



2016
THE NEW
PROCLAMATION

THE BIG
INTERVIEWS

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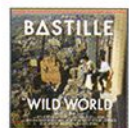
LEAD ALBUM

2016

• Review Ed Power

OUT NOW

BASTILLE



Wild World
VIRGIN EMI
KEY TRACK • 'Good Grief'

07

ASSURED SECOND OUTING FROM SURPRISE STADIUM CANDIDATES

We're running out of stadium bands, with few musicians under the age of 40 seemingly equipped to non-ironically entertain the masses. One exception is Bastille's Dan Smith, who, with 2013 mega-hit 'Pompeii', displayed an uncanny gift for big rock gestures and unforced grandiosity.

The catch is that Smith isn't exactly intent on wrapping himself in the vestments of generational spokesman. Nor is he even remotely interested in suffering the slings and arrows which too often accompany the kind of success Bastille have enjoyed. This became perfectly clear when I sat with him backstage several years ago and he vented about what he perceived as the gross mistreatment he had suffered at the hands of the media.

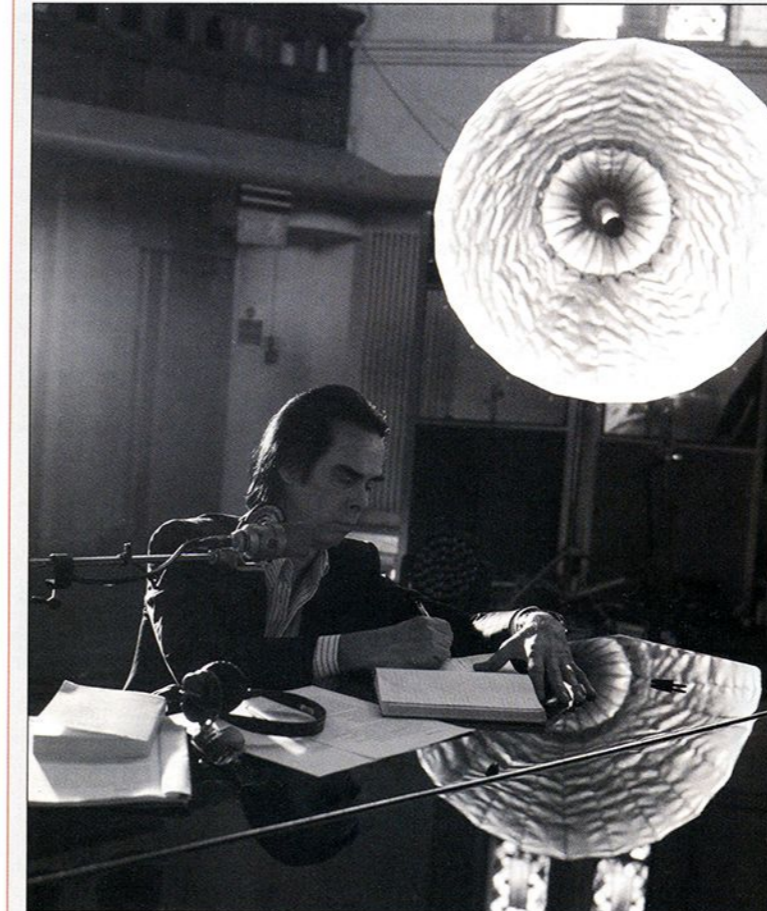
"A journalist reviewed our album and made a comment about my haircut," he told me, steam fairly gusting from his nostrils. "I mean, are you really, in a broadsheet newspaper, making a comment about my hair? In an album review? How is that relevant? We have received some horrible shit. We as a

band never received any support from the press as we were coming up." He has expressed similar views going into Bastille's second album (the band is essentially Smith's personal vehicle). And of course he has a point. All it takes is a bit of success for some critics to start looking down their noses at you. That said, there is a curious contrast between his admirable reluctance to play the preening pop star and Bastille's formal adherence to the mores of stadium rock. Because what seems inescapable, listening to *Wild World* is that Smith really does know how to go about being huge.

