

View From Inside Festival Republic's Melvin Benn
On Why Festivals Don't Always Have To Be About
The Music

When you're a teenager and you've been crammed with books at school, you want to put them down and rock out, essentially. As you get older, from your mid-twenties onwards, you realise that life isn't all about music to the exclusion of everything else. So when I realised this, it wasn't long before I hit upon an idea for a festival that could cover music but also literature, film, theatre, television, poetry, art and comedy. That idea was

Latitude. I genuinely believed back in 2006 that there wasn't a festival doing that in this



country – possibly not in the world. When an exciting idea has come to fruition, it's a fantastic feeling. This year, Latitude has people such as Thom Yorke and the Pet Shop Boys, so the music is still key, but when poets like Simon Armitage read from their collections to packed audiences – he did so last year and will again this year – they tell me that for a short period they feel like the rock stars on the music stages on the other side of the festival.

As for what I shall be doing in two weeks' time, I can't wait to hear Thom Yorke's first ever solo live set and I'm really keen to listen to Andrew Motion; I don't know whether they actually do it but in my mind the Poet Laureate reads poems to the Queen. And so now he's retired from doing that and instead will read them to the masses. I think that's rather nice, don't you?

The Latitude Festival runs from July 17 to 19. www.latitudefestival.co.uk

Music Extra Global Sounds

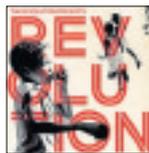
Too safe for a

Club culture is still a major catalyst for international music. Here, dance-floor anthems have driven global genres from bhangra to reggaeton into the commercial charts and British club nights remain a hotbed of emerging and revived styles, whether it's Afro-Latin kuduro beats or Colombian cumbia. So the clubby collaboration of The Revolution Presents **Revolution** (Rapster) should be an exciting prospect: this new album stars a multifaceted Cuban music ensemble along with various British and American producers and artists such as sample enthusiast Norman Cook and rapper Lateef Daumont.

It's a curious combination and one that works in fits and bursts. The thrusting Latin electro of Crazy Love (featuring Björk/Talvin Singh producer Guy Sigsworth) is an immediate highlight, and there are ace turns including Havana hip hop combo Orishas and Róisín Murphy. Elsewhere, Marius de Vries's intense patter lends a menacing air to the tropical beats and high-pressure brass of Guantanamo.

Special mention goes to the four-part harmonies of female vocalists Sexto Sentido and Harold Lopez-Nussa Torres's great piano flourishes but fans of raw Cuban roots might find this a safe compromise. This Revolution is mainly lively, bilingual dance pop – good fun, but with a bit more risk-taking and imagination, it might have been a really exhilarating stormer.

The combination of blues and international styles has yielded some standout records in recent years, including Tinariwen's electric desert riffs and collaborations such as that between Justin Adams and Gambia's Juldeh Camara. British-Asian singer Najma Akhtar and



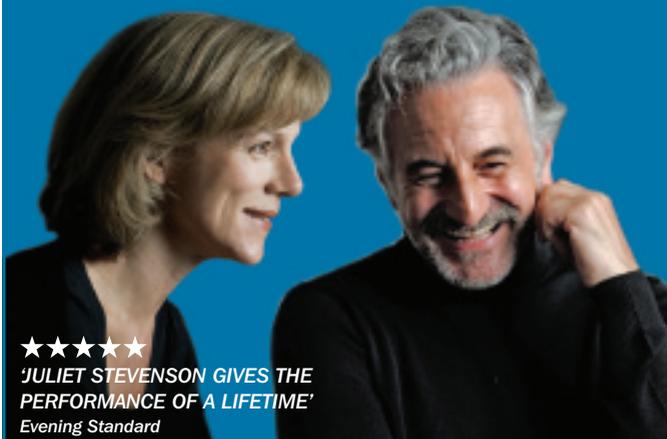
Good fun: Norman Cook and tres player Armando Cosmea appear on Revolution



venerable US guitarist/songwriter Gary Lucas (whose previous work spans Captain Beefheart to Jeff Buckley) offer their own spin on the blues with **Rishte** (World Village). It's not a flawless fusion – occasionally Akhtar's spiralling tones career away from Lucas's moody instrumentation – but there is a definite allure to these melodies, especially the steel-infused, balmy Fragrance, the pulsing rhythm and drone of Daaya and Special Rider Blues, where Akhtar takes the standard 'woke

up this morning' lament in a fabulously different direction. British DJ/writer Charlie Gillett has been an enduring champion of global music and he's compiled another exceptional modern selection in **Otro Mundo** (WCJ), part of his Sound Of The World series. This double album includes 34 acts from 34 countries and Gillett's broad-ranging, effusive perspective ensures it flows enticingly from Calexico's southern-fried Americana and the Ethiopian reggae-soul of Dub Colossus to the

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State Of Play Games Reviews By Steven Fox

Battlefield Heroes

PC, free ★★★★★☆

Battlefield Heroes (pictured) is basically free but it's also a fully fledged, beautifully made, insanely fun and utterly addictive new way of gaming. It's a browser-based (www.battlefieldheroes.com) third-person cartoon shooter in which you can blast, drive, fly and burn your way across a variety of maps with and against other human opponents. At the start, you create a character (up to four) – choose from gunner, soldier or commando – and fight either in the Royal Army (essentially the Allies) or the National Army (quasi-Nazi types). The more you fight, the more you level up, allowing you to unlock weapons and special abilities. The combat is a real hoot but you'll

spend a lot of time wanting to kit your character out in crazy outfits, hats, facial hair etc – and buying such items is how the game is paid for. You don't have to spend 50p on a handlebar 'tache but you'll want to.

Overlord II

X360, £44.99 (also available on PS3, and PC, £29.99) ★★★★★☆

Snappy dialogue, gallows humour and a rich fantasy universe combine well but fail to overcome serious gameplay deficiency and a distinct lack of polish here. You are an evil master hellbent on taking on the forces of good with your horde of minions. These little gremlins are your main resource as you group them to help protect you, fight enemies and collect power-up rewards. The big problem with Overlord II is that it's painfully



linear, offering none of the exploration of its predecessor, and as a straightforward action game the combat just isn't up to scratch. It's also massively buggy: minions continually get lost or stuck, audio sometimes drops and the camera often sucks. It's not particularly pretty, either, which is a shame because you'll want to like it.