

# Something for the Weekend TOP 50 OF '15



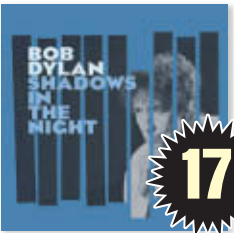
**14**  
**Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds**  
**Chasing Yesterday**  
FOUR years after Noel went solo came this second album. Magical Riverman had a bit of Oasis' Wonderwall to it while The Right Stuff and The Mexican, collabs with Amorphous Androgynous, showed his psychedelic side. **KEY TRACK:** The Girl With X-Ray Eyes



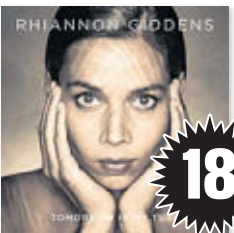
**15**  
**Blur**  
**The Magic Whip**  
BLUR's eighth studio album was a surprise comeback when it arrived in April. Speaking to SFTW, Damon Albarn called it "a miraculous record." Alex James confessed the song Pyongyang "made me cry." And Dave Rowntree said: "We still sound like Blur." **KEY TRACK:** Pyongyang



**16**  
**Joanna Newsom**  
**Divers**  
AFTER quite a wait, we got another glimpse into harp-playing Newsom's extraordinary mind with the release of her fourth album. Her warbling vocals may be an acquired taste but her sprawling songs, with a myriad of cultural references, were utterly intoxicating. **KEY TRACK:** Sapokanikan



**17**  
**Bob Dylan**  
**Shadows In The Night**  
SPOKESMAN for his generation Bob Dylan channelled the spirit of another – Frank Sinatra. His melancholic choices from the Great American Songbook were all recorded by Ol' Blue Eyes and had themes of love, longing and heartache. **KEY TRACK:** Autumn Leaves



**18**  
**Rhiannon Giddens**  
**Tomorrow Is My Turn**  
WITH a voice to die for, Rhiannon has been compared to Nina Simone, Dolly Parton and Joan Baez. She forged her way with old-timey Carolina Chocolate Drops and now adds solo work to her impressive canon. Earthy blues nestled beside sweetest folk music. **KEY TRACK:** Shake Sugaree



**19**  
**John Grant**  
**Grey Tickles, Black Pressure**  
GRANT's renaissance continued with his third solo album. The ex-Czars singer further expanded his sonic horizons with twitchy synths and evocative samples, jostling with his classically trained baritone and lush chamber pop. **KEY TRACK:** Disappointing



**20**  
**Julia Holter**  
**Have You In My Wilderness**  
THIS album proved that Julia Holter is up there with the best of the quirky female singer-songwriters. Her lyrics were poetic and her pure, ringing voice flew effortlessly between despair, joy and everything in between. **KEY TRACK:** Sea Calls Me Home



**21**  
**Chvrches**  
**Every Open Eye**  
FOR their second album, the Scottish trio kept the formula of shimmering synth pop cut through by Lauren Mayberry's soaring vocals. Make Them Gold had a pop precision while Clearest Blue built into a thumping dancefloor-filling finale. **KEY TRACK:** Make Them Gold



**22**  
**Coldplay**  
**A Head Full Of Dreams**  
THE mournful Ghost Stories showed Chris Martin overcoming his marriage break-up. But his mood is positive on Coldplay's seventh album, with guest stars including Beyonce, Noel Gallagher – and ex-wife Gwyneth Paltrow. Blissful pop made for stadiums. **KEY TRACK:** Up&Up

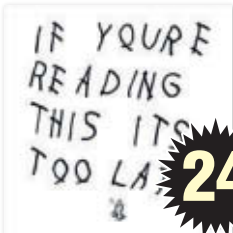


**23**  
**David Gilmour**  
**Rattle That Lock**  
AIDED by his famous black Fender Strat, the Pink Floyd guitarist has developed his own signature sound over the years, but that didn't stop him exploring gospel and jazz on his solo album – or confronting mortality and the futility of war. **KEY TRACK:** A Boat Lies Waiting



**NEW MUSIC**  
By Jim Gellatly  
**THE DEADLY WINTERS**  
**WHO:** Chris Blair (vocals/guitar), Fraser Smith (guitar/mandolin/vocals), Michael Edie (bass/melodica/vocals), Chris Gibson (percussion/vocals), Graeme Chyla (drums/percussion)  
**WHERE:** Edinburgh  
**FOR FANS OF:** Mumford & Sons, The Waterboys, Bellowhead  
**JIM SAYS:** Formed from the ashes of indie outfit Reiser, The Deadly Winters are a very different proposition. First emerging in 2011 they've developed into one of the most exciting contemporary folk bands on the scene. While some acts put their own twist on old songs, or play new songs in a traditional style, the Edinburgh-based outfit delve into history to create their originals. Chris said: "The songs started out as rough semi-stories based in and around vaguely recog-

nisable eras. The writing process has now settled into historic-based recounting of stories that we stumble across and think, 'yup, that's got a Winters tune inside it.' Their track Sixteen Days is the true story of how bassist Mike's grandfather survived on a lifeboat after his boat was torpedoed in World War II. With two albums already under their belts (The Deadly Winters and Away Boys, Away), they have just released a new EP called Table In The Corner. The track Sam Did Run uses Chris's grandfather's wartime experiences. Chris said: "He charged a hill single-



