

LILY WHITE LIES



LYRICALLY hysterical (if watching car crashes qualifies as your kind of entertainment) Lily Allen, the mouthiest Brit in pop (and boy is there some competition for that title), returns with her second studio album, *It's Not Me, It's You*. The daughter of actor Keith Allen shares with her father a certain bon vivant, middle finger aloft attitude to life and cares not a

damn who knows it. And so what if her Cockney accent is straight from the school of Dick van Dyke – it never worried Blur. Her bubbly electro-pop married to acidic wit is a compelling mix. She takes no prisoners on a number of tracks: on *It's Not Fair*, an ersatz bluegrass meets Yakety Sax tune, it's the turn of an ex boyfriend's lack of sexual prowess ("I'm lying in the wet patch in the middle of the bed/I'm feeling pretty damn hard done by/I spent ages giving head"). Leonard Cohen it isn't, but it's pretty damn funny. Elsewhere, *F**k You* is a playground tune about George W Bush and "anyone else who's a bit of a d**k"; an exemplar in puerility, but one many can identify with. Subtle it is not; Bratpop at its finest it is. ■



THE White Lies (not to be confused with the White Stripes) latest offering, *To Lose My Life*, is a glum and gloomy affair that borrows much from the Goth scene of the mid 80s. Think Joy Division with the Sisters Of Mercy chucked into the mix and you're not far off. The trio, from leafy Chiswick in west London, creates fashionably morose melodies that would

make Robert Smith of The Cure's mascara smudge. Lead singer Harry McVeigh's sweeping Ian Curtis-esque baritone is used to devastating effect, particularly on the combustible title track ("Let's grow old together/And die at the same time") which builds to a fabulously layered crescendo. ■

WITH NEW RELEASES FROM LILY ALLEN, U2 AND THE WHITE LIES, *GERAINT PRICE* FINDS A HAT TRICK OF HITS ON HIS HANDS



I felt a pang of schadenfreude at the launch of *No Line On The Horizon*, U2's twelfth studio release. Schadenfreude that the over-oiled PR hype machine behind the band managed to shoot itself in the foot with the release of arguably the biggest album of the year. Firstly, it was leaked online a week early when the band's Australian label inadvertently posted it on digital music site Getmusic.au. Then questions were asked in Britain's Parliament over the relentless hyping of the record by the BBC. Tory MP Nigel Evans, who sits on the culture, media and sport select committee, said it was getting "the sort of publicity money can't buy". You see, I'm somewhat ambivalent towards U2. Leaving the politics and worthiness aside, I just find them musically hit and miss. That said, a new release always elicits a frisson of interest in me. *No Line On The Horizon* is U2's eleventh studio release, and from first listen what is certain is that it's their least immediate work in many years. We start off on an eponymous opener, one of seven tracks written by the band in conjunction with producers Daniel Lanois and Brian Eno (who, with Steve Lillywhite, completes the production holy trinity). Harking back to The Unforgettable Fire era, it's a curious mix of at times discordant guitar and swooshing keyboards set against Bono's vocals. The standout (for me at least) is the appositely titled *Magnificent*. "I was born to sing for you/I didn't have a choice but to lift you up," intones Bono, the Edge's guitar shimmering circa 1984 in the background. It's one slow burner of a cut that grows on each listen. Lead single *Get On Your Boots* is a fuzzy, distorted slab of pop in the Vertigo vein that rattles along like a Noughties remake of *We Didn't Start The Fire* (judge for yourself if that's a compliment). *Cedars Of Lebanon*, however, is a return to the (lyrical) clumsy do-gooding ("Child drinking dirty water from the river bank/Soldier brings oranges he got out from a tank.") we've come to love to loath.

Musically it's plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Fans of their most recent works may not approve, but lovers of real music should rejoice. ■