

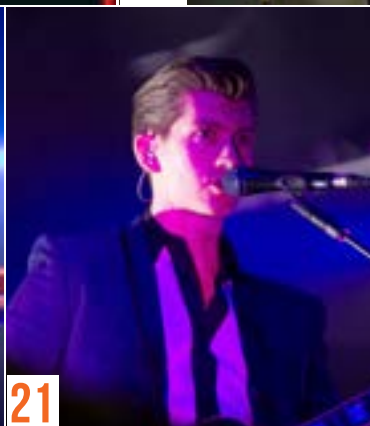
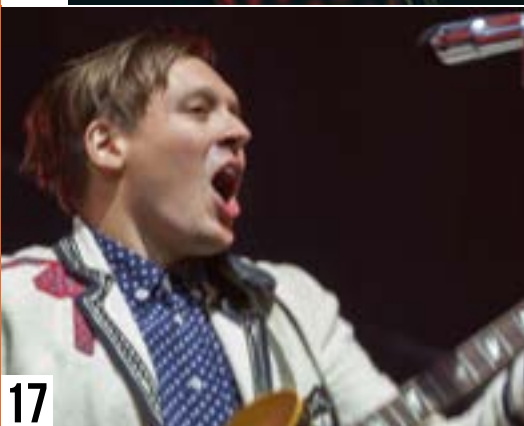


GoldenPlec

Irish Music. Covered



BEST OF 2013



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Welcome

As GoldenPlec heads towards its twelfth birthday in August, we reflect on the fantastic year we had in 2013.

We've reviewed hundreds of live shows, albums, EPs and promoted events all over the country. We were fortunate enough to be selected as recipients of the Arthur Guinness Projects funding and served content to nearly 1 million unique users this year.

Our tireless volunteer team are behind our massive coverage and this magazine features the highlights of music in Ireland in 2013 as voted for by GoldenPlec writers and photographers.

We hope you enjoy what we have to offer and look forward to seeing you online and in print in 2014.

Stephen Byrne -Features Editor
Aidan Cuffe - Editor

BEST LIVE GIG

1 - Queens Of The Stone Age at The O2

Sunday 18th November 2013

They unleash their trademark brand of metal riffage with *You Think I Ain't Worth A Dollar, But I Feel Like A Millionaire*. The significant girth and volume of the pulsating sound instantly reaches what Garth Algar would consider "the appropriate volume" and the sonic assault on the senses was joined by a two-pronged visual spear of truly captivating and blinding lighting and equally impressive visual sequences.

Josh Homme's vocals were surprisingly full-bodied, crisp and pitch-perfect throughout the performance and he managed to more than hold his own when interpreting songs originally performed by Mark Lanegan and former bassist Nick Oliveri.

Their pulsating rhythm figures, relentless drumming and dastardly vocal refrains created a black hole of moshing that sent people flying around like paper airplanes. For some it must have felt like they were playing death-match quidditch as their feet didn't touch the ground for unnatural periods of time.

Burn The Witch shows that

Homme and Co are far more than mere metal show ponies laying down a classic blues riff with pedal steel guitar parts and call and response vocals.

You could argue that other bands have performed better in Ireland this year, but add in a truly stunning light-show, beautifully rendered visual accompaniments and Josh Homme's masterful vocal and virtuoso guitar display and you can't help but conclude that Queens Of The Stone Age in The O2 was simply the highlight of the gig-going calendar in 2013.

"We didn't wanna fall in love with you, Dublin, but you went and made us do it," Homme said offering a rare platitude to the crowd, but in reality it was the crowd who were spellbound, yearning for twenty-one more songs to go with what they'd just put their bodies on the line for.

Review: Stephen Byrne

Photo: Debbie Hickey





2 Chic featuring Nile Rodgers at Forbidden Fruit



Sunday June 2nd 2013

Disco swaggered back into the mainstream consciousness in 2013 thanks to Nile Rodgers' collaboration with Daft Punk on *Get Lucky* but with Chic on tour it didn't take long for the hit-maker to reclaim his throne.

Nile Rodgers' funkadelic disco jukebox was the undoubted highlight of the entire Forbidden Fruit festival and indeed the summer's festival calendar. Chic are quite possibly the tightest band on this or any other planet, with each member a true virtuoso on their chosen instruments. The band blasted through the highlights of their career and other disco classics such as Sister Sledge's *Lost in Music*. However, Rodgers is eager to stress that they are not a covers band even

as they played through the hits they have written for other artists such as Madonna's *Like a Virgin* and Duran Duran's *Notorious*.

As the show progressed it was truly astonishing to realise how many songs Rodgers has either written or produced for other artists. It did become easier to fathom how Rodgers has played on \$2 billion worth of record sales in his career however. Chic's rendition of David Bowie's *Let's Dance* was a spiritual experience – the highlight of Chic's set and indeed the entire festival – as a capacity crowd bounced and sang along in unison. It even had the on-looking Edge dancing.

The last hurrah of *Good Times*, segueing expertly into the Sugar Hill Gang's *Rapper's Delight*, saw Rodgers introduce the band to

the strains of his latest hit *Get Lucky* by Daft Punk before leaving the stage to rapturous applause. Even the late great James Brown would find it hard to beat Chic.

Chic also astonished crowds later in the year when they returned to Ireland for a successful stint in Dublin's Vicar St but their appearance at Forbidden Fruit was simply superb.

Review: Stephen Byrne

Photo: Aisling Finn



3 - Depeche Mode at The O2

9th of November 2013

In Dave Gahan, Depeche Mode possesses a frontman who radiates enough charisma to power a small nation. Whatever Gahan wanted the crowd to do – wave their hands in the air, clap in unison, sing back the chorus – was complied with, with Borg-like efficiency. If Gahan wanted the crowd to lie on their backs and bark like dogs, he'd have got it.

Gahan was full of sexual menace, prowling the stage during *Angel* like a lithe matador, scanning the crowd like they were his prey. The mic stand was getting the full on sleaze treatment from Gahan, gyrating on it like a Lothario during *Policy Of Truth* and hoisting it aloft like a sexual conquest on *Walking In My Shoes*. Most sex scenes in movies are not

this steamy!

Gahan sounded like a prophet proclaiming our fate during an urgent and brilliant *Behind The Wheel*. *The Pain That I'm Used To* sounded suitably like a torrid liaison while the final two monster songs, *Enjoy The Silence* and *Personal Jesus*, closed out the set spectacularly. But after teasing and toying with the crowd for so long, Depeche Mode just couldn't kick their fans out without some more love. There was no chance of people looking for a sneaky exit to catch an early tram.

The encore began with Gore performing an acoustic number in *Shake The Disease* before the raucous fun of the classic *I Just Can't Get Enough* just about summed up how the crowd

felt about the band. *I Feel You* and *Never Let Me Down Again* rounded off an epic gig where Depeche Mode confirmed why they are one of the biggest bands on the planet with a brilliant performance which left the crowd gagging for more.

Review: Frank Hughes

Photo: Michelle Geraghty



4 Airbourne at The Academy

Saturday, 22 October, 2013

Frontman Joel O'Keefe tore through the lyrics with total lack of restraint. He threw his body around the stage, jumping down to fist bump the entire front row one moment and standing precariously atop an amp to play a solo the next. Things only got faster for the anthemic swell of *Too Much, Too Young, Too Fast*, and faster still for bawdy ballad *Girls In Black*.

