

somewhat when it reached my ears. It doesn't matter, though, as a lot of it bangs considerably. The new breed of UK bass wielders are showcased – Mista Men reappropriate bassline house and speed garage; Checan evokes 2003 grime instrumentals – and two scene oldtimers, DJ Q and DJ Narrows, do the 'E.T.'s finger' thing between then and now. **NG**

## singles

### THE 1975 \*\*\*\*

#### *The Sex EP (Dirty Hit)*

Get past the pretentious claim to being "magpies of culture and sound," and you've actually got a pretty fascinating second release from this Manchester outfit. An interesting fusion of guitar-driven psychedelic indie and ambient electronic, this hints at a band capable of becoming Radio 1 darlings in no time. **JS**

### ALICIA KEYS \*\*

#### *Girl On Fire (RCA)*

The new single from Alicia Keys arrives in three parts: the Main, the Inferno Mix, and the Bluelight Mix. They all sound the same to me: lots of ohhs and ahhs and the repeating of lines over and over and over... *If I Ain't Got You* it ain't, but her fans will love it. **LN**

### BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT \*\*

#### *Feel It (The Blue Team)*

The phrase 'there's no school like the old school' must have been the driving force behind whoever produced this effort: to say that this track wouldn't be out of place on an ecstasy-fuelled dance floor some 20 years ago would be a monster understatement. Enjoyable but very, very dated. **JS**

### CAKEHOLE PRESLEY \*\*\*\*

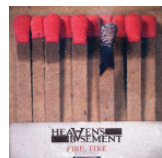
#### *Trinkets (Newsounduales)*



You can hear a little bit of Cohen, a little bit of Dylan, in *Trinkets* – and that's never bad. The tracks flow with the same sort of deliberation; ideas and melodies are kept in stasis by wheeling guitars and roaming basslines. For a first EP, it's a great little thing. **BK**

### HEAVEN'S BASEMENT \*\*\*\*

#### *Fire Fire (Red Bull)*



This takes me back to necking cans of Special Vat in a Llanedeyrn subway circa 1990, listening to the Friday Rock Show on a two-bob ghetto blaster. Similar

to Thunder or Little Angels, Heaven's Basement are good at what they do, with *Fire Fire* being a stomping piece of classic rawk. **RH**

### PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING \*\*\*\*

#### *Everest (Test Card)*

PSB's krauty/posty rock noodling over old Pathe film samples schtick can be a little hit and miss, but when they hit it's like a howitzer. *Everest's* gleaming guitar peals and increasingly woozy '50s narration climbs up and up, till peaking brass seals 2012's greatest pop moment. A triumph. **WS**

### THE RED THE WHITE AND THE BLUE \*\*

#### *Crisis! (Catapult)*

The first installment in a concept album and series of comics called *The Balloonist*, and featuring Feeder's Taka and Ash's Rick, this has the makings of a highly innovative release. Sadly,

it's musically pretty staid: Suede-lite anthemic Britpop that fails to make the most of a decent opening riff. **GP**

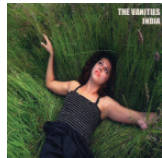
### STIG OF THE DUMP \*\*\*\*

#### *Cannon Fodder EP (Lewis)*

A true MC heavyweight in every sense of the word, Stig Of The Dump returns with *Cannon Fodder* after smashing rap battles across the UK for over a decade. Expect the usual ferocious rhymes, with the production stepping up a notch or two from previous offerings. Definite headbanger. **JA**

### THE VANITIES \*\*

#### *India (Star Asylum)*



There are some interesting touches to The Vanities' new EP – like a subtlety in the ebb and flow of their verse/chorus structure, the synth backline often

rising from obscurity to head big crescendos. It's unfortunate, then, that they sound a little like faux-Manics or Super Furries-lite, rather than anything particularly unique. **BK**

### YEASAYER \*\*

#### *Reagan's Skeleton (Mute)*

Despite displaying a wide range of styles and influences on their recent album *Fragrant World*, this single in isolation just sounds a bit like Depeche Mode... vaguely gothic, droning synths and ominous lyrics. I guess someone at Mute thought it ticked the US election and Halloween boxes when picking a single. **SE**

## demos

### GREETINGS

#### *greetingsmusic.wordpress.com*

As even this Stuckist writer fool has had to admit, the demo-as-physical-product is now a mere cute anachronism. This didn't stop me spending £2 on a felt-tip-artworked CD-R of the same four songs Cardiff trio Greetings have on their Bandcamp. It's the personal touch! It feels right for Greetings, too: this is scrappy, tipsy college rock with singalong bits and off-the-map overdriven guitar. *When I Get Home* is the gem, making me think of some Yo La Tengo deep cut. **NG**

