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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 157
August
2008

OXFORD FESTIVAL FEVER

TRUCK, CORNBURY AND WAKESTOCK
REVIEWED. ZAPFEST CANCELLED

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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ZAPFEST was cancelled with a week's notice last month. The live music festival, featuring the cream of Oxford's emerging rock and dance talent, was due to take place in South Park on Saturday 12th July but the event's organisers posted a notice on the festival website on Friday 4th announcing that it was cancelled.

Initially no specific details were given for the cancellation, other than "unforeseen circumstances". However, since then organiser Lance Cowan has spoken to Nightshift to explain what happened.

"There were a combination of reasons that forced me into the final decision. Probably the most powerful of them being money. There were some costings that increased dramatically since the original quotes, due to the increase of diesel and site problems with South Park.

"Due to a lot of festivals going bankrupt last year, all the companies within the trade are very nervous now. They all require full payment in advance of an event, which puts a lot pressure on the organisers.

This might have been overcome if it wasn't for an error at Natwest Bank, who have now taken over a month to set up my business account. It still isn't set up, by the way. Added to the financial problems, Youthmovies pulled out at the last minute and there was also a very high risk of severe weather for the week running up to the event.

"I tried to come up with a downsized event just so we could have it go ahead but it wasn't feasible, unfortunately. The only way forward was to cut my losses and pull the plug on the event. Maybe next year."

As well as Youthmovies, bands set to perform included Little Fish, A Silent Film, Witches, Stornoway and Jonquil. Ticket holders can obtain refunds from point of purchase.



WINCHELL RIOTS play two special gigs this month. On Friday 8th August they play an intimate acoustic show at the Port Mahon in aid of the Accord Hospice in Renfrewshire, Scotland. The hospice is where Winchell Riots frontman Phil McMinn's mother passed away last year. Speaking about the gig Phil told Nightshift, "We wanted to get some cash raised for it as a thank you from me. I'm not a fan of charity gigs unless the cause is something close to the band's heart but I guess this one is pretty close to our hearts." Support on the night comes from The Half Rabbits, playing their first ever acoustic show.

On Friday 29th July, meanwhile,

The Winchell Riots headline the last ever **Oxfordbands.com** gig at the Wheatsheaf. Local music website Oxfordbands began promoting local gigs back in February 2003 when Young Knives were the headliners. Since then the gigs have showcased some of the best leftfield and underground acts from around the world, including Deerhoof, Mark Eitzel and Part Chimp, but work and band commitments have made it impossible to continue. The final gig comes a year to the day that Oxfordbands.com gave Winchell Riots their first ever show. Support comes from Staffordshire's Epic 45.

THE HOBGOBLIN in Bicester has got its music licence back and starts hosting gigs again from this month. The pub plays host to Boot Led Zeppelin on Sunday 3rd August. A six-band event on Sunday 7th September follows, featuring Beard Of Zeuss, Frowser, Eduard Soundingblock and more.

STUDIO 45 have recently upgraded their CD printer and can offer runs of 100+ full-colour CDs from only 85p per unit. The studio is also now able to provide state of the art Taiyo Yudens Watershield CDs from £1.09 per unit. Call Cheryl on 01865 457000 for details, or visit www.studio45.org.uk.



August

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4th **BIG MAMA'S DOOR (UK)**

11th **BLUE BISHOPS (UK)**

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26th **KATYA GORRIE ft DENNY ILETT Jr**

Wednesday 13th

THE STRATEGY

Thursday 7th

MOSKA presents **BEELZEBOZO / DEDLOK**

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Funk, soul and R&B. 10.30pm-2am; £4.

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15th **THE SCRIBES** £5. *Doors 8pm*

22nd **MOSKA** presents **INTERNATIONAL**

JETSETTERS / DYING ANIMALS

Includes entry to Backroom Boogie afterwards

Saturdays

2nd **SIMPLE** – *Funky House 10-4am.*

9th **A NIGHT OF AFRICAN MUSIC**

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from DJ J1. 9-3 £3 b4 10pm £5 after

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SIKORSKI. *Plus DJs playing dub style and drum'n'bass.*

Sundays

BULLINGDON COMEDY CLUB with compere **SILKY**

DR SHOTOVER: Out, Demons, Out!

More gin, Bedingfield! I have a hangover which is fiercer than the Bengal tiger, and just to put the lid on things, it is the Festival Season. The buggers are multiplying these days, it seems, they're all called "Something"-stock, and they're full of bouncy castles and re-formed bore-bands from the 1980s. Now, I hate to repeat myself - MORE GIN, Bedingfield! - but why o why do they have to be so bloody SAFE these days? MORE GIN, I say, and why don't you pop a measure of Irn-Bru in there too... will this hangover never cease? Where was I? Ah yes, as any fool knows, all festivals should feature the following: a) the Edgar Broughton Band and/or the Pink Fairies headlining b) nasty 70s drugs c) greasy hamburgers d) outbreaks of trench-foot and/or beri-beri and finally of course, the experience is barely worth having without e) being beaten up by bikers. Lefty Lethbridge (stalwart of the East Indies Club Entertainments Committee) has had some sound thoughts on this. Why don't we organise our own East Indies Club Festival next summer, and make sure it ticks all the necessary boxes? If the Pink Fairies won't re-form, I'm sure we could always get Juicy Lucy, who are doing the rounds again... drugs, mud and poor-quality snacks are always easy to come by... and so are bikers. Venue? Lefty reckons he can pull a few strings and get us a patch of scrubland just near Blenheim Palace. As for the name of the festival, given the location, we were briefly thinking of calling it Woodstock-stock. But, as we hate to repeat ourselves, we've decided to reference another festival which happened in 1969, complete with Hell's Angels, dodgy acid, stabbings and bad vibes. Yes. You've got it. We're going to call it Woodstock-amont. Something for everyone, I'm sure you'll agree.

Next month: Gimme (Bus-) Shelter



The Stones in the Park



SETH LAKEMAN returns to the Academy on Tuesday 28th October as part of a tour to promote his new album, 'Poor Man's Heaven'. The rising star of the UK folk scene sold out his previous show at the venue. Tickets are on sale now, priced £14, from wegottickets.com or from the Academy box office.

MANYEUNG are set to reform for a one-off gig in September to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their initial split. The band, including Phill Honey who went on to form The Rock Of Travolta and Boywithatoy, emerged from the then vibrant Witney music scene. The gig takes place at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 27th September.

UNDER THE OAK is a new one-day festival taking place in North Aston on Saturday 30th August. Acts confirmed include Forms Forms

Forms, Dial F For Frankenstein, E For Echo, Les Valentine and Harlequinn. For more details and ticket information visit www.under-the-oak.co.uk

TUNE INTO BBC Oxford
Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show features new tracks from local acts as well as interviews, features, a gig and club guide and a demo review. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.



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Saturday 16th August - White Noise Sound, Spiral 25, TBA

Thursday 21st August - Witches, Alphabet backwards
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ANDY YORKE

'Simple'

(Aktiv)

Back in the late-1990s Andy Yorke fronted local band Unbelievable Truth, who scored a handful of Top 40 hits from their debut album, 'Almost There', on Virgin. The band were hampered somewhat by a section of the music press being intent on maligning Andy for being Thom Yorke's younger brother rather than judging them on their many musical merits (gosh, they're brothers! They have similar voices and they're neither of them graduates of the Timmy Mallet school of zany craziness! Perhaps it's a conspiracy!). Andy left the band in 2000 to work as a translator in Moscow, declaring he was leaving music behind for good.

It's in the blood though, and now he's back, and on this solo debut reunited with erstwhile Unbelievable Truth bandmates Nigel Powell (now playing drums with Dive Dive) and Jason Moulster. Time seems to have stood still musically for Andy in the intervening eight years and 'Simple' might well be a direct



follow-up to Unbelievable Truth's 'Sorrythankyou' second album. An air of expectant melancholy hangs over the album with Andy's reflective, downbeat lyrics riding airily over the delicate, uncluttered guitar lines of songs like 'Twist Of The Knife', while 'Rise & Fall' has a similar driving, oddly uplifting and almost hymnal feel to Truth hits like 'Stone' and 'Higher Than Reason'.

Obviously it's Andy's voice that is central to the whole album and, not surprisingly, the mood remains sombre throughout, accentuated on two of the album's strongest tracks, 'Simple' and 'Diamant', by softly weeping cello, a deep, resonant counterpoint to Andy's lighter vocal moments. That's not to say it's a morbid trawl. Listen to the waltzing 'Let It Be True' with its accordion flourish and tell us it makes you feel sad and we'll bludgeon you to death with a whoopee cushion. Then again, the wracked, emotive wanderings of 'Always By Your Side' and 'Mathilda' aim squarely towards the bleak side of maudlin, while the appropriately-named 'Lay Down' seems resigned to surrender to its demons. 'Simple' was never going to be a party album, though. Andy's strength is his impassioned, romantic melancholy and he has a voice with the strength to convey this with both power and a delicate touch. How 'Simple' will fare ten years after Unbelievable Truth's commercial peak is hard to judge. You can only hope that this time around Andy is allowed to compete on his own terms and be judged purely on his own merits. It's all any musician deserves.

Dale Kattack

MODERN CLICHÉS

'Falseness & Fairytales

(Crash)

Giving your band a name like Modern Clichés, however ironically, is the musical equivalent of slapping a Kick Me sticker on your own back. The Bicester-based trio then provide ample ammunition to enable their critical execution, chugging out a brand of flashy rockabooogie that screams of a desire to play third on the bill to Dirty Pretty Things or something equally glamorous. Actually, their press release boasts that they supported Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong, which by comparison makes propping up Carl Barat's band look like jamming with Hendrix and Cobain in God's own boozer.

From the nominally 60s-styled power-pop of opener 'You Don't Know What You Pop To Be', Modern Clichés tick all boxes marked "classic indie rock" (i.e. following a straight lineage from The Beatles to Oasis with absolutely no recognition of anything beyond), led by a keening, adenoidal vocal reciting disingenuous lines about "The pressure is cooking" and the like; the end result sounding like a watered down version of former local favourites The Samurai Seven but stripped of their punky vim or moddish, melodic charm.

'Exactly The Same As Always' finds the band trying to come on a bit sensitive, only to realise in an angry epiphany that it just ain't working

and start kicking out the old warhorse powerchords again. The press release describes these as "Tarantino-style guitars", although we're buggered if we've ever heard Tarantino play guitar. Maybe he should give it a go. He could hardly do much worse than this.

Dale Kattack

DIE_FUNKT

'Interzone Recordings'

(Eyeless)

The latest monthly release from the excellently esoteric Eyeless label (run by local electro noisemaker David K Frampton) introduces Oxford producer Die_Funkt, with a sprawling 70-minute album of ambient electro wobbliness that at times comes close to Luke Slater's minimalist explorations.

Opening with a slice of genial synthetic fluff over shifting electronic beats and a flutter of noise that could pass for robot popcorn, the album's standout piece is the ten-minute second track (hey, no track titles – how futuristic is that?), based around a looped sample of Hal, the super-computer from 2001: A Space Odyssey. Here is exactly what can make post-acid house electro so fascinating, an extended, hypnotic clang and pulse that grates and squiggles and hints at sinister dehumanised menace, finally dying, like Hal itself, with a

fading, "Daisy... Daisy...". Such densely textured, industrialised landscaping continues into the next track but then the album dips into ambient noodling, music for coffee table-gazing stoners to drift off to, before eventually returning to life with a rattling android freight train ride that owes more than a cursory nod to Kraftwerk's 'Trans-Europe Express'.

'Interzone Recordings' holds together as an album, although it could easily do to lose ten minutes of its more aimless middle section (just because CDs can squeeze 70 minutes of music onto them, doesn't mean artists *have* to go the full hog). More time spent watching cult sci-fi movies and less time sucking up bong smoke and Die Funkt is on to something.

