

**FREE
15-TRACK
CD!**

★ **CLASSIC** ★

Rock

HIGH VOLTAGE ⚡ ROCK'N'ROLL

THE

150

GREATEST

DEBUT ALBUMS

OF ALL TIME



150th Issue

**OZZY
JIMI HENDRIX
GUNS N' ROSES
KING CRIMSON
THE MANICS
DR. JOHN
& MORE!**

BLIZZARD OF OZZ

How Randy Rhoads
saved Ozzy Osbourne

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

How Jimi Hendrix
changed everything

APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION

The making of a rock
classic. By Steven Adler

{ Fantastic. Fumbling. Or just plain freaky.
Rock's finest remember their first time. }

IN THE COURT OF
THE CRIMSON KING

ROXY MUSIC

GENERATION
TERRORISTS

TOO FAST FOR LOVE

PETER GABRIEL

SKID ROW

Future
MEDIA WITH PASSION

OCTOBER 2010



10



IT'S OFTEN BEEN said that bands' second albums are the trickiest to record – after all, they had their entire life to write their first one. In celebration of our 150th issue, this month we take a look at rock's 150 Greatest Debut Albums Ever. Some artists struck gold the very first time they ventured into the studio, some did that and then went on to even greater things. For some it remained their high-water mark, for others it turned out to be their only shot. There are some big names missing

too – after all, the likes of Aerosmith, Deep Purple, and even The Beatles didn't get it right the first time they released a long-player.

You might also notice that our countdown ends in 1999. This is because we want YOU to tell us what you think are the best debut albums of the new millennium. Has there been anything that matches up to Jimi Hendrix or Led Zeppelin's first time out?

Tell us what you think at www.classicrockmagazine.com

ELVIS PRESLEY
ELVIS PRESLEY

RCA, 1956



Presley's hip-bucking, feather-ruffling TV appearances helped advance orders of 362,000 (giving RCA their biggest ever album even before release, and prompting other majors to get into bed with rock'n'roll). Tracks like the classic *Blue Suede Shoes* represented the genre's first assault on popular culture. Revolutionary.

THE ROLLING STONES
THE ROLLING STONES

DECCA, 1964



Even as nonentities, the Stones oozed arrogance, pointedly leaving their name off the sleeve of even their first album (the subtext: 'You'll soon know who we are.'). Mick and Keef barely squeeze their creative juices on this rag-bag of punchy R&B covers, but the sound and sneer are already in place, and it still managed to take over from *With The Beatles* at the top of the UK chart.

THE PRETTY THINGS
THE PRETTY THINGS

FONTANA, 1965



Contemporaries of the Rolling Stones, Londoners The Pretty Things even had original Stones guitarist Dick Taylor in their line-up. They played a similar brand of blues with an edge, directly inspired by the likes of Bo Diddley. A definite case of the first cut being the deepest, however, this debut was the biggest-selling album of their career.

MY GENERATION
THE WHO

BRUNSWICK, 1965



The Who tried to put it down, feeling that it didn't capture the visceral smash-and-grab of their shows. But a generation fell for this whip-cracking debut, which tears from cockney-inflected soul like *Out In The Street* to the proto-punk clatter of the title track with more energy than the Duracell bunny.

THE ANGRY YOUNG MEN
THEM

DECCA, 1965



The Northern Irish band were described on the original album thus: 'These five young rebels are outrageously true to themselves. Defiant! Angry! Sad! They are honest to the point of insult!' The album launched singer Van Morrison and gave us *Gloria*.

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED

Words: Henry Yates

You never forget your first time – especially when it's with **Jimi Hendrix**.



"Seeing Jimi absolutely, completely destroyed me. He came and stole R&B back... but added a whole new dimension."

PETE TOWNSHEND

Jimi Hendrix: his debut changed the world order like no other album.



By 1967, Britain's rock'n'roll cognoscenti had already experienced Jimi Hendrix. The previous winter, he'd touched down in London as a black Seattle nonentity, but quickly became a word-of-mouth sensation, blowing away quaint notions of how the electric guitar could be played with riffs that sounded like everything from a choir of angels to a warplane dropping napalm on the Vietnam jungle.

On stage, Hendrix was trailblazing, mind-blowing, game-changing... and totally intimidating to his peers ("My relationship with Jimi was a bit difficult," admits Jeff Beck. "He and I were both after the wild guitar playing").

It's fair to say that *Are You Experienced* also made British rock's class of '67 sweat. Although it was denied the UK No. 1 spot by Sgt Pepper, this debut represents a year-zero for rock guitar; a line in the sand that only Van Halen's debut comes close to matching. It, and Jimi, changed everything.

It was recorded at various US and UK locations with manager Chas Chandler at the desk, but the meat of the record (including *Foxy Lady*, *Can You See Me*, *Red House* and *Third Stone From The Sun*) was nailed at a session in December 1966, when Jimi took four Marshall stacks to the CBS Studios for engineer Mike Ross to mic at a distance of eight feet. "It was the loudest thing I ever heard in that studio," he noted. "It was very painful on the ears."

Hendrix's debut sounded futuristic, too, but it wasn't beamed from space. Study the record and you'll hear the influences that anchor him to the American blues lineage; dip into early interviews and you'll find nods to artists ranging from the obvious (BB King, Louis Jordan, Albert King, Son House) to the esoteric (Washboard Sam, Smokey Smothers). "The first guitarist I was aware of was Muddy Waters," Hendrix told *Rolling Stone*. "I heard one of his records when I was a little boy and it scared me to death."

Hendrix's genius on his debut was to fuse those dusty blues recordings to his own rampant vision; abusing the format; trampling on the structure; putting notes where a hack bluesman would not; pinballing off at tangents. Essentially, the blues gave Hendrix a canvas to splash with his guitar pyrotechnics. "Seeing Jimi absolutely, completely destroyed me," noted Pete Townshend. "He took back black music; he came and stole R&B back... but added a whole new dimension."

You can hear the tug-of-war between traditional and visionary on *Manic Depression*, *Fire*, and most acutely on *Red House*, which is 12-bar blues doused in kerosene. "To me," Experience bassist Noel Redding once said, "*Red House* was Jimi's way of using his musical roots - everything he knew and understood best - in our pop context. It allowed him infinite freedom in a familiar area."

The majority of 'important' albums also tend to be self-important. *Are You Experienced* is an exception: a sky-scraping, musical high-wire act, fuelled by the sheer exuberance of a 24-year-old genius. Hendrix would arguably make better records, but none of them changed the world order like this one did. **1**



The Byrds: their first album put them on the road to the big time.

MR. TAMBOURINE MAN

Words: Ian Fortnam

Roger McGuinn recalls **The Byrds'** first-album flight - and creating *that* guitar sound.



BEFORE THE BYRDS formed in early 1964, guitarist/vocalist Roger McGuinn had worked as a folk singer on the acoustic coffee-house circuit during the early 1960s. Neither he nor the rest of the band could have known that by the end of the following year they would have recorded one of the great albums of the era, and also created a guitars sound that would forever be synonymous with the 60s.

"Coming up to recording the album, we had a residency at Ciro's on the Sunset Strip playing five twenty minute shows a night. I'd already recorded the album's title track as a single with [ace LA session musicians] The Wrecking Crew - Leon Russell, Hal Blaine, Jerry Cole, Larry Knechtel and Bill Pitman - at the insistence of the album's producer, Terry Melcher, which was pretty standard for the time.

"The rest of the band members were disappointed, but personally I was quite excited because these guys were real pros. Terry Melcher finally came around. David Crosby was the most vocal member of the band about playing on all the tracks. We'd all been influenced by The Beatles, and the Beatles played on their own tracks, so it was important for The Byrds to play on our own tracks.

"When we first went into the studio we were overwhelmed by the size of everything. I was just amazed by the incredible equipment they had. It was just so professional and heavy-duty.

"The signature 12-string Byrds guitar sound that we discovered on that album was not as deliberate as you might think. It came as a result of me watching the movie *A Hard Day's Night* and taking notice of the instruments that The Beatles were

playing. George Harrison was playing what looked like a Rickenbacker six-string, and then he turned sideways and I could see six other tuning pegs at the back like a classical guitar.

"So I went and bought one and we plugged it in in the studio. Ray Gerhardt was the engineer for the *Mr. Tambourine Man* album, and he put a compression on the Rickenbacker 12-string that gave it a sustain that it didn't have on either The Beatles recordings or anybody else's recordings at that point. I think that's what gave it the distinctive sound. And then I approached it as I had the five-string banjo, doing three-finger picking on the 12-string.

"WE COVERED FOUR DYLAN SONGS. HIS MATERIAL WAS JUST THE BEST AROUND."

In The Room was also an influence.

"We covered four Bob Dylan songs on the album because we were still feeling our way as songwriters. Gene Clark was writing all of the songs, I wasn't writing a lot, neither were David Crosby or Chris Hillman. And Dylan's material was just the best around. He was writing things that you could think about. Prior to that, rock'n'roll had just been 'Hey, baby, I love you', kind of stuff.

"He came to one of our rehearsals before we recorded *Mr. Tambourine Man*, and I remember him saying: 'Wow, you can dance to it, man.' **1**

DID YOU KNOW?

The term 'folk rock' was first used by the US music press to describe The Byrds' sound at the time of *Mr. Tambourine Man*.

"We were obviously being influenced by The Searchers and other British groups. I put the riff from *Needles And Pins* into *I Feel A Whole Lot Better*. *When You Walk*

FREAK OUT! THE MOTHERS OF INVENTION

Verve, 1966



The first-ever debut double album, this had a concept. Said Frank Zappa: "It wasn't as if we had a hit single and we needed to build some filler around it. Each tune had a function within an overall satirical concept". It was a ferociously eclectic album ranging from Wowie Zowie's affectionate doo-wop parody to the modern classical experimentation of *The Return Of The Son Of Monster Magnet*.

THE PIPER AT THE GATES OF DAWN PINK FLOYD

Columbia/EMI, 1967



The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn represents the slim argument for Syd Barrett's genius, but it's enough: a transcendental debut that reaches for the stars on *Interstellar Overdrive*, then settles for parochial British humour on *Bike*. "We couldn't play at all, so we had to do something stupid and experimental," recalled Roger Waters in 1992.

THE DOORS THE DOORS

Elektra, 1967



Between *Break On Through*'s bossa nova shuffle, *The End*'s Oedipal nightmare and rock's most obtuse single, *Light My Fire*, *The Doors* was an unlikely US No.2. "But it was never big enough for Jim," says Robby Krieger. "He wanted to be The Beatles..."

SAFE AS MILK CAPTAIN BEEFHEART & HIS MAGIC BAND

Buddah, 1967



Although blues-based (Ry Cooder played guitar on several of the tracks), there are moments on *Safe As Milk* that show how Captain Beefheart would go on to become a surrealist in his music and lyrics. At the time, many thought it was too radical.

THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO THE VELVET UNDERGROUND & NICO

Verve, 1967



Famed for not only its experimental approach, but also the fact that the songs tackled taboo subjects such as drug abuse (*Waiting For The Man* and *Heroin*) and sadomasochism (*Venus In Furs*), TVU&N was also watched over by Andy Warhol, who additionally designed its iconic sleeve. Said Lou Reed of the artist: "He just made it possible for us to be ourselves".



The first-album
Fleetwood Mac:
Peter Green, far right.

FLEETWOOD MAC FLEETWOOD MAC

Blue Horizon, 1968



"When I discovered this album, life changed for me." Those are the words of Aerosmith's Joe Perry. While this Fleetwood Mac was far removed from the Americanised melodic rock band of the mid-1970s, this album was at least as important as what would happen with *Rumours*. Peter Green's genius touch on the guitar allowed them to become more than just another bunch of blues wannabes.

STEPPENWOLF STEPPENWOLF

ABC, 1968



The album is most renowned for two things. Firstly, there's the iconic song *Born To Be Wild*, which of course referred to heavy metal in the lyrics - the first time this had been done. Secondly, both this song and *The Pusher* were used in the movie *Easy Rider* the next year, thereby establishing the Canadian band's status. True biker rock.

TONS OF SOBS FREE

Island, 1968



Forget the damning statistics - *Tons Of Sobs* never charted in Britain and limped to 197 in the US a year later - and consider instead the astonishing ones: that Free's debut was recorded in under

week by four British musicians still in their teens. The blues/rock ratio tipped on later albums, but the precocious swagger of *I'm A Mover* and *The Hunter Is Free* at their most honest.

VINCEBUS ERUPTUM BLUE CHEER

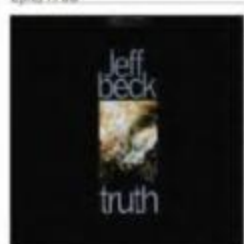
Philips, 1968



Regarded as the prototype for the heavy metal genre, this album initially got noticed for the cover of Eddie Cochran's *Summertime Blues*. Late bassist/vocalist Dickie Peterson once said of it: "After 30 years, man, I've had a love/hate relationship with this song. This is the one song for which I walk up to the mike and I can't remember a single word."

TRUTH JEFF BECK GROUP

Epic, 1968



There are those who believe that this was a better album than Led Zeppelin's self-titled debut. Both had a similarly innovative approach to mixing heavy sounds and blues, and a mix of originals and covers. With Rod Stewart giving one of the best vocal performances of his career, this was inspirational. "I knew it inside out," says Boston leader Tom Scholz.

"It wasn't as if we had a hit single and we needed to build some filler around it. Each tune had a function."

FRANK ZAPPA ON FREAK OUT!

MUSIC IN A DOLL'S HOUSE FAMILY

Reprise, 1968



Can you believe that this album forced The Beatles to change their idea for an album title. They were gonna call *The White Album* *A Doll's House*. On a musical level, *Family* were surprisingly complex for a band only a year old, and they also had the distinctive, unusual tones of vocalist Roger Chapman. Nobody else ever sounded quite like them. Nobody else ever has.

MUSIC FROM BIG PINK THE BAND

Capitol, 1968



Hanging out with Bob Dylan paid off: by 1968, The Band had their songwriting chops oiled and tightened, and Capitol Records' backing for a debut that eschewed the era's experimentation for rootsy, earthy, folksy, harmony-rich songs exemplified by *The Weight*. "A few years ago, we'd play and people would call it nostalgia," noted bassist/vocalist Rick Danko. "Lately, they've been calling it music again."

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND THE ALLMAN BROTHERS BAND

Capricorn, 1969



Although it sold poorly when originally released, this album is now seen as marking the birth of southern rock as a genre in its own right. The Florida band's meld of country, blues and rock gave them a unique perspective; *Whipping Post* from this record was to become the first of many classics. Duane Allman's lead guitar was particularly noteworthy.

THE STOOGES THE STOOGES

Elektra, 1969



With uncharacteristic efficiency, the Stooges bagged \$25K from Elektra, roped in John Cale to produce and knocked out their so-raw-it's-bleeding debut in four days. It's pretty much their live set – plus extras rush-written to fill the tracklist – and almost as thrilling on seedy standouts like *I Wanna Be Your Dog*. Needless to say, it tanked.



Procol Harum: "There was no such thing as prog back then."

PROCOL HARUM

Words: Malcolm Dome Photo: Sylvia Pitcher

On the back of *that* hit single, Procol Harum hoped to take 1967 by storm with their debut LP, but it didn't quite work that way...

THINK BACK to 1967, and The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album is surely the dominant musical force of that year. But Procol Harum can lay claim to making an astonishing impact.

Debut single *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* has long since passed into legend. But a short time afterwards the band released their self-titled, debut album. A disc that was recently included in *Classic Rock's* list of 50 albums that shaped prog rock (see issue 146). "We never thought of ourselves in that way," admits lyricist Keith Reid. "We were into soul, rock'n'roll and country music. But then there was no such thing as prog in those days."

Reid met vocalist/pianist Gary Brooker when the latter was still in his pre-Procol band The Paramounts. When that group split up, the pair decided to work together as songwriters.

"We actually founded Procol Harum so that our songs would get recorded and heard. Nothing we did had been taken up by artists. I think we'd written one song for Dusty Springfield, but I don't know if she even heard it. That was the way things went."

When *A Whiter Shade Of Pale* took off, the band were pressured into getting an album finished as fast as possible. "We'd spent ages writing the songs and rehearsing them, but the recording process was rushed. I wish we'd taken our time, but that's what happens when you have a massive hit."

So, Reid and Brooker – together with guitarist Robin Trower, organist Matthew Fisher, bassist Dave Knights and drummer BJ Wilson – went into the studio with producer Denny Cordell to record 10 songs for the album.

"The way Gary and I worked, I'd come up with the words, and then he'd add the music. The only time on the debut album that we deviated from this was for *Conquistador*. I travelled down to Southend one day to see Gary, and he played me something he'd been working on. I thought the title *Conquistador* would fit, and then went into another room to write the lyrics."

The studio experience was to be one that was far from smooth. "There were times when the tape operator forgot to press the 'record' button. And we also had takes wiped accidentally. We were incredibly tolerant in the studio, but back then everything was much looser. You never had anyone telling you to guard the tapes with your life."

As a result of which, the original multi-track recordings have long since gone missing.

