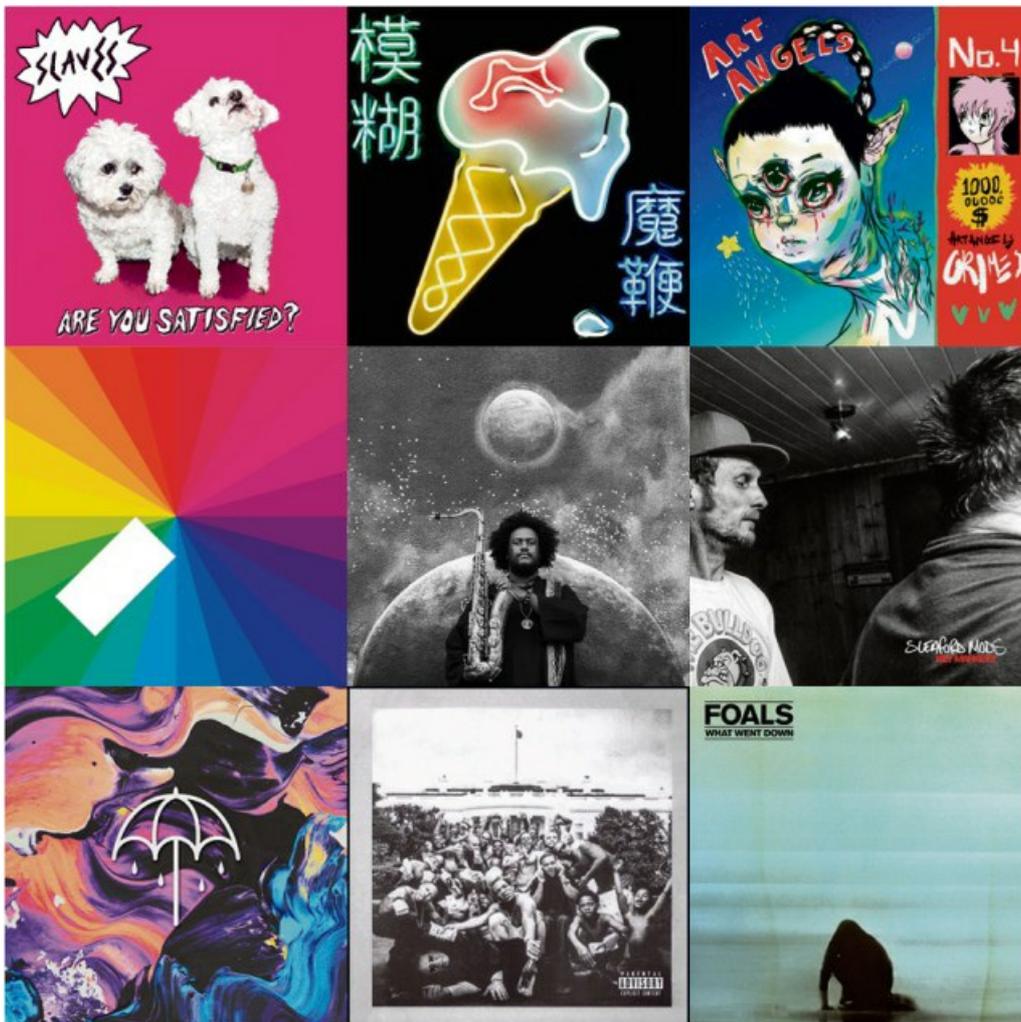


## Best Albums of 2015

The Music editors pick their highlights of what last year had to offer

By Eleanor Langford, Jack Davies and Ant Noonan  
Tuesday 19 January 2016



Another year sees another 'best of' list and it's safe to say that 2015 delivered a mixed bag of quality releases. Highlights included the world of hip-hop witnessing the release of Kendrick Lamar's magnum opus, To Pimp a Butterfly causing critics worldwide to truly acknowledge his place in contemporary music, while British artists battled it out in the annual Mercury Prize seeing Benjamin Clementine's debut, At Least For Now take home the gold. As well as this, artists including Drake, Grimes and Tame Impala stormed back into action, each with incredibly varied and different releases that impressed and surprised both critics and listeners. We at Nouse also ran our Top 50 records of 2015 poll featuring a plethora of opinions and highlights from across the musical spectrum which you can find online in an article discussing the ins and outs of each release in the list. All in all, 2015 was a brilliant year showing us that music continues to move forward in an exciting and socially important direction we can all look forward to. Here's to another brilliant year.

