

# GIT Award 2013

**As the shortlist for this year's GIT AWARD is announced, we catch up with two of the accolade's judges, The Quietus' JOHN DORAN and BBC6 Music's TOM RAVENSCROFT, to find out how Liverpool's current musical crop are perceived outside our fair city...**

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So the GIT Award rolls around again, boasting a dozen eclectic nominees and an impressively qualified panel of judges. The brainchild of Peter Guy, the journalist behind the award's namesake blog Get Into This, the award is designed to celebrate all things music in the city. Last year's inaugural GIT Award highlighted some of Merseyside's upcoming and limelight-starved bands (spanning Esco Williams to Ex-Easter Island Head) to a national audience, with baroque rockers Loved Ones taking the crown. As we prepare ourselves for this month's awards by acquainting or reacquainting ourselves with the current contenders, it's also an opportune time to step back and take stock of affairs.

Liverpool music. We're all living it, but what does it sound like from afar? It can be hard for us, immersed in a city that is clearly humming and buzzing at its nucleus, to have a handle on where we fit into the bigger national picture. Just how is Liverpool's music scene in 2013 perceived outside the city? To try and attain some national perspective, we took the opportunity to speak to two of the judges on the GIT Award panel who call somewhat sunnier southern climes home (and who know a thing or two about music as well).

JOHN DORAN, as if you didn't know, is the editor of *The Quietus* and has contributed to just about every music publication worth reading (including *VICE* and the dearly missed *Stool Pigeon*). He also happens to have been born in Merseyside and, though he left at 18 and has established his career mostly from down south, he says that, "growing up Liverpool provided me with a musical education."

For Doran, it was the grindcore movement of his era and the scene around the Planet X club that moved him most. "I saw bands that are kind of revered in metal circles these days who were just playing in front of maybe about 100 people or so. Bands like Napalm Death, Extreme Noise Terror and, of course, local band Carcass. This is the thing about Liverpool music... in terms of indie or in terms of mainstream, bands like Cast or the La's are known all over the world. But if you actually talk to any American kid who's into heavy metal, they know about Carcass. And I'm sure if you ask anyone walking down Bold Street, they won't know who you're talking about."

Doran is a musical Liverpool that you won't find in the tourist guides, nor will you even find Carcass or Planet X in the index of Paul Du Noyer's incredibly thorough and lovingly penned history of Liverpool music, *Liverpool: Wondrous Place*. From the pop rap of teenage Tyler Mensah to the sludgy metal of Conan, this year's GIT nominees list snapshots a musical city no longer dominated by the jangly guitars of yore. Or as Doran puts it, "there's no fucking way I would go up to Liverpool for no money when I'm that impoverished if everybody just sounded like the La's, do you know what I mean?"

BBC6 Music presenter TOM RAVENSCROFT is another music industry figure known for seeking out new and mould-smashing music; a genetic attribute no doubt passed on by his late father, John Peel. Ravenscroft grew up in the south but, as he explains, his Liverpool association is quite literally inescapable: "My dad was born there and we were brought up [as] LFC supporters, and my middle name is Dalglish. So I had little choice really."

On the issue of - as Doran puts it - "the monolithic shadow of the Beatles", Ravenscroft is pragmatic. "It was a great thing for the city, but I can see that it has its downsides. I'm not big on nostalgia in music and could see that for young bands starting out and wanting to make their own mark it could be a

bit annoying." Doran puts it more bluntly: "The Beatles split up two years before I was born and I'm a middle-aged guy. It's kind of like... it's time to forget about it now."

Doran continues, "speaking as someone who's always lived in working class - even down at heel - areas with low rent, I would say that Liverpool now comes across as more like a proper bonafide international city rather than how it used to feel when I was growing up - which was like a former international city that had fallen on very hard times." Ravenscroft agrees that the creative swell has been noted: "I think so. I have certainly noticed 'Liverpool' in brackets after more bands I like."

And the sounds that are coming out are ever diversifying. Doran points to the incredibly ambitious Rhys Chatham 'guitar orchestra' piece performed at the Anglican Cathedral last year as part of the Biennial. A Crimson Grail utilised 100 electric guitars and 8 basses, and has only been performed twice elsewhere, in New York and in Paris. Doran adds, "all my mates in bands went up to Liverpool and they loved it, they said it was amazing. So on one hand you've got the whole indie Beatles thing, but on the other hand that Rhys Chatham thing really represents to me... you've got every kind of guitar music under the sun really."

It's also helpful that, in the advent of burgeoning technology and a collapsing music industry, it's becoming less important that bands base themselves in London. It's no longer a case of 'you haven't made it till you go to London'. Ravenscroft agrees, "Perhaps [that was the case] a few years ago but less so now; regional independent labels have certainly helped. I think you're probably better off not being in London, really."

And as Doran notes, "London's never produced a really great band. People form great bands elsewhere and then go to London to become famous. It's kind of worth bearing in mind."

While we're not here to London bash either, it is something to ponder: why is it that Liverpool remains, to paraphrase Du Noyer, not just a place where music happens, but a reason why it happens?

Self obsession, and a sense of camaraderie bordering on insularity can be local traits; as Doran points out, Liverpool bands continue to have a tendency for referencing the city in song titles and lyrics in a way that bands nowhere else do.

Looking at how this feeds into the music of the city, he may have just hit the nail on the head: "Scousers love other Scousers, whereas people from Manchester love the bricks and mortar of the place. People from Liverpool all seek out other people from Liverpool when they're away from Liverpool, and I think that maybe there's something about that sense of community and that sense of cooperation that feeds into the music that comes out of the city."

*The GIT Award ceremony takes place on 19th April at Leaf*

## The People's Choice Prize

New for the GIT Award 2013 is the People's Choice Prize. The award's judges were keen to open up the 12-strong shortlist to Liverpool music lovers and let you have your say on the year's best sounds. Getintothisthis has teamed up with *Bido Lito!*, Seven Streets and Juice FM to host an online poll of the 12 shortlisted artists asking Liverpool music fans to vote for their top act from 2012-2013. The winner will perform at the GIT Award showcase on 19th April and also receive a special memento produced by Milk-Presents. Go to [bidolito.co.uk](http://bidolito.co.uk) to cast your vote.

**and the nominations are**