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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 128  
March  
2006

From smalltown

# BELARUS

To bigtime

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# NEWS

**Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**  
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**LOCAL BANDS** have until March 15<sup>th</sup> to submit demos for this year's Oxford Punt. The Punt, organised by Nightshift Magazine, takes place across six venues in Oxford city centre on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May and will showcase 18 of the best new unsigned bands and artists in the county. Bands and solo acts can send demos, clearly marked The Punt, to Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Bands who have previously made their reputations early on at the Punt include The Young Knives and Fell

## STEVE GORE 1965-2006

Steve Gore, bass player with local ska-punk act The Drug Squad, has died after a battle with cancer. Steve had been a popular character on the Oxford music scene for many years, playing bass for Swim The Atlantic, Pickitupandkickit and Goodbye Jane before he joined The Drug Squad. His illness was diagnosed shortly after the band played one of the highlight sets of last summer's Truck Festival.

Gary Good, sax player with The Drug Squad and a friend of Steve's for twenty years told Nightshift: "Steve was the nicest bloke you could ever know and we're all going to miss him. In all the time I'd known him he never said a bad word about anyone. He was the sort of bloke who would never let you down – even if he had to play three gigs in one day with different bands. He was a great musician who could play any style and would always fit in with every band."

Steve's wife Julia gave birth to triplets in December and Nightshift extends its deepest sympathy to them all and his many friends. A benefit gig for Heads Up, the charity helping people diagnosed with cancer of the head or neck, is currently being organised in Steve's memory.



City Girl. This year's line-up will be announced on the Nightshift website noticeboard and on [Oxfordbands.com](http://Oxfordbands.com) on March 16<sup>th</sup>.

All-venue Punt passes are now on sale from Polar Bear Records on Cowley Road or online from [oxfordmusic.net](http://oxfordmusic.net). As ever there will only be 100 passes available, priced at £7 each (plus booking fee).

**TRUCK FESTIVAL** 2006 tickets are now on sale nationally after being made available to Oxfordshire music fans only at the start of February. Tickets for the two-day festival at Hill Farm, Steventon over the weekend of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> July are priced at £40 and are on sale from the Zodiac box office, Polar Bear Records, Windjammer Music in Didcot, Dawson's Music in Abingdon, The Music Box in Wallingford and Rapture in Witney. Festival updates are available online at [www.truckfestival.org](http://www.truckfestival.org).

**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC** have announced their spring programme. Amongst the highlights is a performance by Senegalese musician Nuru Kane at the Zodiac on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> April, Bellowhead at Oxford Town Hall on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> April as part of the Oxford Folk Festival, plus live music events at Modern Art Oxford including Sleeps With Oysters (Thurs 13<sup>th</sup> April) and John Etheridge and Dylan Fowler (Thurs 4<sup>th</sup> May). Full details of all OCM events can be found at [www.ocmevents.org](http://www.ocmevents.org)

**AUDIOSCOPE 2005** raised over £3,000 for the homeless charity Shelter. The two-day festival at the Zodiac featured headline sets from Four Tet and Luke Vibert and brings the total amount raised by Audioscope over the past five years to well over £12,000. This year's event is in the process of being organised; in the meantime people are encouraged to visit Shelter's website at [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk) to participate in the charity's Give It Up event, raising money to help homeless people while giving up a bad habit for one day.

**AKUABA RECORDS** continues to release new singles by up and coming Oxford bands on their monthly singles club. Recent releases have featured Jaberwok and Tinderbox, with new singles by Smilex and King Furnace coming soon. All Akuaba releases are available from HMV Oxford and Polar bear Records or online from [www.akuaba-records.co.uk](http://www.akuaba-records.co.uk).

**AS EVER**, don't forget to tune into The Download each Saturday evening at 6pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.1fm. The long-running local music show showcases the best new Oxfordshire music and features interviews, gig reviews, club listings and demo reviews. You can listen to the show all week on the BBC Radio Oxford website at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford)



**GARY NUMAN** plays his first Oxford show for 12 years when he appears at Brookes University Union on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> April. The synth-pop pioneer, who enjoyed a string of Top 10 hits and chart-topping albums, including 'Are Friends Electric' and 'Cars', has undergone a critical renaissance in recent years after being credited as a major inspiration by the likes of Nirvana, Beck, Blur, Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson. Most recently Sugarbabes had a number 1 hit with 'Freak Like Me', based on a sample of 'Are Friends Electric', while Armand Van Helden and Bassment Jaxx have also sampled Numan songs for Top 10 hits. Numan's new album, 'Jagged', is released this month on Cooking Vinyl. Tickets for the Brookes gig are on sale now, priced £16, from the Brookes box office (10865 484750) or online from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)

Other forthcoming gigs at Brookes include **Mogwai** (Sat 1<sup>st</sup> April), **The Rakes** (Sun 14<sup>th</sup> May) and **The Shins** (Mon 22<sup>nd</sup> May). Tickets for all events are available from the above sources.

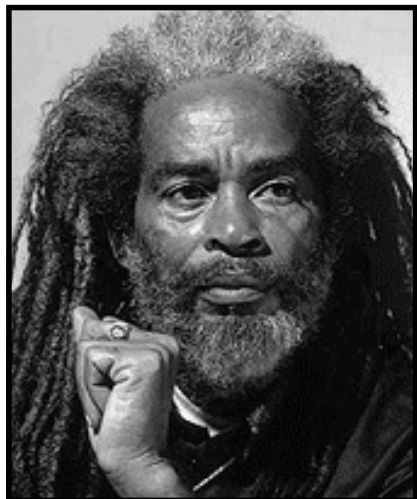
**THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA** return to live action this month when they play at the Cellar (Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> March). The band (pictured, below) have been quiet since the departure of founder member Phill Honey and keyboard player Dave Crabtree but have now recruited two new members, Matt Spooner, formerly of South Sea Company Prospectus, as well as cellist Jenny Bates. They join Joe, Jon and Handsome Dave, who are promising a host of new material and a fresher approach to songwriting, while retaining the core style of the band.



**BELLOWHEAD AND FLOOK** have been announced as the headline acts for this year's Oxford Folk Festival, which runs over the weekend of Friday 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April. Both bands will play at Oxford Town Hall with Bellowhead (*pictured*) topping the Saturday bill and Flook the Sunday. Other acts already confirmed for the third annual folk festival include Waterson: Carthy, Andy Irvine and Black Umfolosi. The festival has also been boosted by a £10,000 Arts Council grant to expand its free street entertainment programme which will centre on the new Oxford Castle Development and will feature marching melodeon band



Melomania and jazz-inflected street band Tongues Of Fire. Line up and ticket details are available online at [www.oxfordfolkfestival.com](http://www.oxfordfolkfestival.com).



**OXFORD WELCOMES** two genuine legends of Jamaican reggae to town this month. Eccentric vocalist and DJ Eek-A-Mouse plays at the Zodiac on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> March, while Max Romeo (*pictured*) performs at Skylarkin's reggae and ska extravaganza on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup>. Romeo enjoyed a single Top 10 hit in the UK in 1969 with 'Wet Dream', which was banned by Radio 1 at the time, but he is best known for his work with Lee 'Scratch' Perry in the 70s. Tickets for both gigs are priced £14 and are on sale from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)

**DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE's** gig at Brookes University Union is now completely sold out. The Washington State indie rockers (*pictured*) have enjoyed growing popularity in the UK with last year's 'Plans' becoming their biggest-selling album to date.

Meanwhile **Razorlight's** semi-secret gig at the Zodiac at the end of January became that venue's fastest ever sold out show, with tickets all gone within an hour of going on sale. Ex-Libertines frontman Carl Barat's new band, **Dirty Pretty Things**, meanwhile sold out their gig at the Zodiac on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March in just under a day. They will now return to Oxford on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April with a gig at Brookes University Union.

**Morrissey's** gig at the New Theatre on May 25<sup>th</sup> sold out in just over two hours on the day tickets went on sale. Tickets



went on sale at 9am on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January and by the afternoon were fetching up to £200 on ebay. Other local gigs sold out include **The Go! Team** at Brookes on Sun 5<sup>th</sup> March, **Graham Coxon's** show at the Zodiac on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March, and **Panic! At The Disco's** show at the Zodiac on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April. The Zodiac now has a ticket exchange and non-profit resale site on its website.

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Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> Shaker Heights + Transmission + Ben Dugard Door 8.30pm £3  
Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Lethal Comedy Store Door with Giggles, James & More Door 8pm £5  
Sun 5<sup>th</sup> Electric Jam - All welcome 8pm FREE  
Thu 9<sup>th</sup> Kitt + Matt Beasley 8.30pm FREE  
Fri 10<sup>th</sup> Tony Jezzard + Friends 8.30pm £3  
Sat 11<sup>th</sup> Sam Kelly's Station House Blues 8.30pm £3  
Sun 12<sup>th</sup> Wittstock Fund Raiser with Lagrima + New Moon + Anton Barbeau + Maeve Bayton 7.30pm £4  
Thu 16<sup>th</sup> Diverse Divas + support 8pm FREE  
Fri 17<sup>th</sup> Inflatables 8.30pm, £3  
Sat 18<sup>th</sup> Rip The Joint + Meat & Potatoes 8.30pm £3  
Sun 19<sup>th</sup> Electric Jam 8pm FREE  
Thu 23<sup>rd</sup> The Clerks + True Rumour 8.30pm £3  
Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Gerry Gillard + Anton Barbeau 8.30pm £3  
Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Mary's Garden + Skin + Fork 8.30pm £3  
Sun 26<sup>th</sup> Green Onions 8.30pm £3  
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# BELARUS

## YOU KNOW THE STORY

— a bunch of mates from the middle of nowhere form a band, play a few gigs, get spotted by the man behind one of the biggest bands the UK has produced, get a record deal and the next thing you know, there are people in the music industry and the national papers touting them as one of the bands to watch. Happens all the time, doesn't it?

No, of course it doesn't. It's a fairytale. Or maybe it isn't. Maybe you could ask Belarus. It's happening to them right now. Only it's never as simple, or as easy as the fairytale makes out.

For starters, very few bunches of mates who form bands can write epic, soaring anthems like Belarus can. Songs like 'A Silent Film', their intricately crafted, horn-drenched pocket battleship of a debut single, released on local indie label Star Harbour back in 2003. Or 'Standing In The Right Place', a billowing, sky-touching torch song, released this month on Precious Iota Records.

For another thing, few bands are prepared to put in the years of work that have seen Belarus grow and develop from workaday local indie rock tryers called Spacehopper, into the fully-formed band with chart-busting potential and enthusiastic notices in the Sunday papers.

## BELARUS FORMED AT THE

start of the decade in their hometown of Faringdon, that last outpost of Oxfordshire before you hit Wiltshire. The original line-up featured singer Lee Alder also playing drums, alongside guitarist Matt Kilford, keyboard player Martin Townsend and bassist Dave Corrigan; Lee quickly realised he was struggling to play a full set behind the kit so switched to a more traditional frontman role while Rich Millin took over the drumming role. Spacehopper were always popular — a small army of friends, neighbours and workmates regularly making the trip to Oxford's pub venues to watch the band — but over time word spread beyond their partisan following. Point promoter Mac sang their praises from early on and Nightshift was moved to state in one gig review that here was a band who should be writing the next national anthem.



## WITH THEIR LOCAL

popularity firmly established, Spacehopper got their big break. Andy Ross, the man who founded Food Records in the early 1990s and discovered and signed Blur, picked up on a demo CD the band had left at his offices weeks previously. With his experienced management skills behind them the band went to work in earnest. Eighteen months ago they changed their name to Belarus. The name change coincided with bassist Dave leaving to go travelling, to be replaced by Rich Voyce.

With his extensive music industry contacts, Andy Ross was able to drum up plenty of interest in Belarus and when a friend of his announced his intention to start up a new record label, Andy put Belarus forward for the label's first release. Already 'Standing In The Right Place' has garnered extensive reviews, and is the perfect launchpad for their debut album — recorded with producer Dave Eringa who has worked with The Manic Street Preachers and Ash — due for release in May.

## 'STANDING IN THE RIGHT

Place' is a solid statement of intent from Belarus, a good indicator of what the band is about and what they are capable of. They mix up delicate, deft melody writing with an instinctive leaning towards pop at its most epic. There may be some obvious and slightly lazy comparisons to Coldplay at times, but closer comparisons would include Feeder, Jeff Buckley and the hugely underrated Purescence, another band with a firm grasp of both epic rock dynamics and a

delicate, romantic pop touch. Live, Belarus are not just accomplished performers but also a band you just know could fill stadiums with their sound.

## NIGHTSHIFT SPOKE TO LEE,

Matt and Martin as the band put the finishing touches to the new album. The past 18 months or so must have been a pretty hectic and exciting time.

Martin: "The highlight for me was finally signing a record contract after so many years hard work, and recording the album."

Lee: "We've spent years striving towards recording an album, I think it's what most bands look forward to most; especially their debut album. When we knew that it was going to finally happen it felt like a huge weight lifted off our shoulders, then moments later we all had a moment of panic worrying about whether we had enough songs!"

Getting picked up by Andy Ross was a major boost. His connections and reputation in the music industry can only help a new, young band like Belarus.

Matt: "Rich our drummer dropped off a demo at Boss Music (Andy's label) and we never had a reply from them as to what they thought of the demo. But then we got a call out of the blue from them asking us to do a first on at 93 Feet East in London. I think he watched us for one song then staggered out. It took three more London gigs before he decided that he wanted to work with us, and I still remember him saying 'I can't begin to tell you how many things are wrong with your band, but here's what we are gonna do.'"

