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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 140  
March  
2007

A Trip Into The Psychedelic Heart Of

# GOLDRUSH

Interview inside

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# NEWS

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## PASSES FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD

**PUNT** are on now available. A limited number of 100 all-venue passes, priced at £7, are on sale online from oxfordmusic.net or in person from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road and the QI bookshop on Turl Street.

The Oxford Punt, now in its tenth year, takes place on the evening of Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> May across six venues in the city centre, featuring nineteen of the best new unsigned acts in the county. The event kicks off at Borders in Magdalen Street at 6pm and takes in the Purple Turtle, the Wheatsheaf, the Music Market, the QI Club and the Cellar. Any bands or solo artist still hoping to take part must submit a demo (including contact details) to The Punt, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU before the 15<sup>th</sup> March. The final Punt line-up will be announced on the Nightshift website shortly after. Previous Punts have seen early gigs by the likes of The Young Knives, Goldrush, Winnebago Deal and Fell City Girl.

**THE ZODIAC** looks set to close for major rebuilding and refurbishment in the middle of May. The venue will hopefully re-open in September with a completely new layout, including a 900-capacity downstairs concert hall. The upstairs venue will have a 400 capacity while there will be a smaller bar venue incorporated into the downstairs plans. The Zodiac has been in need of major work for sometime but last year's takeover by the Academy Music Group has enabled the huge costs of the work to be made available.

**THE YOUNG KNIVES** play their biggest local headline gig to date when they perform at Brookes University Union on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> March. Note that this is a change from the original publicised date (5<sup>th</sup> April). The band are currently on tour in the States and will play a series of UK shows before taking time off to write and record new songs. Tickets for the show are on sale now from the Brookes box office on 01865 484750.



**THE HOLLYBUSH IN WITNEY** is set to re-open as a live music venue from this month. The Hollybush changed hands in August last year and it was feared its Pit venue was closed for good but the new owners are keen to re-launch the music nights. Any bands or acts, including folk, blues and soul artists, can send demos to George Boullin at 35 Corn Street, Witney, OX28 6BT.

**BELARUS** (pictured) have split up. The Farringdon-based band who had built a large local following and had, for the last couple of years, been managed by Andy Ross, former manager of Blur and the man behind Food Records they released a single, 'Standing In The Right Place' on One Iota Records last year.



**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC** are hosting a series of music debates in February and March. The first debate, on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> February, features a panel including Billy Bragg and Fun'Da'Mental's Aki Nawaz on the subject of the personal and political power of music. On Friday 9<sup>th</sup> March author and songwriter Maeve Bayton, along with local singer and musician Kate Garrett, will debate how music changes women's lives and features a set from all-girl band Queen Spleen and a showing of the film *Women Rock* by Sue Okumbe. The final debate is on Thursday March 22<sup>nd</sup> when conductor Ivor Setterfield discusses how music changes people's lives, drawing on testimonies from people involved in Blackbird Leys' Singing Estate project. All the debates take place at Ruskin College on Walton Street. For more details email danielle@ocmevents.org.

**A BENEFIT GIG** for ROSY (Respite Nursing For Oxfordshire's Sick Youngsters) at Romanway last month raised over £3,500 for the charity. The gig, organised by Studio 45, featured the cream of local hip hop, r'n'b, soul and jazz acts, including Jada Pearl and Zuby, and featured a guest appearance from Boston-based Def Jam signing Danielle Scott. A limited



## THIS YEAR'S OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL

takes place over the last weekend of March and features headline sets from Salsa Celtica (pictured), Eliza Carthy and John Spiers and Jon Boden.

The festival, now in its fourth year, runs from Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March through to Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April with live music, ceilidhs and workshops happening in venues across town, with the main acts performing at Oxford Town Hall, as well as the traditional street parade and buskers. Other acts confirmed include The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, John Renbourn and Robin Williamson, Daughters of Elvin, John Kirkpatrick and Indigo Moss. Weekend passes (priced £54) and day tickets are on sale now from Tickets Oxford at the Playhouse on 01865 305305 or online at [www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com). Visit [www.oxfordfolkfestival.com](http://www.oxfordfolkfestival.com) for more details. Meanwhile the Friends of Oxford Folk Festival (or F-OFF as its charming acronym goes) has been set up for anyone wanting to help support the festival. Email [friends@oxfordfolkfestival.com](mailto:friends@oxfordfolkfestival.com) for more details.

There will be two warm-up concerts before the festival. On Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March Fairport's Chris Leslie and Ric Sanders headline at the Holywell Music Room with support from Radio 2 Young Folk Award finalist Wilber, while on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> singing legend June Tabor performs at the Oxford Playhouse with support from Mark Emerson and Andy Cutting. Tickets for both shows are available from Tickets Oxford.

This year's **Cornbury Music Festival** takes place over the weekend of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> July at Cornbury Park, near Charlbury. Line-up and ticket details are due to be announced sometime this month. Visit [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com) for news. Last year's event was headlined by Robert Plant, The Pretenders and Texas as well as featuring stages organised by Truck, the Oxford Folk Festival and Charlbury Riverside Festival.

After last year's enforced break, **Charlbury Riverside** is back this year. The free weekend festival takes place on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June with the line-up due to be announced shortly. Visit [www.riversidefestival.charlbury.com](http://www.riversidefestival.charlbury.com) for details and a survey

run of 100 DVDs of the night are on sale now, priced £10 – call George Hedge on 01865 375251 or Cheryl Lee on 01865 774806 for more details.

**FORMER-EAT** frontman Ange Doolittle's

onymous band visit the Port Mahon on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April as part of a Swiss Concrete club promotion and the gig has already sold out. Swiss Concrete are also planning a two-day live music festival at the Port over the weekend of 30<sup>th</sup> June / 1<sup>st</sup> July, as well as hosting a reunion gig by pioneering local hardcore legends Callous on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

**THE VICTORIA** in Jericho is closed until further notice after the death of landlord Nick Simmons shortly after Christmas. The Victoria hosted Friday night live music sessions which have been running successfully for over two years now.

**VINYL FRONTIER** on Cowley Road is set to shut at the end of March. The second-hand store, which specialises in dance music, is having a half-price sale from now until it closes. With the closure of Massive Records and The Polar Bear in the past year and with Avid Records set to go at the end of 2007 when its lease runs out, Oxford will be left without a single independent music shop.

**THE SAD SONG Co.** release their second album, 'Poignant Device', this month. The solo project of Dive Dive and former-Unbelievable Truth drummer Nigel Powell, SSC recorded the album at Marillion's studio and supported the band at their fanclub convention in Holland recently. The CD is available to buy online at [www.thesadsongco.com](http://www.thesadsongco.com) and Nigel is giving people the chance to pay whatever they feel the

album is worth, either before or after they hear it. Says Nigel: "It's possibly foolish, possibly financial suicide, but since everyone downloads and pirates and generally fails to value the music they buy nowadays, I'm hoping this will make some people at least think about what they're getting, and for how much. Or not." You can read Nightshift's review of the CD on page 6. We got our copy for free.

**OXFORDBANDS.COM** is relaunched this month with a new slim-line look. The online local music resource site will continue to feature the most extensive database of Oxfordshire bands and artists, plus news, reviews and gig listings.

**AS EVER** don't forget to tune into The Download every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The local music show, hosted by Tim Bearder and Dave Gilyeat, features a wide range of new Oxford releases, interviews and reviews as well as a gig guide (read straight out of Nightshift by what appears to be an android with pretensions to Shakespearian acting) and a weekly local demo vote. You can listen to each Download show all week at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford)

**THE DEMO PILE** here at Nightshift is slowly becoming more manageable but we still have a two-month backlog of reviews. If you've sent a CD in and it hasn't been reviewed, it will be in due course. If we had more adverts we could afford more space for reviews etc. etc....



**THE FALL** play a two-night stand at the Zodiac on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> / Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March as part of a UK tour to promote the band's 26th studio album, 'Reformation Post TLC'. Tickets for each gig are £16 but fans wanting to go to both gigs can get a special discount double ticket for £25. Tickets are available online from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com) or in person from the Zodiac box office.

Other gigs at the Zodiac in April include **Clutch** (Sat 7<sup>th</sup>), **Deathstars** plus **Mortiis** (Thu 12<sup>th</sup>), **Midlake** (Fri 13<sup>th</sup>), **65 Days of Static** (Mon 16<sup>th</sup>), **Camera Obscura** (Thu 19<sup>th</sup>) and **Will Haven** (Fri 27<sup>th</sup>).

Corner Cowley / Marsh Road  
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## March

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



**Thu 1<sup>st</sup>** Grinning Spider presents Brickwork Lizards / Seven Years On / Back Pocket Prophet / Clark Wiseman 8.30pm £4  
**Fri 2<sup>nd</sup>** Closed to public from 8pm Private Party  
**Sat 3<sup>rd</sup>** 'Exposure' with SMILEX / MONDO CADA / APE HAS KILLED APE 8.30pm £4 - Superheroes vs Supervillains fancy dress (free goody bag for every costume)  
**Sun 4<sup>th</sup>** Electric Jam - come jam with the house band, The X Men. 8pm FREE  
**Mon 5<sup>th</sup>** Kill Henry Sugar - Eric Della Penne will be at The New Theatre tomorrow playing guitar for Joan Baez, but tonight he plays solo at The X. 8.30pm £3  
**Thu 8<sup>th</sup>** Wheatley Park Soul Band 8.30pm  
**Fri 9<sup>th</sup>** Gammy Leg presents Amberstate / Whiskycats / Grant & Roxy / Simon Davies 8.30pm £4  
**Sat 10<sup>th</sup>** Wittstock Fund Raiser - The Gs / Prohibition Smokers Club / Reverend Moonshine / Jeremy Hughes / Kevin Winters 8.30pm £4  
**Sun 11<sup>th</sup>** Tunez NOT Trident Benefit Gig 7pm - In aid of the Oxfordshire Faslane 365 campaign featuring: from London Peace Not War artists, local Oxford poets, including sexy sappho poet Sophia Blackwell, pagan-folk band Spiderwoods, and peace and justice stalwarts The Sea Green Singers  
**Thu 15<sup>th</sup>** Acoustic Evening with Jessica Goyder / more TBC 8.30pm  
**Fri 16<sup>th</sup>** Grinning Spider presents The Ruins / The Corvids / Feck / Ally Craig / Dan Austin 8.30pm £4  
**Sat 17<sup>th</sup>** The Inflatables - Best Ska Reggae Soul Band in Oxford 8.30pm £4.00  
**Sun 18<sup>th</sup>** Electric Jam 8pm FREE  
**Mon 19<sup>th</sup>** Zena James Quartet with Geoff Castle on piano (founder member of National Jazz Youth Orchestra, and featuring Mike Bradley on drums - one of the UK's top jazz drummers, currently on tour with the Rat Pack musical in New York and Paul Jefferies on double bass. 8.30pm £8 or £12 with dinner. Call for bookings.  
**Fri 23<sup>rd</sup>** Ann Duggan 8.30pm £4  
**Sat 24<sup>th</sup>** Fundraiser for Silver Stars  
**Mon 26<sup>th</sup>** Jazz Jam TBC  
**Thu 29<sup>th</sup>** SelectaSound presents - 8.30pm £4  
**Fri 30<sup>th</sup>** Slidewinder - Farewell to Oxford gig plus JJ Soul / James Thorn 8.30pm £4  
**Sat 31<sup>st</sup>** The Taste (excellent indie rockers from Germany) / support 8.30pm £4

## the port mahon

### Live Music in March

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 - Ali & Co   | 15 - Deadbeat Sounds   |
| 2 - Oxford Folk Club   | 16 - Oxford Folk Club  |
| 3 - The Green  | 18 - Joe Allen & Angharad Jenkins  |
| 4 - Ade Payne  | 21 - Poetry Night  |
| 6 - Dirty Boys presents The Youngs Plan + Liddling + The Blitz Cartel        | 22 - Poetry Night  |
| 7 - Friends with Benefits, Gunkata, The Menus and Sybarites                  | 23 - Oxford Folk Club  |
| 8 - Collision and Consequences + You in Motion + Stray Day                   | 24 - Myanalog presents Foxes! + Onions for Eyes                          |
| 9 - Oxford Folk Club   | 25 - Pindrop Performance with Lind Optical + SJ Esau + Birdrib (5pm-8pm) |
| 11 - The Enigma Project + Where I'm Calling From + The Wookies + Les Natrels | 26 - Juxstar + Amy Bee   |
| 13 - Garrett Band + Laima Bite   | 27 - Swiss Concrete presents King Kool + Mr G & Rich + Violet Violet     |
| 14 - Oxford Folk Club  | 28 - Moiety + Oliver Shaw  |
|  | 29 - Blind Pilots  |
|  | 30 - Oxford Folk Club  |
|  | 31 - Caminus   |

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# GOLDRUSH

## LIKE KINDLY AND GENTEEL

country uncles, it's easy to take Goldrush for granted. In their almost decade-long lifetime they've furnished us not only with a succession of small but perfectly formed bucolic pop gems, founded a quietly successful independent record label of quality and distinction and of course given birth to and carefully nurtured the best small live music festival in the country.

Perhaps it's because of the success of the latter two – Truck Records and Truck Festival – that Goldrush's music sometimes gets overlooked, at least in the UK. Over in the States, where the band have spent a sizeable portion of the last few years, touring both as Mark Gardener's band and in their own right, they are accorded greater respect, both for their DIY aesthetic and because their music taps into a very American vein of rustic spirituality.

## SO ANYWAY, CONSIDERING

this it was a very real pleasure to listen to Goldrush's new album, 'The Heart Is The Place', their third and the follow-up to 2005's 'Ozona'. From its grandly symphonic intro – of which Spiritualized would be proud – through the soaring psychedelic swirl of songs like 'Every One Of Us' and 'The Story Of The City', to more off-kilter moments such as 'Heaven's My Destination' and 'Sun In Your Eyes', the album is fresher, more ambitious and more positive than anything they've recorded before. At heart it is still the Goldrush of classics like 'Same Picture' and 'Let You Down' – all faltering vulnerability and introspective longing – but now Goldrush come armed with prog tendencies and a belief that they can go out and really touch the sky.

