

# MUSIC

with Helen Clarke



Tegan and Sara  
The Con  
Single  
(Vapor Records)  
February 25  
★★★★☆

TEGAN and Sara should be a marketing man's dream. Identical twins, lesbians, weird haircuts... where to begin? So it's a bit of a mystery that, after five albums, they're still relatively unknown.

The title track to the Canadian duo's latest album, which was produced by Death Cab For Cutie guitarist Chris Walla, sees them at their angst-ridden, new-wave best.

Like Pink, but without the gloss, the emotion is as raw as their crackling falsetto vocals.

Which may explain their problem – their heavy, confessional lyrics could scare off pop fans, while their helium-doused vocals could terrify indie musos.

But *The Con* feels like a turning point. An experiment that remains faithful to their roots while still trying to carve out a niche.

A classy melody and a catchy tune – an introduction to one of the most listenable albums of the year so far.



Vampire Weekend  
A-Punk  
Single  
(XL Recordings)  
February 25  
★★★★☆

IT SEEMS Vampire Weekend can do no wrong. After the low-profile, limited-edition release of debut single *Mansard Roof* last November, they've been catapulted into the major league.

A rush-released album and a handful of sell-out London gigs later, the New York art-rock golden boys are striking while the iron's hot, unleashing one of the album's best tracks.

Like an album showcase, it squeezes all their best bits into two and a half minutes of hungry, high-energy pop. Their musical world tour hops between continents, clutching at ska and, of course, their beloved Afropop. Tinny guitar and Ramones-style chanting ("Ay! Ay! Ay! Ay!") interspersed with sunny bursts of flute – on paper a complete mess, but it works brilliantly.

An upbeat, throwaway song, it's still laden with the fresh intellect and wit that has become their trademark.



Young Knives  
Up All Night  
Single  
(Trangressive Records)  
February 25  
★★★★☆

IT'S BEEN a hectic 18 months for Young Knives – riding high on the success of their Mercury Prize-nominated debut *Voices of Animals and Men*, they've toured around the globe... and back again.

*Up All Night* is time for reflection – and it seems they're getting disillusioned.

"Cos everybody looks famous, and they'd be wasting lots of time, everybody looks special tonight," they sneer. An anthemic slating of the scenesters the band detest, the track's an Undertones-style, multi-layered guitar track, with added bite.

Their second album, *Superabundance*, is due for release next month, and if this is an indication of what's to come, we can expect lots more upbeat, crunching guitar pop. A next generation Supergrass – good fun, inoffensive, timeless rock 'n' roll.

# STREETS APART

CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN TAKES TO THE FLOOR

POPPING, locking and krumping sound like machine noise, but to street dancers they are show-stopping techniques.

Two troupes, Bounce and Zoo Nation, are poised for West End runs at the Peacock and Novello theatres, fusing the narrative strength of theatre with the explosive visuals of street dance.

Bounce reinterpret Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, while Zoo Nation's *Into the Hoods* adapts Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. Both aim to propel street dance into a new age of artistic acceptance.

"Dance shows are often reduced to showcases, but we're trying to take on heavier themes," says Ryan Chapell, 29, of Notting Hill, a guest dancer invited to join Swedish superstars Bounce.

"The jazz hands stuff just isn't cutting it anymore," chips in Zoo Nation's Jeffrey Felicissimo, 27, of Chelsea, who turned down a part in *Daddy Cool*, the West End hit which lured cross-genre stars such as So Solid Crew's Harvey.

"Dancing for the sake of it isn't enough, it's all about the story," confirms Queen's Park resident Teneisha Bonner, 26, who co-stars with Ryan in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and Jeffrey in *Into the Hoods*.

"At a certain level, as in any profession, it's a small community," observes Ryan. The 'level'? World-class.

To be accepted in Bounce's nine-man troupe is, Ryan says, a huge honour. "At Stockholm airport, the Welcome to Sweden board is plastered with national heroes Abba, Bjorn Borg and Bounce."

Bounce dazzled audiences at the Camden Roundhouse in 2000. I saw it four times. Ryan says: "Bounce was the reason I decided to stay in London."

In transit at the time between Los Angeles and his native Australia, Ryan thought: "Wow, so there are seriously good dancers in Europe!"

Teneisha was similarly dumbfounded. "I was blown away. I remember thinking, if I was to do anything, this was it."

Two weeks later Teneisha was flying to Germany with the British Bounce troupe, having left the London Studio Centre midway through a three-year course. The spectacle wasn't lost on Jeffrey either. He also joined the British

their street dance disciplines. It smashed preconceptions, memorably when a leotarded male dancer began a ballet routine, courting crowd laughter, before hushing them with perfect pirouettes flourishing into an unthinkable graceful break dance, the DJ splicing between classical music and drum and bass.

Ryan began tap dancing at nine and has choreographed music videos from Jamelia to Hot Chip's latest song, *Ready for the Floor*. "That ballerina was Benke, the group leader now," he says. The group has moved on from straight spectacle to creating a moving play where dialogue stops early on.

Teneisha says: "Tackling established narratives such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is brave, and a sign of maturity." She plays Nurse Ratched, the fierce warden in charge of the patients of her mental health ward (among them, in the film version, Jack Nicholson).

"She is the devil incarnate!" says Taneisha. "I run the gaff and everyone is under me; a contrast to my role as Spindarella in *Into the Hoods*. There I play the underdog, abused by my cruel stepmum and stepsisters."

It's a surprise to hear Taneisha's career only began in her late teens. "I didn't pop out the womb thinking I wanted to dance," says the Jamaican-born star. A mix of athleticism and curiosity led her to a BTEch in dance at college, against the wishes of her mother. "Mum would ask 'Don't you want to be a lawyer, or a doctor?'" She laughs. Now playing lead roles in two cutting-edge shows, Jeffrey describes her as "a force of nature".

"The girl has no limits," he says. "We've known each other years and I can't remember seeing her tired."

Taneisha describes Jeffrey as a total joker, and can't wait to see him as the Giant in *Into the Woods*, though he's only 5ft 6in. Choreographed by Katy Prince, the show has rocked the Edinburgh Festival two years running.

"The best thing is seeing the mix of ages in the crowd. We can see everyone's loving it when the lights come up."

Jeffrey, a Filipino, started dancing at the age of six when his uncle entered him into competition. "I'd had no warning and I wasn't even nervous! It's a passion, I wake up to music every day, no matter what."

He turned pro after landing a Rimmel advert at 16 and has won an Olivier Award alongside his younger brother AJ, with another one of the UK's leading street dance groups, Boy Blue. Hitting the West End is, he considers, the greatest achievement to date. "It's not an easy industry but, as I always say, good things come to those who wait."

● Bounce's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is at the Peacock Theatre, Portugal Street, WC2, Feb 27-Mar 16. £10-34. Tue-Sat 8pm. Sat mat 2.30pm, Sun mat 4pm. Call 0844 412 4322. See [www.sadlerswells.com](http://www.sadlerswells.com)

● Zoo Nation's *Into the Hoods* is at the Novello Theatre, Aldwych, WC2, from Mar 14. £10-39.50. Mon-Sat 7.30pm. Wed and Sat mats 3pm. Call 0844 482 5170. See [www.intothoods.co.uk](http://www.intothoods.co.uk)



Bounce for the South African and Dutch legs of

their 2004 tour.

It's hard to believe one show could make such an impact on the dance community. The secret was that most dancers had specialised backgrounds – from tap and jazz to swing, ballet and lindy hop – beyond

**SPLIT LOYALTIES:** Queen's Park resident Teneisha Bonner, 26, stars in *Into the Hoods* and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*