

# LOCK

THE ADVOCATE FOR  
FEMALE MUSICIANS

VOLUME ONE  
FREE

## BLACK HONEY

**+** LORDE, HAIM,  
AMBER ARCADES,  
WARD THOMAS...

# NINA NESBITT

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS



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# LOCK

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Hello, I'm George King and I would like to start by thanking you for picking up the very first volume of LOCK Magazine. The idea for LOCK Magazine came about out of frustration; a feeling fuelled by the little amount of magazine column inches dedicated to championing female musicians and bands. We believe the UK is brimming with an abundance of terrific female artists and we want to give them the publicity they deserve.

Volume 1's cover star is the truly extraordinary, Izzy B. Phillips of Brighton rock band, Black Honey. We sat down with her in a Brixton flat to speak about the powers of the Internet, Wes Anderson and starting up a record label. Elsewhere in the magazine we have live gig reviews of Vagabon and Alexandra Savior, as well as write-ups about the eagerly anticipated second albums from Lorde and Haim. Plus, there's a load more great stuff, so don't just have a flick through. Put on the kettle, take a seat and enjoy.

I hope you enjoy the first volume and we will see you again for Volume 2. And thank you to everyone who has made this first volume a reality.

Yours sincerely,  
EDITOR, George Henry King

# FOUR FUNNY QUESTIONS: THE SEAMONSTERS



They may have supported the likes of VANT and The Rifles, but we caught up with Sheffield-based six-piece, The Seamonsters to ask them 'Four Funny Questions'.

**Q1. If a film was made about The Seamonsters, which musicians or actors would play you?**

T: If it were a film about our whole lives, I would want Joanna Lumley to play an older me.

E: Renee Zellweger.

N: Dame Judi Dench.

**Q2. Would you rather be the size of an ant, but have the strength of a human, or be the size of a human, but have the strength of an ant?**

T: Size of a human with the strength of an ant.

L: I'd probably be ant-sized, with the strength of a human, so I could impress people and have my own tiny custom-made bass.

N: A human with the strength of an ant, because that's pretty much the amount of strength I have anyway.

H: Human, with ant strength (basically me now anyway).

The Seamonsters are:

Naomi Mann, Lauren Smith, Holly Thompson, Tassie Drobinski, Ella Taylor and Ciara Hurding.

E: Human, with ant strength because I don't want to be stood on.

**Q3. Would you rather have to saw off one of your arms every day, or have saws for arms for the entirety of your existence?**

T: Saws for arms.

N: Have saws for arms for the entirety of your existence because you'd probably adapt and get used to it.

L: I would have saws for arms, so I didn't have to saw my arms off because that would be hell.

H: Sawing off one of my arms everyday, what for the rest of my life? I don't know how many arms you have, but I don't have enough to saw one off everyday. So, if I had one arm left, how would I saw it off? So, saws for arms. Would make slapping people fun.

**Q4. You find yourself in a lift with Lana Del Rey and Florence Welch - but you can only acknowledge one of them. Which one do you choose and why?**

T: Florence Welch.

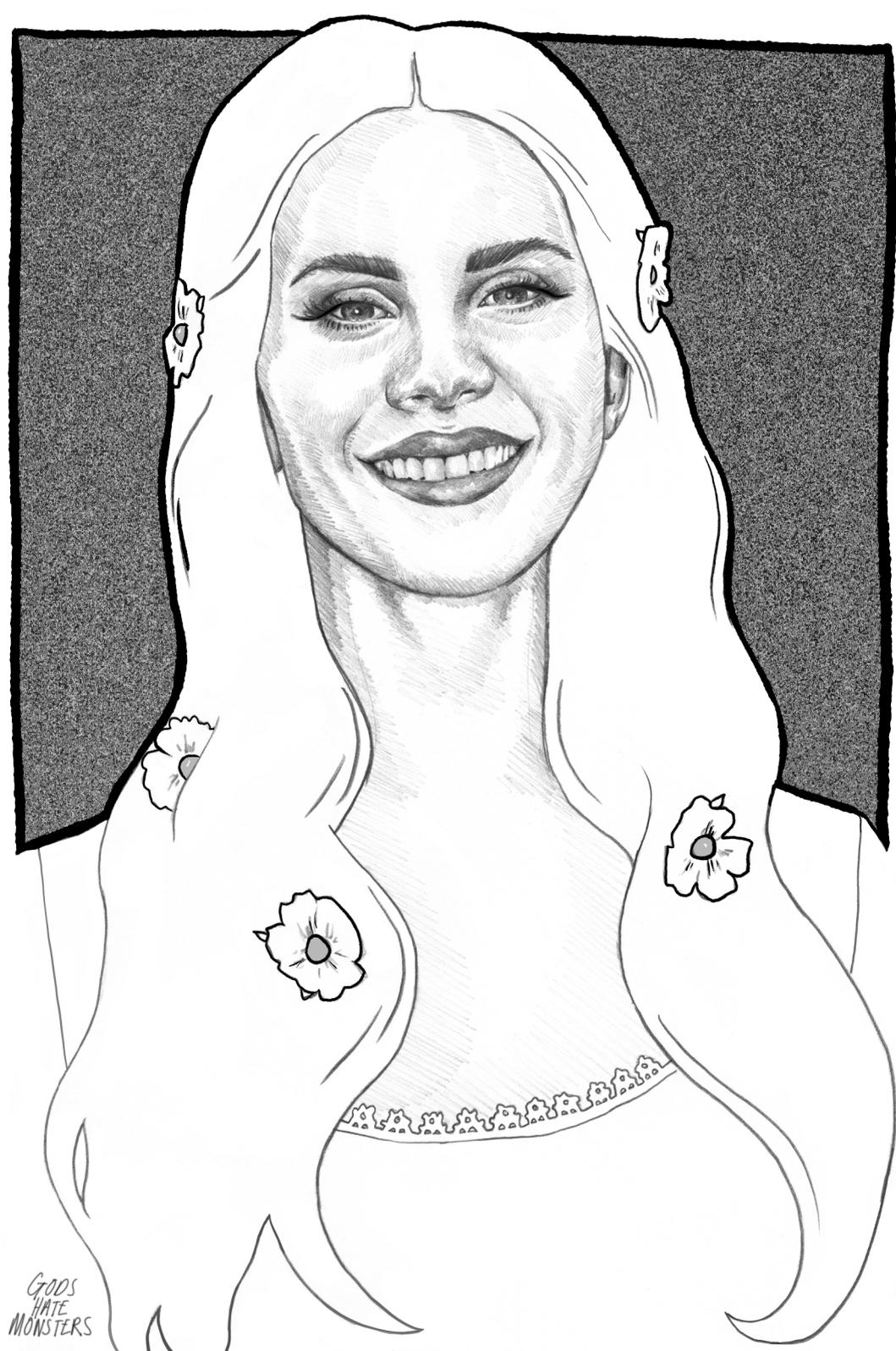
N: Florence Welch because I'm fascinated by her performing style and songwriting and think she would give some useful tips.

L: Lana Del Rey because she is my queen.

H: Florence Welch.

C: Probably Florence Welch because I've loved her since I was little.

E: Florence Welch any day of the week.



# THE REVIEWS SECTION

PIXX

WORDS BY JAKE MARLEY

## ALBUM REVIEW - THE AGE OF ANXIETY

21-year-old, 4AD-signee Hannah Rodgers - a.k.a Pixx - has mastered the art of the tease. Her debut LP, *The Age Of Anxiety*, for example, has been a year in the making and its formative steps were made even earlier than that.

*The Age Of Anxiety* was originally a book-length poem by W.H. Auden, first published in 1947. To this very day it is continually reimagined and Pixx's idea of *The Age Of Anxiety* shares many similarities. Both are agitated, lost and unable to exist within a world of boredom and it's that theme of a lost connection with the ways of the digital age, that runs deep throughout this record.

Heading up the album is 'Baboo' - a track that boasts a moody-pop kick and was put together when the record wasn't much more than an embryo. You could even say it's a lost track from her earlier EP, *Fall In*. The repetitive 'I Bow Down', is deliberately scuzzy. Coated in unbalanced electric guitar licks, it depicts the state of Rodgers' brain when piecing together this record. There is an oozing disdain for an age that lives behind a screen; behind 140 Twitter characters and behind an overly filtered Instagram image.

'A Big Cloud To Float Upon' follows and it isn't what you'd expect. It's a throbbing and slightly dark track, that harbours big riffs and jolty edges and it's definitely the album's most captivating moment.

On the off-kilter, synth-laden number, 'Toes', Pixx borders on alter ego Grimes - erratically berating a life lived on-screen where popularity comes in the form of likes, retweets and follows.