Goldrush frontman and songwriter Robin Bennett puts the psychedelia down to certain mushrooms that grow in the fields around the band's studio on the site of Truck Festival in Steventon. He also points to new influences



surrounding the band: "By the time of the last Truck, when our small village became Woodstock for a weekend, we were spending all our time building stages and the record was still being worked on. I noticed things creeping in - other worlds past, future and supernatural, magic realism. These were literary influences I could no longer avoid: a character, or series of characters, seemed to move through the songs in a ghostly way. Our music was no longer set in America, it was in our own location and our own minds." Mushrooms, then.

## SINCE THE RELEASE OF

'Ozona' Goldrush have come close to quitting altogether as events seemed to be echoing those of a couple of years previously when they were dumped by Virgin Records after the release of debut album, 'Don't Bring Me Down'. 'Ozona' was due to have been released across Europe on German label City Slang but due to contractual problems between the label boss and EMI the album was delayed; effectively the band spent the year on hold. Since then Goldrush have parted company with guitarist Hamish, while founding member Joe Bennett – brother of Robin – has moved to New York to live, although he

remains an integral part of the band.

However, after spending months slogging around the States with Mark Gardener and signing to US label Better Looking, they finally caught back up with City Slang and ended up enjoying a successful European tour with Nada Surf, playing to over 1,000 people a night.

Most recently Goldrush teamed up with producer James Rutledge (aka Pedro), whom Robin knew from his days working at HMV in Cornmarket Street. It was James' input that led to a renewed burst of creativity that became 'The Heart Is The Place'.

## NIGHTSHIFT SPOKE TO

Robin – one of the most influential figures on the Oxford music scene over the past ten years, as singer, festival organiser and record label boss – while Goldrush enjoyed a three-week tour of Germany. When we last talked to him it was around the time of 'Ozona' and he described how the band had almost split up in the wake of leaving Virgin. At the same time Jef left the band. Did he feel events were repeating themselves in a way with the loss of Hamish and Joe moving to New York? How has the band regrouped since?

"They key to success is making

mistakes and not repeating them. The fact is, the core of Joe, myself, Garo and G have been a team for seven years, and it's difficult to alter that. Nick who plays with us now was born in Oxford and his part-time status allows him to do many other things. Hamish leaving, Joe being in New York and G working full time meant Garo and I spent a lot of time in Garo's sheds moulding songs on the piano and guitar and formulating a coherent album with Pedro and our American co-writer Danny Black. Once we'd disassembled the band we could reassemble it correctly and it's now operating at its peak, perhaps for the first time."

'The Heart Is The Place' sounds like Goldrush but there's a definite move on. How much of this is due to a new outlook and how much helped by working with James Rutledge?

"A self-fulfilling prophecy - I knew James could give us an overview and broaden our musical horizons while focusing the sound of the band, and he did. Working with James definitely freshened our approach."

You seem to have discovered a new love for psychedelia and prog; is that a fair assumption?

"We have always loved psychedelia, it has just not always made it onto the records. Mid-60s Beatles, Hendrix and so on have always fascinated us, mostly in the freedom with which they operated and their wide-ranging interests outside music, from art to clothes."

Songs like 'Every One Of Us' sound as joyful and uplifting as Goldrush have ever sounded... and this after a period of band burn-out.

"Well, we have been knocked down a few times. To get up again you have to really fight and want to do better, and so not getting it right first time can make you stronger and more positive second or third time round. We have all had many opportunities to do other things but haven't because we know we have it in us to do something special. When a tune like Every One Of Us comes out you

sit back and go, wow, we can still do it, and with more confidence than before.”

**PREVIOUS TO TEAMING UP** with James Rutledge, Goldrush had gone into the studio with Dave Fridmann, the producer responsible for myriad brilliant albums by Flaming Lips and Mercury Rev, two bands to whom Goldrush owe a musical debt. What is James like to work with compared to David Fridmann?

“They’re similar in their meticulous attention to detail and appetite for different sounds. Dave is a very experienced engineer whereas James came from a musician/sampling background, using an engineer for the mixes. As James is the same age as us, we had a more equal relationship. With Fridmann we kept thinking, oh my God it’s Dave Fridmann, for the first day or two at least. We are trying to work out a way to do some recording with both together, which would be very exciting.”

As well as the personnel side of things, how have Goldrush changed over the years, musically and as people?

“We are older and wiser, but have managed to retain a love for music despite operating within the music ‘industry’. I believe musicians will have to overlap into business to survive in future and the ‘industry’ folks who make no contribution other than to mutter disapproval and wave spreadsheets will be back in accountants and banks where they belong.”

‘The Story Of The City’, the lead track and highlight of the new album, sounds like the best song Goldrush have ever written.

“That one’s about Oxford. I have a love/hate relationship with the place, though the more time I spend away the more I start to develop affection for it, especially walking round the colleges where my grandfather lived after emigrating from New Zealand. He was one of the Inklings with Tolkien and CS Lewis! ‘Can’t Give Up The Ghost’ makes me feel emotional whenever I hear it. It’s probably a long way from most people’s idea of what we sound like.”

**HAVING SPENT TO SO MUCH** time in America, is there any desire for all of Goldrush to follow Joe’s lead and leave the UK behind and move there permanently? If you could transfer one thing from the American music scene into the UK what would it be?

“There have been moments on the beach in San Diego when we’ve thought it might be nice to not go home. In fact Joe is quite settled in Brooklyn, which is also an inspiring place where we have many close friends. Many US bands are very self-sufficient like us, making their own records and putting together their own tours, whereas there has been a culture here of ‘rock stardom’ where musicians are helpless idiots. If Wayne Coyne or Anton Newcome can plug in their own gear, I’m sure I can too.”

**OBVIOUSLY TRUCK FESTIVAL** is still a huge part of Robin’s and Goldrush’s life. It is a festival they created from very modest beginnings that has grown into an established and highly-respected national event, along with the likes of the Green Man Festival, eschewing corporate sponsorship and big name acts in favour of a homeliness and eclectic musical vision. This year’s Truck will be the tenth; with no announcement yet of the line-up or tickets going on sale, we wonder what the future of the festival might be. Where can it go from its recent successes and how hard is it going to be to keep its identity?

“I have been taking steps to protect the legacy of Truck and to return it to its original concept of an artist-run community that promotes creativity of all kinds—you will hear more about this very soon. We want to take the Trucking concept from two days a year to 365. But rest assured Truck Festival at Hill Farm will be the same as ever, in fact slightly smaller in size than last year but of the usual excellent standard.”

And where do Goldrush go from here?

“Berlin! We will be spending a lot more time running Truck, promoting ‘The Heart Is The Place’, and putting together a plan for the next album. Pedro’s just done an amazing remix of ‘Can’t Give Up The Ghost’, which could be a pointer to an even further-out and euphoric sound for the next one.”

‘The Heart Is The Place’ is out now on Truck Records. Goldrush play an album launch party at The Jericho Tavern on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March with support from Danny George Wilson and The Ruins.

Check out [www.goldrush.mu](http://www.goldrush.mu) for band news.

Go to [www.truckfestival.org](http://www.truckfestival.org) for news on this year’s festival.



## March

Every Monday

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12<sup>th</sup> **PAUL LAMB & THE KINGSNAKES**

19<sup>th</sup> **KING EARLE BOOGIE BAND**

26<sup>th</sup> **COLIN JOHN BAND** with **BEN WATERS**

Every Tuesday

### THE OXFORD JAZZ CLUB

*Free live jazz plus DJs playing r’n'b, funk and soul until 2am*

6<sup>th</sup> **ALVIN ROY** – album launch

13<sup>th</sup> **THE TOM GREY QUINTET**

20<sup>th</sup> **HUGH & STU**

27<sup>th</sup> **THE TOM GREY QUINTET**

Every Thursday

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*Funk, soul and R&B. 9-2am Free B4 10pm; £4 after. (30<sup>th</sup> – with guest AIDAN LARKIN)*

9<sup>th</sup> early show with **DICORA** + support. 8-11pm £3

23<sup>rd</sup> early show TBC

Saturdays

3<sup>rd</sup> **SIMPLE** with **ROB DA BANK** (Radio 1 / Sunday Best) + residents – *Funky House. 9-3am*

10<sup>th</sup> **OX4** – *Drum’n’bass. 9-3am*

17<sup>th</sup> **ST PATRICK’S NIGHT SPECIAL** with **HENRY MARTIN’S GHOST** + DJ. 8.30-3am £6

24<sup>th</sup> **SKA NIGHT** featuring **TEN TON**

**PEANUT SMUGGLERS** + DJs. 9.30-3am

31<sup>st</sup> **SOUL NIGHT** with **DJ TONY NANTON**. 9-3am

Sundays

4<sup>th</sup> **LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY** with **BRENDAN**

**DEMPSEY** (Ireland) + **ROBIN INCE** (The Office) +

**CAIMH McDONNELL** plus compere **SILKY**. 8pm. £7/6



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## **RICHARD WALTERS**

### **'Pilotlights EP'**

*(Big Scary Monsters)*

Global warming? Pah, you could freeze the Atlantic with the chill emanating from

'Iceskaters', the lead track on Richard Walters' latest EP. A brush-stroked snare rhythm gives an eerie feel of feet trudging through deep snow while Richard's languidly wracked voice softly adds greater depth to its intense white bleakness.

It's only when you sit down and listen to songs like this, and even more so to 'We Have Your Head', which closes the five-track CD, that you realise how clumsily most balladeers handle the raw state of human emotion. There's nothing complex or difficult at work here, just simple, stunning twilit songs of sadness, some autobiographical, others simply stories, such as 'Elephant In the Room'. Richard's voice, limpid as spring water, a slight quaver adding a hundred weight of wonder to everything it touches, is so strong, even its timorousness, that the stark instrumentation – piano, cello, acoustic guitar – seems to exist merely as a wraith-like presence at the margins.

Not just an EP, 'Pilotlights' is a genuine treasure.

**Dale Kattack**

## **THE SAD SONG Co.**

### **'Poignant Device'**

*(Own Label)*

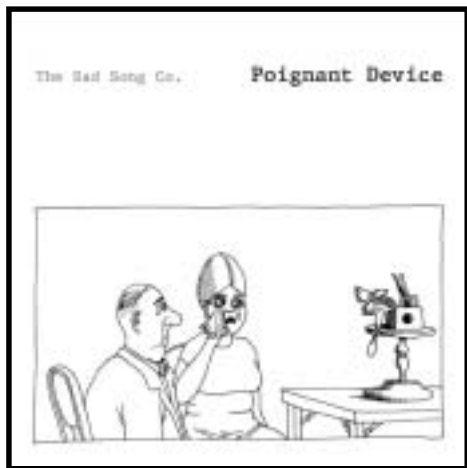
"Honestly, I reckon you're going to hate it," announces Nigel Powell, the man behind The Sad Song Co. of this his second solo album. "But at the same time I've always valued your opinions". You see, children – here's a chap who knows we speak the truth, however painful it might be at times. And he knows a thing or two does Nigel, since in his time he's been part of Unbelievable Truth and Dive Dive as well as being, along with Loz Colbert, the best drummer Oxford has produced. And so, even though he tells us this album was recorded

in Marillion's studio and he's supporting them at their fanclub convention, we remain open-minded. Because talent shines through, even when it's wearing a big flouncy prog-rock frock and going on for ten minutes at a time with lots of different bits in each song and even a Mellotron flourish for pure, unrefined 1970s effect. And anyway, prog is the new punk: just ask Radiohead and Muse, the former of which Nigel comes close to on the sprawling 'Domestic Drama' with its edgy ambience and more changes of direction than 'Paranoid Android'.

As you'd expect with that moniker, Sad Song Co. isn't a barrel of laughs, but neither does it – for the most part – sit with its head in its hands. There are shimmering, simmering moonlit piano sonatas ('Dressing Down') and imposing, driving rock ('I Love Joy') to stand against the less elaborate acoustic laments like 'Rescue'. There's a softness and easy grace to songs like 'The Healing', but whether he's playing it quiet and considered or showboating shamelessly while hammering his kit like John Bonham, Nigel's muscular production and inventive musical prowess keeps things succinct and interesting.

Now then, where did we leave that old Ramones bootleg?

**Dale Kattack**



## **LOOPY**

### **'This Year's Evel Knievel'**

*(Own Label)*

Perennial purveyors of nominally cheery jangle pop Loopy return, half a year on from their risible attempt at a World Cup single, with a full-length CD, attempting to cajole a nation of misery guts to Think Positive and sing along to their Crowded House-style harmonies. "It's gonna be beautiful and wonderful and everything's alright!"

So they say. So why does 'This Year's Evel Knievel' leave us feeling strangely depressed? Perhaps because so much of the album sounds like The Beautiful South without their saving grace – Paul Heaton's sardonic wit and worldview. Instead they jangle, plod and harmonise through forty minutes of bluesy guitar pop with a resolute lack of sunshine in their hearts, but equally with no apparent emotional hurt or weary cynicism.

Even the soft-centred ballad, 'Friday In Firenze', sounds like it's straining every sinew to summon even an ounce of despair. Conversely, when they aim for good-time rousing stadium pop, as on 'Happiness Road', all that tumbles out is watery middle-aged contentment.

And that's perhaps the crux of Loopy: they just sound like a band content to exist as a part-time hobby, scared to commit themselves musically or lyrically to anything too dangerous, like a local FM radio station endlessly pumping out 'Brown Eyed Girl'. And really, when Loopy proclaim that they'll be our Evel Knievel, you have to smile at the irony of it all.

