



JOHN ***

Out Here On The Fringes (Pets Care)

As UK punk enjoys a commercial resurgence with the likes of Idles, Sleaford Mods and Shame, a new addition to this movement arrives in the form of this duo, both of whom conveniently answer to the name John. Their second album quakes with the energy and rawness of a live performance, commanding a limited but powerful sonic palette of deafening drums, searing guitar and roaring vocals. Immediate and unapologetic, this is music that's best experienced in the flesh. **SP**

THE JOY FORMIDABLE ****

A Balloon Called Moaning – 10th Anniversary Edition (Hassle)



To commemorate the decade-and-a-bit since this three-piece from Mold released their debut album, The Joy Formidable are rereleasing it as a

double CD or vinyl, with added Welsh language versions of the original songs. I wanted to like all of this but it's actually these stripped-back, acoustic interpretations that are the most pleasing to the ear. Tracks in English are typical indie and lack oomph, although not understanding the words makes it easier to get lost in the soft rock sound. **LN**

KIZZY CRAWFORD ****

The Way I Dream (Freestyle)



This debut LP from Merthyr Tydfil's Kizzy Crawford is fleshed out in new arrangements with added instrumentation and shows a maturity, smoothness and effortless style that flows seamlessly from electro to folk to jazz to soul. The Bajan/Welsh/English 23-year-old plays lovely guitar on tunes with subjects touching on growing up, being true to oneself, prejudice and global warming. *The Way I Dream*, *Twenty Years*, *Golden Brown* and *Waiting Game* rule, while the pop *Real Love* should bring fans from the mainstream. **RLR**

LAGWAGON ****

Railer (Fat Wreck Chords)



There's nothing new to report here, with the band admitting, in the opening line of lead single *Bubble*, "we're not breaking ground." It's same old Lagwagon.

But that's not a barb on the band, because not many do it as well as Lagwagon. The Fat Wreck legends, now on their ninth album, sound as vital and energised as they ever on have on *Railer*. It's awesome skatepunk – were you expecting something else? **CA**



LAURIE ANDERSON, TENZIN CHOEGYAL & JESSE PARIS SMITH ***

Songs From The Bardo (Smithsonian Folkways)

Definitely not Laurie Anderson responding "hold my beer" to the statement "your voice is so brilliant, you could read the phonebook and I'd love it," *Songs From The Bardo* is 80 minutes of Anderson narrating sections of the *Tibetan Book Of The Dead*, backed by cello, Tibetan lute and the daughter of Patti Smith. Flippant arseholery aside, there's great dedication here, a corollary to the group's activism, lending *SFTB* – though it sometimes lands halfway between audiobook and mindfulness app – a quiet power. **WS**

MATANA ROBERTS ****

Coin Coin Chapter Four: Memphis (Constellation)



Another inspiring force that's wagged tongues in American jazz this decade, Matana Roberts' work draws on her African-American identity and family tree:

her grandma is the cover model for the latest in her *Coin Coin* series. Blues and gospel are consistent stylistic choices here, not just something to tip a hat at, and amidst an hour of deep, vital sound poetry, the choral piece *Her Mighty Waters Run* is five minutes of music as powerful as I've heard all year. **NG**

MOON DUO ****

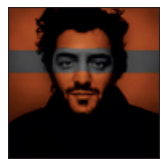
Stars Are The Light (Sacred Bones)



The prolific Portland pair augment a psych-rock brew on their seventh LP, desert rock bleeding into the usual dub-doused density with nods to late 80s/early 90s rave rendered sporadically. Highlights such as *Lost Heads* bathe in a candied cocktail of guitar and synth, while *Fall (In Your Love)* lulls with gilded lustre akin to early Stone Roses. Helped by the production expertise of Spacemen 3's Sonic Boom, this could pass as the progeny of Hawkwind and Happy Mondays. **CHP**

RACHID TAHA ****

Je Suis Africain (Naïve/Believe)



Completed prior to Rachid Taha passing away last year aged 59, this is a fitting final showcase for a ideologically sussed and uncompromising musician. *Je Suis Africain* is a selection of politically charged tracks, mostly made with Middle Eastern instrumentation that inventively rubs shoulders with Morricone-infused bluesy rock. Easy to understand why Damon Albarn and members of The Clash became committed Rachid Taha followers and collaborators. **DN**