"That's the case, unfortunately. In the 60s

this sort of thing happened regularly. We didn't even record this in stereo. It was all mono, and then some trickery was used to get a stereo effect."

In the modern era when every conceivable marketing ploy is used to sell an album, it seems amazing that *A Whiter Shade...* was missed off the album. "We were very idealistic back then. We just felt that the single had been heard and bought, and we wanted people to get 10 new songs."

Incredibly, given the huge success of that single, the album failed to make the Top 50 in the UK. But Reid has a genuine fondness for it. "It was so badly recorded, because everything was too hurried. However the songs were great." ●

The 40th Anniversary edition of Procol Harum is available on Salvo.

DR. JOHN

Words: **Max Bell**

His finger got shot off and heroin almost killed him, but **Dr. John** survived. Meet the man who developed a cult following with the help of a stick, a hat and rhyming slang.

THE DOCTOR WILL see you now.” And what a sight for sore eyes he is! Dr. John, alias Mac Rebennack, hovers into view and couldn’t be mistaken for anyone else. Looking healthier and walking with a sprightlier gait than he did in his darker days, Rebennack is a picture of New Orleans style—a crisp linen shirt, an embroidered waistcoat, the ever-present hat, and hands full of jewellery—as he settles down on a sofa in the bar of a smart West London hotel and hands over his stick for inspection. It’s a hefty example, like a crutch crossed with a cudgel. This stick and others much like it have beaten a voodoo rhythm on many a concert platform.

“What I got on there,” he drawls in the unmistakable accent of his native ward, “is an alligator tooth from a 17-foot ‘gator. These are bones from goats and other critters. Them’s rabbit vertebrae and some feathers. And obviously I got me my dice. I got tons on this stick. A friend in Angola penitentiary made it for me. It’s better

made than even my African sticks, but that’s cos the guys in Angola have got time on their hands. Years of time and nothing much to fill it with. He made this out the wood he found in jail. And here in mah waistcoat pocket I got my cigars and my cigarillos. Macanudos from San Domenico. Smokes is one of my very few vices, apart from sex,” he chuckles. “Which is the first one I call on? Jesus Christ! What else am I gonna do?”

Dr. John is currently undergoing one of his periodic revivals of interest, thanks to his excellent new album *Tribal*—a return to the style of his Louisiana heyday—and a regular slot on the US TV series *Treme*. He also has an unofficial and reluctant status as a spokesman for New Orleans following the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005, and more recently the Gulf Of Mexico disaster wrought by the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion at Macondo Prospect which killed 11 people.

“Put this in your magazine,” says Rebennack. “South Louisiana is the most

disappearing landmass on planet Earth. We lose football fields every hour, thousands of acres lost to erosion. Why? Because the oil companies keep cutting saltwater canals into the natural wetlands. They been doin’ it for maybe 60 years. And now we reap the rewards. It’s double trouble for us because so many people made a living out of the oil industry and these guys are trapped too now they’re shuttin’ the wells down. Louisiana is also the poorest state in the union and the only one that doesn’t collect any revenue from oil itself, thanks to the corruption of past governors.”

Even those who like to think that politics and music don’t mix have to agree that this latest piece of eco-cide affects the globe. “I wrote about it before on mah song *Black Gold*. But it’s so bad. I went out on a boat fishin’ with my granddaughter, and they have signs up in the water, real heavy warnings. There’s sharks baskin’ where they got no right to live, and the damage to the wildlife will make grown men weep.”

THE DEBUT ALBUM



GRIS-GRIS DR. JOHN

Atco, 1968
Brilliantly evoking the hot voodoo haze of N’Awlins bar culture, Dr. John’s debut did wildly inventive things with traditional rhythm and blues, resulting in a riot of psychedelia and swampy blues. Book-ended by the sizzling *Gris-Gris Gumbo Ya Ya* and the elegant menace of *I Walk On Guilted Splinters*, this was a debut bulging with character.



Dr. John: Mac Rebennack took the name from an old Louisiana voodoo practitioner.

GREATEST DEBUTS

According to Rebennack, the BP 'spill' is but one of hundreds to have happened in recent memory. "The ones you don't hear about on an everyday basis. I met these TransOcean employees before I came to England and they told me they were warned in February this was a likely event. And then Sarah Palin says, 'Drill, baby, drill!' Everyone knows she's an asshole. But the corruption of BP is incredible. I mean, the English CEO... He should be in an American court of law. If I'd been partly responsible for the death of 11 people they'd be takin' me to the chair."

As a recording artist who started out playing the most dangerous bars and brothels in New Orleans, Dr. John is aware of the concept of borrowed time. He made albums with R&B legends like Professor Longhair and Doc Pomus hours before they hit their death beds. On *Tribal* he teamed up with a fellow Louisianan stalwart Bobby Charles, the ethnic Cajun who passed away last January.

"I was producing his last album and he was writing with me," he says of Charles. "His dying wish was to finish off the title track, *Tribal*, and another song called *Potnah*. I had to finish 'em without him. I also found an old demo we'd done called *Change Of Heart* and worked that up. The record's dedicated to Bobby. When I was at his funeral, I realised that his spirit entered me. And that's the only blessing we can have. Whatever happens on the other side, we have what we did together."

A lot of people thought Rebennack, 70 in November, wouldn't survive anything like this long. Mac began a flirtation with heroin that started in the 60s and didn't let him go until the early 90s. Everything seemed okay when he was a superstar of sorts – hanging out with The Rolling Stones and Eric Clapton, and earning a living both as an artist and as a session man with a track record that included leading roles playing alongside Canned Heat, Van Morrison, Paul Simon, Carly Simon and Harry Nilsson. He was one of the first-call keyboard players in Los Angeles, having emigrated there in the early 60s to become part of the famed Wrecking Crew studio ensemble.

The drugs and the drink were par for the course, and he didn't have a problem. "That's what junkies think. I did drink, but LSD wasn't my thing. The weed wasn't my thing. Heroin was my thing. I wasn't faithful to none of my wives but I was faithful to heroin, to that and nuthin' else. Eventually I had help. I did rehab. I did meetings and I made friends. I did rehab in N'Awlins cos we hang together better there. It's better to hang like that than to hang sep-a-rated. It ain't a good feelin' to be lynched by yourself. Nobody knows what the protocol is for that junk. Somebody might cut you down – if you're lucky. I been off narcotics now for 20 years."

Wake-up time arrived when the Doc was admitted to hospital ravaged with hepatitis C, cirrhosis of the liver and the kind of gout that sends a man insane. "My liver was a degenerated organ, so if I'm living my life backwards I'm blessed again. My liver was so ruined and small the doctor told

me I had but weeks to live. Holy shit, Batman! Life don't make any sense, but when you hear that news it suddenly becomes a sight more important, dig? Plus they showed me the pictures, and the dialysis scans. My liver was like multi-coloured, Technicolor jello. Shit, it didn't even look like a hunk of meat! Truth to tell, I wasn't even so sorta scared. But my manager was," he laughs. "And my old lady wasn't too happy either."

Granted a stay of execution, Dr. John eased himself out of the limelight but carried on playing club tours even though, under the influence of his Interferon jabs, he was as sick as a dog, living within a flu-like fog. "I knew what my biopsy was gonna be like, but that drug was powerful. Praise be to whoever that I ain't with that. I mean, I wasn't just frail, I was dying on a daily basis."



Dr. John in '84: never far from one of his trademark sticks.

"THE DOCTOR TOLD ME I HAD WEEKS TO LIVE. WHEN YOU HEAR THAT, LIFE BECOMES MORE IMPORTANT, DIG?" – DR. JOHN

Despite the acute self-diagnosis, Rebennack is not a real doctor. But that didn't stop Eric Clapton from seeking his advice when the two met backstage at the Lyceum in London.

"When I ran into him I told him I wanted to consult him as a doctor," Clapton recalled. "He asked me what my problem was, and I told him that I needed a remedy. 'What kind of remedy?' I told him: 'A love potion.' I was calling his bluff, but he asked me to tell him more about the situation. So I told him I was deeply in love with the wife of another man [Patti Harrison, Beatie George's missus], and that she was no longer

happy with him but wouldn't leave him. He gave me a little box made out of woven straw, and told me to keep it in my pocket, gave me various, long-forgotten instructions. I did exactly as I was told."

A few weeks later Eric told George the truth, started his affair with Patti, and told the whole world about it on the Derek And The Dominos' album featuring *Layla* and his other love songs.

Dr. John was in demand with the British rock elite. Clapton and Mick Jagger appeared on his 1971 album *The Sun, Moon & Herbs*, and Rebennack was asked to support the Stones on the road. He also played on the track *Let It Loose* on the Stones' *Exile On Main St.* "Funniest crap was, they wuz mixin' the album in New York, and I went to some shoot party and Keith Richards was real old-school, the coolest cat. They all loved the N'Awlins sound,

so I got my man Didymus the gig on percussion and brought along the singer Tammi Lynn – Keith was all over the lady.

"I'd met 'em before that, in London, when that kid who died [Brian Jones] used to sit in the dressing room and talk for hours about southern music. I guess I influenced Jagger some, cuz people said he changed his vocal style after he met me, but so what? If it rolled with me, that's cool with my ass. Who the hell knows where influence comes from? I don't live in his brain. I know he heard something he could use."

In fact Dr. John's was the name to drop in the Afghan coat-wearing year of '68. First his *Gris-Gris* album (the title means a satin bag full of voodoo) became the underground classic of the year, then *Babylon* confirmed his status as the hippest cat on the prowl. Was this guy for real, with his black-cat moan and his sizzle and his Night Tripper persona? In the days when the British didn't travel much to America, he seemed to be the real deal. And he kept on picking up converts: Van Morrison copped licks off him, ELP stole the title *Brain Salad Surgery* from his song *Right Place Wrong Time*, Humble Pie constructed their live set around a mammoth version of Dr. John's hypnotic cut *I Walk On Guilted Splinters*, which was about a Grand Zombie strolling across fire.

The Doc became a Zelig-like character. He played at Duane Allman's funeral in 1971, opened the Bottom Line club in NYC in January 1974 with Stevie Wonder (Jagger, Johnny Winter and Paul Simon among the crowd) and, famously, stole the show at The Band's farewell. Martin Scorsese filmed that concert, held on Thanksgiving Day 1976.

"That was a blast," he recalls. "The Winterland in San Francisco: Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Allen Toussaint, Ronnie Wood,

Ringo Starr, Van's Tura Lura Lura... man, some cast. But the highlight was Muddy Waters doin' *Nine Below Zero*, which they never used. They didn't get it! Blew me away, cos there's all these bad guitar players standing on the stage with their jaws hanging open. Real good players, but they couldn't catch Muddy. And me and ol' Bobby Charles sang *Down South In New Orleans* and they didn't use that! I don't know where Scorsese was! Nuthin' thing springs to mind is that Sweet William Bonney from the Oakland chapter of the Hells Angels stole mah hat. Had to borrow a beret off a lady to do the gig."

Dr. John is seldom seen **Continued on page 127**

LED ZEPPELIN

ATLANTIC, 1969



Some musicologists might dismiss these early blues-rock compositions as grand-scale theft, but it's not so much *what* Zep played as *how* they played it: faster, harder and

hairier than anyone had dared before. "There just wasn't anything like it at that time," John Paul Jones has rightly said. "Jimmy's production was very innovative. And when Robert roared in, the initial reaction from people was: 'Where did you find him from?' His vocal approach was fantastic." With such timeless rock classics as *Good Times Bad Times*, *Communication Breakdown* and *Dazed and Confused* among its number, *Led Zeppelin* was the sound of a cultural levee breaking.

MC5

KICK OUT THE JAMS

ELEKTRA, 1969



Punk was ripped from the womb at The MC5's two-night-stand in Detroit, even if the resulting live album was doomed to micro-sales after Rob Tyner's battle cry "Kick out the jams, motherfuckers!" meant major US chains refused point-blank to stock it.

FIVE LEAVES LEFT

NICK DRAKE

ISLAND, 1969



Chinks of sunlight broke through on *Time Has Told Me* and *The Thoughts of Mary Jane*, but the mood of Nick Drake's unloved (at the time) debut was set by the wistful drift of

River Man and *Way To Blue*; as fragile and haunted as their author, you knew the 20-year-old guitarist was doomed just by listening to them.

SANTANA

SANTANA

COLUMBIA, 1969



With Woodstock providing the mother of all springboards, the San Franciscans' debut ushered a black-and-white world into a groovy West Coast utopia where

Tijuana rhythms tumbled with blues licks, and vocals were superfluous to the eloquent voice of Carlos Santana's guitar.

BLIND FAITH

BLIND FAITH

POLYDOR, 1969



Sadly, it will always be 'the one with the topless 11-year-old', but *Blind Faith* deserves deeper examination, with Eric Clapton's *Presence Of The Lord* and Steve Winwood's *Can't Find My*

Way Home atoning for Ginger Baker's interminable *Do What You Like*. The band hated it, ensuring this debut was also their tombstone.



Led Zeppelin: the band behind *Led Zeppelin*, funny enough.

BLACK SABBATH

BLACK SABBATH

VERTIGO, 1970



For metal fans, this is the holy grail. Yet despite the unquestioned legendary stature of the album, it was done in something of a rush, as Tony Iommi recalls: "We were on our way

to Europe to play some shows, and literally stopped off at the studio to do this before catching the ferry. We recorded it in one day."

DÉJÀ VU

CROSBY, STILLS, NASH & YOUNG

WARNER BROS., 1970



The second debut album for the band... well, for Crosby, Stills & Nash. Joined by Neil Young, they spent 800 hours in the studio, according to Stephen Stills. However, with the exception of the

Joni Mitchell cover *Woodstock*, all the songs were recorded separately by the four. Jerry Garcia and The Lovin' Spoonful's John Sebastian were also involved, each guesting on one track.

EMERSON LAKE & PALMER

EMERSON LAKE & PALMER

ISLAND, 1970



Although this wasn't strictly the first prog rock album, nor the first by a so-called supergroup, in many ways this record came to epitomise both.

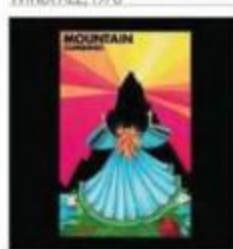
Overblown, bombastic, arrogant and egomaniacal it might have been, but it includes the elegiac

Take A Pebble and *Lucky Man* as part of its tracklist.

CLIMBING!

MOUNTAIN

WINDFALL, 1970



There was something British about US band Mountain, although steeped in American traditions. "What we were doing was different, even it wasn't new," says West. It features the

definitive version of Jack Bruce's *Theme For An Imaginary Western*. Mountain bassist Felix Pappalardi suggested they do it, after he'd produced the Bruce version the previous year.

FIRST STEP

THE FACES

WARNER BROS., 1970



The revamped Small Faces debuted their new line-up and name with *First Step*. "We hacked the basic foundations of *First Step* together in the Stones rehearsal room in Bermondsey,"

Ronnie Wood tells us. "Ian Stewart used to give us free rehearsal time, because we didn't have any money, and that's where we prepared all of that material. From there we took it into the studio where [engineer] Martin Birch allowed the band to blossom in a very ramshackle way that's still evident today."

"We were on our way to Europe, and we literally stopped at the studio before catching the ferry. We recorded it in one day."

TONY IOMMI ON THE SABB'S DEBUT

LAYLA AND OTHER ASSORTED LOVE SONGS DEREK AND THE DOMINOS

POLYDOR, 1970



A new band but hardly a fresh start, the heartbroken, heroin-addled and fame-weary Eric Clapton entered Miami's Criteria Studios in August 1970 to record his last indisputably classic album. From the title track's mournful duel with Duane Allman to *Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out's* bruised solo, there is blood and beauty on these tracks.

AN OLD RAINCOAT WON'T EVER LET YOU DOWN ROD STEWART

VERTIGO, 1970



Amazingly, this was the fourth release on what was really a prog rock label. By the time Stewart had recorded this, he'd agreed to join The Faces, and in fact both Ronnie Wood and Ian McLagan are on this album, as well as Keith Emerson. It set the template for all future Stewart solo releases, mixing folk, rock and blues.

VERY 'EAVY... VERY 'UMBLE URIAH HEEP

VERTIGO, 1970



Slated by most critics when it was first released, now it stands as a monument to one of the UK's finest bands. Guitarist Mick Box recalls: "We were still finding our feet when this record came out, but it does have some of our trademark sounds: the organ approach by Ken Hensley and David Byron's soaring vocals. It was a special moment."

THE INNER MOUNTING FLAME MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA

COLUMBIA, 1971



Regarded as one of the most important jazz-fusion bands, this multi-national line-up was led by guitarist John McLaughlin, and also boasted the talents of keyboard player Jan Hammer and drummer Billy Cobham. The intro for *The Noonward Race* was supposed to feature the whole band, but a fight broke out during the recording, leaving only the guitar and drums.



King Crimson: being "open to all possibilities" led to a landmark album.

IN THE COURT OF THE CRIMSON KING

Words: Paul Henderson

The debut from **King Crimson** was not just a groundbreaking masterpiece, it was also the first true progressive rock album.

