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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 145
August
2007



WITCHIES

Oxford's Spellbinding Pop Alchemists - *interview inside*

plus

Truck Flooded Out!

**The Young Knives up for
Mercury Prize**

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NEWS

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TRUCK FESTIVAL was called off after the Steventon site was submerged in flood waters. As Oxfordshire suffered its heaviest rainfall in 40 years on Friday 20th July the festival site ended up under a metre of water. Organisers were forced to postpone the event after the nearby brook burst its banks. Festival founder Robin Bennett suffered a double blow after his family home in Steventon was also flooded.

Robin and fellow Truck organisers moved quickly to re-arrange the festival for the weekend of 22nd / 23rd September. All tickets remain valid or refunds are available. With the whole Truck label and Truck foundation, which last year raised over £50,000 for charity, dependent on ticket money from the festival, it's hoped people will hold on to their tickets and attend the new dates.

In a heroic piece of emergency organisation, many of the festival's bands, including The Brian Jonestown Massacre and Garth and Maud Hudson, as well as Truck's own Goldrush, played at Brookes University Union over two nights in order to raise money to keep the festival going, while other acts, headed by Frank Turner, performed at an all-day gig at the Port Mahon. A very big Nightshift well done to everyone involved in the festival for their hard work in the face of incredible adversity.



THE YOUNG KNIVES have been shortlisted for this year's Mercury Prize. The local trio's second album, 'Voices Of Animals & Men', is amongst twelve albums up for the prestigious award, alongside big name acts such as Arctic Monkeys, Amy Winehouse and Dizzee Rascal as well as other new talents like Bat For Lashes and New Young Pony Club. The winner will be announced on Tuesday 4th September. Good luck to the Knives from everyone in Oxford.

FOPP has gone into liquidation. The music retail chain, who opened a new store in Oxford's Gloucester Green only a year ago, called in the receivers in early July, which resulted in the closure of all of its stores around the UK.

Also gone this month is the Delicious Music store in St Aldates, which specialised in sheet music and musical instruments as well as local bands' CDs. Rising rent costs are blamed for the closure. The closure of these two stores, along with the demise of Vinyl Frontier on Cowley Road, means that only HMV, Virgin and Borders remain as outlets for CDs in Oxford.

THE PURPLE TURTLE is set to expand its live music programme in October when the venue undergoes a refurbishment that will include a full

stage set up and lighting rig. From October 15th the Turtle will host free live music six nights a week with gigs preceding the regular club nights. Entry will be free to all gigs and open to the general public. Promoter Gregory McCalium told Nightshift that the gigs are almost completely booked up until December but bands wanting to play should contact him on 07867 668 755 or check out www.myspace.com/3spiritmusic.

THE OXFORD URBAN ARTZ FESTIVAL is a regular multi-arts project which aims to feature the best local urban music, dance and visual arts with a series of Saturday afternoon events kicking off on 8th September at the Bayards School in Barton. The events are organised by local musician Rob Jolliffe who works for the Community Bizness project in Barton and Wood Farm. Acts confirmed so far include Nightshift favourites Zuby, Asher Dust and Mr Shadown, along with Djinn, Don JoJo, Inspekt A Rhyme and DeeVyne. There will also be an acoustic stage featuring local bands and solo artists. Go to www.UrbanArtz.com for more information and artist demos.

POOR GIRL NOISE release a compilation album of local and not so local bands that have played at their regular club nights. 'Now We're Out Of The Cup, We Can Concentrate On The League' features eleven tracks from the likes of Jonquil and Zelega as well as Chops, The Pluto, Riotmen and Guns Or Knives. There will be 140 hand-made CDs, each one representing a particular FA Cup Final (including replays) with CDs wrapped in the winners' ribbons. If you're after a particular cup final, get in touch via www.myspace.com/pgnbevies.



SUPERGRASS will become the first Oxford band to headline the new Oxford Academy when it opens in September. The band play a special one-off gig at the Academy on Sunday 23rd September. The gig is expected to be sold out by the time Nightshift comes out.

Editors, meanwhile, became the first band to sell out a gig at the new venue. Tickets for their show on Saturday 6th October sold out in less than 24 hours last month. Amongst the many gigs already booked for the Academy and its upstairs Zodiac venue in the first couple of months are: New Young Pony Club (*Thurs 20th Sept*); RX Bandits (*Fri 21st*); Air Traffic (*Mon 24th*); Gallows (*Tue 25th*); Madina Lake (*Wed 26th*); The Enemy (*Thu 27th*); This Is Menace (*Mon 1st October*); Alabama 3 (*Thu 4th*); Happy Mondays (*Fri 5th - now sold out*); Decemberists (*Sun 7th*); King Creosote (*Mon 8th*); Jack Penate (*Thu 11th*); The Cribs (*Sat 13th*); Foals (*Mon 15th*); Seth Lakeman (*Tue 16th*); Oceansize (*Fri 19th*); Kate Nash (*Thu 25th*) and Youthmovies (*Sat 27th*).

Complete listings details and ticket booking are available online at www.oxford-academy.co.uk. HMV in Cornmarket Street are also selling Academy tickets until the new box office is opened.

the port mahon Live Music in August

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A Quiet Word With

WITCHES

“MY LYRICS ARE GENERALLY a kind of warped reflection of people, places and situations I’ve encountered and are very much routed in reality. However, I do tend towards representing these things in a manner which is often considered ambiguous and sinister. I have a very dark imagination; I have hypnagogic hallucinations (night visions) and recurring nightmares, combined with a love of horror films like *Ringu*, *The Shining*, *The Changeling* and *The Omen*. As a result, films like *Ringu*, arguably influenced by Japanese witch folk tales, and books like *Dreams In The Witch House* by HP Lovecraft were influencing factors behind songs like ‘Sleep Like The Witch That You Are’ and ‘Glowing Sky’.”

SORCERESSES, THE DEVIL’S child, ghosts of murdered children, ancient curses. The stuff of horror films and the stuff of Dave Griffiths’ recurring nightmares. He should have formed a death metal band. Instead he formed bucolic pop troupe Witches and thus set about exorcising his night visions in a more sweetly-natured manner.

Dave is explaining to *Nightshift* the darkness at the heart of Witches’ debut album, ‘Heart Of Stone’, which is released in September. One of the most musically accomplished and texturally complex albums from an Oxford band in some time, it belies the band’s relatively short time together – a mere two years – and fully exhibits the disparate contributions of all six band members.

From Stax brass, through sweeping strings, thunderous guitar noise, gentle pop waltzes and Mariachi trumpets to 80s synth-pop, Witches cast their gaze in every direction without ever losing their core cohesion. And at that core are a dozen sublimely understated pop lullabies coasting on Dave’s plaintive choirboy vocals. Songs like ‘Dead As A Ghost’ move skilfully and seductively from pastoral daydream to punch-up at a Mexican wedding, while the likes of ‘Taking Myself Home Again’ shimmer like musical sunshine. ‘Joseph’s Lament’ finds guitars and harpsichord tumbling over a strident trumpet lead while ‘Putting You Back In The Ground’ dinks along on an almost Toytown keyboard plink and devotional vocal



harmonies before being submersed in a fuzz of guitar noise held on the tightest leash.

Witches are a hard band to pin down, although listen through to ‘Heart Of Stone’ and you can catch glimpses of Sparklehorse, The Velvet Underground, Love, Arcade Fire and even Scott Walker. Seductively intimate and yet luxuriantly orchestral, they’re simply an absolutely fantastic pop group.

