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- 1976 -

Over Four Decades  
Of Black Music  
Journalism

- 2017 -

## Cody Chesnutt

The Divine Comedy

Rodigan v Coxson

The Unwanted Clash

Izzi Dunn

Strings of Life

Plus...

James Brandon Lewis Trio

Nikka Costa

Boomtown Festival

Mongrels

Decosta Boyce





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“**SALUTE** is about real musical creativity - and that gives our aspiring R&B, soul, hip-hop, jazz and reggae musicians a massive chance to make their mark”

**CHRIS WELLS**  
Echoes Magazine Editor

**SALUTE** is inviting musicians to become a part of one of the most far-reaching and exciting talent searches in the history of British music. We believe in the importance of celebrating the multi-cultural and multi-genre character of British music today. **SALUTE** is a competition for unsigned **MUSIC MAKERS** who are creating new and original music in any genre and is open to all UK residents aged 16 and over. You are allowed to submit material previously published on Facebook, YouTube and Soundcloud and we are offering the biggest single cash prize ever in a competition of this type (£50,000).

The competition is open now. Visit **WWW.SALUTEMUSIC.UK** for more information and to enter the competition. Entries close 16th June 2017.

**SALUTE**  
MUSIC MAKERS

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volume 42  
// issue 04

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# FRONTLINES

## FROM THE EDITOR

OK, we know you don't like X-Factor, never watch *The Voice* and think Simon Cowell is [to quote Amy Winehouse's comment in her first interview with us] "poison," but what would you like to see in their place? How about this? Salute Music Makers is a brand new online and TV unsigned songwriters competition - just launched - attempting to locate our finest young music creators.

Why is it different? Unlike the aforesaid TV 'talent' shows, Salute intends to emphasise the originality and creativity of the participants - it's not looking for a bunch of Mariah Carey copyists or the next boy band. And it won't be poking fun at competitors who step forward to contribute their compositions. Why are we telling you about this? Well, because those behind Salute have convinced us they really want to reach out to music creators across every genre of music - including soul, R&B, hip-hop, reggae, jazz and all hybrids and offshoots therefrom - and they asked for our support to do so.

Interested? Then all you need do is visit [salutemusic.co.uk](http://salutemusic.co.uk), upload your track or tracks to the Salute portal and it/they will be heard. It costs £20 per track to enter [up to a maximum of four], but there's every chance you'll at least get your money back from Salute's innovative 'shared revenue' scheme. [Salute will set aside 5% of all advertising and sponsorship revenue, to be placed into a fund to be split between all the 'Music Makers' at the end of the competition.]

Thereafter, a crack team of industry professionals - including musicians in the black music field and... erm, also members of the *Echoes* team - will listen to and evaluate the expected thousands of entries and then whittle that number down to the 100 best. While that's going on, fans and artists will be able to interact on the Salute platform, sharing, liking, commenting and even creating playlists.

Subsequently the public gets to vote online to create a top six of

finalists, each of whom will take part in a series of televised live shows to determine the ultimate winner.

What might you win? All finalists will receive £10,000. The ultimate winner will receive another £40,000 on top, making a total of £50,000, the largest such prize on offer anywhere. No strings attached. With former frontman of The Undertones, Feargal Sharkey, at the helm, Salute insists it's not seeking to favour one form of music over another: everyone should stand an equal chance.

And while you're contemplating imminent superstardom... our May issue finds one our favourite indie soulmen **Cody Chesnutt** launching his new album *My Love Divine Degree* by bagging the cover and telling us what's been inspiring him lately. Reggae man John Masouri tackles the thorny question of the dispute between **Lloyd Coxson** and **David Rodigan**, Dep Ed. Kevin Le Gendre spends time with the most aggressive young threesome in jazz, the **James Brandon Lewis Trio** and I find out what exactly sets cellist/singer/songwriter **Izzi Dunn**'s musical teeth on edge. Honestly, if we could cram more in, we would.

CHRIS WELLS

## NEWS



### BEY MAKES SPECIAL LEMONADE

No doubt looking for a new way to pay the forthcoming twins' school fees, **Beyoncé** is to release a special box set edition of her visual album *Lemonade* this summer.

The package comes with a 600-page coffee table book featuring "hundreds of never-before-seen photos" [it says here] from the making of the album, a

foreword by scholar **Michael Eric Dyson**, and poetry from **Warsan Shire**, whose work is woven throughout the album. The set will also include a lemonade-coloured vinyl pressing. That'll be yellow, then.

All of this can be yours for the price of \$299.99. Well, in the US, anyway. Over here we'd guess, maybe, £250? It's available for pre-order now and will ship this summer.



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**MAY**  
FRI 19 INVERNESS NORTHERN MEETING PARK  
SAT 20 DUNDEE SLESSOR GARDENS  
FRI 26 WREXHAM RACECOURSE GROUND  
SAT 27 COVENTRY BUTTS PARK ARENA  
SUN 28 DARLINGTON NORTHERN ECHO ARENA

**JUNE**  
FRI 02 CARLISLE BRUNTON PARK  
SAT 03 CANTERBURY THE SPITFIRE GROUND  
SAT 10 LLANELLI PARC Y SCARLETS  
SUN 11 TAUNTON RACECOURSE  
FRI 16 BLACKPOOL BLOOMFIELD ROAD  
SAT 17 NEWARK FESTIVAL RIVERSIDE PARK  
FRI 30 SCARBOROUGH OPEN AIR THEATRE

**AUGUST**  
SAT 12 CHELMSFORD CITY RACECOURSE  
SUN 27 NORFOLK HOLKHAM HALL

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## PLAYLISTS

### CHRIS WELLS

1. **JAZZMEIA HORN**  
THE PEACOCKS [PRESTIGE]
2. **MOONCHILD**  
VOYAGER [TRU THOUGHTS]
3. **JULIA BIEL**  
WASTING BREATH []

### KEVIN LE GENDRE

1. **JAMES BRANDON LEWIS**  
BITTERSWEET [BNS]
2. **MOONCHILD**  
VOYAGER [TRU THOUGHTS]
3. **JAZZMEIA HORN**  
PEOPLE MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND [PRESTIGE]

### JOHN MASOURI

1. **NATTALI RIZE**  
EVER RIZING DUB  
[ROOTS LEVEL RECORDS]
2. **KEN BOOTHE**  
RIVERSIDE  
[BOARDHOUSE RECORDS]
3. **GAPPY RANKS**  
BUCKINGHAM PALACE  
[420 SOUND DIGITAL]

### MR. DREW

1. **JOEY BADASS**  
ALL-AMERIKKAN BADA\$\$  
[PRO ERA]
2. **KENDRICK LAMAR**  
DAMN. [TOP DAWG]
3. **WALE**  
SHINE [MAYBACH MUSIC]



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## NE-YO DATES RESCHEDULED

The man known as **Ne-Yo** has rescheduled those postponed shows from the end of last year and will now be stepping on UK stages during September. Thus far he has an eight-date diary:

Manchester, O2 Apollo [September 13]; Glasgow, Barrowland [14]; Milton Keynes, Arena MK [16]; Brighton, Centre [17]; London, O2 Academy Brixton [20]; Bristol, Colston Hall [21]; Bournemouth, B.I.C. [22]; and Birmingham, O2 Academy [23].

Visit [robomagiclive.com](http://robomagiclive.com) and/or [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://ticketmaster.co.uk) for more info and to book.

Guests on all shows are **Diamond Platnumz** and **Sonna Rele**.

## PRINCE FAMILY REALITY TV SHOW

The real reason that **Prince's** estate sued to stop his new music from being released last month has emerged – it's because his heirs want to use those songs first for their planned reality series.

Still in early development, the show will focus on how the family's lives have changed since Prince died on April 21, 2016. A production company has signed on, but no deal is in place for an airdate as of yet.

Reports suggest the family's currently fighting **George Ian Boxill**, the producer of the recently issued *Deliverance* EP, to keep the music under wraps, so they can debut it on the show. Meanwhile, the court has ordered Boxill to turn over the music to the estate, but he's still fighting that.



## EXODUS HITS 40

To celebrate four decades since the original June '77 release date of **Bob Marley & The Wailers'** legendary LP *Exodus* - proclaimed by US Time Magazine as the 'Album Of The Century' - **Island Records**, together with **USM, UMe & The Marley Estate/Tuff Gong Worldwide** are to issue a very special commemorative version of the album in several formats.

**Ziggy Marley**, it seems, has painstakingly revisited the original session recordings, uncovering unused and never before heard vocals, lyric phrasing and instrumentation, and set about incorporating and transforming these newly found elements into brand new session takes. Thus Ziggy's idea for *Exodus 40* is his vision of how his father may have approached these songs today.

Amongst the discoveries, Ziggy uncovered 10 lead vocal outtakes for *One Love*. He pieced together a brand new lead vocal from these outtakes, including vocal booth ad-libs which the listener can hear towards the end of the song. A roster of guest musicians cut a brand new music bed for *Turn Your Lights Down Low* - which leads the song towards R&B, although Bob's original vocals remain. Further subtle instrumental textures are added to a number of other tracks. There'll be various formats and versions to choose from:

### Exodus 40 [2CD]

A 2CD package containing *Exodus* [re-mastered original 1977 album] & *Exodus 40* [Ziggy Marley Restatement].

### Exodus 40 [3CD]

A 3CD Set containing the remastered original 1977 *Exodus* album, Ziggy's restatement *Exodus 40*, and *Exodus Live* which features eight live performances from London's Rainbow Theatre, recorded the week of the original album's release in June 1977 [seven of these performances previously unreleased], plus 28-page booklet.

### Exodus 40 Super Deluxe Edition [4LP/2x7"/Book]

A vinyl collector's edition boxed set containing the content from the 3CD set across 3LPs cut to 180-gram heavyweight black vinyl, as well as an exclusive *Punky Reggae Party* LP, two additional limited edition 7"s & 32-page book contained within a rigid 12"x12" boxed set.

There'll also be a limited edition pressing of the original album on Gold vinyl, only available via UMG D2C channels.




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# NE-YO

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS  
**DIAMOND PLATNUMZ** & *Sonna Rele*

SEPTEMBER 2017

WED	13	MANCHESTER O2 APOLLO
THUR	14	GLASGOW BARROWLAND
SAT	16	MILTON KEYNES ARENA MK
SUN	17	BRIGHTON CENTRE
WED	20	LONDON O2 ACADEMY BRIXTON
THUR	21	BRISTOL COLSTON HALL
FRI	22	BOURNEMOUTH BIC
SAT	23	BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY

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## BADU DOUBLE

**Erykah Badu** has announced two July shows in London. General-release tickets sold-out just five minutes for the July 6 date at the Hammersmith Apollo, but a second date, on the 7<sup>th</sup>, has been added.



Tickets for the new date are available to purchase now from [tickmaster.co.uk](http://tickmaster.co.uk). Expect to pay around £55 plus booking fees.

Badu will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of her two-time Grammy-winning debut album, *Baduizm* whilst performing to fans in London.



## JACKSONS FEEL THE HEAT

Pop's first family **The Jacksons** have scheduled a whole summer's worth of live dates across the UK, celebrating an extraordinary half-century in the business.

Catch them at:

Scarborough, Open Air Theatre [June 17]; Woodstock, Blenheim Palace [18]; Glastonbury Festival [21-25]; Cardiff, Motorpoint Arena [25]; Newmarket, Racecourse [30]; Glynde Place, Love Supreme Festival [June 30-July 2]; Greenwich Musictime Festival [July 6]; Liverpool, Haydock Park [July 11]; Livewire Festival, Blackpool, Tower Headland Arena [August 25]

Visit [ents24.com](http://ents24.com) for further details and to book.

## STAX ACADEMY SUMMER VISIT

To celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first Stax tour back in 1967, the **Stax Music Academy** plans to make a UK stop on their upcoming European tour.

They'll play Kings Place in London on Saturday, July 15. Tickets are priced £16.50 online.

What is the Stax Music Academy? Located in one of the most economically depressed zip codes in the United States, the SMA has for more than 16 years had tremendous success with preparing local students for college and success as adults by mentoring them with intensive music education as the primary tool. And not just any music, but the music of Stax Records, which once stood on the very site SMA stands today.

Back in 1967, Stax Records sent its top artists on the label's first-ever Stax/Volt European tour and those artists' lives and the lives of the audiences were changed forever. As 2017 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that tour, the Stax Music Academy are celebrating by sending its top students on a tour of the UK, France and Ireland, performing the same set-list of the original tour with Otis Redding, Sam & Dave, Eddie Floyd, Carla Thomas, Arthur Conley, and Booker T. & the MGs.

Visit [staxmusicacademy.org](http://staxmusicacademy.org) for more info.



★ MASTER GEE | HEN DOG | WONDER MIKE ★

# Sugar Hill Gang

★ GRANDMASTER MELE MEL AND SCORPIO ★

# FURIOUS 5

WED 31 MAY	HULL WELLY
THU 01 JUN	NORWICH WATERFRONT
FRI 02 JUN	SHEFFIELD FOUNDRY
S SOLD OUT N	LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB
TUE 06 JUN	MANCHESTER GORILLA
THU 08 JUN	LIVERPOOL HANGAR34
FRI 09 JUN	PRESTON LIVE
SUN 11 JUN	LONDON ULU

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"Just A Touch Of Love"  
"Watching You"

LONDON, 229  
FRIDAY 23 JUNE



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Friday 21 July - London, 229  
Saturday 22 July - Leeds, Wardrobe  
Sunday 23 July - Manchester, BOTW



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## TOP OF THE HILL

Rap originals **The Sugarhill Gang** are about to embark on an early summer, eight-date trek across the UK, supported by **The Furious 5** featuring **Grandmaster Melle Mel & Scorpio**.

Kicking off on May 31 at the Welly in Hull, the schedule then runs:

Norwich, Waterfront [June 1]; Sheffield, Foundry [2]; Leeds, Brudenell Social Club [4]; Manchester, Gorilla [6]; Liverpool, Hangar 34 [8]; Preston, Live [9]; and London, ULU [11].

Visit <http://www.ticketweb.co.uk/artist/sugarhill-gang-tickets/25406> for further details and to book.



## FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE

House of Common are delighted to confirm that **Soul II Soul**, **Norman Jay**, **Dennis Bovell** and **Sherwood & Pinch** will be joining the lineup at **House Of Common 2017**. They will play alongside previously announced acts, including festival headliners **Madness**, **De La Soul**, RAMJAM stage curator **David Rodigan**, **Toddla T**, **Dawn Penn**, **Craig Charles**, **Hackney Colliery Band** and very special guests **The Skatalites** on Bank Holiday Monday, August 28, on London's Clapham Common.

More artists, stages and news of family-friendly areas will be revealed in the coming weeks.

Madness say: "Madheads, Carnival heads and madkids united to revel in the sunshine on Clapham Common for the first ever House of Common in 2016, it was the highlight of our mad year and we're now spending these cold hours and days planning how to make 2017's even better, we'll worry about the entertainment, you bring the sunshine."

Visit [madness.co.uk/houseofcommon](http://madness.co.uk/houseofcommon) for more.



## KELLY SUED... FOR CUCKOLDING!

his wife!

In a complaint filed on April 21, Hinds County, MS deputy **Kenny Bryant** claims that his wife, **Asia Childress**, had a romantic relationship with Kelly prior to their July 15, 2012 wedding but told him that it was over.

Bryant said the relationship with Kelly rekindled when his wife attended his concert in October 2012. Sometime afterward, Bryant said his wife convinced him to move to Atlanta to further her career. Bryant said he quit his job and moved, but believes her underlying motive was to continue her affair with Kelly, according to the lawsuit. Bryant also complains in the report that Kelly was seducing Childress.

A summons was filed on Monday, April 24, requiring R. Kelly to respond to the complaint.

Weird just doesn't cover it.





## CUBA GOODING

Former lead vocalist with Main Ingredient and subsequently solo artist in his own right, **Cuba Gooding Sr.** was found dead in his car on April 20 in the Los Angeles suburb of Woodland Hills. According to police, alcohol bottles were removed from the vehicle and, pending an autopsy, overdose is suspected as cause of death. He was 72.

Gooding took over as the lead singer of Main Ingredient in 1971, having already worked with the group as a background singer. The Ingredient's original lead, **Donald McPherson**, had succumbed to leukemia, after co-penning the group's biggest songs up to that point, *You've Been My Inspiration*, *Spinning Around*, and writing *Black Seeds Keep On Growing* by himself. The switch over to Gooding was seamless, however, as they went straight on to score their biggest hits *Everybody Plays The Fool*, *Just Don't Want To Be Lonely*, *Happiness Is Just Around The Bend* and *Rolling Down A Mountainside*.

Born in **Harlem**, Gooding was a son of Dudley MacDonald Gooding and his wife Addie Alston. The elder Gooding was a native of Barbados and had fled the island in 1936 to Cuba where he met and married a woman. When she was murdered because of their affiliation with Pan Africanist leader Marcus Garvey, Dudley Gooding promised his wife on her deathbed that he would name his first son Cuba. His father died when Cuba was 11 years old, Cuba then growing up in Harlem.

After a string of hits fronting The Ingredient, Gooding signed to Motown as a solo artist and cut two albums for the label. None were successful, though UK soul fans warmed to several tracks thereon. *The 1st Cuba Gooding Album* included a cover of Patti Austin's *We're In Love*, a nice ballad *Where Would I Be Without You* and the lively *Ain't Nothing To It*, for example.

Gooding released a third solo album independently in 1993. Before that, though, in 1980, he returned to The Main Ingredient and made two more albums for RCA. He did not participate in a reunion with his old band in 1999 but he did release a single, *Politics*, in September 2007 and enjoyed a small US Christmas hit in 2012 with *This Christmas*.

Cuba Sr. was a father to movie actor Cuba Gooding Jr. as well as Omar, Tommy and April, whom he had with his wife Shirley Gooding. He married Shirley in 1966 but the pair were divorced after eight years. However, they remarried in 1995, more than 21 years after their initial parting.

## TEMPS BASSIST TURMAN DIES

**Kerry Turman**, a longtime bassist for The Temptations, has died after a performance in Missouri, according to Billboard. He was 59.

The coroner in Cape Girardeau County stated Turman was found dead at a local hotel early on Sunday, April 23, shortly after performing Saturday night in Cape Girardeau. The legendary Motown group is currently touring with the Beach Boys.

An initial autopsy indicated Turman had died of natural causes. He had performed with The Temptations since the 1980s. The group announced Turman's death on its Facebook and Twitter accounts, saying: "The Temptations lost a dear member of our family... Rest In Peace, much love, much respect."



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& from 'Light of the World'



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# GIG GUIDE

## GIG OF THE MONTH: STONE FOUNDATION

MAY	12	LEEDS, WARDROBE
	13	LONDON, ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
	18	NEWCASTLE, CLUNY
	19	EDINBURGH, VOODOO ROOMS
	20	GLASGOW, ADMIRAL & THE HOLD
JUNE	20	CORK, CYPRUS AVENUE
	21	BELFAST, EMPIRE BAR & MUSIC HALL
	22	DUBLIN, WORKMAN'S CLUB



The tie-in with Paul Weller is certainly helping them get across a few genre borders, but, make no mistake, Stone Foundation are a straight ahead soul band with a fine new album to get behind. Filled with great songwriting, *Street Rituals* contains probably their best work to date and although it's unlikely – alright a definite – that either William Bell or Bettye Lavette will show up on the live dates, what you'll get from the two Neils [Sheasby and Jones] on their own is sure to suffice. A band on top form. [CW]

### ALEXANDER O'NEAL

MAY	2	LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE
	3	LONDON, 229
JULY	4	LONDON, GREENWICH MUSIC TIME FESTIVAL

### ATA KAK

APRIL	19	LONDON, JAZZ CAFÉ
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### AVISHAI COHEN

MAY	8	LONDON, RONNIE SCOTT'S
-----	---	------------------------

### BEVERLEY KNIGHT

JUNE	16	NORTHAMPTON, DERNGATE
	17	SOUTHEND, CLIFFS PAVILION
	18	READING, HEXAGON
	20	NOTTINGHAM, THEATRE ROYAL
	21	SOUTHAMPTON, GUILDHALL
	22	CARDIFF, ST. DAVID'S HALL
	24	WOKING, NEW VICTORIA THEATRE
	25	LONDON, THEATRE ROYAL [DRURY LANE]
	26	BIRMINGHAM, SYMPHONY HALL
	28	GLASGOW, ABC
	29	SALFORD, LOWRY

### BILLY OCEAN

APRIL	15	SOUTHAMPTON, MAYFLOWER
	17	SALFORD, THE LOWRY
	18	OXFORD, NEW THEATRE
	20	LONDON, PALLADIUM
	21	SOUTHEND, CLIFFS PAVILION
	23	CARDIFF, ST. DAVID'S HALL
	24	BRIGHTON, DOME
	26	BRISTOL, COLSTON HALL
	27	LEICESTER, DE MONTFORT HALL

### BOOMTOWN FAIR

AUGUST	10-13	WINCHESTER, MATTERLEY ESTATE
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### BOOTS COLLINS

JUNE	23	LONDON, FORUM
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### CHAKA KHAN

JUNE	9/10	WILD LIFE, BRIGHTON CITY AIRPORT
	11	MANCHESTER, PARKLIFE
JULY	5-9	HENLEY FESTIVAL
	6/12	LONDON, INDIGO2

### CHANTAE CANN

APRIL	12	LONDON, RAH RAH ROOM
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### CHRONIXX

MAY	19	LEEDS, ACADEMY 2 & UNDERGROUND
	20	BRISTOL, O2 ACADEMY
	21	MANCHESTER, O2 RITZ
	26	BOURNEMOUTH, O2 ACADEMY
	27	BIRMINGHAM, O2 ACADEMY
	28	LONDON, O2 BRIXTON ACADEMY

### CYMANDE

APRIL	27	LONDON, RONNIE SCOTT'S
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### DAYMÉ AROCENA

APRIL	14	LONDON, JAZZ CAFÉ
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### DREADZONE

MAY	5	LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE
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### DRU HILL/112/GINUWINE

OCTOBER	6	LONDON, INDIGO2
	8	BIRMINGHAM, O2 ACADEMY

### FOURPLAY

JULY	12	LONDON, UNION CHAPEL
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### GEORGE CLINTON/PARLIAMENT/FUNKADELIC

MAY	10	GLASGOW, ABC
	11	LEEDS, O2 ACADEMY
	12	MANCHESTER, O2 RITZ
	13	LONDON, O2 FORUM
	14	FUNK & SOUL WEEKENDER, CAMBER SANDS
	15	BRISTOL, O2 ACADEMY

### HIL ST SOUL

APRIL	27	LONDON, JAZZ CAFÉ
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### IMPRESSIONS

JUNE	13	LONDON, UNION CHAPEL
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### JACKSONS

JULY	6	LONDON, GREENWICH MUSIC TIME FESTIVAL
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### JEFF LORBER FUSION

APRIL	27	LONDON, 229
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### LARRY CARLTON

JULY	11	LONDON, UNION CHAPEL
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### LONDON INT SKA FEST FEAT FREDDIE MCGREGOR/YELLOWMAN/KING JAMMY ETC

APRIL	13-16	VARIOUS VENUES [VISIT LONDONINTERNATIONALSKAFFESTIVAL.CO.UK]
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### LOOSE ENDS

MAY	11	LONDON, 229
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### LOVE SUPREME FESTIVAL FEAT GREGORY PORTER/GEORGE BENSON/CORINNE BAILEY RAE ETC

JUNE	30-JULY 2	GLYNDE PLACE, EAST SUSSEX
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### MANU DIBANGO

MAY	5/6	LONDON, RONNIE SCOTT'S
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### MATTHEW HALSALL/DWIGHT TRIBLE

MAY	1/2	LONDON, RONNIE SCOTT'S
-----	-----	------------------------

### MAVIS STAPLES/JAMES HUNTER 6

JULY	6	LONDON, UNION CHAPEL
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### MAXI JAZZ & THE E-TYPE BOYS

APRIL	22	LONDON, JAZZ CAFÉ
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### MORGAN HERITAGE

MAY	4	OXFORD, O2 ACADEMY
	5	MANCHESTER, O2 RITZ
	6	BIRMINGHAM, O2 ACADEMY
	7	LONDON, O2 FORUM

### NICOLA CONTE PRESENTS STEFANIA DIPIERRO

APRIL	28	LONDON, JAZZ CAFÉ
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### PATTI AUSTIN

MAY	13/14	LONDON, RONNIE SCOTT'S
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### PHARCYDE

JULY	27	LONDON, KOKO
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### PROTOJE

MAY	5	MANCHESTER, GORILLA
	6	SHEFFIELD, O2 ACADEMY 2
	7	GLASGOW, O2 ABC
	8	LEEDS, WARDROBE
	9	BIRMINGHAM, O2 INSTITUTE 2
	10	BRISTOL, O2 ACADEMY
	11	BRIGHTON, CONCORDE 2
	12	LONDON, O2 SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE [12]

### RAUL MIDON

MAY	18	LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE
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### SHALAMAR

APRIL	20	BIRMINGHAM, JAM HOUSE
	21	SEDGEFIELD, HARDWICK HALL
	22	LONDON, CLAPHAM GRAND
	26	BOURNEMOUTH, CANVAS
	28	LIVERPOOL, OLYMPIA
	29	MANCHESTER, ACADEMY
	30	BRISTOL, SWX
MAY	2	PETERBOROUGH, CRESSETT
NOV	2	LONDON, INDIGO2

### SHUGGIE OTIS

MAY	21	BRISTOL, FLEECE
	22	MANCHESTER, RUBY LOUNGE
	23	CAMBRIDGE, JUNCTION
	24	BIRMINGHAM, HARE & HOUNDS
	25	SOUTHEND, CHINNERYS
	26	BRIGHTON, CONCORDE 2
	27	LONDON, UNDER THE BRIDGE

### THE SELECTER/THE BEAT

APRIL	29	LONDON, SHEPHERDS BUSH EMPIRE
OCTOBER	6	LONDON, ROUNDHOUSE



## CHAKA EXTRA DATES

Having sold out one of her London shows in a flash, the legendary **Chaka Khan** has been adding gigs around the country.

