

MUSIC

with Helen Clarke



The Verve
Love Is Noise
Parlophone
Single
August 4
★★★★☆

PERHAPS the most unlikely band to jump aboard the 90s revival wagon, given their notoriously stormy inter-band relations, The Verve finally release their comeback single – their first for a decade.

Those expecting a *Bitter Sweet Symphony* for the noughties will be disappointed – *Love Is Noise* is more Madchester than britpop.

Irritating wooshings and blips litter the chorus, but Richard Ashcroft's poetic melodies carry it through.

It's darker and sleazier than the likes of Kasabian and the other pretenders to the throne – and is unmistakably The Verve.

This track swirled through an expectant Glastonbury crowd during their headlining slot in June, whipping them into a storm to match their reaction to the old favourites.

But will the magic still be there when it's dragged out over a long player?

We'll find out in two weeks, when their album, *Forth*, is released.



The Prodigy
The Prodigy Experience: Music for the Jilted Generation
Double Album
XL, August 4
★★★★☆

EVERY generation has its anthems, and for those coming of age in the early 90s, The Prodigy were behind most of them.

The rave culture that both inspired them, and was in turn inspired by them, is picking up speed again.

But with a new scene comes new music and new objectives, and the re-release of The Prodigy's defining albums seems timely. They smashed through the dance/rock boundaries, dispelling the myth that dance bands couldn't make albums. These albums spawned their early classics – *Charly*, *Out of Space*, *Voodoo People*...

Both albums are backed with an extra CD of rarities, remixes and new interpretations, meaning there's something everyone – from old skool fans reliving their youth, to their *Skins*-obsessed younger siblings who want to know what all the fuss was about.



Conor Oburst
Conor Oburst
Album
Wichita
August 4
★★★★☆

THERE can be few artists more prolific than Conor Oburst – at the age of 28 he's ditched his Bright Eyes moniker to release his eighth studio album.

It's billed as his first solo record since 1993's *Water*, but he's had a little help from his friends, in the form of the specially formed Mystic Valley Band. The result isn't far from the tried and tested formula that has earned him cult status in the US – angst-ridden, Americana folk is his speciality, and rather than using his break-away to remodel his sound, he sounds like a man suffocating under his own reputation.

That's not to say it's a dull record – Oburst is a perfectionist, and no one captures the psyche of American youth quite like him.

It's also one of his most accessible projects to date.

informer review

MORE THAN 'MEN IN TIGHTS'

PREVIEW

TWELFTH NIGHT
KENSINGTON PALACE
GARDENS
SATURDAY UNTIL AUGUST 15



FISH OUT OF WATER: James Lavender (Malvolio) on 'set' in Kensington Palace

Picture and cover shot by Ozant Kamaci

SHAKESPEARE – to some the word rings true, to others it can seem outdated or intimidating.

For those who find themselves in the latter category, the bridge between you and The Bard could be just around the corner.

Starring this Saturday in the open air of Kensington Palace Gardens is *Twelfth Night*, one of Shakespeare's comic masterpieces. Yet thanks to The Oxford Shakespeare Company, the 400-year-old story will have its content and language edited to bring it all up to date.

"We don't dumb down," says the theatre group's artistic director, Charlotte Windmill. "But it's not all men in tights by any stretch of the imagination either."

Imagination will certainly be required, as the play is set not in Illyria, but a British-styled seaside resort.

"There's a Punch and Judy stand with puppetry and the costume

designer has issued all the actors with cagoules, just in case we get caught up in a classic seaside storm," Charlotte says. Fingers crossed the hot weather holds and umbrellas stay at bay for this fun family outing.

● *Twelfth Night*, by the Oxford Shakespeare Company, is at Kensington Palace Gardens from Saturday until August 15. Tue-Sat, 7.30pm. £23/15 concs. Under 12s £8, under fives free. Call 08702 643 333 or 08706 092 231. See www.seetickets.com

Christian McLaughlin

RAISING THE MOST PRESSING QUESTION

REVIEW

GONE TOO FAR!
ROYAL COURT THEATRE
RUNS UNTIL AUGUST 9

SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD Londoner Yemi is ashamed of his African heritage. So ashamed he tells Ikudayisi, his older brother, recently arrived from Nigeria to "stop chatting that language, blud". That language being Yoruba, their mother tongue.

On a trip to the shops they bump into Armani, a fast-talking, truculent 15-year-old, who derides the brothers for not

being truly black, like Jamaicans.