At face value, 'The Girls' is an irresistible synth-throb, but deep down there is a tender longing to belong, to fit in, to "dance like the other girls" and to not be different.

The album's oddball approach and flawless execution has you questioning why you're a social media freak, tied to a drip supplied by likes and follows and on-screen popularity - and that's this album's most important trait.

*The Age Of Anxiety* may be loosely based on 1940's poetry and supplied by 1990's electro-pop, but it equally belongs as much in the 1960's, as it does in 2017. That's why the weird and wonderful world of Pixx is the place to be. So, explore, relate and exist - you're in *The Age Of Anxiety*.



## HAIM

WORDS BY CHARLIE WHYTECK

### ALBUM REVIEW - SOMETHING TO TELL YOU

**B**efore I listened to Haim's second album, *Something To Tell You*, I'd never heard of them. Despite a chart-topping debut, the trio of American sisters, whose second name doubles as the band's name, have thus far escaped my attention.

A little half-hearted research reveals that their debut LP, *Days Are Gone*, was serenaded with critical kudos. Their live shows are lauded as rocking - despite a proud distinction from the hot, buttered poppiness of their studio efforts - and their approach is unique, human and occasionally self-effacing enough to endear us. Their firm grounding in modern music, hooks, harmonies and heartbreak, rewards almost everyone from the casual listener to the doe-eyed fan.

In short, they are kind of a big deal and there is a fair amount riding on their second album.

Choosing the opening track of an album is one of the most vital tasks of the editing process; this is the banner, the marching orders and the word to the masses to sit the fuck up and listen. Haim, however, choose to go for something that challenges the listeners and manipulates their expectations by opening with the Michael Jackson-esque and soulful feel of 'Want You Back'. It's a vibe that, despite being prevalent throughout the record, is most evident here.

It's a confident track, but the spacious use of the stereo spectrum and its use of the somewhat unimaginative harmonies, means the song sadly falls a bit flat. Indeed, the production is both a saviour and a hindrance, but it will surely attract a larger audience than a group of artists left to their own devices would. There's a synthetic aftertaste to the opening number, which severely undermines both the artistic talent of Haim and the genuine soulfulness of their expression. A soulfulness that now, post-production, rears its head a lot less often than is desirable.

The album's second track, 'Nothing's Wrong', is a personal favourite and an undiluted success. The sensual guitar is slinky and it sounds like Viv Albertine playing guitar for The Slits in the 21st century.

The strong melodies of this record, coupled with some great guitar and bass playing, are its saving grace. Danielle's powerful, stoic, lower-range voice is its crowning jewel and an asset that sets the sound apart from its counterparts.

Where it lacks, is the production. The album is smothered by what feels like a myriad of producers, and the demotion of Haim's great guitar sound to a position well behind Nu-R&B sensibilities is a shame. The tracks ripple with real imagination, but most fall short of achieving the greatness that those occasional moments of glory suggest they are truly capable of.



## ALBUM REVIEW - MELODRAMA

The Queen of all that is ear candy has done it again.

*Melodrama* is Lorde's second album, following her hugely successful debut, *Pure Heroine*. And whilst there are plenty of moments of artistic brilliance, occasionally, it grates.

Eleven credited producers feature on the album and at times, it really shows. Every beat, every bop and every note is crammed to bursting with infectious hooks - each fatter than the last, each competing for attention.

The bubblegum rumble, synthesiser trumpets and top-end rushes will be too much for the more cynical ears. But perhaps Lorde - a.k.a Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O'Connor - doesn't think there's such a thing as over-producing a record.

And yet, in spite of the indulged urge for overkill, there is something arty, self-aware and occasionally cathartic in the genetic make-up of this album.

Being a sobering take on the hedonism of the 'living-for-the-weekend' generation, second track 'Sober' is aptly titled. Its bleary-eyed narrator searches for something intimate and real amidst the sea of pill-popping, bass-junkie decadence.

Lines like, "bodies all through my house, I know this story by heart, Jack and Jill get fucked up and possessive, when it get dark" aren't written by the kind of narcissistic airheads that we're used to having saturate the Top 40. They are penned by people, real people, who are capable of looking in the mirror and being both exhilarated and terrified by the face of Generation Z glaring back at them.

## LORDE

WORDS BY CHARLIE WHYTOCK

On listening to the deceptively simple lyrics on tracks like 'The Louvre' and the album's disjointed lead single, 'Green Light', I'm taken aback by just how few clichés abound.

The Beatles, Stones, Springsteen, Brian Wilson and Bob Dylan are still revered, fifty years down the line, as standing unmatched atop the Mount Sinai of songwriting genius. So, perhaps the time has come to ask ourselves what it means to be an artist in 21st century music.

Is Lorde an artist? Undeniably. Is this album a work of art? Absolutely. Is it perfect? Of course it isn't. Conversely, a great deal of the charm to *Melodrama* lies in precisely this fact.

Throughout the record the vulnerability evident in a human trying to find their feet in a generation that promises nothing other than sex and drugs, rings louder than the clarion call of a vocalist trying to milk one last veal steak from an industry bled dry of inspiration. And in the end, can any of us ask for more than that?

I clicked play on this album feeling hungover and pessimistic. I left the experience feeling rejuvenated, almost sober; maybe there's hope.

Lorde's moved on since 'Royals' and the beauty of her voice has been retained and the songwriting has been refined. The fragile, piano-led slow dance of 'Liability', for example, demonstrates this with an added maturity, even if the lyrical content is about an imaginary friend.

Commercially, *Melodrama* is already a huge success. Artistically, it's not far off either. But maybe next time, she could do it with only nine producers, to prune the fat and get straight to that soul.

## AMBER ARCADES

WORDS BY ROBYN O'MAHONY



### EP REVIEW - CANNONBALL

Annelotte de Graaf - a.k.a Amber Arcades - has two law degrees and is experienced in assisting war crime tribunals. But you probably wouldn't believe it after listening to her dreamlike and enchanting new EP, *Cannonball*.

It is a journey of two halves, in which songs made to soundtrack summer road trips and adolescent adventures, juxtapose those that delve deep into the soul and deliver emotional depth. It's a trait reminiscent of Bat for Lashes and Florence and the Machine.

The EP's opener, 'Which Will' - a reworked rendition of Nick Drake's 1972 track - sees de Graaf lend her trademark, hazy style to a Band of Horses-esque production. It's a combination that instantly entices the listener with what is a unique and beautiful concoction of genres.

Fittingly, a drumstick count-in precedes

the hustle and bustle of indie rock track, 'It Changes' - a track in which de Graaf's soothing voice works surprisingly well when draped upon jagged guitars.

'Wouldn't Even Know' - featuring Bill Ryder-Jones - seamlessly follows and acts as a slow and thoughtful after-burn led by beguiling vocals and lyrical charm. 'Can't Say That I Tried' instantly harks back to Mystery Jets' debut album *Making Dens*, and its inclusion of orchestral sounds acts as further testament to how diverse this EP is.

Closing the EP in a somewhat underwhelming fashion, the title track is perhaps the one and only weak link. But thankfully it doesn't do enough wrong to diminish what is otherwise an impressive, yet delicate combination of hypnotic vocals, dreamlike percussion and nostalgic guitars, in which Amber Arcades has been able to truly flourish.

Photography by Nick Helderman.

## ALBUM REVIEW - ARE YOU LISTENING?

After years of relentless gigging and major festival appearances, London-based four-piece, The Franklys - comprised of Sweden's Jennifer Ahlkvist and Fanny Broberg, and East Anglia's Zoë Biggs and Lexi Clark - finally decided to produce a substantial body of work. In doing so, they've thankfully managed to write and record an album that truly emulates the energy they give off live - and it deserves your full attention.

In kicking off with the explosive jolt of lead track 'Castaway', The Franklys' debut album, *Are You Listening?*, hits you hard from the get-go with flashes of grunge and a large helping of frenetic garage rock. It's the first landing blow in what is set to be a forty-odd minute fight and encapsulates the essence of Joan Jett, whilst perfectly setting both the tone and the pace for the entirety of an album where the energy never waivers.

'Puppet' follows suit and its intense vibe and raw vocals only further embrace The Franklys' hard-hitting tendencies.

The juxtaposing tempo of 'Keeper' truly and

## THE FRANKLYS

WORDS BY GEORGIE TRUSS

interestingly spins things around - if only temporarily. And despite being a bit of a slow-burner, The Franklys still manage to emit an unbelievably high level of energy that consistently and perfectly matches the intensity of the rest of the group's debut LP.

On 'Don't Kill Your Friends', the broad talent and ability that the quartet harness is undeniable. Unfortunately, unlike the name suggests, this is not an emo ballad of dismay and anger. However, it still presents tones of teenage angst and is definitely the album's head-banger track - one that certainly could have made the cut as a rock revolution anthem back in the 80's.

