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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
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Harry Angel

The Devil's in the Music
Interview inside

Photo by Miles Walkden

Plus
The new bands to watch in 2006

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NEWS

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THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT will take place on Wednesday 10th May. Arrangements for the annual showcase of the best unsigned music in Oxfordshire, organised by Nightshift, are almost complete, with five venues already confirmed and two more to be confirmed. As ever, the Punt will kick off at Borders in Magdalen Street before moving on to Jongleurs, The Wheatsheaf, The City Tavern and finishing off at The Cellar. Nightshift is now inviting everyone to submit demos for any bands or solo artists wanting to play at the Punt. The only rules for inclusion are that acts must be from Oxfordshire, be unsigned and have some gigging experience. Bands that have previously played at the Punt are eligible, although preference is given to new acts. Send demos, clearly marked 'The Punt', to Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU.

ZODIAC owner and promoter Nick Moorbath has been talking to Nightshift in light of various rumours circulating about the future of the venue. Responding to gossip suggesting that Oxford's premier live music club was set to be bought out by The Academy Group, which owns a string of venues around the UK, including the Brixton Academy, Nick told Nightshift: "That's all it is – gossip and speculation. The only thing that is definite is that the Zodiac will undergo a major refurbishment next year. All the planning permission is in place. We are currently looking into various options to finance the work. As soon as anything is confirmed we will let everyone know."

Plans for the Zodiac include expanding the downstairs venue to increase its capacity to around 900 – almost double the capacity of the current upstairs gig room. The upstairs venue will subsequently be made smaller to incorporate offices and new dressing rooms,

while the ground floor venue frontage will include a new bar area. A timetable for the refurbishment is yet to be finalised; in the meantime the Zodiac is booking its spring programme. Notable gigs already confirmed include: The Kooks (10th February), Julian Cope (14th Feb), The Paddingtons (16th Feb), Regina Spektor (16th Feb), Battle (4th March), The Buzzcocks (5th Mar), Cave In (6th Mar), 65 Days of Static (9th Mar), Crowbar and Will Haven (20th Mar), Seth Lakemen (26th Mar) and Graham Coxon (31st Mar). Tickets for all gigs are on sale now from the Zodiac box office on 01865 420042.

THE PORT MAHON in St Clement's is hosting an all-day live music event on Saturday 21st January. Goldrush will headline the gig with an unplugged set and are joined by The Epstein, The Walk Off, Dusty Sound System, The View, At Risk, Smokers Die Younger, Los Diablos, Ady Davey, Rebecca Mosley, Chris Beard and David Fullbrook. The music starts at 1.30pm; tickets are on sale now priced £5 from wegottickets.com.

BLUE KITE release a new single later this month. 'Ways Of Knowing' is the follow-up to the band's excellent third album, 'Resolution', released in 2005. The single, the last recording ever to be made at Dungeon Studios, looks likely to be the last release by the band to feature Kate Garrett on vocals and also features contributions from Goldrush's Joe Bennett and Dungeon Studio's Rich Haines. Full review in next month's Nightshift. Other upcoming local releases include a new EP from The Half Rabbits in early February as well as an album of Smilex remixes, entitled 'Smilex Versus Oxford', on Quickfix Records. The Young Knives, Youth Movie Soundtrack Strategies, The

Evenings and Boywithatoy are among the local artists remixing the band.

PINDROP PERFORMANCES is a new monthly live music club night launched this month at The Port Mahon in St Clement's. Pindrop aims to showcase the best up and coming alternative folk and electronic acts around. The first night takes place on Sunday 29th January and features Brickwork Lizards, The Thumb Quintet and Dan Glazebrook and Josie Webber. Each event starts at 5pm and finishes at 8pm and tickets are limited to 35. Get them from Polar Bear on Cowley Road.

OXFORDBANDS.COM has launched an updated version of its interactive venue guide. The guide features every live music venue in Oxfordshire as well as over 50 small venues around the country in what is intended to become an essential guide for bands trying to get gigs locally or around the country and for gig goers in general. Bands and fans can add comments to each venue's profile. The oxfordbands.com site also features regularly updated local music news, reviews, an extensive photo gallery and a discussion board.

JONGLEURS hosts a Battle of the Bands competition starting with weekly heats from 7th February and culminating with a five-band final on March 14th. First prize is three days in a recording studio. Bands interested in taking part should call 01865 722437 or email barrisa.oxford@regent-inns.plc.uk

THE DOWNLOAD continues to broadcast the best in local music every Saturday evening between 6 and 7pm on BBC Radio Oxford (95.2fm). The hour-long show, presented by Tim Bearder and Dave Gillyeat, features new releases, classic oldies, interviews and demos from Oxford acts as well as club and gig listings. Tune in or listen to it online any day of the week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

DR SHOTOVER: BRANDY BOTOX

Well, I nearly kissed the feller, I don't mind telling you. Just when everything was looking quite Gobi-Desert-like in terms of no booze in the New Year, this alternative medico chappie chimed in with a suggestion. It seems one can have the stuff injected directly into the facial features, thereby bypassing the liver altogether! Only costs thirty guineas a pop. His practice is in a cosy little office off Greek St, just above Mademoiselle Frou-Frou's club, you know the one... He's only got one nurse working with him to take blood and suchlike... Romanian filly, I believe, goes under the name of Nurse Feratu... Quite friendly, in a Gothic sort of way... I think she moonlights downstairs in the evenings, if you know what I mean. I'm due for my first treatment next week. Can hardly wait. Bunty Bradshaw recommended it to me... yes, old Bunty... that's him in the chair over there. Hasn't moved a muscle for a week, you say? Jolly good. Stiff upper lip and all that, what?

Next Month: Gottle o' geer, please.



Dr Shotover cracks a smile after the Brandy Botox treatment

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HARRY ANGEL

IN ALAN PARKER'S 1987

American gothic movie *Angel Heart*, the central character Harry Angel, played by Mickey Rourke, discovers too late that he's sold his soul to the Devil. Such Faustian pacts are part and parcel of music legend too.

Watching Oxford band Harry Angel rampaging through an all-too short set in front of 10,000 fans at last November's Children In Need concert at RAF Brize Norton, having won a BBC internet vote, barely a year into their short career, you could be forgiven for thinking that maybe some devilish deal had been done on their behalf.

PERHAPS MORE PERTINENT

proof of otherworldly goings on in Harry Angel's life came at one of the band's incendiary gigs at the Wheatsheaf last year, supporting Fuck Off Machete. Overcome with heat and exhaustion, frontman Chris Beard collapsed on stage only to come round moments later, stripped to the waist, bleeding and prostrate in a perfect crucifix pose.

Harry Angel's rise up the Oxford music scene has been pretty rapid. Their story might not be anything remarkable on the face of it – simply twelve months of hard gigging, playing any support slot available and trying to hone their sound to something near perfection – but at every turn they've captured the imagination of ever more fans, while their live shows are now amongst the most intense and entertaining in town.

Harry Angel's appearance at the Children in Need gig, alongside Girls Aloud and Status Quo, was proof of their increasing popularity, as well as just reward for a year's hard work.

After contributing a couple of songs to the local 'Fresh Faces For The Modern Age' compilation, Harry Angel released their debut EP back in the autumn. The lead track, 'Death Valley Of the Dolls', a long time live favourite, subsequently cruised its way to second place in the Nightshift writers' end of year Top 20, beaten only by Fell City Girl's 'Weaker Light'.

HARRY ANGEL CAME

together at Charlbury Festival in



Harry Angel (l-r): Dan, Hayley, Chris, Andy. Louis Cypher not pictured.

2003. During local heroes Dive Dive's explosive set to be precise. Chris, as well as guitarist Dan Lordan, quit their then band Cactus straight afterwards, determined to get more out of their music making. Drummer Andy Wright's band of the time, Scrambler, had just split up, while bassist Hayley Phillips had been through the usual string of school and university bands. Fired up by watching Dive Dive, the four friends were agreed on what constituted great music: Pixies, Radiohead, The Cure, Nirvana, The Smiths, PJ Harvey, Joy Division as well as Dive Dive themselves.

Their choice of listening pleasure goes a long way to explaining the Harry Angel sound: big, combustible walls of guitar, songs that can be melodic and epic but with a darkness at their heart. An early Nightshift review suggested a melting pot of Sonic Youth and Bauhaus; American hardcore meets British gothic rock. Radiohead's influence weighed heavy on early gigs and recording but, while their presence can still be felt on tracks like 'Striptease', it is increasingly being consumed by Harry Angel's more abrasive and virulent side. 'Death Valley Of The Dolls' in particular gathers together everything that can be great about Harry Angel: tumbling, gothic drums, relentless bass, opulent fizzbomb guitars and Chris' nervy, transatlantic vocal drawl underpinned by Hayley's serene, Kim Gordon-like backing vocals.

