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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every month. Issue 148 November 2007

Little Fish

Fins are going swimmingly for Oxford's brightest new rock sprats - *interview inside*

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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AS HAS BEEN WIDELY REPORTED, RADIOHEAD released their new album, `In Rainbows' as a download-only album last month with fans able to pay what they wanted for the abum. With virtually no advance press or interviews to promote the album, `In Rainbows' was reported to have sold over 1,500,000 copies in its first week.

Nightshift readers might remember that in March this year local act The Sad Song Co. - the prog-rock solo project of Dive Dive drummer Nigel Powell - offered a similar deal to fans for his last album, `Poignant Device'. At the time Nigel told Nighthsift that, "I'm hoping this will make some people at least think about what they're getting and for how much". A similar sentiment to that expressed by Radiohead.

Read our review of `In Rainbows on page 6.

OXJAM comes to a close this month with a special day-long event at Oxford Castle on Saturday 3rd. Throughout October thousands of Oxjam events have been held across the UK to raise money for Oxfam, including dozens of gigs in Oxford, with sold-out shows by the likes of Witches, Half Rabbits and a special Selectasound show at the Bullingdon featuring Jaberwok and Mr Shaodow. The Castle show, entitled 'The Small World Party', organised by local Oxjam co-ordinator Kevin Jenkins, starts at midday with a set from Sol Samba as well as buskers and street performers. In the afternoon there is a fashion show and auction featuring clothes from Oxfam shops, with the main concert at 7pm featuring sets from Cyberscribes, Mr Shaodow, Brickwork Lizards and more. Tickets are on sale from wegottickets.com.

THE HOBGOBLIN in Bicester has been forced to cancel its regular live rock nights after a single complaint from a neighbour. The monthly rock nights, organised by musician Rus Blaine, have attracted the cream of Oxfordshire's heavier bands, including the likes of Headcount and Mephisto Grande. Speaking to Nightshift, Rus said, "Things are up in the air at the moment. I don't know how it will work out. The nights were extremely busy so I guess the pub will try to start them up again."

SYNTH-POP LEGEND GARY NUMAN *will perform the whole of his seminal `Replicas' album at the Oxford Academy on Thursday 13th March 2008. The gig is part of a UK tour reliving the album which spawned the number 1 hit `Are Friends Electric' as well as cult favourite `Down In The Park'. `Replicas', released in 1979 under the band name Tubeway Army, launched Numan as one of the most influential stars of the 70s and 80s, inspiring the likes of Nine Inch Nails, Smashing Pumpkins, Marilyn Manson, Beck and Blur, all of whom have covered his songs. Tickets for the show, priced £17, are on sale now from the Academy box office or online from wegottickets.com*

CSS *return to Oxford on Tuesday 11th December with a show at the Oxford Academy, as part of a short UK tour. The Brazilian elctro-pop stars are joined by the wonderful Metronomy (recent support to Foals) and Joe Lean and the Jing Jang Jong. Tickets are on sale now, priced £15, from 0844 477 2000 or online from wegottickets.com*

OPTIX relaunches this month with a show at the Cellar. After an initial test period earlier in the year the internet broadcasting station has installed a fully integrated broadcast system in the venue which can stream gigs and comedy shows live onto the internet. The first show, in conjunction with Bassmentality, is on Friday 23rd November with ska-punk newcomers Imperial Leisure. Past shows can be viewed online as well. For more information and competitions visit www.worldiswatching.tv.

RICHARD HAWLEY has rearranged his show at the New Theatre for Tuesday 5th February 2008 after his gig there in September was cancelled due a double booking by his agent. Meanwhile chart-toppers Sugababes have announced a show at the New Theatre on Monday 17th March as part of their UK tour to promote their fifth album, 'Change'. Tickets, priced £26, are on sale now from 0871 2200 260 or online from gigsandtours.com.

Decemberists gig at The Oxford Academy last month was cancelled due to illness in the band. There are no plans to re-arrange the gig as yet and refunds are available from point of purchase.

SMILEX release a new single and their debut album this month. The single, a download-only affair, is called 'Dead Horses' and features vocals from MC Lars. Smilex support Lars at the Oxford Acaemdy on Thursday 8th November. The band then release their debut album, '7', later in the month. '7' was recorded in seven days and deals with the seven deadly sins. It was produced by former-Skunk Anansie guitarist Ace. Both releases are available from www.quickfixrecordings.co.uk

EQUITRUCK III will take place at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 12th January. The mini-festival, planned to run equidistant between Truck Festivals, has moved from its previous home at the Port Mahon where it has hosted the likes of Goldrush, Morrison Steam Fayre and The Epstein. The event, which raises money for Truck's charities of choice, will feature eight local and out of town bands. The line-up is due to be announced shortly at www.myspace.com/equitruck. Tickets, priced £8, go on sale soon after.

BELARUS posthumously release their debut album, `Communicate', on Playdead Records this month. The band, from Faringdon, previously featured on the front cover of Nightshift and were managed Andy Ross who founded Food Records and discovered Blur. The band split earlier this year. The album features eleven tracks, including their debut single 'Standing In The Right Place', and is available from www.playdead.co.uk.

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, presented by Tim Bearder and David Gillyeat, plays a host of new Oxford releases as well as featuring interviews with local and touring acts and a local demo vote. The Download is also available to listen to all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

A Quiet Word With

Little Fish

WHATEVER THEIR NAME suggests, Little Fish are no minnows. They are the newest, sharpest sharks in Oxford's rock pool. And they bite.

A two-piece, Little Fish are lean; they move fast. Since they played their first gig a little over a year ago, they've established themselves as one of the most exciting new bands around, earning themselves a Nightshift Demo Of The Month with their first demo, garnering a string of rave reviews, playing at Glastonbury Festival, becoming the first Oxford band to play at the new Carling Academy - supporting The Young Knives - and attracting an increasing number of record company scouts to their frequent, packed, London shows.

NIGHTSHIFT FIRST encountered Little Fish back in April when they opened the show for Fields and Hush The Many at the old Zodiac, effortlessly blowing both bands out of the water with a primal blend of blues, folk and old-fashioned rock and roll. Singer and guitarist Julia Heslop (better known as Juju) had a simply astonishing voice, raw, emotive and versatile, like a blend of Janis Joplin, Sinead O'Connor and Suzi Quatro while behind her drummer Neil Greenaway (Nez to his friends) thrashed his kit with an almost jazz-like nonchalance.

Since then we can't get enough of the band, their demo, especially its lead track, 'Devil's Eyes', with its Suzi Quatro-like glam-stomp, is on constant rotation on the Nightshift office stereo, while the band's numerous local shows have seen them grow into an ever-more confident fighting unit.

NOT THAT IT'S ALL BEEN PLAIN sailing for Little Fish, and they haven't come out of nowhere. Juju was previously singer with local all-girl band Dolly, who made a bit of a name for themselves in the late-90s and also featured Smilex bassist Jen Acton, while Nez played in the original line-up of Vade Mecum, with brothers Hal and Sam Stokes, who later became The Thieves before relocating to Los Angeles.

In the years after Dolly split, Juju moved to Birmingham to study before entering a prolonged period of self-destruction that culminated in her completely losing her voice and being told by a doctor that she would never sing again. Which makes it all the remarkable that she is now possessed of the most powerful female voice in Oxford music.

PERHAPS APPROPRIATELY FOR a band called Little Fish, the duo first met in a chip shop.

Juju: "I like my chips with ketchup. Nez likes his with brown sauce. I like fish in batter. Nez prefers to eat a burger. Who mentioned music? The chip shop talks. I thrash the guitar. Nez plays drums. I'm mouthy. He is too. We laugh. We both like music. I like The Yeah Yeah Yeah's. He loves Vinni Coliauta and I've never heard of him – but I don't care. `Let's hear you play then Little Fishee!' A challenge later, we're both sat in a barren garage with no PA, me holding my electric guitar and Nez sat behind a drum kit. `One, two, three, go!'"

HOW DO JUJU AND NEZ remember their formative years in their previous bands, Dolly and Vade Mecum, and how is Little Fish different?

Juju: "I haven't really ever thought about it that much over the years. Thinking about it now, I might feel that Dolly was more about four young girls growing up - going out, meeting people, going to parties, experiencing love and life. What I didn't realise at the time was that I was alone within it all. Music was the bond, but we were all different. We all had different visions of life. Dolly gave me life but it was not my life. I suppose that we all have to begin somewhere and for me, it might as well have been with Dolly.

"Where Dolly gave me youth and enthusiasm, Little Fish is more a result of me wanting to justify the mess that I made of my life since! Meeting Nez gave me an opportunity to give my life order, form and beauty. Where Dolly was about skipping happily from adolescence into adulthood, Little Fish is about the forging of a firm, positive identity that is aching to respond to life and become part of it."

Nez: "I had a great time with Hal and Sam and I learned a lot and not just about playing drums. It was my first experience of being a full time musician and I loved being able to practice for long periods regularly, to play music and to be paid for it. The two bands are very different and I feel that I am now playing 'the music' rather than just playing 'the drums'. It's been a bit of a shock singing on stage for the first time and my French accent stinks."

Juju's experiences after Dolly split were a long way from the youth and enthusiasm she experienced in that band, but they almost certainly made Little Fish the band they are now.

Juju: "I could say that I packed my bags and set out for a long, lonely journey across the desert. It certainly felt like that at the time! In fact, I went to University to study. It was there that I started to lose myself. I found Birmingham tough and depressing. After graduating, I got involved with a 'frozen hell' so to speak. I removed myself from accessibility and turned myself into a gargoyle. I lost touch with friends and family. I studied to become a luthier but I didn't finish the course, because I accidentally chopped some of my finger off. In the ambulance, my mum helpfully suggested that I could always play the piano!

"In retrospect I realise how far from life I had removed myself. It was only when my voice disappeared that I was finally forced to face how I was leading my life. It had been a long time coming, but the sky finally fell in on me. There was no avoiding it. For so long I had betrayed myself, my body. I wanted to sing and I had no voice. From losing my voice to forming Little Fish, I focused on healing myself."

So losing your voice was the turning point?

"At first, I thought that my throat was victim to a drying cold. My throat was sore. Maybe it was an infection? After two months of simple rituals one does to heal common colds there was still no sign of change. I feared my ambition to sing might be mocking me. I went to a vocal specialist. I was told I had gastric reflux and that acid had burned my vocal chords. I followed a course of Lozec and although it got rid of the acid, my voice did not recover. Still, my throat was tight, dry, and vocal-less. I was scared. My jaw was tight and I was suffering from intolerable migraines. It wasn't until June that I had my second appointment with another vocal specialist. Almost one year had gone by. The doctor told me, 'In all my life, I have never seen someone as stressed as you. You will probably never be able to sing again'. My heart stopped. I packed my bags and left for Paris. It was only after six months of living in Paris that I murmured my first tone. From this, little by little, I stretched my voice out again and worked seriously on teaching myself how to sing. From losing my voice to finding it again, it took two years of my life. It was a terrifying experience, but if that's what I had to go through, so be it."

REACTION TO LITTLE FISH has been unanimous in its enthusiasm. It's impossible not to get carried away by the band as they strip away all the years of excess baggage rock music has accumulated, whether they're screaming "Am I crazy?", like The Pixies' Flamenco-crazed Francophile cousins, loping down Devilgate Drive on `Devil's Eyes' or staring broken-hearted into the sun as on `Error In Your Sunrise', the best love ballad we've heard from a local act since Laima Bite's awesome `Did You Used To Love'.

Juju: "Not having gigged or showed any of the music to anyone for a while before our first gig, we had no

idea what people's reactions to the music might be. Having any reaction at all certainly came as a surprise. The fact that it has been so positive for us has been a bonus!

"It is only from having a reaction at all, that we have come to realise how vulnerable we as musicians or artists make ourselves. When you don't gig, you are not exposed and therefore, cannot be judged. You are safe. When you do start to expose yourself, if you are disliked, you can accuse people of being ignorant. When however you impress, you then have to live up to expectation. That is something that until now, we haven't ever had to experience. But without going too much into it, everything has been really great. Supporting The Young Knives at The Carling Academy and packing out the Dublin Castle for the first time in London this month was ace! Getting played on Radio 1 has also been incredible. It makes all the days that you struggle to believe in yourself worth the while. It is a huge relief to know that there are other people who also feel what you do towards music. People are forming a real sense of unity around Little Fish. That is more rewarding than anything."

How does it feel to be compared to singers of the quality of Janis Joplin, Sinead O'Connor and Polly Harvey?

Juju: "I am really pleased and flattered to be compared with these singers, but to be honest, they are not specific influences on me. I never heard them until I was told about them. As far as singing is concerned, I am my own biggest critic and I know that I have a long way to go in my career before I could truly accept any compliment of that sort – if ever!"

You say you didn't even start listening to music properly until your late teens.

"I didn't listen to music when I was younger as I found music all too over powering. In fact, I found music so hard to accept that I turned to sport instead. I spent all of my youth playing basketball and running around fields! My starting points were more subliminal ones: Ray Charles in the kitchen, French songs at the dinner table. As far as my tastes and influences go, I'll go with anyone who sings with soul. The music style is not important for me; it is about the artist's conviction. This has always been the case for me and still is. The artists I can relate to the most are Patti Smith, Janis and PJ Harvey, and more current artists, M (French artist), The Yeah Yeah Yeah's and Jack White."

WITH ANY GREAT DUO, including The White Stripes and Fiery Furnaces, to whom Little Fish could fairly be compared at times, the relationship between the two musicians is amplified far more than in a bigger band. There is real musical chemistry between Juju and Nez. What do they most like about the other, musically? Are there disagreements about the way the band is?

Juju: "What I love the most is that he is an extremely talented musician who is still willing to listen, adapt and work at making the songs work without transforming it. This makes all the difference because my rhythms can be a little sketchy sometimes so having someone there who is willing to work things out is a good thing! Disagreements? Umm… I think we only ever disagree on who's wearing the braces!"

Nez: "For me, the variety of what Juju writes and plays always keeps it interesting. Of course, we don't always agree about everything, but we have our say and then decide what we're doing and go for it. It's a healthy relationship."

What are the best and worst things about being a duo?

Juju: "Best things…. We can fit all the gear and us in one little van! We're both best mates so that's great, and band practice is really easily organised! Worst things… On stage, there is no hiding behind anyone or anything. If we make mistakes then it is blindingly obvious! There is quite a lot of pressure on figuring out how to fill out the songs the way another band can, as we can't orchestrate the songs with colourful instrumentation. We have to produce the sound in other ways."

Nez: "Well the worst thing is that being the only male in the band I'm also the only camel and our equipment weighs a bit when you cart it up a load of stairs."

