

MUSIC REVIEWS STUFF INTERVIEWS TU FILMS

# DIRGE

noun

a lament for the dead, especially one forming part of a funeral rite.

Well, hello there! I hope 2024 is shaping up to be a good year for you, dear reader. This issue has a bit of a German expressionist theme to it, and all the usual curios you have come to expect! Also, there are a couple of new contributors including Gig Up North's Dan Humble and Mal Lythe of The Teesside Music Podcast.



Looking at the Obituaries this month, 2024 isn't boding well for actors. With 3 biting the dust before the first week of January had ended. On a more positive note though, this wee issue of DIRGE is jam packed full of totally wizard content, including a rather in depth interview with North-East band of the moment - Benefits. Not to mention some truly amazing gig reviews, including Drab Majesty, Shrug and Hugh Cornwell. Also in DIRGE #6 is a lovingly put together tribute to the 1980 series "The Hammer House of Horror" and much, much more!

There's a loaded 'What's on', too. Which indicates things are looking busy on the musical front this year, which is great to see.

Oh, and I've just realised. I started DIRGE in March '23, making it our birthday! Yay!

Issue 6

March 2024

**APPEARING SOMEWHERE INSIDE..** 

**AMATEUR ORNITHOLOGIST** 

BENEFITS

**COUNT IN FIVES** 

**LAIR OF LOCAL** 

DRAB MAJESTY

**HUGH CORNWELL** 

DIRGE IS ONE!

**KARL BARTOS** 

HAMMER HOUSE OF HORROR

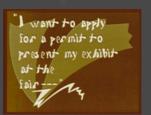
SHRUG

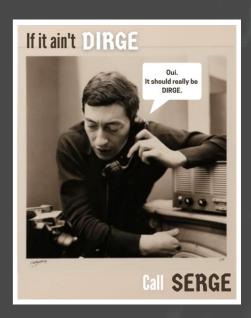
THE MYSTIQUE OF CALIGARI

Front cover image of Amateur Ornithologist - Wycombe Media Front cover image of Hugh Cornwell - Jowheretogo Image of 'A Father's Debt' - James Alexander First image on Drab Majesty review - @loneconcertina



Front cover image - The Cabinet of Caligari (1960)





## THE LAIR OF LOCAL

This is a local page for local music. We'll have no trouble here!



#### **LEHI - SHUT THE DOOR**

Hartlepool lad Lehi (pronounced Lee-Hi) has produced a decent slice of Hartle-pop with 'Shut The Door'. It's not my cup of tea but it's easy on the ear and doesn't annoy me so that's easily the minimum I expect from a song for it to be enjoyable. It's mixed to a professional standard with some dreamy synths on the breakdown and I'll await his next release. 3.3/5



facebook.com/thisislehi

## LOST LOT - DIFFERENT KIND OF HEARTBREAK

We got emailed some pleasant tuneage to bathe in from Lost Lot who we've reviewed previously in DIRGE.

Starting the review off with a mix critique, the vocals could sit better with a bit more reverb, while the bass drum seemed to be distorting which isn't ideal, detracting from the actual songsmithery (is that a word?)

The highlight of Different Kind of Heartbreak for me is the Hammond Organ doused in Leslie which careered around my headphones.

Fair play though, I mentioned my issues with the sound and they did their best to resolve them. Lost Lot's new song is very listenable, combining their obvious love of folk with a more pop orientated, early 2000's guitar sound. 3.8/5

facebook.com/lostlotband

#### STOCK IMAGE - NEW WAY

If Stars In Their Eyes was still a thing I reckon Stock Image could easily make it to the semi-finals by performing as The Human League's Phil Oakey, complete with slicked over hair and a gold earring in one ear.

The pink suited one has released another solid, 80's inspired joint that although isn't as straightforwardly catchy as his previous work, still packs an electronic punch, heralding a slight change of direction for the Sultan of Stockton. The production sounds naturally 80's, it's not just someone hooking up a software synth and a few Linn Drum samples and turning the compressor up full...Or is it? 4/5



facebook.com/stockimagemusic

#### **MARQ ELECTRONICA - APOIDEA**

I tell you what, my daughter absolutely loved Mary's recent song 'Never Go Away', so he definitely resonates with the under-ten demographic!

His new E.P is accomplished, too. Marq has a strong vocal and the production and song writing is slick throughout, following the tried and tested House tropes while still maintaining its originality. There are some rather gnarly bass lines and hooks on Apoidea which is a pre-requisite for any kind of Dance music sub-genre. 3.8/5

facebook.com/margelectronica

#### **AMI LEIGH - THROUGH THE NIGHT**

Get your glowsticks out, readers. Ami has gone trance! And it's actually quite good! Obviously it's no 'Children' by Robert Miles but for one of her first forays into the world of EDM it's pretty listenable with a competent production.

Vocally though, it starts to sound a little bit pastiche and you can sense that this type of music takes Ami out of her comfort zone, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.

As a potential club banger though, I just can't see it. But it's a better attempt than I could muster in this pool of genre. 3/5

facebook.com/amileighmusic

#### **JENNY LASCELLES - INERTIA**

Jenny's tagline is "Like a Summer's walk...But through a graveyard". And, as someone who enjoys walking through my local graveyard on a daily basis, I was keen to see if this resonated with me, dear reader!

Big, confident drums, some Trent Reznor infused piano and mean and moody, octaved vocals that remind me of Kelli Dayton from Hartlepool Trip-Hop export 'Sneaker Pimps'.



Inertia could have had a bigger hook.

The chorus sounded a bit like a pre-chorus. But I still enjoyed it! 3.7/5

facebook.com/jennylascellesmusic

#### THE INKLINGS - RETURN OF THE PUPPETS

The Inklings have produced an eclectic album of tunes. Some hit, some miss. I'd probably liken them to Baz Warne era Stranglers. Not quite as rough round the edges or quirky as Hugh era but still listenable and instantly identifiable. There's also

shades of Wire and a dash of Dire Straits. I thought the organ could have sounded dirtier but all in all the production was pretty on point and I'll await their next release



with interest 3.5/5 facebook.com/theinklingsuk

#### PINK MOON -By my side

I was at Pink Moon's comeback gig at The Forum last year and I enjoyed it. They don't seem to update their FB page much and although 'By My Side' isn't a bad listen, it sounds like a band who are going through the motions and devoid of a direction they can all agree on. There is potential there, it just needs unlocking. 3/5



#### JEN DIXON -THE SOUND

"Hey Chuck, it's your cousin, Marvin Berry.
You know that new sound you've been looking for?
Well listen to this!"

Is 'The Sound' a new, exciting change in direction for the hardworking, chicken loving, Teesside songstress?

Well, I wouldn't say it's all that exciting, but it's Jen's best song yet, produced as well as ever, but with some slight vocal straining on the chorus, which could have perhaps been a semitone or two lower. 3/5

facebook.com/jendixonmusic

#### BRASS MONKEY -SANDY

This song makes me want to don my skull and crossbones bandana and my aviators, rev up my Harley Davidson and hit the open road.

With a vocal that bridges the gap between Iron Butterfly's Doug Ingle and James Hetfield, you can tell this man means serious shiznit when that tambourine hits in the second verse.