AS THE SWINGING 60s moved through its autumn years, rock music was changing, maturing, and entering a Golden Age that would shimmer with the dazzling luminescence of unprecedented creativity and diversity.

In mid-July 1969 a new British band called King Crimson began recording their debut album. Two weeks later they emerged with a remarkable, groundbreaking record that was sweepingly original, musically, creative, expansive; a true rock classic that many people consider to be the first true progressive rock album. When it was released, The Who's Pete Townshend called King Crimson's *In The Court Of The Crimson King: An Observation By King Crimson* (to give it its full title) "an uncanny masterpiece". And it was.

With much bigger ideas than the budget was able to accommodate, and very limited time, there was no way the album could be pieced together meticulously... even though it sounds like it was. "We went in and essentially recorded the tracks live, and embellished them from there, taking advantage of the multi-tracking – although we only had eight tracks," multi-instrumentalist Ian McDonald (later to join Foreigner, of all bands) recalls. "We'd record and then go on the road for two or three days, then go back to the studio. I'm surprised by the nonchalance that I see in the diary I kept."

That the album was completed in two weeks is amazing. That its best-known track, frenetic

opener *21st Century Schizoid Man*, given its complexity and technical difficulty, was recorded in one take is nothing short of astonishing.

"Contrary to what you might think, *Schizoid Man*... was actually a breeze compared to other tracks," says McDonald. But then none of the tracks took long, and everything came together with a speed and smoothness that belies the end result.

"I think the driving force was Ian McDonald, really," says co-producer/lyricist Pete Sinfield. "Ian was the one who wanted to do anything that we could possibly do within the scope and yet still have people listen to it. And I was the one floating around the outside knowing we should have an extraordinary cover without the band's name on, and stuff like that."

Perhaps surprisingly, during the making of the album there was little if any feeling within the band that they were producing something special.

"I don't remember thinking anything like 'Wow! That's great' or whatever," McDonald says. "Except maybe with... *Schizoid Man*. I remember listening back to that and thinking: 'What the hell is this?'"

"When it was all finished there was a sort of glow of satisfaction – and relief," Sinfield remembers. "There was a feeling of, 'Gosh, we've done something and it sounds really rather good, and we're quite proud of this bit, and that bit'. By any standards, there are parts of that album that shine out. And I think it has a timelessness to it as well – which I can tell you by the royalty statements even today."

"I REMEMBER LISTENING TO SCHIZOID, THINKING 'WHAT THE HELL?!'"

ZZ TOP ZZ TOP'S FIRST ALBUM

LONDON, 1971



The Li'l Ol' Band From Texas made their entrance with this unpretentious yet effective mix of blues and southern rock. Despite the fact that the band's roots were buried

deep within American traditions, the trio managed to sound like nobody else. Billy Gibbons already had a reputation as a formidable guitarist, and his work here is astounding. (*Somebody Else Been*) *Shaking Your Tree* and *Brown Sugar* (a Gibbons original, not a Rolling Stones cover) show the fuzz-charged boogie direction in which the band were heading.

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

COLUMBIA, 1972



Often dubbed America's Black Sabbath, Blue Öyster Cult arrived in a blaze of myth and intrigue. While most bands in the metal world had a lumbering

broadsword thrust, BÖC had more of a rapier wit about them. Their music and lyrics told of a formidable intelligence, and with songs such as *I'm On The Lamb But I Ain't No Sheep*, *Cities On Flame With Rock 'N' Roll* and *She's As Beautiful As A Foot*, Blue Öyster Cult took metal in a fresh direction, with a sense of anarchy and surrealism.

THE EAGLES THE EAGLES

ASYLUM, 1972



Linda Ronstadt's backing band went their own way and created a stir with their country rock approach. The Eagles were an instant chart success, having three hit

singles in America from their debut, setting the pattern for decades of acclaim.

PRONOUNCED LEH-NERD SKIN-NERD LYNYRD SKYNYRD

MCA, 1973



For many, it's with this album that true southern rock was born. With the Al Kooper-produced *Pronounced...*, Skynyrd kicked off their career with a raft of songs destined to

become classics, including *Free Bird*, *Simple Man* and the brooding *Tuesday's Gone*.

TUBULAR BELLS MIKE OLDFIELD

VIRGIN, 1973



The first album released by Virgin Records, Oldfield's ambient rock opus was a quirky start. As producer Tom Newman says: "We gave

Richard Branson the album and left it to him to sell. It was destined to be a disaster. Only to sell millions."



Bryan Ferry, second right, wrote all the songs on Roxy Music's debut.

ROXY MUSIC

Words: Malcolm Dome Photo: G Hanekroot

Its production may have been far from ideal, but **Roxy Music's** eponymous debut catapulted them straight into the big time.

IT TOOK TWO weeks to record, with an odd choice of producer and no record label involved. But it kick-started an iconic career.

The album was 1972's self-titled debut by Roxy Music, and it contained all the elements that would make them legendary. And for guitarist Phil Manzanera it was a hectic time. "I was only officially confirmed in the band on February 14, 1972, and a month later we were in the studio."

Manzanera had auditioned the previous October, but lost out to former Nice man David O'List. But when the band played in front of EG Management in early February '72, there was a fight between O'List and drummer Paul Thompson. As a result, EG took on the band but insisted on O'List

going. So in came Manzanera, joining Thompson, frontman Bryan Ferry, bassist Graham Simpson, synth player Brian

Eno and saxophonist Andy Mackay. And, funded by EG, Roxy went to Command Studios in central London on March 14, working with producer Pete Sinfield, best known as the lyricist for King Crimson. "EG managed him, so they kept it in the family. I don't why he was chosen, but the good thing is that Pete let us get on with it."

Roxy recorded live in the studio, with few overdubs. But the band had rehearsed so much that they were ready to do it this way. "We were a band of inspired amateurs back then, who worked very hard and had lots of enthusiasm. And the album has a charm all of its own as a result."

The songs were written by Ferry, bearing a number of cinematic references, something that delighted Manzanera.

"That's one of the things the two of us bonded

over – we loved films. And to hear something like 2HB, with its tribute to Humphrey Bogart, or *Chance Meeting* [inspired by the classic movie *Brief Encounter*] was just incredible. Bryan had so many ideas, and I always thought the rest of us provided the music for his words."

The opening song, *Re-Make/Re-Model*, actually sums up the band's eclecticism, with nods to The Beatles, Duane Eddy and... Wagner.

"We all got the chance at the end to do our own thing. It's a mad journey with lots of energy and it's so exciting. It immediately says who we were – a band who would try anything."

While Roxy had a big hit with *Virginia Plain* later in 1972, reaching No.4 in the chart, this was

recorded four months after the album and not included in the track listing.

"In those days, we liked to keep singles

separate and not feature them on albums."

Apart from the music, what immediately stands out is the cover, featuring model Kari-Ann Muller. It set Roxy apart from almost everyone.

"This cover was so striking that we're going to be using it to promote our January UK tour – it still looks so good even now."

The album was eventually released through Island, thanks to a licensing deal done by EG.

"We got £5,000 from the label for a five-year lease. In those days, that was very innovative. I know EG had to fight to persuade some people at Island to put this out. But it did well for them."

The Roxy Music album reached No.10 in the UK charts, selling over 100,000 copies.

As Manzanera concludes: "This was just the beginning. The rest is history." ■

Patti Smith: poured her soul into her debut.

HORSES

Words: Jaan Uhelszki Photo: Neil Zlozower

Patti Smith's seminal debut album propelled the poet, painter, actor and journalist into a life of rock stardom.

RARELY HAS THERE been such a cataclysmic collision of high and low art as when Patti Smith's album *Horses* was released in '75. With Smith still more poet than singer at the time of its release, the album grew out of her readings-cum-performances at New York's St Mark's Church in 1971.

She'd convinced rock critic and record store clerk Lenny Kaye to provide both moral support and a rather minimalist musical backdrop to her feverish poetry with his electric guitar. Together they created something raw, deconstructed and haunting.

Despite an offer from Johnny Winter's manager, Steve Paul, to get her a record deal in those early months, Patti demurred, explaining that she "didn't have a mission yet". Or

a band. But over the next two years, Kaye and newly hired keyboard player Richard Sohl brought in bassist Ivan Kral and drummer Jay Dee

Daugherty, and Patti declared that she was ready to transfer her poetry to another medium: "In 1974 I saw Television at CBGBs and I saw what I perceived as the future."

Around the same time Clive Davis was looking for musicians to sign to his new label, Arista. "I was just amazed that I was gonna be allowed to make a record," Smith says. "I thought of all the great people that had made them and now I was gonna make one. I wasn't even concerned about whether I'd ever get to make another one."

With Velvet Underground member John Cale producing, Smith and her band recorded their debut album at the famed Electric Lady Studios in NYC. Cale seemed a perfect choice, but he and Smith butted heads from the onset. Smith confesses: "I drove John crazy." After one

particularly frustrating conflagration Cale asked her why she chose him. "Because your records sound so good," she replied. "You bloody fool, you should have picked my engineer," Cale countered. The band decided to reject all Cale's suggestions, and as a result they found their own voice in the struggle.

Smith poured her soul into *Horses*, especially on the first track, *Gloria*, drafting one of the most celebrated opening lines in all of rock history: "Jesus died for somebody's sins, but not mine" (something she commandeered from her poem *Oath*). More declaration of personal autonomy and freedom than a rejection of her own personal God, she neatly melded the strident poem into a rather slurry speeded-up version of Them's garage rock classic that put Van

Morrison's on the map.

Crawdaddy! magazine called the song a "declaration of existence," but for the rest of us it was Smith's coming out party – and we're not speaking sexually despite the provocative lines about a "sweet young thing humping on a parking meter". The confusion never bothered Smith. "I've never been gender specific, or wanted to be gender specific as an artist or a human being." Equally misunderstood is *Rainforest*, which critics surmised was about a quarrel between two Sapphic lovers, one of whom committed suicide. Not so. It was inspired by a rare spat with her sister Linda, who left in a rage, and didn't return that night.

Ultimately *Horses* was more call to action than true album, helping to spawn a cultural revolution. "I was speaking to the disenfranchised, to people outside society, people like myself," Patti says. "I didn't know these people, but I knew they were out there I think *Horses* did what I hoped it would do. It spoke to the people who needed to hear it." ❶

MONTROSE

Warner Brothers, 1973



Sammy Hagar once said of this album: "Everyone involved on the record label side made their mistakes with us, and then Van Halen benefited a few years later." While Hagar had a point, this remains one of the greatest of all debuts (including classics *Rock Candy* and *Bad Motor Scooter*) from an US hard rock act – a blueprint for all the stadium-strutters who followed.

NEW YORK DOLLS

Mercury, 1973



The album that straddled glam, rock'n'roll and punk, this debut was produced by none other than Todd Rundgren, who said of the record: "I'm not too sure it was possible to capture in the studio what this band were really all about. But maybe we ended up with something different to what you saw on stage yet equally as valid."

CLOSING TIME

Asylum, 1973



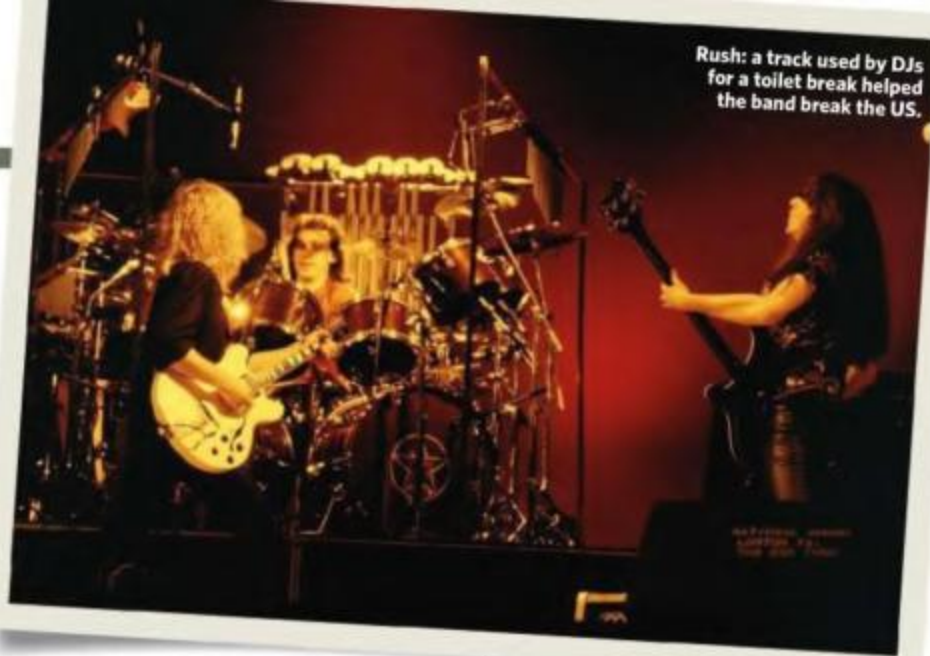
Hard to believe now, but Tom Waits' voice once had a youthful sound to it. His boho-barfly persona was yet to be established at the time of this, his Jerry Yester-produced debut for Asylum Records, on which he crooned country blues songs like the rough-arsed elder brother of James Taylor. The Eagles helped fan Tom's early reputation by covering *Ol' 55*.

CAN'T BUY A THRILL

Probe, 1973



Clever, informed, musicianly, diverse and featuring some sparkling highlights, this is sophisticated early-70s rock at its best. Although later albums leaned increasingly into jazz territory, this one brings together quality rock songs like *Kings* and *Change Of The Guard*, the irresistible, Latin-tinged *Do It Again*, the lilting *Brooklyn* (Owes *The Charmer Under Me*) and the driving classic *Reelin' In The Years* that includes



what is reputedly one of Jimmy Page's fave guitar solos, by session ace Elliott Randall.

THE HUMAN MENAGERIE COCKNEY REBEL

EMI, 1973



Bowie and Bolan might have ruled in the early 70s, but there was also a time when Cockney Rebel's star burned bright. Polio victim, busker, poet, Steve Harley came outta nowhere with

a batch of weirdly bewitching songs and an unaccountable swagger that the public loved and the press despised. This album spawned an unlikely hit in the shape of the sprawling *Sebastian*, and then chilled you to the bone with the epic, angst-ridden *Death Trip*.

BAD COMPANY BAD COMPANY

Island, 1974



Recording at Headley Grange while Led Zep took 'time out' during the recording of *Physical Graffiti*, the former members of Free, Mott The Hoople and King Crimson truly seized the moment. An

album with swagger and style, highlighted by the now classic *Can't Get Enough* and the title track, it epitomised quality hard rock of the period.

KANSAS KANSAS

Kirshner, 1974



'Kansas Is Coming'. So ran ads in US magazines as the band prepared this first album. Listening to it, you can hear the start of

what was to become pomp rock, but *Kansas* also had progressive elements. *Death Of Mother Nature Suite*, anyone?

RUSH RUSH

Mercury/Anthem, 1974



This album broke the Canadian band in the US when the song *Working Man* resonated with the blue-collar workers of Cleveland - and jocks at local station WMMS realised the song was long enough for them to take a toilet break. The album inspired Gene Simmons to dub the band 'Led Zeppelin Jr'. And, listening to the bluesy grooves of *Finding My Way* and *In The Mood*, it's not difficult to see why.

ANGEL ANGEL

Casablanca, 1975



If Kiss were seen as representing the darker, malevolent side of hard rock, then Angel were their heavenly counterparts. Dressing all in white (at least when no one was looking), they were melodic, keyboard-driven and had a certain sweet (in both senses of the word) centre. Unfortunately, record label politics scuppered any chance of success the band - who had a spectacular stage show - might have had. This album remains a cult classic.

DOWN BY THE JETTY DR. FEELGOOD

UNITED ARTISTS, 1975



producer for the since-celebrated Vic Maile.

RITCHIE BLACKMORE'S RAINBOW RITCHIE BLACKMORE'S RAINBOW

POLYDOR, 1975



Freed from Deep Purple's descent into funk, and buoyed by the vast vocal talent of Ronnie Dio, Ritchie Blackmore blazed brightly on this thrilling, epic opening salvo. *Man On The Silver Mountain*, *Catch The Rainbow*, *Sixteenth Century Greensleeves*... Classics all. This debut is all the more remarkable because Blackmore used members of Dio's pre-Rainbow band, Elf, for the purpose of getting it into the shops. The sidemen were soon jettisoned, of course, but that doesn't detract from the sheer quality of their performances.

IAN HUNTER IAN HUNTER

COLUMBIA, 1975



The first album recorded by the former Mott The Hoople mainman after he'd left the band. Here he collaborated with guitarist Mick Ronson, a partnership that would prove lengthy and fruitful. *One Bitten*, *Twice Shy* gave Hunter his only UK Top 20 single.

HIGH VOLTAGE AC/DC

ATCO, 1976



Barely into their 20s when these fiery anthems were laid down, on their debut AC/DC turned the sound of raucous backwater pub-rock into a huge commercial prospect, thanks largely to big riffs, bigger choruses and a ton of irresistible swagger.

