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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 143
June
2007

The Joff Winks Band

Easy does it with Oxford's
new jazz-rock stars -
interview inside



Punt review - inside



Plus
Fell City Girl split!
Last night at the
Zodiac!

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NEWS

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HELLO EVERYONE,

Well, we bid a very fond farewell to the Zodiac in May at an incredibly exciting and emotional gig which saw some of Oxford's best-loved bands reuniting to celebrate the venue that helped put this city on the musical map. While it's a shame to see a part of Oxford music history go, the planned refurbishment by the Academy Group is equally exciting. Come the end of September, Oxford will have its biggest and best regular live music venue ever, one that will help attract even bigger touring bands to town.

Watching The Candyskins, Dustball, The Nubiles and Unbelievable Truth perform on the Zodiac's stage again reminded us just what a fantastic legacy Oxford music has. But in the same month we also had the Oxford Punt, a showcase of the best up and coming acts in the area. It was a night that showed just how varied the local music landscape can be and the extremely high standard that has been set for all new bands to aspire to, which has to be a good thing.

With the Zodiac shut for four months, this summer is a perfect time for everyone to go out and discover for themselves some new musical thrills. Oxford is blessed with plenty of great small venues - the Wheatsheaf, the X, the Port Mahon, the Cellar, the Bullingdon and the Jericho Tavern amongst them. And this is where the stars of tomorrow are already working to make their presence felt. So that's your summer homework - go and see a band you've never heard before. Give them a chance. Who knows, a year from now perhaps they'll be headlining the new Oxford Academy's main stage.

Happy gigging - Ronan Munro (*editor*)

STILL NO NEWS ON THIS YEAR'S TRUCK FESTIVAL line-up, with the promoters saying they are unlikely to announce anything until the end of June. The two-day festival, which takes place over the weekend of the 21st / 22nd July at Hill farm in Steventon, sold out in less than two days back in April, with 1,000 less tickets available than last year. The Truck Foundation has been set up to make the Truck experience a more year-round event, with events planned to raise money for various creative learning projects as well as the festival's main Mali Development Group fundraising. Last year's Truck Festival raised £57,000 for charity.

Borderville, Raggasaurus and Joe Allen and Angharad Jenkins are the first three acts to be confirmed as playing at this year's **COWLEY ROAD CARNIVAL** on Sunday 1st July. For more acts as and when they're announced, plus details

of how to get involved in the Carnival, visit www.cowleyroadcarnival.org

THE MARKET TAVERN closed its doors for the last time on Saturday 26th March, bringing to an end years of live music at the pub. The Tavern has been sold to a Japanese restaurant chain. Under the management of Charis Sharpe the pub had become a great starting point for new local acts, including the weekly Delicious Music showcase nights. Delicious Music promoter, Mars Rynearson, is looking for new venues to host his gig nights.

Meanwhile, **THE WHEATSHEAF**'s promised refurbishment has been on hold indefinitely after the pub's new owners, Allied Breweries, failed to commit to the plans. Subsequently Wheatsheaf manager Al has left the pub. Live music is set to continue, however.



FELL CITY GIRL have split up. Singer Phil McMinn announced the news on the band's MySpace site at the end of May. Over the last two years Fell City Girl have become one of Oxford's most popular and successful bands, regularly selling out the Zodiac as well as venues around the UK, and releasing a series of excellent EPs on Lavolta, a label part-owned by Sony. The band have topped Nightshift's end of year Top 20 for the past two years, with 'Weaker Light' in 2005 and last year with 'Send In the Angels' from their 'Swim' EP.

Speaking to Nightshift Phil explained what had happened and outlined his plans for the future.

"Breaking up Fell City Girl is not something we really wanted to do, but we knew it had to happen for many different and personal reasons. For me, we were facing a huge amount of difficulty in the industry which, as anyone who has any experience working with labels and agents knows, is pretty common, but I got hit with a couple of pretty major things in my personal life that basically left me with no energy to fight anymore after three long years of fighting. We wanted to go out on a high stop while we still had the choice.

"Over the last three months I have been writing and writing and pretty soon we'll have news about what we do next. So far it involves James - our drummer - and myself, as well as a couple of other people. We even have a name. At a guess I've written an album of material, and already there's the usual music industry bullshit coming into play. We recorded a track called 'Histories' towards the end which will form part of what we do next. I think after a few months of total turmoil we feel ready to do it again, albeit with our eyes a little less closed this time. I hope fans will follow; I'm pretty sure they will."

WIN CORNBURY FESTIVAL TICKETS!

With the arrival of Cornbury Festival two years ago, Oxfordshire now has another great summer music event to call its own. While Truck showcases the eclectic underbelly of pop, Cornbury pulls in the big names: this year there are headline sets from **David Gray** and **Blondie**, while the supporting cast boasts **The Waterboys**, **The Proclaimers**, **The Feeling**, **Suzanne Vega**, **Scott Matthews**, **Hothouse Flowers**, **Echo & The Bunnymen**, **Midlake**,



Seth Lakeman and recent Download Chart Number 1, **Katie Walsh**.

Cornbury Festival is set in the picturesque Cornbury County Park, a million miles from the stinking landfill site that is the modern day Reading Festival experience, and, as well as its star-filled main stage, also includes the Oxford Folk Festival stage and the Charlbury Riverside stage, which offers a chance to plenty of local acts to perform to a big festival crowd.

So, a perfect way to spend a sunny summer weekend. Tickets are on sale now, priced £80 for the weekend, or £45 for each day, from the **credit card hotline on 0871 472 0420**. There are discounted children's tickets as well as special VIP passes available.

And thanks to the festival organisers, we have two pairs of weekend tickets, with camping passes, to give away. Free. To you. Oh yes.

All you need to do is answer the following question on a postcard (sorry, no email entries), and post it to **Cornbury Festival Competition, Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**. Deadline for entries is the 20th June.



Multiple entries will be turned into origami giraffes. The editor's decision is to sing loudly along to every Proclaimers song, whether he knows the words or not.

Q: What was Blondie's first UK Number 1 hit single?

Visit www.cornburyfestival.com for full festival information

24/7 STUDIOS on Cowley Road have confirmed they are to close at the end of July, to make room for redevelopment of the building they currently occupy. Robin Leggett, who started up 24/7 nine years ago, is hoping to move into a more production-based studio project in the near future. In the meantime, through Nightshift, he wants to thank all the bands who have rehearsed and recorded at 24/7 over the years.

THE X IN COWLEY looks set to continue to host live music after it paid off a substantial sum of its £3,500 PRS bill last month. A series of benefit gigs by local and out of town bands means the pub has been given an extension to meet its payments. Benefit gigs will continue through the summer and hopefully enough will be raised to safeguard one of the area's most important live music venues. Call Al on 01865 776431 if you fancy playing at the X.



ANDY YORKE prepares for the release of his debut solo album later this year with a headline show at the Jericho Tavern on Wednesday 6th June. Andy was reunited with the rest of Unbelievable Truth for the last night of the Zodiac in May.

A FILM DOCUMENTING THE OXFORD MUSIC SCENE is currently in pre-production and the makers are looking for local musicians and gig-goers to help them out. The documentary will cover the period from 1987 up to the present day and any archive material is needed to fill out the story. So, if you have any photos, videos, flyers, posters or merchandise from Oxford bands, or even interesting anecdotes, contact the film's director, Jon Spira, at newfangled2@yahoo.com, or the producer, Gary Shenton, at production@ofvm.org.

THE SUNDAY STEAMER sessions return for the summer from this month. The bands-on-a-boat trips have become an established and novel part of the Oxford music calendar. The first Sunday Steamer takes place on Sunday 17th June, featuring Bethany Weimers and Amberstate. The boat leaves Salter's Steamers, by Folly Bridge at 3pm; tickets are on sale now, priced £10, from wegottickets.com. An evening sailing, The Friday Frigate, follows on Friday 29th June and features Foxes!, Baby Gravy and Tristan & The Troubadours. The boat leaves at 8pm.

TURAN AUDIO have been recognised at the annual Music Week Awards. The Catalogue Marketing Campaign Of The Year Award was given to Chas Chandler for Slade Remastered, all of which was done at Tim Turan's Cowley studio. Tim also offers excellent mastering services for local bands – call 01865 716466 for details.

BLUR BASSIST ALEX JAMES will be singing copies of his new book, A Bit Of Blur, at Waterstones bookshop on Broad Street between 12.30-1.30pm on Tuesday 19th June.



RIDE are set to reform for a Canadian concert later this year. The Oxford indie legends will perform at North By Northeast Music and Film Festival in Toronto, which takes place from the 7th-10th June. The last time the band performed together was an improvised session that was filmed as part of a Sonic Youth documentary a few years ago. Since Ride split in 1996 Andy Bell has played with Hurricane #1 and latterly as bass player for Oasis, while Mark Gardener has played solo gigs with Goldrush as his backing band. Drummer Loz Colbert has most recently toured as part of the reformed Jesus & Mary Chain. No UK dates are as yet planned, although a live DVD release is due for release later this year.

DON'T FORGET TO TUNE INTO THE DOWNLOAD every Saturday at 6pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The local music show features the best in new Oxford releases plus interviews, features, a gig guide and a local demo vote. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford

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THE FINE ART OF QUALITY INSTRUMENTS

A Quiet Word With

The Joff Winks Band

THERE MUST BE SOMETHING in Oxford's water supply as well as in its famous skyline that makes it home and inspiration to lysergic pop dreamers. Back in 1967 The Small Faces decamped here and wrote 'Itchicoo Park' after taking a trip – of the chemical variety – in South Park. More recently Supergrass have reflected the hallucinogenic-friendly spaces and outlines of the city.

Perhaps, then, The Joff Winks Band might be considered the ultimate Oxford band, capturing as they do the gently trippy feel of a summer stroll up Shotover Hill as well as the academic insularity of the college cloisters. The band's debut album, 'Songs For Days', released this month, weaves its way from Oxford's numerous subterranean bars to the top of its most ornate spires. It's an album to lie back, close your eyes and escape to.

OF COURSE THAT MIGHT ALL be a load of typically poncy music journo metaphorical bollocks, but it does capture the sweetly languid trippiness and occasionally epic pomp of The Joff Winks Band, a group who, inspired by everything from Steely Dan to Pink Floyd and early-70s experimental jazz-rockers Hatfield And The North, might be considered what is now known as a Guilty Pleasure.

But a pleasure they are. The gorgeously bucolic 'Juniper', b-side to last year's 'Share My Blues' single, inched effortlessly into Nightshift's end of year Top Twenty, while the lead track was a fixture on Xfm. In fact, thus far, most of The Joff Winks Band's achievements have been beyond their hometown. Their debut gig was at the UK music industry's annual conference, In The City, in Manchester, and they were earning airplay on Radio 1, 6Music and Xfm before local gig audiences had even become aware of their existence. Since then they have toured with Joseph Arthur and supported Regina Spektor and Ray LaMontagne.

THE JOFF WINKS BAND ARE: Joff Winks (*vocals and guitar*), Matt Baber (*keyboards*), Brad Weissman (*bass*) and Paul Mallyon (*drums*). Joff and Matt first met at the age of three. In a sandpit as far as they can remember. 'Songs For Days' is simultaneously ambitious and unassuming: musically



accomplished, the band manage the difficult task of cramming an awful lot of instrumentation into each song without ever overburdening the captivating melodies; what appear to be almost acoustic, often piano-led songs, are founded on dense layers of electronics, sturdy bass and clever drum patterns. The band draw on jazz, prog, folk and alternative pop to create their sound. One moment you're sharing an intimate glass of whisky with Donald Fagen in some late night jazz bar, the next you're cruising the dusty Midwest freeways with Mercury Rev. Joff's richly pleading vocal style adds an urgency and even portent to lyrics that deal with such offbeat matters as kite flying and train theft, much like 'The Wall'-era Pink Floyd.