## Sleaford Mods – *Key Markets*



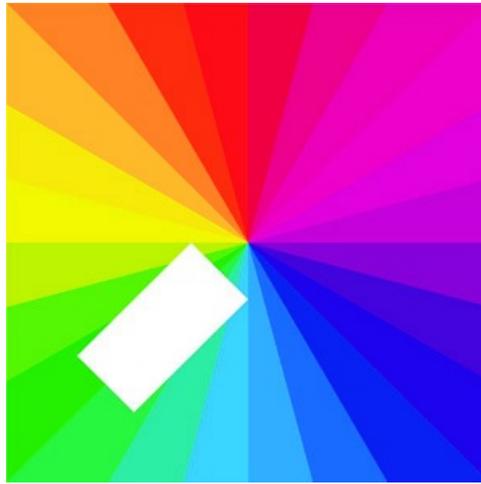
In 2015, Sleaford Mods were pissed off. After the omnishambles of the May general election, a lot of left-leaning Britons felt angry and betrayed but didn't know how to voice this. But oh, Sleaford Mods certainly did. Lyrically, *Key Markets* is a shot of vitriol in a Nottingham working man's club with Jason Williamson barking and spitting dark poetry like a dog who's just been stepped on. Lyrics that have a pop at anyone related to Westminster pollute this claustrophobic and bruising punk release thudded along by Andrew Robert Lindsay Fearn's migraine bass and drums that hock up disgust. If you're pissed, so are Sleaford Mods and *Key Markets* is your musical brick that is waiting to be hurled. **AN**

## Bring Me The Horizon – *That's The Spirit*



Never has reinvention been delivered in such epic form. The success of *That's The Spirit* marks a new era both in Bring Me The Horizon's career and in the future of rock in British culture. Oli Sykes and company have supplied us with a sound ready to destroy any arena, namely the anthem-esque 'Throne' and addictive 'Happy Song'. Though many have been disappointed at the band's change in direction, it cannot be denied that their music embodies the energy of the genre that birthed them, with a style and voice that appeals to the masses. One can only imagine which direction they'll take us next. **EL**

## Jamie xx – *In Colour*



This kaleidoscopic debut from producer Jamie Smith – who goes by the name Jamie xx – acts as a showcase for all that he could not express in his years as a member of indie-pop number The xx. Across *In Colour* we move seamlessly from introverted reverence to floor-filling, pulsating anthems. Opening track ‘Gosh’ builds infectiously to euphoric climax, while album highlight ‘I Know There’s Gonna Be (Good Times)’ smoothly blends an amalgam of styles into glorious harmony. Even after a dozen listens, the beauty of this album forever lies in its clashing intricacy that effortlessly falls into enraptured sound. **EL**

### Kamasi Washington – *The Epic*



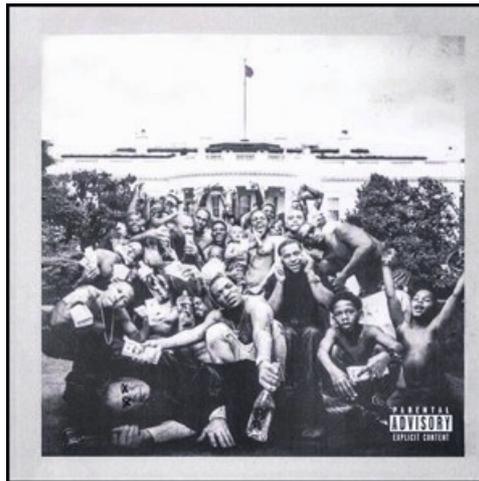
For a lot of listeners of popular music, jazz seems like something alien, something people struggle to understand while maintaining a certain respect for the importance of its legacy. Kamasi Washington’s *The Epic* blows this out of the water. Twisting and turning through a modern jazz conglomeration of power and weight, three hours long, *The Epic* hearkens back to elements of swing, be-bop and even 20th century classical music qualifying the obvious title of such a release. With breadth, depth and accessibility all morphing together to display true virtuosity and style, it is clear that *The Epic* is signifying Jazz’s relevance in the modern music sphere and displaying that true musicianship can never die. **AN**