IN PERSON HARRY ANGEL

are amongst the most unassuming

people you could wish to meet, particularly Chris who, is not only the tallest frontman in Oxford but also the least like his onstage alter-ego: shy and polite offstage, consumed by rock and roll fervour on it. Together the band are enthusiastic and regular local gig goers. To what extent do they, as musicians and writers, identify with the character Harry Angel? 'Death Valley Of The Dolls' suggests a feeling of being doomed.

CHRIS: "I came up with our name as a joke; I knew all the movers and shakers in the Oxford scene from going to gigs and parties but our band was still a mess. I'd already schmoozed my soul away before we'd achieved anything! As for 'Death Valley', like a number of our songs it's really intended as a song for me to cross myself with before hitting the scene. It's angry and self-lacerating but also blackly humorous; it's meant to burn all that self-serving rock star bollocks out of you. Essentially the outcome is positive.

Would signing to a major label be a Faustian pact in your eyes?

CHRIS: "We haven't considered signing to *any* label, that's way off in the future. But anything that threatens the four of us being in control of the music can fuck right off. We want to remain independent as far as it can take us. The rise of the internet and downloading has significantly wrested the power from record labels; you can market yourself and sell your own tunes, so there's no need for your music to be fuelling some fat company exec's Jag."

Has the way things have gone for you this year taken you by surprise?

DAN: "Yes. We were hoping to just get some recognition and it's gone a bit further than that."

Has there been a single moment in 2005, say at the CIN concert, where you've suddenly thought, this is it, we've arrived?

DAN: "No. But we had objectives at the start of the year – play a load of gigs, gel as a band, release an EP, get local people paying attention – and we've achieved them all. That's good to look back on at the end of 2005."

HAYLEY: "We felt we'd passed our 'gig driving test' at February's One Louder at The Wheatsheaf when nothing went badly wrong or blew up. That was a milestone."

In most people's eyes, playing at the Children In Need Concert will seem like the highlight of the year for you; would you agree?

HAYLEY: "It was a bonus but not part of the plan. It didn't make us feel any different afterwards. It won't make any significant impact on our future."

ANDY: "We were biting our fingernails beforehand, but the set went in a flash, then we just drifted around this massive venue watching *Pop Idol* winners and feeling cut adrift."

CHRIS: "'Cause it wasn't our natural habitat, which is a sweaty club."

YOU SAY YOU WERE

inspired to form Harry Angel whilst watching Dive Dive; how much of a musical influence is that band on you, or was it more a case of wanting to see yourselves up on stage like them?

HAYLEY: "We wanted to be as tight as them live. We can dream!"

CHRIS: "I love the energy they project from the stage. Music-wise, yep, I'm a big fan of their twisty-turny righteous melodic hardcore. Plus their 'never-ending tour' attitude to gigging, that's an example we want to follow."

There's a real intensity about your live shows that's increased each time we've seen you; there have been on-stage collapses and concussion. How much of this is down to having more confidence, or is there a self-destructive streak

inside you?

HAYLEY: "Only Beardy!"

DAN: "We're getting him a crash-helmet."

CHRIS: "It's all about cranking as much impact out of the songs as possible. As you get more confident, you can more fully give in to the music, and since ours is dark and fractious that's what comes out of us on-stage."

DAN: "Friday night, people want a knees-up and so you have to put on a show. As more people have started coming to see us, it's pushed us to go for it more. It's a two-way thing."

Where do you see your performances go from here; who are the performers you most admire?

CHRIS: "I just want us to get better at playing the songs and meaning it, which will happen from hard-gigging. As for inspirational performers, there's lots... but off the top of my head: Radiohead and Jeff Buckley for their musicianship; Queen Adreena for their ability to whip up a crowd; McLusky for total FUCK-YOU-YOU'RE-WRONG-WE'RE-RIGHT self-belief."

Early gigs suggested a strong Radiohead influence on the band

but more recently, with the exception of 'Striptease', that side of your sound seems to have been subsumed by the more aggressive, gothic side. Is this the way Harry Angel are going, or is there yet another facet to your sound we're yet to experience?

CHRIS: "I love Radiohead, no argument, but they certainly weren't the only band we wanted to sound like. Their songs are quite baroque and we wanted to keep things simpler from day one. McLusky, Girls Against Boys, Big Black and The Pixies were what I was listening to when we started out. I'm glad we're now expanding our horizons, though the heavy speedfreak stuff will continue. But I want to incorporate more dirty jubilant noise like what Sonic Youth do. We like their balance of battering nastiness and uplifting scuzz. That's my hope - we can keep the energy and fire but start injecting some obvious positivity into the mix."

Are you comfortable with the term 'gothic' being used to describe your music; there's certainly a darkness about it?

HAYLEY: "It's a weird concept. We certainly don't feel any affinity to the current meaning, i.e. shopping-

mall goths moping around to Evanescence and The Rasmus. And the 80s was a long time ago."

CHRIS: "I like goth in the sense that it meant music could be extreme and unafraid to delve into taboo feelings. But I don't listen to much of it; it makes me depressed and I don't have any right to walk around in a mard when I've so much to be thankful for. In the end a label like 'gothic' is just shorthand for 'echoey guitars, tom-heavy drums, grumpy singer' so that's not too far off the mark!"

OXFORD'S MUSIC SCENE IS famously compact and competitive, which, while it can breed a degree of bitchiness, also serves to drive bands to greater heights of creativity - those who don't make the mark are quickly dismissed. It also allows musicians to easily feed off each other and spur one another on. As pretty committed gig goers, Harry Angel must have their favourites on the Oxford scene.

ANDY: "It's a fantastic scene: the venues, the bands, the magazines... it's a great place to start out from."

HAYLEY: "My favourite local acts are The Young Knives and Fell City Girl."

CHRIS: "The Evenings always guarantee a bangin' night out. Suitable Case For Treatment have saved my sanity on numerous occasions. Ally Craig I cannot speak highly enough of; his songs are so clever and intricate and heartfelt; all the other singer-songwriter types in this town are left for dust. As for least favourite acts, leave it out, we're only up for celebrating the good stuff. We're not Goths!"

FINALLY, SOMETHING WE must ask. Watching Harry Angel can be a great cathartic experience, but one of the most intriguing parts of watching them is the sheer height difference between Chris and Hayley. He's easily twice her height. So Chris, how tall are you exactly and are you the tallest man in Oxford music? Or does Hayley just make you seem tall?

Chris: "It's all done with mirrors. I'm only three foot ten really."

Hayley: "Come and see Harry Angel, a gig and a freakshow in one!"

'Death Valley Of The Dolls' is out now. Check out www.harryangel.co.uk for news, downloads and gig dates

A Dozen More To Watch in 2006...

It's around this time every year that Nightshift casts a hawk-like eye over the emerging local musical talent and decides who we are going to allow to be famous this year. You see, kids, it all comes down to bribes in the end. And none of them crappy bags of jelly sweets neither - it's got to be liqueur chocolates or nothing on the confectionery front.

Any road up, one of the most remarkable shows we witnessed from a new Oxford band last year was **THE KEYBOARD CHOIR**: half a dozen synths of varying vintages locked in some kind of gothic ambient battle, all choreographed in marvellous sci-fi style by a conductor stood behind a massive bank of computer gadgetry, like Bauhaus re-imagined by Brian Eno.

Even further from the mainstream pop norm are **HOLIDAY STABBINGS**, a band who have gone through various metamorphoses to become the monstrous barrel of noise they are now. Their contribution to the essential '4 x EPs' compilation on Hanging Out With The Cool Kids Records last year revealed a band veering right off rock's beaten track into hellbastard art noise of the kind pioneered by Swans and Factiva, and with an effects pedals to tunes ratio of about 20. Which just happens to be what their amps go up to.

DEGUELLO who featured alongside Holiday Stabbings on that compilation, promise to be something very special on recent evidence. Still very young, they've already impressed live, notably supporting Mondo Generator back in the summer, and their deceptively melodic hardcore noise, reminiscent in spirit, of Alternative Tentacles' more adventurous roster

as well as Dinosaur Jr and Killdozer, goes completely against the grain of macho hardcore.