Victoria Waterfield



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- 10th All day festival with Twat Daddies + Black Powder + DJs. etc
- 11th The Shanks
- 15th Dirty Boys presents...
- 17th Buy A Lung Fundraiser with Black Powder + Twat Daddies + Nine Stone Cowboy + Cease To Draw Breath
- 22nd Permanent Vacation presents Spectre Folk System + Beach Fuzz + guests
- 23rd The Port presents All-Day Summer Festival
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- 29th The Strategy
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- BORDERVILLE**
FAMILY MACHINE + SMILEX Apr / 03
- RUE THE DAY**
DESERT STORM Apr / 03
- UNDERCOVER SLUT**
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GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st

BALLBOY + STORNOWAY + THE ZEBRAS: **The X, Cowley** – Edinburgh indie stalwarts return south of the border – *see main preview*

VULTURES + INSPECTED BY TEN: **The Wheatsheaf** – Indie-punk from Vultures, formed by various members of The Quarter Finals, Raggasaurus and Gunnbunny, plus rising young rockers Inspected By Ten.

TWELVE SIGNS + SATELLITE STATE + RED VALVE + SERIOUS LEGO DANCE

Friday 1st

BALLBOY / STORNOWAY: The X

Swiss Concrete continue to champion everything that is most indie about indie music, tonight enticing Scottish jangle heroes Ballboy back south of the border after too long an absence. Almost the epitome of under-achieving lo-fi indie twee, the Edinburgh quartet, fronted by the oddly, awkwardly enigmatic Gordon McIntyre, are utterly charming in every respect, capable of mixing dry, downbeat humour with great pathos as they document faintly ridiculous observational takes ('Donald in The Bushes With A Bag Of Glue'; 'I Wonder If You're Drunk Enough To Sleep With Me Tonight') with a yearning for a lost working class community. As such they're direct antecedents of Glasvegas, although in turn they owe great debt to The Smiths, The Wedding Present and The Go-Betweens. Romantic and naïve, yet world weary, and intimately anthemic, Ballboy make their own glamour out of cheap Casios and navel-gazing monologues; they also do the single greatest version of Springsteen's 'Born in The USA' ever. After a recent hiatus the band are set to release their fifth album, 'I Worked On The Ships', and the people who work as teachers by day will once again get a chance to turn into the children of the revolution. A band to cherish. And, as an extra, extra bonus, support comes from the rather wonderful Stornoway, with their blend of romantic celtic-tinged folk-pop and cheerily daft showmanship.

AUGUST

BAND: **The Jericho Tavern** – Prog-pop from the headliners, plus epic indie rocking in a U2-meets-Athlete fashion from Satellite State.

BACKPOCKET PROPHET + EVIL SCARECROW + MY SHIKOME: **Bicester Town FC** – Heavyweight triple bill with Bicester thrash merchants BPP going up against Nottingham's black metallers Evil Scarecrow and rap-inflected metalcore from My Shikome.

GLORIFIED JUKEBOX: **The Cellar** – Hip hop, reggae, dancehall, dub, funk and soul club night.

EAR-POPPING CANDY: **The Port Mahon** – Live music club night.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: **The Bullingdon** – Classic funk, soul and disco every week.

SHAKE: **The Academy** – Weekly dose of funk, reggae, soul, rock'n'roll and jazz with Count Skylarkin' and crew.

GET DOWN: **The Brickworks** – Disco, Latin and funk DJ set every week.

SATURDAY 2nd

ARCANE FESTIVAL: **Horsenden Meadow, Tetsworth** – First day of the East Oxfordshire minifest – *see main preview*

BRAINLOVE FESTIVAL: **The Jericho Tavern** – Full day of quirky electronic music from Brainlove Records in conjunction with Coo Coo Club. Local synth orchestra The Keyboard Choir headline with support from fey electro-folk chap Pagan Wanderer Lu, bubblegum synth-pop weirdoes Retro Spankees, post-punk hysteria from Applicants, plus sets from Dead Singer, Pseudo Nippon, Team Brick and Ratface.

SMILEX: **The Port Mahon** – Sex-mad sleazeball heavy rocking.

PAIGE + BLAST STEREO LOUD + NOT ADVISED + COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES + SOUTH CENTRAL

HEROES: **The X, Cowley**

DJ LUCK & MC NEAT: **The Regal**

SIMPLE: **The Bullingdon** – Funky house club night.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM

101: **The Academy** – Three clubs in one night with classic and contemporary indie at Transformation; 80s and glam pop at Trashy, plus hardcore, metal and alt.rock at Room 101.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: **The Magdalen**

SUNDAY 3rd

ARCANE FESTIVAL: **Horsenden Meadow, Tetsworth** – Second day of the festival.

THE LINES + INLIGHT + THE JELAS:

Thirst Lodge

BOOT LED ZEPPELIN: **The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Welcome return to live action for Bicester's premier pub venue, tonight with Led Zep tribute band.

MONDAY 4th

BIG MAMA'S DOOR: **The Bullingdon** – Blues jamming, soul and r'n'b inspired by Billie Holiday and T-Bone Walker from the London band fronted by Fiona McElroy and Mal Barclay

REVEREND HORTON HEAT: **The Academy** – Texan rockabilly cult hero hits town – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 5th

GLAMOUR FOR BETTER VS

PARTYSHANK: **The Academy** – Jerky electro-pop party music from Reading's Glamour For Better, possibly the only band ever to be inspired to get together after seeing Test Icicles. This tour finds them going head to head with London's frantic electro-disco-punk duo Partyskank.

JAZZ CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz. Tonight upbeat funky keyboard player Howard Peacock and his Quintet are the guest band.

WEDNESDAY 6th

303 DID THIS TO ME + I AM THIEVES + MEWGATZ: **The Wheatsheaf** – Retro-futurist electro-pop from Hampshire's 303 Did This To Me, plus oddball electronic experimentation and soldering iron mischief from local fella Mewgatz.

OWEN TROMANS + THE BLACK HATS + THE DEPUTES: **The X, Cowley** – Former frontman of lo-fi post-punkers San Lorenzo Owen Tromans takes a more pastoral solo path, mixing brooding suburban folk ballads with more jaunty country pop and latterly collaborating with Goldrush's Joe Bennett. 60s-inspired pop from Black Hats and rootsy folk, blues and country rock from Deputies in support.

ECLECTRICITY: **The Cellar** – House and electro club night.

LADYBRIDGE: **The Port Mahon**

THURSDAY 7th

THE RYES: **The Academy** – Fast-rising London power-poppers out on tour to promote new Who-meets-Libertines single 'How Come Loretta'.

BEELZEBOZO + DEDLOK: **The Bullingdon** – Moshka club night with twin metal titans Beelzebozo and Dedlok doing their doomy and thrash things.

NITKOWSKI + ELAPSE-O + HREDA + EUHEDRAL: **The Cellar** – London's



Nitkowski mix up oblique math-rocking, jazzy experimentation and ambient hardcore, while Elapse-O thrash out a vicious, rhythm-heavy blend of Liars and Suicide. There's also artful math-rocking from Hreda and ambient electronic experimentation from Euhedral.

LITTLE FISH + THE FAMILY MACHINE + BABY GRAVY: Thirst Lodge – Oxford's hottest rock property crank out the raw, soulful garage noise with all the spiky exuberance of a young Patti Smith Band, with more than able support from lachrymose rockers Family Machine and bubbly, shouty electro-punkers Baby Gravy.

Saturday 2nd – Sunday 3rd

ARCANE FESTIVAL: Horsenden Meadow, Tetsworth

Another one of those dinky little mini-festivals that are dotting the local landscape this summer, now in its second year Arcane ticks all the right rustic boxes, taking pace on Horsenden Meadow in Tetsworth, on Oxfordshire's eastern border, not far from Thame, while musically the bill features such exotic names as The Rabbit Foot Spasm Band and Holton's Opuant Oog. It's a good, mixed bill of mostly local acts over two stages, with InLight, Witches, Nagatha Krusti, Shirley, The Gullivers, The Gog, Souljacker and The Youngs Plan among those playing the main stage while the second jazz and folk-leaning second stage sees sets from Danny & The Champions of the World, Stornoway (*pictured*), Maria Ilett, The New Moon, Anton Barbeau and Bethany Weimers amongst others. There's also hard house and hardcore from Square 1, dubstep, techno, drum&bass and breakbeats with Pure Alchemy; reggae and jungle from Desta*nation and house from Facefunk. Mixing a festival vibe with the feel of a village fete and a green gathering, Arcane comes with a homely post-Truck Festival appeal. *Full details and tickets at www.arcane-festival.com*



THE STANLEY BLACKS + THE SCARLETTS + KANGO BILL + JOHN PEACOCK: The Jericho Tavern – Crosstown Traffic club night with rootsy country rockers The Stanley Blacks, plus new local ska-punk band The Scarletts and acoustic duo Kango Bill.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Longstanding weekly open performance club night with singers, musicians, storytellers, performance artists and more.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 8th

DODGY + THE CANDYSKINS + A SILENT FILM + FRANK TURNER: The Academy – Britpop revival heaven in aid of cancer research – *see main preview*

WINCHELL RIOTS + THE HALF RABBITS: The Port Mahon – Acoustic charity gig in aid of Accord Hospice with rising local stadium pop starlets Winchell Riots offering a more intimate take on their epic squall, plus a first ever acoustic show from dark-minded indie types The Half Rabbits.

JASON RINGENBERG + PINEY GIR + EMIT BLOCH: The Bullingdon – Alt.country pioneer and former Jason & The Scorchers frontman hits town to celebrate 30 years of country rocking – *see main preview*

FARMER JASON + NICK COPE: Fusion Arts Centre, Princes Street (2pm) – Special children's show from Jason Ringenberg's alter-ego, performing special kiddie-friendly country songs about farm animals and the like. Unlikely to include detailed mention of bolt guns, abattoirs or potentially harmful growth hormones.

BORDERVILLE + THE FAMILY MACHINE + SMILEX: The Wheatsheaf – Triple bill of quality local rocking, with vaudevillian gothic glam from Borderville, plus darkly humorous countrified indie from Family Machine and scuzzy all-action garage punk from Smilex.

CITIZENS OF EARTH + MY FIRST TOOTH + GOODBYE STEREO + SELF-MADE MANIAC: The Jericho Tavern – Meandering funk-rock from local outfit Citizens of Earth, plus alt.country and skiffle in the mould of Willy Mason from Northampton's My First Tooth and pop-punk from Self-Made Maniac.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance featuring a set from afro-dance band Edenhight, mixing highlife, Afrobeat, jazz, Cuban and reggae influences.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 9th

RUE THE DAY + DESERT STORM: The Wheatsheaf – Local metal double bill.

A NIGHT OF AFRICAN MUSIC: The Bullingdon – What it says.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy



Monday 4th

REVEREND HORTON HEAT: The Academy

The world is awash with cult bands but few cult followings run as long and as deep as that of Reverend Horton Heat, Texan rockabilly legends whose chief goal in life seems to keep the flame of classic 50s rock'n'roll alive by touring forever. They've been on the road for nigh on 25 years now, releasing a dozen albums along the way but it's their live shows that keep on packing the fans in. Fronted by founder Jim 'Reverend Horton' Heath, the three-piece are rooted in country, blues, swing and rock'n'roll but get their energy and drive from punk. Heath earned his musical dues on the Texan bar circuit, mainly playing covers, until exposed to the likes of The Cramps and becoming immersed in the Austin punk scene. Since then their myriad releases have featured on such labels as Sub Pop and Interscope and while a major break into the mainstream has never been forthcoming they've achieved wider exposure through various movie and advert uses of their songs, including Levi's. Lyrically witty, or just plain daft (check out his divorce song, 'Where The Hell Did You Go With My Toothbrush?'), two decades on they're as taut and exhilarating as ever, a high-octane psychobilly storm, and with his slicked-up hair and signature Gretsch guitar, Heath himself is like a throwback to a golden age of rock'n'roll.

SUNDAY 10th

DOEI + THE GRENOBLE ALLSTARS + PERM QUINTET: The Cellar – Special gig to celebrate the International Bands Festival, with French electronic dub group Doei; Oxford-based funk and hip hop collective Grenoble Allstars, plus Russia's balalaika groovers Perm Quintet.