Juju: "Fuck Off! I carry stuff!"

Nez: "Hmmm. Well, the good thing is that there are only ever two opinions to consider, unlike bands with bigger line-ups."

OF COURSE, ROCK AND ROLL glory is a long swim upstream. Little Fish look like they've got the musical fins to make the journey; where do they go from here?

Juju: "We are thinking of putting a single out in January. We have significant interest from labels but we don't want to wait to fit in with other people's schedules, so we will do it ourselves if necessary. Like most musicians, ideally we would want to record an album. Until that day comes, we'll keep our head down, keep writing, keep gigging, keep sweating it out, unloading and loading the van, then one day… We'll hope to be salmon!"

Little Fish play at the Cellar on Saturday 10th November with Winnebago Deal and at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 24th with Borderville and Stornoway. Visit www.myspace.com/littlefishmusic for more gig dates and music.

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November

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Saturdays
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10th **OX4** – *Drum'n'Bass 9-3am.*
17th **SIMPLE** *Funky House - Anniversary Night 9.30pm-4am*
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RADIOHEAD
'In Rainbows'

(Download)

Radiohead wait to see how much cash fans will leave on their table

Inevitably the very nature of its release will tend to overshadow the actual music on this, Radiohead's first album in nearly five years, and their first since their contract with Parlophone expired. Whether it will signal a watershed in how bands release albums in future is anybody's guess and at least it's created a proper debate, in an age of free downloads and newspaper give-aways, about the true worth of music. As anyone with an ounce of passion knows full well, great music is priceless.

Radiohead have created more than their fair share of great music over the past 16 years and are, as we said when reviewing Thom Yorke's solo album, 'The Eraser', last year, in a rare and privileged position now as a band who have a global reputation second to none and sales figures that mean they don't have to worry too much about buying Tesco's value bread for a few years, and yet have no major record label on their backs nagging them for hit singles or unit-shifting product (as I believe music is called nowadays by the people who control its traditional distribution). And the mass availability of downloads simply makes Radiohead's bold move that much easier to execute. Of course, they could have decided to hand deliver each copy of a gilt-edged CD by carrier pigeon, but if the music contained therein wasn't all that, the whole exercise would have been pointless.

But then this is Radiohead we're talking about. They don't do substandard. Creatively restless to a point approaching Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, 'In Rainbows' never sits still, never gets comfortable and never lets the listener second guess its next move. So skittish opener '15 Step', with its scattershot beats and fidgety synth hums, makes way for the ferocious 'Bodysnatchers', with its bizarre opening steal from Iron Maiden's 'Number Of The Beast' (go on, listen to the two together and tell us we're lyring) and lacerating guitars, Thom's voice a distorted scream by its conclusion; that in turn makes way for the soft-focus 'Nude', which swims like the vanishing final scene of an early morning dream. Radiohead may have taken much of the last few years off to concentrate on family life but there are only sporadic suggestions that it's mellowed them.

The demons that drive them might not be as apparent on tracks like the minimalist 'Weird Fishes_Arpeggi', or the almost lounge-like 'Jigsaw Falling Into Place' but they glower around 'All I Need', creating a shroud of gloom, the song recalling Rezsõ Seress' old Hungarian suicide song 'Gloomy Sunday'; "I'm an atom bomb trapped in your hot car" is certainly one of the most pessimistic announcements you'll hear this year. The album's highlight, though, is 'House Of Cards', with its tender, simple melody and lush but anxious orchestration.

Ten years on from their commercial zenith, Radiohead are so far beyond rock music, or the music industry's confines, they are near enough incomparable to much else going on. Their only genuine antecedent is Scott Walker who, at the height of his pop star fame, left it all behind to make music of astonishing emotional gravity while almost disappearing from view as a public icon. Radiohead's story is a similar one on many ways: they have almost become a cult of anti-celebrity in a pop world that increasingly dines on soundbites and fashion accessories to survive; in doing so they become infinitely more fascinating than a million guitar-toting gobshites. The release of 'In Rainbows' is an anti-gimmick that finally makes people think about what genuinely matters: the music and its value. Radiohead remain what they have been for so long: priceless.

Dale Kattack

VERTICAL MONTANAS
'Of Scramblers' / 'Thick Mugs'

(Motive Sounds)

You might expect many things from a band that is essentially all of Youthmovies and all of Jonquil, but it's unlikely you'd quite expect a musical tribute to East Anglia with a football chant chorus of "Norfolk! Norfolk!" performed with a lounge-jazz orchestra vibe that's part Steely Dan, part Andrew Gold and part barber's shop quartet. But with an odd dub coda. And something in the lyrics about the singer's mum having a hole in her head. Hard to work out who's the dominant force here since it really sounds unlike either band at all, other than it shares both Youthmovies' and Jonquil's musical perversity by taking you somewhere you didn't really think you'd end up. We guess that makes the exercise a resounding success.

Sue Foreman

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REDOX
'On The Move'
(154)

In an age of haircut bands and Arctic Monkeys-coattail-chasing, it's sometimes good to remember that bands like Redox are out there, oblivious to such fashion whimsies. In fact, other than singer Sue Smith's occasional worrying tendency to sing like Smeegle out of Lord Of The Rings, most of the past 30 years seem to have passed them by. While Redox's debut album, 'Bullaburra' stopped in at every musical port from north African folk to Cajun dance, 'On The Move', is rather more parochial, preferring to jam it out in southern-fried roadhouse funk-blues style, occasionally succumbing to a spiked drink and heading spaceward, as on 'Dan Dakker', with its oddly chanted vocals, or 'MTV', with Phil Freizinger's treated flute lead and heroically awful attempt at rapping. 'Dancing Days', meanwhile, takes a misty-eyed trip back to 50s prom night rock'n'roll but ends up sounding rather more like 'Tiger Feet' by Mud.

Paradoxically, what we like most about Redox is when they're at their most irritating: when Sue gets all witchy, like a ham actor from an old 50s mediaeval b-movie and goes off on her druid gothic apocalyptic poetry thing, as on 'Eternity'. It borders on toe-curling on the one hand and reminds us horribly of Mother Gong, but equally it's so silly there's no other bugger out there willing to do it, which means it's about eleventy-six times better than The Courteeners or Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong or whichever heap of fifteenth-rate Libertines rip off crap the music industry is trying to hoist on us this month. So hats off to the hippies – the day they start caring what everyone else thinks will be a sad day indeed.

Dale Kattack

the port mahon

Live Music in November

1st Port Mahem with Simon Davies + Desmond Chancer
2nd Oxford Folk Club
3rd Quickfix presents Crusader + Black Powder
4th Audioscope Warm-up with Andy Yorke + The Half Rabbits + 50ft Panda
5th Dufus + Art Is But A Word + Collective Era + One Dollar Peep Show
7th The Ruins + Big Bad City + Le Vens + B-Phil
8th Luke Leighfield + Echo Echo + Set Them on Fire
9th Oxford Folk Club
11th Swiss Concrete presents The Brownies + Baby Gravy + Helens Evil Twin
12th Permanent Vacation presents Please + Edward Sounding Block + Don't Move, Play Dead
13th Superloose + Script + Rami
14th Kate Chadwick + Nick Breakspear
15th The Full Metal Waistcoat + Jaupe Bell + Swinging Molly
16th Oxford Folk Club
17th Dethlock
18th Myanalog Presents
19th Divine Coils + Hanaslimai + Open Verge
20th Poor Girl Noise presents Skill 7 Stamina 12 + You're Smiling Now But We'll All Turn Into Demons + Box + Elapse-O
21st Botox Cowboys + Fodder and friends
22nd Oxford Improvisers
23rd Oxford Folk Club
25th Pindrop Performance
26th Vacuous Pop presents Picastro + Viking Moses
27th Swiss Concrete presents Sargasso Trio + Tiny Tigers
28th My Analog Presents
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November

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Fri 2nd The Three Guitarist - Acoustic Heaven Roland Chadwick / Amrit Sond / Michael Berk 8.30pm £4
Sat 3rd Exposure At The X Presents Harry Angel / The Defeat 8.30pm £4
Sun 4th Jessica Goyder / support 8.30pm £3
Wed 7th Shirley Wednesday presents Daniel Hammersley / Loopy / Shirley 8pm £3
Thu 8th Amnesty International Fund Raiser with Zoe Bicat / Simon Davies Duo / John Fletcher / Nick Carpenter / Josh Knight / Samantha Twigg Johnson 8pm £4
Fri 9th Gammy Leg presents Joe Allen & Angharad Jenkins / Fugazirum / Domes Of Silence 8pm £4
Sat 10th Wittstock Fund Raiser. Acts TBC 8.30pm £4
Sun 11th Electric Jam - Come jam with the house band The X Men. All Welcome. 8pm FREE
Wed 12th Jazz At The X Presents Performance Night TBC 8pm £5
Thu 15th Liddigton / Dave Bristow / support 8.30pm £4
Fri 16th Grinning Spider Presents Toby / The Ally Craig Band / Tamarind Sun 8.30pm £4
Sat 17th Assassins of Silence / Xexon Codex 8.30pm £4
Fri 23rd Sam Kelly's Blues Band 8.30pm £5
Sat 24th Chantelle Pike / One Dollar Peep Show / Suzanna Starling 8.30pm £4
Sun 25th Electric Jam 8pm FREE
Wed 28th Jazz At The X Presents A Jazz Jam. Come and jam with the house band led by Paul Jefferies. All welcome. 8pm FREE
Fri 30th King B £8.30pm £4

THE WHEATSHEAF

129 the High street. Oxford OX14BP / Telephone: 01865 721156

Live Music in November

Thursday 1st *The Spin Presents...* **Neil Angilley** (Piano)
Friday 2nd *Klub kakofanney...* **EDUARD SOUNDINGBLOCK**
THE ABORIGINALS + BEAVER FUEL + FILM NOIR
Saturday 3rd **BIG BAD CITY** + BLIND PILOTS + KANED CITIZEN
Sunday 4th **ACTION BEAT** + ELAPSE-O + SAD SHIELDS + PATELPRETAL
Tuesday 6th *Audioscope Presents...* **JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER**
PUMAJAW + THE KEYBOARD CHOIR
Wednesday 7th **MONKEY PUZZLE** + THE GATEWAYS + BEAVER FUEL
Thursday 8th *The Spin Jazz...* **Jutta's Party Band**
Friday 9th *Quickfix Presents...* **ACTION & ACTION** + tbc
Saturday 10th **JOFF WINKS BAND** + THE GREEN + tbc
Wednesday 14th *Red Mosquito presents...* **MANNEQUIN WOODS**
A DAY CALLED DESIRE + SECRETLY SOULMATES
Thursday 15th *The Spin Jazz ...* **Luis D'Agostino** (Guitars)
Friday 16th *Vacuous pop...* **ILL EASE** + THE PATTY WINTERS SHOW
THE YOUNG PLAN
Saturday 17th **THE GOG** + THE PLAUDITS + ALPHABET BACKWARDS
Tuesday 20th **AMEN** + THE INBREDS + DJ SPEEDRANCH
Thursday 22nd *The Spin Jazz...* **Blake Wilner Quartet**
Friday 23rd **FAMILY MACHINE** + tbc
Saturday 24th *GTI Presents...* **AGENTS OF JANE** + SKETCHBEAT
RUBBER DUCK
Thursday 29th *The Spin Jazz...* **Dave O'Higgins** (Sax)

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GIG GUIDE

NOVEMBER

THURSDAY 1st

GRINNING SPIDER with TOY #1 + HAELO + MR SHAODOW + BOTOX COWBOYS: The X, Cowley – Heavyweight gothic grunge from Toy#1 with support from Hungarian rockers Haelo who hold the distinctive honour of being awarded Demo Of The Year in the Slovakian Metal Hammer. Local downbeat blues, reggae and country rockers Botox Cowboys open the show.

PORT MAYHEM: The Port Mahon – More musical mellowness from the Port Mayhem crew. Blues and soul from Desmond Chancer & The Long Memories, featuring Brickwork Lizards' Tom O'Hawk, plus sweet psychedelic folk-pop from Anton Barbeau and Su Jordan, plus folk and bossanova from Simon Davies and Colin Fletcher.

100 BULLETS BACK + 303 DID THIS TO ME + CLANKY ROBO GOB JOBS + CASIO KID & THE ULTIMATE SOUNDFUSE: The Cellar – Electro night at Big Hair with synth-rocking techno crew 100 Bullets Back headlining. One-man cyborg war Clanky Robo Gob Jobs spreads more lo-fi, hardcore digital mayhem in support.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Pianist Neil Angilley is tonight's special guest playing with the Spin house band.

PHISH: The Bullingdon – 90s club night.

THE MESSENGERS + ROUNDHEELS + THE REPEATS: The Jericho Tavern – Country night with pedal-steel-led alt.country types The Messengers, Appalachian folk and country from Roundheels, plus newcomers The Repeats opening the show.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Long-standing bastion of open-minded and eclectic performance continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets and performance artists.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 2nd

ROLAND CHADWICK + AMRIT SOND + MICHAEL BERK: The X, Cowley – A night of acoustic guitar virtuosity from three of the world's leading new-acoustic rising stars. Australian composer Roland Chadwick is a master of classical, steel, slide and electric guitar as well as mandolin, adding elements of jazz, blues, Latin and rock styles into his classical compositions. Kenya's Grammy-winning Amrit Sond, meanwhile, is renowned for his unorthodox tunings, mixing up world, jazz and folk traditions, while Michael Berk stretches himself from flamenco and heavy metal to celtic sounds.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK + ABORIGINALS + BEAVER FUEL + FILM NOIR: The Wheatsheaf – Proggy/math/metal monsters Eduard Sounding Block headline tonight's eclectic Klub Kak happening. Support from lo-fi indie-punk nutter Beaver Fuel.

THE TWANG: The Oxford Academy – Having risen above the initial hype and swift backlash, now we get a chance to hear The Twang for what they really are – a pretty darned good band. The Happy Mondays and Oasis influences are apparent enough but The Smiths and U2 also infect their loping, groove-led songs, and anyone who doesn't think 'Either Way' is a great single is a fool.

DUGOUT: The Cellar – Superfly soul, rare groove and badass funk from DJs Indesition, Odie and Zappa, plus live funk band.

THE MIGHTY PORKER + AMANACE + GRACE SOLERO + EMBERS FIRE: The Jericho Tavern

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

MOROSE BROTHERS: Chester Arms – Irish folk and acoustic pop.

THE GULLIVERS + INSILICO: The Purple Turtle – Spiky indie-punk from Bicester's Gullivers.

