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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 147
October
2007

YOUTHMOVIES

Oxford's inspirational musical
chameleons - interview inside

Plus
Truck Festival review; Carling Academy
opening night and seven pages of local gigs

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NEWS

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SUPERGRASS' homecoming gig at the Carling Academy Oxford was cancelled after bassist Mickey Quinn broke two vertebrae in his back. Mickey had apparently fallen from a first-floor window in the holiday villa he was staying at in the south of France. In a press statement, Supergrass singer Gaz Coombes said, "I hope the crazy fool gets back on his feet as soon as possible. I'm sure he'll pull

through; he's a tough cookie".

Surgeons have operated to repair two broken vertebrae and are treating a smashed heel. Mickey is expected to make a full recovery, although this may take several months. Commenting on the cancellation of the show, Alan Day, promoter for TCT Music, added, "We were really looking forward to this gig, being the local heroes that they are. It's such a shame they won't be playing the first weekend at our new venue, but we wish Mick a speedy recovery and we will reschedule another date with the band once he's well enough."

Supergrass had been enjoying a summer break after completing recording of their sixth album, due for release later this year. All of the band's current plans are now on hold.

Nightshift wishes Mickey a full and speedy recovery.

Refunds on gig tickets are available from point of purchase.

TRUCK RECORDS launches two new regular live music club nights this autumn. Starting from this month, on Thursday 11th, is **Champions Of The World** at the Gladiator Social Club on Iffley Road. As well as a live set from recent Magic Numbers support act **Danny Champion Of The World**, there'll be bingo, a cheese auction and a disco. Meanwhile, after being forced to move much of this year's Truck Festival bill up to Brookes University Union at the last minute following the floods, Truck have decided to go back with a once-a-term gig and club night.

The first Uni-Truck show is on Tuesday 27th November with a selection of bands playing over two stages. American narcotic-rockers **The Warlocks** headline. Tickets are £8 in advance (£5 for students).

Truck is also continuing to go from strength to strength with its in-house recording studios which have recently hosted Foals, Electric Soft Parade and Chicks On Speed. Local bands can take advantage of a special deal until the end of 2007: £150 per day. Contact Stewart or Genevieve at Truck on 01235 821262.

THE BULLINGDON hosts a new weekly live bands club night every Thursday from 4th October. Project:disco is run by the same team who currently run **Coo Coo Club** at the Jericho Tavern. Bands and DJs interested in playing should contact Autumn at autumn@coopromotions.co.uk, including MySpace links where possible.

THE THIEVES have split up. The band formed by Oxfordshire bothers Hal and Sam Stokes have been resident in Los Angeles for the past few years, constantly touring around the States and last month played their biggest gigs to date, appearing at the Milwaukee Summerfest alongside Black Crowes and Tool, and at Monolith Festival with Flaming Lips and Kings of Leon.

The band were due to release a record through Bam Margera's label, Filthy Note, and spend the end of 2007 touring the record. Unfortunately, Filthy Note decided to pull the plug at the last minute. The band's drummer Jamie has also decided to get married later this year, and wants to spend more time in LA, to become an actor. Sam spoke to Nightshift about the

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split: "it's a real shame. We were really starting to build momentum and get somewhere out here, so bad timing really, seeing as we've been slogging it out for so many years. I've had a blast though, and seen and done things I would have never been able to do if I hadn't been in the band, so no regrets at all. We've also been able to finish on a high by playing a festival at Red Rocks in Colorado, with great bands like Flaming Lips, and Kings of Leon - it was an absolute blast! I guess all things must pass, and as one door closes, another one opens. I'm hoping we will do one last Oxford show. I'm back in November and Jamie and Hal should be back around Christmas time, so should be able to make it happen. Bloody well hope so."

IAN BROWN is the latest big-name act to be confirmed for the new Carling Academy Oxford. The former-Stone Roses singer plays on Tuesday 27th November in the main Academy venue.

Other acts confirmed for the next few months include Black Rebel Motorcycle Club (*Wed 14th Nov*); Scratch Perverts (*Fri 16th*); Hot Hot Heat (*Fri 16th*) and Minus The Bear (*Sat 15th December*).

Prog supergroups Asia's planned December show has now been moved to Wednesday 12th March. The gigs by The Twang (*Fri 2nd*

Nov) and Pigeon Detectives (*Tue 20th Nov*) are both now sold out.

Meanwhile, the Academy are looking for street team members to distribute flyers and suchlike. In return street teamers can get free entry to Academy gigs. Anyone interested should email lauren@oxford-academy.co.uk.

SHACK precede their show at the Academy with an in-store gig at HMV in Cornmarket Street at 5pm on Tuesday 16th October. The band will also be signing copies of their new Album, 'Time Machine'.

PLANS ARE AFOOT to organise a Ladyfest in Oxford in 2008. Organiser Joanna Whitehead is keen to hear from bands or artists interested in performing, or anyone who has ideas that might help the event. Email Joanna at ladyfestoxford08@hotmail.co.uk.

DON'T FORGET TO TUNE IN to The Download every Saturday night between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The long-running local music show, presented by Tim Bearder and David Gillyeat, plays the best new Oxford releases as well as featuring interviews with local acts and a regular demo vote. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

OXJAM kicks off again this month with Oxfam hoping to raise over £1million from music events organised around the UK.

Running throughout October Oxjam could be considered the biggest live music festival in the country if taken as a whole, with around 40,000 musicians and an audience of 300,000 expected to take part in over 3,000 events over the month. Last year's inaugural Oxjam raised over £500,000. In Oxford - home city of Oxfam - there are gigs, concerts, jam sessions and live music karaoke virtually every night, kicking off with a planned musical flashmob in the city centre on October 1st and ending with a multicultural musical finale at the Oxford Castle on November 3rd.

Most local Oxjam gigs are listed in Nightshift's gig guide but with many events still to be finalised, visit oxjamoxford.co.uk for full details.



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KRAUTROCK LEGENDS MICHAEL ROTHER AND DIETER

MÖEBIUS have been confirmed as the headline act for this year's Audioscope festival. Rother was previously a member of Neu! as well as Kraftwerk and Harmonia; Möebius was a founder member of Cluster before joining Rother in Harmonia.

Audioscope takes place at the Carling Academy Oxford on Saturday 10th November. Also on this year's bill are New Jersey hip hop weirdoes Dälek as well as post-rockers The Sea and Cake - featuring former-Tortoise man John McEntire - Shit and Shine, Rothko and Birmingham's awesome krautrockers Einstellung. Local bands Witches and Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element also appear.

The annual Audioscope festival raises money for homeless charity Shelter. Last year's event, headlined by Clinic, raises £2,200; since it began in 2001 Audioscope has raised over £15,000 for the charity.

An Audioscope warm-up gig, featuring Portland's psychedelic folk rockers Jackie O Muthafucker, former-Loop people Pumajaw and Oxford's Keyboard Choir takes place at the Wheatsheaf on Tuesday 6th November. Tickets for Adioscope are available now, priced £14, from wegottickets.com Check out www.audioscope.co.uk for full details

the port mahon

Live Music in October

- | | |
|--|---|
| 4 th Port Mayhem presents
Eddy Thompson +
Horizontalice + One Dollar
Peep Show | 18 th Permanent Vacation
presents Alexander Thomas +
Euhedral + Joey Chainsaw |
| 5 th Oxford Folk Club | 19 th Oxford Folk Club |
| 6 th Quickfix presents Ivy's
Itch + Cuckoos Nest | 20 th Poor Girl Noise presents
That Fucking Tank + Hreda +
Capeman! + Shield Your Eyes |
| 7 th Swiss Concrete presents
Blazing Zoos + The
Messengers + Naomi Hates
Humans | 21 st Swiss Concrete presents
Sub Pop Sunday + Vestibule +
13 th Gauge |
| 11 th Dirty Boys | 22 nd Peacemakers |
| 12 th Oxford Folk Club | 23 rd My Analog presents
Francois + The Atlas |
| 14 th Swiss Concrete presents
Butcher Boy + Les Clochards
+ Collee Fall | Mountains + Glas Nost |
| 15 th Poetry Night with Paul
Wyton + Adana Horowitz | 24 th The Jones Radio |
| 16 th Oxfordbands.com in aid
of Oxjam - The Half Rabbits +
Eduard Sounding Block + The
Winchell Riots + Theo | 25 th Johnny Sexual Kitchen |
| 17 th Oxfordbands.com in aid of
Oxjam - Witches + Harry Angel
+ Richard Walters + Mewgatz | 26 th Oxford Folk Club |
| | 28 th Pindrop Performance
5pm - 8pm |
| | 29 th The Young Playthings |
| | 30 th Toad + David K Frampton
+ more |
| | 31 st Joe Allen |

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A Quiet Word With

YOUTHMOVIES

THEY'LL DENY IT OF COURSE, they're too modest to accept responsibility, but Youthmovies are now the most influential band in Oxford.

Look at the local scene and it's awash with young bands making strange new sounds and shapes, mixing guitars and electronics, combining elements of post-rock, jazz, prog, electronica and improv, whether it's newcomers like Twat Trot Tra La, Hreda or Flies Are Spies From Hell, more established talents such as This Town Needs Guns and Jonquil, or the current brightest star in Oxford's musical firmament, Foals, each owes some debt to Youthmovies, be it a direct musical one or as beneficiaries of the band's Do It Yourself and Try And Help Others Along The Way ethos.

And it's not just in Oxford that Youthmovies are so highly regarded. The band, who were initially signed up to the seminal Fierce Panda label, have recently signed to Drowned In Sound's record label, for whom they will release a new album, 'Good Nature', in the New Year. Youthmovies have also performed at the last three Carling Weekend festivals as well as three appearances at All Tomorrow's Parties. Almost constant touring over the past few years has seen them play in virtually every town and city in the UK, and sign a record deal in Japan.

What else? Oh yes, in between all that the band have found time to collaborate with acts as diverse as Adam Gnade, Saul Williams and Jonquil, run a record label and very nearly split up. This month they put out two separate and very different releases, a five-song EP, 'Honey Slides', with Portland, Oregon's 'weird-folk' singer Adam Gnade and a 7" single under the guise of Vertical Montanas, a new band they have formed in conjunction with Jonquil.

Did we mention that Jonquil trumpeter Sam Scott is also now a permanent member of Youthmovies, or that Youthmovies singer and guitarist Andrew Mears was a founding member of Foals? Are you keeping up at the back? Are you?

IT'S ALMOST FIVE YEARS

since Youthmovies first made their presence felt in Oxford (Nightshift got their name wrong while awarding their first CD Demo Of The Month), and three years since we last put the band on the front cover and interviewed them. So much has happened to them in the interim (including shortening their name



from the rather more cumbersome Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies), but because they have spent much of that time making their name around the UK, it's sometimes been easy to overlook their very considerable achievements.

Last month Youthmovies showcased their new material with a low-key gig at the Cellar, supporting Dead Meadow. The new songs still retain much of their band's trademark urgency, endeavour and almost proggy dedication to experimentalism, there's a more prominent melodic edge to them now, and some passages of spaced-out psychedelic rock, while the addition of Sam's trumpet playing has brought in new jazz influences. What does remain the same, though, is the sheer inventiveness of the band: the feeling that each and every song is searching for a new place to go.

FOR THE UNINITIATED,

Youthmovies are: Andrew Mears (*guitar and vocals*); Al English (*guitar and synths*); Stephen 'Ham' Hammond (*bass and synths*) and Graeme Murray (*drums and vocals*) with newcomer Sam making it five. Nightshift spoke to the band as they prepared for a mammoth month-long tour around the UK with Jonquil and Adam Gnade ahead of the new album's release.

YOU SAY YOU ALL FELL OUT for a while – what was the story behind that and how was it resolved? How close did you come to splitting?

Al: "We didn't fall out as such, but we did take some much-needed time out from each other. I moved to London for a year and didn't really come back to Oxford that often. Given that some of us had lived together since university and then spent a ridiculous amount of time cooped up in the back of a van we did

pretty well to not fall out in any sort of significant way I think. But it's safe to say that the time apart was definitely needed. Sam joining the band was the single most influential thing in reconciling any difficulties or disagreements. To welcome in this fresh-faced 18 year old, who arrived without any the debt, worries or personal issues that dogged the rest of us, was a revelation. We felt rejuvenated and Sam quickly relieved any tension by instantly becoming the butt of every joke..."

Andrew: "There were no real arguments. Ham pretty much didn't talk to me for a year, and Al and I were differing fundamentally on a few things, none of which I can remember now... He and I have basically been in each others pockets since day one, so a lot of it was needing time apart to come up with new shit to talk about. Currently it's phasers."

You've left Fierce Panda and signed to Drowned in Sound. They've always been very supportive of Youthmovies.

Al: "The people at Drowned in Sound have been friends of ours for years now, so the idea of signing to a label run by people we knew personally was always going to be an attractive one. Fierce Panda had been good to us but we'd reached a point where we wanted to step up in a way that wouldn't have necessarily been possible had we stayed with them. So we had a look what else was out there, talked to two or three labels and went with DiS. We knew that they 'got us', which was a pretty important factor."

'GOOD NATURE' IS OUT NEXT year – how will it be different to the last album?

Al: "To me, this album is the true culmination of everything we've done until now. If 'Hurrah...' was a record filled with ideas, then 'Good Nature' is the realisation of what

those ideas hinted at. Our internal workings changed a lot when Sam joined, as he was immediately the most musically minded of any of us. His level of understanding had a big impact on making our ideas 'work' in a very literal sense.

Andrew: "'Good Nature' is basically catchier but more complex. The record is a lot more concerned with melody and songwriting than anything we've written in the past, and for me personally it became literary too. I've not been listening to a great deal of rock music; the music that probably informed large parts of 'Hurrah!' no longer holds my interest for that long. Once you recognise the tricks it's like the awe you once felt listening to them occupies less space in your head, so there's room for more awe from else where. I've also discovered that I actually really, really enjoy singing! My confidence in my voice has grown hugely, so there's a lot of that going on now, a lot of my time was spent writing words... hopefully people will stop mistaking us for an instrumental band."

What direction are the improvised shows taking you in? Where do you see Youthmovies moving, in musical terms, in the coming years? Can you imagine, for example, playing a gig or making an album without guitars?

Al: "We have actually played improvised gigs without guitars before, and two thirds of the record that we just made with Adam Gnade was entirely electronic... But we're not heading off to make our 'Kid A' just yet! We do have a conscious plan for where we're headed next though, and the focus is much less on the guitars. All those people who seem aggrieved that we haven't yet invented an entire new musical vocabulary need to calm down."

Andrew: "Indeed. It's hard for us to say where we see ourselves going musically, so much of it's been democratic or natural that any rigid ideas that may be there in the beginning probably won't be realised. The ideas for the next album are the most solid thing that we've ever had, but we'll just have to see if they go the way we want, it'll be pretty uncharted territory for us."

Graeme: "Improvisation is just pure fun for me but I do think that you take a risk every time you take to the stage for an unrehearsed show. The first time we did it we all got a big rush and agreed that it was too much fun not to do more of these kind of shows. It has also bled into the recording and entire sections of the

new record are totally improvised.”
 Ham: “Over the last year we’ve learnt how to better utilise computers and have started programming, so perhaps in the future there could be a more electronic record.”