Usually I berate people for singing in a Yank accent, but on this occasion if he had used a local dialect it wouldn't have had the same je ne sais quoi. 3.8/5

facebook.com/
funkmonkeymetal

## END CREDITS - OUTSIDERS

This new track by the Teesside trio and I have something in common. We are both 5 minute wonders. I read in their press pack this was a bit of a 'Doors' homage. And I can confirm the guitarist is definitely channelling his inner Krieger, with the drums provided by Steady Eddy as accomplished as ever. 'Outsiders' didn't impress me like their preceding stuff, but it's still a jolly good listen. 3.9/5

facebook.com/endcreditsuk

WANT YOUR MUSIC REVIEWED IN DIRGE?
YES, OF COURSE YOU DO! SIMPLY EMAIL
YOUR LATEST RELEASE TO

DARLODIRGE@GMAIL.COM OR MESSAGE ME
ON THE FACEROOK PAGE WHAT'S THE

ON THE FACEBOOK PAGE. WHAT'S THE WORST THAT COULD HAPPEN?

#### **ARTHUR ELY - STARSCAPE**

Dreamy 6-string ambience which makes me think of very early 1970's Pink Floyd (Cirrus Minor, in particular). His soloing is quite Gilmour-esque too. It's a touching little piece that could make up the music to an avant-garde short film. On looking at his FB profile, in days gone by Arthur even used to look like Gilmour. So, he may take this review as high praise. 3.7/5

#### MOJAVE DESERT STAR - STAND UP, BELIEVE

Dan aka Mojave Desert Star is all over this month's issue. He appears in the next column, playing drums in DIRGE stalwarts Compression Session, as well as penning a couple of live reviews. He asked me not to go easy on him...So I won't.

With a band-name that's blues rock and a title that screams cheesy pop, this song is neither. It's a well crafted electronic joint combining live instruments and samples which is rather listenable. Dan has since sent me another song which is better still. 3.7/5

facebook.com/mojavedesertstar

## CONOR MICHAEL COME & KISS ME

I've watched a few episodes of
Conor's 'Off The Stage' podcast and
the lad seems like a really nice bloke.
I just can't get onboard with this
music though, it's not aimed at
people like me. It's better suited to
teenage and twenty something girls.
I've never listened to Conor's three
main influences (not voluntarily
anyway) which are Ed Sheeran,
Damien Rice & Olly Murs, so I don't
really have any point of reference
for this tune.

These days the title could be seen as a tad rapey too, it's not really conducive to the whole #metoo generation. 2.5/5

facebook.com/conormichaeluk

#### **GRAPEUINE - CROSS YOUR MIND**

This guy appears to be obsessed with amusement arcades. His Insta is full of pictures of him in one, as is the front cover of Will's new song.

If this song was an arcade game it would be one of those grabby things that your kids always try and get you to spend loads of money on to 'win' a Minion doll. The one that weakly grabs on then lets go.

Starting out with promise, yet failing to hold onto my attention. 2.9/5 instagram.com/grapevine\_music

#### **PEONY - MAN IL UOMO**

Dark and down-right dirty ditty from North-East fuzz rock duo 'Peony'.

Plenty of tempo and dynamic changes ranging from shouty vocals via White Stripes beats to Haircut 100 scratchy guitars, which this reviewer found enjoyable. It possesses an immediate and snappy production value that enhances the music. My only gripe is the faux Jack White American accent in certain parts, but I've started to accept that certain types of music suit it, so maybe I'm moving on from that particular cross I have to bear.
3.9/5

instagram.com/peony.duo

## COMPRESSION SESSION - DREAMTIME

Back like a proverbial bad penny, Comp Sesh return with their glistening new ditty 'Dreamtime'.

I like this band because they don't take themselves too seriously and have their own sound. This is demonstrated on 'Dreamtime', with plenty to keep you interested.

I think I hear some over the top
Autotune on the vocal and the main
guitar riff is as catchy as it is
scratchy, all held together by a tight
and effective rhythm section. 4/5
instagram.com/compressionsessionband

#### **MARTIN FRANCIS TROLLOPE -FOUND MEMORIES**

I bloody love the word Trollope. Anyway...

South Shields lad Martin has produced quite a listenable album with 'Found Memories', an understated collection of obviously personal songs that succeeds in being touching without being overly sentimental.

As an album it is cohesive and thematic, with comforting keyboard sounds from Martin's Yamaha USS-90 fading away and returning like waves on a warm and familiar sea.

I can hear shades of the one-hit wonder Aqualung (I Put A Spell On You), Air and Midlake. Trollope's voice is basic yet rich and expressive with a folky quality. The tone of the production is brilliantly Lo-Fi.

There's a little bit of filler on 'found Memories', but it's minimal, and most of the songs stand firmly on their own and similarly as part of the collection.

I recommend you listen to this and I look forward to featuring Martin in future issues of DIRGE. 4.1/5



harbourmasterproductions.co.uk

#### ZETA POINT - THE WHOLE ENTIRE TIME

So, I know next to nothing about Zeta Point, except that they are from Durham. A real enigma these lot. So I will channel my inner Alan Turing and see if I can decipher what they are all ahout via their debut, self produced E.P.

The email also omitted any song titles and usually I'd be miffed by that lock of attention to detail but their saving grace was the fact that this is a mighty fine debut release that's possesses a DIY ethos that juxtaposes programmed and live drums to fine effect.

Track one is a bouncy opener with a gnarly bassline that gets lodged in your brain. We then go Transatlantic for the remainder of the E.P reminding me of a criminally underrated 1980's band called The Necessaries (listen to their album Event Horizon).

The Zetas bridge the gap between British Indie and Yankee Alt-Rock in the vein of Weezer and similar. I'd tell you where you can listen to it and find out some more about the band, but I don't know myself.



## REVIEW BY DAN HUMBLE

## **JENNY LASCELLES GEORGIA SMITH CALLY BILLIE GATLEY**

*NE UOLUME BAR* STOCKTON



Jenny L. on stage (Photo by Mal Lythe)

A night of three amazing female voices, what could be better than that? I'll tell you - four amazing female voices!

This musical evening at the NE Volume music bar in Stockton began well with Cally Billie Gatley stepping up to the plate with her unassuming acoustic guitar. Cally's voice is lovely and her guitar playing is interesting with a lot of percussive slaps, funky chords, and 3/4 time signatures (or is it 6/8?). She was clearly a little out of practice, forgetting the words to one song and struggling to find the right chord in a couple of others. But honestly, I didn't mind that at all. Solo acts can get away with it, I actually found it quite charming. I enjoyed all of her songs especially 'Sundays' and 'I Wish' which had many a foot tapping among the seated patrons.

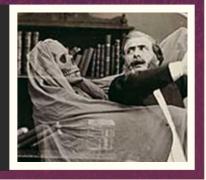
Next up was Georgia Smith with her band. They were tight, with catchy tunes. Although I couldn't hear what she was singing, her voice was also a joy. Not as soaring as C.B.G but with a nice gravel to it on occasion. They bopped around a bit and looked like they were having fun. The tunes had a 70's rock vibe and the lead guitarist tastefully daubed some excellent blues licks onto the musical canvas. 'Pages' and 'Changing (This Time)' stood out as solid pieces of song writing. A fun band to behold! More toes tapped and some heads bobbed. Something Georgia did which CBG also did (and many bands do) is apologise to the audience. Be it for lack of practice/bad sound/hitting bum notes etc. I don't like it. There's nothing to apologise for. You're up there entertaining, but I'd go see both support acts again.

For the last act the lights were dimmed and we were treated to Jenny and her band. The whole package was excellent. They looked and sounded professional and the sound levels were perfectly balanced. Without fuss they came on and ripped into the glorious "She's A Peach". The whole atmosphere of her set was enthralling. The mellow guitar chords and stabs were a perfect example of knowing when to leave space in a song. The rhythm section built up with ominous drive as the second synth pulsed and pushed like a mesmerising undercurrent. Lascelles pulled the happy crowd with her into the dark vibe of "Inertia" and then back into the light with the beautiful "Sea Green". The band members were introduced and after a few more perfect pieces they finished on a rousing romp with "Backbone", leaving the crowd calling for an encore. We didn't get one, but we'd certainly been given a great performance.