*Are You Listening?* embodies a melting pot of genres - from dollops of post-punk garage, to thrashings of heavy rock. On paper it could be seen as too difficult to pull off. But on record, they manage to marry these genres flawlessly, all whilst a festering and lively pop punk undercurrent sizzles away below the surface.

*Are You Listening?*, The Franklys ask. Yes, we really are.



Photography by Derek Bremner.

## THE JAPANESE HOUSE

WORDS BY TOM MOODEY

### EP REVIEW - SAW YOU IN A DREAM

Given the current climate of contemporary electropop music, you'd be hard pushed to find an artist that is not setting out to purely make a three and a half minute chart-topping song, consisting of a chanting chorus and a rigid, trap-esque rhythm.

Yet, the vibrant energy of Amber Bain's musical advances reveals a completely different story. The Japanese House - a synth and guitar-led pop act consisting of Bain alone - delves into much more than the popular music that we are used to. She is able to mould melodies into stories of love, identity and adventure and her most recent EP, *Saw You In A Dream*, does just that.

The EP's title track relies on a simple beat and minimal melodic complications in order to emphasise Bain's carefully calculated vocals. They are calculated through the clear relationship that Bain's vocals have with the production - each lyric embedded into the melody effortlessly and unscathed.

The majority of her work is self-produced, and each song acts as the evidence of its success. 'Saw You In A Dream' is a song to be swayed to and its electro-pop pulse encourages the listener to bob the head and tap a foot for the entire four minutes,

whilst segments of chiming guitar echo alongside the vocals.

'Somebody You Found' demonstrates a similar structure and sound that again enables Bain to share her haunting voice with distinctive diction, whilst '3/3' offers a different audio experience. Its slower tempo and prominent 'clap' on each beat, shows Bain's ability to make arena anthems that deserve to be sung by audiences at the top of their lungs.

Closing track, 'Count To Nine' epitomises what The Japanese House is really about. The work is nine minutes long and opens with a glorious soundscape that gives the image of the sun awakening from a nightlong absence. This then promptly cuts to the sound of a twinkling acoustic guitar cushioning Bain's harmonised vocals. Unlike the previous sounds that are explored throughout her career, 'Count To Nine' blends many more genres and involves so much musicality.

Despite being somewhat of an electropop musician in her own right, Amber Bain, along with her latest musical offering as The Japanese House, has once again shattered the stereotypical view of what an electropop musician is and has to be.

## GIRL RAY

WORDS BY ROBYN O'MAHONY

### SINGLE REVIEW - PREACHER

They may have only formed two years ago, but Girl Ray's latest offering, 'Preacher', is a mature and melodic, pop rock track that displays a level of songwriting beyond their years.

Prised from their recently released debut album, *Earl Grey*, 'Preacher' is wonderfully British, without being patriotic, and harnesses an ethereal vocal that lends to a 70's sound.

Despite having a heavy guitar sound, this track is in essence a whimsical love song that sparkles with maturity, despite the fact that members, Poppy Hankin, Iris McConnell and Sophie Moss are only 19 years of age. Its dreamlike melody and

accompanying vocals speak of troubled adolescent love and will undeniably take listeners on a nostalgia trip, both on record and in a live environment when the band play their biggest headline show to date at London's Scala in November.

The trio's preceding singles, 'Trouble' and 'Stupid Things', were of high quality, but there is an artistry elegance to this song that acts as a progressive step forward for the band.

'Preacher' will undoubtedly spark excitement amongst the group's loyal following, and if this single is anything to go by then we don't blame them.

## NINA NESBITT

WORDS BY JAKE MARLEY

### SINGLE REVIEW - THE MOMENTS I'M MISSING

Any songwriter of note can tell a story. The best, however, evoke feelings and connect with people, often through relatable subjects and tales. In some cases, songwriting evolves through different musical phases and artists mature with age. That is certainly the case with Scottish singer-songwriter, Nina Nesbitt.

Her debut album, *Peroxide* - which was penned mostly between the ages of 17 and 18 - told stories that many teenagers could relate to and charted highly. Now at 23, Nesbitt is entering a new chapter in her career, after successfully coming through a period between record deals that saw her without a label. It was a stage in her career that played a big part in shaping the artist that stands before us today - and Nesbitt herself would tell you that.

That period between her first full-length output and the present day began with her *Modern Love* EP. It was a record that laid the foundations for a change in direction, which came in the form of her first major pop banger, 'Chewing Gum'.

Following that came a series of releases on her own label as part of a collaborative, fan-led project that greatly helped to develop Nesbitt's now unbreakable bond with her fan base.

This year brought the next Nina Nesbitt chapter; a new, self-produced single titled, 'The Moments I'm Missing' - arguably her finest moment to date. It sees Nesbitt at her most reflective and laying her soul bare through eloquent lyrics, providing easily her most intimate and personal moment so far.

'The Moments I'm Missing' is the first release ahead of her sophomore record, expected next year. It sees Nesbitt writing about life moving too fast and not having a chance to process everything that's going on, whilst also not being able to remember and reminisce about good memories and key life moments.

Unsurprisingly, it's yet another relatable track from Nesbitt and it sticks with you until its dying breath. You feel and hear every emotive and tender word spoken. It's truly stunning.

Photography by Alex Lake.

## BESSIE TURNER

WORDS BY TOM MOODEY

### SINGLE REVIEW - WORDS YOU SAY

Britain's indie music scene has many gaps. And a pretty large gap unexplored by the current generation of musicians is the rhythmic delights of the blues.

The blues has long been a youth culture staple, with the rocketing riffs of The Rolling Stones seeming to bust open the 'norm' like a polystyrene door. Yet, over the last twenty years, that deep discussion between instrument and voice has disappeared. There may be glimmers of blues licks and alt-rock bands who probably claim to listen to the likes of Fleetwood Mac and Jimi Hendrix for 'inspiration', but aside from that, there is very little to discuss.

That was until Bessie Turner appeared from the deep, dark depths of Ipswich with two wonderfully crafted singles that appear to not only utilise the true nature of the blues, but moulds it into its very own animal. Turner may have only been making music for a short while, but she is already making fairly sizable waves within the music industry.

Her first single, for example, entitled 'Big Sleep', accumulated over 10,000 streams within the first day of its release. Its immediate success then led to Turner being

asked to play the BBC Introducing stage at Latitude Festival in Suffolk.

So far, she has created a culmination of blues melodies, intermingled with subtle vocal intricacies that share similarities to Karen Carpenter and rhythm guitar that sounds as though it should share an ear with John Mayer. Her forthcoming new single, 'Words You Say', is no different.

Turner's blues influences erupt from the strings of her guitar from the first moment, encompassed by heavy drums and a vocal melody that seems familiar to the listener on the first hearing. The structure of the song is simple, yet the way in which Turner reveals her melodic world is much deeper - her lyrics like a declaration to a past lover, eloquently executed with both sensitivity and dedication.

The song's power rattles the bones and awakens the consciousness, like any good blues song should do. But it also works incredibly well as an ice-breaker to the younger generation that seem so wound up in a world of programmed beats and artificial sound. 'Words You Say' is premeditated rawness, and it's exactly what the doctor ordered.

Photography by Chris Driver.



Make-up by Abbie May.  
Photography by Ben McQuaide.

# IZZY B. PHILLIPS

Within the world of modern music, nonconformists are somewhat hard to come by. Some might even say they are a rare species. But in **Black Honey**'s Izzy B. Phillips, we might just have found a visionary willing to push the popular art form to the periphery.

WORDS BY GEORGE HENRY KING

It may be a bleak, midweek afternoon in the south of London, but concept-driven musician Izzy B. Phillips - situated on the top floor of a converted Brixton flat - isn't about to let her unique and boundary-defying style mimic the dreary trend of today's weather. Being the visionary mastermind behind Black Honey - a rock band whose musical output and cinematic aesthetic is as much Tarantino as it is Wes Anderson - Phillips understands the importance of keeping up both the imagery and the narrative of the Black Honey story; so deviating from the script isn't an option.

Her obsession with cult movies, disdain for social media and longing for the tangibility of bygone eras, casts Phillips as the bohemian type, a nonconformist, and an artist. She spends most days feeling as if she is the star in her own movie, a movie in which the cameras are constantly rolling, despite not actually being there at all. It's a feeling of disconnection that she will openly admit herself, and one that she appears to adhere to - rain or shine.

Phillips' Debbie Harry-blond locks, for example, exude an air of Hollywood, whilst her orange-tinted sunglasses - taken straight from the bridge of Hunter S. Thompson's narcotic-stuffed nose - impose a vintage-tinged filter on the reality that festers beyond the lens. The lack of distinction between what's real and what isn't with Phillips is at times a balancing act; so you'd be forgiven for wondering how much of the plot she believes to be real, when she plays the lead character in a Black Honey music video.

