

Friday, July 1, 2011 **SFTW Sun 7**

## Something for the Weekend

### **SOUTHERN TENANT FOLK REUNION** **4**

#### **Pencaitland**

THE Scots have a wonderful knack for making bleak songs sound pretty.

Take the latest album from this Edinburgh-based septet who add harmonies, banjo, mandolin, harmonica and fiddle to their bruised folk tales.

It works to great effect on band leader Pat McGarvey's stark opener I Dream Of Burning Buildings, as well as gritty mining song The Rights And Interests Of The Laboring Man. The title track is high on eerie atmosphere, paying homage to an enormous derelict maltings in the East Lothian village of

Pencaitland.

A fascinating union of Celtic and American influences. **SC**



# Something for the Weekend

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**4** **AMY LAVERE**  
Stranger Me

WITH a sweet voice and double bass that's way taller than her, Memphis singer Amy enchanted with last album *Anchors & Arns*.

Now she's heading to broader horizons in her lyrics and music.

Stranger Me is a richly atmospheric, darkly seductive song-cycle with the handsome gait of *Damn Love Song* setting the tone.

The sprightly power pop of *You Can't Keep Me*, with its euphoric horns, moves her further away from the alt-country brigade.

And a cracking cover of Captain Beefheart's *Candle Mambo* reveals the breadth of her ambition. You're sure to revere LaVere. **SC**

**35** **G. LOVE**  
Fixin' To Die

I HAD G. Love down as purveyor of smooth, summery songs cut from similar cloth to label-mate Jack Johnson's. But this American folk and blues has a much more rough-hewn complexion.

Sympathetically produced by The Avett Brothers, the album kicks off with a searing rendition of Bukka White's *Fixin' To Die*, a song made famous by Led Zeppelin.

Milk & Sugar has a memorable stomp while covers of Paul Simon's *50 Ways To Leave Your Lover* and The Velvet Underground's *Pale Blue Eyes* hit the mark. A revelation. **SC**

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**4.5** **FINK**  
Perfect Darkness

FIN GREENALL, alias Fink, is often depicted as the odd one out among artists on Brit indie label Ninja Tune that are best known for their visionary hip-hop and electro records.

Though he has worked with the likes of Professor Green and John Legend, his music is decidedly acoustic and folk.

But his original style and sure-footed use of cool atmospherics actually makes it a more comfortable arrangement than you'd think.

His fourth album is an understated belter, echoing the pastoral brilliance of Nick Drake. The rhythmic gem *Warm Shadow* is a memorable standout track. **SC**

By JACQUI SWIFT

**THE Horrors really came of age with their second album, 2009's Primary Colours.**

A record layered in stunning atmospherics, it topped many end of year polls and earned them a Mercury Prize nomination.

Third album *Skying* is set to take them to another level – and lift the goth veil from their gloom doom image.

Lanky 6ft 5in Faris Badwan says: "We may be called The Horrors but it's a knee-jerk reaction to describe the album as dark. It's powerful and intense but it's just as uplifting."

Anyone who caught their Glastonbury set, on the John Peel Stage last Saturday, will have witnessed just how their new songs can lift a crowd.

New single *Still Life* saw fans on shoulders, arms in the air, singing along to their latest anthem.

A proud Faris says: "That was truly a Glastonbury moment for us. Even though no one has really heard the record yet, the tracks we played from *Skying* were special."

*Skying* is another sonic step forward for the Southend-on-Sea band who arrived on the music scene in 2006 in a dark haze and clad in Victorian gear.

With dark bouffant hair and looking like The Cure's younger brothers, they were equally hyped and rubbished as a passing fad for the indie cool crowd.

When they released debut album *Strange House* in 2007, they were seen as a garage-goth band likely to be a one-album wonder.

But the krautrock, new-wavey *Primary Colours* showed what a talent The Horrors really are.

Faris explains: "It was a hindrance being pigeon-holed. "We were represented in a different light to how we intended. But it doesn't matter as people are seeing how we've stepped up our game."

"While this record might not be ten pop songs, there's a lot of melody, a lot of points of entry and plenty for people to get into."

"It's a record you can really immerse yourself in."

On *Skying*, the swirling guitars of opener *Changing The Rain* set the tempo for what is another stunning album from Faris, Joshua Hayward (guitar), Tom Cowan (synths), Rhys Webb (bass) and Joseph Spurgeon (drums).

It is the sound of a band at ease and an album which musically chops and changes with each song.

The chiming synths on *You Said* give it a hymnal dance track feel and the stomping *I Can See Through You* is a future live Horrors anthem. The band have found their groove, for sure, and it is a natural progression from *Primary Colours*.

Faris says: "We are proud of how we have progressed musically with this."

"There has been a gradual stepping stone between each album, bigger steps between the last two albums, but it just shows how comfortable we still are with each other and what can follow."

"Hearing and playing these tracks makes me excited about what follows next."

While Portishead's Geoff Barrow produced their second album, it was all about doing it themselves for the follow-up.

