

inspired by Coltrane, LSD and Indian ragas, guitarists Mike Bloomfield and Elvin Bishop led the 13-minute title track into uncharted vistas, creating a turning point for rock improvisation which inspired Grateful Dead.

Changing line-ups regularly, Butterfield's bands went on to pioneer brass-bolstered R&B on 1967's *The Resurrection Of Pigboy Crabshaw* and '68's *In My Own Dream*, release ill-judged commercial stab *Keep On Moving*, but also a sizzling live double album before splitting in the wake of 1971's *Sometimes I Just Feel Like Smilin'*. Butterfield then followed a rootsier direction with *Better Days*, but diluted his attack with strings on albums he recorded before his fatal heroin overdose in 1987.

Following similar recent sets by The Doobie Brothers and Lou Reed, 11 studio albums (including *The Original Lost Elektra Sessions*) and two live sets (bolstered by previously unreleased 1969 show) are presented in shrunken original sleeves with no annotation. While it's a little patchy, it's an often astonishing legacy which, until now, has never been gathered in the same box, so worth shelling out for. *Kris Needs*

John Cale

M:FANS

★★★★★

Domino DS 108 (2CD/2LP)

Still a Cale-blazer

John Cale stays on-trend in 2016 by upcycling his 1982 album *Music For A New Society* into *M:FANS*. Immediately noticeable as a departure from the original (apart from the titular embrace of the acronym) is the dark thickness of the production; the lowest of low end that punctuates *If You Were Still Around* would have shrugged the needle from the

groove 34 years ago. The original record's improvisational nature is still here but hidden, its minimalist touches are scant.

Whereas the earlier record's arrangements were sparse and skeletal, giving Cale's hymnal, eerie vocal an unsettling prominence, now the silence is bullied by futuristic hums and thumps and whirrs, like CGI ghosts patrolling Haddonfield.

M:FANS is bookended by hitherto unreleased recordings from the original sessions. Their inclusion toys with the sense of time between albums, elegantly introducing and somewhat resolving a persistent theme; the relationship between old and new. The opener *Prelude* is a recording of a touching phone call between Cale and his mother which he removed first time around after she fell suddenly ill. Back To The End's fragile voice and piano complement this nicely, returning us to the past, while the middle places us in the now. *Colin Clements*

Cardiacs

The Seaside

★★★★★

The Alphabet Business Concern ALPHCD 001 (CD/LP)

It's all here, in buckets and spades

Although not the first Cardiacs release, *The Seaside* saw the emergence of the classic 80s line-up and was the album that cemented their punky pop psychedelia, disclosing fully the extraordinary artistry of bandleader Tim Smith.

Initially released as a fan club-only cassette, *The Seaside* was reissued twice in the 90s, but has never resurfaced in its original form. The big draw here is the reinstatement of four tracks long thought to be lost: fantastic early recordings of *Nurses Whispering Verses*, is



Music from a knee society: John Cale

This *The Life, A Little Man And A House and Dinner Time*. As the first chord of *Jibber And Twitch* rings out it is as if the lights have been turned on; a swell of tinkling bells and glutinous synth hangs in the air as convulsive keyboards writhe around in the glow.

The atmosphere is soon split apart by the impish clamour of pot-and-pan percussion which leads a cartoony, skittish and disjointed section. Next, a triumphantly oikish punk passage underscored by brass, synth and Zappa-like mallet percussion dissolves into a hugely satisfying pseudo rock gallop. From this point on, Cardiacs would release a slew of bafflingly singular albums, still woefully underappreciated to this day. The breadth of Cardiacs' musicality is at times difficult to process, but as Tim Smith himself once said, "It's all just tunes isn't it?" *Alun Hamnett*

Johnny Cash

Man In Black: Live In Denmark 1971

★★★★★

Columbia/Legacy 88875169592 (CD)

1971 Danish TV special's first outing on CD

This was originally the audio to a Danish TV special Cash was asked to play during his 1971 Scandinavian tour, which was made available on DVD in 2006. In the grand tradition of these affairs, Cash sings hits such as *A Boy Named Sue*, *I Walk The Line* and *Folsom Prison Blues*, brings on Carl Perkins, the Statler Brothers and the Carter Family (all regulars on his weekly TV show back home), and duets with wife June, before ending with the whole cast singing religious standards.

