

By Nigel Thornton

MUSIC

STEVE MASON *Boys Outside (Double Six) Album*

# From Beta Band to alpha male

**T**HE Beta Band are one of Britain's best loved indie bands. They always had a musical ambition that many of their peers can only dream of, let alone achieve. Mixing myriad styles they created unique and stunning music albeit their relentless experimentation sometimes took them up blind alleys.

This is Beta Band founder member Steve Mason's third solo album although it is the first under his own name.

His previous forays appeared under the names King Biscuit Time and, then, Black Affair.

There is a thread going through his music – it is lyrically and musically sombre, but enriching and thoughtful.

The surprise here is the recruitment of electropop magician as producer Richard X, best known for his work with frothy pop acts Rachel Stevens and Sugababes.

But the combination works a treat with Mason's songs stripped back and given room to breathe.

Understand My Heart is a touching tale of heartbreak where an acoustic guitar befriends some edgy beats and synths.

Stress Position finds Mason having a pop (brave man) at former Sex

Pistol John Lydon, among others, for appearing in TV adverts.

He returns to matters of the heart on the lovely All Come Down and the soaring The Letter.

Mason's private life has been troubled and he has suffered severe bouts of depression, which means his bleak observations are sometimes uncomfortable to listen to.

But the musical mix of elegant pianos and guitars and insistent synths and beats is pretty irresistible. **9**

## WIN IT

To be in with a chance of winning a copy of this album answer the question below.

**What was the Beta Band's first album called?** Send your answers to Steve competition, Nigel Thornton, The Evening Telegraph, 57 Priestgate, Peterborough, PE1 1JW, by May 13.



## USHER

**Raymond V Raymond (RCA) Album** Despite, or maybe because of his huge success, Usher's music has always seemed a little safe. It hasn't stopped him becoming one of the biggest stars in the urban pop universe. On his new album there is the usual confidence but also a pleasing muscularity and risk-taking. **8**

## SWEET APPLE

**Love & Desperation (Tee Pee Records) Album** Four pals, including Dinosaur Jr guitarist hero J Mascis, came together to help one of them, songwriter John Petkovic, cope with a personal tragedy. The result is a US indie supergroup and their album is a gem of guitar-driven pop rock that is more fun than your favourite theme park ride. **8**

## HOLE

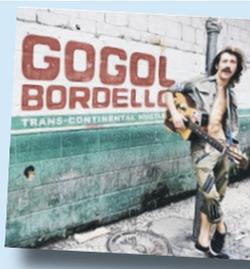
**Nobody's Daughter (Mercury) Album** Hole's first album for 12 years is essentially a solo vehicle for Courtney Love. As ever she is good copy, and helped out by some talented friends, it's a gutsy, emotional outing. Her weaker songs are a little one dimensional but there's no doubting her passion and that pulls her through. **7**

## THE AVETT BROTHERS

**I And Love And You (American Recordings/Columbia) Album** Ubiquitous uber-producer Rick Rubin pops up to help this US trio, who have been called a bluegrass Kings Of Leon. With five albums under their belt, this is their first on a major label and packed as it is with great country rock songs it is set to propel them into the big league. **8**

## GOGOL BORDELLO

**Trans-Continental Hustle (American Recordings/Columbia) Album** Visionary gypsy punk rocker Eugene Hutz's latest batch of celebratory rebel songs have been inspired by his relocation to Brazil. As ever, on the band's fifth album, the music bristles with a primal energy that is instantly and totally addictive. Rich in melody, it really is life-affirming stuff that can leave even a wearied soul giddy with euphoria. **9**



## HARLEM

**Hippies (Matador) Album** US three-piece Harlem have concocted a perfect modern example of garage rock. High on energy, full of infectious rock-pop songs, chiming guitars and joyful rhythms they manage to evoke memories of early Beatles no less. This is a simple pleasure, but not one to tire of quickly. **9**

## FROG EYES

**Paul's Tomb: A Triumph (Dead Oceans) Album** Lovers of classic guitar rock from the likes of Neil Young and Tom Verlaine will be blown away by this wonderful new album by Frog Eyes. Mainman Carey Mercer has created a mesmerising masterpiece with claws that sink deeper into the listener's psyche with each play. **9**

## OFFICER KICKS

**Citywide Curfew (We Make Things) Album** Second album from London quartet Officer Kicks is set to punch big holes in the UK indie rock scene. They have already created quite a buzz (Noel Gallagher is a fan) with their hook laden, exuberant songs as breathe new life into Britpop. **7**

## BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE

**Fever (Columbia) Album** Welsh four-piece Bullet For My Valentine hit the big time with their last album storming the US charts. Their third album finds their well-oiled hard rock machine firing on all cylinders. Expect to see them make further strides to domination of the modern metal world. **6**

## SONGDOG

**A Life Eroding (One Little Indian) Album** Welsh singer/songwriter Lyndon Morgans' songs are dark modern folk soaked with the spirit of punk which has won him and his band Songdog fans that include Bruce Springsteen among their number. Like a Celtic Nick Cave, the mood he conjures up his jet black but beautiful. **8**

## THE CHIEFTAINS FT RY COODER

**San Patricio (Fantasy Records/Concord Music Group) Album** Irish and Mexican music seems an unlikely mix but in the supremely skilled hands of the Chieftains and Cooder it's no surprise that they go together like fish and chips. A dazzling array of instruments lace songs that tell the tale of Irish soldiers who fought for Mexico. **8**

## CHARTS

### Singles

- 1 Good Times **Roll Deep**
- 2 OMG **Usher ft Will. I. Am**
- 3 She Said **Plan B**
- 4 Watercolour **Pendulum**
- 5 Until You Were Gone **Chipmunk ft Esmee Denters**
- 6 Once **Diana Vickers**
- 7 Dirty Picture **Taio Cruz ft Kesha**
- 8 I Need You Tonight **Professor Green ft Ed Drewett**
- 9 This Ain't A Love Song **Scouting For Girls**
- 10 Candy **Aggro Santos ft Kimberly Wyatt**

### Albums

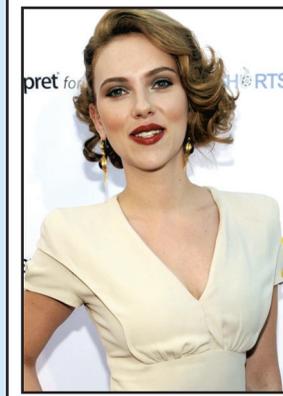
- 1 Songs From the Tainted Cherry Tree **Diana Vickers**
- 2 The Defamation Of Strickland Banks **Plan B**
- 3 Iron Man 2 **AC/DC**
- 4 Raymond v Raymond **Usher**
- 5 The Fame **Lady Gaga**
- 6 Glee – The Music: The Power of Madonna **Glee Cast**
- 7 Lungs **Florence and the Machine**
- 8 My World **Justin Bieber**
- 9 Sunny Side Up **Paolo Nutini**
- 10 Everybody Wants To Be On TV **Scouting For Girls**

hmv get closer

Charts from HMV Peterborough

## GOSSIP

**SCARLETT JOHANSSON** has revealed that she would find the prospect of playing Courtney Love in the upcoming Kurt Cobain biopic, as "interesting and intriguing". The actress/singer admitted that she was a "big fan" of the Hole singer, who is also a co-executive producer on the project, but wouldn't be drawn on if she had been approached for the role. Meanwhile, Johansson also revealed that she would also like to make another album in the future.



## COMPS

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