SATURDAY 3rd

DIZZEE RASCAL: The Oxford Academy – Sold-out gig for the Mercury-winning rap star – *see main preview*

THE EPSTEIN + STORNOWAY + LIZ GREEN: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – The local country rockers celebrate the release of their debut album, 'Last Of The Charanguistas', mixing in an exotic mix of gypsy dance and south American folk into their sweet Neil Diamond-meets-Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young rocking.

KID HARPOON: The Oxford Academy – Special Transformation club appearance from the Syd Barrett-inspired Medway singer-songwriter who's been out on tour with Wombats and Holloways recently.

EXPOSURE with HARRY ANGEL + THE DEFEAT: The X, Cowley – High-octane, goth-tinged hardcore pop from Harry Angel with support from epic indie rockers The Defeat.

BIG BAD CITY + BLIND PILOTS: The Wheatsheaf – Funk rock from Big Bad City.

CRUSADER + THE SCOUNDRELS + BLACK POWDER: The Port Mahon – Quickfix Records night with metallers Crusader, old-school punks The Scoundrels and heavy rockers Black Powder.

DESTA*NATION: The Cellar – Reggae, dub and jungle.

GUO YUE: Sutton Courtenay Abbey – Internationally-renowned Chinese flautist.

MELTING POT with KING FURNACE + WHITE SUNDAY + SLASHED SEAT AFFAIR: The Jericho Tavern – Scuzzy, funked-up heavy rock from King Furnace at tonight's local bands showcase.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night with Radio 1's Trophy Twins and Street Life DJs.

PECKE + ALICE DOYNE: The Temple

HANGMAN CHARLIE + MONEYTREE + LIDDINGTON: The Purple Turtle – Classic heavy rock from Hangman Charlie, plus melancholic indie shambling from Liddington.

Saturday 3rd

DIZZEE RASCAL: The Oxford Academy

Already sold out and not surprising since, even four years on from his Mercury Prize-winning debut, 'Boy In Da Corner', and having ditched much of that album's grim, steely grime edge in favour of more dancefloor-friendly beats, Dylan Mills remains probably the best rapper in the UK at the moment. Where 'Boy…' was musically harsh, vocally twitchy and lyrically bleak, Dizzee's latest album, 'Maths & English' is poppier, assured and, if not smooth, more pumped up and commercial. While grime stayed resolutely underground even as everyone was predicting its imminent world domination, Dizzee's knack with a pop hook and his lyrical lack of insularity has meant he's in a better position to make a full crossover break. 'Maths & English' covers hip hop, drum&bass, two-step and metal as well as pure cheese, but still references old skool hip hop purity like Rob Base and DJ EZ-Rok's 'It Takes Two'. While he's collaborated with Alex Turner and Lily Allen, he doesn't seem to be courting the indie crowd quite as frantically as Lethal Bizzle, but his own individual talent looks set to keep him in the ring for the long term.

SKITTLE ALLEY ACOUSTIC: King's Head & Bell, Abingdon – Funk-rockers Quadrophobe and gothic songsmith Mark Bosley do the honours.

SUNDAY 4th

ACTION BEAT + ELAPSE-O + SAD SHIELDS + PATEL PRETAL: The Wheatsheaf – Experimental noise from the no-wave big band – *see main preview*

ANDY YORKE + THE HALF RABBITS + 50ft PANDA: The Port Mahon – First of a short series of warm-up gigs for this month's Audioscope festival on the 10th. Jeff Buckley-inspired downbeat pop troubadour and former-Unbelievable Truth frontman Andy headlines with support from darkly-inclined fuzz rockers The Half Rabbits and riff-heavy instrumentalists 50ft Panda.

XMAS LIGHTS + OCTOBER FILE + GEHENNA: The Cellar – Maniacal ultra-hardcore brutalists Xmas Lights showcase their new singer with support from Killing Joke-inspired heavyweights October File, featuring former-Jor frontman Ben Hollyer.

BEDOUIN SOUNDCLASH + TINCHY STRYDER: The Oxford Academy – Deceptively-named lightweight Canadian ska-pop trio return with more sincere but watered-down Clash and Specials-influenced dribble.

JOOLS HOLLAND & HIS RHYTHM & BLUES ORCHESTRA: The New Theatre – Another trip to town for Geezer Jools and his swinging chums.

MY LUMINARIES + GO FASTER + HOW I BECAME THE BOMB + DIATRIBE: The Purple Turtle – Rootsy stadium rocking from Reading's My Luminaries, plus support from Liverpool's Wombats-inspired indie rockers Go Faster, Tennessee's jerky electro-pop types How I Became The Bomb and local new wavers Diatribe.

Sunday 4th

ACTION BEAT: The Wheatsheaf

Friday 16th

AXOLOTL: The Bullingdon

Oxford's noise scene continues to grow apace, with local artists finding a regular live outlet courtesy of Permanent Vacation, and more out of town acts finding their way here. PV bring back no-wave big band Action Beat *(pictured)* back to Oxford for another display of improvised guitar battery mayhem, the Bletchley collective inspired by early Sonic Youth and Glenn Branca and variously featuring at least four guitars and anything between one and four drummers; no two sets are ever the same. Support here comes from local Sightings-inspired experimentalist Elapse-O, garage-punk and riot grrl noisenicks Sad Shields and vocal drone act Patel Pretal.

Over at the Bully, meanwhile, San Francisco's Karl Bauer, aka Axolotl, brings his dense, abstract, slowly-evolving guitar and electronics noise chaos, rated as one of the most innovative rising stars of the noise scene, creating shifting patterns of sound over William Sabiston's imaginative percussion, with references to Terry Riley, Cluster and La Monte Young along the way. Completing an uncompromising bill are Berlin's drone and distortion alchemists Birds of Delay and FX-crazed noise manipulator Joey Chainsaw. If it's cosy ballads or a nice bop you're after steer well clear. If you want your synapses blown and ears spiked, join the queue.

MONDAY 5th

65 DAYS OF STATIC + ASOBI SEKSU: The Oxford Academy – Virulent Sheffield noisemakers headline along with Noo Yawk shoegazing starlets – *see main preview*

ANGELA BROWN & THE MIGHTY 45s: The Bullingdon – Live blues, soul, jazz and gospel from the acclaimed singer oft compared favourably to Etta James and Koko Taylor.

DUFUS + ONE DOLLAR PEEPSHOW + HORIZONTAL LIFE: The Port Mahon – Occasionally thirty-strong (not in the Port Mahon they aren't!) freaky, experimental anti-folk collective from New York, who have collaborated with Kimya Dawson and Regina Spektor, over in the UK to promote their new album, 'Legend Of Walnut'. Support from sweet-natured electro-poppers One Dollar Peepshow and trip hop crew Horizontal Life.

CHRIS WHILE & JULIE MATTHEWS: Nettlebed Folk Club – The two former-Albion Band singers and current leading ladies of English folk return again to Oxfordshire's premier folk club.

TUESDAY 6th

JACKIE-O-MUTHAFUCKER + PUMAJAW + KEYBOARD CHOIR: The Wheatsheaf – Leftfield psychedelic folk-pop from the rudely-monikered Portland collective – *see main preview*

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE DUKES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Grandfather of the New Jersey Sound and long-time pal and collaborator of Bruce Springsteen, blues and r'n'b singer and harmonica player Southside Johnny continues his never-ending touring, having been an enduring cult figure throughout the 80s and 90s after his initial creative peak in the 70s. With almost as many record labels as albums over the last twenty-five years, it's fair to say he's never enjoyed the luck or commercial success of his pal, but he can at least claim credit for inspiring Jon Bon Jovi to take up singing. Should we be congratulating him on this point?

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet playing lively modern jazz with contemporary grooves, led by keyboard player Howard.

VERTIGO: The Cellar – Indie cub night with live bands.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 7th

SONS & DAUGHTERS + THE VICTORIAN ENGLISH GENTLEMEN'S CLUB: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – More than welcome return of Glasgow's dark-hearted rockabilly romantics – *see main preview*

MONKEY PUZZLE + THE GATEWAYS: The Wheatsheaf – Jangly indie rocking from headliners Monkey Puzzle.

SHIRLEY + DANIEL HAMMERSLEY + LOOPY: The X, Cowley – Shirley's monthly club night features guest sets from sweet-natured acoustic singer Daniel Hammersley and

Monday 5th

65 DAYS OF STATIC / ASOBI SEKSU: The Oxford Academy

Sometimes the gods of pop send us a little something special to keep like a secret trinket in our hearts, and over the past year it's been New York's Asobi Seksu *(pictured),* essentially a duo formed by guitarist James Hanna and Japanese vocalist Yuki Chikudate, plus bassist Haji and drummer Ben Shapiro. Originally they were scheduled to headline at the Jericho Tavern but have been moved over town to support 65DOS. An exotic combination, musically Asobi Seksu throw themselves prostrate at the altar of shoegazing pop noise, Hanna's turbulent, oceanic guitar thrash underpinning Yuki's cutesy bilingual vocals, kind of like a stripped-down, high-octane collision of My Bloody Valentine, The Sundays, early Lush and Shonen Knife. In full flow they're an astonishing racket but always at their core are simple, almost childlike melodies that either shimmer sweetly or hit you with a bounce factor that goes off the scale. The band's name is Japanese for playful sex: they were made and named to be enjoyed. And of course the venue switch means you get to see the mighty 65 Days Of Static too, regular visitors to Oxford over the years but still a thrill of thermonuclear proportions, an astonishingly intense fusion of post-rock, techno, drum&bass and out-and-out volume that sounds like the soundtrack to imminent atomic holocaust.

Tuesday 6th

JACKIE-O MOTHERFUCKER / PUMAJAW / KEYBOARD CHOIR: The Wheatsheaf

Cough, splutter. Er yes, sorry about the language but you have to forgive such profanity when you're dealing with as cool a band as Portland, Oregon's J-OM. Tonight sees them making their first visit to Oxford as part of a warm-up for Audioscope and they're as wonderfully strange as you'd expect. Originally a duo of multi-instrumentalist Tom Greenwood and saxophonist Nester Bucket, since 1994 they've gone through over 40 musicians, drawn from the US experimental scene. More of a collective than a band, and relying heavily on improvisation, their musical style depends on who's playing at any given time, although the current five-piece line-up, still headed by Greenwood, has been together for three years and the sound veers towards traditional American folk, krautrock, psychedelia and blues, and for all their radical nature, they're often as not a fantastically melodic proposition, while dark, minimalist covers of bands like The Beach Boys and Public Enemy show their great versatility. Superb support tonight comes from Scotland's Pumajaw, formed by former-Loop man John Wills together with Pinky MacLure. Desolate, psychedelic folk of the highest order. Meanwhile, Oxford's own electro-soundscapists Keyboard Choir open a must-see show.

jangly pop types Loopy, as well as Shirley's own party-friendly 60s-styled rock.

THE RUINS + BIG BAD CITY + LE VENS + B-PHIL: The Port Mahon – Smithsy indie rocking from The Ruins, plus funk-rock from Big bad City.

AMERICA: The New Theatre – 70s country-rock giants hit the road again with hits like 'Horse With No Name', 'Ventura Highway' and 'Sister Golden Hair'.

GREEN: The Cellar – Hip hop club night with DJs Fu, Green T and P-Dex.

ANOTHER LOST LEADER + MARTHA ROSWELL + VICKY STUART: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 8th

PORCUPINE TREE + ANATHEMA: The Oxford Academy – A genuine and enduring cult success story in a time when longevity is an ever-rarer commodity. Steven Wilson's Porcupine Tree have been making prog rock of varying shades since the late-80s, building a fanbase across Europe and the States along the way and finally, in the last couple of years, hitting the charts, notably with new album 'Fear Of A Blank Planet', which featured guest slots from Rush guitarist Alex Lifeson and King Crimson's Robert Fripp. Past work has owed more to Talk Talk than Genesis but more recently they've gotten heavier, but that following just keeps on growing and it should come as little surprise that tonight's gig is already sold out.

MC LARS + LAST LETTER READ + SMILEX + THE EVENINGS: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Truck Records' favourite rapper returns to town for another dose of his patented post-punk laptop rap, a world removed from mainstream hip hop culture, backed by a full on punk band and lyrically informed by Herman Melville and Edgar Allen Poe. A new album, 'This Gigantic Robot Kills', produced by Wheatus' Brendan Brown is out soon. Local sleaze-core punkers Smilex and electro-groovers The Evenings support.

SAMANTHA TWIGG JOHNSON + THE SIMON DAVIS DUO + JOSH KNIGHT + THE JON FLETCHER GROUP + ADAM & NIC CARPENTER + ZOË BICAT: The X, Cowley – Acoustic night in aid of Amnesty International.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Featuring guests Jutta's Party Band.

LUKE LEIGHFIELD + ECHO ECHO + SET THEM ON FIRE: The Port Mahon – Mixed bag of noise with singer and keyboard player Luke Leighfield going up against Bloc Party-styled Brighton rockers Echo Echo and lo-fi ranting thrashcore duo Set Them On Fire.

ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro club night with Riotous Rockers.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

GET FUNKED: The Bullingdon – Funk club night.

FRIDAY 9th

PAUL HEATON: The Oxford Academy – The former Housemartins and Beautiful South frontman heads out on his first solo tour with his trademark through-a-pint-glass-darkly tales of kitchen sink romance and loss.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX with PLUMP DJs: The Oxford Academy – Fresh Out Of The Box presents a mega night of nu-skool breaks in conjunction with Finger Lickin' Records. Andy Gardner and Lee Rous are on the decks with a new album, 'Mad Cow', out and cementing their position at the head of the breakbeat crossover. There are also sets from Soul Of Man, plus old-school ravers Drumattic Twins. Recreational Hazard host the second room with techno and electro minimalism from Kostas G, Bass Face, Ed Steele and Matt Carter.

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with DOMES OF SILENCE + FUGAZIRUM + JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS: The X, Cowley – Another eclectic bill at GLP tonight with heavyweight darkwave rockers Domes Of Silence mixing up The Doors, Primal Scream and Depeche Mode, while Fugazirum mash up UK hip hop with roadhouse blues (and aren't, perhaps sadly, Fugazi drunk out of their heads on rum). Local singer Joe Allen and electric violinist Angharad Jenkins open the bill in soulful style.

HUGH TURNER BAND: The Bullingdon – Live funk.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance club night with Afrobeat band Yaaba Funk.

QUICKFIX BANDS NIGHT: The Wheatsheaf – With Action + Action and more tbc.

SAMSON + OFF THE RADAR + QUADROPHOBE: The Jericho Tavern – Not the 70s metallers featuring Bruce Dickinson, but a completely different Samson. Ones what play folk music. Reading indie rockers OTR and local funkers Quadrophobe support.

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR: The Magdalen

AMBERSTATE + THE GRAND: The Purple Turtle – Trip-hopper Amberstate play their last ever gig.

