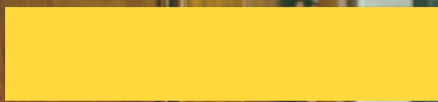


SNACK



JOE WELLS
HOLIDAY SIDEWINDER
DOUG JOHNSTONE
SHEARS
NAUM GABO
FESTIVALS GUIDE

Elle Machray

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For full listings and to find out more about the festival scan below

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BBC
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bbc.co.uk/tectonics

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Martin Boyce *Long Distance Sleep Talking*, 2022
 Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow. Photo: Keith Hunter

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Martin Boyce

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Edinburgh

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fruitmarket.co.uk

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HERSTORY TOURS

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REALMARYKINGSCLOSE.COM

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to SNACK issue 60,

I write in the comforting glow of a week where Glasgow's events industry has become internationally famous. Isn't that a nice thing?

Willy has done us a dubious turn. At least it's better than when *Time Out* or some other internationally known but ultimately clueless media outlet, desperately scrabbling for relevance and/or engagement, drops in to tell us that our local area is one of their 'Top 10 Coolest Neighbourhoods in the World' – all the sighs. Anyway, while the world again perceptibly accelerated the pace at which it eats itself, we made a magazine.

There's all sorts of great stuff tucked into its covers. We've got Elle Machray talking about her brilliant debut novel *Remember, Remember*, and the always excellent SHEARS tells us all about her also excellent new EP, *Now We're Getting Somewhere*. There's also part one of our annual SNACK Scottish Festivals Guide – that's quite handy. As for the rest, I'm sure you'll find your way around. Here, have a jelly bean.

Kenny Lavelle

Editor

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WHAT'S ON **GUIDE**

STANZA POETRY FESTIVAL

The Byre Theatre, St Andrews and online
8th till 10th March

This isn't your traditional poetry festival – this is poetry in motion, and with this year's theme being 'Warp and Weft', you'll see a tapestry of words and performance woven before your very eyes. Take a walk with Alyson Hallett or the women of 12, a collective of women writers, round the botanical gardens; have a one-to-one private performance via the telephone with poets tuning in all the way from Canada; watch Sean Wai Keung make bread; or enjoy gentle poetry and guided meditation from Alycia Pirmohamed, William Letford, and Robin Harris. There's also parties and workshops and slams aplenty for you to weave yourself into. See more on their website.

stanzapoetry.org

HERSTORY

Real Mary King's Close, Edinburgh
Friday, Saturday and Sundays
throughout March

For Women's History Month, Real Mary King's Close's specially curated Herstory Tours are back! Join them on a one-hour social history tour dedicated to the women of Mary King's Close.

From Janet Chesney, whose family was the last to live – and run a business – on the historic street, to the famous Mary, Queen of Scots. Discover how revolutionary thinkers like Sophia Jex-Blake, and the other medical students who formed the Edinburgh Seven, pioneered gender equality. Learn how women shaped the city's history and impacted our lives today. Listen as all is revealed on the Close, where many of the inspiring women you will discover on this tour lived, worked, and shared ideas.

bookings.realmarykingsclose.com/book

GLASGOW INTERNATIONAL COMEDY FESTIVAL

Various Locations, Glasgow
13th till 31st March

There's plenty of mugs you'll recognise off the telly – Frank Skinner, Ed Gamble, Maisie Adam, Sam Campbell, Stewart Lee, Josie Long – and so much more. At The Flying Duck on the 29th is the unforgettable *Gibby's Rock n' Roll Confusion* – a hilarious character is who's a blend of Piers Morgan and punk. Created and performed by playwright and comedian Stephen Brackenridge, Gibby is somehow both anti-fascist, anti-woke, and wholly politically confused, but willing to punch anyone in the name of freedom of speech. Expect layers from this one.

Eleanor Morton, whose online skits of morose Scottish tour guides are legendary, features on the 26th at Òran Mór. Susan Riddell has a brand new show on the 31st at The Stand – and do check out her and Amanda Dwyer's podcast if you haven't already. When they say there's something for everyone, they mean it – go and look at the rest of the programme right now.

glasgowcomedyfestival.com/events

20-24 MARCH 2024

Hippodrome Cinema
10 Hope St, Bo'ness
EH51 0AA

Pictured: The Wind (1928) Courtesy of the
Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Collection

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www.hippfest.co.uk



Falkirk Council



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Scotland



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAL

THE ACID CABARET

SWG3 Poetry Club, Glasgow
22nd March

A consummate cabaret calzone stuffed with bursting with sumptuous fillings – crunchy minimalist dance-pop from R.AGGS, zesty Indian-Scots violin fusion from Alexandra Shrinivas, nutty surreal improv comedy from Shame Pizza, all topped off with a sharp garlic sauce of incisive insightful poetry from Victoria McNulty. As always, these events are priced on a sliding scale and every individual involved in production receives an equal share of the ticket sales.

[instagram.com/theacidcabaret](https://www.instagram.com/theacidcabaret)

COD O'DONNELL & THE CRYPTIDS / UNCLE KID / SHA RIVARI

Home Bar, Edinburgh
9th March

If phrases like 'corroded soundscapes' and 'retrofuturistic rifts' excite you, then this is the gig for you! Imagine a protest zine collaged together from pieces of scavenged recycling and duct tape and glitter, but as music. Uncle Kid's cover of 'What A Wonderful World' truly is something to behold.

rb.gy/fph89c

GABRIELLA BOYD: PRESSER

CAMPLE LINE, Dumfries and Galloway
23rd March till 2nd June

It's almost like you can feel the souls of the paintings sucking and plucking life force from the air itself, like pastel-toned black holes. This collection of new and recent paintings pulls together elements from across Boyd's work, often with the body or buildings as a common motif.

She often creates multiple works simultaneously, each one seeping into and connecting with its brethren.

campleline.org.uk/gabriella-boyd

MARTIN BOYCE: BEFORE BEHIND BETWEEN ABOVE BELOW

Fruitmarket, Edinburgh
2nd March till 9th June

They say the world is your canvas, and in Boyce's case he's taken that very literally. Utilising existing space – the architecture of Fruitmarket in this case – he creates new structures or takes the textures and forms of the built environment as inspiration. No standing at a framed painting and rubbing your beards for this exhibition; you must bend low or creep under or step around these art pieces to fully take them in. Celebrate Fruitmarket's 50th year of displaying art for all to enjoy for free with this, their first major exhibition of 2024.

fruitmarket.co.uk

GEORGE WYLLIE: SPIRES

The Wyllieum, Greenock
28th March till 11th August

You've really made it when they make a purpose-built gallery dedicated to you – this is for George Wyllie, whose early works were a 'requiem' for the shipbuilding industry of Glasgow. A prominent element of his legacy are his spires – and this collection is the largest selection of spires ever shown in a single exhibition, plus they are accompanied by previously unseen archival documents, photographs and drawings. This building will house more than Wyllie, and will be an artistic hub in his hometown, including workshops, rolling exhibitions, and more.

wyllieum.com


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SOLASFESTIVAL.CO.UK

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Mairi Campbell | Malin Lewis | Maranta
Mungos Hi Fi Sound System | N'famady Kouyaté
Peatbog Faeries | Queen Omega & The Royal Souls
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knockengorroch.org.uk

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HIPPFEST

Various Locations, Bo'ness and Online
20th till 24th March

Scotland's only silent film festival is back and, as always, each showing is presented with live music accompaniment. There are community screenings and exhibitions, including one for you trainspotters – *The Flying Scotsman*, which features this iconic train when it was a mere six years of age! The majority of the in-person screenings will be at the Hippodrome, Scotland's oldest purpose-built picture house. Not only that, but enjoy Hippifest at Home, including online talks, screenings, and the festival podcast.

hippodromecinema.co.uk/silent-film-festival

ROSS WILCOCK'S POETRY OPEN MICS

The Curler's Rest and The Alchemy
Experiment, Glasgow
Monthly

If you have ever had the notion of reading your poetry aloud, there's no safer or warmer space than one of Wilcock's nights. Give him a message on Instagram or see if you can add your name on the night. If being part of the audience is more your thing, then do head along – you are guaranteed an evening of characters and an array of forms and styles, plus a few chuckles and things to think on long after the night is over.

[instagram.com/rossopenmic](https://www.instagram.com/rossopenmic)

DJCAD ZINE LIBRARY OPEN DAY

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art
and Design, Dundee
13th March

A monthly open day which has hands-on help for you to make your very own zine, learn more about the library, and browse this most DIY and accessible of publishing forms. They have the supplies – you bring the ideas.

[instagram.com/djcadzinelibrary](https://www.instagram.com/djcadzinelibrary)

A PLAY, A PIE AND A PINT

Òran Mór, Glasgow
26th February till 27th April

Three of your five a day represented in this lunch – now that's a meal deal! There's *Pushin' Thirty*, a new comedy about two ex-best pals who are thrown back together after a chance encounter – featuring original songs from Dundee-based company Elfie Picket. There's also *Hotdog*, a show which sees our protagonist struggling in the aftermath of a traumatic event but determined to be the beating heart of the party, whilst dressed as a hotdog. Ness shows our Nessie, of Loch Ness fame, bonding with Morvern, a young queer Scot. The play explores their determination to smash boundaries and is a collaboration with Sanctuary Queer Arts. There's more besides – check out the website to see.

playpiepint.com

GLASGOW FILM FESTIVAL

One of the biggest UK events of its kind, the Glasgow Film Festival this year marks its 20th birthday. There will be celebrations in various venues around the city, including the annual film quiz and a ceilidh. A wonderful line-up of films of all genres, styles, and countries of origin awaits the avid moviegoer. As you read this, the GFF will be in full swing, so here are our picks of the latter part of the festival.

The biggest star to grace Glasgow this year is none other than Viggo Mortensen, aka the iconic Aragorn from the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. The move from acclaimed actor to director has been natural for Mortensen: his new film, *The Dead Don't Hurt*, is a western with romance set against a brutal time. The picture sounds beautifully shot, tragic, and violent.

For those who love the documentary form, the GFF has you covered with two docs about legendary cultural figures. *Billy Connolly: Big Banana Feet* documents the comic at the height of his powers, during a 1975 Irish tour, and *Opus: Ryuichi Sakamoto* captures one of the legendary composer's final concerts before his death last year. Both films sound like they convey the genius of their subjects with aplomb.

Southeast Asian cinema is still going strong, and the latest offering from actor and director Jason Yu sounds promising. *Sleep* is a psychological horror with echoes of genre staples such as *The Babadook*: a young couple's domestic bliss is disrupted by an unseen force. *Only the River Flows* is a grimy neo-noir murder mystery from China with a rich seam of dark humour. Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-Wai's 90s queer cinema classic *Happy Together* also gets a special screening.



From our own Scottish shores comes the world premiere of *Tummy Monster*, a blackly humorous psychological thriller that sounds as bizarre as it is wildly entertaining. In that vein, *The Invisible Fight* and *Baby Assassins 2 Babies* will whet the action fans' appetite, with both featuring a hefty dose of off-the-wall style.

The FrightFest is always a part of the GFF that generates buzz and sells a lot of tickets, and this year will be no different. *The Deep Dark* looks to be a claustrophobic creature feature with *The Descent* vibes, and if it's half as scary as that classic, you're in for a treat. *Kill Your Lover* takes the body horror route, with the plot revolving around a toxic relationship.

