



RINGO STARR POSTCARDS FROM PARADISE

UME

Ringo Starr's 18th studio release, *Postcards From Paradise*, includes 11 original tracks and is the first to include a song written and recorded by Ringo Starr and his current All Starr Band - Steve Lukather, Todd Rundgren (yes THAT one), Gregg Rolie, Richard Page, Wally Palmer and Gregg Bissonette. *Postcards From Paradise* was produced by Ringo and recorded at his home studio in Los Angeles and, as always, features friends and family. As Ringo often says, "If I am recording and you're in town and drop by, you're going to be on the record!" The album's guest artists include: Joe Walsh, Benmont Tench, Dave Stewart, Ann Marie Simpson, Richard Marx, Amy Keys, Peter Frampton, Nathan East, and Glen Ballard. But what about the music? It glides along with an elastic sheen, stretching boundaries with electronic textures, orchestral arrangements, and some great performances from the aforementioned All-Stars - not to mention Ringo himself who, as usual, seems like he's having the time of his life. *Postcards From Paradise* is a life-affirming lovefest.



BJÖRK VULNICURA

ONE LITTLE INDIAN RECORDS

Vulnicura roughly translates in to "cure for wounds." Since music has been Björk's primary mode of communication, it makes sense that it would also be her balm of choice when dealing with an unexpected life change - in this case: a painful breakup. Björk began working on music that relied heavily on electronic beats and creating music for strings. The process found her creating her most emotionally direct songs since her *Homogenic*. As the songs came to life she began working with Venezuelan producer Arca, who has made a name for himself working with Kanye West and FKA Twigs and British musician The Haxan Cloak, who was brought on to mix the album. Despite the gravity of the material, working on *Vulnicura* ended up being a joyful process, especially later in the process when Arca came on board - with most of the material composed, the two recorded *Vulnicura* in a matter of weeks. The results are stunning - *Vulnicura* an all-enveloping soundworld that takes on new life in headphones. *Vulnicura* must have been an exorcism of sorts as the songs find Björk at her most emotionally direct - and tracks like "Atom Dance" (which features Anthony Hegarty) and "Black Lake" are among the finest of her career. Quite simply, it's a triumph.



ACTION BRONSON MR WONDERFUL

ATLANTIC

Action Bronson is a purveyor of delicious unexpectedness. Before he's a heralded rap artist, a Queens New York-bred, Albanian and Jewish culinary chef with his own cooking show. Verses are delivered with the recklessness of a black market AR15, yet come bejeweled with sharp wit and highbrow hilarity. Action's first full-length release *Mr. Wonderful* is a culmination of every ingredient that's made his discography delectable, then taken levels higher. The album blends the MC's influences—from Cam'ron's Purple Haze to Hendrix's—then colors a currently tope rap game with red-eyed global perspective. The musicality is grade A; live instrumentation turns Mr. Wonderful into a wonderland of sonic discovery. "A Light In The Addict," featuring Party Supplies and Fools Gold vocalist Black Atlas, and "City Boy Blues," which boasts the bottom production of 88 Keys and top coating of Party Supplies, both soar with gorgeous orchestration. The latter track in such a zone that Bronson doesn't spit a single bar, instead letting his vocals ride the wave of soulful rock. This isn't your father's favorite rapper. In a new world where rap fans are colorless and the Internet dictates TV, Action Bronson is a super hero whose physique ironically resembles a Viking warrior. You need this.



SETH AVETT & JESSICA LEA MAYFIELD SETH AVETT AND JESSICA LEA MAYFIELD SING ELLIOTT SMITH

RAMSEUR RECORDS

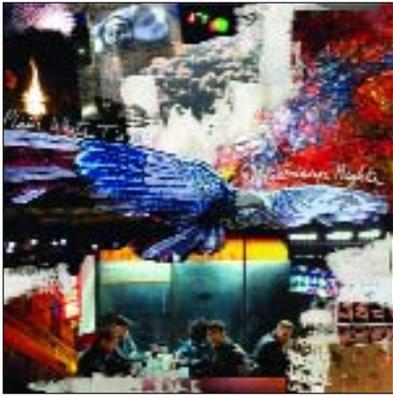
A relationship with, and a love for the songs of Elliott Smith is a feeling shared by many. Avett and Mayfield are among those who view his music as an under-celebrated body of work, reduced by some to a footnote in the canon of 1990's alternative rock. However, for any lover of music who may appraise his work in a dedicated way, the beauty and depth of it is crystal clear. For Seth Avett and Jessica Lea Mayfield, the nature of this album distinguishes itself as a 3-year-old labor of love, more pronounced in this respect than anything either has previously recorded. At the heart of a genuine musical interpretation, there must be an emotional connection. In this regard, the care and feeling for the music is apparent, even from the first moments of the opening track. Aesthetically, Seth Avett & Jessica Lea Mayfield Sing Elliott Smith is defined by simple vocal harmonies, bare instrumentation, and an approach that takes its time. Avett and Mayfield's voices play against each other in a natural and effortless manner, giving Smith's darker themes a new and bright dimension. We know it's hard, but give it a chance: It's more beautiful than you'd expect.



PRODIGY THE DAY IS MY ENEMY

WARNER BROS

The Day is My Enemy, the latest album from Rave Punk liferz The Prodigy, takes you on a journey through the uncharted underbelly of urban nightlife where anger is an ever-present energy lurking just beneath the surface of an edgy calm. "I can't tell you why this record came out so angry, I think it's just inbuilt in me," says Prodigy mastermind Liam Howlett "It's more about what I like music to do. I've always seen music I like as a form of attack. That's what I use music for, it's an attack. The tension is buried deep in the music right from the first drop. It's all about the sound having that sense of danger. That's what The Prodigy sound is about." Uncompromising first single 'Nasty' fires out of the cannons like a ferocious statement of intent and finds Keith Flint at his snarling best. *The Day Is My Enemy* is probably the most British sounding album you'll hear this year. Not British in the flag waving jingoistic sense, but in a way that understands that the nighttime spaces of urban Britain are a multi-hued cacophony of cultures. If *Invaders Must Die* was the sound of the rusted urban sprawl decaying like an open wound in the British countryside, then *The Day is My Enemy* is about the angry humanity existing in the decay of the urban nightmare.



