

HOT NEW ACTS



Stornoway ▲
Kirsty Almeida
Two Door Cinema Club
Pearl & The Puppets
Tiffany Page ▼



Lissie ▲
Surfer Blood
Frankie & The Heartstrings
Rox
Hurts ▼



Goldheart Assembly ▲
The Drums
Drake
Darwin Deez
Fenech-Soler ▼



CURRENT PLAYLIST

The Pretty Reckless – Make Me Wanna Die
Glee The Music: Season One Volumes 1 and 2
Lady Gaga – Bad Romance
Chris Moyles – The Parody Album
Kasabian – West Ryder Pauper Lunatic Asylum
Paolo Nutini – Sunny Side Up
Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers – American Girl
Alicia Keys – Empire State Of Mind Part II
Jamie Cullum – Don't Stop The Music
Colbie Caillat – Breakthrough
John McLaughlin – To The One

Plan B – Love Goes Down
John Mayer – Battle Studies
Justin Bieber – Baby
Owl City – Fireflies
Mark Ronson – Version
Michael Bublé – Sway
Muse – Feeling Good
Biffy Clyro – Only Revolutions
Wynton Marsalis – La Vie En Rose
Just Jack – Embers
Miike Snow – Miike Snow

PHOTO CREDITS

Diana Vickers (cover - Sony Music, inside Supersonic PR), Jarvis Cocker, Frankie Sandford and Steve Dowdle (Borkowski), The Fortunate (Alan Carter Photography), Joanna Newsom (Annabel Mehran), Ke\$ha (Sony Music), Corinne Bailey Rae (Tierney Gearon), Florence and the Machine (Island Records), Toni Braxton (Atlantic Records), Charles Law (Simon Bramley), Kid Sister (Don Flood), La Roux (Chuff Media), Brandi Carlile (Sony Music), Cheryl Cole (Polydor Records), Paloma Faith (Murray Chalmers), Gabriella Cilmi (Island Records), Kate Nash (Chuff Media), Katherine Jenkins (Warner Music), Laura Marling (Rough Trade Records), Operababes, Stornoway (Six07 Press), Lissie (Sony Music), Goldheart Assembly (Fierce Panda), Tiffany Page (Mercury Records), Hurts (Sony Music) and Fenech-Soler (Ben Thomas).

Deighton Rowe

THANKS

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REVUE

SUMMER 2010



THE DIGITAL ECONOMY ACT DECIPHERED

HMV OXFORD STREET NOW SELLS CHOCOLATE

Where oh where is the record business going? The average price of the CD has fallen below £8.00 for the first time in the UK while petrol, food, etc keeps going up. And no matter what the industry does their revenue is even more undermined by cheap digital downloads and piracy. Apparently over the past decade the price has fallen by 28% and part of this can be attributed to 'loss leading' by supermarkets - indeed some years ago a leading European executive told us about a conversation he had with the hypermarket chain Carrefour where their goal was to eventually market a €1 CD and sell them like 'baked beans'. The executive's response was 'I am sure the artists would have a view on this'.

However the industry is fighting back with the recent Digital Economy Bill which was made legislation prior to the dissolution of the last parliament - this is the main feature of this edition of Revue so please check out the centrespread - and its recent National Record Store Day. There are very few independent record stores left and I am sure they think of themselves as 'The Alamo', i.e. fighting a losing cause in light of downloading but this initiative was a step in the right direction. We liked the 'exclusive' and 'collectible' physical product but what about a 'famous' artist adopting each of these stores, i.e. like the blue plaque scheme but with them serving in the relevant shop or carrying out a 'Q&A'? Oxfam has just done something similar in Selfridges with Annie Lennox helping out. Also we need to recapture those early contemporary pop music fashions which were echoed and reinforced within the record store with big cardboard displays and live impromptu sets by new bands, something that Amoeba Music has been doing in the US. Come on let's start the fight back and get HMV to rethink their 'chocolate' proposition and put them on the right track.



A VOTE FOR ME IS A VOTE FOR BBC 6 MUSIC



Jarvis Cocker has just won the 'Rising Star' award at the Sony Radio Awards and rightly so. Now in its third year, the recipient of the Sony DAB Rising Star Award is voted for by the general public and honours new radio DJs who have been successfully broadcasting for less than 18 months. It had previously been won by George Lamb and Singing Henry.

In Cocker's acceptance speech he made the point that "this show couldn't exist on any station" and appreciated that the BBC must offer licence fee payers value for money but nevertheless urged everybody to go on supporting 6 Music. And the latest RAJAR figures have been released with 6 Music having just over 1 million listeners.

