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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 144
July
2007

Jump for joy! It's

A Silent Film

Meet Oxford's cinematic rockers

Plus

Truck line-up announced: Brian Jonestown
Massacre, Idlewild and more - *inside*



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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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THE YOUNG KNIVES re-release their debut mini-album, 'Are Dead', on Shifty Disco on Monday 30th July with new bonus tracks, including classic single 'Rollerskater' and a video for 'Walking On The Autobahn'.

The Knives, who are currently writing and recording their second full album, are set to perform at this year's Carling Weekend. They play the Radio 1 / NME Stage at Reading on Saturday 25th August, the same day that fellow local stars Foals perform on the Carling new bands stage.

Foals, meanwhile, (*pictured*) are currently recording new tracks in New York with TV On The Radio producer David Sitek, with a limited edition 7" single, 'Mathletics', due for release on 20th August. Another single, 'Balloons', is out at the end of October, after which Foals head off on



tour with Bloc Party. The band's debut album is due out in January 2008.

THE REFURBISHED OXFORD ACADEMY / Zodiac venue will have an increased overall capacity when it opens in September, as predicted in May's Nightshift. The new venue will have a capacity of 1,350 across two floors, allowing more flexibility to book larger touring acts.

Academy Music Group Operations Director, Steve Forster said, "We have been working closely with the local authorities to increase the overall site capacity and we're delighted with this new offering for touring artists and promoters. We plan to operate up to three separate rooms if required, and can increase the auditorium of Carling Academy Oxford for larger touring acts utilising the maximum lower floor space. The upstairs Zodiac room can also run at the same time with a flexible capacity for developing artists."

General Manager, Carl Bathgate, adds, "The venue will still have an additional smaller room, Bar Academy, which will be a fantastic space for new and developing artists. Following the format set by our Birmingham and Islington operations, our knowledge and expertise ensures we can offer the most varied configurations for this venue for all level of acts and maximise the potential of its operation, running multiple gigs."

Among acts already booked for the Academy and Zodiac are The Enemy (Thu 27th Sept); Alabama 3 (Thu 4th Oct); Happy Mondays (Fri 5th); The Decemberists (Sun 7th) and Ian Hunter (Tue 23rd).

AS WELL AS THIS MONTH'S TRUCK Festival, Truck Records are involved in Gloucestershire's Two Thousand Trees Festival, which takes place from Friday 13th – Saturday 14th July at Upcote Farm in Withington, near Cheltenham. Truck bands Goldrush, Piney Gir and The Dusty Sound System are all performing along with The Brian James Gang, Frank Turner, InMe and Rose Kemp. In all 50 acts are playing the 2,000-capacity Cotswold festival. Tickets are available locally from wegottickets.com or from SS20 on Cowley Road. Visit www.twothousandtreesfestival.co.uk for full line-up and ticket details.

THE DEADLINE FOR ACTS wanting to perform at this year's Oxford Arts Festival is the 31st July. Now in its second year the multi-media event, which runs from Friday 28th – Sunday 30th September, will feature live music, poetry, art, photography, drama and dance at various venues across the city. Artists should submit demos to The Oxford Arts Festival, PO Box 339, Kidlington, OX5 NAY. The festival line-up will be announced on Friday 17th August.

OPTIX launches this month with a night of live funk and stand-up comedy at the Cellar on Sunday 1st July. The new downloadable entertainment site promises interactive music, including viewers being able to vote for who performs at the club, with webcam broadcasts making the action available for home viewing. Visit

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A **COMPILATION CD** to accompany last month's Swisstfest charity event is available now, with all proceeds going to the Red Cross. The CD features tracks from Mr Shadown, Mewgatz, Zubby, Foxes!, Last Days of Lorca, Ape has Killed Ape!, Balor Knights and La Frange, amongst others. Visit www.myspace.com/swissconcrete for details.



THE THIEVES (pictured) will perform at two of America's most prestigious music festivals this summer. The Oxfordshire band, formed by brothers Hal and Sam Stokes, have been based in LA for the last few years, touring across the States. They play at Milwaukee's Summerfest on July 4th – the largest music festival in the States with over a million fans present – on the same bill as Black Crowes and Tool, while on September 14th The Thieves join Flaming Lips and Kings of Leon on the bill for Monolith in Red Rocks. Check out www.myspace.com/thethieves for more news on the band.

DR SHOTOVER: Emission Control

Oh God. I woke from a long coma this morning to discover that the monstrous nanny state is stopping me smoking in public houses, supermarkets and children's playgrounds... it's political correctness gone mad! Luckily it's still "de rigueur" to smoke at the East Indies Club - we blackballed a chap for refusing a gasper only last month - but it has cast a pall of gloom over the prospect of attending live gigs. Now, at this point you might say, "What live gigs, you miserable old git?", as I am famous for avoiding anything that smacks of today's Youth Culture... however, if you WERE to speak thusly, I would a) punch your smug grinning face for you, and b) point out that actually I was at the Zodiac End-of-an-Era Party, thank YOU very much, and I "dug" sets by The Candyskins, The Nubiles,



Andrew Eldritch opening a supermarket in Belgium last week.

STUDIO 45 in Cowley release 'Days Ahead', the debut album by Hertfordshire-based soul, r'n'b and soca singer Teressa Edwards this month. Listen to tracks online at www.myspace.com/teressaedwardsdebut

THIS YEAR'S AUDIOSCOPE FESTIVAL will take place on Saturday 10th November at the new-look Zodiac. The annual benefit gig for homeless charity Shelter showcases the best in underground and leftfield music. Last year's event featured Clinic, Sonic Boom and I'm Being Good as well as local stars The Rock Of Travolta and Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element.


THE SKITTLE ALLEY have announced a new monthly live music club at the Stocks Bar at the Crown & Thistle in Abingdon. The first night is on Saturday 28th July and features sets from The Ruins, Godwits and Bear In The Air. News and listings are online at the Skittle Alley's new website at skittlealley.110mb.com.

LOVE CLUB is a new acoustic night at the Unicorn in the market Place, Banbury. The club takes place on the first Tuesday of every month and is open to all styles, from rock and folk to hip hop. Acts wanting to play should visit www.myspace.com/myloveclub or email info@myloveclub.co.uk

AFTER EIGHT YEARS in the business Nat Duke, one of the two partners of Soundworks Recording Studios, is leaving to pursue other interests and is selling his share of the studio. Anyone interested should email info@soundworks-oxford.co.uk or ring 01865 401585.


Dustball and those young trouser-swingers The Relationships... Anyway, I do not remember much about the later stages of the evening, but it appears that I blended in well in my multicoloured kaftan and floral cummerbund, whilst enjoying a long pow-wow with an "entirely reputable" local entrepreneur around the concept of a Radiohead-themed rock opera (working title "Thommy"). Meanwhile I wonder what the chances are, in our Brave New Smoke-Free World, of seeing The Mission or The Sisters of Mercy play in this country again... ever been to a Goth gig with no smoke onstage?

Next month: Doctor Shotover meets Doktor Avalanche.



The Relationships
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A Quiet Word With

A Silent Film

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER,

but what kind of rock band takes a book onstage with them?

Well, A Silent Film do. In fact they don't just take the book onstage, they put it through a projector and use the pages as their backdrop, singer Robert Stevenson studiously turning the page for each new song, like a slightly bohemian academic giving a lecture on the social consequences of loud music. Because A Silent Film don't just have knowledge: for all their apparently bookish charm, they've got power too. In spades.

AT THE END OF JUNE A

Silent Film took that book and that power on stage at Glastonbury, having been chosen to perform on the festival's 'BBC Introducing' stage by a panel comprised of Radio 1 DJs Steve Lamacq and Huw Stephens as well as Glastonbury organiser Emily Eavis. They were put forward for the job by BBC Radio Oxford's Download team and faced stiff competition from acts proposed by all the other regional BBC stations as well as Radio 1, One Xtra and 6Music.

The reward is more than justified though, for a band who have, in their own quietly dedicated way, gone about becoming one of the most musically ambitious and accomplished acts in Oxford and now one of the UK's hottest unsigned bands.

THIS MONTH A SILENT FILM

will play at Oxfordshire's own mini-Glastonbury, Truck Festival, returning to the scene of last year's truncated set which saw the band washed out amid the heaviest rain storm the county had seen all year. The Truck show coincides with the release of the band's debut EP on Xtra Mile Records, home also to fellow hopefuls like Dartz!, Frank Turner, This Et Al and The Rifles. The EP will be officially launched with a gig party at the Ultimate Picture Palace, a venue whose big screen will make the perfect canvas on which to project that book. And anyway, where else would a band called A Silent Film launch their debut CD other than a cinema.



THE EP IS THE FRUIT OF

three years' labour, A Silent Film honing their sound into an eclectic amalgam of disparate influences that can sometimes make for a musical trainspotter's wet dream. Lead track, 'The Lamplight', has the understated sweep and deceptive grandiosity of Snow Patrol married to the uncomplicated pop *nous* of Robbie Williams, while 'Six Feet Of Rope And Revenge' juxtaposes sullen, stabbed piano with lightweight skipping beats and Rob's Thom Yorke-meets-Elton John-meets-Midge Ure vocal depth and range. Best of the lot, though, is closing track 'Chromatic Eyes', a long-time live favourite that generally closes the band's set – an oddly proggy, tripped-out, multi-drum rock tattoo that might just be the meeting point between The Beta Band, Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds and Queen.

PLAYING REGULARLY IN

local pub venues as well as the Zodiac A Silent Film sound like a stadium band in waiting, something that sits a little uneasily with Rob, who we meet the day after he's received the news about being picked to play Glastonbury. "We really don't see ourselves as that grand; I'd hate for people to think we're OTT. Intricacy and intimacy are much more our vibe. When we write and play it's a case of finding something small, maybe a sound or rhythm which we find interesting. This catalyst is then

what we build the song around. It is not uncommon for us to go back and re-write songs four or even five times if we are unhappy. In the live show we are looking for people to leave as if they've experienced something special or even brand new. This is exactly what we crave in artists we admire and we would be hypocrites to expect anything less of ourselves."