Quite simply, she's remarkably fascinating; a next-level creative that completely immerses herself in her art. But escapism, however self-inflicted, doesn't last forever, and every so often, excrements from the non-fiction world can bleed into the silver-screen state that Phillips often finds herself in.

"I got egged for wearing flares," she unashamedly admits as she repositions her shades. "I still get people following me

around just because I dress differently. You have to have a self-masochistic mindset to put yourself in a position where you can be criticised for the way you dress or the way you think. The way you dress ultimately says a lot about your mind and how you see things differently."

Phillips grew up in Crawley, "where The Cure are from," she excitedly states, but moved to Brighton in search of a more diversity-accepting stomping ground - and because "all creatives in the South of England gravitate towards Brighton."

Before long, she found her people - people who not only celebrated her for being different, but who also expected and encouraged her to challenge the norm. Her transition from being a waitress in an American diner to being a cult icon for the jilted generation, however, wasn't quite as smooth.

The creative urge that she had harnessed and so frequently exercised for her entire life, was still as prevalent and as eager to now tunnel itself into a new challenge, but translating that into success within the music industry wasn't easy.

Armed with a ton of songs, Phillips countlessly tried to join local bands, but her lack of ability on the electric guitar was a massive hurdle - one she had to prove she could overcome. As she puts it, trying to join a band "was like asking four boys to go on a date with you at the same time."

For Phillips, not having the tools or skills to materialise the abundance of creative ideas and songs that were bubbling away inside her jam-packed headspace, led to a feeling of frustration; a feeling that completely juxtaposed the happiness she had found in moving to her new home.

Eventually, after being in and out of a number of shoddy bands in which she "didn't really take the reigns," Phillips formed Black Honey in retaliation to the oversaturated Brighton grunge scene. "Every band was doing their version of the Pixies," she informs me, and so the

gig circuit's imitating nature at that point actually ended up being the very factor that led Phillips to form a band; a band that would walk its own path and consistently explore, in great depths, the possibilities of visual and musical alignment.

This exploration first came in the form of the group's lead track, 'Teenager'. In order to prevent people and record labels from judging them purely on their appearance, the band decided to simply upload the song with its accompanying artwork and let the Internet, and intrigue, do the rest. It paid off. Before long, a certain degree of hype started to circulate Black Honey - a hype which was as much a result of the quality of their music, as it was the sense of enigma, myth and secrecy surrounding the release. For a while, Black Honey was considered a 'secret band'. There were no press releases and no images of the band members, and the only way to find out more information was to text the mobile number that they published alongside their debut output.

Now, however, the secret is out. Major festival appearances at the likes of Glastonbury and Reading have severely boosted their popularity and support shows with Royal Blood have well and truly unveiled the identities of the previously confidential. Unsurprisingly, Phillips is thankful for the level of attention that her band is now starting to receive, but she assures me that fame isn't what she's chasing, and there's still a part of her that wishes Black Honey was still the riddle that it started out as.

"I don't want to be famous, I don't think my mental health or I could hack it. So, I loved being a secret band because it was the only small time in my life where I feel like people judged us purely on our music. I want to be a star in my own field and I want to write a song that sets the world on fire, but I believe you can be a star without being famous. If you want to be famous, it's way easier to be that, than be a star."

The immediacy of the Internet and social media undeniably played a big part in building the initially allusive nature and





**“I wouldn’t want to be f\*cking signed. I know better than anyone how this should be run!”**

mystery of Black Honey, but Phillips admits to being both weary and terrified of the potentially unstoppable power it could one day possess (“It’s a mind field isn’t it? It’s a rollercoaster that’s completely out of control.”) The arrival of the digital age may have paved the way for more convenient ways in which to consume music, but in doing so eradicated the sense of intimacy often associated with physical formats. It catalysed the extinction of a vinyl record’s warm crackle and ploughed through our not quite as romantic relationship with the CD. Gone are the days in which we’d lend records to friends and queue outside HMV at 6am to be the first to get our hands on our favourite band’s new album - and Phillips isn’t okay with that.

“I crave a time when you could take a record round to your friends house and be like ‘listen to this record I’ve just discovered it’ and you’d share that moment with your best friend and you’d bond over it and that magic is something that you’d rarely get now. I mean, can you imagine a world where everything wasn’t photographed? We’re all collector maniacs and the Internet is completely harvesting that instinct within us. We have to take photos of fucking everything - if there’s not a photo, it didn’t happen.”

Despite no shortage of offers after ‘Teenager’ started circulating the online world, Black Honey boldly opted against signing a record deal in favour of starting up their own record label - the Pulp Fiction-referencing, Foxfive Records. This meant the band wouldn’t have to “sign our rights away,” and most importantly, complete creative control would remain in the hands of Phillips and her Black Honey counterparts: Chris, Tommy and Tom. Most bands would snap up a record deal without a second thought. Most bands even think that getting signed is the be-all and end-all; the surefire way to success and riches. But Black Honey aren’t ‘most bands’ and their strong, yet equally as delicate vision is one that a major label wouldn’t be able to tamper with, without completely stripping it of its authenticity and genius. Their entirely DIY ethos and self-sufficiency, however, is

for some people at least, hard to grasp.

“People come up to me and say ‘who’s you’re product manager? Who’s your art director?’ And I’m like, ‘it’s all fucking us! It’s us four people!’ People think we have got this big major label shafting money down us - people can’t believe that we’re not signed. They’re blown away by it, but I wouldn’t want to be fucking signed. Why would I want someone to tell me what to do, or how to sing or how to direct it? I know better than anyone else how this should be run.”

Not signing with a major label means Phillips and Black Honey are regularly faced with financial insecurity. All of the band’s ventures and releases are self-funded; any money they do make from merchandise sales or paid gigs instantly goes straight back into the marketing of the band - not their own pockets. Not only that, despite now being of a certain calibre of band - one that is frequently invited to dazzle crowds on the top stages at some of the UK’s most renowned festivals - all four members of Black Honey still currently have full time jobs.

Phillips is a creative director for a vinyl label and often works in the band van during the journey between shows. Her previous job, however, wasn’t as lenient when it came to allowing her time off in order for her to pursue a musical career.

Tasked with managing the artistic direction of a vintage clothes shop, Phillips’ role wasn’t particularly flexible, and so if she missed certain shifts, she would get fired. So, after most shows - especially the ones up North - the band would have to drive throughout the night in order to get Phillips through the door of her workplace the next morning. As she worked during the day, the other members of the band would spend most of their time sleeping, before having to do it all over again. It was a tough period for Black Honey; a bleak and tiresome period that saw the band conform to a sleep-deprived and somewhat unsociable lifestyle - the lifestyle of a DIY, unsigned band fuelled only by the level of dedication

Make-up by Abbie May.

Photography by Ben McQuaide.

# "I want teenagers to lose their virginity to my songs."

they have to their craft and their love of an art form. And Phillips wouldn't change a thing.

"We work really hard to keep this band going. We scrub the deck for this band and we have done for years, but I wouldn't change a second of that - I would do it all again in a heartbeat. It's hard to hear bands complain when they are signed, because if you want it enough or you love your art form enough, then you don't need time off."

During an interview earlier in the year, one of Phillips' band mates brazenly claimed that 2017 would be the year in which they will write songs that will change their lives. But as we approach the tail end of the year, we find ourselves, as fans and as writers, still unequipped with the group's long-awaited and constantly asked about debut album. The release of 'Somebody Better' - arguably their biggest single to date - may have catapulted them to another level following its release in March, but an LP's worth of material will be the true test of whether or not such life-changing songs have come to fruition. But despite being pestered and interrogated by nearly every interviewer she has come into contact with since Black Honey first broke onto the scene, Phillips is unwilling to buckle under peer pressure and release an album for the sake of it.

"I would have loved to of put an album out already, but by the same token I almost don't want to. We've already got hundreds of songs, but we need to do what's right for us to make the best piece of work that we can make and when so much is happening it just feels so stupid to rush that. The magic that can happen tomorrow is so worth holding an album back for. They [better

songs] are on the tip of my tongue all the time at the moment. I want to sometimes smack my head against a wall to try and get them out because I feel like I've got something burning up inside me that I need to get out."

Just before Phillips goes off to confidently pose for our cameras - playing out the final scene of today's movie in convicting and effortless fashion - I ask her exactly what she wants and hopes to achieve with Black Honey. Fame, as we know, is irrelevant. Appreciation in her own field is sought after. But Phillips wants more than just admiration. She wants to offer an experience. She wants to help someone. She wants to make a young girl pick up a guitar and form a band. She wants to be an icon. She wants to inspire. She wants to write a concept album and a screenplay. She wants to direct a movie. She wants to do it all.

