

email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net

website: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 153
April
2008

Of daffodils and lions - meet Oxford's pop naturalists

JONQUIL

Plus - FESTIVAL MANIA

All the line-up news from Truck, Cornbury,
Wakestock, The Punt, Wood, Cropredy,
Oxford Folk Festival - *inside*

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Nightshift's guide to the latest on this year's local festivals

THE OXFORD PUNT

THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT has been announced. The annual showcase festival for the best local unsigned acts takes place on **Wednesday 14th May** and features 18 acts playing across five venues in Oxford city centre. The Punt kicks off at Borders at 6.15pm with nu-folk act Faceometer and finishes at midnight with one-man digital hardcore riot Clanky Robo Gobjobs. In between the Punt captures styles as diverse as Arabian dub reggae, garage rock, experimental noise, funk, blues, electro and violin-led indie rock. The full Punt line-up is:

BORDERS: Faceometer / Desmond Chancer & The Long Memories

THE PURPLE TURTLE: International Jetsetters / Cat Matador / Elapse-O / Raggasaurus

THE WHEATSHEAF: Tristan & The Troubadours / Non-Stop Tango / Alphabet Backwards / Rubber Duck

THIRST LODGE: Black Skies Burn / Little Fish / Sikorsky / King Furnace

THE CELLAR: Eduard Sounding Block / David K Frampton / 50ft Panda / Clanky Robo Gobjobs.

Each act will play for thirty minutes with set times staggered so fans can try and catch as many bands as possible. There will be a limited number (100 only) of **all-venue Punt Passes**, which are on sale now, priced £7 (plus booking fee) from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road, or online from oxfordmusic.net. Alternatively, passes are available without booking fee direct from Nightshift – simply send a cheque, made payable to **Nightshift**, to PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Admission to individual gigs will be £4.

With the Punt having previously given early exposure to future local stars such as The Young Knives, Goldrush, Fell City Girl and Winnebago Deal, as well as early incarnations of Foals and Jonquil, it's a great way of discovering the most exciting new music in the area.



CORNBURY

CROWDED HOUSE are set to headline this year's **Cornbury Festival**. The Australian pop favourites top the Sunday night bill at the festival which runs over the weekend of the 5th / 6th July at Cornbury Park, near Charlbury.

Other acts confirmed to play include **Beverley Knight**, **The Bangles**, **KT Tunstall** and **10cc**, while the second stage features headline sets from **Toots & The Maytals** and **Bellowhead** as well as appearances from **Salsa Celica**, **Nick Lowe**, **Half Man**, **Half Biscuit** and **The Beat**. Saturday night's main stage headliner as yet to be announced.

Cornbury Festival organiser Hugh Phillimore spoke to Nightshift about this year's event, which is expected to be the biggest in the festival's history.

"I'm pretty excited about my Saturday headliner as he has a great live reputation although I've never seen him. I'm sure you'll share that excitement when we can reveal it! My personal favourite is Tift Merritt on the Oxford Folk Festival Stage (2nd Stage) on Sunday – she's a US new country star and fantastic live – I just pray I get a chance to see her on the day. Fingers crossed we'll sell out this year – we got close last year and I think our bill is stronger."

For updated news on the festival and tickets (weekend tickets start at £90 for adults and £55 for under-16s with under-5s free) visit

www.cornburyfestival.com or call the booking line on 0871 472 0420.



WAKESTOCK

GROOVE ARMADA have been confirmed as one of the headline acts at the first **WAKESTOCK FESTIVAL** to take place at

Blenheim Palace in Woodstock this summer, featuring a host of big names from the worlds of dance, indie and rock music.

Wakestock, which has been running in north Wales for the past eight years, takes place over the weekend of the 27th-29th June within the picturesque 2,100-acre grounds of the palace and will feature displays of the growing sport of wakeboarding alongside the live music.

Among the other acts already confirmed to perform across three stages at the festival are **The Streets**, **Supergrass**, **Funeral For A Friend**, **The Young Knives**, **Hadouken**, **Audiobullys**, **The Futureheads**, **Metronomy**, **Lightspeed Champion**, **Pendulum**, **Jazzy B**, **Brandon Block**, **Calvin Harris**, **In Case Of Fire** and **Royworld**.

Wakestock will have a capacity of 15,000, making it the joint largest festival in Oxfordshire, alongside Cornbury. Local promoters TCT Music are heavily involved in the organisation and booking of bands for the event.

Weekend tickets for the festival are on sale now, from SS20 on Cowley Road, or Rapture in Witney as well as from the festival **credit card hotline** on 01758 710 000 or online from www.wakestock.co.uk

CROPREDY

SUPERGRASS AND **THE LEVELLERS** will join **Fairport Convention** in headlining this year's **CROPREDY FESTIVAL**.

The annual folk festival, now in its fourth decade, has become an annual pilgrimage for folk fans around the world with English folk-rock pioneers Fairport traditionally topping the Saturday night bill. This year's Cropredy Festival takes place from Thursday 7th – Saturday 9th August. Other acts announced to play include former-Ultravox frontman **Midge Ure**, **Julie Fowlis**, **Joe Brown**, **Paul Brady**, **Stackridge** and **John Tams & Barry Coope**.

Tickets for the event are on sale now, priced £72, for all three days, or £62 for Friday and Saturday only, online at

www.fairportconvention.com



TRUCK / WOOD

ROBIN BENNETT has been speaking to Nightshift about this year's **TRUCK FESTIVAL**, and about Truck's new festival project, **WOOD**.

This year's Truck Festival takes place over the weekend of the **19th-20th July** at **Hill Farm** in **Steventon**. Acts announced so far include former Small Faces keyboard player **Ian McLagan** & **The Bump Band**, punk legends **The Television Personalities**, plus up and coming acts like **Noah & The Whale**, **Camera Obscura**, **Maps** and **These New Puritans**. It has also been announced that local promoters **Vacuous Pop**, **Abort**, **Retry**, **Fail?** and **Sonic Cathedral** will be running different stages over the weekend.

Last year's Truck Festival was washed out in July's floods and had to be re-scheduled for September. Robin explained the impact that had on the whole Truck organisation and what music fans can expect from this year's festival.

"In terms of what this event will be like, last year's flood will not have too much impact. Most elements of the festival will be the same or better. We managed to break even in the end last year, though it was a mighty scare for us.

"This year will be a more concentrated blast of fun than ever before... a reaffirmation of the spirit of Truck: turning the blitz spirit of last year into a joyful celebration. We're involving some new local faces like **Abort**, **Retry**, **Fail** and **Vacuous Pop**, and of course the **Disco Shed**. We've got a whole day of shoegaze magic from **Sonic Cathedral** too, headlined by **Maps**.

"There are lots of acts I'm really excited about seeing – if we can manage not to schedule them



Ian McLagan

all at the same time. This year's Sixties keyboard legend is Ian McLagan of the Small Faces. Some less-known favourites are Gabe Minnikin, a Canadian singer once in The Guthries, with a very low and powerful voice like Johnny Cash, which is no small boast. I'm also excited that there's a new band from Steventon, **Alphabet Backwards**, with a release on **Vacuous Pop**.

"What usually happens is I only see the bands I'm in, the rest of the time I'm running about or on one of our famous bicycles, trying to locate

needles in haystacks or whatever else somebody needs."

This year also sees the first **WOOD Festival**, a small-scale family-friendly festival that takes places over the weekend of **16th-18th May** at **Braziers Park** in south Oxfordshire, a picturesque environmental educational establishment. Acts confirmed so far include **Get Cape**, **Wear Cape**, **Fly**, **Ashley Hutchings**, **King Creosote**, **The Coal Porters** and **Danny & The Champions of the World**. What was the idea behind Wood?

"A combination of things: recent parenthood, and my interest in environmental causes and concerns. Rather than being an 'eco-festival', **WOOD** is an experiment into how we can entertain ourselves and our families all together in one place, just using simple natural things around us: campfires, tents, guitars and other things mostly made of wood. We also want to do something new in springtime to put last year's flood behind us.

"It will be much smaller scale to Truck. This allows us to try out many new green measures not yet possible on the larger scale at Truck, such as composting toilets, stages powered by solar and bicycle power, catering with wood stoves, organic local food and drink. We are even building a special permanent wooden stage!"

For **ticket details** for both Truck and Wood Festivals, visit **www.thisistruck.com**. Tickets for Wood are on sale now online from **wegotickets.com**. Truck tickets go on sale at 11am on Wednesday 2nd April from **Videosyncratic**, the **Inner Bookshop** and **Scribbles** in Oxford and various outlets around Oxfordshire.

THE FIFTH OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL

takes place over the weekend of the **11th-13th April**, with headline acts including **The Kathryn Tickell Band**, **Brass Monkey**, **Bellowhead**, **Martin Simpson** and **Danny Thompson**, **Three Daft Monkeys** and **Rafael and Lola**.

Concerts take place at venues across the city with the main events at **Oxford Town Hall** and the **Holywell Music Room**. Additionally there will be sessions at the **Port Mahon** and a ceilidh up at **Brookes University Union**.

As well as three days of live music there will be the usual array of street performances and workshops hosted by many of the festival performers, including **Jon Boden** and **John Spiers**, **Kathryn Tickell**, and **Chris Newman**, and including special workshops on flamenco and African music.

Season tickets for the folk festival are on sale now, priced £62 from **wegotickets.com** or from **Tickets Oxford** at the **Playhouse**. Day tickets are also on sale, with prices ranging from £14 to £39.

For full festival line-ups and ticket details visit **www.oxfordfolkfestival.com**



THE X HAS REOPENED with a new temporary manager and plans to continue live music at the venue. The X closed down in January when landlady Alison was declared bankrupt following a dispute with the Performing Rights Society over unpaid royalties. New manager **Pippa Dodds** is keen to hear from any bands or promoters wanting to put on gigs at the pub. You can call her on 07748 904 693.

LOVE MUSIC HATE RACISM launch a series of fundraising gigs ahead of the special carnival in London's Victoria Park to mark the 30th anniversary of the first Rock Against Racism rally. This year's event features **The Good The Bad and The Queen**, **Babyshambles** and **Lethal Bizzle** amongst others. The carnival is free and the Oxford branch of **Love Music Hate Racism** will be running coaches to the event, leaving **St Giles** at 8am. Coach tickets are £10 (waged) or £5 concessions. The Oxford shows booked so far take place at the newly reopened X in **Cowley** on Friday 11th April, with **Shirley and InLight** and Friday 25th with **Not My Day**; more acts are due to be confirmed. Check out **www.myspace.com/oxfordlmhr** for more details.

OXFORD PLAYS HOST TO ITS OWN

LADYFEST on Saturday 24th May at the **Port Mahon**, a non-profit event showcasing female musicians and artists from the area, following on from over 50 other Ladyfests in cities around the world. Any female musicians or artists wanting to get involved should email **Lucy** at **ladyfestoxford08@yahoo.co.uk** or visit **www.myspace.com/ladyfestoxford08**.

STUDIO 45 are now offering special discount rates for short order CD and DVD duplication for bands, starting from runs of only 25 CDs. Their special local bands loyalty card also qualifies customers to a free order on their fifth order. For more details call **Cheryl** on 01865 457000 or visit **www.studio45mediapromotions.com**

CROSSWORD RECORDS release a compilation of experimental hip hop, spoken word poetry, guitar pop and electronica this month. The locally-based label have collected 23 tracks by artists from around the UK, including projects from Oxford acts, including **Plosives** (featuring **Youthmovies'** **Andrew Mears**) and **Jonquil** side projects **BirdriB**, **Eleven/Twenty-Two** and **Poems While Drowning**. 'Crosswords Records Volume 2' is available from **www.myspace.com/crosswordsrecords**.

AS EVER, DON'T FORGET TO TUNE INTO THE DOWNLOAD every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on **BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm**. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos and features interviews with local and touring acts as well as a gig and clubbing guide. The show is available to listen to online all week at **bbc.co.uk/oxford**

A stylized sunburst graphic with a semi-circular sun in the center and rays extending upwards and outwards, filling the top half of the poster.

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JONQUIL

THE FIRST COPY OF JONQUIL'S new album, 'Lions', never arrived at Nightshift's office. Neither did the second. Initially we suspected Oxford's notoriously inefficient postal service, but finally getting to hear the album, with its tangible feelings of longing and escape, we had to conclude that the lost CDs had simply gone off to live near the sea, or in the middle of a remote forest. We can only empathise; Jonquil make us feel a bit like that too.

WITH ITS MIXTURE OF bucolic tranquillity and uneasy menace, 'Lions' is a minor masterpiece of modern ambient music. Moods and textures are as important as melodies in Jonquil's music, something the band have honed from their debut album, 2006's 'Sunny Casinos'.

More than one Nightshift scribe has been moved to hail Jonquil as the best band in Oxford over the past couple of years, and their reputation has spread beyond the city, from online indie bible *DrownedinSound* to *Wire* magazine who featured Jonquil on a cover-mounted CD showcasing the best new experimental acts around. At the end of March the band were invited into Radio 1's Maida Vale studios to record a special live concert for broadcast on Huw Stephens' show. Jonquil have also toured around France and Spain and appeared on French television.

JONQUIL STARTED OUT AS A bedroom project, and in many ways it still is. Singer and multi-instrumentalist Hugo Manuel recorded much of 'Sunny Casinos' by himself at home, playing everything from guitar and accordion to bouzouki and glockenspiel, with a few contributions from friends. 'Lions' finds Jonquil now fully expanded into a highly-accomplished multi-instrumental six-piece, featuring flutes, drums, organ, melodica, trumpet and flugelhorn. As well as Hugo, Jonquil feature the multifaceted talents of Jody Prewett, Ben Rimmer, Kit Monteith, Sam Scott and Robin McDiarmid.