And apropos of nothing... NE volume bar: what is that men's toilet all about? At least put up a shower curtain around it or something. D.H.

## THE GREAT BEYOND

I've heard there is a universe outside of The North East.



#### **ARTICULATE OUTBURST - UNSAFE SPACES**

Matt from Leeds' Punk/Alternative Rock outfit Articulate Outburst emailed yours truly to review their album, and finished the email with #whatstheworstthatcouldhappen. So, lets see!

First impressions from the opening track "Anybody out There" were vibes of Joy Division with some sort of obscure Peter Kay character performing vocals.

Thankfully though, the album got progressively better after the false start of the first song. You can hear influences like U.K Subs and Stiff Little Fingers shining through, with hints of early 80's 0!!

from what I can garner from the band's lyrical content they're anti-gammon and anti-woke, so they don't appear to be idealogues. You can't really get away from the political lyrics, and regular DIRGE readers will know I am not fond of music with an overtly political message, but most of the tunes that make up the album are energetic and they kept me engaged and entertained.

Would I listen to Unsafe Spaces in my spare time? Probably not, but I enjoyed it all the same. 3.5/5

articulateoutburst.co.uk

#### JONNY SWIFT - CAMELOT

Jonny Swift is back to grace the hallowed pages of DIRGE once more, with a new release boasting a sleeve that at first glance appears to be an electrical circuit, yet upon closer inspection turns into a fun fair!



And on first listen it all starts to make sense as the subject matter of Jonny's track appears to be the sights, smells and noises of a fun fair in Preston. Niche!

The drums caught my attention from the off and the lyrics are quite evocative, describing the eponymous fun fair from an onlooker's perspective. But, like a a dodgem with a flat battery, the song never really seems to go anywhere. 2.9/5

facebook.com/jonny.swift.10

#### **AMATEUR CULT - EYES**

This Scottish group's name almost describes what people think about yours truly!

Amateur Cult is firth of forth native Alastair Chivers. I like to research people thoroughly and in the process learned that The firth of forth is actually a fjord. Mind blown.

Anyhoo, 'Eyes' is a wicked tune which harks back to Brian Eno era Roxy with plenty of sexy sax and post-punk angular drums. My favourite segment is the interlude near the end, with Chivers' shouty vocals melding Mark. E Smith and him out of Kasabian on a wave of Sax (and possibly Melodica? Citation needed).

The final act builds like the climax of a hangover powered weird-ass fever dream.



4.1/5

facebook.com/amateurcult

## **DIRGE POP CHARTS**

- 1.) DRAGGED UP MISSING PERSON VIV
- 2.) MARTIN F. TROLLOPE FOUND MEMORIES AMATEUR CULT - EYES
- 3.) STOCK IMAGE NEW WAY

  COMPRESSION SESSION DREAMTIME
- 4.) END CREDITS OUTSIDERS PEONY MAN IL UOMO
- 5.) BRASS MONKEY SANDY

OF THE MONTH - C. MICHAEL COME & KISS ME (Sorry)

#### DRAGGED UP - MISSING PERSON

Patrick Bateman would call this 'an epic meditation on intangibility.'

And something this Scottish band is definitely not MISSING is cool choons. Their new single is a dis-jointed, mixed up bundle of fun with lots to take in. It's charming, unpretentious and organic, featuring the quintessential Dragged Up lyrics with plenty of varied instrumentation (I think I can hear an Agogo bell? Perhaps Dragged Up could send me an answer on a postcard).



My favourite bit is the 'wig-out' portion in the middle with plenty of guitar soaked in reverb and a pulsating and splendiferously WACKY bass line! I'm still a bit miffed I never went to Blues Night to watch them play live last year. Oh well, maybe they'll come back! The band have a new album out on April 5th. 4.2/5

facebook.com/draggedup

## **WHAT'S ON - MARCH & APRIL**

DIRGE'S TOP PICKS FOR THE COMING MONTHS

01/03 WITHERED HAND, CAFE ETCH, BORO

07/03 HUNCHBACK N. DAM LIVE SCORE, CATHEDRAL, TOON

09/03 THE MOURNING AFTER, GREEN ROOM, STOCKTON

09/03 MICHAEL GALLAGHER, KU BAR, STOCKTON

13/03 DEWOLFF, THE CLUNY, TOON

14/03 THE STRANGLERS, CITY HALL, TOON

20/03 BUZZARD, BUZZARD, BUZZARD, KU BAR, STOCKTON

23/03 WE ARE CHAMPION, THE CLUNY, TOON

23/03 ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN, CITY HALL, TOON

23/03 RATTUS INHERITUS, LAST POST BAR, THORNABY

26/03 JUSTIN HAYWARD, HIPPODROME, DARLO

30/03 STOCKTON CALLING, VARIOUS VENUES, STOCKTON

06/04 AELIUS FESTIVAL, VARIOUS VENUES, TOON

09/04 COMPRESSION SESSION, THE FORUM, DARLO

20/04 SIMON AND OSCAR (OCS), ARC, STOCKTON

27/04 STRAIGHTEN OUT, THE FORUM, DARLO

29/04 KULA SHAKER, BOILERSHOP, TOON



## WOM (VISTA OF THE MONTH)

SEPIA SPECIAL!

This is a nice one, this. It was snapped near Valley Steet just outside of Darlington town centre. I thought the scape looked like those old dilapidated buildings in the film Nosferatu from 1922, so I decided to put it into sepia to really enhance those early horror vibes! Roz.



### IT'S ONLY WORDS

Some of the finest lines known to humanity



#### **IGGY POP - DUM DUM BOYS**

What happened to Zeke?
He's dead on Jones, man
How about Dave?
O.D'd on alcohol
Oh, what's Rock doing?
Oh, he's living with his mother
What about James?
He's gone straight

Well, things have been tough
Without the Dum Dum Boys
I can't seem to speak the language
I remember how they
Used to stare at the ground
They looked as if they
Put the whole world
Looked as if they put
The whole world down

The first time I met the Dum Dum Boys
I was fascinated
They just stood in front of the old drug store
I was most impressed
No one else was impressed, not at all
And we'd sing da, da, da, da, da, dum, dum, day

Well, where are you now my Dum Dum Boys?

Are you alive or dead?

Have you left me the last of the Dum Dum daze?

And then the sun goes down

And then the boys broke down

People said we were negative

They said we would take but we would never give

But we'd sing da, da, da, da, da, da, dum, dum, day
We'd sing da, da, da, da, da and hope it would pay
We'd sing da, da, da, da, dum, dum, dum, dum, day
Dum, dum day

Well now, I'm looking for the Dum Dum Boys Hey, where are you now when I need your noise? Now, I'm looking for the Dum Dum Boys The walls close in and I need some noise

One of my favourite lyrics and songs. It was included on lggy's 1977 album 'The Idiot', which is reportedly what Ian Curtis was listening to when he offed himself. Say no more!

PREVIEW ® NOSFERATU

Robert Eggers' anticipated remake of the 1922 masterpiece is slated for a 25th of December release in the U.S with a European release in early 2025.

Apparently focusing on Ellen (played by Lily-Rose Depp) more than the previous two adaptations and harnessing Willem Dafoe's odd looks for his role as 'Vampire Hunter'

Dafoe as Von Franz

Professor Albin Eberhart Von Franz (quite possibly a nod to Albin Grau, the production designer for the original German silent film).