WITH A FIVE-WEEK TOUR

ahead of them, do the band feel like Youthmovies is on the verge of wider success, and what realistically can a band of their ilk hope for as far as mass appeal is concerned?

Andrew: “It often feels like you’re on the verge of wider success; we used to let our naivety and enthusiasm get us overly optimistic about it. We keep a lid on it nowadays. We’ve made a record that we’re all really proud of, it was a challenge for us and we succeeded in meeting our own expectations.”

Al: “Our hopes and aspirations have changed a lot over time and we’re currently pretty comfortable in our own skin. We’re never going to be the kind of band that appeals to the masses, but that’s not to say we can’t sustain what we’re doing at a certain level. Longevity is something that has become important to us – we want to still be doing this in ten years time.”

Certainly in Youthmovies’ case it’s been a case of a reputation slowly and steadily earned. They’ve played All Tomorrow’s Parties three times and the Carling Weekend three years running – what have been the highlights of those shows?

Ham: “The first two shows for ATP were ad-hoc gigs. Playing earlier this year for ATP as an invited band, on one of the main stages was one of my main highlights for 2007. The crowd were really responsive to the new material, and we had a lot of fun, as we do, on a big stage. Playing the Carling weekends are always fun, especially playing this year with three drummers swapping across two kits.”

PERHAPS YOUTHMOVIES’

most significant influence has been their mentoring of bands like Foals and Jonquil in recent times; they were close spiritual compatriots of Yannis when he fronted The Edmund Fitzgerald, while Al’s label, Try Harder, released the first Foals single and both of Jonquil’s albums. How important is this to the whole Youthmovies ethos; how do they feel about Foals’ recent success?

Andrew: “Mentored is the wrong word I think. It’s just that I was in Foals, Sam is in Jonquil, and Al put our their records... Al was probably the most useful to them, aside from putting out both bands’ stuff, he helped Foals when it came to them having to meet with big shots and mediated as far as he could. He’s also helped Foals and Jonquil book tours. Of course I still write all of Yannis’ guitar parts, but other than that their work is their own! The only drawback of Foals’ success is that it meant that

I was too over-committed to carry on playing with them... other than that it feels really good to watch their rise. Youthmovies and The Edmund Fitzgerald were definitely influenced by each other back in the day, it’s good to see that the conclusion to that is the start of something else.”

Al: “Doing what we can for bands we believe in and keeping friends close is definitely a big part of our ethos.

We’ve come from a DIY background and that won’t ever leave us, irrespective of there being a booking agent, management and a bigger label involved. We’re not a big band by any means, but even so, you don’t forget where you came from and you don’t forget the people who were there for you when no one else was.”

Youthmovies seem to have become very influential in Oxford over the last couple of years – bands like Hreda, Twat Trot Tra La etc. seem to have their own take on your sound.

Andrew: “I don’t know about that, we’re into similar stuff I guess. It’s natural that we’d end up comparable. We’re lucky, in Oxford, to have a lot of bands from a lot of backgrounds, but there’s always going to be musical congruence, you see it in a lot of towns to varying degrees. The most exciting thing to me that’s going on in Oxford at the moment is the noise movement. It’s sort of the antithesis of what we are... I find it really interesting, because it’s almost as if it’s a response to the technical bands that preceded it, like punk was to prog. These bands are making music that’s cerebral and free, it’s cool.”

Graeme: “The good thing about Oxford music is that it is uninhibited and the bands encourage each other to take risks and sound different.”

OF COURSE, WITH

Youthmovies’ reputation in the UK at an all-time high, and set to go higher still, the band can maybe start to think beyond these shores and the recent offer of a record deal in Japan has opened that door.

Ham: “The album released is getting there and we’re hopefully going over to play a few shows in 2008 which we’re all obviously really excited about. We’ve never even played outside the UK! The label is putting out a compilation of older Youthmovies stuff too, I think.”

Andrew: “It’s weird to be asked to release our music there, it’s unreal that there’s anyone in Japan that’s heard of us let alone wants to release us, it’s an honour, I can’t wait to go.”

‘Honey Slides’ with Adam Gnade and ‘Thick Mugs’ by Vertical Montanas are both released this month. ‘Good Nature’ is released early in 2008. The band headline the Zodiac at the Oxford Academy on Saturday 27th October. Visit www.myspace.com/youthmovies for full tour details, news and tracks.



October

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26th **SAM KELLY'S STATION HOUSE** (for lovers of funk). *8pm. £6*

Saturdays

6th **SIMPLE Funky House 9.30pm-4am**

13th **OXJAM** with **JABERWOK / MR SHAADOW / RUBBER DUCK / THE SWAMIS.** All proceeds to Oxfam.

20th **OX4** – Drum'n'Bass with Prolific / Madcap / Ben E / DJ Lax / Elements. *9-3am. £5.50 / £4.50*

27th **GET MASHED** – Mash-up of the biggest and best tunes from hip hop, funk and reggae to electro house, breaks and drum'n'bass. *£5 (students £3 B4 11pm)*

Sundays

7th **LIVE STAND-UP COMEDY** 8-11pm £6/7

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21st **SIMPLE REASON** / support

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THE EPSTEIN

'Last Of The Charanguistas'

(Own Label)

Once a humble, workaday country-rock band, The Epstein have grown into something special over the last year or so. Where once they could be dismissed as a competent Eagles tribute, this debut album uncovers a far more romantic, exotic character. One of the early signs of this transformation came with last year's 'Leave Your Light On', a lovelorn, bucolic ramble that owed more to Neil Diamond's emotionally-taut style than Don Henley. Indeed Diamond's influence – intended or not – hovers over much of 'Last Of The Charanguistas' and his is an always welcome presence. It's most notable on the album's central highlight, 'Dance The Night Away', a luxuriant lament replete with mariachi horns. Olly Wills' voice is equally plaintive and honey-smooth, never detracting from the sweet, simple melodies but not cowed by the eclectic range of instrumentation (banjo, fiddle, lap steel and bouzouki amongst them) that makes these ten tracks a varied and engaging road trip. From the roadhouse country blues of 'Charanga Classic' to the strident, flamenco-tinged



outlaw thrum of 'Thunder River', The Epstein keep their horizons broad but always have the desert in their sights.

It's only when they revert to more MOR country rock type that they lose their intimacy: album closer 'NYC Blues' is a soft-focus ballad that could have dropped off the back of an old Crosby Stills and Nash album. But that's the exception rather than the rule and the melancholic intensity of 'Just The Wind', even with its guitar histrionics, is where The Epstein strike gold.

Dale Kattack

THIS TOWN NEEDS

GUNS

Split CD

(Big Scary Monsters)

This Town Needs Guns have consistently seemed like a band that would forever be the bridesmaid and never the bride on the local scene, cast in the shadow of more lauded neighbours. But perhaps slowly they're making



their way into the limelight. Their last single, 'And I'll Tell You For Why', was a marked improvement on past efforts and this new split album with Staines' frantic, angsty post-hardcore troupe Cats And Cats is another step up. Sometimes coming over like a composite of other Oxford bands – Dive Dive's playful pop-punk, Youthmovies' restless fretplay and deliberately obtuse song titles, and Fell City Girl's plaintively epic rock – TTNG often sound like they can't quite decide whether they want to be headlining stadiums or tucked away on the bill at All Tomorrow's Parties. '26 Is Dancier Than 4' skips between the two poles, deft of touch but uncertain where it's headed, while 'If I Sit Still Maybe I'll Make It Out Of Here' wrenches every drop of angst out of its slightly morose daydream. Inkings of grunged-up guitar noise start to scuff the varnish on 'If It's True Rufus, Don't Listen To The Hat' before the songs wander off at another tangent. They score points for avoiding the tried and tested verse/chorus/verse/chorus formula, ditching most of their old histrionics and for letting Stuart's vocals take a backseat to the pretty guitar patterns at times. Maybe, just maybe, those wedding bells aren't too far off now.

Sue Foreman

YOUNG KNIVES

'Terra Firma'

(Transgressive)

Young Knives can be forgiven for feeling aggrieved at being pipped by Klaxons of all people for the Mercury Prize, but it seems they've used their ire to positive effect, casting the definitive article from their name violently aside and penning this new single, their most militant three minutes to date.

A bombastic guitar flourish is quickly stamped on by a propulsive, robotic post-punk groove, like the onward march of The People's Revolutionary Army, Henry Darnell's high-set monotone set at stark odds with the machine-like consistency of the steely guitars and bass and hectoring chorus. It's like the band have taken a baseball bat to any remaining vestiges of whimsy in their canon (although lyrically they're as idiosyncratic as ever) and parachuted down into that precise moment of time when new wave clashed head on with the vanguard of synth-pop. Perhaps not an unexpected turn for a band that used to cover Tubeway Army's 'Listen To the Sirens' back when they were first starting out. Out with the tweed and in with PVC jumpsuits and scarlet streaks through dyed black hair, then. Futurism is the future once again.

Dale Kattack

THE FOCAL POINT

'Shoreline Fire'

(Own label)

Debut EP from local youngsters who claim to have ditched their "predominantly standard indie rock" in favour of a more ambitious and approach to songwriting, which boils down to listening to some jazz and electronica and getting hold of a violin bow to play the guitar with. There's little evidence of any great esoteric left-turn here, only the mostly incongruous interjection of banjos, into pretty standard downbeat rock drones that amble amiably but with little purpose down ever gloomier corridors. As an EP of ambient incidental gothic pop it might just pass muster but the painful, pedestrian vocals spoil everything, substituting shouting for any kind of soul or range and the melodies, such as they are, are pretty moribund. Lead track 'Kinetic' briefly promises to turn into spooky new folksters Candidate, while 'Blueshine' has an almost trippy feel to its random tremolo-heavy wandering, but beyond that you're struggling for any real signs of life.

Victoria Waterfield

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HEADCOUNT

'To The Point'

(Malicious Damage)

They vehemently deny it of course, and you have to admit they don't look the part, but we can't help thinking there's a serious gothic vein running through Headcount. It runs through the band's third album like a black slick of belligerence: from the rumbling, metallic bass intro to first track 'Enough Is Enough', through the dark fuzz of the Killing Joke-inspired guitars, to Rob Moss's lyrics: "There is no blood left in my veins / You sucked me dry" on 'Control' (with its decidedly gothy S&M suggestion). He even mentions vampires on 'Gravy Train'.

Not that Headcount are a bunch of sullen miserablists. They're far too angry for that, whether raging against the system and all it entails like the proper punk rockers they are (you know, when punk was about fighting back and not just trying to market your own range of designer skate shoes), or unleashing pent-up fury about child abuse as on 'To The Point's' central track, 'Daddy', a song that could be trite but instead boils with helpless hatred. Sung from a child's point of view it's hardly poetry but exudes righteous fury.

The song is a step down in momentum from the rest of the album's obstinate chugging, perhaps a symptom of Headcount's self-confessed increasing maturity (although anyone who's ever witnessed Rob's onstage



tirades and toilet humour will find that hard to believe).

The mighty industrial roar of Killing Joke is still Headcount's driving force, most notably on 'Bleed' and a re-recorded version of 'Red Mist', but the spiky playfulness of early Adam & The Ants is equally to the fore as ever, like the loping skank in the middle of 'It's A Pleasure Doing Business With You'. The Jesus Lizard's sheet metal hardcore further bolsters the bullish rock assault, while punks of the old school will smile fondly at the nods to Spizz Energi. Increasingly Headcount prefer melody to brute force.

Maturity or not, there aren't too many surprises on 'To The Point' but we wouldn't want there to be if we're honest. Headcount still say what they mean and say it mean.

Ian Chesterton

YOUTHMOVIES & ADAM GNADE

'Honeyslides'

(Try Harder)

Not content with wearing a musical coat of many colours within their own band compositions, Youthmovies regularly collaborate with fellow underground artists, effortlessly showing off new dimensions.

On this five-track EP the band team up with Portland, Oregon singer/poet Adam Gnade – who is currently supporting them on tour – their music sitting as an unsettling, ambient backdrop to Adam's dark-minded, often paranoid, stream-of-consciousness words. Delivering his words with a panicky intensity Adam occasionally threatens to stray into teenage goth fantasy – there are black clouds aplenty on his personal horizon: "they watch us from the trees" and "we live life in the crosshairs". Behind him guitars, keys and horns flicker, undulate and wobble, at their best making you feel like you're walking across an unsafe wooden floor as lightbulbs strobe unevenly above. The bleak, nervous intensity of it all comes on like The Paperchase if they listened to more Steve Reich and John Zorn and less Big Black, or perhaps a fidgety kid brother to Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia's self-harming big sister. Ambient it may be, but it's far from easy listening.

Dale Kattack

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GIG GUIDE

MONDAY 1st

THE MATT SCHOFIELD TRIO: The Bullingdon – Young British blues guitarist who started off playing with Lee Sankey and Dana Gillespie as well as the Lester Butler Tribute Band, now going out with his own band, playing blues and funky jazz, inspired by BB King, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Albert Collins.

Monday 1st – Saturday 3rd Nov

OXJAM

This year's Oxjam-organised nationwide Oxjam festival is more ambitious than last year's, with the aim being to raise over £1million for the charity. Involving numerous local promoters, venues and bands in Oxford it's quite a nebulous affair but there's plenty of entertainment to be had. The event is due to kick off with a flashmob event somewhere in the city centre and finishes with a multicultural musical finale at the Castle. In between there are gigs at virtually every local venue. Highlights include Oxfordbands.com's two gigs at the Port Mahon with local stars Witches (*pictured*), Harry Angel, Richard Walters, Half Rabbits, Eduard Soundingblock and The Winchell Riots, while over at the Bully Selectasound present a night of funk and hip hop with Jaberwok, Mr Shadown and Rubber Duck amongst others. Local bands also turn up at the Wheatsheaf, The X and the Jericho Tavern, while there's a metal and punk night running between the Port Mahon and the Duke on St Clement's. There's a space-rock spectacular in Abingdon with a guest appearance from Hawkwind's Hugh Lloyd-Langton, plus assorted classical, slam poetry and open mic sessions. Some events are still being confirmed so worth checking out www.oxfam.org.uk/oxjam for full details.



OCTOBER

HADOUKEN!: The Oxford Academy – Grime, hip hop, acid house, synth-pop and nu-metal collide head-on in the not-so subtle world of Leeds' Hadouken!, but then what do you expect from a band who name themselves after a special attack move in Street Fighter. A million-plus MySpace hits for nu-rave anthem 'That Boy That Girl' don't lie and tonight'll be a glo-stick-lit celebration whatever the doubters think.
RALPH McTELL: Nettlebed Folk Club – From the dark streets of London to the bright lights of Nettlebed, the well-travelled troubadour continues his storytelling style of folk music.