A Silent Film's epic feel is not that of your typical blustering heavy, hairy rockers. The music is subtle and often complex, with songs sometimes searching through several different set pieces along their course, much like Muse on the soaring 'Knights of Cydonia', or the Radiohead of 'Paranoid Android'. Rob, meanwhile, is a consummate performer, whether hammering it out behind a piano, tucked behind his guitar or roaming the stage with the microphone like an old-fashioned crooner. Does Rob see himself as a showman? How important is it, even at this stage, to put on a show, or is the music the only thing that matters?

"The show is essential; I like the challenge of making the show look jaw-droppingly good on our shoe-string budget. I definitely have an overactive imagination; I bore easily and I like change.

"Personally I'd go with Bjork as the artist I most admire for being constantly and extraordinarily ambitious, or Brian Wilson for taking all that acid and making my life better, and The Flaming Lips for showing me a strong message

doesn't need to be delivered with anger."

A SILENT FILM EMERGED

from the ashes of local teen favourites Shouting Myke three years ago. The old band were a very different prospect – brasher and more aggressive, closer in spirit to American punk-pop, something that initially helped but later hindered their progress. They were fêted both on the Oxford scene as well as by a select few clued-up record label scouts. Shouting Myke played at the Oxford Punt back in 2001 as they were just starting to make an impact on local audiences; four years later A Silent Film played the Punt at a similar point in their career, making an impressive show of it even at that early stage.

A Silent Film are: Rob Stevenson (vocals, guitar and keyboards), Lewis Jones (guitar), Ali Hussain (bass) and Spencer Walker (drums), Ali being the only member who wasn't previously in Shouting Myke.

"Despite all our best intentions, Shouting Myke was consistently labelled as 'Emo'. We didn't really have a clue what that was about, but we got thrown on the pile anyway. A Silent Film is a completely different animal. We're writing songs to reflect our own lives rather than falling into the trap of impersonating other bands."

As with Shouting Myke before them, A Silent Film have been quick to pick up record label interest, their regular London shows now populated by A&R scouts. How has this gone so far?

"Well they're not breaking down the door just yet. No bad experiences at all, just a few cups of tea and free meals. It's all about timing; you can be really good at what you do but if it doesn't fit into the current trends why should they take a chance? They all have bosses to answer to and jobs to keep, so really it's up to us to prove ourselves, and show them what we're doing is worth getting with. Best case scenario, you do what Biffy Clyro and countless other bands have done and slog at it

for years until the majors cannot resist laying their cards out. Then you have the upper hand in terms of choice."

How much has the local music scene helped the band to grow along the way?

"I love it; who wouldn't round here? The venues are good and there are audiences for all ages too – not like in Swindon where if you don't sound like the latest export of hardcore you may as well hang up your haircut. We especially like seeing bands get bullied in Nightshift and then get better, because that's what happened to us!"

The EP is out at the end of July on Xtra Mile; is this a long-term deal or a stepping stone? What are they like to work with?

"It's a one-off deal to get the band going. We were itching to release something and they have a great attitude. Xtra Mile also look after Frank Turner and have had dealings with Dive Dive – both of whom we have had connections to in the past – so it seemed to be a good fit."

You say you've often been unhappy in the past with recordings you've done. Is this EP the first thing you've been happy with and if so what was it about the recording session that was different?

"For a start all the songs we've written for this EP are far superior to older songs; we have a better idea of what we're about and what we want. Since we've been recording ourselves we've learned so much about production that it's less of a struggle to make great sounding recordings. The struggle now lies in our conviction: a band benefits from a producer just like a football team benefits from a coach. In some respects we are looking forward to doing the next record with someone else to oversee the mayhem."

Is it just me or does 'Six Feet Of Rope And Revenge' off the EP sound a bit like Ultravox?

"I've never heard Ultravox, sorry. Subconscious plagiarism is not a crime!"

And what about 'Chromatic Eyes'? It's one of the most startling, original songs to come out of Oxford in the past couple of years, and yet it's tucked away right at the end.

"Chromatic Eyes was written as a bit of an experiment. The lyrics deal with the relationship between music and the human body, so we wanted to see if we could achieve a really energetic sound using the human body as the instrument. The piano and vocals therefore are

backed by a 'rhythm section' of stomps, claps, finger cracks etc that give that distinctive and unusual vibe. Why is it at the end of the EP? You try figuring out which track should follow it!"

WHAT'S THE STORY WITH the book? What's the actual story in the book and how does it relate to the songs?

"The story is our own ongoing story and it is always growing, I hope we'll be using the book for a while yet. When people come back to see us a year from now they might see us flicking past pages they recognise from older songs. The pages are specific to every song we write. We are very keen on nurturing the visual aspect of our live performance, and the book was an idea that appealed to us not least because we'd never seen anyone else do anything like it."

As mentioned, A Silent Film put a lot into their live show visually as well as musically, the book being just part of a stage set that also features a selection of randomly-placed televisions showing all kinds of weird and wonderful imagery, drawing the audience into a world where music and cinema collide. Given an unlimited budget, what would the ideal ASF gig involve and where would it take place?

"We're interested in playing slightly more 'alternative' venues, and so theatre shows are high on our list. We're hoping to achieve this on a smaller scale with the Oxford EP release show at the Ultimate Picture Palace. Being able to incorporate a cinema screen into the live performance and have a seated audience opens a lot of doors. It should be a real event not just another gig. That and Glastonbury!

The band name and the spirit of Vaudeville tie neatly together, but if push comes to shove, who would Rob go for: Chaplin, Keaton or the Marx Brothers?

"Harpo Marx every time. Unless of course you're talking about Diane Keaton..."

A SILENT FILM: AS THE OLD Mafia maxim goes: speak softly, but carry a big stick.

'The Lamplight EP' is released on Monday 30th July on Xtra Mile. A Silent Film play the Barn Stage at Truck Festival on Sunday 22nd July. The band's EP launch gig takes place at the Ultimate Picture Palace on Cowley Road on Saturday 4th August. Check out www.myspace.com/asilentfilm for tracks and gig news.



July

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5th/19th **SMASH DISCO** – Post-punk, indie, electro. 10-2am £3/4

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Every Friday

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Saturdays

7th **SIMPLE** Funky House 9.30pm-4am

14th **CLOSED** – private party

21st **ROOTS & REGGAE**. 9pm-3am. £5/ £6

28th **TRASHY / LADY GUN** 10pm-3am

Sunday 1st **LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY** 8-11pm £6 / £7

Sunday 29th **BURNING LEGACY** presents **HOWARD'S**

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RAGGASAUROS / NAGATHA KRUSTI 7.15pm / £5

Early Shows

Friday 6th **BURNING LEGACY** presents **SOW /**

GEHENNA / RANDALL FLAGG 7.30 / £4

Friday 13th **THE HAZE**

Saturday 14th **GUNNBUNNY / MONDO CADA** / more TBC

THE JOFF WINKS BAND

'Songs For Days'

(JWR)

Its a moody rainy day. A day I could do with winning the lottery. I am as grumpy as a squirrel with a nut allergy, and I manage to badly stub my unshod toe heading to the mail shute, where amongst the bills and demands I find my review copy of this album. So it's hit the sofa with a bumper mug of java and press play, things can't get any worse.

A piano leads a drum roll in a sense that a curtain is opening to reveal a summery, off-kilter Britain transported to a Disney park as run by David Lynch, a floaty place you'd never ever stub your toe and Lemon Jelly probably painted the scenery.

At its best 'Songs For Days' is a giddy mushroom of complex jazz-influenced structures and harmonies woven with literate but sometimes obscure or ambiguous lyrics, as if you were sharing a beach house with Turin Brakes and Donald Fagan, and Jagu Jazzist had popped over for a game of hackysack. 'Milo' and 'Before We Bow Down' are typical of the scintillating and grown-up heights The Joff Winks Band can reach, and let's face it, any band that can deliver Steely Dan chops with such slippery ease is a band to be respected.

'Cast Adrift' is a dreamy lament on the loss of innocence, and throughout the whole album there are touches of nostalgia amongst the



Pink Floyd-like experimentation: samples of a BBC1 ident, primary school kids in a playground, and even the bass player noodling over the sound of dawdling Sunday drivers, all hint at home thoughts from some exile on a lonely planet. If the happy pills wear off a little during 'Hedonic Treadmill' and 'Ace Train', and worse, during an unnecessary revisit to a song called 'Revisited Song', which is in itself about revisiting a song, then it's all brought back to a sunshine ending in 'Morning Sun', a song so aglow you need to put on Ambre Solaire.

'Songs For Days' shows that even with a lazy day vibe you can still challenge and thought provoke, and while I may not have won the lottery, I'm still left with that bright feeling you get when you manage to get three numbers.

Paul Carrera

THE HALF RABBITS

'The Final Days Of Rome'

(Punk Elvis)

A thunderous wave of guitar fuzz, pounding drums and rumbling bass announces the return of The Half Rabbits with lead track, 'This Changes Everything', but immediately it's singer Michael Weatherburn's theatrically-wrought voice that takes centre stage, even as the tumult surrounds and threatens to consume him. Steeped in an abrasively flamboyant musical tradition that runs from art-goths Bauhaus through to stadium grungers Smashing Pumpkins, The Half Rabbits revel in bluster while retaining a breathless intensity that never lets up. Michael hollers about the end of the world on the lead track before crying out for vengeance on the bitter 'Louis' Revenge'. The wall-to-wall, four-to-the-floor squall and swirl of heavily-distorted guitars might serve to hide any cracks in the band's melodic armoury but when they're firing it out with such vigour, you're far too busy holding on tight to the handlebars to notice the decor.

Dale Kattack

GUESSWORK

'Enter Alone'

(Crash)

Sweet Jesus, this is horrible. Inispid, over-polished folk-pop with those nasty shrill vocals you only get in bad folk clubs and stage school musicals. The higher up the register the perpetrator Bronwen Harrison goes, the more the local canine population howl in protest. Lyrically it's little better: cod philosophical blatherings from a cerebrally-stunted year-nine wannabe poet.

Sorry, but Guesswork have absolutely no redeeming features, from the cod-world music tokenism to the synthetic sheen they coat the limping melodies in.

I'm not even completely sure Guesswork are actually from Oxford but this landfill-bothering travesty of an album comes courtesy of Chinnor label Crash and I seriously can't believe they scoured the nation to find something so dreadful. 'Enter Alone', possibly a reflection of their popularity, clocks in at twelve tracks over 50 minutes. We managed four and half before a rising red mist compelled us to snap the wretched slice of aural excrement in half.

