shattering. Obviously, he loved their sound, his newly purchased copy of their second album *Malpractice* (probably the first to grace the US) soundtracked his homecoming party, but it was their look that made the difference. So much so that he also came home under the weight of Soho-bought suits for the entire band. Clem was so committed to projecting a just-so image in Blondie's salad days that he took to caking his barnet in beer, sugar and hairspray, before laying on the kitchen floor to bake it in the oven. How mod is that?

Anyway, it worked. Blondie bestrode their era like a cuban-heeled colossus, and Clem, all upright posture, twirling sticks, skinny this, sharp that and utterly irrepressible bang-on beat became the most instantly recognisable drummer of his generation. Last year, when we last met, Clem – on the road as ever – generously interrupted his pre-gig nap to wax nostalgic about the myriad musicians he'd worked with before concluding: "I've learned a lot from all of them. I just soak it up. And being a drummer, when you play you're laying down a foundation for everything else. And it's cool… I'm 80,000 words into my memoir." It promises to be quite the tale. With quite the dramatis personae.

TOUCHED BY YOUR PRESENCE

STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"I feel saddened that Clem Burke was taken from us so soon. May he rest in peace. Spectacular drumming. We were friends."
Dave Davies

"Rest in power brother Clem. My sincerest condolences go out to your fam and friends. It was an honour to play with you."
Nile Rodgers

"This is so sad. Clem was pure magic."
Skin, Skunk Anansie

"He was also the loudest drummer I've ever heard. Walk behind him when Blondie were on stage and it was thunderous but always on the money, with impeccable timing and power."
Baz Warne, The Stranglers

"Rest in peace Clem. A musical great and one of the good guys."
Johnny Marr

"We lost a great drummer today… a truly individual player. A brother in arms."
Danny Goffey, Supergrass

"I think we all somehow believed you were going to live for ever. You have been so loved. Thank you for it all. You will be missed."
Garbage

"Oh man Clem Burke was the epitome of a super-cool drummer –so influential and a lovely guy."
Tim Burgess, The Charlatans

"Clem will always live in the place reserved for a different kind of angel. He is a real icon."
Ian McCullough, Echo & The Bunnymen

"Great drummer, proper rock'n'roller, and lovely man! I'd even harboured hopes of playing with him one day."
Pete Wylie

DAVID CORIO/GETTY

RIP

Thank you... and good night.

Chris Youlden

January 1, 1943 – April 4, 2025

The former singer with Savoy Brown has died of bronchial pneumonia at the age of 82. Known for his natty stage presentation, involving wearing a bowler hat and monocle and sometimes a tuxedo, Dagenham-born Chris Youlden was a member of the British blues rockers from 1967 to 1970 and appeared on their albums *Getting To The Point, Blue Matter, A Step Further* and *Raw Sienna*. He also went on to pursue a solo career.

Ioannis

Died April 8, 2025

Sleeve artist Ioannis Vasilopoulos, known professionally simply as Ioannis, has died of as-yet undisclosed cause. Born in Athens, Greece, Ioannis designed an array of more than 350 very recognisable record sleeves for the bands and artists including Deep Purple, the Allman Brothers, Uriah Heep, Styx, Blue Öyster Cult, King Crimson, Sepultura, Michael Bolton, Yngwie Malmsteen and Dream Theater during a career that began in 1983.

Sandy Robertson

Died April 4, 2025

Sandy Robertson was a features editor and chief writer for the much-missed British weekly music paper *Sounds* during its glory period of the 1970s. The great, great, great grandson of Victorian astronomer James Scott, Robertson grew up in Renfrew, Scotland, where he was in a bedroom band called The Nobodies along with Alex Fergusson (Alternative TV/Psychic TV). After *Sounds*, Robertson was a talent scout for Southern Music and associate editor/film critic at *Penthouse*. He also wrote books including *The Aleister Crowley Scrapbook*.

Bob Harvey

November 17, 1934 – March 18, 2025

Born in Burley, Washington, Bob Harvey grew up in San Francisco and became the original bassist with West Coast major players Jefferson Airplane upon the group's formation in 1965 after being spotted by the band's Paul Kantner and Marty Balin. Later that same year, complaints over his playing were voiced and he was replaced by Jack Casady. Harvey's other projects included the Slippery Rock String Band, the Holy Mackerel and San Francisco Blue. He was 90 years old. No cause of death has been announced.

WORDS: DAVE LING



JIM STEINFELDT/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Roy Thomas Baker

November 10, 1946 – April 12, 2025

Producer Roy Thomas Baker, most famous for his work with Queen, has died at the age of 78 at his home in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. No cause of death was announced. Baker was among the most successful audio gurus of the 70s and 80s, helping Queen to pioneer their ambitious blend of melody, musicianship and multi-part vocals. As a trusted member of the band's inner circle, he manned the board for their iconic, groundbreaking track *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

Brian May wrote on social media: "Roy was a part of our production team from the very beginning up to and including the album *A Night At The Opera*. We then parted company for *A Day At The Races* but reunited for the *Jazz* album... Roy's production contribution along with Mike Stone's engineering for *Bohemian Rhapsody* will never be forgotten. I regret slipping out of touch latterly with Roy. Life moves at such a pace these days that we imagine there will be plenty of time to rekindle a friendship, and then suddenly one day it's too late."

Born in Hampstead, North London, Baker began his career at Decca Records in the late 1960s, where he worked alongside senior producers Tony Visconti and Gus Dudgeon on recordings by Ten Years After, the Rolling Stones, The Who, Dr John, Ginger Baker's Air Force, Savoy Brown, The Moody Blues, Nazareth, Yes, David Bowie, Be-Bop Deluxe, Dusty Springfield, Free, T.Rex and many more.

After becoming in-house engineer at the Central London studio Trident, he began a long and fruitful relationship with Queen. After working on the band's debut album, he also produced *Queen II, Sheer Heart Attack, A Night At The Opera* (which included *Bohemian Rhapsody*), *A Day At The Races* and *Jazz*.

"It [*Bohemian Rhapsody*] was the first time that an opera section had been incorporated into a pop record, let alone a number one," Baker told *Sound On Sound* magazine in 1995. "We originally planned to have just a couple of '*Galileo*'s, but [the idea] got longer and bigger, so we kept splicing huge lengths of tape on to the reel. Every time Freddie came up with another '*Galileo*', I added another piece of tape to the reel, which was beginning to look like a zebra crossing whizzing by.

"This went on for three or four days, while we decided on the length of the section. That section alone took about three weeks to record, which in 1975 was the average time spent on a whole album."

Following Queen's success, Baker moved to New York to work for Columbia Records, where he produced records for Journey, Ian Hunter and Ronnie Wood, before being offered a senior A&R role at Elektra Records, looking after albums by Lindsey Buckingham, Dokken, Mötley Crüe, Joe Lynn Turner and The Cars. Baker also produced recordings by Foreigner, Yes, Alice Cooper, Cheap Trick, Devo, Ozzy Osbourne, Sammy Hager, T'Pau, Devo, The Stranglers, Guns N' Roses, Shy, The Darkness and Smashing Pumpkins.

"Roy was one of the great producers," said fellow producer Kevin Shirley. **FL/DL**

Les Binks

August 8, 1951 – March 15, 2025



Judas Priest have paid tribute to Les Binks after it was announced that their former drummer had died in March of unknown cause, at the age 73. With a powerful yet intricate style that some credit with influencing the first generation of thrash metal groups, Binks was a member of Priest from 1977 to 1979 and played on the albums *Stained Class* (for which he co-wrote *Beyond The Realms Of Death* with singer Rob Halford), *Killing Machine* and the live *Unleashed In The East*. Although he had been out of the group for more than four decades, Binks was part of Judas Priest's induction into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in November 2022.

In a statement, Priest said: "The acclaimed drumming provided by Les was first class – demonstrating his unique techniques, flair, style and precision. Thank you, your acclaim will live on."

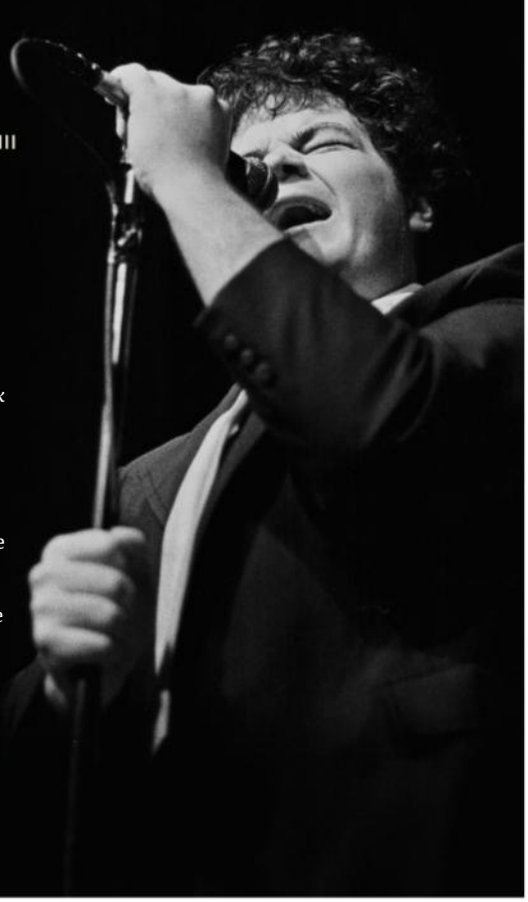
Binks always insisted that despite being forced out of the line-up for 1980's *British Steel* he had no problem with the band members. "I just didn't see the point in continuing to work with a band whose manager didn't want me to receive any payment for that live album," he said, talking about *Unleashed In The East*.

Born in Portadown, Northern Ireland, Binks played with Eric Burdon & War and the US pop group Francy before joining Priest. He also appeared on Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover's solo project *The Butterfly Ball And The Grasshopper's Feast*. In later years he worked with Axis Point, Lionheart, Tytan, The Shakers, Raw Glory and his own group Les Binks' Priesthood.

Former Judas Priest guitarist KK Downing said Binks was "one of the greatest drummers in the world, a good friend and a great guy". **FL/DL**

David Thomas

June 14, 1953 – April 23, 2025



The frontman for acclaimed Cleveland-based experimental rock band Pere Ubu, and formerly Rocket From The Tombs, has died at the age of 71 following a long illness.

The experimental, boundary-breaking Pere Ubu formed in Cleveland, Ohio in 1975. Thomas, their only constant member, described the group's raucous, free-wheeling sound as "avant-garage". *Rolling Stone* described their influential 1978 debut album *The Modern Dance* as "harsh and wilfully ugly". Writing in *Classic Rock* in 2004, Malcolm Dome said it was "a touchstone of art-rock genius, a true masterpiece... Without this album, much of the more esoteric rock music recorded in the decades since would have simply remained unheard".

In fact, Thomas himself once claimed that Pere Ubu were actually a mainstream act, declaring: "You can trace a straight line from the very beginnings, let's say [Elvis Presley's] *Heartbreak Hotel* [1956] to Lou Reed. Into the seventies there was a greater maturity of narrative, of the language of music and the development of technique. Everything was evolving and moving forward. Pere Ubu joined that straight line."

At the time of his death, Thomas and Pere Ubu had been recording a new album. "He knew it was to be his last," said a band statement. "We will endeavour to continue with mixing and finalising the new album so that his last music is available to all." It added: "David's autobiography was nearly completed and we will finish that for him." **PB**

DAVID THOMAS: CHRIS MILLS/GETTY; LES BINKS: FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

Val Kilmer

December 31, 1959 – April 1, 2025

Back in the 1990s, Californian-born actor Kilmer won the respect of the rock community for his portrayals of Jim Morrison and Elvis in the films *The Doors* (directed by Oliver Stone) and Quentin Tarantino's *True Romance*. Kilmer's role as Jim Morrison in *The Doors* was widely praised for capturing the late singer. Other memorable film appearances include *Batman Forever* and *Top Gun: Maverick*. Kilmer was 65 when he died of pneumonia.

Dave Potts

Died January 12, 2025

Praying Mantis guitarist Tino Troy has responded to the news that the band's early drummer Dave Potts recently died. A member of the NWOBHM band from 1979 to 1982, having been part of later versions of Love Affair and Ten Years After, among others, Potts played on Mantis's celebrated debut *Time Tells No Lies*. "Dave's passing came as a shock to myself and Chris [Troy, bassist]," says Tino. "It's sad that half of the musicians from our debut are no longer with us."

Dave Allen

December 23, 1955 – April 5, 2025

Gang Of Four are mourning the passing of their bass player Dave Allen at the age of 69, describing him as "our old music partner, friend, and brilliant musician". After a spell with GOF that lasted from 1976 to 1981, Kendall-born Allen left the British post-punks to form Shriekback with Barry Andrews of XTC. Living in Portland, Oregon during his twilight days, Allen had suffered from early-onset dementia for the past several years.

Roger McLachlan

January 15, 1954 – April 16, 2025

New Zealander Roger McLachlan was an early bass player with the Australian favourites the Little River Band, and played on their first two albums *Little River Band* and *After Hours*, released in 1975 and '76. The following decade, as a session player McLachlan performed the bass parts on John Farnham's global hit *You're The Voice* and its parent album *Whispering Jack*. McLachlan was 71 when he died of complications due to pancreatic cancer.

Kimble Rendall

Died April 2025

Kimble Rendall is best known as a founding member of the quirky Australian band the Hoodoo Gurus and was with them during a year-long spell that began in 1981, before reinventing himself as a maker of music videos for the likes of The Angels, Cold Chisel, Dragon and Mental As Anything. Later he directed films, with credits including *The Matrix Reloaded, The Matrix Revolutions, I, Robot* and *Casanova*. Cause of death and his age were unknown at press time.

New LPs From Alice And Faces

Different firsts since 1973.

The original Alice Cooper Band have regrouped for their first album since 1973's *Muscle Of Love*. *The Revenge Of Alice Cooper* is set for release on July 25 via EarMusic. It has Alice on vocals, of course, plus rhythm guitarist Michael Bruce, bassist Dennis Dunaway and drummer Neal Smith, with a posthumous appearance from lead guitarist Glen Buxton, who died in 1997. It was produced by Bob Ezrin, who helped to make the band's classic early releases.

"This album is a celebration of friendship, nostalgia, and the timeless sound that solidified Alice Cooper as a rock icon," the band say in a statement. "Expect a powerful and nostalgic experience that bridges the gap between our storied past and the present."

In another surprise, drummer Kenney Jones has revealed that the Faces are preparing a new album – their first since *Ooh La La* in 1973 – to be released next year. Jones, vocalist Rod Stewart and guitarist Ronnie Wood have recorded "about eleven tracks", with Jools Holland guesting on one.

"Not all of them are going to be right [for the album]," Jones tells *The Telegraph*, "but most of them are good." **DL**



Alice: back with the old band.

Bad Co. For Hall Of Fame

Soundgarden, White Stripes and Joe Cocker also in.

Bad Company, Soundgarden and Joe Cocker are to be inducted to Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Others to make the final cut include The White Stripes, Cyndi Lauper and the hip-hop duo Outkast. The late record producer Thom Bell, pianist Nicky Hopkins and bassist Carol Kaye will receive the Musical Excellence Award. The Black Crowes, Billy Idol, Oasis, New Order and jam-band Phish all missed out on the 2025 intake.

"It is pretty amazing and very cool to be part of an iconic American institution that celebrates music, musicians and sometimes unsung heroes behind the scenes," Bad Co singer Paul Rodgers told *Billboard*. "I know that our fans, friends and some media have wanted this for a long time, so they will be pleased at last."

Bad Co drummer Simon Kirke agreed: "It's been a long time coming," he says.

The ceremony takes place in Los Angeles on November 8. **DL**

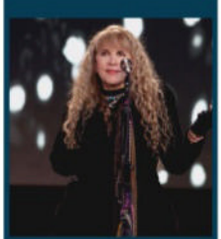
NEWS

Bruce Dickinson was "pleasantly shocked" by **Iron Maiden**'s first rehearsal with new drummer Simon Dawson. "We went through the whole set without a break, and I thought: 'My god, we could do a show tonight if we had to,'" Bruce reveals. British Lion drummer Dawson replaces Nicko McBrain for the band's upcoming Run For Your Lives 50th-anniversary tour.

Marillion guitarist **Steve Rothery** has a new project with Thorsten Quaeschning from Tangerine Dream called Bioscope. A debut album, *Gentō*, which also features Elbow drummer Alex Reeves, will be available in the summer.

Aussie rockers **Rose Tattoo** will play their final show on their 50th anniversary tour on New Year's Eve 2026, and will release an album. "We have achieved what we set out to achieve," says singer and lynchpin Angry Anderson.

Joe Bonamassa releases a new album of all-original material on July 18 via the J&R Adventures label. He says *Breakthrough* his "most adventurous and genre-blending studio album to date".



Stevie Nicks (pictured) is working on a first album of new material since 2011's *In Your Dreams*. The former Fleetwood Mac singer says: "I have seven songs, and they are autobiographical, real stories where I'm not pulling any punches for probably the first time in my life. These are not airy-fairy songs."



WELCOME BACK

The Dead Daisies

More flower power on the way, with the band looking to some blues greats for their new album of covers.

John Corabi is perhaps best known for his short spell fronting Mötley Crüe in the 90s, but his career has seen plenty of twists and turns. Currently the affable Philadelphia rocker is the with The Dead Daisies, having left in 2019 to rejoin in 2023. The band released their seventh album, *Light 'Em Up*, in 2024, and are about to release a covers record, *Lookin' For Trouble*, full of Daisy-fied takes on blues standards. We caught up with Corabi.

You had a few years away. Is anything different with the Daisies of today?

Honestly, it's like I never left. From joining the band [in 2015], it was tour, tour, tour, do a record, then back on tour. I felt like I needed to tap out for a second. But we were all still in contact – it wasn't an argument or "Fuck you, guys, I'm out". When Glenn Hughes decided to do Black Country Communion and his Deep Purple things, David Lowy [Daisies founder and rhythm guitarist] called and said: "Hey dude, do you wanna get back to work?"

"I don't sound anything like BB King so I did my own thing."

The band have had so many line-up changes that there's actually a separate Wikipedia page keeping track.

It's a little misleading. I would say about ninety per cent of the names on there are friends of ours that have filled in for somebody because of scheduling or a health thing, but there's always kind of been a core band.

Was it daunting stepping up to sing songs done by BB King and Robert Johnson?

Of course. I've had a few people tell me they like my approach on [*The Thrill Is Gone*]. We tried to make it a bit slower and more airy, but it's one of those songs where you can't really change the melody. It's such a classic. I don't sound anything like BB King so I did my own thing.

You're sixty-five now. How have you kept your voice in shape?

I do some dumb shit – I like having cocktails – but I never drink before a show. I try to make sure I get enough sleep, especially with travelling. But I think part of it is that I didn't really abuse myself early on in my career. I've never been a drug guy; never did coke, never did meth. People will say to me: "Dude, cocaine in the eighties, right?!" And I'm like: "I wouldn't have been able to tell you".

David Lowy comes from a family of businesspeople worth billions. Does that ever come up in conversation?

With David, you'd never know it. We've become very good friends. He's so humble, and I don't know anybody who works as hard as he does. I've taken offence to comments like: "Oh, it's just some fucking billionaire's hobby". Every record we've done, he's been in the studio for every minute, pulling his hair out as much as everyone else. David's blessed to have a creative brain and a business brain, and uses both really well.

You published an autobiography, *Horseshoes And Hand Grenades*, in 2022.

My buddy Paul [Miles, co-author] was saying that I do a bunch of press for a new record, then I disappear, and that there's a lot of fans out there who would like to know what makes me tick. It was very therapeutic, reliving some things again from a more mature viewpoint. And one thing I figured out is that I don't have any regrets. But there were a few times when I read things back and had a bit of a knot in my stomach, so I'd go pour myself a whisky or a cup of tea. **CL**

Lookin' For Trouble is out May 30 via The Dead Daisies Pty Ltd/SPV.

ALICE COOPER: JENNY RISHER/PRESS; STEVIE NICKS: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY



"I wanted to make an album that sounded really live, with the mistakes left in."

★ HIGH HOPES

Shuyler Jansen

Meet the Neil Young-influenced Canadian looking to spread his success outside Canada.

Shuyler Jansen doesn't come across as a man in a rush. But despite having only just released his fantastic fifth solo album, the fuzzy, spectral *Dim=Sum*, the Canadian already has two more records ready to go. The reason for this urgency is partly down to the fact that Jansen nearly died last year after suffering a heart attack.

"I was just lying in bed, and my wife came in and said I was blue," he says. "I had no idea. I was just gone. Her and her dad gave me CPR. He's a huge guy, he busted a bunch of my ribs. But they saved my life."

It turns out the cardiac issues were hereditary rather than lifestyle related – Shuyler (it rhymes with 'Tyler') quit smoking, drinking and drugs long ago. All the same, that near death experience made him re-frame his life.

"I was in hospital for six months and I recorded *Dim=Sum* right after that," he says. "Before, I was so wrapped up in things like 'Why am I not more famous?' or 'Why am I not getting more shows?' After what happened, I'm just overjoyed to be able to play."

While *Dim=Sim* (his fifth album under his own name) doesn't directly address that traumatic experience, it does possess a nocturnal, otherworldly quality. Songs such as *Fisherman's Daughter* and the 12-minute *To The Depths* resemble a haunted Neil Young – a big influence on Jansen, along with the likes of Townes Van Zandt, Nick Drake and drone-metal pioneers Earth.

"I wanted to make an album that sounded really live, with the mistakes left in," he says. "People aren't willing to show any kind of human error."

Before embarking on his solo career 20 years ago, Jansen put in the hours recording and gigging as a member of 90s indie rockers the Naked And The Dead and then with alt.country outfit Old Reliable. He's Canada-famous rather than globally famous.

"The last time I was in Britain, I ended up playing a showcase at Canada House [the Canadian embassy] for the Canadian High Commissioner to London," he says. "He said to me: 'Can you come play my daughter's wedding party?' I end up playing to a room full of people on this piano that Elton John has given him. That was surreal."

Jansen has been easing himself back into touring after his medical issues last year. He plans to release the first of the two other albums he's sitting on later this year, with the other one following in early 2026.

"I'm one of the lucky ones," he says of everything he's gone through recently. "When you come out of any kind of sickness, you're just happy to still be here. You can't help looking at life differently." **DE**

Dim=Sum is out now via Third Side Music.

FOR FANS OF...



Neil Young's DNA is embedded in most Canadian musicians' music, and Jansen is no exception. "I really love his mid-nineties era," he says, "albums like *Sleeps With Angels* and *Broken Arrow*. Those guys just went in a room and played, they didn't worry about mistakes. They called one of their albums *Ragged Glory* for a reason."

ANTONIO LA FAUCI - CINDERBLOC STUDIOS; PRESS

New Box Set From The Boss

Eighty-two mostly unheard tracks from Springsteen.

A collection of seven complete records made by Bruce Springsteen between 1983 and 2018 – 82 previously unreleased songs, 74 of which have never been heard – with the title *Tracks II: The Lost Albums* is released on June 27 via Columbia Records.

"*The Lost Albums* were full records, some of them even to the point of being mixed and not released," Springsteen explains. "I've played this music to myself and often close friends for years now. I'm glad you'll get a chance to finally hear them. I hope you enjoy them.

"I often read about myself in the 1990s as having some 'lost period'," he says in a promo video. "Not really. I was working the whole time."

The set is available in limited-edition nine-LP and seven-CD formats, including original packaging for each record, with a 100-page cloth-bound hardcover book featuring rare archival photos, notes on each album from essayist Erik Flannigan, plus a personal introduction on the project from Springsteen himself. **PB**



Ritchie Blackmore: earthbound.

Black News For Blackmore

Doctors order Ritchie to avoid flying.

Ritchie Blackmore (who has lived in the US since 1974) is unlikely to return to European stages anytime soon, says his wife Candice Night, his partner in their Medieval and folk-rock project Blackmore's Night. The former Deep Purple and Rainbow guitarist, now 79, suffered a heart attack 18 months ago, and Night reveals that as a consequence of having six stents inserted, doctors have instructed him to avoid plane travel.

"As far as flying anywhere right now, Ritchie has been told by his cardiologist not to get in a plane," Knight told TotalRock Radio's Dawn Osborne.

"I can't believe he turns eighty on April 14 – he doesn't look it and still doesn't act it – but eventually medical things catch up with you, so we've gotta make sure we keep him happy and healthy."

She adds: "Hey, I've seen people younger than him in wheelchairs on stage doing what they do. [But] I think Ritchie probably doesn't want people to see him that way." **DL**

NEWS

Drummer **Zak Starkey** is back in The Who after being dismissed and reinstated following an on-stage dispute with frontman Roger Daltrey at London's Royal Albert Hall. "There have been some communication issues, personal and private on all sides, and these have been aired happily," said a statement from Pete Townshend. Starkey, son of Ringo Starr, has played with The Who for almost three decades.

An expanded version of **Metallica**'s divisive sixth studio album, 1996's, *Load*, is due on June 13 via the band's own Blackened Recordings. Newly remastered, it adds a host of demo versions, live recordings, extended takes and more.

Sammy Hagar believes that Edward Van Halen co-wrote a new song with him from the afterlife. Hagar recorded *Encore, Thank You, Goodnight* with Joe Satriani, former Van Halen bassist Michael Anthony and drummer Kenny Aronoff, after it came to him in a dream. "I'm almost embarrassed to talk about this [because] it's sounds like I'm fucking pulling some shit," insists the Red Rocker, "but I ain't pulling no shit."



Despite not having toured since 2022 due to **Jon Bon Jovi**'s (pictured) throat issues, Bon Jovi have announced plans to play an "intimate private performance" in June in Nashville in conjunction with 'superfan' travel company Runaway Tours.



WELCOME BACK

Stan Lynch

Tom Petty's Heatbreakers' drummer is back behind the kit for an album from his new Americana collective.

Stan Lynch's career has had three acts: drummer with Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, producer/songwriter for Don Henley, The Mavericks and more. Now, at age 70, he's a member of The Speaker Wars, whose hard-edged Americana sound adds the best of Lynch's experience and returns him to the kit. "It's good to have my old job back," he says.

We caught up with Lynch for a chat about everything from learning the secret of the groove to attending a Frank Sinatra concert with Bob Dylan.

Was it in your plans, or did you ever expect, to be in another band when you were seventy?
I've had no plan my entire life! The last thing I remember, I was playing at a topless bar and had a Volkswagen bus and a hundred bucks. Then I remember driving to Los Angeles when I was nineteen – same Volkswagen bus, same hundred bucks [laughs]. I just allow myself to stay busy, and trip and fall into the next joyful thing. That's what The Speaker Wars is.

How did you learn about the all-important groove as a drummer?
In the Heartbreakers, Tom always said: "We gotta get the feel, Stan." Our first producer, Denny Cordell, was the same. He took me to a Bob Marley & The Wailers concert, and Marley was hypnotising the room. Denny said: "That's what a groove is." Denny also had a Ferrari Daytona. He'd say: "Get in and drive. Now, gun it! You feel that? That's the groove."

Don Henley helped to launch your second act, as a producer-songwriter.
He invited me into his world of how he creates songs. He's a poet, and a badass. He sees the world through a filter that's really divine. He said: "Stan, a song has to work from the neck up and the waist down." Great advice.

Can you tell us about when you and Bob Dylan went to see a Frank Sinatra show?
The Heartbreakers were on tour with Bob, and I had tickets to see Frank and Sammy Davis. No one wanted to go, except Bob. There's Bob in the second row, wearing his Unabomber sweatshirt, hiding as best he can. During the break, someone came up to me because they figured I must be Bob's bodyguard, and said: "Come by the dressing room. Frank and Sammy want to say hi." I asked Bob. He made the perfect face, and said: "No, let's get the fuck out of here!" He was always this wonderful contrarian, flying in his own atmosphere. Fearless and courageous, the baddest rock star I ever had the pleasure of backing up.

"Don Henley is a poet. He sees the world through a divine filter."

When was the last time you saw Tom Petty before he died?
At the Hall Of Fame induction. I was certainly the odd man out at that point. But I wasn't going to let that stop me telling Tom how much he meant to me, what a difference all those cats made in my life. I had to literally grab him by the back of the shirt to tell him I loved him. Tom set me up for a whole life in music.

Do you feel a sense of purpose in keeping rock'n'roll music alive?
It's the only music I know. You put me behind the drums, I have a very narrow lane. It's going to sound like the Heartbreakers or The Speaker Wars. I'm not really worried about being a flag bearer. I'm more: "This is what I do. This is what's fun!" **BDM**

Speaker Wars is out on May 30 via Frontiers Records.

RITCHIE BLACKMORE: KEVIN NIXON; STAN LYNCH: VIRGINIA FONVIELLE/PRESS

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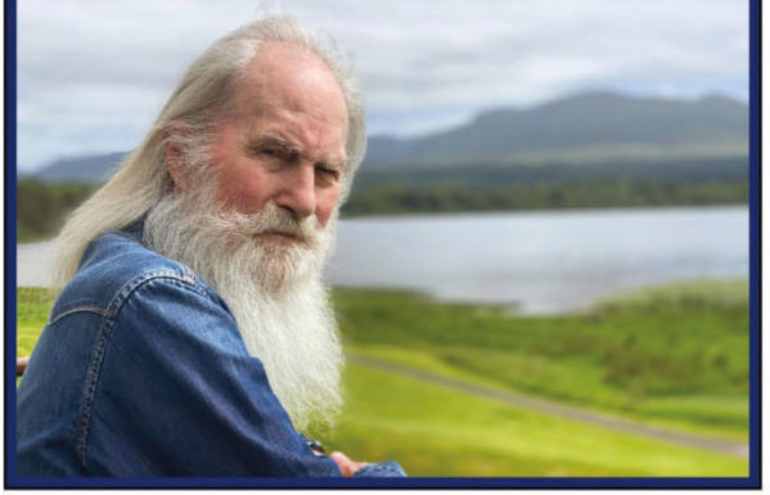
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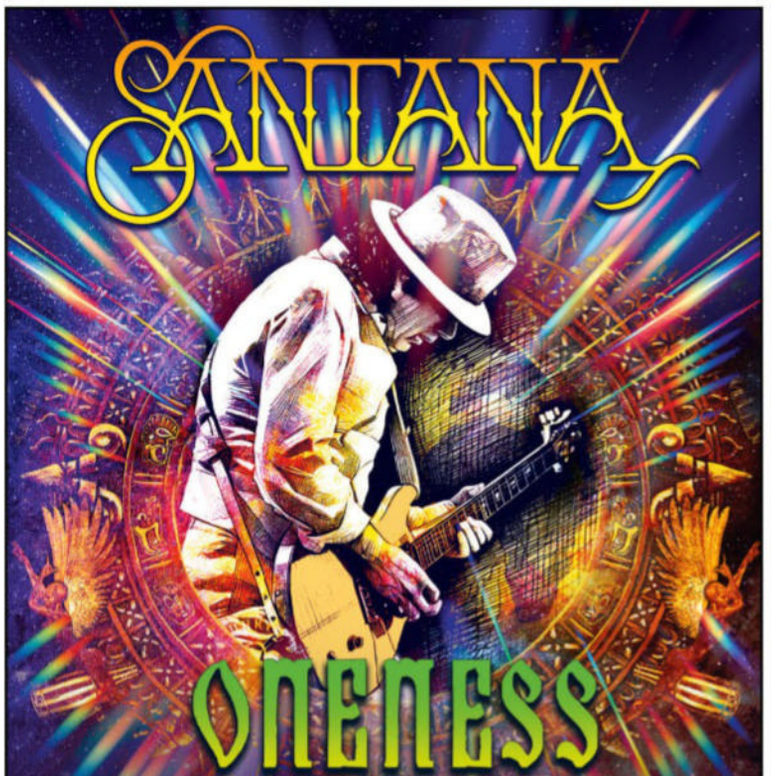
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"It's very surreal. I'm gonna keep going and see where my guitar takes me."

JEREMIAH SHEPHERD/PRESS

★ HIGH HOPES

Ally Venable

Meet the young blueser who's gone from being bullied at school to playing with Buddy Guy.

At the age of 25, Ally Venable has done more than many artists manage in an entire career. She's released six albums. She duetted with Buddy Guy, at his request, after he watched her opening for him (the result, *Texas Louisiana*, featured on Venable's *Real Gone!* LP). Last year she played the national anthem at the Houston Astros game, becoming the first woman to do so. Oh, and she's just bought a house. Not bad for a small-town girl who was bullied in school and never expected music to be more than a hobby.

"It's really cool to be like: 'I bought this with the money I made from being a musician,'" she says, fresh off the Experience Hendrix tour with Zakk Wylde, Kenny Wayne Shepherd, her old friend Christone 'Kingfish' Ingram and others. "I really have beat the odds here. It's very surreal. I'm very grateful. I'm gonna keep going and see where my guitar takes me."

Long inspired by the wah-savvy stylings of Buddy Guy, Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughan, Venable pours her tastes into new album *Money And Power*. There's full-blooded blues rock in *Brown Liquor*; latter-day Bonamassa vibes in the pensive *Do You Cry*; modern alt.rock and country edges in *Heal Me*; a syncopated swing in *Stopper Back Papa*. "I've been feeling all the feelings about this album; excitement, self-doubt, nerves, thrilled..."

Born and raised in Kilgore, Texas, Venable learned to sing from her grandmother, a "crafty, artistic" sort who played Beach Boys and country CDs on road trips to Houston. Back home Venable, an outgoing kid, sang at a family wedding and learned church songs. But it was Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Texas Flood* – which her father played on the way to school – that turned her on to the guitar when she was 12. "I knew it was something that was fun, that I was kind of good at, but I never thought: 'Oh, I'm gonna be this guitar player'. Things just started to build."

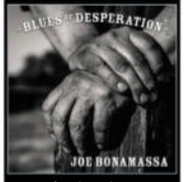
By age 13 she was playing grocery stores, crawfish stands and backyard parties with her own band. She started writing songs, and released her first album while in her teens. It separated her from most of her peers, and she struggled in school. "But finding music helped me become outgoing again. It saved me in that way. It was nice to be like: 'Okay, this is who I am.'"

Now, with *Money And Power*, she hopes to inspire women and young people, in a field where fewer artists look like her (although she agrees that that's changing), continuing to shift the boundaries of the blues, and "create spaces" for the mixed audiences seen more often at country gigs.

So what else does she still aspire to? "I'd like to create a nonprofit of some sort to help my community, and maybe open a cool blues joint. Janie Hendrix gave me a good name for it..." **PG**

Money And Power is out now via Ruf Records. Ally tours the UK from October 14 to 18.

FOR FANS OF...



"I'm a big fan of Joe Bonamassa," Ally says. "I just talked to him the other day while I was on the tour – I saw a poster of him in my dressing room. But definitely I'm very influenced by his music, and the way that he writes, maybe subconsciously because I listen to his music quite a bit. I try to incorporate things that I like into my music."



THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

The Stranglers

Peaches

Driven by a gritty, hooky bass riff and infamous with its charges of misogyny, it was a UK Top 10. Almost 50 years on, it's still a must-play by today's Stranglers.

Words: **James McNair**

There had been voyeuristic songs before, of course, but when it arrived a decade after Andy Williams's chaste and breezy 1967 single *Music To Watch Girls By*, The Stranglers' 1977 hit *Peaches* was something else again. Lecherous and horny, a boorish beach party's worth of lust funnelled into four filthy minutes, the band's second single wouldn't be their last song to court controversy/draw accusations of sexism. On purely musical terms, however, *Peaches* was genius. A gutsy slab of punk and cod-reggae, it remains incredibly hooky.

Adopting a belt-and-braces approach, United Artists Records released it as a double A-side with *Go Buddy Go*. But, like the Sex Pistols' *God Save The Queen*, *Peaches* soon fell foul of The BBC censor, which banned it on grounds of indecency. Perhaps it was the single's cover art depiction of a peach in pink bikini briefs, or maybe it was the anatomical antics that had frontman Hugh Cornwell codifying the word 'clitoris' as 'clitares' as the song's narrator ogled female sunbathers. Either way, the Beeb disapproved.

Taken from The Stranglers' 1977 debut album *Rattus Norvegicus*, *Peaches* was very much in character. *Rattus* was a ballsy, irreverent record knee-deep in vermin and sewers; offensive almost by design. Hugh Cornwell, Jean Jacques Burnel, Jet Black and Dave Greenfield had formed the band in Guildford, Surrey in 1974. Rising up via endless gigging on the UK's raucous and rowdy pub-rock circuit – and travelling in an ice-cream van salvaged from a fleet of such vehicles Black had owned previously – they were accused of hitching a ride on punk's coat-tails. The truth, though, was that these self-styled Men In Black were properly, distinctively 'punk' in attitude before the UK strain of the movement even had a name.

True outsiders with an unsavoury reputation for being 'handy' with their fists, the group emerged as a strange but potent mix of brutality and sophistication, crudeness and intelligence.

"There was a lot of rejection initially, so we had to develop this kind of ghetto mentality," bassist Jean Jacques Burnel says today. "It didn't help that we didn't follow the general dictates of punk. We'd say we liked The Doors and people would give us stick for it. Or they'd say we were too sophisticated because of Dave's incredible keyboard playing. It pissed us off, because that whole idea of punk being 'year zero' was bollocks. Every band has influences whether they admit it or not."

Burnel's meaty, overdriven plectrum bass on *Peaches* provides the song's main hook. Indeed it's so iconic that in 2022 a *Guitar World* magazine poll rated it "The 4th best bassline of all time". Burnel came up with the riff at The Stranglers' Chiddingfold, Surrey squat, and Greenfield later doubled its melody on Hammond organ. The roots of the song's inspiration went further back, however.

"Haven't you ever looked? *Peaches* is voyeuristic, but it's not misogynistic."

United Artists had bought The Stranglers out of a brief, unlikely-fit deal they'd had with reggae label Safari Records. The label switch was amicable, and, later recalling that the band had their own gear for live work, Safari's owner Reg McClean asked to borrow The Stranglers' PA for an all-day dub reggae/sound system event in London.

"So we turned up with it, and Reg gave us a few quid," Burnel recalls. "It was me, Hugh and my then-girlfriend Choosey Susie [as immortalised in the *Rattus Norvegicus* song of the same name]. I remember us being in this huge hall. There was a big spliff going round but we got none of it [laughs].

"The music was incredible and we soaked it up. It had this [dub-reggae artist] King Tubby feel with loads of room for the bass, and guys scatting or rapping over the top. You can hear that *Peaches* was our attempt to write something like that, even though it's not 'proper' reggae as such. We were the first of the punk bands to attempt that kind of crossover."

On May 26, 1977, when The Stranglers made their debut on *Top Of The Pops*, they played *Go Buddy Go*, not *Peaches*. No matter that the single edit for the latter had substituted the word 'bikini' for 'clitares' (sic), the BBC still wasn't having it.

How does Burnel feel today about the charges of misogyny levelled against *Peaches*? "Haven't you ever looked?" he says, smiling. "It's human nature whether you're male or female, gay, straight or whatever. *Peaches* is voyeuristic, but it's not misogynistic."

Peaches was not the first – or last – rock song to make fruity, peach-specific allusions. "Every time I'm in Georgia I eat a peach for peace," guitarist Duane Allman replied when asked about the title of the Allman Brothers' 1972 album *Eat A Peach*. A somewhat dubious explanation from a member of a band renowned for their hell-raising? Perhaps.

In 1996, another song titled *Peaches*, this one a No.8 UK hit for the Presidents Of The United States Of America, also seemed loaded with sexual innuendo. Asked about this, singer Chris Ballew talked of squeezing peaches that had fallen from a tree while he was high on LSD, and this being the song's inspiration. Yeah, right.

The Stranglers' *Peaches* has retained its cultural currency via various sources. Burnel, the son of French restauranteur parents, was doubtless delighted when it became the closing theme for chef Keith Floyd's gastronomic TV shows for the BBC (instrumental only, natch), and the track also plays over the opening titles of Jonathan Glazer's 2000 film *Sexy Beast*, which, in an alarming reversal of bikini-girl voyeurism, depicts a sweaty Ray Winstone in briefs.

Hugh Cornwell left The Stranglers in 1990. Dave Greenfield died in 2020 and Jet Black died in 2022. Burnel continues to co-front The Stranglers today. When the band play their first UK date of 2025 at Lincoln Castle on June 13, *Peaches* will doubtless be on the setlist.



PEACHES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT

As Led Zeppelin's borrowing of Robert Johnson's *'Squeeze me, babe, 'til the juice runs down my leg'* on *The Lemon Song* reminds us, fruit and rock have long been willing bedfellows. The ever-phallic banana (witness the inside sleeve of Kevin Ayers's 1972 LP *Bananamour*, or the cover of the self-titled album by The Velvet Underground & Nico), cherries (the cover of Wild Cherry's self-titled 1976 debut) and others, including a fruit salad (the self-titled album by Juicy Lucy) have all been juiced for titillation. A quick Spotify search also flags-up various songs that mention the kumquat, but let's not go there.



IAN TYAS/KEYSTONE FEATURES/GETTY



The Stranglers in February 1977: (l-r) Dave Greenfield, Jean Jacques Burnel, Jet Black and, being strangled, Hugh Cornwell.

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
May 1977

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.8

PERSONNEL
Hugh Cornwell
Lead vocals, electric guitar
Jean Jacques Burnel
Bass, backing vocals
Dave Greenfield
Organ, synthesiser, backing vocals
Jet Black
Drums

WRITTEN BY
Jean Jacques Burnel/Hugh Cornwell/Jet Black/Dave Greenfield

PRODUCER
Martin Rushent

LABEL
United Artists

Q&A

John Lydon

The PiL frontman and former Sex Pistol on losing loved ones, living near the California fires, spoken-word gigs, underpants...

Interview: **Ian Fortnam**

Formerly Rotten, Sex Pistols vocalist, punk catalyst and all-round iconoclast John Lydon is busy. Knuckling down to write a forthcoming (twelfth) album with Public Image Ltd while touring the UK prior to embarking on another spoken-word tour in September, he's in good shape and on fine form, despite significant setbacks. Lydon's wife Nora died in 2023 following a five-year battle with Alzheimer's, and later that year he lost his manager and oldest friend John Rambo Stevens. He recently found himself in the path of the California wildfires (again). And in February his favourite uncle passed.

Meanwhile, there's Frank Carter's 'Sex Pistols'.
It's weird. A dumbing down of all the integrity, intensity, genuine honesty and heartfelt emotions I put into that band. Of course, it's karaoke, but it's like... Come on, Mr Carter, you're not Johnny Rotten, I am. Right? Stop it. Though I actually think he took it on in the right spirit. The same spirit Billy Idol did before [Idol toured with Steve Jones and Paul Cook as Generation Sex in '23]. Poor Billy, he ran out of wind. He can't sing them songs.

The internet claims you were once offered an MBE for services to music?
I think that was a journalistic invention to try to get my rag. No, I'm not up for accepting anything like that. It's too pomp-y, too social climb-y, and I don't know that it's particularly relevant. I said when I first heard that I wouldn't want to put a sword in the Queen's hand with me at her feet, because "Off with his head" would've come to mind. I'd rather go for the Irish OBE: the Old Bloody Eejit.

You have more spoken-word shows on the horizon.
There's nothing quite like standing up on a stage completely alone, the shit fear of it. I've no script, nothing... And I fucking love it. But the reception's not always favourable. There are some real haters who travel miles, buy tickets, just to come in and say yah boo sucks. At one gig somebody stood up while I was talking about my childhood, and said: "Isn't it true you're trying to profiteer off the death of your wife?" That's evil, beyond any concept I can relate to.

Losing Nora and then Rambo in such a short space of time must have been devastating.
And then recently my favourite uncle. When will the nails in my coffin stop banging? Uncle John [Barry] bought me my first Parker pen when I was six, because he knew I could read and write. My mum taught me and he encouraged me. So I've had a love of Parker pens ever since. I learned to write in italics with that pen from a great teacher at my school, the only one who wasn't a nun. Her name was Miss Kitty. She was dying of cancer and smelled of Heinz Condensed Vegetable Soup, but she was great.

This Is Not The Last Tour will be your first without Rambo.
He was a manager and a best friend, who absolutely kept me honest. You couldn't get a thing past that one.

All this bereavement is an awful lot to deal with.
It is. When you go to bed at night you wonder: "Should I just be thinking of Nora?" I can't leave John out, he meant so much to me too. And my uncle now. And of course I went through it all before with my mum and dad, and all that comes back. So sleep's quite hard to get through. The juxtaposition of tragedies, how can I handle them all? I just have to let it flood over me. And it does. Every single night.

And it's not just grief, is it?
It's not grief. I can hear every one of them, every now and again shouting inside my head: "Oh, Johnsies, that song is awful" from Nora... You have whole conversations, and you're not faking them, the dialogue just pops up automatically.

On this PiL tour you'll have a new drummer. What can you tell us about Mark Roberts?
He looks like film director David Lynch and has worked with [guitarist] Lu [Edmonds] on all kinds of weirdnesses, with Middle and Far Eastern influences, and to my ears he plays like Ginger fucking Baker: full on and hard-core. We're going to miss Bruce [Smith] very much, but we're gonna rely less on technology and get back into proper fucking bangers.

Always nice to have a bit more Middle Eastern flavour in the pot.
It just seems to happen instinctively with us. It doesn't work if you try to force it, but this is who we are. I was brought up in a very mixed area, Arsenal land: Jamaican, Turkish, Greek, Cypriot, German, Italian, Irish and English, a properly good musical upbringing.

Aren't you worried that Mark might prove to have some unacceptable tour-bus foibles?
Listen, the voice of experience here. For sheer smelly, stinky audacity, nothing beats Lu Edmonds's underpants hanging on a hanger. No one can beat that, so he'll be as safe as houses.

So what's it like to be resident in the US right now?
Well, the fires weren't anything to laugh at. In the mid-nineties they came up to my front gate, but these [recent ones] stopped a mile away. It was terrifying, because I knew what it's like, I knew the heat. Everything melts. And long before the flames engulf you, acrid black smoke steals the air out of your lungs. Waiting was a nightmare, because they cut the damn electricity and cell phone towers off, so no one could get any information on what was happening.

Will *Hawaii* feature in the PiL tour's set-list?
We're going to try and do it. I don't know if the emotions are going to be too heavy for me. Even that's wrapped up in good memories of Rambo because he put the video together. I love the empty swing between the palm trees at the end. For a paratrooper, boxer, football hooligan maniac, he could be surprisingly sensitive.

This Is Not The Last Tour kicks off on May 22 in Bristol



"There are some real haters who travel miles, buy tickets, just to come in and say yah boo sucks."

