

What's on... What's gone...

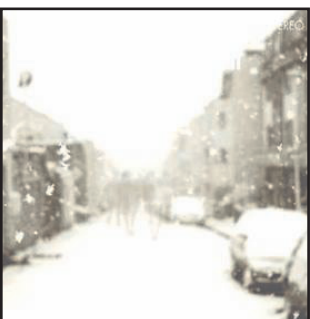
Entertainment

The Chronicle

MUSIC

ALBUMS

The Miserable Rich 'Miss you in the days'



Gosh, it's almost like they read our reviews and acted upon them: we've previously admired The Miserable Rich but were deterred by their mix of chamber music and pop, which we felt would deter both camps: too pop for those classical chappies and too classic for the pop groovers.

Now, while keeping their classical roots, they've gone firmly into the pop camp; those serious people who like discussing how well the fourth violinist did may turn their backs but hopefully the mass market will pay attention.

Despite being serious musicians, The Miserable Rich give the impression of having a good time and not taking their work too seriously, as despite it all it's not earnest.

For example, opener "Laid up in lavender" is in many ways a classic pop tune but opens with the eerie sound of a saw (we hope it's a saw and not just Autotuned violin) and has the echoes of a Cossack hoard towards the end.

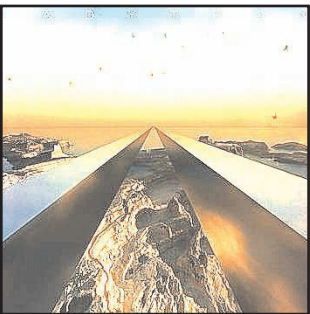
"Imperial lines" opens with heart-warming strings, the sound that even someone who doesn't know their Arne from their Elbow would find enjoyable, but turns into the sort of tune Coldplay would write; while the latter would have a big sound, The Miserable Rich make the tune intimate and low-key, with violin instead of big guitar riff.

Much of it is in this pop / rock vein, though songs like "True love" have something of Smog / Iron and Wine about them, and "Pillion" has a nice country / bluegrass feel.

It's album of the week because they deserve credit for trying to be different; might be a bit clever-clever for some but give them a go.

JMC

Ladytron 'Gravity the seducer'



The attractions of microwave chips, period dramas on the telly and Piers Morgan: these are all things that pass the Review Corner by. You might love "Downton Abbey" but we don't care if it's invaded by zombies and the rich folk all end up wearing their giz-zards as neckties.

We mention this because we find Ladytron a mystery. They

clearly have a strong fanbase and get to play to fervent crowds. This is their fifth album, so while their Wikipedia entry makes no mention of sales, they make a living and travel the world, so fair play to them.

The critics' reviews of this are largely glowing but all this praise can't escape the fact that they're a cult band — ie not many fans — and there's a reason for that. If you find their brand of bland but admittedly melodic dance tunes appealing, feel free to join the cult but leave us out of it.

This is apparently a more gentle album than their previous ones (none of which impressed us either) but the highlight in reviews is often cited as "Ritual", a track that to us sounds like the unfinished instrumental version of a so-so dance single we'd get to review.

Opener "White elephant" is not bad and each time we play it we wonder if we're being too harsh, a feeling that lasts four minutes and 17 seconds. It also sounds like something else — mid era Strangers, we think.

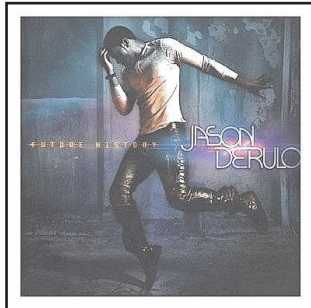
Track two "Mirage" starts off pleasantly downbeat but then a vapid flute sound appears and runs it all.

"Ace of Hz" has a punning title but borrows from "Daddy cool" by Boney M.

Still, don't let us put you off: try "Ace of Hz".

JMC

Jason Derulo 'Future history'



A bit like Pringles, you know this stuff is, not to put too fine a word on it, total crap, but it's addictive crap and like Pringles, Derulo knows how to package his product for mass appeal.

Does anyone know whether he's really a raving megalomaniac or has he just got a well-developed sense of irony? There's the album title itself (though "Future bargain bin" doesn't have the same ring, does it?) but there's also the sticker on front of the CD, in which he's called "singer, songwriter and international superstar".