BEST ALBUM OF THE LAST SIX MONTHS

The Bird And The Bee - Interpreting The Masters Volume 1: A Tribute To Daryl Hall And John Oates

Well would you believe it - a covers record and on the face of it, i.e. on first listening/reading, is nothing out of the ordinary. It's not 'clever' or 'innovative' as the recent Peter Gabriel collection but just a very beautiful piece of simple but contemporary pop music. Think Fyfe Dangerfield's performance of Billy Joel's 'She's Always A Woman' and you are on the right track. Inara George - the daughter of Little Feat founder Lowell George - is the Bird, and Greg Kurstin - multi-instrumentalist and producer of the likes of Lily Allen, Beck, Kylie, Red Hot Chili Peppers - is the Bee. A number of their past indie/synthpop releases have been deemed critical successes. 'Interpreting The Masters Volume 1' has all the big Hall and Oates hits, i.e. splendid versions of 'Maneater', 'I Can't Go For That', 'Kiss On My List', 'Rich Girl' and 'She's Gone' but the standout cut is 'Private Eyes', i.e. truly showcasing Inara's fine voice and demonstrating what a perfect pop song it is.

There is one abnormality though, i.e. the opening title called 'Heard It On The Radio'. When you first hear it, the song is so catchy that you think you have heard it many times before... was it a Hall and Oates song? No. Was it a Captain and Tennille song? No. Was it a Carpenters song? No. It's actually a catchy Bird and the Bee original. A potential contender for pop song of 2010 and we look forward to its UK release later in the year and hope that EMI Blue Note turn this song into their own Owl City 'Fireflies'.



NEW BAND PROFILE - THE FORTUNATE

From the depths of rural North Hampshire emerges a four piece and female-fronted band The Fortunate. Bursting with youthful exuberance and vigour, the band have already established themselves firmly within the local music scene and, after listening to their self-titled EP, it's easy to see why.



Having met at college while studying for a diploma in music, drummer Simon and lead guitarist Sam formed the initial 'scaffolding' of the band, and were shortly joined by vocalist Natalie and bassist Rich; and thus began the creation of The Fortunate.

As far as song-writing is concerned, the band do so on a joint basis and use guitarist Sam's chords as the 'foundations' for new songs. "Once we find that magic chord that tingles through our ears, that's when our imagination and creativity really starts to kick in", says Natalie.

As with any aspiring band, The Fortunate regularly use social networking sites to enhance and promote their work, which not only feeds their fans with news, tracks and gig listings, but has also secured them several radio interviews and live acoustic performances.

In terms of loose genre definition, The Fortunate fall under the vast metaphoric umbrella of alternative rock. However, their infectious twists of pop and funk entwined with their (arguably) Paramore-esque style seems to bridge the narrow gap between generic indie-pop and pop-punk. So what does that leave us with, I hear you ask? The refreshing scent of vibrant, youthful, British originality - that's what.

Side-swept fringes aside, The Fortunate strive to defy musical stereotypes; their "anti ex-boyfriend style songs" approach has made way for a group of talented young people determined to unify both their listeners and genres of music alike through their work.

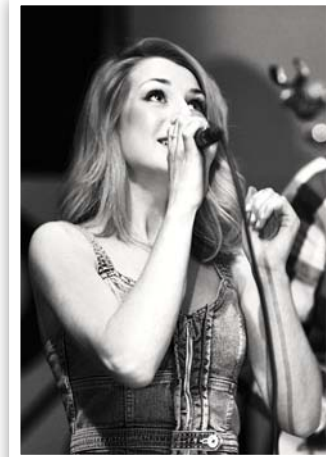
Inspired by the likes of Duran Duran, Fleetwood Mac and Death Cab For Cutie, Natalie's influences are reflected through vocals as well as her keyboard, and add a delicious helping of subtle eighties edge to their music. Amidst the infectiously catchy hooks and lashes of melodic baselines, her keyboard sound and vocals create an almost ethereal ambience of their own. Her endearing wide-eyed innocence almost masks the power, depth and meaning behind the lyrics, thus creating an enchanting, if a little haunting, contrast between her words and her intangible on-stage persona.

In terms of their forthcoming music career, the band had been focusing on their progression in the national Live and Unsigned Competition; indeed, they already experienced a taste of success after breezing their way through both the first and regional auditions in April. There is no disputing their relentless and charismatic determination to make their mark; they have already caused quite a stir with their "fresh, funky sounds" and were dubbed the "band of the day" by judge and A&R guru Chris Grayston of Future Music. Their "bombastic drums" and "gushing hyper-pop sound" secured them a respectable place in the Southern Area Finals, which were held at the Portsmouth Guildhall on 30 May. They did very well, but sadly didn't make it to the final two. It was very tough competition though; there were 22 bands playing and they were up against a lot of very good musicians. They played fantastically though and managed to get another mention from the judges, so it wasn't all bad news! One of the two bands who got through was absolutely awful in my opinion... but hey ho, it's not down to the audience!! They're getting stronger and stronger with each performance, so the experience has been brilliant for them all. It's a shame though, it must be every aspiring band's dream to play at the O2. In the meantime, The Fortunate continue to quench the thirst of their ever-expanding fan base through performing regularly at various venues around the South; details of which can be found on their website at www.myspace.com/thefortunateteuk

With news of the recently imposed and reformed Digital Rights Bill upon us, it is no surprise that the controversy surrounding such a polemic and, quite frankly, disputed topic is certain to set tongues wagging. Regarded as a movement that predominantly benefits the creative and music industry, we were interested to hear The Fortunate's views from the perspective of an upcoming and currently unsigned band.

