

email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net

website: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 149
December
2007

*Incest, Murder and Child-stealing birds.
Welcome to the strange world of*

Sharon Kraus

Oxford's Folk Queen interviewed inside...

Plus

**Nightshift's Top 20
Oxford Songs of 2007
Who is Number 1?**

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CHRISTMAS WITH SUPERGRASS

OXFORD TOWN HALL
DECEMBER 20 & 21

**emma
pollock**

+ Derek Meins

3 DEC - OXFORD JERICHO TAVERN

Johnny Flynn
& The Sussex Vibe

4 FEB - OXFORD JERICHO TAVERN

NOAH AND THE WHALE

+ Jay Jay Pistolet

+ George Pringle

9 DEC - CELLAR BAR, OXFORD

TINA DICO

27 FEB - OXFORD JERICHO TAVERN

OPERAHOUSE

21 JAN - OXFORD JERICHO TAVERN

SCOUTING FOR GIRLS

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NEW DATE ADDED 1 APRIL - READING HEXAGON

NEWS

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HELLO EVERYONE,

Welcome to the last Nightshift of 2007. It's no exaggeration to say it's been an extraordinary year for the Oxford music scene. In May we bid farewell to the **Zodiac**, a venue that was pivotal in putting Oxford music on the map, and four months later welcomed the new **Academy**, the largest dedicated gig venue in the city and already host to some incredible gigs this year.

Two of those gigs were by local acts: **Foals**, who have become one of the hippest acts on the planet in the course of the last twelve months, and **Young Knives**, who cemented their reputation with a Mercury Prize nomination for 'Voices Of Animals and Men'.

Radiohead, meanwhile, continued to lead the field in every respect, releasing their new album, 'In Rainbows' as a download only, with fans able to pay what they wanted for it, sparking a huge debate on the value of music in an age of piracy and free downloads and give-aways. Sadly **Supergrass** made headlines for less fortunate reasons, bassist Mick Quinn breaking his back falling from a balcony while on holiday in France. Once again we wish Mick all the very best for a full and speedy recovery.

Truck Festival too ended up in the wrong kind of headlines when it was flooded out in the great deluge in July. Some phenomenal hard work on the part of the organisers and volunteers meant that a rearranged festival was able to go ahead in September. Hopefully we'll have a proper summer next year.

Beyond the big names Oxford continued to produce music of incredible depth and variety and our traditional end-of-year Top 20 shows just the tip of the iceberg. Next month we'll look forward to some of the new bands that will be setting the scene alight in 2008.

Finally we bid a very fond farewell to our very own Matt Bayliss, who has been writing for Nightshift for the past couple of years. Matt is moving back to his native New Zealand to work as a teacher. Anyone who has met Matt – and we think that's just about everyone who's been to a gig in Oxford in the last two years – will know he is one of the most enthusiastic music fans around, as well as scarily adept at jumping over parked cars. Good luck in everything you do, Matt.

Have a great Christmas, everyone.

Ronan Munro (Editor)

THE X in Cowley hosts a special Winter Warmer weekend festival this month, with local live music clubs Gappy Tooth Industries, Gammy Leg Productions and Swiss Concrete promoting a day each. The event runs from Friday 14th – Sunday 16th December. Friday night's show is headlined by gabba mash-up star nervous_testpilot, along with rapper Mr Shadown and acoustic guitar virtuoso Michael Berk. A full day of live music on Saturday features, amongst others, Arabic dub reggae troupe Raggasaurus, with support from The Relationships, The Family Machine, Spokane, Beelzebozo and Nailbomb Cults, plus acoustic acts and poetry, while pick of the weekend is Sunday's headline set from Callous, the local hardcore pioneers who split up in 2001 and are reforming for one gig only. The Sunday event is also a special farewell party for Nightshift writer Matt Bayliss who is

returning to his native New Zealand. Amongst the other bands he has picked for the day are The Workhouse, Eduard Sounding Block, Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element, Red Paper Dragon and Ally Craig.

Entry to each day is £4 on the door (£3 in advance from wegottickets.com) or £7.50 for the whole weekend. More info on the weekend is online at www.gappytooth.com/ww2007

THE LINE UP FOR

EQUITRUCK III has been announced. The Truck-related mini-festival takes place at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 12th January. Bands confirmed to play are: Smilex, Nought, Dive Dive, Frank Turner, Witches, Morrison Steam Fayre, Ivy's Itch, Harry Angel, Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element, Space Heroes for the People, Little Fish and Flies Are Spies From Hell. Equitruck runs



SUPERGRASS have confirmed two special gigs at Oxford Town Hall on Thursday 20th and Friday 21st December.

Charlie Coombes, brother of singer Gaz and keyboard player Rob, and formerly of local band Tumbleweed, will stand in for bassist Mick Quinn who is still recovering from a broken back, sustained when he fell from a balcony while on holiday in France in September.

Supergrass' planned show to help launch the Academy venue was subsequently postponed. Tickets for the Town Hall gigs are on sale now, priced £17.50, from wegottickets.com and [Seetickets](http://Seetickets.com).

from 1pm through to midnight. Tickets, priced £8, are on sale now from wegottickets.com

MODERN ART OXFORD will be hosting an un-curated music exhibition over the weekend of 12th/13th January 2008 and are looking for local bands, musicians and sound artists to take part. All styles and formats are welcome. Send links to online audio to Jo@ocmevents.org



WITCHES are offering a video download of tracks from their album launch party to anyone who makes a donation to Shelter via their website. The band performed at last month's Audioscope festival in aid of the homeless charity. The video features four tracks from their 'Heart Of Stone' album, 'Josef's Lament', 'Taking Myself Home Again', 'Heart of Stone' and 'At Night I Dream of Black Dogs'. Visit www.witchesband.com for more details. Witches also play a

special pre-Christmas gig at Coo Coo Club at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 8th December. Support comes from riff-heavy local newcomers 50ft Panda.

KEYNOTE STUDIOS have teamed up with Nightshift to offer each Demo Of The Month artist a free day's recording. The studio, in Burghfield, near Reading, is run by Umair Chaudhry, himself a Nightshift Demo Of The Month on a number of occasions, with his solo projects and as part of local hardcore metallers Xmas Lights. Keynote is also offering special rates for Oxford bands – call 01189 599944 for details.

TRUCK RECORDS take their new Unitruck mini-festival over to Bucks New University in High Wycombe on Thursday 6th December. Amongst the acts playing will be Youthmovies, Emma Pollock, Danny, Champion Of The World, Richard Walters and Andy Yorke. Tickets are priced £8adv (£5 NUS) and are on sale now from wegottickets.com

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into the Download every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show, presented by Tim Bearder and Dave Willybat, plays the best Oxford releases as well as featuring interviews with local and touring bands, plus a demo vote. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

Sharron Kraus

SHARRON KRAUS IS ONE OF A VERY RARE breed – a renowned and respected singer, songwriter and musician with fans around the world and a long list of international collaborators to her name, but little known in her home town of Oxford outside of a clued-up circle. Like local improv jazz maestro Pat Thomas, Sharron exists on the peripheries of Oxford's mainstream music scene but her reputation would be the envy of any local band.

WE FIRST ENCOUNTERED SHARRON IN the early 1990s, back when she played in a local rock band called Obsidian; not long after their demise she won Demo Of The Month with a solo project, Shard, and dabbled briefly with electronic music before embarking on her long, successful and consistently intriguing career as a folk singer, in the darkest sense of the word.

Drawing on the age-old traditions of English and Appalachian folk, and fascinated by the grim, timeless depths of classic murder ballads, Sharron's music is earthy and based on traditional acoustic instruments – notably piano, flute and her beloved banjo – but also stark, haunting and often stunningly beautiful. Within this ghostly Arcadian idyll crows peck at corpses, young women regard lovers hanging from gibbets, sisters sleep with brothers, betrayal and loss is always a heartbeat away and there is strange magic in the woods.

Sharron's style of folk may be a world away from contemporary rock vacuity but it draws on myriad strands of rock and pop – from 60s psychedelia (particularly 'Yuletide', her 2002 collaboration with American psych-folk band The Iditarod) to the dark blues, folk and Americana of Nick Cave and Michael Gira. Thus far her career has seen Sharron release six albums, including last year's superb 'Leaves From Off The Tree', which saw her team up with Meg Baird and Helena Espvall from Philadelphia folk troupe Espers, and 'The Black Dove', an album written and recorded with Californian songsmith Christian Kiefer. Earlier this year she released her long-planned seasonal song cycle, 'Right Wantonly A-Mumming', a far lighter album, which featured contributions from English folk luminaries such as John Spiers, Jon Boden and Ian Giles. Over the next few months Sharron will release another three albums, one solo effort and two with friends on the Philadelphia folk scene, a place Sharron spends much of each year, living and working with a collective of like-minded musicians.

Having featured in journals as disparate as The Wire and New Folk Sounds and recorded for Radio 3 and 6Music, Sharron counts amongst her many fans Shirley Collins (a major influence on her own crystalline vocal style) and Thurston Moore.

NIGHTSHIFT SPOKE TO SHARRON AS SHE prepared to head off yet again for the States, a place she feels is her musical home (she was born in The Bronx but raised in the UK), and asked her, first, how she came to move into folk music after her early days playing rock and electronic music.

"I'm always branching out, and hope that won't change. When I started playing music and writing songs I was inspired by people like Tom Waits, Nick Cave, Leonard Cohen, PJ Harvey and Patti



Smith and wanted to combine storytelling lyrics with the raw energy of electric instruments. But I quickly got frustrated by the fact that the louder the music was, the less people could hear my lyrics. That frustration coupled with a growing interest in traditional folk songs, especially murder ballads and other gory tales, meant that I moved towards acoustic instrumentation, falling in love with the banjo on the way.

"There have always been different strands to my music, and traditional folk is just one of them, one that I've been drawn to a lot recently. But traditional folk is quite a narrow field and not one that I'm comfortable staying in - I don't think my solo albums are really 'folk' anyway - so who knows what the future holds. At the moment I'm less drawn to electronic music, but improv and trance-inducing acoustic stuff, or 60s psychedelia-inspired rock - yes please!"

Lyrically the songs are very dark; how much inspiration does Sharron draw from traditional folklore and how much from her own experience and imagination?

"I write from experience, but not directly: I don't sleep with my brother, and neither do I sit in a tower waiting to murder potential suitors - but on some level what I'm writing about is 'true'.

Probably in the same way that the Bible is 'true' - not factually true, but resonating on some level."

'Right Wantonly' was quite a departure, at least in mood, from its predecessors; you wrote and recorded it across a year – was that a planned project or something that just happened?

"It was a huge departure. The idea for the song collection hit me when I was watching the sun rise on Midsummer 2005. At first it scared me - I thought it would be too difficult, that I wasn't a good enough songwriter to write songs that would take on the qualities of traditional songs that other people would want to sing. But it seemed a

challenge I couldn't refuse. I started working on the song for midsummer and was pleased with the result. I kept going until the whole year's worth of songs was written. Once I had that part done, I played rough demos to Jon Boden. He liked them and wanted to get involved, so then I started talking to the other six singers/musicians (John Spiers, Fay Hield, Claire Lloyd, Ian Giles, Graham Metcalfe, Ian Woods) and they all said yes too, so it was on!

"We had a couple of rehearsals in the Half Moon, then we recorded everything except the percussion and extra instruments in one afternoon. It was hell organising that - getting all those people in the right place at the right time - and there are parts of the record that could've done with extra time in the studio, but overall I'm pleased with what we ended up with. My aim was to write and record songs that people would want to sing at the turning points of the year and hopefully I've done that."

Traditional folk music, of all origins, has enjoyed a renaissance in the last decade.

"I don't pay enough attention to fashion to have a good sense of why some things come into fashion and others go out. It was really strange when the shift started occurring. I can mark it by the change in attitude I got when going into music shops and asking for banjo strings: five years ago I'd get laughed at, then at some point things changed - I wasn't seen as an uncool guitar-reject anymore! I'm glad that folk music is getting some attention and that the boundaries between traditional folk and other kinds of music are getting blurred, but I'm sceptical about the people who are now suddenly into folk music. I'll still be playing my banjo when they've shaved their beards and jumped onto the next bandwagon."

AS MENTIONED SHARRON HAS THREE

new albums due out in the near future. One is a solo project, the others are collaborations with Philadelphia friends; what can people expect from each?

"I've a solo album coming out on Durtro that'll be in roughly the same vein as my first two solo ones - probably less murders on this one, but a cast of ghosts, heretics and child-stealing birds. Then there are two duo projects I'm involved in with friends in Philadelphia, both of which are due out in January.

"One project is 'Tau Emerald' and that's with Tara Burke, who plays under the name Fursaxa. She's an amazingly idiosyncratic musician: her music combines glorious wordless vocals with loops of accordion, rattles, mandolins and toy keyboards. We've toured together lots are both inspired by wandering around dark woods at night. We went out for walks each morning, doing some field recordings and batting ideas about, then came home and recorded. One full moon night we went out for a walk then came back, lit some candles, drank wine and recorded. The piece we came up with seemed to capture some moon magic!

"The other duo project, called 'Rusalnaia', is with a musician called Gillian Chadwick, who lives in the Philadelphia 'compound' that I lived in. It's a row of three houses in a fairly run-down part of town where about eight musicians all live together,

garden together, put on gigs, and play. She and I started writing songs together. We wrote four songs and then recorded them at Greg Weeks' studio. He's got all old analogue gear - reel to reel tape. It was great to be recording in that way after so much home recording on digital. Once we had the four songs recorded we decided that we should record a whole album. I was heading back to England, so we postponed writing until my next stay. The next batch of songs went well, and we recorded and mixed with Greg, and got him to add 'acid leads' and keyboards. The album's coming out on Camera Obscura. That project's much more song driven than the Tau Emerald stuff, which is mostly instrumental, layered and improvised. Rusalnaia's more influenced by bands like Mellow Candle and Jefferson Airplane, with entwining vocal lines."

You've worked with some great artists; what have been the things you've learned from that, who was the best to work with?