I am hoping 'Nosferatu' will be one of the better horror movies I have witnessed in the last few years. It has a great deal to live up to though, and I think a lot of the mood could rest on the choice of music Eggers employs.



focusfeatures.com/nosferatu

#### BOAT STORY (IPLAYER)



Well the BBC never used to show violence like this at 9pm ten years ago. It's that comedy violence though, not the old 'ultra violence', but ironically a lot more brutal than A Clockwork Orange. A darkly comedic drama starring Johnson from Peep Show, Daisy Haggard, Craig Fairbrass and Tchéky Karyo (from quality French Crime Thriller Baptiste) that is highly entertaining.

Boat Story is clever and thought provoking, with some stellar acting talent, I binge watched it in one day. 4/5

#### 'A FATHER'S DEBT' GETS THE **GREEN LIGHT**

In the follow up to last year's supernatural, Darlo based short 'Seeing', James has taken things to an even darker place in his new film 'A Father's Debt' which has just gained the funds it needs to produce the short, via Indiegogo.



The eponymous father

Expect Campbell's trademark, gritty auteurism and blood aplenty in this 16mm tale of revenge, due to be released later this year.

#### **TEN WORD FILM REVIEWS**



BONES AND ALL - Let The Right One In meets Natural Born Killers. Decent. THE INVISIBLE MAN - Ridiculous yet watchable Sci-fi frolic with plenty of jump scares.

KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON - Good quality story telling as usual from **Martin Scorsese. Long!** 

EILEEN - Period drama that never quite gets going after showing promise. SOCIETY OF THE SNOW - Retelling of the classic Andes survival story. **Recommended by DIRGE!** 

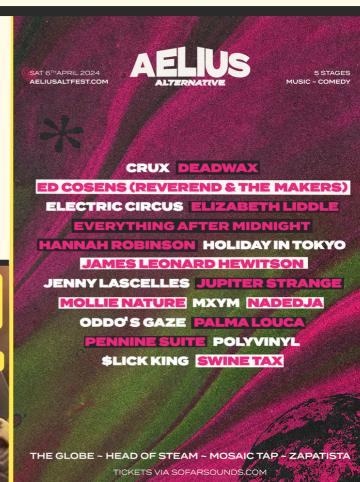
THE ZONE OF INTEREST - Harrowing, sombre and haunting holocaust tale about Rudolf Hoess. Watch!



From the folks who brought you Band of Brothers and The Pacific. Oh, who is that on the credits? It's Barry Keoghan. He's an excellent actor, but boy am I getting sick of his face!

Plenty of Americanised own trumpet blowing and overblown action in this tale of a flying fortress crew battling to hold onto existence when the average life expectancy of bomber crew personnel was a mere six weeks. Intense aerial skirmishes, which are shot well are the main visual treat, although lifting certain scenarios directly from the 1990 film Memphis Belle.

And obviously the Brits are cast as the humourless, stiff upper lipped bores, contrived to contrast with the rambunctious, hilarious, down to Earth and loveable Yankees.







#### KARL BARTOS THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI

Kraftwerk are one of my favourite bands of all time, and Dr Caligari is one of my top films ever. Sounds like a match made in heaven, right?

Well from the teaser samples Bartos' Facebook page shared it didn't bode well. The digital sounding motifs really didn't lend themselves well to the grainy, esoteric frames of the 1920 expressionist masterpiece. Was this project going to be a downfall of Wagnerian proportions?

Bartos is classically trained, studying music at the Robert Schumann Hochschule in Dusseldorf before joining Kraftwerk in 1975 and this no doubt helped him a great deal when penning the score to the movie.

A lot of the music sounds like it could be off a computer game from the early 1990's. Some of it works, some of it doesn't. Melodically and in terms of the bulk of the sound design though, Bartos is on point.

There's just a bit of a plasticity and a dryness to the synthesised score that doesn't match what I witnessed on the screen and left me a bit underwhelmed. All in all though, I enjoyed the synthesis of one quarter of one of my favourite bands and one of my best loved films.

You can listen to the album on Karl's Bandcamp page, but I'd strongly recommend watching the film synced to the film score, which thankfully you can do on YouTube via a channel called 'Kraftwerk Archives'. It offers better context on the individual pieces and in turn enhances the film, I'll also share the link on DIRGE's Facebook page. 3.7/5



facebook.com/originalbartos



#### TRACKS ROUND UP WITH SARAH WILSON



The sun is starting to shine and spring flowers are daring to peek their heads above ground and we have some great gigs lined up for you. Two sold out events to mention on Saturday 9th March. A busy day for the Tracks gang! First up is a **Noisy** Daughters Pop-Up Choir session in celebration of International Women's Day at The Hippodrome hosted by the awesome Liz Corney of Cornshed Sisters and Field Music fame. Followed by our BIG Little Gigs family live music event as part of The Darlington Libraries Bookfest. We are bringing the excellent Los Capitanes to the library to raise the roof with their fun flamenco-pop mashups.

High fives if you managed to get tickets for these events and commiserations if you missed out. For future reference all details of upcoming events and tickets are on our socials.

We are very chuffed to be delivering a Noisy Daughters stage at the mighty Stockton Calling this year. We have a stellar line up featuring Darlo's own Emily Rowan, Tees RnB singer Marina Josephina, India Arkin, indie-folk from Melanie Baker and rockers Pretty Velvet. To round off the day we have Toon altrockers Pave The Jungle and headliners London punk trio Deep Tan. So many good bands playing across the whole festival and it usually sells out so get your ticket today!

> stocktoncalling.co.uk facebook.com/tracksdarlington

#### **PREVIEW**

#### THE STRANGLERS AT NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

I know, I know. Only one original member remains, and to be honest if it wasn't for my son wanting to go (JJ Burnel is his hero) I probably wouldn't be attending on the 14th. The music definitely died the day Dave Greenfield succumbed to Covid a couple of years ago. All the same, I'm still very much looking forward to seeing The Men in Black in Newcastle in March, and the tickets were extortionate so by God I intend to have a good time!

This will be the first occasion I've seen the band without Greenfield on the ivories. I always pitched up on the right side of the stage where Dave used to stand and enjoy watching the greatest keyboard player of all 🦺 time doing his thing. It's not going to be the same, but as a live band they will always be up there (as long as JJ is alive and karate kicking, that is).

Don't forget to pick up the next issue to see how we enjoyed our latest jaunt to The City Hall!

The Stranglers play at Newcastle City Hall on Thursday March 14th.

## **7 OBITUARIES**

TOM WILKINSON (Actor) 1948 - 2023

GLYNIS JOHNS (Actor) 1923 - 2024

**DAUID SOUL (Actor) 1943 - 2024** 

FRANZ BECKENBAUER (Footballer) 1945 - 2024

TISA FARROW (Actor) 1951 - 2024

ANNIE NIGHTINGALE (DJ) 1940 - 2024

**DAVID EMGE (Flyboy) 1945 - 2024** 

**MELANIE SAFKA (Singer) 1947 - 2024** 

IAN LAUENDER (Actor) 1946 - 2024

DAMO SUZUKI (Musician) 1950 - 2024

STEUE WRIGHT (DJ) 1954 - 2024

JOHN SAUIDENT (Actor) 1938 - 2024



# benefits

THE INTERVIEW



# DOWN THE JOB CENTRE AND HE KINDLY AGREED TO ANSWER A FEW QUERIES!

Would you class yourself as a musician first and a political activist of sorts second or the other way around?