While the power and charisma of *that* voice could never be completely sanitised, Cash is unavoidably diluted by trying to provide wholesome family entertainment, having recently sworn off amphetamines. He still manages to unleash tour de force versions of *Kris Kristofferson's Me And Bobby McGee* and *Sunday Mornin'*

Comin' Down, refusing to tone down the weed references in the latter's lyrics.

The *Man In Black* still had plenty of darkness to face in years to come but devotees will still want this document of a time when his light shone gleamingly bright, which was also released as a red and white wax double album for November's Record Store Day Black Friday. *Kris Needs*

Casualties of Cool

Casualties of Cool

★★★★★

Inside Out, cat no tbc (CD/DVD)

Devin gives the world the cold smoulder

In 2009, Devin Townsend elected to eschew the stout, silvery bombast that had become synonymous with much of his work, instead offering up a hugely stripped-back sound on the album *Ki*. The track *Trainfire* was a particularly interesting departure, invoking the quirks of Elvis and Johnny Cash and repurposing them in a light and playful stomp. This was perhaps the jumping-off point, as *Casualties Of Cool* wanders through many of the doors that album opened.

Train-beat rhythms abound and Devin is once again joined by Ché Aimee Dorval on vocals. The difference here is that there is no metallic pith whatsoever; ambience, subtlety and space are uppermost. In spite of some frisky rhythms, the album is wistful, eerie and detached. Devin has referred to it as an album of "haunted Johnny Cash songs" and perhaps the best example is *Forgive Me*. As a rhythmic locomotive rattles and clicks, Dorval's macabre vocal asks, "Have I been remiss?"

A huge highlight is the salacious, sinewy swagger of *The Code*. Drummer Morgan Agren delivers a taut, buoyant shuffle while Townsend's bluesy guitar bobs drowsily up and down. Setting the whole thing off once again are Dorval's irregular melodies, which are simply outstanding.

Now benefitting from a worldwide release, this

repackaged version includes a DVD of a wonderfully atmospheric live performance at London's Union Chapel, one of only three live performances by the group and a fine accompaniment to a brave and absorbing album. *Alun Hamnett*

Slim Chance

On The Move

★★★★★

Fishpool FSHACD 002 (CD)

Fat sound from Ronnie

Lane's old muckers

After Ronnie Lane bailed from The Faces in 1973, he dug deeper into the roots of music than many dared venture in those shiny times, forming Slim Chance, touring his legendary *The Passing Show* and recording several resonant albums, before being struck by the multiple sclerosis which would lead to his early death in 1997.

In 2012, old-bandmates Charlie Hart, Steve Bingham and Steve Simpson returned with further ex-band members as Slim Chance, keeping Lane's spirit alive by releasing *The Show Goes On* and becoming a live attraction, playing Ronnie's old songs plus original compositions.

While Universal plan a large-scale reissue programme, the party is already in full swing on this incarnation of his old band's second album. Joined by Geraint Watkins and Des Horsfall, the band breeze through self-written knees-ups, including *Fishing Line*, *Ragtime* and *Line In The Sand*, along with vibrant reworkings of Lane's *The Poacher*, *Ain't No Lady* and *Done This One Before*, plus Lead Belly's murder ballad *Duncan And Brady*.

Richly garnished by fiddles, bottleneck and accordion, the rejuvenated Slim Chance may conjure echoes of Lane's *The Passing Show*, but ultimately seem to be emerging with a rough-shod, rollicking sound of their own. On this form, they can be sure their old mate would be leaning at the bar, nodding approval. *Kris Needs*



The Cardiacs lookin' like they aorta