

# SINGLES

BY CHRIS YATES

## SINGLE of the WEEK



### BATTLES

*Ice Cream*  
(Inertia)

After the surprising success of their debut album *Mirrored* and the commercial entity that became the debut single *Atlas* (which featured in countless advertising campaigns and movies and everywhere) Battles have come up with another jingle that is custom made to be devoured by the more progressive types in the world of mass media. The already infamous video for *Ice Cream* is at both times a parody of the world of marketing and advertising, as well as being a poster child for it, confusing pun well intended. The track is a blissful, organised spazz-out jam which benefits from the understated vocals of Matias Aguiar acting almost as another instrument as opposed to a lead vocal line of distinction. Already being furiously added to hipster playlists worldwide, *Ice Cream* is sure to be one of the biggest indie singles of the year.

### JIMI BEAVIS

*No Need To Deny It*  
(Independent)

I once heard a cranky old bastard who runs a pub bitching about a friend's demo CD with the main criticism being, "Fuckin' hell, there is such a thing as too much reverb you know." This is of course, total bullshit, and I'm glad that Jimi Beavis believes this as well. His pearly white blues has been caught very live and raw on this recording, adding some authenticity where it may not necessarily have been before. He acknowledges openly that his may not have suffered same kind of pain as say, a people born into slavery, but he takes this on with good humour, illustrated aptly in the lyrics of *Are You Leaving Me?* The best number is *Ain't Afraid Of Crying*, but the other tracks have a fun bounce and I'm sure he tears it up live and it gets a bit more rawkus.

### THE OWLS

*Sugarcane*  
(Independent)

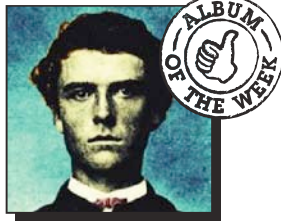
Beardy longhairs The Owls take their power rock very seriously, smashing through this track about being addicted to sugar with an assured confidence that spares them the hassle of really trying to cram any distractions of deep thought or substance into the song. They clearly reference some of the more pop moments in late era stoner-rockism, and they're the kind of band that would hopefully rock up to a gig and tumble out of the back of a panel van in a cloud of bong smoke, if only panel vans still existed. The recording is polished but still chunky, and certain elements (such as the amazing sound created by the bass guitarist) are captured fantastically. Rock on, smoke them if you've got them and drink some fucking Bundy etc.

### THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS

*For You And Me*  
(Independent)

The Frog Brothers from *The Lost Boys* were not the first fearless vampire killers, but I'm pretty sure they were the first ones who ran a comic book shop in the daylight hours, during vampire killing downtime. The Fearless Vampire Killers happens to be the name of a band from Melbourne (and a Roman Polanski movie incidentally) and on their debut single they rip out a swaggingly stompy garage rock anthem that borders on the psychedelic while still focusing more attention on the party than the weirdness. *For You And Me* is a satisfying and alluring number that flirts with danger and darkness without getting too dramatic about it, which the Frogs would definitely have played in their store, or as a soundtrack to the necessary destruction of bloodsuckers.

# ON THE RECORD



### TYLER, THE CREATOR

*Goblin*  
(XL/Inertia)

Tyler opens up a can of juvenile whoop ass on his critics, fans and indifferent bystanders on the opening title track of his second album *Goblin*. It's an almost seven-minute epic rant over a barely there pulsating bass beat while a pitched-down devil-voice rambles away in the background.

"I'm not a fucking role model, I'm a 19-year-old fucking emotional coaster with pipe dreams" he says, expressing his frustration with being thrust into the spotlight as the most talked about rapper in a generation as head creative honcho of his crew of teenage MCs Odd Future Wolf Gang Kill Them All. It's not manufactured hype – his lyrical flow is groundbreaking, his voice is unique and his grasp on what makes a great, dark hip hop record is without question.

*Yankers* climbs a short step up from the intro musically, adding a couple of stinging samples and tuneless piano riffs to the minimalism.

The lyrics throughout are offensive to the point of farce, pushing boundaries of acceptable content even for the most out-there rap records of controversy's past, but there are incredibly sensitive insights into his father issues and other insecurities peppered amongst the shock seeking hate raps. *Radical's* chorus of "kill people, burn shit, fuck school" reminds listeners of his young age and includes a breakdown of an inspirational 'be anything you want to be' self help style mantra, before he takes the whole thing into the realm of stupidity with the line "I'm a fucking unicorn, and fuck anybody who say (sic) I'm not".