"My two duo partners, Gill and Tara, are great to work with and I have a very sisterly relationship with both of them. Also Helena Espvall, the cellist who plays with Espers, is one of my favourite collaborators. She, Tara and I have been recording hour-long improvised pieces at a temple space in Philadelphia, and played some fun gigs together - one highlight being playing at the last Terrastock in Providence. When I play solo shows in this country I'm backed by Michael Tanner and Nick Palmer, who play together as Directorsound, and the two of them are really fun to play with - and wherever Mike goes, there's sure to be bourbon!

"I got a huge thrill out of singing with all the folk singers who sang on 'Right Wantonly A-Mumming'. It was great to be writing songs for other people to sing, which I'd not done before. I'd be writing a song and imagining someone like

Graham Metcalfe or Jon Boden singing it, and then we'd meet up and rehearse, and they'd all sing their parts, and it sounded just how I imagined, only better! The way the five voices work together on 'To Shorten Winter's Sadness' still gives me goosebumps.

"There are lots of singers I'd like to sing with - one is Dave Colohan from Ireland, who sings and plays with United Bible Studies and Agitated Radio Pilot. We played some gigs together in Ireland and our voices work really well together. Another is Alex Neilson from Glasgow, who's got a really pure and fragile voice, and who's also an amazing drummer. I'd love to get Alex and Dave together and do some singing as a trio at some point."

HAVING EXPERIENCED DIFFERENT MUSIC scenes, in the UK and in the States, what are the best things about each and how is Oxford different, better or worse in different respects to what Sharron has experienced elsewhere?

"My home base musically is Philadelphia: the people I most want to collaborate with, gig with, share ideas with, are there. The community of musicians there is a unique mix of people, all doing something very individual, but with a sense of being part of something together. When I'm in Oxford I get homesick for that community, but when I'm over there I miss the old oak trees, and the traditional singers here. I dream of setting up a musical community out in the Oxfordshire countryside, but it's hard to make that a reality.

"There's a network of people world-wide that I'm connected to musically, through bands I've played with, record labels, and zines like the Ptolemaic Terrascope. If I'm part of a 'scene' it's on that global level. The common thread that holds these people together, as well as musical, is the way they

don't treat music as a business, aren't interested in making lots of money or being famous.

"I met Brooke, Meg and Greg of Espers, and Tara, when I was touring with The Iditarod. When they found a house for them to move into and the house next door was free she asked me if I wanted to move in there. I thought about it for about five minutes and then said 'yes;! Through living there with them I met the other Espers people, and people like Jack Rose, who lives about a mile away, people like Devendra Banhart and Joanna Newsom would come to stay on tour. Also Michael Hurley was there visiting for a few days and I got to play fiddle tunes with him in the garden! It's a really lively but stable kind of community - no one is worrying about how cool they are, probably because they're all secure in their coolness! Very different to NYC or London.

"I don't really connect with the Oxford scene and tend to be quite reclusive when I'm here. There are probably lots of bands around that I'd like if I heard them, so maybe I should get out a bit more!"

WHETHER SHARRON FEELS PART OF

Oxford's music scene or not, she is one of its most unique stars: an extremely talented singer, songwriter and musician untouched and unhindered by fashion or notions of cool, content to follow a singular musical path that crosses many international borders. Six albums in, it's never too late to start appreciating the talent on our own doorstep.

'Right Wantonly A-Mumming' is out now on Bo'Weevil Records. Visit www.sharronkraus.com for details on how buy order other albums. Here songs from different albums at www.myspace.com/sharronkraus

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THE FINE ART OF QUALITY INSTRUMENTS

Tracks of our Year

It's that time of year again (you know, the end bit) so it's traditional for us to pick our Top 20 favourite songs by Oxford people. This year saw the rise and rise of Foals, a band Nightshift has been proud to champion since their earliest incarnation and who have become one of the most intense and exciting live bands around. And for a band that don't really do traditional songs, 'Hummer' was a genuine anthem. Beyond top spot competition was particularly fierce, with newcomers Little Fish pipping local giants Radiohead to second spot and Mr Shaodow and Witches hard on their heels. The quality and diversity of bands who didn't quite make the cut says plenty for the continuing strength of the local scene. Anyway, here's our essential Top 20. Hey, why not compile your own, and then realise we were right all along.



1. FOALS: 'Hummer'

What a year it's been for Foals. They started 2007 as cult local favourites with a newly-inked deal with Transgressive Records and ended it as one of the hottest young bands on the planet. In between they tore up venues around the country, played as the house band at a special *Skins* party and nearly caused a riot at Truck Festival when the packed throng in the Trillick tent threatened to bring the house down, literally. And 'Hummer', the band's first single of the year, is exactly the sort of thing the fuss is all about: uptight, speed-freak polyrhythmic funk with a post-punk militancy that could make the dead dance. Currently the best live band in Oxford (and believe us, the competition is stiff) Foals' gigs are rabid celebrations of rock exuberance, and they're only going to get better from hereon in.

2. LITTLE FISH: 'Devil's Eyes'

By crikey this pair were a discovery and a half this year, a big, brash bundle of garage-rock, glam stomp, raw soul and folksy intimacy, singer and guitarist Julia Heslop possessed of a quite astoundingly powerful voice, somewhere between Sinead O'Connor, Janis Joplin, Polly Harvey and Suzi Quatro, while behind her former-Vade Mecum sticksman Neil Greenaway thrashed his kit to within an inch of its life with nonchalant ease. This track was one of many stunning moments in Little Fish's live set, a

loping, but ferocious glitterstomping blues anthem that had us pumping our tiny fists in the air with unbridled glee. One Nightshift scribe insisted we fill this entire Top 20 with Little Fish songs, but that's against the rules, innit?

3. RADIOHEAD: 'House Of Cards'

Picking a single track from a Radiohead album always feels like taking something out of context, so cohesive are they as collections of songs. However, this was our personal favourite from 'In Rainbows', probably the most debated album of recent years for

many different reasons. Putting a lie to any ideas that Radiohead are now too oblique or abstract, Thom's gorgeously fragile voice rides on a tender, discreetly-orchestrated melody. It's five minutes of pure melancholic pop splendour; simple as.

4. MR SHAADOW: 'Look Out, There's A Black Man Coming'

With UK hip hop still trying to escape from its American cousin's shadow, local law student Mr Shaodow was this year's most refreshing musical discovery, sticking to his roots and rapping about everything from working in a call centre to the state of British rap. This was the anthem though, a raw, witty, razor-sharp dismemberment of racism that dealt with bigotry in the best way possible – by royally mocking its absurdity. All this and kung-fu moves! The guy is a star in the making.

5. WITCHES: 'Sleep Like The Witch That You Are'

A band called Witches singing songs about witches. The result was as spellbinding as you'd hope for. 'Heart Of Stone' was arguably the best album by an Oxford band all year and this central highlight was a simply glorious encapsulation of the pure pop elegance the band revel in, delicate, intricate orchestration providing a dreamy but unobtrusive background shimmer to Dave Griffiths' gently haunted incantations before the whole thing rises majestically up into a billowing crescendo, strings, mariachi horns and raging guitars taking everything to a higher plane. Absolutely stunning.

6. A SILENT FILM: 'Chromatic Eyes'

When asked why they'd stuck their best song at the end of their debut 'Projectionist' EP, A Silent Film singer Robert Stevenson quite rightly pointed out, "What do you

follow it with?". If you could imagine for a minute Queen ripping it up with The Bad Seeds in the style of The Beta Band, you might start to comprehend the brilliance of this rowdy, tender, bombastic slab of weirdly psychedelic clicks, claps and slaps, a single-minded piano refrain and Rob's semi-chanted vocals. It's a bar-room blitz.

7. RICHARD WALTERS: 'Elephant In The Room'

The master of desolate balladry surpassed even his own high standards with this year's 'Pilotlights' EP on Big Scary Monsters, from which this towering paean to love, loss and regret is taken. Solemn, wraithlike piano and accordion and a lonely heartbeat drum tattoo allow Richard's searing, fragile voice to breathe and convey immense power and emotion, its slight quaver adding a hundredweight of wonder to everything it touches. If you want to watch grown men weep, here's your perfect ammunition.

8. YOUNG KNIVES: 'Terra Firma'

After the success of 'Voices Of Animals And Men' and the acclaim rightly accorded it (culminating in the bands Mercury Prize nomination), it might have been a question of where next for Young Knives' singularly idiosyncratic take on post-punk pop, but new single 'Terra Firma' pointed the way in almost militaristic fashion, propulsive, robotic grooves and steely guitars sat at odds with Henry Dartnell's high-set monotone. The lyrical whimsy is still there if you dig deep enough but this is Young Knives in retro-futurist marching mode.

9. GOLDRUSH: 'The Story Of The City'

Reports of Goldrush's demise, or creative stagnation, are wildly exaggerated if their most recent album is anything to go by. With 'The Heart Is The Place' the band went all psychedelic and pastoral, heading out on a cinematic road trip with Ride and Mercury Rev cranked up loud on the stereo, and the album's key track set the tone from the start – a gorgeous, childlike, swooning melody with its

head in the clouds. Lovely. Really, really lovely.

10. STORNOWAY: 'Zorbing'

For some it was their, ahem, 'characterful' live shows that did it, what with songs about fish and stuff about goldfish eating wasps, but all that would be meaningless if Stornoway weren't a genuine great pop band, capable of turning bedroom angst into poetry and making the result sound like The Flying Pickets playing prime Belle & Sebastian, as on this, their destined-for-Hitsville celtic folk-tinged show stealer. No hype and an almost heroic lack of attitude meant Stornoway stood or fell on their songs alone, and tall and proud they stood. Officially the most popular band at this year's Oxford Punt, already the rest of the world is starting to wake up to their very obvious charms.

11. SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT: 'Godzilla Vs Kathleen Hannah'

Enduring Nightshift darlings, seemingly destined forever to remain on the margins of local popularity by dint of creating the sort of savage, confrontational electro-heavy post-rock that has decent folk running from venues in fear of their lives, trying to pick imagined shards of sheet metal from their skin, when this lead track from their long-awaited debut album, 'Box Three, Spool Five', proves that all they're doing is making dinky guitar'n'synth pop for ickle baby cyborgs to bop around to. With added shrapnel, obviously.

12. KEYBOARD CHOIR: 'In This Situation, Thinking Won't Help'

A band that does what it says on the tin, so to speak: a six-strong synth collective creating music to soundtrack the factories of the future. In the case of this stand-out track from their debut album, 'Mizen Head To Gascannane Sound', factories controlled by Terminators, churning out equipment designed to destroy the human race. It's thunderous digital brutality in the vein of Add N To (X) and comes complete with a demonic Southern Baptist blues rant from Mephisto Grande's Liam Ings-Reeves halfway through. A track you wouldn't want to stand in the way off.

13. YOUTHMOVIES & ADAM GNADE: 'Honeyslides'

Although Youthmovies didn't actually release any new material in their own right in 2007, they were nevertheless as busy as ever, forever out on tour and taking time out to record an EP with Portland, Oregon poet Adam Gnade, five tracks of intense, nervous paranoia urgently drawled out over the band's undulating math-funk, its bleak intensity sounding like The Paperchase if they'd grown up listening to more Steve Reich and less Big Black. As disorientating as trying to walk across unsafe floorboards while lights strobe unevenly above you.

14. BABY GRAVY: 'I Hate Your Girlfriend'

Spiteful, bitchy, shouty, silly, a bit wobbly and really ever so brilliant, Baby Gravy's oddball prog-jazz-cheerleader-punk-synth-pop-dub hybrid didn't just not fit in with their emo-obsessed teenage peers but half the time didn't seem to fit in with itself, alternately giddy and rambling, singer Iona Roisin squeaking "Sometimes I think it might be nice / To rip out both of your eyes" over Cecilia White's wandering sax before chanting something unmentionable about swallowing bodily fluids. Oh it could be a right royal mess, but exactly the sort of mess kids should be encouraged to make.

15. THE EPSTEIN: 'Dance The Night Away'

Songs about drinking far too much get our vote every time. Songs about drinking too much that sound like Neil Diamond getting cosy with Love around a desert campfire most definitely get our vote. Such is this central highlight of The Epstein's exotically country-rocking album, 'Last Of The Charanguistas', which sees them fulfil all their early promise, revealing themselves not only as a band happy to mix up traditional American folk but as great songwriters with a keen grasp on sweeping intimacy and grace.

16. ALLY CRAIG: 'Get What You Pays For'

Oxford, indeed the world, is awash with sensitive young men armed with acoustic guitars, a heart full of sadness and a couple of Jeff Buckley albums glued to their stereo. And then there are genuine mavericks like Ally Craig who

seems intent on sticking a spanner in the works, not just of soulless singer-songwriter cliché but also into his own songs half the time, writing sweet, emotive stories and singing them with an emotionally taut, quavering croak, partway between Jeff Buckley and Robert Wyatt, and then mangling them with blasts of Thurston Moore-style noise and odd time signatures. Guess that's why we loves him so.

17. SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: 'Groovy Fucking Dancer'

Another masterclass in how synthesizers can be as powerful, if not more so, than mere guitars when put in the right hands. Space Heroes' glitchy, sample-laden electronica could be an uneven journey, held together by Jo Edge's strident double bass rhythms but this track captured them at their best, a pounding krautrock groove underpinning a primitive but poppy sci-fi synth lead, where Neu! catch up in time and space with Daft Punk.

18. JONQUIL: 'Lions'

As any fule know, there simply aren't enough sea shanties in modern day pop music. Which is why Jonquil stick out like a giant rum-soaked thumb with this fantastic olde-worlde roustabout that sounds like several hundred cheery, cider-soaked yokels chanting an updated version of 'Summer Is A Coming In' over a

rustic waltz beat in a tavern in Casiotown. Off to lure some more cargo vessels onto the rocks later that night, we don't doubt.

19. WINCHELL RIOTS: 'Hymn 24'

When last year's Nightshift chart toppers Fell City split up at the start of 2007 we feared we'd lost one of the brightest talents Oxford has seen in recent years, but straight away singer Phil McMinn and drummer James Pamphilon recruited a new band and Winchell Riots first couple of gigs carried on where they'd left off, firing out epic, serrated stadium pop of the highest order, like this slow-burning surge of emotive Bunnymen-inspired noise. If the music industry don't ruin them like last time, the success they so fully deserve should be theirs in 2008.