Equally young, fresh-faced and eager to make some serious noise are **AND NO STAR**, named after half a Sonic Youth album title and, unsurprisingly, taking that band's sound as a primary inspiration. Mostly instrumental, they echo much of Youth Movie Soundtrack Strategies' explorative guitar soundscaping, reigning in their more exuberant tendencies in favour of almost jazz and 60s folk. The math-rock massive will doubtless go a bundle on **FOALS** too, who made an impressive debut in December, emerging from the ashes of The Edmund Fitzgerald.

The proliferation of very young but talented and original bands is one of the most exciting things to happen on the Oxford scene recently, and one band people are going to get very excited about over the next year are **WHERE I'M CALLING FROM**, four teenagers from Wolvercote whose alternately delicate and abrasive sound ties together elements of New Wave, alt.country and indie. You might hear traces of The Only Ones, Low and Belle And Sebastian alongside Fleetwood Mac and some New York punk noise, but it all adds up to something very special indeed.

HARLETTE surprised a lot of people last year by being a young teenage grunge band who didn't sound like a piss-poor mash-up of every second-rate MTV2 heavy rotation band currently in existence. Instead the south Oxfordshire all-girl quartet looked to the likes of Fuzzbox and X-Ray Spex as well as The Cure and Siouxsie for inspiration and it'll be interesting to see how their fizzbomb grunge-pop goes from here.

More heavy duty noise comes from **SOW**,



recently reconvened after a promising but false start last year; the band look like being the best new hope for Oxford metal in 2006 with an uncompromising hardcore assault. **MULES** meanwhile take punk off into more eclectic waters, taking in East European polka, country rock and gypsy dance along the way.

More sedate pleasures come from **BELARUS**, the current guise of the band formerly known as Spacehopper and previously touted by Nightshift, capable of penning emotive stadium pop anthems to equal, if not better Keane and Coldplay. **THE THUMB QUINTET**, by contrast, turn their reflective muse inwards, creating ambient folkatronic soundscapes that find the missing link between Pentangle and Four Tet, while **WITCHES**, formed by former-eeblee chap Dave Griffiths are creating some cool, orchestral pop noises.

The one thing we've found over the years in doing these New Year tips is that we just know something new and previously unheard will take us by surprise mere days after this issue hits the streets. In fact, they're probably tuning up in a bedroom along your street right now. Just you wait and see.

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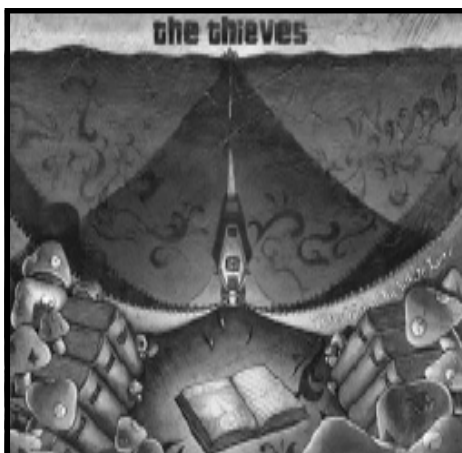
'Tales From The White Line'

(Liquor And Poker)

At the start of 'Vacant Thoughts', two-thirds of the way through The Thieves' debut album, Hal Stokes draws a comparison between the comforting spires of his hometown, Oxford, and the vast expanse of his chosen residence, LA. The Thieves – the band for so long known round these parts as Vade Mecum – may be the product of a shire upbringing, but this album reveals them to be now almost totally immersed in Stateside rock culture.

No great surprise really since they've always been rockers of the old school and years of constant slog around the American gig circuit have rubbed off on their character. As such they're more likely than ever to reap the rewards of their graft. 'Tales From The White Line' sounds like an album you'd expect to hang around the top of the US charts for month on end. Big on hooks and anthems, it's got plenty of bluster but more than this, it's got soul and melody.

The Thieves set out their stall from the off: 'Gimme Some Lip' is all big rabble-rousing rock riffage, with a bit of a snarl, a rootsy barroom blues feel and a bombastic stadium rock finale. The station wagon ride continues with the Aerosmith-inspired 'Don't You Lose Me' and through to the almost country-ish 'Silverliner'. It's a powerful and fresh-sounding album for



the most part though. 'This Road' is a bit of a plod, far too earnest and not helped by its clichéd guitar solo, but you only notice all this because it's sandwiched between the heroic 'You Get It Easy', with its subtle melody steal from Bowie's 'Heroes', and the stomping 'Tales From The White Line'. More offbeat is the synth-led 'Just A Piece', which could be Ultravox in rock-out mode (and with Hal sounding uncannily like Midge Ure), as well as the strident, robotic 'It Still Goes On', which veers closer to U2's most recent outings.

The Thieves' strengths are their tight, melodic approach to every thing they do: simple songs backed by heavy duty rock artillery, and their unselfconscious lack of irony. This is old-fashioned rock and roll as it was meant to be played and ever will be.

Ian Chesterton

JUNKIE BRUSH

'Hearts & Mines EP'

(Own Label)

The kiddies with their Alkaline Trio ringtones and Green Day aspirations can argue the toss all they like but Oxford only has two punk bands worth bothering about: Headcount and Junkie Brush.



Headcount might still be the daddies but Junkie Brush are their Padawan learners, growing up fast and infused with the force. The band's 'Problem – Reaction – Solution' has rapidly become a local anthem, blending uptight sloganeering with a jerky sonic bloodlust and tight melodic edge, and this new EP should confirm their standing as one of the best rackets in town.

'Exhume His Corpse And Make Him Dance for Money' is as belligerent as its title suggests, mixing up some of the best noise from both sides of the Atlantic – The Jesus Lizard and Helmet from The States, Killing Joke and Anti-Pasti from the UK – while 'Now She's Dead' is pure splenetic thrash-punk with a cuss-word count that would make Snoop Dogg blush and, at well under two minutes, it packs its not inconsiderable punch into one short, sharp assault.

The highlight of the EP, though, is Nichole Steal's remix of 'Monkey Grinder', which replaces Junkie Brush's crash and burn approach with a spacey dub-funk treatment that is closer to PiL circa-'Metal Box', while, separated from the guitars, Big Tim's vocals sound remarkably similar to Sean Ryder's stoner drawl.

Ian Chesterton

UNDERTHEIGLOO

'Circlesend'

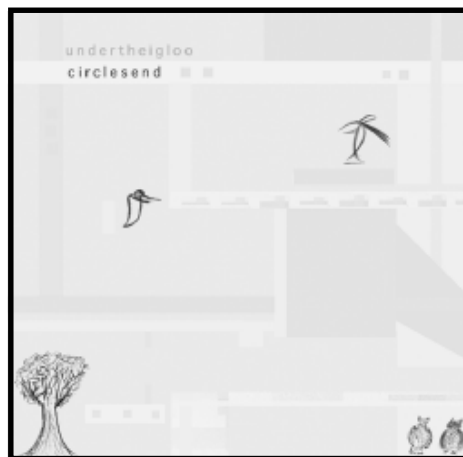
(Freedom Road)

An abiding obsession at Nightshift is the sheer unadulterated bollocks that finds its way into press releases. Obviously the job of a press release is to promote the artist in question. But brazen hyperbole so often works against the band, since it rarely offers any insight into the music and instead simply repeats clichés, plus it gets the reviewer's back up because it's lazy and dishonest. Such is the case with the blurb for Undertheigloo's debut album. In a single paragraph, the music is described as possessing "breathtakingly beauty", "refuses to be pigeonholed" and opening up "near limitless sonic possibilities"; further, Under The Igloo "challenge conventional song writing". So, the best band Oxford has produced. Ever.

All of which is a bit unfair on Undertheigloo, who are a decent enough band, with a small cache of neat ideas and a reasonable grasp of atmosphere. Their musical foundation is mixing up discreet electronics with a reserved guitar buzz, occasionally drawing in strings and piano to invest some variety into the solemn material.

At their best Undertheigloo take Radiohead's glitchy electronic rhythms and gently bubbling synths and create slight, minimalist soundscapes which provide an unimposing backdrop to the singer's Chris Martin-like falsetto. The band seem more interested in textures than songs, with a keen attention to detail in the carefully-layered sounds. 'Circlesend's best moment comes with 'Race To Get To Sleep', which attempts a more portentous attack, but too often the band seem content to sleepwalk through tracks rather than offer any emotional depth, and by the end of the album they're scraping out overwrought pop ballads on autopilot. Which may be unfair to a band who never set out to bring down rock and roll Ragnarok, but, y'know, when you're promised heaven on earth you expect something wonderful.

