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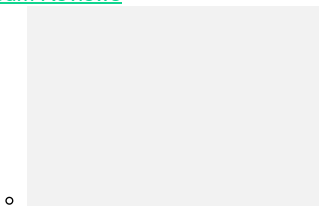
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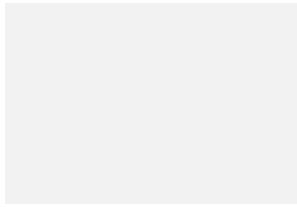
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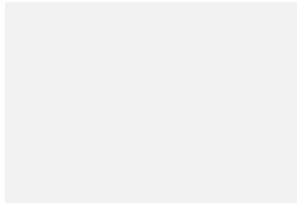
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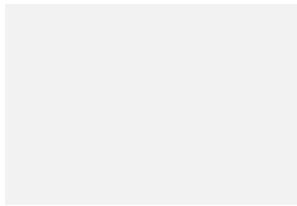
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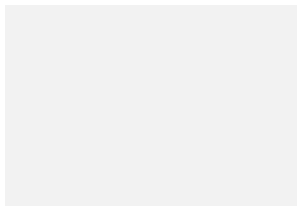
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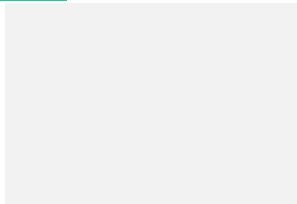


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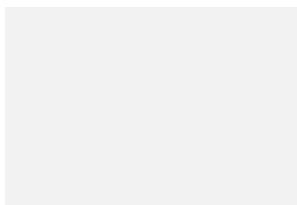
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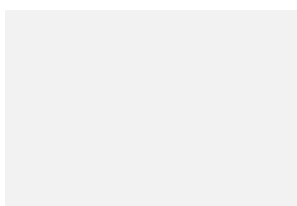


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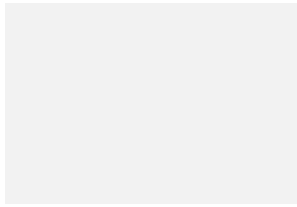
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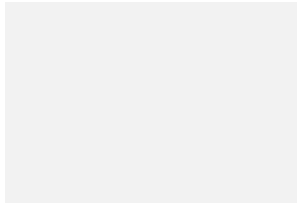
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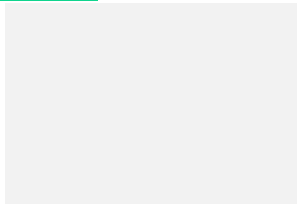


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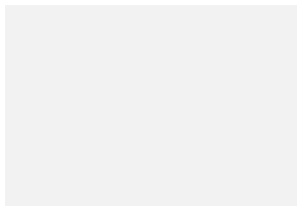


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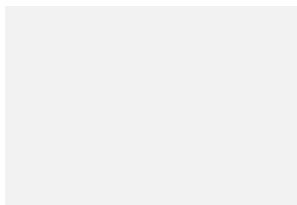
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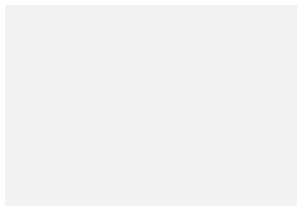
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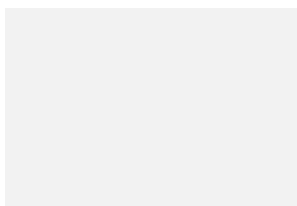
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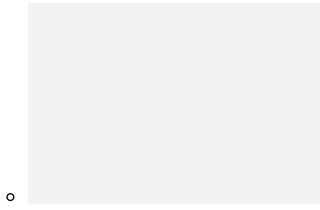


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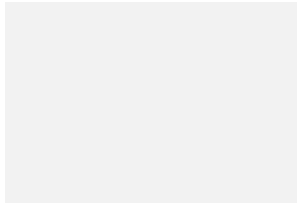


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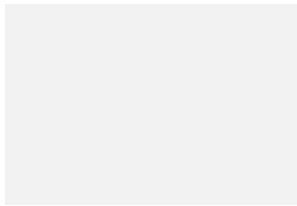
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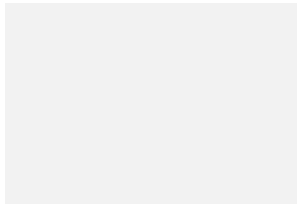
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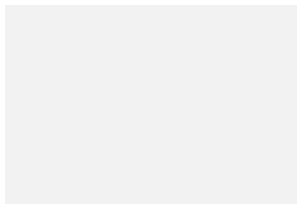
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What Did You Expect From The Vaccines? 10 years on from the most hyped debut in indie