With the EDM influences of the group's debut *Bad Blood* dialled back, the new album makes little bones about its arena ambitions. 'An Act Of Kindness' is Chris Martin if he'd stayed up all night watching *True Detective*. And 'Good Grief' is a wave-your-hands anthem that almost disguises the fact that it is also a fierce meditation on the futility of life and the soul-shrivelling inevitability of death.

Throughout, the necessary bombast is impressively conjured. Meanwhile, film studies graduate Smith has fun slipping in as many cinematic references as possible – the aforementioned 'Good Grief' features snippets from an unidentified science fiction movie, while 'Two Evils' is inspired by the spaghetti western compositions of Ennio Morricone.

The result is a wry, self-aware blockbuster – a collection that sets controls for the loftier reaches of the charts and will almost certainly reach that destination – and stay there for a long time.



NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS

Skeleton Tree

MUTE
• 'Distant Sky'

09

POWERFUL EFFORT FROM LEGENDARY SINGER

There is a raw, even brutal starkness to the cover, title and overall tone of *Skeleton Tree* – the sixteenth Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds album and the first since the horrific death of his son, Arthur.

In a remarkable lecture that nailed Cave's creative impulse entitled 'The Secret History of the Love Song', the singer memorably said: "A great gaping hole was blasted out of my world by the unexpected death of my father when I was nineteen years old. The way I learned to fill this hole, this void, was to write."

In the wake of every parent's worst nightmare, Cave again confronts the void by writing. *Skeleton Tree* is a sparse and achingly beautiful album, self-produced by Cave and Warren Ellis, and featuring minimal synth loops and some of the most haunting piano playing of Cave's entire career. The usual swagger of the Bad Seeds is replaced by a meditative, and ultimately soothing mood.

'Distant Sky' is a stunning duet with Danish soprano Else Torp. "Let us go now, my only companion," Torp sings. "Set out for the distant skies/Soon the children will be rising, will be rising/This is not for our eyes."

On the closing, title track, Cave gently intones, "It's alright now," over a heartbreakingly beautiful piano melody. In the face of unspeakable tragedy, Cave reminds us that music and art are sometimes the only ways of making any sense whatsoever of life's horrible chaos.

—Out Now // Eamon Sweeney

BEACH SLANG



A Loud Bash Of Teenage Feelings
BIG SCARY MONSTERS
• 'The Perfect High'

PLENTY OF TEENAGE KICKS ON ALBUM NUMBER TWO

Ever since they first burst onto the scene with the incendiary 'Who Would Ever Want Anything So Broken?' EP in 2014, Philly act Beach Slang have been setting alight stages and stereos alike with their life affirming marriage of romantic lyrics and indie punk guitars. Hot on the heels of their critically acclaimed 2015 debut, *The Things We Do To Find People Who Feel Like Us*, comes their second album – and their decision to strike while the iron is hot has yielded their finest record yet.

Featuring a (slightly) softer sound compared to their first LP, those who were smitten with the style of the 'Cheap Thrills On A Dead End Street' EP will be besotted with this stunning ten track opus. Singer James Alex's imitable croon is even more exaggerated (and enjoyable) this time around ('Future Mixtape For The Art Kids') and the likes of the blistering 'Atom Bomb', the euphoric 'Hot Tramps' and the jaw-dropping, Smiths-ish swoon of 'The Perfect

High' make this the best rock record of the year. It also heralds Beach Slang as worthy successors to The Replacements, The Gaslight Anthem et al.

—Sep 23 // Edwin McFee

BILLY BRAGG & JOE HENRY



Shine A Light: Field Recordings From The Great American Railroad
COOKING VINYL
• 'The Midnight Special'

FOLK DUO TACKLE SOME RAILROAD CLASSICS

Your humble reviewer got very excited at the prospect of a new Billy Bragg album, given the geopolitical turmoil currently rocking the globe. But rather than a collection of Bragg originals, *Shine A Light* sees the Bard of Barking revisiting a baker's dozen of American railroad songs, along with his friend and fellow singer-songwriter, North Carolina's Joe Henry – who most recently co-wrote some of Lisa Hannigan's gorgeous third album, *At Swim*.