At this point even the stage wasn't enough for Joel, who took to the shoulders of a fan and rode out into the middle of the pit. Surrounded by a sea of outstretched hands, the bare-chested, long-haired figure looked like a mythic hero after battle, his guitar upraised triumphantly like a battle axe.

The sheer explosive power of the first three songs suggested that the band would need to slow down for a breather as they approached the middle of their set. But Airbourne don't do slow songs. Joel may have looked like he'd bitten off more than he could chew with his frantic antics – like a runner who sprints the first mile of a marathon – but Airbourne kept the energy levels turned up to 11 for the entire show. Pace and restraint be damned; they went ahead and sprinted the rest of the marathon too.

When Joel chugged a bottle of Shiraz before playing *Cheap Wine And Cheaper Women*, it was obvious that Airbourne are the living embodiment of the reckless decadence at the heart

of their music.

They don't just play their music hard and fast, they live that way too. After the sonic barrage of *Stand Up For Rock 'n' Roll* the band departed, and there didn't seem like there could be anything left to top the previous hour or so of pure insane rock energy.

Review: Frank Hughes

Photo: Alessio Michellini



5 - Blur at The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham

Thursday 1st of August, 2013

"It really, really, really could happen," Damon Albarn sings just before Blur end their set at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. A decade ago you would have never thought it could happen. Graham Coxon left in 2002 and just a year later the band looked dead. It was resurrected in 2008 and on a dark, windy day in August they play a set no Blur fan present will soon forget.

The foreboding sky had made some of the packed house nervous but as soon as the opening beats of *Girls And Boys* played, all tensions are relieved. The crowd bounce up and down shouting the lyrics back to the stage where the energy is reflected by Damon Albarn. He may be 45 now, but he looks

as good as ever. His double denim and cheeky grin are '90s throwbacks but his performance is timeless.

Graham Coxon too is his usual shoe-gazing self while cheesemaker, and occasional bassist, Alex James seems like he has accidentally ended up on stage and doesn't quite know what the fuss is about. There is a sense of ordinariness about the four piece. There is nothing ordinary about the performance however.

Not supporting an album, this show turns into a greatest hits collection. And not many other bands have a collection of hits greater than Blur. From *Beetlebum* to *Tender* to *Parklife*, with Phil Daniels turning up to perform it himself, and everything in

between; it's almost impossible to pick holes in the show. In the years ahead this Blur show could go down as one of those "I was there" events.

For now, we can just marvel at an incredible performance from band at the peak of their powers.

It really, really, really did happen.

Review: Sean Noone

Photo: Kieran Frost



6 Fleetwood Mac at The O2

Friday, September 20th 2013

The Chain and *Dreams*, polished, and pretty much perfect, left The O2 shaking as Fleetwood Mac returned to Dublin for the first time since 2009. “*There’s a few chapters left in the book of Fleetwood Mac!*” Buckingham says before *Sad Angel* teased the crowd with the prospect of a new album.

Fleetwood Mac perform a number of tracks from ‘Tusk’ with *Not That Funny* showing us the side of this album their label were perplexed by, while *Tusk* is an amazing anthem, full of huge brass riffs. The crowd got a chance to appreciate the amazing skill of guitarist Lindsey Buckingham as he worked his magic on an acoustic version of *Big Love* in an absolutely

mesmerizing way. Stevie Nicks followed with *Landslide*, providing a wonderfully soft and reflective contrast to its predecessor.

The band finished up their main set with *Go Your Own Way*, leaving the crowd calling for an encore before they’ve even left the stage. Nicks and Buckingham return hand in hand – a slightly sickly sentiment to their apparent friendship – to perform *World Turning*, complete with a mammoth drum solo from Mick Fleetwood, before finishing up with *Don’t Stop*.

There was something plastic about Fleetwood Mac tonight. The clichés in the crowd banter seem scripted, and the constant hugs and cuddles between Buckingham and Nicks are so

sickly sweet they become a forced act. However, there is no denying the professional, polished and hugely enjoyable show Fleetwood Mac provide. The crowd are behind the band with numerous standing ovations throughout the show.

To see a band still at the top of their game after all this time, with the promise of some quality new songs on the way, is a treat.

Review: Alice Goodwin

Photo: Kieran Frost



7 - David Byrne & St. Vincent at Electric Picnic

Sunday 31st August 2013

Sometimes a good mood is infectious. And when David Byrne and St Vincent hit the stage at Electric Picnic the good mood flowed like champagne, transporting the gathered masses from a muddy field to a swinging party in a pyrotechnic blast of brass instruments and tuxedos.

As good a show as it was, it's hard to imagine the audience having as much fun watching as the duo had performing. Accompanied by a lively brass section, the former Talking Heads frontman and the diminutive songstress danced eccentrically around the stage between songs. The duo danced in and out of the spotlight as they alternated between lead vocals for songs from each of their respective back

catalogues, before teaming up for a selection of tracks from their album 'Love This Giant'.

The whole thing felt like stumbling uninvited upon some extravagant ballroom soirée. Byrne and St Vincent played wonderfully off each other, weaving in and out of the backing band who'd mastered the art of playing and dancing at once with a carefree delight that was absurdly infectious. The familiarity of numbers from Byrne's back catalogue like *This Must Be The Place* and *Like Humans Do* fired the mood even higher.

Soon the performers onstage weren't the only ones dancing. The packed out tent pulsed with swaying movement, leaving worries like sore feet, wet clothes

and lack of sleep behind. The show segued from moments of unadulterated enchantment (St Vincent's solo rendition of *Cheerleader*), to pure unbound weirdness (Byrne dancing crazily around a theremin on *Northern Lights*) before culminating in dazzling renditions *Burning Down The House* and *Road To Nowhere* that went off like a fireworks display on New Year's Eve.

As the song says, gigs like this only come along *Once In A Lifetime*.

Review: Bernard O'Rourke
Photo: Yan Bourke

8 - Bruce Springsteen & The E-Street Band at Nowlan Park

Tuesday 16th July 2013

Eschewing the usual Dublin date favoured by international acts, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band brought their huge live show to Nowlan Park in Kilkenny (as well as visits to Cork, Limerick and Belfast), complete with a showcase of Irish supporting acts. Delorentos opened the show with a whirlwind set, followed by LAPD (Liam O'Flynn, Andy Irvine, Paddy Glackin and Donal Lunny) and the vociferous Imelda May.

When the Boss took to the stage with *This Little Light Of Mine*, the trademark singalongs that mark all his shows followed closely behind. The setlist jumped from era to era, running right up to the politically charged *Death To My Hometown* from his 2012 album

11

'Wrecking Ball'.

The diehard fans may idolise Springsteen, but few artists give as much love back to the fans as Bruce does. Fan requests scrawled on cardboard placards prompted a trio of *Wild Billy's Circus Story*, *Man At The Top* and *When You Walk In The Room*. This was followed by the iconic 'Born To Run' album played in its entirety.

Young saxophonist Jake Clemons had big shoes to fill since the death of his uncle Clarence, but it's been a seamless transition. It's hard to believe that the man who had played sessions in Whelan's only four years ago was expertly blasting out the unmistakably beautiful *Jungleland* saxophone solo.

And the energy just kept flowing. A fist-pumping, foot-stomping, vein-popping rendition of *Born In The USA* kicked off the eight-song encore. After closing the curtains on another E-Street Tour, Bruce returned to the stage alone with an acoustic rendition of *This Hard Land*, the same song which started the tour 129 shows ago.