NIGHTSHIFT SPOKE TO JOFF as the band prepared to launch the new album, and asked him how they got such a head start in the gigging and radio play stakes.

"Unknown to me a friend of mine managed to pass a copy of some of my earlier songs to a person at Xfm, where they were subsequently aired on an unsigned showcase. The first I new about it was when I received an out of the blue phone call to ask for

my permission to play a track. Funnily enough Matt and I were playing our first acoustic gig at the Bully that same evening. The offer to play at In The City came of the back of this first Xfm session.

"In The City and our first Xfm session led to a couple of major developments for us. Firstly we were able to self-release a download single that qualified the band for playlist on Xfm and we received great support from Claire Sturgess. Secondly we were able to sign a publishing deal, which enabled us to release a few more singles and pick up more air time on Xfm and the BBC."

So far you've enjoyed your best breaks beyond Oxford, how important is the local scene to you?

"Well, we recorded a large part of the record at Dungeon Studios with Richard Haines and we master all of our recordings with Tim Turan in Cowley. Over the years we have used engineers from Los Angeles and London and yet the best people to work with are right here in Oxford. Where else in the world are we going to find a mastering engineer who instinctively understands our music, has an insane knowledge of NASA's space exploration and a complete – and we really mean complete –

Frank Zappa collection. In our opinion Oxford has a scene that is stronger and more vibrant than many cities twice its size and not to mention its musical heritage: obviously of late Radiohead and Supergrass but also the more obscure goings on in the 70s at Richard Branson's Manor Studios. For example Magma and some of the Canterbury bands such as Hatfield And The North, who have been hugely influential for us. Certainly gigging in Oxford is a much more congenial experience than in many other towns, especially London."

You've played live with the likes of Joseph Arthur, Ray LaMontagne and The Longview.

"What we gained from playing with these guys was an opportunity to perform for large and really receptive audiences, especially Joseph's crowd. It is so much easier to gain support from this type of audience than playing a completely cold gig. When you're second on the bill at an unknown venue in the middle of Nowhereville the audience tend to spend 90 percent of your half-hour slot scratching their heads trying to work out what's going on. As for our ideal touring partners, they must be clean, preferably non alcoholic and able to name at least ten Frank Zappa albums."

THERE'S AN EASY, ALMOST jazz lounge ambience about some of the new album, with echoes of Donald Fagen's 'The Nightfly' at times; at other times the music is more bombastic and rock-orientated, with a hefty dash of Pink Floyd in there.

"Fagen and Becker form a large part of our daily listening and when we were kids and everyone else was listening to Nirvana we were dusting off old Pink Floyd LPs like 'Meddle' and 'Atom Heart Mother', so that music is in our blood. As for the bombastic sounds on the record, The Mahavishnu Orchestra are probably more responsible. We've all been reading Walter Kolosky's biography on John McLaughlin and the band and their gigs in the early 70s, which seemed to be somewhat religious experiences for all that saw them. In fact our song 'Milo' is about a kid who is so sick of his iPod and crappy MP3 copies of music with no names, on unlabelled CDRs, that he finds himself in a second-hand record shop, whereupon he stumbles across

the first Mahavishnu Orchestra album and has a revelation of sorts. "For me personally Neil Young is a central influence in terms of direct song writing. Who brings what to the band? Well I tend to bring a nice packed lunch and Matt often brings a bag of Haribo, but on a more serious level, I tend to bring a song in a loosely sketched-out form and then we flesh it out in the rehearsal room and at my home studio. Describing the band's sound is the most difficult thing for us to do. I guess it all depends on what people have heard before. Most people tend to make a connection with what they already know: a review in a magazine is a good example, you often find out as much about the reviewer as you do about the music being reviewed. That said if you're a fan of Steely Dan, Neil Young and Hatfield And The North and you have penchant for Tortoise and a touch of the Flaming Lips then we hope you'd enjoy this record."

Without perhaps wanting to throw your hand in with any of them, do you think that the rise of bands like The Feeling, Midlake and Ghosts, with their unabashed feelings for 70s rock, are helping create the type of atmosphere in which JWB could flourish?

"To be honest, we haven't really heard of any of those bands so I guess that answers that part of the question. We're a bit too 'heads down' concentrating on our own stuff to pay much attention to most of what goes on these days. The Flaming Lips have certainly changed things in this country as they are so openly ambitious with what they do, but in a really unpretentious and inviting way. Another guy who has slipped under the radar for most reviewers is Steven Wilson of Porcupine Tree. He is seriously prolific in so many areas, including the Bass Communion project that inspired some of the ambient moments on 'Songs for Days', and has just got Porcupine Tree into the top 40 album chart for the first time with their ninth album. So if anyone is creating an atmosphere for independent and uncompromised music it's him."

ASA KIND OF PARALLEL

project all the members of The Joff Winks Band play in a band called Antique Seeking Nuns, whose debut EP was soundly panned in *Nightshift* earlier this year. Infused with a lopsided wackiness, Antique Seeking Nuns stand at odds with The Joff Winks band; the influences behind both are similar but while one captivates and entrances, the other merely irritates.

"The line up for both is identical, although ASN started with just me and Matt in the studio. Working practice is also pretty much the

same for both as well. We sometimes have to ask ourselves what the difference between the two bands is... certainly a lot of the Nuns has now been absorbed into JWB as that is the main working band (for example 'Morning Sun' by JWB is based on the middle of 'Son of Cheese' by the Nuns. It's something we do quite a bit of, building a whole song from a smaller section of another.) Song writing is more central to JWB, whereas the Nuns zone in more heavily to Zappa and prog."

ONE OF THE MANY

highlights of 'Songs For Days' is the nostalgic 'Cast Adrift', which features lines such as "Kids TV has changed / Whatever happened to Camberwick Green?" – How can such young pups long for such things before their time? And, having written songs about kite flying, train theft and gardening, what's the weirdest thing they've ever written a song about? Is there anything you can't imagine being inspired by to write? If you could have written one song, for its lyrics or subject matter, what would it be?

"Camberwick Green is late 60s, but was always repeated throughout the 70s and 80s. We do mention Mysterious Cities of Gold and Ulysses 31 – classic mid-80s hardcore cartooning! Most of the really strange lyrics are by the Nuns; for example, 'Ointment For Flies' tells the tragic tale of a fly who is tired of being the fly in other people's ointment and desperately wants some lube to call his own... it's a regular kind of a song. Then there is the Nuns concept album/film script called 'Buttered Cat' (a conspiracy), which we've been chipping away at for five years. "The only subject you won't find us writing about is love. There are enough wretched examples of that in the world without us adding even more to the pile. As for a subject we wish we'd tackled by someone else, Hatfield And The North wrote a song about how they're trying their hardest to make everything sound okay and that they really hope the listener likes their album, which we sympathize with. Then of course there is the Michael Jackson song about all the animals and helping the planet and stuff. That has us in tears every time."

'Songs For Days' is released on iTunes on 3rd June and in the shops early July. The Joff Winks Band play at the Wheatsheaf on Wednesday 6th June, on the Beard Museum Stage at Charlbury Festival on Sunday 17th June and at the Cellar on Thursday 12th July. Visit www.myspace.com/joffwinksband for tracks and news.



June

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Friday 29th – early show with **THE DRUG SQUAD**. 8pm, £4

Saturdays

9th **SIMPLE** *Funky House. End of term party in association with Slide. Live show from Dogshow, plus Will Forbes & Rich Smith. 9.30pm-4am*

16th **TRASHY** – *Trashy moves from the Zodiac for the summer. 9-3am. £5*

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KEYBOARD CHOIR

'Mizen Head To Gascanane Sound'

(Own Label)

Like the old 'Does what it says on the tin' adverts, Keyboard Choir's name should tell you what you need to know. There are lots of keyboards involved and they all sing in something approaching union. Not in complete union, as that'd be boring, like one of Eno or Vangelis' more forgettable ambient offerings. Neither of which reference points is that wide of the mark, but instead Keyboard Choir gnaw away at the more unsettling and lopsided pieces the two electronic titans have created over the years. Indeed the whole of 'Mizen Head To Gascanane Sound' feels like a hit and run history of synthesized music, from the Tornadoes, through Kraftwerk, The Orb, Aphex Twin, Add N To (X) and Jean Michel Jarre.

The spirit of Vangelis wanders wraith-like through album opener, 'The Drone Of The Hearse', sounding like a lost moment of menace from the soundtrack to *Bladerunner*. And the mood remains pretty dark throughout, never more so than on stand-out track 'In This Situation, Thinking Won't Help', a cavernous avalanche of bass-heavy electronics punctuated by Liam Ings-Reeves from Mephisto Grande bellowing southern Baptist hellfire gibberish in a manner that oddly recalls Gavin Bryars'



'Jesus Blood Never Failed Me Yet'. Truly inspirational stuff of the sort that should really be soundtracking the build-up to some cataclysmic sci-fi movie confrontation. At the opposite end of the ambient scale is 'Skylab' with its fluffy, trippy vibe and Eliza Gregory from Ivy's *Itch*'s disembodied voice harking back to The Orb, and the somnambulant glitchy 'Macondo'.

There are moments when 'Mizen Head...' threatens to head down an ambient dead end, as on 'The Shiver', odd tracks that are disappointing because you know they're capable of much more interesting stuff, but for the most part this is a pleasingly unusual thing: purely electronic music with a heart and a soul.

Dale Kattack

BASTION OF DECENCY

'Hell On Earth'

(Own label)

Now this has got to be good, right? Just look at the name; look at the EP title. It's gonna ROCK! Rock like A BASTARD! Yeah! Perhaps the



glossy packaging and press pack should have rung a couple of alarm bells, because full-throttle apocalyptic hardcore metal titans don't spend more time making glossy CD sleeves with fancy fonts on them and posting everything out in cute red plastic folders with professional photos neatly enclosed. Of course not, because they're too busy DRINKING! And FIGHTING! And making their guitars go GRUUUNKKKKK!!!!!! And in fact Bastion Of Decency, from Banbury, aren't an apocalyptic hardcore metal band at all. Instead they sound a lot like Gillan, and they tend to chug along with a slightly prissie phobia of getting dirty or losing control. Like their packaging they're musically tidy and professional, but the time when this could pass for heavy rock is long since gone. As has the CD and its fancy accretions. Into the recycling bin.

Ian Chesterton

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS

'And I'll Tell You For Why'

(Big Scary Monsters)

Hey, when did indie kids get all lustful? First you've got CSS chanting 'Let's Make Love And Listen To Death From Above', now here come local epic guitar-wielders This Town Needs Guns whose b-side to their new single is called 'Wanna Come Back To My Room And Listen To Belle & Sebastian?' And what kohl-eyed, hair-slide-sporting young lass could refuse an offer like that?

Not that the track in question is a pumping rompathon; far from it. This is music for sensitive young things to gaze wistfully into each other's eyes, perhaps after a spot of metaphysical poetry reading. Softly ironing a tender, melancholic melody onto some distracted guitar tickling that wouldn't sound out of place on a more ponderous Sonic Youth track, before heading skywards in the band's trademark fashion. We guess this is the sound of the girl saying "no thanks" and all the soul-searching heartache that follows.

This Town Needs Guns sound more defiant and confident on the lead song, having seemingly discovered that less can be more, removing much of their old bombast and hitting on some dinky jazz-inflected guitar runs and cantering piano over which Stuart Smith yearns for spiritual salvation.