PARKER: The New Flyer, Banbury – New live music night for Banbury.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 10th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy *(1.30pm)* – Krautrock legends Michael Rother and Dieter Möebius headline this year's festival in aid of Shelter – *see main preview*

THE JOFF WINKS BAND + THE GREEN: The Wheatsheaf – Psychedelia-tinged jazz-pop from JWB, finding a meeting place between Flaming Lips and Steely Dan.

COO COO CLUB with MULES + FIREWORKS NIGHT + GODWITS: The Jericho Tavern – Spiky post-punk funk and gypsy dance from Mules at tonight's Coo Coo Club. Downbeat alt.country rockers Fireworks Night support.

WINNEBAGO DEAL + LITTLE FISH + CUCKOO'S NEST: The Cellar – A night of two-piece rock excellence with Winnebago Deal cranking out their blitzkrieg garage-metal noise alongside this month's Nightshift cover stars Little Fish.

EMPIRICAL: Wesley Memorial Hall – European Broadcasting Union Jazz Competition winners giving traditional modern jazz an energetic update by way of Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Ali Farka Toure.

KADIALY KOUATE: Ramsden Memorial Hall – Senegalese kora player in the Mandinka storytelling tradition.

WITTSTOCK FUNDRAISER with JESSICA GOYDER: The X, Cowley – Ephemeral acoustic pop with a rich Catalan edge from local songstress Jessica.

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

REDOX + SUPERLOOSE + TALC DEMONS + ALPHABET BACKWARDS: Abingdon British Legion – Skittle Alley bands nights with local festival funk rockers Redox headlining.
THE REPEATS + ROB LEVER: The Temple
WORLDVIEW + THE FOCAL POINT + FEE FI FO FUM: The Purple Turtle

SUNDAY 11th

THE EIGHTIES MATCHBOX B-LINE DISASTER + THE ZICO CHAIN + THE DIRTY: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Gothabilly heroes return to action like a rocket from the crypt – *see main preview*
TOP OF THE OX: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – The local text vote battle of the band chart showcases its top acts of the year, with student harpist Sarah Warne, folky indie types Stornoway, Bob Dylan-influenced singer Minwah and sweet-natured acoustic singer Daniel Hammersley.
SLOUNGE: The Vaults Café, Radcliffe Square – The latest instalment in Oxford Contemporary Music's multi-arts series, tonight featuring folk-punk harpist Serafina Steer and international slam poetry champion Steve Larkin, coming on somewhere between Spike Milligan and Enimen.

Wednesday 7th

SONS & DAUGHTERS: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

A good month for returning cult heroes of a *noir*-ish persuasion this, with Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster and Sons & Daughters both back in action. Formed out of members of Arab Strap back in 2001, Glasgow's Sons and Daughters have eclipsed their parent band in terms of style if not commercial success. Former Arab Strap lady Adele Bethel leads the band alongside Scott Paterson and their shared love of The Smiths, Velvet Underground and Leonard Cohen makes for deliciously dark art. Black-hearted rockabilly, primal country rock, razor-sharp guitar riffs and songs about murder and voyeurism hide a romantic nature and it's no surprise Nick Cave was enamoured enough to ask them to support him a while back. They also toured with Morrissey and Domino labelmates Franz Ferdinand. Having gone quiet on the release front since 2005's 'Repulsion Box', they return this month with a new single, 'Gilt Complex', produced by Bernard Butler, and a new album due in the New Year.

THE BROWNIES + BABY GRAVY + HELEN & APOS' EVIL TWIN: The Port Mahon – Spiky female-fronted punk noise from Norwich's Brownies at tonight's Swiss Concrete session. Similarly-inclined local starlets Baby Gravy join in the fun.
ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley – Jam along with the in-house band.
SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar – Chilled club night.
BEAR IN THE AIR: The Purple Turtle

MONDAY 12th

THE BIG DEZ BAND: The Bullingdon – Rocking Texas-style blues from Paris singer and guitarist Phil Fernandez and band, paying tribute to Alberts Collins and King.
PLEASE + EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK + DON'T MOVE, PLAY DEAD: The Port Mahon – Wobbly-headed blues and psychedelia craziness from Please at tonight's Permanent Vacation show, mixing up Magic Band with USAisamonster. Prog, metal and math-rocking from ESB, plus keyboard noise from Luton duo DMPD.
DIGITALISM: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – The rebirth of the rock-rave crossover courtesy of Berlin's speed-addled electro-dance duo Digitalism, covering The Cure and remixing Futureheads even as they crank up the Daft Punk and Chemical Brothers block rocking beats. Synths fed through guitar pedals, a deep, deep love of Kraftwerk and its' futuristic dance music of the type people in the old sci-fi movies doubtless envisaged it.
DIR EN GREY: The Oxford Academy – Japan's leading metal lights make a rare UK appearance – *see main preview*
JAZZ @ THE X: The X, Cowley
JOHN TAMS & BARRY COOPE: Nettlebed Folk Club – UK folk circuit regulars Tamms and Barry mix up traditional and original songs on keyboards and guitar.

TUESDAY 13th

RILO KILEY + GRAND OLE PARTY: The Oxford Academy – From leftfield indie-country starlets and support act to Bright Eyes to polished AOR fluff, LA's Rilo Kiley's creative star has declined in inverse correlation to their commercial one. New album 'Under The Blacklight' is awash with shiny unit-shifting pop product, somewhere between Shania Twain, Fleetwood Mac and 70s smooth jazz-rock, and easy-on-the-eye singer Jenny Lewis has an army of fans all by herself, but it's saccharine stadium pop of little discernible emotional or musical depth. There, that should be enough to have a mob of lovelorn geeks baying outside the Nightshift door for the next month or two.
THE CARDIACS + GOD DAMN WHORES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Tim Smith's enduring musical mavericks return – *see main preview*
SUPERLOOSE + SCRIPT: The Port Mahon
TELLING THE BEES + THE EAST ANGLIAN CHANCERS + MAEVE BAYTON & IAN NIXON + MANDY WOOD: East Oxford Community Centre – Benefit gig for the EOCC with acoustic folk and psychedelia troupe Telling The Bees, in the vein of John Martyn and Roy Harper.

Friday 9th

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX

Friday 23rd

SLIDE 13th BIRTHDAY: The Oxford Academy

An excellent month for house and breaks in Oxford with two quality club nights. Fresh Out Of The Box presents a mega night of nu-skool breaks in conjunction with Finger Lickin' Records. **Plump DJs** Andy Gardner and Lee Rous are on the decks with a new album, 'Mad Cow', out and cementing their position at the head of the breakbeat crossover. There are also sets from Soul Of Man, plus old-school ravers Drumattic Twins. Recreational Hazard host the second room with techno and electro minimalism from Kostas G, Bass Face, Ed Steele and Matt Carter.

Later in the month Oxford's peerless house night Slide celebrates 13 years, having played host to the likes of Groove Armada, Carl Cox and James Lavelle along the way and choosing to celebrate this auspicious occasion by inviting back **James Zabiela** *(pictured)* after his sold out show here last year. Zabiela's career has been on a constant upwards trajectory since he won Muzik's Bedroom Bedlam award in 2000, culminating in last year's award of Best British DJ in DJ Magazine. His mastery of layering sounds and warping and twisting tracks provides a perfect mix of entertainment and innovation, and proves Slide is still ahead of the game after all these years.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Special guest set from Paddy Milner.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 14th

BLACK REBEL MOTORCYCLE CLUB: The Oxford Academy – A return trip to the venue where they made their UK debut back in

Saturday 10th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

Audioscope has surpassed itself once again with this year's line-up. The annual mini-festival in aid of Shelter has consistently attracted some of the great underground and leftfield acts from around the world, from Damo Suzuki to Four Tet, but this year beats the lot – Michael Rother and Dieter Möebius. While Rother was a pivotal member of Neu! as well as Kraftwerk, Möebius played with Cluster before the two of them, along with Hans-Joachim Roedelius, formed Harmonia in the early-70s. So, krautrock gods ahoy. The pair's headline appearance coincides neatly the with the release of a live Harmonia album from 1974. Expect machine beats, industrial ambience and hypnotic grooves. Other highlights of the day-long event are post-rockers The Sea and Cake, featuring Tortoise fellow John McEntire; incendiary four-drummer, two-bassist wall-of beats spectacle Shit & Shine, somewhere between Sunn0))) and Beach Boys; UK underground legends Rothko and Birmingham's utterly awesome krautrockers Einstellung. The local contingent is made up of the divine Witches, whose debut 'Heart Of Stone' could well be the best Oxford album of the year, while Audioscope organisers Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element play their traditional opening set in a Neu-meets-Shellac stylee.

2001 for BRMC, back on musical form with new album 'Baby 81' after 2005's rootsy, acoustic 'Howl', recorded during a temporary split with drummer Nick Jago. With the new album they're back doing what they've always done best – classic, smoke-shrouded blues-rock, inspired equally by The Stones, Led Zep, and The Velvet Underground.

MANNEQUINN WOODS + A DAY CALLED DESIRE + SECRETLY SOULMATES: The Wheatsheaf – Grunge and metal noise from local rockers Mannequin Woods, with support from Brummie emo shouters A Day Called Desire.

KATE CHADWICK + NICK BREAKSPEAR: The Port Mahon – Campfire acoustic pop cosiness from Kate Chadwick, plus Black Hats frontman Nick in solo action.

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

CAT 'APPENIN' + DJ BISKIT: The Jericho Tavern – Psychedelic funk.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 15th

TWO GALLANTS + BLITZEN TRAPPER + KELLY STOLTZ: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Excellent raw blues and folk racket from San Francisco duo Adam Stephens (vocals and guitar) and drummer Tyson Vogel, sort of the Delta counterpart to White Stripes electric Chicago blues sound.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Local jazz guitar favourite Luis D'Agostino guests.

ANNI ROSSI: Modern Art Oxford – Maverick Californian viola virtuoso, singer and tap dancer.

FULL METAL WAISTCOAT + JAUPE BELL + SWINGING MOLLY: The Port Mahon – Traditional English folk from Full Metal Waistcoat.

NAPOLEON III + PAGAN WANDERER LU + APPLICANTS + KEYBOARD CHOIR: The Cellar – Minimalist electro-pop, drones and 60s acid pop from Wakefield experimentalists Napoleon III at tonight's Big Hair club.

SHIRLEY + VIGILANCE BLACK SPECIAL + ANOTHER LOST LEADER + SUPERLOOSE: The Jericho Tavern – Crosstown Traffic night with harmony-heavy 60s power pop, surf and Latino party rock fun courtesy of Shirley. Dark-pop splendour from Vigilance in support.

LIDDINGTON + DAVE BRISTOW: The X, Cowley

SELECTASOUND presents THE BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Bullingdon - Wonderfully eclectic blues, jazz, Arabic and hip hop sounds from local faves at tonight's Selectasound show.

FRIDAY 16th

AXOLOTL + BIRDS OF DELAY + JOEY CHAINSAW: The Bullingdon – Experimental noise with San Francisco's Axolotl – *see main preview*

HOT HOT HEAT + THE THIRST + BLONDELLE: The Oxford Academy – Canada's Hot Hot Heat – previously known as The Best New Band In The World back in 2003 on the back of their rather good anti-war song 'Bandages' – return with new album 'Happiness Ltd' and their trademark mix of upbeat new wave pop and ska.

ABRAM WILSON: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – New Orleans trumpeter and sidekick to Soweto Kinch, out on his own and mixing up scat, blues, soul, hip hop and jazz.

SCRATCH PERVERTS: The Oxford Academy – Hip hop, scratching and drum&bass from Tony Vegas, Prime Cuts and Plus One, fresh off the back of their recent 'Watch The Ride' mix album.

ILL EASE + THE PATTY WINTERS SHOW + THE YOUNGS PLAN: The Wheatsheaf – Vacuous Pop night with the return of Brooklyn's Elizabeth Sharp, aka Ill Ease, bridging the gap between The Velvet Underground, Moldy Peaches and New York No-Wave as she skitters between looped guitar and hip hop drumbeats. Vacuous Pop signings The Patty Winters Show recall the spirit of The Wedding Present with their angular, harmony-heavy indie pop.

TOBY + THE ALLY CRAIG BAND + TAMARIND SUN: The X, Cowley – Acoustic pop from Australian girl duo Toby at tonight's Grinning Spider club. Local luminary Ally Craig showcases his new band line-up while winsome acoustic pop newcomers Tamarind Sun open.

JUXTAPOSITION: The Cellar – Reggae, dancehall, dubstep and jungle with DJ Heatwave, plus live set from Vexd.

QUICKFIX NIGHT: The Purple Turtle – Free live music night.

JONNY RACE + THE LE BROCKS + PANIC NUMBER + MALC EVANS: The Jericho Tavern

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 17th

CALVIN HARRIS + THE MITCHELL BROTHERS: The Oxford Academy – Like an annoying kid brother to LCD Soundsystem, Calvin and chums make a suitably cheesy attempt to rehabilitate 80s electro-funk with mixed results. Admit it, a year from now you'll be hiding your copy of 'I Created Disco' under the floorboards lest anyone you care even vaguely about notices you own a copy and sneers at you like a leprous toad.

NICK HARPER: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Impassioned English folk from son-of-Roy Nick Harper.

ASSASSINS OF SILENCE + XEXON CODEX: The X, Cowley – Hawkwind tribute.

THE GOG + THE PLAUDITS: The Wheatsheaf

DEDLOCK: The Port Mahon – Hardcore thrash metal.

ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar – Electro club night with live bands and resident DJs.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Anniversary night at the funky house club.

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

JESSICA GOYDER: The Shed, Charlbury

SOULJACKER: The Temple

BAD SANDWICH + TRIBAL VIBE: The Purple Turtle – Funk rock and reggae.

SUNDAY 18th

OYSTERBAND + DAN DONNELLY: The Oxford Academy – Canterbury's enduring English folkies return, promoting new album, 'Meet You There', in recent years having returned to their easy, melodic roots after collaborations with June Tabor and The Handsome Family.

CHERRY GHOST + TACK, THE BOY DISASTER: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy - Another dose of understated but luxurious home-made country pop from Bolton's Simon Aldred, the man they're calling The Lancastrian Bright Eyes, enjoying some success with new album, 'Thirst For Romance', following a tour support with Amy Winehouse earlier in the year.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Bullingdon

MONDAY 19th

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.