Faris says: "Geoff is the first to say he recorded that album rather than produced it and said we HAD to do this one ourselves."

So the band decamped to an isolated house in Devon, leaving

**TRACKLIST**

1. Changing The Rain
2. You Said
3. I Can See Through You
4. Endless Blue
5. Dive In
6. Still Life
7. Wild Eyed
8. Moving Further Away
9. Monica Gems
10. Oceans Burning

People say we're like Simple Minds...I'm not getting it

-Faris Badwan

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW**

behind all the distractions and their friends in London so they could sink themselves fully into the recording process.

"Well that was the plan, anyway," says Faris. "But it didn't work out that way. The house was in the middle of nowhere, an hour from the nearest train station. But it didn't feel right."

"I think because every weekend we'd have to pack up and drive back to London then fly out to different festivals across Europe.

"Then driving back to Devon on a Monday, we'd be knackered so we never really gave it a go.

"It could have been a really successful endeavour but we came back to London and built our own studio. We should have done that from the beginning."

It is every band's dream to have their own studio and Faris believes it was central to the making of the record.

He says: "Even though we recorded my favourite song, *Moving Further Away*, in Devon and we had fun there – especially one time when all our friends came down on a bus for a party

and a-half minute, euphoric *Moving Further Away* and the stunning closer *Oceans Burning* – Faris is at his best.

He says: "I've really been working hard on my vocals with the band and also (*Faris's side project*) *Cat's Eyes*, where I worked alone more."

"I can definitely sing better than I could five years ago. If I couldn't I'd be worried."

"You're in a band to be creative and learn and that's what we've been doing."

The album has been earning plenty of comparisons, some Faris is keen on while others have left him slightly embarrassed.

He laughs: "There is an autistic need to put things in boxes and some of the bands we are compared to are off the mark."

"Some have likened us to The Psychedelic Furs and I checked out their first album and really liked it. But now we're getting *Simple Minds*."

"Simple Minds? All I've heard by them is *Don't You (Forget About Me)*, which I'm not getting. I need to go and check out their

earlier stuff but I'm keeping an open mind anyway as I've discovered a few good bands by being compared to them."

"On our last record, people compared us to The Chameleons and they're great."

Faris says the band are looking forward to the festival shows ahead – they play *Wireless* at London's Hyde Park this Sunday, supporting Pulp (Jarvis Cocker hailed them as "the future of British rock") and Grace Jones – but says it is their headline tour in October they are really focusing on.

"The visual aspect is so important to us. All the lights and backdrops that you sometimes miss at festivals."

"But we do think we are a good festival band. And it will be great to support Pulp. We wanted to watch them at Glastonbury but should have remembered it's about an hour's walk to The Park stage through the swamps."

"Josh disappeared into one and came back in a terrible, unsalvageable

state. We will see them at *Wireless*. They're a band we respect."

In August, The Horrors headline the Festival Republic Stage at Reading and Leeds. Are they looking ahead to next year and more festival headline slots?

Faris says: "I'd say we're getting there. Our ambitions have changed. We've just started to get some radio play and that has been exciting."

"And we're reaching different people. It's hard to pin down who a Horrors fan is. At the start it was more kids, but now it's people of all backgrounds, which is great, you don't want to exclude anyone."

"Our ambitions have grown gradually. The main motivation now is our desire to improve as a band and everything else runs parallel."

"We want to take a step up and reach more people – as many people as possible without compromising."

● *Skying* is out on July 11. The Horrors play the Main Stage at *Wireless* on Sunday at 4.20pm. See [wirelessfestival.co.uk](http://wirelessfestival.co.uk).

**4** **BEVERLEY KNIGHT**  
Soul UK

I HAVE a real soft spot for Beverley Knight MBE, the UK's undisputed queen of classic soul.

Since she emerged in the mid-Nineties, there has been a reliably pure quality to her work, echoing the genre's greats from across the Atlantic such as Sam Cooke and Aretha Franklin.

Now she's back with *Soul UK*, which finds her in peerless form proudly flying the flag for her country and her craft. The songs are all by British soul artists admired by Beverley. So we get stunning interpretations of Soul II Soul's *Fairplay*, George Michael's *One More Try*, Jamiroquai's *When You Gonna Learn* and many more.

The result is an album sounding both timeless and contemporary and blessed with a voice to die for. **SC**

**4** **BEYONCÉ**

BEYONCÉ'S last record was split into two opposing parts, the sassy, poppy and powerful *Sasha Fierce* versus the heart-on-a-string warbles of *I Am*.

On 4, the Glastonbury conqueror's alter ego Sasha has been reabsorbed and only rears her fiery head on a couple of tracks (*Run The World, End Of Time*), with the pop brilliance of *Single Ladies* or *Sweet Dreams* nowhere to be found.

Much of the album is taken up with Eighties-inspired mid-tempo R&B and, with the exception of the awesome *Party* – produced by Kanye West and featuring Outkast's André 3000 – and the well-produced ballad *I Miss You*, there is nothing that really stands out as something to fall crazy in love with. **PC**

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4 THE HORRORS Skying