When they say there is no show like a Bruce show, they aren't kidding.

Review: Bernard O'Rourke / Niall Swan
Photo: Michelle Geraghty



9 - Suede at The Olympia

Monday 28th October 2013

Suede cut urbane figures as they emerge onstage dressed head to toe in black save for Brett Anderson who strides on slightly behind the band dressed in a white shirt, instantly focusing the eye upon one of British rock's most entrancing performers. Like David Bowie and Morrissey before him Anderson has a strident sexual mystique, an effortless cool and a heightened zeal for theatrical performance, backed up by a powerful, unique voice that's pliable to gritty highrise glam, triumphant wisecracking rock 'n' roll and palpably poignant on sorrow-clad piano ballads.

A revamped version of b-side *The Big Time* yields an unexpected haze of reverberating tremolo

guitar with favourable results. Anderson quickly proves himself an adroit performer moving from smoky jazz to energetic glam, hurling his microphone to the ground leading the crowd through his signature double-clap dance routine as the volume swells and the band attempts to conquer the old with material from their new album.

Suede are happy to omit hits like *She's In Fashion* in favour of four b-sides, such is their fans' voracious appetite for Suede's vintage back catalogue. No doubt if they ever decide to tour B-sides collection 'Sci Fi Lullabies' attendance will be mandatory for any self-respecting Suede fan. Such a bond between band and fan is a rare thing these days. It's easy to see why Suede fans have

taken 'Bloodsports' to heart as it contains songs that match those from the band's past.

The performance put Suede in contention for gig of the year such was the vitality and precision on display. Anderson, however has secured himself frontman of the year with a simply unparalleled and truly beguiling performance. With Suede in such form any chance to see them should not be missed.

Review: Stephen Byrne

Photo: Aaron Corr



10 - Haim at Whelan's

Saturday, 25th May 2013

It looks chaotic onstage as hair and arms flail against drums and up to and away from microphones, but the overlapping vocals and rhythms sound brilliantly harmonious. It is during a simple but effective guitar solo from Danielle during *The Wire*, however, that they instantly and effortlessly transcend the high expectations they have set for themselves, and suddenly the stage looks so small, like it can barely support their massive sound.

The opening songs show what they can do live but when they sing *Falling* they show what they have already done; first in writing an amazing song, then in enchanting their audience. *Go Slow* is more restrained

and when the song is in full instrumentation, everything pulsing and booming, suddenly the sound floats off. The quiet chorus comes and the crowd cheer to fill the silence like a dam bursting, relieving all that pent up tension. They are teasing after that initial outflow of energy and you aren't sure if they'll take it there again.

When *Don't Save Me* starts to flow out of the speakers it feels like a perfect storm of incredible songwriting and immense live presence. It is like the room is trapped in a whirlpool, everyone being dragged under but, instead of fighting, you're happy to stare up at the refracted sunlight and be carried away, admiring the beauty of it in some inexplicable way. It is the most complete

expression of everything they do musically.

When Haim take up drumsticks, beating out wonderfully layered primal rhythms, all that energy that they have pumped into the room starts to erupt like a geyser and vaporises into the warm night. It's obvious to everyone that this sound of theirs won't be boxed into such an intimate setting again.

Review: Stephen Murphy

Photo: Kieran Frost

BEST IRISH SONG



Photo: Kieran Frost

1 Hot Sockets - Soul Brother

With *Soul Brother*, The Hot Sockets proved there was still an appetite for good old-fashioned rock 'n' roll in Ireland in 2013. Using the old Beatles trick of whacking you over the head with a hint of the chorus before darting into the verse, *Soul Brother* is more contagious than your average plague.

It gripped the nation and refused to let go, taking the crown of feel-good hit of the summer in the process.

2 Hozier - Take Me To Church

It was only a matter of time before a Trinity Orchestra alumnus would produce a truly noteworthy composition of their own.

Hailing from Bray, Andrew Hozier-Byrne aka Hozier, delivered an outstanding debut EP from which the standout *Take Me To Church* is drawn.

Startlingly proficient for a new performer Hozier produced a powerful vocal reminiscent of Elton John in his heyday; on this highly atmospheric track that combines choral elements with pop sensibilities in a truly engaging way.

3 James Vincent McMorrow - Cavalier

James Vincent McMorrow smashed back into our earbuds with the release of *Cavalier*, and it was worth the wait. It plugs right into the sound you expect from JVM, nibbling beautifully on his phenomenal falsetto.

Like anything from James, it's emotional, drenched in drama and beautiful throughout.

With a new album looming, this track is an exciting window into one of our most anticipated albums of 2014, and having given it multiple listens, we're even more excited.

4 Little Green Cars - Love Took Me Down To The River

Following on from the successful singles *The John Wayne* and *Harper Lee*, Little Green Cars finally placed their not-so-secret, secret weapon Faye O'Rourke centre stage unleashing her distinctive timbre upon the world in *My Love Took Me Down To The River To Silence Me*.

Unsurprisingly O'Rourke excels, delivering an impassioned vocal performance throughout the bleak, heartbroken, murderous ballad which features excellent four-part harmonies by the Little Green males.

5 Villagers - Nothing Arrived

Beginning with a happy-sad piano line that sounds like veiled sunshine *Nothing Arrived* showcases Conor O'Brien's unique turn of phrase and lyrical wit beautifully as hope is shattered by reality.

"I waited for something and something died/So I waited for nothing and nothing arrived,"

O'Brien repeats as a gloriously gloomy self-fulfilling prophecy concludes one of the standout moments of Villagers' sophomore album '{Awayland}'.

6 Vann Music - Into The Night

Into The Night is arguably the standout moment from VANN Music's debut EP 'Electro Shock Dreams.' It has shades of French house and an anthemic electro pop chorus.

Aaron Smyth's vocal performance is reminiscent of Bono as it swerves through melodic high-pitched shrieks. It's suitably over the top and wouldn't be out of place in an '80s maverick cop movie.

7 Little Green Cars - Harper Lee

The track eloquently sums up everything good about Little Green Cars; harmonious vocals, memorable lyrics, massive choruses and even bigger instrumentation.

Named after the American author responsible for 'To Kill A Mockingbird', *Harper Lee* is a catchy folk song with immaculate harmonies. But with lyrics like *"There's a gun in the attic/Let me go grab it"*, there is much more going on than your average radio-friendly melody can muster.

8 The Duckworth Lewis Method - Out In The Middle

Cricket pop – now a thing, thanks to Neil Hannon and Thomas Walsh. *Out In The Middle* continues in the style of The Beatles, Bowie, The Small Faces and The Kinks that typifies the band's two albums.

The longest song on 'Sticky Wickets' is '70s lounge rock via 'Ogden's Nut Gone Flake', another track tackling the nuances of the sport with flashes of psychedelia among the many musical motifs.

9 Darling - Echoes

Beginning life as the highly promising The Kinetiks in the mid-2000s then disbanding before their time, one of the biggest surprises out of the Irish music scene in 2013 was the emergence of duo Darling and their unbelievably polished debut single *Echoes*.

Catchy, slick and with the potential to be an international hit; more of the same in 2014 please.

