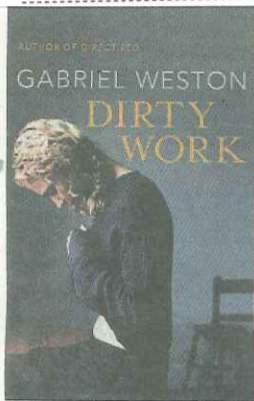


Books & Games

Music Reviews

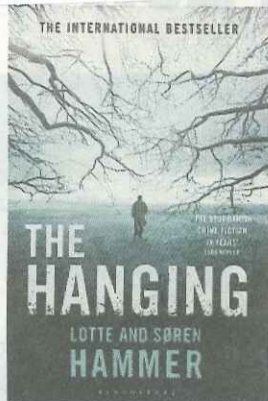
Games



Dirty Work
Gabriel Weston, Atlantic Books, £14.99

●● In 2010, part-time surgeon Gabriel Weston received the 2010 Pen/Ackley Prize for her debut book. Her second, *Dirty Work*, begins with the central character, Nancy, up to her arms in blood when a routine procedure goes wrong, leaving another doctor to jump in and save her patient's life, while she sits back and watches. Nancy faces being struck off from her job, after her patient's life was left hanging in the balance. An intense, jargon-heavy read from the start, *Dirty Work* is not as upsetting as a book on abortion could be, though has its moments.

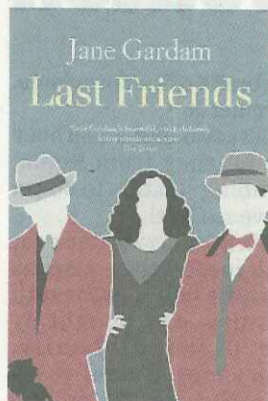
OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)



The Hanging
L & S Hammer, Bloomsbury, £12.99

●● When the corpses of five men are found hanging and mutilated in a school gymnasium, Det Insp Konrad Simonsen and his team of Copenhagen detectives have their work cut out. They must race against time to solve the crime as a fervour of anti-police vigilante reprisals wash over a nation at odds with its liberal outlook. *The Hanging* has enough twists and turns for even the most fervent of thriller fans. It will question which side you sit on a deep-rooted moral question, does conscience over-rule law? A fine first effort.

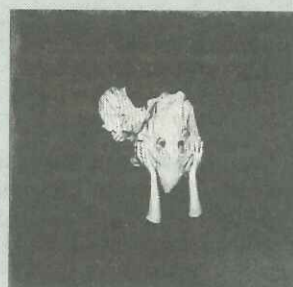
OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)



Last Friends
Jane Gardam, Little Brown, £16.99

●● *Last Friends* completes Jane Gardam's 'Old Filth' trilogy. Focusing on the trio of Old Filth, Betty and Veneering, *Last Friends* sees Veneering finally take centre stage, as Old Filth did in 2004's *Old Filth*, and Betty did in 2009's *The Man In The Wooden Hat*. As with all Gardam's characters, Veneering has an unconventional past. The reader is taken back to 1927 to visit his humble beginnings in the Northern town of Herringfleet. This is a romantic, yet brilliantly realistic end to a tale about three friends who have been through it all together.

OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)



Kveikur
Sigur Ros

●● These Icelandic giants have already made much of the 'aggressive' step they've taken on *Kveikur*, their seventh studio album and the second in the space of a year. From the first track and single, *Brennesteinn*, until the last, this is a lot more punchy, pounding and percussional than anything from the trio before. But this is Sigur Ros, whose music remains beautiful - they haven't become Rammstein overnight. Echoing falsetto vocals, euphoric waves of synth, dainty jingles and tender strings still stop listeners dead in their tracks.

OUR RATING: ★ 9
(out of 10)



Sistrionix
Deap Vally

●● It's been nearly a year since LA rock duo Deap Vally's debut single, *Gonna Make My Own Money*, hit the airwaves here. That song, along with ensuing singles *Lies* and *Baby I Call Hell*, demonstrates a rough-and-ready rock 'n' roll sound earning them comparisons to Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. With no session band backing them up, they eke a bigger sound from their meagre instruments than most acts three times their size could hope for. This extraordinary, exciting album is easily among the best of the year so far.

