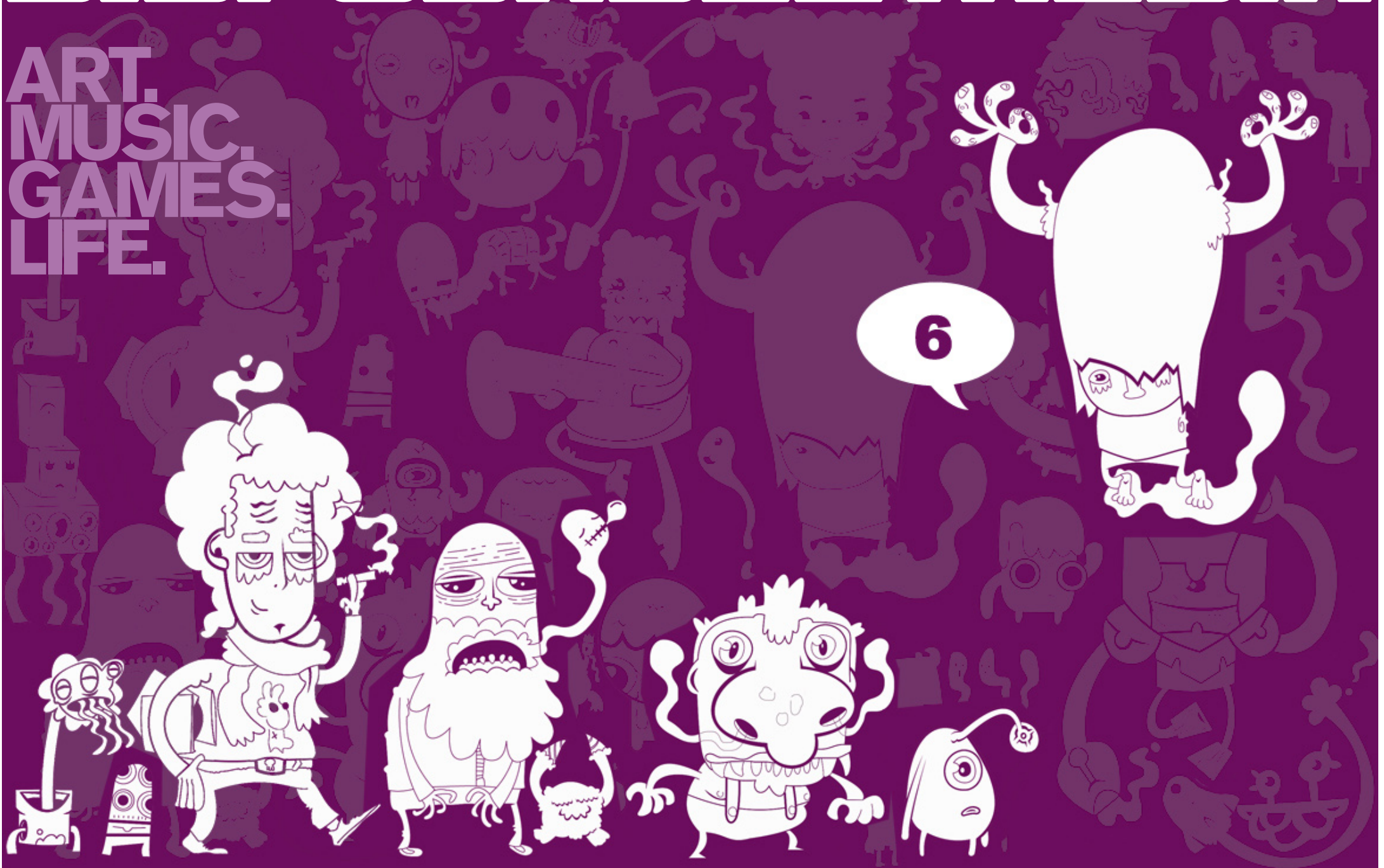


DISPOSABLE MEDIA

ART.
MUSIC.
GAMES.
LIFE.





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“The times, they are a-changing”

as some bloke once mumbled. You may have spotted a new name at the bottom of this column, as I've stepped into the hefty shoes and legacy of former Editor Andrew Revell. But luckily, fans of 'Rev' will be happy to know he's still contributing his prosaic genius, and now he actually gets time to sleep in between issues.

If my undeserved promotion wasn't enough, we're also happy to announce a new bi-monthly schedule for *DM*. Natural disasters and Acts of God notwithstanding.

And if that isn't enough to rock you to the very foundations of your soul, we're also putting the finishing touches to a new *Disposable Media* website. Which means you'll be able to get a *Disposable* fix every day with a blog, reviews of music, games and films, and anything else that we can possibly cram on there. It'll be live before our next issue hits the net, so keep checking www.disposablemedia.co.uk regularly.

But no-one likes too much change, so we'll continue to use our team of great writers and designers to let you know about the most interesting, obscure, and just damn great bits of popular culture that other magazines seem to miss. And there's some pictures of Kylie as well.

Enjoy!

– Dan



//DISPOSED MEDIA

WELL, IT'S BEEN A WHILE SINCE THE LAST ISSUE. STUFF HAS HAPPENED. HERE'S WHAT BRIEFLY...



//games

Wii has launched, everyone loves it (including *Disposable Media*) though Nintendo decides to leave everyone playing Wii Bowling whilst it makes some games. We hope for *Mario Galaxy* before our Wii Elbow gets really serious.



PlayStation 3 has a launch date. Nobody really cares, except to moan about the price, launch titles, size, network features, backwards compatibility, control pad and well, you get the idea. The 360 is quiet, albeit not literally of course, save for the *Halo 3* Beta, sorry, *Crackdown* –

though things are soon to pick up with *Guitar Hero* and *Sensible Soccer* XBLA due in the next few months. After that, the entire industry has a sleep and waits for *Halo 3* and *Grand Theft Auto 4*. Both will be rubbish. In the meantime, everyone sells their PSP, kidneys and children to buy DS Lites even if they already have one and the delightful *Cooking Mama*. *DM* spends most of its spare time playing *Lumines Mobile* and *Call of Duty 3*. Still.



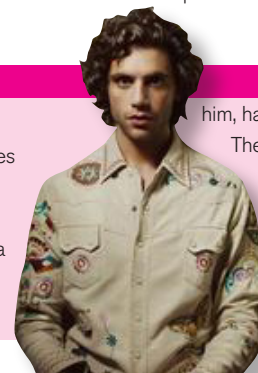
//music

(Possibly) following the success of Take That, everyone decides to reform. Smashing Pumpkins, Rage Against the Machine and (hopefully) Blur are the bigger names doing the 'one last tour/LP'. Interpol decide not to split after all and start recording what will be the album of whatever year it's released in, unless it's in this year, which will probably go to 65daysofstatic and their new LP, *The Destruction of*

Small Ideas. It's out April 30th. Go buy.

Arcade Fire release *Neon Bible*. Everyone loves it, apart from *Newsnight Review* and the internet. We're undecided.

Apparently born in a stage school barn under a wandering northern star, *Mika* is the new Scissor Sisters and despite no one admitting to liking



him, has a number 1 single for a few months. NME 'discovers' The Gossip. So do The Sun. Everyone else 'discovers' that the Kings of Leon are rather good. Again. Mark Ronson is still brilliant, even if he has messed with The Smiths. Keep an ear out for his 'covers' album, it's rather smashing.



//film & tv

Oscars time again. Is it us or are they twice a year now? Not that it matters as everyone worries more about the red carpet than the actual awards, which is just as well considering the winners. The Academy makes amends for years of stupidity and finally gives Scorsese an award or two, people applaud for a long time. Others, okay, Helen Mirren,



make embarrassingly middle-class and overly prepared speeches – the loser of Pop Idol cries when she receives her award. Congratulations to Ennio Morricone though for getting a special award, shame he had Celine Dion sing to him to mark the fact.

Elsewhere, the world prepares itself for the most insane summer of cinema releases ever and *DM* prays

that *Transformers* doesn't make us sob uncontrollably.

Heroes arrives in the UK with the Sci-Fi channel surely getting it from the same place as everyone else: Newsgroups. We quite like it, though not as much as *Dexter* but certainly a lot more than the shambles of *Lost* series 3 and *24* series 24 or whatever its on now.



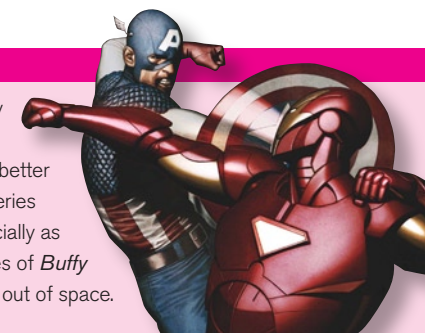
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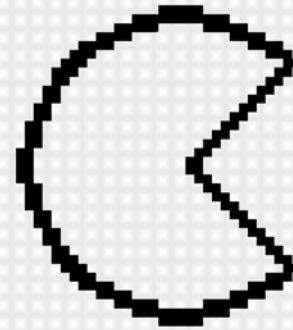
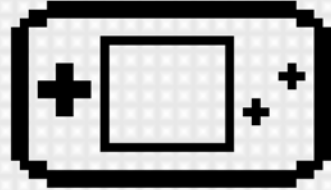
Franksly, little has changed in the land of comics since we last wrote a *Disposed Media* page and that wasn't even last issue. *52* is still ploughing ever onwards and because publishing a comic every week for a year clearly isn't enough, another special event is planned at the end of the run. Nothing major, just World War 3. With multiple issues in a single week, it seems that DC haven't stopped getting carried away.

Meanwhile, #7 of *Civil War* has finally escaped so Marvel is running out of excuses not to go back to normal. Stuff happened, things were said but we don't want to tell you what and especially not here. Suffice to say, there was a fight.

Elsewhere, having jumped away from the *Wonder Woman* flick, Joss Whedon has gone back to the world of *Buffy*, with series 8 appearing as a comic book. If his previous comic work is

anything to go by it has every chance of being better than a new TV series appearing. Especially as the last few series of *Buffy* were...oops, run out of space.





currently playing...

alexander brandon / deus ex: invisible war / blocksum / sonic the hedgehog / okami / ghost rider / battlestations midway

Once upon a time in Hyrule....

There's a relatively unknown condition that causes some people to feel uncomfortable with their limbs – healthy, fully functioning limbs – to the point that they cannot bear to have them on their body. For sufferers, to be anything other than an amputee is to be cluttered, untrue to their self. It's called body identity integrity disorder. I read about it in *The Guardian* the other day. I think we all, to a certain extent, have an internal need to deviate towards order. It's the same feeling that caused me, as a youth, to cut the labels from my teddy-bears ("real teddies don't have labels!") and with a few snips, completely diminish any potential value they might hold as antiques. It's also the same frame of mind that made the

entertainment of all forms has always been obsessed with meaning, justification, and perhaps in the case of a game like *Tetris*, the need for a story is invalid; it just is. But if you look to the *Final Fantasys* and *Halos* of this world, the story frames and guides your actions. With each sequel the plot grows more convoluted. More and more Hollywood scriptwriters are being taken on board. That's fine, and the movement towards more complex games has naturally had its detractors; for example the immensely enjoyable *Wario Ware* (although, interestingly, much of the appeal of the Wii incarnation '*Smooth Moves*' lies with the colourfully realised, and at times hysterical, introductory and concluding plots for each section). Generally, though, it's becoming exhausting: it's not that we're being



WISHLIST

ILLUSTRATION: RACHEL WILD

**ADAM PARKER TELLS US
WHAT HE WOULD WISH FOR
TO MAKE GAMING BETTER
WISH THREE: BETTER
WRITING FOR GAMES**

tidy-em-up *Tetris* such a success, and in this new gaming generation (finally) bring about the adoption of wireless, amputated, controllers (unless you count the dreadful 360 Core pack anomaly).

