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# NIGHTSHIFT

**Oxford's Music Magazine**

Free every  
month.  
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## Flying Fish!

**Little Fish  
on their  
crazy year**  
*inside*



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# NEWS

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**THE ACADEMY** will be renamed the O2 Academy from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 after a partnership deal was struck between the mobile network company and Live Nation, the majority shareholder company in the Academy Music Group. The deal follows on from Carling's sponsorship of the venue expiring. A press release documenting the new partnership declared that "O2 customers will gain priority access to tickets to all gigs at the venues, as well as other Live Nation events across the country. In total, O2 customers will gain special access to as many as 4,000 Live Nation produced shows a year in the UK up to 48 hours before they go on general sale."

AMG PR spokesperson Louise Kovacs clarified the press release with, "O2 customers will receive priority alerts and *selected* pre-sales to not just Academy gigs and events, but Live Nation events as well."

Responding to the statement Alan Day from TCT Music, which promotes a large percentage of the gigs at the Oxford Academy, said, "The decision on how tickets are allocated and sold lies with the promoter and the band. No phone company is going to have 48 hrs pre-sale access to any events I may put on. Priority would go to the bands' mailing list and my mailing list."

**THE PORT MAHON** looks increasingly unlikely to host live music in the future with the current management team set to leave the pub on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and no guarantee that any new licensees will support its continuation. The

pub is currently owned by Greene King and they are searching for a new manager but as of yet everything is up in the air and the current area manager is said not to be keen on live music.

Allison Young, who has promoted gigs at the Port, on St Clement's, for the last three and a half years told Nightshift, "Our last night at the Port Mahon is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December. We are aware that there is someone interested in the place; they, however, want to change it into a restaurant and not continue with the music. This is not 100% confirmed, though. I would like to say a big thank you to all the promoters and bands that have played here during the last three and half years. It's been fun."

The Port Mahon has hosted live music for many years, including the long-running Oxford Folk Club, as well as regular club nights by Oxford Improvisers, Swiss Concrete and Quickfix; The Wombats played their first Oxford gig there and local favourites like Stornoway played their earliest shows at the pub.

**ANY HOPE THAT THE X** in Cowley might be revived as a live music venue were finally laid to rest this month when it was announced the pub was to be turned into an Indian restaurant. The X has been in limbo for the best part of a year now, since landlady AI was declared bankrupt after a long-running dispute with the Performing Rights Society. A succession of temporary managers has allowed piecemeal gigs to carry on but the venue has struggled to attract regular promoters or audiences.



**YOUNG KNIVES' HENRY DARTNALL** has been talking to Nightshift about the band's special 'Homecoming' gig at the Academy on **Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December**, and his pride in the band's acclaimed 'Suprerabundance' album, released earlier this year. The Oxford show is part of a series of Academy Homecoming gigs at cities around the UK and will see Young Knives taking over the entire venue and picking some of their favourite bands as support. Acts already confirmed are local starlets **Tristan & The Troubadours** and **Hreda**, plus Manchester's **Beep Seals**, Reading's **Pete & the Pirates** and Buckinghamshire's **Hollow**.

"We felt like it was time to do an Oxford show, We have neglected the city so far this year and thought it was important to do something special. The Academy said we could have both rooms and put on bands we liked so we thought, awesome, a sort of mini Young Knives-curated festival. We want to make it a bit of a special event; I mean a gig's a gig, but it's always nice to make loads of effort, that way it feels special for us and that should rub off on the whole evening. Plus, I love Christmas so it will be a bit like the last day of term before the Christmas holiday. We might get drunk at lunchtime."

"This year has been a real turning point for us as a band. We released a record we felt very proud of and we got something out of our system with it. I think it proved that although we may never achieve the "success" of some bands, we are successful in a much more polite way. We aren't aiming at stadiums, we are aiming at music. Wow, big statement, I'm full of it today. What I mean is that I think we are only inspired by being continuously evolving songwriters, and as long as we can pay the rent and it's still fun we are happy. Except for the fact that we are never actually happy because we always want to be better."

"We did a shit load of festivals this year and now we are writing album number three. It's got to be completely different, so we aren't rushing it. We're going to be doing a bit of messing about with James Rutledge who House and Ollie know from their HMV days. Who knows what's going to happen."

**Tickets for the Homecoming show** are on sale now, priced £10, from the Academy box office or [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com).

**AS EVER**, don't forget to tune into BBC Radio Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show features the best new

Oxford releases, plus interviews, a demo competition and a local gig and club guide. The show is available to listen to online all week at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford)



**FOALS** are set to become the first Oxford band to sell out two nights at the Academy this month, as they round off an astonishing year in which they released their debut album and embarked on a worldwide tour that took in festivals as far and wide as Brazil and Japan. The band's show on **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December** is already sold out and an extra show was added for **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup>**. Over half the tickets for the extra show have already been sold. Foals have selected fellow local acts **Youthmovies** and **Jonquil** to support them on the Friday with Sheffield's excellent math-core monsters **Rolo Tomassi**, plus **The Invisible** supporting them on the Thursday.

Speaking to from Foals' European tour, frontman Yannis Philippakis told Nightshift, "Although we've always been wary of Homecoming King type prom shows, we are super-excited about the two shows. Primarily due to the fact they are our last shows of an 18 month tour and that we get to finish them at home. Oxford shows always have a special atmosphere for us and we have called up some of our best friends to play as well. Expect joyous carnage, secret after-shows and drum solos. Maybe some new material! After these shows we are going to start work on the next record. In Oxford somewhere."

**Remaining tickets for the Thursday show** are on sale now, priced £13.50, from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com) or the Academy box office.

A quiet word with

# Little Fish

**“WE’VE JUST COME OFF STAGE** in Amsterdam. Supergrass are playing right now!”

Nightshift has caught Little Fish at an inopportune moment, coming down from the buzz of opening for Supergrass on their European tour. Singer Julia Heslop (better known to her mates as Juju) is bursting with excitement and enthusiasm, though. She gleefully informs us that her band have been selling over 100 CDs every night of the tour so far, going down a storm with Supergrass’ fans at shows from Oslo to Milan.

## **LITTLE FISH WERE**

personally chosen for the tour support by Supergrass after they played two nights with them at Oxford Town Hall last Christmas. It nearly didn’t happen though, since Juju thought Gaz Coombes’ phone call was a joke.

JUJU: “I didn’t even know that Gaz had my telephone number. He just called me out of the blue and asked if we would be up for supporting them on their European Tour. At first I thought it was a friend of mine doing a prank phone call because I didn’t recognise the voice but then he insisted, ‘It’s Gaz Coombes from Supergrass. Seriously. I just wanted to phone you personally’. I was so embarrassed.”

## **AFTER ALL THAT’S HAPPENED**

to Little Fish in the past year, you’d think they’d be used to getting phone calls from the great and good of the world of rock music. Prior to their European jaunt, Juju and Little Fish partner Neil ‘Nez’ Greenaway, had been holed up in a Los Angeles recording studio with Linda Perry. That’s Linda Perry the songwriter responsible for monster hits for Pink, Gwen Stefani and Christina Aguilera, as well as signing James Blunt, and who was voted the world’s Number 1 A&R person by her industry colleagues. When she spots talent the world sits up and takes notice.

Perry has just signed Little Fish to her own Custard Records label and has been mentoring the duo over the past few months, pushing them to even greater heights of creativity. One of the results of this collaboration is an astonishing song called ‘Darling Dear’, which triumphantly heads Nightshift’s end of year Top 20, a spectacularly emotive paean to the more hellish side of love and bloody suicide.



The song encapsulates everything that is so great about Oxford’s most exciting new band. It sounds like The Pretenders ransacking The Velvet Underground’s ‘Heroin’, but with all the raw passion of a young Patti Smith. Juju’s voice – a voice she came so close to losing forever a few years ago – is magnificently powerful: whooping, screaming, coo-ing and gently croaking at each turn, an untutored force of nature that snares everyone who hears it. Behind her, Nez is an inspirational powerhouse of a drummer – dextrous and uninhibited, thrashing his kit while barely seeming to work up a sweat.

Little Fish reach the end of 2008 on a high that would be the envy of any young band. Barely 18 months on from their first gigs they’re not just the toast of Oxford, they’re all set to grab global rock glory by the throat in 2009.

**WE LAST PUT LITTLE FISH ON** the front cover a year ago, on the

strength of their stunning first demo and a string of live shows that showed a modest vocal/guitar/drums duo could bring down any house they performed in. Back then we learned that Juju and Nez had, appropriately, met in a local fish and chip shop, were both veterans of other Oxford acts (she in Dolly; he in Vade Mecum) and that a spiral of self-destructive behaviour had almost rendered Juju speechless before she coaxed herself back to health.

And then earlier this year Little Fish won Best Rock Act at the Indy Music Awards and things started to go a little crazy.

A few nights after that brief Amsterdam conversation, the tour over, Juju and Nez are free to chat and Nightshift is able to catch up on Little Fish’s year.

## **JUJU: “IS IT DECEMBER**

already? Wow! I can’t quite believe it. I think Nez and I have been so immersed in everything that we

haven’t taken a moment to look back.

“We started the year the same way that we ended the last. We played on New Year’s Eve in a dodgy pub in London and then continued to play as many gigs as we possibly could. Record companies showed interest but it was after having won ‘Indy Award Rock Act Of The Year’ and recorded a live Session for Radio 1 at Maida Vale Studios, that we were offered a record deal. In October we flew out to LA to record our first album and perform a show at the Viper Room, before Supergrass took us on tour with them.”

How did Linda Perry first come across you?

JUJU: “In January, Custard’s A&R man scouted us and played Linda some of our music. On first hearing, she liked what she heard but there was also something that she didn’t like about it. Not being able to make up her mind, she flew out from LA to watch us play a gig at The Wheatsheaf. Things went on from there.”

NEZ: “We had the best time working with her on the album, both on a personal and working role. She knows what she can get out of you. She has the most fantastic studio and staff working with her. It sometimes didn’t have that studio feel about it which just made the whole process very cool.

“I guess people know her for writing and producing a lot of pop artists, but her roots are especially English 60s and 70s rock. This was also a new experience for her, which made the whole thing more exciting. She works very hard and really pushes you, sometimes 15 hours a day, but still finds that balance of having fun. Her ability to just come out with these fantastic ideas within minutes of playing a song to her was a joy to work with. She’s incredibly talented as an engineer, producer and as an artist. We would have a different approach to the set up on most of the songs, which made it sound very fresh. Jules said she got under her skin, which was true and sometimes quite funny to watch, though I did throw a grump on the very last 30 minutes of recording. We had done two other songs that day. It was the last song and my brain was going through the motions. She just looked at me and said ‘chill out dude!’ I re-played the take and that was the one. That’s how she works. It was a great experience for us all and

one that Jules and myself will look upon in the years ahead."

Didn't Linda even miss the MTV Awards to spend more time in the studio with you?

JUJU: "Yeah! She missed going to an award ceremony where she was to receive an award for the 'Most played song on the radio 2007'. I think it was for the song 'Candy Man' that she wrote for Christina Aguilera. This happened the first time that we went over to the States, in April. We were recording 'Darling Dear' for the first time and having so much fun that she didn't want to leave. Music is always her number one priority and nothing gets in the way of that. We felt completely honoured. That day was magical for all of us. For us both, it was one of the best days of our lives."

The sessions were also very hard work for the band.

JUJU: "It took me some time to understand what Linda was like to work with and also to understand the recording process in general. At first I found it really hard. She made me cry. She shouted at me. She pushed me to my limits. She got under my skin. She stripped me of my ego and ripped my songs apart. She doesn't accept second best from her artists and if she thinks they can do better, she will push them until she gets the best that she can out of them. She made me re-write lyrics to songs if she thought they were lazy and not let me get away with writing anything cheap. It toughened me up for sure."

"To work with her you have to work hard and be on the top of your game all the time but if you do this, working with her becomes a magical experience where she helps you get to the core of everything: the music and yourself. She makes sure that everything in the music makes sense. She doesn't cheat the music out of any moments. She directs, produces, criticises, praises, tears apart and builds only with the music in mind, as first priority, one hundred percent. Working with her was incredible both musically and emotionally. It really got the best out of us."

#### LITTLE FISH'S DEBUT DEMO

last year was a spectacular introduction to the band. We made it Demo Of The Month and its lead track, 'Devil's Eyes', was Nightshift writers' second favourite song of the year, beaten only by Foals' 'Hummer'. Early reviews drew comparisons to artists as diverse as Sinead O'Connor, The Pixies, Janis Joplin and Suzi Quatro, bristling with spiky confidence and garage rock stomp. The pair have quickly moved on though, developing as songwriters and performers while never losing that initial raw energy. Along with

'Darling Dear', another new song, 'Heroine Dance', rarely leaves the Nightshift stereo, exposing Little Fish's more tender, but still emotionally naked side. How do they think they've changed as a band over the last year?

JUJU: "I'm not sure. I wish that I could be more perfect, do shows without making mistakes, record perfectly in time and sing everything I want to hear without any thoughts. Alas, I will never be perfect and neither will the music that we play. It's hard to judge from the inside. As a songwriter? Having recorded the album I feel relieved to have been able to finally liberate myself from some of the songs that I have been holding inside me for so long. I feel like where I was holding on to emotions, I can now clear myself of them, leaving space for me to write new songs. It's been very cleansing for me, so I am extremely excited about writing new material as I now have room inside of me."

"In terms of new songs, the album has a couple of songs that no one has ever heard as they were written literally days before leaving to LA to record. In the month prior I also spent some time writing piano songs – these sound very different to the Little Fish stuff you will hear us play at a gig... but who knows what the future might bring?"

When will the album be released?

JUJU: "The record company are talking about releasing the album around Spring 2009. This process is all new to us so we have no idea how it's all going to work. We are really looking forward to it. Songs? Not telling!"

#### THAT WE'RE TALKING TO

Little Fish about record deals and LA recording session shows how far and how fast things have moved for them since our last interview. This time last year did they envisage what might happen over the next 12 months, and have their experiences of the music industry been better, worse or just different from what they imagined?

JUJU: "There is no way that we could ever have envisaged what would happen to us. It's been a very important and exciting year for us. After all the work we put in, we achieved everything we aimed to achieve; we signed our first record deal and recorded our first album. As a musician you spend years dreaming about these days, so when they finally come, there is immense relief. It's hard out there and still, the battle has only just begun, but we are so happy that we are moving and that people have been so supportive towards us."