**Sue Foreman**



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## SMILEX

### 'Flimsy Fickle Fashion (Fuck Off And Die)'

(Quickfix)

Ooh, I say: Smilex in rude word shock. They'll be stripping off and climbing the speaker stacks next, the wee urchins. Anyway, this 'ere is a download-only single from Quickfix Records and features Smilex fundering and frashing furiously about flimsy fickle fashion and its foughtless followers. Fuck yeah.

You know what Smilex sound like by now, surely, or have you been

living under a rock for the last few years? Oh yes, ROCK we said. Smilex do indeed rock. Big beefy power chords, angry shrieking vocals and the feeling that even though you can't see it they were frotting their guitar amps as they recorded this song. That it weighs in at one minute and 48 seconds suggests they perhaps peaked a little too soon. File under fun.

**Dale Kattack**

## UNDER SPIRIDON CLOAKS

### 'Remains Of the Day'

(Attack! Attack! Attack!)

Oxford/Portsmouth-based one-woman paragon of cheesy electro-grind and political horror Jenny Sparks returns for her first release in nearly two years, though she's still swimming in the same murky musical waters we last found her in.

This two-track EP continues her obsession with the ground-level human horrors of war, sampling both chilling news footage and the best and worst of 80s pop.

'Remains of the Day' dwells on a smoking pile of human bones in a Baghdad market square while a huge squelching synth bass pounds a Eurodisco pop melody into the ground. Continue into the darkness and 'Metal Into Flesh' finds tanks and civilian bodies don't mix as well as Throbbing Gristle and Harold Faltermeyer. Genuinely unpleasant but clever too.

**Dale Kattack**

## DR SHOTOVER: No Relief

Well, as I'm sure you've gathered over the years, my little sweetums, it's always Red Nose Day round these parts... Go easy on the soda, Bedingfield! Ahem, where was I? Ah yes - Comic Relief. I believe it's called that because it's so bloody PISS-POOR. Some of the post-modernists in the club bar think we should celebrate the life and times of that suave Yorkshireman Bill Nelson and declare RED NOISE Day, where everyone has to turn up in slightly crumpled 1930s suits looking serious while



*Lou does his bit for Comic Relief*

spouting incomprehensible Futurist slogans... this could be followed by WHITE NOISE Day, when Lou Reed's 'Metal Machine Music' will be looped and conversation will consist of sarcastic remarks, preferably while wearing dodgy eye-shadow... Ah yes, talking of St Louis of Reed, have you got your ticket for John Cale at the Zodiac? A splendid chap in his way, Mr Cale, even though he has apparently GIVEN UP DRINKING... speculation is rife as to whether he will be bringing a string section and performing the whole of 'Paris 1919'... when I last saw him he was certainly drunk as a pickled egg and shouting in front of a rock band... but that was about twenty years ago... Now, where were we? Ah yes, RED WEDGE Day - good idea, Mr Bragg.

**Next month: Maggie Maggie Maggie - out out out!**

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# GIG GUIDE

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## THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**THE ANSWER + WINNEBAGO DEAL:** *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – Wild'n'haury retro rocking of an authentically 70s variety from Ireland's The Answer, sounding an awful lot like Thunder at times. Recently nominated as Best New British Band in Kerrang! and out on tour promoting last year's 'Rise' album. Local full-throttle garage-metal behemoths Winnebago Deal support.  
**PORT MAYHEM with INFLATABLE BUDDHA + DEMON BARBERS:** *The Zodiac (downstairs)* – The monthly live music club night moves from the Port Mahon to the Zodiac

### *Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

## TILLY & THE WALL: The Zodiac

Do you want to be happy? Like really, really sunshiny, hug-a-stranger, gleaming white teeth happy? Then here are Tilly & The Wall to help you along. Anyone – and everyone – who saw their last gig at the Zodiac will have left the venue beaming like the cat who got, not just the cream, but also the family hamster. Hailing from Nebraska, Tilly & The Wall's secret weapon is tap dancer Jamie Williams who stands in for a live drummer, clacking out the rhythms on a specially amped-up podium. It's a novel idea but just one of the many great things about the band who mercilessly steal pop gems from the 60s, from The Shangri-La's to the sweeter side of The Velvet Underground. Musically minimal, songs come to life through handclaps, vocal harmonies from singers Neely Jenkins and Kianna Alarid and Jamie's gleeful tap dancing. They smile, they laugh, they treat the audience like old friends and everyone with a soul smiles right back at them. So there you go: choose life, choose Tilly & The Wall. The summer starts here.

## MARCH

for one night, featuring acid folk, world punk and cabaret from inventive local collective Inflatable Buddha, plus folk-ska fusion from festival faves Demon Barbers..

**BRICKWORK LIZARDS + SEVEN YEARS ON + BACK POCKET PROPHET + CLARK WISEMAN:** *The X, Cowley* – Soul, hip hop, Egyptian folk, jazz and classical sounds collide in the coolly esoteric world of Brickwork Lizards, headlining tonight's Grinning Spider club night. Support comes from Swindon guitar-pop types Seven Years On, Christian metallers Back Pocket Prophet and Kicks frontman Clark Wiseman.

**HARRY ANGEL + MR G & RICH + MORPH:** *The Hobgoblin, Bicester* – High octane grunge-pop from Harry Angel, plus electro-rock from Mr G & Rich.

**THE QUARTERFINALS + BO DECCA + COLOUR:** *The Cellar* – New wave-styled heavy rock from Quarterfinals with support from local newcomers Bo Decca.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY:** *The Music Market*  
**ALI & Co:** *The Port Mahon*  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** *East Oxford Community Centre*  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** *The Half Moon*  
**TWIZZ TWANGLE BAND + VIGILANCE**  
**BLACK SPECIAL + THE ANYDAYS:** *The Jericho Tavern*

### FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**JOSH PYKE + GODWITS + WHERE I'M CALLING FROM:** *The Zodiac* – Jauntily bittersweet acoustic pop from the Sydney, Australia singer-songwriter in the vein of Evan Dando and Elliot Smith.

**REPUBLIC with LISA LASHES:** *The Zodiac* – Techno club night with pioneering hard house and trance DJ Lisa tonight's guest on the decks.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** *The Port Mahon*  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** *The Bullingdon Klub*  
**KAKOFANNEY with THE DRUG SQUAD + BLACK HATS + LAGRIMA + MAURO:** *The Wheatsheaf* – Energetic ska-punk with a pop edge from Drug Squad at tonight's Klub Kak.

**BENEVA + BO DECCA + FRANK RAPTURE:** *The Jericho Tavern* – Harmonic pop in the vein of Ben Folds and Beautiful South from Coventry's Beneva, plus support.

**THE DUGOUT:** *The Cellar*  
**MARK BOSLEY:** *The George & Dragon, Sutton Courtenay* – Home-coming gig for the local troubadour.

## SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**TILLY & THE WALL:** *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – Sublime 60s-styled sunshine pop – see main preview

**I WAS A CUB SCOUT + LINDA'S NEPHEW + THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS:** *The Zodiac (downstairs)* – Lo-fi synth-punk-emo-disco from Nottingham two-piece I Was A Cub Scout, recently signed to XL after shows with Babyshambles. Local indie rockers TTNG support.

**SMILEX + MONDO CADA + APE HAS KILLED APE:** *The X, Cowley* – Full on and foaming at the mouth glam-punk craziness from Smilex at tonight's eXposure club night. More than able support from heavyweight grungers Mondo Cada and electro storytellers Ape Has Killed Ape.

**THE GREEN:** *The Port Mahon* – Dark, debonair indie rocking.

**BIG BAD CITY + FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS + CONTRACT:** *The Music Market* – Delicious Music local bands night.  
**SIMPLE:** *The Bullingdon* – Funky house club night with special guest DJ Rob Da Bank, him off of Radio 1.

**THE QUARTER-FINALS + HOLIDAY IN VIETNAM + BLUE RIDERS:** *The Wheatsheaf* – Heavyweight indie rocking from Quarterfinals, plus krautfunking psychedelia and synth-rocking improv from HIV.

**MELTING POT with CONNECTING FLIGHT + RAY + HIP ROUTE + ARCHIVE OF EVERYTHING:** *The Jericho Tavern* – Good mixed bill of up and coming unsigned bands at tonight's Melting Pot. Liverpool's electro-rockers Connecting Flight have supported Oceansize and Art Brut recently, while Ray's languid, sweeping pop recalls House Of Love and Chris Isaak.

**LEE DAVIES:** *Temple Bar*  
**REDOX + PETE FRYER BAND:** *The Romany, Bampton* – Swamp-rock and festival funk from Redox, plus eccentric blues rocking from Pete Fryer and chums.

### SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**AIM + SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT:** *The Zodiac (upstairs)* – The band project of Manchester trip hop producer, label owner and sometime rap DJ Andy Turner, Aim have been producing hip hop-based electronic albums since the 90s, with last year's 'Flight 602' the smooth, cinematic culmination of their trippy electronic evolution. Local electro-post-rock juggernauts Sunnyvale provide viciously inventive support.

**JACK PENATE:** *The Zodiac (downstairs)* – South London rockabilly jangler and recent tour



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support to The Maccabees, coming on somewhere between Jamie T, Billy Bragg and The Farmers Boys.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC OPEN JAM SESSION:** **The Music Market**  
**ADE PAYNE:** **The Port Mahon**  
**ELECTRIC JAM:** **The X, Cowley** – Open jam session with in-house band The X Men.

### MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY + SHUFFLE:** **The Zodiac** – Former-Ash guitarist, now an established talent in her own right – *see main preview*

**STEVE ARVEY:** **The Bullingdon** – Acoustic and electric blues-rock from the Chicago-based guitarist, renowned for his reinterpretations of classics by The Rolling Stones, Chester Burnett and others.

**MARTIN SIMPSON:** **Nettlebed Folk Club** – Long-standing English folk stalwart and renowned guitarist and banjo player, mixing up

### Monday 5<sup>th</sup>

## CHARLOTTE HATHERLEY: The Zodiac

Charlotte Hatherley didn't just add an enormous dose of unrefined beauty to Ash, she also lent the band a sweet pop edge to their effervescent punk deluge. Although in her time with the band (she joined in 1997 after a brief spell with Nightnurse and left for good at the start of 2006) Charlotte wrote barely a handful of songs for Ash (notably b-side and cult favourite 'There's A Star'), her solo career suggests her talents were much underused. From her debut outing, 'Kim Wilde', a homage to her childhood idol, through to new album 'The Deep Blue', she's more than adept at a hook-laden bubblegum pop gem, her sweet, dreamy voice at home with early-80s-inspired pure pop or heavier, big-riffed indie power rock. She quotes Pixies as her major influence but there are echoes of The Go-Go's and even Scritti Politti in her deceptively simple songs. And of course, as more than a few people have pointed out, she's an absolute babe. A result on every count.



traditional folk sounds with bluegrass, blues and cajun.

**KILL HENRY SUGAR:** **The X, Cowley** – Joan Baez's guitarist Eric Della Penne plays a solo show at the X prior to his big night at the New Theatre tomorrow.

### TUESDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**JOAN BAEZ:** **The New Theatre** – The queen of the 60s folk revival plays her first Oxford gig in three years, her last visit was part of 2004's Oxford Folk Festival. Along with Bob Dylan, Baez spearheaded the folk revival of the 1960s, helped lead the civil rights protest movement and continues her humanitarian work through to the present day. Musically an inspiration for virtually every female singer-songwriter of the last 40 years and a proper legend.

**THE BLOOD ARM:** **The Zodiac** – LA new wavers on the up'n'up after praise from The Strokes and Franz Ferdinand as well as support to Killers and We Are Scientists. They tick all the right post-punk boxes (Fall, XTC), but replace the sharp-elbowed guitar attack with a piano lead for a woozy, drunken feel on rocking anthems like 'Suspicious Character'.

**JAZZ CLUB with THE ALVIN ROY:** **The Bullingdon** – Free weekly jazz club, tonight featuring Alvin Roy launching his new album.  
**THE YOUNG PLANS + LIDDLING + THE BLITZ CARTEL:** **The Port Mahon**  
**CATO STREET CONSPIRACY + KING FURNACE + THE COURTESY KILL + NOT MY DAY:** **The Wheatsheaf** – Rousing politicised metal in the vein of System Of A Down and Bad Religion from north London's Cato Street Conspiracy, plus loud and hairy funk-rock from King Furnace.

**SHUSH OPEN MIC NIGHT:** **The X, Cowley**  
**ACOUSTIC NIGHT:** **The Hobgoblin, Bicester**

**VERTIGO:** **The Cellar** – Indie club night with live sets from local krautrocking electro stars The Evenings, plus Econoline and National School.

**OPEN MIC NIGHT:** **Mango's**

### WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**MANDO DIAO + ALTERKICKS:** **The Zodiac** – Scuzzy Swedish rockers, exploring classic 60s pop with a fair scraping of indie fuzz.

**RICHARD JAMES + LITTLE EIFFEL:** **The Wheatsheaf** – Solo gig for Gorky's Zygotic Mynci frontman Richard James, launching his new album, 'The Seven Sleepers Den', a gorgeously lysergic blend of bucolic pop, Welsh language folk, devotional country and psychedelia.

**FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS + GUNKATA + THE MENUS + SYBARITES:** **The Port Mahon**

**10CC:** **The New Theatre** – Graham Gouldman's on-going 70s soft-rock torch bearers roll out the hits once again.

**FOLK SESSION:** **The X, Cowley**

**HIT&RUN:** **The Cellar** – Hip hop and drum&bass club night.

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** **Marlborough House**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** **Temple Bar**

### THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**POISON THE WELL:** **The Zodiac (upstairs)** – Rare chance to catch the Florida hardcore giants, over in the UK to promote their fourth album, 'Versions', after signing to Ferret Records, having left Atlantic after 'You Come Before You'. As ever line-up changes have afflicted the band and they now sport two new members, but the core



### Friday 9<sup>th</sup>

## THE HOURS: The Zodiac

In a time of MySpace-fuelled instant cultdom, it's good to come across a new band who have earned their spurs. In The Hours' case with bells on. The band are Antony Genn and Martin Slattery. Both played together in Joe Strummer's Mescaleros until the singer's death. Previous to that Genn was part of an early Pulp line-up as well as one of its later incarnations, as well as keyboard player in Elastica (in fact it was him who legendarily joined the band stark naked on stage at Glastonbury in 1995, having ingested most of the world's supplies of drugs beforehand and was subsequently taken on as a proper band member). Beyond that and some production work with U.N.K.L.E., he's played (and lived) with Robbie Williams and counselled Pete Doherty, having come close to death after years of extreme drug abuse. Now, having lost a whole decade of his life, and all of his teeth, he's back. Slattery, meanwhile, played with Black Grape, but remains a more sober influence. Musically The Hours are a wonderfully melodic band, the gorgeous, graceful 'Back When You Were Good' a particular highlight, while debut single, 'Ali In The Jungle', is equally inventive and catchy. The Hours' debut album was financed by artist Damie Hirst and features James Godson (who played with Gloria Gaynor) as well as Motown legend Jack Ashford and suggests the excessive character traits that drove Genn to drug abuse are now being channelled in far more positive directions.

of the band, singer Jeffrey Moriera, guitarist Ryan Primack and drummer Chris Hornbrook, remains as does their melodic, eloquent take on metal. 'Opposite Of December' remains a landmark of sorts for modern hardcore and tonight's gig should be little short of mayhem.  
**JAMES YORKSTON + NANCY ELIZABETH CUNLIFFE:** **The Zodiac (downstairs)** – Charming, witty and unassuming folk from the old school Scottish troubadour and Fence Collective member, a master of romantic



*Saturday 17<sup>th</sup>*

## IDLEWILD: Brookes University Union

Music press flavours of the month come and go but genuine quality stays the course. Twelve years and six albums into their lifetime, Idlewild just keep on getting better. New album 'Make Another World' has its work cut out to equal 2002's superb 'The Remote Part', but in songs like its title track and 'Once In Your Life', it does the business. From their spiky indie-punk origins (once described as the sound of "a flight of stairs falling down a flight of stairs") to their more sweeping and melodic incarnation (exemplified by the glorious 'You Held The World In Your Arms'), Idlewild have managed to bridge the gap between cult status and commercial success. Their departure from Parlophone doesn't seem to have hindered them either, now signed to Sanctuary offshoot Sequel. Songs is what count though, and Idlewild have those in abundance, their heroic pathos obviously inspired by the likes of REM, Nirvana and Sebadoh but having long since learned to soar in its own right. More than just survivors in rock's fickle waters, Idlewild are simply one of the best bands these isles have produced in the last decade.

early-hours confessionals, plying songs from recent album 'Year Of The Leopard'.

**COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES + YOU IN MOTION + STRAY DAY: The Port Mahon** – Piano-led pop in a Keane and Coldplay style from Collisions and Consequences, plus emotive pop from Lincoln teens You In Motion.

**LES CLOCHARDS + CLARK WISEMAN: QI Club** – Downbeat 80s indie jangle with an exotic Gallic pop edge from Les Clochards, with support from local singer-songwriter Clark Wiseman in a Tim Finn vein.

**HEADS WE DANCE + DOG SHOW + HAMMER Vs THE SNAKE: The Cellar** – A night of electro-rock at the Big Hair club with New Wave synthists Hammer Vs The Snake plus Leeds' electro-glamsters Heads We Dance.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY: The Music Market**

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford**

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**WHEATLEY PARK SOUL BAND: The X, Cowley**

## FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**THE HOURS: The Zodiac** – Back from the brink majestic pop from veterans Antony Genn and Martin Slattery – *see main preview*

**SLIDE with ANDY WEATHERALL: The Zodiac** – The legendary producer and remixer shows off his new minimalist house DJ sound at Oxford's premier monthly house club night.

**GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with WHISKYCATS + GRANT & ROXY + SIMON DAVIES: The X, Cowley** – Lively blues, jazz and rock from Manchester's Whiskycats with support from Grant and Roxy, an odd mix of stand-up comedian and author and winsome songstress, plus folk-cum-bossanova from Simon Davies.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon CIVILIAN + ARC ANGEL + GOOD**

**MOURNING: The Wheatsheaf** – A night of metal and emo from the Quickfix crew.

**DICORA: The Bullingdon** – Local bands night followed by Backroom Boogie.

**ROB LEVER + JESSICA GOYDER TRIO + THE HEARTWEAR PROCESS +**

**ROYWORLD: The Jericho Tavern** – Acoustic folk-pop from local singer Rob Lever, with support from Oxford/Barcelona-based singer Jessica Goyder, mixing gentle bossa nova into her sweet, soulful jazz-pop. Reading's Heartwear Process lean towards Nick Cave in their darkly-inclined rock, while London power-rockers Royworld open proceedings.

**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Live jazz dance club night.

**REDOX + PETE FRYER BAND + REV MOONSHINE + JEREMY HUGHES: The Magdalen**

## SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**RICHARD SWIFT + RICHARD**

**VANDERVELDE: The Zodiac** – Brooding, earnest balladeering from American singer-songwriter, treading similar musical ground to Rufus Wainwright and Ron Sexsmith.

**THE G's + JEREMY HUGHES + REVEREND MOONSHINE + THE PROHIBITION**

**SMOKERS CLUB: The X, Cowley** – Fundraiser for Wittstock Festival.

**SNAKE EYES + THE WISH + SAND**

**CREEK MASSACRE: The Music Market** – Delicious Music local bands night with metallers Snake Eyes and more.

**OX4: The Bullingdon** – Drum&bass club night.

**SKULL THRASH + RANDALL FLAGG +**

**SHE CRIES: The Wheatsheaf** – Heavy rock night with thrash metallers Skull Thrash and this month's demo of the monthers Randall Flagg.

**BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar**

**BACK JACK TABAC: The Duke,**

**St.Clements** – DJs Van Mule and Jason King spin a selection of classic soul, funk, blues, 70s and rock.

**REDOX + PETE FRYER: Crawley Inn, Witney**

## SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**ENIGMA PROJECT + WHERE I'M**

**CALLING FROM + WOOKIES + LES**

**NATRELS: The Port Mahon** – Post-grunge rocking from Reading's Enigma Project at tonight's Swiss Concrete club night. Local new wave sweeties WICF support along with Newbury's bombastic popsters Wookies and weirdo alt.rockers Les Natrels.

**ELECTRIC SIX + PING PONG BITCHES: The Zodiac** – Initially great ('Danger! High

Voltage' and 'Gay Bar') garage rockers outta Noo Yawk in the slipstream of The Strokes and White Stripes, but more recently a stale one-trick pony whose gig at Oxford Town Hall back whenever was one of the most miserably wretched spectacles Nightshift has had the misfortune to witness. But hey, things change (not least the band's line-up, on a pretty regular basis); they might be brilliant and we'll hang our heads in shame. Worth catching Ping Pong Bitches, mind. Spiky synth-punk action. Gotta be good, no? **DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC OPEN JAM SESSION: The Music Market**  
**SALSA SUNDAY: The Cellar** – Live Latin dance with Salsaneros.

## MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**PAUL LAMB & THE KINGSNAKES: The Bullingdon** – North-East blues harpist with a 30-year career on the European blues circuit to his name. Blues, boogie, swing and jump from the man and his dancefloor-friendly band.

**PEGGY & PJ: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Fairport bassist Dave Pegg and Little Johnny England

*Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>*

## BRIGHT EYES: Brookes University Union

Such is the fanatical following that Bright Eyes have acquired it's fair to assume this gig will have sold out in about 25 seconds. The band, fronted by Omaha singer-songwriter Conor Oberst plus regular collaborators Mike Mogis and Nat Walcott along with a rotating cast of Nebraska indie luminaries, have achieved a phenomenal level of commercial success since their breakthrough album, 'Lifted Or The Story Is In The Soil, Keep Your Ear To The Ground', particularly given the band have remained on indie label Saddle Creek throughout. Oberst, not surprisingly a poster boy for disaffected girls (and plenty of boys also) across the States, deals in tales of loving girls too much as well as well-observed critiques of America's right wing, all delivered in a fragile, country-tinged form of pop that owes something to Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and Kurt Cobain. Before the 2004 American presidential elections Oberst joined REM and Bruce Springsteen on the Vote For Change tour and refuses to play any venue owned by Clear Channel. Bright Eyes' new album, 'Cassadaga' is released this month and features contributions from M.Ward and Sleater Kinney's Janet Weiss among others and tonight's gig, one of only two UK shows, will be more like a religious experience than a rock gig.



guitarist PJ Wright team up for a night of blues, folk and rock.

## **TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>**

**JAZZ CLUB with THE TOM GREY**

**QUINTET: The Bullingdon**

**KATE GARRETT BAND + LAIMA BITE: The Port Mahon** – Jazz-tinged pop and folk from Kate Garrett, plus sublime gothic soul from Laima in support.

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

**DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES CLUB: The Music Market** – With UK Blues Brothers tribute act Green Onions, plus Blue Mama and The VIPs.

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

## **WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>**

**OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon** – Saxophonist Pete McPhail is the special guest at tonight's Oxford Improvisers residency.

**FOREVER LIKE RED + THE PLAUDITS +**

**ONE DOLLAR PEEPSHOW: The Zodiac** – Emotive, floaty soft pop from London's Jeff Buckley-inspired crew, recently signed to Echo.

**HANGMAN'S JOE: The Music Market** – Classic rock action.

**FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley**

**PHONIK SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Live jazz, funk, soul and Latin jam session.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar**

## **THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup>**

**DIATRIBE + THE BLITZ CARTEL: The Cellar** – Cure and Smiths-inspired rocking from Diatribe at tonight's Big Hair club, plus feverish indie punk thrash from The Blitz Cartel.

**ELLA CANAVAN: QI Club** – Grimly gothic scuzz-pop from recent Nightshift demo of the monthers making a lo-fi racket with its heart in Nick Cave's sandwich box.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY: The Music Market**

**JESSICA GOYDER: The X, Cowley** – Sweet, bossa nova-tinged acoustic pop from the Anglo-Spanish songstress.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

## **FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup>**

**DEGUELLO + SEXTODECIMO + MONDO CADA + JECANE: The Music Market** – A night of noise beyond compare as the mighty, monstrous Sextodecimo return to tear a new hole in the very fabric of the universe with their beyond-metal death sludge. They're evenly matched with ferocious hardcore urchins Deguello and uber-grunge maniacs Mondo Cada. Seriously, seriously nasty fun.

**ILL EASE + DATA.SELECT.PARTY + THE**

**LATE GREATS: The Wheatshaf** – More quality leftfield sounds courtesy of Vacuous Pop tonight with New York one-woman band Ill Ease mixing up art-punk confrontation with rootsy melodies as Elizabeth Sharp kicks out live rhythms over guitar loops. Spiky new wave pop in the style of The Cure and XTC from Data.Select.Party, plus scuzzy, spindly post-punk from Sussex's Late Greats.

**BASSMENTALITY: The Zodiac** – Live dance club night with sets from London's ska-hip hop fusion band Imperial Leisure, plus trippy funk and rock from returning local talents Jaberwok and jazz-funk from Tonic.

**CORVIDS + THE RUINS + ALLY CRAIG +**

**FECK + DAN AUSTIN: The X, Cowley** – Post-hardcore and krautrock from Corvids at Grinning Spider's club night, plus support from local melodic indie gliders The Ruins and Jeff Buckley-via-Sonic Youth aceness from Ally Craig.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon**

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

**FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar** – House, beats and breaks with Evil Nine.

## **SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup>**

**IDLEWILD: Brookes University Union** – Sweeping pop majesty from Edinburgh's favourite sons – *see main preview*

**JOHN BUTCHER with THE OXFORD**

**IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA: The Jacqueline Du Pre Building** – Leading saxophonist Butcher, responsible for the landmark '13 Friendly Numbers' album, teams up with the leading lights of Oxford's improv scene.

**STEVEN SEAGAL & THUNDERBOX:**

**Oxford Town Hall** – Ponytailed action hero and aikido black belt Seagal goes back to his Delta blues roots with his new album, 'Mojo Priest', having earned his guitar-playing spurs accompanying the likes of Bo Diddley, BB King and Albert Collins. Probably not wise to heckle – have you seen what he does to baddies?

**ST PATRICK'S NIGHT SPECIAL with**

**HENRY MARTEN'S GHOST: The Bullingdon** – A night of lively traditional Irish folk from the local stalwart.

**THE DRUG SQUAD + SLEEPLESS + BLUE MAMA: The Music Market** – Ska, punk and pop from The Drug Squad, plus blues from Blue Mama.

**ABORT, RETRY, FAIL? With**

**ANAMANAGUCHI + DENY THE**

**ACCIDENT + GEORGE PRINGLE: The Cellar** – The electro club night goes American with New York's Anamanaguchi bringing their synth power pop alongside California's DTA's trippy, dubby, downbeat pop. Local lass George Pringle brings the quintessentially English laptop vignettes and musings.

**MELTING POT with A SILENT FILM +**

**BUTCHER BLUES FOUNDATION + JONNY RACE + THE DIRT: The Jericho**

**Tavern** – Superbly orchestrated power rock from A Silent Film, heading unstoppably onwards and upwards. Raw and heavy blues-rock from Butcher Blues Foundation.