PLAIN WHITE T'S AMERICAN NIGHTS

PROUD BIRD/REDJACKET

It's been years since the **Plain White T's** kicked off their career in the Chicago suburbs, playing a mix of pop, punk, and melody-driven rock & roll in basements and clubs across the metro area. A decade-and-a-half later — with several thousand shows and a string of platinum-selling singles, including the mega-hit “Hey There Delilah” (the 18th most downloaded song of all time), under their belts — the guys haven't stopped heading back to the basement to dream up new sounds. Independence: It's what American rock & roll — and American nights — have always been about. Now, five years after the release of *Wonders of the Younger*, they're upping the ante by striking out on their own as an independent band, even putting the finishing touches on their newest album in frontman Tom Higgenson's basement studio. The result is **American Nights**, an album that focuses on everything fans have come to expect from the **Plain White T's** — summery anthems, heart-on-the-sleeve lyrics, acoustic love songs — while still breaking new ground. It's an album about freedom.

UNDER THE RADAR

APRIL 2015

CIMS
COALITION OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC STORES
EST. 1993

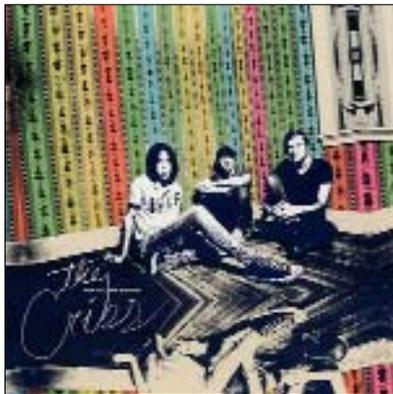


COURAGE MY LOVE BECOMING

INVOGUE

Call them a power trio, pop-punk, alternative metal... They grew up on it all. But while you are jumping around and banging your head with abandon, know this: The Canadian band — which consists of twin sisters Mercedes Arn-Horn (vocals, guitar) and Phoenix Arn-Horn (drums, vocals) with their friend Brandon Lockwood (bass) — does not seek to destroy. No, **Courage My Love** is here to uplift, inspire. **Becoming**, the band's new EP, is eight tracks bled out of **Courage My Love** during a period of exciting changes. “Our first EP, *For Now*, came out when we were 17,” explains Mercedes. “When you're our age, a lot can happen in two years.” Yes, many good things, including a JUNO Award nomination for ‘Breakthrough Group of the Year.’ Opening track “Skin and Bone” captures the fear and longing of leaving something behind. “We're too old to die young,” they sing over thunderous beats, the heart of the matter. Hard-knocking first single “You Don't Know How” cranks it up, intense and defiant: “Find out I'm strong enough on my own now.” By the time **Becoming** closes with the haunting ballad “Dark Wood, Dark Water,” **Courage My Love's** mission is clear: Rock out, be happy, stay true.

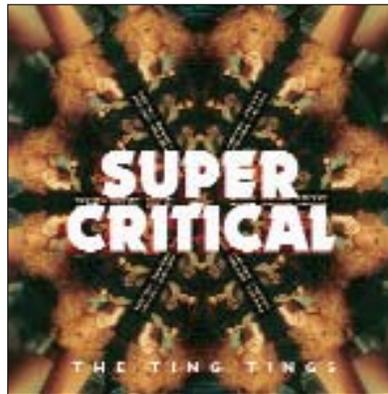
THE CRIBS



FOR ALL MY SISTERS

ARTS & CRAFTS

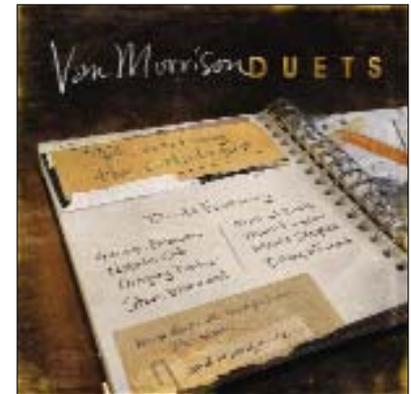
“Pop” isn't a dirty word, it's just taken **the Cribz** a little longer to realize it. “We've always had a little punk rock guilt,” explains the band's singer/guitarist, Ryan Jarman. When the band emerged from Wakefield, England with its self-titled debut (2004) and the follow-up *The New Fellas* (2005), both brimmed with scrappy punk and youthful exasperation. Even with the more obvious, radio-friendly sheen of *Men's Needs, Women's Needs, Whatever* (2007), **the Cribz** still sought equilibrium through dissonance with tracks like “Be Safe,” which also featured Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo spitting bile. And when the Johnny Marr-assisted *Ignore The Ignorant* (2009) added a further level of panache, the band swiftly and pointedly got back-to-basics with the dense and turbulent *In The Belly Of The Brazen Bull* (2012). But on **For All My Sisters**, that pendulum has now swung back to pop — and the brothers are keen to hold it there. **For All My Sisters** is the album they've always threatened to make; sleek, accomplished, concise, and packed to the brim with unadulterated melodies. Musically speaking at least, it's a guilt free zone. And, given that the one-and-only **Ric Ocasek** (The Cars; Weezer) is producer, you can rest assured that this is rock and roll ear candy of the highest order.



THE TING TINGS SUPER CRITICAL

PIAS

The Ting Tings — known for their massive hits “That's Not My Name” and “Shut Up and Let Me Go,” among others — needed a new approach for their next record. Feeling uninspired, the two — Katie White and Jules De Martino — sought out an adventure in late 2012 which took them to Ibiza. As it turned out, unleashing their party spirit was exactly the impetus and momentum needed to craft something special and true to the starting spirit of their musical adventures. The result is **Super Critical**, a hook-stuffed, introspective, modern disco record. While in Ibiza, someone introduced Katie and Jules to **Duran Duran's** stalwart guitarist **Andy Taylor** who offered to help sift through some old demos and become co-producer of this project. Songs began emerging. “It felt like making a record while partying in your bedroom, which is pretty much exactly how we made the first album,” Jules explains. “In 9 months we became like family. It was a massive education for us. His old analogue approach, the studio set-ups he used in the 80s with Duran Duran were perfect for the sound we were looking for. That approach isn't around anymore. Studio people don't know how to achieve it.” And, once again, it's a collection of songs that's impossible to resist.