10 Sounds Of System Breakdown - Neon Contrails

Neon Contrails, a track that sounds like Kasabian's *Fire*, only doused in shape-throwing bleeps and eccentric, funky changes of direction. It's the sort of song that's ready-made for festivals thanks to its 'hear it once, know it forever' chorus.

Sounds Of System Breakdown's defection to London is a genuine loss to Irish music.

BEST INTERNATIONAL SONG



1 Arcade Fire - Reflektor

The album 'Reflektor' built massive hype in the run up to its release.

Despite the album being perhaps a bit polarising in its scope and consistency, the single *Reflektor* was the tool leading the hype with its catchy disco beats. With James Murphy on production and David Bowie on backing vocals, this track was destined to dominate in 2013.

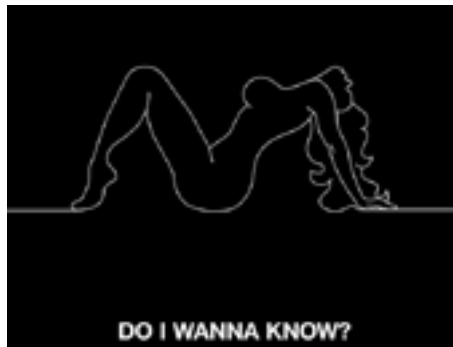
Photo: Kieran Frost



2 Vampire Weekend - Diane Young

Returning with their album 'Modern Vampires Of The City', the catchy indie-electro-pop has evolved but retains that Vampire Weekend sound.

Diane Young is catchy, punchy and sits on top of their trademark funky bass and drumbeats. Mixed with catchy electro-nuggets, it made for one of the most popular tracks of the year.



3 Arctic Monkeys - Do I Wanna Know

Churning out their fifth studio album this year, Arctic Monkey have produced an album that has once again captured the Irish attention after 'Suck It And See' failed to reach the heights of previous albums. *Do I Wanna Know* grinds along with its slow stamping but catchy riff and becomes that earworm you're humming and singing days later.



4 Queens Of The Stone Age - I Appear Missing

The longest track on '...Like Clockwork' has fast become a fan favourite. *I Appear Missing* brings us through a dark almost otherworldly soundscape with psychedelic rock mirrored by impressive animated visuals of the song's official video. A six-minute opera of droning looping choruses almost intentionally split into two epic three-minute acts.



5 Chvrches - Recover

Layered in luscious synth-pop and energetic beats topped off with dazzling sweet vocals, Chvrches' track *Recover* is a gorgeous slice of radio-friendly indie-pop that lures you in with its strained relationship theme to engage the listener with its emotional connection. Combined with the sheer quality her voice possesses, Mayberry is easily one of the most unique and distinctive vocalists around.



6 Daft Punk - Get Lucky

If you put disco into one circle and electronic dance into another circle and merge them into a Venn diagram, well that middle part, that is *Get Lucky*.

It's the perfect blend of disco and dance as Daft Punk steal some genius from Nile Rodgers on guitar and create one of the hits of the year.

Even Linda Martin tried to get in on the action, though we wish she hadn't.



7 John Grant- GMF

John Grant is a quirky character, who's songs thread the fine line between serious and humorous.

GMF walks the line of humour with self-deprecation/loathing as the lyrics take you on a story that is laced with witty and cynical lyrics.

Like a lot of Grant's work, *GMF* is wonderfully candid and reassuringly heart-warming.



8 Haim - The Wire

Dripping with the influences of 80s' rock, HAIM have managed to turn hype into reality as they followed up on the buzz of 2012 with a brilliant album.

One of the highlights on the album is *The Wire*, which is an intense and triumphant breakup number.

Watch these girls just grow and grow.



9 Biffy Clyro - Biblical

The Scottish rockers have had a huge year and with the release of 'Opposites' have made the jump to arena tours.

Biblical is one of the highlights from the album, a song with a chorus so massive and empowering that it was just made for festivals. A heart-wrenching anthem.



10 Icona Pop - I Love It

Icona Pop finally dropped their album this year and *I Love It* is one of the leading tracks; plastered all over radio, adverts and compilations.

This track is an insanely catchy, adrenaline-filled rush moulded into a three-minute pop song.

This thumping track reeks of '90s electro-pop and should permeate your party playlists.

BEST IRISH ALBUM

1 Little Green Cars - *Absolute Zero*

Little Green Cars debut album '*Absolute Zero*' hits the mark on each and every track and not only will it stand out as one of 2013's best albums from an Irish band, it's surely on its way to being regarded as one of the best Irish albums from the last ten years.

'*Absolute Zero*' is full of harmonious vocals, memorable lyrics, massive choruses and a strong, multi-dimensional female vocalist in Faye O'Rourke. When it's coupled with Stevie Appleby's Mumford-esque vocals, you are gifted with something truly special.*



Photo: Alessio Michelini

2 Villagers - *{Awayland}*

What Conor O'Brien and Villagers have done on '*{Awayland}*' is show us exactly what they're capable of. It's an eleven track adventure down the rabbit hole with O'Brien as our guide.

By the time we reach the floaty interlude of *{Awayland}*, it's clear that the more innocent Villagers won't be back.

What they've done here is more than take the next step, they've taken a phenomenal leap forward and delivered a record that builds on its predecessor in every way, stripping away all previous notions of what Villagers were in the process.*

3 Come On Live Long – *Everything Fall*

Come On Live Long's debut album '*Everything Fall*' mixes a soulful rock-based song-writing style with a crisp engaging electronic production sound that pushes the material to incredible highs. A real innate and well communicated sense of commitment and belief in the music takes the album to a place where it contains few lows and always keeps you interested. There's a great sense of creativity on the album with songs evolving thematically and experimenting with new directions. From every angle you approach it – performance-wise, formally, in terms of song-writing or production, musicianship – it simply impresses on every level.

4 And So I Watch You From Afar - *All Hail Bright Futures*

'*All Hail Bright Futures*' sound is so fresh in many ways that comparisons to the band's previous material is almost unfair. The inclusion of numerous additional instruments and the introduction of electronic influences offer a significant development in sonic textures. The openly poppy samba sounds that lace themselves throughout the album are a far cry from the heavier raw guitars *And So I Watch You From Afar* are associated with. Perhaps the biggest gamble is the inclusion of vocals, but it pays off as the behemoth of sound they create becomes even more engaging.*

5 My Bloody Valentine - My Bloody Valentine

'Loveless' was a masterpiece, but it seemed tainted by the realisation that the likes of it would never be heard again. 'm b v' is the ideal follow-up, acting as a continuation of the majesty of 'Loveless', while creating its own identity.

'm b v' is not only a truly wondrous album, but it also confirms the brilliance of 'Loveless'. If 'Loveless' was a giant leap forward for music, then 'm b v' takes another few steps, and should be treasured and admired as much as its predecessor. *

8 Halves - Boa Howl

'Boa Howl' is nothing short of a triumph. Halves have managed to do what many bands attempt and fail at, creating an album that lives and breathes.

'Boa Howl' is entrancing. It's not filled with pop hooks, and it's never going to 'hit the big time', but somehow, Halves don't appear to be a band that want that.

They've created an album that will attract the right kind of attention. It showcases their creative, artistic and experimental talents and is truly a work they should be immensely proud to howl about.

6 Solar Bears - Supermigration

'She Was Coloured In' introduced us to the widescreen cinematic sound of Solar Bears. With 'Supermigration' Rian Trench and John Kowalski have continued to add layers of lush synths and instrumentation to their compositions; while guest vocals from Beth Hirsch (Air) and Sarah P of Keep Shelly In Athens solidify the sex appeal of the soundscapes.