PAUL HEARTFIELD/PRESS

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

When Rivers Meet

Lockdown helped them build a fan base, Aaron aspires to the silver screen, communication is key, one of their albums was a chart first...

Words: **Chris Lord**

To chat with When Rivers Meet is to bask in the warm, friendly energy of Grace and Aaron Bond. Based on the Essex coastline (but very much 'have van, will travel' sorts), the couple's staunchly independent blues-rock band has been making some serious waves of late. In less than a decade their mixture of soul-soaked blues and gritty, swaggering rock has taken them from the most humble beginnings as a function duo playing pubs to the upper echelons of the charts. Not that it's changed them one iota.

The title track from their new album, *Addicted To You*, is about them, Aaron says. "We've been together for over twenty years and we're still like that."

"Maybe that's what makes it work," Grace adds.

They often finish each other's sentences.

"We're intense and we wanted to get that in the songs!"

They say they've sat on this album for longer than any of their previous ones, so they're now more than ready to share the results – "heavier harmonies, more layers, more musicians" – with the world.

They've developed a unique bond as a married couple in a band.

"I think we've gone through higher highs and lower lows," Grace says. Playing original music as WRM was a totally different proposition to the function work of old. "On our first tour, we felt a lot of pressure and we were both on the edge of being able to deal with that."

But as with any successful relationship, romantic or otherwise, communication is pivotal. "Because we're experiencing it together, we can talk about it," Aaron says. "Whereas if you're in a relationship with someone doing something else, it must be difficult for that person to understand."

Their previous album, *Aces Are High*, made chart history in 2023.

Placed between Pink Floyd and pop superstar The Weeknd, *Aces Are High* peaked at No.9 in the UK, making When Rivers Meet the first ever independent rock and blues artists to score a UK Top 10 album. Was that beyond their wildest dreams?

"Yeah, but it hasn't changed our perspective," Grace says. "We've had the conversation about what a successful band is and how you measure it so many times. If we could look forward five years ago and see what we've achieved, we would have thought we're huge. But we still think we're a little band."

Aaron enjoys acting and is keen to add to his CV.

Grace says she has always been completely "obsessed with music", collecting instruments along the way ("a piccolo, a clarinet, a saxophone..."), while Aaron's passions extend to the silver screen. "I like to act," he says. "I was doing some bits at Pinewood Studios for a while, little bits and bobs, and that's something I'd like to get back into at some point".

The band's name was inspired by an estuary in Sardinia.

Inspiration struck while the pair were away recording on the idyllic Mediterranean island. Before WRM, they went by the name of Holmes & Bond, as a duo, and Aaron says that post-wedding, Bond & Bond wasn't the snappiest of choices. "It sounded like a building firm or something, so we couldn't have that," Aaron remembers. "We were interested in the word 'rivers', and in Sardinia we were overlooking an estuary where two rivers met, and it was: 'Ooh!' That was it – we're the rivers, and when we meet the music happens".

Their covid lockdown livestreams were crucial in building a fan base.

With today's technology, it was inevitable that musicians would put on virtual gigs to stay connected with their fans during lockdown. For WRM it had a profoundly transformative effect. Eventually Grace and Aaron were on first-name terms with their audience.

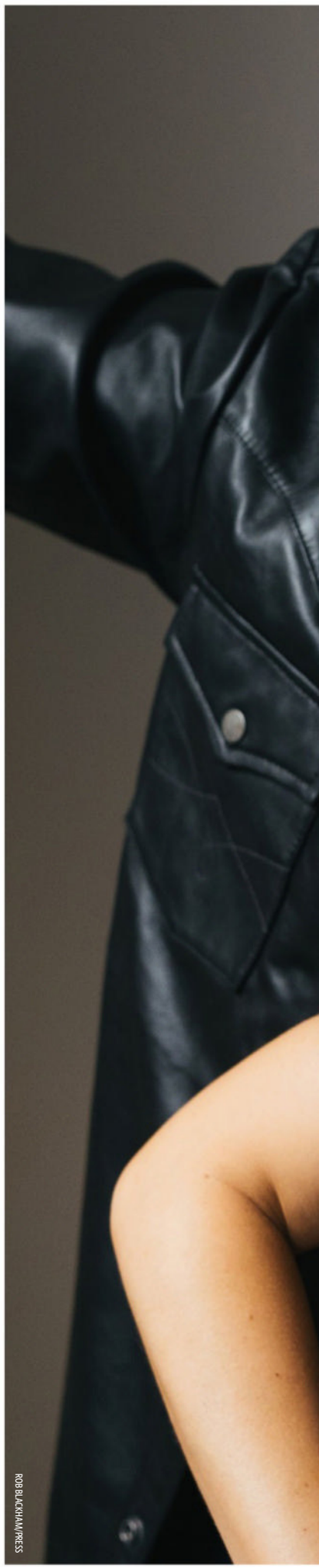
"We were all looking for connection, and we decided to stream on Saturdays, have a drink and pretend we were playing a gig", Grace says. "You feel a bit guilty because it was a shit time for so many people, but it built an amazing community of people. It was a big turning point".

The final straw to quit their jobs was Grace having a bad day at the office.

Grace used to work as a PA. "It was an hour's drive on a really busy road," she says. "I remember one day coming home sitting in this massive traffic jam, and realising I'd left my phone under the desk and that I'd have to go all the way back to get it, and sat there and cried. I was like: "What am I doing?' Life is too short to be miserable! We would rather be doing gigs for fifty quid and sleeping in the back of the van".

"She was very convincing!" Aaron says with a laugh.

Addicted To You is out now via One Road Records.



ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS



Aaron and Grace Bond: "We're the rivers, and when we meet the music happens."

WHERE'S IZZY?

CR presents the third in an exclusive series from Alan Niven's forthcoming book *Sound N' Fury.*

My name is Alan Niven. I am going to tell you some stories. Random rock'n'roll stories. Populated by an interesting cavalcade of characters. Among them are Guns N' Roses. I took them from the gutters of Sunset Boulevard to Wembley Stadium. I took Great White from the backwater clubs of Orange County to Wembley Arena. Along the way we all joined the parade of misfits and madmen that strut and fret their hour upon their stage.

Every story paints a picture. Of personality. Of an event. I hope that at least they will amuse. At best they might contain the germ of wisdom's insight.





Izzy and Axl in '87. They didn't exactly see eye to eye in GN'R.

Iz made the move to the city first. He packed his suitcase and went to lay the foundation of a band. Rattlesnake hide or not, you know that bag was worn and funky, not shiny, like a new Halliburton gifted from Aerosmith.

Iz was the first to take the Night Train out of small-town Indiana for Los Angeles. Axl followed Izzy once he was set up in L.A.– an easy move. He then retreated back to Lafayette. Couldn't hack it in L.A. according to Iz. He was relieved. He told me later he didn't want to deal with Rose, who he had known since high school.

Axl couldn't deal with small-town Indiana either so he moved a second time, loaded like a freight train with all his baggage. Iz was less than thrilled.

So it went. On the third date of the band's first national tour, supporting The Cult, Izzy knocked on my hotel room door. He brushed past me and flopped on the sofa.

"That motherfucker makes us miserable every fuckin' day," he groaned.

Ax was never so fuckin' easy. He did, however, have that voice, a voice that reeked of Middle American white boy outrage and anger. The sound of the outlaw. He had the attitude that championed individualism and every individual. Especially himself.

If that was what Axl brought to the band, what did Izzy bring?

He brought the Night Train. He, in all ways, brought Mr. Brownstone. He brought the sweet Jungle street groove.

I first saw Izz on the stage of The Troubadour. He had an effortless offhand grace in the way that he handled his hollow-bodied Gibson. He played his rhythm parts with a perfect insouciance, knowing exactly when he should leave a space and syncopate the groove.

I have a picture on my wall of Izzy playing with Keef and Ronnie Wood. They not only play like kin, they look like Mama's kin.

Imagine the Stones without Keef. You can't. Imagine Guns without Izzy.

Izzy had the casual wisdom not to inject himself with the blind obediences of a conformist's life. As much as a CC DeVille or a Bon Jovi might have contrived to be rock'n'roll outlaws, Izzy was to the manner born. His lyrics had an uncontrived, main-vein, street vernacular.

When Guns were slated to open for Aerosmith Izzy came to me with a concern.

"Niv, this might be a bit awkward, but I used to deal smack to Joe and Steven."

"Don't worry Iz, if you don't mention it I am damned sure they won't."

Izzy left Guns three months after I was kicked aside by Axl. Iz found me, somehow, when I was with The White Ones in Winterthur, Switzerland.

"I can't deal with it any more," he said.

There had almost been a riot at a GN'R show in Germany. Rose had stormed off the stage for some reason. Again. Izzy was freaked out by the idea of sub-machine-gun-toting cops breaking heads.

He had the jitters. The binding pressure and exposure of expectation and fame, the anxieties that Rose generated, were not worth it to him. They were crushing him. He was going to quit there and then. He did not intend to play the tour-closing show at Wembley Stadium.

"You can't let the fans and the others down like that Iz. You're not the bad guy. Don't be seen as one."

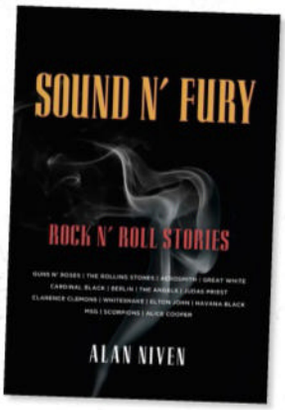
I reserved and paid for a suite at the Wembley Stadium Hilton where Izzy could chill, away from the backstage area, and wait to see if Axl would turn up. Only when he knew that Rose was at the venue did he join the others for his last performance as a member of the band that was mostly built on his insight, songs and style.

It was Izzy's fuckin' band. Izzy was the one I could reliably count on for a position on a decision – his was always the incontrovertible point of view that best served the entire group. He grounded them with his unimpeachable rock'n'roll stance habitually maintained in his playing and writing. Izzy had provided the cool heart for the hot soul of Guns N' Roses.

When the band was inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame, Izzy set up a meeting with Axl at an L.A. hotel. He wanted to get an agreement for the original band to play together one last time – do the fuckin' reunion there in that moment and then say "thank you, good fuckin' night". After waiting for two hours for Axl to show, he drove home to Ojai. No-show Axl had made him miserable one more fuckin' time.

A band is like a chemical molecule. Not all the elements are of the same size, power or energy, and perception does not always define significance, but remove even the slightest grain and the molecule collapses. When Steven lost his mind and got himself fired, that changed the feel of the rhythm section, the rush of enthusiasm was lacking. When Izzy left it meant that the band was no longer the Guns N' Roses that I knew and loved. It was just Dust N' Bones- "just fuckin' gone".

If it was anyone's, it was Izzy's fuckin' band.



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CENTRE: GEORGE CHIN/ICONCPIX; TOP: MEDIAPUNCH/SHUTTERSTOCK

TALKIN TO THE TREES

NEIL YOUNG AND THE CHROME HEARTS



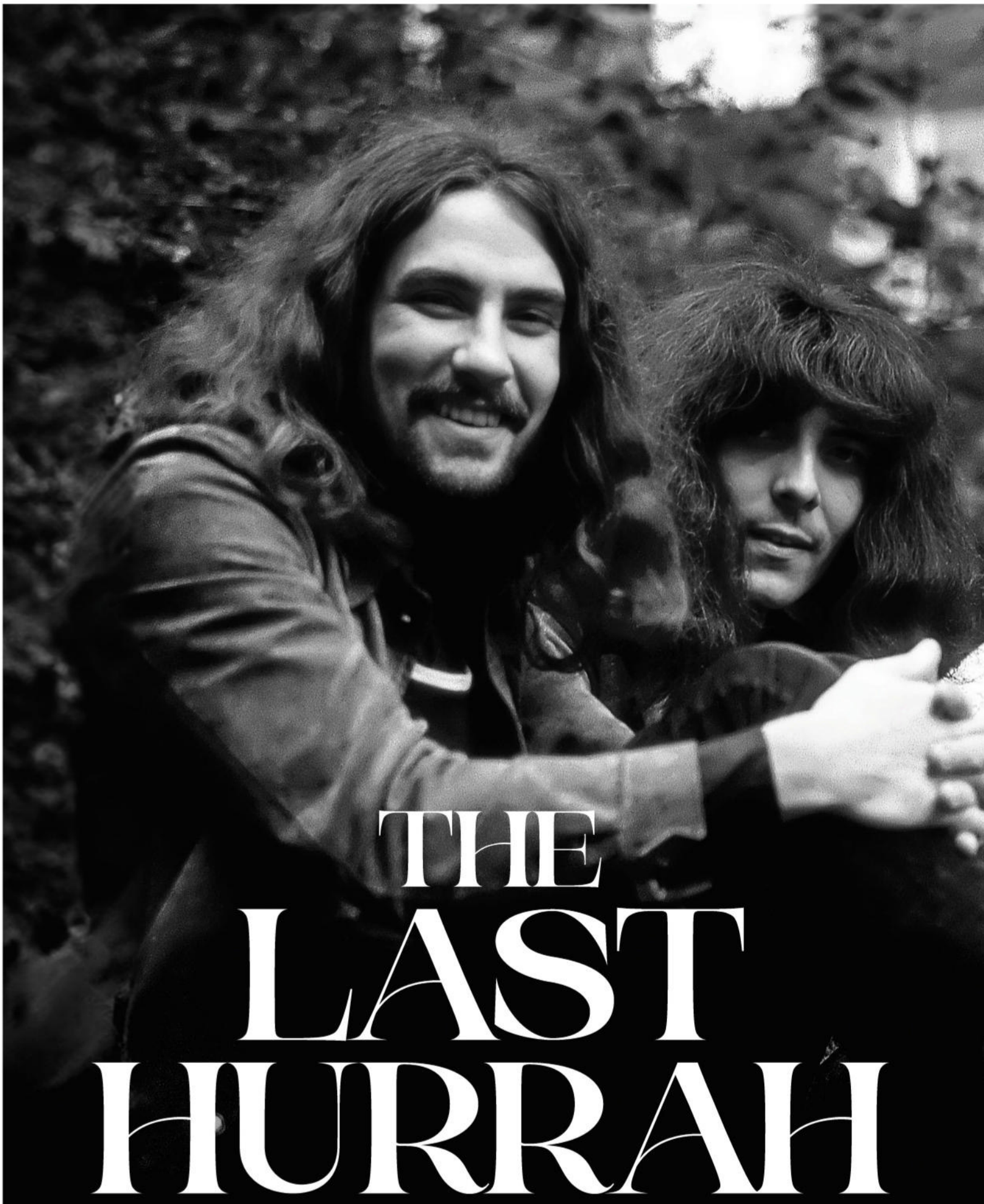
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THE LAST HURRAH

On July 5, 2025, the original four members of **Black Sabbath** reunite to play the *very* last Sabbath show, in their home city. After that there will be no more comebacks, no more tours, no more 'final' shows. Ozzy, Tony, Geezer and Bill look back at their incredible time together.

Words: **Dave Everley**



MM-MEDIA ARCHIVE/ICONIC PIX





Geezer and Ozzy let their hair down. Or up.

This is how it all begins.

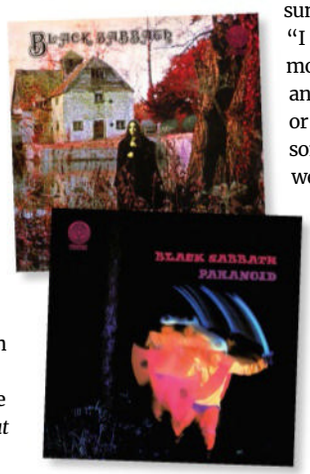
It's May 1969 and four young men are crammed into a room in the Newtown Community Centre in Aston, Birmingham, inventing the future. Between them they sport an array of haystack hairstyles and unkempt moustaches, although they're all barely out of their teens. The eldest is a dark-haired figure who plays his guitar left-handed and emits an air of menace. At 21 he's their unofficial leader. The rest of them are barely 20.

They've been playing together for nearly a year by this point, briefly under the name the Polka Tulk Blues Band, then even more briefly as plain Polka Tulk, and now as Earth. For most of that time they've been grabbing gigs wherever they can, mostly playing blues and blues-rock covers. But recently they realised they needed some material of their own.

They've written one song already, a jazzy, bluesy track called *Wicked World*, whose fearful title plugs into the turmoil and angst in the air. They've also got the beginnings of a few others, jammed out during a recent residency in a grotty club in Hamburg.

But the song they're finishing up now is something else. The inspiration came from Gustav Holst's ominous *Mars, The Bringer Of War*, from his early 20th-century suite *The Planets*, but they've summoned some dark magic and transformed it into something else entirely.

The guitarist, Tony Iommi, lays down a thick, doom-laden riff before wild-eyed, wild-haired singer Ozzy Osbourne lets out the terrified cry: '*What is this that stands before me?*' The music suddenly erupts into a terrified gallop, with bassist Geezer Butler lost in his own world as he rocks his head from side to side, and drummer Bill Ward battering his kit like he's trying to keep a wild animal down.



"When we finished the song, I kind of sunk inside myself," Ward says today. "I thought we've either just made the most enormous mistake of our lives and completely fucked up the future, or we've opened a door that leads to something unknown. I didn't know what we'd done."

Although the finished song won't have its title in its lyrics, the one they'll soon give it, taken from a Boris Karloff B-movie horror movie that came out a few years earlier, fits the music's malevolent aura perfectly: *Black Sabbath*.

Other bands had already heavied up the blues: Cream, Led Zeppelin, America's Iron Butterfly, but *Black Sabbath* was something different. This was no blues song. It was its own thing: a thunderclap that would jolt an entirely new form of music to life, launching the band who wrote it on a journey that none of them could ever have conceived of.

"That song was so different to anything else that had gone before," says bassist Geezer Butler now. "When we wrote *Black Sabbath*, I knew we had found our calling."

This is how it all ends.

On July 5, 2025, 57 years after the four members of Black Sabbath first played together, the thunderclap will ring for the last time.

That's the day when Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward will take the stage at Villa Park stadium in Birmingham for a show named Back To The Beginning, a reference to the fact that all four men were born and raised within

GEEZER: FIN COSTELLO/GETTY; OZZY: ROSS HALFIN



Heavy metal: Sabbath with their silver discs for 1976's *Technical Ecstasy* album, August 10, 1977.

MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY

a stone's throw of this venerable football ground, home of Aston Villa FC since 1897.

It will effectively be the loudest retirement party in history. In February 2023, Ozzy announced that he would no longer be touring, the culmination of years of health issues, physical injuries and debilitating surgeries. He decided in 2024 that he wanted to bow out with one final home-town show, and he wanted the original line-up of Black Sabbath to be part of it. The upcoming show will be the first time all four members have played together in almost 20 years, and it will be the last time ever. For Black Sabbath, and for Ozzy Osbourne, Back To The Beginning is a closing of the circle.

"'Important' isn't the word I would use," Ozzy tells *Classic Rock* of the Villa Park show. "This is my farewell show. I am very blessed to say my goodbyes with the help of so many amazing musicians and friends."

That list of friends is impressive to say the least. Pretty much every significant rock and metal band in operation today is represented on the all-star bill: Metallica, Guns N' Roses, Slayer, Tool, Faith No More, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, Ghost, Korn, Anthrax... the list goes on. These aren't just people whose music has been shaped by Sabbath. They're people whose whole identities have been shaped by them.

The line-up means Back To The Beginning is easily the biggest single gig of the year, probably the decade. But the night itself will belong to the four men who helped start all this all those years ago.

"We've always had a bond with each other," says Iommi. "All the things that have gone down over the years, all the complaining about one thing or another, we're a family at the end of the day."

He can say that now, but Iommi initially wasn't sure if he wanted to play a Black Sabbath show in 2025. "I'd already closed the door on it," he says of the idea of Sabbath playing live again. "I thought that was it."

He's talking about The End, the 11-month long tour that concluded with a farewell show at Birmingham's Genting Arena on February 4, 2017. It wasn't quite the perfect goodbye – Bill Ward wasn't part of it after pulling out of the most recent Sabbath reunion just over five years earlier – but it was as good a curtain closer on such an illustrious career as it gets. For Iommi, whose decision it was not to tour any more after being diagnosed with lymphoma in early 2012, it was unequivocally the end of the road for Black Sabbath. The End really meant the end this time.

"That was really emotional," he says now of that final show. "I thought: 'That's it now, we're done, we won't be playing together again.'"

"The original Sabbath will never be on stage together again."

Ozzy Osbourne



And so it seemed, until he got a text from Ozzy Osbourne in the autumn of 2024 suggesting the original Sabbath reunite for one more performance during what would be Ozzy's last ever live show. The guitarist's reaction: "I didn't want to do it."

Geezer Butler has a different view of The End tour today. "For me it was definitely the end of touring," he says. "But I didn't rule out a one-off gig, or maybe an album."

He got the same message from Ozzy: did he want to do one more gig? "I said yes if the others were up for it," he says.

Iommi's mind was changed by the fact that profits from the show would go to three charities: Cure Parkinson's, Birmingham Children's Hospital and Acorns Children's Hospice.

But there was one other condition: Bill Ward would have to be involved.

The members of Black Sabbath haven't always agreed on everything over the years, but they unequivocally agree on something today. This ➢



"Alright, who shouted out for a Jethro Tull song?" Iommi with Sabbath in London in 1975.

reunion wouldn't be happening if Bill Ward wasn't involved.

Geezer: "The whole point of this last show was to finish with the original four of us playing together, so I wouldn't have contemplated it without Bill."

Tony: "No. There'd be no point. We've already done that. And that was the thing. Because it's the original line-up, that makes it more proper. So no, I wouldn't have done it without the original line-up."

"It's very important," says Ozzy. "The original Sabbath will never be on stage together again. From the late sixties, we're probably one of the only bands where the original members are still alive and speaking with one another."

"We've always had a bond with each other... We're a family at the end of the day."

Tony Iommi

If this has to end anywhere, then Villa Park is the perfect place.

Iommi isn't about to start pretending he's a football fan at this late stage, although he's known plenty of players. "A lot of my friends were ex-footballers and managers for some reason," he says. "I'd have them round to my house for dinner. People like [80s stars] Andy Gray and Trevor Francis, and it'd be: 'Don't talk about football!'"



Ozzy hasn't shown much interest in the game down the years either, although as kids he and Ward would both 'mind' people's cars for money on match days – basically juvenile extortion. "It was a screw," the drummer says gleefully. "They'd pay us so we wouldn't put a knife in the tyres."

It's a different matter for Ward and Butler. The latter in particular follows Aston Villa religiously. "It doesn't get any better," he says of the choice of venue.

But the link to Aston runs deeper than football. Each of them grew up in this working-class area of Birmingham, all within half a mile of Villa Park. Bill lived on the east side, Ozzy on the west, Geezer and Tony to the south: three points on an imaginary crucifix. They went to school in Aston, they started playing music there, they formed Black Sabbath there. Its factories and steel foundries shaped them, and shaped their music.

The Sabbath origin story has been told many times. How Tony Iommi and Bill Ward turned up on the doorstep of a guy calling himself Ozzy Zig after their band Mythology fell apart following a hash bust, only to find it was a kid Iommi used to beat up at school. How Bill had persuaded Tony to take a chance on Ozzy, and how Ozzy brought in Geezer Butler, his mate from their old band Rare Breed (there were another couple of people at the start, a slide guitarist and a saxophone player, long forgotten).

Ward can still remember the first time the four men who would form the core of Black Sabbath played together. "We heard Oz warming up in a different room," he says. "I listened to his voice, this young man, and he sounded so strong and healthy. I thought: 'Oh my god, we've got to hang on to this. This is special.'"

Iommi has a different memory of the noise they made that first time. "It was a horrendous racket," he says, laughing. "Geezer was a guitar player, he had never played bass before. I didn't even know Ozzy sang. But it's amazing how quickly it came together."

They had the whole world in front of them back then. Their camaraderie was unbreakable.

"There was this unity we had," says Ward. "We couldn't stay apart from each other. We used to walk each other home ≫

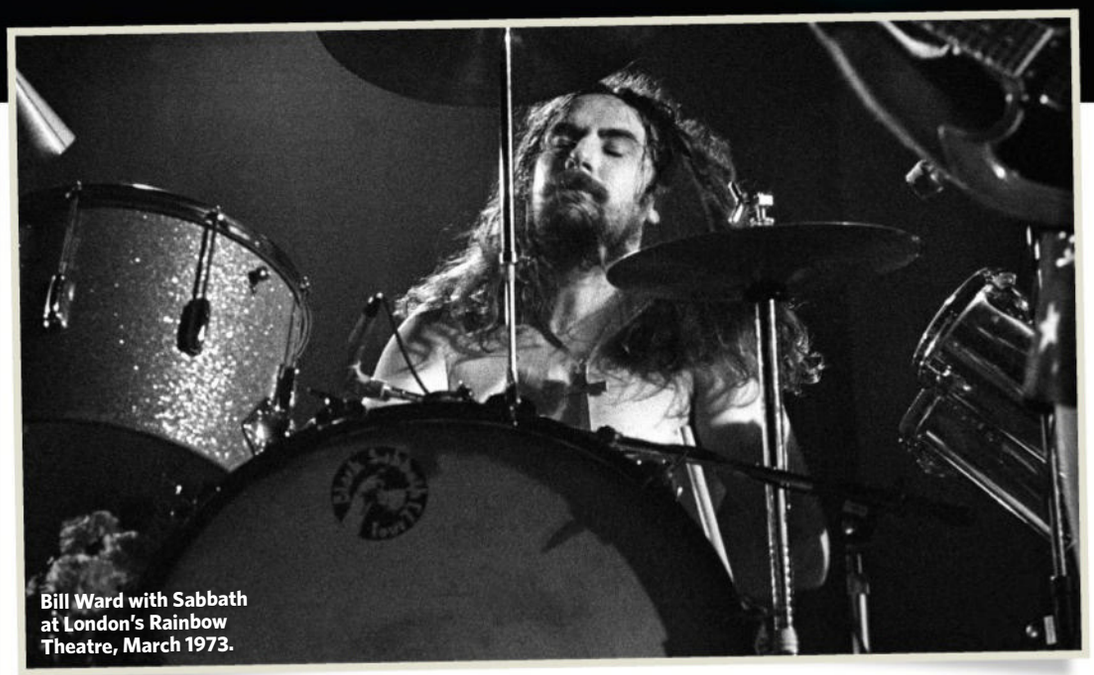
CAMERA PRESS/STEVE EMBERTON



The 'tache years. (Always one to spoil a full set.) Photo session in Germany, March 1971.

PLITZ/GOOD TIME-NIKMA/DALLE/ICONICPIX





Bill Ward with Sabbath at London's Rainbow Theatre, March 1973.

after we played. We'd get to the first house, and sit and talk. Then we'd decide to walk to somebody else's house and do the same. We'd walk through the night, picking each other's brains: 'What do you think?' Sometimes we wouldn't get in until four or five in the morning. If one of us was injured or got in a fight, we had each other's backs."

"We lived and breathed each other," says Iommi.

Ozzy first left Black Sabbath in late 1977, walking out of a rehearsal and not coming back.

For much of the preceding decade, Sabbath had been flying high in every sense. They hadn't so much blazed a trail as steamrolled a new path, the heaviness of their music a benchmark for every other band to aspire to. The records they released from 1970 to 1975 – from the mammoth self-titled debut album to the wild-eyed, cocaine-dusted mania of *Sabotage* – is one of the greatest six-album runs in rock. Along the way these four kids from Aston got to experience everything fame had to offer, both good (tours, drugs, sex) and bad (litigation, religious protests, death threats). Like Iommi says, they lived and breathed each other.

"We were loud and aggressive, and that's what I love about us."

Bill Ward

But by the end of 1977 they were breathing fumes. Ozzy was tired from years of touring and bickering, booze-sodden from years of drinking, and wondering where all the money the band had made actually was. And then he was gone, no longer a member of Black Sabbath.

His self-imposed exile didn't last long, however. A few months later he was back in. By the start of 1979 he was out again. But this time it wasn't his choice.

"We didn't have an option," says Tony. "The record company were saying: 'How's the new album coming on?' I said: 'Oh yeah, it's coming on okay.' But we hadn't done anything. We were putting riffs down, but Ozzy just wasn't in the right frame of mind. He wasn't into it any more."

What happened next is a Hollywood movie waiting to happen. Ozzy holed up in an Los Angeles hotel, determined to drink and snort himself to death, before he was pulled from the wreckage of his career by Sharon Arden, daughter of Sabbath's hardman manager Don Arden and the singer's future wife. His solo career got off to a flying start with 1980's *Blizzard Of Ozz* album and he never looked back.

Sabbath pulled off a minor miracle themselves, bringing in former Rainbow singer Ronnie James Dio and making 1980's career-reviving album *Heaven And Hell*. But Ward wasn't enjoying life in Black Sabbath now that the original fellowship was broken.

"I missed Oz," he says sadly. "I felt a huge loss. And there were other problems at the same time. I lost my mother, which was huge for me, and my drinking was accelerating, which was becoming a problem."

Ward quit the band before the *Heaven*

MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; BILL IAN DICKSON/GETTY

And Hell tour started.

"I don't know what Black Sabbath should have done, but I do know that it didn't work for me."

Iommi carried on with Sabbath through the 80s, initially with Geezer by his side and then as the last remaining original member. The Ozzy and Sabbath camps tossed barbs at each other in the press in the way that warring family members hurl insults around at a drunken wedding reception – they were designed to hurt rather than maim.

"We were mainly focusing on what we were doing," says Iommi, "but of course, I was aware of what Ozzy's career, because he was part of my life. I liked some of the things he was doing. It was great for him that he found people he could do something with. It made him get off his arse. Us too, because we didn't want to lose the original line-up, but we'd had no choice."

Whatever the state of the relationships between the four original members were at any given time during 1980s, there was no changing the fact that the original line-up of Black Sabbath wasn't coming back. That is, until they did.

Six years after they fired Ozzy, Black Sabbath's original line-up reunited on stage for the first time. This was July 13, 1985, at the John F. Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia. The occasion was the US leg of Live Aid.

"Oof, bloody hell," Iommi says, wincing at the memory.

'Oof, bloody hell' sums it up pretty well. Live Aid is famous for many things – Queen's for-the-ages performance, Bono falling off stage mid-set, Bob Geldof saying 'fuck' on British TV at 3pm on a Saturday afternoon. One thing it definitely isn't famous for is the Black Sabbath reunion.

By this point the guitarist was the last man standing from the original line-up. When the offer came in to get back together with Ozzy, Geezer and Bill to play a short set as part of this huge charity extravaganza, he thought: 'Why not?' Phone calls were made, plans arranged.

"We hadn't played together for a while," Iommi says. "We had a slot booked to rehearse on one of the days before the shows, but all we did was drink and talk about the old days."

The night before the show, they hit the bar once more.

"Of course, on the day of the show I had a dreadful hangover," he recalls. "That's why I had my dark glasses on. It didn't help that we were receiving these lawsuits before the show, cos there were problems between Sharon and [her dad and also Black Sabbath's manager] Don Arden. It was all a bit chaotic."

They managed three songs that day: *Children Of The Grave*, *Iron Man* and *Paranoid*. It was a long way from being a great performance (although at



Sabbath fans as far as the eye can see at the California Jam, April 6, 1974.



MAIN: ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/DISNEY GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT CONTENT VIA GETTY; OZZY: CHRIS WALTER/GETTY



ROSS HALFIN

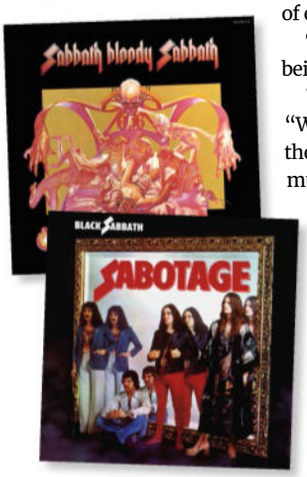
least it wasn't as bad as that of another band that had reunited for the event: Led Zeppelin).

After it was done, they shook hands and stumbled off in their respective directions. Just like that, the first Black Sabbath reunion had come and gone.

The next time it happened was a lot less 'Oof, bloody hell'. This time it was November 15, 1992 in Costa Mesa, California, on the final night of Ozzy's supposed retirement tour. Iommi, Butler and Ward joined their former bandmate on stage at the end of the set for a joyously received four-song encore, playing *Black Sabbath, Fairies Wear Boots* and the ubiquitous *Iron Man* and *Paranoid*.

There was a partial reunion in 1997, when three quarters of the classic line-up got together to play that year's Ozzfest in the US – Ward was the absentee, his place taken by Faith No More's Mike Bordin. But the real thing came in December that year, when the original foursome reunited for two shows at Birmingham's NEC Arena. This was heavy metal's founding fathers bringing it back to where it had started.

"Please, just one last show! With all four original members!"



"It was great to play in our home town with our original line-up," says Iommi. "It was good."

"We played particularly well at those shows," says Butler. "I was very proud of everyone."

"I enjoyed it," says Ward. "I enjoyed being with the band."

You've got to laugh. "It was good" and "We played well" massively undersell the brilliance of those shows. Not just musically, but emotionally too. Sabbath were majestic, the years falling away as they played, the 20-something kids they had once been visible where the 50-something men they had become now stood. Saying there were grown men crying in the audience is usually a huge cliché, but in this case it was true both nights.

This Sabbath reunion came to an end in December 1999, at the end of a tour billed The Last Supper because it was supposedly the band's final run out. Of course, it was no such thing. They were back again in 2001, attempting (unsuccessfully) to record a new album with producer Rick Rubin, then out on the road again in 2004 and 2005.

There was no grand farewell announcement this time, although a legal wrangle between the Osbourne and Iommi camps over the latter's decision to reunite with Ronnie James Dio under the Black Sabbath name suggested some of the old aggro had risen to the surface (the Iommi/Butler/Dio iteration of the band rechristened themselves Heaven & Hell).

All of that indicated there wasn't much chance of a reunion happening again, which inevitably meant it happened again. On November 11, 2011, the four original members of Black Sabbath gathered on stage at the Whisky A Go Go club in Los Angeles to announce that they were not only getting back together to tour once more in 2012, but they would also record their first album together since *Never Say Die!*.

And that's where things got messy.

On May 19, 2012, Black Sabbath played their latest comeback gig, in – where else - Birmingham. Three thousand people packed into the O2 Academy for this warm-up club show ahead of their headlining appearance at Download a month later.

But one person was missing. In February, three months after the announcement that all four original members were getting back together, Ward pulled out of this reunion.

Both sides have their own versions of what went wrong: an "unsignable contract" (Ward); a physical inability to cope with the demands of a long tour (the rest). The net result was that it was Tommy Clufetos, the drummer from Ozzy's solo band, sitting behind the kit that night, and at every subsequent Sabbath gig for the next five years, right up to the last show of the The End tour. When Sabbath recorded their 2013 reunion album *13* it was Rage Against The Machine's Brad Wilk doing the honours.

No one is willing to reopen old wounds today, but it's evident that Ward was hurt by the split and the fallout that followed. "It was a difficult period for me," he says. "There was a lot of mud-slinging. I went inwards, which wasn't wise. I became ill."

He eventually lifted himself out of his despondency via 'drum art', images created via rhythms he'd beat out. But he'd reconnected with Ozzy even before that. Despite what was said in the press, the issue was never between the two of them. Ozzy's wife Sharon, maybe, but not Ozzy himself. "Me and Oz never fell out," he says. "Slowly but surely it all came around."

Tony says he and Ozzy talk more



ROSS HALFIN x2

"I think we'll be sticking to the old faves like *War Pigs, Iron Man, Paranoid* etcetera. But we'll see."

Geezer Butler

than they ever did, and he's in touch with Bill and Geezer from time to time. There was a moment a couple of years ago when an upset Ozzy roasted Geezer in an interview for not calling him after the singer made various health issues public, but that turned out to be a misunderstanding (Geezer doesn't use the phone, and said he'd sent several 'get well' messages that never reached Ozzy). And Bill, the man who has spent long periods in self-imposed exile from Sabbath, seems genuinely happy that everyone is friends again.

"It's an invisible bond," says Ozzy. "It can't be broken."

If you're here for the lowdown on what to expect from the Back To The Beginning gig, sorry to disappoint you. This is mainly because none of the men whose names are at the top of the bill know what they'll be doing. They're not being evasive. It's just that when we speak, in mid-to-late March, it sounds like they genuinely have no idea what will happen.

Here's what we do know:

1. Ozzy will play a short solo set, presumably at the end of the night.

2. He'll then join the rest of Sabbath for their last hurrah together, which will also be a fairly short set.

3. That's pretty much it.

Wheels are definitely in motion, though. Tony sent Ozzy a list of songs he'd like to do. "And he sent a list back saying he'd like to do these songs," says the guitarist. "Then I sent a list to Bill and Geez to see what they thought."

"It's still early days as yet, but I think we'll probably do a shortened set since Ozzy is doing a solo set too," is Geezer's take on it. "I think we'll be sticking to the old faves like *War Pigs*, *Iron Man*, *Paranoid* etcetera. But we'll see."

Over in California, Ward has been in training for the gig. He suffers from neuropathy, which can cause pain in his feet, but that doesn't stop him. He puts ice packs on his feet. "It knocks all the pain and the burning out," he says.

He played for two hours yesterday. "Very loud," he says with some pride. He's been reacquainting himself with using heavy cymbals, ones that will cut through Tony and Geezer's guitar and bass, and generally strengthening his wrists. He's getting his fitness up. "Sparring, boxing, it keeps my upper body fit," he says. "I'm serious about this."

For Ozzy, the health issues and surgeries that have prompted his retirement from performing are no small thing to overcome. In his email to *Classic Rock* in late March, he sounds bullish about the preparation required for the Back To The Beginning show. "What preparation?" he says. "It's what I do."

A few weeks later, speaking on his Sirius X radio show, he gives more of a glimpse into the reality of having to build up his fitness, effectively from scratch.

"I'm doing two sets of three-minute walks a day and weight training," he says. "Three minutes to you, for instance, is nothing, but I've been laying on my back recovering from umpteen surgeries."

But where there's a will, there's a way. Iommi got a text from Ozzy a few days before we speak, outlining his plans to fly to the UK in late May. "We're going to rehearse at some point in the middle of June," says the guitarist. "And then we can answer the questions of what we'll ➢



"IS THIS OZZY'S LAST SHOW? ONE THOUSAND PER CENT"

Sharon Osbourne on the Back To The Beginning show.

When did the idea for the Back To The Beginning show come about?
We've been working on it for a year and a half. It came because Ozzy kept saying that his one big regret was that he didn't get to say thank you and goodbye to his fans. He just felt terrible about it. I was thinking: "How can we do that? How can we make that happen?" And our good mates at LiveNation came forward. I couldn't have done it without them.

How important was it that Bill Ward was involved in this?
It was important to Ozzy. It was very important to him. We're just delighted he said yes. Ozzy's very, very happy.

Why did you ask Tom Morello to act as musical director?
Tom's been incredible. I've known him since he was a little boy. He's a cross between a musician and a public speaker. He just commands respect, no matter from who - people listen to his suggestions. Because he's got that respect from everybody.

Have you called Dave Grohl to see if Ozzy can borrow the throne he used when he broke his leg?
Oh my god! No, we've got a million Ozzy thrones.

Will there be a tribute to Randy Rhoads in any shape?
With Ozzy, yes, of course.

The proceeds from the show go to three charities. Why did you choose the three that you did?
Cure Parkinsons is a no-brainer – every penny goes to find a cure, and that's what most important. And it's the same with Birmingham Children's Hospital and Acorns Children's Hospice. When Ozzy was a kid he was in hospital for a long time, and it was horrible. He never wants a kid to go through what he went through. He wants to raise enough money just to bring a little happiness.

Is this really going to be Ozzy's last ever show?
One thousand per cent. Everything that Ozzy's ever wanted to do, he's done. Every place he's ever wanted to go. He's just had an incredible life. He's done. Literally, after this we're going to go home and shut the door.

Is he retiring from making music altogether?
He likes going and playing on other people's tracks. He enjoys it. So he won't give up recording.



Tony Iommi ignites some heavy metal fire.

play and what we're capable of doing."

One thing Iommi says he won't be doing is playing with any other bands on the bill. The job of pulling together this all-star line-up has been taken up willingly by Rage Against The Machine guitarist Tom Morello, who has embraced the task with the enthusiasm of a toddler who's just discovered the keys to the Haribo factory.

"It's incredible, what he's done," Iommi says of Morello. "I'd die of shock trying to put that together. But I can't see any of us getting up and jamming with anybody else, because everybody else will already be jamming with everybody else. My aim is to focus on Sabbath, and that's it really. We haven't played with Bill for years and it's the original line-up, so I'm sure it's going to be very emotional."

And what does Bill Ward himself think about it all?

"My job is to play my ass off," he says. "That's what I do. No slight on other people, but I'm the drummer with Black Sabbath. Always have been, always will be."

"We're one of the only bands where the original members are still alive and speaking with one another."

Ozzy Osbourne

Last year, Tony Iommi went back and listened to the music he'd written with his engineer and producer Mike Exeter for *13*, Sabbath's much-trumpeted 2013 reunion album. This was before producer Rick Rubin got his hands on it.

"All the band had come over to my house and we put stuff down," he says. "I was listening to it and thinking, 'Blimey, that sounds good.'"

13 was the original line-up's first album since *Never Say Die!*, 35 years earlier. The expectation that these 60-somethings could pick up where their late-20 and early-30-something selves left off was optimistic, but *13* was no disgrace. Still, for Iommi the album is tainted by the experience of making it with Rubin.

"I went to Los Angeles with three CDs full of ideas, but he made us strip everything down that I'd put together," he recalls. "He wanted it to sound like the first album. But you can't recreate that. Some of the stuff sounded better when we were working at my house – it sounded more... alive. But it's what it was. And it's a shame Bill didn't play on it, but it was difficult.

Butler has similarly mixed feelings.

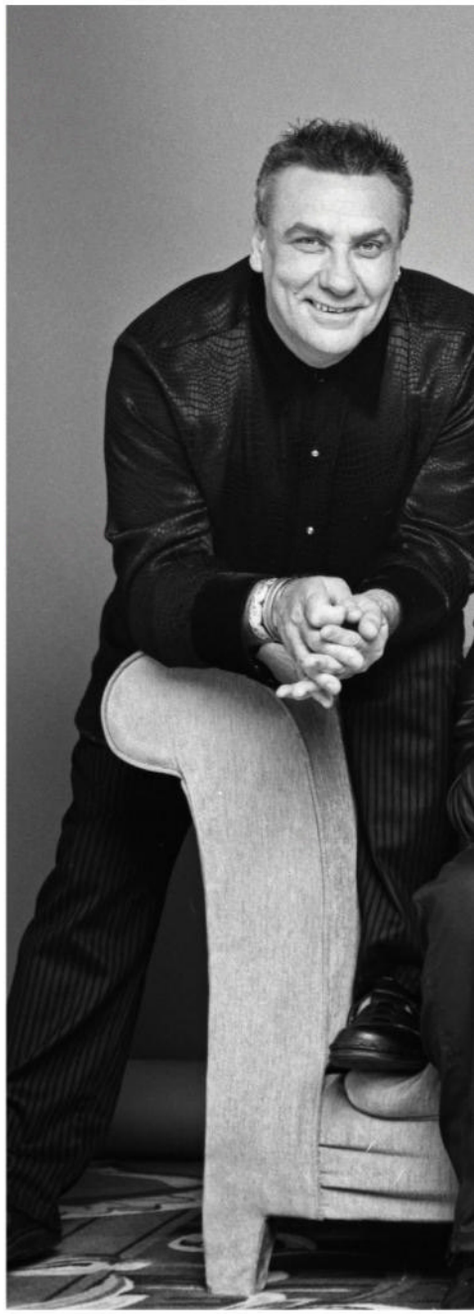
"There are some good songs on there, such as *God Is Dead?*, *Zeitgeist*, *Damaged Soul* and *Dear Father*," he says. "I was led to believe Ozzy would write all the lyrics, but Rick Rubin insisted I write them. So I changed around some lyrics and ideas of Ozzy's, then wrote everything in a mad rush. I like Sabbath's lyrics to mean something, but trying to think of thirteen subjects to write about the night before committing them to recording gave me headaches."

He says he'd change some of those lyrics if he could redo it again. And he echoes Iommi's words: "It would have been great if Bill was on it."

Iommi says there could be a time when pre-Rubin songs he wrote for *13* are released – "There may well be" – but barring a major change of heart or a minor miracle, *13* looks likely to remain Black Sabbath's recorded swansong.

"I've been approached about doing a Sabbath album," says Iommi. "It could be good, but I don't want to take the time of sitting down and writing stuff like last time and it goes willy-nilly."

Geezer is slightly less equivocal. "Do I wish we'd done another album? No, I don't wish we had, but if anyone really wanted to do another, I'd be up for it. But not just for the sake of doing it."



ROSS HALFIN

And Bill Ward, who didn't get the chance to play on what is likely the last Black Sabbath studio album?

"I'd love to do another album," he says. "I'll be direct about that."

Even if there are no more Black Sabbath albums, that doesn't mean there won't be more music from the members of Black Sabbath. Butler says he's "always fiddling about in my home studio, but mainly for my own enjoyment". Ward and Iommi are both actively writing music with a view to releasing it. Ward is sitting on several solo albums, including his long-gestating *Beyond Aston*, which currently stands at 26 tracks. "We just need to find someone who will release it properly," he says.

Iommi hasn't stopped writing music either. "It's really coming on now," he says. "I go in on a Monday or Tuesday with Mike



All smiles: (l-r) Bill Ward, Geezer Butler, Ozzy Osbourne, Tony Iommi.

ROSS HALFIN

Exeter and we put ideas on the tracks." He's cagey about who will sing on it. "I was going to use different singers, then I was going to do instrumental stuff, I've got stuff with just one singer. We'll see."

The guitarist played on a couple of tracks on Ozzy's 2022 solo album *Patient Number 9*. He's not averse to working with the other guys again separately. "That's altogether different to doing a Sabbath album," he says. "I just don't want to get into that thing of: 'Oh, it's a Sabbath album. Are they going to tour?' Are they going to do this or that."

Even Ozzy, the man who sparked the idea for this million-dollar retirement party, isn't stepping back from the studio completely.

"As far as recording goes, I still enjoy doing my own work," he says. "I also enjoy singing on other people's work. For the foreseeable future I will keep on recording, if the projects interest me."



On July 5, Black Sabbath will end their career less than a mile from where it began. This isn't the latest false ending. There will be no more comebacks, no more tours. We're not going to see another farewell show in five years' time.