WITCHES ARE: DAVE GRIFFITHS (*vocals / guitar*); Dan Burt (*guitars / bass*); Tim Roberts (*guitars*); Richard Thomas (*keyboards / bass*); Dave Balch (*drums*) and Benek Chylinski (*trumpet / glockenspiel*). Tim has previously played in Richard Walters’ band, while Benek served in the Polish navy and is trained to fire a Kalashnikov. Additionally the band are sometimes supplemented by Jonquil’s Ben Rimmer on violin and Space Heroes Of The People’s Jo Edge on double bass.

Jo, of course, was previously a bandmate of Dave Griffiths in late, lamented local favourites Eeeblee,

who split up just as the time seemed to be ripe for bigger, better things. As Dave points out, there was no great story behind the split, no monstrous clash of egos. Not even a vicious knife fight at the end of a tense final rehearsal session. Shame...

Dave: “I think anyone who’s been through an amicable band break-up knows that there’s a time when you all just sort of know that it has to come to an end. Nothing very significant happens, and maybe that’s the problem – you feel like you’ve lost direction and you’re just treading water. Excitement comes from thinking about new things you could try out and new directions you could take. Everyone was very relieved when it ended, and there were no bad feelings. I occasionally wonder about things I could do if I wasn’t devoting so much time to Witches, and I have a lot of other interests, but music has always been my main drive and I find it hard to imagine that ever changing.

“Witches started almost immediately after eeeblee came to an end. There was a period of about

a month when I wasn’t in a band, and apparently I was unbearable, so was no doubt encouraged to get a move on with getting the new band off the ground. I met all the Witches through friends of friends – at the time I simply wanted a four piece rock band, but this expanded to the current six-piece line-up about six months later. To begin with it was very strange, getting to know new people, trying to maintain confidence in myself, wondering how the band was going to be received. Then we had a wonderful few months jamming at the Coldroom out in Cumnor, and during this time we wrote the ‘Chaos of A Friday Night’ EP. This cemented my belief in the band, and made me feel like I’d finally left eeeblee behind and could confidently move forward.

Eeeblee was much more of an electronics-based band, while Witches use a much wider array of instruments. Have your musical tastes changed in that time or is more a case of working with different people?

“When I started eeeblee I was very keen on music by bands like Fridge, Lamb and DJ Shadow and I’d recently purchased a phrase sampler that brought with it a wide range of possibilities that differed from the acoustic songwriting I’d done prior to then. It was fun for a couple of years, but after a while I started to realise the live limitations of having everything centred on an electronic device. The later eeeblee stuff shelved the sampler for the most part, replacing the sampled drums with real drums, courtesy of Mark Wilden from The Evenings, and Witches has continued this move. I used to sample trumpets, pianos and guitars and now people play these instruments for real, which I think makes a big difference to the live sound.”

WITCHES’ ALBUM SOUNDS

remarkably assured for a debut. It sounds like the work of a band who have been together far longer and given access to far grander studio facilities.

“Writing the album was really exciting. It was the first time I’ve really co-written anything, replacing sitting down with an acoustic guitar with improvising lyrics over a full band jamming on a musical idea. Improvisation has allowed me to let

go of all the restraints I put on myself when song writing, allowing me to come up with fresher, more interesting lyrics and melodies. I think it's been equally satisfying for everyone else; everyone contributed lots of ideas, and it was a real team effort. In terms of getting out there, I think it's fair to say that we ideally want to follow in the footsteps of some of our favourite bands:

Radiohead, Sparklehorse, The Flaming Lips, Neutral Milk Hotel etc. by getting as many people as possible to hear the album and to come and see us live. We're aware we have a lot of work still to do, but hope that the album gives a good first impression."

The album features quite an array of other local artists, Jo and Ben obviously, but also Sutable Case For Treatment's Jimmy Evil, while Ape Has Killed Ape! frontwoman Emily Gray created the album's sleeve. Who would be your ideal collaborators and producer?

If I could have anyone produce the next Witches album it would be Mark Linkous from Sparklehorse. His production work on the Daniel Johnston album 'Fear Yourself' pretty much inspired everything I contributed to the Witches album. I don't really have an ideal collaborator in mind; I like working with the people in Witches above anyone else, but sometimes it's good to include instruments that no-one in the band can play: in our case violins, flutes, double bass, female vocals etc – Dan kicked me hard in the nuts, but I just couldn't do it. Maybe a big brass section led by Benek for the next Witches album, to help us further exploit our Sigur Ros influences.

"We've had a few little bits of record company interest, but it's only really now that we have anything substantial recorded and we're only just starting to make a name for ourselves on the live circuit. We've made a lot of new friends and contacts since the days of eeebleee – top of the list would have to be Martin Newton, the main man behind the Witches album, who provided us with lots of quality studio time for very little money. He goes to the top of the Christmas card list. He's also been using his prior experience as a band manager to help us get the record out there."

Witches' sound is very well orchestrated, very precise, but there's an underlying feeling of the sound trying to escape much of the time

"We're a six-piece band, and everyone contributes a lot of ideas, leading to the intricate sound that many people comment on. There are a lot of perfectionists in the band, myself included, and this adds to the precise nature of the sound. Personally, however, I see music as a

means of releasing pent-up energy, and I think sometimes this chaotic undertone finds its way through the cracks, occasionally airing itself in tracks like 'Dead As A Ghost' and 'Multiple Personality Detective'. I consider our sound to be the musical equivalent of someone on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Or maybe someone recovering from a nervous breakdown."

DAVE IS ORIGINALLY FROM

Wales but has spent a good few years in the Oxford music scene since coming here to study at the University. How does he view the local scene?

"I spent the worst years of my life in deepest, darkest Wales, four miles from anybody for about eight years. Coming to Oxford was a wonderful experience. When my University course finished I stayed in Oxford because of the strength of the local music scene. It remains second to none, and far better than London or Brighton. Yes, it can be very critical and people can be very spoilt for choice, creating a fair amount of apathy, but these negative aspects are greatly outweighed by the quality of bands, venues, promoters and journalists supporting and enriching the Oxford music scene. Current favourite Witches bands include Jonquil, Stornoway, The Workhouse and Xmas Lights. All four bands deserve far wider recognition, and in a supportive environment like Oxford I believe that at least some of them will find it."

The two other original members of eeebleee, Jo, plus electronics man Tim Day, are now the core of Space Heroes Of The People. What does Dave think of their new band?

"I think they're very brave, going up into space, being heroic, exploring new planets etc. It must be hard being a Space Hero Of The People: all the fame and responsibility, not to mention the risk of your space suit developing a leak and you dying and floating for eternity across the far reaches of space. It's probably much safer playing in a band in Oxford, particularly one with lots of interesting instruments and sounds. It's good to see Tim making the kind of music he always wanted to make, and combined with the excellent musicianship provided by Jo and Liz he's definitely onto a winner."

Come on then, Benek can fire a Kalashnikov. Who would you most like him to shoot?

"He's saving his last bullet for me. For when the time comes."

'Heart Of Stone' is available from Saturday 15th September. Witches play at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 11th August with The Half Rabbits. Check out www.witchesband.com for more info.



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SHARRON KRAUS

'Right Wantonly A-Mumming'

(*Bo 'Weavil*)

She gets about a bit does Sharron Kraus. If she's not travelling around the darkest reaches of Canada or the States, discovering and collaborating with the best underground folk musicians (her last album featured Espers' Meg Baird and Helena Espvall, while earlier this year she performed with United Bible Studies and Jane O'Neil at the Terrascope Tea Party) she's

roving around the wilds of Oxfordshire at odd hours writing an album of traditional songs about the changing seasons. And so 'Right Wantonly...' finds Sharron wrapped up warm in the middle of winter, making holly wreaths and penning 'Wake Up Sleepers', or alternatively sitting atop a hill at dawn on Midsummer's day, imagining a battle between summer and winter.