Pretty and neatly understated stuff from a band who seem to get better with each new release, but have yet to fully define their own identity.

Sue Foreman



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The Atlas Mountains + Noah
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| 5 th Jessica Goyder | 19 th Permanent Vacation
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+ You're Smiling But We'll All
Turn Into Demons + Divine
Coils + Zelega |
| 6 th Rock Soc presents
Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element
+ Theo + Tatsumoko's Bear | 22 nd Oxford Folk Club |
| 7 th Port Mayhem | 23 rd James |
| 8 th Oxford Folk Club | 24 th Pindrop Performance
presents Shady Bard + House
of Brothers + Mijuanita |
| 9 th The Mon£shots + The
Sunrays + Cranefly | 25 th Vacuous Pop presents
Dart! + Data.Select.Party +
HPR |
| 10 th Swiss Concrete presents
The Rosie Taylor Project +
Spokane + 4 or 5 Magicians | 26 th Linda's Nephew + All The
Arms + special guests |
| 11 th Vacuous Pop presents
Eugene McGuinness + Lonely
Ghosts + Tumbledown Estate | 28 th Dubwiser |
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Wed 6th Jazz At the X presents
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– double bass; Ben Twyford –
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booking advised.*

Thu 7th Grinning Spider presents
– Bands TBC. 8.30pm £4

Fri 8th Gammy Leg presents
Stornoway / Earnest Cox / The
New Moon. 8pm £4

Thu 14th Teddy Dan with Wayne
McArthur & The Universal Players.
8.30pm £4

Fri 15th Xposure presents TBC
8.30pm £4

Sat 16th The Sam Kelly Blues
Band 8.30pm £4

Sun 17th Electric Jam - come jam
with The X Men. 8pm FREE

Wed 20th Sharron Kraus - CD
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support 8.30pm £4

Fri 22nd Mary Flower. 8.30pm £5

Sat 23rd Wittstock Fund Raiser -
Acts TBC. 8.30pm £4

Sun 24th Electric Jam - come jam
with The X Men. 8pm FREE

Wed 27th Jazz At The X presents
– A Jazz Jam. Come and jam with
the house band, lead by Paul
Jefferies. 8pm FREE *Dinner
booking advised*

Thur 28th SelectaSound Presents
– Acts TBC. 8.30pm £4

Fri 29th Spit Like This / Kaned
Citizen / Kellik. 8.30pm £4

Sat 30th Vallenato Quintet.
8.30pm £5

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GIG GUIDE

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FRIDAY 1st

THE PIRATE SHIP QUINTET + RED PEPPER DRAGON + BLUENECK + THIRTY TWO: The X, Cowley – A night of very different types of

guitar noise at the X with Bristol's Pirate Ship Quintet mixing up Refused and Isis with Mogwai for their orchestral brand of epic post-rock. Red Pepper Dragon aim for a more ambient-flavoured instrumental rock, partway between Sigur Ros and Boards of Canada, while Blueneck are fresh from supporting Cult Of Luna on tour. Local raging hardcore rioters Thirty Two complete an impressive bill.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with MOOCHER + INIGO JONES BAND + RISING DRAGON +

Sunday 2nd

THE EARLY YEARS / SENNEN / DOT

ALLISON: The Cellar

As a fallen angel voice for hire (notably on Death In Vegas' awesome 'Dirge' and her duets with Pete Doherty) Dot Allison is a more familiar figure than most folks probably realise, but since her days in Scottish pop act One Dove, through an eclectic solo and collaborative career, she's remained on the fringes of both commercial and critical acclaim. Her new album, 'Exaltation Of Larks' is produced by American underground legend Kramer. Norwich's shoegazing revivalists Sennen bridge the musical gap between Mogwai and Simon and Garfunkel, but it's London's The Early Years who every living soul should come and see. Last year's eponymous debut album was a glorious melting pot of psychedelia, krautrock and drone-rock, taking inspiration from Neu! Spacemen 3 and Teardrop Explodes' glorious 'Wilder'. Here is a band with a perfect balance of pristine melody, hypnotic groove and virulent noise. Certainly one of the UK's most undervalued bands at the moment, we've waited a long time for the privilege of seeing them in Oxford and the dark, subterranean confines of the Cellar seem perfectly suited for them.



JUNE

JEREMY: The Wheatsheaf – Mixed bag of musical fun from the KK crew, including funk-rocking renaissance architect Inigo Jones.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
THE LONG INSIDERS + LITTLE THINGS + THE BLACK HATS: The Jericho Tavern – Shimmering, atmospheric cabaret pop in the vein of Ennio Morricone and John Barry from The Long Insiders, who see the return of former-Four Storeys chaps Nick and Simon Kenny, now fronted by chanteuse Sarah Dodd, cooing sweetly in the style of Nancy Sinatra. 60s-influenced indie rock support from Black Hats.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
DUGOUT: The Cellar

SATURDAY 2nd

THE EARLY YEARS + SENNEN + DOT

ALLISON: The Cellar – Sublime psychedelic drone-pop from London's Early Years – *see main preview*

BEAR IN THE AIR + NOVA KICKS + KING OF SPAIN: The Wheatsheaf

BEELZEBOZO + THE NEW MOON + ALLY CRAIG + SAME POPE: The X, Cowley – Grinning Spider night with doomy metallers Beelzebozo doing their blood-spattered grind with support from acoustic pop duo The New Moon, plus Jeff Buckley-goes-Sonic Youth brilliance from Ally Craig.

QUICKFIX RECORDINGS & SMOKERS PROHIBITION CLUB JAM NIGHT: The Port Mahon – Jam along with the local indie collective.
MELTING POT with THE SIRENS CALL + TRANSISTOR STATE + THE KLATTER +

LITTLE FISH: The Jericho Tavern – A rocking good night at tonight's Melting Pot, with Banbury's Oasis-influenced chuggers The Sirens Call, plus melodic indie types Transistor State, urgent heavy rock out of Birmingham from The Klatter and best of the lot, local duo Little Fish, making a sizeable garage-punk racket.

ACOUSTIC EVENING: Isis Tavern, Iffley – Warm-up night for this season's Sunday Steamer.

LIDDINGTON: Temple Bar

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Crawley Inn, Witney

SKITTLE ALLEY ACOUSTIC NIGHT: King's Head & Bell, Abingdon – With sets from Jon and Colin Fletcher, plus Adam Matthews.

SUNDAY 3rd

NOAH & THE WHALE + THANKSGIVING + FRANCOIS & THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS: The Port Mahon – A Night of lopsided folk sounds with London's biblically incorrect oddballs Noah & The Whale singing about death in suitably melancholic fashion. Portland, Oregon's Thanksgiving provide lo-fi indie-folk in the vein of Will Oldham and Smog, while François and the

Atlas Mountains bridge the musical gap between Bristol and France in decidedly ramshackle but occasionally inspired style.

CORSAIRS: Black Horse, Kidlington – 60s-styled rock'n'roll and rockabilly.

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley – Free jam session with in-house band The X Men.

ALL FROM THE MOUTH: The Cellar – Part of the Vauxhall UK beatbox championships.

MONDAY 4th

JONATHAN KALB: The Bullingdon – Renowned US blues guitarist and singer, steeped in the tradition of Muddy Waters, Albert Collins and BB King, but drawing on a wide range of blues styles as well as soul, funk and country along the way, now enjoying his 35th year on the road, touring the US and Europe as well as backing the likes of Bo Diddley, Otis Rush and Lightning Hopkins.

ECLECTRICA: The Port Mahon – New electronic music club night.

TUESDAY 5th

JAZZ CLUB with HOWARD PEACOCK: The Bullingdon – Free weekly jazz club with resident live act Howard Peacock and guests, plus r'n'b DJs.

JESSICA GOYDER: The Port Mahon – Catalan-tinged acoustic jazz-pop from the local songstress and recent Oxford Punt star.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 6th

THE JOFF WINKS BAND + MONKEY

PUZZLE: The Wheatsheaf – This month's Nightshift cover stars unfurl their psychedelic jazz-rock – *see main interview feature*

ANDY YORKE: The Jericho Tavern – One-time Unbelievable Truth frontman Andy gears up for the release of his debut solo album, 'Simple, recorded with former UT bandmates Nigel Powell and Jason Moulster.

SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + THEO + TATSUMOKO'S BEAR: The Port Mahon – Sonically confrontational electro-rock from Sunnyvale, plus promising post-rock from newcomers Theo.

GARY MOORE: The New Theatre – The veteran blues and rock guitar hero and former Thin Lizzy axeman heads out on tour in support of his latest solo album, 'Close As You Get'.

THE MARTIN PICKETT BAND: The X, Cowley – The X's regular jazz club presents Martin Pickett, accompanied by guitarist Kevin Armstrong, double bassist Paul Jeffries and drummer Ben Twyford.

BARCODE: The Bullingdon – DJs Dan Offer and Dave T spinning world jazz tunes.

PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar – Jazz and funk jam session.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 7th

PORT MAYHEM SUMMER CLOSEDOWN

PARTY: The Port Mahon – The monthly



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unplugged club night bids farewell until the autumn with dark-folk posse Telling The Bees, harmonic psychedelic pop duo Anton Barbeau & Su Jordan, hippy-goth folksters Spiderwoods, vintage jazz and blues duo Maeve Bayton and Ian Nixon, plus guitarist Eddy Thompson.

POPULAR WORKSHOP + HARRY ANGEL + SAVAGE HENRY: **The Cellar** – Return of London's angular, jagged and highly-strung post-punk outfit Popular Workshop to town, with support from the equally frenetic Harry Angel, creating a musical riot of guitar fuzz and virulent gothic rhythms.

SMASH DISCO: **The Bullingdon** – Smash Disco moves to the Bully for the summer while the Zodiac undergoes refurbishment, playing their eclectic blend of electro, indie and post-punk.

CROSTOWN TRAFFIC with LAST VERSES + ULYSEES + ONES AND ZEROES: **The Jericho Tavern** – Folky pop from headliners Last Verses.

KING FURNACE + FOURTH CHAMBER: **The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Heavy rock night at the Hobgoblin, with Chili Peppers-styled King Furnace headlining.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon**

FRIDAY 8th

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with STORNOWAY + EARNEST COX + THE NEW MOON: **The X, Cowley** – The Stornoway pop bandwagon continues to gather pace following their excellent showing at last month's Oxford Punt: simple but eclectic celtic-tinged pop from the top drawer. Support at tonight's GLP show comes from Gloucester's new wavers Earnest Cox and local acoustic duo The New Moon.

QUICKFIX PRESENTS with THE DELTA FREQUENCY + STRANGERS IN POLAROIDES + HREDA: **The Wheatsheaf** – Gothic-tinged electro rock action from Delta Frequency. Muse and Jeff Buckley-influenced pop from Strangers in Paradise.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: **The Port Mahon THE HEARTWEAR PROCESS + NATHAN ROSWELL + MONOVIBE + THE PLAUDITS:** **The Jericho Tavern** – Resolutely downbeat gothic pop from Reading's Heartwear Process, brooding in the shadows of Nick Cave and Tindersticks. Support comes from Hampshire rockers Monovibe and local 80s-inspired pop types The Plaudits.

BOSSAPHONIK: **The Cellar** – Live jazz dance from Brazilian samba and bossa nova act Sirius B.