"As far as experiences go with the music industry, I suppose you can never prepare yourself fully for

things that you have never experienced as you have nothing to base it on. We are learning about the industry all the time and to be honest, sometimes I struggle with the business side of things."

NEZ: "We've worked really hard the last year or so and put our efforts into the gigging side. I think the turning point was at the beginning of the year when some interest from labels came about and Jules and myself realised that there was a possibility of something good happening, but no, I don't think we would have thought that getting signed and recording the album would happen this side of Christmas. The Supergrass gig was a fantastic opportunity, we are so grateful to the lads and the chance to tour with the band. To play in those European countries was a cracking experience."

#### FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

though, there is the slightly more parochial matter of a hometown gig at the Wheatsheaf a few days before Christmas; will it feel different playing in Oxford again after playing at the Viper Rooms and across Europe?

JUJU: "No I don't think it will be different; I think it will be great. We have such a great relationship with those who come to see us play in

Oxford that we look forward to seeing them. Oxford has been absolutely great with us in terms of support and encouragement and has been invaluable to us. For us, it's like having a party where we get to see familiar faces who have become part of the Fish Family. I love it and I can't wait!"

NEZ: "It's our home town and I guess where Jules and myself started this whole musical adventure. We love playing in Oxford and we have always had a great vibe here. The Wheatsheaf suits who we are as a band: we're really into that punky, sweaty atmosphere."

And of course 'Darling Dear' is Nightshift's number 1 of the year.

JUJU: "We're completely chuffed about that. Writing a song that someone else other than you enjoys listening to is all a band could ever want. I think that's one of the main reasons why we do what we do."

NEZ: "Yeah, we're thrilled about that one. We've had a really exciting year in all aspects and this is a top way to end it all. Thank you!"

The pleasure is all ours.

*Little Fish play at the Wheatsheaf on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December. Visit [www.myspace.com/littlefishmusic](http://www.myspace.com/littlefishmusic) to hear tracks and read Juju's full European tour blog.*

# The Wheatsheaf

Live Music in December

**THE 4<sup>th</sup> TASSOS SPILIOPOULOS GROUP** Apr / 03

**FRID 5<sup>th</sup> INSPECTED BY TEN**  
**THE HALCYONS + THE VICARS OF TWIGGLY** Apr / 03

**THE 11<sup>th</sup> IAN PRICE** Apr / 03

**FRID 12<sup>th</sup> SMILEX**  
**SHE SET SAIL + CALI COLLECT** Apr / 03

**SAT 13<sup>th</sup> WITCHES**  
**BORDERVILLE + McDOWELL** Apr / 03

**SAT 14<sup>th</sup> MONDO CADA**  
**DOCTOR MAXIMUM + BABY GRAY**  
**CAPTAIN PYRATES + BARBARELLA**  
**LORD MAGPIES & THE PRINCE OF CATS** Apr / 04

**THE 18<sup>th</sup> JONATHAN GEE** Apr / 03

**FRID 19<sup>th</sup> MOTOR CITY SHUFFLE**  
**MY FIRST TOOTH + BEFORE I EXPLODE** Apr / 04

**SAT 20<sup>th</sup> KANGAROO MOON**  
**ALICE DOYNE** Apr / 03

**SAT 21<sup>st</sup> LITTLE FISH**  
**FAMILY MACHINE + RICHARD WALTERS** Apr / 03

Every Monday - Oxford Kings Comedy Club (8-11pm) £3... Every Thursday - The Spice Juke (8-11pm) £5  
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# Tracks of our Year

*And so we come to the end of another great year for Oxford music. Foals' all-conquering success was the icing on the cake of a year that also brought continued success for Young Knives, with their most ambitious album to date, and the emergence of yet more great new bands around the county who continue to prove that we have a scene here that is second to none. And so, as is traditional, Nighthshift compiles its Top 20 of songs that have made our year. Last year it was Foals who topped the pile with the superb 'Hummer', but it's last year's runners-up, Little Fish, who triumph this time round. Local gig-goers have been virtually unanimous in their acclaim for the duo who look set to make a massive breakthrough in 2009. Anyway, here's our essential best of 2008. Don't argue, you know we're right.*



## 1. LITTLE FISH: 'Darling Dear'

The fact that as you read this, Little Fish have just finished recording their album in LA with Linda Perry (considered the world's premier A&R person) and a tour support around Europe with Supergrass tells you a little bit about how special this duo are. But don't take our word for it – track down this stunning statement of intent from a band who only made their live debut eighteen months ago. Imagine The Pretenders as they were on their glorious first album remaking The Velvet Underground's 'Heroin' as a paranoid tale of frustrated passion and bloody suicide, with all the spirit of a young Patti Smith and ending it all in an evil squeal of tortured guitar and primal drums. In another year's time you'll be proclaiming them as your favourite band in the world and we'll sit smugly back and tell you we told you so. Go Fishes!

## 2. A SILENT FILM: 'You Will Leave A Mark'

Everything about A Silent Film suggested epic ambition. The band's debut album, 'The City That Sleeps', sounded not like the debut from a young local band but the assured, grandly-proportioned work of a band already steeped in rock glory and used to performing on the biggest stages the world has to offer. A highlight among highlights was this, a song so naturally elegant you wouldn't be surprised if it came with a pair of eagle's wings attached. At

an admirably concise three and half minutes, it could easily stick around for another five but the sprawling piano and Robert Stevenson's guilt-laden voice say everything perfectly. Bigger, brighter lights surely beckon.

## 3. YOUNG KNIVES: 'Mummy Light The Fire'

Cheeky beggars. Just as everyone thinks they've got Young Knives pinned down as self-consciously eccentric post-punkers, they come back at us with an album like 'Superabundance', an album of mixed

pleasures to be sure but containing some of their best songs to date, including this weird, somnambulant splendid reach back into childhood and an England that only existed in the minds of acid-fuelled dreamers like Syd Barrett and Julian Cope. It's an uncharacteristically airy song that shows just what a great voice Henry Darnell has. There are sweet nods to acid folk and Floyd's psychedelic whimsy and it promises so much more to come from Oxford's most defiantly idiosyncratic popsters.

## 4. FOALS: 'Olympic Airways'

2008 saw Foals take the world by the scruff of the neck like no other Oxford band since Supergrass a decade and a half ago. It was the band's frenetic live shows that made them but their album, 'Antidotes', which went Top 5 in the charts, captured the different sides of their restless inventiveness. 'Olympic Airways' stood at odds to their trademark strident angular disco-rock, a more dreamy trip into spaced-out new wave ambience, yet still balloon-buoyant and fidgety enough to make the most moribund of feet move to the groove.

## 5. RICHARD WALTERS: 'True Love Will Find You In The End'

Cover versions in Nighthshift's Top 20 are as rare as hens' teeth, but this is special enough to be an exception, Rich Walters turning his heavenly vocal talents to Daniel Johnston's moving ballad. The troubled Californian songsmith's peculiar twist on American folk is here turned into a gorgeous, ethereal paean to love and hope, instilled with such yearning, dreamlike sadness that you wonder how music can sound so pure. Richard has been blessed with a voice beyond that of any other local singer, and if songs like this can't get continents full of grown men weeping, then the world is in a worse state than we feared.

## 6. ELAPSE-O: 'Golden Ships'

There's some kind of irony involved in a band whose mission seems to be to utterly destroy the idea of the rock song coming up with a clutch of cracking tunes like this condensed bundle of nastiness. 'Golden Ships' is the stomach-kicking, frighteningly exhilarating sound of Cabaret Voltaire meeting Cocteau Twins round at Michael Gira's house and deciding to make one last song together before huddling together in a funeral pyre. Duo David Roe and Toby Nevitt sustain the pressure masterfully. It's as much a distress signal as pop music and it's so utterly bloody great it makes us weep tears of blood.

## 7. YOUTHMOVIES: 'Something For The Ghosts'

Youthmovies modestly refute the title of most inspirational band in town but any observer can tell you the acclaim is well deserved; even the all-conquering Foals owe them a debt or two. But however much they're copied, they're never bettered, as this nine-minute intricate modern-day prog-math odyssey, from their 'Good Nature' album shows, taking the most convoluted path possible from a to b, via d, n and x, parping horns, guitar feedback, sludgy riffs, jazz rhythms and plaintive vocal cries all thrown into the pot and stirred just so.

## 8. SHARRON KRAUS: 'Green Man'

Surely Oxford's most under-appreciated talent, Sharron Kraus has beguiled us for over a decade now with her dark, ancient English and Appalachian folk tales. There's no soft-centred whimsy here, just tales of death, incest and more death. 'Green Man' was the highlight of her most recent 'The Fox's Wedding' album, a stark, piano and flute-led love song involving being pregnant with a forest, Sharron's haunting voice dancing over the melody like a pagan maiden in spring time. It fully evokes the distant past not as a rustic idyll but a truly terrifying place.

## 9. STORNOWAY: 'On The Rocks'

They might deliberately set out to irritate po-faced gits like us with wacky treatises on fish, but



thankfully Stornoway – officially the brainiest band in Oxford, and there's some stiff competition for that title – have a whole other side that we love unreservedly, one that conjures gorgeous, Caledonian-tinged folk-pop of the sort Mike Scott or King Creosote might be proud to call their own, only infused with a hazy, bucolic spaciness *a la* Gorky's Zygtic Mynci. 'On The Rocks' was the serene highlight of their eco-aware 'Good Fish Guide' EP and allowed anyone with a heart and an ounce of good taste to forgive them their every other indulgence.

## 10. XMAS LIGHTS: 'Electric Sheep'

Brutal and confrontational as they were, Xmas Lights were also master craftsmen when it came to creating moods and epic soundscapes. Their eponymous debut album was structured like a single epic piece of orchestral industrial hardcore, but this monstrous closing number captured the essence of their uncompromising devilry, smoothly oppressive guitar and electronics building up a storm of ambient hell over which the voices of the damned scream their defiance before the whole thing turns on a dime and turns into a switchblade fight to the death between the devil and the deep blue sea.

## 11. JONQUIL: 'Whistle Low'

Having crafted two incredibly accomplished albums from the comfort of a bedroom, Jonquil finally entered a proper recording studio for their 'Whistle Low' EP, continuing to create wonderfully other-worldly pastoral psychedelia. The rinky-dink glimmer of 'Whistle Low's opening gambit makes way for heroic, seafaring voice and accordion, the song full of a sense of rustic escape and separation from the modern world. If Jonquil had emerged out of The Wicker Man's Summer Isle, we wouldn't have been at all surprised.



## 12. THE FAMILY MACHINE:

### 'Got It Made'

Loveable, languid rock hounds that they were, The Family Machine still had a way with a killer tune or two and this multi-part cinematic stand-out track from their debut album at the start of the year showed that sometimes they can even come up with three great tunes in one song. Shimmering through noir-ish psychedelia and 1950s film scores like the soundtrack to some long-forgotten spy or superhero flick, sombre brass, piano swirls and a remorselessly simple beat building a moody backdrop of black and white alleyways and seedy whisky bars, belying its essentially modest acoustic nature.

## 13. INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS:

### 'Never Slows Down'

Featuring two current touring members of The Jesus & Mary Chain, one of whom used to drum with Ride, International Jetsetters' pedigree is in no doubt. With their musical roots drinking inspiration from everything from The Velvet Underground and Spacemen 3 to Cowboy Junkies and Cocteau Twins, they're also an indie trainpotter's dream, but still sound as fresh as a meadow of psychedelic sun-drenched daisies, and here it is singer Fi McFall's sleepy-eyed vocal soar that steals the show, heading skywards in a blizzard of shoegazey guitars in a manner that critics of yore might have called a cathedral of sound.

## 14. THE WINCHELL RIOTS: 'Histories'

With an almost biblical sense of epic, a hollowed-out drum and serrated guitar sound reminiscent of Joy Division and Phil McMinn's petulant yelp, Winchell Riots' debut single stamped its authority in no uncertain terms, full of abrasive grandeur, but equally too intimate to head off on some Muse-style space rock journey. Its graceful turbulence hid an inner darkness more akin to Echo & The Bunnymen's earliest post-punk days, and there are few things that make us happier.

## 15. MR SHAADOW: 'Grime'

Having set his bench extremely high with last year's 'Look Out, There's A Black Man Coming', Mr ShaoDow thankfully lived up to expectations on his latest single, a sweetly humorous side-swipe at say-nothing, image-obsessed grime artists. In this

he was joined by producer Offkey, moving into funky electro house and a more dancefloor-friendly sound that didn't distract from his full-throttle, lyrically sharp rapping. A musical step up for the best rhymers in town and another reminder that humour is the best way to dismantle just about anything.



## 16. TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS:

### 'Crows & Doves'

Bastards that we are, we once condemned Tristan & the Troubadours to the Demo Dumper when they were all about 14 years old. Still, like a spell in boot camp it gave them the kick up the arse they needed and now they're one of the most promising young bands in Oxford, as this Demo Of The Month-winning gem ably demonstrates. Piano, flute, violin, a breathless gasp of a vocal and a giddy, clamouring two-and-half-minute mini-epic ensues that squashes more fun pop ideas into its short life than most bands will come up with in their entire career.

## 17. SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE:

### 'Motorway To Moscow'

Ever wanted to know what Visage might have sounded like trapped in a cyborg factory in the 22nd Century trying to clone Kraftwerk? Complete with ace retro-futurist synth sirens, nasty churning guitar slurry and the sort of squiggly, wiggly techno trance squelch that all the best raves pump out in fifty-gallon barrel loads? Well now you do. And if you didn't ever want to know, why in hell's name not? It bleeps, it bleeps and it'll make even broken

down washing machines dance like short-circuiting Terminators.

## 18. MEEF CHALOIN & ASHER DUST: 'While You Slept'

This little gem would have completely passed us by but for a heads up from Skylarkin's Aidan Larkin. The team-up between local underground mavericks Meef Chaloin and Asher Dust here creates a haunting, romantic reggae love song, shimmering guitars and loping electronic beats underlying Asher's soulful, wine-soaked, heartbroken vocals. Already a minor hit in dubstep circles, it exposes an overlooked side to Oxford's music scene.

