

THE WEEK'S ESSENTIAL NEW RELEASES

POP, ROCK AND JAZZ

Cat Power
Wanderer
Domino

A personal, political and societal stocktaking in song, Chan Marshall's first album in six years is stripped back, reflective, regretful but clear-eyed. An extended road trip through the American's experiences and tribulations, and the dustier, darker recesses of her homeland, *Wanderer* is assembled from the sparsest and most fragile of components. Her reconstruction of Rihanna's *Stay* is typical: all audible piano pedals, sudden silences and the faint breath of strings, it zooms in on the lyrics' bleakness. Woman, with Lana Del Rey, begins as a choral incantation, building to a strum, then a canter, the lyrics increasingly strident and unambiguous until the two singers simply repeat the title, as if to say: "You still got a problem with this?"

On the parched Americana of *Robbin Hood*, *In Your Face* and *Black*, Marshall rages against political chicanery, domestic abuse and sexual/financial exploitation, the soundscapes harking back to Moon Pix (1998). *Horizon*, sung to a haunting piano

motif, is particularly beautiful, its treated backing vocals like restless ghosts; *Nothing Really Matters* flirts with hope and despair, never quite

settling on either. Throughout, Marshall keeps the volume low, letting the nomadic diarising come to the fore and deepening its visceral impact.

The latest instalment in a fitful, often brilliant but haphazard career, this reminds you how powerful she is at her best. *DC*



**ALBUM
OF THE
WEEK**

John Smith
Hummingbird
Commoner/Thirty Tigers



That voice, wise beyond its years, draws you into every nook and cranny; Smith

sounds like a weatherbeaten veteran. With the emphasis on traditional songs (and cameos from Cara Dillon and John McCusker), he delivers soulful performances that should win over people who think they're allergic to folk. The unabashed sensuality of *Hares* on the Mountain makes it a standout, but the wistful, self-penned title track soars, too. *CD*

Tessa Souter
Picture in Black and White
Noa



A pensive journey across the colour line: a jazz singer now based in

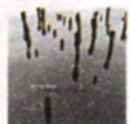
the US, Souter didn't discover that her father was black until well into adulthood. Tracing the threads into her past, she reconstructs her Afro-European DNA. If the Kenyan melody Kothbiro makes an ethereal opener, she is drawn to knottier material, from Ornette Coleman's *Lonely Woman* to a version of Wayne Shorter's *Ana Maria* fitted with her own lyrics. *CD*

Jaakko Eino Kalevi
Out of Touch
Domino



On the Berlin-based Finn's fifth album, his fusing of Hall & Oates, early-1980s Bowie, post-Syd Barrett Floyd, prog, euro-disco and late-period Roxy finds its most perfect expression yet. Themes of escape, alienation, confusion and nostalgia in a ceaselessly interconnected world weave through the 10 tracks, Kalevi's dreamy vocals and lovely soundscapes – he plays every instrument on the album – lending his songs poignancy and power. You could easily listen and just drift along with it; dig deeper and it exerts a real grip. *DC*

Kristin Hersh
Possible Dust Clouds
Fire



Hersh wanted to make "not a live record, but an alive record", so invited some

friends over to play. Most were members of her two bands, *Throwing Muses* and *50 Foot Wave*, so whichever period of her career you prefer, there's something for you here. It may be *Halfway Home*, with its muffled, detuned call-and-response choruses, like the dark side of the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*; or *Fox Point*, with its AC/DC riffage veering in and out of focus; or perhaps even the skiffle-driven, self-harmonising *Lethe*. *ME*

Kurt Vile
Bottle It In
Matador



Vile's new album starts weird ("Sure, they knighted me yesterday.

But who needs armour when I've an exoskeleton?" he sings on the opener, *Loading Zones*) and just gets weirder. He takes us to the verge of madness on *Mutinies* ("The mutinies in my head keep stayin'/I take pills and pills try and make 'em go away"), but pulls it together to deliver the wonderfully titled *Bassackwards* – 10 minutes of low-key loping during which Vile sounds more than ever like the love child of Jonathan Richman and Neil Young. Splendid stuff. *ME*

Jess Glynne
Always In Between
Atlantic



Mock the mid-market target of her handbag house all you like, but

Glynne's seven No 1 singles and a debut that has spent 163 weeks in the UK album chart tell their own tale. A risk-averse follow-up sidesteps trends in favour of choir-backed ballads, strident electro-soul, galloping piano-house and a by-numbers Ed Sheeran offering that equates not wearing make-up once a week with female empowerment. Glynne's powerhouse vocals give most of the tracks enough oomph to be howled out on the way home from the pub. *LV*

You Me at Six
VI
Underdog



Pairing the Surrey rock band *You Me at Six* with the songwriters Eg White (Adele, Dua Lipa) and Joel Pott (George Ezra) sounds like a match made in major-label desperation. But it's the opposite. Going DIY for the first time since their teens, *You Me at Six* have ripped up the rule book, disco-dipped their basslines and recorded a sixth album shot through with fun. *Fast Forward* and *3AM* are swaggering electro-rockers made for festival main stages, while the chiming guitars and grooves of *Back Again* suggest a modern *Simple Minds*. *LV*

**REBRAND
OF THE
WEEK**