John Leeson

MEWGATZ

'Underfelt'

(Oib Records)

Ed McGregor made his first excursions into music on a £3 Yamaha keyboard and an old 1980s 'keytar'. Since then he's made it his mission to accumulate all manner of obsolete electronic instruments and toys which he then short circuits with a soldering iron to create unexpected and unpredictable new sounds. 'Underfelt' is a six-track mini-album which aims to create some cohesion from his unique live shows. As is so often the case with experimental music, the theory is rather more interesting than the end result.

The biggest disappointment about the album is that it seems to revel in its humdrum nature instead of breathlessly searching out the next crazy corner to turn. For all the supposedly

unpredictable nature of the sounds he creates, the haphazard background noise of bleeps and glitches too often feels tired and aimless; the Speak & Spell toy trick is one used as far back as 1983 by OMD on their innovative 'Dazzle Ships' album. On top of all this is Ed's voice, monotonous to the point of psychotic, like a cheap Casio keyboard stuck on a 'morose mumbling' pre-set. It brings everything down, even more playful tracks like 'Difference', while by the end the whole thing has sunk into standard ambient electro fidgeting. Maybe he could try sticking his soldering iron somewhere where it might produce more lively effects.

Dale Kattack

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6th Oxford Folk Club
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8th Wink Stock
9th Poor Girl Noise presents Hreda + Orion Arm + Madrid Axemen + December The 12th
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11th Oxford Improvisers
12th Dirty Boys presents The Gullivers + Bear In The Air + The Repeats
13th Oxford Folk Club
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July

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Sun 1st July Electric Jam - All welcome. Come play/sing/listen with The X Men. 8pm FREE

Mon 2nd An evening of Electronica with Iuan 8.30pm £3

Wed 4th Jazz At The X Presents London saxophonist Simon Allen with the stunning Paul Jefferies Trio. Martin Pickett (keys), Paul Jefferies (electric and double bass) Frank Hockney (drums). 8.30pm £5. Tickets available on-line via www.theX.co.uk

Thu 5th Grinning Spider Presents. Acts TBA 8.30pm £4

Sat 7th Exposure At The X presents MONDO CADA / Nable / more 9pm £4

Sun 8th OX4

Wed 11th Shirley Wednesday with Shirley / Wire Jesus / Kate Chadwick 8pm £3

Fri 13th Gammy Leg Productions presents My Father The Beat / Wilson / Ally Craig 8pm £4

Sat 14th Wittstock Fund Raiser. Acts TBA 8.30pm £4

Sun 15th Electric Jam 8pm FREE
 Wed 18th Jazz At The X Presents A Jazz Jam with the house band, lead by Paul Jefferies. 8.30pm FREE

Fri 20th The Evenings / Bear In The Air / Mile High Young Team / Fork / King Furnace 8.30pm £4
Sat 21st Silversight / The Bard Stars / Yesterday Caught Fire / Richlife £4

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Fri 27th The Idea / support. 8.30pm £4

Sat 28th Denise Marie 8.30pm £4
Sun 29th Electric Jam 8pm FREE

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CORNBURY

Cornbury Country Park, near Charlbury

Saturday 7th – Sunday 8th



Blondie

NOW IN ITS FOURTH YEAR, CORNBURY

Festival is Oxfordshire's big grown-up live music event, set in a picturesque setting of Cornbury Country Park and attracting an array of big-name hitmakers, complemented by a selection of daytime radio-friendly rising stars, plus a host of local acts on the Charlbury Riverside stage.

A world away from the dirty, overcrowded Reading Festival, Cornbury has a similarly rustic vibe to Cropredy but with a considerably more varied and contemporary line-up. It's also pretty family-orientated and the latest event news suggests Rupert Bear and Postman Pat will be appearing onstage at some point, but, hey, rather than Razorlight, eh?

This year's headliners are **DAVID GRAY** and **BLONDIE** (who also headlined the inaugural event back in 2004). The latter, who top Sunday's bill, are indisputably one of the greatest pop bands of all time, with a list of classic hits to their name that equals any act in history. Formed at the birth of punk in New York, the band embraced both the emerging rock revolution and the nascent disco scene, fronted by iconic pop pin-up Debbie Harry. From 1976 through to 1982 Blondie were unstoppable hitmakers, from 'Denis', through 'Sunday Girl', 'Heart Of Glass', 'Atomic', 'Call Me' and the peerless 'Union City Blue', plus a dozen or so others. After an inevitable split in 1983 and pretty much disappearing from sight, Blondie returned, triumphantly in 1999 with another number 1 hit, 'Maria', and have continued to enjoy the fruits of their pop legacy ever since. If you aren't singing along to every song come



Suzanne Vega

Sunday evening, you are spiritually dead.

David Gray, who heads Saturday's bill, meanwhile, comes from the other side of the musical coin – earnest and introverted and possibly responsible for the million or so equally earnest and introverted singer-songwriters who have emerged in the wake of his mega success at the turn of the decade with 'White Ladder'.

The rest of Saturday's line-up provides more visceral thrills, particularly **THE PROCLAIMERS**, another band who seemed destined to languish in pop's vaults until they were resurrected for this year's Comic Relief single, a reworking of their 1988 hit 'I'm Gonna Be'. Much more than a speccy novelty act, the Auchtermuchty duo of identical twins Craig and Charlie Reid are fantastic, rousing folk-rock anthem-makers and perfect for an early-evening singalong.



The Proclaimers

Back in Oxfordshire after their recent new theatre show, **THE WATERBOYS** keep things similarly folky and upbeat, as will Dublin's **HOTHOUSE FLOWERS**, while rising Midlands-based singer-songwriter **SCOTT MATTHEWS** is no stranger to the area after a series of sold-out gigs at the Zodiac and Brookes, providing an intense blend of 70s rock, acoustic folk, blues and soul.

The second, Word, stage on Saturday is headed by darkly psychedelic alternative rock gods **ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN**, a band whose influence has never been more apparent, inspiring the likes of Editors and The Rakes. A quarter of a century on from their masterpiece, 'Heaven Up Here', the Bunnymen as still capable of creating elegantly wonderful music, as last year's 'Siberia' album proved.

Supporting them are Cambridge's punky alt.country cult heroes **THE BROKEN FAMILY BAND**, American soul star **BETTYE LAVETTE** and Janis Joplin-inspired songstress **KATE WALSH**, who recently beat Take That to the number 1 spot in the national download charts.

While Blondie are Sunday's main attraction, below them is a decent mixed bill, the star of which is most definitely **SETH LAKEMAN**,



Echo & The Bunnymen

who has spent the last couple of years helping spearhead the English folk revival, injecting some fresh spirit and a punky verve into traditional fiddle-led tales of the English Civil War and West Country ghost stories. Seth heads up the Oxford Folk Festival stage where he's joined by folk traditionalists **FLOOK**, former-Edward II people **T & LATOUCHE**, bluegrass, rockabilly and jangle-pop starlets **INDIGO MOSS**, flamenco dance duo **RAPHAEL & LOLA**, plus local 16-year-old folk prodigy **WILBUR**.

Up on the main stage, meanwhile **THE FEELING** see nothing wrong in finding inspiration from Supertramp and 10cc, although perhaps they should, but never mind because there's the divine **SUZANNE VEGA** on hand to relieve hits like 'Luka' and 'Tom's Diner', while Texas' **MIDLAKE** show The Feeling exactly how to take 60s and 70s soft rock influences and make them sound contemporary and otherworldly, adding a spooky sheen to The Eagles, America, Neil Young and Fleetwood Mac, their debut album, 'The Trials Of Van Occupanther' being one of the most overlooked gems of recent times.

While Truck Festival retains an element of the village fete about it, Cornbury is like a country fayre as much as a music festival, but the hit-strewn quality of the bill is indisputable and, aided by its setting, provides a welcome counterpoint to the almost industrial experience of most larger festivals these days.

Tickets: weekend: £80 (under-16s £50; under-10s £10; under-5s free). Day tickets: £45 (under-16s £28; under-10s £8; under-5s free). Available from 0871 472 0420.

Information: www.cornburyfestival.com



Seth Lakeman

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26th September £14 adv

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27th September £12.50 adv

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SETH LAKEMAN

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30th October £13 adv

THE BLUETONES

2nd November £12.50 adv

THE TWANG

6th November £20 adv

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES

13th November £15 adv

CARDIACS

17th November £10 adv seated show

NICK HARPER

18th November £14 adv

THE OYSTERBAND

20th November £11.50 adv

THE PIGEON DETECTIVES

23rd November £10 adv

THE COMPLETE STONE ROSES

24th November £15 adv

NEW MODEL ARMY

24th November £8 adv

THE SMITHS INDEED

25th November £15 adv seated show

THE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN

2nd December £12.50 adv

KARINE POLWART

6th December £8.50 adv

BRING ME THE HORIZON

11th December £17.50 adv

SENSATIONAL ALEX HARVEY BAND

12th December £22.50 adv

ASIA

29th February £15 adv

THE BEAT & NEVILLE STAPLE



New shows are announced regularly - please check the website for latest listings
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TRUCK 10

Hill Farm, Steventon

Saturday 21st – Sunday 22nd

TRUCK 10 FINDS THE FESTIVAL

returning to its roots. After the big-name appearances of the last couple of years, Truck founder Robin Bennett has re-assumed his hands-on control of the event and produced a line-up that is more biased towards Oxfordshire acts as well as the regular Friends-Of-Truck cast, which includes the likes of Electric Soft Parade (headlining the main stage on Sunday), Piney Gir, Buck 65, Brakes and of course Truck hosts Goldrush themselves.

This year's star turn is undoubtedly **IDLEWILD**, who top the main stage bill on Saturday night. Despite the lukewarm reception afforded recent album 'Make Another World', Idlewild are quite simply one of the UK's greatest rock bands at the moment, one of the that rare breed of bands that can instil heartbreaking emotion into even the most ferocious guitar anthem, and 'Make Another World' is already a contender for Nightshift's album of the year.

Joining Idlewild on the main stage on Saturday are San Francisco's maverick psychedelic

rockers **THE BRIAN JONESTOWN MASSACRE**, fronted by the notoriously headstrong Anton Newcombe and who boast enough ex-members to populate the whole of Steventon. Newcombe was made infamous by the film *Dig!* A couple of years ago but his singular rock vision has produced some stunning music along the way.