At time of writing the schedule now looks like this:

Cardiff, Motorpoint Arena [June 7]; Shoreham By Sea, Wildlife @ Brighton City Airport [9]; Manchester, Parklife @ Heaton Park [10/11]; Newcastle, O2 Academy [12]; London, IndigO2 [July 6/12]; Henley, Festival [July 7]; Bridlington, Spa [10]; and Southend, Cliffs Pavilion [13]

Visit [ents24.co.uk](http://ents24.co.uk) for tickets and to book.



## DAD CONFIRMS WHITNEY & ROBYN

Deceased diva **Whitney Houston** definitely had a long-term lesbian relationship with her assistant **Robyn Crawford** – so now says Crawford's father, Dennis, in an interview with Radar Online.

"I knew 40 years ago. We all knew," says Crawford Snr., now 79. "I saw them together."

Dennis said he saw the two women holding hands and kissing.

"When she told me, there was nothing I could do about it except love her," he added.

Mr. Crawford also claims that Whitney's mother **Cissy** knew about her daughter's relationship, even though she continues publicly to deny that it ever happened.

"She knew about the relationship with my daughter 25 years ago. Why she would deny it, you have to ask her," Dennis said.

Whitney's famous cousin, **Dionne Warwick**, was also reportedly in on the secret.

"Dionne grew up with them, and knew about it too," said Dennis.

Houston's bodyguard also claims Whitney and Robyn shared a romance in the new documentary, *Whitney: Can I Be Me*, saying the two broke up when Whitney's eventual husband **Bobby Brown** entered the picture, leading to the substance abuse spiral that eventually took her life. Brown himself confirmed the rumoured romance in 2016, but said he wished Robyn had remained in Whitney's life to keep her out of trouble.

Whitney and Robyn met as teens in their native East Orange, New Jersey, back in 1979. Robyn was upgraded to the role of Whitney's personal assistant as her career took off in the following decade. Robyn left her job in 2000, and the pair never spoke again, she has claimed.



## UP FOR THE MELTDOWN

The Southbank Centre has announced the final line-up for rapper, producer, director and visual artist **M.I.A.**'s summer **Meltdown Festival**.

M.I.A.'s chosen artists, a mix of emerging and established acts from across the world, include dance music maestros **Soulwax**, South London grime star **Giggs**,

New York's alternative hip-hopper **Princess Nokia**, Swedish rapper Yung Lean, an **Awful Records** night in the Clore Ballroom featuring a performance from Awful Records founder **Father**, French artist **Fakear** and shows by **Young Fathers**, **Crystal Castles**, **Young M.A.**, **Mykki Blanco**, **MHD**, **JD Samson**, **Afrikan Boy**, **I Wayne**, **Dexta Daps** and **Tommy Genesis**.

There'll be free outdoor parties throughout the festival, including an all-day **Rinse FM Block Party**, a **Carnival Party** and a **Meltdown Mela**.

The festival runs from Friday 9–Sunday 18 June.

For more information visit [southbankcentre.co.uk/meltdown](http://southbankcentre.co.uk/meltdown).

# NIKKA & STRINGS

underneath  
and in between

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Featuring Nikka Costa's latest single 'Nothing Compares 2 U'

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# 20

QUESTIONS  
WITH...

# Nikka Costa

## WHAT ARE YOUR FULL NAMES?

Dominica Theresa Winston Costa! [Very Italian! Lol.]

## WHO WOULD PLAY YOU IN THE BIO-PIC OF YOUR LIFE?

When people try to straighten my hair, I literally look like Miss Piggy - so I think she'd be perfect. Now you also know why I never straighten my hair.

## AS A KID, WHO WAS YOUR BIGGEST MUSICAL INSPIRATION?

*Blueberry Hill* was the first song I ever learned and sang for people as a kid, so I'd say Fats Domino... not bad :)

## WHO WOULD YOU REALLY LIKE TO WORK WITH?

Well, I just got to tick one of my bucket list... Queens Of The Stone Age - so fun and a crazy day of insane singing. I love them! Josh Homme is ridiculously talented, so that was a blast! I suppose Stevie Wonder is still on the list for me... and Jack White.

## WHICH SONG DO YOU WISH YOU HAD WRITTEN?

*A Song For You* by Leon Russell.

## FAVOURITE OWN SONG?

*Pebble To A Pearl*... I wrote it as a note to my daughter and really any little girls out there.

## NIKKA AND STRINGS: THE FULFILMENT OF A LONG-TERM ARTISTIC AMBITION?

I suppose it was always buried in my mind to revisit singing with strings so I'd say yes. I'd already made two records with strings with my dad as a child, but to be able to come back to that has been a real treat for me and I'm very proud of it.

## WHICH COVER SCARED YOU THE MOST TO DO?

*Lover You Should've Come Over*. I've always wanted to cover that song but either wasn't ready in some way or it didn't fit on any previous records. Never did it live, but it's been on my list to do forever... such an amazing song! I knew I had to dig deep to even get close to Jeff Buckley's version. He was such a legend.

## WHO COULDN'T YOU HAVE MADE THIS ALBUM WITHOUT?

I'd have to say Jeff Babko, my pianist and arranger. He was so instrumental in these songs coming to life and such a generous musician and friend. Also of course all the fans who donated to my crowd funding endeavour! It was the first time I've ever done that and I really don't think it would've happened without their help. Sounds corny but it's so true! Plus corn is, like, one of my favourite vegetables.

## WE LOVED YOUR FUNNY CROWD FUNDING VIDS: YOU DO COMEDY ACTING?

I never have, really. The closest I came was when I had my YouTube

channel called "Nikka's Box" where we put something up every week for a year. I did skits with people and also just sang songs some weeks. It was super fun. A lot of work, though, and I got to be a totally ridiculous 'me', which is what I'm actually like most of the time. The vids are still up... it's worth checking out!

## WHOSE WAS THE BEST LIVE GIG YOU EVER SAW?

More corn, but truly the last time I saw Frank Sinatra was epic. I saw him with my husband in Sydney, Australia and he heard we were coming so sat us up the front next to his wife Barbara. He was one of the best interpreters of a song to ever live, I believe. You were in his hand the entire time, it was mesmerizing... really something.

## WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ALBUM OF ALL TIME?

Ugh!! Soooo hard! Ugh... (you know that one right?) ;)

## ARETHA OR BEYONCE?

Well, there would be no Beyonce without Aretha, so there's that. Love 'em both, but I'd have to say The Queen of Soul.

## ILLEGAL DOWNLOADS AND STREAMING: THEFT, AN UNAVOIDABLE PAIN OR JUST FACTS OF A MODERN MUSICIAN'S LIFE?

All of the above.

## WHO MAKES YOU LAUGH?

My friends, my husband, my kids, myself. [Ha!] And Kevin Hart.

## EVER BEEN IN FEAR FOR YOUR LIFE?

We got broken into one night and that was pretty scary. Also there have been some fun plane rides I've been on... eek!

## WHAT'S YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD LIKE?

We live in the hills of LA but we can still walk down the road and eat at some great restaurants. We walk my kids to school, which is rare for LA. There are trees everywhere and birds chirping, coyotes at nighthowling. It's like living in the jungle/forest but you can go get a great Margherita around 6pm!

## SUGGEST A BOOK WORTH READING:

*The Life Changing Magic Of Tidying Up* by Marie Kondo.

## AND A MOVIE WORTH SEEING:

*Amelie*.

## WHOSE ALBUM ARE YOU GOING TO BUY NEXT?

Mine! Gotta start the ball rolling. Lol.

*Nikka Costa's new album Nikka & Strings – Underneath and In Between is released by Metropolis Recordings on Friday, June 2.*





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# DEGREE

# OF

# SEPARATION

**Cody Chesnutt's** solution for a world tearing itself apart begins with better communication. Kevin Le Gendre, for one, is listening hard.

With box office receipts of just under \$3m, Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq* was relatively low down the rankings of last year's blockbusters. However, the work did flag up a chilling milestone. The Windy City has more annual murders and acts of violence than Iraq, even though weapons of mass destruction and former western allies gone rogue are nowhere to be seen. Cody Chesnutt became aware of the runaway mortality rate in Barack Obama's birthplace just as Lee was in production for his movie.

"Actually, I was in London when the idea first came to me. I heard about one of the alarming statistics in Chicago, like 40 people had lost their lives in one weekend," he tells me on the phone with a heavy sigh. Chesnutt pauses before picking up the thread. "The song *Bullets In The Streets And Blood* was written probably in 2014 or even 2013, which shows that we've been dealing with these issues for a while, but I was just moved by that particular story, and, you know, just wanted to speak on it. It's hard to wrap your mind around this ongoing senseless violence throughout the world. It's not just in one specific region."

Even on a slightly muffled transatlantic line Chesnutt's speaking voice sounds like a natural complement to his singing voice, but that is to be expected given the frequent use of spoken word in both his recordings and live performances. If past gigs are anything to by, he might well introduce *Bullets In The Streets And Blood* on stage with a lengthy plea for gun control. Then again the new album whence it came, *My Love Divine*





It's hard to wrap your mind  
around this ongoing senseless  
violence throughout the world.

endemic violence in America and *Africa The Future* shifts a continent from the position of colonized victim to that of worldwide savior, then *She Ran Away* is arguably the most thought-provoking song on offer for the way that it addresses a significant theme within an apparently insignificant scenario, an everyday exchange of views.

"It's about two people having a simple conversation about life, discussing the personality and age-range of their children, which is a great thing to build a conversation," Chesnutt explains. "Yeah, *She Ran Away*... with that piece I definitely wanted to inspire both man and woman to have deeper conversations, to elevate the conversations.

"That particular song is touching on how in the conversation the lady feels like she's been attacked because she heard a sense of truth that she didn't really wanna face at that point in time. So she withdrew from the conversation because she didn't wanna face a personal self-assessment. Which tends to happen, sometimes you're not really ready to look yourself in the face, or to be confronted with your own personal truths... we withdraw, run away from it. But the point of the matter is, even though she may have run away, whatever was said was said in *Love*. Whatever we've contributed to a conversation can be done for the betterment of the relationship."

One of the highlights of *Landing On A Hundred* was the superb ballad *What Kind Of Cool Will We Think Of Next?*, in which Chesnutt questioned the erosion of integrity in an image-obsessed world. People were looking at each other and talking but saying less than ever. Is *She Ran Away* loosely connected to it in terms of its central message?

"Yeah, there's a need for better communication... absolutely. Otherwise how else is it gonna move forward or evolve and have healthier forms of communication? Because we'll always communicate one way or another. We're just at a point now in life where the focus should be what is the healthiest way to communicate, and if anything should be the next cool then that should be the next cool. I can't think of anything 'cooler' than a healthier form of communication."

*My Love Divine Degree* is the first Chesnutt album that he has not produced himself. At the desk this time round is Alex 'Twilight Tone' Khan. Both were invited to be part of a Kanye West writing session in Wisconsin, prepping material for a forthcoming Mr. Kardashian opus in early 2015. Among the several select participants Twilight Tone was the one with whom Chesnutt struck a chord in a meet-and-greet setting with less existential angst than *Abigail's Party*. Maybe.

"Different people would pair off in different rooms and Twilight Tone and me just found ourselves in a room exchanging ideas, and the chemistry felt right. We just hit it off, and after that session, because the vibe was so good, we said why not continue to work together?"

Both were true to their word.

"The following week we met in New York, began to work on the tracks he'd already produced, and I actually came up with a really beautiful song that he produced. I wrote the lyric and it just worked," Chesnutt explains excitedly.

"I told him I was about to start my project and he just jumped into it. It was the perfect combination because he has a deep sense of musical history and he's a DJ, so he has a great sense of groove. I wanted a certain type of pocket and he could feel it naturally so it worked out well."

While Chesnutt's songs maintain the standard of his previous efforts, Twilight Tone has helmed the material with an impressive sensitivity. Some of the pieces are familiarly stark and stripped down, some are more layered: the whole modus operandi was 'open ended' creativity.

"With this record I wanted to combine the spirit of both my first record and my second. This was the first time I'd actually had the opportunity to have my own set-up in here, actually have a recording environment where I could just experiment, play instruments and do whatever. The last record... I was with a band and that was really cool, but now I had the opportunity to just sit again alone and document whatever I was feeling. The rawness and the spontaneity... I wanted that to be part of it. It was Twilight Tone who brought a balance to the production."

Cody's album *My Love Divine Degree* is released June 8 on *One little Indian*.

*Degree*, is as topical as his previous offerings. In fact, the Atlanta-born, New York-based singer-guitarist-songwriter has, since his 2002 breakout single *The Seed*, defined himself as an exponent of home truths that may exercise hearts and minds in a modern world, especially if you soldier in Chicago.

While claiming soul legends Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder as guiding lights, Chesnutt also leans towards the grittier edges of the blues and folk-rock. His sprawling debut *The Headphone Masterpiece*, revealed a lyricist keen to examine post-millennial human nature, and that was duly confirmed by its successor 2012's *Landing On A Hundred*. The decade-long hiatus between the two raised eyebrows and the overriding subtext was that Chesnutt's maverick spirit would not play the music industry game and do product for product's sake. His desire to spend time with his young family also came into play, and changed his outlook.

"You're blessed to see a child come into this world, and I believe in my heart that your understanding of the value of life shifts," he observes.

*My Love Divine Degree* sees Chesnutt return to the fray in the aftermath of Trump and Black Lives Matter, Putin and Assad, social media and anti-social behaviour. For a songwriter there is much raw material and Chesnutt feels compelled to chew on the issues of the day.

"Yeah, that's really what it is. The main point of the record for me - for humanity to really take a look at itself at this point."

If the aforementioned *Bullets In The Streets And Blood* addresses



# MO' JUICE

## Mr. Drew has a woman's bottom.



**Mary J Blige** has been going through some testing times of late. Not only did her ex-husband of 12 years turn out not to be the love of her lifetime, he's apparently also been trying to make off with some of her loot through the courts. The R&B legend, known for filling her work with her pain, claims that she had to go back to the creative drawing board with her new *Strength Of A Woman* album, following the collapse of her marriage. And she's happily opted to use the LP to touch upon the myriad of issues her situation has conjured up. *Thick Of It*, for example, explores the introspection process she went through when things began to fall apart. *U + Me* is classic, honest stripped-down MJB, with production and additional credits claimed by Brandon Hodge [who was behind Usher's *No Limit*]. *Set Me Free* puts all of the messy details, including cheating, disrespect and financial claims, out on public view, as she promises, "There's a special place in hell for you/You gon' pay for all of what you did to me." Alongside the airing of her resentment comes the defiance. Her Kanye-assisted single *Love Yourself* is a message to herself [as well

as others] not to neglect number one, while *Indestructible* is a call to show strength in adversity. Mary assembles an all-star team of DJ Khaled, Missy Elliott, and Migos man Quavo for the middle finger up *Glow Up*. The problem with this album is that Mary has been unable to bring much mood balance to proceedings because it's still so all consuming for her. The result is a body of work fuelled almost exclusively with pain, pity and self-reflection – so it's hard just to play it through to pass the time.

**Adrian Marcel** is the protégé of soul superstar Raphael Saadiq, and has given us three mixtapes in his short career so far. Like his mentor, he's also from Oakland California and now he drops his debut record *GMFU* [Got Me F%&ed Up]. Unlike Saadiq, Marcel is lyrically hardcore. Specifically, he's from the same musical stock of Trey Songz and Bryson Tiller - foul mouthed but with a voice that's sweet rather than street. It's his smooth singing style that makes rowdy songs like the Lil Boosie- and Too Short-assisted *Mobbin'* a bit of a random affair. For the most part, though, this album is a really mellow affair with a soothing summertime vibe. He's at his most capable when he's in seduction mode: on *NoLimit* he sings the praises of his woman to get into her knickers. He's less subtle, yet equally impatient about getting his rocks off on *Beatitup*. Meanwhile he anticipates an evening of freaky extra curricular activity on *Immabehome*. It's not all panty yanking though – *NoMind*, one of the best cuts on the album, finds him gunning for people hating on his relationship, while he uses *Blind* to take aim at people around him who have changed up since his career took off. Marcel sounds like just another voice to me – something like a Ro James-lite, if you will – and ultimately this album is rather forgettable, boasting neither any obvious radio hit nor any real cohesiveness as a body of work. He really

needs something more substantial to take him to the next level.

LA group The Internet released one of my favourite albums of recent times in the shape of 2015's Grammy-nominated *Ego Trippin*. This year, two members of the wonderfully talented collective have gone on to deliver solo projects with very different vibes. First came the debut LP from Syd, a straight R&B release which landed early this year - somewhat of a disappointment overall, but it had its moments. The second member to step up is musician and board-fiddler **Steve Lacy**, who thus far has had limited opportunities to make his mark as a vocalist with his crew. His debut project, *Steve Lacy's Demo EP*, is all very groove-driven, as you'd imagine, and since he's only 18 years old it's a remarkably mature piece of work. He shows himself as a man keen on live instrumentation, as proven by the guitar-flushed *Dark Red*. At his best he's all about the romance, such as on *Thangs*, where he promises: "Baby we can do all the things you want to do." Perhaps the best moment is saved until the end on the track *Some* where he puts in his bid to become his crush's number one pick. OK, this EP does feel very much like a jamming session, but that's perfectly OK given the experimental concept of the project. It's the potential here that is most impressive.

**Mack Wilds** was introduced to the R&B world through warm and inoffensive love songs, cocooned in well-worn mid-tempo hip-hop samples. That was on his first album, *New York: A Love Story*. Though this approach didn't lead to much success, off the back of that the actor-turned-singer took the opportunity to take on some freelance work with the likes of Method Man, Mobb Deep, Fabolous and Maino. Basically, he has been gradually feeling his way into things and his follow-up album, *Shots Fired*, sees him continuing faithfully on this musical





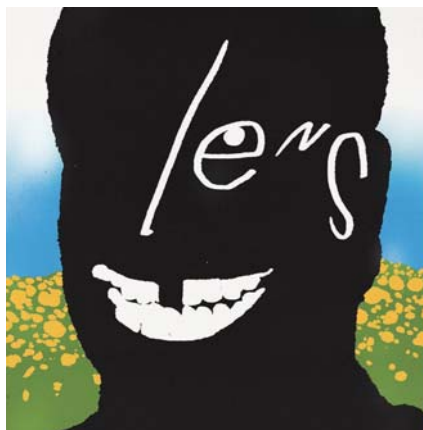
MILA J DOPAMINE '17

path. One major difference is the lack of obvious samples, which makes it easier to concentrate on the lyrical content. Topic-wise, this time around, he's taken a nasty-yet-romantic approach to proceedings. The best example of this is on *Senses*, featuring Tink, where he opts for forthright assertions: "Bend it over, back it up like it's a toe truck..." *Stingy*, uses a looped vocal sample of the classic Ginuwine ballad, but is equally as direct. Then there's *Stolen Gold* on which he threatens to move in on another guy's girl. Even though it's only 37 minutes long, this is quite a hard album to listen to without mentally checking out after a short time; it suffers from a lack of lyrical maturity and it does sound dated at times. He's an OK singer – Trey Songz is a solid reference point – but there's still some development to go. Nothing to get too excited about quite yet.

It feels like only five minutes ago that I was reviewing **Mila J's** second career EP, *Milaulongtime*. That was a solid affair and now, out of nowhere, she's gone ahead and dropped her debut album, *Dopamine*. It's as raw and sexy as we've become used to from the stunning 30-something. She sticks solidly to her smoky and sensual style, regardless of whether she's firing shots at a former lover, or feenin' for some good lovin'. And she's never interested in sugar-coating the depth of her feelings. It's a formula that clearly makes her stand out from anything currently out there. On the very first track on here, *No Fux*, she lashes out in bitterness over her fella's extracurricular activities, against the backdrop of light and airy piano production. But this album isn't a resentful affair by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, most of the time she's happy to expose her vulnerable and softer side: on *Transform U*, for example, she commits to turning her bad boy good, while she takes the opportunity to lower her guard to put cards on the table for *Longway* and *I Do Love You*. A nice album without being a showstopper.

## WIRED

**Frank Ocean**, a notoriously cryptic artist who releases music on a whim and went four years between his last albums, has recently gone into overdrive, releasing new material in droves. His radio show on Beats1 seems to have been the catalyst for this recent generous output. Following *Chanel* and *Biking* is *Lens*, which has a remix from Travis Scott – could this all be adding up to a new album?

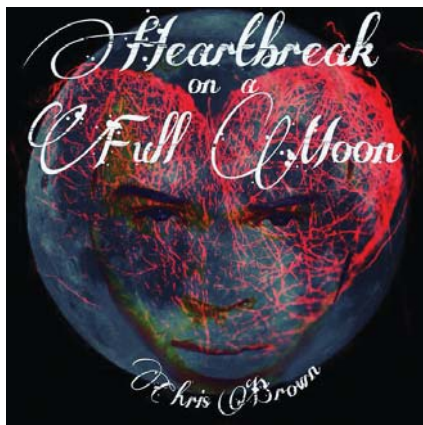


**Young Thug**, one of the most prominent melodic rappers of his generation has decided to go full-on "singing," going by his recent Tweets. Recently he suggested that an album of "easy, breezy, beautiful" songs will be on the way and that king of the genre blends, Drake, will be the executive producer behind the project. The pair most recently collaborated on the track *Sacrifices* on Drizzy's *More Life* release.

**Chris Brown** has confirmed June as the intended month of release for his new album *Heartbreak On A Full Moon*, which will be accompanied by the simultaneous release of his documentary *Welcome to My Life*. His eighth studio album has been preceded by a number of singles, most recently, the sultry *Privacy* – and you can catch the highly racy video for that one online right now.

*Love Galore* is the first single off emerging New Jersey artist **SZA's** very first album *CRTL*, which should surface at some point this summer on Top Dawg Records. Travis Scott drops the bars on this one, which is the follow up to her examination of self-esteem, *Drew Barrymore*.

OVO duo **Majid Jordan** are ready to hit the comeback trail, three years after the release of their solid first album. At the end of April, the Toronto twosome teased a new single by the name of *Phases* on social media. The track documents the personal growth and evolution of the guys from a young age and is a hi-tempo comeback with that traditional, smoothed out vibe they have become known for. Apparently, this is the title track from a new project that should be with us before the year is out.



