

Album reviews

The Killers

Battle Born

★★★★★

When they started, Las Vegas-based The Killers reeked of the seedy, sequined glamour of the Strip. Three LPs later, they've morphed from indie club-night heroes into arena-slaying demi-gods. The pressure of such a rise led to an inevitable hiatus in 2010, during which frontman Brandon Flowers and drummer Ronnie Vannucci Jr both pursued solo projects. Now reunited, the four-piece return in grand fashion with *Battle Born*.

The bombast of 'Flesh and Bone' and triumphant gallop of 'Runaways' immediately call to mind 2006 album *Sam's Town*, rather than the most recent offering *Day & Age*. Unlike that last record, which lost its momentum halfway through, the quality of

Battle Born doesn't waver. Instead of songs about neon tigers and aliens, the 31-year-old Flowers turns his lyric-writing impulse inwards, reminiscing about the pulse-quickening thrill of lust's first flush, as well as contemplating the weight of adult responsibility. But for all his rosy-tinted ruminations on the ease of early life, Flowers keeps faith in the moment. The '80s-tinged 'Deadlines and Commitments' and his ode to long distance love, 'Here with Me', are both lighters-aloft moments with brass and string arrangements to make you feel alive.

Subtlety is not The Killers' forte, yet they've managed to create intimacy here. This album simultaneously offers solace to the individual and a solid gold singalong for the masses. *Kim Taylor Bennett*



Music & Nightlife

Toy

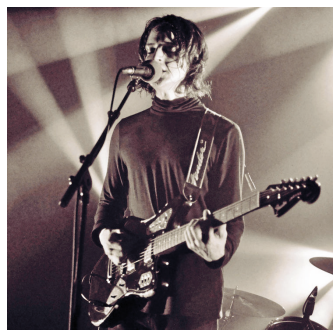
Toy

★★★★★

Shake out your black roll-neck sweaters and polish up your Chelsea boots: it's Toy time. The hip, London-based quintet's debut LP arrives in a kaleidoscopic, droning fog of fuzzed and jangling guitars, fizzing analogue synths and reverb-laden vocals, anchored by the kind of insistent grooves developed by '70s krautrock bands Neu! and Harmonia.

But if that makes Toy sound like technical nerds nostalgic for a time even their parents are far too young to remember, it's selling them short. They've channelled their trippy retro leanings through more recent history – bands Ride and House of Love get a workout on 'Motoring', and 'The Reasons Why' is pretty much a love letter to My Bloody Valentine, but 'Drifting Deeper' shows off their

interest in experimental electronics. A highlight is darkly groovy epic 'Dead and Gone', which finds Toy shifting up the gears to create a buzz so thrillingly physical you can practically see it pouring from your speakers. This one demands maximum volume. *Sharon O'Connell*



This week's new bar review

360°

As Dubai's al-fresco venue prepares to relaunch this week with a new look, we checked out the soft opening



It's only natural to fear change. After five months of anticipation, we were looking forward to the all-new 360° more than anyone. As much as we liked the old seafood restaurant below, we much preferred the idea of a bigger club, with a second indoor room and its own music policy. Talk of a new menu and in-house mixologist made our tummies rumble. And we frankly couldn't wait to see if there really would be toilets upstairs (at last). Yet as our familiar golf buggy wound its way round that sweepingly curved jetty, we couldn't help but feel a small, but very potent, pang of fear.

There's a second bar area, so hopefully there will be less queuing

Disembarking at the entrance, the overhaul is immediately evident. Garish neon lights flash from the same windows where disapproving diners used to sit. And in a statement of intent there's now a bold sign over the door announcing the venue's name: what perhaps started as an afterthought bar on top of a hip restaurant has evolved to take over every last inch of this prime, 360-degree vantage.

Thankfully, our fears were uncalled for. Yes, the rumours are true: compared to the 360° we know and love, the new lower deck is markedly more glitzy – or, as some patrons we overheard dubbed it, 'Dubai-ified'. The globe-lights, swirling screens and especially the flashing strips lining the windows are a bit much at first. But, mainly thanks to the excellent music, on a weekend night it still feels very much like a bangin' club, not a blingin'

lounge. And with all the main promoters promising special things in the funk/retro/boogie/hip-hop/party ballparks below, we're looking forward to the new room establishing its own distinct ethos, vibe and regular crew. The only real hindrance to this is the lack of a sizeable dancefloor.

We're pleased to say there have been no dramatic changes upstairs; instead they've kept what made it special, and refined it. Yes, there are new toilets (behind the main bar), and there's a second bar area, so hopefully there will be less queuing all round. There are a few more seats, but this iconic, irreplicable space has pretty been much been left as is, and we're glad.

So as much as it's natural to fear change, we can't help but be impressed with the tasteful evolution that has occurred here. Upstairs, everything that made 360° special in the first place has been maintained, but some niggles have been ironed out. And now with another deck the party can run later (until 3am while upstairs shuts at 2am), longer (the venue is now set for an 11-month season), and host twice as much music with two DJs spinning at once. We're sold.

Open Sun-Wed 5pm-2am, Thu and Sat 5pm-3am, Fri 4pm-3am. Jumeirah Beach Hotel (04 406 8999).



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