'Right Wantonly...' might have taken a year to write, but that year could as easily have been 1606 as 2006, so steeped in olde worlde English folk is it. Sharron has roped in fellow local folk luminaries Jon Boden and John Spiers as well as Ian Giles, Fay Hield and Claire Lloyd, all of whom contribute vocals as well as fiddle, whistle, melodeon and even crumhorn and the result sounds like a particularly accomplished open session round a roaring log fire at a Cherwell alehouse. Sharron herself is possessed of a voice remarkably like Maddy Prior, which obviously helps the cause. Personally, I'd be happier listening to one of Sharron's more gothic-hewn recordings: tales of corpses hanging from gibbets are more my bag than celebrations of holly and ivy but if you're always a little concerned that a gang of marauding Morris dancers is about to leap out at you from this CD, there's something in its unabashed old-fashioned nature that warms you to it.

Ian Chesterton

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS

'Magna Doors'

(*Matchbox*)

Something of an honorary Oxfordshire band, The Shaker Heights are closer to Aylesbury but never play there, preferring to make their name on the more fertile – and competitive – Oxford scene, and their quality has helped that gamble pay off.

This debut album is steeped in simple, rootsy rock ideals, typified by the plaintive Americana of 'Write To Me Bucheimer', with its echoes of The Band and singer Vincent Coole's freewheeling harmonica playing. The Shaker Heights aren't, though, some kind of retro-thinking folk or country revivalists. There are elements of both throughout their songs, but, as with the simple, rousing 60s-styled pop of 'Guillotine', they manage to twist it slightly and inject something a bit unusual into proceedings. Follow the album through its 45 minutes and you'll hear Orange Juice's jangle pop, Travelling Wilburys' roving rock, the rough-hewn new wave of Psychedelic Furs and Shack's lysergic folk-pop. Coole's smoothed-down smokers rasp can be a powerful tool and

he carries the best songs well, particularly 'Pigment In The Rally', which could be called majestic if it wasn't so understated.

There are disappointments. Opening track 'All About White Out' never rises to its initial promise to kick out the jams, dinking about in the shadows and outstaying its welcome at five and half minutes, while with the title track they resort to piano ballad cliché that overcooks the emotion before widdling pointlessly down an empty corridor.

What The Shaker Heights do have is a neat way with a simple tune, whether it's 'Pigment...' or 'Intimidation', and that's half the battle. You feel, though, that what will really win them the war is leaving the middle ground behind and being willing and able to take those songs to the edge, to make them really something special. There are odd occasions where they show glimpses of doing exactly that. For now though, a promising start.

Dale Kattack

A SILENT FILM

'The Projectionist EP'

(*Xtra Mile*)

As elegant a collection of songs as you could hope for, A Silent Film's debut EP exudes an ambition and maturity that you don't have to imagine too hard to hear emanating from the grandest musical stage. And that's maturity in the sense of they know what they want and they know how to get it, rather than the widdly jazz wank of a Sting album type maturity in case you thought for one second we'd forgotten our punk rock credentials.

Really, this is epic, soaring stuff, with a delicate attention to detail that allows them to cram in more ideas in a few minutes than many bands manage in a lifetime without cluttering everything up. The EP's lead track, 'The Lamplight', is a little like what Queen might have sounded like if they'd emerged in the wake of 'OK Computer', while 'Six Feet Of Rope & Revenge' is 'Pyramid Song' kidnapped by Ultravox circa-'Vienna'. Saying all that, while it's full of stadium rock weight, it never gets overwhelming or histrionic, even the guitar solos looking inwards rather than to the skies. The EP's highlight, of course, though is 'Chromatic Eyes', a strong contender for Nightshift's favourite song of the year, a weirdly psychedelic tattoo of clicks, claps and slaps that could be The Bad Seeds having a laugh at a pub open mic session or Martians forming a band after accidentally discovering an old Queen CD floating in space. Of course it should never be tucked away at the back end of an EP, but as frontman Robert Stephenson rightly pointed out in last month's Nightshift interview, how do you follow that?

Dale Kattack



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Echo & The Bunnymen

photos: Miles Walkden

CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Saturday

In distant corner of the main arena there is a pristine Audi-sponsored marquee where pretty young things dressed all in black hand out free drinks and mountains of free chocolate brownies adorn each table. In the next tent local mums sell tea in proper china mugs and there are about 20 different types of home-baked cake on offer. We are not tripping and neither have we died and gone to heaven; this is how it is at Cornbury, a festival dubbed Poshstock in one preview. It isn't really that posh; it's more that everyone is very polite. People form queues for no apparent reason and other people join them before realising there's nothing to queue for and merrily go on their way, discussing trees and deer and the merits of Suzanne Vega's last album; well-spoken stewards smile benignly at everyone and there's not a heavyweight security guard in site. Really, Cornbury, makes Cropredy Festival look a hellish pit of debauchery. And it's great.

For the first time in a month the sun is shining and rain is a fading memory. And lest we forget, there's some music happening. A lot of the music this weekend is as polite and pastoral as the atmosphere and the country park surroundings, and given that it's actually quite windy, much of it simply gets blown away (probably landing in the tea and cake stall). **IMELDA MAY**, fares pretty well however, her strident, bluesy voice not prepared to get blown off course by anything and sounding a bit like Janis Joplin given a jazz makeover.

HOTHOUSE FLOWERS appear to be little more than The Waterboys with all the tunes taken out and it's up to **THE PROCLAIMERS** to really shake the festival awake. People who only know their brace of big hits might be surprised by some of what they hear today, closer to Status Quo and Chas'n'Dave than you might imagine, but 'Let's Get Married', with Craig and Charlie Reid's fantastically broad accents making sure ever r is rolled to perfection, is a forgotten gem, while their take on Wreckless Eric's 'Whole Wide World' does the old classic all due justice. Of course, it's the closing 'I'm Gonna Be' that rouses everybody – and we mean everybody – into sing-along mode, providing the first great festival moment of the weekend.

Over in the Word Tent, **THE BROKEN FAMILY BAND** are making a joyously rootsy racket that's the best complete set so far today. Within the space of two songs we go from country rock to narcotic fuzzstorm via The Rubettes, before a patch of melancholy finds them jangling closer to The Manic Street Preachers, and while all that might make them sound, on paper at least, a right old mess, they're really quite lovely.

THE WATERBOYS are, of course, far more than just Hothouse Flowers with proper tunes, and they are well suited to the great outdoors. And how could they not be when they're singing about the moon and fishermen. Mike Scott always seems to be a cross between a rampant perfectionist and a slightly deranged busker, especially when he starts pontificating about, y'know, issues, but you're allowed to that sort of

stuff when you've written songs as great as 'Whole Of The Moon'. The Waterboys were due to play last year's Cornbury but ended up stranded at Lisbon airport. This year they've chartered their own jet to make sure they get here from Scandinavia in time. The irony that this same day sees pop stars across the world playing Live Earth concerts to highlight global warming can't have passed them by.

Band of the weekend, with only the merest shadow of a doubt (Blondie are their only real contender) are **ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN**, whose set begins with the sublime 'Rescue' and just gets better and better, a stunning greatest hits show for the committed and casual fans. From 'Villiers Terrace', through 'Seven Seas' and 'Killing Moon', up to recent, no less bountiful, songs like 'Stormy Weather' from last year's 'Siberia' return to form, they never sound like they've aged or dated. Ian McCulloch sparks up a cigarette for 'The Cutter', defying every new law but no-one seems to care, not even David Cameron who is dancing (politely, of course) at the back of the packed tent. After all today's sunshine, the Bunnymen bring a little bit of glorious winter cool to Cornbury.

