

# THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

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Band for believers: Lucky Soul JUSTIN NG/UNIFEX

## So long, Marianne: Ali and her gang reach out to the pure-pop faithful

Rock  
Simon Price



Lucky Soul  
The Lexington  
LONDON



Amazing Baby  
Proud Galleries  
LONDON



Pure pop is a faith, and **Lucky Soul** are a band for believers. More than that, in fact they're a band of believers. *The Great Unwanted*, the 2007 debut album by the Sixties-tinged sextet, was a romantic and heartfelt treasure, adored by all who heard it, or at least everyone in possession of the full complement of aortas and ventricles. "An immediate classic" was my judgement at the time, and I'm standing by that. And, on the evidence of this comeback concert, in which they showcase material from the forthcoming follow-up (due early 2010), they've got another one up their sleeves. A band member tells me it'll be "darker" than its predecessor, but I've got my fingers crossed that's just the sort of thing musicians feel they ought to say when they're coming off the back of something ultra-sunshiny, and that

however dark it gets, somebody remembers to leave a light on.

Lucky Soul don't stand alone: they share a stable with popped-in, souled-out co-religionists. I've always loved record labels that have a distinct aesthetic, and Ruffa Lane, which is co-run by one band member and one ex-member, is such a label. It's no coincidence that Napoleon, the 10-strong Dexys-meets-Springsteen crazies from Uppsala, are Ruffa Lane signings, as is tonight's support act Montt Mardié, a bespectacled bear of a man from Stockholm who only writes songs about his girlfriend Annie, all of them ebullient to bursting point. When he bashfully announces "I love you, Annie!" before his last song, the whole place goes "Awwww". He's thoroughly disarming, which is especially welcome in a city where everyone's armed.

We've already had a taster of Lucky

Soul's second album in the stunning shape of "Woah Billy", quite simply one of the under-the-radar singles of 2009. A bewitching brew of T Rex, Dusty and Blondie, with a poignant pinch of self-doubt (in the literalist way that only a song with the refrain "I've got some doubts about myself" can be), it's a step forward from the contained *Ready Steady Go!* stylings of *The Great Unwanted*. Seriously, log on to your computer and do whatever it takes to hear it: it's one of those songs that forces you to go back to the start and listen again the first time you play it, and once you've done that, it's inside your head and inside your world all day long.

The Greenwich group, led by the core couple of Andrew Laidlaw and Ali Howard (who, with her honey-blond hair and high-necked Sixties dress, is the spitting image of Marianne Faithfull circa "As Tears Go By"

tonight), kick off with "Woah Billy" at the risk of shooting their load early, which takes some nerve. As, in Ali's case, does being here at all: "I've just come out of hospital," she says while kicking off her shoes, Sandie Shaw-like, "and I'm a bit wobbly. How about that, Liam?"

It's the self-confidence of a band who know they've got an immaculate collection of material to draw upon, from *The Great Unwanted*'s title track, with its knowing Lesley Gore quote, through possible future singles "Ain't Nothing Like a Shame (To Bring It All Back Home)" and "White Russian Doll" with its driving Vandellas beat, to "Get Out of Town", featuring a cameo from Brighton girl group The Pipettes on backing vocals. And, indeed, the self-confidence of a band who can afford to leave out their finest moment, "Add Your Light to Mine", completely.

Needless to say, I'm (still) a believer.

# ABC THE INDEPENDENT

ON SUNDAY

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'I, Hunk' and 'Blond Schickel'

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## Contributors

Geoff Dyer

Shane Daniels

Ian Thomson

Rebecca Pearson

Matt Thorne

## POP

★★★★★

### Lucky Soul

*The Great Unwanted*

RUFFA LANE



Lucky Soul have been a whispered name around town for so long that one began to wonder whether they would ever actually deliver. Oh my, how they've delivered. *The Great Unwanted* is an immediate classic, filled with songwriting which borrows its bricks and mortar from both the Brill Building and Hitsville USA: sun-dappled Sixties girl-pop which enraptures from the first honey-sweet note Ali Howard sings. If you liked the concept of The Pipettes but were put off by the jollity and humour, Lucky Soul are for you, replacing those qualities with melancholia, heartache and existential angst. Marvellous. Simon Price

## Immortal combat

How the Chinese martial arts triumphed over the mu...

# UNCUT

## LUCKY SOUL *The Great Unwanted*

RUFFALANE



### Spectre of Spector roused by Greenwich popsters

Lucky Soul may appear a bunch of whimsical pastiche-mongers, but their debut performs the rare feat of meticulously acknowledging its inspirations – The Chiffons and The Shangri-Las via Dusty Springfield – while also transcending them. For all their look-the-part poses, they can infuse glorious pop symphonies with wit: check the skipped heartbeat in “My Darling, Anything”. Ali Howard performs a sterling impression of Sandie Shaw’s wayward daughter throughout, and it’s hard not to be won over. ANDREW MUELLER

ON THE CD  TRACK 04



## Pop

### Lucky Soul

Bush Hall, London



Lucky Soul take a more studied approach to 60s pop classicism. Five dapper gents and one peroxidized femme fatale, they play exquisitely understated songs about heartache, loneliness and smalltown despair with élan and piquant precision, as if Petula Clark had been touched by Phil Spector's production alchemy. Singer Adi Howard makes the Ronettes-like One Kiss Don't Make a Summer sound both glacial and intimate, before cooing through the flawless ache of Baby I'm Broke.