TED NUGENT TED NUGENT

EPIC, 1976



When Ted Nugent transformed himself from Amboy Duke into raging-bonkers rocker, it was a remarkably successful reinvention. And, boy, did the guitarist/vocalist have the songs to back it up: *Just What The Doctor Ordered*, *Hey Baby*, *Stranglehold*... all hail *The Loudman*. "I'm writing better songs than ever before," the Nuge told us in '76, "I think *Stranglehold* is the most inventive thing I've ever done." Ted, we responded, you seem to be on the threshold of something really big, really special... "On the threshold of becoming big?!" he barked. "I'm already there, shithead."

'Montrose remains arguably the greatest of all debut albums from an American hard rock act.'

PETER GABRIEL

Words: **Greg Prato** Photo: **Kees Tabak**

Producer **Bob Ezrin** talks about former Genesis frontman **Peter Gabriel**'s first self-titled debut solo album – often simply referred to as *Car* or *Rain* – released in 1977.

When Peter Gabriel left Genesis in 1975, fans had no idea what his next move would be. Was he retiring from music altogether? Would he continue in the highly theatrical style that was Genesis's trademark? All of these concerns were silenced with the arrival of his debut solo album, 1977's *Peter Gabriel*. The producer, Bob Ezrin, discusses the making of this pivotal release.

What was the vibe during the sessions for Peter Gabriel's self-titled solo debut album in 1977?

It was exciting, creative, dynamic and inspiring. There wasn't a single negative moment during the whole process – not one. I put together this band for Peter. He brought along Robert Fripp, because he said: "I need one Brit." I said: "Okay, you get to place a Brit!" He got Robert Fripp. But the rest of these guys, these were my 'go to' guys, with a couple of additions. When the whole band played together it was just thrilling.

We did this album the old-fashioned way: we put a whole band together in the studio, we worked on the songs together, we worked up the arrangements together. And we did the album very quickly – much more quickly than anything Peter had ever done before. So I had a great time doing it, and I think he had a great time, too.

What were your first impressions on hearing the song *Solsbury Hill*?

The initial impressions were that it was a brilliant song. But we didn't have the chorus line initially, because when he first


brought it in, the chorus went, "Son," he said, "make your life a taxi, not a tomb." And I said: "Over my dead body!" No record of mine is going out that says: "Make your life a taxi, not a tomb!" We're just not doing that." So we spent the whole time making this record searching for that end line.



Apparently Peter Gabriel feels that *Here Comes The Flood* on the album is over-produced.

He may be right. He heard it as a much more intimate thing – and he's the artist. He's the artist and he's the writer. He may be right. But, at the time, both of us felt like this was an exciting thing. We were really enjoying doing it. We didn't explore the other approach. I love the way he does it when it's all very quiet and everything [the version on the 1990 Peter Gabriel compilation *Shaking The Tree*], but I love our version too. And I think the fans, love it too.

How would you compare the sessions for this album to your earlier work with Alice Cooper, Kiss and other notable artists?

Similar, in the sense that everybody was there to make something excellent. And really working hard to make things as good as we possibly could, but doing it with a genuine sense of camaraderie and a collaboration, and a great sense of humour at the same time. We laughed through the whole session. To me, that's a key to making really great stuff. I know that other people thrive on tension and conflict, but I tend to thrive on excitement and laughter and craziness – fun craziness. 

"THERE WASN'T A SINGLE NEGATIVE MOMENT DURING THE WHOLE RECORDING PROCESS."

— BOB EZRIN

THE TUBES THE TUBES

A&M, 1975



Already renowned for outrageous live shows, the San Francisco band's debut album proved that they could also write a killer tune. Album closer *White Punks On Dope* became one of The

Tubes' cornerstone anthems. "There are nights when I wish we didn't have to play it," laughs frontman Fee Waybill today. Despite flawless production from Al Kooper and a cracking brace of songs, surprisingly *The Tubes* peaked at only No.113 in the American chart.

BOSTON BOSTON

Epic, 1976



Amazingly, *Boston* was mostly recorded in band mainman Tom Scholz's basement in Massachusetts. Scholz had originally recorded demos of all the songs, and felt they were strong

enough to be put out as they stood. The label disagreed. "The material had to be recorded in a 'professional' studio – in exactly the same way!" Scholz recalls.

Maybe the label was right – the re-recorded album, *Boston*, sold almost 20 million copies.

DREAMBOAT ANNIE HEART

Mushroom, 1976



Originally released by tiny Canadian label Mushroom, this Zep-tinged album introduced the band led by Ann and Nancy Wilson. "Dreamboat Annie came together when we were in

Canada, playing clubs at night, writing songs during the day," guitarist Nancy said recently. "We'd been turned down twice by every major record label, but we met a cool producer, Mike Flicker, at one of the gigs. He was from a small label who wanted to record us." Just as well he did.

It gave the band three US hit singles – *Crazy On You*, *Magic Man* and the title track, while the album made the Top 10.

DID YOU KNOW?
American Girl, from Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers' debut, has appeared in *The Silence Of The Lambs*, *Scrubs* and *The Sopranos*.

"Our idea was simple: just record good songs. The rest is history."
IAN McDONALD ON FOREIGNER



Peter Gabriel: didn't sit down on the job of making his first solo album.

RAMONES

Sire, 1976



John Peel famously heard this album and completely revamped his show on Radio 1 that night. "I just thought it was one of the most incredible albums I'd ever heard," he said. Although the Ramones were really more about high-energy rock'n'roll, this record was seen by many as the birth of punk, and includes *Blitzkrieg Bop* and *I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend* on its tracklist.

TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS

Shelter, 1976



Who leaves a song as enduring as *American Girl* to be the last track on their debut album? Well, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers, for one. *American Girl* might be the album's best known

song, but *TP&TH* is packed full of rootsy, anthemic numbers such as *The Wild One*, *Forever* and *Breakdown*. Unusually, considering how all-American this debut sounds, it was successful on this side of the Atlantic first.



The Tubes: a lot more than just an outrageous live band.

CHEAP TRICK

Epic, 1977



Fusing their Beatles-esque melodies with spiky rock, CT's debut deals with dark subject matter like mass murder, suicide and paedophilia. The band had also wanted John Lennon to produce.

"We asked him," says Trick guitarist Rick Nielsen, "and our then-manager told us that he wasn't interested. When I worked with John on *Double Fantasy* I asked him about it. He was like: 'No one asked me. I would have loved to have done it!'"

DETECTIVE

Swan Song, 1977



Featuring former members of Yes and Silverhead, Detective had an effective way of combining funk and hard rock. "We were probably the right band in the wrong place," frontman

Michael Des Barres once said. *Detective* didn't sell well, but it gathered a strong cult following. And who was co-producer Jimmy Robinson? Could he have been aka Jimmy Page? Well, that's the - sadly false - legend.

FOREIGNER

Atlantic, 1977



Who'd have thought that a rag-bag collection of Anglo-Americans could record a melodic rock album at the height of punk, and that it would sell five million copies? But that's

what happened with *Foreigner*. Ian McDonald, Foreigner's multi-instrumentalist at the time, says of the album: "Our idea was simple: just record good songs. The rest is history."

THE CARS

Elektra, 1978



With this one album, Boston band The Cars virtually reinvented pop-rock, taking their cue from the new wave and adding their own quirky sense of melodic humour. Heavy airplay for songs like *Just What*

I Needed and *My Best Friend's Girl* ensured that *The Cars* was a hit. The striking model on the cover was Russian-born Natalya Medvedeva.

VAN HALEN

Warner Bros., 1977



Little did Van Halen realise that they were about to turn hard rock upside down. "We knew we had something," says Michael Anthony. "But mostly we had this incredible guitar player in Eddie Van Halen and the best frontman around in David Lee Roth." The result was an album that sounded totally different to anyone else, and bristled with attitude.

DAMNED, DAMNED, DAMNED THE DAMNED

Stiff, 1977



The first British punk album, it set the tone for what was to follow with the band. The cover said it all, the foursome having been hit with cream pies. That was the label's idea, says guitarist Brian James. "They thought it was a jolly wheeze to surprise us with a few cream cakes, little knowing we'd enjoy the experience."

BAT OUT OF HELL MEAT LOAF

Epic, 1977



What began as a science-fiction update of *Peter Pan* morphed into *West Side Story* with a metal heartbeat. Written and conceived by Jim Steinman, sung by Meat Loaf, produced by Todd Rundgren, it's now sold over 43 million copies worldwide, selling 200,000 copies every year. Rundgren summed it up: "I had to do this album. It's so out there".

MARQUEE MOON TELEVISION

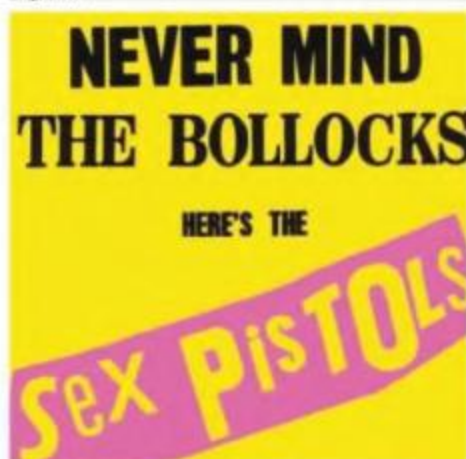
Elektra, 1977



Television's knack of deconstructing the past, then rewiring it into something altogether more alien and thrilling, made British punk look primitive by comparison. The guitar interplay between Richard Lloyd and frontman Tom Verlaine defined the angular sound of the New Yorkers's broody debut, which peaked with the epic 10-minute title track. NME scribe Nick Kent called it "a 24-carat inspired work of genius".

NEVER MIND THE BOLLOCKS HERE'S THE SEX PISTOLS SEX PISTOLS

Virgin, 1977



The shock of the new: Jamie Reid's stark cover art was as uncompromising as the music contained within, which boasted at least two unsinkable punk anthems in *Anarchy in the UK* and *God Save the Queen*. Filth, fury and bye bye Bill Grundy.

PINK FLAG WIRE

Harvest, 1977



If any band took the British punk ethic to its logical extreme it was Wire, four former art students and science geeks with fabulous aliases like Klive Nice and Hornsey Transfer. *Pink Flag's* ferocity was matched only by its brevity, compressing 21 tunes – including all 28 seconds of *Field Days for the Sundays* – into a tidy half hour of tart humour and vicious polemic.

STRANGLERS IV - RATTUS NORVEGICUS THE STRANGLERS

U.A., 1977



Melody Maker dismissed them as "rubbish" as early as 1975, which partly explained The Stranglers' antagonism towards the music weeklies once they hitched a ride with punk two years later. Provocative, menacing and deliciously cynical, this was tough-driving rock with badass bass and keyboards worthy of 60s garage upstarts The Seeds. *Peaches* was promptly banned for its use of the word 'clitoris'.

The Clash: fast, furious and sarcastic.



THE CLASH THE CLASH

CBS, 1977



The Pistols may have bossed the notoriety stakes, but the Clash outstripped them for pure scope. Fast, furious and sarcastic, their politically-edged songs erupted from the cultural melting pot of their West London manor: *White Riot*, *Hate and War*, *London's Burning*. Career Opportunities offered bleak prospects for the nation's youth, while a cover of Junior Murvin's *Police and Thieves* let their street-savvy reggae inspirations show.

MOTÖRHEAD MOTÖRHEAD

Chiswick, 1977



You could say that this wasn't Motörhead's debut – they actually recorded *On Parole* in 1975, but it wasn't released until four years later so strictly speaking it doesn't count! So *Motörhead* was their first release. In April 77, Lemmy and co had all but given up.

They asked Chiswick to record their farewell show. Instead the label offered the band studio time to do a single. However, the trio recorded enough tracks to make the album that saved their career.

"They thought it was a jolly wheeze to surprise us with a few cream cakes, little knowing we'd enjoy the experience."

BRIAN JAMES, THE DAMNED

L.A.M.F. THE HEARTBREAKERS

TRACK, 1977



This electrifying debut from ex-NY Doll Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers was hampered on its original release by a tragic mastering flaw, but it captures the quartet's swaggering, street-smart style directly prior to their inevitable smack-fuelled implosion.

TALKING HEADS '77 TALKING HEADS

SIRE, 1977



CBGBs might have been their spiritual home, but Talking Heads were arty types whose debut album was a neurotic blend of funk, punk and reggae – a curious hybrid of the Velvet Underground, Al Green and The Modern Lovers. Album highlight *Psycho Killer* remains a twisted classic of the era.

THE KICK INSIDE KATE BUSH

EMI, 1978



David Gilmour's tip-off to EMI paid dividends when Kate Bush's startling debut single *Wuthering Heights* made No.1. This parent album was equally ambitious, displaying a rich, playful imagination every bit as expansive as her four-octave voice.

MOLLY HATCHET MOLLY HATCHET

EPIC, 1978



One of the great southern bands, Jacksonville crew Molly Hatchet were chasing pals Lynyrd Skynyrd all the way by the time this album came out. As producer Tom Werman says: "They were dynamite." Especially on tracks like *Bounty Hunter* and *Gator Country*.

OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR THE POLICE

AS&M, 1978



From a trio with chops to spare came a debut that launched a great Brit band of the late 70s. The cod-reggae didn't please everyone, but it worked. *Roxanne*, *So Lonely* and *Next To You* are worth the price of admission alone.

MR. UNIVERSE GILLAN

ACROBAT, 1978



After several overlooked jazz-rock albums under the name of the Ian Gillan Band, the former Deep Purple vocalist got back to his rocking roots. "I got the right line-up together and everything happened very fast," he says of this album. "I knew we'd hit on something special."

BLIZZARD OF OZZ

Words: Henry Yates Photos: Fin Costello

In 1980, **Ozzy Osbourne** was expected to sink in a blizzard of cocaine. Ozzy recalls how instead he hit back with a classic.

IT'S 1979 AND Ozzy Osbourne has fallen on hard times. Bullied out of Black Sabbath and holed up at Le Parc hotel in West Hollywood, he lurks amid the debris of excess: a hopeless, friendless, caged animal, seemingly resigned to his fate as rock's ultimate cautionary tale. "I really did think: 'This is the fucking end for me,'" he admits to *Classic Rock*, three decades later. "I'd been booted out. I just got fucked up every day for three fucking months. Never went outside. Never even opened the drapes."

Into this scene of squalor and self-pity, enter Sharon Arden, with an industrial-strength dose of tough love. Though only in her late 20s and with a puppy-like devotion to the married Osbourne, she was nonetheless a shit-kicking rock'n'roll authoritarian schooled at the knee of the formidable Don Arden (her dad), and the only person capable of mobilising the wallowing singer. "One morning, Sharon just came round and told me: 'Get your shit together. I'll manage you.'" Ozzy recalls, with obvious admiration. "Once she was in the picture, things got rolling. y'know? Sharon absolutely deserves credit for getting that album out of me."

Auditions for musicians to work with Ozzy on his first album outside of Sabbath began with a notice on the board of Mates rehearsal space in LA. Months passed, until the arrival of Californian guitarist Randy Rhoads gave Ozzy his epiphany – "like God entering my life" was how he described it – and the pair left the US for initial writing sessions at Ozzy's family home in Stafford, West Midlands. "Randy was one of these guys who, when we had a weekend off, he'd get in the truck with one of the roadies and just go off around England having guitar lessons," the singer recalls of their odd-couple dynamic. "He probably saw more of England than I ever have."

Finding the rest of the line-up would prove more problematic. In her 2005 autobiography, *Extreme*, Sharon depicts the rhythm section – former Uriah Heep drummer Lee Kerslake and ex-Rainbow bassist Bob Daisley – as talented but unlikeable, and their recruitment as a last resort when other players, including Cozy Powell, priced themselves out of contention. "The instant I saw the band together," she wrote, "I could see the dynamics didn't work, but we were too far down the line."

Rhoads and Ozzy, though, were a natural fit. "In Sabbath, they'd just write something and say: 'Put a vocal on that,'" Ozzy recalls. "I could get the

range in the studio, but with a song like Sabbath's *Bloody Sabbath*, I could never get it on stage. Randy was the first guy in my whole career to make it comfortable for me. When I had the melody in my head for *Goodbye To Romance* – the ballady, Beatley one – I sang it to him, and he says: 'Let's do it in this key.' He was very good at helping me out.

"The thing that I loved about Randy," he adds, "was that everybody was doing that fucking finger-tapping shit, but what he'd do was go from that to a bluesy vibe. He was like Eddie Van Halen and then some. He was a phenomenal find."

Despite Ozzy's residual 'satanic' caricature from the Sabbath years, there was light and shade in the *Blizzard Of Ozz* material recorded at Ridge Farm Studios in March and April of 1980. "I like to go in the studio and make an album," he says. "For me, if it's just fucking headbanging from start to finish, that's not an album, it's just a fucking racket. I'm from the old school. In Black Sabbath we'd do jazz and all kinds of styles, it wasn't just fucking *Iron Man* every song. Anything that makes the album better. So when Randy says to me: 'Do you mind if

I put this classical instrumental piece [Dae] on?', I said: 'What are you fucking asking me for? It's your album as well.' Just go for it, y'know?"