REDOX + THE PETER FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR: **The Magdalen** – Monthly residence for the local festival funk and swamp rockers, plus indefatigable rock eccentric Pete Fryer and indie rockers Film Noir.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: **The Bullingdon**

SATURDAY 9th

MATHS CLASS + GEORGE PRINGLE: **The Cellar** – Urgent, bug-eyed techno-rock from the Brighton band who are soon to be the name on every hipster's lips, sitting (albeit in a fidgety kind of way) alongside the likes of Shitdisco and Foals, plundering the angular new wave of Talking Heads and Gang of Four as well as the punked-up synth-pop of The Faint and kicking it out in a decidedly hysterical fashion. Support from local electro-pop diarist George Pringle, offering a lopsided, low-rent journey into her existential existence.

SIMPLE: **The Bullingdon** – Funky house as the Simple DJs team up with Slide for an end of term party.

THE MON£YSHOTS + CRANFLY + SUNRAYS: **The Port Mahon** – Dark-minded post-punk and acoustic pop from the Mon£yshots.

THE COLOURS + DEFEAT: **Temple Bar** – Radiohead-inspired indie rock from Reading's Colours.

SKITTLE ALLEY BANDS NIGHT: **British Legion, Abingdon** – Dark country rockers Vigilance Black Special headline tonight's new Skittle Alley club, with support from Lewis Cutler & Adam Fitzgerald, Dirty Red and bluesman Steve Morris.

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Flowing Well, Sunningwell**

SUNDAY 10th

THE ROSIE TAYLOR PROJECT + SPOKANE + 4 OR 5 MAGICIANS: **The Port Mahon** – Dependably quality fare from Swiss Concrete, featuring Leeds' hushed, lysergic alt.country types The Rosie Taylor Project, mixing a rootsy acoustic sound with a Scottish indie shimmer. Local dark folksters Spokane support, alongside Brighton's Pavement-inspired rockers 4 Or 5 Magicians.

SCOOPY DON'T: **Black Horse, Kidlington**

MEAN POPPA LEAN: **The Purple Turtle** – Live funk.

MONDAY 11th

THE KYLA BROX BAND: **The Bullingdon** – Daughter of British blues legend Victor Brox, Kyla has shared the stage with her father many times, matching his powerful voice easily and on course to become the UK's premier female blues singer, mixing up classic r'n'b, blues, funk and soul.

LONELY GHOSTS + TUMBLEDOWN ESTATE + EUGENE MCGUINNESS: **The Port Mahon** – Brighton comes to Oxford at tonight's Vacuum Pop show, featuring sometime Help, She Can't Swim fella Tom Denney doing ramshackle, melodramatic electro-acoustic pop, with support from Jim Morrison (no, not that one) in the guise of Tumbledown Estate, proffering a similarly lo-fi slice of frantic punky pop. Liverpoolian singer-songwriter Eugene McGuinness adds a punky attitude to his acoustic pop.

SLOUNGE with COLLEEN: **The Jam Factory** – Minimalist chamber music and tranquil, eerie Renaissance sounds, mixing up classical and contemporary ambient music from French Leaf label signing Colleen, as part of Oxford Contemporary Music's Slounge multi-media season. She combines instruments as diverse as cello, classical guitar, clarinet, music boxes and wind chimes with delay pedals and loops, all played entirely live. Joining Colleen are humorously subversive slam-poet Byron Vincent and sound artist Nicholas Brown, turning Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons' into birdsong.

TUESDAY 12th

JAZZ CLUB with HOWARD PEACOCK: **The Bullingdon**

MARK B: **The Port Mahon**

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: **The X, Cowley**

INTRUSION: **The Cellar** – Goth and industrial club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: **Mangos**

WEDNESDAY 13th

BENT SPOON TRIO: **The Port Mahon** – Oxford Improvisers present Canadian jazz experimenters Bent Spoon, featuring David Laing (sax), Scott Munro (bass) and Chris Dudge (drums)

BARCODE: **The Bullingdon**

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

OPEN MIC SESSION: **Folly Bridge Inn**

OPEN MIC SESSION: **Temple Bar**

THURSDAY 14th

MIMAS + WITCHES + VON BRAUN: **The Cellar** – Oceanic guitar noise in the vein of Mogwai and Explosions In The Sky from Denmark's Mimas, making their Oxford debut.



Thursday 21st

DAMIEN RICE

Monday 25th

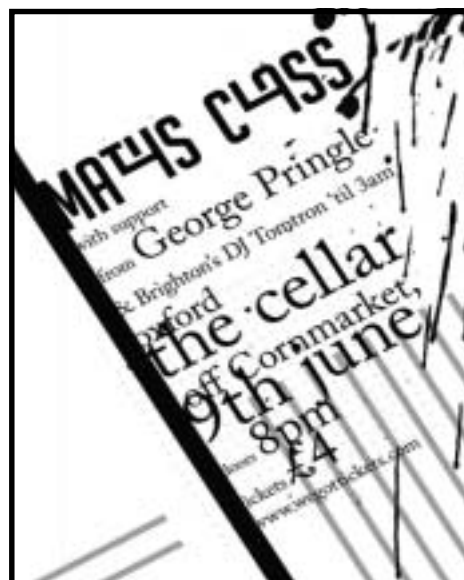
RUFUS

WAINWRIGHT

The New Theatre

Two chances in under a week to catch two of the fastest-rising singer-songwriters around.

First up is Damien Rice, recently split from his long-time vocal partner Lisa Hannigan, the fragile foil to his bitter intensity. After the chart-topping debut, 'O', and last year's follow-up, '9', Rice's place near pole position in the sensitive young men stakes is undoubted but on stage his more experimental side comes more to the fore, mixing sparse, soul-searching acoustic numbers with more fiery funk, rock and even prog. Rufus, meanwhile, celebrates the release of his fifth album this month, 'Release The Stars', which features collaborations with the likes of Neil Tennant, Richard Thompson and, of course, his sister Martha, an album intended to be his most commercial yet after years as a cult concern. Like an old-world Thom Yorke, Rufus switches between lavish, richly-textured and more stripped-down songs, lyrically taking in emotional hurt, political ire and restless romance, both mournful and uplifting, graceful and emotionally unsettled. Whether the wider public will finally warm to him remains to be seen, but his talent is undoubted.





Saturday 23rd

OMD: The New Theatre

Reunited after an acrimonious split in the late-80s, the original line-up of synth-pop titans Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark celebrates with a Greatest Hits tour, and what hits: 'Electricity', 'Enola Gay', 'Souvenir', 'Joan of Arc', 'Genetic Engineering' – the latter from one of the 80s most misunderstood and under-rated classic albums, 'Dazzle Ships', wherein the multi-million-selling hit machine that was Andy McLusky and Paul Humphreys went all experimental in the aftermath of the monumentally successful 'Architecture and Morality', discovering sampling and cut-ups to startling effect. OMD were probably always a little misunderstood: despite their shimmering pop brilliance they were incredibly political (check out the anti-war 'Bunker Soldiers' from their debut album, or even '88 Seconds In Greensboro' from 1985's 'Crush', which documented the massacre of American civil rights activists). Born out of the same post-punk Liverpool scene that spawned Teardrop Explodes and Echo & The Bunnymen, OMD initially captured the decaying industrial soul of the city with home-made synths and drum machines before launching into a string of some 30 Top 40 hits across a decade and a half. Along with Human League and Gary Numan they make up the holy trinity of synth-pop and, as we all know, great pop music remains timeless.

Support comes from local electro-country-mariachi rockers Witches.

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + UNTITLED 1961 + STRAIGHTJACKET: The Port Mahon – Melodic indie rock from Thame's Shaker Heights
TEDDY DAN + WAYNE McARTHUR & THE UNIVERSAL PLAYERS: The X, Cowley – Live roots reggae.

GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon
CROSTOWN TRAFFIC with RUBBER DUCK + THE SIRENS CALL + SMASHED ALPHA: The Jericho Tavern
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 15th

XPOSURE with JONES RADIO + TOY #1: The X, Cowley – Raging, paranoid psych-rock from Jones Radio in the vein of Joy Division, Primal Scream and Pink Floyd, plus goth-edged grunge from Toy #1.

THE MATT SAGE ALLSTARS + THE KATE GARRETT BAND + BARNABUS + JANE

GRIFFITHS & COLIN FLETCHER: Pegasus Theatre – Local acoustic and world pop singer Matt Sage is joined by a collection of local luminaries tonight, who also make up the supporting cast, including songstress Kate Karrett, cellist Barnabus and folky duo Jane and Colin.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
JOE PARKER & THE MEGA HAIRY MEN + JOSH KNIGHT + LAMPLIGHT + MR FOGG: The Jericho Tavern – Alternately fuzzy college rock and sensitive acoustic pop from local newcomers Joe Parker and co.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House beats and breaks.

SATURDAY 16th

THE SAM KELLY BLUES BAND: The X, Cowley – The five-times British Blues Connection Drummer of the Year returns to his favourite local stamping ground with his lively blues band.
THE GOG + THE GREEN: The Wheatsheaf
TRASHY: The Bullingdon – Trashy moves to the Bully for the summer, playing a crowd-friendly mix of 80s, glam-rock and punk.
MELTING POT with KING FURNACE + TIM MATTHEWS + THE COUNCIL + ARCHIVE OF EVERYTHING: The Jericho Tavern – Heavyweight funk-rockers King Furnace headline tonight's Melting Pot show, with support from Tim Matthews' indie-funk trio, retro blues, rock and soul band The Council and electro manglers Archive of Everything.
ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar – Electro club night with live bands and DJs.
JOE ALLEN + THE PISTACHIOS: Temple Bar – Elegantly nervy acoustic pop from recent Punt star Joe Allen.

SUNDAY 17th

SUNDAY STEAMER with BETHANY WEIMERS + AMBERSTATE: Salter's Steamers (3pm) – First Sunday Steamer of the summer (for the uninitiated – lots of great local bands on a boat up and down the Thames, while everyone gets a bit giddy and acts like marauding vikings). Saying that, it's a relatively reserved start to the season with local acoustic songstress Bethany Weimers headlining while ambient jazz-pop types Amberstate provide funky back-up. The boat departs from Salter's Steamers under Folly Bridge.
ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley
CHRIS FOSTER: The Port Mahon
BURN: Black Horse, Kidlington

MONDAY 18th

PRIMO BLUES BAND: The Bullingdon – Return of Sam Kelly's ensemble side project, the five-times British Blues Connection drummer of the year and band playing a mixture of goodtime funky blues, reggae, Hendrix-inspired rock and 70s soul.
JOE ALLEN + THE PISTACHIOS: The Port Mahon – Another chance to catch rising local acoustic star Joe, alongside electric violinist Angharad Jenkins.

TUESDAY 19th

JAZZ CLUB with HOWARD PEACOCK: The Bullingdon
FUCK BUTTONS + YOU'RE SMILING NOW BUT WE ALL TURN INTO DEMONS + DIVINE COILS: The Port Mahon – Ear-mangling electro noise and brutal rhythms from Fuck Buttons, returning to town after their last visit, supporting Youthmovies. Dissonant ambience, drones and unsettling atmospherics from local experimental outfit Divine Coils.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

WEDNESDAY 20th

SHARRON KRAUS: The X, Cowley – Gothic folkstress Sharron launches her latest album,

murder ballads and heartache done in a darkly traditional folk fashion.

BARCODE: The Bullingdon

PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar

THURSDAY 21st

DAMIEN RICE: The New Theatre – Bitter-sweet soul-bearing from the Irish songsmith – *see main preview*

A SILENT FILM + FEE FI FO FUM: The Cellar – Top notch stadium-sized rock action from local stars-in-waiting A Silent Film, gearing up for their debut single release next month. Support from Hella-inspired math-rockers Fee Fi Fo Fum.