CHRIS T-T + A SILENT FILM: The Jericho Tavern – Arch lyrical observation and downbeat electro-folk pop from Chris T-T with intricately grandiose rock from A Silent Film in support.
THE DUKE SPIRIT + CREEPY MORON + MAN FROM MICHAEL: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy –Post-grunge noise-pop in the vein of Pixies and Stooges, fronted by spiky frontwoman Leila Moss.
DIVINE COILS + HANASLIMAI + OPEN VERGE: The Port Mahon – Experimental noise and drones from Divine Coils and guests.
CARA DILLON: Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional folk from the Irish singer and erstwhile Seth Lakeman collaborator.

TUESDAY 20th

AMEN + INBREDS + SPEED RANCH: The Wheatsheaf – Hell of a night in store in the compact confines of the Sheaf as Casey Chaos' hardcore punk-metal marauders – once hailed as The Best Band In The World by Metal Hammer – return to the UK, set to release a new album later this year, their first since 2004's 'Death Before Musick'. Support from London's scumbag metallers The Inbreds.
SKILL 7 STAMINA 12 + YOU'RE SMILING NOW BUT WE'LL ALL TURN INTO DEMONS + BOX + ELAPSE-O: The Port Mahon – Leftfield art-rocking from Skill 7 alongside Portsmouth's spiky garage rockers YSNBWATID.
THE PIGEON DETECTIVES: The Oxford Academy – Sold-out gig from the everyman indie rockers ploughing an unabashed post-Arctic Monkeys furrow.
THE HEAVY: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Why not treat yourself to something a little bit more exotic than Pigeon Detectives by catching this lot on their unstoppable rise. Formed from the ashes of hugely underrated Bristol band Alpha, The Heavy sound like Curtis Mayfield fronting Led Zeppelin by way of the theme tune to The A Team. It's glam-soul-funk-psychedelia and it's great, as amply displayed on ace debut single 'That Kind Of Man'.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live set from regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
VERTIGO: The Cellar
OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 21st

SONIC BOOM SIX + THE FLAMING TSUNAMIS + GROWN AT HOME: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Manchester's hard-gigging punk-hip hop-ska battlers hit town again, tempering their Bad Brains and Specials-inspired ire with some cute Fugees-style soul-pop.
STATUS QUO: The New Theatre – Another two-night stint at the New Theatre for Ver Quo, who, a full forty years after they formed, now find themselves considered cooler than they have since back in the days of 'Pictures Of Matchstick Men'. In part this is down to the fact that recent albums, notably 2005's 'The Party Ain't Over Yet' – the band's 33rd full-length release – were as good as anything they've done since their late-70s / early-80s commercial heyday. Not that Ver Quo have ever had much time for being critically acclaimed, not when they've just been declared the most successful British singles act of all time, ahead of even The Beatles. Folks just love a nice bit of unadulterated barroom boogie fun. Rossi and Parfitt's formula has remained unchanged for nearly half a century and the pair of them have lived every rock cliché going, but Status Quo will be rocking all over the world for many more years to come.
BOTOX COWBOYS + FODDER: The Port Mahon
JAKOBINARINA + VIDEO NASTIES: The Jericho Tavern – Charmingly bolshy teenage punk rocking out of Iceland, just prove it's not all glacial splendour and wildlife documentary soundtracks.
CLUB DUB: The Cellar
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar
JOE PARKER + JULIANA MEYER: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic singer-songwriters night.

THURSDAY 22nd

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guests The Blake Wilner Quartet.

Sunday 11th

THE EIGHTIES MATCHBOX B-LINE DISASTER: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

After being one of Nightshift's favourite bands for a while a few years back, we'd given Brighton's Eighties Matchbox B-Line Disaster up for dead as the trail went strangely cold, but, like the hardcore goth monsters they undoubtedly are, they couldn't stay dead for long and now they're back, black clad and wanting your soul. If your idea of what constitutes goth is dour, overly-sensitive panstick kids obsessed with metaphysical poets and a liking for crap emo bands, here's your re-education. Inspired by The Cramps, Bauhaus and The Birthday Party, Eighties Matchbox are a howling rockabilly riot and capable of inspiring serious slam-dancing frenzies that match any hardcore bunfight. Coffin-voiced frontman Guy McKnight sings about paranoia, the wrath of God and 1930s high-diving circus horses as you'd expect from any dark-minded rock soul, while the band's recent Live Best Of came in a limited-edition ouij board box. How black? None more black.

Monday 12th

DIR EN GREY: The Oxford Academy

After ten years and six albums, Dir En Grey played their first UK gigs back in July this year. Both sold out in an hour and fans queued outside the venue for two days beforehand to get to the front. Back in their native Japan that's simply par for the course for a band who have one of the most rabid fanbases in the country. In 2005 the band played their first European date – selling out a 4,000-capacity venue in Berlin is less than 72 hours with no publicity campaign – followed by a string of sold-out gigs in the States, where they've since supported Korn and Deftones. Unprecedented success for a Japanese rock band, then. Fronted by theatrical vocalist/screamer Kyo, Dir En Grey play melodic power and thrash metal, influenced as much by glam, goth and synth-pop as the usual metal titans, while earlier albums featured more traditional Japanese influences. With `Withering To Death' and their new album, 'Marrow Of A Bone'' the music and words have become more westernised and harder-edged, much of the new album lurching into hardcore territory. Tonight's show is only one of two UK gigs on their current tour, so it should be a pretty fanatical affair. And you've got to love any band with a song called 'Agitated Screams Of Maggots'.

SILVERSTEIN: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – More sad-sack emo-cum-stadium-pop soul-bearing from The Band That Just Won't Go Away. There's a new album, 'Arrivals & Departures' out on Victory Records. All together now: loud bit, quiet bit, loud bit, quiet bit…..
FROM THE JAM: The Oxford Academy – The combined visionary pop genius of Bruce Foxton and Rick Butler returns with more dazzling mod rocking fun. Paul who?
STATUS QUO: The New Theatre
OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon – Freeform jazz and experimentalism from the local improv collective and guests.
ELECTRICITY: The Cellar
PAM + THE PLUGS + 50ft PANDA: The Jericho Tavern – Indie rocking from Nottingham's Pam, plus synth-led prog noise from The Plugs. Ace heavy riffage from recent Demo Of The Monthers 50ft Panda.
ROCK NIGHT: The Bullingdon – Live bands and rock DJs.

Tuesday 13th

THE CARDIACS: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

An always welcome return to town for the enduring maverick musical circus that is The Cardiacs. Formed in Surrey back in 1977, they were once banned outright from appearing in NME by a disgusted editor, but widespread press hatred only fuelled their rise to cult status and a career that has outlasted all their detractors. In their long and varied career the band have gone through myriad line-up changes, but are forever led by frontman Tim Smith. Stylistically they take in everything from prog-rock, metal, pastoral psychedelia and nods to bands as disparate as King Crimson, XTC and the Sex Pistols. Smith's very English lyrical slant and vocal accent preceded Britpop by a good decade but was typical of the band's out-of-time feel which forever cast them as outsiders. Still, the band have never lost their cult status and their influence, though hardly widespread, is still being felt – from Blur's wonkier outings, to Oxford's own Eduard Soundingblock. For lovers of genuinely off-beat rock music, and for anyone who forever despairs of the music press' inability to deal with anything out of the ordinary, here's another chance to celebrate the continuing survival of one such extraordinary band.

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

FRIDAY 23rd

RAVEONETTES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy - Danish shoegazing dreamers - *see main preview*
SLIDE: The Oxford Academy – Monthly house club night with special guest James Zabiela – *see main preview.*
THE COMPLETE STONES ROSES: The Oxford Academy – Tribute to the Manc legends.
FOREIGN BEGGARS: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – London rap crew with a loose stoner vibe and a frontman with the unlikely name of Orifice Vulgatron. Although in this day and age, you wouldn't put it past some parents to actually name their child so.
THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Wheatsheaf – Wry, lachrymose country-tinged rocking from ace local songsmith Jamie Hyatt and crew.
SAM KELLY'S BLUES BAND: The X, Cowley – Live blues from the award-winning drummer and band.
BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Funk, hip hop and breaks with ten-piece ska-rap band Imperial Leisure. Tonight's show also sees the relaunch of interactive internet station Optix.
BLACKMARKET + HI FLYER + THE TROUBLE WITH ME: The Jericho Tavern
NEVER ENOUGH + HARLEQUIN + CONTRACT: The New Flyer, Banbury
REDOX: Fat Lil's, Witney
DEEP PURPLE NIGHT: The Bullingdon – Live tribute to the heavy rock legends.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

SATURDAY 24th

NOUGHT + THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + BIG JOAN + MORE: The Cellar *(5.30pm)* – An extended evening of leftfield rocking from the Big Hair crew. Local jazz'n'decker legends Nought return to town to blow speakers and minds with their virtuoso instrumental hardcore, while the brilliantly theatrical TROT meld Spinal Tap metal mentalism with Add N To (X)-style electro noise and Stravinsky-like classical epicness. Guitar noise monsters Big Joan lead the supporting cast alongside narcotic-popsters Brother Francisco, Eduard Sounding Block, Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element and Von Braun.
GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with RUBBER DUCK + SKETCHBEAT + AGENTS OF JANE: The Wheatsheaf – Funk, reggae and rock from local Rubber Duck at tonight's GTI show. Funky rock from Sketchbeat plus campfire folk from openers Agents of Jane.
THE SMITHS INDEED: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – All the old hits and cult favourites with none of the not-so-good new Morrissey stuff to distract you.
NEW MODEL ARMY: The Oxford Academy – Chest-beating folk-punk stalwarts prepare to rouse the rabble into revolution once again. They believe in killing the bastards, killing the bastards, killing the bastards….
TANGO NUEVO: Pegasus Theatre – New wave Argentine tango from Tango Siempre, taking the dance back to its fiery roots while mixing it up with new musical styles.
COO COO CLUB with BORDERVILLE + STORNOWAY + LITTLE FISH: The Jericho Tavern – As good a line-up of local talent as you'll get anywhere. Vaudevillian space rockers Borderville launch their debut EP with support from sweet-natured folk-pop troupe Stornoway and this month's Nightshift cover stars Little Fish
DEACON BLUE: The New Theatre – Virulent, politicised punk mayhem fro… oh, sorry, they're next to Dead Kennedys in our music encyclopaedia.
ONE DOLLAR PEEPSHOW + CHANTELLE PIKE + SUZANNE STARLING: The X, Cowley – Electro-folk pop from ODP in the vein of Garbage and Cardigans. Extravagant blues-tinged pop from Chantelle Pike.
BLACK HATS + THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Stocks Bar, Abingdon – 60s-styled indie pop from Black Hats plus lachrymose country-pop from The Family Machine at tonight's Skittle Alley session.
UPROOTED + GREEN ONIONS + LIFE & SOUL: Romanway, Cowley
BEN CLAMPSON: The Temple
GET MASHED: The Bullingdon – DJs mixing up indie, hip hop and more.
MISS LARDYDA: The Purple Turtle – Live funk, hip hop and soul.

SUNDAY 25th

WE ARE SCIENTISTS: Brookes University Union – New York's post-punk faves play their first Oxford headline show (their second ever show outside of the States was supporting Editors at the Zodiac in 2005), preparing to release their follow-up to acclaimed debut album, 'With Love & Squalor'.
THE UKULELE ORCHESTRA OF GREAT BRITAIN: The Oxford Academy – Fun, sometimes cheesy but more often inspired covers of rock, punk, jazz and classical favourites played entirely on ukuleles.
SCOUT NIBLETT + DEVASTATIONS + IT HUGS BACK: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Dark'n'dirty blues and folk, with echoes of early PJ Harvey, from the singer/drummer whose new album, 'This Fool, Can Die Now', features Niblett duetting with Will Oldham, while Steve Albini once again takes the production reins. Suave indie rockers Devastations support along with pop cuties It Hugs Back.
PINDROP PERFORMANCE: The Port Mahon – Ambient noise from Crossword Records acts tbc.
JESSICA GOYDER + ARCHIE: The Jericho Tavern – Anglo-Spanish folk-pop from local singer-songwriter Jessica.
ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley
SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar

MONDAY 26th

THE EDDIE MARTIN BAND: The Bullingdon – British blues guitarist, twice nominated for best UK blues guitarist and adept at acoustic, electric and slide, drawing on all manner of American blues traditions, from Delta and Texan style to Chicago and New Orleans.
PICASTRO + VIKING MOSES: The Port Mahon – Somnambulant electro-classical soundscaping from Toronto's Picastro, headlining tonight's Vacuous Pop gig. Missouri's Viking Moses brings his downbeat, whisky-soaked songs of regret in support.
MARAH: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Brooklyn-based roots rockers out on tour.
THE POOZIES: Nettlebed Folk Club – The all-female Scottish folk troupe welcome Sally Barker back into their ranks.

TUESDAY 27th

IAN BROWN: The Oxford Academy – A mere four days after The Complete Stone Roses pay tribute to Manchester's indie greats, here's the real deal – former Roses frontman Ian Brown now ensconced as Britpop's kindly but slightly mad uncle, but managing to knock out the odd decent album along the way. And these days, apparently, he's even started playing the odd Stone Roses track or two.

UNI-TRUCK with THE WARLOCKS + BLOOD RED SHOES + GOLDRUSH + WITCHES – Brookes University Union – First of a new termly club night from Truck Records with LA's narcotic rockers The Warlocks – *see main preview*
THE SARGASSO TRIO + TINY TIGERS + YOUNG*HUSBAND: The Port Mahon – Acoustic and synth-led folk, blues and bluegrass from Norwich's Sargasso Trio. Dreamy psychedelic folk-pop from recent Jeffrey Lewis support Young*Husband open the show.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With The Josephine Davis Band playing live.
ACID WAX: The Cellar – Live set from T.A.P.E.
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 28th

JAZZ JAM: The X, Cowley – Jam along with Paul Jefferies' in-house band.

Friday 23rd

RAVEONETTES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

Winter it may be now but here's the sweet scent of summer to cheer us through the long, dark nights. Or, as one Nightshift reviewer wrote about their last visit to the Zodiac, the musical equivalent of the smell Lenor are always trying to sell us. Danish duo Raveonettes (multi-instrumentalist Sune Rose Wagner and singer / bassist Sharin Foo) are a sweet-as-sugar-coated-sunshine pop experience, joyous and invigorating, taking the sheen and sadness of 60s girl pop, a surf-pop twang, The Everly Brothers' two-part harmonies and a little of Johnny and June Cash's country duetting and icing it with swirling shoegazing dreaminess. In fact they don't really look or sound like a band from the 21st Century: Sune looks like a 50s rocker and sings like a young, lean Lou Reed, while Sharin looks like Nico's kid sister and croons like Julee Cruise or Nancy Sinatra. Together they've got a seductive playfulness about them that'll make you smile like it's your fifth birthday all over again. Their last album, 'Pretty In Black', featured contributions from Ronnie Spector, Mo Tucker and Martin Rev. They've got a new album out this month, 'Lust Lust Lust', which apparently finds the band in more reflective mood, but hell, we just know it's going to make us happy.

