email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net website: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

NIGHTSHIFT

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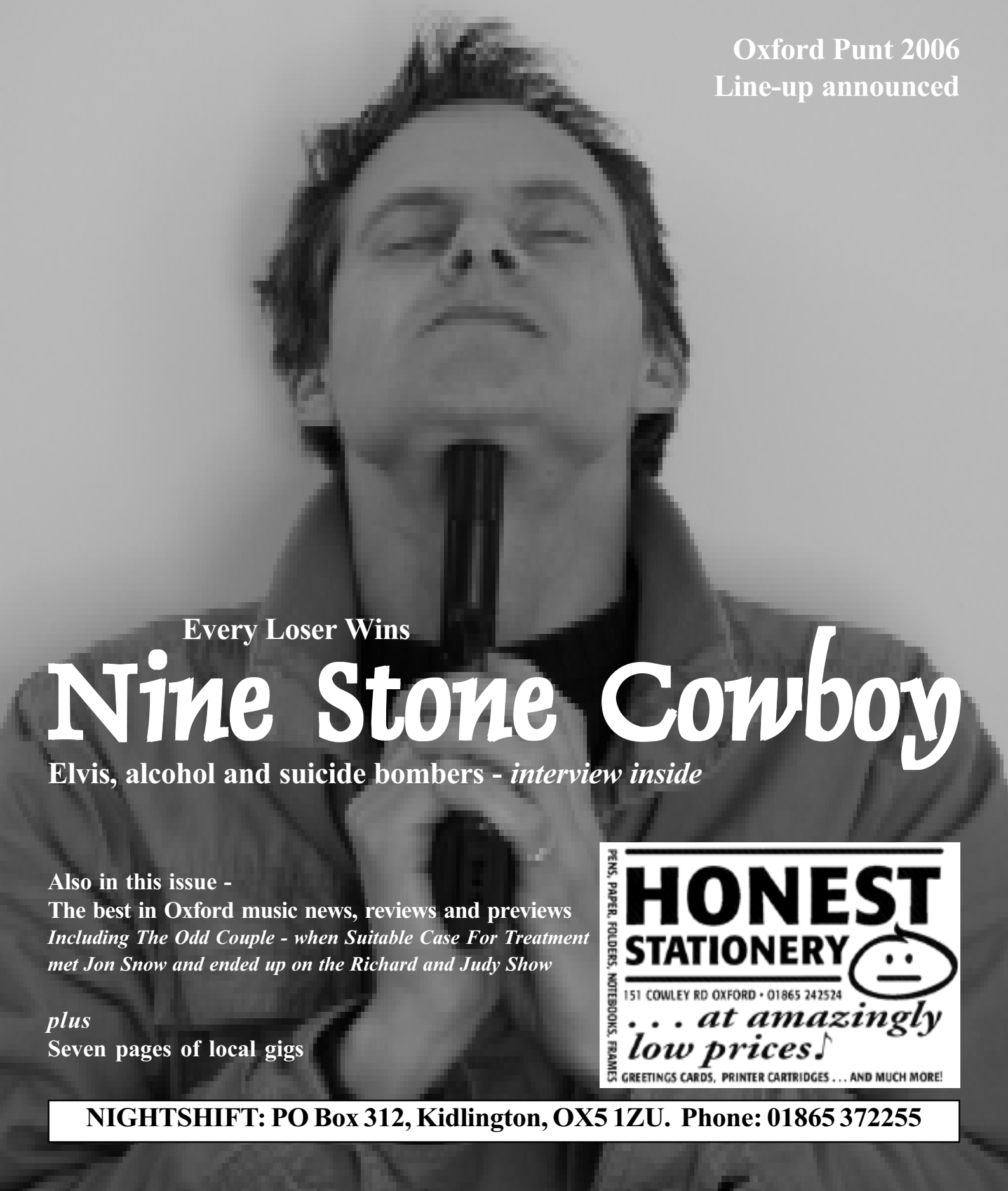

Oxford Punt 2006
Line-up announced

Every Loser Wins

Nine Stone Cowboy

Elvis, alcohol and suicide bombers - *interview inside*

Also in this issue -
The best in Oxford music news, reviews and previews
Including The Odd Couple - when Suitable Case For Treatment met Jon Snow and ended up on the Richard and Judy Show

plus
Seven pages of local gigs

NIGHTSHIFT: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Phone: 01865 372255

NEWS

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PUNT LINE-UP ANNOUNCED

The line-up for this year's Oxford Punt has been finalised. The Punt, now in its ninth year, is a one-night showcase of the best new unsigned bands in Oxfordshire and takes place on Wednesday 10th May. The event features nineteen acts across six venues in Oxford city centre, starting at 6.15pm at Borders bookshop in Magdalen Street before heading off to Jongleurs, The Purple Turtle, The City Tavern and The Wheatsheaf before finishing up just after midnight at The Cellar. Previous Punts have given early exposure to future local stars such as The Young Knives, Winnebago Deal, Suitable Case For Treatment and Goldrush, while last year's Punt featured a sold-out show from Fell City Girl.

This years line up is:

BORDERS: Ally Craig and Rebecca Mosley
JONGLEURS: Witches, Xmas Lights and The Keyboard Choir.
THE PURPLE TURTLE: Mark Crozer, Dusty Sound System and Where I'm Calling From.
THE CITY TAVERN: Shirley, Sow and The Joff Winks Band.
THE WHEATSHEAF: Harlette, And No Star, Asher Dust and Degüello.
THE CELLAR: Zuby, 100 Bullets Back, Jaberwok and Nailbomb Cults.

Everything from folk to gabba to hip hop to hardcore to synth-pop and post-rock is featured across what is one of the strongest Punt line-ups ever, showing the quality of new music coming out of Oxford year after year; the Punt is the perfect way for fans of local music to see as many new bands on evening as possible and maybe catch the next Oxford stars before they hit the big time.

Next month we'll be running a full Punt guide with everything you need to know about the best showcase of new musical talent in the county. In the meantime there are a limited number of all-venue Punt Passes available, priced at £7, on sale now from Polar Bear Records on Cowley Road or online from oxfordmusic.net (both subject to booking fee) or direct from Nightshift (with no booking fee) at PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU.

Full Punt set times are included on page 12.


Harlette

THE ODD COUPLE

Suitable Case For Treatment found themselves at the centre of national media attention recently after they teamed up with Channel 4 newsreader Jon Snow to record a new single. 'Cow' features a monologue written by singer Liam Ings-Reeves and Snow became involved when Liam was getting his autograph at last year's Haye-on-Wye literary festival.

As well as articles in national newspapers, Suitable Case were invited to perform on the Richard & Judy Show, with Jon; surely one of the most bizarre culture clashes ever involving an Oxford band. The show was aired on Wednesday 22nd March. 'Cow' is out now as an iTune download, with a vinyl release planned for May. Talking to Nightshift, Liam explained the circumstances of the song:

"I had written the monologue previous to any thoughts of getting Jon Snow involved. One day when watching the news I just thought that it would sound great and be a quirky contrast to have him read one of my monologues; I had no idea as to how he would react to the proposition but it couldn't hurt to ask. So I went to the Haye-on-Wye literature festival where I knew he was doing a public talk with Robert McNamara and asked him; the rest is history.

"The whole Richard and Judy thing was a massive surprise, we just received an email one day asking if we could go on the show and talk about our new single. We knew that having a recording with Jon Snow wouldn't go unnoticed but nonetheless we were slightly naïve as to quite how much press it would receive. Richard and Judy has a certain kitsch charm to it, the whole experience is going to be a little surreal but good fun.

"There's a video for the song too, it's like a cross between a Buster Keaton movie and a Tim Burton cartoon. You can see it at the Channel 4 web site. I don't think that 'Cow' is too much of a departure from our previous songs; we have always had an approach which involves the juxtaposition of contrasting and conflicting styles of music to create something original and surprising and I think that is what we have done here.

"We have a new album coming out soon with lots of new songs and a few you'll recognise from the live set: everything from gospel death metal to bar mitzvah blues and reporters reading stories about cows going to pubs."

Meanwhile, Suitable Case have begun a once-a-month residency at the Boston Arms in London's Tufnell Park. Check out suitablecasefortreatment.myanalog.net for more details.


Suitable Case For Treatment discuss cows and the Middle East peace process with Mr Snow over a cosy cup of tea. Jon: "So Pete, is Bastard really your surname?"

TRUCK FESTIVAL has now sold out. The last few tickets for the Oxfordshire festival went at the beginning of March, the fastest sell-out Truck has ever enjoyed, confirming its place amongst the best live music festivals in the country. Contractual obligations mean the line-up for this year's event, which takes place at Hill Farm in Steventon over the weekend of the 22nd and 23rd July, cannot be announced until the middle of April. Check out www.truckfestival.org for announcements and updates.

FELL CITY GIRL have announced details of a new release and a local gig in the next couple of months. The local rising stars have just finished recording songs for a new four-track EP to be released on new label Lavolta on Monday 8th May. The band then headline upstairs at the Zodiac on Thursday 11th May - the same venue they sold out at the end of 2005. Tickets for the gig are on sale now, priced £7, from the Zodiac box office on 01865 420042.

MASSIVE RECORDS has closed down. The specialist dance music shop in Gloucester Green shut its doors for the last time at the beginning of March and becomes just the latest local independent music shop to close down this year. Second-hand record emporium Avid, also in Gloucester Green, is counting down the days until it finally shuts, while Wallingford's excellent Music Box has also closed down. High rent increases and increased competition from supermarkets and online traders is blamed for each of the closures. The days of happily browsing for hidden treasures now seem sadly long gone.

DELICIOUS MUSIC, which runs several live music nights each week at different venues in Oxford, is looking for more acts to play. As well as weekly open mic and jam sessions at Far From The Madding Crowd and The City Tavern, Delicious also host local band showcases at the City Tavern and St Aldates Tavern and jazz, blues and folk nights at Far From The Madding Crowd and Bar Milano beneath Pizza Express. Bands, duos or solo artists wanting to play should contact Mars on 07876 184 623.

MOTÖRHEAD are set to return to the New Theatre later in the year after selling out the venue last November. Lemmy and crew play on Sunday 12th November. Tickets, priced £22, are on sale now from Ticketmaster on 0870 606 3500 or online at getlive.co.uk/oxford. Other gigs coming up at the New Theatre include Chris Rea (Friday 14th April), Bonnie Raitt (Saturday 15th April) and Jose Gonzalez (Monday 1st May). Meanwhile, the controversial 'Jerry Springer – The Opera' comes to the New Theatre for eight shows from Monday 3rd to Saturday 8th April if you fancy something different. Tickets for all events are available from Ticketmaster.

ARTS FEST is a two-day music, art and drama mini-festival taking place across various venues in Oxford on Friday 26th and Saturday 27th May. The event is part of Oxford City Council's Artsweek. Bands wanting to play can send demos to Amy McKay c/o 96 Mill Street, Kidlington, OX5 2EF, or call Amy on 07985 186 506.

FORMER-INSPIRAL CARPETS frontman Tom Hingley plays a very special hometown show at Abingdon's Unicorn Theatre on Wednesday 5th April. Tom grew up in Abingdon and recently returned to his old school to play a gig for pupils there. The singer has recently released a retrospective compilation of songs by his pre-Inspirals band, Too Much Texas *(pictured)*. Tickets for the Unicorn gig are on sale now from 07917 890 558

EYNSHAM gets a new live music venue this month when the Moonshine Bowling Alley hosts a gig one Saturday a month starting on the 22nd April. Local rock covers stalwarts The Dirty Earth Band will be the headline band with support from Eynsham's own The Larkz. Tickets, priced £5, are on sale from the Moonshine box office or on the door. Meanwhile, The Dirty Earth band will headline the New Theatre on Sunday 3rd September in aid of local children's charities. The ambitious gig at Oxford's biggest live music venue also features The Corsairs and Warm Baby. Tickets, priced £10 and £8, are on sale now from Ticketmaster on 0870 607 7484 or from the box office in George Street.