This album is an aural feast of sophisticated, uplifting dance music and airy instrumentals. Let yourself be swept away by its voyage around the globe and into the universe.

9 Sounds Of System Breakdown - Nomad

Growling with urban angst, Sounds Of System Breakdown's second album 'Nomad' introduces a darker flavour of sound to the hyper, house party bravado of their debut release.

The influence of both the flamboyant and drug-addled eras of Depeche Mode are palpable as guitars lock horns with synths in the pits of despair and unifying pulses.

Sounds Of System Breakdown haven't missed a trick here and the end result is a joyous album equally as liable to captivate your mind as it is to make you bust a move.

7 Kodaline - In A Perfect World

Kodaline have found themselves propelled to the nub of Ireland's musical zeitgeist through a combination of emotive, earwormy tracks and tearjerking videos, delivered with the kind of polished professionalism that belies their newcomer status.

While Kodaline rarely push the boundaries of musical originality, they pull off something that can be equally difficult: being truly top class at a more long-standing and familiar genre.

They're genuinely world-class at what they do already, and it's one seriously emotive experience. For that, we can only stand back and applaud. *

10 Bell X1 - Chop Chop

It's ten years since it was said Bell X1's music is how "Radiohead should sound now". Thankfully BellX1 have concentrated on sounding like themselves.

It's difficult to describe 'Chop Chop' as anything other than revisiting the organic sound of 'Neither Am I'. It's as if Bell X1 visited every corner of their sound and realised their origins worked best.

There's less of the vibrant banjo solos that made them the most exciting Irish band for a time; rather a more cultured, intimate and bittersweet composition which is not how anyone should sound now, except Bell X1. *

BEST INTERNATIONAL ALBUM

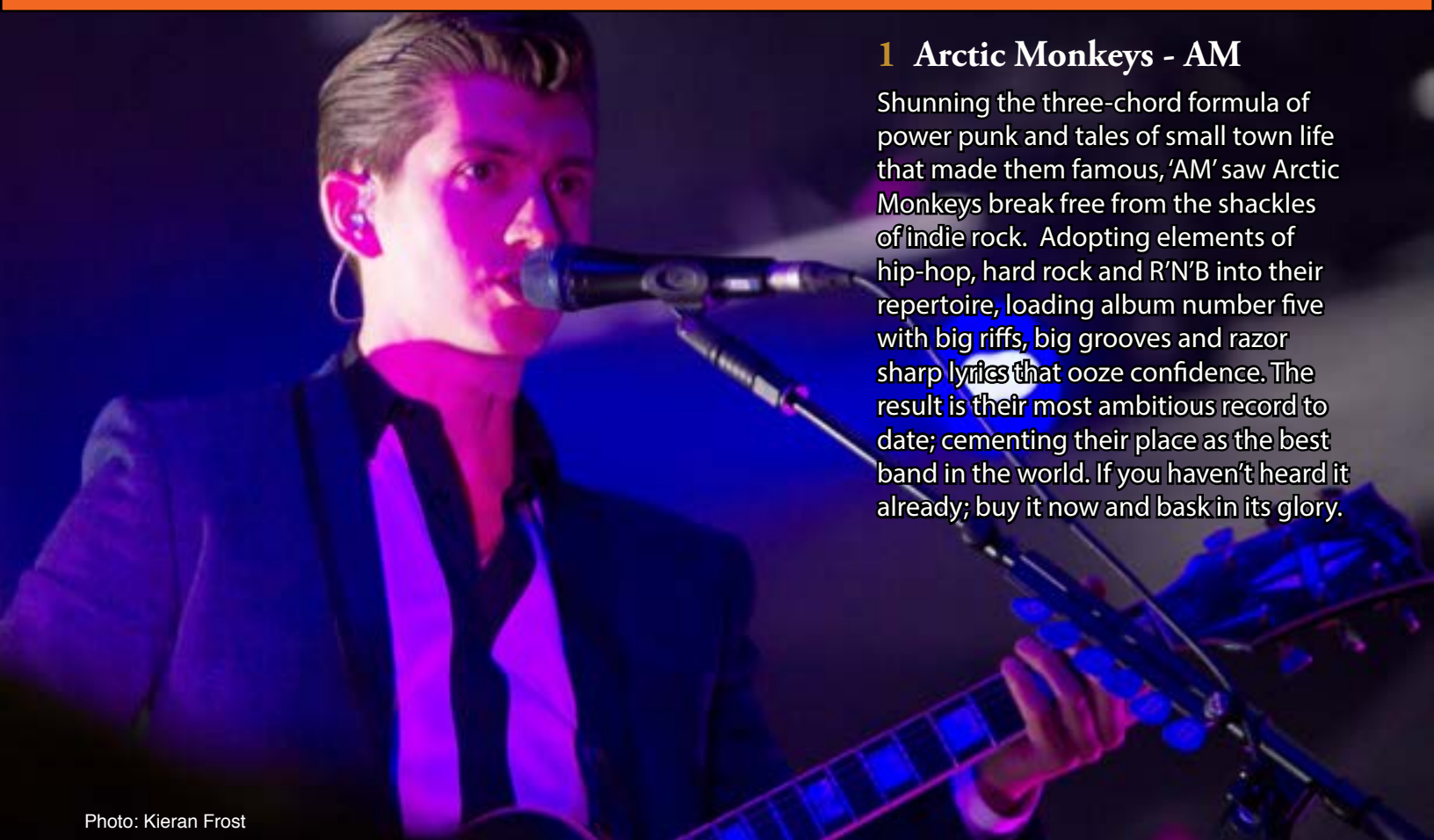


Photo: Kieran Frost

1 Arctic Monkeys - AM

Shunning the three-chord formula of power punk and tales of small town life that made them famous, 'AM' saw Arctic Monkeys break free from the shackles of indie rock. Adopting elements of hip-hop, hard rock and R'n'B into their repertoire, loading album number five with big riffs, big grooves and razor sharp lyrics that ooze confidence. The result is their most ambitious record to date; cementing their place as the best band in the world. If you haven't heard it already; buy it now and bask in its glory.

2 Queens Of The Stone Age - ...Like Clockwork

Queens Of The Stone Age's '...Like Clockwork' is the best hard rock album in years. For any Queens Of The Stone Age fan, a new album will automatically bear comparison with 'Songs for the Deaf', the band's yardstick. '...Like Clockwork' is a giant in its genre and an essential album for fans of rock music.

More accessible, ever-so sweet, but with a hard edge; it doesn't bring Queens Of The Stone Age to a new level, but reaffirms their position as the kings of their craft. It is simply fantastic.

3 Vampire Weekend - Modern Vampires Of The City

On 'Modern Vampires of The City', the New York song-smiths have expanded, exploring much deeper themes and much vaster musical horizons, crafting wonderful music from disparate eras and genres. Musically, this album sounds like a love letter to the music of Rostram Batmanglij's childhood, and like all good love letters, it's honest, passionate, and delicate. It's an album focused on substance rather than style and far more timeless for it. Not only that, it's the best album yet recorded by one of the most exciting bands of a generation.

4 Arcade Fire - Reflektor

Win Butler and Co, you sure know how to whip us into a frenzy leading up to a release, with James Murphy on the controls, David Bowie making a guest appearance and it being a double album with each half designed to be a different experience.