VAN MORRISON DUETS: RE-WORKING THE CATALOGUE

RCA

Van Morrison is one of the most prolific recording artists and extraordinary live performers of our time. He has received a multitude of awards and accolades including 6 Grammy Awards, a Brit Award, an OBE, and has been inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. His visionary songwriting and mastery of many genres continues to shine on albums celebrating and re-exploring his blues, jazz, skiffle and country roots. On **Duets: Re-Working The Catalogue**, **Van** and a small army of special guests selected and recorded some of his songs from the catalog of 360 songs across his career. Deliberately steering away from his more well-known classics, **Van** enlisted some of the artists he most respects to perform these songs with him to re-craft and re-imagine them. The album was recorded in his hometown of Belfast and London in the United Kingdom over the last year, using a variety of musicians and fresh arrangements. Produced by **Van Morrison** along with Don Was and Bob Rock, the album features Bobby Womack, Steve Winwood, Mark Knopfler, Taj Mahal, Mavis Staples, Michael Bublé, Natalie Cole, George Benson, Gregory Porter, Clare Teal, P.J. Proby, Joss Stone, Georgie Fame, Mick Hucknall, Chris Farlowe, and Van's daughter Shana Morrison.



AMERICAN WRESTLERS AMERICAN WRESTLERS

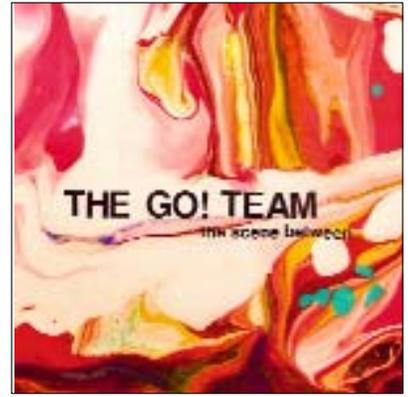
FAT POSSUM

Now based in Missouri, **American Wrestlers** (Gary McClure) has been on one hell of a journey. Born and raised in Glasgow, he then found his way to Manchester, where he recorded some demos under a different name and posted the songs online. It was then that his now-wife first got in touch, and after becoming enraptured with one another, he moved across the Atlantic to get married. Armed with little more than a TASCAM 8-track and “the cheapest pawn shop instruments [he] could afford,” **American Wrestlers** took shape in remote and rural America. Just dig ‘I Can Do No Wrong’ is driven along by a crackling beat, yet it’s a stripped back approach to garage-rock that focuses on melody and avoids the all-too-common desire to drench everything in layer-upon-layer of fuzz. “The warbling in the chorus is me shaking the whole cassette after taking off the front of the tape tray,” he explains of his process. There’s a similar free-spiritedness throughout the record – on ‘There’s No One Crying Over Me Either’, the four-note piano refrain was a happy accident: “I was walking past a piano in a friends house and hit four notes at random, stopped and played them again a few times, then sang a melody, and it eventually became this song.” **American Wrestlers** is full of such gems. DIY!

UNDER THE RADAR

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THE GO! TEAM THE SCENE BETWEEN

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES

Since they burst on the scene more than a decade ago, **The Go! Team** have followed a unique muse that found delicious equilibrium in the fuzzy guitars of Sonic Youth and My Bloody Valentine, along with lo-fi sampledelica, and a vocal ensemble that combined Old School Hip Hop theatrics along with pep rally madness. For the band’s latest album, **The Scene In Between**, **The Go! Team’s** leader, Ian Patron, wrote, recorded, and produced the entire LP on his own, abiding by just four simple rules: “Melody would guide the song, samples would be treated as an instrument rather than a basis for the song, the production would vary across the song (like flipping the dial on a radio), and the singers must all be people he’d never previously heard of.” New single “Blowtorch” captures Patron’s new aesthetic perfectly: “I wrote the song just on an acoustic, but when it came to the recording I had the idea of building it from chords from loads of different sources, so say the G chord was a second sample from one song, the D chord from totally different kind of song and it went on — the process of layering all these turned it into a wall of sound.” Far out. **The Scene In Between** is easily one of the most fun records of 2015. Turn it up and flip the freak out! You need this.

JOE PUG



WINDFALL

LIGHTNING ROD RECORDS

Joe Pug’s rise has been as improbable as it has been impressive. After dropping out of college and taking on work as a carpenter in Chicago, **Pug** got his musical start by providing CDs for his fans to pass along to their friends. This led to a string of sold out shows and a record deal. The following years would have him on the road for over four hundred shows, including stops at Lollapalooza, Bonnaroo, and Newport Folk Festival. If the opening notes on **Pug’s** new LP **Windfall** are a bit disorienting, his fans won’t likely be surprised. The Austin, TX singer-songwriter has made a habit of defying expectations so the piano-driven “Bright Beginnings” and the atmospheric rumination of “Great Hosannas” are just further indication that he’s quite comfortable stepping outside of the guy-with-a-guitar trappings of the genre. The aim on **Windfall** was very straightforward. “We wanted to capture the music just the way we play it, with minimal production,” explains **Pug**. “I wanted to record these songs the way they were written and put them out in the world.” The simple, effective, and sublime arrangements allow **Pug’s** chiming guitars and transcendent lyricism to hit your heart with ruthless efficiency. This is stunning stuff.



ROBBEN FORD INTO THE SUN

PROVOGUE

Robben Ford is one of the premier electric guitarists today, particularly known for his blues playing, as well as his ability to be comfortable in a variety of musical contexts. A five-time Grammy nominee, he has played with artists as diverse as Joni Mitchell, Jimmy Witherspoon, Miles Davis, George Harrison, Phil Lesh, Bonnie Raitt, Michael McDonald, Bob Dylan, John Mayall, Greg Allman, John Scofield, Susan Tedeschi, Keb Mo, Larry Carlton, Mavis Staples, Brad Paisley, and many others. **Into the Sun** explores the depths of **Ford’s** vision, and which equally incorporates his jazz, pop and rock chops. **Into The Sun** is jam packed with guest appearances by the likes of ZZ Ward, Grammy winner Keb Mo, Gov’t Mule and Allman Brothers guitarist Warren Haynes, pedal steel guitar star Robert Randolph, six-string slide legend Sonny Landreth and up-and-coming star Tyler Bryant.



THREE DAYS GRACE HUMAN

RCA

Since first catapulting on to the scene in 2003, **Three Days Grace** consistently connected to audiences via hard-hitting, honest, and hypnotic anthems. The platinum-selling, chart-topping, record-setting quartet—Matt Walst [lead vocals], Barry Stock [lead guitar], Brad Walst [bass], and Neil Sanderson [drums, percussion, keyboards, programming]—once again continue that tradition on their fifth full-length album, **Human**. Their link to listeners is the most natural and human thing of all. “When Matt joined the band last year, there was not a fleeting moment that we didn’t think we would forge ahead,” agrees Neil. “Matt’s first show was in front of eight-thousand people... and he came out guns blazing. We never looked back.” Energized, the band wisely booked studio time and began creating **Human** with all hands on deck – even the new guy was writing songs. With its robust refrain and gnashing guitars, lead single “Painkiller” doesn’t simply reintroduce **Three Days Grace** — rather it reaffirms their place at the forefront of 21st century hard rock. “These songs describe what we’re about right now,” says Barry. “There’s a lot of inner struggle and loss on those record. Our goal was to be a little heavier and darker and reflect what we’ve gone through.” The result is nothing shy of victorious.