"I want to do everything. I want to see the world, I want to play massive shows and I want teenagers to lose their virginity to my songs. Black Honey is a live show, an art piece, a video, a song, an experience and a form of escapism. It's an all-encompassing piece. It's my way of processing the shit in my life, so if I do that well enough then that should help someone else with their shit."

Phillips' burning sense of ambition may at times be similar to that of a Hollywood movie's dreaming protagonist, but if anyone is going make something that appears to be only achievable in fiction, a reality, then it will be Izzy B. Phillips: the far-sighted, innovative orchestrator of Black Honey. 🍷



Photography by Ben McQuaide.  
Make-up by Abbie May.

# AMBER ARCADES

WORDS BY  
CAMERON POOLE

The United Nations prevents conflict and maintains international order - but it isn't exactly renowned for spawning talented musicians. Amber Arcades is the exception.

Amber Arcades - a.k.a Annelotte de Graaf - only considered music "as a viable career" a few years ago, and she initially felt that she had left it too late. But after one self-produced album, two well-received EPs, a tour with rock veterans Grandaddy and befriending ex-Coral member, Bill Ryder-Jones, the Dutch singer-songwriter may have timed her ascent into the music industry just right.

"I never really saw it [music] as a viable career option," says the 28-year-old. "I played in my first band at 21 and thought I'd already missed the boat by then, since I had all these friends who'd already released records when they were 21 and I was just starting out."

Undoubtedly, in today's music industry, the general opinion seems to be that if you haven't achieved a certain degree of success by your mid-twenties, the possibility of forging a career in music after that point is very unlikely - and for Amber, that was the case. Initially, Amber put her music on the back-burner, in favour of higher education, and as a result ended up with a master's degree in law and a job at the United Nations.

She also worked in the Netherlands Immigrations sector and saved money in order to fund her debut album.

"I was always saving, ever since I got my first job. My Mum was a single mother on benefits so we never had a lot of money."

After years of savings, she eventually had saved enough to afford to up sticks and travel to New York to record her debut album, *Fading Lines*, with a budget of \$12,000 and producer, Ben Greenberg. The result was a bold, adventurous and creative album, which was reflected in the fact she travelled from her home in the Netherlands to the Big Apple to record it.

"I wanted to work with Ben Greenberg and he just happened to be based in New York. I could have asked him to come over to the Netherlands, but where's the adventure in that? I must also admit I am kind of America-obsessed. I guess I've kept that association between adventure and a sense of freedom with that country."

Before its release, her debut album quickly grabbed the attention of indie label, Heavenly Records, and before long the Utrecht-native's gamble was looking like





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## “I never really saw it [music] as a viable career option.”

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it was going to pay off. Heavenly released the album on her behalf and the label and Amber Arcades have since teamed up again for the release of her most recent EP, *Cannonball*.

“As a Dutch artist I feel very lucky to have found a way into the UK scene through them, as it can be quite a difficult thing for non-UK bands. The UK is such an island, like literally, but also figuratively as in it’s hard to get in there as an outsider.”

When asked about how she’s been finding the UK, it was lovely to see how enthusiastic the self-dubbed “guitar-pop music” maker was about little ol’ blighty.

“I’m down with the UK. I like playing shows here because I feel people get the music and generally people are very attentive at gigs.”

After spending some time in the UK, Amber Arcades ended up touring with American-rockers, Granddaddy and honing her own artistic skills by spending time with Bill

Ryder-Jones. The pair worked on a track together called ‘Wouldn’t Even Know’, which featured on Amber’s, *Cannonball*. It was interesting to hear how Amber found these intuitive experiences.

“With regards to Granddaddy, it’s always inspirational to meet people who have been in the business for so long. It can be a pretty mean and killing business in some ways. Bill Ryder-Jones is just an amazing person overall. I got to hang out with him properly when we recorded the video for the track a couple of weeks ago and he’s just one of the most direct, honest, no filter, no bullshit people I’ve come across. He’s an inspiration for sure in how he approaches being a musician and being real about it.”

When asked what’s next for Amber Arcades, there was only sheer positivity about the singer’s future endeavours.

“I’m playing some shows over the summer, finishing up writing for my next record and then recording this autumn if all goes well!”

# THE FRANKLYS

After years on the road and a number of major festival appearances, **The Franklys** finally decided to record their **debut album**. Following its release, we sat down with them to speak about juggling music with full time jobs, misogyny in the music industry and **British politics**.

WORDS BY  
GEORGE HENRY KING

“Did feminism ever happen? Did history teach us nothing?” The Franklys are disappointed - and rightly so. A few weeks ago, a small article that was published in an undisclosed magazine, devalued the London four-piece’s ability and work ethic to merely being, *‘proof that girls can make great noise too!’* Whether that was the intention or not remains to be seen, but with a single, careless sentence, the misogynistic and stereotypical view of women in music - that has plagued the industry for decades - had once again been furthered.

“It’s tiresome and lazy writing, and something we should be done with by now,” bassist Zoe Biggs defiantly states. “It’s something we should not be having to even defend. We’re living in a world that’s going backwards and as a female; it feels that you have to prove yourself constantly. There needs to be a revolution and everyone needs to be on board.”

A revolution, however, is sadly, easier said than done, and uneducated writers are just a part of the problem. As The Franklys rightly point out, the reaction of some gig-goers when they see an all-female band rocking out on stage or readying themselves for their set is often a sexist one. Whether

the comments are overt or sub-conscious, complimentary they are not - despite what the people making them seem to think. Some, however, don’t even try to be nice.

“We played a gig recently where we overheard two girls talking, sounding almost disgusted. They were saying, *‘oh, it’s a girl band next’* as if it was something very much outside of the norm for them, which is a shame. There are always the classics like, *‘I don’t usually like all girl bands, but I like you’* or *‘you play well for girls.’* A personal favourite of ours is, *‘oh where’s the drummer gone? Has she gone to do some shopping, to buy some new shoes?’*”

As well as the derogatory remarks that female musicians so frequently have to challenge both on and off the stage, the undeniable lack of female bands currently featured on some of the UK’s biggest music festivals, is also a worry. The likes of Reading and Leeds Festival, for example, has constantly come under fire due to its lack of gender diversity and constantly male-heavy line-up. It’s a consistent occurrence that begs the question of whether or not festival promoters are purposely shying away from female bands. But The Franklys - who’ve played at both Isle of Wight Festival and Download Festival - suggest it might



Photography by Derek Bremner



Photography by Paul Johnson

actually be a result of the lack of young women being inspired by rock music.

"Commercially, there just isn't enough rock music out there that makes girls want to pick up an instrument and go nuts. If you turn on your TV, there's the X-Factor. If you turn on the music channel, it's mainly R'n'B and pop. Rock music has never been such a hard business, so I'm not surprised people are being put off. Rock music needs to be made more available to everyone."

Earlier this summer, The Franklys finally released their long-awaited debut album, *Are You Listening?* - a relentless, forty-odd minute onslaught of punk rock punches, in which there's no respite. To say it's been a long time coming would be an understatement. But debut albums are a once in a lifetime occurrence, and so it's vital that they don't materialise prematurely.

"We didn't want to rush into it. You only get one debut album and you want it to be the best representation of yourselves that it can possibly be. I think playing together you build up a really good connection and energy that can then hopefully shine through on the record. We really wanted to wait until we had the right material, right arrangements, right producer and right studio."

Desperate to capture their ferocious live energy on record, The Franklys enlisted the talents of Sean Douglas - who worked on their debut EP - and Jimmy O and Mikey Sorbello from rock-duo, The Graveltones. But without an energy-exuding audience to perform in front of, capturing the same atmosphere and raw quality that is so prevalent during their emphatic live shows wasn't going to be easy.

"It's very different being in a studio, as opposed to jumping around on stage, playing in front of people. We've always strived to capture that live energy and sound on our recordings, but we had felt in the past that we didn't quite manage to translate it onto record. The closest we had got was with our first EP, which we recorded with Sean Douglas at Fish Factory studios. So we went back to Sean and we finally

managed to get that raw energy on to the record."

Prior to the recording of the album, The Franklys had a long discussion about which tracks to walk into the studio with. Some were old favourites that would go on to be re-recorded and even re-arranged. But not all of their older tracks were quite as lucky.

"We were pretty ruthless and knew which songs we wanted to record. Some old songs we just felt didn't represent our sound or us as a band anymore, so they were left behind. We recorded twelve songs, so we'd have a good choice, but there was one that we all knew wouldn't fit with the album. But we have kept it aside for the future. All the rest for us were no brainers."