Something had to change but without a total disconnection to the past, and the choice of Murphy seems obvious. There is no one single style that binds the album together, but 'Reflektor' is still definitively Arcade Fire, moving forward without leaving us behind.

5 Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds - Push the Sky Away

'Push the Sky Away' isn't an easy listen. It's a dense, difficult work, but given time, reveals itself to be hauntingly moving and frequently brilliant.

Not many voices on earth are as unmistakeable as Cave's; his signature baritone is as striking as ever, shifting from gravelly, 100-a-day menace on the brilliant *Higgs Boson Blues* to gentle and fragile on the almost unbearably moving title track.

It's a supreme testament to Nick Cave that he is still creating albums like this. 'Push the Sky Away' is a very worthy addition to Cave's extraordinary body of work.

8 John Grant - Pale Green Ghosts

The sophomore album can be a bit of a catch-22 situation. Do you simply repeat yourself and risk being panned and alienating fans or spread your wings and risk being panned and alienating fans. John Grant does both.

The unexpected disco pump of *Black Belt* is far removed from the romance of 'Queen Of Denmark' while GMF delivers the quick witted lyrics you'd expect.

"I wonder who they'll get to play me. Maybe they could dig up Richard Burton's corpse."

'Pale Green Ghosts' proves that sometimes you can have your cake and eat it too.

6 Biffy Clyro - Opposites

Scottish rockers Biffy Clyro announced an emphatic return with the release of 'Opposites', their first album in four years. Being their sixth studio album, they have found a level of comfort with their sound that is reeling in fans by the bucket load.

Layered in the inevitable barrage of ass-kicking, guitar-thrashing riffs and fist-pumping tracks, 'Opposites' hooks you in from the opening tune.

Black Chandelier, Biblical, Stinging Belle and *The Joke's On Us* are just some of the standouts on this cracking release.

9 David Bowie - The Next Day

'The Next Day' is David Bowie's most coherent collection of songs since 'Let's Dance'. Tony Visconti is at the helm once again, having reignited Bowie's creative flame on preceding albums 'Heathen' and 'Reality'.

As such 'The Next Day' is the natural successor to those albums, creating yet another trilogy in the Bowie canon, rather than the quadrilogy implied by the album's title and Berlin-centric lead single *Where Are We Now?*.

It's quite an achievement for an artist to better his previous ten albums, but that's exactly what Bowie has done on 'The Next Day'.

7 The National - Trouble Will Find Me

The National's 'Trouble Will Find Me' provides us with the band's most exciting output to date. The band incorporate a subtle electronic aspect to their sound that makes their deep music all the more moving, while still retaining the exceptional songwriting that made them one of the most alluring bands of the '00s.

The album is a glorious combination of quiet mournful pieces such as *I Need My Girl*, and angrier, more energetic songs like *Sea Of Love*, all of which are utterly breath-taking. All in all this is one hell of an album.

10 Kanye West - Yeezus

'Yeezus' strikes with a heavy, unsettled, hyper-edgy tone and goes so far down the line of madness, incomprehension, and heavy hip-hop that there's scarcely a wisp of the quiet sweetness of his earlier output.

Those of you looking for an epic follow-up to 'My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy' or a reprise of 'The College Dropout' won't recognise your beloved Kanye.

It's refreshing to see him move in a different direction, *Black Skinhead* being a prime example of him pushing his vocal more and more, setting aside the vocoder hooks that he's known for.

BEST IRISH EP

1 Hozier - Take Me To Church

The devotion to his old-style American influences shines through Hozier's music, but he injects enough of a modern twist to give the record a character of its own.

His vocals – at times pleading, at others reverential – bind everything together, showing off a talent for inventive, engaging lyrics which a lot of acts can miss out on.

'Take Me To Church' is a strong and confident debut, and one that's bound to gather him a flock of followers for the future. If back-to-basics bluesy soul is your thing, you'd do worse than to join them.



Photo: Shaun Neary

2 Croupier - Visor

Like a whirlwind trying to catch itself, Wicklow's Croupier are a force of nature bursting with energy, riffs and a sense that anything can happen next.

Their second EP 'Visor' is full of rhythmic chops and cascading synth lines, bordering on tropical with expressive guitars countered by melancholic vocals.

Power Up's intro plays honey trap before the volume soars in tandem with Oisín Murphy's frantic refrain of "it's outside it's outside" which he delivers as if there is a giant trying to climb out of his mouth. And that's just for starters.

3 Cfit - Morning Bruises

The Dublin six-piece make excellent use of all instruments involved, filling every conceivable part of the audio spectrum.

The arrangements and production are beautiful throughout and each of the songs has a lovely flow. Filled with intelligent words from Noel Duplaa, it's a very contemplative album before hitting you with *Spitefuck*, one of the best tracks of the year.

One moment it's tender and intimate, the next it's grandiose and magnificent. Cfit are a band with the potential to go places and *Spitefuck* is the perfect example of why.

4 Kodaline - High Hopes

Nailed to radio playlists and soundtracking every sporting encounter imaginable; you couldn't move in 2013 without hearing the lush vocals of Steve Garrigan, as Kodaline lassoed their way to the top of the charts with each subsequent single and EP laying claim to the pop-rock domain vacated by Coldplay.

Kodaline run the risk of being somewhat safe, but tap into universal themes with the kind of pathos that escapes most bands of their ilk, creating songs which deliver to young and old alike. It's a skill that very few bands master, but Kodaline have.

5 Tandem Felix - Popcorn

Undoubtedly experimentalists, Tandem Felix clearly aim themselves at the 'alternative' shelf.

The overall production quality of 'Popcorn' is impressive and does not falter, even for the briefest spell.

The inclusion of a pedal steel guitar and trumpet on *Tell Yer Loved Ones* works a real treat and makes Tandem Felix a band of absorbing variety.

Having recorded ten tracks in 2009 entitled 'Tweedledee' (not an official release), the band have come a long way. Musically, the improvements are vast and the band as a whole have now developed a sound which fits.

8 Corner Boy - Morning Morning

With time spent on the circuit in Montreal, Corner Boy has used varied styles in creating his story of travel across North America, adding their voice to folk-pop throng spreading across the world.

Corner Boy, though, throws a handful of traditional Irish sounds into the mix.

Overall, 'Morning Morning' is a polished success and the praise it received is based purely on merit. Corner Boy may well be similar to current radio dominators, but as a first attempt, it's exciting to imagine how the follow-ups will sound.

6 Young Wonder - Show Me Your Teeth

Young Wonder followed up their critically acclaimed 2012 debut with the persuasive hyper ambient flow of EP 'Show Your Teeth.'

Time (Feat. Sacred Animals) delivers the kind of expansive claustrophobia Darragh Nolan has become associated with; his guest vocal is the perfect foil to those of Rachel Koeman. Stand-out track *Electrified* is a highlight of Irish dance in 2013 showcasing Koeman's considerable vocal ingenuity. Ian Ring's production is cleverly restrained throughout creating the perfect balance between fabricating minimalistic atmospheric soundscapes and gloom-splitting beats for Rachel Koeman's angelic voice to suckle upon.

9 Kid Karate - Lights Out EP

About as subtle as a YouTube street brawl, single *Two Times* unleashes the guitar/drum/vox volcano of Dublin duo Kid Karate on their debut EP 'Lights Out'.