Of course Truck wouldn't be Truck without **GOLDRUSH** and they'll doubtless be airing much of recent album, 'The Heart Is The Place' as well as inviting various guests and mates on stage along the way. One of whom may well be festival stalwart **PINEY GIR**, who tends to crop up all over the place at Truck, whether with her own Country Roadshow or with 60s-styled all-girl band **THE SCHLA LA LA'S**. And possibly with every other act on the bill at some stage. Possibly at different ends of the festival site simultaneously.

Idiosyncratic rapper **BUCK 65**, garage-pop sweeties **THE BRAKES**, alt.country dreamers **MOJAVE 3** and local polka-punk starlets **THE MULES** complete Saturday's main stage line-up.

The real joy of Truck, and one of the main reasons it now sells out before the line-up has even been announced, is the eclectic, often esoteric, nature of the acts on the other stages. Saturday in the Barn is a great chance for anyone who missed their recent Cellar show to

catch the brilliant **EARLY YEARS**, worthy heirs to Spacemen 3 and Neu!'s narcotic krautrock throne. Amongst those joining them amid the vague odour of cattle dung and straw will be former-Cast frontman **JOHN POWER**, dark-minded indie troupers **ILIKETRAINS**, rising Oxford celtic-pop favourites **STORNOWAY** and jauntily infectious indie rockers **SIX NATION STATE**. Later on, the Barn switches over to the DJs with **DJ FRESH, CHASE AND STATUS, TEDDY DUBSPIN & BOB GNARLY** and **DJ DARCY** amongst those spinning drum&bass, dub and house into the early hours.

On Sunday the star turns up on the main stage will undoubtedly be former-Squeeze songwriter **GLENN TILBROOK**, a man whose pop legacy has never been more apparent, inspiring everyone from The Libertines to Arctic Monkeys; Liverpool's harmony-heavy, frantic post-punkers **HOT CLUB DE PARIS**, with their Futureheads and Bloc Party-leaning noise,



Promoter's View

Nightshift spoke to Truck Festival founder Robin Bennett about this year's event

You've taken this year's festival back under your own control. What is the plan for the festival and how will this year's event be different to the last couple?

"The plan is broadly the same as last year, with expansion beyond music with the theatre stage, the 'Fete Encounter' and various performance artists, a cinema tent and lots of new stalls. We also have our own fire engine! We're trying to put together a special finale for the Sunday night and working on some very special guests. We're again making a Channel 4 film and hope to make a DVD of the first ten years, and quite a few of the acts playing this year are from the list of favourite-ever Truck acts that people sent us. We've slightly reduced the number of bands in the lounge to make it more... loungey. I suspect the number of attendees is going to be about the same as last year after all. I don't think something like Truck is ever 'under control', it's more like a freely-evolving amoeba!"

Do you envisage Truck Festival carrying on for years to come in its current format?

"We took the decision to keep the size around the 5,000 mark as it means we can still enjoy it, organise it and play music, possibly simultaneously. Any bigger and it would be another kind of beast. The fact is, we only have enough parking for 5,000. What we may do is

start or get involved in other festivals, such as the 2,000 Trees festival near Cheltenham that we're helping with this year, events that have the DIY spirit."

You're expanding the idea of Truck to a more year-round thing; what is the idea behind that and how will it take shape?

"Well, everyone always feels so happy on the weekend and says they want more weekends like it... so we're working to provide that. We're already scouting sites further afield and have linked up with the Clean Air Clean Stars event in Joshua Tree, California. We also want to do a Truck tour that's more like a musical revue with stage set and compères etc."

Which acts are you most looking forward to seeing this year?

"There's one I'm working on right now that would really excite me, fingers crossed... I'm nervous/excited to see what Anton from Brian Jonestown does on stage. My mum will have to tell him off if he swears too much. They are a great live band on their day. Hard to believe Idlewild have been going 10 years, I remember moshing to them!"



Robin (far right) and Goldrush, the band who launched Truck in 1998

and **THE RALFE BAND**'s intense, atmospheric quirk-pop. Headliners **ELECTRIC SOFT PARADE**, meanwhile, at least give you an excuse to head for home early if you so desire.

But don't. Instead head into the Barn where **NOUGHT** will soothe your fevered brow. Before pummelling your skull to dust with their pressure-cooker instrumental art-core. Main man James Sedwards is easily the most original and talented guitarist Oxford has produced and what he can do with six strings, some effects pedals and a couple of power tools is astonishing.

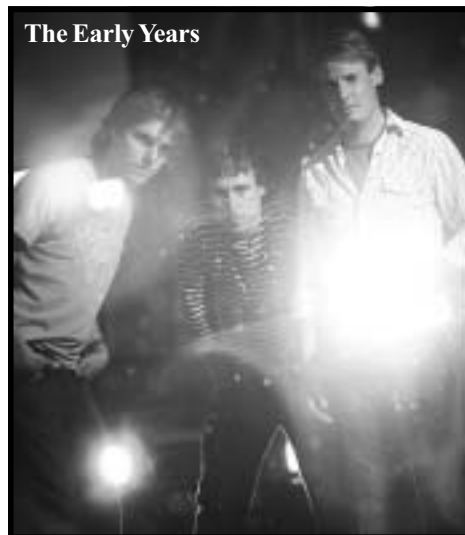
There are rumours **THE CANDYSKINS** may be continuing their recent reformation long enough to grace the Barn stage but at time of going to press such things were still up in the air, but two acts who will be there are **WINNEBAGO DEAL** and **THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA**. The former, like the Candyskins, played the last night of the Zodiac back in May



and nearly made the demolition crew's jobs redundant with their trademark blitzkrieg garage-metal attack. The Rock, meanwhile, cut their teeth at Truck many moons ago and despite losing founder member Phill Honey, they've returned as strong and exhilarating as ever, cellist and keyboard player Jenny Bates providing the focal point the group always needed as they stick Stravinsky's grandiosity through Add N To (X)'s machine music mincer and add a good dash of Spinal Tap showmanship for good measure. This month's Nightshift cover stars **A SILENT FILM** help keep the quality levels high.

Nightshift's favourite stage at Truck is always the Trailerpark Tent. Here is where the mad, bad and plain weird often crop up at the most unexpected moments. Who's playing which day hasn't been finalised as we write this but acts you can expect to catch over the weekend include synth-rockers **100 BULLETS BACK**, electro-poppers **TRADEMARK**, synth orchestra **THE KEYBOARD CHOIR**, bedroom angst narrator **GEORGE PRINGLE**, mordant folksters **GRAVENHURST**, Italian disco-punks **DISCO DRIVE** and, best of the lot, local post-rock experimentalists **YOUTHMOVIES**, a band who manage to walk the very fine line between leftfield sound exploration and pure, unrefined rock and roll thrills. Last year their set in the Barn was impossible to get into, so make sure you squeeze yourself into the considerably smaller Trailerpark nice and early for what will undoubtedly be one of the sets of the weekend.

The Early Years



Beyond these stages of course are the Lounge Tent and the Market Acoustic Stage, where the likes of **THE EPSTEIN**, **ANDY YORKE** and **RICHARD WALTERS** will all be performing, but, as ever, there's far too much going on to fully preview in this space, and difficult either-or choices will need to be made at some point. And of course, you can almost guarantee the best thing you see all weekend will be some act you've never even heard of before. Probably tucked away in a tent in the middle of the afternoon. That's what makes Truck our favourite festival of the summer. Small it may be, but perfectly formed.

Tickets: SOLD OUT

Information: www.truckfestival.org



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GIG GUIDE

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SUNDAY 1st

COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL: Cowley Road (12-6pm) – The annual East Oxford festival returns with four live music stages, assorted sound systems and myriad community performances and displays – *see main preview*
SWISSFEST: The Port Mahon (1-11pm) – Second day of the mini festival, featuring Foxes!, Sailplanes, Last Days Of Lorca, Mr Shadown, Mewgatz and Ash Verjee. Also, in the garden in the afternoon for free there's James Bell, Jody Prewett, Naomi Hates Humans,

Sunday 1st

COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL

Carnival returns again this year, its future seemingly secure now with BMW's continued sponsorship. This year's event sees the return of the big parade and more live music than last year. There are four live stages featuring a wide selection of mostly local acts, as well as half a dozen sound systems, including sessions from Skylarkin, Slide, Simple and Bossaphonik. This year's Carnival theme is fire and on the main Phoenix Stage, situated in front of The Elm tree, Brickwork Lizards will be exploring an entire world's worth of musical styles, with support from psychedelic singer-songwriter Anton Barbeau, experimental soundscapists Jonquil, rising rap star Mr Shadown, world-folkster Matt Sage, superb young guitar'n'violin duo Joe Allen & Angharad Jenkins, plus Michael Henry and Friends' traditional Irish folk. At the end of James Street the OX4 stage features local reggae favourites Mackating, country rockers The Epstein, Arabic-reggae youngsters Raggasaurus, theatrical space rockers Borderville and jazzy rap crew Confidential Collective, plus DJs, all of which will be broadcast throughout the day on OX4fm. The Freedom Community Stage sees reigning UK calypso monarch Brown Sugar (*pictured*) headlining, while the Constant Jammin' stage outside the Hi Lo restaurant hosts a non-stop reggae, ska, soca and Afrobeat jam with Ockard Ridim. Carnival is a great way to appreciate Cowley Road without the traffic chaos; it runs from midday through to 6pm, with various aftershow parties running into the night. Check out www.cowleyroadcarnival.org for more info and set times.

JULY

Mijuanito, Rowena Dugdale, Simon Davies and Beaver Fuel. All proceeds go to The Red Cross.
ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley – All-comers jam session. Jam along with in-house band The X Men.