Despite what major festival slots and mammoth touring schedules so often lead many to believe, being in a band in 2017 is very rarely a viable source of income. Many of the country's most promising, young upstarts have to hold down part time or full time jobs just to keep their dream alive - and for The Franklys, it's no different. All four members currently work full time and therefore when it came to recording their debut album, they often wouldn't leave the studio until the early hours of the morning. And with time not always on their side, they remarkably managed to record the backbone of the album in just a matter of days.

"The sessions were just fitted in whenever we were free or after work. We would sometimes work as late into the night as we could. We went into Fish Factory Studios in the summer last year for five days and recorded all the drums, percussion and bass, along with some guitars. Then for everything else that was left, and all the mixing, we went to Orgone Studios and Juno Studios."

In addition to balancing her work and band commitments, Zoe has also been studying a degree at the Open University for the last nine years. Regardless of the long hours and having very little free time, it's an experience that she describes as "rewarding" and insists that schools and colleges need



Photography by Derek Bremner

# “You can see how life under May is panning out.”

to encourage the alternatives to University a lot more than they are currently doing.

“When I was finishing my A-levels, immediately the question was, ‘*what University are you going to?*’ Nothing was forced down our throats more than, ‘*you have to go to university.*’ I can only speak from my personal experience, but studying with the Open University was one of the best choices I’ve ever made. It’s not perfect, but at least they have a vision for something different.”

At the time of writing, the General Election is only two weeks away. Theresa May is rather surprisingly being thrown to the wolves by the mainstream media over her cowardly U-turn on the so-called ‘Dementia Tax’, and Jeremy Corbyn is busy gatecrashing Libertines gigs and conversing with Grime artists over afternoon cappuccinos. Tory parents are at loggerheads with their Labour-voting children’s new found interest in British politics, and the millennials have turned out in record-breaking fashion, determined to avenge Brexit and take back control of their future. From the Conservative’s perspective, the polls are a bit too close for comfort, but Corbyn’s not won everyone over just yet.

“It’s a difficult one isn’t it?” The Franklys ponder. “If everyone who claims to really support Labour goes and votes for Labour then I think he stands a chance. But then again, it all depends on whether your local Labour MP is any good! He’s been subjected to such a subtle, and sometimes unsubtle, smear campaign it’s boggling. The general theme when he is brought up in conversation with a lot of our friends is ‘*yes, seems like a decent guy, hard working, honest, good values, stands by his principals,*

*but is he a leader? He seems weak!*’ I think you can already see how life under May is panning out.”

The Franklys are also very much in tune with what’s going on across the pond. In January this year, as part of the Women’s March, they put paint to placard and took to the streets alongside 100,000 other Londoners - and over 3.5 millions Americans - in protest of Donald Trump’s Inauguration. It was a demonstration fuelled by his lack of respect for women’s rights and the realisation that, unless you are a white, male in agreement with his questionable ideologies, the next few years could be very bleak. Zoe still remembers hearing of his shock win.

“A few of my friends were trying to stay up all night to watch the results roll in. I think Jen was actually staying round mine and we all thought it might be a tight result, but surely he couldn’t win. It was terrifying waking up during the night to notifications of him winning various key states. And when it was finally sinking in that he had won, I felt angry, sad and then scared. Scared that his behaviour, his words, his appalling racist, homophobic, sexist tantrums and stamping of feet had all just been validated and normalised.”

As rave reviews for *Are You Listening?* roll in, it would be easy for The Franklys to get complacent. But unsurprisingly, that’s not their style.

“It’s probably a dangerous thing to think, ‘that’s it we’ve made it’. You’ve always got to be pushing for that next level and that next step, just never forget where you have come from.” 📌

# AMBER BURGOYNE

INTERVIEW BY STEVE DAWSON

**A**mber Burgoyne is a singer-songwriter that couples elements of jazz with melancholic and emotive compositions. It's an interesting mix to say the least. So, we decided to sit down with her in her current place of residence in Brighton, where she studies at BIMM (British and Irish Modern Music Institute), to speak about how she writes a song, the city's gigging opportunities and being famous.

**How long have you been singing and playing guitar and did both those skills arrive together?**

I have only been playing guitar since the age of 16, so for about three or four years. I have been singing ever since I was little, but I never had the confidence to do anything with it and I never really thought it was an option, not until I was a teenager.

**What inspires you when writing your lyrics?**

I think I really have to feel something, like in the pit of my stomach, that hits me and then I want to write about it.

**You seem to write more sad sounding numbers - do you find it easier than writing more upbeat songs?**

Yeah I do, because I always feel like when you're hurt it really hits you and to me it's much more expressive. When I feel happy it just makes me want to sit about with my mates and have a laugh. I don't know, hopefully one day I can write a really happy song that makes people want to dance, but that's not really me.

**How does the song writing process usually go for you - do you keep a notepad full of lyrical ideas and fit them to the music? Or do you write a melody along with some music first, and work backwards from that?**

I have been writing poems since school, but obviously you don't feel what you felt back then, so I find it hard to use old lyrics even if I have a book full of them. When I write, it is kind of a mess, I will just feel like I need to write and get my guitar out. I'll mess about with chords and write some stuff down. I like writing like it's a conversation that I have had, so sometimes I look at old texts. But it always has to be personal, otherwise nothing comes out.

**Do you think there are enough gig opportunities for your sort of music in Brighton where you are based or do you find yourself on bills where you are not playing with similar artists?**

Yeah, Brighton is a great place to be doing gigs, because there is all sorts going on. Not like my hometown - it's all pub kind of bands down there, no one is interested in someone like me.

**How far would you like to take your music? Would you want to be a huge pop star or would you prefer being an underground, cult act?**

I just want to be able to play music everyday, I want to make it what I do for a living. Being famous would be cool, but who knows, right?



Photography by Lora Cornes

**Would you ever look into getting a backing band and do you think this would take your sound in a different direction?**

Yeah, actually at the moment I'm getting a backing band together - gonna have a bit of saxophone on the tracks, some brushes and bass. I'll still have acoustic numbers, but hopefully it will turn more heads when I'm on stage.

**Do you think songwriting works through spontaneous inspiration or is it a more calculated craft with rules that can be learnt? Do you sit down with an idea in mind of what sort of song you are going to write?**

It is definitely more of a spontaneous thing, like I said before I have to really feel it to want to write about it.

**Who are you listening to at the moment?**

If we are saying current music, I don't really know, there isn't anyone in particular. But the record I keep putting on is 'The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill' by Lauryn Hill.

**If there was one song you could have written, what would it be?**

That's really hard, there are so many songs I wish I could have written, but I'd say, 'May You Never' by John Martyn. It has the most beautiful words in it. I wish I could write something like that for the people I love. 🐾

**FROM:** Brighton, UK

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# WARD THOMAS

After making history with their second album, *Cartwheels*, Ward Thomas became the UK's biggest country act ever. We caught up with the twin sisters to speak about their unprecedented success and making country music cool again.

WORDS BY  
GEORGE HENRY KING

When the Stones Roses geared up to release their second studio album, *Second Coming*, towards the end of 1994, the pressure bestowed upon them was nothing short of excruciating.

The release of their critically acclaimed debut some five years earlier had catapulted them beyond dizzying heights, and it acted as the perfect antidote to the bleak and desperate situations in which many people, especially in the North, found themselves in.

Despite eclipsing its predecessor's chart performance, the quality of content featured on the Stone Roses' follow-up buckled under expectation, and sadly fell victim to what we have since so frequently come to call, 'Second Album Syndrome' - the diagnosis given to a second album that underperforms significantly in comparison to the one that came before it.

Country-duo Ward Thomas, however, appear to be either immune to 'S.A.S' or they are working in reverse. Their self-produced debut album, *From Where We Stand*, for example, failed to break into the UK Top 40 when it was released back in 2014. But its follow-up, *Cartwheels*,

achieved a chart position that no other British country act has managed to obtain since or before - No.1.

Overnight, Catherine and Lizzy Ward had gone from being two humble twin sisters, hoping to merely emulate the minor level of success they enjoyed with their first release, to becoming the UK's most successful and biggest country act ever. They'd gone from growing up on a farm in Hampshire on a diet of the Dixie Chicks, dreaming of perhaps one day being able to mirror even an ounce of their heroes' success, to making history with the very genre of music that they'd always adored.

After an understandably copious amount of screaming and jumping took place within the family kitchen, the pair celebrated over lunch with the two writers who they had co-wrote the album with. But they were more than just mere co-writers; they were the very influencing factor that helped to coax more honest and relatable songs out of the duo.

"We wrote a lot of this album with two girls of a similar age to us who also happen to be great friends - Rebekah Powell and Jessica Sharman - and I think that encouraged more

honest material. So, I think the album may be a little more relatable to a wider range of people."