**24**  
**Drake**  
**If You're Reading This It's Too Late**  
THIS surprise album from Toronto's finest arrived without any prior announcement – and that made it extra special. Over the course of 17 tracks Drake proved why he is at the top of his game. Moody and melancholy, it was a real treat. **KEY TRACK:** Preach



**25**  
**Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats**  
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PREVIOUSLY placed firmly in the folkie Americana box, Rateliff reinvented himself with this sax-fuelled, soul-drenched record. The album bristles with positive energy – and fittingly, it appeared on the great Memphis label Stax. **KEY TRACK:** S.O.B.



**26**  
**Florence & The Machine**  
**How Big, How Blue, How Beautiful**  
WORKING with Björk producer Markus Dravs gave the most emotionally engaging of Florence Welch's albums so far. Tracks Various Storms & Saints, and Long & Lost brought listeners closer to the emotions that rang out from her lyrics. **KEY TRACK:** Third Eye



**27**  
**The Libertines**  
**Anthems For Doomed Youth**  
IN the year Blur made a convincing and vibrant comeback record, The Libertines did too... but theirs was still undeniably shambolic. Pete Doherty's poeticism was undeniable, and in full force on sublime songs such as Barbarians and You're My Waterloo. **KEY TRACK:** Gunga Din



**28**  
**Guy Garvey**  
**Courting The Squall**  
IT was after turning 40 last year that Guy Garvey realised songwriting was what made him happiest. So after 25 years as Elbow's frontman, the time was right to make a solo album. Musically, Garvey described his album as "simpler, sparser and a bit more laidback". **KEY TRACK:** Angela's Eyes



**29**  
**Gaz Coombes**  
**Matorador**  
IN Supergrass, Gaz Coombes enjoyed nearly 20 years as the frontman of one of Britain's most-loved groups. On this second solo album he found his feet, his own sound and gained confidence. No wonder it earned him a nomination for the Mercury Music Prize. **KEY TRACK:** Detroit



**30**  
**The Arcs**  
**Yours, Dreamily**  
WHEN workaholic Dan Auerbach decided to take a "breather" from The Black Keys, what did he do? While most of us would have been happy to kick back on a yacht in the Caribbean, Dan started another band. The result was this psychedelic tour-de-force. **KEY TRACK:** Stay In My Corner



**31**  
**Leon Bridges**  
**Coming Home**  
A SOUL singer in the mould of Sam Cooke, this 26-year-old Texan's debut album was a revelation. His throaty, gritty vocals showcased a vital talent and breathed life into his Sixties stylings. The sultry Brown Skin Girl was smooth and sexy with an electrifying immediacy. Nothing short of a classic. **KEY TRACK:** Shine



**32**  
**Wilco**  
**Star Wars**  
ONE of the Chicago band's finest efforts from their 20-year existence. It expertly straddled their knack for a great indie pop tune combined with more experimental sonic adventures. A looser, more freewheeling effort than other recent outings. **KEY TRACK:** More...



**33**  
**Foals**  
**What Went Down**  
THE success of last album, 2013's Holy Fire, made the band realize they could do what they wanted. So What Went Down was released much sooner than expected and with a heavier sound. It mixed forceful songs with gentler moments. Give it All showed Foals have excelled. **KEY TRACK:** Night Swimmers



**34**  
**A\$AP Rocky**  
**At Long Last. A\$AP**  
A\$AP's collaborators made his second album a varied and intriguing affair. Cameos from MIA, Kanye West, and even old stager Rod Stewart signaled A\$AP's genuine love for his craft. At 18 tracks, this record was a lot to take in but it was endlessly interesting. **KEY TRACK:** Everyday



**35**  
**Disclosure**  
**Caracal**  
AIDED by a stellar line-up of collaborators (Sam Smith, Lorde and others), Guy Lawrence and brother Howard wrote a wide range of songs for their second outing. Guy said: "This album goes straight from 60 beats per minute to 130bpm." **KEY TRACK:** Good Intentions



**36**  
**Years & Years**  
**Communion**  
SINGER Oily Alexander told SFTW that since their debut album was released, "It's been a whirlwind, pure chaos, and enough to send you mad." Catchy music, an emotive falsetto and dark lyrics from the BBC Sound of 2015 winners made this the sound of the summer. **KEY TRACK:** Shine