By [davidalthom](#)

-

11 March 2021

Whether it's a bar with sticky floors and some sort of signature drink that involves a green WKD or a grimy gig venue that O2 probably absorbed, there's a place into our memory associated with The Vaccine's debut record *What Did You Expect From The Vaccines?*

Entering the UK albums chart at number 4 in March 2011, *WDYEFTV?* became the biggest-selling debut record by a band that year, leaving its mark on a generation of listeners all the same. Despite 'Wreckin' Bar' remaining a classic that everyone from your dad to any bloke at the bar knows, and 'If You Wanna' being a staple of all alternative club playlists to this day, *WDYEFTV?* wasn't met with the fanfare expect from a band heralded as the saviour of British indie.

Rewind back to March 11th 2011 for a minute. *WDYEFTV?* was long-anticipated. The Vaccines were held as marking a new era of alt-music, coming in towards the end of the 'indie landfill' that swept the UK. Music press heavily pushed them, including NME, earning them a reputation of an 'NME band', turning out to be both a gift and burden of huge expectations.

NME even drew a tongue in cheek comparison to Jesus in [one article](#). Maybe a tad too far? It's no wonder some didn't take too lightly to a debut album that may not hit like the New Testament did when that dropped.

Then the reviews came in. [Rolling Stone](#) gave it 3.5/5. [Drowned in Sound](#) questioned whether their hype from NME helped or hindered them, saying the band are *'being touted as saviours at a time when not a lot of people are in the market for being saved'* and claimed *'It is not a disaster, but in many ways a disaster would probably have been more of a laugh. Still, what did you expect? We can't say they didn't warn us'*. In both critique and compliment, the [BBC](#) said *'it's the rawer, less-than-perfect moments that make What Did You Expect From The Vaccines? a hell of a lot more interesting than the copycat indie rock record it at first appears to be.'*

How did indie's 'it' boys go from the messiahs of the genre to a moderately-positive but lukewarm reception overnight?

Mirroring headlines we've seen a great deal these last few months, [NME](#) claimed the record *'should serve to give British rock music a much needed jolt in the arm'*. Expected praise, sure, but it had truth in the matter.

It's clear in retrospect just how heavy the weight of expectation bore on this album in its reviews, the massive comparison to every British rock band under the sun, and the utter tone of feeling let down permeating through a lot of these articles. All of which simply begs the question we long to ask, just *what did we expect from The Vaccines?*

Was it possible for any record to hit the level that was being begged for? [The Guardian](#) took this into account, describing *WDYEFTV?* as a *'first effort by a fairly good indie band boosted far out of their league by an overexcited music press.'*

But nothing stopped *WDYEFTV?* from becoming a quintessential indie album racking up the streams and adorning record store shelves.

Looking at the record, beyond the hype, the magazine covers, and with the benefit of 10 years, it's clear that *WDYEFTV?* is inanelly human. The production isn't massive, nothing is crafted in a way that makes it feel unachievable and untouchable. Uncomplicated riffs and self-aware lyrics have each song feeling relatable on a level you just don't get when everything is amped up to 10. *WDYEFTV?* really excels in the moments that weren't shouted about around town, it found triumph in its perfect simplicity. It's exactly what it was meant to be, which might be the vaguest praise possible, but it is. It's what it says on the tin. Dull your expectations and you'll be amazed.

It was the perfect record for those of us hitting adulthood and all its challenges in the first half of the 2010s. Fumbling our way through the dating scene and failing, like frontman Justin Young experiences in *'Norgaard'* when a double date ended with three of the participants hooking up without Young. *'You've seen the world, what did it look like? You took a plane, I'll take a push bike'* from *'Wolfpack'* remains one of the greatest indie openers and harkens back to those days of chatting mindlessly to your uni mates about their enriching summers travelling whilst you worked in a supermarket 6 days a week for three months straight.

That's the charm of *WDYEFTV?* and The Vaccines' career since – self-deprecation, critical reflection, wanting and a desire to be wanted are all things we all see in ourselves at any point in our lives.

From the chanting of 'ra ra ra' to the sermon-like 'All in White', *WDYEFTV?* embodies British indie at its unrefined best. It's never anything other than the band claimed it to be – a record made by them, not for the music press, not to save the genre, but to kickstart a music career in the way The Vaccines were determined to.