Unlike the duo's latest release, which was partly written in Nashville, their first album was composed when Catherine and Lizzy were still at school. As a result, it lacked the very air of life experience and lyrical maturity that runs throughout *Cartwheels*. But being more accustomed to writing about adult life wasn't the only thing that was different this time around.

The pair's ever-burning desire to experience different ways of developing their sound and methods of recording resulted in a conscious decision to record *Cartwheels* in London, instead of in Nashville where their first album was laid down. It was a signal of intent that was mimicked by their decision to team up with major label juggernauts Sony Music, in order to further their career and improve on the small victory they had with their debut. The label's influence and more pristine and carefully crafted marketing campaign, undeniably had a positive impact on the album's commercial success. But the operation was still very much spearheaded by Catherine and Lizzy.

"We were very lucky with our team because we still had a lot of creative control. We released our first album as an experiment and we were pleasantly surprised by the result. But when it came to the second album, we felt it was the right time to move up and Sony seemed to be the right choice for us - they gave us a lot of advice."

The success of *Cartwheels* was unprecedented, and it was an achievement that very few, if any, saw coming - not least, Ward Thomas themselves. In hitting the No.1 spot they had surpassed any previous chart performance affiliated with their country music peers and were quickly dubbed by the mainstream media as "Britain's first country stars" - a term that the duo admits "still feels strange" when they hear it.

Without particularly trying to become the flag-bearers of British country music, the Ward twins are now, by default, the poster

girls for a genre heavily rooted in American culture. A genre, therefore, that has always struggled to make a real commercial impact on the UK music scene. Arguably, its lack of appeal to the British public can be quite transparently put down to the fact that the themes coursing through the very veins of country music, have only ever touched upon the trials and tribulations of the very red and white striped nation that spawned it.

The likes of Miranda Lambert and Maren Morris have indeed bolstered the universal appeal of country music, but the rising popularity of repetitive, soulless pop music, in the UK at least, is sadly unrivalled. The charts are plagued with Brit school graduates and oversaturated with identical song structures; each artist plagiarising their own previous hit. For every single from Little Mix, there are ten from Ed Sheeran.

So, despite the occasional anomaly, the Nashville-originating genre can often only cling to the ledge of the Top 40 - in which residents often outstay their welcome - and dangle, hopelessly between 40 and 41, with little chance of climbing upwards to safety. But Ward Thomas believe that the British people's preconception of country music might just be starting to change - and it's hard to argue that they might have had a little something to do with it.

"I think people are generally becoming more open minded to country music over here. It has been a dirty word for such a long time, mainly because we weren't being exposed to the good stuff enough. I hope that we can bring a younger perspective on the genre that'll help boost its popularity with the younger audience in this country."

By adding a modern twist to the genre and not conforming to the stereotypically awful fashion choices associated with country music (you won't see the pair donning cowboy hats anytime soon), Ward Thomas have captured the UK's interest in country and have quite frankly, made it a dam sight 'cooler' than it ever was. But opting against riding horses whilst chewing pieces of straw in their music videos isn't the only reason behind their more commercial appeal.



# "We have always felt that country music represents authenticity and genuine experiences."

"We have always felt that country music represents authenticity and genuine experiences. So, when we started writing we never wanted to write a song from the perspective of two girls born in Tennessee, as we weren't. We write about what we know and experience. I think that people can see through songs that aren't genuine."

*Cartwheels* is littered with lyrics that allude to failed, struggling or difficult relationships. The types of relationships that very few adolescents and young adults are lucky enough to avoid. Whilst some of these lyrical subjects are close to home, many however, act merely as metaphors for the changes and sense of uncertainty that both our society and world are currently battling; social commentary in the guise of stories about turbulent and bitter life experiences. Despite being advised by their mother to never speak about politics or religion during interviews, the pair assures me that such a rule ceases to apply when it comes to their song writing.

"It actually proves great writing material. We are very influenced by everything that is happening and the current issues. Writing these songs proves a great way to express difficult times that we witness others and each other going through."

As they head into album three, having just finished a successful tour of the UK, it's hard to comprehend the thought process of two 23-year-olds tasked with the responsibility of bettering a record that quite literally made history. But Ward Thomas aren't about to let doubt dictate their thought process or pressure stifle their ability.

"We will approach the third album the same as our second album. We will take our time and not release anything until we are really proud of it."

If their bout of 'Second Album Syndrome' is anything to go by, I think they'll be all right. 🐾



# VAGABON

## ELECTROWERKZ, LONDON

WORDS BY TASNEEM HOSSAIN

It's a warm, summer's evening in Central London, and New York-based singer-songwriter Vagabon - a.k.a Lætitia Tamkoc - is moments away from playing her first ever show in the UK to an entirely sold out, Electrowerkz.

Just prior to Vagabon, London-based troubadour, Alice Barlow (not to be confused with the soap actor-come-Voice contestant of the same name) takes to the stage as main support, playing a short, but captivating set to a fully-packed, smoke-filled room. Barlow manages to ready the crowd with a melancholic atmosphere - bracing them for Vagabon in the process.

Having released her debut album, *Infinite Worlds*, earlier in the year, Vagabon was eager to bring her songs to life in front of an enthusiastic audience and in embarking on her first visit across the pond to the UK, she unsurprisingly, doesn't disappoint.

With this being Vagabon's first ever UK show, and a sold out show at that, the young solo artist understandably takes to the stage with an air of apprehension, coupled with a visible nervous energy. However, as she begins to play, her nerves subside and she slowly mesmerises the audience with a voice reminiscent of Lucy Rose. It is a voice that is gentle where required and really

brings her songs and lyricism to life in the most fascinating way - especially when in a small and tightly packed space.

Standout songs from her album, including 'The Embers' and 'Mal a L'aise', transfer beautifully live and the audience applaud with great adoration song after song.

Between songs, she speaks very little, but Vagabon is soon reassured by an audience member after one of them shouts, "you're doing great!", which seems to ease her mood, as she seamlessly enters into the latter part of her set.

Her songs speak of the notions of growing and self-development - themes which are clearly relatable for most of her audience. As the set progresses, more and more passion and gratitude is directed towards those who are present tonight.

If Vagabon's first UK show is anything to go by, she will clearly be on many peoples' radars by the end of the year, and she definitely harnesses the ability to potentially grace many of the major festival bills in 2018. Vagabon is not a household name just yet, but when she is, she won't be forgotten. Let's just hope she brings the Sun every time she comes to London.



LIVE

# ALEXANDRA SAVIOR

## SCALA, LONDON

WORDS BY CAMERON POOLE

Enigmatic songstress Alexandra Savior is perhaps unfairly most known for being Alex Turner's writing partner. Anyone who is a true fan of Savior, however, will know that she is a unique talent in her own right and at her packed-out show at London's Scala this evening, she proves it.

Having seen Alexandra Savior on a number of occasions, most notably at her first showcase gig at the London Courtyard last year, what is instantly noticeable this time around is how much more at ease Savior seems to be onstage.

She opens the set with 'Frankie' - one of the many crooning numbers featured on her debut album, *Belladonna of Sadness* - and its cinematic sound and harrowing vocal instantly captivate the audience.

The Portland native then effortlessly sweeps through 'Bones', before launching into album standout, 'Mirage' - much to the audience's liking. 'M.T.M.E' - which Alexandra has previously described as a song that makes her "want to fall off the stage" - sounds as captivating and powerful live as it does on record. The screams that take place during the bridge of the song also, rather impressively, feature live.

Quaint track 'Girlie' slows down the tempo, as Alexandra croons out the lines, "*she calls me, Girlie*" with the help of the audience who sing every word back to her.

Observing the packed out venue, I notice and start to truly understand the audience's sheer admiration and love for Alexandra, her onstage persona, emotional performance and her scattered outbursts of witty humour. She's truly entralling to watch.

Her backing band is musically tight throughout the gig and they excel in bringing Alexandra's favourite track, 'Audeline', to life in a live environment. The angelic and dreamy sounding 'Until You're Mine' concludes with Alexandra's high-pitched vocal. Seemingly embarrassed, she states, "we can move on."

After closing her intense set with 'Cupid', 'Vanishing Point' and latest single, 'Mystery Girl' - the latter of which sees the 21-year-old end the song with a haunting laugh taken straight out of a B-movie horror flick - Alexandra swiftly and abruptly leaves the stage, leaving the crowd wanting more.

LIVE



# KT TUNSTALL

## BARBICAN, LONDON

Before even the first chord of what will be a career-spanning set is strummed, KT Tunstall's infectious air of showmanship infects the entirety of London's Barbican Centre.

