NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every month. Issue 117 April 2005



"we can experiment with impunity!" - interview inside

also in this issue -

Oxford Punt 2005
Line-up announced



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THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT HAS BEEN

finalised. The Punt takes place on Wednesay 11th May and features 24 local bands and solo artists playing across eight venues on one night. The Punt is now established as the best showcase of local unsigned music. This year Nightshift received over 100 demos from local acts hoping to take part. The Punt received an added boost last month when Kiss Bar became the eighth venue to be added to the event, meaning we could fit an extra three bands on the bill, making this the biggest Punt ever.

The full line up is as follows:

Borders: 6.15pm: Laima Bite; 7pm: Kate Chadwick.

Jongleurs: 7.30: The Evenings; 8.15: A Silent Film; 9pm: The Factory Far From The Madding Crowd (in conjunction with Delicious Music): 8.15: Zoe Bicat; 9.15: The Thumb Quintet; 10.15: Chantelle Pike. The City Tavern: 8.30: The Half Rabbits; 9.30: Fell City Girl; 10.30:

Junkie Brush.

The Wheatsheaf: 8pm: P.Y.E; 9pm: Vena Cava; 10pm: The Confidential Collective.

The Purple Turtle (in conjunction with The Beard Museum): 8.30: Moocher; 9.30: The Family Machine; 10.30: Film Noir.

Kiss Bar: 8.30: TV Baby; 9.30: Harry Angel; 10.30: Script.

The Cellar: 9pm: Blue Kite; 10pm: The E Band; 11pm: Big Speakers;

12am: The Walk Off.

With a solid six hours of great live music on show, with styles ranging from acoustic folk and hip hop, to punk, new wave and industrial techno, fans of local music shouldn't miss out. The best way to enjoy the Punt is with an all-venue **Punt Pass**. There are 100 of these available, priced £7, on sale now from The Polar Bear on Cowley Road, The Oxford Music Shop on St Aldates or online from oxfordmusic.net. Alternatively simply pay on the door at whichever venues you fancy. Borders and Far From the Madding Crowd are free entry.

Nightshift would like to say a big thank you to everyone who submitted a demo for consideration. The quality, as ever, was extremely high and we're just sorry we couldn't fit even more bands on the bill.

In the May issue of Nightshift we'll be running a four-page Oxford Punt special with a complete guide to everything that's happening on the

THE DOWNLOAD, BBC Radio

Oxford's local music show. continues its initial 8-week run this month. The show, hosted by Tim Bearder, goes out every Friday between 7-8pm and features songs and interviews with Oxford bands, as well as gig reviews, a gig and club guide and a local demo vote. For anyone who misses out on the live airing, you can listen to the show again on bbc.co.uk/oxford. Bands wanting to submit music to be played should send it to Tim Bearder c/o BBC Oxford, 269 Banbury Road, Summertown, Oxford, OX2 7DW.

DAYS OF GRACE have called it a day. The local emo faves decided to split at the end of February, due to "different life commitments". Singer Patrick Currier has since joined Blood Roses, while drummer Chris will be concentrating on his other band, Sow..

NATION, who released their debut album, 'Today Is The First Day', in December last year, make their latest bid for rock and roll glory with a headline gig at the New Theatre on Saturday 13th August. They become the first Oxford band to headline the 1,700-capacity venue since Supergrass last year. Tickets, priced £10, are available from the New Theatre box office or Virgin Megastore on Cornmarket.





THE YOUNG KNIVES release a new EP on May 16th on hot new indie label Transgressive, the label that launched The Subways earlier this year. Tracks on the limited 10" EP are 'Coastgard', 'Kramer Vs Kramer', 'Weekends And Bleak days' and 'Trembling Of The Trails', all of which were produced by Gang Of Four legend Andy Gill. The songs will also be available to download. The Young Knives head out on a national tour to promote the new EP, including a headline show at the Zodiac on Friday 6th May. Tickets available from the box office (01865 420042) or online from wegottickets.com.

DONOVAN heads a list of big name acts coming to Oxford. The 60s folk legend appears at Oxford Town Hall on Thursday 9th June to promote his new album, 'Beat Café'. Also coming up in Oxford is the return of former Spice Girl Mel C at the Zodiac (Mon 2nd May), The Futureheads at Brookes University Union (Sun 15th May) and a highly-anticipated first visit to town for The Magic Band (Zodiac, Mon 23rd June). Tickets for all shows are available from the Zodiac box office (01865 420042) or online from wegottickets.com.

KISS BAR opens its doors to regular live music from this month. The Park End Street bar, which has just become the eighth venue on this year's Oxford Punt, will host gigs every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday starting on 5th April when experimental hardcore noise legends Nought headline. Lee Christian, singer with local rockers Smilex, as well as former presenter of The Fortnightly Fix and Quickfix Records label boss, is the promoter for the new music nights. He hopes the Kiss Bar will become a cool hang-out for local gig goers in a part of town dominated by crap nightclubs and vile weekend binge drinkers. As such there will be 100 club membership cards available that will allow cheap entry to all gigs and priority entry on busy nights. As well as live bands, local band members will be DJing between band sets. See this month's gig guide for full line-up.

THE HALF RABBITS contribute a track, 'Fast Breeder Reactor', to 'Public Service Broadcast 6', released on Jetplane Landing's Smalltown America label. The compilation, including tracks from 65daysofstatic and Thee More Shallows, is available now from www.smalltownamerica.co.uk.

BOB WOODS

Nightshift was saddened to learn of the death of former Jericho Tavern landlord Bob Woods last month after a long period of ill health. Bob, along with his wife Kath, ran the Tavern in its heyday as a live music venue and played a large part in making it the legendary venue it has become. Their enthusiasm for live music allowed gig promoter Mac to build the Tavern up into one of the best small venues in the country before it was shut down in 1995.

As well as a great pub landlord of the old school, with an attitude and sense of humour that made the Jericho such a great place to visit, Bob was also a talented singer in his own right and would often perform at Your Song nights, including a classic rendition of The Specials' 'Gangsters' with ATL. Nightshift extends its deepest sympathies to Kath and to Bob's children, Mick and Shel and raises a glass to his memory.

Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element

THE HISS AND CLANG OF A

malfunctioning futuristic factory. The clatter and skitter of spasticated off-funk rhythms. The crunch and skronk of a belligerent guitar getting its own back on a society that refused to understand it. No, not the new McFly single. This must be Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element, Oxford's premier exponents of dissonant electronic post-rock and fractured guitar noise. They've come to make your stereo bleed.

SUNNYVALE'S ABILITY TO

turn heads while turning the accepted norms of rock music inside out is an art form that has been honed over the past five years, ever since their first incarnation recorded one of the most indulgently unlistenable demos Nightshift has ever heard. Nowadays, of course, we can't get enough of their intricate, often brutal, always fascinating, brand of anti-music.

Having become an integral part of the Oxford music scene in recent times, spearheading a left turn into more experimental sounds, organising (and starring at) the annual Audioscope Festival, as well as running the excellent Oxfordbands.com website, Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element have finally gotten round to releasing their debut EP this month. 'Techno Self Harm', released on Field Records, follows on from a succession of acclaimed demos and last year's contribution to the 'Asking For Trouble' compilation EP, which showcased a clutch of the very best underground experimental bands around at the

'Techno Self Harm' might not capture the full majestic attack of Sunnyvale's live sound, where volume as much as their elaborate weave of sound textures, is such a part of the experience, but it is their most accomplished recorded work to date. 'Music that actually sounds like architecture' is about as close a description as Nightshift has ever managed of Sunnyvale, although 'Kraftwerk remixed by Shellac' (and severely brutalised along the way) might possibly steer you in the right direction. But the difficulty in fully matching a description to the reality is testament to the band's ingenuity and divergence from the rock and roll norm.



Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element (l-r): Giles, Simon, Stuart

SUNNYVALE (STUART

Fowkes: electronics, bass and keyboards; Simon Minter: guitar and Giles Borg: guitar) spent much of last year touring the country, the highlight of which was a blistering set on the Barn stage at Truck Festival. That gig was also the final appearance with founder member Simon Proffitt, who has moved back to his native Wales for good. The loss of Simon, however, has been the spur for Sunnyvale to move on and get things moving properly, the band now less geographically dispersed (Stuart: "Until Simon decided to call it a day we were essentially just practising for upcoming shows. Now we have more freedom to sort out where we want to take things.").

NIGHTSHIFT TALKED TO

Sunnyvale about their position as Oxford's leading proponents of experimental music, the state of leftfield music in the UK, especially since the death of John Peel, but first about the new EP. STUART: "I think it succeeds in capturing the essence of what we do live, but that's only half the story, really. What you hear when you go to see Sunnyvale live is essentially the pieces we think will work in that context, but there's a whole slew of other material that will see the light of day if and when we do an album, but which for various reasons wouldn't work

live. Sometimes the electronics are too harsh to be put through a PA, as we've discovered to our personal extreme discomfort when trying them out in rehearsal. Or from time to time we'll end with something that works well recorded, but which is too abstract or too distinct from everything else to form part of our live set. For the EP, we really set out just to capture some of the tunes that had been going down well live, and the live sound we've developed, and I think it does that well."

GILES: "On the one hand, I never feel any of our recordings capture the Sunnyvale experience because there's something about hearing it live. I don't know if it's valve amps or what, but when all the sounds mix together into one sonic mass, it's an effect that's really hard to get on CD, unless you're Kevin Shields, I suppose. That said, I think the new EP is an okay introduction. The next one is going to be even better, as our new song rocks like Satan."

SIMON: "It's been in the works for a long time, and to have it finally released is fantastic. I think we're all very pleased with how it's come together, and it was great working with a label that left us in control of the music and packaging. Simon [Proffitt] was heavily involved in the recording process, and we continued to mix and finalise the recordings after he left.

The five tracks on the EP have captured our sound pretty well; they've also forced us to focus on the intricacies and detail of our songs, resulting in tighter arrangements and less being left to chance. I think our live set has improved massively as a result of working on this EP."

How has the band changed since Simon left? And how do you feel you've progressed or regressed since we last interviewed you, back in 2003?