As if peddling lowest common denominator pap is not enough, he wants to be seen as a serious musician and famous in his own right. Can you imagine the new album from Robert Plant, Elton John, Tom Jones, Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen (you get the drift) being branded "international superstar"? No, us neither.

Then — as he started it — we'd take issue with "songwriter". The most memorable tracks on the album sample "The banana boat song" and Toto's "Africa," while a number of other people's work plays a part. His own "tunes" are just a beat with some vocals over the top. We'd argue that a tune should have at least some element you can whistle.

As for superstar lyrics, how about "She like She like She like She like She like She like / That's my sh-- That's my sh-- That's my

sh-- That's my sh-- That's my sh-- That's my sh--". Len Cohen, eat your heart out.

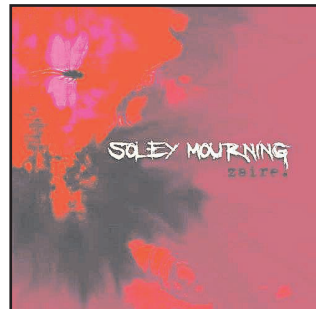
And singer? Singers don't need Autotunes, which our bat-like ideas detect in places.

Still, all that aside, at least this isn't annoying. The criticism above aside, the audacity of using "The banana boat song" makes "Don't wanna go home" entertaining, and "IT girl" is quite a good tune. Anyone who can rhyme "Come to think of it I remember one chick / That I was messing with when I was in Connecticut" possibly does have a sense of humour — that line's in "Be careful", when Derulo warns other singers, songwriters and international superstars about the dangers of having sex with fans. Naturally, as Derulo IS an international superstar, she doesn't actually stalk him, just his "people" and instead of moving house or calling the cops, he's "stepping up security".

This is mass-produced music for playing in the background as you do something more important, like the Hoovering, though he seems to have a large fanbase — if you want to see him live, he plays the MEN Arena on 2nd March, and the LG Arena in Brum on 24th February.

JMC

Soley Mourning 'Zaire'



This is a good, solid rock / blues album from Black Country rockers Soley Mourning, who according to the Press notes have a following in melodic rock-loving Europe, including Belgium, Denmark, Germany and Holland.

Their second album "Remove replace rewire" was good enough to land them a European tour with Magnum and this album follows the increased confidence that tour brought, plus a more melodic edge from new drummer Mash.

This is a pretty good album: we'd got as far as to suggest that if you thought the Incubus album was pants and you're missing that melodic, cool progressive rock sound in your life, give this a go.

True, they're not SoCal — though BlackCo does have a ring — but it's enjoyable.

What you get is slick rock, while still sounding appealingly English, harking back to the quality rock of 70s without going to stadium bland or the over-indulgent, and very crisp — think Steve Miller Band.

Vocals come from Mat Patridge who has a strong voice without ever going macho or over the top rock — more Eddie Vedder than Iron Maiden, though it'd be mellow Vedder.

Despite the Press release upping the drummer's influence the rhythm section does what it's supposed to do, and gives the songs a groove without ever taking over. This being heavy rock, you'd expect guitar solos and these are fluid and impressive, given added strength by the more melodic tunes, though it's also more than just formulaic verse-

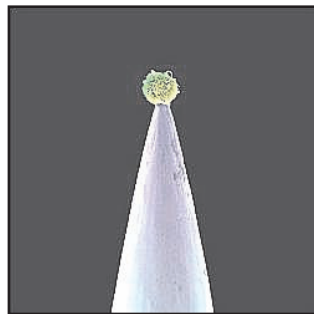
chorus-verse-chorus-lead break, and "Simone" is a very nice rock ballad, without the usual clichés.

Try "Deadman's town", the single, "Gimme sumthin'" or "She's gonna make it shine".

Out on Monday.

JMC

Peter Gabriel 'New blood'



Hardly the most prolific of musicians, and despite not releasing an album of newly-composed music for nearly a decade, Gabriel has actually been more active in the last few years than for some time.

The live shows to promote 2002's "UP" seemed to go on for an age, and as the tour extended, it developed into a retrospective look back over his remarkable back catalogue, and this reflective mood continued last year with the "Scratch my back" project, with a number of respected songwriters recording re-workings of each other's music. Gabriel (typically) took this a step further, by using a full orchestra, recording a full album of "tributes" to his own favourite artists and then taking the whole thing on tour.

Continuing to work with arranger John Metcalfe, "New blood" holds together as a collective piece rather better than the "Scratch" album, and despite all the tracks being written by one composer rather than several, the dynamics and moods seem to have a variety missing from the previous project.

