

# Weekend Music & Theatre

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## MY SIX BEST ALBUMS IAN ANDERSON

**IAN ANDERSON**, 66, is a singer and musician with *Jethro Tull*, whose biggest hit was *Living In The Past* in 1969. His album *Honky Tonk* is released on Monday and he tours from April 28. [gigantic.com/artist/ian-anderson](http://gigantic.com/artist/ian-anderson)

**ROY HARPER: Come Out Fighting Ghengis Smith** (Deleted) This was released in 1968, the year Jethro Tull began, and we played a few shows together. Roy's music evolved from the folk revival and he brought some originality to it. The way he combined observation, storytelling and opinion helped to shape my approach to songwriting.

**MOSE ALLISON: Swingin' Machine** (Atlantic) My favourite jazz album. Allison performed laconic songs of the Deep South, a smoky, illegal booze shack kind of jazz. A cult figure who provided a generation of blues and rock musicians with material.

**JB LENOIR: Alabama Blues** (Complete Blues) Lenoir was a strummer who sang with bell-like clarity about conscription and the race riots. He wasn't



afraid to talk about social issues and presented them in a dignified way. He didn't live long, but should be honoured as an important artist.

**BEETHOVEN: Symphony No 9** (Deutsche Grammophon) I got to know this through the movie *A Clockwork Orange*. Beethoven is the big daddy of classical composers, technically refined with the ability to communicate emotion across a dramatic range. I like Herbert von Karajan's version from the 1960s.

**VARTTINA: Aitara** (Xenophile) Folk has always been part of my life and this is a Finnish band, who I refer to irreverently as the "fishwives". They sing about women in the workplace in a curious, beautiful voice.

**SETH LAKEMAN: Freedom Fields** (Relentless) This is based on folk-song ideas but Seth brings it into the 21st century, which makes it appealing because of the great use of rhythm. I'm confident that if I put on his latest, I'll be able to pick up my flute and play along as our influences are so similar.

## RODNEY CROWELL: *Tarpaper Sky* ★★★★★

(New West) Emmylou Harris's favourite collaborator has created another collection of pleasingly warm country, folk and roots songs that will sit happily alongside chart-topping sets such as *Diamonds And Dirt* (1988), *Life Is Messy* (1992) and the brilliant *The Outsider* (2005). Helped by his longtime guitarist buddy, Eagles sideman Steuart Smith, RC zips slickly along this avenue of Americana with some style. From the jukebox classic sound of Frankie Please and the jaunty accordion and mandolin-driven *Fever On The Bayou* to the touching *God I'm Missing You* and poignant *Grandma Loved That Old Man*, this well-produced album becomes more comfortable with every listen.

DAVID HAMILTON

## PAOLO NUTINI: *Caustic Love* ★★★★★

(Atlantic) He's been away for five years – and my, how he's grown up. Paisley's Paolo ditched the jollity of *Pencil Full Of Lead* and gets funky and soulful here, with material that amazing voice has been crying out for. *Let Me Down Easy* and *Iron Sky* see him transmogrify into a cross between Marvin Gaye and Bobby Womack, with the latter even throwing in a sample of Charlie Chaplin as the Great Dictator. Opener *Scream and Fashion* are more modern affairs with *Fashion* buzzing thanks to an all-too-short appearance by the marvellous Janelle Monae. He does keep the troubadour feel of earlier albums, though, on tracks like *Better Man* and the great *Cherry Blossom*.

## BILLY BRAGG: *Live At The Union Chapel, London* ★★★★★

(Cooking Vinyl) Having delivered masterful Americana on last year's studio album *Tooth & Nail* last year, Billy Bragg seems rejuvenated, and shows that to great aplomb on this live CD/DVD set. The music spans his 30-year career, including Woody Guthrie tracks he worked on with Wilco on *Mermaid Avenue*, and his impassioned political views on *Between The Wars* and *There Is Power In A Union*. The band are sharp, the venue is acoustically great and visually stunning, and the DVD also includes his solo encore of the entire *Life's A Riot With Spy vs Spy* album. In one of the little video interludes, he wonders how he can still be allowed to do the job he loves, but this is something we should be very grateful for.