Closing gala *Janey* is an intimate documentary whose subject is Glasgow's own comedian Janey Godley. The film intersperses footage of her recent tour with interviews and stories, in the wake of her cancer diagnosis. Expect belly laughs and a deep dive into her colourful yet troubled life.

Whether you live in Glasgow or are passing through, celebrating 20 years of the GFF by taking in a movie or soaking up the party atmosphere is highly recommended. We'll see you at the GFT!

The Glasgow Film Festival runs from 28th February till 10th March

Martin Sandison

SCOTTISH FESTIVALS GUIDE

In Scotland, as the days get longer and taps come off in sweltering 18-degree heat, it means one thing. Festival season! There's almost a festival for every day, for every occasion and for every flavour of person, which can be a little overwhelming, so here's a wee selection of those we are daydreaming about while looking out at the current damp, dreich weather. We can't fit in every festival we'd like to this month so we'll be back with part 2 of our guide in the April mag.

EDINBURGH TRADFEST

3rd till 13th May
Edinburgh, Various Venues

This year's Edinburgh Tradfest once again features a fantastic line-up of live music at the Traverse and elsewhere across Edinburgh. **Valtos** open the festival on 3rd May at The Queen's Hall – these Skye natives really have taken the trad and electronic music crossover world by storm, so that'll be a treat. They'll be joined by award-winning singer/songwriter **Josie Duncan**, with more special guests to be announced.

What else is there? Well, over the 11 days of the festival there will be live music and workshops involving more than 100 musicians, including velvet harmonies from all-female electro-trad band **Birdvox** (Inge Thomson, Charlotte Printer, Jenny Sturgeon, Sarah Hayes); **Triptic** – formed from three members of Moisha's Bagel; and Canada's finest fiddle quartet, **The Fretless**, joined by award-winning folk singer-songwriter Madeleine Roger. There's so much more besides, including talks, adult and children's music workshops, ceilidhs, films, and storytelling. Best have a dig through their programme and unearth your own special bespoke festival.

edinburghtradfest.com

KNOCKENGORROCH

23rd till 26th May
Galloway Hills

We've previously described Knockengoroch as a festival where 'you will be plied with more smiles, more glitter, more hugs, more music, more offers of victuals, more warmth than ever before in your life.' What else could you want? This mighty and magical corner of the earth will host Trinidad & Tobago's **Queen Omega & The Royal Souls**, **Yoko Pwno** (eclectic Celtic fusion), **Kathryn Tickell & The Darkening** (genre-melting band who explore the land's historic threads of music and landscape, with Amen-inspired breakbeats, ominous vocals, and the wildest of piping), and loads more. Oh, and there'll be sax-core rave from the awesome **808 State**.

It's not just about the music: the weekend will also feature comedy and theatre shows, arts, crafts, nature and heritage workshops. It's one of the most family friendly festivals on the circuit, open to all ages with a dedicated quiet family camping area plus a children's tent and procession. The Knock Bus is the eco way to travel from Glasgow and Edinburgh.

knockengoroch.org.uk

THE REELING

8th till 9th June

Rouken Glen Park, Glasgow

Set in the Glasgow Southside gem that is Rouken Glen Park (OK, it's in East Renfrewshire, technically) this relatively new festival instantly became the biggest single weekend of traditional music in the Central Belt. Folk-electronica powerhouse **Niteworks**, playing their last ever gig, and **Elephant Sessions** will head up the Saturday while Sunday's main stage line-up is topped by Scots Trad Awards Musician of the Year **Julie Fowlis** and the multi award-winning Scottish supergroup **Mànran**.

Throughout the weeknd you'll be treated to SNACK favs **Kinnaris Quintet**, iconic Gaelic singer **Kathleen MacInnes**, **Siobhan Miller** (four-time winner of Best Singer at the Scots Trad Music Awards) with her band, as well as **Hannah Rarity**, **Aidan O' Rourke**, **Gnoss**, and a whole lot more besides. What's more, we're delighted to see that The Reeling have signed a Keychange pledge booking at least 50% women and gender minorities in their lineups, as well as hiring at least 50% women and gender minorities in their direct staffing. Leading the way!

thereeling.com



TECTONICS

4th & 5th May

City Halls, Glasgow

Tectonics, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra's festival of new and experimental music, celebrates eleven years of ground-breaking music this May. Conceived by the orchestra's Principal Guest Conductor, Ilan Volkov, and co-curated by Alasdair Campbell (Counterflows) the festival has blurred the lines between musical genres since 2013 and continues to question what music can be. Day 1 will kick off with multi-instrumentalist **Kate Armitage** and her entourage – actually, Kate will be performing six improvised pieces across the weekend. Apparently 'common sense will not prevail' – they got us with that statement alone.

Elsewhere Tokyo recorder player, improviser and sound-worker **Eiko Yamada** will perform her 'sound action'. Each evening will complete with a collection of performances in the Main Hall including a healthy dose of UK and world premieres. A common thread among several of this year's genre-defying artists is their daring use of voice, electronics, and improvisation. Sounds ace.

Limited number of discounted Weekend Passes are available until 26th April.

bbc.co.uk/tectonics



GOVAN MUSIC FESTIVAL

Various venues, Govan
13th till 16th March

Govan Music Festival is back, bringing powerful performances from folk, hip hop and classical music to Govan. Festival organiser Paul MacAlindin is building a festival with genuine community roots. Speaking to Paul, he says he doesn't need big names to create an impactful festival. It's about re-establishing a sense of worth in an area that's had a lot done to it and has had its sense of worth run down over a very long time. Last year, Visit Scotland's Thistle Awards made them finalists for Outstanding Festival. School choirs celebrate world music and local singers and dancers showcase Govan's talent. **The Glasgow Barons** will première a jazz saxophone piece on Bizet's Carmen, alongside Mahler's beautiful Symphony 4 (Fun Fact: the opera opened Govan's Lyceum in 1898). The Four Barons string quartet plays music from folk to Debussy. You can revel with **Freed Up CIC** in a drug- and alcohol-free music & dance night, too.

 glasgowbarons.com/govan-music-

EDEN

Raehills Estate, near Moffat
13th till 16th June

Eden is always a bit of a riot, in the best possible sense. This year they have **Leftfield** (DJ set), **The Zombies** (dare you miss the chance to hear 'She's Not There'?), drum and bass royalty **L TJ Bukem**, **corto.alto**, **Optimo**, **Free Love**, **Becky Sikasa** and loads more lined up besides. There's family camping and loads of kids activities too – the cosy Cinema Caravan is back, yas! This year's festival theme is Myths & Legends, so think Loch Ness Monsters, mermaids, dragons, Koroks (go as a Korok, please) and the like. As always, there will be a prize for the best costume of the year.

SOLAS

Errol Park, Perthshire
14th till 16th June

A midsummer festival miles away from *Midsommar* (no ritual sacrifices on offer). While devoted to providing an entertaining weekend of global music and art practices, the weekend is peppered with ethical and voice-enhancing practices, such as debates with activists and thinkers of various disciplines. Food for the soul, the community, the earth, and the mind. 2024's musical line-up includes the mighty **Tom McGuire & the Brassholes**, **An Danna Dub**, **The Niche Family**, **Terra Kin**, and **Pippa Blundell**, plus beyond music there's yoga, mindfulness, pilates, and women's circles.

solasfestival.co.uk



HOUSEGUEST

Glasgow, various venues
6th April

This brand new one-day festival presented by local DIY promoters Crowded Flat and Scottish Music Collective features a wealth of Scottish talent across three Glasgow venues (Nice N Sleazy, Garage Attic, and The Variety Bar). With **Her Picture**, **Majesty Palm**, **Pinc Wafer**, **Pizza Crunch**, **The Zeebecks**, **Tina Sandwich**, **Cortnë**, **Martha May & The Mondays**, and loads more SNACK favourites, you'll be spoilt for grassroots goodness.

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*Andy Zaltzman (The Bugle,
The News Quiz – BBC Radio 4)*



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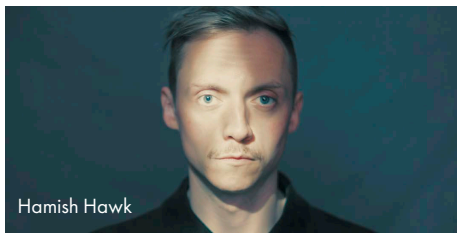


STAG & DAGGER

4th May (Edinburgh) & 5th May (Glasgow)
Various venues

Back straddling the M8 over the early May bank holiday weekend, there's 30 acts to catch in each city, with **Hamish Hawk**, fresh from his victorious night at the Barras, headlining both. What else? There's loads: **Lucia & The Best Boys**, **Benefits**, **Fat Dog**, **Antony Szmierok** (Glasgow only), **Deadletter**, and the brilliant **Snapped Ankles** – it all sounds kinda raucous. Sweet!

[instagram.com/staganddagfest](https://www.instagram.com/staganddagfest)



HIDDEN DOOR

Secret Location, Edinburgh
10th-11th May

2024 marks Hidden Door Festival's 10th anniversary – a decade since they opened up the Market Street vaults in 2014. To celebrate, they are planning a birthday party at a secret location never before used for an event like Hidden Door. They are keeping the location under tabs at the moment but say it's in the heart of the city (EH1). The organisers are also making plans for a bigger 5-day festival later in 2024, more akin to their usual, with more details on that to follow in the spring.

[hiddendoorarts.org](https://www.hiddendoorarts.org)

BIG CITY

Queen's Park, Glasgow
29th June

Doesn't a big city like Glasgow deserve a big city festival? Ya know, like the ones you travel to big European cities to see? Big City, curated by Mogwai, has perhaps the genesis of something special, and we're 100% here for it. The lineup is cracking, as you'd expect from the Mogwai boys, featuring **Nadine Shah**, **Bdrmm**, **Slowdive**, **Beak>**, **Michael Rother**, **Kathryn Joseph**, **Elisabeth Elektra**, **Cloth**, and **Sacred Paws**. **Mogwai** are, of course, headlining and we can't wait to stot 10 minutes up the road to see them. There's a Literary Tent in partnership with **White Rabbit Books**, too. See you there!

[bigcity.scot](https://www.bigcity.scot)

KELBURN GARDEN PARTY

Kelburn Estate, Largs
4th till 8th July

Previous punters often use the word 'magical' to describe Kelburn Garden Party. A versatile festival that is as laid-back or as full-on as you make it. You may start to mistake yourself for a fairy from the glen, surrounded by sound (dance music, folk, funk, disco, dub, jungle, alt pop etc.) from all over the world. This year we're looking forward to **James Holden**, **HAAi**, **Athens of the North**, **Nubiyan Twist**, **Bikini Body**, **LVRA**, **The Twistettes**, **Conscious Route**, **neverfine**, **DJ Storm**, **Girobabies**, and **Kohla**. Plus a good ole wander roon to find new favourites.