Donning a pair of mermaid-scale leggings, that reflect her impressive light show, KT quickly launches into set opener, 'Miniature Disasters'. But tonight isn't entirely about the music. Throughout the set, KT also entertains with anecdotes about her life and musical career and it goes hand in hand with the relaxed atmosphere. Her knack for audience interaction is a refreshing trait, especially in comparison to other artists who barely say a word to their audience during their gigs.

"Will you sing along with me London? I know it's not really your style, but it's an emotional song," announces the Scottish singer-songwriter before effortlessly seeping into the emotive and piano-led, 'Crescent Moon'. Unashamedly, the crowd oblige.

Before long we are introduced to 'Pete The Beat' - the name given to the drum machine on which all of KT's thumping rhythms are played. Starting most songs with a beat, she then proceeds to record certain guitar hooks and backing vocals, successfully layering and looping all the components of a live show together.

The result is impressive and the method gives life and adds something different to her catchy, acoustic songs. As skilful as this is, 'Pete The Beat' is perhaps used a bit too much and sadly leads to a few stale moments.

The set's party atmosphere, however, outshines any minor flaws and it's KT's personality that's really the star of the show. After spotting a row of empty seats,

WORDS BY CAMERON POOLE



Photography by Kirk Stauffer.

KT offers the audience the chance to swap seats in order to be closer to the stage. It seems simple enough, but there's a catch; any audience member looking to upgrade, will have to win a dance-off. It's a moment in her set that has also been quite a regular occurrence at her recent shows, but nonetheless the audience lap it up.

Alongside the likes of the lyrically fragile, 'Invisible Empire' and the 2016 single, 'Maybe It's A Good Thing', KT also uses this evening to cover a few of her favourite songs. The White Stripes' 'Seven Nation Army' is as anthemic as ever, even with the bizarre addition of a kazoo, and 'Faith' by George Michael sees every audience member boogieing in their seats. She also pays tribute to the late Chris Cornell with a poignant cover of perhaps his most famous composition, 'Black Hole Sun'.

KT's musical prowess is perhaps best displayed during the more personal and intimate moments. The subtle and beautiful 'Yellow Flower', for example, sees the entire venue hanging on every one of KT's words.

Concluding her triumphant set with arguably her two biggest hits - 'Other Side Of The World' and 'Suddenly I See' - KT exits the party in the only way she knows how - with a mass sing-along that sees the whole audience dancing their way onto the streets of London.

LIVE LIVE

# LA LUNE

## THE GREEN DOOR STORE, BRIGHTON

WORDS BY STEVE DAWSON



Photography by Sarah-Louise Burns.

are subject to ever-changing dynamics and glorious layered sonics, which build track-by-track.

Recently released single 'bathe' acts as further testament to the 18-year-old's tried and tested formula. And with the addition of Nathalie Nedeljkovic's haunting backing vocals, la lune's latest release sounds as beautifully delicate live as it does when aired on the likes of BBC Introducing.

With a minimal set-up of just one guitar, a keyboard and a drum pad, there really is no room for error when la lune performs live.

But tonight, the Brighton-based soloist - a.k.a Olivia Judd - and her two onstage companions needn't feel exposed or vulnerable.

Her performance at The Green Door Store is tight and faultless throughout, and the soloist's reverber-soaked soundscapes engulf the entirety of the room within seconds of set opener, 'Intro' - a cover of The XX.

The trio's use of backing tracks and effect-laden vocals, help to create a dreamy and atmospheric bubble in which the audience

The set's penultimate track, 'climatise', is a standout one. Piano chords drag you through a treacle-filled swimming pool of sound, before the final chorus intensely soars beyond reach.

la lune's closing number, 'berlin', further demonstrates her ability to pre-produce subtle, yet effective musical backdrops, whilst the percussive contribution from drummer Myles Sargent adds further texture to what is a multi-layered and simply mesmerising live show.

On record, la lune's sounds are ambitious - but tonight, she proves she is more than capable of creating them in a live environment.

# GIRL RAY

THE LEXINGTON, LONDON



Photography by Don Blandford.

It would be reductive to simply call Girl Ray a band. In fact, throughout their first headline gig at The Lexington in London, they strike me as a gang, unafraid to reveal the innermost intricacies and emotions that permeate through their catalogue.

Walking onstage in front of a full house, the North London trio, made up of Poppy Hankin, Iris McConnell and Sophie Moss, refreshingly wear their hearts on their sleeves. Instead of delivering lyrics with a lifeless vocal, akin to some bands making music today, Hankin offers the whole heart-wrenching package. Her nonchalant soprano chimes like a nightingale's trill.

Before long, their ballsy take on 'estrogen-pop' ferociously kicks in, as Girl Ray open their set with two harmoniously-melodic tunes - 'I'll Make This Fun' and 'Where Am I Now'. From the off, Hankin fully connects with the songs and as a result, the audience feel as though they are part of something meaningful and pure.

'Ghosty' and 'If You Like' swiftly follow, highlighting McConnell's aptness for creating pounding, rhythmic tones between the snare and bass drum. The swooping reprise of 'Stupid Things' sends the three-

LIVE

WORDS BY ALICIA CARPENTER

piece cascading into a bubbly and aquatic myriad of echoing guitars. It's definitely the highlight of the set, and Moss's throbbing bass, coupled with angelic melodies, projects a strange kind of clarity. It's a haphazard reminder of the many times we've all tried to grab the attention of someone we like or fancy, but often with embarrassing results.

The launch of their new brand, 'Girl Spray' is the comic curveball of the set. It's a makeshift concoction of Lynx Africa and Impulse wrapped in novelty, handmade Girl Ray packaging - the bidding starts at a modest £1.

Next up is 'Just Like That', for which McConnell rises from behind the drum set and takes up the mic to sing. Picture the surf vibes of American rock-duo, Best Coast (minus the syrupy vocals of Beth Consentino) and you might just be able to imagine it. A gripping instrumental soon follows in the form of the grungy, 'New Song' - its urgent vocal makes it the dark horse of the set.

The gig concludes with fan favourite, 'Trouble'. It sheds light on Hankin's chagrin at becoming somebody you dislike whilst being in a relationship and depicts the bittersweet aspect of loving someone, but knowing that without change, there's trouble on the horizon. The wistful lyrics contrast the sweet melodies, and its true-to-life message couldn't be more relevant to the group's adolescent fan base.

As the band confidently depart the stage after what has been a relaxingly tame, but surprisingly sweaty gig, 'Girl Spray' is squirted in the audience one last time. Rather surprisingly, it's actually quite a nice scent.



GODS  
HATE  
MONSTERS

# Girls Against

GUEST  
FEATURE

Girls Against is a fantastic online campaign that is dedicated to combating the appalling rise in sexual assault and harassment at live music events.

So, as fans of both their ethos and the impact they are having on the safety of gig-goers, we invited them to contribute to the first volume of LOCK by telling us a little bit more about the great things they are currently doing and why they are doing them.

We set up Girls Against after Hann was assaulted at a Peace concert in 2015. Her story was published on Twitter and there was a huge outcry for change. Through that we discovered very little was being done to directly combat the issue, so we took matters into our own hands and Girls Against was born!

Our primary focus is raising awareness of the issue. When more people are aware it goes on, more is going to be done to change the current situation. We also actively work with security companies and venues to improve their way of handling sexual assault.

I think we expected it to be an easy ride, but it is far from it. We have so many big plans, which are becoming increasingly harder to achieve.

Our main goal for Girls Against was to provide a support system for victims, creating somewhere people feel they can come to if they have concerns and need

someone to talk to about their experiences. We are honoured that we are able to achieve that and much more.

We are focusing now on tackling the bigger picture, proper security training, venue regulations etc. For us, making sure gig-goers feel safe at gigs is the most important step forward in the campaign.

If you're at a gig and see someone feeling uncomfortable, don't ignore it! Help them; tell security, do anything you can. Even if you think it's nothing, it is probably making that person feel very uncomfortable. Ask them if they're okay and suggest talking to security.

Also, keep an eye out for who the perpetrators are because that is also useful especially if you reporting to security. Some people are still unaware that sexual assault at gigs is happens, so please educate those folks and spread the word!

Contact Girls Against via the following methods:  
TWITTER: @girlsagainst "our DM's are always open!"  
EMAIL: girlsagainstgiggroping@gmail.com

# Julia Jacklin

UK TOUR  
NOV 2017

02 PORTSMOUTH WEDGEWOOD ROOMS

03 BRISTOL THEKLA

04 LEEDS BELGRAVE MUSIC HALL

06 GLASGOW ORAN MOR

07 MANCHESTER GORILLA

08 NOTTINGHAM RESCUE ROOMS

09 LONDON O<sub>2</sub> SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE



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In loving memory of:  
BOB POOLE & LUKE EVANS.