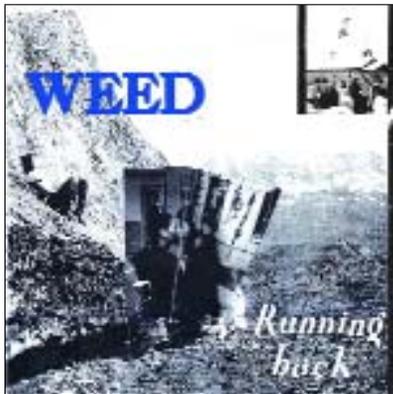
STURGILL SIMPSON
METAMODERN SOUNDS IN COUNTRY MUSIC
 HIGHTOP MOUNTAIN

Some become country musicians because they love the style — they grew up on Waylon and Willie, wanted to be cowboys and cow-girls, pick guitars and drive old trucks. **Sturgill Simpson** seems to have the lament of a lonely tune in the marrow of his bones. His voice aches each note out, burdened and bestial. You get the sense that there is nothing about **Simpson** that is put on -- that he truly feels his songs and writing and performing them is a ritual of catharsis. Hearing **Simpson's** mournful strains harkens back to some of country music's greatest artists, but without actually imitating anyone particular or borrowing too much. **Metamodern Sounds in Country Music** is a wholly spiritual sophomore album with **Simpson** backed by spare and organic arrangements with wildly effected guitars, sparing use of pedal steel and organ, and modern production that is as richly textured as it is soul-bearing.



CHASTITY BELT
TIME TO GO HOME
 HARDLY ART

Chastity Belt met in a tiny college town in Eastern Washington, but their story begins for real in Seattle, where the city's DIY community led them, as it has countless others, into a cramped practice space. They emerged with a cheekily-titled debut, *No Regerts*, sold it out faster than anyone involved thought possible, and toured America. Now they're back with *Time to Go Home* — an album that was born from a valuable lesson: In the outside world, they realized something crucial: they didn't have to play party songs now that their audience didn't consist exclusively of inebriated 18-22 year olds. Though still built on a foundation of post-post-punk energy, jagged rhythms, and instrumental moves that couldn't be anyone else's, *Time to Go Home's* songs they grew into in the months that followed are equal parts street-level takedown and gray-skied melancholy. They pay tribute to writer Sheila Heti on "Drone" and John Carpenter with "The Thing," and deliver a parallel-universe stoner anthem influenced by Electrelane with "Joke." *Time to Go Home* sees **Chastity Belt** take the nights out and bad parties of their past to their stretching points, watch the world around them break apart, and rebuild it in their own image with stunning clarity before anyone gets hungover.



WEED
RUNNING BACK
 LEFSE

Weed formed in 2010 when Will Anderson and Kevin Doherty reconvened on a clothing-optional beach in Vancouver. A couple weekend trips to Washington were made, a 7" single was cut, a couple screwballs tightened up. In 2011 they played a benefit for the UBC campus radio station, where Hugo Noriega provided the band with doughnuts. He was quickly recruited and the three have been together ever since. They have aggravated one million drummers in the meantime. In September 2013 the band released an LP of sentimental dream-grunge called *Deserve* on Seattle's Couple Skate Records and started doing laps around the continent, silencing the critics (literally, in some cases) and stirring up a loyal fanbase lovingly referred to as the Field Trippers. And they have a song called "Thousand Pounds" from their brand new album called *Running Back* which is available both on the CD you see before you as well as a beautiful slab of pink vinyl. Pretty funny stuff for a band that claims their name is based on a verb rather than the noun — a noun that should be enjoyed while you crank this up nice and loud.



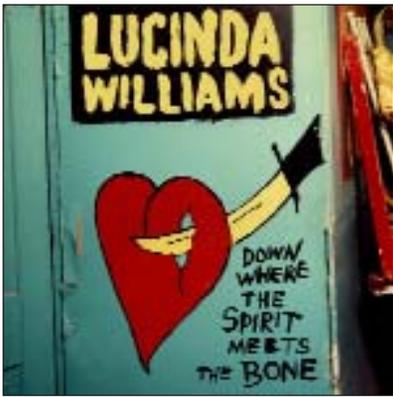
CASSANDRA WILSON
COMING FORTH BY DAY
 LEGACY

An otherworldly musical homage to legendary jazz vocalist Billie Holiday on the 100th anniversary of the singer's birth, *Coming Forth By Day* is **Cassandra Wilson's** moody, soulful new album showcase for contemporary yet timeless interpretations of standards associated with Lady Day. **Wilson** has drawn inspiration from Billie Holiday for her entire life and chose the title as a way to honor the iconic singer: *Coming Forth By Day* is an English translation of the title of the ancient Egyptian "Book of the Dead" — a collection of scriptures intended to assist one's journey through both life and the afterlife. The album features 11 re-interpretations of standards associated with Lady Day plus an original penned by **Wilson**, the dream-like new "Last Song (For Lester)," imagined as a heartbreaking final message from Billie to her musical love, Lester Young. (Upon getting the news that Young had passed away, Billie flew overseas to his funeral only to be denied the opportunity to sing by Young's family.) *Coming Forth By Day* was produced by Nick Launay (Nick Cave, Arcade Fire, Yeah Yeah Yeah's) and features an amazing array of guests, including T Bone Burnett, Nick Zinner (Yeah Yeah Yeahs), and the one-and-only Van Dyke Parks. You need this.