MONDAY 2nd

THE LARRY MILLER BAND: The Bullingdon – Rocking blues from the UK guitarist inspired by the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Gary Moore.
ELECTRONICA NIGHT with IUAN: The X, Cowley
CHERISH THE LADIES: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional Irish folk from the American-based all-female folk collective.
THE ATTRACTIONS: The Port Mahon

TUESDAY 3rd

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Paddy Milner is the guest at tonight's free jazz club. That's free jazz as in you don't have to pay, not the other sort of free jazz.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 4th

SIMON ALLEN & THE PAUL JEFFERIES TRIO: The X, Cowley – The X's jazz club presents London saxophonist Simon Allen, playing with keyboard player Martin Pickett, electric and double bassist Paul Jefferies and drummer Frank Hockney.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 5th

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Trumpeter Steve Waterman plays with the Spin's house band.
THE FAMILY MACHINE + THE PONY COLLABORATION + LITTLE FISH: The Jericho Tavern – Lachrymose country-tinged indie rocking from local favourites The Family Machine at tonight's Truck Festival warm-up gig. Support comes from London's sweet-natured pop dreamers The Pony Collaboration and this month's demo of the monthers Little Fish.
GRINNING SPIDER: The X, Cowley
NATIONAL SCHOOL + INDIKA + THE RUINS: The Cellar – Oddball mix of post-punk jerkiness and end-of-the-pier cabaret from National School at tonight's Big Hair club.
SMASH DISCO: The Bullingdon – Electro, indie and post-punk club night.
TOY #1 + MY OWN CONSPIRACY: The

Hobgoblin, Bicester
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 6th

SOW + GEHENNA + RANDALL FLAGG: The Bullingdon – Top night of local metal at the Bully with heavyweight grinders Sow cranking it up in the style of Meshugga, while Bicester's Gehenna opt for some Will Haven-style spazz-core action. Randall Flagg provide the mayhem hardcore opening fun.
KLUB KAKOFANNEY with CONFIDENTIAL COLLECTIVE + KANED CITIZEN + NOT TOO SHABBY: The Wheatsheaf – Jazz, funk and dub-tinted party hip hop from expansive local crew The Confidential Collective at tonight's Klub Kak. Upbeat indie pop from Kaned Citizen and scuzzy heavy rock from Not Too Shabby in support.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + EMMA FOREMAN + LAUGHING PINES + WAVE MACHINES: The Jericho Tavern – Rootsy, melodic guitar pop from Aylesbury's Shaker Heights, with support from trashy indie rockers Laughing Pines and glitchy, lo-fi country-pop types Wave Machines.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SATURDAY 7th
CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Cornbury Country Park – First day of the festival with David Gray, The Waterboys, Proclaimers, Echo & The Bunnymen and more – *see main preview*
LITTLE PEOPLE BIG NEEDS CHARITY ALL-DAYER: The Port Mahon – The Quickfix crew present an all-day live music event in aid of the John Radcliffe children's hospital. Smilex are headliners but will also be opening the day with a special children's set, which won't, hopefully, feature such favourites as 'Sex For Sale' or 'Flimsy Fickle Fashion (Fuck Off And Die)'. Actually, hopefully it will. Anyway, able support comes from a reformed Verbal Kink, wobbly pop geniuses Baby Gravy, digital hardcore noiseniks The Walk Off, dark-minded indie rockers The Courtesy Kill, metallers Skullthrash and indie-ska hopefuls Tristan and the Troubadours. Outside in the acoustic garden there are sets from Jamie Hyatt, Nick Breakspear, Tara Milton, Dave Fullbrook, Chris Beard and more. Kids are allowed in until 6pm for a bargain two quid.
MONDO CADA + NABLE: The X, Cowley – Good'n'nasty grunge and hardcore rumbling and raging from Mondo Cada, with Didcot's garage rockers Nable in support.



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FUCK BUTTONS + KEYBOARD CHOIR + CUTTING PINK WITH KNIVES + EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK: *The Cellar* – A night of righteous noise with electro ear manglers Fuck Buttons mixing up brutal rhythms with ferocious sound frequencies. Keyboard Choir bring their textured synthscapes, while CPWK crank it out in a post-At The Drive-In fashion. Former-Suitable Case types Eduard Sounding Block make their live debut.

SIMPLE: *The Bullingdon* – Funky house club night.

MELTING POT with THE HOOSIERS + THE SKIES + BLACK HATS + JIM: *The Jericho Tavern* – Melodic post-punk pop in the vein of Squeeze and XTC from London's Hoosiers at tonight's Melting Pot. Support comes from Reading rockers The Skies, plus local 60s-style pop people The Black Hats. **LEE DAVIES & CHRIS THOMPSON:** *Temple Bar*

SUNDAY 8th

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: *Cornbury Country Park* – Second day of the festival with headliners Blondie joined by The Feeling, Midlake, Seth Lakeman, Suzanne Vega and more – *see main preview*

OX4: *The X, Cowley* – DJs from the new OX4 87.9fm radio station on the decks.

ROBOTS NEED TOYS: *The Jericho Tavern* – Special VJ night with an audio-visual mix of electro indie disco.

MONDAY 9th

NICKY MOORE'S BLUES

CORPORATION: *The Bullingdon* – Something of a UK blues legend, with the nickname The Voice, Nicky Moore has previously sung with heavy rockers Samson and Mammoth and can belt it out with the best of them, as well as possessing the range to sing raw blues and r'n'b and acoustic ballads.

SWARB'S LAZARUS: *Nettlebed Folk Club* – The former-Fairport and Whippersnapper fiddler teams up with Martin Allcock and Kevin Dempsey for some traditional British folk tunes.

TUESDAY 10th

MARTIN STEPHENSON + AGENTS OF JANE + SIMON DAVIES: *The Port Mahon* – The former-Daintees frontman makes a rare trip south of the border – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB: *The Bullingdon* – Regular jazz club band The Howard Peacock Quintet perform live.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: *The X, Cowley*

WEDNESDAY 11th

SHIRLEY + WIRE JESUS + KATE

CHADWICK: *The X, Cowley* – New regular club night from bouncy local 60s-styled rockers Shirley, plus Reading's Fleetwood Mac-meets-Arcade Fire epic chamber pop types Wire Jesus. Local acoustic singer-songwriter Kate Chadwick opens.

OPEN MIC SESSION: *Folly Bridge Inn*

OPEN MIC SESSION: *Temple Bar*

THURSDAY 12th

THE JOFF WINKS BAND + THE CARTER MANOEUVRE + JOE ALLEN: *The Cellar* – Last month's Nightshift cover stars launch their debut album.

THE GULLIVERS: *The Port Mahon*

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: *The Wheatsheaf* – Justin

Quinn's Bakerhouse are tonight's guests.

THE EPSTEIN + RHONDDA VALLEY PIGEON FEDERATION + THE

ROUNDHEELS: *The Jericho Tavern* – Country rocking in Flying Burrito Brothers style from local faves the Epstein, warming up for Truck Festival.

GET FUNKED: *The Bullingdon*

CATWEAZLE CLUB: *East Oxford*

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: *The Half Moon*

SKYLARKIN: *The Brickworks*

FRIDAY 13th

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with MY FATHER THE BEAT + WILSON + ALLY CRAIG: *The X, Cowley* – Dark-minded synth-pop and baggy grooves from MFTB at tonight's Gammy Leg session. Joining them are rousing Happy Mondays-styled party rockers Wilson, plus local Jeff Buckley-goes-Sonic Youth songsmith Ally Craig.

ANNA LOG + JAMES BELL + JOE SWARBRICK: *The Wheatsheaf* – Lo-fi, melancholic piano balladry from local songstress Anna Log at tonight's acoustic session, with Borderville frontman Joe Swarbrick bringing a dash of glamour to the occasion.

THE HAZE: *The Bullingdon* – Experimentally-minded indie rock in a Radiohead vein.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: *The Port Mahon*
FILTHY DUKES: *Po Na Na* – The Kill 'Em All club DJs spin a selection of electro, new wave and post-punk-inspired tunes, from Maccabees to LCD Soundsystem and Simian.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: *The Bullingdon*
REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + THE NEW MOON: *The Magdalen* – Swamp rock and festival funk from Redox, with the usual cast of friends.

THE REPERTOIRES + SHIRLEY + WINTERKINGS: *The Jericho Tavern* – Big, bolshy indie rocking in the style of Oasis and Embrace from Henley's Repertoires, plus local summery 60s-inspired rock and rollers Shirley in support.

SATURDAY 14th

WITTSTOCK FUNDRAISER: *The X, Cowley*

THE TAMBORINES: *The Jericho Tavern* – Coo Coo Club presents a Truck warm-up for London-based trio The Tamborines, heading skywards with heir wall-of-sound devotional psych-pop, somewhere between My Bloody Valentine, The Byrds and Ride.

THE SCREENBEATS + RICHARD

FULLER: *Temple Bar*

SUNDAY 15th

MEET ME IN St LOUIS + ROLO TOMASSI + SHUT YOUR EYES AND YOU'LL BURST INTO FLAMES: *The Port Mahon* – Excellent triple bill of leftfield rocking courtesy of Vacuous Pop. Guildford's Meet Me In St Louis launch their debut album, 'Variations On Swing', on Big Scary Monsters Records, kicking out an animated, spasmodic racket in the vein of Minus The Bear and Interpol, while teen typhoons Rolo Tomassi crank out a frighteningly maniacal hardcore noise akin to The Locust. Shut Your Eyes... keep up the high-paced tempo with a frantic brand of punk-funk.

ELECTRIC JAM: *The X, Cowley*



Tuesday 10th

MARTIN STEPHENSON: The Port Mahon

Swiss Concrete are fast becoming masters of resurrecting obscure 80s pop careers, from I, Ludicrous, through Eat's Ange Doolittle to this latest show, featuring County Durham-born, Scottish-based singer-songwriter Martin Stephenson, who made a reasonable-sized dent in the music scene with his band The Daintees. Always someone wanting kick against dominant trends, Stephenson named his band in response to the seriousness and austerity of the prevailing post-punk trends, and when, in the early-90s he grew tired of endless music industry shenanigans, he simply upped and went to live in the Scottish Highlands. Here he gigs and buses regularly to this day and tonight's gig is a rare journey so far south.

Stephenson's rootsy pop is inspired as much by folk stars like John Martyn and Dick Gaughan as it is by the 60s harmonic pop of The Byrds and The Beatles, switching from carefree summer jangle to gorgeously lachrymose acoustic folk. And maybe, just maybe, with the rebirth of folk music these past couple of years, the man might finally be in fashion.

MONDAY 16th

LES WILSON & THE MIGHTY HOUSE ROCKERS: *The Bullingdon* – Gutsy slide guitar veteran of 25 years on the UK blues scene, with a style learned from the likes of Buddy Guy, Hound Dog Taylor and Albert King.

DEDLOTZ + K-LACURA + KEROSINE: *The Port Mahon* – New local metal showcase night.

