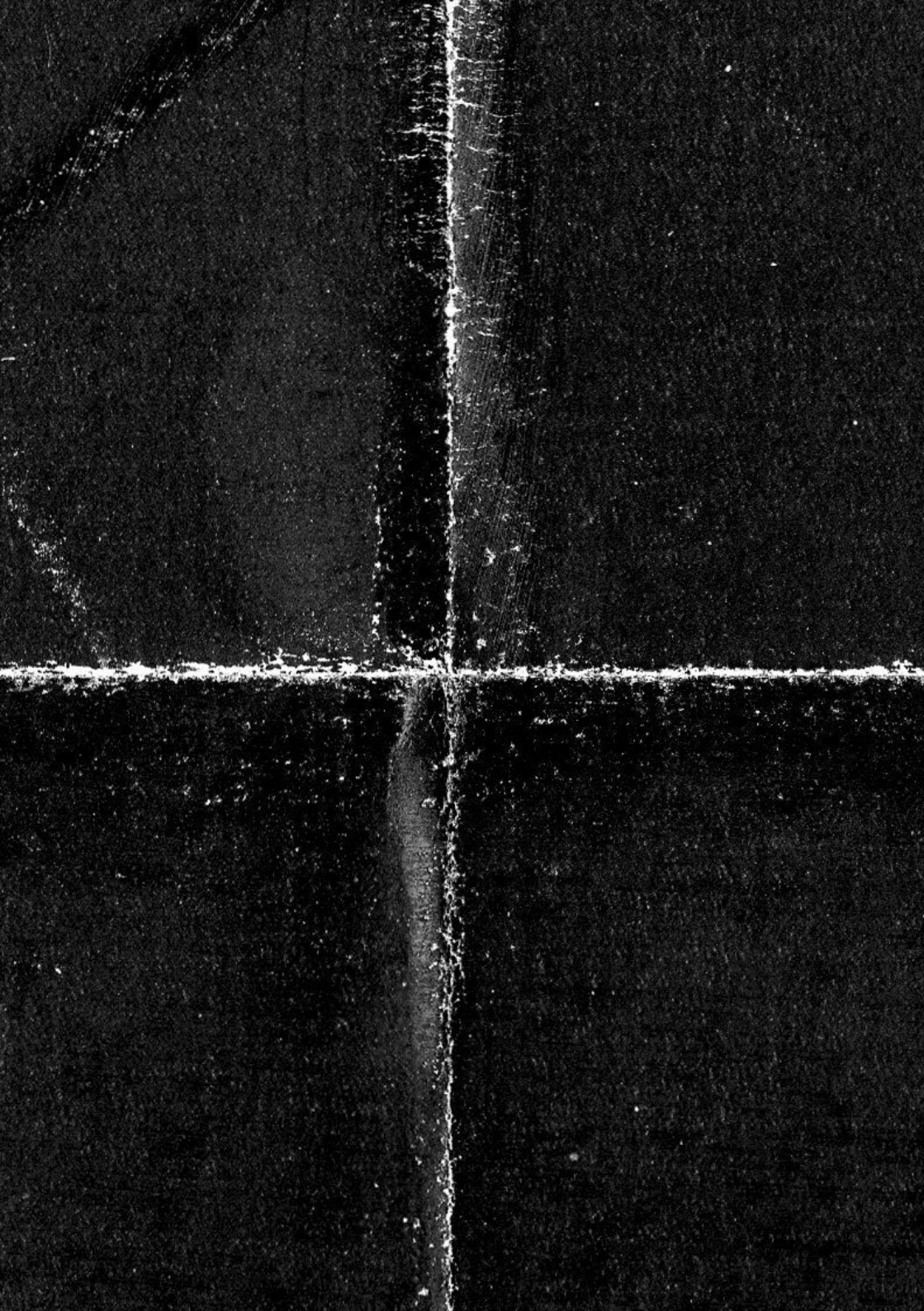


PATCH POCKETS

2021

ALBUMS
↑ OF THE
+ EPs YEAR





In a year that was ninety percent a trainwreck, the music was definitely a highlight. And yes, highlights still count even in the dingiest, void-iest shadows. This zine covers my personal top 10 albums and EPs from this hellish year.