# R&B CHART TOP 25

- HUMBLE**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- THAT'S WHAT I LIKE**  
BRUNO MARS
- DNA**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- MASK OFF**  
FUTURE
- iSPY**  
KYLE FEAT LIL YACHTY
- XO TOUR Liif3**  
LIL UZI VERT
- LOYALTY**  
KENDRICK LAMAR FEAT RIHANNA
- CONGRATULATIONS**  
POST MALONE FEAT QUAVO
- ELEMENT**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- LOVE**  
KENDRICK LAMAR FEAT ZACARI
- TUNNEL VISION**  
KODAK BLACK
- I FEEL IT COMING**  
THE WEEKND FEAT DAFT PUNK
- LOCATION**  
KHALID
- BAD AND BOUJEE**  
MIGOS FEATURING LIL UZI VERT
- PASSIONFRUIT**  
DRAKE
- T-SHIRT**  
MIGOS
- BOUNCE BACK**  
BIG SEAN
- YAH**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- XXX**  
KENDRICK LAMAR FEAT U2
- SWANG**  
RAE SREMMURD
- FEEL**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- PRIDE**  
KENDRICK LAMAR
- ROLEX**  
AYO & TEO
- 24K MAGIC**  
BRUNO MARS
- LUST**  
KENDRICK LAMAR





# STRINGS ATTACHED

IZZI DUNN'S FIRST SOLO ALBUM IN SIX YEARS IS A WELCOME ADDITION TO HER LIFE AS A DEMON INSTRUMENTALIST.

"My new bitch yellow/She blow that dick like a cello."

So says American rapper Lil Yachty on his recent track *Peek A Boo*, revealing not only a massive amount of misogynistic thicktwatishness on his part, but in one throwaway phrase highlighting a wider phenomenon that singer, songwriter and [most pertinently] cellist Izzi Dunn has been dealing with for a decade and more: the supplanting of instrumental awareness by technological shortcut.

"That's the shit that really upsets me - people out there thinking you blow a cello!"

Izzi is laughing while she reacts to Yachty's quote, but she is far from amused.

"No, I'm *not* happy about people not knowing what a real cello sounds like and thinking that you blow it. It's even scarier for the classical world. I mean, it's still always respected, but trying to keep this love and the skill going and alive... if we don't have popular music representing it we'll be in trouble."

Better not get onto the thorny subject of synthetic strings, then. Too late.

"Ha! Well, as you can imagine, with the amount of stuff like that we are subjected to, I've had to get my head around that one too. And, to be fair, the quality of synthesized strings has improved a lot since the early days. I suppose people have used them so much that the memory of the real thing has faded as more and more people get used to the synthetic version. Most young people these days probably don't know what a real cello sounds like! I do worry sometimes. We must not let it disappear."

One hundred per cent. Anyway, no danger of that on Izzi's superb new album, *Recycle Love*, coming mid next month, her first solo project for six years. Naturally it's full of real strings – in one of her other professional guises she's a founder member [since 2005] of Demon Strings, a sextet featuring Stella Page, Antonia Pagulatos, Kotono Sato, Alice Pratley and Oli Langford that plays for and behind many a pop star in both studio and on stage – it has horns [actually The Haggis Horns, another bunch she's happily toured with], and it's very funky. The latter she puts down, in part, to her co-producer, Dego, of 4hero fame: ["He is Mr. Syncopated," she says. "His knowledge of funk is amazing."] It's properly arranged, orchestral funk too – quite a feat for any indie project. Another facet of Izzi's reaction to what she's hearing around her these days.

"There's a lot more production-led music now," she explains, "and I tend to move away from that minimal, synthetic sound, where there are very few instruments being played - in the conventional sense, I mean. We're almost at a place where, apart from the voice, everything else you hear now comes from a computer-based instrument. It's an electronic world. But then... well, I think back to when I was lucky enough to sit down with Bobby Womack in a hotel on tour and he picks up his guitar and layers it with another guy who's doing the same thing... *that* interaction is what I have always really loved."

Womack? Sure: Izzi played on three songs on the great man's final album, the Albarn/Russell produced *The Bravest Man In The Universe*, and prior to that with Gorillaz on the tour during which Bobby made his well received cameo appearances.

Naturally, at this juncture I find myself unable to resist temptation and tell Izzi that most soul fans – well me, anyway - didn't exactly love that last album of Womack's, mainly due to its production. She is kind enough to acknowledge an old fart's point.

"If you're involved in his music so much, the new sound would have been a shock. And, as I said, a lot of new music is so minimal. I did like the fact that his voice was at the forefront of the sound. As a string person, of course I *love* the old stuff – obviously *Across 110<sup>th</sup> Street*, which has a great string arrangement. But I can understand why some people struggled with it, yeah."

I tend to move away from that minimal, synthetic sound, where there are very few instruments being played...

Izzi and her string-based mates have played with all sorts in the early years of this century, including The Good, The Bad & The Queen, Blur, Mark Ronson, Jamie T and this month's cover star Cody Chesnutt. It provides a relatively stable platform from which her occasional forays as an out-front artist can spring. But how does she time these? And wouldn't it make more sense to stick to the behind-the-scenes stuff and avoid the extra hassle of the solo releases?

"That's a really good question. I was thinking about this the other day, in fact. Thing is, I have so much music that I listen to, get *immersed* in, that it has to find its way out eventually. I think I'd probably burst if it didn't come out somewhere, in some way. The music I play strings on is very diverse and it all filters through me into my own music.

"And, you're right, I do get to see all the things an artist goes through from my position in the background, of course I do - but it doesn't put me off. I *love* making my own albums."

No desire to chase the major deal, though?

"No, we've never gone for that. The landscape of putting music out has changed so much, of course. At the time I started, being an indie artist made me something of an outsider, but now so many artists work this way that I feel like one of many. As I've got older I have given thought to whether or not I should be doing it. But I do still love expressing myself and there are no rules for what I do. I feel I can dip in and out of it because of the other stuff. And perhaps in future I'll write more for other people – I'd be happy expressing myself in that way, I'm sure."

What about the planning stage? Does she just accumulate material until there's enough for an album? Or is it a matter of clearing the diary and working on it during a set period?

"I'm not always crazy busy so there is downtime to be found if you want it. I suppose it's taken two years from the time we started. It normally fits around my other work - not so much a grand plan, but I did involve somebody else in the process this time – Dego – so that brings a certain amount of structure along with it. And I do still have other thoughts about expanding what I do: I'd like to go beyond string arrangements and get into soundtracks, for example, if I could."

One of the best aspects of *Recycle Love*, along with Izzi's expressive lead vocals and the high standard of musicianship, is her songwriting. She's unafraid to mix it up in the lyrics department, ranging from personal relationship tales to observations on societal issues. The video to the funky *Our Time*, for example – see online - was shot during last year's Million Mask March through London. Turns out Izzi does a fair few marches: she went on the anti-Iraq war protest and also the anti-military-action-in-Syria march too.

"The thing about the Million Mask March was we could film without exposing anyone else to the pressure of being filmed – 'cause they all had masks on. People did ask us what we were doing and we also got to talk to people that were down there – a lot of them seemed to be doing it after their day-job and by using the masks they could demonstrate without their bosses knowing what they doing. Because I've been on a few marches it wasn't an unusual environment for me. And the song we felt was a kind of protest, so it felt like the right place for it.

"As for lyrics, for me, as it's gone along, lyrics have become more and more important. It's nice to encounter people who appreciate lyrics - they are definitely the artists I look up to. It's a real skill to be able to observe things in such a way that it makes a point but doesn't preach too much to people about your own personal view. Your aim is to raise questions and make people think. I'm still learning that. People like Marvin and Bob Marley, they take that snapshot in time, but it resonates across the years. And they also wrote amazing love songs too. It lets you see what the artist was thinking at that moment when they made the record. I hope that's what my album tries to achieve."



# SOULSIDES

Chris Wells remembers everything... selectively.



Don't know why it's stuck in the mind after all these years – naturally, one always likes to bear a decent a grudge - but I still recall an on-air conversation back in 1971 between some fleeting pop star nobody and Radio 1 DJ Emperor Rosko on the latter's Roundtable Friday review show, during which said nomark claimed to "quite like" Al Green's sound but "wouldn't want to hear a whole album like it." [Yeah, I know: knob.] Interesting, then, how we're well into the next century and people are still lining up to record down at Willie Mitchell's Royal Studios and with as many of the original Hi guys as survive.

Anyway, it's now **Robert Cray**'s turn to hook into the considerable vibe provided by Charles Hodges [keys], Leroy Hodges [bass], Archie Archer [keys] and album producer Steve Jordan drums/guitar, for his new album, titled simply *Robert Cray & Hi Rhythm*. The Royal Horns and Strings are there too, of course: Jack Hale [trombone], Lannie McMillan [tenor sax], Jim Spake [baritone] and Mark Franklin [trumpet] on the former, Lester Snell directing the latter. It's a perfect fit. The drum sound is still steam-driven velvet, the organ still purrs, the guitar lines still flow like mercury; all Cray has to do is choose a few appropriate covers, throw in the odd composition of his own, and off they go, everyone doing just what's required. It's all good and you'll happily play it from start to finish, but right now the opening cover of Bill Withers' *The Same Love That Made Me Laugh*, the wistful Cray-penned ballad *The Way We Are* and a two-part take on Lowman Pauling's *I'm With You*, featuring Masqueraders Harold Thomas and Robert Wrightsil on backgrounds, are depressing the shiver button. Label is Jay-Vee.

And then, of course, there's one of the Hi originals: Mr. **Don Bryant**. For a while now Don's been caring for his wife of 43 years Ann Peebles, who suffered a stroke back in 2012, but he's cut this new set, *Don't Give Up On Love*, in her honour and with her blessing. Naturally he's also used some of the familiar Hi team – he's got Howard Grimes on drums and Scott Bomar on bass – though the music was laid at Electraphonic rather than Royal studio. The sound is still very close to what he used to do back in the day, of course: at 74 the man sounds in remarkably good nick vocally, his age and maturity lending a convincingly world-weary air to the songs that require it. There's a nice cover of Ann's *It Was Jealously*, a lovely gospelly swayer in *How Do I Get There* that he absolutely kills and a confidently strutting title track. Don penned seven of the 10 songs too. What a guy.

In a similar southern vein is **Bruce Mississippi Johnson**'s *The Deal Baby*, an album that walks the line between soul and blues with a swagger all of its own. Never heard of him? Me neither. OK, well... actually born in Mississippi, Bruce grew up submerged in the music of his Grandfather's church, devoured a musical diet of Al Green, Jackie Wilson [a cousin, apparently], Lou Rawls and Gil Scott-Heron, went into the marines – he's a big fellow at 6ft 4ins – and then spent some quality time on the Parisian jazz scene. Subsequently he provided vocals for Big Joe Turner's Blues Caravan and it was while playing around the world in BJT's band that Bruce started to collaborate with the keyboard player, Johan Dalgaard, on the songs that would eventually become this album. He lives in London these days, but you wouldn't know it from the swampy sound of *The Deal Baby*, 'cause it sounds about as mid-seventies and southern as bluesy-soul gets, the man's pained baritone bringing an air of hurtfulness to just about

everything he does. Think, say, early-ish period Latimore for a sound guide, though maybe he doesn't quite have Benny's distinctive vocal tone. Still good though: as you'll hear for yourself on self-pitying earners like *No Good*, or guitar-heavy story tunes like *Neighbour Next Door*, Johnson's is a voice you could listen to for hours.

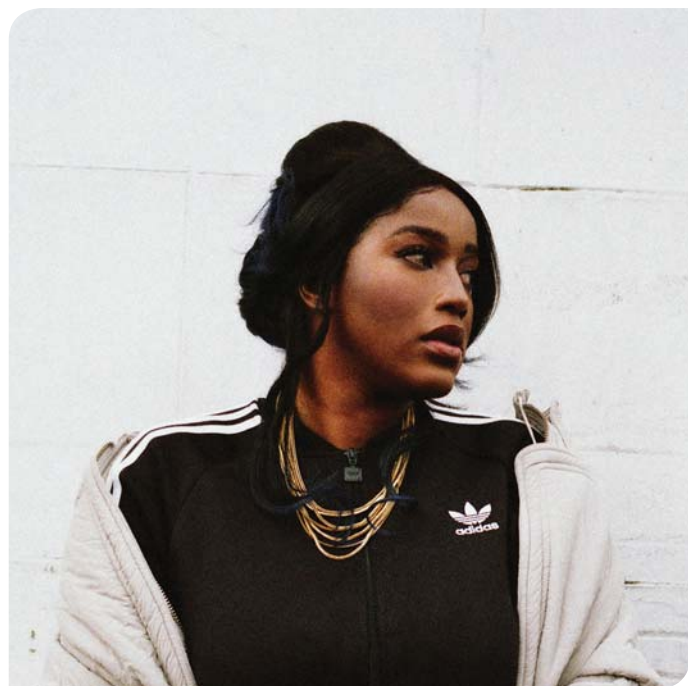
Utterly and completely different to any of the foregoing is **Moonchild**'s third album *Voyager*. We're over in featherlight, jazzy soul territory here – think KING, Corinne Bailey Rae, perhaps some of Jarrod Lawson's more ethereal moments – where vocalist Amber Navran and her two buddies Max Bryk and Andris Mattson chase butterfly melodies over softly pulsing rhythms, intergalactic synth washes, floaty, hide 'n' seek flutes and warmly rasping horn riffs. For this one they locked themselves away in a Californian countryside studio and the intense time together has somehow made it feel more personal; it's definitely their best work yet. I'd recommend sticking the thing on late at night and just drifting away, as you enjoy picking out personal favourites: is it the cool, D'Angelo-ish *Think Back* or maybe the funky jam *Show You The Way* this time around? Hypnotic, compelling and out on Tru Thoughts from May 25.

In a vaguely related area is the admirable **Julia Biel**, whose next album is almost done and ready. For now we have the single *Wasting Breath*, a great little mid-tempo track that sets Jules' unmistakable vocal against a chinking guitar figure and atmospheric strings. It's a joint production by Idris Rahman and Ms. B, and a portent for something special, I reckon.

Another one-off is **Melisa Whiskey** whose *Sweetest Cake* is a sexy slice of funk with an old-school vibe and a sense of fun. Actually, she'd sound great singing over a Daptone-sourced groove, imo, but this is fine too: Mary-meets-Beyonce, but I'm liking Melisa's tone better than either. Watch out for her *Moon & The Sky* EP, coming soon.

Liking **Tom Glide**'s *Divas Got Soul* album, which features such as **Tracy Hamlin, Hil St. Soul, Kenya, Stephanie Cooke, Nia Simmons, Funmilayo Ngozi, S.E.L., Chidi, Terisa Griffin, Candace Woodson and Gina Carey**. It's all pretty happy-go-lucky stuff, mostly upbeat, and no trouble at all to get into on a sunny afternoon. Stand-outs? Maybe the funky opener *Strong Feelings* starring Ms Hamlin, where the groove and the horns create the kind of party atmosphere Russ Abbot hasn't even dreamed about, and perhaps *True Fantasy* featuring Kenya, which has an odd Maze-like swing about it. Consistently decent, though.

Enjoying **Dara Tucker**'s *Oklahoma Rain* too, the vocalist and songwriter's fourth album on which she has been finding her personal



feet again after the death in 2014 of both of her parents. The latter events inform the beautifully lilting title song as well as the tune that directly follows it, *Moving On*, both of which - like much of the album, as it goes - sit on the borders, stylistically, of jazz, soul and occasionally that folksy-sometimes-country Americana vibe. Fans of, say, Lizz Wright or even Alicia Olatuja and Somi are bound to enjoy a lot of what's going on here. The funky *Radio* has already been getting some action as a promo cut, while the softly-swaying waltz ballad *I Fall* sees Dara teaming up for a duet with Kevin Whalum. It does tend towards MOR/Disney during the final tracks, but it's very nicely crafted, nonetheless.



A new guy to look out for is Londoner **Decosta Boyce**. His debut album, *Electrick Soul*, won't be with us officially until August, but there's sure to be plenty of takers for his hip Sly, Isleys, Prince and D'Angelo influenced style. From support slots for the like of Roachford, Mica Paris, Bev Knight and Texas, not to mention singing and playing as part of Heatwave and in the aforesaid Bev's band, Boyce has subsequently built his own garden studio and invited an impressive list of top UK session mates to contribute to his album - such as Keeling Lee [guitar], Sam Odiwe [bass], Winston Marche [drums], Ayo Oyerinde [keys] plus vocalists Steph Oyerinde and Cee Cee Stalin. The guy obviously digs the crossover soul-pop-funk-rock sound of the seventies: its happy energy and free flowing vibe is everywhere, tracks like the guitar focused *Don't Hurt My Feelings* coming on like first-album-Van Hunt while *I'd Do Anything* has a Sly groove, *Good Music* a Prince feel and the closer *Do It For You* is all about the Isleys. Top new talent.

Finally and way, waaaay more jazzy [in the traditional sense] is the debut set from 25-year-old **Jazzmeia Horn** - she being the 2015 winner of the Thelonius Monk International Jazz Musician competition - entitled *A Social Call*. There are bridges to the soul world in covers of Norman Whitfield's *I'm Going Down* [heard by Jazzmeia as a Mary J tune, of course] and Bell/Creed's *People Make The World Go Round*, but neither is really taken from the soul angle, so don't expect it. Truth is, I just love her sound and what she does - the Sarah Vaughan and Rachelle Ferrell influences are obvious and, indeed, she's quoted in the press biog of being an addict to the latter's *I Forgive You* from *Individuality* [which makes her a woman of immense taste and discernment]. It's basically an album of covers, the absolute standout for me being an eight-minute version of Jimmie Rowles' *The Peacocks* [lyrics by Norma Winstone] - I just never wanted it to end. The 13-minute medley of *Afro Blue* and *Wade In The Water* intercut with Ms Horn's own poem *Eye See You* is pretty extraordinary and Ferrell-ian too. A massive new name on the rise.



# SWEET TOP RHYTHMS 25

**1. LEELA JAMES**  
DID IT FOR LOVE [SHESANGZ MUSIC]

**2. KENI STEVENS**  
OUT OF THE BLUE [SOUL CHILLI]

**3. S.E.L. FT MICHELLE CHIAVARINI**  
FLOWERED TEARS [QUANTIZE]

**4. MF ROBOTS**  
COME ON WITH THE GOOD THING [KOBALT]

**5. HANNAH WHITE**  
ROMA [DSG]

**6. BRIT FUNK PROJECT**  
BLESS THE FUNK [PROMO]

**7. KINDRED THE FAMILY SOUL**  
WELCOME TO MY WORLD - BOOGIE BACK MIX [KINDRED]

**8. TUXEDO**  
TUXEDO 2 [STONES THROW]

**9. KINGDON**  
HERE COMES THE SUNSHINE [DSG]

**10. CHINA MOSES**  
NIGHTINTALES [EDEL]

**11. WILL DOWNBEG**  
YOUR SMILE - BOOGIE BACK MIX [SHANACHIE]

**12. MICHON YOUNG**  
LOVE, LIFE, EXPERIENCES [ATLANTA]

**13. CHARLIE WILSON**  
IN IT TO WIN IT [RCA]

**14. KIM TIBBS**  
DRIFTING/FOR [ORCHID]

**15. TOM GLIDE**  
DIVAS GOT SOUL [TGEE]

**16. JIMMY GALLAGHER**  
SOUL CITY THEME/PHILLY NIGHTS [DSG]

**17. JAMIROQUAI**  
AUTOMATION [VIRGIN]

**18. MARC STAGGERS**  
KEEP THOSE FIRES BURNING [DSG]

**19. TY CAUSEY**  
TYANGLES [TYVONN MUSIC]

**20. MAYSA**  
LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD [SHANACHIE]

**21. ASHANTI MUNIR**  
SO SMOOTH - COLIN WATSON REMIX [CAE]

**22. MATHER**  
SOME LIKE IT HOT [DSG]

**23. VARIOUS**  
SOUL LOUNGE 2017 [DOME]

**24. ERIC ROBERSON**  
EARTH [DOME]

**25. OCTOBER LONDON**  
COLOR BLIND [LOVE CADILLAC]





# RINSE. RECYCLE... REMIX

**The Mongrels** have had another go at their last album and it now sounds very different. Kid Acne explains it all to Sunil Chauhan.

**“You used to get tons, didn’t you?” pontificates Kid Acne, frontman of Sheffield-based duo Mongrels, on the phone during a trip to London. We’re talking about remixes, abundant during the reign of the 12” single but less common in the streaming era.**

“You probably didn’t need all that,” he laughs.

Multiple remixes aren’t as inevitable as they were in the 1990s, but Kid Acne hasn’t lost his interest in seeing how a song can acquire a new life in the hands of someone new.

A companion piece to last year’s album *Attack The Monolith* - the first time the group translated what Kid Acne calls “our very lo-fi old school DIY hip-hop” to a proper album - they’ve returned with *Attack The Megalith*, an eight-track EP of reworks from that debut. Calling on producers like former Attica Blues member Charlie Dark, Hashfinger, and King Kashmere, Kid Acne is still surprised at what they all came up with.

“I was thinking, maybe we’ll get two or three remixes together, just for the same of continuing the album theme, but they were so strong. I thought a few more, five or six, would be a good marker. And then it got to seven or eight! But once we got to the halfway point, the other guys said, ‘OK, we’ve got something to respond to’. So with the Juga Naut one, he heard what Hashfinger and Sam Zircon had done and thought, ‘OK, I’m going to do *this*!’”

More than the novelty of hearing his songs turn unrecognisable, Kid also likes the way the remix process works. Some rappers might not take to having someone else take apart what they spent hours and hours on, but Kid likes hearing his



“A lot of my lyrics, more than I’d like to admit, are references to ‘80s and ‘90s TV...”

songs completely done over, without his input.

“If you’re working from scratch and asking someone to come up with some beats, there’s almost too much choice. Sometimes that’s liberating; other times it’s paralysing. But for this, I wasn’t saying, ‘How about we put the hook at the beginning?’ or ‘How about we extend the intro?’ They were pretty much finished. So I think it’s a refreshing process.”

*Attack The Megalith* also acts as a bit of a marker between projects. Though Acne released three albums from 2001 to 2007, starting with *Rap Traffic* on his own Invisible Spies label, the last being *Romance Ain’t Dead* on Lex, he then took a break from recording, focusing more on art projects [he runs a gallery and printing studio with his girlfriend]. When he started to think about making music again around 2012 it was after revisiting old sessions he started in the late ‘90s [the first Mongrels singles were in 1997 and 2001]. Started with DJ-producer Benjamin when the pair were teenagers, going through old and unreleased tracks seemed an easier, comfortable way to get back into rapping.

“When I came back to it, it was The Mongrels’ unreleased material that got me excited again. There were all these disparate elements of songs that had just lain dormant.”

Since then, the pair have released three singles and an EP - *In the Pop Wilderness* - with Manchester crew Burgundy Blood, a release that might also have been titled *In The Rap Wilderness*, thanks to the distance Acne tends to keep from the most popular end of the genre. But it’s mainly about being forgotten by people he used to work with.

“There’s a vocal sample from the Bee Gees talking about when things are going well, people are patting you on the back, but as soon as you have a hard time, you’re just left in the pop wilderness. I think we’ve all been through the mill with the music industry. When you’re younger, it can be quite daunting and overwhelming. You’re constantly questioning your own ideas, wondering if it’s good or not. It’s good to be older and realise no one cares.”

There’s more awareness of rap north of the M25 these days, mainly

thanks to the internet, but if you ask Kid Acne whether he’s self-conscious about being a northern MC, it’s a non-issue. He’s only made aware of it when he wanders down south.

“I’m probably the wrong person to ask cos I listen to a lot of northern MCs,” he says. “But it’s funny: whenever I’m down here, that does always come up. Charlie Dark was like, ‘It’s really funny having that northern accent on that kind of beat’, but it wouldn’t have occurred to me, cos that’s just what I sound like.”