MELODIC OXFORD is a new live music club running every month at The Port Mahon, showcasing the best new melodic bands in town. The opening night features sets by Stormaway, Where I'm Calling From, Foxes! and Shaker Heights on Sunday 9th April. Any bands wanting to play should contact Adam on 01865 742 670.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into The Download every Saturday night between 6 and 7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The local music show, now into its second year, continues to showcase the best new music in Oxford, featuring interviews with local acts and touring bands, local releases, a gig and club guide and a demo vote. You can listen to each show all week online at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

A Quiet Word with

Nine Stone Cowboy

IT'S THE OLD STORY – BOY meets girl, girl meets boy; their eyes meet across a crowded tube train carriage, there is a tinkle of romantic piano and gently sweeping strings and hearts and minds are set in emotional turmoil. But this is no everyday case of love at first sight. The boy is a suicide bomber, the girl just one of his unsuspecting victims. Can love save the day? In his head he's telling her it won't hurt, won't leave a scar. "Don't get closer to me," he implores; he's worried about what his parents would think if they knew. The music carousels as confused thoughts spin through the boy's mind. The last thing you hear is an explosion.

Welcome to Mark Cope's world of love and romance.

MARK COPE IS NINE STONE Cowboy and 'Closer' is the stand-out track on his debut EP, 'Son Of Elvis', released this month. The EP is four slices of bitter-sweet romantic pop that celebrates life's losers and socially-disaffected freaks. The EP's title track was inspired by a Rastafarian busker Mark encountered in Washington who knew every Elvis song by heart and would sing any of them for a dollar. As a song it's a wonderfully old-fashioned show tune, the sort of rousing honky tonk terrace chant you can imagine being bellowed out by pissed-up students at closing time, but at the same time it's a very intimate portrait of one of life's heroic failures.

Heroic failures and alcohol are Mark's abiding obsessions. Nine Stone Cowboy gigs invariably start with the impassively-intoned refrain, "My name is Mark, and I'm an alcoholic", a pastiche of a typical AA counselling group, but perhaps an autobiographical confession too.

IF THE NAME MARK COPE sounds familiar it's because he was, alongside brother Nick, guitarist with The Candyskins, perhaps Oxford's most celebrated cult heroes during the 1990s; the band who first championed local newcomers On A Friday, offering

Mark Cope guns for pop glory

them support slots and namechecking them at every opportunity long before they became Radiohead. A band too who so very nearly emulated Radiohead's success, reaching the Top 40 on a number of occasions and coming within a whisker of cracking the States.

When The Candyskins eventually split, worn out by the stress of striving for success that was so near and yet so tantalisingly out of reach, Mark relocated to Boston, Massachusetts, where he learned how to use a recording studio, and he started to write songs again, informed by the same melodic drive and spirit of the underdog lyricism as The Candyskins themselves.

After putting together a demo album of new songs, Mark was persuaded to play live again and went about getting a new band together. The first line-up of Nine Stone Cowboy included, in Mark's own words, "a nine-fingered bass player with a liking for crack and a very unstable drummer". After a disastrous gig at last year's Truck Festival, Mark recruited the cream of Oxford's pop old guard, friends from his Candyskins days. So in came erstwhile Ride drummer Loz Colbert, Medal guitarist Mark Willis and Jason Moulster and Jimmy Crosskey, both formerly of Unbelievable Truth. The band's line-up is completed by keyboard player Andrew Ward. In Oxford terms they're a bona fide supergroup, although Mark remains the chief songwriter.

AFTER FIFTEEN YEARS OF playing with The Candyskins, getting so close to a commercial breakthrough and suffering the devastating effects of music industry intrigue and dishonesty, Mark could have been forgiven for leaving music behind completely but with Nine Stone Cowboy he's back as strong as he ever was.

"We were so close, so close after fifteen years. We needed one radio station in Chicago to add our single `Feed It' and we would go top 40 in America. I remember diving in a swimming pool in L.A. and smiling underwater, so happy we'd finally cracked it. Two weeks later the band had split up and I was washing up in a restaurant at night and working in a medical centre for the homeless during the day. I couldn't give myself time to think. Not a very nice time."

Nine Stone Cowboy started off as a bedroom project before you started recruiting a new band; was it always intended to become a fully-formed project or were you content in the beginning to be doing it for fun on your own?

"In the beginning I just wanted to record and write songs on my own that my friends would like, but everyone that heard it kept telling me to get a band together and play live, which scared the absolute shit out of me. It's completely different from being in The Candyskins; there's a lot more pressure now being the frontman. It's a bit more naked."

A LOT OF MARK'S SONGS seem to be about drink, drinkers, heroic failures and lost causes. Is that something he particularly relates to? A celebration of the darker side of life, notably on the track, 'Welcome To The Horror Of Happiness?

"I love sad songs with characters and stories. I love lyrics and writing them; it's definitely my favourite bit. Despair and sadness with a happy tune and humour: you can't beat it."

Mark confesses many of his songs are written and recorded whilst drunk. In many ways his new work recalls that of another great rock drunkard, Robert Pollard, co-songwriter with the brilliant but often overlooked Guided By Voices.

"Writing under the influence works for me. You try things you would not dream of doing sober. I'm quite good at it; I can record, play guitar, sing and operate machinery but I can't stand up. I have two heads when I'm recording: the drunk composer and the sober producer. I've had some great fights with myself. I'm the happiest man on the planet when I have a new idea for a song and a bottle of red wine or two, it could go anywhere.

"I love all the old country drunks: George Jones, Hank Williams etc. I love the story of George Jones who went missing before a concert. They searched every motel in a 50 mile radius; they finally found him five days later, close to death in a room surrounded by empty bottles and a guitar."

What would be the best place and state of mind for someone to listen to Nine Stone Cowboy in?

"With a drink in your hand , a smile on your face as the ship goes down."

YOU HAD SOME PROBLEMS with the original line-up of the band.

"I still have nightmares about Truck Festival. I originally wanted to get five dwarves to be in the band; I couldn't fail with that. If it was a choice at Glastonbury between Coldplay and a band with five dwarves I know where I'd be."

Since then you've recruited near enough the cream of Oxford's old school musicians.

"After smashed drum kits and tantrums I decided to get all my favourite musicians in Oxford together. It's such a pleasure and so exciting now to sing with them behind me. In rehearsals when they do five-minute endings – as all bands do – I just stand there thinking, `Fuck they're good'. Jimmy has been brilliant; he's my Ronnie Hazelhurst - he knows the songs better than I do."

WITH THE BAND LINE-UP sorted, Nine Stone Cowboy could finally do recorded justice to Mark's new songs. The result of which is the 'Son Of Elvis' CD, released on his own Dead Cowboy Music Company label.

"I wanted to record the songs I'd done in a proper studio with the band, so we went to Shonk – John Halliday, the old Candyskins' drummer's studio – to record. All the songs are a bit different and I had a bit of a headache picking the A-side. `Welcome To The Horror Of Happiness' started life at a party where I just kept stamping on the floor singing this tune in my head so I wouldn't forget it. `King of England' started out as a sample from Henry VIII with Ray Winston. It took me two days to get the sample right; I had to do it myself in the end. It's all about drug dealers.

"Andy Ward, our keyboard player, and me started the label, so this is our first release. My brother Nick has a song so good it hurts which we will be putting out soon."

Do you see the songwriting responsibilities becoming more shared or is this very much your baby?

"They do call me Herr Cope, so there's your answer."

AS PART OF ONE OF Oxford's best-loved bands ever, Mark has a grounding in the local scene that few others could equal. What does he think about the Oxford music scene now, and how has it changed since he was first starting out with The Candyskins?

"I do like the Oxford music scene; it's much more diverse and real than other places.

"I remember being in a pub in Camden listening to this band on the next table discussing what they should all wear, after about an hour of this one of them said, `when are we going to write a song?' I think they became Menswear.

"When we first started in the Candyskins people would ask us where we were from. When we said Oxford, they laughed. Things have changed so much but the respect and friendship amongst the bands is still there. Oxford's too small to be an arsehole, you soon get found out."

Many local music fans – and beyond Oxford too – will fondly remember The Candyskins. Are you happy to pick up some of those old fans for Nine Stone Cowboy or would you rather cut all ties with the past?

"Our fans were brilliant and a few have been turning up to gigs so it's been great to see them again, also on MySpace a lot of old faces have been turning up."

Having been through the music biz ringer and seen the best and worst it can offer, what advice would you give to young bands starting out now and hoping to make it big?

"Take the business side more seriously than we did, and never trust fat Americans who say they love your music. Mind you we had more fun than any band I ever met; everyday was an adventure. I'm writing a book at the moment: `How To Make Soundchecks Fun'. It's a winner!"

WHILE MARK'S contribution to The Candyskins might have been under-played, with Nine Stone Cowboy he's really come into his own.

Here is a man with genuine pop talent, as well as a lyricist of no little humour and pathos. He's proof that there are always second chances in life, even in the unforgivingly transient world of pop, and that you just can't keep a good man down. Ask Mark what his proudest achievement in life is though, and it's perhaps unsurprising that heavy drinking was involved:

"Hearing one of my songs on a Boston radio station three months after not even knowing how to turn a computer on was great. But at the end of the day it has to be dancing right next to Prince in a small London club and repeatedly bumping into the little fella, giving him the thumbs up. Karl our bass player bought him a pint of bitter; he didn't touch it. Shame. Ah, the good old days…"

'Son Of Elvis' is out now. Nine Stone Cowboy play at The Zodiac on Friday 21st April. Go to www.ninestonecowboy.com for more information and gig news.

RELEASED

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NATUREBOY

'Turning'

(Natureboy)

There is music made for music fans and there is music made for other musicians. The latter can, on occasion, be as enjoyable as the former, but there's always a risk when musicians get so involved in the minutiae of making music that its original purpose can be lost in production techniques and convoluted guitar solos.

There's a bit of that with Natureboy, the work of multi-instrumentalist Dave Noble and his thirteen-strong array of guest musicians (although that's half the number that played on Natureboy's debut album). The basic premise is easy jazz, with the lead roles predominantly taken by vibraphone (played by local jazz favourite Roger Beaujolais) and Fender Rhodes electric piano. To say the overriding mood was chilled out barely hints at the almost soporific nature of much of 'Turning'.

'I Can See The Love' is night bird jazz-pop, snuggling up to Donald Fagen in a basement wine bar, while 'Diamonds' smoothes its way into dreamy folk somnambulance before succumbing to jazz showboating. The album comes to life with 'Marion"s easy bossanova, and if you stuck Laetitia Sadier's sweet Gallic vocals on top you'd have one of Stereolab's more whimsical moments.

Best of the lot, however, is 'Life', a piano-led Latin-tinged soul-jazz number featuring singer Alice Russell in full Sade effect. Unfortunately the party never moves on from here, Natureboy reverting to chilled jazz rambles, elongated noodling and muso self-congratulation, even on Lennon and McCartney's 'Sun King'.

The musicianship here is faultless, that's not in contention, but whether there's much to take away from 'Turning' other than an admiration for the band's technical abilities depends on whether you love music or simply musak.

Sue Foreman

SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT & JON SNOW

'Cow'

(iTunes)

If rock music's great triumph is to make the mundane seem profound, romantic or extraordinary, then 'Cow' must scoop the prize for the weirdest two minutes of blinding normality ever recorded.

For a start, how about this for an odd couple – Oxford's finest purveyors of perverse noise fronted, for one song only, by Channel 4's straight-laced newsreader. It wasn't just a stroke of cheeky good luck that brought the two together, it was a moment of inspired musical genius. On the surface, 'Cow' might sound mellower than we've come to expect of Suitable Case For Treatment, whose grinding, oblique prog-hardcore racket can be as imposing as it is confounding, but tune into the spaced-out Zappa-fied lollop of jazz rhythms and spooky guitar ambience and you'll find it as unsettling as anything they've mustered thus far. But add Snow's benevolently austere narration and you're edging towards kids' nightmare terrain.

The story of 'Cow' is that of someone wandering round a couple of pubs looking for his mates, who haven't shown up. That's it. How fucking dull is that? But here, with the subject named and dehumanised as a lost bovine wanderer and the text chopped out and read like CS Lewis's 'Jabberwocky' being read aloud by Stanley Unwin on Chris Morris' Blue Jam, it's bizarre, twisted and daft.