We've got punk, we've got emo, we've got metalcore, and even a dash of hyperpop.

The records aren't listed in any particular order because I had a hard enough time just choosing them!

Good riddance to 2021, but it did give us some bangers. So without further ado, here are my favourites.

- **ELEANOR TAYLOR**

PATCH POCKETS

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@PATCHPOCKETSUK - TWITTER

AS EVERYTHING UNFOLDS

WITHIN EACH LIES THE OTHER

The first album on this list is a blistering LP debut from one of the UK's most exciting post-hardcore bands.

As **Everything Unfolds** first got on my radar when I heard their 2021 single 'Grayscale'. The way that the band effortlessly fused the melodic and brutal aspects of post-hardcore immediately got my attention.

One of the band's biggest influences are emo icons My Chemical Romance (*same here tbh*). For me, the sheer cinematic scale of AEU's music is every note as theatric as *Black Parade* or *Three Cheers*.

Following on from their 2018 EP *Closure*, this debut full-length record digs deep into the struggle of mental illness. The introspective lyrics are sometimes hard to hear, but they represent reality for many

people with depression and intrusive thoughts.

The black dog it comes, it hunts, it follows you

We run from our problems like there's no tomorrow

Our reckless minds are so tainted in sorrow

The stranger in the mirror is smothering me

- 'Stranger In The Mirror'

2021 saw vocalist **Charlie Rolfe** ticking off one of her dreams for the band: going on tour with Holding Absence. I saw AEU support the Cardiff band at **Manchester Academy** back in November - it was a thunderously heavy set done with pure professionalism from the band members.

If you haven't heard this band before, now is the time. Because otherwise you'll be stuck in the Ticketmaster queue for their inevitably sold-out future shows.

AS EVERYTHING UNFOLDS

WITHIN EACH LIES THE OTHER

Parental
ADVISORY
EXPLICIT CONTENT

WALLOW
GRAYSCALE

ONE
LAST
TIME



NO
THE
INSIDE



TRASH BOAT

DON'T YOU FEEL AMAZING?

Trash Boat sail us away to the land of Idios, where truth and reality are not synonyms, but bitter rivals.

This LP had Trash Boat tackle more complex and mature themes than ever before. ***Don't You Feel Amazing?*** delves into issues of drug addiction, shame, and coming out as queer. This is a band taking all the things we're not supposed to talk about and playing them full throttle to sold-out crowds.

Idios represents our inner world, where we can be the truest version of ourselves. Here, hedonism is not only allowed but wholeheartedly encouraged. This is in contrast to the media-framed real world, which Trash Boat dissect in the anthem '**Silence Is Golden**'. They want to encourage their fans to both live authentically and build solidarity with other people.

The album's lyrics were heavily influenced by frontman **Tobi**

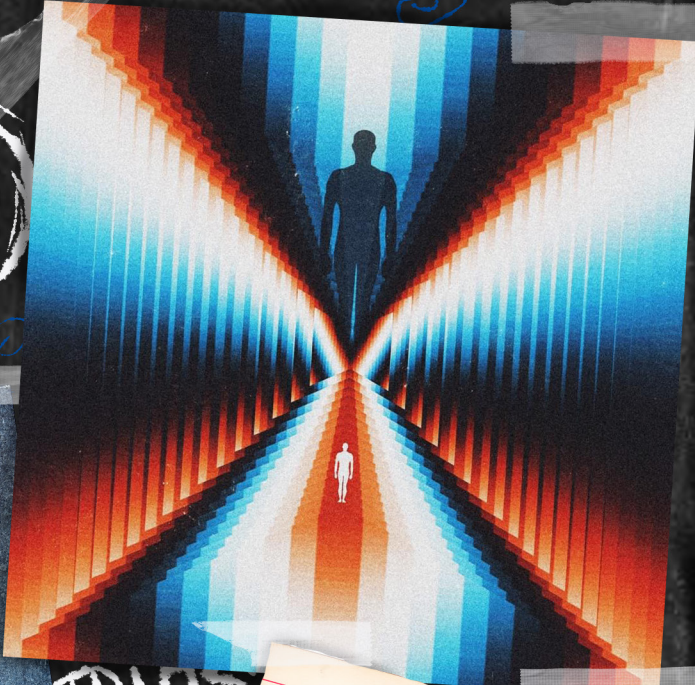
Duncan's real-life experiences. After an injury as a teenager left him with chronic pain, he was prescribed opioid medication. This morphed into a (now kicked) addiction. The euphoria he felt while high comes through in the album's energetic peaks. However, the darker side of dependency also lurks in the music's shadowy corners.