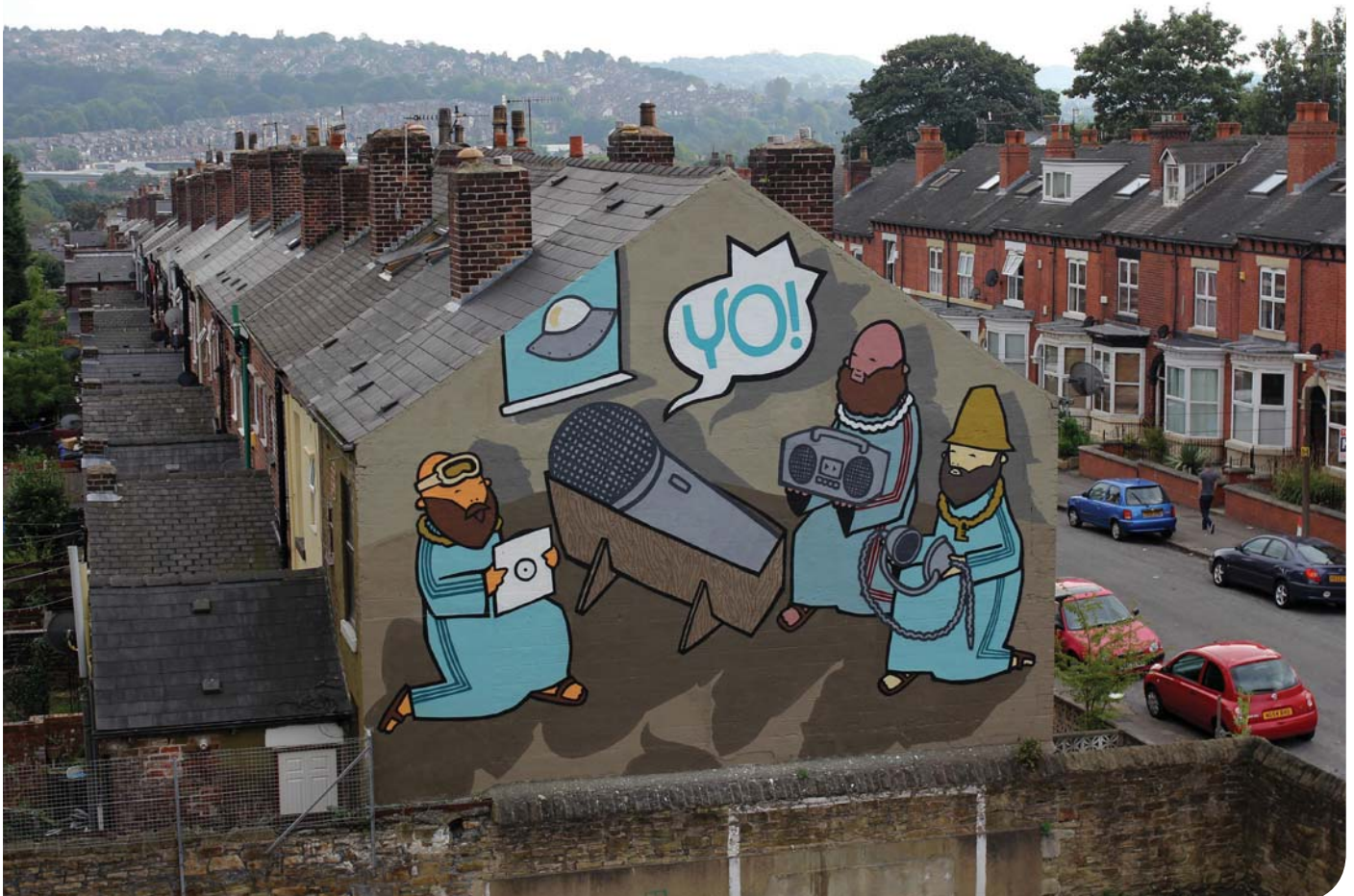
He namechecks artists like Lee Scott [“he’s smashing it”], the Bad Taste Cru, Juga Naut and Cappo as proof of the range of northern hip-hop, but doesn’t see why it should be a talking point that his Sheffield accent sits on a record with a New Yorker like New Kingdom’s Sebash, who features on several Mongrels songs.

“Sebash is amazing,” says Kid. “He’s a very on-in-a-million type of guy; very positive and welcoming and he was there from the off. We met through the guy from Wordsound, Skitz Fernando. We just became drinking partners whenever I went to New York. And that led to Sebash being on 90% of the Mongrels material.”

Talk of New Kingdom – one of his favourites next to the Beastie Boys - leads to the 1990s in general, a period that he can’t help referencing in his lyrics. He hasn’t owned a TV for a decade, but he hasn’t forgotten the programmes he watched when he did have one.

“A lot of my lyrics, more than I’d like to admit, are references to ‘80s and ‘90s TV,” he laughs. “That was my whole world - watching TV and listening to rap records. That tends to be where my mind goes. I haven’t had a telly for 10 years so I’d be hard pressed to find many up to date references. Without being too nostalgic, that tends to suit the mood of the lyrics. Even though I’m delivering it in the mind of an adult, it’s still puerile. That teenage version of me, what fell in love with music, that’s still in there.”

Not wanting to wish another lengthy break on the group, you hope it stays there.





# BEATS, RHYMES

# & LIFE

by  
**Sunil Chauhan**

## ALBUMS



### HOMEBOY SANDMAN VEINS

[STONES THROW]

Homeboy Sandman releases too much to hit it out of the park every time, but the prolific Queens rapper doesn't necessarily need to. Sandman might not be the most reliable provider of provocatively conservative gems like *America The Beautiful*, but he is dependable for a kind of high-quality, no-frills boom-bap classicism. So if *Veins* isn't quite on par with last year's *Kindness For Weakness*, this fourth album for Stones Throw is still strong, if not likely to endear the unconverted. Sandman knows who he's making albums for, and doesn't care if anyone else likes them or not. So even if there's something unorthodox about *Veins*, in its own stubborn way it's also kind of rebellious, refusing to bend for anyone outside the stalwart audience for early-mid-'90s-rooted New York rap. Beginning with opener *Between The Clouds*, this concise, 10-track project doesn't shift radically from its jazz-tinged production, nor does it really deviate from Sandman's get-in-get-out structure — each song fades out around the three-minute mark, making *Veins* seem like an all-too-easy effort for its maker. *The presence of Aesop Rock on *Lice and Lice Two* seems to energise Sandman — you wish there were maybe more guests — but he finds sharper inspiration on *Underground Dreams*, where he raps around questions of fame on an underground level. It's a close relation to Jon Wayne's recent album. "I'm gonna make a record everybody thinks is classic/ Not just a couple people/ Hot women are going to throw themselves at me/ Anything I post is going to get mad likes and shares," he raps, half craving the fame, half disenchanted at what you're supposed to want as a rapper. It's the highlight of an album that gets by on Sandman's sincerity, thoughtfulness and dependability, but doesn't try hard enough. Then again, Sandman's the kind of rapper who doesn't believe in trying too hard — he just records and releases, and if it hits the spot, great. If it doesn't, well there's always next time to try again.*

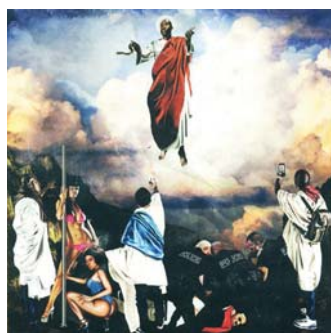
★★★



### KENDRICK LAMAR DAMN.

[INTERSCOPE]

*DAMN.* might be Kendrick Lamar's best album. It doesn't have the political pedigree of *To Pimp A Butterfly* but it shows laurel-resting is a long way off. It's easier to engage with than the tightly conceptualised *TPAB*, sounding like it had a looser gestation process, but whether it's the expensively engineered production, the dense embarrassment of rich flows, or the detailed storytelling, *DAMN* is an album you want to unravel. Incredibly, Lamar's gotten better as a rapper. That youthful agility is still there, but there's a newfound force on show. He's as much Ice Cube as he is Del the Funky Homosapien.



The construction has always been immaculate, but now it's easier to feel, as well as admire. The only album he could have made after *TPAB*, it's Kendrick refusing the role of a rapper for think-pieces, making something that's for rap fans first, dabblers second. It's also more straightforwardly enjoyable. It still has its deeper philosophical, religious, spiritual riddles, with plenty of references to being an Israelite. But while there's plenty to unpack — arguably more, as it's more thickly woven — it all comes together on *Duckworth*, the story of how TDE founder Anthony Top Dawg Tiffith nearly killed Lamar's father whilst working at KFC. "Whoever thought the greatest rapper would be from coincidence?/ Because if Anthony killed Ducky, Top Dawg could be servin' life/ While I grew up without a father and die in a gunfight." It's the kind of story you can't quite believe, a grand ol' sittin'-round-the-fire yarn, but its detail and clarity make it stranger than fiction — and it's a song that brings Lamar closer to the world of Colson Whitehead and Paul Beatty. *DAMN.* indeed.

★★★★

### FREDDIE GIBBS YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE

[ESGN]

Such is Gibbs' voice that he is able to get away with much that a less gravelly rapper might not be so lucky with. Smart at sounding beaten yet triumphant, Gibbs has carved out a place for himself as the ultimate survivalist rapper. Despite this lucky asset, his well-worn larynx has often, curiously, lacked gravitas. He's strained to sound like one of rap's great survivors, but on *You Only Live Twice*, he finally seems to have located that elusive sense of authenticity. After a 2014 shooting in Brooklyn that left two members of his entourage wounded and a sexual assault charge that hung over him last year, Gibbs seems less wounded, more righteously galvanised. His crew survived, and the court acquitted him of rape, but Gibbs now has the necessary public scandal to fuel his Tupac aspirations. The cover of *You Only Live Twice* doesn't hoist Gibbs up on a Makaveli crucifix, but does find him painted him as a Christ-like figure. You presume this is the point he's been waiting for, and it pays off. Whose sins he wants to sacrifice himself for, we're never told, but he's believably haunted, pondering about what he has and hasn't accomplished, with convincing existential torment. He's reflective, proclaiming that "the future started yesterday," sticking faithfully to his hard-won, trouble-I've-seen grizzled themes. But on *YOL2*, he never dips in energy: recent events in his personal life seems to have motivated a steelier sense of purpose that gives the album a new defiance and confidence. He's no longer just the wounded warrior, but one with a new intensity. *You Only Live Twice* might be a transitional EP, but it feels like a turning point, one where he stops being the favourite grizzled gangsta rapper of Madlib fans, and crosses over.

★★★ 1/2



## RAEKWON

### THE WILD [ICE H2O]

If recent wars of words between Raekwon and other Wu-Tang Clan members left you feeling unsure about the Chef's place in Staten Island's finest, *The Wild* makes it clearer – it is the first of his solo albums to feature no other Clansmen. It's a dramatic shift from the collective form that most Wu albums take, but eight years since his *Only Built For Cuban Linx* sequel, this latest is out to show not only that Raekwon still has fire in his belly, but that he can do it alone. It makes for a focused set, one that does away with the surplus cameos of *Fly International Luxurious Art*, with a more intimate focus. *Marvin* – like Ghostface's eulogies for history's soul men, distils *Marvin Gaye's* biography to three verses, with Cee-Lo drafted in for the hook. Raekwon is equally reflective elsewhere – on *Visiting Hour*, he raps: "That used to be me, young, ruthless, and carefree/ Until I seen the bigger picture, shifted, my way of thinking/ That 25 to life is real, so is the casket once it close on you." It's a turnaround for one of Mafiosos rap's best spokespeople, even if he's swapped one archetype for another – this time that of the wisened, older boss [though advice for the young 'uns isn't something the Wu have ever shied away from]. The production this time round also suits the reflective angle, with its emphasis on warmer soul samples, and when Raekwon finds the right beat, *The Wild* finds its momentum. All too often, however, the beats aren't up to the mark, lacking style. All the good will in the world for one of the Wu's best can't quite disguise that while Rza's modern tastes might not mirror Raekwon's, he could still benefit from hiring a replacement. *The Wild* shows a rapper who hasn't forgotten what makes him great, namely that twisting-maze-like flow, but still hasn't figured out how to enhance it either.

★★★

## FILM

### KICKS

#### DIR: JUSTIN TIPPING

Cast: Christopher Meyer, Jahking Guillory and Christopher Jordan Wallace

On an inner city coming-of-age drama about friendship, masculinity and adolescent rites of passage, first-time director Justin Tipping shows a promising visual sense, albeit one that relies too readily on rap video-borrowed slo-mo montages of cars and girls, voiceover, and a few too many generous close-ups of trainers. But it has an indie lyricism to it, which coupled with a taste for grit, marks Tipping out as one to watch. Imagine *Boyz n the Hood* in the hands of Sofia Coppola and you're half-way there.

Co-scripted by Tipping and Josh Beirne-Golden, *Kicks* is anchored by

Brandon [Guillory], a 14-year-old from a poor Bay Area family who's small for his age – a recurring dig from other characters – but fast on his feet. His recitations of Biggie lyrics, dreamily recited to highlight a fantasy of hyper-masculinity that his shy personality prevents him from becoming, are laced with a recurring motif of an astronaut. Early on in the film, Brandon says even his dreams are about being chased; he just wants to escape everything by flying out into space.

One of a trio of friends – the others are ladies' man Rico [Christopher Meyer] and chubby sidekick archetype Albert [Christopher Jordan Wallace, son of one Notorious BIG] – Brandon's withdrawn personality helps him detach from reality, though when he is robbed and beaten by a group of bigger kids for his red and black Air Jordans – the film's brutal tipping point – Guillory amply displays a newfound rage for vengeance beneath his introverted demeanor.

Pinning does a good job of conveying the fetishisation of exorbitantly priced trainers in poorer neighbourhoods, even if he doesn't really show how sports companies exploit it. The shoes though are mere incitement for bigger battles around masculinity and sensitive egos in brittle environments.

Like Barry Jenkins, Pinning is interested in showing how ideas around manhood are brought into being and carried through generations. Scenes between Brandon and Marlon [a terrific Mahershala Ali] in particular show an even-handed ebb and flow of machismo and tenderness, and as the violence starts to mount, *Kicks* resembles a morality tale on the physical and psychological costs of hasty actions.

With title cards quoting Kendrick Lamar, Tupac, Too \$hort and Mac Dre between scenes, *Kicks'* rap credentials are clear, but they aren't intrinsic to the narrative. Similarly, the shifts from gritty adventure to comedic asides aren't always smooth. But the questioning of the cost retribution can enact on those it draws into its maelstrom make *Kicks* worth a look, as does the sun-kissed cinematography from Michael Ragen. If Pinning can strain a little less hard for artiness and give his characters stronger definition, he'll have a promising career ahead.

★★★



# IT'S ON

**DJ Jazzy Jeff** and the **Fresh Prince** never quite made it as hitmakers outside the US, save for seasonal smash *Summertime*, but as in *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, he's still making time for old friend Jazz, this time to reunite and take the old group on tour again. The beloved pair have recently announced two European dates: in August, they're in Croatia for MTV's Summerblast Festival and then closer to home, they are joining the 2017 Livewire Festival. The new dates could signify more to come, but the decision will likely rest with Smith.

**Jeezy** has been handed a wrongful death lawsuit after the family of a dead concert promoter repeated witness testimony that a man with a close resemblance to the Atlanta rapper was responsible for the murder. Jeezy hasn't been charged, but the claim has regained momentum after a new witness came forward. The case involves the death of promoter **Eric Johnson** who was shot five times at a concert featuring Jeezy in California in 2014. Jeezy's legal consultants have so far refused to comment.

*Friday After Next* might be 15 years old, but it looks like **Ice Cube** is dusting off his flannel shirt and signed up for a new instalment of the stoner comedy. **John Witherspoon**, who memorably played Cube's father in the Friday films, recently told Orlando radio station Power 95.3 FM that a new *Friday* movie had just been green lighted. More details have yet to be announced – it's not yet certain that **Chris Tucker** is on board.

In an anecdote that was made for a new edition of the *Ego Trip Big Book of Racism*, **David Cho**, the former publisher of Grantland, recently revealed that **Kanye West** wanted a common thread linking the songs on *Watch The Throne*. According to Cho, West wanted every song title to feature the N-word in the title but **Jay-Z** was less enamoured with the idea, relenting only for *Niggas In Paris*. Cho said Kanye's reason behind the idea was, "We're gonna put the N-word in every single title of this album so everyone has to say it and they have to confront it."

Grime's biggest stars are campaigning for Labour in the upcoming election. Explicitly encouraging fans to register and vote for **Jeremy Corbyn**, **JME** gave registration instructions, while **AJ Tracey** and **Novelist** – who joined the Labour Party last June – have all tweeted in support of Corbyn. It's a change of affairs from **Dizzee Rascal** rapping that he was "a problem for Anthony Blair" back in 2003. Addressing voter apathy and Labour party support, **Akala** tweeted: "I am not and probably never will be a Labour supporter. However I will be voting for the first time and I'll be voting for @jeremycorbyn." **Stormzy** meanwhile cited Corbyn's history of anti-apartheid campaigning. "I saw some sick picture of him from back in the day when he was campaigning about anti-apartheid and I thought, 'Yeah, I like your energy... I feel like he gets what the ethnic minorities are going through and the homeless and the working class.'"





# FILTER OFF

**James Brandon Lewis Trio** are bringing it live, direct and untamed. Kevin Le Gendre is ready.

Lo-fi is a term associated first and foremost with indie label popular music, but jazz also has a history of sounding rough and rugged as well as arty and articulate. The work of American tenor saxophonist James Brandon Lewis is a case in point. In the past few years he has recorded a gorgeous gospel-infused work, *Divine Travels*, but the latest offering by his trio, *No Filter*, is, by his own admission, *gritty and raw*.

"We all play pretty aggressive," Lewis told me in March to hearty nods of approval from his bandmates, drummer Warren G. 'Trae' Crudup III and bass guitarist Luke Stewart. We were sitting in the basement of Ronnie Scott's in London where the trio was about to unveil music from the aforesaid album at a graveyard shift that nonetheless drew a livewire audience plugged right into the trio's electric firestorm.

It proved one of the gigs of the year so far for its ferociously high energy playing as well as rhythmic flights of fancy that blurred the lines between free improv, funk, hip-hop and punk. The music had an uncut and uncompromising quality that fully justifies the album title as well as its artwork, and the overall vibe and mindset of the players.

"We just wanted to let it all out, and we did," says Lewis. "I don't have any restrictions. That's why I call it *No Filter*. You know, it's like the CD cover, that's a selfie. The album was recorded in one day, mixed and mastered the next day - that's like 48 hours - and then released in a month. It's like 'no filter, no extra,' just as is, just put it out there."

A native of Buffalo, New York, Lewis, who has the kind of tough, dry tenor sound that hits especially hard in a chordless setting, has seen his star steadily rise in the last decade. Educated at the renowned Howard University as well as the equally prestigious CalArts College he was tutored by Charlie Haden, among others, and has shown himself to be an artist open of mind as well as blessed of technique. He was actually performing music to a puppet show in Brooklyn when he caught the attention of the adventurous indie label, BNS Sessions.

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“ “

## We all play pretty aggressive.

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Lewis met Washington-born Stewart at a gig in New York in 2012, later saw a clip of Crudup on Stewart's webpage, and envisaged the three of them gelling as a unit. As Lewis himself states, funk is one of the many common vocabularies in the group, but as important as the strength and the suppleness of the groove may be in JBL trio, and it moves swiftly from banging backbeat to whirling rubato, there is also a shared vision, "like a community thing... no egos, it's all about the music."

Crudup is keen to highlight the egalitarian, democratic nature of the trio, which he also attributes to their deep roots in one of the first places in the history of America where people of colour were able to congregate, elevate and enjoy a degree of autonomy: the church.

"For me it's more like a conversation amongst each other," says Crudup. "James might play a rhythmic, melodic phrase on his horn, let me piggyback off that. We're throwing musical ideas at each other... or Luke might do some riff on his bass, or sometimes Luke has pedals where he loops a rhythm and we'll just vibe off of that.

"So I'm just going off the conversation and putting my interpretation or expression on the painting that we're all making together. I grew up in church, and in church when the spirit comes through you're in it," he exclaims. "You're present in that moment when the spirit is coming through and that high energy is coming through people are dancing and shouting. That's where I'm coming from and I'm just naturally being who I am. That's my foundation; we each have foundations in church, so that rhythm and that spiritual connection is right there.

Lewis concurs without hesitation, his voice rising a touch for emphasis.

"You can find people jumping pews. It's not a game, it's also human... being angry is just as valid as being happy, though being angry people... associate that with a negative connotation when really is just a part of human existence. It just all relates. I didn't have a choice in the matter of going to church. I was born, and then, bam, we were going to church. It's a good place to go to, it's free."

That sense of liberty and possibility has only served the naturally experimental leanings of the players, and one of the key moments of the London gig saw Lewis evoke the sound of a turntable scratch through the imaginative manipulation of his horn, creating the illusion of machine-based noise through man-made means.

"There are certain things I'd be doing on the sax and I feel like that sounds a little electronic, but I don't have no equipment. I'm just trying to hear it."

Distortion of tone and timbre is also high on the agenda of Luke Stewart, though he uses a range of state of the art gizmos and effects to achieve his goal.

"Sometimes I like the approach of playing anti-bass. I like to make the bass sound like *not a bass*," he says. "I'm very much a fan of more aggressive sounding bass tones, especially on bass guitar and also with bass guitar it allows me to utilise pedals.

"With the looper you can use that to loop, but also to create a murky bed, a nice murky foundation for which you can just be free over that.

"I'm also influenced by who I consider to be modern masters of electronic music, from Aphex Twin and Squarepusher to Flying Lotus and beyond," he continues. "I'm a fan of people who can take a manufactured electronic device and do something that you're not supposed to do with it. So I use a delay pedal, loop pedal and pitch shifter. I really like to look for different things I can do in terms of, like, almost layering in real time, sounds as well as melodies. Also I feel like I've devised a way to make the bass sound like Madlib bass sounds. I like the challenge of making it not sound like a traditional bass."

These acts of subversion are entirely in keeping with the youthful exuberance of the JBL trio, a band that has energy to burn on stage. Yet Crudup, Stewart and Lewis also have an impressive maturity if not focused wisdom about them, suggesting that they are Internet savvy 30-somethings who have understood that the age of access to unlimited data means precious little without a real understanding of all the brave souls who have helped to shape history in the first place. With little prompting Lewis waxes lyrical about how much he has been able to learn by working with several revered veteran musicians.

"When I was doing *Divine Travels* with Gerald Cleaver and William Parker, it was phenomenal," he says, with a broad smile. "I give props and respect to the elders. The same thing with Jamaladeen [Tacuma] and Rudy Royston, because I am an old soul... I love hanging out with older people."

## UK JAZZ CHART TOP 10

**1. JAMES BRANDON LEWIS TRIO**  
NO FILTER [BNS]

**2. TRIO 3**  
VISITING TEXTURE [INTAKT]

**3. NICHOLAS PAYTON**  
AFRO-CARBBEAN MIXTAPE [PAYTONE]

**4. IVO PERELMAN-MATTHEW SHIPP**  
THE ART OF PERELMAN-SHIPP VOLUME 2 TARVOS [LEO]

**5. COOPER-MOORE & MAD KING EDMUND**  
THE REVEREND EDDIE BONES [GEARBOX]

**6. TOMASZ STANKO**  
DECEMBER AVENUE [ECM]

**7. NICOLE MITCHELL**  
MANDORLA AWAKENING II EMERGING WORLDS [FPE]

**8. STEVE LEHMAN**  
SELEBEYONE [PI]

**9. CAMERON GRAVES**  
PLANETARY PRINCE [MACK AVENUE]

**10. VARIOUS**  
SPIRITUAL JAZZ 7: ISLAM [JAZZMAN]



# From The *Smooth* To The *Groove*

by  
LAURENCE PRANGELL



version of *People Make The World Go Round*. A thought provoking spoken word intro segues into a spiritual jazz workout from the brass and rhythm sections before she delivers a scintillating vocal over a driving rhythm. Jazzmeia cites Rachele Ferrell as her mentor and there are certain similarities in approach. This will undoubtedly be amongst the Jazz albums of the year. Sensational!