## LINDA RONSTADT: *Duets* ★★★★★

(Rhino) The distressing news that Ronstadt has been diagnosed

## ALBUM REVIEWS



**SOUL MAN:** Paolo Nutini goes retro with a new edge on his latest record

with Parkinson's Disease makes this a timely and poignant release. The album contains 15 of her finest collaborations, highlighting her great voice and her versatility. Grammy-winning songs *I Can't Help It* (with Emmylou Harris), *Somewhere Out There* (with James Ingram) and the fabulous *Don't Know Much* with the velvet-voiced Aaron Neville are all here, along with Cajun-tinged duets with Ann Savoy, crooning with Frank Sinatra on *Moonlight In Vermont* and rolling back the years with *Bette Milder* in a version of *Rosemary Clooney's Sisters*.

## BRONWYNNE BRENT: *Stardust* ★★★★★

(Bronwynne Brent Music) The album cover sees this Mississippi miss wearing a wispy garland of dried flowers in her hair, suggesting we're in for some delicate folk. Boy, looks can be so deceiving. Brent's second album is awash with Tex-mex Americana, jazzy shuffles and bluesy laments, all delivered with a voice that has the power of Billie Holiday and the range of Nerina Pallot. John Convertino, one-half of Calexico, mans the drums, and his input along with the production and guitar licks of Johnny Sangster keep things ticking along as Bronwynne bemoans betrayal and loss on top tracks like *Lay Me Down*, *Devil Again* and *Bulletproof*.

## ROD STEWART: *Live 1976-1998 - Tonight's The Night* ★★★★★

(Rhino) A sprawling four-disc collection of Rod on stage in over 20 years of concerts. In a chronological affair of 58 previously unreleased live performances, you see Rod the Rocker slowly morph into Stewart the Showman, but his voice is in surprisingly fine fettle throughout. The first disc is the best, with Rod still fresh from fleeing the Faces and rattling through tracks like *Sweet Little Rock N Roller* and *Maggie May*. On through the years, you find

## SCHOOL OF LANGUAGE: *Old Fears* ★★★★★

(Memphis Industries) The Brewis Brothers are an inventive pair of Mackems. Their combined talents as Field Music are thrilling, while Peter's 2008 solo side-project *The Week That Was* saw David help out, but this is David's baby – a second School of Language album, six

years after the first. Like most of the Brewis beat, it's a sometimes challenging but ultimately entertaining coupling of art-rock, funk and prog – staccato drumbeats and clipped guitarwork abound. *Distance Between*, *Dress Up* and *Moment Of Doubt* are the best moments.

## BEN WATT: *Hendra* ★★★★★

(Unmade Road) He's been busy, Ben, since his debut solo album in 1983, with *Everything But The Girl*, DJ work, nightclub ownership, record label launching, fatherhood, illness, and authorship, but finally, 31 years after North Marine Drive, comes his solo follow-up. And it's worth the wait. Simple and delicate for

the most part, but with some hidden bite. Much is driven by loss, with Matthew Arnold's *Field* seeing Watt scattering his father's ashes, and the title track remembering his late sister Jennie. Some heavy duty guitar pals help out, as Suede's Bernard Butler and David Gilmour of Pink Floyd pitch in, but Watt's original mantra of stripped-down folk and the EBTG flow is back in vogue again.

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# Vampire chiller back with a bite

## LET THE RIGHT ONE IN ★★★★★

Apollo Theatre, London, 0844 412 4648 until September 27

JUST when you thought it was safe to go back to the theatre, particularly one whose roof collapsed on the audience last year, along comes a play to make you quiver with apprehension of a different kind. What began as a novel and was subsequently resurrected on celluloid in two film versions – the original Swedish and a remarkably good American remake – *Let The Right One In* is one of the most successful variants on the hackneyed myth of vampires in the last two decades. If this latest incarnation loses much in the transition it is still a potent chiller.

Jack Thorne's adaptation for the National Theatre of Scotland – which premiered at Dundee Rep before becoming the company's first production to play London's West End – transfers the action from a soulless Stockholm suburb to an anonymous Scottish one.