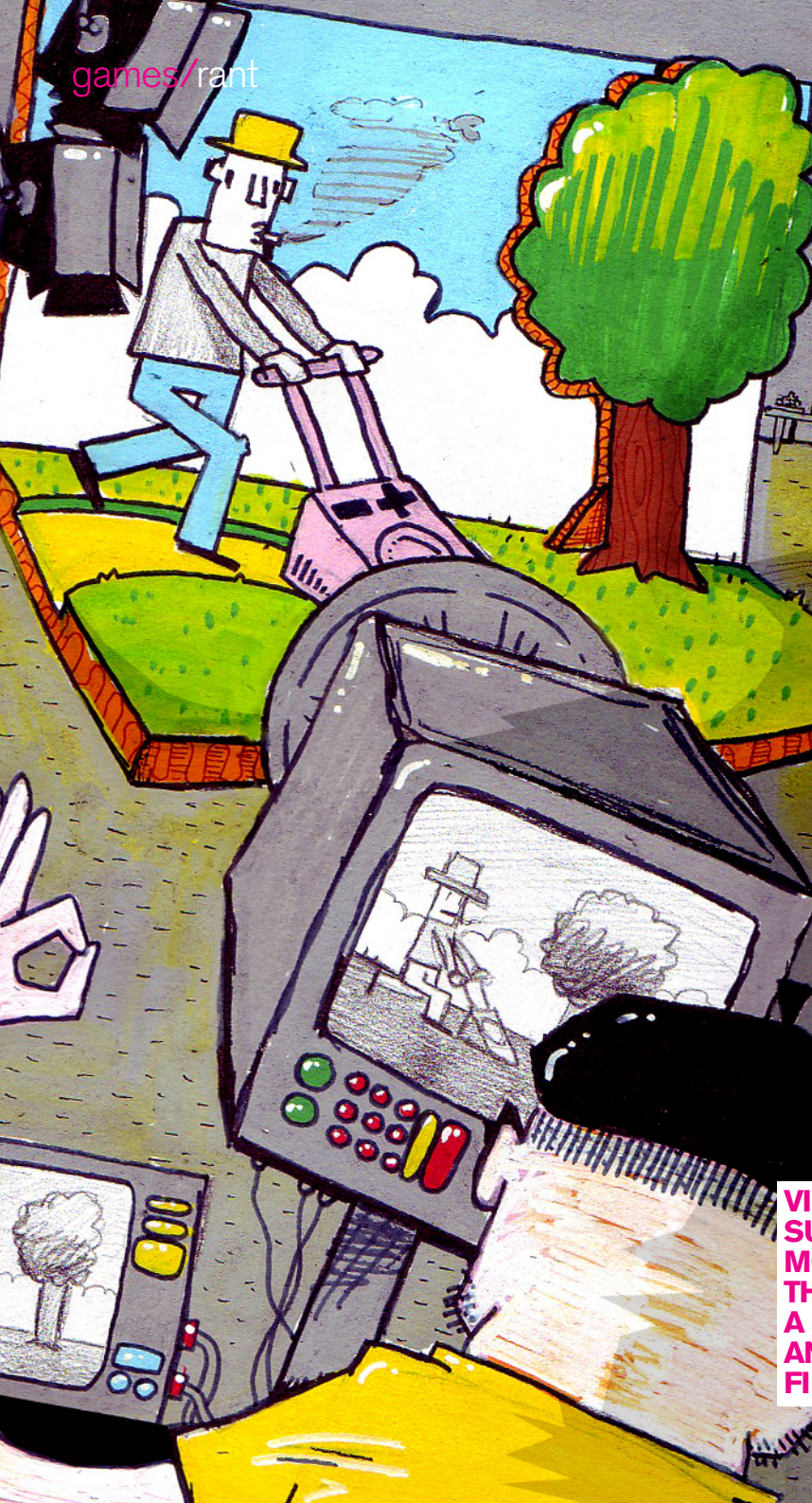
Some people – perhaps in that same heated rush for streamline purity of experience – dismiss the value of a decent story to games. They're a sideshow, they say; a means to an end. I've never been satisfied with this view. Western

overloaded with fiction; it's that we're being overloaded with shoddy fiction. For every *Deus Ex*, there's a million *Psi Ops* or – yeah, I'm going to say it – a *Zelda*, which, however enjoyable they may be as games, appear quite flimsy in the face of any serious critique.

I mean, light and dark worlds? Gods that thank you for collecting a few raindrops – which they in all their sacred power could not – and restoring light to the land? If you're just looking to switch your brain off and entertain yourself after a hard day at work (and admittedly *Zelda*'s Twilight sections were beautifully realised and fun to play) that's fine, but in any other medium, such simplistic metaphors would clearly be seen as the preserve of children ("turn that stupid cartoon off and do your homework!").

We must begin to strive for first-rate writing, and not allow ourselves to be patronised with basic, inoffensive, easy-to-translate-across-regions plots any longer. Where is the challenge, the humour, the sadness? As graphical realism in games increases, the special kind of poignancy – unique to gaming – that emerges from the machinations of ever-more-complex game engines – the unscripted emulation of the real – grows. And it will do so proportionately. Where once you might have felt a twinge of sadness for a fallen comrade on some World War 2 battlefield, in time it will increasingly be incidental, plotless details: the way the light plays between leaves of a tree, or how a snowflake settles on the ground; these observations, recreated through polygons and algorithms to provide much the same shared emotion as with the work of a photographer, or indeed any artist, that says – "Yes. I noticed it too."

**"LIGHT AND DARK WORLDS?
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LAND?... THAT'S FINE, BUT IN
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PRESERVE OF CHILDREN!"**



When I casually asked Jeff Minter if I could buy the rights to make a movie based on his classic game *Hover*

Bovver, I wasn't entirely sure in my own mind what I was going to do with them afterwards. The fee for these rights is still unpaid, by the way. I'll sort it out at some point over the next few months, as plans for "Consolevania Presents *Hover Bovver: The Movie: A Videogame Movie*" get properly underway.

The script for "Consolevania Presents *Hover Bovver: The Movie: A Videogame Movie*" is pretty much complete, but it'll take a few more drafts to knock it into an acceptable shape. Then, most likely, things will change and change again as we



BIGLIME

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES DOWNING

THIS ISSUE, DM'S VERY OWN RANTING SCOTSMAN **ROBERT FLORENCE** GETS HIMSELF INTO A SPOT OF (HOVER) BOVVER.

start to shoot the thing. So what is the thing? "What is the thing, exactly, Rab?" That's me doing your voice there. All limp wrists and everything.

Well, first of all, it's not a straight adaptation of the storyline of *Hover Bovver*. Don't worry, I haven't gone all Uwe Boll on the fucker. There aren't any big-titted fire-breathing dragonbeasts in it. The main character is still Gordon Bennet. But in the movie, his second name is pronounced "Benet," like how the French and poofs talk. And there are certainly lawnmowers in it. Handsome creatures, these lawnmowers. Heroes of youth.

VIDEOGAMERS DON'T HAVE A MOVIE. SURE, THERE ARE VIDEOGAME MOVIES, BUT THAT'S NOT THE SAME THING. VIDEOGAMERS DON'T HAVE A MOVIE THAT THEY CAN TREASURE AND SAY "SEE THAT FILM? THAT'S MY FILM, THAT FILM!"

See, here's the thing...videogamers don't have a movie. Sure, there are videogame movies, but that's not the same thing. Videogamers don't have a movie that they can treasure and say "See that film? That's my film, that film." Ice Hockey fans have the glorious *Slapshot*. Baseball fans have *The Natural*, *Pride of the Yankees* and *Field of Dreams*. Murderers have Henry: *Portrait of a Serial Killer* and Paedophiles have everything. Gamers have nothing.

It would be ridiculous to expect that the *Consolevania* crew, with zero money and limited experience, could make a videogame movie that matters. Utterly ridiculous. But we're going to try it anyway. We're going to try to secure some funding from people within the games industry, while explaining to them that

they'll see nothing back, because we're giving away the film for free. It's an impossibility, but we're going to do it anyway.

Most likely, "Consolevania Presents *Hover Bovver: The Movie: A Videogame Movie*" will be a disaster and I will be a laughing stock. But if it makes one or two people out there go "Man, I love that film where the guy goes totally Solid Snake at

the end" then it will have been worth doing.

Hover Bovver is a wonderful game. It's still wonderful. It's the kind of game where you bite a pillow while playing. But the best thing about *Hover Bovver* (and the reason why I've decided to attempt to make a film inspired by it) is that it's unmistakably, unashamedly British. I fear sometimes that the "British memory" of gaming is being lost. When you look at opinion on the internet, it seems that almost everyone is speaking from some shared background – and most commonly these days, that shared background is an American one. It's all reminiscences about the NES and the Genesis. I don't like it.

As corporate gaming websites suck up American news and opinion and spit it everywhere, there's a danger that new British gamers are losing touch with what it meant to be a gamer in Britain. I've been shaped by peculiarly British glories like *Skool Daze* and *Jet Set Willy*, and there are a lot of people like me out there. I think we have our own outlook. Our own way of seeing this hobby of ours. And it's a little bit of that I hope to capture with "Consolevania Presents *Hover Bovver: The Movie: A Videogame Movie*." Which is, by the way, just a working title. I think it's currently a bit on the short side.

Blocksum is an atypical "zone" game, demanding strong nerves, excruciating precision, and calculated responses to the unrelenting assaults that greet the avatar, providing aesthetics that are functional without being overpowering, and laying bare the "mental arithmetic" skeleton used in many puzzlers.

Yes, it's a maths game, but hopefully the promise of "zone"-like intensity has kept you from flipping the page. In the game, the player must eliminate various blocks before they fill the playing field completely. So far, so what? The difference here is that each block is numbered (and coloured for aesthetic pleasantry); and to eliminate them the player must ensure that the number shown on a block is the number of blocks adjacent to that block which share that number.

In other words, if there are three blocks labelled "3" they will vanish, allowing space for more blocks continue filling the play area. Currently it still sounds like other block-matching puzzlers; you're just moving blocks with the same number next to one another instead of the same colour. Except in *Blocksum* you can't move the blocks; you can only sum them.

Using the arrow keys to move the in-game cursor over a block, and then pressing and holding the action button, you can then press a key to "sum up" your selected block with the adjacent block you highlighted with the cursor. Let's say we had two "3"s in a row, followed by a "2" and a "1". By moving the cursor over the "2" block, pressing and holding the button, and pressing right, the "2" and the "1" will combine to make "3", and now that there are 3 "3" blocks in a row, they will vanish. But there's more; before they vanish, there is a brief pause where the player can set up more "3" blocks directly adjacent to the completed combination, and these will also vanish and count towards the bonus. This means that each successful combination precedes a scramble to create more blocks of the same number.

And this creativity separates *Blocksum* from other tile matchers; it puts extra pressure on you firstly by demanding that greater numbers of tiles are grouped together and then by allowing you to directly manipulate the identity of these tiles. That leaves no-one to blame but yourself when you try to ambitiously create and group nine "9" blocks together (and, in the case of your correspondent, fumble stupidly and end up creating a "13" block, making everything much harder.) It's one of those beautiful games that adds an illusion of freedom and creativity to the problem solving.

Then there are the bonuses; novice players would be wise to steer clear of huge number combinations lest they fumble whilst the playing field fills with more new blocks (unless you get a special block can eliminate all blocks of a certain numeric identity.) Observe *Blocksum* being played by an experienced player, however, and you'll witness high combo setups in anticipation for higher numbers that will soon appear onscreen... or even long waits for the playing field to fill with easy, small numbers at the start of the game, before the first level is blitized in one chained combo of small numbers.

Blocksum is difficult to explain in words but reveals itself with five minutes of play. Presentation is also excellent; the slowly rotating backdrop is almost hypnotic, and the techno-lite music makes things more atmospheric. Also, the backdrop changes at each completed level, and even when failure draws near there is a brief period of time where you can scan the play field for a combo opportunity before it's too late. Anyway, if you're reading this part of *Disposable Media* then the simple graphics and straightforward gameplay concept should be an instant draw; *Blocksum* is a wonderful alternative to the blockbuster games of the new generation that focus too much on frills and filler, and I don't doubt that I'll still be playing it long after you've read this.

BLOCKSUM

A GAME THAT PROVES TO BE AS TAXING ON THE MIND AS IT IS ON THE FINGERS... AND ALSO PROVES VERY DIFFICULT TO TEAR AWAY FROM.



“BLOCKSUM IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN IN WORDS BUT REVEALS ITSELF WITH FIVE MINUTES OF PLAY”



HOW SEGA'S ONCE-CELEBRATED ICON HAS BECOME A FIGURE OF MOCKERY

WORDS DAN GASSIS

DESIGN ANDREW CAMPBELL

SPEED TRAP

DM is pretty certain that, like us, you've become disillusioned with the *Sonic* franchise, perhaps to the point where you wish Sonic Team would stop pissing all over our memories. Just look at the major console releases at the tail-end of the series' chronology. *Heroes*: flimsy. *Shadow*: a catastrophe. Sonic's 360 outing: laughable. These games have turned the brand into a joke; if they weren't released under the *Sonic* banner then some dignity might have been saved before it was too late. Unfortunately it seems that one or two things are happening; either Sonic Team feels it's their duty to continue such a long-lasting franchise, or it's simply selling well. But why?

DM thinks that fundamental flaws shared between the latest titles are to blame; various elaborations on a formula that should be so straightforward. It's obvious that franchise development is a very delicate act that can go to shit all too easily unless the right refinements are made. Whilst everyone understands that these people are trying to capture the biggest audience, surely that can be done without such radical shifts in style? When you first played the Megadrive game it was beautiful: a lush 2D environment with bright colours and an emphasis on getting “

**SONIC GAMES SHOULD BE
ABOUT SONIC, AND SONIC ALONE.**”

around the environment quickly whilst bouncing on enemies. Playing *Shadow The Hedgehog*, you were presented with a world straight out of any low-budget *GTA* rip-off, and you meandered around slowly, before trying to find your homing attack and instead pulling out a gun. It was the complete opposite of what you thought *Sonic* games should be about.

But what should they be about? *Riders* was a spin-off that managed to be even worse than *Sonic R*, and wouldn't hold much interest for the platforming fans. The 360 *Sonic* elaborated on the new characters and abilities

of previous games and maintained the more contemporary, “realistic” environs of *Shadow*, a game which completely missed the point and placed an emphasis on shooting and “attitude” rather than speed and acceleration. *Heroes* was so restrictive it might as well have been on rails.

Sonic games should be about Sonic, and Sonic alone. *Shadow the Hedgehog* was built around the characterisation of Shadow; with his moodiness and teen-angst, he'd look out of place in Green Hill Zone, and his ballistic combat and stationary assaults are the antithesis of the franchise's soul. *Sonic Adventure*'s levels shone when they didn't involve Gamma's tedious lock-on combat, Amy's hateful non-game or Knuckles' “just-fuck-off-and-die” gem hunts; these were all far too uncharacteristic to be part of a *Sonic* game.