HIT & RUN: The Cellar – With DJ Fu and Tonn Piper plus MC Mantmast.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar
MOIETY + DISAPPOINTED + KATE CHADWICK: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

THURSDAY 29th

BUZZCOCKS: The Oxford Academy – Another trip to town for the enduring punk legends, with Mssrs Shelley and Diggle cranking out timeless classics like 'Ever Fallen In Love', 'Orgasm Addict' and 'Promises' along with actually-very-good new stuff. One of the genuinely greatest singles bands of all time.
PAMA INTERNATIONAL: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Classic punk downstairs, full-on ska and reggae party upstairs – it's just like 1977 again. And coincidentally, Pama International became the first band in 30 years to be signed to Trojan Records. No surprise when you consider the collective's pedigree: formed by Finny and Sean Flowerdew (The Loafers, Special Beat), they also feature Fuzz Townsend, Ernie McKoe (Galliano), Simon Wilcox (Steel Pulse), Lynval Golding and Horace Panter (The Specials) and Madness' Lee Thompson at various times. Mixing up soulful ska, rocksteady and dub, they've played with The Skatalites and Toots and The Maytals along the way.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Saxophonist Dave O'Higgins is tonight's guest turn.
FARMYARD ANIMALS: Modern Art Oxford – OCM present an early-evening show of jazz and experimentation from the Bellowhead side project, taking inspiration from English, Balkan, Arabic and Catalan traditions.
HREDA + TUSKEN COALITION + THE OCTOBER GAME + THE CARTER MANOEUVRE: The Cellar – Instrumental rock action from local newcomers Hreda at tonight's Big Hair gig.
SS20 PRESENTS: The Bullingdon – Live bands and DJs from the local skate emporium.
JOHNNY'S SEXUAL KITCHEN: The Port Mahon
THE SIRENS CALL + NOT MY DAY: The Jericho Tavern – Local indie rock double bill.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Somerset, Marston Road

FRIDAY 30th

REPUBLICA: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Hard house and trance with guest Mark eg, plus Ratpack, Digital Era, GQ, Sandman and Alex Lays.
MATT BERRY: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – The star of Snuffbox and The IT Crowd, as well as sometime Mighty Boosh villain, Matt Berry shows the other side of his talents, along with his experimental backing band Jonas 3.
KING B: The X, Cowley – Live blues-rock.

Tuesday 27th

THE WARLOCKS: Brookes Union

When July's Truck Festival was flooded out, the organisers and headline acts decamped to Brookes Union for a welly-wearing mini-festival. And they had such fun they thought they'd make it a one-a-term event. So here is the first Uni-Truck club night, with a headline set from LA's narcotic groove rockers The Warlocks, a band whose starting points seems to be Spacemen 3's adage: "Taking drugs to make music to take drugs to" and whose chemical intake apparently makes Pete Doherty look like Ian MacKaye. Unsurprisingly then there's been a fair amount of chaos and conflict within the ranks throughout their eight-year lifetime – over twenty band members have been and gone and the seven-strong line-up of their 2005 album, `Surgery', is once again redrawn, the core being singer and guitarist Bobby Heckster, himself a temporary member of The Brian Jonestown Massacre. The musical debt to Spacemen 3 is huge – all flanged guitars, narcotic drones and relentless guitar grooves, but homage is also paid to The Velvet Underground, Rolling Stones, Ride and The Jesus and Mary Chain. Maybe not the band to kick-start a jolly student party, but at their best a monolithic wall of sound. Exemplary support tonight comes from pop-friendly, Lightning Bolt-heavy girl/boy duo Blood Red Shoes, plus local stars Goldrush, Witches and Stornoway.

HQ: The Cellar
SOULJACKER + ODD ONES OUT + FEARNE: The Jericho Tavern – Classic 60s and 70s-styled rock from headliners Souljacker.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
GLITTERSKIN + STRAIGHTJACKET + CENTURY MAN: The Purple Turtle

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is the 20th of each month - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm) or email listings to Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net.
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LIVE

SEASICK STEVE
The Oxford Academy

When Seasick Steve was handed the Mojo Breakthrough Award earlier this year the former hobo, who left his Mississippi home at thirteen to escape an abusive stepfather, commented that it had only taken him sixty years to breakthrough.

The fact the world has finally woken up to the wandering bluesman's music is fantastic, but the irony is, without those years in the wilderness, the stories he tells through his songs wouldn't be so fascinating. And what stories he has. Steve lived in Haight-Ashbury in the 60s, Paris' Left Bank in the 70s and in the flat below Kurt Cobain in Seattle in the 90s. Along the way he played guitar with Son House and Lightning Hopkins and produced albums for Modest Mouse and Bikini Kill. This guy has really lived.

And he is a genuine star. Sat down and armed only with a guitar and a box on which he kicks out a beat when needed, he commands the room, from front to back, even getting away with singing without a microphone when the inane chatter from those at the very back starts to irk him. Seasick Steve's blues is as raw and pure as it was when Son House and Robert Johnson were first around. His songs are simple, stripped down, languorous in their execution and occasionally filled with an almost dumb humour that contemporary irony has all but killed (on 'It's All Good' he drawls the immortal lines, "I should be at home singing to my dog / But he dead now", while further along we get a song called 'I Wear My Socks Up To My Knees'). In fact, watching Seasick Steve is like watching a master craftsman creating sturdily ornate furniture in an age of flat-packed blandness.

Photo: rphimages

Without the break he got when a lone radio DJ picked up on his debut album (he's here tonight, just off stage and gets his due respect) it's certain that Seasick Steve would still be playing these same songs to however many people, til the day he finally croaked, and because he's never sought adulation, he seems to genuinely appreciate it when it comes. In fact, when he hobbles offstage at the end of the set, with no fanfare, still playing his guitar, the crowd is in rapture.

He returns for the astonishing autobiographical 'Doghouse Blues', which contains in its few notes, more wit, warmth and wisdom than most bands will manage in a career, and it's clear to everyone here that real stars aren't made in stage school or on TV talent shows, but forged in the trials of real life.

Dale Kattack

THE PATTI SMITH GROUP
The Oxford Academy

As far as living legends go, they don't come any better than Patti Smith. Arguably the greatest female rock icon of all time, her 1975 debut, 'Horses', is easily one of the greatest punk-era albums while, along with Bruce Springsteen, she is author of the greatest sex song of all time, 'Because The Night'. Tonight, in the flesh, she never once disappoints.

From the opening, loping skank of 'Redondo Beach' Patti lives up to the legend on every count. An oddly ramshackle figure, speaking in a stoner New York drawl and prone to rambling, surreal monologues infused with razor-sharp wit, once she sings her voice is a thing of wonder, even after all these years, gloriously strident and infused with sleepy-eyed soul. Musically her songs, and her band, are quite traditional, steeped in blues, jazz and rock and roll, which sometimes seems at odds with her arty, poetic side. That part of her comes to the fore on a cover of Hendrix's 'Are You Experienced?' wherein Patti takes the instrumental lead on clarinet; a clever and unexpected move. Cue another cute story about being stoned and having kids which in turn makes way for a lysergic poem about a Dodo that finally leads into another cover, Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit', possibly the only disappointment of the entire set since for once Patti is unable to make the song her own, unlike an astonishing version of 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' and a spaced-out take on 'Within You Without You'.

For the most part, though, it's her own songs that send shiver down the spine tonight, the majority taken from 'Horses' and its 1978 equal 'Easter'. 'Ghost Dance' is dark and haunting, while a final encore of 'Rock'n'Roll Nigger' is simply magnificent in its primal aggression, Patti once more the ferocious young punk girl beside constant guitar partner Lenny Kaye (who takes the lead for a thunderous rendition of The Seeds' 'Pushin' Too Hard').

Of course two songs steal the show from even these incredible highlights. Patti long ago made Van Morrison's 'Gloria' her own, taking it to unimagined realms of violent passion, while 'Because The Night' is perhaps one of the most emotional moments I've ever had at a gig, having waited a lifetime to hear it performed live by Smith herself. It's a love song with few equals and Patti's soul-rending vocal performance knocks even the most experienced gig goer backwards. Really, there are no words that can do justice to that song.

Finally seeing a childhood hero in concert is a risky business. Tonight, though, Patti Smith is everything she promised to be. A living legend. Still.

Dale Kattack

OXFORD IMPROVISERS

The Port Mahon

It's always been a mystery to me why improvised music is seen as somehow weird and difficult. After all, most people dance in a free, unstructured way, so why shouldn't music reflect this? Most rock and pop music, with all its wild and rebellious associations, is still slave to all sorts of structural and rhythmical conventions that belie that image. Maybe we're more unsettled by challenging and unpredictable art than we like to admit.

In the absence of the scheduled but sadly flu-ridden Charles Hayward, some familiar Oxford faces are joined tonight by drummer Mark Sanders and vocalist Viv Corringham. Sanders is probably best known for his role in Jah Wobble's world dub project, but his roots are in jazz and improvisation. Tonight's first set brings him together with Pete McPhail on sax and flute and Dominic Lash on double bass. The result is assured yet gentle, the three seeming to share a telepathic sense of where the others are going. Sanders uses an assortment of bells to augment his standard kit, with fine results.

Viv Corringham doesn't sing in a conventional way but uses her voice to make sounds that create her own musical landscape. Accompanied by Pat Thomas on keyboard they head off on a journey that goes to some fairly extreme places that recall Thomas' beloved Sun Ra. He's never been afraid to push boundaries, including reaching inside a grand piano to pluck the strings with his fingers. After Radiohead he's probably Oxford's most influential musical figure, with a list of collaborations long enough to fill this paper. Next, Thomas and Sanders join battle, a phrase I don't use lightly. Their unconstrained and in-yer-face performance has some of the attentive audience laughing out loud.

After a duet with McPhail and Corringham all five conclude with an ensemble piece, though this is the only part that doesn't really work. Improvisation seems to involve a certain unspoken agreement as to roughly where things are going, and maybe it's easier for two or three people to achieve this.

The Oxford Improvisers perform regularly, and I met someone who'd driven for six hours to be here. Why not try something different for your next gigging experience?

Art Lagun

HAROLD BUDD

The Holywell Music Room

Pianist and composer Harold Budd is perhaps best known for his pioneering work with Brian Eno in the late 1970s and early 80s, though later collaborations with the likes of the Cocteau Twins, David Sylvian and John Foxx have also done much to bring him to the attention of a wider audience. Only three years ago, Budd let it be known that creatively he had little more to say and was retiring after thirty years in music. However, since then there has been a retraction; new albums have appeared and new collaborations planned.

Looking like a shy, greying and affable American tourist, Budd sits at the concert grand and proceeds to take us through an hour's worth of selections from his body of work. Ambient is a word that is invariably associated with his music, largely due to the considerable influence of the early seminal albums made on Eno's Obscure Records label, starting with 1978's 'Pavilion of Dreams'. His subtle yet crystalline piano technique has long been central to his output of instrumental compositions, though synthesizers and a range of instruments and musicians from the worlds of jazz, and traditional American and world music, have all contributed to the collective achievement. Tonight the electronic processing of his playing is minimal. Rather we have the starker and more immediate experience of Harold Budd as a single performing musician. The effect of this is to highlight both the innate strength of his compositions and also their more traditional influences from classical music. Chopin's Nocturnes are evoked more than once, while the fluid lines and shifting colours seem to connect directly with the French impressionism of Ravel and Debussy. Elsewhere Budd's playing is more dramatic and there is a piece from 1991's 'By Dawn's Early Light', which includes a sombre poetry recitation. However, it is the pieces from the two seminal albums with Eno, 'Plateaux of Mirror' and 'The Pearl', which are the most transfixing. Even without the rich electronic treatments on the original recordings, these pieces are extremely atmospheric, desolate and haunting.

Then, with the hour up, there's a salute to the crowd, a stiff bow and he's gone. It's tempting to say that in some ways this was a little bit of an underwhelming performance that didn't completely do justice to the man's achievements and rich body of work. Much of his best music is quite ethereal and disembodied and it's almost disconcerting to live through it attentively as a performance, rather than, it has to be said, an ambience. Still, as an intimate sampler of Harold Budd there was enough here to win over converts to his unique talent and generate a positive reassessment of a still evolving, still challenging career.

Steve Thompson

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Photo: James Gray King

FOALS / METRONOMY

The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

Metronomy are our favourite new band. Three geeky blokes from Brighton perched behind tiny synthesizers, dressed in t-shirts with glowing light discs on the front that flash on and off when they perform their hysterically choreographed vogueing routines. As the opening track jitters and jerks urgently in a glorious post-punk sci-fi robo-pop fashion, you want to leap on stage, stick plant pots on their heads and shout "You are Devo and I claim my five pounds!". But then you're too busy dancing and grinning, and you don't stop dancing and grinning for the next half hour as they hum and buzz through early Human League and Kraftwerk, via beer hall polka and middle eastern funk until they reach critical mass with some wall of noise synthabilly carnage. Now that's what we call fun.

But tonight is Foals' party, their big homecoming, and they're second to none. When we witnessed Foals tearing up the Wheatsheaf in front of fifty people eighteen months ago they were spectacle enough; tonight, in front of a near-rabid full house, they're so finely honed and so tightly wound you feel the whole thing could snap like an over-stretched steel cable at any second, but conversely they're fluid and fresh in a way all those tedious funk jam bands could only gawp at and drool in blind envy.

Funk is what Foals are but their funk is so uptight and furious it doesn't so much invite your feet to move as fire a semi-automatic machine gun at them until they're no more than a blur. Yannis and Jimmy's duelling guitars make way for Buzzcocks-simple two-note solos and even when they introduce their "love ballad" it sounds like The Cure going wild in an MDMA trance. Before the forty-minute set is over they've managed to break the drum kit and there's a five-minute break while it's fixed for the final breakneck track.

"We reckon this is the best Monday night ever," announces Yannis towards the end. The boy ain't wrong.