20. 50ft PANDA: 'Flight From Tartarus'

In 50ft Panda's world the riff is king. And queen. Okay, in their world the riff is EVERYTHING. A straight down the line duo of drummer and guitarist 50ft Panda ransack 70s heavy rock behemoths like Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin and kick them frenetically from A to B before they have a chance to compose themselves, sounding like the proverbial flight of stairs falling down a flight of stairs. Seriously, you could bang nails into concrete walls with this noise.

LEST WE FORGET...

2006

1. FELL CITY GIRL: 'Send In The Angels'
2. YOUNG KNIVES: 'She's Attracted To'
3. XMAS LIGHTS: 'The Threat Level Is Orange'
4. THOM YORKE: 'Black Swan'
5. REBECCA MOSLEY: 'Queues'

2005

1. FELL CITY GIRL: 'Weaker Light'
2. HARRY ANGEL: 'Death Valley Of The Dolls'
3. THE YOUNG KNIVES: 'Coastguard'
4. THE RELATIONSHIPS: 'English Blues'
5. THE FACTORY: 'Servant's Hand'

2004

1. THE YOUNG KNIVES: 'The Decsion'
2. LAIMA BITE: 'Did You Used To Love?'
3. SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT: 'Dead Pigeon Teacher'
4. THE EVENINGS: 'I Didn't Remember'
5. WINNEBAGO DEAL: 'Knife Chase'

2003

1. THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA: 'Everything's Opened Up'
2. SEXY BREAKFAST: 'Fade To White'
3. RADIOHEAD: 'Sail To The Moon'
4. SUITABLE CASE FOR TREATMENT: 'Brand New Loafers'
5. BRIDGE: 'Harvester'

2002

1. THE YOUNG KNIVES: 'Walking On The Autobahn'
2. SUPERGRASS: 'Grace'
3. GOLDRUSH: 'Same Picture'
4. COMA KAI: 'Fury'
5. WINNEBAGO DEAL: 'Whisky Business'

SMILEX

'7'

SMILEX & MC LARS

'Dead Horses'

(Quickfix)

I do wonder what the opinion of Smilex round these parts might be if they weren't from Oxford. In particular I'd love to know what the reaction would be to their slash'n'burn glammy punk-metal if they crawled out of an LA gin joint, which they invariably do. Because Smilex have been around on the Oxford music scene for a good few years now, propping up God knows how many noisy bills around town or ripping it up in the Trailerpark Tent at Truck, they do tend to get taken for granted, and because they're such an affable bunch – offstage at least – and because we all know that Lee Christian isn't really going to glass us in the face when he invariably leaps into the crowd at every gig, or simply piss on the bar staff, maybe we don't appreciate them for the great rock and roll spectacle they are.

In fact there probably isn't a band in Oxfordshire who can honestly say they prostrate themselves so fully at rock and roll's grubby altar with such conviction gig in, gig out. And if they do sound more like they fell of the back of Motley Crue's debut album than The Stooges' Funhouse, that only accentuates their irony-free, bandwagon-free credentials. Almost unbelievably, '7' is Smilex's debut



album, following on from a succession of singles; it's produced by former-Skunk Anansie guitarist Ace and features seven songs, recorded in seven days, each dealing with one of the seven deadly sins. Worth mentioning here too that the album artwork, designed by Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia / Ape has Killed Ape! frontwoman Emily Gray is worth the price of the CD alone.

Musically Smilex aficionados will find few surprises but plenty to drink heavily and throw yourself around the living room to, perhaps pausing occasionally to chuck a chair or small nest of tables out of the window at a passing neighbour while screaming, "Let's fuck!", which is the general gist of yer average Smilex song. Lee screams, yelps, shouts and screams some more over Tom Sharp's often extravagant guitar fuzz and flourishes (notably on 'Get Off The

Game', which covers envy), and Jen Acton and Pat Holmberg's unstinting stadium glam thump (there are more than passing hints of Alice Cooper and The Sweet on tracks like 'For What It's Worth' and 'God Given Right'). The onstage theatrics you get at their gigs aren't here of course, but much of that energy is captured by a full-blooded production. Perhaps Smilex don't do restraint so well - 'Syllabus' roars in with an incendiary wall of guitar noise but quickly descends into angsty contemplation – but when they kick it out and don't care too much about being cool, like on the unreconstructed 80s sleaze-rock of 'Apepigman' (which neatly rips it out of the sort of people they musically so closely resemble), they sound born to play 20,000-capacity arenas.

Download-only single, 'Dead Horses', meanwhile, finds Smilex teaming up with literary Californian rapper and honorary Oxonian MC Lars. Have to say it's a bit of a disappointment really, not playing to either act's main strengths, instead landing in a muddled, rambling self-help guide to being in a band and the evils of corporations in music, over some by-rote grunge rock.

Ignore that though and think about Smilex at their best. In a world where Towers Of London are lauded by feeble-minded PR and media types who wouldn't know punk rock spirit if it spat itself out of a vodka bottle into their chilled cranberry juice, Smilex probably don't stand a chance. If that just makes them kick harder against the pricks, all the better for us.

Victoria Waterfield

FOALS

'Balloons'

(Transgressive)

Foals' stock in trade of deceptive simplicity hits a new peak with 'Balloons', a song so short and sweet it'll be virtually finished by the time you reach the dancefloor and have you spending the next hour trying to dislodge its infectious central vocal line from your internal jukebox. "We can fly balloons on this fuel called love" runs a repeated chant with perversely militant agitation over furtively twitching, robo-funking guitars and oddly sorrowful sax parps. It's a strange kind of brilliance can make something so ostensibly sweet-natured sound like you're about to have your front teeth put through by a well-aimed fretboard.

Foals come closer than almost anyone to Gang Of Four's restless post-punk dance noise, and while their songs are always best enjoyed whilst marvelling at the band's onstage interaction and berserker studiousness, 'Balloons' will make any pop party go with a bang. Just remember to hit the floor pronto.

Victoria Waterfield

THE FAMILY MACHINE

'Got It Made'

(Beard Museum)

Even though they're almost part of the furniture on the local scene, it's never wise to second-guess The Family Machine, as this new single amply demonstrates. Just as previous songs like 'Lethal Drugs Cocktail' and 'Flowers By The Roadside' had us wedging them firmly in the "wry, country-tinged indie rock" pigeonhole, 'Got It Made' takes a more exotic path, shimmering through *noir*-ish psychedelia and 50s film scores, like the soundtrack to some long-forgotten spy or superhero flick, sombre brass, piano swirls and a remorselessly simple beat building a moody backdrop of black and white alleyways and seedy whisky bars and belying its essentially modest acoustic nature as Jamie Hyatt sings with the kind of steely melancholy that he does so well, sounding world-weary without ever becoming maudlin, a stoical rock gumshoe in search of a story to become a part of.

As for the rest of the EP, the buoyant 'Do Song' is just a mostly instrumental remake of the band's World Cup novelty song, minus the fantastically cheesy "Rooney" chant, while 'The Way It Goes' and 'When You Come Down' fall more neatly into that good-natured hangdog pop we've come to expect from The Family Machine.

Ian Chesterton

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8th The Green + D-Blockers
9th Swiss Concrete with featuring King Kool - Mephisto Grande - Hacksaw - Apes Fight Back - Fee Fi Fo Fum
10th Otway post tour party
11th Alphabet Backwards + Stuart Boon
12th Sneaky Pete presents Matt Kilford + Bethany Weimers + Rachael Dadd
13th Dirty Boys
14th Oxford Folk Club Open Night
15th Chalk

16th Off Field all-dayer featuring Foetus 502 + Fee Fi Fo Fum + Chocolate Nut + Toad + VI + Wire Rooms + The Bumble Bees
17th Permanent Vacation presents Telescopes + Egyptian Death + Joey Chainsaw + Sorrell
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December

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15th **OX4** – Drum'n'Bass 9-3am

22nd **BISH BASH BOSH** – dance night 9-3am £3

29th **REGGAE NIGHT 9-4am**

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Friday 21st **THE GREEN** + I SEE BLUE April 19

Saturday 22nd **BORDERVILLE** + tbc April 18

Friday 26th **RAGGASAUROS** 8pm / 18

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GIG GUIDE

SATURDAY 1st

THE DAMNED + SMILEX: The Oxford Academy – Return of the punk legends, revisiting classic hits like ‘New Rose’, ‘Neat Neat Neat’ and ‘Smash It Up’, frontman Dave Vanian and bassist Captain Sensible still present and correct from the band’s original line-up. Local glammy punk rioters Smilex launch their debut album, ‘7’, in support.

NECRO: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Gore-soaked hip hop from the self-styled death rap star – *see main preview*
LUPEN CROOK + HOSPITAL BOMBERS + BEN CONWAY: The Cellar – Medway’s dark-minded acoustic troubadour – *see main preview*

X-POSURE with CALIGULA + CASTRATES + B-PHIL: The X, Cowley – Last ever X-Posure club night, signing off in some style with Stooges-inspired garage rockers Caligula, fast’n’furious Black Flag-style punk from Castrates and acoustic pop from former-Place Above chap Ben Philips.

Saturday 1st

LUPEN CROOK:

The Cellar

Sometimes heralded as The New Devendra Banhart, and occasionally declaimed as an acolyte of Pete Doherty, Medway acoustic signer-songwriter Lupen Crook is neither. In his own words, “I’m not an entertainer, I’m a selfish, self-absorbed prick who wants to confuse people”. Which is about right. Like Banhart, Crook delves into age-old folk traditions for inspiration but prefers to dwell on the most macabre aspects, lyrics about dead relatives, rape and cancer complementing his stark, skeletal picking style of guitar playing. From murderous sea shanties to full-blooded rock and the haunting, string-laden acoustic folk of his new single, ‘Halloween’, his voice often rising to a lupine howl, or sounding like a twisted take on Syd Barrett, Lupen Crook is a good universe and half away from Radio 2-friendly acoustic songsmiths like David Gray and James Blunt. Support tonight comes from Brighton’s urban folksters Hospital Bombers, in a Jamie-T vein, plus Tristan & The Troubadours’ Ben Conway.



DECEMBER

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night with Kissy, Sell Out and Dogshow.

JUNE + COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES + THE RUINS: The Wheatsheaf – Heavyweight indie and garage rocking from June, with shoegazey support from The Ruins.

KEYBOARD CHOIR + 1877 + 100 BULLETS BACK: The Purple Turtle – Multi-textured synth splendour from Keyboard Choir, plus spiky new wave noise from Aylesbury’s 1877 and hard-edged electro-dance from 100 Bullets Back.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Cavalier, Marston – The newly renamed Redox play their regular residency, bringing festival funk and witchy prog-pop to the unwashed masses.

MELTING POT with SKETCHBEAT + HELIUM SOUL + DURANGOS + MOON: The Jericho Tavern – Blues and funk mixed bill at tonight’s Melting Pot, with Worcestershire funk rockers Sketchbeat, Hampshire’s Helium Soul and Cardiff’s garage blues rockers Durango.

WALLINGFORD BEAT CLUB: Portcullis Club, Wallingford – New retro beat club courtesy of Sir Bald Diddley, tonight featuring Dutch beat group Mark & The Spies, making out like mid-60s Kinks and Beatles. Support comes from Baldy’s own authentic 60s ska and r’n’b big band Nine-Ton Peanut Smugglers, plus organ-driven frat-rockers Los Imbasils.

THE SUSPECTS: The Temple

SUNDAY 2nd

KARINE POLWART: The Oxford Academy – Pure, dark-edged traditional folk from the Scottish singer and guitarist and former member of The Battlefield Band who recently won the Best Original Song title at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards for ‘Daisy’, this following on from her three gongs at the 2005 awards for her debut album, ‘Faultlines’.

THE SEQUINS + BLITZ CARTEL + THE GULLIVERS + VON BRAUN: The Port Mahon – Coventry’s lightweight indie funksters The Sequins launch their debut album with support from local thrash-punkers Blitz Cartel and melodic punk-pop noisemakers The Gullivers.

LITTLE WINGS: Ultimate Picture Palace – Lo-fi folk from the K Records star who has previously worked with Devendra Banhart and M Ward.

I’M AFRAID OF presents SIX NATION STATE + KID ACNE + TACTICIANS: The Purple Turtle – Jangly Britpop from Southampton’s Six Nation State, plus Sheffield’s own Beastie Boy, Kid Acne and Oasis-styled rockers Tacticians in support.

MONDAY 3rd

THE BLUES BISHOPS: The Bullingdon – Hard-rocking blues in the style of Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters and Peter Green from the European festival faves, recently joined by former-Argent and Zombies bassist Jim Rodford.

EMMA POLLOCK: The Jericho Tavern – Former Queen of downbeat lo-fi pop genius with The Delgados branches out on her own and aims for a sweeter-natured, more soft-focus and polished pop sound, with her debut solo album, ‘Watch The Fireworks’, produced by Jeremy Wheatley, who previously worked with Corinne Bailey-Rae and Razorlight

DICK GAUGHAN: Nettlebed Folk Club – The renowned Scottish folk singer and guitar virtuoso mixes up traditional ballads and political songs.

TUESDAY 4th

SETSUBUN BEAN UNIT: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Experimental jazz and space-funk celebrating the traditional Japanese springtime Setsubun Festival – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon – Weekly jazz session with regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet playing lively modern jazz with contemporary grooves, led by keyboard player Howard.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 5th

DUKE SPECIAL: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Dreadlocked Belfast-based musical hobo Peter Wilson creeps up the musical popularity ladder by stealth, examining the romantic underbelly of pop, mixing Morrissey’s downbeat humour with The Divine Comedy’s lush piano-led orchestral pop.

SHIRLEY + MONKEY PUZZLE: The X, Cowley – Local sunshine pop fun pups Shirley host their regular monthly club night with fuzzy indie rocking from guests Monkey Puzzle.