"No, we're not," says Tony. "Like I say, I didn't originally want to do this one, because I'd already closed the door on it, and I thought that was it."

"I'll never say never, because I've said never too many times before, and look what happened," says Geezer. "But I seriously think this is the actual end, unless someone digs us up or finds our DNA in the future and recreates us."

Back To The Beginning will be a bittersweet night, for sure, not least because it feels real this time. But it isn't about Sabbath's legacy – that was cemented a long time ago. It's about beginnings and endings, about friendships and the passage of time, about four working-class kids achieving the unachievable.

"You can never know how your life turns out." says Iommi. "It's just believing in what you do and following that path. That's always what I've had, and not give up on it."

Here, at the end of it all, how do Sabbath want to be remembered?

"For what we brought to the table," says Tony Iommi. "For bringing this music out and inspiring other bands to build on it."

Geezer Butler: "As four working-class blokes who defied all the odds, but had an unbreakable belief in ourselves, and bonded with the greatest fans ever."

"For showing that it's okay to push things, to be outlandish and extraordinary and rough around the edges," says Bill Ward. "We were loud and aggressive, and that's what I love about us."

Back To The Beginning takes place on July 5 at Villa Park, Birmingham.

SPIRITS IN THE MATERIAL WORLD

Out of the darkness comes light, and **Ghost**'s future increasingly looks bright. Tobias Forge, aka Papa V Perpetua, talks dark matters and working towards "newer, better, bigger".

Words: **Johnny Sharp**



"When I was younger I was obsessed with becoming a celebrity," Tobias Forge admits. "It came with the trade I wanted to be in – a successful musician."

A surprising admission, perhaps, for a man who has built his success fronting Swedish theatrical hard rockers Ghost while wearing a succession of ornate masks, his face obscured, accompanied by a band referred to as Nameless Ghouls. His true identity was revealed officially only in 2017, and not by choice, after former ghouls broke ranks to complain about more earthly matters such as financial remuneration. Now, although this bearded 44-year-old has regularly been seen out of costume talking about his work (usually in a death-metal T-shirt and jeans, although choosing not to go on camera for our video call – old habits die hard), he maintains a relatively low profile, even at home in Stockholm.

"I'm kind of a D-level celebrity in Sweden," he says. "Which is completely fine. On the street where I live there are real famous people, from TV and Hollywood movies, and I don't envy their level of attention."

That may get increasingly difficult to contain if Ghost's fan base continues to grow at its current pace. As we speak they're at the start of a 55-date world tour, which has already taken in UK arena dates, the year after their own concert film, *Rite Here Right Now*, captured their spectacular live show from their 2023 tour. Judging by some of the titanic tunes that grace new album *Skeletá*, they'll soon be converting yet more impressionable young rock fans to the diabolical cause.

That's 'diabolical' in the traditional sense, because from day one Ghost have pinned their philosophical and aesthetic colours to an anti-Christian mast, as first single and album highlight *Satanized* reflects once more. The promotional video for that song shows a clergyman in a confession box pouring out his admission of demonic possession to a priest, with nuns and monks also gripped by presumably supernatural powers to play along to the song on medieval instruments. Towards the end of the clip, the hapless cleric turns into Ghost's new front persona, Papa V Perpetua, the latest in the lineage of mysterious leaders around which the band's mythos has been built.

So when we watch Ghost, are we basically watching a piece of musical theatre, or a rock band? Or both?

"It's a theatrical rock band, but it's not a play," says Forge. "We've really put a lot of effort into telling the story around the band, and creating the stage sets, the costumes, the light show, the pyros, because that's easily directed. But when we go on stage there's part of it that's just like a traditional band, based on the vibe in the room. So there still is this element of spontaneity when we play live, to maintain the excitement you want from a rock show."

All good showbiz fun, then, and anyone who has seen the band live can attest that they deliver handsomely in terms of on-stage spectacle. The bigger Ghost get, though, particularly in the notoriously satanic-panic-prone America, the more scrutiny there is likely to be over just what brand of Beelzebub-bothering they are trying to sell to the God-fearing youth of the world.

And that's where it's hard to pin Forge down, in terms of quite what variety of occultism he subscribes to. He has explained in the past that he embraced Satanism as a teenager by way of rebelling against strict teachers and an oppressively Christian, conservative stepmother, as well as a means of finding his tribe among the rock fraternity. But then it lent itself to the world he began creating with Ghost in 2006.

"The first Ghost record was written with no



MIKAEL ERIKSSON / MINDJUSTRIES

commercial aspirations whatsoever," he says. "It was just like an art project for me, and the satanic imagery was kind of a homage to my origins in the underground death metal/black metal scenes, where all that stuff is omnipresent. For me it was a very natural way of writing and a source of strong imagery to use. But then with the second album, I had a sense that this might be the train I'd been waiting for, so that made me sharpen my senses, and I figured: 'Well if people are listening, I might as well say something worthwhile'.

"I still believe that devilish imagery is a very effective way of telling a story," he continues, "especially in this day and age where there's this political force in the world that proclaims being on the good side, but where I come from it seems closer to the dark. What I stand for is probably closer to Jesus, to humanism, and progress, and a positive approach to how you treat people, than the supposed 'good side' are, because they want to destroy those things. They are the closest thing now to fucking Damien Thorn [the antichrist character in the *Omen* films]. Isn't that fucking ironic?"

"When I was younger I was obsessed with becoming a celebrity... I'm kind of a D-level celebrity in Sweden."

Tobias Forge

So is Satanism, to Forge, essentially a rebellion against the Christian right and the kind of forces that helped get Donald Trump into power?

"Yeah," he says. "I think the shocker for us was that we thought that in the western world we were striving towards a more secular, free world. Then you find yourself surrounded by people who secretly wanted a more simple way of seeing things. Understanding the world is difficult, and it's easy to become a zealot, and to succumb to a dictatorship, where if you just do these simple things and listen to the leader, life will be easier. And that's what linear religion has done to the world. So who is the real dark force?"

At the same time, though, he doesn't believe that all is lost.

"I still have this utopian idea of where the western world is going, which I still believe in. I still think that what's going on right now is just a bump in the road." ≫



Ghost: always look on the dark side of life...

"Devilish imagery is a very effective way of telling a story, especially where there's this political force in the world that proclaims being on the good side."

Tobias Forge

Has he ever felt any supernatural force around him during his career? Ever felt he's dicing with spiritual danger? It seems not, as he prefers to talk in more oblique terms.

"I do believe that there is a force in the universe," he says, "that you can be aware of or tapped into, but that force is not good or bad per se, it's progressive... On the other hand there will always be someone who feels like: 'I don't like this progressive movement at all, because I'm not making money out of it and I feel like my life is worthless because of it.' So I do believe that there is a force forward for humanity.

"The opposite of that is basically people being robbed of faith – belief in themselves and their own ability and their own right to control their own lives."

It's fair to say that Ghost's style of music isn't the variety of rock music most often associated with the occult. But as Forge explains, his natural tendency as a songwriter is to lean towards a more immediate, melodic style.

"Even if you listen to my old death metal band, it's pretty al dente music, but I still tried to make it as catchy as I could. I don't want to make just a background sound that you can sit and meditate to, I want to tell you something, I want to make you feel something. I think it's a natural progression that you try to be more and more effective in your writing.

"There's this misconception," he adds, "especially in indie rock, that people don't want to look good, and they don't want to be liked. You think that My Bloody Valentine didn't want to be successful? Of course they did! Did they want to become U2? Probably not. But they wanted to be just as effective in affecting people with their music. So it's a natural thing for me. If that means selling more records or getting more streams, then great."

For all the references to the dark side of the traditional spiritual spectrum, Forge insists that on *Skeletá* in particular, he has positive messages to impart. Opening track *Peacefield*, for example, offers air-punching sentiments of defiance as it celebrates '*the end of our monarchy, a state machine*'. It assures listeners: '*This is what dreams are made of, this is what they're afraid of/ A rhyme with no reason... When they finally reach you, you will have seen through/That dark is the season.*'

"I wanted to write a song that was going to instil hope," he says, "and as a reminder that just because it's night now, doesn't mean that there won't be a tomorrow. On another part of the record I compare it to winter."

That would be *De Profundis Borealis* (he does like his Latin titles), where he sings: '*Every time you feel the wind blow and a glow within you dies, when tomorrow comes you will know that the morning thaws the ice*'. For Forge this reflects a sense of optimism, which can also be found in community, as suggested on *Cenotaph* in which he sings: '*Wherever I go, you're always there, riding next to me*'.

Even if you could apply these words to any number of situations – agit-punk this is not – it's the kind of rock music that sees itself as a source of solace for people in troubled times. Forge sees Ghost very much in that mould, whether his fan base buy into the theatrics, the anti-religious humanism or just the rush of a singalong chorus.

"There is a large portion of our fan base that have experienced isolation," he says. "I've heard a lot of sentiments about the joy of having found a social network through fandom, and that gladdens me a lot."

With a predominantly young male fan base, he also feels Ghost is a positive force to steer people away from more destructive ideologies.

"There are men who are kind of compasslessly cartwheeling in the void of how to be, and when there seems to be this incel mindset that people are being drawn towards, that probably comes from social disorientation and not knowing how to be a man, or even a human in this day and age. That's a huge problem and I hope that being part of a positive fan community can help address that."

Forge's ambitions for Ghost are still growing, as he explains of the current tour: "With the film, I think that was sort of a bookend of what we were up until that point. So my job here is to reinvent Ghost in a newer, better, bigger thing that will take us onwards and upwards."

In Perpetua, if you will.

Skeletá is out now via Loma Vista.

MIKAEL ERIKSSON/M INDUSTRIES

NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL

4th-7th September 2025 at Grimsthorpe Castle, Lincs

Classic Rock, Prog & Blues

Thursday

DARE
The best in classic melodic rock led by Thin Lizzy's Darren Wharton

Yes Please TWO long sets of classic Yes
Ebb Bringing prog to the unbelievers

JOHN VERITY
Classic blues from former Argent man who has worked with a Who's Who of bands

Long Road Home Rock drenched in blues
Delfinia Ukrainian melodic power metal
Dancing Wu Li Masters Rock/funk fusion

Friday

FRANCK CARDUCCI & The Fantastic Speed
Theatrical, flamboyant classic rock & prog

The SANTANA
Winner of National Tribute Music Awards

THE MENTULLS
Genre defying rock

CATS in SPACE
Think 70s... Majestic songs, soaring vocals, powerful guitars, thundering drums!

Blackballed Filthy blues, rock riffs
Splink Folky, spacey, prog rock
Izengard Hard rock in the classic style
Zopp Neo-Canterbury, epic prog-jazz rock
Ruby Dawn Rock in a haunting hypnotic space

GYPSY'S KISS
Hard rock band co-formed by Iron Maiden man

STRAY
Legendary 60s rocking blues band

BERRY JARLOOKERS
Raw, energetic hook-laden melodic blues

Leadfeather Classic, 70's style heavy rock
Vmbra Melody focused heavy prog-rock
Troyen Dynamic crowd pleasing rock
Z-Machine Instrumental prog/rock/jazz
... + one to be announced ...

Saturday

Quo CONNECTION
John Coghlan's former band play classic Frantic Four

Chris Bevington ORGANISATION
Rocking, grooving, big band blues from IBBA chart topping band

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN
The God Of Hellfire returns to NVRF with his full show for a second headline appearance

GALAHAD
40th year show for prog rock veterans

Spriggan Mist
Charismatic folk-prog you'll remember

John Hackett Band
Melodic, funky, jazz, flute infused prog

Square Wild Award winning rocky prog
Landmarq Emotional, melodic acrobatics
Simone Galassi Italian blues power trio
The Blue Lena Southern, country blues
... + Band competition winner ...

Hammerhead Heavy, guitar based rock
The Whisky Flowers Blues & Americana
Soulweaver Dynamic & intense classic rock
Jeanice Lee Heavy yet melodic rock
Long Earth Melodic, symphonic prog

Sunday

ATOMIC ROOSTER
Organ-based rock from prog pioneers

Neil Pinnegar's GROUNDHOGS
Classic psychedelia from legendary band

Uli Jon Roth
The ultimate in classic rock from former Scorpions legend

SKYS
The Skys... peace, love, wisdom, music!

Hats Off Gentlemen It's Queen
Metal, AOR, prog - it's all there!

HAZE
prog with dual double-neck guitar, flute & violin

McHale's Permanent Brew Psychedelic blues
Winter In Eden Crunching symphonic rock
The Dead Can Wait 80s style classic rock
Albany Down Salt of the Earth rock
... + one to be announced ...

Candacraig Dark and twisted neo-prog
Heronimus Fin Improvised neo-psych rock
Tribe3 Modern accessible prog soundscapes
Ashley Sherlock Rocking country blues
Teiger Haunting atmospheric psychedelia

Grimsthorpe Castle



All stages inside marquees
2 alternating main stages
Main stage sets 1 hour minimum
All sets at least 45 minutes
Concert hall quality sound
Real-ale bar, luxury toilets!
Camping chairs allowed

www.NVRF.rocks

Camping next to music arena
Glamping with real beds
Luxury showers & toilets
Free parking for all
4 day & daily tickets available
Pay by instalments
Maximum 1,000 tickets per day

Line-up subject to change without notice

NENE VALLEY ROCK FESTIVAL

Long Train Still Runnin'

With vocalist Michael McDonald on board again and a new album, more than 50 years down the tracks **The Doobie Brothers** have still got what it takes.They tell us to just listen to the music...

Words: **Dave Ling**





CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE/PRESS



Band of Brothers in '76: (l-r) Keith Knudsen, John Hartman, Tom Johnston, Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter, Patrick Simmons, Michael McDonald, Tiran Porter.

Apart from a five-year hiatus during the mid-80s, The Doobie Brothers have been rockin' on down the highway for more than half a century. With 10 US Top 10 hits to their name, including two No.1s, the multiple-Grammy-winning Californian band also made some of the most popular albums of the 70s. Their 1976 greatest hits collection, *Best Of The Doobies*, has achieved diamond status, selling 10 million copies in the United States alone.

Yet as staples of an FM Radio scene that critics joyfully eviscerated as the epitome of blandness, probably few could identify a member of the Doobies – except perhaps for keyboard player and vocalist Michael McDonald, who also carved a hugely successful R&B/crossover career of his own – should they pass them on the street.

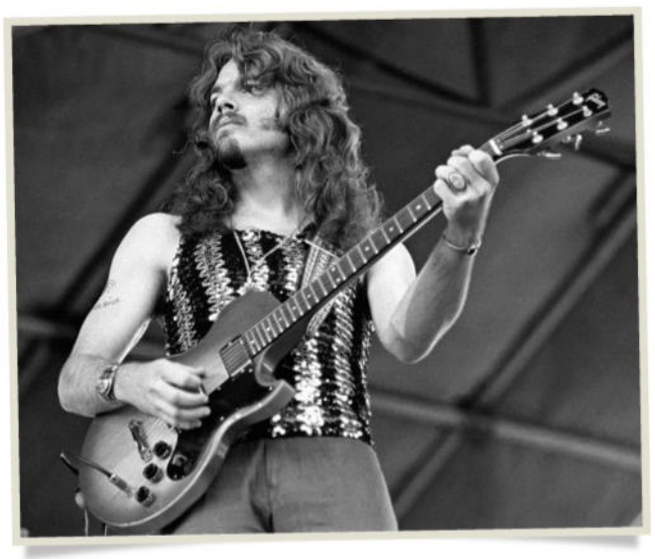
"When I meet people on flights and they ask whether I'm in a band, I tell them the songs that we're known for. They recognise those, but not me," co-founding guitarist Patrick Simmons told *Classic Rock* back in 2010, adding: "I kinda like that."

Their hit list speaks for itself. Peppered with immaculate vocal harmonies, *What A Fool Believes, Listen To The Music, Black Water, Long Train Runnin', China Grove* and *Takin' It To The Streets* all trod the lines between rock, blues and soul. The Doobies refused to become stuck in one particular genre, but the first verse and chorus of just about any of their tracks was all it took for recognition.

Debuting on the 1976 album *Takin' It To The Streets* (their sixth studio LP), Michael McDonald injected the melody X-factor that would propel the Doobies to new heights, his immaculate soulful voice complementing a more keyboard-friendly accessibility. Although McDonald wasn't there every step of the way, except for that aforementioned 1980s break the band never stopped touring and recording.

Now into his fifth spell on board, McDonald rejoined in 2019 for the group's 50th-anniversary tour, later cancelled due to lockdown, too late to appear on *Liberté*, which was released in 2021 and featured Little Feat's Bill Payne on keyboards.

Their first album of new music in 11 years, *Liberté* was not only made with an unfamiliar face at the studio console, it was also a fresh method of working for the Doobies, whose first nine albums had been overseen by the estimable Ted Templeman. The newcomer was John Shanks, a versatile, Grammy-winning producer and songwriter with ties to Bon Jovi, Stevie Nicks, Van Halen, Carlos Santana, Bonnie Raitt, Joe Cocker and even Take That and Westlife. At the risk of portraying the New Yorker as a know-it-all, he also played guitars, bass and various keyboards and did drum programming on *Liberté*, as well as co-writing all 12 of its songs.



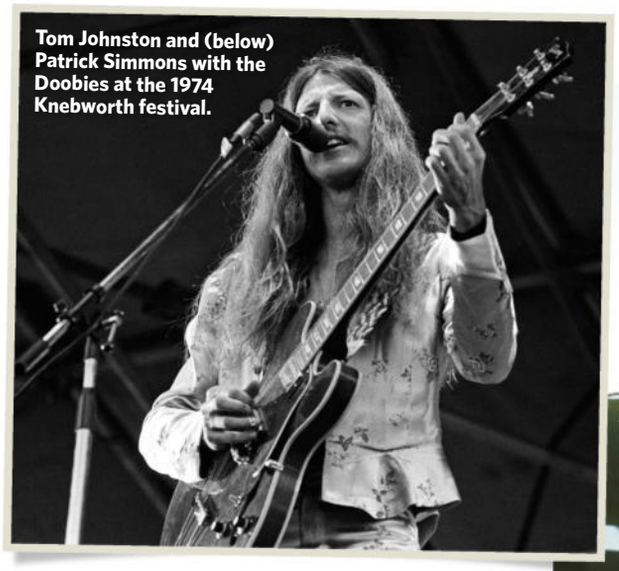
Despite the album being only a modest success, and failing to make the US *Billboard* Hot 100, so fired up were the Doobies of its mode of creation that Shanks was enthusiastically rehired for the follow-up. *Walk This Road* repeats the formula, with Shanks not only dominating the writing credits with all but one of its songs, but also bringing in the outside talent who appeared on it, including bassists Pino Palladino and Bob Glaub, percussionist Victor Indrizzo and backing singer John Cowan.

"John Shanks has introduced a completely new writing style for this band," enthuses Tom Johnston, the long-serving, co-founding guitarist now into a fourth spell of his own. As before, each band member submitted material, and trusted Shanks to add the finishing touches.

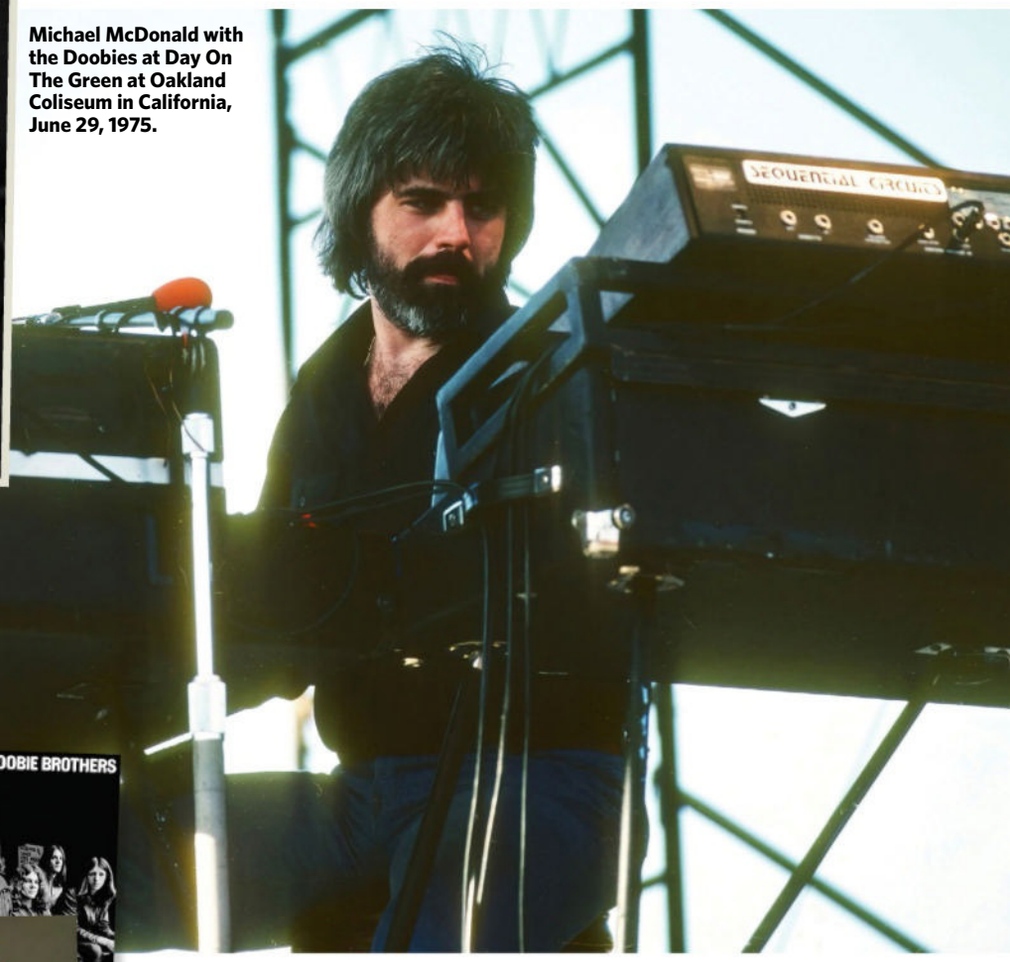
"Upstairs at John's studio there was a writing room. You'd come in the door, grab a coffee, show your songs and then hear what the others had brought in," Johnston remembers of the process.

So far so traditional. But in another twist, encouraged by Shanks, this time writing credits didn't always determine the singer, and everybody sang on each other's songs.

MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; TOM JOHNSTON: JAN DICKSON/GETTY



Tom Johnston and (below) Patrick Simmons with the Doobies at the 1974 Knebworth festival.



Michael McDonald with the Doobies at Day On The Green at Oakland Coliseum in California, June 29, 1975.

"It's an interesting way to work, and it's fast – not that we were in a hurry," reflects Johnston.

"John is an excellent songwriter and I really enjoyed working with him. I hope we can do more in the future," Michael McDonald says of a first-time collaboration with Shanks. "Besides being a consummate producer he's very good at overseeing a project from beginning to end, and he also brings many skills as a guitar player and a musician. John has the type of studio that most musicians can only dream of. He had keyboards I've never seen before."

Walk This Road, the band's sixteenth studio record, is exactly the album fans would wish for from a band like the Doobies at such an advanced stage in their career. With all three principal vocalists – McDonald, Simmons and Johnston – at the mic, its tracks come on like long-lost old friends, dispensing a winning mix of fun, superlative musical precision and the kind of autumn-years wisdom that a grandfather might bestow.

Its stirring opening number and title track, a thinly veiled condemnation of the current US government, sets a tone of maturity, common sense and, above all, decency for what follows. Although McDonald (who wrote the song with Shanks) is too discrete to reveal its inspiration by name, his frustration is all too evident.

"I think it's important that all of us stand up and say our piece," McDonald says. "Here in the US these are perilous times, I'm afraid. We are staring down a dark channel that could lead to totalitarianism. We've got a guy who doesn't want to be President Of The Unites States as much as he wants to be one of the points of light – the whole axis of everything. He wants the world. We have to be very careful of that, and we should speak out against it while we still can. I have no doubt that should they get their own way, this administration would shut down the press completely."



"We were a pretty loose bunch looking out for a way to avoid growing up."

Michael McDonald

The presence on the same song of Mavis Staples, celebrated R&B and gospel singer and political activist from Chicago who is considered a national treasure in her homeland, only accentuates its strong, positive message. The sprightly 85-year-old, who once turned down a proposal of marriage from Bob Dylan, is as close of a voice of the nation's scruples as it could get.

"I've known Mavis for quite a few years," McDonald reveals. "She is, after all, the First Lady of socially conscious gospel music. Mavis has always been at the forefront of what we were just discussing – speaking out and saying what needs to be said. For us, going to her for that particular song was kind of inevitable. We were extremely honoured that she would agree."

In contrast to the boundlessly spiritual Staples, while two of the album's songs namecheck the Lord (*Angels Of Mercy*) and God (*Speed Of Pain*) McDonald is slightly cagey when asked whether or not the Doobies are a religious group.

"I can't speak for the rest of the band, only myself," he considers for a moment. "I've no doubt that there's a higher consciousness – a God, if you will – that has allowed me to do things in my life that I could not have accomplished alone. On more than one occasion He has saved me from myself. I don't need God to have picture ID or an address to know that He exists. I have a very personal relationship with God and there isn't a day that goes by that I don't look for Him to guide me."

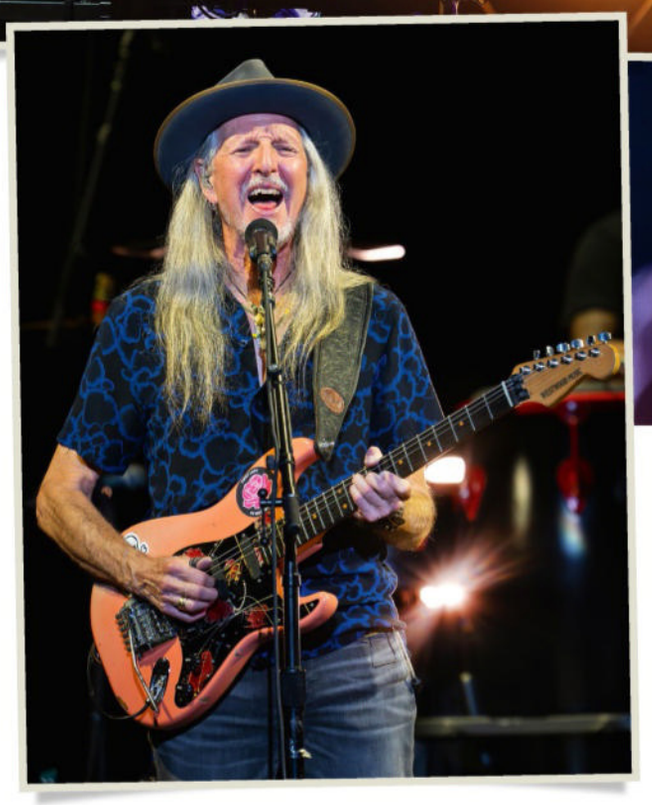
It's the type of talk you'd maybe expect from an easy-going bunch of guys nearing the end of the road rather than the young bucks that named themselves as a gang of cannabis smokers (a 'doobie' being US slang for a joint), and the album is full of lyrics that look back over the past decades and question where the writer – and also maybe the listener – went wrong in life. But it's also not what you would call 'preachy'. The poignant *Learn To Let Go*, which began as an idea by Shanks and was expanded with McDonald's help, is a good example.

"The concept behind *Learn To Let Go* is one of the hardest in life: moving on," McDonald explains. "People want to take possession of everything they encounter, and to control it, ➢

MICHAEL MCDONALD: LARRY HULST/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; PATRICK SIMMONS: IAN DICKSON/GETTY



The Doobie Brothers at Toyota Pavilion in California in 2024: (clockwise) Michael MacDonald, Tom Johnston, Patrick Simmons.





when in fact we are not in control of anything. We placed that thought within the context of a love affair that has run its course."

Sung with typical emotional gusto by McDonald, the delightful *Learn To Let Go* is a showcase for one of the best blue-eyed soul singers in the business, a flexing of the larynx that propelled *Yah Mo Be There* (a 1983 duet with James Ingram), Christopher Cross's *Ride Like The Wind* and his own *Sweet Freedom* and *I Keep Forgettin' (Every Time You're Near)* to the top reaches of international charts.

Meanwhile, featuring the line: '*If I could say I'm sorry would it do any good*', *State Of Grace* is another notable, gravitas-heavy moment.

"That one was written by Pat [Simmons] with John [Shanks], and I'm sure it did him good to get it off his chest," Johnston points out.

"It's all a part of that theme we just spoke about," McDonald elaborates. "It's important that we remember to accept how small we are in the context of the universe. I've a friend who says: 'My ego is not my amigo' and it always makes me smile."

Does it feel good to share such wisdom?

"No, and I'll tell you why," Johnston fires back. "I've never thought that way, I don't try to be a messenger. My goal is to write good songs."



The Doobies once again hit the bullseye with *Walk This Road*. An album of theirs would be incomplete without a fistful of radio-friendly melodic hard rock anthems, and along with *Angels & Mercy*, complete with the fist-in-the-air lyric '*Getting lost in rock'n'roll heaven*', *Here To Stay* – another appropriate title – fits the bill.

"I wrote that one several years ago. It's about a friend I lost, a very sad tale," Johnston confides. "There lyrics were altered a little when I sat down with John [Shanks], but the original message is still there."

Further on, the album takes a diversion into Cajun-flavoured sounds – we're talking about *New Orleans* and *The Kind That Last* – that keeps things fresh.

"I like having those songs on the record," Johnston says proudly. "It's good to do shit that you didn't do last time. Each record should have its own personality. *New Orleans* was one of those songs that started out in one direction and we took it a complete hundred and eighty degrees. It has kind of a Stones-y feel with a New Orleans vibe."

"I had a ton of fun making this record," McDonald continues. "I enjoyed playing on everyone else's songs as much as my own. *New Orleans* allowed me to play the accordion. I don't normally take a step out to take a solo on a synthesiser, but I did that on *Lahaina*. Normally I'd leave that to someone that knew what they were doing, but here it felt completely natural.

"And on the next record, should we do another one, we've promised ourselves to sit on the floor together and play live," he continues. "In the old days we'd talk about 'beating the demo', making a song sound better in the studio, but the process has changed so much it would be fun to take things back to the basics of it all. I miss sitting on the floor and letting the song invent itself through our hands and brains."

"I don't try to be a messenger. My goal is to write good songs."

Tom Johnston

The song referred to by McDonald, *Lahaina*, was put forward by Pat Simmons and is named after a historic town in Maui in Hawaii. It features Mick Fleetwood on drums, and laments the wildfires in 2023 which cost the former Fleetwood Mac drummer his restaurant on Front Street. Simmons and Fleetwood both reside on the island.

"It's a situation that should never have happened," Simmons states in the album biography/press release. "When we wrote it, I was desperate to contribute something after the fires because I just felt so helpless."

Long-term fans of the band will be celebrating

PATRICK SIMMONS + MICHAEL MCDONALD + TOM JOHNSTON: STEVE JENNINGS/GETTY



Doobies Tom Johnston, John McFee, Michael McDonald and Pat Simmons, August 2021.

"Being in this band is like no other experience I've had in music. There's something very comfortable about it for me."

Michael McDonald

this latest return of McDonald, whose presence always elevates them to another level.

"It always feels great to go back to the Doobies. Being in this band is like no other experience I've had in music," he says. "There's something very comfortable about it for me, which is I've spent such a chunk of time here. More than anything – even when we've had differences – we managed to remain friends. Any disagreements never took away our capacity to like each other. Being in this band is like home. I enjoy being a Doobie Brother."

Tom Johnston recognises what McDonald adds to the band when he comes back from doing his own thing. "He brings his own style – his keyboards, his vocals and his writing. With Michael in the band it's a little bit different to the guitar-driven thing [before he joined], but it's just as valid. People loving having him up there."

Along with his bandmates, McDonald was inducted to the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2020. However, with the world in lockdown at the time due to covid, the honour was received via the internet from the group's own homes.

"It's a shame it was done remotely, in some ways at least, but I wasn't heartbroken it happened that way," McDonald says. "I don't like those huge events. They're an ordeal – fly in, show up, and join in the huge jam session at the end. That didn't really appeal to me, but it sure meant a lot to be inducted, as we do like to think of ourselves as a rock band. We have covered many different genres but it was a rock band even before I joined. We were all very flattered."

Aware of the negativity felt by some towards the Hall Of Fame, Johnston prefers to think of the organisation in two halves. "The guys that I consider important – Bo Diddley, James Brown, Little Richard, BB King, Eric Clapton and Cream – are in there, and to me that validates the Hall Of Fame," he reasons. "As for the newer version, I just let everyone else worry about the validity of that."

When asked if he might be offended by *CR* describing *Walk This Road* as music from a better time, McDonald smirks good-naturedly and says: "I *think* it sounds complimentary to me."

The implication is that the Doobies are more to do with the past than with the present.

"There's a compliment in there *somewhere*," he shrugs. "But I am so impressed by the number of young artists out there who are so much better than we were [at their age]. We were a pretty loose bunch looking out for a way to avoid growing up; they put in more effort and detail than we did."

And yet in some ways, in 2025 the Doobie Brothers are bigger than they've ever been. On their 2017 visit to the UK, alongside Steely Dan, they co-headlined London's O2 Arena. Now, as part of a five-date tour that begins on July 11, they top the bill at the same huge venue. They're also the special guests of Jeff Lynne when he plays his final Electric Light Orchestra show at a sold-out Hyde Park in London on July 13. Quite an achievement for a band considered as American as apple pie, and maybe a little faceless too.

"Nobody is more astonished about any of this than we are – or more grateful," McDonald admits of the Doobies' dogged longevity. "In the States, some of our audiences have been coming to see us for more than fifty years. None of us thought we'd still be doing this in this size of venues after all of these years. I never thought I would be taking the stage in my sixties or my seventies. But here we are, and it's wonderful."

Walk This Road is out on June 6 via Rhino.



FAGEN'S YACHT ROCK "SET-UP"

McDonald explains F-word documentary storm.

Like it or not – and the debate causes feelings to run high – The Doobie Brothers and Michael McDonald have been engulfed by a phenomenon known as yacht rock. The description was first coined by the Americans JD Ryznar and Steve Huey in their cult web series of the same name, which sought to lampoon, and ultimately re-popularise, the super-smooth, easy-listening sounds of the likes of Toto, Steely Dan, Kenny Loggins, Christopher Cross and of course McDonald, who the pair view as the touchstone of their movement.

Some find the tag condescending and deeply insulting. Others embrace it with no guilt whatsoever. Perhaps unexpectedly, McDonald is in the latter group.

"As far as that goes, I feel fortunate to be counted as one of the people in that genre, along with Hall & Oates, Toto, the Eagles and whoever," he explains affably. "I have no problem with it due to the company I'm keeping. My kids made me watch those videos [by Ryznar and Huey] as they went viral and I found them pretty amusing."

One person distinctly *not* amused by it all was Steely Dan's Donald Fagen (pictured), who made internet headlines by swearing at Garret Price when the filmmaker called about licensing the band's music for his HBO movie *Music Box: Yacht Rock: A DOCKumentary*.

"You have to know Donald's sense of humour," McDonald grins. "When the guy called him, Donald said: 'You can have the licence, but do something for me. Hang up, pretend like we haven't talked and let's have another conversation.' So that's what happened. He called back and Donald told him: 'Go fuck yourself' and hung up. That's my understanding. It was a total set-up."

MAIN: CHRIS PIZZELLO/ALAMY; DONALD FAGEN: SANTIAGO FELIPE/GETTY



LEAP OF

Reeling from illness and uncertain times, **Skunk Anansie**'s future hung in the balance. But with new album *The Painful Truth,* they "stood on top of the cliff, held hands and jumped into the clouds".

Words: **Polly Glass**

It's Friday night at London's Roundhouse. Skunk Anansie have just launched into raging 2022 polemic *Piggy*, and Skin is sailing across the crowd on a massive pig. A snarling, nose-ringed inflatable that would frighten the hell out of Pink Floyd's porcine mascot, it's a darkly sardonic steed for the woman we're transfixed by. It's hard not to smile when she does. An otherworldly but very likeable punk queen at 57, she soars effortlessly through operatic notes, honeyed warmth and hard-rocker grit, flanked on stage by three of her best friends, all of them striking powerhouses in their own right.



FAITH

For all the Orwellian visual swings and political punches (far-right extremism, social media trolls, inequality…), a Skunk Anansie show is one of the most fun rock-geared nights out you can have. It's also one of the most friendly. Mixing 90s mega-hits like *Weak* and *Charlie Big Potato* with fiery, fat-free new material (more on that shortly), they draw a far more diverse audience than most of their peers. There are men, women, teenagers, a few children with parents. At the front stands a guy with his hair in two enormous red spikes – old-school Camden punk chic at its least ironic – dancing with punters who look nothing like him.

"I saw him singing along to songs like *Hedonism*," guitarist Ace tells us in the pub the next day. "You wouldn't associate that with that kind of aggressive-looking crazy punk. But he's singing a ballad and looking like he's going to cry there."

Even in the 90s, Skunk Anansie always had range in their political messaging. Boiling rage came with sing-your-heart-out choruses. Sharp, funny specificity was their secret weapon in anthems like *Little Baby Swastikkka*, where incisive imagery met the classic rock, punk, soul, jazz, pop and more of the band's collective DNA.

But back to the Roundhouse, and the sound of a crash. Skin ≫

ROB O'CONNOR/PRESS







Definitely not weak: Skin and Mark Richardson, Cass Lewis (top), Martin 'Ace' Kent, March/April 2025.

has fallen off the pig. Amazingly she gets right back up – part rodeo champion, part high-fashion catwalk model. Soon after, changing gears again, she instigates an all-female moshpit, pogoing in the thick of it with her fans. The mood is giddy. It *is* political, but *everyone* here is having the best time, including the band.

"It's fun to play those songs," bassist Cass Lewis offers. "We have fun playing *Swastikkka* and *Yes It's Fucking Political*. Those are our banging songs. We're not playing songs like Rage Against The Machine. Our anger is mixed up with all the fun that we have when we play together."

Skunk Anansie haven't been idle in the nine years since their last album, but nor have they been the force of freshness they used to be. Between 'greatest hits' shows, 25th-anniversary activity, Skin's appearance on *The Masked Singer* and a few singles, they began to feel rooted in their past. Behind the scenes, the retirement of their longtime manager shone a light on questions about their future – the truth about what they were in danger of becoming.

"It was a very slow descent, but it *was* a descent," Skin reflects. "We were going in the wrong direction. I felt that for a few years."

"We needed to reinvent," drummer Mark Richardson agrees. "We needed to go somewhere different. We stood on top of the cliff, held hands and jumped into the clouds."

Recorded in Los Angeles with maverick producer/TV On The Radio mastermind David Sitek, new album *The Painful Truth* is the result of that leap. A taught, fearless selection of bangers, ballads and incisive statements, it's the sound of a band fully invested in pushing themselves. The music of a group who've faced huge life changes, ever-shifting industry sands and a close brush with death. Proper songs at a career juncture when so many forget how to write them.

"I wanted to make this kind of album for a very long time," Skin says, "and for one reason or another reason things just didn't happen the way we wanted it to. And then this was a chance."

The next afternoon – a few hours ahead of their second sold-out night at the Roundhouse – we're in Skunk Anansie's dressing room. Generations of the Skunk family gathered here last night over gin, babies and post-gig highs. All four in the band are parents. Cass recently became a grandfather. Now, as Skin extends a hand, we can hear Mark's teething seven-month-old with his wife in the next room. At one point Cass pops in to check on plans for Ace's birthday tomorrow. There's comfort between them, undercut by the emotional whirlwinds of parenthood and touring life. You can see it in the balance they strike on stage between politics and party-friendly warmth.

"Music is a healing force. Every day I meet someone at a gig who says: 'You got me through that hard time.'" Ace

"I think people suck in the message better if you surround it with a little touch of cheekiness and a sense of humour," Skin muses, all eye contact and enunciation. "Yes you can write songs that say 'fascism is bad! We don't like fascism, boo boo booooo!' But it's so clichéd. So for us it's better to try to be clever about it, because then it gets to people in a different way. And at the end of the day, people have come to a fucking gig, right? They want to enjoy themselves. They don't mind a bit of messaging as long as it's not every song all the way through."

Cosy but fashion-alert in voluminous denim and a woolly hat, with dyed blond eyebrows and a black manicure, Skin has the laser focus of someone who's been misinterpreted all her life – and now knows precisely what she wants to say. Years of experience across the full media spectrum have put an eloquent intensity in her answers. No one fucks with her when she dives into crowds.

But there's a softness to her, too. She can be very funny. She breaks into a smile on certain subjects (Nina Simone, her daughter's favourite Disney characters, the humour in her lyrics on *The Painful Truth*). She pokes fun lovingly at her bandmates, as they do with her, but you sense that they'd all take a bullet for one another.

"We're lucky, because these are genuinely three of the nicest men I've known on the planet," she says, nodding to Mark as he joins us – all inked gym-honed arms, spiked silver hair, and a gentle manner that belies his thunderous performance behind the kit. "You know, I've had these guys be around the gayest things on the planet, and it's just like, no vibes or whatever. But they're genuinely very good people, and they're really different from each other."

Up the road at the Pembroke Castle pub, the other half of Skunk Anansie enjoy the sun over gin and tonic (Ace) and nachos with a pint for a late breakfast (Cass). They're easy, friendly company. Ace's formative years were spent in the bars around Camden Market, so this is very much home turf.

"And when Skunk first got going, we all went to Camden to buy clothes," he recalls. "*Slightly* different story for Skin now, her clothes don't

SKIN & MARK RICHARDS ON: KATJA OGRIN/GETTY; CASS: JOSEPH OKPAKO/GETTY; ACE: LORNE THOMSON/GETTY

come from Camden, they all come from Gucci to Camden, or whatever."

North London lifers who still live locally, Ace and Cass grew up in the same record shop in Queensway. Cass (born Richard Lewis) bought his first album there: Bill Haley & The Comets' *Rock Around The Clock*, not what you might expect from the slinky Funkadelic grooviness of his bass lines today. "And I bought Elvis Presley," he adds, "and my first pop album was David Essex."

Imbued with a brightened disposition following a close call with cancer, Cass is the most naturally sociable of the group. When Skin needed a wingman to visit the Jean-Paul Gaultier offices recently (she's had a long relationship with the French fashion house), she took him.

"I'm like: 'I'm taking Cass, because he'll just charm all the girls,'" she says later. "And that's exactly what happened. Because I can be a bit shy in those kinds of situations, [with] posh things and posh people." She pauses with a knowing grin. "But then he made *me* go with him to Chanel to get a present for his girlfriend. Because I know how to do that, I know which handbag, I'm like: 'Yeah, don't get your money out here...'"

For Ace (Martin Kent on his passport), it was all about punk in the beginning. The guitarist picked up albums by The Stranglers and the Incredible Shrinking Dickies, until he discovered Black Sabbath and traded all his punk records for a Sabbath double compilation. As an adult he's translated that thirst for newness into different roles – teaching, writing columns for *Guitarist* magazine and starting a music school in Italy. Currently head of industry partnerships and business development at London's ICMP (Institute Of Contemporary Music Performance), he's very much the 'business head' in Skunk Anansie. It's a role he wears naturally. It's easy to picture him working with young people.

"I love being surrounded by young, vibrant, creative individuals," he enthuses, beaming. "There's such a diverse mix of people at those places, it's amazing. There's energy there all the time, creative energy, which is more so than you get off the older, jaded bands."

Experiences like these (Mark also has a teaching background, and Skin mentors students at NYU's Clive Davis Institute) served them well when it came to recording *The Painful Truth* with David Sitek. Known chiefly for his role in alt.rockers TV On The Radio – he also has production and remix credits for Nine Inch Nails, Weezer, Steven Wilson and lots more – Sitek was also a big Skunk Anansie fan. During sessions at his studio in LA, he hauled them firmly outside their comfort zone. Out went their riff-based roots, in favour of a lyric-first approach, with ample space for experiments and left-field touches. Strong choruses were key. They all agree it was exactly what they needed.

"It was like breathing new life into us," Cass remembers, "just having someone with a completely different approach, who deconstructed what we normally do."

"I call it simplistic madness," Ace reasons. "Simplistic in the fact that it's really basic in certain ways, and it's all analogue sounds. But it's complete madness. When you listen to *An Artist Is An Artist*, it's like: 'What is that arrangement? It's fucking insane.' And then *Lost and Found*, that's a really bizarre arrangement, same with *Animal*. But we did what felt good, not questioning it. So



Powerhouse performance: Skin at The Roundhouse, London, March 28, 2025.

CAPITAL PICTURES / ALAMY

"It was a very slow descent, but it *was* a descent. We were going in the wrong direction." Skin

when I came to learn the record, I was like: 'This is quite weird...'"

And yet for all its curveballs and fewer guitars, *The Painful Truth* rocks hard. Solos are all the more powerful for their sparing deployment. Groove and melody are the core drivers throughout, lending a sensual heartbeat to the whole record. It doesn't sound like a band doubting their future, despite notions to the contrary after their longtime manager retired. When that happened, Skin suggests, there were assumptions within their camp. Namely that Skunk Anansie would do a big farewell arena tour, make a ton of cash and call it a day.

"It was almost decided for us," she says. "But it's kind of like: 'Well, no one actually asked us!' And when the four of us actually sat down and asked ourselves, we were like: 'Absolutely not. Let's make a new album.'"

United in their resolve, Skunk Anansie knew where they needed to go. There was a farmhouse in Devon that became available. Beautiful countryside. Sheep for neighbours. No phone signal. No distractions. They packed their bags and headed there.

Over the course of four sessions in this remote idyll, they wrote songs that became the nucleus of *The Painful Truth*. They talked frankly about their lives. Cass walked his dog in the fields. Skin cooked everyone fry-ups for breakfast. For the singer it was a welcome echo of her newfound domestic bliss in America; she and her wife have a house in upstate New York, with a lake where their daughter learned to swim.

Right away, *An Artist Is An Artist*, a razor-sharp attack on the neanderthal lows of social media comments, was the song to beat. Now the album's angular but fiercely hooky opening track, complete with unprecedented avant-jazz sax solo, it set the bar for this new Skunk Anansie era.

"It's a statement of intent, isn't it?" says Mark. "Like: 'This album is different.' I mean, bearing in mind [that] we've been a band of three decades that's consistently taken the piss out of saxophone and hated on it a *lot*, and then on *Artist* it just sounds so perfect."

"And that was showing off," Skin acknowledges, of the song's brilliant, climactic lyrical assault. "Like, how ridiculous can I get? It's the middle eight. It's the fucking shining part of the song. I've got to be a clever bitch, have some word play in there."