[kelburngardenparty.com](https://www.kelburngardenparty.com)

SHETLAND FOLK FESTIVAL

2nd till 5th May

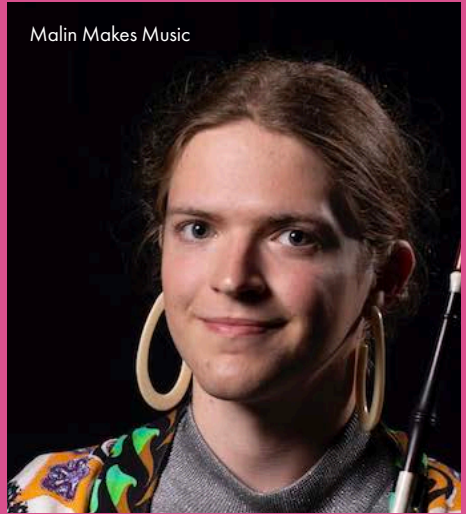
Scotland's most northerly folk festival is by some regarded as the granddaddy of folk festivals. For performers, locals and visitors alike, the festival's sessions are often cited as amongst the best in the world. Visiting artists, local talent and a warm welcome are all guaranteed. The event is volunteer-run and rather than hotels, visitors stay in the homes of Folk Festival supporters. How about that for hospitality? Gigs are held all over Shetland and, on the final night, audiences in three large venues are treated to a marathon concert in which everyone has a chance to see all the 15 or so visiting bands, which this year include **Kirsten Adamson & The Tanagers**, **Tenement Jazz Band**, and **Beth Malcolm** (BBC MG ALBA Scots Singer of the Year 2022).

shetland.org/visit/events/folk-festival

Beth Malcolm



Malin Makes Music



SKYE LIVE

Portree, Skye
9th till 11th May

It's no exaggeration to say that Skye Live has one of the most picturesque settings of any festival in the world. Like, the whole world – that big whole thing. Set in Portree, with stunning views of the incredible Cuillin Ridge on one side and The Old Man of Storr on the other to accompany some of the best of contemporary traditional music and electronica, it's gonna be unforgettable. Who's playing? **Niteworks**, **Malin Makes Music**, **Heisk**, **Fras**, **Skerryvore**, **Peatbog Faeries**, **Josie Duncan...** best check out their website for the full menu.

You'll have to be quick to grab tickets for this year's fest: as the handy ticker on their website will tell you, there's less than 15% of tickets left. Go!

skylive.co.uk



HIPPFEST



The only festival in Scotland where silent films are the centrepiece is HippFest. Based in Scotland's first and oldest cinema, the historic Hippodrome in Bo'ness, the programme features classics brought to life, such as *Oliver Twist*, the works of Laurel and Hardy, jazz-age flapper flicks, and films from all over the globe, all accompanied by live music.

The opening night promises the world premiere of Jenny Gilbertson's 1933 film *The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric*. The story follows a young couple and their dilemma of whether to stay in Scotland and maintain a croft or emigrate to Australia, a scenario that is still sadly relevant to Scottish rural communities today.

This original version of Gilbertson's silent film was rescued in the 1980s from a hen house on Shetland, covered in guano, where it had been stored due to the volatile nature of the nitrate film used. Gilbertson filmed on a 35mm Eyemo handheld camera, which could only hold a few minutes at a time, so every shot had to be carefully considered. An extremely determined woman, she undertook all elements of the filmmaking process herself and refused to be pigeonholed into the gender roles of the time. Gilbertson is considered by some to be the first woman to direct a feature film in Scotland.

The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric has a brand new music commission by composer and multi-instrumentalist Inge Thomson and renowned fiddle player Catriona Macdonald, which will be performed live at the film's premiere. SNACK spoke with both artists to find out more.



Why is Jenny Gilbertson a name we shouldn't forget?

Inge Thomson: She was a female filmographer in the 1930s – back then it was a fight to be a female anything in a man's world, let alone operate machinery and do anything technical, so for that she's absolutely awesome.

Catriona Macdonald: I actually met her in the 1980s. She had this really beautiful soft face and white hair, sitting there talking about her incredible journey that she made to Greenland in her 70s [where she stayed for 13 months to make documentary *Jenny's Arctic Diary*]. It was so awe-inspiring, thinking, wow, do women actually do those things?

This film captures the beauty and hardships of the islands with an incredible intimacy. How much did you use your own experiences growing up in Fair Isle and Shetland?

Inge: It was immediately nostalgic for me because I grew up on a croft and everybody on Fair Isle is attached to a croft. The actual practices of land management haven't changed much at all, although we don't harness ponies to plough the land anymore. Crofts are quite small, so there's still an awful lot of handwork, for instance peat cutting, of which there's a brilliant scene in the film. You can see he's really skilled at it – and it still happens in the same way with the same tool he uses, a tushkar.

Catriona: I have been a fiddle player since I was a young child and was taught by one of the very well-known older fiddle players and collectors from Shetland, a man called Tom Anderson. I'm bringing my traditional string-playing aesthetic for that. For various reasons, the fiddle is the main instrument in Shetland and has been for centuries, more so than song, which is in some ways quite unusual.

How far have you reached beyond traditional Scottish or Celtic music and instruments for this piece?

Inge: The film is very rooted in the Shetland traditions. The tunes and heads and riffs I've kept quite close to the traditional forms. Getting Catriona in to be my co-collaborator was important because she's a very spirited Shetland fiddle player who conveys stories within her playing. She also plays in the AEAE tuning, which in Shetland is called 'the ringing strings' and is evocative of place. For me, it immediately grounds it in Shetland.

Catriona: If you know anything about trad music and Shetland, that sound instantly takes you there. Shetland music is my life, my practice – everything is based on that. It was really interesting for me to come in on this female filmmaker's work, because I was one of the first female players that started playing in the 1980s in Shetland; it had been seen as a very much male kind of tradition. That's part of my PhD, recovering women's role in the musical tradition and culture. Working with Inge on this is fantastic – she has a really contemporary viewpoint on things, and my part as the fiddle player is to be a sort of central point she can work her compositional magic around.

Inge: A lot of what I do relies on new technology and electronics and live manipulation, so there is a small touch of that, but it can't be anything that pulls it out of the time. I have used some elements to draw on atmospheric things, like rumbling wind.

Catriona: We also wanted to take it somewhere fresh so that it doesn't just become a pastiche. I was surprised, when I watched it, at how contemporary that period of time is – Jenny's captured a special part of Shetland life. There was a period of interest in photography at the turn of the century, but in this period between the wars you don't see lots of photographs or interactions. There is one actor, but the rest are real people – that was Jenny's filmmaking, to get in there and really live the life, from within the community.

You can watch *The Rugged Island: A Shetland Lyric* and its brand new music accompaniment online or in-person at HippFest on 20th March. HippFest 2024 runs 20th till 24th March

hippodromecinema.co.uk

You can see the accompanying talk about Jenny Gilbertson for free on YouTube: youtube.com/@FalkirkLeisureandCulture





INVISIBLE WOMEN

Rachel Pronger, Camilla Baier, and Lauren Clarke are Invisible Women, a feminist film collective formed in 2017. Self-described 'archive activists', Invisible Women research overlooked histories of women in film, contextualising them through screenings and editorial. SNACK spoke with the trio about the joys and challenges of working with the archive and their Glasgow Film Festival retrospective on Mexican actor Dolores del Río.

How did you all meet, and what was the impetus behind Invisible Women?

Rachel: Camilla and I were studying for a Film, Exhibition and Curation masters at the University of Edinburgh, and separately we'd both become interested in ideas around archives and feminism. We ended up working together as part of our final project, screening works by pioneering female filmmakers spanning the 1930s to 1970s.

That effectively became Invisible Women's pilot screening. From there we accidentally started a business, which snowballed over the next couple of years. #MeToo happened quite soon after, which meant we were tapping into a zeitgeist around women's stories in film. During the pandemic we built up our website and digital presence, and Lauren joined us in 2021.

Lauren: I did the same masters degree and I'd been following Invisible Women's work. After collaborating with them on an event looking at women's labour, called *Punch In/Out*, they graciously let me enter the fold.

What is it about archival work that appeals to you?

Camilla: It's the idea that you have to look at your past to understand your present.

When people make statements like ‘there weren’t any female filmmakers back then’, we get our hands dirty by going into the archive and actually finding the work. Archive work is so interesting because it’s so timely, even though the films can be 70, 80, 100 years old!

Lauren: There can be huge barriers to accessing archive material, even just having the time and headspace to find those individual gems, so we try to make it more accessible. Sometimes we pair archival work with contemporary work, and we’ve supported some of the Latin American work with subtitling. It’s all about widening the opportunities for these films to be seen.

How did your Dolores del Río retrospective [*Wild Flower*, *Flaming Star*] at this year’s GFF come about?

Camilla: We were asked by GFF if we wanted to curate their retrospective this year. It was exciting to get asked to do something with a bigger festival and go in a direction we’d never gone in before by focusing on an actor. Usually we look at filmmakers, but we’ve never really looked at talent.

Rachel: We talk a lot about, and challenge, the idea of authorship. We started out looking at women directors but realised early on how problematic that was – various structural issues meant that women didn’t get to make as many films. Film is super collaborative and the auteur theory is very much a patriarchal, hierarchical theory. It fundamentally erases a lot of the labour that goes into filmmaking that doesn’t come under the category of directing. Part of what we’re trying to do is problematise the idea that the director is the one person we should focus on. Looking at an actor opens up alleyways to talk about the power (or lack of) that actors have in different contexts, and del Río’s a rich example of that.

Across the films you’re screening with GFF, del Río plays an Indigenous Mexican woman, a Brazilian aristocrat, and a Native American woman. What can modern audiences learn from her career about Hollywood’s treatment of race and ethnicity?

Rachel: That’s a really exciting, huge topic. It’s important when screening historical work to understand the context it was made in. We’re not saying we think it’s great that del Río was cast as a Native American, but we recognise that it was common practice in Hollywood at the time, and that it still happens! We can look at her performances in the context of what she was given to do and how she invested those roles with dignity and gravitas.

What else does *Invisible Women* have coming up?

Camilla: We’re doing a Dorothy Arzner CineMasters strand in March at the GFT. At Glasgow Short Film Festival we’ve got two programmes of films from [Mexican feminist film collective] Cine Mujer, one of which has never been screened in the UK. We’ve got a season at ¡Viva!, Manchester’s Spanish and Latin American film festival, about the Argentinian filmmaker María Luisa Bemberg. Then we’ve got an amazing project with the Nottingham Contemporary gallery...

Rachel: ...It’s called Peep Show and it’s a moving image installation, which is new territory for us. It’s about the male gaze in the history of film, using work by female directors to talk about the way it was shaped in early Hollywood. It also makes connections between early filmmaking and cinema of sensation, sideshows, and carnivals.

**Invisible Women can be found on X/
Twitter ([IW_Archives](#)), Instagram
([invisiblewomen_archives](#)), and at
[invisible-women.co.uk](#)**

JOE WELLS



When stand-up comedian Joe Wells' clip about his 'non-autistic brother' went unexpectedly viral, he found himself being asked about autism more than ever. His new show, *King of the Autistics*, plays on the absurdity of speaking on behalf of such a vast, varied community. That didn't stop us from asking him to take the throne once more as he prepares to take the 2023 Fringe show on a 2024 UK tour.

Hi, Joe. Could you explain your show's title in your own words?

