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Joe Mount has escalated from bedroom producer to successful pop pioneer and, as Mark Beaumont discovers, he's happier than ever

### St Vincent

Laura Snapes gets deep into the abrasive world of St Vincent, aka Annie Clark, and discovers why she's finally making music reflective of her true self

### Speedy Ortiz

On the road with Massachusetts' new DIY heroes, Phil Hebblethwaite joins a self-funded ride taking in private homes and fighting spirit

### From The Vaults: Tony Wilson, 1984

30 years ago this very week, the Factory Records pioneer spoke to Chris Bohn about his unconventional approach to showbusiness

## CONTRIBUTORS



**George Ding**  
Writer  
George reported on China's prohibitions on live music: "Gaga's got millions of fans on the Chinese mainland. If she ever toured here, I think she'd be floored by the reception."



**Lucy Jones**  
Deputy Editor, NME.COM  
Lucy interviewed our Radar star: "The mysterious Sohn rarely talks, so it was a thrill to chat to the man behind one of the most exciting debut albums of the year."



**Derek Bremner**  
Photographer  
"Having never seen BRMC live before I didn't really know what to expect from them, but I'm always relieved to see a band throw energy into a performance."

# THIS WEEK WE ASK...



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(Left) The Chinese 'Artpop' artwork and (inset) the uncensored original. (Right) Gaga's suggestive stagewear may not be tolerated in China



**ALBUM CENSORSHIP IS IRRELEVANT. LIVE MUSIC IS THE VICTIM OF CHINA'S ASSAULT ON POP CULTURE**

BY **GEORGE DING**

**Lady Gaga wants to play live in China. But government censorship laws won't make it easy, says one Beijing-based music fan**



Last month, Lady Gaga finally got government permission to release her album 'Artpop' in China. She tweeted: "I'm so excited!!!! The Chinese government approved 'Artpop' to be released in China with all 15 songs!

Next I hope I can come to perform!"

Even though she had to make edits to some songs and censor the cover (see above), it appeared to be a change of heart from China's Ministry of Culture. In 2011, the Ministry placed six tracks from Gaga's 'Born This Way' on a list of 100 blacklisted songs to be removed from music websites because they "endangered national cultural

safety". Other tracks included in the drive to keep "poor taste and vulgar content" away from China's youth included Katy Perry's 'Last Friday Night (TGIF)' and Backstreet Boys' 'I Want It That Way'.

Many Western reports claimed this was a "ban" on the artists and their music, but that's overstating it. In reality, the restriction applied only to online distribution and the offending tracks were targeted not for their content but because they hadn't been registered and reviewed by the ministry – a bureaucratic objection rather than a moral one. In fact, Backstreet Boys brought their 20th Anniversary Tour to six cities in China last year, and Katy Perry performed in Beijing just days before 'Artpop' got the green light.

'Artpop' won't see huge sales on the Chinese mainland. Illegal downloading is the norm in China – I've lived in Beijing for six years and wouldn't know where to buy a CD even if I wanted one. And anyone who did want an uncensored CD would probably have already had it delivered from Hong Kong. Focusing on the changes to Gaga's album artwork detracts from the real problem – and that's her hope to perform here. While she has played in Hong

Kong and Taiwan, the Chinese mainland is a very different beast. Even if a concert tour is approved, the government can change its mind whenever it wants. Just ask Oasis, whose 2009 shows in Beijing and Shanghai were cancelled with just a month to go, when censors realised that Noel Gallagher had appeared at a Free Tibet concert in 1997.

Even if Gaga doesn't have a stance on Tibet, the censorship of 'Artpop's cover doesn't bode well for her more suggestive costumes and choreography. Getting your album approved is a far cry from realising your artistic vision onstage in China. In 2008, I went to see Kanye West's much-touted Glow In The Dark Tour when he came to Beijing. Gone were the elaborate sets and laser lights. Forget about cameos from Kid Cudi and Lupe Fiasco, Yeezy wasn't even allowed to swear. Well-timed pauses took the place of f-bombs. There was little banter with the crowd and no encore. When the last song ended, Kanye quietly walked backstage. He hasn't been back since. ■

► For more opinion and debate, head to [NME.COM/blogs](http://NME.COM/blogs)

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**LOST ALBUMS**

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**The Van Pelt**  
**Sultans Of Settlement (1997)**

Chosen by Frank Turner



"They're kind of a lost band, really. They were from New Jersey, were around in the mid to late '90s and their singer was called Chris Leo – brother of Ted Leo of Ted Leo And The Pharmacists. 'Sultans Of Settlement' is their second album and one of the best indie records ever. The guitar playing is incredible, and Chris Leo's lyrics are very special. He doesn't sing about normal stuff, he sings about parent-teacher relationships and infidelity – odd topics done really intelligently, not just girls and cars. I used to worship that record – in fact I still do."

► **THE DETAILS**

- **RELEASE DATE** 1997
- **LABEL** Gern Blandsten Records
- **BEST TRACKS** Yamato (Where People Really Die), We Are The Heathens
- **WHERE TO FIND IT** Available as an import online or in good independent shops
- **LISTEN ONLINE** On Spotify