TWAT DADDIES + BLACK POWDER: The Port Mahon – All-day music event with local bands.



Friday 8th

JASON RINGENBERG / PINEY GIR: The Bullingdon

As leader of Jason & The Scorchers in the 1980s, Nashville singer-songwriter Jason Ringenberg laid the foundation of what was to be known as alt.country, taking the traditional country sound to a more alternative culture where it found a whole new life. This year Jason celebrates 30 years playing music with the release of a career-spanning compilation, 'Best Tracks and Side Tracks', the railroad imagery included in its title something that the former railroad labourer has continually referred to in song. From full-on cowpunk rocking to more pathos-laden prairie porch ballads, his songs are steeped in down-home tradition and he sports a rhinestone cowboy hat, but he's equally happy to acknowledge the influence The Ramones and more along the way and in his time he's collaborated with The Wildhearts as well as Steve Earle. Live, Ringenberg's experience, charisma and humour allows him draw in the largest or smallest crowd and make every gig feel like a singalong in your living room. Support for the evening's show at the Bully comes from Truck favourite Piney Gir with her Patsy Cline-styled Country Roadshow. In the afternoon, meanwhile, Ringenberg plays a special children's gig at the Fusion Arts Centre in Princes Street under his Farmer Jason alter-ego, performing his specially-written farmyard country songs. Here he's joined by Candyskins frontman Nick Cope

MONDAY 11th

GUTTER TWINS: The Academy – Monstrously portentous folk-rocking from grunge survivors Lanegan and Dulli – *see main preview*

GO AUDIO: The Academy – Synth-pop-tinged pop-punkers hit the road in support of debut album 'Made Up Stories'.

BLUES BISHOPS: The Bullingdon – Hard-rocking blues in the style of Jimi Hendrix, Muddy Waters and Peter Green from the European festival favourites, recently joined by former-Argent and Zombies bassist Jim Rodford.

THE SHANKS: The Port Mahon

TUESDAY 12th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with guests The Hugh Turner Band.

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

WEDNESDAY 13th

THE STRATEGY: The Bullingdon – Belligerently angular pop.

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar

THURSDAY 14th

THE STIFF LIPS + JOE ALLEN + COGWHEEL DOGS: The Cellar – Big Hair club night with Rebecca Mosley's twisted acoustic duo Cogwheel Dogs and emotive singer-songwriter Joe Allen.

SHIRLEY + CHRIS LACEY & DAN AUSTIN: The Jericho Tavern – 60s-styled harmony-heavy pop with a Latin twist from Shirley at tonight's Crosstown Traffic night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 15th

THE SCRIBES: The Bullingdon – Witty, angry and inventive hip hop from Bristol's rising rap act, out on the road to promote debut album, 'The Sky Is Falling', after supporting the likes of Skinnyman, Blade and Roll Deep.

UNDERCOVER SLUT + VANITY BEACH:

The Wheatsheaf – Mascara and panstick-spattered industrial-glam punks Undercover Slut sleaze their ghoulish way out of Paris to promote new album, 'Amerikkka Macht Frei', now 13 years on the road, still revolving around frontman O, but boasting current and former members with names like Incest, Disease, Porn and Date Rape. Nice. Support comes from Finland's Vanity Beach, pumping out a form of gothic electro-rock that somehow finds a meeting pint between Skid Row and Depeche Mode.

THE STRATEGY + DEADBEAT CAVALIER + ZHAIN + GOLD DIGGER: The Jericho Tavern – Jerky, jangly indie noise from Bucks' Strategy at the Tavern tonight with local political punks Deadbeat Cavalier and ballsy classic rockers Zhain in support.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SHAKE: The Academy

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 16th

WHITE NOISE SOUND + SPIRAL 25: The Cellar – Seriously good psychedelic drone-rocking in the vein of Spacemen 3, Suicide and The Jesus & Mary Chain from Swansea's White Noise Sound, veering from vicious, dirty

wells of noise to blissed-out dreamscapes. Former Factory and Dirty Sci-Fi chaps Spiral 25 add their own brand of dark-minded psychedelia to the evening's fun and festivities.

ELDER STUBBS FESTIVAL: Elder Stubbs

Allotments – Afternoon of live music amid the market garden produce. Huw Lloyd Langton, Assassins of Silence, Brickwork Lizards and Roundheels are among the acts playing live.

MAGIC – A KIND OF QUEEN: The New Theatre – Theatrical tribute to Queen.

SOCA SLAM: The Bullingdon – Soca, Calypso and reggae club night.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SUNDAY 17th

BUY A LUNG FUNDRAISER: The Port Mahon – Charity gig with Black Powder, Twat Daddies, Nine-Stone Cowboy and Cease To Draw Breath.

MONDAY 18th

3rd DEGREE LEBURN: The Bullingdon – Electric blues and boogie from the British guitar veteran.

CLUTCH: The Academy – Another trip to town for the ever-gigging heavyweight cult stars, set to release a new live album, 'Full Fathom Five', having gradually shifted their stance from metallic hardcore and punk through stoner rock to a more bluesy and southern rock-inspired current sound.

TUESDAY 19th

SERJ TANKIAN: The Academy – Rearranged gig for the former-System Of A Down frontman after illness forced the cancellation of his gig back in April. Now out on a solo trip and a new album, 'Elect The Dead', Serj seems to have lost none of his operatic flamboyance, still playing the fire and brimstone preacher even when planted behind a piano. Yes, no poncy acoustic change of direction here, with all the rage, eccentricity, colour and propulsion as in his nu-metal days. Yes he might seem a bit over-serious at times, but hell, it's because he actually *cares*!

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 20th

THE LAST SHADOW PUPPETS: The New Theatre – Expansive orchestral pop from Alex Turner and chums – *see main preview*

WE ARE SCIENTISTS: The Academy – The New York post-punk faves return to town after last November's Brookes show, still in the ascendancy after the success of second album 'Brain Thrust Mastery' in March and running the whole gamut of cool and not so cool 80s references.

INCARNA: The Wheatsheaf – Abingdon-based metalcore monsters.

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar

THURSDAY 21st

MGMT: The Academy – Spaced-out psychedelic electro-pop from the New York

newcomers – *see main preview*

WITCHES + ALPHABET BACKWARDS:

The Cellar – Sweetly exotic pop from Witches, touching on everything from glitchy alt.country to mariachi to post-hardcore noise while conjuring the dreamiest pop melodies imaginable. Highly-promising new indie starlets Alphabet Backwards support.

LAZARUS CLAMP + SPENCER McGARRY SEASON + PALACE MUSIC: The

Wheatsheaf – Swiss Concrete celebrate their second birthday – two years of promoting some of the best undiscovered and half-

forgotten musical gems in the pop firmament. Tonight's gig tends towards the former side of things with Birmingham's excellent Lazarus Clamp who deftly mix up Slint-like post-rock stylings with a gentle folky melodicism, occasionally coming on like the meeting point between Sonic Youth and Sparklehorse.

Cardiff's Spencer McGarry Season evoke the spirit of Super Furry Animals with their summery psychedelic folk-pop, while local strange ones Palace Music make with the wibbly wobbly lo-fi noodling sounds.

OFF THE RADAR + THE DEPUTES: The Jericho Tavern – Return of Reading's indie rockers.

ROCK COVERS NIGHT: The Hobgoblin, Bicester

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

Friday 8th

MUSIC FOR LIFE

CONCERT:

The Academy

A special benefit gig to raise money for Cancer Research, featuring a bill brought together by Dave Holt, the man who used to manage Unbelievable Truth and organised a series of Oxfam charity gigs back in the 90s at the Abingdon Old Gaol (back before they turned it, along with everything else in Abingdon, into flats) featuring the likes of Radiohead, Ride and Supergrass. Diagnosed with cancer at the start of this year, thankfully Dave is now on the road to recovery and tonight's benefit is a thank you for the care he received. Helping him raise money will be local pop legends The Candyskins, reforming once again after their triumphant show at the Zodiac farewell party last year to show why they are still so fondly remembered by local gig veterans. If you're already a fan, they'll need no introduction; newcomers should come along and marvel at timeless, harmony-heavy guitar anthems that straddle the divide between 60s sunshine pop and melodic punk vim. Peerless. Joining them are fellow Britpop hitmakers Dodgy, now back in their original three-piece line-up and fronted by Nigel Clark and set to relive old hits like 'Staying Out For The Summer' and 'In A Room'. Million Dead firebrand-turned-travelling folk troubadour Frank Turner plays an acoustic set, while class stadium-pop starlets a Silent Film complete an impressive bill that offers a glimpse of both Oxford's past and future pop glory.



FRIDAY 22nd

BEACH FUZZ + SPECTRE FOLK SYSTEM + BLEEDING HEAD

NARRATIVE + LATAHS: The Port Mahon

– Excellent night of experimental noise from Permanent Vacation – *see main preview*

THE TRAVELLING BAND + THE EPSTEIN

+ STORNOWAY: The Jacqueline du Pre

Building – Manchester's psychedelic country and folk rockers come to town for this special concert at the JDP with local country types The Epstein and celtic-folk popstrels Stornoway.

INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS + DYING

ANIMALS: The Bullingdon – Moshka club night with cathedral of sound psych-rock indie types International Jetsetters mixing up Wedding Present and Spacemen 3 type noise.

THE YOUNGS PLAN + TALK IN CODE +

FREAKISHLY LONG MIRRORS + THE

SHAKELLERS: The Jericho Tavern –

Twinkling math-pop and post-hardcore in the vein of Youthmovies and Dive Dive from The Youngs Plan, plus heavyweight jangle-rock from FLM.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 23rd

DOCUMENT ONE + TOTALLY

ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS +

SIKORSKI: The Bullingdon – Synth-dance night with twitchy electro-poppers TEED and industrial-strength synth-rockers Sikorsky.

BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Wheatsheaf

– Eclectic mix of 40s jazz, Arabic folk, blues and hip hop from the talented Lizards.

MINISTRY OF SOUND ANTHEMS

TOUR: The Regal – Dance extravaganza from the London super club DJs.

KING FURNACE + BABY GRAVY + THE

REPEATS: The Cellar – Ballsy rock'n'roll and scuzzy showmanship from the rock monster that is King Furnace, with support from rinky-dink electro-punk kids Baby Gravy.

PORT SUMMER ALL-DAYER: The Port

Mahon – Full day of live music with bands to be confirmed.



Monday 11th

THE GUTTER TWINS:

The Academy

Greg Dulli and Mark Lanegan bring their singularly downtrodden gothic folk project to town to inject a little bit of gloom and a whole lot of doom into our summer. With Dulli formerly fronting Afghan Whigs and Lanegan providing buffalo-disembowelling vocals for Screaming Trees and more recently Queens Of The Stone Age, the pair have seen a fair bit of the rock and roll life but together as The Gutter Twins they take an understated approach to its seedier side. The pair's debut album, 'Saturnalia', released on Sub Pop, a perfect home for two of grunge's great survivors, comes shrouded in layers of portent and regret, at times recalling Swans' later-period introspective menace, but leavened by Dulli and Lanegan's switching vocal styles. For all its brooding, unsettling mood (typical song title: 'All Misery') The Gutter Twins' music is melodically delicate, subtle string arrangements competing with churning guitars and imposing vocal performances; it's a fine balancing act that only two such talents could pull off, dancing an elegant waltz between the abandoned whisky bottles and overflowing ashtrays. If you can imagine The Everly Brothers reinvented by Satan, you've got a decent frame of reference for the Gutter Twins, so get your party shoes on.



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TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM
101: The Academy
ASHES TO ASHES: The Jericho Tavern -
80s night with bands and DJs.

SUNDAY 24th

GARAGE NATION: The Regal – A night of UK garage.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE

FRYER BAND: Watlington Memorial Club

– Festival funk, swamp rock and witchy psychedelia from The Mighty Redox, plus madcap rocking from Pete Fryer.

MONDAY 25th

Nowt on. Have a day off, why don'tcha. Oh hey, it's a Bank Holiday. We all get a day off. Let's drink!