They believe that without such enforcement free downloads will create throngs of keen but financially non-committal fans. Although a vast fan base is paramount in establishing oneself within the brutal world of the music industry, a fan base that depends solely upon free downloads does not provide the vital financial support needed to secure an aspiring band's success; thus dampening the chances for upcoming artists before they've even begun.

Indeed, with claims that the recent movement is a law "written quite literally by the record industry, for the record industry", it seems that The Fortunate have lived up to their name with the timing of their emergence; but is this enough for them to break through the towering gates of commercial success? Although they are already proving themselves ruthless impostors within the competitive realms of unsigned British talent, as with the equal ruthlessness of the modern music industry, only time will tell. However, with that magical entwinement of energy and hauntingly melodic sound, I'd say they stood a darn good chance.



JOANNA NEWSOM – HAVE ONE ON ME

If 2006's 'Ys' finally and deservedly brought Joanna Newsom to a wider audience and ably demonstrated her gift as a composer, her third album 'Have One On Me' magnificently stretches the point further and longer. In turns it blends the stark originality of her original debut ('The Milk-Eyed Mender') with the more lavish approach of her follow-up. This is an extensive pallet, spread as it is over three very absorbing CDs and more than two hours of music, but it gives Joanna room to explore and broaden her range of styles, leaning a little less on her beloved harp and more on piano across the 18 tracks, with a voice far removed from the rawness and squeaky delivery of yore. But of course it is her harp playing that remains core to the whole work, combined effectively with Newsom's magical, captivating, lyrics. Gone is the oft lavish orchestration we heard on 'Ys', replaced here by unobtrusive yet creative, but definitely integral, arrangements from a more compact and instrumentally diverse group, led by Ryan Francesconi of her Ys Street Band.

There are several pivotal moments in this experience and none more so than 'Good Intentions Paving Company', which pulls the full intensity of her lyrics and voice in front of the piano, all laid over a rolling track mix from the band of gospel, blues and bluegrass. CD two features another highlight, the early Joni Mitchell-like 'In California' and the album's closing track, 'Does Not Suffice', is a sadly moving reminder of Newsom at her barest, again with a gospel undertone and not dissimilar to the touching earlier track 'Baby Birch'. This embarrassment of riches just gets better with each listening as the depth of Ms Newsom's stunning lyrics reward endlessly and has to be a contender for Album of the Year. Brilliant!



KE\$HA – ANIMAL



If you've turned your radio on recently chances are that you've heard about Ke\$ha and her single 'Tik Tok' which seems to be playing on the airways about once every five minutes. 'Animal' is Ke\$ha's debut album and personally I find it hard to take her seriously as she places a dollar sign in the middle of her name! Saying that, her singles 'Tik Tok' and more recently 'Blah Blah Blah' with 3OH!3 have done very well in the charts.

It's clear to see with a quick flick through the album that Ke\$ha's message is just to 'party hard' (she apparently brushes her teeth with Jack Daniels don't you know?) which is fine but how many generic Americans girls can sing about partying for much longer? I will give her some credit though as she clearly appeals to a particular market and is doing very well out of it. There is also the title track 'Animal' which shows some musical promise for the future but sadly shows too little. So if you like generic, girly pop then it appears Ke\$ha's your 'cup of tea' but if you enjoy anything with a bit of musical depth stay well clear.

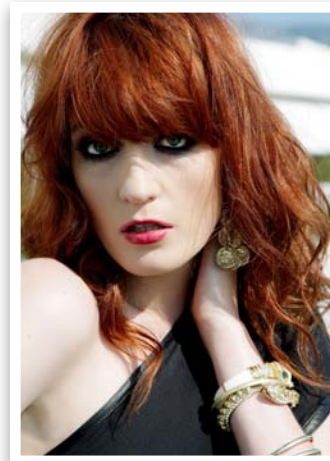
CORINNE BAILEY RAE – THE SEA

'The Sea' is the second album from English singer songwriter and guitarist Corinne Bailey Rae. It was released on 26 January 2010 after a hiatus of nearly two years following the death of her husband and fellow musician Jason Rae. She is a very accomplished musician and her self titled debut album was nominated for Grammy and BRIT Awards and won two MOBO Awards. Much of the second album was recorded before the untimely death of her husband but some tracks on the album do refer to her horrible loss - 'I Would Like To Call It Beauty' muses on her tragedy, she sings, "You're haunting me, consoling me". It's a beautiful song, easy listening like the majority of the album but full of emotion.

Many people thought that her debut album was too safe and even too polite but 'The Sea' has discarded any of these feelings. It is a far better record than her earlier release and the lead single 'I'd Do It All Again' premiered on 25 November 2009 on the Jools Holland programme 'Later' and is a beautiful example of the music that Corinne Bailey Rae is capable of making. This album sums up Rae's pure passion for music making, something she should be proud of.



