

MUSIC

with Helen Clarke



Mansard Roof
Vampire Weekend
Single - 7" vinyl and
download
(Abeano Music)
Out November 5
★★★★★

YOU'D struggle to find a more inappropriately named band as preppy art-rockers Vampire Weekend.

But push that to the back of your mind and you'll discover the most exciting sound to come out of New York for a long time.

The band's debut single straddles the line between retro and cutting edge. Sounding like an old 45 recorded in a woodland cottage, *Mansard Roof* and B-side *Ladies Of Cambridge* achieve the unimaginable task of combining traditional African, ska and classical music, creating a magical, haunting sound.

Ezra Koenig's woody, distant vocals are accompanied by two-tone style beats and dramatic, gliding strings.

Next week's support slot for The Shins at Hammersmith Apollo and the release of their self-produced debut album early next year will be their UK showcase and should be their chance to shake off the college band stigma.



Paper and Glue
Emma Pollock
Single
(4AD)
Out November 5
★☆☆☆☆

THE FORMER Delgados frontwoman releases the latest single from her debut solo album *Watch The Fireworks* ahead of her show at the 100 Club later this month.

As founder of the Scottish indiepop pioneers Pollock's butter wouldn't melt vocals paved the way for a generation of quirky folk-infused bands north of the border. But strip away the intricate, neatly crafted artistry of Delgados and her solo work sounds like a watered down, sweetened up Suzanne Vega.

B-side *I Have A Double* is slightly more gutsy, and as she reaches the riskier, higher end of her vocal range, a slight crackle in her voice promises something a bit more special but never quite delivers.

A safe, inoffensive chewing gum record - nice enough, but no real flavour.



Hideout
Film School
Album
(Beggars Banquet)
Out November 5
★★★☆☆

HIDEOUT is Film School's third outing, and in the 18 months since the release of their self-titled LP, Greg Bertens and co have clearly been listening to a lot of Joy Division. Veering away from the post-punk sound of previous albums, *Hideout* plunges to new depths.

Brooding, driving guitars with fierce drums form the basis of the album, and together with Bertens' growling vocals, they give life the band's darkest, moodiest songs to date.

Opening track *Dear Me's* intro is one minute of fuzzy, Fall-esque guitar, before percussion and then finally vocals kick in a perfect, Doves-style tension builder that sets the tone for the album.

Film School have been likened to label mates The National, but Bertens lacks their singer Matt Berninger's ability to tap into a full range of emotions. *Hideout* has some moments of brilliance - the dreamy *Lectric* and menacing *Sick Hipster Nursed By Suicide Girl* - but the bleakness can get wearing.

CREATIVITY LEAVES NO TIME FOR LOVE



YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED: From left, Aidan Synnott, Julie Marie-Taylor and Christian Olliver

THE SACRIFICES WRITERS MAKE FOR THEIR ART ARE RARELY APPRECIATED, BUT CHRISTIAN McLAUGHLIN WAS IMPRESSED BY TIM DIGBY-BELL'S SELF-DENIAL

YOUNG, handsome, talented and yet with no time for love - writer and musician Tim Digby-Bell faces a conundrum.

"It's terrible," says the Pimlico-based 25-year-old. "Romance is such a wonderful topic, but I've got no one to write about."

Striving to perfect both his plays and music, Tim says he has been too busy to keep an eye out for the ladies.

"My productivity goes through the roof when I'm broken-hearted, so I definitely need someone to come stamp on me," he laughs. "But I've been so buried in my work that I'd make a useless boyfriend."

Staring with piercing blue eyes through silky jet-black hair, it is almost impossible to believe the 6ft 5in towering talent.

Take a look at his list of achievements since graduating from Edinburgh University two years ago, however, and the blinkered determination is easier to imagine.

He is already a published poet in the *London Magazine*, where inspirations of his such as Sylvia Plath and Philip Larkin have featured.

Last Saturday his band, Duologue, rocked the Troubadour in Earl's Court with a furious fusion of live instrumentals and computer-generated electronica. On Tuesday, it's the turn of the Westbourne Studios for a gig.

The following day and his play, *Tell*, will transfer to the New End Theatre in Hampstead on the back of runs at the Edinburgh Festival in August and the Hen and Chickens Theatre, Islington, where it debuted in January.

In the absence of love, what on earth could keep such a creative engine running?

Tim explains that *Tell*, which he wrote over Christmas last year while living with his father at their family home in Parson's Green, is loosely based on his parents' divorce.

"The story is about very different ways of dealing with the breakdown of a marriage," he says.

"My dad, Christopher, carried on living in Parson's Green, plodding along in the same house, trying to ignore the signs of life that he shared with my mother.

"My mother, Claire, took nothing of her past life and moved to a flat where everything was totally new.

"What struck me was how incredibly differently two people dealt with the same problem."

As sombre as this may sound, the end result is anything but.

While successfully anchoring the audience's emotions in these poignant themes, Tim's goal was to go beyond the conventions of straightforward acting.

Referring to the three characters as 'tellers', Tim decided to use them as representational vehicles as a means of highlighting different forms of the art of storytelling.

The lyrical mastery of Alfred (Christian Olliver), the male lead who narrates most of the dialogue of the play, paints beautiful verbal pictures.

Vivian (Julie Marie-Taylor) plays the female lead. Totally silent, she conveys her equally expressive

TIM IS AMAZED THAT HE HAS NEVER TIRED OF TINKERING WITH THE CHARACTERS AND SCRIPT

story through mesmerising body language and improbable props such as stuffed birds and aubergines.

Aidan Synnott, who takes on a multitude of minor characters, provides the hilarity with chameleon-like expressions and a bevy of crazy costumes.

The three actors in concert create an interweaving look at the past, present and future of two people who were once in love.

Quietly contemplative at times, riotously funny at others, Tim is amazed that he has never tired of tinkering with the characters and the script after nearly a year since its conception.

"It's been so much fun," he says. "We're also in the process of turning it into a radio play. The narrative format lends itself to radio; we just need to make the expression bigger and layer it with sounds."

Playing with sounds is possibly what comes easiest. Somewhat to his family's surprise -

none of whom is particularly musical - Tim asked for a guitar at the age of six after seeing someone play.

Now a master of the instrument, he has also picked up piano, djembe and didgeridoo, dabbled in jazz flute, and - more recently - immersed himself in digital sounds with his Duologue band-mate Tobi Leeming.

"We began playing together at university in an 80s folk band which was fun but musically boring," he says. "We love the energy of live bands but are also hugely excited by electronics."

Duologue's ambition is to combine the

emotional intensity of bands such as Beirut, Sigur Rós and Radiohead with brain-melting sounds of electronic music pioneers such as Modeselektor and Aphex Twin.

"You delude yourself it will all happen fast, but we feel like we're getting there," Tim says. "I just hope that I can carry on and not end up one of those people in the pub that starts telling you about some student band they were once in."

So what's dream? "Having the time to do what you love doing, that's the dream," he replies.

"This summer from nine to five I'd work on music and in the evenings on the play. My older sister Melissa, who works a more traditional nine to five, looks at my life and imagines I have no stress.

"But the truth is that it's a psychological battle not to get scared. So many talents have gone under the floorboards.

"You work hard but so much is down to a lucky break."

And the alternative? "Accountancy," Tim laughs. "I'd like to leave behind music and plays that hopefully people will find relevant. There's never been a sense of choice about it."



ENSEMBLE: Tim Digby-Bell (left), Christian Olliver, Aidan Synnott, Dom Graham-Hyde and Julie Marie-Taylor