

* **trembling blue stars**

* **introduction** *

* **pacific radio** *

* **pop heart** *

* **cody** *

* **ghost shakers** *

* **fosca** *

* **the millionaire of your own hair** *

* **tompot blenny** *

* **found under blankets** *

* **trembling blue stars**

* **christmas and train trips**

* **and things** *

all songs taken from albums released this autumn on
Shinkansen, except the Trembling Blue Stars tracks
which were recorded in 1997 but never released.

A Miracle on Commercial Street

Scene: *Spitalfields Market, December 11th, 3pm.* Through the white-webbed windows of the Spitz bar, bright flakes of snow can be seen flurrying and flummoxing about the freshly frosted streets like fallout from an explosion in a fish-finger factory, while small sooty urchins scurry cheerily hither and merrily thither clad only in raggedy raincoats, moth-eaten mufflers and neatly ironed Belle & Sebastian T-shirts, almost as if there weren't chimneys needing cleaning. Back on our side of the glass, a jaded former pop-kid, still numb to his quivering core after going to both nights of the recent Gentle Waves showcase in order to win a bet, slumps in a chair and gazes with contempt at the small polythene package a fat and absurdly jolly old man with a fluffy white beard and garb as crimson as his cheeks has just handed him – some sort of reward, a moment's eavesdropping soon reveals, for him having agreed to sit on the old fellow's knee for five minutes when they'd earlier met by chance in the downstairs toilets.

What the hell is this? I thought you said you were going to buy me a drink? And where's that reindeer you said I could stroke?

Ho ho ho, all in good time, young fellow, all in good time. First, a special festive gift that'll do you far more good than any cheap alcoholic fix or quick velvety fondle: a CD containing five shiny pop-songs which are – like the sight of snowflakes melting on the upturned lips of a loved-one, or of familiar handwriting smudged across an airmail envelope, or of TV footage of large groups of penguins falling over – guaranteed to pluck you promptly from your torpid pit of self-pity and plant you pertly on the sun-dappled peaks of purposefulness; in short, five songs to make you think that life is, perhaps, worth another shot after all.

Five songs? It implies six on the cover.

Yes, but the first one's just an instrumental, and no-one counts instrumentals. Look, let me talk you through it:

PACIFIC RADIO: Pop Heart

Pacific Radio is basically a pseudonym for north London curiosity Rob Crutchley, who's also previously recorded under the name Monograph. And here's how it works: wait for that first molten rush of guitars to explode over you and then begin declaiming above the roar *I might not be sixteen any more, I might live 25 minutes' walk from the nearest tube-station and I might, through no fault of my own, support Barnet FC, but deep inside me something still burns with a furious incandescent rage* – because then you'll know how it feels to have a true Pop Heart. Or to have had

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