

Album reviews

The Big Pink

Future This

★★★★★

As everybody scans the skies for 2012's bright new stars, it's worth remembering the albatross that being tipped as The Next Big Thing so often proves to be. It's something Milo Cordell and Robbie Furze are surely reminded of as they await the release of their second album.

Rewind to 2008 and the duo's first single was pumping from hip speakers throughout the world's coolest cities, its fuzzy, maximalist sound pitched part way between My Bloody Valentine, Spiritualized and a Boeing 787 at take-off. *A Brief History of Love* followed, a cavernous, FX-heavy, majesto-pop album with a cliff-top sweep and a single ('Dominoes') so addictive its chorus was sampled by bonkers US rapper Nicki Minaj.

Fast forward to 2012 and The Big Pink's follow-up shows that not very

much has changed. Alas, the alt-pop world has turned in the interim, which means that *Future This* sounds like a title born of very wishful thinking. The duo might have learned from fellow London scenesters The Horrors, whose second LP saw them so neatly wriggle out of their psych-garage-goth straitjacket. And their mates Klaxons could have warned them of the dangers of using the word 'future' in an album title.

With producer Paul Epworth again on board, they've crafted (more) epic songs not unimpressive in their scale and deep-space heft, but with R&B/hip-hop inflections and 'experimental' electronics grafted on. 'Jump Music' and a rockist 'Lose Your Mind' surely aim at Kasabian's fanbase, but The Big Pink are at least five years too late to that party. It's overly snide to say there are '77 Ways to Say No', as the final track claims, but *Future This* merits no more than a maybe. *Sharon O'Connell*



Howler

America Give Up

★★★★★

It's pretty crude to boil a band down to an equation, but with this Minneapolis-based quintet wearing their influences like band badges on an artfully distressed jean jacket, well, it's just so easy. While we're in the mood for stew, Howler are a boiled-off broth of ingredients including The Cramps, The Libertines and The Strokes, with a dash of The Modern Lovers and a sprinkling of early Razorlight back when they were aping The Libertines, who were just being the British Strokes, who were... oh, you get the picture.

Chief songwriter is 19-year-old Jordan Gatesmith and, while there is a certain appeal to the band's cleanly crafted scuzz-rock, given the album title it'd be fair to expect some sort of socio-political commentary. Sadly,

the best Gatesmith can offer is: 'We wanted to give a middle finger to something.' Why set yourself up if you've got nothing to say? Of course, some of the best songs ever written communicate ambiguous, angsty ennui, but unfortunately Howler lack grit, conviction and articulacy. *Kim Taylor Bennett*



This week's new bar review

Movida



It's not often you see the name **Movida** without the word 'celeb' perched either side: every muttering of the three syllables seems to call to mind a slew of tabloid tales of inebriated exclusive excess. No doubt you've already heard about the infamous visits of Kate Moss, Jay-Z and Beyoncé to the club's London base – what chance does its baby brother in Dubai have of measuring up?

In terms of décor, we have to say they've got it right. The club boasts the same sleek purple furnishings and neon glow as its Soho sister, and the large velvety-padded seats and attentive

staff exude excess. Instead of a collective dancefloor, each booth has its own floor-lit platform; yet while it's desperately exclusive, it doesn't look like much fun.

It's undeniable that by transporting such a renowned brand to a second location, founder Marc Merren risks dulling its exclusivity. Yet as a decadent invention for the world's most moneyed, we were, quite frankly, half expecting to hate this place – but came away strangely enchanted.

Open Wed-Fri 11pm-3am. Guestlist/reservations only. Radisson Royal Hotel, Sheikh Zayed Road (055 174 4449).

Two more to try

Oscar's Vine Society

Walk into Oscar's and everything seems accidently in place; brass picture frames hang from a stone wall, bottles are stacked to the ceiling, a chalk board announcing the day's menu hangs from exposed red bricks. In short, the bar does a fine job of impersonating all the clichés you might associate with an underground French bar, despite actually being a few floors up a luxury hotel. There's a decent range of grapes on offer, but the food can be rather disappointing.



Open Fri-Wed 6pm-11.30pm, Thu 6pm-1am. Crowne Plaza Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road (04 331 1111).

Carter's



Having turned its back on a colonial theme, we're sad to say there's now little to distinguish Carter's from any other faux-pub in Dubai. On some visits it's a lukewarm impersonation of a sports bar, on others it's left to a mild rock-pop soundtrack to entertain drinkers. Luckily, the softly lit terrace offers a pleasant winter escape. **Open daily noon-1am (food served until 11pm). Wafi, Oud Metha (04 324 0000).**