FLORENCE AND THE MACHINE – LUNGS



'Lungs' is Florence and the Machine's debut album and was released on 6 July 2009, i.e. over a year ago but it was worth revisiting. The album won the 'Mastercard British Album' award at the 2010 BRIT Awards and reached No. 1 in the album charts on 17 January. There is a huge cacophony of sound and a strong variety of instrumental noise that permeates the record and the first single 'Dog Days Are Over' demonstrates this well. It's a great track that opens with the harp and Florence Welch's vocals and builds in intensity adding in drums, hand claps and a backing choir. There is definitely a unique quality to the music made by this band, perhaps the harp adds something, it features in many songs on the album and gives them an angelic quality that contrasts to the rest of the music in an intriguing way. Another decent quality to the album is the pulsating beat that drives the entire album forward. 'Cosmic Love' and 'Howl' both contain strong almost tribal-like drum beats adding tension and threat to the sound. The drums themselves often threaten to overpower the melody but fortunately they never do. Welch's voice is a force to be reckoned with and she is well capable of holding her own particularly in the last song on the album, a cover of Candi Staton's 'You've Got The Love'. This song has been covered countless times but I can honestly say that I prefer it to the original. It's a great end to a great album.

TONI BRAXTON – PULSE

She's back. The soul sensation Toni Braxton has just released a new CD 'Pulse' after a break of 5 years. Fans of 'Breathe Again' and 'Un-Break My Heart' will not be disappointed as it is a great soul diva recording in the traditional sense. Of late we have experienced the likes of Leona and Alexandra Burke attempting to grab Whitney Houston's 'crown' and adding their own 21st century twist but the jury is still out until they justify their rise to the top after 'sealing the live show ticket' that awaits them later in the year.

And with so many Whitney fans being genuinely disappointed with her recent live shows, i.e. the 'state of the voice', Toni Braxton could yet re-establish and fill that void that she had worked so hard to achieve years ago but was curtailed by her unfortunate bankruptcy and seemingly poor management. 'Pulse' has all the classic cuts such as the big ballads 'Yesterday', 'Woman', 'Hands Tied' and the toe tapping and dancing 'Make My Heart' perfect for that GMTV, Femal and mainstream female music market.



DIANA VICKERS – SONGS FROM THE TAINTED CHERRY TREE

'Once' is one of those exquisite pop records that comes along every now and then. Will it be one of the records of the year or will that be Justin Bieber's 'Baby'? From a UK perspective one could argue that 'Once' is far superior in its construction and tone, i.e. more in tune with 2010. Whether you buy or download her debut CD 'Songs From The Tainted Cherry Tree', you must add 'Once' to your collection. This debut CD is the tenth by an X Factor discovery to reach the UK No. 1 in five years following releases by G4, Steve Brookstein, Journey South, Shayne Ward, Ray Quinn, Leona Lewis (two), Alexandra Burke and JLS. And of these only G4, JLS and Diana Vickers were not released by Simon Cowell's label.

It will be interesting to see if forthcoming releases by EMI's Ruth Lorenzo, Syco's Joe McElderry and Sony's Olly Murs follow the tradition. The big question though is will it be genuinely different to the 'normal' production of these TV show personality releases, i.e. does it attempt to 'crossover' to the cred side? Well they have tried but the American style of singing through your nose is a touch annoying, and there are a couple of cuts that could be attributed to female American singer songwriters. Her accompanying live shows have been well received but whether she will follow Duffy and Florence and the Machine we just don't know. Or will it be a Sandi Thom 'passage of artistic' career: we will have to wait and see but whatever happens 'Once' is postpastic. Looking forward the next single is 'The Boy Who Murdered Love' which is another upbeat and infectiously catchy track which reminds the Revue team of Dolores O'Riordan from The Cranberries, which is no bad thing.



DIGITAL ECONOMY ACT – SUBSTANCE V POLITICS

The Digital Economy Act became law on 9 April 2010. The purpose of this article is to look at what the Act is designed to do and to look at that in the context of what some commentators say it should do (and others say it should not). Many of the headlines have focused on the Act creating machinery for cracking down on file sharing and other forms of illegal downloading. In fact the scope of the Act is far wider than just an attempt at controlling downloading behaviour. Its purpose is to enable governmental control of broadcasting as well.

This broad scope of the Act includes provisions to: add film production and distribution to Channel 4's remit and enable Ofcom to review its performance in making innovative content; allow for single franchise area for commercial television; allow the government to specify a digital switchover date for radio; allow Ofcom to renew national radio licences at seven year terms and to vary local digital radio licences; extend game regulation under the Video Recordings Act 1984 so that it specifically refers to games that include certain types of behaviour, and to allow for video games regulatory responsibility to be separate from the regulation of video works. The future of Channel 4, the switchover to digital broadcasting and regulation of video games are all topics that are being actively discussed outside the scope of this article, but the cynics who criticise the Act have focused only on the increased involvement of Ofcom (and therefore the Government) in the control of downloading behaviour.