Martin: "That's right, he then went on to give us half an hour's rant on how we needed dub reggae bass lines in our songs; I still don't know whether he was being serious to this day."

Matt: "It's the first time really we've worked with someone whose opinion we value and respect; he achieved so much in the 90s with Food Records that we feel very privileged to have him on our side ... the Brit Pop Guru that he is."

Lee: "Andy and Jo at Boss Music have been great; they spent months working really hard to get the ball rolling for us with nothing in return, they just have complete faith in us and our music."

Tell us a bit about Precious Iota.

Matt: "Dave who runs the label used to play with Andy in a band years ago, Andy found out that Dave was starting this label so sent him some of our music. They heard the demo, saw us play a couple of times and said pretty much straight away that they wanted to work with us."

"To be honest it took a long time to finalise the deal as we had to appoint a lawyer before we could even start talking contracts. I remember Rich Voyce, our bass player, walking out of one of the meetings saying '6 months ago I wasn't even in the band, and now I have the same lawyer as Jimi Hendrix and The Who.'"

Lee: "It was really funny, our first meeting with our lawyer we were more impressed with their selection of biscuits than actually listening to what he had to say about the deal!"

Martin: "We are actually the first band signed to Precious Iota, hopefully not the last!"

## ONE BENEFIT OF HAVING

such a high-profile management team behind a band is they can get to work with some of the top producers, in Belarus' case Dave Eringa, who can bring out the best in a band in the studio.

Lee: "Being our first time working with a producer we were a tad nervous about making a bad choice, or potentially working with someone that didn't bring out the best in our sound. We had a pretty long list of names, all of which had positives and negatives, but in the end it simply came down to meeting

Dave for the first time. A couple of the lads met him for a drink and a chat, then he came down to our rehearsal rooms to get a better idea of our live sound and how we played together as a band. From the offset he was really excited about our songs and wanted to produce the album, his enthusiasm is what ultimately rubbed off on us."

Matt: "He got us to up the tempo of a few of the tracks which felt very weird to play at first, but in hindsight when we now listen to the old demos they sound like funeral marches. God, he had so many stories of the bands that he had worked with, one in particular involved the bass player in Starsailor, the lead singer of Nickleback and a real good hard kicking! Let's just say I have more respect for Starsailor after hearing that story."

Martin: "We started the album in October and it was completed about six weeks later; all credit to Dave and Sean Genockey for their hard work."

Lee: "Yeah, thinking back it's all a bit of a blur really as the schedule for recording the album was pretty intense, we had no time to really relax, the days were very long and we had to work extremely hard to meet the deadline. Don't get me wrong, it was great fun and we loved every minute of it, but my god I'm never working to a schedule like that ever again ... I don't know how Dave Eringa did it; the man doesn't sleep!"

#### WORDS MOST OFTEN ASSOCIATED

with Belarus' music would be epic, majestic, graceful and soaring; there's nothing timid or half-hearted about their songs and their confidence shines through.

Lee: "Last year I was on a writing mission, spent a lot of time locked away in my bedroom writing and recording demos. When I felt I had a song in a good place I would get the lads round to have a listen and within a few days we would get in the rehearsal rooms to take it further, work on the dynamics and details of the song. At the moment it's a process that really works for us and will always work for us, but getting better and more accomplished is all part of being in a band, and it would be great to have the opportunity to have our days free to write as a whole band together in one room."

Matt: "Even though one or two of us might start a song off, when it gets into the practice room everyone has their input and helps shape the song really."

Who would you say is the most epic band the world has ever seen?

Martin: "I remember watching 'Pink Floyd' at Earl's Court ... they could have retired epic from the Oxford Dictionary after that gig."

You tend to get compared with the likes of Coldplay, Snow Patrol et al. How do you feel about that?

Lee: "Doesn't bother me, you're gonna get compared to someone at the end of the day, I don't think we really sound like Coldplay but whatever really, if it's not them it will be someone else..."

Matt: "I don't think I've ever heard of a band that hasn't been pigeon-holed into

some genre or another, we've been compared to so many bands now over the years you kind of just smirk and go back to watching *Family Guy*."

Martin: "Lately any band in our genre automatically gets compared with Coldplay or Radiohead."

Do you feel there is any danger of maybe being seen as bandwagon jumpers on a certain sound, despite the fact you've been playing in this style for a few years?

Matt: "I'm glad you asked that ... when we play 'Colourless' people always say how it reminds them of Coldplay, but we were playing that before they were even around."

Lee: "So technically they sound like us, not the other way round."

Matt: "Damn right, the fact is we know the type of music we play, we'll be liked by a lot of people and I'm sure a lot of people will hate us, but that's music ... we love what we do and there's no point trying to be something we're not."

Martin: "We've always got bad reviews as well as good reviews, who doesn't? Even Nightshift gave us a good slating many years ago ... we probably deserved it, though."

#### HAILING FROM FARINGDON,

Belarus are pitched equidistant between Oxford and Swindon, towns with intense historical and footballing rivalries. At different times they've been referred to as an Oxford band and a Swindon band, but which do they relate to most?

Martin: "I'll have to sit on the fence with this one as I have fond memories of both. Most of my school friends have moved to Swindon and I spend a lot of my time there. I spent two great years at Oxford College, went some of the best raves ever during my time there!"

Lee: "I'm not a follower of football so I don't fully appreciate the rivalry thing ... I'm from Faringdon, and to be honest from a band point of view Swindon and Oxford have been as equally supportive. I don't think we've ever had any grief because of where we are from, and does it really matter anyway?"

Matt: "As most of us are from or have lived in Faringdon I think it has actually benefited us living in between and not taking a side as such. As a place Oxford has a lot more to offer, but like Martin I have a lot of friends in Swindon and lived a lot of my life there."

Maybe with their continued success Belarus could usher in a new age of mutual love and understanding between Oxford and Swindon; alternatively all-out war could break out as both sides claim them as their own. Having established themselves so strongly on the Oxford music scene over the past five years, we'll not be relinquishing our grip on Belarus for a while yet. And anyway, what are petty small-town rivalries anyway when you're aiming so much higher? Belarus then: big music and heading for the big time.

**'Standing In The Right Place' is out now on Precious Iota Records. Check out [www.belarus.mu](http://www.belarus.mu) for news and live dates.**

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## THE YOUNG KNIVES

### 'Here Comes The Rumour Mill'

*(Transgressive)*

There's a common thread running through The Young Knives' videos: the twin themes of being trapped (mostly in a staid working environment) and running (away from the shackles that bind them, towards a less prosaic world, usually full of fields and horses); in many ways they echo the dream sequences from Terry Gilliam's *Brazil*.

In 'Here Comes The Rumour Mill' the prison walls are made up of constant lies, gossip, conjecture and half truths. Perhaps it's merely the frustration of being stuck in the small pond mentality of the office jobs they've recently been able to escape, but more than that these themes seem to reflect The Young Knives' frustrations at the limitations of being in a band.

In last month's Nightshift interview they claimed they were a band that was always striving for the next level and this single bares that out, trying to stretch the walls of the three-minute guitar pop song, trying to infect it with



something very slightly sinister while keeping its fragile structure intact. The easy option is to simply kick down the walls and let the noise take over. The Young Knives are too good and too smart for that. Instead they wreak a far more subtle form of havoc and the result is another malformed gem of a song. And in the line "But at night he sleeps like a child", they've created one of those rare moments of pure pop perfection.

**Dale Kattack**

## DUSTY SOUND SYSTEM

### 'Days Of Splendor, Nights Of Horror'

*(Truck)*

If you want done something quickly, ask a busy man goes the old adage, and so it goes with Robin Bennett. Not content with fronting Goldrush as they continue to make inroads into the States, organising Truck Festival and being part of Truck Records, he managed to recruit a whole new band and write and record this mini album in the space of eight days in California.



Despite having recruited temporary bandmates from the ranks of The Warlocks and Brian Jonestown Massacre as well as fellow Truckee Piney Gir, it's no great surprise to find this debut is a raw country-folk outing. The incongruous barrelhouse blues stomp of album opener 'The One And Only Lost Boy' aside, this is the rootsy, unpolished flipside to the Goldrush coin. Robin's hushed, slightly gravelly delivery suits the more contemplative moments here, such as the basic, acoustic lament 'Nothing I Can't Do Without'; similarly the broken-hearted prairie folk of 'It Takes No Talent To Party'. The twin highlights of the album, though, come with 'Nation At War', an acoustic guitar and mouth organ-led protest song that is pure 60s Dylan, and the sweet bluegrass of 'I'm A Soldier' with Piney's delicious backing harmonies.

'As I Lay Dying' and 'You Can't Fool All The People' are stock filler, both sluggish and unremarkable, but at its best 'Days Of Splendor...' has the same home-made naivety and charm of the best underground country music.

**Ian Chesterton**

## MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM

### 'Distance Between Them'

*(Boreads Music)*

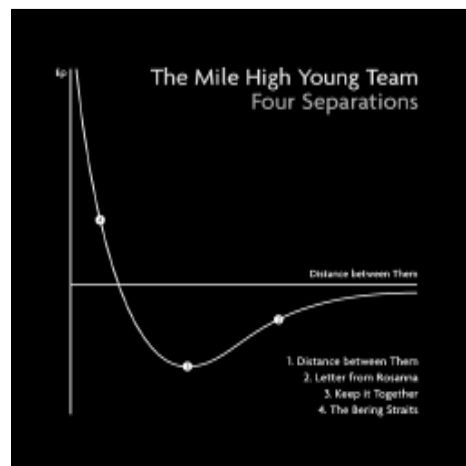
The barriers fell long ago but the ground between folk and pop is still ridden with pitfalls. In particular the trend in contemporary English folk music to polish all the rustic charm away with shiny modern pop production. Mile High Young Team's debut finds them picking a delicate path through this minefield. The band were formed by former-Bridge frontman Colin MacKinnon who here provides most of the music but takes a vocal backseat to Emily Aldworth Davis.

It's a lovingly crafted EP, everything sensitively, almost perfectly set in its place. But that's often the problem with such careful constructs – they can sound like they lost their soul along the way and it's difficult to warm to the tastefully graceful likes of 'Keep It Together', for all its imaginative use of cello and piano. On 'The Bering Straits' MHYT tip over to the right side of the line, Colin's rich Scottish accent adding a rootsy counterpoint to Emily's glacial tones.

But the winner here is the EP's lead track, a world-weary, country-tinged semi-acoustic lament with Emily's voice limpid and strident like The Mekons' Sally Timms and the whole thing nestling up to you in a similar style to the hugely underrated Tompaulin.

For all Colin's Scottish roots, it's a peculiarly English affair and if they can just forget their manners once in a while Mile High Young Team will go a lot further towards endearing themselves to us.

**Dale Kattack**



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## WITCHES

### 'In The Chaos Of A Friday Night'

*(Within The Woods)*

Eeebleee were one of the more unassumingly charming bands to come out of Oxford in recent times, with their glitchy, often bruising take on delicate folky pop. Since their split bassist Jo Edge has become more ensconced in The Evenings, while guitarist Ben Ulph concentrates on The Thumb Quintet. Eeebleee frontman Dave Griffiths, meanwhile, is only just re-emerging with his new outfit, Witches.

This debut release, following a couple of low-key live shows last year, is, if anything, an advance on Eeebleee's intricate sound. Relying heavily on synthesizers, Witches belie their gentle exterior with overt passages of noise, the title track cantering along on a Bo Diddley-style rhythm, replete with Mariachi trumpet, before climaxing in a flurry of distorted guitars and squalling horns. 'I Wish I Could Lead Your Life' is closer to Dave's old outfit, with his clear, angelic voice draped over a trickle of bubbling electronics, soft horn hum and piano, but 'Liked The Teacher's Hair' kicks in with some ferocity, like Nought reinterpreted for trumpet. And then it's back to the serene pop pool for the closing number. From Nought to Nick Drake, The Velvet Underground to Belle & Sebastian in the space of ten minutes. That's going some by any standards. Witches' magic, obviously.

**Dale Kattack**



## HARLETTE

### 'Don't Call Me Creepy'

*(Freedom Road)*

Inevitable perhaps that every all-girl band with a streak of bile running through them like Blackpool rock and an armoury of frantic, distorted guitars should be compared to Babes In Toyland and Hole but with south Oxfordshire teens Harlette the comparisons are valid.

Here are four compact strips of spunky, punky lo-fi spite with a self-esteem issue. Like riot grrl precursors like Seven Year Bitch and Frantic Spiders, Harlette put their energies to good use, channelling it into scratchy three-chord thrash and vitriol rather than pretty melodies and neat musical arrangements. Everything rattles along

on the back of some rickety tom-heavy drumming, fuzzed-up gothy guitars careering from start to finish with little regard for any furniture in the way and everything sounds splendidly like it's held together with nervous energy and glittery sticky tape.

**Ian Chesterton**

## TINDERBOX

### 'Serenade You'

*(Akuaba)*

Tinderbox's debut release on the Akuaba singles club finds them a very different beast to the one that turned up in the demo pages a few months back. Gone is the shrill, off-key female vocalist and fluffy jazz-pop, in comes a low-rent, strung-out style of dreamy rock that hints at some of Radiohead's more abstract pronouncements.