The two friends didn't just decamp to a remote studio to record. Instead, the train itself became their studio as these songs were recorded over the course of an epic 65-hour journey across America on the Texas

Eagle Railroad Service. You get authentic rail announcements in the background, while the percussive chug of the engine forms an organic heartbeat. Indeed, the record should come with a health warning that prolonged exposure can lull the unwary into an impromptu doze!

The spirit of Boxcar Willie, Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly inhabits these old tunes. Indeed, quite a few of them were penned by the latter, including 'Rock Island Line', subsequently made famous by Johnny Cash, 'In The Pines', recorded by Nirvana as 'Where Did You Sleep Last Night?', and 'The Midnight Special', a precursor to rock 'n' roll, most popularly covered by Creedence.

It's clear that Bragg and Henry love their source material, from the melancholy yodel of Jimmie Rodgers' 'Waiting For A Train' through Glen Campbell's bittersweet 'Gentle On My Mind' and Guthrie's magnificent 'Hobo's Lullaby' to the southern twang of Hank Williams' 'Lonesome Whistle', about the call of the railway to a Georgia jailbird. The inhabitants of these songs are classic outsiders, from African American folk hero 'John Henry' to 19th century outlaw 'Railroad Bill', but the writing is on the wall for the railroad by the time they get to the closer, Gordon Lightfoot's 'Early Morning Rain', whose homesick hero admits, "You can't jump a jet plane

like you can a freight train."

The arrangements are simple: guitar, vocals and the background noises of the 2,728 miles of track the duo travelled from Chicago to LA. They often hit the record button while the train paused to pick up passengers in waiting rooms and at the track side, from St. Louis to El Paso. The result is a wonderfully authentic homage to the wandering songs of singers past.

—Sep 23 // John Walshe

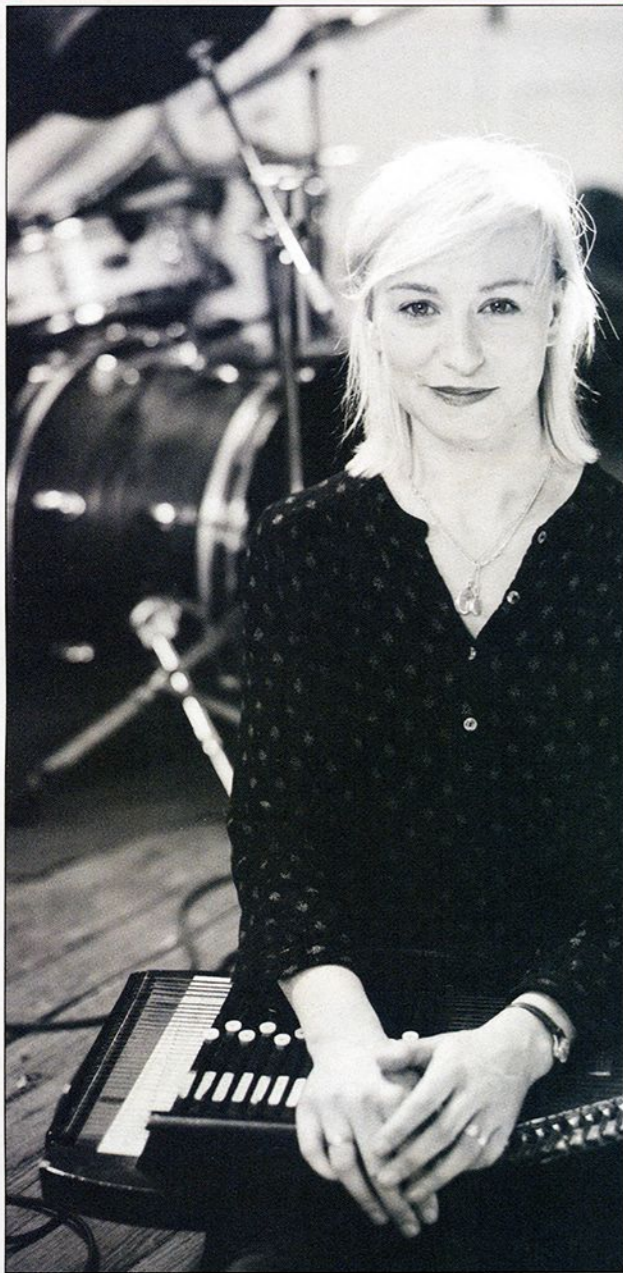
D.A.R.K.