Sue Forman



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GIG GUIDE

SUNDAY 1st

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:
The Old School House – Delicious Music get a new gigging year off to a good start with their weekly all-comers session.

MONDAY 2nd

Nothing to see here.

Tuesday 24th

DAMO SUZUKI / SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT: The Wheatsheaf

Blimey, where to start with this one? Tonight promises to set a benchmark for local gigs for the rest of the year, with the return to town of former-Can legend Damo Suzuki. The man's last show in town was headlining Audiscope back in 2004 where his improvised set of cosmic psychedelia, Japanese folk and bizarre experimentation blew minds and made an army of converts. Damo was backed for that gig by various members of Bilge Pump and Wolves! Of Greece. Tonight he'll be joined, for one gig only, by an Oxford supergroup made up of drummers Loz Colbert (Ride) and Nigel Powell (Dive Dive), guitarists James Sedwards (Nought) and Ben Ulph (The Thumb Quintet), plus bassist Phil Oakley (Sexy Breakfast and The Evenings). An incredible coming together of serious local talents with one of the most innovative and maverick musical genius of all time. And with the band promising a single rehearsal before the gig, you just know anything could happen. And if that's not a mouth-watering enough prospect, arch prog-core monsters Suitable Case are tonight's support: surely reason enough to start queuing around midday to ensure you get in.



JANUARY

TUESDAY 3rd

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:

The Bullingdon – Weekly free-entry jazz club with resident band and DJs.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC JAM

NIGHT: The City Tavern

WEDNESDAY 4th

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd

GIGSWAP UK NIGHT: The Wheatsheaf

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Marlborough House, Western Road – All-comers session with a £50 prize for best act of the night.

THURSDAY 5th

PORT MAYHEM with REDOX + NEIL

NAYAR: The Port Mahon – Funky acid pop from the Redox crew.

BEELZEBOZO: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Heavy riffage and doomy rocking from local newcomers.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With guest performer Neil Mason.

JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush – Weekly 'energy jazz' residency.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks – Weekly DJ session playing reggae, ska, funk, Latin and Afrobeat.

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

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Long-standing all-comers music and performance club.

FRIDAY 6th

SHIRLEY + THE GREEN + THE SHAKER

HEIGHTS: The Zodiac – Local indie rock bill featuring 60s bubblegum pop-inspired Shirley, Suede-influenced rockers The Green and mellow Velvet Underground-styled newcomers The Shaker Heights.

LAGRIMA: The Exeter Hall, Cowley
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE DRUG SQUAD + ROOSTER BAND + TWIZZ TWANGLE + FORK: The Wheatsheaf – Party-friendly ska punk and spaghetti western rock from The Drug Squad, with support from esoteric pop imp Twizz Twangle and proggy noisemakers Fork.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Weekly soul, funk and disco club night.

SATURDAY 7th

LOST CHIHUAHUA: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Easily done. They should get a bigger dog, a Newfoundland perhaps, much easier to find.
MY FATHER THE BEAT + BLUE JUNK + SILENT ECHOES: The City Tavern – Psychedelic indie rock from local newcomers My Father The Beat topping a bill of local emerging talent.

MOFO: The Red Lion, Witney – Heavy rock covers.

MASTERPIECE: The Bullingdon – Funk, soul, r'n'b and reggae club night.

DETROXIN: The Coven – Detroit and Berlin-flavoured techno with DJs Denise Crisanto, Tom Lehman, Dave Mahy and Nic Dobbs.

SUNDAY 8th

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

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:
The Old School House

STEVE DEGUTIS: The Red Lion, Witney

JOSIE & DAN: The Magic Café (1pm)

MONDAY 9th

RESERVOIR CATS: The Bullingdon – Hard rocking electric party blues from Tony Jezzard's local stalwarts.

TUESDAY 10th

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:
The Bullingdon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC JAM

NIGHT: The City Tavern

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

WEDNESDAY 11th

STINKING LIZAVETA + NOUGHT +

DEGUELLO: The Cellar – Time to blow up the PA again as Philadelphia's doom-jazz heavyweights Stinking Lizaveta return to Oxford, making big and brutal with their Sabbath and Slint influences. Nought should give them a good run for their money in the loud and heavy stakes, while highly promising youngsters Deguello open the show in impressively oppressive style.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd

OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon

THURSDAY 12th

JOHN OTWAY + MURRAY TORKILDSEN:

The Port Mahon – The clown prince of pop returns once more to wreak more melodic madness and do himself an injury, while former-Sweeney frontman Murray adds a more caustic element of market town soul.





Friday 27th

PART CHIMP / TODD / LORDS / HEY COLOSSUS:

The Wheatsheaf

A night for the stout of heart, as Oxfordbands.com presents four of the very loudest bands on the planet together in a rather small room. The running order is due to be set on the night, this being a package tour brought together by Rock Action, Southern, Jonson family and Gringo Records, but star turns must be the awesome Part Chimp, the band formed from the ashes of the equally awesome Ligament. Here heaviosity is taken to heroic new heights, or depths – a sludge-fuzz of overdriven guitars, where even the distortion pedals are fed through distortion pedals and the resulting cacophony, equal parts Monster Magnet, Killdozer and Th'Faith Healers, threatens to flatten surrounding buildings. Joining them on their musical journey into the abyss are recent Audioscope math-rock stars Lords and the monolithic Todd, whose mix of synthetic rhythms, monstrous metal riffage and hellbastard vocals can be terrifying to behold. But perhaps loudest of the lot are stoner rock titans Hey Colossus, whose blend of space drones and white noise calls to mind The Melvins and Unsane at times. Part Chimp might have a song called 'Hello Bastards', but Hey Colossus' debut album was simply titled, 'Hey Colossus Hate You'. It's a title that sums up the punishing nature of tonight's gig, but your courage in the face of extreme noise will be well rewarded. Probably with tinnitus for years to come.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT: *Far From The Madding Crowd* – With guests The Bewley Brothers.
REBUS + MARY'S GARDEN: *The Cellar* – Garage punk action from Reading's Rebus, plus downbeat, melodic drone-rock from Mary's Garden.
JAZZ NIGHT: *The City Tavern*
BARCODE TRIO: *The Hollybush*
SKYLARKIN: *The Brickworks*
SABOTAGE: *The Zodiac*
CATWEAZLE CLUB: *East Oxford Community Centre*

FRIDAY 13th

BEELZEBOZO + HERO STORY + THE BRAVADO + LEXISS: *The Zodiac* – Doomy metallers Beelzebozo head a local bands night with support from emo

youngsters Hero Story and rudimentary punkers The Bravado.

THE RELATIONSHIPS + LES CLOCHARDS: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley* – Understated pop brilliance from the mighty Relationships.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: *The Port Mahon*
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: *The Victoria, Jericho*
BACKROOM BOOGIE: *The Bullingdon*
HQ: *The Cellar* – Drum&bass club night.

SATURDAY 14th

THE ZIMMERMEN: *The Bullingdon* – Bob Dylan tribute.
THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS + ACTION + ACTION: *The Wheatsheaf* – Emotive indie rocking from This Town Needs Guns.
SOLAHARBA: *The Port Mahon*
THE OBSCURE: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley* – Cure tribute.
NOVEMBER + THE MONGROLS + SHE CRIES + JAKE RUSH: *The City Tavern* – Local bands showcase.
RUBBER MONKEYS: *The Red Lion, Witney*
ZELEGA + SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT: *The Mill, Banbury* – Post-rock and electronica.
MARK BOSLEY: *The Magic Café (1pm)*

SUNDAY 15th

KELLY'S HEROES: *The Red Lion, Witney*
BEARD MUSEUM with LAMORNA WINKS: *Purple Turtle* – Gentle pop pleasures at the first Beard Museum night of 2006.
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: *The Old School House*

MONDAY 16th

KING B BLUES BAND: *The Bullingdon* – Live blues rock.
TEDDY THOMPSON: *The Zodiac* – Son of English folk legends Richard and Linda Thompson Teddy follows a more Americanised style of pop, taking in traditional country and Californian guitar pop, while his new album features collaborations with both Rufus and Martha Wainwright.

TUESDAY 17th

BEDOUIIN SOUNDCLASH: *The Zodiac* – Hmm, a reggae-inflected pop band from Kingston, you say? Doesn't sound like such a bad thing, but this is Kingston, Ontario we're talking about here. Canadian popstrels Bedouin Soundclash are probably going to be huge in 2006, with their new single, a cover version of U2's 'New Year's Day' that sounds oddly, perhaps worryingly like a cross between Sting and Eddy Grant, but it's produced by Bad Brains' Darryl Jenifer, so there's an ounce of credibility about it.