'The best methods that people in power can use to maintain their power come from promoting and controlling the silence of the people who can change it.'

- Tobi Duncan for *Rock Sound* (2021)

This 13-track record takes its foundation from punk and hardcore. But Trash Boat also know how to stick in a good singalong chorus when needed. Heavier tracks like '**Alpha Omega**' belong just as much as the more accessible '**Bad Entertainment**' and '**He's So Good**'.

TRASH
-BOAT-



IDIOTS
X

I'M SO OBSCENE
but I feel
AMAZING



FT.
MILKIE
WAVE

ALPHA-OMEGA-THE-CYCLE-REPEATS-

SLASH FICTION

GENDER, TRAUMA & FRIENDSHIP

Sheffield's top emo queercore band run through the full A-Z of human emotions on their latest release.

Gender, Trauma & Friendship is, as the title suggests, a raw and heartfelt exploration of some deeply personal themes. But while the album deals heavily with loneliness, it has a way of never making you feel alone. The band share vocal duties throughout the album which creates this real feeling of unity and togetherness (even when they're ripping out your heartstrings)

***so i'll mould bricks from my
bones
fashion my teeth into stairs
turn my flesh into foundations
build a lighthouse to guide you
home***

- *The Lighthouse*

The sound moves from stripped-back acoustic vibes on 'Pick My Stitches' to anthemic energy on 'How's This For Heartbreak?'

One of the record's biggest lyrics is the rallying cry of 'my friends are the family I choose!' ('Footnote'). It's something a lot of people can relate to, but hits especially close to home for us in the LGBT+ community.

Each of the 10 tracks may be different, but they work together to build one cohesive sound. Slash Fiction prove that you don't need the flashiest production or any unnecessary flourishes to make a strong debut album. Sheffield's one-and-only DIY emo queercore band have hit the mark just right.

A version of this article was published on the Patch Pockets site in July 2021.



IFIC

1. Pick My Stitches
2. I'll get there, if I leave every thing but my bones behind
3. How's This For Heartbreak?
4. Ten Feet Tall
5. Footnote
6. The Lighthouse
7. The Space Between
8. Cross my heart
9. Headaches
10. Needle & Thread



SLASH FICTION



My friends are the family I choose



SPIRITBOX

ETERNAL BLUE

The hype around Spiritbox had *Kerrang!* name them ‘the hottest band in the world’. And by God, they lived up to that hype.

This Canadian three-piece exploded into mainstream consciousness in 2020 with their crushing track ‘Holy Roller’. What followed was a string of singles that sounded more like they’d come from a band’s third or fourth LP than their first. Flawless production worked alongside Courtney LaPlante’s inimitable vocals to make *Eternal Blue* a truly standout debut.

Music media has struggled to classify this band’s sound into a one neat label. Nu-metal? Metalcore? Melodic heavy metal? All we know for sure is that it’s damn good!