Lyrically, too, the

subject matter was eclectic, with Ozzy (or Daisley, depending on who you believe) taking in occult hero Aleister Crowley, pay-per-view hotel porn ("Randy used to call them 'bone movies'"), and the controversial *Suicide Solution*, later to spark a lawsuit from the parents of a Californian teenager who shot himself while listening to it. "But if you'd listened to the lyric, it's not about suicide as a 'solution'," Ozzy counters. "It's about liquid. It was about Bon Scott, to be honest with you – about drinking yourself to death. I remember being in the dressing room with Bon, and he had this fucking great big tumbler of what turned out to be Jack – fucking half a pint! A couple of weeks later my sister phoned me and says: 'You know a guy called Bon Scott? He drank himself to death.' But that song turned into a mess, all the fucking backbiting. It was crazy."

Perhaps it was a little rich of Ozzy to judge anyone else's drinking habits. Although Sharon had made him functional, it's a mistake to cast *Blizzard...* as the 'sober album'.

"Any band situation I've been in,"

Ozzy reflects, "the first album is always the most fun, because you've got everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Recording *Blizzard Of Ozz*, there was a wonderful atmosphere: Sharon would come down, we'd all go down the pub, get pissed, come back, have

DID YOU KNOW?

When Randy Rhoads auditioned for Ozzy, he walked in with his Les Paul and warmed up, and was offered the job immediately.



Wizards of ...Ozz: (l to r) Randy Rhoads, Lee Kerslake, Ozzy Osbourne and Bob Daisley.

some fun... loads of booze and drugs. It's when fucking business starts to get involved that it starts to get shitty. I don't understand the business side of it, still. My wife is the manager."

But even to an industry novice, it was clear that business was good. Released in September 1980, *Blizzard Of Oz* swaggered into the UK album chart at No.7 and went platinum during a two-year run in the US chart. Sweeter still, no doubt, was the *schadenfreude* of watching the Ronnie James Dio-fronted Sabbath flounder after the strong start of that year's *Heaven And Hell* album. Just a year after facing the knacker's yard, Ozzy Osbourne was back at the head of the metal pack.



Sharon applies the Prince's Darkness.

For some, though, *Blizzard Of Oz* left a nasty taste in the mouth. In 1981, Kerslake and Daisley were pushed out. They would later sue Jet Records and Don Arden for 'non-payment of performance royalties from sales' of the chart-straddling album. Lawsuits pinged back and forth.

And then in 2002 came the reissue of the record, on which their drum and bass parts had been erased altogether, and replaced respectively by Mike Bordin and Robert Trujillo. "Bob Daisley and Lee Kerslake have harassed Ozzy and our family for several years," said Sharon. "Because of their abusive and unjust behaviour, Ozzy wanted to remove them from these recordings."

Curiously, this year's 30th-anniversary reissue of *Blizzard...* will reinstate the original mix. And Ozzy tells *Classic Rock* that it's something he welcomes.

"That was the way it was done, you know?" he considers. "It's this law shit. [The re-recording] was done because of these fucking never-ending lawsuits that keep fucking popping up every fucking three years. If it starts again we'll have to change it again, because when somebody puts a lawsuit in, whether it's a ridiculous one or not, I still have to get a lawyer to defend me, y'know? I'm glad it's back the way it was. We didn't want to change it in the first place, but it was the only way we could stop the lawsuits, y'know?"

Ultimately, to the man in the pit, the legal small print and ethical chin-stroking make little difference to the thrill of what is still a pivotal moment in hard rock. *Blizzard Of Oz* is a victory snatched from the jaws of defeat. And it sounds

Down on the farm: Ozzy recording *Blizzard Of Oz* in 1980.



like it, with Ozzy performing with a backs-to-the-wall fire that he's never quite matched since becoming financially secure.

"People often say to me: 'What's your favourite album?'" he muses. "Well, I can't say that any one is my favourite, because it makes everything else get looked on, so most of the time I say: 'I haven't made it yet'. But I think *Blizzard Of Oz* is a fine piece of work. It's one of my proudest moments and it speaks for itself."

Ozzfest 2010 plays the London O2 Arena on Sept 18. The 30th anniversary edition of 'Blizzard...' will be available through Sony later this year.

THE GODZ THE GODZ

MILLENNIUM/RCA, 1978



Ohio outlaws The Godz never bettered their debut. Produced by Grand Funk Railroad's Don Brewer, this is definitive bad-ass biker-rock, packed full of chainmailed, chainsawin' anthems such as *Gotta Keep A Runnin'* and *Cross Country*. What's more, it's just been reissued. (See review, p.100.)

UNKNOWN PLEASURES JOY DIVISION

FACTORY, 1979



Factory Records boss Tony Wilson famously staked his life savings on the pressing of Joy Division's debut album, and while it gave negligible payback in 1979, the suicide of frontman Ian Curtis ensured posthumous mythology, with the smoke-blackened romance of *Shadowplay* and *She's Lost Control* trickling down through every band of serious young men that followed. Still bleak, still brilliant.

INFLAMMABLE MATERIAL STIFF LITTLE FINGERS

ROUGH TRADE, 1979



The raw, angst-ridden sound of the Belfast streets, the first Stiff Little Fingers album veered from spiky anthems like *Suspect* and *White Noise* to a remarkably mature take on Bob Marley's *Johnny Was* that shone a light on this vibrant quartet's burgeoning abilities.

THE UNDERTONES THE UNDERTONES

SIRE, 1979



Is this the greatest pop-punk album of all time? John Peel certainly thought so, and it's hard to argue with songs as irresistibly snotty and sweet as *Get Over You*, *Here Comes The Summer* and the immortal *Teenage Kicks* – about which Peel wrote 'There's nothing you could add to it or subtract from it that would improve it'.

IN THE FLAT FIELD BAUHAUS

4AD, 1980



Proudly theatrical, the first Bauhaus album defined a gothic movement that the Northampton quartet had single-handedly instigated with their iconic 12" vinyl debut *Bela Lugosi's Dead*. Skeletal frontman Pete Murphy's stentorian vocal tones set an enduring goth template, while Daniel Ash's razor-wire guitar shards stripped the band's glam-infected, post-punk minimalism to its barest bones. Claustrophobia, blasphemy, 'cruxifixation ecstasy'; in *The Flat Field* mesmerised and inspired with all of this and more.

Mötley Crüe: "One of the first bands to take punk and mix it with glam and metal," says Vince Neil.



TOO FAST FOR LOVE

Words: Dave Ling Photo: Robert Matheu

Out of money, and their music out of fashion, in 1981 **Mötley Crüe** recorded a debut album that set the glam-metal ball rolling.

BACK IN NOVEMBER 1981, just less than 12 months after they got together, Vince Neil, Nikki Sixx, Mick Mars and Tommy Lee were total unknowns; young, dumb and practically overflowing with cum, inhabiting the Mötley house in Los Angeles later portrayed so graphically in their book *The Dirt*, and without the proverbial pot in which to urinate.

The band's sleazy adaptation of hard-rock themes was hardly in demand at the time. Gigs were in short supply – as was toilet paper. Six months earlier all 100 copies pressed of their aptly titled seven-inch vinyl debut single *Stick To Your Guns* (b/w *Toast Of The Town*) had been given away free at the band's live shows. And yet the full-length album they'd been dying to make would ignite a glam-metal revolution.

In the days before Doc McGee and Doug Thaler handled their affairs and Elektra Records signed the

group's royalty cheques, Mötley Crüe were managed by Allan Coffman – a former construction worker who was the brother-in-law of a friend of Mars – and his wife. The group were being paid just \$20 a week. Indeed it was drummer Tommy Lee's willingness to 'take one for the team' that enabled them to visit the studio at all.

"We were all in relationships at the time except for Tommy, and the manager at Hit City West studio was this girl," singer Vince Neil reminisces with a mischievous grin. "She wasn't very attractive, but we made Tommy do her for some free recording time."

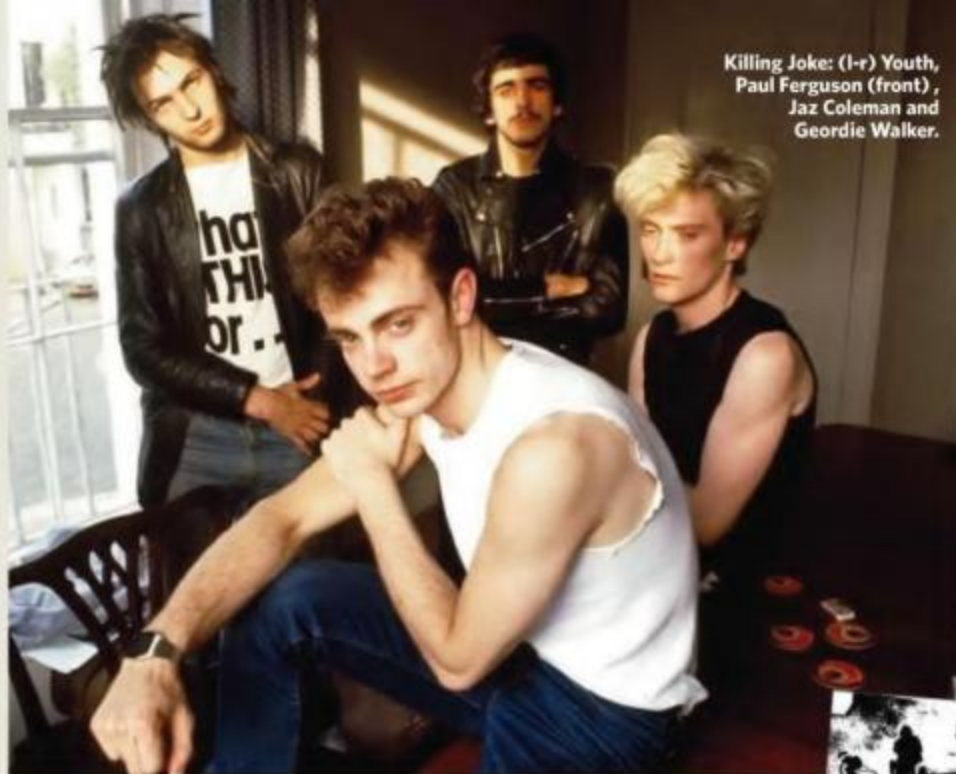
Self-produced by the group, recorded over just three days and mixed at Cherokee Studios (with Coffman And Coffman Productions credited as executive producers), the album was made for the

miserly sum of \$2,500. Just 20,000 copies were pressed on their own label, Leathur Records. "Too Fast For Love was a demo tape, man," Neil

exclaims. But, without doubt, its audaciousness paid off. Once Elektra signed the group, Roy Thomas Baker, of Queen fame, was brought in to

"THE STUDIO MANAGER WAS THIS GIRL. WE MADE TOMMY DO HER FOR SOME FREE RECORDING TIME."

VINCE NEIL



Killing Joke: (l-r) Youth, Paul Ferguson (front), Jaz Coleman and Geordie Walker.

KILLING JOKE

Words: Ian Fortnam Photo: Paul Slattery

Their debut album was born in a squat in 1980, Killing Joke frontman Jaz Coleman tells all...

remix the original Leathür edition.

"A lot of people say Roy screwed up the album, and I agree," admits Neil. "I prefer the rawness of the version that we did ourselves."

In fact Mötley had apparently tried to persuade Andy Scott, guitarist of The Sweet, to oversee the record, but their efforts were in vain.

"That's absolutely true," Neil confirms. "Mötley Crüe loved Sweet's *Desolation Boulevard* album. We also asked Herman Rarebell [drummer with the Scorpions] to produce us and take a share in the band, but he passed. I still tease him about that."

Neil is amused to be reminded that the press release that accompanied *Too Fast For Love* called the group's style "A return to the hard-driving sound of The Beatles re-energised for the 80s".

Considering that Mötley Crüe went on to become one of the most copied bands in the world, it didn't sound like they thought of themselves as particularly original.

"You've gotta remember that in the 1980s, music was still recovering from the punk rock movement," the singer protests. "We were one of the first bands to take punk and mix it with glam and metal. We started a whole new trend."

As affirmed by this issue's cover story, so many acts never quite manage to surpass their first two or three albums. So what is it about the spark of a group's earliest work?

"Well, you have your whole life to write your first album, and then a year before the sophomore curse kicks in," Neil reasons.

"To me, *Too Fast For Love* has some great material. We still do most of those songs on stage. Some are pretty juvenile, *Come On And Dance* makes me want to cringe a little, but we were a young band back then, and for the time that it came out, we were so far ahead of the game." ●

WHEN THE first album was recorded we were all living together in a squat in Elgin Crescent by Ladbrooke Grove," Killing Joke's Jaz Coleman recalls, looking back 30 years. "Living there definitely affected the way the album sounded and is still affecting my life. The second wave of punk was much more interesting than the first. McLaren's New York Dolls influence never did it for me, though I very much liked the idea of taking out all guitar solos.

"The second wave of punk was more influenced by rhythm sections that made your body move. Public Image Limited, Killing Joke and Joy Division started going in a different direction rhythmically and mysticism occurred.

"We used to play Chic and hang around with pimps and gangsters. Heavy dub was the one thing we all liked listening to together, there weren't a lot of common denominators. During my first conversation with [KJ guitarist] Geordie he asked me what music I liked, I reeled off a couple of things and he went 'That's shit'. So I said, 'What do you like?' He reeled off a couple and I said 'Well, that's shit'. That about sums it up, but when it came to reggae we were all one.

"Drums were very important; the tribal thing. We asked ourselves, 'What is an English rhythm?' Paul's way of dealing with the lack of an intrinsically English rhythm was to draw from the

Celtic side; his big tom-toms are reminiscent of the bodhran in Irish traditional music, so we just made the folk music that we never had. In other countries people get drunk and sing the songs of their forefathers. Not in England, they're singing Manchester United songs. Of course, we did have a folk tradition but it's been wiped out. And no, I don't mean fucking Morris dancing.

"On the first EP we'd been feeling our way toward the true Killing Joke sound, but we wanted it heavier, and we found it on the first album. We wouldn't accept a producer in the initial period of finding our musical identity. We wanted to learn production skills ourselves. Also around that time Youth [KJ bassist] and I went to a very early Adam And The Ants gig, on the Xerox tour when Adam was really fucking cool, but I was more impressed by the tribalism of the audience than the band, so I thought, 'Yeah, we'll steal this audience, they'll come with us in the end'.

"We recorded at the Marquee Studios, at the back of the Marquee club in Wardour Street. We had all of our entourage with us and we were all smoking about two or three ounces of dope a day. I can remember finishing our two ounces of dope one day, then taking another ounce off our management, and because they didn't have any

more we physically attacked them. Dope didn't chill us out, we were waiting for the kiss of white heat of a nuclear explosion at any moment, so there was a

kind of horrible atmosphere of paranoia and madness. And it's all still relevant; the paranoia of *Tomorrow's World*; the themes of big brother and conscription... *Wardance* becomes more significant every year." ●

"WE FOUND THE TRUE KILLING JOKE SOUND ON THE FIRST ALBUM." - JAZ COLEMAN

Zodiac Mindwarp: 'doing it properly' proved to be his downfall.

HIGH PRIEST OF LOVE

Words: Rachel Rider Photo: Fin Costello

For guitarist Kid Chaos, their 1986 mini-album was as good as it got for **Zodiac Mindwarp And The Love Reaction**.

Stephen Harris, aka Kid Chaos, aka Haggis – later of The Cult and The Four Horsemen – was one of the guitarists for The Love Reaction. “I was sort of in Zodiac Mindwarp from the beginning and we were really good friends. Not just me and Zodiac, but the four guys, and that, of all of the things that I’ve ever done in the music industry, not musically, but as a thing, that’s the thing I’m most proud of and it wasn’t even, obviously, my idea. But that was the classic dream come true, right?”

“There was no part of being in Zodiac Mindwarp that I thought was funny. I look back on it now and the idea of being 18 with a plastic German helmet on jumping up and down singing like, ‘baby whatever...’ – corny, crazy lyrics!”

“But I always used to think that we were just like early Iggy And The Stooges: we could only play three chords but we did it well. And the thing that killed Zodiac Mindwarp was that Zodiac couldn’t write songs. I mean, he wrote one song. Then he wrote another one. Then we either did that song or the other song, over and over again.”

“I’m not saying that I could have done any better, but because he had that singular, stubborn vision, he refused to let anyone try to expand that vision out. And maybe that’s a good thing. If you listen to The Sex Pistols, they pretty

much played the same song over and over again. And that’s what made them cool.

“You listen back to Zodiac Mindwarp now, you have the *Wild Child* EP, which is sort of this badly recorded blueprint, and then you have the *High Priest Of Love* EP, which is like *The Great Moment Of Zodiac Mindwarp*. And then everything after it is like a slightly-better-recorded-crap-version of that, so realistically... we should have just broken up after that.”

“It would’ve been way cooler if the band had never signed to a major label; or had signed to a major label, spent all the money and then broken up – which is sort of what almost happened. But of course, hindsight is 20/20, right? You don’t have that

perspective... That’s what would have happened if we’d been cynical. But we weren’t, we were just – well, it *became* cynical.