Jonquil emerged out of the ashes of two local post-rock bands: The Modern (led by Hugo and who played at the Oxford Punt back in 2003) and



Wait For Coniston, while there is a fair amount of cross-pollination with other local bands: trumpeter Sam also plays with Youthmovies, while Youthmovies' singer Andrew Mears and This Town Needs Guns' Stuart Smith also features on guest vocal duties for the new album. To confirm the link with Youthmovies, both Jonquil albums have been released on Try Harder Records, the label run by Youthmovies guitarist Al English.

NAMED AFTER A TYPE OF daffodil, Jonquil balance skilfully on the cusp of sweet-natured folk music and wayward experimentalism. Listen to 'Lions' and you'll constantly find yourself picking out new experiences, from the childish simplicity of 'Babe, So Now Why No?', through the tender, ghostly atmospherics of 'Pencil, Paper', to the rousing, heroic shanty that is the album's title track. In between there are sampled thunder storms, Gregorian chanting, Bulgarian folk and lonely acoustic laments. Jonquil follow no formula in their songwriting, appealing equally to trad folkies and fans of leftfield rock. They've toured with Youthmovies and supported A Silver Mt Zion and A Hawk & A Hacksaw, fitting in everywhere and nowhere and impossible to pigeonhole.

THIS MONTH JONQUIL release a new EP, 'Whistle Low', again on Try Harder. It is the first CD the band have recorded in a proper

studio. A European tour to promote the EP includes a hometown show at the Cellar on Wednesday 9th April. Nightshift spoke to Hugo about the origins of the band and his original vision for Jonquil.

"I started fiddling around with sounds on my computer in the summer before I went to university. At this time, Jonquil existed as a completely different entity, a live band. Because most of us were leaving Oxford for universities, we felt the need to record all of this material before it disappeared, and it seemed logical to me to combine what we had been doing live with what I had been doing by myself on the computer. We made 'Sunny Casinos' without even considering how to play live, or expecting it to get released. The night we finished it we gave a copy to Al, and the next day he said that he wanted to release it... and so then we realised that we could make something of this!"

The name Jonquil comes from a type of daffodil, is there a conscious effort to relate to the delicacy and complexity of nature?

"Yeah, totally. That sounds right, 'Sunny Casinos' was all about the beautiful lush sounds masked by streams of noise and hiss... it was very much influenced by all the Kranky Records stuff and Animal Collective's early stuff."

A NOTABLE FACET OF Jonquil's sound, especially given their

esoteric and experimental nature at times, is the almost complete lack of electronics in the music, the myriad sounds on the albums created entirely organically on traditional instruments.

"I used to have a particular interest in acoustic instruments. There was a time when any weird zither or reed organ would spark inspiration, but now I don't feel any desire to keep things 'organic'. We've gone from using almost exclusively acoustic instrumentation to a more happy medium. The way our songs are put together is very much the same way that any electronic music is put together. We'll record riffs and sounds before we've decided how to use them most of the time. It's all in the editing. I've been writing electronic music for years... I still write more dance music and electronic stuff than anything for Jonquil, but I don't get as much out of it."

What would you say are the main differences between 'Sunny Casinos' and 'Lions', both musically and in the way they were written and recorded? "I can't listen to 'Sunny Casinos' anymore; we didn't really know what we were doing back then, we were just learning. 'Lions' was us trying to be a pop band, but not quite committing fully and coming out slightly askew. They were recorded both in very much the same way, the main difference being that Sam was in the band for recording 'Lions'. Another strong addition with 'Lions' is a greater lyrical focus. Some sort of 'meaning' within the songs has become a little more tangible because of it."

How difficult have you found it to transfer your recorded sound into live shows?

"Our live shows can bear only passing resemblance to our recordings. We're pretty weird in that we work the wrong way round. We write stuff in the studio with no eye on how to perform it live. Then we have to go to Kit's garage to 'learn' our own songs, which can be infuriating, but often we'll discover something in the song that we hadn't noticed before."

Jonquil seem to be free from the formulaic constraints of a traditional rock or pop band, particularly in the way your music is structured; is that a

conscious thing, and who would you say are your biggest influences in this and other respects?

"As I said before, Kranky Records stuff (Stars Of The Lid, Keith Fullerton Whitman etc.) and Akron/Family were really influential in the early days. I think 'Lions' is very influenced by people like Neil Young, Joni Mitchell and Judee Sill. I listen to a lot of 60s pop, Motown and Stax soul and I think that has maybe come across in the new EP, that and our love of electronic music. We all have such differing musical tastes and interests alongside what we create in Jonquil. Three of us run an experimental hip hop label called Crossword Records and it dominates a lot of what we do musically outside of the band. I think that has an effect on how the band might appear a little less conventional or formulaic. The label is based around an idea of continuous collaboration between musicians and so the standard 'band roles' disappear a little when we return to Jonquil."

IF THERE IS ONE OVER-RIDING mood hanging over 'Lions' it is one of longing and separation. It's a feeling perfectly encapsulated in the track 'Shore', at the very end of the album, a desolate accordion-led hymn that captures the feeling of being lost and alone on a deserted beach. Does Hugo ever feel he'd like to escape to somewhere far from the towns and cities?

"I lived in the countryside until I was 14, and can easily say that I much prefer the city, by a long stretch. I guess maybe it's the record's folksiness that might suggest the country, but I've never really felt that connection strongly myself. I don't think it's a particularly up-beat record, but I don't know about how that came about or anything. It's all sound to me."

JONQUIL APPEAL ACROSS THE board to both traditional folk music fans and fans of more esoteric rock. For example you're as at home playing with Youthmovies as you are Adem or A Hawk And A Hacksaw. Why do you think that is?

"I don't have any interest for the folk revival thing anymore. There was time, when Devendra Danhart, Joanna Newsom et al first came out that it was really interesting, but now it seems to have turned into a very middle-of-the-road easy-listening. Like trip-hop in the mid-90s, it's become totally coffee table. Our live set-up is now almost entirely electric, and in our new EP, hopefully there is nothing to let reviewers call us 'Folk'. Last year we played an all-day in London with people like Adem and The Earlies and that really killed it for us. We've done tours with This Town Needs Guns and Youthmovies, neither of whom sound

much like us, but its so much more fun than playing with a bunch of folkies, sitting down and being silent." Jonquil's upcoming tour will take in more dates in France and Spain, after previous successful excursions; how have they been and how different is it playing there to in the UK?

"It's better in just about every way. Its really invigorating, because after playing so many gigs in the UK to apathetic audiences, we go to Europe and people seem to appreciate live music so much more. They make it financially viable for bands to tour and you are treated like kings. We are releasing our next EP on Acuarela Records in Europe who are based in Madrid. They asked us to play at their festival in Castellon, in a beautiful concert hall, and as soon as we finished our set they said that they wanted to release us in Europe."

JONQUIL SEEM TO BE PART OF a community within the Oxford scene, along with the likes of Youthmovies, Foals etc. How supportive has this network been and what do you feel about the Oxford scene as a whole given your experiences in Jonquil, and before that in The Modern?

"I think it's a really important thing to have a community of musicians around you if you are in a band, or writing music. So much amazing music has come out of dense communities... I don't know whether it's just being in the right place at the right time, but it certainly helps. We share Sam with Youthmovies and used to share Jody with This Town Needs Guns. It's also nice having a band like Foals who are doing so well on their own but are still totally conscious of the music and people that surrounded them at the beginning. It's cool that they're so keen to help out bands like us and Youthmovies now that they have platform to do it from."

The new EP promises a bigger, studio production; have you found limitations in the way you've recorded until now, at home? How do you envisage Jonquil's next album sounding?

"We're very happy with the way that we record, it allows us so much freedom and I think that it is almost intrinsic to the existence of Jonquil. We went to Warehouse studio in Kennington to re-record 'Whistle Low' for the EP as a kind of experiment. I'm so glad we did, and I'm really pleased with the results, but I think we would be a very different band if we did everything in professional studios. The next album will basically be a doo-wop record. Seriously."

'Whistle Low' is out this month on Try Harder. Jonquil play the Cellar on Wednesday 9th April. Visit www.myspace.com/jonquiluk for news, tracks and tour dates



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12th **OX4** – *Drum'n'Bass with* **TEMPER D.** *9pm-3am*

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YOUNG KNIVES

'Superabundance'

(Transgressive)

And so Young Knives reach their difficult third album (if we're including their debut mini-album '...Are Dead', which we are), that point at which bands face a career dichotomy. Admirably Young Knives have chosen the less open path but one that leads to far greater opportunities.

Not that you'd think it after the opening few numbers on 'Superabundance'. 'Fit 4U' is dry and deadpan but worryingly pedestrian, while recent single, 'Up All Night' is utterly bereft of the clever, weird edge that has always made even the most throwaway Young Knives song a pleasure. It sounds like it'd be more at home hanging out with a bunch of 1980s mod revival bands. Luckily the stridently militaristic march of 'Terra Firma' punctuates this underwhelming introduction and by the time they reach 'Counters', with its Devo-ish yelp and its emotionally disengaged first-person account of middle-management suicide, they're breaching fresh frontiers.

The lyrical obsession with suburban ennui and



middle-class, middle-aged, middle-management frustration and escape remains from 'Voices Of Animals And Men', and Henry Darnell's wonderfully arcane use of language and odd phrasing is another constant, but for the most part they've left well behind the post-punk pop frivolity in favour of more understated noises and a maturity that retains a playful edge, like the string-laden 'Turn Tail', or the

dreamily carouselling psychedelia of 'Rue The Day'. Something 'Voices...' hinted at was a love for 60s acid-fuelled folk, and the odd, almost a capella 'Flies' dives into that world head-on, paving the way for one of 'Superabundance's twin high points, the airy 'Mummy Light The Fire', full of wide-eyed childlike wonder and a quintessential Englishness that you'll only ever find in the worlds of Syd Barrett or Julian Cope. The other high spot is 'I Can Hardly See Them', with its monstrous electro pulse that reminds us of Blur's finest moments, hidden away on the b-sides of their more commercially viable singles, a place where the band could get away with their more obliquely imaginative indulgences without frightening the sheep. That these two tracks are at the polar extremes of Young Knives' songwriting styles promises so much more for the future, especially when held up against the formulaic laziness of the most recent Futureheads material. And as 'Superabundance' climaxes with the clamouring drama of 'Current Of The River', the future for Oxford's most cynically observant band appears more optimistic than ever before.

Dale Kattack

SUPERGRASS

'Diamond Hoo Ha'

(Parlophone)

Supergrass stoned in a field are far less fun than Supergrass armed with beer and fags and ready to party, which is why 2005's 'Road To Rouen' was something of a disappointment. 'Diamond Hoo Ha' is something approaching a return to form, at least in part, with the band generally doing what they do best – pillaging rock's past and adding their own discernible character to the best parts.

'Diamond Hoo Ha Man', the first single from this, Supergrass' fifth studio album, attracted criticism for supposedly aping White Stripes'



garagey blues rock, but its ballsy stomp is closer to Led Zep, something they've leaned towards as far back as the likes of 'Lenny', and they still kick it out with great gusto. Similarly 'Bad Blood', which blatantly steals from Iggy's 'The Passenger', whilst remaining very much a Supergrass song, and 'Rebel In You', a twilit glam-rock number with noticeable echoes of 'Late In The Day'.

Where 'Diamond Hoo Ha' disappoints is in the same way previous albums have – the band wandering off in a fug of spliffed-out contemplation, as on the slowed-down honky tonk 'When I Needed You', or the good-natured haze of 'The Return Of...'. Here they're little more than functional rockers lost anywhere between 1968 and the present day, still hoping The Who are pumping on everyone's stereo.

That old mischief has never gone away though, however much Supergrass have 'grown up' in the past 15 years. 'Rough Knuckles', with its psychedelic keyboard squelch is straight out of a 60s head movie freak scene, while 'Whisky & Green Tea' is weird and wired, the guitar threatening to go all 'Crazy Horses' and ending in a squall of crazy horns.

Survivors of the first wave of Britpop, Supergrass are now godfathers to its current offspring, especially Arctic Monkeys. 'Diamond Hoo Ha' never sounds ahead of the game but for the most part it sounds like Supergrass are still on top of their own game. Still life in the old dogs, yet.

Sue Foreman

WINCHELL RIOTS

'Histories'

(Andrew The Great)

The first release from Winchell Riots, the band formed by former-Fell City Girl frontman Phil McMinn and drummer James Pamphilon, is very much the son and heir of its predecessor, with Phil's petulant yelp striving for an almost biblical sense of epic, while the hollowed-out production on the drums and the serrated guitar sound echo Joy Division's 'Unknown Pleasures'. The abrasive grandeur of 'Histories' will obviously draw comparisons to Muse, but Winchell Riots feel more intimate than that, never in danger of heading out on a 15-minute space-rock solo as it clocks in at a very compact three minutes, while its graceful turbulence hides an inner darkness more akin to Echo & The Bunnymen's earliest post-punk days, and there are few things that make us happier.

'The Man Who Mapped The Oceans' and 'I'd Lower You Down' find The Winchell Riots rapt in glacial self-contemplation, like a pop-conscious Sigur Ros, while Youthmovies' remix of 'Histories' guts the original with android precision and adds a sinister electro sheen as Phil's cut-up vocal lines stutter in and out of focus, and we'll even gloss over the fact the drums sound like they're about to launch into Phil Collins' 'In The Air Tonight'.