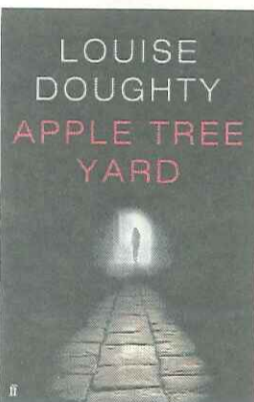
OUR RATING: ★ 9
(out of 10)



Ashes Cricket 2013
XBox 360, £32.99

●● This summer's big cricketing event is three weeks away, as the Aussies try and wrestle that tiny urn away from English hands. Here, you're at the crease, in control of the ultimate rivalry, with a brand new game engine creating the most authentic leather on willow experience around. Batsmen have 360 degree control over shot placement, and satisfaction from placing a drive between the fielders then racing away for four is infectious. An improvement on 2009's effort, with dynamic features such as deteriorating wickets and weather conditions.

OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)



Apple Tree Yard
Louise Doughty, Faber & Faber, £12.99

●● Yvonne Carmichael appears to have it all; a successful career in genetics and a large home in London, which she shares with her husband, with fleeting visits from her adult children. She didn't plan on the affair, though her marriage wasn't as good as it appeared, it was just chance she stumbled across him at an opportune moment. The novel follows the after-effect of the choices she makes as they spiral out of control. *Apple Tree Yard* is not only a look at the individual psychology of humans, but the social choices and morality we live by.

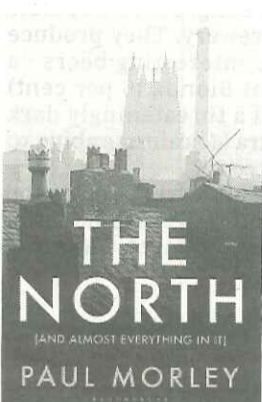
OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)



Happy Money
E Dunn & M Norton, OneWorld, £10.99

●● An antidote to the plethora of books promising to make you £1m in a month, *Happy Money* takes a different approach to finance. Rather than telling you how to make more money, the authors explain how to use the money you do have to make you happier. Because actually, after a certain point more money doesn't make you happier. The book essentially gives us five rules to live by - buy experiences, keep treats as treats, buy time, spend money on others and pay now, receive later. Jam-packed with tips, it's also really, really funny.

OUR RATING: ★ 9
(out of 10)



The North
Paul Morley, Bloomsbury, £20

●● This could have been accurately titled *The North West (And Almost Everything In It)*, as Morley's extensive homage to life in the North could prove something of a disappointment for readers hoping for a few more facts about areas further North East. But there's no denying the painstaking research gone into music journalist Morley's love letter to the North. A mix of geography and Morley's own personal memoirs, interspersed with northern anecdotes and historical snippets that move back through time. Endless fun for fact fans.

OUR RATING: ★ 6
(out of 10)



Born Sinner
J. Cole

●● Grammy-nominated rapper J. Cole pushes the follow-up to his 2011 debut *Cole World: The Sideline Story* to coincide with Kanye West's *Yeezus*, out the same week. Far from the basketball theme on his previous album, the North Carolina-based star, full name Jermaine Lamarr Cole, warns listeners in the opening: "It's way darker this time". The record, interjected with short skits, features collaborations with Miguel, TLC and Kendrick Lamar and is largely a great listen. It's good to hear a fresh talent who can throw out rhymes.

OUR RATING: ★ 7
(out of 10)



Ice On The Dune
Empire Of The Sun

●● Five years ago, glamorous Australian electronic duo *Empire Of The Sun* exploded with a unique take on indie-electro, and long-time friends Luke Steele and Nick Littlemore are back. Following the same formula as their 2008 debut, the upbeat first half has a retro, nostalgic feel perfectly encapsulated in the first single *Alive*. The second half is more restrained, allowing its audience to wind down with *I'll Be Around* and *Keep A Watch*. Even though there isn't a bad song on here, it fails to recapture the magic they bottled first time round.

OUR RATING: ★ 7
(out of 10)



Company of Heroes 2
PC, £26.99

●● The original *Company of Heroes* thrust you into the Saving Private Ryan scenario, and went on to deliver one of the most visceral real-time strategy experiences on any games system. Now, you take command of the iconic Soviet Red Army in brutal frontline warfare to free Mother Russia from the invading Nazis, while *Company of Heroes 2* takes on the very best RTS titles money can buy on PC. And it delivers a brilliant wartime adventure, as you stretch your strategic skills and tactical expertise to the limit. Beautiful and brutal.

OUR RATING: ★ 8
(out of 10)