**ECHOBEAT: Temple Bar**

**SLAINTE: Red Lion, Yarnton** – Irish folk band.

**NORTHERN SOUL & MOTOWN NIGHT:**

**Pressed Steel Social Club, Cowley**

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

## **SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup>**

**BRIGHT EYES: Brookes University** – Lovelorn loveliness from Conor Oberst and his Omaha chums – *see main preview*

**TOWERS OF LONDON: The Zodiac** –

Risible, third-rate Motley Crue tribute from Piles of Shite, earning themselves a few months stay of execution after Donny Tourette's "hilarious antics" in the Celebrity Big Brother house. Guest appearance by Jo O'Meara unlikely.

**JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS: The Port Mahon** – Highly-promising local acoustic duo with singer and guitarist Joe teaming up with electric violinist Angharad Jenkins in the vein of Damien Rice and Mike Scott.

**CHRIS LESLIE & RIC SANDERS +**



*Monday 19<sup>th</sup>*

## **JOHN CALE:**

### **The Zodiac**

Re-arranged from January. As a principle player in The Velvet Underground, the arty foil to Lou Reed's rock'n'roller, John Cale's legend is secure, but ever since the release of those two epoch-making albums, 'The Velvet Underground and Nico' and 'White Light, White Heat', Cale has done plenty to prove he was the real innovator in that band. Over the course of 40 years he's released 25 solo albums and 20 soundtracks as well as producing some of the most important albums of recent times (notably Patti Smith's 'Horses' and The Stooges' debut). Describing himself as "a classical composer, dishevelled my personality by dabbling in rock 'n' roll", Cale has always surpassed the boundaries that separate those musical worlds, his classical training and early time spent playing with La Monte Young and John Cage lending him an experimental edge that has stayed with him throughout his career. 'Paris 1919' (released in 1973) remains Cale's solo masterpiece but all along the line he's remained a versatile innovator, alternately dark and threatening – and remarkably confrontational for such an established figure – and playful and romantic, his skill with viola and piano easily matched by his wonderfully rich Welsh singing voice. Tonight's gig, in support of new album, 'Circus Live', is a rare chance to see not just a legend but one of the single most important figures in musical history.

**WILBER: Holywell Music Room** – Oxford Folk Festival warm-up show from the Fairport Convention chaps.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC OPEN JAM SESSION: The Music Market**

**ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley**

## **MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup>**

**JOHN CALE: The Zodiac** – Re-arranged gig for the former-Velvet Underground legend – *see main preview*

**THE KING EARL BOOGIE BAND: The**

**Bullingdon** – Blues and jug band originally formed by ex-Mungo Jerry blokes Paul King and Colin Earl, subsequently offering service to all manner of 60s and 70s rock refugees, including former members of Manfred Mann's Earth Band and Status Quo.

**TANGLEFOOT: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Canadian power folkies.

**ZENA JAMES QUARTET: The X, Cowley** – Top quality jazz night featuring National Jazz Youth Orchestra founder Geoff Castle (piano) plus top UK jazz drummer Mike Bradley and Paul Jeffries on double bass.

### **TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup>**

**JAZZ CLUB with HUGH & STU: The Bullingdon**

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

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: Mango's**

### **WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup>**

**MULES + BODECCA + TWAT TROT TRA LA: The Zodiac** – London-Oxford polka punks play their first Zodiac headline show: an energetic fusion of new wave tension and Eastern European gypsy dance that at its best sounds like a hoe-down showdown between Jacques Brel and The Pop Group.

**FOLK SESSION: The X, Cowley**

**HIT&RUN: The Cellar**

*Monday 26<sup>th</sup>*

## **UNEARTH / JOB FOR A COWBOY / DESPISED ICON / DAATH: The Zodiac**

You want metal? You got metal! Times four. In big, fuck-off chunks with armour plating and a side order of METAL. Unearth's US and European tour in support of new album, 'III: In The Line Of Fire', brings them to the Zodiac as one of a few UK dates, their darkly orchestral metalcore an equal to Killswitch Engage, their mix of thrash, hardcore and old-fashioned guitar harmonies inspired by Iron Maiden through to Pantera. Joining them at this carnival of carnage are Arizona's Job For A Cowboy, a guttural, lava-gargling hellstorm of speed and death metal, the similarly-minded Despised Icon, out of Montreal, with their full-on grinding guitars and blastbeats, plus Georgia sextet Daath, recently signed to Roadrunner and harking back to early-90s death metal, with all its accompanying trappings: the evil that lurks within the human mind, ancient evil, a bit more evil for good measure. In short it's a great night to cleanse your soul, and maybe slaughter some of your best friends in an orgy of sonic violence. Go on, treat yourself.



**OPEN MIC SESSION: Marlborough House**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar**

### **THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**THIRTEEN SENSES + LUKE TOMS: The Zodiac** – Rampaging gabba hardcore and industrial death disco from Thirteen Se.... Oh okay, not really, but you can live in hope, eh?  
**JUNE TABOR + MARK EMERSON + ANDY CUTTING: Oxford Playhouse** – Former Oxford Uni student, Oxford Folk Festival patron and a woman with a justifiable claim to be the queen of English folk music, June Tabor here plays a warm-up gig for the Folk Festival, offering sparse and sombre reinterpretations of traditional songs.

**THE HALF RABBITS + SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + FIGMENT: The Cellar** – Dark new wave rocking in the vein of The Chameleons and Bauhaus from The Half Rabbits, plus earth-scorching electro post-rock from Sunnyvale.

**THE GULLIVERS + SAMUEL BEER: QI Club** – Ska-tinged indie punk from Bicester's Gullivers in a similar vein to Larrikin Love and The Maccabees.

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY: The Music Market**

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

### **FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**THE DRESDENS: The Music Market** – The two Bens from Winnebago Deal team up with Jack out of Gunnbunny for a dose of seriously incendiary garage punk rocking, instilled with the spirit of Action Swingers, AC/DC and Motorhead at their most ferocious. Hold on tight to something solid else you'll be swept away.

**WEDNESDAY THE THIRTEENTH +**

**McQUEEN: The Zodiac (upstairs)** – Confusingly-monikered frontman with Muderolls, Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> (named after the daughter in The Addams Family and The Munsters' address) brings his OTT panto goth-horror rocking back to the Zodiac in support of last year's 'Fang Bang' album.

**KATE NASH: The Zodiac (downstairs)** – 19-year-old London singer coming on like a sweeter-natured, folkier Lily Allen, but treading closer to the likes of Goldfrapp on ace new single 'Caroline's A Victim'.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon BABY GRAVY + TELEGRAPH +**

**ANALOGUE: The Wheatshaf** – Oddball electro-punk pop from Baby Gravy, somehow finding a meeting point between Le Tigre, The Human League, Lee Perry and Hawkwind.

**THE LOW COUNTRIES + PORT ERIN + AGENTS OF JANE + COLEY PARK: The Jericho Tavern** – Local bands night.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

### **SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>**

**THE SOUNDS: The Zodiac** – Swedish rockers mixing 70s punk with 80s pop, previously tour support to Foo Fighters and The Strokes, out on this headline tour to promote new album, 'Dying To Say This To You', produced by Jeff Saltzman, also responsible for The Killers' 'Hot Fuss'.

**THE ACADEMY IS: The Zodiac** – Blah blah... Fueled By Ramen... blah blah... anthemic punk-pop... blah blah... probably sold out already... blah blah... somebody fetch the shotgun... blah blah...

**NINE-TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS: The Bullingdon** – Traditional 60s-style ska from Sir Bald Diddle's Smugglers, plus ska DJs.

**NONSENSE + CHRIS MARTIN + MR SHAADOW + ROBIN HOODZ + DEVILISH + RETROFIRE: The Music Market** – Delicious Music local hip hop night, including ace new rapper Mr Shadow.

**FOXES! + ONIONS FOR EYES: The Port Mahon** – Sweet 80s-styled indie jangle from Foxes! in the grand tradition of Heavenly et al.

**CHICKS WITH DECKS: The Cellar** – Indie, new wave, electro and punk club night.

**CHRIS THOMPSON: Temple Bar**

### **SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup>**

**THE YOUNG KNIVES: Brookes University Union** – The Knives headline their biggest local show so far as part of a UK tour before heading back into the studio to write and record the follow-up to 'Voices of Animals and Men'.

**PINDROP PERFORMANCE with LIND OPTICAL + SJ ESAU + BIRDTRIB: The Port Mahon (5pm)** – More leftfield and experimental sounds in a sedate setting from the Pindrop people. This afternoon's show features local psychedelic popster and soundscapist Lind Optical, with support from new Anticon signing SJ Esau and rising avant-hip hop talent Birdtrib.

**BLACK UMFOLOSI: The Zodiac** – Lively Township dance and gumboot stomping from South Africa's multi-arts troupe.

**DELICIOUS MUSIC ELECTRIC OPEN JAM SESSION: The Music Market**

**BEARD MUSEUM with THE KICKS +**

**VINCE FREEMAN + GG + JASON KING:**

**The Purple Turtle** – Banbury's Kicks headline tonight's Beard Museum, brothers Lee and Clark Wiseman owing a fair bit to the brothers Finn along the way.

**THE INDIGOS + BACK POCKET PROPHET + THE LOYAL TROOPER + WHISTLER: The Jericho Tavern** –

Selectasound gig featuring Birmingham new wavers The Indigos, plus heavy rocking from BPP and summery guitar pop bounce from The Loyal Trooper. Student newcomers Whistler open proceedings.

### **MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup>**

**UNEARTH + JOB FOR A COWBOY + DISPISED ICON + DAATH: The Zodiac** – Heavy goings on with a four-band bill of American and Canadian ultra metal – *see main preview*

**THE COLIN JOHN BAND with BEN**

**WATERS: The Bullingdon** – Classic blues-rock from the Ohio-based singer and guitarist, tonight joined by renowned blues pianist Ben Waters, fresh from his local show with Chris Jagger.

**JUXSTAR + AMY BEE: The Port Mahon** – Slick MOR rock from the headliners.

**FEAST OF FIDDLES: Nettlebed Folk Club**

**JAZZ JAM: The X, Cowley**

### **TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>**

**GOOD SHOES + VINCENT VINCENT & THE VILLAINS: The Zodiac** – Jerky, jangly new wave indie rocking out of London Town, eschewing Libertines-style crappiness in favour of more Jam and Buzzcocks-inspired noise.  
**KING KOOL + MR G & RICH + VIOLET VIOLET: The Port Mahon** – Swiss Concrete club night with former Big Audio Dynamite chap Dan Donovan bringing his new band King Kool

to town. Electro-indie rocking from Mr G & Rich plus shouty gossip rock from Violet Violet.

**FEAST OF FIDDLES ACOUSTIC:**

**Nettlebed Folk Club**

**DELICIOUS MUSIC BLUES CLUB:** The Music Market – With Green Onions and Blue Mama.

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

**DELICIOUS MUSIC JAZZ NIGHT:** Bar Milano, Pizza Express

### **WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>**

**MOIETY + OLIVER SHAW:** The Port Mahon – Acoustic night.

**FOLK SESSION:** The X, Cowley

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** Marlborough House

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** Temple Bar

### **THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup>**

**THE BEAT with NEVILLE STAPLES:** The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Former Two Tone heroes return to town after last year's Bullingdon gigs, this time teamed up and kicking out the old hits and classic ska and reggae tunes.

**THE TWANG + RIPCORDER:** The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – Swaggering, laddish groove-rock from Birmingham's The Twang, mixing up Stone Roses, The Clash and The Streets into an earthy brew.

**SKYLARKIN with DJ DEREK:** The Zodiac (*upstairs*) – Skylarkin's monthly ska, reggae and soul extravaganza with the Bristolian DJ.

**ELLA CANAVAN + BIG BAD CITY + THE SEA + FRIDAY ISLAND:** The X, Cowley – Selectasound presents a night of new local bands, including lo-fi doomsters Ella Canavan. Funk-rock from Big Bad City, fronted by none other than current Miss UK Ellie Glynn; stripped-down White Stripes-style rocking from The Sea. **THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + JONQUIL + THEO + GEORGE PRINGLE + HOUSE OF BROTHERS:** The Cellar – Emo-tinged power rocking from local favourites TTNG, with support from esoteric pop types Jonquil, hypnotic guitar noise from Theo, digital musings from George Pringle and the return of former-Murder Of Rosa Luxembourg people House of Brothers.



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**OXFORD UNIVERSITY JAZZ SOCIETY:**

**The Music Market**

**BLIND PILOTS:** The Port Mahon

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

### **FRIDAY 30<sup>th</sup>**

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL with UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN:** Oxford Town Hall – Opening night of the annual folk festival, packed with ukulele-fuelled fun – *see main preview*

**MAGPIE LANE:** Holywell Music Room

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with MESAPLEX + SUNSHINE REPUBLIC + CHARLOTTE ROSE:** The Zodiac – Excellent triple bill of new talent at tonight's GTI. Former Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia people Mesaplex crunch out some alternately glitchy and soaring electro-rock with a nod to Kraftwerk along the way, while Sunshine Republic mix up drones, feedback and psychotic screaming into monolithic passages of noise; Swans, Mogwai and Godspeed all contribute to their wall of sound and set-long tracks with titles like 'Celebrity Fat Cunt'. Delicate acoustic

songstress Charlotte Rose provides some aural respite for more sensitive souls in the audience.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon

**KAIKO + THE SHAKER HEIGHTS +**

**BODECCA:** The Jericho Tavern

**SLIDEWINDER:** The X, Cowley – Live blues.

### **SATURDAY 31<sup>st</sup>**

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL with SALSA CELTICA + JOHN SPIERS & JON BODEN + FERNHILL + LUKE DANIELS + JOHN KIRKPATRICK + MORE:** Oxford Town Hall – First full day of the city-wide folk festival – *see main preview*

**THE DAUGHTERS OF ELVIN:** Holywell Music Room – A night of mediaeval music as part of OFF.

**WOODPECKER BAND:** Brookes University Union – Ceilidh with local faves.

**INDIGO MOSS:** The Cellar – Nu-folk starlets perform as part of the OFF, mixing up bluegrass, rockabilly and jangle-pop.

