

spectrum there's Sunny Side Up and Rise Of The Fall: gentle, sinister songs with God alone knows what meaning – and the closest that FNM ever get to a formula, which is essentially a piano intro leading into a blistering tsunami of rage. Add curveballs such as From The Dead, a plangent alt. country anthem, and it all adds up to the logical follow-up to 1997's *Album Of The Year*. It's like they've never been away. *Joel McIver*

THE FALL



The Fall Sub-Lingual Tablet

★★★★

Cherry Red BRED 660 (CD / LP)

Keep taking the Tablet

Despite frontman Mark E Smith's propensity for hiring and firing, The Fall have enjoyed an unprecedented period of calm over the past decade. Remarkably, the current quintet has endured since Smith's last major personnel putsch in 2007 and, with this new waxing taken into account, they've now clocked up an unbroken run of five full-length studio LPs.

What MES's present charges have thus achieved, however, has been solid rather than seismic. To their credit, they fashioned The Fall's one truly indispensable LP this side of Y2K with 2010's *Your Future Our Clutter*, but the band's last two outings, *Ersatz GB* and *Re-Mit* frequently felt like exercises in going through the motions.

Sub-Lingual Tablet, though, suggests the mercurial Mancs are again on an upswing. Smith's voice admittedly sounds ravaged on the cranky Quit iPhone and the otherwise boisterous Stout Man, but at least he's fully engaged throughout. Indeed, when he leads from the front on the anthemic Venice With The Girls, Smith even compels you into believing The Fall's best work is still yet to come.

Its contents are heartening, but *Sub-Lingual Tablet* presents fans with a fiscal dilemma. Not only do the vinyl and CD mixes differ wildly, but only those prepared to fork out for both formats can acquire two entirely unrelated Smith vocal takes on Dedication Not Medication. *Tim Peacock*



Georgie Fame And The Blue Flames

Rhythm And Blues At The Camden Theatre

★★★★

Rhythm And Blues R&B 3-180 (LP)

Georgie teaches the mods how to move it

Contrasting two contemporary 1964 Blue Flames sets from the Camden Theatre and the more familiar Jazz Club at The Flamingo, where all-nighters on Wardour Street were nothing new, Georgie Fame and his jazz-chop pals run through their standard repertoire with all the élan of far more seasoned pros.

The funky Night Train and Jimmy Reed's Bright Lights, Big City are ideal vehicles for Fame's authentic delivery, while Walking The Dog retains all the shine of a much-loved pair of Tonik mohair Sta-Prest. You get two versions of that, the hit single Yeh Yeh, plus a guest appearance from Long John Baldry on You're Breaking My Heart – the rowdiest cut here by some distance. Given their penchant for Jimmy Smith and Ray Charles, it's no surprise to hear the Flames stretching out on Fool's Paradise and Moody's Mood, where the organ, saxes and percussionist Speedy Acquaye (the Accra, Ghana-born man credited with introducing Georgie to African culture) whip up an appropriate sweat.

If this all seems like music from a distant past, it's worth recalling that there were great debates about the validity of world music long before the term was coined. Could blue men play the whites, as the Bonzos had it? Fame and friends prove that they could. *Max Bell*

Thea Gilmore Ghosts & Graffiti

★★★★

Fullfill FCCD 165

Or should that be guests and gravitas?

As fine a singer and songwriter as Thea Gilmore is, she's never quite managed to cash in on her reputation; though more than capable of fulfilling her potential on her own, inviting a few friends to help the cause – as she has here – is probably a wise move. Joan As Policewoman is one such ally on This Girl Is Taking Bets,



Back to the old haunt:
Thea Gilmore

while John Bramwell from I Am Kloot helps revive 2004's Razor Valentine, still every bit as sharp and barbed as its title. John Cooper Clarke brings his inimitable presence to Don't Set Foot Over The Railway Track, and other Gilmore loves include Billy Bragg, Joan Baez and Sandy Denny, whose Glistening Bay, one of the "lost" songs here, is a stand-out choice.