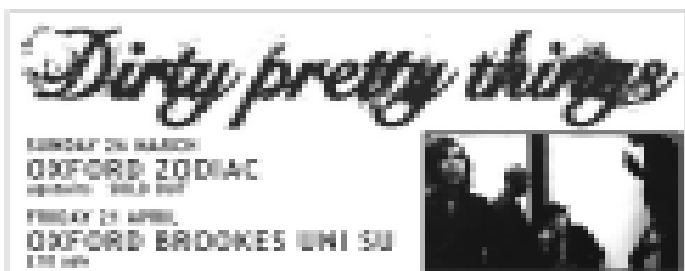
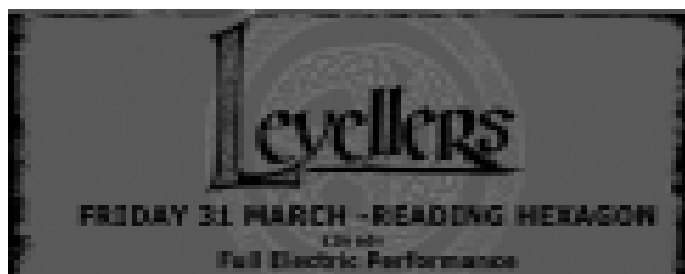
'Serenade' is standard post-'Kid A' fare but with a keen use of space about it, while squelchy analogue synths worm their way through the bare skeleton of a song that is 'Cure For A Fusspot', with its distressed, distracted vocals, creating an uneasy atmosphere, with the odd shard of splintered guitar noise to break the ice.

A new band still finding their own identity then, but one prepared to take a sideways trip into somewhere removed from the indie rock norm, and so much promise for things to come.

**John Leeson**

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# GIG GUIDE

## WEDNESDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT:** Far From The Madding Crowd – Weekly all-comers singers and musicians session.

**FOLK SESSION:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Weekly trad folk night in the Ex's cosy confines.

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Marlborough House, Western Road – Weekly open mic session with £50 cash prize.

**PHONIK SESSIONS:** The Cellar – Live funk jam.

## THURSDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**JIM REID + THE FAMILY MACHINE + LAGRIMA:** The Cellar – Rearranged gig for the

*Friday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

## GOGOL BORDELLO: The Zodiac

Given that there are precious few proper nutters in rock music these days, we should welcome Gogol Bordello frontman Eugene Hutz with open arms. The bequiffed and heavily-moustachioed singer and general onstage lunatic currently heads up the hippest band in New York, as well as just starting out on an acting career with *Everything Is Illuminated*, playing opposite Elija Wood. Gogol Bordello is a long way from Hutz's Ukrainian upbringing where he was forced to learn about western rock music on illegal radio broadcasts and had to flee his home town after the Chernobyl disaster. Gogol Bordello play what they themselves describe as gypsy punk (also the title of their new Steve Albini-produced album), a frenzied fusion of traditional Roma wedding music and classic punk. Not a million miles away, in attitude and style, from System Of A Down at times, although a closer comparison would be The Pogues' punked-up Irish folk or Bela Bartok's Eastern European classical folk. A defining moment in Eugene Hutz's life was seeing Sonic Youth play in the Ukraine in 1989, prompting his eventual move to New York where he formed the supranational Gogol Bordello along with Russian accordion and violin players, Jewish guitarist and bassist, and Thai-American and Chinese-Scottish percussionists.

## MARCH

former Jesus & Mary Chain singer, whose band helped obliterate a stagnant pop scene in 1985 with the epoch-making 'Psychodandy', fusing honey-dripping Spector-ish melodies with ear-splitting feedback and riotous gigs that make Babyshambles look like a teddy bears' picnic. Reid's new single takes a more considered approach to classic 60s girl group pop and trippy Velvet Underground-inspired rocking but still retains much of that old magic. The guy's a legend, go see him.

**THE SPINTO BAND:** The Zodiac – Rising six-piece band out of Delaware featuring tow pairs of brothers making sweet, lysergic pop mixed up with leftfield noise and coming on somewhere between Pavement, Yo La Tengo and Flaming Lips.

**THE SKIES:** The Bullingdon

**PORT MAYHEM with EMILY ROLT + GLENDA HUIH + EDDIE THOMPSON + MARIANNA MAGNAVITA:** The Port Mahon – Acoustic live music night with local singer-songwriters.

**GWYN ASHTON:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – High energy blues rock from the Aussie bluesman.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT:** Far From The Madding Crowd – With Latin guitar duo Los Hombres.

**JAZZ NIGHT:** The City Tavern – Weekly jazz session featuring Oxford Uni's jazz musicians and guest performers.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre – Long-serving all-comers club night for singers, musicians, performance artists and more.

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

**SKYLARKIN:** The Brickworks – Weekly DJ session with Aidan Larkin and guests spinning reggae, ska, funk, Latin and Afrobeat tunes.

**SABOTAGE:** The Zodiac – Weekly hard rocking club night from The Club That Cannot Be Named playing new and old metal, hardcore and alternative sounds.

## FRIDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**GOGOL BORDELLO:** The Zodiac (upstairs) – Ukraine-via-New York gypsy punks – see main preview

**EBERG + THE E BAND:** The Zodiac (downstairs) – Iceland's ethereal pop elf Einar Tonsberg brings his home-made E-harp back to town for some more glacial psychedelia and misty-eyed electro balladry. Something like a cross between Sigur Ros, the more abstract, ambient bits of Radiohead and Brian Wilson and currently a big favourite on BBC 6 Music. His new album, 'VoffVoff' includes possibly the only ode to super-soft loo roll ever - 'Love Your Bum'. Eccentric but quite lovely. Keeping up the E theme, local electro-improv collective The E band play their first gigs since supporting The Magic Band last year and then taking Charlbury

Festival by storm. Rambling monologues, punishing electronics and sunshine brass. One of Oxford's best kept musical secrets.

**RIVER + ARCTIC WOLF:** The City Tavern – Local bands showcase including funk-rockers Arctic Wolf.

**THE SHAKER HEIGHTS:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Local indie rockers drawing on early-U2 and the mellower side of Loud Reed.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with CONFIDENTIAL COLLECTIVE + MINIMAX ORCHESTRA + MARYBENDYTOY + MARK SOLLIS:** The Wheatsheaf – High energy soul, hip hop and funk from the expansive local dance collective at tonight's Klub Kak mixed bag of pop noise.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon **BOSSAPHONIK:** The Cellar – Live jazz, funk, dub and Latin sounds with The Anti Social Club.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon **ACOUSTIC NIGHT:** The Victoria, Jericho **FRIDAY STREET:** St Aldates Tavern – New weekly covers night.

## SATURDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**BATTLE + THE ON OFFS + THE DELTA FREQUENCY:** The Zodiac – 80s new wave revivalists following hot on the heels of Editors (with whom they shared a stage at Truck last summer). Drawing on influences like The Cure, The Associates, early Simple Minds and Kitchens of Distinction, as well as Echo and the Bunnymen (hey, they were called Killing Moon until just over a year ago), Battle spent most of 2005 earning their spurs on tour with the likes of Bloc Party and The Rakes, while a couple of limited-edition singles look set to become collectors' items as soon as their debut album is released this spring.

**EEK-A-MOUSE:** The Zodiac – A rare UK appearance from one of Jamaican reggae's true mavericks and originals. At 6'6", the man christened Ripton Hylton has always stood out and his free-flowing, sing-song form of scat (dubbed sing-jay) as well as his bubbling lunacy and mad catchphrasing earned him an enviable reputation in the early-80s when he was one of the leading stars of the roots and dancehall scene.







### *Sunday 5<sup>th</sup>*

## THE GO! TEAM: Brookes University Union

Go! Team's rise and rise brings a warm feeling to the hardest of hearts. From underground thrill-givers, riding a reputation for some of the most life-affirming live shows in the country, to national recognition and a Mercury Prize nomination, they've remained the sound of eternal sunshine. In Go! Team's supercharged pop world, it's always summer and it's always time for a party. Check out their 30-minute, ultra-compact, fun-packed debut album, 'Thunder Lighting Strike' if you're in any doubt. Here you'll find the Brighton crew's good-time mash up of stolen beats, old school hip hop, cheerleader pop, northern soul and NYC punk raising the dead and bidding them dance. Fronted by a girl simply called Ninja, The Go! Team (see, even the name bleeds positively) hark back to the glory days of uplifting, slightly mischievous hip hop, like De La Soul and Salt'n'Pepa, but updated by way of The Avalanches' bamboozling sampladelica. 80s US TV themes mingle with sweet strings and children's voices and any urge to resist the temptation to dance will be roundly mocked.

Still going strong, although best known as a DJ these days, he remains a cult legend.

**SIMPLE: The Bullingdon** – Funky house with DJ Mr C.

**SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + SENNEN + HALF RABBITS + ANN ARBOR: The Cellar** – Abrasive electro rocking in a Shellac-meets-Kraftwerk with extreme prejudice vein from Sunnyvale

**THE BEASTMEN + EBOP+ IN/OUT + BEN E COOK: The City Tavern** – Delicious Music presents a local bands showcase.

**THE DIVINE COILS + RATFACE: The Port Mahon** – Dissonant rock nastiness.

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Fitzharry, Abingdon**

**PETE BEARDER: The Magic Café (1pm)**

### SUNDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**THE GO! TEAM + THE GRATES + SMOOSH: The Zodiac** – Sunshine pop and old school hip hop party tunes from the Brighton crew – *see main preview*

**BUZZCOCKS + THE ADORED + GEAR: The Zodiac** – Punk-pop legends still going strong, responsible for some of the finest songs of the last 30 years and still sounding fresh and alive on new album, 'Flat-Pack Philosophy'.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House**

**TAKE THE MIC: East Oxford Music Club (3-5pm)** – Open mic session for 8-18 year old performers. All performers under-18 welcome on a first come, first served basis.

**FUSED: The Black Horse, Kidlington**

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

**ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (8pm)**

### MONDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**CAVE IN + ZICO CHAIN + JACOB'S**

**STORIES: The Zodiac** – Rampaging angst metal from Boston's hardcore survivors Cave In, still trying to move the barriers with each release. New album 'Perfect Pitch Black' is some way away from the band's excellent 'Jupiter', continuing to draw in more melodic influences and injecting elements of psychedelia, math-metal and 70s hard rock riffage into the grungey hardcore that typified their earlier work, and it's a welcome return to form after a misfiring dalliance with major label commercialism. Support comes from Brighton's hardcore screamers Zico Chain, fresh from supporting My Awesome Compilation on tour, plus fellow south coast desolate soundscapers Jacob's Stories.

**BIG DEZ: The Bullingdon** – High-spirited Texas-style blues-rock from the Parisian quintet making their first ever visit to the UK. Despite their French origins they're a band completely immersed in American blues, singer and guitarist Phil Fernandez being influenced by the likes of Albert Collins and Johnny Guitar Watkins and having played with Uncle John Turner, Luther Allinson and Billy Branch, while the band's new album, 'Night After Night' was recorded in Austin, Texas.

**DOWN BY INTERROGATION + THE VANITY SCORE: The Corridor**

**ALY BAIN & PHIL CUNNINGHAM:**

**Nettlebed Folk Club** – Near-legendary Scottish fiddle player and former member of Boys Of The Lough, playing traditional Shetland music.

### TUESDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:**

**The Bullingdon** – Ever-popular free live jazz club with house band The Tom Grey Quintet getting the crowd moving, plus funk, soul and r'n'b DJs til late.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**

**DELICIOUS MUSIC BANDS NIGHT: The City Tavern** – New local bands night from the Delicious crew featuring tonight, Not My Day, In/Out and She Cries.

**REBECCA MOSLEY + CHRIS BEARD: Ba Ba** – Solemn folk pop from Ms Mosley and Mr Beard at tonight's Beard Museum.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express** – New live music session from Delicious Music. Tonight's guest is guitarist Pawel Kuterba.

**CHIARINA: Café Rouge** – Weekly pop, folk and jazz residency.

### WEDNESDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**JEL + FUCK OFF MACHETE: The Wheatsheaf** – Anticon-associated Chicago beatmaker Jel continues to stretch the boundaries of underground hip hop, pioneering the live playing of drum machines. Part of a short UK tour to promote new album, 'Soft Money'.

Support comes from Scotland's Fuck Off Machete, fronted by former Ganger lass Natasha Noramly and cranking out the art-house punk noise somewhere between Sonic Youth and Life Without Buildings

**BROOKES ACOUSTIC ROCK SOCIETY**

**NIGHT: The Bullingdon**

**OXFORD IMPROVISORS: The Port Mahon**

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd**

**FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road**

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

### THURSDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**65 DAYS OF STATIC + CHRIS CLARKE +**

**THE MIRIMAR DISASTER: The Zodiac** – Sonic grandeur and sensory assault out of Sheffield – *see main preview*

**SHOOTING AT UNARMED MEN + MALE +**

**MULES: The Port Mahon** – Former McLusky

### *Thursday 9<sup>th</sup>*

## SHOOTING AT UNARMED MEN / MALE / MULES: The Port Mahon

McLusky were one of the great maverick rock bands of recent years, ploughing a singularly misanthropic and bitingly funny furrow wherever they played. Jon Chapple was the unsung star of the band and his re-emergence with his new band, Shooting At Unarmed Men, ensures the reckless, fists-out rampage through punk rock vitriol and bleak, black humour continues. Chapple has a wit as sharp and merciless as a butcher's cleaver, added to a disarming geekiness and a frantic way with a guitar that recalls mentor Steve Albini's Big Black work. Add a good dose of Fall-like abrasiveness and a spark of Wire-style pop hysteria and it's an all-action lo-fi brawl that you've just got to join in with. Support for tonight's Oxfordbands.com night are scratchy Bristolian fem-core urchins Male, fusing Sonic Youth and PJ Harvey bile onto Tortoise-inspired strangeness, plus local punkabily starlets Mules. A serious bunch of noise to squeeze into such a small room.





