

and greatest influences. Amongst the fabled producer's choices are Nils Frahm, Fourtet, A Winged Victory For The Sullen and a new cover of Yeasayer's *I Remember* by Hopkins himself. The whole thing feels like an otherworldly treasure, lulling you in with its dreamlike seamlessness. Highly recommended, but stay away if you're feeling drowsy. **CPI**

VARIOUS ****

Next Step Soweto Vol. 4 (Strut)

If your knowledge of African music extends to the song used on a beans advert from the 90s and Paul Simon's *Graceland*, there's evidently a lot more on offer after listening to this. Songs are percussively driven, with guitars, drums and the occasional synth and organ – but there's not a single dominant signature sound to be heard. Some tracks sound like something released on Dischord Records, others are disco funk workouts, while there are vocal harmonies and repetition forging a strong groove throughout. **GM**

singles

BLOODFLOWER ****

People Places (self-released)



I was caught off guard by this one. The band's name suggested images of earnest rockers, but instead this an early-80s new waver, heavy on the sawtooth synths, and reminiscent of Tubeway Army. Grandiose and melodramatic in all the right ways. **DG**

ELLEN ALLIEN ***

Alien Rmxs (Bitch Control)



Not sure how we, the global population, have lasted five years without a proper Ellen Allien album, but the self-termed Berlinette hasn't turned hermit. Three

remixes of tracks from 2014's *Freak* EP to tide us over: by AUX 88 (muscleman electro), Ejeca (wistful 90s acid) and Radio Slave (a Chicago-style clapfest). **NG**

FJORDS ***

Cusco (Crookedman)

They say *Cusco* is inspired by the Peruvian city, but I'm hearing Japan (the group). Fripp-like guitar at the beginning and end and intriguing Modern English vocals and synths, also. Like the jangly Big Country-ish guitars; the shouted vocals, not so much. More lyrics please, but otherwise these Cardiffians show promise. **RLR**

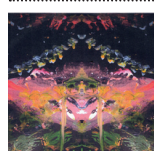
GEORGIA PATERSON ***

Hear Your Voice (self-released)

A decent first outing from a new Cardiff songwriter gives us twinkly melodies and dulcet chord changes, all arranged using fittingly folksy instrumentation (mandolin, violin and mandocello). The songs, although neatly constructed, might be a little sweet for some tastes but future recordings should hopefully extend a more rounded repertoire. **CPI**

LOST DAWN ***

Count On Me (Easy Action)



As a Cornish émigré who remembers the 1990s, I reserve the right to gasp each time I hear a band from the region who aren't completely embarrassing. Falmouth

trio Lost Dawn remember the 90s too, or are

aware of them: this single tips its hat to garage and psych but most closely resembles a never-quite-were alt-rock American outfit from two decades back. **NG**

NOEL GALLAGHER'S HIGH FLYING BIRDS ****

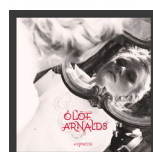
Ballad Of The Mighty I (Sour Mash)



Whether or not you like the former Oasis frontman's voice, the catchy guitar riffs from the offset are enough to make the track, at the very least, bearable. The instrumental develops into a melodic, almost nostalgic breakdown, capped off by a single violin chord. Lyrical repetition of "Yes I'll find you" may get tiresome very quickly. **DM**

ÓLÓF ARNALDS ***

Hypnose (One Little Indian)



The enjoyable *Hypnose*, from Arnalds' forthcoming album *Palme*, contrasts an uplifting melody with lyrics which describe "two-facedness when

it comes to the matters of the heart". B-side, *Víðihlið*, a wistful, simply-produced folk song, is better still, showcasing a stratospheric voice. **HR**

demos

TIDES OF SULFUR

tidesofsulfur.bandcamp.com

Cardiff trio Tides Of Sulfur satisfy this section of the mag in two ways – with a brand new Bandcamp track (*Betray*), and a three-song set released in autumn but available on tape, like a PROPER demo. Both deliver thick, punishing heaviness inspired by death/doom: the metal subgenres, with pleasing echoes of bands like Autopsy and Hooded Menace, but also the nouns, via the *Ypres* tape's WWI lyrical concept. Definitely one of the region's finest metal prospects right now. **NG**