Taken to new, biting extremes in LA with Sitek, firecracker moments like this sit naturally alongside contrasting moods elsewhere. From the sultry R&B of *Fell In Love* to bittersweet party anthem *Cheers* and the bass-heavy thump of *Animal*, it speaks on a universal level even where it's rooted in Skin's own experience.



Having almost checked out, Skunk Anansie have re-checked in for the long haul: (l-r) Mark Richardson, Skin, Cass Lewis, Martin 'Ace' Kent.

"As long as you're not trying to encompass the 'sentiment of a generation' or some bullshit," she says. "Just be *real*. I mean, I fully expect to get in trouble for some of these lyrics."

One potent example of this is the downbeat, smoky ballad *Shame*. There are echoes of her upbringing there, which involved moving between Air Force bases, living above her grandfather's club in Brixton, struggling to find her place. Personal ghosts that without the backing of her bandmates would have been harder to face.

"'*I got the love from my mother, the pain from my dad, the blame from my brother, shame I got it bad*'," she recites, a stillness coming over her. "I said to the guys: 'I've got to change this bit, I'm just gonna get too much trouble." And they were like: 'Do what you gotta do, girl.'"

"It's your truth isn't it?" Mark shrugs simply. "But it changed the way we wrote entirely, because before that we've had all these riffs and all this stuff, and we were like: "When are you gonna do lyrics, Skinny?!' [Her actual nickname, changed to Skin because it sounded cooler.] And it's just too overwhelming. It's too much. Where's the inspiration? And what we've learned is we need to make space for that to happen [first]."

Watching him and Skin, ostensibly two very different people, there's a quiet but companionable understanding between them. The fitness-focused half of the band, given their respective roles. He's a gym and HIIT guy, she does yoga and weight training. He's been sober for 21 years. She's acutely conscious of sustaining her performance powers long-term.

"I saw Diana Ross twice last year, and she's fucking shit," Skin exclaims. "She looks fantastic and it's Diana Ross, but the voice is *gone*, and she makes *zero* effort to sing anything properly. But I saw Dolly Parton – *perfect*. I want to be like that. I want to be like Tom Jones and still be able to sing at eighty."

For the whole band, that awareness of our mortality shot up following Cass's stage-four cancer diagnosis, while *The Painful Truth* was in the works. Punishing stretches of chemotherapy ensued. For a while the line between life and death looked thin. Then one day Skin's daughter told her mother: "Uncle Cass isn't sick any more". Incredibly, it turned out to be true. He declined the option of stem-cell treatment, and instead went to LA to finish the record with the band.

"I feel really strong, I feel fantastic," he tells us in the pub today. "Even when I went to LA to finish the album, you could see my skin, it's all blotchy and patchy. But the first time I caught a cold after being sick was on this tour! And it was beautiful, because one of the things that helped bring me through was the band, you know. Ace used to come and see me quite a lot, and he has no idea what it meant to me."

He breaks off. The shadow of that time hangs. There's nothing anyone can say for a moment, as they look at each other across the table.

"It's love," Ace says, wiping his own eyes. "It's love." There's a pause. "I drove my car into the fucking kerb on the way back from your place, I was so sad." They both laugh at that. "But no, it's a place of love, isn't it? We look after each other.

"You can't really explain it," he continues, his voice full of intent, "but music is a powerful force, and it's a healing force as well. Because how many people do we meet who say: 'You got me through that hard time'? Every day, I meet someone at a gig who says that."

"I used to take that for granted, and I don't any more," Cass admits. "The first day I went into rehearsals for this tour and I played my bass, it was like: '*This* is what I need.' It felt like medicine."

Back in the bowels of the Roundhouse, gearing up for soundcheck over chat about gear, their kids and Skin's recent 'ABBA Voyage' trip ("*Oh my god it's good*! I wasn't drinking, I just danced and sang my arse off"), the mood is familial. They've already been on tour for a month across Europe. In two weeks, Mark will reveal his own cancer diagnosis. But everyone feels fresh, up for it, happy to be here. They're friends – *actual* friends. It's a rarer thing among bands, certainly at this level, than you might think.

"It *is* fucking rare," Skin agrees. "And we know that because we've toured with bands and they're all in their fucking separate tour bus or bitching about each other in the press. I don't want to be in that band.'"

"We decided back then that if this is ever us, we're going to stop," Mark says. "Because what's the point? Happiness, fulfillment, being... you know, just being *happy*, that's the point."

It's not always been easy to be in Skunk Anansie. It still isn't sometimes. But with expression and performance like theirs, is it meant to be?

"It's supposed to be hard," Skin reasons. "A career in music is not supposed to be an easy job. It's not something that everyone can do."

"The first day I went into rehearsals for this tour, and I played my bass, it felt like medicine." Cass Lewis

The Painful Truth is out now via FLG Records.

ROB O'CONNOR/PRESS



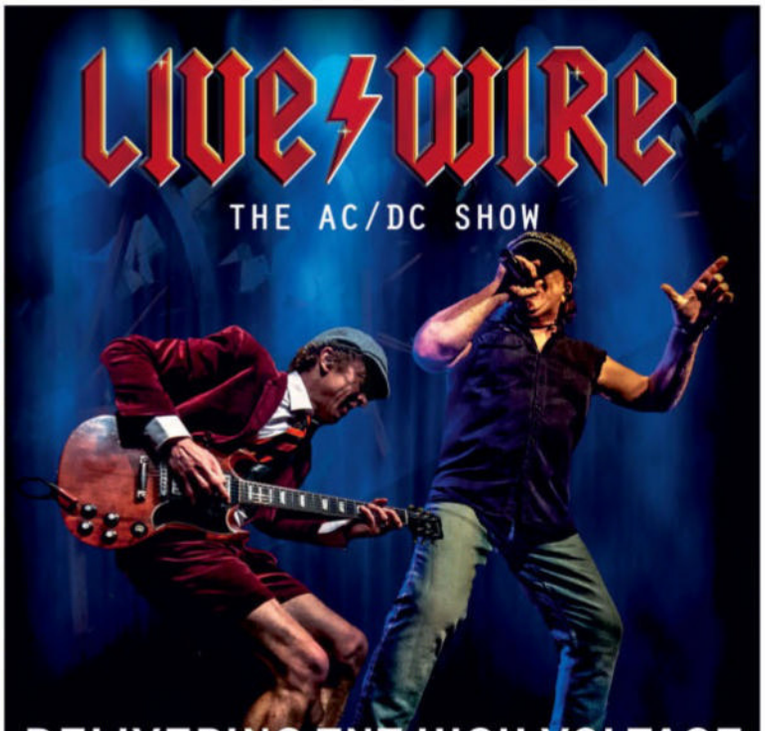
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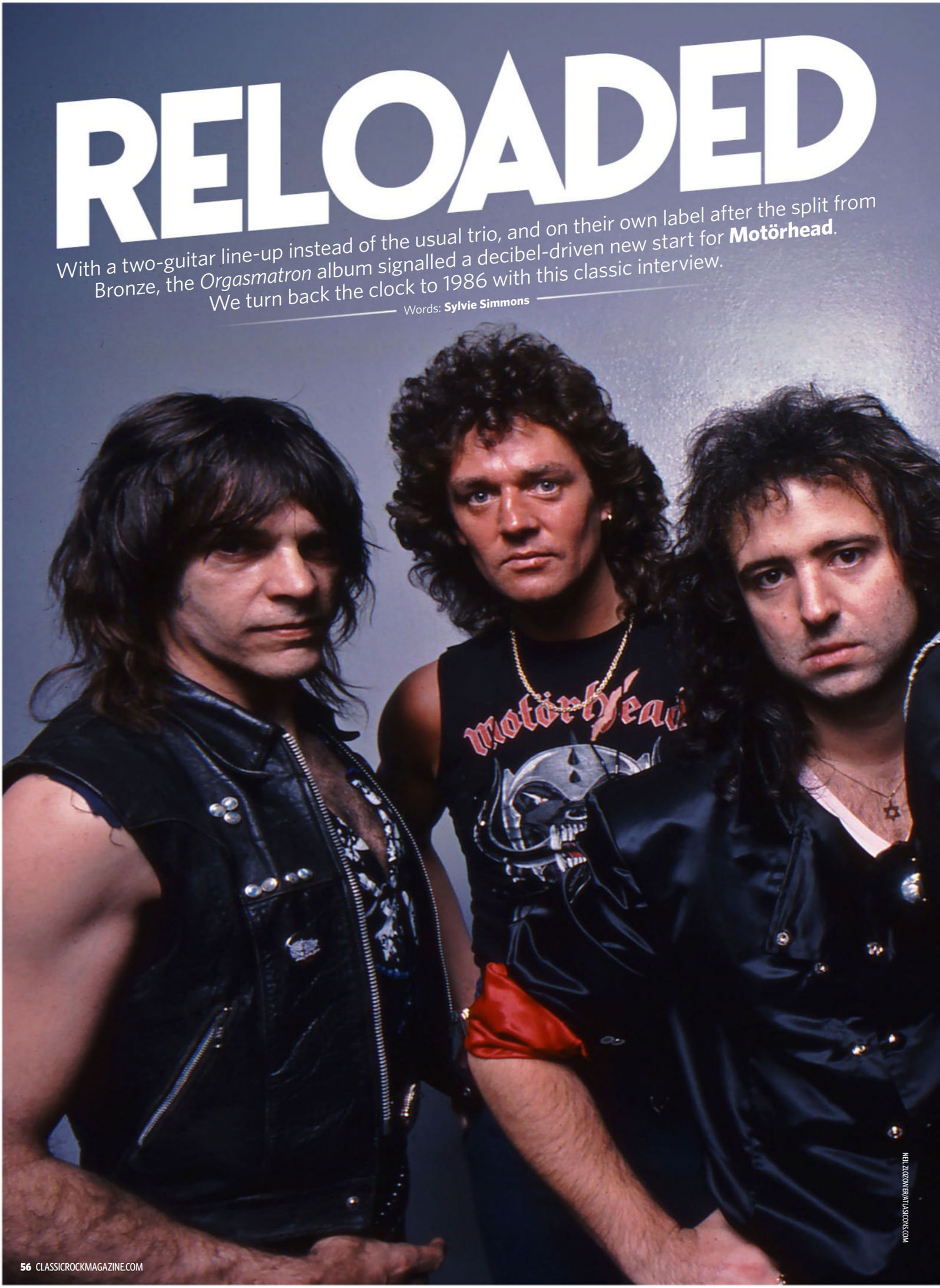

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RELOADED

With a two-guitar line-up instead of the usual trio, and on their own label after the split from Bronze, the *Orgasmatron* album signalled a decibel-driven new start for **Motörhead**. We turn back the clock to 1986 with this classic interview.

Words: **Sylvie Simmons**



NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM



Author's note: *I've lost count of how many times I've interviewed Lemmy, but I clearly remember I never had anything less than a great time. The first was in 1981 in Los Angeles, when Motörhead were on a US tour,opening for Blizzard Of Ozz. The last was also in LA, in 2006, at the legendary Rainbow Bar & Grill on Sunset Boulevard.*

Since Lemmy moved to America, that rock bar, a short walk up the hill from his modest flat, had become his home from home. The waitresses all adored him. The bar owners cemented a black marble Motörhead slab on the floor just outside the entrance, like a one-band metal Hall Of Fame. Lemmy said drily that it reminded him of what made him leave Britain: being trodden on by the UK music business.

Except for his newly aquired set of shiny white American teeth, Lemmy never changed at all. Whenever I met him he was open, honest, smart, well-read, with the driest sense of humour. Tough as nails but a gentleman, who rocked like no one but could tear up over a Beatles song or Ann Wilson of Heart singing a ballad. (I've seen him do both.)

This is one of my favourite Lemmy interviews. It took place in 1986 at his rented house in London, shortly before the release of Motörhead's new album Orgasmatron. *Dressed head to toe in black, smoking Marlboros, a drink in his hand, he was the perfect host.*

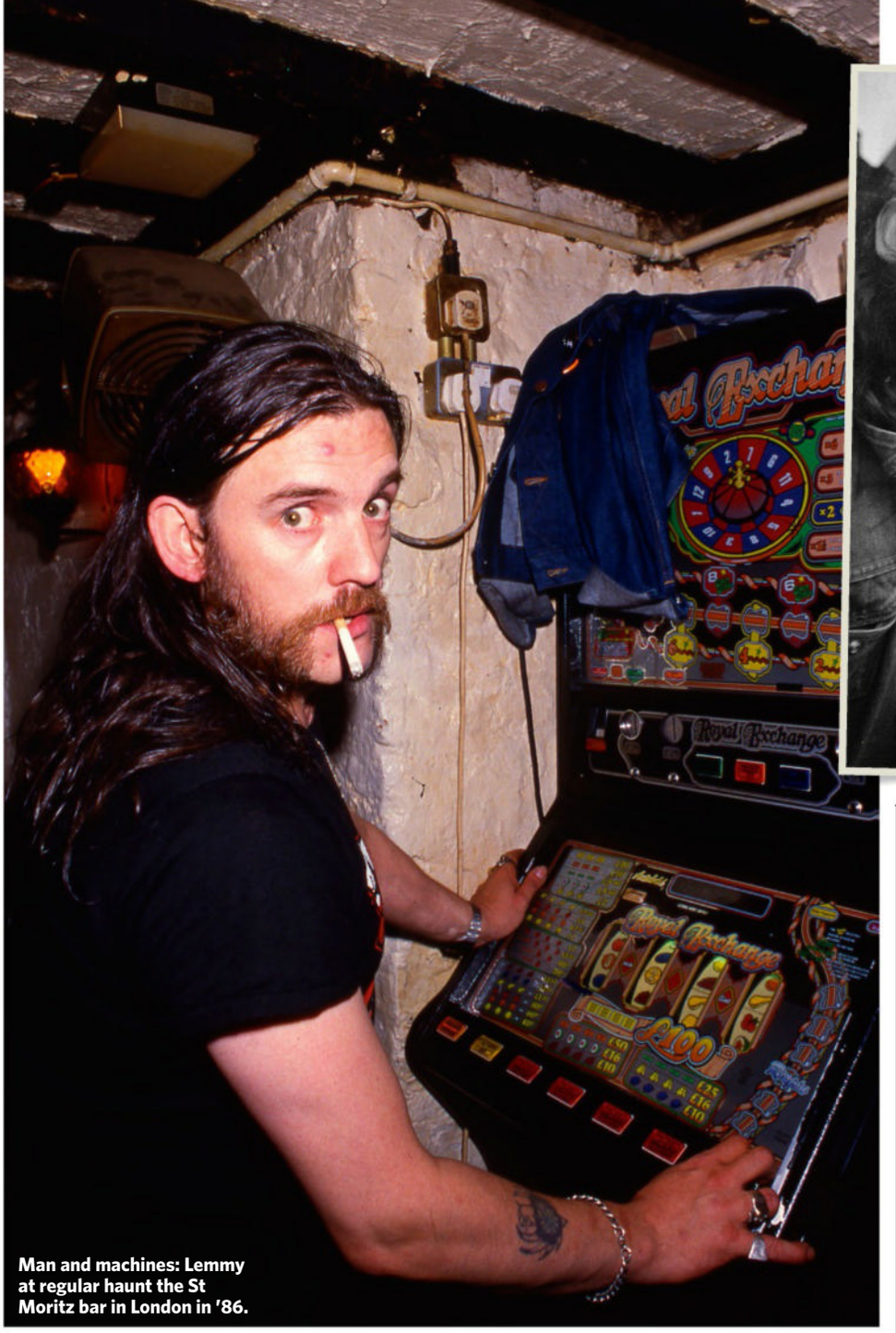
Lemmy was a one-off. I miss him. I know I'm not alone in feeling that way.

Sylvie Simmons

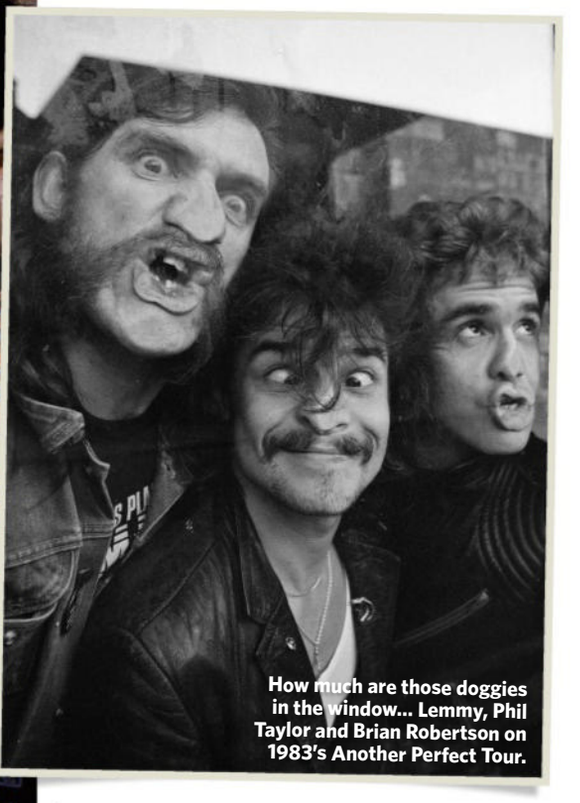
It's old, it's dark, it hides a thousand evils behind a façade of normality and curtains drawn against the sun. On a boring West London street, it could be any old house. But it's not, it's Motörhouse, home of the one and only Lemmy, and his Motörhead sidekick Würzel, the Lone Ranger and Tonto of metal. A nasty little boy picking his nose watches me walk up the front path.

When you look closely the house is all sorts of abandoned-looking. Lemmy once said that if he moved in next door to you the lawn would die – and it looks like the neighbour has too. As I'm thinking of the possibilities - rent him out for the week and solve those bad-neighbour blues; install him in number 8 Downing Street and watch Maggie Thatcher wither away - he appears at the door in a haze of smoke, with a Carlsberg in his hand. The little boy makes a perfect scale model of the World Cup football with the contents of his nose. Lemmy leads me inside...

It's civilised. Cosy, smoky and dark. Two downstairs rooms knocked into one with an arch in the middle where Lemmy's model aeroplanes (crafted with love, ➢



Man and machines: Lemmy at regular haunt the St Moritz bar in London in '86.



How much are those doggies in the window... Lemmy, Phil Taylor and Brian Robertson on 1983's Another Perfect Tour.

"The others got really jaded about the whole thing. You had to put a pistol up their arses to get them to play any of the old songs."

Lemmy

painted with precision) dingle-dangle on little wires. A fireplace crowded with Motörobilia and scary masks and World War II stuff. A far wall plastered with a collage of photos of Samantha Fox, the topless, E-cupped model and, loosely, singer that Lemmy was going to work with (there's a photo of the spaghetti-eating contest where they met). Out back there's a garden with more weeds and concrete than The Smiths. By the sofa, various props of civilised life: whisky, beer, cigarettes, videos, TV set, and a nice cup of tea that Lemmy just made. And in the corner there's a parking meter. Why's there a parking meter in the front room, Lemmy?

"Well," says Lemmy (he says 'well' just like he'd sing 'well' - Lauren Bacall to the nth degree soaked in Jack Daniels and strained through a filter tip) "I was coming out of the Embassy Club one night with this bird and it was just there. You know? I thought: 'That would look good in the garden', so I picked it up and hailed a taxi. And she's going: 'No! You'll get arrested!' And I said: 'Well I'm not going to fucking walk home with it.' So I hailed a taxi and I said: 'Do you mind if I bring this in?' And he said: 'No mate, I don't give a fuck.'" This being one of those jovial, world-famous London Black Cab drivers who mow down old ladies, small cars and bicycles with a smile. So here it is, in the front room. Should be out front making them some money, I suggest.

"We've tried it, but you can't get the money out," Lemmy shrugs.

Würzel comes in, plonks himself down on the sofa, lights up a cigarette.

Which of them's the domesticated one, I ask, complimenting Lemmy on the nice cup of tea.

"Thank you. It was a tea bag. You just put it in a cup of water. He usually makes it. I wouldn't say he was domesticated though."

Würzel has just discovered that his cup of tea is full of washing-up liquid. Lemmy recommends milk.

Do they do their own laundry?

"No," says Lemmy. "We used to have a machine but it broke down. It's difficult when you're bachelors."

But this is a man who's learned to rise above difficulties in the past three years. It was that long ago that two thirds of his band - 'Philthy' Phil Taylor and cleaner-behind-the-ears 'Robbo' Robertson - disappeared, and a legal battle with Bronze Records began that prevented the new line-up of Lemmy, Würzel, Pete Gill and Phil Campbell from putting out a record.

While the label was releasing compilations and the press was writing obituaries, Motörhead was out on the road - Australia! Hungary! Scandinavia! The United States! Tromso! Tromso? ("Even the people who live there have never heard of Tromso. It's past the fucking Arctic Circle!") - honing itself into the tightest pack of Metal animals this side of Metalzoic, and climaxing in a 10th Anniversary show at London's Hammersmith Odeon, where Motörheadmen past and present joined on stage in a rousing chorus of the song that started it all: *Motörhead*.

Lemmy wrote the song for Hawkwind before they kicked him out after five albums, in '75, and sang it with Pink Fairies Larry Wallis and Lucas Fox when he put together his new band. "The worst band in the world," as the critics called it. Soon came Eddie Clarke and Philthy - the line-up we scholars call 'classic Motörhead' - and two of the best metal albums ever to scream through speakers: *Overkill* and *Ace Of Spades*.

And then Eddie left in disgust over Wendy O Williams, Robbo came in for one album - *Another Perfect Day*; it wasn't - and what with poor

MAIN: GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX; INSET: GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX



Gardeners' world: Würzel, Phil Campbell and Lemmy in Kensal Rise, London, June 1986.



"Is yours the beans on toast?" Würzel, Lemmy and Phil Campbell get some practise before going on *MasterChef*.



sales and poorer record company, it looked like Motörhead was done for, over, flat on its back and deader than the neighbour's lawn.

Except to Lemmy Kilmister. "Motörhead is my livelihood, it's what I enjoy doing. If I gave it up, what would I have left? Fuck all." So he didn't, and as soon as he could he put out an album. *Orgasmatron* is it, and it's brilliant. Lemmy thinks so too: "The best one so far, don't you think?"

I'm rather partial to *Ace Of Spades*, I say.

"It's certainly the best thing we've done since *Ace Of Spades*," says Lemmy. "And this is definitely the best Motörhead."

Other than the obvious difference to all but the innumerate, how's this Motörhead different, I ask.

"Enthusiasm," says Lemmy. "That's the main difference. It's such a relief to be with three geezers who want to be in the band, in Motörhead, as a thing - all together, us against the world. The others got really jaded about the whole thing. You had to put a pistol up their arses to get them to play any of the old songs. Even *Motörhead*, for fuck's sake. If I went to see Little Richard and he didn't play *Long Tall Sally* I'd be round the fucking dressing room banging on his door! This lot really want to do this, and I've never had that sort of thing in a band since Eddie left, really. And it wasn't there for quite a while before he left either."

The dispute between Lem and Ed over Ms Sticky Nipples is public domain by now. But why did Philthy leave? He seemed as permanent as a wart.

"I don't know, really," says Lemmy. "I don't think he knows. It's just that it wasn't going that well with Brian Robertson, so we fired him and got these other two guys in, and on the day we got them Phil announced he was leaving.

"He was just fed up and he didn't think it was going to get any better. I think he was just depressed about being in a heavy metal band and never getting any honour from his fellow musicians. Do you know what I mean? Because you never get the respect side of it. You might be a fantastic player, but nobody expects you to know how to play. A lot of metal bands have got musicians that are a damn sight better than what you'd get in a jazz fusion band, but you don't get any fucking Grammy awards, no accolades."

Does that bother him, I ask?

"No, it doesn't bother me because I'm a cobbled-together bass player anyway. I'm not supposed to be playing bass, I play rhythm guitar, so I'd never be in a poll for bass players. And I'm not exactly Maria Callas either. So I get voted in because I'm a character."

Certainly is. Even trendy *Sounds* and *NME* writers wear Motörhead T-shirts. ("It's because," says wise Lemmy, "they get them for nothing.")

But not Brian Robertson. Uh-huh. You always got the impression, seeing him with Motörhead, that the band was a bad smell under his daintily-freckled nose.

"I know what you mean," says Lemmy. "The ≫

ANDRE CSILLAG/ICONICPIX x2



Würzel and Lemmy (and Phil Campbell's hands) in the back garden of Lemmy's house in Kensal Rise, London, August '86.



fans felt the same way. He was always more like 'I'm Brian Robertson, guest guitarist' instead of one of the band. But he was a good player. I think *Another Perfect Day* was a good album."

Würzel nods, so I ask him was he a Motörhead fan before joining? Lemmy looks up from his whisky.

"I had two albums," Würzel beams like a schoolboy who knows the right answer, "*Ace Of Spades* and *No Sleep*. And then I heard *Another Perfect Day*. A friend brought it round and said: 'Have you heard the new Motörhead?' and put it on and I really liked it. But it didn't do very well, did it?"

"Certainly didn't," growls Lemmy.

So much so that a lot of people - actually, let's be honest, it was just a couple of people in the press - rang the death knell for Motörhead.

"I don't even listen to them," says Lemmy. "I've always been determined that they don't tell me when it's finished, I do. They all thought I was going to have a new name for it too, lay Motörhead to rest, cross its arms over its chest, shut its eyes and leave. Well I invented Motörhead, it's Motörhead as long as I'm in it. And I'm not going to start again, going around the boozers, I'm too old for all that shit. Can you imagine? The Red Lion in Brentford again? A fucking nightmare," he chokes.

Lemmy's 47, Würzel's 37, a baby. Where did he find him?

"Under a rock," grins Lemmy. It's a wicked grin. "I was looking for a toad and I had to make do with him."

Did he kiss him and turn him into Prince? "More likely to turn into a lay-by," Lemmy says wittily, making one of many references to Würzel's manly prowess. ("Don't mention the measurements or that'll be it," whispers Lemmy, "the rest of us will never get a bird in America next time. Let's just say when he gets undressed, people throw buns at it.")

What were you doing before Motörhead, I ask Würzel?

"What, musically?"

Unless there's something else you want to tell us. Feel free.

"Well I was on the roof, killing moss, spraying chemicals on it, and in the evening I was playing with this band called Bastard."

"Which is a coincidence," says Lemmy, "because that was what I was going to call Motörhead originally!"

"The reason I called it Bastard was because I was sick of it up to here with all these wallies," Würzel goes on, "so I thought I'll call it what I want and just get on with it. Which is what Lemmy wanted to do too."

Describe the new band in sentences of two syllables, I demand of Lemmy as Würzel goes to make more tea.

"Würzel's sneaky and cheerful, Phil Campbell's young and horny, and Pete Gill is old and flash, like me," says Lemmy, "but in a different way."

Does he feel his age?

"You find you have a reserve that clicks in, that goes into overdrive when you need it," says Lemmy.

Does he eat salads? "No." Has he ever eaten a salad? "Yes." And that's why he doesn't eat salads? "Yes."

"Who wants to eat rabbit food all the time?" asks Würzel, who's come back with the tea.

"Rabbits," say Lemmy and I in two-part harmony.

There's harmonies on the new album - on one track anyway, *Ain't My Crime* - only not like those sorts of harmonies. Lemmy tells me it's a love song. Personal experience?

"Of course. If you go through life and you don't get married or you don't die, it's going to happen."

Is Lemmy a confirmed bachelor?

"Well you get set in your ways," Lemmy says as he shifts onto the floor. "Because if somebody says to you: 'Don't do this, don't do that, don't live like that', you say 'Fuck you!' and that's another one gone, isn't it? So I'm not expecting to live with anybody really seriously again. Except Würzel, and that really *is* serious. I find him walking backwards and forwards in the kitchen singing to himself at all hours, or telling himself jokes under his breath and laughing at them."

Tell me about first love, I ask, whimsically.

"Tender, romantic and hopeless," Lemmy ➢

"I was on the roof killing moss, spraying chemicals on it. And in the evening I was playing with this band called Bastard."

Würzel

MAIN: RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX; INSET: GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX; RIGHT: NEIL ZLOZOWER/ATLASICONS.COM



"Motörhead is my livelihood. If I gave it up what would I have left? Fk all."**

Lemmy



The look that kills.

answers, just as whimsically. "Actually, on the first one you're so shit-scared that nothing happens, ever. All these macho stories you get in the locker room, it's bullshit, it never happens."

"Mine," Würzel's gone all misty-eyed, "was called Ethel Taylor."

"Ethel?" perks up Lemmy. "Mine was Kathleen Sweeny. A little slip of a Catholic girl..."

And he's got a lot to say about religion. Always has had - the evil and hypocrisy of the whole damned thing's been as permanent a fixture with Motörhead as the fetching horned death's head logo. Lemmy's favourite song on the album is the title one, *Orgasmatron*. "The lyrics, really they're very personal. Maybe people will hear them and not think I'm just a mindless gorilla in a leather jacket."

'*Two thousand years of misery, of torture in my name/Hypocrisy made paramount, paranoia the law/My name is religion, sadistic sacred whore.*' That's some of them.

"That's how I feel about the whole fucking thing," steams Lemmy, detailing wars, inquisitions, poverty, the Vatican, the Pope's withered balls and Catholic girls in-the-club for God. His mother was a Catholic. His father left them - and he was a Protestant vicar, for Christ's sake! The Reverend Sydney Kilmister. She had to write to the Pope to get permission to remarry.

His father, Lemmy says, is a hypocrite. No love lost, they didn't even contact each other until Lemmy was grown up and already starting a band. They met up, dad asked forgiveness, said he'd do anything to make it up to Lem, who asked for some money - not much, just enough to get the band off the ground. Dad said no, he didn't think it was right for his son. He'd send him to school to be an accountant instead. Lemmy said 'Fuck off' and the rest is heavy metal history.

"I invented a cocktail called the Motörheadbanger. You only need two and the world ceases to exist."

Lemmy

So that's where the doom and gloom comes from?

"I think that's my star sign," says Lemmy, who's a Capricorn, who are all (except for Jesus) miserable sods. But, "I'm on the cusp of Sagittarius, so that's what my outgoing bit is. I've got the depression and the doom and the pessimism of a Capricorn but I laugh at it because of the Sagittarius bit. I think it's funny! The oncoming death of the universe as practised by the human race is inevitable and I just think it's fucking hilarious! They put a new war on the telly every night and I just fall all over the floor - here they go again!"

"It's true what you say about cusps," pipes up Würzel, who is a Libra and Scorpio mix.

But do they mix a good cocktail?

"Yes I do, actually," says Lemmy. "I invented a cocktail called the Motörheadbanger. I made it out of the entire band and crew's duty frees on the French tour last year. It's really quite interesting, and quite expensive to get it mixed up, but you only need two and the world ceases to exist."

Do they throw many parties at the Motörhouse, I ask?

"No, I just go to everybody else's. It's a much more sensible idea. Why have a dog and bark yourself?"

Why indeed. Are they kind to animals, by the way?

"Yes, actually, but we don't have any."

What's the best party Lemmy's ever ligged at?

"You've got me there. I've got a ton of parties to go back through, because I do like a good lig. Couldn't have been one of ours because I avoid ours like the plague. I always tend to grab the girl and leg it out of the side door before the party starts. I'd sooner be in the crowd than at the fucking party. But the Stones one was a good one - at the Roof Gardens, after they did the 100 Club."

That was where Eric Clapton came up to him, tapped him on the shoulder and said: "Are you Lemmy? I've always wanted to meet you". And Clapton was one of his fucking *heroes*, even if it was Hank B Marvin he impersonated (complete with all the moves; he did it during Hawkwind and they weren't amused) in front of the mirror. That was also the party where Würzel, seeing a ravishing blonde across the room, confided to Ronnie Wood: "Cor, I wouldn't mind having a shot at that after the party," and Ron pointed out that it was Mrs Wood.

Lemmy says he goes to these ligs for the beer and the girls, not the music. If AC/DC or ZZ Top were in town, that's a different matter; he'd be there every night. Contrary to popular belief he doesn't just listen to heavy metal. "I'm just as likely to listen to Mike Oldfield or Joni Mitchell. People think when we go home we listen to fucking Judas Priest albums. They must think you're a moron! I listen to a lot of rock'n'roll, Chuck Berry, Little Richard."

His latest pick-to-click, if you care to know, is Zodiac Mindwarp, admiring any man who can sing about his willy for an hour a night. Then again, he rates Samantha Fox as a singer...

Which musician would they least like to spend a night with.

"Divine," says Lemmy.

"I thought you were going to say Paul Weller," says Würzel.

"Easier to stand than Divine," says Lemmy.

Talk turns to Raquel Welch for some reason, who is Lemmy's Ideal Woman, and then we're going to *watch videos*, so I've only got one more thing to ask: is there anything about the Real Lemmy that would shock and surprise your fans?

"Yes," says Lemmy. "I'm a woman."

NEIL ZLOZOWER/PATLASICONS.COM



Scrap heap challengers: (l-r) Pete Gill, Lemmy, Phil Campbell (front) and Würzel, London, 1984.

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO CHRIS GOSS

You can't rush art. Mindfulness and spirituality matter. There are times to keep music simple. Be receptive to the vibrations of the world... These are among the things that shape his world view.

Interview: **Jo Kendall**

Masters Of Reality mainman and noted Kyuss/Queens Of The Stone Age desert-rock pioneer/producer Chris Goss has just risen and is partaking of his first coffee and smoke of the day, while talking to *Classic Rock*. "The pictures I saw as a kid of Keith Richards and Jimmy Page with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths, I can't shed that," he says. "I associate the action with rebellious music, and so I'll die right along with them, I suppose."

A witty interviewee as dry as the Joshua Tree area of California where he lives, with more than 40 years of music business experience, Goss imparts wisdom on the importance of Brian Jones's hair, sunrise light frequencies, old-school studios, the magic of jamming with Ginger Baker, and why the heck it's taken 16 years for a new Masters Of Reality album, *The Archer*, – his "most personal, less esoteric" – to reach our ears.

CREATING ART TAKES AS LONG AS IT TAKES

"Especially if you want it to be personal and not obligatory. Creation happens in the brain over a period of time, not where you say: 'Okay, I'm under contract to do an album, therefore I have to make music now.' I have to be inspired to write an album. The period of time between 2009 and the present was 'interesting', but it's probably more 'harrowing' when relating to the psychology of the world during the last sixteen years. Not much music inspired me in that time, but the loss of Bowie, and the release of the *Blackstar* album, was such an incredible way for him to go – he was the first artist to actually analyse his death in public – that was somewhat of an inspiration to stop thinking about things, get off my ass and just do it. I felt like I had some kind of analysis to add. I have had a tendency to be very esoteric in my musical announcements, and this record took a left turn into a more personal state of being. I'd found the fodder for *The Archer* in my own crisis, not the world's."

I DIDN'T CHOOSE MINDFULNESS, MINDFULNESS CHOSE ME

"There are so many levels of mindfulness. I mean, I have to pay my American Express bill after this call, is that being mindful? The Jungian universal mind, being part of collective unconsciousness and shared ancestral experience, is probably how I've spent most of my life, but not intentionally. I guess I was born to put a finger on the pulse of the vibe of the world – we're given this thing, and we have to do our thing back at it, and that's the mindfulness that really matters, I suppose."

SPIRITUALITY IS PART OF AN ARTIST'S JOB

"It wasn't a moment of realisation that I had this side of me. Spirituality is the theme of a lot of my favourite artists, from Kubrick to Bowie, and it takes on a sense of isolation, like you may be the only one floating out there in space, hence *2001* and Major Tom. Looking underneath modern communications to see who or what's really pushing it all is our [the artist's] job. I'm not an intellectual, I'm a blue-collar man with the frustrations of a blue-collar man and perhaps an ability to poetically sum things up a bit more. But I've usually hidden it under layers of esoteric bullshit [laughs]."

MY DEBUT ALBUM HOLDS PAINFUL MEMORIES FOR ME, BUT I HAD A COPING STRATEGY

"The first Masters album, *The Blue Garden* [1989], was an exercise in isolation. The band was not in good condition and we had a very aggressive producer in Rick Rubin. I felt as though the music's intended message got convoluted by the direction of the world's most popular producer at the time, and I went with it: "Okay, listen to this guy, maybe he makes sense." I deeply regret this period now. But how do you move on? You find people who are like-minded to be in your band to help get on tape what feels good to you. Shortly after I left Def American and Delicious Vinyl finally bought my contract from Rick Rubin, they re-released that album. Ginger Baker joined the band a month or two after that, a very like-minded individual very aware of the bullshit that comes along with making music. I felt empowered, and that gave me a lot of strength to move forward."

"Spirituality is the theme of a lot of my favourite artists, from Kubrick to Bowie."

YOU EXPECT CREATING MUSIC TO BE DIFFICULT, BUT SIMPLICITY IS THE KEY

"I remember the day I learned how simple it was to play the chords for *Rock And Roll* by Led Zeppelin. It was like this major discovery. What Jimmy Page was doing – to start with – it's very simple. He's a master, and a master is not afraid of simplicity. The song structures became more complex and deep as time went on, of course. I've been led astray by more complicated things since, but I always knew simplicity should be the root."

BRIAN JONES'S HAIR CHANGED MY LIFE

"My aunts bought me the Rolling Stones' *Out Of Our Heads* LP when I was six or seven years old. The music was pretty intense, but Brian Jones's hair – the bangs – was a benchmark for me. Later, I acquired those bangs, *and* the dark circles like the ones under his eyes beneath those bangs. ≻

ALEX SOLCA PRESS





Chris Goss: putting a finger "on the pulse of the vibe of the world".

His image and character was my first introduction to self-destructiveness, and the role that it plays in art. There was something about Brian that was different from every Stone on that LP cover."

PROG ROCK SHOWED ME HOW TO KICK DOWN BARRIERS

"The first prog music I got into was Yes, then Jethro Tull. From the start, I loved the musicianship. What early prog bands learned from classical music mixed with a love of pop meant they could string you along in a way that was beautifully done. The longer pieces of music were awe-inspiring, and when you saw them live it was just a wonderful experience. Prog broke down any barriers for me. Musically and lyrically you could go where you wanted to and let your mind take over. Then I moved on to jazz fusion, particularly Mahavishnu Orchestra, and that was a profound era for me. I look back on the years of 1971 to 1973, when I was just beginning high school, and every single category of music was blasting out and doing well, from Stevie Wonder to the Stones to funk to jazz fusion, prog, folk music, Joni Mitchell, and people were so open to it all."

JAMMING WITH GINGER BAKER CAN MAKE YOU SWOON

"I have to feel a riff in my spine, it has to make me move. When working up a riff, I'd say never settle for the first version. Turn it upside down, sideways, and keep jamming on it and arrange it so the power is increased and it becomes a body game. I met Ginger Baker briefly at a party in the early nineties, and my then-manager said: 'You guys should jam'. Ginger rolled his eyes back, like: 'Yeah, sure'. Anyway, the manager actually got Ginger and his kit to the rehearsal studio, and we jammed. Some very powerful things happened, and when he did the four-tom fill that he was famous for, I almost fainted twice because I was transported back to being twelve years old and listening to *Live Cream*. I felt the riffs in my spine; within three minutes we knew we'd be working together."

I'M A NIGHT OWL, BUT I'M HAVING TO RECALIBRATE

"I'm nocturnal, so I'm not getting the sunlight that's so important to not just our skin, but our internal melanin, in our brain. I'm into the whole electromagnetic frequency thing that Tesla was onto a hundred years ago, and I'm a follower of [circadian biologist] Doctor Jack Kruse. His work is around the harm that artificial light does, and I'm discovering that my mindset is affected by this. So if I'm up late I'm trying to get out to see the sunrise, because the colours and the frequencies of the colours are very important to us. With blue light and iPads and iPhones, here's an indoor brainwashing thing that's kind of happening, and it's affecting everybody. It's a trans-human agenda, I suppose. But I won't get into that right now."

"Jimmy Page is a master, and a master is not afraid of simplicity."

WORKING AS A PRODUCER HAS TO LIGHT SOMETHING UP IN ME – ESPECIALLY NOW BUDGETS ARE SLASHED

"Looking back on the people I've worked with, I can't be certain if talent found me, or did I find them. Whatever the answer, there's got to be something in the music that lights me up. But I've found it more and more difficult these days, especially with budgets for recording being carved down to nothing. We used to be able to spend three months making an album, with proper rehearsal and studio time to experiment, with a 200,000-dollar budget. God bless the people who can make records for the budgets given to them now – more in the region of 20,000 dollars, unless you've got a cute face and a cute ass and a major label behind you. My label [Mascot] have been very patient with me over the last five or six years, and we've made a little go a long way."

THE BEST RECORDING STUDIOS ARE LIKE YOUR FRIEND'S BASEMENT

"A lot of the studios that made a transition from the seventies into the eighties and nineties went from a really cool vibe into becoming Darth Vader's living room. They were all black and shiny. I tend to like rundown, vibey places that feel like your friend's basement, places you want to hang out in. Unfortunately there's no circumnavigating the no-smoking rule now."

WHEN BANDMEMBERS ARE SCATTERED ACROSS THE WORLD THEY ARE STILL FAMILY

"Masters Of Reality members unfortunately live halfway across the globe. Half the time my drummer, John Leamy, is in New York, my bass player Paul Powell is in Ibiza, and Alain Johannes, the guitarist, is in Chile. It happens when you get older and you each have responsibilities. Just for us to get together in the same room costs a fortune, so it's been a long distance love affair making *The Archer*. But we did manage to get together to record a few times, so it turned out fine. This is all due to their diligence and expense. So we're separated, but when we do get together it's joyous, and we're a family."

The Archer is out now via Mascot Records.

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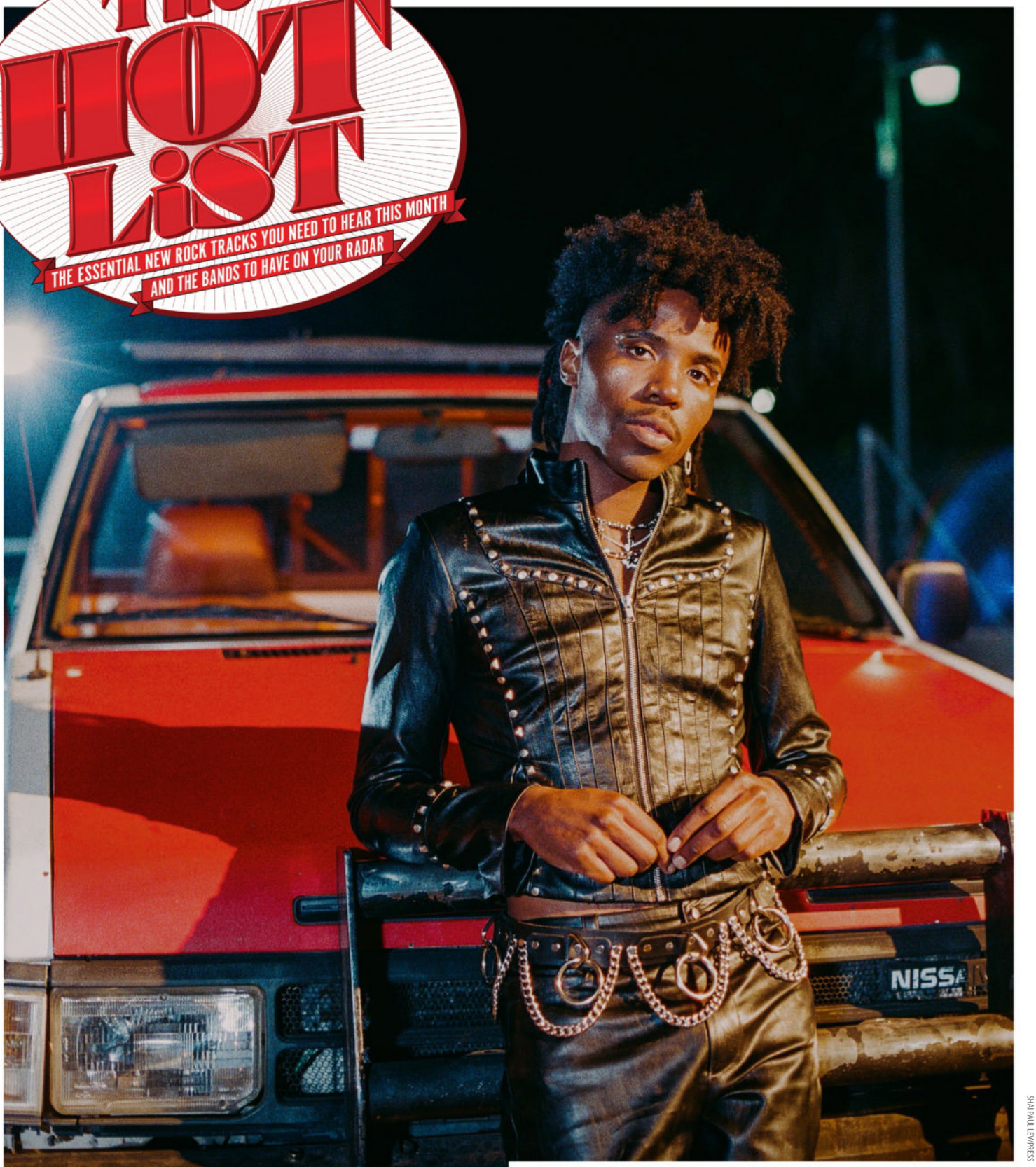
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The HOT LIST

THE ESSENTIAL NEW ROCK TRACKS YOU NEED TO HEAR THIS MONTH AND THE BANDS TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR



SHAI PAUL LEV/PRESS

Welcome, dear reader, to the latest edition of The Hot List. Once more we find ourselves in a changeable sea of new sounds, often from slightly unexpected places. Musicians need to shake things up a little sometimes, even when existing patterns have done well for them. This month we've got a commanding gear-shift from retro stoners Kadavar, a brand new band from Kris Barras and the solo album of a Lemon Twig, among other tasty bites – along with a young Texan guy who might be a new-generation Prince, or Sly Stone, or something. So yes, it's a good haul.