Propelled by the doctrine that one Big Muff isn't enough vocalist/guitarist Kevin Breen lays down a quagmire of distortion and angsty vocals as drummer Steven Gannon tries to play ringmaster whilst simultaneously egging his companion on.

American influences abide, but 'Lights Out' grabs you in such a way that this almost becomes irrelevant, because Kid Karate can more than hold their own at an advanced level of combat.

7 The Statics - Hidden Pigeons

Throughout the EP, Liam Gardner's lead vocal strikes the right balance of sounding familiar without trying to ape any contemporaries.

The playing throughout is super tight and the production is clear and clean, which brings the best out of the band's sound. Really, there isn't much more you would want to improve on this release.

Between *Hit & Miss* and *Alone*, there are enough melodies that are easier to remember than your own name. Now is the perfect time to get yourself acquainted with The Statics.

10 This Other Kingdom - Sunlight

Like a meteor hurtling over Russia the psychedelic space rock of Dublin band, This Other Kingdom, wastes no time in making an impact. Similar to that astrological phenomenon there is an epic quality to their music collected from a variety of differing influences.

It's one thing to have these fine influences but another fusing them together in a coherent fashion and forging a unique slant to distinguish yourself from the pack. Thankfully, This Other Kingdom manage to achieve it. Their heady cocktail of neo-psychedelic space rock is one to lose yourself in.

BEST IRISH VIDEO

1 Hozier - Take Me To Church

Directed by Brendan Canty of Feel Good Lost, the video was influenced by the recent treatment of the homosexual community in Russia.

Hozier says *"It references the recent increase of organised attacked and torturing of homosexuals in Russia, which is subsequent to a long, hateful and oppressive political campaign against the LGBT Community. The song was always about humanity at its most natural, and how that is undermined ceaselessly by religious organisations and those who would have us believe they act in its interests."*



2 Hot Sprockets - Soul Brother

Depending who you ask, *Soul Brother* is one of The Hot Sprockets' best tracks.

Add to that the genius '70s visual masterpiece by Finn Keenan and you have two fantastic pieces complimenting each other.

We also completely buy into the concept of the Sprockets as '70s cop heroes.



3 Kodaline - All I Want

Ireland's runaway success act of 2013 struck a chord with millions of people around the world with *All I Want*.

If you've ever daydreamed about being the hero and getting the girl then the video for *All I Want* will strike a massive chord. Check out the follow-up video where his dog Digby goes missing.



4 James Vincent McMorrow - Cavalier

The return of James Vincent McMorrow is no small deal and the first taster of his forthcoming album was *Cavalier*.

Aoife McArdle creates a beautiful accompaniment that is equally dark and vivid in measures, from pure frustration to elation and release. It's gritty and emotional and like JVM's voice, will likely evoke a response.



5 Little Green Cars - My Love Took Me Down To The River to Silence Me (De La Muerte)

De La Muerte took a trip down to the Burren to shoot a gorgeous video for Little Green Cars in the stark isolation of Clare's landmark.

It's as beautifully shot and powerful and entrancing as the song itself.



6 My Fellow Sponges - This Dream Song

Mia Mullarky's video for *This Dream Song* is a quirky single shot video which tracks one person walking through a crazy house in reverse in an awesome dream sequence.

It's hard to really describe what happens in this video, it's definitely worth taking a look for yourself.



7 The Duckworth Lewis Method - It's Not Cricket

Thomas Walsh and Neil Hannon put imagery to their cricket-pop concept with a little help from Vlad the Impaler, Lance Armstrong and a host of appreciators of the gentlemen's game.

If Monty Python was a musical ensemble with a cricket fetish, this would probably be the result.

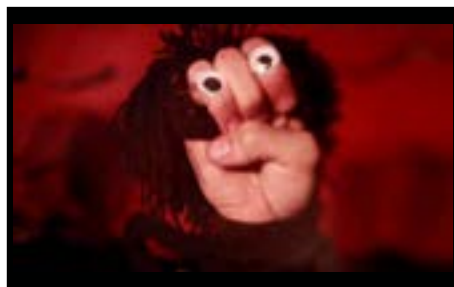


8 Le Galaxie - Lucy Is Here

Greg Corcoran & Steve Mac Devitt have created a wonderful, tense chase video with a twist for Le Galaxie's *Lucy is Here*.

Crazed chainsaw wielding killers chase Lucy through a dingy part of town but little do they know she's leading them straight into a face-off with Le Galaxie.

Showing their mettle, Le Galaxie turn and leg it. Better safe than sorry, lads!



9 The Radioactive Grandma - Don't Look Down

The lads from Radioactive Grandma put together a cracking live video, except the video is of hand puppets playing a live show to a crazy hand puppet crowd. It's incredibly detailed down to security and show production.

Watch out for the eye catching lady! #GetYourWristsOut.



10 Bad Bones - Bad Bones

Bad Bones is the work of talented producer Sal Stapleton. One of numerous talented emerging Irish artists under Toast Office Records, it layers its electronic hook over a slick psychedelic narrative making it both visually and aurally appealing.

It is certainly a precursor to bigger and more evolving projects, most recently giving Heathers track *Waiter* a similar treatment.

BEST INTERNATIONAL VIDEO

1 Nick Cave- Jubilee Street

Nick Cave's dream of sex, power and perfumed ecstasy is played through a golden kaleidoscope in his music video, *Jubilee Street*. Ray Winstone re-enacts Cave's lustrous imagination under the direction of famed producer Nick Launay in a medley of quasi-religious sex acts. Its hotter than coals and twice as beautiful.



2 Queens Of The Stone Age- I Appear Missing

In the run-up to their latest album, Queens Of The Stone Age put forth a collective of videos that created an extended trailer to coincide with its release.

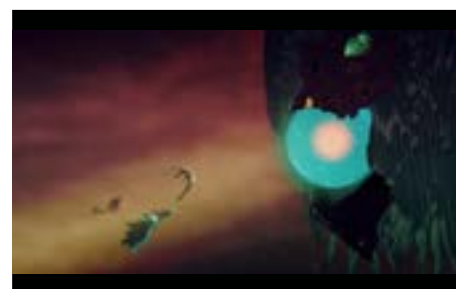
I Appear Missing was one of the first and featured bloody, creepy artwork by Boneface, who also designed the '...Like Clockwork' album cover, animated by Liam Brazier.



3 Justin Timberlake - Mirrors

The '20:20 Experience' was led in its release by *Mirrors* and it truly is a top pop song. The video walks you through a couple who were absolutely meant to be and mirror each other.

Despite heartache and tears, the good times outweigh the bad when you have your mirror.



4 Queens Of The Stone Age - My God Is The Sun

Queens Of The Stone Age's new video for *My God Is the Sun* continued the band's barrage of creepy animated clips in advance of their new album, '...Like Clockwork'.

Whereas the previous clips for *I Appear Missing*, *If I Had A Tail* and *Keep Your Eyes Peeled* offered only portions of the album cuts, *My God Is The Sun* gives us the whole shebang, in all its gory glory.



5 Arcade Fire - Reflektor

The *Reflektor* video is as mysterious, weird and brilliant as the single itself. The band drive round the dark countryside in a van, sporting terrifying over-sized masks of themselves.

Throw in a glass man, a disco ball, and several other reflective things, and you have the ideal visual accompaniment to a fantastic song.



