

Honey certainly breaks boundaries in an attempt to win fresh admirers for the Louisiana-born singer-songwriter. Country and rock meet the blues and Williams certainly seems to enjoy creating a kind of aural mini-guide to all that is Americana. The stadium crowd will have a ball head-banging to the super-stomp that is Honey Bee, while those who dream in Tennessee Technicolor are richly served by Well Well Well, a stroll in Cash country that comes flavoured by Jim Lauderdale and Charlie Louvin's vocal contributions. Elvis Costello also appears in Almost Blue guise to duet on Jailhouse Tears, Susanna Hoffs and Matthew Sweet adding harmonies to Little Rock Star, a guitar-heavy, reassuring hug for those who toss talent away, a piece said to be inspired by Pete Doherty. *Little Honey* is, then, a something for everyone offering. And few will be disappointed.

Fred Dellar

follow-up's skittering, synth- and hi-hat-driven sound and Robinson's polysyllabic flow are designed to reconnect him with the grime constituency. It does its job efficiently yet mirthlessly, the chiselled-jaw determination of Missing Me encapsulating both the record's greatest strength and most debilitating weakness. It is as if Kano were so anxious to appease his most entrenched critics that he would circumscribe his talents and imagination to satisfy them, rather than, as the final track claims, Aim For The Sky. Grime purists will rejoice in the return of a notable prodigal; others may be unengaged by a considerable talent operating safely within his parameters.

Angus Batey



Snow Patrol

★★★

A Hundred Million Suns

FICTION/POLYDOR

Same old same old for their fifth album. Mega-sales not guaranteed, however.

Poor Gary Lightbody. Whatever commercial break-throughs he has achieved over time – platinum records here,

milestone chart positions there, stadium ticket sales everywhere – his success is dogged by perceptions of callous careerism (supposedly sacking "uppity" band members) and cynical cribbing (U2, Coldplay). For his band's new album, the crashing regret Lightbody laid bare on 2006's stirring *Eyes Open* album has been replaced by the starry-eyed wonders of new love, but the risible imagery (on *Lifeboats*, for instance, he appears in need of a vascular surgeon for his "veins... like forest trees") only rises above shallow and lazy when he returns to remorse, as on *Please Just Take These Photos From My Hands*. Without musically moving anywhere new either, *A Hundred Million Suns* sounds like a holding pattern for Snow Patrol, and while *Crack The Shutters* has a chance of emulating *Chasing Cars*' success, a root and branch rethink surely beckons.

Andy Fyfe

Max Tundra

★★★★

Parallax Error Beheads You

DOMINO

Breaking a six-year silence, Ben Jacob's third full-length as Max Tundra.

Six years in the making thanks to its author's meticulously perfectionist approach, *Parallax Error Beheads You* is an artfully constructed cascade of effervescent electronic pop-pop. A manic rush of retro computer beats, layered dance moves and jazz-funk flourishes, at first spin it whirls past in a chaotic day-glo blur. However, this is chaos with a jittery pop method behind it. Like Frank Zappa, Todd Rundgren and Trevor Horn filtered through a jumble of '80s circuitry and in-the-studio embellishments, these songs quickly unfurl into arcade-orchestrated kitchen sink symphonies. Chopping and swapping musical styles with a joyous lack of inhibition, *Parallax Error...* goes all-out to entertain, be it with rapid-fire love songs or squidgy synth-pop epics. There's something here for anyone with a taste for things multicoloured and marvellously eclectic.

Andrew Carden

Bloc Party

★★★★★

Intimacy

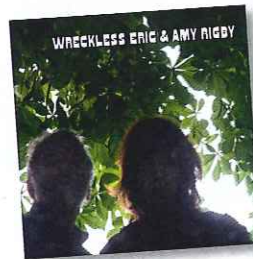
WICHITA

More of the same but better from the London four-piece.

Nearly two years on from the poorly received *Drugs* and

dislocation of *A Weekend In The City*, Bloc Party have decided, it seems, to really go their own way on an album of extremes, both musically and emotionally. Opening with two of your most experimental songs is not the formula of a band intent on winning new admirers, but boldness has its own reward in the big grime beats, tension-filled horns and cold self-loathing of *Mercury*. It's not all sculpted soundscapes, though: *Biko* and *Zephyrus* (the latter with a cathedral choir adding layers of murk to the blackness) are both tracks of delicately claustrophobic beauty. The best – and most straightforward – is saved until last, however, *Lon Square's* refrain of "I carry your heart with me" a moment of hope and clarity amid the bleakness, making for possibly the loveliest song Bloc Party have ever recorded and a warming promise of ever greater things to come.

Andy Fyfe



Wreckless Eric & Amy Rigby

★★★★★

Wreckless Eric & Amy Rigby

STIFF

He'd got the whole wide world just to find her. And now, he has...

His immortal 1977 hit, (I'd Go The) Whole Wide World, painted a picture of a lovelorn Wreckless Eric Goulden on a quest to find the woman of his dreams. Thirty-one years later, he returns to the Stiff label and celebrates his marriage to American "Mod housewife" and groovy songstress Amy Rigby with this joint-named effort. A slush-fest it isn't, opener *Comes My Ship* setting the tone, its optimistic title masking a tale of "fallout" and "pain". Elsewhere, melodically sussed, wryly observed post-'60s pop nuggets are humorous (Rigby's *Men In Sandals*), trenchant (*The Downside Of Being A Fuck-Up*) and reflective (*Another Drive-In Saturday*). A final bow of Johnny Cash's *I Still Miss Someone* underlines the duo's shared sense of melancholia on this a triumph of an album.

Phil Alexander

Oasis: "You at the back, write some more songs, please."



The hol

The Gallaghers' seventh... But can you roll with it

Oasis

★★★★★

Dig Out Your Soul

FOR THE Britpop era's titans to s more than 10 years after their hub peak, reveals surprising levels of di the sibling rucks, the regular line-u the fact that popular culture simpl least of Noel and Liam Gallagher's has been maintaining the hunger t after last night's G&T lost its spar

Throughout it all, they worked *Be Here Now*, the final act in the b to riches narrative, Oasis have co the songs that made them famous make a new record every two or *Your Soul* is certainly not their wo be 2000's spirit-sapping *Standing Of Giants* – but, even after ackno decline in the group's internal tu contributed to a succession of m albums, its opaque disposition is

One issue is Noel Gallagher's songwriting *glasnost*. Out of 11 c are Noel's, Liam contributes thi and Andy Bell one each. Witho qualities Archer and Bell bring t efforts here and previously feel another person's style – in this psychedelic blues that's the alb