It sparks a war of words with the combustible Yemi. But Armani is slapped down by her soft-spoken friend Paris, who says her vitriol comes from the fact she is embarrassed to be mixed-race.

Next, a local Muslim shopkeeper won't let the brothers in because Yemi is wearing a hood and two police officers hassle the young man who they perceive to be a rude boy, unlike his respectable African-born brother.

Meanwhile an elderly white lady recoils in fear as the gentlemanly Nigerian offers her a hand with her shopping. Confused, well you're meant to be.

Gone Too Far! at the Royal Court Theatre swaps roles, perspectives and insults in a flash, shining a light on the confused world of race and identity which engulfs inner-city youngsters.

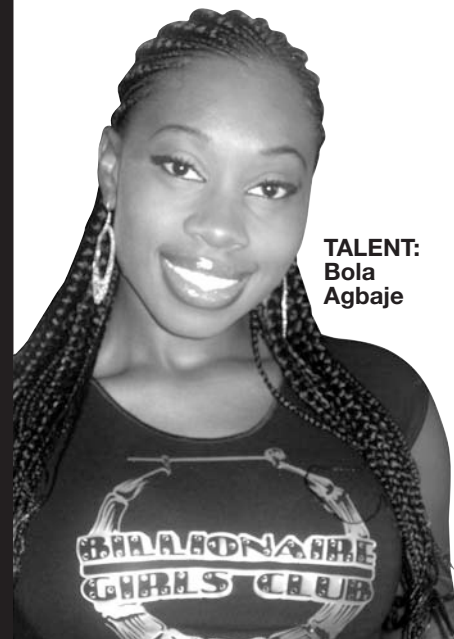
Punctuated with street dance, slang and swear words, playwright Bola Agbaje rattles through the complex and deep themes with a light touch belying her years – at 27 this is her debut play.

But Agbaje, who was raised in Hastings, before swapping England for Nigeria and back again, knows more than most about the cultural contortions expected of many youngsters who see-saw between continents, personas and beings. It questions perceptions, stereotypes and divisions between black Caribbeans and Africans.

But her play, winner of the 2008 Laurence Olivier Award, raises the most pressing question of all: Who are you?

● See www.royalcourttheatre.com or call 020 7565 5000 for tickets. The show runs until August 9.

Aidan Jones



TALENT: Bola Agbaje

PRISONERS OF THE NIGHT

A MENTAL hospital, five prostitutes and an Olympic flame. Sounds like a recipe for disaster, but these are the ingredients of a timely resurrection of a Russian play.

Entitled *Stars in the Morning Sky*, this tale of social exclusion was first told by Alexander Galin in 1980 when Moscow was 'cleaning up' before the arrival of the Olympic Games.

"These women wanted to celebrate the arrival of the games," says actor and co-producer of the show Rachel Fishwick. "But Soviet authorities swept prostitutes off the streets like rubbish to make sure they were kept out of the public eye."

The parallel today is in China, where people are being imprisoned for expressing political views in the lead up to Beijing's games, but Rachel, 28, says: "This kind of thing could happen anywhere. London will be trying to do its best to present the world 'sanitised' picture to the world come 2012, we can only try to manage how that is done."

The action unfolds on the edges of Moscow in an abandoned mental home. It is here that five prostitutes are heard by police and left to sit out the celebration. Stewing in the darkness, reflections on their lives and that of Russian society made this one of Galin's most celebrated plays.

It is the third production by

CHRISTIAN MCLAUGHLIN TALKS TO JAGGED EDGE PRODUCTIONS ABOUT THEIR LATEST PLAY – THE REVIVAL OF A RUSSIAN TALE OF SOCIAL OUTCASTS AND CONFRONTING DEMONS



BED FELLOWS: Emilie Patry and Sebastian Aguirre in *Stars in the Morning Sky* Pictures by Dan Bond

● *Stars in the Morning Sky*, by Alexander Galin, is at the Riverside Studios until August 17. Mon-Sat 7.30pm, Sun 6pm, Sat mat 2.30pm. £14/10 concs. Call 020 8237 1111. See www.riversidestudios.co.uk



CLEAN STREET VICTIMS: Jan Hirst (far left); Emilie Patry (left); Emily Dobbs (above) and Rachel Fishwick star in the story of Russian prostitutes swept off the streets and locked up, when their country hosts the Olympics

