Oxford’s master of melancholy on his incredible ten-year musical journey - interview inside.

Plus - News, reviews and six pages of local gigs
JAZZ MASTERCLASS
with Sid Jacobs

‘Sid is one of the most sophisticated players
I've ever heard ... a champion of musical textures
that are complex, engaging and musically satisfying.’
Dr Joe Barth, Just Jazz Guitar

‘... this package is deep.’ Guitar Player magazine

Wednesday 21st March
6.30pm • Tickets £10

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**NEWS**

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
Phone: 01865 372255 email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net

**BANDS AND SINGERS** wanting to play this year’s **Oxford Punt** on May 9th have until the 15th of March to send CDs in. The Punt, now in its tenth year, will feature nineteen acts across six venues in the city centre over the course of one night. The Punt is widely recognised as the premier showcase of local new talent, having, in the past, provided early gigs for The Young Knives, Fell City Girl and Goldrush amongst others. Venues taking part this year are Borders, QI Club, the Wheatsheaf, the Music Market, the Purple Turtle and the Cellar. The event runs from 6pm in Borders through to 1am down at the Cellar. Bands, duos or solo artists should send demos, with a short biog, to The Punt, c/o Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. The only rules for inclusion are that bands must be unsigned, resident in Oxfordshire and have some gigging experience. Bands that played last year’s Punt cannot play this year. As ever, a limited number (100) of all-venue Punt passes will be on sale from mid-February, priced £7, from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road, QI Club on Turl Street and online from oxfordmusica.net.

**JOHN CALE**’s gig at the **Zodiac** on Monday 29th January has now been re-arranged for Monday 19th March. The former-Velvet Underground man pulled the Oxford show due to “unforeseen circumstances”. All tickets remain valid for the new date. Similarly Thirteen Senses have re-arranged their February Zodiac show for Thursday 22nd March due to recording commitments.

**SHIFTY DISCO** celebrates ten years of musical independence this month with the release of a three-CD box set featuring some of the label’s most significant releases as well as the best of its current roster. The label began as a monthly singles club back in 1997 with Dustball’s ‘Senor Nachos’, and was responsible for The Young Knives’ debut single and mini-album as well as debut releases by Unbelievable Truth and Nought. The box set features tracks by Unbelievable Truth, Nought, Beaker and The Evenings as well as non-Oxford acts such as Beulah, Elf Power and new signings My Device.

**YOUTHMOVIES** team up with former-Can legend Damo Suzuki for a one-off gig at the **Cellar** on Sunday 1st April. Damo has played a number of improvised gigs in Oxford with various local musicians, including members of Nought, Dive Dive, Diva and Fell City Girl. Tickets for the show are on sale now, priced £6, from wegotickets.com. Support comes from Fuck Buttons, Swordwind and Traktors.

**THE WALK OFF** release their debut single, ‘Vader Fader’, on February 26th on Norwich-based indie label Hungry Audio, home also to Telescopes. The new single is released on 7” vinyl as well as a download. The band launch the single with a gig at the **Zodiac** on Saturday 24th February, with support from last month’s Nightshift cover stars Baby Gravy, plus ex-Suitable Case people Mephisto Grande. Go to www.thewalkoff.com for further tour details.

**OXFORD GUITAR GALLERY** hosts another jazz masterclass with renowned guitarist Sid Jacobs on Wednesday 21st March. The class starts at 6.30pm with tickets, priced £10, strictly limited. Contact 01865 553777 for details or visit www.oxfordguitargallery.com

**THE FAMILY MACHINE AND FOXES!** contribute to a new compilation mini-album on Big Scary Monsters’ Alcopop singles club this month. The six-track, 3 CD is available to singles club subscribers from late January or by mail-order from www.ilovealcopop.co.uk from February. The other acts included on the CD are Ooberman, Midget, Beauty School Dropout and Popular Workshop. Family Machine and Foxes! play a launch gig for the album at the Cellar on Thursday 8th February.

**QI CLUB** in Turl Street are looking for more acts to play their fortnightly gig nights. Bands and solo acts can email Stewart at chuckykeys@hotmail.com or call on 07939592732.

**DON’T FORGET TO TUNE IN** to the Download every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The local music show features the best new Oxford releases, plus interviews, a club and gig guide and a regular demo vote. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

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**THE MUSIC MARKET**

**February**

DMR + **UP’N’COMING ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS**
Every Saturday 8.30pm, £4. Local live bands night. 3rd Campus / One Dollar Peepshow / The Wildflowers Tour 10th Hip Hop Night with Mr Shadown / Nonsense / Chris Martin / Sly / more 17th Shaker Appeal / Juxtsar / The Castrates / The litterates 24th Off Kilter / The Underside

**DELICIOUS MUSIC OPEN MIC NIGHT**
Every Sunday 8pm, FREE ENTRY

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY**
Every Thursday 8pm, FREE ENTRY

**FRIDAY FOOD**
Every Friday 12-3pm, £2 (includes a bowl of fresh home-made soup)
2nd BORDERVILLE 9th BROTHER BEN & JAMES BELL 16th AMBERSTATE 23rd MONDO CADA

**DEADBEAT SOUNDS** - Live bands
Friday 9th / 16th. 8pm, £4

**DMR TUESDAY NIGHT BLUES CLUB** 8pm, £3
13th GREEN ONIONS (unpeeled) 27th BLUE MAMA
A Quiet Word With

Richard Walters

“I USED TO GET THE JEFF Buckley comparison a lot, that and Thom Yorke. They’re two of the best vocalists of the last 20 years, so it’s always been a taken by me as a compliment. They were two of the main reasons I started singing. But really, deep down, I wish I was Scott Walker.”

RICHARD WALTERS IS ONE OF the most talented singers Oxford has produced and, almost secretly, one of the most successful. Still only 24 years-old, Richard has been playing on the local scene for ten years now, originally in the band Polysoul (alongside future members of Witches and Jaberwok) and later Theremin, who released a single on Shifty Disco in 2001. But it’s as a solo performer that Richard is best known and has enjoyed his greatest successes. In the past five years he has signed a publishing deal with Warner Chappell, in 2005.

WITH PLENTY OF MUSICAL ironies in the fire, 2007 looks like being Richard’s most successful year yet. This month he releases a new EP, ‘Pilotlights’, on renowned indie label Big Scary Monsters, five songs that showcase everything that is great about his voice and his songwriting. Often – and quite accurately – compared to Jeff Buckley and Thom Yorke, Richard’s voice possesses a choirboy-like clarity: cracked and keening, run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked and run through with choirboy-like clarity: cracked

simple, the latter a solemn, funereal lament that recalls the heart-breaking purity of Robert Wyatt at his very best. Elsewhere, ‘Ice Skaters’ rides over a bizarre rhythm like the sound of feet trudging through deep snow, accentuating the gorgeous longing and loneliness inherent in it. A long-time favourite of ours here at Nightshift, rave reviews of Richard Walters’ gigs and low-key CD releases have become a staple of these pages, while in his various guises he has appeared at more Oxford Punt events than any other artist. As such, it’s easy to forget just how much the quietly unassuming singer has achieved. For his still tender years he has seen and done far more than most musicians will ever accomplish in their careers, and it’s all still just beginning.

We met up with Richard as he prepared to launch his new EP, ‘Pilotlights’, on renowned indie label Big Scary Monsters, five songs that showcase everything that is great about his voice and his songwriting. Often – and quite accurately – compared to Jeff Buckley and Thom Yorke, Richard’s voice possesses a choirboy-like clarity: cracked and keening, run through with vulnerability and a real sadness that can puncture the hardest heart. Songs like ‘We Have Your Head’ and ‘Elephant In The Room’ are wonderfully stripped-down and

YOU WERE SIGNED TO Courtyard Management; how did that help your career?

‘Theremin signed to Courtyard. Warner Chappell publishing first in 2001 - Courtyard saw us supporting Medal, who they were managing at the time. I left the band in 2002, pretty much intent on leaving music alone for a few years. But I started writing again and playing a few gigs on my own, and that’s when Courtyard approached me regarding management. It was a huge compliment - having been a Radiohead and Supergrass fan for years. I’m managed by their sister company ATC now but it’s all interlinked. I still do the bulk of my recording at the studio over in Sutton Courtenay. I re-signed a solo publishing deal, just with Warner Chappell, in 2005.’

You’ve worked with some formidable people in the music industry.

“Working with Guy Sigsworth was awe inspiring; he’s a genius. It was initially a strange idea for me, working with an electronic and mainly pop-based producer, he’d just finished work with Britney Spears when I met him. At the time I really felt like I’d fallen out of love with guitar music, I wanted to move away from that shifty singer/songwriter scene and try a different direction. The idea of making electronic music had always been appealing, but I’d never had the know-how technically to do it alone. I’d listened to Björk or Portishead records and thought how the fuck? Cos there are certain sounds you just can’t pin down, and not being able to understand how it’s done is half the appeal. Guy was suggested to me; I was aware of what he’d done with Björk, especially on ‘Vespertine’, and his involvement with Madonna but that was it. I did some research and fell in love with the Frou Frou album he did with Imogen Heap, that’s an incredible record, totally underated. It’s been a fantastic experience. I’ve also written and recorded with Bernard Butler over the last year. I met him at a festival in Ireland in 2005, and pestered him until he agreed to do some tracks. I think Bernard’s still untouchable as a guitarist, he’s totally unique.”

YOU’VE JUST SIGNED TO BIG Scary Monsters. How did that come about, do you see it as a long-term arrangement and how does it feel to be involved with a small label compared to Warner Chappell?

“I heard about BSM because they released a wonderful EP by the Swedish band Jeniferever, whom I became a little obsessed with. Kevin runs a fantastic, proven label almost entirely by himself, simply because he loves music. Signing publishing with a major was good for the advance, but that about it... unless I suddenly start shifting millions of albums, I’ll never be a priority at a company as big as that.”

YOU’VE SEEN A FAIR BIT OF the world in recent times.