## 19. THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS:

### 'Baboon'

With October's debut album, 'Animals', This Town Needs Guns left behind the epic emo-tinged pop and convoluted track titles in favour of a more introverted math-leaning spangle, and a whole album of songs named after animals. 'Panda' was obviously the winner in the cute beast stakes but 'Baboon' showed the band at their best musically, Tim Collins' guitar work twinkling almost effortlessly over the easy rhythms and Stuart Smith's voice, full of dreamy resignation.

## 20. MARIA ILETT: 'Sit On The Sun'

There's such a sweet, naïve charm about Maria Ilett's voice that only a Dementor could fail to be swept along in its summery breeze. Here she croons like a sad-eyed bushbaby and chirrups like a frisky songbird in equal measure, the song recalling the innocence and exuberance of early-80s cult stars like Young Marble Giants and Jane, whirring and clicking, humming and buzzing like the intricate working of a clock, giving vital space for Maria's voice to weave its sweet, pretty magic.

*Last year...*

1. FOALS: 'Hummer'; 2. LITTLE FISH: 'Devil's Eyes'; 3. RADIOHEAD: 'House Of Cards'; 4. MR SHAADOW: 'Look Out, There's A Black Man Coming'; 5. WITCHES: 'Sleep Like The Witch That You Are'; 6. A SILENT FILM: 'Chromatic Eyes'; 7. RICHARD WALTERS: 'Elephant In The Room'; 8. YOUNG KNIVES: 'Terra Firma'; 9. GOLDRUSH: 'The Story Of The City'; 10. STORNOWAY: 'Zorbing'; 11. SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT: 'Godzilla vs Kathleen Hannah'; 12. KEYBOARD CHOIR: 'In This Situation, Thinking Won't Help'; 13. YOUTHMOVIES & ADAM GNADE: 'Honeslides'; 14. BABY GRAVY: 'I Hate Your Girlfriend'; 15. THE EPSTEIN: 'Dance The Night Away'; 16. ALLY CRAIG: 'Get What You Pays For'; 17. SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: 'Groovy Fucking Dancer'; 18. JONQUIL: 'Lions'; 19. WINCHELL RIOTS: 'Hymn 24'; 20. 50ft PANDA: 'Flight From Tartarus'

# RELEASED

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## VARIOUS

### 'A Quantum Of Covers'

(BBC Children In Need)

A bit of fun in a worthy cause. BBC Radio Oxford Introducing team Dave Gillyeat and Tim Bearder have gathered together eleven local acts to cover various Bond themes in aid of the annual Children In Need appeal, neatly coinciding with the release of *A Quantum Of Solace*.

It's a bit of a thankless task for any band to tackle a Bond theme since they're all so well known, even by those who aren't Bond aficionados, and by their very nature they're so OTT to start with, it takes something special to make a good fist of it. As such we can't be too critical, although there are a few disappointments. Chief amongst these is Borderville's cheesy, honky-tonk take on Wings' 'Live & Let Die', since the band's flamboyant nature should make them perfect candidates but they never rise to the occasion. Similarly Boywithatoy's usual playful sleaziness is missing from their pretty

straightfaced, piano-led take on 'Tomorrow Never Dies', while Witches simply sound like they can't be bothered on an underwhelming 'Nobody Does It Better'.

For the most part, though, it's done well. Stornoway's take on Tina Turner's 'Goldeneye' is a typically quirky electro remake that finds a middle ground between Pet Shop Boys and Flying Pickets before weirdly wandering into Spike Milligan territory. The Family Machine's underplayed 'Goldfinger' is genuinely sweet, while 50ft Panda add their trademark, tightly-reined squall and clatter to 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service'. Xmas Light's decidedly old-school metal take on the Bond theme is as bombastic and brazen as you'd hope for and The Epstein, too, come out well from their languid steel guitar-led version of 'View To A Kill'. Maria Ilett manages to capture much of Nancy Sinatra's girly sweetness on her summery 'You Only Live Twice'.

But one track justifies a visit to iTunes by itself: Banbury industrial grinders Sikorski team up with Oxford-based former Miss UK Eleanor Glynn for



a superb demolition of 'Living Daylights' that guts A-Ha's original with a nasty electronic crunch and lets Eleanor's operatically soulful voice soar past the point of decency – seriously, she makes Shirley Bassey sound like an asthmatic hamster. Now that takes some doing.

**Dale Kattack**

## VARIOUS

### 'Here Comes Everybody'

(Own Label)

Subtitled "A city fathers collection", this compilation CD, put together by former-Anyways guitarist Mark Price to celebrate his recent 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, is a fantastic trawl through over two decades of a particularly convoluted strand of Oxford's music history. Mark has even drawn one of those classic rock family trees to explain who was who along the way.

His story begins in the mid-80s with Here Comes Everybody, a band that featured soon-to-be members of Talulah Gosh, The Anyway and Razorcuts, as well as being the band responsible for inspiring Ride's Andy Bell to learn guitar. The sole HCE track here is a lo-fi, rudimentary jangle

of the sort which was pretty ubiquitous at the time but it leads neatly into a trio of Anyways classics, most notable of which is the gorgeous 'Wider', one of the finest songs ever written by an Oxford band. That The Anyways, in any of their four incarnations, never made it beyond local cult status is an oversight on the world's part.

Razorcuts – named after a line in a Buzzcocks song – offer a fey, jangly take on their heroes' pop-punk, while Lucky & The Losers – featuring the late Hamish Ferguson, plus fellow former Anyway Karen Cleave – bring a neat country and western distraction to proceedings, replete with pedal steel.

Post-Anyways split, The Relationships provided the most obvious follow-on, with Richard Ramage's trademark vocal quaver and downbeat romantic outlook best showcased here with the quietly brilliant 'English Blues'. Richard's former bandmates Pete Lock, Alan Buckley and Mark Price himself, meanwhile, formed Blue Kite, with vocalist Liz Woolley's sultry vocal delivery swooning over the moody psychedelic trippiness of their music.

By now we're into the late-90s and Borgnine's languid surf-pop-cum-prairie psychedelia, featuring Ian Nixon who would go on to form current Francophile café pop band Les Clochards (also featured here) with HCE and Talulah Gosh chap Pete Momtchiloff, and Karen Cleave. This compendium closes with tracks by The Kate Garrett Band and Moiety, both Blue Kite alumni.

Obviously the chief omission here is any Talulah Gosh material, but doubtless copyright problems saw to that, while Easy Tiger's inclusion is a

mystery given they don't even feature on the family tree, but otherwise, for veteran local giggers and anyone with an interest in the city's rich musical history, this is essential stuff, and its subtitle is wholly appropriate given the influence these bands have had on the scene over such a long period of time.

**Dale Kattack**

## MATT KILFORD

### 'House On The Hill'

(Own Label)

Previously the guitarist in local indie hopefuls Belarus, Matt Kilford's solo debut shows that he's a talented singer too. After his old band's expansive pop, Matt's songs are intimate, airy and, if not exactly minimalist, stripped to the bare necessities – piano, sparse drumbeats and acoustic guitar allow his voice to dominate songs like 'Zurich' and EP highlight 'House On The Hill', coming on somewhere between Ryan Adams and Damien Rice. It's pretty traditional melancholic singer-songwriter fare and the overly-polished 'Hindsight' treads worryingly close to *X-Factor*-style schmaltz, but unlike a lot of acoustic troubadours, he studiously avoids self-pity, preferring a warm, personable feeling of resignation. The title track has echoes of 'Hallelujah' about it but Matt sounds confident enough to be his own man and it's a lovely lament to a lost love.

**Ian Chesterton**



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# GIG GUIDE

## MONDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**THE SHERMAN ROBERTSON BAND: The Bullingdon** – Good-time, upbeat blues from the Texan guitarist – *see main preview*  
**THE SCRIPT: The Academy** – Long-since sold-out show from Dublin's polished, pathologically cheesy soul-pop trio, riding high on the back of their number 1 debut album, dishing out piano-led ballads with the sinister cheeriness of Jesus Army recruiting sergeants.

## TUESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**APOCALYPTICA + SWALLOW THE SUN: The Academy** – Finnish cello-metallers, featuring three classically-trained cellists cranking out reinterpretations of songs by Metallica, Faith No More, Rammstein and

### *Monday 1<sup>st</sup>*

## SHERMAN ROBERTSON: The Bullingdon

Sherman Robertson has been a regular visitor to the Famous Monday Blues nights over the years, but it's worth restating the man's credentials, since he's been a star of the American and European blues scene for night on forty years now. Born in Louisiana, he was playing in bands in Houston, Texas as a teenager in the late-60s before being picked to play lead with soul legend Bobby Bland and later Junior Parker. The 70s saw him touring with Zydeco king Clifton Chenier, while Paul Simon selected him to play on 'Graceland'. Robertson was also signed to Atlantic Records for a while by Bluesbreakers producer Mike Vernon, before opting to go independent. Since that time he's mostly stuck to playing live, where his reputation forever precedes him. Possessed of the same physical showmanship as Albert Collins, Robertson is an energetic and dynamic guitarist as well as a powerful soul singer. Stylistically he adds a rock edge to Zydeco, r'n'b and Texan electric and swampy Louisiana blues, rhythmic and funky and as well suited to the intimate confines of the Bully as it is to the larger festival stages he regularly graces.



## DECEMBER

more, plus their own self-penned material in a similarly symphonic thrash style. Fellow Finns Swallow The Sun bring their melodic doom metal along in support.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz club. Tonight's band are Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited.

**BOOG + JIM DRISCOLL + JENNY MAY + TELLING THE BEES: Gardeners Arms, Jericho** – Acoustic night in aid of the Jericho Waterfront Appeal, including local trad folkies Telling The Bees.

**RUE THE DAY + MR B, GENTLEMAN RHYMER + VULTURES + SECRET RIVALS: The Jericho Tavern** – Thrash metal from Rue The Day, indie rock from Vultures and punk-pop from Secret Rivals. Highlight of the show, though, might be Mr B's odd Chuck D-meets-Noel Coward music hall hip hop.  
**KAPOW: The Cellar** – Indie and electro club night with live set from Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs.

## WEDNESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**JOLIE HOLLAND: The Academy** – Idiosyncratic old-time folk, jazz and blues songstress makes her Oxford debut – *see main preview*

**NARCISSISTS: Baby Love** – Electro and indie club night with live band.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

**FREE RANGE: The Cellar** – Dubstep and drum'n'bass club night.

## THURSDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**THE WEDDING PRESENT: The Academy** – Troubled indie rock romantic David Gedge reaches his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, still going strong and set to release a new album, 'El Rey', after recording with Steve Albini again. A band who pretty much set the benchmark for the past 20 years of underground indie noise, theirs is never a happy sound, but remains steadfast of spirit.  
**SKYLARKIN' with INTRODUCING: The Academy** – A note-by-note live performance of DJ Shadow's seminal 'Entroducing' album at tonight's Skylarkin', one of the first times it has been performed indoors, after a successful summer festival tour. Afterwards Jon Kennedy is the guest DJ, the Bristol-based dub and electro chap having been mentored by Mr Scruff.

**MOSHKA with THE EAVESDROPPERS + JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS + KANGO BILL: The Bullingdon** – Spangly, 80s-styled pop from Eavesdroppers at tonight's Moshka club, with support from emotive acoustic duo Joe & Angharad.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Tonight's special guest is the Tassos Spiliotopoulos Group, featuring the avant garde

Greek-born guitarist and his cosmopolitan quartet.

**LOOSE GRIP + NUMBER9: The Cellar** – Soul, funk and hip hop from Loose Grip.

**EMPTY VESSELS + CAND ELECTRIC + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN: The Jericho Tavern** – Blues rocking from Empty Vessels and Cand Electric, plus grungy noise from Dial F.

**KENAI: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Essex-based screamo crew.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

## FRIDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**DREADZONE: The Regal** – Return to town after their Academy show back in March.

Dreadzone's peculiarly British form of reggae, fusing roots sounds and dub with a folky feel, trance and breakbeats, remains true after 16 years on the road. Veterans of five albums, six Peel sessions and countless tours and festival appearances, Glastonbury surely being their spiritual home. Their classic 1995 second album, 'Second Light', spawned their only Top 20 hit, 'Little Britain', but their enduring appeal rests in their ability to transform any room, or field, into a reggae party. The trippy, spacious, almost rustic feel of their sound might feel almost archaic compared to what's come since but it's following their own path that's ultimately kept them on top of their game for so long. And it's weird to think that amongst the band's earliest backing singers were Alison Goldfrapp and Melanie Blatt.

**THE WILDHEARTS: The Academy** – Once more into rock and roll battle for Ginger and the boys, the Newcastle pop-metal cult heroes this time round promoting an album of cover versions, 'Stop Us If You've Heard This One Before', having enjoyed – or endured – a singularly turbulent history, where the only constant elements, aside from Ginger himself, have been drugs and alcohol.

**IGLU & HARTLEY: The Academy** – Grotesquely infectious electro-rap-rockers, managing to mix up Chili Peppers, OutKast and MGMT into something that's simultaneously daft, harmless fun and horribly cheesy pap. Billion-selling glory awaits.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with INSPECTED BY TEN + THE HALCYONS + VICARS OF TWIDDLEY: The Wheatsheaf** – More musical merriment of an eclectic persuasion from the KK Krew, tonight featuring ebullient syntho soul-rockers Inspected By Ten and electro-acoustic folk-rock in a PJ Harvey vein from The Halcyons.

**THE THIN LIZZY EXPERIENCE: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to the Irish rock legends.

**PRISONERS OF KATRINA + RELIK + THE TRAPS + SHE-BEATS: The Jericho Tavern BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon** – Classic soul, funk and r'n'b.

**DUGOUT Vs SKYLARKIN': The Cellar** –

Soul, rare grooves and funk club night.  
**GET DOWN: The Brickworks** – Weekly funk, Latin and disco session.

## **SATURDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**

**THE MAGIC NUMBERS + THE PANMAN + STORNOWAY: Jacqueline du Pre Building** – After their triumphant headline set at Truck's Harvest Festival weekend, Romeo and Michele Stodart and Sean and Angela Gannon showcase songs from their forthcoming third album in the impressive setting of the JDP Building, their warm, harmony-heavy 60s-inspired brand of pop hopefully bringing a little sunshine to a dark winter evening. Local heroes Stornoway continue to impress everyone they play to with their idiosyncratic folksy pop.

**ALABAMA 3: The Academy** – Another chance to testify with Brixton's enduringly entertaining acid-fired gospel punks. The Rev D Wayne Love and Larry Love lead the band through old favourites as well as tracks from their new 'Monday Don't Mean Anything' album.