Why is there a need to regulate downloading? It could be argued that there is no such need, but record companies are trying to do just that. The companies, through the BPI, have already targeted private consumers who they blame for file sharing. These individuals receive aggressive letters from law firms, but in many cases they are not the parties guilty for file sharing. Talk Talk is one of the internet providers most concerned about the repercussions of disconnection. They say the essential flaw is always the same: copyright holders can link piracy to IP addresses and these can be matched to a household internet account, but there could be tens of people using one IP address. This is particularly the case with wireless internet access where a remote user can log on via an IP address unknown to the address holder. Apparently, the most determined pirates/criminals will cover their tracks, hijacking other people's internet connections if they can. These letters sent by lawyers demand one off payments of compensation. There is a risk that some people receiving such letters, who may be innocent, may pay the compensation to make the problem go away. Therefore there is most certainly a need to control the way in which record companies are trying to regulate downloading.

The attempt to control downloading behaviour in this way is the very bluntest of instruments. What the Act will create is a code where online investigators will discover the IP address of a party offering a song or other material for others to copy. The investigators would present the address to the relevant internet service provider. The ISP can be required under the new legislation to notify these addresses to rights holders and to threaten users they believe are using rights with sanctions. At first these sanctions will be financial, but they may extend to temporary disconnection if Ofcom thinks that financial penalties are not being effective.

It is important to note that this does not extend the protection available under the law to record companies and other rights holders. The law of copyright already entitles them to enforce their rights by pursuing 'pirates'. It is also well worth noting that nothing is going to happen overnight. The Act provides for the appointment of a communications regulator, who is to complete an approved code of practice for implementing the Act within eight months. This includes a three-month period for approval of the code by the European Commission. It will not come back before Parliament before December 2010. Then there must be a technical measures code drafted and a progress review by Ofcom. Once the machinery starts to work in 2011, Ofcom can begin to assess how the new reporting machinery is working. The controversial measure whereby the High Court could as of now grant injunctions forcing ISPs to block access to online locations if a substantial portion of that location infringes copyright has been withdrawn. Such a measure can only now be brought in if the Government is so determined, through Ofcom, to order ISPs to sanction speed blocks, bandwidth shaping, site blocking, account suspension or other limits against an ISP customer. For such measures to be brought into action, Ofcom must consult and consider whether they would be effective. If it decides to recommend them, then they must be approved by Parliament.

Some commentators have said that the Act is misconceived because breach of copyright is not a criminal act and there are remedies available to rights holders to sue for compensation to protect their rights. This is to ignore the fact that the police have long been involved in

enforcing rights against pirates who have manufactured records illegally. Further, no act is subject to criminal law unless and until Parliament decides that social behaviour (or misbehaviour) needs to be controlled in that way. As stated above, it is not so much that the rights holders have no ability to prosecute claims, it is more that the manner of that prosecution needed to be made more accurate and effective to stop the innocent being targeted in place of the serial offenders.

Record labels will never stop music being distributed without payment. Labels promote CD sales by making available MP3s on the internet. If they are available for free or at a substantial discount, it gives out the message that the industry is prepared for that to happen and for music to be consumed more cheaply than it used to be. File sharing and home copying is still in breach of copyright laws, but the popularity of recorded music is helped by 'viral marketing', i.e. fans forwarding tracks to their friends. When does viral marketing (which the industry wants to encourage) become wholesale abuse of copyright (which the industry wants to stop)? One criticism against the Act then

will be that there will be an inbuilt discretion in every case about when to prosecute and there may be some miscarriages of justice. Surely this is inevitable. One positive outcome of the Act should be that parents whose children download and file-share should become more aware of how to reduce the risk of their IP address being reported by an ISP to Ofcom. Obviously, if someone is only buying tracks from an iTunes account that should never lead to a problem. But as soon as a consumer downloads from a variety of sources, and particularly that consumer then shares music on a regular basis, that IP account may be susceptible to inspection. Consumers at the cutting edge of music tastes will always want to acquire new music from little known sources in much the way that some fans used to seek out imported singles in underground record shops. A fan forwarding a track to a few friends is against the law, but is in truth no more open to criticism than a fan 30 years ago buying an album and lending it to a friend who might copy it to cassette. Of much more interest to the music industry will be a fan who acquires a lot of music for next to nothing from an Eastern European site (which does not pay royalties on those sales) and then distribute it in large numbers to a sizeable number of recipients. If a parent wants to be wary of one thing, it is a child acquiring music in that way. That will excite the interest of an ISP and that IP address may be more likely to be referred.

Why should ISPs be brought into this and made responsible for acting the role of policeman? ISPs would prefer to be seen as neutral carriers of content between rights holders and consumers. The law appears to have decided that ISPs cannot escape this role – it is in a way a cost of them being involved in this business. It is worth pointing out that 95% of home broadband connections are provided between BT, Talk Talk, Virgin Media, Sky, Orange and O2.

These are all substantial businesses who can provide the manpower to comply with the Act. The smaller ISPs and mobile broadband providers, which might find the administration forced upon them onerous, could well be exempted from it by a 'threshold' system. There are in any case examples of other spheres of commercial activity, which carry even more responsibility. For example, consumer credit legislation ensures that credit card companies indemnify consumers against loss in many cases for loss suffered when a consumer buys goods or services with the card, even though the card provider is not responsible for the goods or services being unsatisfactory.