Lucky Soul may be a period piece, but they are a supremely crafted one. They encore with The Killing Moon, Echo and the Bunnymen's immaculate nugget of moody, mid-80s pop, and it shines for the same reason that tonight is a sweeping triumph: it's the songs, stupid.

**Ian Gittins**

*Lucky Soul are at Middlesbrough Music Live festival on June 3. Details: [middlesbroughmusiclive.co.uk](http://middlesbroughmusiclive.co.uk)*



Simon  
Price

### Lucky Soul

Bush Hall, LONDON

With her peroxide Dusty Springfield bob, sleeveless floral-print dress, Mary Quant make-up and red rose hairclip, Lucky Soul's Ali Howard could be a mannequin from the V&A's recent Sixties Fashion exhibition come to life. Standing with her back to the audience and facing a soberly-dressed backing band (we really don't see enough waistcoats in pop any more) and a curtain of black velvet and fairy lights, she spins around, sings a song with the words "I need you/Like a lifeboat needs the shore", and you know that this is, in every possible sense, a good start.

Lucky Soul are a band to fall in love with, and to. A Motown- and Spector-influenced pop sextet from Greenwich, their delicious sound will be adored by anyone who already has time for Saint Etienne, The Cardigans and Blondie, but mere pastiche isn't all that the songwriter Andrew Laidlaw has up his cuff-linked sleeve. Drawing mainly from their debut album *The Great Unwanted*, a disarming and enchanting show includes six-beats-to-the-bar ballads, four-to-the-floor stormers and neat covers (a funk-ed-up, en-Raptured take on the Bunnymen's "Killing Moon").

Right now they're too modest and nervous to have real stage presence, and Ali lacks the glacial confidence of, say, a Debbie Harry (applause makes her giggle), but that will come. One exchange sums up Lucky Soul perfectly. "We've got a slow, smoochy one for you now", promises Ali. "Smoochy?" asks Andrew, "I thought it was pure misery". Beaming, she concedes: "Well yeah, a bit of that too." This is heartache you can sway to.

[s.price@independent.co.uk](mailto:s.price@independent.co.uk)





# Souled on the Sixties

## ALBUM OF THE WEEK

### Lucky Soul: The Great Unwanted

Ruffa Lane

★★★★★

Lucky Soul may come from Greenwich, South London, but their spiritual home is the US in the 1960s and the golden age of girl group pop. The Ronettes, The Shangri-Las, a dab of Motown, a burst of doo-wop; all these things are filtered through classic English pop on the band's debut album, *The Great Unwanted*. This is pop at its most glorious and heartbreaking: vocalist Ali Howard sounds like a more coquettish Dusty Springfield writing the soundtrack to the first summer she fell in love; lyrics about first kisses and dashed hopes are set against hip-twisting rhythm sections, hand-clapping choruses, shimmering harmonies and gleaming brass. *Get Outta Town*, with its gleeful spirit of rebellion, is freeway pop at its most brilliant and shameless. In contrast, *Baby I'm Broke* is a slow burning, modern soul beauty steeped in tears. There's certainly a mischievous sense of pastiche here in the careful calibration of retro references and the sound of sun-soaked adolescent dreams. Yet Lucky Soul incorporate this knowingness with such disarming ease that this pitch perfect record deserves to be on the stereo all summer. *Claire Allfree*



Polydor

★★★★★



Not content with revolutionising 21st-century hip pop, superb producer Timbaland has lately been intent on starring in his clients' videos (Nelly Furtado)

## CD ROUND-UP

Kings Of Leon:  
*Because Of The Times*

RCA

★★★★★

The Samson-esque

POP

Lucky Soul

*The Great Unwanted*

Ruffa Lane

★★★★★



Five blokes and a blonde from Greenwich, Lucky Soul purvey

purist pop not dissimilar to Belle and Sebastian. Their neatly packaged debut album, something of a "best of", certainly lives up to the quality of the excellent singles *Lips Are Unhappy* and the self-mocking *Ain't Never Been Cool*. Dapper rather than sweaty, they're at their offhand best on the title track, the resigned *Baby I'm Broke* and the northern-soul steal *Get Outta Town!*

STEVE JELBERT



++GIG REVIEW++

## Lucky Soul

16th May 07 - Bush Hall

Krissie heads to Bush Hall to see Lucky Soul and check out what the fuss is all about...

Last Wednesday evening I hauled up west and along a damp Uxbridge road to take a butchers at the much-lauded Lucky Soul at Bush Hall. On arrival, with a little time to spare I took my place at the bar for a G & T. The little saloon was plump with allsorts. Students, drunken Swedes, lonely looking older men, young woman in Mary Quant bobs and lots of couples all babbling with anticipation.