UISCEDWR: *Nettlebed Folk Club* – Yorkshire trio, and former-BBC Young Folk Musician Award winners, mixing up lively folk dance with mournful ballads.

TUESDAY 17th

JAZZ CLUB: *The Bullingdon* – With the Howard Peacock Quintet

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

TWAT DADDIES: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 18th

ANTONIA: The Port Mahon – Ballads and pop hits mixed with originals from the local singer.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 19th

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With trumpeter Damon Brown.

SMASH DISCO: The Bullingdon

BORDERVILLE + ALL THESE ARMS: The Cellar – Theatrical glam-goth-funk-space rock with a Vaudevillian flair from the mighty Borderville.

OWEN TROMANS + PACIFIC OCEAN

FIRE + THE CONSCRIPTS + THE

MARMADUKES: The Jericho Tavern – Campfire country pop from Wiltshire singer-songwriter Owen Tromans, plus Leicester's wistful, downbeat blues and roots-flavoured rockers Pacific Ocean Fire.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 20th

GUNNBUNNY + MONDO CADA: The Bullingdon – Superlative night of local grunge noise with raw, bluesy duo Gunnbunny firing up in authentic early Mudhoney style, while the increasingly brutal Mondo Cada follow their brilliant Oxford Punt set with another journey into virulent hardcore.

THE EVENINGS + BEAR IN THE AIR +

MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM + FORK +

KING FURNACE: The X, Cowley –

Krautrocking grooves and bolshy electro-pop from Nightshift favourites the Evenings, plus assorted local supports.

VINCENT VINCENT & THE VILLAINS +

FLOWE + BABY GRAVY: Sunningwell

Festival – Another cute local outdoor festival, this time featuring a stage mounted over the village pond in Sunningwell. And they've

managed to entice London's fast-rising cult faves Vincent Vincent and the Villains over to headline, the band recently signed to EMI for whom they released 'Johnny Two Bands'. Following loosely in the slipstream of The Libertines et al, theirs is a more old-fashioned sound, with a heavy 50s rock'n'roll twang and rolling surf rock rhythms. Support comes from local eclectic oddballs Baby Gravy.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

THE RUINS + THE ATTIKA STATE + THE

BROMPTONS: The Jericho Tavern – Local indie thrash and grunge pop noisemakers The Ruins headline tonight's new bands night.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 21st

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Stevenon – First day of Oxfordshire's premier new music festival. Idlewild and Brian Jonestown massacre headline – *see main festival preview*

SILVERSIGHT + THE BARD STARS +

YESTERDAY CAUGHT FIRE + RICHLIFE:

The X, Cowley – Four-band rock bill at the X tonight with funky heavyweights Silversight headlining. Bluesy pub rock from Bard Stars and emo from Yesterday Caught Fire.

MELTING POT with RUBBER DUCK +

DEATHSTAR PREVIEW + VOID: The

Jericho Tavern – A decidedly mixed bill at tonight's Melting Pot with funk and dub

rockers Rubber Duck going up against fearsome gothic synth-rockers Deathstar Preview.

ROOTS & REGGAE PARTY: The

Bullingdon

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND +

HUGH McMANNERS BAND: The Cavalier, Marston

ACOUSTIC SKY: Temple Bar

JONES RADIO: The Port Mahon

SUNDAY 22nd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Stevenon –

Second day of the south Oxfordshire festival.

Electric Soft Parade top the bill – *see main festival preview*

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley

MONDAY 23rd

AYNSLEY LISTER: The Bullingdon – Heavy-duty blues-rock from the acclaimed young British guitarist, equally at home playing it raw and acoustic or pumping it up Hendrix-style on the electric.

STEELEYE SPAN: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 24th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Local jazz singer Katya Gorrie guests with guitarist Denny Ilett Jr.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X,

Cowley

WEDNESDAY 25th

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

TRUE RUMOUR: The Port Mahon

THURSDAY 26th

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Saxophonist Butch Thomas guests with the Spin's house musicians.

SELECTASOUND PRESENTS: The X, Cowley

GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon

DUBWISER: The Port Mahon

DJ DEREK + RAGGASAURUS + THE

DRUG SQUAD: The Cellar – Ska and reggae night with legendary Bristolian DJ Derek on the decks, with live sets from ska-punks The Drug Squad and Arabic vocal-led dub act Raggasaurus.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 27th

THE IDEA: The X, Cowley – The local punk-pop types bid a fond farewell with a final gig, featuring assorted mates and special guests.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + THE DIRTY

ROYALS + MISTER KITE: The Jericho

Tavern – Album launch party for Aylesbury's roots-rockers The Shaker Heights with former-Samurai Seven chaps The Dirty Royals set to steal the show with their live-wire harmonic guitar pop, partway between The Beach Boys and Buzzcocks.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 28th

DENISE MARIE: The X, Cowley – Bayou blues, swampy jazz and funky soul from the New Orleans singer.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with

MINUTES + UNDERCUT + BEAVER FUEL:

The Wheatsheaf – Melodic acoustic pop from The Minutes, plus recent Orson supports Undercut and lo-fi scuzz-pop lunatic Beaver Fuel.

TRASHY Vs LADYGUN: The Bullingdon –

Trash-pop, new indie, post-punk and dirty rock & roll.

THE RUINS + THE GODWITS + BEAR IN

THE AIR: The Crown & Thistle, Abingdon –

New regular Skittle Alley bands night.

THE TYMES + LIDDINGTON: Temple Bar

SUNDAY 29th

HOWARD'S ALIAS + KELLY KEMP +

RAGGASAURUS + NAGATHA KRUSTI:

The Bullingdon – Ska-punkers Howard's Alias

return to town, out on tour to promote their third album, following supports to the likes of Capdown and RX Bandits. Tour support comes from former-No Comply frontwoman Kelly Kemp, now following a more acoustic folk and country path, while local support comes from Arabic vocal-led dub crew Raggasaurus and funky hardcore types Nagatha Krusti.

MONDAY 30th

FAMILY STYLE: The Bullingdon – Genuine family blues band out of Milan and now recognised as Italy's premier blues band, taking in a little bit soul, swing and whisky-soaked balladeering along the way.

TUESDAY 31st


THE BRIGHTS + STORNOWAY + STARS




OF AVIATION: The Port Mahon – Essex jangle-popsters The Brights visit town where they're joined by bright young local hopes Stornoway.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With a live set from The Hugh Turner Band

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

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LIVE

MATHS CLASS / GEORGE PRINGLE

The Cellar

We may not have hover cars and digest our food in pill form yet, but George Pringle could be held up as a prime example of futuristic musical reductiveness, a series of rueful spoken-word observations about what it means to be a 21st-century woman set to a skittering, minimal electronic beat. While it might be the sort of thing they gobble down with post-ironic relish in Hoxton, unfortunately it's also rubbish. Get a fourteen-year-old girl to read out her MySpace blog over the top of a beat laid down by someone after their first half hour in front of a sequencer and a CD of royalty-free drum beats, and you'd achieve a similar effect. Except given those circumstances, you'd at least be free from the mannequin archness on display here, which seems to suggest that dropping a few zeitgeist-defining keywords over some lame electronica makes you the new Patti Smith.

Maths Class, meanwhile, could scarcely be trying harder for that elusive *NME* best-new-band-in-Britain bracket if they were all wearing T-shirts with Conor McNicholas' grinning mug plastered all over them. That said, there are certainly some great moments mixed in there, most notably when pulsing keyboards take centre stage, layering up the melodies and mixing up the influences well. They're great visually, too, with plenty of energy and playful aggression, and a look that stays just the right side of A&R shop dummy. But although their referential touchpoints undoubtedly push all the buttons marked 'cool', and the finely-coiffured choppiness of the songs undeniably has its charms, there just isn't much in the way of memorable moments you'd take home and treasure: only one or two songs hint at a sound all their own. Appealingly stylish yet almost immediately forgettable, then – perhaps there's hope for that *NME* cover yet.

Holly Temperature.



photo: Marc West

OXFORD IMPROVISERS featuring CHRIS DADGE & DAVID LAING

The Port Mahon

Oxford Improvisers are a humble group who indulge in the obscure yet intriguing art of ad lib music performance. An informal gig every second Wednesday of the month with a special guest seems to be a winning format: tonight's performance is their 98th!

A 'house band' is an arbitrary decision made on the night: a violin, guitar and percussion three-piece resolve to play tonight. The three members' delicate suggestions begin tentatively then converge into a tremendous racket, totally incomprehensible but completely mesmerizing. Intricate sprawls of fantastically nonsensical guitar pickings meet violin moans and peculiar knockings. The percussionist's unconventional source of inspiration lies in a long metal sheet draped across an overturned barstool, along with sundry unrelated metal bits and pieces. The metal strip displays wide versatility: gentle knockings morph into atmospheric wah-wah jet streams, then lull into eerie thuds.

Casually straddling tonight's intervals are Chris Dadge and David Laing. The bearded fellows are two thirds of the Canadian improv outfit Bent Spoon Trio, and are Oxford's special guests tonight. The band use unconventional instruments and techniques to engender creative liberation. One example is Laing's signature 'laingdon', which consists of a mouthpiece tied to a plastic tube with a bell on the end to project the sound. When blown, it emits an odd, wheezy buzz. Dadge is an extraordinarily virtuosic drummer, hurriedly moving from toms

draped in tea towels to vegetable slicers and wood blocks in a rush of spontaneous creativity.

Free improvisation seems to return to the audaciously experimental child in all of us – bashing away at anything purely to hear its rough, organic timbre. An Oxford Improvisers gig certainly requires one's ears to do the work, to connect seemingly incongruous musical lines together. Another captivating gig displaying Oxford's refreshingly broad music scene.

Pascal Ansell

50ft PANDA / BLIND PILOTS

The Bullingdon

We arrive with customary lateness into a Bully that seems something of a private social club tonight – a relatively small crowd maybe, but one that seems to be operating as a close-knit group of enthusiastic chums – quarter-way into Blind Pilots' set. And lo, it's like we're back in 1969, with Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath laying down the foundations for heavy metal. Here is a band that's unashamedly retro, but unerringly confident and assured. With band members lurching away to their noisy, riff-heavy concoctions, and a Robert Plant-in-waiting yelping out lyrics that speak of girls, partying and cut-to-the-quick emotions, Blind Pilots are nothing if not a solid show to behold. Dealing not quite elegantly with some technical problems, they do remain steadfastly ordinary; but they operate with reference to a

musical time where ordinary meant heavy, engaging rock music.