If you go back to the beginning of this article and reflect that the purpose of the Act is to define it as part of the framework for digital media in the near and medium future, then the provisions relating to downloading can be put into that perspective. Any Act which tries to look into the future will be open to criticism as being either unnecessary or misconceived. If it is ineffective then it will be open to ridicule, but if it causes the setting up of an improved and more agile machinery to protect rights and to target infringers, then it will be hard to condemn it. It will also have shown that the Government will have listened to lobbying from the music industry, and that might just provide the industry with a much needed boost of its morale.

Charles Law is a music lawyer of longstanding who represents artists creating music as well as record companies, publishers and others who use music, including new media ventures.



KID SISTER – ULTRAVIOLET

Salt-N-Pepa are the most successful female rap group of all time and are fondly remembered for 'melodic' cuts including 'Push It' and 'Let's Talk About Sex' at the beginning of the 90s. They produced short songs with memorable choruses, attitude and fine rap that produced great pop music. Missy Elliot among others has attempted to pick up the 'pop rap' banner but appeared to concentrate on a more serious and adult side to 'rap soul' apart from one massive dance record.

Kid Sister's debut release 'Ultraviolet' picks up where Salt-N-Pepa left off some 15 years ago albeit it with a 'nod' to Justin Bieber with a series of memorable short, snappy and infectious songs that have the potential to be a series of hit singles. Bieber's 'Baby' has grabbed the teen market worldwide and there is no reason Kid Sister's cuts like 'Life On TV', '54321', 'Daydreaming' and 'Big N Bad' can't do the same.

Kid Sister, aka Melissa King, apparently learnt her musical trade from various Chicago house parties and first caught the imagination with the Kanye West-assisted 'Pro Nails' as well as appearing on 'Beeper' with The Count and Sinden. 'Ultraviolet' combines party rhymes and pop culture references and was recorded at 'Attic Studios' in Chicago with contributions from the likes of Estelle, Tony Williams and Brian Kennedy – who is the producer genius behind Rihanna's 'Disturbia'. FIFA should consider her debut CD as the 'soundtrack' for the 2010 World Cup as it covers all the best in global pop music.



LA ROUX – LA ROUX



'La Roux' (released 29 June 2009) is the self titled debut album by Brixton's own 80s revivalist. It's an album that has more synth sounds than The Eurythmics, The Pet Shop Boys and Erasure put together. But it works! The single 'In For The Kill' has sold in excess of 450,000 copies and reached No. 3 in the UK charts making it the 35th biggest seller of the decade, so people must be embracing the 80s vibes. The charts were also lapping up 'Quicksand' with its sharp vocals and quirky beats and 'Bulletproof' resulted in La Roux's first No.1 single.

As well as dance tracks La Roux also provides some slower more mellow songs like 'Cover My Eyes' - it still has the synth sound but this time blended with the backing vocals of the London Community Gospel Choir. 'Armour Love' also fulfils this slower, mellower type of track. It's easy to see how La Roux was nominated for the 2009 Mercury Music Prize. It's refreshing to know that artists like La Roux are taking chances and these chances are being well received. The 21 year old has stumbled across an old form which sounds new and fresh in today's charts.

BRANDI CARLILE – GIVE UP THE GHOST

We need to review "a new country and western release by a prominent female singer songwriter" said our editor. Taylor Swift was a no as we covered her in the last edition and from her new material she is becoming "Disneyfied"; Colbie Caillat we love but one could argue that she is not the genuine article; Emily Robison and Martie Maguire's 'Court Yard Hounds' was given the thumbs down as part of the establishment so what about Brandi Carlisle's third release 'Give Up The Ghost'.

The album was released back in November and has been a slow burner but enthusiastically received by the fans. A European tour was 'booked' to coincide with the release but has been put back to October 2010 and we would advise checking her and her band out if you enjoy the likes of Patsy Cline, Bonnie Raitt, Sheryl Crow and KT Tunstall.

She was discovered by Rick Rubin back in 2005 and originally produced by T Bone Burnett and has gone on to be a 'shining light' in her field. Standout cuts on this record are her duet with Elton John on 'Caroline', Benmont Tench backed 'Pride and Joy' and the latest single 'Dreams'. All very lovely and heartfelt.



CHERYL COLE – 3 WORDS



'3 Words' has been out for over six months, sold nearly a million copies in the UK and she has just finished touring the UK with the Black Eyed Peas in support of this perfect pop CD for 2010. The reason for featuring it is that the four stand out cuts – 'Heartbreaker', 'Make Me Cry', 'Heaven' and 'Boy Like You' perfectly summarise the genius that William James Adam Jr is. Whether it is with his Black Eyed Peas hits or Fergie's solo work, his obsession with short chorus, repetition and songs that suit the MP3 and digital age they are all a hit the world over. Apparently his 'ultimate' song is one with no verse but just a chorus, a minute long and able to be sung by both male and female alike.

Add the 'sex appeal', UK pop pedigree, huge terrestrial TV viewing figures with the X Factor and the beautiful girl next door then you have a winning combination in the perfect pop star – Cheryl Cole. It isn't Lady Gaga nor Madonna nor Kylie but something more amorphous, contemporary, soap opera, chat show, girl next door, beauty contest – dare we say diva?