Not sure I class myself as either to be honest! I'm definitely not a "musician" as I can't really play an instrument with any degree of skill. I can klang a guitar and find the chord I'm after on a synth, but the reality is I just enjoy compiling abstract noises together and writing words, that's it. Robbie, Hugh and Michael are the noisemakers in this band, the only sound I make comes out of my mouth. Political activist? Ok, ya might have got me on that one. The initial point of the band was to react to current urgencies — to write, record and release as quickly as possible in order to be relevant to the situation it was talking about — so the stances we've taken on the things we class as urgencies could be seen as activism, but really, it's all just about us trying to be honest. I know we're pretty blatant in our messaging but there's a part of me that believes most, if not all, music is in some way political, even love songs, even instrumentals.

#### Tell me about the Umbro/shorts combo. Any subversive reasoning behind it or is it just because it looks good?

Just clothes I got in a sale mate, nothing more. I suffer quite a bit from anxiety, nerves and stage fright so in the early shows wearing the same clothes was a bit like putting armour on, so it helped in that respect. I don't think I've ever met another musician who doesn't have similar hang ups about playing, some mask it with too much booze, some fake bravado, some by using clothing as a uniform. I use shorts.

#### Any ideas formulating yet about the vibe of the difficult second album? More of the same or a change in direction?

You always want to develop as an artist and not try to repeat yourself but... you also want to remain true to yourself and your ideals. We can't really alter what this band is in terms of its aim to react to current situations, but we can shift what style and manner we do it in. Pretty much all the first album was done in bedrooms and kitchens on cheap mics so we might do more studio work this time to add a more professional edge but I wouldn't be expecting the Royal Philharmonic to turn up. That's for album three, swing when you're winning era Benefits.

#### Do you think Benefits' socio-political message and your intense stage persona are your unique selling points?

Nope. This thing only really works as a unit so it's all about teamwork. I think it's probably easy to categorise us as a political noise group or something like that, but the gigs aren't lefty rallies. We found out quite early that we needed more strings to our bow for our live shows so there's quite a bit of humour and interaction in it now. Constantly pushing people away or berating them isn't necessarily the most pleasant thing to see, hear or perform and not really in keeping with our overall aims. Despite all the shouting, intensity, and perceptions of what you might think we're about, we want the overall experience to be uplifting. Basically, like Queen in their 80's pomp but a noise band.



You rep Teesside whenever possible and speak in your own native accent which I respect. Do you think the Teesside area is underachieving on a national level or do you think the North East as a whole is being held back when compared to the rest of the U.K?

The North East has been the runt of the UK litter for as long as I can remember and it doesn't look like it'll change soon. These days though it's difficult to tell which area of the country isn't underachieving or being held back. We've travelled to many towns and cities over the last couple of years and the grass ain't really that much greener elsewhere. In regard to Teesside, years ago, when my old band played SXSW our management listed us as coming from "London, UK" in the official programme as they claimed no one knew where Middlesbrough was and it didn't really matter anyway. I was livid, but it highlighted how much the place was seen as an irrelevance to people with no real connection to the area.

However, as much as I like the sloganeering regionality of plastering "BENEFITS – TEESSIDE" on our t shirts we're in no way poster boys for the area. It's just another way of telling our story that's all, this is who we are, and this is where we're from. I've got no problem with yourself or anyone else not liking our music by the way, we don't write to get a nice pat on the back – no one should write for those reasons.

Criticism is a funny thing, and you need to learn to take both the positive and negative with a huge pinch of salt, not take any of it too seriously or to heart as you'll end up losing the plot. It's not always easy mind, constantly hearing about how terrible you are certainly takes its toll and has an effect equally as destructive as believing your own hype. Gotta blank them both somehow. The only true way for any band or musician to sustain doing this is to try and enjoy it and remember why you love making music in the first place.

#### What do you think of the Teesside music scene at present?

I think there's a lot to be applauded within the local scene right now with people like Point Blank, NE Volume and yourself writing about it and the shoots of life of exciting young bands finally starting to emerge. There are problems in terms of where bands can perform and develop but it's always been like that. The struggle is part of the fun.

We've got enough venues and bands but there doesn't seem to be much of a link between the two, or a belief that they can both help each other out. I saw an interview with Stock Image where he said that bands play at NE Volume in Stockton but then seem to have nowhere to go and he's kinda right. I went to watch the Dossers/Provenance/End Credits show there last year and it was great, full to the brim with sixth formers and early twentysomethings absolutely bang into their music. That audience needs to be catered for as otherwise it'll become disillusioned and fizzle out. Using Leeds as an example, there's a desire to take risks and a camaraderie there that's seemingly lacking in Teesside. The Brudenell offered us a headline show fresh after restrictions were lifted despite not having any releases or real gig experience. It gave us a huge amount of confidence to push on, but I don't see that sort of thing happening for a new band up here and it's sad. There seems to be more of a focus on all day multi venue festivals, tribute acts and seminars on how to make it big in the music business. All of that is fine and dandy, keeps lots of people happy, but I think there needs to be a little shift or at least a tweak in priorities as otherwise the younger bands will just give up.

In fairness though, anyone serious about creating a vibrant music scene in Teesside should ask those kids what they want, not old knackers like me who've been around the block far too many times.

In a utopian world where all society's ills have been resolved, what style of music would you make?

Noisy shouty music moaning about how perfect everything all is.

Haha, thanks for taking the time to speak to DIRGE, Kingsley. I don't necessarily like the first album as a musical vehicle (who knows I might like the second) but it's great to see northern bands establishing themselves nationwide. I hope to talk to you again in the future when the second album is out!



## THE MYSTIQUE OF CALIGARI

What a glorious time it must have been to be alive in the epoch of Weimar Germany. So many frontiers being explored in the realms of art, music and film, not to mention the breaking down of social and sexual barriers in a time of exploration and freedom. The calm before the storm if you will, before paradise was lost on Hitler's ascension to power in 1933.

This film probably would never have existed if it wasn't for the great war (like so much iconic art) as Caligari's writers Carl Mayer and Hans Janowitz emerged from the global conflict as pacifists with a strong distrust of authority, and this is partly what influenced the story, with Dr Caligari being the sinister symbol of authoritarianism.

In terms of what was to come politically and socially in the years that followed in Germany, you could say the film prophesied the sleepwalking of a nation into utter oblivion. A totalitarian regime led by a madman that hypnotised half it's population and silenced the other half.

The visual aesthetics and plot devices employed by the film's creators were incredibly forward thinking and at odds with the realism and on location sets of its contemporaries. Caligari utilised a twist ending, framing and non-linear flashbacks to amazing effect, meaning you really need to concentrate on what is happening on screen or you may get lost in the psychotic, disorienting maelstrom of what you are viewing. If you've never seen a silent film before, then this would be a great place to start.



German Promotional Poster

## DIRGE IS ONE!

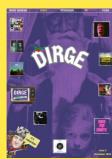
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO DIRGE! THANKS FOR BEING WITH ME EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, YOUR SUPPORT MEANS A LOT, DEAR READER. I HOPE WE'LL SEE A SECOND BIRTHDAY AND BEYOND, ALL BEING WELL!

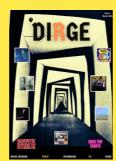














I was amazed how many people were at this free gig. Credit to the promoter 'Undercover Originals'. Not a covers band in sight!

The Lend were okay, a bit too much like 'Cast' for my taste, but they provided some good guitar licks. And they gave out free badges which was a nice touch!

Shannon Pearl got off to a bit of a rocky start with some technical issues, but she brushed that aside and put on an impassioned and energetic performance. Plenty of people in the well-oiled audience sat up and swayed in time to the music. She was quite hypnotic at times.

Crux went down well, too. Again, not really my thing (except for about 3 songs toward the end of their set which did sound very good). Comparisons to Arctic Monkeys follow them and I can see why. There are far too many bands around like that. They gave their all though and had the audience up dancing.