And how to follow that? Well, not with **DAVID GRAY**, it has to be said. In fact if you followed up a demonstration of cement drying with David Gray it would feel like a let-down, especially since he dispenses with 'Babylon' – the only song anyone seems to know or care about – three songs in, and spends the rest of his interminable acoustic set boring everyone into an early grave with his maudlin, moribund toss. The campsite beckons and we politely say our good nights. And

Midlake



Indigo Moss



David Gray



then we discover someone's put a pub in the middle of the campsite. Can life get any better?

Sunday

Another beautiful day. Even the clouds are those nice big fluffy ones like children draw. There a lot of children around. Perhaps they smelled the cakes. Or maybe it's because they know that Postman Pat is going to be on stage later. Have you ever seen a toddlers' moshpit? It's scary. Ten years from now they'll be slamming each other around to the latest emo noise (yes, bad news music lovers, God's decided to punish us for messing up the climate by making us listen to lukewarm college rock for all eternity) but for now, this is what genuine pop star hero worship looks like. Sock it to 'em, Pat!

Anyway, since it's almost tropical here compared to what's passed for summer so far, what we could do with is **OSIBISA**, who must be at least a hundred years old by now but still know how to get a party started, and it's not long into their set before everyone is – voluntarily or not – bobbing about and clapping along. Really, it's not our style to enjoy such feelgood music but when the whole of the previous month has felt like standing under a cold shower, Osibisa can actually make you feel like you've moved to the other side of the world.

Initially more demure, **INDIGO MOSS**, playing in the Oxford Folk Festival Tent, are similarly irresistible. A three-boy, two-girl band from London who are helping shake up the English folk circuit. Steeped in the past they might be, hooked on skiffle, rockabilly and country music, they've got a vibrant punk twist about them that gets us to thinking about The

Violent Femmes, which is always something to be encouraged.

If Saturday found us seeking home comforts in the form of tea and cake, today we find it in the shape of **THE FAMILY MACHINE** up on the small Charlbury Riverside stage. As comfortable as a pair of old sandals, their wry, hangdog songs tread a fine path between genuine pathos and plain daftness, especially 'Lethal Drug Cocktail' and the brilliant 'Flowers By The Roadside'.

Inspired by the reception afforded Postman Pat frontman Jamie Hyatt produces three finger puppets to help him sing. A dog, a tiger and "a grey thing". Whatever it is, it's more fun to watch than last night's Gray thing.

Those who know what's good for them are forsaking the queues for food and the tent where an eager-to-please young man is trying to give away free shots of Bushmills whisky to catch **MIDLAKE**, whose under-hyped 'Trials Of Van Occupanther' album is slowly, discreetly, moving them from cult concern to potential billion-selling rock superstar status. Their intimate psychedelia might perhaps benefit from a more cosy arena, but equally, their easy, slightly trippy mix up of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and America makes them a perfect summer festival band.

SUZANNE VEGA, meanwhile, really should be lost on a big outdoor stage, but as she opens her set with the original a cappella version of 'Tom's Diner' she proves she has the voice to cut through any setting. It's such a stark introduction she's got everyone's undivided attention from the off and she's not letting go. Although the sad, beautiful 'Luka' remains a classic, it's her closing

two numbers – a full-band version of 'Tom's Diner' and 'Gypsy' that steal the show.

Apparently Vega "lost it a bit" for a while a few years ago, but whatever it was she lost, she seems to have got it back with interest.

Oh shit, **THE FEELING** are coming on. Quick, everyone hide. Perhaps they'll go away. They don't, so we do. All the way back to the free whisky tent. C'mon – which would you choose?

SETH LAKEMAN seems to be making it his mission to play every festival in Oxfordshire this year, but you could watch him over and over again and still be in thrall to his haunting, timeless paeans to Dartmoor ghosts and the English civil war. He's a great singer and an even better songwriter, but it's when Lakeman lets rip with his fiddle that he really shines. His rise to folk-pop crossover stardom is surely as inevitable as it is deserved.

And then it's time for **BLONDIE** to close the show. As a pop band they are peerless and tonight's hit-strewn set shows that real class cannot be manufactured in a TV studio or moulded in stage school. Count the classics: 'Call Me', 'Union City Blue', 'Atomic', 'Rapture', even more recent chart-topper 'Maria' mocks pretenders to Blondie's pop throne. And Debbie Harry – the voice of a backstreet angel, the looks and style of Monroe. And she's how old? 62! Okay she dances like a giddy aunt at a wedding reception, but her voice is incredible. And as hit follows hit follows hit and Cornbury rises to toast the greatest pop band ever under a clear, starry sky, you know that you wouldn't swap this hour for all the free chocolate brownies on the planet.

Dale Kattack

FUCK BUTTONS / THE KEYBOARD CHOIR / CUTTING PINK WITH KNIVES / EDUARD SOUNDINGBLOCK

The Cellar

Eduard Soundingblock is the new band from half of the much-missed Suitable Case For Treatment. What might be surprising is that Eduard also features members from such disparate acts as Phyal and The Drugsquad. At first glance the expected metal tropes and spacerock swirls are all present, but the entire effect is surprisingly rootsy. The clipped, grainy vocals put us in mind of Jon Spencer. Admittedly, that's Jon Spencer stretched on a rack in The Melvins' dungeon while The Cardiacs look on approvingly, but hey. It's early days yet, but Eduard look as though they shall retain the Beefheart cheekiness of SC4T whilst edging into the scabjazz extremism of Nought. Warning: it's going to be good.

Good is not a word that Cutting Pink With Knives inspire to – apart from “Good God, are they still playing?” A camp American and a cheap synth originally promises something like Hammer Vs The Snake, but ultimately they just crank out bargain basement hardcore laced with lame jokes. It's a little like pre-Def Jam Beastie Boys, except that it's unspeakably, unmitigatedly awful.

Watching The Keyboard Choir is something like auditing some bloated Civil Service Administration. Whilst there's probably at least two members and four machines more than is strictly necessary, the Choir are a great live experience, especially the flailing mixer-conductor. A lag in the middle notwithstanding, this is an enjoyable set, though oddly for such an unwieldy band the best moments are the simplest: the euphoric techno of the closing minutes, or the Tangerine Dream pomp of the opener.

Some acts tickle the intellect and some go straight for the groin, but there is music that punches directly to the gut. The implausibly named Fuck Buttons are a fantastic example of the latter, glorious to experience but hard to put across in words. They play keyboard drones stupidly loud, embellished with occasional loops and heavily-treated vocals. It's a *tiny* bit like a 90s Front 242 album with a chimp at the mixing desk, but mostly it's just simple, thrilling noise. We think it's majestic, but if you don't like the sound of it you won't like the...sound of it. It being nothing but engulfing, delicious, visceral sound. Got that? Right, we're off to dance about architecture.

David Murphy

OMD

The New Theatre

“Mr Humphreys, are you free?” With that neat little fanfare, OMD frontman Andy McClusky beckons Paul Humphreys centre stage to sing the band's biggest hit, ‘Souvenir’, and puts to bed any lingering animosity caused by their original split in 1988.

In the early-80s Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark were an unstoppable synth-pop colossus, banging out hit after hit even as much of their music veered into the stranger corners of electronic experimentation. 1981's ‘Architecture & Morality’ saw the band at their commercial peak and this current greatest hits tour follows on from a series of dates reliving that album in its entirety. The first half hour of tonight's set is similarly dedicated to the album, from the opening ‘Sealand’, a perfect industrial hymn, McClusky's sonorous voice backed by the hiss and clang of pistons, mechanical and imposing, through the searing, brittle ‘New Stone Age’ to the stunning grace of ‘Maid Of Orleans’. At each turn OMD's pop prowess is humbling, the band quite obviously enjoying themselves as much as they ever have, McClusky looking barely a day older than he did 20 years ago and still dancing like a squirrel that's just been hit by a truck.