### Slaves – *Are You Satisfied?*



Basic, bare, but brilliant, Slaves' fantastic debut *Are You Satisfied?* is comfortably one of 2015's albums of the year. Sounding distinctly different to anything else in the musical landscape at the moment, the duo from Tunbridge Wells in Kent have managed to produce an exquisite, stripped back amalgamation of punk and grime. Think Sex Pistols if they'd first come on the scene in the era of garage circa 2001. Listen to 'Sockets' for a standout moment, but just buy the whole album. *Are You Satisfied?* was well deserving of its Mercury Prize nomination last year for its breakneck speed songs that even a momentary listen to will leave the hairs on the back of your neck standing on their ends. **JD**

## Kendrick Lamar – *To Pimp A Butterfly*



If *Good Kid, M.A.A.D City* was a film, then *To Pimp a Butterfly* is a novel. Full of nuanced detail and thematic intricacies, Lamar's third LP depicts celebrity, capitalism and most importantly, contemporary blackness, creating something more than just a record but a political statement defining what it's like to be a black man in a society that crushes African-American individualism and culture. Lamar's performance crackles and sparks while the album's production pulses and breathes, highlighting how *To Pimp a Butterfly* is not just an album, but a signifier of the greater black movement that continues the drive towards equality. **AN**

## Blur – *The Magic Whip*



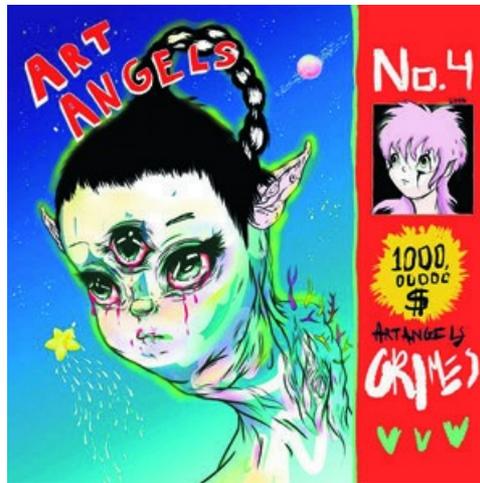
When Blur announced they would be releasing their first studio album in 12 years, they left an armada of fans feeling a mixture of extreme excitement, but also a slight fear that it might not live up to 12 years of anxious waiting. Any worries were unnecessary, as *The Magic Whip* proved to be yet another successful musical transformation by a band that have become experts in changing their sound throughout the years. Recorded in Hong Kong, the album at times can feel like a musical postcard from the orient. But, importantly, it's still distinctly Blur (look no further than archetypal singalong 'Ong Ong'). Another impressive album from Cheltenham's finest. **JD**

### Foals – *What Went Down*



Oxford rockers Foals make our 'Best Albums of 2015' for their brilliantly rocky *What Went Down*. The band managed to follow up 2013's fantastic *Holy Fire* with an album packed with heavy rock rage interspersed with frontman Yannis Philippakis' high-pitched, melodic vocals. Similarly to their previous albums, *What Went Down* is another example of gradual change, rather than a drastic transformation. 'Mountain At My Gates' is a nod to their previous, jangly indie rock, but title track 'What Went Down' is the best example of the band's successful transition to an enjoyably heavier sound. The band have engineered a much bigger sound that will be a welcome addition to their already widely-lauded and intense live shows. **JD**

### Grimes – *Art Angel*



You will never find Grimes pandering to the Top 40 charts and industry fat-cats in her life or in her music. The utterly striking *Art Angels* is a fearless fuck-you to those that have tried to define her, a fierce fight to be seen on her own terms. With this album she shows her strength as a producer, toeing the line between the pop we love and the pop she is. Her sound is blown out and colourful while also synthetic and unreal, capturing her struggle to define herself in an industry that whitewashes female artists. From the sickly sweet sound of 'California' to the heated 'Kill V. Maim', Grimes proves she is more than a pop product. **EL**



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