Much has been said already about Tyler already – many will praise the album and even more will be offended to the point of protest – but for those who thought hip hop could go nowhere new, it's a fucking wake up call.

★★★★ Chris Yates



### MY MORNING JACKET

*Circuital*  
(ATO/Spunk/EMI)

Kentucky's My Morning Jacket can never be held responsible for spinning their wheels. Since 2001's *At Dawn*, we've seen Jim James and his merry men stroke the folk rock aesthetic in *It Still Moves*, lathered it in Radiohead-esque *computer* sheens with *Z*, then dived from genre to genre on last LP *Evil Urges*. Every change of direction has remained unequivocally a My Morning Jacket release, however, so the idea of a new release isn't met with anxiety at an impending failure as it is with giddy wonder as to what marvels they will procure next.

The new album *Circuital* opens with *Victory Dance*, which whilst a beautiful dark-hued number, is reminiscent of *Z's It Beats 4 U*, yet it's the way it leads into the title track that makes both tracks stand out. With such a one-two punch, *The Day Is Coming* comes as a subdued left turn, evoking a more British folk tense than their Southern rock pedigree would normally espouse. The wonderful *Wonderful (The Way I Feel)* is easy listening country with a classic John Denver hook, with James' iconic, echoed voice trailing off beautifully at the end. *Outta My System* sends the band back over the Atlantic, evoking a countrified Roger Daltrey as James voices the necessities of exploring drugs, theft and other fringe illegalities before growing up, all to a distinctly ebging and flowing MMJ jam. *Holdin On To Black Metal* traverses *Evil Urges'* warped dance swagger complete with a children's choir, whilst closer *Movin' Away* sends us away on a wistful note and the delicate-yet-simplistic piano that Band Of Horses used to deal out in spaces.

*Circuital* is a step up from their previous outing – an extremely accomplished effort from a band that continues to grow in every sense of the word.

★★★★ Brendan Telford



### LADY GAGA

*Born This Way*  
(Interscope/Universal)

For all of her various accomplishments, Lady Gaga has never completely nailed the musical aspect of being a pop idol. Her phenomenally successful 2008 debut *The Fame* housed some of the most memorable and idiosyncratic pop singles of the past decade but, as an album, was little more than a poorly executed hodgepodge of musical styles. While 2009 follow-up *The Fame Monster* was pretty much perfect, it was nevertheless a mere EP. For all of her laudable ambition, Gaga still hasn't proven she can successfully deliver anything more substantial than a hit single.

*Born This Way* is supposed to change that. Against all odds and expectations, it's almost guaranteed success. While the album's Madonna-aping lead single, crudely fashioned artwork and Gaga's endless promises of greatness seemed to be setting up pop's current goddess for certain failure, *Born This Way* is actually a genuinely excellent album. Most shockingly, it's an infinitely better album than it is a compilation of singles. Taken on their individual merits, most songs on the record are utterly ridiculous – and not in the way one would expect of a Gaga record. Cuts like *Judas*, *Hair and Scheiße* are jagged, unpredictable blasts of obnoxious electro-pop punctuated by countless leftfield turns, nonsense hooks, stupidly intense dance rhythms and, bizarrely, genuine pathos.

Yet, miraculously, it all comes together in context. More impressively, it still manages to maintain that same giddy thrill that marks more conventional pop releases. Somehow, Gaga has made a record that psychotically thrashes together vicious electro grooves, distorted heavy metal guitars, cheap europop clichés, classic pop hooks and ADHD in raw, noisy production and still manages to sound spontaneous, evocative and immediate. It's a remarkable piece of work. It shouldn't work at all. Not even a little bit. Yet, somehow, it's actually very enjoyable.

★★★★ Matt O'Neill



### BATTLES

*Gloss Drop*  
(Warp/Inertia)

NY dynamic supergroup Battles blew everyone away with a slew of stellar experimental releases that culminated in the brilliant 2007 album *Mirrored*. Cultivating a sound that was as radical and audacious as it was jawdroppingly technical and inherently narcotic, Battles occupied a dark corner of the rock music shelf that up until that point no one realised needed filling. Still, it all looked to have come to a shuddering halt last year when, after recording their follow up, key member Tyondai Braxton left the band.