STUART: "Possibly in the early days, we were trying to weave elements of bands we love like Prolapse, Unwound or Hovercraft into an electronic backing, but probably ended up sounding more like Godspeed You! Black Lace or something. Now I think we just sound like Sunnyvale. With fewer members, we're able to give more emphasis to each constituent part of the sound, and achieve a finer balance in the sound. When we were using three guitars, two basses, a desktop PC, a sampler and a keyboard, I think people didn't know what the hell was going on - us included half of the time, and the sound engineer the other half of the time. The process of composition is still the same. We've never used a pre-set sound or untreated sample in a backing track, so with every sound being created from scratch or nicked from someone else's music and manipulated until we can claim it as our own, the backing tracks can take a long time to come together. Frustrating in terms of coming up with a song by messing about in rehearsal, but incredibly satisfying to start with a couple of guitars and a blank computer monitor and eventually ending up with something with which we're all happy."

SIMON: "It was a real shame that Simon decided to call it a day, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to have a band member living so far away. I don't think it's particularly connected to Simon's departure probably more to the number of gigs we did last year - but we've become a much tighter unit, which makes it far easier to perform live and work on new material. In terms of our sound, there is obviously less going on in there than when we were a four-piece, but if anything we've honed what we individually do and things have never been stronger."

SINCE SUNNYVALE HAVE

become a more coherent live prospect, the temptation to call their music 'difficult' has lessened. The new EP is focussed even at its most frenetic, but the awkward shapes and textures they use, as well as the underlying belligerence of the whole sound and dynamic and their lack of adherence to traditional song structures will still alienate anyone with strict conservative musical tastes.

and their lack of adherence to traditional song structures will still alienate anyone with strict conservative musical tastes. STUART: "That tends to be from people whose background entirely lies in more 'traditional' forms of guitar music. All we're really doing is combining elements from different artists and areas of music that members of the band find inspiring and trying to add something of our own from that starting point. When you take into account that we're really not an extreme band (original, we hope, but not extreme. Or Extreme.) and that so much of the best music from the last fifty years has wilfully stolen as much as possible from as many areas of music as possible, I'm still surprised that we're considered particularly challenging. When we first started Sunnyvale, I always thought that if we've even managed to influence the way one person thinks about music even slightly, then I'd consider that a major achievement." GILES: "Tom Waits said a great thing about music, something along the lines of you make music because you can't find the music you want in the record store. So with that in mind I'd say it's not so much difficult as just not what you'd find in the record store. Unless you played two records at the same time. Perhaps if you played 'We Built This City' by Starship and some Kraftwerk at the same time, maybe with a little Prolapse, though that would in fact be awesome and probably much, much better than we are. I have no idea how that story fits into the question, but it's a nice story." SIMON: "We all have pretty diverse listening tastes, and so it's still a surprise when people consider us challenging - much more so these days, compared to in the past when a greater part of what we did was improvised or based around more abstract arrangements. It's nice to think that we might challenge people in a positive way - making them aware of sounds they weren't aware of beforehand, and even opening peoples' eyes and ears to something beyond simple guitar music. There is still obviously music around which is far, far more challenging, though. We're happy to be at some point between

traditional and extreme.'

You would probably accept that Sunnyvale exist on the leftfield of the UK music scene; do you think that scene as a whole is still healthy and, since the death of John Peel, what hope is there for bands like yourselves breaking through to a bigger audience? GILES: "John's death is a terrible

GILES: "John's death is a terrible blow, as although his was a show you would dip into, just hearing a track on his show gave it a certain cachet that you just wouldn't get from some other show. It was like a seal of approval, and I think the scene, whatever that is, needs someone with his sort of stature to sort out the best for people, especially as there's just so much music out there these days."

SIMON: "The loss of John Peel was terrible, and I was surprised at how much of an emotional blow it was. He was obviously a great focus and conduit for the country's leftfield music scene; but I think that the underground scene in general is as strong as ever. The internet is hugely responsible for this - there is a rich and varied network of people across the country with similar ideals, and to some extent we are fine with accepting that we'll probably never break through to a huge audience doing what we're doing. There seem to be enough people out there who appreciate us, and I don't have a problem with operating entirely separately from the 'big' music scene. It's perfectly possible to be a successful independent band (in terms of releases, gigs and development) without the involvement of huge labels, budgets and audiences. We're never going to be able to support ourselves financially from Sunnyvale, but we never expected to, and if anything this gives us greater freedom – not needing to rely on income created by the music we're creating means that we can experiment with impunity!"

STUART: "I've never felt as much sadness for the death of a stranger as I did when John Peel died. It's just crucial for everyone to keep building on what John left behind and keep things going the way they always have. We know from the response we've had in playing other cities across the UK that there are people who seem genuinely to have connected with our music, which is incredible. It's just a case of getting our music out to those people, and I hope we can do that."

'Techno Self Harm' is released on Field Records this month. Check out www.sunnyvalenoise subelement.co.uk for news and gig dates.



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RELEASED

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NARCO 'Control Of The Stereo'

(Surface To Air)

As mentioned in last month's review of comeback single, 'Evil Brother', Narco have been too long gone. Back in 2000 they were top of the Oxford pile, but other creative commitments mean they disappeared from view in the interim. This debut album has been a good long while in the making and finds Narco in a very different rock landscape to the one where they began their journey.

As a producer of other local bands such as The Domes of Silence and the now defunct Six Ray Sun, Rich Aitken is adept at coating pretty traditional rock and roll noise with a sharp, shiny coat of electronic noise, in a similar way to modern day Primal Scream. It's easy to hear where that comes from listening to 'Control Of The Stereo'. Rich's bass guitar rumbles and clangs metallically, always underpinned by solid, single-minded drum patterns, while singer



Cave drawls his best Bobby Gillespie drawl over a fuzz of dirty guitar and splinters of keyboard noise. It's music that simply bulldozes you into submission.

Where Narco aim for gutter-level rock sleaziness, 'Evil Brother' succeeds best with its Suicide-inspired motoring, but they also do yobbish, like on the driving 'Une Kilo De Stilo', and brash, as on the 70s-style rockathon, 'Young Man Vs The 747'. In fact classic early-70s rock is the real starting point for Narco. You can hear echoes of Golden Earring on songs like 'Pick It Up', while the drumming is straight out of the John Bonham school of human drum machines. Elsewhere The Stooges and Doors help cake on the darkness and rough edges, but at their very heart you feel Narco would be happiest stripped to the waist, poured into tight PVC trousers, thrusting their groins at a long-haired, scantily-clad LA club crowd. Ah, wouldn't we all.

If there's a fault with 'Control Of The Stereo' it's with the reworking of their classic, 'Teen Suicide Explosion', which really demonstrates how much they've changed since their initial impact on the local scene. Where once was graceful dead-eyed New Wave nihilism, now is thundering industrial funk rock. But then, the original would have sounded completely out of place in this company. The new-look heavyweight Narco packs a hefty punch.

Ian Chesterton

SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT 'Techno Self-Harm'

(Field Records)

Given how established Sunnvvale are on the local scene, both as leading propagators of avant-rock noise and organisers of the annual Audioscope festival, it comes as a bit of a surprise to discover that 'Techno Self Harm' is the band's debut release (aside from a contribution to last year's fourband 'Asking For Trouble' compilation). Still, it takes time to capture and properly distil all that vicious electronic noise.

If Coldplay-inspired pop fluffiness is your bag, look away now. Sunnyvale have nothing you could effectively call a song, but there is a sternly-adhered to coherence to each of their passages of dissonant, rhythmic noise so that they never risk falling into the abyss of random, self-indulgent artfor-art's sake that too many practitioners of experimental music fall all too willingly into. Lead track, 'Techno Self-Harm', flutters and stabs its way through typewriter rhythms, spasticated

funky beats, gurning guitar licks and a stubborn refusal to sit down and behave like a good little tune. Heck, you could almost dance to it if someone plugged you into the mains and fed you pure base speed. 'How Spiderman Was Tricked By His Wife' is more oblique and cinematic, while the exhaustinglytitled 'There Are Already Enough Photographs Of People And Doors' is an ugly gruel of synthetic belches and crunching guitar and bass blasts, kind of like an unhappy but oddly effective mash up of Coil, Shellac and something unpleasant that lurks in Warp Records' kitchen cabinet and likes playing with cutlery. By comparison, the thankfully brieflytitled 'Cow' is a picture of calm with its gently spangled spangled guitars ad slow rising tide of tension. Ambient coffee table music, then. For people who don't like coffee and think tables are for practising power tools on.

Dale Kattack

MATT SAGE & THE ORCHESTRA **OF LOVE**

'Strange News From Another Star'

(Own Label)

As host of The Catweazle Club, Matt Sage has been a pivotal player in the local live music scene for ten years now, encouraging and collaborating with all manner of musicians and singers who have passed through his all-comers club. Matt's Orchestra Of Love features no less than 14 of these musicians, including a hurdy gurdy player and a three-piece string section (as well as one set of siblings and two sets of lovers, according to the worryingly spiritual press release). There's a rustic hippy vibe about this debut album (hey, Matt lives on a boat and sings about love and the sky and stuff and probably doesn't drive a large family saloon), but thankfully any mysticism is rarely overpowering, with the tendency being towards uncomplicated folky pop songs. Songs range from the lush, orchestral lysergic fluff of opening track, 'All Around The World',

which could almost pass itself off as one of Mercury Rev's dreamier creations, to the back-to-basics acoustic folk of 'Take Time'. Matt strives for eclecticism while sticking to what he knows best, so there's a slight Arabic edge to 'The King Of Everything', which otherwise owes more to Richard Thompson, as well as gospel, bluegrass and classical guitar all adding life to gently uplifting 60s folk-pop in the vein of Donovan or, on the rootsier songs, a young Bob Dylan. Meanwhile, 'Outlaws', an old-fashioned country soul ballad, sounds strangely like Billy Joel's 'Always A Woman to Me'. The album does tail off towards the end, but only the terminally cheesy piano-led power ballad, 'Sweet Provider', has you reaching for the skip button. An album for people whose hearts and minds are away in a more innocent age.

