

Album reviews

Cher Lloyd

Sticks + Stones

★★★★★

It's only been a year since Cher strutted into the public consciousness on *The X Factor UK*, wowing audiences with her cover of Soulja Boy's 'Turn My Swag On', her vocals quivering but accomplished, before flipping into her now trademark defiant lip-curl. Her ballsy break from the overcooked covers of most *X Factor* auditions earned her a standing ovation.

In hindsight it seems canny that she should choose a song that focused on fabulosity, a kiss-off to the 'haters', because more than any other *X Factor* alum, Lloyd has dealt with a lot of flak in the past 12 months. She's a diva, she's fallen out with Cheryl Cole, she's too big for her boots, they say. The Worcestershire-born 18-year-old has been largely defiant in the face of those 'keyboard warriors with a license

to hate', but even with a number one under her belt (the diabolical 'Oh My Darling, Clementine'-referencing 'Swagger Jagger') it must still sting.

Her sound can best be summed up by the Busta Rhymes-featuring opener 'Grow Up', which sees her pinballing between cutesy Lily Allen-like lilts and sharp, in-your-face raps. At the record's apex is her current single, the urban pop punch of 'With Ur Love' (with Mike Posner), and the skippy 'Superhero'. Its lowest points are the jarring 'Over the Moon' (like an urban Mika) and the bass-wobble of 'Dub On the Track' with grime MCs Ghetts, Mic Righteous and Dot Rotten (awful).

Even with its cast of top-notch writers and producers – Max Martin, The Runners – her Stateside-recorded debut will do little to silence critics. It's divisive, but it is unmistakably Cher Lloyd, and there's some triumph in that. *Kim Taylor Bennett*



David Lynch

Crazy Clown Time

★★★★★

Just what is eccentric Hollywood director David Lynch doing releasing an album? In some ways, the spooky auteur recording an electronic music record is a surprise. In others, not so much. The charging blues riff of opener 'Pinky's Dream' – haunting vocals courtesy of Karen O from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs – conjures images of a furious James Hurley flying down the roads in *Twin Peaks*, just as the title track echoes 'Fire Walk With Me' in its sordid, carnal groans and loosely strung-together narrative of 'girls with ripped shirts'. The internal monologue about voyeurism and lost love in 'Speed Roadster', backed by a minimal beat, recalls Lynch's 1986 film *Blue Velvet*.

Crazy Clown Time is at once eerie and provocative, but also hypnotic and futuristic, especially on single

'Good Day Today', in which Lynch's vocals sound bionic, and gunshots are interspersed with an upbeat track that apes Brad Carter's funky house single 'Morning Always Comes Too Soon'.

The surrealist director warrants his own adjective – 'Lynchian' – because he makes movies like nobody else, and his music follows a similar path. *Danielle Goldstein*



This week's new bar review

Cirque du Soir



London's original Cirque du Soir quickly became known as a place to see and be seen following its 2009 launch. Its mood of circus-themed decadence seduced celeb guests including Leo DiCaprio, Usher, Scarlett Johansson – and Lady Gaga, who is said to be such a fan that she was tipped to make an appearance at the launch of Cirque du Soir Mk II in Dubai.

The new venue is in the same spot as the former 400 Club, which closed its doors at The Fairmont two months ago. And it was the same team who threw them open two weeks ago (November 15) with all the fanfare and horn blowing you'd expect from a circus-themed club, including a visit from A-list Lebanese celeb Haifa Wehbe.

The narrow, underground room is decorated in dim hues by the hand

of designer Stephane Dupoux, while visitors are greeted by a cast of circus stereotypes; burlesque dancers jut from podiums, fairies spin from ropes hung from the ceiling, and jugglers tend the tables. The best moment, though, is when the troupe comes together in the wee hours for a fire-breathing, cork-popping stage show, in equal parts vaudeville performance and nightclub rabble-rousing.

It's no surprise that Cirque du Soir landed in Dubai, its high-end theatrics chiming with the city's brazenly glitzy scene. With talk of a third branch launching in Beirut next year, the city could just have beaten the buzz.

Open Tue, Thu and Fri 10pm-late. Guest list and reservations only. The Fairmont Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road (04 332 4900)

M-Dek



Recent weeks have seen two new club nights launching at M-Dek, making it high time to reassess this chic rooftop bar. Both on a Thursday, Italian-themed Aperitivo boasts fluid, funky DJing and drinks deals from 5pm until 9pm, making it an ideal post-work spot for Media City types. Later in the evening, the newer Bar Rumba, which launched on November 17, is a breath of fresh air, hosting jazz and Latin breakbeats from eclectic touring DJs. **Open daily 7pm-2am. Media One Hotel, Dubai Media City (04 427 1000)**

Sublime Bar and Lounge

Sublime is comparable to an Ikea showroom: on the surface it's sleek, modern and clean, but closer inspection reveals it as cheap, limited and plain. For a hotel bar it has a modicum of novelty, but we can't really recommend it for more than the daily two-for-one happy hour from 4pm to 8pm.

Open Sun-Wed noon-2am; Thu-Sat 3pm-3am; Fri noon-3am. Ibis World Trade Centre Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road (04 318 7130)