JOHN OTWAY: The Jericho Tavern – Madcap blues, punk and pop from the clown prince of rock and roll.

FULL METAL WAISTCOAT + OLLIE THOMAS + MATTHEW BOARD: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night with local folk revivalists FMW.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

FLAPJACK: Sugar Browns, Jericho – New weekly intimate jazz session with Jack Pescod & Friends.

THURSDAY 6th

ELAPSE-O + PLEASE + PNAK: The

Bullingdon – Joint club night with Coo Coo and Permanent Vacation, featuring a first headline set from rising local noise experimentalists Elapse-O - *see main preview*
BRING ME THE HORIZON: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Sheffield's fast-rising deathcore barbarians bring the noise, out on a headlining tour after trips on the road with Killswitch Engage, The Haunted and Lostprophets, and still riding high on the back of last year's Kerrang! award for best British Newcomers. And if you're a very lucky little metal bunny, singer Oli Sykes might even wee on you after the gig.

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + THE

CONSCRIPTS: The X, Cowley – Eclectic and exotic treats from Brickwork Lizards,

Saturday 1st

NECRO: The Zodiac @ The Academy

Billed as An Evening With Necro, which puts a cosy slant on hip hop's most dark-minded protagonist, a man described by Mike Skinner as "an extreme Eminem" and more pertinently, by The Face as "a very, very bad man". Brooklyn's Necro has already had the tabloids in this country up in arms but he's hardly Charles Manson (although his new album, 'Death Rap', does deal with the Manson Family murders in unnecessarily gruesome detail), instead, with titles like 'Mutilate The Beat' and 'Forensic Pathologist', he's more like the Carcass of rap, only mixed up with a fair amount of Bloodhound Gang's juvenile humour (hopefully intentional). Having spent his early youth playing in metal bands, Necro's taken the ferocity and noise of that genre into rap and the new album features contributions from members of Anthrax, Lamb of God and Shadows Fall, while he's previously worked with Slipknot and Obituary. Sick and morbid, his rhymes are delivered in a menacing, lispy monotone and drip with blood and black humour and, really, tonight's show puts Lethal Bizzle's visit this month in the shadows.



running through 40s jazz and north African folk music to hip hop and southern blues. Conscripts mix up soul, funk, hip hop and rock in support.

PORT MAYHEM with THE DOOLALLYS:

The Port Mahon – Mellow acoustic sounds from the travelling trad folkies.

THE EVENINGS + MR SHAADOW + THE UNRECORDED: The Cellar – Electro-pop, krautrock grooves and experimentation from The Evenings, plus top-class local rap from Mr Shadow.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guests The John Donaldson quartet.

THE BLACK HATS + SEVEN YEARS ON + MINUTES: The Jericho Tavern – Melodic indie rocking from Black Hats.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 7th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE

AROUSERS + INIGO JONES + SUPERLOOSE + MARY BENDY TOY:

The Wheatsheaf – Another mixed bill from Klub Kak, including surf rock and 50s rock'n'roll from The Arousers and bulldozing industrial goth-metal from Mary Bendy Toy.
JOSH ROUSE: The Oxford Academy – The Nebraska-born, Nashville-resident singer-songwriter returns to town to promote new album, 'Country Mouse, City House', mixing up old-style country and folk roots with languid pop and Philly soul, somewhere between Carole King and early Van Morrison.

LETHAL BIZZLE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – A bloke who seems to have been camped at the Academy in recent weeks, following assorted support slots, including with musical collaborators Gallows. Rabble-rousing rap showmanship with an eye on the indie market, plenty of call-and-response silliness, a few remaining touches of grime, a cover of House Of Pain's 'Jump Around' as well as pretty decent recent single 'Police On My Back', a loose cover of the old Equals hit.

INFLATABLES: The X, Cowley – Classic ska, reggae and soul covers.

THE MIGHTY PORKER + FLOODED

HALLWAYS + TWELVE SIGNS +

CAMINUS: The Jericho Tavern

STORNOWAY + THE FOLLYS +

EVOLVERS + SHOPLIFTERS: The Purple Turtle – Launch gig for 60s-styled popsters The Follys' debut CD, plus a headline set from piscine-knowledgeable folk-pop chaps Stornoway.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 8th

THE LONDON GYPSY ORCHESTRA:

The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy –

Exuberant, fiery Eastern European and Balkan folk from the 40-strong gypsy dance collective.

SCOUTING FOR GIRLS: The Oxford

Academy – Describing themselves as "buoyantly infectious", which makes them sound like a mild stomach bug, Scouting For Girls continue the onward march of the new wave of MOR, armed with plenty of piano-led



Tuesday 4th

SETSUBUN BEAN

UNIT: The Zodiac @

The Academy

Another inspired promotion from Oxford Contemporary Music, tonight featuring experimental jazz and space-funk trio Setsubun Bean Unit celebrating the traditional Japanese springtime Setsubun Festival (featuring the scattering of soya beans and the beating of demons, fact fans), providing a weird and wonderful electronic reworking of traditional Japanese folk and contemporary rhythms, taking in anything and literally everything in between, whether it be deranged contemporary jazz marches, Balkan folk dance, leftfield electronica or – oh yes – Yiddish dub reggae. The band are essentially the trio of Pete Flood, Gideon Jucker and Brendan Kelly, all part of English folk big band Bellowhead but who also play together as Farmyard Animals, and currently signed to electro pioneer Matthew Herbert's Accidental Records. They are joined by a cast of Japanese vocalists, musicians and dancers for a musical trip that's equally inspired, daft and unclassifiable and features that staple of rock bands the world over, the electronic tuba. Something decidedly different to add to your gigging week.

soul-pop ballads and blokey, beer-friendly singalongs about love and stuff. Tonight's dominant mood has been designated as "upbeat". You will comply.
CAINE + TALC DEMONS + ALPHABET BACKWARDS: The X, Cowley – Wittstock fundraiser.

COO COO CLUB with WITCHES + 50ft

PANDA: The Jericho Tavern – Sublime soft-centred, spiky-edged pop from Witches, taking in everything from alt.country to mariachi and hardcore noise pop along the way. Monstrous riffs'n'beats rocking from 50ft Panda in support.

DAVID STACKENAS: Brookes University Drama Hall – The internationally-renowned Swedish guitar experimentalist visits town as part of a short UK tour, teaming up with Julian Faultless (French horn), Dominic Lash (bass) and David Stent (guitar) from Oxford Improvisers.

PHISH: The Bullingdon – 90s club night.

THE GREEN + D-BLOCKERS: The Port Mahon – Local rock double bill.

OXEYE FUNDRAISER: East Oxford Community Centre – Benefit gig for Radley Lakes, Warneford Meadow and Jericho Boatyard campaigns with live bands, DJs and stalls.

DEAD LEG: The Temple

FUNKY JUSTICE + DJ THUNDERCAT: The Purple Turtle – Live funk, soul and hip hop.

SUNDAY 9th

NOAH & THE WHALE + JAY JAY

PISTOLET: The Cellar – London-based indie-folk band, taking in everything from bluegrass to skiffle along the way and recent support to Jeffrey Lewis at the X, keeping it jaunty and knowing in the vein of They Might Be Giants. DIY nu-folk troubadour Jay Jay supports.

KING KOOL + MEPHISTO GRANDE + HACKSAW + APES FIGHT BACK + FEE

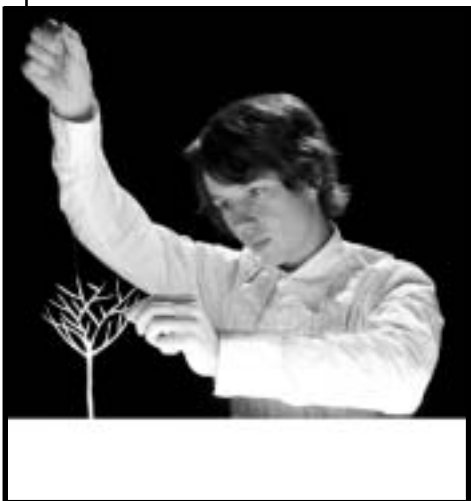
FI FO FUM: The Port Mahon – Dirty, grungy garage-rock, blues and rockabilly from

Wednesday 5th

SLOUNGE:

The Vaults Café

Oxford Contemporary Music's ongoing Slounge series is one of the most interesting innovations on the local scene, each event offering a mix of music, poetry, film and art (oh, and now with added dinner with the move to the Vaults Café in Radcliffe Square). Tonight's Slounge closes OCM's Autumn season and brings to town Leafcutter John for a rare live appearance. A sometime member of Mercury-nominated avant-jazz collective Polar Bear, John Burton is a leader in the UK folktronica field, mixing up sampled nature sounds with often ancient acoustic instrumentation and electronics to create complex, suggestive soundscapes that cross the borders between pastoral and urban ambience. His latest album, 'Housebound Spirit', is inspired by his increasing panic attacks brought on by agoraphobia and make for suitably disconcerting listening. Also performing tonight is Lisa Busby, one half of local electronic duo Sleeps In Oysters, presenting her 'Brambles In Starlight' piece, featuring lo-fi electro-pop, children's toys and evocative imagery. Oxford Film And Video Makers also present a series of short films.



London's King Kool, inspired by the likes of Jon Spencer, headlining a Swiss Concrete duos night. Support comes from the mighty Mephisto Grande, mixing up Tom Waits with something nasty from under the stairs, Bristol's rudimentary punkers Hacksaw (who have written the best song ever about Bath City FC) and Blackburn's aggressive bass and drum monsters Apes Fight Back, coming on somewhere between Big Black and McLusky.

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley – Jam along with the in-house band, The X Men.

CASIO KID + OLYMPIC LIFTS: The Purple Turtle – Lo-fi bedroom emotronica.

MONDAY 10th

NEVER THE BRIDE: The Bullingdon – Return of the blues-rock favourites, fronted by asbestos-lunged frontwoman Nikki Lambourn, likened to Tina Turner and Janis Joplin and rated as the UK's premier female blues singer; power rocking back-up in the style of Heart from the band.

TUESDAY 11th

CSS + METRONOMY + JOE LEAN & THE JING JANG JONG: The Oxford Academy – Brazil's super sexy girl power pop returns – *see main preview*

THE SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY BAND: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Unconcerned that their band leader died in 1982, The Sensational Alex Harvey Band continue along their eclectic, showy glam-rock journey, now with former-Shamen chap Max Maxwell on vocals alongside original band members Zal Cleminson, Chris Glen and Hugh and Ted McKenna.

JAZZ CLUB with THE BENTLEY RHYTHM ACES: The Bullingdon ALPHABET BACKWARDS + STUART BOON: The Port Mahon – Gentle, dreamy semi-acoustic indie folk from Alphabet Backwards.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley LES CLOCHARDS + BUENA VISTA SOCIALISTS + MAEVE BAYTON + JANE GRIFFITHS + COLIN FLETCHER & JAMES BELL: East Oxford Community Centre – Benefit gig for the Community Centre with Gallic pop types Les Clochards and folk and blues songstress Maevae Bayton.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 12th

DIVINE HERESY The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – New extreme metal outing for former-Fear Factory guitarist Dino Cazares, keeping it loud and furious on new album 'Bleed The Fifth', produced by Machine Head and Soulfly chappie Logan Maden.

JEZ COOKE: The X, Cowley – Jazz guitarist Cooke performs alongside Martin Pickett (piano), Paul Jefferies (bass) and Charlie Stratford (drums).
MATT KILFORD + BETHANY WEIMERS + RACHAEL DADD: The Port Mahon – First night of the new Sneaky Pete club featuring a selection of local songwriters, including former-Belarus chap Matt Kilford plus acoustic folk-pop from Rachael Dadd and dark-hearted folk from Bethany Weimers.

RACHELLE VAN ZANTEN + DANIEL HAMMERSLEY: The Jericho Tavern – Canadian blues slide guitarist back in the UK after her star turn at Truck Festival in September.

SUPERLOOSE + HELEN PEACOCK + SEAN GRANT: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn FLAPJACK: Sugar Browns, Jericho

THURSDAY 13th

MAXIMO PARK: The Oxford Academy – Long-since sold-out gig for Sunderland's returning post-punk indie rockers, last seen cranking up the noise in the discreet setting of The Oxford Union.

THE FAMILY MACHINE + HOUSE OF LANTERNS + CHINWAG: The Cellar – Country-tinged indie rockers Family Machine launch their excellent John Barry-inspired single, 'Got It Made'.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Martin Shaw plays with the jazz club's house band.

FOUR STAR MARY + FATALLY YOURS + TELLING THE BEES: The Jericho Tavern – Once Buffy's house band, Four Star Mary make their first trip to Oxford for a few years, following their chosen grungy roots-rock path.

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

FRIDAY 14th

WINTER WARMER WEEKENDER: The X, Cowley – First day of the pre-Christmas live music extravaganza with Gappy Tooth Industries picking their favourite bands of the year – *see main preview*

ORSON: The Oxford Academy – Awful, more like.

QUICKFIX PRESENTS with THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + DARTZ! + SECONDSMILE + PENNINES: The Wheatsheaf – Epic, emotive and fidgety indie rocking from TTNG at tonight's Quickfix club in conjunction with Big Scary Monsters Records. Jerky post-punk from Dartz! in support plus mountainous rocking from Pennines.