“When I left they got two guys in and suddenly they got a proper producer and they made a proper video and it was like the idealism had gone. It was like the philosophy changed. And I think in a way maybe that was the first time they did start thinking, you know... ‘Fuck! We’d better get

our act together. Let’s rehearse properly. Let’s get proper nice jackets made and let’s get a proper producer and do it properly.’ But doing it properly, that’s fucking crap.”

“WHAT KILLED US WAS THAT ZODIAC COULDN’T WRITE SONGS.” – KID CHAOS



FRESH FRUIT FOR ROTTING VEGETABLES DEAD KENNEDYS

Cherry Red, 1980



A fiercely intelligent alternative to the drooling majority of 80s punk rock, San Francisco’s finest tore into the corrupt and the cruel with a barrage of unhinged surf-punk

and some of the smartest and funniest lyrics ever written.

LIGHTNING TO THE NATIONS DIAMOND HEAD

Happy Face, 1980



This was the start of a New Wave Of British Heavy Metal legend. Few albums have made such an impact. It came in a white sleeve with no info (and thus was also known as

The White Album) because co-manager Reg Fellows owned a cardboard factory and could get plain sleeves made at a low cost. In fact, the whole thing was done with little budget. It contains the brilliant *Am I Evil?* and would go on to inspire Metallica and more.

SHEER GREED GIRL

Jet, 1980



There was an air of hatred for this lot during the NWOBHM years. Maybe because Jet Records hyped them? Or because vocalist Phil Lewis (who went on to sing for LA Guns) was a cocky git? Whatever, their debut still gave us gems like the swaggering, sleaze-packed *Hollywood Teaze*.

IRON MAIDEN IRON MAIDEN

EMI, 1980



“I hate the production on this. It’s wrong,” Iron Maiden bassist Steve Harris has said on more than one occasion. But the fact remains that the band’s self-titled debut was to become

a cornerstone for much that happened in metal during the subsequent few years. And from this debut, *Phantom Of The Opera*, *Running Free*, *Sanctuary* and *Iron Maiden* still remain on the set lists of nearly all of the Irons’ concert tours.



Iron Maiden: when Paul Di'Anno insisted on being taken everywhere on a trunk.

MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP MICHAEL SCHENKER GROUP

Chrysalis, 1980



Everyone thought mad Michael Schenker, the guitar god of UFO, was tossing away his career when he went solo. Wrong. Along came this mighty debut, full of UFO-equalling tracks such as *Armed And Ready*, *Cry For The Nations* and *Into The Arena*.

PRETENDERS PRETENDERS

REAL, 1980



Think Pretenders, think Chrissie Hynde. But the band had a truly magical aura when late guitarist James Honeyman-Scott was part of the fold. This is a delectable debut, full of perfect (but undeniably spiky) pop songs. It only takes a mention of the songs' names to have them humming around your head: *Precious*, *Stop Your Sobbing*, *Kid*, *Brass In Pocket*, *Lovers Of Today*... consummate stuff.

BOY U2

Island, 1980



Before Bono's messiah complex tightened its grip, U2 were simply a damn good rock band, and *Boy* is full of their least over-played

classics, from the spiralling *Out Of Control* to the punky *I Will Follow*. Already, they're writing for stadiums.

WELCOME TO HELL VENOM

Neat, 1981



a style of music they dubbed black metal. "We were fed up with seeing all these poseur bands. This was us sticking two fingers up at them."

ASIA ASIA

Geffen, 1982



When former members of ELP, Yes, Buggles and King Crimson got together, nobody expected such a commercial explosion. But this was one supergroup that worked, with this album topping the US charts and giving us the hit *Heat Of The Moment*. Why did they call themselves Asia? "Our manager Brian Lane came up with it," explains John Wetton. "It did mean we got good racking in the shops."

"We wanted to be faster, harder and more ferocious than Motörhead," explained bassist/vocalist Cronos. The trio recorded in downtime at Neat's studios, but succeeded in inventing

"We wanted to be faster, harder and more ferocious than Motörhead," explained Venom bassist/vocalist Cronos.

BATTLE HYMNS MANOWAR

EMI, 1982



Death to false metal – and maybe the birth of battle metal. Apart from anything else what sets this up as something of a classic is the presence of Orson Welles. The legendary actor and director narrates on *Dark Avenger*.

UNDER THE BLADE TWISTED SISTER

Secret, 1982



Losers on the US club circuit, Twisted Sister came over to England, got UFO's Pete Way to produce them – and history was made. "We fell in love with England. They fell in love with us," says guitarist Jay Jay French.

THE CROSSING BIG COUNTRY

Mercury, 1983



Although remembered most for prompting cries of "the guitars sound like bagpipes!", Big Country's first album was a stirring blend of windswept bombast and infectious hooks, typified by the chart-bothering oomph of singles *Fields Of Fire*, *In A Big Country* and *Chance*.

HOLY DIVER DIO

Vertigo, 1983



After leaving Black Sabbath, Ronnie James Dio was determined to go his own way. "I wanted to be in charge of my career," he said. So the singer formed Dio, debuting with this memorable album. Every song was impressive, and guitarist Vivian Campbell was an inspired choice. "I love what he did here," Dio said at the time. The title track, *Stand Up And Shout* and *Rainbow In The Dark* remain true metal classics.

SCRIPT FOR A JESTER'S TEAR MARILLION

EMI, 1983



The album that gave meaning to the rebirth of progressive rock. Upon their arrival on the rock scene, many felt that Marillion sounded too close to Peter Gabriel-era Genesis. "I think there was always a lot more to them than being another Genesis," says producer Nick Tauber. And songs on their debut such as *He Knows You Know* and *Garden Party* definitely bear this out.

DID YOU KNOW?

Fish requested for a rubber plant to feature on the cover of Marillion's *Script For A Jester's Tear*, but the artist forgot to include it.

KILL 'EM ALL
METALLICA

MEGAFORCE, 1983



"Metallica's legend begins here. This was originally to be titled *Metal Up Your Ass*, with a gory cover. 'The label persuaded us that no record shop would stock it,' says drummer Lars Ulrich, 'so we changed it - reluctantly.' Held within are thrash cornerstones *Whiplash* and *Seek & Destroy*.

TEXAS FLOOD
STEVIE RAY VAUGHAN

EPIC, 1983



Jackson Browne offered three days in his home studio, and it was all Texan guitarist SRV needed to record the debut that saved 80s blues. On the best moments, like *Pride And Joy*, his calling cards are already in place: killer songwriting fused with technique and emotive feel.

DREAMTIME
THE CULT

BEGGARS BANQUET, 1984



A far cry from their later trad rock bombast, the first Cult album married the windswept tribalism of Ian Astbury's imagination to the elegant post-punk melodrama of

Billy Duffy's guitar work on seminal alt-rock anthems like *Spiritwalker* and *Horse Nation*.

STREET TALK
STEVE PERRY

COLUMBIA, 1984



Solo albums are often a disaster, but not so for Journey vocalist Steve Perry. *Street Talk* (which was very Journey-like in its sound) yielded no less than four US hit singles,

including the No.1 mid-tempo ballad *Oh Sherrie*.

STAKK ATTACK
WRATHCHILD

HEAVY METAL, 1984



A teetering platform heel of an album, *Stakk Attack* is a low-rent sleaze-fest full of tacky posturing and barking-mad bubblegum anthems. Misspelling the titles (*Law Abuzer*, *Alrite*

With The Boyz) only added to the songs' absurdly infectious charms.

BONDED BY BLOOD
EXODUS

TORRID/COMBAT, 1985



One of the most influential thrash albums ever, *BBB* was recorded as Exodus were still coming to terms with Kirk Hammett's defection to Metallica. "It's always going to be the greatest album we do," says guitarist Gary Holt.

APPETITE FOR
DESTRUCTION

Words: Henry Yates Photo: Ross Halfin

In 1987, the 'real' **GN'R** bottled the mayhem of the Sunset Strip on their classic debut. Ousted drummer **Steven Adler** tells all.

"THE FIVE OF us were brothers," Steven Adler says of the classic GN'R line-up. "We lived together. We ate together. We fucked together. And Axl and all his lawyers will never be able to take away what we accomplished at that time in our lives. There are millions of musicians, but to get five in a room that can actually make magic happen, that's rare. We had that on *Appetite For Destruction*."

Twenty-three years later, the drummer believes the legendary debut has aged "like a fine brandy". True enough. The most dazzling album of its era, and the reason why thousands still flock to Axl's travelling freakshow in 2010, *Appetite*... is the sound of undiluted anarchy: a musical simulation of fighting bikers, fucking strippers and shooting smack that gives a vicarious thrill to armchair hedonists. It's an album built on chemistry - both kinds - and with respect to Matt Sorum (who is arguably the better drummer), the gang mentality never truly recovered from Adler's 1990 dismissal, when his heroin habit left him too weak to nail *Civil War* for *Use Your Illusion II*.

Now clean, and having just released his memoirs - *My Appetite For Destruction: Sex & Drugs & Guns N' Roses* - the drummer bears no grudge. "I have wonderful memories of *Appetite*..." he says. "Because we just knew. Me, Axl, Slash, Duff, Izzy... we all knew where it was gonna take us. We'd go into the booth and listen back, looking at each other, saying: 'This is gonna be the greatest record ever'. The first time we heard it on the radio, we were like little kids, jumping up and down, screaming, singing along, dancing in a circle."

The backstory of *Appetite*... is well-known: the band wrote most of the material in a squalid LA headquarters known as the Garden, and began work with producer Mike Clink at Rumbo Recorders in August 1986. The material was graphic and autobiographical, equal parts sex, drugs, porn and poverty.

"The songs were everything we'd lived though," says Adler. "They were part of our lives. It was just the five of us, our

crazy friends, and all the crazy experiences. You're living on the streets, you got nothing... Thank God we had strippers! Because strippers make great money, and if you've seven or eight of them on your side, that's a lot of money. They wanted to take care of us rockers..."

Slash has previously described songs like *Mr Brownstone* as being written "at the height of our chemical bliss". When it came to recording, Adler insists they lived a dual existence.

"We were young guys, and had nothing but parties and pussy on our minds, but when it came to going in that studio, everybody straightened their ass up. First we work, then we party. I was a big pot smoker, a little alcohol... but heroin around the band during *Appetite*? I'm telling you, none. Well, not with me personally. Our guitar players, they'd fiddle-faddle every once in a while. But we took it seriously. We'd sleep all afternoon, go record, then go out and party."

All except Axl: "He'd do his parts by himself. Axl's a lone wolf. He's like... I don't want to say Dracula, but he likes his space. Axl's vocals are what took the longest, because he's a

perfectionist: some of the vocals, he'd record one word at a time. But most of the songs are first or second take.

"THERE WAS NO HEROIN AROUND THE BAND DURING *APPETITE*... NONE."

- STEVEN ADLER

Sweet Child O' Mine was first take."

Quite a smooth process, then?

"There was one incident," recalls Adler. "As a band, we always said we'd never let anyone tell us how to write our music. There was this one part in *You're Crazy*... it was originally full-time from

beginning to end, but Mike Clink goes: 'Hey, why don't you do the verse half-time?'

Thinking that everybody else was gonna jump up and say: 'Fuck you, don't tell us what to do!' I was the only one who jumped up and said it. Everyone else was just looking at me."

Ask Adler for a favourite song and he reels off the tracklisting. "*Rocket Queen*... *Nightrain*... *Welcome To The Jungle*... *Think About You*... *Sweet Child O' Mine*..."

Brownstone's a good one. You know what? Every single one. I felt for sure we were gonna have the first album ever that had twelve singles."

What did you think of Axl





Adler: "I want to be part of Axl's life again."

Steven Adler in 1987 and (left) in 2010.

screwing a groupie/girlfriend of yours (since revealed to be Adriana Smith) on *Rocket Queen*?

"Oh, that was just an old girlfriend, a stripper," Adler laughs. "We had, like, eight or nine strippers who were part of our little clan. She just happened to be one I was making out with at the time. But I didn't mind that Axl fucked her. Of course not. He was doing it for the band. Fuck away!"

Adler was equally relaxed about royalties, with Axl taking 25 per cent, the other three on 20 per cent, and himself on 15 per cent. "It was split perfectly," he maintains. "The lyrics were Axl's, so I thought it was only proper for him to make a bit more. Without a fight, I offered it: I said, 'Dude, you take five per cent of mine; I'll take 15, you take 25'. Lyrics are important. You drive around in your car, you're singing the lyrics. But of course, I made a lot of money from *Appetite*. ... You can't sell that many records and not make money."

The bonhomie couldn't last. "Our relationships didn't change during *Appetite*..." he says. "Things only started changing after we'd been on the road, and there was so much drugs and alcohol. We didn't even have to ask for drugs... All we had to do was think it, and it magically appeared. You just think: 'I want a big line of coke' and bing! I was very naïve with heroin. I did it for two months straight, got sick, and the doctor gave me this opiate blocker. I got even sicker, and we had to go in for *Civil War*, and I could not perform."

All logic dictates that *Appetite*... represents the never-to-be-repeated peak of Guns N' Roses. Adler refuses to accept it. "The thing that bothers me is that we didn't finish what we started – because of me," he says. "*Use Your Illusion* would have been bigger and better. If they didn't have that drummer [Sorum]... He's like a machine, nobody wants to hear that. You want to hear swing, feel, groove – that's how I play. I did the demos for *Use Your Illusion*; we'd play the songs, go to the booth and say: 'This is gonna be bigger than fuckin' *Appetite*...' And it would've been. But because of my fuck-up, we didn't finish what we started. Twenty years later, we still can't finish what we started. It means so much to me to do that."

"I want all four of those goofballs to read my book and realise what a special thing we had," he concludes. "Slash and Duff are part of my life again. Izzy is like a gypsy, he just travels the world, but I've been trying to get hold of him. More than anything, I want to be part of Axl's life again. We're brothers. And what do brothers do? They fight. Just because you don't like your brother sometimes doesn't mean you don't love him." 📖

My Appetite For Destruction by Steven Adler (FarrarCollins, £20) is available now.

The Pursuit Of Happiness: dirty pop-rock anthems par excellence.

GREATEST DEBUTS



TOP
OH

LOVE JUNK

Words: Philip Wilding

He tore up half its songs, but having Todd Rundgren produce their debut was a dream come true for **The Pursuit Of Happiness**

"I DREAMED ABOUT working with Todd Rundgren," says The Pursuit Of Happiness mainman Moe Berg on the phone from his home in Toronto. "When the record company asked who we thought should produce our album, I just blurted out his name and then forgot about it as it seemed so unlikely. Then a few weeks later we were at a gig in Winnipeg. During soundcheck there was a call for me and it was Todd – it was a very surreal moment. And he began critiquing our music – especially my guitar playing, which he hated. But Todd was such a big influence on my writing, it seemed he might get what we were doing."

And how he did. The band's spectacular debut album, *Love Junk*, dealt with a diverse range of subjects: the damaging power of cults; jealousy; love's ups and downs; the story of a random attack on a stranger once seen on the train. It was clever, considered stuff and Todd helped create a memorable batch of sparkling pop rock with dirt under its fingernails. Try to stop yourself humming *Down On Him* and then really listen to the lyrics – it's quite likely you'll creep yourself out.

"These songs were pretty intuitive. Which is to say, I didn't set about to write any of them," says Moe. "The songs weren't about love, but the things around love like sex, break-ups, obsession... hence the title. I always liked the titles of our records to accurately reflect the major themes of the album. A lot of times I'd write stream of consciousness stuff and then form it into songs later. A song like *I'm An Adult Now* just presented itself to me fully formed. I don't even think I had to edit anything."

It was the latter that set everything rolling, it and

She's So Young appearing as two of the songs on the band's original four-track demo. And as well as attempting to shop around for a deal they also hit on the idea of making a video.

"We figured we could construct the best video around *I'm An Adult Now* so we shot it and took it over to Much Music, which was Canada's MTV, with the hope they'd throw it on their indie show one day," remembers Moe. "To our amazement, they put it into rotation and suddenly we had a national profile. Managers, agents and record companies started calling. We also had a demand for a record of *I'm An Adult Now* so we pressed one up ourselves. We sold out of our pressing so a local indie called the Record Peddler pressed the next

batch and, eventually, Warner Brothers took it from them. We eventually signed with Chrysalis after meeting a bunch of labels. We'd literally been playing

small clubs in Toronto up until then."

The band moved to Woodstock to rehearse the album, for which they had 30 songs by then. By all accounts Rundgren tore through them, dismissing some as too " twee", others as having "too much guitar." As Moe admits, it was the making of them. They recorded in the nearby Lake Hill, staying at a guesthouse adjacent to the studio.

"We had a great time, both in and out of the studio," he says with some fondness. "Todd once told us: 'You'll leave here with your master under one arm and your livers under the other.' He had a house on the property and occasionally, after a session, he'd come down to our place for a drink and we'd have boisterous discussions about politics or music. I have to say that life was pretty amazing right about then."

"WITH TODD, WE'D HAVE BOISTEROUS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT POLITICS." – MOE BERG

EAT 'EM AND SMILE DAVID LEE ROTH

Warner Bros. 1986



Dave Lee Roth's debut solo release was known as *Sonrisa Salvaje* south of the border, the former Van Halen frontman re-recording the entire

album in Spanish to appeal to the Mexican market. But it was blistering stuff in any language, Steve Vai's histrionic playing (check opener *Yankee Rose* for proof) and Roth's droll delivery making it a commercial and critical success.