**JOHNNY TRUANT: The Academy** – Rearranged gig from July from Brighton's metalcore monsters, whose hobbies include bellowing, shouting and screaming, out on tour after the release of new album 'No Tears For The Creatures', having previously supported the likes of Killswitch Engage, Alexisonfire and As I Lay Dying.

**TRANSFORMATION with THE FUTUREHEADS: The Academy** – Special late club night set from Sunderland's spiky post-punk indie rockers. Transformation, meanwhile, spins its usual selection of indie anthems old and new, plus there's trash-pop and 80s sounds at Trashy and alt.rock, metal and punk at Room 101.

**MELTING POT: The Jericho Tavern** – Mixed bag of bands to be confirmed.

**HOGGZ: The Red Lion, Witney**  
**UP-ROOTED + LOST CHIHUAHUA + DISCOVERED + BRASS ROOTS: BMW Social Club, Romanway, Cowley** – A selection of classic soul, funk and rock.

**SIMPLE: The Bullingdon** – Funky house club night with Alex Metric.

## **SUNDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**

**ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Red Lion, Kidlington**



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## **MONDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**

**ISIS: The Regal** – Monolithic post-metal soundscape titans hit town – *see main preview*  
**THE HOLD STEADY: The Academy** – The Brooklyn rockers return after their planned September tour was cancelled due to guitarist Tad Kubler being hospitalised with pancreatitis. In thrall to Springsteen on the one hand, they're master craftsmen in the world of rootsy, quintessentially American songwriting, with a great everyman style of storytelling courtesy of Craig Finn, recounting tales of lives crashing and burning to drink, drugs or age, and attempts to find salvation in religion or love. Gruff, bluesy and earthy, The Hold Steady also lean towards the best of 80s alt.rock, from Husker Du to The Replacements. Excellent, timeless stuff.

**CONNIE LUSH & BLUES SHOUTER: The Bullingdon** – Five-times winner of Best UK Female Blues Singer, Connie Lush returns to the Famous Monday Blues with her powerful singing style taking in blues, rock, jazz and soul.

## **TUESDAY 9<sup>th</sup>**

**THE SAW DOCTORS: The Academy** – Commercial rejuvenation of a kind for the cult Irish folk-rockers at the moment, over a decade after they had the biggest-selling single of all time in their home country with 'I Useta Lover', a record that still stands. A cover of Sugababes' 'About You Now' for a dare on a charity show has pushed them back into the limelight and they're off on tour to remind people what they've been missing these past years. That being emotive, rootsy hometown vignettes and reminisces, as well as some gently satirical pops at everything from the catholic church to U2.

**ASCENSION OF THE WATCHERS: The Academy** – Ambient, even ethereal at times, gothic electro-rocking from former-Fear Factory hands Burton C Bell and John Bechdel, who has also spent time in Ministry and Killing Joke.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – With a live set from funky jazz pianist Howard Peacock and his band.

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

## **WEDNESDAY 10<sup>th</sup>**

**THE HAMSTERS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – The British blues-rock veterans play a two-night stint at Fat Lil's, paying due homage to Hendrix and ZZ Top.

**THE MARTIN HANLEY BAND + 100 THINGS TO DO IN DOVER: The Jericho Tavern**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**  
**ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar** – Electro, bassline and fidget house with Portugal-based Angolan kuduro collective Buraka Som Sistema, plus Get Your Geek On and Kartik Poria.

## **THURSDAY 11<sup>th</sup>**

**FOALS: The Academy** – First of a two-night homecoming stint from the local stars – *see main preview*

**NEVILLE STAPLES: The Academy** – The former Specials and Fun Boy Three chap returns with his new band, playing a few of his old classics alongside new material.

**SKYLARKIN': The Academy** – The weekly ska, reggae, soul and rock'n'roll club welcomes a genuine living legend to its decks tonight with



*Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup>*

## **JOLIE HOLLAND: The Academy**

Born and bred in Texas, now based in Brooklyn, Jolie Holland could only come from America, but at what point in time is a completely different question. Idiosyncratic and mannered, her voice in itself is an oddity, often as much of an absent-minded drawl as a singing voice, and sometimes sounds like it comes from many decades ago. Initial impressions suggest the influence of Billie Holiday or Betty Carter, but the meandering haziness of her songs are as much testament to her love for Daniel Johnston. Holland has been something of a cult star since her collection of home-made demos was released as a debut album in 2003, and her third album, 'Springtime Can Kill You', saw her established as a critics' favourite and admired by the likes of Tom Waits and Nick Cave. Her latest album, 'The Living & The Dead' sees her collaborating with M Ward and members of Bright Eyes and Elvis Costello's band and her mix of old-time country and western, jazz, blues and folk deserves similar sale figures to Amy Winehouse or Duffy. Her peculiarly individual vocal style, though, will need to get through the Radio 2 playlist filter first.

Don Letts. The film-maker and musician brought dub and reggae to the punk scene with his DJ sets at the Roxy in the 70s before documenting that scene in films like *The Punk Rock Movie* and more recently the Clash biopic *Westway To The World*. Along the way he inspired The Clash, PiL et al to investigate Jamaican music and subsequently formed Big Audio Dynamite with Mick Jones. Come along and pay your respects while skanking yourself into a frothy mess.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – With tenor sax player Ian Price.

**THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + SECOND SMILE + HOUSE OF BROTHERS + CAT MATADOR: The Cellar** – Big Scary Monsters Records Christmas party with TTNG showing off their deft math-rock chops, while fellow local rockers Cat Matador delve into darker alt.rock waters.

**THE HAMSTERS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Second night of the electric blues-rockers session.

**CHOKEHOLD + BEARD OF ZEUSS + MORTILLIAN: The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Metal night at the Hob with local heavyweights Chokehold bowing out, plus stoner-metallers Beard of Zeuss and new young rockers Mortillian.



*Monday 8<sup>th</sup>*

## ISIS: The Regal

Time was hardcore was all shouting and maniacal guitar storms. And occasionally in Isis' world it still is. But usually only for brief spells amid their expansive, crushing sound explorations. Inspired initially by the likes of Neurosis and Godflesh – acts they've since had close connections to – LA's Isis are now a byword for post-metal musical ambition, in turn influencing the likes of Pelican and Russian Circles. Having started out in the mid-90s as a pretty standard hardcore drone and sludge-metal band, they've evolved into a monolithic force of nature, the sound of encroaching doom and war. Isis defy easy classification but frontman Aaron Turner's description of "thinking man's metal" comes close, involving a combination of heavyweight riffage, elaborate structural progression, elements of ambient noise and, increasingly, electronics. Tracks tend to weigh in at the 10 or 15 minute end of the scale, vocals mostly kept to a middle-distance growl, although lyrically they explore mystical ideas and their albums tend to have specific themes. They hit their peak with the magnificent and aptly-titled 'Oceanic', but they continue to progress, while retaining their cult status – despite tours with Mogwai and Tool, they shun the trapping of rock stardom as much as they do the clichés of heavy rock itself. Tonight's gig is one of only four UK shows, including an appearance at All Tomorrow's Parties, and if you have any love for hypnotic, bludgeoning repetition, you will be here.

**STRUNG OUT with GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN BAD TOWNS + BETHANY WEIMERS + JAMES FORDER: Baby Simple** – New monthly acoustic club with live sets from sweet-natured, warm-hearted popstrels GTHIBT and ethereal songstress Bethany Weimers.  
**LOST TRANSMISSION + THE COLOURS: The Jericho Tavern** – Epic indie rocking with heavy eastern influences from Lost Transmission, plus stadium-pop from Reading's Colours.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

## FRIDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**FOALS: The Academy** – Already sold-out homecoming gig – *see main preview*  
**INDUSTRY: The Academy** – Free party DJ collective Project Storm spin a heavyweight mix of techno, trance and hard house.

**BEN OTTEWELL: The Bullingdon** – The Gomez singer and guitarist heads off on a solo acoustic tour.  
**SMILEX + SHE SET SAIL + CALI COLLECT: The Wheatsheaf** – Ever-entertaining scuzz-rock noise from Smilex, with emo and grunge-pop support from She Sets Sail and Cali Collect.  
**PINDROP PERFORMANCE: Holywell Music Room** – Return of the ambient live music sessions, tonight featuring Stravinsky, Stockhausen and Golijov from The Chamber Ensemble, ambient minimalism from Keyboard Choir, twee indie pop from The Mountain Parade and acoustic folk from Fergus Kinglian.  
**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Jazz dance and worldbreaks with live set from Dave Noble's lush, funky Natureboy, plus DJ sets from Dan Offer and Gil Karpas.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + THE ISAMBARDS: The Magdalen** – Monthly residency from psychedelic party funksters Mighty Redox, plus oddball rockers The Pete Fryer Band.  
**CADILLACS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Blues and soul classics from Dave Smith and his band.  
**PINEAPPLE THIEF + LIGHTBOX + BRASSNECK + SEVEN O'CLOCK JUNKIES: The Jericho Tavern** – Proggy indie rock from Yeovil's Pineapple Thief.  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**  
**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

## SATURDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**WINTER WARMER: The Jericho Tavern** – Eleven-band all-day extravaganza from Gappy Tooth Industries and chums. Continues tomorrow – *see main preview*  
**WITCHES + BORDERVILLE + McDOWELL: The Wheatsheaf** – Superlative, dark-natured rocking from Witches, plus flamboyant vaudevillian glam-pop from Borderville.  
**BLACK STONE CHERRY + SEVENDUST: The Academy** – Southern rocking in the tradition of Lynyrd Skynyrd and Black Crowes from Kentucky's Black Stone Cherry.  
**FLAMBOYANT BELLA: The Academy** – Hitchin's electro indie-pop scrappers come on like a cross between Lily Allen and Los Campesinos on disco-fied jangle-pop slices of life like 'Completely Wankered'.  
**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY + ROOM 101: The Academy**  
**GREEN ONIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – UK's premier Blues Brothers tribute band.  
**HQ: The Cellar** – Old skool drum'n'bass club night.  
**THE CORSAIRS: The Red Lion, Witney** – Rockabilly and rock'n'roll covers and originals.  
**THE PETE FRYER BAND: Seacourt Bridge Inn**  
**CHALK + ECHO BOOMER + KING'S SHILLING: Folly Bridge Inn** – Local indie rock triple bill.  
**PHISH: The Bullingdon** – 90s retro club night.

## SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**WINTER WARMER: The Jericho Tavern** – Second day of the weekend mini-festival – *see main preview*  
**MONDO CADA + DR MAXIMUM + BABY GRAVY + CAPTAIN PYRATES +**

**BARBARELLA + LORD Magpie & the prince of cats: The Wheatsheaf** – Dirty grungy hardcore noise from Mondo Cada, plus assorted guests including ace local electro-punk-pop starlets Baby Gravy.  
**SONIC BOOM SIX + NY-LON + MOUTHWASH: The Academy** – Irrepressibly effervescent pop-friendly ska-punk-hip hop from Manchester's prolific, ever-gigging Sonic Boom Six, fronted by the sweetly spirited vocal talents of Laila Khan, out on tour to promote new rarities album 'Play On' ahead of a new studio album next year.  
**ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Red Lion, Kidlington**  
**EYE-CON: The Black Horse, Kidlington**

## MONDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**THE EDDIE MARTIN BAND: The Bullingdon** – British blues guitarist, twice nominated for best UK blues guitarist and adept at acoustic, slide and electric, drawing on all manner of American blues traditions, from Delta and Texan to Chicago and New Orleans.  
**PRIDE TIGER: The Academy** – Assorted members of Canadian metallers Three Inches Of Blood unleash their inner Thin Lizzy.

## TUESDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**THE LEVELLERS + FRANK TURNER: The Academy** – Enduringly popular folk-punks continue their seemingly never-ending tour after another summer on the festival circuit, currently promoting new album 'Letters From Underground'. Former-Million Dead screamer-turned politico folkie Frank Turner provides suitably socially aware support.  
**CANTERBURY: The Academy** – Farnham-based indie-punkers tour in support of their debut album.  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Featuring a set from jazz singer Alison Bentley.

## WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Live open funk jam session.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

## THURSDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**MOSHKA with THE BLACK HATS + ALLY CRAIG + DRUNKENSTEIN + MARY BENDY TOY: The Bullingdon** – Energetic, spiky melodic new wave pop partway between The Jam and Young Knives from The Black Hats. Support comes from Jeff Buckley-eaten-by-Sonic Youth-style songsmith Ally Craig, trashy punk noisemakers Drunkenstein and industrial pop types Mary Bendy Toy.  
**SKYLARKIN: The Academy** – Ska, dub, soul and rock'n'roll with Count Skylarkin, featuring a live set from Louie & The Louies, the new surf and garage rock band from Sir Bald Diddley, wearing his Link Wray, Pyramids and Dick Dale influences on his sleeve once again.  
**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – With pianist Jonathan Gee.  
**A SILENT FILM + XMAS LIGHTS + VULTURES: The Cellar** – The local epic pop heroes round off a great year with support from malevolent hardcore nutters Xmas Lights and indie rockers Vultures.  
**BRICKWORK LIZARDS + JAY ALICE: The Jericho Tavern** – Wee small hours gutter jazz from the Lizards.

**APPLE PIRATE XMAS PARTY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Six-band bill with acts to be announced.

**MARIANA MAGNAVITA & VASHTI: Baby Simple** – Acoustic pop from the Anglo-Brazilian songstress.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

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

**THE DAMNED: The Academy** – Another run through the old punk classics ('New Rose', 'Smash It Up', 'Neat Neat Neat' et al) from Msrs Vanian and Sensible.

*Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> / Friday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## **FOALS**

*Sunday 21<sup>st</sup>*

## **YOUNG KNIVES:**

### **The Academy**

Having already sold out their UK tour, including this hometown date, Foals have now added a second Academy show to cope with the demand. Incredible to think it wasn't so long ago they were playing to fewer than a hundred converts down the Wheatsheaf. Testament to their meteoric rise this last eighteen months. 'Antidotes', which gave the band a Top 5 debut hit, was an accomplished but fresh album, but it's live that Foals really shine, a high-octane, sharp-elbowed post-punk party machine that belies its inventiveness with an irresistibly infectious pop edge. Where they go from here is anyone's guess, but the light their success shines on Oxford can only benefit other great local bands, two of whom, Youthmovies and Jonquil, provide support for the Friday gig, while ace Sheffield math-core bruisers Rolo Tomassi support on the Thursday.