Terry Molloy

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FRIDAY 1st

SOL SAMBA + B-LOCO: The Zodiac (upstairs) - Third annual Oxford samba party, featuring local outfit Sol Samba.

EMILIANA TORINNI: The Zodiac (downstairs) - Gentle, honey-sweet vocals and sparse acoustic pop from the Brighton-based Icelandic-Italian songstress best known for writing Kylie's number 1 single, 'Slow', as well as her 'Gollum's Song' contribution to the Lord of the Rings soundtrack. Atmospheric stuff in the vein of Kathryn Williams and Nick Drake.

NED KELLY: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney OXFORD FOLK CLUB OPEN NIGHT: The Port Mahon

Saturday 2nd

THEE MORE SHALLOWS/ **BILLIE MAHONIE:** The Wheatsheaf

San Francisco's Thee More Shallows' new album, 'More Deep Cuts', the band's second, is a small thing of genuine beauty. Despite losing their songwriter, Tadas Kisielius, partway through its recording, the band have managed to bridge the gap between the ephemeral pop dreams of Grandaddy, Yo La Tengo and Sparklehorse and the glitchier avant-rock of Godspeed and Tortoise, while existing well below the radar of major labels who long ago forgot what great pop music really sounded like. Centred around singer Dee Kesler, whose fragile vocal tremors add such emotion and depth to the songs, Thee More Shallows are equally grandiose and introvert, sweeping strings, big horn arrangements and toy piano refrains all rubbing shoulders. Oh yes, it's all loneliness, paranoia and mass graves round here; party on! Support at tonight's Vacuous Pop club night comes in the wholly unexpected form of Billy Mahonie, who we suspected had split up years ago. They did, however, release a new album, 'Dust', last year, and appear to be back in action. One time acolytes of Nought, their dynamic mix of jazz, hardcore and cinematic rock itself went on to be influential and it'll be interesting to see how the years have changed them.



SKETCHY: The Cellar - Hip hop and funk club night with DJs Toby Kidd and Mr Brogan. THE CORSAIRS: The Baytree, Grove BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon -Weekly club spinning classic soul, funk and disco.

SATURDAY 2nd

THEE MORE SHALLOWS + BILLY MAHONIE: The Wheatsheaf - Sad and soulful alt.pop outta San Francisco - see main preview **BOYWITHATOY** presents MESAPLEX + DARK PHASE + CAMP ACTOR + DJ PEEPSHOW PADDY: The Port Mahon -Former Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia chaps return without leading lady Emily, now exploring their more electronic side. Dark-edged electronica from Dark Phase, plus Human League-influenced synth-pop from Camp Actor. SCRIPT + STUEY MUTCH: The Exeter Hall, Cowley - Melodic, eclectic guitar pop. THE FIGHT + FIREBRAND + NAGATHA KRUSTY + CANNON FODDER: The Zodiac -Fast-rising UK punk teens The Fight, from Dudley, are already taking coals to Newcastle, metaphorically speaking, having been discovered by New Found Glory's Chad Gilbert and toured with them and Rancid. Spiky, belligerent but melodic female-fronted punk noise in the great British tradition of The Clash and Buzzcocks. Support tonight is from local punk scrappers Firebrand and ska-core nutters Nagatha Krusty. SIMPLE: The Bullingdon - Funky house. FRESH OUT OF THE BOX with SNEAKY:

DEEP SPACE CLUB with MASCERPONE SIDEWINDERS + UNDERGROUND SANDWICH: The Mill, Banbury MOFO: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney LEE GABEL & KATE SAUNDERS: The Magic Café (1pm)

The Cellar - Breakbeats.

SUNDAY 3rd

EDITORS + THE HALF RABBITS: The Zodiac - Another bunch of cool, but oh so hot new wave revivalists following in the footsteps of Interpol, British Sea Power et al, Birmingham's Editors have also helped resurrect the Kitchenware label, once home to Prefab Sprout and Fatima Mansions, and you can expect shimmering Bunnymen-style guitars, desolate, romantic lyrical images and long, grey overcoats aplenty. New single, 'Munich', the follow up to last year's acclaimed debut, 'Bullets', is out this month. NINE-STONE COWBOY + THE INVISIBLE: The Bullingdon - Former Candyskins guitarist

Mark Cope returns with his new lo-fi pop thrill. ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Victoria, Jericho

MONDAY 4th

ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION: The Zodiac -Welcome return for the Anglo-Asian rap-rockdance collective, burning with a passion and political astuteness most sloganeering chancers would kill for. The subject matter of their songs is gritty and inflammatory but the music carries it on strong shoulders, zealous party anthems pumped full of hip hop bullishness, punk rock

energy and exotic bhangra and traditional Indian folk sounds.

PIGPEN with MARK BOSLEY + BOBBIE + REDOX + TWIZZ TWANGLE: The Elm Tree -Twizz Twangle hosts more esoteric pop nonsense, with downbeat gothic troubadour Mark Bosley headlining. World funk vibes from Redox and anti-pop lunacy from Twizz himself.

SALSANEROS: The Cellar – Live Latin dance. A FEAST OF FIDDLES: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 5th

RACHAEL DADD + DREW ATKINS + AL **HUGHES: The Port Mahon** - Traditional Celtic and Appalachian folk from Ms Dadd, with support from Paul McCartney and Noel Gallagher-influenced songwriter Drew Atkins.

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon

NOUGHT + XMAS LIGHTS: Kiss Bar - Jazzcore instrumental rock pioneers return to Oxford to launch the new Kiss Bar live music club. Expect sonic carnage and guitar virtuosity on an unprecedented scale.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

P.Y.E + THE HOLIDAY STABBING: The Cellar - Nought-inspired instrumental rock from P.Y.E, plus hardcore mayhem from Holiday Stabbings.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Old School Inn

DAVE HOUSE + RED DAWN + THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + UNDER THE IGLOO: Freuds -Local bands showcase.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Hobgoblin, Cowley Road

A FEAST OF FIDDLES: Nettlebed Folk Club WEDNESDAY 6th

COROFIN & FRIENDS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley - Weekly trad Irish folk session with resident band and guests.

DELICIOUS MUSIC LIVE JAZZ: Aqua Vitae - Free live jazz session down by the river from the Delicious Music crew.

NIRVANA TRIBUTE NIGHT: Kiss Bar - Local rock luminaries pay homage to dear, dead Kurt and chums.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: Northgate Hall - Allcomers live music and poetry club.

BARCODE: The Hollybush, Osney - Weekly 'energy jazz' residency.

THURSDAY 7th

THE SUBWAYS: The Zodiac - Raw and reckless rocking fun with the Welwyn Garden City teens - see main preview

KAHOUTEK: The Exeter Hall, Cowley THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf WARHEN + KING FURNACE + YOUR LOSS: The Cellar - Heavyweight indie pop from Warhen, plus funky hard rock from King Furnace. THE WALK OFF + ASHER DUST: Kiss Bar -More industrial techno hardcore mayhem from the Walk Off, with support from Big Speakers singer AJ's lo-fi hip hop solo project. DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES & JAZZ BANDS

NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd SKYLARKIN': The Brickworks - Weekly dose of funky house, Latin dance, reggae, ska and more with host DJ Aidan Larkin and guests.

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac - Weekly rock club night.



Thursday 7th

THE SUBWAYS: The Zodiac

After nabbing a prestigious unsigned band slot at last year's Glastonbury Festival, The Subways – hailing from that none-more rock metropolis, Welwyn Garden City now find themselves lauded as one of this year's big breakthrough rock acts by everyone from Q and NME to Zane Lowe. But don't let that put you off. Their last showing in Oxford, supporting StellaStarr*, showed a band possessed of all the raw recklessness that you hope against hope to find amid the rising tide of contrived, posturing wannabes. A classic three-piece fronted by guitarist Billy Lunn and bassist Mary-Charlotte Cooper, they've got the pop looks of a young Ash but the licks of The Stooges, Sonic Youth and, most of all, Royal Trux. Most recently they've been out and about supporting the likes of Graham Coxon and the similarly-minded Von Bondies, while this month sees the release of debut single for Infectious, 'Oh Yeah'. Most importantly, they're one of the few bands who can sing, "Rock and roll is gonna save us", and make you actually believe it to be true.

FRIDAY 8th

THE E BAND: The Zodiac – Improvised electronic weirdness in the key of E.

THE FACTORY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Superb noise-pop newcomers on the local scene, funnelling The Stooges, Loop and Th'Faith Healers into an magnificent storm of noise.

CHRISTINA KUBISCH: The Old Fire Station

- Berlin-based sound artist who has pioneered the creation of site-specific sound and light environments, sound sculptures and sound installations. Tonight Christina will be mapping the hidden sound world of Oxford using electro magnetic technology. Fans can also enjoy a sound journey around the city using specially designed headphones.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB with PINT & DALE: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon THE CORSAIRS: The Barn, Red Lion,

Witney - Classic rockabilly covers and originals. HQ: The Cellar - Drum&bass with Renegade Hardware's Keaton.

SATURDAY 9th

THE GLITTERATI + HURRICANE PARTY + BLACK VELVETS: The Zodiac — Horrible sub-Aerosmith hair rock from the ever-touring Glitterati, who appear to be proof positive that trendy London media types will fall for any old cobblers if Alan McGee says it's cool. Equally retro, equally irrelevant hard rocking clichéd landfill from the supports. Save your pennies and go and see the real Iron Maiden at Reading, kids. POKEY + ROOKIE + THE CLIFFHANGERS: The Wheatsheaf — Local bands night. SLIDEWINDER: The Exeter Hall, Cowley — Blues.

BLAG: The Bullingdon

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – Phat pumping breakbeats with Hexadecimal from Heavy Disco Records.

MARK SOLLIS: The Magic Café (1pm) SUNDAY 10th

OSPREY & THE NEW WORLD + MAN BEEF: The Bullingdon – Rustic folk rocking from the local singer.