“I feel so lucky to have had the chance to see somewhere like Hong Kong, to play there. It’s not somewhere I can imagine I would have visited otherwise. It did make me realise how lucky we are in Oxford and the UK in general when it comes to live music. They’re cying out for live acts over there, this massive city and yet, if you’re a music fan, it’s very limited. Playing in the States was fun – it’s a bit of a teenage dream realised. When we played at SXSW in Austin, I just assumed, Texas - redneck hell, but it was great. The festival was staggering: an entire city devoted to music for one week, it was just fucking mayhem, in a good way. And Austin was a beautiful, cultural city. I got a taxi from the airport, and before the driver had even asked where to, he told me that not all Texans are small minded, gun-toting Bush supporters;
At Sea’ played on CSI: Miami, especially with the reaction it provoked." ‘It’s like having a free music video, albeit starring David Caruso. And you’ve got a guaranteed audience of millions; it’s amazing exposure.

When it was originally shown in May, I couldn’t believe the reaction. CBS said they’d never had a response like that to a piece of music on the show, which was very flattering. I even had an email from a couple in San Diego who used the song for their first dance at their wedding. And a dance company in Portland have used the song. Those kind of things are odd to think about, but it’s the reason I wanted to write music. I find it comforting to think that a song I wrote in my living room means something to other people in other places.”

THERE’S A CONSISTENT feeling of sadness and loss in your songs; do your songs reflect you as a person?

“They are sad songs but I don’t think of myself as a particularly sad person. I have ups and downs like everyone else. It’s just that I write more music when I’m on a low. They’re not always written from a personal point of view though, sometimes they’re stories. I’d like to move away from that one day and try a different approach, but at the moment writing happy songs for the sake of it just wouldn’t be true. ‘Elephant In The Room’ is obviously about the end of a relationship but it’s not that personal. It’s just... an aching, the right side of sadness. I think a lot of people can find something they relate to in that. I’d feel hopeful even. Someone shouted ‘Why don’t you set yourself on fire?’ at one gig last summer and I thought, ‘That’s quite good. That’s my song.’

‘Why don’t you set yourself on fire?’ right in the middle of ‘I’m Sorry’ at one gig last summer and I thought, shit, this really must be unbearable to watch, but that happens sometimes. On the good nights it comes out as just, I don’t know... an aching, the right side of sadness. I think a lot of the time people can find something they relate to in that. I’d feel ridiculous if I suddenly started writing political protest songs, it’d be totally contrived. It’s not that I don’t care about big world issues, it’s just... there aren’t that many words that rhyme with Bush.”

YOU WERE DIAGNOSED WITH epilepsy in 2004 just as things were moving away from that one day and trying to take off; how did this affect you and what was going on at the time, and has it had an effect on your music?

“You were diagnosed with epilepsy until the following January, when I started having fits again. I found it quite hard to cope with at the time, and it just distracted me from music for a bit but things went back to normal after a month or so.”

YOU’VE BEEN PLAYING IN bands and solo since you were 15; what have been the most important things that have happened to you in that time, and what has been the most important lesson you’ve learned?

“I’m 24 now, so it’s scary to think it’s almost 10 years since Polysoul. I suppose, on a personal level at least, not much has changed. I still love singing, I write in the same way and yeah, music’s still the biggest part of me. The only difference really is it can be harder, without that safety net you have when you’re younger, to find the time and drive to push yourself to the next level when you’re working 35 hours a week, in a job that you have little or no interest in, but that’s how I know it still matters to me. My opinion of the music industry has changed massively in that time though: I’m probably getting more and more cynical every year. I signed my first publishing deal in that time though, and I’m sure that to a piece of music on the show, millions; it’s amazing exposure. You’ve got a guaranteed audience of millions; it’s amazing exposure. The only difference really is it can be harder, without that safety net you have when you’re younger, to find the time and drive to push yourself to the next level when you’re working 35 hours a week, in a job that you have little or no interest in, but that’s how I know it still matters to me. My opinion of the music industry has changed massively in that time though: I’m probably getting more and more cynical every year. I signed my first publishing deal in that time though, and I’m sure that to a piece of music on the show, millions; it’s amazing exposure.

‘Pilotlights’ is released on 26th February on Big Scary Monsters.

Dale Kattack sounded like. produced ‘Bad’, this is what it might have
Aphex Twin and Atari Teenage Riot had
If Michael Jackson was indeed the Devil, and
meat processor.

If Michael Jackson was indeed the Devil, and

but has a wry sense of humor even when hurt.
Sue Foreman
}{

GOLDRUSH
‘The Heart Is The Place’
(Truck)
In which our protagonists journey far from the
Shire to take on the American beast, lose two of
their band of brothers, come within an inch of
splitting up and finally return home full of
spirituality and with a new-found love of
psychedelic prog-rock.

Not that Goldrush’s third album escapes its
prairie roots entirely, from its grandly
symphonic intro, of which Spiritualized would

Like Marilyn Mason coughing up a lungful of
edges as rough as shattered glass and a voice
Hissing factory beats, synth squelches with

Not that Goldrush’s third album escapes its
prairie roots entirely, from its grandly
symphonic intro, of which Spiritualized would

A couple of years ago the then completely
unknown Laima Bite absolutely slayed us
with one of the most beautiful, heart-wrenching demos we’ve ever received,
including the peerless ‘Did You Used To
Love’. Since then her solo work has taken a
backseat to vocal duties with The Factory
and latterly Mary’s Garden. With a voice
that can convey both portent and sadness
with consummate ease Laima has taken each
band to a higher level but it’s still her
stripped-down solo material that shows her
talents off best.

This eight-song mini-album features backing
from Junkie Brush’s Tim Lovegrove, plus
Mary’s Garden bandmates Moty Dimante
and Colin Mackinnon, but they never
impose on Laima’s warm, soulful folk songs,
a lyrical world of love and loss. Sometimes
the words have a clumsiness that trips up the
emotional outpouring, as on ‘The Milkman’,
but at others, such as ‘Hear You Breathing’
she can cut to the very quick of what love is
all about, and that’s a rare gift.

Despite the romantic nature of these songs,
it’s slush-free; Laima’s take on it all is
resolutely pessimistic, but then happy music
is for stupid people and you could lose your
head and heart in songs like ‘Twisted Angel’
or the gorgeous ‘Wait For Me’, gently bucolic
flute and acoustic guitar creating a shroud of
private melancholy.

Too often singer-songwriters have either a
great voice or great songs. Laima has both.
A rare talent. One that demands wider
exposure.

Dale Kattack

THE WALK OFF
‘Vader Fader’
(Hungry Audio)
Hissing factory beats, synth squelches with
edges as rough as shattered glass and a voice
like Marilyn Mason coughing up a lungful of
cigarette tar, it’s fair to say The Walk Off
won’t be invading the consciousness or wallet
of yer average fan of The Feeling any time
soon. But they should. They should be inside
their heads screaming and pummelling and
making them cry for it all to stop because it
hurts. Hurts like ten tons of hammers and
rusty razor blades landing on you when you’re
tucked up snugly in bed. Hurts even though at
heart it’s a snappy little disco number with a
chorus that sounds like N.E.R.D’s ‘Lapdance’
after a contretemps with an industrial chicken
meat processor.

Dale Kattack

CHANTELLE PIKE
‘Ain’t It Just A Cigarette
(Own Label)
Oxford is currently awash with talented young
female singer-songwriters, amongst them
Chantelle Pike, who eschews bedroom
introspection in favour of a more showy, jazz
style. That said, the strongest track on this
Mark Gardener-produced EP is ‘Isabella’ with
its swooning cello and deep-set melancholy. But
otherwise Chantelle seems more at home belting
out tear-stained torch songs in a basement jazz
club, her strong, velvety voice often at odds
with her humdrum subject matter.

Dale Kattack

LAIMA BITE
‘Spiderweb’
(Own Label)
A couple of years ago the then completely
unknown Laima Bite absolutely slayed us
with one of the most beautiful, heart-

Dale Kattack

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10% student discount every day

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Delicious Music Entertainment in association with Up’n’Coming Entertainment presents
03 Caminus + One Dollar Peepshow + The Wildflowers Tour including Tom Corneill, Blair Chadwick & Tamara Parsons
10 Hip Hop Night with Mr Shaodow + Nonsense + Chris Martin + Sly + more
17 Shaker Appeal + Juxstar + The Castrates + The Literates
24 Off Kilter + The Underside

Sundays @ Market Tavern
Weekly Electric Open Mic Jam / 8pm Free!
Bring your own instruments - amps, PA & drums provided. Acoustic open mic artists welcome

Tuesdays @ Pizza Express, Golden Cross
LIVE JAZZ & MORE – Downstairs in Bar Milano / 7.30pm / Free Entry
06 Luis D’Agostino
13 Tamara Parsons & Adam Dutton + Pawel Kuterba
20 Neil Mason’s Masonic Groove
27 Blue Mama

Tuesday Night Blues Club @ The Music Market
13 Green Onions (unpeeled)
27 Blue Mama & guests

Wednesday 14 - Valentine’s Massacre with Black Skies Burn + Thirty Two + more brutal metal acts. 8pm; £3

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FOR BOOKINGS email deliciousmusicrepublic@msn.com
THURSDAY 1st
HELLOGOODBYE + PLAIN WHITE T + HOUSTON CALLS: The Zodiac – Electro-
pop and sunny Orange County pop-punk collide in unlikely but quite fun union in
HelloGoodbye’s world. Tonight’s show by the
Drive Thru-signed types is already sold out.
GRINNING SPIDER with TRUE RUMOUR + COLINS OF PARADISE + JOE &

ANGHARAD + PETE CHADWICK: The X, Cowley – Delicate, doloeful acoustic pop in
the vein of Jeff Buckley and Red House Painters
from True Rumour, plus support from trippy
cocktail jazzers Colins of Paradise.

JOHN ADREW FREDERICK + THE NEW
MOON: Q1 Club – L.A singer-songwriter and
Black Watch frontman Frederick comes to town as
part of a short UK tour to promote his 11th
album, ’Tatterdemalium’, plying eloquent,
psychedelia-tinged pop and backed by Pat
‘Jazz Butcher’ Fish. Local acoustic duo The
New Moon support.

PORT MAYHEM: The Port Mahon –
Acoustic night.