TUESDAY 2nd

REVEREND & THE MAKERS: The Oxford Academy – Arctic Monkeys mentor Jon McClure brings his philosophical showmanship to town – *see main preview*
JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley
OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 3rd

HAROLD BUDD: Holywell Music Room – Legendary ambient and minimalist composer plays a rare solo show – *see main preview*
KATE WALSH: The Jericho Tavern – Sweet sunny-day folk-pop from Brighton singer Kate who beat Kaiser Chiefs and Take That to number 1 in the album download charts with her self-released 'Tim's House'. Back in town after an impressive showing at this year's Cornbury Festival.
THE TREAT + HANGMAN'S JOE: The Wheatsheaf
ALLY CRAIG + BEAVER FUEL + SHIRLEY: The X, Cowley – Shirley continue their monthly club residency, with special guest tonight Ally Craig bridging the gap between Jeff Buckley and Sonic Youth. Lo-fi punkers Beaver Fuel support while Shirley bring their sunshiney 60s party rock'n'roll.
HIT&RUN: The Cellar – Hip hop and drum&bass club night with a live set from the UK's leading female beatboxer, Bellatrix.
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 4th

ALABAMA 3: The Oxford Academy – Another return to town for the enduringly entertaining acid-fried gospel rockers outta Brixton, promoting new album 'MOR'. Are you ready to testify once more, brothers and sisters?
THE THRILLS: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Irish sunshine popsters with their hearts in 1960s California, back in action with their third album, 'Teenager', following on from

Top 10 hits 'So Much For The City' and 'Let's Bottle Bohemia' and bringing some celtic charm to Neil Young and The Beach Boys.

MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM + BACK POCKET PROPHET + HOUSE OF BLUE DOLLS: The X, Cowley – Grinning Spider club night with expansive, rootsy rockers MHYT headlining.

ONE-DOLLAR PEEPSHOW: The Port Mahon – Fuzzy, Cardigans-inspired guitar pop.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Trumpeter Ben Cummings plays with the in-house band.

PROJECT:DISCO: The Bullingdon – New weekly club night with live bands and DJs playing indie, alt.country, electro and rock.

ROSIE ODDIE + RICHARD WALTERS + JOE ALLEN: The Cellar – Bill Oddie's daughter Rosie brings her 60s girl group and country-rock-influenced pop to tonight's Big Hair Club.

ANDENSUM + SAVAGE HENRY + VISIONS FALL: The Hobgoblin – Bicester's monthly heavy rock night with assorted local metal and punk noise.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks – Ska, reggae, Afrobeat and soul from DJ Aidan Larkin and guests.

FRIDAY 5th

HAPPY MONDAYS: The Oxford Academy – Sean Ryder, Bez and the drummer attempt to remain conscious for an hour or so and perhaps even remember some of their old hits, which should require some kind of superhuman effort since none of them were straight enough to know what the hell was going on first time round. Still, 'Wrote For Luck', eh? Classic.

THE BROKEN FAMILY BAND: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Joyously rootsy Cambridge folk-rockers and recent stars of Cornbury Festival, mixing up country rock, 60s pop and full-blown metal

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE EVENINGS + BOTOX COWBOYS + CAINE + JAMES BELL: The Wheatsheaf – Electro-rockers The Evenings headline tonight's Klub Kak mixed bag.
PEARL KITES + LITTLE FISH + DIAMOND LINES + FLUID LINE: The Jericho Tavern – Harmony-heavy garage rocking from Pearl Kites with support from Nightshift's current fave new local duo Little Fish coming in where Fiery Furnaces meet Sinead O'Connor.

SCRAMBLER + TOULOUSE + CHRIS BEARD: The X, Cowley – Oxjam event featuring a one-off reunion gig for former-local Jam-inspired favourites Scrambler. Country-tinged rockers Toulouse support with an acoustic set, plus Harry Angel frontman Chris Beard
FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House and breaks.

THE BIG RIVER BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 6th

EDITORS + RA RA RIOT: The Oxford

Academy – Darkest and best of the new wave of new wave hitmakers celebrate being the first band to sell out the new Academy – *see main preview*

NINE-STONE COWBOY + LITTLE FISH + AMBERSTATE: The Wheatsheaf – Wry melancholic drinking songs from Mark Cope's Nine Stone Cowboy, coming on somewhere between Teenage Fanclub and Guided By Voices. Ace garage-blues rockers Little Fish support, alongside ambient electro-jazz pop types Amberstate.

Tuesday 2nd

REVEREND & THE MAKERS: The Oxford Academy

Fame by association is always a fragile thing but Reverend & The Makers' Jon McClure can hardly be accused of grasping The Arctic Monkeys' coattails, even if his band are now reaping the rewards of supporting their Sheffield neighbours on tour. McClure is widely credited as mentor and surrogate big brother to Alex Turner, not least by the Arctic's frontman himself, and is at least partly responsible for introducing Turner to the works of John Cooper-Clarke, from whom both draw massive inspiration. As a rock star in his own right, McClure has enough to stand on his own feet – self-confidence and swagger that borders on hubris and a stage presence that is never less than pure entertainment. Musically The Makers hark back to Stone Roses, Charlatans and Happy Mondays with their lively mix of punk-funk, electro and reggae. Talking of which, McClure reckons himself to be the reincarnation of Bob Marley (his mum was pregnant with him at the time of Marley's death). Rabble-rousing anti-work anthem 'Heavyweight Champion Of The World' has hovered around the charts most of the summer and if Jon does come out with some crap sometimes, at least he always does it with righteous passion.



OXFORD URBAN ARTZ FESTIVAL:

Brookes University Union – Hip hop, dance, fashion and art all-day.

QUICKFIX presents IVY'S ITCH + HELLSET ORCHESTRA + CUCKOO'S NEST + DECIBELLA: The Port Mahon – Goth-grunge virulence from Ivy's Itch, plus Hammer Horror pop from Nottingham's Hellset.

LES CLOCHARDS + THE MARMADUKES + THE NEW MOON: The X, Cowley – Exotic mix of Parisian folk music, alt.country, old school indie jangle and classic rock'n'roll from Les Clochards.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house with Audiojack, Romanno Farrocco and resident DJs.

MELTING POT with HELIUM SOUND + VIB GYOR + JONNY RACE +

NORDGARDEN: The Jericho Tavern – Bluesy heavy rock from headliners Helium Sound.

MARK BOSLEY + DAN AUSTIN + ALPHABET BACKWARDS + YORKSHIRE LUKE: King's Head & Bell, Abingdon – Sardonic songwriting from the south Oxfordshire gothic troubadour Mark B at tonight's Skittle Alley acoustic club.

DUGOUT: The Cellar – The soul, rare groove and funk club night celebrates its first birthday with sets from Rob Life, Colour Climax and Indersition.

POWER TRAIN: Fat Lil's, Witney REDOX + PETE FRYER BAND: The Crawley Inn, Witney

SOULJACKER: Temple Bar

SUNDAY 7th

THE DECEMBERISTS + THE LAND OF TALK: The Oxford Academy – Strangely exotic downbeat folk-pop from the very lovely Decemberists – *see main preview*

ROADSIDE POPPIES + MESSENGERS + NAOMI HATES HUMANS: The Port Mahon – Winsome jangly indie pop from Cambridge's Roadside Poppies at this evening's Swiss Concrete night. Lightweight alt.country from The Messengers. Lo-fi acoustic singer-songwriter Naomi Hates Humans will doubtless be bringing a little misanthropy to proceedings.

PALLADIUM: The Jericho Tavern – Hossanah! After last month's visit of Ben's Brother to the Tavern, here comes something even worse – jazz-rockers Palladium. Imagine a cross between Level 42, Toto and Zoot Woman. Now go and fetch your gun.

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

MONDAY 8th

ROB TOGNONI: The Bullingdon – Driving blues-rock from the Tasmanian guitarist and his power trio band.

KING CREOSOTE: The Oxford Academy – Lovely, leftfield folkiness from Fife's Kenny Anderson, on the up and up with new album 'Bombshell' and rousingly ace single 'You've No Clue Do You?'.

LAURA MARLING + NOAH & THE WHALE + KING CHARLES: The Jericho Tavern – Country-tinged folk-pop in the vein of Joni Mitchell and Carole King from the Reading-based songstress who's spent much of the past year touring with Jamie T, Rufus Wainwright and Jack Penate.



Wednesday 3rd

HAROLD BUDD: Holywell Music Room

Oxford Contemporary Music go from strength to strength with their new Autumn season boasting a very rare solo live appearance from legendary Californian avant garde composer Harold Budd. From his early 60s work, ranging from minimalist drone pieces and extended gong solos, through to his re-emergence in the early 70s as a full-time composer marrying the worlds of popular jazz and electronic experimentation, he's always been above and beyond the musical pack. If you could judge a musician on the strength of their collaborations Budd would be near peerless, having worked extensively with Brian Eno (notably on the classic 'Plateaux of Mirror'), as well as Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie, synth-pop pioneer John Foxx, Can drummer Jaki Liebeckzeit and Jah Wobble. His 2004 album 'Avalon Sutra' was billed as his final recorded work, but he's since gone back on that announcement and tonight's concert features Budd on piano and electronics. Anyone whose initial inspiration to make music was inspired by hearing the sound of wind blowing through telephone wires while growing up in the Mojave desert has got to be worth an evening of anyone's time.

JOHN SPIERS & JON BODEN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Squeezeboxer Spiers and fiddler and singer Boden return to their old stamping ground.

TUESDAY 9th

LOS CAMPESINOS + YOU SAY PARTY, WE SAY DIE!: The Oxford Academy – A little bit of autumn sunshine courtesy of Wales' cutesy seven-piece indie sweeties Los Campesinos, falling somewhere between Tilly & The Wall and Broken Social Scene.

TURIN BRAKES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – More earnest emoting from Olly Knights and Gale Paridjanian, out on tour in support of their fourth album 'Dark On Fire'.

CHARLIE HAYWOOD: The Port Mahon – Pioneering drummer with This Heat, Quiet Sun and Camberwell Now. Haywood is currently working as a solo artist whilst pursuing



Saturday 6th

EDITORS: The Oxford Academy

Editors can now claim to be the first band ever to sell out the new Oxford Academy – just the latest milestone in a journey that, since sublime early singles ‘Bullets’ and ‘Munich,’ has seen them rise and rise through the indie rock ranks with the nonchalant ease of Ronaldinho dancing through Macclesfield’s back four. Because class speaks volumes and Editors have shown that class with new album, ‘An End Has A Start’, already a number 1 hit and, with its title track, spawning one of the truly great singles of 2007. Editors’ skinny, soberly-dressed demeanour points to a love for all things Joy Division and Echo & The Bunnymen and that’s pretty much exactly where you’ll find their music emanating from. But where their main inspirations found fulfilment in introspection, Editors increasingly look outwards, with Chris Urbanowicz’s expansive, cascading guitar sound counterpointing as well as complementing singer Tom Smith’s romantic, poetic lyrics. With the new album Editors could have taken the easy route and simply replicated debut ‘The Back Room’; instead they’ve moved on to a higher plain. Two years ago they were tucked away on the Barn stage at Truck Festival. Now, major festival headline slots can’t be far off.

collaborative projects with the likes of Bill Laswell, Fred Frith & Hugh Hopper. Tonight playing solo and with Oxford Improvisers Pat Thomas, Pete McPhail & Viv Corringham.

JAZZ CLUB with THE NUMBERS

RACKET: The Bullingdon

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

DANIEL HAMMERSLEY + BEN GRIFFITH + MARTHA ROWSELL: The Jericho Tavern

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 10th

JJ SOUL with THE PAULJEFFERIES

QUARTET: The X, Cowley – Jazz club night at the X with guest JJ Soul joining Paul Jefferies’ in-house band.

STAFRAENN HAKON: The Wheatsheaf – Delicate, ethereal effects-laden pop from Iceland’s Stafaenn Hakon at tonight’s Vacuous Pop promotion.

GREEN: The Cellar – New hip hop club night with live set from human beatbox star Killa Kela.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 11th

TUNNG: The Oxford Academy – Spooky electro-folk and rural diabolism from the bleakly lovely Tunng, drawing on the darker side of traditional English and Scottish folk.

JACK PENATE: The Oxford Academy – Intimate but geezerish mix of soul, jangle-pop, ska and skiffle from young master Jack.

JOBY BURGESS: Modern Art Oxford – Special children’s and family show from the renowned percussionist.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guest Tim Whitehead on tenor sax.

ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – New electro dance club night with Hannah Holland and Emily Williams.

PROJECT:DISCO: The Bullingdon

ANTON BARBEAU + SCRIFT +

ENDGAME: The Jericho Tavern – Psychedelia-tinged folk-pop from Californian pop troubadour Anton and guests.

CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD:

Gladiators Social Club, Iffley Road – New club night from the Truck crew featuring live music from recent Magic Numbers support Danny & The Champions of the World. The night also includes a cheese auction apparently. Those crazy Truckers....

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 12th

HEADCOUNT + BEELZEBOZO + JUNKIE

BRUSH + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS: The Wheatsheaf – Punky-metal party night as Headcount launch their new album, ‘To The Point’, getting angry about stuff in the style of Killing Joke. Monolithic metallers Beelzebozo and old-school punkers Junkie Brush provide suitably heavyweight artillery back-up.

SLIDE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Electro-house stars Hot Chip play a special guest DJ set at tonight’s Slide.

MR SCRUFF: The Oxford Academy – Another quirky, eclectic and doubtless marathon DJ set from Manchester’s tea-guzzling, marine life-obsessed Andy Carthy with a sometimes surreal selection of tunes.

THE UNDERTONES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – The punk-pop legends, long-since reformed *sans* Feargal Sharkey but instead led by someone who sounds uncannily like him, make their first visit to town, showing off timeless classics, from ‘Teenage Kicks’ and ‘Jimmy Jimmy’ to ‘Here Comes The Summer’ and ‘True Confessions’ plus plenty of new material. Gentlemen of a certain age can be forgiven for getting extremely excited and trying to pogo like they’re still 14. C’mon, give us a break, eh?

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with THE DRUGSQUAD + LOOPY + CYRUS: The X, Cowley – Ska-punk party sounds from local vets The Drug Squad headlining tonight’s GLP session. 80s-styled jangle poppers Loopy support alongside acoustic pop chappie Cyrus.

THE SKIES + NOT MY DAY + THE BLACK HATS: The Bullingdon – Reading rockers The Skies headline.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance with guests Manteca.

THE RUINS + LIDDINGTON + NO

MACHINE: The Jericho Tavern – Shoegazey indie rocking from The Ruins, plus downbeat guitar pop from Liddington

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND +

FILM NOIR: Magdalen Arms

THE COOKIE MONSTERS: Fat Lil’s, Witney

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 13th

THE CRIBS: The Oxford Academy – The brothers Jarman return with their third album of simple, spiky, Strokes-y indie-punk, ‘Men’s Needs, Women’s Needs, Whatever’, produced by Franz Ferdinand’s Alex Kapranos.

STEPHEN FRETWELL: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Acoustic pop miserablism and unlucky in love stories from the bard of Scunthorpe.

JABERWOK + MR SHAADOW + RUBBER

DUCK + THE SWAMIS: The Bullingdon – More Oxjam action, this time promoted by the Selectasound crew with psychedelic funk and rock from Jaberwok, plus excellent old skool rap from Mr Shadown, and funk and ska from Rubber Duck.

JOHNNY’S SEXUAL KITCHEN: The Wheatsheaf

VON BRAUN + THE MARK BOSLEY

EXPERIENCE: The X, Cowley – Wittstock Festival fundraiser.

COO COO CLUB with MORRISON

STEAM FAYRE + TRISTAN & THE

TROUBADOURS + LITTLE FISH +

ROXANNE: THE EARLY YEARS: The

Jericho Tavern – West London’s roots revivalists MSF return to town, mixing up lively southern-friend rock, ska, skiffle and country. Local indie-ska youngsters Tristan and the Troubadours support, alongside utterly ace garage-rocking duo Little Fish.

ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar – Electro, grime and beats with live bands and DJs.

THE INCREDIBLE EVOLUTION: Fat Lil’s, Witney

LEE DAVIES & NIKKI LLOYD: Temple Bar

SUNDAY 14th

SPIERS & BODEN: The Bullingdon – Squeezeboxer Spiers and fiddler and singer Boden play their first Oxford gig since the Oxford Folk Festival.

3 DAFT MONKEYS: The Oxford Academy – Cornish folk-punks and regular support act to good buddies The Levellers, drawing on traditional English and Celtic folk as well as

Balkan, gypsy, reggae and punk music.

BUTCHER BOY + LES CLOCHARDS +

COLLEGE FALL: The Port Mahon –

Whimsical alt.country and jangly 80s-style guitar pop from Glasgow’s string-drenched cuties. Local Gallic country popstrels Les Clochards support.

The X, Cowley The X, Cowley – Acoustic night.

MONDAY 15th

FOALS: The Oxford Academy – Jerky versions of the dream from Oxford's latest pop triumph – *see main preview*

FIGHTSTAR + THE SLEEPING + EMANUEL + YOU ME AT SIX: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Charlie out of Busted continues his credibility-saving journey into rip-snorting punk-rock mayhem. Or, in the real world, sounding a tiny, weeny bit faster than Busted.

IAN PARKER BAND: The Bullingdon – Blues and roots guitarist with a serious reputation on the European festival scene, mixing up standards and originals in the style of Eric Clapton, Stevie Ray Vaughan and John Mayall.

SHOW OF HANDS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Virtuoso roots folk from Steve Knightly and Phil Beer.

Friday 7th

THE DECEMBERISTS:

The Oxford Academy

The current vogue in music may be for tales of cashpoint machines, visits to burger bars and watching girls in nightclubs, but Portland, Oregon's Decemberists are rather less prosaic in their songwriting. Creative writing graduate Colin Meloy's lyrics deal with pirates, Spanish child monarchs, soldiers fighting in the trenches of WW1, sailors' widows and on the band's new album, 'The Crane Wife', ancient Japanese folk tale tragedy, all delivered in baroque style over a soundtrack that marries antiquated instrumentation (hurdy gurdy, accordion, upright bass) with modern electronics. So, they're a quaint, bookish bunch, The Decemberists, but they've also got one of the most fanatical cult followings in rock (famously when all their equipment was stolen after a gig in 2005 their fans quickly raised £8,000 to replace it all). 'The Crane Wife' is The Decemberists' fourth album and continues the band's carefree marriage of wonderfully catchy, folksy melodies, olde worlde psychedelia and effusive rock. Here is where Robyn Hitchcock's arcane vision and The Go-Betweens' joyous pop spirit meets 80s college rock and 60s folk revivalism. They make a great team.



TUESDAY 16th

SETH LAKEMAN: The Oxford Academy – Poster boy for the new wave of English folk returns after a summer of festivals – *see main preview*

SHACK: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Strange to imagine that a band that almost seem to bring bad luck and underachievement upon themselves at every turn should just now be releasing a Best Of (not a Greatest Hits, obviously). Still, it's an encouraging sign of their resilience, gathering together songs from their 19-year, five-album lifetime, including the sublime 'Streets Of Kenny' from their masterpiece - 'HMS Fable'. That the new collection is released on Sour Mash – the record label run by Noel Gallagher, who was initially inspired by the brothers Mick and John Head – is testament to the fact their influence and the loyalty it inspires, goes beyond mere trifles like commercial success.

THE HALF RABBITS + EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK + WINCHELL RIOTS ACOUSTIC: The Port Mahon – Oxjam gig organised by Oxfordbands.com, featuring fizzbomb gothsters Half Rabbits, plus heavyweight math-rockers Eduard Sounding Block and former-Fell City Girl chaps Winchell Riots playing an acoustic set.

ACID WAX: The Cellar – Electro, broken beats, techno and more with South Africa's The Bulgarian and the Fresh Out Of Death System.

JAZZ CLUB with KATYA GORRIE & DENNY ILETT Jr: The Bullingdon
SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 17th

NIK TURNER'S SPACE RITUAL: The Oxford Academy – Founding member of Hawkwind and composer of classic tracks like 'Master Of The Universe' and 'Brainstorm', Nik Turner returns to Oxford for the first time in many years (in fact for the first time since he played the Zodiac when it was still the Co-Op Hall) with his musical project of the last few years, Space Ritual, bringing some serious free jazz into the space-rock party. Expect plenty of old Hawkwind numbers amongst the new material.

JIM WHITE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Forty years old before he released his debut album (1999's excellent 'Wrong Eyed Jesus') Florida's Jim White has plenty of stories to tell, mainly spooky, rambling tales of the Deep South, religion and drugs, all delivered in his hazy stream-of-consciousness style. A downbeat sense of humour infects his spiritual songs that have been variously described as hick-hop or ghost-funk. Labels, eh? Don't we just love 'em.

WITCHES + HARRY ANGEL + RICHARD WALTERS +

MEWGATZ: The Port Mahon – Oxjam action with recent Nightshift cover stars Witches plying their perfect country-tinged pop. Virulent goth-core noise from Harry Angel in support plus sublime acoustic pop from Richard Walters and electro experimentation from Mewgatz.

BEAR IN THE AIR + TOY #1 +



Monday 15th

FOALS

Saturday 27th

YOUTHMOVIES:

The Oxford Academy

If Oxford has excelled at anything recently it's in producing some of the best experimental rock bands in the country. The fate of Foals and Youthmovies have so often been closely tied, from the latter's mentoring of the former in their early Edmund Fitzgerald incarnation, through to Youthmovies singer Andrew Mears being part of Foals' initial line-up. As things currently stand it's the apprentices who are on the cusp of greatness at the moment, being the name to drop in cool musical circles – something compounded recently by their live appearance at a party in the new series of Skins. Prodigious guitar talent Yannis Philippakis has had the makings of a rock hero since he fronted local starlets Elizabeth as a 15 year old but with Foals' ditching of math-rock structures for a more uptight disco-pop sound, they've really nailed something fresh and new. This month's Nightshift cover stars Youthmovies, meanwhile, remain a restless beast with their next album steering into predictably unpredictable territory, straight-down-the-line indie rock sweetness all messed up by odd prog, jazz and psychedelic excursions. Both bands have mastered the fine art of balancing experimentalism with accessibility and are both now inspiration for a whole new wave of UK guitar bands.

FOURTH CHAMBER: The Wheatsheaf
HIT & RUN: The Cellar – Hip hop with DJ Nicky Blackmarket.

ONE NIGHT STAND: Fat Lil's, Witney
OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn
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Tuesday 16th

SETH LAKEMAN: The Oxford Academy

Even with competition from the likes of his old musical cohort Kate Rusby, Seth Lakeman is the brightest star in the new English folk firmament. Like Pentangle in the 60s and The Pogues in the 80s, Seth Lakeman brings such a freshness and attitude to traditional folk music that it's hard to believe what you're hearing is essentially music that's hundreds of years old. His last two albums, the Mercury-nominated 'Kitty Jay' and last year's superb 'Freedom Fields', cover such long-lost subject matter as ghost stories from Dartmoor, tales of Civil War battles and handsome soldiers courting young maidens, continuing a generations-old storytelling tradition, but now with a 21st Century rocket up its backside. Given the West Country shares as much cultural history with Scotland and Wales as it does England, it's no surprise that there's a rich celtic vein running through much of Seth's material. Lakeman is a powerful, emotive singer and guitarist but it's when he picks up his fiddle that he really dazzles, with a style of playing as close to Roy Williamson or even John Cale as, say, Dave Swarbrick, emphasising its droning, psychedelic capabilities. A real star and a sure-fire bet to be the first poster boy for the new folk revolution.

THURSDAY 18th

PREFUSE 73: The Oxford Academy – Man of many faces Scott Herren brings his Prefuse 73 project to Oxford for the first time, promoting new album 'Preparations', mixing up his trademark glitchy beats with various guest rap appearances.

PANIC CELL: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Vengeful thrash metal from London's Panic Cell, promoting new album 'What Doesn't Kill Us'. What doesn't kill people probably wouldn't be allowed on their album to be honest.

ALEXANDER THOMAS + SHAGGY PARASOLS + EUHEDRAL + STRAY

GHOST: The Port Mahon – Another quality bill of experimental noise from Permanent

Vacation. Headliner Alexander Thomas creates blissful orchestral noise using theremin, loops and delays, while Shaggy Parasols make a ore raggedy racket with just guitar and drums. Synth-drone minimalism from Euhedral, plus ambient electro noise in an Aphex Twin from opener Stray Ghost.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guests The Kate Williams Band.

PROJECT:DISCO: The Bullingdon KING FURNACE + SAVAGE HENRY + DR SLAGGLEBERRY: The Cellar – Heavy rock and funk night at Big Hair.

PORTERIN + BLINDRIDE + RUBBER DUCK: The X, Cowley

ALAN TYLER & THE LOST SONS OF LITTLEFIELD + THE MARMADUKES: The Jericho Tavern – The former-Rockingbirds

frontman returns to town after a decade and a bit's absence, the pioneering north London alt.country songwriter back with a new band.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon – Oxjam special.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 19th

GRINNING SPIDERBALL: The X, Cowley – First night of Grinning Spider's weekend mini-festival. Set times to be confirmed but bands performing over the weekend include The Cheesegraters, Space Heroes Of The People, Novakicks, The Dirty Royals, Kate Chadwick, The New Moon, Fork, Beaver Fuel, Script, Joe Allen & Angharad Jenkins, Gwyn Ashton, Shirley and The Corvids.

SEASICK STEVE: The Oxford Academy – Three strings and an old wooden box – shouldn't make for this month's most rockinest show, but it bleedin' well will do – *see main preview*

OCEANSIZE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Convoluted, grandiose prog rocking from the occasionally awesome Glaswegian rock behemoth that is Oceansize. Either the unlikely meeting point between Yes and Tool, or Black Sabbath infected by Tortoise, depending on your point of view.

REPUBLICA: The Oxford Academy – Hard house and trance club night featuring guest set from Judge Jules.

THE BLACK HATS + SEVEN YEARS ON + DAVE CORRIGAN: The Wheatsheaf – 60s-inspired indie rocking from The Black Hats, plus Swindon rockers Seven Years On. Dave Corrigan, son of Manchester City goalkeeping legend Joe, opens the show.

NURU KANE & THE BAYEFALLGNAWA: Northwall Arts Centre, Summertown – Blues fusion from the Senegalese guitarist and guimbri player.

TAILFIN + NOVAKICKS + ATTIKASTATE + MICK WILSON DUO: The Jericho Tavern – Epic indie jangle from Wycombe's Tailfin, with support from Slough-based emo crew Attika State.

GYPSY JAZZ: Woodcote Village Hall – With rising UK gypsy jazz stars Robin Nolan and Ian Cruickshank.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – Rave special with a night of acid house tunes.

GRIN CITY: Magdalen Arms – Funky blues rock and pop.

THE BIG BLUE: Fat Lil's, Witney

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 20th

GRINNING SPIDERBALL: The X, Cowley (12pm) – Full day of live music from Grinning Spider.

ED HARCOURT + THE VEILS: The Oxford Academy – Ed's been around long enough to be releasing a Best Of album this year, following on from last year's 'The Beautiful Lie', although since his 2001 high point – the Mercury-nominated 'Here Be Monsters' – he's moved from being the new Tom Waits to a more middle of the road terrain, still managing to spice things up with the odd waltz, tango or music hall number. Glammy goth-pop support from The Veils.

MINDLESS SELF INDULGENCE: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – It is categorically impossible to dislike any band whose singer goes under the name of Little Jimmy Urine, and the fanatical reception given MSI last time they played the Zodiac is testament to their good taste-baiting iconoclasm. A messy mash-up of electro, hip hop and punk, they've managed to support System Of A Down, Rammstein, Iggy Pop and Marilyn Manson, although it's Little Jimmy's onstage behaviour that's as much of a pull as the music – setting fire to his pubic hair, drinking his own urine or simply inviting audience members on stage to punch him in the face, it's all part of the routine. Wouldn't it just be fantastic if Jay Kay from Jamiroquai invited the audience to punch him in the face? The queue for tickets would stretch for miles.

SMILEX + FIGMENT + THE FOURTH CHAMBER: The Cellar – Smilex should probably be supporting Mindless Self Indulgence tonight but instead they're headlining their own evening of rock and roll mayhem, coming on where The Stooges meet Motley Crue.

AN EMERGENCY + MEET ME IN ST LOUIS + THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS: The Wheatsheaf – All angles covered at tonight's Vacuum Pop gig with Exeter's sharp-elbowed punk rockers An Emergency making it hard and spiky in the vein of Q & Not U, while Meet Me In St Louis spazz out in their wiry At The Drive-In way, plus local indie rockers TTNG. **THAT FUCKING TANK + HREDA + CAPEMAN! + SHIELD YOUR EYES: The Port Mahon** – Titanic sludge-metal onslaught from Leeds' monstrous duo That Fucking Tank at tonight's Poor Girl Noise club. Math-rocking support from local newcomers Hreda and Preston's Capeman!

TIM BRADY: Modern Art Oxford – New York composer and songwriter (not to mention human rights campaigner) mixing up classical, electronic, jazz and world sounds into an edgy, eclectic whole.

SIDI GOMA & THE BLACK SUFIS OF GUJARAT: Wesley Memorial Chapel – Exuberant devotional music and dance from the Sidi African-Indian band.

MELTING POT with RAY + SHALLOW CALL + TIM MATTHEWS: The Jericho Tavern – Dark, sweeping indie rock influenced by the Bunnymen and Chameleons from Ray at tonight's Melting Pot. Trashy indie noise from Shallow Call.

UNDERGROUND ZERO + DR HAS BEEN + ASSASSINS OF SILENCE: Drayton Hall,

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Friday 19th

SEASICK STEVE: The Oxford Academy

If you're wondering why the Academy, having installed the best state-of-the-art PA system available, are playing host to a sixty-something former-hobo armed only with a three-string guitar and an old soapbox, you obviously didn't catch any of Seasick Steve's incendiary performances at various festivals this summer – from the Carling Weekend to Green Man – or his astonishing appearance on Jools Holland's last Hootenanny show. Seasick Steve (real name Steve Wold, so nicknamed because, "I always get seasick") left his Mississippi home at age 13 and travelled the States as a hobo for years, in that time playing guitar with the likes of Son House and Lightning Hopkins. In the 60s he lived in Haight-Ashbury; in the 70s he was resident on Paris' Left Bank and in the 90s he lived in the flat below Kurt Cobain in Seattle. He's been a session musician and a producer (including working with Bikini Kill and Modest Mouse) and, fifty years after leaving home, he released his debut solo album at the end of last year, having decided to return to his "song and dance" roots. Playing with various three and even one-string customised guitars and what he dubs a Mississippi drum machine, his raw, fiery, wonderfully emotion-packed blues nowadays sounds like a sound from another planet.

Abingdon – A space-rock spectacular in aid of Oxjam, featuring local psych-rockers plus special guest appearance from Hawkwind's Hugh Lloyd Langton.

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night with Prolific, Madcap, Ben E, DJ Lax and Elements.