Science Agrees
COOKING VINYL
• 'Watch Out'

INDIE SUPERGROUP DELIVER THE GOODS

While the concept of unlikely musical team-ups is always interesting, the results are often unpredictable. For every Bowie and Bing there's a Metallica and Lou Reed: the experiments usually yield more misses than hits. D.A.R.K., featuring the Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan, ex-Smiths bassist Andy Rourke and DJ/producer Ole Kourty, buck that trend with their '80s steeped debut *Science Agrees* and, while there are a few wobbles



CATHY DAVEY
New Forest
HAMMER TOE
• 'Armadillo'

08

COMEBACK ALBUM IS AN ASSURED AND ALLURING LISTEN

Created in not one but two forests (Woodford in Galway and Connemara), Davey's first album since 2010's still shimmering *The Nameless* aims to examine the complexities of humans by using nature as a metaphor. Comprising 11 tracks, album number four feels every bit the "comeback album". It is assured, alluring and hugely imaginative, effortlessly picking up where Davey left off before she took a break from music to found an animal rescue centre.

The record opens strongly with 'New Forest', a theatrical composition which could soundtrack a warped version of a Brothers Grimm fairytale. Things really kick off on 'Snitch', a skiffle tinged number which calls to mind Fun Boy Three and Bananarama's 'Ain't What You Do'. It's followed by the cerebral pop of 'Armadillo'. Taking its cues from 'Beauty School Drop Out' (from the *Grease Soundtrack*), it's a stunning, '50s sock hop-inspired number with barking mad lyrics, and it feels like a world beater. The dream-like torch song 'Chrysocoma' rounds off the record in style, and ensures this latest visit to Davey's weird and wonderful world is one you'll want to repeat time and time again.

—Out Now// **Edwin McFee**

(Steal You Away,'Underwater'), it's a strong offering.

There's a huge New Order influence throughout ('Curvy', 'Watch Out'); the Bowie-informed 'Gunfight' is superb; and the record is crammed with hooks and slick studio trickery. O'Riordan's vocals are understated but effective, and much of the material sees her sing alongside Koresky ('Miles Away'), while Rourke's basslines steer the ship.

The ghosts of The Cranberries and The Smiths rarely make an appearance on *Science Agrees*: all concerned have created a project that genuinely stands on its own.

—Out Now// **Edwin McFee**

VAN MORRISON



Keep Me Singing
CAROLINE INTERNATIONAL
• 'Keep Me Singing'

36TH STUDIO ALBUM FROM THE BELFAST COWBOY

Coming in the wake of the expanded reissue of his classic 1974 album, *It's Too Late To Stop Now* – without doubt one of the greatest live albums ever made – *Keep Me Singing* presents the mellower, more laid-back side of the now 71-year-old legend.

But it's still Van as we know him; that voice is as strong and expressive as ever, while the songs are a mix of familiar-sounding, soulful ballads and mid-tempo jazz-influenced tunes. There are lush arrangements too, no more so than on the string-laden opener 'Let It Rhyme', which also boasts a lovely minor-key melody, as well as a harmonica solo and Hammond organ textures.