They lead surprisingly fittingly into 50ft Panda's outstanding take on the Sweep The Leg Johnny-Oxes-That Fucking Tank axis of broken, chunking, instrumental rock: this music takes urgently melodic riffs, and grinds them through all manner of time changes, awkward corners and forays into feedback-drenched mayhem. Normally I'm ready to gnaw off my own hands at the thought of *another* heavy-angular-post-rock band, but 50ft Panda maintain a strong grip on what's important for a good live show: they rock, and they do so relentlessly and brilliantly. Never does the artifice of tricky structure and churning confusion give way to self-conscious isolation from the audience – rather, the connection between musician and listener is constant and immense. Sure, it's clever and impressive what they're doing, structurally and musically (and the two members – on just drums and guitar – are outstandingly good), but it's the sheer primal heaviness at play that sets this band way above their peers.

Simon Minter

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BIFFY CLYRO / YOURCODENAMEIS: MILO / FRANK TURNER

Brookes Union

Since splitting Million Dead Frank Turner has been carving a career for himself as a mostly acoustic solo act – although occasionally accompanied by local boys Dive Dive – with a work ethic that would shame a honey bee. He's a likeable, chatty host, looking like a young Bob Dylan but musically and lyrically closer to Billy Bragg, that punky edge still sticking to his folk songs. Heartache dominates but the set's highlight is the spittle-flecked 'Thatcher Fucked the Kids', a poignant and strangely contemporary song that should be played at top volume from every street corner the day the old hag finally croaks.

Great to have Yourcodenameis:milo in town after they cancelled their recent Zodiac show. Newcastle's spindly noiseniks are one of the UK's most underrated talents, a curious sense of pure pop melody underpinning everything they do, however intense or propulsive. They are one of the few bands able to bridge the gap between aggression and melody without compromising either: rising above emo and side-stepping pure hardcore and sometimes as close to Snow Patrol or Idlewild as they are to spiritual mentors Fugazi.

As their set speeds onwards the riffs get heavier until they lurch into the pulverising 'Rapt. Dept.' wherein Killing Joke dismantle 'Kashmir'. It's an absolute killer; a genuine rock anthem.

But the majority of tonight's hirsute crowd are here for fellow beardies Biffy Clyro, hailing from Scotland but whose hearts and souls reside in Seattle (but hey, Kurt was always a big fan of Caledonian indie). For the most part Biffy seem intent on burying every tune they possess in several layers of fuzz, but the way the crowd cheers at even the most innocuous bass rumble intro, they're doing something right. In fact you get the feeling that ten or twenty years from now the band will be regarded as some kind of seminal moment in rock, having for the most part, avoided any kind of press hype, achieving cult status by word of mouth and hard work alone. As such we want to love them more than we can. There are moments of near-greatness where their inventive side rises to the surface, or a catchy melody pokes through the bluster, but after an hour of solid, sometime stodgy noise, you yearn for fresh air and some sort of respite.

Ian Chesterton

THE ROSIE TAYLOR PROJECT / SPOKANE / 4 OR 5 MAGICIANS

The Port Mahon

Brighton's 4 or 5 Magicians make one hell of a racket, most of which is produced by an enthusiastic and not untalented drummer. They don't stray from a path marked out by Guided By Voices, Dinosaur Jr and Sebadoh, and make a pretty good case for being mentioned in the same sentence. The thing about this kind of loosely-played, stoner rock is that bands with a touch of genius, like Pavement, tend to show up the inadequacies of lesser outfits, and these noisemongers fall into the latter camp.

The crowd suddenly swells to welcome Spokane and their dark, alt.country music that sounds for all the world like Chris Isaac reincarnated on Cowley Road. They're fronted by Dan Morgan, whose implausibly deep, sonorous voice demands attention and sings of empty streets and lost love. As an Oxford band this all a bit incongruous but it soon becomes clear that they're dead serious about their music and, though some of the material punches above its weight, classy songs like 'By Your Name' recall Johnny Cash in leaving us feeling satisfied if a little unsettled.

The Rosie Taylor Project describe themselves as alt.country but sound as much like a Postcard-era Scottish band. Hailing from Leeds, they shun drums in favour of an acoustic sound embellished by some very nice trumpet from second vocalist Sophie. The overall effect is delicate and thoughtful, and a good example of how less can very much be more. 'The Sun On My Right' stands out, with a haunting refrain that stays in the head long after the gig is over. The imperfect acoustics of the Port don't do them full justice, but listening to them again at home you could see them doing a Belle and Sebastian by producing late night songs for people whose main musical interests lie elsewhere.

Art Lagun

EUGENE MCGUINNESS / LONELY GHOSTS vs TUMBLEDOWN ESTATE / MEWGATZ

The Port Mahon

Good old Vacuous Pop. Oxford's finest promoter is seemingly incapable of putting on crap bands. Tonight's theme is solo artists with different visions, with the support acts nurtured by Brighton's mighty One Inch Badge label. Mewgatz (real name Ed) is the male half of Oxford folktronic duo Little Eiffel, and he's a cheeky one. He grabs toys and retro keyboards by the neck and circuit bends them 'til they emit peals of pleasant ringings midway through a chunky guitar riff. Over fuzzy guitar pangs and furry beats Ed interjects breathy, syncopated lyrics, and the result is absorbing and intriguing. It's great to see a lowly Oxford artist you never knew existed, a sure testament to Oxford's thriving music scene.

Lonely Ghosts and Tumbledown Estate are two solo artists respectively, in the field of bucolic guitar electronica. Tonight it's not the expected scrap between them but more of a collective shouting match over furious beats. The agitated riffs and backing tracks aren't too bad *per se* but it's hard not to be put off by the somewhat contrived histrionics. That sort of Gay Against You boxer-hanging-out seems unwarranted as the music doesn't quite match the performance that accompanies it.

Alex McGuinness has no time for that of that nonsense, however. Recently signed to Domino, it seems that big things await the Liverpool/London acoustic wailer. McGuinness has a certain element which defies the singer/songwriter cliché. He truly stands by himself for artistic direction and originality. His performance is filled with a humility, a modest display of his sonorous top end singing evocative lyrics as mellifluous chords ground the listener. The baking, muggy Port Mahon air is stilled, the warmth is shared, and McGuinness leaves with a glorious encore.

Pascal Ansell

THE EARLY YEARS / MAXIMO PARK SENNEN

The Cellar

That Sennen have named themselves after a Ride song should tell you plenty about the Norwich shoegazing revivalists. As it is, the band hark back to the narcotic drone rock of Spacemen 3, who along with My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth, inspired Ride in the first place. Their set is surrounded by a fug of heavily-flanged guitars which subsume the introverted melodies and backseat vocals. For the first fifteen minutes it sounds pretty but not enough to convince, but, with the subtle mastery of their forebears, they utilise the power of hypnotic suggestion to suck you in and give your brain a good scramble.

They're just a rumble of distant thunder compared to The Early Years' storm, though. The London quartet's eponymous debut was one of last year's most impressive, and overlooked, albums, a meticulously-crafted amalgam of Neu!'s motorik grooves, Spacemen 3's devotional psychedelia and the dark, fragrant new wave melody of Echo & The Bunnymen and Teardrop Explodes. Tonight, initially frustratingly, but increasingly exhilaratingly, they crush such subtleties under a welter of swirling guitar noise and pounding, metronomic rhythms. Stand-out tracks from the album, like 'All Ones And Zeroes', are just about recognisable, David Malkinson's voice often little more than a howl in the heart of a hurricane. Like Spacemen 3 before them, The Early Years specialise in the build up, sustain and release of tension, taking each track to a point where it can no longer withstand the pressure and bursts like a dam. A brief pocket of calm sees them riding Kraftwerk's Autobahn before the clouds consume them for one last acid-binged blizzard.

Victoria Waterfield

Oxford Union

Vodafone's series of secret gigs in strange locations is novel and fun, with a cave and a church already ticked off the list. With its high beamed roof and ornate leaded windows, the Oxford Union makes a grand setting for Newcastle's Maximo Park in front of 200 lucky competition winners, but when it comes to the bit, the room works against the occasion. Basically, the sound tonight is awful. The music is a mush, the vocals incoherent, even with the help of a top of the range PA system.

A shame, since Maximo Park fully deserve their recent success, second album 'Our Earthly Pleasures' only just missing out on top spot in the charts and the band's live shows have earned them a growing, fanatical following. Much of this is down to frontman Paul Smith, a bowler-hatted, action-packed cross between Phil Daniels and Jerry Sadowitz, whose frantic antics reflect the urgent, bug-eyed mania of their best songs and contrast with the rest of the band's static studiousness. Stand out track from an hour-long set is, unsurprisingly, 'Apply Some Pressure', wherein Spizz Energi's full-throttle pop-punk is sucked into Devo's jerky robo-rock machinery and a bona fide indie disco anthem is born. They're at their best when they keep it fast and sharp, as on new single, 'Books In Boxes, especially since the slower numbers, like 'Parisian Skies', suffer the most from the unholy sound mix.

In the end, though, there's an awkwardness about the whole affair, like a bunch of fancy dressed goons accidentally gatecrashing a black tie do, a largely static crowd either unable to make out their favourite songs or worried they'll break a nearby statue if they start moshing. So, Maximo Park at the Oxford Union: right band; wrong venue; nice try.

Dale Kattack

STORNOWAY / EARNEST COX / THE NEW MOON

The X

Stornoway, the headliners at tonight's Gammy Leg gig, should be well known to Nightshift readers by now, so we'll concentrate on the others lesser known acts. Suffice to say, if you haven't fallen in love with their exquisite melodies, supreme musicianship and rambling banter already, you either have a heart of stone or need to catch up quick. Remember, it's never too late.

The New Moon, who are probably much better suited to a festival crowd, already have an attentive audience when I arrive. Their songs, mainly a wispy kind of folk, lose their legs before they reach the point where I'm standing. Much more interesting for me is the climactic couple of songs of their set, where Matt cuts loose somewhat, shooting off on tangents from a gentle melody to torrents of noise from his acoustic, akin to the reaction Albini provoked from David Gedge on 'Seamonsers'.

