

WHAT'S ON

News of the best in the entertainment world this month

END OF THE ROAD FOR A POP ICON

His UK concerts this autumn may be the last chance to see Paul Simon playing live. By **Simon Evans**

IT HAS never been easy being a Simon and Garfunkel fan. I know, am one. Admitting you admired their music was not something you did in fashionable company, or at least at my boarding school. They didn't fit the Seventies fashion for glam, disco, punk, hard rock or Eighties style over substance, and during the Nineties they seemed to disappear altogether.

Even during the duo's Sixties heyday, when Paul and Artie produced such timeless classics as *Homeward Bound*, *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, *The Sound of Silence*, *Mrs Robinson* and *Feelin' Groovy*, they didn't really fit in.

At the 1967 Monterey Festival, while all

around them was love, flowers and exhortations to tune in and drop out, Simon and Garfunkel were performing Bergmanesque vignettes of abandoned love and quirky little ditties about Corn Flakes and English muffins. And while Richard Neville, in *Playpower*, his survey of the late Sixties counterculture, described Paul Simon's songs as "beautiful antique poetry" you wouldn't have found too many fashionable types at the time taking along Simon and Garfunkel's *Bookends* album to their next rave.

Thankfully that has all changed now, and 30 years after being vilified for

Graceland, his exhilarating, career-defining excursion into South African pop, Paul Simon is sitting on top of the album charts again, revered by a new generation of music-lovers weaned on *You Can Call Me Al* rather than *I Am A Rock*.

Alone amongst his Sixties peers, Paul Simon is producing work of consistently high quality, and still pushing musical boundaries, too. His latest album, *Stranger to Stranger*, is right up there with his very best, and with a catalogue that includes the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album, *Still Crazy After All These Years* and *Graceland*, not to mention 2011's brilliant *So Beautiful or So What*, that is



high praise indeed. Later this year Simon is embarking on what may well be his last British tour, the great man having recently hinted, in several interviews, that it may be time to turn his still restless creative energies away from music.

The arrival of a new book looking back at Simon and Garfunkel's career, both together and apart, by Liverpool author Spencer Leigh, could not, therefore, come at a better time.

It was Leigh who, back in 1973, published *Now and Then*, the first thorough examination of Paul Simon's work. Published by a small Merseyside company, and long since out of print, it may have been superceded over the years by more up to date tomes but none have come close to matching Leigh's original quirky insights and knowledge.

Together Alone (McNidder and Grace, £15), an updated and greatly expanded new edition of *Now and Then*, is therefore very welcome indeed. Spencer does an admirable job, for instance, of untangling Paul and Art's pre-Simon and Garfunkel work for a bewildering variety of small labels and he's also very good on Paul Simon's mid-Sixties English folk club days, but I would have liked more on the 2003-04 and 2009 reunion tours. Full marks though for devoting a chapter to *Stranger to Stranger*.

It's strange that a songwriter as influential as Paul Simon, or indeed a musical act that crossed the generations as effortlessly as Simon and Garfunkel, has not been the subject of more critical attention. Perhaps now that Paul Simon is seemingly closing the door on his remarkable career that will soon be rectified.

That there may be new Paul Simon songs to look forward to in the years ahead is a cause of much sadness amongst us Simon and Garfunkel fans, as is the thought that Paul and Artie will probably never share a stage together again. The current state of the relationship is best described as frosty, with Paul Simon saying recently that the two old friends, who have known each other since primary school, were not speaking.

We have been here before, however. Back in the late Fifties Paul and Artie didn't speak for years after Paul released a

solo single behind Garfunkel's back. There was renewed bitterness after the partnership dissolved in the early Seventies, and again in the mid-Eighties when, after a triumphant reunion tour Paul Simon summarily removed Garfunkel's vocals from what was intended to be a Simon and Garfunkel LP but ended up as the solo album *Hearts and Bones*.

A brief reunion in the early Nineties also ended acrimoniously and although the 2003 and 2004 tours appeared to heal old wounds, recent comments by Garfunkel that Paul Simon was an "idiot" for turning his back on Simon and Garfunkel seems to have reactivated a new round of hostilities.

Perhaps the tragedy of the partnership is best summed up by Spencer Leigh in *Together and Alone*: "Early on, Simon and Garfunkel realised two things. Firstly, the world liked them working together. Secondly, they didn't."

Together and Alone, by Spencer Leigh is published by McNidder and Grace at £15. Paul Simon is touring the UK in November, playing the following dates: November 3: Bournemouth International Centre; November 4: Motorpoint Arena, Cardiff; November 7,8: Royal Albert Hall, London; November 10: Manchester Apollo; November 12: Motorpoint Arena, Nottingham. For ticket details go to: (www.paulsimon.com).



ON THE LEVEL WITH EIGHTIES ICONS

Following on from their successful *Sirens* shows of 2014 and 2015, top Eighties band Level 42 will be hitting the road once again in October for a tour of the UK in support of their new *Sirens II* EP.

Starting in Llandudno on October 3 the tour will feature a further 19 shows, culminating at London's Eventim Apollo on October 29. The band will be performing a host of their greatest hits as well as new material from the *Sirens II* EP.

To date the band have released 14 studio albums, seven live albums, the *Sirens* EP and six compilation albums. They have had 18 top 40 singles, including *Lessons in Love*, *Something About You*, *Leaving Me Now*, *Running in the Family* and *Hot Water*, sold out Wembley Arena for a total of 21 nights and sold in excess of 30 million albums worldwide.

With the recent re-issues of the band's vast catalogue on Universal Music they are still a benchmark for the best in British jazz funk.

■ For details of all the dates, and how to book tickets, go to: (www.livenation.co.uk). Tickets are on sale at £28 except for the London date which has tickets on sale at £38.50, £34.50, £30 and £27.50 (subject to per-ticket charge plus order processing fee).