Behind the band run huge images of warships and missiles, the band's political edge seemingly as relevant today as when they were headlining CND rallies in the 80s. ‘Enola Gay’, the greatest, most danceable song about nuclear annihilation ever, is still a joy. ‘Architecture & Morality’ was a perfect pop album, packed with some of the greatest hits ever to grace the charts, but it was still only OMD's third best outing, and those singles aired tonight from their eponymous debut and the peerless ‘Organisation’ still sound imperiously futuristic. Even later tracks, like the cheesy, brassy ‘Forever Live & Die’ and ‘Locomotion’ show the magic was there until the very end. Only a couple of songs, from the later days of McClusky's solo project, fail to pass the test of time or taste.

‘Messages’ shimmers like the pop equivalent of a 40-storey mirror glass skyscraper reflecting the setting sun, but it's set closer ‘Electricity’, the band's first ever single, that steals the show, synths buzzing like the death of alien civilisations as Andy McClusky reflects on mankind's enslavement to power stations and possible salvation in the form of alternative energy. Written 28 years ago, it shows how far ahead of the game OMD always were on so many levels. Quite simply, superb.

Dale Kattack

Corner Cowley / Marsh Road

August

Every Tuesday – Shush Open Mic – Come



Wed 1st Shirley Wednesday presents Shirley / goodMOURNING / Keysman Rob 8.30pm £3

Thu 2nd Grinning Spider presents Blitz Cartel / Beaver Fuel / Nova Kicks 8.30pm £4

Fri 3rd Addis'ababa presents DJ Reggae Night - old & new reggae / calypso / soca 8.30pm £3

Sat 4th Exposure Presents. Act TBC 8.30pm £4

Sun 5th Electric Jam - Come jam with The X Men. All welcome. 8pm FREE

Mon 6th NEW FOR AUGUST Quiz night every Monday including music round. £1 in 8.30pm

Thu 9th Zaturgus 8.30pm £3

Fri 10th Gammy Leg presents Barnabas / Catnap / Phyal. 8.30pm £4

Sat 11th Wittstock Presents. Acts TBC

Fri 17th Grinning Spider presents Beelzebozo / Eduard Soundingblock / Courtesy Kill / Ally Craig 8.30pm £4

Sat 18th The Taste / support 8.30pm £4.00

Sun 19th Electric Jam

Wed 22nd Jazz At The X presents A Jazz Jam with the house band, lead by Paul Jefferies. 8.30pm FREE

Fri 23rd Sam Kelly's Blues Band. 8.30pm £5

Sat 25th The X At The Bully. PRS fundraiser at The Bully with The Swamies / Kaned Citizen / Jeremy Hughes / Al De Boss / more TBC. Plus Addis'ababa DJ Reggae Night – old and new reggae / calypso / soca. Live music starts at 9pm. Reggae Till 3am. Tickets £5 on door £4 online at www.theX.co.uk

Thu 30th SelectaSound Presents. Acts TBC 8.30pm

Fri 31st Glitterskin / support 8.30pm £4



FREE CHARITY MUSIC FESTIVAL

GODWITS.ANTON BARBEAU.GREEN ONIONS
SLEEPS IN OYSTERS.THE GS.JAMES BELL
AUDIO POLLUTION.JEREMY HUGHES.
THE DRUG SQUAD.BEELZEBOZO.32.
BARRY AND THE BEACHCOMBERS.FORK.
PROHIBITION SMOKERS CLUB.HEADCOUNT
NEW MOON.COLINS OF PARADISE.
SUPERLOOSE.FREE SPIRITS.BLACK HATS.
MARK BOSLEY.TWIZZ TWANGLE.
DAN AUSTIN.MITCH SALSURY AND THE
SARCASM DUO.ROOSTER BOOSTER.
AMBERSTATE.RAGGASURUS.THE JACKS.

17th 18th 19th AUGUST

FERRYMAN INN
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GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st

SHIRLEY + GOOD MOURNING + KEYSMAN

ROB: The X, Cowley – Sunshine harmonies and feel-good 60s-styled pop from Shirley at their monthly club night. Support comes from Bicester's Glassjaw-inspired rockers Good Mourning.

THE DRESDENS + SICERIOS: The Port

Mahon – Molten hardcore, grunge and metal from Winnebago Deal-meets-Gunnbunny supergroup The Dresdens.

SKYNY NYRDS: The Wheatsheaf – Oxford's very own Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute band.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 2nd

BLITZ CARTEL + BEAVER FUEL + NOVA

KICKS: The X, Cowley – Indie punk noise from Blitz Cartel with support from fuzzy lo-fi rocker

Thursday 9th – Saturday 11th

FAIRPORT'S CROPREDY CONVENTION

This year is Cropredy Festival's 40th anniversary, making it by some distance Oxfordshire's longest-running festival. And in many ways Fairport Convention's annual gathering has stayed stuck in those late-60s halcyon days. Fairport themselves keep on going and, as is traditional, will headline the Saturday night with a three-hour set featuring all their greatest hits, a host of friends and guest turns and a rousing singalong of 'Meet On The Ledge' at the end. The 1969 line-up (or at least the surviving members) of Fairport will also be performing, reprising the band's landmark 'Liege & Leaf' album, which is also 40 years old this summer, in full on the Friday night. Of course Richard Thompson will be involved in that, and he also headlines the Friday night in his own right. Elsewhere Jools Holland brings his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra along for Thursday night's session, where he'll be supported by the current golden boy of English folk, Seth Lakeman, as well as classic rockers Wishbone Ash. Show Of Hands, Last Orders, Bob Fox & Billy Mitchell and The Strawbs are amongst the other big names in folk and blues filling out the traditionally-minded bill, but, as ever with Cropredy, it's the general ambience of the event: laid-back, relatively clean and with a good emphasis on decent food and beer, that's as much part of the experience as the music. It's not ready for its dotage just yet.

AUGUST

Beaver Fuel and melodic indie pop types Nova Kicks.

JONQUIL + THE GREAT ESKIMO HOAX +

MEPHISTO GRANDE: The Cellar – Top-notch experimental pop from Jonquil, plus Birmingham soundscapists TGEH and local warped blues-core monsters Mephisto Grande.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 3rd

ADDISABABA REGGAE NIGHT: The X,

Cowley – DJs playing old and new reggae, calypso and soca.

ON FIRE + SCENE SCREAMERS: The Port Mahon

THE LONG INSIDERS + JUMP PILOTS + THE WISH: The Jericho Tavern – Shimmering, atmospheric music for spy films in the style of John Barry, Johnny Cash and Chris Isaacs from The Long Insiders.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Weekly club night playing classic funk, soul and disco.

DUGOUT: The Cellar – Soul, rare groove and funk club night.

UPSTREAM PROVIDERS + TOOL & THE GANG: The Wheatsheaf

SATURDAY 4th

A SILENT FILM + RICHARD WALTERS:

Ultimate Picture Palace – Last month's Nightshift cover stars launch their debut EP in the unusual, but appropriately cinematic setting of the UPP. Now very much Oxford's brightest unsigned hopes, ASF's intricate, often epic rock is perfectly suited to such an environment. Sublime, intimate heartbreak pop from Richard Walters in support. In fact, a pretty peerless local double bill. Be there. **LIDDINGTON + ALLY CRAIG + BLACK SOUL: The X, Cowley** – Xposure club night with shoegazy rockers Liddington, plus ace songsmith Ally Craig.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night.