RICHARD DAWSON *****

2020 (Domino)

Richard Dawson's unique music draws on traditional English folk, the sea shanties of his native Newcastle, and other outsider influences. While this album sees him moving in a more conventional direction there is a hint of something like prog here, and the warped melodic sense that runs through all of his music is still there. Synths and electric guitars provide a wider sonic palette than on previous records, underpinning the twisted tales of everyday life that are Dawson's lyrical matter. **DG**

SERAFINA STEER ****

The Mind Is A Trap (Vitamin Concept)



An intriguing suite of tunes fashioned from electronica, harp, spoken word and more. The instrumental *Whatsmystone* shimmers symphonically, layers of harp cascade hypnotically on *Time To Recover*, and both weave through on *Provides Common Ground* and *Say What You See*, which isn't a lament for Roy Walker, but a meditative echo of Björk's *Vespertine*. The title track is arpeggiating Euro synthpop, stitching Arthur Russell with Bat For Lashes; *Back On the Scene* is Kraftwerkian and *This Is My Emotion* chomps Hot Chip. **CS**

THE SHERLOCKS ****

Under Your Sky (Infectious)



The Sherlock's' second album is one of mellow optimism. It is fuelled by euphoric indie-rock anthems, bringing an upbeat context to grungy, tremoring riffs and thrumming drums. *Magic Man* is ironically not spellbinding, despite its intricately-weaved riffs; it's bass-fronted in its overall buildup, but still breaks down into classic Brit-indie. Most of the tracks align to the guitar-bass-drums format, save for the ethereal synthesisers in *Give It All Up* and the twangy, echoing guitar in *One Day*. **MF**

SUGGESTED FRIENDS *****

Turtle Taxi (Fika)



This UK indie-meets-folk-meets-punk band's music has a beachy, summer soundtrack feel, the lyrics are witty and relevant and the often emotional vocals compliment rather than demand all the attention. There are some beautiful guitar licks here that you wish were longer and make you press replay. More folk-pop than punk rock, this album deals with love, loss, death and landfill. *Turtle Taxi* has personality and humour and I was hooked from the first track. **LN**



THIRD EYE BLIND ***

Screamer (Megaforce)

"My current mood resonates with rebellion, energy, courage, and risk," says Third Eye Blind frontman Stephan Jenkins, and that's what you're getting from their sixth album. Not as guitar based as you'd think, this, with innovative, risky sounds including multiple tone-altering tools amidst nods back to their 90s rock pomp. *The Kids Are Coming (To Take You Down)* has a Third Eye Blind vintage feel, while *Light It Up* and *Who Am I* drag the tempo right down. **OS**

demos

CLWB FUZZ

facebook.com/clwbuzz

Retroactively speaking, in that I only checked it out in the process of writing this review, the first song released by Cardiff four-piece Clwb Fuzz (*Samurai*, back in May) gives little indication of how heavy and lumbering their latest one is. *High* starts off with a Sabbath/Blue Cheer proto-metal riff and crawls along in a blur of feedback, dandruff and indolent Mary Chain/Loop vocals. If they have more songs like this and access to big amps, a Clwb Fuzz live performance could be very good. **NG**

PETTER RYLEN

petterrylen.com

Petter Rylen has already accrued a respectable CV as part of the Copenhagen jazz scene, but for reasons unspecified recently moved to Newport and is attempting to remodel himself as a solo concert pianist. So if, on the face of it, he's surpassed the 'demo' stage, that's essentially what these two new five-minute pieces are. *Hyde* is the jazzier of them, rippling and airy with subtle vocal interplay, while *Poem* is tonally sorrowful and seems to nod to minimal composition. **NG**

SEASIDE WITCH COVEN

facebook.com/ihateswc

Whatever makeup of identities I expected on first seeing the name Seaside Witch Coven, it wasn't the three twentysomething blokes they turned out to be. Aside from this latest frown-inducing variation on the 'Girl Band'/male techno DJ using a woman's name' carry-on, this Cardiff trio's debut song *Spitter* is decent in an overdriven, yearning indie-punk way – think No Age or Japandroids, perhaps, with a punchy instrumental section about two-thirds in. **NG**