

**British Sea Power**Manchester Ritz  
11/4/17**View: side, standing**

Carrying the flag for intelligent guitar-based rock is something that British Sea Power have become effortlessly skilled at over the course of their six-album career, with *Let The Dancers Inherit The Party* their latest literate instalment. Its lead track, *Bad Bohemian*, got the party started and, along with a Galaxie 500 cover (*Tugboat*), three old favourites were interspersed with new cuts during the first hour. Its strong tunes and danceability translated well to the stage and the audience enthusiastically greeted every new classic in the making.

Amid the traditional stage foliage, Yan was at the helm on most new numbers, Noble's guitar more prominent, his chiming lead lines ringing out over the rhythms, while Abi Fry's subtle viola and vocals made a noticeable contribution. The set concluded with three tracks from *Do You Like Rock Music*, climaxing on the instrumental majesty of *The Great Skua*. As the band returned in exuberant silver outfits, the evening ended with a singalong to standards, *Carrion* and *All In It*. Another bare-faced triumph.  
*Ashley Jones*

**Pain Of Salvation**London Islington  
Assembly Hall  
12/4/17**View: standing, stage-left**

Sweden's premier prog-metalers promoted the rich and unpredictable sounds of *In The Passing Light Of Day*, opening with *Full Throttle Tribe*, which perfectly encapsulates their sonic signature, guitars growling, keyboards soaring, vocals emoting and bass and drums resonating. Yet there's another element that separates them from the pack – the sound of silence. Their music is intense, but it's punctuated with pauses that allow songs like *Meaningless* to breathe and luxuriate in their evocative melodies and Daniel Gildenlöw's golden vocals.

Older songs like *Ashes* segued into the sonic template of their latest album, while the new songs shone brightest. The stripped-down balladry of *Silent Gold* was heart-wrenchingly personal, while the symphonic *On A Tuesday* was a highpoint, masterfully articulating the pain of the singer's own salvation.

Pain by name, but a class performance of pure pleasure.  
*Andy Rawll*

**The Kooks**Manchester Academy  
21/4/17**View: standing**

Some 10 years on from their debut, the Brighton boys are still bursting with energy and dusted off *Inside In, Inside Out* in its entirety. Alongside greatest hits including *Seaside*, *Ooh La* and *She Moves In Her Own Way* – which sounded perfect – were subsequent pearls, such as *Junk Of The Heart*, *Bad Habit* and *Around Town*, which allowed the audience to let loose and bop.

The night ended with an emotional performance of *Naive*. Arms around each other, the crowd screamed, shouted and cried along to that most memorable 2007 indie anthem. The Kooks rightly are proud of their first album, but they've much room to explore and retain momentum for the next decade. *Brigid Harrison-Draper*

**Dream Theater**Manchester Apollo  
19/4/17**View: front-centre, circle**

Reprising *Images And Words* 25 years on, the band set off with the heavy guitar riffing of *The Enemy Inside*, typifying their musicianship and sheer virtuosity. Tracks lifted from their latest, immaculate *The Astonishing* were equally brilliant, but there was a darker metal edge to the set and their playing – wonderful!

A relatively simple stage set and a truly marvellous light show saw timing, mood and empathy cleverly matched. Petrucci's guitar work, Rudess' magical keyboards, Mangini's mellifluous drumming and the energetic Myung growl on bass complemented LaBrie's great lead vocals. Absent for extensive, jaw-dropping instrumental passages, he returned to command, complete and lift the music, as well as provide amusing reminiscences. Prog-metal can be warm, assertive, confident and welcoming, as Dream Theater proved in spades.  
*Andrew Mather*

**The Shires**London Palladium  
2/5/17**View: circle, front-left**

The vocal duo of Crissie Rhodes and Ben Earle (alternating guitar/piano), backed by a four-piece electric band, country-rocked and -popped through 100 minutes of sparkling tunes from their latest, *My Universe*, and debut, plus choice covers in Robbie's *Angels* and *Bee Gees' Islands In The Stream*. The mood was resolutely chipper and the vocal harmonies as dazzling as Crissie's silver dress, the

tempo shifting from swinging, singalong opener, the joyous *Nashville Grey Skies*, to the trad lament of *Daddy's Little Girl*.

Among the insistent, affirmative pop-rockers presented were the recent album's title track, the pair's first songwriting collaboration, *All Over Again*, and the shared leads of *Not Even Drunk Right Now*. The gospelly pedal steel of *Save Me* and brushed percussion of *I Just Want To Love You* reflected their Nashville residency, while *Friday Night* and *Jeckyll & Hyde* nodded to the likes of Faith and Martina. A three-song encore included the celebratory *Made In England* and stomping closer, *A Thousand Hallelujahs*. Amen. *Tim Jones*

**Chris De Burgh**London Palladium  
26/4/17**View: seating, centre stalls**

Forget the *Lady*, there are so many treasures in CdeB's bulky catalogue, and his *A Better World* - studio effort *No 21* - continues with his interest in wartime history, with a modern feel, exemplified by *ballad, Homeland*. Opener, *Bethlehem*, is another strong number proving he's lost none of his thought-provoking lyrical touch.