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: *The Bullingdon*
OPEN MIC SESSION: *The Exeter Hall, Cowley*
THE DHARMA + THE EPSTEIN: *The Cellar* – Funky folk rock from The Dharma, plus country rocking from The Epstein.
DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC JAM NIGHT: *The City Tavern*

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Sat 14th The Obscure 8:30pm
Sun 15th TBC
Thu 19th Rebecca Mosley / Ally Craig 8:30pm
Fri 20th Krissy Matthews 8:30pm
Sat 21st Agents of Jane / Lee Davies 8:30pm
Sun 22nd Electric Jam 8:00pm
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Saturday 28th

CORROSION OF CONFORMITY / CLUTCH: The Zodiac

Corrosion of Conformity return to the UK after the cancellation of their September 2005 tour due to the personal effects of Hurricane Katrina, and this time round there's the added bonus of legendary US metal experimentalists Clutch, a band now 12 years, six albums and over 2,000 gigs old; their most recent is the diverse and elaborate 'Blast Tyrant', but it's as a live band that they've earned their cult status, having toured with just about every metal and hardcore band worth their salt. Corrosion of Conformity, meanwhile, are a lesson in resilience as, twenty years after their birth in the depths of North Carolina, the punk-metal crossover pioneers find themselves considered one of the most influential heavy rock bands around. Formed in the early 80s by guitarist Woody Weatherman, and massively influenced by Black Flag, they were one of the first bands to cross-breed punk's speed and politicised aggression with metal riffs and melody. Despite quickly becoming favourites on the American underground scene, they never achieved their potential, mainly due to the internal instability of the band, but with a shift of sound through thrash and stoner-rock to today's slowed-down uber-metal with its southern rock grooves, they've managed to drag fashion back towards them, inspiring the likes of Kyuss in the process. Breakthrough album 'Deliverance' found them supporting Metallica on a world tour, while new album 'In The Arms Of God' finds their Sabbath-esque brand of heaviness very much the sound of the moment.

WEDNESDAY 18th

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd

PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar

THURSDAY 19th

REBECCA MOSELY + ALLY CRAIG: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Double bill of two of Oxford's most promising young singer-songwriters.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND

FOLK NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With Latin guitar duo Los Hombres.

TRUE RUMOUR: The Port Mahon – Considered 80s-style pop in a Blue Nile vein.

THE THUMB QUINTET + RICHARD

WALTERS + BELA EMERSON: The Cellar – Folktronica from The Thumb Quintet, mixing up Four Tet and Pentangle, plus Jeff Buckley-inspired support from the very excellent Richard Walters.

JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern
BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush
SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks
SABOTAGE: The Zodiac
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

FRIDAY 20th

ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN: The New Theatre – *Stars In Their Eyes* winner Gary Mullen does his best Freddie impersonation as he runs through the greatest hits.

THE LUCIDA CONSOLE + MAI MAYO MAI: The Wheatsheaf – Post-hardcore rock from Halifax's Lucida Console, newly signed to Must Destroy Rock Records and mixing up ponderous psychedelic whimsy with blistering feedback frenzies in a vaguely Mogwai style. New local jazzy math-core hopefuls Mai Mayo Mai support.
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
KRISSY MATTHEWS: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Live blues and rock.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
REDOX: The Magdalen Arms
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar

SATURDAY 21st

LIVE MUSIC ALL-DAYER: The Port Mahon – An unplugged Goldrush headline today's all-day live music bunfest, along with The Epstein, The Walk Off, Dusty Sound System, The View, At Risk, Smokers Die Younger, Los Diablos, Ady Davey, Rebecca Mosley, Chris Beard and David Fullbrook.

WINNEBAGO DEAL + WINTERS + COBRA + 20/20 VISION: The Zodiac – After spending much of last year touring the world as two-thirds of Nick Oliveri's Mondo Generator, the two Bens play a hometown gig in the guise we know them best. You want speed, volume, sonic violence, songs about whisky and fighting and no daft fripperies like bass guitars to get in the way of the mayhem? Well here's Winnebago Deal. They rock. Loudly. And at a great speed. Support from chums Winters as well as Ben Perrier's brother's band Cobra and new local metal hopefuls 20/20 Vision.

CLYNDERSOUND + BLINDSIGHTED + KANED CITIZEN: The City Tavern – Unsigned bands showcase from Delicious Music with Black Country rockers Clyndersound headlining.

AGENTS OF JANE + LEE DAVIES: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night.

BEAVER: The Red Lion, Witney

PHILIP KING & PENNY MOORE: The Magic Café (1pm)

SUNDAY 22nd

THE ACADEMY IS... + PANIC! AT THE DISCO + THE JUNIOR VARSITY: The Zodiac – Rigor mortis-inducing pop-punk from Chicago's depressingly popular The Academy Is... coming to the UK to promote thrilling new single, 'Slow Down'. Support comes from fellow Fuelled By Ramen signings Panic! At The Disco, who sound a bit like a cross between the mellower bits of QOTSA and Good Charlotte. It's already sold out so nothing we can say is going to spoil the evening for everyone involved, but it does make us wonder long and hard about falling standards of taste amongst young people.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House

DEAD MEN'S SHOES: The Red Lion, Witney

ELECTRIC JAM: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

MONDAY 23rd

DOCTOR A'S BLUES BAND: The Bullingdon – Laidback country blues and ragtime from the guitarist and keyboard player and his extensive backing band.

THE BULLY WEE BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 24th

DAMO SUZUKI + SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT: The Wheatsheaf – Legendary former-Can frontman teams up with Oxford improv supergroup – see main preview

DRAGONFORCE: The Zodiac – Now that's what we call a proper metal band name. Even better, Dragonforce's new album is called 'Sonic Firestorm'. It's like the last fifteen years in heavy metal's evolution never happened. Which, when you consider the likes of Limp Bizkit, might not be such a bad thing. Here is the new face of classic melodic speed metal: expect lots of hair, hooks big enough to land blue whales and even more hair.

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC JAM NIGHT: The City Tavern

Tuesday 31st

TEST ICICLES: The Zodiac

Hey ho, here we go again. Test Icicles have been the name on the lips of every London scenester and eager young A&R pup over the past few months. This despite being bottled off while supporting Domino labelmates The Arctic Monkeys. That's Domino the label who signed the band and then promptly told them to go away and write some better songs. But, hey, it's all about the danger, innit? And admittedly there's been bit of that with Anglo-American trio Test Icicles, the band with the worst name of the year: keyboard player Devonte Hynes collapsed on stage after severing a toe on a broken bottle, while guitarist Rory Atwell suffered a broken nose stage-diving during a gig. The stuff that rock history books are written about, obviously. The musically is equally suspect in the danger stakes: recent single, 'Boa Vs Python' was petulant and splenetic enough, mixing up a spittle-flecked brew of post-punk funk, digital hardcore and hip hop but, like Selfish C*nt, Test Icicles aren't quite the revolution they wish to be. It's probably all ironic of course, and for now at least, the capital's fashionistas decree that Test Icicles are almost painfully cool. But will we remember the name, or anything else about them, in a year's time?



WEDNESDAY 25th

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC

NIGHT: **Far From The Madding Crowd**

GIGSWAP UK NIGHT: **The Wheatsheaf**

THURSDAY 26th

BLEEDING THROUGH: The Zodiac – Orange County's eyeliner-caked metalcore savages hit town to coincide with the release of new album, 'The Truth' on Trustkill, the follow-up to breakthrough opus, 'This Is Love, This Is Murderous', displaying all that can be right about American metal: taking its cure from Scandinavian doomsters like At The Gates and The Haunted, as well as fellow American thrash bands like Lamb Of God it's brutal, cathartic noise that mixes up melodic, technical riffage with intense breakdowns and screaming vocals from former-18 Visions and Throwdown chappie Brandon Scieppati. Thus far Bleeding Through have supported AFI and Cradle Of Filth as well as joining 2004's Ozzfest bill and last year's Warped tour, and 2006 looks like the year their lyrically vicious racket goes mainstream.

PETER MOORE: The Port Mahon – Script frontman Peter does his solo thing.

DENISE MARIE: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd – With The Jazz Emporium.

FLIPRON + BLACK ALLER SCREENS + THE MONEYSHOTS: The Cellar – Unhinged, slightly wacky rock from Flipron, plus Jam-inspired New Wave from Ireland's Black Alley Screens.

JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

FRIDAY 27th

PART CHIMP + TODD + LORDS + HEY COLOSSUS: The Wheatsheaf – A night of extreme volume and splendid noise, from Oxfordbands.com – see main preview

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with HOLIDAY STABBINGS + POPULAR WORKSHOPS + MARK SOLLIS: The Zodiac – GTI mixes up the styles once again with a headline set from Oxford's most uncompromising noise merchants, Holiday Stabbings – punishing, effects-heavy dissonant hardcore sound destructors in the vein of Swans. Support comes from London art-rockers Popular Workshops, who feature assorted former members of Querelle, Xmas Lights and Tiger Club, plus local blues balladeer Mark Sollis.

THE LEGENDARY BOOGIEMEN: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Live blues and boogie from the local stalwarts.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 28th

CLUTCH + CORROSION OF

CONFORMITY: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Cult metal titans return after last year's forced cancellation – see main preview

THE RESEARCH + MONO TAXI + THE ONE THREE: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Wakefield's sweetly shambolic indie losers The Research shamble into town to plug

new single, 'The Way You Used To Smile', managing to make a crappy old Casio keyboard and an out-of-tune recorder go a long way, while recalling the spirit of indie pop circa-1986. Support comes from similarly-minded Anglo-French lo-fi wombles Mono Taxi, adding a playful pop twist to Yo La Tengo and Sonic Youth. The One Three, meanwhile are something of a supergroup, featuring Morrissey's current guitarist Boz Boorer alongside former Frigid Vinegar chaps Alex Lusty, Brett Gordon and John Halliday, plus Zodiac sound engineer and one-time bassist for Sinead O'Connor, Spike Nosurname.

KOHOUTEK: The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Indie rock action from the local tryers.

GREEN ONIONS + NOT MY DAY +

PAWEŁ KUTURBA: The City Tavern – Local bands showcase from Delicious Music including a Joe Satriani tribute from guitarist Paweł Kuturba.

LIVE JAZZ: The Bullingdon

W.A.M.: The Red Lion, Witney

SUNDAY 29th

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + THE THUMB QUINTET + DAN GLAZEBROOK & JOSIE WEBBER: The Port Mahon (5pm) – Launch gig for the new monthly Pindrop Performances club night, showcasing some of the best underground avant-folk and electronica bands around. Tonight's headliners are Turkish folk-meets-early jazz and blues combo Brickwork Lizards. Support from local electro-folk trio The Thumb Quintet, mixing up acid folk with ambient electronics, plus funky left-wing folksters Dan and Josie.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC

SESSION: The Old School House

BEARD MUSEUM with TONE MASONS

+ STILLMAN: Purple Turtle

CAT & FIDDLE: The Red Lion, Witney

MONDAY 30th

PETE BOSS & THE BLUEHEARTS: The Bullingdon – Clapton-esque blues rocking from the Oxford guitar veteran.

TUNNG + JAKOKOYAK + SKOUD: The Port Mahon – Esoteric night of music from acts whose names you won't find in any dictionary. Electronica and pastoral English folk come together in downbeat style from Tunng, while Wales' Jakokoyak, fresh from supporting Super Furry Animals in Japan, mixes up The Beta Band, Air and Aphex Twin. Swedish-based Russian drummer Simon Koudriavtsev, meanwhile, drifts elegantly in the style of Múm and Boards of Canada.

THE STRAWBS: Nettlebed Folk Club – 60s folk-rock faves continue their pastoral prog journey.

TUESDAY 31st

TEST ICICLES + HELP SHE CAN'T

SWIM + SAMN ARMS: The Zodiac –

Hip hop and digital hardcore mash-up from the London trendies – see main preview

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY

QUINTET: The Bullingdon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC JAM

NIGHT: The City Tavern

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Sun 8th **STEVE DEGUTIS**

Fri 13th *tbc*

Sat 14th **RUBBER MONKEYS**

Sun 15th **KELLY'S HEROES**

Fri 20th **80s DISCO**

Sat 21st **BEAVER**

Sun 22nd **DEAD MEN'S SHOES**

Fri 27th *tbc*

Sat 28th **W.A.M**

Sun 29th **CAT & FIDDLE**

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LIVE

GET CAPE WEAR CAPE FLY / CHINESE FINGER TRAP / SECOND SMILE / ITCH

The Bullingdon

Kicking off tonight's Big Scary Monsters showcase are Itch, a band that has been creating a fair few ripples of interest recently. It's easy to see why; they have a pretty unique sound that somehow manages to blend rootsy Americana with furious sections of noise. The guitar lines frequently give way to squalls of noise, leaving the burly bass lines to drive the melodies that their songs have in spades. There are frequent changes in tempo, mood and direction that are handled with such gracious aplomb that it would be inaccurate to call the band 'angular'. It does, however, seem to be right to call them a very exciting prospect.

Chinese Finger Trap seem to be suffering from a distinct lack of volume. Their take on punk (for which read The Stooges) should be stripping the paint from the walls. Singer Dale is cutting his best Iggy shapes all over the stage but seems to only be able to do a passable Emo Phillips impression. Sadly

with the sound against them, it's about the only impression they're able to make.

Following the beautifully layered intricacies, but again woefully quiet, emo of Second Smile is Get Cape Wear Cape Fly. Just one man, an acoustic guitar and a laptop, Get Cape (Sam Duckworth to his mum) calls to mind Damien Rice and local players Thumb Quintet. In essence, these are songs that stick to the basics, which means that politically-charged songs like 'Glass Houses' and the aching ballad 'Chronicles of A Bohemian Teenager' find their targets easily, whilst also becoming heart-warming singalongs. It helps of course that Sam's voice is warm, raspy and charged with a sense of feeling that the likes of James Blunt wish they had. Get Cape has songs that are intelligent, heartfelt and filled with a joyful exuberance; it won't be long until he's really flying.

Allin Pratt

BLUE KITE

The Bullingdon

There are some things about our fair city that are just so comforting. The bums standing round Bonn Square. Dead things hanging upside down in the covered market at Christmas time. Sheppard & Woodward. And bands like Blue Kite. Blue Kite have been around a while, but that's what makes them so reassuring. There's no messing around with gimmicks or too much subtlety. It's straight forward 80s pop. Lead singer Pete is dancing round the stage and everyone's giving it as much energy as they did in their first gig. And never mind the fact that the place is almost empty. This doesn't seem to phase them in the slightest.

The bass and drums really drive the band, giving Blue Kite their very big sound. Local stalwart Tim Turan is always trying something different and goes for some intricate changes and off beat rhythms – as on 'Chase Away The Moon'. Another local hero, Kate

Garrett, adds splashes of keyboards and flute and shares the singing with Pete. This works best on songs like 'Blues Kite' where she's an octave higher, or where they're harmonising. Otherwise, when they sing the same thing, it can feel like they're competing with each other to be heard. Kate's left to her own devices occasionally and on 'Disappointed' she really shines. The Cocteau Twins-like guitars swirl is still there and the song is reminiscent of any one of Crowded House's finest.

Their new single, 'Ways Of Knowing', is the highlight tonight: catchy piano riff and more swirling guitars. There's enough chorus effect to make Andy Summers turn in his grave. Oh wait. He's still alive. Blue Kite may have been around the block a few times but they show no signs of slowing down. Which makes Oxford that more a comfortable place to be.

Katy Jerome

NINESTONE COWBOY / JOFF WINKS /WHERE I'M CALLING FROM

The Zodiac

Oxford's old guard goes head to head with the new breed tonight and everyone's a winner. North Oxford newcomers Where I'm Coming From, initially at least, are a musical world away from their excellent demo of a few months back. There are odd, rambling passages that sound like Fleetwood Mac's 'Albatross' that jar oddly with harsh, blistered bursts of noise where Joy Division rub up against The Cure. These latter numbers promise so much in themselves, especially with singer Ben Osborne's cool, slightly lispy voice that sounds wonderfully like The Only Ones' Peter Perrett, but what marks them out are the darker, slower numbers, partway between Belle and Sebastian and Low, each emotionally charged but naïve and rough round the edges. A real treasure.

Joff Winks is another newcomer on the local scene but already sounds like a mature and accomplished songwriter and performer. Backed by a full-blooded rock band, his piano-led ballads maybe sound over-egged at times and could do with more room to breathe, but the way Joff treads the fine line between James Blunt-style emoting and Elton John-like showboating makes for an often enthralling show. There are funky excursions where the spectre of Steely Dan lurks, and more serene pop moments where Joff promises to drift off onto Mercury Rev's

lost highway, and it all points to a young man who's already approaching the top of his game.