GRIN CITY: Temple Bar

TALC DEMONS + ADAM MATTHEWS +

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + LEVERS +

YORKSHIRE LUKE: British Legion,

Abingdon – Skittle Alley bands night.

THE JOHN COUGHLAN BAND: Fat Lil's,
Witney – Blues rock from the former-Quo chap.

REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: The
Cavalier, Marston

SUNDAY 21st

GRINNING SPIDERBALL: The X, Cowley
(12pm)

THE CORAL: The Oxford Academy – Merseyside's eccentric sons seem to have grown up with their new, fourth, album, 'Roots & Echoes', taking a turn, as the title suggests, into classic 60s-styled songwriting. Possibly because it was recorded at Noel Gallagher's studio with The Magic Numbers' producer behind the desk. There are more ballads than before but tonight's gig should still feature plenty of their old psychedelic soul and sea shanties.

MR HUDSON & THE LIBRARY: The Oxford Academy – Former Oxford University graduate Mr Hudson returns to his old stamping ground with his odd mix of lounge jazz, soul, hip hop and showtunes. Like Cole Porter crossed with The Streets.

SUB POP SUNDAY + VESTIBULE + 13

GAUGE: The Port Mahon – Bishop's Stortford power-rock trio who don't sound like a Sub Pop band at all.

SIMPLE REASON: The Bullingdon
MONDAY 22nd

GILES HEDLEY & THE AVIATORS: The Bullingdon – Midlands-based guitarist, singer and harmonica player and UK blues veteran with a career going back to the 60s. Long-standing favourite on the European blues festival circuit, Hedley's rootsy slide and bottleneck guitar playing, along with his simultaneous mouth and nose harp playing draws on traditional Delta and Chicago blues, but given a funky edge by jazz-styled bassist Richard Sadler.

THE HOOSIERS: The Oxford Academy – Exuberant melodic post-punk pop in the vein of Squeeze, Dexy's and XTC from London's Hoosiers.

THESE NEW PURITANS: The Jericho Tavern – Fall-inspired pop weirdoes, coming on with an oblique fusion of electro-funk, post-punk and trance. That their debut album has been produced by Gareth Jones, who has previously worked with Liars, Wire and Einstürzende Neubaten, should tell you plenty about their quality.

ALTAN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Gorgeous Scottish-Irish ballads and traditional jigs and reels.

TUESDAY 23rd

IAN HUNTER: The Oxford Academy – Former-Mott The Hoople frontman Hunter celebrates his longevity and enduring cult popularity, kicking out those old 70s glam-rock hits as well as songs from his extensive solo career, including his long-term collaboration with the late, great Mick Ronson.

JAZZ CLUB with THE HOWARD

PEACOCK QUINTET: The Bullingdon

NIZLOPI: The Jericho Tavern – Low-key gig from duo Luke Concannon and John Parker who hit the number 1 spot a couple of Christmases ago with 'The JCB Song'. Soulful folk-pop with an odd array of instrumentation (including Parker's human beatboxing and double bass).

VERTIGO: The Cellar – Indie club night.

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X,
Cowley

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The
Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 24th

MANNEQUIN WOODS + HPR + KILL THE
ARCADE: The Wheatshaf – Oxjam gig with Local classic 70s-styled heavy rockers

Mannequin State, plus jerky At The Drive-In influenced noisemongers HPR and expansive indie rockers Kill The Arcade.

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

VINCENT VINCENT & THE VILLAINS + THE ANYDAYS: The Jericho Tavern – Fast-rising London cult stars, recently signed to EMI for whom they released 'Johnny Two Bands'. Following in the footsteps of The Libertines et al. theirs is a more old-fashioned sound, with a heavy 50s rock'n'roll twang and rolling surf rock rhythms.

CLUB DUB: The Cellar – Reggae club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

THURSDAY 25th

KATE NASH: The Oxford Academy – She must eat so many lemons because she is so bitter, but she prefers your friends because they are much fitter – cockney kitchen sink drama from the MySpace queen – *see main preview*

Thursday 25th

KATE NASH: The Oxford Academy

Love her or hate her – and some people really, *really* seem to hate her – Kate Nash is now an unavoidable pop phenomenon and it's no surprise that tonight's gig is already sold out. The temptation to call her this year's Lily Allen (who initially championed her) is difficult to resist and it's been mentioned several hundred dozen times before but Kate is probably closer to The Streets or Jamie T in her oddly conversational style, tales of crap boyfriends and whimsical observations backdropped by pubs, kitchens and the top deck of the bus. Indeed, Kate's celebration of the humdrum makes Arctic Monkeys sound like Scott Walker. Her overt cockney accent (real or assumed depending on who you believe, and heavily mocked on the 'LDN Is A Victim' single) is probably what divides opinion the most and will doubtless limit her shelf life, but here at Nightshift we're really rather fond of the ace 'Foundations', although debut single 'Caroline's A Victim' was even better. Kate's debut album, 'Made Of Bricks' was rush-released by a record label obviously worried she'd go out of fashion before the summer was out and 18 months from posting her first song on MySpace to topping the charts is some going. Maybe she'll be forgotten as quickly as a Big Brother evictee, but for now she's worth enjoying.



CAPDOWN: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Final ever Oxford show from the south Wales combat punks, out on their farewell tour after a heroic decade trying to smash the system with the power of punk rock.

THEO: Modern Art Oxford – Inventive loops'n'drones'noise post-rocking from Theo.

THE SIRENS CALL + TIM MATTHEWS + INDIGO JONES + THE OCTOBER GAME: The X, Cowley – Oxjam event with local rockers Sirens Call headlining.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With The Paul Booth Band.

PROJECT:DISCO: The Bullingdon

ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro and breakbeats with Slide's Lee Mortimer.

NINE-STONE COWBOY + OWEN

TROMANS + CAT MATADOR: The Jericho Tavern – More elegantly drunken rocking from NSC.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon BLUEGRASS & APPALACHIAN JAM

SESSION: Fox & Hounds, Abingdon Road – Oxford's only monthly old time American music jam session.

SKYLARKIN: The Brickworks

FRIDAY 26th

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS: The Oxford Academy – Still away with the rock and roll fairies, and thank goodness for that – *see main preview*

SHY CHILD: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – New York duo who are leaders of the American branch of nu-rave, if we're to believe what we're told. What we know for sure is they have a guitar synth. Which makes them retro-futuristic cool in our book.

JEFFREY LEWIS BAND + PROFESSOR LOUIE: The X, Cowley – MyAnalog night with New York anti-folk singer Jeffrey Lewis over in the UK to promote his new album, '12 Crass Songs' on Rough Trade. Supporting him tonight is his uncle Louie, who's been a spoken word and political rap cult favourite on the NY scene for the past twenty years.

EVAN PARKER & STEPHEN GREW:

Jacqueline du Pre Building – Part of a UK tour by sax maestro Evan Parker with pianist Stephen Grew and the string trio of Philip Wachsmann (violin), Dominic Lash (bass), Bruno Guastalla (cello).

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + 50ft PANDA + VON BRAUN: The Cellar – Big Hair club night with ex-Fell City Girl chaps Winchell Riots headlining, plus riffastic rocking from recent Nightshift Demo of the Monthers 50ft Panda.

FAIRPORT CONVENTION: Fat Lil's, Witney – Special low-key show from the English folk legends.

CONTRACT + THE MOTION +

PEACEMAKERS: The Jericho Tavern

SAM KELLY'S STATION HOUSE: The Bullingdon – Early show with lively funk rock from the renowned jazz drummer and band.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – With guest DJ Aidan Larkin.

SATURDAY 27th

YOUTHMOVIES: The Zodiac @ The Oxford Academy – Quick-witted guitar mangling from the mighty Youthmovies, now angling in proggy waters – *see main preview*

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE EVENINGS + LAST DAYS OF LORCA + SPIDERWOODS: The Wheatsheaf – Krautrock grooves and electro noise from The Evenings, now reduced to a three-piece. Angular, spiky guitar pop from Last Days Of Lorca, plus gothic trad folk from Spiderwoods.

OXJAM PUNK & METAL SPECIAL: The Port Mahon / The Duke – St Clement's erupts in rock and roll noise in aid of Oxfam's Oxjam festival with punk and metal bands playing across both venues.

COO COO CLUB with THE LONG INSIDERS + OX + THE RELATIONSHIPS:

The Jericho Tavern – Cinematic lounge pop and country rocking from the brothers Kenny. Psychedelic 60s-styled pop from The Relationships.

UNITING THE ELEMENTS: The X, Cowley – Return of the ever-touring German Euro-rockers.

GET MASHED: The Bullingdon – Mash-up of hip hop, funk, reggae, electro house, breaks and drum&bass.

DANIEL KAYE + SCSELFIE: Temple Bar

HQ: The Cellar – Hip hop club night featuring the Shogun Assassins tour with Alix Perez, Icicle and Spectrasound.

SHAKER HEIGHTS + SUPERDEADLYNINJABEES +

BEELZEBOZO: Stocks Bar, Abingdon – Mixed bill at tonight's Skittle Alley gig with Aylesbury's melodic roots rockers Shaker Heights, funk from SDNB and riff-heavy metal from Beelzebozo.

SUNDAY 28th

AGAINST ME!: The Oxford Academy – Florida's melodic anarcho-punk pranksters celebrate their major label debut, 'New Wave'.

ELECTRIC JAM: The X, Cowley

MONDAY 29th

ROB ZONCA BAND: The Bullingdon – Italian blues singer and bassist now hitting out with his own band after 25 years as a session man.

SANCTITY: The Oxford Academy – Anthemic metalcore from North Carolina's Trivium-endorsed thrashers, over in the UK for a short tour in support of debut album 'Road To Bloodshed'.

CUT OFF YOUR HANDS + THE ADS + THE PISTOLAS: The Jericho Tavern – New Zealand new wave and 80s indie-inspired pop types, fresh from supporting Foals on tour and sporting a distinct Cure feel.

BRASS MONKEY: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 30th

THE BLUETONES: The Oxford Academy – Once more into the Britpop breach, you noble indie foot soldiers! Never let the world's apparent apathy steer you from the undeniable truth that people really don't care. But, hey, that mortgage ain't gonna pay itself now, is it?

SEXTODECIMO: The Cellar – The mighty, monolithic Sextodecimo make a rare live showing, taking stoner metal and sludge-core to



Friday 26th

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS:

The Oxford Academy

What's left to say about a band who have consistently been one of the most innovative, inventive, eclectic and eccentric in recent British pop? It's perhaps ironic that the Welsh heroes were born into life at the same time as most of the Britpop crowd and have existed in uneasy parallel ever since – similarly defined by their regional origins but never constrained by the retro musical traditions of those other bands. The band's oddly-compiled 2004 greatest hits, 'Songbook Volume 1', is probably only equalled by Supergrass' 'Is 10' compilation in its buoyant celebration of everything a great modern pop band should be about – always reinventing themselves and drawing on myriad influences to make for a genuinely original sound. Last month SFA released their eighth studio album, 'Hey Venus!', having changed record labels, spent much of the previous couple of years involved in various solo projects (Candylion, Acid Casuals, Y Peth and Neon Neon) and working on an orchestral piece with composer Charles Hazelwood. They also recorded another album in tandem with 'Hey Venus!' which will be released shortly. Busy chaps. So, psychedelia, melancholic acoustic folk, pristine guitar pop, nosebleed techno, punk and plenty of lateral lyrical thinking. It's all here if you want it. Along with stories about dogs, Newton's theory of gravity, alien abductions, war and the weather. Some of it in Welsh, some in English. Whatever, they speak a universal language of brilliant pop music.

new depths of intensity, touching on such extreme bases as Swans, Sunn))) and Carcass along the way to total and utter oblivion.

JAZZ CLUB with THE OXOFRD JAZZ

ORCHESTRA: The Bullingdon

SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley

OPEN MIC SESSION: Far From The Madding Crowd

WEDNESDAY 31st

HIT&RUN: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: Folly Bridge Inn

OPEN MIC SESSION: Temple Bar

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TRUCK 10

Hill Farm, Steveton

SATURDAY

Arriving early for Truck on Saturday morning is usually a good idea; you get to beat the queues, pitch your tent somewhere that isn't bristling with thistles, and you get a couple of minutes to relax before the marathon begins. This year it would appear that the idea of having a festival in September has put quite a few people off. Parking is a doddle, the campsite is nearly empty, and as for queuing, there's no problem at all. After the literal wash-out of the festival's original July dates, is it possible that this rescheduled Truck is going to turn into a metaphorical one?

There have been plenty of muttering pre-festival that this year's line-up is a regression from past years, but the organisers have been talking about taking Truck back to its roots and, this being its tenth anniversary, apparently the aim is to bring back a good few 'old friends' from past festivals. While this does mean there's precious little on show you haven't already seen before, or have no desire to ever see, as ever with Truck, the joy is in seeking out, or simply chancing upon, neat little treats tucked away on the bill, below the radar of expectation.

Things don't get off to the best of starts, though, with **Actress Hands** in the Lounge Tent. Having impressed us with a dimly remembered single some time ago our spirits are dashed as they churn out insipid indie that lacks charisma and decent vocals. Actress Hands: thumbs down; pull your fingers out; read the manual. Oh, somebody stop us!

Another band who impress us only to fall at the final hurdle are **The Gog**. Catching their sound check at the Market Stage they sound like a band drowning. The vocalist is hacking at her neck to produce the kind of stuttering cacophony that you'd only find in the worst kind of porn movies. When we catch their actual set, they've taken to wearing orange afros and descended into funk grooves, which is something of a let down. They're like forgotten local oddballs Dog, but not as good...until we see the programme and discover that they *are* Dog. But not as good. That's a bit sad, really.

Enemies of lispers the world over, **Restlesslist** are an unusual bunch. Their first number is a limp, tinny post-rock bounce, a sort of 65 Minutes Of Static, but then they suddenly throw in some big band samples, drag on a trumpet player, and it all sounds rather wonderfully like the incidental music to Batman. Things taper off again, but that's probably because all the machines break, along with some of the guitar strings.

Country rock is really the *lingua franca* of Truck, and **Babel** have a fair crack at it. There's some enticingly slurred fiddle, but they really take off when they get that floor to the floor hoe-down groove going. Hey, look, we're literally tapping our feet! Now we're really in the festival vibe.

On the main stage the first highlight of the day belongs to **The Cut Outs**. Yes they look a bit goth; yes the power punk/pop is a bit obvious, and they are a little bit rough around the edges but they do at least try to inject a bit of energy into proceedings with a sound and look that is mere steps away from Joan Jett and The Blackhearts.



Do we really want to hear sensitive post-grunge, fronted by a man whose voice cracks every other syllable? We don't, which is why we shan't be seeking **The Holy Orders** out again. We preferred it when the Barn was full of metal bands - even if they were rubbish they were at least fun.

We promised ourselves we wouldn't spend all Truck watching our favourite local bands, and yet somehow here we are before the mighty **Stornoway** once again. Maybe the main stage sucks a little intimacy from their winsome folk pop, but eco-jazz shuffle 'The Good Fish Guide' still sounds gloriously like The Proclaimers played by The Grumbleweeds, via The Divine Comedy, and we leave with a broad smile.