BUCKY + LITTLE FISH + TWAT TROT
TRA LA + MEPHISTO GRANDE: The
Cellar – Leftfield rock from the Big Hair crew,
including post-rocker Twat Tront Tra La and
rabad blues mayhem from former-Suitable Case
chaps Mephisto Grande.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford
Community Centre – Oxford’s long-running
open-mic club keeps going strong with a varied
selection of singers, poets and performance
artists every week.

DIRTY SCI-FI + MONDO CADA +
FATALY YOURS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester –
Bicester gets its monthly dose of the heavy
stuff, this time courtesy of doomy rockers Dirty
Sci-Fi, full-on grunge thrashers Mondo Cada and
Smiths-inspired rockers Fatialy Yours.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon

FRIDAY 2nd

BEN LEE TYLER + ALEX VARGAS + THE
IDEA: The X, Cowley – Classic 80s-influenced
power rock from Cheltenham’s Ben Lee Tyler,
with support from bluesy acoustic pop singer
Alex Vargas.

ROSY BENNET: Emperor Ballroom,
Romanway, Cowley – Benefit gig for Respite
Nursing for Oxfordshire’s Sick Youngsters,
featuring a night of hip hop, r’n’b and jazz
music, including soul starlet Jada Pearl, rapper
Zuby, G Buck, Teresa Edwards, Alvin Roy,
plus a special Def Jam guest.

DAN SARTAIN: The Zodiac – Colourful,
dramatic story-telling singer out of Alabama
with an authentic 1950s Tex-Mex sound that
mixes rockabilly with mariachi and a country
twang. Stylishly stripped-down stuff from
another age, performed with genuine flair.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with IVY’SITCH +
POTE FRANKLIN + IAN STAPLES: The
Wheatsheaf – Goth-grunge banshees Ivy’s Itch
tear up Klub Kak’s monthly session.

BANDS & SINGERS NIGHT: The Victoria,
Jericho

INLIGHT + LONELY ECHOES + L-
SHAPED ROOM + SUB FUNC: The Cellar
RAG battle of the bands.

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

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
TONY BOWEN + SLASHED SEAT AFFAIR
+ SOMAHIGH + THE BANDINS: Jericho
Tavern – Rock and acoustic night.

SUNDAY 4th

METRIC: The Zodiac – Toronto-based quartet
fronted by Broken Social Scene collaborator
Emily Haines whose effervescent vocals and
keyboard playing breathe life into the band.

JAMIE T: Brookes
University Union

MySpace may have launched him on the road
to fame and fortune but it’s a path
that’s been well beaten by endless tours and
one that shows no sign of ending any time
soon. In fact, with his debut album, ‘Panic
Prevention’, due at the end of January, Jamie
T is looking more and more like one of
2007’s biggest stars. The champion if the
disenfranchised has so far furnished us with a
handful of limited edition EPs, each packed
to the gunnels with blurry, boozey suburban
narratives. Like a south London Arctic
Monkeys he’s got an eye for detail and a
way with a rhyme that would shame most
rappers. Jamie blurs the line between rap
and folk, not to mention punk and reggae, as
much indebted to Billy Bragg and Desmond
Decker as he is to The Streets and The
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RAG battle of the bands.

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

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
TONY BOWEN + SLASHED SEAT AFFAIR
+ SOMAHIGH + THE BANDINS: Jericho
Tavern – Rock and acoustic night.

SUNDAY 4th

METRIC: The Zodiac – Toronto-based quartet
fronted by Broken Social Scene collaborator
Emily Haines whose effervescent vocals and
keyboard playing breathe life into the band.
with the in-house band, The X-Men.

SESSION: The Music Market

DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC JAM

about them.

Canadian album of the year in 2006, while

Album ‘Live It Out’ was nominated for

excellent show at the Zodiac back in October as

London-based folktronica songsmith after his

rise –

JAMIE T: Brookes University Union –

ROB TOGNONI: The Bullingdon –

HOMELESS: The Port Mahon

SUGAR’N’SPICE + THEO + DJ

Shack.

melodic, jangly 60s edge akin to The La’s and

former-Menswear guitarist Chris Gentry, have a

London’s Grace, unsurprisingly, owe a debt to

tour of two up’n’coming indie acts. West

GRACE + CLOCKS: The Zodiac –

power trio band.

blues-rock from the Tasmanian guitarist and his

rocking.

tonight’s gig should get the X well and truly

raunchy blues voice. The duo’s new album

he released his third album, ‘Magic Position’,

late last year featuring collaborations with

Marianne Faithfull and Larrkin Love and

mainstream success finally looks like his for the

taking.

JAZZ CLUB with KATYAGORRIE &

DENNY ILETT Jr: The Bullingdon – Free

weekly jazz club with resident and guest bands,

plus r’n’b DJs til late.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X,

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DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ SESSION: Bar

Milano, Pizza Express – With jazz guitarist

Luis D’Agostino.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: Mangos

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Hobgoblin,

Bicester

WEDNESDAY 7th

FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley

HIT & RUN: The Cellar – Hip hop and

drum&bass club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House

THURSDAY 8th

BEN WATERS & CHRIS JAGGER: The X,

Cowley – Renowned blues and zydeco duo

play an intimate show at the X – see main

preview

AEROGRAFME: The Zodiac – Symphonic,

oceanic and sometimes bruising prog-grunge

excellence from Glasgow’s mighty Aerogramme,

a band who ought to be selling several million

more albums than they currently do, despite

being beloved of everyone from Flaming Lips

and Pavement to Charlie from Busted. Inspired

by the likes of Talk Talk and The God Machine,

they’re ambitious, extravagant and complex but

packing a great melodic punch. C’mon, make

them famous!

BRITPOP NIGHT: The Zodiac – New club

night with Loz Colbert spinning classic indie

and rock anthems.

ZELEGA: The Port Mahon

LOUISE SETARA: The Living Room,

Oxford Castle – Rising teenage jazz singer,

recently signed to Blue Note offshoot label

Manhattan, promoting debut album, ‘Still

Waters’.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon

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CAPDOWN: The Zodiac – Once more into

the breach for Milton Keynes’ politicised skapunk

battlers.

BRIAN JAMES GANG: The Zodiac –

Original Damned guitarist Brian James keeps on

rocking with his own band, keeping the punk

and garage rock flag flying. And they still play

‘New Rose’, in case you were wondering.

SLIDE: The Zodiac – House club night with

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BLUNTED Vs BOOGIE BASEMENT: The

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GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with

RAGGASARUS + WILSON + LES

CLOCHARDS: The X, Cowley – Gappy

Tooth Industries’ side project presents a jolly

party mix with lively reggae / Arabic groovers

Raggasarus, deceptively brilliant Northampton

baggy revivalists Wilson and local Gallic

An unusual venue for a gig, Oxford Town

Hall’s high ceiling and miniature grandiosity

is well suited to Regina Spektor. The wild-

haired Muscovite-turned-Bronx resident is

well in the ascendency now after years

spent cultivating a cult following amongst

the anti-folk and art-rock crowd in her

adopted New York, mixing up gypsy folk,

jazz and grungy pop. Her big break came in

2003 when she supported The Strokes on

tour and she hasn’t looked back. Last year

she sold out the Zodiac and headlined the

barn stage at Truck and this time around

should have little trouble selling out such a

venue as this. As with another of this

month’s star turns, Bat For Lashes, Regina’s

appeal lies both in her quite stunning voice

and her twisted take on songwriting. Vocally

she veers from little girl lost to ominous

majesty, all the while rivalrying Tori Amos

for the title of Queen of Whimsy; she’s prone

to beating her piano stool with a cane and

singing about Hans Christian Anderson

“Having his way with me” After 2005’s

breakthrough album, ‘Soviet Kitsch’, her

reputation is enhanced with fourth album

‘Begin The Hope’ and it’s not beyond

reason that next time she’ll have outgrown

even this venue.

Jagger: a big name for a small venue but the

perfect environment to appreciate Mick’s

younger brother’s earthy brand of swamp

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Original Damned guitarist Brian James keeps on

well as his appearance at last summer’s Truck

Festival. Pastoral hymns cut through with

analogue sounds and electronic beats with a

sweeping elegance coupled with as his yearning,

doomed lyrics and wonderfully limpid voice

mark him out as a successor to Nick Cave or

John Cale. A talented multi-instrumentalist,

Wolf tends to lead with violin, viola or piano,

but utilises more exotic instruments, such as a

Finnish kantele. Now signed to Loog Records,

he released his third album, ‘Magic Position’,

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BROTHER FRANCISCO + GANGER
QUICKFIX presents VESTIBULE + Jericho Tavern – Acoustic pop and indie rock night.

SUNDAY 11th
FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL + MESAPLEX + LAST DAYS OF LORCA:
The Port Mahon – Swiss Concrete night with alternately urgent and ambient synth ‘n’ guitar instrumentalists Flies Are Spies, plus Depeche Mode-inspired electronics from Mesaplex and epic, angular rocking from Chichester’s Last days of Lorca.

DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Music Market
THE DIVINITY SCHOOL + LOKEI + HANGMAN’S JOE: The Bullingdon: - Local rock bands night.
SALSANEROS: The Cellar – Salsa club night with live band.

MONDAY 12th
FUNKYDORY: The Bullingdon – Rough and raw blues-rock with a soul edge from the UK rising stars, drawing on Led Zeppelin, Frank Zappa raw blues-rock with a soul edge from the UK.

TUESDAY 13th
KLAXONS + CSS + NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB + THE SUNSHINE UNDERGROUND BAND: Brookes University Union – NME’s ‘New Rave’ Awards tour comes to town – see main preview.
JUST JACK: The Zodiac – Urban folk narratives from the North London singer-cum-rapper in a vaguely Streets-like vein.
JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY QUINTET: The Bullingdon
ANTON BARBEAU + THE NEW MOON: The Port Mahon – Psychedelic-tinged 60s-styled pop from Mr Barbeau.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.
DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ SESSION: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With guests Tamara Parsons, Adam Dutton and Pawel Kuterba.