Young Knives, meanwhile, return to Oxford as part of the Academy chain's 'Homecoming' gig series. Having stayed very much ahead of the game with this year's 'Superabundance' album, moving deftly but not irretrievably away from their early quirk-punk sound into more esoteric, even folky, pop, they've doubtless done their long-term prospects a power of good, and with the band selecting a handful of support acts from the local scene as well as some choice favourites from around the UK, these shows should be as much a celebration of Oxford itself as Foals and Young Knives themselves.



**SWISS CONCRETE with MOTOR CITY SHUFFLE + MY FIRST TOOTH + THE RELATIONSHIPS: The Wheatsheaf** – More jangly fun from Swiss Concrete with jaunty young indie rockers Motor City Shuffle, joyous folk-pop outfit My First Tooth and local tweedy psychedelia legends The Relationships.

**WHEN ALCOHOL MATTERS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic ska, Two Tone and punk covers.

**FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar** – House and breaks club night.

**WHISKY BLITZ + BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + DIRTY VOICE: The Jericho Tavern** – Local punk and metal double bill.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**  
**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

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

**GEHENNA + FELL SILENT + CHOKEHOLD + VISIONFALL: The Academy** – A night of hardcore metal with local death and metalcore headliners Gehenna promoting new EP 'Guardians'.

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY + ROOM 101: The Academy**

**KANGAROO MOON + ALICE DOYNE: The Wheatsheaf** – Misty-eyed acoustic folk-rock from the headliners.

**CHEAP THRILLS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Covers of classic alt.rock anthems, from Foo Fighters to Rage Against The Machine.

**HUMAN ZOO with INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS + NIGHT PORTRAITS: The Allendale Centre, Carterton** – A new monthly live music night for West Oxfordshire's last outpost. Tonight sees psych-rock shoegazers International Jetsetters and goth-punkers Night Portraits providing the noise.

**CHALK + NICK BREAKSPEAR + CROOKED SMILE: The Jericho Tavern** – Indie rock from Chalk, plus a solo set from Black Hats frontman Nick.

**EVOLUTION: The Red Lion, Witney**  
**ATTACK ATTACK: The Cellar** – Electro and alternative club night from the Vacuous Pop and Abort, Retry, Fail? crews.

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

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

**LITTLE FISH + THE FAMILY MACHINE + RICHARD WALTERS: The Wheatsheaf** – Homecoming gig of sorts for local heroes Little Fish – coinciding with Young Knives' homecoming gig up the road the same night. Having recorded their debut album in LA with Linda Perry recently before touring Europe with Supergrass, Joolz and Nez give Oxford fans a taste of their raucous live show in intimate surroundings before the big time beckons. Be there and tell your grandchildren all about it. Excellent support from cinematic country-tinged popstrels Family Machine and ethereal acoustic pop from Rich Walters.

**THE YOUNG KNIVES: The Academy** – Part of the Academy chain's 'Homecoming' show season, Henry, House and Ollie headline with a supporting cast of local starlets – *see main preview*

**SAMUEL ZASADA + VON BRAUN + SEABUCKTHORN: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Witney acoustic singer-songwriter launches his



*Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> / Sunday 14<sup>th</sup>*

## **WINTER WARMER:**

### **The Jericho Tavern**

Now as much a fixture of early December as sleighbells and Santa impersonators, the Winter Warmer moves across town this year from the X to the Tavern, still showcasing much that is great, good and decidedly odd on the local scene, featuring 22 acts over two days. The event is organised by the enduringly eclectic Gappy Tooth Industries club, along with Swiss Concrete and Coo Coo, and alongside emerging local pop favourites such as Alphabet Backwards and The Black Hats (*pictured*) you'll discover virulent southern gothic blues from Mephisto Grande, soaring gothic Eurorock from Mary's Garden, idiosyncratic folk-pop from Cogwheel Dogs, indie-punk from The Gullivers, Gallic country-tinged café pop from Les Clochards, expansive orchestral folk-rock from Mile High Young Team, sugar-coated lo-fi acoustic pop from The Mountain Parade, dark-hearted power-rock from The Night Portraits, folk-pop from Aidan Canaday, morose one-man country-blues band Dear Landlord and brassy funk-rockers Sketchbeat. Plenty more stuff besides and all for the bargain price of £3 per day if you arrive before 3pm. Which is less than the price of a pint in many venues for eleven bands a day. Treat yourself to an early budget-price Christmas gift, why not?

debut album, with support from noisy angular rockers Von Braun and ambient electro-acoustic drifters Seabuckthorn.

**ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Red Lion, Kidlington**

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

**FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Bullingdon** – Assorted guests celebrate the long-running blues club's ongoing success.

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

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

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

**REGGAE CHRISTMAS with MACKATING + RAGGASAURUS: The Academy** – Local



reggae faves Mackating play their traditional Christmas Eve show, with support from Arab-dub band Raggasaurus, plus DJs Count Skylarkin and Trojan Records' Wrongtom.  
**TRASHY: The Academy**

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

Santa Claus is reading his list. Reading it once, reading it twice, to see who has been naughty and who has been nice. We're okay here – we're getting a small island off the coast of Dubai and a medium-sized Premier League club to play with. Sadly your savings are all now worthless so it'll be an old sixpence and a mouldy satsuma for you, and you'll be living in a damp cardboard box by January. Still, chin up, could be worse. You could be Amy Winehouse.

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

No music, just football and hangovers. That's the real spirit of Christmas.

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

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY + ROOM 101: The Academy**

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + UNIQUE SOUL:** Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Skittle Alley bands night with local festival funk and psychedelia faves The Mighty Redox.

**BIG HAIR Vs BASSMENTALITY:** The Cellar – Bands to be confirmed.

**FOURTUNE:** The Red Lion, Witney

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

**ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Red Lion, Kidlington**

**BUTTERFLY COLLECTORS: The Black Horse, Kidlington**

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

Come on, make an effort, someone.

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

**THE BLACKOUT + ATTACK ATTACK + SAID MIKE: The Academy** – Triple bill of Welsh pop-punk.

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

**ANIMAL MAGIC PARTY: The Academy** – Zoo-themed NYE party with the traditional Your Song covers extravaganza, Trashy and Skylarkin's Disco Shed.

**SHEPHERD'S PIE + EVERY HIPPIE'S DREAM + SKULLTHRASH: Fat Lil's, Witney**

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + MOON LEOPARD + THE ISAMBARDS: The Magdalen**

**STORNOWAY: The Jericho Tavern**

**QUEEN OF CLUBS CABARET: The Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock** – Live music and cabaret with slam poetry-cum-world music crazies Inflatable Buddha and Adverse Camber DJs.

**COVERUPS: The Red Lion, Witney**  
**SOUL & REGGAE PARTY: The Bullingdon**

*Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is the 18<sup>th</sup> of December - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm) or email listings to [Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net). All listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be reproduced without permission*

### **VENUE PHONE NUMBERS**

Oxford Academy: 0844 477 2000 (ticketweb)

The Bullingdon: 01865 244516

The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156

The Cellar: 01865 244761

The Regal: 01865 241261

The New Theatre: 0844 847 1585

The Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775

The Purple Turtle: 01865 247086

The Temple: 01865 243251

East Oxford Community Centre: 01865 792168

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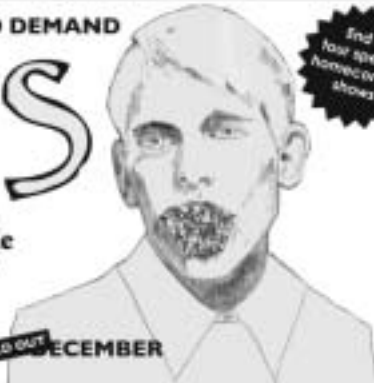
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# INTRODUCING....

*Nightshift's new monthly guide to the best local bands bubbling under*

## CAT MATADOR

### Who are they?

Liam Martin on guitars and vocals; Darren Gillick on bass; Sian Lloyd-Williams on violin and Christopher Roe-French on drums. It started with Liam trying to realise some bedroom songs and asking around for other musicians. Word spread through friends, which brought in Darren and Sian. Chris answered an advert on a message board and turned up to a practice, having already learned the band's demo beforehand. Since then it's lots of gigging around town, including a set at the Oxford Punt in May. They are currently finishing off recording a new set of songs.

### What do they sound like?

Dark, dense, impassioned and pent-up rock that takes in elements of gothic pop, new wave, math-rock and simple, angsty indie noise. Sian's violin adds colour and a bit of menace to the band's introverted hysteria, that at times touches on Clinic's wired metronomic groove-rocking, although they can do melodic too, even hinting at The Police on occasions. In their own words, they are "Moving between the sound of quiet personal contemplation and some big aircraft taking off. We tend to use trashy beats, haunting violins, driving fuzzy bass lines, layered guitar textures and strained vocals making quiet, loud, depressing, uplifting, poppy, catchy, proggy and sometimes shoe-gazy tunes."

### What inspires them?

"When we have a rehearsal in which we are all mentally right there together in the same room, especially since the music can sometimes be a little unpredictable. Here are some interesting words anyway: Swathes of unpredictable sound, unison and harmony, kraut rock, silly drum beats, pedals that might surprise you and songs...most of all good songs inspire us I think, conventional or not."

### Career highlight so far:

"The realisation one day that we all really believed in what we were doing, that's important. The Punt was great too; such a vibe in town is so nice. The funniest moment was drunkenly playing acoustic under a tarpaulin in the pissing rain at the Cowley Road Carnival with all our mates standing there with newspapers over their heads screaming the words of the songs."

### And the lowlight:

"Completely jumping the gun and playing at Charlbury Riverside Festival 2007 after like two or three practices together with no drummer. After bouts

of hay fever, drinking overnight and sheer lack of preparation it all sort of...didn't work."

### Their favourite other Oxford act is:

"Hreda. They manage to leave you wanting more and being an instrumental band that's pretty hard. They can fit highs and lows into a three or four minute track"

### If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be:

"Alligator' by The National. It's one of the most focused and complete albums ever and it was bought on a whim, which always helps you to see

things for what they are, no hype or reputation at the time.

### When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"The Big Scary Monsters Christmas Party at The Cellar. It's on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December with This Town Needs Guns, House of Brothers and Shapes. I hope newcomers will get the sense of personality and ups and downs that come with the songs, I think they can be quite personal if you listen. Also a bit of tension; there's a fair amount of tension and release."

### Their favourite and least favourite thing about Oxford music are:

"Favourite would be the close network of nice people and their enthusiasm. Also the fact that the bar is set high: it pushes all the acts to achieve more. Least favourite would be the occasional realisation that there are like five good gigs on in one night. That can make things quite difficult, because it happens every week."

### You might love them if you love:

Clinic, Youthmovies, The National, British Sea Power.

### Hear them here:

[www.myspace.com.catmatador](http://www.myspace.com.catmatador)



## DR SHOTOVER: Xmas Box Set

Yes, yes, we're all very excited here about Xmas, and as a result we've come up with ... The East Indies Club Festive Quiz. I knew that would put a spring in your step... talking of which, large glass of Chateau Gaviscon for me, there's a good chap... [urrrp] ... Ah, that's better. So, without further ado:

1. Who is most likely to jump on the piano at the Xmas Rock Knees-up?

a) Bruce Springsteen, b) Meatloaf, c) Lee from Smiley, or d) Don't care

2. Which of these were Xmas Number Ones?

a) The Power of Love by Frankie Goes To Hollywood, b) The Power of Love by Jennifer Rush, c) The Temples of Syrinx by Rush, or d) Don't care.

3. Xmas Number Twos? (Actually we haven't got any answers for this, we just wanted to say "Xmas Number Twos" and fall off our bar stools sniggering).



*Popsies: "We're looking forward to a Quality Street Xmas with Dr Si!"*

4. "Number Twos", "Bar stools" - geddit?

a) Yes, b) No, c) You are pathetic childish drunks, or d) Don't care.

5. "For how much longer do we tolerate Xmas murder?"

a) The Pop Group, b) Iggy Pop, c) The Countryside Alliance, or d) Don't give a fox.

Answers on a large Stilton to Dr Shotover c/o The East Indies Club. Cheers!

**Next month: We Are All Prostitutes**

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# LIVE

## MERCURY REV

### The Academy

Back in 1998 when Mercury Rev released 'Deserter Songs' the band were close to becoming something of a phenomenon. That album, alongside Flaming Lips' (a band that Mercury Rev's Jonathan Donahue and Dave Fridmann were very much a part of) 'Soft Bulletin' saw Americana taken to a new level and reaching a whole new audience.

Fast forward a few years and Flaming Lips have gone on to be one of the most revered bands on the planet, whilst Mercury Rev have become something of a cult concern. Some may point to the somewhat disappointing albums that followed 'Deserter Songs', or the fact that Flaming Lips' live show developed into the best party you've ever been to. The big question tonight is whether Mercury Rev still have anything to offer.

Recent album 'Snowflake Midnight' has seen the band adopt a slightly more electronic feel, but as soon as the band take to the stage, we're left in no doubt that in a live setting Mercury Rev are bolstering their sound to embrace waves of cathartic noise. Folktronica this is not, and the conversion of 'Snowflake In A Hot World' from gentle lilt to cacophonous stomp leaves us breathless. All the subtleties of the 'Deserter Songs'-era material are washed away in swathes of

layered guitar histrionics and machine-gun snare rolls. Even the usual soothing piano that accompanies Donahue on 'Tonight It Shows' is so loud that it threatens to shatter your ear-drums.

At the centre of it all is Donahue and co-conspirator Grasshopper, the latter looking effortlessly cool as he drives these songs towards sonic combustion. Donahue's exuberance is infectious, and while he rarely deigns to speak to the rapturous crowd the intensity of his

performance speaks volumes. His impression of a dying swan in the centre of the stage would look ridiculous in any other circumstance but coupled with the sheer emotional power of what's emanating from the stage, it seems to make perfect sense. Donahue and his band are clearly revelling in playing these songs live, and on this performance, you'd have to say that Mercury Rev still have plenty more to offer us yet.