Van is in particularly romantic mood on 'Every Time I See A River', in which he croons longingly, "I remember when I was yours and you were mine." He continues the nostalgic theme on 'Memory Lane', which has echoes of 'Coney Island', and also references *Astral Weeks* in the lyric "I'm stuck here again..." On the sumptuously engaging title track, Van sings of "going down to a corner" and, not for the first time, he namechecks Sam Cooke – this time referencing his songs 'That's Where It's At' and 'Let the Good Times Roll'.

The singer's spiritual side emerges on the atmospheric meditation 'Holy Guardian Angel', which over six epic minutes builds into a powerful, gospel-influenced tour-de-force.

Elsewhere, a solid version of 'Share Your Love With Me' – originally recorded by Bobby Bland – is a nod to the artist's early inspirations. Elsewhere, the bluesy 'Going Down To Bangor' comes across as a kind of a sequel

to Van's classic story-telling yarn 'Cleaning Windows', and finds him reminiscing about times past at the County Down seaside resort.

Jerky rhythms and soulful brass abound on 'Too Late' (the title of which is surely a sly nod to that reissued live album), while 'Caledonia Swing' sounds like its title – a jaunty, jazzy instrumental that harks back to his showband days.

Fans of the singer's 'Have I Told You Lately' phase will warm to these songs, while long time devotees will also find plenty to keep them happy.

—Sep 30// **Colm O'Hare**

PASSENGER



Young As The Morning, Old As The Sea
COOKING VINYL
• 'The Long Road'

POLISHED ALBUM FROM PROLIFIC TROUBADOUR

When it comes to songwriting, Passenger, known to his mum as Mike Rosenberg, is usually as quotable as an afternoon spent with the Gallagher Brothers, Bono and Zlatan Ibrahimovic. The 32-year-old guitar-slinger knocks out killer couplets with the kind of regularity with which McDonald's make burgers. With *Young As The Morning...* his eighth album since 2007, however, maybe the creative well is starting to run a little dry.

The Brighton native still knows his way around a melody and is capable of penning the kind of hummable hooks that Hoover up your attention, but many of these songs seem to have foregone his trademark wry lyrics for a more Hallmark-esque sentiment, devoid of the cutting observations that elevated his lyrics above the pile.

Rosenberg made his name writing personal songs that resounded with the universal, but album opener 'Everything' seems to have the songwriter tying himself in existential knots, as he observes that "Nothing's never something until you lose everything".

The production, courtesy of Rosenberg himself alongside Chris Vallego (INXS, Empire of the Sun), is a little less subtle than before, with tracks like the inoffensive folk pop of 'If You Go' and the catchy but forgettable 'Anywhere' suffering from a little too much polish.

It has its moments. The bittersweet reminiscence of 'When We Were Young' is rather lovely, as our hero bemoans the speedy passing of the seasons. The title track features a galloping rhythm and a host of atmospheric crashes in the background, as he waxes wishfully about wanting to travel, namechecking 'get away from it' hotspots across the globe, from the west of Ireland to Norwegian lakes, Finnish forests and even squeezing in a visit to his Polish grandmother.

'Beautiful Birds' is a disarmingly

beautiful love song, brimming over with avian metaphors, which features the honeyed tones of 20-year-old British songstress, Jasmine Lucilla Elizabeth Jennifer van den Bogaerde, aka Birdy. 'The Long Road' is either a lovely tribute to a friend, a would-be paramour or an honest look in the mirror, at someone who, "Found faith but you chose to doubt it/You found love but you live without it/now you don't want to live without it".

So, *Young As The Morning...* has plenty to recommend it. But songs like 'Fool's Gold' and 'Somebody's Love' feel like the kind of bittersweet also-rans that Passenger could pen before his cornflakes had gone soggy in the bowl. Rosenberg is capable of so much more.

—Sep 23// **John Walshe**

PREOCCUPATIONS



Preoccupations
JAGJAGUWAR
• 'Anxiety'

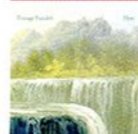
CANADIANS NEGOTIATE TRICKY NAME CHANGE WITH EASE

The Canadian post-punk artists formerly known as Viet Cong were forced into a name change, as – to put it mildly – calling themselves after an insurgent group from the Vietnam war went down badly. It's a good move, as the furore over their name can no longer overshadow the talents of an excellent band.