WEDNESDAY 14th
MARCIO MATTOS: The Port Mahon – Brazilian cellist, a renowned figure on the London and European improvisation circuit, teams up with members of the Oxford Improv Collective.
VALENTINE’S MASSACRE with BLACK SKIES BURN + THIRTY TWO: The Music Market – Extreme metal night in celebration of St Valentine’s Day, featuring former-Faith In Hate people Black Skies Burn.
FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley
PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar – Funk open jam session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House

THURSDAY 15th
THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + WITCHES + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: The Cellar – The resurgent Rock are re-stating their case as the best live band in Oxford with their incendiary blend of rock theatrics, orchestral pomp and electronic edginess, pitching them somewhere between Stravinsky, Shellac and Trans Am, in a galaxy far, far away. Witches provide more genteel leftfield pop fun, while newcomers Space Heroes could be one of this year’s stars, mixing up glitchy electronics with metronomic drumming and sci-fi samples.
ROLO TOMASSI: The Port Mahon – Shouty, shouty, yelp, yelp 236MPH wobbly Beehive-gone-gamba extreme giberhing synthcore mayhem from the Sheffield nutters won sound like The Locust getting cooked in a spin dryer by Melt Banana. Bring yer mum.

Tuesday 13th
NME AWARDS TOUR: Brookes University
One of two NME Awards-branded tours currently doing the rounds, this one is dubbed ‘The New Rave’, a lazy and inaccurate label for a collection of bands playing dancefloor-friendly rock. South London’s Klaxons probably come closest to fitting the label, taking gonzo acid house riffs and playing them with guitars instead of synths. There are obvious nods to Guru Josh and Baby D, while they also cover novelty rave hit ‘The Bouncer’, but their drunken, hyperactive pop is as close to Kasabian at times. Leed’s Sunshine Underground Band keep the frantically funky post-punk noise count high, where Killers meet Radio 4, while New Young Pony Club, fresh from supporting Lily Allen, style themselves closer to Tom Tom Club with an alluring blend of electro-pop and 80s funk. Best of the lot, though, are Sao Paulo sextet CSS (pictured). While it’s not surprising to see the media get into a froth about an (almost) all-girl Brazilian band, their dirty, sexy robo-disco-punk is irresistibly infectious, nowhere more so than on recent single, ‘Alala’, where Hot Chip are one of this year’s star turns, mixing up synthcore mayhem from the Sheffield nutters won sound like The Locust getting cooked in a spin dryer by Melt Banana. Bring yer mum.

songsters Les Clochards coming on like a cross between Serge Gainsbourg, Elvis and The Pastels.
BANDS & SINGERS NIGHT: The Victoria, Irejo
QUICKFIX presents VESTIBULE + BROTHER FRANCISCO + GANGER DRAFT + BLUE RIDERS: The Wheatsheaf – Post-rocking from headliners Vestibule, plus heavy-duty drum and piano action from former-Black Neilson types Brother Francisco. Newcomers Ganger Draft feature members of Verbal Kink and At Risk, while Didcot’s Blues Riders opt for some classic heavy rocking.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Brass-heavy ska, funk and jazz with Smerin’s Anti-Social Club, plus DJs.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
Oxford Folk Club: The Port Mahon
TREV WILLIAMS + THE KING’S SHILLINGS + OFF THE RADAR + THE BROCKS: Jericho Tavern – Acoustic pop and indie rock night.

SATURDAY 10th
FORK + HEADCOUNT + 32 + ALLY CRAIG: The X, Cowley – Wittstock fundraiser with prog-punkers Fork teaming up with punk-metal titans headcount, plus Sonic Youth-via-Jeff Buckley style pop from Ally Craig.
MIDAS: The Port Mahon
BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Ska, reggae and funk with guests Planet Man and Internationalz, plus DJs.
OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum’n’bass club night.
BARAKA: Coven 11 – Psy-trance club night with DJs Aeon, Petran and LSDan.
BLACK JACK TABAC: The Duke, St Clements – Blues, funk, soul, jazz, reggae, and punk from DJs Van Mule and Aidan Larkin.

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FRANK TURNER + DIVE DIVE + BEANS ON TOUR: The Zodiac – Former Million Dead frontman Frank heads out on tour in support of his new solo album, Sleep Is For The Week’, now plying a more rootsy style with a political edge. Local punk-pop heroes Dive Dive are acting as his backing band for the duration and also playing a support set, having released their second album, ‘Revenge of the Mechanical Dog’ this month. Beans on Toast should provide suitably wholesome support as well as valuable roughage.


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

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ROGER TARRY: Qi Club – Tender, melancholy folk-pop in a Nick Drake style from Mr Tarry, with support from The Epstein’s Olly Wills.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon FRIDAY 16th

GRINNING SPIDER with SMALLTEASERS + PHYAL + BACKPOCKET PROHET + AGENTS OF JANE + TREV WILLIAMS + SCELIEF; The X, Cowley – Benefit gig for mental health charity MIND, featuring MOR popsters Smallteasers, punk metallers Phyal, plus balladeer Trev Williams.

MANATEES + YOU JUDAS: The Wheatsheaf – Awesome black-hearted prog rock, doom-metal and drone-core from Carlisle’s Manatees at tonight’s Vacuous Pop night. Ambitious and incredibly heavy, leaning towards Swans and Neurosis but with King Crimson’s adventurous spurt. They’ll take your bleeding head off, so they will. Derby’s You Judas will give them a good run for their money with their vitriolic brand of proggy hardcore, where Radiohead collide head on with Black Sabbath.

DARTZ: The Zodiac – Spiky, angular post-punk funk in a Q And Not U-meets-Dismemberment Plan vein from the Teeside newcomers.


SKYNY NYRDS: The Chester Arms SATURDAY 17th

THE EGG: The Zodiac (upstairs) – After their last, curiously muted, showing at the Zodiac, the one-time local trance-funk favourites return to Oxford, still riding high on the back of their collaboration with David Guetto, ‘Love Don’t Let Me Go’, used on the ice-skating Citroen advert. These days stripped down to twins Ned and Matt Scott, they still manage to inject a live rock vitality into dance music.

LOST ALONE + ARMSTRONG: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Return of former-Intentions of An Asteroid frontman Steven Battelle with his new band Lost Alone, aiming high with a stadium-sized brand of punky metal, where Aerosmith and Muse meet Green Day.

WHISKEYCATS: The X, Cowley – Funky good-time rock and roll from Manchester’s cult stars.

UP C DOWN C + EDWARD SOUNDING BLOCK + TWAT TROT TRA LA + NEVEREST SONGS: The Port Mahon – Myanalog night with good bill of leftfield rockers, including former-Suitable Case types Edward Sounding Block, plus math-rockers Twat Trot Tra La.

SHAKER APPEAL + JUXSTAR + THE ILITRATES: The Music Market – Delicious Music new local bands night, including the ironically-named litirates.

ABDULLAH CHADEH: Chipping Norton Theatre – Big Village presents the Syrian Qanun maestro.

TURNTABLEISM: The Cellar – Hip hop and drum&bass club night.

MELTING POT with BEAR IN THE AIR + BRANDEAN STEEP: Jericho Tavern SUNDAY 18th

AIR TRAFFIC + GHOSTS + SNOWFIGHT IN THE CITY CENTRE: The Zodiac – Piano-led punk from Bournemouth’s Air Traffic, newly signed to EMI after casing a stir with their debut single, ‘Just Abuse Me’ on Fierce Panda’s Fandango singles club last year, and more recently seen on Jools Holland and on tour with Snow Patrol.

HI FLYER: The Bullingdon DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Music Market ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley MONDAY 19th

AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Texas sonic destroyers return – see main preview.

BLOOD RED SHOES: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Raw-edged bubblegum grunge-pop from Brighton duo who’ve released singles on Drowned In Sound and Youthmovies’ Try Harder label.

THE LRYDER BAND: The Bullingdon – 60s-style biker blues from the London-based guitarist and former leader of 60s cult act The Hush who played with Led Zep and Fleetwood Mac amongst others. After a 20-year break from music, Ryder returned in the early-90s to establish himself on the UK blues scene, drawing favourable comparisons with Peter Green.

THE BATTLEFIELD BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – Scotland’s premier folksters return for another intimate gig.

DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ SESSION: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – Tonight’s guests are Neil Mason’s Masonic Groove.

OPEN MIC NIGHT: Mangos WEDNESDAY 21st

DISCO DRIVE + AN EMERGENCY: The Wheatsheaf – Melodic punk-pop, where The Clash meet Fugazi from Turin’s Disco Drive; Exeter’s post-hardcore guitar manglers bring their Q And Not U-influenced punk along in support.

FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley HIT & RUN: The Cellar OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House THURSDAY 22nd

ALTON ELLIS + INTENSIFIED: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Rocksteady legend makes his first ever visit to town – see main preview.

DUKE SPECIAL: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Dreadlocked Belfast-based musical hobo Peter Wilson explores the romantic underbelly of pop, mixing Morrissey’s downbeat humour with a lush, piano-led Keane-styled sound. Recently he’s toured in support of The Divine Comedy and Beautiful South.

Monday 19th AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD: The Zodiac

It seems half a lifetime since we were dodging flying cymbals and well-aimed Sonic Youth riffs down at the old Point when the Austin, Texas band whose name will always be truncated to Trail Of Dead first hit town. Despite much critical praise and plenty of those frantic life shows, the band never really took off (eventually earning themselves the music industry tag And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Debt) and you could be forgiven for thinking they’d simply died and gone to indie rock heaven. But here they are back again, with new (fifth) album, ‘So Divided’, something of a return to form after 2005’s self-destructive ‘Worlds Apart’. Nerdy cowboy guitars they might be, with a penchant for Dungeons and Dragons, but they still kick out a fair old racket, powerchords and guitar vandalism being the order of the day, an almost orchestral amalgam of so much that’s good about classic American alt.rock. Swaggering rock-played loud and things getting broken: would you really rather go and see Thirteen Senses?
Thursday 22nd

ALTON ELLIS / INTENSIFIED: The Zodiac

Courtesy of Skylarkin, comes a rare chance to catch a glimpse of a genuine reggae legend, Alton Ellis, the Jamaican singer widely credited with inventing rocksteady back in the 60s. According to legend, while recording the song ‘Get Ready – Rock Steady’ stand-in bassist Jackie Mitto couldn’t keep up with the ska rhythm so it was slowed down and a new genre was born. With a career stretching over 40 years, including some legendary sessions at Studio 1 and classics like ‘Duke Of Earl’, Neil Sedaka’s ‘Breaking Up Is Hard To Do’ and hit single ‘Girl, I’ve Got A Date’ to his credit, Ellis, possessed of a smooth, passionate soul voice, is rightly considered one of the figureheads of traditional reggae; in 2006 he was inducted into the Reggae & World Music Awards Hall Of Fame. Tonight’s support, Intensified, could headline in their own right, with fifteen years of live performance behind them, earning a reputation as the UK’s leading trad ska band and favourably compared to The Skatalites. Tonight’s gig is followed by Skylarkin’s regular ska, reggae and soul session with legendary Britolian DJ Derek.

