

Album Review: Frank Turner – The Third Three Years

“Thank you very much. That was ace.”

By [Chris Owen](#), Editor (2015/16)
Wednesday 26 November 2014

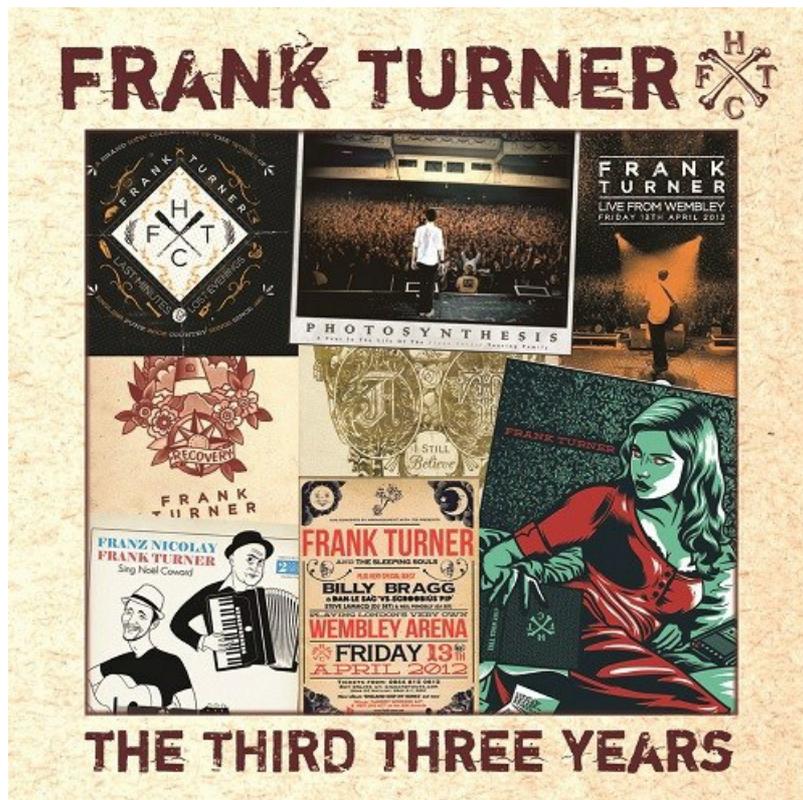


Photo Credit: Xtra Mile Recording

Frank Turner's 'Three Years' albums are always an incomparable pleasure to listen to and review. Free from the dogmatic analyses of character and artistic direction that shroud the release of a studio album, the triennial collection of covers, collaborations and original material makes for a purely uninhibited and always completely enjoyable listen. *The Third Three Years* is, unquestionably, his best yet. Fun, moving and, as always, nothing less than entirely honest, it reminds us of why we fell in love with Frank in the first place, in case any of us were careless enough to ever forget.

He is, and always has been, an artist who clearly, dearly loves to release music. When others shy away from indiscriminate recording and releasing in a paralysis of self-consciousness, Frank churns out music with a paradoxical indifference and compassion for his fans' needs. This is never truer than on his latest effort (which is, of course, entirely the wrong word - he's never really been an artist to attempt; only to create). On *The Third Three Years*, Queen, Paul McCartney and Bruce Springsteen are masterfully covered with absolutely no-one else in mind. As a result, every one of Frank's fans will know that these typically impervious releases are exactly what they burningly want and need from their self-penned skinny, half-arsed country singer.

Stripped-back but not dumbed down, 'Somebody To Love', like most of Frank's covers - 'Build Me Up Buttercup' and 'Greatest Day' come to mind - pinpoints and pays homage to the spark of the original whilst weaving his own uncompromising musicianship into the song's very fabric. Versatility is entirely the wrong term for this skill; more suitable is, quite simply, artistry. 'Hits and Mrs' is charming and touching, with the signature Turner bittersweetness nestled somewhere between the chord progressions. Having first appeared on the *Polaroid Picture EP*, a follow-up release to 2013's *Tape Deck Heart*, album-winner 'Sweet Albion Blues' blessedly crops up again as the third track on this year's release. Go and listen to it. It's flipping brilliant.

'Something of Freedom' is this album's Bob Dylan moment, and a silencer to the irksome, and now infamous, Guardian article of 2012. Moment over, and 'Fields of June' is unleashed, a phenomenal folk tango of austerity and glorious melody. It's refreshing as hell to hear Frank's angst-ridden tone set against an equally striking female vocal, courtesy of the excellent Emily Barker & the Red Clay Halo. At the back end of the album, stripped-back and re-imagined versions of 'Plain Sailing Weather', 'Tell Tale Signs' and 'The Way I Tend To Be' provide a nostalgic throwback to the heartbreak year of 2013, and Frank's defining studio effort.

After a full run, *The Third Three Years* is like finding the comfort blanket that you forgot you had. Better still, like finding a comfort blanket with a big picture of Frank's melancholy face, holding up a hand and waving indifferently, to remind us that, whilst times change, there's always a quite-angry-but-not-really folk man writing songs that care about us. 'If you're all about the destination, take a fucking flight. We're going nowhere slowly, but we're seeing all the sights', goes the passionately dispassionate lyric from 'The Ballad of Me and My Friends'. In 2007, on the first recording of the song, Frank addresses a chattering crowd, stuttering slightly over his introduction - 'T-This song's called The Ballad of Me and My Friends', he says, before delivering the timeless classic to a small yet rapturous reception. On the 2014 rerecording, the now stadium-sized crowd takes over for the refrain - 'We're definitely going to hell, and we'll have all the best stories to tell.' Some things never change. Some things don't need to.

Rating: ★★★★★



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