"It's hard to love someone when you don't love yourself. There, in that tawdry configuration of words, lies the essential essence of the blues – especially when sung straight through the ages by a timeless voice still resonant after seventy years, weary history.

Bessie Smith, be she rare, was time- less and transcendent, plus much more: booming, cooing, cackling, coo, hateful, happy. She was hallowed in her 1926-1930 prime and all the more – with prosperity in her loins and pride in her stride – that she was a rich woman in her later years. In the same vein there are other worthy candidates, and declarations of the blues are made to be debated. But listen to the right moment, generally alone at night with the lights down low, and there is no contest.

Smith sang on the then-now milieu of vinyl records from 1923 to 1930, and almost all of these were included in a new 10-CD set called 78s Complete Columbia Recordings: Bessie Smith. It’s a lot of music – 111 tracks, more than anyone could handle, but it’s of utmost import for Duke Ellington (The Columbia Studio Albums 1930-1951), and Louis Armstrong (The Okeh, Columbia & RCA Victor Recordings 1923-25), not to mention others like a 45-volume compendium of Jimmie Primo and 45-disc monument to Johnny Cash.

Appreciators of eclectic static would no doubt be interested, another new, and far more sinewy, treasure trove titled World Hard, Play Hard, Play Hard Hard Time, Good Time & End Time Music, a collection of 350 recordings meant to pay tribute to the many kinds of toil and torment. It’s hard to be known, intimately, by every voice to “trouble, trouble” itself, she directs her phenomenon of a voice, a music that loses aspects of clarity and sharpness over the years but gains in emotion and feeling.

Her voice is steeped in the blues that it returns even more prominent parafields into celebrations of toil and torment. It’s hard to be alive, she says now, but the only other way is to be lost and die. That would be worse, of course – or wouldn’t it? In his collection haunted house blues, Smith suggests otherwise: “I’m so lost and I don’t know if I’m going to be saved or taken” is the way it sounds, but the words are twisted.

It’s not the only song in which we return to this: “I’m just the blues all the time, then.” "Tell the undertaker I’ll be that the blues is going to call me at last.”

It opens with I'll Stay With You, a version of a song originally recorded by Tom Turpin with the executors of the late Bessie Smith, who passed away in 1937. It’s the story of a man whose wife has died and he’s left with a baby to look after. The burden falls on him and he’s left feeling lonely and forgotten.

Eight years after releasing Waiting for the Sirens’ Call – the band’s much-anticipated comeback album – New Order are back. Since their 1993 studio album, Bizarre Love Triangle, the band’s latest release is to be released on September 12, 2020.

New Order made a habit of providing a stirring counterpoint to the rest of the world’s music, to the point where it was often easier to find New Order albums than to find their peers. Their 1983 debut, Power, Corruption & Lies, proved to be a landmark release in the genre, with its haunting guitar riffs and on-point lyrics.

New Order's new album, Blue Monday, was produced by John Peel and features contributions from Mark E. Smith of The Fall, Pete Shelley of The Buzzcocks, and Happy Mondays.

The album features a range of styles, from the electronic and synth-pop of the band's early years to the more experimental and atmospheric sounds of their later work.

New Order's frontman, Bernard Sumner, said of the new album: "We wanted to make a record that was different from anything we've done before. We wanted to explore new sounds and take risks. We're really excited about how it's turned out and we think it's one of our best albums yet."