In fact, the *Adventure* games could have been the closest thing to a half-decent 3D Sonic we had. Oh, you can whinge all you like about the crap animation, annoying voices and the baffling soundtrack, but you'd be missing the point; the most urgent need is an annihilation of the character line-up so that the hedgehogs' levels can flourish. Each of

them, in some way or another, is more true to the series' roots than any of the current releases. The

only exception would be *Sonic Rush*; a return to 2D roots with nice refinements and innovations, a bright palette, a typically brilliant Naganuma soundtrack, and brilliantly quick sections in each zone. *Sonic* games excel when they are about cutting a sleek, stylish path through each level using a mix of good timing and control dexterity, and these things haven't been possible in other characters stories. It's simple, Sega; make a *Sonic* game a game about Sonic, rather than a game about Amy, Knuckles, Shadow, Gamma, Tails, Silver, Jet, Wave, Rouge...

UNACTO BORN

HIS MUSIC HAS PROVOKED AWE AND PAINTED DEPTH AND HISTORY INTO THE MOST ALIEN AND FUTURISTIC WORLDS. HE HAS WORKED ON THE SOUNDTRACKS OF THE MOST GENRE-DEFINING OF TITLES, INCLUDING DEUS EX, DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR AND UNREAL TOURNAMENT. AND IF LAST.FM PLAY COUNTS ARE ANYTHING TO GO BY, HE'S STILL GAINING PROMINENT AUDIENCES FOR HIS PAST WORKS, AND HAS PLENTY MORE TO COME ON THE HORIZON.



DISPOSABLE MEDIA CAUGHT UP WITH ALEXANDER BRANDON.

WORDS: ADAM PARKER
DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

When did you first know that you wanted to make music as a career, and how did you get into creating soundtracks for games?

I'm not sure exactly when I knew I wanted to make music a career, but I knew I wanted games to be a career when I was around ten years old having played numerous arcade games and like so many others geekily knowing it would be "the next big thing". Music came into play when a friend of mine started taping game soundtracks on a tape recorder

and I followed suit. I then had the chance to write music for the first time thanks to the Ad Lib Music Synthesizer Card, the first widespread commercially available soundcard for the IBM PC and clones.

Who are your main influences?

Hirozaku Tanaka, Michiru Yamane, Club Kukeiha and other fine Konami and Capcom composers. Oddly enough Nubuo Uematsu isn't on this list but perhaps that's because his music has been so lauded by everyone else

already. I like it, but I don't consider it nearly as well done as the "*Strider*" soundtrack for example. Brad Fuller, George Sanger and Team Fat, many other game composers come into play here. As far as non game music the usual greats are there: John Williams, James Horner, Alan Silvestri, Basil Poledouris (God rest his soul), Mozart, Wagner, Satie, Debussy, Mussorgsky, and this list goes on forever... Dream Theater, Van Halen, Steve Vai, A Tribe Called Quest, Public Enemy, Global Communication, Postal Service, etc. etc.

You are perhaps best known for your work on the *Deus Ex* soundtracks, but you made several before and after that. Which are you most proud of?

Unreal, to be sure. *Tyrian* was my first and still is excellent in my opinion. And lately, *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows* had a great adaptive soundtrack with an orchestra; it just didn't get much recognition.

Music is clearly integral to the experience of immersion in games, as

“I KNEW I WANTED GAMES TO BE A CAREER WHEN I WAS AROUND TEN YEARS OLD HAVING PLAYED NUMEROUS ARCADE GAMES AND LIKE SO MANY OTHERS GEEKILY KNOWING IT WOULD BE “THE NEXT BIG THING”

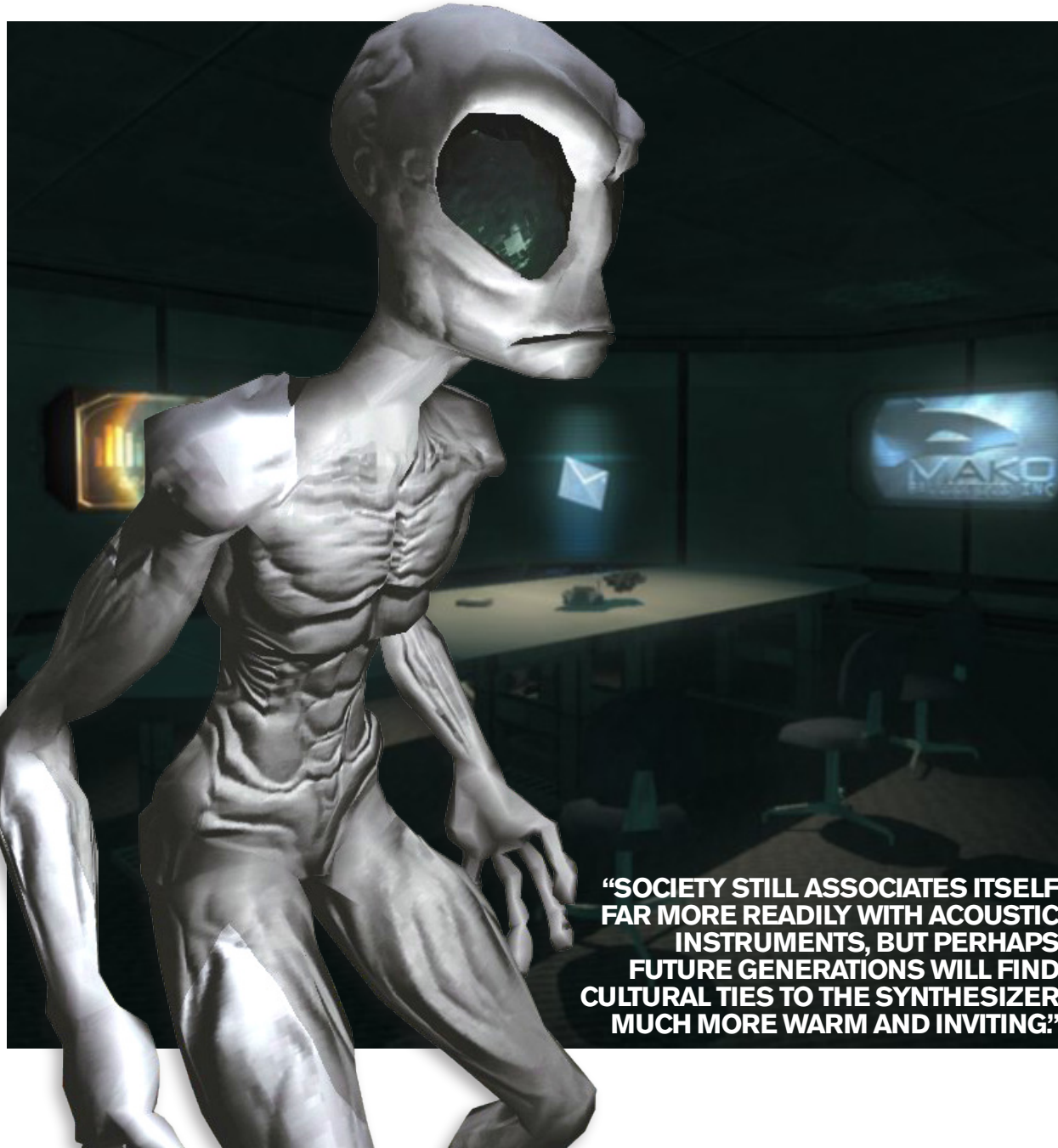
many gamers will attest. Why do you think this is the case, and how do you set out to enhance this?

Music in games just as in films provides something outside reality that can influence emotional response and drive decision making. Most of the time though, the visuals and gameplay are what inspire the themes that simply enhance the moments even more. Take *Unreal*. A lot of inspiration visually was derived from Rodney Matthews (in some levels, not all), and the music reflected that otherworldly fantasy nature. The same goes for *Gauntlet*. In *Tyrian* the music was more thematic and action oriented, and you know, if it was done by a live band it just wouldn't have worked. The visuals and audio need to go together properly in terms of resolution.

The music in *Invisible War* varied in style quite a lot from the original *Deus Ex*: was this a change that emerged from your own evolution as an artist, or was it more defined by the game, and the vision of Ion Storm?

The musical direction of that game primarily came from Harvey Smith. I like both the music from both games for different reasons. In the first game the music stands well on its own but isn't nearly as tied to gameplay (it tries but doesn't do that well at it). In the second the music is dismal and barren listening to it on its own (unless you're depressed and want a combination of The Cure and Brian Eno), but while playing, boy does it make the environments and atmosphere pop.

Can you see interactive music completely superseding 'static' pieces in



“SOCIETY STILL ASSOCIATES ITSELF FAR MORE READILY WITH ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS, BUT PERHAPS FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL FIND CULTURAL TIES TO THE SYNTHESIZER MUCH MORE WARM AND INVITING.”

games in the future?

Not at all. Looped music will always have a role in games; it just depends on the game's design. In a traditional menu where a player will spend a maximum of one to two minutes at a time, looped music works well there. EA among other people are changing how game menus are done though, so this might not still be relevant.

Darwin once said that music was used as an early precursor to language. It can clearly be laced with meaning, and finding structure and patterns in it is integral to whether we find it appealing or not; music can often be described as mathematically beautiful. How important is appealing to 'the brain' in developments in electronic music?

The connection between the brain and electronic music is one of experimentation primarily, not as much about emotion; or at least it isn't yet. Society still associates itself far more readily with acoustic instruments, but perhaps future generations will find cultural ties to the synthesizer much more warm and inviting. And in my opinion, they should. Hell, I already equate certain Tom Petty songs with an Oberheim synth to an old rustic town.

What projects are you working on at the moment?

'Happy Feet' was just released and it's actually pretty enjoyable as a children's title. I did some voice over and audio direction work on that one since the music was licensed. There are some original titles we have in the works but I can't say what they are... yet. Otherwise, I'm also working on a personal project called *'Legend'* that you can find out more about in future posts on my newsletter blog 'Club Silicon', which can be found at:

www.clubsilicononline.com

DEUS EX MACHINA

WORDS: ADAM PARKER

DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

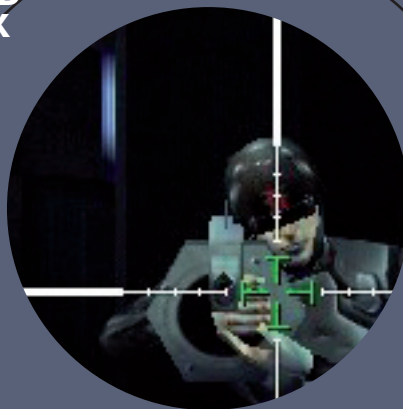
AFTER THE CULT SUCCESS THAT FOLLOWED THE FIRST GAME, THE OBSESSIVE LEVEL OF INTEREST SURROUNDING ITS SEQUEL'S DEVELOPMENT WAS INEVITABLE. THE ANALYSIS OF SCREENSHOTS TOOK ON A MORE DESPERATE EDGE THROUGH FORUMS AND GAMES SITES ALIKE; TO THE POST-MATRIX GAMES-PLAYING AUDIENCE, THIS WAS IMPORTANT.

DISPOSABLE MEDIA, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS AT RLLMUKFORUM.COM, LOOKS BACK AT DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR.

With the release almost upon us, out came the revelations: one single ammo type for all weapons, removal of the skill upgrades from the first game, an interface that had gone through numerous iterations ultimately settling on something too bulky and, frankly, ugly. The Deus Ex fans' collective heart sank, but their fingers were crossed.

They couldn't go wrong... could they? They couldn't ruin Deus Ex?

Acceptance diluted previous disbelief. Minds were made up before the game was even released. Cue the blame game: it was the cross-platform launch that caused this, said the PC fanboys. It's the Xbox's fault. The console ruined our game.



And then, when the game was actually out: bile flowed. Cult fans hated what Ion Storm had done to their beloved series. The screens demoed at E3 didn't make it to the final game. Huge swathes of the project had apparently been cut. In the name of profit, seemingly, Ion Storm had sold out the PC crowd.

What had gone wrong?

It is telling that, when we asked the opinions of Rllmukforum members on Deus Ex and Deus Ex: Invisible War - long after the dust stirred by the sequel's release had settled - the replies should be weighted so heavily in favour of the original. >>>

"[DEUS EX] WAS THE BEST PC GAME I EVER PLAYED - BAR NONE. THE SEQUEL WAS A WATERED DOWN VERSION FOR THE XBOX GENERATION."
- MRHATFIELD

"PLAYING BASKETBALL IN BATTERY PARK; SHOOTING CIVILIANS AND THROWING THEM IN THE SEA; BUYING AS MANY CIGARETTES AS I CAN AND SEEING IF I COULD KILL MYSELF THROUGH EXCESSIVE SMOKING (I COULD); READING THE NEWSPAPERS; DISCOVERING I COULD HACK THE ATMS; THROWING VASES OUT OF APARTMENT WINDOWS; FINDING OUT THAT SEEMINGLY TOKEN CHARACTERS - SUCH AS ISAAC, THE LUCKY MONEY BARTENDER - HAVE OPINIONS ON CHINESE TRIADS AND THE GOVERNMENT; THERE WAS ATTENTION TO DETAIL IN THIS GAME LIKE NO OTHER."
- QAZIMOD

"OH MY GOD, JC! A BOMB!"
- TEQUILA

"I'M STILL PLAYING THROUGH DEUS EX, FOR THE FIRST TIME. I PLAYED THROUGH INVISIBLE WAR COUNTLESS TIMES, JUST TO SEE ALL THE DIFFERENT ENDINGS. IT WAS STILL FUN; TRYING OUT USING THE DIFFERENT MODS, AND HELPING OUT THE DIFFERENT FACTIONS. IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT THE SEQUEL NEVER QUITE REACHED THE GENIUS OF THE FIRST GAME."