**"In between songs she glugged from a pint glass of Lager and never once spilled a drop or smudged her lipstick."**

When my queuing was done I went through into the hall where plaster leaves and cherubs adorned the walls and high ceilings – and while I was admiring the chandeliers Lucky Soul walked on to the stage.

Ali Howard trilled out lovelorn lyrics with a voice like strawberries and cream. She casually shimmied pointy toed about the stage while piping out Spectorish jingles such as "Add Your Light to Mine" and "Ain't Never Been Cool". In between songs she glugged from a pint glass of Lager and never once spilled a drop or smudged her lipstick. Andrew Laidlaw, who you could say is the kingpin of this outfit has plucked some lovely melodies out of the ether and the whole band played through the set like a charm.



pic by Kenneth Yau

### LIVE MUSIC

You are in: London > Entertainment > Music > Live Music > Review: Lucky Soul



Lucky Soul onstage at Bush Hall

#### Review: Lucky Soul

16 May at Bush Hall  
Likened to Saint Etienne with Phil Spector in charge of the mix, the young Greenwich six-piece step up to the plate for their biggest headline gig to date. Our reviewer Melanie Spence finds there's more here than meets the eye...

She takes to the stage beneath a lustrous, whipped cream shock of hair, mesmerising and impossibly blonde. Ali Howard, lead singer of Lucky Soul, has an air of the demure about her, but one that persistently whispers, "We're fabulous".

In bright Sixties shift dress, complete with flower in her hair, Ali and her five cohorts are a world away from the school of skin-tight black denim that London's venues have grown so accustomed to.

And it's a look that works, by jingo! Tried and tested. But any comparisons to Blondie et al are blown clean out of the water when Howard (think Dusty rather than disruptive) opens her mouth.

Possessing a sugar-coated, baby-doll voice, she sweeps and instantly soothes the baying crowd, fresh from the furore of support Johnny Boy, into the more opulent world of powder pop.

**"Lead singer Ali has an air of the demure about her, but one that persistently whispers, "We're fabulous"..."**

Melanie Spence

From glistering openers such as My Brittle Heart, the momentum gathers pace toward the dangerously catchy single Add Your Light to Mine and the album title track, The Great Unwanted.

Few can resist shimmying along as the room is transformed into a snow globe of light and magic, complete with twinkling fairy lights and glittering disco-ball.

#### surprisingly ballsy

Take the tempo down a notch, mind you, and Lucky Soul have some real spine-tinglers up their sleeves.

Baby I'm Broke, a beautiful and tragic end-of-my-tether number, hears Howard's vocal tone soften enough to be comparable to The Beautiful South's Briana Corrigan, while the songwriting excellence of guitarist Andrew Laidlaw comes into its own on the epic instrumentation of the set's fuller songs.

And perhaps it's the more epic numbers that Lucky Soul were born to perform.

With an encore holding much more than just one more tear-soaked ballad, they launch into a surprisingly ballsy interpretation of Echo and the Bunnymen's Killing Moon.



Andrew Laidlaw gets a bit spangley

In lesser hands it could have sounded trite and gimmicky, but Lucky Soul make the song their own, replacing the grandiose posturing of the original with a wall-of-sound guitar onslaught that sounds refreshingly incongruous.

Keep your wits about you where this outfit are concerned. This is a band that could have a distinctly disruptive side after all. And that's a touch I like.



# theguardian

## Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted ★★★★★

(Ruffa Lane) £10.99

A small but avid clan of "Souldiers" has embraced this Greenwich band as the new-century version of St Etienne. Their art-students-play-Spector sensibility stands out against 2007's guitar-based soundtrack as incongruously as St Etienne's did in the Britpop era, so Lucky Soul have their work cut out to achieve mainstream approval. Their first album's title track portrays the quest for acceptance as a dogged struggle ("Singing a hymn to the great unwanted, we will not be ignored"), and the reverberant Ain't Never Been Cool makes even greater play of their outsider stance. The core of Lucky Soul, though, is their full-bodied, 1960s-referencing sound, at the centre of which are Ali Howard's sophisticated-pussycat vocals. Understatement isn't in their remit, but what a glorious, over-romanticised racket they make. If the tremulous, violin-laced likes of My Darling Anything and One Kiss Don't Make a Summer are pastiche, they're gorgeous pastiche.

Caroline Sullivan

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## film & music



I'm much more confident, my jeans even fit a little different," such suggests of insight are strewn throughout The Evolution. Fortunately, we need not dwell on the significance of Clara's waist size with a jolt of hip producers (DJ Les, Redberry Jenkins, et al) also making the most of her resonant, if sometimes, waxy. Aside from some flat, self-separating ballads, the listener is treated to 1960s urban pop: the brilliant, Neptune-produced I Frowned (classicist Janet Jackson), Get Up (which is Redberry's '80s in France) and vocals are strangled as if electric current went awry. Clara is no Beyoncé yet, but a song as good as Like a Boy, a Ruffback to Dorian's Child at their collaboration peak, suggests that

she one day might be. Evolution showing. Dorian Lynskey

## Sister Vanilla Little Pop Rock ★★★★

(Chemical Undergrowth) £10.99

It seems strange that a pair of genre fans should be hiding behind their own but that's what Ben and William Rock do in Little Pop Rock. In all but name it's the closest thing to a new Josh & Mary Chain album in a decade. However, the indelicately scuzzy sound is now thanks to little sister Linda, who added vocals

REVIEW: This could be a productive path - let's see if he follows it.