ARTEFACT

artefact420.bandcamp.com

Pro tip: add value and popularity to your band by playing a type of music no-one else in your town is playing. Cardiff quartet Artefact render themselves useful by trading in gothic postpunk – icily melodic guitars, foreboding vocals – and do so superbly on their initial seven songs. At least half the band come from a punk/hardcore background, so as well as the assumed Banshees and Bauhaus ancestry, recent DIY-rooted revivalists like Belgrado have probably helped to shape their direction. **NG**

LOST EMBERS

www.lostembers.co.uk

If you get irritated when I blithely reference relatively obscure bands as if they were household names (see the previous two demo reviews), today the boot's on the other foot, courtesy of Johnny Boon, aka Lost Embers. Influenced by "the ambience of Draco Rosa", who I'd never heard of prior to Googling and learning he was in Menudo with Ricky Martin, on new digital single *Waiting* this manifests itself in a plaintive acoustic ballad abetted by some beige FX. An album, *The Borders Of Winter*, is set to follow it in spring. **NG**

THIS MONTH'S DVD PICK

JOHN WICK

15 (Lions Gate)



Legendary assassin John Wick (Keanu Reeves) retired from his violent career after marrying the love of his life. Her sudden death leaves John in deep mourning. When sadistic mobster Iosef Tarasov (Alfie Allen) and his thugs steal John's prized car and kill the puppy that was a last gift from his wife, John unleashes the remorseless killing machine within and seeks vengeance. A refreshing change and Keanu is fit at 50 and relishes his latest action role, great fun, bloody throughout but executed well. *****AL**

THE REWRITE

12 (Lions Gate)



While *The Rewrite* is actually quite enjoyable at times, the setup is pretty formulaic, with Grant's washed-up screenwriter Keith Michaels working as a writer-in-residence at an upstate New York college. First dismissing and then falling for Holly Carpenter (Marisa Tomei), a middle-aged single mother who enrolls in his class, Grant is charming in a part he's played many times before. As rewrites go, this one represents a decent improvement. *****AL**

LIFE ITSELF

E (Dogwoof)



This documentary about the life and work of the Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic Roger Ebert is a thoughtful and touching one. Mixing footage of Ebert in the last six months of his life and interviews with his friends and family, the film looks at Ebert's (sometimes strained) relationships and his iconic work as a film critic. Although Ebert's passing, after a lengthy battle a cancer that attacked his jaw, was a sad time for many, the footage of him is heartwarming. Despite the fact he could no longer speak without assistance, Ebert still excluded humour and light through his writing. *****HA**

PREDESTINATION

15 (Signature Entertainment)



A time-travelling conundrum with Ethan Hawke as a Temporal Agent, slipping back and forth through time to prevent a terrorist attack. This is an incredibly complex tale, albeit one with brilliant performances by Hawke and co-star Sarah Snook, which one would benefit from watching twice. Mindboggling. *****AL**

EASTERN BOYS

15 (Peccadillo Pictures)



A middle aged Parisian businessman gets more than he bargains for when his Paris flat is occupied by Eastern European boys. An intense and sexually charged love affair develops between the older (Daniel) and younger (Marek / Rouslan) characters in the film. *Eastern Boys'* LGBT subject matter is accessible for all audiences, and is often overshadowed by the fragility of Daniel and Marek's encounters. The intimate scenes are captivating, but do not be fooled, this is unexpectedly tense, and will leave you on the edge of your seat throughout. *****NP**

HALO: NIGHTFALL

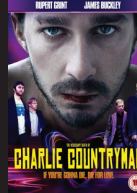
12 (Anchor Bay Entertainment)



In just ten minutes you know this will be another generic, futuristic action film in which humanity is on the brink. Connected to the game *Halo* (through its use of weaponry and the very brief appearance of a "Zealot elite") this film is clichés galore, with all the classic sci-fi's jumbled into one. A virus is unleashed, the cast is stranded on an alien planet, a rogue soldier gets his comeuppance, the commander sacrifices himself and lines of purest cheese ("Tonight, we are God!") are uttered. Oh, and there's far too many people eaten alive by giant worms. ***DM**

THE NECESSARY DEATH OF CHARLIE COUNTRYMAN

15 (Ev)



Described as a "psychological romantic crime drama", this directorial debut from Fredrik Bond centres around an American tourist who travels to Bucharest after the death of his mother, only to fall in love with a woman tangled in a spiderweb of issues. An eccentric muddle of a film which is often confusing due to its inconsistent tone. A bit messy, but not completely terrible. ****RW**