There is a new-found directness and honesty at the heart of these songs. Lead single 'Anxiety' deals in exactly that, directly addressing a lack of self-confidence and sense of dread. Elsewhere, the slew of songs with one-word titles – including 'Monotony', 'Stimulation', 'Degraded' and 'Fever' – do exactly what they say on the tin. Along with the new moniker, Preoccupations are now writing music with much more heart and purpose. This is well worth getting preoccupied with.

—Sep 16// **Eamon Sweeney**

TEENAGE FANCLUB



Here
PRIMA
• 'Thin Air'

TENTH ALBUM FROM SCOTTISH GUITAR POWER-POPPERS

Arguably the most enduring of all the UK outfits that emerged in the pre-Britpop years, Scotland's Teenage Fanclub continue to inspire the kind of loyalty other bands dream of. Their strength lies in their consistency: they've rarely departed from a winning template of Byrds/Big Star/Beach Boys-influenced pop harmonies, jangly

guitar textures and catchy tunecraft.

The original founding triumvirate of Norman Blake, Raymond McGinley and Gerard Love each contribute four songs, adding to the sense of artistic camaraderie and equality within the band. Joined by long-time drummer Francis McDonald and keyboardist Dave McGowan, the sound is instantly recognisable. Opening tune 'I'm In Love' has it all – the familiar chugging guitars and soaring harmonies, with dense organ fills. They revisit their Byrds influence to an even greater degree on 'Thin Air', with the voices and ringing guitars blending seamlessly, while the sublime 'With You' boasts a truly exquisite melody.

Elsewhere, 'I Have Nothing More To Say' – a John Lennon style slow-burner – offers more distorted buzz-saw textures. 'The First Love' is glorious '60s-style pop, and 'I Was Beautiful When I Was Alive' is a gem reminiscent of *On The Beach*-era Neil Young.

While not as joyously exuberant as some of Teenage Fanclub's earlier triumphs, *Here* is still mightily impressive.

—Out Now// **Colm O'Hare**

KATE TEMPEST



Let Them Eat Chaos
BIG DADA/SINJIA TIME
• 'Perfect Coffee'

TEMPEST BREWS TOP A STORM OF BEAUTIFUL CHAOS

Joining the dots between music and spoken word, and drawing inspiration from Beckett, Joyce and Yeats – not to mention Wu-Tang Clan – prolific Londoner Kate Tempest has authored a novel and a string of acclaimed albums, in addition to poetry and plays. Still only 30, she has already received both the Ted Hughes Award and a Mercury nomination.

Honing her craft "hanging around on picket lines rapping at riot cops", Tempest paints thought-provoking pictures: check the compelling 'Ketamine For Breakfast', which bristles with sparkling production and bubbling bass lines, and relays a fascinating story of addiction.

'Europe Is Lost' tells the tale of a character clutching onto a bottle early in the morning and unable to sleep, before declaring Europe, America and London are lost. "The anarchists are desperate for something to smash," Tempest observes, before deconstructing warfare, terrorism and selfies.

Just when *Let Them Eat Chaos* is starting to sound slightly formulaic, Tempest lobs a terrifically dreamy curve ball into the mix with 'Perfect Coffee': "Alright, alright, whose city is this?" the singer asks as the song probes the gentrification of London; a timely subject given the recent closure of Fabric.

Kate Tempest is an extraordinary talent and a fresh and insightful voice.

—Oct 7// **Eamon Sweeney**

KT TUNSTALL



KIN
VIRGIN RECORDS
• 'Turned A Light On'

IMPRESSIVE EFFORT FROM CALIFORNIA-BASED SONGSTRESS

She started out as the quirky Brit folk/pop artist with talent to burn both as a singer-songwriter and highly accomplished guitar player. Ten years on from her breakthrough debut *Eye To The Telescope* and its brace of hit singles, KT Tunstall hasn't lost her ear for a bouncy tune and a catchy melody.