Fast forward a year and core members John Stanier (Helmet, Mark Of Cain), Ian Williams (Don Callabero) and Dave Konopka (Lynx) bring forth *Gloss Drop* – and it is another shockingly fresh breath of air. Roping in a slew of collaborators such as Gary Numan, Kazu Makino (Blonde Redhead) and Eye (The Boredoms), *Gloss Drop* continues Battles' propensity to set parameters with the sole intent of smashing them into myriad pieces, bringing together the remains to create suites of sound that at times defy imagination. *White Electric* is the closest track that could be called "vintage" Battles – alive with frenetic precision and finesse – yet there's a sense of frivolity bubbling underneath the surface that doesn't rear its head until the outro. It's much more obvious in tracks like the carnivalesque *Futura*, *Inchworm* and *Wall Street*, whilst closer *Sundome* is one hell of a perverted ragga jam. However it's the single *Ice Cream* that steals this show – a giant leap into the psychedelic sonic unknown, a confection that's impossible to OD from, no matter how hard you try (and you will try...).

This sense of effervescence and frivolity pervades *Gloss Drop*, boldly stating that whilst the Battles of old will be missed, the Battles of now are intent on marching to the beat of their own (incredibly warped and infinitely exciting) drum.

★★★★ Brendan Telford



### RE:ENACTMENT

*Sport*  
(Lofty)

Regardless of whether we like to admit it, one's appreciation of an album's quality is often directly linked to matters of context. One's evaluation of *Sport*, for example, will depend largely upon one's perspective on the band's capacity. The long-awaited debut album of eclectic Brisbane electro-punks Re:Enactment, *Sport's* quality oscillates dramatically in deference to the kind of band its audience believes them to be.

If one views *Sport* as the debut album of a scrappy local outfit (which they are), it's an exceptional release. Jacob Hicks is one of the most remarkable and idiosyncratic songwriters this city has produced and, more often than not, his jagged wordplay and charismatic yowl are ably supported by backdrops as visceral and inspiring as they are intelligent and engaging. It's unlikely a Brisbane band will produce a single of greater perfection in 2011 than the shimmering, cerebral electro-boogie of *Scraps* or deliver a closer more magically evocative than *Tronic*.

If, however, one views *Sport* as the debut album of a band of genuine world-conquering potential (which they also are), it becomes a rather frustrating experience. There are glimpses of perfection here but there's also an inconsistent quality ratio and it's compounded by a ridiculously sequenced tracklist (punk-rock bomb *Fisherman Runaway* dropped awkwardly into the album's sedate mid-section) and the knowledge the band took years to deliver this record. Songs like the soul-heavy *Too Much* or disco-punk opener *&BOMB* are basically just poorly arranged fluffs of exceptional ideas and, to this end, *Sport* feels like an opportunity squandered.

To someone not invested in the band at all, *Sport* will probably just be another album: some good songs, some not-so-good songs and a cool sound. My advice? Check this one out and decide for yourself. I'm still swinging between the first two options.

★★★½ Matt O'Neill



### SKIPPING GIRL VINEGAR

*Keep Calm Carry The Monkey*  
(Popboomerang/MGM)

Skipping Girl Vinegar could very much be the indie-folk breakout band of 2011. From the packaging of the album, to the exquisitely crafted songs, all the way to extremely kind nature of the musicians behind the music, without any fireworks this Melbourne five-piece have brought forward an album that should keep you warm through the oncoming winter before shedding its layers to be your soundtrack of the summer.

Opener *Chase The Sun* is pure pop bliss, cute and sweet enough to be a *Sesame Street* singalong. But it's not all sunshine and gummy drops, with plenty of moments on the album that are dark and full of mood such as *Central Station* and *Moose Took Me Deep*. Listen to the subtle banjos pluck, the trumpets moan, and the soft piano arrangements and you find highlight after highlight, deep under the layers of melody. But overall, the tone of *Keep Calm Carry The Monkey* is one of joyous uprising and reliable tales of everyday existence, showing no better than on *Wasted*, a track that surfaced almost a year ago which now, distorted with a grumbling, bulked up bassline, is as fuzzed out as the disorderly night singer Mark Lang is painting so colourfully.

Never are Skipping Girl Vinegar boastful or ostentatious. They instead let their crisp, pop ditties do the talking, plying their trade with a humbling grace while the DIY aesthetic shows the music in an organic sense of occasion without any scenester bullshit to convolute it. As much as *Keep Calm Carry The Monkey* should see the band deservedly worm into the public psyche, it's still nice to have this band as a little secret, even if it's not going to be for too much longer.

★★★★ Benny Doyle