OPEN HAND: The Zodiac – Californian heavy rockers take time out from their tour with My Chemical Romance for an intimate headline gig at the Zodiac. New album 'You And Me' is winning rave reviews across the board with favourable comparisons to Nirvana, Jane's Addiction, The Mars Volta and Black Sabbath.

ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (5pm) – All-comers jam session with in-house rhythm section.

MONDAY 11th

THE FEATURES: The Zodiac – Organ-driven power pop and jock punk-baiting blues rock from Tennessee's Features, fresh from supporting Razorlight and Kings of Leon on tour.

GORDON GILTRAP: Nettlebed Folk Club SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 12th

THE LEVELLERS: Brookes University Union

– Back in town for a full electric gig after last
year's acoustic show at the Town Hall. All the hits
and more. With fiddles.

DO ME BAD THINGS + FIEBLE WIENER + TOKYO DRAGONS: The Zodiac -

Rock'n'soul party riot with Croydon's ninestrong ensemble – see main preview

BURNING BLUE + BENEVA + IAN NIXON: The Port Mahon – Jazz guitar and vocals from Burning Blue, plus a set of French songs from

former ATL and Relationships chap, Ian Nixon. JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon

CHANGE AT LOHNE + THE BIG SLEEP: Kiss Bar – Post-rock action.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Old School Inn

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Hobgoblin, Cowley Road INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth club night.

WEDNESDAY 13th

TAURPIS TULA + VIRGIN EYE BLOOD BROTHERS + HERTTA LUSSU ASSA + THE THUMB QUINTET: The Port Mahon – Avantfolk oddness and haunting, hymnal pop from an esoteric bill of noisemakers – main preview COROFIN & FRIENDS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

YYZ: The Bullingdon
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:
Far From The Madding Crowd
GUNNBUNNY + MONDO CADA: Kiss Bar –
Return of the howling grunge heavyweights.
BOSSAPHONIK with SUGAR BEATS: The
Cellar – Up and coming UK jazz dance.
BARCODE: The Hollybush, Osney

THURSDAY 14th

THE BLACK WATCH + THE JAZZ BUTCHER + ANTON BARBEAU + THE NEW MOON: The Port Mahon - A rare chance to see LA's long-standing best kept pop secret, The Black Watch, in the UK. The country-tinged janglers carry echoes of The Go-Betweens, My Bloody Valentine and Lloyd Cole, alternating between lysergic fluffy pink cloud pop and lachrymose balladeering. And they're really quite lovely. Even better, you get 80s indie cult star The Jazz Butcher (aka Pat Fish) into the bargain. The former Creation Records signing, now playing solo acoustic shows is joined by prolific Anglo-American singer Anton Barbeau with his 60sstyled pyshcedelic acoustic pop, plus local folkrock duo The New Moon.

RAPHAEL & FRIENDS: Oxford Playhouse – Locally-based master of Spanish guitar, combining gypsy soul and energy with Andalucian chants, inspired by his travels.

SAME OLD SAME OLD + BEN DUGARD: The Exeter Hall, Cowley THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + ELATION THROUGH SOUND + FROM MARS: The

Cellar – Local bands showcase.

JABBERWOCK: Kiss Bar

Tuesday 12th

DO ME BAD THINGS: The Zodiac

Amid the trail of weird, wild and wonderful pop nuggets that unearthed themselves at last year's Truck Festival, Croydon's Do Me Bad Things shone as brightly as any. A nine-piece ensemble featuring a seemingly never-ending supply of lead vocalists, including a lung-bursting black soul diva, a seriously camp male crooner and an old school blues-rock pig gravel gargler, they also feature a trio of singing doo-wop dancers who appear to be experiencing either some kind of religious epiphany or a monumental orgasm. New single 'What's Hideous' comes with a hefty coat of polish, while its predecessor saw Do Me Bad Things performing on CD:UK and MTV2, but live they're alive with rocking energy: sounding like The Commitments if they'd grown up listing to Judas Priest, or Scissor Sisters possessed by The Screaming Trees. They're all powerchords, unrefined soul and a one-band party waiting to explode. It's not just a gig, it's a show.





Wednesday 13th

TAURPIS TULA/ VIRGIN EYE BLOOD BROTHERS/HERTTA LUSSU ÄSSÄ/THE THUMB QUINTET: The Port Mahon

Another night of live music with a difference from the Oxfordbands.com crew. Glasgow's Taurpis Tula (pictured - no, really) return to town after last year's acclaimed gig at the same venue. They are Heather Leigh Murray from Charalambides, plus Wire journalist and one-time Telstar Ponies man David Keenan, together creating improvised, futuristic avant-folk and gamelan. Spectral and atonal, made up of loops and drones, it's both unnerving and hypnotic in its quiet intensity. Kentucky's wonderfully named Virgin Eye Blood Brothers are an equally haunting duo, creating subterranean industrial jazz that owes some to Throbbing Gristle, but equally to arid desert folk and free improvised psychedelia. Definitely not emo, then. Equally other-worldly are Finnish all-female folk trio Hertta Lussu Ässä with a wild and sometimes messy collage of psychedelia and alt.folk. Local electro-folk trio The Thumb Quintet open proceedings with their mash up of Pentangle and Four Tet.

OXFORD IMPROVISORS ORCHESTRA: OUADA X-Change Gallery, Gloucester Green

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES & JAZZ BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd SKYLARKIN': The Brickworks SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 15th

65 DAYS OF STATIC + RANDOM NUMBER + DIEGO GARCIA: The Wheatsheaf – Blimey, have they moved in or something? Fifth Oxford gig in as many months for Sheffield's post-rock battlers, using guitars and electronics to make for a loud-as-war cacophony of beats and ambience that's something akin to Sigur Ros scrapping it out with Squarepusher. Hood's Matt Robson brings his Random Number project along in support, plus Worcester's instrumental rockers Diego Garcia. OXFORD FOLK CLUB OPEN NIGHT: The Port Mahon

MID-LIFE CRISIS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon STRANGERS: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney FRIDAY SOLUTION with TASK FORCE UK: The Cellar – Live hip hop and DJs.

SATURDAY 16th

SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + THE WORKHOUSE + ANN ARBOR: The

Wheatsheaf – This month's Nightshift cover stars launch their debut EP, mixing up twin bass rhythms with guitar and electronic noise; sometimes abstract, sometimes physically painful, always captivating. Support from sublime guitar soundscapists The Workhouse, plus post-hardcore noiseniks Ann Arbor.

I AM KLOOT: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Manchester's maverick art-pop trio return, promoting the release of ambitious new album, 'Gods And Monsters', full of their trademark dark tales from northern suburbia.

TH'LEGENDARY SHACK SHAKERS + SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT: The

Zodiac (downstairs) – Yee! and, in a very real sense, ha! Deep South rockabilly rebels The Legendary Shack Shakers bring their vaudevillian cowpunk to town to teach us lame-assed limey indie fops how to ROCK AND ROLL. Bible in one hand, bottle of whisky in the other, deranged frontman Col JD Wilkes and band do backwoods punk, rockabilly, swamp blues and polka like the Devil hisself got their souls. He'll very likely have yours by the end of the night too.

THE INVISIBLE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley DEPTH CHARGE: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

NBS: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney THE CORSAIRS: The Crown, Didcot CHICKS WITH DECKS Vs ROLLERCOASTER: The Cellar –

Mix'n'match of punk, indie, electro, trash pop and riot grrl sounds.

TRACEY & MATTHEW COLLINS: The Magic Café (1pm)

SUNDAY 17th

ELECTRIC EEL SHOCK: The Zodiac -

Perennial favourites round these parts, Japan's heavy metal clown princes strip down to their socks and sideburns again for an unabashed trip through AC/DC and Motorhead rock heaven.

THE SPIRALIST + EARNEST COX: The

Bullingdon – Former Animalhouse people Jason and Hari return with their new laptop soul project, mixing up dub, jazz breaks, gospel vocals and bossanova rhythms. Cheltenham's bright and shiny pop thrill Earnest Cox continue to endear themselves to local gig goers with a cool blend of Tiger and The Go Betweens.

UNITING THE ELEMENTS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – German rockers on tour.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Victoria, Jericho

THE CORSAIRS: The Black Horse, Kidlington MONDAY 18th

MORRIS ON: Nettlebed Folk Club SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 19th

JIM MORAY + DIALECT: The Zodiac -

Currently getting the contemporary folk world in a froth with his acclaimed 'Sweet England', 21-year old Jim Moray updates traditional English songs, drawing on influences as diverse as Charlie Mingus and leftfield electronic music. Dialect, meanwhile mix up classical, electronic and postrock into an atmospheric whole.

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon

KISMET + JANE GRIFFITHS & COLIN FLETCHER: The Port Mahon – Mix up of traditional world sounds from all-female group Kismet, plus Catweazle Club stalwarts Jane and Colin in support. OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall,

MINDEFINE + ACTION AND ACTION: Kiss Bar – Local indie rockers.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Old School Inn

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Hobgoblin, Cowley Road

WEDNESDAY 20th

100 BULLETS BACK + OFF THE RADAR + ALUMINIUM BABE: The Wheatsheaf – Synth-pop and new wave from 100 Bullets Back. COROFIN & FRIENDS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC LIVE JAZZ: Aqua Vitae PHYAL + FORK: Kiss Bar – Local punkmetallers remain inseparable as Phyal launch their new EP.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: Northgate Hall BARCODE: The Hollybush, Osney

THURSDAY 21st

THE TWO DUOS: Modern Art, Oxford

(5.45pm) – Jazz-influenced new music and modal improvisation from leading lights of the local improv circuit, including violinist Malcolm Atkins, tabla player Chris Hills, bassist Dom Lash and saxophonist Pete McPhail.