Perhaps her recent move to Venice Beach in California has something to do with it, but *Kin* oozes with breezy, West Coast melodies and warm summer vibes. 'Hard Girls' channels the jangly LA power-pop smarts of The Bangles, while the lengthily-titled 'It Took Me So Long To Get Here But Here I Am' is even more sun-kissed, with layered harmonies, a gently chugging guitar rhythm and a memorable chorus.

'Maybe It's A Good Thing' is more in keeping with her earlier style – a meaty acoustic rocker with hooks aplenty, while elsewhere, the harmonies are even sweeter on the acoustic ballad, 'Turned A Light On' – an irresistible, Fleetwood Mac-style tune.

'On My Star' is pastoral and melancholic, while 'Two Way' features James Bay taking turns with Tunstall on the verses: their voices are ideally matched. The album concludes with 'Love Is An Ocean', yet another dreamily blissful tune.

The quality never sags throughout and the overall flavour of *Kin* is one of contentment and sheer joy – the effect on the listener is certainly infectious.

—Out Now// **Colm O'Hare**

WARPAINT



Heads Up
ROUGH TRADE
• 'Dre'

IMPRESSIVE THIRD ALBUM FROM LA ART ROCKERS

When bands state their intention to get "experimental", it usually means nothing more than adding some keyboards. To their credit, LA art-rock collective Warpaint walk it like they talk it on their third record, *Heads Up*, a genuinely daring effort.

Kicking off with the sparse electro number 'Whiteout', the album goes on to take a series of fascinating stylistic detours. Both the title

track and 'New Song' are juddering punk-funk workouts that would do James Murphy proud, while 'The Stall' shows that Radiohead have some serious new competition in the avant electro stakes. 'Don't Wanna' is a down-tempo gem with echoes of Massive Attack, and best of all is 'Dre', a delicious slice of hazy hip-hop that would fit nicely into the discography of the titular producer.

Heads Up is a superb album by one of US alt-rock's most talented bands.

—Sep 23// **Paul Nolan**

VARIOUS ARTISTS



The Man Who Fell To Earth
UNIVERSAL
• 'Memory Of Hiroshima'

CULT SOUNDTRACK FINALLY GETS OFFICIAL RELEASE

In addition to his glittering music career, David Bowie also made a significant contribution to cinema. As with his records and live performances, the late singer broke new ground in the medium, albeit on a more modest scale.

Unlike most rock-come-movie stars, his performances in Nic Roeg's sci-fi classic *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, as well as *Merry Christmas*, *Mister Lawrence* and *The Prestige*, won admiring reviews that, compared to Mick Jagger's notices, were virtually standing ovations.

Given that he revisited the story in theatrical form late in his life – in collaboration with Irish playwright Enda Walsh – *The Man Who Fell To Earth* (which tells the tale of an alien who crash-lands on Earth, and ends up broken and alone) was clearly a project that mattered to him. It's perhaps fitting then, that a restored version of the film, and a release – for the first time – of its soundtrack are the first posthumous reissues of Bowie's output.

The singer actually recorded a soundtrack for the movie, although complex legal wranglings have meant it has never seen the light of day. We don't have it now either, but the music here – consisting largely of pieces by the Mamas and Papas' John Phillips and Japanese composer Stomu Yamashta – makes for sumptuous listening. While Phillips' contributions are mostly garish (if fun) country pastiches, Yamashta's avant garde ambient suites are uniformly superb. The unsettling chamber piece 'Memory Of Hiroshima', in particular, is simply stunning.

Elsewhere, there are a few odds and ends which are enjoyable if inessential, including Louis Armstrong's mellow, jazzy take on 'Blueberry Hill' and The Kingston Trio's folk ballad 'Try To Remember'. Overall, though, *The Man Who Fell To Earth* is powerful and emotionally resonant stuff.

—Out Now// **Paul Nolan**