Wednesday 20th

THE LAST SHADOW PUPPETS:

The New Theatre

Funny thing, side projects, they can go wrong or right in so many ways; in the former case, old lags retreading the blues riffs of their youth; in the latter, Thom Yorke taking Radiohead's *outré* musings to new extremes of despair. Arctic Monkeys frontman Alex Turner's foray into pet project – where he's teamed up with Rascals singer Miles Kane – never looked like promising too much, especially after the pedestrian disappointment of the last Monkeys album. But in reality, it's a corker. In fact The Last Shadow Puppets are a far more ambitious, expansive and sophisticated proposition than Turner's day job. Having recruited singer-songwriter Stephen Fretwell on bass and Arctic Monkeys producer James Ford on drums, they hit paydirt by inviting Arcade Fire collaborator Owen Pallett to arrange the string parts and immediately we're in a musical world that recalls Scott Walker, John Barry and Love. Dynamic debut single 'The Age Of The Understatement' set the scene and the band's album fulfilled most of its promise. It's classically elegant 60s pop and swing with a modern swagger and even confirmed Monkeys haters should be won over. The band played a semi-secret set at Glastonbury in June and were joined by Jack White on guitar; not just a side project then, but a genuine super-group.



TUESDAY 26th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with singer Katya Gorrie and guitarist Denny Ilett Jr.

WEDNESDAY 27th

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar

THURSDAY 28th

HENRY ROLLINS SPOKEN WORD: The Academy – The one-time Black Flag-fronting hardcore hardman continues to pack a mighty punch even without the guitars, continuing his spoken word tour, mixing in autobiographical stories with political observations, the informed polemic complementing Rollins' surprisingly amiable wit and self-effacing humour.

THE WARLOCKS: The Academy – Narcotic groove-rock from the San Francisco bad boys, the band whose starting point appears to be Spacemen 3's motto, "Taking drugs to make music to take drugs to", and whose chemical intake apparently makes Pete Doherty look like Ian MacKaye. Twenty-plus band members have come and gone in the ensuing chaos, the line-up constantly redrawn around singer-guitarist Bobby Heckster, himself a temporary member of The Brian Jonestown Massacre. The musical debt to Spacemen 3 too is huge – all flanged guitars, psychedelic drones and relentless guitar riffs, but homage is also paid to The Velvet Underground, The Stones, Ride and The Jesus & Mary Chain, and at their best The Warlocks are as savage a wall of rock sound as you'll find.

DJ DEREK: The Academy – Classic ska, reggae and soul from the legendary Bristolian DJ.

YOUNG PLAYTHINGS: The Port Mahon – Chirpy, sunshine power-pop in the vein of Weezer.

DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + RORY ELLIS + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS: The Jericho Tavern – Funereal gutter jazz in an after-hours Tom Waits fashion from Mr Chancer and chums, plus slightly sozzled songs about, yes, whisky, from Francis and friends.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 29th

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + EPIC 45 + HREDA: The Wheatsheaf – Last ever Oxfordbands.com gig with the mighty Winchell Riots, a band they have championed since the days of Fell City Girl and a suitably heroic show to go out on. Intimate, yet epic stadium-sized guitar pop from Winchell Riots, tipping a nod to Sigur Ros, Muse and Echo & The Bunnymen, plus spangled jangle-pop and ambient electronica from Staffordshire's Epic 45 and elaborate jazz-core and math-rock from Hreda in support.

TIM WESTWOOD: The Regal – The Radio 1 hip hop mouthpiece hit the Regal decks.



Thursday 21st

MGMT: The Academy

We've been waiting for this moment ever since we fell head over heels in love with the New York duo's debut single, 'Time To Pretend', earlier this year, an almost spiritually euphoric slab of electro-prog-pop. MGMT – Andrew VanWyngarden and Ben Goldwasser – followed that up with possibly the year's most eclectic album, 'Oracular Spectacular', whose title alone tells you much about the pair's psychedelically-enhanced approach to pop. Produced by Dave Fridmann, it unsurprisingly captures some of Flaming Lips and Mercury Rev's star-gazing, acid-frazzled rootsy space-rock, switching from 60s West Coast to synth-rocking retro-futurism at will, a swirling, stomping blend of prog, disco, country, psychedelia and more that references everything from Bowie and Pink Floyd through The Beatles and Incredible String Band to Todd Rundgren and Hall & Oates. Check out the band garbed in bandannas and tie-dye shirts gabbing on about the universe and chaos theory and they come on like crazed hippy sound explorers but the pop gems hidden on the album can't be argued with. Live, with a full band, there's a tendency to drift into extended jam sessions, but having been picked to support Radiohead last month, soundtracking the last series of Skins and being hailed as the next big thing by everyone from Rolling Stone to The Guardian, the substance is obvious beyond the style and the hype.

THE STRATEGY: The Port Mahon
THE REPEATS + WHISKY BLITZ + HARLEQUIN + THE HI & LO: The Jericho Tavern – Local bands night with indie rockers The Repeats and good-time classic rockers Whisky Blitz.

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SHAKE: The Academy
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 30th

UNDER THE OAK: North Aston – One-day music festival featuring Forms Forms Forms, Dial F For Frankenstein, E For Echo, Les Valentine, Harlequinn, Jonathan Oakley and more.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with JESSICA GOYDER + DENISE MARIE + THE PLUGS: The Wheatsheaf – Fluffy, tree-hugging acoustic pop from Jessica Goyder at tonight's GTI, plus Bayou blues and funky folk from New Orleans' Denise Marie and Elbow-influenced pop grandeur from The Plugs.

SMILEX + THE BLACK HATS + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS: The Cellar – Garage punk and glam-metal rocking from Smilex, with support from 60s-inspired pop types Black Hats and Velvet Underground-influenced teen rockers Tristan & The Troubadours.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SUNDAY 31st

ZANGRYUS + SACRED DIVIDE: The Port Mahon

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Friday 22nd

BEACH FUZZ / SPECTRE FOLK SYSTEM / BLEEDING HEART NARRATIVE : The Port Mahon

Another impressively challenging bill from local champions of experimental noise, Permanent Vacation, tonight, featuring Manchester's semi-improvised trio Beach Fuzz, combining drums, vocals and guitar and lots and lots of effects pedals to create a musical landscape of feedback, vocal manipulation and freeform tribal rhythms that mixes in various bits of The Velvet Underground, Sonic Youth, Vibracathedral Orchestra and krautrock pioneers Popol Vuh. Likely star of the show is Pete Nolan, drummer with Sonic Youth-affiliated noisemakers Magik Markers, tonight presenting his solo side project, Spectre Folk System, a haunting, intense flurry of avant-



folk. Bleeding Heart Narrative is the solo work of London-based composer Oliver Barrett who utilises layered piano, cello and vocals to create complex shifting patterns of alternately abrasive and seductive noise, which you can imagine being appreciated in the grand surroundings of the Holywell Music Room, given some wider exposure. Completing the bill is Cambridge's Latahs, again a one-man, multi-instrumental show, creating clanging industrial dissonance of the sort that in a more perfect world would be causing Kooks fans to spontaneously haemorrhage what passes for their brains into a large bucket.

VENUE PHONE NUMBERS

Oxford Academy: 0844 477 2000 (ticketweb)
The Bullingdon: 01865 244516
The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156
The X: 01865 776431
The Cellar: 01865 244761
The New Theatre: 0870 606 3500

The Port Mahon: 01865 202067
The Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775
Brookes Union: 01865 484750
The Purple Turtle: 01865 247086
The Temple: 01865 243251
East Oxford Community Centre: 01865 792168

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THE FINE ART OF QUALITY INSTRUMENTS

WAKESTOCK

FRIDAY

The last thing you really need when you turn up at a festival and find the arena closed for another two hours because the organisers want you to go and watch a selection of beefy blokes doing incredible but Darwin-challenging stunts while attached to the back of speedboats is to bump into a mate who's armed with a three-litre box of Merlot. It means things start out messy and quickly go downhill faster than one of the blokes being pulled across a skate ramp-cum-swimming pool called the Billabong by a mechanised wire later in the afternoon.

Still, maybe a messed-up state is the best way to appreciate Wakestock which seems – to be kind – to suffer from teething troubles.

Situated in the farthest corner of Blenheim Palace's expansive grounds, Wakestock is still a picturesque affair with a trek down to the lake to watch the sport a healthy, wholesome alternative to sitting in front of the telly watching Euro 2008. But even once the main music arena opens there's a palpable feeling of not much going on. Partly this is due to a low turnout for the opening day (all festivals seem to have suffered this summer from a combination of overkill and a fear of rubbish weather) but it takes an age for things to warm up and with the various music tents badly marked out we spend twenty minutes watching **HYPER** in the belief that they're Devil's Gun. Actually Hyper, if that's who they indeed are, aren't half bad, if a little cheesy, in their mix of heavy-duty, grungy electro-funk and wandering hip hop pontificating. They're far better when piling on the pressure, less good when sounding a bit like Faithless; they come on stage to a crowd of about 15 and leave to the cheers of twenty times that number and if you can't imagine them selling huge amounts of CDs a bright future on the festival circuit seems likely.

The familiar strains of 'Man In The Machine' draws into what we now know is the main stage tent for **ROYWORLD**'s set which, as ever, gets us to wondering why we enjoy a band who remind us of Supertramp so much. Later on we play 'Man In The Machine' to a friend and convince him it's a lost Sparks track. So that's why we like them.

We try ever so, ever so hard to like **FRIENDLY FIRES** but just can't summon up the enthusiasm. Perhaps it's because they can't summon up the enthusiasm to write more than one tune. That tune is 'Paris' and it sounds like some meeting point between Hot Chip and Cameo, but the rest of their set sounds exactly the same – lightweight, skittish disco-house that might sound a bit more exciting anywhere other than a quarter-full marquee.

To be honest we don't even attempt to like **CAZALS**. Partly because we remember them a couple of years ago as a band that could make Pigeon Detectives sound like futuristic android hardcore demons, but mostly because their nominally electro-infused pub rock stodge is so meat-and-potatoes it should be sold not in a plastic CD case but a thick layer of pastry.

Like a lot of stuff today **TROPHY TWINS**' set lacks impact by being played out to such a small crowd who are at least all packed to the front and determined to have something resembling fun.



Happy Mondays

Compared to Cazals Trophy Twins' twitchy, uncluttered and uplifting funky house is proof that there's possibly some life here tonight.

We – unprofessionally – completely miss **GROOVE ARMADA**, and we're still not sure how or why. It might have something to do with going back to the campsite to neck as much red wine as possible rather than pay £3.50 for a can of Red Stripe in the arena, or maybe we were just standing underneath the giant windmill fairground ride, wondering why anyone would pay good money to make the contents of their stomach reappear through centrifugal force. Which doubtless makes us the sort of wimps who would get sand kicked in their face by beefy wakeboarders.

We do, however, have our expectations shoved down our cynical throat by **PENDULUM** who are really bloody good, managing to lift a surprisingly lairy (what do you expect if you're only selling premium-strength lager?) crowd's spirits. Pendulum's stadium-sized, rock-friendly, populist take on drum&bass has made them something of a *bête noir* in underground dance circles but faced with a tent full of pissed people who just want to dance and don't give a shit about looking cool, they fit the bill perfectly. And against the odds, Friday ends on a high.

Dale Kattack

SATURDAY

Outside Blenheim Palace gates some 100 people are waiting for the promised shuttle bus. Some have been here for over an hour. Some are throwing themselves in front of passing taxis in desperation. A forlorn steward with no radio contact to the outside world shrugs his shoulders and says "It was meant to be here ages ago". Eventually a twelve-seater minibus turns up. We don't know whether to laugh or riot. Dammit, we're English. We squeeze into the luggage compartment and make do. At least we're getting there in the end.

We negotiate the police sniffer dog (possibly employed by the Marquis of Blandford to confiscate him a new stash), who fails to notice that our trousers are tailored from pure cocaine,

and the first band we catch are **REEMA**. We quickly wish we were back at the bus stop. Byrote emot-rock that ticks all boxes marked Oasis through to Stones Roses, performed with cock-rock posturing and featuring a bass player in a hopefully ironic Anarchy t-shirt.