QUICKFIX JAM SESSION: The Port Mahon
MELTING POT with NINE-STONE COWBOY +

ULYSSES + THE RAVINES + CABARET RAT: The Jericho Tavern – Pop melodrama, odes to drink and life seen through a glass darkly from Mark Cope's Nine-Stone Cowboy at tonight's Melting Pot. Support from Bath's 70s-styled power rockers Ulysses, indie rockers The Ravines and dark bedroom punk act Cabaret Rat.

KATE CHADWICK + RAMI + JIM DRISCOLL & OLIVER SHAW: King's Head & Bell,

Abingdon – Skittle Alley live music night with local acoustic singer-songwriter Kate Chadwick, plus bluesman Rami.

THE WOOKIES + THE WARM: Temple Bar

SUNDAY 5th

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley – Open session

with in-house band The X Men.

MEDEA + NOT MY DAY + DEVICE: The Port

Mahon – Kent heavyweights Medea visit town on tour, with local indie rockers Not My Day.

MONDAY 6th

LITTLE JENNY & THE BLUE BEANS: The Bullingdon – Swedish all-female blues rockers,

kicking it out in the style of Led Zep, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix.

TUESDAY 7th

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE: The Port Mahon –

Potential for huge confusion tonight as a band with the same name as a pub just around the corner from tonight's venue play, threatening a paradox to rival the Toclafane's invasion of Earth. Er, sorry, where were we? Oh yes, Vacuous Pop night with Bromsgrove's angular, jarring post-hardcore types Cape Of Good Hope. The rift in time and space is opening even as you read this.

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 8th

THE PINEY GIR COUNTRY ROADSHOW:

The Jericho Tavern – Upbeat, down-home country of the old school from Truck's favourite stable hand in the vein of June Carter-Cash and Dolly Parton.

OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 9th

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – Opening night of Fairport's annual shindig with headliners Jools Holland and his R&B Orchestra, plus Seth Lakeman, Wishbone Ash and Kerfuffle – *see main preview*

ZATURGUS: The X, Cowley

FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL +

TWENTYSIXFEET + PYE: The Cellar – Leftfield and post-rock triple bill.

DEADBEAT CAVALIER + COPROLITE: The Port Mahon – Local Rancid and Alkaline Trio-influenced punks.

BEELZEBOZO + FOURTH CHAMBER + SAVAGE HENRY: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Heavyweight noise from Beelzebozo at the Hob's monthly rock night.

ROCKIT: The Wheatsheaf – New club night with live bands and DJs.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 10th

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – First full day of the folk festival, with The Richard Thompson Band, Fairport 1969, Show of Hands and more – *see main preview*

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with PHYL

+ CATNAP + BARNABAS: The X, Cowley –

Punk-metal noise from headliners Phyl at tonight's GLP club, with support from Brighton's grinding, atonal art-rockers Catnap, in the vein of The Fall and Sonic Youth, plus looped guitars'n'cello trickery from Barnabas.

DEDLOK: The Bullingdon – Full-on thrash and grinding from the local metallers.

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM

NOIR: The Magdalen – Monthly residency for the festival funk and swamp rock crazies and their chums.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance.

JONNY RACE + SHORTWAVE FADE +

WAITING FOR SIRENS: The Jericho Tavern

– Melancholic acoustic folk-pop and wistful sea shanties from Jonny Race, plus epic indie rock from Shortwave Fade in support.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon





Saturday 18th

DEAD MEADOW / YOUTHMOVIES:

The Cellar

A splendid antidote to the summer sunshine tonight as Vacuous Pop bring Washington DC's Dead Meadow to the suitably dark subterranean confines of the Cellar. Although now relocated to Los Angeles, Dead Meadow formed and made their name in Washington, with some early help from Fugazi, but their sound is a world away from the tight, angled attack of DC hardcore. Instead they lose themselves in a sludgy, stoner grind, travelling through 60s garage psychedelia, 70s hard rock and 80s narcotic drone-rock, lyrically inspired by Tolkien and HP Lovecraft, they'll probably cause a solar eclipse even in the middle of August. Sludgy, repetitive riffs hide finely detailed subtleties and often seriously sweet melodies. Still, live at least, they prefer to lose themselves in a fog of smoke and extended riffathons, the musical heading simultaneously spaceward and into some dark void. A band to lose yourself completely in. And if all that ain't enough, mighty, many-angled propulsive math-rockers Youthmovies are supporting. Double yes!

SATURDAY 11th

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – Fairport Convention and their many, many friends play their traditional closing set, with support from Bob Fox and Billy Mitchell, The Strawbs and more – *see main preview*

DIRTY BOYS ALLDAYER: The Port Mahon – Live music through the afternoon and evening with sets from Meet Me In St Louis, Look See Proof, Envy & Other Sins, Stornoway, 303 Did This To Me, Mewgatz, The Youngs Plan and The Blitz Cartel.

COO COO CLUB with THE HALF RABBITS + WITCHES + BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Jericho Tavern – Goth-tinged noise-pop crew Half Rabbits launch their new EP with support from this month's cover stars Witches (*see main interview feature*) and eclectic world music collective Brickwork Lizards.

TRASHEDELICA: The Bullingdon – Trashy pop, new indie and rock'n'roll from the Trashy crew.

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Cavalier, Marston

SCYTHE: The Wheatsheaf – New alternative and goth DJ night.

RICHARD & JAMIE: Temple Bar

SUNDAY 12th

COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES +

COLINS OF PARADISE + STARS: The Purple Turtle – Emotive indie rocking from Collisions and Consequences with jazz, funk and pop from Colins Of Paradise.

TWAT DADDIES: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 13th

FUNKY DORY: The Bullingdon – Swift return to town for rising UK blues, funk and jazz rockers Funky Dory

GUNNBUNNY + SUPERNECK: The Port Mahon – Raw, ferocious grunge-core from Gunnbunny.

TUESDAY 14th

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon

ROSE MELBERG + ROBIN ALLENDER +

GREGORY WEBSTER: The Port Mahon – Sweet, dreamy, childlike acoustic pop from Vancouver's Rose Melberg, former frontwoman of Tiger Trap and The Softies, plus autumnal folk-pop from Bristol's Robin Allender and former-Razorcuts frontman Greg Webster at tonight's Swiss Concrete club.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

WEDNESDAY 15th

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 16th

WINTERMUTE + SECONDSMILE + THIS

TOWN NEEDS GUNS: The Cellar – Big Scary Monster Records night with Leeds' rising starlets Wintermute taking inspiration from Smashing Pumpkins, Placebo and Interpol, while dark-minded goth-grungers Secondsmile provide support. Local BSM signings TTNG open the show.

ROCKIT: The Wheatsheaf

EZEKIEL + BUTLER: The Port Mahon

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 17th

WITTSTOCK FESTIVAL: The Ferryman Inn, Bablock Hythe – First day of the charity free music festival – *see main preview*

BEELZEBOZO + EDUARD

SOUNDINGBLOCK + COURTESY KILL +

ALLY CRAIG: The X, Cowley – Super-heavyweight metal from Beelzebozo, plus esoteric noise from Suitable Case refugees Eduard Soundingblock.

RUBBER DUCK + THE RESPONSE

COLLECTIVE + BARE KNUCKLES: The

Jericho Tavern – Funk, reggae and rock fusion from Rubberduck.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House and techno club night.

SATURDAY 18th

DEAD MEADOW + YOUTHMOVIES: The Cellar – Psychedelic stoner grooving from Washington DC's finest – *see main preview*

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE +

COMPUTE + LIECHTENSTEIN + ALICE: The

Port Mahon – Glitchy electro-pop and krautrocking grooves from SHOTP at tonight's Swiss Concrete session. Scandinavian support from Sweden's synth-poppers Compute and twee indie types Liechtenstein.

