

GOING UNDERGROUND



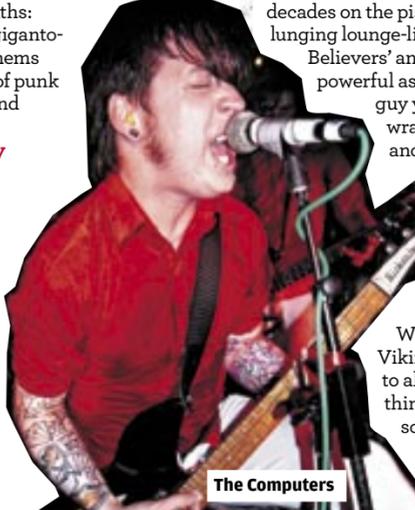
This year's Reading and Leeds sites are packed with amazing punk rock. **Ben Patashnik** from *NME.COM*'s 'Notes From The Underground' picks out 10 highlights

Not only has punk rock – both homegrown and imported – never been better represented at Reading and Leeds, but the quality's equally high. So with that in mind, we thought it'd be a crime to let some of these rare lot go unnoticed; yeah, *The Bronx* and their Mariachi alter-egos are going to tear shit up, but that won't surprise anyone. Take a chance and get up early, or duck by the Lock Up Stage at almost any point and we promise you'll leave muttering something about 'holy-shit-that-was-the-most-awesome-thing-I've-ever-seen-dude...'

1 SONIC BOOM SIX
They've gone from sleeping on their fans' floors to one of the biggest stages in the world, and not a second too soon for the 10-legged soundclash known as SB6. Their backstory is interesting enough – genre-mashing Mancs make a fiercely DIY stand and bleed the sound of modern multicultural England (with all its joys and nasty social problems) into a bafflingly brilliant series of albums, tour the world on their own, do it again – but would mean nothing if they sucked. But they don't even remotely suck! They're one of the most truly stimulating live bands ever to whip an apathetic crowd into devotion, and their grassroots army of support stands testament to that. What's more, their billing is a victory and inspiration for everyone who writes songs with their mates and dreams of something better.
■ **Opening Main Stage, Friday Reading/Sunday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'A Bright Cold Day In April'**

2 A WILHELM SCREAM
When you talk of intensity, of violent music being used intelligently and crafted symphonically, and of live shows being ecstatic celebrations of something powerfully nameless, you talk of A Wilhelm Scream. Having toured relentlessly almost since records began, their last three albums ('Mute Print', 'Ruiner' and the staggering 'Career Suicide') have seen them win plaudits both critical and popular, but it's the sheer thrill of watching five dudes absolutely killing every time they step onstage that endures. Boil it down to maths: massive riffs plus throaty gigantochoruses plus (belting anthems times speed) to the power of punk fury equals AWESOME. And maths never lies, does it?
■ **Lock Up Stage, Saturday Reading/Friday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'The King Is Dead'**

3 THE COMPUTERS
Look past the Costello-on-glue outfits, the slick greaser hairdos and the sad fact they're not comprised of circuitboards and diodes and 'The Computers' philosophy can be expounded thusly: we are going to rock your fucking



balls off. Replete with buzzsaw guitars and neck-snapping drums this Exeter foursome care not for such minor conceits as the time of their billing (probably somewhere around the time much of the festival vomits themselves awake) because they know they are a truly fearsome alarm clock in punk rock form. Here's a tip: just stay up from the night before to ensure you don't miss them. But don't blame us if you die from fatigue immediately after.
■ **Opening Lock Up Stage, Saturday Reading/Friday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'Love The Music, Hate The Kids'**

4 BOUNCING SOULS
Yes, that band your older brother used to be into are still around – and they're still brilliant. The New Jersey survivors might look a bit creaky after two decades on the piss, but Greg Attonito's still got his lunging lounge-lizard drawl, and the likes of 'True Believers' and 'Kids And Heroes' are just as powerful as ever; provided, of course some guy you met seconds before has wrapped himself around your soul and poured half a pint of warm lager down your face. Be prepared for colossal singalongs.
■ **Lock Up Stage, Friday Reading/Sunday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'True Believers'**

