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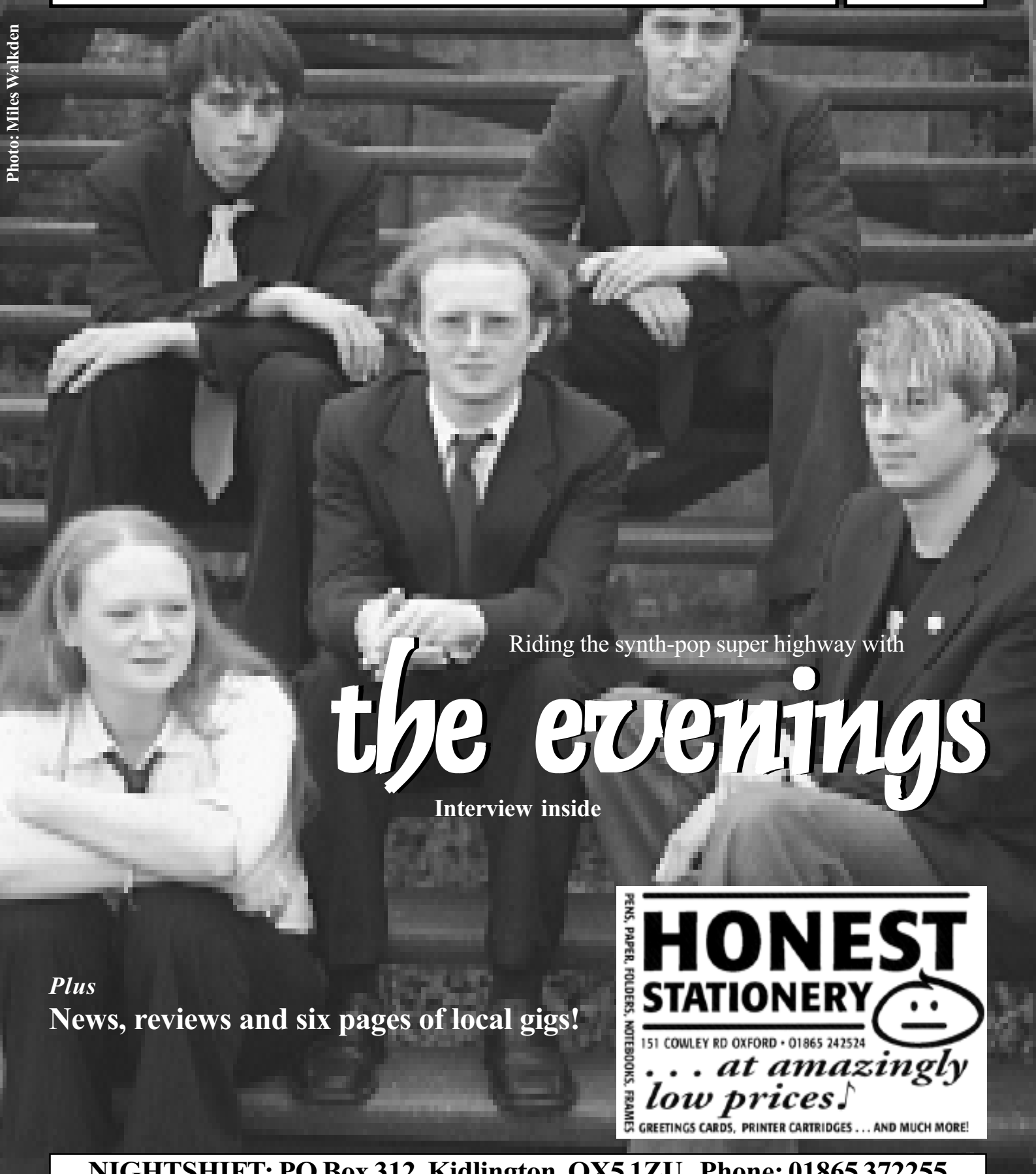
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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 123
October
2005

Photo: Miles Walkden



Riding the synth-pop super highway with

the evenings

Interview inside

Plus

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NEWS

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HELLO AND WELCOME to a particularly packed issue of Nightshift. October is always the gigging highlight of the year but this year is madder than ever, with so many bands on tour as well as a host of gigs by local acts. This month's gig guide takes up a phenomenal six pages, so there must be something there for everyone.

A very brief welcome to Oxford to all the new students starting this term. If you're reading this it hopefully means you have some interest in live music and we're sure you'll enjoy your stay in Oxford which has one of the best gig scenes in the UK. There's no room to say any more, so have a great gigging month. See you again in November.

ANDY YORKE plays a rare solo gig at the Zodiac on Friday 21st October. The former Unbelievable Truth singer will be supporting one-time Miracle Legion frontman Mark Mulcahy who in turn regularly supported the Truth on tour. Tickets for the gig are available from the Zodiac box office on 01865 420042. In other former Unbelievable Truth members news, bassist Jason Moulster has, along with ex-Ride drummer Loz Colbert, joined Ninestone Cowboy, the band fronted by former-Candyskins guitarist Mark Cope. Quite an Oxford supergroup, then. The new-look band will be playing live at the beginning of December.

THE EXETER HALL in Cowley hosts a special John Peel Day commemoration gig on Thursday 13th October. The gig, featuring sets from Kaned Citizen, Andensum, Lee Davies, Ben Dugard, Ally Craig and The Hero Story, is part of a national day of gigs to celebrate the life of the legendary DJ, one year on from his sad demise. Entry is free.

The Ex also hosts an all-day gig in aid of Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital on Saturday 8th October. The gig has been organised by local pop band True Rumour who will be launching their debut CD release the same day. Music starts at 3pm with local singer-songwriters Chris Thompson, Lee Davies and Ben Dugard, and there are sets from Laima Bite and Sarah Wilson, Kohoutek, The G's and of course True Rumour, amongst others. Admission is a very reasonable £3.

ONE-TIME LOCAL HARD ROCK favourites Charlie Mouse are reforming for a one-off gig this month. The band, who were one of the biggest acts in Oxford in the late-80s and early-90s will play at the Red Lion in Witney on

Saturday 8th October. The band will also be selling a compilation CD and DVD of all their old recordings.

THE CATWEAZLE CLUB has moved. The weekly all-comers night, now in its 11th year, has taken up residency at East Oxford Community Centre every Thursday. Thursday 27th will be the club's birthday party and all performers are welcome.

OXFORD GUITAR GALLERY in Summertown hosts a jazz masterclass with Sid Jacobs on Tuesday 18th October. A limited number of tickets, priced at £10, are available from the shop on 01865 553777, or email info@theguitargallery.com

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY's gig at the Zodiac, scheduled for Monday 26th September, has been postponed. The reason given was that singer and guitarist and New Orleans resident Pepper Keenan is currently displaced and looking after family members as they await word on when or if they will be able to return to the city after last month's hurricane. No news as yet about when the gig will be rescheduled, but tickets for the original date remain valid or refunds are available from point of purchase.

HARD FI follow up their sold-out gig at the Zodiac this month (Tuesday 18th October) with a visit to Brookes University on Sunday 18th December. Call the Brookes box office on 01865 484750 for ticket details.

DON'T FORGET to tune into The Download every Saturday evening at 6pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The weekly local music show features an hour of Oxford music, interviews and a demo vote.

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- 5th - Oxford Improvisers
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- 8th - Phil White plus Twizz Twangle
- 11th - **Badly Built presents** Jon Fletcher, Simon Davies and Andy Letcher
- 12th - Blue Junk - *Fusion Rock*
- 13th - True Rumour
- 15th - Betty & the Werewolves / Life with Bears / The Hot Silk Pockets
- 20th - Charlotte James - *Alternative Rock*
- 22nd - Custom Blue / Monstro / Ghost Warriors / Piexo - *'My Initials Records' celebrates its first birthday*
- 26th - Lost Chihuahua
- 27th - Twat Daddies (*punk rock*) / Drew Atkins
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A Quiet Word With

The Evenings

THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICE is the drummer – gurning and indulging in silent primal scream therapy, his kit stage centre, the rest of the band aligned around his pivotal position. The second thing you notice is the searing pain in your skull as the opening wave of synthesizer noise breaks upon the audience. Witness the hapless bar staff wincing and holding their fingers in their ears. Later on you notice a maddeningly infectious tune dancing around inside your head that you simply cannot shift. The band is The Evenings and that nursery rhyme-simple ball of electro-pop fluff teasing your internal jukebox is ‘I Didn’t Remember’, the stand-out track from the band’s new ‘Louder In The Dark’ EP.

ALL OF WHICH NEATLY SUMS up The Evenings experience. At once they’re an unusual band – mostly instrumental but occasionally led in song by drummer and founding member Mark Wilden – often sonically challenging, as at this year’s Oxford Punt when that introductory passage of noise had such a profound effect on the Jongleurs staff, unused to such an extreme pitch of sound, but at their heart, a seriously good pop band with an arsenal of heavy duty tunes that combat and complement the more experimental side of their nature. ‘Louder In The Dark’, released this month and launched with a boat trip on the Thames, is The Evenings’ seventh release and their first as a full band. Previous CDs, including the debut album, ‘Let’s Go’, and last year’s brilliant ‘Listening’ EP, were recorded by Mark alone. As a live band The Evenings have been a nebulous collection of permanent, temporary or guest members drawn from other local bands, including Eeeblee, Sexy Breakfast, Big Speakers, Suitable Case For Treatment and Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element. Often the line-up for a gig would have been down to who happened to be in the neighbourhood that night. As such gigs veered from inspired madness to indulgent prog-rock dirge. Over the last 18 months, however, the line-up has settled and The Evenings have been able to establish themselves as one of the most innovative bands in Oxford. Joining



The Evenings (l-r): Phil, Stuart, Mark, Jo, Seb

Mark in the band are Seb Reynolds (synths) and Phil Oakley (guitar), both from Sexy Breakfast, Jo Edge (electric double bass), previously of Eeeblee, and Stuart Fowkes (synths) otherwise employed by Sunnyvale. They’re something of an Oxford supergroup, one that is much more than the sum of its talented parts. With a predominantly synth-led sound, underpinned by more organic instruments, The Evenings hark back to the earliest pioneers of synth-pop – OMD, Depeche Mode and a pre-Midge Ure Ultravox, but dragged into the space age by a more *avante garde* edge that can involve anything from Future Sound Of London-style squelches and wobbles or Add N To (X)-inspired symphonics to a massed chorus of human screams. They’re a million miles away from the tedious laptop botherers that have given electronic music such a bad reputation. Instead they’re closer to the theatricality of the more extravagant prog bands, but with the sleek, stark style and attitude of New Wave.

AT THE CORE OF THE BAND though, is Mark Wilden, the man who formed The Evenings as a bedroom-based project after having a dream one night about a lounge band called Tony Fucker and The Evenings (thankfully he dispensed with the right part of that band name). Bespectacled, be-suited and with a head of flyaway blond hair, Mark looks like a cross between an eccentric university don and a dandyish Doctor Who, something that only adds to the strange,

inspirational experience of The Evenings in full live flow, where an air of studious mania reigns. Nighthsift spoke to him shortly after the boat party along the Thames, which launched the new EP. The Evenings sound has developed quite some way since your first album. How much is this the way your tastes and intentions have changed and how much is it the influence of different people coming into and out of the band?

MARK: “It’s partly me getting better at what I do, and partly the other members of the band gradually wrestling more and more of it away from me. The recordings and the gigs are still very different beasts – I’m the one sat at the computer for the recordings and I do the bulk of the writing, so if the records sound a bit rubbish that’s entirely my fault. As for the gigs, I’m sat behind a drum kit with our electronics blasting into my headphones, so I have no idea at all how it sounds, making any issues of control redundant.