PALOMA FAITH – DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH OR SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL?

Paloma Faith is not your average artist; she packs a punch in many different areas. As well as having a degree in theatre direction, being a magician's assistant and also a burlesque dancer not too long ago, she has appeared in films including 'St. Trinians' and Terry Gilliam's 'The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus'. Her CV is quite impressive to say the least.

'Do You Want the Truth or Something Beautiful?' is Paloma's debut album and she has described it as being "cinematic and theatrical". From the album she has released two singles, 'Stone Cold Sober' a great soul, stamping anthem and 'New York' a catchy melodic track. But sadly the rest of the album falls short of Paloma's description. All the tracks sound very similar especially the final three - 'Stargazer', 'My Legs Are Weak' and 'Play On'. It seems that after the first track everything is downhill thereon after. Her voice has that quirky, Amy Winehouse sound but it's not enough to rely on as the record lacks some real substance. Don't get me wrong the songs aren't bad but they are not great either. Unfortunately the album is very forgettable and to be honest it's all been done before by the likes of Winehouse and Duffy, etc. Saying that, there is promise, Paloma has had success in many different areas, so who am I to say that she won't be the next big thing.



GABRIELLA GILMI – TEN

She was only 16 only 16... when she recorded the most played song on UK radio in 2009 'Sweet About Me'; and made her debut CD 'Lessons To Be Learned'. She was only 18 only 18... when her debut CD had sold over 2 million copies, picked up many industry awards worldwide, played the main stage at Glastonbury and released her second CD 'Ten' that has a completely different sound to the first. The 'Xenomania' pop factory are in evidence on this modern dance/pop record particularly with the first single 'On A Mission'.

Also involved in the record is Dallas Austin, and the new single 'Hearts Don't Lie' is a fine pop record. A dancy Little Boots?? Like the Giorgio Moroder sounding 'Love Me Cos'. And she is even better live with her great band where her respect of classic rock like Led Zeppelin's 'Whole Lotta Love' is in evidence. She once said that on her 18th birthday she wanted to interview Leonard Cohen but then appears on the cover of FHM and goes all glamour girl. The next Kylie Minogue or the next Holly Valance – you decide??? Looking forward to when she was only 19 only 19...



KATE NASH – MY BEST FRIEND IS YOU

'My Best Friend Is You' is the second album from British female pop artist Kate Nash. It follows the platinum selling UK No. 1 album 'Made Of Bricks'. In 2008 she was named Best Female Artist at the BRIT Awards. 'My Best Friend Is You' was released on 19 April 2010 and it has a completely different sound to that of the debut album. Nash explains that it is maturity that has changed her musical style. The lead single 'Do-Wah-Doo' portrays this new change of direction. It's a vibrant, catchy pop tune. It shows that Nash is now relying on a decent melody and chorus line rather than scathing, witty lyrics. The album has got a real variety of sounds from Pop to Motown and even 'Riot Grrr!' - a genre of music developed from the underground feminist punk movement that emphasises female empowerment. 'Mansion Song' oozes femininity and it's a stark contrast to any of her other material - not for the faint hearted. It's hearty stuff, a sound that is undoubtedly dictated by the sexist mutterings of her boyfriend - Ryan Jarman from The Cibs.

'My Best Friend Is You' makes for a challenging listen at times and it's clearly lacking in the freshness of the debut album. Saying that, it is very compelling and inventive. Kate Nash is definitely not a one trick pony; she has shown that she may be around for a few years to come.



KATHERINE JENKINS – BELIEVE



'Believe' produced by David Foster (Josh Groban, Michael Bublé) is Katherine Jenkins' seventh album and after seven releases, I'm still not sure she's made her mind up about what sort of artist she wants to be. We are very familiar with these 'crossover' type artists but personally I think she should stick to classical stuff. It's just a bit too bizarre hearing a classical singer attempt Bob Marley's 'No Woman No Cry'!

The album starts off with 'Love Never Dies' the title song from Andrew Lloyd Webber's 'Phantom Of The Opera' sequel and preceded by Evanescence's 'Bring Me To Life' - a very unusual choice of song but actually this is the stand out track on the album. This track is arranged with strings and shows the song in a new light and gives the crossover artist some credit. Sarah McLachlan's 'Angel' is the next track on the record and it's a song that has been covered by many different artists. The production is once again very unsurprising and of course there is the choir complete with the usual key change. The title track 'I Believe' is a duet with the impressive Andrea Bocelli which marks the first time that these two singers have sung together in the recording studio and it makes for a decent listen.

The rest of the album unfortunately is very predictable; there are more cheesy covers of 'Endless Love' famously sung by Diana Ross and Lionel Richie and Queen's 'Who Wants To Live Forever'. Original classical fans will appreciate 'La Vie En Rose', 'La Califfa' and 'Ancora Non Sai' with famous violinist Andre Rieu - all tracks that show a glimpse of the singer's original roots.