As bullied schoolboy Oskar (Martin Quinn) pursues revenge fantasies at night by stabbing a knife into the trees, he is observed by his new neighbour, Eli (Rebecca

Benson) from a climbing frame. Although both are caught in the maelstrom of puberty, Eli has the self-possession of someone, or something, older. Inexplicably, Thorne fails to include Eli's most telling line from John Ajvide Lindqvist's screenplay – "I'm 12. But I've been 12 for a long time." As Gavin Kean's detective pursues a serial killer it is evident that the perpetrator is Eli's guardian and, er, supplier, Hakan. Eli encourages Oskar to fight back against bullies while he in turn acts as her protector when Hakan comes to an appalling end.

Slow to start, it leaps into life in the second half, haemorrhaging satisfying shocks. Director John Tiffany adds music and dance to sustain an atmosphere that the leaden dialogue fails to deliver. In his professional stage debut, Quinn conveys perfectly Oskar's awkwardness, whether hugging Eli at arm's length or failing to jump over a pommel horse in the school gym. Benson is equally good, radiating the abstruse allure of a young Alice Krige while flattening her delivery to remain just the wrong side of human. Puts fresh blood into the undead.

NEIL NORMAN

he's adept at a mean cover or two, including *Dock Of The Bay*, *Some Guys Have All The Luck*, *Rocks* and *Baby Please Don't Go* among others, while the Stewart classics are all here.

## THE AMAZING SNAKEHEADS: *Amphetamine Ballads* ★★★★★

(Domino) An angry, ferocious debut album from the Glasgow trio, Dale Barclay rampages at the front, akin to Nick Cave during his *Birthday Party* days, making no concessions with his broad, menacing accent spitting out his skewed view on the seedy underbelly of life (*Swamp Song*, *Nighttime*, *I'm A Vampire*). The second half of the album sees the band catching their breath from the frenzied opening tracks – *Every Guy Wants To Be Her Baby* benefitting from some seedy sax and *Heading For Heartbreak* bemoaning their lot after their excesses catch up with them.

DAVE ESSON



COVER STAR: Rod Stewart



JOURNEY: Alison Goldfrapp

# Mother of reinvention's

## GOLDFRAPP ★★★★★

Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, April 4

TRYING to pigeon-hole Alison Goldfrapp's music into one particular genre has always been an impossible task. The enigmatic singer and her songwriting partner Will Gregory seem to reinvent themselves with every album. From the soaring operatic beauty of their first album, *Felt Mountain*, they morphed into a staccato disco stomp on *Supernature* and then a deliciously understated melancholy

for their latest release, *Tales of Us*. Tonight we were treated to all three of these Goldfrapps, although not surprisingly, songs from the latter album formed much of the show. You wondered how tracks like the ethereal, haunting *Thea* would work in a live context but tonight it proved one of the standout songs. Alison's vocals were particularly impressive. Earlier she had seemed a little taken aback when the place erupted into a euphoric roar as she walked onstage. "You're gorgeous," she beamed. "How are you?" "Fine, Alison, how are you?"

# mesmerising new guise

replied one fan. "I've got a bit of a cold, actually," said the singer. She certainly didn't perform like she was under the weather, her voice soaring throughout the set – the Royal Concert Hall proved to be a great venue acoustically for Goldfrapp's sometimes intricate sound. After the haunting beauty of the *Tales of Us* tracks, the disco stompers were unleashed with *Ride a White Horse* and *Train* bringing the main part of the show to a thunderous close. Then it was encore time with

Alison going into operatic mode for *Utopia* from *Felt Mountain*. We were also treated to the band's anthem, their first single, *Lovely Head*. Performance-wise this track was a return to the old days with Alison working between two microphones – one for her regular singing and the other for her synthesised primal vocal acrobatics on the chorus. All in all the show was a triumph. One can't help wondering where Goldfrapp are headed next on this fascinating musical journey.

ALASDAIR FERGUSON



WISE WORDS: Eli (Benson) helps bullied Oskar (Quinn)

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Evening Standard

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