## MARVIN PARKS MARVIN PARKS [SCHEMA CD/LP]

Marvin Parks came to our attention on Nicole Conte's *Free Souls* album. Conte produces Parks' debut self-titled album and what a lovely album it is. Parks' rich deep voice is perfectly accompanied by the cream of Italian jazz musicians on a selection of standards and a few original compositions. The up-tempo *Charade*, *Brother Where Are You* and *Awakening* contrast with the modal *Other African Blues* and mid-tempo *Nature Boy* and *Sea And Sand* to make a thoroughly enjoyable, accessible and relaxing album to raise your spirits.

## SMOOTH-JAZZ

**SPECIAL EFX  
DEEP AS THE NIGHT [TRIPPIN' RHYTHM CD]**  
Chieli Minucci's Special EFX have been recording quality smooth-jazz/fusion since 1984. Fans of the group should enjoy their new set, the band's first in four years. Minucci's guitar is prominent on relaxed smooth grooves such as the title track and *Night Shift*. The atmospheric *You Were The One* and the lovely, lilting *Never Ending Love* warrant particular attention. The standard of the melodies is especially strong, as evidenced by *Another Day Another Smile* and *Lavish*. There is a Celtic influence on several. This wholly instrumental album will appeal to fans of the genre primarily and those of Special EFX specifically.

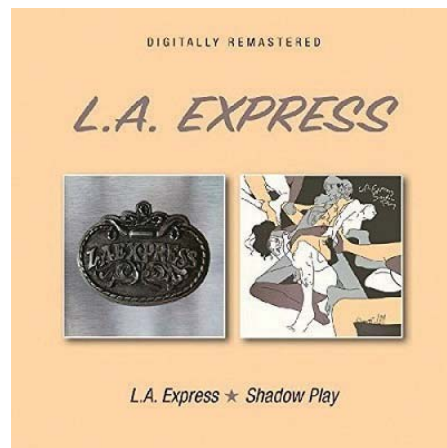
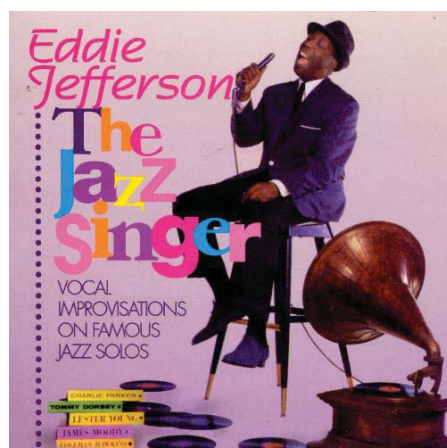
**KAYLA WATERS  
APOGEE [TRIPPIN' RHYTHM CD]**  
Classically trained pianist Kayla Waters is the daughter of highly acclaimed saxophonist Kim. Her debut is a fine set of smooth-jazz grooves. Her piano playing is crisp and melodious and the album contains some excellent smooth grooves. Tunes like *I Am* and *Apogee* are infectious, silky and immaculately played. The floating *Sunkissed* has a summer vibe, whilst *Freedom March* has a driving up-beat sound. She sings on several tunes too, such as *Heaven Is Here* and *The Dream*. Fortunately she possesses a nice voice that has a relaxed beauty to it. She wrote all the tunes too and co-produced this strong debut with her father. Recommended.

**The last three years have been fantastic years for jazz releases: the music is definitely at a high spot just now. In fact, 2017 might actually become the best yet, as we are only in May and we have at least five or six strong contenders for 'Jazz Album Of The Year' already. This month we have another one from a new artist that you will definitely want to check out, who has blown me away.**

## NEW JAZZ

### JAZZMEIA HORN A SOCIAL CALL [PRESTIGE CD]

Every few years a new female Jazz singer emerges and blows us away with her sassiness. This year we welcome Jazzmeia Horn who makes her debut for Prestige with a fine selection of standards and classic tracks with a social message, all backed by a great band. *Up Above My Head* and the title track really swing, the 10min+ medley contains a unique cover of *Afro Blue* joined to *Wade In The Water* by her own dramatic *Eye See You*. She really lets rip on a jazzed-up version of Norman Whitfield's *I'm Going Down*. The killer cut though is Jazzmeia's



## REISSUES

### L.A. EXPRESS

#### L.A. EXPRESS/SHADOW PLAY [BGO CD]

L.A. Express were a jazz-fusion group that backed Joni Mitchell and Tom Scott, an original member who had left the band [as had Larry Carlton and Joe Sample of The Crusaders], by the time these two albums were recorded. There is a strong Crusaders feel to them. Mainstay of the group was Victor Feldman. Primarily instrumental, there are some great fusion tunes, like *Chariot Race*, *Nordic Woods* and *Midnite Flite*. On the more commercial front check the happy go lucky *Dance The Night Away* or the lovely mellow *Velvet Lady* stand out.

### SHAKATAK

#### MANIC AND COOL [SECRET CD]

This reissue of Shakatak's 1988 set had been much sought-after on CD. It mixes their Brit jazz-funk roots, early smooth-jazz and a little bit of '80s Soul. Jill Saward's vocals are featured heavily and tracks such as *Slow Dancing*, the duet *Stop and Time Of My Life* are amongst her strongest performances. Also check the hit *Mr. Manic And Sister Cool*. There are several instrumentals, with *Walk That Walk* hitting a pleasant groove. The production is of its time.

### VARIOUS

#### SPIRITUAL JAZZ 7: MODAL, ESOTERIC, & PROGRESSIVE JAZZ INSPIRED BY ISLAM 1957 TO 1988 [Jazzman CD/LP]

The seventh volume in this ever inspiring series, this collection offers up 12 tracks – in the main by US artists – who have drawn inspiration from Islam. The results are at times entrancing and at others uplifting. *Humility In The Light Of The Creator* by Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre is a brooding, atmosphere-filled piece of spiritual jazz; the multi-styled *Africanos Latinos* from Kahil El Zabar's Ritual Trio is exactly that; while the big, heavy vibe of *Kalahari Suite* by Emmanuel Abdul Rahim is full of energy. *Ah Ya Zen* by Abdelrahama Elkhatib is a funk-edged, organ led groover and The Lightmen's *All Praises To Allah [Parts 1 & 2]* is killer slab of high octane rhythmic jazz from Texas. A really strong collection once again.

## INNER CITY LABEL - PART 2

A couple of months ago I reviewed some of the classic jazz-fusion albums reissued from the excellent Inner City label. Here are a few more:

### EDDIE JEFFERSON

#### JAZZ SINGER CD

Eddie Jefferson is amongst the most distinctive jazz vocalists and one of, if not, the innovator of jazz vocalese – the style of adding lyrics to an instrumental track. *Jazz Singer* was recorded in 1965, but was released on Inner City Records in 1976. Something of a classic, it features a barnstorming take on Miles' *So What* [a jazz-dance anthem], plus a host of interpretations of jazz standards/classics. Highlights are the lovely version of *Body And Soul*, *Moody's Mood For Love* and *It's Only A Paper Moon*. Those that enjoyed the Soul Brother Mark Murphy Anthology should enjoy *Jazz Singer*.

### EDDIE JEFFERSON

#### THE MAIN MAN CD

*The Main Man* dates from 1977 and is a blast. The versions of Donald Byrd's *Jeannine* and Eddie Harris' *Freedom Jazz Dance* put you in jazz-dance heaven. Jefferson is in full flight and the arrangements, especially of the horns, are blistering. *Body And Soul* and *Moody's Mood For Love* are re-worked. Other classics include *Summertime* and *Night Train*. Also, give *Bennie's From Heaven* a listen, a standard given a quizzical but jazzy take and title. Another Jefferson classic.

### RAY MANTILLA

#### MANTILLA CD

From 1978, *Mantilla* is a lost Latin-jazz-fusion gem of the highest quality. Percussionist Ray Mantilla is amongst the finest Latin drummers and his intense yet subtle playing is all over this recording. Duke Ellington's *Caravan* is re-worked as *Caravanesse* – an eight-minute opus that features magnificent flute work from Jeremy Steig. *Mariposa 78* is a fast and furious Latin workout, as is the compelling *Chango Llama*. The album features drummer Joe Chambers, and guitarist Carl Ratzer [wow!!!] as well as Steig and Eddie Gomez. Simply brilliant.

### JASMINE

#### TROPICAL BREEZE CD

Jasmine were a short lived Latin-jazz-fusion

group that recorded this one album for Inner City. The album is of note as Cassandra Wilson was in the band [her debut recording?] and she sings on most of the tracks. Band leader Ron Cuccia translates the Brazilian lyrics into English for her, including the Airto/Azymuth hit *Partido Alto [Everything I Do]*, which is outstanding, as is Milton Nascimento's *Cravo E Canela [Dream Street]*. Edu Lobo's *Tropical Breeze* and Nascimento's beautiful *Dream Dancer* are wonderful Brazilian-flavoured jazz-funk. Wilson's voice at this time [1980] possesses a more delicate vibe than her later husky tone. Great album.

### URSZULA DUDZIAK

#### FUTURE TALK CD

Polish singer Urszula Dudziak released *Future Talk* on Inner City in 1979. On it she displays her incredible five-octave range using a wordless semi-scat style – not unlike a female Bobby McFerrin. But the music is much funkier, with Marcus Miller on bass and Buddy Williams in the drum seat. Tracks like *Cats*, *Kasia's Dance* and *Shenkansen* typify the album. *Roxanna* is a grittier tune with Miller's thumbed bass to the fore and *Quiet Afternoon* adds a jazzier tinge. Amazing.

## JAZZ RELEASES FOR RECORD STORE DAY

There were many limited edition vinyl jazz releases for record Store Day on April 22. There were unreleased albums from **Thelonious Monk**, **Bill Evans** and **Dexter Gordon**, a rare '50s **Art Pepper Quartet**, a 3LP set from legendary bassist **Jaco Pastorius**, an under-appreciated early '70s **Sun Ra** album, Brazilian gems from **Arthur Verocai** and **Marcus Valle** and **Santana's** Woodstock set. In addition **The Headhunters'** much-sampled *God Make Me Funky* got a first time 45 reissue and there was an interesting 6 x 7" single box set from the **Ethiopiques** series featuring jazz and funk from Ethiopia.

See [www.soulbrother.com](http://www.soulbrother.com) for the full list of jazz releases. Whilst some of these titles are already long gone, grab what you can whilst they are still available.

Laurence Prangell is a partner at Soul Brother Records and can be heard on Solar Radio Sunday mornings 10-12.





# The Boom, Yeah!

**John Masouri** prepares you for this year's **Boomtown Festival**, now established as the country's number one reggae-influenced weekend away.

Boomtown is coming! Rural Hampshire is the place to be from August 10-13 for **Boomtown Chapter 9 – Behind The Mask**. There's no longer any need to cast envious eyes across the Channel towards Summer Jam, Garance and Rototum, or mourn the lack of a major UK festival specialising in bass culture music. Boomtown has come a long way since its inception, and this year's model promises to be brighter and bolder than ever.

"Escape to a world filled with unity, creativity and freedom," is a great sales pitch but that's honestly how it's been year after year - ever since the mysterious - and possibly mythical - Nickolas Boom had his Road To Damascus moment and started building an alternative city that has got bigger and more inventive each time autumn comes round and a few fields in southern England get a radical makeover.

The word "city" is valid incidentally, because Boomtown 2017 has its own Town Centre and an impressive 27 main stages, spread across 11 themed districts - each with a vibrancy and character of its own. The set designs are key to Boomtown's success, and have an imaginative, comic book sense of grandeur that can leave you breathless at times.

A Boomtown graphic novel can't be far off but, in the end, it's the line-ups that determine whether people will pay the entry fee or not.

Reggae music has been a feature of Boomtown since the beginning, when a crowd of 400 packed into a tent painted like a lion's head. Patrons entered through its open mouth and the main reggae arena's been called "The Lion's Den" ever since. **Capleton** and **Barrington Levy** were among the earliest headliners but attendances have skyrocketed since then and every big name reggae artist wants to play there. There's another well-balanced line-up this year, one that encompasses all the major strands of reggae culture, from ska, through roots, dub, sound-system, dancehall and fusion. Established acts like **Toots And The Maytals** and **Ziggy Marley** share the bill with the up-and-coming, and it's pleasing to see so many of Jamaica's new wave roots artists on show, led by **Protoje**, **Raging Fyah**, **Jah 9**, **Jesse Royal** and **Iba Mahr**. The people behind Boomtown are clearly fans of the music, as this quote from one of the organisers attests.

"I've seen the reggae scene struggle for years and to bring these artists over... a lot of them weren't getting booked any more in the UK, and it was really tough for me as a reggae lover to see it. It's just makes me really proud of what we've created. I don't think there's anything else like it in the world."

This year's line-up will be performing in an arena that's been described as "the heart of the festival" by another of Boomtown's inner circle.

"It was always vibes and always rammed," she says. "The temple idea was always there as well, because the idea was so that the audience became immersed in the music."

At the Trench Town district's heart is a giant temple that looks as if it was designed by aliens, perhaps collaborating with ancient Aztecs. Again, the sales pitch speaks nothing but the truth.

"The Temple of Trench Town dominates the skyline with an inferno of flames, lasers and cascading waterfalls set against the ultimate soundtrack of reggae, dancehall, dub and roots."

**Toots And The Maytals** and **Gentleman's Dub Club** have played there several times before. Toots has made a triumphant return to touring after a fairly lengthy absence, whilst GDC hail from Leeds and have a dynamic stage act. Both are festival favourites. However this will be **Ziggy Marley's** first time at Boomtown, following memorable appearances by younger brothers Stephen, Damian and Julian Marley in previous years. Ziggy has recently followed the Grammy-winning *Fly Rasta* with a new album simply called *Ziggy Marley* that leans more towards message songs. In a recent phone conversation he spoke with enthusiasm about the festival scene and reggae music's ever-expanding popularity. As the world becomes a more unstable and scary place, the lyrics of many reggae songs offer hope that change is possible. This may sound naïve, but at least it's not defeatist. Ziggy laughs at the mention of all this, but not in a dismissive way.

"For me, this is a new form of revolution," he says. "Back in my father's time, in the sixties and seventies, revolution was a social movement. It was a whole political experience involving warfare. This is how I see it. Things were more physical. But my interpretation now is of revolution as a spiritual force. To me, this is a next kind of revolution – a revolution of the individual human being within themselves. Human beings don't change much, which is why we need spiritual change. This is where the real revolution has to take place, and that's what most of my thoughts are about these days."

It's a sentiment shared by Jamaican young bloods like **Protoje**, who's played in The Lion's Den before. His **In.Digg.Nation** band stars Danny "Firehouse" Dennis – bassist on so many reggae hits from the nineties and beyond – but it's the *Ancient Future* sing-jay's engaging brand of Rasta truth-telling that's the main attraction. He's among a handful of contemporary Jamaican artists – **Jesse Royal** included – who are expanding the boundaries of today's reggae music, even whilst safeguarding its legacy. **Jah 9** is another – an exciting female talent with a soul-searching, jazzy delivery, and whose lyrics are infused with new age poetry. She's unique, whilst **Raging Fyah** are the best self-contained reggae band since Morgan Heritage, and just as versatile. Their last album was Grammy nominated. **Lutan Fyah** is another roots warrior from Jamaica who'll feel at home performing for a Boomtown audience. Solo Banton says that reggae music in The Lion's Den attracts "a calm, loving and spiritually awakened crowd," although they'll be energised and inspired after watching Australian singer **Nattali Rize**, who's spent a lot of time in Jamaica in recent years.

"For me, it's not just about playing music that sounds nice," she says. "It's not just for fun. It's about being part of a movement, shifting perception and helping to amplify pathways to higher consciousness. Music is a powerful force toward this realisation when used in such a way."

Her latest album *Rebel Frequency* is a tour-de-force. In her hands, reggae music becomes a weapon of peace and enlightenment. She's a freedom fighter who honed her skills on the streets of Byron Bay and then as lead singer with Blue King Brown. Recent collaborations with **Julian Marley**, **Kabaka Pyramid**, **Jah 9** and **The Congos** have enhanced her reputation considerably, but the passion and conviction's been there since the start. The influence of Rastafari is writ large at any reggae festival, as symbolised by Nattali's distinctive bleach blonde dreadlocks.

"According to my father, everyone is Rasta," says Ziggy. "Because this is the thing with Rasta. It's not like other, so-called religions where you have to convert, or something like that. Rasta means the children of the earth, and the children of the Almighty. Whether some people recognise who they are or not, this is our philosophy. We are all children of the Almighty which means everyone is Rasta, so whether you say it or not, it's no matter, y'know what me a say?"

Any distinctions between reggae and dancehall are blurring also. **Agent Sasco** and **Mr. Vegas** are champions of both worlds. The former's *Theory Of Reggaetivity* was a far worldlier album than you'd expect from a deejay also known as Assassin.

"It is quite different, and sometimes I go a bit close to the edge," he admits, laughing. "Our genre is very singles driven and so I might have fun doing something that's frivolous or more hardcore, but I want to be moving forward now and to let people know what my core values are. I want to be doing more serious work if I can put it like that, because I've changed a lot."

There's still energy and excitement in his music and that's also true of **Mr. Vegas**, who lights up every stage show whether he's delivering



reggae, dancehall, crossover or gospel songs. He's Mr. Versatile and still guaranteed to cause mayhem with *Heads High*.

That period in reggae's history when dancehall was marginalised is over. The music carried it through and people everywhere love dancehall these days. Boomtown has nurtured it and Glastonsbury is staid by comparison. There's a sense of freedom there – not an angry release like we've witnessed throughout the country this past year, but one that's rooted in something more communal.

Don't miss deejay legends **U Roy** and **Big Youth**, whilst **Chakademus & Pliers** were household names in the UK during the early nineties. *Tease Me* and *She Don't Let Nobody* were two of five record-breaking hits released by the duo back then. Pliers' real name is Everton Bonner, and several of his siblings are also reggae artists. The best known of the remaining Bonner Brothers is Richie Spice, whose biggest hits include *Earth A Run Red*, *Black Skin* and *Youths Get So Cold*. Another brother, Spanner Banner, was once signed to Chris Blackwell's label Island Jamaica. He was Chakademus' first vocal partner but soon achieved his own breakthrough with songs like *Chill* and *What We Need Is Love*, shared with Luciano. Two other members of the clan will join them at Boomtown this year – **Snatcha Lion** and **Shepherd Bonner**.

So what of our own? Boomtown has an admirable record for supporting UK reggae and dancehall talent, and it's hard to think of any deserving artists or sound systems based here who haven't performed there yet. **The Specials** will be their usual riotous selves as they tear through hits like *Too Much Too Young*, *Rudy A Message To You* and *Ghost Town*. "Explosive" always crops up in reviews of their live shows, and with good reason. They are the ultimate 2 Tone band, and they're still edgy and unpredictable after all these years.

**Brinsley Forde** will be another familiar name to every Aswad fan in the crowd. He's carved out a solo career for himself in recent years, whilst **Randy Valentine** is an outstanding young singer from East London via Jamaica. Expect to hear songs from the albums *Bring Back The Love* and *Break The Chain* and listen out too for **Brother Culture**, who's been an unsung hero of reggae sound systems in the UK for decades, and **Horseman And The Upper Cut Band**, fronted by the drummer / deejay who played on much of Prince Fatty's output, including hits by Hollie Cook.



## REGGAE ALBUMS TOP 25

**1. CHRISTOPER MARTIN**  
BIG DEAL [VP]

**2. THE AGGROVATORS**  
DUBBING AT KING TUBBY'S  
[GREENSLEEVES]

**3. BEENIE MAN**  
UNSTOPPABLE [357]

**4. ALBOROSIE**  
FREEDOM AND FYAH  
[GREENSLEEVES]

**5. SOUL OF JAMAICA**  
INNA DE YARD [CHAPTER 2]

**6. VARIOUS**  
WE REMEMBER DENNIS BROWN [VP]

**7. VARIOUS**  
BLACK SONGS MATTER [ARIWA]

**8. RESONATORS**  
IMAGINARY PEOPLE [WAH WAH]

**9. ASWAD**  
LIVE AT ROCK PALAST [WDR]

**10. VARIOUS**  
STUDIO ONE ROCKSTEADY VOL 2  
[SOUL JAZZ]

**11. VARIOUS**  
REGGAE GOLD 2016 [VP]

**12. MYKAL ROSE**  
RASTA STATE [VP]

**13. JAH 9**  
9 [VP]

**14. MAX ROMEO**  
HORRORS OWN [NU ROOTS]

**15. GENTLEMAN**  
UNPLUGGED [VP]

**16. RAGING FYAH**  
EVERLASTING [VP]

**17. BULBY YORK**  
EPIC AND TING [GREENSLEEVES]

**18. VARIOUS**  
BIGGEST REGGAE ONE DROP  
ANTHEMS 2015 [VP]

**19. ASSASSIN**  
THEORY OF REGGAETIVITY [SOUND  
AGE]

**20. VARIOUS**  
SOCA GOLD 2016 [VP]

**21. VYBZ KARTEL**  
KING OF THE DANCEHALL [ZOJAK]

**22. KEN BOOTHE**  
THE BEST OF [TROJAN]

**23. VARIOUS**  
JUNJO PRESENTS WORLD CUP  
[GREENSLEEVES]

**24. DUKE REID**  
GOLDEN HITS [TROJAN]

**25. MORGAN HERITAGE**  
HITS [CTBC]

# run the track...

## John Masouri has that t'ing.

MORGAN HERITAGE FEATURING KABAKA PYRAMID & DRE ISLAND WE ARE [CTBC]

"We have the ability, to erase poverty. We are the future, and that is everything. A world of conflict, that's unnecessary and most people don't even know the reason for it..."

This song, taken from the Heritage's new album *Avrakedabra*, acts as a mouthpiece for a younger generation assailed on all sides by austerity, warmongers, false news, racism and ideology. "The world needs a brand new day," just like say, and they're backed to the hilt by Kabaka and Dre Island, who represent the future leaders they're singing about.

I OCTANE & DING DONG STOP WILD UP [GOOD GOOD PRODUCTIONS]  
SHENSEEA & BOOM BOOM WINE [GOOD GOOD PRODUCTIONS]  
MASICKA 10 OUTA 10 [GOOD GOOD PRODUCTIONS]

Good Good's Money Mix riddim opens with old school cash register and never lets up. It's a party beat, aimed at clubbers, but there's nothing lightweight about the talent involved. I Octane and Masicka are regulars on this label. I Octane's previous hits include *No Badda Dan Jah* and *Spend Some Money* but the every-ready Ding Dong makes the difference here. Masicka follows *Everything Mi Want* with lyrics praising his girl – the best view is when she spreads her legs and touches her toes apparently – but it's Shenseea's cut that'll get most reaction. She's hot right now on the back of tunes like *Loodi* [with Vybz Kartel] and *Best Na Na*, featuring King Kosa and Konsens.

ALKALINE & SEAN PAUL GYALIS PRO [DJ FRASS]

These two really are prolific. Sean Paul's a worldwide celebrity, but stays close to what's happening at grassroots level, whilst Alkaline is the most intriguing new dancehall artist in a long while. Forget the gimmicky, blacked out eyeballs and all that. The youth's got style and lyrics, and this is a sure-fire follow-up to songs like *Fast*, *Microwave* and *Son Of A Queen*. The riddim's called *Crazy Glue* incidentally, and it's another infectious dancehall beat from DJ Frass.

GYPTIAN THAT TING [SILVER BIRDS RECORDS]  
KALADO & STONE BWOY KRAZY WINE [SILVER BIRDS RECORDS]  
ICE COLD WAY YOU DO IT [SILVER BIRDS RECORDS]

Gyptian had a busy year in 2016, with tracks like *Bring Back The Luv*, *Jiggle Jiggle* and *Right Direction* maintaining his lengthy stay in the reggae charts. *That Ting* is another party tune and voiced over a riddim called *Rave*, but which has steel drums on it. Must be the Caribbean version but *Ice Cold*'s a good singer also, and *Krazy Wine* catchy as anything.

SEAN KINGSTON FEATURING VYBZ KARTEL CHANCE [TIME IS MONEY ENTERTAINMENT]

It's been a long time since Sean Kingston bust with *Beautiful Girls*. He still looks the same though, and that laidback vocal style hasn't changed much either. Last time he stepped out with a Jamaican deejay was on a remix of Alkaline's *Ride With Me* but this track is slow and syrupy, and offers little traction for Kartel to really get busy.