- MR DO

"DESPITE LONG LOADING TIMES AND TWO APPARENTLY BUTCHERED/CUT DOWN LEVELS, THE PS2 VERSION [OF DEUS EX 1] IS ONE OF THE BEST PS2 GAMES EVER."
- TSSK

"[IT'S] FUNNY HOW [DEUS EX 1] AND THE ORIGINAL HALF-LIFE WERE BOTH MODS OF CREAKY OLD ENGINES... PROOF IF IT WERE NEEDED THAT GENIUS TAKES TIME AND YOU SIMPLY CANNOT LEGISLATE FOR HOW CLEVER, CREATIVE AND GROUNDBREAKING GAME DEVELOPERS CAN BE WHEN THEY'RE NOT [MUCKING] ABOUT WRITING ENGINES."
- LINKSTER



As a rule, sequels are less popular anyway – Terminator 2 notwithstanding – and this principle is particularly true of an industry which relies on continued hardware upgrades; inevitably some punters are going to be left behind. But now, in the years after Invisible War's release, we see a game which, for all its past graphical flair, restricts you far more than its prequel ever did.

The reception of a game at launch is all-important. Arriving in a post-GTA 3 gaming landscape, Invisible War's tight corridors and melodramatic FMV (after the confident, exquisite use of the in-game engine in the first game) feel, early on in the game, like a real step backwards. Computer technology may have moved on and come down in price (and will provide, naturally, a smoother play experience) but the Xbox version, certainly, will never gain quicker loading times, nor improved framerates; and for the PC fraternity, there are brighter prospects on the horizon now, without the need

to look back to old games whose negative reception is all too fresh in the memory.

The plot of Invisible War mirrors its predecessor somewhat: you start off knowing little of your past, as part of an organisation that you will later defect from. Invisible War continues this convention with rather less success, however: where you took part in several missions for UNATCO in Deus Ex – developing, perhaps, a certain affection for your surroundings (an affection which would later be shockingly altered) – Invisible War threw you out of the Tarsus Academy almost immediately, as you fled from religious terrorists. Perhaps it was part of the intention to leave you feeling unwanted – to put the choices in your hands right at the start – but your apparent value to the academy contradicts this. The characters

INVISIBLE WAR'S TIGHT CORRIDORS AND MELODRAMATIC FMV FEEL, EARLY ON IN THE GAME, LIKE A REAL STEP BACKWARDS.

were at times compelling: the post-human Omar with their

militaristic body upgrades are clearly borne of the same wonderfully imaginative minds as the Morpheus AI.

There is, however, something about the slick lighting, clean faces and smooth, pastel surfaces that jars with your expectations after the dark, jagged, trench-coated appeal of the first game. And there are absurd, unforgivable simplifications: all-purpose multitools function as both lockpicks and computer terminal hacking devices. Some of the mods in the first game – like the spy drone, for example – looked and felt like they might blow up in your face the first time you tried to use them, yet the supposed danger of using 'black market' upgrades in Invisible War is only suggested by

some dubious spiel by your superiors, and a slightly different colour hue of the canisters. In short: the edgy, intelligent hacker underworld of the first game was neutered.

After all that, though, the feeling you get when you play through Invisible War is not one of pessimism. The soundtrack, gratefully, is just as exceptional and evocative as in the first game, crafted as it is by Alexander Brandon (see our interview with him on page 8.) The plot, too, at times goes in similarly bold, 'hard sci-fi' directions.

Invisible War carries the same soul of the original, albeit only a piece of that soul, existing in the shadow of its roots, regrettably skewed in favour of what was believed a larger, console gaming audience would want. Invisible War is to Deus Ex as Reloaded and Revolutions are to the Matrix: divisive, not what was expected, and, above all, unnecessary.

Sequels are less popular anyway.



OKAMI

(PS2)

Okami plays like a free roaming RPG - roping in elements of *Zelda*, *Shadow of the Colossus* and even finding time for wacky Japanese humour (Mafia sparrows anyone?). Playing as Amaterasu - no normal wolf, but a sun god no less - your job is to save the world.

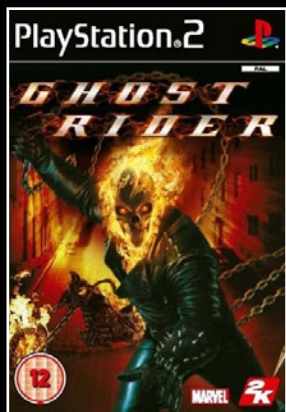
Altering the landscape plays a pivotal role and can be achieved by a flick of your celestial brush - water in your way? No problem just draw a lily pad, creating an organic stepping stone. The further you progress the more powers you gain and the more enjoyable *Okami* becomes.

With a huge landscape to explore occasionally a loss of direction occurs - but not only is the gameplay top notch, the distinctive Japanese artistic stylings make it a treat for your eyes too.

Paul Blakeley



"NOT ONLY IS THE GAMEPLAY TOP NOTCH, THE DISTINCTIVE ARTISTIC STYLINGS MAKE IT A TREAT FOR YOUR EYES TOO"



GHOST RIDER

(PS2)

By no means revolutionary, *Ghost Rider* does just enough to satisfy fans of the cult comic hero.

As you walk and ride through countless demons, there is lots of satisfaction to be had from dispatching them with your chain, shotgun, and cinematic special moves. Plus your iconic motorcycle comes complete with missiles, and the ability to jump and slide over and under obstacles.

But despite a flaming skull for a head, and the impressively fearsome bosses, you'll be limited and frustrated by a fixed third person

camera, which can leave you running in circles to locate unseen baddies. Meanwhile the bike sections are limited to rollercoaster tracks which provide a break from the main action, rather than equal enjoyment.

A shed load of unlockable extras will entice fans, including complete comics and fellow comic hero Blade, but there just isn't enough to jump *Ghost Rider* over other similar titles.

Dan Thornton



"BY NO MEANS REVOLUTIONARY, GHOST RIDER DOES JUST ENOUGH TO SATISFY FANS OF THE CULT COMIC HERO."



BATTLE-
STATIONS
MIDWAY

(XBOX 360)

This ambitious addition to the Xbox 360 catalogue mixes brains and brawn as you take control of U.S and Japanese naval fleets.

With ships, planes, aircraft carriers and boatyards, you'll need the simple and intuitive strategic map to control much of the action. But if you'd rather take over from the reliable A.I. captains and pilots, the manual controls are equally well designed, and provide the adrenaline rush strategy games can lack.

You'll balance steering, firing weapons, ship repairs, and your overall strategy, and it's this

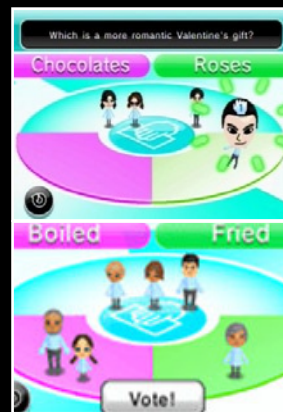
switching which gets the blood pumping.

The graphics cope with the large distances needed, while icons and crew members warn you of the various types of battle damage. Even more impressive is the lack of lag with eight players online, as you team-up to destroy your enemies. The only flaw is the lack of a co-op mission mode.

Dan Thornton



"THE MANUAL CONTROLS ARE WELL DESIGNED, AND PROVIDE THE ADRENALINE RUSH STRATEGY GAMES CAN LACK"



EVERYBODY
VOTE CHANNEL

(Wii)

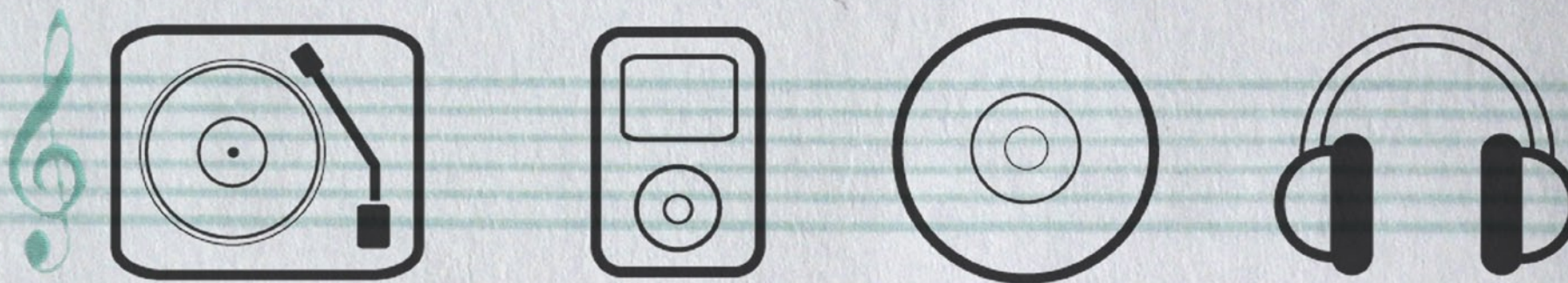
Nintendo's latest non-game addition to its Wii channel lineup proves to be deceptively game-like. What is the point on voting on random 'Do you prefer this or that?' questions, I hear you ask, especially when the connection times are so long and annoying? Because it's communal. Because it's fun. Because you get to predict what the outcome is! There have only been a few UK poll results so far, but the thrill of seeing what other Wii owners think, broken down by gender and region demographics, and more importantly, whether your

prediction was right, is not bad for a free download. Go on, you know you want to, how can you resist those unbearably cute little Mii animations?

Rachel Wild



"NINTENDO'S LATEST NON-GAME ADDITION TO ITS WII CHANNEL LINEUP PROVES TO BE DECEPTIVELY GAME-LIKE"



music

currently listening to...

kylie minogue / varsity drag / radio 1 / bunch of myspace stuff / acoustic ladyland / field music / kings of leon



ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS

KYLIE MINOGUE LIVE - SHOWGIRL HOMECOMING TOUR, WEMBLEY ARENA, MONDAY JANUARY 8TH, 2007

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

THERE WON'T BE MANY 'COMEBACK' TOURS THIS YEAR THAT GET THE PRESS IN AS MUCH OF A FRENZY AS KYLIE MINOGUE'S SHOWGIRL HOMECOMING. DESPITE MASSIVE DEMAND, DISPOSABLE MEDIA PULLED A FEW STRINGS AND CALLED IN SOME OLD LOANS IN TIME TO MAKE IT ALONG TO ONE OF THE POPSTAR'S DATES AT WEMBLEY.

There's no getting away from it. For anyone whose only contact with Kylie Minogue comes in the form of the exposé style snaps printed almost weekly in *Heat* and the like, this concert – and indeed this entire tour – was about her recovery from cancer. But for the 10,000 or more who managed to get their hands on tickets during last spring's record-breaking sell-out, illness could not have been further from the mind. This was a night of music and entertainment – a night that left the impression that one could not exist without the other.

It's a given that Kylie didn't just stand on stage for two hours, belting out one hit after another; inevitably – and as much publicised by the press – there were more than a few costume changes involved. But the costumes, along with the eight unique themes that surrounded them, provided their own highlights. Fusing *Can't Get You Out Of My*



“AT THIS POINT IN TIME - OUTSIDE SOHO'S STRIP CLUBS - WEMBLEY ARENA WAS PROBABLY THE MOST LIBERAL PLACE IN THE WORLD. ONLY AT A KYLIE CONCERT, SO THEY SAY.”

Head with *Doctor Who* was an inspired move; seeing a troop of Cyber-adorned dancers marching out in time to the song's opening throngs was a true highlight, as well as an astute reading of the singer's fanbase.

None of these changes caused any delay, however. Between each theme, long, scaling outros and intros (created by Brothers in Rhythm's Steve Anderson, no less) winged their way around the arena, hinting at the possible tracks to come. As a result, it was often possible to spot the crowd physically straining for the first recognisable note or bar, usually so they could scream in its welcome.

Make no mistake - this was a concert designed to milk adoration from its crowd, with almost twenty years of touring resulting in a refined production. Songs, many of which have been performed on numerous occasions before, were lifted to their pinnacle and treated in a way that suggests Kylie and her team now know how to draw the best from the most diverse of line-ups. Most of note was the adaptation of *The Loco-Motion*, brought to life like never before by the addition of a brassy big-band and just a smidgen of sex

appeal. It was the kind of surprising performance that could only bring a smile to everyone's faces with a general feeling of "how did they do that?"

The retro feel didn't stop there, either. Ever conscious of her past and the bearing it has had on her career, perhaps the most stirring moment of the night came in the form of the appropriately named "Everything Taboo" section, which featured some of Kylie's more unmentionable early-90s-rave-tracks intermingled with the likes of *Shocked*, *Spinning Around* (itself mixed with Cece Peniston's *Finally*) and *What Do I Have To Do*. As well as giving a nod to some of the older members of the audience, it also kicked off a party atmosphere that reigned supreme for most of what followed.

Like the worst wedding reception ever, there was still something endearing about seeing a couple in their 50s dancing their hearts out, while two 12 year old girls with flashing tiaras leapt up and down next to them like they needed the loo. Over in the corner, a crowd of what seemed like stag do-ers were fixated at the stage watching every move Kylie made in adoration. Or, were they in fact spying the two lesbians openly necking in the front row? Whatever the case, at this point in time - outside Soho's strip clubs - Wembley Arena was probably the most liberal place in the world. Only at a Kylie concert, so they say.

It's because of this family feeling that Kylie's performance was able to seamlessly fuse 80s classics like *I Should Be So Lucky* with some of the more obscure album tracks from commercial-bomb *Impossible Princess* without the blink of an eye. While the kids may not have known some of the Stock/Aitken/Waterman tracks from Adam, that didn't stop them welcoming them with the same gaiety that was gifted to excellent renditions of the likes of *Slow* and *Confide In Me*. *Showgirl* is more a celebration of the many facets of pop than a glorification of one of its stars.