## POP Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted (Ruffa Lane)

★★★★★  
ARRIVING like a snowstorm in the Sahara, Lucky Soul's debut is a welcome distraction from the reality rock and eyeliner emo currently swirling around. Indeed this Greenwich six-piece's Dusty meets The Crystals pop is so out of step with everything else i

they've been doing for the past decade. It would seem most of that time has been spent writing glorious clouds of pop. Lips Are Unhappy is simply perfect, made of glistening guitars with Ali Howard's voice tracing an arc of perfect melancholy over the delicate construct, while Baby I'm Broke is a heartbreakingly glacial melodrama. However, its otherness will likely dictate that The Great Unwanted is destined to be a cult classic. Which is a cryin,' shame.

## POP James Harries Days Like These (Go)

★★★★★  
JAMES HARRIES is British singer-songwriter who has made his home in the Cayman Republic. He also wants a lot like Jeff Buckley (even if he's not promising that). His Harries gives an edge that sets him apart from the more folk of mainstream indie rockers, who hardly a lyric one we could listen to and love it. And if you're there often quite lonely, he gives us more big ideas, to give it, it's not down there's quite enough.

## HIP HOP E-P I'll Sleep When You're

★★★★★  
EL PROYECTO is a name - governed all day with Camp. He takes on hip he that's genuine pop. This second album is a welcome distraction from the reality rock and eyeliner emo currently swirling around. Indeed this Greenwich six-piece's Dusty meets The Crystals pop is so out of step with everything else right now you wonder what they've been doing for the past decade. It would seem most of that time has been spent writing glorious clouds of pop. Lips Are Unhappy is simply perfect, made of glistening guitars with Ali Howard's voice tracing an arc of perfect melancholy over the delicate construct, while Baby I'm Broke is a heartbreakingly glacial melodrama. However, its otherness will likely dictate that The Great Unwanted is destined to be a cult classic. Which is a cryin,' shame.

REVIEW

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TUESDAY, 10 APRIL 2007  
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## POP Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted (Ruffa Lane)

★★★★★

ARRIVING like a snowstorm in the Sahara, Lucky Soul's debut is a welcome distraction from the reality rock and eyeliner emo currently swirling around. Indeed this Greenwich six-piece's Dusty meets The Crystals pop is so out of step with everything else right now you wonder what they've been doing for the past decade. It would seem most of that time has been spent writing glorious clouds of pop. Lips Are Unhappy is simply perfect, made of glistening guitars with Ali Howard's voice tracing an arc of perfect melancholy over the delicate construct, while Baby I'm Broke is a heartbreakingly glacial melodrama. However, its otherness will likely dictate that The Great Unwanted is destined to be a cult classic. Which is a cryin,' shame.

REVIEWS MUSIC





## RECORD REVIEWS



### Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted [Ruffa Lane; 2007]

Rating: 8.0

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Ever since the Beach Boys' "Don't Worry Baby", guitar groups have set out to capture the teenage melodrama of 60s girl groups. Most recently, Britons the Pipettes broke hearts in matching costumes, while El Perro del Mar cried Swedish tears into orchestrally fluffed pillows. And don't forget Johnny Boy's "You Are the Generation That Bought More Shoes and You Get What You Deserve". Some bands add the Velvet Underground to the formula, whether in the sweet noise squall of the Jesus and Mary Chain or the Concretes' misty Mazzy Starscapes.

When I first encountered Lucky Soul, on last year's chic indie pop comp *The Kids at the Club*, all I could hear was the past. The London sextet's thrillingly overwrought girl-group glamor is completely unmediated by hipster weirdness; you'll find no Wes Anderson postmodernism on their debut album, *The Great Unwanted*, so you can leave your ironic T-shirts at home. The syrupy orchestration of "My Brittle Heart", the group's first single, takes from Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound" not the overly familiar drum patterns, but the grand, open-hearted directness, as huge and as potentially embarrassing as first love. "Liberty is wasted on me," sings frontwoman Ali Howard, echoing a line from 1991 Morrissey B-side "I've Changed My Plea to Guilty". Another Lucky Soul single, "Lips Are Unhappy" remembers the Motown lesson on amplifying emotion by seeming to suppress it, as Howard calls for us to "shake, shake, shimmy, shimmy" (for sure!) over sunny-day tambourine and velveteen harmonies. "I'm tired of keeping composure when I'm not supposed to feel sad," she sings on "One Kiss Don't Make a Summer". The tracks of her tears are easy to trace.

The screenshot shows the Pitchfork website interface. At the top, there are logos for "Pitchfork", "NO NONSENSE", and "Coors". Below the navigation menu, there are several article teasers. The main article featured is "Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted" with a rating of 8.0. To the right, there are other article teasers for "Voxtrof" and "Feist Extends Tour".

