

Album reviews

Alabama Shakes

Boys & Girls

★★★★★

Imagine the Kings of Leon playing Otis Redding after a dark night of the soul, with just Redding's 'Coffee and Cigarettes' for company. What you'll come up with ain't far off Alabama Shakes.

It's not so much that the Athens quartet are retro-sounding, more that it's almost as though they've spent their entire lives to date locked in their parents' basements with nothing but a scratchy stack of Atlantic Records vinyl for company. Now the Shakes have emerged like a fully-formed relic, dazed by the light of post-Black Keys hype with which they've been showered. Bassist Zac Cockrell grinds out Duck Dunn de-dums over drummer Steve Johnson's flatback groove. Guitarist Heath Fogg oozes woody Ron Wood bends and trills.

Frontwoman Brittany Howard yelps like Robert Plant impersonating Etta James. Swells of Matthew Fisher-esque Hammond organ emerge, and they all chip in some sub-Beach Boys harmonies. In short, Alabama Shakes sound like a New Orleans bar band grounding out weathered soul to tourists (no surprise they started with covers gigs as The Shakes).

Boys & Girls has just two tempos – mid and slow – like lurching Southern rockers outweighed by decked Stax soul. Yet there's a thrilling looseness to the delivery, not so much that the songs could fall apart at any moment, but that an extra four bars could slide in and none of the quartet would notice. There's just one trick up the Shakes' sleeve, but it's such a good trick it doesn't sound like they're fooling anyone, merely playing the only way they know how. And there's truth in that. *Rob Garratt*



Patti Smith

Banga

★★★★★

Patti Smith has always had the ability to produce a nervous panic in this listener. It's similar to finding yourself at a dinner party surrounded by avid readers locked into a discussion of an obscure Peruvian author while you nod dumbly and resist the urge to stick a fork into your thigh. The title of her new album, *Banga*, comes from a novel by Mikhail Bulgakov. 'April Fool' is inspired by Gogol, while 'Constantine's Dream' is an imagining of a Piero della Francesca fresco. It's a far cry from the title of the b-side of her 1974 debut single (Google it).

Yet, despite lofty references, Smith's latest is still hugely nourishing, with or without the PhD. 'Mosaik' and 'Fuji-san' recall post-Maharishi Beatles songs such as 'Dear Prudence' in their raga-like splendour, while the title tune

brings to mind the sweeping desert rock of Tinariwen. In contrast, the gentle elegance of piano-led tracks like 'Maria' expose an intimate side rarely heard from the punk matriarch. *Oliver Keens*



This week's bar review

Bidi Bondi

This chilled Aussie hangout has a new happy hour to boost its appeal among laid-back expats

We've always liked Bidi Bondi, probably because it's the antithesis of The Palm. The man-made paradise of golden beaches, luxury villas, Disney castles and five-star resorts is the last place you'd expect to find an Aussie bar so laid-back you feel overdressed in a collar.

Along with lesser-known neighbours Veda, Barça and Beach House Cabana, Bidi Bondi will next week be relaunching a new daily happy hour. With the flyer advertising that 'residents and non-residents' are welcome, we decided to see how sociable this 'Socialise' night really is.

The answer is very: both staff and punters were full of smiles and cheers. Because it's based at the bottom of an apartment block, rather than within a hotel (which means no walking across a Swarovski-lined lobby to reach the faux-dive pub), Bidi Bondi possesses an irreplicable community feel, like stumbling upon a British student union bar without being a member of the university. Where the city is overpopulated with generic, wood-panel faux-Brit pubs, the Australian theme helps fuel this



spark of youth – with boards and shorts on the wall, and Aussie classics such as AC/DC and Nick Cave on the stereo, it feels decidedly adolescent. The overall effect is like an 'old man's pub' for young men (and women).