A fun night all in all and it cost nowt. Hopefully there's going to be one of these every month so get yourself down to it. D.H.

facebook.com/shannonpearlofficial facebook.com/cruxnewcastle

#### GIGUPNORTH.UK

There is a new website on the block. Gig Up North's mission is to bring the North-East music scene together with concert promotion, musician's networking, a comprehensive gig guide, band database, for sale ads and more.

It's in the early stages of development at the moment but the idea seems to be gathering some positive traction among North-East music types.

Dan Humble, the site's creator says "I really hope the site benefits original local bands and the music scene in general".

Head over to gigupnorth.uk now to get involved and help the Northern scene grow!



# THIS MONTH WE HAVE MICHAEL LUKE, HEAD HONCHO AND SVENGALI OVERLORD OF THE TEES VALLEY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, CHOOSING SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE MUSIC.



#### THE DOORS - L.A WOMAN (1971)

I am a massive fan of The Doors. So much so that I visit Jim Morrison's grave in Paris every year on the anniversary of his death. There are a group of us from all over the world that meet there every year, so my annual pilgrimage isn't as sad as it might sound. The Doors have been a massive part of my life since I discovered them at the tender age of thirteen. I can quite confidently say that they are my favourite band and always have been since I first heard this album, having borrowed it from Darlo Library after I heard the re-release of "Light My Fire" when the Oliver Stone film starring Val Kilmer as Jim Morrison came out.



#### **BEACH BOYS - PET SOUNDS (1966)**

The Beach Boys were the first band I discovered that were around before my lifetime and I was only ten years old when that happened. When people think of The Beach Boys, they'll probably think of Surfin' USA and the like. However, Pet Sounds is an album of such innovation, in terms of both depth of the songs and standard of production, that it's hard to imagine that it was made by the same group. Songs like "I Just Wasn't Made For These Times" and "I Know There's An Answer" will never feature on a Beach Boys greatest hits but are stand out moments in their top class repertoire and well ahead of their time. The Beatles most definitely would not have made the innovations in production that they did on Sgt Pepper had it not been for Pet Sounds.



#### **TEENAGE FANCLUB - BANDWAGONESQUE (1991)**

It's difficult to pin point why this album makes my top five. Looking back, it came out in 1991 at a time when Guns N Roses and U2 were the biggest bands in the world and grunge and alternative rock was beginning to take over the over produced, stadium rock that had been gone before it. Bandwagonesque brought with it the power and excitement of the unpolished US alternative rock sound but with pop melodies and harmonies reminiscent of The Byrds and The Beach Boys. The indie music scene in Britain was pretty dull at the time as well, so this album came at me like a ray of sunshine and I've listened to it regularly ever since.



#### SUEDE - DOG MAN STAR (1994)

I mentioned before about the UK indie scene being quite dull in the early nineties. It was the arrival of Suede in 1992 that breathed colour back into British guitar based music. As a teenager I was always drawn towards lyrics and I think Brett Anderson from Suede is one of the best lyricists in modern music. For example, a song called "Heroine" on this album. The lyrics are filled with beauty and romance, invoking thoughts of a young man mourning the loss of his first love, but as the song develops it becomes clear that the protagonist is not pining for a lost love, he's in withdrawal and is pining for heroin. The metaphor of drug as lover and addiction as love, and the wordplay of the title are nothing short of poetic genius.



#### MANIC STREET PREACHERS - THE HOLY BIBLE (1994)

Some may see that I've picked a Manic Street Preachers album and make a judgement, but whether your thoughts on the Manics be positive or negative, let me tell you, this album is like no other. It was released just a few months before guitarist and chief lyricist Richey Edwards disappeared (the likelihood being he committed suicide at the Severn Bridge). The decline in his mental wellbeing was well documented at the time and with hindsight, it's clear to see that this album is the sound of a man who's losing his mind. With themes of anorexia, the Holocaust and suicide, this album is as harrowing as it is musically brilliant.



#### CLASSIC DARLO CHIPPY CLOSES ITS DOORS

The Chippy Plus has closed its doors for the final time. Formerly Jazz's Fish Bar at the top of North Road, the takeaway has been a permanent fixture of the Thompson Street/North Road junction since I was a wee lad. (Prior to that it was known as Eric's). As a semiregular customer since my early teens, it really does seem like the end of an era.

My meal of choice was invariably a battered cheeseburger with chips and salad. The owner is a lovely woman and I wish her and her family all the best for the future.



RIP (Image - Alamy)

## REVIEW

# Drab Majesty

Belgrave Music Hall, Leeds



DRAB ARE ONE OF MY FAVOURITE BANDS OF THE LAST FEW YEARS, SIMULTANEOUSLY NOSTALGIC AND FUTURISTIC. I MISSED THEM LAST TIME THEY TOURED THE U.K, SO YOU COULD BET YOUR BY GOLLY WOW I'D SEE THEM ON THIS TOUR! WELL, HOW WAS IT? LET'S FIND OUT!

In exchange for a 'favour' I managed to get a lift down with Mick from Stock Image, so I promptly put a holiday in for the next day to recover. We were joined by my son Davey and step-son Jake for the short drive down to Yorkshire to see Drab Majesty and Nuovo Testamento. Our gang stopped off at Wetherby Services on the way down for a cheeky Burger King and before I had time to eat it, (due to Mick's speed demon driving) we had arrived at the venue - Belgrave Music Hall and Canteen, located in the heart of the city.

The Belgrave is a venue over three floors, incorporating a restaurant (the food looked great), a bar and the live room at the top that unfortunately wasn't selling ANY kind of draught lager.



Chelsea Crowley of Nuovo Testamento

I settled for Red Stripe (I know, first world problems, right?) and meandered over to the merch stand where I purchased a rather fetching Drab Majesty tee shirt for £25. Upon hearing the opening moments of a Nuovo Testamento track I wandered down to the front.

They're an Italian/U.S three-piece featuring a synth player, a vocalist and an electronic percussionist, playing what looked to me like old 1980's Simmons Hexagonal drum pads.

Nuovo are one of those bands carried by the allure of the female lead singer (if you like that kind of thing) and some alright songs.

After another curt trip to the bar (that's one thing I will say - very quick service) it was time to keep our appointment with the other-worldly, white-wigged and heavily made up duo that is Drab Majesty.

I first heard the L.A electronic twosome on a Dark Wave compilation. On hearing 'Cold Souls' I was convinced it was from the mid-80's, only to in fact find out that it was released in 2017. I've listened to them ever since.

They took to the stage and the crowd erupted as the opener 'Dot in The Sky' resounded around the Belgrave. Followed by 'The Other Side' and then every other of their best songs, leaving nothing for the latter half of the show and leaving me ever so slightly bored. Deb looked tired and there was no between song craic, which I was prepared for as that isn't their schtick. I think they're meant to be aloof aliens on a trip to Earth. Don't get me wrong it was great to see them live, maybe I had too higher hopes though, and I'm not sure I'd see them again.



Deb Demure of Drab Majesty



# MOUSES IRKED MAEUE & THE TRAINS

THE FORUM DARLO

The Forum Music Centre's foray into Independent Venue week (organised by the lovely folk at Tracks) was actually one I was going to avoid, having given two of the three bands on the evening's bill a not so favourable review in the last issue of this magazine. However, Maeve of Maeve & The Trains fame asked me to come down and I do find it hard to say no to people.



I have to admit that unfortunately I was more than a little inebriated before I even set foot in the venue (I blame William Stead) so the night is rather sketchy, but I do remember having a good time, all in all!

The aforementioned Maeve & The Trains were probably the best band of the evening, being a well prepped, tuneful and engaging live entity, and it helps a great deal that I can remember the bulk of their set.