MOTHER MOTHER
VERY GOOD BAD THING
 DEF JAM

Mother Mother has always reveled in contradiction. For singer / guitarist Ryan Guldemond, there is no denying the human condition in all its tragic, conflicting nature. Two years after the Juno-nominated *The Sticks*, the Vancouver quintet returns with its fifth studio album, *Very Good Bad Thing* — an edgy, synth-heavy, club-driven rock record filled with massive hooks. But as is the band's trademark, behind the gauzy boy-girl vocal harmonies, angular guitar lines and infectious rhythms lies something deeper and darker. "I think it's peppier and more of a party, but at the same time the torture is very apparent," singer/keyboardist Jasmin Parkin says. "But there's not a lot of denial," Guldemond says. "There's a pride behind the confession." No subject is taboo for **Mother Mother** on *Very Good Bad Thing*: male body image ("I Go Hungry"), morning-after self-loathing ("Have It Out"), bullying and suicide ("Kept Down"). Recorded with Juno-winning producer Gavin Brown (Metric) at his Noble Street studio in Toronto, *Very Good Bad Thing* is the next logical step in **Mother Mother's** sonic evolution. The guitar hooks are bigger, the synths are louder, the vocal harmonies are more crafted, the irony toned down, and the bass and drums are tighter, and the sin is extra sweet.



LUCINDA WILLIAMS
DOWN WHERE THE SPIRIT MEETS THE BONE
 HIGHWAY 20 RECORDS

As a rule, you can divide music into three categories — the kind that aims for the head, the kind that aims for the heart and the kind that aims for the hips. Forging two of those connections at once is pretty impressive, but connecting on all three? That’s a rare accomplishment indeed, one that **Lucinda Williams** manages on her 11th studio album, **Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone**. The first release on **Williams**’ own Highway 20 Records label, **Down Where The Spirit Meets The Bone** is easily the most ambitious creation in a body of work that’s long on ambition. Over the course of two discs, **Williams** leaves no emotional crevice left unexplored, drinking deeply from a well of inspiration that culminates with an offering that overflows with delta-infused country soul. As ever, **Williams** uses words to ensnare her audience, sometimes with an arm around the shoulder, sometimes with hands grabbing the lapels, and sonics to hold that crowd’s rapt attention. But here, **Williams** pushes herself as a vocalist as well, making the most of both her instrument’s honeyed warmth and its sandpaper-to-the-soul toughness. She un-tethers herself more fully than she has in ages, or possibly ever. Pete Thomas, Bill Frisell, Ian McLagen, Jakob Dylan and Tony Joe White guest.



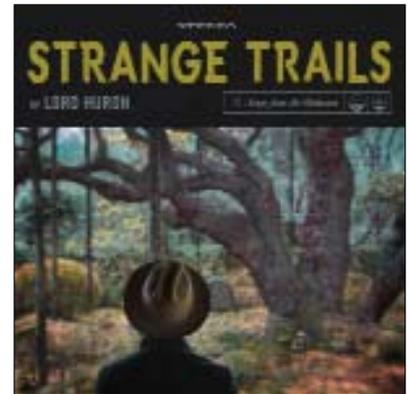
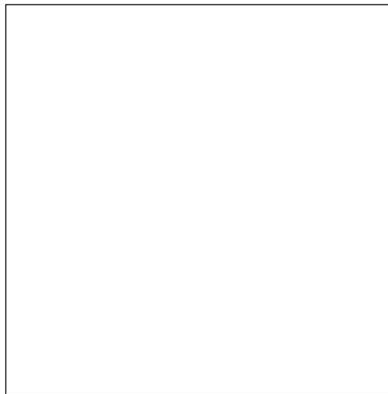
SHLOHMO
DARK RED
 TRUE PANTHER SOUND

Dark Red is the second full-length album from **Shlohmo**, aka 25 year-old Los Angeles native Henry Laufer. The album is an uncanny marriage of his ever-evolving, richly textured sound with shades of 90s IDM, R&B, cassette-tape Jungle, and, in an unexpected turn, sludge metal. “It sounds like if Electric Wizard tried to make an R&B record,” he says, “or Boards of Canada meets Burzum by the River Styx.” **Shlohmo**’s music thus far exists in the poles between the subtle textured tracks of 2011’s **Bad Vibes** and the booming sinister synths and HI hats of his production work and remixes (split EP with Jeremiah, Banks’ “Brain”, remixes for Drake + The Weeknd). **Dark Red** utilizes **Shlohmo**’s existing palate but also mines the noises and imperfections inherent in analog production and naturally damaged sounds. Side-stepping current trends that lean towards pristine, computer-generated production, **Dark Red** explores natural distortion, fuzz and noise as compositional tools, intentionally distressing sounds to echo the feeling of the icy menace and emotional charge found on early black metal tapes. The result is a deeply personal listen, **Shlohmo**’s boldest statement yet.



THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION
FREEDOM TOWER (NO WAVE DANCE PARTY 2015)
 MOM & POP

New York City is a big place. A loud place. Some of that noise is music. And some of the music is noise. Sucking it all in and turning it loose with prejudice, **The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion** takes a ferocious bite out of the Big Apple with their new long-player, **Freedom Tower – No Wave Dance Party 2015**. Like the best sides that percolated up from the Bronx, the Lower East Side, and Greenwich Village across the 1970s and ‘80s – **Freedom Tower** is more than a high-octane dance party record, it is a document of New York City, a chronicle of grit and terror and love! It’s all here: The Hustler and The Trust Fund Baby, the Mosh Pit Casualty, the Celebrity Chef, the Crooked Cop, the Struggling Artist, the Sucker MC, the forgotten Sex Workers and Last-Chance Cinderellas. **Freedom Tower** is a radical portrait of New York City set to the savage funkacide of the **Blues Explosion**, locked and loaded with the most deadly, predatory guitar riffs that primitive magnetic tape can handle... From start to finish, **Freedom Tower** is overmodulated, cooked with dirt, and finished in acid rain! **Freedom Tower** is packed with the kind of beats and rhymes that will make even the most reserved Walter Mitty jump back and say “damn!” Even after all these years **The Blues** is **NUMBER ONE!**



LORD HURON
STRANGE TRAILS
 IAMSOUND

Ben Schneider conjured **Lord Huron** from the depths of Lake Huron during a trip to his family home in northern Michigan in 2010. Ancient memories, smoke over the moon and nights full of perilous laughter all bolstered the brew from which **Lord Huron** emerged. Ben brought **Lord Huron** back with him to Los Angeles, where strange young things are known to flourish, unhindered. As the songs grew, so did the need for a band to play them. Answering the call ringing out from California, grand brethren from years past, friends and fellow Michiganders, Mark Barry, Miguel Briseno and Tom Renaud, left their respective paths, or bent each road to their own will, to reconvene out west. After a pair of EPs, a debut album, **Lonesome Dreams** saw release in 2012. Tours followed that found the boys in blistering deserts, reveling in sinister paradises, wandering frozen coasts and lost among the hanging fog of bygone forests. Who can say but the soles of their shoes how far they travelled and how wide? In 2014, trail-weary but intrepid, **Lord Huron** set up camp deep in Los Angeles at Whispering Pines Studios to notch their latest songs – all filled with danger, slapback and noir – and abet the journeys of others. Together they’re called **Strange Tales**... May they soundtrack your own.