Still, *The Great Unwanted* isn't the kind of album that leaves you walking out humming "Be My Baby". Guitarist, primary songwriter, and arranger Andrew Laidlaw pays more attention to composition than to homage, and Howard has an unshowy, girlish voice that's nevertheless more polished than usual in indie pop, with shades of Dusty Springfield, Sandie Shaw, and Petula Clark. She can cast a spell over upbeat Northern Soul floorshakers like "Getta Outta Town!" and bouncy third single "Add Your Light to Mine, Baby". But she's just as at home on decorous torch songs like guitar waltz "Baby I'm Broke", aching finale "The Last Song" (with its reviewer-ready "the penultimate beat of the drum") and the smoldering "My Darling, Anything", which pours sugar in the singer's wounds with musical puns about missed beats and a heart that goes "skip-skip-skip" like a scratched-up CD. It's the type of sumptuous bubblegum that made an impressive showing on Pitchfork's "The 200 Greatest Songs of the 1960s" but rarely places on year-end album lists.

On "The Great Unwanted", Lucky Soul decisively align themselves with the uncool, a not uncommon move that rings true mostly due to the music's non-appetite for winks. "Look for us, we were the casualties/ Forever paying the price for a life less boring," Howard proclaims. Elsewhere on the album, the toweringly embellished title track from recent EP *Ain't Never Been Cool* once again sides with the unfairly unloved. Which on one hand could be viewed as commercially astute; the latest girl-group revival can't last forever. Then again, that's where things get really poignant. Howard has chosen whole-broken-heartedly to stand among the pop-besotted, lonely souls to whom the Smiths addressed another B-side, 1985's "Rubber Ring"-- the huddled masses whose lives were once saved by a song. If we don't love her, who will?

-Marc Hogan, May 24, 2007



# The WORD

More Than A Music Magazine

£4.20 ISSUE 50 APRIL 2007

## LUCKY SOUL

Great British pop to go-go for on *The Great Unwanted*

By Arwa Haider

There is something about Lucky Soul – through a handful of singles and giddy



live dates since early 2006 – that turns listeners' hearts as gooey as a chocolate box left in the sunshine. Such a thing could be a messy indulgence; fortunately, Lucky Soul's soft centres are superbly sealed on their debut album, *The Great Unwanted*. And perhaps it's a sneaky trick, but such self-deprecation (check also *Ain't Never Been Cool* – a siren call for misfits) makes their music more desirable.

This sextet, fronted by Ali Howard (both coquettish and headstrong on *Baby I'm Broke* and the lush slowie *My Darling, Anything*) clearly reference 1960s girl groups, but also evoke a clas-

sic British cocktail, including Saint Etienne and The Boo Radleys. These fluffy-textured tunes are crucially well crafted and fabulously danceable, with epic flourishes and rousing handclaps (apparently sampled from fans online). So, lucky us – this isn't a modish crush, but a full-blown pop affair.

*The Great Unwanted* is out on Ruffa Lane

31.03.07/£4.25

# MUSICWEEK

## TASTEMAKERS TIPS

### Lucky Soul

The Great Unwanted  
(Ruffa Lane)

PAUL CONNOLLY, LONDON LITE

"It's always refreshing to hear something out of step with everything else. As far as I can tell, there's nary a mention of chip shops, extra strong lager or copping a feel on Lucky Soul's album. Nothing wrong with those subjects, you understand, but right now I prefer to hear some doe-eyed, Sixties-tinged swirling pop music about love and stuff. And you can dance to it."

## TASTEMAKERS TIPS

### My Top 10

NEIL CLAXTON

Artist, Mint Royale

1. LUCKY SOUL THE GREAT LUCKY SOUL UNWANTED (RUFFA LANE)
2. LEONA NAESS THIRTEENS (UNSIGNED)
3. BUEN CHICO CHOOSING MY RELIGION (FAITH & HOPE)
4. ALPINESTARS BASIC (FAITH & HOPE)
5. JARVIS COCKER JARVIS (ROUGH TRADE)
6. SOL SEPPY THE BELLS OF 1 2 (GRONLAND)
7. MELLOTRON OVERDRIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS (UNSIGNED)
8. THE ANSWERING MACHINE DECADANT (UNSIGNED)
9. GOOD SHOES THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK (BRILLE)
10. THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS NO! (ROUNDER)

"I spend most of my listening time on music we are working with, so for something to push that out of the way it has to be special, which Leona Naess' *Ghosts In The Attic*, or the outright joyfulness of Lucky Soul's sparkling album, certainly are. Nostalgia and new rave have resurrected the Alpinestars' debut album, still as fresh and vital as ever, while Buen Chico and Mellotron Overdrive satisfy the guitar end of things. And let's not forget two of the best albums from last year, from Sol Seppy and the genius Jarvis."



plonk  
music media other

### Lucky Soul

#### The Great Unwanted (Ruffa Lane)

Lucky Soul make sophisticated pop rooted in the Sixties, accompanied by all the brass, strings and harmonies needed to make you dance, and the melancholy of the past. The music sounds expensive, yet was probably done on a shoestring and certainly won't have a high concept music video. This is great

because the vocals are filled with both the synthetic glamour of a Barbie advert and genuine soul when called for, as in 'Add Your Light To Mine, Baby'; it's great because there are slow doo-wop numbers ('Baby I'm Broke') and stomp along party tunes ('Get Outta Town'). This is a decade on plastic.