**HIGH & MIGHTY:** The Zodiac (*downstairs*) – One-time local metal favourites reunite.

**VEDA PARK + STORNOWAY + AMBERSTATE + MOIETY:** The Wheatsheaf – Launch gig for Veda Park's 'What's It Like Being You?' album. The band's soft-centred 70s-styled rock comes with support from celtic-tinged rockers Stornoway as well as trippy jazz-popstrels Amberstate.

**INFLATABLE BUDDHA + MATT SAGE & THE ORCHESTRA OF LOVE + THE CONSCRIPTS:** East Oxford Community Centre – Benefit gig for Frontiers charity, in particular their work in helping Bulgarian orphanage House Of Butterflies. World folk sounds with a theatrical punk edge from Inflatable Buddha, plus lush, harmonic folk-pop from Matt Sage and crew.

**CAMINUS:** The Port Mahon

**VAN DIEMANS + AKERMYSTS +**

**MOOCHER:** The Music Market – Delicious Music local bands night.

*Fri 30<sup>th</sup> March – Sun 1<sup>st</sup> April*

## **OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Various Venues**

Four years in and the Oxford Folk Festival goes from strength to strength. This year's event finds Oxford Town Hall giving itself over to three days of traditional English as well as more exotic world sounds, while there are concerts, workshops and ceilidhs across the city as well as street performances and a grand parade. This year's headliners are Scotland's Salsa Celtica, an eleven-piece fusion band mixing up south American dance with British folk; Eliza Carthy (*pictured*) with her band The Ratcatchers: one of modern English folk music's finest fiddlers and singers backed up by an all-star band that features new folk luminaries Spiers and Boden, who feature in their own right this weekend; The Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain, reinterpreting all manner of genres on ukuleles, plus Oxford's own Magpie Lane who perform at The Holywell Music Room. Other attractions include a giant ceilidh session with local stars The Woodpecker Band up at Brookes, quirky singer-songwriter Luke Smith, mediaeval troupe The Daughters of Elvin, squeezebox maestro John Kirkpatrick and Welsh folk heroes Fernhill. In fact, there's so much going on you'd have to be omnipresent to catch even half of it. For a full programme of events, visit [www.oxfordfolkfestival.com](http://www.oxfordfolkfestival.com). Weekend and day tickets are available online at [www.ticketsoxford.com](http://www.ticketsoxford.com) or on 01865 305305.

**STILLMAN + DANIELLE HELMS:** Burton Taylor Theatre – Multi-instrumentalist Chaz Craik mixes up Radiohead, Doves and Nick Drake in his Stillman project, with support from local singer-songwriter Danielle Helms. **SOUL NIGHT:** The Bullingdon – With DJ Tony Nanton **THE TASTE:** The X, Cowley – German indie rockers on tour.

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



# LIVE

## NME AWARDS TOUR

### Brookes University Union

NME are calling it New Rave, but no one tonight seems convinced, not the bands, all who mock the term from the stage, nor even the kids down the front sporting glo-sticks around their necks. They know that what they're watching is simply an old-fashioned rock show.

And anyway, what self-respecting rave starts at 7pm – the time **New Young Pony Club** hit the stage, well before most people have even got through the doors. And so we miss all but the last echoes of their coolly stylised 80s electro-funk. Spirits are quickly lifted by Leeds' **Sunshine Underground Band**. Their initial burst of yelping and buzzing sounds worryingly like Arctic Monkeys with a firecracker up their collective backside, but as the heavyweight funk bass takes hold, underpinning Craig Wellington's vocal acrobatics, bits of metal get bashed and the intensity slowly but surely builds throughout the set, shrapnel shards of The Music, The Clash and even Teardrop Explodes invade the party vibe and an up-for-it crowd pogos towards a climax that sees Wellington stand astride his monitor like a true rock god. And promptly fall over.

Sao Paulo's **CSS** are the main reason we're here: the five-girls, one-boy electro-popsters have rarely left our consciousness since 'Alala' wedged its way in a few months back. They arrive on stage wearing burkas before spiritedly hurling themselves into the cheerleader chant of 'CSS Suxxx', but it quickly becomes apparent that their sound engineer is either deaf or on a mission to sabotage the party, such is the lack of power coming from the same PA that Sunshine Underground Band had just threatened to melt. A shame because CSS are such a joyously pure pop band, especially when they're belting out love songs to alcohol or getting smoochy on 'Let's Make Love And Listen To Death From Above'. Their energy is as infectious as their tunes: both possessed of a childlike irresistibility.

We came with no preconceptions about **Klaxons**; a number 2 debut album suggests it's not all NME hype. But you wonder if the editor who acclaimed this lumpen indie rock show New Rave has ever come closer to



CSS photo: Richard Hounslow

being pilled off his skull in a field off the M25 than listening to Pulp's 'Sorted For Es and Whizz'. It's like listening to Kasabian without the bulldozing funk or any of the tunes. It's not even an entertaining triumph of style over substance: there is no style and each stomping stadium rock chug that leaps in ungainly fashion from the stage is as average as the last. Acid house was a musical revolution; this isn't even musical evolution. Stop waving your hands in the air and hang your heads in shame.

**Victoria Waterfield**

## MR SHAADOW

### The Music Market

Tonight's Delicious Music hip hop night exposes Oxford's music scene to a still rarely seen side of local music; it also heralds the arrival of a young man who could become a genuine local star.

Mr Shadow – real name Elliot – is a London-born Brookes law student with a fresh, individualistic take on rap. His opening number exposes everything that's great about him: 'There's A Black Man Coming' is both socially astute but equally witty and warming: "Look out there's a black man coming / People in wheelchairs get up and start running". Throughout a half-hour set Shadow (a wordplay on Shadow and Shaolin) draws you into his worldview, a world away from rap's macho bravado. "Anyone here got a job?" he cheerfully enquires before an a capella rap on working in a call centre that's closer to slam poetry than mainstream hip hop. His

rapping style is full of confidence and clarity with a sometimes machine gun-like staccato delivery and a neat line in self-deprecation. He sometimes looks like he needs to relax a bit more but given this is one of his first Oxford shows that's not surprising and he's laying his rapping and rhymes pretty bare with only the most minimal electro back-up, samples kept to a bare minimum.

There's a moment of earnest romance when he comes on like LL Cool J, but it's when he's making more political observations he's in his element and he leaves the best to last, 'The British Are Coming', an almost anthemic dissection of what's wrong with and what can be great about UK rap (ie: stop trying to be American!) with a sing-a-long contribution from the crowd. It's a great call to arms and signals the arrival in town of a real talent.

**Dale Kattack**

## JAMIE T / DEM NUDES

### Brookes University Union

Despite the claims of the headline act that Dem Nudes are "the best band in London", to these ears they sound like fourth-rate Clash copyists, and are rightly paid very little heed by the large crowd here tonight.

Moving swiftly on to Jamie T, the mood quickly changes from frustrating low-quality punk to invigorating knockabout indie-hip-hop. In the months that have passed since T last performed in Oxford (downstairs at the Zodiac), he's scored a top ten hit with 'Calm Down Dearest' and garnered increasing amounts of attention in the lead-up to his debut album 'Panic Prevention'. It's refreshing to see, though, that both he and his band are as sloppy and excitable as they were before the spotlight fell so squarely onto them. T paces the stage delivering lyrics (both his own, and random snippets of – for some reason – 4 Non Blondes and more in between songs) in a

colloquial tongue that comes over as much refreshingly honest as it does idiosyncratic. The band (guitar, bass, drums, turntables, keyboards) keep up with a loose and guitar-heavy take on light, fun hip-hop, sounding like anything from Arctic Monkeys-tinged urban cheekiness to thunderously bass-driven disco.

What keeps the performance fresh and engaging is the sheer charisma of Jamie T; he interacts with and leads the audience with the enthusiasm of a good mate and the quick wit of an old professional. In a very similar way to how Lily Allen represents a collision between hip-hop, dance and indie music that's happening throughout the worlds of MySpace and real life right now, Jamie T is totally of the moment – vital, kinetic and almost unaware of conventional audience/performer divisions. Hopefully the moment won't last long enough for his magic to wear off.

**Simon Minter**

## COLINS OF PARADISE / TRUE RUMOUR / JOE & ANGHARAD / KATE CHADWICK

### The X

Since opening The Punt in 2005 the intervening 18 months has seen Kate Chadwick finish her Brookes degree and a songwriting course working with the likes of Chris Difford. Her breezy lyrics, silver-wrapping, radio-friendly melodies remain though, while physically she's grown into a willowy and sophisticated woman. Yet tonight she chooses not to unfurl, her old coyness restricting her tight in a chair, which takes some of the normal Lene Marlin / Mindy Smith jaunt away from heartfelt songs like 'Home' and 'Here'. A simple bar stool and the boys' hearts would be broken.

Brookes University is currently doing the city proud, teaming with new talent, and none more so than the astonishing duo of Joe Allen and Angharad Jenkins. Tonight's set opener, 'Are You Awake?', bleeds into the epic 'Please Don't Just Stare At Me' and immediately I'm having to rein in the over-excited adjectives appearing on my note pad. Maybe it's the way Joe batters his acoustic as he sings, as if Mike Scott and Damien Rice are both wrestling inside him, his tennis shoes pawing at the boards trying to lift him off the ground. Maybe

it's the way Angharad's violin swoops and glides like seagulls round a Hibernian cliff face, effortlessly catching the thermals of his wonderful voice. 'Gunpoint' ratchets this up further as a loop-station turns it into Ed Alleyne Johnson dancing with Thom Yorke. To paraphrase the master; this is so fucking special.

After having my emotional cistern drained, I don't get the best out of True Rumour. The blissed-out sax, and Mark Cobb's rich strong voice end up as the cigarette after the lovemaking. Their best song, 'Magic Carpet,' is just that, a bonged-out ride on sailing arabesques.

The Colins of Paradise too look as if they may coat me in easy-listening, but their bi-polar space-pop-cum-nu-jazz both grooves and unsettles from the start. Ryan Bradshaw's and Lee Smith's awesome bass and drums kick out the jams from Bobbie and Jon Seagroatt's sunshine vocals and ripping sax, and while they can all lay it down like The Egg in session during '139', it's in the arena of complicated jazz chords and twisting time signatures that they're really pushing the envelope.

**Paul Carreira**

## ELECTROLYTES / BORDERVILLE / HOLIDAY IN VIETNAM

### The Wheatsheaf

Hang on, what in tarnation has happened to student band competitions? They used to be the domain of wacky young men in trilbys who listened to too much Weather Report and had band names like Deckchairs in the Desert or Tuna Chunks in Brine. This grand final has far too much quality. Maybe it's because student musicians have been mixing with the locals, which explains why tonight sees various ex-members of Sexy Breakfast going head-to-head for the crown.

Holiday In Vietnam feature keyboard player Seb Reynolds as well as drummer TJ Hertz who played in last year's winners, Photo. Together they're a semi-improvised krautfunk, synth-pop jam band, equal parts Hawkwind, Can, Residents and the fifteenth minute of a live musical duel between Lou Reed and John Cale. Amid the curlicues and psychedelic swirls of synths and propulsive funk bass TJ's imaginative drumming stands out and while it all occasionally threatens to meander off into some crazed hippyfest hell, it remains coherent and intriguing throughout. On any other night, no bugger would stand a chance.

But even in the face of such stiff competition, Borderville are in a class of their own. Featuring Sexy Breakfast singer Joe Swarbrick and bassist Phil Oakley,

they look and sound like they're already headlining the Albert Hall. Their opening number is alive with heroic bombast and Vaudevillian flamboyance. Pink Floyd's space-rock races for the sky with Bowie's glam stomp, the whole thing strutting like a showpiece number from *Chicago*. They play like the last minute of their last gig. Then they slow it down and camp it up, now they're Cole Porter via Sex Gang Children, and if they sometimes sound too clever for their own good, it's only because they've got more ideas in a single song than many bands manage in a lifetime. The penultimate number is a carouselling, drunken blues swagger, Marc & the Mambas urging The Doors on to ever greater whisky-sodden excess. Superb stuff.

Which makes you feel for Electrolytes, not least because their guitar amp has just exploded. They're solid enough, rattling, jangling and rumbling like The Cure before finally sparking into action at the death and fizzing like The Wedding Present and you feel that they too, in less illustrious company, would perhaps have stolen it. But the judges are unanimous: it's Borderville's night, which saves us the trouble of having to bang anyone's head against the bar. But on tonight's evidence, every band is a winner.

**Dale Kattack**

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## METRIC

### The Zodiac

Tonight we get irrevocable proof, if it were still needed, that the inexplicable popularity of certain things has extended into alternative music. Metric were initially scheduled to play the Zodiac's smaller downstairs venue and on moving upstairs have pretty much filled that too. Having enjoyed recent single 'Monster Hospital' and read a lot about the band on various reputable music blogs I thought I ought to see what all the fuss was about.

And to be honest, I'm still none the wiser after the event. Singer Emily Haines throws herself around with abandon and the band play it loud and proud, all of which covers up the fact they don't have a great deal in the way of tunes. The closest they come to something memorable is when they pilfer a melody, presumably in the hope that their audience is too young to notice where it came

from. 'Monster Hospital' lifts brazenly from 'I Fought The Law', which wouldn't be so bad if this brief moment of glory didn't throw the spotlight on their long-term shortcomings. They get so desperate they even resort to ransacking 'Every Breath You Take' on current single 'Empty'.

Of course Emily isn't daft and does everything she can to deflect the attention away from the music. So she dons little shorts, stage dives and at one point holds up a song to launch into a wibbling rant about nasty corporate stuff. The shame about it all is that Emily is a good singer and puts on a great show, the band is pretty competent, but they've given themselves nothing to play with. But, in a day and age when uninspiring alternative acts are the ones that make it big, Metric should be everywhere in no time at all.