That the whole thing is going to be performed live on the Richard & Judy show is either a triumph of good over the powers of darkness, or a recipe for crashing ratings and soiled pensioner underwear. If they can get away with this Suitable Case should be commissioned to write the UK's Eurovision entry.

Sue Foreman

CHRISTIAN KIEFER & SHARRON KRAUS

'The Black Dove'

(Tompkins Square)

Local singer Sharron Kraus is probably one of the very few Oxford musicians with an international reputation. Her last album, 'Songs Of Love And Regret', was acclaimed by both press and fellow musicians over in the States, where she spends much of her time, and for this new album she's teamed up with north Californian cult folk hero Christian Kiefer.

As with 'Songs Of Love And Regret', Sharron harks back to the very roots of English dark folk, the music that spawned Appalachian bluegrass and the late-60s acid folk revival. Possessed of a voice of often startling clarity she infuses sparse, funereal ballads and laments with emotional depth and a haunting ambience. 'The Black Dove' is 15 songs from lonely mountains and dark forests (and Kiefer's studio is situated in the middle of a forest, just for added authenticity).

On the one side the music is pared down to its barest trad-folk bones – flute, banjo and voice - while on the other, as on 'Cold Blue Room', with its dense hallucinogenic clamour and marching rhythms, or 'The Rocks', with its eerie synthetics, it embraces a relatively more modern world of music. Each way you turn, though, the mood remains sombre, the landscape bleakly enticing.

Often compared to influential 50s and 60s folkstress Shirley Collins, Sharron borrows equally from Waterson: Carthy, Joni Mitchell and Nick Cave, writing musical stories out of time but as ageless as the mountains and forests they inhabit.

Victoria Waterfield

GIG GUIDE

APRIL

SATURDAY 1st

MOGWAI: Brookes University Union – Post-rock pioneers make with the quiet bits and loud bits – *see main preview*

NURU KANE & BAND: The Zodiac *(upstairs)* – Senegalese singer and musician playing Moroccan gnawa music – a rhythmic, bluesy take on traditional north African folk music – and promoting his first internationally released album, 'Sigil'.

ADEQUATE SEVEN + NAGATHA KRUSTI + CANNON FODDER: The Zodiac *(downstairs)* – Cardiff-based funky heavy rockers who've supported the likes of Hundred Reasons and Capdown on tour. All set to release a new album this spring, the follow-up to acclaimed debut, 'Songs Of Innocence And Of Experience', on Household Name Records. Local funk-core rockers Nagatha Krusti support.

AMBERSTATE + PRIMITIVE TIME MACHINE: The City Tavern – Ambient, minimalist indie-pop from Amberstate, plus funky rock in a Chili Peppers-influenced style from PTM, formerly known as Arktic Wolf.

WEDNESDAY'S CHILD + SCKIN + ELIOT: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Local bands night, including delicate trippy pop from Maria Ilett's Eliot.

MOTORMARK + LIFE WITH BEARS + SOCKS AND SHOES: The Port Mahon – Scary digital hardcore-styled synth-pop from Motormark, plus geeky robo-pop from local duo Life With Bears.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night with Freestylers.

SKYNY NYRDS: The Black Bull, Kidlington – Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute.

Saturday 1st

MOGWAI: Brookes University Union

Post-rock might nowadays be the last refuge of the terminally tuneless and a cul-de-sac of snobbish intellectualism over musical style and visceral thrills, but it wasn't ever thus. In the wake of bands like Talk Talk, My Bloody Valentine and Slint, Glasgow's Mogwai helped define the post-rock aesthetic, mixing up influences from ambient, hardcore, classical, art-rock and new wave into a dense, elaborate whole. While they've never surpassed their 1997 classic, 'Mogwai Young Team', guitarists Stuart Braithwaite and John Cummings and co. have continued to explore the intricate textures and dynamics of guitar music. Really, they're a band that has to be seen live to be properly appreciated, where their quiet/loud dynamics really make their presence felt; pensive, trippy, ethereal, tense, punishing and somnambulant by turns. Now into their second decade together, where Mogwai go from here is a major decision, and if new album 'Mr Beast' is anything to go by, it's towards a more traditional rock style. So there you go: rock music – it's the new post-rock.

SUNDAY 2nd

THE BLOCKHEADS: The Bullingdon – Chaz Jankel and crew find life after Ian Dury – *see main preview*

JOHNNY'S SEXUAL KITCHEN: The Port Mahon – Reformed local blues, soul and jazz rockers.

ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley *(3-7pm)*

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

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House – Weekly all-comers live music night.

MONDAY 3rd

HOPE OF THE STATES: The Zodiac – Chichester's finest return to action after taking most of the last year off to write and record their second album. Their absence hasn't harmed their popularity too much since tonight's gig is already sold out. The post-rock symphonics of Godspeed and Radiohead get an impassioned, almost punky makeover, with a keen political edge.

THE ADAM BOMB BAND: The Bullingdon – LA blues-rocker returns to the Bully's blues club after touring with Hanoi Rocks, making with the big hair and the even bigger stadium rock guitar anthems.

DOT ALLISON: Po Na Na – Trip-pop and electro from the erstwhile One Dove songstress, most famous for her haunting vocal addition to Death In Vegas' 'Dirge', as well as her more recent collaborations with Pete Doherty.

FEAST OF FIDDLES ACOUSTIC: Nettlebed Folk Club – Return of the popular six-fiddlers extravaganza, this year including Steeleye Span's Peter Knight.

TUESDAY 4th

SALSA CELTICA: The Zodiac – Eleven-strong Edinburgh collective, infusing traditional Scottish dance music with Afro-Cuban rhythms and melody.

JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with guest bands, plus funk and soul DJs til late.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAM NIGHT: The City Tavern

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With blues duo Chico and the Man.

WEDNESDAY 5th

SNAKE EYES: The Port Mahon – Promising young local metallers playing old school melodic rock in the style of Iron Maiden and Thin Lizzy.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd

TOM HINGLEY: The Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon – The former Inspiral Carpets frontman and Abingdon-born chap takes a trip back in time to his old hometown for a gig featuring new songs and old Carpets classics.

FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

HIT'N'RUN: The Cellar – Drum&bass and hip hop club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road

THURSDAY 6th

KILLING JOKE: The Zodiac – Mighty, monolithic gothic punk overlords come to eat your soul – *see main preview*

MC LARS + THE EVENINGS + BIG SPEAKERS: The Zodiac – New York-based rapper who's almost become an honorary

Sunday 2nd

THE BLOCKHEADS: The Bullingdon

Ian Dury was both the clown prince of punk and its poet laureate. The man combined a wicked wit with often moving insight into an, until then, rarely visited side of life in music, as well as some sparkling rhymes and deft turns of phrase. But it was his backing band, The Blockheads, who made it all come to life, particularly on stage. The original band – Chaz Jankel, Norman Watts-Roy, Charlie Charles, John Turnbull and Mick Gallagher – were brought together to help Dury promote debut album, 'New Boots and Panties', on the first Stiff Records package tour in 1977, but quickly became one of the most recognisable and individualistic backing bands in British pop, managing to bring much of punk's anything-goes attitude and playfulness to a sound that combined blues, rock, jazz and funk. It's worth remembering too that it was Jankel who co-wrote their biggest hits with Dury – notably 'Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick' and 'Sex and Drugs and Rock and Roll'. The Blockheads reconvened for Dury's last album, 'Mr Lovepants', and played with him at his farewell gig before he succumbed to cancer, but have managed to carry on together since, carving their own path. Their last album together, 'Where's The Party', reaped critical praise, while their live sets – with Jankel on lead vocals, often joined by celebrity guests – contain much of the magic, and all of the hits, of old.

Oxonian after his frequent appearances in town and his long associations with Truck Records. Still, for the uninitiated, he's a breath of fresh air in hip hop, utilising lo-fi electronics, bargain basement beats and samples – including Supergrass – to back up literary raps about iPods, Sid Vicious and coked-up record company execs. New single, 'Download This Song', samples Iggy's 'The Passenger'. Able local support comes from electro-rockers The Evenings and extensive rap crew Big Speakers.

WHO'S NEXT: The Bullingdon – Tribute to The Who.

ALEXANDER BALANESCU & ADA MILEA: Wesley Memorial Church – Violinist and composer Balanescu presents the world premier of his theatrical new song cycle, based on a surrealist take on Robinson Crusoe by Romanian poet Gellu Naum, with radical Romanian vocalist Ada Milea.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With electric jazz guitarist Pawel Kuterba.

CHRIS BEARD + ALLY CRAIG + DAN FLY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Harry Angel frontman Chris goes solo and acoustic in a downbeat fashion, plus darkly humorous folky pop from Ally Craig.

PROJECTIONS + ECONOLINE + FLIPPRON: The Cellar – Assorted shades of the indie rock beast.

JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks – Weekly vinyl session with Aidan Larkin and guests playing the best in ska, reggae, soul, funk and Afrobeat.

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac – Weekly rock club night playing classic and new metal, hardcore and alternative sounds.

FRIDAY 7th

HUNDRED REASONS: The Zodiac – Surrey's emo bruisers plug that difficult third album – *see main preview.*

ZALO: The Zodiac – Eclectic Finnish duo, mixing up acoustic and electro-pop sounds.

MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM + THE IDEA + DREW ATKINS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Debut gig from former-Bridge chap Colin MacKinnon's new band, mixing up rootsy folk-pop with a synthetic pop sheen. 60s-inspired singer-songwriter Drew Atkins supports.

THE SWAN BAND: Oxford Town Hall – Oxford Folk Festival opening night ceilidh with the popular local veterans.

OXFORD WAITS: The Holywell Music Room – Traditional folk sounds.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE RELATIONSHIPS + REDOX + LES CLOCHARDS: The Elm Tree – A change of scene this month for Klub Kakofanney as they switch to the Elm Tree for one month only. Tonight's reliably eclectic bill features ace psychedelic pop romantics The Relationships, plus ska-funk-folk-prog loons Redox and Gallic jazz-pop types Les Clochards.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB OPEN NIGHT: The Port Mahon

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance club night.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho

FRIDAY STREET: St Aldates Tavern – Rock and pop covers.

TOULOUSE + THE PLUGS + DAVID DOLL: The Corner Room – Countrified indie rock from Toulouse heading a local bands bill.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Classic funk, soul and disco.

SATURDAY 8th

BELLOWHEAD + WATERSON:CARTHY + ON ENGLISH GROUND + MORE : Oxford Town Hall – First full day of the third Oxford Folk Festival – *see main preview*

THE JACKSON ANALOGUE: The Zodiac – Blues and soul-driven rock from the Isle of Wight-based band, last seen round these parts supporting Morning Runner. Hammond-led rock that harks back to The Small Faces and Booker T & The MGs, and more contemporaneously, Kings Of Leon.

MORRISON STEAM FAYRE + LUKE SMITH & THE FEELINGS + EMMY THE GREAT: The Cellar – Oxford Folk Festival fringe gig with 60s psychedelic folk, blues and r'n'b gang MSF.

THE RELATIONSHIPS + FIONA SMITH: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Sweet 60s-styled psychedelic pop from the local legends.

THEE MORE SHALLOWS, POLARIS, THE WORKHOUSE & RAL PARTHA VOGELBACHER: The Port Mahon – More difficult rock shapes courtesy of the very excellent Vacuous Pop crew. Downbeat alt.country from Thee More Shallows in the vein of Grandaddy and Sparklehorse, plus instrumental post-rocking

Thursday 6th

KILLING JOKE: The Zodiac

That Killing Joke play their first Oxford gig for 20 years in the same month that Gary Numan returns to town is some kind of poetic coincidence. Both acts were reviled by the music press when they arrived on the scene in the wake of punk but both have gone on to be far more influential than most of their contemporaries. That last Joke gig, at Oxford Polytechnic (now Brookes), was not only one of the most incredible displays of musical firepower witnessed in town but also one of the most violent concerts we've ever seen: a band like Killing Joke attracted extreme fans and the gig featured onstage battles between band, fans and security that saw a stream of injured bodies stretchered from the hall. Time and age may have mellowed the fanbase, but not the band. Their last, eponymous, album, featuring the original line-up of the band, plus Dave Grohl on drums, was as raw and brutal as their awesome 1980 debut, while new CD 'Hosannas From The Basements Of Hell' is similarly uncompromising. Killing Joke's sound, best heard on that debut, as well as 1985's 'Night Time' and the last two opuses, is typified by Jaz Coleman's monstrous vocal rasp and apocalyptic lyrics added to the band's monolithic industrial synth-punk that's both devastatingly bleak and surprisingly melodic. Live they remain one of the few bands who can genuinely terrify a crowd, Coleman a wild, shamanic performer, all of them the sort of blokes you really wouldn't want to mess with. Genuine rock legends: see them live then go home and destroy all your so-called hardcore albums.

