Reviews Albums

Fields - Everything Last Winter (Atlantic) ★★★

Fields' name is just too perfect. It invites metaphors about corn blowing softly in the wind, epic expanses, tranquil beauty... all that shit.

Well it would be, if Fields were a bit more pastoral. Whenever I think of a clever piece of imagery, the album gets momentarily loud and fast and frantic, and all my cleverness looks out of place.

So, Fields. They sometimes have that epic, emotionally wrought sense of yearning — the sort of thing Arcade Fire do superbly. They sometimes sound, appropriately, all beautifully pastoral. Then at other times, they're more interested in utilising complex rhythms and dynamics than in making decent melodies. Their best moments come when they combine all three, and sound like Nick Drake might if he'd lived into the early 90s and joined a bunch of shoe-gazers, combining his gorgeous lilting melodies with walls of guitar-made fuzz.

TG

The Bird and the Bee - s/t (Blue Note) ★★★★

Imogen Heap! Sing-Sing! Joanna Newsom! Tori Amos! If these words all appearing together are currently making you squee with excitement, then The Bird and the Bee are for you. The band consists of Inara George and Greg Kurstin — yes, he of the Peaches, Pink and Karen O collaborations — and together they make honeyed, electro-acoustic, slightly trip-hop folk-pop. Now that's a lot of genres at once.

George's voice has a soft, dream-like quality that creates ambience more than it goes for power. Kurstin's relaxing, mid-tempo beats are saved from dinner party ubiquity thanks to barbed lyrics that catch the listener out: "Be my fucking boyfriend," George trills schoolgirlishly on one track, whilst 'I Hate Camera' and album closer 'Spark' are the darker moments.

If you find Regina Spektor mispronouncing "better" a vagina-rock quirk too far, The Bird and the Bee have nothing to offer you. For the rest of us, this is the sound of the summer come three months early.

SC

Album of the Fortnight

Maxïmo Park - Our Earthly Pleasures (Warp) ★★★★

Most bands spend their second album complaining about their new-found fame. You know: touring, being recognised in the street, reviewers (ahem). But Maxïmo Park's singer and lyricist Paul Smith hasn't bothered with all that. A proper rock star he may be, but judging from these songs, he still ain't getting any.

Which is all the better for adding that love-stung emotional edge to Maxïmo's energetic pop-rock. Nubile, shiny-eyed groupies are queuing at the stage door, but Smith is too wrapped up in past rejections to notice. Thankfully the woe-is-me love troubles are delivered with knowing irony. "I buy books. I never read, and then I tell you some more about ME," he yells, demonstrating the kind of self-mockery frontmen aren't renowned for.

Lyrical concerns aren't the only thing to have carried over from album number one. Musically Maxïmo are also pretty much unchanged. They're still angular, Duncan Lloyd's eruptive guitar still dominates (drowning out the drums and keyboards a little too often) and you detect a strategy in the catchy chorus of single 'Our Velocity' — Maxïmo want to have hits. But it's slow burners like 'Nosebleed' and 'Your Urge' that really hook. The band make mazy melodies while Smith tells mazy stories. You'll get happily lost in there.

DJ

Good Shoes - Think Before You Speak (Brille) ★★★

The name's kind of ironic. Perhaps taken from that time a scenester gave his sartorial seal of approval to some rogue in brogues at the all-night disco party. Because Good Shoes don't wear good shoes. Theirs is the sound of the suburbs and they wear the only shoes that embody the mundanity of life there: crappy brown trainers.

Dissatisfaction with the humdrum is fused with acute observation, as singer Rhys Jones wrings out the self-conscious anxieties, insecurities and lovelorn idealism of late teenage life. "I spit and I drool but I just don't change a thing," he yelps over taut, twisting and turning guitar pop on 'All In My Head', while 'Small Town Girl' coils a slice of life tale around jittery melody and sunny melancholy, like Life Without Buildings pulling off The Buzzcocks.

At times the sentiments lack weight. 'Sophia' misses the stop for Smithsian romanticism and gets off at soppy. But otherwise these shiny two-minute wonders vividly evoke first love and a youthful sense of life's possibilities. If only one can escape Morden.

TL

DJ Food & DK - Now, Listen Again! (Ninja Tune) ★★★

Multiple choice time. Option one: this is a fantastic mix album from the Ninja Tune family. It's the second Solid Steel outing for DJ Food & DK, and they've topped their previous achievement by packing in even more tunes, mixed it with even greater decks-terity and an even more eclectic approach. This means Eric B & Rakim blended into The Human League, Primal Scream merging into Bomb the Bass and mischievous little additions like the 'Are You Being Served?' tune. It's technically impressive and will keep any party going for the hour and five minutes it lasts.

Option two: though we dearly love Ninja Tune, and think that DJ Food & DK's last Solid Steel mix was amazing, this time there's something missing. Are we imagining a slight by-the-numbers feel to proceedings? Are we terribly jaded for thinking that they've worked to what's become a well established checklist, and that this makes everything sparkle just a little less than before? You choose.