So, there was no surprise when Madonna's *Vogue* cropped up, albeit fused to its benefit with a much-loved track lifted from Kylie's *Fever* album - *Burning Up*. But its place here was not political or even an attempt to be meaningful, like Madonna's "I Love Kylie Minogue" t-shirt at the Brit Awards a few years back. As with the entire performance, *Vogue* is an example of pop music at its best - a signature dish, if you like. For the three or so hours Kylie was on stage, she sold all forms of pop music.

It was a party and a carnival of noise. One that left everyone with a huge smile on their face, and was a suitable testament to one of pop music's most enduring ambassadors.

music/retrospective

TRIALS OF AN

IMPOSSIBLE PRINCESS

WORDS: KEITH ANDREW
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

ALMOST TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE LOCO-MOTION FIRST TOPPED THE CHARTS IN AUSTRALIA, KYLIE MINOGUE'S SHOWGIRL HOMECOMING TOUR HAS BEEN SOMETHING OF A CELEBRATION FOR POP AFICIONADOS, MARKING HER INTENTION FOR A MINI-COMEBACK IN 2007. DISPOSABLE MEDIA TAKES A LOOK AT JUST WHAT MAKES A MELBOURNE GIRL MAKE HEADLINES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLOBE.

Despite those infamous song lyrics, there's never been anything lucky (or lucky, lucky, lucky, for that matter) about Kylie Minogue's twenty years in the musical spotlight. When it comes to summaries, the tabloid press certainly have a knack for over-simplification; plucked by Peter Waterman and co. from a dodgy perm, a job as a mechanic and one of the weddings of the 1980s (perhaps only second to Charles and Diana) and shot to international superstardom and an almost constant stream of hit singles and albums to the present day.

But for those brave enough to follow Minogue's career from *I Should Be So Lucky* to *Showgirl*, her story is one equally stained by flops and career faux-pas as it is lifted by #1s and gold hot pants. Unlike many of her compadres, Kylie is currently adored by the massed ranks of the press – whether due to the feeling of compassion that surrounded her recent illness, or the headline-grabbing tour



which hit the UK at the turn of the year – and it's hard to imagine her being toppled from that spot. Pre-*Spinning Around* however, the picture was not so rosy. Kylie Minogue was a relic. A has been. A classic 'where are they now?' contender.

When Australian singer/songwriter Nick Cave approached Kylie to sing on his *The Murder Ballads* album, released back in 1997, she herself admitted at the time that there weren't many artists out there with less credibility than "Kylie Minogue". From having successive top ten hits at the turn of the eighties (indeed, the final tally rested at a then-record breaking thirteen consecutive top six singles), things changed when Kylie finally parted company with Waterman's 'hit factory' in 1992 after a manic five albums in just four years. Indeed, it was a sad end to a period that had consisted of notable pop fluff but also genuine trend setting; the Kylie that

This period was one easily brushed aside by her peers; here was Kylie Minogue, attempting to do something 'trendy' in a bid to ride the crest of the Brit-pop wave which hit the UK in the mid 1990s. Labelled quite simply as 'indie Kylie', the years which followed saw Miss Minogue actually working with many dance icons – names such as the Pet Shop Boys, Pete Heller, and Rob Dougan (of 'Clubbed to Death' fame). Yet it was her collaborations with the Manic Street Preachers that stole the gaze of the press and bore the most negativity. Despite the fact that both *Some Kind of Bliss* and *I Don't Need Anyone* are both solid pop records to their very core, the fact that Kylie had even considered working with James Dean Bradfield was seemingly enough to warrant national condemnation.

As a result, much of her debut album with De-construction – the appropriately titled

seemingly alien genres matter to people who'd never willingly spent a night in the middle of a farmer's field in Norfolk.

At De-construction little had changed. Her work with the Manics, with Brothers in Rhythm, or with any of the artists and producers who collaborated with Minogue, was about exploiting another fruitful facet of her musical persona.

Even when she joined Parlophone at the turn of the millennium – a move that saw the added 'bonus' of mass popularity rear its head once again – tracks such as *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* in 2001 and *Slow* three years later managed to spark a resurgence in electro-pop music in the charts – a spark that had been missing for long enough to make the two aforementioned tracks sound entirely un-radio friendly upon first listen. Hard to imagine now, admittedly.

It's perhaps this ceaseless progression

“WHILE THE HITS WERE CERTAINLY HARDER TO COME BY AND HER FOLLOWING HAD STARTED TO RESEMBLE THE PRETENTIOUS DREGS OF A LONDON WINE BAR, HER TAKE ON MUSIC HADN'T CHANGED; DO WHAT YOU LOVE, AND DO IT WELL.”

had adorned the charts post-Michael Hutchence was one that played a key role in selling an emerging dance scene to a commercial audience.

It was, therefore, perhaps unsurprising to those in the know that Kylie went on to turn down more lucrative contracts in order to sign to the relatively unknown and dance-orientated (and now sadly defunct) De-construction. To casual observers, this 'second coming' still means little more than the Brothers in Rhythm produced *Confide In Me* in 1994 – a track which went some way to restoring professional integrity to an artist who, following almost three years away from the singles stand, had lost most of her commercial sparkle. But Kylie Minogue's three years and two albums at De-construction never troubled the higher echelons of the music charts after *Confide*'s initial impressive debut.

Kylie Minogue – and the album that followed almost three years later were vastly overlooked by the industry and the journalists that populate it. While 1997's *Impossible Princess* is a cacophony of different influences, ranging from trip-hop to some simple down-and-dirty dance, its predecessor paid homage to the likes of acid jazz and the then burgeoning house music scene. Not much Brit-pop there, then.

But, as far as Kylie Minogue is concerned, it was business as usual. While the hits were certainly harder to come by and her following had started to resemble the pretentious dregs of a London wine bar, her take on music hadn't changed; do what you love, and do it well. Back in the early 1990s, when *Lucky*, *Loco-Motion* and co. were still fresh in the memory, Minogue switched almost completely and embraced the dance scene, even penning a few rave tracks.. She managed to make

from dance to indie to acid jazz to electro and back again that, in part, explains a large portion of the singer's abiding appeal. While there's an inevitable new look ushered in with each video and a new 'Kylie' logo adorning each album cover, the music playing in the background has always been solid and strong enough to support the more superficial elements that are seemingly tied to fame in the modern day.

Yes, it's about *that* bum. Yes, it's about *that* video. Yes, it's about *that outfit*. But, it's also about the combination of the #1s with the precious album tracks you know only a small number of people besides yourself have even heard of. In the trials of Kylie Minogue, the music is most certainly a guilty party.

Let's just be thankful she's never resorted to snogging Christina and Britney on stage, eh? That's what I call 'lucky'.

TRIUMPH OVER ADVARSITY

: VARSITY DRAG AT THE PORTLAND ARMS :

WORDS: DAN THORNTON

DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANGUS FARQUHAR



**AGE WON'T WEARY ONE
UNSUNG HERO OF U.S.
PUNK POP, AS HIS NEW
BAND TAKES ON A LOW-
BUDGET TOUR OF EUROPE.**

There's an informal, almost 'invite-only' air to the tiny back room venue of the Portland Arms. It takes a certain type of fan to have tracked the movements of Varsity Drag lead singer Ben Deily since his departure from The Lemonheads almost 20 years ago. But if his departure preceded the rise of acoustic hippy Evan Dando to star status, Deily's mournful pop-punk odes to unrequited love have a cult status which endured throughout his absence from

"HE MIGHT HAVE A DAY JOB IN ADVERTISING, BUT DEILY'S VOICE STILL EPITOMISES TEENAGE ANGST, UNREQUITED LOVE, AND REGRET IN A MANNER UNMATCHED BY BANDS HALF HIS AGE."

recording – save for Pods, which lasted from 1992-1994.

But now he's back, and bringing with him the same high tempo pop-punk melodies that made him the unsung hero of the early Lemonheads albums. He might have a day job in advertising, but Deily's voice still epitomises teenage angst, unrequited love, and regret in a manner unmatched by bands half his age. And the rest of Varsity Drag have got his back, with the Mohican-sporting school vice principal Will Anderson on bass, and long-haired, bespectacled and shirtless drummer Ian Miller exhausting himself to maintain the high-speed rhythm.

It's almost a surreal homecoming for Deily, who grew up in Cambridge, albeit Cambridge, Massachusetts. Following a late start, and one support act reduced from five piece to a solo act by a bass player stuck on the motorway, there's a sense of urgency to make it through much of the new album and still include the classics. But that doesn't stop some comedic interludes between Deily and Anderson, obviously both enjoying the delights of touring cheap lodgings around Europe.

Stand out tunes from the new album, *'For Crying Out Loud'*, are the power trio of *'Skinny Ties'*, *'Billy Ruane'*, and *'Miles of Ocean'*. All three are honed and crafted slices of punk guitars, thumping bass and pounding drums, topped with poetic vocals. All three match the earlier *'Ever'* and *'7 Powers'*, and inspire as much singing and dancing in the crowd. In fact, you can almost see the years being stripped from the more middle-aged members of the audience in a way make-up companies would kill for.

The only chance to grab a breath is when Deily takes the mic alone for *'Postcard'*, a beautiful and emotive eulogy to a departed love. And when he sings "I know it won't go on as such, but I'll hope we'll keep in touch", a roomful of fans, both new and old, is hoping he means it.

BEN DEILY SPEAKS...



DM: "Why on earth did you decide to tour Europe in the middle of Winter?"

BD: "We released the album in the summer of 2006, and after years of asking, a crazy German called Florian offered to arrange a tour but it would take six months, putting us in January. That fell through, but Aston, the boss of our label Boss Tuneage stepped in, and arranged it instead."

DM: "Do you still get nervous, even after all this time?"

BD: "Not any more. What's the worst they can do to me? Even if people shout things, it's fun and encouraging. The only thing that scares me is going to places like Wakefield tomorrow and not knowing if we'll find a place for everyone to stay."

DM: "What's your favourite song to play live?"

BD: "*7 Powers* is a really good song to play. It's a draw between that and *Skinny Ties*. But I'm getting to like playing *Postcard*. We've never really played it live, even in The Lemonheads."

DM: "Seeing as you work in advertising as your day job, what would be the taglines for Ben Deily?"

BD: "Now I'm on the spot. I try and think of some and put them on my website (www.bendeily.com), but I'm struggling now. How about: "Ben Deily – he means you no harm"

Varsity Drag's album 'For Crying Out Loud' is out now, available on Boss Tuneage record (www.bosstuneage.com). For Pods CD's and the latest news, visit www.bendeily.com or join the Drag at www.myspace.com/varsitydrag.



RADIO 1

WORDS: DAN THORNTON & IAN MORENO-MELGAR
DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

WELCOME TO GOOD VS. BAD. EVERY ISSUE WE PICK ON SOMETHING MUSIC RELATED AND PRAISE IT AND SHOUT IT DOWN AT THE SAME TIME. THIS ISSUE IT'S RADIO 1.

ON AIR

GOOD

The fact we're even having this argument is proof that Radio 1 is worth supporting. When was the last time anyone felt inspired enough to love or hate "insipid local FM", playing the blandest hits of the 80's, 90's and today?

Commercial radio stations might be an easy target, but that's only because they're uniformly rubbish. Except for five stations in London, the rest are part of a small number of national networks, playing the same shows, at the same time, across the country. And at least you can identify Radio 1 presenters, rather than the anodyne clones who assemble for "Breakfast with Kev/Trev/Gaz and Sue/Tina/Kelly".

The BBC has to tread a fine line between keeping an audience big enough to justify itself as a national service, and being different enough to do the same. The daytime shows play a pretty wide range of music, and in the evenings the station suddenly gets a whole lot more specialist. You could argue that every show should be breaking new and obscure bands, but in all honesty did anyone ever actually make it through an entire

John Peel show? When I'm stuck in an office with a bunch of orange-skinned nattering harpies, all I want is something loud enough to drown them out. It's when I get home in the evening I want to hear music from people intending to be dead by 21.

You could switch to internet-based radio, but in all honesty most of them have a back catalogue of about 15 songs. Or you could watch digital video jukebox channels, playing the same bland hits, but with pictures.

Radio 1 is increasingly the only place where you might be forced to listen to something fresh and new, enjoy it, and find yourself rushing out to buy it the same day, unless you're in the U.S. and you're stuck with college radio.

RADIO 1 IS INCREASINGLY THE ONLY PLACE WHERE YOU MIGHT BE FORCED TO LISTEN TO SOMETHING FRESH AND NEW

So let's be honest here: arguing against Radio 1 is basically saying you're far better than those that enjoy the daytime shows, and to prove it you're willing to risk never being tempted by a new CD, or a new band. **DT**

BAD

It's all too easy to claim that something is of merit when comparing it to something that clearly isn't. Trying to claim that Radio 1 offers an enjoyable radio service because local radio doesn't is lazy. I should make it plain before I go on, that this little 'rant' applies solely to Radio 1's daytime schedule. The evening and night time schedules are wonderful and frankly serve to highlight how dull their daytime schedule is.