Friday 7th – Sunday 9th

OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL

Now in its third year, the annual Oxford Folk Festival continues to expand and attract ever more exotic acts from around the world. Boosted by an Arts Council Grant, this year's event features a plethora of free outdoor entertainment, mainly around the new Oxford Castle complex, featuring marching bands, street musicians and wandering minstrels, while the big name acts perform at the Town Hall and Holywell Music Room. Friday night kicks off with a ceilidh, hosted by the veteran Swan Band, while the Holywell hosts Oxford Waits. Saturday's headliners are Spiers and Boden's Bellowhead, who played their debut gig at 2004's inaugural Oxford Folk Festival and have since become the most popular live band on the UK folk circuit. Joining them are the royal family of English folk music, Waterson:Carthy and new young folk troupe On English Ground. Sunday's bill is topped by Flook *(pictured)*, imaginatively updating traditional English folk music and recently voted best band at the BBC Radio Folk Awards. Irish folk icon Andy Irvine – a former member of Planxty and Patrick Street – mixes up Irish and Balkan music, while Zimbabwe's Black Umfolosi promise to be this year's show-stoppers with their action-packed mix of a capella music and dance. But beyond the headliners there's plenty more to try and catch, including Steve Ashley, Chris Wood, Rachel Unthank and the Winterset, Verity Sharp, Andy Cronshaw, Magpie Lane and Morrison Steam Fayre. The Cellar in Cornmarket Street and Kidlington's Exeter Hall will also be hosting live music and dances. Tickets are on sale from the Oxford Playhouse or the Town Hall while full line-up and details are online at www.oxfordfolkfestival.com.

from Polaris, a band made up of members of Bilge Pump and Quack Quack. Oxford's splendidly ethereal instrumental soundscapists The Workhouse join the fun with introspective balladeer Ral Partha Vogelbacher.
HARD HOUSE CLUB NIGHT: The Bullingdon
SHIRLEY + CLONE RADIO + THE DIVINITY SCHOOL: The City Tavern – Feelgood surf-pop from Shirley, plus local indie rock supports.
REDOX: The Fitzharry, Abingdon

SUNDAY 9th

FLOOK + BLACK UMFOLOSI + ANDY IRVINE + MORE: Oxford Town Hall – Second day of the Oxford Folk Festival – *see main preview*
SHAKER HEIGHTS + FOXES! + WHERE I'M CALLING FROM + STORMAWAY: The Port Mahon – New live music club night, Melodic Oxford, showcases a selection of local songsmiths, tonight featuring Velvet Underground and U2-influenced rockers The Shaker Heights, fey, 60s-styled indie poppers Foxes!, highly-promising new wavers WICF, plus newcomers Stormaway.
ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley *(3-7pm)*
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

MONDAY 10th

STEVE ARVEY: The Bullingdon – Chicago-based electric and acoustic blues guitarist and vocalist who honed his skills playing with the great Bo Diddley.
GREENACRE + THE VANITY SCORE + GOOD MOURNING + THE VANDENBURG TRAGEDY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Expansive bill of local emo bands, with Greenacre drawing on Alexisonfire and Finch for inspiration, while The Vanity Score look towards Funeral for A Friend et al.
JOHN TAMS & BARRY COOPE: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional English folk from the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards-nominated duo.

TUESDAY 11th

GUILLEMOTS + MISTY'S BIG ADVENTURE: The Zodiac – Oddball uber-indie popstrels out of London, picking up approving looks from the all the right media and industry types for their junk and clatter of kiddie's keyboards, Verve-styled guitarscapes and extended jazz-rock jams. Truck Festival regulars and all-round bonkers big band support from MBA - *see main preview*
BATTLES + FOALS: The Zodiac – Esoteric instrumental rocking from US Warp Records signings, Battles. Formed by ex-Helmet drummer John Stanie, Don Caballero guitarist Ian Williams and Lynx guitarist Dave Konopka, they make an effects-heavy noise that moves through prog, jazz, breaks, electronica and full-on rock, while bringing an original edge to post-rock dynamics. Local post-rock newcomers Foals support.
JAZZ CLUB with THE KATYA GORRIE BAND featuring DENNY ILETT Jr: The Bullingdon
BARNABUS: The Port Mahon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAM NIGHT: The City Tavern
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With Latin jazz guitar duo Los Hombres.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

WEDNESDAY 12th

KKNULL Vs Z'EV + THE EVENINGS + HOLIDAY STABBINGS: The Wheatsheaf – Japanese improv master goes head to head with US industrial dance pioneer – *see main preview*
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd
LOCAL BANDS NIGHT: The Bullingdon
FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
OXFORD IMPROVISORS: The Port Mahon
PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar – Live jazz, funk and soul jam.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road

THURSDAY 13th

GOOD BOOKS: The Zodiac – Transgressive's latest signings – *see main preview.*
DISQUES VOGUE: The Zodiac – Easy, cheesy listening, bossanova and cocktail

Friday 7th

HUNDRED REASONS: The Zodiac

And so it's difficult third album time for Surrey's masters of hard slog and grubby hardcore noise, Hundred Reasons. After the band's abrasive debut outing – 2002's 'Ideas Above Our Station' – 'Shatterproof Is Not A Challenge', its 2004 follow-up was, if not a complete disappointment, then a pretty safe retread of the formula that had made the band one of the few UK-bred post-grunge bands to be able to stand their own against the onslaught of American rock. As it is, Hundred Reasons' new CD, 'Kill Your Own' plays safe: big, heavyweight choruses, chunky rock hooks and heartfelt screaming, tempered with the odd mellow ballad. Hundred Reasons have always been a band who have made up in sweaty, macho power and work ethic what they've lacked in the sexy songwriting stakes, and their reputation is grounded in their well-honed live shows. Here is a band who never seem to be off the road. It may be an uncomfortable truth but the band seem to be maturing with age; their anger at the world and its myriad injustices is being kept ablaze by their departure from Columbia, though their arrival at V2 suggests the landing was more comfortable than most bands could hope for. So anyway, once more into the mosh pit, but this time bring your lighters and be ready to hold them aloft.

lounge jazz from the old Disques Vogue crew.
SLEEPS IN OYSTERS: Modern Art Oxford Café – Sweet, nursery-rhyme-simple pop melodies get a glitchy electronic makeover from this Reading-based duo, somewhere between Xahdrez, Pram and Young Marble Giants.
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With Chico and the Man.
JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
DREW ATKINS + NICK BRAKESPEAR: The Port Mahon – Local acoustic singer-songwriters.
TWENTYSIXFEET + WITCHES: The Cellar – Glitchy indie rocking from Twentysixfeet, plus ambient electro folk-pop and trippy rocking from Witches.
FUTURO + THE KICKS: The Corner Room – Glaswegian jerky new wave rockers.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney
SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks
SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 14th

SLIDE with JAMES LAVELLE: The Zodiac – Mo'Wax founder, U.N.K.L.E main man and former Oxford kid-about-town returns to Oxford for a Slide special, playing the best new house sounds.
HARRY ANGEL + TWO MINUTE WARNING + MEET HER SISTER: The Wheatsheaf – Gothic-tinged grunge-pop from local firebrands Harry Angel.
CHRIS REA: The New Theatre – The Middlesborough growler brings more gravel-voiced MOR rock to town, defying the vagaries of musical fashion as he continues to plough a traditional style rooted in American 60s rock. Expect all the hits - `Road To Hell', `Let's Dance' and `On The Beach' - as well as crowd pleasers from his extensive career at the top.
THE SWAMIS + KITT + LOS DIABLOS SUCIOS INGLES: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Local bands showcase.
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
MUNGO: St Aldates Tavern
BLUNTED: The Cellar – Hip hop club night.

SATURDAY 15th

DIVE DIVE + FRANK TURNER + THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS: The Wheatsheaf – First of a two-night residency at the Sheaf from the mighty Dive Dive, whose last local gig was a sold-out show upstairs at the Zodiac. Tonight the high-wired pop-punk puppies team up with ex-Million Dead fontman Frank Turner and rising local emo rockers TTNG to play a showcase for Spill Magazine. Virtually sold out already, hence the second night added. And you can win tickets in our competition on page 15.
BONNIE RAITT: The New Theatre – The first lady of blues-rock and r'n'b continues to defy the years, possessed of a powerful voice, but also one of the few female guitar virtuosos in the world. From successful folk-rock siren, to drug casualty to international rock star and multi-Grammy winning songwriter, after her come-back album, 'Nick Of Time', produced by Don Was. One of the most uncompromising musicians around, even after 25 years in the business.
THE TURBULENCE + BHASKAR + JOE SATRIANI TRIBUTE: The City Tavern – Local mixed bag bands night from Delicious Music.
FUTURE FUNK FORMATION: The Bullingdon – Funk club night.
FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar

SUNDAY 16th

DIVE DIVE + FRANK TURNER + SUCIOPERRO: The Wheatsheaf – Second night of high-octane punk-pop thrills from the local heroes.
BEARD MUSEUM with FATALLY YOURS + SIMON DAVIES + HORSEFIGHTER + MATT BUSH: The Purple Turtle – Smithsy indie pop from Fatally Yours at tonight's Beard Museum, plus local singer-songwriter Simon Davies and indie rockers Horsefighter.
ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley *(3-7pm)*
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House
LOCAL BANDS SHOWCASE: The Bullingdon
ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

MONDAY 17th

THE FAMILY STYLE BAND: The Bullingdon – Proper family band out of Milan and now recognised as Italy's premier blues band, taking in a little bit of soul, swing and whisky-soaked balladeering along the way.

TUESDAY 18th

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAM NIGHT: The City Tavern
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With electric jazz guitarist Pawel Kuterba.

WEDNESDAY 19th

DANKO JONES: The Zodiac – Hot, sweaty punked-up blues from Canada's one-man gigging machine, forever on the road, preaching a gospel of Rolling

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Wednesday 10th May

Borders
6.15pm Ally Craig
7pm Rebecca Mosley

The Purple Turtle
8pm Mark Crozer
8.45pm Dusty Sound System
9.30pm Where I'm Calling From

The Wheatsheaf
8.15pm Harlette
9pm And No Star
9.45pm Asher Dust
10.30pm Deguello

Jongleurs
7.30pm Witches
8.15pm Xmas Lights
9pm Keyboard Choir

The City Tavern
8.30pm Shirley
9.30pm Sow
10.30pm The Joff Winks Band

The Cellar
9pm Zuby
10pm 100 Bullets Back
11pm Jaberwok
12 midnight Nailbomb Cults

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Stones, Jon Spencer and The Birthday Party.
DOPAMINE + DAYS IN DECEMBER + FIRSTBORN + THE END GAME + RICHARD BELL: The Bullingdon – Melodic, big-riffed Welsh rockers out on tour after supports to Funeral For A Friend and Underoath, plus an extensive supporting cast of local student acts.
REDOX + KTB + EMERALD SKY + THE MARK BOSLEY BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Ska and funk hoe-down fun from Redox, plus gentle English and Appalachian-influenced folk from Katy Bennett and oddball gothic pop from Mark Bosley.
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd
NINE TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS: The Cricketers Arms – Classic authentic 60-style ska and r'n'b from Sir Bald Diddley and chums.
FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

Tuesday 11th

GUILLEMOTS: The Zodiac

Up until very recently the only thing major record companies were interested was signing anything safe and uncluttered by individuality or eccentricity. Now, as more and more bands side-step the record label thing altogether via MySpace, the A&R scouts are scrambling to pick up rather more interesting stuff. And so it is that London's Guillemots are being stalked by men in puffa jackets even as you read this. On the back of a couple of sweetly naïve, off-kilter EPs, the band are looking likely to be one of the more unexpected breakthrough acts of 2006. They've already garnered some pleasingly polarised reviews, describing them variously as the best new pop band around and a complete car crash of a band. That their live shows can involve anything from battered biscuit tins and broken kiddies keyboards to extended improvised jazz jams and the whole band howling like wolves may explain the differences of opinion, but there's definitely a sweet, suave charm about their music, which they claim is inspired by both birdsong and Björk but may sound a little bit more like The Divine Comedy mixed up a bit with the poppier side of The Cure at times. Sweeping, orchestral synth-pop and flamboyant Toytown lounge jazz – come on, it's better than another manufactured emo band, surely?

