

Katie CAMPBELLING

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ROCK, POP & ANYTHING ELSE

Music laid bare in another acoustic success



Singles

MR HUDSON featuring **KANYE WEST:**

Supernova. The English songsmith knows he's got it made when he has a global superstar on board. This desperate love song about grasping the opportunity to escape is stripped bare electro pop that has that twist of genius, but all-too-rare flashes of a majestic melody.



REVEREND AND THE MAKERS: Silence Is Talking. Big, bold, brash and shrouded with a Phil Spectorish 60s production aura. It leaves a large imprint on the imagination.

LUPEN CROOK AND THE MURDERBIRDS: The Lost Belongings EP. This heralds a new start in their career freed from their contractual obligations and a free rein to get stuck into their DIY folk punk, never more so than on the lead track *Last We Connect*. The Crooked Family, a song that totally implodes in nursery rhyme-laden anguish. Eccentric, uncompromising and may never be big sellers, but they are fascinatingly wayward.

ANIMAL KINGDOM: Tin Man. You don't have to dig too deep – in fact the surface hardly needs scratching – before you unearth the influence of Radiohead and Coldplay. Soft-edged indie that captures a sense of contented melancholy.

PAUL CARRACK: Just 4 Tonic. This bubbly reggae blast was penned by Carrack and is one of those songs that sounds like it's been around forever. Written before the onset of the grim recession and yet it smack bang in tune with what's going on now. It even has the lyric "politicians from the left and right seem to wear a thin disguise."

Does Carrack have a crystal ball?

Albums

PEOPLE IN PLANES: Beyond The Horizon. A dynamic debut with head-nodding opener *Last Man*. Standing a statement of real intent. One of those all-enveloping sounds that becomes a total deluge. The Cardiff band set out to create an album of precision and intensity with a swagger – and that's just what they've done. Mayday's urgent guitar flashes stir up a feeling of agitation which the rest of the album works hard to lessen as they veer from cellos to hell-fire syncopated rock implusions. Songs like *Pretty Buildings* reach out for epic status and then the next moment it's a scratchy, ugly downpour. Or, as the band states: "Blood and guts went into it." As varied as there are people in planes.

Andy Hirst



■ **SOULFUL:** Ruby Wood of Ruby and Noah at the Parish acoustic night

TITLE: Acoustic night feat – Joeey and Aiden, Love Tornado, Hey Zeus and Ruby and Noah.
VENUE: The Parish

IT was a night of double acts at the Parish, starting with Joeey and Aiden. They're likeable on stage but need to work on their song structure and vocal technique to fulfill their potential. Next up were Ben and Davey from the wonderfully-named Love Tornado. Having seen their full band live, I couldn't imagine how their loud, energetic set would work on a quieter acoustic stage. But in fact it laid bare their instrumental and vocal skills.

The contrast of Ben's rough and powerful vocals and Davey's more mellow tones provided

great harmony and their witty, up tempo songs proved acoustic acts don't have to be soul searching or muted. If you had to sum up Love Tornado, you'd say fun – and a little bit different. After all, how often do Kenneth Branagh and the Metro newspaper make it into a set? Onto Hey Zeus – again a stripped down version of a bigger band. Band members Tom and Matt gave an impressive show of technical guitar skill. Their style was traditional acoustic but Tom's lead vocals were so stunning and powerful that they really distinguished the performance. Closing the show were headlineers Ruby and Noah. They are respected for their talents on the local scene – and it's easy to see why. I will confess that jazz is not my

thing at all. The roaming instrumentals and scat vocalsirk me, I can't help it. But Ruby's soulful voice made even those minor irritations sound pleasant. A real testament to natural vocal talent, enhanced by skill and control. Her voice carried smoothly over the melodic rhythms provided by Noah on guitar, who also assisted with backing vocals.

The audience were made part of the show, getting chance to choose the set list, which closed with a brilliantly done medley featuring I'd Rather Be With You, Beyonce Knowles' covers, Craig David and The Police among others.

The audience were wowed. Yet another top quality line up at this fast-growing acoustic night. Long may it continue!

Vagabond hitting the road with zeal

A few years ago, Huddersfield guitarist Luke Fitting was just starting out in his band career.

Now he's a member of pop rockers Vagabond, who are being tipped for promise in 2009.

Luke – a former Salentine Nook High and Leeds College of Music student – formed Huddersfield indie pop group Bikini Black Special with friends in 2003, when they were just teenagers.

The band has been through several changes since then – but now Luke is set on the path to success with Vagabond, who are about to release their new album *You Don't Know The Half Of It* on August 17.

Indications all point to a warm reception – the single due for release on August 3, *Don't Wanna Run No More* has just moved up to the B List on the Radio 1 playlists.

The 11 tracks on the new album sit between classic pop and synth-tinged rock. There's even a bit of gospel in there, in single *Don't Wanna Run No More*.

Singer Alex Vargas says of the single: "It's about giving up the chase and realising there was no point in trying anymore."



■ **RIISING STARS:** Vagabond are making waves after a series of high-profile support slots and a maiden Glastonbury appearance

There's a mixture of heavier, explosive tracks and more laid back songs on the album.

Vagabond like to put some meaning into their words. The album's title is taken from a lyric in album track *Smile Of Mona Lisa*, is a reminder to people not to judge them too quickly.

Alex said: "You can't listen to one or two tracks off our album

and think you know what Vagabond is all about. You've got to hear the whole package."

So, something of a concept album then. Quite a retro idea.

And Alex has been described as a cross between 80s stars Michael Hutchence and Bryan Ferry, with his powerful vocals. The comparison is a compliment – though they may not be the most

current of stars.

But, while like any band Vagabond are influenced by past artists, Vagabond are not buying into the retro gimmick craze that is sweeping the music industry. They deal in plain, powerful pop rock. And there's no shame in that – creating a perfect pop song is an achievement many musicians pursue.

As well as Luke and Alex, Vagabond are made up of guitarist Stephen Carter, bassist Sam Odiwe and drummer Karl Penney.

In support of their single and album releases, Vagabond are heading out on tour in August.

They kicked off their summer live dates as special guests to *The Script* at London's Shepherd Bush Empire, followed by gigs with McFly, James Morrison and The Saturdays, as well as three major festival dates, including Glastonbury.

As part of the tour, they will visit Mojo in Manchester on August 11 and *The Cockpit* in Leeds on August 14. For more details, you can visit www.myspace.com/vagabond or www.bobo.com/vagabond or www.facebook.com/vagabondthband

You can also check out Vagabond's cover of 'Fans' by Kings of Leon at <http://www.youtube.com/vagabondthband>