For the lyrics, LaPlante mostly drew on past depressive episodes,

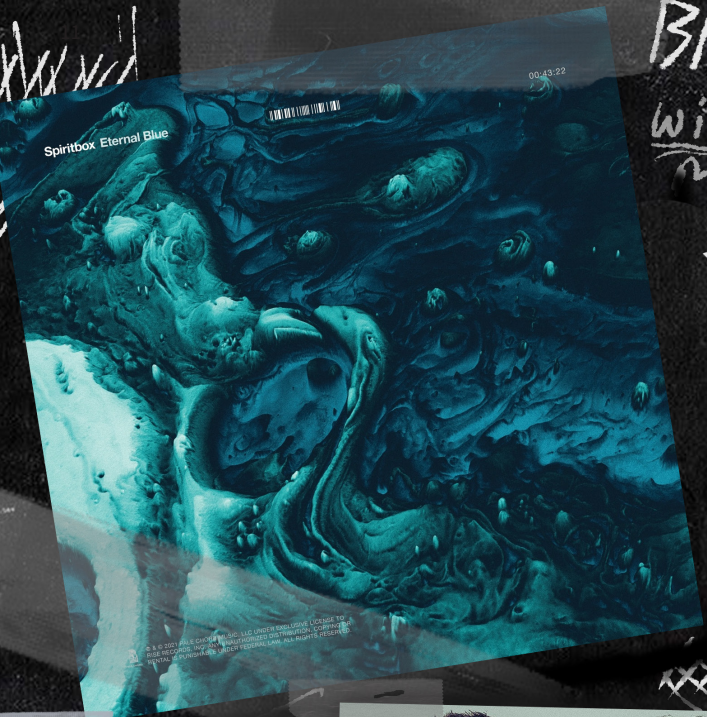
and the isolation she felt after losing a close friendship. The album is yet another example of how people can find catharsis and healing through heavy music.

My personal top track is ‘Circle With Me’. It addresses the cycles of negative self-perception that can come after harsh comments. The song looks criticism straight in the eye and says ‘go on then. I *dare* you.’ Like the juxtaposition of negativity and media hype, the contrasting clean and guttural vocals form two sides of the same coin.

***Negative feedback loop
I’m spinning out of control
The sickly sweetness is crushing me
But I want to know
If there’s no heat when I escalate
the fire is cold
- ‘Circle With Me’***

Handwritten scribbles in the top left corner.

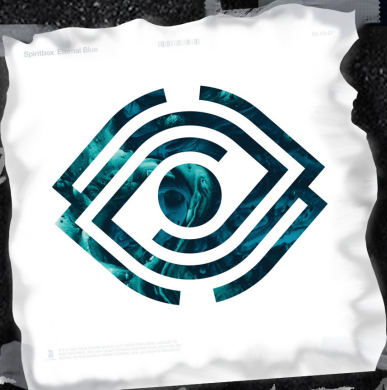
Blood into
wine take
my body
INSTEAD



SUNKILLER
SING ME
TO
SLEEP



REVOLVER



YELLOW JACKET

Handwritten scribbles in the bottom right corner.

HOLDING ABSENCE

THE GREATEST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE

After the monochrome aesthetic of their self-titled debut, Holding Absence return in brilliant technicolour.

Cinematic, existential, *The Greatest Mistake of My Life* is an album with sky high ambition. When the opening line hits, you can't help but feel it right in your bones - 'I'm *alive!*'

It's a lyric that would be cathartic at the best of times but seems especially poignant as we enter the second year of a deadly pandemic. Simply put, the record celebrates life. Every high, every low, every mistake and regret, Holding Absence want you to feel it all.

I didn't understand this fully until I saw the band perform this album live. Frontman Lucas Woodland was up on that Manchester stage screaming his lyrics like the fate of the entire crowd depended on it.

The single tracks stand out the most but *TGOML* never has a dull moment. 'Afterlife' and 'Beyond Belief' are towering anthems easily on par with their past hits 'Monochrome' and 'Like A Shadow'.

***To the existential dread
I let run through my head
The truth is that you hurt me for
so long
And here's my celebration song
- Celebration Song***

The rise of Holding Absence has been nothing short of meteoric. From support slots to bonafide headliners in their own right, I don't think we've seen this band even come close to their peak.

NOMOROSSES



THE GREATEST MISTAKE OF MY LIFE

PERFORMED BY
HOLDING ABSENCE



I'M
ALIIIIIVE!!!