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road

THURSDAY 20th

TANGENTS with TANGO SIEMPRE, GILAD ATZMON & STEVE ARGUELLES: Wesley Memorial Church – Radical tango re-workings from a host of European jazz and electronic artists, including acclaimed tango ensemble Tango Siempre, including specially-commissioned new works by Goldfrapp's Will Gregory.
ACOUSTIC NIGHT with MORGAN FINLEY + REBECCA MOSLEY: The Bullingdon – Canadian singer-songwriter Morgan makes his Oxford debut, plus local downbeat folk-pop singer Rebecca Mosley.
THE QUARTER FINALS + A SILENT FILM: The Cellar – Heavy duty indie rocking from former Warhen chappies The Quarter Finals, plus fantastically anthemic stadium rocking from A Silent Film.
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With jazz guitar duo Los Hombres.
JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney
SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks
SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 21st

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS: Brookes University Union – Carl Barat and the boys make a swift return to town after February's sold-out gig at the Zodiac. The former Libertines frontman continues his journey through the dark streets of London to a soundtrack of old Jam riffs, while several hundred deluded teenagers proclaim him as some kind of visionary poet laureate.
PANIC! AT THE DISCO: The Zodiac *(upstairs)* – Long-since sold-out show from the US emo crew, back after sharing the bill with The Academy Is… back in January.
NINE STONE COWBOY + TV BABY: The Zodiac *(downstairs)* – This month's Nightshift cover stars launch debut single, 'Son Of Elvis' – *see main interview feature*
RESERVOIR CATS + FECK: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Party-friendly hard-rocking blues from Tony Jezzard's Reservoir Cats.
AN EMERGENCY + BREAKNECK STATIC + PEACE BURIAL AT SEA: The Wheatsheaf – Vacuous Pop club night with Exeter's short, sharp, scratchy rockers An Emergency getting wired with London-Tokyo-based wackos Breakneck Static, inspired by Melt Banana and Deerhoof. Newcastle's Slint and Mogwai-influenced soundscapists Peace Burial open the show.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB OPEN NIGHT: The Port Mahon
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
FRIDAY STREET: St Aldates Tavern
REDOX: Magdalen Arms
SKYNY NYRDS: The Tandem, Kennington
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar

Wednesday 12th

KK NULL Vs Z'EV / THE EVENINGS / HOLIDAY STABBINGS: The Wheatsheaf

Oxfordbands.com brings one of Japan's most revered experimental musicians to Oxford for the first time in the shape of KK Null. Originally an improvisational guitarist, he's now best known for creating atmospheric electronic soundscapes with an improvisational edge, and with over 100 releases to his credit in a 20-year career, including ten albums with his progressive hardcore band Zeni Geva, who have been produced by Steve Albini. Null has also worked with Merzbow, John Zorn and Fred Frith, and although his UK appearances have been extremely rare, he has performed across Europe at avant garde music festivals for years. Going up against him tonight is Z'Ev, a pioneering figure on the US industrial music scene and a former collaborator with John Cage, Glenn Branca and Psychic TV. Utilising scrap yard instruments – from sheets of metal to industrial spring coils – he mixes up south east Asian rhythms with dark experimental punk, metal, trance and ambient electronics. Representing Oxford in such uncompromising company will be melodic electro-rock experimenters The Evenings, plus dissonant guitar manglers Holiday Stabbings. A great night of music with a different perspective on the world.

SATURDAY 22nd

HELL IS FOR HEROES: The Zodiac – Spiky punk noise from the ever-touring DIY rock urchins, cocking a snook to the music biz with their self-sufficient set-up, self-released albums and ever-growing cult following. Last year's 'Transmit Disrupt' took a darker, more intense path than its rabble-rousing predecessor but Hell Is For Heroes still work best live, were they're now consummate punk rocking performers.
CANNONBALL JANE + TRADEMARK + CHICKS WITH DECKS Vs ROLLERCOASTER: The Cellar – Hip hop-

Thursday 13th

GOODBOOKS: The Zodiac

Post-Franz Ferdinand and Arctic Monkeys, UK-based guitar music is simply booming and doing so without the need or permission of the major labels who continue to flounder about wondering how to clamp down on free music downloads, seemingly oblivious to the good it's done the likes of Arctic Monkeys. The latest low-key popstrels making for the big time via t'internet are Goodbooks. Transgressive Records' latest signings, are currently creating a stir in the trendier London toilet venues after supporting Magic Numbers and Art Brut and selling out self-released debut EP, 'Valves And Robots', but it's via Myspace that their reputation is spreading. Here fans can listen to and download new single 'Walk With Me', as well as the band's wonderfully pretty and utterly haunting 'Passchendaele' demo. Here is sweet, scrappy harmony-heavy jangle-pop with a hefty wadge of synth pop, somewhat akin to The Cure's Robert Smith fronting a lo-fi Pulp, but the band aren't indie ghetto dwellers, collaborating with rapper Why Lout even as they re-conjure the spirit of 1981. Deceptively political, they're also oddball performers, like The Young Knives turning their own geekiness to their advantage. They were doubtless badly bullied at school but very soon a nation will learn to love them.

indie fusion from Cannonball Jane, plus Pet Shop Boys and Human League-influenced synth-pop from Oxford's Trademark. New wave, indie and 80s sounds from CWD after the bands.
HORSEFIGHTER + SHEER DROP + SLEEPLESS: The City Tavern – Local bands showcase.
KOHOUTEK + THE POWDERS + THE SHAKER HEIGHTS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Local indie rock bands showcase.
THE COLOURS + THE HEARTWEAR PROCESS: The Port Mahon
DIRTY EARTH BAND: The Moonshine, Eynsham – First night of Eynsham's new live music club at the local bowling alley, featuring classic rock covers from the Oxford stalwarts.

SUNDAY 23rd

BROMHEADS JACKET + THE OXFAM GLAMOUR MODELS: The Bullingdon – More rudimentary new wave noisemaking from Sheffield's Bromheads Jacket – mates with, support to and musical kindred spirits with Arctic Monkeys, with sharp, shouty songs about mobile phones and Macdonald's.
ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley *(3-7pm)*
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House
STEVE DORSON: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 24th

KING EARL BOOGIE BAND: The Bullingdon – Blues and jug band originally formed by ex-Mungo Jerry blokes Paul King and Colin Earl and subsequently offering service to all manner of 60s and 70s rock refugees including former members of Manfred Mann's Earth Band and Status Quo.
JOHN RENBOURN & ROBIN WILLIAMSON: Nettlebed Folk Club – Former Pentangle guitarist Renbourn teams up with ex-Incredible String Band vocalist Robin Williamson for a feast of English acid folk revivalism.

TUESDAY 25th

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAM NIGHT: The City Tavern
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ BLUES & FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With guest singer Chiarina Darrah.

WEDNESDAY 26th

DIRTY SCI-FI + BABY GRAVY: The Wheatsheaf – Gothic psychedelic prog drone rock from Dirty Sci-Fi, featuring ex-members of The Factory, plus kooky post-punk sounds from Baby Gravy, coming on strangely like a cross between Hawkwind and X-Ray Spex.
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd
FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road

THURSDAY 27th

ASKEW & AVIS: Modern Art Oxford Café – Jazz, soul, doo-wop and close-harmony singing given an electronic twist from vocalists Jeremy Askew and Rebecca Avis, who use their voices to create melodies and rhythms alongside Robin Whitnell's laptop soundtracks.
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK BANDS NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With jazz duo Jazz Emporium.
JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
KING FURNACE + THE DELTA FREQUENCY + AMBERSTATE: The Cellar – Chili Peppers-influenced funk-rock from King Furnace, plus melodic electro noise from former-Rock Of Travolta chap Phill Honey's new band, The Delta Frequency.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney
SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks
SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

FRIDAY 28th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES presents VENA CAVA + CHARLOTTE JAMES + FOXES!: The Zodiac – Belligerent hardcore metal from the new-look Vena Cava, plus local singer-songwriter Charlotte James and shambolic indie-pop newcomers Foxes! at tonight's GTI club night which also features a Confucian photography exhibition, whatever the bleedin' heck one of them is.

Sunday 30th

GARY NUMAN: Brookes University

No other musician has undergone such a critical reappraisal as Gary Numan in the past few years. During his late-70s, early-80s commercial peak, the press loathed Numan for daring to declare he wanted to be a pop star at a time when punk idealism still held sway. It didn't do him much harm, though – he topped the charts with epic synth-pop hits 'Are Friends Electric?' and 'Cars', while 'Replicas', 'The Pleasure Principle' and 'Telekon' similarly dominated the album charts. Thereafter his career went into a slow commercial and creative meltdown, but fast-forward a few years and those old records are being quoted as major inspiration by everyone from Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson, Foo Fighters, Beck to Goldfrapp and Afrikka Bambaataa, while in the UK Blur, The Prodigy and Stephen Merritt are huge fans. More recently Bassment Jaxx, Sugarbabes and Armand Van Helden have heavily sampled his old material for chart hits and suddenly the long-time cult star is *the* name to drop. Mixing up paranoid, dystopian lyricism with an android-like persona and futuristic synthesiser soundscapes, Numan pioneered both synth-pop and industrial rock; with his most recent albums, notably 'Pure' and this year's 'Jagged', he's come full circle – taking a cue from the likes of Trent Reznor and Manson to create dark, epic industrial synth-rock that still sounds like it should be soundtracking Philip K Dick's bleakest stories. A consummate performer and one of the true musical innovators of the last 25 years.

OXFORD FOLK with MADDIE SOUTHORN: The Port Mahon – Ethereal folk songs with keyboard accompaniment.
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
MUNGO: St Aldates Tavern
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
HQ: The Cellar

SATURDAY 29th

THE DATSUNS: The Zodiac – Once more time around the block for the AC/DC-inspired garage rockers.
THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MAY: The Zodiac – Psychedelic folk revivalists, mixing their dulcimers with their drones as they find a middle ground between Steeleye Span and Spacemen 3, taking in Pentangle and early Fairport along the way.
THE GIFT: The Bullingdon – Tribute to The Jam, featuring original Jam drummer Rick Butler
THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD: The New Theatre – Reliably spectacular reinterpretations of all the old Floyd classics.
PRIMITIVE TIME MACHINE + THE GULLIVERS + NOT MY DAY: The City Tavern – Funk rock from PTM, plus punky Buzzcocks and Libertines-influenced indie rock from The Gullivers.
DESTA*NATION: The Cellar

SUNDAY 30th

GARY NUMAN: Brookes University Union – The synth-pop overlord returns with his industrial rock cabaret – *see main preview*
FIELDS + MUMRA: The Zodiac – Acid-folk-inspired rock from London's Fields, somehow mixing 60s-style traditional sounds with My Bloody Valentine-like noise and drones and dropping into the 21st Century somewhere between Magic Numbers and Pure Reason Revolution.
LUM COL CON PIX: The Port Mahon – Multi-deck concept project from Evenings chap Mark Wilden and chums. Or, as they put it themselves, 'obtuse artwank'.
BEARD MUSEUM with OX + ROGER TARRY + RICK HOPE: The Purple Turtle – Dark, melodic folk-pop from Ox at tonight's Beard Museum club night.
ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley *(3-7pm)*
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

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WIN DIVE DIVE TICKETS

Dive Dive return to local action for the first time this year with a two night stint at The Wheatsheaf. They play over the Easter weekend – Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th April. The Sunday show was added after the Saturday night sold out in a matter of days.