**Jonathan Falcone**

# NME

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

ALBUMS

14 April 2007

## Lucky Soul

### The Great Unwanted (Ruffa Lane)



There's never been a decade as picked over, reworked and abused as the '60s. There'd be justification to cordon it off altogether, were it not

for bands like Greenwich's Lucky Soul. Their Spector-indebted sound is ice cream sweet, but, like Saint Etienne or The Concretes, they lace it with ground shards of bleak heartbreak and sharp lyrics that'll have your heart bleeding. Singer Ali Howard's girlish, unaffected voice brings depth to the styled misery of 'Baby I'm Broke' and 'My Brittle Heart'. It's been done a bazillion times, but then so has sex. Occasionally, they slip over the line with one too many handclaps ('Get Outta Town' is almost Emma Bunton), but, mostly, it looks like a summer of love is coming their way.

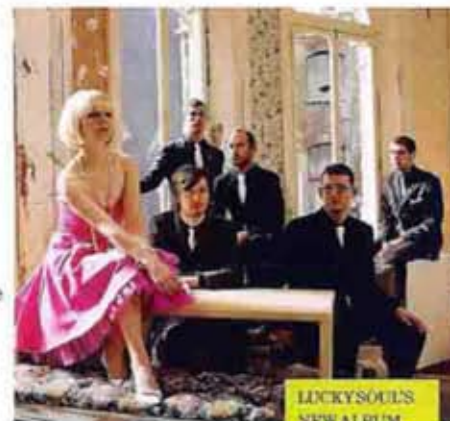
# ELLE

ellehotlist  
may 2007

5 reasons  
we love...

**lucky soul**

- 1 They make tear-soaked pop songs about lost love. 'Our music is about happy heartache,' says lead singer Ali Howard.
- 2 Their sound harks back to the golden era of the Ronettes.
- 3 Ali wears vintage dresses onstage from her huge collection.
- 4 The boys in the band consider me one of the lads,' says Ali. Aah!
- 5 They'd love to play the Royal Albert Hall with a full orchestra.



LUCKYSOUL'S  
NEW ALBUM,  
THE GREAT  
UNWANTED, IS  
OUT ON 9 APRIL

## hot music

Artists and tunes to rock your world



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VIEW THE COLLECTION

## Lucky Soul - The Great Unwanted

More on: [Lucky Soul](#)

Released: 09/04/07

Label: Ruffa Soul

Rating: ★★★★★

The days are finally starting get longer, the cricket season has begun and upmarket newspapers are filled with articles about global warming and water shortages every time the sun comes out. All this can only mean one thing - the summer has officially begun.

This gives music journalists a chance to label any song with a hummable chorus and a side helping of trumpets "the soundtrack of the summer". Thankfully Greenwich's best (only?) six-piece indie popsters **Lucky Soul** have saved hacks throughout the land from months of having to listen to loads of dodgy songs with 'Sun', 'Summer' and 'Sunshine' in the title by releasing 2007's more sparkling pop album in early April. **The Great Unwanted** is one of the best albums you'll hear all year and deserves to sell bucket (and spade) loads.

The opening track '**Add Your Light To Mine Baby**' is an ode to unrequited love which sounds like it was recorded by some great forgotten 60s girl group, and '**Get Outta Town**' is a danceable feast of a song full of horns and manic drumming. Meanwhile '**Ain't Never Been Cool**' is the sassy pop song that **Saint Etienne** spent an entire career trying to write but never quite managed.

A quick scan through the album's song titles reveals that things aren't always rosy in the **Soul's** garden. '**Lips Are Unhappy**', '**Baby I'm Broke**' and '**My Brittle Heart**' could all be names plucked from a dodgy Emo album or an episode of the Jeremy Kyle show. Luckily, they're all beautiful songs, overflowing with gorgeous melodies which perfectly complement **Ali Howard's** warm bubblegum pop vocals. The stand out track is '**It's Yours**' which is melancholy pop at its finest.

At a time when bands are spending the GDP of small African countries trying to make stripped down, 'back to basics' albums to prove that they mean it (man), it's a joy to hear a band who realise that music doesn't have to be downbeat, drab and earnest to be compelling and affecting. **The Great Unwanted** will be the soundtrack to your summer and you'll still be playing it come Christmas.

John McCarthy



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## More Lucky Soul Articles:

Album Reviews: [Lucky Soul - The Great Unwanted](#)

APRIL 17, 2007

## Reviewed: The Great Unwanted - Lucky Soul



Since we retired Monday Music Review (R.I.P.) we haven't done much by way of album reviews but we had to make a big exception for **Lucky Soul**, a band we've been bigging up on Londonist since we fell in love with them on first listen...