“The live sound will have changed a lot while the lineup was changing – The Evenings with three guitars is bound to sound different to The Evenings with a choir and a DJ – and I’ve always found it really exciting that the same tracks can sound almost completely different and yet be the same underneath. It did tend towards the enormous-mushy-mess end of things, and since that time the sound will have changed with us getting better at playing with each other, learning fixed parts and nailing things down. It’s a compromise, but it feels like a

compromise worth making. The recordings and gigs are starting to sound more like each other these days as well, which, like all the things you have to do to improve, makes me nervous.

Where does ‘Louder In The Dark’ find The Evenings creatively?

MARK: “The new EP comprises new recordings of old songs. The youngest of the songs, ‘I Didn’t Remember’, was written over a year ago, so it’s been a slow one to get together, but it’s the first time we’ve all been on the same studio recording. I’d been fighting that for a long while as we didn’t have the resources to do it properly, but one day we stopped spending the band earnings on beer and put them in a little jar, and before we knew it we had enough for a couple of days of studio recording. It’s been a really rewarding process, and despite having gigged the arse off the songs for a long while it’s only now that we’ve recorded them that we know how to play them properly. It feels like the first complete Evenings release at last. I hope the next one doesn’t take this bloody long.”

THE BAND LINE-UP IS SETTLED now, but musically where do you see yourselves going in the near future?

MARK: “I’m always hoping to take the Evenings in musical directions we haven’t been in before, trying to find as many different ways as possible to do what we do. We have an ambient set we bring out every now and then and we’ve successfully played acoustic a couple of times; it would be fun to go darker, to do some really nasty music, but then the pop kid in me keeps saying we should get more songs with words, as that always connects better with people and is more challenging to do successfully. To be honest, just to get some new material would be good. Bloody office jobs; there’s never time to write anymore.”

Is having something of a supergroup on your hands a hindrance to The Evenings’ progression?

MARK: “It sometimes feels like everything that’s ever helped us has hindered us in other ways, and having every member in the band involved with three other projects is no exception to that. It was part of what got us noticed in the first

place, for one thing, and it's great for the band musically - everyone having fresh influences from outside stops the band feeling stale, but it can be a nightmare trying to book things, competing with other gig schedules - everyone's busy and it's nobody's fault, but it can get frustrating. Happily I managed to bring eeeblee down from the inside so we've got Jo for good. This could be why Sunnyvale and Sexy Breakfast won't let me join."

If you could get any Oxford musician to join The Evenings, who would it be?

MARK: "My fantasy is to get an all-female line-up of The Evenings. We'd keep Jo on double bass, of course, and have Sally and Alice from The Half Rabbits' rhythm section, with Staz from Harlette on second drum kit, Eliza from Ivy's Itch on guitar, Emily from Holiday Stabbings making Kaos pad noises and Laima Bite fronting. I accept that the rest of us wouldn't be able to play in the band anymore, but if I could see that line-up on stage playing Evenings songs I could die a happy man right there and then."

THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN

the electronic side of the music and the more organic side seems to hark back to acts like Ultravox, John Foxx et al, but with a more modern production and arrangement, where do you personally draw most inspiration from and what are your feelings about modern electronic music?

MARK: "The thing that inspires me most is the fact that if this band doesn't do grand and wonderful things I'll be stuck working in office admin until I go certifiably insane. It can be a powerful motivator, knowing that I'm not qualified to do anything else, and barely qualified to make music anyway. Ideally we'd be making music that sounds different to anything else around, or what's the point? Don't get me wrong, I've got a lot of time for modern electronic music, but I've seen so many big-name electronic acts with no sense of showmanship whatsoever that an element of entertainment has ended up at the core of what we do. We'll have to stand out if we're to amount to anything."

At the Punt, you started your set with a barrage of synth sounds that had the uninitiated in the crowd almost contorting with pain - is there a part of you that simply wants to make a noise that can hurt folks? Is there a deliberate mission to challenge listeners?

MARK: "Not consciously; I guess I just have high expectations of what an audience can take. We're not trying to damage anyone, but at the same time we're trying not to patronise people. To me The

Evenings' music seems really simple and pleasant to listen to, which may say more about me than about anything else. But then I've got no idea what we sound like live; I can't hear a thing from the back of the stage. I'm most interested in connecting with people in the audience, and making their brains hurt can be quite an effective way of doing that."

FOLLOWING ON FROM THE

new EP will be a full album of Evenings remixes by various Oxford acts, notably Smilex, Twizz Twangle, Boywithatoy and The Beta Prophecy. The results are often suitably bizarre, with special mention going to Twizz Twangle's crazed treatment of early single, 'Let's Go', which goes so far off-message as to disappear from view almost completely.

MARK: "It's come together beautifully. Scott Parker and Smilex could tell exactly where the tracks wanted to go and led them off in the right directions, while The Beta Prophecy and Boywithatoy took the tracks round the back and beat them into totally different shapes. The mixes I like the best tend to be the ones that have the least respect for the source material, and the mixes that do things I never would have thought of doing - I have to mention Twizz Twangle's remix here, because I've never heard a remix quite like it, and I still don't know if I love it or hate it. He said he'd never done a remix before and I believe him."

THE 'LOUDER IN THE DARK' EP

was launched with a boat trip. Previous releases have been launched in arts centres and you seem to have a longing for grand, elaborate displays; given an unlimited budget where would you like to launch your next release?

MARK: "I don't think there's a better way to see a band than on a boat on a sunny Sunday afternoon. The look on the fishermen's faces is worth the price of admission alone. The bands tend to sound much better than usual as the sound doesn't have walls to bounce off, and it's much less dank and sweaty than your typical gig venue - it's all very civilised, if still alcohol-fuelled. The music stops for locks and everything. I've always wanted to do a record launch at the Sheldonian, a proper black-tie evening do, with a ridiculously large number of musicians, led in sections by the five of us - a five-way musical battle, if you will. It will probably sound horrible, but it'll look amazing."

'Louder In The Dark' is out now on Brainlove Records. Visit www.theevenings.co.uk for news and gig dates.



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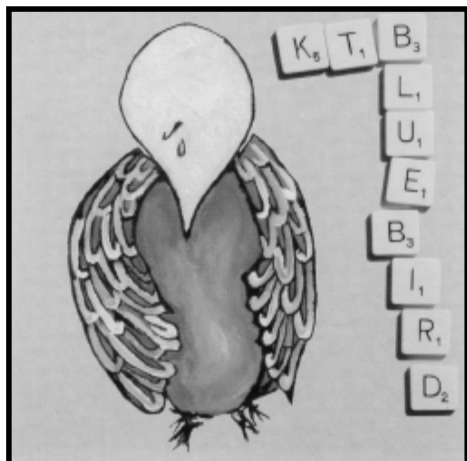
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KTB

'Bluebird'

(Tatinga)

For a while back there young Katy Bennett looked like she might eclipse her older brothers Robin and Joe and their band, Goldrush. Having reached the finals of the BBC Radio 2 Young Folk Musician Of The Year Award back in 2003, Katy released her sweetly pastoral debut album, 'All Calm In Dreamland', on Truck to universally positive reviews. The intervening 18 months have found Katy – or KTB as she prefers to be known, although now she's up against KT Tunstall on the initials front –

keeping a low musical profile, bar her traditional Truck Festival appearances, but this second album, released on a new record label, Tatinga, should cement her growing reputation, with its sultry but limpid echoes of Kathryn Williams and, occasionally, Michelle Shocked.

'Bluebird' starts strongly with opener 'Five' a simple, languid, wide-eyed folk strum that sets the scene for most of the album. There's a playful jazz feel to 'Loved', Katy using the sparseness of her arrangements to her advantage, although lyrically it's pretty homely stuff – all baking bread and drinking Earl Grey tea. Title track 'Bluebird' keeps promising to break into the chorus of 'Dream A Little Dream Of Me', which is pretty cute, while further in the mood is more sombre, Ellen Fallowfield's cello more prominent on tracks like 'Fall' and 'Fish', both songs of gentle longing that best showcase Katy's alternately crystal cut or wispy, breathless voice. There's a tendency for the album to drift into anonymity towards the end as the style and mood stay too close to the safe and narrow path. That's forgivable, unlike 'Red Meat' which makes even this hardened vegetarian choke with embarrassment, with its eulogising of marinated tofu, like some dippy hippy returning from a subsidised trip to Goa. A shame because its cheapens an otherwise enchanting album that manages to coax a cool pop shine out of traditional English folk fare.

Dale Kattack

THE EVENINGS

'Louder In The Dark'

(Brainlove)

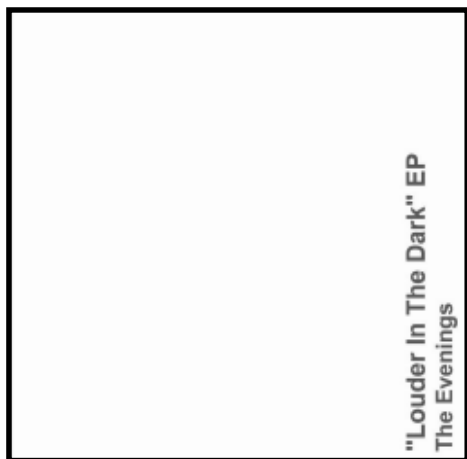
In the faraway world of Synthland there seems to be precious little middle ground between the retro-futurist synth-pop revivalists and the glitchy digital randomists, but perhaps The

Evenings can seize that ground with this latest release, which revisits and re-records four tracks from their last three EPs, soldered together for release on London's Brainlove Records.

'Fizzy Piss' burrows into Add N To (X)'s orchestral majesty, vast swells of synthesiser noise powered along by Mark Wilden's muscular man-machine beats, only to be punctured by disorientating interludes of electro fidgeting. The uplifting, almost spiritual 'I Didn't Remember', meanwhile, finds early Depeche Mode flickering around the armoured exoskeleton of Ultravox, while clamouring voices breathlessly compete for air space. In both cases there's a clever balance of straight, simple melody and obstinate awkwardness which makes for something bizarrely hummable. Perversely, 'Paste' then throws a spanner in the works, sounding like a lopsided space-age rowing boat being molested by a shoal of silicon piranhas before retaliating with a battery of lazer cannons.

They won't be playing The Evenings on Radio 2 any time soon, then. But really, they should.

Dale Kattack



HARRY ANGEL

'Death Valley Of The Dolls'

(Own Label)

Harry Angel's debut CD release is a difficult one to review in that the two lead tracks, 'Death Valley...' and 'Striptease' have both been reviewed here before, firstly as a demo and then again as part of the 'Fresh Faces For The Modern Age' compilation, a mere two months ago. What new to say then, apart from the fact that the really quite ace 'Death Valley...' increasingly reminds us of legendary local girl rockers Death By Crimpers (whose members later begat Beaker, Passion Play and Ivy's Itch), with its raging fizz of goth-pop guitars, only with Karen Crimper's awesome Janis Joplin howl replaced by Chris Beard's more languid, Americanised drawl. Think of a polite collision between Bauhaus and Placebo and that's a generous starting point.

'Striptease', meanwhile, still sounds like something robbed off the recording sessions for 'Pablo Honey', which is no bad thing and suggests that Harry Angel are mining a rich seam of early-90s Oxford music.