*Thursday 9<sup>th</sup>*

## 65 DAYS OF STATIC: The Zodiac

We're big fans of stuff being loud here at Nightshift, and Sheffield's 65 Days Of Static do loud to an heroic degree. They've been frequent visitors to Oxford over the past couple of years but this is their biggest local gig to date, showing just how much they've grown. And they've grown in lots of ways, rapidly outgrowing comparisons with sonic precursors Mogwai, expanding their esoteric instrumental noise to encompass not just rock and post-rock stylings but classical, jungle and eastern sounds. And this with just the traditional rock and roll guitar, bass and drums line-up and not a laptop in sight. 65 Days are the perfect repost to anyone who thinks instrumental rock soundscapes are for bearded geeks with no sense of melody. They're cinematic, brutal, elegant and simply thrilling, creating a vast sound that can literally take your breath away as wave upon wave crashes against the venue walls. New album 'One Time For All', the follow-up to 2004's acclaimed 'The Fall Of Math' is out this month and tonight's show will be given an added visual dimension by The Media Lounge. Fellow Yorkshiremen The Miramar Disaster support, bringing a more metallic form of rock carnage to the stage.

chap Jon Chapple cranks up the misanthropometer once again to blinding effect – *see main preview*

**THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA: The Cellar** – The new-look Rock hit town again. After losing founding member Phill Honey (himself back in action this month with his new band The Delta Frequency), TROT have recruited one-time South Sea Company Prospectus keyboard player Matt Spooner and new cellist Jenny Bates and will be looking to restate their claim to the Oxford rock throne. Symphonic instrumental rocking with nods to Add N To (X), Shellac and Stravinsky.  
**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd** – Featuring Chico and the Man.  
**JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern**  
**KITT + MATT BEASELY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**  
**SAHARA BOAT CLUB + GLASS FACTORY: The Bullingdon** – Indie rock night.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks**  
**SABOTAGE: The Zodiac**

### FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**GEMMA HAYES: The Zodiac** – Polished folky pop from the Irish singer-songwriter whose 2002 debut, 'Night On My Side', made it onto the Mercury Prize shortlist. A bit more rootsy and rocking than the likes of KT Tunstall or Katie Melua but new album, 'The Roads Don't Love You', still wanders towards the easy listening side of the pop highway.  
**SLIDE: The Zodiac** – House club night with live set from Hybrid, plus resident DJs Matt Braddock and Lee Mortimer.  
**GOODFELLAZ: The City Tavern** – Good-time party funk and pop.  
**THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + KNIVES: The Wheatsheaf** – Melodic post-hardcore rock.  
**TONY JEZZARD: The Exeter Hall, Cowley** – Blues rock from the local veteran.  
**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon**  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**  
**BLUNTED: The Cellar** – hip hop, funk, soul and breaks club night.  
**ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho**  
**REDOX: The Magdalen Arms**  
**MUNGO: St Aldates Tavern**

### SATURDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT + STIG + DEGUELLO: The Cellar** – Brutal art-prog, doom metal, gospel blues and something nasty from the black hit of space from the mighty Suitable Case. Local newcomers Deguello are shaping up into one of the most promising bands around with a leftfield stab at hardcore.  
**SOPHIE SOLOMON: The Zodiac** – Once dubbed 'The Keith Richards of the violin', the former Oxford University history student (and local drum&bass DJ) and founding member of Oi

Va Voi (alongside KT Tunstall), takes a lead role with her new band, promoting new album, 'Poison Sweet Madeira', having worked with the likes of Richard Hawley, Rufus Wainwright and the London Symphony Orchestra, mixing up classical influences with sounds from Eastern Europe, Russia, North Africa, and Romany gypsy music.

**SAM KELLY'S STATION HOUSE BLUES: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**  
**AMBER STATE + FOXES + TRUE RUMOUR: The City Tavern** – Local bands showcase from the Delicious Music crew.

**LUX LUTHER + FATALLY YOURS: The Wheatsheaf** – Sweet, piano-led pop from Lux Luther, plus Smiths-y rocking from Fatally Yours.  
**JAMIE T + MORRISON STEAM FAYRE + YO ZUSHI: The Corner Room** – Fresh, eclectic new pop talent from West London, Jamie T looks certain to be one of this year's big breakthrough successes on the back of his excellent new 'Betty & Her Selfish Sons' EP. Mixing up a low-rent 70s punk attitude, early Bob Dylan-style folk and Streets-y hip hop and electronica, Jamie's simultaneously boisterous and sensitive, danceable and introverted, with a touch of the Arctic Monkeys about his observational punk poetry.  
**NEIL'S CHILDREN + THE VICHY GOVERNMENT + LIFE WITH BEARS + SOCK & SHOES: The Port Mahon**  
**HALF RABBITS + NUVOLA + LAURA LOST: Ignition, Witney Utd FC** – Launch night for Witney's new live music venue, featuring local new wave popsters The Half Rabbits.  
**1990-1999: The Bullingdon** – 90s club tunes.  
**THE SKYNY NYRDS: The New Inn, Witney**  
**ANNA & AIMEE: The Magic Café (1pm)**

### SUNDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**KANO: The Zodiac** – Melodic hip hop and grime from the rising East London star – *see main preview*  
**MY AWESOME COMPILATION + ADZUKI + A BOY CALLED HERO + MOURNING GLORY: Confessions, Banbury** – Leicester emo rockers in an upbeat Get Up Kids style.  
**LAGRIMA + NEW MOON + ANTON BARBEAU + MAEVE BAYTON: The Exeter Hall, Cowley** – Fundraiser for the Wittstock Festival with assorted local luminaries plus American psychedelic pop songsmith Anton Barbeau.  
**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Old School House**  
**THE BEARD MUSEUM with THE KICKS + JANE TAYLOR + KATE GARRETT + DIRTY ROYAL: The Purple Turtle** – Mellow pop, folk and rock at Beard Museum.  
**FAJITA EATERS: The Black Horse, Kidlington**  
**UNPLUGGED ACOUSTIC SONG SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley (3-7pm)**

### MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**BIG JOE TURNER & HIS MEMPHIS BLUES CARAVAN: The Bullingdon** – Memphis blues legend still going strong after 40 years on the road – *see main preview*  
**NOT MY DAY: + MOOCHER: The Corridor**  
**INTRUSION: The Cellar** – Goth and industrial club night.  
**NOEL MURPHY: Nettlebed Folk Club** – St Patrick's Day party with the Irish folk singer.

### TUESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**  
**DELICIOUS MUSIC BANDS NIGHT: The City Tavern**  
**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express** – With guests The Bewley Brothers.  
**CHIARINA: Café Rouge**

### WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**PHYAL + MARY'S GARDEN + BEELZEBOZO + JEREMY HUGHES: The Wheatsheaf** – Punk-metal rocking from Bicester's Phyal, with support from gothic stadium rockers Mary's Garden and doom-metallers Beelzebozo.  
**THE BLACK VELVETS + WINTERVILLE: The Zodiac** – Sing it from the rooftops, kids: 70s

**BIG FREE OPENING NIGHT - SAT 11th MARCH**

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★ **THE HALF RABBITS** ★

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rock is back! Led Zep! AC/DC! David Bowie! Oh, sorry, that was two years ago. Someone forgot to tell The Black Velvets. But wait! Come back! There is excitement to be had! They sound a bit like a cross between Bon Jovi and The Stereophonics! Could it get any better? Only if they were called Jet, perhaps.

**KOHOUTEK: The City Tavern** – Local indie rockers.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd**

**FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**

### *Sunday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## **KANO: The Zodiac**

Along with Sway, who appeared at the Coven in Oxford last month, East London's Kano (aka Kane Robinson) is leading the next generation of British rappers from the pirate radio underground into the mainstream. In fact there he was onstage at last year's Smash Hits poll winners' party after he came second in their readers' best newcomer award. He was also voted best newcomer at last year's MOBO Awards and even Ken Livingston has been singing his praises. Not bad for a 19-year-old lad whose debut white label, 'Boys Love Girls', released when he was 16, shipped a tidy sum on the back of pirate radio play alone. Kano's since hit the Top 20 with the Mike Skinner-assisted 'Night Night'. His move into the mainstream is helped in no small part by his suave, sing-song style of rapping that tends to avoid too much London slang, making it more accessible to a wider audience. But there's a solid underground squelch to the music, reflecting Kano's roots in the capital's grime scene where he's collaborated with the likes of Katie Pearl, and he's probably the best current hope for taking grime into more commercial territories. Following on from last year's debut album, 'Home Sweet Home', on 679 Records (home too to The Streets) Kano releases a new single to coincide with this national tour, 'Brown Eyes', and he's got an MTV crew in tow making a documentary about his rise. A rare chance to catch some serious quality rap in Oxford.



**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough House, Western Road**

**PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar**

**FREAK OUT: The Bullingdon**

### **THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup>**

**THE EPSTEIN + 100 BULLETS BACK: The Cellar** – Classic country rocking from The Epstein, plus new wave and synth pop action from 100BB.

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

**JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern**

**THE ETCHINGS: The Port Mahon**

**DIVERSE DIVAS + ANNA & AMY: The Exeter Hall, Cowley**

**MARIA ILETT: Abingdon Library (2pm)** – Bookish afternoon outing from the local folk-cum-trip hop songstress.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney**

**SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks**

**SABOTAGE: The Zodiac**

### **FRIDAY 17<sup>th</sup>**

**FRESH OUT OF THE BOX with KRAFTY**

**KUTS: The Zodiac** – Beats and breaks from the FOTB crew, plus a live set from Brighton's Krafty Kuts – aka Martin Reeves – veteran club DJ who has played alongside Fatboy Slim, The Jungle Brothers and Roni Size as well as providing music for Coca Cola and Playstation ads. His hometown Supercharged club night has been a major influence on the UK breaks scene.

**SPARKS II featuring HARLETTE + ALL YOU MISS + LAST PROPOSAL: The Zodiac** – Launch gig for the new 'Spark' compilation CD from the Young Women's Bands Project. Grungey punk noise from Harlette, plus melodic grunge pop from All You Miss.

**DYSE: The Wheatsheaf** – Roerhedds / Volt side project.

**THE INFLATABLES: The Exeter Hall, Cowley** – Classic ska, soul and reggae covers.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB St PATRICK'S**

**NIGHT SPECIAL: The Port Mahon** – With Colin Manning and friends.

**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Senegalese mbalax, Latin, reggae and jazz from Afrotema.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

**ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho**

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Magdalen Arms**

**FRIDAY STREET: St Aldates Tavern**

### **SATURDAY 18<sup>th</sup>**

**YOUTH MOVIE SOUNDTRACK**

**STRATEGIES + FOALS + TIRED IRIE: The Zodiac** – First hometown gig in over a year for local post-rock heroes Youth Movies, back in town after a busy year touring the UK. Currently recording their second album for release on Fierce Panda later this year and a good chance to re-acquaint yourselves with one of Oxford's most complex, cathartic and downright thrilling live bands. Support comes from promising newcomers Foals, the band made up of former members of The Edmund Fitzgerald and current YMSS chaps. Leicester's Tired Irie open proceedings, promoting debut single on Try Harder Records and mixing up studied maths-rock with the darker side of 80s new wave.

**PAT FISH + ANTON BARBEAU + THE NEW MOON: The Port Mahon** – Another double-header from Pat 'Jazz Butcher' Fish and Sacramento's Anton Barbeau, displaying two of the best eccentric songwriters from either side of the Atlantic. Fish is still going strong after his



### *Monday 13<sup>th</sup>*

## **BIG JOE TURNER & HIS MEMPHIS BLUES CARAVAN: The Bullingdon**

Quite rightly these days considered as one of the true keepers of the Memphis blues flame, Big Joe Turner has a history in blues that goes back over 40 years. The renowned bass player recorded with Chuck Berry as well as spending many years as a sideman to BB King, Albert King, Al Green and Isaac Hayes, with whom he featured in the legendary Wattstax film. In that time Turner earned a reputation as one of the greatest blues players of all time; his list of musical admirers is almost as long as his list of musical and civic awards. Over time he became a band leader, arranger and latterly song writer, moving to Europe and recording three albums with singer Eugene Bridges. His Memphis Blues Caravan continues to tour the world, delivering passionate, good-time southern blues and rock, including his signature tune, 'I Am The Blues'. The current band line-up includes singer Earl Green as well as guitarist Dieter Jagiela.

prolific 80s pop career, putting his Oxford University philosophy degree to good use in his blackly humorous songs. Barbeau, rapidly making Oxford his second home, is relentlessly prolific and wilfully oddball, taking Robyn Hitchcock as his primary inspiration, his psychedelic pop also recalls the likes of XTC, Julian Cope and Bob Dylan. Local popsters The New Moon open proceedings.

**BLUE JUNK + TURBULENCE + JOE SATRIANI TRIBUTE: The City Tavern** – Funk-rock fusion from Blue Junk at tonight's Delicious Music local bands showcase.