JOSH ROUSE
THE EMBERS OF TIME
 YEP ROC

"It's my surreal expat therapy record," observes **Josh Rouse** about his new LP, **The Embers of Time**. A career peak, **The Embers of Time** takes inspiration from his self-admitted crisis of confidence and bouts with existential psychotherapy in his adopted home of Valencia, Spain. He split time recording the album between Valencia and Nashville, and enlisted Brad Jones (Justin Townes Earle) as producer. The record moves from the hushed twang of "Time," where **Josh** recalls a stepfather who died too young and muses about his own mortality, to the deceptively sunny album closer "Crystal Falls," which recounts a rare period of solace from his itinerant childhood. "In Crystal Falls I made a few good friends," he sings. "It was just another stop. I never saw them again." The 10-song collection of originals contains some of **Rouse's** most beautiful arrangements and complex songwriting to date, featuring Glen Campbell-style Countrypolitan pop mastery through *Self Portrait*-era Dylan confessional lyrics. **Rouse** has been called "one of contemporary music's most engaging singer-songwriters" (NPR) as well as "a talent to outrank Ryan Adams or Conor Oberst" (Uncut), and with **The Embers of Time** he opens a new chapter in his lauded career.

UNDER THE RADAR

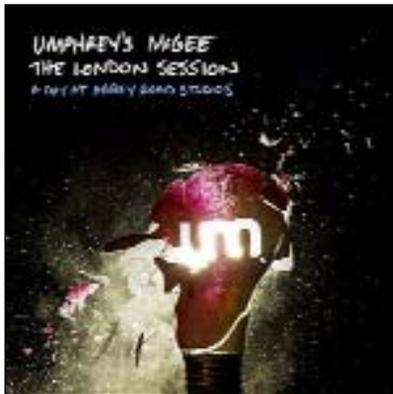
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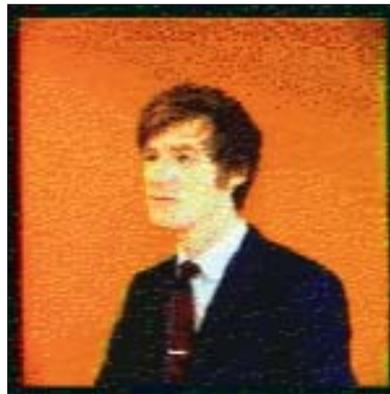
JESSIE BAYLIN
DARK PLACE
 BLONDERAT

Some singers can create a mood far before the first syllables of lyric have been woven into a full story. Such is the case with **Jessie Baylin**, whose ethereal voice shoots the opening notes of **Dark Place**, her fourth album, into instant emotive territory – it envelops in a mysterious gauze, setting the stage for what is her most raw, personal work yet and also her most thrilling. It's the combination of elements on **Dark Place** that make it such a rattling look into not only **Baylin's** mind but the human condition: her voice, in its other-worldly tone that can be both angelic and deeply plaintive, cuts through poetic lyrics with throbbing guitars. She's Nico, if she could sing like Nina Simone; she's Dusty Springfield fronting Mazzy Star. "Dusty," she says, before adding, "on Quaaludes." Once again collaborating with producer Richard Swift (The Shins, Damien Jurado, Laetitia Sadier) **Dark Place** is rich not only in songcraft but fascinating swirls of musical composition that hold together a cohesive story, with echoes of everything from the Cocteau Twins to Love and late Beatles; from Todd Rundgren to Linda Perhacs and Beach House. These exposing the shadows that lurk behind all of our brightest corners: On motherhood, marriage, on the dangerous freedom of adulthood. It's stirring, sexy stuff.



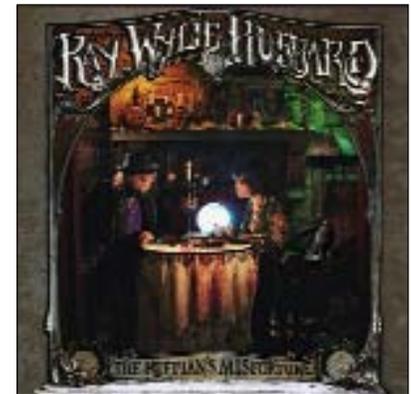
UMPHREY'S MCGEE
THE LONDON SESSION: A DAY AT ABBEY ROAD STUDIOS
 NOTHING TOO FANCY MUSIC

As jam band luminaries **Umphrey's McGee** prepared for three nights at Brooklyn Bowl London in June 2014, longtime **UM** producer Manny Sanchez shot manager Kevin Browning a half-joking email: "Thinking about how to get myself over to London... **UM** at Abbey Road?" With that **The London Session** was born. Less than ten months after the release of *Similar Skin*, **Umphrey's** is pleased to unveil their latest studio album straight from the world's most famous recording mecca. The stealth recording operation yielded ten tracks, from a single day, in Abbey Road's legendary Studio 2. Titanium-strength rockers fit jigsaw-like among earworm acoustic arrangements on a record that checks all the boxes. What exactly do you do with a mere 12 hours in this iconic studio? You make the most of it. With few expectations of what the session might actually yield, a handful of tracks quickly turned into an album's worth of material. Acoustic arrangements, new versions of setlist regulars, and the first cover ever to grace a **UM** studio record (see if you can spot it) are all infused with the spirit of Abbey Road. **Umphrey's McGee** are already a band used to playing without a net – and **The London Session** is a bold experiment that yielded an impressive result. Dig!



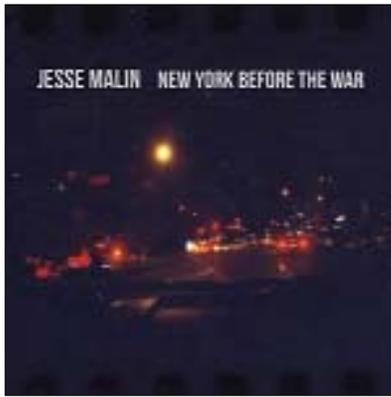
EAST INDIA YOUTH
CULTURE OF VOLUME
 XL

When William Doyle first performed live as **East India Youth** in November 2012 to a dozen people in a tiny Dalston basement venue, it was remarkable that he made it through the entire 25-minute gig without incident. Over the next two years his achievements seemed as effortlessly gained as they were well-deserved, as evidenced on his 2013 debut, **Total Strife Forever** and his stunning new album, **Culture Of Volume**. Named after a fragment of verse from the "Monument" by poet (and Brian Eno collaborator) Rick Holland, **Culture Of Volume** is William Doyle's dizzying sophomore achievement, mainly recorded (like his debut *Total Strife Forever*) on his own, in his bedroom at home in London. He explains: "I always wanted to make quite sophisticated music using very unsophisticated means." Weaving Pet Shop Boys style pop bangers next to industrial techno, next to sci-fi Scott Walker style ballads next to ambient explorations, next to urgent, Krautrock-like synthesizer laments, Doyle makes his point: "The whole vibe of the album is certainly trying to force errors by making unlikely connections and seeing what happens." As the man himself sings at the opening of the album: "The end result is not what was in mind." But it is undoubtedly brilliant.