Ernest Cox, who apparently take their name from a Gloucester undertakers and not a porn film, are a more interesting proposition, falling somewhere between the art school stylings of the Blue Aeroplanes and the working men's club ramblings of The Fall. Wonderfully they look like a band that's been thrown together, one that shouldn't produce such good music, but somehow pulls it out the bag. Maybe the key is in the way they throw everything at the wall to see what sticks; a lot doesn't, but you applaud them for trying. Then there's the keyboard player who doesn't use more than one hand throughout the set. They also have a bass player that looks like a Geography teacher. How can it all seem so wrong but work out so right? It's there in a nutshell.

Russell Barker

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH LITTLE FISH

In a month of demos low on what you might call talent, here's some serious star quality. Little Fish are a two-piece band formed by one-time Dolly singer Julia, who for some reason now calls herself Juju (either because she's a big fan of Siouxsie and the Banshees or she's developed a stutter) and erstwhile Vade Mecum drummer Neil, who has decided to rename himself Nez, possibly because he fell asleep halfway through telling everyone what he was really called. That silliness aside, this is simply great. Julia has a pretty stunning voice, somewhere between Sinéad O'Connor, Suzie Quatro and a very young Tina Turner, and the music flits between O'Connor's wracked emotional folk-rock, Quatro's rollicking glam-stomp and Turner's ballsy blues and soul. Lead track, 'Devil's Eyes', is a stripped-down but full-blooded balancing act between garage-rock aggression and meticulously-constructed melody, while 'Am I Crazy' touches on The Pixies' latin-tinged punk mania. They can even do it slow and sensitive, as on the sweet-natured acoustic lament, 'Error In Your Sunrise'. Almost a decade on from when she first lit up the local music scene, it's a genuine pleasure to hear Julia's voice again.

BETHANY WEIMERS

Can it really be summer when in some people's hearts it is still the very depths of darkest winter? Here's cheery, chirpy party sparrow Bethany Weimers with a seven-and-a-half-minute opus made up entirely of scraping violin and banshee wail that wanders through several octaves and is to The Cheeky Girls what the charred bones of atomic bomb victims are to a Chuckle Brothers show. Come on, let's be honest – this is goth! Depending on your disposition, Bethany is either the soundtrack to a thousand lost souls, or a wailing harpy who ought to cheer up a bit. It's a bit of a tawl if we're honest but something in its unrelenting misery grips us. And when it finally finishes it begins to rain. And then it begins to snow. And then the earth splits and demons pour out. Do you see what you've done, Bethany? Do you? You've only bloody gone and started Ragnarok!

THE CONSCRIPTS

A band featuring at least one former member of local rap crew Big Speakers, The Conscripts promise us some funk and deliver on that pledge. Opening track 'Food' is a deceptive killer, a stumbling, grimy, brass-laden 70s funk trip that initially appears far too drunk and awkward to hit the dancefloor but becomes oddly infectious to the point you're unconsciously nodding your head and thinking about Prince and cheap porn flicks by the end – a rare trick indeed. The rest of the demo doesn't quite hit that spot, 'In Love With Yourself' trying to be too slick in a jazzed-up hip hop kind of way, but sounding too ponderous to get its groove on, although the more urgent 'Legions' rescues things a bit with what appears to be Jimi Hendrix trying to rap, which is at least a novelty.

UNKNOWN FLOW

What's this? More goth? It certainly sounds like it from the opening minutes – eerie electro hum, chime bars, a ghostly dissonance and some stridently intense female vocals, but soon it becomes apparent we're in the realm of a darker beast altogether – Prog Rock. Yes, proper prog rock. Not your modern day post-Radiohead stuff, the proper fifteen-minute rambling epic stuff with impenetrable guitar solos, wandering bass excursions, arpeggiating funk jams, random passages of frantic drumming and narrative vocals that form part of a song trilogy called 'The Arco Isis Archipelago'. No, really, it's true. They told us. They also told us they use flattened fifths, whatever they are (we're just guessing but The Ramones probably never used them), and we get terribly confused and wonder where they've hidden the tunes amongst all this cleverness. On the one hand Unknown Flow are ambitious and very accomplished, especially since they're all still at school. But on the other hand, can we have the last half hour of our lives back please?

PIGTHE

And at the opposite end of the musical scale, here's someone who doesn't seem to know one end of a guitar from the other. Which always warms us to people, mainly because we can feel marginally more clever than them. Anyway, Pigthe's pleasantly rambling letter makes way for some pleasantly rambling lo-fi rock noise that perhaps doesn't seem to have any

great sense of purpose or direction but settles itself in with some whistling synthesizer over a hazy mist of distorted guitar and some sporadic despairing over the state of human existence. Things take a turn for the acoustic on 'Clap Hands', which tries to turn that old singalong into a Shetland sea shanty, but demo highlight is 'Melt' which fails, but at least tries hard, to emulate My Bloody Valentine's fluttering splendour. After that it's a quick drop back down the quality ladder for closing number 'End Of My Rope', which finds Pigthe pining for some release from the misery of it all. By which point we can only empathise.

KNARF

What in blazes is happening to band names these days? Pigthe? Knarf? Both sound like the sound of either snide sniggering or violent vomiting, although in Knarf's case we must stress that ambient drum&bass is no laughing matter. No, instead we get studiously discreet chitter chatter beats and intermittent but hushed piano stabs, which might tempt a particularly timid mouse onto the dancefloor, but tend to sound too much like wallpaper musak for painfully trendy bars where everyone dresses in white, wears way too much hair gel and they only sell imported Japanese lager. It's well executed but you wonder at its purpose, since it's neither danceable (unless you're a particularly timid mouse, of course) but equally it's too restless to relax to. But then they do hit their stride with third track 'Winston', a dinky electro-pop shuffle that nudges its way into your face and gives Knarf some purpose. And then they follow that with 'For the Journey', which does lean back on those samey drum&bass beats but comes with a tingle of 70s synths that warm us like the tender caress of a bacofail-clad alien temptress. Good to see they get there in the end.

THE JESUS KNIVES

The Jesus Knives apparently got together with the sole purpose of creating some aggressive feedback noise, which has to be a more honest and admirable intention than wanting to make a career in the music industry by sucking any corporate cock that presents itself along the way. If the reality doesn't quite live up to the hellstorm we imagined, they do manage to shout a lot and batter their guitars to a moderate degree, genuflecting at the altar of Fugazi (never a bad thing) and racing through two and a bit tracks in seven minutes. Pleasing to the ear for a few brief moments, they don't, however, offer anything much new and at times get stuck

in that increasingly tedious stop-start post-hardcore thing that's long-since been done to death. Formed at the back end of 2006, they're another one of those, come back in six months and we'll see what you've come up with bands. Until then, not a bad effort.

THE FURNITURE GROUP

What kind of a band name is that? Sounds more like a removal firm to us, or a chain of discount flatpack wardrobe stores. Mind you it captures the exotic nature of their music perfectly: pedestrian funk-rock-lite that sits around waiting for the party to start before sinking into a torpor that's only briefly alleviated by a short, tedious, widdly guitar solo. There's some vague attempt on the part of the band, and in particular the singer, to be The Red Hot Chili Peppers, but any end resemblance is fleeting at most, a closer likeness would be watching someone you didn't know or care about dying slowly on a hospital ventilator. The machinery is working efficiently, if laboriously, but all the soul is seeping out of it. Seriously, self-assembly kitchen units are more rock and roll than this.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE KICKS

Funny the direction in which bands' ambitions seem to lie. From their opening track, 'Notice Me', with its solemn, sensitive piano lead, The Kicks sound like they're gearing up to soundtrack end-of-season footage of weeping football fans on a what-could-have-been montage. Or maybe they really do just want to reach the semi-finals of X-Factor by offending no-one at all. Either way they layer on the pain with the singer wailing "I want you to notice me!" And like a creaking door, it's impossible to ignore. Further into a strangely incoherent hotchpotch of a demo there's some life with second track 'Lately', although it does sound like it's been recorded inside a giant milk bottle several miles away from the nearest microphone; the muffled, fuzzy guitars at least distracting from the desperate pleading and shouting that has replaced the earlier whining. A tune briefly pops its head above the parapet for 'Element Of Surprise', a forlorn Beatles-y strum that sounds like it just wants to curl up and die in a corner. We're happy to lend a swift boot in the right direction.

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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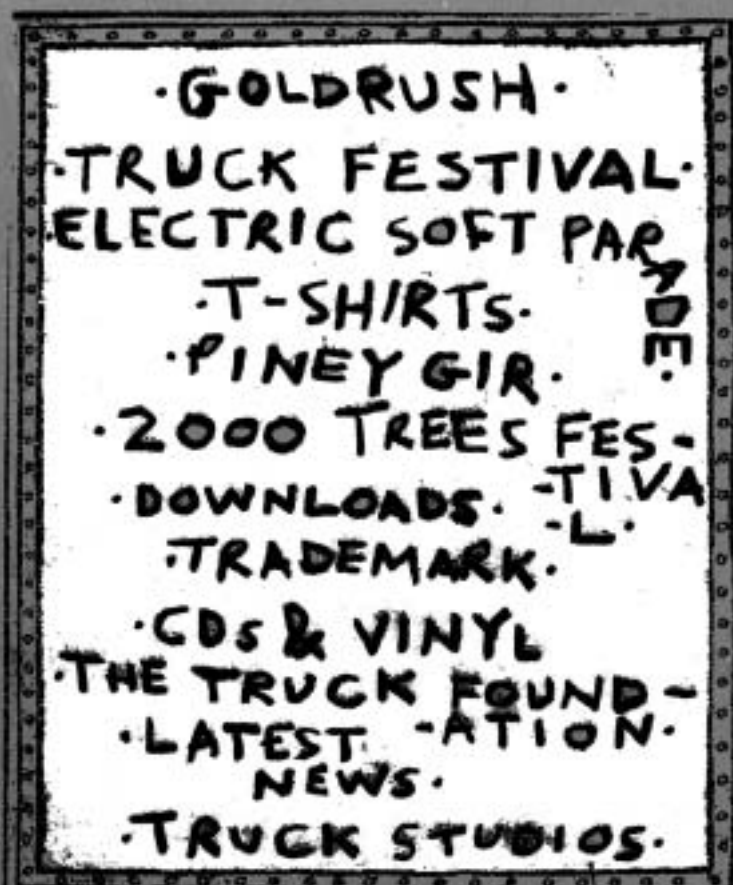
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