**SIMPLE: The Bullingdon** – Funky house club night with resident DJs.

**RIP THE JOINT: The Exeter Hall, Cowley** – Energetic rocking blues.

**THE SKYNY NYRDS: The Bricklayers, Marston**



*Monday 20<sup>th</sup>*

## WILL HAVEN / CROWBAR / KINGSIZE BLUES: The Zodiac

They're back! Hurray! Four years after they split, the result of singer Grady Avenell's retirement due to tour-induced exhaustion, Sacramento's finest, Will Haven, have reconvened. So, it's time to rock again. Rock hard. In an unrelenting, no-prisoners hardcore stylee. Having (according to guitarist Jeff Urwin) formed in order to become "the heavy metal Radiohead", Will Haven became one of the most influential underground hardcore metal acts around, inspiring everyone from Deftones to Slipknot. 2001's magnum opus, 'Carpe Diem', made them a global concern and their last gig at the Zodiac is still remembered fondly and fearfully by local metallers. There's even a new album due in the summer as well as a world tour with long-time chums Deftones. Co-headlining a night that is definitely not for the faint-hearted are New Orleans' Crowbar, doomy hardcore tyrants in the lineage of The Melvins and Pantera and last seen damaging the Zodiac's foundations in support to Hatebreed. Opening proceedings will be rising UK metallers Kingsize Blues, aiming for that part of your skull marked Raging Speedhorn and Stampin' Ground.

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass with DJs Lee and Sabre.  
MAEVE BAYTON: The Magic Café (1pm)

**SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup>**

JETHRO TULL: The New Theatre – 60s folk-rock heroes continue to recall the summer of love.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:  
The Old School House

LINDY, DANNY MICHELL & BOB KEMMIS:  
The Port Mahon

THE WORRIED MEN: The Black Horse,  
Kidlington

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

**MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup>**

CROWBAR + WILL HAVEN + THROUGH  
THE EYES OF THE DEAD + THE SEVENTH  
CROSS: The Zodiac – A night of unforgiving  
hardcore metal noise with the reformed Will  
Haven and chums – *see main preview*  
DOUG JAY & THE BLUEJAYS: The  
Bullington – Florida-born, Washington DC  
resident harmonica player, playing blues and r'n'b  
harp in the style of Slim Harpo and Little Walter.  
ODD ONES OUT + HEADS TO THE WALL:  
The Corridor  
VIN GARBUTT: Nettlebed Folk Club

**TUESDAY 21<sup>st</sup>**

JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:  
The Bullington

KUBB: The Zodiac – Epic, heartfelt indie  
rocking in a post-Coldplay-Athlete-Keane vein.  
There is melancholy aplenty and hearts worn  
firmly on sleeves. There will be delicately played  
piano and towering guitars. There will be heavy  
radio play and Top 40 action. And at the end of it  
all there may even be Brit Award nominations and  
a Mercury Prize nomination.

THE RIVER + BLIND PILOTS + LICKETY

SPLITS: The Wheatsheaf

FORT DAX + THE HUNGRY I + DAVID

GOOSEY: The Port Mahon – Leftfield sounds  
courtesy of Vacuous Pop.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Exeter Hall,  
Cowley

DELICIOUS MUSIC BAND NIGHT: The City  
Tavern

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND

FOLK NIGHT: Bar Milano, Pizza Express –  
Live jazz from The Jazz Duo.

CHIARINA: Café Rouge

**WEDNESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>**

MY FATHER THE BEAT + CITY LIGHTS JUST

BURN: The Wheatsheaf – Baggy beats, synth  
rocking and Velvet Underground-influenced guitar  
dirges from the promising local newcomers  
boasting former members of Tiger Club and  
Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia, plus  
punkie indie noise from CLJB.

DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: Far  
From The Madding Crowd

THE ETCHINGS + HANGMAN'S JOKE: The  
Port Mahon

FOLK SESSION: The Exeter Hall, Cowley

HIT & RUN: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Marlborough  
House, Western Road

**THURSDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>**

SECRET MACHINES + PREFUSE 73: The  
Zodiac – Best band on the planet, no arguments  
– *see main preview*

WHO'S WHO: The Zodiac (downstairs) –

Superior Who tribute, evoking the live-wire spirit  
of the band at their 'Live At Leeds' best.

THE CLERKS + TRUE RUMOUR: The Exeter  
Hall, Cowley – Bouncy female-fronted guitar  
pop from The Clerks, plus atmospheric 80s-

styled pop in a Blue Nile vein from True Rumour.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK  
NIGHT: Far From The Madding Crowd –

Featuring acoustic duo The Bewley Brothers.

AND NO STAR + MAI MAYO MAI: The  
Cellar – Double bill of local post-rock noise,  
with And No Star taking an angular, Billy  
Mahonie-influenced route, while Mai Mayo Mai  
explore jazzier terrain.

JAZZ NIGHT: The City Tavern

PETE MOORE: The Port Mahon

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford  
Community Centre

BARCODE TRIO: The Hollybush, Osney

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

SABOTAGE: The Zodiac

**FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup>**

BLACK DICE: The Wheatsheaf – Sonic  
manipulation and abrasive rock experimentation  
from the New York mavericks – *see main preview*

BELL X1: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Irish rockers,  
previously bandmates with Damien Rice,  
ploughing an epic furrow following support slots  
to Bon Jovi and Eliot Smith.

HIGH & MIGHTY: The Zodiac (downstairs) –  
One-off reformation gig from the long-time local  
heavy rock favourites. Excellent, melodic metal  
with a punky edge. Local emo youngsters The  
Hero Story support and may well learn a few new  
(old) tricks.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

*Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## SECRET MACHINES: The Zodiac

Sometimes great music, like great films, can  
transport you to another world entirely.  
Along with The Arcade Fire and Mew, New  
York's Secret Machines create huge,  
elaborate canvasses of sound that are so  
expansive that it's easy to miss the  
incredible complex detail involved. Prog-rock  
is a lazy tag to label Secret Machines with,  
although they do lean towards the opulence  
of Pink Floyd at times. Even here, though,  
there's the sunshine melody and mischief of  
Syd Barrett. But beyond the bombast and  
sky-reaching trance rock, Secret Machines  
are simply a magnificent pop band. Brothers  
Brandon and Benjamin Curtis form the core  
of the band, sharing vocal duties as well as  
playing guitar and keyboards. For a three-  
piece they pack a lot in, stretching their  
sound from motorik krautrock grooves to  
West Coast melodies, from Neu! To The  
Byrds via Guided By Voices. Their last gig  
at the Zodiac, last spring, was an awe-  
inspiring show by a band who defy the  
prosaic outlook of most of their peers,  
instead putting on the kind of show that  
should be closing huge outdoor festivals the  
world over. New album 'Ten Silver Drops'  
follows the journey started by their  
masterful 'Now Here Is Nowhere' in 2004.  
Secret Machines claim to want to connect to  
the Gods and the cosmos. In their case,  
they're right on course.



**GERRY GILLARD + ANTON BARBEAU:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Blues, rock and country from Gerry, plus eccentric psychedelic pop in a Robyn Hitchcock style from Anton.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon  
**ACOUSTIC NIGHT:** The Victoria, Jericho  
**MUNGO:** St Aldates Tavern

### **SATURDAY 25<sup>th</sup>**

**MENDEED:** The Zodiac – Fast-rising young Glaswegian metallers recently seen out on tour with Dragonforce and Cradle of Filth. Melodic heavy rock in an updated NWOBHM style, second album, 'This War Will Last Forever' is out this month.

**ROADRUNNER with LONG TALL SHORTY + THE LOST 45s:** The Bullingdon – Mod, 60s soul, r'n'b, ska, funky Hammond, acid jazz and Britpop classics at tonight's Roadrunner, plus a live set from the recently resurrected Long Tall Shorty, punky r'n'b cheerleaders from the original 70s punk scene and faves with the mod crowd. Leeds mod revivalists The Lost 45s support.

**MARY'S GARDEN + FORK:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Gothic Euro-rocking from Mary's Garden, plus proggy punk from Fork.

**MURRAY TORKILDSEN:** The Port Mahon – Caustic pop from the former Sweeney frontman.

**TRANSMISSION + NOT MY DAY + MOOCHER + IN/OUT:** The City Tavern – Local bands showcase.

**ROLLERCOASTER Vs CHICKS WITH DECKS:** The Cellar

**KATE GARRETT:** The Magic Café (1pm)

### **SUNDAY 26<sup>th</sup>**

**SETH LAKEMAN:** The Zodiac – Dartmoor singer-songwriter Seth continues to get used to life in the spotlight after his debut album, 'Kitty Jay' (recorded for £300 in his Devon kitchen) was shortlisted for last year's Mercury Prize. It's an album documenting the many myths and legends of Dartmoor, was launched with a gig at the nearby prison and unsurprisingly is a doomy, tortured affair, but it's also seen the fella – who began his musical career in his teens as part of the band Equation, alongside Kate Rusby and Cara Dillon – nominated for two Radio Folk Awards, while later this year he sets off on tour with Billy Bragg as well as releasing new CD 'Glass Ceilings'.  
**PINDROP PERFORMANCE with SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT + NAPOLEON III + THE PINDROP IMPROV QUINTET:** The Port Mahon (5pm) – Suitable Case show off their sensitive side, while Napoleon III mess with the electronics.

**GREEN ONIONS:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Blues Brothers tribute band.

**BEARD MUSEUM with SCRIPT + PATRICK BRISCOE + BARNABUS:** The Purple Turtle – Gentle, esoteric pop pleasures as ever at the Beard Museum.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Old School House

**RHYTHM METHOD:** The Black Horse, Kidlington

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

### **MONDAY 27<sup>th</sup>**

**THE HAMSTERS:** The Bullingdon – Return trip to the Monday night blues club for the UK electric blues-rock stalwarts, paying homage to Hendrix and ZZ Top.

**DARK PHASE:** The Corridor – Heavy-duty trip hop electro-pop from Dark Phase with leanings towards Sneaker Pimps and Massive Attack.

**FEAST OF FIDDLES:** Nettlebed Folk Club

### **TUESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>**

**OK GO:** The Zodiac – Cheesy, geeky power-pop hits that'll stick in the nether regions of your brain for weeks to come from the Chigaco rockers, somehow managing to remain likeable despite an occasionally resemblance to Good Charlotte. They redeem themselves with nods to bands like The Cars and the Knack as well as cover versions of old Adam & The Ants and Elvis Costello songs, and they're a hoot live, complete with dance routines. OK Go follow in the lineage of very American geek-rock bands like Weezer and Fountains of Wayne, while new single 'A Million Ways' is almost lounge music.

**SEXTODECIMO + BEARD OF ZEUS:** The Cellar – Possibly the most awe-inspiring live band on the local scene at the moment, Sextodecimo's extreme form of sludgy grinding noise has moved beyond the realms of metal and into a world of all-out sonic warfare.

**FEAST OF FIDDLES:** Nettlebed Folk Club  
**JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET:** The Bullingdon

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley

**DELICIOUS MUSIC BANDS NIGHT:** The City Tavern

**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES AND FOLK NIGHT:** Bar Milano, Pizza Express – Featuring special guests Duo Viente Dedos.

### **WEDNESDAY 29<sup>th</sup>**

**TV BABY + HOTKNIFE JACKSON + FOXES + BAD ACTORS:** The Wheatsheaf – Excellent punk and new wave inspired rocking from TV Baby.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT:** Far From The Madding Crowd

**FOLK SESSION:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Marlborough House, Western Road

**PHONIK SESSION:** The Cellar

### **THURSDAY 30<sup>th</sup>**

**MAX ROMEO + CHARMAX PLAYERS:** The Zodiac – The second genuine Jamaican reggae legend to hit town this month. Romeo is probably best known in the UK for his solitary Top 10 hit in 1969, 'Wet Dream', an innuendo-laden novelty that made the most of a radio ban. But his best work was in the 70s when he teamed up with Lee 'Scratch' Perry, notably on the now legendary 'War Ina Babylon'. One of the genre's most influential singers, Romeo has covered most styles of reggae in his time and is widely regarded as a true godfather of Jamaican music. The Prodigy extensively sampled him, while Madness covered him on their recent 'Dangermen Sessions'. Tonight's Skylarkin' promotion also features DJ sets from Bristolian ska legend DJ Derek as well as host Aidan Larkin playing ska, reggae, r'n'b and funk classics.

**MARSHA SWANSON + REBECCA MOSLEY + LAIMA BITE:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Folky songstress on tour with her new album, 'Watershed', plus excellent local supports from Rebecca Mosley and Laima Bite.

**KOHOOTEK:** The Port Mahon – Local indie rockers.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ, BLUES & FOLK NIGHT:** Far From The Madding Crowd – With Los Hombres.