MR VEGAS WHAT A GWAAN [MAXIMUM SOUND]  
BEENIE MAN, VOICEMAIL & DING DONG SKANK



AND RAVE  
[MAXIMUM SOUND]  
MICHIE ONE & LOUCHIE LOU, DING DONG &  
BRAVO PRINCESS  
[MAXIMUM SOUND]

Mr. Vegas is multi-faceted, and can impress on all kinds of material including reality songs like this, inspired by the worsening crime figures affecting his hometown. "Kingston, tell me what a gwan," he begins. "My life, it's worth more than a cell phone." There are seven cuts to Frenchie's new dancehall rhythm – Skank & Rave, which he built with Jamaican producer Shams – and they're all good. Beenie Man's is "rough like grizzlies," whilst vocal cuts by Romain Virgo and QQ exude class but let's hear it for Louchie Lou & Michie One, who've known Frenchie from Fashion days, and make a triumphant comeback here. Priceless indeed.

ALOZADE CAN'T STYLE A STYLER  
[DANCEHALLRULERZ]  
MASICKA GOT MONEY  
[DANCEHALLRULERZ]  
GAPPY RANKS NAME FA  
[DANCEHALLRULERZ]

DancehallRulerz have history, since past riddims include Melon, Way Up and Sunscreen. This latest – a bucking bronco called Concrete Soldier – also hosts Ward 21, Jiggy King, Bay-C and Spyda Stretch but it's Alozade who nails it with some insistent, lyrically adept bragging. Masicka tries to do the same, but lacks finesse and we should all feel pride for Gappy Ranks – the deejay from London NW10 who's consistently been holding his own on riddims like this, despite stiff competition.

KEN BOOTHE RIVERSIDE  
[NAH LEF YA]  
KIDDUS I MESSAGE FROM THE HEART  
[NAH LEF YA]  
JAH'MILA WHO FEELS IT KNOWS IT [NAH LEF YA]

It's been a long time since Ken Boothe

recorded a song that's capable of giving you goose bumps but Riverside – which mixes gospel influences with a solid reggae rhythm – does just that. Like those by Kiddus I and Cornell Campbell, it's of the calibre we're always hoping to hear whenever a well-respected veteran re-enters the studio whilst female singers Jah'Mila and Kelissa just a come, and both are definite names to watch.

SOOTHSAYERS SPEAK TO MY SOUL EP -  
BLINDED SOULS / EAGLE SONG / ROLL RIVER  
ROLL / REFUGEE  
[WAH WAH 45s 10"]

Wah Wah 45s is home to The Resonators but they've recently signed South London big band The Soothsayers and made a lot of vinyl junkies' hearts skip a beat by issuing these four new recordings on a 10" single. All are variations of tracks released on previous albums, but each one is beautifully reworked. Blinded Souls and Eagle Song – now revamped from the versions on Tangled Roots and Lost City – will thrill Afrobeat fans, whilst Roll River Roll is a semi-dub reggae workout, and Refugee a song penned on behalf of displaced persons the world over.



## REGGAE SINGLES TOP 30

1. 1 SEAN PAUL  
LIKE THIS
2. 3 I OCTANE  
SO WE BAD
3. 6 JAH CURE  
TELEPHONE LOVE
4. 7 PROTEJE  
BLOOD MONEY
5. 14 LUCIANO  
ONE OF A KIND
6. NEW KONSHENS/CHRIS BROWN  
BRUK OFF YUH BACK
7. NEW BUSY SIGNAL  
BRIGHTER DAY MUST COME
8. 2 CHRONIXX  
JUDGMENT
9. 4 MAVADO  
TRIPLE MURDA
10. 5 CHRONIXX  
LIKES
11. NEW CUTTY RANKS  
BRAVE ENOUGH
12. NEW RAGING FYAH  
REAL LIFE
13. 8 JAH 9  
HUMBLE MI
14. 15 VYBZ KARTEL  
IT NUH HARD
15. 16 SEAN PAUL/WAYNE WONDER  
THIS PARTY
16. NEW LUKIE D  
SLOW DOWN
17. NEW ALAINE/KABAKA PYRAMID  
BLUE C
18. 9 BUSY SIGNAL  
SAME WAY SUH
19. 21 ROMAIN VIRGO  
LOVE SICK
20. 20 BUSY SIGNAL  
NAH USE DEM
21. 10 JAH 9 FEAT CHRONIXX  
HARDCORE
22. 11 DEMARCO  
HAPPY FI YUH
23. 12 ALKALINE  
BADNESS IT NAME
24. 13 SWASHI  
WHAT MUST BE
25. 17 BUSY SIGNAL  
FRESH FROM YAAD EP
26. 18 SINGING MELODY  
HOTTER THAN FIRE
27. 22 LUCIANO  
STRANGE TIME
28. 19 ALKALINE  
12PM
29. 23 RESONATORS  
PAPPA DADDI O
30. 24 TARRUS RILEY  
CRIME FREE CHRISTMAS





# RODIGAN v COXSONE

The public dispute between two of reggae's most celebrated UK champions has raised issues both pertinent and inaccurate. Our man [John Masouri](#), who knows both parties well, advises against allowing destructive forces to run wild.

**It's been likened to an old school soundclash, but there are no winners in the recently declared war between David Rodigan and Lloydie Coxson. This time they're not battling with dub-plates but via social media, after soundman Lloydie posted a video on YouTube deriding Rodigan and his currently heightened profile, the result of the publication of Rodi's book, *My Life In Reggae*.**

Rivalry within reggae music is nothing new, of course. But as Rodigan appeared on ITV News and *This Week*, enjoyed a slot on *Later... With Jools Holland* and inspired acres of column inches [including my own feature in this very magazine], by the time Friday April 7 came around and the video had aired, all hell was breaking loose.

Lloydie's film is 18 minutes long, and takes no prisoners. The first other members of the Coxson posse knew of it was when he showed it to them in a car heading for a gig in Cardiff that night. Whilst they would revise their opinion after seeing the level of support he's received, the mood back then was one of disbelief. He hadn't given them any warning, but arranged the filming himself and then gone ahead and posted it.

He opens by saying that he speaks for "the 500 sound systems that bust reggae music here in England," and reminds us that whilst reggae music came from Jamaica, it was in the UK where it became a major industry. Not for nothing does he call sound systems "the greatest asset for the promotion of reggae music here in England," although he then blames his fellow Jamaicans for "mashing up the reggae industry" by closing down the studios, pressing plants and record shops, and leaving local musicians "sat at home doing nothing." The inference is clear - that

Jamaica has fallen victim to an international conspiracy to divest it of the island's musical and cultural legacy, and this has allowed outsiders to prosper at Jamaicans' expense. He makes no attempt to disentangle the effects of globalisation from the scenario he describes [and which has impacted on every other music genre you care to mention]. And there's no acknowledgement from Lloydie that reggae music is now more popular worldwide than ever before - surely a good thing - or that it's being driven by people of *all* nationalities who now feel liberated to make a contribution in their own right, no matter their skin colour or origination, and irrespective of whether they're an artist, musician, producer, promoter, engineer or whatever.

Three minutes in and the knife comes out for "the little white boy David Rodigan," who's accused of having hoodwinked the Jamaican music fraternity into giving him an award. It was back in February 2015 that the Jamaica Reggae Industry Association [JARIA] honoured him for his contribution "to the growth and development of Jamaican music." This was a first for any non-Jamaican, and a proud moment for an outstanding radio presenter who's championed reggae music for over 40 years.

"I have loved the music of this country all my life," he told the Jamaica Observer at the time, "therefore it is such an amazing feeling to be honoured in this way. I am delighted and can't say thank you too many times."

After accusing Rodigan of cynically exploiting Jamaican artists for his own ends [by getting them to voice specials for him], Lloydie informs us that he made the film after, "I sit in my house in England and see David

Rodigan come on the television and say he is the Godfather for reggae in England.”

Except, Rodigan does not appear to have said this. There’s certainly no evidence to support such an assertion, anyway – and you can watch all of Rodigan’s recent TV appearances on YouTube to check.

Undeterred, Lloydie goes on: “You people in Jamaica, you make white people come and fool you all the while.” And then he issues a timely reminder that Duke Vin, Count Suckle and other such contemporaries are more deserving of the Godfather mantle, and noting how their achievements have been all but forgotten. It’s actually a valuable history lesson and one that needs telling - although he then goes on to say that, “giving Rodigan an award for the upbringing of reggae is a disgrace and a shameful thing to we 500 sound-systems here in England who go through a whole heap of police and Babylon brutality to bring up our Jamaican reggae music to something. We play reggae to the top of the English charts... and now here comes a little white boy named David Rodigan, who you glorify.” Lloydie accuses the Jamaicans who nominated Rodigan for the award of “still living in mental slavery,” and dismisses specials as “a gimmick music” that only glorifies the individual and leads to figures like Rodigan “getting feisty.” He also accuses Rodigan – who was awarded the MBE for his services to broadcasting in 2012 – of having claimed that he’s “the King Of Reggae” and knows reggae music better than people in Jamaica. Again, there’s no evidence for this.

Rodigan, says Coxson, has never loaded speakers into a ten-ton truck, suffered at the hands of racist police or gone through great hardship to play sound-system. This is true – though it’s equally true to observe that Rodigan has spent most of his career being a radio presenter/DJ rather than a soundman. There’s no mention of all the other non-Jamaicans who’ve devoted years of their lives to playing and promoting reggae music over the years in this country, either.

In fact, on the contrary: “We have to adjust these things. We can’t let white people take over the business that we are doing, *our* reggae business,” he says at one point. Yet the truth remains that it wasn’t just Caribbean people who helped to build the reggae industry over here, and there have been white, Jewish, Middle Eastern and other nationalities involved in it from the very start. Of course, no-one disputes that the majority of the giants upon whose shoulders we all stand were/are black and/or Jamaicans, but such separatist talk sends a chill wind through the business, and can only serve to diminish the music in many people’s eyes.

Coxson’s video was soon clocking up over 50,000 views and garnering a lot of support. It provoked a blizzard of tweets and Facebook posts in reply – some of them overtly racist, although there were also large numbers of people who praised both men for their contributions, and showed more interest in the more general issues that Lloydie – correctly - raised. His call for the powers-that-be to honour and show more appreciation for the sound-systems who played such a crucial role in establishing reggae music in this country is beyond reproach. That definitely needs tackling - but it’s a campaign that needs to be directed towards organisations like the Brit Awards and the MOBOs, rather than being used as a stick to beat one of the UK’s foremost ambassadors for reggae, who Coxson renames “David Rob And Gone.”

For his part, Rodigan initially decided that he wasn’t going to respond to Lloydie’s claims, but then issued a statement on Facebook just over a week later. “The real bone of contention seems to revolve around me apparently saying that I am ‘The Godfather of Reggae’,” he wrote. “I challenge Lloyd Coxson to prove that I ever said that. Prove it by showing the video footage, prove it by showing the press interview when I said that... prove it.

“I am powerless over what a radio or television presenter or journalist says about me, whether it’s a term of praise or an expression of disapproval. But I am NOT powerless over my own mouth and what comes out of it. I have never said that I am ‘The Godfather of Reggae’, neither have I said that I’m the ‘King of Reggae’, neither have I ever claimed to have ‘bust a reggae artist’ because I would never be so arrogant and presumptuous.”

Extrovert on stage he may be, but Rodigan is modest and self-effacing away from it. However that title “Godfather Of Reggae” has been appearing in articles and on flyers for a good while now – perhaps two years? – so surely someone should have realised that its continued appearance would invite controversy. Couldn’t Rodigan have squashed some of that? And at no point did he respond to some of the key issues that Lloydie raised in his film - there was no acknowledgement, for example, that more could be done to celebrate and honour the achievements of reggae veterans.

In the event, the response did Rodigan few favours: he was unable to quell criticisms that he’d not done enough in carrying the grassroots reggae scene in this country with him as his fame increased. But did he

deserve the abuse that he’s been subjected to?

The furore raises some complex issues. It’s no surprise that Coxson has himself come under attack from some quarters for being racist: that phrase “little white boy” speaks volumes [and he repeats it several times during the film]. On the other hand, it’s only right and fair that people question the extent to which racial privilege may have contributed to Rodigan’s success. The irony being that when he first applied for a radio slot playing reggae, the station in question turned him down as they thought a black person should be doing it instead! It was his presentation and passion for the music that made them change their minds.

In the end, anyone thinking that Rodigan’s had an easy ride because he’s white need only read his autobiography. In one chapter he talks about how certain producers would threaten him with violence if he didn’t play their records. One day he snapped and told listeners to Capital Radio, “This is it. I’m laying down the law. I’m not being intimidated anymore. I will play what I consider to be good reggae and if you don’t like it, tough.” The national press picked up on the story and a lot of people were supportive of him, but retribution was swift.

“That night when I played as usual at Gossips in Soho, virtually all the cars parked outside the venue had their tyres slashed. That was the comeback I got for speaking out in public. Later things turned even more sinister. I became the target of a vicious racist group calling itself the Black Music Protection Squad. They made images of me with a noose around my neck: “Wanted for the rape of black music, David Rodigan.” One night there was a big reggae concert at the Hammersmith Palais in west London. I had introduced the show and been Master of Ceremonies and when the audience came out at the end of the night all the cars had been stickered with a picture of me in a prison block cell with a rope around my neck.

“They pursued me for years. They would stay silent for a long time then re-emerge. Much later, after I had been on the air for more than a decade, they threatened my life. I was presenting a daytime show of many music genres. They phoned me up at the studios and said, “If you don’t play a reggae record today you are fucking dead.” The police were called... such victimisation caused outrage amongst the black community because people didn’t think it was fair. That meant a lot to me - black people don’t take that kind of racist bullshit from anyone.”





# HOT 102FM REGGAE CHART

1. DEATH TO MICROWAVE  
ALKALINE [CHIMNEY]

2. NO LIE  
SEAN PAUL FEAT. DUA LIPA  
[ISLAND]

3. MIDDLE EAST  
HARRY TODDLER FEAT. IKEL  
MARVELOUS [DOWNSOUND]

4. SHAPE OF YOU  
ED SHEERAN [ASYLUM]

5. YENG YENG  
DING DONG FEAT. BRAVO RAVERS  
[DUNWELL PRODUCTIONS]

6. GANJA  
BUGLE FEAT. SHAGGY [AN9TED]

7. CHAMPION JOCKEY  
HAWKEYE [GAFJAM]

8. ME LOVE MY FATTY  
STYLE X [CLAIMS]

9. TEK WEH YUH HEART  
SEAN PAUL FEAT. TORY LANEZ  
[SPJ/ISLAND]

10. CHANCE  
SEAN KINGSTON FEAT. VYBZ  
KARTEL [DELUGA HEIGHTS/EPIC]

11. WHO TROUBLE DEM  
VYBZ KARTEL  
[GOOD GOOD PRODUCTIONS]

12. JIGGLE LIKKLE  
SAVAGE [YELLOW MOON]

13. GAL DEM SUGAR  
KONSHENS [SUBKONSHUS/HIT  
GROVES MUSIC]

14. JIGGLE JIGGLE  
SHENSEEA  
[ROMEICH ENTERTAINMENT]

15. SHOULD'VE BEEN ME  
NAUGHTY BOY FEAT. KYLA &  
POPCAN [VIRGIN/EMI]

16. SON OF A QUEEN  
ALKALINE [CHIMNEY]

17. ROAR FI A CAUSE  
DAMION 'JNR GONG' MARLEY  
[GHETTO YOUTHS INTERNATIONAL]

18. BANGA  
AIDONIA [4TH GENNA MUSIC/1  
PRODUCTIONS]

19. SHEET  
SPICE [TRUE BLUE MUSIC]

20. DIRT NAP  
MAVADO [YELLOW MOON]

# v i b

“The fact is that Rodigan is white,” someone remarked on Facebook in contribution to the **Rodigan v Coxson** debate. “His whiteness is a factor in the debate and questions are being asked about how this has affected his access, reception and opportunities. Why shouldn’t that be asked? Because it makes white people uncomfortable? Because some “black” people feel uncomfortable about it too?”

The question of race arose very quickly after **Lloydie Coxson**’s online film, and followed on from the so-called Tropical House controversy. There’s a lot of resentment in the air, into which Coxson tapped when criticising the Jamaican music industry for giving awards to foreigners, whilst deserving causes closer to home went unrecognised.

In fact, **JARIA** have handed out many awards over the years, and **Rodigan** is still the only non-Jamaican recipient. Is Lloydie really suggesting we have to wait until every last Jamaican musician gets one before honouring someone from abroad who’s dedicated their career to promoting and celebrating reggae music? **JARIA** made an important statement when honouring Rodigan. They were sending a message that Jamaica was coming to terms with its legacy, and acknowledging how the contributions of people from overseas is part of that process.

Those involved in **JARIA** are drawn from all sectors of the music industry. They are the proud standard bearers of Jamaica’s musical heritage and to accuse them of selling out was unworthy. Ok, the national music library hasn’t materialised yet, but there’s now an official Peter Tosh museum in Kingston and the city’s annual Reggae Month attracts visitors from far and wide, as do events held at the University of West Indies. Faculty members there have links with other people studying reggae culture from around the world, whilst Sunday night sessions at the Dub Club are refreshingly multi-cultural. Jamaica has long been a favourite destination for rock, rap and R&B stars, but there are more foreign artists, producers, soundmen and radio DJs visiting or living in Kingston than ever before. **Snoop** changed his name after sampling Rastafari and the local ganja, and **Major Laza** play to big crowds on the island. They’ve introduced a raft of contemporary Jamaican artists to international club audiences, including **Chronixx**, **Vybz Kartel** and **Busy Signal**. This relationship seems to be based on mutual benefit rather than exploitation; and who could deny the impact that Japanese people have had on Jamaican music over the past 25 years or so? Away to the north, past Red Hills Road, lives one of the island’s biggest reggae stars, Sicily-born **Alborosie**, who’s been a resident of Jamaica for more than a decade. The island’s motto is “out of many, one people” and that’s taken on new meaning in an era of expanding globalisation and online economies. Protectionism raises its head whenever people start talking about all the Chinese investment

that’s happening throughout the island, but today’s Kingston is headed in the other direction. It’s outward looking, just like the music playing on the airwaves, which blends a little R&B, hip-hop, EDM and soca into the reggae and dancehall mix. Some of the rhythms may come from elsewhere, so that local artists can voice them. Or the rhythms are Jamaican and the vocals you’re hearing were recorded somewhere else. The permutations are endless: one track might whizz through cyber space and visit three continents before coming back to Jamaica.

The music’s changed as the lines of communication have increased - but this is something to celebrate surely, rather than berate? People working together can work miracles and whilst some may want to return to the past, we need to remember that reggae’s worldwide popularity wasn’t earned by accident, but through the efforts of armies of people - Jamaican and otherwise - living everywhere from Atlanta to Zimbabwe.

I see this same spirit at the big reggae festivals across Europe. People of all nationalities are drawn to reggae because of the philosophy it embodies. They’re attracted to talk of peace and unity, and building a better world. Some feel disenfranchised from the communities and societies they come from, and want to be part of something more inclusive - something that stands for truth and equality, that warns against destroying the environment and exposes the lies we’re told by governments. Reggae music isn’t entirely about such things, of course, but the influence of Rastafari, coupled with progressive and even revolutionary thought is what drives many reggae fans to base their lifestyle around reggae culture.

**Lloydie Coxson** isn’t a racist. I was at his wedding last summer where there were many white guests, including his current selector [who also happens to be my son]. He was among the first reggae selectors who played to mixed audiences in the UK. That was in the late sixties and early seventies, when he used to DJ at Colombo’s in Carnaby Street. Rodigan writes about this in his book. It’s what prompted him to later invite Coxson onto his radio show, so he could tell his story and play some of his exclusive dub-plates. The distinguished looking Coxson was the No. 1 soundman outside of Jamaica at that time, and had all the best tunes. Indeed, the closest you could get to downtown Kingston back then was at a Coxson dance, ringed by towering columns of speaker boxes and with Lloydie, Festus and the crew stood at the decks - often with a visiting Jamaican artist for company. What an experience! The vibes could be intense; you’d get goose bumps from the music they played sometimes. Former champions of reggae sound system like Coxson remain heroes to many, including myself, although their achievements went largely unheralded at the time. You might read about them in the weekly **Black Echoes** from time to time but radio and

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television exposure was non-existent, even for a top sound like Sir Coxson.

From what I've seen - and despite what Lloydie says - the music industry in Jamaica is ahead of us here in terms of honouring their reggae greats. Then again, they don't have a majority white, right-leaning media to contend with - but that still wouldn't stop us organising exhibitions, degree courses and seminars, applying for blue plaques and official honours, helping veterans to write books, or make documentaries about their lives, archive their old tapes and memorabilia, build a website or maintain a Facebook page. If the BBC won't do it and there's no funding available, then let's pool ideas and see what can be done. We could start petitions demanding that the Brit Awards become more representative, or see if crowd funding can start the ball rolling.

**Paul Bradshaw**, reflecting on the Coxson/Rodigan debate for ancienttofuture.com asked the question, "If a book was published tomorrow portraying Lloydie Coxson's Life In Reggae Music & Sound System - a story that shows the evolution of Sound System alongside the music [ska to

dancehall] and also offers a deeper insight into the cultural resistance of the Afro Caribbean community and rise of Rastafari in the face of racist attacks and fire bombings, police and SPG harassment and consistent marginalisation - would Coxson be feted in the press and invited to talk about it on national TV? I don't think so. And if that's the case maybe we all need to reflect on that and ask ourselves, 'What role can I play in this struggle for recognition - for truth and rights?'"

Google "UK reggae sound-system" and the first name you see is that of **Reggae Roast** - a sound based in Hackney that's still in its infancy when measured against a tradition that stretches back to the early fifties. Is this cultural appropriation? Reggae Roast is white owned after all, but what it means is that James and the team are doing something right, by successfully harnessing online forces. This should be a wake-up call for everyone involved with reggae music here in the UK and there's no reason why we can't learn those lessons together, rather than divide into factions. [JM]

## HOT 102FM DANCEHALL TOP 20

### 1. MAGIC

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN [VP]

### 2. QUEEN MAJESTY

CHRONIXX [NO CHOICE]

### 3. SELFIE

BIGGATON [IMHOTEP C]

### 4. NO HYPOCRITES ALLOWED

TARRUS RILEY [TRUCK BACK]

### 5. TRUEVERSATION

QUEEN IFRICA FEAT. DAMIAN 'JR GONG'  
MARLEY [VP]

### 6. YOU'VE GOT A WAY

GYPTIAN [YVP]

### 7. TAXI DRIVER

HEZRON [STONE LOVE MUSIC]

### 8. BLOOD MONEY

PROTOJE [MR BONGO]

### 9. FUCK U MEAN

DEXTA DAPS [DASECA PRODUCTION]

### 10. LIONS

SKIP MARLEY [TUFF GONG INTERNATIONAL]

### 11. LOVE & CONFLICT

SOPHIA SQUIRE [GLOBAL FLEX MUSIC]

### 12. STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN [SEANIZZLE]

### 13. DASH WATA

RAGING FYAH [DUB ROCKERS]

### 14. LIKES

CHRONIXX [SOUL CIRCLE MUSIC]

### 15. COLD BLOODED MURDERER

LIVE WYVA FEAT. CAPLETON [STREET TUFF]

### 16. RASTA NUH GANGSTA

SAMORY I [RORY STONE LOVE/BLACK DUB]

### 17. LET'S DANCE

RICHIE STEPHENS  
[STEELY & CLEVIE PRODUCTION]

### 18. REGGAE NIGHT

MORGAN HERITAGE [CTBC MUSIC GROUP]

### 19. LOVING YOU RIGHT

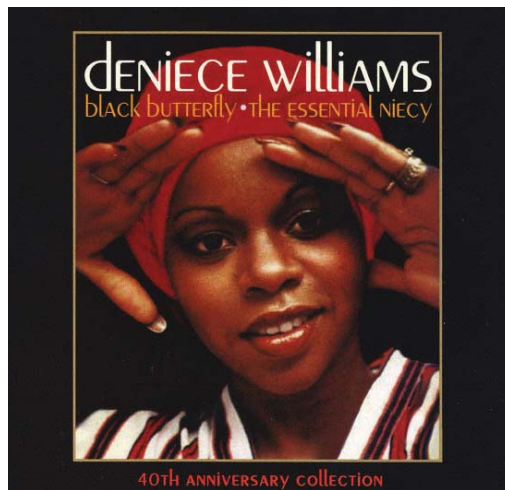
K'ONEIL [GEDEON SOLDIERS]

### 20. BORROWED TIME

SASHA DIAS [LTK 20/ HEAVY BEAT]



# ALBUMS



## DENIECE WILLIAMS

### BLACK BUTTERFLY - THE ESSENTIAL NIECY [BIG BREAK]

Well this is long overdue. Despite over a decade of considerable commercial clout [roughly mid-'70s to '80s] Niecy has rarely been granted the compilation treatment - unlike contemporaries Minnie or Phyllis - and now here comes BBR with a sumptuous double-CD treatment. Disc one's '70s-focus means proceedings kick off with her signature tune *Free* - still an ethereal floaty thing of unparalleled beauty after all these years, sent to the heavens by Williams' celestial soprano - and maintains a consistent quality level from there on. It's pretty much the same track listing as her previous 'best of', *Gonna Take A Miracle*, released [shockingly] 20 years ago as part of Columbia's brilliant 'Legacy' series that also included unsung artists like Cheryl Lynn and The Emotions. So you get her Mathis duet mega hit - the percolating disco-lite *Too Much, Too Little, Too Late* - and Thom Bell-produced sleeper classic *Silly*, alongside a few poppier additions like the perky *Waiting By The Hotline*. Shame they didn't dig a tad deeper into album cuts like *Song Bird's* wrenching *The Letter*, but with material this good and a supporting cast that includes Maurice White, Charles Stepney, Ray Parker Jr. and more, who's really complaining?