Of the two new songs here, 'Seventeen' appears equally in thrall to The Crimpers' incendiary gothic fuzz storm, although we'd guess Harry Angel are too young to have ever clapped eyes on them, while 'Mine' cranks up the Big Black-style sheet metal mayhem, Chris does his best Albini holler and lets the song batter its way out of the sewer. If you've let Harry Angel pass you by so far, now is as good a time as ever to discover one of the most promising new noises in town. And if you can track down a copy of Death By Crimpers' long-lost classic debut single, 'Obsessive', you can rediscover one of the best old noises Oxford ever produced.

Dale Kattack



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CHARLIE MOUSE



CHARLIE MOUSE 'Hello Goodbye Hello'

(Own Label)

For the benefit of younger readers (basically anyone under the age of 35 in this case), back in the late-80s / early-90s Charlie Mouse were just about the biggest rock band in Oxford. That's rock with a capital R, dressed in leather waistcoat, leather trousers and snakeskin boots. Back when The Cellar was called The Corn Dolly, a major hangout for bikers and Sunset Strip refugees, Charlie Mouse would regular pack the place out. Theirs was the sound of unreconstructed old-fashioned sleaze rock. Their local popularity, which later extended to a flurry of interest from Kerrang!, coincided with the international success of Guns'n'Roses and Aerosmith, to whom they bore both musical and aesthetic

similarities. They had bubble perms and their singer went under the name Mentally Ill.

Charlie Mouse split up over ten years ago but their legacy endures in certain corners of the Oxford music scene and so they've just reformed for a one-off gig at The Red Lion in Witney this month and this compilation of old songs is a comprehensive souvenir of their past glories. In the intervening years Mentally Ill has changed his name back to Martin Hill, while Charlie Mouse's music now sounds positively quaint – stomping power anthems with just the faintest whiff

of sleaze about them rub up against good-time southern fried rock or bluesy rock with an almost Nashville country feel to some tracks. The emphasis is on melody rather than raw power which, coupled with the dated production, makes the whole CD sound hollow, but what stands in its favour is that because this kind of music wasn't ever cool or trendy, it's dated rather better than much of the music from that era. The subject matter is typical soft rocking fare – shagging in the back of limousines ('Rich Bitch'), girls in general ('Talkin' On The Sky'), or booze ('Moonshine Groove') and at least three songs here could be mistaken for Kiss' 'Crazy, Crazy Nights', which all contributed to their extinction when grunge came a kicking at rock's door, but for a little while at least, Charlie Mouse were Oxford's little bit of LA sleaze.

Ian Chesterton

SUPERGRASS

'Low C'

(Parlophone)

Round our way we're still trying to decide whether we like 'Road To Rouen' or not. Supergrass have provided us with so many near-perfect pop moments over the past decade that their sudden downturn in mood caught us off guard. It grows on you, we won't deny that, but we always feel that as soon as the Grass come on the stereo we should be bouncing around like tartrazine-fuelled toddlers, smashing the furniture, not lounging around thinking about Steely Dan.

'Low C', the second single from the album, finds Supergrass in their now familiar languid, slightly stoned state of mind. Rob Coombes tinkles the ivories like the last jazzman at an East End knees-up, while Gaz floats dreamily through pink, fluffy clouds of dope smoke, holding tightly on to Paul McCartney's hand to stop him plummeting to earth. It's easy-going jingle musak, coming to a bio yoghurt drink advert near you soon. Unlikely, however, to be pumping on your stereo.

Sue Foreman

SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT

'Of Motets and Misdirection'

(Thin Man)

Suitable Case's first two mini-albums, 'Plenty More Neurologists in the Sea' and 'A Sinistra Case For The Laevus Levus', get squeezed together and remastered for a national release.

As such there's no new material here but it's good to have the band's entire recorded works together on one CD at last. Just so you can confuse, confound and possibly terrify your neighbours, pets and any passing emo kids. At the slightly more stable end of the spectrum is the swamp ska bump of 'Wooga', but at the far side of the asylum is magnum opus 'Dead Pigeon Teachers', a sprawling, nine-minute lesson in musical lunacy. Ranging from deathly southern gospel to grinding metal via prog-funk, Suitable Case are disturbed little rock bunnies but also one of the most inspired and inspiring bands around.

Victoria Waterfield



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Fri 7th Sounds of The Jam
Sat 8th Charlie Mouse
Sun 9th Rob James
Thu 13th The Promise
Fri 14th The Corsairs
Sat 15th The Hoggz
Sun 16th Cody
Fri 21st Fused
Sat 22nd The Strangers
Sun 23rd Frank Abrahams
Fri 28th Indefinitely
Sat 29th High Voltage
Sun 30th Steve Dugutis

Every Mon - Karaoke. Every Wed - Quiz Night

Opening times for the Barn -

Fri & Sat: 10.45pm - 1.00am Sun: 5pm - 7pm

Monday nights are karaoke 11pm - 1.00am

Once a month on a Thursday is originals night:
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GIG GUIDE

SATURDAY 1st

BELLOWHEAD: The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Dynamic folk dance from Jon Spiers and John Boden's 10-piece big band, which features a full brass section along with fiddle, guitar and bouzouki. As close to the likes of Frank Zappa, Herb Alpert and Bo Diddley as they are to traditional English folk music, and rightly considered to be one of the most innovative folk bands in the UK at the moment.

THE GLITTERATI: The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – "A blistering three-dimensional mind-melt of frantic sex-inducing sound, dazzling good looks and moral code-defying anarchic spirit", reads the press release. Round here we simply call them The Shitterati. Great stuff if you like Guns'n'Roses b-sides.

BADGE: The Port Mahon

Sunday 2nd

PURE REASON REVOLUTION:

The Zodiac

The rebirth of prog rock? It's been promised many times but rarely delivered with the conviction of London's Pure Reason Revolution. C'mon, they've just released a 13-minutes single, 'The Bright Ambassadors Of Morning', while their Poptones debut was called – possibly with tongue firmly in cheek – 'Apprentice of the Universe'. Oh, and their avowed intention is to write this generation's 'Dark Side Of The Moon'. Perhaps not such admirable intentions but Pure Reason Revolution, unlike most bands, are far better than their dreams. 'The Bright Ambassadors Of Morning' is a megalithic journey into sound – a sprawling, mantric, almost spiritual clutter of Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Neu!, Super Furry Animals and The Orb. There are unearthly harmonies, trippy analogue synths, becalmed passages of ambience and crushing rushes of heavy rock guitars. All usually within the first five minutes of each lengthy song. It's more than just prog – it's acid folk space rock, it's happening here in the 21st Century and it sounds a lot more like the future than just about anyone else around at the moment.

OCTOBER

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night.

TONY IOMAN: The Duke Of Monmouth, Abingdon Road – A tribute to Elvis from the popular impersonator.

THE RALFE BAND + THE EPSTEIN + THE TAYLORS: The Wheatsheaf – Vibrant, ramshackle folk from rising stars The Ralfé Band, plus Eagles-inspired country rocking from local favourites The Epstein.

EVOLUTION: The Red Lion, Witney

THE POWDERS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – Live electronica and DJs.

LEGENDARY: The Volunteer, Grove

NICK BREAKSPEARE: Winchester Acoustic Suite

SUNDAY 2nd

PURE REASON REVOLUTION: The Zodiac – Nouveau-psychedelic dreamers – *see main preview*

CHRIS DIFFORD + LISA FITZGIBBON: The Bullingdon – Former-Squeeze founder and songwriter Chris Difford has always been considered one of English pop's great poets but now, post-Libertines et al, he's also considered one of the most influential musicians and lyricists of the past 25 years. So, a great chance to revisit some of those classic hits, plus the man's new songs, or, for the newcomers, a chance to catch up on the inspiration for so much of today's British guitar pop. Locally-based Aussie power-folk songstress Lisa Fitzgibbon supports.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

BOB BOWLES: The Red Lion, Witney
ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Jam along with the in-house rhythm section – all musicians welcome.

ELIOT: The Cellar – Soulful and spacious trip-pop from Eliot, featuring vocals from local songstress Maria Ilett.

MONDAY 3rd

THE ALAMO LEAL BAND: The Bullingdon – Brazilian-born guitarist, fusing traditional blues with Brazilian roots sounds, from Latin funk and soul to swing and old time country.

IDIOT PILOT + A SILENT FILM: The Zodiac – Washington State duo who for once live up to their eclectic list of influences, managing to mix up Radiohead's melodic electro soundscapes with punishing NIN and Deftones metal and Squarepusher's frantic techno on recent debut album, 'Strange We Should Meet Here'. Early reports suggest they're just as good live, so hopefully a chance to catch them before the big time beckons.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

MARTIN SIMPSON & MARTIN CATHY: Nettlebed Folk Club – Two legends of the British folk scene team up for an intimate gig at the famous Nettlebed folk club.

SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 4th

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:

The Bullingdon – Free weekly jazz residency.

BLOOD SIMPLE + IONICA + VENA CAVA:

The Zodiac – Former-Visions of Disorder vocalist Tim Williams and guitarist Mike Kennedy carry on the good work of their pioneering metalcore outfit. Support from local metallers Ionica and Vena Cava.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

G Bar, St Ebbes

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

WEDNESDAY 5th

DAVEY GRAHAM & MARTIN CATHY:

Holywell Music Room – Two major talents of the English folk scene team up.

MILES DOUBLEDAY & CHRIS BROWN:

The Port Mahon – Oxford Improvisers presents an evening of, er, improvised music.

DELICIOUS MUSIC BANDS NIGHT with MOOCHER + A TRIBUTE TO JOE SATRIANI + MY GURU: G Bar, St Ebbes – Eclectic rock sounds from Moocher.

GIGSWAP UK NIGHT: The Wheatsheaf

IRISH FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

THURSDAY 6th

QUEEN ADREENA: The Zodiac – Nightshift has now officially run out of superlatives to describe Queen Adreena. So we suggest you simply go along and see for yourself what genuine rock and roll carnage should look like. A punishing, sometimes uncomfortable spectacle of gothic metal and self-abuse but worth every minute of it.

THE DHARMA: The Port Mahon – Chilled-out funky rock.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, FOLK AND

BLUES BANDS NIGHT: Far From The

Madding Crowd – With Latin jazz from Duó

Veinte Dedas.

ALUMINIUM BABE + FROM MARS: The Cellar – Alternately sugar-sweet and sleazy fuzz-pop from New York's Aluminium Babe, mixing up The Cardigans' pretty guitar pop with Blondie's





Saturday 8th

EDITORS / WE ARE SCIENTISTS: The Zodiac

If you weren't lucky enough to squeeze into the Barn stage at this year's Truck Festival to catch Editors and were hoping you could catch them on this tour instead, tough. Tonight's gig is long-since sold out. Which is about as surprising as Pete Doherty failing to turn up to a Babyshambles gig. The Editors story so far has tended to revolve around them being compared too much to Joy Division, or referred to as 'The English Interpol'. Neither of which are particularly accurate. Four serious-looking men in suits play brooding music, true, and there's a been some serious theft from the New Wave vault going on, but Editors' debut album, 'The Back Room' outshines Interpol on every level. Instead they're closer to Echo and the Bunnymen, The Chameleons, The Smiths and Cocteau Twins; frontman Tom Smith has the baritone voice of Ian McCulloch or Julian Cope, while Chris Urbanowicz plays with a similar sparkling style to Johnny Marr or Robin Guthrie. Meanwhile, singles like 'Munich' and cult debut 'Bullets' are elegant, urgent indie disco classics equal to anything else you'll hear this year. New York's post-punk darlings We Are Scientists make their Oxford debut in support.