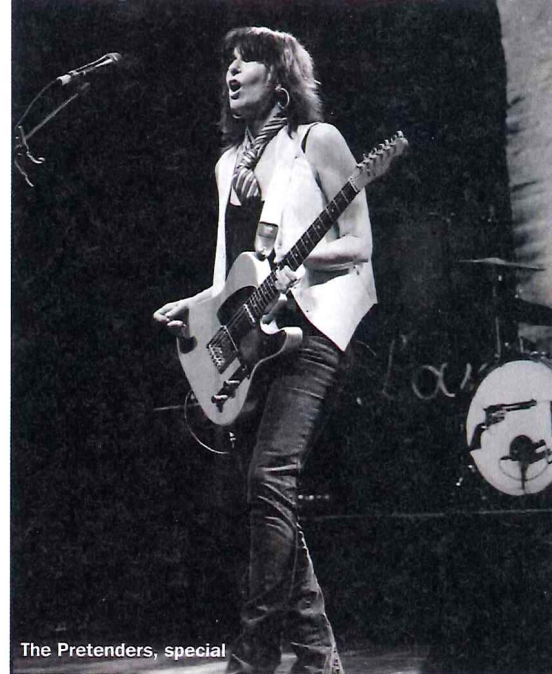
With music that borders on progressive hard rock, the Steinman-ish *Spanish Train* and astral *A Spaceman Came Travelling* are immortal rock classics. The epic *Crusader* was reserved for an acoustic outing and the charmer went walkabout on *The Lady In Red*. People danced to a surprising cover of *Toto's Africa*, while *Don't Pay The Ferryman* and an arm-waving *High On Emotion* kept the AOR engine rolling. His jovial antics on the quirky *Patricia The Stripper* saw the singer gifted with red bras flung from the front. The man still has it. *Mark Taylor*

**Cheltenham Jazz Festival**

26/4/-1/5/17

**View: all over**

Cheltenham's adopted son, the magnificent Gregory Porter, closed this year's festival with a memorable two-hour performance, capping six days packed with concerts covering the full spectrum of jazz and beyond. Also drawing in a mainstream audience was pop idol, Will Young, who showed his jazzy side, plus Laura Mvula, and singer-songwriter Jack Savoretti. Soul and blues flavours were well-represented by piquant sets from Robert Cray, the delightful Valerie June, Eric Bibb and legendary organ maestro, Booker T Jones. Rising soul-jazz chanteuse, Kandace Springs,

**The Pretenders, special**

dazzled, while Meshell Ndegeocello and her band impressed deeply, along with the brilliant *Snarky Puppy*.

For the hardcore jazzers, keyboard maven Chick Corea was the man to hear, closely followed by saxophonists Chris Potter, Logan Richardson and Marius Neset. Master drummer Steve Gadd was a must-see act with a band including noted session guitarist, Michael Landau. The presence of Orchestra Baobab, Lionel Loueke and *Toto La Momposina* brought a delightful, exotic dimension to a festival whose hallmark has always been its inclusive eclecticism. Sensational. *Charles Waring*

**Erja Lytinen**London 100 Club  
11/4/17**View: standing**

Finnish singer/guitarist Erja Lytinen expressed her personality and soul in a captivating set mainly focusing on her new, 10th studio outing, *Stolen Hearts*. Softly spoken, her voice took on an engaging life in *City Of Angels*, which segued into *Lover's Novels*, her guitar abilities entwining with keyboards into musical bliss. Black Ocean's bopping riff drifted into a calming solo, and her cover of *Koko Taylor's I'm A Woman* complete with its *Bad To The Bone* riff evinced enthralling fret work.

Lytinen poured emotion into the captivating power-ballad, *24 Angels*, plus plenty of slide action, and it featured on the upbeat *Rocking Chair*. Erja then expressed her softer side with a delightful encore of *Curtis Mayfield's People Get Ready*, performed with finesse. A heart-stealer. *Mark Taylor*

**Hawkwind**London Borderline  
4/5/17**View: standing by bar**

An afternoon acoustic album launch set by the cosmic quintet for the gathered media

ran for 25 minutes and showcased a number from their new *Cherry Red* set, *Into The Woods*, along with three cuts from *1978's 25 Years On*. Due to sound-level restrictions, Dave Brock and co sang without microphones and their minstrelsy featured unplugged drums and tambourines, adding a quarky charm to proceedings. Brock, lyric sheet in hand, beamed throughout, retelling tales about the title track busked over the road near *Tottenham Court tube*, and leading the communal singalongs that accompanied the merry band throughout. Glasses were charged as *Psi Power* saw out short but sweet jig, their latest arboraceous trip boding well for the sylvan machine. *Tim Jones*

**The Pretenders**London Royal Albert Hall  
10/4/17**View: front row, rear stalls**

The Pretenders-resurrected opened with a brace of new tracks, the punk-charged title track to comeback album, *Alone*, and the gritty, drum-driven *Gotta Wait*. A youthful-looking Chrissie Hynde was sassy in pink trimmed-military jacket and jeans, and a little narked when Security forced fans at the front to remain in their seats. However, everyone got up for a mid-section rollercoaster ride of hits, including *Talk Of The Town*, a jangly *Back On The Chain Gang* and the jive of *Don't Get Me Wrong*.

Hynde's vocals soared on the ballads, *Hymn To Her* and a superb *I'll Stand By You*, while jovial anecdotes shared with drummer Martin Chambers made for a light-hearted affair and even saw an attempted trombone solo from the veteran sticksman. A four-song encore included rocking country twang from guitarist James Walbourne on *Thumbelina*, with the finale reserved for the special *Brass In Pocket*. *Mark Taylor*