REPUBLICA: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Hard house and trance club night.
THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR: The Magdalen

FLATFOOT 56 + CHOKEHOLD + HERO IN ERROR + IN BREACH OF SANITY: The Courtyard, Bicester – A mayhem night of punk noise at Bicester's Courtyard youth centre as Chicago celtic-punk warriors Flatfoot 56 come to town, fresh from supporting Flogging Molly on tour. Bullish Irish punk in the vein of The Pogues and Dropkick Murphys, bagpipes and all. Recent Saxon tour support Chokehold head the supporting cast.
TAMARIND SUN + MICAWBER + THE BOY DID GOOD: The Jericho Tavern – Winsome female-fronted acoustic from headliners Tamarind Sun.
HANGMAN CHARLIE + JOE PARKER & THE POWERS: The Purple Turtle OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SATURDAY 15th

WINTER WARMER WEEKENDER: The X, Cowley (3pm) – Gammy Leg Productions take over the reins for the second day of the X's weekend festival – *see main preview*

MINUS THE BEAR: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Melodic post-hardcore and electro-rocking from Dave Grohl's fave new band – *see main preview*

MATT SAGE + BARNABAS + THE KATE GARRETT BAND + COLIN FLETCHER & JANE GRIFFITHS: The Abbey, Sutton Courtenay – Grand surroundings for a Catweazle Club special, with Catweazle host

Wednesday 5th

CSS / METRONOMY /
JOE LEAN & THE
JING JANG JONG:
The Academy

Last time we encountered CSS they were casually blowing Klaxons off stage at Brookes, even though it wasn't their greatest gig by some distance, plagued by poor sound. But their quality is clear to see: infectious anti-muso fun, bubble and bounce, a merry-making mix up of synth-pop, disco, new wave and classic girl pop that makes debauchery seem cute and cuddly. 'Let's Make Love & Listen To Death From Above' seems to have been used a single for just about every show on telly this year, while 'Alcohol' and 'Alala' are now wedged in the internal jukeboxes of even the tiniest toddler. That five girls and a boy from Sao Paulo who couldn't even play their instruments when they started should prove to be one of the best pop bands on the planet shows that it's attitude rather than technique that really matters. Joyous stuff. And joyous support too from Sheffield's Metronomy, recent tour support to Foals, three blokes with synthesizers coming on like Devo's slightly mad kid brothers, getting high on The Human League and gypsy dance. Oh yes. The less said about Joe Lean the better, to be honest.



Matt Sage doing his sweetly psychedelic world folk thing with support from cellist Barnabas, plus jazz and folk-tinged pop from Kate Garrett.

JUNCTION 13 + PISTOL KICKS: The Wheatsheaf

JABERWOK + THE PLAUDITS + DR SLAGGLEBERRY: The Cellar – Psychedelic funk and rock from Jaberwok, plus 80s-styled pop from The Plaudits and Chili Peppers-influenced funk from Dr Slaggleberry.

MELTING POT with DEXTER + THE DAVID GOO VARIETY BAND + HEYS + HIP ROUTE: The Jericho Tavern – Ska-punk from Birmingham's Dexter at tonight's Melting Pot Christmas bash. Self-consciously oddball singer-songwriter David Goo supports.

SOUL JACKER: The Temple

THE REPEATS: The Purple Turtle

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + SUBMERSE + LADYBRIDGE: Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Skittle Alley Christmas party.

SUNDAY 16th

WINTER WARMER WEEKENDER: The X, Cowley (3pm) – Swiss Concrete host the final day of the weekend festival with Nightshift scribe Matt Bayliss picking his favourites before heading back to New Zealand. The mighty Callous reform in his honour – *see main preview*

TOAD + FEE FI FO FUM + THE BUMBLEBEES + VI + WIRE ROOMS + FOETUS 502 + CHOCOLATE NUTS: The Port Mahon (4.30pm) – Extended Off-Feild leftfield and experimental music session with Improv krautrockers Toad et al - *see main preview*

ERRORS + SO SO MODERN: The Cellar – Vacuous Pop host their Christmas party after another year of bringing some of the most esoteric musical mavericks to town. Tonight's untraditionally festive guests are Glasgow's Rock Action-signed electro-noise quartet Errors, coming on some place in between Mogwai, Add N To (X) and Autechre, with support from New Zealand's synth-heavy math-rockers So So Modern.

FOCAL POINT + DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + CONSCRIPTS: The Wheatsheaf - Quirky indie noise from Focal Point plus soul and hip hop from the support.

MONDAY 17th

TAKA BOOM & BLAZE + GILES HEDLEY + LEBURN: The Bullingdon – The Famous Monday Night Blues hosts its traditional Christmas do with special guest turns from former-Parliament backing singer and sister of Chaka Khan, Taka Boom, plus Midlands-based guitarist and singer Giles Hedley, renowned on the European festival circuit for his bottleneck and slide playing, drawing on Delta and Chicago blues tradition.

TELESCOPES + EGYPTIAN DEATH + JOEY CHAINSAW + SORRELL: The Port Mahon – Drone-tastic experimental noise extravaganza from Permanent Vacation - *see main preview*



Thursday 6th

ELAPSE-O:
The Bullingdon

Sunday 16th

OFF-FEILD SPECIAL:
The Port Mahon

Monday 17th

TELESCOPES:
The Port Mahon

Saturday 22nd

POOR GIRL NOISE:
The Port Mahon

Another great month for experimental noise gigs in Oxford with four special events to pick from. On the 6th Coo Coo and Permanent Vacation team up for a one-off club night featuring a first headline set from rising local noise experimentalists Elapse-O, fusing drones with tightly-controlled noise and feedback in the vein of Cluster and Nurse With Wound. Support comes from London acts Please, mixing up Magic Band eccentricity with USAisamonster riffery, and electro experimentalists Pnak. There are also DJ sets from Lady Pilot, Code Red and Permanent Vacation people.

The 16th sees an extended leftfield and experimental music session from David K Frampton and chums with improv krautrockers Toad, jittering math-core types Fee Fi Fo Fum, twee folk from Bumblebees, pulse noise from VI and experimental synth-noise in the vein of Throbbing Gristle and Suicide from Wire Rooms and Foetus 502.

Stephen Lawrie's drones, pulses, delays and feedback machine Telescopes (*pictured*) hums and screeches its way back into town the following night with a singularly uncompromising mission to entrance and terrify all-comers. Local noise luminary Joey Chainsaw pushes them close with his reverberated guitar-based nightmare soundtracks, while Egyptian Death make their live debut, formed by members of Elapse-O, Traktors and Euhedral.

Finally PGN provide a full free day of experimental noise on the 22nd, featuring sets from Bletchley's Dawn Chorus and Riotmen, both featuring members of Action Beat, local mathsy guitar manglers Twat Trot Tra La, At The Drive-In-inspired post-rock from Tunbridge Wells' Kids That Made America, plus avant-funk from Prefontaine and indie punk from The Youngs Plan.



Tuesday 11th

OLAFUR ARNALDS / ROBERT STEVENSON / RICHARD WALTERS: The Holywell Music Room

The world's oldest purpose-built concert venue plays host to Iceland's newest soundscaping talent in the form of Olafur Arnalds, who goes a long way to confirming everything you thought about that country and its ability to keep producing wonderfully glacial music that crosses the boundary between pop and classical music. Backed by a string quartet Arnalds combines piano, electronic keyboards and percussion and drones to create instrumental chamber music pieces that rise from fragile, emotional intimacy to grand, sweeping crescendos, not a million miles away from Sigur Ros, unsurprisingly. He's over in the UK for a short tour to promote debut album 'Eulogy For Evolution' and has been snapped up by Radiohead producer Nigel Godrich's management company for soundtrack work, even more unsurprisingly. Quality local support tonight comes from A Silent Film frontman Robert Stevenson and Richard Walters.

St AGNES FOUNTAIN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional folk from Chris While, Julie Mathews, Chris Leslie and David Hughes.

SUPERLOOSE + RUNNING WITH SCISSORS + DAN AUSTIN + RODNEY QUAKES: The Venue Bar, Abingdon – Skittle Alley live session.

TUESDAY 18th

JOB FOR A COWBOY + THE BLACK DAHLIA MURDER: The Zodiac @ The

DRUMMER WANTED

with b/vs.

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CALL DREW ON 511065

Oxford Academy – Joint headline tour from two rising stars of extreme metal, with Arizona's Job For A Cowboy's pulverising blend of thrash and doom metal, plus death metal unpleasantness from Michigan's Black Dahlia Murder.

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD

PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

AMBERSTATE: The Jericho Tavern – Farewell gig for the local ambient trip hoppers. Free mince pies too, apparently. That's what we call going out in style.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 19th

WINCHELL ROTS + THE HALF RABBITS + ALICE: The Wheatsheaf – Having begun 2007 in disarray after the break-up of Fell City Girl, Phil McMinn and James Pamphilon end it in style with their new band, Winchell Riots, set to become one of the leading lights of the local scene in 2008.

SHED SEVEN: The Oxford Academy – Ah yes, remember the glamour of those glorious Britpop halcyon days, when you could waltz around your local indie dancehall to the strains of The Bluetones, Kula Shaker and Shed Seven? Well, now you can again. Because they're all back, in their full mid-90s glory. Ain't it great to be alive, children?

THE NOYZE + RELIK + THE VICE + WITHIN OUR RIGHTS : The Bullingdon – Dance-friendly indie rock in the vein of Hard-Fi and The Twang from Reading's The Noize. **13 GAUGE + BEELZEBOZO: The Temple** – Swiss Concrete night with hardcore growlers 13 Gauge and doomy metallers Beelzebozo.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn FLAPJACK: Sugar Browns, Jericho THURSDAY 20th

SUPERGRASS: Oxford Town Hall – First of two nights at the Town Hall from local legends Supergrass, missing bassist Mickey but kicking out classic hits, from 'Caught By The Fuzz' onwards, plus songs from the as-yet unreleased new album. After the forced cancellation of their Academy show back in September, it's great chance to celebrate Oxford's undisputed champions of bubblegum, fuzzgun, psychedelic pop genius.

JONQUIL + THE GREAT ESKIMO HOAX + AND NO STAR + TITUS: The Cellar – Esoteric folk, indie and experimental pop from Jonquil, on a mission to reintroduce sea shanties into contemporary music. Varied assortment of post-, math- and experimental rocking from the supporting cast.

HANGMAN'S JOE + INVISIBLE VEGAS: The Port Mahon – Heavyweight trad rock from Hangman's Joe.

SCARAMOOSE: The X, Cowley NOVA KICKS + THE REPEATS: The Jericho Tavern – Melodic guitar pop in a Crowded House vein from Banbury's Nova Kicks.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon FRIDAY 21st

SUPERGRASS: Oxford Town Hall – Second night of superlative pop hits.

THE GREEN: The Wheatsheaf – Dark, glammy indie rocking.

THE EPSTEIN + DUSTY SOUND SYSTEM + STORNOWAY: Portcullis Club, Wallingford – Truck special with country rockers The Epstein, Robin Bennett's DSS and sweet-natured celtic pop starlets Stornoway.

THE BRIGHTS + THE GOG + SHORTWAVE FADE: The Jericho Tavern – Jangly guitar pop from Essex's The Brights. **MONKEY PUZZLE: The Purple Turtle OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

SATURDAY 22nd

POOR GIRL NOISE ALL-DAYER: The Port Mahon – Full free day of experimental noise from PGN - see main preview

BORDERVILLE: The Wheatsheaf – Vaudevillian gothic glamrocking from the rising local starlets.

COO COO CLUB with THE EPSTEIN + DANNY GEORGE WILSON + TREVOR MOSS + HANNA LOU: The Jericho Tavern – Coo Coo Club Christmas shindig with local country-rocking faves The Epstein kicking up prairie dust in the style of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young and Neil Diamond. **BLAKE'S HEAVEN: The X, Cowley** – Big band jazz.

ABORIGINALS: The Temple – Free jazz trance meets dub reggae.

BISH BASH BOSH: The Bullingdon – Club night.

SUNDAY 23rd

BEARD MUSEUM: The Purple Turtle – Christmas party time for the long-running club with this year's top local pop sensation Little Fish, coming on like a cross between Suzi Quatro's kid sister and a young Sinead O'Connor at her feistiast. Beard Museum hosts The Family Machine join in the fun, and we're promised an appearance by Santa. Santa, if you're listening, we'd like Martha Jones out of Dr Who in our Christmas stocking, please.

CHINO MARTIN + NONSENSE: The Port Mahon

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley

MONDAY 24th

MACKATING + AFRICAN ROOTS SOUND SYSTEM: The Oxford Academy – Local reggae stalwarts Mackating play their traditional Christmas Eve party set, along with African Roots Sound system sending Oxford skanking into the Festive morning.

TUESDAY 25th

CHRISTMAS DAY – Recent Audioscope stars Shit & Shine perform a special five-hour set in the Nightshift editor's living room, creating a sonic shockwave that knocks Santa's sleigh out of the sky and brings about the end of days. Followed by mince pies and sherry.

WEDNESDAY 26th

JAZZ JAM: The X, Cowley – Jam along with the in-house jazz band led by Paul Jefferies.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 27th

THE WALK OFF + PARTY SHANK + CLANKY ROBO GOBJOBS: *The Cellar* – Digital hardcore mayhem from The Walk Off and CRGJ to send 2007 out with a bang.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: *East Oxford Community Centre*
OPEN MIC SESSION: *The Half Moon*

Friday 14th – Sunday 16th

WINTER WARMER:

The X

Three solid days of live music to warm your frost-covered cockles, courtesy of Gappy Tooth Industries, Gammy Leg Productions and Swiss Concrete, each club taking over one day at the X to showcase some of their favourite bands of the year.

Friday night's GTI session features gabba nutter nervous_testpilot, spiky, punky indie-popsters The Gullivers, kung fu fighting rap star Mr Shadown and acoustic guitar maestro Michael Berk, while the GLP day on Saturday sees a headline set from north African-styled dub troupe Raggasaurus, plus alt.country and dark folk from Spokane, lachrymose country pop from The Family Machine, headbanging techno from Nailbomb Cults, zombie metal from Beelzeboto, tweedy psychedelia from The Relationships and even some cat-centric poetry from Rachel Pantechon.

Sunday's line-up is superb, with Nightshift scribe Matt Bayliss bidding farewell to Oxford to return to his native New Zealand. He's even managed to persuade local hardcore legends Callous (*pictured*) to reform for one gig, their first since 2001, reminding us why we loved their ferocious, melodic blend of Jesus Lizard and Helmet back in the day. Joining them will be epic rock soundscapists Red Paper Dragon, motorik electro-pop from Space Heroes Of The People, krautrock from Corvids, ethereal indie noise from The Workhouse, Jeff Buckley-inspired acoustic alchemy from Ally Craig, hardcore math-rocking from Eduard Sounding Block and abrasive post-rock from Sunnyvale – as good a line-up of local leftfield talent as you can get. And as an extra bonus, the X does the best Guinness in town and since Guinness is almost like food, you can live off it for the entire duration.