And then things go wrong. We head off to catch recent Transgressive singing **ESSER** only to find he's just finished. Set times have been forced to change, but you wouldn't know because no bastard is telling anyone and they're still flogging mini programmes for a fiver at the gate with the wrong times in.

Emergency strategic planning means we do make it in time for **OPERATOR PLEASE**, who turn out to be the highlight of the day, surpassing any novelty teeny-pop label with a set that's fifty times more punk rock than all the rock lads with their Anarchy t-shirts and yet pretends to be nothing more than silly, throwaway bubblegum fun. Like Be Your Own Pet raised on Toni Basil and Britney Spears, they chew their way through half an hour of frothy, frenzied held-together-with-spit-and-string disco-punk that climaxes with ace debut smash 'Just a Song About Ping Pong'

Those in the know (ie. Music industry types) are promising great things from **IN CASE OF FIRE**. They are, we're told, The New Muse. They're not, of course. They're a bombastic cross between Ultravox and Bon Jovi with a barely-disguised power rock ballad that might as well be Poison. Still, unlike, say, Reema, they play with some conviction and a bit of showbiz flair and you think that maybe Wembley glory isn't beyond them.

If Pendulum defied expectations, **CALVIN HARRIS** shreds them and magically makes a decorative paper chain from their remains. We'd come with only the sour knowledge of his awful, knowingly retro album to fuel our preconceptions but twenty minutes into his big beat techno squiggle, with its side order of feelgood electro-pop and we're dancing badly, madly but mostly gladly. Harris is a natural born bandleader and his brand of happy electro-dance – where Tubeway Army meets Ottowan – is simple and irresistible. He ruins it a bit at the



The Streets



Futureheads



Estelle

photos by rphimages

end with 'The Girls' but we leave the tent repenting our earlier cynicism.

The same can't be said of **HAPPY MONDAYS** who we thought might be past it and don't even try to confound us with a lazy, decrepit set that finds a barely comprehensible Shaun Ryder and a floppy, grizzled Bez going through the motions (notionally a greatest hits set) like cynical has-beens on the chicken-in-a-basket circuit. Any swagger, chaos or menace they had back in their 80s heyday is long gone. And then we remember the best thing about The Mondays was always the remixes.

If we have to say anything positive about Happy Mondays it's that they're better than **ELLIOT MINOR**, a gaggle of ex-choristers who make McFly look and sound like The Stranglers, and criminally awful cover-versions maestro **MARK RONSON**, who makes pop music for people who have had their brains scooped out with a ladle and replaced by a family of twittering, shitting budgies.

And if that isn't enough to put us in a bad mood, it takes two hours to get back to Oxford because the shuttle buses have been stolen by aliens. Or at least they might as well have for all the help the information tent people can offer.

Dale Kattack

SUNDAY

There's little doubt that Sunday's line-up is the strongest of the three days and it's no coincidence it's the day featuring the most local acts, including headliners **SUPERGRASS**, who we end up missing simply because doing so is the only way we can feasibly get home without another epic trek across Oxfordshire's wilder outskirts, possibly involving an air ambulance or a fight with grizzly bears.

I only catch two songs of **WINCHELL RIOTS'** set, which is a shame, as I like what I hear. Being rather early in the day, the arena is still only half full, but the band fill it with their epic, reverb-laden rock. I don't hear enough to really be able to tell, but my initial impressions are that they sound like what Keane would sound like if they were actually any good.

And then to **LITTLE FISH**. Who'd have

thought a boy and a girl could make so much noise? Especially a girl as tiny as 'Juju'. Every inch the rock'n'roller in her white skinny jeans and red braces, she's an instrument in herself – her voice creates everything and her guitar follows. PJ Harvey or Suzi Quatro are fair comparisons. The repertoire is varied, from blues to rock via soul, with a lot of bravery, pain, anger and compassion thrown in. Occasionally it gets a bit frighteningly yelpy, but it's mostly challenging and intriguing.

Completing a trio of new local talents are **A SILENT FILM**. How annoying – a local band I haven't bothered seeing before because I didn't think they'd be this good. Epic, layered, synthy, earnest – their sound is great. Their songs sound amazing, but I have no idea how commercial they are – I'm just enjoying the interesting sound they're making. Not heard anything as inventive, yet accessible as this in quite a while. And their cover of 'Born Slippy' is amazing.

After all that early excitement come **THE DYKEENIES**. They're pretty standard teen pop/rock/indie. Very popular with the 'youth' who have appeared out of nowhere (and are surely too young to be here). I'm reliably informed that they're a cross between Fall Out Boy and Busted; I wouldn't know. I'm obviously too old.

I think I'm being won over by the **BLACK KIDS'** catchiness. Their sheer, unadulterated poppiness irritated me at first, but the influences have been showing through – rock, disco, early 80s pop-funk, Motown. They're still not the tightest band live I've ever seen, but tunes like recent single 'Hurricane Jane' whip the crowd up anyway, so they're doing something right.

Look! It's the bloke who used to be in Test Icicles and he's wearing a furry hat! He's got a female drummer! And a violin player! So automatically cool, obviously. It's **LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION** and it's all a quite jolly singer-songwriter-with-wry-observations-about-life type of affair, but not twee, despite excursions towards 60s surf rock (which win me over with the quirky chord changes). He seems like a nice guy, and it's all quite appealing.

ESTELLE is on the sassier end of cool. She's brought a huge band with her, but this grandiosity is dampened the moment she starts chatting to the audience (apparently, men are getting on her nerves so much that she's written a song about it). She toasts and raps as well as sings, and it's not an r'n'b bore-fest – there's even some reggae and grime in there (but not, alas, any Kanye). She puts her heart into it, and it's quite a refreshing contrast to most the rest of today's guitar-orientated line-up.

Back to local matter and **YOUNG KNIVES**. But oh no! They don't sound so quirky anymore. Except when they play their older stuff. The stage presence is still eccentric, so they've not deserted us completely, despite Henry's declaration that 'Hot Summer' made them multimillionaires. The Beatles-y harmonies and guitar interplay are still in evidence, too, and 'Turn Tail' is lovely. The crowd are somewhat distracted during their set by a giant red WKD beach ball, though. Which probably says a whole lot more about the crowd than it does the band.

Your reviewer doesn't like **THE STREETS**. No amount of lazy, soul-destroying, endlessly repetitive basslines smothered by Mike Skinner's arrogant, posturing, rambling, uninspired, self-aggrandising, boorish boasting – conspicuously devoid of any rhyme, rhythm or anything else interesting whatsoever – would persuade her otherwise. And so it transpires.

But hold on to your heart-rate, it's **THE FUTUREHEADS!** Never knowingly laid-back, their marriage of frenetic punkery and beautiful harmonies would be charming if that description didn't seem a bit too odd to apply to them. The ever-popular 'Skip To The End' requires synchronised crowd jumping, the mere sight of which exhausts me into taking my leave.

And so ends the first Wakesock. An interesting experiment and a generally welcome addition to Oxfordshire's summer calendar that maybe didn't live up to expectations. There is work to be done if it's to return next year, and it's to be hope it does as the potential of the event, particularly in such a picturesque setting, is great.

Kirsten Etheridge

CORNBURY FESTIVAL

SATURDAY

Cornbury makes no pretence to being hip or trendy, and therein lies its greatest strength. For the most part it's a festival for hits. More specifically Saturday seems to be a festival of 70s and 80s hits, with a crowd assured of a youth-reliving comfort zone.

It's a zone into which **THE BEAT** skank with consummate ease, firing out their big numbers - 'Too Nice To Talk To'; 'Hands Off She's Mine'; 'Tears Of A Clown' - to a sunshine-enthused audience, in between loping ska and reggae jams, the only minor blip being a crowd-pleasing but stilted take on 'Rock The Casbah' - always The Clash's least inspiring moment.

After which we wander past an exotic array of Caribbean, Lebanese and Goan food stalls to catch a glimpse of how the other half lives: the other half being the VIP festival goers who get their own stage-left enclosure and tent with comfy sofas, flushing loos and a Pimm's reception. Whatever happened to standing in the rain drinking weak lager and crapping in a ditch?

IMELDA MAY is well suited to such polite company, her nominally celtic-tinged acoustic folk-pop occasionally dipping into showtune brassiness or a country twang. She covers Patsy Cline's 'Walking After Midnight', but after a while she comes on a bit too much like Michelle Shocked without any semblance of attitude.

Attitude is something **HALF MAN HALF BISCUIT** have in spades, even when they're singing about the difficulties of washing sieves, or taking problem chimps to the Ideal Home Exhibition. Two decades on from their inception the band still look like middle-ranking public sector workers and patently still spend too much time watching crap daytime telly. Frontman Nigel Blackwell is a poet genius with lyrics sharp enough to slash Razorlight's throats, veering from sardonic to satirical to surreal, taking aim at everything from cynical blue badge abusers to over-sensitive bands on 'Bad Review'. A chorus of 'You're going on after Crispy Ambulance' raises a cheer from every indie obscurist present, while the band themselves sound like nothing so much as a wiry, skiffle-inflected Fall, and as they encore with classic debut single 'Trumpton Riots' we know we've already witnessed the band of the weekend.

But hey, **THE BANGLES** are up next and we remember that once upon a time, before the execrable

'Eternal Flame', they were a pretty bloody great band at times, and 'Going Down To Liverpool', from when they were part of the burgeoning Paisley Underground scene, sounds as fresh as the band look even after all this time. They open with a cover of 'Hazy Shade Of Winter' in tribute to tonight's headliner Paul Simon, while 'Manic Monday' is as bright as the sunshine which hasn't yet succumbed to the encroaching clouds. Sadly as soon as the band start on their new songs it all becomes overblown, synthetic stadium MOR bluster and the lure of the curry stalls is too much to resist, managing to catch the last few minutes of **JULIAN VELARD**'s self-congratulatory honky tonk cabaret on the Word stage as we go.

If The Beat and The Bangles are a one-way ticket back to the early-80s, so too is the display of kids' breakdancing on the arena podium, an impressive if anachronistic reminder of a time before Glastonbury headliner Jay-Z was even out of nappies.

ERIC BIBB looks like Kid Creole in his white suit and wide-brimmed hat, but musically he's far more in tune with Robert Johnson's lonesome porch blues, and if most of his material is unfamiliar to anyone who's not a fully-fledged blues aficionado, he keeps hold of the large crowd for the entirety of his hour-long set. And for extra cool points we learn that Bibb's godfather is none other than Paul Robeson.

From the Word stage it's only a minute's lazy lager and sunshine-added amble to the Riverside stage where hometown comfort is available in the shape of the reliably inclusive **EPSTEIN**, today meandering between country waltzes and blues cabin laments.

The wind has picked up, the sun has gone into hiding and the rain has started. It's a barely noticeable drizzle for now but soon the bars and marquees will be thronged by folks who suddenly wished they'd splashed out on VIP tickets. Or simply remembered to bring something waterproof to wear.

It don't bother us none right now though, because here's **CARBON / SILICON** who feature not one, but two gen-you-ine punk rock legends in the form of Mick Jones and Tony James. Sadly they're not going to be playing a set of their old hits since it means we don't get the chance to shout out for 'Love Missile F1-11'. Sadly too, they're not really very punk rock either. Jones is like a camp, cockney car

Half Man Half Biscuit



photo by Miles Walkden

salesman and sings like Buzzcock's Pete Shelley with a blocked nose and initially they do sound like they could eat most of their young acolytes for breakfast, but there's a creeping music hall feel to the set, and together they bypass their glory years altogether and bash out reheated mid-70s pub-rock and r'n'b that's solid enough but not enough to lift our slightly soggy spirits.

The weather does little to help **TOOTS & THE MAYTALS** either, who on a sunnier day would doubtless be a triumph. But the wind steals half the sound and, let's face it, reggae just doesn't sound the same in the rain.

Strangely, neither do **SMILEX**, who you'd bank on revelling in a bit of mud and misery. Instead they're oddly restrained today on the Riverside stage, saving their punky garage snarl for the last couple of numbers and instead offering a mix of Radiohead-style wooziness and Guns'n'Roses' more considered outings. Still, Lee Christian's 'I love the Bangles' slogan, daubed across his torso, is rather sweet compared to his usual filth.