DD

Also Released

The Sounds - Dying to Say This to You (Korova) ★★★

Scandinavian pop-dance-rock outfit who sound like Sugarcubes-era Bjork covering 'Somebody Told Me', or The Cardigans if they hadn't gone folk after *Gran Turismo*. Glossily produced and lots of fun, but not very original. *SC*

J Dilla - Ruff Draft (Stones Throw) ★★★

Previously only available on his own label, Mummy Records, this re-release of the late hip hop producer's sought-after 2003 album saw him switch from the honeyed sound of his 90s production work to his pioneering, cut-up style. *DJ*

The Draytones - Forever On (1965 Records) ★★★

Anglo-Argentinean three-piece whose pathological love of British beat groups comes out in a note-perfect imitation of the Kinks. Not quite there yet, but a band worth keeping an eye on. *JE*

The Bees - Octopus (Virgin) ★★

Disappointing effort from the jolly Isle of Wight-ers, especially since it opens so promisingly with 'Who Knows What the Question Is?', the greatest Beatles song that Ringo never wrote. *GP*

Various - OM Presents: OM Hip Hop Vol 1 (OM Hip Hop) ★★★

There's always been a righteous feel to San Francisco's OM imprint, so no surprises that their debut hip hop collection should feature the conscious stylings of Strange Fruit Project and ex Digable Planet Ladybug Mecca. Solid, socially responsible stuff. *DJ*

Key To Ratings...

★★★★★ Must-own
★★★★ Very good
★★★ Good but flawed
★★ Poor
★ Unlistenable

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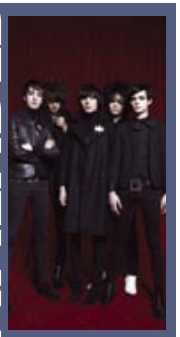
RECOMMENDED



THE HORRORS
Mon 26 Mar, The Cockpit Big-haired, ludicrously dressed grotty rock 'n' roll.

THE FALL
Wed 21 Mar, Irish Centre Mark E. Smith and his ever-changing band of misfits tour their new album.

BROMHEADS JACKET
Thu 22 Mar, The Cockpit Proving there is still life in the post-Arctic Monkey's explosion yet.

Listings

Reader information
Gigs are listed by date. Concs refer to concessionary price tickets, normally available to children, the unwaged, OAPs and NUS card holders.

Contributor information
Listings must arrive by 3pm Friday, 12 days before publication: **listings for the next issue, covering Wed 04 Apr to Thu 19 Apr, must arrive by 3pm on Fri 23 Mar.** Include event type, event name, date, time, price, venue and a brief description. Fax 0113 244 1002, e-mail music@leedsguide.co.uk or write to Leeds Guide, 80 North Street, Leeds, LS2 7PN. Listings are free but inclusion is not guaranteed due to limited space.

Tue 20 Mar

Cover/Tribute Act

Paul 'Frank' Ellis *Lure, 2 The Ginnel, Harrogate, 01423 528 093 • 8pm* • Frank Sinatra impersonator. Call 07903 149 534 for tickets.

Wed 21 Mar

Band Showcase

Bright Young Things 2007 *HiFi Club, 2 Central Road, Leeds, 0113 242 7353 • 7-10pm • £3* • Sketches in Technicolour, Rob Galloway and The Guests appear live as part of Leeds Council's Bright Young Things competition.

The Springboard *New Roscoe, Bristol Street, Sheepscar, Leeds, 0113 246 0778 • 8pm • £3* • Featuring psychedelic indie rockers Mercia Draft, Lusk and Stable.

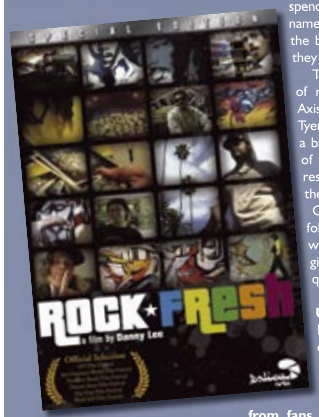
Folk, Country & Acoustic

Acoustic Night *Cockpit, Swinegate, Leeds, 0113 244 1573 • 8pm • Free* • Featuring Dan O'Shea.

Cartouche *Korks Wine Bar & Brasserie, 40 Bondgate, Otley, Leeds, 01943 462 020 • 8pm* • For tickets, contact 01943 467 189.

Hayley Gaftarnick and Guests *The Wardrobe, 6 St Peter's Buildings, St Peter's*

Get Fresh!



Rock Fresh, released on 26 March, tracks the activities of graffiti artists, who, if you haven't seen them in person, are the talented folk who adorn walls with mind-blowing art. Some people will try to tell you that they are like Wayne from round the corner who went off the rails after his missus left him and now spends his days scrawling her name alongside profanities on the back of toilet doors, but they're not really.

The DVD tracks the lives of renowned graffiti artists Axis, Clae, Kofie, Trixter and Tyer as they struggle to find a balance between the lure of the mainstream and the respect synonymous with the underground scene.

Courtesy of the friendly folks at Wienerworld Ltd we have five copies to give away. Just answer this question correctly:

US artist Jackson Pollock used gloss enamel paint to produce his drippy, abstract paintings to rapturous applause from fans and critics alike, but what paint do graffiti artists famously use?

a) Finger paints
b) Face paints
c) Spray cans

Answers on a wall to the usual address (see page 4) by 22 March

FAVERSHAM LIVE

24 MAR ROCHELLE
25 MAR THEA GILMORE + ERIN MCKEOWN
31 MAR ROLL DEEP (LIVE)
01 APR WINNEBAGO DEAL + THE DISAPPOINTMENTS
07 APR TIM SWEENEY (DFA) + THE ROMANCE
08 APR CRAZY P (LIVE) + SILVER CITY + QUANTIC (DJ SET)
12 APR ALASDAIR ROBERTS
14 APR THE LATE GREATS
15 APR MICKY P KERR + LITTLE LEE
17 APR EL-P (DEF JUX) + KIDKANEVIL
18 APR MONKEY SWALLOWS THE UNIVERSE + RORY MCVICAR
21 APR WILD BEASTS + VIDEO NASTIES

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