SAVING BLUE + MIMI NOIR: The Port Mahon – Double bill of touring Swedish bands.

THE LIES & HOW WE TOLD THEM + ZELEGA + APERATEC: The Cellar – Leftfield and experimental rocking.

SELECTASOUND with FOXES! + IZIT-U + THE SIREN’S CALL: The X, Cowley – Sweet jangly electro-pop from Foxes! plus indie rocking from Banbury’s Sirens Call.

MARK BOSLEY: QI Club – Local gothic pop troubadour.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon

Friday 23rd

100 BULLETS BACK + MARY BENDY TOY + ANTON BARBEAU: The X, Cowley – Synth-rocking action in an Underworld-meets-Sheep On Drugs vein from rising stars 100 Bullets Back, with support from industrial pop weirdos Mary Bendy Toy and 60s psychedelic folk-pop from Anton Barbeau.

MACCABEES + GOOD BOOKS: The Zodiac – Brighton’s indie funkers hoping to live up to their NME-infected “Best New Band In Britain” tag, and looking ever more likely to make it big with a livewire live show that leans towards Bloc Party and XTC.

RICHARD WALTERS + THE FAMILY MACHINE + WITCHES: The Zodiac (downstairs) – This month’s Nightshift cover star Richard Walters launches his new EP, with support from lachrymose country-popsters The Family Machine and esoteric rockers Witches – see main interview feature

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with STORNOWAY + KANUTE + THE GULLIVERS: Moody’s Pool Bar – Change of venue for GTI tonight due to a double booking at the Zodiac, so it’s off round the back for the eclectic live music club night, tonight featuring celtic-tinged rockers Stornoway, atmospheric trip-hoppers Kanute, plus skanking indie-punks The Gullivers.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX with PLUMP DJS: The Zodiac – Special FOTB tonight as multi-award-winning DJ team Plump DJs, from Fabric’s Eargasm club, spin the best in nu-skool breaks. Plus sets from First Contact and Soundz. You are requested to wear a hat. Or a wig.

BANDS & SINGERS NIGHT: The Victoria, Jericho

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

Oxford Folk Club: The Port Mahon

HQ: The Cellar

REDOX + PETE FRYER BAND: The Magdalen – Swamp funk from Redox, plus eccentric blues-rocking from Mr Fryer and chums.

NIGEL BROWN + COTTON BLONDE + CUSTOM GUITAR REBELS + THE LONG WEIGHTS: Jericho Tavern

Saturday 24th

EL TANBURA: The Zodiac (upstairs) – Traditional Egyptian music from the collection of fishermen, musicians, storytellers and poets.

THE WALK OFF + MEPHISTO GRANDE + BABY GRAVY + PALACE OF RIGHTEOUS JUSTICE: The Zodiac (downstairs) – Launch gig for The Walk Off’s new single. Punishing digital hardcore mayhem, death disco brutality and dancing bears all round. Mephisto Grande sees the return of former-Suitable Case For Treatment frontman Liam Ings-Reeves and drummer Pete Ward with a stripped-down brand of grotesque blues-core, while Baby Gravy add further lopsided lunatic genius to the party with their dubby synth-punk racket.

SKAVILLE + THE ELEMENTS: The Bullingdon - Top-flight ska, reggae and punk from former-Bad Manners chaps Nick Welsh, Louis Alphonso and Martin Stewart, who, as well as penning the band’s 80s hits, have also played with and produced Lee Perry, Prince Buster and The Selecter. Dust off your monkey boots and get ready for some serious moonstomping.

SHAKER HEIGHTS + SAM ISAAC + SIMPLY LUKE + LEIGHFIELD: The X, Cowley – Infectiously melodic country-tinged rock and shimmering indie pop from Aylesbury’s Shaker Heights.

ZUBY + FUGAZIRUM + SCROOBIUS PIP + MY SHADOW: The Port Mahon – Swiss Concrete presents a night of hip hop with ace local rapper Zuby’s slick, accomplished delivery recalling Nas and Jay-Z. Support comes from six-piece blues-hip hop band Fugazirum, laidback jazz poet and humourist Scroobius Pip and possibly best of all, newcomer Mr Shadown, armed with a dark, raw style, excellent use of samples and, with ‘Look Out There’s A Black Man Coming’, a brilliant, funny, uncomfortable piece of social commentary – a new local star in the making?

THE EPSTEIN + DANNY GEORGE WILSON + MORRISON STEAM FAYRE: Holywell Music Room – Country rocking of the old school from local favourites The Epstein at tonight’s special Holywell concert.

OFF KILTER + THE UDNERSIDE: The Music Market

CHICKS WITH DECKS: The Cellar – Indie, new wave, riot grrl and 80s club night.

Tuesday 27th

¡FORWARD, RUSSIA!: The Zodiac

Having been the saving grace of last year’s NME tour at Brookes, followed by one of the star turns at Truck Festival, Leeds’ ¡Forward, Russia! (and, God, don’t we hate having to keep inserting them upside-down exclamation marks) return for a headline show in their own right. Here is a band for whom the word frenetic was possibly invented. With little room for subtlety or slowing down they take At The Drive-In for a breakneck ride through late-70s / early-80s new wave, calling at stations marked The Pop Group, The Associates, Joy Division and even Dexy’s; it’s a frantic, slightly crazed form of disco all scuzzed up by white noise and spiky hardcore before being shoveled into a washing machine for a full spin cycle. Combinative to the point of awkwardness, ¡Forward, Russia! offer lyrical political conjecture and songs about Einstein but smother them in so much guitar mess you’ll have your work cut out picking the nuggets of wisdom out, and they’ve a tendency to simply number their songs rather than give them names. They’re not especially new tricks, but they are immense fun. And faced with a rock show like this, fun is what it’s all about.
SUNDAY 25th

FOALS: The Zodiac – Having signed to record label-of-the-moment Transgressive and relocated to Brighton, Foals return to their former hometown for their biggest headline gig to date. The former-Nightshift cover stars look set for a very bright 2007 with an album due out later this year and their highly-rhythmic blend of new wave funk, post-rock and discolified pop set to light up the musical skies. They may have fled to the seaside, but we’ll keep them for our own for now, spiritually at least.

PINDROP PERFORMANCE with THE KEYBOARD CHOIR + JUNK PLANET + LITTLE COSMONAUT: The Port Mahon – Electronic ambience, digital experimentation and analogue brilliance from the synth orchestra at tonight’s Pindrop. Little Cosmonaut bring a healthy dose of twee to the table in support, along with John Brainlove’s electro mash-up ensemble Junkplanet.

THE DOUGHNUT KINGS: The Bullyingdon – Big band jazz from the university collective.

DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Music Market

BEARD MUSEUM: The Purple Turtle – Psychedelic blues and folk from Morrison Steam Fayre at tonight’s Beard Museum, plus downbeat local rockers The Moneyshops and The Robot Heart.

SALASEROS: The Cellar

MONDAY 26th

HONEYBOY HICKLING & THE DTs: The Bullyingdon – Renowned UK blues harpist and singer who’s worked with Steve Marriot and Bo Diddley along the way. In his own right mixing up covers of classics by Chuck Berry, Charlie Musselwhite and Canned Heat amongst others.

COURTNEY PINE: The Zodiac – Another visit to town for the UK’s leading jazz saxophonist and bandleader, mixing experimental and easy jazz with drum&bass, funk, and world sounds.

MORNING RUNNER: The Zodiac – Lighters aloft, kids. Reading’s epic soft rockers return, armed with a cache of ballads and stadium anthems and an eye on Coldplay’s throne and looking likely to make a fair attempt at capturing it after support tours with them as well as Snow Patrol and Bloc Party.

BILLY MITCHELL & BOB FOX: Nettlebed Folk Club

LOGH + VESSELS: The Port Mahon

TUESDAY 27th

¡FORWARD, RUSSIA! + CURSIVE + SOMETREE: The Port Mahon (upstairs) – Uptight, up’n’at’em rock and roll from the rising post-hardcore heroes – see main preview

BAT FOR LASHES: The Zodiac (downstairs) – A trip into folk’s heart of darkness with songstress Natasha Khan.

JAZZ CLUB with THE NUMBERS

RACKET: The Bullyingdon

VEDA PARK + RICHARD BROTHERTON: The Port Mahon – Gentle rocking from Veda park with a hint or two of Steely Dan in the mix.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley


DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ SESSION: Bar Milano, Pizza Express – With Blue Mama.

DIRTY BEAUTIFUL: The Cellar – Techno club night.


WEDNESDAY 28th

PIGEON DETECTIVES: The Zodiac – Possibly the band most likely to get everyone saying ’Arctic who?’ in 2007. Leeds’ laddish, rabble-rousing rockers are already experiencing gig mayhem on the back of MySpace-inspired cultdom, kicking out buzzsaw indie-punk in the vein of The Clash and Buzzcocks.

A SILENT FILM: The Wheatsheaf – Oxford’s band-most-likely-to gear up for a busy few months, attracting plenty of record label interest for their epic, inventive stadium-sized pop, mixing epic, introverted piano ballads with sky-touching guitar workouts, somewhere between Queen, Elton John and Muse. Get ’em while they’re hot.

FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley

DIVINE COILS: The Port Mahon – Drones, dissonance and ambient spookiness from the experimental collective.

PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House

THE BANSHEE + MEENIES: The Jericho Tavern

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VENUE PHONE NUMBERS

The Zodiac: 01865 420042
The Bullyingdon: 01865 244516
The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156
The X: 01865 776431
The Cellar: 01865 244761
The New Theatre: 0870 606 3500
Black Horse: 01865 373154
The Port Mahon: 01865 202067
Delicious Music: 07876 184623
Point Promotions: 07711 628021
The Victoria: 01865 311723
Brookes: 01865 484750
The Music Market: 01865 248388
QI Club: 01865 261500
ROBYN HITCHCOCK AND THE VENUS 3
Oxford Zodiac

Well, you know what happened next, but we didn’t then. It was never going to be just another Robyn Hitchcock gig – he’s played in Oxford quite a lot recently, but this time he is backed by the Venus 3, who are REM guitarist Peter Buck along with bass player Scott McCaughey and drummer Bill Rieflin, who are also in REM these days. Sadly the advertising hadn’t made this terribly clear, and the Zodiac was no more than half full.

Apart from a few old Hitchcock favourites like ‘Madonna of the Wasps’ and ‘Kingdom of Love’, much of the material tonight is from the new ‘Olé! Tarantula’ album, and leans towards the jangly, dreamy side of Hitchcock, rather than the grinding stuff that mentions ‘thorax’ a lot. Buck is happy to strum modestly in the background on a vintage twelve-string and look on indulgently during Hitchcock’s surreal song introductions, which, as a friend remarks, are becoming very reminiscent of a less nasty Peter Cook.

This would have been a great gig if it had ended there, but when the band came back for an encore, who appears but Mike Mills and bloody Michael Stipe! Cue much girly shrieking, and not just from me. Stipe is wearing a Norman Wisdom suit, with a cap and what can only be described as a handbag, and, in the way of celebrities, he’s very small.

The affable-looking Mills picks up a spare guitar and Stipe makes his way to the side of the stage, all eyes following him. The ensemble start with REM’s ‘Electrolite’, with Stipe and Hitchcock singing the chorus, “You are the star tonight”, to each other, then ‘Listening to the Higsons’ (Michael Stipe + a song that mentions Norwich = surreal!) and an unreleased REM song called, I think, ‘DJ At the End of the World’. Stipe leaves and everyone starts swapping instruments, finishing with a fabulous ‘Eight Miles High’, where Buck finally lets rip with the freeform twelve-string lead. They all look like they are having the best time together, and I suspect the residents of the Randolph or Old Bank are disturbed that night by loud renditions of Fast Show sketches and requests for toast at 3am. Quite extraordinary.

Angus Stevenson

SAM COOKE GROUP Feat. ADAM WALDMANN / ALEX HUTTON TRIO
Spin Jazz Club, The Wheatsheaf

They say the problem with jazz today is that there’s plenty of young blood coming in but only old people watching. Oxford’s finest (and most credible) jazz club, The Spin, disproves this view: they manage to get young bands and pull in plenty of students, providing warm jazz on a cold and fatally windy night.

And warm jazz it is indeed. London’s renowned Alex Hutton Trio opens with ‘Yellow-Blue Waltz’, double bass acting as the focal point of the song, plucking tender melodies whilst Hutton’s embellished piano chords provide a background. As far as oxymorons go, there’s a certain melancholy-upbeat mood – ‘Another Good Reason’expounds this odd ambivalence better than the English language could. Hutton ends with a quiet contrapuntal piano line, a finale held silent a moment too long - adding tension; the last chord bringing a resolute end with chuckles all round.

The even younger Sam Cooke Quartet, featuring soprano saxophonist Adam Waldmann, start their introductory theme; Waldmann’s head-bobbing followed by a jilting yet soulful bass groove. Herbie Hancock-esque chimes reverberate from Sam Cook’s keyboard and a tidy little drum line fills it in. A fuller and more rounded sound is achieved, perhaps because of Cooke’s deep honky tonk setting which the band seem to hold a note) while the band seem to have taken their lead from the likes of Blur. Their take on ‘indie’ is far more spiky and interesting than you’d expect: they cover Pixies’ ‘Gouge Away’, so I guess the band is winning this particular war.

Mary’s Garden have had to live in the shadow of The Factory for some time, but on tonight’s evidence it won’t be long before we’re grateful they split when they did. These songs are dark and dense and in lesser hands could seem cumbersome and heavy. However, the band are so tight that they make these songs roar. Centre stage is Laima Bite who looks as if she’s dressed for a wedding and a funeral at the same time. Such get up unsurprisingly suits the band who are capable of creating an unforgiving dirge whilst Laima’s voice takes their songs to a passionate high. They finish their set with the eponymous ‘Mary’s Garden’, a seven-minute epic that epitomises the band. It’s awash with dynamics and opulent ideas and it sounds gigantic; hopefully grand things await this enchanting band.

Sam Shepherd
**IMOGEN HEAP**
The New Theatre

Imogen Heap loves to play the ditzy bimbo. There she is on stage, nattering away into her microphone, more to herself than anyone in the crowd, making out like all her technology is getting the better of her. Yet here’s a nice cup of tea, courtesy of a helpful roadie. In reality, she’s a smart operator and highly inventive musician. Self-consciously kooky in a mad-woman-with-ten-cats-at-the-end-of-the-street way she may be but she hasn’t filled a venue this size by accident.

Leading into her set with an impromptu appearance in the front row, she wrenches dirty, squeaky analogue sounds out of her hand-held synth on ‘I’m In Love With You’, layering on her trademark lysergic caterwaul, voice, effects and rhythms all looped to buggery as she flounces around the stage in her best ball gown. Next she’s behind her decorative grand piano (or at least an electric disguised as), exhorting breathlessly as she pounds the keys with almost operatic portent, the MOR tendencies subtly raked through with electronic experimentation of the kind Laurie Anderson pioneered in the early-80s. Indeed there’s an overwhelming feel of 80s nostalgia about much of tonight’s set, the image of Cyndi Lauper more than once peeking out from Imogen’s geekily flamboyant performance.

The straight piano-led numbers hint at Tori Amos, or a grander, more assertive Cat Power, but when she’s joined by support band Nemo things lean towards harsher electronic sounds, while the best of her solo songs tonight have a skipping African township rhythm and are playfully bizarre.

The synth-heavy ‘Hide & Seek’ that closes the set is simply brilliant; similarly the exuberant ‘Daylight Robbery’. Imogen Heap finds herself in a strange place: too arty and weird for the Alanis-buying multitudes but too sweet and soulful for the avant-garde crowd. Given that she’s playing to a packed and completely rapt house tonight, it seems like a place worth inhabiting.

*Dale Kattack*

**THE VOYAGERS / MATT SAGE’S ORCHESTRA OF LOVE**

**The Zodiac**

Tonight there are two Matt Sages. The promoter of excellent Big Village gigs and the performer who two years ago wanted strings, keyboards and backing singers to set off his heartfelt singer-songwriting. Now he is a late 60s-early 70s sound: Brit folk, art rock, Al Stewart with inflections of Dylan, Cohen and even Paul Simon.

How much does the Orchestra enhance Matt’s performance? Mainly they echo the emotion of Matt’s lyrics, singing and guitar with lush, soaring, swooping harmonies, professionally arranged and played. But the best is when they and Matt set up a contrast, especially when he starts songs almost unaccompanied. This seems true for Matt too, as he sings ‘Lilia’ in this style with much more confidence after a low-key start to the set.

The Voyagers is the first of four Big Village gigs of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern music. The Voyagers are purely instrumental and led by London-based Israeli Daphna Sadeh on double bass. Her band are all virtuosos but play their mix of Sephardic, Middle Eastern, Klezmer and a touch of jazz as a genuine ensemble. What we get is very earthy and ranges from joy to reflective melancholy. Never one dimensional, there is a touch of Jewish irony not only in some of the music but also the ritualistic way Daphna asks the traditional question, “Are you having a good time?”

An early number is like a moody film noir slowly unfolding. Then there’s Nim Schwartz’s wonderful long-awaited oud solo intro; I’d have loved more of this. The clarinet is the instrument of the soul in Klezmer, and Stuart Curtis ensures that the soul is dancin’, but it is Daphnia’s balszy double bass that is centre stage. She plucks fiercely and with great musicality, and Stuart challenges the audience with bursts of bowing that seem more festival of abstract high brow music than Middle Eastern.

The last run of numbers have a dance edge; they are a touch samey and suffer from the Zodiac acoustics mashing the sound of the individual instruments. But it is a big finish with a vibrant atmosphere and mutual high between crowd and band.

*Colin May*
**ROSE KEMP / UNDERGROUND RAILROAD / REBECCA MOSLEY**

**The Cellar**

Rebecca Mosley captures an extraordinary amount of punk rock spirit with her taut, at times aggressive, take on the acoustic singer-songwriter style. Not that her songs are crude, messy or particularly loud; far from it, she has a beautifully clear and untainted voice and delivers lyrics with breathy confidence. There’s real power to what she’s doing, though. It may be the arrangement of the music, going beyond the realms of standard strum/fingerpick into more esoteric areas. It may be the quirky style of her cello player, who lacks and paws at the strings to add undertcurrents of dissonance and aural elephants to the sound. Whatever it is, Mosley seems absolutely free of pretence and posturing whilst delivering rich, captivating songs that have the crowd in the palm of her hand.

Underground Railroad ratchet up the noise frenzy quotient with an absolutely outstanding set. This is a band that sounds like the entire discography of Sonic Youth being minced into pieces: feedback-infused barrages of unidentifiable guitar noise showering over relentless basslines and some of the tightest and most inventive drumming I’ve seen for some time. It’s an incredible show, and works brilliantly as a visual spectacle – the three band members are unerringly cool and detached, with each taking on vocal duties during, and even between songs. The obvious influences at work here could have easily replaced any sense of originality or magic about the band, but they’re better than that – they’re carving the past into their own sound and they’re very, very good. Following that high, it’s difficult for me to fully appreciate Rose Kemp’s set of comparatively middle-of-the-road heavy indie-rock numbers. I’ve previously seen her performing as an intense, passionate solo artist (tonight she appears with band in tow) and in her wonderful improv/ drone side project, Jeremy Smoking Jacket, and so it’s a slight disappointment how ordinary her music sounds. Don’t get me wrong, it’s perfectly listenable guitar-based noise, bringing to mind a relaxed Courtney Love fronting The Breeders, but tonight it lacks a spark that I’m sure Kemp is capable of. There are, however, occasional glimpses of something special at work, with forays into repetitive riffing and distorted tone. Maybe tonight was just not the night for it to really happen.