New Wave disco and The Ramones' full-throttle punk noise. From Mars give The Cure a staccato punk-funk kick up the backside.

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB with MARK LUCKHART'S BIG IDEA: The Wheatsheaf
BREAK EVEN: The Bullingdon – Breakbeats and house from Jael and Evil Twin.

NURU KANE: Modern Art, Oxford (5.45pm) – Senegalese singer-songwriter

UNITING THE ELEMENTS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – German rockers on a never-ending UK tour.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks – Weekly dose of reggae, soul, ska, funk, Latin and Afrobeat from DJ Aidan Larkin and guests.

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac – Punk, metal, indie and alternative sounds each week from The Club That Cannot Be Named.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Senegalese mbalax jazz from Afrofema.

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney – Weekly energy jazz residency.

FRIDAY 7th

HIDDEN IN PLAIN VIEW: The Zodiac – New Jersey-based pop-punksters here for the nasty

things in life (rape, murder and car crashes being the typical subject matter of songs on debut album, 'Life In Dreaming'), all dished out a simple, melodic style as befits their Drive Thru Records standing.

SOURCE: The Zodiac – Monthly drum&bass club night with guests DJ Chemical and Lee, plus a two-hour live set from London Electricity.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE EPSTEIN + VEDA PARK + OVERFLOW: The

Wheatsheaf – Country rock from tonight's headliners, plus melodic acoustic rock in the vein of The Band from Veda Park.

PAT THOMAS: The Holywell Music Room – The local avant garde piano virtuoso and improv stalwart Pat gives a rendition of Chris Byers transcriptions of Derek Bailey improvisations, while French horn player Julian Faultless plays Stockhausen's 'In Freundschaft'.

SOUNDS OF THE JAM: The Red Lion, Witney – Jam tribute band.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
THE INVISIBLE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – 70s-styled melodic rockers.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SATURDAY 8th

EDITORS + WE ARE SCIENTISTS: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Long-since sold out gig from Birmingham's New Wave revivalists – see *main preview*

ADEQUATE SEVEN + MC LARS: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Fun punk-dance crossover from the band who have played with acts as diverse as Cypress Hill, Hundred Reasons and Kelly Osbourne.

THE G's + KOHOUTEK + NOCODA + SEFTON + NUMBENINE + RAMI + LAIMA BITE & SARAH WILSON + TRUE RUMOUR + CHRIS THOMPSON + LEE DAVIES + BEN DUGARD: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (3pm) – All-day gig in aid of St Ormond Street Children's Hospital, featuring a selection of local bands and singers, including ambient popsters True Rumour who launch their new album at the event.

CHARLIE MOUSE: The Red Lion, Witney – The one-time Oxford rock heroes reconvene twelve years after they split up to kick out those sleazy hard rock jams once again.

PHIL WHITE + TWIZZ TWANGLE: The Port Mahon – Local songwriters night, including the mayhem maverick sounds of Twizz Twangle.

THE BROTHERS OF INVENTION: The Wheatsheaf

KETUBA: Modern Art, Oxford – Traditional Lithuanian wedding music in a 1914 style.

FREAK OUT: The Bullingdon – Rock club night.

BARAKA: The Coven – A night of psy-trance with Sean Rudz and Mat V from 666.

THE PETE FRYER BAND + REDOX: The Chester Arms

JOCK & MOOSE: Winchester Acoustic Suite
SIMON DAVIES + COLIN FLETCHER: Magic Café

SUNDAY 9th

LES CLOCHARDS: The Bullingdon – Local bands night.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

CASSETTE BOY: The Cellar – Sound cut-ups, prank calls and lo-fi techno mayhem.

ROB JONES: The Red Lion, Witney

DENISE MARIE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – New Orleans bayou blues.

MONDAY 10th

THE JOHN O'LEARY BAND: The

Bullingdon – Irish-born blues singer and harp player inspired by the legendary Cyril Davies now into his fifth decade of playing live. Backed by a young and versatile band, he mixes up standards by the likes of Muddy Waters, Junior Webb and Rice Miller with original material, infusing his blues sound with jazz chords and Latin rhythms.

FOCUS: The Zodiac – Woo-hoo! Return of the semi-legendary Dutch prog-rockers, best remembered for their yodel-heavy hit 'Hocus Pocus' in 1973. Not sure if this is the original line-up featuring founders Thijs Van Leer and Jan Akkerman, but no doubt we'll get all those mad old instrumental hits that fused classical, jazz and rock influences into an often insanely catchy whole.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

Tuesday 11th

MAGIC NUMBERS: Brookes University

The band of 2005, surely? This year The Magic Numbers have, almost unnoticed, become everyone's favourite new group. Championed by both Radio 1 and Radio 2, the broadsheets and the entire music press, online fanzines and A-list pop stars as diverse as Bono, Elton John and Oasis; it seems everyone has something nice to say about Romeo and Michele Stodart and Sean and Angela Gannon. Everyone that is except TOTP's Richard Bacon, who managed to insult the sweet-natured quartet enough for them to walk out of the studio as they prepared to promote new single, 'Love Me Like You'. They were consequently accused of lacking a sense of humour by none other than Anne Widdecombe, but The Magic Numbers' gloriously optimistic outlook, reflected in their perfect summer pop, suggests it was Bacon's lack of humour they objected to. Anyway, all that can only enhance the reputation of a band whose eponymous debut album has already sold in excess of 100,000 copies in the UK and was shortlisted for the Mercury Prize (and probably deserved to win). This summer has seen them become one of the best festival bands in recent memory, not least at Truck, and if their euphoric, daydreaming, romantic jangle-pop can adapt to the encroaching winter, by this time next year they should be just about the biggest band on the planet.





Tuesday 11th

LADYTRON: The Zodiac

As cool and clinical as Kraftwerk, but as sexy and soulful as anything on Motown, Liverpool-based Ladytron are near enough the perfect pop band for the 21st Century. Two boys, two girls, four gleaming banks of synthesizers; Ladytron are the personification of all those wildly optimistic 1950 sci-fi films, only filtered through the very best 70s and early-80s synth-pop (Kraftwerk, The Normal, Gary Numan, David Bowie, Visage) and imbued with various exotic international flavours (from Bulgarian to Japanese). After two startling albums of sleek, platinum-coated electronic groove pop, the band have beamed down at Island Records and just released a new album, 'Witching Hour', a warmer, less linear realisation of their futuristic pop vision. Hell, they've even recruited a live drummer and guitarist for their live gigs. Their appearance at Reading Festival, however, suggests they're unlikely to turn into a hairy old rock band just yet. With vocals shared between the equally icy Helen Marnie and former Oxford University student Mira Aroyo, Ladytron are the next evolutionary step up from Kraftwerk's 'Man Machine'. Glorious stuff.

HUGH CRABTREE & PHUNGUS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Special 30th anniversary ceilidh at Nettlebed's legendary folk club.

SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 11th

THE MAGIC NUMBERS: Brookes University Union – Everyone's favourite new band and a ray of sunshine in the darkest corners of pop this year – *see main preview*

LADYTRON: The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Divine synth-pop quartet return – *see main preview*

THE SETH LAKEMAN TRIO: The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – Dartmoor singer-songwriter Seth suddenly finds himself in the spotlight after his debut album, 'Kitty Jay' (recorded for £300 in his Devon kitchen) was shortlisted for this year's Mercury Prize. It's an album documenting the

many myths and legends of Dartmoor, was launched with a gig at the nearby prison and unsurprisingly is a doomy, tortured affair, but it's also seen the fella – who began his musical career in his teens as part of the band Equation, alongside Kate Rusby and Cara Dillon – nominated for two Radio 2 Folk Awards.

DEERHOOF + THE DRONES + ALEXANDER TUCKER: The Wheatsheaf – ATP tour package of leftfield rock heroes – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB with THE KATYA GORRIE BAND featuring DENNY ILETT Jr: **The Bullingdon**

JON FLETCHER + SIMON DAVIES + ANDY LETCHER: The Port Mahon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: G Bar, St Ebbes

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

WEDNESDAY 12th

DOPAMINE + REUBEN'S ACCOMPLICE + FIRSTBORN: The Bullingdon – Heavy rock night at the Bully including American rockers Reuben's Accomplice.

IRISH FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC NIGHT with CHIARINA DARRAH + PAWEL KUTERBA: G Bar, St Ebbes – Acoustic pop, folk and jazz.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

Far From The Madding Crowd

BLUE JUNK: The Port Mahon

THURSDAY 13th

KANED CITIZEN + ANDENSUM + LEE DAVIES + DEN DUGARD + ALLY CRAIG + THE HERO STORY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Special gig organised as part of the celebrations of John Peel Day on the first anniversary of the great man's death.

TOM BAXTER + CASS: The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Another lovelorn English singer-songwriter in the slipstream of David Gray et al. Still, pretty neat stuff with his Jeff Buckley-styled voice and sometimes imaginative musical twists. Hey, we'll even forgive him for supporting Jamie Cullum on tour.

TOWERS OF LONDON: The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – Possibly, no, probably. No, without any doubt, the single worst band on planet earth at this present time. And that includes Jamiroquai, so it's saying something. Fifth-rate Motley Crue riffs, attitude and haircuts served up as some kind of 21st Century Sex Pistols. Gentle readers, please do not be fooled into believing this makes Towers of London in any small way entertaining. Save your money and pay some old tramp to piss on your head. You'll have more fun.

TRUE RUMOUR: The Port Mahon – Atmospheric acoustic pop.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ AND BLUES

BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – Tonight's guest is acoustic pop, jazz and folk singer Chiarina Darrah.

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB with BRYAN

CORBETT: The Wheatsheaf

TEA + MIRELLA HODZIC: Modern Art, Oxford (5.45pm) – Bosnian folk guitar and vocal duo.

THE PROMISE: The Red Lion, Witney

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

TWENTYSIXFEET + THE THUMB QUINTET:

The Cellar – Highly textured, atmospheric indie rocking from Twentysixfeet, with techno-acoustic folk-pop support from The Thumb Quintet.

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney

THE WALK OFF + THE GULLIVERS: The

Hobgoblin, Bicester – Digital hardcore from

The Walk Off, plus Libertines-inspired indie punk from The Gullivers.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 14th

SLIDE: The Zodiac – Oxford's longest-running house club celebrates its 11th birthday with a guest appearance from Laylo and Bushwacka, plus sets from Matt Braddock and Lee Mortimer.

Tuesday 11th

DEERHOOF / THE DRONES / The Wheatsheaf

Oxfordbands.com teams up with the good people behind All Tomorrow's Parties to present this leg of the current ATP tour featuring three of the most obstinately odd actss currently gracing world stages. San Francisco's Deerhoof have been making strange, jagged avant-pop noises for over a decade now, formed by virtuoso drummer Greg Saunier and bassist Rob Fisk (who, after leaving the band and later returning, now plays guitar), but most notable for crazy Japanese vocalist Satomi Matsuzaki's Anglo-Japanese yapping singing style. Pitched somewhere to the left of Sonic Youth's more escapist pieces and arty 80s indie popstrels Young Marble Giants, they're both sweet and strange. Melbourne's The Drones (*pictured*), meanwhile, are rooted in slightly more traditional rock traditions, but take in everything from Beefheart-style blues to the darker side of folk and country, all kicked out with intense disregard for convention. Opening the bill is Alexander Tucker who has worked with Jackie-O Motherfucker, Sunn 0))) and Bardo Bond.



OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
KINGSKINS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
INKUBUS SUKKUBUS + AT RISK: The Wheatheaf – Enduring pagan goth-popsters keep the black flag flying with support from local gothsters At Risk.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
BLUNTED: The Cellar – Hip hop, funk, soul and drum&bass club night.

THE CORSAIRS: The Red Lion, Witney – Rockabilly revivalists.

CODY: The Baytree, Grove

SATURDAY 15th

LAURA VIERS + THE TORTURED SOULS: The Zodiac – Prolific singer-songwriter out of Seattle, coming on like a riot grrl Suzanne Vega on new album 'Year Of The Meteors', the follow-up to last year's acclaimed 'Carbon Glacier'

BOOT-LED ZEPPELIN: The Zodiac – Led Zep tribute.

BETTY AND THE WEREWOLVES + LIFE WITH BEARS + HOT SILK POCKETS: The Port Mahon – Dangerous wildlife-themed pop night at the Port.

ASSASSINS OF SILENCE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Hawkwind tribute.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY: Romanway, Cowley – A Phil Lynott greatest hits set from the UK's premier Thin Lizzy tribute band.

THE HOGGZ: The Red Lion, Witney – Classic rock covers.

FELL CITY GIRL + HARRY ANGEL + THE HALF RABBITS: The Mill, Banbury – Sky-touching epic pop from the mighty Fell City with support from gothic noisenicks Harry Angel and New Wavers The Half Rabbits.

FRESH OUT OF THE BLOCK: The Cellar – Club night featuring live house and breakbeats from Stanton Warriors.

OSPREY + ADY DAVEY: Winchester
Acoustic Suite – Acoustic pop from the local favourites.

SUNDAY 16th

REBECCA MOSLEY + ALLY CRAIG + CHRIS BEARD + AND NO STAR: The Bullingdon – Showcase of local singer-songwriter talents, plus post-rock action from And No Star.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

BEARD MUSEUM with ROSE KEMP + LOZ COLBERT + SIMON DAVIES: The Purple Turtle – Dark, twisted folk pop from Rose Kemp at tonight's Beard Museum, plus support from former-Ride sticksman turned singer, Loz.

CODY: The Red Lion, Witney

ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

MONDAY 17th

THE OLLY ALCOCK BAND: The Bullingdon – Cumbrian blues guitarist and singer in the vein of Howlin' Wolf and George Thorogood, promoting new album, 'Why The Long Face'.

THE PADDINGTONS: The Zodiac – Effusive and spiky, if utterly incompetent punk-pop from Hull's skinny wretches, launched on the road to cult fame on the back of their friendship with The Libertines and still hacking away at the Clash's garage-punk legacy with ungainly tenacity.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

PAUL DOWNES & PHIL BEER: Nettlebed Folk Club

SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 18th

HARD FI: The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Already sold out, tonight's Oxford debut from the best thing to come out of Staines since Ali G. Already hailed as one of the UK's brightest new pop hopes and shortlisted for the Mercury Prize for debut mini-album 'Stars Of CCTV', Hard-Fi's strength lies in their blend of ska, funk and urban rhythms with a melodic punk bite – sort of Strummer-meets-The Streets. They've got plenty of throwaway pop gems, like recent singles 'Hard To Beat', in their armoury, which might help their longevity, but you wonder whether they can fill another whole album with stories about how crap it is living in Staines. On second thoughts, if you've ever been there, it might not seem such a chore after all.

REUBEN + FIGHTING WITH WIRE + THE MASCARA STORY: The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – Reliably feisty and anthemic emo rocking from Guildford's hardest working band. Back on form of late after gigging themselves half to death, and with new songs like 'For Every Teenager Who Listens To Drum and Bass, A Rock Star Dies', obviously in no danger of losing their touch with an ungainly title.

JAZZ CLUB with PADDY MILNER: The Bullingdon – Guest appearance at the weekly jazz club from the rising star.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

THOMAS TRUAX + DAVID

CRONENBURG'S WIFE + FILTHY PEDRO: The Cellar – A night of anti-folk noise including Truck Festival regular Thomas Truax with his collection of bizarre home-made instruments and knowing take on hillbilly country pop.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: G Bar, St Ebbes

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

WEDNESDAY 19th

JOYUSA: Jacqueline Du Pre Music

Building – Uplifting European jazz with a samba and flamenco twist.

IRISH FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC BANDS NIGHT with DELPHI + WHERE I'M CALLING FROM + BLINDSIGHTED: G Bar, St Ebbes

BROOKES ROCK SOCIETY ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Bullingdon

VENA CAVA: The Cellar – Elaborate local metallers with a neat line in hellbastard hardcore, proggy interludes and Balkan folk bits. Oh yes.

THURSDAY 20th

DREADZONE: The Zodiac – Twelve years of reggae, hip hop and ambient dance experimentation find Dreadzone still on top of their game.

CHARLOTTE JAMES: The Port Mahon – Alternative pop from the singer and guitarist.

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB with SID JACOBS: The Wheatheaf

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES, JAZZ & FOLK BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – Tonight's guests are Jazz Emporium.

BIG SPEAKERS: The Cellar – Live hip hop from the expansive local collective, mixing fluid five-MC rapping with a full-on band back-up.

FRANKIE PALLENT + DREWATKINS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Local acoustic singer-songwriter in the style of Paul McCartney and Noel Gallagher.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney



Sunday 23rd

THE FALL: The Zodiac

Can there be anything left to say about The Fall that hasn't been said before? For almost 30 years now they've been the most consistently inconsistent band in Britain, if not the world: even their most die-hard fans – and Fall fans are extremely die-hard – find them frustrating and contrary in the extreme. What can never be denied, however, is that Mark E Smith is a musical genius. Since he formed the band in 1976 he's created some of the most startlingly original, awkward, exhilarating and obtuse music you're ever likely to hear. The Fall sound is a constantly mutating beast but forever remains unmistakably The Fall – an uneasy meeting of Elvis and Beefheart, Can and Cochran, with an oddly arty edge to it, plenty of punk-inspired bile and a wit and grasp of social reality that few songwriters can equal. Smith has also managed to dispense with more collaborators than the entire Borgia family, occasionally 'informing' bandmates of their sacking with his fist mid-set. Gigs can be unpredictable but on their night The Fall remain, three decades on, more innovative and dangerous than any teenage rock rebels. A national treasure.

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 21st

HAWTHORNE HEIGHTS + SILVERSTEIN + SPITALFIELD + BAYSIDE: The Zodiac

(*upstairs*) – A Night of quiet bits, loud bits, more quiet bits and some more loud bits as sensitive screamo types Hawthorne Heights make their UK debut headlining this Victory Records 'Never Sleep Again' package tour.

CREEPSHOW featuring HEXSTATIC: The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Peepshow celebrates its second birthday with an early Halloween party featuring Ninja Tunes' audio-visual pioneers Hextstatic who released their second audio-visual album, 'Masterview' late last year following on from acclaimed collaborations with Coldcut and David Byrne. Meanwhile Digital re-score *The Shining* at what has become Oxford's best and most eclectic club night.

MARK MULCAHY + ANDY YORKE: The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – Welcome return to town for the former-Miracle Legion frontman, with a rare supporting appearance from Unbelievable



Thursday 27th

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 one of this year's big breakthrough rock acts. They've made the jump from supporting bands like Stellarstarr* (with whom they made their Oxford debut) to headlining venues like Brookes (for the second time this year) with consummate ease. And the best thing about their rapid rise to fame is it hasn't given them time to smooth off those great rough edges that make them such fun to watch. They're 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 (and fiancée) 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 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.

Truth chappie Andy Yorke.

LAPSUS LINGUAE + THE WALK OFF + AN EMERGENCY: *The Wheatsheaf* – Return of Glasgow's manic piano-led hardcore warriors, mixing up The Birthday Party, Shellac and Tori Amos into an unholy musical maelstrom.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: *The Port Mahon*
BLUES DELUX: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley*
FELL CITY GIRL + P.Y.E + PHYAL + ACCIDENTALLY INNOCENT + LEXXIS: *The Net, Abingdon* – Bright young stars of the Oxford scene do it for the kids with this under-18s gig.

BOSSAPHONIK: *The Cellar* – Club night with jazzy hip hop fusion from Bussetti.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: *The Victoria, Jericho*
BACKROOM BOOGIE: *The Bullingdon*

FUSED: *The Red Lion, Witney* – Contemporary indie and rock covers.
LEGENDARY: *General Foods Sports & Social Club, Banbury*

SATURDAY 22nd

CUSTOM BLUE + MONSTRO + GHOST WARRIORS + PIE XO: *The Port Mahon* – Local label My Initials celebrate their first birthday with a showcase of ambient leftfield and experimental acts.

MEW: *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – Soaring blissed-out guitar rock of the first order from Denmark's finest musical export, promoting ace new album

'And The Glass Handed Kites', a typically ambitious sprawl of noise that stretches from My Bloody Valentine atmospheric to 'Low'-era Bowie. Perfect, crystalline pop. International fame and fortune are long overdue.

THE ANSWER + TOKYO DRAGONS + THE SOUND EXPLOSION: *The Zodiac*

(downstairs) – The New School Of Rock tour featuring A rotating headline bill of three supposedly up and coming bands, although AC/DC acolytes Tokyo Dragons seem to have been around for ever and we wonder whether sounding an awful lot like yesterday's men The Datsuns is really an indication of great things to come. Joining them on the tour are Newcastle's boozy rockers The Sound Explosion and The Answer – recent tour support to The Darkness.

IN THE FLESH + EL JAEGO + THE SPACE

BETWEEN: *The Wheatsheaf* – Full-blooded indie rocking from In The Flesh in the vein of Feeder and Foo Fighters, plus support from indie punkers El Jaego.

THE STRANGERS: *The Red Lion, Witney* – Stadium rock covers and originals.

ROADRUNNER: *The Bullingdon* – Mod, northern soul, 60s garage and freakbeat club night with live acts and DJs.

LJILJANA BUTLER: *Wesley Memorial Church* – Eastern European folk singer.

ROLLERCOASTER Vs CHICKS WITH

DECKS: *The Cellar* – Eclectic mash up of punk, New Wave, 80s pop and more.

JULIANA MEYER: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley*
DEAD MEN'S SHOES: *Chipping Norton FC*

SUNDAY 23rd

THE FALL + NOUGHT: *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – Contender for The Greatest Living Englishman, Mark E Smith returns with his ever-changing band of minstrels – see main preview.

BRAKES + CHRIS TT + THE SEAL CUB

CLUBBING CLUB: *The Zodiac (downstairs)* – The South Coast supergroup – made up of various member of British Sea Power, Electric Soft Parade and The Tenderfoot, return to Oxfordshire after their sterling set at Truck Festival, showing just how many mad ideas they can cram into a two-minute pop song. Along the way you'll hear thrash punk, country rock, good-time party pop and some jangly indie stuff. You'll also hear irresistible pop anthem, 'All Night Disco Party' and a fairly respectable cover of The Jesus and Mary Chain's 'Sometime Always'. Sarf Landan troubadour Chris TT joins the fun with barbed tales of urban life, while the world's worst-named band The Seal Cub Clubbing Club (and not because we're airy fairy hippies with a penchant for big-eyed furry beats, although we are, but because it's impossible to say when you're even half cut) open the show.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

The Old School House

THE BROTHERS: *The Bullingdon*

LAGRIMA + GLENDA HUIH: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley*

ILIKETRAINS: *The Cellar* – Mogwai-styled guitar soundscaping from Leeds' busy post-rockers, promoting new single 'A Rook House For Bobby', a tribute to the eccentric former world chess champion.