Soaked from our knees to our boots now we discover that **NICK LOWE** has turned into an ageing lounge crooner and we'd be wasting valuable drinking time waiting around for him to play 'I Love The

Sound Of Breaking Glass'. Or indeed anything interesting.

We are guaranteed hits from **PAUL SIMON**, though. C'mon, he's had so many over the last 30 years he could surely trip over a dozen of them just walking on stage. And so it is, for the most part, backed by a seven-piece band and giving a large chunk of 'Gracelands' an outing, along with a couple of oldies like 'Mrs Robinson' and a hushed 'Sound Of Silence' that perhaps miss Art Garfunkel's tremulous touch. Simon does succumb to festival rock out syndrome mid-set and he seems to be trying to please everyone - those that only know the big hits and the more fanatical obscurists. Any disappointment is redeemed late on with a drizzle-defying 'Diamonds On The Soles Of Her Shoes' and an almost inevitable encore of 'You Can Call Me Al', both of which send everyone back to their tents (or luxury VIP five-star yurts, which doubtless come complete with fully fitted kitchen and en-suite comfy crapper) happy, but also get us to pondering Paul Simon's generally unremarked-up influence on acts as diverse as Battles and Vampire Weekend. Maybe Cornbury simply doesn't need to try for the new, cool sounds. They just go straight for the great granddaddy.

And then. And then it really starts to piss down.

Dale Kattack

Toots & The Maytals



Carbon / Silicon



photos by Marc West

The Epstein



SUNDAY

After the incredible high of seeing Half Man Half Biscuit yesterday, could Sunday possibly live up to that start? Taking a cursory glance at the timetable, it doesn't appear to have much chance.

However on the walk to the arena I pass through beautiful woodland and lakes and hear **LUKE SMITH** playing 'Luke's National Anthem' on the Folk Festival stage and all seems well in the world. The rest of Luke's set is as charming as ever, the jokes a variation on a theme we've heard a million times before, but will never tire of hearing as they're delivered in such a humble, sweet way. Luke wraps things up with 'Out With The Old, In With The New', his protest song against the inexorable march of progress. It's so eloquent that when he slips a reading from Betjeman in the middle you wouldn't notice the join.

After such a splendid start it's over to the Riverside stage where **MODOU DIOUF** and his band are giving a display of Senegalese sabar drumming. It's energetic, infectious and happy and has everyone from small children to granddads up and dancing. I can think of no greater compliment. Unfortunately I've arrived towards the end of his set but as I head off to find something else I stumble

across **ARMALEGGAN**, a group of contemporary Border Morris dancers. The costumes are a sight to behold, Kiss-style make up and a distinct gothic element. It's a nice twist on the usual Morris dancing and intriguing stuff.

When they have done it's down to the main stage and the festival equivalent of Henman Hill. The slope is awash with Tesco's collapsible chairs (only because Waitrose don't make them) which make it perilous negotiating your way down near the stage. Luckily **TOM BAXTER** doesn't require anyone to get too close, as his range projects across the whole site. So I stand at the top of the slope with a delicious mince beef pie and marvel at his blustery rock. At first it seems to have the gravitas of Elbow but feels lacking. Prolonged exposure wins me over to his Jeff Buckley-style voice and windswept melodies, his vocals standing out now the other Buckley soundalikes have gone. Fittingly one of the huge bubbles people have been making floats ridiculously high in the sky as his set comes to a close and pops on the last drum crash.

There follows one of those interminable gaps caused by the rotating stage policy (the two main stages have an act roughly every two hours) so if there's something

you don't like you're pretty stuck. Eventually, though, **JAUNE TOUJOURS** appear on the folk stage and things brighten up considerably. They evoke the French gypsy spirit with plenty of accordion, bright clothes and bountiful brass. It provides a much needed party vibe but can lack a bit of variation.

At least the Riverside stage seems to be getting through a good number of acts, even if they appear to be chucking them on randomly, probably in the order they arrive. So after checking the program and doing some detective work I realise I'm watching **BACK TO THE BORDER**, a wholly unenthralling country blues duo. That's matched soon after on the Folk Festival stage by **TIFT MERRITT**, who has a lovely old country voice, but sings songs devoid of any real character.

To show my desperation I'm starting to wonder if **10CC** will provide a merciful release from all this. Of course, my optimism is misplaced, and then some. They deliver a crowd-pleasing greatest hits set, but by God it's insipid, bland rubbish. I have to take refuge during 'The Things We Do For Love' as the song and crowd reaction is making me physically sick. At least things can't get any worse.

In fact they get much better, despite the start of 10CC's set

prompting a downpour that barely lets up. The mood is brightened by **SALSA CELTICA** whose upbeat set lifts the crowd's spirits. The name gives away what they do, and whether they deliver salsa rhythms or Scottish jigs it's all done with an amazing passion. Some Jamaican elements then get thrown in along with some frenetic toasting, but it's the Celtic elements that really get people going and make them one of the highlights of the day.

To round off the day **KT TUNSTALL** does what's expected of her and nothing more, which in this instance is fine and exactly what the crowd want. She probably would have been more interesting to see in an acoustic setting, though.

CROWDED HOUSE plough a similar furrow, but also prove why they're one of the more underrated big acts. Melodies abound and you start to realise just how many of their tunes you actually know but never realised it, and that the tunes are much better than you originally thought, the warm hug needed at the end of the long day. And while it's not earth shattering stuff, it's certainly a pleasant enough way to close the festival and sum Cornbury up quite neatly. It's certainly one of the sweetest and most carefully crafted festivals, and for that it should be applauded.

Russell Barker

TRUCK FESTIVAL

SATURDAY

After last year's festival, people really thought Truck had jumped the shark. Naturally, rescheduling was out of their control, but the general feeling was that the line-up was predictable and uninspired, and that Truck had been gradually ossifying into a noisy convalescent home for tedious country musicians.

This year, however, turns out to be the best Truck for a long time. The line-up is pruned of some of the incumbents, but there is still a pleasant smattering of favourites on offer; the site had been rethought but still kept to the familiar blueprint, and, most importantly, the atmosphere is wonderful.

It's so gladdening to see people going rubber-limb loopy in The Beat Hive before eating doughnuts and then sitting quietly to enjoy something acoustic at the Market Stage. More than anything else this year we get the impression that Truckers are open to all manner of different performances, and this is reflected in some surprising, but refreshing thematic booking policies, such as Crossword Records' abstract hip-hop showcase, or the Sonic Cathedral shoegazing celebration. It is the sort of weekend to make anyone wax lyrical. Anyone apart from Evan Dando, anyway...

Implausibly, our festival begins with a band from Hong Kong. **DP** is a guitar-and-drums scuzz riffing concoction, who make a great noise, but feel like half of a good rock band. AC without the DC.

Vacuous Pop's well received line-up begins with **Load.Click.Shoot** whose bandy-legged disco pop sends hordes of kids in horrible plastic shades, who look like extras from *Weird Science*, into a dancing frenzy. Is this because the band are good (which they are, with their snotty take on Foals-esque puzzle pop and excellent naughty schoolboy keyboards), or because these guys have been cocked for some Day-Glo musical fun all morning? Load, click, shoot indeed.

Hey, the naughty schoolboy has been doing his homework. **Alphabet Backwards**' keyboard player shares a cheeky Korg buzz with the previous band, but plays it spiced with nonchalantly adept arpeggios and Herbie Hancock twiddles. The two singers may look like a cut-budget children's presenters, but they play impossibly, gorgeously, heart-burstingly jolly acoustic-led pop that would sound as at home in the Top 40 as it would at a drunken barndance.

A spot of lunch later **The European Union** provides our first visit to The Market Stage, once again the most comfy part of Truck, with the most reliable sound. Sadly, although European Union are billed as sounding like Nirvana, we turn up to a minimal folk pop song played by sleepy robots. Thereafter they step up into a trudge down The Band's avenue, good ol' boys chord progressions overlaid with hammered elementary piano and drawled self-conscious vocals. Passable.

Admittedly it's not our dream of a collaboration between Bellowhead and Fuck Buttons, but **Buttonhead**'s set starts incredibly, a repeated wordless three note vocal motif over some complex pomp rock that sounds like Philip Glass' 'Einstein On The Beach' played by Magma. Except that it also sounds like Godspeed You! Black Emperor played by Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Amazing. However, after a while the focus gets lost somewhere to the left of the kitchen sink, and the

show becomes a valiant, but ultimately unsatisfying mash-up; we would have stuck it out to the end anyway, if the falsetto vocals weren't so tooth-pullingly terrible.

Richard Walters is over on the main stage. We know this because his voice is carried on the wind like the skeleton of a recently deceased butterfly. From a distance it's ethereal; up close it seems to lose its impact. Many would argue that a man of Richard's talents deserves to be on a big stage, but we can't help but feel that his set would benefit from a more intimate setting.

Also on the main stage, **Little Fish** are winning a small army of new fans. Aside from being musically spotless, Juju and Nez are rare in looking as though they were born to be onstage – even on the main stage, it's rare to see an act that you can't tear your eyes from. Another Fish victory.

Part of the Truck experience is overhearing a conversation and picking out enough information about a band to persuade you to stop lounging on the grass quaffing cider and go check them out instead. **Lovvers** are tearing the Barn a new backside, lurching around the stage bristling with energy and ear-shatteringly fuzzed up guitars. It's a definite injection of much needed vigour. Special credit too for being the first band of the festival to climb the speaker stacks at the side of the stage.

"Who's ready for some ramshackle, drunken, atonal, clueless, shambolic, dated indie, then?!" Perhaps it's a good thing they don't really go for MCs at Truck, as there'd be no real way of introducing "pop legends" **The Television Personalities** and their agonising set. Imagine a bad Go Betweens rip-off encoded, bounced off the surface of Mars, and then reassembled in a brewery with half the data missing or corrupt.

"Embarrassing" is the only word that serves. When we bump into frontman Dan Treacy (quite literally) later, he mumbles something about going off to do drugs with Amy Winehouse and staggers off with a carrier bag dangling from his hand. "That man is a genius," says a bystander with no hint of irony in his voice. It's not quite the adjective we'd have chosen.

Much better are **Rolo Tomassi**, who are bursting with even more fire and brimstone than usual and their energy and expressiveness are a genuine delight. It might well be true that most of their songs do sound exactly the same, but then when all of your songs channel the spirit of the The Birthday Party through the synth-fuelled jerkiness of Numbers and the outright bombast and aggression of the Dillinger Escape Plan, you're not really doing a whole lot wrong. At last year's Truck they were a definite highlight that confused more people than they delighted. This year the audience is primed and restless before they hit the stage. It's incredible and heartening that something so extreme can be so widely accepted. Breakneck riffs and time changes, St Vitus dancing, and a frontwoman whose roar puts most screamo frontmen to shame, Rolo Tomassi are a challenging band. Fortunately they're also one of the most entertaining acts you're likely to see at the moment. although you will need to have a sit down and a nice cup of sweet tea afterwards.

Sadly lacking in tea, but brimming over with cider, we take a gulp and try to push our way into The



Beat Hive – the tent that replaces the lounge tent this year. **Mr ShaoDow** is holding court and the crowd in the palm of his hand, simultaneously proving himself to be a consummate performer and British rap/hip-hop to be an easy equal to American efforts. Having read some embarrassing nonsense following Jay-Z's Glastonbury booking that music festivals aren't the place for hip hop, it's a joy to see ShaoDow's frenetic set. He's clearly happy too: much as we love his music, we've always felt that his shows can be somewhat nervous and twitchy. Clearly the adoring reception has pushed him to greater things, as he prowls the stage, ranting into two mikes simultaneously and generally sending a tent full of dancers insane, whilst never missing a syllable of his excellent lyrics. Asher Dust helps out with the odd piece of singing and a nice red hat, but this is ShaoDow's hour, and he deserves it.