**Sam Shepherd**



photo: Sam Shepherd

## SETH LAKEMAN

### The Academy

Seth Lakeman almost fills the Academy's downstairs venue once again. No problem, then, with sustaining the expanded fan base he has grown since his Mercury Prize nomination for 'Kitty Jay' catapulted him beyond the folk scene. A big part of Lakeman's appeal is that he is comfortable being influenced by rock and probably always has been right from the very early, very youthful Lakeman Brothers CD, 'Three Piece Suite'.

Tonight he and his band put on a stage show that would have fitted as well with the Reading Festival crowd as with the Cambridge Folk Festival. With a full light show and his good looks and tenor voice, it's easy to see why the 'poster boy' label has stuck. Then there's the delivery, all relentless energy, even when he slows down for the declamatory 'Greed and Gold' or when accompanying himself solo on the violin and stomping around the stage singing 'Kitty Jay'.

It's all very exciting, commercial and very now. Unless you had prior knowledge it was difficult to pick which of the songs of soldiers, sailors, shape-changers and tragedies, real and mythical, are a century or two old or written by Lakeman a week ago. They all get the same treatment.

But it becomes too relentless, and even veers towards monotonous when Lakeman puts down his fiddle and is strumming the tenor guitar. The man is a quality storyteller but this gets obscured and eroded on the night. For instance, the full tilt, almost stadium rock diminishes 'Solomon Browne', the story of the Penlee lifeboat disaster, and Lakeman seems to realise it as he appears a mite discomforted singing it this way. What doesn't get obscured though, is that in Ben

Nicholls on double bass, Lakeman has a fine musician in his band.

Exciting but also occasionally disappointing, then. While many fans say Lakeman's undoubted talent is best on stage and his studio CDs don't do him justice, on tonight's showing it is the other way round.

**Colin May**

## MURCOF / OREN

### MARSHALL

### Holywell Music Room

Oren Marshall has been intriguingly described as the 'Jimi Hendrix of the tuba', a compliment which is bound to excite curiosity, though perhaps also a certain amount of derision.

His set begins in high seriousness with near darkness in the Music Room and a slow atmospheric introduction played acoustically. Marshall then brings in effects from a range of pedals and electronic devices. However it soon becomes clear that the circuitry is misbehaving badly with intrusive feedback and buzzing interference breaking through the loops and whorls of electronic sound, and he reluctantly announces the rest of the set will be performed acoustically. This is a huge shame. I'd managed to listen to some of the material on his web-site and the more extreme samples where he multi-layers his own playing in performance and also generates dramatic and powerful distortion, are quite wonderful.

However, it's soon apparent that, away from the studio effects, Oren Marshall is also technical master of his instrument, with an imagination and resources to match. He manages to bring a multi-

layered depth and strangeness to the sound of the tuba, even without the electronic treatments. The lowest range of the instrument is exploited in the cycling of a deep throbbing pulse which sounds something like a didgeridoo, while he also vocalises into the mouthpiece generating odd fragments of speech beneath the main sound. Surreal performance practice takes over before long as Marshall and his tube meld into the semblance of an animal, creeping along the floor and growling and nuzzling up against the front row audience. You don't get this sort of thing on BBC Young Musician of the Year. More's the pity.

Unlike Oren Marshall's set, Mexican composer Murcof's visuals and performance seem to coalesce with an impressive technical efficiency. The three acoustic musicians, violinist, cellist and trombone player are drawn from the Barcelona ensemble Grup Instrumental Bcn216. Murcof himself generates and modulates the electronic sounds from a console at the back of the stage, also processing the sounds of the other three musicians.

Tonight is a suite of five pieces called 'Océano'. It sounds like very dramatic and high-quality soundtrack music, though the limitations of that genre are also sometimes exposed. Deep echoing sci-fi sound effects punctuate the Murcof soundworld a little too obviously, while fractured dance rhythms alternately sustain and divert your interest. At other times the textures of the music just get too overloaded, which actually drains the music of atmosphere. The best piece is the last, which most successfully exploits the tensions between ancient and futuristic musical modes. Imagine a hybrid of an English viol consort and early Kraftwerk engaged in a call and answer sequence that builds in intensity to a genuinely dark and intense climax and you're on the right track.

**Steve Thompson**

## NITIN SAWHNEY

### The Academy

Nitin Sawhney's music this evening is like an aural Google Earth. With the flick of the wrist he can swoop on a whim, down to the terracotta rooftops of Seville or cool his heels in the waters of the gypsy Camargue, onward east, hugging either coastline of the Mediterranean, following the path of a Turkish sirocco over the Arabian Plateau, down to greet the mauve dawn over the waters of the Ganges. What's more he takes us on this polycultural trip, not like someone clumsily showing you his Holiday snaps, but on a laid-back Club Class magic carpet ride.

On occasions I have found some of Sawhney's recordings, with featured random vocalists, and politico audio samplings, to be a mite distracting or disjointed, but tonight, ditching the sample work, and using an intertwining ensemble of musicians and singers, who shine equally as bright as his own star, the whole becomes a breathless global symphony, totally enthralling what has to be the widest cross-section of Oxford society I've ever seen crammed under a local roof.

Nitin himself sits left of stage, tugging leading riffs from a Spanish guitar, passively overseeing it all, and seemingly conducting it with his mind. On 'River Pulse' the complex interplay between his guitaring, Aref Durrvesh on tablas and Ashwin Srinivasan on bansuri flute, is eye-wateringly world class. It's Ashwin who also supplies the dreamy Indian vocals on 'Homelands' and the staccato rap on 'The Conference', while Brazilian Tina Grace brings a dark, racy Beth Orton feel to 'Days Of Fire' and Luci Jules blisses like Beverly Knight on the more Buddha Beat 'Sunset'.

The last time I saw Nitin Sawhney, he was in a comedy double act called 'The Secret Asians' with a pre-*Goodness Gracious Me*, Sanjeev Bhaskar. Watching him here in controlled guru serenity, it's hard now to picture the chuddy jokes, but wonderfully satisfying to see how they have both in their separate ways built enormous bridges of concord and understanding with East and West, that one day some will say was ahead of its time.

**Paul Carrera**

## FUCKED UP

### The Academy

Look up the word hardcore in the dictionary and you'll find a picture of Fucked Up singer Pink Eyes staring right back at you. At least that's the way it should be. The man is punk rock personified. There he is, bald, bearded, considerably larger than life and with his pants down round his knees, ferociously roaming around the crowd, facing down all-comers, occasionally picking someone up and dumping them over his shoulder back onto the floor. Sometimes someone from the moshpit falls over and he'll stoop down to pick them up, give them a huge, sweaty bear hug and move on to his next victim. Throughout all this he never stops singing. Okay, singing isn't the right word. Roaring. Bellowing. Growling. Those are the noises he makes. And afterwards he genially shakes hands with a crowd of eager fans and thanks everyone for enjoying the show as much as he so obviously does. Did we mention he leaves the gig mid-song at one point to have a poo and then blames it on eating at Jamie Oliver's restaurant in town? When did punk forget that this was how it was meant to be?

We'd heard stories of Fucked Up's notorious live shows – of riots on bridges in Texas and trashed venues, but here tonight, in the flesh, it all

finally feels brilliantly real. The Canadian sextet are an odd unit to behold – the band all look about sixteen – cute, fresh-faced and a world apart from their human firestorm of a frontman. But the noise they crank out is astonishing – three guitars and bass create a solid wall of almost symphonic carnage over which Pink Eyes rages. It's monstrous but incredibly melodic, like The Ramones' single-mindedness filtered through Band Of Susans' powerhouse psychedelia, guitars churning and churning until all you can do is gawp and surrender to it all.

The intimate confines of the Academy's bar venue perfectly suit the band, containing their performance so it feels even more intense. Bodies clash and one particularly wrecked individual is knocked unconscious. Pink Eyes stops the gig and makes sure they're carefully carried to safety, before mayhem is resumed. They play songs from new album 'The Chemistry Of Common Life', a contender for album of the year, as well as pillaging tracks from 'Epics In Minutes', and it's simply the most glorious cacophony we've heard all year. Fucked Up: this is hardcore. Accept no substitutes.

**Dale Kattack**

## OXES

### The Cellar

"Can you guys give a little back, please? We're playing at up to 120 beats per minute here..." Surveying the apocalyptic scenes unfolding around me, it's safe to say that impeccably moustachioed Oxes drummer Christopher Freeland has a decidedly un-American grasp of irony.

One song into the Baltimore punks' set and the other two-thirds of the band – guitarists Marc Miller and Natalio Fowler, like Freedland, clad in *de rigueur* tight-fitting Oxford Utd shirts – have already performed atop their trademark boxes before taking full advantage of their wireless instruments to meet and mingle with their frenzied public in the midst of the moshpit. For Oxes, clearly, all the world's a stage.

Not content with simply destroying the fourth wall, though, they seem intent on inspiring the crowd into conducting a rigorous structural examination of the Cellar – and we're only too happy to oblige. Crowdsurfers are scraped along the low ceiling until a light fitting is

brought down, the one solitary moment of sobriety of the entire set being when a punter gingerly hands the long strip lightbulb to a member of the bar staff.

So, you will know Oxes by the trail of destruction, then, but you'll also know them by the scattling interlude aimed at loosening us all up (as if that's needed); the cover of Nirvana's 'Drain You', featuring guest vocals from an enthusiastic but anonymous member of the audience and such bright ideas as inverse crowdsurfing, by which people are pressed to the ground rather than the ceiling, thereby helping to clean the floor at the same time.

This is fast, raw, heartbeat-quickenning, ear-mangling punk rock, played in the sort of grubby, constrictive venue it should be played in, accompanied by the flailing limbs and structural damage it should be accompanied by. What else to do but to rejoice and abandon myself to the chaos?

**Ben Woolhead**

## BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE / KYTE

### The Wheatsheaf

The first time we saw Kyte they were supporting the fabulously glum iLikeTrains, and we were mightily impressed. Their delicate, yet colossal soundscapes filled the room and we decided that it was no coincidence that there was a little bird gracing the covers of their CDs, as their music simply soared that night. Tonight at the Wheatsheaf, Kyte have moved on even further, making good on the early promise of their Sonic Cathedral single 'Planet'. Their songs tread the line between wistful and outright bombast carefully. Pulling together elements of post-rock and shoegaze, they draw comparisons to those sounds that emanate most strongly from Iceland, while shooting the whole thing through with a little added muscle when it's needed. With a new EP on the way (which features a stunning version of Peter Gabriel's 'Solsbury Hill') it shouldn't be long before this Kyte flies even higher.

British Expeditionary Force are built from the ruins of Yourcodenameis:milo but you would never guess from this performance. YCNIM ground to a halt just as things were getting interesting with their 'Print Is Dead' collaborations, but all is not lost as British Expeditionary Force are, as their name suggests,

heading off in new directions. Mixing up post-rock and glitchy electronica is admittedly not a new thing, but BEF do it well. It's a pretty hypnotic affair as we get caught up in elongated wispy passages of music, and for the most part we're happy to join the band in getting caught up in their world. Mid set things go a little off track when some fairly straightforward indie tracks barge their way in, but come the thrum of their final song we're back with them, rocking in synchronicity on their sonic voyage. There's promise here, so it's worth joining British Expeditionary Force now as it can only lead to great things.

**Sam Shepherd**



photo: Sam Shepherd



## DON CABELLERO / HREDA / SECONDSMILE

### The Regal

Tonight's Audioscope presentation offers three bands exhibiting varying degrees of angularity, even awkwardness (in the best meaning of the word) and makes the best of the excellent acoustics and PA of The Regal, with its rumoured 31Hz sub-woofers under the floor.

Bridport's Secondsmile try to mix Muse-style rocking out with delicate acoustic guitar-lines with only limited success. Whilst great care has clearly gone into their set there's too much going on to be able to stand back and take it in. A triumph of ambition over direction, they get less interesting as time goes on.

Local boys Hreda are easily the most interesting proposition on offer tonight. Post-rock instrumental bands are as common as ticks on sheep but rarely have I come across one so consistently engaging, even on this first hearing. Melodic phrases are repeated but always with a subtle variation that keeps the interest from wavering the whole set long. There's more than a touch of Godspeed about them, particularly in the cello on their recorded work, and it's difficult to see how vocals could possibly enhance their work: They're hopeless as background music because you just want to concentrate and take it all in.

Maybe they owe a debt to Sonic Youth and a few others, but no-one's going to blacklist them for that.

I had high hopes of Don Caballero, with their impeccable math pedigree (though they hate the term) and a new album with the great title 'Punkgasm'.

On record the Pittsburgh trio are urgent, focussed and technically brilliant, but somehow they can't reproduce the magic tonight. Maybe it's the Regal's cavernous dimensions or the fact that they've been touring across Europe without a day off for several weeks. Everything hinges around Damon Che, the only original member and a truly extraordinary drummer. He looks like he's deliberately choosing every drum stroke in real time, agonising and continually changing his mind as he goes along. This makes it hard to concentrate on guitarists Gene Doyle and Jason Jouver, who meander around acting more like fans of Che than bandmates.

This style of rock music, with its constantly changing rhythmic structure and tonal patterns, is easier to admire than be moved by. Maybe the thoughtful appreciation of the modest crowd is confirmation.

*Art Lagun*

## THE WEEK THAT WAS / THE RUBY SUNS

### The Academy

Auckland, New Zealand boy-girl duo Ruby Suns are a right weird couple. Perched behind a bank of electronics and assorted percussion, we spend the first couple of numbers wondering if they're a pair of religious nutters, space cakes or experimental Congolese pop cyborgs. As well as creating an almost mediaeval electronic psychedelia, they randomly hit drums, bongos or cowbells and wail and chant like they're summoning strange gods. Sometimes it's a bit messy but it's never less than beguiling. Before we know it they're off pretending to be The Bhundu Boys, then a Caribbean steel band, then Kid Creole and the Coconuts and finally a lost Phil Spector girl band. Tell us you'd prefer Pigeon Detectives over *that*.

But if you really want to play pop trainspotter's reference points bingo, Sunderland's The Week That Was are your band. Formed from the ashes of Field Music, brothers Peter and David Brewis have created a strangely appealing form of machine-prog that at once has you worrying you're developing a liking for Genesis (check

out 'The Good Life' – it sounds like bloody 'Abacab'!) or Graham Parker, while marvelling at what Kate Bush's 'Hounds Of Love' might have sounded like if Peter Gabriel had taken the lead role. From the simple, lovely pop of 'Airport Line' to more pompous indulgences, via the odd bit of marimba, they rarely let an idea get too comfortable, and even their most vulnerable pop moments are thrust out with strident gusto. And all the while their set, taken almost completely from their eponymous debut album, tells a cyclical tale of a murder and the media frenzy that surrounds it. In some ways it's a retro bunfest, but in others, it's one of the most ambitious song cycles you'll hear these past few years.