FRANK ABRAHAMS: *The Red Lion, Witney*

MONDAY 24th

THE IAN PARKER BAND: *The Bullingdon* – Blues and roots guitarist with a serious reputation on the European festival circuit, mixing up standards and originals in the style of Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan and John Mayall.

LEAVES: *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – Alternately majestic and introverted pop from Iceland's Leaves, following up their promising 'Breathe' album with major label debut 'The Angela Test'. Skinny and slightly sensitive young men play the universal music of heartache. Sometime with pianos. Warm-hearted in a Coldplay kind of way, with leaning towards Radiohead, Elbow and Beck at times.

FOZZY: *The Zodiac (downstairs)* – WWF wrestler Chris Jericho teams up with wrestling fanatics Stuck Mojo and, hey presto! Big ol' hairy

Saturday 29th / Sunday 30th

AUDIOSCOPE:

The Zodiac

Now in its fifth year, the annual Audioscope mini-festival, which has so far raised over £10,000 for homeless charity Shelter, has expanded to take in two days of live music. As well as an effective fundraiser, Audioscope is also an excellent showcase of the best underground and leftfield music around, providing a good mix of international sound manipulators with the cream of Oxford's own more esoteric starlets. Last year the organisers managed to entice former Can frontman Damo Suzuki along to headline. This year it's folktronica pioneer Kieran Hebden, aka Four Tet (*pictured*), who tops the bill on the Saturday. Formerly of Fridge, Kieran's woozy, warped style of melodic electronic soundscaping defies easy classification. With recent album 'Everything Ecstatic' he's ditched the guitars altogether for a fully electronic sound. Joining him on the Saturday are Texas' masters of textured guitar noise, Explosions In The Sky, former McLusky fella John Chapple's new project Shooting At Unarmed Men, New York one-woman noise frenzy Ill Ease, mad jazz-metallars Giddy Motors and local rising starlets Fell City Girl. On the Sunday electro legend Luke Vibert is the star attraction, joined by enigmatic songwriter Scout Niblett, jazz-core pioneers Billy Mahonie, Ninja Tunes' Super Numeri, plus a great double bill of Oxford talent in Nought of course Audioscope hosts Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element, who open the show. All this plus much, much more besides. £18 gets you a pass for both days. Check out www.audioscope.co.uk for more details.



metal in the vein of Scorpions and Ozzy Osbourne. Go on, you love it really.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

CHRIS WHILE & JULIE MATTHEWS:

Nettlebed Folk Club

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:

The Bullingdon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

SALSANEROS: The Cellar

TUESDAY 25th

TURIN BRAKES: Brookes University Union

– Mellow stadium-sized rock from the south coast duo promoting new album, 'Jackinthebox', and taking a more - gosh - rock path. Whatever next? Guitar solos? 15-foot high monsters onstage? Some vestige of entertainment?

KUBB: The Zodiac – Soon to be massive elegantly melancholy popsters already being called The New Coldplay, fronted by Harry Collier, a very handsome young man who will doubtless be dating A-list Hollywood actresses this time next year. Jeff Buckley-inspired falsetto emoting is very much the order of the day and if you're missing Athlete and Snow Patrol, here are your new favourite band.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

G Bar, St Ebbes

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:

The Bullingdon

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

WEDNESDAY 26th

NAGATHA KRUSTI + ARPUSSY + LEAVE IN FALL: The Bullingdon – Punk and metal bands night.

IRISH FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

LOST CHIUUAUA: The Port Mahon

DELICIOUS MUSIC NIGHT with PAWEL

KUTERBA: G Bar, St Ebbes

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

Far From The Madding Crowd

GIGSWAP UK: The Wheatsheaf

THURSDAY 27th

THE SUBWAYS: Brookes University Union – The teenage rampage continues apace – *see main preview*

THE SPIN JAZZ CLUB with JONATHAN

GEE: The Wheatsheaf

TWAT DADDIES + DREW ATKINS: The Port

Mahon – Punk rocking action from Twat Daddys, plus acoustic pop from Drew Atkins.

DJ DEREK: The Zodiac – Reggae, ska, soul and dancehall from the veteran Britolian DJ with special guest set from Ska Cubano's Natty Bo.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES, JAZZ & FOLK

BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding

Crowd – Featuring jazz from tonight's guests

The Sheila Salway Trio.

THE HELLSET ORCHESTRA + BIG JOAN +

THE WITCHES: The Cellar – Elaborate,

theatrical horror pop.

HEATHER DALE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley –

The singer's last Oxford gig before returning to Canada.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BACKYARD ACOUSTIC CLUB: The

Cricketers Arms

FRIDAY 28th

SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT + HEADCOUNT + JUNKIE BRUSH + STIG: The

Exeter Hall, Cowley – Pre-Halloween night

heavy rock party with maleficent gospel-prog-metal from Suitable Case, plus bruising punk-metal from Headcount and wiry New Wave noise from Junkie Brush.

ALEXISONFIRE: The Zodiac (upstairs) –

Canadian hardcore crew return for their third visit to The Club That Cannot Be Named.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES presents THE

MULES + BLIND MICE + MARK ABIS: The

Zodiac (downstairs) – Another mixed bag of

sounds at tonight's GTI. There's aggressive folk, punk-funk and Eastern European dance from Mules, with elegant pop in the vein of Steely Dan and The Beatles from London's Blind Mice, as well as quality melancholic folk-pop from local singer-songwriter Mark Abis.

INDEFINITELY: The Red Lion, Witney

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

REDOX UNPLUGGED: The Flowing Well,

Sunningwell

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.

FUSED: The Baytree, Grove

SATURDAY 29th

LACUNA COIL: The Zodiac (upstairs) –

Italian gothic metallers make a rare UK

appearance – *see main preview*

AUDIOSCOPE: The Zodiac (downstairs –

4pm) – The fifth Audioscope runs over two days with Four Tet headlining the opening night – *see main preview*

HIGH VOLTAGE: The Red Lion, Witney

THE EPSTEIN: The Port Mahon – Full-blooded country rocking in the style of The Eagles.

NAKED NU-SOUL: The Bullingdon

KING ADA: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar

SUNDAY 30th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Zodiac (downstairs –

4pm) – Second day of leftfield music thrills,

topped off by Luke Vibert – *see main preview*

BLUE KITE + ADY DAVEY + OSPREY &

FRIENDS: The Bullingdon – Icy trip-pop and

folk-rock from Blue Kite with support from local singer-songwriters Ady and Oz.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:

The Old School House

BEARD MUSEUM with SCRIPT + LINDSEY +

EARNEST COX + THE TREAT: The Purple

Turtle – Eclectic indie rocking from Script,

veering between 60s-styled psychedelic pop and gothic new wave.

STEVE DUGUTIS: The Red Lion, Witney

ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

MONDAY 31st

THE ADAM BOMB BAND: The Bullingdon –

Return visit to the Bully's Monday night blues club for LA rocker Adam Bomb – big hair, big riffs, stadium-sized rock anthems and just occasionally, a flame-throwing guitar.



Saturday 29th

LACUNA COIL:

The Zodiac

One of only four dates on this, Lacuna Coil's first proper UK tour, their previous visits to these shores limited to one-off London shows, as well as this summer's Download Festival. Hailing from Italy, the band started off in the late-90s on their native goth scene, initially inspired by the likes of Paradise Lost and The Gathering, before a tour with Swiss gothsters Lacrimosa and the release of 2001's 'Unleashed Memories' brought both critical praise and some commercial success. 2002's follow-up, 'Comalies', has expanded Lacuna Coil's sound, typified by the contrasting vocals of female singer Cristina Scabbia and her male counterpart Andrea Ferro. Cristina is ethereal, haunting and angelic by turns, Andrea is gruff and growling. Musically they cross the boundary between goth and the darker, almost psychedelic side of metal – as melancholy, melodramatic and narcotic as you'd imagine. Aggressive riffs go up against almost pretty, seductive melodies, and while the band could be accused of indirectly inspiring Evanescence, it shouldn't be held against them. Tonight's gig is split into two parts – an acoustic session followed by a full electric show. Dress to depress.

THE KILLS: The Zodiac – The most rock'n'roll looking band on the planet return once again to dish out the dirty, low-down blues-soaked lo-fi rock grime in the style of The Velvet Underground and Patti Smith. Seriously, these people smoke fags and drink bourbon even when they're asleep. What do you expect from folks who call themselves VV and Hotel?

THE MON\$YSHOTS: The Port Mahon – Halloween party with doomy local rockers.

DELICIOUS MUSIC HALLOWEEN PARTY: G Bar, St Ebbes – Two floors of live music from the Delicious crew

ARTISAN: Nettlebed Folk Club

SALSANEROS: The Cellar

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PARTY IN THE PARK

South Park

So, we came back for more, did we? Even after last year's soul-sapping display of lowest common denominator abattoir sweepings? Of course we did, we enjoy Fox FM's annual atrocity exhibition unfold before us. And it reminds us, hopelessly snobbish misanthropists that we are, that we're better than everyone else. And anyway, Girls Aloud and Rachel Stevens are playing, and they're both ace and we defy anyone to say otherwise.

Across the road the landlord of a nearby pub has opened early today in the hope that star turn **Charlotte Church** will pop by for a pre-gig pint or eight, but he's to be disappointed as she delivers a short, sober, by-the-book set that typifies the soullessness of these latter-day Radio1 roadshow affairs. Each act, from openers **Texas** to headliners **McFly**, comes on, mouths a few limp platitudes to the throng, mimes a couple of hits and disappears stage left, either to count their sales figures or into eternal obscurity. The stark brevity of each performance not only accentuates the lack of any depth in the acts on show, but is symptomatic of modern consumers' inability to take in anything more than five minutes of information at a time.

Still, it's a blessing when you consider that when we arrive **Tyler James** is decimating White Town's 'Your Woman', which sets a benchmark for the crass, tasteless and, creatively bankrupt celebration of shit that is to follow. Seriously, it makes Will Green's treatment of 'Light My Fire' sound like genius incarnate.

Interspersed with the brief musical PRs and karaoke call-and-response

interludes are assorted Fox DJs whose loud-mouthed chumminess reminds us exactly why we wake up to Wogan nowadays. Everything is announced as "Fantastic", "Brilliant" and "Amazing", when even the insect trying to drown itself in our vodka because it's so depressed, could tell you it's not.

The **ferrety one from Busted** is up on stage now with his new band. He laughingly announces that his bass player, Dave, is from Wales. As if that's somehow intrinsically funny. Which it isn't. And neither is looking like an underfed gerbil and sounding like a fifth-rate Green Day. People are cheering but it might just be for the KFC advert being broadcast on the stage screens. **X-Factor** runner-up **Rowetta** at least has the vocal talent to promise something special in the future, but for now she's wasted on the bland, identikit plastic soul material she's being fed. Give the girl a decent song and then we might see her shine.

Unlike the aptly-named **Faders** (The female Busted! Hosannah!), whose most remarkable quality is that one of them is the daughter of Midge Ure. No Regrets, Midge? You bloody well should have. Or **Mark Owen**, who was one of last year's PITP's saving graces but who, in the interim, seems to have mutated into a fearsome cross between Bono and Jamiroquai. Or indeed **Freefaller**, with their stolen Led Zep riffs and unforgivable cover of Green Day's 'Basket Case'. Hopefully their next freefall will end with the parachute failing to open.

