



**the new
arts supplement
for the inquirer**

**film and record
reviews,
live music,
interviews and
more**

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about the new revue

The *New Revue* is a new arts supplement for the *Inquirer*.

It will be published alongside each issue of the paper, and will have reviews of exhibitions, shows, records, and any arty stuff that takes our fancy.

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cinema control

Hailed as one of the best films of the year, *Control* charts the rise and fall of Joy Division's front man, Ian Curtis. Ollie Richter speaks with director Anton Corbijn and star Samantha Morton.



Control

theatre desperately seeking susan Novello Theatre, London

For the uninitiated, *Desperately Seeking Susan* was the 1985 movie which helped propel a young Madonna to fame. It wasn't a particularly good watch back then and is even worse now - but that hasn't stopped it being

reworked, remodelled and spun out onto the West End stage. Added to the mix is the seemingly obligatory, modern day revival of a successful pop band from times gone by - Blondie - and you're all set for the West End's latest great hope.

In the vein of *We Will Rock You*, there's a flaccid story trying to tie together the band's various songs, and though both show's storylines are equally weak, *We Will Rock You* carries show stopping tunes. Although the same formula is applied with DSS, they've managed to defile Blondie's new-wave punk armoury - turning each hit into the most ghastly series of loops and synth beats imaginable. Your eight-year-old brother could come up with

something better after 10 minutes of fiddling with the Casio keyboard he got for Christmas.

The whole thing is a farce from the word go and eventually all pretence is abandoned - the finale turning into pub karaoke of the worst kind, with each cast member taking it in turns to murder Debbie Harry's vocals in the medley from hell. The singing is beyond abysmal - even from the few actors who were seemingly capable of holding a tune earlier on - and you wonder if you're on the end of a terrible joke.

Blondie remain one of the greatest acts of their era and in Debbie Harry boast a true icon of modern pop culture. This on the other hand, is one of the most turgid things to hit the West End stage in years. Save yourself the agony - buy a Blondie CD instead.
Ollie Richter

Desperately Seeking Susan opens on November 16.



Blondie the Musical: a good idea?



Joy Division, the 70s four-piece from Manchester, changed not only the British, but global music scene, transcending genres to leave a lasting footprint which still shapes the basis of so much of today's 'new' music. Considering the band never charted a single higher than 13, it's even more remarkable.

Dutch music photographer Anton Corbijn, one of the most respected figures in the industry, has worked with everyone from Frank Sinatra, through to David Bowie and Kylie Minogue. He is an avid fan of Joy Division and did some of his most famous work with them, so it seemed natural for him to make his first foray into directing with *Control*.

The film attempts to reveal the truth behind the elusive singer, who faced a constant battle with epilepsy and depression, eventually leading to him taking his own life at 23-years-old. It is a tragic tale that Curtis himself seemed to prophesise. Even now, so long after his death, songs such as the iconic 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' leave a strange feeling of emptiness. The 'arty' lyrics now so evidently the inner most thoughts of Curtis' mind and personal traumas.

Joy Division, formed in 1976 and were inspired after watching a little known band at the time: The Sex Pistols. After being signed by Tony Wilson's Factory Records they worked their way up the rock ladder, earning their stripes supporting big acts of the day such as The Buzzcocks. They reached the peak of their fame shortly before Curtis' death in 1980 - the remaining members later went on to form, and have great success, as New Order.

The film is based on the memoirs of Curtis' wife Deborah, who also assisted in the making of the film. Her role is central and Corbijn managed to attract Oscar nominee, Samantha Morton, to

the part. She first came to Corbijn's attention whilst shooting a music video for U2's 'Electric Storm' and made an instant impact. "She was astonishing - everything she did had a reason," he said. "When I had this script I approached her and showed her [Debbie's] book. Debbie is such a difficult part to play, but I think Samantha's attracted to difficult roles"

Morton, notorious for being ultra selective when choosing her work, already had an interest in the subject, despite not being a fan of Joy Division during their peak. "I'd heard their music but I didn't get it," said Morton. "I thought they had a couple of great songs but I wasn't a fan." A few years later however, Morton found herself living in New York and on a trip to the local record store, she stumbled across the 'Heart and Soul' box set and decided to give the band another go. "It had a picture of [Curtis] on the cover, then you opened it and it had a block of flats in Manchester and his name scratched into it; the way they'd done it was really amazing." With the band's entire back catalogue at her mercy, she soon made up for lost time, "I started listening to it and that was it, I was hooked."