JAMES BLUNT: The Zodiac – At ease, men. Former guardsman James prepares to disarm you with lovelorn acoustic pop and Elton Johnapproved power choruses – see main preview DAN AUSTIN, MARK NEWSON & RAMI: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

Thursday 21st

JAMES BLUNT: The Zodiac

When you discover that singer-songwriter James Blunt's stand-out track from his debut album is an anti-war ballad, 'No Bravery', you might stifle a yawn and declare that a spell in the army might sort him out. Except that's exactly where he's emerged from. A former captain, he served in Kosovo and guarded both the Queen and the Queen Mother's coffin. So, he knows of what he sings. And he sings it well. Blunt's clutch of uplifting acoustic ballads saw him quickly signed to Linda Perry's record label (her what writes songs for Pink and Christine Aguilera), writing with Robbie Williams' songwriter Guy Chambers and supporting Elton John on tour. Debut album 'Back To Bedlam' is a sure-fire Radio 2 smash hit, Blunt's reedy falsetto and tender, hopelessly romantic songs all set to break hearts across the nation, partway between the sensitive folkiness of Elliot Smith and the pastoral pop of The Byrds and Crosby, Still and Nash. Mind you, he's a right scruffy urchin for someone who's spent most of his adult life in uniform.



THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES & JAZZ BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd BIG SPEAKERS + CAPSKEY & GEASY RED: Kiss Bar — Old school rap sounds from Big Speakers, plus lo-fi hip hop and electronica from Capskey & Greasy Red.

THE DRUG SQUAD + SEXY BREAKFAST + THE CHERRY BOMBERS: The Cellar – Skapunk and spaghetti western rocking from The Drug Squad, plus ace glam-tinged space rockers Sexy Breakfast.

DELIVERENCE with PACIFIC OCEAN FIRE + DON'S MOBILE BARBERS: The Elm Tree –Country'n'western themed club night with live country music, plus free wild west food, tequila and gambling.

SKYLARKIN': The Brickworks SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 22nd

A VERY METAL YOUR SONG: The Zodiac (downstairs) – One-off hard rocking special of the legendary covers night. Expect classic metal covers from such local luminaries as The Walk Off, Near Life Experience, Outofinto, Phyal, Harlette, Place Above and Chinese Finger Trap. FLOGGING MOLLY + THE BRIEFS: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Guinness-soaked Irish-American folk-punk in the vein of The Pogues, Men they Couldn't Hang and Dropkick Murphys from the longstanding faves, always guaranteed to bring the craic, force you to dance your legs to bloody stumps and leave you with a sore head in the morning. What do you mean you don't go to those sort of parties? Wimp!

KRISSY MATTHEWS BLUES BOYS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

THE WORRIED MEN: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney

OXFORD FOLK CLUB with WHALEY & FLETCHER: The Port Mahon BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 23rd

BROOKES ROCK SOCIETY BANDS AND ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Bullingdon KING B: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Electric blues with singer Claire Johnson and band. VERBAL KINK + MALCOVITCH: The Wheatsheaf – Grunge rock from VK. FRESH OUT OF THE BOX presents DOPE AMMO OLD SKOOL SPECIAL: The Cellar LOADED: The Barn, Red Lion, Witney THE CORSAIRS: The Prince of Wales, Didcot

JANE GRIFFITHS & COLIN FLETCHER: The Magic Café (1pm)

SUNDAY 24th

THE KAISER CHIEFS + NINE BLACK ALPS + DUAL: Brookes University Union – We predict a sell out as UK indie's fastest rising starlets hit town – see main preview

MACKATING: The Bullingdon – Local roots and dancehall stars bring the reggae party to the

ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (5pm)

MONDAY 25th

BLUE TAPESTRY: Nettlebed Folk Club SALSANEROS: The Cellar

Bully.

TUESDAY 26th

HONDO McLEAN + WHEN REASON
SLEEPS + BLOOD ROSES + BACK BY SIX:
The Zodiac – Progressive Welsh metallers Hondo
McLean finally make it to town after a couple of
cancelled shows, mixing up Slayer-style
heaviosity with Poison The Well's melodic edge.
Blood Roses sees the re-emergence of former
Days Of Grace singer Patrick and Marconi's
Voodoo's Snuffy.

ZOE BICAT + DAN AUSTIN + FORK
ACOUSTIC: The Port Mahon - Dark, fragile
folk from Zoe at tonight's acoustic club night.
CASSETTE FOR CASSETTE + WE THE
STARLING: Kiss Bar - Former Moonkat lasses
and lads return for more indie racket making.
JAZZ CLUB with PADDY MILNER: The
Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall,

Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Old School Inn

WEDNESDAY 27th

DOUBLE CROSS: The Bullingdon COROFIN & FRIENDS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd VENA CAVA + THE PROCESS: Kiss Bar – Old school metal with a hardcore kick from newcomers Vena Cava

CATWEAZLE CLUB: Northgate Hall BARCODE: The Hollybush, Osney BOSSAPHONIK presents MARIANA MAGNAVITA: The Cellar – Samba, bossanova, batucada and Brazilian dance.

THURSDAY 28th

THE RAKES: The Zodiac – Skinny, wired and blood-spattered east London post-punkers, dealing in buzzsaw anthems and social commentary on singles like 'Strasbourg and the snappy, anti-city slicker hit, '22 Grand Job', fronted by Ian Curtis acolyte Alan Donohue.

CHAMFER + KING FURNACE: Kiss Bar – Funky psychedelic rock with an eastern flavour from Chamfer, plus Chili Peppers-influenced heavy rock from King Furnace.

MARA CARLYSLE: Modern Art, Oxford (5.45pm) – OCM presents the acclaimed jazz vocalist, recent support to Arto Lyndsay.

OPAQUE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf TWENTY SIX FEET + THE RICHARD WALTERS BAND + CUSTOMERS: The Cellar – Post-rock from Twenty Six Feet, plus

excellent Tim Buckley-inspired pop from Mr Walters and gang.

DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES & JAZZ BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd SKYLARKIN': The Brickworks SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 29th

MARK OWEN: The Zodiac – Former Take That puppy dog and *Celebrity Big Brother* inmate makes another go of it.

FELL CITY GIRL + THE HALF RABBITS + P.Y.E: The Wheatsheaf – Top quality local triple bill from the oxfordbands.com crew tonight. Headliners FCG continue to prove that they're one of the most promising young bands in Oxford with their skyscraping, Muse-inspired epic rock. Rambling and fuzzy indie goth noise from Half Rabbits, plus jazzy instrumental rock from P.Y.E.

BIG BOYS BLUES: The Exeter Hall, Cowley GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with ESKIMO DISCO + THE EPSTEIN: The Zodiac – Melodic electro-pop from Eskimo Disco at tonight's GTI club night, plus full-blooded country rock from The Epstein.

EAST 42nd STREET: Red Lion, Witney OXFORD FOLK CLUB OPEN NNIGHT: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon



Sunday 24th

KAISER CHIEFS / NINE BLACK ALPS: Brookes Union

"Watching the people get lairy / It's not very pretty I tell thee". It's gotta be the best comedy lyric of the last few years. There's just not enough 16th Century-style language in pop music, but then Leed's Kaiser Chiefs are all about raising the ghosts of England past. Strange to think that less than a year ago they were playing second fiddle to the likes of The Ordinary Boys at the Zodiac while this time around they've had to upgrade to Brookes after the Zodiac sold out in two days. Still, they're riding high on the back of extensive NME patronage, while last year's 'I Predict A Riot', from where that lyric comes, was as addictive as it was belligerent. New single 'Oh My God' is probably better still and the band manage to scrunch up the likes of The Clash, Kinks, Supergrass, Blur and Dexy's with admirable aplomb. Manchester's hotly-tipped Nine Black Alps, meanwhile, look across the Atlantic for inspiration. More specifically Seattle. Okay, so they sound very, very like Nirvana. Hasn't stopped Island Records winning the predictable bidding war to secure their signatures. Does this presage a second grunge revival? How the cycle of fashion spirals ever faster and tighter.

SATURDAY 30th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY MAY FESTIVAL: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (12-11pm) — First day of Klub Kak's traditional two-day May Bank Holiday weekend live music festival with a full day of pop, rock, funk and world music sounds.

COMA KAI: The Wheatsheaf – Local metal and hardcore favourites return to action after a lengthy absence.

ROADRUNNER: The Bullingdon – Mod, northern soul and funky Hammond sounds from the Roadrunner crew.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX presents
CAPTIVE STATE: The Cellar – Live nine-piece
hip hop and funk orchestra.

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LIVE

SECRET MACHINES / M83 The Zodiac

A sold-out show and a tangible air of expectation suggests that last year's best kept rock secret are rapidly becoming dearly beloved rock champions. New York's Secret Machines have doubtless benefited from a national tour supporting Chemical Brothers and their own support tonight, M83, will hopefully build on tonight's exposure, displaying an occasionally awesome mastery of all-consuming drone rock that stretches from Pink Floyd to Death In Vegas.

The stage bathed in blue neon light and drenched in an ominous organ buzz suggests a religious experience in store, and for at least half of tonight's set it's not far short. The lights turn a blinding white and the trip begins. Josh Garza utilises his expansive drum kit to full effect, kicking out powerful, lock-tight rhythms that demonstrate an incredible talent without ever being fancy. Brothers Benjamin and Brandon Curtis share vocal duties, Brandon on piano, Benjamin on guitar. It all looks very prog, and its roots lie within the complex arrangements and virtuoso displays of the 70s, but without the indulgence or fripperies. Sure there are times, mainly towards the end of the main set, where it all gets a bit Styx, but their mastery of atmosphere and dynamics forever push things forwards with an insistency that's impossible to resist and a deep, rich melodic vein running through every song that's closer to the 60s folk-rock sounds of The Band or The Byrds. Sunshine harmonies battle with turbulent passages of noise, ideas flower and die in an instant while other notes hang on the air for an age. On 'Now Here Is Nowhere', Neu! are infected by the spirit of Guided By Voices. Pink Floyd's opulent music fireworks are consumed by cavernous galley slave beats and it's as magnificent and oppressive as the heart of the maelstrom. But then they're soaring as majestically as an eagle on the airy 'Nowhere Again'. The real, cacophonous climax is kept until last, of course. 'First Wave Intact' is simply stunning, a combustible fusion of prog and krautrock, ploughing a singular guitar furrow in much the same way as Spacemen 3



once did, tricking half the crowd with its sudden false ending before burning a path to some glorious higher plane. An absolutely stunning finale from quite possibly the most vital rock band currently on the planet.

