



**MADONNA: MDNA
(INTERSCOPE)**

★★★★★

Madonna has returned with renewed vigour. 2008's *Hard Candy* tried to recapture the American market and fell flat, but *MDNA* features left-field European producers more suited to her instinctive melodic style. Italian house DJ Marco Benassi has her down on the dancefloor, while electronic maestro Martin Solvig and guests Nicki Minaj and M.I.A lend a garage pop edge. 'I Don't Give A', for instance, is vintage vengeful Madonna "reassessing" marriage to Guy Ritchie. "I try to be a good girl/try to be your wife/diminish myself/and swallow my life", she spits out, as Minaj delivers a bold rap over churchy production. By far the strongest tracks, though, are those she recorded with William Orbit. He brings out her inner "weird", making her sing in the upper registers with a fulsome sense of yearning. She and Orbit have created a startling kind of electronic chanson – thank God they found each other again. **L.O'B**



QUIET. ★★★★★

By Susan Cain (Viking) £14.99

Introverts are underrated. Without them we wouldn't have Apple computers, the theory of relativity or Van Gogh's genius. Yet extroverts dominate in today's society and our children are encouraged to be outgoing and assertive. *Quiet. The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* is one of those intelligent, well-researched books that come along occasionally that really do provide a shift in perspective. The author is a self-confessed introvert who learned to use her listening skills and non-confrontational style, while working as a lawyer. She begins by exploring the archetypes of extrovert/introvert and follows the rise of extrovert values like "charismatic leadership" and "sharp skills" which have taken over business and politics. Loudmouths thrive in collaborative working groups, but Cain proposes that collaboration kills creativity – what's needed is solitary work. The 2008 crash was caused by the culture of risk and reward-seeking bankers – enough said. Cain suggests that we take a leaf from the Chinese and their Confucian ethic of quiet study and relationship-honouring. This is soft power at work. This should be compulsory reading for headmasters, CEOs and ministers. **I.O'R**