Dale Kattack

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GIG GUIDE

TUESDAY 1st

AKALA + BLACK CHERRY + MR

SHAADOW: The Academy – MOBO Award-winning rapper out of London, and brother of Miss Dynamite, comes to town in support of recent second album, 'Freedom Lasso', sampling everyone from Siouxsie and the Banshees to Zombie Nation (on his excellent 'Shakespeare') behind his fast-paced, wordy

Wednesday 2nd

FUTURE OF THE LEFT: The Jericho Tavern

In what sorry excuse passes for the world of punk rock in this day and age, there seems to be little room for real eloquence, anger, humour and intensity. Attributes that Future Of The Left have in abundance. The south Wales three-piece formed from the ashes of McLusky (singer/guitarist Andrew Falkous and drummer Jack Egglestone) and Jarcrew (bassist Kelson Mathias) and have already proved equal to their previous incarnations with debut album 'Curses' and a series of live dates that have managed to alienate a sizeable proportion of their old fanbase (they sometimes use synthesizers! Splitters!) and upset almost all of Against Me!'s fanbase when they supported them on tour. From the rumbling, industrial bass and sheet-metal guitar noise to Falkous' snarling, hectoring or preaching vocals and lyrical misanthropy and evil wit, Future Of The Left feel like the true heirs of bands like PiL, Big Black and Beastie Boys, with track titles like 'The Lord Hates a Coward', 'Real Men Hunt In Packs' and 'Fuck The Countryside Alliance'. Theirs is the real spirit of punk rock and if you don't like the way it laughs and spits in your face, there's a world of corporate manufactured alternatives out there in MySpaceland to soothe your fevered brow.

APRIL

rapping. Local rap star Mr Shadown opens the show.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 2nd

THE FUTURE OF THE LEFT: The Jericho Tavern – Misanthropic malcontents put the world to rights with a well-aimed hammer – *see main preview*

IAMX: The Academy – Former-Sneaker Pimps fella Chris Corner, now relocated to Berlin, returns with his new band, mixing up heavy-duty synth-rock and dancefloor electro, somewhere between Depeche Mode, Nine Inch Nails and Chemical Brothers. New single, 'The Alternative', is out now.

JESSIE GRACE + OLLY NEASHAM + RAMI: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 3rd

AIDEN + KILL HANNAH: The Academy – Seattle emo rockers in a similar vein to My Chemical Romance and AFI, which hasn't stopped the band becoming seriously big news in recent years. Sporting AFI's mall-goth look and with frontman Wil Francis utilising the patented "feel my pain" lyricism they neatly package melodic punk-pop into easy to digest three-minute bursts. Signed to Victory Records on the back of a recommendation by Silverstein, Aiden have gigged their way to emo supremacy.

BLOOD RED SHOES: The Academy – Scrappy, pop-friendly rowdy garage rocking from the Brighton duo who've most recently been out on tour with Biffy Clyro and Maximo Park.

HONG KONG IN THE 60s + MY SAD CAPTAINS + MODERN CLICHÉS: The Bullingdon – Swiss Concrete club night with London's HKIT60s blending pastoral acoustic folk with synth-pop and krautrock rhythms to create dreamy pop reveries in a vaguely Stereolab-gone-acoustic fashion. Countrified indie pop in a Pavement vein from My Sad Captains, plus moddish rock from Bicester's Modern Cliches in support.

OUTCRY + I SAID YES: The Wheatsheaf – Epic acoustic pop from the local headliners.

STORNOWAY + POLLY & THE BILLETS DOUX + ANTON BARBEAU: The Cellar – Folky celtic pop in a Belle & Sebastian vein from local faves Stornoway, plus Winchester's jazz and blues combo Polly & The Billets and psychedelic Sacramento songsmith Anton Barbeau.

ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 4th

EFTERKLING + OUR BROKEN GARDEN: The Bullingdon – Glacial Viking electro-pixies ride their longboats into town – *see main*

preview

ENVY & OTHER SINS: The Academy – Sprightly Kinks-inspired guitar pop from the recent Channel 4 Unsigned competition winners.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE MIGHTY REDOX + TWIZZ TWANGLE + ABORIGINALS + THE SHAKELLERS: The Wheatsheaf – Swampy festival funk and witchy psychedelia from The Mighty Redox at tonight's KK, plus decidedly off-kilter pop from Twizz and funky reggae dance from Aboriginals.

DIFFERENT STATIONS + THE YOUNG RUNAWAYS + BRENTFLOOD + THE TEABO SHOW: The Jericho Tavern – Libertines-style indie punk from Stratford's Different Stations, plus Wolverhampton's Britrockers Young Runaways.

THE EPSTEIN + ANTON BARBEAU: The Corner Club – Exotic country rocking with a Mariachi twist from The Epstein, somewhere between Neil Diamond and The Flying Burrito Brothers, plus psychedelic folk-pop in a Robyn Hitchcock vein from Mr Barbeau.

DUM SPIRO SPERO + PARIS BIANCA: The Purple Turtle – Indie and post-rock from Dum Spiro Spero.

RICH CHASE: Fat Lil's, Witney

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Weekly dose of classic funk, soul and disco.

SHAKE: The Academy

DUGOUT: The Cellar – Soul, rare groove and funk with guest DJ Fingathing.

GET DOWN: The Brickworks – Disco, funk and Latin sounds.

SATURDAY 5th

EVERY TIME I DIE: The Academy – Return of the New York State metalcore faves, back with a new, southern rock-influenced album, 'The Big Dirty'.

SERJ TANKIAN: The Academy – Former-System Of A Down frontman goes solo – *see main preview*

NINE-STONE COWBOY: The Wheatsheaf – Slice-of life indie rocking from Mark Cope and co.

BACK POCKET PROPHET: The Purple Turtle – Old school thrash metal.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house with Bloody Beetroots.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy – Special rock night with



Guitar Hero championship at Room 101 and a power ballads theme night at Trashy. Classic and contemporary indie tunes at Transformation.

MELTING POT with THE ANYDAYS + SKETCHBEAT + THE HEYS + JAMES FORDE: *The Jericho Tavern* – 60s-styled popsters The Anydays headline Melting Pot's mixed bag club night.

LEE DAVIES & FRIENDS: The Temple
SCOTT ROWSON + ALPHABET

BACKWARDS: The Fitzharry's Arms, Abingdon – Skittle Alley acoustic session.

HEADCOUNT + BEARD OF ZEUSS + FOURTEEN-TEN: The Final Whistle, Bicester – Killing Joke-inspired punk-metal behemoths Headcount and stoner-metal beasts BoZ take their monstrous noise to Bicester's unexpected peripheries.

Friday 4th

EFTERKLANG:

The Bullingdon

Tonight's show is a collaboration between Coo Coo Club and Vacuous Pop and provides Oxford gig-goers with their first chance to catch Danish electro experimentalists Efterklang live. 'Electro experimentalists' gives you about one quarter of the full picture for this eight-piece collective of course. Like Sigur Ros, Mum and even Mew, Efterklang's music seems intended to capture the majestic landscapes of Scandinavia's bleaker outposts, full of glacial ambience and hushed, choral vocal arrangements that lend a ghostly atmosphere to pieces of music that take in pop, classical and acid folk along the way. On CD they can be a fragile experience but Efterklang are a more robust proposition live, marching snares, exuberant brass and strings embellishing the evocative electronics. Even the band's name sounds like an exotically arcane instrument designed entirely to reflect the sound of glaciers and tundra. Their second album, 'Parades', is a suitably episodic affair and has already garnered across-the-board critical acclaim, including a rare 10/10 review on DrownedInSound, and has drawn comparisons with everyone from Bjork and Radiohead to Steve Reich and Arcade Fire. All of which are valid enough, but Efterklang are out on their own and fabulously original.



SUNDAY 6th

ENJOY DESTROY: The Academy – Blustering grunge-pop noise from Basingstoke's Enjoy Destroy, coming on somewhere between Foo Fighter and Feeder, perhaps not unsurprising since Grant Nicholas produced the band's new album, 'Little Dreams'.

SHOW OF HANDS: The Academy – Traditional English folk from veteran duo Steve Knightley and Phil Beer.

MONDAY 7th

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

NO USE FOR A NAME: The Academy – 20 years on the road now for California's melodic punk-poppers, out on tour in support of new album, 'The Feelgood Record Of The Year'.

DAN LE SAC Vs SCROOBIUS PIP + GIDEON CON + PRODUCERS WITH COMPUTERS: The Academy – Heavily-bearded performance poet meets geeky knob-twiddler and a genuine cult hit single is born. If you live in a cave in Borneo you might have missed out on last year's superb 'Thou Shalt Always Kill', a minimalist electro-punk satire on all things supposedly cool and trendy. There's more to the London-based duo than this though especially the excellent Radiohead-sampling 'A Letter From Man To God'. Poetry, eh? You might even just learn to love it.

CHRIS BATHGATE + JEN CHARLTON + UTE: The Jericho Tavern – Michigan-based folkster Bathgate plugs his new album, 'A Cork Tale Wake', with support from London acoustic folk singer Jen Charlton.

HUSH THE MANY (HEED THE FEW) + CAT MATADOR + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS: The Purple Turtle – Dreamy indie folk-pop coming on like a cross between Galaxie 500 and Magic Numbers from Hush The Many, plus promising local rockers Cat Matador and ska-tinged indie-punks Tristan and the Troubadours.

ALY BAIN & PHIL CUNNINGHAM: Nettlebed Folk Club – Former Boys Of The Lough fiddle virtuoso Bain continues his exploration of traditional Scottish Islands folk with long-term musical partner Cunningham.

TUESDAY 8th

ELBOW + TWO GALLANTS: The Academy – Reliably wonderful Mancunian masters of all things poetic, dreamy and downbeat, back with another cracking album, 'The Seldom Seen Kid', with frontman Guy Garvey's poetic lyrics managing to mix the personal and political brilliantly. If there were any justice in the world, Elbow, not Oasis, would be Manchester's multi-million-selling kings of pop. Excellent support too from Two Gallants – raw melodic blues and folk racket from San Francisco singer-guitarist Adam Stephens and drummer Tyson Vogel, sort of the Delta counterpart to White Stripes' Chicago blues sound.

FRANK TURNER + ANDY YORKE + CIARA HAIDEN: The Academy – Another trip to town for former-Million Dead frontman Frank Turner, now firmly established as a solo

Saturday 5th

SERJ TANKIAN:

The Academy

Even amid the late-90s metal resurgence, LA's System Of A Down stood out from the pack, one of the most flamboyant, innovative, politicised and downright bizarre bands of the time, formed by a group of Armenian-Americans and drawing on the traditional folk sounds of their ancestral homeland as much as the punk and metal noise that surrounded them in the States. Leading the band was the magnificently operatic fire and brimstone preacher Serj Tankian, a man who lived the impassioned activism of his songs, forming the grassroots humanitarian campaign group Axis Of Justice with Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello. While SOAD's first couple of albums were minor masterpieces, their last two were disappointing, with Tankian overshadowed by guitarist Daron Malakian, and in 2006 they went on indefinite hiatus. But now Serj is back with his new (mostly) solo project and a new album, 'Elect The Dead'. And don't go expecting no poncy acoustic change of direction, because even if the album finds our man sat behind a piano or strumming an acoustic guitar some of the time, it contains as much rage, eccentricity, colour and furious propulsion as his old band. He may be criticised for being a bit too self-serious at times, but that's only because he believes so vehemently in what he's doing and singing about, and music could do with a fair few more like him.

artist following a folky, politicised musical course very much in the vein of Billy Bragg. As ever, local lads Dive Dive provide rocking back up. Support comes from erstwhile Unbelievable Truth singer Andy Yorke with his rather lovely Jeff Buckley-inspired folk-pop.

FRAUD + COREY MWAMBA & ORPHY ROBINSON: Wesley Memorial Church, Jericho – Free-thinking jazz and funk from recent BBC Jazz Award nominees Fraud, plus vibes and marimba duo Corey and Orphy.

JETHRO TULL: The New Theatre – Enduring English folk-rockers continue to explore their new-found world music sound.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With special guests Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited.
SIMON DAVIES DUO + JANE GRIFFITHS & COLIN FLETCHER + SUSANNAH



Wednesday 9th

CIBELLE:

The Academy

Another musically exotic offering from Oxford Contemporary Music in the shape of Brazilian singer, composer, poet and video artists Cibelle, once a member of the radical Sao Paulo Confessions set, formed by the late Suba. Since that time she has moved to keep the experimental nature of that group going, attempting to reinvent bossanova in various unlikely and often thrilling ways. If you think sugar cubes, coffee spoons, eggs and "wood on cardboard with a scarf" are simply the random stream-of-consciousness thoughts of a stoned nutter, you'd be wrong, they're a selection of the instruments Cibelle utilises on her most recent album, last year's 'The Shine Of Dried Electric Leaves', which featured Devendra Banhart on guest vocals. The results of her experiments can be uneven, particularly live, but more often they're beguiling – swaying tropical rhythms, bizarre lyrical imagery, unsettling vocal chants, incongruous piano riffs and a wonderful attention to atmosphere all add up to an intimate and haunting whole, a strange kind of agitated lounge-folk music from an oddly out-of-focus psychedelic world.