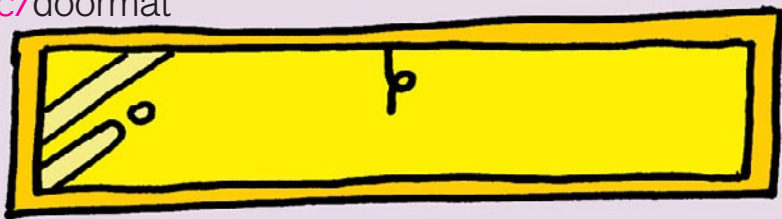
TRYING TO CLAIM THAT RADIO 1 OFFERS AN ENJOYABLE RADIO SERVICE BECAUSE LOCAL RADIO DOESN'T IS LAZY

Funded almost exclusively by the license fee, Radio 1 fails as a public broadcaster during the daytime as a form of entertainment. Local radio is funded by advertising and as such, has its hand forced. It HAS to play 'safe' music, it HAS to play music that appeals to as many people as possible and to offend nobody; its aim is to be inherently inoffensive. Paid for by its listeners, Radio 1 should be a wide and varied mix of styles and genres featuring new, unknown, old, traditional or legendary acts. Radio 1 should champion new British acts,

break boundaries and give opportunities to acts that wouldn't get airplay on local stations. Essentially, Radio 1 should be dictated by its listeners and their tastes, their opinions or even better, by what the DJs recommend. This is not the case. Instead, it's a vague mess which tries to jump onto tastes and fashions long after they've become apparent. The daytime DJs are vapid shells, their own tastes drowned out by their insistence on using their shows as a way of pushing their own 'cool value' and attempting to be part of the zeitgeist (is Jo Whiley even in the 'target age'?) Add to this the playlist which is the backbone of

the music played each day which forces the DJs to play whatever the playlist boss wants. Which currently is the former boss of Kiss FM, hence the ridiculous amounts of faceless dance music that creeps into the playlist and gets repeated for months on end.

But with rising listening figures, maybe it's just my grumpy self that resents being forced to listen to Fedde Le Grand 4 times a day? Working in a bunker that can only receive Radio 1, my choice is limited and so my excuse is valid. How about Radio 1's? **IM**

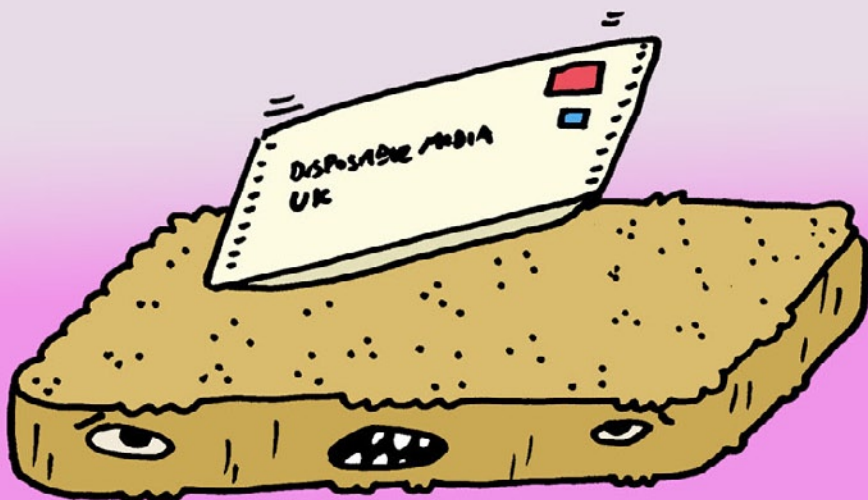
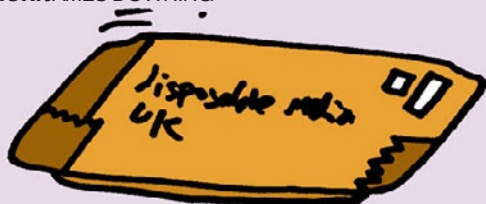


ANOTHER ISSUE AND YET ANOTHER
SELECTION OF TALENTED MUSICIANS
HAVE SENT STUFF TO LAND ON...

THE DOORMAT

WORDS AND DESIGN: ANDREW REVELL

ILLUSTRATION: JAMES DOWNING



Clearly while advertising *DM5* something happened that made people from different genres and countries become interested in sending stuff to The doormat. It's fair to say that indie/electronic music from the UK has been pretty much all the page has been subsisting on but suddenly we get our first hip-hop, our first metal, our first pure-pop, two discs from the USA and one from Russia. As well as one that started life in a Scottish school.

Remember, if you are in a band, know someone in a band, know someone who runs a record label or anything like that all the bands listed below did was to send a message on myspace (we're myspace.com/disposablemediamagazine) or dropped an email and we gave them the address to send a CD to. That's it. Every single band that did that is now listed below being advertised for free to twelve thousand readers. Good eh?

After an epic postal journey lasting several weeks, **DUSTVEIL** managed to make their CD the first to land on the doormat from outside the UK. Maybe Russian influence, or maybe just the fact they've got a flautist and a bunch of violins it all adds up to a confident instrumental sound, reminiscent of everything from the

Starsky and Hutch theme, Madness and opera but all smoothed over with an indie gloss. Occasionally it is clear that English isn't their native language and sometimes it seems like changes have been made to appeal more to ears used to English with the last track sounding a bit too much like Britpop, but they deserve the foreign ears (and success) they clearly crave.

America probably won't be pleased to have been beaten by Russia to get here first, but **THE COALITION** sampler was literally seconds behind and represents the first hip-hop to land on the doormat at the same time. It's fair to say it's a mixed bunch with most tracks doing nothing for me - sounding too earnest, too scant on production and they certainly know how to whinge. That said, the first proper track is exactly the opposite to all of that, is confident and has been spun several times. If that shows the way things are going in the future it might be worth keeping an eye on them. And yes, I would have told you what the good track was called but I seem to have misplaced the track listing. Whoops.

Back in Britain and back to the land of guitars, albeit considerably louder than I've had before, is **SERPICO**. Having spent too much time playing *Guitar Hero* recently I'm quite grateful for any rock or metal that

lands on the doormat and even more so when it has this sort of quality. If you've never appreciated any band that shows off how many K's they've got then this is unlikely to change your mind but it is thoroughly enjoyable. Despite being a band formed in a Scottish school it has a real sense of maturity to it and if you've ever

enjoyed Bad Religion or The Offspring (*Crazy Taxi*, basically) then their EP is probably a safe investment. It's delivered a little darker and a lot less poppy, but bound to appeal nonetheless. Cute that they have to mark

gigs as for over 14's only too since being reviewed in *Kerrang*.

Clearly hearing that I am welcoming anything a bit related to *Guitar Hero*, **MY PRIVATE HELL** flung a CD over from the other side of the pond. Once again loud is a fair description with screams and guitars mixing the way only screams and guitars can... but it just doesn't quite all hold together. Tracks have moments that work well, but it feels a bit too messy and if not in

need of polish, then certainly a rough scrub. Various comments about trying to be a successful business doesn't help, but when they find themselves in a (business) situation to release a full album hopefully things will be a little clearer.

It's hard to make a smooth transition when going from metal into something that sounds quite a lot like Sophie Ellis-Bextor, but here I am. Really if you haven't been put off by that description then there is every chance you'll enjoy this **SARAH NIXEY** album. "Famed" as one third of Black Box Recorder, probably only remembered by page 58 of the Guinness Book of Hit Singles, the solo work is, well, Sophie Ellis-Bextor. Posh voice (it sounds a bit like a Bond girl narrating some songs), a bit arty, electrical accompaniment and relatively massive production values hold it together and while it all works well it's just too hard to get excited about. *Beautiful Oblivion* is probably the best of an album that goes on for much too long and never feels like anything but background music.

Hearing the sound of an accordion was quite a relief to be honest and **PARANORMAL AND THE NIGHT VISION CAMERAS** are a fair bit different to the previous artist. The first track sounds like a French busker, the second like Velvet Underground and the third starts sounding a little like ELO. It's clear you're in alternative territory, but it's good enough to have snuck onto a Festive 50 list, it's different and while they're not the most cheerful souls I

can't deny enjoying making my way through their album.

Really you should ignore this paragraph as I'm not meant to mention **FATHER OF BOON** as they want to get all their publicity in the summer as they've secured themselves a record deal. So this isn't a review, I'm not saying that the disc they sent is really quite good, not saying that they do certainly deserve their record deal and not pointing you in the direction of their MySpace page if you like some kind of mix between prog-rock, The Streets and the claim to fame of supporting the excellent (and sadly missed) Mclusky. But as this isn't a review, if you do go and check them out, don't tell them I sent you.

As this is my last doormat (a replacement is already inline apparently, they're probably great) I'm going to use my powers for good. **KAT FLINT**, reviewed in the first doormat, has just finished recording her new album. Annoyingly it proves that record companies still aren't paying enough attention as she's had to rope in her fans to pay to pre-order an album that doesn't yet exist. Despite people, including those with a financial interest, having access to so much great music so easily, clearly people still need jabbing in the right direction. Which at least means this still feels like it has a point and it feels nice to help out, even if it is just a little bit.

Hopefully my replacement will agree.



DUSTVEIL
myspace.com/dustveil



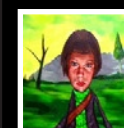
THE COALITION
myspace.com/coalition9



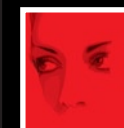
SERPICO
myspace.com/serpicoband



MY PRIVATE HELL
myspace.com/myprivatehell



PARANORMAL AND THE NIGHT VISION CAMERAS
myspace.com/paranormalandthenightvisioncameras



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FATHER OF BOON
myspace.com/boonfather



KAT FLINT
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YOUR STUFF.



ACOUSTIC
LADYLAND
SKINNY GRIN

They may sport the most misleading band name since The Eagles of Death Metal, but it's hard to imagine Acoustic Ladyland's eclectic, experimental jazz rock lives up to their bizarre adage. If anything, the homage is an appropriate one: there are several moments of new album *Skinny Grin* that bear no slight return to Hendrix-style jams - albeit with saxophone in place of the guitar. There are plenty of other influences thrown in as well, giving each song an unpredictable, sometimes chaotic feel. Rather than disrupting the flow of the album

though, it lends a thrilling, improvised feel to it without detracting from the songs themselves. Opening track *Road of Bones* is a prime example - it leads from a quiet piano melody into a sudden roar of guitars, before winding back down with some slow sax. Other highlights include the brilliant single *Cuts And Lies*, and fast-paced instrumental *That Night*.

James Hamilton



"PLENTY OF INFLUENCES THROWN IN, GIVING EACH SONG AN UNPREDICTABLE, SOMETIMES CHAOTIC FEEL"



KINGS OF
LEON
BECAUSE OF
THE TIMES

Often lazily described as "The Southern Strokes", such comparisons do Tennessee's Kings of Leon few favours, particularly as their sophomore effort *"Aha Shake Heartbreak"* showed a level of progression and invention that made their New York brethren look decidedly stale. This, their third studio release, is a much bolder, more experimental work that takes some time to show its hand, but given a few listens will be lodged in your brain for just as long as its forebears. The punky Charmer revisits *Bleach*-era Nirvana, while

the chiming *Ragoo* and anthemic *Fans* are two of their best tunes to date. Topped and tailed by widescreen epics *Knocked Up* and *Arizona*, ...Times lacks the frantic urgency of their previous albums, but replaces it with superior songwriting and skill. Difficult third album? You'd never have guessed.

Chris Schilling



"THIS, THEIR THIRD STUDIO RELEASE, IS A MUCH BOLDER, MORE EXPERIMENTAL WORK THAT TAKES TIME TO SHOW ITS HAND"



FIELD MUSIC
TONES OF
TOWN

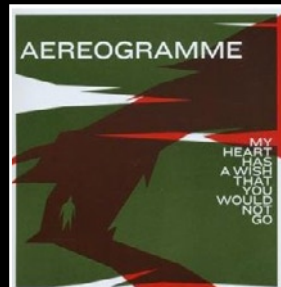
At a time when clever, inventive pop songs feel almost like a thing of the past, Field Music are a welcome - and overdue - breath of fresh air. *Tones of Town* is their second album in less than two years, and it's better than most bands could do in four. Layered, melodic guitar pop is what these guys are all about, with strings, vocal harmonies and delicate keys bringing vibrancy and colour to every song. The guitar work is generally subtle and understated, providing memorable hooks throughout - but the drumming is what really brings the

album to life, giving an edge to the likes of *In Context* and *Working To Work*. Other highlights include the second track, *Sit Tight* (which is rounded off with some excellent beat-boxing) and album closer *She Can Do What She Wants*, but really there isn't a bad track on here. Do yourself a favour, and pick this up.

James Hamilton



"TONES OF TOWN IS THEIR SECOND ALBUM IN LESS THAN TWO YEARS, AND IT'S BETTER THAN MOST BANDS COULD DO IN FOUR"



AEREO-
GRAMME
MY HEART
HAS A
WISH THAT
YOU WOULD
NOT GO

Previous Aereogramme LPs are not only bursting with an almost savage anger (singer Craig B often exploding into a deep, primal scream) but at their core tightly structured guitars and poignantly tough lyrical insight. New LP *My Heart...* differs at a most obvious level by removing the screams and replacing them with strings. Violins are now the band's weapon of choice adding another layer to the dense structural compositions that now swell and sweep beautifully. Each track was apparently written with a film in mind and there's a

clear cinematic feel that works as the perfect accompaniment for the themes of love and loss that permeate the LP. This is hugely recommended listening from a much overlooked band.