Enjoy the picks in these pages, and for more new tunes every week visit classicrockmagazine.com

De'Wayne *Biological*

This guy recently cropped up on our radar and we've been hooked ever since. Houston-born, LA-based singer/guitarist De'Wayne is a rock'n'roller with several charismatic twists, all of which are showcased in this joyous cut from his upcoming album; the sort of choon we can see appealing to both old-school rockers and alt./indie lovers in need of a new banger. A driving rock anthem with funk in its footsteps and a gloriously heartwarming 80s pulse – kinda like Prince jamming with The Killers, with an extra sprinkle of glitter – *Biological* is a bright-eyed floor filler with a sensual heartbeat. Definitely one to watch for.

yeahdewayne.com



Hollow Souls
Borderline

Kris Barras has worn a few hats over the years (fighter, businessman, shredder, blueser, hard rocker…), most of them under the Kris Barras Band moniker. Now teamed up with longtime multi-instrumentalist compadre Josiah J Manning and backing-turned-lead singer Phoebe Jane, he's flying with a new, bluesy collective, Hollow Souls. So far it sounds like he's enjoying it, possibly a little freer without the pressure of his own name on the masthead. Loose-limbed yet slick, soulful first single *Borderline* sees the trio team up with lion-maned blues rock six-stringer Jared James Nichols – an assured flavour of more to come.
hollowsouls.co.uk



Marty & The Bad Punch
The Time Is Now

German guitarist Marty Punch is the mastermind and driving force behind this slickly produced collective. All galloping, twin-lead melodic rock fire and brimstone with a giant chorus and deft, full-pelt drumming that makes your feet feel tired just from listening to it, *The Time Is Now* is the opening track on their new self-titled album, and you can see why. If you like sincere, chest-thumping, big-swinging AOR bravado with a fire in its belly, check this out.
martyandthebadpunch.com



The Southern River Band
Fuck You, Pay Me

It's invariably a good day when these Aussie dudes release a new single, and with the gloriously titled *F**k You, Pay Me* it's no exception. Glistening with that irresistible blend of raw shitkicker rock'n'roll and Thin Lizzy-evoking sweetness that made last year's *D.I.Y* album such a corker, it does that wonderful thing of slipping down a treat without losing its edge. No big surprises, no bullshit, just rock'n'roll done bloody well.
thesouthernriverband.com

HOLLOW SOULS: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS; MARTY & THE BAD PUNCH: TALLEE SAVAGE - SAVAGE PHOTOGRAPHY/PRESS



Brian D'Addario
Nothing On My Mind

The eldest of New York brother duo The Lemon Twigs, Brian D'Addario leans into his sweet, Beach Boys pop balladeer side (i.e. one of his biggest strengths) on his new solo album *Till The Morning*. It's a gorgeous, classy record all the way through, but we're kinda partial to *Nothing On My Mind* right now – one of the more rollicking, up-tempo numbers, in a very 60s-y sort of way. Like The Who circa *I Can't Explain*, *I'm A Boy* etc but with less Shepherd's Bush grit and more US West Coast summer breezes.
brianpauldaddario.bandcamp.com



Kadavar *Regeneration*

Berlin stoner-come-psychedelic rockers Kadavar have a new album out this month, *I Just Want To Be A Sound*, from which this commanding ride of heavy, ethereal and freaked out textures comes. One of those tracks that doesn't go where you expect it to (in a very good way), it's a rejuvenated gear-shift for the band and punchy with it – think Tame Impala getting deep into early Pink Floyd and Black Sabbath records, after three months doing ayahuasca in a forest. Trippy, maaaan...
kadavar.com



King Kraken *March Of The Gods*

Welsh hard rockers King Kraken lean into the dirty, beefy territory of Clutch – plus the heavy psychedelia of Mastodon – on this galloping, guitar-chugging highlight and title track from their new album. Thick-set fodder but light and nimble on its feet, like a stampede of hungry dinosaurs homing in on their prey (and stopping off at their stoner mate's cave for a puff of the good stuff en route), it'll have you downing your pint and roaring to the gods of Valhalla before the first verse is done.
kingkraken.co.uk



Star Circus
One Hit Wonder

Part livewire glam stomper, part heartstring-tugging pop-rocker in the vein of Cheap Trick and ELO – with a dash of Thin Lizzy-esque guitar beef in the chorus – *One Hit Wonder* had the *Classic Rock* team bobbing along enthusiastically from the get-go. "It's about someone I worked with in the music industry a few years ago," frontman Dave Winkler explains. "*One Hit Wonder* tells a story from the perspective of a 'hired gun' who has been used and discarded. The song delves into themes of exploitation and manipulation from an ego-driven individual, hiding behind a saintly, heroic persona, a 'man of the people' mask."

starcircus.co.uk



The Scaramanga Six *Hully Gully*

Mixing biting, riffy punk sensibilities with angular pop twists (imagine Cardiacs via XTC but with a meatier, more contemporary darkness and you're in the right wheelhouse), Yorkshire DIY rock mavericks The Scaramanga Six celebrate 30 years as a band with this fiery highlight from their latest album, *GLUT*. "We are a life sentence band," they say, "showing very little sign of evaporation." Full of oddball touches but thoughtfully arranged and super-hooky – with singer Paul Morricone's velvety croon sailing over the top of it all – the new record reflects that seasoned lifer's appreciation of detail and originality in songwriting.

thescaramangasix.co.uk

STAR CIRCUS: MYKE GRAY/PRESS



And keep an ear out for... Brothers Osborne

Need a cheery distraction from the angst-inducing, oh-god-what-the-fuck-now headlines of late? Countrified, Nashville-based siblings the Brothers Osborne have just the tonic for you – I mean, whatever your stance is on Stetsons, cowboy boots and the music that tends to come with it, you can't really deny it's chipper stuff.

Anyway, the Bros' new single *Finish This Drink* is their first new music since March 2024's *Break Mine* EP, and the rockiest thing they've done since 2020's *Skeletons* record. Initially dreamed up by singer TJ in a Waffle House outpost a few years ago, not long after "a couple of drinks" (read: *all* the drinks) one night with The Cadillac Three's Jaren Johnston, it finds the pair on boot-stomping, country-fried form, without losing their rocker-friendly edge (if anything, they've leaned into it more). Plus there's more to come from them later in the year.

Watch this space, y'all...

brothersosborne.com

CHRIS SQUIRE REMEMBERED

The legacy of "the greatest bass player in history" and 30 musical memories that explain why...

PLUS Robert Fripp & Andy Summers; Savatage; Stewart Copeland; Solstice; Black Country, New Road; Cosmic Cathedral; O.R.k. and loads more...



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- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Above Average
- Average
- Below Par
- A Disappointment
- Pants
- Pish

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Edited By Ian Fortnam

ian.fortnam@futurenet.com

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/GETTY

THE HARD STUFF ALBUMS



Skunk Anansie

The Painful Truth *FLG*



Veteran Brit-rockers defy challenging times with ambitious midlife reboot.

A whole quarter century has passed since Skunk Anansie's history-making show as the final band of the previous millennium to headline Glastonbury, which rounded off a blazing run of multi-platinum albums and monster hits. A lengthy sabbatical, solo albums and side projects followed before these trailblazing British "Clit Rock" icons reunited in 2009. Alas their ongoing second act has so far produced just two fairly patchy albums.

Skunk Anansie's first album in nine years, *The Painful Truth* lands in the thick of an extended rough patch for the band. Following management shake-ups, plus bassist Cass Lewis and drummer Mark Richardson both undergoing cancer treatment, life has acquired a new urgency. And resting on their laurels would mean creative death.

To this end, the Skunks brought in producer Dave Sitek (Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Weezer, Beyoncé and more). Sitek stripped away the band's signature heavy guitar riffs and clobbering drums, and pushed a more electro-friendly post-punk sound, to mostly positive effect. Their alt.rock energy remains, but their overwrought nu-metal bombast is dialled down.

This gung-ho reboot attitude is evident instantly on fantastic opener *An Artist Is An Artist*, a declamatory spoken-word diatribe over propulsive Kraut-infused grooves and angular guitar. The lyric insists defiantly that true artists remain vital and engaged at any age, regardless of critical disdain and shifting fashions. '*They ain't here for your pleasure, changing like the British weather!*' Skin proclaims. If any veteran band needed a galvanising mid-career manifesto, it's this one.

Elsewhere an impressive eclecticism rules. In the trip-hop power ballad *Shame*, Skin broods on lingering family wounds in a shredded vibrato before switching gear for the soaring, operatic chorus. On the deadpan disco-rocker *Fell In Love With A Girl* she unpacks the kinky delights of a bizarre love triangle with another woman and a '*typical fuckboy*'. Riffing on their shared love of Dennis Bovell's production work for The Slits, Sitek and the Skunks also cook up a dub-infused punky reggae party on *Shoulda Been You*.

It's occasionally shrill and clunky, but from proudly queer love songs to spine-tingling piano weepies to stadium-sized lust confessionals this is Skunk Anansie's most musically ambitious album yet, and their best work for decades. It's great to have these alternative national treasures back on such lively, adventurous, emotionally raw form.

Stephen Dalton

Chime Oblivion

Chime Oblivion *DEATHGOD*

Osees/Bow Wow Wow collaboration bears ripe post-punk fruit.



It's a frustrating rarity for supergroups to sound as good in the flesh as they do on paper, but this project, sparked by a meeting of Osees' John Dwyer and former Bow Wow Wow/early Adam And The Ants drummer Dave Barbarossa does. That surely has a lot to do with the other musicians they've brought in to bring the sound of *The John Peel Show* circa 1979 vividly back to life.

Oakland-based singer HL Nelly hyperventilates like The Slits' little sister over New York sonic maverick Weasel Walter's vampish guitar on *Kiss Her Or Be Her*, while *Neighborhood Dog* rekindles the spirit of X-Ray Spex over Barbarossa's thumping percussion as a sax honks impatiently in the background. Walter's slashing shards of guitar create more addictive hooks on *And Again* and *The Univited Guest*, and dub rumble underneath *The Catalogue* rounds off a vibrant retrofitted bag of irresistible noise.

Johnny Sharp

Bernie Marsden

Icons *CONQUEST MUSIC*

Classy covers from the late guitarist.



The fourth album of five in the now sadly departed guitarist Bernie Marsden's Inspirations series comprises Marsden's devoted covers of songs by some of his rock heroes, and includes a sparkling reimagining of Hendrix's *Purple Haze*.

It opens, in homage to Peter Green, with *Shake Your Money Maker*, the Elmore James song made famous by blues-years Fleetwood Mac, and also includes Green's *Man Of The World*, as well as *Like It This Way*, a Danny Kirwan song from Mac's 1969 Chicago sessions album. The choice of that illustrates Marsden's appreciation of deep cuts, underlined by a brilliant version of Rory Gallagher's *Wheels Within Wheels* and his take on Derek And The Dominos' *Bell Bottom Blues*.

Two bonus originals – the instrumentals *Kestrel* and *Barford Blues* – show just how much Marsden learned from the masters named above and others, and his Midas touch is confirmed on all 12 tracks.

Neil Jeffries

Spear Of Destiny

Janus *EASTERSNOW*

Kirk Brandon's glory days revisited in style.

After re-recording Spear Of Destiny's first three albums in recent years, frontman Kirk Brandon has turned his attention to his band's most successful period. A comprehensive re-working of all the songs from the chart-bothering *Outland* and *The Price You Pay*, *Janus* is clearly an exercise in unfinished business.

The original versions of these songs sounded good at the time, but never truly suited the sterile, inorganic production style of the late 80s. Kicked back into life by the gritty and spirited Spear line-up of today, everything from the heavyweight likes of *Never Take Me Alive, Land Of Shame* and *Radio Radio* through to neglected B-sides *Pumpkin Man* and *Embassy Song* are born again, with rowdy guitars and Brandon's ageless yelp front and centre. Worth hearing for a newly earthy (and still prescient) *Whole World's Waiting* and a ferocious reboot of *Junk Man* alone, *Janus* sets two great records straight.

Dom Lawson

CJ Wildheart

Slots *DEVILSPIT*

Ebullient garage rock and punk from former Wildhearts guitarist.



Back in the mists of time, before CJ had the surname Wildheart, he haunted the bars and clubs of London's Soho like some kind of rock'n'roll behemoth (not really, he was always very polite), as part of the always-about-to-but-never-quite-delivered Tattooed Love Boys. As promising as they were, it was CJ, with a guitar sound that somehow captured the middle ground between Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen and the Pistols' Steve Jones, that really shone.

He's kept up his chops since as a Wildheart (no longer, alas) and also as part of the excellent but short lived Honeycrack and with the effervescent, dense melodies of The Jellys. Solo suits

ROBO CONNOR/PRESS

him, though. He can sing, and his sixth album is his best yet, part Sham 69 (check out the excellent *The Kids*), part early Wildhearts, unsurprisingly (*You Got The Best Part Of Me*), but all CJ; sneering and vibrant, hard punk-pop.

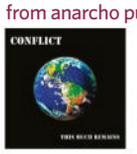
Philip Wilding

Conflict

This Much Remains

MORTARHATE/CADIZ

First new album in 22 years from anarcho punk's bosses.



Conflict's bombastic punk intensity added righteous fury to the catalytic ideas of Crass, outshining the weedy clatter of their forebears. But vocalist, founder and sole remaining original member Colin Jerwood was a controversial figure who refused to toe the line of the 80s/90s proto-woke – and inevitably internecine – anarcho punk scene.

Driven by accomplished session guitarist Gav King, *This Much Remains* comes from an entirely new Conflict line-up, with awesome Dragster singer Fiona Friel, one of the vocalists, compensating for Jerwood's breathlessly gruff sprechgesang. Nonetheless, Conflict come across as a retro curiosity in both sound and substance, the album bookended by its intro featuring a medley of past glories and concluded with a reworking of *To Be Continued*. A guest appearance on highlight *Cut The Crap* from the late, great Benjamin Zephaniah helps lift the spirit, but apart from the roiling rage of *Masters Of The Race?* and *A Message To Them*, overall it's too little, too late.

Alex Burrows

King Kraken

March Of The Gods

SELF-RELEASED

Sea-monstrous fun from Cardiff hard rock crew on album number two.



With song titles like *Bezerker*, *El Giganto* and *Chainsaw Saviour*, it's a fair assumption that with this album you're in for a wild ride that cocks a snook at subtlety, tweaks the nose of gloom and flies the flag for pure, denim-clad fun.

Cardiff's King Kraken craft dirty hard rock at its purest, roaring in with a Clutch-like swagger, an arsenal of fat riffs and tales from the battlefield both literal and figurative. Frontman Mark Donoghue, meanwhile, digs deep to channel his inner Hetfield, affording himself instant charisma, while guitarists Adam Healey and Pete Rose wail and chug their approval to provide an unscalable wall of noise behind him.

There are moments of reflection, however. The thoughtful, bluesy *Hero* is a moving tribute to a much-missed father, a precious moment of vulnerability amid all the bluster, that serves to make King Kraken all the more likeable.

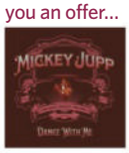
Emma Johnston

Mickey Jupp

Dance With Me

CONQUEST MUSIC

Godfather of pub rock makes you an offer...



This fourth volume of The Boot Legacy series confirms that former Southend R&B hero Jupp, once signed to Stiff, should be more celebrated than he is. *Dance With Me* comprises 16 slice-of-life songs that fly by in 48 minutes without a second of filler, in arrangements ranging from rock to blues via several irresistibly lazy shuffles, as if the product of collaborations between Joe Ely, Leon Wilkinson and Nick Lowe.

Kicking off with the Americana of *Little Red Ford*, it eases into *That Ol' Right Hand* (three delicious verses detailing a piano player, a dancer and... a girl). *Monk Moor* has shades of CCR's *I Put A Spell On You*, *Blue Belle Of The Ball* plays like a 1950s crooner classic, and Jupp's lyrics to *Chalk And Cheese* are laugh-out-loud funny. It ends fabulously with bluesy acoustic *I'm A Car*, as classy a slice of innuendo as you'll ever hear. Everything here works.

Neil Jeffries

Giant

Stand And Deliver

FRONTIERS MUSIC

Brobdingnagian hair-metallers walk the earth once more.



Too late to garner real success with 1989's *Last Of The Runaways*, Giant fell victim to the Nirvana roach bomb, along with any other remaining hair-metal bands. Once the smog had cleared, the writing was on the wall and Giant disbanded after releasing 1991's *Time To Burn*. Since reanimating in 2001 the band have released an album roughly every decade, and *Stand And Deliver* arrives (relatively) hot on the heels of 2022's *Shifting Time*.

Original guitarist/vocalist/songwriter Dann Huff provides heartfelt ballad *Time To Call It Love*, blazing arena stomper *Holdin' On For Dear Life* and lighters-aloft showstopper *Paradise Found*, while ex-Perfect Plan Swede Kent Hilli proves his vocal chops across each explosive hook, his style remaining comfortably similar to Huff.

Jimmy Westerlund produces as well as playing lead guitars, creating a thoroughly modern sound with all the trappings of the melodic rock that Giant are known and overlooked for.

Phoebe Flys

Gary Moore

Live From Baloise Session

PROVOGUE

A 2008 show by the late guitarist.



It's a tribute to the enduring power of the blues that it turned Gary Moore from a journeyman guitarist into a blues maestro with a lasting legacy. It's a legacy that keeps giving, with several live albums since his untimely death in 2011.

The latest is from the Baloise Session festival in Basel, Switzerland in 2008. He kicks off the set with Albert King's *Oh Pretty Woman* and demonstrates immediately the fluid guitar tone laced with a hint of frustration that made his signature style. Chuck Berry's *Thirty Days*, a slow-burning *I Love You More Than You'll Ever Know* and his own *Still Got The Blues* and *The Blues Is Alright* are among the other highlights.

Hugh Fielder

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder



The Ravagers: easy contender for sleaze rocker of the year.

The Ravagers

On the Loose *SPAGHETTY TOWN*



Baltimore is known for a few cool things: John Waters, Edgar Allan Poe's old house, a ridiculously high crime rate, and the goddamn Ravagers. High-level sleaze rockers in the rich vein of Hanoi Rocks, Hardcore Superstar and the Backyard Babies, they deliver razor-sharp riffs and big ol' scream-along choruses, and sharp lyrics about important topics like getting eaten by wild dogs, dealing with drunk idiots, and general despair. I mean, is there a more perfect anthem for this moment than *No Tomorrow No Problem*? It's funny, back in the 90s, bands like this would write songs about how it's the end of the world, but it totally wasn't. Now it is, and we should be glad that we've got The Ravagers to sing about it. The most aptly named band since... I dunno, The Wheelchair Motherfuckers. Who were all in wheelchairs, naturally. You get my drift. Easy contender for sleaze rocker of the year.

Gorebodies

The Open Teeth *DN*



Primal punk scuzz. Gorebodies tear it up on fast 'n' furious rockers like *Too Dark, Shudder* and *Chained To The Kennel*. They sound like a feral version of Meatbodies, which is some weird coincidence, and the lyrics are so angry I prescribed them all some Ativan to calm the fuck down. PS fun fact: three out of four members have moustaches. So you can trust 'em to fucking rock.

Antagonizör

Edgelords From Hell

SELF-RELEASED



They're from Gainesville Florida, and you'll find lots of snotty punk attitude mixed in with their satanic thrash'n'roll. This album drips with high-school sleaze, as evidenced by ham-fisted rippers like *Smoke Grass Eat Ass, Speed Demon's Spell* and *Ready For The Rapture*. So, is it all a goof? Not in my heart, man. For true rockers only.

Psychic Pigs

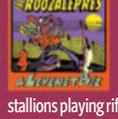
Psychic Pigs *SLOVENLY*



Brandon Welchez has had a band called Crocodiles for the past 20-odd years. They play bubblegummy power-pop. But one morning Brandon woke up and thought: "What if I just get real, real gone for a change?" So he hooked up with the Fucked Up drummer and they created this blistering slab of 70s proto-punk with furious solos and riffs that would cave your brains in back in '75. Love it.

The Roozalepres

A Leveret Biz *SELF-RELEASED*



What does the name mean? I don't know. The important thing to know is that this band is a bunch of Italian stallions playing riffy, poppy glam-punk in the Hanoi Rocks tradition with some Hellacopters and AC/DC flourishes thrown in for added spice. Probably the most likeable record I've heard this month. Makes me wanna smoke cigarettes and walk around listening to it on cassette.

PRESS



The Doobie Brothers

Walk That Road *RHINO*



Whoa-oh-whoa, they've brought the big gun back into the band.

A new Doobie Brothers album might not be a surprise in itself, since core members Tom Johnston, John McFee and Patrick Simmons have been chugging along merrily this century, releasing four well-crafted albums. What is a surprise – and a very pleasant one – is the return of vocalist Michael McDonald, an intermittent guest of late but now a full participant for the first time since 1980's fractious *One Step Closer*. The format, though, echoes 2021's *Liberté*, for which songwriters Johnston and Simmons collaborated individually with producer John Shanks before taking the finished product to the group. McDonald has submitted to the same regime. And while it sounds awkward, at their best the Doobies were a church sufficiently broad to accommodate disparate talents.

McDonald initially exited after his introduction in 1975 gave the band their most sustained burst of mainstream success, albeit at the cost of surrendering their rougher, rocky edge. These days there's less tension, and the musical equivalent of separate beds brings its own rewards. Gritty and blues-tinged, *Here To Stay*, *Angels And Mercy* – with guitar playing reminiscent of Peter Green's on *Oh Well* – and *New Orleans* are throwbacks to the pre-McDonald era, when the Doobies were the darlings of the North California biker bar scene more than half a century ago. But with McDonald the youngest Doobie at 73 there's a sense of reflection too, especially on *Lahaina*, the closing comfort-ballad titled after a town in Hawaii, which features Mick Fleetwood and Hawaiian ukulele wizard Jake Shimabukuru. The languid *Speed Of Pain* is a showcase for McDonald's ruminating vocals and his stentorian piano, while *Learn To Let Go* could have graced *Minute By Minute*.

Elsewhere there's a gospel undercurrent to both the title track, on which vocalist Mavis Staples guests, and the outstanding *State Of Grace*, in which the line '*I've wasted all of my life living on memories*' might be tad melodramatic, but the song itself is desperately moving. *Call Me* is a reminder that Dave Matthews is not without influence, *Here To Stay* begins with a burst of a cappella vocals before it gallops like Steely Dan's *Reelin' In The Years*, and *The Kind That Lasts* brings tough, swampy funk.

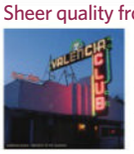
None of this should really work in 2025, but the fact the Doobie Brothers don't have to exist makes their actual existence all the more worthwhile, and *Walk This Road* is an album as full of joy as it is of craft. Sixteen albums in, they're still not letting themselves down.

John Aizlewood

Cardinal Black

Midnight At The Valencia *THIRTY TIGERS*

Sheer quality from the get-go.



Cardinal Black are one of those bands that sound like they've been around forever, and that feeling of familiarity is testament to the accomplished songwriting on second album *Midnight At The Valencia*. Key to this is the warm, ethereal and intimate atmosphere of the tracks, with guitarist Chris Buck displaying terrific poise and vocalist Tom Hollister delivering some superbly soulful, honeyed vocals. Combined with some heartfelt lyrics, his voice conjures up an irresistible sense of cinematic, misty-eyed introspection and nostalgia. *Breathe*, *Racing Cars*, *Push/Pull* and *Adeline* are driven by pure emotion. Sultry and immersive, they draw you into deeply humane personal narratives. *Keep On Running*'s swamp-blues stalker tale gives the album a disturbing central twist, the antidote being immense album closer *Your Spark (Blows Me To Pieces)*, a slow-build soaring love song with an epic guitar solo.

With talent like this, Cardinal Black really should go global, no problem.

Essi Berelian

Propagandhi

At Peace *EPITAPH*

Militant anti-capitalist activist punks return after eight years.

Like Frank Zappa's fascist theocracy prophecies in punk form, you only need to listen to *Haille Sellasse, Up Your Ass* from Propagandhi's 1993's debut *How To Clean Everything* – which combined the biting satire of Nomeanso with the melodic skate punk of NOFX – to recognise how far Propagandhi were/are ahead of their time. The same can be said of the pre-9/11 *Albright Monument, Baghdad* from 2001's classic *Today's Empires, Tomorrow's Ashes*.

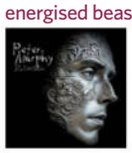
Eighth album *At Peace* further develops the raging melodic punk/progressive metal Propagandhi introduced on 2009's *Supporting Caste*. Monstrous opener *Guiding Lights* sounds like mid-career Neurosis, with the title track matching its devastating intensity. But at its core, *At Peace* is a more mature, reflective and spiritual Propagandhi. '*Don't follow me, don't ask me where I'm going*,' Chris Hannah laments on *No Longer Young*. The band might be older and wiser, but still driven by injustice, and the multilayered *Fire Season* is archetypal Propagandhi with its angst-ridden poetic metaphor.

Alex Burrows

Peter Murphy

Silver Shade *METROPOLIS*

First album in 11 years from the goth pioneer is an energised beast.



Unlike many of his peers, former Bauhaus frontman Peter Murphy has never held any qualms about identifying as goth. Hell, he'll even admit to laying down the template, right down from the chiselled cheekbones, doomed baritone and musical theatre. But, to his credit, whether mixing Middle Eastern influences with rock and electronics and whatever knocks on his crypt, he's never stood still.

Silver Shade, his first album since 2014's *Lion*, finds him reunited with producer and Killing Joke bassist Youth, and while the results couldn't have been made by anyone else, they see Murphy's healthy curiosity embracing industrial electronica. Crucially, a sense of immediacy is palpable from the off with *Swoon*, on which Murphy's powerful voice is bolstered by Youth's muscular production and Trent Reznor's backing vocals. *Meaning Of My Life* is drenched with drama, while *Hot Roy* rocks hard against pumping electronics and scything guitars.

Despite the passing years, Murphy still delivers.

Julian Marszalek

King Hüsky

King Hüsky *HYPE CITY MUSIC*

Kvelertak guitarist delves into softer territory on solo debut.



Vidar Landa is best known as guitarist and songwriter with Norwegian metal mayhemists Kvelertak, but like many a hard rocker, his passions stretch to markedly different varieties of popular song. So he's left his Flying V on the stand and unplugged his effects pedals for this set of cuddly, if sardonic soft-sung semi-acoustic indie-pop. Who knew he had such a winning way with a sunshine melody, as on the love-lorn beauty of

PRESS

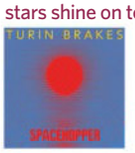
Waiting For A Chance and *Wish I Had A Dog* and *Change Of Heart*'s whistling, carefree grunge-lite? And while Kvelertak sang in their native language, Landa opts for English, which will surely help UK audiences to appreciate vignettes featuring characters '*licking on a frog with friends from Prague*'.

Johnny Sharp

Turin Brakes

Spacehopper *COOKING VINYL*

Forgotten 'New Acoustic' stars shine on tenth album.



Whatever happened to Turin Brakes? Once dubbed the darlings of the so called New Acoustic Movement in the early noughties, they were harshly cast aside once The Strokes and The Libertines came along. After 2003's *Ether Song* saw the South London band peak in the album charts, they were pretty much forgotten about both critically and commercially. Rather than jack it all in, though, they soldiered on and continued to release consistently confident records.

Spacehopper, their tenth studio album, sees the band reflecting on their early beginnings through wiser eyes, particularly on soaring opener *The Message* and the jangly title track. These familiar moments work well, but it's the darker, spikier songs that are perhaps the most ear-catching, especially the guitar-scratching *Pays To Be Paranoid*, a scathing indictment of the digital world we live in, and psych-drenched closer *What's Underneath*. Sure, they're guilty of peddling the odd pedestrian number, but there's nothing on here that warrants kicking them to the kerb. You might be surprised by what you find here.

Damian Jones

Spider Rockets

Dirty And Bad

FIREROCK MUSIC GROUP

Classic rock of ages celebrated by New Jersey crew.



New Jersey has a particular advantage over neighbouring New York: there's much less pressure and expectation to be achingly cool and arch. There, in the home of Springsteen, back-to-basics rock'n'roll is celebrated and kept alive, a vital part of US modern history to be cherished.

The state's Spider Rockets offer gritty, grubby, sex-soaked hard rock riddled with fiddly guitar licks and solid riffs, led expertly by frontwoman Helena Cos, who veers from slinky and suggestive to fearlessly in-your-face. They have a song called *Rock Your Ass Off*, and there is no hidden subtext (although one line '*Wanna show me how you do, when you follow, follow through*' is bound to elicit a few schoolboy sniggers this side of the Atlantic). *Dirty And Bad* is music for dive bars and cheap beers, and there's always a space in the world for that.

Emma Johnston

Stereolab

Instant Holograms On Metal Film *DUOPHONIC/WARP*

Anglo-French avant poppers' first new album in 15 years.



Stereolab were always a welcome counterpoint to Britpop with their broader European outlook in the 90s. In today's Brexit-ruined times with Faragism on the rise, the fragrances of their imaginary Utopian Europop, as if coming from the Springtime following the successful revolution of 1968, is more welcome still. Song titles like *Vermona F Transistor* could have appeared on any of Stereolab's previous albums, and here they're revisiting old terrain rather than breaking new ground. Still, this 2025 variant, as evidenced by *Flashes From Everywhere*, with its dark, limpid flute tones and the Parisian milk-bar frenzy of *Electrified Teenybop!* are subtly inflected, more mature versions of their familiar tropes and tendencies, their Anglo-Franco-Krautrock alliance. These are the sounds of mid-evening rather than blazing afternoon. With Pulp also reactivated, the good 90s are back to do battle with the bad 90s.

David Stubbs

Deraps

Viva Rock N' Roll! *METALVILLE*

Want to feel like a teenager again? Drink this.



According to the cliché, second albums can be tough. Not for Deraps, though, judging by the sound of *Viva Rock N' Roll*.

Guitar sensation Jacob Deraps returns with a fistful of tunes that it's very tempting to describe as 'sizzling' and 'incendiary' – so we won't resist. Built on Deraps's reputation as a six-stringer in the style of Eddie Van Halen, there's not much deviation second time around either, as that classic high-gain sound stamps itself all across these 11 tracks, although *Equinox* is actually a tasteful intro to *Last Fall*, which feels a bit like *Dance The Night Away* with a whisker of White Lion. Songs like *The Legend Of Larrikin Laddie, Blindside* and *Born To Die* don't rely so much on DLR-era VH, otherwise fans of Eddie can plug in pretty much anywhere, as that infectious abandon and joyous swing is in the driving seat from beginning to end.

Essi Berelian

Crystal Spiders

Metanoia *RIPPLE*

Hex-dispensing desert doom from a trio of weed wizards.



I watched this movie the other day called *Delicate Arch*, about these four idiots who go hiking in the desert and take a bunch of mushrooms and lose their minds. Frankly, it lacked something. Then I heard this record. That's what it fuckin' lacked. Crystal Spiders are a three-piece stoner-fuzz band from Raleigh, NC and they sound like the vultures circling overhead as your drug-addled brain realises you're out of water two miles out in Death Valley. It radiates waves of dry, relentless heat, the chugging riffs like some unseen serpentine creature lurking under the sand, the soaring male/female vocals like the Grim Reaper and his siren bride stroking your hair with fingers of doom. I could tell you which bands they might sound like or which songs I like the best, but let's not break the spell here. This is magic metal, and you are officially in the sacred circle.

Sleazegrinder

ROUND-UP: **BLUES**

By Henry Yates



When Rivers Meet: oozing star aura.

When Rivers Meet

Addicted To You *ONE ROAD*



In a modern industry where good bands drop like flies, it's been heartening to chart the rise of When Rivers Meet from the greenhorn circuit to something approaching mainstream contention. The uptick is no mystery, with Grace and Aaron Bond not only oozing star aura – like The White Stripes reimagined by Tim Burton – but also going beyond the dead-eyed blues dogma that keeps less imaginative artists playing for the mullet-and-bumbag crowd in mainland Europe.

The opening title track underlines all that. Dancing between fuzzy riffs, psych wiggery and prog harmonies, it feels like three songs in one, all of them excellent. *Still Standing* nixes the notion that you should choose a time signature and stick to it. *Coming Up For Air* might be the prettiest moment here (a smoky-eyed courtship dance with witchy fingerstyle guitar and a piano like a haunted music box), while *Soft White Sand* is the dirtiest, Aaron not so much running his Telecaster through an overdrive pedal as dropping it into a woodchipper. This album should be another deserved success.

Catfish

Time To Fly *INDEPENDENT*



The death of Catfish's hugely talented and well-liked singer/guitarist Matt Long in October last year at the age of just 29 was the blackest of news. But this collection of unused studio material (completed by his bandmates) is the best way to remember him, the charging riffs of Change *My Ways* and *Sick Of It All* pulsing with life, light, soul and defiance.

The Milk Men

Live From Milkfest *FABULOUS*



The trouble with most live albums, says Milk Men guitarist Adam Norsworthy, is that they sound like skimmed milk. Not this one. Recorded in rough 'n' ready fashion from the mixing desk at the band's charity festival, highlights such as *Shoot The Lights* and *Little Miss Attention* have the elbows-out punky energy of The Who's *Live At Leeds*.

Ben Joseph And The Lay Lows

The Burns *TIGER LIBRA*



London-based but with roots in the US South, Ben Joseph is a skilful cultural fusioneer, with *The Burns* dabbling in everything from zydeco (*Cajun Queen*) to Allman Brothers-style duelling-guitar blues (*Burn Me*). Every gearshift feels authentic, and the band play out of their skin throughout.

The Blues Against Youth

Gianni Tbay's Blues Against Youth

ESCAPE FROM TODAY



Turin slide man Tbay is a wonderfully skewed talent. Starting with first single *Discomfort Zone*, nothing here sounds quite as it should – and that's a recommendaton. In particular, check out the strident *Low Swingin' Bad News*, and *Goin' To California*.

BLACKHAM/PRESS

The Hard Stuff Albums



Garbage

Let All That We Imagine Be The Light *BMG*



Keep your gold watch. Shirley Manson and co. are still in their prime.

'*I'm not dead, I'm not done*,' Shirley Manson declares on *Chinese Fire Horse*, a vitriolic kick-back against journalists who of late have been asking her if she's planning to retire. Not a chance. With the electro-goth revival reaching full throttle (The Cure, Heartworms, Eurovision hexmaker Bambi Thug) and synthetic space-rock very much coming of age, even following the cancellation of the tour to support 2021's *No Gods No Masters* – due to an old on-stage hip injury that left Manson requiring surgery and lengthy recuperation – these originators are as relevant as ever, and going both nowhere and back to the future-rock frontline.

Manson's rehabilitation period has, in this eighth album in 30 years, created one of the band's most reflective releases (here she works towards acceptance of the fragility of her body while also reasserting its many strengths) but also one of their most defiant. Besides using the bubblegum space-rock of *Chinese Fire Horse* to put the boot into some poor underpaid hacks, across these 45 minutes Manson takes aim at cheating exes, oppressive and warmongering regimes, cruel ideologies and bigots of all shapes and sizes.

Opener *There's No Future In Optimism* may have a wink in the title but the song stares glazed-eyed at a burning world; two lovers escape an apocalyptic LA of race riots, earthquakes, circling helicopters and swarming cops. *R U Happy Now* harpoons the gun-loving, misogynistic MAGA mind-set. Often, the record's politics broaden into the righteous and inclusive: *Get Out My Face AKA Bad Kitty* has Manson embodying the voice of online female fightback, while *Sisyphus*, a gorgeous melding of classical strings and AI-baiting electronics, throws its arms protectively around the vulnerable, be they black, trans or Palestinian.

Diaristic vignettes add to the impact. *Hold* is a cry for connection from Manson's surgery-imposed lockdown. *Have We Met (The Void)* throws back to the night four decades ago when her boyfriend's mistress turned up at her door and she was flung into her life's first abyss of uncertainty. *The Day I Met God* concerns a recent religious experience on military-strength painkillers. And having three exploratory producers behind her serves Manson arguably better than ever. Vig, Marker and Erikson layer meditative moments in cinematic synth-noir textures, hammer her bursts of self-assurance with innovative tech-rock and drench her personal revelations in a kind of intergalactic opulence. Rarely has a record sounded so far from the allotment.

Mark Beaumont

The Inspector Cluzo

Less Is More *F.THEBASSPLAYER*

French organic farming duo make great garage-rock record.



Two organic farmers from Gascony making an album – their tenth – that swaggers like a rough mix of The White Stripes and early Clutch (who they'll be touring with later this year). Inspired by naturalist Henry David Thoreau and philosopher Guy Debord, this extraordinary scream of social consciousness is the kind of record that'll make the hairs on the back of your neck salute.

It might deal with the bigger issues of escalating consumerism and post-growth, but don't let that give you pause, just enjoy being steamrollered by the visceral punch of *As Stupid As You Can* or the furious-sounding *The Greenwashers*. Even more surprising is their wonderful take on Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's *Almost Cut My Hair*. The magnificent bastards.

Philip Wilding

Various

Think Loud 4 Parkinson's *KINDREDSPIRITMUSIC.ORG*

Cover jobs.

Fair to say that this charity album to raise money for finding a cure for Parkinson's is aimed at those most at risk of getting it: the over-60s. A bunch of covers is the tried and trusted way of doing these things, so that's mainly what we have here. And if you can twist something familiar into something unexpected, so much the better.

Want a new guitar solo for *AllRight Now*? Chris Spedding's your man, twisting it every which way while still paying homage to Paul Kossoff. Meanwhile, Arthur 'God Of Hellfire' Brown does a close impression of Paul Rodgers. But he cuts loose on *House Of The Rising Sun* as if he's just caught crabs from the place.

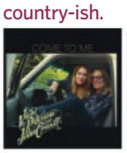
Richard Thompson and Hugh Cornwell might seem like an incongruous duo (until you remember they were at school together), but they romp all over *Tobacco Road*. John Cooper Clarke heads into the Australian outback for a lugubrious take on Slim Dusty's *Old Dingo*. More subtle is Queen's Roger Taylor reviving Sandy Nelson's *Let There Be Drums* with the Kodo Drummers and Hank Marvin. There are also several acts revisiting their own hits, climaxing with Gary Brooker's vocals being posthumously added to a new version of *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*.

Hugh Fielder

Vicki Peterson & John Cowsill

Long After The Fire *LABEL 51*

She Bangles. He Cowsills. They're married. They're country-ish.



Now in their late 60s, Cowsills singing drummer John Cowsill and Bangles lead guitarist Vicki Peterson have been married for over 20 years, during which time he's mainly been the Beach Boys' drummer. They've collaborated sporadically, but this is their first album together. It's comprised of songs written by John's late brothers and fellow Cowsills Barry and Bill, stretching back as far as The Cowsills' 60s heyday.

With steel guitar prominent, it's a cross between old-style country and western and new-fangled Americana. It's impeccably played and sung (both separately and together), of course, and there's a spiritual undertow to *When Hearts Collide* and the Spanish guitar-laden *Ol' Timeless*. They're not overly gloopy, though, and when they rock out on *Sound On Sound* it's as if the Georgia Satellites were still a going concern.

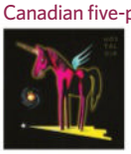
No cages are rattled here, but it's a union of two gifted people in late bloom.

John Aizlewood

Mother Mother

Nostalgia *PARLOPHONE/WARNER*

Grating indie rock from Canadian five-piece.



'Quirky' is a difficult one to get right. Lay it on too thick and it curdles into weirdness or, worse, wackiness. British Columbia's Mother Mother definitely land on the wrong side of the line on their tenth album. *Nostalgia* is holed below the waterline by overcooked theatrical singing and self-consciously 'playful' musical choices that plays well with their fellow Canadians but leaves most of the rest of the world cold.

A big part of the problem are

JOSEPH CULTICE/REDFERNS

the voices of brother and sister Ryan and Molly Guldemond, guitarist and keyboard player respectively. With the former's wilfully odd enunciation and the latter's grating, childlike whisper, the pair seem to be in competition as to who can be most annoying (his impression of a malfunctioning, Police-era Sting on the title track edges it). It's a shame, because *Better Of Me* and the dreamy *Little Mistake* suggest there's a fizzy, smart indie-rock album underneath the zany bullshit.

Dave Everley

Tarja

Circus Life *EARMUSIC*

Gifted Finnish singer shines brightest on this fan-favourite live recording.



With shares in sounds of the grandiose variety, metal and classical have always made fruitful bedfellows. Tarja Turunen understands this as much as anyone, and over the past 20 years the ex-Nightwish frontwoman has released a raft of symphonic-metal solo albums that showcase her prodigiously powerful, three-octave vocal range.

Turunen's *Circus Life* concert was originally included on 2022's compilation album *Best Of: Living The Dream*, and now it gets a standalone release. It was recorded in Bucharest in January 2020, and all the songs in its career-spanning set-list received new arrangements. On *Diva*, Turunen's voice soars highest among propulsive guitars and vibrant violins. *Love To Hate* ambles gracefully to its crushing crescendo. *Falling Awake* is a sophisticated track with AOR vibes and a cracking guitar solo. These tracks don't always come off, but if we're talking pure musical enterprise, it's a huge achievement.

Chris Lord

Das Koolies

Pando *STRANGETOWN*

Riding the sainted rhythms on the midnight train from Cardiff.



Having effortlessly blended pop, psychedelia, surf, punk, country and prog – often in the same song – Super Furry Animals would regularly segue from their idiosyncratic howl of protest *The Man Don't Give A Fuck* into techno workouts that could go on for up to 30 minutes. Now, with singer Gruff Rhys deeply ensconced in his solo career, the remainder of the band have regrouped as Das Koolies once again to continue with the electronic party vibe with this second album.

Ogov Gôkh and *Responde A La Pregunta* are bangers of the old school, the latter hitting that peak groove that ensures the total mind-wiping that goes so well with unabashed arm waving. The pumping *Spider City* provides the perfect beat for that upward rush towards total hedonism, while with *White Star* the quartet bringing down the pace, which is continued with the gorgeous *Thoughtless*.

Julian Marszalek

Aawks

On Through The Sky Maze

BLACK THRONE PRODUCTIONS

Canadian psych-metal crew look to the occult for their heavy sonic adventures.



From the moment Black Sabbath invented metal as we know it, mysticism, the occult and punishingly heavy riffs have happily shacked up together and kept subsequent generations enthralled.

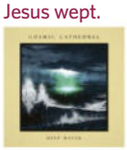
Aawks, from Barrie, Ontario, are without doubt worshippers at the Sabbath altar. Kicking off with clanging bells, ferocious feedback and a riff-and-scream combo, *Celestial Magick* is a snarling, foam-mouthed beast, biting at the heels of Mastodon in an attempt to bring them down and step into their place at the psych-metal top table. Demons, spirits and tortured souls roam the beautifully bleak landscape, enticed to the surface realm by sheer force of noise. Things take a trippier turn in the likes of *Lost Dwellers*, and *On Through The Sky Maze* is the kind of heavy nightmare that dreams are made of.

Emma Johnston

Cosmic Cathedral

Deep Water *INSIDEOUT MUSIC*

Jesus wept.



It takes Neal Morse a verse and a half to mention Jesus for the first, but certainly not last, time on the debut album from his latest project. Unsurprising, given that the former vocalist and keyboard player with prog mainstays Spock's Beard has put his unshakeable Christian faith front and centre for 20-plus years. It's not a sin to use music as a delivery mechanism for spiritual beliefs, as Cosmic Cathedral do here, but it helps if the proselytising is backed up by interesting music.

Unfortunately, *Deep Water* is the softest of soft prog, a mush of MOR guitars, cheeseball synths, and Morse relentlessly exhorting to the heavens like Neil Diamond clutching a Bible. Even if the message doesn't resonate, the talent involved - including former Genesis touring drummer Chester Thompson and Robert Plant associate Byron House – should at least produce something engaging musically, but *Deep Water* is duller than a *Songs Of Praise* re-run.

Dave Everley

Yngwie Malmsteem

Tokyo Live *MUSIC THEORIES*

Guitar noodling on a grand scale and set to 'Stun'.



Like the poor, guitar virtuoso (you have to use that phrase every time you utter his name) Yngwie Malmsteem has always been with us. For those who might have missed it, he was the man most likely to succeed Ritchie Blackmore; a darling of the guitar magazines with his Fender Strat and attitude.

This absurdly OTT collection, 90 minutes of Malmsteem railroading every song into complete submission, is, dependent on your viewpoint, the guitarist at his best or worst. Classical, acoustic, baroque, something from his time with Alcatrazz, even some Deep Purple, it is the sound of a very talented player who doesn't know when to stop.

Philip Wilding

ROUND-UP: MELODIC ROCK

By Dave Ling



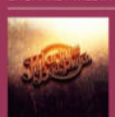
Marty And The Bad Punch: radio-friendly hard rock anthems.

TALLEE SAVAGE/PRESS

Marty And The Bad Punch

Marty And The Bad Punch

ENGHARDT MEDIA



Munich-based guitarist and songwriter Martin Punsch returns with a third album from his (almost) self-titled project. Following its immediate predecessor, 2020's *Walk A Straight Line*, it introduces a set of new yet familiar faces, except for guitarist Tommy Denander, who was a guest last time out. Here, Denander steps up for the entire album, joining a crack team fronted by up-and-coming hotshot British vocalist Dan Byrne, plus celebrated bassist Tony Franklin (The Firm, Blue Murder) and Levara drummer Josh Devine.

With the Americana-style material of the past now seemingly abandoned, radio-friendly hard rock anthems sit alongside some slower-paced moments. Featuring an impassioned display from Dan Byrne, *Have Faith* is without doubt the record's centrepiece – a powerful, moving ballad with additional colour from the Stockholm Strings, Denander tinkling away on a grand piano owned by Benny Andersson of ABBA.

This is well worth investigating.

Captain Black Beard

Chasing Danger *MIGHTY MUSIC*

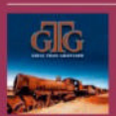


Captain Black Beard admit to being cut from the same cloth as Night Flight Orchestra. Seven albums into their career it's nobody's fault that CBB's Swedish compatriots successfully flew the 'disco AOR' banner first. Unmistakably, both bands are on a mission to bring fun back into music, with bold, powerful, enjoyable tunes.

Great Train Graveyard

Great Train Graveyard

AOR BLVD



The concept of Great Train Graveyard was born when Steve Newman from the band Newman and British singer Ben Green collaborated in Compass, a project steeped in prog rock and metal. GTG are considerably mellower, earthier and looser than Compass, nodding at vintage-era Bad Company.

Sandness

Vertigo *ROCKSHOTS*



Slickly produced by Alessandro Del Vecchio, *Vertigo* is album number five from this Italian trio blessed with a pair of powerful lead voices (guitarist Roberto Luchetta and bassist Marco Battistotti) and charged with a whole lot of attitude. *Not Your Dog* and *From Hero To Zero* are hummable and boisterous, and a mild whiff of punk zeal helps to separate them from the pack.

Wheels Of Fire

All In *ART OF MELODY*



The fourth album from Italians WOF, *All In* picks up where 2019 predecessor *Begin Again* signed off, by adding modern elements to what had been a more formulaic AOR approach. However, songs such as *Fool's Paradise* and *99 Lies* very much retain melody as a cornerstone, and a slick, forceful production from singer/keyboard player Davide 'Dave Rox' Barbieri is a big bonus.