FRIDAY 28th

NATURALELEMENTS + WAYNE McARTHUR: *The X, Cowley* – Reggae, soul and r'n'b from Luton all-girl five-piece Natural Elements, plus James Brown-style soul from Wayne McArthur.
RAGGASAUROS + ABORIGINALS: *The Wheatsheaf* – Live reggae from Arabic-dub crew Raggasaurus and trippy dub-trancers Aboriginals.
THE CARTER MANOEUVRE + SEVEN-FOOT TRANNIES + ETERNAL SUNSHINE: *The Jericho Tavern* – Jerky indie pop from Leamington's Carter Manoeuvre.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: *The Port Mahon*
BACKROOM BOOGIE: *The Bullingdon* – With guest DJ Aidan Larkin.

SATURDAY 29th

COO COO CLUB: *The Jericho Tavern* – Bands TBC.

REGGAE NIGHT: *The Bullingdon*

SUNDAY 30th

Bugger all. On a stick.

MONDAY 31st

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + THE NEW MOON: *The Magdalen* – The mighty hippy funk circus that is Redox celebrates New year in the stylish environs of the Magdalen, with able support from eccentric rockers PFB and acoustic duo The New Moon.

STORNOWAY + THE MIGHTY PORKER: *The Jericho Tavern* – New Year's Eve party with the undisputed delights of celtic folk-tinged rockers Stornoway.

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is the 20th of each month - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm) or email listings to Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. All listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be reproduced without permission



Saturday 15th

MINUS THE BEAR:

The Zodiac @ The Academy

Currently enjoying the honour of being Dave Grohl's favourite band, as well as an MTV Band Of The Week, Seattle's Minus The Bear return to town after last November's sold-out gig at the same venue. Pivotal keyboard player Matt Bayles left the band last year but produced the band's most recent album, 'Planet Of Ice' which finds them edging further into spacier, melodic territory, much of the early abstract punk and quirky math-rock of 2002's 'Highly Refined Pirates' now gone, along with those daft song titles (our favourites being 'Hey, Wanna Throw Up? Get Me Naked' and 'Houston We Have Uh Oh'). But as Minus The Bear's cult appeal wanes their commercial prospects continue to grow and their blend of melodic post-hardcore, synth-pop and prog is still a refreshing change from most mainstream American rock heavyweights. Home-grown electro jangle-pop outfit I Was A Cub Scout join them on tour.

VENUE PHONE NUMBERS

Oxford Academy: 0844 477 2000 (ticketweb)
The Bullingdon: 01865 244516
The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156
The X: 01865 776431
The Cellar: 01865 244761
The New Theatre: 0870 606 3500
The Port Mahon: 01865 202067
Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775
Brookes: 01865 484750
Purple Turtle: 01865 247086
The Temple: 01865 243251
East Oxford Community Centre: 01865 792168

LIVE

AUDIOSCOPE

The Academy

The annual Audioscope mini-festival, in aid of homeless charity Shelter, is surrounded by injustice. Its *raison d'être* is to raise money for and highlight the problems of those people who, in a land of plenty, don't even have a proper home to live in. On a musical level, on what turns out to be one of the most incredible days of live music in years, where is the justice in musical legends Michael Rother and Dieter Möbius - two men whose combined history takes in Kraftwerk, Neu!, Cluster and Harmonia and are therefore directly responsible for everything from Detroit techno to ambient and industrial music and half of the decent alternative bands to come out of Europe in the past 30 years - playing in front of a crowd that's about one quarter the size of that which watched the fucking Pigeon Detectives a week later? Sometimes we want to scream. And kill people.

That aside, God this is good. Today's local contingent never disappoint: **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element**, as event organisers, open proceedings and, at an hour that is inhumanely early for such aural punishment, manage the delicate feat of managing to be both brutal and confrontational while retaining a rather sweet melodic edge, throbbing electronics and sheet metal guitar noise never swamping fidgety dance grooves and the inexplicable catchiness of tracks like 'Techno Self Harm'.

Late additions to the bill **Winchell Riots**, formed from the much-mourned ashes of Fell City Girl, continue the intimate stadium pop path of their former incarnation, perhaps not as instant as they were previously but still armed with plaintive, captivating anthems like 'Hymn 24'.

Witches, initially at least, seem too sweet-natured for today's leftfield company, their dark-hearted orchestral pop full of wide-eyed wonderment and an easy, expansive grace, but as songs like 'Sleep Like Then Witch That You Are' swell into all-out battles between the fuzzed-up guitars and squalling horns, they



Shit & Shine photo by Sam Shepherd

prove they can stand their corner in the noisiest company.

There are minor let-downs today: Warp Records electro chap **Chris Clark** is too self-consciously intellectual in his approach to claustrophobic ambience, only rarely - mostly in the middle of his hour-long set - engaging either hearts or feet, while we miss most of **The Sea And Cake** while attempting get something to eat in a nearby restaurant that seems to have gone on a sponsored go-slow.

But headliners **Rother and Möbius** are everything we'd hoped for: over thirty years on from their inspirational joining of forces, the pair never sound like they're playing catch-up: hypnotic hums and pulses undulate softly but powerfully over tirelessly chattering beats, shifting patterns of sound draw in elements of all their previous projects, from Kraftwerk's glistening highway electronica to Cluster's machine-rock atmospherics, and when they play Harmonia's 'De Luxe' (for the first time in three decades) you know you've just witnessed something very special indeed.

But the incredible thing about today is that they're not even the best act on show. In any other year that honour would go to Birmingham's **Einstellung**, an instrumental, krautrock-influenced pressure cooker Panzer rock division, firing out a monolithic, motorik wall of sound that sounds like Kraftwerk's

'Autobahn' reinvented for the most hardcore rock venue in Hades. Awesome is an overused word in music reviews but in *Einstellung's* case it should be printed in bold type, capital letters and underlined. Twice.

But then there's **Shit And Shine**: the single most incredible half hour of music I have experienced in years. Before they even come on stage their vast wall of orange amps sits hissing and buzzing ominously at the crowd, as if warming itself up for the onslaught ahead. And when it comes, it has you feverishly holding onto anything heavy and solid just so you don't get blown to kingdom come. There are eight of Shit And Shine: four drummers and four others playing strange bits of electronic equipment or screaming through distortion pedals, the drum circle pounding out a funereal pagan tattoo as the digital dissonance builds oppressively around them until you can feel it in every organ in your body. To say they are unrelenting or overpowering would be like saying World War II was a bit of a scrap. And when they do finally wind down you don't know whether to laugh or cry or turn cartwheels or simply give up listening to music forever because nothing will ever top that. And if there were any justice in the world, Shit And Shine would be Number 1 in the charts and omnipresent on every radio station until the earth finally falls into the sun.

Dale Kattack

CARDIACS

The Academy

When Cardiacs finally hit the stage after their seemingly endless intro tape they launch into 'Jibber and Twitch', a song whose title adequately sums up the musical approach of the band.

Try as hard as you like to describe Cardiacs and you'll always come up short. Prog, metal, punk, jazz, dance, and ska; there seems to be a little of everything in there. Frontman Tim Smith describes them as pop, so we'll just have to agree with him. If this is pop, then it's the best kind. Shot through with a controlled lunacy these are songs that eschew the usual verse/chorus/verse template and fire off crazed flurries of notes in schizophrenic glee. 'To Go Off And Things' is the closest they get to a straightforward tune tonight but even that is packed with enough twists and turns to send the decidedly middle-aged audience into a bezerk frenzy.

New songs 'Ditzzy Scene', 'Gen' and 'Made All Up' are greeted with something approaching religious elation. This is not entirely surprising; after all it has been nearly ten years since the last Cardiacs album so

some new material has been long overdue. Importantly, these new songs fit easily into the Cardiacs canon, sounding fresh and exciting but retaining that special something that identifies them as Cardiacs songs. In their thirtieth year Cardiacs show no signs of running out of ideas, and are still one of the most enthralling live bands around. This is not so much a gig, more an exercise in musical genius and showmanship. Frenetic guitar lines and impossible rhythm patterns are thrown out with an assured confidence (often accompanied with a self congratulatory grin from Tim Smith). The addition of backing singers Mel Woods and Clare Lemmon add depth not only to the songs but to the band's onstage presence, giving proceedings an air of grandeur.

Tonight's show is grand, with the new songs and new guitarist Kavus Torabi completely integrated into the line-up. It is not going too far to say that this is about as good as Cardiacs have been in the last ten years. There's life in this band yet.

Sam Shepherd

ANNI ROSSI

Modern Art Oxford

An inspired ongoing collaboration between MAO and Oxford Contemporary Music, these regular Thursday evening events offer you a sample of some of the most interesting musicians from various reaches of the globe, performing music experimental and/or traditional, for little more than the price of a pint.

Take tonight's unjustly obscure star: Anni Rossi is a classically-trained musician, hailing from the northern US state of Minnesota, who simultaneously sings, plays viola, and taps out percussion on specially mic-ed up shoes. Apparently this is one of only two solo performances before she joins the awesome Electrelane on what may well be their farewell tour. Now, the viola's a wonderful instrument, much under-appreciated outside the world of classical music - look at John Cale if you need convincing - with a range and character all of its own. And Anni Rossi's playing has an expressivity to match, extending across pizzicato, inventive harmonics, rapping of the bow on the instrument's body, and also a strumming that makes it sound

something like a ukulele.

As for her voice, it's also rich and emotional, yet when the sentiment or words demand, it reaches into a quirky vocal territory where Lena Lovich or Clare Grogan wouldn't seem out of place. The songs are an odd combination of the provincial and the comfortable edging into the surreal. There's lots of stuff drawn from her upbringing in Scandia, Minnesota, involving references to her father shovelling snow, bears, fishing and glaciers, yet there's also a vein of poetic imagination at work here that seems to twist things several degrees away from the ordinary. Laurie Anderson is someone who springs to mind as a possible influence - less folksy than Anni but equally using a solo string instrument (violin) to accompany narratives of the mundane made subtly strange. The final song 'Wheelpusher' is a typical slice of the Anni Rossi enigma, sort of coming across as a fervent love song but somehow referencing California and Denver on the way to a central conundrum about bee keeping in the Himalayas. What more could you expect for three whole pounds?

Steve Thompson

DR SHOTOVER

The Most Annoying Songs In The World, Ever!

As the Festive Season approaches, the tiny tousled heads of Your Truly and his chums at the East Indies Club are preoccupied with one thing - our end-of-year poll of yes, you guessed it (unless you need new glasses, Specy)... The Most Annoying Songs In The World Ever. After a night of particularly torrential drinking in the club bar, Ruffy Rawlings proposed that the poll should be organised by decade, starting with the 1960s... his own

personal "bête noire" being 'Love Is Blue' by Vicky Leandros. (This is possibly due to an unpleasant experience in a French fairground when he was a nipper, but I digress...). A chorus of votes followed - 'Windmills Of Your Mind' by Noel Harrison, 'Lily the Pink' by The Scaffold, 'I Like it' by Gerry and the Pacemakers - but the eventual joint winners (just beating 'I Wear Short Shorts' by Freddie and The Dreamers - ugh, that dance!) were The Beatles and Marmalade... both doing the hideous 'O-bla-di O-bla-da'. Ye Gods! McCartney, if there were any justice in the world, YOU would have been the one to be shot in front of the Dakota Building, just for writing that song... Where were we? Ah yes, the 70s. As you can imagine, this provoked long and heated debate. 'Do The Bump' by Kenny, 'My Ding-A-Ling' by Chuck Berry (what WERE you thinking, you old perv?), and 'Save Your Kisses For Me' by Brotherhood of Shite, sorry, Man were all contenders... but finally the crown was snatched (out of the sticky paws of Little Jimmy Osmond and his 'Long-Haired Lover From Liverpool') by that advert song, you know the one... 'I'd Like to Buy the World a C*ke'. Personally I'd like to buy myself a helicopter gunship and rain lead death down from the skies on the songwriters responsible for this abortion! The New Seekers (who sang it), and all those "hip-yet-wholesome" Young People in turtlenecks in the ad... oh, and the C*ca C*la C*rporation, too. There, that's seasonal. Who knows, maybe Santa will oblige...?

Next month: Oh God. It's the Eighties.



The New Seekers: "And now we'd like to do 'Heatseeker' by AC/DC".



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ASOBI SEKSU

The Academy

It begins with a storm in a wind tunnel and ends in a howling cacophony of cymbals and guitar feedback. In between is one of the best gigs of the year. Just as we'd hoped.

Asobi Seksu's two albums have been virtually glued into our stereo these last few months, but the royal thrashing those songs are given tonight eclipses their recorded incarnations. Formed in New York by guitarist James Hannah and Japanese singer and keyboard player Yuki Chikudate, the four-strong band are clearly in thrall to My Bloody Valentine, but whereas most Kevin Shields acolytes attempt to emulate the convoluted alchemy of 'Loveless', Asobi Seksu throw themselves into 'Isn't Anything's crashing, monolithic rock carnage which rages around its almost childlike pop core.

Yuki is the fragile songbird riding the overwhelming tumult, her wonderfully playful, shrill voice never consumed by the cascading keyboards or tumbling tom-heavy drums, switching from lovelorn schoolgirl swoon to gleeful nursery rhyme chirrup as wave upon wave upon wave of guitar noise threatens to smash those sweet, simple melodies to pieces, the whole spectacle bathed in a blizzard of strobes. When she takes a backseat to James's vocal lead on 'Pink Cloud Tracing Paper' her siren-like backing vocals and shimmering synth lines make for the set's most intense, dream-like moment.