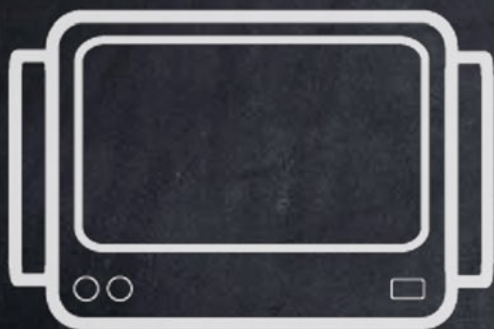
Ian Moreno-Melgar



"VIOLINS ARE NOW THE BAND'S WEAPON OF CHOICE, ADDING ANOTHER LAYER TO THE DENSE STRUCTURAL COMPOSITIONS"

DIRECTOR

CAMERAMAN



film & tv

currently watching...

dexter / hot fuzz / keane / click / the science of sleep



WORDS: CHRIS SCHILLING
DESIGN: ANDREW CAMPBELL

DEX APPEAL

IT'S CAUSED QUITE A STIR IN THE US, AND NOW IT'S ON ITS WAY OVER HERE. DARK, DRY, AND DELICIOUSLY DIFFERENT, **DEXTER** COULD WELL BE THE BEST NEW AMERICAN TV SHOW SINCE THE WIRE. DISPOSABLE MEDIA TAKES A LOOK AT THIS 'SLICE OF LIFE' DRAMA.

Not many TV shows have a pilot episode which features the lead protagonist brutally murdering someone, but then not many TV shows are like Showtime's *Dexter*: a dark, creepy and intense thriller of a series which - when FX finally gets round to showing it in the UK over Summer - might just become your

new favourite programme. Assuming you've not already downloaded it from the internet, that is.

If there's not many shows like *Dexter*, then that's because there aren't many heroes like Dexter Morgan. A blood-spatter analyst working for the Miami Police Department by day, it's his out-of-hours activities that make



him stand out from the crowd. His nine-to-five has him solving murders, but by night he's committing them - a serial killer who preys only on those who really deserve it. This moral aspect to Dexter's slayings make him ostensibly the good guy, but can someone who kills in cold blood ever be the hero?

When he's played so expertly by Michael C Hall (who you may remember as David from the majestic *Six Feet Under*) then yes - yes, he can. Hall makes Dexter seem disarmingly normal; friendly, charming and all too human, all the while hiding his dark secret from his colleagues. Yet, when the situation calls for it he's cold, calculating and brutal - stalking his potential victims with forensic precision, then sedating them until they wake up, naked and bound to a table, ready for some surgery that will have them shuffling off this mortal coil a little earlier than they'd planned.

The show (and Hall himself) never lets you forget that Dexter is a troubled individual - frequent flashback sequences flesh out his disturbing backstory, gradually revealing the tortured past behind this complex character. Dexter is raised by his foster father Harry, who soon realises he's not like other kids, and initially encourages him to sate his thirst for killing by slaying woodland creatures. Then Harry realises that Dexter's 'talent' can be put to better use, instilling in him a moral code that has Dexter hunting down people who've escaped justice, and ensuring they can never commit such crimes ever again. The aforementioned opening sequence has Dexter killing a paedophile who has raped and murdered several children, and each episode follows a similar path, with various miscreants being tailed by Dexter throughout the hour-long programme, interspersed with snapshots of his daily forensic work.

His job winds up as part of a season-long story arc as Dexter finds himself on the trail of a rival serial killer - but one who doesn't have the same moral code as our anti-hero. Dubbed the Ice Truck Killer, the murderer in question

kills prostitutes, before freezing their bodies and slicing them to pieces, arranging each one in a gruesome tableau - for a very specific reason. As it turns out, the killer has a connection to Dexter, knowing far more about him than we viewers do ourselves, and Season One follows this story to a devastating conclusion, throwing in several intriguing revelations along the way.

As you may expect from the descriptions above, *Dexter* is certainly not a family show. Each murder scene is shown in explicitly graphic detail, while the later flashbacks to a particularly disturbing part of Dexter's past are gory and frightening. Yet despite all this horror, it's a surprisingly funny show - often finding laughs from the darkest moments with a wicked streak of jet-black comedy. It's the kind of programme where you find yourself laughing when you feel you shouldn't be - such as the moment when one of Dexter's victims fails to show remorse for his crimes. "But I'm not sorry," he shrills. "Neither am I," deadpans Dexter as he applies the killer blow.

Further laughs come from Dexter's sex-obsessed assistant Vince Masuka, whose frequent crude comments at the most inappropriate moments bring a much-needed levity to proceedings. Similarly, his love-hate relationship with ball-busting hardass Sergeant Doakes (a wonderfully gruff Erik King) is a highlight; their verbal - and later physical - sparring adds tension, as Doakes' hunch that Dex has something to hide starts creating a fractious atmosphere in the department.

Indeed, the performances across the board deserve praise - Julie Benz as Dexter's girlfriend Rita ("I chose her because she was damaged") brings a tragic pathos to the role, while David Zayas' detective Angel is charismatic and hugely likeable. *The Exorcism Of Emily Rose*'s Jennifer Carpenter initially seems the weak link as Dexter's foster sister, but later episodes show her to have hidden depths.



Which is something that could be said for pretty much everyone in the show. These are unusually fleshed-out characters - an aspect atypical of so many modern US dramas - which helps make the show such a consistently brilliant treat. While one or two episodes may dip below the quality watermark set by the pilot (the occasional lapse into soapiness, or the earlier "murder of the week" leanings), overall it's a remarkably solid first season, with a final stretch that piles on the twists and character revelations. It will almost certainly have viewers on the edge of their sofas, wishing for the next episode to come round as quickly as possible.

Its quality makes it all the more surprising that *Dexter* hasn't been garlanded with awards; Hall has had nods from the Screen Actors Guild and The Golden Globes but neither resulted in wins, while Benz picked up the series' only trophy so far for Best Supporting Actress in the US's Satellite Awards. It's clear that this dark night of the soul isn't to all critics' tastes, but it's bound to pick up rave reviews - and likely some *Daily Mail* outrage - when it eventually debuts over here. But while *Dexter*'s internal darkness might be off-putting to some, it's impossible not to recommend to anyone who likes their TV witty, gritty and adult. As drama series go, it's a killer.

"THE FBI ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE LESS THAN 50 SERIAL KILLERS ACTIVE IN THE U.S. TODAY. WE DON'T GET TOGETHER AT CONVENTIONS, SHARE TRADE SECRETS, OR EXCHANGE CHRISTMAS CARDS. BUT SOMETIMES I WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE FOR OTHERS"

- DEXTER MORGAN

"



HOT FUZZ (15)

//director:
edgar wright

Super-cop Nicholas Angel (Simon Pegg) is sent to the perfect crime-free village in the country only to discover the villagers are hiding a grisly secret. Think *Midsomer Murders* with more murders and humour thrown in and you're half way there.

The story flicks between action, comedy and horror which surprisingly all works together to provide enough laughs, spooks and action to keep most viewers happy. It's possibly too long, but certain scenes are side-splittingly funny - you haven't lived until you've seen a

shotgun-toting Granny drop-kicked in the face.

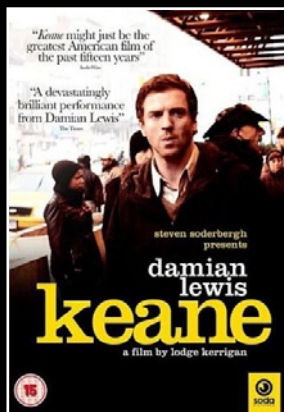
The cast all perform superbly - especially Nick Frost as Angel's new partner, PC Danny Butterman. He provides the emotion and is the funny man to Pegg's straight man.

A much needed shot in the arm to the local film industry, showing there's more to British cinema than just rom-com's.

Paul Blakeley



"THINK MIDSOMER MURDERS WITH MORE MURDERS AND HUMOUR THROWN IN AND YOU'RE HALF WAY THERE"



KEANE (15)

//director:
lodge kerrigan

Tight close ups, no formal narrative structure, lack of obvious soundtrack and made in 32 days; there is no doubt that *Keane* bears many hallmarks of an independent film. That it competes emotionally, visually and as powerfully as any other film made in the last 12 months is testament to its craftsmanship.

The ever versatile Damien Lewis is the titular William Keane, a man spiralling into mental illness after his daughter goes missing. As the film progresses, Keane's behaviour comes to show clear symptoms of

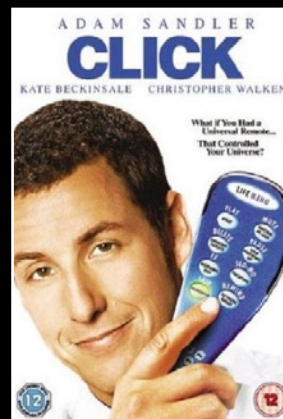
schizophrenia and the viewer is pushed further away from empathy into ultimately sorrow - his actions driven by guilt, remorse, loss and anger - our reaction driven by worry.

The pace is slow, events uncomfortable to watch and the film 'ends' with no resolution but what you put into the film you certainly reap - *Keane* is a painfully evocative film that scares as much as it does inspire.

Ian Moreno-Melgar



"TIGHT CLOSE UPS, NO FORMAL NARRATIVE STRUCTURE, LACK OF OBVIOUS SOUNDTRACK AND MADE IN 32 DAYS"



CLICK (12)

//director:
frank coraci

The first half of *Click* is a great Adam Sandler comedy, with some deliciously cruel jokes at the expense of his neighbour's git of a son, and an incredibly sexy supporting role by Kate Beckinsale.

The story of an undervalued architect, it utilises the likes of David Hasselhoff and a stuffed duck, to great effect, as Sandler's character gets a universal remote control which really does control the universe.

But there are some warning signs early on, with the oddball character of Christopher Walken



"A CLICHÉD PLOT TWIST SOURS THE ENJOYMENT YOU'VE HAD FROM THE ONE-LINERS AND SET-PIECES"

strangely underwhelming. And as the focus changes in an attempt to moralise itself above similar films, such as Jim Carrey's *Bruce Almighty*, the second half really drags.

Finishing off with a clichéd plot twist sours the enjoyment you've had from the one-liners and set-pieces, and you're left with a film which is only really for hardcore fans of Sandler and Beckinsale.

Dan Thornton



THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP (15)

//director:
michel gondry

You know how dreams are often hard to describe objectively to another person - at once a real experience, but upon waking, too unreal to make sense? Gondry, best known for his music videos, captures this perfectly in his third feature-length, but still not quite conventional, film.

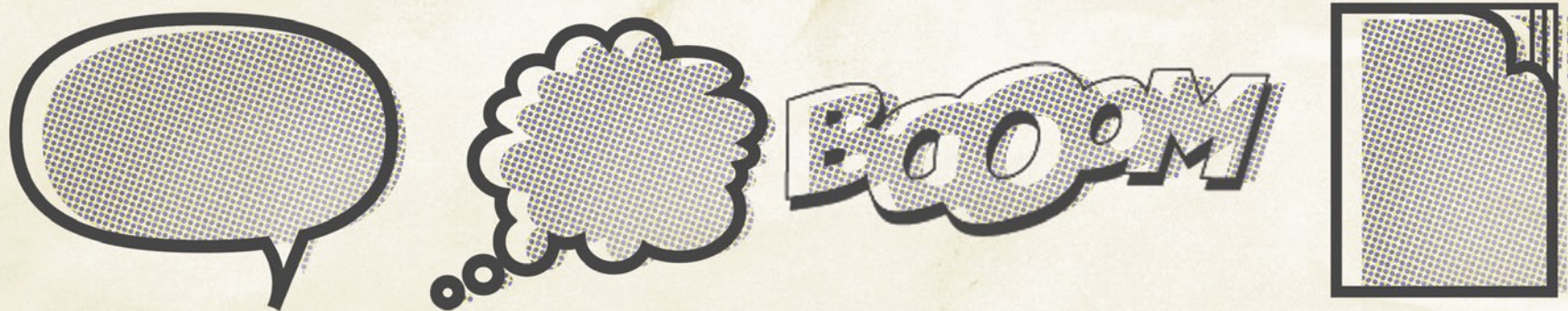
If you've seen *Everlong* by the Foo Fighters, you'll recognise the big hands; the craft material-inspired landscapes from Bjork's *Bachelorette* form the surreal backdrops to Stephane's half-in, half-out dream episodes.



"A MIX OF LANGUAGES, VISUALS, TRUTH AND FABRICATION, THAT YOU WILL WANT TO SEE MORE THAN ONCE"

It's a complicated story of friendship, love, ambition, family and all the randomness that goes into making our nighttime escapades so strange, yet familiar. When the boundary between sleep and real life breaks down, this is what comes out - a mix of languages, visuals, truth and fabrication, that you will want to see more than once.

Rachel Wild



currently reading...

the death of captain marvel / blankets / gray horses / copper / emo boy / civil war



THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL

MANY COMIC HEROES HAVE DIED IN BATTLE. BUT THE END FOR ONE SUPERHERO CHANGED THINGS FOREVER.



It's easy to be cynical after The Death Of Superman in 1993.

Now, when a superhero shuffles off the mortal coil, you expect them to return in a new costume and four different holographic covers. Back in 1982 things were different, and 25 years later The Death of Captain

Marvel is still one of the most moving moments in comic history. Editor-in-Chief Jim Starlin came to the title knowing it would be cancelled, and in the process brought many a comic fan close to tears. Indeed, aside from the 2007 story

Civil War: The Return (set before his death), the original Mar-Vell is one of the few characters to be left to rest in peace.

Ignoring the DC Comics character of the same name, this character was the first from the Marvel comic company to carry the Captain Marvel title, as alien military officer Mar-Vell of the Kree. Originally sent to observe earth, he decides to protect humanity, and as a result, becomes a traitor in the eyes of his own warlike race.

