

Album reviews

My Bloody Valentine

m b v

★★★★★

A quick story to debunk the idea that all music journalists are cool. When this reviewer bought his first copy of My Bloody Valentine's seminal 1991 album, *Loveless*, he assumed its abrasive and distorted sound was the result of a faulty vinyl pressing, and promptly returned it. A foolish move, and one that he's still rightly mocked for. It took time to realise that between the growling terror of Kevin Shields' guitar and Bilinda Butcher's submerged vocals was an otherworldly beauty which, though heavily imitated over the last two decades, has never come close to being equalled.

It's therefore an enormous thrill that within seconds of listening to this outrageously overdue follow-up, you're transported back to the unique world of *Loveless* – a place where songs feel like a slow embrace amid the panic of a four-minute warning. *m b v* is a brilliant record – every

bit as dreamily turbulent as you'd hope – but it's not simply a sequel. The bludgeoning doom loops of 'Nothing Is' make for one of the most overtly punk things they've ever made, while by contrast, 'New You' could qualify as the most bright and chirpy. One thing's for sure though: it wouldn't just be uncool to return this masterful record, it would be plain wrong. *Oliver Keens*



Veronica Falls

Waiting for Something to Happen

★★★★★

Here's a tricky one: if you're an indie-pop band whose first album was praised for its wide-eyed, scratchy charm, how do you step things up second time around without alienating everyone who liked you in the first place? Veronica Falls have negotiated this tricky progression impressively well. The C86-loving quartet have expanded their range slightly, taking tips from The Primitives, early Lush on the jangling rush of 'My Heart Beats', and even krautrock: 'Tell Me' has a satisfying motorik

thump to it. With 13 songs in 37 minutes, *Waiting for Something to Happen* flashes by, but impeccably crafted tracks 'Buried Alive' and 'If You Still Want Me' are worth revisiting. *James Manning*



Devlin

A Moving Picture

★★★★★

It's often said there are only seven endlessly reworked stories in fiction. Here 23-year-old east London rapper Devlin has stretched to just one – that of his rise from the streets to become the voice of a forgotten generation. Admittedly Devlin's version of this now-familiar tale is smart and visceral – 'Pour more blood in your cup / Take a sip full of sin and let your taste buds savour the buzz' he raps on the Hendrix-sampling '(All Along the) Watchtower', featuring Ed Sheeran. But while the topic can stand to be covered again, the rock classic can't – it's a pop-rap bludgeoning.

By the Eminem-aping melodrama of 'Rewind' the tone feels like a one-note rant. 'It's like everybody wants me to live a lie,' Devlin spits. That's what you get for turning your life story into a cross pop album. *Jonny Ensall*



This week's new bar review

MusicHall

Book a seat at this unique theatre-club on the Palm Jumeirah to enjoy an eclectic night out



Having previously visited the original MusicHall in Beirut six years ago, we experienced an overwhelming sense of déjà vu upon sauntering into the Dubai location. Like stepping into a mysterious time bubble, the fun we'd had when we were six years' less wrinkly leaped to mind.

However, upon closer inspection, this was instead a case of 'same, same, but five-star'. We've heard that the original venue is now a slightly worn former cinema (put it this way: if the Beirut branch was a person, it would have a lot of laughter lines).

MusicHall's USP is in its name: it's famed for its eclectic roster of musicians

In contrast, the Dubai rendering is housed inside the incredibly lavish Zabeel Saray on the Palm. The theatre may look the same, but we're sure the carpets are thicker, the curtains heavier, and the lighting and sound, we hazard a guess, higher quality.

So does this extra opulence hit you via the drinks prices? No one can deny that a night at Dubai's MusicHall is dear. The minimum spend for an (albeit very big and comfy) bar stool is Dhs300, while a seat at one of the tables that make up the majority of the space is Dhs450: if you don't drink, go thirsty for a lot of soft drinks. This pricing setup means many 'Hallers invest in bottle service, thus leaving in a very merry state. A tip for those who do indulge: watch out for the type of spirit being poured into your tumbler. Being observant could save you Dhs30 a time.

But then it's not only the decor that you're paying for. MusicHall's USP is in its name: it's famed for its eclectic roster of musicians. Each act typically plays three songs, interspersed by 15-minute intervals, when chart-friendly fare tends to be spun. On our visit we were thrilled to hear female chanteuses performing soulful or funky-up Otis Redding and Stevie Wonder tracks; an eastern European folk duo playing the spoons; traditional Greek opera and guitar music (and dancing); and Bob Marley tunes sung by a charismatic and talented solo drummer.

Each act is clearly gifted and very carefully selected by famed Beirut-born Greek-Lebanese founder Michael Elefferlades (we know his heritage because it's engraved above the entrance, alongside an image of his face). Our only quibble is that the same line-up, bar one act, performed at both our (fully booked) January and February visits. Yet as long as there's a musical shake up every few months, we'll certainly return for both the party atmosphere and the high-quality performances on offer at this proudly Lebanese international success story.

Open Thu-Fri 9pm-3am. Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, Palm Jumeirah (056 270 8670).

