

ON MY OWN

Laura Cain highlights some one-offs who are happy to go solo

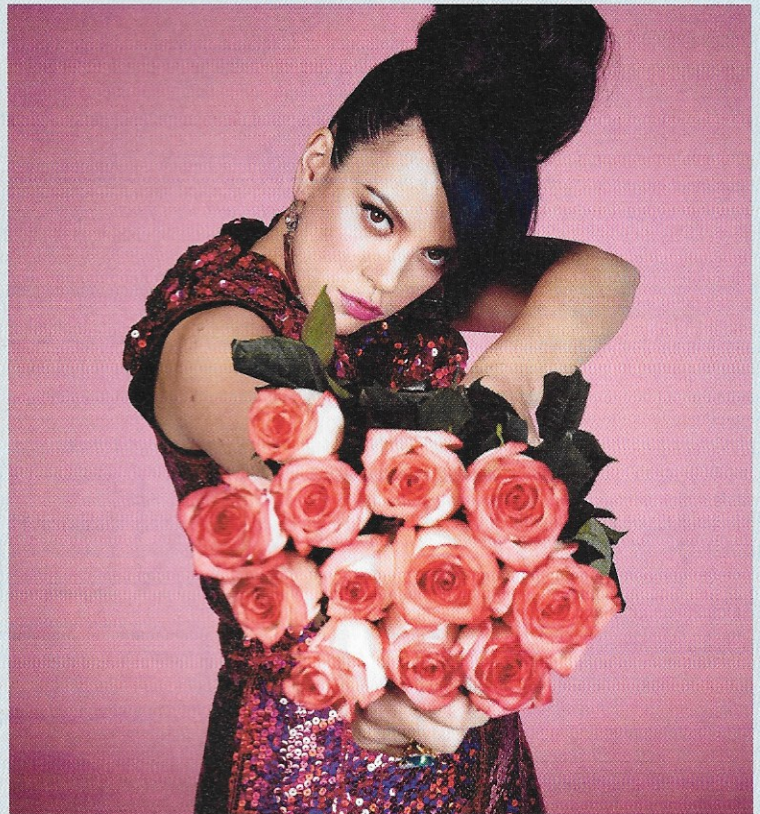
LILY ALLEN

If Lily Allen's recent set at Glastonbury was anything to go by, she's certainly retained her energetic schoolgirl charm and buoyant stage persona during a self-imposed hiatus. Following the four-year absence, Allen faced the possibility of a failed reprise with the release of *Sheezus* this spring, but some frosty receptions didn't mar her enthusiasm as she set off on the summer festival circuit, resulting in many positive reviews. Now, she's been booked to headline this year's Edinburgh Hogmanay celebrations, and it's likely to be one of her biggest audiences to date: last year, for example, 130,000 attendees swarmed Princes Street Gardens to the sound of Pet Shop Boys.

Allen's 2006 debut album *Alright, Still* put her on the map with ska-friendly compositions full of catchy hooks and youthful attitude. Eight years on, 'Hard Out Here' (Allen's vindictive answer to 'Blurred Lines') is a poppier affair that divided opinion. On one side, it was praised for pointing a finger at the industry's sexism; on the other, remarked upon for ironically containing an unclear message.

Allen's off-loading lyricism might be her downfall but it's also one of her biggest attributes. Opting to leave the public school vicinity aged 15, she delved into music-making with the intention of getting things out of her system. This is partly why the Hammersmith-born singer retains such an appeal to this day: she's still among the few musicians singing so openly about modern living, dealing with subjects such as hate and menstruation in a frivolous manner. It's Allen's brand of cockney, pop-friendly musings and wit that makes her a lingeringly relevant entertainer.

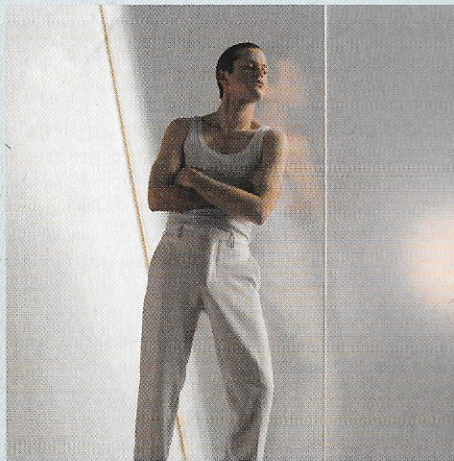
02 Academy, Glasgow, Sat 22 Nov. Concert in the Gardens, Edinburgh, Hogmanay.



LADY GAGA

Exciting and extravagant Lady Gaga was once the talk of the music world, but last year's release of third effort *Artpop* proved that originality is often hard to maintain. Nonetheless, for an artist comfortably adept at bringing novel ideas and intriguing elements to her performances, it will be interesting to see how the new album translates into her arRAVE tour, with Glasgow's impressive Hydro being a fitting host.

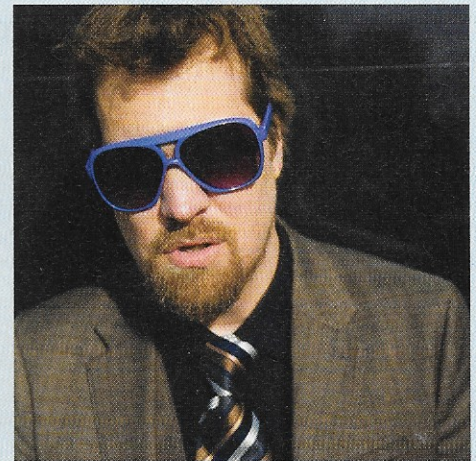
■ SSE Hydro, Glasgow, Sun 19 Oct.



PERFUME GENIUS

Mike Hadreas' haunting vocals are set to echo around the Caves, in an inspired feat of venue booking. The Seattle musician's previous material featured sparse piano layouts that gently punctuated his intimate songwriting, words hinting at the difficult life of gay teens. New album *Too Bright* promises to be a more forward probing of sexuality, interlaced with an electronic twist (see live review, page 72).

■ Caves, Edinburgh, Sun 23 Nov.



JOHN GRANT

Poignant, anguished and soaked in throbbing synths, *Pale Green Ghosts* put the ex-Czars frontman on the map in 2013 and critics were quick to sing his praises. This November, John Grant finds his way to the Usher Hall, as the Royal Northern Sinfonia accompanies him in reworking this magic live, with the promise of the odd new composition added to the mix.

■ Usher Hall, Edinburgh, Sat 29 Nov.