

MUSIC

with Helen Clarke



Time for Heroes: The Best of the Libertines
The Libertines
Album
(Rough Trade)
Out October 29
★★★★☆

EVERY generation has its band – and while they're better known for their (not so) private lives, The Libertines' influence on the music scene cannot be under-estimated.

Releasing just two LPs, much of which was space-filling drivel, the band still managed to shape the sound, look and gossip of the past five years.

The Strokes have been credited with kick-starting the influx of garage guitar bands but it was Doherty, Barat and co who brought it to the UK and stamped their names all over it.

Mastering that typically English trait of juggling romanticism with a hard-as-nails attitude, they made poets out of Oasis fans and dandies out of football thugs.

The album's cover features a photo of a fresh-faced, pouting group of friends – a contrast to their bedraggled, car-crash post-Libertines projects.

With a collection of tracks from the two albums, plus debut *What A Waster*, in between album track *Don't Look Back Into The Sun* and B-side *Mayday*, there are some interesting omissions (*Vertigo*, *The Boy Looked At Johnny...*) but plenty of classics, including indie disco favourite *Time For Heroes*.

The bittersweet *Can't Stand Me Now* and closing track, *What Became Of The Likely Lads*, pose the question on every fan's lips – is this a posthumous Best Of or a reminder of what they do best?



Houseclouds
Liars
Single
(Mute)
Out October 29
★☆☆☆☆

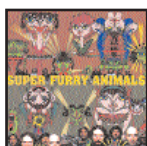
OVER the course of their four albums, Liars have earned a reputation as one of the most pioneering bands of today.

Merging electro beats with off-kilter indie wailings, their influence is widespread. They've made their name as both performers and producers, lending their hand to countless remixes.

So it's ironic that the best track on this record, *Clear Island*, is a remix by their pre-teen labelmates Tiny Masters Of Today.

Lead track *Houseclouds* is a tired, wild stab in the dark – Liars are desperately clawing to reach the heights they promised so early on but are falling somewhat off the mark.

Instead, their latest effort is three-and-a-half minutes of dull electronic rumbling. Liars seem dead-set on sticking to formula, but that's *Housecloud's* downfall – too much style, not enough substance.



Run-Away
Super Furry Animals
Single
(Rough Trade)
October 29
★★★★☆

THE SECOND single from SFA's fifth album, *Hey Venus!*, reinforces the fact that Gruff Rhys and co can do pretty much anything they like and still manage to sound as fresh and cool as they did at the beginning of their career more than a decade ago.

From an entire album of Welsh ramblings to narrowly dodging the censors' axe due to the amount of swearing in one song, they've done it all.

So it shouldn't really be a surprise that they return ahead of their Roundhouse shows with a pop tune Phil Spector would be proud of.

One of their most accessible records to date, *Run-Away* maximises Rhys's harmonies with lashings of dreamy guitar and block drums.

To say SFA are at their peak would discredit their more innovative, challenging back catalogue but the laid-back, retro feel of their latest offering could well snare them some new fans.



OFF THE WALL: Hideaway (above) by Natasha Kissell, and (right) It Fluttered and Failed for Breath, by Peter Harrap



HIS & HERS

A HUSBAND AND WIFE TEAM ARE MAKING A BIG SPLASH IN THE ART SCENE. CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN REPORTS

PRETTY in pink? Notting Hill artist Peter Harrap, 32, thought so when he first laid eyes on his future wife, artist Natasha Kissell.

Now exhibiting together – alongside the Chapman brothers – Peter admits how it all began. “I was at a party in Shepherd’s Bush and there was this girl in pink socks and high heels. I remember just thinking ‘Wow!’”

That 2001 fascination blossomed into something more serious. Engaged within a year, the two tied the knot on a trip to Italy, in 2003.

“I’d vowed never to marry an artist,” she says. “I never thought there could be room for two egos as big as mine!”

Natasha omits pink socks from her website biography, instead claiming the couple met “at the Royal Academy”.

Whatever the official line, the 28-year-old is happy to declare that their union has been a success.

Laughing together at how heated their discussions get (the furniture sometimes flies), she says: “Sharing this obsession with anyone but another artist would have meant boring my partner to tears.”

Peter agrees, adding that they are competitive in all the right ways. “We can put a foot though each other’s work if we know it’s not good enough,” he says. “But that’s one of the luxuries of knowing each other so well.” Yet however much they share an outlook on life, the art they produce is quite different.

Natasha’s paintings mix eerie landscapes with prominent urban features. She says they represent people’s desire to improve their surroundings, while reminding the viewer

of the threat that nature – an uncontrollable and more powerful force – poses.

Nature’s unpredictability is something she explores by looking at the spiritual side of humanity. “Fears are passed down the generations,” she says. “You can see them wrapped up in superstitions, folklores and religions.”

“We can’t control nature, and all the better for it. Can

‘WE CAN PUT A FOOT THROUGH EACH OTHER’S WORK IF WE KNOW IT’S NOT GOOD ENOUGH’

you imagine how boring things would be if we could?”

Having grown up in a liberal household, however, Natasha finds herself caught in a conundrum. “I’m not moral or superstitious in any way,” she says, “but to not look beyond the surface of things would be to cheat ourselves out of so much possibility.”

That balanced sensitivity, Natasha hopes, helps her achieve her ultimate artistic ambition – reinventing a contemporary version of romanticism. A desire to

“find out what you’re about” is also central to Peter’s work. Referring to painting as a necessity, not an option, he recalls how he flunked his

exams. “Art opened a door for me that I have been exploring for 20 years,” he says. “I was no good with words, but a paintbrush gave me access to ideas. These led me to art history, which led to mathematics, as the rules of art are based on maths.”

He was helped in no small part by his parents, Izzy and John, who ran the Living Art gallery in Earl’s Court between 1970 and 2000.

Peter’s reputation then grew at Camberwell College of Art and as director of the Young Royal Academy.

“Someone came up to me in the pub last week and said, ‘You’re really famous!’” Peter disagreed. Now their work hangs on Charles Saatchi’s walls, it is harder to deny.

Peter’s series, *Passionate Boredom*, depicts listless characters in front of graffiti-sprayed walls. Is his art a form of protest? “Maybe people will use it as a springboard for change, but my intention is to reflect what’s going on.”

Struggling artists who live in Holland Park Avenue, Notting Hill? “We’re not poor, but it’s all relative,” Peter says. “We always run towards the cliff as neither of us makes art with commercial success in mind.”

Discomfort is the aim of *Play*, a show of 14 artists organised by Julia Alvarez. Describing it as “fun with a twist of menace”, Peter warns it is not warm or fuzzy. “A pretty picture is something you can brush off; it doesn’t stay with you. Art needs a touch of poison.”

● *Play* is at The Cello Factory, 33 Cornwall Road, SE1, 12.30-5pm, Nov 1-16. Email: Cello Factory@aol.com



informe review