The Dead Daisies

Lookin' For Trouble *SPV*



Musical collective kick back down south with blues covers album.

Traditionally, when a band has a little spare studio time while recording an album, they knock out a B-side or two. That is, if they're not using those precious hours to indulge in extra-curricular activities long associated with the profession.

While John Corabi, David Lowy and friends were finishing the recording of last year's Dead Daisies album of originals *Light 'Em Up*, though, they felt sufficiently inspired by the heritage of their surroundings in Fame Studios, Muscle Shoals, Alabama, to jam a few blues numbers while the mood took them. It might not be the most original idea ever to occur to a band, and anyone who has endured less-than-inspired blues-rock covers in public houses across the country will know that the genre's simple charm doesn't always make for thrilling entertainment. But the results depend on the passion and finesse put into the performance.

On that front, *Lookin' For Trouble* hits its mark as often as it misses with this 10-song set of standards. They rip into Muddy Waters's *I'm Ready* with all the hard-rock gusto and crunching bottom end you'd expect from The Dead Daisies, with guitarist Doug Aldrich letting rip in satisfying style to ice a satisfyingly stodgy cake. That's an example of the chunka-chunka approach to blues rock working. It's less successful on their rendition of *Little Red Rooster* – perhaps because we're best used to it being done at a slow, swaggering tempo, speeding it up doesn't do a lot for it. Similarly, their reading of Freddie King's *Going Down* is a stirring one thanks to a feisty rhythm section and a ravenous vocal from Corabi, resembling ZZ Top wired on jailhouse stimulants. Yet while Lead Belly's *Black Betty* is laced with lively harmonica, we all know the Ram Jam version, and while The Dead Daisies' chugging take on it would probably work at 10pm in a liquidly refreshed club setting, on record it's forgettable.

When they add gospel-ish backing vocals to a bouncing cover of John Lee Hooker's *Boom Boom* it has a certain rock'n'soul strut, but it's just a touch too Jools Holland-y compared to the sharp pugilism of the original.

However, two more winners emerge in the shape of a stomping overhaul of Robert Johnson's *Crossroads*, and perhaps the album's brightest highlight, a resonantly soulful stab at BB King's *The Thrill Is Gone*, which comes into its own via some brilliantly emotive guitar licks and Corabi's angst-racked vocal delivery.

Johnny Sharp

Teen Mortgage

Devil Ultrasonic Dream *ROADRUNNER*

Bass players are too dang expensive these days.



What I don't get about this recent proliferation of two-piece bands (Mantar, Venus Twins, Hella, these dudes etc) is why bands have been belabouring themselves with four or five knuckleheads for the past five or so decades.

Teen Mortgage are Ed Barkauskas on drums and James Guile on guitar/vox, and that's it. Imagine how roomy the van is! Anyway, these DC punks have created a poppy but visceral wall of sound that balances an abundance of alt./grunge hooks with a bedrock of fuzzy garage punk. I mean, it's a lot more regal than your average gunk band – they're like Rush compared to The Mummies – but you can tell they've spent many drunken nights bashing out *Louie Louie* before they wrestled these songs into shape. The searing *Control* is only 50 seconds long, which is also pretty punk. Heavy, groovy, snotty, and over in under half an hour. How can you argue with that?

Sleazegrinder

Vinny Peculiar

Things Too Long Left Unsaid *SHADRACK & DUXBURY*

Criminally undervalued national treasure raises game.

Dealing in the kind of humour-adjacent kitchen-sink indie lyrics that Smiths-era Morrissey would once so deftly deploy is a quintessentially English discipline. Kink Ray Davies was probably its original exponent, casually populating his perfectly crafted 60s set-pieces with '*Carnabytian armies*' and window-cleaning women wearing '*hats like Princess Marina*'. It has always fed on a national appetite for nostalgia, a weakness for updated Wilde-ian wordplay. Lawrence from Denim was brilliant at it, but Alan Wilkes (aka Vinny Peculiar), blessed with an acute observational eye for particularly evocative pop-cultural detritus, is its boss.

Naming his label after the undertakers Billy Fisher worked for in *Billy Liar* says an awful lot about the Salford-based nearly man, and the rest can probably be found in his exquisitely tooled couplets for *Glam Rock Graveyard, All I Want For Christmas Is A Gibson Flying V* and *Shenstone College Disco*. If you ever considered Pulp to be just a little too mannered and art-school, here's the rock-literate Jarvis Cocker you can do business with.

Ian Fortnam

Counting Crows

Butter Miracle, The Complete Sweets! *BMG*

Rock romantics don't fix what ain't broke.



More than 30 years on from their multi-platinum debut *August And Everything After* defied grunge trends with swoony roots-rock inspired by Springsteen, Van Morrison and The Band, San Francisco's stalwart Counting Crows are in no hurry to change. Given elevation by Adam Duritz's emphatically poetic lyrics and impassioned delivery, these songs embrace the trad, dad. As their audience noticed long ago, they're very, very good at it. Duritz can still surprise with his lyrical twists and moments of vulnerable candour, and the balance of hoary riffs and beat-up blues has a seductive swing that flouts logic.

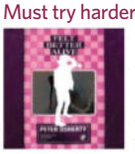
Half of this daftly titled new album came out as an EP in 2021. New tracks like *With Love From A-Z* and *Spaceman In Tulsa* tell their wild and innocent stories with an easy knack for switching between laid-back and urgent. *Virginia Through The Rain* is the most Counting Crows song title ever (it's a place, and also a girl's name, see?), while *Under The Aurora* borders on majestic. It'd require high levels of haughtiness not to melt.

Chris Roberts

Peter Doherty

Felt Better Alive *STRAP ORIGINALS*

Must try harder.



It seems that a great talent is buried somewhere within Peter Doherty, struggling to get out. The first Libertines album is a raggedy classic, and 2009's *Last Of The English Roses* and 2022's *The Fantasy Life Of Poetry & Crime* are songs that prove he's got something.

Felt Better Alive starts well. *Calvados* paints a pleasant picture of French peasant life

THE DEAD DAISIES/PRESS

with some clever chord choices behind Doherty's accented frailty. The string-driven *Pot Of Gold*, a song about trying to write a song, is equally strong melodically, and *The Day The Baron Died* wouldn't shame Ray Davies.

Things start going astray with the half-arsery of *Out Of Tune Balloon* and *Ed Belly*. The clanging *Poca Mahonney's* recovers some ground ,but *Fingee* is as silly as its title, meaning this album is a frustrating game of two halves: it's good when its good, but when it's bad it's not good at all.

Pat Carty

Peter Baumann

Nightfall *BUREAU B*

Latest studio album by ex-Tangerine Dream man.



Peter Baumann has said that in all his work since his early-70s heyday with Tangerine Dream he has striven to create a sense of the transcendent. That's certainly conveyed on *Nightfall*, with titles such as *A World Apart*, *From A Far Land* and *Sailing Past Midnight*. These tracks evolve and shift slowly and gradually as the album progresses, from the woodblock pulse of *No One Knows*, its melody meandering uncertainly, its serpentine, aerial progress continuing on *Lost In A Pale Blue Sky*. The sense of enigma deepens, the high arches of Baumann's synth tones receding somehow before *I'm Sitting Here, Just For A While* snaps us back to Earth, as if to remind us that this is a journey into inner space.

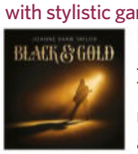
Tangerine Dream continued despite the loss of their founder Edgar Froese, but really, Peter Baumann is as close as we get to TD in 2025.

David Stubbs

Joanne Shaw Taylor

Black & Gold *JOURNEYMAN*

Blues chanteuse strikes gold with stylistic gambles.



Blues rocker Joanne Shaw Taylor has maintained a remarkable head of steam since last year's *Heavy Soul*, with a run of new singles to telegraph the contents of *Black & Gold*. This time she expands on her previous album's integration of soul and pop influences, mixing a more adventurous range of styles into the bluesy bedrock. Sixteen years into her career, Shaw Taylor's distinctive identity as a singer, soloist and songwriter allow her to weave in Americana (*Hold Of My Heart*), Pretenders-style pop-rock (*All The Things I Said*), and give Sam Sparro's *Black & Gold* a fired up, reggae-infused makeover. Meanwhile, back in blues rock territory, her concise, molten lead playing (*I Gotta Stop Letting You Let Me Down*), artful writing (*What Are You Gonna Do Now*) and smouldering vocals on Faces cover *Love Lives Here* hit the bullseye dead on.

Rich Davenport

The Scaramanga Six

Glut *WRATH*

Thirty years in, weird and witty West Yorkshire outfit are still an absorbing listen.



Led by multi-instrumentalist twin brothers Paul and Steven Morricone, the Huddersfield alt-art rock band are celebrating 30 years with back-to-back albums. *Glut* is first up, before *Dearth* in July. Paul is an accomplished filmmaker, and that penchant for theatrics is usually prominent in the music. Not to mention the Cardiacs-style textures, and their ability to shift between the abstract and the nonsensical. *Bad Time Music* rushes forth with a riotous chunk of the garage-rock chic that the Six (currently a quartet) pull off so well. *You're Back In The Room* is amusingly ominous with eerie guitar twangs and droll warning about mindless consumerism: '*You've been shopping in your sleep*'.

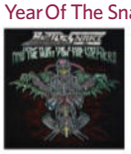
"We cannot find a reason to cease", the band said when announcing these new records. And really that's as good a reason as any.

Chris Lord

Battlesnake

Dawn Of The Exultants And The Hunt For The Shepherd *SELF-RELEASED*

Turns out it really is the Year Of The Snake.



It's been remarked that Battlesnake owe as much to Tenacious D as they owe Judas Priest, and it's a fair assessment. Ah, yes, that traditionally repellent musical cocktail: heavy metal and humour! But in the case of this madcap Australian sextet, it's less about farts and shagging and more about proffering a very knowing sense of buffoonery (we think) that downplays the fact that they can actually play the shit out of their instruments. *Shepherd Hunter* – naturally about a search for Jesus's supposedly long-lost twin – takes in a wild six minutes with trad metal riffage, Dio-esque pageantry and a smidgen of keytar. *Murder Machine* is the most Priest-like – along with Sam Frank's hyper-animated vocals, those turbocharged guitars lead a dizzying sonic assault. You'll laugh, you'll headbang and you might even hurl during Battlesnake's third album, but let's dive into their camp pagan wardrobe another time.

Chris Lord

The Haunted

Songs Of Last Resort *CENTURY MEDIA*

Double-dipped Swedes prove not as sweet.



For metal fans of a certain vintage, The Haunted were as close as they'd get to Gothenburg melodeath icons At The Gates, particularly given that band disbanded long before the scene got global recognition. So when ATG returned to active duty a little over a decade ago, a big question mark was put on how active The Haunted could possibly be as Jonas Björler and Adrian Erlandsson pulled double-duty.

Songs Of Last Resort is The Haunted's first release in eight years, but thankfully the rust hasn't set in too hard. The offer of high-intensity thrash with distinctly Gothenburg melodic sensibilities remains, and there's a vitality to *Warhead, To Bleed Out, Hell Is Wasted On The Dead* and *Salvation Recalled* that recalls the band's peak. Elsewhere, though, *Songs Of Last Resort* feels a little too back-to-basics, especially given that while their Gothenburg peers have often gone through highs and lows, the most recent releases from the likes of In Flames, The Halo Effect and, yes, At The Gates have sounded much more incendiary and vital.

Rich Hobson

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Smoking Popes

Lovely Stuff *ANXIOUS & ANGRY*

You might recall these Illinois-born, hook-literate pop-punkers from their Morrissey-fronts-Buzzcocks '95 near-hit *Need You Around* (it was on the *Clueless* soundtrack). Well, they're still (agelessly) at it, and retain their truffle-pig's nose for muscular indie anthems. **7/10**

TVOD

Party Time *MOTHLAND*

Fresh from what's proving to be an enduring Brooklyn-based post-punk breeding ground, TVOD offset an edgy NYC-adjacent intellectual take on six-stringed spikiness with a rare ability to shake indie dancefloor booty. Imagine Talking Heads with less anxiety. **8/10**

Pup

Who Will Look After The Dogs *LITTLE DIPPER/RISE*

Toronto's Pup give the impression of a band with two controls at their disposal: one marked 'angry uncompromising noise punk', the other 'harmony-laced mainstream pop', both of which they habitually crank, until their bark almost drowns out their bite. Arf-arf! **7/10**

Detroit Run

Defiance PT 1 *SELF-RELEASED*

Despite being limited to an EP of five tracks, touted Liverpudlian quartet DR conjure up arena-targeted, anthemic alt.rock (gang vox, squashed/bloated guitar washes, balls-out keys) with clear ambitions towards global immensity. Nice enough, but Detroit? Really? **6/10**

Foxwarren

2 *ANTI-*

An urban folk-based patchwork quilt of found/curated sounds masterfully wrangled by lead singer-songwriter Andy Shauf. Occasional guitars colour lightly deployed existential crises. A bit like Optiganly Yours. Who split in obscurity... It's tip-top stuff though. **8/10**

Jools

Violent Delights *HASSLE*

Holding up an unflinching mirror to their digitally damaged zeitgeist, genre-shredding 21st-century punk sextet Jools laser-focus heavily treated guitars, post-hip-hop beats and dual-vocalled anxious blurts on isolation, obsession and third-millennial toxicity. Very now. **7/10**

Real Sickies

Under A Plastic Bag *STOMP*

Feed The Dickies and Superchunk into an industrial mincer, and the slightly-above-generic Edmonton popcore shlock that spews out will, apparently, be embraced by gonk-top royalty as Billie Joe's Armstrong's 'favourite Canadian punk band'. Adenoidal. **6/10**

You Vandal

This Is Where People Come To Die *EUCLID PLACE*

Self-describing as "Florida pop-punk"' probably tells you all you need to picture You Vandal: bearded, old enough to know better, smiling in direct contravention of actual punk law. And how do they sound? Like that week in the 90s when everything went Offspring-shaped. **6/10**

Clamm

Serious Acts *MEAT MACHINE*

One thing you can never accuse Melbourne trio Clamm of lacking is intensity. Their riffs jar, their sternly deployed lyrics seek to unerringly reflect traumatic times, yet they aim to offer catharsis. '*I've got no idea,*' Jack Summers monotonously insists. And it's hard to disagree. **6/10**

Frankie & The Witch Fingers

Trash Classic *LEVITATION/RAS*

Sparking with significant levels of dynamism, verve, ingenuity and all that other good stuff that commands a wafer-thin 21st-century attention span, LA's Frankie & The Witch Fingers perk up their psych base layer with a Devo-esque, Cheap Trick degree of commercial-minded cleverness. Ace. **7/10**

Twat Union

Don't Look It In The Eye *ALCOPOP*

'Feminist feral theatre punks.' No, wait... Who formed as a 'whimsical jest'. Okay, if anyone's still reading, they're actually pretty perky. The right kind of provocative and playful. They've songs about vibrators, thigh chafe, urinary tract infections... Hello? Where is everybody? **5/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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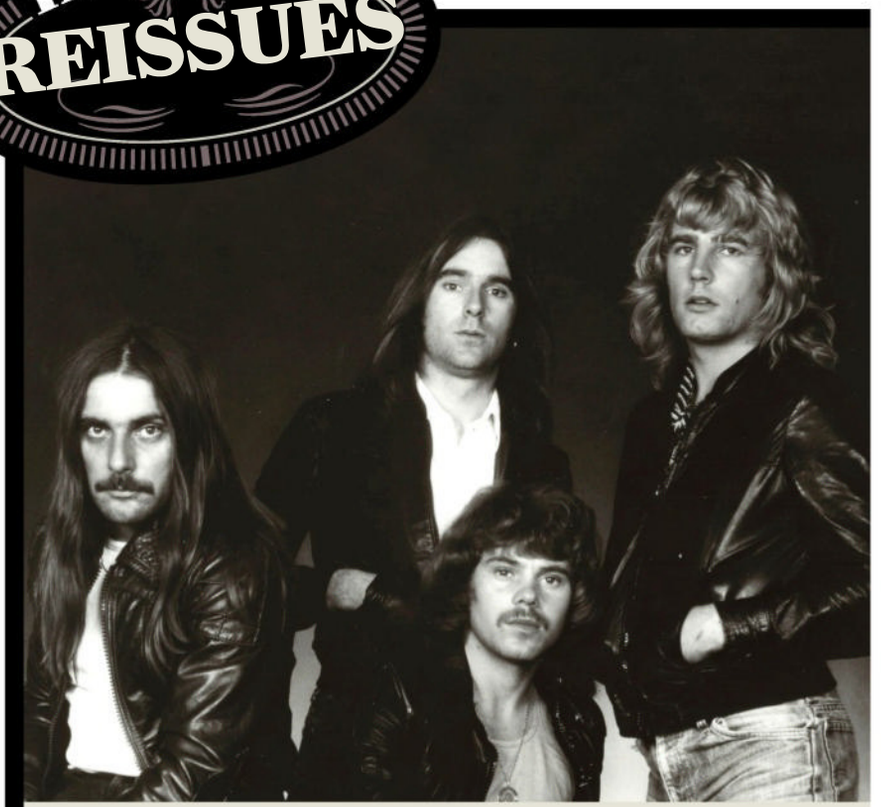
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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES



Status Quo

Live! *EDSEL*



Classic live double repackaged in eight-CD set with three full show recordings.

It has been suggested now and then that Status Quo tracks can sound a little, well, samey. But that's only to those who don't appreciate them. Yet even Quo diehards might find largely the same set of songs performed four times in the same box set (two of which are literally identical) a little repetitive.

Nonetheless, as a polished up re-release of a classic live album, a careful remastering of these recordings from Glasgow Apollo in October 1976 (with all three nights' full performances thrown in), it does a handsome job, heightening the best qualities of the original without smoothing off any essential rough edges.

People often refer to Quo as being 'at the peak of their powers' here. But while that might be true of their live potency, as songwriters and their trajectory towards becoming 'the people's band', they'd barely got started. Not only had they yet to write and record some of their best songs when *Live!* was recorded, it's also faintly baffling in retrospect that they didn't play *Down Down* or *Paper Plane*, or other big hits (*Break The Rules*, *Down The Dustpipe*). But this is a band who were perhaps eager to prove they were a serious rock band and that singles chart success wasn't really what they were about.

That's where this expanded *Live!* set finds it's USP. The marathon jams through *Forty-Five Hundred Times* are central to this album, and on three 16-to-18-minute takes on it here they give themselves licence to roam. Francis Rossi's guitar playing sounds positively possessed at times, and by the end on one of these nights his guitar isn't even in tune any more. He's similarly galvanised on the fretboard on the gutsy renditions of *Roll Over Lay Down*. Elsewhere the visceral aggression of Quo's performance also punches holes in the speakers, as when bassist Alan Lancaster gets to the mic and pretty much roars his way through *Bye Bye Johnny*.

As *CR* News Editor Dave Ling's must-read sleeve notes remind us, the band themselves always differed regarding this record's value, with perennial malcontent Rossi annoyed at the messy performances, which unlike many live albums of the era went unconcealed by studio overdubs. But as drummer John Coghlan concludes: "Ask any Quo fan and they'll agree. That rawness was the reason they liked it."

That ragged glory endures. And there's enough of it here to keep the Quo army headbanging for, ooh, around forty-five hundred hours, give or take.

Johnny Sharp

Compulsion

Reissues *ONE LITTLE INDIAN*

Passion-packed 90s four-piece explode onto white/orange vinyl.



As we seem to establish every month, the early 90s was a perilous place to fetch up into if you were a rock band who weren't easily pigeonholed into either loud-bit-quiet-bit-plaid-flannel grunge or gaw-blimey-Mary-Poppins-where's-me-whelks? Britpop. Many fell foul of one or other of these journalistic catch-all contrivances, but Dublin quartet Compulsion managed to have their career derailed by both.

Extremely post-punk, utterly feral in the live arena while surprisingly cerebral and sophisticated for a band so outwardly maniacal, Compulsion first crashed into the Seattle charabanc as Thee Amazing Collosal Men. Following a bust-up with Virgin Records and a change of drummer, they renamed and re-coiffed just in time to be lumped in with the New Wave Of New Wave: an immediately pre-Britpop *NME* invention soon to be cast aside like a Daz-cut speed-wrap, faster than you could say 'Blur versus Oasis'.

Fickle fashion aside, Compulsion were timelessly brilliant in their day. They blazed bright, rocked like Pixies on a hotplate and delivered a brace of albums history found no difficulty in kicking to the cultural kerb. Upon splitting in '97 guitarist Garret Lee re-forenamed himself Jacknife and went on to produce U2, R.E.M., Robbie Williams and Taylor Swift.

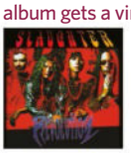
Comforter ('94, **8/10**), packed with riff-driven bangers honed on the road, stands up to scrutiny three decades down the line, soundtracking as it does a dystopia we're all now more than familiar with, and has been generously expanded with contemporary bon-bons to more than double its original length. There's a motorik forward momentum to widely ignored *The Future Is Medium* ('96, **8/10**, also extended) that speaks of lashings of unrealised potential and is sadly symptomatic of a time when talent was suddenly way more abundant than budget and an entire generation of contenders were one missed sales target – or one unfortunate haircut – away from undeserved oblivion.

Ian Fortnam

Slaughter

Revolution *DEKO*

Glam metal B-listers' fleetingly fascinating fifth album gets a vinyl release.



Unlike some of their hair-metal contemporaries who were T-boned by grunge, Slaughter resisted the lure of down-tuning their guitars, growing goatees and bulk-buying plaid shirts. But the freedom of not having to write MTV hits any more still gave them the chance to mix up their sound a little.

Released in 1997, after even the grunge bubble had burst, and reissued on vinyl for the first time, *Revolution* half-delivers on the promise of its title. *American Pie* (not that one) gives it a little T.Rex glam stomp, and there's more than a whiff of psychedelia to the terrific *Heaven It Cries*. If only they'd followed through on all that. *You're My Everything* and the title track are a decent enough throwbacks, but the woeful *Tongue'N'Groove*, with Mark Slaughter's voice in full paint-peeling mode, and a cover of *Rocky Mountain Way* stink the place out.

Interesting, but not quite interesting enough.

Dave Everley

The Donnas

The Atlantic Years *CHERRY RED*

Raucous ramalama repackaged for rocking re-evaluation.



To be reacquainted with The Donnas is to realise that there was always that little bit more about them than what the snootier end of the critical spectrum maintained. But while *Spend The Night*'s preoccupations of weed and beer, all-night shenanigans and copping off were at the front and centre of their aesthetic, so was a dedication to rocking, rolling and riffing that proved they were no mere dilettantes. As evidenced by *Take It Off* and the enduring *Who Invited You*, Allison Robertson's mastery of her Les Paul was fuelled by her ability in riff creation, while the rhythm section of bassist Maya Ford and drummer Torry Castellano kept it tight – and hard and knew the value of a well-deployed cowbell.

A wrist injury to Castellano

VERTIGO PRESS

forced The Donna's to change their attack on 2004's *Gold Medal*. A more nuanced album that eases up on the speed and pays more attention to group dynamics while highlighting Brett Anderson's singing and melodic sensibilities (see *Fall Behind Me* and the grooving *It's So Hard*), it deserves another look, not least because of its reputation for perceived maturity.

Of the bonus material on the third disc, which includes B-sides and acoustic diversions, a cracking 2003 session for Xfm is a highlight, and seven live tracks from The Paradise in Boston from the same year confirms they were every bit as good on stage as in the studio. Remember them this way – The Donnas at their absolute peak.

Julian Marszalek

Bruce Soord

Bruce Soord KSCOPE

Reprise of The Pineapple Thief supremo's solo debut.



Just as persistence was beginning to pay off, and The Pineapple Thief were establishing themselves in the vanguard of modern-day UK prog, founder and frontman Bruce Soord took a step back from their captivatingly widescreen sound to release a self-titled solo album, whose more delicate approach is still just as enticing a decade on.

Buried Here, seemingly expressing Soord's frustrations at his solitary songwriting struggles in his Yeovil home studio, is a thing of mournful beauty, redolent of Talk Talk's more sombre moments, punctuated by dark twanging shadows but also broken up with a beautiful sunset guitar break. The acoustic picking on *Willow Tree*, accompanied by understated clouds of brass, is similarly evocative, and the faintly shoegaze-y shimmer of guitars that introduce *A Thousand Daggers* show just how skilfully Soord can dress a song, whether for band or solo. His versatility is also displayed on *The Odds*, whose malevolent funk noir sees him step successfully out of his comfort zone into dance music territory. The album begins to fade a little in the second half, as mournful Radiohead-isms begin to merge into a less distinctive background mood, but several tracks here will still figure prominently in anyone's playlist of Soord/Pineapple Thief essential moments.

Johnny Sharp

7 Seconds

New Wind/Change In My Heart TRUST

The original plus a re-imagined full remix.



Originally released in 1986, third album *New Wind* was a turning point for Reno, Nevada hardcore punks 7 Seconds who adopted a more accessible, melodic new-wave oriented sound. The album – and EP of the previous year *Rock Together, Walk Together* – was produced by Dischord Records owner Ian MacKaye, with acclaimed DC producer Don Zientara as engineer. During the same period, MacKaye himself was also exploring a new post-Minor Threat/pre-Fugazi sound with his *Egg Hunt* EP and *Embrace* album. *Wind* along with Rites Of Spring's sole album of the previous year – heralded what retroactively became known as emo. It's akin to Government Issue's work of the same era and also redolent of other Dischord 'Revolution Summer' bands – Fire Party, Beefeater, Gray Matter, Soulside et al.

MacKaye and Zientara have remixed and re-sequenced *Wind*, renaming it *Change In My Head*. Their new production gives it a fuller and richer bottom end, compensating for the original's tinny sound – not least Kevin Seconds' vocals. An unreleased 52-second title track – plus another titled *Compro* – from the original *Wind* sessions are included. The packaging includes a 24-page booklet with interviews, unseen band pics and ephemera of the era.

Alex Burrows

Atomic Rooster

Atomic Rooster ESOTERIC

There's nothing chicken about this Rooster.

Perhaps not their best-remembered era, the early 1980s, but this was when Atomic Rooster went properly nuclear. Having bowed out in 1975 after a couple of lacklustre albums, two-thirds of the archetypal Rooster line-up – ex-Crazy World of Arthur Brown organist Vincent Crane and guitarist John Du Cann – were joined by drummer Preston Heyman for 1980's self-titled comeback that was their heaviest rocking album to date, no doubt intended to grab the attention of the NWOBHM-loving youth.

This two-CD remaster presents the original 10 tracks with 11 bonus tracks – B-sides and various demos from 1980 and 1981 – on disc one, while disc two contains Live At The Marquee Club 1980, this time with drummer Paul Hammond from their classic *Death Walks Behind You* era. Infamously recorded through a single on-stage mic, *LATMC* is powerful but rough enough to make it a for-fans-only addition. The Hammond-driven frenzy of disc one is where the meat lies, with the menacing *In The Shadows* and galloping instrumental *Watch Out!* among the top tracks of a belting set.

Unfortunately they couldn't keep it together. Du Cann departed not long afterwards, and they lost their record deal. Which is a shame, because this collection offers 10 nuggets of hard-rocking gold.

Essi Berelian



Suede

Sci-Fi Lullabies Edsel

Must-have B-side collection unearths more lost treasures.



It's something largely lost now that physical singles are a thing of the past, but by the mid-90s the art of the B-side – bolstered by the rise of CDs and multi-format releases – was elevated to magical heights, often as finely crafted as the tracks that made the main albums.

Sci-Fi Lullabies, a collection of B-sides from Suede's first three records, is a masterpiece of its kind, originally released as a two-disc set that cherry-picked the best from the self-titled, *Dog Man Star* and *Coming Up* eras. Disc one could easily have been an album in its own right, largely down to the presence of Bernard Butler, whose intricate, dreamy guitar and progressive influence acts as a beautiful foil to frontman Brett Anderson's spiky, late-night-Soho take on romance, sex and drugs. That the gritty elegance of *My Insatiable One* was never on an album is testament to the sheer quality and ambition of those first two breathtakingly brilliant releases.

This re-release's third disc, curated by Anderson, comprises bonus songs from 1999's *Head Music* up to 2022's *Autofiction*. Post-Butler, their sound became poppier, yet they were still creating intricate and daring music that elevated them far above the blokey Britpop clichés of Oasis. Gorgeously melancholic, the new-wave-flecked *The Sadness In You, The Sadness In Me* is a cinematic opener for part three, drenched in synths that become a sinewy, feline calling card as the collection unfolds. Anderson's fixation with fluid sexuality, of late-night erotic adventures and running wild in the streets is a constant thread, sometimes as a participant, sometimes, as on the funky *Crackhead*,with an arch, disdainful sense of detachment.

What's fascinating is the intelligence, glamour and imagination on display – every single track in this collection is a complete entity of its own, the band never seeming to repeat themselves. Even *Blinded*, rescued from the cutting-room floor and never before released, is a smoky, sensuous torch song that earns its place as the full stop on the record.

Far from a cheap cash-in of mishapes and also-rans, *Sci-Fi Lullabies*, is an essential artifact from Suede's rich history. In a year that's seeing the 90s revived at pace, this stands out as special.

Emma Johnston

GIE KNAEPS/GETTY



Dire Straits

Brothers In Arms (40th Anniversary)

MERCURY



Mark Knopfler's crowning achievement; mildly dated, largely evocative.

Was it written in the starlight? Mark Knopfler's Newcastle pub-turned-arena rockers Dire Straits had certainly built a formidable following by 1985, thanks to his brimstone-and-ambrosia guitar playing on debut single *Sultans Of Swing* and beyond, the breathless melodic beauties of 1980's *Making Movies* album and the immersive tonal song-films of 1982's *Love Over Gold*. But 30 million sales? The first CD to shift a million? Somehow, above the cramped Caribbean studio of its making, the planets aligned.

Revisiting their behemoth fifth album *Brothers In Arms* on this five-LP/three-CD reissue four decades on, its era-defining charms still exude the assured, enfolding warmth that first made it such a massive hit with estate agents testing the limits of their Mazdas on the M11. *So Far Away* slips down like honeyed malt whisky, subtle and undemanding yet fundamentally satisfying, like the 80s drifting by in fragrant, gaseous form. *Walk Of Life* still bristles with fairground honky-tonk vivacity; tranquil ballad *Why Worry?* is rendered even more affecting with the 2022 Dolby Atmos mix enhancing its Mediterranean stillness.

Some tracks are museum-ready now: the shoulder-pad blues of *One World*, and *Money For Nothing*, presented in its full eight-minute version and dated by its casual gay slurs and sense of Springsteen's *Glory Days*. But much has grown rewardingly evocative. Jazz-bar torch song *Your Latest Trick*, recalling Sade, *Arthur's Theme* and *Moonlighting*. *Ride Across The River*, their take on Peter Gabriel's electro-fied world music, telling of Latin American mercenaries, swathed in pan flutes, reggae brass and mariachi trumpet. And the war-themed second half, including the lustrous title track and the dramatic impacts of bluegrass confessional *The Man's Too Strong*, recalling a time when arena rock aspired to be a force for global political good.

Key to the reissue's appeal, however, is the inclusion of a two-hour 1985 live show from San Antonio, pure manna for a fan base denied any whiff of a reunion. Here the likes of *Ride* and *Sultans* are energised for the stage, *Tunnel Of Love* stretches out over 20 dense and driving minutes, and we can revel once more in Knopfler's acoustic refrain rising balletically from the back end of *Romeo And Juliet*'s chorus, still one of the most wonderful moments in recorded music. It ends with a euphoric *Going Home*, but this package feels more like the ultimate arrival.

Mark Beaumont

Dinosaur Jr

Without A Sound *CHERRY RED*

The year is 1994, and main man J Mascis is sounding weary.



That is, he's sounding even wearier than usual, which is going some. Opening track *Feel The Pain* begins with the sound of a cork popping, but is anything but celebratory; jarring, mournful and never static, Mascis's vocals imbued with a sense of isolation. '*I feel the pain of everyone*,' he wails, reflecting his sense of bereavement following the death of his father, before the coruscating guitar cuts in and singularly adds to the sense of gnawing desperation.

Dinosaur Jr's sixth album is a strange beast. Recorded near-solo following drummer Murph's departure, with some assist from long-term bassist Mike Johnson and Come singer Thalia Zedek, it was criticised at the time for being too much of a "vanity project" (*Rolling Stone*), centred as it is on Mascis's inertia and inability to cope with the world. One track – the closing *Over Your Shoulder*, with its exquisite billowing guitar solo – turned up in the Japanese Top 20 unexpectedly 25 years later. Yet with the benefit of hindsight *Without A Sound* is just as strong as Mascis's more fêted albums.

Second single *I Don't Think So* is a gorgeous pop gem beloved of fellow Boston band Lemonheads, spiked by searing guitar; the gentler *Seemed Like The Thing To Do* starts like a hushed Velvet Underground; the guitar solo in *Even You* is wild even by Mascis's standards. In all, a real treat waiting to be rediscovered.

The reissue comes as double vinyl or CD, with B-sides, previously unreleased mixes and a chaotically fierce live London set from 1994.

Everett True

Raven

Screamin' Down The House 1985-1988 *HNE*

Thrash-influencing trio's American adventure.

Another very handy career distillation for anyone needing a bit more Raven in their life – this four-CD box set focusing on the band's slightly wobbly mid-to-late-80s period.

With the band having made serious waves with their NWOBHM-defining sound and first three albums, the major labels and the big league beckoned. At which point things started to go wrong. Signed to Atlantic and relocating from Newcastle to New York, inevitably, Mark (guitars) and John Gallagher (bass/vocals) and Rob 'Wacko' Hunter (drums) were pushed toward a more radio-friendly sound on 1985's *Stay Hard* and 1986's *The Pack Is Back*. Both albums contain a few decent tracks, but the more commercial direction simply alienated old fans and failed to win many new ones. Fortunately the band remained determined and released the blazing five-track *Mad* EP, with *Speed Of The Reflex, Do Or Die* and *Gimmie Just A Little*, demonstrating what they could do when left to their own devices. *Life's A Bitch* (1987), their last album for Atlantic, and *Nothing Exceeds Like Excess* (1988), on Under One Flag, are a return to full-tilt form, the latter including a single bonus track, *Kick Your Ass*.

So, two dubious records, one excellent EP and two thrashing corkers. Could have been worse.

Essi Berelian

Various

60 Years Of The Southend Scene *CONQUEST MUSIC*

The Thames riviera holds a boatload of talent.



Southend, favoured holiday destination of East End Teddy boys, provided a rock'n'roll watering-hole distraction from the seafront flick-knife shenanigans. Pubs and clubs such as The Kursaal and The Monico on Canvey Island reverberated with Jerry Lee Lewis and Chuck Berry. From the 60s onwards a glut of home-grown talent sprang forth, notably Dr. Feelgood and Eddie & The Hot Rods.

This two-CD comp spotlights some of the under-celebrated but no less talented artists, such as veteran musician and songwriter Mickey Jupp, a kind of scene godfather whose band Legend inspired a legion of pub rockers with *Cheque Book*. He remains in fine voice, as demonstrated on the selections here. Other early hitmakers include The Paramounts, with Gary Brooker and Robin Trower, later of Procol Harum. Lurking beneath the trad-rock facade is a sneakily subversive, working-class bohemian vibe linking the

DEBORAH FENGOLD/PRESS

varied acts on disc two. See the Tuppenny Bunters, a 'punky tonk' duo whose singer Fi sounds like Nancy from *Oliver!*, and Eight Rounds Rapid's *Writeabout* (with Wilko Johnson's son Simon on guitar). Elsewhere, Crucifixion's *The Fox* is a weighty slab of NWOBHM, and Taming The Outback unleash the goths.

Southend's own gang continue to breed musical intrigue worthy of investigation.

Claudia Elliott

Paul Di'Anno

In Memory Of *METALVILLE*

Late-career collection aids charity.



In recent years, press coverage of Paul Di'Anno centred on his tenacity in touring and making new music in the face of his well-documented health issues, and cordial encounters with former Iron Maiden bandmate Steve Harris and his own replacement, Bruce Dickinson. This shift to a more positive perception followed years of self-destructive chaos, which often overshadowed the fact that Di'Anno recorded worthwhile music after Maiden. That is, if you know where to look.

With a vast catalogue covering metal, punk, melodic rock, tribute albums, collaborations with NWOBHM peers, and endless live versions of Maiden staples, issued under a succession of band names and as solo projects, sifting out the good stuff can be a challenge. This compilation of Di'Anno's output with Metalville Records (with a percentage from each copy donated to the Metality charitable foundation) makes a fair fist of it, although its arrival seven months after his passing is perhaps questionable. In its favour are three rabid live renditions of highlights from Killers' *Murder One* (1992), Di'Anno's forceful performances on near-thrash thrusters *Impaler* and *Marshall Lockjaw* impressing with their range and power.

Seven tracks from the short-lived Architects Of Chaoz (2014-2016) inject the Maiden twin-lead template with a welcome shot of latter-day metal aggression (*Rejected, Je Suis Charlie*), overlaid with surging, barbed-wire melodies from Di'Anno.

Two relatively ropey in-concert Maiden covers aside, *In Memory Of* proves that Di'Anno could still deliver the goods in the last decade of his life.

Rich Davenport

Sweet

Platinum Rare 1 *METALVILLE*

Sweet bare their teeth through the lipstick.



Rarities albums can be a musical crapshoot. The implied promise of unreleased gems is like catnip to hard-core fans, but the reality is often little more than the sound of a barrel being slowly scraped. Thankfully, Sweet's Andy Scott has good form in this regard, having previously unearthed gold with the *Level Headed Tour Rehearsals 1977* set. But does his archive still contain sufficient nuggets to fill two CDs?

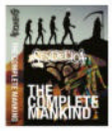
From the moment a high-quality rough mix of *Ballroom Blitz* opens *Platinum Rare 1* (originally a limited 2021 Record Store Day release) to the closing moments of a similarly strong preliminary take of *Lost Angels*, the answer is an emphatic "Uh-huh", to quote Steve Priest. They may lack the fullness of the finished tracks, but these alternative versions and mixes of glittering hits (*Hellraiser, Ballroom Blitz, Teenage Rampage*) and knuckle-duster album tracks (*Live For Today, Midnight To Daylight*) score with rawer, live-in-the-studio ambience, crisp sound and subtle differences in arrangements and overdubs. With additional deep-dive delights including a Brian Connolly-sung *Play All Night*, a Priest-fronted *Rebel Rouser*, and stellar pop-rock obscurity *Where Do We Go From Here*, this is a must-have for die-hards.

Rich Davenport

Sendelica

The Complete Mankind *FRUITS DE MER*

UK space-rock titans at their most ambitious.



One of UK psych's most prolific bands over the past 20 years, Sendelica are fans of an extravagant gesture. *The Complete Mankind* compiles their last four, conceptually linked albums, and adds a disc of demos and out-takes to each. If nine and a quarter hours of meandering, instrumental jams and electro-krautrock freak-outs seems a daunting prospect, Sendelica's bottomless well of ideas provides countless reasons to commit.

2021's *And Man Created God* LP is a magnificent starting point. From conjuring hazy echoes of Iggy Pop's *China Girl* on the jagged post-rock of *MMT* to exploring woozy expanses of aquatic dub on *Seren Golawr*, the Welsh legends inhabit every fresh sonic environment with the same casual flair. But for a truly brain-rinsing experience, deeply stoned epics from last year's *Requiem For Mankind* take the disco biscuit. *Cosmic Slop (In The Beginning)* switches from rolling waves of dark ambience to fidgety cosmic rock; *The Downfall* showcases Sendelica's darker, heavier side, with horror-flick overtones and a barrage of Sabbath-like gloom; the closing *Chaos* is a brawny blur of Jah Wobble bass, bad-trip post-punk and smouldering, neo-classical ambience.

The Complete Mankind is a modern space-rock colossus.

Dom Lawson



Various

Springsteen's Country *ACE*

Country stars cover songs by The Boss.

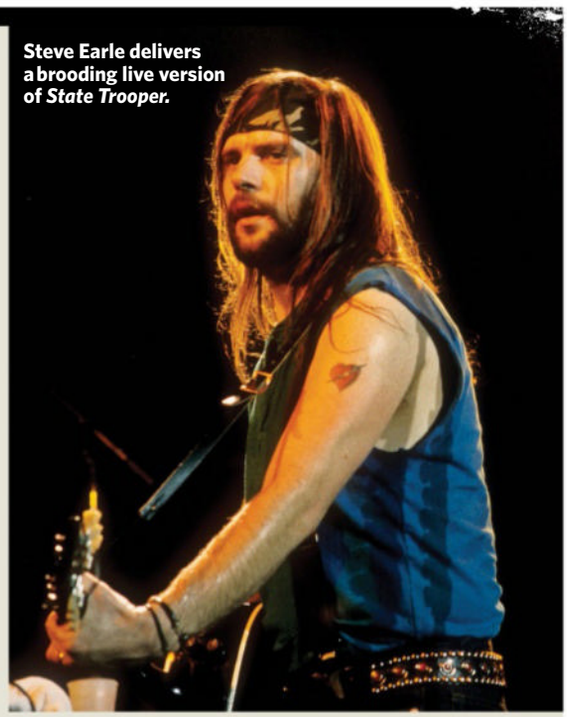
There are two kinds of people this 20-track collection of country covers is likely to attract: country fans curious about Springsteen, and Springsteen fans curious about country. There probably aren't as many country fans reading this, so...

Johnny Cash starts with *Johnny 99*, the title track of his 1983 album released just a year after Springsteen's *Nebraska*, with his own distinctive drawl and guitar twang, demonstrating that the Boss's songs have all the necessary country ingredients. The more traditional Travis Tritt then employs an arsenal of clichés on *Tougher Than The Rest*. Other covers of this song by Shawn Colvin and Emmylou Harris have revealed an unexpected tenderness that might have worked better here.

What draws country singers to Springsteen songs are the stories. John Anderson's *Atlantic City* from 2001 has a Band feel to it, while The Mavericks were only just getting into country when they recorded *Nebraska* song *More than Heaven Will Allow*, and focus more on the harmonies. Kenny Chesney is another Springsteen fan from way back and had been playing *One Step Back* in bars for years before he recorded it in 2002. And it shows.

Emmylou Harris's version of *Tougher Than The Rest* isn't included, so *The Price You Pay* will have to do, although frankly it's not as good. British country artist Paul Ansell travelled to Nashville to record his delicate, heartfelt cover of *If I Should Fall Behind* in 2008 with musicians who'd played with Elvis that he'd lured out of retirement. Rockabilly artist Sonny Burgess, from the same era, still sounds lively on *Tiger Rose*. And the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band echo the rockabilly feel on *From Small Things*, adding a rebellious streak.

Girls In Their Summer Clothes, from Bruce's *Magic*, is an unlikely candidate for a country cover, but Canadian Doc Walker makes a pretty good stab at it. Carolina bluegrass band Town Mountain do even better on *I'm On Fire*, adding fiddle to the mix and boosting the harmonies.



Steve Earle delivers a brooding live version of *State Trooper*.

CLAYTON CALL/GETTY

Rounding out this collection is Steve Earle, whose *Copperhead Road* album in 1988 threatened to make him country's answer to Springsteen. Here he delivers a brooding, almost menacing live version of *State Trooper*, bringing us full circle back to *Nebraska*.

Hugh Fielder



INXS

Listen Like Thieves (40th Anniversary Deluxe Edition) *UNIVERSAL*



Aussie big hitters' overseas breakthrough.

INXS came up the hard way on the Australian pub circuit. Their fourth album, 1984's *The Swing* reached No.1 at home, spearheaded by the Nile Rodgers-produced single *Original Sin*, but stalled just outside the US Top 50. The band regrouped in Sydney to plot their next move, working with Chris Thomas (Sex Pistols, Pretenders etc).

As a new album neared completion, Thomas, as has been the way with producers since (recording) time began, didn't hear a hit single. He steered main songwriters Michael Hutchence and Andrew Farris towards a demo marked 'Funk Song #11'. Out of that they forged *What You Need*, which gave the band their first US top-five hit and opened doors.

Follow-up *Listen Like Thieves*, first released October 1985, is front-loaded with Side 1 hogging all the best tracks, which now sound even stronger thanks to a robust new mix from Giles Martin and Paul Hicks. *What You Need* laid the dance/rock groundwork for 1987's world-conquering *Kick* album, and the rocking title track is driven by the tough rhythm section of Jon Farriss and Garry Gary Beers (the most Australian name ever), as is the stop-start *Kiss The Dirt*.

Should-have-been-a-single *Shine Like It Does* allows singer Hutchence, a beautiful-looking man whose presence in the group's videos certainly didn't hinder progress, to give it his full Aussie-Jagger routine. Side two pales in comparison, but *This Time* has another great soaring chorus, something this crew were very good at.

The new deluxe version (three CDs/one LP) has various very-nearly-there demos, with *Shine Like It Does* almost a match for the released take, and a BBC recording from a June '86 Royal Albert Hall show that proves what a fine live band they were, and it was probably even better with Johnny Handsome sweating and throwing shapes in front of you.

The two-CD version includes an excellent extended remix of *Listen Like Thieves* by Francois Kevorkian and Hutchence, and useful B-side *I'm Over You* on which Jon Farriss does a fair impression of the Hutch purr, which makes you wonder why he didn't step forward to the mic when the frontman passed away. These tracks should be in the big box, but such is marketing.

INXS would make better records than *Listen Like Thieves*, namely their very own *Achtung Baby* with 1992's *Welcome To Wherever You Are*, but *Thieves* did what was asked of it. The world was theirs.

Pat Carty

Black Stone Cherry

This is Black Stone Cherry's RSD album. The band really likes it. *MASCOT*

This is Black Stone Cherry's RSD album. We really like it.



At least to this writer, it feels like more and more Record Store Day releases are just pricey, run-of-the-mill reissues. Kudos to Kentucky-fried rockers Black Stone Cherry, then, for curating something unique and worthwhile for the occasion.

This, their first-ever RSD release, includes live tracks, Cherry-fied covers and more. The band's heavy southern-rock DNA has never faltered, but in recent years a healthy dose of grungy angst has penetrated their songs. *Out Of Pocket*, from 2023's *Screamin' At The Sky*, is one such example. Killswitch Engage frontman Jesse Leach is a guest vocalist on this version (mainly some shouty bits), which feels slightly token. A new cut, *Have You Ever Been Lonely*, is a polished slice of the quartet's poppier, emotive side. Among covers of songs by The Cult and Tracy Chapman, the highlight is a customarily riffed up take on Tina Turner's *What's Love Got To Do With It*. And the tracks recorded at Hellfest, starting with *Lonely Train*, are explosive to say the least.