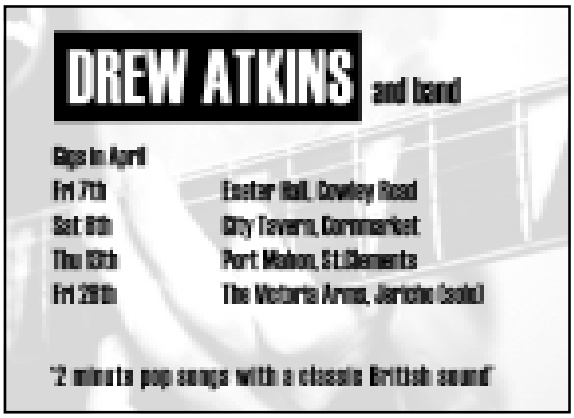
The gigs are part of a series of promotional showcases organised by Spill Magazine. Oxford's pop-punk favourites, whose last hometown gig was a sold-out show upstairs at the Zodiac, will be joined on both nights by former-Million Dead frontman Frank Turner. On the Saturday night, local rockers This Town Needs Guns complete the bill while on the Sunday Sucioperro join the fun.

Tickets for the gigs are on sale now, priced £5 from wegottickets.com, but the band have given Nightshift a pair of tickets for each night to give away, completely free, to some randomly-chosen lucky so and so.

To stand a chance of winning a pair of tickets just answer the following question:

What was the title of Dive Dive's debut album, released last year?

Email answers to wheatsheaf@divedive.co.uk. Entries to arrive no later than the 10th April.



VENUE PHONE NUMBERS

The Zodiac: 01865 420042
Point Promotions: 07711 628021
The Bullingdon: 01865 244516
The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156
The Exeter Hall: 01865 776431
The Red Lion, Witney: 01993 703149
The Cellar: 01865 244761
The New Theatre: 0870 606 3500
Black Horse: 01865 373154
Nettlebed Folk Club: 01628 636620
The Port Mahon: 01865 202067
Delicious Music: 07876 184623
The Victoria: 01865 554047
Brookes: 01865 484750
The City Tavern: 01865 248388

LIVE

THE GO! TEAM / SMOOSH

Brookes University

Some bands have a gimmick which dominates their marketing and carries their career. Smoosh don't need one – but, for the moment at least, they might not be able to avoid it. Seattle sisters Asya (13, keyboard and vocals) and Chloe (12 today, drums) recorded debut album 'She Like Electric' two years ago (!), but their quirkiness, precociousness and lack of self-consciousness aren't intimidating at all. Their piano pop is like Ben Folds without the melancholy, and they seem to not feel constricted by verse-chorus pop conventions. Remember their name.

Smoosh are bound to develop and mature their sound, which is something The Go! Team have done in the last few years, evolving from their beginnings as one man – Ian Parton – in a Hove flat with a four-track recorder and sampler. Unlike the similarly sample-happy Fatboy Slim and The Avalanches, however, there were always live instruments played over the top - hence the need for the six-piece band we see tonight. Frontwoman, singer, rapper, MC and enthusiastic cheerleader Ninja acknowledges to the crowd that the Mercury-nominated album 'Thunder, Lightning, Strike' isn't heavy on lyrics, so she teaches us some. Ninja's vocals often add dynamism to the riffs and loops, but sometimes her dancing adds more to the party than her rapping. She's good for the live experience, though; there's less rapport between the band and the audience in the few tracks she doesn't do much in, like 'Junior Kickstart'. 'Get It Together' and 'Ladyflash', however, are a triumph, as are new tracks like 'Do It Right'.

As kitsch and crazy as the B52s and Japanese bands like Plus-Tech

Go! Team photo: Richard Hounslow

Squeeze Box, The Go! Team come across as a superficially shambolic but subtly complex and layered school orchestra thrashing up funk, hip-hop, indie, symphonic 70s TV themes and anything else they can find. Above all, however, they're different and fun.

Kirsten Etheridge

E-BAND / EBERG

The Zodiac

When first confronted by the E-Band I immediately recognise this ensemble as a fair slice of the Cowley Road's scenesters and backroom staff. There's promoter Mac, laying down an inspired foundation of keyboards and krautrock programming, with DJ Aidan Larkin leaning all over the mike, singing like Keith Richard's speaks, till it all begins to groove like Faithless's Rollo fronting Heaven 17. Cleverly free-forming over all this, with a variety of brass, flute and electronica, come an assortment of Zodiac and Brickworks staff. Tonight this potentially amazing vibe never quite gets the adamantly static crowd dancing, as it did so effectively in the hazy sunshine and cut grass of the Charlbury festival last year, but its all here, waiting for summer.

Twychild is a little used Elizabethan word to cover the period, often in later life, of a second childhood, a time when seemingly simplistic utterances become curiously profound. Spike Milligan was born like it, but there is nothing goonish about Einar Tonsberg's lyrics, that enable him to sing "I'm not thinking / I think not". His new album `Voff Voff' (the way his native Icelandic dogs bark), like his first, `Plastic Lions', is a masterpiece of cool sound engineering; a zoo of electronic creatures, distorted clicks and disembodied accented wordplay. These fantastically organic pieces are given vibrant extra life with the full Eberg line-up of Einar, juggling vocals, computer and guitar, the wonderful beaming Janey Price on cello and backing vocals and Luke Watson on percussion.

'Love Your Bum' (the lyrics are all ads for toilet rolls) becomes an instant playground/student anthem, 'Sober In June' is the antithesis of Paul Simon's 'Feeling Groovy', yet with a similar *laissez faire*, while 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star' will have you rubbing your eyes thinking you are watching CBeebies on tour. They can do deeply dark in the scathing 'Fun Anyway' and '(I Wouldn't Want To Be) Inside Your Head', but it is the shout aloud, cosmically wry numbers that should have them sweep the likes of Nizlopi aside and take their festival-pop crown.

Paul Carrera

KRAFTY KUTS / NICK THAYER

The Zodiac

The Fresh Out of The Box team are going up in the world. Having established a name for quality house and breaks nights at the Cellar, the night is becoming a major club name on the Oxford scene.

So tonight is a party to celebrate. They certainly have no problem growing into their newer surrounding here at the Zodiac; the place is packed.

Up first is Nick Thayer, up and coming Australian breaks DJ who is starting make a name for himself on these shores. His set is an intriguing one.

There's plenty of what you'd expect from a breaks DJ, from the epic, but toying crescendos, dropping into fat, frenetic bass lines that weave and jab relentlessly, tonight's VJ, Kasimer22, providing a backdrop, which when the crowd aren't shaking too much to notice, adds a darker intensity to the vibe. Thayer's set is far from run of the mill, and offers up a few surprises. Particularly towards the end of the set, Thayer keeps the crowd guessing, throwing scarcely-doctored versions of work by artists so distantly linked to the house scene as Rage Against The Machine. While some of his changes disrupt the continuity and vibe of the set, it is by and large a winner.

With the crowd well worked, up next is the UK's own Martin Reeves, aka Krafty Kuts. Being more of a veteran than Thayer, Krafty comes with a name already made for himself and the crowd seem eager.

Anyone who has heard Krafty's mixes will know his set can vary from super-funky hip hop to pumping drum&bass. Yet with the crowd ready to hit the ground running, he cuts to the chase tonight. Building on this momentum the first stage of his set is largely at the house end of the Krafty spectrum, and it works a treat, and for the first hour or so the crowd are mesmerised.

This is arguably the peak of the evening but even though the drops gets lower and the crowd begins to dissipate, the night is a sure success for all involved.

Patrick Casey

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS / HUMANZI

The Zodiac

Whatever you thought of their music, The Libertines made for good car crash viewing. And while Pete Doherty spirals ever nearer to that inevitable overdose, Carl Barat, who's had to pick up the pieces so many times already, is suddenly lumbered with the tag, 'The sensible one out of The Libertines'. Naming his new band after Stephen Frears' 2002 biopic of asylum seekers trying to make a living in London's seedy underbelly, he's doubtless trying to re-establish his gutter level credentials.

Dirty Pretty Things are not far off the final line-up of The Libertines reincarnated anyway, with drummer Gary Powell joining Barat, along with new guitarist and bassist Anthony Rossomando and erstwhile Cooper Temple Clause chap Didz Hammond. Musically they're hardly marking new territory either, the trademark call-to-arms pub rock still very much where Carl's heart is, and there's a couple of old Libs tunes in there to get the frantic faithful down the front in even more of a froth.

Thing is, even more than The Libertines, Dirty Pretty Things are so much less than their very obvious influences. Half the set could be thrashed-up Squeeze b-sides, the rest are just bolted-together lumps of stuff that Thin Lizzy and The Jam left behind. Barat's louche swagger might indicate a streetwise urchin poet laureate, but mostly he's just shouting stuff over basic three-chord thrash-pop that sounds like Suede with all the tunes and most of the glamour sucked out and left to rot under Westminster Bridge.

The night isn't a complete waste of time, though. Dublin's Humanzi have already supported Hard Fi and Foo Fighters in their home town and tonight suggest they'll soon be overtaking tonight's headliners. They couldn't look any more like a Libertines tribute band if they sparked up a crack pipe on stage but against those odds they're really good. There's some real muscle on their punk rock bones, and some quite brutal synth back-up to their drone-thrash guitar noise. There's a blatant steal of The Ruts' 'Babylon's Burning', but otherwise they're more like a collision of Six By Seven and The Clash, while space-grunge set closer 'Get This Scene Together' recalls Cooper Temple Clause at their old, rough-edged best.

Victoria Waterfield

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA

The Cellar

The Rock Of Travolta could have been given up for dead. With the departure of founding member Phill Honey, keyboard player Dave Crabtree and cellist Ros Murray the band seemed to sink into semi-hibernation and the group who, back at the turn of the century looked like the most exciting new act to come out of Oxford in some years looked like slipping out of existence without even a whimper.

But out of the public gaze they were reforming. In came one-time South Sea Company Prospectus chap Matt Spooner and cellist and synth player Jennie Bates. Tonight is the Rock's hometown return and, despite a fixture clash with 65 Days Of Static across town, the Cellar is close to packed. They haven't been forgotten after all.

The Rock Of Travolta were never the most prolific songwriters and there was always a risk tonight would find them replaying a set of old numbers, but only three remain from their original incarnation, including the monstrous 'Giant Robo'. The majority of the set is completely new and the band sound as fresh, vigorous and downright brutal as they ever did. Dave Warrington and new boy Matt duel magnificently on guitars, while Jenny's cello lead and occasional turns on synth are pushed right to the front to lend the whole symphonic cacophony a righteous, excoriating edge. And they're unrelenting: the whole neo-classical prog-hardcore precision-perfect sound riot is exhilarating to behold. Blue Oyster Cult collide head-on with Godspeed You! Black Emperor, while Shellac and Stravinsky get mangled by the BBC Radiophonic Workshop.

Perhaps The Rock Of Travolta don't hold the shock of the new any longer; we expect the best and, if it doesn't always sound like the future as it once did, we still get the best. They finish with a tumultuous 'I Am Your Father' and we kick ourselves for ever daring to think they were gonners.

Dale Kattack

KANO / DAVID BANNER

The Zodiac

Right, David Banner's a weird one. Maybe I didn't have my 'Crunk cup' with me tonight. Double platinum selling crunk star, invades UK, supports Kano on UK tour and takes the top off the venue. Simple isn't it? Hmm… with a lively stage presence, Banner proceeds to strip, entices young ladies to "Play with it" and generally shouts a lot. He looks confused at a predominately white, middle-class, un-crunked audience and says "Man, I ain't used to this".

So he does what any man would do in his situation, and takes the skinniest, whitest bad boy, (also suitably confused) pulls him onstage and tells him to "Get crunk!" and strip. Thus ensues a hilarious five-minute routine of the little kid trying to keep up with the energetic Banner, dancing and pratting around, with his hat on sideways, looking more like a rejected Beastie Boy than someone waiting for Kano to appear.