We've found the wide menu of stodgy grub to be a bit patchy, but service is fast and friendly, and the reasonable prices are even more tempting during the new happy hour, with drinks from Dhs25 from 5pm until 8pm everyday. Pretty sociable, if you ask us.

Open Sun-Wed 11am-midnight; Thu-Fri 11am-1am Palm Jumeirah (04 427 0515).

20 drinks deals

Happy hours

Barrels Selected drinks are half price all night, every night until the end of August. *Daily 8pm-3am. Until August 31. Majestic Hotel Tower, Bur Dubai (04 501 2540).*

Der Keller Selected drinks Dhs25. *Daily 7.30pm-8.30pm. Ongoing. Jumeirah Beach Hotel (04 406 8999).*

Dhow and Anchor Enjoy a wide range of drinks from Dhs25. *Daily 7.30pm-8.30pm. Ongoing. Jumeirah Beach Hotel (04 406 8999).*

Dubai Marina Yacht Club (Aquara Lounge) Buy one drink, get one free at this popular post-work spot. *Daily sunset-8.30pm. Ongoing. Dubai Marina Yacht Club (04 362 7900).*

Horizon Lounge Half-price deals on selected drinks. *Daily 8pm-9pm. Ongoing. Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa (04 399 5000).*

ICON Bar & Lounge Drinks from Dhs19. *Daily 8pm-9pm; Fri sunset-1am. Ongoing. Radisson Blu Hotel, Dubai Media City (04 366 9111).*

Moods Guests can enjoy half-price house beverages for an hour every evening. *Daily 8pm-9pm. Ongoing. Sheraton Jumeirah Beach Resort, Dubai Marina (04 399 5533).*

Rosso Selected drinks Dhs20 to Dhs25, with draft hops at Dhs28. *Daily sunset-9pm. Ongoing. Amwaj Rotana, Dubai Marina (04 428 3088).*

The Music Room Double shot in all regular beverages for Dhs20 all night. *Daily 8pm-3am. Until August 31. Majestic Hotel Tower, Bur Dubai (04 359 8888).*

Waterfront All house drinks for Dhs25. *Daily 7.30pm-8.30pm. Ongoing. Jumeirah Beach Hotel (04 406 8999).*

Ladies' nights

Après Free bubbly for ladies for two hours. *Sun 8pm-10pm. Ongoing. Mall of the Emirates, Barsha (04 341 2575).*

Blends Complimentary drinks for ladies before midnight. *Tue 8pm-midnight. Ongoing. The Address, Dubai Marina (04 436 7777).*

Blue Bar Three glasses of bubbly for ladies. *Mon 8pm-11pm. Ongoing. Novotel World Trade Centre Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road (04 332 0000).*

Carter's Free mixed drinks for ladies, and snacks served 9pm until 10pm. *Tue 8pm-11pm. Wafi (04 324 4100).*

Horizon Lounge Three free glasses of bubbly or three mixed drinks for ladies. *Tue 8pm-midnight. Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa (04 399 5000).*

Rosso Ladies can enjoy two glasses of grape or two short drinks on week nights from 9pm. *Sat-Wed 9pm-midnight. Ongoing. Amwaj Rotana, Jumeirah Beach Residence (04 428 3088).*

Summer Place Three free glasses of bubbly or three mixed drinks for ladies. *8pm-midnight. Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa (04 399 5000).*

The Gramercy Four mixed drinks for ladies, plus a bottle of fizz on your fourth visit, and Dhs40 food dishes. *Tue 7pm-11pm. Ongoing. DIFC (04 437 7511).*

The Music Room There are unlimited free drinks for ladies for two hours on Tuesdays, while on Thursdays every group of four ladies gets a free fishbowl of beverage for the night. *Tue, Thu 8pm-10pm. Majestic Hotel Tower, Bur Dubai (04 355 8888).*

Z:ONE Four free drinks for ladies on Tuesdays. *Tue 7pm-10pm. Ongoing. Media One Hotel, Dubai Media City (04 427 1000).*