As **Morrison Steam Fayre** take to the stage the sun is out. The Met Office, however, disagrees, suggesting rain. It's as if they don't have windows there and just make it all up. Sun is definitely needed for Morrison Steam Fayre, though, as their country rock sounds as if it's been plucked from the southern states of America. They then go on to cover a Creedence Clearwater Revival tune and start a countrified folk theme that runs throughout the weekend.

On the Market Stage **The Quarter Finals** are kicking up something of a storm. Their Stooges-lite punk pop is slightly incongruous for a tent where the audience is normally sat down and possibly sleeping. No matter, they deliver a clutch of pop-punk songs with plenty of attitude and grace. If you needed a sleep at this point, you'd have been well served at the main stage watching **Monkey Swallows the Universe**, who are nowhere near as exciting as their name suggested.

When **A Scholar And A Physician** rap, it makes Morris Minor & The Majors look like Public Enemy. There are millions of them, and the whole experience is akin to a techno revue performed by the cast of *Why Don't You?* Which



means it's mostly dumb, but you'd have to be a pretty miserable soul to actively dislike it. Meanwhile, we're going to start a support group for people like us who loved **Piney Gir's** debut electro album, and have become deeply disillusioned with her myriad novelty projects ever since. Can this cod C&W **Roadshow** malarkey and get back to the keyboards, woman! After that it seems only right that we go and see some properly apocalyptic, hellfire preacher country. With the biggest beard at Truck, and the loudest acoustic guitar in the hemisphere, **Josh T Pearson** smashes out his Bible-black dirges with arresting intensity. The cavernous sound is strangely like Merle Haggard having a crack at drone-core, and as such is the best act so far.

Some respite from the folk appears in the form of **Paris Motel**. A nine-piece band featuring violas, cor anglais and a host of other instruments create quite stunning orchestral rock. That might well conjure up images of Meatloaf, but the reality is far less contrived and infinitely more charming.

Just when we thought things were getting just a little too relaxed this year, **Blood Red Shoes** come along and shake things up. Performing to a Trailerpark tent that simply can't cope with the sheer number of people packed in to it, they rampage through their garage punk. It's the first time we've witnessed crowd surfing in the tent and as the barriers threaten to buckle and break things are starting to feel just a little bit chaotic. A half hour of pandemonium later and it's obvious that we've probably seen the best performance of the day, if not the weekend.

To paraphrase a review of *Waiting For Godot*, at a **Fuck Buttons** show nothing happens, perfectly. Huge distorted keyboard drones swirl around the tent, punctuated by occasional percussion loops that all sound like the opening of 'Iko Iko' by The Dixie Cups, for some



Glenn Tilbrook



Piney Gir



Foals

inexplicable reason. It's something like rave without the drums and something like death metal without the songs. Ah, it's just fucking great, go find out for yourselves. Most people watching, though, seem to be in the tent to get in early to ensure they see **Foals**, who are on next. Arriving early doesn't necessarily mean you'll get to see the band. With the tent swelling to bursting point a decision is made to evacuate and ultimately pull the gig. Moving Foals to the Barn for a later slot still doesn't help matters. Before **Forward, Russia!** have even taken to the stage people are queuing outside to see Foals, and ultimately will fail to get in. As Foals' set kicks off with those spidery little guitar riffs that intertwine and wrap round eminently danceable riffs the room seems to breathe a sigh of relief that anticipation and high expectations do sometimes go rewarded. If the hysteria that seems to surround the band today is anything to go by, Foals will be the biggest band in the country by this time next year. As usual Yannis is the centre of attention, full of swagger and rock star poses. This seems to polarise his audience, but you can't deny that he looks like he was born to front a rock band. Tear your eyes away from him, and the stage is full of energy. Fingers cascade over fret boards and guitars are pounded with fists and all of it is done with an air of total nonchalance. Despite the theatre of it all the best thing about Foals' set is that here is something we can finally dance to.

Finally we make our way back to the tent, passing a young man being carted off in handcuffs. We ponder that after years of metal and punk acts (including those supposedly notorious hell raisers Towers of London), whose fans are supposedly wild and irresponsible, it takes a day packed with acoustic folk acts for us to witness what might well be the first arrest at Truck.

SUNDAY

Sticking our heads out of the tent on Sunday we're shocked to see a Police Forensic Unit van parked up on the camp site. It appears these folk fans are worse than we expected and Truck has turned into a lawless state overnight. This might explain the loss of 24 cans of lager that we had yesterday, but are now inexplicably gone. That headache must be the result of a mugging.

Okay, what the fuck are **Keyboard Choir** doing playing (a) at 11am; and (b) at the same time as **Witches**? It's a disaster of barely manageable proportions. Anyway, it seems that the best cure for a Boeing-sized hangover is to dance like your life depends on it. So that's what we do. And Keyboard Choir's glitchy electronica provides the backdrop for dancing like a loon. Their success lies in picking, magpie style, from a wide range of samples and layering them, texture after texture, to create something uniquely their own. Plus they have dancing robots on stage, and what's not to love about *that*?

On a more organic bent, **Witches** have also cherry-picked a richly varied plethora of influences and the resultant music is, quite frankly, astounding. Their ability to meld dark with light has rarely been done better and they have a strange power to totally and utterly rock, without ever sounding the least bit angry. Really, could there be a better local band right now? Somehow we doubt it

Nostalgists that we are, it's good to see a proper old-fashioned backing tape, none of this laptop nonsense. Unfortunately, **Napoleon III's** beautiful vintage reel to reel overshadows his songs, which are fine, but all sound a bit like Pink Floyd's 'Corporal Clegg' without the chorus.

Maybe some of us stayed up last night, but **Thomas Truax** looks like he hasn't slept in weeks. It doesn't affect his fantastic performance any, though, which is a wobbly stroll through Tom Waits' notebooks with mechanical machines

instead of a band. If Oliver Postgate had made *Twin Peaks* in his shed after *The Clangers*, it would probably have sounded like this.

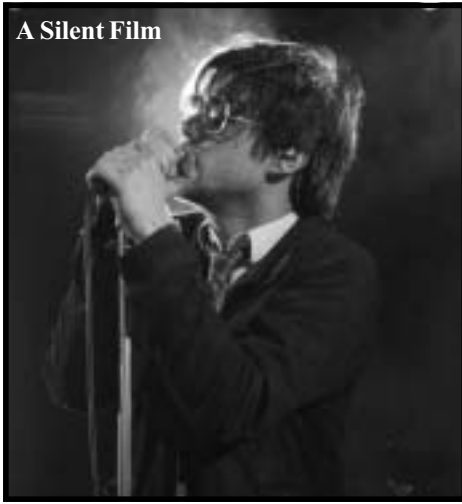
Hurrah for **Mules**! And furthermore, yippee! These are the kinds of things you'd be saying too, if you saw this implausibly awesome band. If inside of two minutes you don't feel the urge to dance to their insane-o jittery beats, then it is official: you are clinically dead. I'm sure this is what people in the States would be doing jazzercise to, if they only knew about it. Simply brilliant.

In the world of post rock, **Hreda** manage the tricky art of being both pensive and cathartic. Their guitars have obviously had a good massage by Steve Albini and they know how to work the hypnotic angle to a tee. The slower sections of their set give the odd feeling of being underwater, while the more textured blasts are akin to being brought upwards to glide low over the ocean. No, scratch that: *Hreda are the ocean*: a large, exquisite, glistening expanse that is all too easy to get carried away by.

The Winchell Riots, meanwhile is the band formed by half of much missed locals boys Fell City Girl. They pretty much pick up where FCG left off, but have swapped some of the epic guitar crescendos for stabbing snare rhythms. It's extremely promising stuff, with one drawback: it may be the hangar-like reverb of The Barn, but every song feels a tiny bit overly emotive. Stop twisting our arms, and start leading us by the hands, we'll end up coming a lot further with you.

We feel bad that so few people investigate the Theatre tent, so we make another foray into it. Biggest cuntin' error of the weekend. **Sunshines** is two drunk men, one of whom is wearing a dress. Think about that for a second – a man in a dress! Anything could happen! It's all wild and improvised! Fuck Thatcher! And so on. After they've spent ten minutes making the sound of a

A Silent Film



Baby Gravy



cyborg farting from a little machine, and giggling, we back swiftly away.

Ineptitude of a different sort in the Quilting Bee tent as **Seb** from The Evenings and The Keyboard choir sings whilst **Chris** from Harry Angel accompanies him inaudibly. It's bloody awful, but at least it's unpretentious.

Having had their set rained off at last year's truck (well before being flooded out became trendy) **A Silent Film** are taking no chances, and are appearing in The Barn. Their epic pop benefits from being on the big stage. It allows the songs to breathe and in this room A Silent Film are bathed in grandeur. One of the great things about Truck is the way it can veer from such grand sounds to something more quirky almost instantly. **Baby Gravy** have had a line up change recently but it has changed none of their charm. Vocalist Iona exudes exuberance and attitude, pulling the band through their set of barbed off-kilter pop songs. You either love them or hate them; we assume the girl who runs out screaming doesn't like them too much; her loss.

We approach **Rachelle Van Zanten** with a little caution. That is an acoustic guitar and a distinctive country lilt we can hear after all. Just as we're deciding to move on, she breaks out some of the most spine-tingling blues slide guitar we've ever heard. It's guttural and primal and dripping in grime. We absolute love it. Unlike Piney Gir's girl pop ensemble **The Schla La Las**, who are basically a joke, and like most jokes, they don't work a second time. Apparently this is their last ever gig – hark to the rustle of a thousand Truckers shrugging.

The unwritten rule of Truck is that you'll find your favourite act when least expecting it. We were thinking time was running out for this epiphany, when we stumbled on Italy's **Disco Drive**. There are three of them, but sometimes two of them play drums. All their songs sound like Q And Not U

Rolo Tomassi



Idlewild



playing along with a car alarm. We can't get enough of it, frankly.

We weren't expecting a lot from **Glenn Tilbrook** but he manages to surprise us. He plays and sings with an absolute passion. Obviously he breaks out old Squeeze numbers, but there's no harm in that; after all Squeeze did have the odd good song or ten. He closes with a cover of 'Funky Town' (which is unfortunately lacking anything in the funk department) and the old Squeeze classic, 'Tempted', which manages to soar dramatically. Tilbrook and his band inject some real energy into a song that is normally quite sedate and laid back. Performance wise it can't be faulted, although it does make us start to feel quite old to think that some bloke from Squeeze just played one of the sets of the weekend.

After a 'severe weather warning' we pack the tents away only to discover the loss of all our Pringles and Haribo sweets. We vow to smash the next acoustic guitar we see, but decide we'd rather see **Pull Tiger Tail** than Electric Soft Parade. Pull Tiger Tail sound amazing, taking all the best bits from grunge and layering a post-rock delayed guitar all over the top. These are lush pop songs filled with just enough clout to make them irresistible. **Winnebago Deal** follow this polished sound with something that sounds like a meat grinder hurtling through a crowded train carriage. Raw and visceral as always, it almost doesn't matter that the only time you can hear Ben #1's vocals over the wave of sonic brutality is when he's screaming like his lungs might escape through his twisted mouth. In fact that only makes us like them more. Older numbers like 'Did It. Done It. Doing It Again' get the biggest reaction, which consists of a swirling mass of sweaty teenagers. The desired effect, then, for one of Oxford's hardest partying bands.

And suitably, here come **Rolo Tomassi** to SCARE THE SHIT OUT OF EVERYONE. This is a band for which the word frenetic was invented. Their material is so much more insane and complex than

Rachelle Van Zanten



just saying the words would lead you to believe. Imagine Melt Banana, The Locust, Mr Bungle as your starting points. Then think of every single *other* band you have ever heard of and pile them on top of each other in a crazy mish-mash of...craziness. Now you're at least part way there. This is like 1,000 years of teen angst condensed into several short bursts of superhuman strength invective. Sublime stuff, if you can handle it.

Over on the Main Stage headliners **Idlewild** keep everyone waiting for far longer than is polite. After all, good things come to those who wait. Idlewild, though, are far from inspiring, seemingly going through the motions, Roddy Woomble in particular seems totally disinterested. They do have some great tunes though, and as they launch into 'You Held the World in Your Arms' you remember that Idlewild were always a great band who somehow always got overlooked. As Nought play to an almost empty Barn, the Main field is heaving. It would appear that this year's Truck was not the wash out it so easily could have been. And then, finally, it's **nervous_testpilot** who is essentially just a funny little man playing prerecorded music and doing a silly dance, but he's still a cracking end to the festival. High points on his hardcore odyssey are when he (ahem) "drops" 'Apache', and the brilliantly original sound of a squeaky toy making an acid house riff: all hail breakbeat Sweep! Standing at the back of the tent watching the weekend's casualties trying to dance to music that is officially *too fast* provides the most wonderful memory to take home from the festival. It wasn't the best lineup Truck's ever had, we'll admit, but we're still glad that the festival managed to claw itself from the brink of its demise. We wonder what next year shall bring.

Words: Sam Shepherd, David Murphy, Matt Bayliss. All photos by Sam Shepherd

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YOUNG KNIVES / LITTLE FISH

The Carling Academy

And so Little Fish become the first Oxford band to play the new Academy. But that's the least of the reasons to remember their name. If Little Fish haven't exactly come out of nowhere (singer/guitarist Julia Heslop and drummer Neil Greenaway both have local history with Dolly and Vade Mecum respectively) they're one of the most fully-formed new bands to hit the scene in an age. Looking like The White Stripes in reverse, they make an almighty clatter for a two-piece, Neil thrashing his drums mercilessly even as he cradles his sticks like a lazy jazzman, while Julia's voice is simply astounding – a raw but malleable mix of Janis Joplin and Sinead O'Connor that morphs to accommodate garage punk, gutter soul, strident folk and even Flamenco as the needs takes it. In a twenty-minute set there are at least three chill-down-the-spine moments. Most bands wouldn't manage that in a lifetime.

If we'd forgotten in any way, even for a few moments, just what a great band Young Knives are, tonight reaffirms everything we ever loved about them. Having taken a break from incessant touring to record their new album, they've regained that freshness and subtle lunacy that first made them local stars. Henry and House bicker and verbally joust throughout the set and seem, for the first time on a while, to really be enjoying themselves.

Tonight is mostly about showcasing new material, and even on first hearing it stands up there with long-time favourites like 'Here Comes The Rumour Mill' and 'The Decision', both kicked out early: two near-perfect pop moments. Tonight's opening track is dark and robotic, synths almost on an equal footing with the guitars, like Blur at their most experimental. New single 'Terra Firma' follows this trend, so militaristic you fully expect it to invade Poland before its three minutes are up. 'Counters' sounds like a frustrated bank clerk trashing the office in the middle of a nervous breakdown, while even the initially slight 'Fit For You' is deceptively hypnotic. It strikes you just how adept Young Knives are at cramming so much into consistently short, sharp hits, knocking you backwards with a killer hook or chorus even as they're jittering around the fringes of post-punk's confrontational awkwardness. 'Coastguard' is frenetic and cacophonous, while set closer 'She's Attracted To' keeps a tight grasp on the handle of the mad-sane door. Fifty-five minutes, non-stop: short, sharp, sweet and not a little sublime.

Dale Kattack

RUSSIAN CIRCLES

The Wheatsheaf

It's hot in here. It's really, really damn hot in here. Sweat drips from foreheads into pint glasses coated with condensation. Over to one side there's a behemoth of a man, covered in tattoos, topless, stripped down to his shorts and sporting muscles more at home at the rugby World Cup. Compared to Russian Circles' riffs, however, he's a four-foot midget.