Dale Kattack

WARHEN / P.Y.E The Wheatsheaf

Having recently been deeply traumatised at seeing G4 on TOTP performing Radioheads' 'Creep', reviewing local bands has suddenly become an unsettling business, for fear of encouraging one to such a success, that in a decade's time it gets covered in a way that finally sends me over the top with an axe. Tonight I'm in safe hands, as here are two very good quality teams of three, producing il-Divo-immune sets. I like Warhen's no nonsense garage approach. Songs with short titles that tumble and thrash and rock out in a mind-meld of The Jam, Queen (when they were in jeans), and classic 70s rockers like Jo-Jo Gunne. 'Get Away', 'Fooling Around' and 'Off My Face', all have the same great heads-downand-go-for-it feel, though after that there is really no variation on a theme. The best of the action tops out with Cameron Grote, the young drummer, going for all out Bonham warfare on his cymbals,

while the singer and the lofty bassist spar vocals like a demented Cotswold Libertines.

It's a good night for percussionists. It's P.Y.E's drummer's birthday, and he plays like he's never going to see another. The whole band capitalise on the raucous crowd this occasion had brought in, and they jam the roof off, with their piledriving instrumentals. They're best described as the kind of manic jazz / post-rock that Base Jumpers would want to soundtrack their globe-trotting video clips with. Again no latitude or variation, just tight as a Scottish clam, nowhere near as complex or oblique as Nought, while remaining solidly loud in its wayward funkiness. P.Y.E party like you wish the Wheatsheaf was on wheels and barrelling down the motorway at a ton. Now all I need is house arrest for Tenors.

Paul Carrera

SONDRE LERCHE

The Zodiac

Sondre Lerche is a Norwegian singer-songwriter with two albums full of big brash, bouncy pop tunes. So it's something of an odd move that he decides to tour alone, stripping the songs of their glamour. Tonight is a challenge, for the audience, and for Sondre himself. At times his guitar playing can be abrasive, like a Billy Bragg solo show, yet there's always an air of playfulness. It's only on the third song that he hits his stride, courtesy of a jagged guitar break reminiscent of The Loft. Then it's left to 'Modern Nature' to kick things back to life, the usual male/ female duet being supplemented by an unusually enthusiastic crowd. To further the Peter Astor comparisons, this could easily have come off the Weather Prophets debut, 'Mayflower'.

This heralds the romance segment, which includes a beautiful a cappella cover of Bing Crosby's 'Moonlight Becomes You', and an almost overly-cheerful original. He's picked up the momentum at last, so in typically perverse fashion he throws in a new number and loses it again.

One thing that does keep you entertained amid all the false promises is Sondre's endearing banter, the broken English he uses making it even more charming. In keeping with this he finishes the main set, bows politely numerous times, fakes an encore and launches into his best song, the title track of his latest album, 'Two Way Monologue'. And even though he gets overexcited and plays it way, way too fast it's still glorious.

The encore finally shows Lerche

as the talent he is, especially as he's brave and talented enough to pull off another a cappella number, Chet Baker's 'The More I See You'. A sporadic genius, but then aren't they the best sort?

Russell Barker

THE RELATIONSHIPS/VEDA PARK/ADY DAVEY/LOZ COLBERT

The Bullingdon

You could almost call this gig veterans' night, such is the length of musical service of everyone on display. But what might be lacking in urgency is made up for in innate and learned skilfulness. It's a surprise to see former Ride sticksman Loz on stage singing, armed with an acoustic guitar. "You've come a long way since you were a drummer", chirps one wag. Loz looks at the kit set up behind him and returns, "about two feet". He then goes on to demonstrate an accomplished singing voice and a neat way with a simple song, from the melancholy 'Autumn Leaves', to the more upbeat 'Futurist', his first night nerves only occasionally showing through. Looks like we'll be hearing plenty more from arguably the best drummer Oxford has ever produced.

Ady Davey has being doing the solo singer-songwriter thing far longer but tonight's brief set shows that just because someone's almost become part of the musical furniture, you can't write them off. Ady's Dylan-inspired songs offer a mix of vulnerability and humour, a shadow casting a certain darkness over his easy vignettes. There's a darkness too about Veda Park's lightweight, jazzy acoustic

rock. Their opening shot is a deadringer for one-hit wonders It's Immaterial, but further in they're closer to Robbie Robertson's solo material. Generally they're best when they keep it low key and dour, less effective on the rockier numbers.

All these, however, are but pups compared to The Relationships. The band celebrates its tenth anniversary this month but the various members have been playing in bands locally right back to the 70s. Richard Ramage's beautifully-crafted tales of humdrum suburbia are full of disappointment rather than heartbreak and come from a politer place than the hoary rock and roll circus but still they have the timorous freshness of a new-born fawn. To a soundtrack that gently stirs in parts of The Byrds, Go-Betweens and even The Mekons at times, there are lyrically dextrous stories of librarians and living in a house with Brian Jones: the 60s dream holed up in a home counties cul-de-sac, staring wistfully at a rose-tinted past and a quietly turbulent soul. Really, there isn't a teenage rock tearaway in the land could touch on such things.

Dale Kattack

THIRTEEN SENSES The Zodiac

Imagine the agony: four Cornwall youngsters meet at college, find common musical ground, form a band, draw their songwriting inspiration from their surroundings, spend years crafting their sound, move to London and get signed – only to find a trio called Keane occupying their space in the MOR indie scene. The band is Thirteen Senses, and this story tells you most of what you need to know about their sound.

However, this doesn't mean that they should be dismissed out of hand. Their piano-based similarity to Keane may not be deliberate, just an unfortunate coincidence. Their non-piano tracks nod towards Coldplay and Elbow, but again it's probably not deliberate; just a case of growing up in the same country in the last few decades, drawing on the same influences. Singer Will South directs proceedings, either from his Korg or guitar – roughly half of the set is driven by each. Will introduces their first top 20 hit, 'Thru The Glass', as one of their few "jumping around" numbers; it's also the the most memorable - anthemic rather than delicate, positive rather than plaintive. New single 'The Salt Wound Routine', conversely, is all string-laden

emotion, and best just described as "nice"

Thirteen Senses create an assured, expansive sound; it's evocative, like a soundtrack to a childhood, though any child might get a bit bored after 15 songs. The way they repeat hooks and layer parts makes the flat melodies a bit more palatable.

One supposes that their debut album, 'The Invitation', is a grower, but I don't know whether I'd be willing to investigate; my initial impression hardly leaves me hungry for more.

Kirsten Etheridge



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THE RAVEONETTES / DOGS

The Zodiac

Every so often, a band come along who make me re-examine my faith in the system which should (I know, but I'm an idealist) mean that good bands get signed and turgid pub rock stays where it belongs. Dogs are one such outfit, wheeling out some of the most insipid, charmless pub rock I've ever had the misfortune of hearing. They exist in that execrable middle ground between the most bloated excuses Oasis have ever made and The Strokes with all of the life sucked out. Worse, they conduct themselves with a completely unjustified swagger, singer Johnny Cooke conducting himself like he thinks he's the offspring of Bono and Jesus. With any luck, I'll wake up tomorrow and find that Dogs were just a terrible nightmare and The Raveonettes are at number one.

'Cos they're great, thank goodness. With Sune Rose Wagner and Sharin Foo bolstered by a full backing band, they're an invigorating, joyous pop experience. In fact, they sound a bit like that smell Lenor are always advertising. While they might have hit on one of those so-simple-it'sbrilliant ideas in fusing reverb-drenched 1960s surf pop with periods of staring at their shoes and invoking the ghost of Slowdive at their best, they really make it work. 'That Great Love Sound' stitches together Spector and Spacemen 3, while 'Noisy Summer' throws cute handclaps into the mix and ends up as 'Leader of the Pack' reworked by Flying Saucer Attack. Where they occasionally let themselves down is in producing the odd track that takes the signifiers of its influences without fully embracing them. Sometimes there's the sheen of girl group pop without the underlying sadness that made much of it so remarkable, but mostly, however, The Raveonettes keep it fresh enough to remain enthralling: mining a rich seam of music from which to draw inspiration, with a palpable delight in what they're doing that's infectious. My faith is reaffirmed, albeit before it even had a chance to flee the Zodiac.

SAMURAI SEVEN / RED STAR CYCLE/FILM NOIR

The Wheatsheaf

With so many bands seeking to remind us of the 1980s, it seems impossible to forget them, and that's where Film Noir join us. In addition to the obligatory synth riffage, Film Noir add jangly-pop guitars, combined with the quaint melodies of 90s Britpop.

Developing further contrast as the set goes on, they bring raw, roughedged, punk instrumentation, yet with high-register bass from the Peter Hook school of music, topped off by an Ian McCulloch / Morrissey-modelled singer. Despite this fruitful combination, the set is distinctly static.

Attempting to counteract this Red Star Cycle invite the audience as close as they dare. Setting up a violin along with the standard rock fare suggests the band are going to try something different and before anyone can say Levellers, RSC launch into a song that's more synth disco than crusty folk. Diversity is the name of their game, mixing drum'n'bass, industrial metal, and more restrained piano balladry within a single song. Such genre juggling makes for enthralling viewing, with violin/keys player Ben frantically

switching between the two while singer Jeremy likewise keeps the audience engaged, displaying an impressive vocal range combined with an onstage charisma.

Unfortunately for The Samurai Seven, having technical problems from the off, this momentum is lost. The band are not only sporadically haunted by feedback, but recurrent problems coordinating their computer backing tracks. The band clearly feel uncomfortable with the delays, and seem less assured on stage than usual. This is a damn shame as backing tracks or no, they do a fine job. With a sound that combines raucous rock with 60s sensibilities, we get both Pete Towsend windmills, and overblown endings, but also super-sweet melodies layered in three part harmonies. The band at times have a sound reminiscent of The Wildhearts at their peak. However their undeniable qualities unfortunately fail to salvage the show and as the venue begins to empty, there's the feeling that on another night The Samurai Seven could have stolen the show.