In calling their debut album **The Great Unwanted**, and so arming reviewers with an easy insult if their opinion is not favourable, Lucky Soul are either extremely naive or immensely confident. If it's the latter, however, the confidence is completely justified. The Great Unwanted exudes the innocent exuberance of music that is simply joyous, favouring timelessness over fashionability.

*I Ain't Never Been Cool* sums up Lucky Soul's spirit nicely - "Be what you want, be what you want to / Wear what you want, love who you want to" - and the irony of not worrying about being cool, of course, is that this is the coolest thing you can do.

All the lead tracks from the excellent singles that we've alerted you to on Londonist are included on this album (in the case of *My Brittle Heart*, reworked with a real string section, making it even more grandiose, if that were possible).

All the lead tracks from the excellent singles that we've alerted you to on Londonist are included on this album (in the case of *My Brittle Heart*, reworked with a real string section, making it even more grandiose, if that were possible).

They are, in their own ways, both representative and unrepresentative of the album. Take, for instance, *Lips Are Unhappy*; a song that cannot fail to elicit toe-tapping and head-nodding from anyone with any semblance of rhythm but with a melancholic lyric delivered in a wonderfully yearning style. The juxtaposition is distilled perfectly two minutes and 15 seconds into the track: a simple 'shake, shimmy' lyric supported by an angelic 'oooooh' backing vocal, a sound that we think could well be the sound of heaven.

The dual personality of the songs pretty much sums up the Lucky Soul sound, actually; capable of being heart-rending and heart-warming at the same time, heartache never felt so good.

Pleasingly for those of us tired of buying albums where the only good tracks are the singles, the best things on **The Great Unwanted** are the previously-unreleased tracks. The title track is a rhapsodic call to action, similar in defiant attitude to *I Ain't Never Been Cool*, but more strident in delivery. The final trio of songs (ignoring the hidden track) of *The Towering Inferno*, *It's Yours* and *The Last Song* give us the sad, soulful side of Lucky Soul's already impressive canon.

Much of the credit goes to lead singer **Ali Howard's** vocals, which start off all coquettish **Diana Ross** in the first track *Add Your Light To Mine, Baby*, get all r'n'b (in the old stomping sense) in the 'I Can't Get No) Satisfaction' referencing *Get Outta Town*, ending with the heart-breaking country mournful tone in *The Last Song*. Ignore what passes for soul nowadays, on **The Great Unwanted** Howard gives a master class in how to imbue a song with real soul, whatever the genre.

Lucky Soul are an absolute treasure. They've delivered the kind of album you want to share with everyone you know, one you'll never tire of hearing, despite playing it constantly for months (a statement we make from personal experience). The music here comes not from the wish to shift units but from a deeply musical soul, and because of that **The Great Unwanted** sounds like a classic now, and will continue to sound like a classic years and decades from now.

Lucky Soul are playing **Bush Hall** on 16th May (tickets £7 [available online](#)). Look out for a chance to win a pair of tickets coming up on Londonist soon.





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LUCKY SOUL (Photo: Liz Peck)

## Lucky Soul The Great Unwanted

US release date: Available as import  
UK release date: 9 April 2007

by Dave Heaton

PopMatters Associate Music Editor  
Email Print Write to the editor

T echoes of the Shirelles, Crystals, etc., the song turns alienation into a uniting force, and then into a rallying cry ("Look for us / We were the whipping children / But no more"), using activist declarations like "We will not be ignored / We won't take that no more." The song ties tears of loneliness together with anti-conformity ("Dreading the sight of a Monday morning") within an indie-pop song, drawing an invisible line from the Brill Building and Motown to punk and K Records. They coyly twist the cadence of Lesley Gore's "It's My Party" into "It's your body / You can die if you want to," playing with pop history while aggressively asserting their own revamped version of sensitive-pop. Actually that's what they do throughout *The Great Unwanted*. They take a history's worth of love-and-loneliness songs and turn them into their own glimmering, shimmering gold. They've taken scraps of radio hits and misses past and regrown them into something fresh and new. They might never be huge, they might never be cool, but Lucky Soul has already created a catalogue of hit songs nonetheless.

Two videos... because we like Lucky Soul so much...

RATING:  9

— 9 April 2007

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April 17, 2007

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**Lucky Soul - The Great Unwanted**  
There is a world where horns, strings, tambourine and hand-claps reign supreme; a world of romantic disaster, softcore sex and sloppy stomps. Johnny Gore and the sorrow-laden 1960s pop of the Shangri-Las. To buy this CD >



## Great — and wanted

The crafted, angst-laden 1960s pop of Lucky Soul appeals to the unfashionable outsider in JOHNNY DEK

Recalling the classic sorrow-laden 60s pop of The Shangri-Las and Lesley Gore, this Greenwich-based six-piece have perfected a capricious sound that's completely at odds with the current music scene. If St Etienne rather than Oasis had been the defining stars of the Brit Pop era, then they probably wouldn't be alone, but it's laddish rock rather than crafted pop that rules.