STARLING + JAMES BELL + CLARE ROWKE: East Oxford Community Centre – Acoustic night in aid of Amnesty International.
INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 9th

CIBELLE: The Academy – Brazilian experimentalist – *see main preview*
JONQUIL + HREDA + THEO + GOSSAMER ALBATROSS: The Cellar – This month's Nightshift cover stars play a hometown gig to celebrate the release of their new EP, with support from jazzy post-rockers Hreda and loops'n'effects experimentalist Theo – *see main interview feature*
OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon – Freeform virtuosity from the local improv troupe.
NAT JOHNSON + JAMES SEVERY + RORY McVICAR: The Jericho Tavern – Monkey Swallows The Universe singer Natalie goes solo as her band go on an indefinite hiatus, conjuring up sweet-natured, dreamy acoustic pop.
OXJAM: The Wheatsheaf – Benefit gig for Oxfam's nationwide musical jam session.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 10th

YOUNG HEART ATTACK + IN SO FAR + YOUNG LOVERS: The Academy – All-out old-fashioned rock'n'roll mayhem from Texas' Young Heart Attack, back in action after being dropped by XL Records and splitting up for a while. New album 'Rock & Awe' features their trademark blend of bluesy metal and punk spirit, where AC/DC and The Runaways meet The Sex Pistols.
MOSHKA with JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS + TRACY CURTIS: The Bullingdon – Levellers Day fundraiser with local electro-acoustic duo Joe and Angharad.
CARLOS TOSADA + SWING SISTER: The Port Mahon
MIRROR! MIRROR! + THE GREAT ESKIMO HOAX + EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK + LAKES: The Cellar – Jerky post-punk noise from Birmingham's Mirror! Mirror! plus quirky leftfield pop in a Youthmovies vein from Great Eskimo Hoax and heavyweight prog-core from ESB at tonight's Big Hair club.
MUMFORD & SONS + OWEN TROMANS + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + VON BRAUN: The Jericho Tavern – Rootsy leftfield bluegrass and folk from London's Mumford and Sons, plus campfire folk rock from Truck favourite Owen Tromans and promising local alt-rockers Von Braun.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 11th

OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Various Venues – First day of the fifth Oxford Folk Festival featuring concerts, workshops and ceilidhs across town. Tonight's offerings include sets from Three Daft Monkeys and The Christminster Singers. For full listings visit www.oxfordfolkfestival.com.
DASHBOARD CONFESSIONAL: The Academy – Solo acoustic show from Florida's sensitive bedwett... sorry, emo-folk poet Chris Carrabba. Come, sing along, laugh, cry, feel the pain. Go home alone. Put the CD on. Cry a bit more.
KING FURNACE + SCARAMANGA SIX + DOMES OF SILENCE: The Wheatsheaf – Quickfix night with ripsnorting heavy rockers King Furnace, plus South Yorkshire's raw, operatic garage punks kicking it out in the style of The Damned and heavyweight electro-rockers Domes of Silence.
LIDDINGTON + RUN WALK: The Purple Turtle
IMPERIAL VIPERS + PLUKO + CHALK + ETERNAL SUNSHINE: The Jericho Tavern – Classic hard rock out of Bedfordshire.
THE FAMILY MACHINE + ROB LEVER + JOHN NIVEN: The Corner Club – Wry, lachrymose countrified rock and cinematic pop from the ace Family Machine, plus a special book reading session from music industry satirist John Niven.
THE MIGHTY PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney
SHIRLEY + INLIGHT: The X, Cowley – Benefit gig for the forthcoming Love Music Hate Racism festival in London this month to mark

the 30th anniversary of the first Rock Against Racism rally, which featured The Clash, X-Ray Spex and Tom Robinson. Local 60s-flavoured rockers Shirley headline tonight's show.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + TOMMO + JEREMY & KEVIN: The Magdalen
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live soul and jazz dance from Sun Ensemble, plus resident DJs.
SHAKE: The Academy
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

Friday 18th

THE LONG BLONDES / XXTEENS:

The Academy

Long Blondes' debut album, 'Someone To Drive You Home', was undoubtedly one of the best pure pop albums of the last five years or so, packed as it was with the band's joyously bitter-sweet anthems like 'Giddy Stratospheres' and 'Weekend Without Make-Up', tales of unreliable men and rallying cries for female empowerment. As such, new album 'Couples' is a bit of a surprise, Long Blondes taking a downward turn mood-wise and touching on apparent influences such as Goldfrapp, St Etienne and even Propaganda more than their previous tendencies towards all things Blondie. But on repeat listenings, it's a great move, the band staying a step ahead of the game and still able to craft intricate, intelligent but irresistible pop songs, singer Kate Jackson alternately strident and coquettish and each song dealing with the subject of couples (or more frequently, ex-couples). 80s synth-pop, krautrock and disco all get a look-in on an eclectic, esoteric but genuinely fun album. And with her incisive lyricism, Jackson has the potential to do for disenfranchised teenage girls what Morrissey did for the boys previously. Tonight's support band are called XXTeens and have a singer called Danny Fancy. Go on, Google XXTeens and Fancy and just wait for the cops to come round. Luckily they're worth the effort, electro-heavy death disco and funk that's partway between The Pop Group and Prodigy. No, seriously, officer.



SATURDAY 12th

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + HER NAME IS CALLA: *The Wheatshaeaf* – CD launch gig from The Winchell Riots with great support from majestic Leicester rockers Her Name Is Calla.

SIA: The Academy – Aussie-born, New York-based singer, best known in the UK for her 2000 Top 10 hit, 'Taken For Granted', and Wookie-remixed club hit 'Little Man', as well as her work with Zero 7. Having moved on from her early jazz and r'n'b sound to a folkier, more soulful style, she's drawn comparisons to the likes of Lauren Hill and Dido, and she's over here promoting recent album 'Some People Have Real Problems'. Just don't go listening to her cover version of 'Paranoid Android'.

OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Various Venues -Full day of folkie goings on at Oxford Town Hall, Holywell Music Room and beyond with sets from folk big band Bellowhead, plus veterans Martin Simpson and Danny Thompson, flamenco from Raphael & Lola, plus The Oxford Fiddle Group and many more. There's also a full day of music workshops.

EDDIE RICHARDS + SI YEATS + KOSTAS G: The Cellar – The Godfather of UK house and techno plays a rare Oxford gig, having pioneered his trademark deep bass-driven techno and tribal house sound since the mid-80s, playing legendary nights at The Hacienda and Heaven while acid house was in its infancy and subsequently providing remixes for the likes of Orbital and The Shamen.

KAMIKAZE TEST PILOTS + THIRTY TWO: The Purple Turtle – Heavy rock and old school metal from KTP plus metalcore noise from Thirty Two.

BLACK POWDER + TWAT DADDIES: The Port Mahon

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass with Temper D.

THE KING & QUEEN SHOW: Fat Lil's, Witney – Double tribute band night with Queen and Elvis' greatest hits given a royal airing.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy - Indie and rock club nights with live sets from local elegant prog-pop faves A Silent Film and Wolverhampton's indie-rockers Yelps.

SUNDAY 13th

OFF-FIELD: The Port Mahon (4pm) – Special session of leftfield pop and noise including sets from Brazilian chanteuse Mariana Magnavita, tape-led psych-outs from Clara Kindler, dynamic synth fuzz from Foetus 502, atmospheric electronics from Euhedral, crunching improv from Toad and grotty stadium metal from Chocolate Nuts, plus more.

OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Various Venues - Final day of the festival with a headline set from The Kathryn Tickell Band, plus Brass Monkey and more.

ALPHABEAT: The Academy – Infectiously jaunty Danish popstrels,

currently being looked after by Mika's manager, but don't let that put you off. They're great, in a dead sweet 80s soul-pop kinda way, part S Club 7, part B52s, part Scissor Sisters. Expect a string of Number 1 hits very soon.

SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + HREDA + THEO + 1877: The Purple Turtle – Excellent bill of local leftfield noise, with headliners Sunnyvale coming on in abrasive Kraftwerk-remixed-by-Shellac style. Hreda bring the jazzy math-rock, while loopmeister Theo breathes fresh new life into experimental post-rocking. Darkly-inclined new wavers 1877 open the show in noisy fashion.

MONDAY 14th

THE JAKE WALKER BAND: The Bullingdon – New York-based guitarist and singer in the vein of Otis Rush and Freddie King, injecting a soulful warmth to his electric blues.

I AM KLOOT: The Academy – Masterful 60s-inclined pop, rock and soul from Manchester's underrated mavericks, back with a new album, 'I Am Kloot Play Moolah Rouge', following on from 2005's excellent 'Gods & Monsters', replete with their usual dark, twisted lyricism and understated psychedelia.

RUTH NOTMAN with HANNAH EDMUNDS & SAUL ROSE: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 15th

PAOLO ANGELI + NOSTROMO: The Port Mahon – A rare UK gig from Sardinian guitarist Paolo Angeli at tonight's Oxford Improvisers show, the virtuoso player creating a multi-layered sound of bowed lead, plucked bass and tapped rhythm as he tackles songs by Fred Frith and Bjork amongst his own compositions. Flautist and saxophonist Pete McPhail's Nostromo quartet provide support.

THE BLESSING: The Academy – Jazz horns meet rock rhythms with Bristol's The Blessing, featuring former-Portishead rhythm section Jim Barr and Clive Deamer, plus brass players Pete Judge and Jake McMurchie, whose CV includes Super Furry Animals and The National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Their new album, 'All Is Yes', somehow finds a meeting point between Ornette Coleman and The Stranglers.

TWISTED WHEEL: The Jericho Tavern – The Tavern is increasingly becoming the place to catch rising indie stars at ground level, with Manchester's recent In The City sensations Twisted Wheel very much on the up and up with their laddishly poetic mix of Arctic Monkeys and The Coral.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With guests The Hugh Turner Band.


INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial and darkwave club night.

WEDNESDAY 16th

LETHAL BIZZLE: The Academy – Return visit for the rabble-rousing rap and

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Wednesday 23rd

GOGOL BORDELLO: The Academy

Given that there are precious few proper nutters in rock music these days, we always welcome Gogol Bordello frontman Eugene Hutz back with open arms. The bequipped and heavily-moustachioed singer and general onstage lunatic heads up New York's Gogol Bordello, Madonna's favourite band, for better or worse, and one of the best party bands on the planet – if you like your parties hot, sweaty, dangerous and hosted by a man who might be the lovechild of Borat and Johnny Rotten. Gogol Bordello is a long way from Hutz's Ukrainian upbringing where he was forced to learn about western rock music on illegal radio broadcasts and had to flee his home town after the Chernobyl disaster. Gogol Bordello play what they themselves describe as gypsy punk (also the title of their Steve Albini-produced debut album), a frenzied fusion of traditional Roma wedding music and classic punk. Not a million miles away, in attitude and style, from The Pogues' punked-up Irish folk or Bela Bartok's Eastern European classical folk. A defining moment in Eugene Hutz's life was seeing Sonic Youth play in the Ukraine in 1989, prompting his eventual move to New York. Expect washboards, fiddles and accordion, band members crowd surfing on top of bass drums and plenty of old-fashioned showbiz fun.



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grime showman with an eye on the indie music dollar following a series of collaborations, including with Gallows.

MARTHA ROSE + MINWAH: The Port Mahon – Sneaky Pete club night with folk and country lullaby crooner Martha Rose and 60s American folk-influenced singer Minwah.
SHIRLEY + DEPUITES + BEN PHILLIPS: The Jericho Tavern – Feelgood rock'n'roll and harmony-heavy guitar pop from the local stalwarts.

TOM MIDGELY: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 17th

SUPERMAN REVENGE SQUAD + EN MORCEAUX + JAM ON BREAD + HELEN PEARSON: The Bullingdon – Acoustic night at Swiss Concrete's club session, featuring Croydon's agit-folk one-man-band Superman Revenge Squad, taking a downbeat look at the humdrum nature of life. Local minimalist popstrels En Morceaux support, alongside Manchester's ukulele-toting lo-fi adventurer Jam On Bread.

THE DRESDENS: The Port Mahon – Blitzkrieg garage-punk bop from the unholy union of Winnebago Deal and Jack Goldstein. They rock. Like bastards.

TAMBORINES + INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS + THE LEFT OUTSIDES:

The Jericho Tavern – Wall-of-sound devotional psych pop from London's Tamborines, somewhere between Ride, The Byrds and My Bloody Valentine, ably supported by Oxford's own shoegazing maestros International Jetsetters.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf MARVIS RAVOLT + STRANGERS IN POLAROIDS + UTE: The Cellar

ONE NITE STAND: Fat Lil's, Witney ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 18th

STANTON WARRIORS + SOUL OF MAN: The Academy – Internationally-renowned nu-skool breakbeats duo Dominic Butler and Mark Yardley hit the decks.

TOM HINGLEY & THE LOVERS: The Academy – Soulful garage psychedelia from the Inspiral Carpets frontman, ably assisted by former-Fall chaps Steve and Paul Hanley.

THE LONG BLONDES + XXTEENS: The Academy – Exuberant girl-pop from Sheffield's rising stars – *see main preview*

THE STANLEY BLACKS + SEVEN YEARS ON + TALC DEMONS + SHATTERED DREAMS: The Jericho Tavern – Brighton's rootsy folk-rockers.

TAKE ON THAT: Fat Lil's, Witney – Special tribute to Take That.

PETE BOSS & THE BLUEHEARTS: Didcot Labour Club – Local Clapton-inspired electric bluesman.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon SHAKE: The Academy

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – Nu-school breaks with guest DJ Will Saul from Simple Records.