But here's salvation – it's time for **Girls Aloud** and proof that shamelessly manufactured pop groups can not only be great fun, but also that there is some great songwriting still being done out there in Chartland. 'Long Hot Summer' and 'Sound Of The Underground' are absolute crackers. As is **Rachel Stevens'** 2004 hit, 'So Good', mainly because it's a dead-ringer for Goldfrapp, though sadly the rest of her set fails to live up to that opening salvo, degenerating into generic techno disco and shout outs of "How ya doing, Oxford!" (we're really rather drunk, thank you).

Liberty X, whose last legs now appear to be finally buckling, exceed the cliché count by several million with a continual barrage of "Put your hands in the air! / Make some noise! / Are you ready for some Fun!" proclamations. And then they mime a cover of 'Ain't Nobody'.

All of which makes **KT Tunstall** sound exotic by comparison. Maybe it's over-exposure to adverts for her album on telly but we've finally succumbed to her slick, jazzy brand of gentle pop, and today she sounds pretty classy. But then, compared to **Lucie Silvas'** stage school warbling or **Simon Webbe's** limp-wristed, soulless r'n'b slop, the screams of a constipated Ork would sound like sweet soul music.

In the end – or more accurately, well before the end – it's all too much. We forsake McFly's doubtless rewriting of the punk rock rulebook to go and watch England heroically scrape to Ashes victory against Australia in the pub. Charlotte Church buys us a large whisky to celebrate. We lend her a copy of the new Arcade Fire album and she promises to try harder in future. Not such a bad day after all, then.

Dale Kattack

THE CHERRY BOMBERS

The Wheatsheaf

One thing that is more annoying than the lone bagpiper who noise-pollutes Commarket Street on a Saturday, is watching a corking band like the Cherry Bombers busting their humps on stage, knowing that the flashbulbs of celebrity are being used up elsewhere on some Cowell / Walsh 'fresh-from-the-front-room' no-marks that swill from our TVs, while the Cherry Bombers' lot will be a tiring trip back to London, dragging their cabs and cases out of a van in the early hours. You need the constitution and motivation of a Pamplona bull to work the toilet circuit, and there is no ring rust with these four girls.

Starting out in '99 as Tea Rosie and the Starlettes, they have become the darlings of Ladyfests and Riot Grrl 'zines, with their irreverent repertoire, part Rezillos, part feisty Shangri-La's, which allies them to the punk movement, although their love of pop heritage denies them wholesale involvement. Singles 'Turn Around' (a Siouxsie / Tom Tom Club-style message, telling some waste of space boyfriend, to rack off) and 'Back Seat Lovers' are typical of the snappy set, with its powerful but curious guitar effect and chords that sound like the drone of a brass section, as if Stax Records had signed Toyah.

In a just world, The Cherry Bombers' brand of flinty fashion and hairspray 60s meets sink-estate 70s, say, with an imagined album called 'Greatest Misses', would trample all over the vacuous FM blingers onto the glossy covers. Hard work and hard knocks. There's no shortcut, people; only pressure makes diamonds.

Paul Carrera

THE MISSION

The Zodiac

The Mission were formed by Wayne Hussey and the now-departed Craig Adams after leaving Sisters of Mercy in 1985; however, unlike the Sisters, they are still around, existing without impinging much on the public consciousness, though still much beloved by the sort of people who wear old Fields of the Nephilim tour t-shirts. As such, I'm expecting an 80s-style doom-laden dirge with impenetrable amounts of reverb and uninspired new material. Today however, new single 'Breathe Me In' has hit No.1 in the German alternative charts. It appears Wayne and co. aren't quite relics yet.

The driving rock of 'Evangeline', with its Big Country-style tumbling drums, isn't that interesting - even when it segues into Abba's 'Gimme Gimme Gimme'. The jangly guitar of 'Sea of Love' resembles The Cult's 'She Sells Sanctuary', and 'Hymn (for America)' is almost heavy metal. The Mission appreciate their support; after playing an old b-side, which Wayne says only real fans will know, they launch into the more recognisable oldies like 'Butterfly on a Wheel', heaped with reverb but stirring rather than melodramatic. The Mission's most successful - and most typical - tracks are the anthemic ones: 'Deliverance', 'Severina' and 'Wasteland' are impassioned, with rousing lyrics, repetitive guitar riffs and driving basslines. They close with the remixed version of 'Tower of Strength', complete with Ofra Haza-like wailing. The guitars layer over the dancery backing track and build to an epic crescendo... and then Wayne walks off and it's all over. The Mission are lot more accessible than the image or the legend has led me to expect. I can happily report that, here at least, all is well in Gothland.

Kirsten Etheridge

POWERPLANT

Oxford University Botanical Gardens

Stepping into the Botanic Gardens tonight is like entering a wardrobe and finding yourself in Narnia: beyond the familiar gateway lies an underworld wholly alien and exotic. The grounds have been transformed into a shimmering elfin grotto in which whirling motes of light dance amongst the overhanging branches, where trees enjoin the explorer to touch them and Barbie-pink fibre-optic lilies drift in pools. The darkness under which these strange plants unfurl adds to the sense of enchantment, and even the oft-trodden paths seem to be playing games, wilfully refusing to lead the same way twice.

This metamorphoses takes place at the hands of Oxford Contemporary Music who have commissioned artists specialising in photography, sculpture, sound, light and pyrotechnics to produce site-specific installations. The unusual location is an inspired choice, the exhibits coupling with the environment to forge a conceptual link between nature and humankind.

For the spectacular 'Pyrophones', Mark Anderson transforms the Bog Garden into a devil-driven inferno in which variously placed gas pipes belch out bellyfuls of flame in computer-generated sequence. As the fireballs rise, a machine-like beat sounds to form a disorienting industrial rhythm which shifts in and out of sync. NIN's 'Closer' shattered and splintered, its pieces randomly tossed to the air.

Eerily luminous beneath the trees, Anne Bean's 'Roots' initially appears to be a

family of monstrous puffballs. Closer inspection reveals something stranger still: chest-high balloons filled with light, their mouths stoppered with harmonicas. As the gas gradually escapes, so too does a singing hum which can be modulated by blowing back into the instruments.

Kirsten Reynold's 'Sighs from the Depths' utilises two gramophones whose turntables spin discs cut from tree trunks. As the twig-styluses run along the age-telling grooves, these unorthodox phonograms produce a clunk-clunking beat accompanied by the uneven whir of a child's go-kart careering across tarmac. The twigs are connected to spinning glitter-balls whose orbits jerk and judder in time to these rhythmic pulses.

Through exploring the sounds latent in natural phenomena, Power Plant confronts the narrowness of conventional definitions of music. Each piece serves as an instrument in a madly improbable orchestra, performing its own part in a soundscape half-mechanical, half-natural. The hybridisation of alleged opposites is a notion that pervades the show. Traditionally painted as warring adversaries in Western culture, art, nature and technology are here cross-pollinated to create a fertile garden of bizarre new breeds. This is a mesmerising experience that ignites the imagination and leaves the senses tingling – even the workaday world on the other side of the wardrobe seems subtly transformed.

Emily Gray

MILLION DEAD / GAY FOR JOHNNY DEPP

The Zodiac

Gay For Johnny Depp are a bunch of scuzzy New York types who are preaching the word of 'Gayness' to the masses. They do this by bashing out wave after wave of impenetrable punk. The kind of punk thing you'd find on a Sham 69 bootleg. It's messy stuff alright, and with vocalist Sid Jagger screeching like a mortally wounded guinea pig over songs with titles like 'Sex in Your

Mouth', it would be easy to dismiss GFJD as a joke band. GFJD *are* a joke band, but that doesn't mean there is a need to be dismissive; they've got a pretty good joke. Not quite as refined as the Pansy Division one liner perhaps, and not as satirical as the Mukilteo Faries; but they have all the exuberance and attitude of Julian Clary fronting Black Flag. Which is pretty funny.

Million Dead are a much more serious proposition, their recent album 'Harmony no Harmony' had all the hallmarks of a band that were not only intelligent, but were capable of making a racket that few other young British bands were capable of. Shortly before tonight's show it was announced that the band were to split, and so, unsurprisingly, they are playing before a packed, and vigorous audience. Any subtleties that might be found on their records are crushed beneath a brutal wave of larynx-twisting vocals and fiercely buzzing guitars. Their energy is totally unrelenting, and the audience is happy to reciprocate Million Dead's efforts. Songs such as 'Pornography for Cowards' and 'Holloway Prison Blues' flash past in a blur, each spat out with the kind of intensity you might expect from Fugazi on a good night. It's a real shame that we'll have to add one more to the Million Dead.

Allin Pratt



Photo by Sam Shepherd

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13th - CHIARINA DARRAH (acoustic folk, pop & jazz)

20th - JAZZ EMPORIUM

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TRIVIUM

The Zodiac

The cynical part of me would love to think that if Trivium weren't having the time of their lives in an internationally-successful band, they could forge a decent career for themselves in marketing. The extensively-stocked merch table is four deep all night, they have the crowd obeying every call for a circle pit from start to finish, and even find time for a bit of website-related upselling between songs.

Theirs is a calculated blend of all the bits of metal that bolt together to form a platinum-selling stadium act.

Frontman Matt Heafy is the ringleader, flipping through his repertoire of Nigel Tufnell-esque action figure poses, and prone to gung-ho and unintentionally hilarious outbursts demanding the apocalypse from his reverential acolytes. All the elements are present and correct: soaring sing-along choruses, extended drops allowing the band to whip up a frenzy before it all kicks off again, and portentous lyrics bending double under their own weight.

On the other hand, the wide-eyed non-cynic in me finds it all pretty irresistible. Trivium's ostentatious soloing and

relentlessly energetic prowling of the stage owes a huge debt to the mighty Maiden, but their classic metal histrionics are carefully couched in a shell of credible hardcore aggression. Their musicianship, especially for a band mostly still in their teens, is at times jaw-dropping, and it's hard not to be carried along by the enthusiastic interplay between band and audience. It might be far from the dangerous, parent-scaring hellish noise it thinks it is, but this marketing metal lark is actually quite a lot of fun. Gotta dash, I've got a few Trivium e-cards to send.

Stuart Fowkes



Photo by Richard Hounslow

DADDY G

The Zodiac

Tonight's celebrations for the wonderful Skylarkin' club's third birthday start in the Brickworks, where virtually every DJ on the roster gets the chance to grace the decks.

The huge level of excitement and genuine pride in this most trend-defying club is tangible, with heads craning to read the label on a new seven-inch being passed around. The party moves into The Zodiac, where DJ Derek is warming things up nicely.

The man really is a joy to watch, for the surgical care he takes in preparing each tune as well as his gruff, incomprehensible introductions. But the man of the night is Grant Marshall, AKA Daddy G and founder member of Massive Attack. Though he's been absent from the last two albums and the forthcoming one, now nearing completion, he has shown up for some live dates and the word is he'll reappear on the next LP.

Tonight's set falls within the club's trademark of soulful reggae, all played off vinyl, with a

preponderance of short, vocal tunes. G's never been one for trying to impress with obscure tracks or anonymous white labels, but happy to mix classic floor-fillers with lesser known releases, then dropping bombshells like the new mix-up of 'Sexual Healing' and 'Waiting in Vain'. Later he effortlessly slides into a long section featuring the 'Under Me Sleng Teng' rhythm, that most timeless of basslines. His set could be seen as a mirror of the Bristol Sound itself, self-assured, focused and completely heedless of trends or fashion. This single-mindedness could explain the enduring status of the place and its key figures like Massive, Adrian Sherwood and Portishead, despite their sporadic output and live appearances.

Needless to say, the crowd can't get enough and it's all over too quickly, but the party continues elsewhere well into the weekend, everyone looking forward to the next three years.