RAY WYLIE HUBBARD
THE RUFFIAN'S MISFORTUNE
 BORDELLO RECORDS

When it comes to down 'n' dirty roots 'n' roll, nobody in the wide world of Americana music today does it better than **Ray Wylie Hubbard**. Except, it seems, for **Hubbard** himself. After riding a decade-long career resurgence into the national spotlight with 2012's acclaimed *The Grifter's Hymnal*, the iconoclastic Texas songwriter is back to continue his hot streak with **The Ruffian's Misfortune** — his 16th album. From his humble beginnings as an Oklahoma folkie in the '60s to his wild ride through the '70s progressive country movement, and onward through the honky-tonk fog of the '80s to his soberly-empowered comeback as a songwriter's songwriter in the '90s, **Hubbard** was already a bona fide legend by the time he really found his groove right at the turn of the century. In lieu of drugs and alcohol, that language became **Hubbard's** new addiction — and the title of his 2001 album *Eternal and Lowdown* somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy: 14 years further down the road, he's still chasing hellhounds deep into the underbelly of the blues, with a Lightnin' Hopkins gleam in his eyes and a Rolling Stone swagger in his boot steps. **The Ruffian's Misfortune** is his latest missive home from this leg of his long journey. Its message? Don't wait up. Also available on VINYL.



JESSE MALIN
NEW YORK BEFORE THE WAR
 ONE LITTLE INDIAN

New York Before the War is a hymn to everything **Jesse Malin** believes in most: respecting your roots, grabbing the future by its throat, and creating a soundtrack for a life filled with meaning. None of those things is easy to do, especially now. In fact, that's what the war in the title is all about: the battle to create and hold onto what's worthwhile even as so many forces, both internal and in the world outside, conspire to sweep it away. At the very top of that list is music. "I've always been a fan of the album as an art form," **Malin** says, and *New York Before the War* is a unified statement. It opens with "The Dreamers," a haunting ballad that nearly became the album's title track. Resting on an elegant piano figure, the song evokes both the alienation and the sense of deep connection that travel can bring. Wherever you are and whomever you meet, "the blood still runs red," **Malin** sings. That sense of doubleness, that emotional complexity – carving your own path but desperate for connection to a larger community — runs throughout the album. Darker meditations like "She's So Dangerous" and "Bar Life" nestle next to rockers like "Freeway" (which features a blistering solo by the MCS's Wayne Kramer) and "Turn Up the Mains" (with Alejandro Escovedo on backing vocals). Brilliant.

UNDER THE RADAR

APRIL 2015



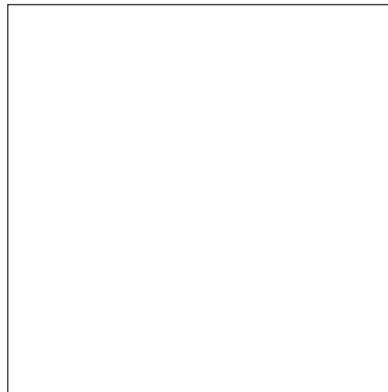
THE WATERBOYS
MODERN BLUES
 HARLEQUIN & CLOWN

Modern Blues is an electric, eclectic, soulful, bold and gloriously free-wheeling rock'n'roll record, arriving at a time when the relevance and popular reach of **The Waterboys** has garnered new momentum. Mike Scott entered the studio intent on harnessing the rolling, spontaneous energy that fuelled some of **The Waterboys'** greatest albums. "I set out to make a record with an ensemble playing live, to get that performance spirit. It's how I recorded *Fisherman's Blues*." To that end, he corralled old hands and new friends. Ralph Salmins, a mainstay on drums for the past four years, appears alongside Scott and talismanic **Waterboy** Steve Wickham, who weaves dizzying fuzz fiddle spell on several tracks of *Modern Blues*. Fresh to the ranks are Memphis keyboard player "Brother" Paul Brown, and David Hood, legendary bassist from the heyday of FAME studios and Muscle Shoals. "I've got the man who played on Aretha Franklin hits on bass!" Scott laughs. Asked why he chose to record in Nashville, Scott (who lives mostly in Dublin) explained, "Nashville has a reputation as Music City, USA... I know that across town Jack White's making a record, The Black Keys are making theirs. I like that competitive feeling... It's a spur." Indeed. **The Waterboys** are back!



STEVE HACKETT
WOLFLIGHT
 INSIDE OUT MUSIC

Wolflight is **Steve Hackett's** first original solo studio album since *Beyond The Shrouded Horizon* in 2011. Primal and orchestral, it retains the former Genesis guitarist's trademark virtuosity as electric guitar runs right the way through with a regular sprinkling of acoustic. The concept behind it is a new unexplored chapter in the guitarist's career. The ten tracks take the listener through a journey in space and time looking at the different faces of the endless fight for freedom. Wandering between parallel universes, **Hackett** explores contemporary and ancient cultures, from Greece (Corycian Fire) to the Far East (Wolflight), the USA and Martin Luther King (Black Thunder), but also his very own childhood memories (The Wheel's Turning) and the unresolved drama of domestic violence (Love Song to a Vampire). "It reflects everybody's struggle for freedom on a journey travelling through both inner and outer space," says **Hackett**. "It explores sounds from as far afield as Greece, Azerbaijan, the deep American South, Sahara desert and beyond, from all our yesterdays, evoking the ancient past." There's a primal energy is at the root of *Wolflight* – may it serve as a springboard to an exotic and exciting adventure.