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 19th

JAMES: The New Theatre – Reformed Manchester hitmakers get back on the road in aid of new album, 'Hey Ma', their first in seven years. Expect songs from that, plus all the old hits, including 'Sit Down' and 'Laid'.

RED LORRY YELLOW LORRY: The Academy – Utterly great hardcore gothic rocking from the reformed Lorries, spawned from the same Leeds scene that produced The Sisters Of Mercy, Skeletal Family and The Mission (Lorries drummer Mick Brown left the band to form the Mish). Cavernous and aggressive in a way that leaned as much towards Killing Joke and Wire as it did their black-clad contemporaries, the likes of 'Monkeys On Juice', 'He's Read' and 'Walking On Your Hands' are classic 80s alternative disco hits.

DEGUELLO + MONDO CADA: The Wheatsheaf – Excellent experimental hardcore noise from Deguello, with support from uber-grunge monsters Mondo Cada.

EXCESS: The Bullingdon – House club night with Micky Slim.

D-BLOCKERS: The Port Mahon

REVELATOR: Fat Lil's, Witney

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM

101: The Academy

VIXENS: The Temple

ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar – Electro and post-punk club night with live bands and guest

SUNDAY 20th

Bugger all. On a stick. With a side order of boiled onions.

MONDAY 21st

HAMILTON LOOMIS: The Bullingdon – Young Texan bluesman who was mentored by Bo Diddley, Clarence Brown and Albert Collins. A virtuoso multi-instrumentalist as adept at piano, drums and blues harp as he is with his trademark Strat guitar, and adding a funky dash to traditional Delta blues.

BEN'S BROTHER + A FINE FRENZY: The Academy – Lightweight soul-pop from the inexplicably popular Ben's Brother.

ELLE MILANO + UNTITLED MUSIC PROJECT + THE GULLIVERS: The Jericho Tavern – Worryingly thin angular indie rockers out of Brighton and recent support to Bloc Party.

ROY BAILEY & JOHN KIRKPATRICK: Nettlebed Folk Club

TUESDAY 22nd

THESE NEW PURITANS: The Academy – Inscrutable, stern and stripped-down funk-up post-punk from Southend's Fall-inspired electro twitch-rockers.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 23rd

GOGOL BORDELLO + SKINDRED: The Academy – Fantastically mayhem gypsy punk – *see main preview*

INIGO JONES BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Acoustic funk, soul and blues.
LUCY & THE CATERPILLAR + YOU & ME: Baby Simple – Winsome acoustic folk and country-pop.
PHIL KING + THE SHIFT: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 24th

ILIKETRAINS + CAT MATADOR: The Academy - Leeds' iLikeTrains must be one of the most unusual bands in the UK at the moment, and not just because they tend to dress in vintage British Rail uniforms and spell their name with an annoying grammatical glitch, but because while their indie counterparts are getting rich quick singing about going to McDonald's or fighting at taxi ranks, iLikeTrains are making ten-minute epics documenting everything from the assassination of British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval, to the Beeching Report to chess champion Bobby Fischer. All of which are conveyed by way of funereal epics that marry goth, shoegazing and new wave. They've been coming to Oxford regularly over the last couple of years and each time to larger crowds.

MEPHISTO GRANDE + KEYBOARD CHOIR: Freud's – Wonderfully guttural gospel blues racket from Mephisto Grande, launching their debut CD tonight, with support from atmospheric electro ensemble Keyboard Choir.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf
TELLING THE BEES + CHRIS & ROXY +

JOSH KNIGHT: The Jericho Tavern – Poetic trad folk in the Fairport traditional from local troupe Telling The Bees.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
SMASH DISCO: The Academy – Featuring a live set from Baby Gravy.
ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro and house club night.

FRIDAY 25th

KARINE POLWART: The Academy – Pure, dark-edged traditional folk from the Scottish singer and guitarist and former member of The Battlefield Band, who recently won the Best Original Song title at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards for 'Daisy', this following on from her three gongs at the 2005 awards for her debut album, 'Faultlines'.

NIZLOPI: The Academy – Back in Oxford after last October's low-key Jericho Tavern gig, Luke Concannon and John Parker kick out their soulful folk-pop with an odd array of instruments, including Parker's human beatboxing and double bass, while nearly-Christmas Number 1, 'The JCB Song', is sure to be the night's big singalong moment.

SLIDE: The Academy – House club night with guest DJ James Holden.

THE HALF RABBITS + SENNEN: The Wheatsheaf – Oxjam gig from the local gothic pop favourites The Half Rabbits, plus shoegazing sonic spiralists Sennen.

MISO ENSEMBLE: Jacqueline du Pre Building – First of two nights of contemporary Portuguese music from OCM, tonight featuring composer, poet and percussionist Miguel Azguime providing a multi-medium show of electronics, words and projections.
MOSHKA with SHIRLEY: The Bullingdon – Cheery harmonic pop and Latin-tinged rock'n'roll.
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
DANIEL HAMMERSLEY + MARTHA ROSWELL + TAMARA PARSONS + FACEOMETER: The Jericho Tavern – Sensitive acoustic pop balladeer Daniel Hammersley headlines an acoustic songwriters night.
NOT MY DAY: The X, Cowley – Love Music, Hate Racism benefit.
DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN: The Purple Turtle
POWERTRAIN: Fat Lil's, Witney
THE PETE FRYER BAND + THE MIGHTY REDOX: Jack Russell, Marston
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SHAKE: The Academy
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 26th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with ONE DOLLAR PEEPSHOW + VOLKENFUNK + JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS: The Wheatsheaf – Good-natured Cardigans-style indie synth-pop from One Dollar Peepshow at tonight's reliably mixed GTI bill. Joining them are Teutonic electro dance duo Volkefunk and

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Sunday 27th

THE KILLS:

The Academy

If you're really shallow or bored or simply a *Heat*-reading mouth breather, you could come along tonight just to see if Kate Moss is in the crowd – the Burford-dwelling stick person being the current squeeze, Jamie Hince, one half of The Kills, alongside Florida-born musical partner Alison Mosshart. But really, there are several dozen better reasons to make the trip down to tonight's gig. The Kills have, suitably enough, remained in the darker shadows of pop's underworld since their garage-rocking debut album, 'Keep On Your Mean Side', the duo sharing a love for all things Velvet Underground, Beefheart and Suicide and with follow-up album 'No Wow' sidling further into lo-fi electro minimalism. But now their new album, 'Midnight Boom', finds them opening up their musical vista and discovering the joy of dancing, produced as it is by Alex Epton (aka Armani XXXchange). With those beats come a heightened sense of melody and increased emotional resonance, with odes to east London clubbing alongside tales of failed romance. Even with the new glam girlfriend and lighter musical tone, it's not going to be a laugh-a-minute party tonight, Jamie and Alison remaining an almost closed-off unit on stage, their introspection serving as a defence mechanism against the world that only serves to heighten the abundant tension in the music.

emotive folk-pop duo Joe and Angharad.

THE SMITH QUARTET: Jacqueline du Pre Building – Continuing Oxford Contemporary Music's celebration of new Portuguese music, The Smith Ensemble provide electronics and string-led interpretations of Miguel Azguime and Carlos Caires.

JUSTIN ADAMS & JULDEH CAMARA: The Academy – Excellent marriage of rootsy blues and rock and Gambian folk music tonight as guitarist and producer Justin Adams (who plays with Robert Plant's band) teams up with singer and riti player Juldeh Camara, the pair having just released an album, 'Soul Science', together.

HARRY ANGEL + JONNY DARE: The Purple Turtle – Fuzzcore pop from Harry Angel.

THE EPSTEIN: The Jericho Tavern – Local country rock favourites headline tonight's Coo Coo Club.

RESERVOIR CATS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Good-time hard rocking blues.

THE RUINS + STORNOWAY + DEATH BY ORCHESTRA: Stocks Bar, Abingdon – Skittle Alley bands night with indie rockers The Ruins and celtic-tinged pop starlets Stornoway.

SOUL & REGGAE NIGHT: The Bullingdon TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SOULJACKER + DEAD LEG: The Temple HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.

SUNDAY 27th

THE KILLS: The Academy – Dark-hearted lo-fi garage noise from the deadly duo – *see main preview*

THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD: The New Theatre – Extravagant tribute to the gods of prog.

ZANGRYUS + SACRED DIVIDE: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 28th

GREGG WRIGHT: The Bullingdon – Rocking blues from California's Gregg Wright, a left-handed guitarist playing a right-handed guitar upside down. A renowned session musician who has played with Spencer Davis and Michael Jackson, cranking out classic blues and rock anthems as well as his own songs.

MYSTERY JETS: The Academy – Back with a second album, '21', but without dad – Henry Harrison. Where now for Eel Pie's psychedelic prog-pop weirdoes? Towards a more jangly, contemplative sound if recent singles are anything to go on.

ANGUS & JULIA STONE: The Jericho Tavern – Sweet-natured, childlike acoustic pop, with elements of Fleetwood Mac and Simon & Garfunkel, from the Sydney-based brother/sister duo, whose recent 'A Book Like This' album went top 10 in their native Australia, having been recorded in Fran Healey from Travis' living room.

LITTLE JOHNNY ENGLAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – English folk-rockers utilising squeezebox, fiddle and slide guitar to add a trad edge to their more contemporary rock sound.

JAZZ JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

TUESDAY 29th

DJ YODA'S MAGIC CINEMA SHOW: The Academy – Scratching, breakbeats and general turntable mischief from DJ Yoda.

ULRICH SCHNAUSS + AIRIEL + INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS: The Cellar – Eyes down, there's your shoes, have a good gaze – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet.

HEADINGTON CATWEAZLE: Kiln Lane Community Centre, Risinghurst – The longstanding open mic club takes a short vacation out of the ring road for the night.

WEDNESDAY 30th

HEALTH + ELAPSE-O + JAYETAL: The Wheatsheaf – First date of a mammoth European tour for LA's primal noise experimentalists, taking on influences from krautrock to pagan industrial folk to create a savage but inventive clatter of metallic electro noise that leans at times towards the likes of Liars and Gang Gang Dance. Local experimental starlets E lapse-O support, along with fuzzy Mactronica two-piece Jayetal.

THE SCRIPT: The Jericho Tavern – Genial soul and r'n'b from the rising Irish hopefuls.

MAY WARNING: The Port Mahon – May eve musical party.

INFLATABLE BUDDHA: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic set from the cabaret-poetry collective.

Tuesday 29th

ULRICH SCHNAUSS / AIRIEL: The Cellar

Sonic Cathedral presents another quality night of shoegazing noise with German electro-noise starlet Ulrich Schnauss out on tour with recent collaborators Aerial, from Chicago. Schnauss' most recent album, 'Goodbye', his first for Domino Records, finds him in his trademark oceanic ambient territory, mixing up tender melodies with huge washes of noise and underpinned by discreet Balearic beats, like a hybrid of Tangerine Dream, Chapterhouse and My Bloody Valentine, while there are still hints of his ambient drum&bass origins. Schnauss' dreamy soundscapes are given an even more ethereal feel by Judith Beek's vocals and his expansive arrangements make it music to lose yourself in. You could say the same about Aerial, who arrive in the UK to promote their debut album, 'The Battle Of Sealand', armed with titanic waves of distorted guitar noise, the better to relive the gloy days of Ride and Slowdive, and they'll be chuffed to find Loz Colbert from Ride playing with tonight's opening band, International Jetsetters, formed with fellow current Mary Chain chap Mark Crozer, the band complementing tonight's line-up fully as they delve into the heavily-flanged world of Spacemen 3 and Magoo. Indie music as it was made before the corporations stole it away.



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

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Purple Turtle

7.45 International Jetsetters
8.30 Cat Matador
9.15 Elapse-O
10.00 Raggasaurus

Wheatsheaf

8.15 Tristan & The Troubadours
9.00 Non-Stop Tango
9.45 Alphabet Backwards
10.30 Rubber Duck

Thirst Lodge

8.30 Black Skies Burn
9.30 Little Fish
10.30 Sikorsky
11.30 King Furnace

Cellar

9.00 Eduard Sounding Block
10.00 David K Frampton
11.00 50ft Panda
12.00 Clanky Robo Gobjobs

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LIVE

GARY NUMAN

The Academy

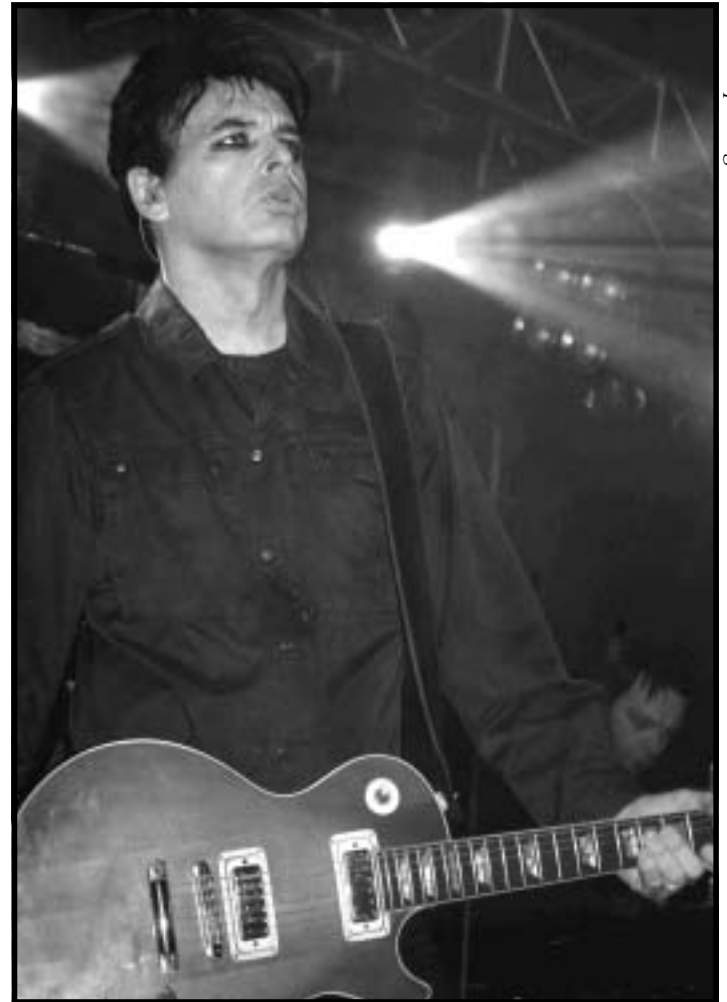
Nearly 30 years since 'Are Friends Electric?' launched him onto a journey as one of the biggest, and yet most critically reviled, pop stars on the planet, and in the week he celebrates his 50th birthday, Gary Numan is performing in front of a sold out Oxford audience for the first time since the early 80s. Rarely has a musical star shone so brightly, fallen so spectacularly and risen again so defiantly as his.

