Clean Bandit Dust Clears

Another catchy single from a band whose penchant for unique electro-classica fusion pop has been steadily winning over YouTube commenters and Sara Cox alike. The forthcoming Dust Clears EP features Alt-J's Thom Green



Earl Sweatshirt

Hive Fans who pre-order the album Doris will get this single to keep them ticking over until 20 August. After a year in a Samoan boarding school, here Earl Sweatshirt (above) makes a powerful return, all heavy bass and dark thoughts.

The Vaccines Melody Calling Proving their new-found versatility, the West London indie-rock act have left their thundering guitars behind for a fresher and more sophisticated sound



The dancehall DJs (above), who must have spent the last few weeks high-fiving over their name choice hit back at accusations of sexism that plaque the genre with this mix featuring female MCs only - and some Beyoncé. What's not to love?

Jake Bugg Broken

Complete with the talented 18-year-old's usual acoustic guitar and heart-wrenching lyrics, this latest single possesses emotion in abundance.

Laura Veirs was haunted by fears for her unborn second child when she wrote her new album, but the songs are far from melancholic, she tells Simon Hardeman

WHEN THE

ways. When Laura Veirs had her first child, her reaction was to record an awardwinning children's album of old folk songs that dealt with death and suffering. Three years later. her second child a few months old, the critically acclaimed singer-songwriter is about to release what may be her best vet. a cascade of self-penned adult tunes that weave together parenthood, darkness and fear, recorded with collaborators including k.d. lang and My Morning Jacket's

In her wood-panelled basement in Portland, Oregon, Veirs tells me it took her time to get her "songwriting chops" back after her first child. "I was so worn out being a new parent, and going through this thing like being in love for the first time when you just can't think straight. I was falling in love with liked again and then I realised I was looking at tension between light and dark, like warp and weft in weaving." Warp and Weft became the title of her new collection, which she will tour in the UK this year.

Many of the songs were written while she was pregnant. How did a lot of worry," the bespectacled. chirpy 39-year-old says. "Is it

"IT CAN BE LIMITING WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE I'M WRITING NARRATIVE SONGS BUT I DON'T LIKE

going to come out with five heads? Is it going to make it? There's so

"Every parent is stalked by a spectre of darkness because something could happen to your family," she continues, quoting lyrics from the first track on her new album: sentimental, so sappy. It took me there's the chorus for "Dorothy of

about a year to get songs that I the Island", one of the many story songs inspired by real life, this one about a mother apparently plunging to her death, a chorus Veirs appropriated from an old Blind Willie Johnson song: "Motherless children have a hard time/ When their mother's dead..."

But her music is not melancholic. "I love that tension, I play with that affect the process? "There was that all the time, jarring someone - 'how can I feel so good listening to a song about motherless children?'. It's a strange thing to have a happy melody with dark lyrics but I love it. It's so much more interesting.' Raised in Colorado, Veirs was a

punk – possibly the only punk to have ended up getting a US Parents' Choice Award (for 2011's Tumble Bee, the children's album). But after college, when the singer of her band quit, she realised she would have to learn to be a front person. It wasn't easy: "My first ever open-mic was in front of two people, my friend and the sound guy, who was blind, but my hands were shaking off the neck. It was "Stalked by winter/ Solace in a a disaster. I thought: 'I can't do my child. And my songs were so small warm hand". And then this. Let me dig in here and figure out why."



FANTASY BAND She nearly made a career by Gillian Orr 'digging in" in a different way until an epiphany in a Chinese desert.

"I was a geology major on a field

trip I didn't enjoy and I realised.

'I'm not going to be a scientist, but

this guitar is for me, so I'll work on that'." And she did, taking lessons

to hone a very impressive technique. "It can be limiting when you say you're a folk musician. Yes, I'm writing narrative songs that have natural imagery and I play acoustic guitar but I don't like to box myself." The latest album is certainly much more expansive and fully produced than "folk"

would suggest, featuring a song

about Alice Coltrane and another

came Laura's way because of her

long-time collaborator, and hus-

band - producer Tucker Martine.

The couple met in 2000, and worked

together on Veirs's second proper

album. The Triumphs and Travails

of Orphan Mae. She says it was many years before they got together romantically. "It's tricky territory to be a creative collaborator with your

partner because you can be snippy.

When it started we had a couple of

hitches." Now they have a ritual of

shaking hands before they start

work. "When we make a record, we

are artists and collaborators first;

then second we're husband and

last three albums, but lang is a new

friend, as is singer-songwriter

Neko Case, who also appears on

Warp and Weft and who has just moved to Portland, "It's the

hippest town in America, lots of

young families, lots of people like

us who used to be punks trying to

Some people might have to

figure out the cover of Warp and

Weft. "It's an unfolded crane,"

explains Veirs. It refers to the song

Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl

irradiated in Hiroshima in 1945.

Her ambition was to fold 1,000

origami cranes to get a wish from

the gods. She died aged 12, in 1955.

"Inside will be paper you can fold

and every crane we get we'll give a

and Weft. "I can write one in an

hour or two, suspend judgement

in the moment and go with it, but

most of them aren't very good. I

have to write so many to get the

dozens of orphaned songs chatter-

ing around Veirs and Martine's

Portland home, as they tend to

Tennessee, three, and Oz the new-

born. The real children make

Veirs's forthcoming tour "a sched-

uling nightmare. I just try to

remind myself this is what I want:

a satisfying marriage, a collabora-

tion with Tucker on multiple

levels, these two amazing beauti-

ful children and this artistic life.'

Warn and Weft' is out on Bella

Union on 19 August. Laura Veirs

tours the UK in November

I'm struck by the image of

Veirs wrote 60 songs for Warp

dollar to a peace group."

good ones."

'Sadako Folding Cranes", about

James has featured on Veirs's

wife and parents.'

figure it all out."

inspired by Coltrane's jazz. k.d. lang, Jim James, and others Nick Allbrook, Pond



'Most of the music I love is made by awful musicians'

DRUMS: JAKI LIEBEZEIT

Most of the music I really love is made by people with unconventional or theoreti cally god-awful musicianship. But good players making a good band? Anyone who's forgotten time in the midst of Can's "Halleluhwah" can dig Jaki Liebezeit.

BASS: LARRY GRAHAM Larry Graham from Sly and the Family Stone gets bass duties for "Thank You For Talkin' to Me Africa" alone

SYNTH: SHAGS CHAMBERLAIN

I'd have Shags playing his trusty Realistic MG-1. He has played with Brous, Pikelet, Lost Animal, Isaiah Mitchell Ariel Pink and Michael Rother. An all-round record/ synth/bass wizard.

PRODUCTION: BRIAN ENO

Just in case this lot of interstellar-shred-nerds got tempted into some cheeky proggery I'd have Brian Eno manipulating the thing.

VOCALS: ANDRÉ BENJAMIN

He could sing, and probably wail, and hopefully dance. It'd be pretty all right if the band played his songs too. Probably the best guy in... probably the best guy.

GUITAR: JOSHUA

HAYWARD

I was gonna go with Robert Fripp. Well done on a life of kicking ass, Mr Fripp, but you'll have to go in favour of Mr Joshua Hayward of The Horrors. He can make pretty much every opiated leviathan howl I want a guitar to make.

Pond's album 'Hobo Rocket' is out on 5 August on Modular