DEAD SPIES + PORT ERIN: The X, Cowley – Spiky indie rocking from London's Dead Spies, plus bouncy guitar pop from Bath's Port Erin.

SMASH DISCO: The Bullingdon

CROSTOWN TRAFFIC with BEN

MARWOOD + NOT MY DAY: The Jericho Tavern – Local singer-songwriter Ben Marwood headlines tonight's Crosstown Traffic showcase gig with his Elliot Smith and Ben Folds-flavoured pop.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 22nd

MARY FLOWER: The X, Cowley – American acoustic singer-songwriter renowned for her finger-

Monday 25th

DARTZ! /

DATA.SELECT.PARTY: The Port Mahon

Not, perhaps fortunately, a chance to relive late-70s rockabilly hits like 'Daddy Cool', but another opportunity to revel in Vacuous Pop's esoteric tastes in modern pop. Teesside's Dartz! (we're quite fond of bands with exclamation marks at the end of their names at the moment) have been quietly picking up a serious reputation for themselves with a typically angular and frenetic brand of post-punk that draws on Gang Of Four and Talking Heads and regularly sees them mentioned alongside Dismemberment Plan and Q And No U, not to mention our own Foals. Seemingly endless touring has found them in tow to Futureheads and Rumble Strips amongst others and the band's literary and politically agitated stylings seem to fit neatly into the current musical climes while sounding like they're from another time altogether. Data.Select.Party in support could probably fill the Port's intimate gig room on their own; they share with Dartz! a feel for speed-addled disco-rock and shouty call-and-response vocals and, as with the headliners your feet will want to dance even as your head tries to work out exactly how they're meant to.



picking and slide guitar style as well as her rich jazz and blues voice. She's back in town promoting her acclaimed new album, 'Bywater Dance'.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
THE NOYZE + PHILL MORRISSEY + WAVE MACHINES + BANDINIS: The Jericho Tavern – Beefy indie rocking inspired by The Stone Roses and Oasis from Reading's The Noize.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
OXFORD UNDERGROUND: The Cellar – Hip hop club night.

SATURDAY 23rd

OMD: The New Theatre – Synth-pop legends do their greatest hits – *see main preview*
HELLSETT ORCHESTRA + FOXES! + TITUS + BENKREN + RICHARD WALTERS + JOE SWARBRICK: The Cellar – Big Hair presents an alternative to Glastonbury, with joyously jangly indie heroes Foxes! plus experimental post-rockers Titus, angel-voiced songsmith Rich Walters and Borderville frontman Joe Swarbrick, plus plenty more besides.
OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.
WITTSTOCK FUNDRAISER: The X, Cowley

SUNDAY 24th

SHADY BARD + HOUSE OF BROTHERS + MIJUANITO: The Port Mahon (5pm) – Elegantly lo-fi orchestral pop from Birmingham's DIY mini-orchestra Shady Bard at tonight's Pindrop performance, using French horns, strings and piano alongside the decidedly more indie glockenspiels and Casios to create a sound that marries the kitchen sink pop operas of Divine Comedy with the more atmospheric sounds of Mogwai and Sigur Ros. Should be fun cramming them all onto the Port's stage. Support comes from former-Murder Of Rosa Luxembourg man Andrew Jackson, plying serene piano and strings-led pop, plus San Francisco's Mijuanito's confessional acoustic Americana and folk.
ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley
BICESTER BLUES CLUB with THE JUMPSTERS: The Country Club, The Old Chapel, Bicester – Live blues from The Jumpsters.
ELVIS REBORN: Black Horse, Kidlington – Tribute to the King.

MONDAY 25th

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT: The New Theatre – Martha's bruv bares his aching soul – *see main preview*

DARTZ + DAT.SELECT.PARTY: The Port Mahon – Twitchy punk-funk action from the Teesside rockers – *see main preview*
GEOFF ACHISON & THE SOULDIGGERS: The Bullingdon – Melbourne-based blues-rock guitarist, and previous winner of the prestigious Albert King Award for most promising young blues guitarist, Achison excels at both electric and acoustic blues, adding jazz and funk improvisations into his traditional repertoire.

TUESDAY 26th

JAZZ CLUB with THE HUGH TURNER BAND: The Bullingdon
LINDA'S NEPHEW + ALL THE ARMS: The Port Mahon
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
OPEN MIC SESSION: Mangos

WEDNESDAY 27th

JAZZ JAM: The X, Cowley – Jam along with Paul Jeffries' in-house jazz band.
BARCODE: The Bullingdon
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 28th

THE WALK OFF + THE EVENINGS + CLANKY ROBO GOB JOBS: The Cellar – Electro night at Big Hair's weekly club. Digital hardcore tearaways The Walk Off recreate the sound of bombs falling on munitions factories, while The Evenings, bring the linear krautrock grooves.
DUBWISER: The Port Mahon – Back into the groove with local roots reggae veterans Dubwiser.
GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon
CROSTOWN TRAFFIC with THE ANYDAYS + THE PLUGS: The Jericho Tavern – Sunshiney 60s pop from headliners The Anydays.
SELECTASOUND PRESENTS: The X, Cowley

FRIDAY 29th

FRIDAY FRIGATE with FOXES! + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS + BABY GRAVY: Salter's Steamers (8pm) – An evening sailing for the Sunday Steamer crew, tonight's indie triple bill headed by the ever-improving Foxes!, recent stars of the Oxford Punt, with support from fellow Punters Baby Gravy and indie-ska hopefuls Tristan and the Troubadours.
SPIT LIKE THIS + KANED CITIZEN + KELLIK: The X, Cowley – Cyndi Rott's glam-punkers warm up for their appearance at Guildfest, with support from local pop act Kaned Citizen and Brummie metallers Kellik.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Classic funk, soul and disco with special guest DJ Aidan Larkin, plus an early gig from local ska-punkers The Drug Squad.
HQ: The Cellar

SATURDAY 30th

SWISSFEST: The Port Mahon (12pm-11.30pm) – Small but perfectly-formed mini-festival featuring the cream of Swiss Concrete's first year – *see main preview*
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with IVY'S ITCH + BRENDA + SEFTON: The Wheatshaf – Demonic gothic grunge and ghostly pop spookiness from the mighty Ivy's Itch at tonight's GTI, here to ensure children everywhere will enjoy a disturbed night's sleep across Oxfordshire. Inventively melodic indie rock noise, where Fell City Girl meet Mogwai, from Brenda, plus soothing acoustic pop from Sefton, providing the calm before Ivy's Itch's storm.
VALLENATO QUINTET: The X, Cowley – Following on from a two-day residency at



Sat 30th June – Sun 1st July

SWISSFEST:


The Port Mahon

Like similarly-minded club nights Gappy Tooth Industries and Klub Kakofanney, Swiss Concrete are adept at putting on mixed bills that display plenty of musical variety while retaining a creditable coherence. To celebrate their first anniversary, SC host a two-day mini-festival featuring their favourite acts from the past twelve months. Each evening at the Port Mahon sees six acts, while each afternoon features acoustic and poetry sessions. Highlights of the Saturday are terse, arty electro dabblers Ape Has Killed Ape!, Abrasive, melodic hardcore monsters Our Own Devices, synth'n'guitar instrumentalist Flies Are Spies From Hell, accomplished Nas-styled rapper Zuby (*pictured*) and Sheffield's spazz-rockers Balor Knights, while in the garden the genius that is Ally Craig is joined by Glenda Huish and Richard Catalogue amongst others. Sunday's evening session is headlined by sweet jangle-pop favourites Foxes! who are joined by Switzerland's electro heavyweights La Frange, Brighton's Radiohead-inspired Last Days Of Lorca, twee minimalists Little Eiffel and bright local rap star Mr Shadown, while down in the garden there's James Bell, Jody Prewett, Naomi Hates Humans and Beaver Fuel amongst others. A great way to discover some unheard pop gems. Entry is £5 a day or £8 for the weekend. All profits go to the Red Cross.

Glastonbury Festival the LA salsa and rumba band bring their traditional Colombian dance and storytelling to the X.

WALK ON THE WILD SIDE: The Bullingdon – Oxfam fundraiser with Natureboy playing a set of new funk and groove-led tracks, plus DJ sets from Van Mule, Jason King and Sam.

OFF THE RADAR + YOUNG THINGS PLAY + THE WISH: The Jericho Tavern – Anthemic power-pop from Reading's Off The Radar, plus downbeat 80s-styled indie jangle from The Wish.
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LIVE

THE OXFORD PUNT

The Oxford Punt has kicked off at Borders for most of its lifetime but this is the first time the music has actually taken place in the store's music section. And yet, despite the fact that behind opening act **Jessica Goyder** we can spy books sporting pictures of Sid Vicious and Tom Waits, it's a strangely understated start to the evening. Of course, you're not going to get rip-snorting thrash-metal from Jessica, an acoustic singer-songwriter who learned her trade in Brazil and Barcelona and is possessed of a wonderfully pure jazz singing voice that switches between Nina Simone and Minny Ripperton, the whole thing blanketed in a gentle Spanish mist, including set highlights 'Blossom' sung in both English and Spanish, and the closing a cappella 'Demons To Tea'. We do wonder, though, about the tome *The 500 Greatest Singles Since Punk And Disco* that gleams out from the shelves. Just how arbitrary is that, especially since both genres are still very much alive.

Mr Shadow initially doesn't seem too sure about performing in a bookshop; ironic given his opening track, 'Look Out, There's A Black Man Coming', a brilliantly witty anti-racism tirade that dwells on the uncomfortable feeling of being followed around shops by security guards due to the colour of his skin. The welcome he receives, though, quells any doubts and his lively, good-natured mixture of rap, kung fu and near stand-up comedy, plus his disarming manner of prompting audience participation in anthems such as 'The British Are Coming' shows him up as the consummate performer he is sure to become.

On to the venues proper and **Thirty Two** at the Market Tavern, who immediately make us wonder how we got from lilting Catalan folk to ferocious face-shredding thrash-core in such a short space of time. Many in the crowd visibly flinch in the face of such an unrelenting battering so early on, but those that make the effort to face the storm out can hear the texture and tension underlying the blood-spattered, shirts-off row, even as it hurtles headlong to a cataclysmic conclusion.

Seemingly half the population of Oxford has headed to the Purple Turtle for **Foxes!** and it's nigh-on impossible to see anything bar frontman Adam's hat. Bolstered by the club's cavernous architecture and, lent confidence by the large, enthusiastic crowd, their sound gains

new strength, coming on like some kind of electro-skiffle, 60s pop harmonies mixing it up with jaunty rockabilly. Foxes! have obviously come to party and from their very first number they've got the crowd eating out of the palm of their hands.

Putting even **Thirty Two** in the shade as far as sheer brutality goes, **Mondo Cada** up at the Wheatsheaf are an incandescent torrent of flanged guitars, churning bass and semi-buried guttural exhortations from the budding Henry Rollins up front. And they rock. Like bastards. Like bastards who are programmed to kill, kill and kill again. On tonight's showing they could give kindred spirits Sextodecimo a run for their money.

Back to the Market Tavern for **Mary Bendy Toy**, who get the vote for causing the most love-them-or-loathe-them debate (which is always a good sign), because, what's this – a nasty industrial gothic punk band fronted by a shrieking Hazel O'Connor, but who have a sense of humour that borders on Sid James and use an air-raid siren as an instrument. It's a timely reminder for anyone who ever marvelled at the much-underrated *Breaking Glass* of an era when punk went all robotic and dressed in black plastic, and we love it, whatever the curmudgeons say.