Art Lagun

ALLYOUMISS / IVY'S ITCH / THE CLIFFHANGERS / HARLETTE / LAST PROPOSAL

The Zodiac

Tonight's gig is billed as a night of "Chick Rock", which throws up all manner of arguments, the least of which is whether anyone should even be using the word chick in rock music in the 21st Century. But anyway, we could write a 10,000 essay on the place of women and girls in music but space allows us no more than 400, so let's simply examine the quality of Oxford's small quota of all-girl, or female-dominated bands.

Last Proposal and Harlette are both extremely young, the former happy to kick out sprightly, simple punk-pop tunes that make up in infectiousness what they lack in bite, but Harlette make enough noise for both of them. Verging on ramshackle they might be but there's something about them makes you think this is probably what The Banshees sounded like live in the beginning. Their sound encompasses goth, punk and plenty of grunge but already they seem to have enough character of their own.

Character is something The Cliffhangers have, although like a hyperactive child, their effusive personality can start to grate at times. In recent single 'Roxy' they've got a slight, sleazy goth-disco gem, something they should build on, but beyond that they're trying to be too clever, sacrificing songwriting – not to mention singer Chantelle Pike's otherwise

exceptional voice – for indulgent private musical jokes. Definitely a band that is less than the sum of its talented parts.

Ivy's Itch, it must be said, are in a different class to the rest of tonight's bill. They've got the experience, that's for sure, and in Eliza they've also got probably the best female rock singer in town. As ever the haunted 'Laudanum' opens a set which then careers through a blitz of hellhound aural pyrotechnics. After half an hour of being punished in this way, you kind of wish they'd drop the pace a little, but for those girls in the crowd watching them for the first time tonight, they should be a revelation and an inspiration.

Allyoumiss have grown up plenty since they first hit the scene as young teens a few years back. Their sound is beefier, more confident and less easy to pigeonhole. They've got one absolute cracker of a grunge-pop anthem that echoes Avril Lavigne's 'Skater Boy' and enough songwriting sparkle about them to dip into balladry occasionally without sounding twee or overly earnest.

Hopefully tonight's gig will have inspired a few more girls to pick up guitars and form their own bands. Then, perhaps, self-imposed ghetto gigs like this will become a curious anachronism.

Victoria Waterfield

JABERWOK / WHERE I'M CALLING FROM G Bar

The Daily Mail might be certain that exams are getting easier, but here at Miserable Critics Central it's as tough as ever to get a good review, even if you're still at school.

Luckily, Where I'm Calling From score highly on any scale, and considering they're only 17, that's a real achievement. Their performance at tonight's Delicious Music bands night is good rather than outstanding, but they have a wealth of songwriting ideas and are honing a most individual voice for themselves. It's a sensitive but muscular indie sound, a chunky cross between Belle & Sebastian and The Wedding Present: one tune even sounds like 'Brimful Of Asha' rewritten by The Smiths, which is a great concept. Granted, there are faults (some clunky rhythm work, a few Idlewild doldrums, the singer's infuriating mannerisms) but I'll forgive them. Call me patronising, but it's refreshing to see teenagers making

such interesting, assured music.

Funk zen teaches "First learn how to play, Groovehopper, then learn when not to play".

Jaberwok have missed the second clause, attempting music built entirely from crescendos. Don't they know the best dance music is based on anticipation? Still, they may lack restraint, but their acid jazz meets P-funk set is enjoyable. The instrumental section fares best, improbably melding JIQ, Baby Ford and Pink Floyd, and rugs begin to be cut.

All well, good and slightly ordinary, but then from nowhere the band morphs into a super-tight acid-frazzled beast for the last three numbers, getting twice as intricate and five times as funky without warning. So I cross out all my notes and watch those rugs getting properly shredded. It goes to show you never can tell, as old folk like me sometimes say.

David Murphy

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

ABANDON

The nights are drawing in so it's time for the goths to reawaken. And here's demo page regular Umair Chaudhry in his latest guise, Abandon. Really, it should be called Abandon Hope All Ye Who Listen Here, so relentlessly morbid is this half-hour offering. Excellent. Taking his main cue, apparently, from Swans – without doubt the bleakest band of all time – Umair creates a landscape of remorselessly portentous synthetic chamber music that grinds and rumbles like gothic thunder. Church organs swell and flatten surrounding buildings, guitars spangle like dying stars, while slow-burning beats dare the dead to dance. At its heaviest, as on 'Sick Of My Fears' it sounds like a black mass disco; elsewhere there are echoes of Belgian 4AD signings Clan Of Xymox. The whole thing is a bit like a miniature black hole slowly swallowing up any remaining light in the vicinity. The sort of stuff parents would worry about their kids listening to in the isolation of their bedrooms. And thus, something to be heartily encouraged.

SUBROSA 5

Subrosa 5 are from Thame and spend a lot of time in their accompanying letter waffling on about how the neighbouring Chiltern Hills are imbued with the spirit of Glenn Miller, who played his final gig in nearby Wycombe, before they leave us with the encouraging news that they're actually more inspired by the spirit of Ride. And so it turns out on opening number 'Wallpaper Silhouettes', an eight-minute drift through heavily-effected guitars that flutter and blossom and rise up on the same air currents that lift the resurgent Chilterns red kite population. The vocals take a good four minutes to make an appearance and when they do they're innocuous enough but perhaps unnecessary given that the guitars themselves have enough about them to carry the whole piece. A shame that the second song here, 'Subrosa 212 Country Voodoo' doesn't live up to its title, a lumpen stab at Bob Dylan done in the style of early Radiohead. C'mon fellas, don't let that early promise crash down to

earth like Mr Miller – off up to the top of Bledlow Ridge with you and let's see you really fly.

NORTHSEA HIJACK

Aside from a veritable shoal of fishing-related puns in the accompanying letter, this is a pretty assured debut demo from Northsea Hijack. Like Subrosa 5 there's a bit of a shoegazing influence going on, with heavily-delayed guitars leading the charge. Throw in a bit of early-80s alternative pop, a Hammond organ buzz, some gothy atmospherics and some sullen, bluesy vocals with a tendency to sound a bit too serious and you've got most of the history of indie music all in one pot. Not that this really has quite enough character of its own to make you want to listen again, but there's evidence they might do something more interesting with time. There are hints of a funky jazz-pop tendency trying to make its presence felt, although the last song here, 'Single Of The Weak', is pure indie self-contemplation, too submissive and accepting of defeat to win your sympathy.

DON SMOOTH

A full album-length demo from the partly Oxfordshire rockers, following on from their promising first demo a few months ago. No great chance of direction here, Don Smooth opt for hard-edged punk-pop, melodic hardcore and maybe a bit of emo. It's well structured, deftly handled and convincingly played, but for all that it's maybe a bit too polished. They manage to draw in a few interesting influences along the way, though. The moody 'Love Machine' leans towards Queens of the Stone Age, while the more sprightly 'Hate' is closer to Dive Dive. 'Take A Ride', meanwhile, is poppier still and sounds not unlike XTC at times. Enough to suggest that if they're prepared to live out of a transit van for the next three years, Don Smooth might make build a sizeable following, but for now we'd like to hear them get seriously rough around the edges.

TREV WILLIAMS

Last time round Trev got himself trashed in the Demo Dumper on account of some seriously mawkish piano ballads that those of us who remember the darker days of the mid-1980s got very upset about. As some kind of recompense this time round he's serviced us with a song he wrote a few years ago, 'Pretty City Boy', which carries

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a pretty authentic 70s punk feel about it, albeit tempered by some floaty guitars bits – sort of like a cross between Ride and Eddie and the Hotrods if you can possibly imagine that. That done, Trev returns to type and formulaic piano ballads like ‘Don’t Lead Me On’ plus a very silly and annoying “comedy” song called ‘The Tale Of Keith’s Pet Frog’, played on a harpsichord and sung in a “I’m mad, me” voice. We guess it’s just in Trev’s nature to sit behind his electric piano and emote about lost love and such stuff and we shouldn’t really deny him that simple pleasure. Not that he ever sounds particularly happy about it.

DANIEL SMITH

Or Daniel ‘Supa’ Smith to give him his full name, if his letter is to be believed. Fans of catchy pop tunes wouldn’t think so, but maybe people who enjoy listening to detuned pianos being stabbed in a rhythmic but random fashion might perhaps concur. Because, gentle listener, we are once again in the realm of so-called experimental music. And such things can easily go both ways. Daniel’s got a couple of decent ideas on this evidence, especially ‘Happy Happy’, which sounds like Mr Blobby playing Moog Favourites of the 70s over some squelchy beats. Problem is, as with each of the four tracks on the demo, each single idea is left to repeat itself ad nauseum with little attempt to carry it onto another level. So each piece ends up sounding like an ad jingle for some kind of retro-futurist food pill on repeat loop. So, Daniel ‘Partial Success’ Smith, then. It’s a start.

HIJERA

Ooh, how 21st Century! It’s the baggy, rave and Britpop revivals all in one. Hijera somehow manage to sound like The Happy Mondays, Oasis and Stereo MCs all at the same time, which is no mean feat, but maybe 15 years ago it might have seemed relevant, exciting even. Sadly some sounds are so intrinsically linked to a certain period of time that they will always sound dated, however much energy is expended in trying to bring them back to life. There’s some slack-jawed drawling, big rumbling guitars, a bit of squelchy synth action and some loping, funky beats. If we’re trying to be encouraging, we’d say this might have down a storm on the dance stage at Glastonbury in 1990.

ESCAPE ROUTE PATTERN

We last reviewed this lot at the end of last

year and compared them, not unfavourably, with the likes of Pavement and Husker Du. The recording quality has improved in the interim, but that raw proto-hardcore sound is still there, retaining a ragged, fuzzy thunder about it. Escape Route Pattern flit from the poppier end of the grunge scale, as on ‘Butternut’, to a more lo-fi fuzz and thrash, as on both ‘Vita Blue fast Ball’ and ‘Suck My Wake’. They’re better on the latter since they never sound pin-sharp enough to do the tight, fast stuff, sounding much more effective, and authentic, on the low-rent end of the scale.

CLATTER

Melodic but whiny indie droning from a band whose line-up (including sax, clarinet, kora and mbira players) is rarely reflected in the finished product. Instead what we get is some pretty rudimentary, workaday Beatles-influenced melodies and vocal stylings and precious few glimpses of something less parochial flitting about on the peripheries of the songs. It’s a bit messy but not unpleasant; best of the lot is the more reflective ‘The Art Of Walking Through Crowds’, but generally any similarities to The Beatles shouldn’t be overstated as the whole thing lacks the ambition the instruments involved might suggest.

THE DEMO DUMPER

ARMSTRONG

Take comfort, progress-phobics everywhere. However much the world moves on, however much technology takes us closer to the stars, somewhere it will always a pub rock gig circa-1981. Oh, Armstrong can hide behind the odd passage of moody guitar or an intricate little interlude, but they are forever stumbling through the timeless wastes of soft-metal, dreaming of supporting Gillan on tour. The music chugs merrily along, blissful in its ignorance of the passing years, in desperate need of someone to untether it from its short leash, while the singer histrionically coughs and warbles about all manner of things we can’t be bothered to decipher, bursting into mock operatic excess at the end of every other line. Isn’t it nice to know there are some things you can rely on to remain unchanged in this increasingly hectic world, and for those folks who still think pocket calculators and digital watches are a wondrous new invention to know that there are people out there more out of touch than they are.

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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. Aw heck, you’re not taking the slightest bit of notice of this are you?

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