With Morton secured as a Joy Division fan, years later when she heard an Ian Curtis film was in the development stages, she was horrified at the rumours being bandied about, "I heard Jude Law was doing it, and with all respect to Jude - I think he's lovely - but I thought 'what? That's just stupid that is.' Jude Law playing Ian Curtis? No!" With or without Law in the role, Morton was strongly against the proposed film, even before she'd been approached, "I just thought they shouldn't make it. I personally have an issue with biopics anyway, and because I had a vested interest in the music I just thought it shouldn't be done."

Morton's fears proved to be un-

founded and unknown actor Sam Riley was cast as Curtis. Riley proved himself to be not only a superb lookalike, but soundalike as well; all the singing and playing of instruments in the film were played live on set by the actors. Quite a feat when you consider nearly all of them had no musical background, especially in the case of James Anthony Pearson (playing guitarist Bernard Sumner) who'd never even picked up a guitar before.

The film received rave early reviews, and it looks set to add to the multiple awards picked up during the initial preview festival season. So does it do justice to one of rock's most tragic, and iconic figures? Shot in monochrome, it's certainly a beauty to watch. With camerawork as adept and prominent as the acting, Corbijn's photographic excellence and background is highly evident. The actors are made to work in the frame, rather than having the camera follow their moments - the settings, background and actors are all on an equal footing as 'stars'. It's a way of filming that really adds to the feeling that you're watching a piece of art, rather than just another movie.

As far as debuts go, Corbijn couldn't have wished for a greater critical response to *Control* and is keen to work on another film project, this time one that he's not so emotionally attached to. It does seem fitting however, that *Control*'s subject matter is so close to his heart. He agrees there's a mystique surrounding bands from past eras, which isn't simply there because time has altered memories, making them more favourable - but he believes the MTV culture has played a big part in killing off rock's romance, "In the 70s music played a bigger role, everyone's lives have changed since then. The highlight of popular culture has maybe already been, I think that may well be the case."

battle of the bands

In Bombay Bicycle Club and Cajun Dance Party, North London offers the two biggest contenders for the title of 'next big thing' in British music. But who will emerge victorious? **Ollie Richter** finds out.

A few days before the school disco and sports day, a selection of young, wannabe rock stars have picked up instruments for the first time and somehow persuaded the Headmaster to let them play a few songs. Almost everyone seems to share the opinion that all school bands carry tuneless guitars and endless, high-pitched whining from pre-pubescent teenagers. So when one appears capable of playing well, it's natural for their classmates to put down their textbooks and take notice. But when two appear in short proximity of each other it causes quite a stir, and not just in the playground.

Bombay Bicycle Club started out two years ago at 15, alternating their name and line up regularly, until settling down to the four-piece they have today. Putting a stop to the constant

name changes, they opted for Bombay Bicycle Club - named after the curry house chain. Fitting jam sessions around their studies, they tried to get a slot at their school's band night, but were banned for being too young. Age was to continue getting in the way, but their blend of tight guitars and warbling vocals eventually meant people had no choice but take note and a few venues let the underage act perform. Myspace, the tool of today's trade, enabled them to secure a host of gigs at local Islington venues, such as Lark in the Park, from which they built up a small but loyal fan base. The problem remained that both the band and the fans were barely 16, so the hardest part of the night was actually getting into the venue.

It was when the band won Channel 4 competition, Road to V, that their star would really start to rise. They sent in a demo and soon had a call saying they were through to the finals. The competition - to find an unsigned band to open the 2006 V Festival - was certainly worth winning.

After that major breakthrough, the band has gone on to play scores of rapturous shows - this time gaining fans of all ages. Their highest point came at this year's Carling festivals, where they played alongside acts such as The Strokes' Albert Hammond Jr, Kate Nash and Jack Peñate. Also in the tent that day were BBC's prime



competition: Cajun Dance Party.

Both bands started out 2 years ago at the same age and until recently were on a level playing field - but BBC are still independently releasing their material, while CDP's progress has been more rapid.

While working through their GCSEs the band got together and quickly produced a handful of early demos, which were championed by Steve Lamacq and the NME. This exposure led to them being snapped up by XL Recordings (White Stripes, Basement Jaxx) for a reported £250 thousand. Not bad when you haven't even finished your A Levels.

That boost gave the five-piece a platform to embark on a full UK tour during schools holidays and even a

heavily praised slot on Glastonbury's Park Stage. CDP are a polished act already, which is scary on two counts: their age, and how new they are to all this. Their eighth gig drew 600 people alone, giving some indication of how quickly they moved off the starting blocks.

Mixing the melodic hooks of mainstream indie with synth is hardly a new concept - but these guys succeed where most fail. Their debut album should appear next summer, after they've finished their exams.

So who'll take the crown? CDP have a clear advantage at the moment but BBC are catching up. Either way, be proud that Islington shows all the signs of being at the forefront of British music.



live reviews

BLOOD RED SHOES

Bush Hall, 10/10/07

Off to the seaside? Think twice before asking Blood Red Shoes along.