- TGMOML
1. awake
 2. Celebration Song
 3. Curse me with
your Kiss
 4. **AFTER LIFE**
 5. Drugs and Love
 6. **IN CIRCLES**
 7. nomoreroses
 8. **BEYOND BELIEF**
 9. Die Alone (in your
lover's arms)
 10. phantoms
 11. Mourning Song
 12. **THE GREATEST
MISTAKE OF MY
LIFE**

PINKSHIFT

SACCHARINE

Baltimore punk band **Pinkshift** are here to change the game. The rock establishment have little experience with bands that blew up over TikTok, and frustratingly even less experience with a band that's all people of colour.

'I'm gonna tell my therapist on you' shone a spotlight on the young band as it rocketed to viral fame on social media. Pretty soon there was an excited, anticipatory buzz around Pinkshift. Once **Saccharine** was unleashed, there was no doubt that these guys had the songwriting chops to justify the hype.

Saccharine is a blaze of grunge-influenced punk for the new generation. And if the mainstream has any problem with that, then Pinkshift are happy to leave them behind in the dust. Get with it, or get out.



GOATH LIPSTICK

CRYSTALLINE CORSET



Sonically, this quirky little record might not seem to fit in with the punk/metal releases here. But I think it belongs perfectly with this cast of other misfits and outcasts.

Goth Lipstick is the brainchild of musician duo **Francesca Fey** and **Paperface**. *Crystalline Corset* was the first of two EPs they released in 2021.

Fey describes the album as a ‘trans feminist coming of age story’ and classes the band (tongue in cheek) as Sixth Wave Emo. The album creates a cyberpunk world where trans people can modify and digitise their bodies at will. If you can imagine what *Bladerunner’s* queer underground might sound like, then you’re not far off. Either that or the soundtrack to a chibi anime adaptation of *The Matrix*.

Goth Lipstick’s sound is a patchwork of hyperpop, chiptune, and emo influences. It probably shouldn’t work, but it really, really does.

MANNEQUIN PUSSY

PERFECT



Some bands feel a need to ‘prove’ how punk they are. Always going for 100 mile-an-hour power chords and balking at the suggestion of anything else. **Mannequin Pussy** use their latest EP to show that it’s okay to step on the brakes when needed. But don’t get it twisted, these songs are still venomous and full of teeth.

Perfect screeches through a range of hard-hitting social and political issues to give you an EP that basically has ‘punk’ written through it like a stick of rock. Trailblazers and game changers til they die, Mannequin Pussy have hit it out of the park with this one.

HAVELOCKE

THE ARSONIST

Apocalyptic settings for an apocalyptic year, with some vampire references thrown in for good measure. Sheffield's other only emo band follow in the footsteps of giants on their debut album. Funeral For A Friend, Hawthorne Heights, and the Used can all be heard in **The Arsonist's** dark melodies. When I heard the first single 'Vampire Eyes' I wrote that it was 'post-hardcore smudged with the darkest of eyeliners' and I stand by that for the rest of the album.

One of my hopes for 2022 is that I'll get to see Havelocke live. So folks, if you're reading this, come back to Manchester!



SEE YOU SPACE COWBOY / IF I DIE FIRST

A SURE DISASTER

This split EP is an absolute pressure cooker. These two hardcore titans wrote five razor sharp tracks and somehow corralled them, biting and snapping, into one record. You can almost hear them straining at their chains, only a second away from unleashing pure carnage.

SYSC and **IIDF** joined forces for '**bloodstainedeyes**' and its appropriately gory video. As with the full EP, it is not for those of a nervous disposition.

-
- 1. Painting a clear picture from an unreliable narrator
 - 2. Modernizing the myth of Sisyphus
 - 3. bloodstainedeyes
 - 4. Mirror, Mirror, this is nothing like you promised
 - 5. My nightmares would do numbers as horror movies

Violence and poetry, art and chaos, SeeYouSpaceCowboy and If I Die First - this really is a record of perfect pairings.



Thank you for supporting *Patch Pockets* in 2021!

Special shoutouts to:

- My family (even though they have no clue what I do)
- My wonderful partner Fia
- Into the Red, Slash Fiction & all the UK DIY emo folks
- Social Distance Warriors
- Paul Burston's Polari Salon
- Woah That's Fresh! Publicity
- Negative/Positive
- RAT BATH
- The World Over
- Abby K



