

MusicInDepth

JAMES COUSINS



Right, who's next?

A list of the bands that reformed in 2007 reads like 'A Brief Introduction to Twentieth Century Popular Music', with everyone, great and the good or truly woeful, well represented. From mystical heavy metal progenitors Led Zeppelin, to The Police's reggae-inflected New Wave, to that most angry of bands, Rage Against The Machine, it seems that every genre had ancient musical skeletons just aching to be brought out of the closet, dusted down and propped up on a stage. Even the Spice Girls are getting in on the act, miraculously finding time for music amidst pouting and promoting their latest perfumes.

You'd struggle to read the full list without running out of breath, and that's only including the most famous groups. Start adding in indie legends such as My Bloody Valentine, The Jesus And Mary Chain and Dinosaur Jr. and you're really starting to test your lung capacity. Now, I don't want to start a purely theoretical argument about the motivations behind the reformations of these musical behemoths, but I think that it's obvious that not all of these groups will have been prompted to reform by the same factors. While Led Zeppelin's motives may have been applaudably altruistic, reuniting to perform in honour of their longtime friend and Atlantic Records boss Ahmet Ertegun, with all proceeds going to charity, surely nobody expects the Spice Girls to reach such artistic heights as Jimmy Page's solo in Stairway To Heaven? The Sex Pistols, hardly novices at this reunion business, named their 1996 reunion The Filthy Lucre Tour; admirably honest, if a poke in the eye for any remaining die-hard punks lurking around London.

Nothing seems to be able to stand in the way of these bands' determination to once more appear in all their glory on a stage near you. Or, seeing as we're York students, it would probably be more accurate to say appear soon on a stage not-particularly-near you-at-all. But let's leave that minor inconvenience aside for the moment, shall we. I mean, Led Zeppelin's drummer has been dead for over a quarter of a century, which would seem to put a bit of a dampener on any possible reunion talk. But fear not! John Bonham thoughtfully passed on his rhythmically-gifted DNA, begetting, as he did, a son. The day is saved, and The Great Band Reunion grinds forward.

Well, if death isn't an insurmountable obstacle, how about total personal incompatibility? Sting once got so angry at Police drummer Stuart Copeland that he scrawled a certain four letter word beginning with 'C' across Copeland's drums in vivid red letters, yet they're once again polyrhythmically gracing stages after a twenty-year absence. Drug addictions? A minor inconvenience - Smashing Pumpkin Jimmy Chamberlain is clean and ready to rock after a reputedly monumental drug habit.

No hurdle is too great to overcome in the grand scheme of The Great Band Reunion. Maybe we could be seeing The Beatles live for the first time since 1969. And I'm not talking about replacing John and George, I mean the original Fab Four. We can always dream...

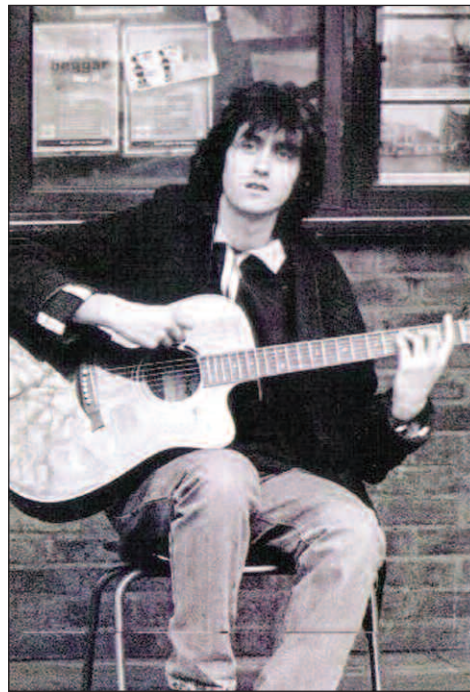
ARTIST: JAY FOREMAN
ALBUM: 20 SONGS
REVIEW: OLIVIA HAUGHTON
DATE: OUT NOW



Everybody loves a laugh, right? York's resident musical comedian Jay Foreman has been cashing in on this fact since 2005 when a charity fundraising idea got big. Four CDs later, including a recently released 'Best Of', Jay has become something of a campus legend. No, let me clarify - just a legend. The song 'Moon Chavs' has generated a bit of a cult following in students across the country, as a quick search of YouTube testifies. But it's not only students who are fans of Jay's; the BBC showed considerable interest in '20 Songs for Free', the show he brought to last year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

Jay confesses that he "loves to make people laugh at things they shouldn't find funny", and *20 Songs*, a compilation of the best songs from his previous three CDs, does just that. Titles such as 'Chained to a Radiator' and 'Stealing Food' give a feel of what's in store, although nothing can fully prepare you for the gleeful, yet slightly guilty, feeling the album will leave you with. The songs range from the downright silly ('Spirograph' and 'Balloon') to the lewd and terribly funny ('Buggery Club'). And somewhere along the way Jay touches upon more sensitive issues in 'Little Japanese Baby' and 'No Christmas' where his skillful wit and complete lack of taste give way to dry humour.