Numan's current tour is a celebration of 'Replicas', his 1979 masterpiece from which 'AFE?' was taken, and which has become a benchmark in electronic and industrial music, inspiring everyone from Nine Inch Nails, Kurt Cobain and Beck to Blur, Dr Dre and Afrika Bambaataa, sampled and covered to death, its dystopian sci-fi imagery seemingly as potent now as it was back in those pre-*Bladerunner* days. Electronic music has advanced phenomenally since 'Replicas' was created, but its raw, brutally linear sounds have dated well and with a full live production, the power that leaks from tracks like the set-opening album title track is incredible, waves of eerie bass synths cut through by serrated guitar noise and topped off

by Numan's emotionally detached android sneer and potentially sparse lyrics.

Playing the album in its entirety means some favourites, like 'Are Friends Electric?' (saved til last), the monolithic 'Down In The Park' and the swirling, paranoid 'Me, I Disconnect From You' get yet another airing, while more obscure tracks like 'The Machman' – the highlight of tonight's set with its abrasive proto-industrial lunge and sexually ambiguous existentialism – and 'It Must Have Been Years' – Kurt's fave, with its guitars a throwback to Tubeway Army's early punk sound – are rarer treats.

For the fanatical Numanoid connoisseurs (and few fanbases are more fanatical than Numan's) it's the outtakes from that period that make the show: 'We Have A Technical', previously covered by Damon Albarn and Weezer's Matt Sharp, is almost playful electro-pop, while 'We're The Crazies' sounds every bit the lost new wave gem it was never credited as. Two instrumental pieces, from the tail-end of 'Replicas', throw contrasting lights on the album: the haunting, atmospheric 'I Nearly Married A Human', and the throwaway 'When The Machines Rock',



although the latter's title could theoretically sum up Numan's music in one. Before 'Replicas' electronic music was mostly the preserve of lab-based boffins, leftfield experimenters and prog-rock fantasists. Numan's Philip K Dick-inspired concept album about a decaying future world changed the musical landscape immeasurably.

And as he finishes his set with a song from a much more recent album, 'A Prayer For The Unborn', it's obvious that creative spark is back after so long in the wilderness. Good things come to those who wait, and after 30 years of waiting, it seems Gary Numan has finally earned the respect and acclaim that was so long due to him.

Dale Kattack

GRAVEPAINTINGS / ALEXANDER THOMAS / EUHEDRAL / DTV

The Port Mahon

Tabletop improv often has the excitement of its vast range of sound options tempered by the inevitable gap between musical events that is dictated by the time taken to put one thing down and pick another up. Copious use of delay can mask this to a certain extent, but it still imposes a rhythm on the music that can result in predictability. DTV manages to avoid this pitfall, sampling himself bowing strings and bashing metal pipes to create a surprisingly dynamic soundscape that can rush from heavy static to something delicate that sounds like ivory raindrops falling into a tin bucket. This kind of performance can be fascinating, but is rarely this exciting.

Euhedral isn't in our dictionary, but logic dictates it should mean "having pleasing surfaces". Pretty apt, when his miasma of reverbed voice, rubbed guitar strings and

keyboard drones is agreeable, but doesn't seem to boast much depth, in contrast with other Euhedral gigs we've witnessed. Euphonious but hardly euphoric. The final track shows what he *can* achieve, shoving sandpapery rasps about beneath a slow copter blade pulse to eerie effect.

Some people claim that making music from loops and effect pedals is too easy. Alexander Thomas counters this by using only theremin for his sound sources, which is one of the hardest instruments to play well (if a guitar with no frets sounds difficult, imagine one with no neck or strings either, and that's how awkward a theremin is to control). Quickly bypassing the b-movie clichés of the instrument, Thomas builds up a sensual series of sonic constructions, that are alternately scouring and beautiful. Unbelievably his last

number manages to somehow create crunchy beats from the theremin, and sounds like a lost Mu-Ziq classic. Plus he's a dapper dresser; there's too much scruffiness in alt music. All hail.

Birmingham's Gravepaintings have a tough act to follow, and initially their samples of choice – snake charmer reeds and tropical bird warbles – make them sound unpleasantly like a queasy update of world trancers Loop Guru.

Thankfully these elements soon get lost in a vast wave of trouser-flapping noise the likes of which we're amazed the Port PA can handle. Physically powerful, then, but nothing here to stand out from other droneheads doing the rounds. Gravepaintings' music may be about building to a climax, but they're a bit of a squib at the end of a satisfying and eventful evening.

David Murphy

SON OF DAVE / TOM MANSI & THE ICEBREAKERS / LIAM INGS-REEVES

The Jericho Tavern

An unholy roar greets my pasty ears walking up the Jericho Tavern stairs, folky echoes and thundering drums. Ah, good, Liam Ings-Reeves, Oxford's prime growler, with Mephisto Grande and before that Suitcase Case For Treatment, tonight on his solo project. Reeves is the wonderfully obscure zenith in the muddy pool of the Oxford scene mediocrity – his vocal chords have done more for the local scene than [insert dull Oxford band here] could ever do, and praise be to him for it. Crazy blues chugging is familiar territory and he looks smashing also – black stripy shirt with fuzzy tiger tie can't be argued with.

Tom Mansi & The Icebreakers are a slightly dull rock n' roll affair, but it's always nice to see a double bass. Next.

In his own words, Benjamin Darvill, aka Son Of Dave, does "drinking, lovemaking and fighting songs... over a pool game... or a

woman". He also calls it 'porno music' – charming. Not only does he provide ace columns for music paper The Stool Pigeon, he looks just like the cowboy from *Mulholland Drive*. Uncanny. The one-man Son Of Dave machine is a multi-tasking polyglot of the musical world: a left foot steadily stomping, right hand waving a crackly shaker apparatus, other hand holding a harmonica and funny-shaped mic thing. What pours out of his knackered lo-fi VOX amp is a rambunctious, belly-pummelling medley of beat-boxing gospel noise, loop-pedal blues; a manic alcoholic merrymaking. Son Of Dave is a high priest of crowd involvement, inviting one straight-laced lass and a jovial chap onto the stage for apples, Kronenbourg, and a good go at the shakers. It's when he admits near the end: "Okay, I'm going to play the next song and then pretend to leave," you know



Son Of Dave photo: www.myspace.com/johnsphotos

he's a legend. Music this absurdly fuss free should pass without any philosophising last sentence, so let

us part with: hail, hail Son Of Dave!
Pascal Ansell

CHARLIE DARK'S AFRICAN BEATS

The Academy

Charlie Dark is a prolific musician and poet, part of now defunct band Attica Blues and founder of the Blacktronica collective of artists spanning various creative arts. This short tour was billed as a culture clash of African rhythms and digital beats and features guitar, African percussion and electronics. The pieces are mainly instrumentals, varying in mood and revealing a band very much in tune with each other's ideas. Early on we get a great number that recalls tribal deep house, lazy but insistent, with the emphasis on each instrument working together to create one sound. At other times individuals take prominence, notably Chief Udoh Essiet, a Nigerian master drummer who demonstrates the talking drum and explains its place in traditional life. He used to play in Fela Kuti's band, which is about as cred-worthy as you can get in African terms. Later on things get a bit more freeform and bring to mind Weather Report, the 70s jazz-fusion collective whose members, though hugely talented individually,

never quite fulfilled their potential as a band.

Dark's digital beats and samples are actually quite understated, laid down more as a tapestry for the other instruments to weave on. As a strategy it's proved controversial historically: Salif Keita got a lot of stick in the 80s for wanting to record his classic 'Soro' album in a state-of-the-art studio with full digital facilities, and I remember having bad-tempered conversations with hardcore world music types who thought this was outrageous.

Intriguing though tonight's show is, it would have been more enjoyable to have come pre-armed with knowledge of the material, as there's clearly new ground being broken, but as it happens they've yet to commit this project to an album. If this all works out they could become the new darlings of the summer festival circuit. If it doesn't, well, Charlie Dark's got plenty of other projects to chance his arm at.

Art Lagun

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THE GO! TEAM

The Academy

Great. Just when it seems that human activity has screwed up the climate so much that winter is now a year-round event and there are more reported sightings of Lord Lucan than of the sun, the media decide to unveil the news that Prozac is as effectual as the spoonful of sugar that helped it go down. What's a person supposed to do to squeeze any measure of enjoyment out of life?

Good thing there are bands like The Go! Team around. Fizzy, frothy and day-glo bright, they are pure aural serotonin. A six-piece hailing from Brighton, their musical reference points are an unlikely assortment of indie rock, cheerleader chants, early 80s hip-hop and clap-in clap-out playground games. With a hefty smattering of kids' TV themes on the side. These pick'n'mix grabbings are sugar-dusted by bursts of rap delivered by Ninja - whose moniker just about sums up the kitschy manga cartoon aesthetic - in a style strongly reminiscent of Neneh Cherry. Other guilty pleasures in evidence are Bis, Salt-n-Pepa, Les Rhythmes Digitales and, erm, The Smart E's. Caught up in this candy-junk rush, the band gleefully cavort about the stage, disco-dancing and tossing instruments amongst themselves like relay batons. They buzz with all the giddy effervescence of a frat party in a US teen movie - without the macho strutting that tends to accompany such excursions. It's impossible not to love them.

The one bit of fault-finding here (and I feel I must include some because, let's face it, a start-to-finish eulogy can be a bit tiresome to read) is the sound. It's so loud that you feel your eardrums are being pounded by the wrong end of a chisel, yet it's impossible to make out any of the high-end stuff. To crank some more mileage out of the teen party analogy, there are times when you feel like the kid without an invite who is left to prowling enviously outside. However, it would be churlish to hold this against them, especially as it detracts little from the fun. With their irrepressible soda-pop exuberance, The Go! Team are enough to convince you that a product engendering pure happiness isn't just a myth spun by dodgy pharmaceutical research bodies after all.

Emily Gray

VAMPIRE WEEKEND

The Academy

African music hasn't been as hip in this country since John Peel was championing the likes of Bhundu Boys and Four Brothers back in the late-80s, but with everyone from Foals to Damon Albarn pillaging the rhythms and harmonies of the continent, now is exactly the right time for Brooklyn's Vampire Weekend to be this month's hottest new band around.

Wearing their Ivy League educations and well-to-do suburban America roots firmly on their sleeves, Vampire Weekend seem to be daring class-obsessed UK music fans to hate them from the off, but tonight's sold-out show and the band's fanatical reception prove that great pop music is truly classless, even when it's singing about obscure points of grammar ('Oxford Comma') or equally obscure points of architecture (set opener 'Mansard Roof'). Even when, like Vampire Weekend, it dresses itself exactly like a bunch of recent Ivy League graduates tend to dress (a bit like Haircut 100 or Orange Juice, truth be told). Add in some heavy-duty musical referencing of The Police and

Vampire Weekend seem like that once rare but increasingly popular phenomenon, an American band geared almost entirely towards the British indie scene.

The band's self-styled "Upper West Side Soweto" style might sound contrived if the resultant pop music wasn't so damn great - 'Cape Cod Kwassa Kwassa', with its nods to Ghanaian hi-life and Nigerian juju music is pure musical sunshine, while the Township guitar sounds littered throughout the set go well beyond tokenistic cherry-picking. Strip virtually any of the songs tonight of their more worldly edge and they'd still stand up as sweet, simple pop gems, a sprightly quickstep away from retro AOR kitsch. You can even forgive them for reminding you of They Might Be Giants as singer Ezra Koenig yelps "Who gives a fuck about an Oxford comma", because in its way it's about as far away from the witless lyrical nothingness of Pigeon Detectives and their ilk as it's possible to get. No doubt about it, Vampire Weekend are going to be the feelgood hit of this summer.

Sue Foreman

EINSTELLUNG / XMAS LIGHTS / CITY LIGHTS JUST BURN

The Wheatsheaf

On a night of quite astonishing musical power, City Lights Just Burn have got their work cut out not to get bulldozed into the tarmac. And, on balance, they fight their corner admirably. There's a suspicion, particularly in the first half of their set, that they're not entirely sure what they want to be - mixing up elements of post-rock, new wave and American punk into a slightly messy whole, but once they let themselves dig a groove and stick to it they really come into their own, a couple of rumbling instrumental passages signposting exactly where their strengths lie, while retaining a sullen melodic edge.