Musically, Gilmore is right on top of her game. The thrilling folk-rock lament London leaps out at the listener, and the obvious hit, Coming Back To You, is so catchy it should easily outstrip her other fan favourite, Juliet, given its multi-tracked Theas bouncing round the room. Anyhoo, she deserves a major break on her 15th album. Integrity and passion abound throughout. Whether she wants the fame (attention-seeking not being her forte), acclaim waits in the wings. *Max Bell*

The Granite Shore Once More From The Top

★★★★★

Occultation RHEA 7 DF 036 (CD / LP)

Because I know that time is always time

Since 2009, while reawakening long-slumbering Wild Swans and Distractions for his Occultation imprint, Nick Halliwell has slipped out the odd small-circulation EP as The Granite Shore. Now he emerges from the office with his debut album, to what will surely be far more attention.

Featuring a cast of Occultation regulars including Only One Mike Kellie, *Once More From The Top* is a song cycle following a band from its early days through to glory years, dissolution and the inevitable reunion tour. In this it bears some resemblance to The Kinks' *Lola Versus Powerman*, though what Ray Davies casts as satire becomes, in Halliwell's hands, a metaphor for passing time, ageing, and lost dreams.

Thankfully, as a lyricist

Halliwell is up to this ambitious undertaking, for which his poignant orchestrated pop is the perfect setting. Honeybus, *Ocean Rain*-era Bunnymen and The Divine Comedy shorn of archness are direction-finders, while Halliwell's bruised baritone evokes Ian Curtis, had he lived into reflective middle-age. In what is self-evidently a whole work rather than a handful of songs Now, therefore, ..., with its legalese-as-poetry, and the quietly defiant Be That As It May stand out. Ian Hunter's Ballad of Mott The Hoople is quoted on the sleeve. As he once said elsewhere: "It was a labour of love and they did really well." *Mark Brend*

Marcus Hamblett Concrete

★★★★

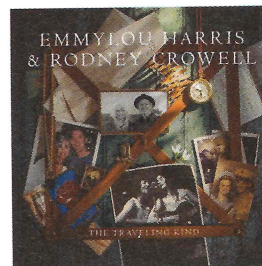
Willkommen 019

Not so tangible?

Multi-instrumentalist Marcus Hamblett is one of Laura Marling's band, but that he helps cement together her sounds – and those of many other acts – doesn't give us a concrete idea of his own private musical world. His largely instrumental debut solo album offers instead a small selection of tracks that, in places, break down suddenly and unexpectedly into distinct movements. There's quite a lot compressed into the lovingly packaged release, with the relatively short length strangely not rendering it concise.

The musicianship and production is solid, and Hamblett likely has a lifetime of making great music ahead of him, but the ideas here sometimes intriguingly float just out of reach. Both Thomas Heather and Hamblett himself provide sterling jazzy drumming, with Heather's skittery presence on Nocturne contrasting effectively with the dustbowl guitar. The stately Three Four sounds curiously like your favourite French easy listening classic, pared down to leave only the warm

underlayers and some fizzing touches of analogue synth. Other influences seem to include post-rock and one can imagine parts of folksy closer Stony Ground accompanying film or television work, its ethereal female vocals drawing us off to the land of the lotus eaters. *Phil Smith*



Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell The Traveling Kind

★★★★

Nonesuch 548243 (CD / LP)

They liked making Old Yellow Moon so much...

Mixing and matching country legends doesn't always work, as countless reverentially suspect abominations attest, but given the glorious vocal skills of Emmylou and Rodney, one is at least assured of sumptuous old-school Americana in spades.

The Little Feat-flavoured Bring It On Home To Memphis ruffles rocky feathers with such gusto that it's hard to countenance that these two legends won't see 60 again. Far more reflective is You Can't Say We Didn't Try, a virtual Willie Nelson pastiche that chugs by so agreeably it barely casts a shadow. Crowell's No Memories Hanging Around isn't much of an improvement on the original, but Em and Rod are in such harmonic synch that one forgives the revival. Lucinda Williams' I Just Wanted To See You So Bad (Plant and Krauss missed a trick there) is the Harris highlight, closely chased down by tear-jerker Higher Mountains. Behind the star turn, the duo's Glory Band regulars, augmented by Bill Payne and go-to producer Joe Henry, keep the pot boiling.