THE TASTE: The X, Cowley

WITTSTOCK FESTIVAL: The Ferryman Inn, Bablock Hythe

CAVE MUSIC: The Wheatsheaf

SKETCHBEAT + JO SHAW TAYLOR: The Jericho Tavern

SATURDAY SANCTUARY: Temple Bar (3-11pm) – All-day live music with White Sunday, When The Lights Go Out, Lee Davies and more.

SUNDAY 19th

WITTSTOCK FESTIVAL: The Ferryman Inn, Bablock Hythe – Final day of the charity free festival

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley

TINY CITIES: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 20th

LIGHTNING WILLIE & THE POOR BOYS:

The Bullingdon – Return of the Texas-born, Pasadena-resident electric blues-rock guitarist, a big favourite on the UK blues circuit and a regular visitor to the famous Monday Night Blues Club at the Bully. Rocking blues, swing and rock'n'roll that mixes up Otis Rush, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eddie Cochran.

ATTIKA ESTATE + THE DON RAMOS +

HELLO SUMMER + THEO: The Port Mahon – Touring punk double bill from Attika Estate and Don Ramos, with local experimental noisemakers Theo opening the show.

TUESDAY 21st

JAZZ CLUB with ALVIN ROY & REEDS

UNLIMITED: The Bullingdon

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 22nd

JAZZ JAM: The X, Cowley – Paul Jeffries leads the in-house band.

AGRIPON: The Port Mahon – High-velocity hardcore and experimentalism.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 23rd

SAM KELLY'S BLUES BAND: The X, Cowley – Live blues from the award-winning drummer and band.

HREDA + THE TUPOLEV GHOST + LITTLE

COSMONAUT: The Cellar – Jerky post-punk and math-rocking from rising local starlets Hreda at tonight's Big Hair club night. Cambridge's post-hardcore scrappers The Tupolev Ghost support.

THE JONES RADIO: The Port Mahon – Dark-hearted indie rocking from Reading's Jones Radio.

ROCKIT: The Wheatsheaf

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 24th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with SPOKANE + THE CARTER MANOEUVRE + MR

SHAADOW: The Wheatsheaf – Another pleasingly mixed bill at tonight's GTI with Spokane switching from melancholic, literate, whisky-soaked laments to sharp country rocking at that place where Johnny Cash meets Bruce Springsteen.

Leamington's wired post-rockers The Carter

Manoeuvre support with an always unmissable

opening set from local rapper Mr Shaadow.

MY OWN CONSPIRACY: The Port Mahon

GARDEN PARTY + THE VELVET HEARTS +

MOME RATHS + ROB LEVER: The Jericho Tavern

COLLISIONS AND CONSEQUENCES: The Wheatsheaf

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 25th

THE SWAMIS + KANED CITIZEN + JEREMY

HUGHES + AL DE BOSS + ADDISABABA

DJs: The Bullingdon – Benefit gig for the X's PRS fund, still needing to raise money to help keep live music going. A cast of X regulars provide the live sounds while Addisababa play a selection of reggae, calypso and soca sounds.



Friday 17th – Sunday 19th

WITTSTOCK:

The Ferryman Inn, Bablock Hythe

Another one of those great mini-festivals that abound across Oxfordshire during the warmer months. Wittstock is also free and for charity (they've been running fundraisers at local venues and punters are asked for donations) and features a good selection of local bands over three days at the Ferryman Inn in Bablock Hythe, near Witney, which, in its past, has hosted The Kinks and Robert Plant as well as some of the early raves. Among those taking to the stage across the weekend are Oxfordshire's premier proper punk rockers Headcount (*pictured*), coming on like a melodically metal cross between Therapy?, Killing Joke and Adam & The Ants; sweetly gothic folk-pop people Godwits; doomy metallers Beelzebobo; brothers in musical mischief Twizz Twangle and Mark Bosley; electro-jazz rockers Colins Of Paradise; ska-punk party animals The Drug Squad; 60s-inspired rockers Black Hats; ambient electro experimenters Sleeps In Oysters; hardcore ragers Thirty Two; Arab vocal-fronted dubsters Raggasaurus and Blues Brothers tribute band Green Onions. Plenty more besides. The riverside location is perfect for a summer weekend and come Sunday, even if you've consumed your own bodyweight in ale, you won't be waist-deep in discarded food containers like at Reading.

BABY GRAVY + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: The Cellar – Wobbly-headed pop genius from electro-dub-punk-prog-jazz-popstrels Baby Gravy, with support from kraut-grooving electronic trio Space Heroes.

COO COO CLUB with THE MARIA ILETT BAND + JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS: The Jericho Tavern – Sweet-natured trip-pop, electro-folk and jazz-tinged pop from local songstress Maria Ilett at tonight's Coo Coo Club. Jeff Buckley-inspired acoustic pop from singer/guitarist Joe Allen and violinist Angharad Jenkins.

BEN CLEMPSON: Temple Bar
SUNDAY 26th

PINDROP PERFORMANCE with FOR BARRY RAY + TRAW & DOMINIC LASH + DIVINE COILS + BEAUTIFUL SCREAMING LADY: The Port Mahon (5pm) – Another early evening session of

atmospheric, experimental sounds from the Pindrop crew. Tonight's show is in conjunction with Fourier Transform Records with For Barry Ray producing touching, delicate soundsapes, along with sound manipulators Traw, creating real-time sampling and processing and tonight teaming up with Oxford Improviser Dominic Lash. Local duo Divine Coils create eerie dissonance and drones while Beautiful Screaming Lady does little to up the hum-along tunes count with a set of abstract and random noise.

POWERCUT: The Jericho Tavern – Solar-powered live music at the carbon-neutral club.

MONDAY 27th

LEE DAVIES + CHRIS THOMPSON: The Port Mahon – Acoustic pop night.

TUESDAY 28th

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 29th

SO SO MODERN: The Cellar – High-tension electro-rocking from Wellington, New Zealand's So So Modern at tonight's Vacuum Pop show, mixing up post-punk, synth-pop and math-rock into a dynamic riot of fun.
PEACEMAKERS: The Port Mahon
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar
THURSDAY 30th

DJ DEREK + THE FRUSTRATIONS + HORIZONTAL LIFE: The Cellar – Classic ska, reggae and soul from Bristol's legendary DJ Derek.

SELECTASOUND PRESENTS: The X, Cowley

DUBWISER: The Port Mahon – Local roots reggae favourites.

ROCKIT: The Wheatsheaf
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 31st

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + GRUDLE BAY RIOTS: The Wheatsheaf – Return of Fell City Girl frontman Phil McMinn and drummer Shrek with their glacial new band The Winchell Riots at tonight's Oxfordbands.com gig. Support comes from fellow riot-inspired types GBR, playing Four Tet-inspired live electronica.

GLITTERSKIN: The X, Cowley – Indie rock.

BUNKFEST: Various Venues, Wallingford – First day of the annual folk and blues festival, taking in various venues across the town and featuring live sets plus ceilidhs, music workshops and dances.

THE FRUSTRATIONS + THE COURTESY KILL + THE MARMADUKES: The Jericho Tavern – Local bands night.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.

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DEMOS

Please read the conditions below before submitting a demo, or we won't review it.