5 STREETLIGHT MANIFESTO
Whisper it – horns aren't only for Vikings. Streetlight are a living riposte to all those fools locked in the past who think chunky power chords married to soaring brass immediately means Reel Big Fish-like idiocy, and they're also the best chance you'll have to play air-trumpet the

entire weekend. Far less cheesy than Mad Caddies (who are on the same stage on Saturday at Reading/Friday at Leeds), go see them if you like deeply noir storytelling set to a rich, cinematic soundtrack; avoid if you're scared of telling your friends you like bands with brass sections. You massive sissy.
■ **Lock Up Stage, Friday Reading/Sunday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'A Moment Of Silence'**

6 SNUFF
Yes! Snuff are back! And they are – as anyone who saw them support NOFX a couple of months ago – as delightfully ramshackle as ever. Long, meandering between-song banter, a singing drummer who sounds like he's selling onions dahn Stepney Market and frenetic, drunk anthems such as 'Nick Northern' and 'Martin'... Kings Of Leon they certainly ain't. But Snuff's charm lies in their immense likeableness, that and the fact they plainly don't give the merest of shits that they're a total anachronism in the world of Das Musik V2.0. They probably won't be playing again for another few years (because they can't be arsed), so don't miss the chance to have a bit of a shout.
■ **Lock Up Stage, Saturday Reading/Friday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'Nick Northern'**

7 ALEXISONFIRE
Actual, certifiable gods in their native Canada, their double billing is the surest sign that the mainstream is cottoning onto the fact that these chaps could/should/will be vast. Expect big tunes (and loads of Noah And The Whale fans to collectively cack themselves in abject fear) when they play the cavernous Main Stage, and something approaching

vicious chaos later the same day on the Lock Up, but throughout both there'll be the feeling that if the entire world was run through the democratisation of circle pits it'd be a much better place.
■ **Main Stage/Lock Up Stage, Friday Reading/Sunday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'Boiled Frogs'**

8 FRANK TURNER
He's been reading your texts, y'know, and Turner knows exactly why you're at Reading: to get heroically smashed and forget about the world. It's scientifically impossible to leave an FT gig and not feel like, yeah, the planet's pretty rad despite everything – especially because the whole tent'll be bellowing along – so get some positivity up you before Radiohead destroy all happiness. He's not the only shouty troubadour from a legendary band (Hot Water Music's Chuck Ragan is playing the Lock Up on Saturday Reading/Friday Leeds), but ex-Million Deader Turner's certainly the most likely to get thousands of people infused with a sense of righteousness/general pissedness. In a good way.
■ **NME/Radio 1 Stage, Sunday Reading/Saturday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'The Ballad Of Me And My Friends'**

9 ANTI-FLAG
Anti-Flag's To-Do List for Reading and Leeds: 1) Bring the righteous mosh; 2) Make Billy Talent, who'll be waiting nervously in the wings to go on afterwards, sweat copiously with the fear that there's no way they'll be able to touch them in terms of intensity or passion; 3) Slam a hefty dose of politics

and social relevance into the faces of festival-goers hitherto unprepared for such cranial activity; 4) Bring a bit more righteous mosh; 5) Fill their ferocious melodies with loads of bits where everyone goes "Wooooooaaaaah" and pumps their fist; 6) See points 1 and 4 again; 7) Repeat.
■ **Co-headlining Lock Up Stage, Friday Reading/Sunday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'Die For Your Government'**

10 AFI
There's something about AFI that inspires true devotion; if you're the guy at their gig *without* a tattoo of Davey Havok's Top Five hairdos then you're the weird one. They've always concerned themselves with making the underdog feel like a superhero and provided a haven for the tender circus of freaks who follow them. There's no time like the present to dip into their world – just make sure both feet are on the ground when they play 'The Days Of The Phoenix'.
■ **NME/Radio 1 Stage, Sunday Reading/Saturday Leeds**
■ **Download: 'The Lost Souls'**

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