Colins Of Paradise, too, are causing much heated debate and possibly marital rows and we glance at our notepad to see the words Shakatak scrawled worryingly in capital letters. It's probably the electric piano and the typically-80s funky bass, akin to Pino Paladino's trademark fretless sound, but a passing expert on many things jazz suggest their big sax and keyboard sound, married to heavy drums and a distinct groove that rises up to carry it all along, is more reminiscent of jazz-rock pioneers Colosseum

Strangest pit-stop on this year's Punt circuit is the QI Club, not because it's a venue more used to hosting the well-heeled socialites of Oxford city, but because the gig room, such as it is, would fit snugly inside your broom cupboard, meaning a lucky dozen punters find themselves pressed face-to-face with singer **Joe Allen** and electric violinist **Angharad Jenkins**, while the remainder of a large crowd listen through the wall. Together the duo continue to take the concept of voice, fiddle and acoustic guitar to unbelievable reaches of rage, tension and release. It's difficult not to get swept out to sea in

Ape Has Killed Ape!



Mondo Cada



Brickwork Lizards



the tempest these two stars create in songs like 'At Gunpoint' and 'Do You Think That's Enough', while Anghrad's bubbly banter with the audience towels us down after the rain, as Joe re-tunes his pummelled guitar between songs, and causes us to take them both to our hearts.

Ape Has Killed Ape! find themselves most hampered by the QI set-up, notably their un-mic-ed mandolin player who is inaudible even to those who've made it inside the performance room. The band's electronic backing tracks spend the first couple of numbers apparently smoking a sly fag outside on Ship Street before sloping back in, mid-set. But despite this, AHKA! battle valiantly on to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. This is lovely stuff: measured, thoughtful and spacious, playing the Malcolm Middleton card to Arab Strap as it were. Their template hasn't moved on far from the heady days of Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia, consisting of shuffling, minimal beats, some neat keyboard and glockenspiel work and Emily Gray's familiar laconic arthouse musings. The only drawback is that it makes us miss MBICR all the more.

Things are getting hectic now as the gigs come thick and fast and folks are tearing around in between venues, as the promised downpour keeps to a

decent drizzle. But batten down the hatches for the newest rock and roll storm to hit town, Hurricane Delta (or **The Delta Frequency** as we probably should call them), down at the Cellar. In their case the supergroup element is actually an advantage rather than a hindrance (Audioslave, anyone?). Tom from Smilex has by far and away the best guitar sound in town; every lick sounds like he's sparking up the Batmobile. Never mind their recent terrible review in these very pages, this band rocks harder than the Kobe earthquake.

And talking of terrifying things, here are **Mephisto Grande** down at the Purple Turtle. Frontman Liam Ings-Reeves looks like he literally wants to devour several audience members (something we're in no doubt he is capable of). Formed from the remains of Suitable Case For Treatment, they lack that band's barnstorming heaviness but musically still carry plenty of weight and dynamics. There's an unexpected French number before they raise the stakes with an awesome guitar track that pulls together all the Fall and Beefheart references of their SC4T days. Fantastic.

Tonight's most talked-about set seems to come from **Brickwork Lizards** who, even on tonight's varied bill, manage to draw in more



The Delta Frequency



Mary Bendy Toy



Smilex



Baby Gravy



Thirty Two



Stornoway

global influences than a UN council meeting. From North African devotional sufi, complete with oud, through French café music to Hungarian Balkan folk and even some fire and brimstone American roots blues, they are forever shifting, keeping the listener on their toes even as they sink into its warm, otherworldly charms. Their pre-war jazz carries an authentic period feel and with four very different, equally talented singers, you wonder if they maybe need reporting to the Monopolies Commission.

There's a distinctly Gallic feel to **Les Clochards** too, back at QI, where the crowd has thinned just enough to allow most present to at least see the band. Visually as well as musically they seem like the sort of band you'd stumble across in a back street Parisian bar, Karen Cleave's accordion lending an exotic swirl to Ian Nixon's Left Bank poet-does-Johnny Cash drawl.

Stornoway are, according to many, Oxford's best band at the moment, and we love them. But when you're listening to their delicate folk pop from the back of a packed Wheatsheaf, and not all the band are present, it's hard to take too much away from the experience. Still, they occupy a place where the coolest thing in the whole world is to have a country and western hoe-down and

drink whiskey from huge jugs with three Xs on the side. For some reason they remind us of a living, breathing Mark Twain novel. Not sure about the giant horse's head that seems to be their motif; perhaps they save it for putting in the beds of unbelievers. The way things are going, there can't be many of them left in Oxford.

And the other contender for top local band title comes from **Borderville**. If you tried to teach Martians about rock music with nothing but videos of *Tommy* and the musical *Buffy* episode, a Rick Wakeman album and a scratchy 7" of 'Ballroom Blitz' they'd probably turn out performances just like Borderville. Fun though Sexy Breakfast were it's great to see frontman Joe Swarbrick finding songs that really suit his voice, and a band who can be theatrical without being smug (well, okay, maybe a tiny bit smug). 'Glambulance' calls for fists in the air, and for one night The Music Market is a Broadway theatre.

The Mile High Young Team look like they stepped out of a David Lynch film. They sound pretty good too, despite the lack of their cellist, and certainly better than their rather overly polished recordings. It's not much of response, but then the Punt should leave you confused, dizzy, and possibly slightly drunk.

Drunk being something **Baby Gravy**

aren't old enough to get yet. Anyone expecting shambolic chaos is in for a shock. What we get these days is extremely focussed and with definite star potential, not just from buoyantly charismatic singer Iona Roisin but equally from fantastic saxophonist Cecilia White who fixes the crowd with a steely gaze throughout. Bizarrely they manage to make a cogent noise that falls between Yes and X-Ray Spex, or maybe Huggy Bear turning their hand to Beefheart. No, really. And of course, they sound like nothing else in Oxford.

The bruised and awkward vocals of **The Gullivers'** Mark Byrne is sometimes what turns folks of the band but they actually work remarkably well against the suburban punk thud of the music. Tonight's performance is uneven but loveable, like a gangly Dickensian urchin who's grown out of his clothes.

After the mad, mid-evening flurry which finds three bands playing against each other at a time, the Punt begins to wind down – or rather, climax – at the Cellar.

Space Heroes of the People inspire two distinct reactions in us. Their instrumental stuff is excellent – at its best, it drives along like prime Kraftwerk, all unfussy rhythms, treated vocal samples and assorted blips and pops – and makes us think we might be watching our band of the

night. But then two tracks with vocals provided by an extraneous fourth member spoil it all. The song name-checking various dinosaurs is ruined by the vocals: imagine an embarrassing aunt bellowing cretinous aphorisms over your favourite krautrock track and you're close. Then it's normal service resumed for great instrumental closer, 'Groovy Dancer'. One can only hope the vocalist is dispensed with forthwith.

There is a very good reason why **Smilex** were chosen to close the Punt. That reason being they are impossible to ignore. Even though frontman Lee is knee-high to Iggy's leather thong, he's a whirlwind of drunken, lunatic abandon, smashing glasses against his head, invading the front few rows, who seem scared to fight back, and yelping about SEX while his band keep a respectfully solid barrage of powerchords going behind him. Smilex may deal in classic rock and roll cliché, but that's also their strength: say what you like about Lee's antics, no other fucker in town is that committed to creating such a spectacle, oblivious to their own personal safety. Smilex rock. Simple as. And like the Punt itself, Oxford should be proud to have them.

Words: Dale Kattack, Victoria Waterfield, Matt Bayliss, Art Lagun, Paul Carrera, Richard Catherall, Stuart Fowkes, Colin May.

LAST NIGHT PARTY

The Zodiac

Contrary to the old joke, nostalgia really is what it used to be. Tonight is a goodbye to something very, very special at the heart of Oxford's music scene, but it's also a welcome back to life for a handful of those bands who helped make this venue, and the local scene in general, what it is.

Tonight's bill is extraordinary. The Candyskins, Dustball, The Nubiles and Unbelievable Truth have all come back from the grave, while opening the night are The Relationships, a band whose lifespan outstrips that of the venue itself. Add to that Winnebago Deal, The Epstein and consummate party trashers Smilex and you've got a celebration that goes well beyond being merely a gig.

Yes, a celebration, even when **Unbelievable Truth** are cruising through an acoustic set of greatest hits – 'Settle Down', 'Higher Than Reason', 'Stone' and more – in front of a packed crowd, many of whom seem to have travelled halfway across the country to be here for this occasion and haven't set foot in the Zodiac since these bands were in their heyday. That's how much the Zodiac means to people. It's a part of their own personal histories. Hell, there are couples here who first met and fell in love on this dancefloor.

Relationships drummer Tim Turan jokes that his band will probably outlive even the rebuilt venue, but maybe there's a grain of truth in that. Frontman Richard Ramage has graced this stage since the 80s when his previous band The Anyways were the brightest pop fun in town and his gentle, romantic songwriting is timeless. The wistfully beautiful 'English Blues' is infused with melancholic reflection and drizzle, reflecting the rain which occasionally leaks through the Zodiac's ageing roof.

The music becomes more urgent with the arrival of **The Nubiles**, or at least the remaining half of them – singer/bassist Tara Milton and guitarist Giorgio Curcetti, with new drummer Ben Calvert replacing Dan Goddard. Back at the start of the 90s, The Nubiles were in a league of one, keeping alive that post-punk funk noise that was all muscles and odd angles; a style that's now *de rigueur* for aspiring indie types. Sadly there's no 'Kunte Kinte' tonight but we

do get 'Tatjana' amid a frenetic set that sounds like The Stranglers on a discoed speed trip. The music doesn't sound like it's aged at all.

And **Dustball** don't seem to have aged either, particularly drummer James Stuart who still looks like the fresh-faced teenager who bashed the hell out of his kit back in 1996 when Dustball first made their presence felt with the triumphant 'Yeah Yeah Yeah', a song that, appropriately, climaxes tonight's frantic dash of a set, taking in songs we've not heard in almost a decade but still seem to know all the words to, and when, thirty stunning minutes and one



Dustball photo: RPH Images



Candyskins photo: RPH Images

broken kick-drum pedal later, they launch into 'Señor Nachos' there's not a still body in the house. Other than a brief trip downstairs to catch fifteen minutes of **Winnebago Deal**'s trademark tidal wave of blitzkrieg garage metal – the most noise you can make with just two people, full of righteous fury and always up for the fight – we're staying upstairs tonight, fully aware it'll be nigh on impossible to get back upstairs for **The Candyskins** otherwise. It's hard to explain to anyone who wasn't around at the time what an important band The Candyskins were to Oxford in their heyday, but even newcomers tonight are in thrall to them; you'd never guess they'd split up nine years ago and have barely rehearsed for tonight. Perfect pop songs come easy to them. We get all the old favourites, from the beatific 'Wembley', through the stark pathos of 'Car Crash' to the closing, triumphant, 'Mrs Hoover'. And everyone – *everyone* – seems to be singing the chorus to 'Monday Morning', perhaps conscious that tomorrow's alarm clock is going to ring way too early after this party.

And now, of course, it's time to look to the future. Four months from tonight Oxford will welcome the best live music venue it's ever had. Thanks for the memories. The Zodiac is dead. Long live the Zodiac!