Well, I guess the takeaway I want people to have from the show is that we shouldn't feel like there's only space for one or a few people to be representatives of autistic people.

I'm someone who is talking about this a lot because I'm interested in it and I have lots of things to say about it, but I think that we [autistic people] can all actively be autistic representation in the world. So *King of the Autistics* is a sort of jokey title. You know: how silly would it be to just have one person in charge of all autistic people? We can all collectively speak for autistic people rather than having individual spokespeople.

Since a specific routine of yours went viral, which was a sort of play on how neurotypicals speak about neurodivergent folk, is that what people expect all of your comedy to be like?

Yeah, I guess so. Things are going quite well for me, career-wise, but it does mean that lots of people want different things for me.

There are people who want me to do comedy that's for children, and then TV producers often want really edgy, sort of controversial comedy. So the tour show is sort of about being pulled in different directions.

Do you come up against a lot of misconceptions, then?

Sometimes. One of my biggest influences is a writer called Polly Samuel and she wrote a lot about those misconceptions [like missing social cues or an ability to relate]. She didn't coin the term 'double empathy' but she paved the way for it to be discussed: how autistic people have only been talked about from one perspective, from the outside. So it's not so much that those are all misconceptions, because I do struggle with reading people, but it's more about a new angle on it. Obviously, there are some completely poor stereotypes, but some of those things about social cues are true. But it's only one bit of the picture.

The relationships in stand-up comedy, between audience and performer, are quite strictly defined. Did that draw you to it?

Yeah, definitely. I like comedy because I know when a joke's gone well and when it hasn't. There are very unambiguous social cues. Everything about comedy really works for my access needs, for want of a better term. A quiet room when I get to the gig, a shared interest with people, being able to work on my own and have control over how I work. And then the actual performance itself, where the parameters of the conversation are very clear. I know it's my turn to talk.

Also, I think all the things I used to do socially, where I would run over things I had said in a way that wasn't helpful, became helpful when I did comedy. 'I came across weird there,' or, 'I said the wrong thing,' became, 'Oh, that joke didn't work tonight. Why didn't it work?'. It makes you a bit more analytical because those conversational things aren't innate.

That makes sense. And doing a show thirty times at the Edinburgh Fringe must give you a lot of opportunity to fine-tune those interactions.

Yeah. I can listen back to the recordings and say, 'Why didn't they laugh at that? I thought people would understand what I was saying.' I can [even] show it to someone else.

Is there a difference between doing that at the Fringe and taking the show on tour?

Lots of the people coming to the tour show are autistic and not necessarily the comedy fans that go and see it at the Fringe. It's a really nice atmosphere and I'm always quite excited by it, because I don't want to be the guy that's just for the comedy connoisseurs. The comics I admire are the ones who can do stuff that's interesting but also really accessible.

Catch *King of the Autistics at The Stand*, Edinburgh, on March 12th & at *The Stand*, Glasgow, on March 13th as part of the Glasgow International Comedy Festival

HOLIDAY SIDEWINDER

The winter we still endure has felt eternal: long nights, a new storm with an enigmatic name every other week, and the overall misery of 2023's lingering sense of dread have contributed, I'm sure, to a collective seasonal affective disorder across the nation. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel, and Australian-born pop siren Holiday Sidewinder is here to guide us to it. She knows her way around a pop song: her work is characterised by memorable hooks, an 80s-inspired sound that fuses new wave and reggae, and a real sense of warmth.

Sidewinder returns with her anticipated, sun-soaked sophomore record *The Last Resort*, following the release of a few tantalising cuts off the album. She describes the record herself as 'a tropical cocktail of reggae, rock, sophisti-drop-top-yacht-pop with glam metal guitars, rave and disco'; and it's hard to disagree. You can catch Sidewinder supporting Sophie Ellis-Bextor, once again, on her upcoming European tour. In the meantime, we sat down with her to discuss her inspirations, holiday bucket lists, and hanging out with S.E.B. in her kitchen. Prepare to be taken to your happy place.

***The Last Resort* feels like an evolution from *Forever or Whatever*; did you find your influences had changed or evolved between making each record?**

I found myself listening to a lot of reggae during lockdowns as a form of escapism and relaxation.

I would make myself a fresh juice, sunbathe, and listen to reggae. A lot of Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Alton Ellis, Ken Boothe, Susan Cadogan, UB40. Cheesy stuff too. John Martyn's *Glorious Fool* era.

How did the production process of *The Last Resort* vary from your previous work? What are the challenges and benefits of producing music independently?

Usually, I collaborate in the room with my friend Ben Mark, and we do everything together. Lots of laughing. This time he produced the tracks, sent them over, and I would write and record my vocals long distance and email them back! He was in London; I was in Cyprus, Koh Samui, and Estonia. Then we would do Facetime sessions to make changes and edits. I had a concept of what I wanted the record to be and sound like, and the title, before we even started writing.

Even if the 'genre' of each song on the record can vary, it feels like the 80s has a huge imprint on your work. What is it about that era you find so inspiring, or influential?

I always say to this, that the appeal of that era, and where my music fits in that, is the mix of analogue and synthesised music. Incredible players and parts, mixed with synthesised rhythms or melodies. There's a quality and a joy, and a cringe factor, that makes it feel carefree and shameless. You hear it all over modern music from Harry Styles to The Weekend. The sonic and aesthetic, like disco, never fully dies.



What are the ingredients for the perfect pop star, if such a thing exists, in your opinion?

They create a whole world that you can enter into and radiate some kind of powerful infectious energy.

How the hell did you get Kim Wilde on 'Cliffhanger?' What was it like working with such an industry legend?

It's WILD. I haven't met her yet; she's my online friend/fan. So, I just reached out and asked her. She and her brother Ricky laid down the vocals and emailed them over. Was very surreal listening to Kim singing my song a capella. Very moving.

I'm not exaggerating when I say I have been humming 'So Paradise' to myself since I saw you perform with Sophie Ellis-Bextor nearly two years ago; it is absolutely my favourite and a real highlight on the album. Can you discuss the background of the song? Its subject matter and lyrics definitely contrast with the upbeat tempo and feel.

When I was living in Thailand, I saw a street sign that said *So, Paradise*, with the comma. The grammar made me laugh. What does it mean? Like so... paradise. I'm always musing on existentialism, anthropology, and capitalism with a sense of humour about everything.

Photo credit: Thom Kerr

Resorts with their infinity pools and dimmable lights... it just made me think. I love cloaking dark lyrics in upbeat happy music and melodies. It's my favourite hobby.

I see you are rejoining Sophie on tour this year. How did you initially connect with her, and what is it like joining forces with this eternal pop empress?

I met her in her kitchen one day, when I was working with her husband Richard on some great songs. They are really like family to me now. I think she's the most awe-inspiring person, and just classy as fuck with the way she does everything, like truly everything. She's just a great person, and an incredible entertainer. A total natural. We come from similar mindsets on lots of things. Kind of a similar upbringing, too.

Your music and aesthetic evoke vacation glamour and have definitely alleviated my seasonal affective disorder over the last few weeks. What is the dream holiday destination on your bucket list?

St. Lucia, Egypt, Patagonia, Barbados, Fiji... they're top of my list at the moment.

The Last Resort is released on 24th March via Venus Beach Records



ELLE MACHRAY

Debut novels don't come more blazing, more incendiary, than this. Nominated by the *Observer* as a Best Debut Novelist of 2024, Elle Machray has already set the literary world alight with their debut, *Remember, Remember*. A fascinating alternate history of an eighteenth-century attempt to bring down the British Empire, it has totally captured our collective imagination here at SNACK, and we were lucky enough to chat to Elle about what inspires hers.

***Remember, Remember* follows an alternative history of the Georgian era, in which Black, queer, female voices take centre stage. How much of *Remember, Remember* is truly alternative and imaginative, and how much is inspired or informed by hidden histories?**

I'd say it's a healthy mix of inspiration and imagination. Every parliamentary scandal or labour strike I mention are all real things that happened within about five to ten years of the novel's setting. Eighteenth-century Londoners really knew the power of protest – and how to document it. Unsurprisingly, when it came to researching the characters, I had to dig deeper. Due to the way history is recorded and taught, many people still assume there were few Black people in Britain until the Windrush generation, which is absolutely not true.

While writing *Remember, Remember*, it was important to challenge that assumption by drawing on recorded experiences from historical Black figures.

Marion, Delphine's boss, for example, is based on the infamous brothel owner Black Harriot, and Delphine herself is partially inspired by St Lucian revolutionary Flore Bois Gaillard. The notable absence of femme Black stories recorded in this period is one of the main reasons Delphine's perspective is the largest in *Remember, Remember*. I wanted to imagine what Flore might have done or said if she'd been in London, to give her a new voice – even if it was a fictional one.

The 1772 Somerset v Stewart case [which dealt with the right of an enslaved person in Britain to not be forcibly removed and sent to another country to be sold] is also pivotal to the inspiration of the novel. Can you share why you felt it was so important to incorporate this into the narrative through the character of Vincent?

The Somerset v Stewart case was a pivotal moment in British legal history, and it deeply resonated with me while researching *Remember, Remember*. While David Olusoga's *Black and British: A Forgotten History* introduced me to the case, it was the knowledge that countless similar struggles ended in tragedy that truly shaped Vincent's story.

The Somerset ruling, while a victory, had limitations quickly exposed by the continued injustice faced by many Black people in Britain. *Remember, Remember*'s fictionalised narrative reflects this reality. Vincent and Delphine continue to grapple with prejudice and exploitation despite the legal precedent, highlighting the complex power structures and systemic oppression that perpetuate injustice. Through their struggles, *Remember, Remember* uses the Somerset case as a springboard to explore the human cost of injustice and the enduring power of resistance, reminding us that legal victories are only the first step in a long fight for true freedom.

The novel also uses this idea of 'little rebellions', which I loved, particularly for contrast in a story for which large scale rebellion constantly thunders. Can you expand a little on the value of 'little rebellions' in *Remember, Remember*, and perhaps to political resistance more broadly?

While grand revolutions may capture headlines, I believe the most transformative resistance often happens in quieter moments. I wanted to showcase how Black people in the eighteenth century, often portrayed solely as victims, resisted in everyday ways.

This message is particularly relevant today, where overt protest is increasingly restricted. Choosing not to spread misinformation, or supporting marginalised communities – or even challenging that uncle at the dinner table – are all forms of resistance. These acts may not make newspapers, but they contribute to the collective hum of dissent that can ultimately lead to positive change. As the saying goes, 'little drops of water wear away the stones,' and in the fight for justice, every little rebellion counts.

Something I think a lot of readers will enjoy is how morally complex the characters and their motivations are – the novel accepts that none of us can claim terms as broad and immoderate as 'good' or 'evil', especially if you commit to a radical political cause.

Despite living in an increasingly polarised world, I don't think any of us exist in stark absolutes. We're all shaped by complex histories, unique circumstances, and have inherent biases and flaws – much like Delphine.

The decisions she makes in *Remember, Remember* are imperfect and her choices are definitely morally questionable. How could they not be? But after examining her experiences and motivations, I think many would struggle to call her monstrous. Recognising the sacrifices and struggles inherent in any path, even those with debatable outcomes, fosters empathy and understanding. Even in fiction, there are no easy or convenient solutions to questions of justice. It's a journey that demands genuine understanding and honesty from all sides.