*Simon Minter*

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**A SILENT FILM**

**The Cellar**

A Silent Film must come under the marvellous new zeitgeist banner of a big, fat guilty pleasure. Some nights you just want to go out and see A Show, in the safe hands of a band whose frontman is an out and out trooper. And anybody who has witnessed Rob Stevenson’s grandstanding at Your Songs over the years, especially the stellar set of Elton John covers that saw in this New Year at the Zodiac, will know that the flame has long been overdue.

Most bands find themselves in the gutter, and some indeed are looking up at the stars, but after a first stab at it as Shouting Myke, ASF weren’t just going to lie there. They showed everything they had and have built themselves a giant booster rocket out of the history of pop and rock and they are as sure as hell going up there. They may well be a music hack’s spot-the-influences wet dream, but to their credit they are like some fantastasmgorical recycling machine, one where everything comes out shiny new and original. So ‘Lover’s Ride’, a curious simile on relationships via a rusting car, fairly gives us like the Manics’ ‘Design For Life’, ‘Rascal Of Love’ is pure A-Ha by way of John Barry, brightly gilt and ‘Aurora’ is as much Scott Walker balladeering as Keane, where only Rog could sing “I am your patient / you are my shrink” and make it sound like heartbreaking songsmithery. But if maturity has finally fluttered down on the shoulders of Oxford’s boyish answer to Robbie Ross and Chris Martin, you can rest assured that his heart, like Mika, still belongs to Freddie and his production values, fully displayed when the band all take to drums for the piano stomping finale, ‘Chromatic Eyes’, with its echoes of ‘It’s A Kind Of Magic’ and ‘We Will Rock You’. Tonight they deserve every stadium they want to lay their hands on. This isn’t just music, it’s Baroque and Roll!

*Paul Carrera*

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**JONQUIL / THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS / STORNOWAY / LITTLE COSMONAUT**

**The Cellar**

New Year is always a good time to discover new bands. And to show off Christmas presents. We know what Stornoway got for Christmas, since they keep mentioning it: the book, Does Anything Eat Wasps? Oh, and a Stylophone, just one of many unusual instruments used across tonight’s gig.

So anyway, apparently spiders eat wasps, as does Stornoway’s singer’s goldfish, he informs us. Such whimsy is in keeping with the band’s occasional wackiness, as on ‘The Good Fish Guide’, but they’re far better when they beef things up, as on a song about catching the sun, like a heavier, rootier Belle & Sebastian, while their opening track finds them switching between urgent funk-rock and scrawny ska skanking like a bug-eyed speed-freak. The restlessness that sticks to better things, but you do sometimes wish they had a bit more simplicity and punch about them. Conversely, Jonquil work better on CD; too much of their subtlety and wonky atmospherics get lost amid the clutter of a live band. Their faces painted like cats and armed with piano accordion, trumpet and upright bass, they’re hardly your common-or-garden indie rock band, and the ideas they have are obvious for all to hear: a mess of sea shanties, nursery rhymes and acid folk drones. But tonight they sound like snapshots rather than songs, rarely given time to breathe before being put to sleep. A more ambient setting would suit them, but for now Jonquil’s ‘Sunny Casinos’ album is the best place to fully appreciate their genuine charms.

*Dale Kattack*
February

Every Tuesday – Shush Open Mic – Come Sing / Play / Listen. 8pm FREE; All Welcome
Every Wednesday – Folk Session – Come Sing / Play / Listen. 8pm FREE; All Welcome

Thur 1st Grinning Spider presents True Rumour / Colins of Paradise / Joe & Angharad 8:30pm £4
Fri 2nd Live At The X presents Ben Lee Tyler / Alex Vargas / The Idea 8.30pm £5 adv / £7 door
Sat 3rd eXposure At The X presents TBA 8:30pm £4
Sun 4th Electric Jam – jam with The X Men – All Welcome – 8pm FREE

Thur 8th Live At The X presents Ben Waters & Chris Jagger 8.30pm £9 adv / £12 door (seated performance – limited numbers). Tickets now on sale at The X, The Music Box (53a Cowley Road) & on the website at www.theX.co.uk
Fri 9th Gammy Leg Productions presents Raggasarus / Toupe / Les Clochards 8:30pm £4
Sat 10th Wittstock Fundraiser with Fork / Headcount / 32 / Ally Craig 8:30pm £4
Thu 15th Jessica Goyder / guests 8.30pm
Fri 16th Grinning Spider presents a fundraiser For MIND with The Mighty Roars / Santa Dog / Fork / Dirty Sci Fi 8:30pm £4
Sat 17th Whiskeycats / guests 8.30pm £4
Sun 18th Electric Jam 8pm FREE

Thu 22nd SelectaSound presents TBA 8:30pm £4
Fri 23rd Live At The X presents 100 Bullets Back / Mary BendyToy / Anton Barbeau 8:30pm £4
Sat 24th Live At The X presents Shaker Heights / Sam Isaac / Simply Luke / Leightfield 8:30pm £4
Sun 25th TBC

1 - Port Mayhem
2 - Oxford Folk Club
3 - The Green
4 - Dead Spies
5 - Sugar’n’Spice + Theo + DJ Homeless + guest
6 - Dirty Boys present Cotton Blonde + Your Favourite Weapon + The Idea
7 - Myanalog presents
8 - Zelega
9 - Oxford Folk Club
10 - Midas
11 - Swiss Concrete present Flies Are Spies From Hell + Mesaplex + Last Days of Lorca
13 - Anton Barbeau + The New Moon + more
14 - Oxford Improvisers
15 - Vacuous Pop present Rolo Tomassi + Infants
16 - Oxford Folk Club
17 - Myanalog present Up C Down C + Edward Sounding Block + Twat Trot Tra La + Neverest Songs
22 - Saving Blue + Mimi Noir
23 - Oxford Folk Club
24 - Swiss Concrete present Zuby + Fugazirum + Scroobius Pip + Mr Shaodow
25 - Pindrop Performance
26 - Myanalog present Logh + Vessels
27 - Veda Park + more
28 - Divine Coils

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**DEMO OF THE MONTH**

**MONDAY MORNING SUN**

And so we embark on another epic journey into electronic unpleasantness with Xmas Lights lynchpin Umair Chaudhry, a man who either has an awful lot of spare time on his hands or else has an awful lot of bile to unload. This latest opus weighs in at a full hour and could easily have been stripped of a couple of its more ponderous tracks, Gregorian industrial dirges wherein any hope for mankind’s salvation is hoovered up by some vile robotic battle tank, but at its best this is pretty awesome stuff, lead track ‘Bad Bones’ in particular, with its galley slave beats and eviscerating synthetics that, over ten minutes, billow up into a cavernous cacophony that’s almost operatic in its reach and grandeur, a disembodied robot voice your only friend for the trip. Umair is a master of unrelenting music, doubtless gleaned from his love of Swans, a band who took the idea of desolation to a whole new level. He’s closest to their grim magnificence on ‘The Quest’, the musical equivalent of something nasty stalking darkened corridors. He might be in need of some serious editing at times, but really, give this man a full orchestra and let him loose composing the incidental music for the next series of Dr Who.

**SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE**

A very, very close second this month, perhaps only because this demo doesn’t quite capture the band’s impressive live sound. Formed by one-time Eeebleee bandmates Jo Edge and Tim Day, Space Heroes take that band’s glitchy electronic edge, add some seriously metronomic drumming and sprinkle on the film samples and antiquated computer game bleeps and bloops. Jo’s strident double bass playing, sometimes warping into a lead instrument, full of classical portent, holds the ship steady while synths and samples have a free rein. Easily the best of the lot here is last track ‘Groovy Dancer’, a pounding krautrocking groove underpinning a primitive but poppy sci-fi synth lead, where Neu! catch up in time and space with Daft Punk.

**SERPICO**

Anthemic, chest-beating punky metal that, seemingly by force of will alone, makes you cast aside any heard-it-all-before cynicism and punch the air in testosterone-fuelled triumph. Serpico are so steeped in heavy rock cliché it’s almost heroic. From 70s metal, through 80s thrash to the more macho side of grunge, stopping briefly to nab some rabble-rousing slogans from New Model Army, they kick it out with vigour and no little genuine passion. We’ll brush the pleading, semi-ballad ‘Glassye’ under the carpet for now since otherwise this is full-throttle, balls-out hard rock as it were meant to be. And, in the spirit of AC/DC, we salute them for it.

**THE COLINS OF PARADISE**

Ambience of a very different nature to Monday Morning Sun from former B So Global chappie Jon Seagroatt and chums. Colins of Paradise instead transport us to the cocktail lounge of a cruise ship circa-1972 with crooner Bobbie Watson playing it sweet and cheerful over an easy jazz backing that’s just spaced out enough to avoid becoming elevator musak. It’s a smooth ride with the best track here the more elegant ‘Be Still’, a torch song that could have been a great Bond theme with a bit more bombast, Bobbie’s pure, limpid voice holding sway before the band buoy themselves up for a final track that’s closer to The Cardigans. It’s the sort of stuff you could play to your parents, or even your grandparents. In fact they’re more likely to play it to you.

