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## This week's new live music

**Andrew Clements, John Fordham & John Robinson**

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Other Lives

### Other Lives, On tour

You don't necessarily need a cabin in the woods in order to connect with the American landscape. From a remote Oklahoman town, Other Lives are a band whose music is, spiritually, many miles from the back-to-basics communion of musician and folk idiom. Rather than offering reassuring simplicity, Other Lives make music that is all about acknowledging complexity: the band's album *Tamer Animals* makes a virtue of the band's arrangements, wherein Jesse Tabish's songs are accompanied by restrained cello and vibes. On one level, Other Lives are of a piece with the widescreen parables of a band like Calexico. On another, their tuneful but melancholic compositions make them a kind of hip Coldplay, the songs used to tearjerking effect in that covert breaker of emerging mainstream talent, US TV drama *Grey's Anatomy*.

***Deaf Institute, Manchester, Wed; Lexington, N1, Thu***

*John Robinson*

### Shonen Knife, On tour



Shonen Knife

The prevalent grunge nostalgia vibe of the moment makes it a good time for the return

of Shonen Knife, the Japanese trio whose naive pop-punk compositions were unironically adored by Kurt Cobain. The band were ultimately signed to Creation records in the UK, but how they were presented in the media often seemed incredibly patronising, as critics failed to grasp the idea that three Japanese women might want to play cute songs on the guitar. To celebrate 30 years together, the band this week release an album called Osaka Ramones, where they pay tribute to their most formative influence.

***Deaf Institute, Manchester, Sat; Cluny, Newcastle upon Tyne, Sun; Sneaky Pete's, Edinburgh, Mon; Nice N Sleazy, Glasgow, Tue; Black Box, Belfast, Wed***

JR

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## **Green Man Festival, Crickhowell**

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Sic Alps

A mixture of reverence and irreverence, the Green Man is a microcosm of every strand of folk music worth the name. Folk, after all, is the foundation for this event, where, in a green and misty pocket of the Welsh landscape, artists both traditional and modern have for several years been accommodated under the festival's wide umbrella. This year, as a testament to the expansion in the folky on both sides of the Atlantic, you'll find fewer of the older, more venerated names (Robert Plant, Donovan, Bert Jansch etc) that you'll have seen at previous events. Instead, there's a wealth of young, acoustically minded performers in the shape of Fleet Foxes, Laura Marling and Josh T Pearson. For all the bucolic atmosphere, though, Green Man's vibe is not purist, and decent bands are admitted from across the board, like the rowdy Sic Alps and the heavy synth groovers Holy Fuck.

***Glanusk Estate, Fri to 21 Aug***

JR

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## **Elan Mehler Trio, Brecon & London**

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Elan Mehler Trio

Young American pianist Elan Mehler's albums for UK DJ Gilles Peterson's Brownswood label have been very accessible and pop-angled but nonetheless cliché-avoiding sessions that at times resemble the soundtrack to a romantic movie. His 2010 album *Half Seas Over* was a collaboration with country-rocker Adam McBride-Smith, and its 2011 follow-up *The After Suite* also involves McBride-Smith and vocalist Becca Stevens on a new batch of ethereal ballads and tone-poems. That material is reworked

here for Mehler's subtle acoustic trio with bassist Tod Hedrick and drummer Max Goldman, and the album's more structurally surprising and improv-oriented aspects should get a better workout in this context. Mehler's Brecon appearance finds him in formidable contemporary-jazz company, on a programme also featuring Norma Winstone's trio.

**Brecon Jazz Festival, Sat; Vortex Jazz Club, N16, Sun**

*John Fordham*

## Grimeborn Opera, London



The Emperor of Atlantis. Photograph: Steve Kenny

Despite the punning irreverence of its name, Grimeborn Opera is in serious danger of becoming a bit of an institution. This year's programme sensibly continues with the mix as before – repertory and near-repertory works in small-scale productions by up-and-coming music-theatre companies, alongside brand new operas and works in progress. This year Britten's *The Turn Of The Screw*, Handel's *Alcina*, and Mozart's *Impresario* represent the tried and tested, while a double bill of Holst plus Ullmann's *The Emperor Of Atlantis* should appeal to rarity hunters. Stephen Crowe's *Francis Bacon Opera* and Jools Scott's *Demon Lover* feature among the novelties.

**Arcola, E8, Wed to 27 Aug**

*Andrew Clements*

## Harvey Trilogy, Edinburgh



Ilan Volkov. Photograph: Simon Butterworth

Between 2005 and 2008 Jonathan Harvey was composer in association with the BBC Scottish Symphony. During this time he produced three large-scale orchestral works – *Body Mandala*, ... *Towards A Pure Land*, and *Speakings* – all of which relate in one way or another to Harvey's long-standing interest in Buddhism. Ilan Volkov, then the BBC SSO's principal conductor, took charge of the premieres of all three works and recorded them for CD, but until now they have never been heard as Harvey intended – as a trilogy. However, the far eastern theme of this year's Edinburgh festival provided the perfect opportunity to present them all, so Volkov again conducts his former orchestra and IRCAM in Paris provides the real-time electroacoustic transformations that *Speakings* requires.

**Usher Hall, Sat**

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