And wait we did. In a twenty-minute interval filled by a below-par DJ, I didn't spot one, not one, UK hip hop tune. Okay, so Kano, isn't the epitome of UK hip-hop, nor is Banner strictly hip hop, but…. Kanye West? Beyonce? Please, give us some credit.

Anyway, Kano finally appears, and proceeds to bore the hell out of me, and quite a few others. I just don't sense the energy and vibe that should have been there at such an event. No showmanship, no charisma and no verve, which leads me to think that the powerful, potent and vehement performance that I was expecting was just not there, with Kano looking a lot more bored than he would have been, say, at one of the Sidewinder events or pirate radio shows where he rose through the ranks and honed his skills.

However, a highlight of the night is a welcome entry to the stage from MCs Ghetto & Danger, adding the much needed hype and energy that is missing and these guys had quite obviously brought some along from the grime clubs they still frequent.

DJ Indecision

Futureheads photo by Richard Hounslow

THE FUTUREHEADS
The Zodiac

A band needs a certain degree of self-belief to organise a secret gig. What if nobody shows? What if it's half-empty? What if you forget to mention the gig to anybody at all? These are all important factors which The Futureheads have considered and overcome; for tonight the Zodiac is sold out, and tonight the crowd loves this band.

The chirpy new-post-punk Sunderland quartet seem refreshingly grateful for this, and succeed in being both utterly confident in their playing ability and utterly charming in their posture-free demeanour. In a music scene crowded with arrogance and pretentiousness, this is perhaps more important than they realise. There are many bands that play like The Futureheads – spiky guitars, corner-turning melodies and slice-of-life lyrics – but few that don't inspire me to thoughts of arson and assault.

Showcasing tracks from their imminent second album in amongst the popular favourites from their first, there's a marked difference between the Undertones/ Supergrass/Gang of Four cute-uptight aggression of fantastic older tracks like 'Decent Days and Nights' and 'Hounds of Love' and a more considered, songwriterly style which becomes apparent in the new work.

Regrettably, they seem to have fallen foul of the 'second album syndrome' which they themselves joke about onstage – the new album seems to be less concerned with visceral pop *thrills* than with emotionally-charged, downtempo *songs*.

Still, the gloriously idiosyncratic four-part vocals are intact and set the band in a place far ahead of less adventurous contemporaries. Musically they prove an effortless ability to construct deceptively complex songs and to create a thunderous noise which at times borders on the intensity of Killing Joke or early Fugazi.

It's a fine, fine show, the crowd are wowed and almost entirely enthused, and I hope that The Futureheads never allow their self-belief to eclipse their charm, originality or integrity.

Simon Minter

STELLASTARR*
The Zodiac

New York's Stellastarr* seem to have become something of a forgotten band amid the rush to throw laurels at the likes of The Killers and Editors, but on the strength of tonight's gig and new album, 'Harmonies For The Haunted', they're equals to either.

Set opener 'Lost In Time' is a gorgeously sad, soaring hymn, chiming Cocteau Twins-inspired guitars mixing with funereal piano, Shawn Christensen's warm baritone perfectly complimented by bassist Amanda Tannen's sparse but lovely backing vocals. From thereon in it all kicks up a gear and a melody-heavy rush through all the best bits of the early-80s – Christensen's voice pitched somewhere between Julian Cope and The Cure's Robert Smith, the band cherry picking The Bunnymen, XTC and The Chameleons. Which might just add up to a magpie band picking over the bones of their cool record collections, but for Stellastarr*'s astute pop sensibilities, notably on tonight's highlight, 'Sweet Troubled Soul'. There are killer hooks at every turn, soaring choruses, sweet harmonies and a deft vocal interaction between the band's twin leads, alternately passionate and almost evangelical.

They're spirited, pretty and abrasive and the final encore of 'Jenny' is a turbulent old row, but however they play it, they're simply a great pop band. For now Stellastarr* are the unsung heroes of the new wave-inspired rock scene, but theirs are songs that really should be heard.

John Leeson

YOUTH MOVIE SOUNDTRACK STRATEGIES / FOALS
The Zodiac

A sold out Zodiac is positively swarming this evening, and expectations are sky-high for Youth Movie Soundtrack Strategies' first Oxford gig for a year. People seem to be waiting to be blown away, not just by the headliners whose reputation, both locally and nationally has grown even in their absence, but also by local newcomers Foals, the band formed by former members of The Edmund Fitzgerald and current members of Youth Movies.

And we don't have too wait long. Having heard so many good things about Foals on the local gig-going grapevine, tonight we hear those good things expressed by the band themselves. It seems impossible not to mention the ubiquitous Albini reference point here, and there it goes. Nevertheless, the Foals' sound is nestled firmly between Shellac's greatness and And No Star's youthful exuberance. Also, possessing Animal from the Muppets on drums does nothing to hinder matters. After a few songs I start to wonder if all of the four guitars are strictly necessary, considering the, at times, minimalist sound. They do chop things up a little towards the end of play, but the impression left is that much like the band's namesake, they are still trying to find their feet in the world.

On sturdier footing and supposedly back with a vengeance after their year-long Oxford hiatus, Youth Movies push the reverence quota to close to bursting tonight. They do impress early, with a stark intro segueing effortlessly into noodling fretwork and a ton of atmosphere. Unlike Foals, what would usually constitute fairly standard post-rock fare is elevated to an altogether higher plain, one where not an instrument is misused, nor a note wasted. Older pieces 'Ores' and 'The If Works' blend seamlessly into newer material from their forthcoming album, as they push and pull the songs around with switchblade precision. Perhaps disappointingly, this signals not so much a musical sea change amongst YMSS as camouflage attempt, now that their chosen form of music is becoming the new black. They seemed to be saying "Hey, we did it first, and better." Perhaps they did, but maybe now we need to hear a further musical evolution.

Matt Bayliss

Youth Movies photo by Miles Walkden

GOGOL BORDELLO / THE FIGHTING COCKS

The Zodiac

The Fighting Cocks, from Essex, have five members, but they only play three instruments, two of which are inaudible - the guitars are there solely for show, and the turntables don't add much to the incredibly loud punk ragga backing track anyway, so effectively this band consists of four weirdly-attired people ranting brattishly. As a chunk of ironic Variety it's fun, but the strength of the show is that they are clearly half in love with the same pre-packaged pop they ridicule (both Kelis and B*Witched have their lyrics brutally re-appropriated). It can all turn into a Dumb & Dumba Chumbawumba occasionally, but this band are updating the punk credo for the digital age: don't even bother stealing instruments and half-learning them anymore, just cut straight to the dressing up and shouting. For this, they must surely be applauded.

Now, imagine this punk cabaret schtick but put the musicianship back in tenfold, and you've got New York's self-styled gypsy punks Gogol Bordello. Searing East European fiddle and accordion runs are married to thumping bass and drum rolls that wouldn't be out of place in Pantera, whilst all the time frontman Eugene Hutz throws his bared torso round the stage like Borat Rotten, his handlebar moustache dripping sweat. What's amazing is that beneath all the chaos Gogol Bordello are still as tight a folk rock band as anyone could dream of. But when we add in washboard-wielding sisters, musicians crowd surfing on bass drums, myriad fists aloft and one of the biggest stage invasions seen in recent times, the net effect is like an egalitarian Nuremberg Rally. There's so much going on that any review is in danger of becoming simply a list of salient oddities, but it's evident that this band are tapping a vein of good old-fashioned showbiz, offering us choreographed carnage built on ruthlessly-honed performance and practised theatricality, equally embracing Busby Berkeley, The Who and Taraf De Haidouks. Expect imitators springing up everywhere. Expect none of them to come even close.

David Murphy

JIM REID

The Cellar

It happens to nearly every rock rebel eventually, we guess. They grow up and mellow out.

Back in 1985 The Jesus And Mary Chain ripped through a torpid music scene like avenging angels. Their sound, part venom-spitting feedback, part honey-dripping Spector-esque melodies, was as fresh and ferocious as anything since the advent of punk; gigs habitually ended in riots that made your typical Babyshambles show look like a well-orchestrated tea party, while singer Jim Reid's battles, on and offstage, with guitar-playing sibling William put the brothers Gallagher to shame. The whole thing collapsed in one almighty on-stage bust-up and little more was heard from either Jim or William, the band's legacy gradually airbrushed out of the picture by an increasingly revisionist music press.

But now Jim's back and he sounds – by his standards anyway – like a man at peace with himself. Debut solo single 'Song For A Secret', on Oxfordshire's Transistor Records, is a sweet, lysergic splash of dappled sunshine pop that's more candy than psycho. It's one of a handful of stand-out tracks from tonight's set, with Jim and co-guitarist Phil King – latterly of Lush – perched on bar stools, backed by an imposing drum machine.

Tonight's opening number might as well have been a lost gem from the third Velvet Underground album, and Jim's Lou Reed fixation hasn't diminished much as Velvets-styled narcotic folkiness rubs up against almost devotional gospel-tinged material. Jim himself looks healthier than he ever did in his iconoclastic Mary Chain days.

Whether he's making another bid for rock and roll glory, or simply returning to something he can finally love again, simply for the love of playing, is something only he really knows for now, but twenty years after he changed the face of music forever, it's a real pleasure to welcome him back.

Dale Kattack

65 Days of Static photo by Sam Shepherd

65DAYSOFSTATIC / CHRIS CLARK

The Zodiac

8pm is not the hour you want to be faced with Chris Clark. There he is onstage, one man and many buttons creating a noise that can surely only be enjoyed in the small hours whilst on weapons-grade pharmaceuticals. If you took every Warp album you owned, your favourite Deicide moments, some Del The Funky Homosapien and played them simultaneously you would end up with something not unlike the Chris Clark experience. If watching Clark prodding his buttons weren't enough for you, there are always the backdrop animations to focus on. A cartoon rabbit's eyes exploding in a mass of seething tendrils coupled with the seemingly random insanity of Clark's electronica prove to be something of a pleasing but occasionally disturbing jolt early on.

65DaysofStatic are no strangers to Oxford, having been frequent visitors over the last few years. Usually they find themselves playing to a handful of people at the Wheatsheaf, but tonight they have the Zodiac bursting at the seams. With a live show this incendiary their current popularity is hardly surprising.

This is the first time they've used live visuals, and it takes everything to a new level. They have always been capable of stripping flesh from bone with their particularly aggressive brand of post-rock, and now they've got animations to back it up. Scenes from the 80s nuclear holocaust movie *Threads* popping up seem entirely relevant. An A-bomb explodes over Sheffield and triggers chaos? A sonic A-bomb from Sheffield arrives at the Zodiac and detonates during 'Retreat! Retreat!' causing extensive devastation? It all seems so obvious.

Animations aside, 65Days could have levelled the place without them. The energy the band expend thrashing out the likes of 'This Cat Is A Landmine' is frightening. They thrash and batter until a shockwave knocks everyone into a devoted state of awe. They are easily one of the best live bands you'll have the pleasure of seeing; this band is unstoppable.

Sam Shepherd

CROWBAR / WILL HAVEN / KINGSIZE BLUES

The Zodiac

There are some bands who, to paraphrase Voltaire in the crudest terms, if they didn't exist, there really wouldn't be any need to invent them. Kingsize Blues deal in that peculiarly inexpressive, vacuous blend of metallic styles currently being plied by any number of nonentity support bands up and down the country. Their precisely-cut aggression sits comfortably within the confines of its genre, looking around anxiously as if any hint at straying beyond the black-clad, double kick drum metal fraternity will be punished by the Gods of True Metal. Worse, even through the sheets of down-tuned guitars and guttural screaming, it all manages to sound (un)remarkably staid and middle class.

Staid isn't an accusation that could ever have been levelled at Sacramento's Will Haven, who will forever be renowned as one of the most virulent live bands on the hardcore scene. Their reformation after splitting in 2003 might have been greeted with some reservation but even the loss of Grady Avenell at the start of this UK tour, due a family illness, can't temper the thrill of it all and a set of mostly old material confirms their return is more than welcome.