**STRAFE**

We vaguely seem to remember Strafe’s last demo a year or so ago being one of those “are they being entirely serious?” efforts but giving it the benefit of the doubt and history repeats itself with this new offering, wherein a pretty decent tune, shimmering with early-80s indie-goth sweetness gets dragged into another place by the singer, a chap who sounds like a repressed bank clerk, a timid little chap filled with fury and a need to express his torment to all around him and so gets drunk at the office Christmas party and does an Echo & The Bunnymen impersonation on the boss’s desk. Odd, but oddly likeable, especially since the guitars chime and spangle like The Banshees or early-Altered Images. They lose it a bit when they attempt to rock out, trying too hard to be pained and earnest. Not sure what the line-up of the band is (and we’re too bone idle to look on
PROHIBITION SMOKERS CLUB
A supergroup of sorts, formed by various members of Smiles (isn’t every local band these days?), Baby Gravy, Suspicion Of Affray, Verbal Kink and Courtesy Kill, they centre around Lee Smiles’s songwriting, veering, often with little regard for coherence between stripped-down acoustic numbers to more inventive art house jazz tracks. ‘Witch’ is the best of these, a hazy free-for-all nominally held together by a lazy marching beat that prevents all the different voices and sax swells from disappearing in five different directions. It’s like some post-punk anarcho collective discovering John Coltrane. From there we get meandering countrified murder ballads, and a ghostly, flute-led clamour of lo-fi alt-pop noise before they seem to run out of co-ordination completely and sound like a blues-rock take on Scissor Sisters. Not entirely sure if that’s to be encouraged or not but take the best two or three tracks here and the dissonant melting pot of ideas is pretty appealing.

THOMAS POORE
Simple, straightforward stuff this from singer-guitarist Thomas, backed by erstwhile-Factory and now Dirty Sci-Fi drummer Andy Proper. From its initial Can-like pulse, this one-song demo breaks into a more punked-up 60s rock chug with faint echoes of Spacemen 3 and Joy Division, but a more overriding feel of Steppenwolf. Despite their stripped-down line-up this is full-blooded, raunchy stuff in a heads-down, garage drone way and sounds like it could punch a decent-sized hole in a studio wall. It’s even got a guitar solo that manages to retain a sense of purpose, grounded by the throbbing biker bass rhythm. We’re always a bit suspicious of one-track demos but Thomas promises it’s a taster for a full album, currently being recorded and it’s enough to get us wanting to hear more. If that album features a jolly medley of Joy Div’s ‘Dead Souls’ and Steppenwolf’s ‘Born To Be Wild’ we’ll send him a shiny pound coin. It’s where his head’s at.

THE COUNTERFEITS
Another band who rise above their everyman rock standard by dint of actually managing to write three decent tunes (which, on a three-song demo is going some). They can do raucous indie punk (‘No Alternative’), as well as dark-hearted rockabogie and even slip in a stripped-down acoustic ballad that not only doesn’t suck like a Dyson full of leeches, but carries some emotional weight. They can be a tad clumsy at times, with the odd unnecessary guitar solo and occasionally you feel they could switch up a gear, if only to make the most of what are essentially strong melodies, but otherwise, a sterling effort.

VEDA PARK
Time for a break from the hectic world of modern music, so here are soft-centred 70s-styled rockers Veda Park, singing about the joy of new babies (‘Welcome To The World’) and questioning why they, us or anyone goes to work everyday with the possible homage to that piece of M40 graffiti, Why Do You Do This Every Day? Respect must go out for the whistling on the first track, although the generally pedestrian pace and lack of passion about the whole demo does make you ache slightly for a bit of va-vah-vooom. Still, Veda Park have never been about breaking bones, preferring a more languid approach, all wandering sax codas and generally strummed acoustic guitars. Somewhere between the easier end of Steely Dan and Van Morrison’s less abrasive moments. It’s like proper grown up music!

WASTED POTENTIAL
In another strong month for local demos (what’s going on? Have we scared all the really rubbish bands away or are people finally getting the message and tidying up their acts?) we were fretting slightly (but not unduly) about which poor sods were going to end up undeservedly dumped. So hats off to Wasted Potential for stepping in at the death with this risible effort, wherein someone who cannot sing teams up with someone who can barely play and scrape, slither and generally drag their sorry carcasses through a mire of inconsequential guitar pop that sound so sorry for itself we can only guess it’s been wandering around town with a wasp in its shoe, searching for the tenner it lost while being hit by a bus and laughed at by a group of school children. All this after being dumped its girlfriend. Who we shall call Laura. Because there’s a song here called ‘Laura Fuck You’, which seems to have nicked its premise from The Scissor Sisters and promptly sucked any vestige of camp disco energy out of it. That said, it’s better by far than ‘Just Friends’, the musical incarnation of tepid cabbage water that whines and sobs like a chastised lurcher and makes The Pastels sound like Metallica.

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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1 February TCT Music presents
HELLOGOODBYE + PLAIN WHITE TS + HOUSTON CALLS
2 February TCT Music presents
DAN SARTAIN + PLATE SIX + TWO TEARS
3 February TCT Music presents
GYM CLASS HEROES + MADINA LAKE + HANGAR 18
4 February Academy Events presents
METRIC
5 February Academy Events presents
GRACE S CHOLLS + JOHNNY RACE
6 February TCT Music presents
PATRICK WOLF
8 February TCT Music presents
AEREOGRAMME + DEGUELLO
8 February Downstairs Clubnight 11-2am £3
BRITPOP CLUB feat DJ LOZ (X-RIDE)
9 February TCT Music presents
CAPDOWN + HOWARD ALIAS + THE DISAPPOINTMENTS
9 February Academy Events presents
BRIAN JAMES GANG + HEADCOUNT
11 February TCT Music presents
THIRTEEN SENSES
12 February TCT Music presents
THE HOLLOWAYS
13 February TCT Music presents
ELECTRIC SOFT PARADE + GOLDRUSH
13 February Academy Events presents
JUST JACK
15 February TCT Music presents
FRANK TURNER + DIVE DIVE + BEANS ON TOAST
16 February Academy Events presents
DARTZ + HARRY ANGEL + KING FURNACE
17 February TCT Music presents
THE EGG
17 February TCT Music presents
LOST ALONE + ARMSTRONG
18 February TCT Music presents
AIR TRAFFIC + GHOSTS + SNOWFIGHT IN THE CITY CENTRE
19 February SJM Concerts presents
AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD
19 February TCT Music presents
BLOOD RED SHOES + BORDERVILLE + GEORGE PRINGLE
20 February TCT Music presents
HELL IS FOR HEROES + BRIGADE + DOPAMINE
22 February Skylarkin' Soundsystems presents
ALTON ELLIS + INTENSIFIED
22 February TCT Music presents
DUKE SPECIAL
23 February TCT Music presents
THE MACCABEES + GOOD BOOKS
23 February Academy Events presents EP Launch Party
RICHARD WALTERS + WITCHES + MORE
23 February Goppy Tooth Presents in Moody's Bar behind the Zodiac
THE GULLIVERS + KANUTE + STORNOWAY
24 February Big Village presents
EL TAMURBA
24 February TCT Music presents
downstairs
THE WALKOFF + MEGHISTO GRANDE + BABY GRAY
25 February TCT Music presents
THE HOLD STEADY + THE CHECKS + THE NEW YORK FUND
25 February TCT Music presents downstairs
FOALS
26 February TCT Music presents
COURTNEY PINE BAND
26 February TCT Music presents
MORNING RUNNER + THE SONIC HEARTS
27 February TCT Music presents
FORWARD RUSSIA + CURSIVE + SOMETREE
27 February TCT Music presents
downstairs
BAT FOR LASHES
28 February TCT Music presents
PIGEON DETECTIVE
1 March TCT Music presents
THE ANSWER + AIRBOURNE + LAUREN HARRIS
1 March downstairs
INFLATABLE BUDDHA + THE DEMON BARBERS
2 March Academy Events presents
JOSH PYKE + GODWITS & MORE
3 March TCT Music presents
TILLY AND THE WALL + THE LITTLE ONES
3 March TCT Music downstairs
I WAS A CUB SCOUT
4 March Academy Events presents
AIM
5 March TCT Music presents
CHARLOTTE HATHERLY + SHUFFLE
7 March TCT Music presents
MANDO DIAO
8 March TCT Music presents
POISON THE WELL
9 March TCT Music presents
THE HOURS
10 March TCT Music presents
RICHARD SWIFT + RICHARD VANDERVELDE
11 March Academy Events presents
ELECTRIC SIX + THE PING PONG BITCHES
19 March TCT Music presents
JOHN CALE
21 March Academy Events presents
THE MULES + be dead
22 March TCT Music presents
THIRTEEN SENSES + LUKE TOMS
23 March TCT Music presents
WEDNESDAY 13 + LUKE TOMS
24 March TCT Music presents
THE SOUNDS + LUKE TOMS
26 March TCT Music presents
UNEARTH + JOE FOR A COWBOY + DESPISED ICON + DAATH
27 March TCT Music presents
GOOD SHOES
29 March Monster Trading presents
THE BEAT + NEVILLE STAPLES
29 March TCT Music presents
TWANG

FEBRUARY CLUB NIGHTS LAST ENTRY FOR CLUBS 2AM AT WEEKENDS! SEE WEBSITE FOR MORE CLUB INFO

THURSDAYS: 15th Feb - SABOTAGE Rock, Metal, Punk & Alternative/ 8th BRITPOP NIGHT Britpop & Influences // Thu 22 Feb new Club launch night
29th - DJ DEREK feat WRONGTOM ([Trojan Records / Hard F] Feelgood Reggae Dancehall and Skata with the Skylarkin' Crew
FRIDAYS - BOOGIE BASEMENT 2nd Feb/Boogie Basement Disco Shed SoundSystem/ 9th Feb Blunted Presents Boogie Basement
2nd - HIT & RUN 4th BIRTHDAY Foreign Beggars, Total science, Jungle drummer Vs, DJ FU, GTA, Heartless R Charris b2b Flawless
9th - SLIDE Paul Woolford & residents @ Quality House clubnight monthly
16th - REPUBLICA Drum'n'Bass special Mampi Swift, Randall, Chase and Status, Claz, TC, Reaction, Mikke Hussla, Mc's Sniper (Flavours) Algar (Kinetic
23rd - FRESH OUT THE BOX 2nd Birthday Presents Plump DJs / First Contact / Sounds
SATURDAYS - TRANSFORMATION Current & classic Indie rock & TRASHY Indie punk glam rock & 80s

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