'Irked' are definitely better live than on record, as are Teesside favourites 'Mouses' and I've got nothing negative to say about them. Part of the reason being I can't remember much of the evening.



#### WITHERED HAND TO PLAY INTIMATE BORO SHOW

Cult Edinburgh Indie-Rock purveyor
'Withered Hand' (real name Jeremy Beadle\*)
is to play a cosy gig at Café Etch, a venue
that I enjoyed a couple of gigs at last year.

Recently added to the list of locations for Twisteralla festival, music promoters 'The Kids Are Solid Gold' are hoping to etch the café into the Middlesbrough music landscape.

The show is on Friday 1st March with support coming from Dressed Like Wolves.

Tickets are priced at £16.50.

\*Not really, it's actually Dan Wilson

NOSH 🗑

This month's **NOSH** is a bit more up market than last time.

In a rare outing for the wife and I, we visited one of our usual haunts - Meze, a family run business up near the theatre that offers Mediterranean fare which is always freshly prepared.

Tonight we both had Chicken Supreme, a pummelled chicken breast accompanied by a garlic and tomato sauce, rice and fried potatoes, not to mention the complimentary bread. It was lovely as mell

Two mains, two bottles of water and a coffee came to £32. If you're a fan of Turkish Nosh, try it!

mezedarlington.co.uk



## LYTHE WIRE

WE JOIN TEESSIDE MUSIC SCENE ENTHUSIAST AND PROLIFIC GIG GOER MAL LYTHE AS HE TAKES US THROUGH HIS RECENT GIG EXPERIENCES!

So, I'm Mal and I'm a regular gig goer, a gigaholic if you will. Now we have the introductions out of the way I can get into the first of many of these regular articles! Well, it's february and I've already been to fifteen gigs so far this year. The highlight for me to date has to be Mouses at the Green Room. They're probably my favourite North East act, always really wholesome. Provenance headlined The Georgian with a bunch of other young bands which is also a high point of the year thus far. The more recent younger bands have some of the best crowds I've seen at local gigs. They definitely have more energy than 38 year old me stood at the side hoping I don't somehow get involved in the pit. I travelled to Sunderland to watch another favourite of mine 'Tummyache' and had the best chip butty splash I've ever had in my life. Sunderland = the best place in the world for a chip butty splash. The gig was mint, too. This year I also witnessed a really unique set at NE Volume Bar by a Ukrainian artist called Magua. One guy, a bass and a solid backing track. Even the fans of the local headliner stepped a few feet forward to witness him more closely.

Middlesbrough has started showing more life as well with venues like Off The Ground, Toft House, Play Brew and Café Etch now announcing gigs. I'm especially excited about that because I don't have to get a bus or train to these shows meaning I can get to bed a little earlier. If you want to hear more from me (and I can't see why you wouldn't) you can listen to T-T-Teesside Music Podcast on Spotify. See ya at the front!

## **INTERVIEW**

## AMATEUR ORNITHOLOGIST

I bumped into Daniel from A.O in a nearby nature reserve so I thought I'd kill two birds with one stone and ask him a few questions!

#### Let's start with the name. Where did it originate?

I used to write a Geordie kitchen-sink superhero comic book called Sugar Glider and there were lots of bird-inspired characters involved. So I knew quite a lot about birds at the time. Around then, I set up a Soundcloud page for some songs I'd collaborated and stuck the name Amateur Ornithologist on it. So the name came about 6 years before I released any music. I like the combination of words - something studious and something rough around the edges, because that's me.



Straight outta Hamsterley Forest (Image - Wycombe Media)

My favourite bird is a crow. What are your favourite types of birds?

Corvids are the best. My favourite is the magpie. The football rattle call, hidden blues amongst the black, the deviousness in stealing nests... Wherever I've lived, I've had magpies land on the windowsill and look through to me.

#### Your songs seem to be injected with a quintessentially English 1970's flavour. Is that the sound you were going for?

The three albums definitely have different sounds and approaches to each other but the influence of Wire, Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush is in them all. So you've got experimental art rock feeding in but more in the background on the first two albums than on Hide where we have more strings, saxophones and different time signatures. And the contemporary artists I'm interested in - field Music, Cate Le Bon and The Coral - as well as the band members who were involved this time around, are probably bringing in 70's influences that I've not explored properly myself.

#### How did you go about recording the album? Was it a studio jobby or was it done at home?

I have lots of experience managing arts projects so I'm able to bring that into the music. I made spreadsheets of to do lists etc that helped achieve Hide on a modest budget. We recorded as much as we could at home - keyboards, electric guitars, backing vocals - then worked with Harbourmaster at his studio to capture the acoustic sounds - strings, pianos, percussion, etc. I worked with him on the first two albums and he's my oldest friend so we were always going to work with him again for Hide.

## I hope you don't take offence here, but you're no spring chicken (still younger than me though). What has your musical journey comprised of up until this moment?

You know how to charm a guy! The Amateur Ornithologist band currently has members from 20 to 50 years old, and I'm pretty much in the middle at 37. I started making music at around 16 with Harbourmaster and we eventually formed a band called Squares. We released a self-produced album but eventually split up when I was 24. I made comics and films and didn't do much in music again for a decade when I started teaching myself midi composition during the lockdowns. I released the first Amateur Ornithologist album in 2021 and formed the band in the lead-up to the release of Building the Bird in 2022.

#### What are your plans for 2024?

We released Hide in January and did a launch event where we played the whole album live. We're planning on playing more gigs and perform songs from the three albums that we've not managed to yet. At the same time, I'm hoping to write a load of songs in the background and eventually bring them to the band towards the end of the year. I think the new songs will combine orchestral influences with synths and soundscapes. But no doubt, they'll still end up as pop songs.

## REVIEW

## **HUGH CORNWELL**



THE PRIMITIVES

Boilershop Newcastle

The boss is getting on now (74 years young, in fact!) And it's fair to say his glory days are well behind him, with his live shows being a wee bit 'safe' these days. Regardless, my two oldest were keen to go, so I snapped up three tickets for Hughie at the Boilershop in Geordie Land.

The pint sized Cyndy Lauper-esque Tracy Cattell looked happy to be up on stage and she and the band provided a really up beat, high energy and engaging performance, with a lot more strings to their bow than simply 'Crash' and I'd be happy to see them again in the future!

There was then a break of about 20 minutes, just enough time for Hugh to have a nice cup of tea and put his prison-like black sweater and chinos on for his headline set. Hugh explained after his opening track that this evening would be a night of solo tunes with a few Stranglers 'diamonds' thrown in. For me though, Stranglers songs without keyboards is like Netflix and chill without the chill. Cornwell's solo songs are hit and miss (mainly miss) but the kids and I enjoyed it in general. The highlight of the set for me was Totem & Taboo, the title track of his 2012 album, which was produced by Steve Albini of In Utero fame.

After gigs Hugh usually goes to the merch stand to sign things and have photos taken with fans, and as my daughter was really keen to

meet him we headed straight there. Only to be told by Hugh that he won't acknowledge anyone who doesn't buy one of his rubbish solo albums. So I told him exactly what I thought about it. No more heroes anymore indeed!



Hugh's blue, da-ba-dee-da-ba-da

## HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN RECORD PRESSING PLANT

Butterfly Effect have emerged from their boutique vinyl chrysalis to release a book by Steve Spithray about his experiences establishing 'Pressed On', a start-up vinyl pressing business.

It's had some great reviews by music heads and industry folks alike and is testimony to Steve's vision as a an entrepreneur and music fan. His story makes me contemplate that classic George McFly quote from Back to the Future - 'If you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything'.