Disc two is where things get a bit wobbly. Here the loose chronological approach is mainly '80s focused, with a slightly jolting reverse backwards towards the end as if the decade didn't have enough to offer. Partly that's true, if mainly because post-'80s megahit *Let's Hear It For The Boy* - the 12" version kicking things off here - her commercial Columbia sides were understandably determined to recreate that



million selling monster. While some are fun - George Duke's giddy Motown-pastiche *I Can't Wait*, others - say, the crashing Linn drum horror *Wiser And Weaker* - fall decidedly into the 'unessential' Niecy bucket.

That said, despite the *Footloose* hit's long shadow, Williams was still steadily producing some sterling sides. Several are here: the exalted *Black Butterfly* [aptly chosen to title this collection] and her gorgeous cover of the Impressions' *I'm So Proud*. Others aren't: a deep dive into Williams' concurrent '80s gospel career and sides like her Philip Bailey duet *They Say* could have bolstered disc two no end. Tricky licensing issues, one imagines. Still, carping aside, this a compelling collection from one of soul music's brightest stars. Just listen to *God Is Amazing* on disc one for any proof that Niecy could knock any of the Mariah's or Jills that followed her into a cocked hat. Glorious.

Adam Mattera ★★★★★

## FUZZY HASKINS

### I GOT MY THANG TOGETHER: THE WESTBOUND YEARS [ACE]

Original Parliamentarian/Funkadelicster Haskins had been getting pretty fed up with George Clinton by the time the first of his solo albums for Westbound hit the racks back in 1976. The P-Funk set-up, entertainingly wild and loose [and smelly] as it was to we outsiders, could be a nightmare if you were on the inside, expecting to be paid on time or expecting to spend some time off stimulants [to pick two random examples]. Thus guitarist, songwriter and vocalist Fuzzy had been secretly compiling material towards his own project by the time other band members

# SOUL ALBUM OF THE MONTH



## NIKKA COSTA NIKKA & STRINGS: UNDERNEATH AND IN BETWEEN [METROPOLIS]

After over two decades of ferociously cranking up the funk, maybe it's not surprising Nikka Costa might want to take time to simmer down a little. Ever since *Butterfly Rocket* repositioned her as an adult artist to reckon with, the self-proclaimed 'funky white bitch' has barely paused for breath with a series of critically-lauded [if largely commercially ignored] albums in which she comes on like the lovechild of Lenny Kravitz and Betty Davis.

Not that you'd call *Nikka & Strings* easy-listening by any means. But the focus here is squarely on the voice rather than the funk - and what a voice. Nikka's been compared more than once to Janis Joplin and again that holds true, certainly in spirit, if not specifics: the rawness and intensity is there, but Costa displays remarkable control and tone too. Featuring a string quartet throughout, the set takes a 'something old, something new, borrowed and blue' approach, so the track-list veers from jazz standards like *Stormy Weather* to radical reworkings of her own songbook like *Headfirst*, new composition *Arms Around You* to covers of material by Solomon Burke and Jeff Buckley.

Nikka's shown glimpses of her vulnerability before on tracks like *Nothing* and *The Rules of the Road*, but there's a visceral new level of openness and intimacy here - underscored by the fact that in no small way this is an album haunted by ghosts. Opening the album with her bluesy take on the late Mr. Nelson's anthemic *Nothing Compares 2 U*, arguably one of the most direct and powerful songs about loss ever written, immediately sets a wistful tone. [Indeed a purple shadow is also cast over *Silver Tongue*, a smoky, jazz-inflected take on an obscure early noughties Costa/Prince co-write]. The aforementioned Buckley and Nikka's own father [there's a stunning take on *Come Rain Or Come Shine* based on one of Don Costa's rediscovered old charts for Sinatra] also appear, while *Arms Around You* directly references the need to connect with loved ones while they're still alive. By setting herself the challenge of *Nikka & Strings* - a brave move in a career marked by brave career moves - Costa reveals herself as a mature, emotionally intelligent artist of depth only hinted at before, and it's beautiful.

Adam Mattera ★★★★★

like Bootsy had also been launching their own side projects. In the event Haskins' own solo recording career lasted only two albums - *A Whole Nuther Thang* and 1978's *Radio Active* - and we get almost all of it here, plus a couple of extra tunes too.

It differs from P-Funk in that it's not quite as madcap or inventive lyrically, but it's still riddled with funky grooves and riffs, underpinned by the same fat drumming style [Haskins preferred Boogie Mosson] we were used to. Neither was Fuzzy concerned about letting his true feelings as regards the 'parent' group show through: on the slow-grind funk of *Which Way Do I Disco* he sings, 'Mothership just disconnect me/But the discotheque has got to protect me', although little he actually cut for either album was all that disco-slanted. The nearest is the non-album groove that opens this comp, *Gettin' It Off*, a driving blend of hi-hat, synth wiggles and almost Blaxploitation horn riffs. More representative is the JB-inclined *Not Yet*, presented here in its eight-minute 12-inch version. Also included is his own alternative take on *Cookie Jar*, which, of course, he wrote. The odd selection aside - who needs to hear *Sometimes I Rock And Roll*, basically a tepid 'lift' of *I Hear You Knocking?* - but overall it's a very enjoyable assemblage of sound.

Chris Wells ★★★★★

## NATTALI RIZE REBEL FREQUENCY [ROOTS LEVEL]

Nattali Rize and Carlo Santone were founder members of Australian band Blue King Brown, whose 2014 album *Born Free* was partially recorded at Tuff Gong studios in Jamaica. A year later their charismatic lead singer - the Gwen Stefani of reggae protest music - began issuing records under her own name, again recorded in Jamaica, but featuring the rhythm section from Notis Heavyweight Rockaz, with producer

Wayne "Unga" Thompson on drums. Those sessions resulted in 2015's *New Era Frequency* and two tracks from that EP are repeated here - both produced by Notis, who've worked with many of the island's new wave of roots artists.

*Generations Will Rize* features Kabaka Pyramid, whose lyrics are uncompromising as her own. *Heart Of A Lion* is the other track from *New Era Frequency*, with cultural lyrics exultant as a sugar rush. Like *One People* [taken from

but still rootsy might try *Fly Away*, featuring Raging Fyah. A lazy one-drop underpins *Meditation* and she sounds a little like Nelly Furtado on *Free Up Your Mind*, but it's speaker box shaking anthems like *Rebel Frequency* and *Evolutionary* - another deep roots track, and with cameos from Dre Island & Jah 9 - that bring out the best in her.

John Masouri ★★★★★



*Born Free*] it'll gain a lot more attention from being included here, on the debut album of an artist we'll be seeing and hearing plenty more of in future.

It was lead single *Natty Rides Again*, shared with Julian Marley that thrust her into the spotlight. Everything about that track was strong - the rhythm and message especially, which raised expectations of the album to come. We were right to be excited since *Warriors* and the jubilant, stepping title track will be played in roots dances all summer, whereas radio DJs looking for something more melodic

## TEACHA DEE RASTAFARI WAY [GIDDIMANI]

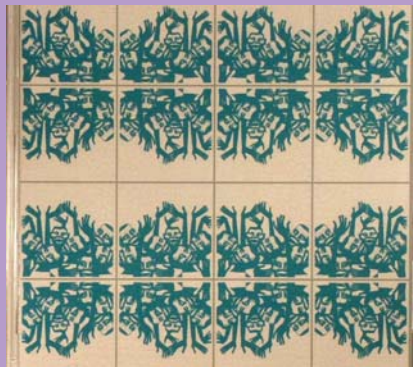
Teacha Dee hails from Westmoreland, although he left there for Montego Bay where he graduated as a teacher and taught maths, science and IT before finding success with several European labels, beginning with Pow Pow. That was a decade ago and he's the finished article now - a committed rootsman who can switch between singing and dee-jaying with ease, and all without missing a beat.

This second album, produced for his own Ten Floor label and named after a 2016 hit, is his best yet. The title track is classic new roots, and embellished by sprays of horns as he sings of having taken his Nazarene vows. "It's not an easy road when you choose Rastafari way..." There's not a lot of variety here in truth. Every track is cut in that traditional roots reggae style although the tempos vary and it's certainly well produced, with horns used throughout. *Rastafari Way* isn't the only song that'll rock a crowd either. It's time to start leaping when *Jah Jah Is Calling* is played, and I defy anyone to resist *Emperor Selassie* with its slow but insidious bass-line. *13 Months Of Sunshine* is a celebration of Africa and the most commercial track on the album although the message remains, as does the reggae beat.

Teacha Dee won't be on every reggae fan's radar but he deserves a listen, and there are a



## JAZZ ALBUM OF THE MONTH



### VARIOUS SPIRITUAL JAZZ 7: ISLAM 1957-1989 [JAZZMAN]

Generally speaking, compilations or reissues don't make this slot, as the onus is on new work. But this anthology of music recorded over three decades is a worthy exception to the rule. All of the featured material has not aged one iota, and the selections are flawless.

The embrace of Islam by black American jazz musicians was mostly prevalent in the '60s, and the adoption of Muslim names also chimed with a more widespread use of Middle Eastern and North African musical materials. While the likes of Yusef Lateef and Sahib Shihab are the two most high profile figures in this respect there were numerous other players who followed suit, and this quite astounding compilation uncovers more obscure names that nonetheless deserve their place in history. Dawan Muhammad, Idrees & Jamila Sulieman and Abdelrahman Abdo Elkhatib, Maurice McIntyre, Kahil El 'Zabar's Ritual Trio, Emmanuel Abdul-Rahim, Creative Arts Ensemble, Sabu Martinez and Ahmed Abdul-Malik all made superlative music for independent labels in which Arabic modes and scales, spiraling horns and rippling

hand drums make for an enticing combination, especially when the ensemble playing is layered with either passages of spoken word or yearning vocal chants. Much of this work is hypnotic, ethereal and deeply emotive, and it is also interesting to hear distinct echoes of Sun Ra's big band fantasia on some pieces and fizzing Afro-Cuban strains elsewhere. Connections and overlaps between different parts of the back Diaspora abound, with Allah present in the house. The Jazzman label is one of the premium 'crate diggers' in operation today, and this treatment of a vital subject maintains the high standards previously set in the *Spiritual Jazz* series.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★★★★

handful of tracks on this album that none of them should miss.

John Masouri ★★★★★ 1/2

### BLACKSTONES

#### INSIGHT

#### [BURNING SOUNDS]

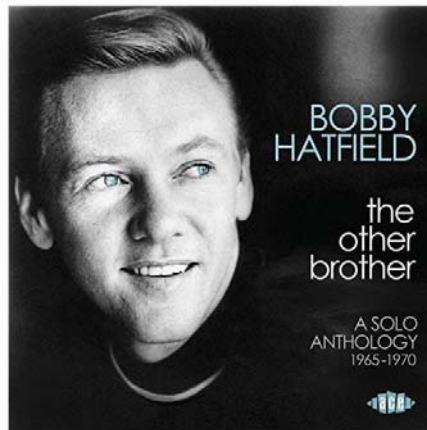
Burning Sounds' reissue programme is the gift that just keeps on giving, with *Insight* having first been released in the late seventies. The Blackstones' best-known member is Leon Leiffer, whose love of Jamaican rocksteady groups like The Uniques, Paragons and Techniques led him to form the Mighty Soul Rebels in the very early seventies. They recorded a handful of singles for Count Shelly before Leiffer started The Blackstones with Neville Henry and Ben Cockery, who lasted just six months and was replaced by Byron Otis.

This line-up kicked off with a cover of The Melodians' *Little Nut Tree* before coming to the attention of Jamaican producer Phil Pratt, who'd relocated to London and still had close ties to the Jamaican scene. Their first track with him was the self-penned *Revolution Time* – a sufferers lament that sounded as if it were sang by the Abyssinians, and over a rhythm that could only have been made in Kingston. It was an auspicious beginning and quickly led to this debut album, produced by Pratt and released on Burning Sounds in 1979. They'd laid the vocals – and also overdubbed lead guitar – at Chalk Farm studios in London, over rhythm tracks Pratt had recorded at Channel One and Joe Gibbs. The result was an album that could stand alongside those being made by vocal trios from yard like The Meditations or Mighty Diamonds, and which fused rocksteady style harmonies with lyrical themes and rhythms associated with the rockers music then coming from Jamaica.

No reggae outfit based in London could have hoped for more. Apart from *Revolution Time*, The Blackstones had a few songs of their own like *Hey, Hey, Hey, Kaiwazians*, *Spreading Rumours* and *Love Me Girl*, which they got to record along with several cover versions. The most familiar of these include *Open The Gates*, which Dennis Brown originally recorded for Niney The Observer; *True, True, True* [a hit for

Ken Parker at Treasure Isle] and Bob Marley's *Soul Shakedown Party*. The Blackstones' close harmonies are impressive throughout and the group has continued to perform and record new material ever since, led by the indefatigable Leiffer.

John Masouri ★★★★★ 1/2



### BOBBY HATFIELD THE OTHER BROTHER [ACE]

The Righteous Brothers were arguably the best-ever practitioners of "blue-eyed soul", but it's a common view that Bill Medley, the baritone half of the duo, was the truly soulful singer and that his mate Robert Lee Hatfield just tagged along to provide tenor harmonies. Not so, as this 24-tracker ably demonstrates. Focussing on the 1965-1970 period of Bobby's career, it shows that whether he was tackling romantic songs, beat ballads, soul standards or southern funk, that high yet flexible voice, with its ascents into thrilling falsetto, brought every drop of emotion out of the number.

For sentimental songs, it's hard to beat *Unchained Melody*, issued as by The Righteous Brothers but in fact a Hatfield solo performance; but his previously unissued take on *Crying In The Chapel* runs it pretty close. The beat ballad *Paradise* also sees the light of day for the first time; inevitably it has Phil Spector overtones

[it had been recorded by The Ronettes] but Bobby stamps his own personality on the song, as he does with another revival, Timi Yuro's *What's The Matter Baby* on which he strips the city sheen from the number and steepes it in leather-throated testifying and startling spurts of falsetto. The big-production *So Much Love* is also previously unissued; surely the record company didn't fear competition from Tony Blackburn's version?

Maurice & Mac's soul classic *You Left The Water Running* is taken faster than the original and, with Bobby's voice double-tracked, sounds like a Righteous Bros. Record. It's one of the tracks from his 1970 LP recorded at Rick Hall's Fame Studios in Alabama, as is *The Feeling Is Right*, first popularised by Clarence Carter. Both these songs had been early hits for Rick Hall's studio, and the album includes other in-house songs like the country-tinged *The Promised Land* and the Southern funk of *Shuckin' And Jivin'*. We also get to hear what may have been the first-ever cover version of The Beatles' *Let It Be*, and rather tasty it is too, especially when Bobby slips a verse from *People Get Ready* into it. His own song *Soul Café* is redolent of the South too, but far removed from Muscle Shoals: with its loping rhythm and relaxed brass riffs, it exudes the feel of New Orleans R&B and is all the better for it.

Bobby Hatfield's solo career never really took off - he scored only one minor US hit under his own name - and he would have to reunite with Bill Medley to rekindle his success. But, as this collection shows, it wasn't due to any lack of talent that he's so often thought of as just the other Brother.

Mike Atherton ★★★★★

### VARIOUS

#### MONKEY BUSINESS 7" VINYL BOX SET [TROJAN]

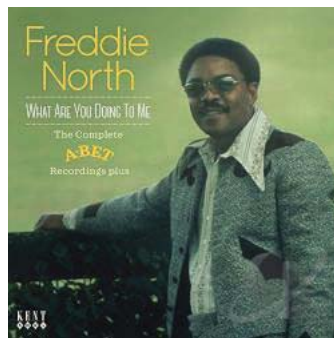
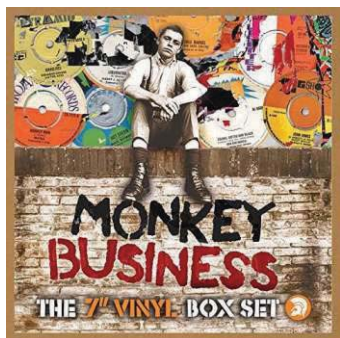
Reggae revive specialists Trojan are finally getting the hang of this boxed-set lark. Hard on the heels of the much-delayed, though ultimately worth the wait, *Spirit Of '69* comes this 10-disc blast of early reggae - that's "disc" in the sense of "45 rpm single", not "little shiny thing." And, Lord have mercy, it's out right on

time. But it's not exactly out for the first time. The original *Monkey Business* was a Trojan LP of the 1980s, and more recently the title re-emerged as a greatly expanded double CD. But the aim remains the same: to collect the sounds which made the dance floors of Britain shake during the era of reggae-loving skinheads, circa 1968 to 1971.

In that regard the set succeeds admirably. The 20 tracks include the chart smashes like Desmond Dekker's perfect combination of social reality and dance hall fun *Israelites*, which would nowadays be hailed as a "roots classic" if it had sold in the hundreds rather than the hundreds of thousands, Max Romeo's very cheeky and very catchy *Wet Dream*, The Maytals' anthemic *Monkey Man* and Dave & Ansel Collins' supreme combination of yelping DJing and nearly-in-tune piano *Double Barrel*, perhaps the last of the truly great skin'ead hits. Also present are some of the great sounds which should have reached our pop charts but, despite good sales, didn't, like The Reggae Boys' crunching *Mama Look Deh*, Rudy Mills' careering *John Jones* and Lester Sterling & Stranger Cole's jumping, shuffling *Bangarang*.

In truth, two of the 20 tracks are slightly baffling. 007 by Desmond Dekker is a superbly infectious tune, but it was a hit a couple of years before reggae and skinheads emerged; while organist Richard Ace's *Hang 'Em High* is a boring cover of one of the usually immaculate Booker T. & The MGs' few boring records. It wasn't even particularly popular at the time, if memory serves. But this set, pressed on delectably heavy vinyl, adorned with reproductions of various Trojan labels of the era, slipped into "Hot Shot" sleeves and encased in a robust, colourful box, is a must-have for fans who were too young to buy the singles when they came out or who wish to replace their well-worn originals. Just about the only thing missing is "KEVIN" scrawled across the labels in marker pen, but you can add that embellishment yourself... as long as your name is Kevin.

Mike Atherton ★★★★★ 1/2



**FREDDIE NORTH**  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME [KENT]

He wasn't a bad singer for a part-timer. Freddie North, born Freddie Carpenter in Tennessee in 1939, had a promising singing career, sang in the bars and made a few records for local labels, but by 1965 he'd decided that he'd rather like to pay the bills and put food on the table regularly, if you don't mind, and took up a position with

Nashville's Nashboro Records, where he rose to the position of sales and promotion manager in a stay lasting over a decade. During those years he made a steady stream of recordings, scoring only one big hit and another smaller one, but maintaining a high musical standard, as these 23 tracks show.

Freddie's deep, rich voice, with tonal similarities to that of Jerry Butler, exuded soul without apparent effort, though his sound was understandably much more southern, as evidenced by his reading of *Rainy Night In Georgia*, where his controlled but captivating use of his full vocal range over a full but not overpowering production creates a memorable version of this oft-recorded song. Apart from the medium funk of *Love To Hate* and the singalong gospel of *Follow The Lamb*, he pretty much sticks to ballads, to which his unhurried style is well suited, with the bluesy *Thank That Woman* and a heartfelt take on Big Maybelle's *Oh Lord What Are You Doing To Me* standing out amongst a quality selection.

Being from Nashville, it's hardly surprising that a country element finds its way into some of his recordings, such as 1973's cover of Mel Street's recent country smash *Lovin' On Back Streets* and his melodic rendition of Tammy Wynette's *Till I Get It Right*, one of four previously unissued tracks on the CD. He's equally adept at covers of soul songs too, like Motown's *My Whole World Ended*, given a dramatic treatment by ace producer Swamp Dogg. Overall, the album is not rich in dramatic moments, but if you like AOS [adult-orientated soul] you'll find plenty to enjoy here.

Mike Atherton ★★★ ½



**REV. SHAWN AMOS**  
THE REVEREND LOVES YOU

[PUT TOGETHER]  
No, he's not a real reverend - he's following in the footsteps of that long line of black musicians who awarded themselves titles - Duke Ellington and King Curtis for starters. But when he starts singing in that strong, confident, earthy voice, he's sure enough preaching the

blues. He reaches right back to the '30s with Memphis Minnie's song *Joliet Bound*, an urgent ditty about getting a lifetimes' jail sentence - but at least he's got a drink of White Lightning to ease the pain - and to the early '60s for *Bright Lights Big City*, taken in the typically easy-rolling style of its creator Jimmy Reed.

Most of the 12 songs, though, are the Rev's own and, though they deal with well-proven blues themes, at the same time they're strikingly original, like the measured, grinding opener *Days Of Depression*, the exuberantly celebratory *Brand New Man*, the slow, forlorn and country-tinged *The Last Day I'm Loving You* and the stepping, self-explanatory *Boogie*. The gem in the set, though, is the pounding tale of infidelity *You're Gonna Miss Me When I Get Home*, its ear-catching lyrics punctuated by the Rev's chugging, declamatory harmonica.

Backed by a band led by Chris Roberts' forceful and flexible guitar playing, with the rhythm section augmented by organ and brass on some tracks and even a guest appearance by The Blind Boys Of Alabama, he succeeds in doing what many have tried but few have achieved: putting a new slant on the blues while remaining true to its history. "Old school, new tools," he calls his music, and this writer couldn't express it better than that. The 40 minutes of music seems over all too soon, and when it is, this writer keeps reaching for the repeat button. Now, when's he appearing at a venue near me?

Mike Atherton ★★★★★ 1/2



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## REGGAE ALBUM OF THE MONTH



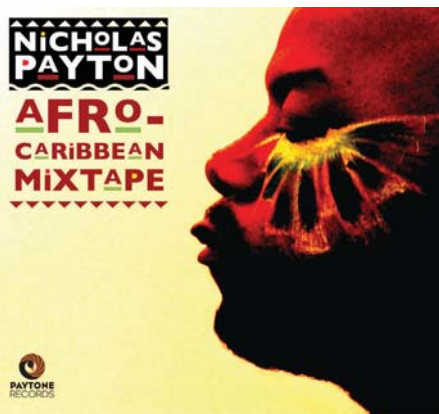
### MORGAN HERITAGE AVRAKEDABRA [COOL TO BE CONSCIOUS]

It is cool to be conscious, and the fact that many dancehall artists have switched to making reggae albums speaks for itself. Morgan Heritage chose the right name for their label and then had us all rejoicing in 2015 when *Strictly Roots* won the Grammy for Best Reggae Album. It's an award they should have won a few times already, but no matter because they might just win the next one.