Missing lead guitarist James Gray-King, Xmas Lights prove that last month's sublime show at the Cellar was no fluke, steering away from that night's more hardcore metal noise into darker, more atmospheric synth-led territory, Nick B and Umair Chaudhry's distorted vocal screams lacing the doomy industrial ambience with genuine menace, like a bizarre but entirely satisfying

collision of Eno and Neurosis.

Birmingham's krautrocking instrumentalists Einstellung might not possess Xmas Lights' brutality, but they have a casual, even nonchalant relentlessness that has every head in the room nodding zombie-like as the band's sonic blanket of crescendos and plateaux, driven along by unforgiving motorik grooves, becomes singularly hypnotic.

Einstellung are four earnest-looking, black-clad men who, in another life, look like they might be providing muscular back-up to some megalomaniac Bond villain, but instead they channel their contempt for humanity into tightly-orchestrated musical thunder. There isn't a single break in their hour-long set as it steers an intricate but linear course between Neu!'s steely glide and Smashing Pumpkins' virulent grunge pop, and if you could capture and bottle the energy pouring from the stage, you could solve the world's fossil fuel dependency in an instant.

Dale Kattack

the port mahon

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DREADZONE / DUBWISER

The Academy

Dubwiser have seemingly been around for so long that vocalist Jonas' son has been recruited as percussionist for the band. Still, such longevity can only point to the quality of the band or their dogged determination. Facing a crowd that are initially hard work Dubwiser never stop their attempts to get everyone moving. Part of the problem might be that their material can be found hanging around the fringes of roots and rocksteady. At times it's just a little too laid back to set the crowd alight, but their performance is faultless. As an example of perfectly executed reggae you won't find better. In Jonas, Dubwiser have a frontman who is eminently watchable. There he is lost in his music, dreads flying, grin on his face and foot up on the monitor willing the audience to move to the solid bass lines. Okay, so his slightly dodgy socks throw us off a little bit, but when he starts to play a bongo solo with his son on their closing track you can't help but feel a little warm inside. That warmth is quickly dispelled by Dreadzone's vocalist who falls into the trap that so many stumble into having read *Bass Culture*. His *faux* patois is irritating beyond belief. If he didn't then treat us to additional impressions of "Northern Comedian" and "Cockerney Barrow Boy" later on, you'd assume he was just an ignorant fool. This minor niggle aside, Dreadzone are nothing short of stunning. The older songs help the audience find their dancing feet, and within seconds the



Dreadzone photo by Sam Shepherd

floor of the Academy is bouncing under the weight of frantic skanking. They may not have huge record sales, but you can tell that Dreadzone honed their craft on the festival circuit as they keep the tempo high and the people dancing.

New songs such as the awful 'MySpace' are messy and lacking cohesion, but when you've got the likes of 'Little Britain' in the bank and a live show that pleases every time, such things are unlikely to be a concern.

Sam Shepherd

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THE LONG INSIDERS / **THE BLACK HATS**

The Jericho Tavern

Ah, the Nineties. The current accepted musical view of this much-maligned decade re-imagines it as an embarrassing pile of regurgitated vomit, chunks of previous decades swilling about in shiny, overproduced bile. What's remarkable is how we ever managed to escape such postmodernist trappings – if indeed we ever did.

The Black Hats' oeuvre seems to straddle the divide between the previous decade and the present day, half of it moulded in the image of the Foo Fighters, the other half sounding like a meaty Young Knives. The effect of this dual purpose is a little unsettling, giving the impression that the band are desperately seeking commercialism by hopping genre to match the zeitgeist, rather than sticking to their guns. They needn't worry – they can pen a great indie pop song and their grasp of dynamics and structure is commendable. Lacking the gruff Grohl growl or any discernable oddball charm to match their all-too-obvious musical influences mean they appear to fall short when, with a little less focus on making it big and a little more time developing their own take on things, they should be up there with the best of 'em.

One peculiar Nineties sub-genre which is quite understandably overlooked is the cod-spy theme. As the Bond films gathered pace the rapidly-aging Britpop kids seemed to fall over themselves to write tunes for the soundtracks – and fall they inevitably did. Though clearly soundtracking some imaginary spy film, The Long Insiders are thankfully made of sterner stuff. Nick Cave's shadow looms large, lending genuine menace to familiar, reverb-soaked guitar lines and classically clattering drums. The cherry on the cake, however, is the passionate wail of singer Sarah Dodd, who is the single most glamorous individual to grace an Oxford stage in living memory. While a forty-five minute set tires a little towards the end due to a limited tonal palette (a couple more tear-jerkers wouldn't go amiss), there's still more than enough musical substance here to transcend the wilfully dated aesthetic.

And that's the answer, kids – playing cool music does not make you cool. Playing good music lets you get away with being cool. How nice to leave a gig having learned something.

Joe Swarbrick

JOHNNY FOREIGNER / THE YOUNGS **PLAN / RECONCILIATIONS**

The Jericho Tavern

Now, I've been known to enjoy many strands of weirdsville music in the past; from sheets of unabated white noise, to miniscule scraping at minimal volumes, to hyperscreaming idiocy. Sometimes I wonder why even I listen to half of the music that I do. So with that on my mind, we start with Reconciliations, who are either (a) a glorious journey into the furthest reaches of super-delayed guitar arpeggio; or (b) what it sounds like when the guitarist that you're thinking of ditching from your band *just won't stop* playing with his new Boss DD-6. With this kind of sound it's up to you to decide – as Chuck D would say – what side YOU on. Personally, I may have enjoyed this more if I lived inside the band's speaker cones, and wasn't a casual observer supping a quiet pint at the back of the room.

The Youngs Plan come at their experimentalism from a different perspective: they're offcuts of the same material that helped to construct both Youthmovies and This Town Needs Guns, if one needs to place this local band in a local context. They do what any self-respecting Oxfordian would expect of an alerno-guitar-rockist-band: they change time signatures with awkward confidence;

they build and build and build and build; they do that high-guitar-small-bowing-manoeuvre movement that is as familiar as the Jericho Tavern's wall-painting is garish. They're totally competent and slick, but in a world drenched with the alternative, it'd be nice to have something *normal*.

And that's where Johnny Foreigner come in. They're the one band tonight that doesn't seem to be striving to prove a point of musicianship, coolness, weirdness or originality. They just *are* all of those things, wrapped up in a ball of Huggy-Bear-Heavenly-Bis indie pop noise that's incredibly infectious and baggage-free. Eschewing the oft-made mistake of not having the skills to back up the chaos and mess, they romp through an outstanding set of high-speed, boy/girl shouty cute aggression that passes by as quickly as a good hour in the indie 7's section of a quality independent record store. They're like bands used to be – and hopefully will be again soon. Weirdsville is going to be over soon, and if this band and their playing things old school style is what's coming back, I'm looking backwards to a bright future.

Simon Minter

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NIGHTSHIFT

PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU

Tel: 01865 372255

email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net

Online: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

Editor: Ronan Munro

**Contributors: Sue Foreman, Victoria Waterfield,
Steve Thompson Kirsten Etheridge, Simon Minter,
Sam Shepherd, Stuart Fowkes, Katy Jerome,
Ian Chesterton, Pascal Ansell, David Murphy,
Emily Gray, Russell Barker, Colin May, Art Lagun,
Richard Hounslow, Joe Swarbrick**



ELIZA / COGWHEEL DOGS / WE AERONAUTS

The Bullingdon

It seems that everyone is looking for the next Arcade Fire these days. Apparently Black Kids were in the running despite the fact the difference couldn't be more apparent. It would appear that We Aeronauts are willing to step up and attempt to follow in the footsteps of Win Butler and co. There's enough of them, the quirky instrumentation is in place (Glockenspiel) and Roll is the next big thing, apparently) as is the cacophony of backing vocals and yet something is missing. Having elaborately-titled songs doesn't matter a jot when the arrangements aren't as tight and interesting as they should be. Their songs certainly have more ideas than some indie chancers out there, but poor timing and worried signals after missed cues conspire to betray them. It's a shaky night for them, but the signs are that with a little polishing We Aeronauts could be a little gem.

Cogwheel Dogs is essentially Rebecca Moseley and cellist Tom Parnell as we've known them for some time, but they've augmented the sound with the addition of some well placed drums. Initially we're not entirely sure it works, but slowly come round to the fact that whatever percussion there may be, it is never intrusive. Musically Moseley is still taking folk music to a different level. This is *avant* folk, and while it may not always be an easy listen it is certainly beguiling and haunting.

Eliza Newman, one time singer with Icelandic popstrels Bellatrix, manages to avoid all the usual baggage that you would associate with an artist from that country. There are no ethereal soundscapes here, merely straightforward indie pop. Ordinarily this would not be a problem but Eliza's songs never quite hit the mark. New single 'Change My Name' highlights her way with a sultry croon and a spiky tune, and the sorrowful ballad 'Return To Me' tugs at the heart strings effectively, but elsewhere her material lacks bite. It's a real shame but when you're capable of the kind of beauty that lies at the heart of 'Return To Me' only a churl would write Eliza off just yet.

Sam Shepherd

INSPIRAL CARPETS

The Academy

Inspiral Carpets never really got their critical due first time round – not as hard as Happy Mondays, or as cool as The Stone Roses, they were always treated as poor cousins on the late-80s Manchester scene despite a musical canon that easily eclipses the Mondays' much overrated output. That they've survived intact (tonight's line-up is the same as their commercial peak 18 years ago) says a lot and means tonight's gig is much more than a run through the hits by an ageing frontman and a bunch of session musicians (hello, Shaun Ryder).

Initially, though, it's all a bit of a mess, the band clambering through the first few numbers clumsily, only Clint Boon's sparkling Farfisa organ lifting them above pub rock standard. But when they hit their stride and start picking the best bits off debut album, 'Life', they come to life and a surprisingly up for it crowd (who have spent much of the half hour before the band arrive mooing loudly in tribute to the band's legendary old Cow logo) is lost in frenzied nostalgia. 'Directing Traffic' and 'Real Thing' buzz with psychedelic garage-rock energy, while 'She Comes In The Fall' shimmers hazily, its 60s-

styled harmonies playing off a strident marching snare beat.

The bowl cuts of yore are long gone, both frontman Tom Hingley and Clint Boon now close-cropped and looking slightly gaunt, but Tom's voice has held up well and when he sings the first line of 'This Is How It Feels', the band's heartbreaking paean to depression and unemployment, it's only the crowd's determination to join in that keeps a lump from every throat.

There's a similarly tangible rush of emotion for 'Move' but it's the frantic buzzing grooves of 'Butterfly' and 'Joe' that really cap a show that defies any potential for disappointment. It's undeniable that this latest Inspiral tour is nothing more and nothing less than an exercise in earning a few quid reliving past glories, but when that past is awash with minor pop classics, it's well worth reliving and tonight proves that Inspiral Carpets have not only survived the passage of the years far better than most of their contemporaries, they were always superior to their bigger, tougher contemporaries.

Ian Chesterton

PETE BOSS AND THE BLUEHEARTS

The Bullingdon

Pete Boss and the Bluehearts are held in particular affection by Oxford blues fans. This is partially down to being an Oxford band with a twenty-year history of keeping the blues flame burning locally since their start as The Elmore's in 1987. As well as Pete Boss, singer Tex Elmore and drummer Danny Gonzalez were from the original band. But mostly, on a good night, their no-nonsense, let-the-music-do-the-talking approach just warms your heart.

Tonight is one of those nights, which is remarkable as they have not long emerged from a two-year hibernation from gigging, and anyway they only do occasional gigs. They come out of the traps so fast and tight, reeling off the first three numbers without a break, with fluency and confidence, it makes me think they must have spent most of those two years doing nothing but rehearsing. It's six numbers in before we get the first slow blues, by which time the audience at The Famous Monday Night Blues is theirs.

Stevie Ray Vaughan and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers are big influences on how they play their own compositions and the Otis

Rush and Little Milton numbers they do. But also they play a couple of more r'n'b funk sounding tunes and the second half opener has a country rock feel. Pete Boss is a blues guitar virtuoso who even in the most high-speed licks is able to make nearly every note crystal clear. In 'City of Angels', his guitar soars like a trumpet, which could be thought showboating, but actually feels more like Dr Boss serving the music. Tex Elmore's voice now has a stronger, lower register, making his vocals sound better than ever. With Tony Jezzard of Reservoir Cats deputising on the keyboard, the night is a summit conference of top local blues talent.

The only slight disappointment for sentimentalists is that the band don't do Steve Ray Vaughan's 'Mary Had A Little Lamb', a signature number for the Elmore's. Conversely the highpoint is the slow blues 'What Love Can Make You Do', with Boss's guitar and Jezzard's keyboard bouncing call and response back and forth before Tony launches into a fine jazz-funk-influenced keyboard solo. The verdict of the room: don't go back into hibernation again.

Colin May

GUILLEMOTS/IDA MARIA

The Academy

Tonight is part of a promotional tour for Guillemots' about to be released second album 'Red'. 'Red' lights are draped over amps and speakers and are hanging behind the bands from the top of the stage in loops that just might be nooses.

Ida Maria, from the far north of Norway, is in a red dress too. I only catch her last two breathless, back-of-the-throat Björk-tinged Scandie songs. Ida has a publicity picture designed as a police mug shot, and the beginnings of a reputation for hyperactive gigs, but tonight, without her band, she is a demure and well-mannered support act who is no threat to the headliners.