What do you hope readers take away from *Remember, Remember*? It's a book that feels designed to get you thinking, to challenge you and to make you reconsider what you might have taken for granted...

Remember, Remember deals with some difficult topics and uncomfortable truths, but ultimately, it's a story of hope. What I'd love for readers to remember most about Delphine is her spirit. She's fierce and tenacious, and despite everything, she believes in our potential for change. Her story isn't about naively wishing for a better future; it's about actively forging one, even when the path seems dark and uncertain.

Remember, Remember is definitely a cautionary tale, but I'd like to think it's also an optimistic one.

***Remember, Remember* is out now,
published by HarperNorth**



DOUG JOHNSTONE

Since his debut novel, *Tombstoning*, was published in 2006, Doug Johnstone has produced a varied and vital body of work, while always remaining distinct. Best known for crime fiction, most recently with the Skelfs series of crime thrillers, his first foray into science fiction, *The Space Between Us*, received wide critical acclaim and gained him plenty of new readers. The sequel, *The Collapsing Wave*, is published this month and SNACK spoke to Doug to learn all about it.

How do you describe *The Collapsing Wave*?

It's a speculative novel set in present-day Scotland, where a group of outsiders have made contact with an alien species. It's the sequel to my first science fiction book, *The Space Between Us*, which was like a cross between *E.T.* and *Thelma and Louise* – a road trip across Scotland, running from the authorities with an octopus-like alien from Saturn's moon Enceladus in tow.

The Collapsing Wave takes up a few months after that book ended, and a makeshift US military base has been established in the Scottish Highlands, to capture these aliens from the waters off the coast. Some of the humans from the first book are imprisoned there, but gradually they re-establish contact with the aliens and each other, and manage to break free. This leads to a showdown between the aliens, along with sympathetic humans, and the military might of the establishment. It definitely ups the ante compared to the first book. If *The Space Between Us* was the movie *Alien*, this is the sequel *Aliens*, guns and all!

***The Space Between Us* rightly garnered a lot of critical acclaim and attention, including on national TV. Were you surprised by the reaction, and just how much does such coverage help?**

I was very surprised. After fifteen crime novels, my first SF book got on the telly! But I was very grateful. Most reactions to the book were very positive; folk really seemed to understand what I was trying to do. That television coverage had a big impact on sales, not just because folk get to hear about the book, but the fact you're on there gives booksellers confidence, so they order more.

Something many reviewers claimed was that *The Space Between Us* was a sci-fi novel for readers who think they don't like sci-fi. Why do you think that was?

Yeah, that was a really interesting reaction. I think SF is still thought of as a ghetto in fiction a little bit, which I've never understood. Folk will watch SF movies all the time, but never pick up the source material in a bookshop, which is strange. The book starts off with normal characters in a normal Scotland, then something SF happens, and hopefully the reader is dragged into it. I think of *The Space Between Us* as a gateway drug, to get folk to read more science fiction.

What themes are you looking to explore with these novels?

Fundamentally, the books are about consciousness and connection. How do we find connection in a world that seems to alienate us? All three main human characters are alone at the start of the first book, and they find connection with each other through an alien entity they call Sandy. The second book explores these ideas in more depth, I hope, as well as the idea of 'othering' – how do humans treat anything other than themselves, whether that's refugees, aliens, or just someone with a different worldview? What can we do to better understand other points of view?

Both novels are character driven, and they're memorable characters at that. Were you excited to be able to return to them and see what they've been up to? Do you come to care for your characters?

Yeah, it was great to revisit the three central characters of Lennox, Ava, and Heather. They're very different from each other, and at very different stages of life, but they share something deep with each other. I absolutely come to care deeply for my characters; love them despite their flaws. Checking back in with them for the second book was a delight but also a challenge. How had the events of the first book affected them?

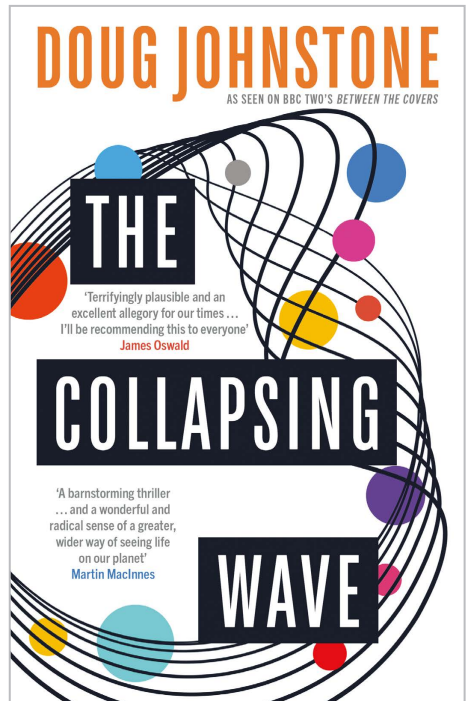
The Skelfs series of crime novels are also ongoing. Can you give us an update on those? And has writing crime changed for you over the years?

Yeah, I'm working on the sixth book in that series now. It's called *Living is a Problem*, and is due out in September. The Skelfs series, about three women who have to run a funeral directors and private investigators, is a very different experience to writing the standalone thrillers I was doing before.

In one aspect, I'm still writing about the same thing – ordinary people thrown into extraordinary circumstances. But the Skelfs series is much more expansive, more experimental and goes much deeper, I think. I'm able to write about all sorts of stuff that obsesses me, because I've established this framework. I've never really written what readers might consider 'mainstream' crime fiction, but that goes doubly so now.

Going back to *The Collapsing Wave*, do you think you'll be writing further science fiction? Or are there perhaps other surprises in store?

I will definitely be writing more SF, for sure. And maybe dabbling in fantasy, but again, I suspect it'll be a book for folk who 'don't usually read fantasy'!



The Collapsing Wave is published 14th March by Orenda Books



If you love dance and/or pop, SHEARS should already be on your radar. She's had some of the strongest releases from the Scottish grassroots in the past couple of years, and her new EP is more of the same quality.

SNACK caught up with SHEARS, talking about artwork, friends, dancing, and that album looming on the horizon.

New EP *Now We're Getting Somewhere* was released at the end of February. Is it a fair representation of where you're at right now?

I think so. I finished it in April last year, so you change a little bit and progress with what you're doing. But it's a fair representation. It's called *Now We're Getting Somewhere* because it's a body of work that I have written, recorded, produced, and mixed, and it's the first one where I've done all of the stuff. Everything apart from mastering. So it feels like a bit of a milestone for me and now we're kind of getting into our stride.

A lot of moments are about the end or soon-to-be end of a relationship. Have you collated a theme for the EP, or just had a rough few months?

I had a lot of feelings at the time, ha! There was a lot going on. I hit a point in my life where people moved forward with what they're doing, but everyone's going in different directions. I think it happens to everyone. Some people stick around, some people don't. Breaking up with a friend can feel worse sometimes than breaking up with a partner because you've known somebody for such a long time. It felt like a turning point where all this stuff was happening.

The artwork for the singles/EP features yourself as a child. Was this to save money, or to symbolise something more pertinent?

I mean, it did save money, but it wasn't the initial intention.

My mum was clearing out a bunch of cupboards and they were moving house, and she'd sent me a whole load of those photos that I'd never actually seen before. I went through them and thought these would be really good. As the EP is called *Now We're Getting Somewhere*, I felt like having the young me at the beginning worked with that idea.

You wrote, recorded, produced, and mixed the EP yourself, and there's many reasons you should, but is there an overriding reason for you to remain in so much control?

I definitely like control over the music because you get to have it sound exactly the way you want it to sound. Also, you don't need to wait for other people's schedules to align with yours, which is something that was always kind of tricky before, because people are really busy. You'd be like 'can you mix these six songs?' They'd say, 'yeah, in two months'.

Photo credit: Trisha Ward

Any thoughts on a debut album?

I've started maybe 4 or 5 songs, but they're not finished yet, so it's hard to know. It may be a bit poppier than the EP that I've just released, slightly, but still with my own style of production. I never know where my songs fit. I always have that trouble when people ask 'what genre is your music?' Well, this song sounds like this, and this song sounds like this!

Will any existing songs make it onto the album?

Nah, it'll all be new going forward. I don't know exactly how, but I'll figure that out. That all comes out in the wash.

You've already played big shows in Glasgow and Leith recently. Any live plans you can share with us?

I am in a writing bubble at the moment, so I'm not entirely sure. I'm in talks with a couple of festivals. It'll be nice to do some of that, but I don't have major plans: usually gigs come through and I go, oh, yeah, that'd be fun.

I haven't planned anything strictly myself right now because I just want to write for a little bit, but I'll get some plans in to do some live stuff.



The *Now We're Getting Somewhere* EP is out now

NAUM GABO

After nearly 20 years of making music together, and sporadic live appearances at the Sub Club and Berghain, Glasgow electronic duo NAUM GABO – better known as Jonnie Wilkes of Optimo and prolific mastering engineer James Savage – are releasing their debut album, *F.Lux*, on DFA records. I caught up with them to find out what was behind this massive slab of electronic noise.

Naum Gabo (the artist the band are named after), was concerned with depicting things without weight. Is the music designed to be a counterpoint to that?

Jonnie: Well, the only reference, actually, was the kinetic aspect, because it was mainly kinetic sculpture that he was doing. When James and I started to work with sequencers and stuff, like this kind of circular cycle and movement, I sort of drew a comparison there. I remember when we first did the track 'Red Cones' – which actually was over 20 years ago – James Murphy [LCD Soundsystem] heard me playing out somewhere and he asked me what that track was. We burnt the CD-R and I was posting it to New York to James, and I sort of hand drew a cover with a felt tip, and it said *The Kinetic Disco Sound of Naum Gabo*. We just liked the name because it was two four-letter words and it was a bit confusing. I think we've always sort of covered our tracks a bit as well.

Was it always the intent for this to be an album?

Jonnie: We have religiously met on a weekly basis to make music for 20 years.

Nothing has ever gotten in the way of that, and it's an outlet that we both really cherish. It was quite a disparate thing: we were producing music for short films, we were doing sound design type stuff, we were doing techno records on Kompakt.

We were making mid-tempo disco on Japanese labels. We were, like, making remixes for bands. I can't remember the exact point where we thought, let's start putting all these ideas in one place. And even when we did do that, we didn't really know if it would ever happen – we were well aware that it's quite a difficult record.

We sent it to DFA, who we've known for some time, thinking it's maybe not a typical DFA record, but DFA are really expanding in terms of the nature of the music that they're releasing. Although having said that, they just sent me one of their compilations of the really early stuff. And actually right back then, DFA released some really experimental music like Black Dice and Pixeltan and bands like this. So they picked it up and they were really keen to do it.

You said the sonic qualities took precedence over finishing tracks?

Jonnie: It was a priority for us to make sure that the record was affecting in a sonic way, instead of trying to tell stories through narrative the way writing songs sometimes does. It was just like, what can we do with sound here? What sounds can we put together that sometimes maybe are incongruous, or don't fit together so well? We can tell our own story by putting those together. The joy for us is in being in the studio and working with these sounds. There's very light areas and there's very dark areas, and I mean, there's even humour in there somewhere too.