Jay ventures into mildly political territory with 'Calypso' and attempts a "non-funny" song in 'Hundred Perfect Days'. This, with a



catchy guitar riff and melancholic melody, works well; if it's a little out of place among 19 comic songs then it's heartfelt words and musicality are all part of the charm.

Jay's arrangements are simple and primarily acoustic, using mostly guitar, with occasional synthesizers. If you manage to catch him live you're in for a treat because as good as the album is, when it comes to comedy, live performance can't be bettered. Be warned though, this album is hardly a tasteful work. But who cares? At £5 (only 25p a song, he points out) Jay capitalises on our guilty pleasures and so we must thank him.

ON THE UP

ARTIST: THE BRASCOES
PREVIEW: JESS POWERS

The Brascoes were born early last year when old friends Dan Jones and Nove drunkenly decided to form a band. Add mates Jonny and Clymo to the mix and they have gone on to cause a stir in the Birmingham unsigned scene with what they describe as 'spiky, danceable indie'. They have been compared to Bloc Party, We Are Scientists and the Pigeon Detectives, with singer Jones bearing more than a passing resemblance to Kasabian's Sergio Pizzorno. Last year they were crowned winners of the Surface Unsigned Festival and have just released their first EP by digital download. Next month sees them heading out from their native Birmingham and Nottingham to play Leeds, Sheffield and Manchester.

I met up with the band in Birmingham before they played a gig at the Old Wharf in Digbeth, ironically supporting the band that came second in the Surface Unsigned Festival. The four-piece clearly get on well, Dan exclaiming that "you'll never meet four people who like the sound of their own voices more than us," which certainly proved helpful for what they termed their third "proper" interview. The band seem really enthused about breaking out of the Birmingham music scene, although whether this is a move to widen their fan base or just to fulfil a curious obsession about visiting Flamingo Land is in some doubt.

To read Jess's interview with The Brascoes visit www.nouse.co.uk/whats-on

IN-DEPTH: KIWI DUB

If names like Fat Freddy's Drop, The Black Seeds, Kora or Little Bushmen mean something to you then you're part of a special minority in Britain.

On my travels through New Zealand I was irresistibly taken in by the funky grooves that were all around. I was struck by the duality of the music; mellow enough for a day spent lounging in the sun, yet rhythmic enough to get up and dance to. It's the feel-good factor that got to me. There's something about the tranquility and easy-going vibe of New Zealand that instills in these artists an ability to create music quite different from that of any other country, and pass the feeling on.

Dub music began back in the 1960s. An offshoot of reggae; dub tends to focus on heavily manipulated and rhythm-centric remixes of pre-existing tracks, with deep, throbbing basslines and echoey production. It is seldom found in our neck of the woods, and you could be forgiven for thinking it had almost fizzled out entirely, certainly if the British musical mainstream was your only field of reference. But New Zealand has done something magical with this genre; it has taken dub to a new level and blown the roof off.

Salmonella Dub formed in 1992; instrumentally weighted electro-acoustic dub fit for the dance floor put them at the forefront of this New Zealand musical genera-

tion and, along with fellow dubsters Supergroove, they pioneered the way. They have since released numerous albums and EPs, the latest of which, *Heal Me*, rightly received rave reviews. Trinity Roots and Pitch Black followed in the late 90s; Trinity's *Home, Land and Sea* is a particularly striking blend of jazz, soul, dub and roots with beautiful brass and saxophone arrangements. Add to the mix The Black Seeds, (pictured below), a supremely chilled-out and melodic 7-piece formed in 1998, and Kora or Little Bushmen, and you've got a body of work that's well worth exploring.

The typically earthy tunes with more than a touch of funk often refer to poignant, existential and political themes. Take, for example, Kora's 'Politician' which, true to their roots style, expresses resistance to oppression. But by the same token, this organic feel gives life and character to the less profound songs; one of my favourites, 'Fire' by The Black Seeds, is guaranteed to lift the spirits. Fat Freddy's Drop, the icing on the cake, have broken into the international market on a much larger scale than any other Kiwi band and last year played on the Glastonbury Jazz World Stage.

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Olivia Haughton