**THE TREND:** The Bullingdon

**LOS DIABLOS + CURTIS ELLER:** The Cellar – Acoustic pop from Evenings chap Mark Baldwin.

**JAZZ NIGHT:** The City Tavern

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre



*Friday 24<sup>th</sup>*

## **BLACK DICE:**

## **The Wheatsheaf**

Experimental music gets a bad name sometimes, often rightly with the perpetrators so intent on creating something they consider to be art that they forget they're working in the field of music. New York's Black Dice have been blurring the boundaries between artful experimentation and full-on rock and roll since 1997 but they've always kept it entertaining as well as challenging. Starting off as a personified gesture of sheer sonic violence, pumping out cacophonous 30-second lumps of noise, they've continued to move forwards (and sideways), diving further and further into sound processing, fractured melodies and disorientating dynamics. Inspired by the likes of Can, Throbbing Gristle, My Bloody Valentine and Pink Floyd, Eric and Bjorn Copeland and Aaron Warren utilise all manner of treated guitars, percussion, vocals and customised sound machines to create music that is easily the equal to its myriad influences. Black Dice gigs are probably not quite as physically dangerous as they once were, but with the band going further down the route of fragmenting music with each album – notably their landmark 'Beaches And Canyons' album – they create a Dadaist ballet score that's every bit as mentally punishing.

### **FRIDAY 31<sup>st</sup>**

**GRAHAM COXON:** The Zodiac (upstairs) – Long-since sold-out gig from the former-Blur guitarist-turned-lo-fi troubadour.

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with LOOPY + WHERE I'M CALLING FROM + PETER WILKINSON:** The Zodiac (downstairs) – Effervescent guitar pop in a Housemartins style from Loopy, plus highly-promising new wave-inspired noise from WICF and jazzy acoustic pop from Mr Wilkinson.

**THE HALF RABBITS + SENNEN:** The Wheatsheaf – New wave rock with a dark edge from The Half Rabbits.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon  
**WERK SHOWCASE with ACTRESS + ATKI-2 + PO-SKI:** The Cellar – Wonky, squonky electro-dance.

**THE PORTER BOYS:** The Exeter Hall, Cowley – Acoustic guitar pop.

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



# LIVE

## BE YOUR OWN PET

### The Zodiac

Despite hardly being a household name in the UK – their output so far adding up to a couple of limited edition singles and a tour support to The Kills – when Be Your Own Pet's drummer Jamin Orrall hobbles on stage to set up his kit after the support band, he receives a chorus of idolatry screams. Word spreads quickly these days.

Be Your Own Pet are a four-piece band from Texas, all barely 18 and the focus of a frenzied record company signing scramble last year after blitzing the South By South West music conference in their home state. And you simply have to love them.

Their cup flows over with a frenzied punk-pop froth that goes a long, long way to covering up a lack of substance in the songwriting department. In fact the gaps between songs tend to be longer than the minute-long bursts of frantic, spasmodic noise their music consists of. Riffs and hooks

are stolen off the peg from Buzzcocks, The Undertones and Dead Kennedys, including one heroic rip-off of Buzzcocks' 'Boredom', while they share similar traits to fellow Texans The Painteens in their ability to turn rudimentary thrash into pop gold. In between songs they go in for a spot of youthful sloganeering that rarely gets beyond the "Fuck George Bush" school of political thought, but simply endears them even further.

Amid the smash-and-grab pop storm the focus of the band remains singer Jemina Abegg, a vision of spunky, punky exuberance with her blur of peroxide hair, Karen O squeal and frantic frugging.

She's prettier than Britney and with several continents more personality and destined for pin-up status any week soon.

The gig, little more than half an hour of it, ends with Be Your Own



Photo: Richard Hounslow

Pet careering through one last fizzbomb of noise with the house lights turned on full before afro-ed bassist Nathan Vasquez hurls himself into the crowd, to be carried over their heads to the dressing room. It's called fun.

There's nothing big or clever to analyse about it all, but accusing Be Your Pet of lacking substance is missing the point. You might as well dismiss *Tom & Jerry* for not being *Citizen Kane*.

**Dale Kattack**

## DENISE MARIE / MARIA ILLETT

### The Exeter Hall

"I thought if you had an acoustic guitar it meant that you were a protest singer," sang Morrissey twenty years ago. How times have changed. Nowadays there's only one subject that gets most acoustic slinging singer-songwriters grabbing the compositional pen, and that's doleful self-pity. Refreshing, then, to discover a pair of talented singers with a larger agenda and some real songwriting ability.

Maria Illett is a surprise initially, as my previous experience of her is a lovely louche recording brushed with faintly Bristolian electronics, but tonight she's left all that stuff at home. Her great strength is her winning, naturally accented vocal, and by dispensing with the self-conscious warbles that similar acts employ it allows her to achieve a far greater range of sophisticated phrasing. She's not quite a Laima Bite or a Chantelle Pike yet, and a little more diversity wouldn't go amiss, but it's still an impressive performance...but bring the synths along next time, Maria. We like those.

New Orleans visitor Denise Marie has a wider repertoire, drawing on country, blues, jazz and the odd Latin rhythm. Denise's voice is sweet and almost reedy with a husky edge and it's equally suited to cajoling, romancing or haranguing - hell, she even does a protest song, if you're reading, Morrissey. Her guitar technique is intricate without sacrificing any fluidity, making most local strummers look woefully clumsy. She even sings two songs accompanied by nothing but a tambourine, and if you've only seen tambourines waggled lamely by simian frontmen or some guitarist's girlfriend you'd be amazed at the rattling almost mechanical rhythmic lattice that Denise produces, reminding me oddly of Truck favourite Thomas Truax. Perhaps things get a tiny bit twee at times - visions of Denise serenading Kermit The Frog in some synthetic mangrove - but this is a minor quibble. Watch out for this spirited and individual musician on her next visit.

**David Murphy**

## SEXTODECIMO / SOW / SKULL THRASH

### The Wheatsheaf

Tonight's Quickfix showcase of local metal should have been called One Heavier, with each band cranking up the pressure as the night wears on.

Witney newcomers inject moments of considered psychedelic wobbliness into their squalling thrash, or fly off on classic Iron Maiden guitar solo trips, while the singer has an admirable range that veers from guttural growl to operatic Ronnie James Dio falsetto. They do suffer a bit from looking like they should all be working in a vegan café, but otherwise it's a promising show.

Sow have beards, hair and riffs. Proper, full-on beards, lots of hair and seriously savage riffs. Pitched somewhere between Meshugga and At The Gates theirs is an untempered hardcore assault, a pavement saw buzzstorm topped off with primordial vocals from some lower level of Hades. Formed from the ashes of Days Of Grace, Jor and Miazma they've got great local pedigree, but beyond that

easily enough weaponry to move onto bigger things.

But then Sextodecimo render all-comers redundant. Even a man down as they are tonight theirs is the most terrifying noise around. Witness two-thirds of the crowd evaporate as the band's all-consuming grind spirals in on itself like a sonic back hole. Sextodecimo have travelled so far into rock's black heart they've emerged on the other side in another world altogether. Now they're closer to the likes of Throbbing Gristle than any cartoonish death metal racket. Their dissonance is almost symphonic. It's like the radioactive fallout from Chernobyl has formed a band; it's the Aberfan disaster made into a musical. And it's unrelenting. Sextodecimo are the single most awe-inspiring live band in Oxford at the moment. The venue is almost deserted by the time they finish. Here is a band that genuinely scares people. Worship them.

**Dale Kattack**



## WITCHES / NATIONAL SNACK / MULES

### The Cellar

Former-Eeeblee frontman Dave Griffiths' fresh six-piece project, Witches, is both intimate and charged with the kind of epic atmospheric and conscientiously crafted musicianship you'd expect under his stewardship. 'In the Chaos Of A Friday Night' creeps on with a gently-bassed, Tony Iommi-esque riff that slowly blooms to a mushroom cloud crescendo of crooning British trumpet and feedback. 'I Wish I Could Lead The Life You Lead' is like Al Stewart fronting post-rockers iLiKETRAiNS, while personal favourite, 'Putting You Back Into The Ground', is a delicate shimmy between early Genesis' 'Harlequin' and Radiohead's 'Lucky'. With 'I'm Taking Myself Home Again' rocking out in a faintly grand Coldplay way, Witches oeuvre is so comprehensively masterful, it's hard to call them a new band.

London's National Snack immediately strike you as the sort of knowing, "how bizarre" fruit loops that inhabit the Edinburgh

Fringe. Three girls and two boys, pitched somewhere between the B52s and Electric Six, they claim not to be students while touting us for votes for them in this year's Student Music Awards. Still they make me smile fit to burst, as anyone would if a girl sang to you repeatedly to "Lick me all over and make me wet".

Amazon.com does this spooky 'if you bought this, then you'll like this' thing which you could almost apply to the Mules' electro-billy workout. So if you've bought Space's album 'Spiders', anything by the Bonzo Dog Doo Da Band, 'Monster Mash', 'Great Balls Of Fire', 'Mickey' by Toni Basil and Madness' 'House of Fun', then you'll just love Mules. Happily admitting to being students, they have gleefully rummaged through the canon of eccentric punk to create their party of originality, and driven forward by drummer Ed Seed's compelling vocals they are well on their way towards being a top knees-up.

**Paul Carrera**

## IDIOT PILOT / THE SEAL CUB CLUBBING CLUB

### The Zodiac

Tongue-twistingly monikered, The Seal Cub Clubbing Club bring both the frustration and complexity of their name to their music. The five-piece from The Wirral are refreshingly imaginative, if a little baffling the first time you hear them. Singer Nik Glover isn't afraid to be unconventional, and his yelping and falsetto is sometimes startling. Their strange amalgamation of Pavement, Talking Heads, prog, punk and pub-rock is at times non-sequitur, but this makes it both interesting and challenging to listen to.

Idiot Pilot also veer from one style to another and back many times within the same track, but in a rather more conspicuous way. The duo from Bellingham, Washington are two distinct parts of the same whole: Michael Harris commandeers plinky, bleepy synths and glitchy, frenetic drum machine rhythms with his soaring, impassioned (and sometimes over-the-top) vocals, while Daniel Anderson punctuates proceedings with his screeching voice and

serrated guitar crunches. The result is like taking the verse and chorus parts of Linkin Park songs and polarising them as much as possible. The effect of this juxtaposition is at times a little disjointed but works well, especially in 'Spark Plug', the heaviest track Jesus Jones never did.

The power of the performance is, however, slightly tarnished by the execution. Arrogance which must make their recorded output sound passionate and exciting just comes across tonight as annoying; a fair amount of confidence is necessary, but some of the duo's behaviour tonight – aggressively complaining about the sound system and so on – is of the type that can alienate an audience. Downstairs at the Zodiac might be small fry for a band whose debut album, 'Strange We Should Meet Here', is out on Reprise, but this isn't the best way to win new fans. It's a shame, because Idiot Pilot are otherwise quite impressive.

**Kirsten Etheridge**



## March

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## DAMO SUZUKI

### The Cellar

As the frontman of Can at their most creative, Damo Suzuki's status as a musical visionary is beyond doubt. Unlike so many former rock innovators the man has remained on the cutting edge of music making ever since, most recently embarking on a never-ending world tour of improvisational gigs with an array of what are rather pretentiously called sound carriers.

Before his headline set, Damo joins support act Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element for a couple of numbers, improvising over the top of their far more mechanical soundscaping, which displays more of a clash of styles but oddly works. You feel he could freeform over a soundtrack of the speaking clock. In fact there's probably a CD for sale on the internet already.

Tonight's sound carriers are the absolute cream of Oxford's musical talent: Nought guitarist James Sedwards, Ben Ulph from The Thumb Quintet also on guitar, Evenings bassist Phil Oakley, plus Loz Colbert and Nigel Powell, easily the two most talented drummers this city has produced.

The genius behind this band is that not only are they individually

talented but also amongst the most free thinking musicians around.

Despite having just a brief, hour-long rehearsal the night before, the band lock into a tight groove immediately, egos subsumed in favour of an organic one-ness. In particular the way Loz and Nigel interact is a spectacle in itself.

What is quickly apparent, and absolutely fascinating is how similar the band's sound and structures are to Can. As if by their very proximity to Damo Suzuki some of that krautrock spirit has infected them. Damo himself knows this terrain intimately, locking himself into a freeform cycle of chants, like Captain Beefheart jamming it up with a sect of Gregorian monks.

Pressed together at the front the lucky ones in a packed crowd are drawn in to the studious intensity on the small stage; tonight is the sort of gig that makes you want to go home and form a band without delay. There are moments later on in the set when it all gets a bit Weather Report but anyone who thinks this is a glorified funk jam isn't listening properly. A joyous experience.

**Dale Kattack**

## PART CHIMP / TODD / HEY COLOSSUS / LORDS

### The Wheatsheaf

Tonight's gig is billed as the loudest gig in Oxford this year. This is good; loud is good. It all starts rather inauspiciously though with Nottingham's Lords. Not sure just how much of this stop-start jazzed-up post-hardcore stuff we can take any more. Confined in its own self-congratulatory little box, it's a dead end sound destined to be played by overly-serious young men with bad facial hair for years to come. But we need a noise that washes you downstream and deposits you dazed and confused outside a disreputable liquor store, not one that meekly offers to come home and help you with your maths homework.

So thank the lord for Hey Colossus. The singer has thick-rimmed specs and a full-on bushy beard but the band's sheet-metal noise attack carries a pulverising power, sludgy and dark, the vocals lost like a howl in the bleak eye of the storm and it's bloody great.

Todd should have been the perfect

sequel to that but tonight they sound like they've never met one another before and the whole thing is a complete mess. A loud, grinding, rocking mess, but a mess nonetheless. Shame.