6 Arctic Monkeys - R U Mine?

Introduced by Jones Jukebox on KROQ, Arctic Monkey - *R U Mine?* see's Alex Turner and Matt Helders wearing Rock 'n' Roll sunglasses at night while driving and rocking out, air drumming and filming to their own tune.

There's something that draws you in with its retro vibe.



7 Franz Ferdinand - Evil Eye

Evil Eye may not be the best known video Diane Martel has directed this year - she was also responsible for Miley's pants and bras in *We Can't Stop* and Robin Thicke's "yes means no" dancefloor hit *Blurred Lines* - but the Franz Ferdinand single was definitely her best work. A horror pastiche, the video features cannibalism, necrophilia and lots of dismemberment but the creepiest thing by far is Alex's 'tache.



8 Macklemore - Can't Hold Us

Pirates of 2013, Macklemore's heist was global as he rose to superstardom.

Can't Hold Us was one of the driving factors and the video is fun, life-affirming, patriotic and magical.

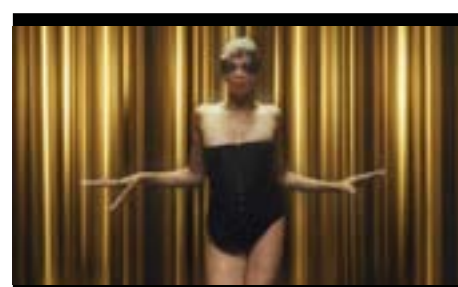
It's a party straight from Macklemore's brain and everyone is invited. If you haven't seen this video, you may have been in a coma.



9 Haim - The Wire

Several hearts were undoubtedly broken when Californians Haim took to Irish stages during the year, so their video for *The Wire* is certainly an appropriate one.

In the video, the three sisters callously break up with their other halves, whose dramatic weeping lets us know that heartbreak still sucks, even when the music is this good.



10 MGMT - Alien Days

MGMT don't run from the playbook of normal videos and their video for *Alien Days* is no different.

It sees two aliens in human bodies and the bizarre imagery served up includes giving birth to a translucent sphere which gets pushed into a tube and seems to become alien caviar.

Interested yet?

BEST NEW ACT



1 Hozier

2013 very much belonged to Andrew 'Hozier' Byrne. Having amassed quite a reputation following a stellar debut EP with 'Take Me To Church' the title track from said EP garnered a huge viral audience and cemented him as one of the most promising singer/songwriters to watch out for. His upward trajectory was built on the foundations of continuous hard work through an array of projects. Known on the underground through Trinity Orchestra, Zaska and the Dublin singer-songwriter scene, the latter half of the year served as a breakthrough to a more general audience. Sets at Electric Picnic, Knockanstockan, Other Voices, numerous radio air play and an Irish Tour meant 2013 was deservedly dominated by the Wicklow native.

Photo: Debbie Hickey

2 The Statics

It's safe to say that 2013 was a good year for The Statics and yet it's tantalising to say that the best is still ahead of them.

Their 'Hidden Pigeon' EP was rapturously received by all and a series of impressive displays at festivals (Valentia Isle and Vantastival) was capped by a standout support slot to The Duckworth Lewis Method.

The Statics' infectious sound fuses The Beatles, The La's and The Coral together and has seen them begin to gain regular radio airplay.

With a debut album planned for recording in 2014 you can expect to see and hear a lot more from The Statics.

3 Come On Live Long

Dublin-based five-piece Come On Live Long spent 2013 gigging hard with the songs from their debut album 'Everything Fall' and if the band hasn't penetrated public consciousness just yet it's not for a lacking in the songwriting department.

The album is heavy on electronic and electric sounds, but there is a unique soul to the playing so that even a person who hasn't heard a full album since 'Hotel California' won't be lost.

Adding to this the ability to masterfully develop musical themes as they go and you can be sure it's only a matter of time before this group finds its deserved spot atop the Irish music scene.

4 Walking On Cars

2013 has been a huge year for Redbull Bedroom Jam winners Walking On Cars. The band have provided a steady stream of tracks online to perk up the fans' ears, while earning a reputation for being a serious live act.

The group have supported the likes of Paramore, have sold out The Academy two nights running, and wrapped it all up with a performance at the NYE party in Dublin last week.

Their delightfully pleasant indie-pop tunes are the reason for this meteoritic rise, and 2014 will perhaps see an album coming our way.

5 Swords

The initial promise displayed on Swords' EP 'Black Balloon' was confirmed with the release of their debut album 'Lions & Gold' in 2013.

The Dublin trio's blend of indie-electro powered by Jarlath Canining's distorted bass, electro-pop synth lines and Diane Anglim's composed vocals saw singles *All The Boys*, *Buildings* and title track *Lions & Gold* all make their way onto national radio airwaves.

A successful tour of Ireland followed, with festival appearances at Camden Crawl and Electric Picnic. Add to this a publishing deal with Smalltown America Music; it's been a heady year for Swords.

8 Raglans

The ascension of Raglans is unabated and the only question is not if they will make it big in 2014 but how quickly they will make it.

Throughout 2013, they cemented their place as a great live band with some stunning performances (especially at Knockanstockan) and they ended the year with a successful tour of the UK.

2014 promises to be even better with the release of their much anticipated debut album and they will also be supporting The Strypes on part of their UK tour.

Raglans with their energetic hooky songs have the formula to be huge in 2014.

6 The Barley Mob

It's been quite a year for Dublin outfit The Barley Mob. The folk/reggae sextet's crowdfunded self-titled debut album captured the joyous, feel-good vibe of their live shows.

They didn't let festival season go to waste, establishing themselves as the country's go to act for creating good vibes. There's a serious message behind the party atmosphere though that explains why The Barley Mob have resonated so well with the Irish psyche.

They understand exactly what is wrong with the world around them and are not afraid to call it as they see it.

9 Conor Linnie

Conor Linnie became a very familiar face on the Dublin music circuit in 2013 so much so that at times you'd be forgiven for wondering who he bribed to get so many plumb support slots.

But the truth is the folk troubadour bribed artists and promoters alike with nothing more than his talent.

His live shows are a treat; Linnie's clever lyrics and timid stage presence are thoroughly endearing, either as a solo performer or with the vast array of musicians that accompany him at his headline shows.

The quality of the material on his debut album 'Astray' captivates.

7 Altered Hours

in 2013, Cork band The Altered Hours made the breakthrough they've been threatening for some time. Ever since their 'Downstream' EP was released in 2011, anticipation was building for what they'd produce next.

When it finally arrived the glorious psychedelic shoegaze of 'Sweet Jelly Roll' didn't disappoint and whetted the appetite for their next release 'Dig Early' in 2014.

Appearances at Hard Working Class Heroes, Electric Picnic and a headline tour of Ireland further highlighted the momentum that The Altered Hours are gathering after what was a stellar 2013.

10 Tandem Felix

The Tandem Felix lads made creating a positive impression on all and sundry look effortless during 2013.

The 'Popcorn' EP was intriguing, slow-burning and offered new depths to their atmospheric sound. As if that wasn't enough the delightful double single *Ryan Hoguet/ How Strange, The Weather* further enhanced just how much more Tandem Felix have left in their locker.

Their prowess on the live stage didn't go unnoticed, with the Kodaline lads being sufficiently impressed to have them support them in The Olympia. Tandem Felix's upward trajectory looks likely to continue to gather momentum during 2014.