I guess you just depend on the user's interpretation to pick up on whatever they do.

There's a real kind of weight to it, a physicality. Do you intend for this to be played loud?

Jonnie: I've listened to it on a monumentally huge sound system and it's really powerful. But some of my most enjoyable listens have been through not particularly good speakers in a home, a domestic kind of wireless speaker in the kitchen. So I don't think we thought about it. I understand it's pretty muscular in places, but I hope that it stands up in all sorts of environments.

James: I think even irrespective of the level of loudness, that kind of depth, weight, whatever you want to call it, comes across.

Jonnie: The first time I met James he was at a studio in Glasgow, and I brought these tracks, which I sort of thought, well, I think they need mastered, but they basically needed fixed. I'd been referencing on speakers that were vibrating. There was so much bass on this record. And James opened up the tracks in his studio and he's like, there's no bass on these records. There's nothing there.

James: There was a spate of these dodgy speakers being sold about Glasgow as well. I remember they appeared to have bass, but in reality there was none.

Jonnie: James and I became friends and I was like, fuck, I need to be working with this guy. So one of the things I've really learned a lot from James is how sound behaves in different rooms and how it appears, in different contexts. And I'd like to think I'm better at that, but yeah, that record was not a bass-heavy record. I thought it was. Zero bass.

James: That's the next album title.

Do you have any plans to play it out live?

James: I wouldn't want to regurgitate just exactly what's there. I think we're both in agreement with that. Whatever we do, we mix it up a bit just for our enjoyment more than anything. So I'd like to think of something where we could maybe add something to it and make it enjoyable for us, and make it feel live.

F.Lux is out on 6th March on DFA Records



CARROT AND CARDAMOM SLICE

Have you ever used Too Good To Go? It's an app where local retailers, both independent and large chain, list perishable items they haven't sold, which you can pick up towards closing time for a fraction of the price - usually a third. If you're going on holiday and you're on a budget, the app works abroad, too: you don't even have to speak the language. Just swipe in the app to collect your surprise bag. For local bakeries you know you'll probably receive bread, sandwiches, pastries, or cakes, but with supermarkets you could end up with a mixture of random stuff or lots of the same thing, as we discovered recently when we suddenly found ourselves bestowed with a hefty amount of carrots. Initially, we made carrot and coriander soup, which is a great way to use up excess carrots, but we still had plenty left so decided to try another spice, this time cardamom, to liven up a homemade carrot cake. Carrots strangely work well with aromatic spices like ground cardamom; they're also relatively sweet and the moistness ensures a light and tasty final product.

INGREDIENTS

- 300g plain flour
- 300g caster sugar
- 300ml sunflower oil
- 300g grated carrots
- 1½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp cardamom powder

Frosting

- 55g vegan cream cheese
- 150g icing sugar
- ¼ tsp cardamom powder

METHOD

Preheat your oven to 170°C/fan 150°C/gas mark 3.

Line a 900g loaf tin (or cake tin if you prefer) with greaseproof paper.

To a bowl, add sugar and oil and mix well.

Slowly mix in the flour, baking powder, baking soda, cardamom powder, and vanilla extract.

Ensure the mixture is combined well.

Add the carrots to the mixture and mix until dispersed throughout.

Add the mixture to the baking tin and bake for 25-30 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.

Leave the cake to cool completely.

Whilst cooling, prepare the frosting, by mixing together the vegan cream cheese with the icing sugar and cardamom powder until the frosting is light and fluffy.

Once the cake is cold, add the frosting to the cake.

Garnish with grated orange zest or toasted almonds – whatever you prefer – then enjoy!

THE (NOT) GAY MOVIE CLUB
8212141



In the immortal words of radio-friendly-country-tinged-pop beauty Sheryl Crow, ‘A change would do you good.’ Flicking through our staggering 32 (Not) Gay Movie Club inductees, I notice a few common criteria: box office bomb; high camp; likely to feature Bette Midler. Perhaps we should change things up a little this month and dip our toes into something different. Admittedly, anyone flicking through our (Not) Gay Movie vault (which I am sure you do on the regular) will find not a whole lot of sci-fi, which is outrageous. After all, sci-fi lends itself so perfectly to queer subtext and exploration of gender, sexuality and ‘the other’: everything and anything is possible in the world of science fiction. Shame on us for focusing on quite so much Cher (the singer and Horowitz). As it celebrates its 25th anniversary this month, it feels pertinent that we sink our teeth into one of the most important and acclaimed movies of its time: the Wachowskis’ seminal film, *The Matrix*.

I was about to start this summary with a glib ‘For anyone who has been living under a rock...’ bit, but upon reflection I remember the plot is fairly complicated.

The story revolves around moody but handsome computer hacker Neo (Keanu Reeves), who discovers that the world he lives in is a simulated reality created by intelligent machines in order to subdue humanity. Tale as old as time, really. Neo joins a group of rebels led by Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) in order to break free from the illusion and fight against the machines. Insane special effects, mind-blowing martial arts, and lofty philosophical musings ensue. The film touches on the light themes of reality, identity, and the struggle for freedom. The ambition of The Matrix franchise is colossal.

There may not be anything immediately queer about *The Matrix*. I remember when it came out it was every teenage boy and male film reviewer’s favourite movie; the aesthetic is metallic and mechanical; the film feels very serious and conceptual (very little camp, next to no whimsy); and the stakes of Neo’s journey are high octane. However, there is something inherently queer about the film’s very premise: the film presents a group of misfits actively involved in the rejection of a strict, binary system of which they do not feel a part.

Every queer person in some way is challenging the status quo within a heteronormative society, and the film symbolises that. And one must acknowledge how the film's directors, Lana and Lilly Wachowski, have both come out as transgender women since the film's release, presenting further nuance into *The Matrix's* queer subtext.

Lilly Wachowski has suggested the film was ahead of its time with regard to telling the story of gender binary rebellion and was truly about transgender identity; speaking to the BBC, she stated '*The Matrix* stuff was all about the desire for transformation, but it was all coming from a closeted point of view. We had the character of Switch – who was a character who would be a man in the real world and then a woman in the Matrix.' Meanwhile, theorist and writer Andrea Long Chu goes deeper, and has hypothesised that 'the red pill' allegory presented near the start of the film refers to hormone therapy pills, which in the 1990s were actually red. Perhaps this is coincidence, but it is interesting to rewatch the movie through this lens. Plus, *The Matrix* saw the beginning of the Wachowskis' careers, in which they would create explicitly queer stories (to varying degrees of success) as seen in *Sense8* and *Cloud Atlas*.

And aside from the queer subtext of the film, there is something to be said for celebrating the fierce warrior that is Trinity, played by the majestic Carrie-Anne Moss. She is so magnetic and, of course, delivers the floating kick that has been cemented as one of the most amazing martial arts moments in nineties cinema. And it wouldn't be NGMC without mentioning the film's costume design. *The Matrix's* costuming is characterised by a sleek, futuristic aesthetic that perfectly complemented the film's cyberpunk atmosphere. Neo and Trinity don long, flowing leather coats, sunglasses, and tight-fitting, high-tech attire: what was once futuristic clothing has returned in today's millennial nostalgia.

As with *The Fifth Element* before it, the costumes in *The Matrix* are synonymous with its groundbreaking, innovative style and arguably influenced fashion for decades to come. And who *didn't* want Neo's flip phone?

But I hear you asking: is there *anything* camp and OTT in *The Matrix*, something that bursts its bubble and saves it from being a serious cyberpunk snoozefest? Well, Susan Sontag *does* suggest in her famous works about defining camp that 'Nothing in nature can be campy.... Rural camp is still man-made, and most campy objects are urban,' which definitely applies to the hyper-mechanical futurism of *The Matrix*. But let's be real: Keanu Reeves' deadpan delivery of overwrought dialogue is hilarious ('I know kung fu,' he informs Morpheus, without a hint of irony). And while they are impressive, the martial art scenes are absolutely insane and over the top. Cutting through the often-dense philosophical quagmire of the film with backflips and karate chops is unintentionally hilarious.

However, there is an ultimate freedom that science fiction allows, and queer stories thrive in a genre in which boundaries are pushed and tested. Lilly Wachowski has stated, when creating *The Matrix*, 'We were existing in a space where the words didn't exist, so we were always living in a world of imagination.' Therein lies the joy and possibility of sci-fi: allegory that enables audiences to explore ourselves, free from the confines of reality. Am I going to watch *The Matrix* over *Mommie Dearest*? That's a no from me. But, 25 years after its release, *The Matrix* does hold up technically and culturally, as well as launching the careers of two of cinema's most innovative queer voices, constantly evolving and pushing the boundaries of storytelling.

Anyway, back to our regular scheduled programming next month: canine sport classic *Air Bud: Golden Receiver*.

REVIEW

IVY GRIMES

Book: *Star Shapes*

Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, writer Ivy Grimes' recent novella *Star Shapes* (illustrated by Alana Baldwin) packs a short yet ominous punch, studded with haunting, snappy prose and darkly funny illuminations on faith and belief, life philosophies, and family. Staged around a strange daylight kidnapping catalysed by a small child, *Star Shapes* sees the protagonist drawn into the fold of an odd country family who, instead of hurting or abusing her, ask her to complete a series of peculiar lessons and tests that seem sensible only to them. Grimes crafts a curiously suffocating environment full of American Gothic charm and dustiness – wide, empty fields carrying houses that seem almost nonexistent due to their isolation; lonely snakes in need of feeding – and allows the novella to shift in emotional tone with each page. Increasingly unsettled by herself and those around her, our protagonist finds herself pulled between fear and irritation, intrigue and disgust, frustration and defeat, until she doesn't know who she is, why she's there – or what the family truly wants.

A curious, easy-to-read tale, *Star Shapes* confronts the dilemmas that arise when religiosity, faith, grief, and the family unit are knit too closely together, weaving a story that, although brief, allows each character to develop an individual voice with promise.

A punchy, creepy story that makes even the simplest of objects feel unwelcoming and freakishly celestial.

***Star Shapes* is published by Spooky House Press**

Ambrose Kelly

JENNY KLEEMAN

Book: *The Price of Life: In Search of What We're Worth and Who Decides*

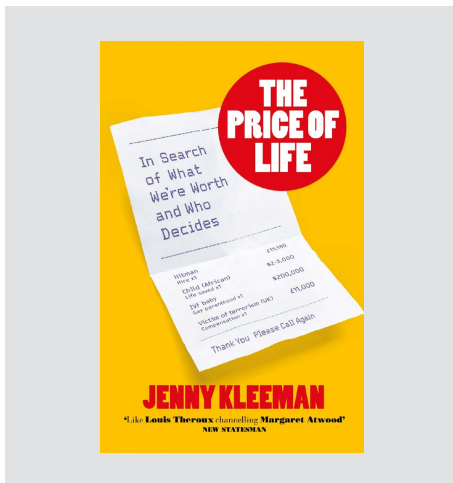
Jenny Kleeman states from the outset that she is 'not a numbers person...economist, an actuary or a statistician' and finds it difficult to compute lives by numbers – her new book is a project which attempts to understand just this. *The Price of Life: In Search of What We're Worth and Who Decides* is a deep dive into the cost of taking a life, creating a life, saving a life, and having someone write such an investigation who isn't numbers driven is in fact a positive. I'm not sure I would've finished a book that was as coldly callous as the title implies; thankfully Kleeman injects some life.