Any track from this album brings me back to a simpler time, dancing on sticky floors, knocking back expensive pints in the Roundhouse, dancing under the beating sun of Glastonbury and watching a plastic wine bottle absolutely welly someone in the face during 'Wreckin' Bar'. The anger and acceptance that ebbs and flows throughout the album make it more relevant than ever now, in a time of chaos, confusion and a distinct lack of control over the very basic parts of our lives.

It's an understatement to say a lot has happened in these 10 years for us who were teens when they crept onto the scene. Continual expectations changed and defeated by years of rising student debt, rent rises, austerity, being from a generation consistently slated in the media for wanting too much, wanting too little and being in every way, unpleasant and ungrateful with a chip on our shoulder. And now the global pandemic.

We've been forced to be adaptable and messy twenty-somethings fumbling our way through life as best we can in a tumultuous time – something that feels completely, utterly captured by a record that predates all of these happenings. Is it not 2020 summed up in the line *'I've got too much time on my hands, but you don't understand'*? The timeless sensibilities of *WDYEFTV?* keep us streaming it a decade, and a hell of a lot of other indie bands, later.

As time went on, the weight of expectation disappeared. Other artists adorned the covers of magazines touted as the saviours of their respective genres, goaded by our desire to solve all of our own problems through the art of somebody else. *WDYEFTV?* found itself flourishing as the evergreen album that it is, and it stays one of the most listenable and satisfying debut records in British rock history. The music press hype was not misguided, as [Pitchfork](#) said back in 2011, *'The Vaccines, much to their credit, are savvier about expectations than their champions and critics alike.'*

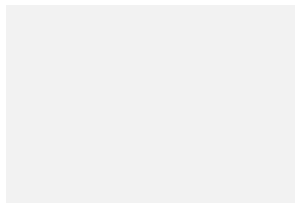
10 years on The Vaccines show no sign of slowing down, with secret Glastonbury sets, a couple of spin-off records, a lot of free promotion from Pfizer and collaboration with Kylie Minogue for the Shaun the Sheep movie- we didn't expect that one.

The Vaccines have been dropping tracks from their *Cosy Karaoke* EP and are barreling towards their 5th LP to be released in 2021, [claimed](#) to be the best one yet by the band. After 2020, we're used to keeping our expectations for enjoyment low and expectations for vaccines high, so let's see how this one goes.

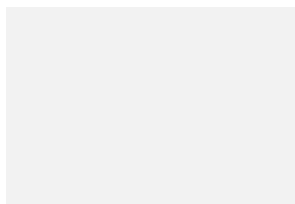
'They've all got their opinions, but what do they know?' opens the final, non-secret track on the album. The world can place whatever expectations it wants on The Vaccines- they'll keep on doing just fine.

Keep up to date with The Vaccines on Twitter [here](#).

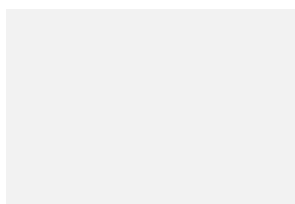
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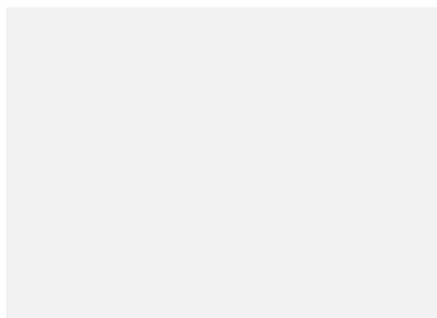
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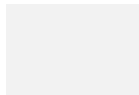
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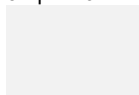
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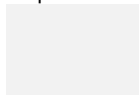
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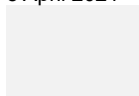
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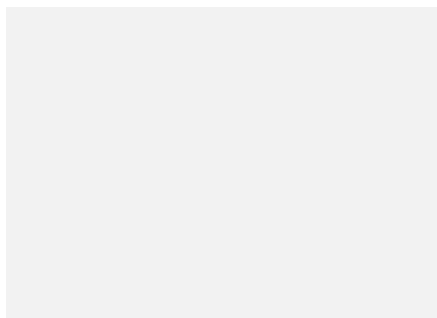
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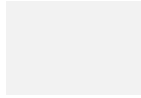
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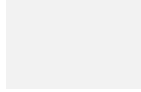
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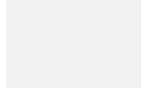
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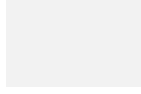
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