In the more considered moments – it's all relative – Asobi Seksu are no less powerful, James bending his guitar notes on 'Everything Is On', just like Shields, while Yuki coos ethereally. A cover of Hope Sandoval's 'Suzanne' is starry and sultry, Yuki singing much further down the register, but 'Unhappy That You Don't Like Me' from their eponymous debut sees them explode in a riot of glitter, shrapnel and raw fuzz, an ecstatic noise pop thrill, the sweet, shrill songbird still riding the storm. By the end Yuki is behind the drum kit hammering out a galley slave beat while drummer Ben Shapiro is out front battering seven shades of hell out of a crash cymbal as the guitar swamps the room. The hiss and hum of feedback and pulsing sequencer invades the venue for a good minute after the band have disappeared, and when it finally subsides all you feel is exhilaration. As it should be.

Dale Kattack

EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK / ABORIGINALS / BEAVER FUEL

The Wheatsheaf

The joy of Klub Kakofanney has always been its intentional lack of cohesion, something perfectly encapsulated by Beaver Fuel tonight, who cock up the intro to their opening song and ride the Cresta run of cosy pop chaos for the next half hour. Two songs in and bassist James is peering intently at frontman Leigh's fretboard to work out what he's meant to be playing, but it's all part of their odd charm, sticking up for punk's just-do-it ethic but more akin to the shambling indie noise of post-C86 bands like The Sea Urchins and Razorcuts, although set highlight 'Eurovision Political Favour Contest', with its flanged guitars and vocal snarl, is pure spirit of '76. Closing number 'I Want To Live In Your Buttercrack' is introduced as a love song, but possibly only appeals to a select group of ladies and, worryingly, is by far the most assured song in the set, which means they must enjoy rehearsing it the most. Aborigines don't have a didgeridoo, which is a big plus point, but instinct tells us we'll hate them anyway, straddling, as they do, the opposing worlds of free jazz and reggae. The first few minutes bear out our initial

feelings but as we contemplate sloping outside for some relief, we're sucked into a strange, hazy hippy-vibed acid-dub party jam, the four-piece brass section gelling with the solid, stoned groove and by the end we're bobbing about like we're in some far flung Glastonbury field at 4 in the morning.

In which case Eduard Sounding Block are an alarm clock imbedded in your skull at 7am. Theirs is a many-angled spazzcore noise blast, initially at least sounding like the earliest incarnation of Faith No More squeezed through a math-rock mangle, former-Underbelly singer James bellowing and seething as the music fits and starts like an alcoholic ninja with the DTs. Further in the opposing forces of hardcore and prog rock rub uneasily against each other, finally settling for a head-to-head between Dillinger Escape Plan and King Crimson. As is the theme for the night, there is a constant element of chaos about the band, but they forever grip tightly to an uneasy cohesion. Where Eduard Sounding Block go from here is the exciting part.

Dale Kattack

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MICHAEL BERK / AMRIT SOND / ROLAND CHADWICK

The X

We're suspicious of *quality*. Spend too long creating quality music and you might find you've forgotten to include anything else; it might be okay for fitted carpets, but makes for the sort of vapid music that is only enjoyed by people who get excited about the mechanics of their heated windscreens. This is art not athletics, and whereas art should probe new regions, *quality* can only be judged against itself. So, we wouldn't normally get bogged down with technique – as the conceptual artist Sol Le Witt said, “banal ideas cannot be rescued by beautiful execution” – and yet tonight's guitarists marry astonishing technical agility with the ability to make exciting music.

Roland Chadwick opens his set with some slide blues that leave a lot more space than most players would dare. It's sadly let down by his slurred voice, that spews out a Mississippi glossolalia, from which bubble random phrases like “mistreated” and “Kansas City”, like a hot serving of cliché gumbo. Thankfully, he soon moves on to Spanish guitar that he picks, thumps and generally bullies to make delightful *neo-flamenco*. A vocal Spaniard, initially wary, ends up giving a one man standing ovation.

Amrit Sond's first two numbers, by contrast, don't evoke much of a reaction. They're

intricate and well constructed, but sound like they should be aural wallpaper for a wildlife documentary. Suddenly he plays us ‘Rigid Geometry’, a piece that takes the phrase “extended technique” and garrottes it with an abused G string. It took three years to write, nearly as long to tune up for, it sounds like Derek Bailey playing Xenakis and it's frankly incredible. His final track, a plucked nugget of cubist lute music, is also good, and if some of the set gets mired, the highlights sear like fireworks.

Michael Berk's ability could make other guitarists weep. But, although his tracks like ‘Trenchfoot’ are as complex and intense as any Venetian Snares 12”, Michael is truly great because he never loses sight of what makes a song work - he plays every bloody note of ‘Bohemian Rhapsody’ (we mean *all* the instruments and vocals) with the concentration and deftness of Andres Segovia playing Bach. It's not ironic or kitsch, however, and makes Rodrigo Y Gabriela look like busking chancers. A version of ‘No Woman No Cry’ dissects the song completely, but somehow keeps Marley's simple emotion burning. Sol Le Witt would have lit a fat one, wiped away a tear, and nodded approval.

David Murphy

SONS & DAUGHTERS / THE VICTORIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMEN'S CLUB / INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS

The Academy

There's a shoe-gazing revival ongoing right now so it's a warm welcome back to action for erstwhile Ride drummer Loz Colbert, joining singer and guitarist (and now fellow member of The Jesus & Mary Chain) Mark Crozer in International Jetsetters for a set that's something like late-80s indie rock heaven: all swooning melodies, shimmering guitars and discreet fuzz, echoes of The Wedding Present on stand-out tracks like ‘Inside Out’, while ‘Inside Yourself’ finds ‘Revolver’-era Beatles sucked into Spacemen 3's narcotic dreamscape. More considered tracks, like ‘Keep It In’, are less effective, like a pastiche of Lou Reed's ‘Vicious’, but while you wish Mark had a backing vocalist to help him out at times, it's a promising start.

The Victorian English Gentlemen's Club have been a curiosity on the live circuit for a while now, always the support band, never the headliner, but watching them it's easy to see why their day will probably never come: they just don't fit in. Anywhere. They're great though, from the opening, strident, almost militaristic gothic lament, like a bizarre cross between early Adam & The Ants, The Virgin Prunes and a fire in a pet shop, before they take The B52s into dirty, staccato punk-metal territory, the scarily intense drummer full of imagination that

only intensifies the unusual song structures and vocal harmonies. One of the most compellingly odd bands around, next time they're propping up a bill somewhere, remember to get there early.

Back from a two-year hiatus, Glasgow's Sons & Daughters are setting off on a marathon tour ahead of January's new album release, so much of tonight's set is unfamiliar. Or perhaps not: here are songs about suicide, insanity and betrayal played in life-affirming pop style that goes completely against their lyrical grain, like set-closer ‘House In My Head’, which is pure bubblegum brilliance. ‘Genuine Boy’ is kicked out with grungy show-tune rockabilly pizzazz, while current single ‘Gilt Complex’ almost seems to laugh through gritted teeth at they way the music business turns people into monsters. Of course it's Sons & Daughters' debut single, ‘Johnny Cash’, that steals the show, with its krautrockabilly motorik groove, the band switching into a blast of ‘I Wannabe Your Dog’ halfway through, having apparently gone down a bomb supporting The Stooges in the States. No chance of that happening tonight as a surprisingly small but obviously devoted crowd welcomes them back to the land of drunken gothic revelry.

Ian Chesterton

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DIR EN GREY

The Academy

The prospect of a night of Japanese metal conjures up pleasing images of wild, hairy behemoths and screeching guitar solos but sadly the reality of tonight's show couldn't be further distant.

Dir En Grey were once part of the Japanese visual kei (visual style) movement, typified by flamboyant clothes and hairstyles, sometimes with an androgynous element, and a musical style encompassing glam-rock and metal. Their ten-year history has seen them move through musical styles, their current one a kind of emo metal, heavy on heartfelt vocal outpourings and rejecting guitar solos in favour of tuneful if ultimately bland arrangements. Singer Kyo has an unusual and powerful voice and they all look the part, with skinny black clothes, fingerless gloves and dyed brown hair, but it's when you see their videos that they start to make sense: glossy, sharp, futuristic and very 21st Century TV. They also deserve credit for being the only band I know who've charted in America with singles sung in Japanese, with titles typically so in sounding nonsensical but profound at the same time, like 'Dozing Green' and 'Clever Sleazoid'. Support slots for the Deftones and Linkin Park give clues as to their audience, yet despite this being only one of two UK dates the Academy is barely a quarter full tonight, suggesting UK audiences still need some convincing about this being the future of rock'n'roll.

Japan has always specialised in extremity, from endurance games to extreme rock bands like The Boredoms and Sigh, often seen as a reaction to a society in many ways still very traditional and inward-looking, with conformity often favoured over free expression. For their part Dir En Grey seem to be trying to tap into teenage angst and rebellion while keeping an eye on commercial acceptability. Still, you can't look at the tiny Japanese girls walking away happily with their home-made placards and remain too cynical.

Art Lagun

ILL EASE

The Wheatsheaf

Say "one-man band", and the chances are the words will conjure up the image of some hapless bearded fellow standing on the corner of Cornmarket Street, drum strapped to his back, cymbals between his knees and a kazoo rammed up either nostril: a comic spectacle of abandoned dignity, "musical" only in the very loosest sense of the word. Somehow, all the unique possibilities of solo performance have been boiled down in the popular imagination to a quaint novelty to be sandwiched between the living statues and end-of-the-world doomsayers. Well, Ill Ease, aka New Yorker Elizabeth Sharp, is here to remedy that.

Really, it's not like watching a one-person performance at all; Sharp manages to generate enough noise, abandon and hellfire for an entire band. With the aid of sampler, she clones endless replicas of herself, a dirty looped guitar line keeping everything in place whilst she thrashes out her own accompaniment on drums, maracas and vocals. She whirls round the stage like a dervish, slashing at cymbals as though beheading chickens, chucking her instruments any which way whenever a new whim grabs her and generally thrilling to the frenzy she whips up. She is magnificent. Rather than straitjacketing her into the niche of diverting gimmick, performing alone liberates: given free rein of her own unruly invention, she plays music that doesn't fit neatly into any particular genre. Rather, it freewheels through elements of punk, blues and hip-hop. The lo-fi scuzziness of the Velvet Underground is spiked by Breeders-esque barbs. It's prairie music – loose striding, thumbs hooked through the belt-loops of its ratty jeans and breathing a swaggering booziness.

She ends in the jubilant chaos of 'Fuck Everyone', a one-woman bar brawl of a song which leaves her kit reduced to pile of mangled metal and flayed skin. Fuck 'em indeed.

Emily Gray

BRAINLOVE

RECORDS TOUR

The Cellar

Tonight, the Brainlove Records tour hits the Cellar to impart an awkward, glitch-pop philosophy to Oxford's finest haircuts. Preaching to the choir, perhaps, in a city familiar with such tomfoolery, first act Pagan Wanderer Lu shoe horns wilfully unpleasant bursts of noise between some decent vocal melodies and disappointingly tired-sounding electronic bleeps. Occasionally, the songs shine through their contrived shackles – Mr Lu has a neat way with an acerbic lyric – but often it's too concertedly obtuse to hit the mark.

Oxford's Keyboard Choir re-release their debut album, 'Mizen Head To Gascanane Sound', on Brainlove this month and, looking not unlike a crèche for posh orphans with ADD, perform with wild, drunken exuberance. When the tempo is upped it's truly impressive, like a perma-stoned student taking his first pill and actually going out dancing. More of this in the future, please.

Napoleon III's electro-pop formula is untouchably well-crafted. A reel-to-reel tape provides warm, pounding backing to songs revealing surprising depth and wit. 'Hit Schmooze For Me' marries pop perfection with real poignancy, its rallying cry, "Let's go to bed at 9 o'clock in the evening / So we will be fresh to serve," an ironic call to the despondent office worker in all of us. Genius at work, and the brightest jewel in Brainlove's makeshift crown.

The Applicants, conversely, are dull, noisy and shallow, but at least they look as if they're having fun. A sense of fun, however, doth not a great band make, and this brash, gimmicky thrash irritates half the crowd out of the door, Napoleon III having filled hearts and minds already.

Steffan Panther



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SCRATCH PERVERTS

The Academy

You know that scene in *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, where the lads are about to enter the pub and a guy comes running out screaming and on fire? Well this evening's entertainment begins in ominously similar fashion when a minor fracas erupts outside the venue. Things can only get better, we think, as we hastily make our entrance.

How wrong we are, for inside the venue, every dance music-related cliché known to man is being played out before our very eyes: people gratuitously sucking face on the dance floor while males in terrible clothing leer at and pursue women who are even more sartorially challenged. The spectre of *Human Traffic* looms large over the whole affair. There are even people with glow-sticks (no, no, NO!). Deciding not to get too involved with the seething mass of troglodytes, we hang back and check out the tunes. Scratch Perverts are in full swing and the track selection, while faultless, is eerily familiar. Beastie Boys into DJ Shadow into Nirvana into...hold on a minute. This is the same set I saw them drop at Fabric three years ago! Literally. My, how they have progressed. Anyway, when I surprise my wingman by predicting that they are about to play a 'hip hop' version of 'Killing In The Name Of' (which they do), we both stand there in confused silence, not sure whether to rock out or pistol-whip someone. It's almost a relief when the relatively straightforward drum&bass set begins, but this also shows, in Hunter S. Thompson style, that the high water mark of the genre was about five years ago.

I suppose we shouldn't complain. People obviously don't attend these things to listen to extended scratch breaks over P-funk b-sides; they come here to lose their shit to a large dollop of nostalgia, which is all well and good. It's just that most of us already work in a soulless void, so it would be nice not to have to frequent one in our free time as well.

Matt Bayliss

THAT FUCKING TANK

/ HREDA / CAPEMAN /

SHIELD YOUR EYES

The Port Mahon

Promoters Poor Girl Noise have been putting on ace leftfield/lesser-known bands at the Port Mahon since January, having largely going unnoticed, but thankfully tonight is heaving.

The night couldn't get off to a better start, with the riotous, colossal noise of London three-piece Shield Your Eyes. SYE employ the warped, reversible structures of Hella with the crunchy lo-fi sound of Lightning Bolt etc. Guitarist Stef Ketteringham is an absolute maestro, teasing out grimy squeals with intricate fingerpicks and uplifting riffs aplenty.