It's an interesting concept: death, life, and the human body, with chapters succinctly focused on the figure attributed to each and covering topics such as life insurance, cadavers, Silicon Valley philanthropy, and Covid lockdown – it has very little in terms of light relief. Each chapter begins with a human case study, and then moves into statistics and more general figures. The data is laid out, but with feeling – we see the data applied in real terms.

Kleeman articulately explores the unfeeling brutality of a data-driven world, and ultimately satirises the argument that Effective Altruists make (which is that when donating to charity you should strive to choose one that affects the highest number of lives, for example). Addressing the value of lives from these calculations, there's a tone to Kleeman's voice that expresses an inability to quite fathom this number-driven society – her more-than-plausible epilogue argument is that 'numbers can also flatten differences in human experience.' It's a title that supplies a dose of fresh air around the grim realisation that our world is besotted with numbers and data; Kleeman however, thankfully refuses to relinquish the lived quality of things.

The Price of Life is published by Picador on 14th March

Keira Brown



ALYS HARDY

Single: I Like It Like That

The debut single from the Welsh singer-songwriter captures the giddy rush of the heart and head when locking eyes with someone feels like a thunderclap.

Folk-informed, with a huge pop sensibility, a lovely bit of melodic vocal hook, and joyous chiming guitar lines that match the fluttery excitement of the first twinkling beats of a crush.

'I Like It Like That' is out now

Chris Queen

WINE MOMS

Single: Dogma

I remember the first time I saw Wine Moms play – I saw their name on the bill at King Tuts, and having not heard of them, figured it would be a quirky indie folk thing, complete with twee lyrics and ukuleles. I was completely wrong and I was not prepared. I felt a similar way about their latest single, 'Dogma'. It starts with a lone, almost tame, guitar riff, but you can feel what's coming; it's just setting the tone. The rhythm section sets off, bursting into the band's signature grunge-punk sound.

The ferocious, snarled delivery matches the energy and flow of the song, which constantly chops and changes, keeping things catchy but not repetitive. The breakdown comes in with overlapping vocals vying for your attention, each dominating the sound in their own way. The music starts to fade out before that familiar intro riff comes back in: the pounding kick drum, one last chorus. Wine Moms aren't done yet.

'Dogma' is out now

Matthew O'Donnell

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Single: Hush

The first release from the Glasgow five-piece since 2018's *Post Era* is a downbeat dance floor filler for the sad kids in the club, taking a cosmic jazz beat and Balearic guitar that twists in and out of melancholy vocals from Mitch Flynn and The Orielles' Esmé-Dee Hand-Halford. One for putting on at a huge party whilst staring, Gatsby-like, off into the middle distance at some poignant thought.

'Hush' is out now via El Rancho Records

Chris Queen



MARKY WILDTYPE

Single: Tell Me Again

In a departure from his previous indie folk sound, Marky Wildtype's latest single 'Tell Me Again', the first from his upcoming second album, is a DIY marvel. It's a little bit of new wave, a little bit of rock, and a little bit of pop, topped off with spoken word.

All the instruments take turns coming into the mix. The bass (what a bassline – apparently it came to Marky Wildtype in a dream), the drums, even the synths popping in one at a time, give the tune a faint otherworldly energy.

The vocals come across as a spoken-word piece, with lyrics about those individuals who make kindness exceptionally difficult to commit to, due to their unrepentantly foul behaviour.

A true testament to the DIY ethos, this song, as well as the whole new album, is entirely arranged, performed, recorded, and mixed by Marky Wildtype, save for a little bit of drumming.

'Tell Me Again' is out now

Matthew O'Donnell

SAVAGE MANSION

Album: The Shakes

It sounds like The Phantom Band. It sounds like early Fall. It sounds like The Charlatans when Tim was trying to be Ol' Dirty. It sounds like The Verve before they swapped acid for coke. It sounds like that bit on 'Another Girl Another Planet' when the punks realised they could play guitar. It sounds like Wilson Phillips. It sounds like Emo Phillips. It sounds like mid-period Fall. It sounds like Noel thought Oasis did. It sounds like Pavement when they remembered they liked each other. It sounds like the NME would make up a spurious genre based on it. It sounds like Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. It sounds like late period Fall. It sounds like skinny ties and converse and big flares and afghans. It sounds like a self released 7". It sounds like 1974, and 1994, and 2004 and 2024. It sounds like a party I'd like to be at.

The Shakes is out now on Lost Map Records

Chris Queen

LITTLE SIMZ

EP: Drop 7

A decade after the debut of her Drop series, acclaimed British rapper Little Simz surprised her fans with the unexpected release of the *Drop 7* EP. *Drop 7* is yet another succinct collection, boasting razor-sharp delivery – the *Drop* releases allow Simz space for experimentation and act as marker for future long players, this time introducing high-energy dance rhythms to the mix.

The statement EP opens with ‘Mood Swings’. A hypnotic track, its club-oriented beats are crafted by producer Jakwob, also known for his work with dance and electronic artists such as Nia Archives and Shygirl. The song establishes the mood for what quickly follows, as Simz fires through introspective lyrics against a backdrop of vibrant melodies and deep R&B grooves. In ‘Fever’, Simz effortlessly transitions between various tongues as she humbly celebrates her achievements in the lines, ‘Can you believe that we made it this far? Still the same me that I’ve been from the start / I know what I bring, I’ve been playing my part.’

The theme of self-validation continues in the lyrics of ‘Torch’, a ferociously addictive track where Simz declares ‘Nothin’ left to prove ‘cause I done enough’. ‘SOS’ begins with echoing drums before the Brazilian rhythms pick up and beckon listeners back to the dance floor. As the tempo mellows, tracks like ‘I Ain’t Feelin It’ and ‘Power’ offer rich, contemplative sounds. Closing with the dreamy piano intro of ‘Far Away’, the record seems to end on a serene note before transitioning seamlessly into another lively bouncy number, perfectly drawing the collection to its close.

While some similarities might be drawn between this new work and Beyoncé’s club-ready *Renaissance* album released in 2022, including a resemblance in the silver, metallic-style album artwork, Simz continues to affirm her uniqueness.

Drop 7 is out now on Forever Living Originals via AWAL Recordings

Aisha Fatunmbi-Randall



Photo credit: Karolina Wielocha

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SHEARS

EP: *Now We're Getting Somewhere*

Since earning a following singing cover songs online, Leith-based (Ayrshire-born) producer Rebecca Shearing has flourished into an accomplished solo artist in her own right. In 2019, she began releasing electronic pop music as SHEARS, and *Now We're Getting Somewhere* is her fourth EP.

Roughly twenty minutes long, it consists of six tracks – written, produced, and mixed at Shearing's home studio. Despite its bedroom origins, and we don't say this lightly, it sounds on a level with any current mainstream pop. The opening track 'I Look At You (It's Over)' is a late 90s/early 00s throwback, with power vocals, clattering jungle beats, warm synths, and an irresistible chorus. It's a masterclass in modern dance music, and across the EP, you'll find nods to classic acts like Alice Deejay and Ian Van Dahl, colliding with sounds you might expect from Alice Glass and girl in red. 'Made to Move' is cold and glitchy, 'Shadow' is an awkward groove machine, 'Figure Me Out' is a surging floor filler, 'As You Are' goes full-on drum and bass at the end, and closing track 'The Way You Like' is tied with the opener for the best song on here.



Now We're Getting Somewhere is a smashing wee pop album packed with fresh-faced, nostalgic bangers, just as suited to your living room as the club dance floor.

SHEARS is also phenomenal live: go see her!

Now We're Getting Somewhere is out now

Chris Sneddon

LAST BOY

EP: *Live at the Carron Bothy*

Strong, dusky vocals and a moodily ambient production marks 'Live From the Carron Bothy', the debut EP from Last Boy, a selection of old and original Scottish bothy ballads. The live element of the release allows the earthy, intimate origins of these ballads to shine through: it's a stripped back sound that feels authentic and deferential to tradition, with the bothy fire snapping behind covers of long-established songs such as 'The Dowie Dens o' Yarrow',

The accompanying film, shot by Craig McIntosh, is an immersive and stunningly rendered asset to the recording, another being the concluding track of the EP, written by Last Boy himself.



Photo credit: Craig McIntosh

'The Boy With Blood on His Hands', entirely without accompaniment, yet movingly sung in the style of a traditional bothy ballad, makes you feel firmly pulled into the present day, and suggests an exciting flexibility for an ancient form. A suppleness which I hope Last Boy explores with similar flair in the future.

Live From the Carron Bothy is out now

James Taylor

LACUNA

EP: Greenhouse Baby (Live at Chime Studios)

Richly textured and dynamic, Lacuna's latest EP, *Greenhouse Baby*, feels like a whole day of changing weather and light and atmosphere packed into a trio of folk-rock tracks. Recorded live at Chime Studios by Luc Grindle, *Greenhouse Baby* follows the Glasgow group's 2023 EP *Overgrown* and 2021's *Mazza Mary*.

The EP dawns with the warm, earthy tones of 'Creature Comforts', fiddle weaving through the thicket of guitar and woody percussion. The band then mellows into a soft, steady groove on 'Saint Bernadette'. With breathy vocals and low, grungy guitar, a weak, tepid sense of calm seeps through the mix, before storm clouds of percussion and distortion tear through the malaise.

The EP's closing piece is a reworking of the band's 2021 song 'Mazza Mary'. A wistful, country-tinted track, this version is made softer and warmer by the introduction of gentle fiddle and gorgeous molten saxophone, which transform the track from wispy, feathery beginnings into a blazing sunset of a finale.

Greenhouse Baby (Live at Chime Studios) is out now

Zoë White



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UNION OF KNIVES

Album: *Start From The Endless*

Eighteen years and an almost complete change of line-up on from their debut album, *Violence & Birdsong*, polymathic producer Chris Gordon returns to the project that took Union of Knives to Cy Twombly exhibitions at the Tate Modern and the lovelorn doctors of *Grey's Anatomy*. Intended as a companion piece to 2021's *Endless From The Start*, he is once again working with Ant Thomaz of DopeSickFly and drummer Peter Kelly of, well, too many bands to list here, but best known for his work with The Kills and electroclash darlings Ladytron.

It's a dense, complex piece of work with influences drawn from classical music as much as industrial; drum and bass and heavy metal blast beats. It's all about texture and contrast – the dreamy weave of 'Elixir' falling into the pounding hedonism of single 'Salut Salut'; the delicacy of 'I Took My Rage From the Sun', where guest vocalist Daisy Miles sings 'I would never hurt her' and leaves dread open in the implication; the doomy coda of 'Annihilation' with the title repeated in a blissful lullaby.

Gordon is a talented and prolific producer – using Kelly's forceful drum blasts as a rush of propulsion under 'X' or as a pounding techno break, and Thomaz as a charismatic voice that can lighten the intensity as well as lean into it.

Honestly, there's a lot going on here, and I feel like I'm probably capable of analysing about ten percent of the sheer depth of this even on about a week of solid listens – it's like a Rothko painting or something, layers upon layers of lacquer that pull the listener further in each time. Is that a stylophone? A theremin? Is that a string quartet of a feedback loop, vocal distortion, or manipulated guitars? There's an intensity to it – the kind of confidence of an album that is able to stand in an uncategorisable space on its own – that could soundtrack both raving vampires and the most modern of art.