Patrick Casey

THE EPSTEIN / REDOX / FORK / THE NEW MOON

The Bullingdon

Tonight's Oxfam benefit gig brings together four bands whose presence is ever present on the local live circuit but perhaps tend to fall beneath the radar of the cool police. Acoustic duo The New Moon's use of a double bass to underpin the guitar gives them added resonance, although it does tend to dominate their sound at times, at least until singer Matt starts strumming even harder and becoming more vocally animated. His songs tend to be whimsy dressed up as something more profound and his voice lacks range over a whole set but the diverting jazz runs and the addition of Phil Freizinger's flute for the closing numbers at least keep the momentum going.

Gig organisers Fork describe themselves as progressive punk, but beyond James' snarled vocals and the elongated passages of widdly indulgence, it's hard to see what they are other than a shambles. Incoherent and chaotic, only the opening number, which could have come direct from the Class of 76, has any form. Eventually the whole thing degenerates into a prolonged jam

session, like a dogfight under six feet of mud.

Redox bring some cohesion back to proceedings. Going in for grooveled jams, funky reggae skanks and an upbeat festival party vibe, you feel they could have slipped through a timewarp, landing here from a muddy field in 1972, still convinced Jethro Tull are the here and now, but it's that uncaring attitude towards current trends that's so endearing and their cowpunk finale, where The Men They Couldn't Hang collide with the 60s hippy dream, is a belter. And now for something altogether more serious and beardy, the evergigging Epstein, eschew the dark, downbeat emotions of their Trucking chums Goldrush. Instead they're more of an old-fashioned country rock band, more akin to The Eagles. There's close harmony singing and a full-blooded Midwest twang, while Goldrush's increasingly hirsute Joe Bennett goes for it on fiddle duties. Not for them weeping into a bottle of sour mash; instead they're hitting the dusty highway and heading for the Hotel California.

Terry Molloy

THE ADVENTURES OF / EMILY HOLT / THUMB QUINTET

The Cellar

Tonight's gig celebrates the release of the Beard Museum club's first compilation album, and of course showcases some local talent. First up is one time Eeebleee guitarist Ben Ulph with his chosen line up for the evening, The Thumb Quintet. This may be their first gig, but it doesn't show. It's an entirely instrumental affair, and one that dips its toe in to the waters of stripped-back country folk. This is the stuff that sitting under neon bar lights was invented for: intricate guitar runs and the occasional bottleneck on the fret board. It makes for an oddly American feel, but smoky bars are a feature of any landscape, and here in The Cellar it all makes perfect sense. It won't be long before they're soundtracking documentaries about long distance lorry drivers.

There is currently a surge in female singer songwriters in Oxford and it won't be long before Emily Holt is mentioned alongside Chantelle Pike and Laima Bite. After a shaky start (covering Coldplay's 'Yellow'), Emily is soon well into her stride. Not only an accomplished pianist, she has a voice that can melt hearts and strip wallpaper. Although at times tonight she really soars, she is a little way from being the finished article. With a little polishing, the Beard Museum, might just have unearthed a diamond.

The Adventures of... close tonight's proceedings, but they have a tough act to follow. Their folky rock set might impress on another evening, but Emily Holt raised the bar just a little too high.

Allin Pratt

HAL/THE MAGIC NUMBERS

The Zodiac

An evening of mellow mellowness. Hal lovingly recreate 70s soft rock, all skinnyrib jumpers and crimped hair, with those key changes that say, "Hey baby, it's kinda late, but there's some wine in my fitted bachelor-pad kitchenette and some coke on the smoked glass coffee table... Let's listen to some sounds on my 8-track and get, uh, comfortable, on the nangahyde, know what I mean?" Very FM radio, very LA. Their favourite year is 1975... and let's face it, this is exactly the stuff punk wanted to vaporise (much more so than the habitually-reviled Yes / Floyd dinosaurs of prog). Retro compilations such as 'Guilty Pleasures' have set up this smooth blow-dried balladry as the fashionable follow-up to easy listening, but easy listening was funnier. It's all Hall and no Oates.

The Magic Numbers' favourite year is 1965. We're still in LA, but now we're

with the groovy troubadours who quit the New York coffee house folky protest scene to 'go electric' on the West Coast. The Magic Numbers have certainly gone electric... they own some pretty tunes, and some nice harmonies to dress them up in. The instrumentation is pleasantly quirky there's even a xylophone duet on one song, and I keep expecting The Lovin' Spoonful's John B. Sebastian to appear with his autoharp. This music has a blissed-out smile on its face as if to say, "Like wow, man, this is our thing! And you can be part of it!" But sadly I can't. Like Hal. The Magic Numbers are just a bit too knowing. Their enthusiasm for their chosen specialist area is surely real, but it's all to selfreferential, verging on smug. I am happy to sail on the great rivers of the musical past. but these guys are just paddling round on safe, calm backwaters.

Harry Lime

MARK ABIS The Magic Café

Londoner Mark Abis used to have a pitch on the Portobello Road selling oriental carpets, so it seemed right that one of his first Oxford gigs is the Magic Café. This is not an easy one for any musician. While the lunchtime live music slot here is well established, most people come to eat and only a very few to really listen.

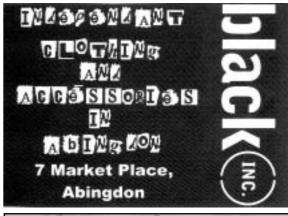
Mark is a singer songwriter with an easy laid-back presence. His staple is mellow, slightly melancholic cool folk. His easy on the ear fluid singing is backed by plenty of variety in his guitar and harmonica playing. But he does have more than one style. The opening number, the optimistic, 'Steppin' Out', has an appealing jazz and

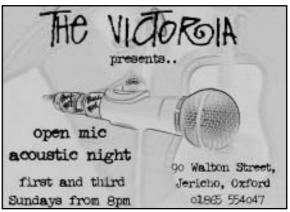
off beat feel. Other songs possess strong echoes of the Bob Dylan of 'Blood on the Tracks' and 'Desire' in both Mark's singing and his harmonica riffs. His evocative love song, 'Summer Breeze', as sung by Emiliana Torrini featured in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*; for his version today, Mark's voice barely rises above a tender whisper. It matches the words but is almost drowned by the clatter of cutlery. This is a low-key performance that hints of more to come. Even so by half way through the set Mark's charming applause from all corners of the previously disconnected café crowd.

Colin May











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QUEEN ADREENA/IVY'S ITCH

The Zodiac

The great thing about rock and roll is that it allows people to get on stage and behave in a manner that, were they to do the same thing in the middle of the street, would get them locked up for life. Ivy's Itch singer Eliza Gregory, part baby doll, part Linda Blair, has a can of cider in one hand and is screaming barely decipherable abuse at a room full of strangers. Ivy's Itch have been making such a hellish racket for a good while now, but tracks like the ghostly 'Laudanum' are still fully charged. Eliza does spooky kid whisper and moltenthroated roar with mildly unhinged style, all underpinned by her band's rumbling, tumbling industrial gothic sprawl that prevents it ever becoming just a well-orchestrated scream fest.

Still, Eliza's a picture of sober respectability compared to Katy Jane Garside, singer with Queen Adreena and a woman whose onstage antics are legendary. A year off to write new songs seems to have tempered most of Katy Jane's self-abusive tendencies but she still has a worryingly haunted look in her eye. She has the body and behaviour of a particularly wayward teenager but the tension in her face would better suit a woman who has lived through the worst the world has to offer. For someone who recently admonished an interviewer for being voyeuristic, she's far too keen to display her underwear, but Katy Jane's performance is still a benchmark by which all others must be measured, part pantomime, part atrocity exhibition. The band have condensed their sound into a solid tribal metal attack, as on 'FM Doll', that has you checking your teeth to make sure they haven't been kicked down your throat by the tomheavy beats or Crispin's lacerating guitar. 'Soda Dreamer' is the flipside - quirky, childlike and fizzing with sugar-coated nervousness. 'Pretty Polly bridges these two sides of Queen Adreena's sound, but it's in this live setting that everything gels so perfectly, not so much a backdrop as a real time soundtrack to semi-choreographed chaos. Thank the lord for rock and roll, then. Without it the mental wards would be overflowing. Victoria Waterfield

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DETWIIJE / WAIT FOR CONISTON / THE EXPLOITS OF ELAINE

The Wheatsheaf

The theme for this night of Vacuous Pop is post-rock, though those with longer memories might observe prog-rock trying to raise its mulleted head. The main distinction could be that prog hails back to a time when it was pretty much the only game in town, in terms of albums made by white people, while post-rock currently occupies a small part of a huge universe of musical exploration.

The best is served up first in The Exploits of Elaine, from Telford. Very young, very intense, they like quiet passages of contemplation shattered by huge explosions of sound. David Bell comes across as a molecular collision of Gary Numan and Keith Emerson, approaching his old Korg synth as an adversary as much as an instrument, wringing ever more unlikely sounds from it while banging at the door of Can. Completely over-the-top, not a hint of self-consciousness, a great example of why so many bands sound their best before they're signed.

Wait for Coniston are tonight's low point. Their Cardiacs-style diddly-diddleyness comes across as self-indulgent rather than challenging and, though the only band tonight to introduce a few vocals, they struggle to create any clear identity. The singer looks like a busker, which may be a pursuit better suited to his talents. London's Detwiije have an EP in the shops and an album out soon on Vacuous Pop. Like the Exploits, there's a clear Godspeed! influence, particularly in the violin, but rather than extend an idea over several minutes, Detwiije play around with musical themes in a rather more varied and sophisticated way. They're not afraid to rock out too, which suggests a spot of movement might be in order but. in true post-rock fashion, both band and audience stand virtually motionless. Maybe it's seeing three bands with such similar agendas, but after a while threechord melancholia starts to creep in to what is generally an impressive evening. Art Lagun

THE WEDDING PRESENT

The Zodiac

Can it really be nine years since the last Wedding Present album, 'Saturnalia'? Although David Gedge had been around in his Cinerama guise for some time, when the Wedding Present fell apart, many people felt genuinely hurt. Gedge wrote break-up songs like no one else; so when all those 'boy meets girl, boy dabbles with someone else, girl leaves boy, boy mopes about a bit' songs disappeared, where were we to go? Who would emote our pain for us? Some, judging by tonight's audience, simply nailed their

doors shut, and hoped that one day, just maybe, Gedge might reform The Wedding Present.