Dale Kattack

SHACK

The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

Love Shack or hate them (see what I did there?) the Liverpool four piece are champions of melodic British guitar pop and have been merrily strolling uphill on the outskirts of fame and fortune for over 20 years now. This is the second night on a UK tour supporting their latest album, 'Time Machine', a greatest hits showdown. It isn't shoulder to shoulder tonight at the Academy, but think quality over quantity. The fans know their stuff and Shack are only happy to please with hit after hit, mixed in with some promising-sounding new material. The banter between Michael Head and the audience in between songs make it, at times, seem more like a bunch of lads sitting round over a pint than watching a gig. Still, it's what the fans love. Shack offer up an eclectic blend of jangly pop, treading on the toes of psychedelica and prog rock while snuggling up to some folk. 'Al's Vacation' chugs away nicely but the sharp twists and tempo changes make for a nice surprise - The Beach Boys meets The Kinks, tipping their hat to R.E.M. Forget any fuss or pretentiousness, Shack may make pleasant songs but that doesn't mean it has to be boring or easy. 'Meant To Be' starts off as a nice standard rock ballad but which completely headbutts itself into a spine-tingling Mexican passage straight out of the Rio Grande. 'Streets of Kenny' is one of many 3/4 songs tonight but sounds like a Native American rain dance by XTC.

It may not be the most polished of performances, and Mick is quite obviously the worse for wear from drink, but there are many gleaming moments. You get the feeling not much has changed over the years, as far as the way they go about making music. Endearingly shambolic, one thing is for certain: they love what they do and nothing is going to make them change the way they do it.

Katy Jerome

SPIERS AND BODEN / JOE HUGHES

The Bullingdon

The only distinguishing mark of singer guitarist Joe Hughes' set is his quirky choice of songs. They have nothing in common in subject or style other than starting and ending with numbers about Liverpool. What comes in between includes, oh dear, a Tom Waits song performed as a sing-a-long, and an Arctic Monkeys cover, whose title, 'Mardy Bum', is the best thing about it. He ends with `The Leaving of Liverpool', but brings nothing new to a song worn out in the last century by a million sing-alongs in folk clubs and by the Spinners forever doing it on flickering black and white TV.

John Spiers and Jon Boden have been making over traditional English folk songs and tunes and have been known for some time now for playing traditional English songs and tunes loud and fast including with their 11-piece big band Bellowhead. What can get drowned out in the noise is that they are great musicians. Tonight, in the Bully's intimate space, this shines through. Spiers, on his various squeezeboxes is in maestro form; next to me a closet concertina player is rapt in awe. Boden's vocals are excellent, the best I have heard him, and his fiddle playing is filled with variety.

The duo play a single set of nearly two hours. The touches of gypsy and café music are there but don't overwhelm the English roots music. Tunes they have played hundreds of times, they are still totally into, including my current favourite, 'Ramblin Sailor. They also play new material, of which 'The Story Of Beggar Tom Padgett' is the strongest. Unfortunately they follow fashion and add in a Tom Waits song, which jars, but at least they don't invite the crowd to sing along. Otherwise a pretty perfect set which ends with the young crowd in a frenzy of excitement and cheering at what are now the Spiers and Boden anthems, 'Rochdale Coconut Dance' and 'Prickle-Eye Bush'.

Colin May

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EDITORS
The Oxford Academy

The only low point of an otherwise superlative gig tonight comes at the very end, after the lights have gone up. A chorus of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' emanates from a mass of cabbage-brained rugby fans at the front of the hall. Apparently England have just beaten Australia at the world's least interesting sport, but since when did nit-eating apes like this start listening to bands like Editors?

But then of course, Editors are no longer the dark-minded cult heroes of two years ago. These days they get played on Radio 2, while the video to new single 'An End Has A Start' is seemingly omnipresent. That song opens tonight's set in front of a heaving full house, Chris Urbanowicz's glissando guitar swarming through the hall, wrapping its way around Tom Smith's rich, sonorous voice. There's a definite progression to the new songs to tracks from Editors' debut album, 'The Back Room'. Producer Jacknife Lee has coaxed out the band's inner stadium rocker (unsurprising given his previous work with U2 and Snow Patrol, to whom Editors increasingly seem to owe a musical debt). Older songs, notably the brittle 'Lights', are steeped in the mists of new wave's broodier clan, especially the Bunnymen and Psychedelic Furs, and Smith plays the intense, doomed young man part brilliantly (it's mere coincidence that tonight's gig also sees the opening night of Ian Curtis biopic *Control*), wrapping his arms around him as he expounds his romantic misanthropy. The synth hums of 'Blood' are replaced on the new songs by piano and it's easy to see Chris Martin-like stardom suiting Smith as Editors' star continues to rise.

If there are very occasional moments when you feel Urbanowicz needs to utilise the space between notes a little better lest his wall of sound guitar barrel the songs into one homogenous lump, that quickly feels like nit-picking as 'All Sparks' and 'Bones' dance between the venue's suitably black walls. But it's 'Munich' that has the crowd united in a mass singalong. And an anthem that will hopefully last well after the rugby fans have long since returned to whichever cave they lumbered out of. Music like this is wasted on such people.

Victoria Waterfield

STAFRAENN HAKON / KEYBOARD CHOIR
The Wheatsheaf

Quite often, the way that music is delivered is just as important as the tunes themselves. In this respect, and despite their set being a complete and utter shambles from start to finish, The Keyboard Choir still manage to envelope and isolate each member of the tiny audience with their disorientating, pulsing electronica. The confluence of the six keyboards has the potential for claustrophobia, but their actual effect is one of eerie harmony. They achieve this by pervading your consciousness one minute, lulling you into a false sense of dread, before they are off on a hard trance trip, incorporating banging synth lines that wouldn't be out of place at a straightforward rock gig. Even as a shambles, they are scintillating.

And if the Keyboard Choir's music inexorably slides in your direction like a dense, lachrymal fog, then Stafraenn Hakon's tunes not so much waft over you as sidle up for a big, warm hug. The music is projected from such an elevated plain that it makes you feel positively weightless in comparison. Stafraenn (the sobriquet of Icelandic-born Ólafur Josephsson) is tonight joined by a full complement of musicians, who expertly bring out the rich and subtle variety in his songs. Although the music is largely of an ambient nature, it peaks and troughs enough to prevent it from ossifying. Droplets of wobbly guitar pitter-patter down, gently colliding with a groundswell of scattershot drums and reverbed synth and it all puts one in terrible danger of wanting to write wistful poetry. The vocals, too, are particularly lovely and the duty is shared by several members of the band. At times when you close your eyes, it could be the soundtrack to the happiest dream you've ever had and, like a cloud, I guess, it's a refreshing reminder that music doesn't have to be heavy to carry weight.

Matt Bayliss

LOS CAMPESINOS! / YOU SAY PARTY! WE SAY DIE!
The Oxford Academy

With a line up containing more exclamation marks than a secretary's e-mail advertising the latest charity 'fun' day, tonight at least offers more entertainment within than it does on the surface. First though, we have You Say Party! We Say Die! who go gurgle, gurgle, jerk, crackle and pop to cover up the fact there's not much substance at home here. Just another bunch of fashionistas that look like CSS dragged through a hedge backwards.

Los Campesinos! were last seen in Oxford action for MyAnalog at the Port Mahon, which shows how fast a band can gather momentum nowadays. Rather twee, but with a decided pop element, I'd been looking forward to their set for a while. Initially I'm more than a little disappointed, the first couple of songs passing by in a sludgy haze, subtleties being lost in a murky mix with the vocals way down somewhere. Singer Gareth is trying too hard and risks turning himself into squealy fella from The Automatic. New single 'The International Tweecore Underground' finds matters righting themselves somewhat, sheer effervescence battling through the problems. And it works, from thereon in.

Once the sound is clear and Gareth relaxes a little, Los Campesinos! are the most joyous thing you can imagine. At turns (and sometimes in the space of the same song) they are ridiculously shambolic, raggedly psyched out by Harriet's violin (a key component of the band) and doing half-arsed synchronised dancing to set closer 'Sweet Dreams Sweet Cheeks'.

Draw a triangle between Camper Van Beethoven, The Wannadies and The Shop Assistants and flailing somewhere in the middle are Los Campesinos! It's a wonderful place to be.

Russell Barker

GALLOWS / POISON THE WELL / LETHAL BIZZLE

The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy

Lethal Bizzle is the first disappointment of the night. Having dispensed with the grime that initially made his name with More Fire Crew, Bizzle tries too hard to court indie crowds while indulging in the sort of clichéd rap crossover bravado that makes so much late-90s music embarrassing to remember. New single 'Police On My Back' is a rare highlight and positively buzzes with energy, even if you have to chuckle at two hundred skinny white kids chanting "Fuck the police!" along with the chorus. A cover of 'Jump Around', though, is predictable and dated.

An even bigger let-down are Poison The Well, who have seemingly dispensed with any former creativity in favour of a show of choreographed macho bullshit, only mildly leavened by the amusing site of singer Jeffrey Moreira constantly pumping his elbow as he sings, as if he's got an invisible set of bagpipes tugged under his arm.

But no matter, Watford's Gallows are here to save punk rock from emo and corporate whores. Armed with an old school unifying attitude that takes hardcore back to its pre-rock star days, they're quick to proclaim themselves as one with the crowd, over half of whom are forming the biggest circle pit the Zodiac has ever seen. In fact wiry, tattooed frontman Frank Carter is straight into the crowd from the off, spending as much time being carried over the heads of the crowd, hanging from the lighting rig or standing on the bar at the back, still bellowing his manifesto, as he does on stage.

Gallows are a racket, a row, a disorganised storm of old punk chords mugged from Refused or Conflict or even The Beastie Boys' earliest incarnation, but they're also great pressure cooker fun. They probably don't need to do the macho posturing they end up falling for when Bizzle reappears on stage with them, and the cover of 'Staring At The Rude Boys' is hamfisted, but for the first time in years we come out of a punk gig feeling like we've actually witnessed punk rock as it was meant to sound and not a contrived, unit-shifting, airplay-friendly approximation. And for that, we truly love Gallows.

Ian Chesterton

TUNNG / EUGENE McGUINNESS / COGWHEEL DOGS

The Oxford Academy

With their line-up of guitar and cello and stall set out simply as an acoustic duo, it's easy to assume that Cogwheel Dogs might be unable to throw any surprises our way. Luckily, Rebecca Mosley's rhythmic, vaguely unconventional guitar style, Tom Parnell's discordant assaults on his cello, and some oblique thematic tangents mark this out as something far more satisfying. It's far from the finished article, but there are highlights in 'Ducking Stool' and 'Cress' that are redolent of Nina Nastasia's finest hour, `Run to Ruin'.

Consistently intriguing and occasionally inspired, then, unlike Eugene McGuinness, who, if there were a sliding scale of wry, lyrically-knowing songwriters, would unfortunately sit firmly at the Chris T-T rather than the Jeffrey Lewis end. His songs, touching on such levities as watching *Neighbours* twice a day too often come across as the musical equivalent of light teatime observational comedy. Arch and passionless: not two of my favourite musical qualities.

Tunng, by contrast, are positively bursting with imagination: an impossible mixture of the Beta Band, Fairport Convention and Múm - there certainly aren't many bands who could combine gelignite and cuckoo calls in the same song. Their outer layer of traditional folk is subverted by skittering, crystal-clear beat programming that's very cleverly put together: in places it's awkward and restless, but never to the extent that it demands attention as anything other than a fine complement. Ostensibly, you could apply epithets like 'jaunty' to Tunng's music, but this belies an abstruse undercurrent of songs covering a whole range of unpleasant ways to die. Beautifully catchy songs pulled apart and reassembled anew into something darker and wholly more satisfying – it's great to know that the future of folk is in safe hands.

Stuart Fowkes

Photo: rphimages

SETH LAKEMAN
The Oxford Academy

A truly great musician should look and sound like they are at one with their instrument. Seth Lakeman is a pretty neat guitarist, a very good singer and an excellent songwriter, but it's when he picks up his fiddle that he enters that rarefied realm of the musical alchemist.

Highlights in tonight's hour and a half set are many, but most involve Lakeman shredding his bow against the strings of his fiddle, whether it's the urgent stomp of 'Lady Of The Sea', the jigs and reels that make up tonight's encores or the set's centrepiece, 'Kitty Jay', where his bowmanship reaches its zenith, haunting and hypnotic, infused with the ghostly spirit of its subject matter.

Not that the guitar-led songs are a let-down: Lakeman's ability to take on centuries-old stories and bring them to life with an emotional intensity that can have you shivering beside Dartmoor ghosts or in the middle of a Civil War battlefield puts a lie to any idea that traditional English folk music is a moribund genre. In fact if there's any criticism to be made of Seth Lakeman it's that as his commercial appeal continues to widen, so too does his band, now expanded to a five-piece, including electric guitar, when it's the stripped-down acoustic numbers that work best – notably 'Kitty Jay' – odd rockier songs come over as too middle of the road, as if he's chasing Radio 2 appeal. He simply doesn't need so much clutter. All that's forgotten, though, as he airs most of last year's superb 'Freedom Fields' album, as well as new songs, like recent single 'Poor Man's Heaven', acoustic guitar rubbing up against mandolin and a strident double bass throb and lyrics full of rebellious defiance.

With each visit to Oxford Seth Lakeman plays at a larger venue, and with tonight's gig again sold out and a new album out early next year, folk music's number one poster boy, who not so long ago was part of Cara Dillon's backing band, looks like outgrowing even this place. A musician with his talent and vision deserves everything he gets.