**Russell Barker**

## UPCDOWNCLEFTCRIGHTC / CATS AND CATS AND CATS / TWAT TROT TRA LA

### The Port Mahon

The Port is already stifling by the time the obtusely-named Twat Trot Tra La take to the stage, so it's a tad surprising to see the drummer replete in a Muscovite hat for most of their set. The local two piece bash out a series of short, sharp shocks to the system, sounding for all the world like the bastard child of Hella and By The End Of Tonight, albeit about one tenth as evil, the Machiavellian influence replaced with drawing Mark E. Smith vocals and distinctly countrified riffage.

Now, I'm not a big fan of cats, really. Lions: rad; tigers: hardcore. But regular kitties: poncey and boring (*you're fired!* – Ed). Cats and Cats and Cats however, are sublime; and provide the first "you had me at hello" moment of the evening with 'Fight Fight With Fight'. It's an intoxicating blend of deeply-buried melodies and At The Drive-In raucousness. If fact, there is so much thrashing about on stage, they could easily power their home town of Staines. Extra special mention goes to the Antonio Banderas lookin' drummer, who is as crisp

as that first bevvie after a hard day's work. Set closer 'Kites' infuses diddly Foals-esque rhythms with Rock Of Travolta-style guitar wielding histrionics, providing a final blast of uplifting sonic magic.

And just when I thought things couldn't get any better, Upcdownc (Full name: UpCDDownCohIcan'tbebothered) strike up, all guns blazing and ready to party. The affable inter-song banter allows for snatches of humour between the insane technical ability on show. When mocked for their lack of originality, the drummer's deadpan response is just "How about some original insults?". The criticism is not that far off the mark though, as certainly all the post-rock boxes are ticked. It's just that they are done so with an industrial size 'bite me' marker pen. Their new material stands equal, if not surpassing older numbers and the dual drumming, while nothing new, does descend into a final all-member drumathon that expands my already huge grin. Fantastic.

**Matt Bayliss**

## AGENTS OF JANE / JOE ALLEN / CHARLOTTE JAMES / ALICE DOYNE

### Jericho Tavern

I haven't been to the Jericho Tavern in ages, and there's now raspberry beer on offer. Disgusting, or brilliant? Not sure and don't have time to speculate now as it's a packed line-up. In fact the first act wasn't even listed. Strange, because as far as I'm concerned she should get star billing. Londoner, Alice Doyne, at only 18, is surely set for some musical breakthrough. With her acoustic guitar she confidently glides through a set of songs bejewelled with breathtaking moments. Like Oxford's own Chantelle Pike, Alice's voice is a real force of nature with a twang reminiscent of Neko Case, and equally strong songs.

Poor Charlotte James. It's not going her way tonight. First off, we're getting some strange noises from her guitar. Oh, the battery is gone. Ouch, now it's feedback. When she finally settles into her set it's painfully quiet and what you do hear mostly sounds as if she's singing backwards. Like Frazey Ford (The Be Good Tanyas) meets a lazy Sinead O'Conner. Add to this a pretty unsympathetic sound engineer and

maybe we should just move on to Joe Allen.

Joe sings and plays acoustic guitar and is accompanied by Angharad Jenkins on electric violin. Joe certainly has charisma. The emotion becomes so overwhelming that you do fear he is going to spontaneously combust. My main issue is that he just sounds too close to Damien Rice. I know it's not *his* fault. But it's just too uncanny. Perhaps it would help if he could tune his guitar (at least to match the violin) and had fewer meandering songs.

All six of headliners Agents of Jane are crammed onto the small stage. It's an organised shambles, the folk songs being lovely but loose. Soft-sung JP Davies is at the heart of the fun, and at times I wish I could hear more of him. The violin and cello are often out of tune and timing is tricky, but much like James Yorkstone & The Athletes or early The Bees, it's the sweet songs which are driving things. 'Petticoat' and 'Do They Know You?' certainly make me want to hear more.

**Katy Jerome**

## JUST JACK

### The Zodiac

You don't hear screams in the Zodiac very often, but there are a few tonight as Jack Allsop walks onstage to join his five bandmates. Opening with 'Life Stories', he comes across as confident but not cocky, lapping up the adulation but careful to show a bit of gratitude. Most of his new, second album is aired, plus a few from the little-heard debut, 'The Outer Marker'. Comparisons with The Streets are valid only to an extent; Jack steers away from the darker side of urban life, preferring positive, even jolly subject matter, though the clever wordplay and semi-obscure cultural references are familiar. If hip-hop is the black CNN (© Chuck D) then maybe he represents the white BBC Three.

Stripped of the album's lush production, horns, strings and treated beats many songs lose appeal, the slower keyboard-heavy ones working best. His voice suits rapping perfectly, like Mike Skinner's it's just very listenable, though his odd attempt at proper singing shows he made the right call there. The fun they're all clearly having soon becomes infectious:

the unreleased 'Goth in a Disco', with its Goldfrapp tinge, has us laughing out loud and we soon forget that much of the music is unexceptional ska and they're still a way from real stardom.

Just as the set draws to a close and it looks like we're won over, he slips up. Announcing "I hope you're not as sick of this song as I am", he launches into a cursory, sped-up version of 'Starz in their Eyes', like he can't wait to get it over. It's a classic pop mistake; expecting everyone else to share his annoyance at the current media focus on one song. Never mind the fact that it's probably the single of the year (so far) and will provide him with royalty payments for decades to come.

Maybe he should ask Bob Dylan how sick he is of 'Like a Rolling Stone'. Or listen to his own lyrics.

It's hard not to share Just Jack's pleasure in his success but, as the saying goes: Be nice to people you meet on the way up, 'cos you might meet them again on the way down.

*Art Lagun*

## AEROGRAMME

### The Zodiac

According to the shaky wisdom of pop psychology, a man with a beard is a man with something to hide. If this be true, then Glasgow's Aerogramme are a bottomless well of inscrutability, with all of them bedecked in the kind of face-forestry that would strike envy into the heart of any Norse god. They deliver soaring, symphonic music in a post-rock vein that is laced with the brooding moroseness you'd expect from Chemikal Underground affiliates. Expertly layering light and shade, epic guitars paint thunderstorms across the sky on tracks such as 'Black Path' before dropping away into summer-evening wistfulness. As sweetly melodic and they are aggressive, the musical chops and changes are overlaid by Craig B's vocals, which swoops in similar emotional arcs to that of Phil McMinn from Fell City Girl.

Lovely as this is, Aerogramme hint at richer depths yet to be mined. The intertracks which cement the songs together crawl through synth-scapes populated by demon-possessed music-

boxes and bleepy Electropunkton fished from the Nintendo DS. Shimmering and sinister, these divergences are so compelling as to make the return to familiar post-rock territory almost an anticlimax. Iain Cook's programming adds a glitchy electro edge to the main tracks, but these nonetheless lack the creepy inventiveness of the material which, by its positioning, should act as filler. The gigantic drum around which the band are ranged adds a tribal urgency to the odd song here and there but, considering that it is of a size that King Arthur could have comfortably seated all his knights around, it seems a shame not to have made more use of it..

Performing before an audience so unresponsive as to be certifiably comatose, it seems a touch undignified when the band, having exited to scanty applause, then hastily scamper back on stage for an obviously prescheduled encore. Nonetheless, they have saved up some of their best material for the end, with 'Conscious Life for Coma Boy' swirling up on the crest of a synthetic choir before being swept under by the maelstrom chorus. The set climaxes in a ferocious scrimmage in which Craig's delicate vocals give way to the snarlings of a troglodyte fed on a diet of nails and hacksaws. Tossed about by the cathartic pummelling of sheer guitar racket, you kind of wish they'd give their Hyde side a freer rein elsewhere.

*Emily Gray*



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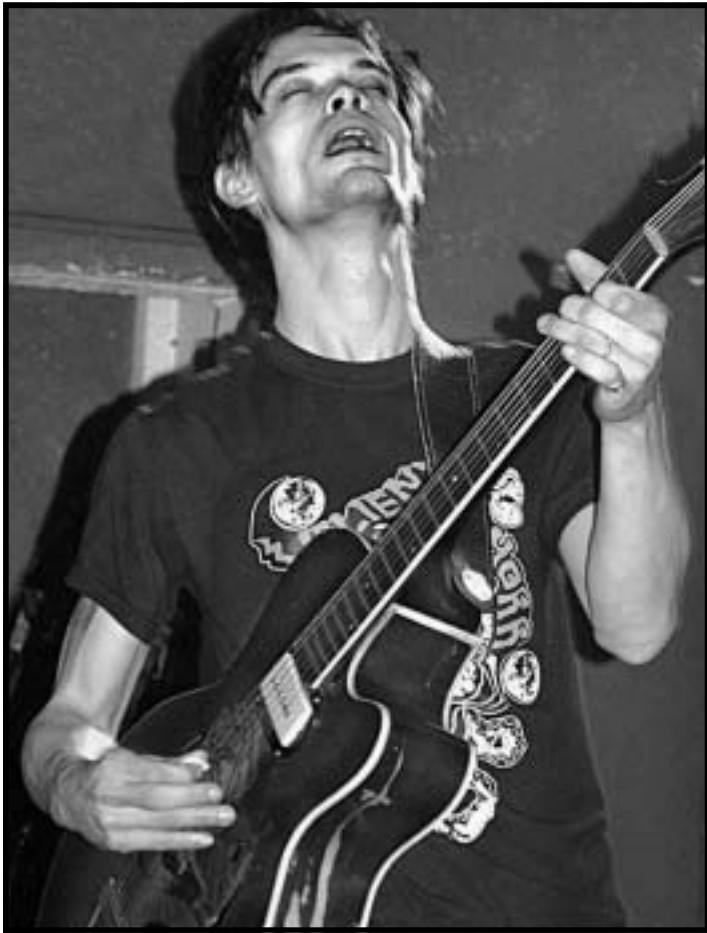
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## DAN SARTAIN / THE DRESDENS

### The Zodiac

Any readers who were lucky enough to witness New York garage-rockers The Action Swingers at one of their sublime early-90s Jericho Tavern gigs will know just what high praise we intend when we compare The Dresdens to that raw cacophony. Made up of Ben and Ben out of Winnebago Deal and Jack from Gunnbunty they are a grunge-garage-speed-metal-armageddon three-way marriage made, not in Eynsham, but Hell itself. Jack talks like a gen-you-ine southern bluesman and sings like a rampaging mastodon while riffs the size of small mountains tumble from the speaker stacks. At extreme volume. If this doesn't thrill you to your very marrow then you are spiritually, if not clinically dead. One song is called 'Be A Believer'; we believe. This is rock and fucking roll. You got that?

Dan Sartain almost doesn't make it tonight. His van broke down just outside Cambridge and by the

time he arrives at the Zodiac it's taken longer to make it from the east Midlands than it did from his native Alabama to the UK. A true professional, he and his bearded backing band – just two of them – simply stride on stage, tune up and play.

Dan casts an unlikely figure – scrawny, sinewy and slightly goofy, like a young Jim Carrey – but he's a classic rock'n'roll troubadour, his heart and soul sunk in the sounds of the southern states and Mexico, his modern take on rockabilly a far meatier prospect than recent single 'Flight of the Finch' suggested, its mariachi feel blitzed with a heavier swamp-blues punch. Not that this is some kind of retro revival: Dan's listened good and hard to Sonic Youth too and you feel he could be the bastard son of Tav Falco; he's that good. A night to remember just how raw and powerful a force rock'n'roll music can be.

**Dale Kattack**

## THE DEBRETTS/ HAMMER VS THE SNAKE/ GEORGE PRINGLE

### The X

Diaristic tales of mild debauchery over trendily lo-fi laptop with the odd moment of little girl simplicity thrown in: hey, it's Lily Allen Ginsberg! Rather, it's George Pringle with her spoken tales of smoking, frustration and favourite records. We can imagine George sitting on a rumpled bed with a typewriter and hundreds of ashtrays, dreaming that a photographer from *The Observer Magazine* is snapping from the rafters, like any number of sophomore hipsters, but she does have a certain something to offer: not least killer lines like "I'm going to kick that indie witch in the tits".

Ultimately George is a much better writer than performer or programmer, and it would be interesting to hear her read without accompaniment...and, err, a little more slowly).

Our recent brush with Hammer Vs The Snake's recorded work was disappointing, but clearly their New York stutter funk needs to be experienced live. True, the first couple of numbers share a failing with the EP, in that they couldn't get going; "fragmented" is

one thing, "disconnected" is another, and it's only the singer's horrific Giles Brandreth jumper that holds our attention. Given time, however, HVTs come through with cheap Devo-style gyrations and sly Beastie Boys smirks to unexpectedly win us over.

There's a big difference between a vocalist and a frontperson, and Vonnie DeBrett is a textbook exemplum. She stalks, screeches, leaps, and – when the music demands it – even sings rather winsomely, holding the audience captive. When Vonnie's on the prowl you forget the rest of the band; then again, you probably wouldn't notice them anyway as The Debretts play astoundingly mediocre new wave, pleasant but utterly anonymous. 'You Can't Fix It' is definitely the best tune, and that's a cheap peroxide Blondie with little to offer. We'd love to love The Debretts, but they'll have to write something first. Why not call George Pringle? She's got loads of lyrics, and doesn't seem to know what to do with them.

**David Murphy**

## MANATEES / INFANTS / YOU JUDAS! / THEO

### The Wheatsheaf

Ain't it just great when things get better and better? Take tonight's openers, Theo. We come in partway through their set and immediately have them down as more earnest young men whose songs all sound like the middle-eight of an old At the Drive-In number. But they're masters of hypnosis; their set builds from disjointed beginnings, through myriad guitar loops and effects until it's a buzzing tangle of sounds that could easily be the swarming of millions of wasps in some dark corner of hell.

