

The Spook School: "infused with optimism and acceptance"



Mitski: "sensitive but compelling alt.rock"



# QUEER NATION

IF YOU'RE FEELING LOST ABOUT **PWR BTTM'S** ALLEGED ABUSES COMING TO LIGHT, DON'T. THE QUEER ROCK SCENE HAS PLENTY OF OTHER SAFE SPACES YOU CAN MAKE YOUR OWN, SAYS ALMA RODA-GIL...



BY NOW, YOU will have heard the news about the alleged abuses of Ben Hopkins, the guitarist in queer punk duo PWR BTTM. At the time of going to press, the band had been dropped by Polyvinyl, their label, and were offering full refunds to fans who'd bought or pre-ordered second album Pageant. The label were also making donations to anti-sexual violence charity RAINN, and AVP, which aids victims of LGBTQ violence. PWR BTTM's planned tour, which would have seen them headlining London's KOKO on September 1, has also apparently been cancelled. Prior to this, PWR BTTM released their own statement, asking for those who'd been affected to contact an email set up by the band for mediation. The group were widely condemned for this. For more information on this story, check Kerrang.com.

PWR BTTM was a safe space for many people. They were a band K! believed in, and planned to put on the cover; such was their importance to an audience of rock fans spoken to so rarely. This news has been heartbreaking. But whatever you learned to love about yourself through this band is still yours to keep, even if they aren't who you thought they were. There are plenty more safe spaces around. We asked writer Alma Roda-Gil to tell us more...

"In an uncertain world, one thing's for sure: there is no single queer story. Music is and has always been an outlet for everyone, and in the tense climate we currently live in, queer music is a cathartic outlet that LGBTQ+ people need more than ever. Even if you don't identify as such, though, here are some amazing bands you'll love regardless..."

"Hailing from the hilariously named town of Pity Me, longtime Kerrang! favourites Martha describe their motto as: 'Anarchy,

Veganism, Irn-Bru.' Their incredibly catchy northern punk-rock explores themes from bisexuality to mental health on 2016's *Blisters On The Pit Of My Heart*.

"Even further up north, you'll find Edinburgh's The Spook School. They and Martha share a label, the late, great Fortuna Pop. Though they navigate sometimes dark themes, The Spook School's sophomore album *Try To Be Hopeful* is infused with optimism and acceptance, like on *Binary*; reminding the listener that they don't need to conform to gender standards and can exist outside of them.

"Across the pond, Philadelphia's Cayetana are making tremendous noise with their recently-released *New Kind Of Normal*. The trio's second offering is packed full of pop-punk goodness as they own their vulnerabilities; mental illness doesn't have to mean you're a burden, and Cayetana's music celebrates even the ugly parts. Also from Philadelphia are the riff-heavy Thin Lips, as illustrated by their 2016 album *Riff Hard*. Their debut, clocking in at under 30 minutes, delivers bursts of angry energy the whole way through.

"Further up the East Coast, New York offers a multitude of amazing queer bands and artists. Mitski and her sensitive-but-compelling alt.rock is the name on everyone's lips as her upcoming album *Puberty 2* gains hype and anticipation – but she's actually been making noise since 2012. While sadness is undeniably present in her music, she creates hauntingly beautiful melodies and is an act to watch out for. Just outside of New York, in Purchase, Adult Mom also have an upcoming record; *Soft Spots* is bedroom pop at its finest. It follows up 2015's *Momentary Lapse Of Happily*, where vocalist Steph Knipe told the story of their survival and recovery.

"Wrapping up the stateside section of this list is a band who were short-lived but loved by many – and their music won't ever go away. G.L.O.S.S., from Olympia, Washington, released 10 tracks over two EPs. Their aggressive hardcore punk fights back against transphobic institutions and is truly a cathartic experience that'll stay with you for a long, long time.

"Back home, and last but not least, Watford's Nervus are an act to watch. Last year's melodic punk-pop debut *Permanent Rainbow* is a record heavy with meaning – with themes of gender dysphoria and addiction – but, as shown by their single *Oh Joy*, it's an uplifting release. They are also the funniest band on Twitter by some distance. While those aforementioned songs started as a bedroom project by vocalist Em Foster, *Permanent Rainbow* emerged as an important, triumphant record – and you can catch Nervus perform it live in June.

"Hopefully you've found a couple new bands to listen to on this list. There's something for everyone, from bubbly pop to gritty hardcore; different genres for different identities, and voices that too often aren't heard enough."



Martha: "incredibly catchy northern punk-rock"