

Cate Le Bon, late of Neon Neon, still all lit up.

Cate Le Bon

★★★★★

Mug Museum

TURNSTILE. CD/DL/LP

Third album from the sometime Neon Neon operative.



Carmarthen-shire Cate has engaged a wide spectrum of Welsh music-makers.

She sings a lovely lead vocal on the new Manics album. She's the subject of the equally lovely Cate's Song, on the recent album from north Wales's Sweet Baboo. This album, recorded in LA with Joanna Newsom studio aid Noah Georgeson, is likely to have the Le Bon tones resounding further. Cuckoo Through The Walls sounds like a John Cale composition. If glossed up a bit, Are You With Me Now? would fit on Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*. I Think I Knew suggests a more melodic Nico. Across it all sits one of the most characterful voices of recent times – one minute suggesting folk rock paradise, the next Macbeth.

Roy Wilkinson

Israel Nash Gripka

★★★★★

Israel Nash's Rain Plans

LOOSE. CD/DL

Missouri wild-man refines his Youngian philosophy.

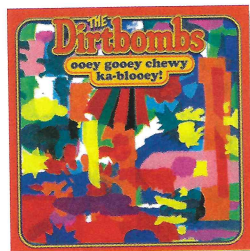


There's a huge Neil Young-shaped elephant in Israel Nash Gripka's room.

Relocated to his isolated ranch (and studio) outside Austin, Texas, Gripka has retained his Young fixation on this third album, and if *Woman At The Well*, *Through The Door* or

Rain Plans itself contain amped-up trace elements of *From Hank To Hendrix* or *Old Man*, they carry such passion and swing that you can almost believe we've never been down by the river before. Elsewhere, there's a strangely melancholy psychedelic glow about Gripka's fretful pondering over his family and future, where what he shares most with Young is the same restless quest for answers and truth. Which may go some way to explaining why the music is so often drawn from the same well, but as it's one of such rare depth there's plenty to go round.

Andy Fyfe



The Dirtbombs

★★★★★

Ooey Gooyey Chewy Ka-blooney!

IN THE RED. CD/DL/LP

Garage-rock kingpin turns his hand to bubblegum pop.

Along with several LPs of sterling original material, Mick Collins' The Dirtbombs are best known for their rightfully acclaimed 2001 soul salute *Ultraglide In Black*, and 2011's combustible *Party Store*, a set of Detroit Techno classics covered in the unique Dirtbombs style. Their third tribute set – this time to the golden era of bubblegum pop – is exactly detail-correct, down to the group's new Archies-style logo. All 10 tracks are Collins originals rather than covers this time, but the bright, bold charm and irresistible hooks of *Sugar On Top* and *Crazy For You* – delivered with The Dirtbombs'

trademark rhythmic heft – are up there with Kasenetz-Katz's best work, while swooning ballad *Girl On The Carousel* provides the album's *Gooney* quotient. Meanwhile, the closing three-song *Sunshine Suite* tips a nod and a wink in the direction of key bubblegum influence Brian Wilson, and suggests that a set of *Dirtbomb* surf-ditties would be very welcome.

Stevie Chick

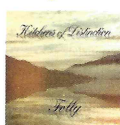
Kitchens Of Distinction

★★★★

Folly

3 LOOP MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Turn of the '90s proto-shoegazers reunite.



In the wake of C86's indie-ghetto nadir, certain alt-groups scaled the heights of

cool (*Happy Mondays*, *My Bloody Valentine*), but others didn't, somehow failing to connect with the (largely E-crazed) new order, perhaps reeking too tellingly of the under-achieving old sound and values. Sales figures, at least, would condemn Kitchens Of Distinction to the latter historical group, but here's their shot at reappraisal, 19 years since dissolution, and just six months after leader Patrick Fitzgerald's kidney removal. Most persuasively, Julian Swales' swirling wedges of feedback on *Oak Tree* – indeed, throughout – strongly imply proto-Coldplay ancestry. While *Folly* finds the original trio back at the sonic luxuriance of old, within its dreamscapes Fitzgerald's often Kitchens-sink observations and harsh, bloke-from-Editors singing voice remain naggingly terrestrial, dragging the listener down to earth, when everything else is straining heavenwards. For most listeners, that two-

way pull will feel too much like hard work.

Andrew Perry

White Denim

★★★★★

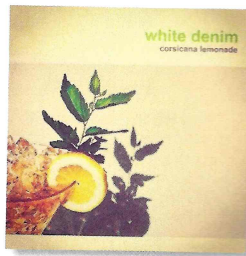
Corsicana Lemonade

DOWNTOWN/PIAS. CD/DL/LP

Their sunny, hooky masterpiece, kickstarted by Jeff Tweedy sessions.

"We really wanted to say something new," explains James Petrali of Austin's White Denim. The jazz-chopsy quartet's five-year career has been all about swerving the clichés of 20th century music – and they've managed it with electrifying, genre-hopping results. This fifth album, germinated under Jeff Tweedy's fleeting guidance in Chicago (he got them playing live), and back in Texas, after a digression into muscular rock, it ultimately hatched out as their "barbecue record" – summery, mellow-rockin', rootsier, heart-full-of-country-soulful, with gorgeous echoes of *Love*, Zep's *Houses Of The Holy*, and, at its funkiest (the struttin' *Come Back*), *Cameo*. The combo remains peerlessly able, its jittery rhythms and predilection for hotpants-tight left-turns still intact, but this time the song is king: *New Blue Feeling* serenely paints a relationship in flux, the sweet eclipsing the bitter; *Let It Feel Good* (*My Eagles*) sublimely defines the new anti-hesitancy. Overall, this is pretty near perfect.

Andrew Perry



initial pressing of just 500 copies. Its carefully contrived 'cult' status amplified the mystique of Copenhagen-dwelling Johnny Vic – Satellites' one-man band – whose dolefully jubilant adult rock and lugubrious croon mused on the role of manliness in a manliness-unfriendly world. 02 is strictly cut from the same cloth; the piano stridently bounces, guitars add a little grit here, the drums a bit of grind there, the horns and strings a little garnish, like a modern day *The*. Which is great – up to a point. But after nearly 50 minutes of emphatic, forehead-wrinkling earnestness, 02 is so tastefully measured that it actually becomes quite soulless; hardly the effect Vic is striving for.

Andy Fyfe

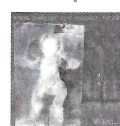
Steve Ignorant With Paranoid Visions

★★★★★

When...?

OVERGROUND. CD/DL/LP

Former Crass frontman links with second generation Dublin punks.



After putting the Crass legacy firmly to bed with 2010's *The Last Supper* shows,

Steve Ignorant has not gone gentle into that good night. The anarcho-punk singer turned sculptor, lifeboat crewman and sometime collaborator formed a tidy alliance with Dublin punks *Paranoid Visions*, adding his peculiar gravelly gravitas to the riotous *Split Personality* from 2012's *Escape From The Austerity Complex*. *When...?* goes one better, Ignorant giving real focus and pizzazz to otherwise punk-by-numbers efforts like *No Contrition* and *Braindance*. If there's a sense of world-weariness to the words of *Changing Times* and internet-dissing acoustic lament *Log On/Bog Off*, it's never at the expense of core principles; Deko Dachau and his loyal foot-soldiers fashioning a set of ragged, rolling anthems that fit their guest star to a T.

Andy Cowan