No matter though, because here are Part Chimp, gods of loud. This is what it's all about: the soundtrack to all-out war conducted through the medium of guitars and effects pedals and deciphered through a hailstorm. Formed from the ashes of the brilliant Ligament a few years ago, Part Chimp have taken that band's *modus operandi* to its ultimate conclusion, dispensing with the last vestiges of melody in favour of an all-out volume attack, vocals completely drown out by the onslaught of distorted guitar noise. If the venue's fire alarm went off now we'd know nothing about the encroaching conflagration and we'd all die. But we'd die happy with the sound of music at its most brilliantly brutal ringing in our ears.

**Dale Kattack**

## SWAY / SKINNYMAN

### Kinetic @ The Coven

Kids these days, eh? Everything moves so quickly with them. I can hardly keep up, and believe me I try. Which is why I had heard very little of Sway before I turned up tonight. Admittedly I had bought his first single a few months back but the mind boggles as to how fast this guy has taken the UK Hip-hop scene by storm. His album, 'This Is My Demo', was one of the most eagerly awaited UK urban releases for some time, preceded by the mixtape, 'This Is My Promo'. And to live up to all the hype must be quite a task but tonight it's easy to see why there is so much.

Immediately engaging the crowd from the moment he steps on stage, Sway knocks out a few of the recent singles with a completely fresh approach, sounding nothing like the flows on the album, but still tight, clean and crisp. A few exclusives also are a highlight, including a hilarious freestyle over J-Kwon's 'Topsy' - A particularly annoying tune, but made all the more entertaining by Sway's

amusing sense of humour. Another which bemuses most here is a mash up of the *Rainbow* theme, along with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, rounded off with another amusing freestyle over the *Magic Roundabout* theme. Even more humorous is the fact he actually tried to clear the sample - Some things are better left for the live show, mate!

Rounding off the live sets tonight is a bizarre performance from Skinnyman, which includes a DJ who doesn't have a clue about his cues, ten guest MCs shouting random words every few lines, and weirdly enough, Skinnyman's ten-year-old son on stage. At 3am? Surely he should be in bed? And harping on about Bush and Blair and how we're all done for isn't something I want to hear between every song.

If there was just an instrumental running and no-one apart from Skinny I'm sure he would have enough stage presence to hold the crowd.

**Indecision**

# THIS AINT VEGAS / THAT FUCKING TANK / AND NO STAR

## The Wheatsheaf

They may have barely shed their puppy fat, but young contenders And No Star are fast developing into a force to be reckoned with. Bursts of frantic, blistering noise are lined up alongside almost poppy guitars-skirls and unexpected cornet solos. At times cheeky and teasing, at times wilfully disruptive, they throw the audience off at every corner. A guitar-driven feed of escalating stops-and-starts will grow increasingly frenzied until, just when the whole thing threatens to explode into the stratosphere, the band frustrate expectation by shifting down several gears into a laid-back, end-of-summer lilt. It's a tribute to the communication between them that they never become unseated by their own sudden side-swerves and whiplash-inducing speed-changes.

Also instrumental and tapping a similar vein, That Fucking Tank suffer a little through the inevitable comparison. Brimming with urgency, they nonetheless appear to lack some of the necessary invention and freshness. Abrasive

and confrontational, they serve up fractured volleys of noise that hurtle along at a gut-churning pace and threaten to decimate everything in their path. Unfortunately, their shrugging off of synchronicity occasionally looks less like a deliberate rejection and more like general half-arsedness.

The bill is topped by Sunderland quartet This Aint Vegas. Sticking to the theme, they hurl a Molotov cocktail of distorted noise and lethally jagged edges into the audience – yet This Aint Vegas spike the mix with a double-whammy of vocals. More duel than duet, the shouted thrusts and parries work wonderfully with the music, the massacred guitars and hacked-about rhythms forming an anarchic battlefield for their vocal combat. Sonic Youth, At the Drive-in and hints of early Dustball are all sucked into the tornado of noise. An exuberant primordial energy gallops through their set like the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Like And No Star, they prove adept at riding it.

*Emily Gray*

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Sat 4<sup>th</sup> Divine Coils and Holiday Stabbings  
Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Oxford Improvisers  
Thu 9<sup>th</sup> Oxfordbands.com presents Shooting At Unarmed Men  
Fri 10<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club  
Sat 11<sup>th</sup> Neil's Children + The Vichy Government + Life With Bears + Socks & Shoes  
Thu 16<sup>th</sup> The Etchings  
Fri 17<sup>th</sup> UPSTAIRS - Oxford Folk Club - DOWNSTAIRS ST PATRICKS PARTY, Live Music with Colin Manning and Friends  
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Tue 21<sup>st</sup> Vacuum Pop presents Fort Dax + The Hungry I + David Goosey  
Wed 22<sup>nd</sup> The Etchings and Hangman's Joke  
Thu 23<sup>rd</sup> Peter Moore  
Fri 24<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club  
Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Murray Torkildsen  
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## **BELARUS / A SILENT FILM /** **100 BULLETS BACK**

### **The Zodiac**

Tonight's gig is the first to be put on by Oxford Radio's Download show; a fine declaration of intent if ever there was one.

Quite what listeners will make of 100 Bullets Back when their set flutters across the airwaves is anyone's guess. They'll probably check their radios out to see if there's a switch marked 1984, and whether it has been glued in place. 100 Bullets Back are pretty much out there on their own tonight, favouring slabs of frozen 80s synth pop over the warmth of stadium-filling rock or the mind-boggling complexity of prog. It's all very well executed, if slightly derivative, although the spectacle of two blokes poking keyboards (and occasionally thrashing at a guitar) does eventually become a little tiresome,

When A Silent Film take to a stage, they appear to have filled it to bursting with effects pedals. No chilled electro pop for them, instead they fill the air with colossal songs of ridiculous grandeur. You could call it anthemic rock, but really A Silent Film have taken their lead from Radiohead's 'OK Computer', deconstructed the guitar sounds, expanded the waistlines of their songs, and have well and truly dipped their toes in the prog pool. They're awash with confidence, and their performance tonight would certainly suggest that they could well find themselves one of the bands to watch in the coming months.

No strangers to the odd anthem themselves, Belarus are similarly capable of creating tidal waves of sound. There's nothing prog about them though; Belarus trade in big pop songs packed with muscle and choruses littered with hooks. Current single 'Standing in the Right Place' sounds considerably more intense tonight, flying in the face of those Coldplay comparisons, whilst 'Colourless' stands out as a perfectly written heartwrencher. 'Standing In The Right Place' is almost a prophetic title, with the music buying public in thrall to the likes of Keane, Belarus are most certainly in the right place at the right time. Thankfully, on the basis of this showing at least, they've got the songs, and a sound that will stamp the simpering of Chris Martin et al into the ground.

*Allin Pratt*

## **JEREMY SMOKING JACKET /** **NAPOLEON III**

### **The Cellar**

Jeremy Smoking Jacket are a three-piece, as much concerned with the process of constructing their songs as they are with the finished product. The majority of their set is centred around the repetition and manipulation of live samples, over which a variety of instruments and items (drums/bass/trumpet/melodica/violin/shop dummy) are hit, scraped and played.

Soundscapes are created as one watches, growing from faltering sketches into almost overwhelmingly dense swathes of relentlessly rhythmic noise. Musically they refer to the free-folk improvisations of Vibracathedral Orchestra *et al*, alongside the live manipulations of Manyfingers or Ill Ease and Pram's scrabbling, scattershot toytown stylings. Singer Rose Kemp has a powerful, flexible voice and lurches from Josephine Wiggs-style impassioned lyricism, through the ghostly chants of Christina Carter, to a Björk-like use of vocal tics,

coughs and sighs. When the pieces fall into place, this is a breathtaking band to experience.

Napoleon III are altogether a more mainstream proposition, but it would be difficult not to be. A one-man outfit utilising live guitars, vocals and keyboards over backing tracks fed from an impressive reel-to-reel tape deck, he intriguingly combines utterly underground and brashly overground conceits. Confident, Elbow-style vocals tell knowingly naïve stories of a bored young man's life – Arctic Monkeys could take a leaf or two out of this chap's social commentary notebook – over a musical backing which hacks together well-crafted songs and crazed, bubbling electronica. The result is musical, melodic, weird and funny. Like the Flaming Lips and like Oxford's own The Evenings, Napoleon III has hit that perfect balance – weirdo music which non-weirdos can get down to.

*Simon Minter*

## **METRONOMY**

### **The Cellar**

Metronomy is the creation of one Joseph Mount, who describes himself as a disillusioned rock'n'roll drummer from Devon, now relocated to Brighton. He makes instrumental, lo-fi electronic pop using an old computer, adding touches of guitar, melodica and sax. Joined tonight by occasional backing band The Food Groups, he plays a short but engaging set involving multiple instruments and even a few synchronised dance moves.

There's a kinship with bands like They Came From The Stars, I Saw Them, who also prefer unselfconscious expression to stark, digital modernism. They represent the continuing reshaping of digital and rock music into a new DIY ethic, involving a more human approach to technology.

The hardest thing about Metronomy's music is trying to form an opinion about it – it's just too un-pin-downable, except maybe a hint of early-80s Rough Trade. Though there's a lot of people doing this kind of thing

Mount's name is spreading fast and he's caught the eye of Franz Ferdinand, Roots Manuva and Ladytron, who've all booked him for remix duties. Maybe his destiny lies as tweaker of other people's music, yet his own songs are certainly worth a listen, combining child-like simplicity with complex underlying structures, the result being great background music that doesn't quite make you want to rush out and buy the records.

This leads to the big question facing all musicians today – how the hell are they going to make any money in a climate where anyone with a computer and a broadband connection can listen to unlimited free and legal music of any kind, without ever having to leave their seat.

To be honest I've had more fun listening to Metronomy's tracks on Myspace than I did hanging around till midnight waiting for his set. Time will tell whether it was worth it.

*Art Lagun*



## COLDCUT

### The Zodiac

A decade ago, Coldcut were so far ahead of their time, technologically and musically, that it seemed like they, more than anyone else, were pointing the way towards an anarchic future for

electronica in which anyone with a penchant for sampling and two ideas to rub together could make waves. The 2006-model Coldcut are still paving the way on the tech front – tonight's

setup is a bewildering array of laptops, samplers, and assorted rackmounts at whose purpose we can but guess. The real-time live VJing is undeniably impressive and makes for a terrific live show, and although the 'text us your mobile phone videos' schtick smacks of zeitgeist, c'mon it's the guys who invented Pirate TV ferchrissakes.

Musically, however, much of the set is grounded in the same outmoded political sloganeering that mired material like 'Pan Opticon', all soundbite with little substance. Mid-set guest spots from pioneer Robert Owens and new girl on the block Mpho Skeef are characterized not by forward-thinking sound sculptures, but by some pretty dreary house.

Thankfully, there are highlights aplenty – excellent contributions from the genial MC pairing of Mike Ladd and Juice Aleem are welcome throughout, and ubiquitous Ninja collaborator Roots Manuva is as fabulous as ever, albeit *in absentia*. The retailored 'Atomic Moog 2000' owes more than a little to Cornelius' excellent remix, while snippets of everything from AC/DC to *Live and Let Die* are a reminder that Coldcut, more than anyone else, are masters of stealing the perfect hook and using it to get your feet moving.

More of a nostalgia trip than a glimpse into the future in some respects, perhaps, but there's enough here – just – to suggest that Coldcut might be just as influential in another ten years. Keep it steel, indeed.

**Stuart Fowkes**

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## HEADCOUNT / BEELZEBOZO / VENA CAVA / NAGATHA KRUSTI

### The Exeter Hall

Daft band names and punk rock are the order of the evening at the Ex, with the appallingly- / hilariously- (delete according to taste) named Nagatha Krusti proving a ragged, primitive opening salvo, looking a lot like early-90s fraggie rockers Ned's Atomic Dustbin, and kicking out a row that's mostly rehashed thrash-punk riffs but occasionally funkied up with a bit of slap bass or a cod reggae skank. Not bad in short bursts but they ultimately outstay their welcome.

Vena Cava, performing tonight for the first time with their new vocalist, are a more full metal racket. The new guy, all black and red striped hair, a face full of piercings and a Danzig t-shirt, is more guttural than his predecessor Marco and with the band taking fewer twists and turns than before but the sound remains uncompromisingly dense and ferocious.

Similarly reformed are Beelzebozo, rising from the ashes of Mook. Possibly even more daftly named than Nagatha Krusti, they ram the Hammer Horror point home by taking to the stage in matching bloodstained work shirts before crunching out humungous metal riffs that sound like breezblocks being chucked off of motorway

bridges onto oncoming traffic. Mike Gilpin, looking ever more like Tony Christie in his suit and tie, adds a melodic edge, not to mention a degree of sophistication, to the slow-mo thrash, with the end result sounding something like Eddie Vedder fronting Metallica, although there are odd moments when the go-slow dynamics and panto horror riffs make you want to scream out for them to get a bloody move on.

No hanging about for Headcount, still the best punk rock band in Oxford, despite being nearly old enough to have fathered most of the teenage pretenders in town. From the frenetic, belligerent speed-punk attack of 'Die Monkey Die', with what is possibly the only ever use of the phrase "suffering succotash" ever in rock music, to the more darkly-textured tracks with their big, gothic chorus pedals, Headcount rarely take prisoners, and there's no escape from their expletive-laden humour that's even more brutal than their music. Here is where the primal express train hit of early Therapy? meets the tribal squall of Adam & The Ants' first incarnation. Did we mention they're the best punk rock band in Oxford by several parsecs?