Before Hreda, an amateurish little set from Preston duo Capeman, a watered-down Tank with hackneyed, indecipherable riffs and slack drumming. Hreda, on the other hand are a strictly professional affair: take the pronunciation: "it's with a 'th' at the end... It's Greek or summat - Hu-Ray-The". Having suffered a slightly disappointing Truck set, Hreda perform with an arse-in-your-face intimacy you can only experience at the Port. Proficiently pulled-off epic post-rock tunes, terrific set - decent chaps.

Quality instrumental Leeds duo That Fucking Tank are the musical equivalent of England's World Cup performance - chugging, horsepower baritone guitar riffs and squashy, lucozade-driven drum hooks. The stage side of the Port resembles a euphoric scrum of moist man chests, a virile display of trouser-dropping and proficient air guitar playing. This is gigging at its most primitive, sociable and best - with an impressive strength from guitarist Andy Abbot shielding his drummer from a sweaty death. Dancing in your boxers is as fun as it sounds, with the next day's legs screaming out in bruises - there's no better sign of a great gig.

Pascal Ansell

DIGITALISM

The Academy

A quick flick through the copy of the Royal Horticultural Society's *Encyclopedia of Plants and Flowers* that sits alongside every Nightshift scribe's desk not only provides a quick'n'lazy intro to a review, but also tells us that digitalism is overexposure to poisonous compounds found in the foxglove. That's good because it certainly isn't a condition caused by overexposure to any electronic music that came out after, ooh, 1997. Possibly the biggest export in German electronica last year, Digitalism eschew any of the more cutting-edge techno of their contemporaries on the likes of Tresor Records, instead taking Daft Punk's decade-old debut as their Year Zero. As such, it's a defiantly old-school sound, updated with 2007's array of massive bass noises and plangent buzzsaw synths.

In places it's fantastic stuff - big, squelchy basslines interspersed with retro 303-style skwerks make for excellent no-brainer electro fun. However, they don't take the acid-twined techno beats as far as, say, their contemporaries MSTRKRFT do on their (mostly) excellent 'The Looks', preferring instead to pepper their tunes with altogether lighter synth workouts and pop vocals. The vocal contributions are without exception the weakest contributions, coming off like a Pet Shop Boys B-side in places, and on 'Pogo' achieving what was previously impossible, with a sound like the bald bloke from Aqua shouting over an old LFO track.

That said, the kids are here to dance, not to get bogged down in revivalism nitpicking, and on that score Digitalism certainly deliver. The dancefloor is a mess of heaving bodies from start to finish, but you'd be struggling to remember any of their tunes the next day, or to be turning to their record for listening pleasure six (or even three) months from now. Great fun while it lasts, but ultimately unsatisfactory, like the Milky Way of electronica.

Stuart Fowkes

JEFFREY LEWIS

The X

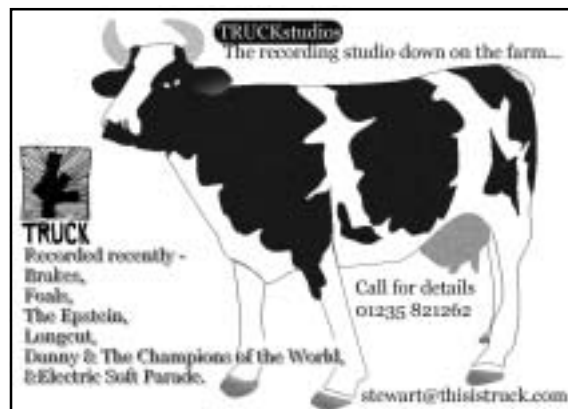
An old fanzine cartoon showed a punk leaving a record shop with a Crass album. Removing the record from its sleeve he dumps it in the bin and walks off down the road admiring the sleeve artwork. It kind of summed up the ambivalent attitude to a band whose political ideals and artistic imagination often overshadowed their shouty brand of anarcho-punk.

Crass are an odd choice for a tribute band, then, least of all by an American folk singer, but here's New York's Jeffrey Lewis, who has just released 'Twelve Crass Songs', which suitably enough comes accompanied by a cartoon strip depicting how the Essex-based wreckers of civilisation soundtracked his adolescence. And, astonishingly, Lewis shows just how powerful and, yes, even beautiful, those old thrash-punk calls to arms can be when laid bare and allowed to breathe. None more so than tonight's set opener, 'Democrat', which takes on an almost Leonard Cohen-like solemnity, even while it's stacked with grisly imagery. Lewis' own songs tread a fine line between melancholic introspection and jaunty whimsy, as you'd expect from the slightly geeky figure on stage, looking, and often sounding, a bit like a young Paul Simon. He's a genuinely funny bloke too, offering strange cartoon stories to accompany idiosyncratic songs about 'Champion Jim', or the condensed history of Chinese communism, while his band flit from grunge to skiffle with ease, unconstrained by style.

But it's the central segment of tonight's set that sets the old punks' hearts a-flutter, breathing new life into Crass's polemic and exposing the poetry within. A punchy, bluesy take on 'Banned From The Roxy' is bettered only by a brilliant 'System' - possibly Crass's finest moment, keyboard player Helen Schreiner playing a cutesy Eve Libertine to Lewis' goofy Steve Ignorant - and a sublime 'I Ain't Thick'.

If 'Twelve Crass Songs' ignites fresh interest in one of the most important and underrated bands of the punk era, it will be an extra bonus. As it is, Lewis has made one of the best and most unusual albums of the year.

Sue Foreman



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DEMO OF THE MONTH

INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS

Previously a Nightshift Demo Of The Month winner in his own right as well as star of last year's Oxford Punt, local singer and guitarist Mark Crozer has more recently found himself part of the reformed Jesus & Mary Chain, alongside former-Ride drummer Loz Colbert. While Loz didn't play on these recordings, the pair of them, along with bassist Bert Audubert, have formed International Jetsetters and show that the brothers Reid have had a profound effect on their music. Mark's voice echoes Jim Reid's sullen drawl at times, while at others his voice is bleached out and dreamy, while the guitars shimmer and soar, drenched in reverb. 'Inside Yourself' sets out its stall in the landscape of My Bloody Valentine, Spacemen 3 and Sonic Youth from the start, while 'Keep It In' is meatier and more traditionally rock and roll, Mark coming on all Lou Reed as the music chugs with narcotic spaciness, but it's 'Inside Out' that really takes you out to a higher plane, guitars chiming and fizzing with propulsive zest, the gorgeous honey-dipped melody partway between Ride and My Bloody Valentine. There's an exhilarating mix of sweetness and raw power here that is increasingly rare in guitar pop and you feel that if Mark and Loz's Mary Chain duties don't take up too much of their time, International Jetsetters could become one of the best bands to come out of Oxford for a long time.

ELLEN McATEER

For some reason known only to us we spent the first minute of this demo convinced we were listening to yachtswoman Ellen McArthur. But this Ellen has an even more exciting story to tell: she apparently recorded these tracks in a hurry before the birth of her twin sons. And we pictured her in the ambulance trying to lay down her vocal lines in between gulps of gas and air, but seemingly it wasn't quite that much of a last-minute effort (although we have had a few demos over the years that sound like the singers are in the final stages of labour, or at least trying to force a large object out of their nether regions). As it is, Ellen McAteer sounds far too much at ease and unhurried, her seductively husky voice layered softly over gentle acoustic tunes with a sweet folksy serenity, notably on lead track 'Blue Valentine', which is really quite lovely. The rest of the demo does tend to become a bit

Demo of the Month wins a free day's recording at Keynote. Call 01189 599944 to claim your prize!

formulaic towards the end but retains a sleepily good-natured prettiness to it and we feel sure that Ellen's twins were soothed in the womb and shall thus grow up to be gentle-natured, socially-responsible assets to humanity. A shame that more mums-to-be aren't similarly talented.

RANDALL FLAGG

If Randall Flagg ever did anything as grown up and sensible as have children they would almost certainly come round to your house and eat *your* children. Because they would be terrible role models as parents – forever trashing the furniture and vomiting their dinner against the wall and shouting at each other as loudly and violently as possible. Another previous recipient of the Nightshift Demo Of The Month award, Randall Flagg, appropriately named after the personification of evil in Stephen King's epic *The Stand*, deal in hardcore of the unrelenting screaming type. Couldn't tell you if this was a progression from their last demo but it sure as hell hits the spot, spewing bile, blast beats and nasty, sharp-edged sheet-metal guitar noise in every direction like a well-choreographed riot in a shrapnel factory. It probably sounds like half of the bands in New Jersey at the moment but we don't care too much because we don't live in New Jersey. We live in Oxford and anything that disturbs the peace as effectively as this is welcome round our house any day. Beats having to buy a rottweiler to scare the neighbours off.

FACEOMETER

Faceometer is, according to his letter, a travelling musicians from Birmingham who has lived and played his music in Exeter, Wales and London before relocating to Oxford, although he doesn't say whether he was driven from those previous residences by mobs of pitchfork-wielding natives, enraged at his crimes against music. If so it's their loss and our gain, because this is a great demo – pure, unconstructed country and folk fun, replete with frantic banjo plucking and washboard shuffling, not to mention one seriously disturbing bout of shouting halfway through the second song that had us peering out of the office window to see if a fight had broken out in the street (in Kidlington? Never!). There's also some carouselling circus country rocking, but the best song here is 'Mellow Drama', a jaunty close harmony duet with guest singer Lizzie Parle, that sounds like a cross between the Handsome Family and Jeffrey Lewis; anyone unable to enjoy its jolly company is surely a soulless pod person or, alternatively, a member of Kraftwerk. The whole thing is all a bit cheesy, not least the improbably named Faceometer's fake American accent, but it is also fun and that's all that counts. Oxford welcomes him.

THE ENDGAME

We were rather unnecessarily rude about this lot a couple of months ago when we reviewed their previous demo, purely because they made the fatal mistake of quoting The Kooks as an influence, but here's another demo from the Divinity Road-based indie boppers and, casting our thoughts away from vile things like manufactured corporate guitar pop, The Endgame aren't such an unpleasant proposition, offering up sprightly, happy-go-lucky harmony-heavy 60s rock with a bit of punky vim in the mix to make sure everything toddles along with simple, giddy life. In a way they remind us of The Samurai Seven in their early days, still honing their songwriting skills but able to carry a room full of punters along with energy and enthusiasm. They do, perhaps, tend to sound like a thousand and one other bands from across the history of pop, from The Beatles to The Jam and much in between and subsequent, but maybe that'll be their strength: uncomplicated fun for folks what aren't miserable, cynical bastards like what we are.

THE PALACE OF RIGHTEOUS JUSTICE

Yet another musical project from former-Rock Of Travolta chap Phill Honey, along with a couple of, we hope, drunk mates, one of whom may or may not also be in The MonFyshots. We say we hope they were drunk because what all this amounts to can surely only have seemed funny after several bottles of supermarket-brand vodka. Come on, with aliases like Minge Man, Captain Cock and The Boy Wanker, you surely know what's in store? No? How about song titles like 'Nice Ass, Great Tits, Shit Face', or 'I Like Knockers'? Getting the picture? Add in some OTT glam-goth electro-rocking in a sort of half-arsed Marilyn Manson vein and you've got the industrial-grunge Macc Lads. 'Nice Ass' is actually the best of the lot, with its electro stomp that's not far removed from Phill's Delta Frequency project, while the simply silly 'I Like Knockers', with its monotone list of various slang terms for breasts, is almost salvaged by a resiliently throbbing bass line. Hey, we said throbbing! Fnar, fnar. Etc.

MONKEY PUZZLE

We do wonder sometimes whether some of the bands who send us demos had even met each other, never mind written and rehearsed together, before they paid money to go into a recording studio. Monkey Puzzle's rudimentary and ramshackle indie jangle really doesn't seem to know where it's going or what it might do when it eventually gets there, preferring to trundle along oblivious to its many shortcomings, not least a singer who struggles to stay in the same country as the sorry excuse for a tune in hand. The lead guitarist, meanwhile, seems to harbour

ambitions above and beyond the modest aims and abilities of his bandmates and spends the entire three songs meandering all over the place. Unless of course in an effort to save money Monkey Puzzle used a second-hand tape that still had another band's solos on it. Since this CD is labelled as the band's debut recordings perhaps we could give them the benefit of the doubt and hope they improve with time and try to get to know each other along the way. By the end, though, their formless trudge is getting painfully tedious.

BEN PHILLIPS

And here's some more trudging, this time from happy chappie Ben Phillips, previously guitarist with local rockers Place Above. This is simple acoustic fare of the strum'n'moan variety, Ben seemingly unhappy with his lot in life and love and searching for "someone who cares", as if he expects to find any kindness and sympathy round these parts. It's not atrocious by any means but the three songs here all plough a similarly maudlin furrow and it's bad enough that the evenings are getting darker, the social infrastructure of the entire country is about to collapse and Orson are playing a gig in Oxford without young Ben rubbing salt in the wounds. Look, here's fifty pence, go and buy yourself a bar of chocolate; you'll feel much better afterwards. Perhaps you could write a song about it.

THE DEMO DUMPER

DIFFERENT REASONS

"You'll probably hate this," state Henley's Different Reasons in a rare moment of self-awareness, and we never like to disappoint people, especially when their music is simply sitting up and begging for a hiding, like an incontinent puppy dog. Opening track 'Crazy Fool' was apparently a recent UK Songwriting Contest semi-finalist. Probably beaten to the trophy only by Rancid Hellspawn's 'Festerin' Pus' we ponder, whilst wiping a small puddle of insipidness from underneath the CD player. 'Crazy Fool' is, according to the band's own notes, an "angst-ridden love song", which is pretty near the mark, although they could have added "lily-livered, soul-sapping, will-crushing heap of dung. In a bucket." Worse though is "acoustic vibed heartbreaker" 'Reality Hurts', another polished slice of nondescript acoustic pop, which contains the lines "I went to the doctor and he said to me, reality is a state of mind". No he bloody didn't. He told you to buck your fucking ideas up and stop moping about like David Gray's less interesting younger brother. And then he told you that you had inoperable talent deficit, which is fatal. At least it is if we come anywhere near you with a lump hammer.

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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