Tonight the Oxford music old guard are represented by Ninestone Cowboy, the band formed by former-Candyskins guitarist Mark Cope, now expanded to include former members of Ride (drummer Loz Colbert), Medal (guitarist Mark Willis) and Unbelievable Truth (guitarist Jim Crosskey and bassist Jason Moulster). In parochial terms it's a supergroup but it's neither indulgent nor lazy. Mark's songs are mostly bitter-sweet, 30-something angst poems about drinking. Like ATL?, whose song title gave them their name, Ninestone Cowboy infect a pure pop heart with an inventive and eclectic array of influences, while always remaining irresistibly simple. There's the rousing, carouselling, synth-led 'Groupies Need Love Too', a tear-stained drinking anthem in itself, and 'Where Do We Go From Here', which bathes Phil Spector's wall of sound in a sleepwalking indie rock fuzz. Forthcoming debut single, 'Son Of Elvis', meanwhile, is the big, harmony-drenched sunshine showstopper that so many bands spend a lifetime trying to write. If, on tonight's evidence, the kids weren't already so far down the road to pop accomplishment, Ninestone Cowboy would be the perfect guides.

Dale Kattack

THE SEQUINS

The Wheatsheaf

You'd think that the very mention of another new band influenced by the late 80s would be as welcome as a group hug in a burns unit. Not so, pop-pickers. In the recent past only a few record companies have dabbled delicately in the arena of pre-Madchester indie-archness, but lately they've been going for it, like a hungry mutt for a bone. The Sequins, a lively five-piece from Coventry, have all the hyper-catchy impudence of a tweedy JCR college band, who could once again give punk geekdom a good name. Like a weird science of Joy Division playing 'Walking On Sunshine' or Johnny Marr joining The Undertones, it all works splendidly, mostly due to singer Hywel Roberts' compelling but understated stage presence: think Stephen Fry's baby brother who

sounds like a world-weary Feargal Sharkey. His urgent, sensitive vocals are counterpointed by some sensational body swerving antics from barefoot guitarist Justin Hui.

Sold-out single, 'Nobody Dreams About Me', on Tough Love Records, is a three minute pop sigh of wonderful sing-along deftness and African township riffs, guaranteed to have students everywhere flinging themselves out of windows, while staccato tales of besottedness and jealousy in 'Happy Chappie' and 'Dear Uncle Bill' bear more than a passing modish nod to their hometown's skanking past, holding a high speed Nizlopi beachparty. The Sequins have the unique ability to break your heart *and* pogo at the same time. Now that is worth a hug.

Paul Carrera

SOUKOUS KOUMBELE

The Zodiac

Soukous Koumbele turn the Zodiac into an African dance hall tonight. In doing so they convey that their music is bound up with a culture where people dance themselves into a pleasurable state to escape daily troubles.

Promoters Big Village are rewarded with a good turn out on a cold night. The band's and the crowd's tacit agreement to have a good time means the place is buzzing from the off, though the crowd can't have understood any of the vocals unless they're fluent in Lingala.

Leader Koko Kanyinda, conga drummer and singer, is a survivor from that generation of Congolese musicians who played Cuban-influenced rumba African style. This music has been on a journey in time as well as distance from Africa to Cuba and back. It was a major force in the Africa of the 1960s. Based now in London, Koko leads a band of several generations of Congolese musicians that is probably the only rival in Europe to Kekele in playing this dance music. A powerful squat man, Koko presides over both band and the crowd like a severe elder uncle with a soft centre: his stern expression periodically dissolved

into an enormous smile. The music is relentless, repetitive rhythm; you have to give yourself up to it not only with your ears but with your body. With three guitars working with the drumming, the sound is similar to Zimbabwean township music, but with a more trance-like feel. The playing is self-effacing, the emphasis on the collective sound and with virtually no solos. Koko's brilliant, masterful ten-minute solo spot, is different to most of the gig. The rhythms are more purely African. He switches briefly from congas to the African traditional djembe drum, and there's a magic passage when he lays a different counterpoint drum rhythm over the chants from the audience.

Singer Jose Ndelo's voice is also impressive. He's joined by two young female dancers whose moves leave you wondering how they could do that without injuring themselves. While Soukous Koumbele don't quite reach the exceptional intensity and musical interest of Ska Cubano's storming of the Zodiac, they're not far behind which shows what a great gig tonight really is.

Colin May

WHIP / STAFRAENN HAKON / LAST OF THE REAL HARDMEN,

The Port Mahon

Last of the Real Hardmen is the name for the solo offshoot of the prodigious Chris Summerlin, luminary of such obliquely wondrous outfits as Reynolds, Wolves! Of Greece and the mighty Lords. Refreshingly, it shows a completely different side to his other projects: lambent acoustic explorations are backed up by nothing more sophisticated than tape loops of birdsong or swirling drones. For all its apparent simplicity, there's a depth and subtle complexity to the playing that lends each of these pieces depth and spirit, and stretches the overall effect far beyond the ostensible limitations imposed by one man on a guitar stool. Lovely stuff.

The only slight disappointment on this evening of solo performances comes from Stafrænn Hákon, whose vaporous songs don't really solidify and come together tonight as we know they can. Too often, things build to a certain height and

level off before they reach the spine-tingling peaks of which we know he's capable. Moments are rapturously heartwarming, but these peaks are cold comfort alongside the excellence of the rest of the evening.

By contrast, Whip, looking every inch the travelling troubadour, is armed with only the basic elements of a singer-songwriter, and strips off all the protective layers encasing his songs to leave just the bare heart beneath. For all the lyrical professions to godlessness, it's real 'can I get a witness' stuff, concentrated bursts of melancholy at home in such rare company as Smog, and offering a devotional for those of us feeling the chill of winter creeping in. He's an accomplished guitarist, but it's his cracked drawl, part Will Oldham and with a hint of early Stipe, that sets the room alight, even though it's a dark kind of light to send us on our way home.

Stuart Fowkes.

ESKIMO DISCO / TRADEMARK / SCRIPT

The Exeter Hall

Tonight's warm-up gig for Gappy Tooth Industries' Winter Warmer Weekend is electronica in its broadest sense, with a decidedly eclectic line-up.

Local quintet Script have a female-male vocal dynamic which weaves around epic keyboard parts to produce something rather beautiful. Think The Magic Numbers covering Muse. The guitar leads more than the keyboard, which is a shame, as it makes them sound more folksy and obscures some of the winsome tunes and chord progressions. Some of their songs are either too short or end in seemingly inappropriate places, which jars somewhat. It's all an appealing jumble, though they could maybe do with a little more polish to define their sound.

It's a mystery that Trademark aren't more widely known. They are perfect synth-pop; the newer stuff they play tonight (especially 'Where You Went Wrong' and 'Stuck in a Rut') is more poppy and commercial than their earlier darker and moodier stuff, but still an exquisite example of the craft,

and still exhibits their early 80s musical roots. Oli is an animated frontman, in contrast to his enigmatic Kraftwerk-esque bandmates, and they have the whole package sorted, from the suits to the plug logo. Lovely.

London-based Eskimo Disco are one of those bands that have the pomp before the fame, but that may not necessarily be a bad thing: their swagger is compelling. They're heading for the space-rock category, evoking Daft Punk, Blondie, Stevie Wonder and even Junior Senior without falling into the Babylon Zoo trap. There's a hint of Bowie, especially (ironically?) on 'Japanese Girl' and the whole thing is flamboyant and fun, even the cover of 'The Final Countdown'. 'Picture Perfect' would be a fantastic plaintive pop song if it weren't for the distracting talking bits and self-indulgent guitar solo, while 'What is Woman' is the best song Giorgio Moroder never wrote. No doubt the Franz Ferdinand fans will discover them soon.

Kirsten Etheridge

the port mahon

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

AND NO STAR

If there's one thing Oxford's proved itself more than capable of producing in recent years, it's instrumental rock bands. From Nought, through The Rock Of Travolta to Youth Movie Soundtrack Strategies and The Edmund Fitzgerald, the compulsion to dispense with vocal niceties and explore your inner prog-rocker has always been close to the surface. So here is the next generation, Wantage teenage noise-makers And No Star, named, appropriately enough, after half a Sonic Youth album title. They follow a very direct lineage from predecessors YMSS and The Edmund Fitzgerald, mixing up almost jazzy fretplay with post-hardcore contortions and the odd pastoral passage of self-contemplation. And No Star seem to prefer the considered approach, tending to abruptly end tracks as soon as they're at risk of exploding in a ball of overdriven guitar bluster. At times there's even a 60s acid folk feel to tracks like 'Handclaps and Heckles', while elsewhere they call to mind both Billy Mahonie and forgotten 4AD signings Dif Juz, although at their most abrasive they're closer to Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element without the punishing electronics. They've even got the requisite overlong, self-consciously clever song titles and maybe they need to find a bit more of their own identity, but they're very young and this demo is a cracking, accomplished debut.