Sometimes you don't have to do anything too clever, just crank out those huge, all-consuming guitar riffs and let them wreak their damage; folks will be too preoccupied trying to prise themselves from the back wall, or simply too stoned, to care. Russian Circles' riffs come coated in soot and volcanic ash; they're black as night and they cover you before you can run, like the hapless citizens of Pompeii.

The Chicago trio – over in the UK supporting Tool and playing a handful of headline dates – match the oppressive heat at every step.

It's 1972 again and Sabbath are reinventing hard rock. 1972? Perhaps that's also the temperature inside the Wheatsheaf in degrees Fahrenheit. Listening to Russian Circles is like standing at an open window listening to a storm. Like the best storms they fall into pockets of calm, ponderous contemplation. Now it's like staring at the ocean: there's no set flow, just hypnotic eddies and swirls and waves lapping closer to the flood defences.

Droplets of icy water trickle down your glass and through your fingers. And then they're lurching, like an ugly roar of thunder, back into the billowing black clouds that mass as far as the eye can see. Forty minutes and it's over and the silence is deafening. The prickly heat slowly dissipates as people head for the exit.

Outside the air is cool and crisp, as only the greatest storm can make it.

Victoria Waterfield

JALI FILY CISSOKHO & THE

GRIOT GROVES BAND

Burton Taylor Theatre

Part concert, part gig and even part lecture this evening is a triumph for Jali Fily's virtuoso kora playing and warm resonant singing voice. Jali Fily is a Griot praise singer and a keeper of his culture's oral history from a family of Griots in southern Senegal, and the evening shows that for him music is a vocation. His playing and singing doesn't hit you over the head but captures you by stealth, even though you haven't understood a word unless you know a smattering of Mandinka or Wolof. Suddenly you forget that in the cramped seating of the sit-down, sold-out Burton Taylor Theatre your knees are too close to your chin and next door's elbows are in dangerous proximity to your ribs.

Jali Fily has a very traditional kora sound. Not for him adding extra strings, or playing the kora through an electronic box. So it's a curiosity

that his band utilises the bass guitar of Ame Diange rather than traditional West African instruments, alongside the djembe of Elhadji Seye. Ame and Jali Fily are sympathetic to each other's playing, feeling each other out rather than clashing. I like the contrast of kora and Ame's low-key jazz and rock-inflected lines and, also, the sparks when he and the excellent Elhadji improvise over Jali's kora melody. For some the bass guitar is too intrusive and they are thankful when feedback gremlins end Ame's contribution early.

While not at ease doing the, "are you having a good time?" ritual, Fily is relaxed, totally at home and smiling when playing and singing in his captivating, deeply traditional style. We are lucky he is now resident in Witney and part of the local music scene.

Colin May

ROLO TOMASSI / MEPHISTO GRANDE / ABZTRAQT SIR Q / CLANKY ROBO GOBJOBS

The Cellar

Never mind Dawn Of The Dead, this evening it's Night Of The Mental Singers. One-man punch-up in an asylum Clanky Robo Gobjobs looks like a slightly chubby, extremely camp jogger, dressed in tracksuit pants and dinosaur hoodie and is, incredibly, the meeting place between Anaal Nathrakh and the first Depeche Mode album. Rinky-dink synth-pop is consumed by screaming and hollering and nasty digital hardcore beats.

When he's not stomping around the near-deserted dancefloor, Mr Gobjobs is convulsed onstage like he's about to vomit up his colon. And if that ain't great entertainment, what is? Occasionally you wonder if it's all just a pastiche of 80s performance art, but we make a mental note to put the lad on in Borders at the next Oxford Punt. No, strike that, we're going to market him as a children's party entertainer. There'll be tears on the big day but you can guarantee the little blighters will be quiet as mice for the next six months.

Abztraqt Sir Q are from Portugal and are as unruly as their name suggests. They're fronted by a strange woman in an ill-fitting dress and crazy make-up, who looks like the sort of person who collars you at

parties and talks intensely and over-earnestly to you about the cosmos and chakras. As her band play an odd funkified sort of art-punk, all bizarre jazz timings and freeform jerkiness, she squeaks and makes breathless noises or recites poetry or simply blows a balloon up and makes it deflate noisily. It's fun at first but soon becomes wearing – they're just too self-consciously weird and she thinks she's Bjork.

Liam Ings-Reeves has his work cut out to retain his crown as Oxford's king of vocal madness tonight then, but his Tom Waits-cum-Uruk-Hai bark is pretty peerless and the band's Parisian café band-kidnapped-by-Southern Baptist cannibals with a death metal fixation remains a wonderfully vile brew.

But tonight's star is Eva Spence, petite, blonde teenage singer with Sheffield's Rolo Tomassi, a girl who makes Linda Blair in The Exorcist sound like Judie Garland. The whole band look like they would be more at home sucking on lollipops than cranking out spazz-core mayhem and vomiting invective but for us they're this year's most startling new discovery. A genuine extremeophile's pop dream. Love them. Fear them.

Dale Kattack

FOR BARRY RAY / TRAW WITH DOMINIC LASH / DIVINE COILS

The Port Mahon

Pindrop Performance: what a fitting name for late Sunday afternoon gigs. A lovely earplugs-free affair, today's gig is in collaboration with the experimental Oxford/Wales label Fourier Transform. Setting the norm for tonight's 'eerie' electronic improv mode are Divine Coils, an Oxford based bunch who excel in the creepy factor and not much else. Scratchy mosquito pulses are slightly sadistic in their subtle affliction on the audience, and séance chimes put the listener on edge. Which leads to the annoying nature of a lot of improvised live music: why does it all need to be so flipping *eerie*?

Welsh laptop improvisers Traw put on a rather more novel and entertaining performance. Dominic Lash of Oxford Improvisers is at the forefront with his double bass, scratching and rattling away whilst the three Welshmen get to work live-sampling him. The upshot is a succulent radiation from the Port's PA, disorientating and feeding the imagination, which flies off in all

directions when one's eyes remain closed. Brilliant.

Whoever Barry Ray is, (whether he exists or not), he must be a happy chappy having a band dedicated to him. The Australian/Swedish husband and wife duo are eerie, yes, but enchanting at that.

The wife wields her weapon of choice: not a bow or plectrum, but a handheld electronic fan. With this she flutters around a snare drum, creating relentless engine noises that sound piercingly industrial but captivating and unusual. FBD sound like a workaholic's daydream: tireless clutter and shuffling on a cold electronic desk, reverberations and warped splutters; it's all very avant-garde but definitely listenable. Throughout their set a rather sweet toddler fearlessly traipses into the stifling Port, indecipherably chanting. Hats off to a bloke who gave the mother a good telling off - and believe me you need to have balls to do that nowadays.

Pascal Ansell

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NEW YOUNG PONYCLUB

The Carling Academy

First impressions? Shiny. Clean. Black. Tonight is the opening night of the new Carling Academy Oxford (to give it its official title) and it genuinely feels like the start of a new era. The main downstairs venue bears no resemblance to what went before and there are more subtle, but welcome, changes – you can get a drink without queuing, and visit the loo without contracting typhoid. Given the occasion New Young Ponyclub might simply be a sideshow, but they exceed all expectations. Perhaps they lack a bit of depth but they're a class above the trendy Hoxton playthings they're sometimes dismissed as. Singer Tahita Bulmer is the star of the show – a fabulously bored debutante with a streak of dirty, low-down blues siren running through her and the spirit of a young Debbie Harry in her veins. She's as much a cheerleader as vocalist, pumping the crowd up as the band gradually up the tempo throughout the set, hitting rich, electro-rock grooves and mining them with steely, robotic precision.

Initially NYPC come across as some sort of hybrid of New York New Wave and 80s synth-pop, Lou Hayter's Numan-esque keyboard lines dominating angular funk bass and guitar, but as they crank up the party vibe, their disco edge comes more to the fore, while Sarah Jones' drumming becomes more tribal and suddenly they're the android Go! Team, infectious and irresistible.

As Tahita herself points out, the Academy, whose stage they're christening tonight, is shiny and new just like New Young Ponyclub. And she's spot on. As the band kick out a messy but fun cover of Technotronic's 'Pump Up The Jam', even those who've only popped into see what the new venue looks like are moving their feet. After all the waiting, it's a near-perfect start to the modern age.

Dale Kattack

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ACTION BEAT / TRAKTORS / ELAPSE-O

The Port Mahon

There's hardly been a shortage of opportunities to see the avant garde, the leftfield and the downright weird in Oxford over the past few years, but an all-dayer of such wilfully outré delights is still something to treasure.

Dipping into this Permanent Vacation-promoted mini-festival's evening's programme, there's an early highlight with Elopse-O, who manage to encapsulate all that's good about drone and still find time to enlist a member who spends most of her time making portentous hand gestures and setting fire to things. There's feedback and noise, sure, but it's controlled so tightly that there's substance, warmth and in places real beauty to be had. The whole affair is underpinned by simple, subtle beats, lending them the urgency of Sunroof!'s explosive improv alongside the clinical majesty of 'Zuckerzeit'-era Cluster.

By contrast, Traktors play the kind of music that is obviously loads of fun to make in your

bedroom, but should probably stay there, involving as it does hitting guitars and playing around with effects pedals to no great overall effect. Following the clarity and vision of Elopse-O, there's really nothing to see here.

Headliners Action Beat are fabulous – in essence, two drummers and multiple guitarists playing what Glenn Branca might have come up with if he'd been born in Bletchley. Taking their cue from all things no wave and adding some hardcore aggression into the mix, they're happy to build on a single motif until it becomes a moment of violence and joy at the same time. In places it's as if there are two bands playing prime early-80s Sonic Youth simultaneously, and where we come from, there are few higher compliments.

A cause for double celebration, then: that such bands are out there making wonderful music, and that there are outlets in Oxford for us to enjoy them.

Stuart Fowkes

THIS CITY / DATA.SELECT.PARTY / CASIOKID & THE ULTIMATE SOUNDFUSE

The Cellar

Once again the best comes at us first in the shape of Casiokid & the Ultimate Soundfuse, a low-fi synth outfit from Northampton, barely three months old. Impressively strong, clear vocals and catchy tunes come courtesy of song-writer Jack Sunasky, providing the human counterpoint to the 8-bit monophonic meanderings of Ben Varnell. They cite computer games as their main influence and write gems like 'Crying Over Myspace', a classic modern love song if a bit minimal to break the charts. Like a low budget Daft Punk, they're a genuinely charming alternative to the legion of similar bands with their heads stuck up the 80s.

Data.Select.Party are into dancing, and want us all to join in. Not a bad idea, as the songs are sharp and punchy in a Hard-Fi vein with a pleasing disco backbeat, played with precision and vigour. Unfortunately tonight's typically laid-back Oxford audience are happy just to look on, supping their drinks. An uncomfortable stand-off ensues, punctuated with

comments from the stage like "So this is Oxford on a Saturday night?". This is a shame, because 'She's An Eyeful In The Alley' is a really great single and they'd have done better just playing us their set. London bands typically display a touch of arrogance, but it's something that needs to be earned. This also reveals the downside of MySpace in that bands now quickly build up thousands of 'friends', mostly other bands, and turn up to a gig like this expecting to be greeted as heroes.

Brighton boys This City continue in a similar vein, only wilder and less studied. Plus they have the sense to keep their gobs shut between songs. Not dissimilar to Biffy Clyro, who they've supported, they're almost there with the catchy punk pop thing, but the songs let them down. They also leave a nagging feeling that they're here for their own pleasure more than ours. Our lesson tonight, brethren: turn up early.

Art Lagun

SO SO MODERN / CLANKY ROBO GOB JOBS


The Cellar

"I'm a fat guy in a blue hoodie," says the hooded fat guy, aka Clanky Robo Gob Jobs, to the techno-threatened, painfully trendy crowd. By day, CRGJs is a film production student, but once the moon is up he's often seen at the Cellar. Albeit for some miracle of genetic science he's neither a twat nor does he sit around adding half-met friends-of-friends on Facebook or perform that sacred Mighty Boosh 'tasty soup' sequence. The boy is hilarious, but is no fun if taken seriously. Filthy slabs of techno, brilliant 'I'm a troubled videogame fanatic' histrionics and jittery screams. Puts to shame the dreadful Baby Gravy set that precedes him.

Transgressive embarrassingly describe So So Modern as 'disco emocore thrash', but this is pure fawning over their latest signing. It's understandable: So So Modern are deceptively near looking so like any other dance-y guitar band that when they do whip out the tunes,

it's easy to carelessly classify them. Problem being, however, that the most interesting music can't be planted in crass NME pigeonholes. Seemingly bright-eyed and bushy tailed, even having come all the way from the other side of the world, New Zealand's fantastic four-piece So So Modern weigh in at a terrific 600lbs of supreme synth-endorsed math rock. SSM immediately get a front-row dance session started once they commit to the Cellar's two feet of fame. 'The New International' is an innocuous Battles romp, following the restless syncopated climax 'Fire Fights'. They're like an intelligent, hyperactive and very, very good version of the egregiously poor Klaxons. The Kiwis' sudden time signature changes neither willingly mess with the listener's head nor sound contrived. SSM only endeavour to get your noggin bobbing. And in trying, they succeed tremendously.

Pascal Ansell

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THURSDAY 4TH OCT BIG HAIR LIVE INDIE & ROCK	WEDNESDAY 24TH OCT CLUB:DUB DUBSTEP & REGGAE & JUNGLE
FRIDAY 5TH OCT FRESHERS OUT THEIR BOX FOTB FRESHERS PARTY	THURSDAY 25TH OCT ECLECTRICITY ELECTRO BOOTY BASS
SATURDAY 6TH OCT THE DUG OUT SOUL & HIPHOP & FUNK	FRIDAY 26TH OCT BIG HAIR LIVE INDIE & ROCK
MONDAY 8TH OCT THE FREE BEER SHOW COMEDY NIGHT	SATURDAY 27TH OCT HQ DRUM N BASS
TUESDAY 9TH OCT INTRUSION GOTH CLUB NIGHT	SUNDAY 28TH OCT SUNDAY ROAST CHILLED SUNDAY CLUB
WEDNESDAY 10TH OCT GREEN LAUNCH NIGHT FEAT. KILLA KELA LIVE	MONDAY 29TH OCT THE FREE BEER SHOW COMEDY NIGHT
THURSDAY 11TH OCT ECLECTRICITY ELECTRO BOOTY BASS	TUESDAY 30TH OCT SEXTODECIMO LIVE HEAVY ROCK
FRIDAY 12TH OCT BOSSAPHONIK LIVE JAZZ DANCE NIGHT	WEDNESDAY 31ST OCT HIT & RUN HIPHOP & DRUM N BASS
SATURDAY 13TH OCT ABORT, RETRY, FAIL ? ELECTRO & INDIE & BEATS	
SUNDAY 14TH OCT SUNDAY ROAST CHILLED SUNDAY CLUB	
MONDAY 15TH OCT THE FREE BEER SHOW COMEDY NIGHT	
TUESDAY 16TH OCT ACID WAX ELECTRO BREAKS & TECHNO	
WEDNESDAY 17TH OCT HIT & RUN HIPHOP & DRUM N BASS	
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JONQUIL

Jacqueline du Pré Music Building

The brushed light wood surrounds of the Jacqueline du Pré Music Building are extraordinarily apt for Jonquil: comfortable and safe, emanating a quintessentially Oxfordian air of refinement and quiet superiority. Tonight is no seething mass of punk rock mayhem, nor is it a showcase of cutting-edge experimental envelope-pushing. However, what Jonquil do well, at least as well as many of their peers both locally and nationally, is to create a warm cocoon of sound that's as rich as it is straightforward: an odd combination of MOR coffee-table musicianship and lush, carefully-orchestrated instrumentation.