Available in limited quantities – 3,000 copies of the white-and-black marble vinyl have been issued worldwide – it's a worthy purchase for Cherryheads who can get their mitts on it.

Chris Lord

Francis Rossi

The Way We Were Vol 1 *EARMUSIC*

First time's the charm.



Seventeen previously unreleased demos from the Status Quo guitarist's archive, all co-written with Bob Young. This is Rossi shining a light on recordings he believes are better than versions that were released later, mainly by Quo from 2002-07. His demos are no back-of-a-fag-packet sketches, but home-studio quality. On this collection they hang together and flow like a 'proper' album should.

The booklet's track-by-track notes detail Rossi's frustration that when demos are reworked for posterity, something often gets lost, or (as in the case of *Tongue Tied* and *I Don't Wanna Hurt You Anymore*) buried. Oddly, this even happened to four made ahead of his 2010 solo album, where presumably he had the final say.

Collectively, though, the 17 portray a craftsman committed to his art. These days, that commitment generates gentle rockers of superior quality. The Rossi/Young output far exceeds what Quo will ever record, and among those overlooked are five songs aired here for the first time. *Scary Mary* – about Young's wife! – is the best of them, but *Why I'm Walking*, *Load On My Mind* and *Can't Change The World* are no flops. Last song *Life Has Changed*, meanwhile, has a McCartney vibe to it.

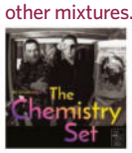
An impressive set. Here's to Vol 2.

Neil Jeffries

The Chemistry Set

An Introduction To *FRUITS DE MER*

Collected acid drops and other mixtures.



Originally part of the mid-80s British indie psychedelic revival, the re-formed Chemistry Set now comprises David McLean (drums, rhythm guitar, keyboards) and Paul Lake (lead/bass). Since regrouping in 2007 and finding a lysergically sympathetic home at specialist label Fruits de Mer Records, they have kept up a steady release rate and, thanks to social media, have picked up a dedicated international fan base. This two-CD set is a selection from their back catalogue, including various EPs, 2016's well-received album *The Endless More And More, Pink Felt Trip* and solo recordings.

Inevitable as the early Floyd comparisons will be, the British whimsy of *Lovely Cuppa Tea* is more Damon Albarn than Syd Barrett. From the same EP is *The Rubicon*, a spiky lyrical response to contemporary patriotic delusion. Speaking of early Floyd, they're not only chasing the elusive spirit of Syd, but a specific sonic height, namely Floyd's debut 45 *Arnold Layne/Candy And A Currant Bun*, never bettered nor since recaptured, in many a fan's view.

The multi-instrumentalist duo

ALAMY

bring unexpected touches to their choice of covers, such as tablas and sitar on Hendrix's *Love Or Confusion*, phasing on Del Shannon's haunting '68 oddity *Silver Birch*, a beefed up *Dear Mr Fantasy*, topped with two mixes of *The Witch*, Mark Fry's eerie psych folk cut from '72. *The World Is Hollow And I Touched The Sky* is a lot like Status Quo's '68 psych-out *Pictures Of Matchstick Men* – and that's no bad thing.

Claudia Elliott

Kevin Ayers And The Whole World

Shooting At The Moon

ESOTERIC

In search of lost time.



If you were a pissed-up and/or stoned student at the turn of the 70s, Kevin Ayers was your pied piper; to be admired and envied. And if you could turn your tutor on to *Shooting At The Moon* he or she would probably be able to get you a year's deferral when the college was threatening to throw you out for being unable to provide evidence that you had done any work.

Oh to be able to walk up to that girl you'd seen across the street and chat her up as Ayers does with such charm on *May I?* instead of being paralysed by fear of rejection. Or to lose yourself in the convoluted story of an oyster that wants to be a flying fish. Or, when told to shut up and grow up, to fire back with a batch of bendy bass notes and guitar harmonics as on the delightfully descriptive *Underwater*.

It's like gleefully dashing around the musical equivalent of the children's playground between the swings, the slide and the roundabout, occasionally glancing at the adults on the other side of the fence who are looking at you, wondering if maybe they grew up too soon.

Hugh Fielder

Buddy Guy

This Is Buddy Guy!

CRAFT/BLUESVILLE

Blues explosion.



Proper guitar god Guy wouldn't truly get his just deserts until 1991's marvellous *Damn Right, I've Got The Blues* kick-started the then 55-year-old's late-period renaissance. Before that, despite some great Chess label sides and several superb collaborations with Junior Wells, the best way to experience Guy's guitar mastery was live. And *This Is Buddy Guy!* captures him on a particularly good 1968 night in a small Californian club.

Guy was no slouch in the vocals department, as attested to several times here, but right from opener *I Got My Eyes On You*, his Stratocaster stings like a particularly upset hornet. The band, including AC Reed and Bobby Fields on horns and the bubbling bass of Jack Meyers, swing like Tarzan while Guy takes the face off every head in the room.

The covers are perfectly chosen, with Guy displaying casual brilliance raining down frenzied phrases during Guitar Slim's *The Things That I Used To Do*, hollering with barely supressed desire while afflicted by Little Willie John's *Fever*, and steamrolling over Eddie Floyd's *Knock On Wood*.

The originals, however, are where he really takes off. *You Were Wrong* is another master class, and *I Had A Dream Last Night* is astounding. "This is a blues," he states by way of a seriously understated introduction before veering between the sweetness of BB King's vibrato and the bruising attack of Albert King, and then staccato flurries of notes that are all him. Little wonder he's worshipped the way he is.

Pat Carty

Skid Row

Revolutions Per Minute

EARMUSIC

New Jersey survivors' overlooked fifth album gets a deserved spruce-up.



Johnny Solinger put in 16 years as singer with Skid Row before he was fired in 2015, and how is he remembered? As the guy who wasn't Sebastian Bach. The Texan died in 2021 as a result of liver failure, but his reputation deserves to be boosted posthumously by this remastered reissue of the second of the two albums he made with the band.

First released in 2006, *Revolutions Per Minute* doesn't disgrace itself next to Skid Row's first two, Bach-fronted albums, and is a whole lot better than the latter's swansong *Subhuman Race*. While the riffy *Disease* and *Another Dick In The System* call back to their turn-of-the-90s glory days, *Shut Up Baby I Love You* and *Let It Ride* possess a snarling punk-metal edge that was pushed down during the hair-metal years. Solinger couldn't scream like his predecessor, but what his voice lacks in acrobatics it makes up for in attitude.

Rightly, the album doesn't take itself too seriously. Ten-gallon-hatted country pastiche *You Lie* kicks just the right amount of shit, and *When God Can't Wait* is a raucous Celtic punk blast that sank a few too many Guinness the night before and woke up thinking it was the Dropkick Murphys. The same can't be said for *White Trash*, three minutes of lazy punching down from a band who are hardly going to be on the cover of *Mensa Monthly* themselves. That aside, *Revolutions Per Minute* is better than its barely existent reputation suggests, and a fitting memorial to the guy who wasn't Sebastian Bach.

Dave Everley



Various

Young & Wild: A Decade Of American Glam Metal 1982-1992 *CHERRY RED*

The good, the bad and the ugly from a colourful 10-year period of American hard rock.

I blame myself. I was one of those stumbling up and down Sunset Strip and the murkier parts of Manhattan – before it became the millionaire's island (© Chris Robinson) it is now – looking like I dressed in the dark and giving credence to bands who should probably never have made it out of the garage, let alone onto a major label. Those were, as people are wont to say, different times.

This three-disc set makes a pretty good fist of capturing those turbulent years. I had a ringside seat as the world turned from bands like Mötley Crüe and cast its gaze towards the new breed of bands spearheaded by artists like Mother Love Bone. Drugs would wreak havoc on both those bands, but that was about all they had in common, even if both weren't above applying eyeliner when it came to stage time. Sleeve notes aside, the essays here read like Wikipedia filtered through ChatGPT, and capture little of the excitement of that era; there's little wrong with the curation as we go from Twisted Sister all the way through to XYZ. It's quite the ride, like crashing your car into a railway bridge is a ride.

To the compilers' credit, it's not just the familiar names – Skid Row, Faster Pussycat, Cinderella – included here. They've gone through the crates to find the bands who probably haunted the shadows on films like *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II*, the truly awful Leatherwolf (still a touring entity, apparently, and once signed to Island Records – good to see all that Bob Marley money going to a good home), the deathly Lillian Axe (picked up by MCA, still ruining club gigs for paying customers all across the US) and L.A. Guns (PolyGram, new album *Leopard Skin* available now, though not through PolyGram) and their live favourite, the hideous *Sex Action*, on which Phil Lewis's caterwauling is enough to spook a dog three counties away.

Of course, it's easy to throw stones – and fun too – although there were glimmers of promise among the music of the era, such as Junkyard and the excellent *Hollywood*, and Warrior Soul's *Trippin' On Ecstasy*. But for every ounce of invention, there's always a band like Tuff, waiting to become landfill.

Philip Wilding



Twisted Sister: we are gonna take it.

FIN COSTELLO/GETTY

THE HARD STUFF
STUFF
MULTIMEDIA



BowieOdyssey75

Simon Goddard *OMNIBUS*

Latest in a series of BowieOdyssey series is another engaging triumph.



This is the sixth in Simon Goddard's series of near-flawless *Bowie Odyssey* books, and once more the reader is caught, enraptured, ensnared right from the opening sentences. Those opening sentences are about Bowie's mum. Of course they are. Why wouldn't they be? Rule number one of writing: tell a story.

They mumble in whispers thinking she won't be able to hear them. But for a woman of 61 she has remarkably sharp ears. And eyes. She spotted them the moment she picked up her basket in Sainsbury's...

The chapter teases, lively and sad and open-eyed with a childish sense of wonder. "Look mum. I've made a record with a Beatle" (and not just any Beatle), before leading the reader on to auteur filmmaker Nichola Roeg (*The Man Who Fell To Earth*), Los Angeles and way too much cocaine. And throughout, the spectre of Bowie haunted and moulded by his new alter ego the Thin White Duke, dark and disconnected.

And the witches. The witches of Los Angeles, as related to Angie. "WITCHES? D... DAV... STOP! WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?"

Closer to home, the unstoppable rise of Margaret Thatcher. The year of the monster, of the chosen ones. Hippie Morticia Addams. The Cambridge Rapist. Nazi-obsessed serial killers. Chart-topping singles on both sides of the Atlantic. *Fame. Golden Years. Young Americans.* The wonderfully abstruse *TVC15.* Blue-eyed soul boys and girls dancing in the shadows.

With each step, each misstep, Bowie makes – whether to New Mexico where he is filming with Roeg, or to the Thameside studios of London Weekend Television (the Thin White Duke in persona) – the story becomes ever more thrilling.

Fame. It's a new sensation for Maggie. Not the cameras and the microphones poking in her face, which she's long used to like any other politician. It's the way they poke them, and the fever in the eyes of the people who poke them.

Like all great storytellers, Goddard concerns himself with seemingly tangential details, weaving them right back into the main frame; he picks up on the detritus, the conversations that take place off-camera, to make a compelling whole.

Lurid and blood-soaked and right on the cusp of punk rock and Bowie's all-conquering (and deeply scary) *Station To Station*, the latest installment in the *Bowie Odyssey* series is a triumph. Once more.

Everett True

Life Is A Long Song: A Compendium Of Jethro Tull In 33⅓ Songs

Richard Taylor

WYMER PUBLISHING

Train-spotterly look at selections of the Tullography.



Jethro Tull don't have the epic, *Hammer Of The Gods*-like story of some of their 70s peers. What they do have is a back catalogue that inspires absolute devotion in lifelong fans such as this book's author Richard Taylor. *Life Is A Long Song* is a love letter to Ian Anderson's merry troupe, shining a light on 33⅓ songs because, well, that's a number that vinyl lovers of a certain age understand.

It's a nice idea, and there's no doubting the passion involved. But passion only goes so far. There are no new interviews, or even old ones, and the level of insight falls well short: "Wow, what brilliant words, and I think I actually understand most of them," Taylor writes of *Baker Street Muse*. That stuff works well down the pub, much less so on paper.

Dave Everley

Genesis: On Record

Martin Popoff *WYMER*

Fans'-eye view of the band's catalogue.



Across two hefty volumes of 250 pages each the author assembles and moderates a varied group of Genesis fans as they dissect and debate their way through every studio album the band made.

The first volume, *Entangled*, runs from 1969's *From Genesis To Revelation* to 1977's *Wind And Wuthering*. The second, Behind The Lines, begins with *And Then There Were Three* in 1978 then follows the Banks/Collins/Rutherford line-up through to 1992's *We Can't Dance* and the brief Ray Wilson coda, 1997's *Calling All Stations*.

The fan groups are predominantly American, which means they don't have the British hangups about Genesis's transition from prog to pop, but it also means that some of the British colloquial humour passes them by – and Bognor Regis leaves them baffled. But their Genesis credentials are otherwise impeccable and their opinions and analyses are deep and detailed. Best read while listening to the relevant album.

Hugh Fielder

Yoko

David Sheff *SIMON & SCHUSTER*

Sympathetic biography based on countless interviews with the Japanese artist.



Until relatively recent times, Yoko Ono has endured a poor press, vilified as a predator, a caterwauler and the woman who broke up The Beatles. Today it is understood that she is none of these things. She had no idea who Lennon was when they first met, her vocal style is justly acclaimed as an original howl of primal emotion. And Sheff argues that The Beatles might have split up earlier had she not been there to hold a deeply depressed John's hand for those last two albums.

Sheff is not blind to Ono's faults, her ambition, her paranoia, but rightly acclaims her for art – deceptively simple works such as a chessboard on which all of the pieces are white. He also conveys her wealthy yet harrowing upbringing – profoundly lonely, with distant parents, her childhood scarred by witnessing the allied bombing of Tokyo.

A vital book.

David Stubbs

Fleetwood Mac: All The Songs: The Story Behind Every Track

Olivier Roubin And Romuald Ollivier

BLACK DOG & LEVENTHA

Mac you need.



Don't be put off by part of the title; this is not just a cold-facts book that *The Story Behind Every Track* might imply. There's much more to it than that. Yes, details of every track Fleetwood Mac recorded – writers, personnel, background info, dates, studio, basic and brief (thankfully) technical info, recording... – take up much of the weighty hardback's 600 pages. But that's interspersed with chunks of band story and potted biographical portraits of personnel and plenty of photos (credit to the picture researcher

RON GALELLA/RON GALELLA COLLECTION VIA GETTY

for finding many that you probably haven't seen before), and dotted with little 'Did you know?' fact boxes. There's also an exhaustive bibliography. All of which makes this very nicely presented book a much more enjoyable read than many dull, nerdy track-by-track publications.

For the Mac fan who reckons they know every detail about the band, read this book and find out that you don't.

Paul Henderson

Porcupine Tree: Every Album, Every Song

Nick Holmes

SONICBOND PUBLISHING

Dry but detailed account of prog-metal trailblazers' catalogue.



Sonicbond's extensive series of track-by-track dissections of major artists' output has found fertile ground in prog. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given its musicians' and fans' enduring passion for complex tapestries of song that pretty much invite detailed dissection. Anyone in the market for a band biography won't really find it here, as that side of things is covered only by workaday, matter-of-fact accounts of the people and situations involved, seemingly aimed at those not acquainted with them (Gavin Harrison, we're told, is "a highly skilled, technical and physically powerful drummer").

Where this book offers much more value is in its research. Holmes has evidently dug deep to find interviews and sleeve-notes where Steven Wilson and bandmates shed welcome light on the inspirations and creative building blocks for songs and albums, making this a fine listener's handbook for anyone wanting to discover, or rediscover, the back catalogue of arguably 21st-century British prog's greatest band.

Johnny Sharp

Grave Undertakings

Suzi Quatro *NEW HAVEN*

Devil Gate couch.



Who'd have thought it? Behind Suzi Quatro's raunchy, leather-clad, ass-shaking image lurks a novelist with a deep psychological bent. Her book revolves around six students taking a course in psychology, described succinctly by one of them as "Who the fuck are we?", and their professor.

We follow them across 19 seminars, with each of them giving a dissertation on a particular aspect of psychology, moderated by the professor. This requires a wide-ranging and thorough knowledge of the topic by Quatro, and she certainly knows her id from her ego.

At times the psycho-babble threatens to become a dense, headache-inducing spider web, but she cleverly introduces a series of romantic twists among the participants (including the professor with one of the students – how Freudian is that?) to keep you engaged.

There is just one musical reference in the entire book: Simon & Garfunkel's *I Am A Rock*, which figures.

Hugh Fielder

Siouxsie And The Banshees 1980-1987: Into The Light

Laurence Hedges *WYMER*

Florid descriptions of Banshees' peak era.



While there was glorious antagonism towards the band's' first albums, covered in Hedges's previous book *The Early Years*, most Siouxsie And The Banshees fans would agree that their golden age came with the music they magicked up in the years addressed here. *Juju*, *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse*, *Hyaena*, *Tinderbox* and even the revealing covers album *Through The Looking Glass* remain pulsating pillars of the post-punk pantheon. Aggressive yet arty, direct yet dreamy, they still sound like nobody else (well, apart from their many imitators).

This book strives to be both a narrative of the period and an intense analysis of every track. It also detours into related tangents – *Spellbound* gets an extended passage on Hitchcock, Dali and Freud. Unfortunately the writing is overstuffed – the word 'polyrhythmic' gets flogged to bits – and the editing is sloppy. It's always fun to read how much LSD Sioux took during *A Kiss In The Dreamhouse*, though.

Chris Roberts







Mike Malinin, Robby Takac and John Rzeznik in 1993.

Goo Goo Dolls

Although the strength of their songwriting has been frustratingly inconsistent, the band have shown moments of real class.

It's a long way from thrashing the hell out of Badfinger's *Without You* in a hardcore band called The Beaumonts to writing two of the most enduring singles of the 90s: *Iris* and *Slide* from 1998's *Dizzy Up The Girl*. In between, John Rzeznik and Goo Goo Dolls have done it all: alcoholism; sued by former band members, and sued former record labels themselves; reached both the zenith and the nadir of songwriting creativity, and somehow transcended genres from hardcore to hard rock to the nation's favourite balladeers. It's fair to say that the dazzlingly pretty Rzeznik has been on more schoolgirls' bedroom walls than Blu Tack.

To his credit, he and his band (bassist Robby Takac is the mainstay, drummers come and go) have taken their lumps and managed to survive, falling in and out of popularity, although always a live draw in the US. Goo Goo Dolls' last studio album, 2022's *Chaos In Bloom*, reignited their passion for making music again with that unique Goos shimmer; hard pop, elegant ballads, while Rzeznik – who did a very good job of producing the album too – sang about the negative creep of social media and the blinkering of women's rights. He did the press rounds for the record, and surprised journalists by railing against America's cultural slide towards a landscape slowly beginning to resemble US TV drama series *The Handmaid's Tale*. It was quite some distance from the chiselled features perpetually singing about love's blind alleyways.

The Goos are now a fixture of America's summer tour circuit, filling out huge so-called 'shed' shows with other emotionally overwrought acts like Train, The Fray and Matchbox Twenty. This year it's the turn of Dashboard Confessional. But if the Goo Goo Dolls' sometimes uneven catalogue proves anything, it's that the band are anything but a nostalgia act, or one-note musicians who found their format on record one and stuck to it. There's a strong argument to be made that their crossover success – their 1995 album *A Boy Named Goo* – became a huge seller in spite of the band themselves. It's as rough-hewn in parts as some of their earlier records, there's very little to distinguish what separates it from its predecessor *Superstar Car Wash* (double-platinum record sales aside). Everyone else had changed, it was just the Goo Goo Dolls who'd stayed the same.

Philip Wilding

Essential Classics



A Boy Named Goo

METAL BLADE, 1995

The first Metal Blade album to achieve double-platinum status, and the last Goos album with drummer George Tutuska. Just to add to the chaos, the Walmart chain was said to have pulled it from the racks when customers mistakenly complained about the young boy on the cover being covered in blood. It was blackberry jam. It would end with the band in legal wrangling over royalties and eventually see them leave their label. But what an end note, with the band in furious form, the thundering *Long Way Down*, the sheer, relentless drive of *Naked* and *Flat Top*, with its snarling social discourse, Rzeznik spitting out each word.



Dizzy Up The Girl

WARNER BROS, 1998

It might have come crashing into the world like a platinum-covered tank, but *Dizzy Up The Girl* is a relatively simple songwriter's arc from 1993's *Superstar Car Wash* through *A Boy Named Goo* to an album that generated more money in a year than some countries. It's easy to sneer "sell-out", and in their videos Rzeznik might be suddenly wearing more make up than your average model, but the songwriting is stellar, even without the million-selling singles; the brooding rise and fall of *All Eyes On Me*, the rattling *Bullet Proof* and the driving *Hate This Place*. No matter, their path was always going to be set after *Iris*.

BOB BERG/GETTY

Superior Reputation cementing



Superstar Car Wash

METAL BLADE, 1993

Narrowly missing the Essential category, the Goos' fourth studio album is the first time you could see what the band might go on to be. Rzeznik was once asked what the best album he'd made was (he chose two, but more on that shortly). He remembered *Car Wash* as the one where "I was coming into my own as a songwriter... the songs are really well written". And it shows, from the blasting opener *Fallin' Down* to the raucous *Domino*, one of the album's real highlights, but often overlooked as it's a Robby Takac vocal, and it sits next to the excellent Paul Westerberg co-write *We Are The Normal*.



Hold Me Up

METAL BLADE 1990

Only three years but a million miles stylistically from *Car Wash*, *Hold Me Up* was the band's first album of a new decade, the first when Rzeznik was really finding his voice as a singer and the first time the band made a music video. Rzeznik talks about taking things more seriously with *Car Wash*, but it's with *Hold Me Up* that you can really hear the band flexing their songwriting muscle. The sound might be more power-pop than hardcore and the production paper-thin, but the humming *Just The Way You Are*, the wholly infectious *There You Are* plus the surprisingly heartfelt *Two Days In February* make this a neglected gem.



Gutterflower

WARNER BROS, 2002

Following-up *Dizzy Up The Girl* was always going to be a tough task; zeitgeist records tend to come round only once in your career. That said, *Gutterflower* is a great Goos album, it's just that it was standing on the shoulders of giants. It didn't hurt that Rzeznik now looked like a rock star AI might create, and that the band still had a finely tuned ear for the sparkling acoustic thrum of *Sympathy* (very timeless, very Goos) or the surprisingly down-at-heel-single *Here Is Gone*. And the band's true heartbeat remained with the dryly observant *What A Scene*, the lingering *It's Over* and the hard, chiming *Think About Me*.



Something For The Rest Of Us

WARNER BROS, 2010

Rzeznik calls it the best sounding record the band ever made. The label disagreed, and released it only when the band threatened to break their contract if they didn't. It's lyrically punchy and raw, bold and broken, and it's ironic that one of the singles was called *Notbroken* when Rzeznik was anything but. It's there too in the brittle *Nothing Is Real*. Rzeznik recalls: "It was probably the most close-to-the-bone writing that I'd ever done. I was extremely depressed and at the bottom of my alcoholism. It took me ten years to listen to it again, and then I went: "My god, this is a fucking good record."

Good Worth exploring



Chaos In Bloom

WARNER BROS, 2022

An album inspired by a lyric from The Chameleons' *Tears*, a lot of it written during the pandemic, and self-produced, it gave the band back some of the fire that had sometimes eluded them over the previous decade. Recorded at Dreamland Studios outside Woodstock on Rzeznik's collection of vintage amps and equipment, it felt more live and vital again. The band sang about social injustice, the imbalance of health care in the US (Rzeznik referred to Trump as a "pissy little bitch"), and their new verve showed in songs like the droll *Yeah, I Like You*, the thrumming *Going Crazy*, which could have turned up on *Dizzy*, and the Elton John-like *You Are The Answer*.



Miracle Pill

WARNER BROS, 2019

By the time of 2019's *Miracle Pill*, Rzeznik and Takac had honed the latter-day Goos sound. Long gone were the gloriously ragged notes of The Replacements, replaced by what can best be described as indie anthem ballads. It's all very grown up, slickly produced and absolute manna for an audience who still wanted to feel like an alternative crowd but not alternative enough to head towards the exits. The swaying *Over You* cries out for the audience to sing while holding their glowing phones aloft, *Lost* is a hopeful ballad for empty-nesters who've watched their kids leave home, and the enchanting title track is a fully formed ear worm after one listen.



Let Love In

WARNER BROS, 2006

It might have taken more than 10 years for *Let Love In* to go gold in the US, and while it has been occasionally criticised for its Goo Goo Dolls by-numbers approach – the three singles are among the first four songs on the album, and it's far from subtle – but history has been kind to an album that must have been being made in a period where the band's wheels were beginning to fall off. Thundering opener *Stay With You* is classic, gutsy Goos (the record could have used a bit more kick), the title track lingers like a good kiss and *Without You Here* must have soundtracked a thousand goodbyes, but it was all very far from an album like *Superstar Car Wash*.

Avoid



It's Christmas All Over

WARNER BROS, 2020

You can blame covid for a lot of things, and it certainly contributed to the creation of this underwhelming collection of Christmas standards (and a few originals) that is guaranteed to make you feel like Christmas Day, and not the summer solstice, is the longest day of the year. It starts promisingly enough with Tom Petty's *Christmas All Over Again*, but then goes off a cliff like Santa's sled hitting a patch of black ice. The band's *This Is Christmas* is appealing enough, but mainly because it sounds like any Goos ballad, but the reworking of the band's *Better Days* with a child vocal will make you kick the Christmas tree.

Essential Playlist

There You Are
Hold Me Up

Two Days In February
Hold Me Up

Fallin' Down
Superstar Car Wash

Girl Right Next To Me
Superstar Car Wash

Domino
Superstar Car Wash

Long Way Down
A Boy Named Goo

Flat Top
A Boy Named Goo

Name
A Boy Named Goo

All Eyes On Me
Dizzy Up The Girl

Acoustic #3
Dizzy Up The Girl

Big Machine
Gutterflower

It's Over
Gutterflower

Stay With You
Let Love In

Better Days
Let Love In

Nothing Is Real
Something For The Rest Of Us

Come To Me
Magnetic

Boxes
Boxes

Over You
Miracle Pill

Going Crazy
Chaos In Bloom

Save Me From Myself
Chaos In Bloom

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30 MAY WORTHING THE FACTORY
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07 JUN FLEET THE HARLINGTON
17 JUN COULSDON TUESDAY NIGHT MUSIC CLUB
28 JUN NETHERLANDS HOGE STOEP BLUES FESTIVAL
04 JUL TRING DEMBE THEATRE
05 JUL ALFOLD ROCK & BLUES FESTIVAL
11 JUL BURES MUSIC FESTIVAL
17 JUL CAMBERLEY LOGIN LOUNGE
19 JUL BLACKPOOL WATERLOO BAR
20 JUL SHEFFIELD GREYSTONES
03 AUG CAMBRIDGE ROCK FESTIVAL
08 AUG BRIGHTON KOMEDIA
09 AUG BUXTON BLUES FESTIVAL
09 AUG STOCKPORT FIREVOLT FESTIVAL
24 AUG COLNE R&B FEST
04 SEP WOLVERHAMPTON KK'S STEEL MILL
05 SEP SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK
06 SEP EDINBURGH LIQUID ROOMS^
07 SEP NEWCASTLE WYLAM BREWERY^
11 SEP BRISTOL FLEECE^
12 SEP CARDIFF GLOBE^
14 SEP COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE^
28 SEP SOUTHEND CHINNERYS^
12 OCT BARNOLDSWICK MUSIC & ARTS CENTRE
15 OCT LONDON 100 CLUB
16 OCT NORWICH BRICKMAKERS
18 OCT ALDERSHOT WESTEND CENTRE
25 OCT HARTLEPOOL HALLELUJAH FEST
07 NOV WHITBY ROCKS
05 DEC LOOE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FEST
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FRI 30TH MAY HULL SOCIAL
SAT 31ST MAY HUNGERFORD THE CROFT HALL
SUN 1ST JUNE HASTINGS THE CARLISLE
TUE 3RD JUNE PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
WED 4TH JUNE SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CHINNERYS
THU 5TH JUNE WINCHESTER THE ARC
FRI 6TH JUNE ALDERSHOT WEST END CENTRE
SAT 7TH JUNE NEW MILTON FOREST ARTS CENTRE
SUN 8TH JUNE MILTON KEYNES THE STABLES
TUE 10TH JUNE BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX
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THU 12TH JUNE BRIDPORT ELECTRIC PALACE
FRI 13TH JUNE HAMPTON THE HUB CLUB
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SUN 15TH JUNE STAINES THAMESIDE BREWERY
WED 18TH JUNE NORWICH WATERFRONT
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FRI 20TH JUNE GLASGOW GARAGE2
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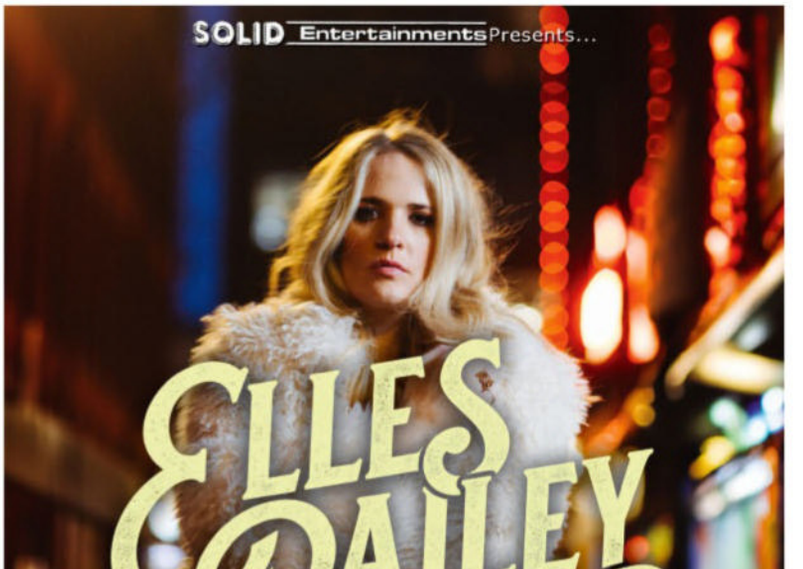
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SAT 15TH NOV NEWCASTLE THE CLUNY #
SUN 16TH NOV YORK CRESCENTS ARTS #
MON 17TH NOV MANCHESTER CAROLE NASH HALL #
TUE 18TH NOV CHESTER LIVE ROOMS #
THUR 20TH NOV BRISTOL THE FLEECE #
SAT 22ND NOV FLEET THE HARLINGTON #
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LIVE!

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

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Brandon Boyd keeps his shirt on, shock.

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ZAINE LEWIS/ICONICPIX



Bonnie Raitt

The 13-times Grammy-winning singer/guitarist plays shows in the UK and Ireland in June.

Known for a sultry fusion of blues, country, rock and folk, Bonnie Raitt has been releasing albums since 1971. Almost two decades later, her career went stellar with the multi-platinum album *Nick Of Time*. Its follow-up, 1991's *Luck Of The Draw*, included the über ballad *I Can't Make You Love Me* later covered by George Michael, Adele and many more. The Californian-born singer, guitarist and political activist previews her 10 British and Irish shows.

Having toured here two years ago, this is a fairly speedy return.
I wanted to play more than one city in Scotland, and other places in England that we didn't get to last time, so I'm excited to be coming back again.

Prior to that 2023 tour you won three more Grammys in one night for your album *Just Like That...*, bringing your total haul of Grammys to a whopping thirteen.
The genre of Americana has gotten so big, I wasn't surprised to get nominated in that category [for the song *Made Up Mind*], but I was *really* surprised to win Song Of The Year [with the album's title track]. The *Daily Mail* had me on the cover saying: "Unknown blues singer wins Grammy". That *cracked me up*.

Having success with a self-written song must have felt sweet, given that you are sometimes seen as an 'interpreter' rather than a writer.
It was wonderful. I was even more thrilled by the response to that song generally as it's about organ donation, so if it brought more attention to that subject then it was doubly sweet.

But you're not precious about the source of your material: a good song is a good song, regardless of who wrote it.
Oh yeah. And it would be quite boring for me to have my own view only. I love mixing a Richard Thompson song with an Al Green cover or something by John Prine. That's part of the joy of what I do and why I've kept it up for so long, and also hopefully some of the reason that the fans love what I do.

Your most famous recording, *I Can't Make You*

C.ELLIOTT PHOTOGRAPHY/PRESS

***Love Me*, was a previously uncelebrated song written by a pair of unknown songwriters.**
It was great that they [Mike Reid and Allen Shamblin] sent that song to me. When I heard it I almost fell over due to its greatness. It's a stunning, classic heartbreak song with sophisticated lyrics.

Achieving mainstream success with your tenth album, *Nick Of Time*, at the age of forty, did you appreciate it more?
Absolutely. I don't regret anything that happened until that point, but it was frustrating not to have the records in the store when I had worked so hard, selling out tours and working ten months per year. Also, I had been sober for a year when I wrote the album, which is sort of what it's about.

You were briefly signed to Paisley Park Records by Prince.
Actually, I wasn't, though we did discuss a collaboration. I had been dropped by Warners, and he said he loved my music. I went to Minnesota to meet him, but all he played me was finished songs that were not in my key and not topics that I would sing about, whereas I had wanted to work on songs from scratch. So it never got off the ground.

What was Prince like, in your experience?
He was pretty shy. You'd have dinner with him and he wasn't good at making eye contact. But otherwise he was like you expected.

For an artist, what's it like to play at a church of music like London's Royal Albert Hall?
Oh, my goodness. I was *so* nervous the first time. I had never felt that I would get to that place, and, incredibly, we actually sold it out.

What about the songs you'll be playing on this tour? Do you stick rigidly to a set-list?
No. I'm always conscious of what we played the last time we were in a city. This time, with no new album to promote, I can relax and pull out some deep cuts.

Three years down the line from *Just Like That...*, are you prepping a follow-up?
No. We've been on the road for so long there hasn't been the time.

As an extraordinarily principled and compassionate person, and also a social activist, living in the US right now, each day must bring a new and different nightmare?
You couldn't have put it any better. It's an unprecedented situation. Our immigrant community is being rounded up unfairly, then there are the threatened cuts in Medicaid, and now there's no more research on vaccines for the pandemic. The climate crisis gets worse, they're looking to drill off the California Coast. There are no firefighters for the next disaster. It's an illegal takeover by a man who is, in my mind, a threat to our democracy.

Do you fear for the nation's future?
I do. And also for that of the world. We need to work *together*, and it isn't happening. **DL**

Raitt's tour runs from June 1 to June 17.

© NOÉMI OTTILIA SZABÓ/PRESS



Zeal & Ardor

The Swiss band play a one-off UK gig at Desertfest.

Formed more than a decade ago in Basel, Switzerland, Zeal & Ardor are an experimental metal band with four albums to their name, the most recent being last year's *Greif* (sic). Leader Manuel Gagneux previews their co-headline slot at this year's Desertfest in London.

Zeal & Ador have been tagged with many labels, including 'avant-garde metal', 'neo-soul' and 'industrial grunge'. How do you describe your music?
There are so many descriptions. I don't like any of them. The one I *wouldn't* use is 'avant garde'.

The band's sound is derived from spiritual music from the time of American slavery and black metal, two styles that most people would consider poles apart.
I was with another band, but kinda burnt out with it all, so I asked people which genres I should combine. Someone said black metal and another suggested 'N-word' music. Instead of being appalled I wrote a song in twenty minutes.

What was it like?
Full disclosure: it was pretty terrible, but I liked the idea so much I stuck with it.

Last year's *Greif* was named after a mythical bird-like creature from an annual parade in your home town of Basel. What were you trying to say with that?
I don't really have an answer. Plus, musicians shouldn't talk about the meaning of their songs; let the fans have their own beliefs. I like to keep things mysterious.

Four years ago Zeal & Ardor toured with Opeth and Mastodon. Did the fans of the co-headliners 'get' your music?
I think so. And everyone on the tour was happy because Opeth were playing *Blackwater Park* [considered to be their defining album].

What did the audience at the 2018 Montreux Jazz Festival make of you?
That was one of our worst concerts, but it wasn't due to [circumstances of the festival]. The problems were mainly technical issues.

Who would you most like to tour with?
I'm a huge fan of Björk, so that would be great. Or any of the projects from [Faith No More frontman] Mike Patton. To be honest, we would tour with anyone. I just love music, man.

You're a co-headlining this year's Desertfest, a wide-ranging and non-conformist selection of acts from across the world, over three nights at various North London venues. Is that the perfect gig for a band like yours?
You might think that, but when every band [on the bill is a little out of the ordinary], that takes our special thing away. It becomes a bit 'standard'. But playing at The Roundhouse for the first time will be pretty special for us.

Who will you be hoping to watch on the Saturday night that you play?
Conan and Konvent. Pallbearer, of course. There are some bands I don't know, but that's cool. That's what a festival is for – to discover 'new' bands.

What are Zeal & Ardour trying to achieve through their music?
In many ways we have already achieved far more than I could ask for. I get to travel around the world with my friends, scream at strangers and call it a job. To ask for anything more would be kind of an asshole move.

Please describe the Z&A show in six adjectives or fewer.
Relentless. Soulful. Mysterious. Honest. Dilligent. And warm. **DL**

Desertfest takes place on May 16-18.



> "[The blues] scene really embraced me, but I never really felt I fitted into that box. My music's biggest link with the blues is that it's guitar based."

Chantel McGregor

With elements of prog on her new album, the guitarist/singer is hopeful people will see her in a different light.

The hard-touring, Yorkshire-born guitarist and singer returns with her first new album in a decade. *The Healing*, McGregor's third full-length record, marks a number of changes – and don't go calling her a blues-rock artist any more.

Why has it been ten years years since your last album, *Lose Control*?
Basically, life got in the way. My grandma became poorly and I helped to look after her. But I usually tour the whole year round and it isn't always easy to sit down and write songs.

Some of the tracks on *The Healing* introduce what, from the outside at least, seems a fairly new element for you – prog rock.
Anyone that knows me is aware of how much I love Steven Wilson and Porcupine Tree. It isn't a secret. I love the technicality of prog. Lyrically and musically its content is always interesting. I find it really, really intriguing.

And you don't see yourself as a blues artist any more, right?
Others thought that way, but I don't know that I ever did. My earliest gigs were in blues clubs because those were the only places that would book me for ticketed gigs, and to be fair they were lovely people. That scene really embraced me, but I never really felt I fitted into that box. My music's biggest link with the blues is that it's guitar based.

Do you expect some fans to be surprised by the new album? Maybe even disappointed?
Well I hope not disappointed, because it's an album I really believe in. For me its biggest leap was the more personal style of lyrics. Previously, my songs were about telly programmes, vampires or films. Now I'm getting older it feels right to write about real-life experiences.

The title track of *The Healing* is a good example of that.
Yeah. That's a hugely personal one about nearly losing my mum to illness. God knows how I'm going to sing it live, but getting those thoughts out was quite cathartic.

How did you end up working with backroom team Oli Brown and Wayne Proctor of The Dead Collective, who besides assisting with production were also heavily involved in the songwriting?
We've all known each other for donkey's years. I really loved what they were doing with The Dead Collective, and luckily they agreed to help out. Letting go to such a degree was a massive step for me, as I'm a massive control freak. I love to run everything, do everything, own it, too.

Why are you so determined to remain an independent artist?
It's not that I wouldn't be interested to offers [from record companies], but this is my baby. It's always been my thing. Giving *any* of it away feels like a big deal. When you asked about why it's been so long between albums, it's not like I had a label beathing down my neck. I could release it when it felt right. And if I want to do a prog album I'm not being told no, it's got to be blues.

***The Healing* is released on May 23, the same day as your show at London's 100 Club.**
I've played the 100 Club for years and I love the place. When you walk through those doors it's almost possible to feel the history. You stand on the same stage as Paul McCartney. It feels really special.

Most of your life is spent driving up and down the motorways. When your spirit is low, what motivates you to keep going?
That's simple – the fans. One of my biggest followers is a guy called Paul from Essex. He goes to Scotland... everywhere. When you get home at four a.m. and you've lived on McDonalds for three days [shrugs]. I just love making people happy. That's why I do this. **DL**

McGregor is on the road throughout 2025.

HEATHER ELLIOTT PHOTOGRAPHY/PRESS

Tour Dates

AC/DC
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Aug 21

BRYAN ADAMS
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	May 8
Manchester	AO Arena	May 9
Leeds	First Direct Arena	May 10
Aberdeen	P&J Live	May 11
Glasgow	Hydro	May 13
London	O2 Arena	May 15
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	May 16
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 17
Birmingham	BP Pulse Live	May 18

THE ALMIGHTY, WOLFSBANE
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 22
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 28
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 29
Barrowland	Ballroom	Nov 30

RICHARD ASHCROFT, THE LIGHTNING SEEDS, THE ZUTONS
Oxfordshire	Blenheim Palace	Jun 19

ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 16

BABYLON AD, BAD ACTRESS
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 4
Southampton	Suburbia	Sep 5
Leicester	HRH Sleaze	Sep 6
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Sep 7
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 10
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Sep 11
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 12
Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 14

ELLES BAILEY
Bristol	Christ Church Clifton	Jun 7
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Aug 2
Sunderland	Fire Station	Aug 3

BATTLE BEAST, DOMINIUM, MAJESTICA
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 21
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 22
Bristol	Academy	Oct 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 24

BLAZE BAYLEY
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 1
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 2
Norwich	Brickmakers	Sep 4
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 5
Worcester	Angel Of Rage	Sep 6
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Sep 7
Worthing	The Factory	Sep 25
Newport	The Patriot	Sep 26
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Sep 27

Black Sabbath, Metallica, Guns N' Roses, Slayer, more

Birmingham	Villa Park	Jul 5

THE BLACK KEYS
Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 8
Manchester	Castlefield Bowl	Jul 9
London	Alexandra Palace Park	Jul 11

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT, WHEN RIVERS MEET
London	Palladium	May 25

JOE BONAMASSA PLAYS RORY GALLAGHER
Cork	Live At The Marquee	Jul 1-3

DANNY BOWES (SPOKEN WORD)
Cambridge	Junction 2	Jun 1
Brighton	Komedia	Jun 2
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jun 4
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Jun 5
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Jun 7
Sheffield	Memorial Hall	Jun 8
Birmingham	Glee Club	Jun 10
Cardiff	Glee Club	Jun 11

BRAVE RIVAL
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	May 24
Worthing	Factory Live	May 30
Fleet	Harlington	Jun 7
Alfold	Rock & Blues Festival	Jul 5
Brighton	Komedia	Aug 8
Buxton	Blues Festival	Aug 9
Stockport	Firevolt Festival	Aug 10
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 5
Whitby	Rocks	Nov 7
Looe	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5

BRITISH LION
Dover	Booking Hall	Aug 3
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 28
Troon	Winter Storm Festival	Nov 29
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 30
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 2
Manchester	Gorilla	Dec 3
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Dec 4
Isle Of Wight	Strings Bar & Venue	Dec 6
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 7
Frome	Cheese And Grain	Dec 8
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 10
Colchester	Arts Centre	Dec 11
Gravesend	Red Lion	Dec 12
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 13
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Dec 15-19

ELKIE BROOKS
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	May 29
London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Jun 3
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Jun 26

OLI BROWN & THE DEAD COLLECTIVE
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	May 29
Guildford	Boileroom	May 30
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	May 31

BYWATER CALL, DAN PATLANSKY
London	Highbury Garage	Nov 19
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 20
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 21
Newcastle	Anarchy Brew	Nov 22
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 23
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 25
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 26
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 28

JERRY CANTRELL
London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 17

CARDINAL BLACK
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 2
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 3
Dublin	Opium	Oct 9
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 10
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 16
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 17
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Oct 19
Bristol	SWX	Oct 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 24
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 28
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 29
London	Camden Koko	Oct 30

ERIC CLAPTON
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	May 18
London	Royal Albert Hall	May 21, 23, 24

CLUTCH
Bristol	Beacon	Dec 15
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 17
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 18
Manchester	Academy	Dec 19
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 20

STEVE CONTE
Cambridge	Six Six	Jun 3
Margate	Justines	Jun 4
Brighton	Prince Albert	Jun 5
Bristol	Louisianna	Jun 6
London	Camden Dublin Castle	Jun 8

ALICE COOPER, BOBBIE DAZZLE
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jul 22
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Jul 23

COUNTING CROWS
Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 23
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 24
Leeds	Academy	Oct 26
Edinburgh	Academy	Oct 27
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Oct 29
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 31
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 1

THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Jun 19

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM
Galashiels	MacArts	May 23
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	May 24
Edinburgh	The Hive	May 25

CURVED AIR
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Nov 13
Gt Yarmouth	HRH Prog Festival	Nov 14
Hull	Wrecking Ball	Nov 15

ORANGE GOBLIN



The mighty Goblin are saying goodbye to the road after this, their final tour. Get to a show and make it a memorable farewell.

See page 98 for dates. Currently December 10 to December 17.

Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 16
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 20
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 21
Winchester	Arc	Nov 22
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 23

ROGER DALTREY
Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 30
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 8

DARE, CHANTEL MCGREGOR
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Dec 14

THE DARKNESS, ASH
Bristol	Beacon Theatre	May 24
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 25
Leicester	De Montford Hall	May 27
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 28
London	Wembley Arena	May 29

THE DEAD DAISIES, SCARLET REBELS, DAN BYRNE
Belfast	Limelight	Aug 13
Edinburgh	Academy	Aug 14
Newcastle	NX	Aug 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Aug 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 20
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Aug 21

DEFTONES
London	Crystal Palace Park	Jun 29
Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 24
St Austell	Eden Sessions	Jul 26

DEWOLFF, LIGHTNING THREADS
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 14

DISTURBED, MEGADETH
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 20
Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 22
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 24
London	O2 Arena	Oct 26
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 28

Recommended

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 11
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 15
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 17
London	O2 Arena	Jul 19
Dublin	3 Arena	Jul 21

ELECTRIC BOYS, THE SPANGLES
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 4
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jun 5
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jun 7
Wakefield	Venue 23	Jun 8
London	King's Cross Water Rats	Jun 10
Crumlin	The Patriot	Jun 12

EPICA, AMARANTHE, CHARLOTTE WESSELS' THE OBSESSION
Bristol	Bristol Beacon	Jan 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Jan 21
Manchester	Apollo	Jan 23
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jan 24

EXTREME
Birmingham	Academy	Aug 6
Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 7

FEEDER
Leeds	Academy	Sep 26
London	Brixton Academy	Sep 27
Manchester	Academy	Oct 2
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 3
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 9
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 11

FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 26
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 30
Whitby	Tomorrows Ghosts Festival	Oct 31
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 1

SAMANTHA FISH
Frome	Cheese & Grain	May 28
Liverpool	Arts Club	May 30
Southampton	The Brook	May 31
Oxford	Academy 2	Jun 1

FLORENCE BLACK
Dublin	Academy 2	Sep 12
Belfast	Voodoo	Sep 13
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 15
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Sep 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 19
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 20
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 21
London	Islington Academy	Sep 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 24
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 25
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 27

FM
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Sep 4
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Sep 5
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 6
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Sep 7
Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 11
Cardiff	Globe	Sep 12
Gloucester	Guildhall	Sep 13
Colchester	Arts Centre	Sep 14
London	Islington Academy	Sep 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 19
Manchester	Academy	Sep 20
Farsley	Old Woollen	Sep 21
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 27
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Sep 28

FOCUS
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Nov 2
Worthing	Factory	Nov 4
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 6
Southport	Atkinson	Nov 7
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 8, 9
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 10
Manchester	Stoller Hall	Nov 11
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 12
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Nov 13
Southampton	1865	Nov 20
Chichester	Council House	Nov 21

JAMES SHARROCK

LIVE!