And if you were to mention girl groups today, it's the sexual promises of Girls Aloud rather than the boyfriend problems of The Ronettes that spring to mind. Lucky Soul, though, are no less terrifyingly catchy or danceable than both bands. Here is a world where horns, strings, tambourine and hand-claps reign supreme; a world of romantic disaster (*One Kiss Don't Make A Summer*), sunshine fun (*Add Your Light To Mine, Baby*) and sloppy



Here is a world where horns, strings, tambourine and hand-claps reign supreme  
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slowies (*My Darling, Anything*) that are much darker once you dig into the lyrics. But while the band's sound and Al Howard's pussycat vocals will appeal to retro-soul fans, they're much more than a pastiche act to match the latest Cath Kidston tea towels. A few plays in, and you begin forgetting all the references.

What saves *The Great Unwanted* is its self-deprecating humour — something you could only find in this decade — and the over-arching sensation that the party's over and it all went terribly wrong. Both the title track and the wonderful *Ant Never Been Cool* make great play of their outsider status: "Won't get in your club/ Not quite up your street/ It's terribly exciting/ I'm practically asleep," sings Howard. You don't need scenes when you're this unfashionably fabulous.

*The Great Unwanted* is out on Rufa Lane  
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PopMatters Picks: The Best Music of 2007

## The Best Indie-Pop of 2007

[12 December 2007]

by **Dave Heaton**

PopMatters Associate Music Editor

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**Lucky Soul**  
**The Great Unwanted**  
 (RUFFA LANE)  
[AMAZON](#)

**3** The Greenwich, UK, band Lucky Soul epitomizes the independent spirit. Their self-released debut album is making waves because of sheer talent. Group founder Andrew Laidlaw writes and arranges songs that put a fresh spin on pop-music history. Singer Ali Howard belts them out in a stylish yet emotional way, fitting the nature of the songs themselves, which flash at you to get your attention but then quietly break your heart as you listen past the surface. Sad love songs have been written forever, but Lucky Soul's are especially sharp, with clever lyrics joined to perfectly bittersweet melodies.

Multiple songs: [MySpace](#)



Lucky Soul - My Brittle Heart

Related articles:

[Review: Lucky Soul: The Great Unwanted \(09.Apr.07\)](#)



PopMatters Picks: The Best Music of 2007

## The Best Albums of 2007

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[17 December 2007]



**Lucky Soul**  
**The Great Unwanted**  
 (RUFFA LANE)  
[AMAZON](#)

**41** It isn't rare these days for a group to take its cues from '50s and '60s vocal pop: Motown, the 'girl groups' and Northern Soul. But it is rare that the songs are well-written enough that it doesn't seem like a costume or gimmick. The Greenwich, UK band Lucky Soul's debut album has razzle-dazzle in spades, but its impact lingers long after that daze-inducing first kiss, on the strength of its songs. They take their cues from the greats of the past—including also indie-pop of more recent decades—but that's only the start. The band's founder Andrew Laidlaw, is a songwriter with an innate grasp on melody, words and how they work together for listeners. And underneath the romantic glow and bittersweet tone of his summery pop songs lies an independent, nonconformist streak, befitting of the most headstrong punk rocker. *Dave Heaton*





Pitchfork  
Overlooked Records 2007  
[2007]  
Rating: N/A

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After a long weekend of festival-throwing and -going, we're taking a publishing break and marking the occasion with our third annual roundup of records issued in the first half of the year that deserve more attention than you, gentle reader, may be giving them.



Lucky Soul  
[The Great Unwanted](#)  
[Ruffa Lane]

Guitar pop band sets out to capture the teenage melodrama of 60s girl groups but they won't leave you humming "Be My Baby"; instead, the group pays more attention to composition than to homage, and the result is one of the year's best indie pop records.

MP3» Lucky Soul - "The Great Unwanted"

# THE INDEPENDENT MUSIC



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## Albums of the year: Rock & Pop

Sometimes, calling the winner is easy. LCD Soundsystem's Kraftwerkian opus *Sound of Silver* took the lead back in January and remained head and shoulders in front of the competition, although Felix Da Housecat's *Virgo Blaktro and the Movie Disco* was a fine companion piece. In a similar genre, Scotland's cocky Calvin Harris's *I Created Disco* was a party from start to finish, Canadian electrofunkers Chromeo's *Fancy Footwork* carried on where their cracking debut left off, Robyn's self-titled album positioned her as a pop-friendly Peaches and New Young Pony Club's *Fantastic Playroom* nearly captured the punk-funk poise of their live shows. A few of alt-rock's gnarly old buggers proved they still have what it takes: Nick Cave returned to his garage roots with *Grinderman*, and his former missus PJ Harvey (with *White Chalk*) and his proto-goth peer Siouxsie Sioux (with *Mantaray*) both made late-career classics, while Welsh wonders Manic Street Preachers (*Send Away the Tigers*) and Super Furry Animals (*Hey Venus!*) came up with the goods once again. In terms of younger auteurs, newcomer Mika's *Life In Cartoon Motion* had a swagger which was most closely matched, ironically, by his adversary and sometime support act Patrick Wolf, with *The Magic Position*. Kylie's tenth album *X* was both her best album and the year's best major pop release, although if more people had bought Lucky Soul's *The Great Unwanted* or Dragonette's *Galore*, she might have had a challenger...