Having found ourselves caught between two randomly scurrying children who appear to be demonstrating Brownian Motion for the deaf on the way back from the tea tent, we return to the main stage for **Emmy The Great**, who was a highlight of Truck 06. Sadly her music's become more polite and tidy in the interim and this set turns into a nondescript wash of general pleasantness. Still, she's retained an ear-catching literacy in her lyrics, and a delivery that seems to be intelligently hectoring and monstrously cute simultaneously, rather like losing a theological debate to a Care Bear.

Little Fish



The Family Machine



Lemonheads



Dead Kids



Rolo Tomassi



Mr ShaoDow



In place of the Trailer Park tent (oh how we miss you) is a tiny little stage that serves as an add on to the bar. Niftily titled The Village Pub, there's barely enough room to swing a kitten inside. Squeezing in to catch **The Family Machine** is well worth the effort. Beset by technical difficulties, the band take it all in their stride and turn in what might be one of the sets of the weekend. Self-effacing to the end, and good humoured throughout, it would be easy to miss the fact that Family Machine also have great tunes by the truck load. 'Flowers By The Roadside' is splendid but it's 'The Do Song' that inspires the most smiles and with lyrics that consist solely of "do" it's impossible not to join in.

When you see someone in a scarlet astronaut suit playing limp, Bowie-ish country songs out of tune and saying garbage like "I fell in the whoop-de-doo" and, "show me love, you kitty cats", you begin to think that it must be an elaborate musical prank. We still don't know if **Y** is a serious musician or a practical joker – either way, it's a shit way to spend your life.

"Next on ITV3, *When Irony Goes Bad*, this week featuring rubbish band **Dead Kids**". The spectacle of men dressed like The Quireboy who play songs that all sound like Van Halen's 'Jump' without the subtlety, and smothered with crap synths and tinny guitars is enough to sap the strength. Dead Kids look like something that was cut from *Nathan Barley* as being too awful to even satirise. Terrible shouty singer too. Okay, we're prepared to believe

it's a bit of harmless fun; but if anyone over the age of 14 tries to tell you this is punk attitude, kill them. Kill them, for they shall never know better.

Martin Simpson has a taste for language, introducing his set with a discussion of the adjectives "bucolic" and "crepuscular", and clearly relishing the visceral imagery of his opening traditional ballad, lingering over the phrase "the bloody steel". He also languidly enjoys every line of a bottleneck tune, which reminds us that the blues is an intelligent narrative music, not just an excuse to show your beery market town mates how fast your left hand can go. Of course, Simpson's guitar playing *is* also phenomenal, varying from lute-like delicacy to swift percussive passages via sleazy Chicago blues, but he never milks it, always letting the song lead the way. He was playing The Albert Hall for the Proms the day after, so we feel lucky to have caught him somewhere this intimate.

These New Puritans are more of an irritant than an entertainment, from the singer's inexplicable desire to dress in fake gold chain mail to their calculated, vacuous music that's so achingly Hoxton that it almost has a different sharp haircut for every song, and that says nothing more about their ambitions than *NME* track of the week.

Okkervil River, though, are perhaps the highlight of the day, if nothing else then for filling that traditional sunset main stage slot with something country-tinged and laid-back that isn't soporific and deathly dull. Quite the opposite, in fact – this is Americana with the same dark heart

as Red House Painters, and some of the sense of joyous dynamism that's been brought into the mainstream of late by Arcade Fire. At their most dramatic it's no great leap of the imagination to see Conor Oberst belting these tunes out, while their more thoughtful pieces bring to mind the plaintive beauty of Songs:Ohia.

We're slightly suspicious of the Don't Look Back movement in which acts perform their pivotal albums. When it was announced that **The Lemonheads** would do the excellent 'It's a Shame About Ray' at Truck, the first thing that sprang to mind is that it's 27-minutes long: in their billed show they could have played it three times, and left space to mime turning over the record. As it is, they crack through the album, minus a couple of tracks, in record time, and it feels something like a contractual obligation. After a couple of minutes, Evan Dando comes on for a solo reading of Smudge's excellent 'Outdoor Type' and 'Being Around', before the band return in a seemingly much more relaxed frame of mind for another thirty minutes or so of superior playing. The problem is that these were never main stage songs, they're vulnerable, retiring, loveable (and probably stoned) little tunes that are most likely happier out of the limelight: as is Evan, noticeably rolling his eyes, who seems unappreciative of the crowd and mutters barely a word. Not really a disappointment, then, but great as these songs are, the show adds nothing to them.

David Murphy, Stuart Fowkes, Sam Shepherd

TRUCK FESTIVAL

SUNDAY

Chefs will tell you that many different dishes can be created with the same base sauce. **Mephisto Grande** are like that. As a duo they've got the basic recipe down – free reed drones, brimstone Beefheart growls and bludgeoning rhythms – but today they're augmented with skronking sax and members of The Oxford Gospel Choir for a dense slab of Pentecostal rock, featuring the best cover of 'Frere Jacques' ever. If The vicar of Steventon had got on stage during this and announced we were all going to hell, the local church would have been filled with repentant sinners by tea time.

In fact that's exactly where we're heading for a little salvation. The vicar has been doling out ice-cream since the festival began 11 years ago, so we feel it's time to give a little bit of love back to God. There's also a sign outside the church that says something along the lines of "2pm Rock in the Church", so how could we not investigate? There's not a lot of rocking going on as it turns out, although the sermon does revolve around some of the Vicar's favourite tunes. Once you're in though, it's pretty hard to leave without feeling guilty so we're here for the duration. Shaking hands with Rev Colin Patching after the service, it's pleasing to note that he's wearing a Jesus t-shirt, in the same way that everyone wears their favourite band's merch with pride.

The Winchell Riots have a few metaphorical demons to exorcise, as by their own admission last year's appearance on the Barn Stage didn't go as planned. By way of atonement, they put in a performance little short of flawless, right down to the sun appearing on cue as singer Phil McMinn belts out 'I've not seen a Truck this bright for years' during 'Red Square'. 'Hymn 24' and 'Kandahar Road' are touching and emotive without being crass or obvious, and 'Histories', as ever, provides the change of pace necessary to stop their set from descending into a series of mid-paced chokers. But really, it's as good a performance as they've ever put on, and the clearest indication yet that they should eclipse former glories at least to the extent that people stop referencing Fell City Girl in all their review. Umm, like we just did.

If anyone wasn't sure what a kora was, **Jali Filli Cissokho** explains it to us; he then explains how one plays it with four digits, just in case nobody was yet floored by the man's talents. The rippling cascades of notes he plucks from this African harp-like instrument are as succulent as they are impressive, and can seem heartbeat simple or cortex complex depending on where one focuses. Perhaps his voice, though sweet, is a little limited, but then again as he comes from the story-telling griot tradition, maybe understanding the lyrics would have helped. It hardly matters when you can lose your Sunday afternoon exhaustion in this impeccable playing. If you saw anyone walking round Truck with their jaws dangling open, they probably hadn't got over Cissokho's set yet.

On Sunday the Pavilion is given over to **Piney Gir**. Not wanting to venture in between sets in case she makes us do cross stitch or dress up as a racoon, we edge into a strange hinterland at the edge of the campsite, full of non-musical attractions, including craft demonstrations, a cycle powered entertainment system (sadly closed) and a little hut where a frankly petrifying man attempts

to draw us in for some lessons in "woooing" (sic) whilst scratchy easy listening plays. We also get to see the large number of Truckers who like to hang out in the campsite all day, playing footie and strumming guitars: quite an expensive way to camp out with your mates, but each to their own. In search of another subset of Truckers, some children explain that the playbus is fun, but would be better if it drove around, and that Truck is a good festival because they "saw a tractor".

We return in time for **Borderville**, who are excellently dressed as if they've come from a time travelling wedding, except Joe Swarbrick who looks like a boy band Edward Scissorhands. Dead Kids should be watching this outstanding set – *this* is how you do pastiche and genre melding. In some ways it's a parody of 70s pomp bands and Broadway musicals, but also a celebration of what can be great about those things, presented with imagination and a well-rehearsed flow. The sort of arch and theatrical act that makes you want to describe them like a Victorian playbill: "A vaudevillian confection of sonorous majesty" it is, then.

Spectrum, one of the many aliases of **Sonic Boom** (you know, him out of Spacemen 3 that didn't go on to form the world-conquering Spiritualized), don't seem to know what they want to sound like. Starting off with an extended, burbling synth piece that's actually rather lovely in an Ochre Records-in-2001 kind of way, they move on to drudge their way through a tedious walking-pace exercise that's about as psychedelic as a tortoise. But before we can lose faith, they close with a slab of magical, meandering guitar trance that brings to mind Spacemen 3's 'Dreamweapon'. With their set curtailed to just three songs, it's hard to tell which of these is their defining direction, and actually we wonder if they know themselves.

Elsewhere on the triumphant Sonic Cathedral stage, **The Early Years** are putting in one of the performances of the weekend, managing to out-Spacemen 3 even the return to the guitar-bass-drums format from Sonic Boom himself. The keyboard-led moments are pure 'Playing With Fire', the extended sections of repetitive riffs are shoegaze-gone-krautrock providence, and half hour seems to be over in five minutes. Mesmerising.

If Truck is still around in 2020, we can count on **Thomas Truax** still to be there, playing his songs on a range of madcap (and possibly, by that stage, robot-powered) contraptions. The festival wouldn't be the same without him winning a legion of new fans with the help of the Homicator and Mother Superior (if you don't know what we're talking about, you need to see him). But while his home-made gadgets and dry on-stage banter draw you in, he has some killer songs at his disposal too, to keep the faithful coming back year on year.

We've always admired KTB, but never really been that excited by her. Good, therefore, to see her as part of the excellent folk quartet **Little Sister**, doling out melismatic harmonies, acoustic tapestries and hot Appalachian fiddle licks. They somehow manage to get some of the audience doing forward rolls round the field, which is no mean feat when we're this tired.

Les Clochards are sadly not mentioned in the programme, and misadvertised outside the Pub Tent, so it's not surprising they start playing to a mere scattering of listeners. Their tasty Gallic café



The Winchell Riots



Maps

indie sound soon draws in passers by, however, because nobody could resist that mix of syrupy vocal, French accordion and fluid bass. Also, that's Peter Momtchiloff from Talulah Gosh and Heavenly on guitar, should you have your *I Spy Book Of Jangle Pop* on you.

"Come and see **The Nuns** tomorrow", says a flier tout on Saturday. Your smug reviewer answers, "Okay, as long as they're an all female tribute to The Monks". "Yes," she replies, "yes they are." Put us in our place, didn't it? If you don't know who The Monks are, you're stupid. They are one of the finest alternative rock bands, and quite possibly the first. They started in Germany in the early 60s in an attempt to create an anti-matter Beatles, and they've influenced approximately everyone who's any good, ever. They're the only band better than The Fall, according to Mark E Smith, which is unprecedented praise. The Nuns' set is good, but doesn't quite capture the full distorted grandeur of the originals. A celebration of, rather than an alternative to, The Monks.

Over on the main stage **Johnny Foreigner** have been attacking everyone with their angular metal/punk for long enough, and it's the turn of **Fighting With Wire** to provide back to basic thrills. They may only be a three piece but the noise they produce is vast and visceral. Frank Turner will later refer to them in terms of being not dissimilar to early Foo Fighters (and earning a poorly aimed bottle launched in his direction as a result) but he's not too far from the truth. Big riffs and big choruses and an energetic show might not make Fighting With Wire the most original thing you'll ever see, but for mindless thrills you won't go far wrong.

Scotland's **Camera Obscura** are so twee and melodic, we imagine that Swiss Concrete are



The Early Years



Borderville



Spectrum



Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly.

backstage with their diary open ready to catch them. At times they're like The Sundays, but more twee, or like The Cowboy Junkies, but more twee. They're good, but they're *really* twee. There's no synonym for "twee" so we'd better stop now.