Wimborne	Tivoli	Nov 22
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Nov 24
Lowdham	Village Hall	Nov 25
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 26
Cardiff	Earl Haig Club	Nov 27
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 28
Aldershot	West End Centre	Nov 30

FORBIDDEN

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 12

LITA FORD, VIXEN

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 23
London	IndigO2	Jul 24

FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND, KILL THE LIGHTS, THE BLACKOUT

Leeds	Millennium Square	Jul 18
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 19

GALAHAD

Southampton	1865	Jun 21

GANG OF FOUR

London	Kentish Town Forum	Jun 24
Dublin	Button Factory	Jun 26, 27

GONG

Allendale	Village Hall	May 23
Liverpool	Outer Waves Festival	May 25
Bristol	Watching Trees Festival	Jun 1

GRAND SLAM

Hastings	The Carlisle	Sep 5

GUNS N' ROSES

Birmingham	Villa Park	Jun 23
London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 26

DARYL HALL, GLENN TILBROOK

Manchester	Apollo	May 23
Brighton	Centre	May 25

HAWKWIND

Sheffield	City Hall	May 23
Portsmouth	Guildhall	May 24
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	May 25
London	Barbican Centre	May 26

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Cardiff	New Theatre	Oct 19
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Oct 20
Weston-Super-Mare	Playhouse	Oct 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Oct 23
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 24
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 25
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Oct 27
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Oct 28
Birmingham	Town Hall	Oct 29
Swindon	Wyvern	Oct 30
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 31

HEAVY PETTIN

Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Jun 27
London	Islington Academy 2	Jun 28
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Jul 10
Newcastle	Cluny	Jul 11
Glasgow	Slay	Jul 12
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 13

HELLOWEEN, BEST IN BLACK

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 25

GLENN HUGHES

Bristol	Academy	Oct 14
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 24
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 25

BILLY IDOL, NEW MODEL ARMY

London	Wembley Arena	Jun 24

INGLORIOUS

Buckley	Tivoli	Jun 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jun 7
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Jun 9
London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Jun 10

IRON MAIDEN, THE RAVEN AGE

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jun 21
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 22
Dublin	Malahide Castle	Jun 25
London	London Stadium	Jun 28
Glasgow	Hydro	Jun 30

BILLY JOEL

Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Jun 7
Liverpool	Anfield Stadium	Jun 21

LAURENCE JONES

Wavendon	The Stables	May 29
Dover	Booking Hall	May 30

JUDAS PRIEST, PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS

Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 23

JUDAS PRIEST, ALICE COOPER, PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS

London	O2 Arena	Jul 25

KERRY KING

Manchester	Academy 2	Aug 12
Bristol	SWX	Aug 13

KING DIAMOND, MYRKUR, PARADISE LOST, UNTO OTHERS

Manchester	Academy	Jun 30
London	Chalk Farm	Roundhouse Jul 1

KING KING, LAURA EVANS

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 1
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 4
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 6
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 7
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 8
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 10
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 11
Bath	Komedia	Oct 12
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 14
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 15
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 16
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 19
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Oct 21
Stockton On Tees	Arc	Oct 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 31
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 2

KING KRAKEN

Bromsgrove	Breaking Bands Festival	May 23
Crumlin	The Patriot	May 24
Coventry	Tin Music & Art	Jun 6
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jun 7
Glasgow	Audio	Jun 8
Dorset	Love Rocks Festival	Jun 20

KIRA MAC

Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 19
Wakefield	Venue 23	Sep 20
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 21
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 24
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 25
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 26
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Sep 27
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 28
Brighton	Komedia	Sep 30
London	Islington Academy 2	Oct 1
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 3

KITTIE

Donington Park	Download Festival	Jun 13
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Jun 15

LARKIN POE

Manchester	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 18
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 21
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 22

LAZULI

Stourport	Fusion Festival	Aug 7
Bango	Neuadd Ogwen	Aug 8
Dublin	Sound House	Aug 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Aug 11
London	Putney Half Moon	Aug 12
Southampton	1865	Aug 13
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Aug 14
Sudbury	Arts Centre	Aug 16

THE LAZYS

Glasgow	Audio	Aug 7
Leeds	Key Club	Aug 8
Stockport	Firevolt Festival	Aug 10
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 3
Southampton	Joiners	Sep 4
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 6

TOBY LEE

Wavendon	The Stables	Jun 3

LINDISFARNE

Whitby	Pavilion	May 25

LINKIN PARK, SPITIBOX, JPEGMAFIA

London	Wembley Stadium	Jun 28

LORD OF THE LOST

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 31
Whitby	All Tomorrows Ghosts Festival	Nov 1
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 2
Belfast	Limelight 1	Nov 4
Dublin	Academy	Nov 5
Bristol	Prospect Building	Nov 7

IGGY POP



Pop-tastic! He may be in his 70s, but James Osterberg still kicks out the jams like few others around.

See opposite page for dates. Currently May 28 to June 3.

London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 8
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Nov 9

JEFF LYNNE'S ELO

Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 5
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jul 9
London	Hyde Park	Jul 13

LYNYRD SKYNYRD, BLACKBERRY SMOKE

Manchester	AO Arena	Jul 15
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Jul 16
Brighton	Centre	Jul 18
London	Wembley Arena	Jul 19

Recommended

MAGNUM – A TRIBUTE TO TONY CLARKIN

Holmfirth	Picturedome	Oct 2
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 3
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 6

MANOWAR

London	Brixton Academy	Jul 19

MARILYN MANSON

Brighton	Centre	Oct 29
Bournemouth	Windsor Hall	Oct 31
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 1
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 2
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 4
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 7

ERIC MARTIN (UNPLUGGED)

Dublin	Whelans	May 23
Glasgow	Garage	May 25
Newcastle	Think Tank	May 28
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	May 29
Sheffield	Corporation	May 31
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Jun 1
Stoke-on-Trent	Underground	Jun 2
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Jun 4
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Jun 6
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Jun 7
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jun 8

ROBIN McAULEY, LYIN' RAMPANT

London	Camden Underworld	Aug 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 8
Crumlin	The Patriot	Aug 9
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Aug 15
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Aug 16

CHANTEL McGREGOR

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	May 23
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 28
Hertford	Corn Exchange	May 29
Hull	Social	May 30
Hungerford	Croft Hall	May 31
Hastings	The Carlisle	Jun 1

MICHAEL MONROE, CJ WILDHEART

Glasgow	Slay	May 23
Belfast	Bel-AOR Rocks	May 24
Southampton	1865	May 26
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 27
Bristol	Thekla	May 28
Swansea	Sin City	May 30
Buckley	Tivoli	May 31
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	Jun 1

ALANIS MORISSETTE

Dublin	Malahide Castle	Jun 29
Belfast	Belsonic Festival	Jun 30
Cardiff	Castle	Jul 2
Lancashire	Lytham Festival	Jul 4
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jul 5
London	O2 Arena	Jul 27

LUKE MORLEY, WILLIE DOWLING

Manchester	RNCM	Sep 11
Glasgow	St Luke's	Sep 12
Sunderland	Fire Station	Sep 14
Leeds	City Varieties	Sep 15
Bristol	St George's Hall	Sep 16
Brighton	Old Market	Sep 17
London	Bloomsbury Theatre	Sep 19

NEAL MORSE & THE RESONANCE, THE FLOWER KINGS

London	Islington Academy	Jun 4
Manchester	Academy 2	Jun 5

GRAHAM NASH

Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 4
York	Barbican	Oct 5
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 7
Cardiff	New Theatre	Oct 9
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 10
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 13
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 15
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Oct 18
London	Palladium	Oct 19

NEW FOUND GLORY, REAL FRIENDS, KOYO

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Oct 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 12
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 15
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 17
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 18

NINE INCH NAILS

Dublin	3 Arena	Jun 15
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 17
London	O2 Arena	Jun 18

OASIS, RICHARD ASHCROFT

Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jul 4, 5
Manchester	Heaton Park	Jul 11, 12, 16, 19, 20
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25-28, 30, Aug 2, 3
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Aug 8, 9, 12
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 16, 17

ORANGE GOBLIN, GRAND MAGUS, URNE

Glasgow	Garage	Dec 10
Dublin	Button Factory	Dec 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 12
Manchester	Academy 2	Dec 13

CARL DE SOUZA/AFP VIA GETTY

Bristol	SWX	Dec 14
Southampton	1865	Dec 16
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 17

CASSIDY PARIS

Hastings	The Carlisle	May 23
Crumlin	The Patriot	May 30
Lincoln	Call Of The Wild Festival	Jun 1

PARKWAY DRIVE

London	Wembley Arena	Oct 4
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 6

PENTAGRAM

Bristol	Thekla	Jul 1
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Jul 2
London	Highbury Garage	Jul 3
Manchester	Gorilla	Jul 5

IGGY POP

London	Alexndra Palace	May 28
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	May 31
Glasgow	Academy	Jun 3

POWERWOLF, HAMMERFALL, WIND ROSE

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 7

PUBLIC ENEMY

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 27

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD

Ware	Stone Valley Festival	May 23
Bournemouth	Academy	May 24
Torquay	The Foundry	May 26
Brighton	Chalk	May 27
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	May 29
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	May 30
Norwich	Epic Studios	May 31
Dublin	Olympia	Jun 1
Limerick	Dolan's Warehouse	Jun 13
Cardiff	Depot	Jun 14
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Jun 26
Newark	Stone Valley Festival	Jun 27
Oxford	Academy	Jun 28
Warrington	Parr Hall	Jul 1
Leicester	Academy	Jul 3
Lincoln	Engine Shed	Jul 4
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Jul 5
Sheffield	Leadmill	Jul 30
Northampton	Roadmender	Jul 31
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Aug 1
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Aug 7
Durham	Stone Valley Festival	Aug 8
Coventry	Empire	Aug 9
Cork City	Hall	Aug 15
Belfast	Putting The Fast In Belfast	Aug 16

THE QUIREBOYS, WILLIE DOWLING

Newcastle	The Cluny	May 30

BONNIE RAITT

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Jun 1
Dublin	Vicar Street	Jun 3, 4
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 7
Nottingham	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 8
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jun 10
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 11
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 14
London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 16
Brighton	Brighton Dome	Jun 17

THE RASMUS

Glasgow	Galvanizers	Nov 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 1
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 4
Southampton	1865	Dec 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 6

REEF, KERBDOG

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 16
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 17
Norwich	UEA	Oct 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 23
Bristol	Academy	Oct 24
Southampton	1865	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 30
Liverpool	Academy	Oct 31
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Nov 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 2
Leeds	Academy	Nov 6
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 7
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 8

REFUSED

Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 1
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Oct 2
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 3
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 5

RIVAL SONS

York	Barbican	Jul 24
Bournemouth	Academy	Aug 1
Liverpool	University	Aug 2

Stockton-on-Tees	Globe	Oct 3
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Oct 8

AN EVENING WITH FRANCIS ROSSI

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	May 24
Cheltenham	Town Hall	May 25
Guildford	G-Live	May 28
Neath	Gwyn Hall	May 30
Newbury	Corn Exchange	May 31
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Jun 1
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Jun 3
Yeovil	Westlands	Jun 4
Stratford-Upon-Avon	Playhouse	Jun 6
Wimborne	Tivoli	Sep 19
Exeter	Corn Exchange	Sep 21
Axminster	Guildhall	Sep 22
Portsmouth	King's Theatre	Sep 23
Redditch	Palace Theatre	Sep 25
Birmingham	Town Hall	Sep 26
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Sep 28
Chelmsford	Theatre	Sep 29
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Oct 1
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Oct 2
Tunbridge Wells	Assembly Hall	Oct 3
Bromley	Churchill Theatre	Oct 5
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 6
King's Lynn	Corn Exchange	Oct 8
Mansfield	Palace Theatre	Oct 9
Bridlington	Spa	Oct 11
Manchester	RNCM	Oct 12
New Brighton	Floral Theatre	Oct 14
Dunfermline	Alhambra	Oct 15
York	Barbican	Oct 16
Sunderland	Fire Station	Oct 18
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 28
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 29
Aldershot	Prince's Hall	Oct 31
Dunstable	Grove Theatre	Nov 1
Runcorn	Brindley Theatre	Nov 3
Hereford	Courtyard	Nov 4
Sheffield	Memorial Hall	Nov 5
Bath	Forum	Nov 7
Wrexham	William Aston Hall	Nov 8

DARIUS RUCKER

Belfast	SSE Arena	Sep 29
Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 30
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 2
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 3
London	O2 Arena	Oct 5

SANTANA

Glasgow	The Hydro	Jun 18
Manchester	Co-op Live	Jun 19
London	O2 Arena	Jun 21

SATCHVAI BAND

York	Barbican	Jun 13
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 14
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 17
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Jun 18
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 19

SAVATAGE

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jun 16

SAXON, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 4
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 5
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
Sheffield	Octagon	Nov 8
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 9
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 11
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 13
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 16

Recommended

SHEEPDOGS

Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	May 27
Brighton	Concorde 2	May 28
Cardiff	The Globe	May 29
Suffolk	Red Rooster Festival	May 30

DAVID SINCLAIR FOUR

Hersham	Surrey Blues Club	Jul 4
High Wycombe	Dusty's	Aug 6
Sutton	Sound Lounge	Aug 22
Carlisle	Blues Festival	Oct 10
Stevenage	Red Lion	Oct 26
Richmond	Kew Village Market	Nov 2

THE SISTERS OF MERCY

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 25, 26

SKINDRED, THOSE DAMN CROWS, BOB VYLAN, MORE

Stevenage	Lamex Stadium	May 23

MAID OF STONE FESTIVAL



Michael Schenker (pictured) playing music from his UFO years, Black Stone Cherry and Sweet head up the annual bash.

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 18-20

SLAYER, AMON AMARTH, ANTHRAX, MASTODON, HATEBREED, NECKBREAKKER

Cardiff	Blackweir Fields	Jul 3
London	Finsbury Park	Jul 6

SMASHING PUMPKINS, SKUNK ANANSIE, WHITE LIES, MORE

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 10

JUDGE SMITH

London	Holborn Holy Sepulchre Church	Jul 12

PATTI SMITH

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 6
London	Palladium	Oct 12, 13

SOFT WHITE UNDERBELLY

London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 24

SOLSTICE

Kidderminster	45 Live	Aug 31

SON OF MAN, THE MIGHTY RA

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Aug 9

SOUTHERN RIVER BAND

Dublin	Workman's Club	Jun 13
Buckley	Tivoli	Jun 14
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jun 18

STEEL PANTHER, BLACK SONIC PEARLS

Glasgow	Academy	Jun 16
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Jun 17

SPARKS

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 18, 19
Manchester	Apollo	Jun 21, 22
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Jun 24
Dublin	National Stadium	Jul 15, 16
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Jul 18
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jul 19

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN & THE E STREET BAND

Liverpool	Anfield Stadium	Jun 4, 7

STEREOPHONICS

Belfast	Belsonic	Jun 5
Dublin	St Anne's Park	Jun 6
Cork	Virgin Media Park	Jun 7
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 14
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 28
London	Finsbury Park	Jul 4
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jul 11, 12

AL STEWART

Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 3
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 5
York	Barbican	Oct 7
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 10
Guildford	G Live	Oct 11
Birmingham	Alexandra	Oct 12
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 15
London	Palladium	Oct 15

THE STRANGLERS, BUZZCOCKS

Leeds	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 21
Edinburgh	Academy	Oct 23
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Oct 24
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 28
Brighton	Dome	Oct 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 31, Nov 1

STRAY

London	Putney Half Moon	May 28
Bedford	Esquires	Jul 28
Hastings	The Carlisle	Nov 28

TEN

Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Jul 19
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jul 27
Gravesend	Red Lion	Aug 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Aug 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 13
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 25
Newport	The Patriot	Nov 8
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Nov 15
Layton	Institute	Nov 22

TESTAMENT, OBITUARY

Bristol	Beacon	Oct 7
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 8
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Oct 9
Manchester	Academy	Oct 10
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 11

THESE WICKED RIVERS

Galashiels	MacArts	Jun 6
Worcester	St Swithun's	Jun 7
Ipswich	St Stephen's	Jun 8
Southampton	Papillon	Jun 13
Hastings	Henry Ward Hall	Jun 14
Belper	St Peter's	Jun 21

THOSE DAMN CROWS

Leicester	Academy	Oct 17
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 18
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 21
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 22
Bristol	Crane	Oct 24
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 26
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 28
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 30
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 31

A THOUSAND HORSES

Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Jul 30
Manchester	Academy	Jul 31
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 1

THREE DAYS GRACE

Birmingham	Academy	Dec 9
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 10
Manchester	Apollo	Dec 12
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 13

TRAIN

Southampton	Summer Sessions	Jun 28
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 30
Warwickshire	St Nicholas' ParkJul 2	
Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 3
Lytham	Festival	Jul 4
Dublin	Iveagh Gardens	Jul 6
Limerick	King John's Castle	Jul 7

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LIVE!

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

London	Gt Portland St 229 Club	Sep 11
Chelmsford	Social Club	Sep 12
Deal	Astor Theatre	Sep 13
Bath	Chapel Arts Centre	Sep 18
Modbury	Memorial Hall	Sep 19
Darlington	Forum Music Centre	Sep 16
Otley	Courthouse	Sep 27
Warringtion	Irish Club	Sep 28
Hampton	The Hub	Oct 2
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Oct 3
Havant	The Spring	Oct 4
Newport (IOW)	Strings Venue	Oct 5

BONNIE TYLER

London	IndigO2	Jul 25

JIMMIE VAUGHN & THE TILT-A-WHIRL BAND

London	Gr Portland Street 229 Club	Jul 28, 29

VOLBEAT, BUSH, GEL

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 5
Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 6
Manchester	AO Arena	Nov 8
Glasgow	Hydro	Nov 10
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 12
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 13

RICK WAKEMAN, RETURN OF THE CAPED CRUSADER

Aylesbury	Waterside Arts	Oct 12
York	Barbican	Oct 14
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 18
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 22
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Oct 23
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Oct 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 25
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 26
London	Palladium	Oct 28
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 29

WARRIOR SOUL, SPREAD EAGLE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Southampton	Suburbia	Aug 29
Brighton	Dust	Aug 30
Swansea	Sin City	Aug 31
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 2
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 3
Stockport	Spinning Top	Sep 4
Derby	Victoria Inn	Sep 5
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 6
Leicester	HRH Sleaze Festival	Sep 7
Birmingham	Subside	Sep 8
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 11
Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 12
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Sep 13

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, CJ WILDHEART

Inverness	An Seomar	Sep 13
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 16
Carlisle	Brickyard	Sep 17
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 20
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 21
Cambridge	Junction 2	Sep 22
Southampton	1865	Sep 23
Bristol	The Exchange	Sep 25
London	Oxford Street 100	Club 26
Swansea	Sin City	Sep 27

W.A.S.P.

Norwich	UEA	Jul 20
Glasgow	Academy	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 26
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 26
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Sep 27
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 28

THE WATERBOYS

Oxford	New Theatre	May 23
Stockton-on-Tees	Globe	May 24
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	May 25
Guildford	G Live	May 27
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	May 28
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	May 31

WEEZER

Dublin	Trinity College	Jul 2

BOBBY WEIR & WOLF BROS

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 21

WHEN RIVERS MEET

Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 23
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	May 24
Southampton	The Brook	May 26
Norwich	Waterfront	May 29
Bath	Komedia	Sep 28
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Oct 2
Newbury	Arlington Arts	Oct 3
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 26
Southport	The Atkinson	Oct 31
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Nov 1
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 6
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Nov 7
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Nov 8
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 9
Cardiff	The Globe	Nov 20
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 22
Reading	Sub 89	Nov 27

WILCO

London	Royal Albert Hall	Jun 22

THE WILDHEARTS

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jul 24

WISHBONE ASH

Derby	Flowerpot	Sep 17
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 19, 20
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Sep 22
Southport	The Atkinson	Sep 23
Kendal	Bootleggers	Sep 24
Galashiels	MacArts	Sep 25
Haddington	Corn Exchange	Sep 26
Glasgow	QMU	Sep 27
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Sep 28
Stockton-on-Tees	ARC	Oct 1
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 2, 3
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 5
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 8
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 9
Worcester	Huntingdon Hall	Oct 10
Gillingham	Glassbox Theatre	Oct 11
Harpenden	Eric Morecambe Centre	Oct 12
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 14, 15
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 16
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 17
Aberdare	Coliseum Theatre	Oct 18
Basingstoke	Haymarket	Oct 19
Shoreham-By-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 21
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 22
Wimborne	Tivoli	Oct 23, 24
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 25

WOLFMOTHER

London	Islington Academy	Jul 29
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 30

Y&T

Glasgow	Garage	Oct 15
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Oct 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 18
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 19
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 21
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 24
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Oct 25

NEIL YOUNG & THE CHROME HEARTS, CAT STEVENS/YUSUF, VAN MORRISON

London	Hyde Park BST Festival	Jul 11

Festivals

2000 TREES
COHEED AND CAMBRIA, ALEXISONFIRE, TAKING BACK SUNDAY, MORE

Cheltenham	Upcote Farm	Jul 9-12

ALFORD ROCK & BLUES
WHEN RIVERS MEET, BRAVE RIVAL, NINE BELOW ZERO, MORE

Alford (Surrey)	Springbok Estate	Jul 3-6

ARCTANGENT
KARNIVOOL, MELVINS, ROLO TOMASSI, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 13-16

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MACHINE HEAD, MASTODON, TRIVIUM, GOJIRA, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 7-10

BLOODSTOCK'S WINTER GATHERING
CANDLEMASS, VENOM INC, RAISED BY OWLS, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 6

CARLISLE BLUES RHYTHM AND ROCK FESTIVAL
JO HARMAN, KYLA BROX, HAMILTON LOOMIS, DAVID SINCLAIR FOUR, MORE

Carlisle	Crown & Mitre Hotel	Oct 10-12

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

NEIL YOUNG & THE CHROME HEARTS



With his vast catalogue the set will likely span decades and include genuine classics. Join him and rock in the free world.

London | Hyde Park | Jul 11

CORNWALL ROCKS
FM, TROY REDFERN, GRAHAM OLIVER'S ARMY, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Resort	Oct 3-5

DAMNATION
THE HAUNTED, PIG DESTROYER, WORMROT, MORE

Manchester	BEC Arena	Nov 8, 9

DOWNLOAD
GREEN DAY, KORN, SLEEP TOKEN, MORE

Leicestershire	Donington Park	Jun 13-15

FAIRPORT CONVENTION'S CROPREDY
FAIRPORT CONVENTION, ALBERT LEE, TREVOR HORN BAND, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy	Aug 7-9

FIREVOLT
QUIREBOYS, VON HERTZEN BROTHERS, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 7-10

Recommended

FOREVER NOW
KRAFTWERK, DEATH CULT, THE DAMNED, PIL, MORE

Milton Keynes	Bowl	Jun 22

HAMMERDOWN FESTIVAL
TYGERS OF PAN TANG, DEMON, ONE LAST DAY, MORE

Brighton	Chalk	Jul 19, 20

HARD ROCK HELL
ROYAL REPUBLIC, STEELHEART, APRIL WINE, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 6-9

HARD ROCK HELL PROG
ASIA FEATURING JOHN PAYNE, FOGHAT, FOCUS, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 13-16

HARD ROCH HELL SLEAZE
BABYLON AD, JETBOY, PRETTY BOY FLOYD, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Sep 5-7

HELLA ROCK
VIRGINMARYS, FURY, TATTOO MOLLY, MORE

Coventry	Empire	Aug 30

JUST PUSH PLAY
VIRGINMARYS, DAN BYRNE, GORILLA RIOT, MORE

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Sep 6

KOZFEST
SYSTEM 7, HAWKLORDS, THE BEVIS FRONT, MORE

Builth Wells	Penmenau Farm	Aug 8-10

MAID OF STONE
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, BLACK STONE CHERRY, SWEET, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 18-20

NENE VALLEY ROCK FEST
ARTHUR BROWN, DARE, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Lincs	Grimsthorpe Castle	Sep 6

NORTHERN KIN
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, MIDGE URE, UNDERTONES, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall	Aug 1-3

NOZFEST
SCARLET REBELS, KIM JENNETT, DOOMSDAY OUTLAW, MORE

Southampton	1865	Aug 16

NWOCR LIVEFEST
CATS IN SPACE, THESE WICKED RIVERS, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 27, 28

PROG FOR PEART
AMAROK, KALLE WALLNER, COMEDY OF ERRORS, MORE

Abingdon	The Northcourt	Jul 18, 19

RADAR
CARPENTER BRUT, UNDERØATH, ZEAL & ARDOR, MORE

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jul 4-6

REBELLION
THE DAMNED, HUGH CORNWELL, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 7-10

STEELHOUSE
W.A.S.P., THOSE DAMN CROWS, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 25-27

STONEDEAD
THE ALMIGHTY, THE DEAD DAISIES, SWEET, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 23

TOMORROW'S GHOSTS
FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM, LORD OF THE LOST, BALAAM & THE ANGEL, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Oct 31, Nov 1

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK
JO HARMAN, THOMAS HEPPELL, JERRY JABLONSKI, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 8

WILDFIRE
BLACK SPIDERS, AUSTIN GOLD, BEAUX GRIS GRIS & THE APOCALYPSE, MORE

Lanarkshire	Wiston Lodge	Jun 27-29

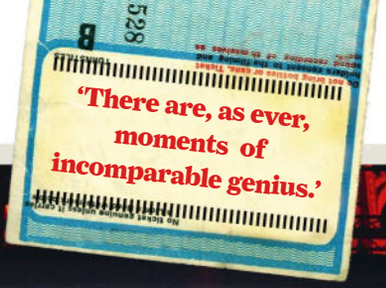
WINTER'S END
ARENA, WOBBLER, ANTIMATTER, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Apr 24-27

Y NOT
THE PRODIGY, PRIMAL SCREAM, FRANZ FERDINAND, MORE

Derby	Pikehall	Jul 31-Aug 3

FRAZER HARRISON/GETTY



The Who

London Royal Albert Hall

The song is over?

★ After a quarter-century, 22 barnstorming series and 32 million quid raised, Roger Daltrey is stepping down as curator of the annual Teenage Cancer Trust gigs (Robert Smith takes up the reins for next year's event), and tonight's show marks Daltrey's swansong. He fronted The Who at 2000's inaugural event, and here he stands once more, centre-stage, with Pete Townshend to his left, delivering an awe-inspiring, if potentially testicle-loosening, 'Yeah!' at the roaring climax of *Won't Get Fooled Again*.

It's been an emotional set so far, not without difficulties (Daltrey's in-ear monitors aren't mixed to his satisfaction. There is, by turns, too little or too much of Zak Starkey's flamboyantly Keith Moon alike drums ringing in his ears, so he's not at all happy and he's not exactly keeping it to himself). Townshend's poker face remains impassive as they restart *The Real Me*. He's been trying to leave The Who for 4.2 decades and you get the impression that, as 80 looms, volatility is no more his favourite flavour now than it was in '83. Yet there are, as ever, moments of incomparable genius to savour across this career-spanning two-hour set, from a punchy *I Can't Explain*, an acoustic *Behind Blue Eyes* and *The Seeker*, ample chunks of *Quadrophenia*, two each from *My Generation*, *Tommy* and *Face Dances*, to a closing live debut of *Who's Next*'s *The Song Is Over*. And is it? You better not bet your life.

Ian Fortnam



Roger Daltrey bows out as curator of the annual Teenage Cancer Trust gigs, with Pete Townshend (inset) by his side.

Sweet

London Shepherd's Bush Empire

Proto-glam-metal heroes write a memorable late chapter.

★ This evening, back after missing last year's tours of Australia and the UK on doctor's orders, Andy Scott rings the changes. Behind Sweet's final classic-era member stands FM guitarist Jim Kirkpatrick, who shadows Scott while his stamina returns, even taking centre stage when the 75-year-old takes a 10-minute breather in the wings.

With last year's new album *Full Circle* having drawn praise, Scott is determined to remain on the road, celebrating his group's legacy for as long as he's able. Tonight Sweet relegate their bubblegum pop years to a postscript, reeling off the likes of *Poppa Joe, Funny Funny* and *Little Willy* in two short medleys, with the main focus on sizzling hard rock for the remainder of a glorious 95-minute knees-up.

With the teenybopper moments such as *Hellraiser, Blockbuster!, Action* and *The Ballroom Blitz* represented, your correspondent is in heaven as deeper cuts *Lost Angels*, *Windy City* and *Set Me Free* arrive back-to-back. There's even a rarely performed full-length album version of *Love Is Like Oxygen*, complete with its proggy keyboard interlude.

With scarily good harmonies, guitars on 11 and wonderfully sympathetic keyboard parts, plus a powerhouse display from vocalist Paul Manzi, this is Sweet as they should be heard. There's still gas in the tank. Summer festivals look out.

Dave Ling

Manic Street Preachers

Glasgow Barrowland

Welsh rock legends thrive live.

★ It's rather poignant seeing Manic Street Preachers playing live in 2025, almost 40 years after James Dean Bradfield, Nicky Wire and Sean Moore formed the band as teenagers. The punk revolutionaries who once vowed to destroy rock'n'roll are still here. That's no contradiction, it's something to be proud of. They survived despite the tragic loss of core member Richey Edwards, whose absence is felt during the first show of their latest tour, particularly when he gazes at us from the *Motorcycle Emptiness* video, and when touring musicians Dave Eringa and Wayne Murray leave the stage so that the Edwards-era song *She Is Suffering* can be performed as a trio. "But there should be four of us," Bradfield laments, quietly.

The Manics have released 15 studio albums, and tonight's set-list – it varies slightly, nightly – includes something from 13 of them. It's a crowd-pleasing selection, especially from a band who'd rather split than trudge on as a nostalgia act. Opening with the melancholy, ABBA-esque euphoria of *Decline & Fall* from latest album *Critical Thinking* and (almost) ending with incendiary early single *Motown Junk* can be seen as a purposeful statement: we exist in the present, we celebrate our past. Bradfield deserves particular praise as an immense musical talent who has never run out of gas.

Paul Whitelaw

Wilko: Love And Death And Rock'N'Roll

London Southwark Playhouse

The late Dr Feelgood maestro returns as a beatific beatnik.

★ As we file in to take our seats for this fringe-theatre show about the remarkable life of Wilko Johnson, we're greeted by The Who's *My Generation*. '*Hope I die before I get old*' is about to be poignantly turned on its head. Johnson Willis, who plays Wilko, stands silhouetted, arms aloft, as he faces his cancer diagnosis by living life only in the moment; the wayward guitar hero becomes a beatific, sweary rock rebel uttering Shakespearian lines in an Essex yowl. He makes a decent stab at the Telecaster but doesn't dart around and lacks the laconic wit. The other four cast members, who play multiple roles, are more than decent musicians, both as a jug band doing *Goodnight Irene* on Canvey seafront and as the Feelgoods in their prime. 'Lee Brilleaux' is suitably combative, snarling, and whips his head around the harmonica. That a woman plays Sparko sounds ridiculous but works.

What Dr Feelgood did, simple though it appeared, is devilishly difficult to reproduce. The show does take liberties, particularly where Wilko is reconciled with a white-suited 'heavenly' Brilleaux, and sometimes veers towards mawkishness, but the songs make for a tearfully joyous, stomping finale. Despite its flaws, the play hits the spot. The legend of the irascible Essex wildman burns bright.

Claudia Elliott

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Ghost

Birmingham Utilita Arena

The satanic Swedes rise again.

★ The forces of darkness are abroad. It might be Easter Sunday, but Birmingham is awash with a sea of black as nuns, corpse-painted priests, popes and even a couple of Jesuses pop up in the city for Ghost. Even half an hour after the doors open, queues stretch on endlessly, largely due to a phone ban for the Skeletour in order to preserve some mystery, and the floor is still only half-full when the satanically inclined Swedes arrive.

It's early days for *Skeletá* – the album isn't even out until the week after the band play – but this new era looks to be their grandest yet. From the *Phantom Of The Opera* look of the 'new' Papa V Perpetua, to the Victorian-steampunk aesthetic of the Nameless Ghouls, Ghost delight in hamming it up on stage. The stage set and production are phenomenal; at one point the stage is covered in flames against an animated hellscape backdrop while images at other points recall towards *Monty Python*'s surreal humour.

Newer material might incline more towards Journey and Def Leppard than Ghost's Sabbath/Cathedral roots, but performed live even poppier recent singles *Lachryma* and *Satanized* become gargantuan heavy metal epics. But then Ghost have those in spades; *Cirice, He Is, Rats* and *Square Hammer* are all proven anthems, and there's a delight in the return of *Spirit, Majesty* and *Monstrance Clock* that reaffirms Ghost as torchbearers for heavy metal's next generation.

Rich Hobson



Papa V Perpetua and the Nameless Ghouls delight in hamming it up on stage.

Incubus

London O2 Arena

Be careful which songs you cover.

★ Twenty-four years have mostly been kind to Incubus's landmark album *Morning View*, which the band are revisiting in full tonight. Even more so to the band's singer Brandon Boyd, once incapable of keeping his top on for more than three songs live (he slashes his shirt to the waist tonight, but it stays on, much to the dismay of the two women seated next to me); he's still film-star handsome and in excellent voice too. When he's singing, that is. Between songs he rarely seems to acknowledge the ardent audience – some 15,000-plus, easily. No one has come expecting peak Dave Lee Roth, but more than the odd nod at the hordes hanging on his (very occasional) word would lift things immeasurably.

The album, recorded in view of the Pacific Ocean, still has the vague feel of a Californian morning about it, acoustic renderings, sitting on the riser to chill and chat in a way that makes you think they might light a campfire and toast marshmallows. As does the very easy-going performance, one song drifting slowly towards the next, and when that song is *Wish You Were Here* or *Are You In?,* which they very nearly ruin with a midsection cover of *In The Air Tonight*, then it's hard to complain. It's probably best to draw a veil over their take on Portishead's *Glory Box*, but ultimately they rescue themselves with the lusty *Pardon Me* and the evergreen, aching *Drive*.

Philip Wilding

The Flaming Lips

London Brixton Academy

Let the songs, not the talk, tell the stories.

★ Early in the second of two sets, Wayne Coyne is sporting an absurdly massive floral headdress which the young Peter Gabriel might have rejected as a bit much. Countless balloons bounce around the hall, and blue and red lasers leap about. Every word of every song flashes on the screen behind the stage, which resembles the world's trippiest lava lamp. "Surrender", it commands at one point, and amid this sensory overload it's best to obey. As Oklahoma's psychedelic seers approach veteran status, roughly a quarter-century since they went overground with *The Soft Bulletin*, they still put on one heck of a show.

Their 2002 album *Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots* constitutes the first set tonight, its spacey dream-pop musing on mortality with a light, floaty touch, but Coyne, with bird's-nest grey hair, stalls its momentum somewhat with his rambling between-song chats; it probably isn't essential that we all hear about how he enjoys wiping his kids' noses. The power of *Are You A Hypnotist?* and *Do You Realize?* gets things back on track.

After the interval, the retina-scorching visuals blast up from 10 to 11, and while there's more electronica than guitar, squelchy bass digs in as anthems like *She Don't Use Jelly* and the distorted Motown cascade of *Race For The Prize* hit their effervescent grooves. Blinding.

Chris Roberts

Eureka Machines / Tropical Contact

Wolverhampton KK's Steel Mill

Yorkshire double bill ensures The North rises again.

★ The sun is shining, it's a Bank Holiday and the Eureka Machines are on tour. These aren't the only things to celebrate tonight, though, with the main support coming from Tropical Contact, fellow Yorkshire-based, Britrock-flavoured troubadours who largely fell silent after the release of their excellent debut *XS* back in 2016.

The quality of TC's songwriting shines through in a rapid run-through of songs that in another life could've been massive. *Warriors* has the riffy thump of The Wildhearts, *Nightcrime* employs some Terrorvision-ish guitar twangs, and there's massive choruses for days, cheeky covers of *Misirlou* and Beastie Boys' *Fight For Your Right* somehow the least impactful songs in the set.

In July last year, Eureka Machines frontman Chris Catalyst admitted new album *Everything* would "probably be the last Eureka Machines album". While he's since marched that back with a cheeky joke in recent single *Back In The Back Of Beyond*, the band's live show is testament to how gutting it would be to lose them from the British rock scene. Bounding out *Everything*'s title song, the next 90 minutes balance power-pop brilliance, shit-kicking riffs and fizzy punk excitability in a jubilant triumph. Stick around lads, the world needs more of this.

Rich Hobson

KATJA OGRIN/GETTY



Chris Goss: centre-stage and masterful.



Steven Janssens gives it plenty of guitar swagger.



‘A master class in pop-literate understated rock immensity.’

Masters Of Reality / Earl Of Hell

London 229 Club

Chilled individuals, fearsome players.

Chris Goss is, of course, some sort of genius. The unsung, and borderline unseen, co-producer of *Rated R* who provided just enough of his characteristic Iggy/Bowie Berlin-era fairy dust to elevate Queens Of The Stone Age from the critically acclaimed darlings of the desert-rock underground to credible mainstream contenders. Obviously, QOTSA have since more than prevailed commercially and have been regularly called upon to effusively *C-C-C-C-C-Cocaine* before capacity crowds in arenas and stadia. But Chris. Well, Chris (who, to all intents and purposes, *is* Masters Of Reality) is here. Now 229 is a top venue, but let’s just say you’d have a hell of a job staging the Royal Tournament in its relatively snug confines. Like it or not, after 44 years (off and on) in the MOR game, Goss still inhabits the cosy arena of the cult artist. But does this small detail preclude him from putting on a staggeringly brilliant show? We’ll get to that later. But no one’s heard to demand a refund.

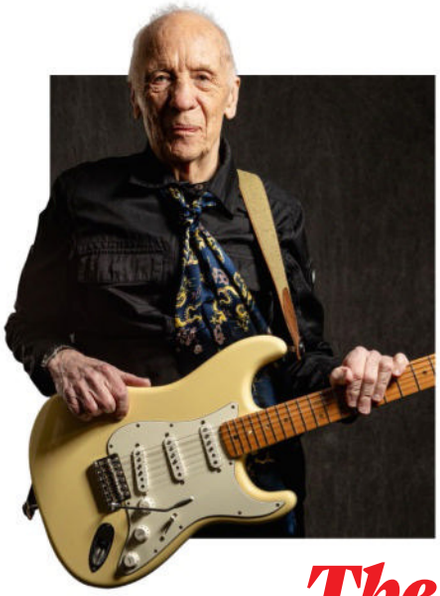
Prior to the evening’s main attraction we’re treated to a sound performance from Scotland’s Earl Of Hell, a band clearly dedicated to rocking out in the traditional sense of the term. Vocalist Eric Brock chooses not to brood and scowl mysteriously, but to engage with his audience in a strain of convivial banter as irresistible as that of a holiday camp’s knobbly-knees contest MC. All eyes are drawn to guitarist Lewis Inglis, a singularly Caledonian, post-Iommi apparition who’d have fitted perfectly into mid-70s Nazareth. All ‘tache and glowers, he grinds out the irredeemably doomed riff of *Macabra Cadabra* (yes, really) to a sympathetic audience who’re clearly liking what they’re hearing. Especially any poor sods only here because they mistook Masters Of Reality for a Black Sabbath tribute.

Goss’s arrival on stage could not be more unassuming. At the mercy of sciatica and resplendent in purple velvet jacket, shirt and tie, he eases himself into the chair from which he performs at centre-stage, masterfully operating guitar pedals by hand, contouring trademark tones to perfection, his coolly effected modus operandi’s little short of sonic alchemy. Proceedings commence with two from MOR’s recently released first album in 16 years *The Archer* (the bump ’n’ rolling grind of *Mr. Tap N’Go* and the swirling *Lodger*-esque psych of *I Had A Dream*). It’s a confident, bullish opening gambit that contrasts neatly with an immediately subsequent exhilarating take on *Doraldina’s Prophecies*, one of Goss’s earliest songs. *Deep In The Hole* (the driving, insistent title track of MOR’s ’01 album, which was packed with guesting QOTSA alumni and saw the band teetering on the very brink of almost crossing over) initiates widespread collective nirvana among the rapt faithful.

Goss’s benign state of apparent tranquility as he negotiates unlikely guitar lines, and soothes with his surprisingly dulcet tones (pitched somewhere between pastoral, *Another Green World* Eno and Josh Homme at his most *Leg Of Lamb*-y) doesn’t mean that the rest of the stage is free of charisma; MOR’s regular rhythm section of drummer John Leamy and bassist Paul Powell (particularly fired-up funkwards by audience encouragement) are augmented by ex-Mark Lanegan Band-mates Steven Jannssens (guitar swagger) and Aldo Struyf (keyboard colour). With a storming set covering all catalogue bases, three from their self-titled debut, two more from *Deep In The Hole*, another newbie from *The Archer* (the undeniably superb Goss-by-numbers *Sugar*), tonight’s show’s a master class in pop-literate understated rock immensity.

Ian Fortnam

JOHN MCMURTRIE



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Blues lifer **Robin Trower** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Henry Yates**



Born in South London in 1945, Robin Trower announced his molten-soul guitar touch on Procol Harum's first five albums, then vindicated his split for a solo career with his second solo album, 1974's gold-selling *Bridge Of Sighs*. For many, that album remains his career peak. Trower has kept reaching in his late period, releasing 14 post-millennial albums (including this year's *Come And Find Me*) and is plainly still as passionate about music as ever.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

I must have been about six, because it was when we lived in New Zealand. I distinctly remember hearing *Blue Skies* by Irving Berlin on the radio – it might have been sung by Bing Crosby – and thinking: "Ooh, I like that". That song was the start of me really 'hearing' music.

THE FIRST GUITAR RIFF I MASTERED

I remember working out *Apache* by The Shadows. My first guitar was cheap and cheerful, a Rosetti acoustic, but it didn't take me long to try and electrify it – get a pickup on it and plug it into the back of the radio. It's a miracle I didn't kill myself with an electric shock!

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

My early band, The Paramounts, started off doing Chuck Berry and we covered *Sweet Little Sixteen*. I'm not sure how well I played the licks, but the stage was definitely a natural environment for me.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

As a guitar player, BB King's *Live At The Regal* changed my course. The thing with BB is that he was actually playing vocal melodies, completely different to the guitarists prior to that. I met him when Procol Harum was on the same bill at the Miami Pop Festival. He was very friendly, there was no side to him.

THE GUITAR HERO

Obviously Jimi Hendrix was a big influence; my favourite track is *Stone Free*. But I think Albert King is the main man. After I saw him live I wanted to give up playing the guitar. It took me about a year to get over that. I loved the whole *Born Under A Bad Sign* album, but *Crosscut Saw* just floored me. What he's doing is really advanced for the time. He's not only got this fabulous tone and it's incredibly soulful, but everything he plays is a melody.

THE SINGER

Dinah Washington is probably my favourite singer. Her early stuff is more bluesy and funky, but she's had a lot of pop hits with strings and everything – you know, *Mad About The Boy, What A Diff'rence A Day Makes*. It's about something deeper than just hitting the notes. How soulful is it? How much of your own personality is put into it? That's what the great singers bring.

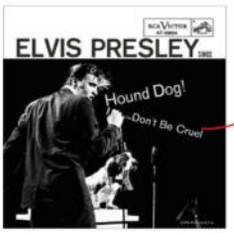
THE SONGWRITER

There's one or two John Lennon songs – I'm thinking about *Strawberry Fields Forever*, for instance – that are transcendent. But in the rock'n'roll era Leiber and Stoller have to be right up there. Ben E King's *Spanish Harlem*, Elvis's *Hound Dog*... they must've had more hits than anyone. But they had no 'fame' in that way.



THE BEST LIVE ACT I'VE SEEN

Definitely James Brown. We went to see him at Walthamstow Granada in the mid-sixties. I was so familiar with his album *Live At The Apollo*, but to see it visually was another thing altogether – talk about 'Mr Dynamite'. You've never seen anything like it.



THE BEST COVER VERSION

Hound Dog by Elvis Presley. The original was by Big Mama Thornton. The lyric doesn't really make sense coming from a man but it still works. I remember watching Leiber and Stoller being interviewed and they were asked what they thought of Elvis's version, and one of them said: "Well, when we first heard it, we thought it wasn't very good... but when it sold over a million we started to see its attributes."



THE BEST RECORD I'VE MADE

Overall it might be *In City Dreams* [1977]. It has more of an R&B flavour, which was where my head was at at the time. We had a great producer, Don Davis, and Rustee Allen and Bill Lordan from Sly & The Family Stone on bass and drums, which added another dimension. I understand why people like *Bridge Of Sighs* [1974], though.



THE WORST RECORD I'VE MADE

On *In The Line Of Fire* [1990] I think I allowed myself to be dragged off course trying to make a more commercial album. I mean, there's good stuff on it, but I don't feel like there's enough of me there.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

A Cottage For Sale by Billy Eckstine. It's such a beautiful piece and the subject is so moving. He's singing about how, you know, we used to live here, this was our wonderful place we shared together, but it is no longer.

MY FAVOURITE AIR-GUITAR TRACK

I don't think I've ever played air guitar, but it would probably be *Personal Manager* by Albert King.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

Yikes! How about *St. James Infirmary* by Bobby Bland? It's very fitting. I'm hoping my funeral is just going to be: "Let's bury him and move on".

Come And Find Me is out now via Provogue.

"After I saw Albert King live I wanted to give up playing the guitar."

ROBIN TROWER: ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS; ALBERT KING: DAVID REDFERN/GETTY


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