Curiously, given that it's now fifteen years since the primitive incarnation of Crowbar crawled out of the swamp armed with nothing but a toothy grin and a few fiendish riffs, now very much feels like their time, as if evolution has come full circle and what we need now more than ever is to be smacked around the face by one of Kirk Windstein's doomy chops. Their commanding passages of sludgy repetition are seductive, like Sunn0))) pissed up on whisky and soundtracking the *Dukes of Hazzard*. It's grindingly downtempo all right, but with the kind of languid crunch that brings to mind the kind of deep south weather in which it's too damn hot to play any faster. There are moments of almost bluesy indolence that bring to mind Windstein's illustrious Down project, but above all, this is music that doesn't just kick hard, but is also imbued with the kind of groove and heart that's kept Crowbar relevant well into their second decade. Proof positive that all a man needs in life is sunshine, whisky and rock 'n' roll.

Stuart Fowkes

DR SHOTOVER:

Queasy Listening

Pull up a pew, cross my palm with brandy, and I'll tell you what's in store for the Oxford music scene. Yes, it's bad news, I'm afraid... the Nineties Revival is almost upon us. (Steady, old chap, you've turned quite pale). As I gaze into the glass I see swirly Thames Valley Goth bands called SHRINEGAZER... grunting industrial metal bands called CARPHONE WHOREHOUSE... lame grungy indies called PLAID LAKE... doomy trip-hoppers called MIGHTY DUB CINEMA... not to mention the return of those cheeky Britpop chappies SARNIE. Oh dear oh dear, I hear you say. But it gets worse. It gets yet more "Nineties". I see a troupe of nonces in suits called THE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS, arriving at gigs in a four-wheel drive people carrier... and now they've made all the other bands redundant! (Except for two members of each band, who have to re-apply for their old jobs on lower wages *and* learn to play the saxophone). It's time to throw off the Madam Gypsy Rose outfit and reach for my old service revolver...

Next month: 1890s Revival (phew)

*Liam: Management c***s?*
Noel: You've NEARLY got it sorted, our kid... the second word has a C, an N and a T in it, but it's longer than that...

DEMOS

If you do not supply us with a proper contact number and address as stated below, we will not review your demo.

DEMO OF THE MONTH

SOW

The formula for making good metal is pretty simple: keep it heavy and, fast or slow, not too many fancy bits. Definitely no funky bits or rap interludes. Which is where Sow get it right. Taking Pantera and Meshugga as their starting points, they have no truck with fripperies, preferring to keep the riffs distorted, the vocals raging and guttural and the beats set to attack mode. On 'Design' the drummer locks into an almost Burundi beat and you half expect Adam Ant to coming yelping in, but the mood remains unstintingly aggressive. 'Dreams Awake The Dead"s staccato dynamic, with its bursts of double kick drumming and crunching chopped-out guitar stabs sounds like heavy machine gun fire, the vocals the screams of the bullet-riddled dying. This demo lacks some of Sow's live power and there's a tendency for them to stick too close to their chosen straight and narrow, but it's hardcore metal knocked out as it should be.

FLOODED HALLWAYS

Oxford-London hip hop outfit Flooded Hallways have already won fans locally sharing the bill with the likes of Big Speakers and this low-rent demo, while lacking real punch, displays a chilled charm. The obvious comparison is The Streets, with the vocal delivery on 'Jam Jar Money' a near perfect reflection of Mike Skinner's observational, occasionally romantic monologues. Nice to hear some real Oxfordshire accents on the rapping, even on the yapping style of 'Hurry Hurry', while the backing loops take in somnambulant electro squeaks and gurgles along with ambient, discordant jazz. The playful 70s soul backing on 'Jam Jar Money' suggests they could up the tempo and make it a party, but they seem happier to exist in a more laid-back stoner haze.

GTA

Ooh blimey, this lot live along our road, better be nice else they'll be shovelling dog mess through the letterbox at 3 in the morning when their hip hop party starts to wind down. This is rap of far punchier, more upbeat hue than Flooded Hallways. 'Breakthrough' and 'Like Blap', with their horn stabs and 80s pop and 60s soul samples and lively call-and-response delivery are more likely to get rumps moving. The accents are more transatlantic, although even here there are some serious Shire accents popping in. GTA are closer to the chart-friendly rap sounds of Jay-Z or the lighter side of Nas, although their attempts at making it heavier, as on 'Smile', sound clumsy and the rhymes cheesy. Those rhymes are forgivable on the much more laid-back, swinging 'Ballroom Dancing', although they can't resist a few clichés about haters and the like. Stick to the fun stuff and we're away.

THE SHIPPING FORECAST

Meanwhile the 80s revival continues unabated with this lo-fi synth-pop outfit who sound like they recorded their demo about a mile and half away from the tape recorder. This kind of blunts the effect of the whole exercise, but otherwise Shipping Forecast tick the right boxes in the serious young men getting all arty stakes. There are a few OMD-style synth patches and a whole box of ideas nicked from Thomas Dolby as they tackle the great humanity/machinery interface question with its attendant pretensions, although 'The Undeserving Poor' seems to be about a fist fight in a pub, with broken glass and overturned tables everywhere. Not the sort of thing you readily associate with synth-pop. Unless it's Fad Gadget of course. But then he was completely bloody mad.

THE DANCE DIRTY

We're so used to reading letters from bands claiming to sound like all manner of exotic combinations of great influences, it's nice to hear a band who actually do sound like hat they claim. The Dance Dirty suggest late-70s pop punkers TV Personalities as a starting point and that's precisely where we find them, shambling merrily along with a rambling awkwardness added to a sweet blokiness and the general impression that they don't really know or care how they got here or where it might all go from there. In fact they're a bit of a mess, but in a quite cute way, with lyrics that an eight year old might have penned as a bedtime story ('There's A Skeleton In My Closet'). The initial fizz of tracks like 'No Battles Left To Win' does quickly start to go flat but in their hearts it's still 1977 and there is a battle still to be fought: against the evil forces of musical accomplishment.

CRITICAL STAGE

And talking of musical accomplishment, here are the frontline shock troops in the war against the prog rock revival. Critical Stage's demo comes in a sleeve featuring a cartoon of a skinhead vomiting and the music is no more cultured. With song titles like 'I Couldn't Care Less', 'No Vote' and 'S.H.I.T', all delivered using a single chord and sung by a bloke who sounds like he should be mauling all-comers in the Shed End at Chelsea in the early 80s, Critical Stage recall a lost era in punk rock. One where the central subject matter ranged from fighting to bringing down the government (in particular, Maggie Thatcher's government). This is what punk used to sound like when it was made by proper uncouth blokes and before the self-pity brigade moved in. It's a complete and utter bloody mess, most of lyrics seem to revolve around shouting "Oi! Oi! Oi!" a lot, it sounds like it fell backwards off an old Crass label compilation and we really rather like it.

EVERY OTHER SUNDAY

Following in the illustrious footsteps of that other random day of the week-monikered band, On A Friday, teenage trio Every Other Sunday have just about scraped together a single, two and a half minute song. Which sounds a bit like Buzzcocks if you're being generous, especially vocally, but is somewhat hampered by a bizarre background interference that is either a frog regurgitating a can of rice pudding, some broken plumbing or someone learning to play a wobble board in the next room. If it's intentional it's a misfiring stab at art-rock, but more likely it's a faulty home studio or CD duplicating machine. Whatever it is, it made us feel a bit queasy.

HIGH CHILD

Even as we celebrate the second coming of Britpop there are still bands moping around the party for the first lot, minesweeping the dregs of Oasis' songbook. Sorry, but when a band quotes The Beatles, the Kinks, Small Faces and Oasis as their major influences, we know what we're in for. Not that High Child are a completely wretched exercise in retro rocking - 'I Tell All My Secrets To My Guitar' has a jolly niceness to it, with its sunshiney 60s harmonies and simple pop approach, but you know that Shed Seven did it all rather better ten years ago. And that's saying something. It's passable enough until they get to the obligatory ballad, 'Lost Boy', which dribbles apologetically along, like a wet flannel being taken for a walk in a litter-strewn muddy park. Just think, kids. In another ten years people will be able to resurrect the grit and spirit of Arctic Monkeys' fourth album. Suddenly global warming doesn't seem so bad after all.

EMPEROR OF SOUND

Apparently, in the two years they've been together, Emperor of Sound have become one of Oxford's most dynamic and enjoyable live acts. They said so, so it must be true. Some of them used to be in Justin Hawkins' old band and they reckon they've forgotten more about rocking than most young bands will ever know. Which is shorthand for "we've gone senile". And doesn't it show. There are certain pubs and certain FM radio stations we avidly avoid lest we encounter this kind of overwrought AOR bilge, lest it turn us to stone or suck our very souls dry and replace them with old copies of Making Music magazine. Here's a band who doubtless sit around in rehearsals talking about being authentic and keeping it real and bemoaning young people's inability to appreciate the intricacies and style of Jeff Beck or Stevie Ray Vaughan, while simultaneously managing to avoid every ounce of soul or feeling those players had. Doubtless they probably think Paul Weller's new CD is better than the first Jam album.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE SIRENS CALL

Oh dear oh Lor', can music get any more dreary? Here's a three-piece from Banbury who still think there's some gold to be found in that over-mined sensitive grunge pop field. On and bleedin' on they grind, while the vocalist – we hesitate to call him a singer lest it gives him delusions of grandeur – coats the interminable proceedings with a drip, drip, drip of milky self pity. Epic? Anthemic? They certainly want to be, but only in the same way that an ageing, three-legged sloth might harbour desires to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup. This is the sort of demo you can completely forget is actually still playing, so you leave the room to make a cup of tea (weak, lukewarm and slightly too sugary would be appropriate) only to return a day or two later to realise it's still stuck in the same grim, grey rut it was before. People, really you cannot even start to comprehend how tedious this demo is. The sirens call: we can here them now. An armed response unit is on its way. A short burst of automatic machine gun fire and the world of music is a happier place.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU.
***IMPORTANT:** no review without a contact address and phone number (no email or mobile-only). No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. Aw heck, you're not taking the slightest bit of notice of this are you?*

Listings

April May

[illegible] **THE BANE** [illegible]

[illegible] **ADEQUATE SEVEN** [illegible]

[illegible] **HOPE OF THE STATES** [illegible]

[illegible] **SALSA CELTICA** [illegible]

[illegible] **KILLING JOKE** [illegible]

[illegible] **PIG LABS** [illegible]

[illegible] **HUNDRED REASONS** [illegible]

[illegible] **ZALO** [illegible]

[illegible] **THE JACKSON ANALOGUE** [illegible]

[illegible] **GUILLAMOTS** [illegible]

[illegible] **BATTLES** [illegible]

[illegible] **GOOD BOOKS** [illegible]

[illegible] **DANKO JONES** [illegible]

[illegible] **NINESTONE COWBOY** [illegible]

[illegible] **HELL IS FOR HEROES** [illegible]

[illegible] **PANIC AT THE DISCO** [illegible]

[illegible] **VENA CAVA** [illegible]

[illegible] **THE DATSUNS** [illegible]

[illegible] **THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MAY** [illegible]

[illegible] **FIELDS** [illegible]

TEDDY THOMPSON [illegible]

MYSTERY JETS [illegible]

UGLY DUCKLING [illegible]

RICK WITTER & THE DUKES [illegible]

MOHAIR [illegible]

FELL CITY GIRL [illegible]

THE BROTHERS [illegible]

SHACK [illegible]

STILL REMAINS [illegible]

HOT CHIP [illegible]

BAKA BEYOND [illegible]

BREAKS CO-OP [illegible]

ADEM [illegible]

SLEATER KINNEY [illegible]

THE DECEMBERISTS [illegible]

BRIGADE [illegible]

NICK KARN [illegible]

EVERY TIME I DIE [illegible]

LIAM FROST AND THE SLOWGOES

FAMILY [illegible]

NEW MODEL ARMY [illegible]

THE RESEARCH [illegible]

RODRIGO Y GABRIELA [illegible]

THERMINT [illegible]

JOSH ROUSE [illegible]

Nightlisting

HAMMER & TONGUE POETRY SLAM [illegible]

HOUSE ALWAYS WINS [illegible]

DISHEUN SINGH [illegible]

SLIDE [illegible]

SOURCE [illegible]

DJ BERER [illegible]

CLUBNIGHT TBA [illegible]

[illegible]

ZODIAC