If Sonic Cathedral is at least partially about celebrating shoegaze and all things alternative from the early nineties, then it's fitting that **Ulrich Schnauss'** brand of electronica seems to sit squarely in that time period, all Future Sound of London simplistic beat patterns and plodding synth progressions straight out of 1993. What he does well are big, enveloping washes of sound, which sit beneath the body of the tracks, pulsating ominously but unfortunately rarely taking centre stage. Minus points too, sadly, for possibly the worst stage presence of the weekend – Schnauss sits sideways on at a table, staring at his laptop and prodding buttons, and doesn't even look up to acknowledge the audience during his set. What a performer.

We wait for a while for **Cats In Paris**. Presumably they're still there, as after ten minutes there's not even mike or lead brought onstage. Good DJs and amusingly wrecked dancers to entertain us, luckily. On record, much of **Maps'** Mercury-nominated album can sound thin and inconsequential, gossamer synth washes and techno-twee arrangements sometimes obscuring the excellent songs underneath. With a six-piece live band to bolster the songs live, though, they're a different proposition – a shoegaze band with the racks

of guitar pedals replaced by banks of synths, to incredible effect. 'Elouise' and 'Back And Forth', like the Queen in her heyday, combine beauty with massive power, and Maps are the perfect band to help bring a festival to a close, nodding to the music that got them where they are today, but resolutely forward-looking in approach. By their finale, a cover of Ride's 'Leave The All Behind', the wall of noise is so great you can almost feel your ribs snapping under the weight of the sonic wave emanating from the stage. It's not so much an aural experience as a physical one. It's rare to pinpoint the best fifteen seconds of a festival, but that gigantic grinding blitz was the highlight of Truck. That, and the guy who'd fallen asleep in a foetal position eating his ice cream, smearing it all over his beard.

Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly could never hope to follow that but he's giving it a go. The main stage is by now looking pretty spectacular in the dark. The dry ice is being lit up perfectly and pink clouds are floating past Sam Duckworth and his horn section as he tries to give the last few Truckers standing something memorable.

The overall music quality this year was phenomenally high, and the ambience was always friendly and tolerant. Yes, the ticket price has gone up, but it's still peanuts compared to the huge cost of Weakstock, for example – and it has a vicar serving ice cream instead of a giant drinks logo; which would you prefer? We're sorry we doubted you, Truck; see you next year.
David Murphy, Stuart Fowkes, Sam Shephard

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

GTA featuring JADA PEARL

Previously Kidlington rap duo GTA found themselves in the Demo Dumper after furnishing us with an elongated freestyle demo whose highlight was a song about Scotland being full of haggis. They apologise for upsetting us and hope we enjoy this team-up with local soulstress Jada Pearl, whose recent demo suggested a great singer in search of a great song. The lead track here, 'The Way', goes a long way to redressing the balance on every level, a funk-disco dancefloor filler that kicks in threatening to be Shakatak but struts around amid the glitz and mirror balls like a rapped-up Grooverider, Jada's powerful wail adding depth to a smooth rap performance. It's pure chart fodder, although one half of GTA, Ineffable's slightly clipped, plummy vocal performance sounds incongruous in the middle of the song. Further in the pair trade rhymes in accomplished fashion, smooth and commercial sounding, oddly in thrall to the American rap big guns but distinctly English in their delivery. But it sounds like they need Jada, or someone similar, to give them that extra edge in a saturated marketplace. Then they'll really hit their stride.

MONICA Y CARLOS

This duo nearly snatch this month's Demo Of The Month title from GTA and Jada with an unexpectedly oddball mix of Chemical Brothers-style android beats, cute Latin-American coos and chants and an obvious love for the band Magnetic Fields (in fact they even cover Yeah, Oh Yeah!). They also cite as their main influences photocopiers, magazine cuttings and shop windows, which would normally come across as pure pretension but as 'Quieréme Más' thrums and bubbles with steely mechanical determination we reckon there might be something in it. Even better, we log onto their MySpace site while we're listening to the CD and get a slight time-lapse delay which sounds bloody great. Further in they become a bit more organic, with added Latin pop swing before veering into a mess of My Bloody Valentine-style textures and lost voices with odd Stereolab-like retro-future lounge music intermissions. Variety, sparkle, inventiveness and a bit of

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summer sunshine? These are rare commodities on the demo pages sometimes.

LUTECE CONSTANT

Lutece is a 13-year-old Peers School student who gives us her dad's mobile number as a contact and as such we just can't be our normal horrible selves, even if this demo does find her covering 'Better In Time' by Leone Lewis and Adele's 'Chasing Pavements', along with singing a couple of songs she got off the peg from Songs 4 Sale. The main reason we can't be anything other than nice is that Lutece has a great voice for her age, occasionally sounding like she's already an established member of Girls Aloud or Eternal. In fact if we hadn't looked her up on Youtube we'd have been suspicious that we were being duped by some scallywag and she was actually a fully-grown, major-label signed soul diva. Because we wouldn't know either way since we only ever listen to scratchy, lo-fi post-punk and obscure synth-pop and the charts tend to pass us by. But anyway, she's not the finished article yet but at 13 Lutece surely has a future on *Britain's Got Talent* or the *X Factor* and by 18 we fully expect her to be an established global r'n'b icon living in a giant mansion with a menagerie of strange hairless dogs for company. Go girl.

JESUS KNIVES

Phew, back to reality and some scratchy, angular post-punk rampaging after all that popular music madness. We seem to remember reviewing this lot a few months back when they professed to exist solely to play aggressive feedback-style noise, and little has changed since that time, The Jesus Knives still very much in thrall to Fugazi, Shellac and The Jesus Lizard – a spasticated hardcore clatter with pockets of post-rock broodiness that twists, turns and mostly churns its spindly way along with no little haste, the singer shouting until his lungs are fit to burst and the veins on his head stand out. An heroic, if not entirely original effort that is never, ever going to sell more than about six copies of a limited-edition hand-etched 7" single.

CABEZA

More clattering lo-fi noise here, though of a more bluesy-inclined indie-punk type and featuring a song called 'The Flower Queen's Daughter', which must the most inappropriate song of that title ever since it doesn't sound anything like Marillion. It should be called 'Piss In The Gutter With The Devil At My Side' at the very least.

Cabeza's problem is that this whole demo is still unmastered and really suffers as a consequence – the gothabilly fuzz of 'Abhorrent Visage' (the title is a bit more like it, unless it's a savage attack on Steve Strange's new romantic supergroup) promises much but ends up sounding like a sprawling mess of separate parts than a butt-kicking whisky monster. Towards the end of the demo they sound like they're running out of breath but amid the haphazard recording there are enough signs of promise to make us want to hear them again when they've sorted their act out a bit.

THE PICTURE SHOW

Looking at the picture of the band on the front of the CD we're expecting another trawl through common-or-garden indie rock, so the vicious spit of harsh electronic noise and aural snow that hits us is a bit of a shock to say the least. And for ten minutes it goes on. And on. And on. Brutally uncompromising stuff that threatens to rival Lou Reed's 'Metal Machine Music' for pure unlistenability. But, alas, it turns out it's just a fault at the pressing plant, because come track two we're back in the more mundane world of lacklustre, semi-acoustic indie-folk rock that covers all bases from earnest and epic to, erm, earnest and epic. Did we mention that it sounds very earnest? And three songs later they're still here, still sounding very earnest, U2-style guitars doing their best to kick the Midge Ure-style vocals into shape. Next time, lads, get the pressing plant to fuck up the whole CD. So much more interesting.

THE A TRAIN

This lot were formerly Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers under their previous guise as The Others. But on this evidence we're seriously thinking of retrospectively stripping them of the title, like Robert Mugabe having his Knighthood revoked for bad behaviour. More piano-led stadium pop, here put together so clinically that any semblance of soul or character has been polished away to a faint smear on its otherwise pristine, bland, generic surface. It's all very well executed – from the close vocal harmonies to the many, many wandering guitar solos – but like Keane or the least interesting corners of Crowded House's catalogue it comes and goes leaving no impression whatsoever, other than the feeling that someone not very interesting may or may not have just been in the room with you. 'Black & White Memories' hints ever so slightly at The Mavericks and is delivered with a cheesy, shit-eating grin, while 'Why Would He Leave?' is a laborious trudge when it should be a bolshy, showbiz swagger. The answer to the question, of course, being, he left because he feared he'd be bored into a catatonic state if he stuck around for any more of this treatment.

THE LAST ARMY

Cute girls who occasionally sing in French are always a pop winner and so The Last Army charm us immediately with their feckless gothic baroque pop, their first song, 'Dead', going something like Fun Boy Three's 'Tunnel Of Love' but with the guitar line to 'London Calling' powering it along behind the seductive vocal lead. The more flowery 'A Day Like Any Other' comes on all breathless and girly and Catatonia-like before the band switch lanes completely for a male vocal-led Toytown synth-pop waltz. After that there's a bit of a dip into some Sleeper-lite indie chugging until the lady upfront starts with the coy French singing stuff – more Vanessa Paradis than Jane Birkin, it has to be said – and sounding like she's ever so slightly wasted (on drugs and a lack of sleep rather than wasted on this band). Y'see, you don't need to be all mad and crazy and way-out to win our hearts. Just sweet and sexy and armed with a pocketful of simple pop choons. Is that too much to ask for?

THE DEMO DUMPER

RED VALVE

This album-length demo (Oh. Joy.) comes accompanied by a very nice, glossy press pack, with lots of slightly blurred photos and all held together by a neat little string tie thing. From the band's mission statement we learnt that 1. Red Valve is a rock band. 4. They love playing live. 9. They are always willing to try out new sounds an ideas, and 10. There is little good music in the charts at the moment and they will change that. Oh, and they like Velvet Revolver but hate indie bands like The Killers and The Last Shadow Puppets, which doesn't bode well in the taste stakes. But it's point 9 we'll pick them up on, because across the stultifying sprawl of this CD there is not one single iota of evidence that Red Valve have any new ideas or sounds other than badly rehashed AC/DC and Deep Purple riffs, all churned out with a shocking lack of attitude, direction or sense of adventure. Instead they're as limp and predictable as any hoary old pub rock band hacking it out to no-one in particular on a Tuesday evening in the middle of fucking nowhere. It's so utterly devoid of character but goes on so long that listening to it is like trying to get an injunction against a faceless stalker who keeps calling you to recite discarded Axl Rose lyrics at you in a dull monotone for several hours on end. At least they can rest assured they'll never have to go through the effort of fulfilling point 10 of their letter.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email MySpace link to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demo for review.

IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number. No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo.



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Easy Star All Stars + Ed Rome
(inc. free entry to DJ Derek til 2am)

Fri 31st Oct - £17.50 adv
Rockstar Taste of Chaos
ft. Atreyu + Story Of The Year
+ As I Lay Dying + Mucc

Sat 1st Nov - £15 adv
Funeral For A Friend
+ Cancer Bats + In Case Of Fire
+ ATTACK! ATTACK!

Tues 4th Nov - £10.50 adv
One Night Only

Weds 5th Nov - £11 adv
Alphabeat

Thurs 6th Nov - £12 adv
Built To Spill + Disco Doom

Fri 7th Nov - £10 adv
The Aggrolites + The Grit
+ New York Alcoholic Anxiety Attack

Sat 8th Nov - £10 adv
The Complete Stone Roses

Tues 11th Nov - £14 adv
Less Than Jake
+ Pepper + Beat Union

Fri 14th Nov - £16 adv
Mercury Rev

Fri 14th Nov - £10 adv
Flipron & Mistys Big Adventure

Sun 16th Nov - £12 adv
Elliot Minor

Thurs 20th Nov - £8.50 adv
The Whip

Fri 21st Nov - £15 adv
Show Of Hands

Sat 22nd Nov - £12 adv
Airborne

Sun 23rd Nov - £8 adv
Ida Maria

Sat 29th Nov - £12 adv
The Rifles
Rescheduled date - original tickets valid

Thurs 4th Dec - £13 adv
The Wedding Present

Sat 6th Dec - £16 adv
Alabama 3

Tues 9th Dec - £20 adv
Saw Doctors

Thurs 11th Dec - £12.50 adv
Neville Staple & his band

Sat 13th Dec - £14 adv
Black Stone Cherry

CARLING XPERIENCE TICKETWEB

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Fridays
SHAKE!

Saturdays
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