DEMO OF THE MONTH

ALLY CRAIG

Ally, bless him, politely hopes we like his demo and don't call him "a useless fucking arsehole", as if that were ever a possibility. He then proceeds to open the CD with a minute-long piece of barely-coherent rambling and strumming called 'Work In Progress', as if he's deliberately inviting critical abuse and alienating any potential fans. Luckily for him we've got more patience than most of the modern day idiocracy's ringtone-obsessed numbskulls and thus make it through to 'A Train Then A Train Then A Train', which showcases Ally's idiosyncratic charms more fully, his emotionally-taut, quavering croak infusing even the most urgently haphazard of musical passages with character. It's not just Ally's voice that reminds us of Robert Wyatt; his tendency towards the deliberately obtuse and the feeling that he neither knows nor particularly cares where songs are going or at what pace, and the feeling that the whole demo could well have been written and recorded in under half an hour, echoes Wyatt's fan-baiting style at times. The most stark example of this is 'Angular Spirals', wherein Ally's voice becomes a weirdly operatic falsetto and an uncertainly-plucked acoustic guitar steals the riff from 'Are Friends Electric?' before chugging off to join T-Rex. Well, tough titty Ally, we're on to your little game and it won't work – we're gonna damn well enjoy your music

ONE MAN METAL MACHINE

Back with a new band name and a new CD after the recent panning his last album got in these very pages, David K Frampton seems to have got over the sickly softness he was afflicted with in the wake of having a new baby and the sleepless nights are kicking in. Here are two tracks of crunching, gurgling, atonal electronic noise that sound like the production line at a sinister near-future factory, endlessly churning out their evil produce – probably Soylent Green or Cyberdyne Systems attack robots. Alternatively maybe David was just so pissed off about his last review he simply pushed the button marked 'Nasty' on his synthesizer and left it to do its worst. A strangely unsettling feeling of

nausea creeps up on you as the music ceaselessly goes about its business; perhaps he's discovered the infamous brown note. Rather spendidly the second track here, 'Thunderblast', is even more abrasive and oppressive, if a little random, like a slowed-down Wolf Eyes. Welcome back to Hell's own studios David – nice just didn't suit you.

FLOODED HALLWAYS

Oxford-based hip hop has long since ceased to be a novelty of course, and with the likes of Zuby and Mr Shadown around the bench has been set pretty high for local rappers but Flooded Hallways have some pedigree themselves and namechecking Jericho and Gypsy Lane within the first line immediately earns them bonus points. The two lead tracks here, 'Unatuned' and 'Shape Shift', show off the band's strengths: distinctly English raps about nights out, drinking and fat kids. You can almost smell the rain-soaked pavements on the former, a nocturnal march with a trippy edge, while the latter ups their game, based around an old electric piano melody that's driving us mad trying to place it (late-70s / early-80s we're guessing). The rapping is assured if lacking in variety, but with a drop in pace and tone on 'Ode To No One' and 'Therapy' they lose their edge, plodding along kebab shop-lined streets in search of mates and a pub that will actually serve them with a self-defeating shrug.

PETER JONES

Earnest, occasionally overwrought acoustic folk of the old school here from Peter Jones, who sounds for much of the time like he'd fit very neatly on the bill at Cropredy, perhaps in between Richard Thompson and Bob Fox. Things don't start too promisingly, with 'The Bare Bones' finding Peter emitting a pained moan in place of singing properly and falling into that old trap of strumming his guitar harder the more anguished he becomes, but he comes more into his own on 'A Day At A Time', playing it cooler and not letting his emotions get the better of a standard but not unpleasant campfire strum. He introduces some piano onto 'Open Plan' and seems to suit the poppier terrain, although it never strays too far from the middle of the road. Peter's biggest problem really, though, is a lack of brevity, each track clocking in over the five-minute mark, which can become laborious at this pedestrian pace.

DUNMORE GUNS

More rootsy acoustic stuff which belies the band's feisty name by ticking every possible sub-Dylan wannabe box as it strums lazily and mournfully along, fronted by a horribly soulless, characterless and emotionless croak of a voice that at its best sounds like the final grumblings of an expiring 60-a-day addict. Someone blows tunelessly and remorselessly into a mouth organ with all the elan of a giddy toddler and it's almost a blessed relief from such unstinting tedium. 'Circles' is like being soaked to the skin by a sudden torrential downpour of unrefined drudgery, while the deluded sense of *bon homie* on 'Just For' is seemingly the only thing stopping the whole sorry affair from collapsing in a blubbing heap of pleading and self pity as its long-suffering wife contemptuously steps over its trembling lump of a body on her way to finding a better life.

LIDDINGTON

Second demo in recent months from jangle/trudge-pop miseries Liddington, a band named after the view of the hillside from their bedroom window but who seem more reminiscent of overgrown backyards populated by overflowing dustbins. Initially there's some charm to their dreamy, shoegazing fuzz, somewhere between Ride and The Wedding Present and compared to much of what purports to be music in this month's demo pile, it's not so bad, but Liddington do suffer rather from being relentlessly glum without ever being romantically so. 'Incredible' has a pretty enough melody and there's a feeling that deep down they might even have some promise somewhere down the line, but as things get increasingly mawkish and morbid, without even that spark of melodic sweetness to sugar the pill, you start to wonder about the point of life itself.

NB

Not entirely sure what to make of this, a four-track, two-minute demo from Nick B, formerly of local rocker Centre Negative and who sometimes goes under the names of Gentleman Distortionist and Mounted Insanity Cannon. This here is, apparently, a taster for a 100-track album of extreme *a capella* music, which involves a variety of vocal rhythms and noises, all executed through a collection of microphones and effects. Which sounds ace in concept and probably sounds ace when layered over the top of tripped-out Czech animations at 3 in the morning after a night inesting the finest local mushrooms, but standing alone in isolation this mix of hissing, bubbling, scraping and screaming noises resemblances nothing so much as outtakes from an old BBC Radiophonic Workshop sound effects

album. And this next one, Delia, is called 'CD Being Kicked Across Office Into Bin'.

MOME RATHS

Dear God, the battle for that coveted Demo Dumper spot really is hotting up, and here are Mome Raths to put up some serious resistance to all-comers. Kicking off, not unappealingly, with the shambolic 'Crazy Janey', a completely flat female voice attempts to dance over a jaunty, childlike piano melody that plinks and plonks in a lo-fi nursery rhyme fashion, the whole thing lurching, albeit in a good-natured, tip-toeing way, all over the place, like the loony subject of the song. And it really is all downhill from there. Incompetence gives way to sheer bloody-minded crapness as rudimentary Casio noises are banged out and a lonesome snare drum is beaten with no sense of rhythm. Come on, this isn't even music, it's just silly people making stupid noises and not in some punk rock kind of art statement way either, just utter bollocks. Not quite bad enough for this month's Demo Dumper then, but worthy of an award for most depressingly pointless demo of all time.

THE DEMO DUMPER

KHAMELEON

Chameleons, as we all well know, are clever little blighters, able to change colour to blend in with their surroundings. Kameleon here might just about blend in with the fake wood panelling of whichever benighted pub they're playing on any particular night but more likely they'd be shouting "We're over here!" to all and sundry in their special ham-fisted way. This is constipated pub-bound rock that takes itself so seriously you want to spend the duration of the interminably-laboured demo lighting your own farts or sitting on a whoopee cushion just to try and restore some kind of natural balance to the world. If Kameleon made a video to opening trudgefest 'Shallow Blue' it would doubtless be set on a windswept mountainside and the band would sit around afterwards watching the playback while going, "Woo, yeah, dude!" to each other. For about sixteen hours. Honestly, making your way through to the end is like trying to climb said windswept mountain with two broken legs while dragging a sack of dead huskies behind you. Y'know, fun! Further in they try on a bit of blues, some funk and even a spot of Calypso, but mostly what you remember is the interminable shouting and the feeling that precious minutes of your life are being stolen from you.

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. Nightshift accepts no responsibility for deflated egos.



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