THE LONDON SOULS
HERE COME THE GIRLS
 FEEL RECORDS

The London Souls' have been nothing short of a best-kept-secret among New York City concertgoers since the band's formation in 2008, building a fervent and dynamic fan base leveraged by their ever-substantiated reputation for consistently well-rehearsed and impassioned, explosive live performances. The band's celebrated sound and spirit draws significant influence from the driving force of British rock pioneers Cream and Led Zeppelin, to billowing and bouncing funk and soul, to the layered harmonies and memorable hooks of The Beatles and The Hollies, to the contemporary psychedelia of *My Morning Jacket* among many more. Produced by Soulive's Eric Krasno, *Here Come The Girls* is indeed a declarative statement from the band, a true showcase for the band's remarkable songwriting chops that's already prompted *Relix* to dub it "among history's finest examples of the dirtiest rock." It's a sound that's both indebted to the heroes that came before them and utterly modern and forward-thinking at the same time. **The London Souls** are not revivalists – they're the new guard, blazing their own trail with a brash and blistering self-assurance. Think they don't make 'em like they used to? Then you need to get hip to this. *The Girls* did.



DRENGÉ UNDERTOW

INFECTIOUS MUSIC

That 1969 Ford Mustang on the cover of **Drengé's Undertow** — with its brake lights ominously lighting the deserted forest road from which it appears to have suddenly swerved — is “either the starting point or ending point” for every song on the U.K. band’s bold and evolutionary sophomore album. “The car, the woods, the idea of feeling stuck,” says singer-guitarist Eoin Loveless, “are themes that keep cropping up in these songs. It’s a record about getting out of somewhere.” Though songs such as “We Can Do What We Want” and “Running Wild” retain what *The Quietus* described as **Drengé’s** “bone-shaking punk-blues,” **Undertow** is considerably more sonically nuanced, with the kind of atmospheric textures that bring out a new kind of gloominess in their music. Among tracks on **Undertow** of which they’re proudest, they note that the sneering “Never Awake” felt like a moment when the album really began to coalesce. “From that track, the sounds we had going for that song and the lyrics, it all started to patch together,” Eoin says. “That song really informed the rest of the record for us. It was a bit of a breakthrough.” And what a breakthrough it is — **Undertow** is aptly named: There’s no sense fighting these deep groovers — just enjoy the ride.



GOV'T MULE DUB SIDE OF THE MULE

EVIL TEEN

Gov't Mule, Blues Rock powerhouse led by guitarist extraordinaire Warren Haynes continues to blow fans’ minds with the continued excavation of its deep archive of live gems. Recorded during **Gov't Mule's** fabled New Year Eve 2006 performance at the Beacon Theatre in New York City, **Dub Side of the Mule** features three-plus hours of **Mule** standards and covers, including a 1-hour reggae/R&B set featuring the legendary **Toots Hibbert**, the legendary founder of **Toots & The Maytals**. The album also includes special appearances by **Gregg Allman & Friends** and **Blues Traveller's John Popper**. All 34 tracks have been remixed and mastered. The album will be available in three formats: standard edition CD (1 CD of the entire set with Toots, plus two additional **Mule-only** reggae songs), standard edition vinyl (two 180-gram vinyl's of the Toots set, plus two additional **Mule-only** reggae songs & a download code for the digital files), and a deluxe edition (3 CDs of the entire 3-hour performance, plus a DVD of only the entire reggae set with Toots Hibbert. *Irie!*)



YOUNG FATHERS WHITE MEN ARE BLACK MEN TOO

BIG DADA

Let's get that title out of the way first: **White Men Are Black men Too**. When the sci-fi 20's 'Urban' might as well be the atomic 50's 'Race', when R&B has no blues and hip-hop is a boom bip with a shorty, a hoe, it's off to the street corner we go... Where does a group like **Young Fathers**, who pickn mix from the popular music sweet shop and fly no flags and swear allegiance to no country? **Young Fathers** go to the place where Beck makes a sandwich with The Beach Boys and Captain Beefheart, where Faust and The Fall tango. In Rock and Pop you are allowed to pretty much be yourself. If you are a blue and green-eyed boy from Brixton with the sallowest of white skin you can become the epitome of crystalized soul, itself. It swings both ways. So... **Young Fathers** are breaking out of the ghetto. **White Men Are Black Men Too** is rock and pop. And hip-hop, too. (Whoops, slipped out). No, you don't box in the R&B Hits 2003 generation that easily. This sticker is only for the business. The listeners can decide for themselves. This is not a joke. This is not a stunt. This is the sound of The Future. And **Young Fathers** want you to sing along.



AWOLNATION RUN

RED BULL RECORDS

Following a whirlwind two-year world tour in support of *Megalithic Symphony*, 2014 saw **AWOLNATION** withdraw into the depths of the California coastline to construct the sophomore effort. A culmination of the years following the release of the debut album, the 14-track **Run** was written, performed and produced entirely by musical architect Aaron Bruno. The end result is a finely tuned musical masterwork that is at times, and all at once, sprawling, atmospheric, exuberant, earnest and refined with moments of a signature aggressive unease. 'There is not one second on the record that hasn't been thoughtfully placed,' said Bruno. 'Every single element serves a purpose.' Standout songs alongside the first single "Hollow Moon (Bad Wolf)" include the cinematic "Jailbreak," the soaring anthem "I Am," the title track "Run," the euphoric "Windows," the painfully vulnerable "Headrest for My Soul," and the atomic rebellion of "KOOKSEVERYWHERE!!!!" Like **AWOLNATION** themselves, everything about this album is ALL CAPS — not to mention beautiful, catchy, and straight TURNT in equal measure.



CATFISH & THE BOTTLEMEN THE BALCONY

COMMUNION

British indie rock outfit **Catfish and the Bottlemen** formed in Llandudno, Wales, with members moving to the seaside town from as far away as Sheffield and Newcastle to complete the lineup. The band started out in 2010 when Aussie-born vocalist Van McCann started playing with guitarist Bill Bibby — the elder brother of McCann's best friend — and bassist Benji Blakeway. They began to attract fans through their guerilla D.I.Y. gigs in car parks prior to shows, and in 2011 they played a rain-soaked evening in Manchester prior to a sold-out Kasabian performance while friends handed out free copies of their demo. Their D.I.Y. ethic led them to play over 250 official and unofficial events in 2012 and the first half of 2013 before they eventually signed to Mumford & Sons' Ben Lovett's Communion Records. After releasing a slew of strong EPs **Catfish and the Bottlemen's** debut album, **The Balcony**, lives up to the bands promise (and then some) with a winning combination of hooks, guts, and humor. Think The Strokes crossed with Arctic Monkeys and The Cribs — all full hearts, loud guitars, and reckless abandon.