Some of the tracks chosen for this "re-imagining" are less obvious choices than others, but not necessarily less successful for it.

"Downside up" takes on a new emotion missing from the electric original, while — surprisingly — the wonderfully evocative mood of "Mercy street" not only evaporates from the new take, but, amazingly gains nothing from the 64-piece orchestra. A disappointing surprise.

However, the opening "Rhythm of the heat" and "Red rain" take on a massive, dark broodiness that only an orchestra can give: tremendous.

Significantly, a deluxe version of the CD, with an additional disc of instrumental-only recordings, stands up well in its own right as a serious orchestral release.

Gabriel and Metcalfe have resisted the obvious opportunity to take the typically angst-ridden Gabriel catalogue to an even darker level on every track and many even take a lighter tone, but there is a power and magnificence throughout the whole album.

A full four minutes of ambient sound, recorded on Solsbury Hill, will give ammunition to anyone who considers either Gabriel or the very concept of re-recording with orchestras as pretentious but to be fair, it was the original Gabriel project that inspired the likes of Sting and George Michael to follow the same path.

"MR G"

SINGLES

Soley Mourning 'Deadman's town'

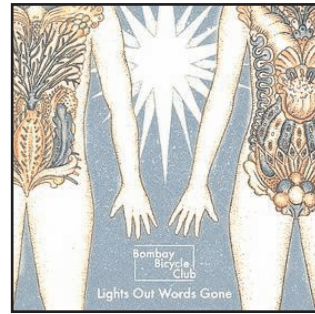


Zeppelin-esque intro and heavy bluesy riff accompanied by melodic vocals make this one of the more commercially appealing tracks off the new album by Black Country rockers Soley Mourning.

If you like 70s melodic rock from the likes of Steve Miller or were disappointed with the new Incubus album, give this a chance.

Single's out now, album "Zaire" is out on Monday.

Bombay Bicycle Club 'Lights out words gone'



Slick, slightly exotic sounding single from the Club's excellent album; the more we play it, the more it seems like album of the year.

Pop music of the highest quality.

Promise us: at the very least, give this a listen in the next 24 hours, though if you don't think it's good we might ban you from reading this column.

Beth Jeans Houghton and the Hooves of Destiny 'Liliputt'



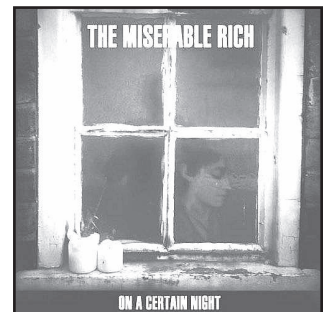
Retro tune that evokes an image of a Mama Cass-style singer in a kaftan and with beads.

We have to say: we didn't like this. We found the singing twee and annoying and had to play the new Metronomy single several times to recover. This might not be a bad thing: other bands we find annoying are Arctic Monkeys and Queen.

Musically, it's 60s folk, with a big-voiced female singer doing a fair Sandy Denny approximation and folk rock accompaniment.

The Miserable Rich 'On a certain night'

We felt guilty for not liking The Miserable Rich's last album; they claim to have invented chamber pop, which is a mix of cham-



ber music and pop. It's clever and well done but what do you do with it?

This new single is better, with more emphasis on the pop and less on the strings and a strong melody. We're still not sure but given it a listen; at least they're trying to be different.

JMC

WALKS AND TALKS

Health issues for disabled learners

East Cheshire NHS Trust has teamed up with Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to raise awareness of learning disabilities for its "Health matters" public lecture.

Presented by Andy Worth, of Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, the lecture takes place on Tuesday, 1st November.

Entitled "Learning disability awareness" the session aims to define learning disabilities and highlight the health issues associated with people with a learning disability.

Mr Worth has worked for the NHS for over 30 years. He is a registered nurse and specialist practitioner for the learning disabled.

Around 2-3% of the population have a learning disability. This equates to 1.2 million people with a mild or moderate learning disability and 210,000 people with severe or profound learning disability.

To book a free place at the lecture, which starts at 7pm at Macclesfield District General Hospital's education and training centre, call the communications and engagement department on 01625 661560, freephone 0800 1954194 or email ecn-tr.yourvoice@nhs.net

READERS' VIBES

Bought a newly released album? Whether it's pop, rock, jazz or classic, send us a short review.



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