Dale Kattack

JOBY BURGESS, POWERPLANT & THE ELYSIAN QUARTET

The Jacqueline du Pre Building

Your word for the week is *synaesthesia*, the unusual ability to experience one sense through another. We've always wondered how synaesthetes find multimedia son et lumière shows like tonight's: "The yellow is out of tune with the bassoon"? Still, they might find a little more to entice than we do in Kathy Hinde's projections, which are lush but ultimately as memorable or meaningful as the majority of pop videos. Her colleagues in Powerplant (Joby Burgess, percussion, and Matthew Fairclough, machines) make up for this shortfall beautifully. They open with Javier Alvarez' 'Temazcal', mixing chitinous electronics that sound like Lovecraftian tentacles clawing at shale beaches, with live rhythms

from a single pair of maracas. The piece intelligently finds similarities between the two very different sound sources, and is played with jaw-dropping precision.

'Carbon Copy' loops sounds from improvisations on a Brazilian berimbau, and overlays them with stabbing percussion, ending up sounding uncannily like a drum&bass remix of Aphex Twin's classic 'Digeridoo'. Even better is Burgess' performance of Steve Reich's 'Electric Counterpoint' on the xylosynth, an instrument that allows metallophone keys to act as midi triggers, producing a vast array of sounds. By performing the piece using vintage synthesiser tones instead of guitar, Powerplant remind us just how much

electronic club music has borrowed from Reich over the past twenty years (we're looking at you, The Orb!). Possibly the best performance we've seen this year.

After the interval Powerplant are joined by The Elysian quartet for Ben Foster's arrangements of Kraftwerk compositions. The electronics are decent enough (even if they will keep breaking down) and the Elysians play with fine dynamic sense, but somehow the two elements don't mix. The fascinating paradox of Kraftwerk is that their music is simultaneously robotically arid and joyously human, that they create true warmth by eradicating all traces of the flesh from their austere controlled soundworld. By fudging the arrangements between two camps Foster has reduced Kraftwerk's masterpieces to a series of pretty tunes. And we have Coldplay to do that for us.

David Murphy

FIELDS / HUSH THE MANY

The Zodiac

The middle ground is no place to be. Politically, artistically it's a no-man's land where a desire to please all of the people all of the time will inevitably crash ignobly. It's a lesson that Hush The Many would do well to learn. Their name suggests something ethereal and on a few occasions that's what we get: when the solemn cello is allowed to dominate and singers Nima and Alexandra weave their boy/girl harmonies most subtly, they possess some of Galaxie 500's quiet grandeur, if a little awkwardly. Similarly when they really go for it their propulsive squall is impressive, but half of the set mixes these opposing desires uncomfortably and you get the worst of both worlds – a middling mush that sounds like it's picking scraps from The Magic Numbers' table.

For the first half of their set you could level the same criticism at Fields, a band we know to be capable of so much more. Here is where the new wave of acid-tipped 60s folk meets the vivid dreamscapes of My Bloody Valentine and Ride (drummer Henry Spenner in particular has the same effortless intensity as Loz Colbert). But it's all too well mannered: even when they're hitting you with a devotional acoustic folk hymn, they seem like they're concentrating so hard on losing themselves they can't actually get lost. But finally, just as we're about to give up, frustrated, they hit the space-rock pedals on 'If You Fail, We All Fail', singers Nick Peill and Thorunn Antonia wrap their voices around each other and we're soaring. 'Songs For The Fields' is the sound of the dam bursting and a flood of stargazing noise engulfing the room. Doubts are finally swept away. If Fields could hit those highs earlier on and stay there for a whole set, they'd be a religious experience

Sue Foreman

A SILVER MOUNT ZION / JONQUIL

The Zodiac

Jonquil have to be Oxford's greatest band at present. Tonight they prepare for the summer with their new and more overtly folky material. 'Rings' is a fantastic and somewhat moving piece with its florid guitar lines and nursery rhyme chanting. Hugo is on top form tonight, with a voice that's dynamic and sonorous. The serenely jolly 'Whistle Low' sounds a tad edgy with the clackity drumming pervading the mix.

Epic post-rock orchestra Godspeed You! Black Emperor just about got away with the slightly pretentious song names and 22-minute songs. Its shameless remnants who play here tonight, however, are a frustrating listen at times. A Silver Mount Zion were born out of the indefinite hiatus of Godspeed with band leader and hirsute botherer Efrim singing in an incongruous punk drawl, slowed down and lisping. The same motif swelling and falling for 15 minutes apiece is fairly entertaining live, and it certainly has its gripping moments. Things get rather dramatic: parts fall so quiet that you dare to blink, then rise to epic four-to-the-floor poundings from an understandably bored drummer. An eerie wailing is found in the violinist singing into her instrument's pickup; a big muff double bass throbs these icky walls. Even their tuning up sounds magnificent! 'Take These Hands And Throw Them In the River' is the culmination of sounds: after an introduction of ascending freeform drones, in slips a slick beat and we're flying. Yet after 90 minutes of leg-aching drama, Efrim spoils it all by complaining about having to finish at 10.30. The unreasonable prick even has the gall to criticize the promoter who put him on in the first place. An unnecessarily pissed off end to the evening.

Pascal Ansell

ACOUSTIC LADYLAND / ALLY CRAIG

The Zodiac

Last month Ally Craig had the good fortune of being exalted to the hilt in these very pages I have to agree: he's a bloody marvel and a great chap with great chops indeed. A consummate musician in all respects, songs replete with unusual embellishments – he's partial to a few delicious dissonances as well. As for the voice: it's a soft, supple and thoroughly distinctive one indeed.

London jazz rockers Acoustic Ladyland put a twist on typical sedentary jazz viewing. As the drummer throws out the brushes for the early punk um-ta-um-ta's, a sweaty saxophonist blasts naughty little motif; twinkles are heard from a lushly ring-modulated keyboard. The drummer is a species of effortless Damon Che, camping more around the field of, to use a hopeless oxymoron, jazz conventions. A breakneck speed bastard child 'Take Five' of Dave Brubeck fame is wielded, 'Road of Bones' is a twisted, relentlessly noisy and discordant affair. The major seventh splits the ears. The frontman / saxophonist discharges sundry solos: emitting seconds of an extraordinary bubbling noise midway through tastefully preposterous solos. His pink shirt turns slowly more purple with patches of perspiration. It's when Acoustic Ladyland leave the structural post-punk fetters and instead incorporate true improvisational jazz that they hit that 'J spot' of which no other music on earth can reach. The shirt is now fully invaded with purple jazz sweats. Job done.

Pascal Ansell

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SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO

Slide @ The Zodiac

Ten years ago dance music was so popular and DJs frankly so greedy that even moderately famous names would have laughed at the idea of playing somewhere like The Zodiac. Now the whole scene is a lot calmer and clubs like Slide can attract the likes of James Lavelle, Marshall Jefferson and Andrew Weatherall, loyally carrying a torch for House music and firmly established as the club night in Oxford to plan your holidays around.

The problem with live acts at clubs is that you never know when to expect some action, and it's four long hours after the doors open before we get to see the band, a fair few of the crowd having already called it a night. Simian Mobile Disco grew out of Simian, whose Justice remix of 'We Are Your Friends' soundtracked the summer before last. It's omission tonight could have been for contractual reasons, but the truth is that nothing we heard tonight came close to matching it for inventiveness. The beats are plodding and pedestrian, the overuse of squelchy acid noises leading you to suspect that they're short of proper musical ideas. The overall impression is the dance equivalent of a forty-five minute guitar solo, though fortunately most of the audience are so, er, tuned in that they'd be as happy dancing away to the shipping forecast. The music is sophisticated in a Basement Jaxx way, it just doesn't lend itself as well to a live format.

Sad to say that this is rather a depressing night, for dance music's great strength has always been its constant forward motion into new territories. I don't even know if the band consider themselves part of the new rave scene, but whose idea was it to attempt to revive something that never really died in the first place? Whatever you thought of acid house and the early rave scene no-one could deny that, like punk, it broke genuinely new ground and created a fresh musical lexicon. I'd hate to see dance music follow other genres into pointless revivalism and tired recreations of past glory.

Art Lagun

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THE PAPER CHASE / CUTTING PINK WITH KNIVES

The Wheatsheaf

It's a night of extremes at The Wheatsheaf tonight. The venue is packed and unbearably hot, and both Cutting Pink With Knives and The Paper Chase approach musical extremism from completely different angles.

Cutting Pink With Knives are a 3 piece from London that deal in a kind of off-kilter Berzerker-style hardcore driven by keyboards. Trying to get a handle on their songs on first listen is difficult because they rarely last more than a minute and a half, and each one constantly changes shape and direction. As a live band, however, it's almost as if the songs don't really matter. The band members are rarely playing their instruments, preferring to be led in a camp crazed party dance by a sequencer/keyboard that spits out hardcore that sounds like it's been written by Napalm Death and played by Nintendo. Impossible not to love as a spectacle alone, Cutting Pink With Knives are stunning despite being fairly impenetrable musically.

The party stops as soon as a couple of deep solitary notes are played on the keyboard and The Paper Chase introduce themselves to us by way of a sample of some poor fellow totally losing it in a phone box. The track's called 'It's Out There and It's Going To Get You', and as it segues into 'We Know Where You Sleep' everything you need to know about The Paper Chase is laid bare. Twitchy, panicky and claustrophobic, each song is an exploration of vocalist/guitarist John Congleton's world of paranoia and panic attacks. It's a world made all the more real by his taut, wound-up demeanour. Far more animated than the last time they graced The Wheatsheaf, they have become a far more interesting band to watch live. The heat in the venue adds to the discomfort that lies at the heart of each song and audience members are heading outside for a breather before returning to the drama unfolding onstage. Tonight The Paper Chase are phenomenal; it'll be a great pity if John Congleton ever sorts his head out.

Sam Shepherd

LOW VS. DIAMOND

The Zodiac

I hereby swear as you are all my witnesses that I will never again go and see another 'up'n'coming' indie rock band who think they are on the verge of making it to the very tip top of a very large mountain of fame. Never, ever. Well until next time. And of course unless I know them. Or they're from Oxford. Or... oh bloody hell. It's destined to happen again I know so let's just get this over with.

Low vs. Diamond – they really aren't *that* bad, so why am I being such a grumpy guts? Picked up by The Killers' management after playing just a single gig, this Los Angeles quintet are destined for very big things, right? Actually, I should steer most of my aggression at the sound engineer whom they've brought along. I suppose she's already got her sights on Wembley with the way she's set the volume tonight. It's such a shame. So I try my best to get past the white noise and wall of sound. Because I suspect there is more to LVD than this racket. Past the overdriven guitars are some impressively melodic anthems,

fuelled by punchy and sometime syncopated drum beats, glittering guitar and atmospheric keyboards. Sometimes clever and most of the time very big. In fact, that's where it would seem they are destined to be. Very big stadiums, which is maybe why tonight just doesn't seem to be working.

The band bring elements of The Killers, The Strokes and Editors, with flashes of Interpol but at times with a more hungry and raw Foo Fighters-type of delivery. My favourite song of the night, 'Stay Awake', starts with some chilling synths and energetic lead singer Lucas Fields sounding a bit like Ian McCullough, whereas 'Heart Attack', their latest single, would be right at home on the main stage at Glastonbury as the crowds sway back and forth pointing back at the stage through gritted teeth, "Kiss the way we were goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye." Perhaps it's at those bigger arenas that LVD will really shine, but until then I've temporarily kissed my hearing goodbye.

Katy Jerome

The Wheatsheaf
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CRADLE OF FILTH

Brookes Union

With all their cannily-sloganned T-shirts and aspirations as heirs to the Hammer Horror schlock throne, it's all too easy to imagine Cradle Of Filth holding earnest pre-tour meetings to decide how to make themselves appear even more EVIL. The drumkit is coiled – no, come to think of it, enshrouded – in barbed wire, the stage lit with a shade of green which doubtless carries the Pantone number 666, and naturally there are projections of PENTAGRAMS and other such wickedness. The icing on the cake? A Valkyrie backing singer clad in stockings and suspenders. Utterly hilarious, but sad to report that the music suffers from similar crass overstatement.