**Ian Chesterton**

## REGINA SPEKTOR

### The Zodiac

Regina Spektor presently seems to be occupying a strange place in the popularity stakes. Her name seems to be on everyone's lips, yet even her third full length didn't come up as much more than a blip on the UK music radar. This is reflected in tonight's set up. Housed downstairs in the Zodiac, but tickets easily selling out to a mixture of the curious and committed.

When Spektor finally takes the stage anticipation is heavy, and from the first note she hits it is clear this is going to be something extraordinary. Accompanying her soft croon with the simple percussion of microphone taps, the crowd hushes to a near-silence which finally breaks into a rapturous ovation at the song's end. This is essentially the pattern for each of tonight's songs. Whether she is accompanying herself on piano, guitar, or folding-

chair-as-drum, Spektor is on top form. The crowd seems most at home with the material from her most recent, 'Soviet Kitsch' album, as the first notes of 'Ode To Divorce' and 'Carbon Monoxide' are welcomed with cheers, while 'Sailor Song' even induces a sing along. But the hold over the audience is such that even new material is happily digested.

The vocal performance is fantastic throughout, but the night's arguably most touching moment is when Spektor sets aside her vocal theatrics, on the soft, stark 'Samson', for which the hush of the crowd seems all the more intense.

The set is flawless from start to finish, and while time constraints keep us from hearing as much as we want, we go home knowing we will be hearing much, much more in the future.

**Patrick Casey**

## GWYNETH HERBERT

### The Bullingdon

Gwyneth Herbert has a magnificent voice and at this Saturday night gig she shows she can use it to really inhabit her material, whether doing covers or her own songs. Marketed by her record company as the "next Norah Jones", she is much better than this. Never have I been in the Bully with so little chatter going on.

True, Herbert's beauty and how she uses it to tease can focus attention. But mainly it is down to the web she weaves with her many voices: hitting high notes with unwavering purity; singing Tom Waits 'Fallin Down' from the back of the throat; doing scat singing; starting the second half of her set unaccompanied in a very intimate scaled down style, and being the only singer I have heard to challenge Nicky Lambourne of Never the Bride in the Janis Joplin soundalike stakes.

Gwyneth could sing any style, from punk (she was once in a teen punk band) to opera. It is no surprise she resists being pigeon holed, by describing herself as a story-teller, and that she fell out with Universal Records.

Presently her covers are better than her own songs, not because of the singing but because her writing

is not yet strong enough. I love her take on Dolly Parton's 'Jolene'. Though it's not up to that of Susanna and the Magical Orchestra, by singing half a beat ahead of her band real tension is injected into the familiar tale. Her angry blast at the corporate music biz, 'Going For A Song', introduced as being about "loony arsehole records", is the best of her own numbers. Several Oxford bands would probably agree when she sings, "It's hard to sing a note with a golden handshake in your throat".

Gwyneth Herbert did her learning fighting to be heard in pubs. She clearly revels in being back at almost eye level with the audience, bantering, getting energy from them and giving it back: during her song on the corporate music biz, there's a seriously loud burst of flatulence. Gwyneth simply invites the originator to join the band as wind player. Tonight she seems to be rediscovering herself and the pleasure of gigging after one too many big concerts at prestige venues. The message from tonight is that however big a star you might become Gwyneth, don't give up on the small venues. That's where the real fun is.

**Colin May**

## DR SHOTOVER: Life In Bars

So... yet again one is tempted to ask, "What bloody year is it?" A question that is partially prompted by one's return to the world of booze, but even more so by the confusing nature of the Oxford music scene. One minute it's Damo Suzuki at the Cellar with some local soap-dodgers pretending to be Can doing 'Future Days', the next it's Nought at the Zodiac pretending to be the Mahavishnu Orchestra doing 'Birds of Fire', followed closely on the same bill by St Julian of Cope, and suddenly we're talking 'Space Ritual'-era Hawkwind combined with Amon Duul II's 'Wolf City'... Aargh! It's worse than that time when I was used as an army guinea-pig for the new truth serum LSD-25 (as revealed in my soon-to-be-published memoir, 'From Porton Down to Wonderland: Flashbacks of a Military Attaché Case'). The colours! The weird sounds! The Marshall amps!... What's that you say? 1973? Ah yes, that was the year. Thanks. I feel better now. Mine's a pint of Watney's Red Barrel.

**Next month: Double Diamond Works Wonders**



*Amon Duul II last week - Julian Cope is out of sight (but you knew that).*

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# 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

### XMAS LIGHTS

The CD glides quietly, elegantly into the stereo. The display flashes three times and reveals the damage: three tracks; 36 minutes. This is going to be a trawl, right? Wrong! Xmas lights aren't just head and shoulders above every other demo this month, they're the height of a giraffe wearing a top hat standing on a skyscraper above. Opener 'The Threat Level Is Orange' is fifteen minutes long and not a second is wasted. The five-minute ambient industrial grind, full of soporific menace, that introduces the song gradually emerges into an almost ghostly slo-mo metal assault, packed with reigned-in aggression and a keen grasp of tension. The sound is dense, almost claustrophobic at times, three guitars, sequencers and Marco's rasping, distorted vocals locked in combat with a hammering, incessant piano refrain. It's like a melting pot of Earth, Tool, Trans-Am and Skinny Puppy and by the time it's reached monolithic status around the thirteen minute mark, you're utterly hooked on it. After that there's the clamour and buzz of 'Ambience Of The Void', its gothic atmospherics, with their touches of Echo and the Bunnymen's darker moments, precipitating an avalanche of guitar fuzz. 'The Threat Level Is Red' revisits the epic opener, this time in a more electronic, almost Eno-ish vein, but it all points to one thing: Xmas Lights are an awesome prospect.

### MATTHEW COLLINS

Singer-songwriters are ten-a-penny, but decent ones, even half-decent ones, are an altogether rarer commodity. Matthew Collins couldn't be considered a radical departure from the standard folk-pop emoting blueprint by even the most demented crack addict but there's enough gentle charm here to save his tender tonsils and fret fingers from surgical removal by Nightshift's semi-trained team of sonic retribution surgeons. There's some mellow acoustic guitar and a softly rocking backing band behind Matthew's hushed transatlantic voice, and he seems to be able to avoid self pity throughout the three

songs here, coming on somewhere between Eliot Smith and Jeff Buckley, as well as Feeder's mellower moments. Perhaps it's a bit too innocuous to startle the neighbours or upset even the most timid of great aunts, but in its own unassuming way, it gets on with the job.

### THIRD ORDER

"I'm actually quite a happy person. I just can't write happy songs!" says young Daniel Clarke, the man behind Third Order, as well as the bands Kazor and Reactor Mind and a fellow who has frequently been accused of being a bit of an old misery guts in these very pages. A bit like a reversal of the old tears-behind-the-laughter cliché. We'll take his word for it anyway, and he's certainly right about the songs thing. Here are two more of his grim-faced industrial dance anthems, leaning more towards the primitive acid house side of things than his more full-on industrial projects of before. 'Take It' is all bubbling synth rhythms and digital pulses that remind us pleasingly of Andrew Eldritch's Sisterhood project (no, we don't expect you to know what the hell we're talking about, not unless you're well versed in obscure 80s goth music, what like we just happen to be), although the vocals initially sound like the terrified squeaks of someone who's just spotted a strange face at the window at midnight. The snarly, growly nasty stuff makes more of an appearance on 'Never Stop', a club-friendly industrial dance slab. Well, just so long as the club in question is Slimelight and the year is somewhere around 1995. Which, translated, means it's actually quite good, if a little dated.

### DUPPY KILLA

A confusing, amusing demo that has something, but we're not quite sure exactly how much, to do with Nightshift demo page regular Asher 'AJ' Dust. That's his trademark scrawl on the letter at least and the lo-fi dub-ragga-electro mix-up is definitely his style, but this is a CD of off-the-wall rasta tales rapped, toasted or just freeform narrated by a series of guest vocalists, mainly in full-on patois. "Duppy Killa does not endorse the lyrics or sentiments of 'Ras Whitey'" says the letter of the first track, about a white American rasta who moves to America who ends up getting a right old hiding from the locals, although the sentiments behind the track are open to debate. 'Black Madeba' appears to be about masturbating and not

having a job, while best of the lot is 'Bless', which sounds like a dubbed-out old gospel blues lament over a selection of electronic bleeps, bleeps and boings. It's all a bit like stumbling across an old Czech animation on Channel 4 at three in the morning and if it's all a bit of a babble you're somehow pleased that someone went to the effort of making it.

## BEELEBOZO

Rising from the ashes of much underrated local metallers Mook, Beelzebozo - named after a Bill Hicks sketch - already find themselves the most regularly misspelt band name in Oxford. But the real darkness lies within. Sort of. Understandably, given their vaguely satanic moniker, Beelzebozo are a glum bunch, clocking in at around the 25bpm count, seemingly almost too sluggish to drag their heavy carcass across the room for the punch-up it vaguely thought of starting. But then like those big old bruisers you encounter in proper old fashioned pubs that haven't cottoned on to Nobby's Nuts and any smoking ban is unlikely to be enforced, they don't have to move quickly to get the job done. At their most urgent there is an almost militaristic insistency about Beelzebozo. While Mike Gilpin's growly croon adds a melodic edge that might steal a little of the guitar's menace, it does make for an interesting end result - kind of like Neil Diamond finding himself at the helm of a death metal band. Now, who fancies a pint and a fight?

## CITY LIGHTS JUST BURN

So here's this month's obligatory thrashy, trashy, vaguely emo-fied slice of lightweight punky guitar pop. It's got everything we now expect - yapping vocals, a couple of slow breakdowns and a general feeling of being young and hard done by in life. But it seems to have a bit of bite about it. At least until it loses any sense of purpose or direction and starts to flounder in a murky sea of pedestrian indie fuzz, the singer perhaps accidentally sounding rather like David Gedge when he's not whining loudly. The whole demo is a bit like hurling a bucket of soup against a wall - there's the initial, pleasing splat, followed by an increasingly laboured slither down the tiles.

## BELGRAVES

Clunky, almost funky indie rock of the most lumpen non-vintage. Fronted by a chap who fancies himself as the new Liam Gallagher for much of the time and the new

Badly Drawn Boy for the rest of the time, Belgraves, like Beelzebozo, seem unwilling to go anywhere fast, but unlike Beelzebozo, they don't have the punching power to make up for it. Instead they trundle drearily round in ever decreasing circles for what seems like several weeks, the shouty singer struggling to keep up even with this pedestrian rock. Could this music be any more devoid of character, charm or originality? Almost certainly not.

## LAURA LOST

At least this has got a bit of vim about it. Laura Lost (that's the name of the band, although their singer is called Laura and their website tends to go on a bit about them being, like, lost. Man) purport to be in awe of The Pixies, which is never a bad thing, and it's very apparent on this demo's lead track, 'Tragic', which could actually be 'Gigantic', apart from its bassline, which appears to be nicked from 'And Then He Kissed Me'. Further in there's some decent frantic fizz-pop, somewhere between The B52s, Go-Gos and the poppier moments of Hole; Laura's voice tends towards the sweet-natured girly style, not far off Belinda Carlisle, when she's not doing the shouty, screamy bit. The only real downside is the power ballad, 'House', which is overblown and all a bit like something Gwen Stefani might have penned in a particularly uninspired moment. Other than that, promising stuff.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

## SEVEN DAYS LATER

Ooh! Metal! Big grungy powerchords! Is good! Hurray! But oh no! What's this? A sensitive young man with social interaction issues has is here to spoil the rocking party and tell us all how cruel the world has been to him. In a loud foghorn voice. In the background someone is screaming at his girlfriend for necking the last can of Stella. Or it could be the backing vocalist trying to tell the guitarist to play something a little less generic. It's painful. The song ends. There is silence. For two whole bloody minutes. Then the second track starts. It sounds the same. Mr Old Misery Guts and Mr Angry are back and now they're engaged in a tussle, hopefully to the death, for the last twiglet. Meanwhile, everyone else has buggered off to join Lemmy's shindig on the other side of the universe.

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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Fri 03 ECHO

Sat 04 EER A HOUSE

Sat 04 BATTLE

Sun 05 BECKCOCK

Mon 06 CAME UP

Thu 09 05 DAYS OF STATE

Thu 09 CHAZ F

Fri 10 GEMMA HAYES

Sat 11 SOPHIE SOLOMON

Sun 12 RAB

Thu 16 THE BLACK VELVETS

Fri 17 ALPHONSO

Sat 18 YOUTHMOVIE

Sun 19 THE CHINESE

Mon 20 CHOWHAI / WILL HAYES

Tue 21 RAB

Thu 23 SECRET MACHINES

Thu 23 WHO'S WHO

Fri 24 BELL XI

Fri 24 HIGH AND MIGHTY

Sat 25 BOOTLED ZEPPELIN

Sat 26 REMIXED

Sun 26 SETH LANDMAN

Tue 28 ON GO

Thu 30 MAX HOMER

Fri 31 GRABAM COOP

Fri 31 LUMPY

Sat 04 FUNK RAVE

Sat 04 ADEQUATE SEVEN

Mon 05 HOPE OF THE STATES

Tue 06 SALAS CELTICA

Thu 08 MC LARS

Fri 09 HUNDRED SEASONS

Sat 09 THE JACKSON ANALOGUE

Tue 11 GILLMATHS

Thu 13 GOOD BOYFRIEND

Wed 19 BARRY JONES

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Sat 20 THE DARTONS

Sat 20 THE EIGHTEENTH DAY OF MAY

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