ASHER DUST

Asher's previous offering was a Nightshift demo of the month, a lo-fi mix of intelligent rap, Streets-y urban electronica and ragga, and while this new four-song CD never quite reaches the heights of the last one, he remains an artist who is always interesting to listen to. Again here Asher mixes up the personal and the political, rapping in a semi-whispered, breathless style that's so different to the soulful voice he adds to Big Speakers and other projects. The personal is most apparent in 'Brave Face' which, while musically nothing like The Streets, does echo 'Dry Your Eyes' lyrically over a nursery rhyme-simple melody and sombre, synthetic string backing. 'Bully Bwoy' is a tale of exacting extremely physical revenge over an old school tormentor, although you

wonder how this hangs with Asher's message of peace in 'Show Some Love', an expletive-drenched extortion for the UK hip hop massive to ditch their faux-gangsta posturing. What would probably help Asher most is greater attention to production and mixing since there's a fair amount of distortion here that isn't intentional. Still, the guy remains a genuinely maverick presence on the local scene.

RETRIBUTION

As ever, faced with a band of enthusiastic young lads, all in their mid-teens, Nightshift starts to turn into a kindly old uncle and has to try hard not to be condescending, but it seems like Abingdon's Retribution don't need to be patronised. Musically they're already sorted – a very tight four-piece rock unit. Like fellow youngsters And No Star, they're an instrumental band, but that's where any similarity ends, choosing the righteous path of old school heavy metal, kicking off at a merry old pace and whizzing through their Iron Maiden and Thin Lizzy licks with gay abandon. The formula continues across three tracks and you wonder what they can do over a full set, or what they'll be like when they're cranked up live and loud. Being young teenage lads of course, they've forgotten to supply titles for any of their tracks; too busy vandalising bus shelters or trying to nick cans of Stella from the local mini-mart, no doubt. Sorry, was that patronising?

RAWLINS

A band formed by Brookes student Alex Rawlins and his brother Digby, whose previous job was as the biggest dog in the world. Initially they sound like yet another band from the school of overwrought, shambolic indie rock, but repeat listening reveals a band who, deep beneath the mess have a reasonable grasp of melody, albeit mid-1980s radio-friendly AOR melody. Well, for one song at least, 'Futures', although even here there's a worrying tendency for the singer to start shouting the more emotional he gets. Careful there fella, that's the first step down the road to domestic violence. Elsewhere there's some lightweight cod-reggae on 'Nick Harper', for which we must blame The Police (although The Police did write some ace pop songs in this vein, like 'Message In A Bottle', and that one about Sue Lawley). But by the end they're close to exhausting any last drop of sympathy from us, the

crashing drums, overdriven keyboards and over-emotional vocals all pointing to something unpleasant and odorous from 1985.

ORKO

"Your mission is to review the rock band ORKO. Your review must be honest, fair and thorough, with each song stripped, dissected and left in a bloody heap on top of your demo pile". So reads Orko's accompanying letter. Listen, sunshines, don't tell us *our* job! That's *our* job! Telling you *your* job, understand? As if Nightshift is ever anything less than honest, fair and thorough. How about we just say you're rubbish and leave it at that? Okay, maybe not, because you're not rubbish, just a bit formulaic in a noisy side of emo kind of way, coming in midway between Hell Is For Heroes and Hundred Reasons. Frantic and shouty with loud bits and quiet bits and occasionally some stop-start bits for a bit of variety. All fun enough while it lasts but lacking enough of its own character to leave much of an impression. Any road up, there you go: middle of the pile, any problems with that, write to your MP.

ABSENCE

Oh great, an album-length demo of ambient noise from one bloke in his bedroom studio. We live for these moments. They make the time pass so much slowly and therefore make us feel like we're living longer. It's not so bad once you turn the lights off, to be honest. Mostly because Absence is the work of one Umair Chaudhrey, who seems to have booked himself a monthly residency in the demo pages (Oi, Umair – we're gonna start charging you rent at this rate, the advertisers are starting to get restless). As ever, Umair is best when he's doing the nasty industrial stuff, as on 'Internal Distraction', mixing up drones and ghostly synthetic human voices with passive tick-tock rhythms to gently punishing effect in the style of Coil or Fatrix. Further in there is funereal chamber music ('Fluctuation') and electronic drone-heavy spaghetti western soundtracking ('Less Than Perfect'), while the spacey, relaxed 'Lost In You' is pure Vangelis. Ambient music, for the most part, exists beyond criticism since it merely seeks to provide background noise, and while you're unlikely to hear Absence seeping from an elevator speaker any time soon, it possesses enough substance to justify its existence, without the genuine menace of much of Umair's previous works.

SOJOURNER FLEET

Oh Christ, here's another of those embarrassing press letters: "Sojourner Fleet

is a new band for the UK. Formed in the first quarter of 2005, the four members seek to carve a unique sound from a wide variety of influences. Described as 'a timeless sound' their music is a bit of everything drawn from the flotsam and jetsam of experience. There are stories involved. There is a gentle touch and twisted vice, complete abandon and then a mouth organ. Cutting from intense screams to nursery rhyme melodies, the mood shifts rapidly through song and set". Sorry, but what utter, meaningless, pretentious fucking bloody bollocks was all that about? It means NOTHING. Except that the writer has his head trapped between the buttocks of a member of the local amateur literary circle. God we want to hate this band. But they're just not quite bad enough. Clumsy and half-hearted for sure but maybe there are the seeds of a decent band here, with their mix of 60s Californian pop, alt.country and shoegazing indie rock. It's more of an untidy mess than the thrilling genre collision it could be but if Sojourner Fleet can strip away the bits that don't fit and decide what they really want to be, they're a decent enough prospect. Any more crap like that press release though and we'll take yer bleedin' heads off, y'hear?

THE DEMO DUMPER

NIK LLOYD

And just when we thought we'd calmed down, here comes Nik Lloyd to make us cross again. Nik is a singer-songwriter who has been playing since he was nine years old. You'd think he'd have got better in all that time. Instead he's spent those years listening to all the wrong music and picking up some bad habits. This demo sounds like the work of a former minor member of Boyzone, or an *X Factor* runner-up's Christmas ballad, soaked in tasteful layers of piano and synthetic strings, Nik's nasal vocals and mawkishly sentimental lyrics providing the final coating of asinine pop sludge. There isn't a single part of this demo that doesn't sound like it was glued together by the accounts department of some sinister sub-division of Sony/BMG. Really, this makes Jamie Cullum sound like Lemmy. Talking of which, had Lemmy accidentally spawned Nik Lloyd during some inebriated backstage tryst, and then seen him grow up into this, the ultimate rebellion against his rock and roll father, he'd doubtless have slung him in a sack along with a few bricks and headed for the nearest canal. That or stopped his pocket money so he couldn't buy any more sodding Blue albums.

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?

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Mon 16 TONY THOMPSON
A THE MURDERER • MURDER • MURDER
Tue 17 BLOODHOUND SOUNDCLASH
A MURDERER
Sat 21 MURDERER DEAL
A MURDERER • MURDER • MURDER
Tue 24 DRAGONFORCE
A MURDERER
Thu 26 BLEEDING THROUGH
A MURDERER
Fri 27 THE HOLIDAY STARRING
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Sat 28 CORROSION OF CONFORMITY
A MURDERER
A MURDERER • MURDERER
Sat 28 THE HERANCH
A MURDERER • MURDERER • MURDERER
Tue 31 TEST KICKER
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February

Sat 4 BE YOUR OWN BOSS
Mon 6 I DON'T PLAY
Fri 10 TO THE MOON
Mon 13 HIDDEN IN PLAIN VIEW
Tue 14 JULIAN COPE
Tue 14 MORNING MURDER
Thu 16 THE PADDINGTON
Thu 16 BRIGGS SPENTON
Sat 18 THE YOUNG KNIVES
Mon 19 THE BOY LEAST LIKELY TO
Mon 20 FRIENDS
Thu 23 JOHNNY THUMP
Sat 25 LOVE'S KEY
Sat 25 MURDERER
Sat 26 THE RIFLE

Thu 03 LOW HIDDEN
Sat 05 BATTLE
Sun 06 MURDERER
Mon 08 CAFE IN
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