Every moment is 100 per cent screeching goff madness. There are twin vocal screams, twin tapping solos, twin kick drum pedals: pretty much everything possible to cram double the evil into every track, like a black metal version of double chocolate muffins. It's wall-to-wall noise for fear of dropping below the level of true metal: with every song trying to cram in as much portent, omen and other gloomy Latinate abstract nouns as possible, there's just dynamic range. What's left has a similar effect to being clubbed round the head with a volume of Edgar Allan Poe for



photo: RPH Images

two hours. Despite playing that's technically superb throughout, there are no twists or turns, just flat-out histrionics that, ultimately, aren't even very interesting: once you've heard the first corpse-paint-clad paean to comic-book evil, you've heard 'em all.

And this might be nitpicking, but proceedings are more suburban *Hot Fuzz* village-green subversion ('Stop these evil monsters corrupting our children!', screams the *Daily Mail*) than the kind of Norwegian church-burning, rival-stabbing fanaticism that might at least help us take it all a bit more seriously. Cradle of Filth, then: about as scary as William Shatner.

Stuart Fowkes

LITTLE FISH

The Wheatsheaf

You can tell a lot about a band, just by watching them set up their instruments. There is a hurried, wired, economy of movement about local duo Little Fish that says everything about their efficiency of purpose and direction. Drummer Nez almost flicks together his kit, while singer Jools unfurls leads in a blur, jacks up her guitar and stabs, satisfied, at the pedal buttons with her basketball sneakers. A touching piece of spiritual humanity as she puts a small pigeon feather that she's picked up during the day onto the mike stand, bish... bash... bosh, a quick hello and they're all over us like a marching army.



photo: Paul Carrera

They open with 'Devil's Eyes', an anthemic, all-bets-off romping rock hit, that is akin to Sinéad O'Connor having met up with Suzi Quatro rather than Prince, followed by the feistier 'Sweat'n'Shiver', where she stomps out the line, "Like you I can live on a grain of sugar" with all the spittle and frustration of Annie Lennox. From then on it's a rout. Renowned local producer Richard Narco, brings out all of Jools' best feral Patti Smith / Roisin Murphy qualities on their brilliant debut EP, and thankfully this all transports to the stage and is kicked triumphantly forward by Nez's unimpeachable backbeat, gained in no small part as ex-sticksman for high-octane rockers Vade Mecum. 'Cafe Solo' boils with gritted anger over the 'Street Spirit'-like acoustic picking, while 'Jackie D' is a root blues-rock lament to days lost to the Tennessee whiskey.

They blaze out with 'Am I Crazy?', a hurtling back-draft of mania that makes you want to die air-drumming and leaves you with your lungs on fire. Like Jack White, they've found the keys to the garage of rock simplicity, and have the seemingly effortless talent to make it look cool in the 21st Century. Little Fish will undoubtedly end up in a bigger pond, or (ahem) a giant rock pool.

Paul Carrera

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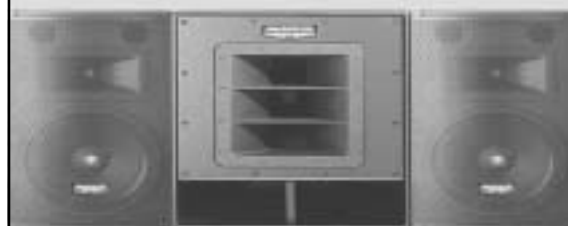
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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

SIKORSKI

A Banbury-based electronic duo with a highly impressive line in magnificently nasty and bulbous synth buzzes and squelches, Sikorski did themselves out of a possibly Punt place by putting a Northamptonshire address on their letter. Hopefully this Demo of the Month will make amends. If not they can always come and knock the Nightshift offices down with a single blast of their bass synth. Kicking in like a heavyweight acid house splurge, backed up with some militant metal-bashing beats, they rev the distortion up to the max and make some brilliantly 'orrible bowel-threatening noise, still managing to inject a malevolent melody into proceedings and show the potential for electronic music to reach frequencies that traditional instruments simply can't reach. When they introduce some rasping vocals for the industrial third track they turn into late-80s Belgian new beat monsters Front 242. The whole demo has a retro feel to it but it also packs a pretty vicious punch, so we ain't standing in its way.

THE COLOURS

This month's Band Most Likely To Sell Five Trillion CDs And End Up Soundtracking A Car Advert. The Colours might struggle to be noticed amid an overcrowded post-Radiohead / Muse / Coldplay marketplace but if they can make themselves heard, there's no reason why they can't make a substantial splash. Emotive, anthemic indie rock with an almost military sense of purpose, aided by the singer's strident falsetto on tracks like 'In And Out' and 'January', a high-pitched howl that holds its own against the stadium-sized guitars. 'Fallen Soldiers' comes with echoes of Talk Talk, which is always a promising sign, while even the more traditional Americanised rock bluster of 'Bad Light' becomes irresistible with its angelic, synthesized backing vocals.

TANDEM

Decidedly half-hearted 80s-styled jangle-pop that doubtless wears an oversized cardigan hanging off one shoulder as it shuffles around its bedroom to the sound of The Razorcuts and Farmers Boys (ask your dad). Lighthearted by its very nature, it still tends to mumble when it should be singing merrily from the highest rooftop

and eventually gets itself into a right jumble as it tries it on with a bit of yelping, shouting and generally angular post-punk. By the third track, 'You've Been Hit By A ?' (and we all know how painful question marks can be, what with their sharp little elbows and quizzical looks), they sound like nothing so much as a duck drowning in a puddle of quicksand. They start to fight back with final song, 'Bonjour! Je M'apelle', but it's all a bit of an untidy scramble, fists flying and much shouting but no discernible winner, except, maybe, the Great God of Utter Bleedin' Chaos.

THE PLAUDITS

More 80s-bothering guitar pop here, though of a decidedly darker nature as The Plaudits sneak into Robert Smith's bedroom in the dead of night (silly boys – that's when he's wide awake!) and steal an old Cure guitar riff. This they then take home and allow to chime delicately along with some moody synth and a sullenly intense singer who opines romantically about stuff like girls leaving him. And shadows. It ain't goth but it ain't far off neither and we really rather like it. The mood lightens and everything changes tack thereafter as they next steal the piano intro to 'It Must Be Love' before jiggling into Crowded House territory. All perfectly acceptable, what with the 80s being the future and all, but a slight shame they spoil things with the overwrought 'Having Yourself On', which desperately wants to achieve anthem status but is tied to the ground by its own bodyweight.

SATELLITE STATE

And so yet more sweetly chiming indie guitars, this time rather more fleet of foot than The Plaudits, although with a similarly melancholy disposition and closer in style and mood to Snow Patrol or Idlewild's more ethereal and contemplative moments. 'Letting Go' is languid and windswept, buffing up Ride's oceanic guitar noise and flooding the stereo. Great stuff but, again like The Plaudits, slightly spoiled at the end with the inclusion of an unnecessarily schmaltzy soft rock ballad of little or no discernible character that plumbs almost Boyzone-like levels of bilge. How they got to this point from such promising beginnings we ruddy bleedin' well don't know.

THE WISH

Blimmin Nora, yet more 80s-burgling spangly jangle, this time from two brothers called Dave and Nelly Green (unless Nelly is actually a sister who has been LYING to

her devoted but gullible brother all these years. You'd think the name was a bit of a give-away. We'll not dwell on such fripperies though, since the music is really rather lovely, chiming and gleaming away with much understated elegance in a politely sombre fashion, while singer Dave opines romantically and poetically not unlike the great Robert Forster (him out of The Go-Betweens in case you were wondering and if that still makes no sense to you, you are missing out on something very great in life). On 'Now Is Time' the guitar circles prettily like a sparrow hawk but never goes in for the kill, oddly deciding instead to try its hand at the intro to 'Sweet Child Of Mine' for the closing few bars of the song. But such blemishes hardly detract from a mildly captivating demo that should appeal to sensitive, melancholic indie daydreamers everywhere.

BACK POCKET PROPHET

Anyone who was there and not blinded by the flashing lights of the Club Tropicana, will tell you that the 80s were as much about the rebirth of metal as they were fancy new synthesisers, and so here are Bicester's Back Pocket Prophet, bringing a smile of recognition to Nightshift's resident old school metal expert as she reminisces about Armoured Saint. Leaning initially towards the more languid, gothic fringes of the rock beast BPP do come across as a bit poncy and overly-serious but as they pile on the pressure and up turn up the volume and effects pedals they come into their own a bit more. They sound like they might dream of wearing bear skins, living in pagan cave communities and worshipping earth goddesses, but they can kick out a decent riff and roar and bellow with conviction. Wouldn't mind seeing how they'd fare in a scrap with this next lot...

REIGN UPON US

With a name like that, a skull on the CD sleeve and songs called 'Bottle Of Jack' and 'Scent Of Hatred', Reign Upon Us are never gonna be a jazz-funk band, and nor would we want them to be. Because there's a small part of our souls that always leaps with joy when some proper 'eavy metal hits the stereo, perhaps because it reminds us, in these airbrushed times, that somewhere out there there are folk who just want to make music that's fast, loud and unpleasant (unpleasant as in it'll annoy rightwing Christians and the like, not unpleasant as in jazz-funk). Anyway, pitching themselves neatly between Sikh and Lamb Of God, this Bicester quintet fire up the overdriven guitars while the evil toad ogre man with the mic belches up a hatful of bile. It's pretty standard, generic

stuff, truth be told and never seems to really let rip as it judders and lurches along its protracted way. In fact it don't half go on a bit, a bit like a Tolkien novel, something the singer is doubtless very fond of since he seems to have borrowed his voice from an Orc. Still, it's metal, innit – can't argue with that.

DEAD CLASS

Lightweight punk-metal as it should be played – with a bit of vim and vigour, unlike the torpor-inducing Organised Confusion demo that immediately follows it. First track, 'That All You Got', sounds like The Adverts' 'Gary Gilmour's Eyes' being played in the style of The Sweet's 'Blockbuster', bustling old ladies out of the way as it fights to get to the boozier for opening time, which is really rather cool when you think about it, the singer's slightly hysterical delivery exacerbating its needy aggression. Further in they mix up The Dead Kennedys and The Undertones to similarly impressive effect, at least until they decide to sign off with a gooey whisper – something to do with baby girls or something – when it really should finish with the sound of someone having their teeth punched through a pub window.

THE DEMO DUMPER

ORGANISED CONFUSION

With a churning grunge guitar intro, Organised Confusion set the scene for some serious ear-damage and doubtless some bearded blokes going "Grrrr" a lot. It's more than a little disappointing then to hear what sounds like a slightly boring conversation at a bus stop between two blokes comparing brands of margarine or somesuch as the sludgy mess behind them burrows itself ever so slowly into the mud, there to die peacefully. To call this demo pedestrian is an insult to pedestrians, even the really old ones who walk really slowly and get in your way when you're trying to get somewhere in a hurry whilst carrying a heavy box of Nightshifts. Occasionally it pauses to contemplate a dead bee on the verge, all the while continuing its painfully tedious commentary on the general unfairness of life. A singular blessing about the demo is that it only contains two tracks instead of the four listed on the sleeve, although they earn a token bonus point for having a bass player called Dunstan Langrish, although Dunstan Languish might be more appropriate in this case. Or maybe simply Dunstan Loadofbollocks.

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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