Bookending the show tonight with firstly an improvised set recalling the swells of sound created by 'Meddle'-era Pink Floyd combined with the desolate nature of Godspeed! You Black Emperor; secondly a structured reading of tracks from their first and (launching tonight) second albums, Jonquil prove that they can hold their own in terms of musicianship. It's somehow more refreshing, though, to hear them in improvising

mode - letting the multiplicity of instruments on stage almost decide for themselves what's going to come next - than in 'pro' mode. On record, Jonquil's songs are great; running the gamut from quiet, delicate Hood-style pastoral sketches to thick slabs of layered sound seemingly equally influenced by Brian Wilson, Polyphonic Spree and the folk music of Vashti Bunyan and Incredible String Band. They can certainly pull off this combination in a live context; and it's a mightily impressive display of arrangement and performance. It seems slightly lacking, however. It might be the bored look on the faces of half of the band; perhaps it's the relentlessly languorous pace of their songs; but such private music seems to lose something when played out in public.

A very 'Oxford' band, then: literate, confident and knowing. But somehow slightly shallow. Perhaps that's my own faux-Northern attitudes at play, perhaps not. If nothing else, Jonquil are certainly thought-provoking, and that's got to count for a lot.

Simon Minter

ERASURE

The New Theatre

We all know what Erasure sound like, don't we? This is, after all, one of the most successful bands of the late-80s / early-90s, with well over 20 chart hits to their name.

Even though the arrangements and even instrumentation may change (they recorded an album of acoustic country and western versions of some of their old songs last year), an Erasure song is still unmistakable - not least due to Andy Bell's distinctive voice. He could sing the Chinese national anthem and make it sound like a torch song of loss and redemption.

There was a point in the mid-90s where Erasure became very unfashionable - and songs from that era are noticeably absent tonight. But the hardcore support (now far more the age for Radio 2 than Radio 1) meant they reached a point where they could afford to put out whatever music they wanted without having to rely on commercial success - which meant they stuck around long enough to benefit from the 2000s' synthpop resurgence.

On this tour, in support of their new album, 'Light At The End Of

The World', out are Andy's flamboyant leotards and feathers, but in are glittery camouflage gear and Jackson Pollock-inspired suits. A sense of humour pervades - Andy prances, struts, joins the backing singers in cheesy arm movements and even introduces a lamb puppet called Mint Sauce to 'help' him sing. The costume change interval is accompanied by a pages-from-Ceefax ambient track and a stream-of-consciousness monologue from screens on the stage, encouraging us to wave our hands like we're on drugs, among other random thoughts.

So what about the new stuff? Well, surrounded by the soaring catchiness of songs like 'Chorus' and the anthemic 'Love to Hate You', it doesn't fare too badly. 'Breathe' - the only track from 2005's 'Nightbird' here - is easily the best thing since their heyday, but recent single 'Sunday Girl' isn't too bad either.

Nothing exciting enough to draw in many new fans - but certainly enough to keep the existing ones happy.

Kirsten Etheridge

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Your essential guide to Oxford music

Never mind MySpace and all that "we sound like John Lennon rocking out with Hendrix as Johnny Cash looks on approvingly" self-aggrandising bollocks. You want to know what all the local bands really sound like? Nightshift has the truth. We discovered it scribbled on the back of a crumpled Campaign For Real Ale newsletter whilst picking ourselves off the pub floor one afternoon when we were meant to be writing some proper reviews. Here's the real lowdown on some of our local pop heroes. More next month if we can be bothered.

<u>BAND</u>	<u>WHO THEY THINK THEY ARE</u>	<u>WHO THEY ARE IN THE REAL WORLD</u>
Ivy's Itch	Babes In Toyland	No Doubt
The Walk Off	Rammstein	Yazoo
Headcount	Killing Joke	The Toy Dolls
The Joff Winks Band	Steely Dan	Shakatak
Borderville	Ziggy Stardust	Alvin Stardust
Smilex	The Stooges	The Macc Lads
Radiohead	Autechre	Vangelis
Baby Gravy	X-Ray Spex	The Mini Pops
Young Knives	The Pixies	The Weather Girls
Winnebago Deal	Black Flag	Chas'n'Dave
Dive Dive	Fugazi	Fightstar
Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element	Kraftwerk	Trio
Goldrush	Flaming Lips	REO Speedwagon
Foals	Battles	Kajagoogoo
Mr Shadown	Bruce Lee	Hong Kong Fuey
The Relationships	The Relationships	The Relationships

(* - note to bands concerned - if you are offended in any way, it was all Mac's idea, okay?)

DR SHOTOVER

Zodi-Ac-Ademy and the Love Reaction

Yes, yes, it IS very exciting, I know, it's just opening up again... but mind you, so is my old war wound. Anyway, I'm sure you've all been trying to get on the interweb to buy tickets for the Led Zeppelin reunion (personally I couldn't care less - they were called the New Yardbirds last time I looked). But here's a bloody extraordinary thing I heard from Tubby Marchington the other day.... Apparently the lead (or Led) singer chappie, Roger Plant or whatever his name is, has bought a house in Yarnton. You know, the one with the Garden Centre... oh, hang on, I get it. This is a Plant joke isn't it? Ve-ry funny. I do not think. I suppose next you'll be telling me George Bush has rented a cottage there too... Anyway, if by ANY chance it WERE true about old Planty, perhaps he and the chaps could consider playing at the All-New Carling Academy... I mean it would be just down the road, wouldn't it? I might even stir me stumps to get along myself, even if I can't smoke in there any more... Meanwhile, I feel that this column should be sending its heartfelt sympathies to Mickey from Supergrass... I've had a few nasty sleep-walking accidents myself in my time, especially after a few brandies... my advice is, always get some popsy to handcuff you to the bed if sleeping in a room with a balcony. I learned that from a roadie (with the New Yardbirds). Ahem.



Jimmy Page is moving to Reading

Next month: Snarling at the Carling.

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

XMAS LIGHTS

Help! The ceiling is caving in! War has broken out and you can hear the screams of the dying. Tall buildings collapse and flights of stairs fall down flights of stairs. It must be another Xmas Lights demo. No ballads yet, then. Thank the Lord for that. Instead it's maniacal spazz-metal, elegantly sombre electronic drones and blast beats, all topped off with Marco Ruggiero's alternately hellish yelping and Gregorian chanting. 'You'll Grow Out Of Us In Ten Years' is a shrieking and growling contest over some bad-tempered doom-metal that discovers some previously unnoticed proggy tendencies halfway through. Four tracks clocking in at a mighty 45 minutes, Xmas Lights, as ever, give precious little quarter, raging, screaming and bludgeoning their way chaotically through the rest of this month's demo pack who can merely cower in the corner wishing they had sharp-edged weaponry like this. When they do loosen their grip on the musical machete, on the overlong industrial funk meander of the unnamed final track (including a narrative from someone who apparently "fucking hates that band Xmas Lights"), they do themselves a disservice, sounding like a half-arsed rehearsal jam. At its best though, it's like an opera. Without the love story element. Or the fat lady singing. Just the gory murder scenes played out again and again and again until the audience vomits up its G&Ts. Which Xmas Lights duly sample and spit back at the hapless onlookers at terrifying volume until their eyeballs pop.

UNSPOKEN HEROES

Wahey! More screaming! Screaming is good. Especially if it's the screaming of rightwing American politicians on the receiving end of rusty bayonets, but that's just a jolly daydream we indulge ourselves in occasionally. This screaming is of the nasty hardcore angry young man variety – a bit like Xmas Lights but without the feeling they could actually do you some seriously bodily harm. Guitars chum, drums thunder and crash and voices cry out for vengeance and everything scurries past with great haste, like a completely batty bag lady running down the street warning of the apocalypse whilst being chased by giant cartoon hammers. Doubtless Unspoken Heroes owe most of what they know to the likes of Dillinger Escape Plan, but if only a few of the other bands on this page could claim a similar debt, how the world would mend.

MATT WINKWORTH

Matt Winkworth claims that his demo is in a bit of a different genre to most of what gets reviewed in Nightshift, so we're expecting a bit of Tuvan throat singing at the very least. Instead we get some piano-led pop with a slightly fey indie-leaning feel to it. Which, unlike wide-mouthed frogs, you do tend to see quite a lot of round here. Admittedly Matt's got a bit of a theatrical thing going on, whether it's seemingly practising his scales in the shower as on winsome demo opener 'Infatuated', or leading the chorus line in an apparent audition for *Any Dream Will Do* on 'Just Like The Movies', that oddly ends up sounding like an old Belle & Sebastian demo. 'Prologue' is his overwrought show-stopper number with its call-and-response vocal with a female backing vocal. Add in some hushed strings and brass, self-consciously quirky lyrics and a final number that could well be Gong performing a provincial amateur dramatic version of a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical and you have to at least admire the ambition in what is essentially a bedroom-bound project. Doesn't stop it all getting on your tits a bit by the end, mind.

AMV

Now, if Mr Winkworth really wanted to send us something beyond our normal musical remit, he could take a leaf out of AMV's book. AMV stands for Articulus Mediae Vitae, which is what OMD were called in the late 13th Century. Articulus Mediae Vitae actually means Mid-Life Crisis and is the project formed by local improv luminary and Dubwiser keyboard player Malcolm Atkins who here revisits and updates four pieces of music from the 13th and 14th Century, performing them on violin along with keyboards and tabla as well as vocals from Liz Hodgson. The end result is somewhere between chamber music, monastic chanting and north African devotional music; it's gently soporific in a not unpleasant way, although our knowledge of music 700 years back is patchy to say the least, although apparently the must-have fashion accessory amongst trendier members of Henry V's court was an early Circulus t-shirt sporting the legend Keep Music Med-Evil.

TERMINAL STATE

Terminal State is the solo electronic project of Wadham College student Gianni Vesuviano, which is a great cool name, since it makes him sound like a volcano. And he's drawn a picture on the front of the CD sleeve which we're not quite sure about. It might be the mushroom cloud from a nuclear explosion, which would be in keeping with the band name, but equally it could be a chef's hat. Or perhaps a malformed and rather rudimentary penis. All

of which is as mixed up as the music on opening track 'Static Rush', a suitably frantic buzz storm of breakbeats and swarming keyboard squiggles that trip frantically over each other in their blind panic to get to the exit door before the nasty spooky voice from 'A Force To Behold' gets to them and cooks their livers for supper. The rabid gothic gabba assault continues through 'I'm All Yours' before lurching into metal-bashing industrial dub for 'Discharge' which initially carries a similarly distorted punch and refuses to settle into a comfortable groove, preferring to dig itself an ever deeper, darker hole to sit and scowl in. Good stuff. Especially if you want to upset the neighbours at 4 in the morning.

DOTS AND STOPS

Talking of 4 in the morning, we've a feeling that might have been the time Dots and Stops first turned on their tape recorder, the assorted musicians here doubtless having spent the previous few hours DRINKING! And TAKING DRUGS! And here is an album-length demo of the ensuing semi-comatose chaos. At its best it sounds like a campfire jam session by a group of Pavement fans, doubtless revelling in its lo-fi ineptness while assured of its left-leaning authenticity. In fact, had the band spent more times, making the best two or three tracks here (the Velvets-y folk of 'For All The People Who Wear Their Hair' and the 60s garage rock-leaning 'Do We Depreciate?') sound less like something the cat just mauled it might be less of a torture session than it soon becomes. In the end it's little more than an exercise in over-indulgent whining and haphazard acoustic thrash, a private joke that gets lost in translation.

THE ENDGAME

It's a brave band who send a demo into Nightshift citing The Kooks as a major influence. Or perhaps a very stupid one. Why not just write, "Hello Nightshift, we rubbed our CD in some dog poo before we sent it in so you would like us even more". Of course we make all sorts of enemies in these circumstances since we're faced with a band who play well, sound like they could be bothering the lower regions of the charts with a bit of luck and could probably have a room full of eager, if naïve, young people bouncing merrily up and down for forty five minutes. But they sound like the bloody Kooks! Y'know, not just a little bit like The Kooks. A whole big fat lot like The Kooks. It's slick, daytime radio-friendly harmony pop that would sit snugly in a Woolworth's advert for one of a dozen or so recent identikit Britrock tryers whose injection of a few 60s vocal harmonies into some lightweight punk-pop is now passed off as alternative by a music media desperate not to upset the corporate advertisers. And of course it's completely out of order to heap so much guilt on a group of cheery young chaps from Headington who just want to play some pop songs and maybe get some girls to love them. But, Christ, they want to be The Kooks! Unforgivable.

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.

UXL

UXL's album-length CD arrives in a beautifully-presented package, complete with some full colour photos of the band, including one of the stylishly-coiffeured singer at the microphone in a moment of intense emotion. And he's praying! Possibly calling on God to guide his lyrical arrows into the heart of some lucky, lucky lady. Or maybe he's just praying that his daft manager won't include any embarrassing pictures of him when she sends it off to Nightshift. Because then we might laugh and point and call him a WANKER. And then we might laugh and point at his band's billowing cloud of fart gas that passes for music and sneer at the "wide and eclectic" list of influences that range from Led Zep and Pink Floyd to U2 and Muse (hey, that covers everything from stadium rock to... er... stadium rock! A-fucking-mazing). The reality of course is that UXL bare no resemblance whatsoever to any of the above, sounding more like Robbie Williams making a vain and ultimately teeth-grindingly awful stab at lightweight emo. Check out those constipated power ballads, kids! Ooh, and what's this? Some more power ballads! Lighters aloft: we're gonna burn these fuckers alive.

THE DEMO DUMPER

INLIGHT

Well here's a turn up for the books: after UXL's barrel-scraping careerist rock putrefaction has us frothing at the mouth in almost neanderthal rage, here comes something that is, unbelievably, even worse. Treading a similarly soulless MOR rock path, InLight might as well tattoo "Mature" and "Accomplished" on their foreheads, just so we appreciate how, well, mature and accomplished they are, as if it's some kind of virtue and not an affliction worthy of a lifetime of solitary confinement and regular injections – just for the hell of it, of course. Their CD collection obviously has no room for such giddy pleasures as The Dickies or Shonen Knife and is all the poorer for it. Instead we get an overly-earnest bloke repeating the line "Don't you see that I'm fragile" over and bloody over again alongside a histrionic guitar solo until you want to hurl him, like a twee porcelain ornament, across the room and hope he breaks into tiny pieces. Of course there's the inevitable piano-led ballad, 'Bridges', all twinkling electric keys and sub-Elton John lamentation, that so desperately craves to be described as "soaring" but has cliché crawling over it like lice on a sickly dog. "You'll miss me when I'm gone" whines the singer on 'Give It A Try'. Funny that since the CD has been in the bin for a good half an hour now and we've felt no urge to retrieve it. A rotting banana skin, however, has started to complain that the neighbourhood has gone down the pan.



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