***Start From The Endless* is out on 19th March**

Chris Queen

DANCER

Album: *10 Songs I Hate About You*

Following hot on the heels of their 2023 EPs *Dancer* and *As Well*, *10 Songs I Hate About You* is the debut LP from Glasgow-based post-punks Dancer. If the arrival of yet another post-punk band doesn't thrill you, then let it be known: this is no bog-standard release, and *Dancer's* music is far from generic. Singer Gemma Fleet's lyrics are witty, insightful, and absurd, and whilst the delivery is often evocative of slam poetry, her vocals are brimming with effortless melody and, in their peppier moments, are great for a singalong. There's also something enduringly endearing about how she casually announces the song title at the beginning of each track in her Home Counties accent. To complement Fleet's vocals, the rest of *Dancer* concoct a catchy cocktail of slacker rock, techy indie and awkward punk that's part Television, part Dananananaykroyd, and part Smashing Pumpkins.

Photo credit: Simon Murphy



Chris Taylor's intricate guitar playing switches between lively and meditative, Andrew Doig trades trundling bass lines with melodic low-end grunts, and Gavin Murdoch's drums are complex and danceable, with a satisfying thump and thwack. Album highlights include the dreamy synth lines of 'Change' (played on a DIY contraption attached to Taylor's guitar), the mathy guitar lines and oddball lyrics ('how now, brown cow, big wow') of 'Make A Decision' and the chorus of 'When I Was A Teenage Horse' – its melody delightfully borrowed from The Equals' chart-topping hit 'Baby, Come Back'. *10 Songs I Hate About You* is fun, memorable, and unabashedly eccentric.

10 Songs I Hate About You is out on 15th March via Meritorio Records

Chris Sneddon

ELLE MACHRAY

Book: Remember, Remember

The best historical fiction comments on the present day, and few novels do this as acutely and with such impact as Elle Machray's *Remember, Remember*. Set in London in the late 18th century, siblings Delphine and Vincent are attempting to take control of their lives after years of enslavement in the service of the entitled and despicable Lord Harvey. Initially they put their trust in the law of the land and due process. But as events unfold it becomes clear that for them and those like them, the more things change the more they stay the same, despite the talk of justice for all discussed among the educated classes of the time. It's a difficult book to talk about without giving spoilers, but suffice to say there are joyous highs, and terrible lows, all inextricably linked.

Chapters often begin with quotes from Enlightenment philosophers, writers and thinkers who would shape the political and social contracts of the 17th and 18th century, and whose

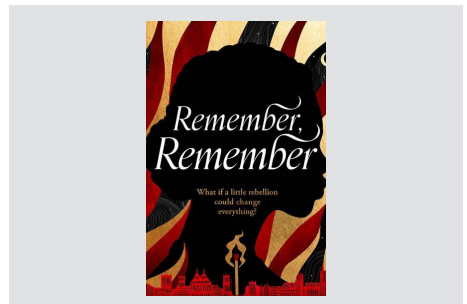
influence is still felt today. Names such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Locke, Rousseau, and Kant are invoked, but these are contrasted with newspaper reports from around the country which balance what was really happening on the streets of Britain for those in slavery.

You can't help but compare the philosophy and ideology with the reality of Delphine and Vincent's lives, and the former especially comes to realise that fine words butter no parsnips when faced with prejudice, violence and hate, particularly when it is, if not state-approved, then definitely state-ignored. As you read, parallels with Britain today are unavoidable. *Remember, Remember* touches upon institutionalised racism and misogyny, but also threats against the right to protest, the role of police, prolonged and toothless parliamentary process, universal civil liberties, and much more. As the quote from Edmund Burke says, 'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing', and it's as relevant today as it was then.

Elle Machray has written a novel which weaves together history and fiction seamlessly, and which is genuinely thrilling and thought-provoking throughout. Educate, inform, entertain. *Remember, Remember* ticks all the boxes.

Remember, Remember is published by Harper North

Alistair Braidwood



SNACK BITS

Bits is a column that is firmly out of touch with the heavily discussed pop culture of the day. Yes, we know Taylor Swift won the American Football Cup in February, but as to why Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Natasha Bedingfield are getting another spin in the spotlight, who knows? If we make it through the Oscars, we might have bluffed our way through another awards season, and with the clocks going forward, we're counting the days to summer festivals.

It's a varied bag with respect to styles and genres this month, although a lot of quality to please you, no matter what you're into. Yes, even that: there's no shaming here, so let's get things moving on a serious note.

The uneasy and careering canter of 'I Drink Therefore I Am' is an on-the-nose retelling of the times alcohol takes over our lives. Whatever your relationship is with alcohol (and the genuine one, not the one you tell others), anything which encourages frank discussions and assessments should be encouraged. It's not an easy listen from **Stephen Durkan**, perhaps more of a narrative or scene soundtrack than a song you return to, but as a statement or a gateway into honesty or reappraisal, it's very welcome.

An artist's relationship with alcohol is also the focus of 'Half Price Fantasy' by **Grayling**, albeit with a very different sonic landscape.



Photo credit: Rosie Sco

Here, pedal-steel licks vie with a world-weary vocal to create something so sumptuous you could sink into for an entire weekend.

And as a further warning to look after yourself, here's a song about your favourite artists dying at a young age. As the title suggests, 'TWENTY7CLUB' from **Alx Romance** is an ode to the age so many stars bow out, and the fragile state our heroes often inhabit while still wowing audiences.

It's a dark tale with hope of redemption, or at least a brighter future, and this is replicated in the music. The verses are murky but the choruses are pure pop, while the track rolls out on the two-minute mark. Well, it's better to burn out than fade away.

Mapped By A Forest provide jangling guitars, but at a slower pace than you'd normally associate with this style. That's no bad thing, and quite refreshing, bringing a mournful feel to 'Our Place In The World'. It's not going to pull up trees by itself, but it's melodic, meaningful, and should sit well alongside the more powerful moments in their catalogue.

'How Long' is a smooth showcase of **Nicky Murray's** strong vocals and a backdrop of instruments which wouldn't be out of place on Radio 2. If you like light and jazzy numbers where the vocals do a lot of the lifting, this will make you feel at ease. Nicky also features on the bill at Glasgow's Glad Café on 9th March, with the Gladcast Two event raising funds for Glad Radio.

'Second Thought' by **The Wits** might be a track that wrestles with anxiety, but it's lively and sure to put a bit of spring in your step. No matter how the world turns, there will always be kids with guitars harking back, even as they do their own thing, working their way through their issues. It's clean, well put-together and enough to warrant further investigation if choppy guitars and an anthemic sheen are your bag.

And if you love guitars, look out for **Polly** and 'Mother Knows Best'. It's released just before Mothers' Day, so if you need to buy a present, this track is a gentle reminder. Your mother might like this song, she might not, and if you think this is a set-up for a cheap gag about your mother, you're in the wrong place, my friend.

It might be a gentle reminder, but that's the only gentle thing about the track. From the measured, menacing start to the hyper-powered end, and with impassioned vocals all throughout, it's a heavy track that chugs along nicely.

A more traditional Mothers' Day gift comes in the form of **Siobhan Wilson's** *FLOWERCORE* 7 EP, although this is released after that big date on the calendar. Siobhan is all in on her flower project, including a Kickstarter campaign, and the initial tracks are the light and lovely moments you'd expect from such a consistent Scottish artist. 'Snowdrop's Tune' is a pleasant start to the release, but it's a stirring and reflective collective of the nature that exists in the artist's immediate surroundings.



Photo credit: Greg Ryan

Referencing Judy Collins wasn't on our bingo card for this month's column but 'Reborn & Grown' by **Jane Frances** takes us there, and a good few other places. There are moments that are positively lovely, particularly the pre-chorus lifts. If you're a bit tired of the way Britain is heading back to the 1970s, take a trip across the pond to enjoy a fresh take on a sound that will spark a nostalgic glow.

The strings and vocals are especially delightful, and it's cheering to have something so pleasant now and again.

Delightful is also one of the apt descriptions for **Alison Eales' Four for a Boy** EP, a sweet collection fuelled by ukuleles, accordions and charming vocals. It could be the ideal antidote to tough days.

There's a lot more to come from **Josienne Clarke** this year, notably the *Parenthesis, I*, album in May, but single 'Most of All' is a nice way to ease into that. A traditional folk-style song with delicate guitar picking, recorded in a lo-fi way, allowing an artist to expose themselves to the world to poke and peer at. It's just what you need at times.

By the time you come back to us next month, we'll probably still be getting our head around 'Eyes' by **Amateur Cult**. There's a great deal going on in less than four minutes, with the squelching synth a great way to kick things off while the motorik drums and squealing peals of sax are a great way to bring things home. You've also got the post-funk, new-wave step back in time, with more than a knowing wink from **Bikini Body** and 'Mr Tinnitus'.

And we'll end with an act we've mentioned a few times, who are causing a ruckus with their new EP: **Martha May & The Mondays**. 'SPIT!' as its title suggests it's raw and punky, but 'Tennis' lulls you in with a seductive musical backing that sounds like the most indie of laid-back pop. And then the lyrics kick in. Oh my! 'Touch Me' is far more frenetic, continuing the sexually charged flow, and will cause merry chaos in live shows. 'War Games' has a brattish energy, wrapping up the EP neatly. Martha May & The Mondays have lived up to their billing with a short, sharp collection that will grab attention and ensure you need to catch your breath.

See you in April, you fools.



IF I WAS SAMUEL L. JACKSON AT MY PREVIOUS JOB...

then I would ram my heel,
lifting the front door clean off its hinges.
I would strut in like a peacock,
shaking my rainbow-coloured arse
and lighting a Benson and Hedges,
cig perched side-lip,
I'd demand to speak to the managers.

While I waited, I'd fire a round
from my pump action shotgun
into the photocopier
for all the times it jammed; all the toner
cartridges I was forced to replace.

In this valley of darkness, bare-handed,
I'd rip off a toilet seat then hurl it
out the bathroom window,
fooling locals into believing it was a UFO
and that aliens had landed.

Do not mess with me, motherfuckers.
I can see through each of you;
as transparent as the watercooler.
*And you will know my name is the Lord
when I lay my vengeance upon you –*
or by the ID card left in my top drawer.

I want apologies. Retribution.
Payback for all the psychological torment;
nerve-racking, backstabbing, wise-cracking
dogs abuse
which brought me to my knees.
At the very least, before I leave,
I want you to get busy boot-kissing
then make me a Royale with cheese.

Your reputation depends upon it.

Stephen Watt

Celebrating Scottish Traditional Music

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DEIRA
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DONALD MACDONALD
ELEPHANT SESSIONS
HANNAH RARITY
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KINNARIS QUINTET
MEC LIR
NITENWORKS
PROJECT SMOK
ROSIE H SULLIVAN
SIOBHAN MILLER
BAND
TRIP

SUN 9 JUNE

BRÌGHDE CHAIMBEUL
& AIDAN O'ROURKE
CALA
CHLOE MATHARU
CLAIRE HASTINGS
CROFT NO. FIVE
FARA
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