

Album reviews

Bob Dylan

Tempest

★★★★★

It's no secret that Bob Dylan is an old man. Now 71, after five decades on the road his vocal cords – those that once youthfully declared the times 'a-changin' – have been reduced to a barely serviceable growl, while arthritis has rendered him unable to consistently play a guitar live for years now.

But while other rockers (McCartney, Jagger; take note) like to jig around the stage like an embarrassing great uncle on Christmas afternoon, Dylan wilfully accentuates his age. Always one comfortable with an artful muse, since recovering from a mid-'80s, Christian-inspired dirge with 1997's *Time Out of Mind*, Dylan's latter-day pose has been that of the time-cracked, wizened troubadour. He's no longer the voice of the future, but an ironically morbid growl, preaching seemingly from beyond the grave.

The music, too, has continued to devolve as Dylan delves further into the weathered world of the past with

each passing release; where 2005's *Modern Times* boasted a jazzy swing, 2009's *Together Through Life* hummed like a tribute to Chicago's Chess Records. In spirit, *Tempest* goes even further back into Americana folklore, long before even Dylan's primary influence, Woody Guthrie.

While each of these new releases has inevitably been hailed by over-excited critics as the last words of rock's greatest genius, it's always foolish to compare Dylan's renaissance work with his '60s and '70s heyday. Yet we're pretty smitten with *Tempest*, perhaps his best in decades. The 14-minute title track does drag a little, and Lennon tribute 'Roll on John' is more clumsy than you might hope for a songwriter often held up as a poet. But in this sprawling, 68-minute work there's far more discernable imagery, wit and – most importantly – passion than much of his recent output.

We shudder to say it, but 50 years after his debut LP, this one would mark a fine moment to take one last bow. *Rob Garratt*



Calvin Harris

18 Months

★★★★★

He may be known for giving pop a euphoric edge, but does one album really need 27 ravey, face-melting build-ups? (Yes, we actually counted.) While Harris is as desperate as an armed robber to get hands in the air, his third album neglects some basics – namely variety, originality and songcraft. It doesn't help that six of the 15 songs (such as Rihanna-collab 'We Found Love') are more than a year old. Of the newer bangers, Dizzee and Tinie Tempah bring some verbal London swagger, but ultimately *18 Months* reeks of an insecure man in the DJ booth, desperate for constant signs of life from his audience. *Oliver Keens*



This week's new bar review

Falcon Lounge

This business-oriented hangout atop Dubai World Trade Centre has now opened its doors to the public



Formerly part of the exclusive members-only World Trade Club, the Falcon Lounge is now open to mere non-executive mortals in the evenings. It's attached to the upmarket Seven Sands restaurant; riding up to the 33rd floor in the elevator offers a sense of anticipation, as if you're about to enter the mysterious world of the economic elite. This feeling continues as the lift opens to reveal the appropriately discreet receptionist, who nods cordially as guests enter.

The first thing that hits you is the spectacular view across the city from

It's easy to imagine moguls mulling their latest deal as they gaze over the city

the iconic World Trade Centre at the mouth of downtown Sheikh Zayed Road. It's easy to imagine magnates and moguls sitting back with a cigar, mulling their latest deal as they gaze over the city towards the Gulf. It's a gentleman's club atmosphere, with a secretive and quintessentially masculine smell.

As with the entire building, which dates back to 1979 when it stood aloft and alone in the empty desert, there's also an overwhelming feeling that everything's a little detached; a relic of a bygone era. The decor is decidedly dated – reminiscent of a walnut dashboard from an '80s BMW. The dark woods and mixture of chrome and leather are more akin to the interior of an oligarch's yacht than the sophisticated sense of wealth that can be found elsewhere in Dubai.

Located in a venue that's geared towards exhibitions, trade fairs and conferences, the sense that this bar is a retreat from the corporate action is inescapable. The music during our visit was provided by a DJ, who was quietly piping jazzy dance music from his decks propped on a covered piano, the volume restrained and unsure.

When we arrived there were three middle-aged businessmen in suits quietly conversing in the corner, and three members of staff waiting expectantly to discreetly spring into action. It's not a jeans and T-shirt kind of place (technically the dress code is 'business attire') and there was an unsettling sense that we'd encroached on something private. Its location next to the larger restaurant means the bar is more like an executive lounge in an airport than a standalone destination. Yet while we can't really see who'll be enticed from more conventional drinking spots, if you happen to stumble across the Falcon Lounge, it's worth stepping in to enjoy the amazing views.

Open Sat-Thu 10am-11pm. Dubai World Trade Centre, Sheikh Zayed Road (04 309 7979).