For no apparent reason it is an age, and three false starts in the crowd, before the cheer can go up for Guillemots taking to the stage. They launch into a dirty, aggressive mashed-up siren sound that I don't like but their hardcore fans lap up. I can't tell how much of the mash is deliberate and how much such rotten sound balance, that Arista Hawkes on double bass, plus the sax duo, needn't have bothered for the early numbers in the set.

It is only Fyfe Dangerfield's great voice that shines through this part of the set. Whether singing falsetto, resentful, angry rock or

introspective singer-songwriter, he is attention grabbing. His solo version, with only his acoustic guitar, of 'We're Here' induces an intense silence in the crowd.

The second half of the set is a whole lot better. Now the fine jazz-inflected double bass lines are audible and snatches of, albeit rather ineffectual, floaty sax making the dirty flamenco / fado trash metal guitar, and the pounding drums of Greig Stewart – ex-drummer with Suitable Case For Treatment – far less dominant. Also, much needed, the excitement level rises several notches during 'Trains in Brazil' and 'Sao Paulo', though the band's low-key encore means a disappointingly flat finish.

This is a much more straight-up rock gig than expected, with Fyfe out front with a guitar, the saxophones having little impact and no quirky stage antics. The improv and jazz influence remain but only in snatches. What next, even more of a stadium sound for headlining big festival stages, or Fyfe playing at an Oxford Improvisers gig in a minuscule venue as he did in 2004 when known as Hutchins?

What's interesting is it may not be either-or, but just might be both.

Colin May

DR SHOTOVER

The Piss Artist Formerly Known As...

...Hugo-Ffoulkes-Morrison! That was his name. I was undercover in Chittagong at the time, and this chap in a crumpled linen suit, allegedly attached to the Consulate, was always in the hotel bar knocking back the Johnnie Walker-and-orange like it was going out of style... He claimed to be related to Sterling Morrison, but I couldn't see it, somehow... especially when he mentioned that Jim and Van were his cousins, too. I gather he went troppo later, married a local girl and set up shop as a "Buddha-polisher", whatever that might be... Now, where were we? Ah yes, you wanted to know more about the Oxford Music Scene. It's full of animals, absolute animals these days. Foals, Mules, Guillemots, Half-Rabbits, 50 Ft. Pandas, Reservoir Cats, Easy Tigers, you name it, not to mention Brickwork Lizards and er, Little Fish. (Are fish animals? I don't bloody know, I just drink like one). Now, someone of an academic persuasion might say that this aspiration towards "the animal" in the naming of Oxford bands reflects something in the Zeitgeist. Perhaps it comes from a desire to be wild, free and yet innocent; perhaps it echoes a deep-seated need to identify with nature in an increasingly technological and impersonal world... Still, you know what? Frankly I couldn't give an Arctic Monkey's. Whose round is it?

Next month: The return of Indie Disco.



FOALS: "We wanna be free to do what we wanna do, and we wanna get loaded, and we wanna have a good time!"

News Extra!

OXFORD FESTIVAL SHOCK FURY!

OXFORD'S music scene was reeling this month from the news that there would be one weekend over the summer when there was no live music festival anywhere in the county.

With Oxfordshire now literally awash with music festivals, including Cropredy and Cornbury, Wakestock at Woodstock, Wittstock at wherever, Wood Festival, possibly a metal festival, a Cheese Festival,



"Mummy, what in bloody blazes can we do this weekend?"

Truck and the Punt and maybe another festival that rhymes with a very rude word, not to mention Oxjam, Oxfringe and Oxford Folk, plus Elder Stubbs and Elder Stubbs the Younger festivals, there is now a festival for every single weekend of the summer. Except one. Probably in June sometime.

"I'm devastated," wailed one distraught local gig-goer, sporting a haircut straight out of a Shockwaves advert and wearing a pashmina, "I might even have to watch a bit of Euro 2008, and we all know that's going to be crap because Scotland aren't in it."

On hearing the news, Truck Festival organising brother and sister team Robert and Joanne Bennett moved quickly to try and arrange something – anything – to fill the yawning gap in the music calendar, even a fireside singalong. Supergrass were quick to confirm their place on the bill.

Local gig-going veterans were concerned that the empty weekend might prompt some of Oxford's venues to open their doors for unseasonable indoor gigs. "That's all we need," wept Nightshift editor Doughnut Munro through tears of pure cynicism, "Having to

An empty field, yesterday



stand in a dark, sweaty basement while everyone else gets to sit by the river drinking ice-cold cider. I preferred their earlier stuff anyway."

"Oh for God's sake, who cares? It'll probably rain all summer just like last year," someone might have said.

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

MARIA ILETT

There's such sweet, naïve charm about Maria Ilett's voice that only a Dementor could fail to be swept along in its summery breeze. She croons like a sad-eyed bushbaby and chirrups like a frisky songbird in equal measures, her occasional London-leaning accenting confirming her own comparison to Damon Albarn isn't without foundation. CD opener 'Sit On The Sun' is a gentle semi-acoustic reverie that's pitched partway between Kates Nash and Walsh, but it's with 'Hit The Blue' she really comes into her own, the discreetly scuffed-up electronic backing bolstering her carefree, nursery rhyme-simple melody. Best of the lot, though, is 'Stars', which recalls the innocence and exuberance of early-80s indie cult stars like Young Marble Giants and Jane. All the while the music whirrs, clicks, hums and buzzes the like the intricate but unobtrusive workings of a clock, giving vital space for Maria's voice to weave its sweet, pretty magic. It's simple and relentlessly good-natured and its a like a dose of aural Prozac. And, contrary to recent scientific research on such things, it makes us very happy indeed.

MONKEY PUZZLE

If only others had the lightness of touch of Maria Ilett. By no means the worst thing in this month's demo pile, Monkey Puzzle just sound lumpen and heavy-footed coming straight after her CD. Theirs is a sturdy, churning form of indie rock, making up in sullen bullishness what it lacks in finesse or guile, threatening to knock a few solid objects out of its onward path but tethered by an adenoidal, inexpressive vocal drone. When they switch styles to a more acoustic sound it doesn't help much, still sounding too sterile, and unwilling to get out of their hole, like they've become jaded and tired of the whole music-making process and ultimately coming on like an *X Factor* idea of what guitar bands should sound like.

DR SLAGGLEBERRY

The proliferation of bands marrying hardcore noise to math-rock complexity is surely a good sign, rescuing guitar music from secret – and not so secret – jazz fans. And so here are Thame's Dr Slaggleberry, who possibly own the odd jazz album but also know more than a thing or two about rocking out in pleasingly virulent fashion.

Demo of the Month wins a free day's recording at Keynote. Call 01189 599944 to claim your prize and get special deals for local bands!

Taking Mr Bungle and The Locust as starting points, they crack on through four tracks in less than 11 minutes, leaving no room for indulgence or trying to be too clever, instead preferring short, sharp angular bursts of noise that segue into each other, delving occasionally into more conventional Faith No More-style riffage, the vocalist opting for a gimp-in-the-cellar scream, or doing a fair old impression of an android goblin being sucked down a particularly resonant plug hole, as on 'Hits'. They might not always sound especially original in all this, but Dr Slaggleberry's no-nonsense approach to a style of rock more commonly awash with nonsense, means nothing ever gets left long enough to sound stale.

OPAQUE

Ooh, I say, a bit of culture here, and no mistake. Or at least a band who sound a little bit like they might be French, or perhaps had lunch in a Parisian café once. Opaque have, at least, got an accordion, an instrument that could make even Boltthrower sound French and sophisticated. There's more than a soupçon (ooh, get us) of Gallic folk here anyway, but such exotic leanings do tend to get bogged down in a decidedly four-to-the-floor rock rumble with the bish-bash-bosh drumming overwhelming any Parisian flourish from the squeezebox. The drumming continues to dominate everything throughout, along with odd, incongruous widdly guitar solos and the more charming elements here, like the breathless, hushed lead vocal, get left to fight for air, although the moon-in-June rhyming (Lyn! Cryin! Dyin'!) is probably best left mostly unheard. A softer approach on the final track, plus the introduction of a female vocal lead sadly doesn't help matters, since her voice is horribly shrill, like a bad Maddy Prior impersonator. So, anyway, some good intentions, but in need of a good dose of subtlety and possibly several focus group meetings about what the band do best and what The Kids want from it all. And what we want in this case, is less beer and corned beef sandwiches and more red wine and Brie baguettes, please.

LES CLOCHARDS

Blimey, and arriving right on time to show how it can and should be done, are Les Clochards. Who even have a French band name in case you didn't quite get where they're coming from. The drum intro to first song, 'Tango Borracho', initially promises/threatens Iron Maiden's 'Run To The Hills', but soon nestles into a more rustic Gallic groove, jazzy bass runs and drum shuffles underpinning Karen Cleave's smoky vocal

lead and accordion flourishes, while backing vocalist Ian Nixon interjects with husky art-flick narratives about crap, half-remembered pubs, parties and fights from the night before. "I get drunk and I forget things" croons Karen in a style reminiscent of The Mekons' Sally Timms and with a similarly tangible air of whisky-sozzled half-regret. 'Shallow' is more straight-down-the-line French jazz, so laidback it nearly has us toppling backwards off the office chair, with all the urgency of a rural French lunch hour, the languid squeezebox augmented by the wash of waves on a pebble beach, and only the more prosaic 'Simone Signoret', with its fireside and slippers-style duet, doesn't quite keep the mood going. Still, we're going to keep this one spinning until we've finished this bottle of claret. And after that, it's time for... maybe another bottle of claret.

DEDLOK

The name screams METAL! And so it does indeed come to pass. Dedlok's is a bruising, mid-tempo breed of prog-tinged metal-core and old-fashioned thrash, harking back to Slayer and Pantera, all bulldozing, shredded riffs and chest-beating raging and bellowing. They don't exactly rush into battle, slowly building up momentum, but by the time they get a full head of steam, they're grinding and growling and giving no quarter. The chugging simplicity of 'Protest' owes more to early-80s protest punk than metal but soon they're back to the sound of Motorhead kicking it out with no little fury in Metallica's backyard and all is well with the world.

SARA LOWES

If Sara had left off the last couple of tracks from this six-song CD she might have won our hearts a little more; but equally, without the first couple of songs, she'd have roasted alive in the Demo Dumper for all eternity, such is the steep drop-off in quality and descent into the muddy MOR mire that occurs from start to finish. Sara's first track, 'I Wish', is a jolly, piano-led jazz-pop piece of froth that could be a distant cousin of Stereolab from a certain angle, while 'Down And Out' carries echoes of Kate Bush, both tracks, bolstered by horns and Hammond organ, display plenty of life and imagination even while aiming squarely for Radio 2-friendly fluffiness. But beyond that there is only mawkish sentimentality, soporific tweeness and the faint odour of Harvest Festival concerts. The more straight Sara plays it, just her, her piano and the odd bit of electronic trickery, the more she sounds like she's auditioning for some benighted Saturday night talent show where the winner gets to understudy the lead role in a new Andrew Lloyd Webber schmaltzfest. Over-long, over-

egged and over-bearing, the shrill, vacant songs become so insipid they make Enya sound like Janis Joplin.

THE KARMA

This lot are almost a glyph of a rock band, trying to mix up so many 'classic' styles that in the end they sound like no-one and nothing in particular, be it the 60s-styled vocal harmonies and 80s MOR of opener 'Breathe As One', or the U2-stealing 'Matter Of Time'. They do have the odd good idea, and a couple of neat hooks, but even these sound they've been latched on to the songs with not enough thought to how the whole thing is going to end up sounding, sacrificing some soul and character in favour of trying too hard to be clever, while spending too much of the time in between these small peaks simply moping about. They're at their best with the semi-gothic pomp of 'Matter Of Time', even if they do overstate their case by a factor of ten, while by the end they've sunk into sub-Oasis come-together laddish spirituality.

THE DEMO DUMPER

EUTOPIA

Eutopia describe their sound as "Dedicated power emo pop", which means fuck all to us and is too long-winded to be some new movement invented by NME, but since the whole sorry affair sounds exactly like 'Kayleigh' by Marillion, we'll simply rebrand it as rustic prog-rock crap. And when we say it sounds exactly like 'Kayleigh', we mean *exactly*. Same dreamy, pastoral floaty guitars, same keening, constipated vocals, same feeling of nausea we used to get when we were trapped in a hot, sweaty venue with five hundred mouth-breathing, denim-clad dunces who were blissfully unaware that the last 30 years of musical evolution had ever happened. Or even that the last fifty thousand years of human evolution had occurred. The lead track here is called 'Valentine', it crops up twice, once in its 'finished' state and again as a demo version, even though they both sound identical and if you sang it to your love done on Valentine's Day they would be quite within the laws of decency to gut you with a fish knife and cop off with the nearest sentient creature. "If only I knew the way" bleats the singer over and over and bloody over again. It's over there, fool! Straight through that window. Never mind that we're fifteen storeys up, just make sure you stop your whining by the time you get to the pavement.

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. We currently have a two-month backlog of demos for review. We will try and get round to all of them as soon as we can.



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Tue 8 Apr

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Cibelle + Sleeps in Oysters

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Fri 11 Apr

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Tue 15 Apr - £7 adv

The Blessing

Wed 16 Apr - £10 adv

Lethal Bizzle
+ Bashy + Blah Blah Blah

Fri 18 Apr - £6 adv

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Sat 10 May - £17.50 adv

Magnum

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Black Lips

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Wednesday 13

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