This follow-up is just as strong, proud and talented as its predecessor; their customary deep roots sound – heard to best effect on *Want Some More* and former single *Selah* – again providing the bedrock, even as they push at the boundaries a little on tracks like *One Life To Live* with its thumping, techno/reggae beat, and *We Are* featuring Kabaka Pyramid & Dre Island. "Welcome to the future," they announce, before arguing the case for a better world. The production's thrillingly up-to-date and the bass drops heavy as lead, reinforcing the notion that there's music on this album for everyone, whether you're a longstanding fan from the mid-nineties, or you heard *Light It Up* from the last album and want to investigate further. *Ride And Roll* and both versions of *Reggae Night*, co-starring DreZion should go down well with clubbers but it's the roots and lovers rock tracks that best illustrate what this family quintet from Brooklyn and Jamaica are all about.

The aura of accomplishment permeating this album is something only granted to those who've perfected their craft and know what to do with it. The musicianship's first-rate and so are the vocals. There are two powerful singers in Morgan Heritage and whilst Gramps' baritone isn't heard much [*Dancing In The Moonlight* and *One Family*, shared with Stephen and Ziggy Marley excepted], Peetah soars on tracks like *Harder Than U Know*, which tells of everyday struggles, and *Tribute To Ruggs* – a majestic one-drop featuring the late Bunny Ruggs of Third World. Other standouts include the seductive *Ready For Love* and *Golden*; an R&B soaked love song that's perfect for cruising on a summer's day.

John Masouri ★★★★★ 1/2



### NICHOLAS PAYTON AFRO-CARIBBEAN MIXTAPE [PAYTONE]

Trumpeter-vocalist Payton's interest in West Indian music has surfaced on numerous occasions during his two-decade career, but this is the most comprehensive exploration of the region's notable cultural riches. Indeed the conceptual foundation of this 2CD release is as much socio-political as it is musical, as the multi-instrumentalist celebrates the African diaspora in the broadest sense, looking at how territories such as Haiti, Cuba and New Orleans have come to form a complex sonic and spiritual matrix, which in turn shapes a wide range of genres. Aided and abetted by a number of excellent sidemen [double bassist Vicente Archer, percussionist Daniel Sadownick, keyboardist Kevin Hays and Lady Fingaz on the decks and electronics, among others], Payton has accordingly set his sights far and wide, creating a 22-track opus in which the rhythmic shifts are constant. He takes in downbeat-led funk, thudding proto-ragga and airy swing, amid an interesting synthesis of dubbed up keyboard licks and wah-wah-like turntable scratches.

The reason why the mixtape works is not just down to the diversity of the elements

deployed though. Payton inflects the above materials in unexpected ways, introducing a decidedly '80s hip-hop vocabulary, complete with pinged electric cowbells, before graduating to string-laden '70s soul a la Donald Byrd and '90s neo soul a la Erykah Badu.

Quite significantly, Payton doesn't really go overboard as a soloist, and while his improvisations are enticing, bolstered by a beautifully misty Hubbardeque tone, they do not dominate the compositions. The use of recordings of strong statements by innovators such as Dizzy Gillespie, Duke, Max, Blakey and Miles also anchors the historical base of the project, and while a few of the pieces could have been arguably more effective as interludes rather than full length tracks the result is as thought-provoking as the claim that jazz is a four letter word.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★★★★ 1/2

### TERENCE BLANCHARD THE COMEDIAN [BLUE NOTE]

One of the key soundtrack composers of the last two decades returns to writing for the silver screen with a score for the new Robert De Niro film, and the result is as one would expect. Trumpeter Blanchard's ability to pen expressive themes and imbue them with subtle drama by way of finely shaded arrangements is intact. The bluesy signature that marked his classic works such as *Malcom X* is instantly recognizable, but on occasion the sprightly, airy themes are maybe just a touch too familiar. However, the band the trumpeter leads is outstanding, and the contributions of saxophonists Ravi Coltrane and Khari Allen Lee, in particular, who weave in and out of the main melodies with a gymnastic grace, are excellent. Altogether a very listenable release, but arguably not as memorable as some of the other highlights in Blanchard's substantial and largely impressive discography.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★★★★

### ARCHIE SHEPP DOODLIN' [INNER CITY]

While Shepp's decision to forgo his saxophones and voice and perform solely on piano may be the main talking point of this session the presence of the little recorded trumpeter Al Shorter is also notable. All of which is problematic. Shorter only appears in the latter half of the set and lacks the creative impulse that made his own solo work so interesting, and, as he is badly miked, his work on the Afro-Latin stomp of *Worried About You* gets swallowed up by Shepp's comping. Both the ropey engineering and lack of group cohesion scupper the performance before it has a chance to really get going. Elsewhere Shepp takes on standards such as *Sweet Georgia Brown* and *Doodlin'*; and he simply doesn't generate enough ideas to really carry the tunes from start to finish. Only on the title track, a dark-hued Shorter original recast as a duet between Shepp and bassist Bob Reid with an astute detour into Matt Dennis's *Invitation*, does Shepp reach a brooding intensity that is not unattractive. An uneven entry in his discography then; a disc that needs the hand of a strong producer to guide it to a better place.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★

### the comedian



### terence blanchard

ravi coltrane henny burton carl allen david pulphus khari allen lee



### DON PULLEN SAM RIVERS

#### CAPRICORN RISING

[BLACK SAINT]

Very welcome reissue of something of a hidden gem in '70s jazz. The energy of the Pullen Rivers quartet positively combusts in places, with the appropriately titled opener *Break Out* setting the agenda in no uncertain terms. Saxophonist-flautist Rivers and pianist Pullen treat the material very much like modeling clay, pulling harmony and rhythm all around a loose rubato groove while massaging quicksilver melodies into life. Drummer Bobby Battle and double bassist Alex Blake are fine contributors, especially the former, whose ability to galvanize the low end with lengthy, vaulting kick drum phrases is really quite superb.

While the onus is on extended pieces in which a theme can undergo a forensic deconstruction-reconstruction process there is an absolutely gorgeous mid-tempo ballad in *Joycie Girl*. Vaguely reminiscent of some of Pharoah Sanders' classic Impulse! work it is a sauntering Afro-samba enhanced by piping soprano from Rivers and keys work from Pullen that moves from gentle stream to raging torrent in an instant.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★★★★

#### VARIOUS

#### LET'S GET SWINGING MODERN JAZZ IN BELGIUM

1950-1970

[SDBAN]

With some justification, given the country's early embrace of the music, France has one of the most important jazz scenes in Europe. However, its francophone neighbour, Belgium has also made a sizeable contribution and this well researched, discerningly compiled and very handsomely packaged 2-CD set provides a worthy showcase for artists forever associated with the thriving club scene in Brussels and beyond. As one would expect the Belgians who managed to gain international recognition through their command of swing, bebop and all things modal are well represented – think Philip Catherine, Bobby Jaspar and Francy Boland, who collaborated so memorably with Kenny Clarke – but the inclusion of less well known figures like Jacques Pelzer, Fats Sadi, Herman Sandy and René Goldstein is also welcome. Well worth a spin.

Kevin Le Gendre ★★★★★ 1/2



## 3STYLE: DE COSTA BOYCE

**1 - Once almost the only music student in school, now a studio in the garden, a busy tour diary and a cracking debut album on the way: ever doubt you'd make it this far?**

"Yes and No: My path has been a difficult one and, to be honest, after some of the situations I've been in, I have had doubts and felt like quitting - but this really is my passion and I've always talked myself out of doubt by saying, 'Nine-to-five again? No Way!' Haha! I think you have to believe in yourself and work hard to succeed in anything, and I've always done my best at that."

**2 - Quite a strong [and enjoyable] seventies soul/funk sound to your music [aside from the Otis-style ballad, obv's]: you listen to a lot of music from this era? Such as?**

"Thank you. I've listened to and learnt from the best: Sly and The Family Stone, Stevie Wonder, Donny Hathaway, Aretha Franklin, Parliament/Funkadelic, Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye, Al Green, James Brown, Ohio Players, Shuggie Otis, Isaac Hayes, Temptations, David Bowie, Eddie Harris, Miles Davis, Jackson 5. So many more but I don't want to fill up the pages in the mag... Oh, but I have to mention [not from that era] Prince, D'Angelo, The Roots, Bilal and Van Hunt."

**3 - An impressive list of players on *Electric Soul*. You been calling in favours from all your touring mates, or do you just have a well-stuffed wallet?**

"Hahaha, love it! I'm lucky enough to have great working and social friendships with all the players. I consider Winston [drums] & Keeling [guitar] as family, as they have been with me from the early stages. With everyone else it's like an extended family vibe. I don't think this album could have sounded the way it does otherwise."



### NORTHERN SOUL REVIEWS

#### GOLDEN TORCH II

VARIOUS ARTISTS [OUTTA SIGHT]

The Superlatives, from New Jersey, kick off this 14-track L.P. with their 1966 Uptite waxing *I Still Love You*, and from the first few bars it's obvious that it's a winner: walloping beat, soaring strings, vivid harmonies, a catchy chorus, it powers along and takes the listener [or dancer] right along with it. It's a great beginning to this second volume of sounds which were popular at the Golden Torch.

The Torch, in Tunstall, Staffs, was opened by Chris Burton in 1965. Its first night featured Billy J. Kramer & The Dakotas, but things got better, and soul acts like Inez & Charlie Foxx and Major Lance appeared there along with DJs such as Colin Curtis, Keith Minshull and, er, Pete Stringfellow. In the early '70s it gained a reputation for its all-nighters before the usual police raids/ drugs busts scenario got it closed in 1973 after the magistrates refused to renew its licence. The fact that it's still fondly remembered all these years later shows what an important venue it was.

Some of the tunes featured on the album may seem commonplace now - but remember the first time you heard Dobie Gray's anthemic call to dance *Out On The Floor* or The Showstoppers' unstoppable *Ain't Nothing But A House Party*, and how they sounded not just like the best soul records you'd heard, but the best soul records there could ever be. Some numbers are not so renowned, and are just a little steadier in pace, but still sound great, like the crisp girl-group sound of Tari Stevens' *False Alarm*, while others, like George Carrow's turbocharged tilt at Darrell Banks' *Angel Baby*, gallop along thunderously as if they're racing to be the first to reach the run-out groove.

The inclusion of a British pop-stomper in Jason Knight's *Our Love Is Getting Stronger* and a '72 newie, First Choice's *This Is The House*, ensures that this set offers both quality and variety. I would tell you more, but I've just got to flip back to side one and listen to The Superlatives again.

#### SINGLE OF THE MONTH

is actually not a single at all, but the latest in Kent's series of EPs. It's

#### THE STARS OF MODERN [KENT]

The label delights in making these look as authentically Sixties as possible, with their laminated sleeves, intentionally vapid notes and retro typefaces. This very neat little limited-edition package offers four fab waxings [oh good grief, they've got me at it now] from L.A.s Modern label, all dating from 1965 to 1968.

*Before It's Too Late* by strident-toned Jackie Day is a pounding dance opus with a lusty sax solo; Vernon Garrett's *If I Could Turn Back The Hands Of Time* is similarly four-on-the-floor, with Vern's sandpaper tones urged along by a male backing group and a sweeping brass arrangement. Mary Love's strongly Motownesque *I've Got To Get You Back*, unlike some of her singles, wasn't released in Britain, and her sweet-voiced charm has made it a perennial favourite; and finally, Johnny Gilliam wraps his rich tones around a big beat ballad reminiscent of Jerry Butler.

This is the fifth EP in the series and, like the others, comes recommended.

\*\*\*

Mike Atherton

Starting this column with some events worth supporting leading up to the Whitsun bank holiday and the first mention goes to the **Ibstock Soul Club** at Central Avenue, Ibstock, LE67 6NF who are holding their next northern soul and Motown session on Friday May 19. Resident spinners Richard John and Simon and Tom Hunt will be spinning the best sounds of those genres from a starting time of 8 running right through until 1am. Admission is £4 before 9pm or £5 after. Further info from 078496 18174.

Also over the weekend of May 19/20/21 it is time for the **11th North Lincs Soul festival** which will be taking place by the seaside at Street East in Morecambe, Lincs, LA4 5HF. This popular festival will run over the usual 3 days with Friday featuring the all-day welcome package running from a start time of 2pm through until 2am the following morning. There will be 4 different sessions here over the following days. Saturday will feature two Celebration sessions in the afternoon and evening. This is followed by Sunday which is themed as **Cocktail Sunday** starting at noon until 2am finish on the Monday morning. A top line-up of local deejays will include Jackie Allsorts, Rod Allsworth, Alan Barnes, Marcus Ball, Dave Blair, Paul Collins, Roger Williams and Terry Gee + many more. Sounds like a great weekend to me so try and ensure you get along. Admission is only by special festival wristbands which need to be bought in advance. Go to the website [northlincsfestival.co.uk](http://northlincsfestival.co.uk) for full details.

Friday May 19 is the date for the Darwin charity soul night being held at the **Hollins Grove Conservative Club** in the town. Des Jones will be joined by guests Andy Childs, Graeme Bickerton and Ian Mellody. Doors open at 8 until a 1am finish and it will cost you £5 entry fee. You can call 01706 821925 for any help you need.

This same night sees the 2nd

anniversary night at the **Farnworth Cricket Club**, Farnworth, Bolton, BL4 0EA. Soul music across the board will be forming the musical agenda here with a hint of 70s, 80s and 90s in the mix as well. Special guest spinner will be Chris De Luen with doors opening to the assembled throng at 8 until 1am. Admission is only £3. Great value in today's terms. Moving onto Saturday May 20 and you need look no further for your entertainment on this date as top Midlands promoter Fitzroy [aka Fitzsoul] has got together another 3 roomed **King Power Stadium** extravaganza at Filbert Way, Leicester, LE2 7FL. 1600 people, 12 DJs and 3 rooms is the USP here with a diverse musical agenda comprising northern soul, Motown, Club classics and the best of the modern genre. A top class DJ roster will bring you the very best music all the way here with the night running from 8 until a 2am conclusion. Fitzy, Mark Freeman, Jim D, Yocky, Mick Jay, Sam Moore, Ted Massey, Clive Henderson, Rob Yates, Mark Randle and Barry Cooper will be behind the decks for this 6 hour extravaganza. Admission is £5 before 9.30pm and £7 after, so try to get there early. Also if you want to stay over and make a real weekend of it, then there's a Holiday Inn which is just 2 minutes walk away and the organisers have negotiated a special rate for all soullies attending the King Power extravaganza; which is just £66 per room with 2 people sharing and I believe that includes breakfast as well; now that's top value these days. Just say you are attending the King Power event when making your booking. 0116 249 4590 is the number to call or you can get further info from Fitzy on 07831 458780 or on the website [www.fitzsoul.co.uk](http://www.fitzsoul.co.uk) Also on this night West Lincs Soul present a session of across the board dancers' delights and jumpin' soul music at **The Stanley Club**, 1, Liverpool Road, Burscough,

L40 5TN. Top spinner Rod Looker from the **Beechwood Soul Club** is guest alongside the regulars Tony B, Andy and Ursula. You can expect to hear floorfillers, underplayed dancers, stompers and creepers during proceedings. Looking ahead and 17 June is the venue's 10th anniversary no less. Further info regarding this event from 07415 777748

On Saturday May 20 there will be another **Soul In The Dales** event happening in the Clifford Suite of the Black Horse in High Street, Skipton, North Yorks. Here you will be able to hear the best of Northern Soul, Motown and 60s in the company of veteran BBC Radio Lancashire broadcaster Keith Fletcher, whose Sunday Night Soul session is always popular. Keith will be ably assisted by a supporting cast that includes Fenny [a regular spinner on P & O's cruises], Bradford's finest Steve Burke and Ian Kinmond. This venue boasts a large dancefloor and easy parking on the High Street but has a strictly no talc policy, so make a note. Doors open at 7.30 until 1.30 and admission is £6.00

The next event to mention on this same night should be something special as it's a charity 'Dancing To Beat Blood Cancer' night set to be held in the charming Lincolnshire market town of Louth. Those of you who have followed this column over the years will know that Louth has figured in my life for a long time as I have relatives there, only about half a mile from **The Louth Town Hall**, Eastgate, LN11 9NH; where this night is being held. The venue is across the road from the town's cinema. Northern soul, classic Tamla Motown gems and 70s crossover and modern gems will be the order of the night. Nottingham legend Rob Smith will be special guest spinner alongside Martin Stanford, NG4 and Louth's very own Neil Brooks and residents Gaz Simpson and DJ Dicky Mabo. The town hall is a prestigious venue with a fantastic dancefloor and Rob will be running a record sales bar; and an extra added incentive is that Louth has

over 20 pubs in the town, and I've sampled most of them in my time. Doors open at 7pm until a 12.30 finish and it will cost you £5 for an advance ticket or £6 on the door on the night.

A mention on Sunday May 21 goes out to the **Seaside Soul** Sunday Afternoon session, which will be no less than number 19 in the series, being held in the North Wales resort of **Llandudno**, home of the legendary Dave Price of days gone by. I shall always remember Dave, complete with his classic cap, whizzing up to ECHOES on board the special Llandudno mail train. It will be held at **The County Hotel**, 11, Queen's Road, Craig-Y-Don, near Llandudno, and will feature 60s soul, Motown, northern soul and r & b with proceeds going to the local St David's Hospice. Rob Lloyd Jones, Colwyn Roberts, Richard Andrew, Kev Jones and Steve Hoy will be spinning the sounds you want to hear. Doors open at 1pm through until 6 with a suggested donation of £5 being made on entry. This fundraising event happens on the 3rd Sunday of every month and is one to visit if you're by the sea this summer. And I bet Dave Price will be there too.

**The Embassy** in Mansfield Road, Sheffield is holding a northern soul all-dayer on this Sunday which will feature 6 deejays in one great venue. There is also what the organisers call the best dancefloor in Sheffield and doors open at 2pm until late. Make sure you get along if you can. It's S12 2AG for sat navvers.

There is a big offering of rare soul upcoming over the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend of May 26-27-28 at **The Fishpond**, 204, South Parade, Matlock Baths, Derbys D4 3NR with nearly 30 hours of northern soul being brought to you by top Midlands deejays. There will be 3 big sessions here with the action being kicked off by 60s, 70s and 80s to current day sounds on Friday evening with Yocky, Paul Cater, Jon Mills and Mansfield's head honcho Phil Kingswood with admission £5 advance or £7 at the door. This is followed on Saturday with no less than 18 hours of music at the 12 noon-6am combined northern

soul all dayer/all-nighter in the Matlock ballroom. There will be a mighty plethora of soul spinners on hand at this marathon extravaganza of soul music across the board including Colin Curtis, Soul Sam, Yocky, Mick H, John Vincent, Dave Rimmer, Ted Massey, John Poole and many more. Proceedings will then close with another northern soul session in the ballroom on Sunday from 2pm until 8. This will cost £5 advance or £7 at the door. Throughout the weekend there will be an outside terrace bar with live deejays where you can chill or hopefully should we say; bask in the sunshine.

There will be another **100 Club all-nighter** on the Whit Saturday May 27 when Ady Croasdell will be joined by Butch and other residents for another popular session at 100, Oxford Street. Doors open at 11 until 6am with entry set at 12 squids and strictly no admission after 3am.

This same night sees a special presentation of **Soul in Barnoldswick** at the town's Rolls Royce Leisure Club in Skipton Road, BB18 6HJ. Stuart McIntyre will guest at this special event on the Yorks/Lancs borders and will be joined by long-running resident Roman, Shaun F and Mike Kemp. The action will be in the Merlin Suite's big ballroom. Doors open at 8 until 1am with it costing you a fiver to gain entry. Further info from Roman on 01282 613020.

**The Chateau Impney** all-nighter in Droitwich Spa, nr Worcester, WR9 0BN is happening on Whit Saturday May 27 and runs for a whole 12 hours kicking off at 8pm. This will be a true 100% northern soul extravaganza with top deejays Clive Jones, Ozz Osbourne, Mick Taylor, Chalky, Dean Carr, Mark Freeman, Little Scotty and Steve Haywood on hand to entertain allcomers and to keep the floor busy. Accommodation is available for those wanting to stay over and you should call 01905 774411. Rooms are just £59 per couple sharing. To get your tickets you should call 07976 351377.

This same night there is a night of rare soul happening at **Kingsway Village Hall**,

Clipstone Road, Forest Town, Mansfield, NG19 0DU where resident spinner Ken will be joined by guests Glyn Sissons and the man from just off the A1 Dougie Hall. Oldies-fast and furious for the dancers is what is promised here with the action set to kick off at 7.30 until a late finish. The venue boasts a large wooden dancefloor and it will cost you just £4 at the door. Further info from 07733 300545

There is an afternoon summer soul session at **Weavers Park Lane**, 40, Park Lane, Kidderminster on this Whit Saturday where from 2-6pm you can listen to the music as provided by Paul G's Soul Train whilst at the same time enjoy some real ale with a barbeque. The music is from way back in the 50s up until Y2K.

Wolverhampton's renowned record collector Bill Bishop is the guest DJ.

That Beatin' Rhythm host another session of soul at the **Harborough Hills Social Club**, 14, Vernon Street, Barnsley, S71 1BW on this very busy May 27 where from 7.30 until midnight you can be entertained by Leeds Central original Derek Greenhoff, Deano, Keith 'Mr Motown' Barnes and guest Martin W. There's a large dancefloor plus a bar with cheap beer and great soul music, so what more can you ask. Admission is just £3.00

**Junction 28 Soul Club** are holding a 70s, crossover and modern soul night on May 27 at Junction 28, the Postmill Centre, Market Street, South Normanton, Alfreton, DE55 2EJ [so no reason not to be able to find the venue]. Residents Clive and Neil are joined by special guest Cressy. The venue is only 1 mile from J28 of the M1 and doors open at 7.30. Entry is £4.00

Soul In The Vaults happens also on this night at the **Earl Sutton Connsie Club**, Station Road, Earl Sutton, Leics, LE9 7GE. Pete Ankers, Rob Gray, Colin Chamberlain and their guest Daz Holt present a night of stonking northern soul where Hinckley main man and local hero Ady Cope will be special guest spinner. £5 gets you into proceedings. Until next time...



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# ECHOES

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Subscribe, Save Money On The Cover Price... And Get **Somi's** splendid, five-star rated, former Album Of The Month **Petite Afrique** Absolutely FREE!!!



That's right: simply take out an annual print subscription to Echoes this month and we'll send you, because, we're as bonkers as, well... Theresa May's red hat, a gratis copy of the album aforesaid.

Yessirreebob, thanks to generosity of them there **Okeh Records** folks, a copy of **Petite Afrique**, undoubtedly our Editor's favourite album so far this year, could be on its way to you - if you take your finger out yo' ass and make the right decision.

By which we mean, should you take out a sub to Echoes whilst our May issue is on the shelves, in return we will send you, without further cost to your good self, **Somi's** staggeringly impressive CD as described, together with a complimentary snort of surprise from our esteemed Ed [who, it has to be said, is very easily startled, as he's led a quiet life, mostly playing Solitaire, being a failed suicide bomber and watching kitten videos on the internet].

What could be more generous than that? Well, apart from a sneak preview of next week's euro-lottery winning numbers. Obviously that. Oh, and George 'Five Jobs' Osbourne's tardis-like wallet. And you save money on the cover price too. No, please, don't cry. We tried that and it just looks silly and makes the dog bark.

Echoes' yearly subs rates [11 issues] are:

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Please specify when you would like your sub to begin.

**Read this small print.** This CD offer applies to the UK only and does **NOT** apply to online subscriptions or those lasting less than one year. Plus we have only a limited number of copies of the album as stated on hand. If they run out we reserve the right to substitute a suitable replacement – but that has only happened a handful of times in 16 years, so don't wet your pants.

Oh, and don't expect your album to arrive in the same envelope as your first issue: it comes separately, usually a bit later, once we've gone off sale for the month. Look, it's a free CD, alright? What the fuck d'you want?

The next issue of Echoes will be our June 'Look How Close We Suddenly Are To The Sun' edition. Keep an eye out for it. And some money, obviously: we have to eat. In the meantime, stay on our website and Facebook and Twitter for news updates and FREE exclusive online features. And stuff.



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