Ian Chesterton

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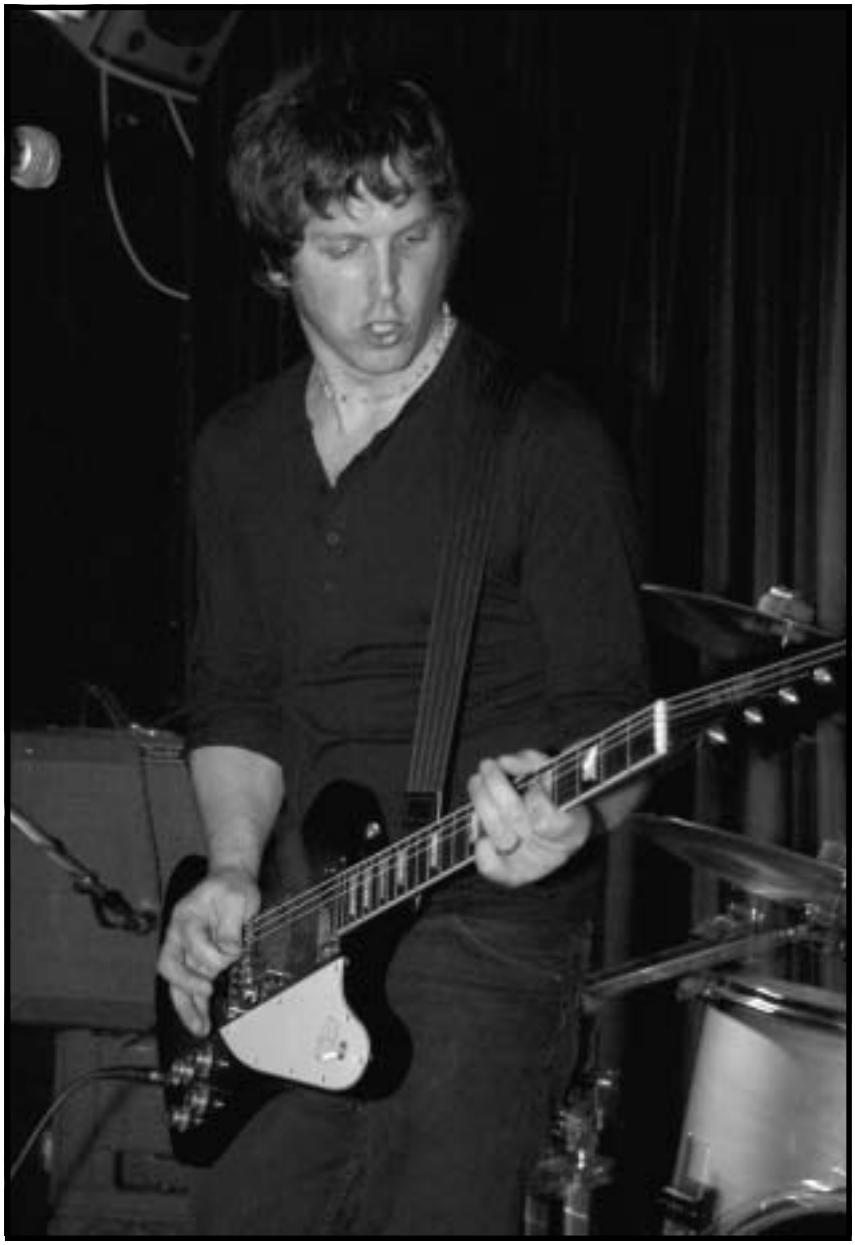

photo by Sam Shepherd

THE BLACK HATS / SEVEN YEARS ON / DAVE CORRIGAN

The Wheatsheaf

There's nothing worse than the bloke at a party who brings his acoustic guitar and a heart full of woe rather than a bin bag of beer and whiskey. Dave Corrigan skates very close to being the kind of guy you'd only invite to a party with the caveat "Don't bring your guitar". As you might expect his songs are pretty maudlin but at least his structures are basic, so they have room for a tune rather than endless finger-picked noodling.

Seven Years On hail from Swindon, which instantly puts us on the back foot. You can see why they might list Pavement among their influences but American college rock this most certainly isn't. The vocals are nestled very much in the realm of Blur, finding an apex at the point at which Albarn and Coxon meet. Musically, there are distinct flavours of Blur at work too, but Seven Years On only find their feet when they are thrashing the hell out of their guitars and making a tide of white noise. Too many times they try to be just a bit too clever and they lose momentum. More time pounding the fretboard and less time furrowing the brow, and they could be on to something.

The Black Hats start their set Vision On style by drawing their back drop. Apart from this and a quick nod to new wave, once they start their set there's nothing retro about them at all. Nick Breakspear has always had a way with a tune and although The Black Hats are considerably more noisy and raucous than his previous exploits, at the heart of each of these songs is a kernel of pop sensibility. 'The Lift' has a chorus that inspires hands in the air clap-alongs, while 'Shout Out' finds us dabbing at the corner of our eyes and pretending not to cry. The final song tonight finds Breakspear lamenting being left on the subs bench and being nothing more than ordinary. On this evidence, The Black Hats are far from being anything of the sort.

Sam Shepherd

MyArse.com

Following the overwhelmingly positive response to last month's MyArse feature (two people said they liked it, although one admitted he didn't quite understand what it was all about) we've decided to flog it just a little bit more. So here we go for probably the last time - Nightshift's so-honest-it-hurts guide to what your local favourites are really all about, whatever they might try and tell you.

WHO THEY ARE	WHO THEY THINK THEY ARE	WHO THEY ARE IN THE REAL WORLD
Youthmovies	Van Der Graaf Generator	Weather Report
The Epstein	Crazy Horse	The Mavericks
Redox	Gong	The Wurzels
Klub Kakofanney	The Exploding Plastic Inevitable	The PTA Barn Dance
Eduard Sounding Block	Mr Bungle	Rainbow
A Silent Film	Radiohead	Marillion
Ally Craig	Robert Wyatt	Pete Doherty
Witches	Sparklehorse	Athlete
Stornoway	The Pogues	The Boomtown Rats
The Rock Of Travolta	Nought	Saxon
Sharron Kraus	Shirley Collins	Pam Ayres
The Workhouse	Joy Division	The Shadows
Xmas Lights	Dillinger Escape Plan	Christian Death
Space Heroes Of The People	Keyboard Choir	The Evenings
The Evenings	Keyboard Choir	Space Heroes Of The People
The Carling Academy	The Zodiac	Luton Airport
Nightshift	Sniffin' Glue	The Daily Mail
Ronan Munro	Lester Bangs	Jeremy Clarkson

DR SHOTOVER

Dark Side Of The Moog

"No Bad Vibes In These Premises" - Steve Hillage looks into Elf and Safety.

I have always been a Mellotron man myself, but Stinky Stonesfield has been trying to convince me of the superior merits of the miniMoog, as played by pretty much everyone in late 70s Prog - Rush, Utopia, you know the sort of thing... (Yes, well, obviously at that stage in the game we were all into PUNK ROCK and NOT listening to Steve Hillage AT ALL... Ahem.) Meanwhile Kraftwerk were exponents of the mini- (and the poly-) Moog too, in case you want someone who fits in better with the accepted canon. Talking of can(n)on, who were those people I wanted to shoot again? Oh yes, the Kaiser Chiefs. The other thing that has been making my blood boil this month is those stupid notices stuck on the doors of gymnasiums, toyshops and government offices everywhere: "No Smoking: it is against the law to smoke in these premises". Somehow, whenever I read one of these, I always hear a whining snide little voice - the sort of person who says "Shh" in the cinema and/or was a prefect at school - and I find myself reaching for my riding crop. I would beat the malefactors to within an inch of their lives if only I could find them... In the meantime I shall have to try and keep my blood pressure down with some Gong - "Camembert Electrique" perhaps. And a nice full bong of your finest quality Nepalese Temple Ball, Stinky... I'm sure they don't call you Stonesfield for nothing... Aaah, that's better...!

Next month: Gong But Not Forgotten.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

MOUNTED INSANITY CANNON

In a month where those bands at least vaguely attempting some kind of traditional, melodic approach to music fall as short of the mark as a lame piglet attempting to break the world land speed record, the battle for Demo Of The Month is tightly fought between this and Flies Are Spies From Hell, Mounted Insanity Cannon winning out by sheer dint of being, well, insane. From the starting point of a children's story time, it lurches violently into stuttering gabba synth-core with all the flow and finesse of a malfunctioning firework stuffed with nails. There is much screaming and bits fly off at exciting but messy angles, while the vocal parts, such as they are, sound oddly like the falsetto bits from 'Blockbuster' by The Sweet. From then on we crunch through some erratic hardcore scat on 'Word Of Mouth' with its nagging refrain of "Your eyes are bigger than your belly" backed up by the jolly sounds of a cyborg slaughterhouse, racing past 'The Laughing Song' which sounds like every CBeebies jingle ever mashed together, high on mescaline and armed with machetes and a distortion pedal and does indeed sound like it's laughing at you. The descent into screaming hellbastard mayhem is complete with 'Bill Oddie Vs Sparrow Ninja', which could be retitled, 'Electro-convulsive Therapy: The Musical'. And hey, Bill Oddie's daughter played at the Cellar last month. Chances are she didn't sound anything like this. Her dad's beloved bird life wouldn't approve.

FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL

Oxford is awash with instrumental, nominally post-hardcore bands, some of whom are great and some of whom really need an imagination implant, but FASFH stand out a bit by dint of being piano as well as guitar led. In fact their three tracks here form some kind of extended duel between the two for domination, the grunged-up power of the guitars never allowed to swamp the guile of the keyboard, both driving each other on, like some bizarre fusion of Mike Oldfield and Explosions In The Sky. In fact there's one bit of demo opener 'Mountain Language' that could be ripped straight out of 'Tubular Bells'. FASFH's real secret weapon, though, is the drummer, who powers everything along with an imaginatively energetic display, never allowing the leads room for indulgence. Essentially this is what used to be called classical rock, and it's a cultural step up from the band's last demo, but it's some way removed from Sky. It could all have been a bit poncy or overplayed but the reality is genuinely exhilarating.

EUHEDRAL

When you completely strip out any vestige of melody, groove or recognisable beat from music, what you're left with is aural sculpture that, like any abstract form of art, allows the listener / viewer to take what they want from it, if anything (most people being happier to be spoon-fed a simple melody, and nothing wrong with that). Euhedral is a one-man project, part of Oxford's burgeoning experimental noise scene, and its soporific ambience will either have you dreamily spotting delicate and shifting shapes in its carefully textured layers, or lapsing into a coma from which only a prince's kiss can wake you. Euhedral quotes Mike Patton, John Zorn and Wolf Eyes as influences but this is far more relaxed fare, electronic drones, wobbles, wows and flutters seemingly in no hurry to go anyway in particular. The best thing here is 'S2' that sounds a bit like clockwork toys in a haunted nursery being spied on by a police helicopter. Guess that puts us in the dreamers' camp, then.

KNARF

More instrumental ambience, this time from the ambient electronica and drum&bass school of thought, and back quite soon after their last demo review. Now, as then, you feel Knarf are just a bit too discreet to make any impact on your heart or dancing feet. It's probably not even their fault that we can't help thinking this gently bubbling mix of guitar loops and loping beats would fit in neatly in some Logan's Run-themed overpriced cocktail bar where painfully cool people stand around sipping £8 margaritas and not talking to anyone lest they let slip that they're not actually very interesting.

1877

1877? Blimey that's a whole century before punk broke; one hundred years before Joy Division started out on their musical journey into the heart of darkness. So Aylesbury's 1877 probably aren't really from Victorian England after all, since Manchester's finest is where their story begins. Here be shadowy post-hardcore thrash-pop fronted by a young man with a bit of an Ian Curtis fixation and a band who cast admiring glances at Fugazi and Sonic Youth without feeling the need to prostrate themselves at their feet. Of the two tracks here, the first one, 'A Bitter Pill' is the most effective, the singer screaming

through gritted teeth into a black void as guitars skitter and drums pound in paranoid fashion around him. 'Conversation In A Cheap Room' is less urgent, more akin to Sonic Youth's tightly-wound languor until, some six minutes later, it heaves into more grandiose territory and has a stab at being Muse. A small, dark treat, like a bar of Bourneville chocolate.

D-BLOCKERS

Don't know why but the name led us to expect some rap crew or other, which would have been preferable to this execrable grunge rock chugging. D-Blockers lay their cards on the table from the off with 'I Want To Be The Death Of Disco'. What's wrong with a bit of disco, eh? It can be fun, silly, a bit of a laugh. At least it's not turgid, up its own arse, navel-gazing, sub-Pearl Jam shit layered over with overwrought gravelly shouting and the sort of churning powerchords Alice In Chains would have flushed down the crapper out of sheer embarrassment. But, obscenely quickly they dispense with such rollicking fun and get down to the sensitive ballad. Incredible how crushingly inevitable these things are. The band do indeed seem to have ingested a fair few D-blockers on this evidence, since all traces of adrenaline have gone, sucked out along with any vestige of life, soul or humanity that may have once flickered, however briefly, within its nauseating cadaver. That done it's back to the Foo Fighters fantasies, the band sturdily oblivious to the fact they are actually Stiltskin's spiritually dead kid brothers.

SUPERDEADLY NINJABEES

Now there's a name that screams Fun! in your face, ain't it? But no. It's always a sad sign when the bass player is the first band member listed (and what names: Cez! Mic! Si! Verca! Er, Rupert! Actually Rupert becomes Ruup on the band's MySpace site. Which is also where we discover one of their principal inspirations are… Jamiroquai. We don't know whether to laugh. Or cry. Or simply go round to their house and butcher them where they sleep). "We're not a funk band, even though we sound like one" they protest. Unconvincingly and incorrectly. Because what's that if it ain't jazz-funk leaking out of the stereo like the stale fug of student band competition? Bizarrely they also list Rammstein as an influence but there's not a hint of a flame-throwing cod-piece or strident Teutonic industrial metal anywhere and believe us we searched long and hard for it. Instead half the demo is an elongated onanistic orgy of slap bass self-congratulation, the worst rapping this side of Limp Bizkit and the feeling that the whole thing is the city council's idea of a multicultural music workshop. The rest of the CD is made up of something that could be Ozric Tentacles and, lastly, a remix of one of their tracks that sounds like an early-90s techno track and bares so little resemblance to the source material that it's inadmissible as evidence in their favour.

THE LAST VERSE

Lumpen, sluggish folk-rock that barely seems to be willing or able to drag itself into life for the most part, even though it's got the most basic foundations of something rather better – the maudlin prairie twang of the guitar and the female backing vocals that get us thinking misty-eyed thoughts of ace folk-pop cult heroes Tansads. Any such promise is inevitably subsumed to extended Snowy White-style flights of guitar fancy and MOR rock jangling that sounds like Fleetwood Mac, only without any of the interesting cocaine-induced tensions. 'Halloween' is a polished musical shrug of a song, while 'Start This Thing' is not so much breathless as collapsing with coronary failure at the news that mortgage rates have gone up half a percent. At the death they start to rescue themselves with 'Cabaret Routine', which is positively giddy compared to what's gone before but sympathy goes out of the window as it ends in a chorus of finger-in-the-ear olde worlde folk yodelling.

THE DEMO DUMPER

LIGHTBOX

What is this, National Shit Music Week or something? Apparently Lightbox are known as one of Aylesbury's best bands, which doesn't say very much for Aylesbury, or ignores the existence of bands like 1877. But anyway, Lightbox have even put a cute little emoticon in their letter after the bit where they hope we'll give them a positive review. If they think that will endear us to their wretchedly over-earnest FM rock then they don't know us for the truly vicious bastards we are when it comes to hunting down the musically underachieving like the hellhounds of rock and roll Darwinism. Anyway, so Lightbox, in their own pallid, overly-milky way, try to be a bit funky, a bit, y'know, bluesy, a bit, hey, yeah! Doubtless knowing winks are exchanged during the thrilling Brian May-style guitar solos. Jesus, we barely know where to start with this: just imagine all the most depressing aspects of X Factor, Battle of the Band competitions, village hall charity rock nights and James Blunt all crumpled together like used bog roll and served up with a flourish by a grinning imbecile of a waiter and you'll begin to comprehend the sheer unbridled joy of Lightbox. Was music ever meant to be this po-faced and tedious? Someone really should box their lights out.

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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