### PIPEDREAM

#### *pipedreamcc.bandcamp.com*

Similarly, you can get this on cassette if that's how you roll. It's limited to 20 copies (investment opportunity?), so I don't suppose Cardiff three-piece Pipedream have any great issue with you taking the free download path. Their bag is melodic 90s style US punk, with Jawbreaker being cited as an influence; this comes through on the opening *Lemon & Sugar*, but overall Pipedream are a bit more... delicate than that. I mean that in a 'good end of Deep Elm Records' kinda way. **NG**

### RAPHAELITES

#### *raphaelitesband.bandcamp.com*

Barry quintet Raphaelites make a flying start by virtue of their singer's name, Harrison 'Badger' Ball – he sounds like he should be a septuagenarian who used to own a pet tiger and now spends all day in a private members' club spilling soup on himself. The band seem to fancy themselves as rock'n'roll animals, but that doesn't greatly reflect itself in their jangly alt-rock, which is well produced and harmony-heavy but a little too polite, to say nothing of 'Badger's' faux American accent. **NG**

# THIS MONTH'S DVD PICK

13

15 (Paramount)



This testosterone-fuelled film is set in the shady world of underground Russian roulette where participants find themselves part of a deadly game in which other men bet on their lives. Statham and Rourke add a bit of gravitas to proceedings, and it's shocking in places with an apparent life-affirming message throughout. Life is precious. \*\*\***EC**

### JUST BURIED

15 (Showbox Home Entertainment)



When an awkward young man inherits a near bankrupt funeral home in a remote Canadian town, he soon finds that bumping off locals is the best way to drum up business. With help from the local mortician, a series of 'accidents' keeps the bodies coming and business booming. Laughs, weirdness and a neat twist make for an endearingly off-beat black comedy. \*\*\***GM**

### KILLER JOE

18 (Voltage Pictures)



*Killer Joe* is not for the faint-hearted. Don't expect McConaughey in his usual rom/com mode: this is a dark and depraved thriller. He plays Joe, a Dallas cop by day and a contract killer by night. In this capacity he enters the lives of a local family and what prevails is a twisted, violent tale of murder. \*\*\*\***EC**

### MARGIN CALL

15 (Paramount)



In offering such a refreshingly learned take on the crumbling of Wall Street, *Margin Call* affords its audience an eye-opening insight into the wanton gambling of some of banking's most unscrupulous risk-takers. Providing a microcosmic vision of the economic crash through the eyes of one investment firm, the film leaves us with a powerful visual metaphor and the distinct feeling that nothing will ever really change. \*\*\*\***GL**

### RHOD GILBERT LIVE: THE MAN WITH THE FLAMING BATTENBERG TATTOO

15 (Channel 4 DVD)



Following his recent course of anger management and his new body art, Gilbert is a new person. But although he's less angry, he's thankfully not less funny. I'm glad to see that the levels of hilarity I experienced when seeing the show live in May weren't diminished in the transfer from theatre to DVD. This latest live tour is without doubt his best yet. \*\*\***AB**

### SEARCHING FOR SUGARMAN

PG (Sony Classics)



Rodriguez, the 70s rock icon that never was, disappeared amid rumours that he had committed suicide on stage. However, his album continued to gain fans in apartheid-era South Africa; this documentary follows two fans who investigate what really happened to their hero. A fresh and fascinating documentary that makes this Bob Dylan-esque singer an even bigger enigma than he already was. \*\*\*\***GH**

### SKATELAND

12 (Showbox Home Entertainment)



It's 1983 and Richie Wheeler is a gifted but aimless 19-year-old writer in small-town Texas. He is happy to fill his days with parties, girls and roller skating, but his ambitious girlfriend and his best friend's death cause him to re-examine his life. Some decent performances and a few half-hearted comedy moments do little to lift this tedious coming-of-age drama. \*\***GM**

### THE LOCK IN

E (Lace International)



A live show fusing dance styles to tell the story of one night in a crap pub. The complexity of the dances blends well with the traditional skills on display. One or two misguided stabs at comedy aside, the result is a celebration of British culture that doesn't feel a bit David Cameron. \*\*\*\***MM**

### WOJTEK THE BEAR THAT WENT TO WAR

E (Brightspark)



Admittedly I reviewed this DVD because it's narrated by Brian Blessed, but also because I had to see actual footage of a gun-wielding, beer-guzzling bear. Raised by a group of Polish soldiers, Wojtek became a mascot to his friends in WWII, following them into battle and giving them hope in times of madness. This is an enthralling, heart-warming story of bravery and comradeship from the most unlikely source. \*\*\***GH**