**37**  
**Sufjan Stevens**  
**Carrie & Lowell**  
YOU never know what to expect from this mercurial talent. We had the orchestral majesty of 2005's Illinois and the unsettling electronica of 2010's The Age Of Adz. Here, he went back to the intimate folk settings of his early forays. **KEY TRACK:** Death With Dignity



**38**  
**Jeff Lynne's ELO**  
**Alone In The Universe**  
WHEN SFTW met ELO mastermind Jeff Lynne, he rightly seemed chuffed with the band's 14th studio album, which sounds like a greatest hits collection... but from a parallel universe. Full of pure pop melodies and lashings of strings. **KEY TRACK:** All My Life



**39**  
**Mark Ronson**  
**Uptown Special**  
A BRILLIANT feelgood album inspired by Ronson's love of funk and soul. First single Uptown Funk was a record-breaking hit while megastar Stevie Wonder pops up on album opener Uptown's First Finale and closing track Crack In The Pearl Pt. II. **KEY TRACK:** Uptown Funk



**40**  
**Miley Cyrus/Flaming Lips**  
**Miley Cyrus & Her Dead Petz**  
PRODUCED by Wayne Coyne and other members of the Flaming Lips, Miley's fifth album was 23 tracks long – and it was released for free. Trippy, full of teenage rebellion and expletives. **KEY TRACK:** Dooo It!



**41**  
**Public Service Broadcasting**  
**The Race For Space**  
THE second album from this experimental duo was a soundtrack to speeches and news bulletins from the space race. The standout track Gagarin was a throbbing, thrilling funk workout about Russian Yuri Gagarin – the first man in space. **KEY TRACK:** Gagarin



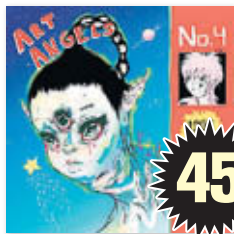
**42**  
**Muse**  
**Drones**  
INSPIRED by a book on modern warfare, frontman Matt Bellamy said this was "the best Muse have made in a long time". A concept album that took the band back to their classic rock sound, it told a dark story through the electro-rock of Mercy, and lighter songs such as Revolt. **KEY TRACK:** Dead Inside



**43**  
**Jason Isbell**  
**Something More Than Free**  
THIS Alabama-born artist is on a creative roll. After 2013's Southeastern drew rave reviews, this might be the best thing the 36-year-old has ever done. It ranges from intimate country tinged folk to expansive indie rock. **KEY TRACK:** If It Takes A Lifetime



**44**  
**Nothing But Thieves**  
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ONE of the breakthrough bands of the year, Nothing But Thieves delivered a debut which immediately placed them as natural successors to the likes of Muse. With an enviable live reputation, 2016 is going to be a big year for the Essex five-piece. **KEY TRACK:** Itch



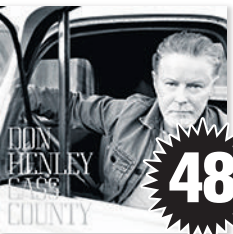
**45**  
**Grimes**  
**Art Angels**  
CANADIAN artist and producer Claire Boucher – AKA Grimes – made one of the year's most original offerings. Kill V. Maim imagined Al Pacino as a space-travelling vampire while Venus Fly featured super-cool Janelle Monae. No other album was quite like it. **KEY TRACK:** Venus Fly



**46**  
**Ellie Goulding**  
**Delirium**  
THIS third album reflected Ellie's newfound confidence. It was a huge pop record that began after a meeting with Max Martin. Ellie told SFTW: "I was only meant to write one song with Max but we got on so well, we were like, 'So it's, let's just make more songs together'." **KEY TRACK:** Holding On For Life



**47**  
**Father John Misty**  
**I Love You, Honeybear**  
JOSH TILLMAN, ex of Fleet Foxes, followed up his debut solo album Fear Fun with this joyous record. Each track started off as conventional, guitar-led folk stuff, then Tillman warped his compositions with some unexpected electronics, or a zany instrumental. Brilliant stuff. **KEY TRACK:** True Affection



**48**  
**Don Henley**  
**Cass County**  
THE Eagles legend went back to his Texas roots for a heartfelt but never too sentimental solo album. Guests included country legend Dolly Parton and the Stones' Mick Jagger and you could practically smell the earth of his childhood stomping ground. **KEY TRACK:** Take A Picture Of This



**49**  
**Duran Duran**  
**Paper Gods**  
IT WASN'T just middle-aged mums excited about the return of this band – the pop gods have influenced everyone from The Killers to Years & Years. Co-produced by Mark Ronson and Nile Rodgers, this shows they still know how to fill a dancefloor. **KEY TRACK:** What Are The Chances?



**50**  
**Richard Hawley**  
**Hollow Meadows**  
"MISTER Sheffield" decided to return to the more reflective textures of his breakthrough album, Coles Corner, moving away from the squalling guitars of Standing At The Sky's Edge. Once again he managed to deliver a blindingly honest and beautifully crafted set of songs. **KEY TRACK:** Heart Of Oak

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