They finish with a decent enough cover of John Cale's 'Fear Is A Man's Best Friend' and then they're off to support Stereolab on tour, another band who managed to take some of the least likely retro sounds and make them brilliant again. That Was The Week That Was – soon to become the band that will be.

*Victoria Waterfield*

## HELIUM SOUL / THE DACOITS / THE ALFONZ

### The Jericho Tavern

The Melting Pot is another of those heroic monthly live music club nights in the tradition of Klub Kakofanney and Gappy Tooth Industries, that strives to entice punters' gaze away from the glitz of the bigger gigs in town with a mix and match policy of unsigned newcomers, gently stamping its identity on the venue for the night with a homely selection of scented candles and free snacks. A nice touch.

Also trying to stamp their identity onto proceedings are The Alfonz, a feisty enough Jam-inspired trio from Swindon. We've heard so much similarly-styled mod-punk noise recently it's hard to get too thrilled but their enthusiastic simplicity, self-effacing humour and the singer's appalling jumper make them hard to dislike.

Faringdon's Dacoits are a difficult one to fathom at times, seemingly full of musically-proficient ambition, they've yet to develop real stage presence, singer Carrie Rossiter dolled up to the nines and full of blues-rock emoting, while backing singer Patti Rowe sinks into the

background, looks nervous and doesn't seem to have enough to do, when she could be adding a whole new dimension to the band with a bit of imagination. Initially the band struggle to get a foothold, 'Holy Man' only hinting at the panicked intensity it needs, while sometimes it sounds like Cher fronting an overblown Eurorock band. But the last third of the set finds them fired up, 'Home By Twelve' edging closer to PJ Harvey territory, before they close on a melodramatic garage thrash number and really let rip.

We miss the end of Helium Soul's set because we're outside stabbing our ears, eyes and throat out with a screwdriver rather than endure any more of their interminably slothful pub rock of the sort that makes Reef sound like The Stooges jamming with the Devil himself. When you glance at your notebook and see you've scribbled the words Mark Knopfler and Gary Moore next to a doodle of a man hanging from a gibbet, you know that escape is your only option.

*Dale Kattack*

## **BRITISH SEA POWER / FILM SCHOOL**

### **The Regal**

Film School are doing their thing as I arrive, but I'm too distracted by the majesty of the venue to pay full attention. This really is a spectacular room – spacious, tall, elegant and glittering with art deco finesse – and it lends itself brilliantly to hosting live music, at least once you've dragged your gawp down towards the stage. This is a *real* venue, that makes me feel like I'm on a Night Out rather than just popping down the road to see what's going on. Even the mysterious ruling that alcoholic drinks cannot be served during live sets seems acceptable in this environment.

Anyway, Film School. They sound pretty good. An American take on chorus-pedal-swathed shoegaze music, with enough bite to recall Ride in their floppy-haired prime and enough vigour to remind of Medicine's more out-there slices of noise music. However, they're over before they've started, for me: I arrived late and I'm still exploring the venue. Must pay more attention to British Sea Power, I tell myself. They've got people to set up trees onstage for them, and everything. Believe it or not, this stagecraft gimmickry works, and casts a pleasantly rustic hue onto things.

## **RAGGASAURUS / GTA**

### **The Academy**

With a few exceptions, rap rarely makes for a great live spectacle and there are moments tonight when local duo GTA fall prey to its many clichés: Chima Anya and Ineffable's chatty introduction ticks the usual boxes of respects paid and a little bit of self-aggrandisement; it's personable but makes the set's start feel messy, while the pair often rap over each other on their freestyling numbers and odd lyrics and rhymes are close to cringeworthy.

But when they get it right, there's real promise. Chima in particular raps with confidence and natural swagger, while DJ Fu provides a solid, funky soul'n'synth backing while suggesting he's as adept a toaster as his two frontmen. Some of the improvised rhymes are witty and inventive and when they click into each other's flow they're a formidable double act. It's easy to see why GTA have found themselves in both Nightshift's Demo Dumper and Demo Of The Month spots, and their final number tonight, 'The Way', which took the demo crown recently shows just what they can do. They're joined by the lithe,

The band look comfortable in this setting, like it's not an awkward construct that they've found themselves stuck inside. This helps their music – which tends towards the sweeping, epic-in-intent end of indie guitar pop – travel from the stage to the ears quite easily. The show seems more of an event because of the trees and the environment. This works just fine for me, as a newcomer to BSP's music, and I'm somewhat transfixed by the richness of sound and directness of melody that they seem to have under their control. However it becomes apparent that they don't do much beyond a relatively slight range of music – they lack contrast, and quickly fall into a repetitive set of similarly-paced, similarly-constructed tunes that, individually, aren't outside the grasp of most decent-in-their-field local bands.

Combined with a worryingly muddy sound, which makes me question whether a trumpet player and a violin player are actually doing *anything*, the set quickly became a drag, and not even the pretty trees or the spectacular surroundings could stop me from wishing myself elsewhere.

*Simon Minter*

powerful vocal talent of Jada Pearl and her soaring soul voice adds a whole new dimension to the disco-fied anthem.

Raggasaurus were born for the live arena. An oddly jaunty instrumental opener – loosely based around 'No Woman No Cry' – suggests a lounge dub jam band, but with the arrival of gaunt, hirsute frontman Tunki they're off into their own peculiar mutation of reggae and Arabic chanting. And really that's it – they barely change pace or style for the next forty minutes and it's impossible to understand anything Tunki sings, but Raggasaurus are so buoyantly insistent they can even make the empty pint glasses along the bar dance lazily along. Tonight is the first time we've seen the band since the Punt back in May but again they feel symptomatic of why Oxford's music scene is so strong – that a band this detached from anything supposedly cool or mainstream acceptable exists and thrives alongside everyone else, is testament to the scene as much as the band's own unique talents.

*Ian Chesterton*



## **December**

**Every Monday**

### **THE FAMOUS MONDAY NIGHT BLUES**

*The best in UK, European and US blues. 8-12.*

1<sup>st</sup> **SHERMAN ROBERTSON BAND (USA)**

8<sup>th</sup> **CONNIE LUSH & BLUES SHOUTER (UK)**

15<sup>th</sup> **THE EDDIE MARTIN BAND (UK)**

22<sup>nd</sup> **FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES CHRISTMAS PARTY**

**Every Tuesday**

### **THE OXFORD JAZZ CLUB**

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

3<sup>rd</sup> **ALVIN ROY & REEDS UNLIMITED**

9<sup>th</sup> / 23<sup>rd</sup> **THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET**

16<sup>th</sup> **ALISON BENTLEY**

**Thursdays**

4<sup>th</sup> **MOSHKA** presents **THE EAVESDROPPERS / JOE ALLEN & ANGHARAD JENKINS / KANGO BILL**

18<sup>th</sup> **MOSHKA** presents **THE BLACK HATS / ALLY CRAIG / DRUNKENSTEIN / MARY BENDY TOY / PHANTOM THEORY**

**Every Friday**

### **BACKROOM BOOGIE**

*Funk, soul and R&B. 10.30pm-3am; £4.*

**Friday Early Shows**

12<sup>th</sup> **BEN OTTEWELL** (from GOMEZ)

*Includes entry to Backroom Boogie afterwards*

**Saturdays**

6<sup>th</sup> **SIMPLE** – *Funky House with ALEX METRIC 9-4am.*

13<sup>th</sup> **PHISH** – *90s club night. 10-3am*

20<sup>th</sup> **OX4** – *Drum'n'bass 9-3am; £6/5*

27<sup>th</sup> **TBC**

**Sundays**

7<sup>th</sup> **KILL FOR A SEAT COMEDY CLUB**

*with compere SILKY 7.45pm; £7.50/6.50*

**New year's Eve**

**SOUL & REGGAE PARTY. 10-4am**





## LADYTRON / ASOBI SEKSU

### The Academy

Like a nightingale trapped in a wind tunnel, Yuki Chikudate is always fighting to make her voice heard above the storm that surrounds her. New York's Asobi Seksu are a classic shoegazing band reborn, but now switching their gaze to the stars, of which the fairy lights adorning their microphone stands are a mere glimpse. Yuki's voice and the fragile, pretty melodies it conveys are the essence of the band which might otherwise become merely a storm of guitar noise with nowhere in particular to blow. Like Cocteau Twins' Liz Frazer, she uses her voice as much as an instrument as a conduit for lyrics, whooping and cooing amid the blizzard of distortion and the spangling melodies. There are snatches of The Sundays in the more considered numbers but once Asobi Seksu ratchet up the noise levels and Yuki takes to the drum kit to thrash out a primal tattoo, they're awash with the spirit of My Bloody Valentine and a spectacular triumph. All of which might daunt lesser headline bands, but Ladytron are too imperious to concern themselves with such base worries. Despite the addition of a long-haired bass player and chief protagonist Daniel Hunt's incongruous beard, they're still the coolest-looking band on the planet, the austere Helen Marnie and fabulously chic Mira Aroyo as ever

clad head to toe in black and resisting any temptation to display human emotion, preferring a disdainful coquettish stance that never falters, even when Mira is chanting exotically in her native Bulgarian on 'Black Cat' or Helen is opining that she'll set herself on fire on the gigantic 'Burning Up' with its shameless Numan synth steals.

From the Glitterstomping, frosty soul of 'Runaway', through an otherworldly 'International Dateline' to the harsh cyborg snarl of 'True Mathematics', with its knowing nod to The Normal's 'Warm Leatherette', Ladytron prove that machine-powered pop has as much, if not more, spirit than its often more prosaic organic cousin, and when they hit 'Playgirl', there's little doubt that it's one of the single greatest pop songs ever written.

It's not all sleek, silicon perfection tonight, of course. The band's sound engineer does them a disservice on 'Deep Blue' which becomes a solemn dirge and the final encore of 'Destroy Everything You Touch' lurches in with a flat squelch when it should kick like a robot mule.

That aside, and despite the increasing intrusion of traditional live instrumentation into the band's sound, they remain a pure, detached spectacle and a peerless pop group.

**Dale Kattack**

## WITCHES

### The Cellar

It's Halloween, so obviously Witches are playing. Except tonight the band are dressed variously as ghosts, vampires and slaughtered Victorian brides. And, hey, check out those song titles: 'Dead As A Ghost', 'There's A Darkness', 'At Night I Dream Of Black Dogs'.

The wonderful thing about Witches is that despite all this, they're a world away from gothic pantomime or naval-gazing melancholy; if anything the costumes detract from the often genuinely haunting nature of the music. Given we haven't caught the band live for a year, during which they've undergone a line-up change, it's a timely reminder just what a fantastic band they are. Set opener 'BOK' is oddly exuberant despite its apparently morose nature, while 'In The Chaos Of A Friday Night' is fevered, maraca-led splendour; even the more downbeat 'There's a Darkness', relatively stripped down from the band's typically opulent sound, manages to soar. It also showcases Witches' real secret weapon: trumpeter Bernard

Chylinski who, as much as Dave Griffiths' plaintive vocals or Martin Newton's nonchalantly abrasive guitar fuzz, takes each song to a higher level. The Bunynmen-like scurry of 'Dead As A Ghost' particularly benefits from his Mariachi squall.

Amongst a swathe of new songs aired tonight from a promised second album to come next year, stand-out songs are the sludgy, harpsichord-led grunge shimmer of 'Church Beds' and the horn-drenched 'Leave', Witches climaxing the set with the frenetic punk blast of 'Stammer', frontman Dave leaping about, maracas aloft as if performing a suitably pagan Halloween ritual.

What makes Witches such a great band is the carefully controlled balance between musical intimacy and overwhelming chaos. Songs build and erupt, often violently, but within each is a seductive, soulful melody, without which none of them would survive. On a magical night, this is magical music.

**Dale Kattack**

## MISTY'S BIG ADVENTURE / FLIPRON

### The Academy

Make no bones about it, this isn't the coolest ticket in town tonight by a long shot. That would probably go to the show downstairs featuring Mercury Rev and Howling Bells. One upside of this is that because nobody is bothered by cool, there is a ridiculous amount of unashamed fun to be had.

Take Flipron for instance. They have a bass player that looks like a cross between Herman Munster and Mick Fleetwood, a short ass singer with Marty Feldman eyes and silver shoes, and music that could easily be described as Borderville for The Levellers' set, but they are great. Misty's Big Adventure work on similar principals, so make good touring mates. Firstly there are eight of them crammed on stage, including a dancer, more of whom later, and some great brass. Grandmaster Gareth, a curious looking man in fisherman's cap and full beard conducts proceedings. They kick off with an instrumental that's an odd cross between calypso and an old kids TV show theme tune. Following

that they launch straight into 'I Can't Bring The Time Back', which marks the appearance of Erotic Volvo, who is a man in blue face paint and a red cloak with inflated blue hands attached to it and who will lead us in the dancing. This is a key element tonight; the audience all ready to let go and eager to copy his dance movements or to chase him round the floor when he jumps into the crowd.

The brass is another key element, used sparingly and intermittently, sometimes in a call and response fashion. Gareth's laconic vocals remind you of an understated Eddie Argos from Art Brut and his storytelling style offsets the music perfectly.

This fantastic show by both bands is a result of laughing in the face of adversity, as the promoter has run off with all the money, causing half the tour to be cancelled. They say out of these moments comes great art, but now it appears the birth of great dumb fun also.

**Russell Barker**



## VAGROCK

### The Bullingdon

According to misogynist mythology, anyone with feminist leanings must perforce be an uptight, humourless shrew with a pole up her (inevitably female) arse. Vagrock, as the name of a night aimed at raising the status of women within music, at least refutes that stereotype. Although reducing women to their genitalia is perhaps not doing much to advance the cause. Nor, in many ways, is the night itself. Events like this may draw attention to the under-representation of female musicians, but as tokenist one-off specials, also end up reinscribing the problem.