The Brighton duo, wielding lyrics such as "it's getting boring by the sea" and "looking for a way out" hardly seem the best advocates of their home town.

Speeding up the M1 and shaking the sand from their shoes, the band land on the stage ready for their biggest headline show to date. The south-coast pair - consisting of Steven Ansell (vox/drums) and Laura-Mary Carter (vox/guitar) - aren't ones for stage fright. Having relentlessly toured up and down the country, as well as being Maximo Park's support act of choice. While they may fall under the indie umbrella, and their polite exterior does its best to mask it - something darker is lurking underneath.

As the band launch into opening number It's Getting Boring By The Sea, their easy on the eye pop exterior isn't so much scratched away as torn open and shred to pieces. Under the sugar-coated surface there's pure grunge bubbling away. White Stripes tribute act? Think again.

The band roll through their set at an alarming rate - barely leaving the breathless hordes to recover after stand out tracks 'You Bring Me Down' and new single 'I Wish I Was Someone Better'.

'How To Pass The Time' brings the night to a close after a spectacular stage dive from raven haired beauty, Laura-Mary, sending the hall into uproar.

They might not be on Brighton Tourist Board's Christmas card list, but who cares - if this is what's on offer, we're off! Now, where's that bucket and spade...

Ollie Richter

FRIENDLY FIRES

Hoxton Bar and Grill, 25/10/07

One glance at the floor and the room is almost impossible to make out. A thick, heavy black curtain hangs over the door so that the only light to be seen is on the bar and the stage.

The only sound to drift across the room is the occasional clinking of glasses and the odd whisper. Friendly Fires couldn't have walked into a more depressing atmosphere if they were at a funeral. But it all leads Ed MacFarlane (vox/guitar/bits & bobs) to devise a plan to make up for the lack of energy, in stage presence.

Jumping and squirming about, he climbs down from the stage and rolls through the audience before climbing back. The crowd stands in shock, jaws slack as a fat man's g-string, while MacFarlane continues in his exuberance.

New single 'Paris' carries a wonderful blend of cow bells, synths and a drum beat fast enough to make your insides tingle. MacFarlane's vocals drift in the air like the smell of a freshly baked pie, luring you closer to the music in a hypnotic haze. While 'On Board' takes you down a different crossroad into a sexual, throbbing, bass-lead mess of high-pitched vocals and abrupt snare strikes.

Friendly Fires play a strangely arousing form of indie-ambient-dance music. Weaving through relaxing tracks, songs to get down and dirty with and something to get you writhing like Jarvis Cocker to.

Whether you're angry or ecstatic, you won't be able to leave without having a sly groove.

Danielle Goldstein

LOS CAMPESINOS!

ULU, 23/10/07

If you've ever found yourself in a room with no idea how you got there, or what you're supposed to be doing, spare a thought for twinkle-toed funsters Los Campesinos!

Teaming up while at Cardiff Uni and weighing in at a mighty seven members, Los Camp! have been rapidly catapulted from 9am lectures to 9pm headline slots. With melodies played out via glockenspiels, along with a knack of perfecting sickly-sweet harmonies, they'll either send you screaming their name through the valleys or running hastily back to the hills, scarred for life.

Los Campesinos! (translated as 'the peasants' in Spanish) don't want to be liked, they want to be loved. They want every crowd member to feel the same as they do getting up and doing this for a living. You get the impression this is one joke band that somehow struck gold - a band that enjoy dancing on stage with Happy Meal toys as backing dancers.

'Fun' as far as bands are concerned however, is often a recipe for disaster. When something other than the music takes precedence, a spectacular crash and burn is expected to ensue. But it's hard not to smile as Los Camp! take to the stage, regardless of whether their brand of candyfloss pop is your thing. 'The International Tweexcore Underground' and 'Sweet Dreams, Sweet Cheeks' live up to every inch of their grand titles.

As the band themselves proclaim, "We're gonna smash this place up and deck it out in fairy lights". Duck for cover - things are going to get messy - and what a beautiful mess it'll be.

Ollie Richter

LOVVERS

The Macbeth, Hoxton, 25/10/07

If ever there was a band more suited to play in an insane asylum, Lovvers are it.

Shaun (vox) thrashes around like a paranoid madman on MDMA, his eyes wide and darting around the room.

He clutches the mic like a child unwilling to share a new toy, casting suspicious glances from under his heavy eyebrows.

As he leaps back and forth, slipping off the stage, the last wisps of smoke are disappearing into the night as people head inside to catch a glimpse of the action.

'Search For Gold' is a nightmare on Elm Street with Freddie Krueger singing at you through gritted teeth. The vocals skip from short, sharp bursts of rage into long drawls of frustration.