The top end of our hearing suitably sand-papered, You Judas! excavate our rib-cage with giant Sabbath-shaped riffs that tumble into ponderous pools of dark, proggy restlessness and an undulating sludge of black noise topped off with the frontman's phlegm-gargling yelping. And if you in any way think that's a bad thing, you're a big softy.

Like Theo themselves, tonight's Vacuous Pop night continues to hit new heights with each band. Infants start with a scream and a squall of unfocussed dissonance, like a factory waking and

stretching from a bad dream, before contorting and lurching through their set like a spasticated drunkard at an experimental jazz convention, Butthole Surfers bulldozing Deerhoof on the margins of rock and roll sanity before Atari Teenage Riot decimate the theme tune to *Stingray*. Crazy but brilliant.

But all these are mere foothills before Manatees' imperious black mountains of sound. Rumbling out of Carlisle they are the perfect meeting point between Black Sabbath and The God Machine: unrelenting, all-consuming and with all the gravity of a supermassive black hole that drags you ever inwards even though the hour is late and the last bus is about to depart. With a bass set so low it could disembowel buffalo, Manatees could be the soundtrack to some extreme demolition DVD, a howling, bludgeoning cacophony with a soul full of brooding malevolence, a heart set on horrific glory and its fingers gripped ever more tightly around the trigger. It's quite simply awesome stuff. Gig of the year, for now.

**Dale Kattack**



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## ...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD

### **The Zodiac**

When this bunch of Texans hit the country for the first time nearly ten years ago their impact was considerable. Carnage was around every corner, drum kits were ritually dispatched and band members would often emerge from proceedings bleeding and grinning like evil dervishes.

Fast forward to the present day and the band have grown up, parted ways both literally and geographically and if rumour is to be believed, they are close to bringing the whole thing to a shuddering stop. The recent release of their latest album, 'So Divided', saw the band ditching the discordant Sonic Youth-style assault that made their name, and continue in the far more melodic vein that was established on its critically dismissed predecessor 'Worlds Apart'.

So it's something of a surprise that tonight's set leans heavily on the glories of their past. Many of tonight's songs are culled from the far reaches of Trail of Dead's career. Even more surprising is the way in which they play tonight. From the offset the band seem almost amateur in their approach; songs are slashed apart in a sloppy fashion, whilst Conrad Keeley's vocals miss the mark with an alarming regularity. Even worse is the apparent lack of danger that normally emanates from the stage in waves of sonic violence.

'Perfect Teenhood' and set closer 'Totally Natural' are as close as we get to the full aural assault of Trail of Dead at their best, but even they lack the edge that we've come to expect from such an explosive live band. It's only when they encore with 'Mistakes and Regrets' that they seem to hit their stride but by then it's too late to rescue a set that's gone awry with meandering tunes and clumsy instrument changes that break up the band's usually natural momentum. On tonight's evidence, it would appear that The Trail of Dead may be approaching the end, which is a tragic shame.

*Sam Shepherd*

## ROLO TOMASSI/ NAILBOMB CULTS

### **The Port Mahon**

Nailbomb Cults are an absolute nuisance. Imagine an eternally insolent yet devilishly clever child, bounding about the place, spouting 220bpm d'n'b rhythms. This (laptop) boy churns out endless recycled gabba beats, running up the walls, but before long you just wish he'd get brutally run over by a Land Rover. He samples Lulu's 'Shout' and steals DJ Yoda samples. Ha-bloody-ha. It was funny the first time round. You were likely to have had a better time listening to the Headington roundabout roadworks a few months back than this copy-cat drill'n'bass nonsense.

Rolo Tomassi, however, put their short attention spans to much better use. A major topic with the Sheffield five-piece seems to be that they're so very young. But I'm not the oldest writer in the world so I'll try not to gush at such precociousness. Rolo Tomassi take a sizeable chunk of influence pie

from technical grindcore scary men The Locust and pump their own songs full of fun and, dare I say, youthful exuberance. If you looked away you'd assume the screamer to be some pierced 24 year old man with a baseball cap. In actual fact it is a very pretty (very small) girl named Eve. By Zeus, they tear the place up. The bass amp is LITERALLY rocking, each noise-maker convulsing, a merry shambles of movement to the tightest sporadic metal noise. They hurtle through breakneck speed jazz chords, leg shaking blasts and tasteful ambience, all in about twenty seconds. I pray these guys never start 6<sup>th</sup> form, forget about university and just play to me in my wee attic-bound rocking chair, for the rest of my parole-restricted days. This is the most fun I've had at a gig in a long time. Correction. The most fun I've had at a gig ever.

*Pascal Ansell*

## THE NOISETTES / THE VICTORIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMENS CLUB

### **The Zodiac**

Cardiff lo-fi trio The Victorian English Gentlemens Club (deliberately lacking an apostrophe) revel – and excel – in unconventionality. Emma, Louise and Adam's art punk is a quirky, shouty affair, with disjointed melodies and rhythms crashing into angular and edgy guitars. Their scant respect for songwriting conventions is often confused and confusing – like in the wonderfully-titled 'My Son Spells Backwards' – but works far better in the impossibly catchy 'Amateur Man' and 'Ban the Gin'. Veering from Devo to The Young Knives and back again, it might not – deliberately – hold together all of the time, but it's always interesting.

While TVEGC suit the intimacy of downstairs at the Zodiac quite well, it's far too small for The Noisettes. Singer and bassist Shingai – for whom 'charismatic' seems far too weak a description – is literally climbing up the walls, such is her energy. Headline touring to promote

their debut album, 'What's the Time Mr Wolf', and fresh from supporting Muse, The Noisettes are bursting with tunes and styles, as if they're trying to cover all bases with the first album before polishing one direction. Shingai's versatility covers everything from soul to hard rock via operatic screeching, while the other two look like refugees from Camel and are quite happy to noodle away on their own, weaving in and out of Shingai's bass and voice. They're adept enough to sometimes do away with the bass guitar without losing volume or depth.

The blues-rock fusion is often a bit jumbled but it's all very frenetic and fun; 'Don't Give Up' is an exalting rally cry, while 'Sister Rosetta (Capture the Spirit)' is a multi-hook-laden anthem. However, the real star isn't the music but Shingai; forget Beth Ditto, this is the current coolest woman in rock.

*Kirsten Etheridge*

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# DEMOS

Please read the conditions below before submitting a demo!

## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### RANDALL FLAGG

Dear oh Lord, what a truly wretched month this is for demos. The last couple of issues have seen a marked upturn in quality to the point where we were worried we'd have to abandon the Demo Dumper altogether, but it seems the New Year is a bad time for recording music, most of this month's demos sounding like they were laid down in the middle of a post-Christmas hangover by estranged in-laws. As such it is down to Randall Flagg to guide us through the darkness. Although they'd doubtless decline that honour, having named themselves after the villain of Stephen King's 'The Stand', an incarnation of evil that fits well with their brand of virulent hardcore. They claim to be influenced by Dillinger Escape Plan, Duran Duran and Jeff Buckley but we reckon they're fibbing about the last two as they growl, shriek, and thrash their way through a brace of tracks possessed of a bi-polar disorder and a surfeit of caffeine and blue smarties in their bloodstream. You can almost picture the band leaping on and off a battered sofa with childlike glee and no little rage as they recorded this, bug-eyed to a man and with no thought of the poor sods living next door. Admirable behaviour.

### LEE CHRISTIAN

One of the only other demos to come out with any credit this month comes courtesy of Smilex singer Lee, a man who holds the world record for stream of consciousness talking. Here he goes solo, armed with some home recording equipment, a sampler and a small amount of digital technology. Despite this, much of the demo has more in common with an acoustic singer-songwriter than, say Depeche Mode. At least until he starts sounding like Depeche Mode halfway through. More often though he's got Marilyn Manson on his mind and, for a few brief seconds at least, The Spice Girls. Likes his disco does Lee, and his claustrophobic atmospherics (although that might be as much down to poor quality recording as any evilness in his soul). At his best here his growling vocals seethe over wired guitars and crackling noises as he sings about star fuckers and the like, like Marc Bolan washed up in a gutter, although there's a tendency for songs to wander around in a

stoned haze. Surprising really given Lee's clean-living ways.

### BEAVER FUEL

"As listening to my last demo was clearly such a pleasure I thought I'd waste no time inflicting my latest upon you." Thus writes Leigh Beaver Fuel, a man who at least possesses a sense of humour (and an industrial vacuum packing machine given how tightly his CD was jammed into its paper sleeve). Something that must help no end when you're writing songs called 'I Want To Live In Your Buttrack', with jaunty lyrics like, "I'll always be there to pull down your pants when you need to pee". All of which might start to endear us to him, especially since this demo has the ramshackle spirit of late-80s indie bands like The Sea Urchins and The Pastels running through it like bright pink felt pen, if the whole thing didn't seem designed specifically to annoy the hell out of us. Sprightly and incompetent retro pop we can live with (in fact we live with quite a few shelves of the stuff) but Leigh's overly-adenoidal yelping, while trying to sound sensitive and lovelorn, coupled with the way he manages to make even a fuzzed-up guitar sound like a kiddie's toy has us desperately scrabbling for the twee switch. Perhaps there's something to be said for grown-up music after all.

### THE ROLLERCOASTER PROJECT

Despite the title of this demo, 'Drone #1', it's less of a dirge than any of the other, nominally more exotic, offerings in this month's pile. The work of electronics chap Johnny White, the Rollercoaster Project has a strangely triumphant tone about it, the opening track in particular sounding like a glitched-up version of the Bridal March. Elsewhere it's either stuttering like a digitally upgraded take on an old Steve Reich piece or minimalist and soporific, like Boards of Canada. The tendency for it to fizz innocuously away towards the end detracts from its strengths, although it feels like it would work better accompanied by some decent visuals. Some bizarre Czech animation perhaps. Or footage of certain other demo acts this month being ritually gutted with a cleaver.

### TREV WILLIAMS

Ah, dear Trevor: Farrington's lovelorn balladeer and demo page glutton for



punishment returns with three more... ahem... lovelorn ballads, at least this time round providing us with some strangely incongruous listening pleasures: like the raunchy piano bounce that backs up his wailing cries of anguish on 'Honey Trap', or the boogie-woogie and human beatboxing on 'Anytime' that suggest Trev's at least prepared to give stuff a go, even if it does sometimes make him sound a bit silly. "The whole world is against you," he croons on the more sedate 'Am I The Last To See'. Maybe he could restyle that as a love song to Jade Goody?

## PEDRO DE VASCONCELOS

This album-length demo is entitled 'The Blackbird Leys Bossanova Sessions'. When we hear the word Bossanova we immediately think of sexy Latino people cavorting around exotic bars and dancehalls, but even though this is some way removed from the usual menu of indie, metal and acoustic pop that makes up the majority of the demo pile, it's still a singularly unexotic trip, more lazy veranda musak with little to entice the passer by. Pedro plucks idly at his guitar and prefers to mumble than sing and it would maybe be passable if it didn't go on and on and bleedin' on for something approaching a month, all at the same shuffling pace. In the end it's all a bit of a trawl: less like an excursion in the Brazilian sunshine, more like too long trapped in Starbucks for the weekend.

## DIFFERENT REASONS

Moribund acoustic blues-rock that makes Pedro sound like an all-night Rio pool party hosted by Lemmy out of Motorhead. With their country and gospel roots, which rise to the surface sporadically, you'd expect Different Reasons to be free-wheeling souls, but they sound more like a constipated barbers-shop quartet. The harder and deeper you listen, hoping, searching for traces of life in this sprawling wreck of a demo, the murkier it becomes. They grunt and whinny their way through five tracks, cheery handclaps and harmonies unable to disguise the wretched misery that seeps from its every pore.

## LIDDINGTON

Liddington write, they tell us, "striking and timeless songs", for which, read "good natured but dreary". Like the musical equivalent of the neighbour who'll come and fix your car for you before boring you to the point of suicide talking about the reliability and value of a Honda Jazz. And even saying

that makes us feel guilty and disgusted with ourselves since they seem not to have a bad bone in their bodies, shuffling along humbly and in a vaguely folkie fashion. Even when they introduce a fuzz pedal into the second song you feel even a glimpse of their own shadow would have them scampering back to their bedroom, to sit trembling and clutching their Belle & Sebastian albums. Oh come on, please! Isn't it bad enough we have to cope with global warming and Jeremy Clarkson's existence without you lot moping round here looking all glum?

## THE FOCAL POINT

This starts off okay: a forced falsetto and some furtively atmospheric guitar plucking recalling Radiohead's 'Street Spirit'. But then it erupts into a clatter of hollow metal objects, an abused distortion pedal and a bloke shouting like a hoarse Sunday league football coach trying to rid himself of chronic constipation through primal scream therapy. And thereafter The Focal Point rant and slaver with some gusto but precious little (okay, absolutely no) skill through to the end, the singer croaking himself towards a hernia over seemingly random guitar wanderings. 'Skyburst' actually has the rudiments of a decent song but in these hands it's like asking a class of toddlers to transform a dustbin full of body parts and tinfoil into a fully-functioning attack cyborg.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

## JUXSTAR

Never mind musical incompetence, tone-deaf singers or self-pitying bedroom troubadours, what we love most in life is to point at musos and laugh and throw stuff and then follow them home and point and laugh some more. Such is the soulless, spiritual black hole that constitutes Juxstar's demo. This is wedding reception rock: polished, glossed-over power chords and stage school blues singing, warbling and floundering under the weight of its own self importance. The sort of stuff beer-bellied old men who last bought an album back in 1974 would listen to before proudly proclaiming that it's far better than the rubbish that Young People play these days. It's Bonnie Tyler-lite and as windswept as a peroxide perm, the ubiquitous saccharine-fuelled soft-rock ballad apparently having escaped from some made-for-TV romantic drama where someone dies tragically but with great dignity from inoperable indigestion at the end. "You taste like chocolate pie" warbles the singer. Shit sandwich, more like.

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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