But in death he became honoured by his fellow superheroes on earth, his sworn enemy the Skrulls, and all the more, by the first graphic novel ever published by Marvel. The cover even featured an audacious homage to Michelangelos's Pieta, with Mar-vell and the Grim Reaper replacing Jesus and Mary.

His epitaph begins, appropriately enough, with Mar-Vell starting to record his autobiography. It's only when a routine fight leaves him struggling for breath that the nature of his illness becomes public knowledge, and the world learns what he has already discovered via his cosmic powers – he's dying from cancer.

The story is as much about the reactions of others as it is about the death of a superhero. The emotions of his family, friends and enemies are all beautifully studied, doubtless due to the loss of Jim Starlin's own father from the same disease just a few months earlier.

The greatest heroic minds are forced to

question why they have never devoted themselves to curing this deadly disease until it has affected one of their own, whilst Marvel's greatest superheroes take turns visiting the bedside of their fallen comrade.

No reader can blame Spider-Man, when he runs from Captain Marvel's bedside, unable to deal with the situation. Scenes such as Mar-Vell revealing his fate to his lover, Elysia, are

handled by Starlin's artwork alone, allowing the shared moments to speak to the reader.

In two full page images, the heroes of the Marvel universe are first pictured assembled to visit the dying Mar-Vell, and on the back cover behind his grave to pay their respects. The impact of these images seems a likely starting point for the mass-hero crossover mini-series that followed in Galaxy Wars.

Mar-Vell himself struggles to accept his fate, in light of his superhuman powers, but his final moments are spent in a symbolic battle. His arch enemy Thanos "who is death and the lover of death" finally helps Mar-Vell to resign himself to his fate, and succumb to the kiss of death herself.

The book doesn't just feel like a farewell to Captain Marvel, but also to Jim Starlin's father, and as such, the emotion pours from every panel. Years before

graphic novels became

acceptable adult reading, lined up in your local bookshop, this was a story that could be used to show the emotional impact possible in the comic format. Despite celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year, the timeless skill of Starlin – and the fact that cancer is still such a deadly disease which touches so many people – makes the story just as poignant today as when it was written.



"FOR DEATH IS KNOCKING AT MY DOOR, AND NOT ALL MY POWER CAN KEEP HIM OUT."

MANTEAU DE NEIGE

HAVE YOU EVER...

...ARGUED WITH AN ANNOYING LITTLE BROTHER?
...GOT IN TROUBLE WITH YOUR PARENTS?
...BEEN AWAY ON CAMP?
...FELT OUT OF PLACE?
...PLAYED IN THE SNOW?
...DRAWN A PICTURE?
...THROWN IT AWAY?
...LEFT HOME?
...GONE TO UNI?
...HAD A CRISIS OF FAITH?
...FALLEN IN LOVE?
...GROWN UP?

WORDS & DESIGN: RACHEL WILD

Reading a fairly hefty graphic novel whilst on a 4 day trip to France, in French, is not necessarily to be recommended, especially when you aren't exactly fluent in the language. However, when the book in question is Craig Thompson's *Blankets*, and this is the first ever time you've been able to get your hands on it, you can be forgiven for only getting half way through and having an unshakeable misconception that it's set in Paris, even though all the signs point to the author's North American homelands.

One of the unique selling points of comics is the ability to pick up hints from the artwork even when you can't quite understand the nuances of the dialogue, and hopefully you'll soon come to realise why this book is worth picking up in whatever shape or form is available. >>>



Let's start from the beginning shall we? Blankets is largely autobiographical; a coming-of-age retelling of Craig Thompson's own experiences growing up amidst an evangelical Christian family, a fraught relationship with a little brother, a girl he really, really likes, and lots and lots of snow. Basically it all comes down to real life human emotions, expressed on the page in a way that nearly everyone should be able to relate to.

According to Thompson himself, the novel grew out of the idea to try and describe what it feels like to sleep next to someone for the first time. This theme of growing up, moving on, forming your own decisions and finding your own identity, with all the new experiences it brings - how can anyone not empathise with it? Obviously for some, it's a little too close to home - a Missouri library had to remove it from the shelves when protesters deemed it pornographic - and fair enough, it's definitely not suitable for kids, mostly because they simply wouldn't get it. The inherent complexity of emotions in real life are drawn out for all to see and while there's not enough shown to excite 'adult' fans, aspiring adulthood is what the book is all about. Craig's relationship with his school friends, his parents, his little brother, his religion, even his hair, go through enormous changes throughout the story, whilst his new relationship with a girl called Raina provides the catalyst.

So, reading through in English, is it any better? Well, first off, you appreciate how much the visual language contributes to the story. The art complements the words, making up for things that dialogue alone can't say, and providing the emotional landscape behind each chapter. It'll be the pictures that break your heart more often than the words, once again echoing real life. Craig in the book is also an artist, and just as Craig the writer draws how he

is feeling, you can see how Craig the character's mind is working through his sketches rather than thought bubbles. Once again, as with a lot of indie comics, the art is all black and white, but in a way that's like a personal diary compared to a full colour magazine,

"THE IDEA WAS TO TRY AND DESCRIBE WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO SLEEP NEXT TO SOMEONE FOR THE FIRST TIME."

it just feels right. The cover of the English edition allows a blue hue to replace the greys inside, but not much more is needed. Some

things are better left unsaid y'know? This is not a documentary biopic, it's a narrative, seen from one perspective, totally subjective and creatively remembered.

Either way, all this was enough to gain Blankets numerous awards and raving critical

success, from literary as well as comic industry press. Unusually for a writer/creator/artist, a lot of the applause has fallen on the 'cartooning' -

IT'LL BE THE PICTURES THAT BREAK YOUR HEART MORE OFTEN THAN THE WORDS

Thompson tells a good story, but - possibly more importantly in the graphic novel world -

he draws it gorgeously too.

It's such a classic that it's a shame it has to end. Unfortunately the ending, when you finally get there after over 500 pages, might be a bit of a letdown. It's better to be forewarned. Because after the rollercoaster of adolescence, isn't that what adulthood is anyway? Stable, steady, who wouldn't be disappointed? But it's the experience that makes it worthwhile, makes it what it becomes, and gives us memories (and comic books) worth holding on to.

Blankets, along with Craig Thompson's other award-winning books, *Goodbye Chunky Rice* and *Carnet de Voyage*, are published by Top Shelf Productions. They also look after such indie stars as Andy Runton (*Owly*), James Kochalka (*American Elf*) and Jeffrey Brown (*Clumsy*, *Every Girl is The End of the World For Me*) who will be in the U.K. in May to visit Page 45 in Nottingham and Comic Expo in Bristol. Top Shelf also have some awesome webcomics on their site at www.topshelfcomix.com. See also: www.page45.com, www.comicexpo.net and Craig Thompson's website at www.dootdootgarden.com





GRAY HORSES (ONI PRESS)

Hope Larson

It's not unfair to say that if you like Bryan Lee O'Malley's work (*Scott Pilgrim, Lost at Sea*) then you'll like this for a number of reasons. Firstly, Oni Press publishes them both. Secondly the art style is quite similar, and lastly because he and Hope Larson are a couple. *Gray Horses* deserves more than just a 'sounds like' review though because it comes into it's own with dual language dialogue - the protagonist, Noémie is a French exchange student - and adorable visual onomatopoeia and attention to detail on every page. At night she explores the meaning of

strange, wallpaper-inspired dreams, by day she explores life in America - finding friends, and ultimately herself, in three-coloured, rounded frame, graphic novel loveliness.

Rachel Wild



"COMES INTO ITS OWN WITH DUAL LANGUAGE DIALOGUE AND ADORABLE VISUAL ONOMATOPOEIA"



COPPER (WEB COMIC)

Kazu Kibuishi

Copper is "technically" a webcomic. It's a self-contained story on one page, about a boy and his dog and the adventures they find themselves on which turn out to teach important lessons about life. Yes, it sounds cheesy. It sounds like a billion other 'comics' out there on the internet, but with one important distinction. This guy can draw. He can break your heart and have you wondering if a cartoon dog could be psychic, in merely seven panels. He can give you free art that will make you want to spend 20 dollars on a print for your wall which will 'still' be

a bargain. The only catch is that you have to wait 2 months or so in between instalments, but sign up for the mailing list, and wait to have this little bit of gorgeousness brighten up your in-box considerably.

<http://www.boltcity.com/copper>

Rachel Wild



"KAZU CAN GIVE YOU FREE ART THAT WILL MAKE YOU WANT TO SPEND \$20 ON A PRINT WHICH WILL *STILL* BE A BARGAIN"



CIVIL WAR (MARVEL)

Mark Millar
& Steve McNiven

In these cynical times, it's hardly surprising to think of a crossover event as nothing more than a marketing ploy to shift more comics. Often that cynicism is justified but not in this case. Marvel's *Civil War* event is a worthy one, thanks largely to the pertinent premise; a Superhuman Registration Act is introduced following the death of hundreds of people due to an over-zealous superhuman battle. Naturally such an act divides opinion throughout the Marvel Universe and quickly factions are created, with former Avenger allies Captain

America and Iron Man now as leaders at loggerheads.

Millar's intelligent writing enables a thought-provoking allegory with the U.S.'s own Patriot Act without feeling forced. The storyline is a natural one and brings a realistic touch to an otherwise fantastical genre. McNiven's pencils are crisp and detailed throughout, although did cause some delays during the seven issue run. No matter, it was well worth the wait.

Andrew Campbell



"MILLAR'S INTELLIGENT WRITING ENABLES A THOUGHT-PROVOKING ALLEGORY WITH THE U.S.'S OWN PATRIOT ACT"



EMO BOY #1-6 (SLAVE LABOUR GRAPHICS) Steve Emond

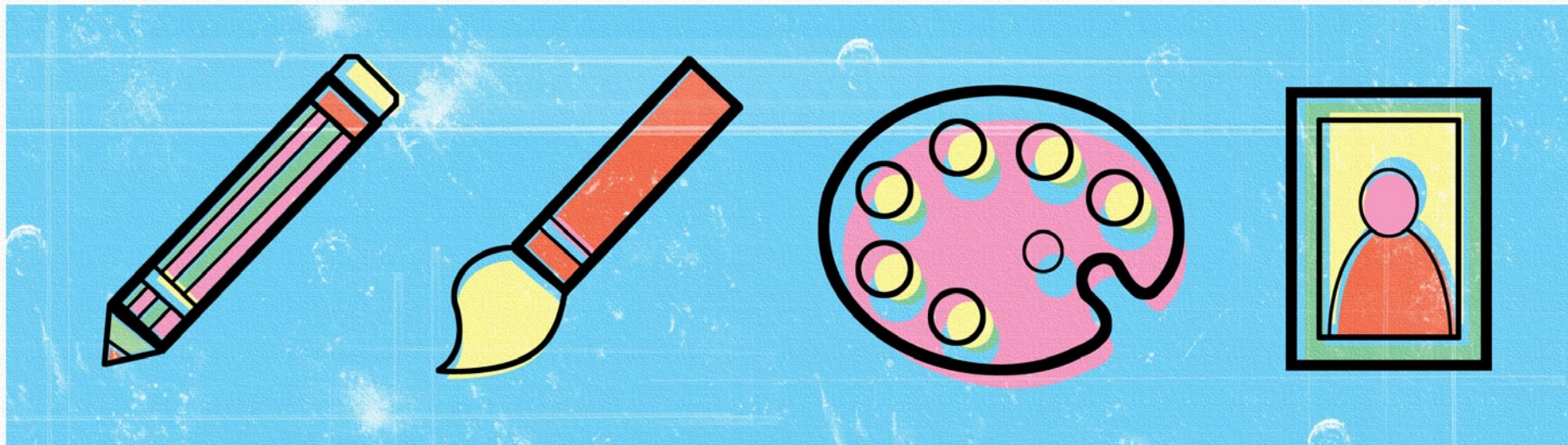
Emo Boy is an Emo superhero. No, he's not that guy out of My Chemical Romance, and while he does have floppy hair, he's certainly no geek chic fashion icon for the Myspace generation. He is truly melancholy hardcore emo. He is so emo, he can't kiss a girl without making her explode. His only friend is the fat girl who has a crush on him, his super power makes him want to cry and he writes Smashing Pumpkins-esque poetry over star-scribbled pages. Issues 1-6, collected in *Volume 1: Nobody Cares About Anything Anyway, So*

Why Don't We All Just Die? are not for trendy teens, but for lovers of black humour and those who can recall their own angst-ridden high school diaries wishing to see them illustrated in an appropriately nearly self-published, black and white format.

Rachel Wild



"HIS SUPER POWER MAKES HIM WANT TO CRY AND HE WRITES SMASHING PUMPKINS-ESQUE POETRY OVER STAR-SCRIBBLED PAGES."



welcome to the disposable media gallery...

here at DM we believe in good art. every issue we aim to bring you the best / andrew campbell / matthew plater / laura copeland



andrew campbell



WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

JOKER'S WILD
ANDREW CAMPBELL
11HERBS.DEVIANTART.COM

matthew plater



WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

A WHITE AND PURPLE LINE
MATTHEW PLATER
MAP-MAP.DEVIANTART.COM

laura copeland



WHAT:
WHO:
WHERE:

HORSEY
LAURA COPELAND
LOZZYBOO.DEVIANTART.COM

fun/bonus pull-out section

DISPOSABLE MEDIA: THE PS3 LAUNCH SPECIAL

IT'S OK...

...BIT EXPENSIVE THOUGH.

THE END

Check us out at myspace.com/disposablemediamagazine to see what our *real* next issue will look like, get updates on the new website, contact us and tell us what you think, and check out our staff vacancies if you want to help make next issue even better.