The audience, all the while daring themselves to go closer until Shaun lunges forward again and everyone takes a snap dive backwards. 'A Good Book' reaches towards something more sing-able. We're not talking karaoke here, but the drums hold a danceable beat with an ongoing, warped blur of guitar that back the only tuneful vocals of the entire set.

The rest of the band stand back, clear of Shaun's flailing limbs, other than Henry (guitar) who wades in for some chaos at the end.

After a bout of spitting and crashing into each other the band clammers off the stage in a mess of limbs and sweat. The crowd are ready to congratulate and retreat at the same time.

Lovvers' are distorted and dirty, like an unfiltered enema, leaving you feeling uncomfortable yet refreshed.

Danielle Goldstein

RACUNE

The Arts Theatre, Soho, 18/10/07

Racune describe themselves as a band that "exhume the old and embrace the new" and this is certainly what they accomplish. They combine metal, rock'n'roll, 80's synth, funk and soul.

At first, 'Can't Bring Me Down' reminds you of the sort of music you would associate with a bar that specialises in soul, yet this is suddenly transformed into metal through the use of the bass. The guitar riff is reminiscent of oldtime greats - one that comes readily to mind is Slash from Guns n' Roses. This is definitely a track you can listen to both in and out of a club.

'Changes', on the other hand, provides a refreshing upbeat tempo and a very prominent ending through Niven on the drums. Great to groove to or to just listen to, this song does a fantastic job of sticking in your mind like an instant classic.

The vocals in 'For The Last Time' have an Evanescence feel to them, due to the use of an echo. Despite this similarity, Culler's performance is spectacular. These lyrics touch you somewhere deep and stay with you long after the song is over, making you want to listen to it again just to keep the feeling.

Racune are a band well worth giving some attention. They certainly won't stay a secret for long as there is too much talent there to go unnoticed.

Stefan Marseglia

YOUTHMOVIES

The Works, Kingston, 11/10/07

When your musically fanatic friend proclaims that a musician sounds like 'nobody else', your initial reaction is a rolling of the eyes accompanied by a thought of "yeah, right".

But when a similar statement comes from said band's record label releasing said artists' debut album, the laws of music-kind declare that it should forfeit its right to be taken seriously.

Not in the case of Youthmovies - recently taken under the wing of webzine-cum-indie label, Drowned in Sound - who deliver a performance to smash all genre boundaries tonight. Lazy press they may have, but lazy this band are not.

From the first strum, the audience realise that the term 'predictable' is not applicable here. Two-time changes, trumpet riffs over distorted guitar chords and a complete disregard for orthodox song structures leaves punters stunned mid-pint.

The band dive into 'So And So...' and continue to baffle. A clean guitar threads into a melodic breakdown, carried by a combination of high hat-snare-bass drum that has indie kids in the first few rows convulsing like Ian Curtis, albeit only for about 20 seconds. An acapella interlude brings the song to an end and the mouths of the crowd snap shut.

One could try and attest a Buffy Clyro-influence to the vocals, but even that would be pushing it. It's a stretch to find another foursome comparable to them.

While the introverted stage manners of the band stand in stark contrast to the explosive nature of their music, it seems pretty hard to deny the claim that Youthmovies sound like "bugger-all else out there". And yes, that's a good thing.

Matthias Scherer

the macabees

Roundhouse, Camden
16/10/07

"This used to be where the trains turned round you know," states a timid Orlando Weeks (vox). Not only doing his best to entertain you with a bit of music, he's even prepared to throw in some trivia. Who said variety was dead?

The Maccabees, a five-piece amalgamation of Brighton and South London, have toiled away on the gigging scene - specialising in sing-along choruses interspersed with a rhythm section faster than the Japanese railway. Yet here they are on a major stage - and although casual observers might gloss over them in the listings, the sold out crowd of rowdy teens baying for their arrival justifies their place.

From singles 'First Love' and 'About Your Dress' through to upcoming release 'Toothpaste Kisses', it's a relentless assault, with the fans matching the band toe to toe in the pit. A dubious middle section shows a slight lack of 24-carat material, but a ferocious finale soon pushes the lapses aside. As the gig ends, the sweat-soaked bodies filter out, the lights come back up and the thought lingers that you might just have witnessed The Maccabees' crowning glory.

View these guys as just another indie 'The' band if you must but leave your preconceptions at the door and watch the show. This isn't trilbies and wayfarers; this isn't three chord melodies and a pear cider while you're at it please - hell, let's go one further, this isn't even indie. This is British rock music as it stands today and it's about time we all got on board and realised it.

Ollie Richter

The Maccabees Photo: Mike Burnell