**This Is My Ship** valiantly step in for The Pheebes at the last minute, and so concern with how well they fit in with the Vagrock manifesto may not have been the greatest consideration. Had it been, they would have seemed an eccentric choice, not least on account of being three-quarters male. They could probably be filed under “emo”, though the tortuously saccharine key-changes that are supposed to signify this bare as much resemblance to genuine raw feeling as Parsley the Lion does to your bona-fidé *panthera leo*. They play with tight control, but their tunes are so generic that they simply merge with a undifferentiated slurry of nameless soundalikes. I guess it's an indication of how casually male-privileging attitudes assert themselves that there's no better way of summing up this complete dearth of guts, grit and force than with that classic phrase, it's got no bollocks.

**The Courtesies Kill** are no improvement. Again, they don't fail through being daringly

bad, but simply by being so utterly unremarkable that it's almost worse. The music – once more of the indie-emo school, with a fair dose of Garbage thrown in – is so lacking in attitude that you can picture the school bully waiting to give its bones a damn good drubbing.

Thank god, then, for **Baby Gravy**. With frontwoman Iona having graduated from the Oxford Young Women's Band Project, to whom the proceeds of tonight's shenanigans go, they are a sterling advertisement for the scheme. Their scuffed-up spazz-rock, featuring shouty vocals riding atop a roller of dingy electro noise, is exactly what a gig like this should be about. Iona, tonight affecting a west-coun'ry twang, has excellent stage presence, at once unstudied and self-conscious. They've also got bags more invention than anyone else on the bill, as is testified by a song on which a moonlighting MC inserts neat spatches of rap into the mix, and they've got enough ramshackle vigour and talent to overcome this and to prove once again that they're one of the most invigorating young bands Oxford has to offer.

Whilst tonight's mixed-sex approach does avoid the trap of creating a ghetto, it's sad that a bid to raise women's status generally can't achieve even 50/50 itself. Women are under-represented in music, but there are several bands in Oxford which feature the kind of willed, talented female performers that would give a sense of focus and meaning to an event like Vagrock. They just don't want to be shoe-horned into the narrow specialist-interest slot of “women's” music.

*Emily Gray*

## MARTHA WAINWRIGHT

### Oxford Town Hall

To many Martha Wainwright is ‘that woman’ who featured on Snow Patrol's ‘Set The Fire To The Third Bar’, whilst others will undoubtedly link her to her prodigal family, which includes parents Loudon Wainwright III and Kate McGarrigle and brother Rufus. However, to assume either of these represent her vocal calibre would be a bit like comparing a Ford Fiesta to a Ferrari. Whilst both may be cars, just as Martha is a Wainwright, like the Ferrari, She has an added spark that rests in her multiplicity and sees her travel from folk-rock to cabaret-jazz over the span of her set. Equally, just as Martha refuses to be bound by her family ties, she breaks free of the limits of song, displaying her variety within each ensemble than rather between them, both in terms of style and lyrical content.

So her appearance at the Town Hall seems somewhat apt, the building itself being constrained by its own sense of history. Nevertheless Martha never appears unnerved by this, her presence filling the stage and her voice embraces the acoustics of the high roof, culminating in a celestial feel. While there's no doubt a venue can enhance an artist's sound, aptitude like Martha's transpires regardless of situational factors and there's little doubt that her abilities would radiate even in venues which dictate a much flatter sound.

Acoustics and history aside, Martha is unmistakably one of few individuals who excels in juxtaposing tradition and originality, fusing it together to create a style all of it's own. Few artists could sing a song entitled ‘Bloody Mother Fucking Arsehole’ whilst maintaining an angelic quality and even fewer could ensure both the 60 year old and 16 year old audience members were delighted at its appearance.

Martha may always be a Wainwright, but she's certified an identity all of her own; One which is formed by her relatives, enhanced by her variety and is much like a Ferrari, necessitating a class of her own.

*Lisa Ward*

## MEPHISTO GRANDE / SIX BULLET CHAMBER

### The Wheatsheaf

Young blood: there's enough of it on the Oxford music circuit. It's hard to walk into your local and not encounter the next great math-rock/tech-core/delete or hyphenate as appropriate band running through sound check. None of your scenester posing for tonight's headliners, local genre-defiant Mephisto Grande.

Openers Six Bullet Chamber pound a Clutch-esque Southern rock set into the mix – all the more impressive given that they're from Banbury. Diving breathlessly into Slipknot riffs, at their strongest they drench metal-core distortion with James Hetfield-style vocals.

A circle stomping ground forms for the headliners: tribal pseudo-sacred beats throbbing beneath Tom Waits vocals – who other than Mephisto Grande? The band play a set gloriously disassociated from an audience that writhes all the more for their indifference. Glowing scarlet backlights the band appropriately; from opener ‘John The Relevator’ into ‘Sea Life’, the setlist ascends from abstract cacophony – with added grit from lead singer Liam's extraordinary dragged-over-tarmac vocals – to magnificent Zappa clarinet squeals and guitar shrieks, all peppered with offbeat situationist poetry. Think riff-heavy Captain Beefheart. It's a challenging, intoxicating set, enveloping The Wheatsheaf in smoky experimental blues.

A decent gig claims your attention; a great gig walks off with your soul. Mephisto Grande

manage the former while surreptitiously arranging the latter: come to pose, leave aching from abstract headbanging and with a receipt from Mephistopheles himself. What more could you pray for?

*Liz Dodd*



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Fri 5<sup>th</sup> **The THIN LIZZY Experience** UK's best new tribute to Thin Lizzy. Unbelievable - £8, door 8

Wed 10<sup>th</sup> **The Hamsters** First of two nights - visit. Tonight is ZZ TOP & HENDRIX special - £12, door 8

Thu 11<sup>th</sup> **The Hamsters** Second night sees Slim and the boys play their brand of Blues/Rock - £12, door 8

Fri 12<sup>th</sup> **The Cadillacs** Dave Smith of the resident blues band plays two full sets of soulful classics - £2, door 8, 18+

Sat 13<sup>th</sup> **Green Onions** Great tribute to THE BLUES BROTHERS - £5, door 8

Wed 17<sup>th</sup> **Lil Fat Comedy Club** 2nd Comedy Club this month features Ray Peacock & guests - £7, door 7.30

Thu 18<sup>th</sup> **Apple Pirate Xmas Party** Master line-up, 6 bands!!! - £10, door 7, 14+ Over 18 after show

Fri 19<sup>th</sup> **WAM** WHEN ALCOHOL MATTERS Skiff Punk covers played at their best - £2, door 8

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> **Cheap Thrills** Cool rock cover band play classics by Foo Fighters & many more - £2, door 8

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### MISFIT MOD

With a name like Misfit Mod we were expecting yet another third-rate Jam tribute band in the vein of thrilling rock rioters The Rifles. We certainly weren't expecting anything as beguiling as this. Misfit Mod is the studio project of Sarah Kelleher, although any other information about the lady is hard to come by. Perhaps that's a good thing since we prefer to think of her as a strange ghost-like creature who haunts remote recording studios in the depths of winter nights, laying down her dark-hued electronic minimalism with the lights off and shortwave radio static intermittently invading the ethereal setting. This is music to both soothe you to sleep and haunt the corners of your dreams. Sarah's voice is pure and limpid and here she interweaves herself while also adding distant, disembodied voices to create an eerie, multi-layered musical spell, accentuated by the old Human League-style synth hums and lashings of reverb. It's the sort of thing you would expect to have stumbled across at the tail end of an old John Peel radio show back in the day, like Opal or Mazzy Star playing a gig to no-one in a haunted underground jazz bar. Y'know, cheery party music for wacky fun lovers the world over.

### DEAR CITY

Woohoo, more ethereal wooziness, this time from a singer called Camille Baziadoly, who for this demo is ably backed up by Phill Honey, once of The Rock Of Travolta and a regular demo of the month winner under his Boywithatoy guise. Here he provides suitably ghost-in-the-machine back-up – all shimmering guitars, theremin and glitchy electronic beats – to Camille's sleepy ghost croons and whispers. It's not quite as effective as Misfit Mod, since her voice tends to stay stuck in a semi-decipherable state of breathlessness throughout when perhaps it needs to soar once in a while. The mood remains gently doomladen, like the private musings of a doomed Bronte-esque heroine contemplating suicide on a bleak moor. Or perhaps a close cousin of obscure 80s etherealists AC Marias. It really is time to crack open the party poppers and dance til dawn.

### HOLLOW MOON

The great thing about the internet is you can check virtually anything you're told to see if it's true or not. But sometimes you just have to believe what someone says. And Hollow Moon tell us that the singer on their demo, Jake Fern, is trapped inside an iron lung, which accounts for his mighty voice. Well, without sounding callous, his loss is our gain, cos he has indeed got a lovely voice, a dreamily sonorous gothic crooner with a hushed intensity about him that sounds slightly over dramatic but fits well with the band's languorous acoustic strum and electronic hum, cello and smoky female backing vocals all adding to a clutter of sounds that come together as a dense, drifting fog. At they're best they sound murky but grand of deportment, filled with misty-eyed romanticism and, on 'Reichstag', echoes of Bauhaus' arty lyrical phraseology and haughty sneer. Cultured stuff, and we wouldn't mind seeing them on the same bill as Borderville sometime soon. Although we're not sure how you get an iron lung onstage. Maybe we should call Radiohead and ask them.

### NIGHT PORTRAITS

So anyway we stick the CD in the stereo and are greeted by an evil dissonant buzz. And it's only then we read Night Portraits' letter. "This CD doesn't work in a CD player". Well that's really fucking helpful isn't it? What next? A Toaster that won't take bread? Perhaps someone could arrange for all Kooks CDs to not work in CD players. Anyway, then it takes three goes to get the blessed thing to work in the computer and we're ready to give it a right old shoeing. But, hey, hey, what's this? Bit of raucous gothic punk rock action? We're changing our minds already. There are spidery guitar flecks and rabble-rousing, overly-dramatic vocals and even some big squelchy electronic intermissions and it all sounds a bit like a cross between The Stooges, New Model Army and Dead Kennedys, but really not like any of those in particular. More just like something violently ripped from the footnotes of the early-80s alternative rock underground. There's plenty of comic potential from some young scamp from Witney screaming "The otters of Beirut!" repeatedly, but the clenched-teeth sincerity of it all, added to the meaty metallic riffage, wins us over every time.

## TARGET NINE

"There ain't arf Been some clever bastards" sang Ian Dury once, but not every band has to try and be clever. Some work far better playing it a bit dumb. Take Target Nine for instance. Half the time they're trying to match the likes of Youthmovies in the wibbly, vaguely math-rock stakes with their nice flowery guitar undulations and keening, emotive vocals; the other half they're just bashing out a great big grunge racket, all powerchords and militancy. And you can just guess which makes them sound the best. Come on, just scrape off all those pretensions to musical intellect – they make you sound awkward like a year 9 fanzine writer trying to interview Thom Yorke – and give us the hard, fast stuff, the stuff that makes you sound like Biffy Clyro or Foo Fighters. It's not original by any stretch of the imagination but it works a treat here. Bish bash bosh. Job done. And the last track here, 'Say What You Want', sounds almost exactly like Reuben, which ain't such a bad thing. Are we going soft in our old age or what?

## THE FINS

No, we're not going soft. It only takes a sniff of bellicose old bollocks like this to get us gnawing at our cage bars again. Nominally The Fins are coming from exactly the same place as Target Nine but with none of the naivety or feeling of simple fun. Instead their overconfident, overbearingly sincere take on anthemic grunge simply grates, sounding like someone's tried to polish every ounce of character from Queens Of The Stone Age or Foo Fighters in a desperate attempt to get a major record deal or support slot on the next Funeral For A Friend tour. They're all mouth and trousers and no substance. And they look like a right bunch of tits in their photo, especially the bloke in the pink tie and fedora. "You think you're someone but you're something else" opines the singer in one chest-beating pearl of wisdom. Yeah, that's right. I'm a giraffe and him next to me is a stuffed crust pizza. And you must be the Dalai fucking Lama.

## GRUDLE BAY RIOTS

Grudle Bay Riots are a duo made up of Nathan Allsworth and Tom Hodges, who were previously in promising local post-rockers PYE. Despite the new band name they're now a far mellower prospect, aiming more towards the folk, jazz and soft house style of things. Mixing up acoustic guitars, shuffling electronic beats and snatches of cello or piano, they adopt a shifting sands dynamic, the trancy Mediterranean-feel folk doodle of the opening track, 'Using Lift Guilt Trip', backed up with busy cartoon alien plumbing noises, the whole thing

casually reaching a zen-like state despite its fanciful, flowery fluttering. From busy to languid on 'Return To Regensburg', with its stargazy disposition and ambient serenity, and we're entering the world of Mike Oldfield, with delicate, detailed attention to texture. Best of the lot, though is closer 'Cinema Coast', with just the merest hints of Oriental and African noises brushing up against the electronic shimmer, coming on like Jean Michel Jarre's concerts in China whimsies. Definitely better suited to come-down chill-out sessions than a live gig setting, Grudle Bay Riots manage that most difficult of tasks – making ambient music that stays interesting throughout.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### DIFFERENT REASONS

Different Reasons have addressed their envelope to 'Nightwank', but then, in a shocking display of cowardice, crossed that out and put 'Nightshift' instead, like we wouldn't notice. Or perhaps it's their idea of humour. Still, they're obviously bitter about something (possibly because we called them a constipated barbers shop quartet last time we reviewed them), because their letter says they have "diversified our sound which you will probably hate as it's not Rebecca Mosley, Ally Craig or Fell City Girl but yes there are other acts in the county!". The news of Fell City Girl's demise a year and a half ago obviously hasn't filtered through to Henley yet. But, yeah, our wall-to-wall overkill coverage of Rebecca Mosley and Ally Craig must be hard for all those other local bands to stomach. And probably comes as quite a surprise to Ms Mosley and Mr Craig, who must have had all of four reviews between them over the last year or so.

Anyway, there's more but you want to know about Different Reasons' music don't you? Yes you do, don't lie. Well, it starts promisingly, for all of the four seconds it takes their wobbly synth intro to descend into what sounds like a discarded first draft of the backing music for 'Do They Know It's Christmas?'. Thereafter it's a pretty turgid trawl though standard folk-pop anonymity, the sole highlight of which is a strange squeaky female backing vocal on 'Better Way', that sounds like someone pretending to do a cute voice for their pet hamster under the lead singer's karaoke Elvis impersonation. "We await your 'witticisms'" announce Different Reasons at the end of their letter. And we're tempted to sink to their level and just call them Different Wank. Except they're not. They're the same wank as they were last time.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email MySpace link to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto: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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