LOOK WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN POISON

Enigma. 1986



Young, dumb and... well, you get the picture. Poison might have come from Pittsburgh, but they typified the burgeoning LA hair scene. They'd never better this debut.

Throwaway, raucous and dumb, songs like *Talk Dirty To Me* and *Look What The Cat Dragged In* proved that Poison were the perfect house band for the all-consuming, day-glo 80s.

OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET KING'S X

Megaforce. 1988



Ten years in the making, Texan trio King's X's debut turned heads with its punchy and unconventional arrangements, Beatles-esque harmonies and

Doug Pinnick's soulful vocals. The astonishing *Goldilox* sounded like nothing else, while the strident *King* hinted at their Christian beliefs.

SCUM NAPALM DEATH

Earache. 1987



Had anyone ever heard anything as extreme as this before? We don't think so. "We were a bunch of kids trying to be as noisy as we could," drummer Mick Harris says. "There

was no cunning plan. Who knew what would happen?" It gave birth to grindcore, that's what happened.



SKID ROW

Words: Roger Lotring Photos: Mark Weiss

In Sebastian Bach, **Skid Row** thought they had the bona fide rock star who could propel them to the big time. But with the singer's talent came an ego that threatened to destroy the band.

IT'S EVEN FUNNIER now, and Dave 'Snake' Sabo laughs, remembering the afternoon at his mother's house in Sayreville when Skid Row first met Sebastian Bach.

"One of the first things Sebastian does, he walks in and goes: 'What's up, dude! I got a nine-inch dick!'"

"I go, 'Cool—meet my mom.'"

After such a revealing introduction, the members of Skid Row then took the lanky 19-year-old to Mingies, a favourite haunt. When that night's band took a break, they went on stage for an unrehearsed run-through of *Piece Of Me*, one of the demo cuts that had lured the Canadian singer to New Jersey. Bach made an immediate impression, including nearly starting a drunken fight with another club patron in the parking lot. "He threw a punch and missed the guy by a mile," Sabo laughs. Forcing their new frontman into the car, they knew even then it would be one wild ride.

"Rachel [Bolan, bass] told me—and I'll never forget it: 'He's a great singer, but we're gonna have trouble.'" But Snake, having witnessed what he saw as the second coming of David Lee Roth with the voice of Rob Halford, was willing to deal with the devil. "He was absolutely flamboyant and crazy—a bona fide rock star with an incredible voice."

Sebastian Bach was exactly what Skid Row needed. Eventually, though, success would make him their nightmare.

Skid Row formed around the songwriting nucleus of Snake Sabo and Rachel Bolan, and marginal players already working with Snake

would be replaced with Rob Affuso, drums, and Scotti Hill, guitar. The band then spent a year auditioning singers, ranging from the not-quite-right to the barely capable. Future Lynch Mob vocalists Oni Logan and Robert Mason were considered. There was even talk of poaching Jeff Keith from Tesla, before Bach was spotted jamming with Zakk Wylde and Kevin DuBrow at photographer Mark Weiss's wedding.

Appetite For Destruction had changed the whole landscape and labels were searching for their own version. Of the two frontrunners, Geffen Records was already home to Guns N' Roses, so Atlantic won Skid Row's signatures. Everything was in place by early July 1988. Following three weeks of pre-production and a demo that mapped out arrangements, the band relocated to a studio in the unlikely rock'n'roll locale of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. That studio, Royal Recorders, was based in the Americana Resort, which had been pitched to the band as a 'Playboy hotel'. Manager Doc McGhee and his

co-managing brother, Scott, neglected to mention that it had not had that affiliation for several years.

"Corn as far as the eye could see," recalls Rachel, who had expected Playboy Bunnies. But the remote location decreased the number of distractions for a rambunctious band used to living half an hour from New York City. Still, they managed to make the best of the dullness. "We'd have parties with strangers staying at the hotel," says Bolan. "The only bar there was a piano bar, so we became friends with those [musicians] and would drink with them after their set."

Bach had a habit of enthusiastically playing ➡

Sweet little Skid Rowers: (from left) Rob Affuso, Sebastian Bach, Scotti Hill, Dave 'Snake' Sabo, Rachel Bolan.

THE DEBUT ALBUM

SKID ROW



SKID ROW
SKID ROW

Atlantic, 1989

Aspiring to emulate the vast popularity of Guns N' Roses, Skid Row were every bit as cocky, tough and vital as their rivals, and they had the tunes to ensure that success was instant and massive. Twenty-one years on, any rock club that fails to play *Youth Gone Wild* at least once a night simply isn't doing it properly.



GREATEST DEBUTS

Skid Row's demo for their new friends, despite producer Michael Wagener insisting it was confidential and strictly meant to document the arrangements. When someone mentioned hearing it, the producer finally snapped. "I took the cassette, pulled out the tape and microwaved it – no more demo to play," he recalls.

Scotti remembers the resort was huge, but not much of a party scene. Eventually, Wagener rented jet-skis so the band could tear up Lake Geneva.

The only other extra-curricular activity was Alpine Valley, a sizable amphitheatre located between Milwaukee and Chicago. "A lot of bands came through there that summer," Scotti says. "Some of them knew about this new band working out there, so it was a lot of fun for us."

"Saving grace, actually," adds Rachel. "Otherwise, we would have gone fucking insane. Aerosmith stopped in. Def Leppard came down with a bottle of champagne, wishing us luck. I'm like: 'Def Leppard are standing in the control room, listening to our playback. This is a higher level...'"

Although the Americana Resort was the furthest thing from a modern-day Gomorrah, it did boast an adjacent convention centre that Wagener felt certain would be perfect for recording drums. Roy Thomas Baker had suggested the room to him after recording T'Pau's *Bridge Of Spies* album there. "People think there's tons of artificial reverb on those drums, when in reality it's mostly that big room you can hear on the album. The day before we started tracking, they had an auction there with 120 cars; that's how big the place was."

"We had a video camera on both sides, so Rob could see us in the studio, and we could see him," Snake recalls. Drum tech Chris Mohr would even sleep on the floor of the barren convention centre to guard the unattended gear. But recording basic tracks in separate buildings was challenging for Affuso, who disliked the feeling of disconnection. He also hated Snake's obsession with perfection.

"I'm the biggest jerkoff when it comes to drummers," admits Sabo, claiming the natural acoustics alone were not enough. "I'm surprised Rob didn't end up in a fucking insane asylum because of me. I was just brutal."

"Yeah," Affuso laughs in agreement. "And, frankly, it did take some of the fun out of the whole thing. I didn't think rock'n'roll was supposed to be so perfect. Some of the beauty is the imperfection."

Snake insisted on precision without sounding sterile. "It had to have groove; to be on the back of the beat – but it had to be on time. I was a stickler, to the point where the guys got sick of me."

So Rob took inspiration from AC/DC – specifically drummer Phil Rudd – as a guideline during the sessions: "[Rudd played] so perfectly, pushing forward with his right hand on the high-hat and pulling back with the kick drum and snare, playing behind the beat."

Still, despite the search for perfection, there are minimal overdubs on the *Skid Row* album. Adamant about making an album they could replicate live, Rachel often protested to Wagener about any embellishments, including an acoustic guitar added to thicken *18 And Life*.

"I'm like: 'Nuance, schmooance.' I didn't want anything we weren't going to be able to pull off live. But Snake was like: 'Dude, the guy's got plenty of gold records on his wall to prove he knows what he's doing.'"

That attention to detail also kept Bach from

singing harmonies on *Sweet Little Sister*, because he was simultaneously singing over them. "Obviously, Sebastian is a far better singer than me," Sabo chuckles. "But the idea was that contrast, because that was the reality of what it would be like."

Patterned after the dual guitars of bands such as Iron Maiden and Judas Priest, and especially Aerosmith, listening to the album through headphones also reveals much point-counterpoint interaction between Scotti and Snake.

"We had many discussions, and a lot of times sat down and worked out our parts," Hill explains. "If a song needed a really screaming, fast, heroic

"RACHEL SAID: 'BACH'S A GREAT SINGER, BUT WE'RE GONNA HAVE TROUBLE.' HE WAS FLAMBOYANT AND CRAZY. A BONA FIDE ROCK STAR."



guitar solo, that's definitely up Snake's alley. I wound up doing the more melodic, soulful stuff, like *18 And Life* and *I Remember You*."

Guitar solos were the only aspect of the songs not determined in pre-production, Wagener says. "Once we got in the studio, the parts left to chance were the solos, and we had tons of fun with those."

Now 46, Scotti is more laid back. But during those earlier years, and especially while tracking the first album, he was prone to angry frustration.

"Yeah, yeah – you've been talking to Rachel, right?" he laughs. "I don't remember what song we were working on, but that old blue guitar of mine, I took it off and just whipped it across the room, put a big chip in the wall and stormed out. I used to do that kind of shit back then."

Such outbursts were the result of feeling inadequate compared to his heroes. "I wasn't as good as the guys I idolised. I put a lot of pressure on myself, and it probably held me back a bit. Even if I was having tuning problems – boom! – I'd throw a fit and break something."

That's ironic, because the public perception was that Bach had the volatile personality in the band. "Oh, he did," assures Hill, laughing. But Sebastian was not the only one. "No, no, definitely not. I was a little more hot-headed back then – probably a lot of fun to be around, but a really nasty temper. But I was throwing fits at myself, where he would throw a fit because he hadn't done it in an hour."

I REMEMBER YOU was the dark horse on the album. According to Affuso, it wasn't originally even going to be included for fear of being lumped in with every other hard rock band on the power ballad bandwagon.

"Rachel and Snake thought the song was too pop, too pretty, and that it wasn't in line with our public image. I said: 'Are you fucking kidding me? This is going to be one of our first hits!' It was a real fight – I had to pull teeth to get that on the album."

Tracking vocals for the song wasn't easy, either. Multiple takes were comped together, a common pre-Pro Tools method of getting a pristine vocal performance that Wagener still uses today.

And although there were other comped performances throughout the album, in terms of Sebastian's vocals, that song required the most takes, Snake says. "When Rachel and I wrote melodies, we didn't put limits on how high a vocal was – we were like: 'We're not singing it!'"

Bach also had yet to fully come into his own as a singer, Bolan explains. "We were all young, but he's a few years younger, so he was a kid. He had pitch and timing problems. But he was still a teenager when we started, for God's sake."

Perfectionist Wagener was willing to go to any lengths to get the right performance. But A&R was less agreeable, at one point arguing that some vocal tracks on the album should be recut.

"Certain people seemed to think they should sound more like Bon Jovi," the producer says, "because they were big at that time. But we fought against it."

Atlantic Records also disagreed with *18 And Life* being the second single, wanting *I Remember You* instead – a move the band feared might taper the commercial lifespan of the album.

"I'll never forget it," Sabo says, describing a call in New Mexico between Atlantic's Jason Flomm and himself, Rachel, Sebastian and Scott McGhee. "We didn't have a clue whether people were going to get it, but we just felt like that was the next step we needed to take, that particular song."

Originally written about Sabo's older brother, Rick, and his personality change following military service in Vietnam, *18 And Life* became the metaphorical story of a tragically disaffected youth that would reach No. 4 on the *Billboard* chart, their highest charting single in the United States.

The sessions wrapped in September and the album was released on

Continued on page 127

The Stone Roses:
a kaleidoscope of ideas
outta Madchester.



MASTERS OF REALITY

Def American, 1988



own twists. You can tell I'm a fan of Yes." Stand out tracks include *The Eyes Of Texas* and *Domino*.

KINGDOM COME

Polydor, 1988



MOR's debut is one of the pivotal albums of the stoner genre, but "We never thought of ourselves as stoner," says mainman Chris Goss. "What we were doing was hard rock, but we added in our

Unlabelled copies of *Kingdom Come* were sent out to US radio, hinting that it was actually Led Zeppelin. When the truth came out, the band made the monumental error of denying they

VIVID

Epic, 1988

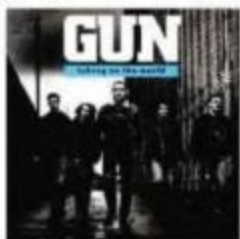


Mick Jagger, you realised that this was a quite brilliant amalgam of hard rock, funk and jazz.

Vernon Reid, Living Colour's fleet-fingered guitarist, became one of the best of his generation.

TAKING ON THE WORLD

A&M, 1989



While the Scottish band would go on to have further success, this is the album that

most represents what they were about. Gun were a melodic hard rock band, but they had an edge and streetwise grit, as they proved on hit single *Better Days*.

BLEACH

Sub Pop, 1989



Before the naked baby swam into view, there was *Bleach*: a rough-and-ready opening gambit recorded on eight-track in three days for \$600 that submerged Kurt

Cobain's melodic flair beneath sparse noise and lyrics whose meaning he apparently "didn't give a flying fuck about". It's still a visceral thrill, even if the only hint of impending world domination is *About A Girl*.

DID YOU KNOW?

Nirvana named their debut *Bleach* after Cobain saw an Aids prevention poster warning addicts to bleach their needles.

LET LOVE RULE

1989, Virgin



Having been told his vibe was neither 'black enough' nor 'white enough', Kravitz self-financed *Let Love Rule*, played virtually all the vintage instruments, and let his 60s obsession drive material that ranged from the up-tempo

funk of *Mr Cab Driver* to the plaintive balladry of *I Build This Garden For Us*. "I refused to change my music to fit in," he says.

PRETTY HATE MACHINE

Island, 1989



classic 80s rock plus touches of industrial sounds. It wasn't the full-on electronic explosion of later years, but it was far more accessible.

THE STONE ROSES

1989, Silvertone



The Jackson Pollock-esque sleeve implied a kaleidoscope of ideas, and so it proved on the grooves, with Ian Brown's vocals whispering ambition, John Squire's guitar fusing The Byrds,

BURNING TREE

Epic, 1990



Marc Ford's power trio recorded just one album before the band went out on tour with the Black Crowes. The latter group saw something they liked, snagged the guitarist and put an end to *Burning Tree*. Which is a tragedy given the Taste- and Cream-like grooves running through the record, highlighted by the rattling title track and the plaintive *Crush*.

Bleach submerged Cobain's melodic flair beneath sparse noise and lyrics whose meaning he "didn't give a flying fuck about".

APPLE MOTHER LOVE BONE

STARDOG/MERCURY, 1993



One of the great grunge albums. Sadly, this was not only MLB's debut record, but it was also their last. Ranging from spot of glam (*This Is Shangri-La*) to the gentle

piano-led *Man Of Golden Words*, the band born from the ashes of noiseniks Green River married tunes and ragged riffs while frontman Andrew Wood did his best Freddie Mercury over the top. Who knows what the Seattle band might have achieved had Wood not died from a drugs overdose before its release.

LAST DECADE, DEAD CENTURY WARRIOR SOUL

GEFFEN, 1990



This explosive debut railed against the first Bush president and, on *Charlie's Out Of Prison*, told the story of frontman Kory Clarke's time as a drug dealer's driver. "He was insane," Clarke says of Charlie. "Once he almost beat his girlfriend to death and when I tried to intervene he put a gun to my head."

BELLYBUTTON JELLYFISH

CHARISMA, 1990



Given their enduring power pop legacy, it's hard to believe that Jellyfish only ever made two albums. This, now a remarkable 20 years old, tipped its hat to the British

invasion in the shape of Queen and Badfinger. *Baby's Coming Back* was a jaunty acoustic-based gem, while *She Still Loves Him* is possibly the best song Wings never wrote.

THE LA'S THE LA'S

GO! DISCS, 1990



The La's was shit; a bogus, plastic 60s pastiche that should never have seen light of day. At least that's what reclusive/obsessive La's singer songwriter Lee Mavers thought. The rest

of us fell hard for the swooning British jangle of *There She Goes* and *Son Of A Gun* and its other ten tracks.

BACK STREET SYMPHONY THUNDER

EMI, 1990



After Terraplane failed, most of that band regrouped as Thunder. The result was somewhere between Whitesnake and Def Leppard. "What we've

done is what we could never do with Terraplane," said guitarist Luke Morley. Produced (brilliantly, as it happened) by Duran Duran's Andy Taylor, BST is packed full of Brit rock anthems including *Dirty Love*, the title track and the epic ballad *Love Walked In*.

WE STILL laugh about it now," says The Black Crowes frontman Chris Robinson, relaxing at his home in California. "We were one of those local bands that really wasn't very popular. If we wrote a riff at sound-check then we played it that night, we'd play the song on the spot, just throw it in there. People weren't so keen on that sort of thing."

Even their A&R man stumbled upon them by accident. George Drakoulis was in Atlanta scouting other bands for the A&M label. He happened to be nursing a drink in a bar when he asked the stranger next to him if there were any rock bands in town worth hearing.

"And someone mentioned Mr Crowe's Garden, as we were back then," Chris recalls. "Typically, we had no shows booked while he was in town, but we had a gig booked in New York coming up, third on the bill of five bands at Drums. George came down and he said we were all right. And I guess we were. He kept coming down to Atlanta after that and we kept working on demos."