Chris Hawkins of BBC6 music says of the book -

"Testament to the great ambition and passion of music lovers who knew they could make a big and positive impact on UK music."



You can buy Steve's book via Butterfly Effect's Bandcamp butterflyeffect1.bandcamp.com

The book is priced at £14.99.

#### FORLORN OVER LORNE

The much loved Boro practice room is to close its doors. Utilised by many from the Tees Scene over the years (including myself on several occasions with seminal Psych-Rockers The Glass Moths).

It was just a stones throw away from the local red light district, which was ideal for letting off some steam after a particularly arduous rehearsal. Gary Doyle of Werbeniuk says "Every local band must have been there at some time. (Lorne Street) Will be missed by all in the local scene".



The famous Lorne Street, in happier times

## REVIEW

# SHRUG STOCK IMAGE MASCARA'S LIES

TOFT HOUSE BORO

BY DAN HUMBLE

My ticket said doors at 7.30 so I managed to miss half of Mascara's Lies set as they actually started at 7.30. But judging by the 20 minutes I saw of them that was probably a good thing. I've heard their tunes online and they're alright, but the live setup of just a drummer and a guitarist was static and dull. Set against the austere, whitewashed walls of Toft House's small, unadorned room, I was bored.

Speaking of boredom, the next act, Stock Image was the same. His okay tunes are soporific when coupled with his stance behind a sequencer while doing very little. Come on guys...put some thought into your live shows if you aren't going to move much!



Happily the immortal Shrug were lively and fun to watch.

Deliberately shambolic and chaotic to behold, frontman Robert led us on a merry dance of alien autopsies, Whitby kippers, resurrections and a host of horses heads from their excellent 2018 LP 'Island Complex'. The band rarely perform or even rehearse these days, but even without the wigs and props and mad dancing Shrug's songs are always immediate and gripping. They finished on the epic 'Sir Walter Raleigh's Fast Food Takeover' before the seated crowd extracted a reluctant encore.

This quirky band seem to be winding down to the end of their madcap musical adventures. If you get chance to see them perform, I strongly advise you do so. D.H.

the-shrug-archive.bandcamp.com facebook.com/stockimagemusic instagram/mascaraslies

#### OH. MAC. GOD!

Macdonald's on Whessoe Road have reopened following a revamp, making it more contemporary! I wonder how long it takes the local folk to make it look scruffy again. I for one cannot wait to see! In all seriousness though, I've taken my bairns there a fair few times over the years and the staff are always dead nice. All the best!



PROJECT LONG - ROMANCEROS

BY ANN CUTHBERT Projectiono.bandcamp.com

The original Spanish Romanceros are a collection of folk ballads which have inspired writers over hundreds of years with themes of battle and honour. Project Lono, in their dramatic soundscape featuring eight poems with music and sound effects, continue and expand on this tradition. Their Romanceros are concerned with the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigaders who went to fight, including local men like John Unthank of Eston. As well as offering a vivid and visceral poetic commentary, they weave together references to other writers and artists who went to Spain to 'help draw a line in the sand.' Bob Beagrie performs his poems matched with music composed, recorded and arranged by S.J Forth, accompanied by Kev Howard and John Dunleavy.

'The Face of War', an ekphrastic poem based on surrealist Dali's work, sets the scene with a barren wind blowing and the reiteration of the pointlessness of war – 'the same horrid masks stare out'.

In 'Passage', two friends Otto and Tommy are 'hellbent for España'. We hear, against the sound of plucked strings, their hopes for what they can do there. 'A tune can lead us to what we might be.' But there is a lamenting chorus – 'Ay Dios mío.'

In an all-enveloping soundscape, the regular rhythm of palmitas, handclapping accompaniment to flamenco, becomes disjointed then segues into the buzzing of mosquitoes which in turn becomes the buzzing and whine of planes, a crescendo of bombing and discordant voices which gradually quietens into a lullaby in 'The Grammar of Survival', eyes closing 'having learnt the trick of not noticing the dead.'

In Vagabonds, there's radio static. It flickers in and out with 'flambe'ed voices from underground bunkers'. The poem's poignant violin accompaniment by John Dunleavy, of our supposedly pastoral anthem Jerusalem, albeit with an undertone of vibrating engines, directly references poet Laurie Lee's experiences.

How much do you need to know about the Spanish Civil War to appreciate this sequence? I'd say it helps to get the background to these narratives. Yet even without that, you experience horror, repugnance and outrage in the words and sounds of Romanceros. And at times, you do hear a tune that 'echoes back with hope.' A.C.

# HOUSE OF HORROR

## **A Retrospective**



Hammer was, and still is a much loved British institution. Coming to the fore in the mid 1950's with a couple of notable Sci-Fi offerings, the company soon realised that horror movies with plenty of Kensington Gore were what the young movie goers of the late 1950's and 60's craved. Releasing classic remakes of the Universal Horror of the 1930's, Hammer tapped into the burgeoning scares market and made a killing at the box office by releasing titles like The Horror of Dracula and The Curse of Frankenstein that, although were borrowed from the U.S film tradition, were quintessentially British.

Hammer's films started to wane in popularity by the early 1970's as people started to grow tired of the same rehashing of Dracula. Even a Horror/Kung-Fu/Dracula mash up in the form of Legend of The 7 Golden Vampires couldn't save them, and in 1976 they made their last horror - To The Devil A Daughter, which was frankly, dogshite. Their feature film swansong was unfortunately the extremely dated 'On The Buses' movie from 1979. Could Hammer be redeemed?



Growing Pains - Very bizarre episode

Of course they could! With this wonderful small-screen series from 1980! Each episode is greatly different from the last and features themes of Witches, dark satanic conspiracies, confined spaces, haunted houses, vampires, experiments, Voodoo, werewolves and cannibalism, amongst other quaint and pleasant things.

Of course, it all looks rather dated now, but for horror geeks like me the series is a fun, creepy and nostalgic romp that is unmistakably English in tone and delivery.

I knew when I first got the DVD as a horror obsessed teenager I was going to be drawn into the dark and magical world of Hammer House of Horror. From the spooky title sequences, with an imposing country house immersed in fog and an instantly recognisable theme to the more often than not 'shock' (or schlock) ending.

My favourite episode has to be The Mark of Satan. It's about a morgue attendant who starts to develop an obsession with the number nine, and gradually begins to lose his mind. Is he being conspired against or is it all in his head? There is a sickly tone to Hammer House of Horror, and that is represented to full effect in this episode. Utilising dream sequences, off kilter camera angles, sound and colour to show a man descending into the depths of extreme

paranoid psychosis. Or is there justification to his paranoia?



The madcap Mark of Satan!

With acting talent like Peter Cushing, Brian Cox, Denholm Elliot, Pierce Brosnan, Diana Dors and other classic British character actors there's plenty to keep you interested and enthralled.

Is it dated? Yes. Is it cheesy? Yes. Are some of the episodes a little bit rubbish? Yes. Would I change this series? Hell no! Hammer House of Horror is the perfect antidote for the post-modern horror climate we now exist in. Get the box set!



Worst birthday party EVER

#### THE EPISODES

- 1: Witching Time
- 2: The Thirteenth Reunion
- 3: Rude Awakening
- 4: Growing Pains
- 5: The House that Bled to Death
- 6: Charlie Boy
- 7: The Silent Scream
- 8: Children of the Full Moon
- 9: Carpathian Eagle
- 10: Guardian of the Abyss
- 11: Visitor from the Grave
- 12: The Two Faces of Evil
- 13: The Mark of Satan



The great Peter Cushing who plays a 'harmless' pet shop owner

# DIRGE POSTER



Anton LaVey & Jayne Mansfield