LAURA MARLING – I SPEAK BECAUSE I CAN

There is an endearing quality about Laura Marling's voice and lyrics that belies her youthfulness and suggests a greater maturity than a 20-year-old is entitled to possess. Yet it is clear from this, her second album, that much development has gone on since her Mercury Music Prize nominated debut 'Alas I Cannot Swim', in 2008. All traces of innocent girlishness are gone, replaced by this remarkable maturity, exuded by the flowing lyrics. She delivers a new more adult image, a set of songs that show clear lineage to Britain's fine folk heritage and wisdom beyond her years. Produced by Ethan Johns this is a collection of folk-rock songs par excellence in which you can detect Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell to name but two.

Her voice is the masterstroke that separates Laura from most of the other folksy singer-songwriters about today - of which there are many - and she surprises with the range of tempos displayed here. The album kicks off with the driving and jiggy 'Devil's Spoke', which briefly hints at KT Tunstall, but clearly comes via early Dylan like later number 'Hope in the Air'. 'Rambling Man' is pure Mitchell. Laura swoops on to the beautiful 'Blackberry Stone', the haunting 'Alpha Shallows' and the utterly wonderful 'Goodbye England (Covered In Snow)', which evokes memories of snowy winters past. Many struggle with their second album, but young Marling has just stepped up to and beyond the mark with hers.



In the 'Classical Crossover' field one act still continues to create new and challenging music - The Operababes. Rebecca Knight and Maria Jones are at home most in the studio with industry award winning record producer Noel Vine. "Everyone says that the female singers have been doing well of late but I'm with Sophie Ellis-Bextor on this" says Rebecca "I think that the girls have always been there - it's a fight but it's still fun. There does seem to be more female singers in our side of the industry now, certainly more than when we hit the market 8 or 9 years ago. I do think that Operababes injected a bit of extra girl power and paved the way for others to come up through the ranks." Noel Vine agrees "Operababes came at a time when all the public had as a female recording artist within the Classical Crossover market was Charlotte Church, and she was still very young. When Operababes hit the headlines with their rags to riches story, they weren't just girls, but young women, appealing to a different market entirely, something that their record label Sony had a hard time understanding. They expected two girls to say yes to everything and get two women who had opinions!"

Rebecca comments on the current crop of female classical vocalists "firstly, my mum is a very well known international opera singer - she sang with Domingo in her heyday and was singing at Covent Garden for 40 years and finished there aged 71, so you can imagine what I've grown up with. As a child I've heard Domingo, Carreras and Pavarotti singing, watched 5 hours of Wagner at the Royal Opera House aged 5 without rustling a sweet paper - opera is in my blood so commenting on reality TV stars and current female singers singing in an opera style, well you're asking the wrong person maybe? I think that the best female classical singer we have in the world today is Angela Gheorghiu. She has everything, stage presence, voice, character and

above all the X factor, not a pretend TV X factor, but the real X factor". Noel continues "there is a difference between recording artists and live performers, every once in a while you do get singers who can do both really well. A lot of artists think that it's all about 3 minutes on stage, sing your song and off, but the real singers are the ones who can capture an audience for 2 hours in a concert without walking off stage for no reason. Forget the pyrotechnics, streamers and gospel choir standing behind you to make it all look amazing, just put a piano on stage and see what it sounds like then. Sadly in Classical Crossover it can be about what it looks like and how much it has cost rather than what it actually sounds like."

The subject moves onto where the easy listening classical vocal market will go in the next few years. "Hmm, that's a good one" says Rebecca. "It does seem that everyone tends to copy everyone else, don't get me wrong I love Ennio Morricone and am a true fan, but if I hear another recording of Nella Fantasia... I think that artists and arrangers need to be more inventive and not just carbon copy the last album they worked on. It's all a bit too safe and easy, although again I think you're asking the wrong people. We are constantly inventing and challenging ourselves musically and creatively. That's the upside of being with an independent label. We're lucky because we have a very loyal fan base who love what weird and wonderful stuff we churn out. I think that there's a lot of other female and male artists in our area who would love to sit down with Noel and go crazy but their record labels are too conservative and reluctant to rock the boat. That's what I love about Operababes, we're not afraid to try new things and really push boundaries within our genre." Lastly, the name "oh, don't get me started" moans Rebecca. "Well it's been a double edged sword hasn't it. I can't complain, it's put a roof over my head and I earn a living from it, was it my choice erm no...but hey, it's one of those things! Is it demeaning? Demeaning to what exactly? We're not recording Strauss' 4 last songs here or extracts from Britten's 'Turn of the Screw'. Operababes is our product. An act if you like. We don't walk around being 'Operababes'. What people forget is that we are trained Opera singers, we have a background of singing roles in Opera companies, so we can actually call ourselves Opera singers. There are not that many female singers in our market who can do that. Operababes is a different avenue from the norm."

So what next for the girls. Noel jumps in "I've got about 40 tracks recorded of new Operababes stuff, but I get bored quickly so stuff changes very fast - the aim is to do 2 new albums with the girls aiming for release in the Autumn of this year and beginning of 2011."



operababes.com myspace.com/operababes