"All these bands in Atlanta were working hard on their repertoires and their stage shows, and we were the worst – no work ethic, non-career minded, no local following. But for some reason we always had people flying in from LA or New York to see what we were doing. We just thought they'll take us to dinner. We'd order eight

pitchers of margaritas and by the time the gig started we were pissed out of our heads and barely able to finish the show. They'd fly back home and we thought we'd got one over on them."

Dining on someone else's dime and playing live intermittently enabled the band to focus on making what would become their debut album for the American label. Yet while they were recording *Shake Your Money Maker*, they hadn't even signed the deal. And George Drakoulis hadn't produced a full album before, so he was also feeling his way. They hunkered down in a studio and wrote and rehearsed for days at a time.

"That really was when we built up our relationship with George," says Chris. "We were kids, we had a few guitars, a couple of amps... We didn't have a budget for food, we kind of ate whatever George didn't finish. It was fantastic, though, a real adventure for us. We were thinking, we're making a record, then we'll get a deal and we'll try to get us much out of this experience as possible and then figure out what we're going to do with our lives. It seemed to us that you had to be an asshole to get on MTV or in showbiz. We weren't interested in that so much."

"It was just like that," agrees the other Robinson brother, guitarist Rich. "The studio was a place where Brendan O'Brien had worked. He was just our engineer then, which is very strange when you think about it now. I moved into my 20s in the middle of recording our first album – as good

a way to start a new decade as any."

Just two years later, Rich had come up with a song that would make the final cut of the album, the elegiac *She Talks To Angels* (which, along with *Jealous Again*, the band have deconstructed for the just-released *Croweology* collection).

"*She Talks To Angels* has always held up for us," says Rich. "That was the first song I wrote. And when George heard it he really liked it. Chris wasn't sure, but George insisted, said we needed it on the record. Chris likes to move on, he doesn't tend to dwell on the past, and I think that song had been around a while by the time we got to making the album and he just wanted to hear new stuff."

"It's a George record," Chris says, but not unkindly. "We were so excited and eager, and George was very methodical – thank God. He made a very radio-friendly record. It took a long time because we weren't used to the studio, we weren't used to things being perfect. But we were thinking, this is how it's done so this is how we'll do it. Though when we bought our freedom with that record selling millions of copies in the States, we never made a perfect record again."

Both Robinsons agree that the album still stands up 20 years later, even if they can hear the band's naivety between the grooves.

"We still play pretty much everything from that record," says Chris. "The only song that's been lost is *Struttin' Blues*. *Seein' Things* is still a band favourite and a song that we probably play twice a week if we're on the road. I hear songs on the radio like *Jealous Again* and I like it. It's still a big part of our

show. It's an iconic song for us, as is *Twice As Hard*. I still love to sing *Sister Luck* when we do it."

"Though it was *Sister Luck* that was really hard to

capture in the studio," Rich remembers. "As a band we hadn't played much together, and trying to find that dynamic was really hard for us on some songs. We recorded *Sister Luck* several times just trying to get it really right. But it holds up as an album, I think. I always view our records as what they meant at the time. I think when you're that young and things happen that fast, you really wear your influences on your sleeve. And the only frame of reference you have is wanting to make music that moves people as much as the music that I loved moved me. That was always the goal. So to me it was the best possible record we could've made then. I still think the songs are pretty great."

So did the record-buying public. *Shake Your Money Maker* sold more than seven million copies, and on the back of it the band went off on a world tour that would take them away from Atlanta for almost two years, playing more than 350 shows.

"I remember us coming over to London to play the Marquee club, and thinking the queue outside was for someone else," Rich laughs. "The audiences over there were unbelievable compared to America. We played the Marquee, and then went out opening for the Dogs D'Amour. Then months later, at the end of the *Shake Your Money Maker* tour, we came back to London and did Hammersmith Odeon. That sort of wrapped up it all up. We came full circle, and then we got on the plane and finally went home." ■

Brothers Rich (left) and Chris Robinson. *Shake Your Money Maker* was the Crowes only "perfect" record, says Chris.

SHAKE YOUR MONEY MAKER

Words: Philip Wilding Photo: Robert Matheu

Arguably their best album, **The Black Crowes'** debut is full of iconic songs, most of which they still thoroughly enjoy playing.



GREATEST DEBUTS

TEMPLE OF THE DOG TEMPLE OF THE DOG

AS&M, 1991



Full of sprawling grunge grandeur, this was conceived by Chris Cornell as a tribute to late Mother Love Bone vocalist Andrew Wood. Said MLB (and future Pearl Jam)

bassist Jeff Ament: "It was a good thing at the time, because it allowed Stone [Gossard, also ex-MLB] and me to make music." The melody from stand-out track *Times Of Trouble* would re-surface as Pearl Jam b-side, *Footsteps*.

FACELIFT ALICE IN CHAINS

COLUMBIA, 1991



With detuned Sabbath-y riffs, and unique dual-harmony vocals from Layne Staley and main songwriter, guitarist Jerry Cantrell, Alice In Chains were the heaviest of the

Seattle grunge bands. While follow-up album *Dirt* often gets the plaudits, it's *Facelift* with its crushing roster including *Man In The Box*, *We Die Young* and *Bleed The Freak* that really made the most impact.

TEN PEARL JAM

EPIC, 1991



The album that commercially truly defined grunge, *Ten* remains many fans' favourite Pearl Jam record. Bigger, bolder and more focused than their later

records, it's a multi-million seller that brims with conviction and honesty. It's home to anthems like *Alive*, *Even Flow* and *Jeremy*.

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

1992, EPIC



While some early 90s albums like Nirvana's *Nevermind* merely whined, Rage's debut positively seethes, with fist-in-the-air anthems like *Bullet In The Head* and

Bombtrack still sounding every bit as combustible as the flaming Buddhist monk on the sleeve.



GENERATION TERRORISTS

Words: Paul Elliott Photo: Ed Sirrs

The **Manics'** debut came from nowhere. *CR* goes back to 1992 to revisit an encounter with **Nicky Wire** and **Richey Edwards**.

AT THE BEGINNING of the 90s, Manic Street Preachers stated that they would make only one album, that it would sell 10 million copies, and that the band would then split up, their agenda complete. And in the end, nothing could have been further from the truth.

Generation Terrorists, the Manics' debut album, was not the huge success the band had predicted: it sold only 250,000 copies. And 18 years on, the band is still active, albeit minus one of the four founding members that created *Generation Terrorists* and the two albums that followed.

On February 1, 1995, guitarist and lyricist Richey Edwards disappeared from the Embassy Hotel in London, never to be seen again. In November 2008, he was officially declared presumed dead.

In the wake of Edwards' disappearance, the Manics continued as a trio: guitarist/vocalist James Dean Bradfield, bassist Nicky Wire and drummer Sean Moore. And they went on to become one of the most successful British rock groups of the modern era. September 13, 2010 saw the release of the Manic Street Preachers' tenth studio album, *Postcards From A Young Man*. It features a guest appearance from Duff McKagan, former bassist for Guns N' Roses, a band that had a huge influence on *Generation Terrorists*. It is as if the Manics' story has turned full circle.





Manics in '92: Nicky Wire (back) and (l-r) Richey Edwards, James Dean Bradfield and Sean Moore.

In February 1992, when *Generation Terrorists* was released, it was the two lyricists, Nicky Wire and Richey Edwards, who acted as chief spokesmen for the band. At this time, the Manics' outspokenness had made them the band people loved to hate.

"That's fair enough," Richey shrugged. "People do expect a lot from us and they can get a bit antagonistic. James puts up with most because he's the singer. He ended up going bare-topped nearly every night on our last tour because there was so much spitting from the crowd."

Richey freely admitted that as a guitar player he was pretty much useless. "James was brought up on Led Zeppelin," Richey said, "whereas the things that impressed me when I was young were early Clash, the Pistols and Hanoi Rocks. There was hardly any musicianship involved, it always seemed better just to jump up and down and try to look good. That's what I always concentrated on, rather than actually learning to play!"

"James is the best guitarist," Nicky explained, "so he does everything. Because we've known each other since we were five, we trust each other – there are no egos in the band. Richey takes the best picture and James does the best solos. We do all the artwork ourselves, and Richey needs just as much time to do that as James does to record the guitars."

Richey claimed it was his lack of guitar-playing

ability that led the Manics to cover the Guns N' Roses song *It's So Easy* for the b-side of the *Generation Terrorists* single, *You Love Us*. "It's So Easy is just an angry song that's easy to play," he smiled. "James took me into consideration." But there was no doubt that the Manics were united in their love for GN'R. During the recording of *Generation Terrorists* at Black Barn studios in Surrey, the band bribed engineer Matt Ollivier to drive them up to Tower Records in London's Piccadilly to buy *Use Your Illusion I & II* on the day of release.

"We stayed up all night playing them," Nicky recalled. "Estranged is the best track on the two albums. The guitar solos are so beautiful."

Added Richey: "When we were teenagers we'd had almost a decade of boredom before Guns N' Roses and Public Enemy started. There are really big drawbacks about both those bands – homophobia, anti-Semitism, misogyny, whatever – but we focused on their good points."

"It's strange that Axl Rose does dumbfuck things like *Back Off Bitch*," said Nicky. "But the mistakes that

these bands make don't matter to us, because we always thought to ourselves that we were going to be the perfect band." Nicky was not joking when he said this.

What Richey Edwards and Nicky Wire expressed – in this interview and in the lyrics on *Generation Terrorists* – was an intelligence and a cultural reach far beyond that of most rock bands.

"We could never understand bands like Poison and Warrant," Richey groaned. "They'd sing about cruising down Sunset Strip on a Harley Davidson, cocaine parties, loads of women. We were just rotting away in a bedroom in Wales and it made no sense to us at all. Tigertailz come from near where we're from, and they really wanted that LA lifestyle. We could never feel any kind of affinity with those aspirations. It just seemed really childish."

It was typical of the Manics that they would invite Traci Lords, porn star and ex-girlfriend of Slash, to sing a duet with Bradfield on *Little Baby Nothing*, one of the key songs on *Generation Terrorists*. In her dull voice, the lyrics (*My mind is dead, everybody loves me, wants a slice of me...*) became even more disturbing.

"We thought Traci would be a good idea for the song," Richey explained. "We haven't seen any of her films. We don't want to. We've just read about her and how she nearly brought down the American porn industry because 30 of her 42 films were made when she was 15. She flew in to London to see us play, we met and talked after the show, and we did the song the next day."

"Traci is just really sweet," added Nicky. "The song is about that typical male attitude: a man can fuck a million girls and he's a stud, but a woman is outcast as a slag."

In 1992, with alternative rock in the ascendancy, the Manics felt a kinship not only with GN'R but with the band that was the antithesis of Axl's rock star excesses, Nirvana.

"With Nirvana breaking through, barriers have gone down," said Richey. "It's not so much down to your haircut as your songs. When we were teenagers we'd be playing the same records as all the hardcore metal fans, but because we looked different they all thought we'd be into Joy Division."

Nicky: "We're glad about that, though, because we want to compete on our own terms. We're different to other rock bands."

A case in point was the *Generation Terrorists* cover art. As Richey revealed, "The cover the record label suggested was obscene! They said: 'We've got this

great concept: the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage with red velvet curtains opening to reveal a cruise missile with 'Generation

"WE WERE PLAYING THE SAME RECORDS AS ALL THE METAL FANS, BUT THEY THOUGHT WE WERE INTO JOY DIVISION." – RICHEY EDWARDS

Terrorists' written on the tip.' I just went, 'Fuck it, I'm going to have to do everything myself!'"

The resulting cover shot of Richey's torso with crucifix and tattoo (altered from 'Useless Generation' to the album title) is the defining image of the Manics. *Generation Terrorists* may not have sold 10 million copies, but it is one of rock's classic debuts, and in 1992 it confirmed Manic Street Preachers as the most exciting rock band in Britain. ●

COPPER BLUE SUGAR

Creation, 1992

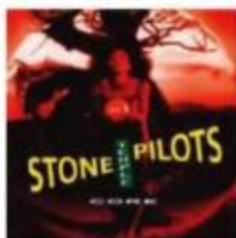


After years of decibel-worrying toil, ex-Hüsker Dü man Bob Mould found himself with an unlikely hit album when he teamed with bassist David Barbe and drummer

Malcolm Travis for Sugar. *Copper Blue* was lean, loud and unstintingly melodic, Mould even dedicating two songs – *Hoover Dam* and *If I Can't Change Your Mind* – to George Martin and The Beatles.

CORE STONE TEMPLE PILOTS

Atlantic, 1992



If the recipe for successful band is a solid rhythm section, a guitarist who has technique and flair to spare, and a troubled singer, then STP had the lot. Throw in a clutch of energetic,

hard-rocktastic songs – *Sex Type Thing*, *Piece Of Pie*, *Crackerman et al* – and it's no wonder the end result was not only a great debut but also one of the great albums of the 90s.

SHAME BRAD

Epic, 1993



Something of a Seattle supergroup, featuring Stone Gossard, Shawn Smith and Regan Hagar, who were connected to Pearl Jam and Satchel. It's a very chilled-out affair,

from the plaintive opener *Buttercup* to piano-led *Screen*, by way of the funky groove of *20th Century*. Most of the tracks were the results of jam sessions in the studio.

EARTH VS THE WILDHEARTS THE WILDHEARTS

EastWest, 1993



Outrageously confident and bursting with dazzling riffs and memorable sing-along melodies, The Wildhearts' debut sounded like all your favourite rock'n'roll

bands playing at once. An exuberant snapshot of a band in love with music and life, songs like *Greetings From Shitsville* and *Everlone* were fresh and timeless. Z Brit-rock masterpiece.

GRACE JEFF BUCKLEY

Columbia, 1994



Buckley copycats might mimic the angel voice, but they're missing the point: the late Californian had eclectic tastes – Zeppelin, Al Di Meola, The Smiths... and his sole album mixed

moments of drowsy beauty, *So Real*, with bombastic rock, *Eternal Life*, and reworked Middle English hymns, *Corpus Christi Carol*. "I know I can do better," said Buckley – but he never got the chance.

DEFINITELY MAYBE OASIS

Creation, 1994



Before they became bloated and delusional, Oasis were briefly Britain's most thrilling band, with classics like *Supersonic*, *Cigarettes & Alcohol* and the brilliant *Live Forever* fusing Liam's

reptile sneer to Noel's light-fingered talent for hooks. The ratio of arrogance/ability soon tipped the scales, but on this debut, the Gallaghers nailed down the equation.

NOLA DOWN

Elektra, 1995



"What we wanted to do was get something of an underground vibe," says Down's Pepper Keenan of their debut, which is packed with southern sludge metal. When he started the band

with Phil Anselmo in 1991, his aim "was for this to be the sort of band we'd both dig."

1977 ASH

Infectious, 1996



Given that anthems like *Girl From Mars* and *Oh Yeah* were written by 16-year-old Tim Wheeler against a backdrop of A-levels, underage drinking and illicit Henri Winterman

cigars, it's no real surprise that 1977 plays out like one of those never-ending teenage summers. Like all good coming-of-age experiences, it even ends with the sound of industrial-scale vomiting (on the album's hidden track *Sick Party*).

WORD GETS AROUND STEREOPHONICS

V2, 1997



Ostensibly, it was a local album for local people, with Kelly Jones turning his lyricist's eye on everything from the price of cauliflowers on the Cwmaman market to a disgraced football coach. But *Word Gets Around* transcended the Welsh Valleys: it was a lifeline for anyone growing up skint and sidelined in modern Britain, helped along by the best rock hooks of the late 90s.

BUCKCHERRY BUCKCHERRY

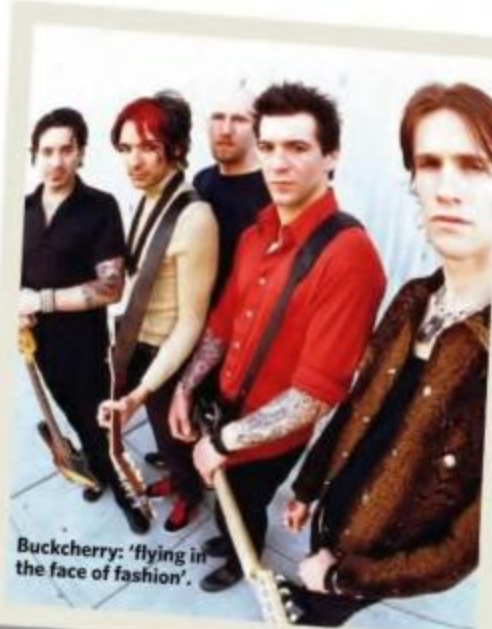
DreamWorks, 1999



Flying in the face of fashion, Buckcherry arrived at the fag-end of the 90s to remind everybody that the 80s still rocked. Positively reeking of the Sunset Strip and all the bad behaviour

that went with it, Josh Todd and his snake-hipped comrades were on fire on their debut. And, if the lyrics to smash-hit *Lit Up* were any clue, out of their minds too.

Disagree? Join the 'Great Debut Debate' at classicrockmagazine.com



Buckcherry: 'flying in the face of fashion'.