And then, after a rather unfortunate event (Gedge's fourteen-year-long relationship recently ended) it finally happened. It was bad news for Gedge, but great news for everyone else. He's greeted tonight with a hero's welcome, and he's grinning like a man who's rediscovered something incredibly special. We get a few songs from the new album, and the odd hint of Cinerama, but when 'My Favourite Dress'

makes an appearance, the whole place erupts. There are points in tonight's set when it appears that time travel is entirely possible, all these great songs make for a truly Proustian experience. "Who would believe, all these great songs from one man?" enquires Gedge wryly. These great songs are the reason why there are grown men (the same ones who nailed theirs doors shut - all bald and shocking shirts) heckling and creating an entirely unpleasant sweaty mess at the front. Had he lived just a few months longer, John Peel would have had the chance to see one of his favourite bands playing live again. Thankfully, we now have that chance; it's wonderful to have The Wedding Present back. Allin Pratt





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DEMO OF THE MONTH

CULTURAL AMNESIA

You know it's a bad month when a group of blokes who first got together in 1979, split up in 1983 and have just reformed, and sound 20 years out of date are demo of the month. But so it is. Cultural Amnesia are from Thame and, in their original incarnation, were part of the early industrial and electronic music scene. Since Cultural Amnesia split one of them has gone on to work with the late John Balance of Coil and they dedicate their first track here, 'Sea Song', to him. The music here is incredibly dated now, but some of it's still pretty intriguing. 'Sea Song' is all ambient electronic spots and squiggles with vocals reminiscent of Eno on 'Before and After Science', while 'Fai-Ya-La' could be the missing link between Psychic TV and the Flowerpot Men; maybe it should have been called 'Flobadob'. If you're a sad 80s synth-pop trainspotter like us you can spot obscure influences like Karel Fialka and even Men Without Hats on songs like 'Perfect Activity', although 'Syst.Admn' takes a different path altogether with its uptight electro funk and teeth-grinding vocal rant. But it's also symptomatic of Cultural Amnesia's main drawback - their self-conscious weirdness. Here they sound like arch nutters The Very Things, while on 'Probably, Likely, No' it's all 50s sci-fi android voices. Over a full album-length demo it can sound a bit monotone but we like the primitive feel of the electronics, even if you know you've heard it done before. 20 years ago.

PLACE ABOVE

Place Above's demo is entitled 'Thanks For Listening', which is sweet. But then they have much to be modest about. They open proceedings with a churning guitar solo that goes on rather too long, bludgeoning the point home too forcefully before the vocals eventually arrive to restore calm. Evidently from the Axl Rose school of elongating the last word of every line, the singer doesn't match the rocking intro but instead of opening up, the music comes down to meet him and what's left is a sullen indie jangle with only the occasional grungy thrash to

break it up. Thereafter it's pretty dull trawl through generic indie grey sludge and fuzz with the singer moaning relentlessly over the top to the point it becomes torturous and by the time we reach the token slowie, 'Judas Smile', you can feel your finger twitching on the trigger of your illegallyacquired bolt gun, normally licensed only to those charged with dispensing with diseased cattle. Disappointing - when we saw them live a couple of months back they had more life than this.

SNAKE EYES

Ooh, another guitar solo intro, and this one's one of them proper Snowy White elongated fretwank jobbies too. Well, what do you expect from a band called Snake Eyes. Just how rock and bleedin' roll is that, eh? EH? Even if they do come from Iffley village. We like this lot because despite the fact they're only in their teens and from a sweet rustic Oxford alcove, they at least make a decent attempt to sound like beered-up LA rock pigs and have songs with titles like 'Deep Inside' and 'Fireball Woman', which are only a pink torpedo away from being Spinal Tap. There's a bit of Steppenwolf about the former track, with its slow-burning growl, while the latter is more AC/DC. If Snake Eyes were a stick of rock they'd have the word cliché running right the way through them and come wrapped in an old leather jacket, but this just endears us to them still further.

SEPIATONE

Band's music is so often reflected in their chosen names and so it is with the tasteful but ultimately rather twee Sepiatone. In fact you can almost imagine them whimsically painting a watercolour landscape atop a gently sloping meadow as their folky demo plays gently in the background. It's all very pretty and well constructed, a little like a photo of cutesy chocolate box kittens with pink button noses and we spend much of the time listening to the demo worrying that it might have an attack of the vapours at any moment. That's not to damn it too much: the singer's got a pure, sweet, Julianne Regan kind of voice, while musically the acoustic guitar reminds us of Tracy Chapman's minimalist approach. 'Standing Still' would probably sell by the bucketload given a bit of Radio 2 play, and there's a fair chance Sepiatone would be an absolute wow on the Christian pop circuit.

THE DHARMA

Hmm, more hippies we suspect. The Dharma are pictured here attired in the sort of garb vou suspect people might wear if they smoked too much dope and ate nothing but alfalfa sprouts, while much of the demo has a hint of a spiritually uplifting relaxation tape about it, replete with 'evocative' images of mountains in shadow and sunlight breaking through clouds. Guitars are gently plucked, keyboards swell warmly and gently on opening track 'Universal Way', but the vocals are dour and mournful and it carries a feeling of defeatism about it. By the time the drumbeat finally comes in the song can barely summon the energy or will to pick its feet off the ground. Only 'Let Go' makes the effort to break into a canter but even then only just and by the time we crawl, half dead with lethargy, to the end of the CD we find we're stuck firmly in the doldrums without even the faintest of breezes to carry us out. You'd think, being hippies, they'd take some more interesting drugs and do something a bit crazy.

WILL TO LOVE

And then, before we knew it, it was 1995 again and we're stumbling through the mud and dropped Japanese noodles of a Britpop festival. In the distance we can here Oasis warming up. But at double speed, and with the unmistakably nasal tones of Stephen Pastel on vocals. "I'm sure this is what the world is waiting for" snuffles the singer, hopefully not referring to his own band. Neil Young appears to have flown over for a jam but to no avail. It's all about as epic and skyscraping as anything can possibly be when it's got both its feet set in a five-ton block of concrete. Will to love? Reckon we're rapidly losing the will to live.

FUJBUCKET

Fujbucket? Christ almighty, what kind of a crappy name is that for a band? Why not call yourselves Barrel of Shit and be done with it? It reeks of indie underachievers. but mercifully isn't anything of the kind (well, except the out of place second track which absolutely is turgid indie rocking of the most bog-standard kind, with its horrible nasal vocals and tune nicked from The Only Ones). Instead Fujbucket are a nine-piece jazzy easy listening outfit from St Edmund's College with an occasionally cute line in Hammond-led soft funk-pop with girly female vocals. While they do tend towards the musak-side of cocktail lounge swing, they can pull it off, like the low-rent 'Interview With A TV Critic' or the jazzy 'Too Proud To Phone'. What

does let them down, especially over ten tracks, is singer Jess's inability or unwillingness to stretch her voice, plus a somewhat overbearing sense of kitchen sink drama.

ROOKIE

Rookie's demo comes with a photo of a golfer on the front, which tends to fit neatly in with their, initially at least, sensible slacks style of guitar noise. They play with a bit of muscle but not enough to knock you off your stride, while they're contemplative without plumbing any emotional depth. It's all a bit Prefab Sprout, a bit Orange Juice, but without the sparkle. But halfway through they drop it down a notch, let their jeans hang low, neck a few shots of bourbon and turn their fuzz pedals on. Now they meander like Pavement, all gauche and pensive and finally, leaving their best 'til the very end, give it a bit of a beating with a fuzzy stick on 'Something Happening', an awkward but more effective stab at that hazy Sebadoh thing. Shame they took so long to get going.

THE DEMO

LE PWE BLO

Another band out of St Edmund's College, although originally from Wales. And they can bloody well sod back off there on this rancid evidence. This is crap. Utter bleedin' effing bollocking crap, and that's about all we can think to say about it. We can only deduce that this was some kind of wacky student prank to get themselves in the demo dumper. Well congratulations you smug bastards, you succeeded. It was tempting to give that dubious honour to someone else just to deny you the satisfaction, but when we thought about the, admittedly small, amount of the earth's natural resources that went into making this CD, its case and its sleeve, we got really fucking angry. Wars are being fought and people are dying to secure yet more oil reserves and all because bastards like you are wasting it making CDs of unmitigated bilge like this. Gentle reader, if you in any way think that a band that boasts someone playing musical lollipops, a guitarist that models his style on George Formby and cites Moldy Peaches as a prime influence has any place on this planet, here's your band. We must warn you, however, that we'd appreciate it if you never read Nightshift again, we just don't want your sort round here.

Hey, stoopid people, read this bit before you send a demo in!

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number (no email or mobile-only). No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. Go and have a cry instead.



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Mon 02 May ds - Martha Wainwright

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Thu 05 May - yourcodenameis:milo

Fri 06 May - The Go! Team

Fri 06 May ds - The Young Knives

Sat 07 May - Caravan

Sat 7 May ds - Million Dead

Sun 08 May - Alexisonfire vs Rise Against

Tue 10 May - The Bays

Tue 10 May ds - Morning Runner

Thu 12 May - Limehouse Lizzy

Fri 13 May - Road Rage Tour

Sat 14 May - Boot-Led Zeppelin

Sun 15 May - Drive Thru Invasion Tour

Tue 17 May - Teenage Fanclub

Tue 17 May ds - Silverstein

Thu 19 May - Dogs Die in Hot Cars

Fri 20 May - A

Fri 20 May ds - 100 Bullets Back

Mon 23 May - Tsunami Bomb

Sat 28 May - Alabama 3

Sun 29 May - Armor for Sleep

Tue 31 May - The Duke Spirit

Mon 06 June - The Magic Band

Sun 12 June - Martin Grech

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These details are subject to change, call to check.