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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 151
February
2008

THE FAMILY MACHINE

They're breedin' crazy, them kids!



photo: Alex Rawlings

The X in closure shock - *news inside*

*plus reviews, previews and six pages
of local gigs.*

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NEWS

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move to have her declared bankrupt came out of a court session on Thursday 17th January with immediate effect. As such the X was forced to close down that day and will remain shut until such time as its owners, Punch, install a new manager. As leaseholder on the pub, All is no longer allowed to continue trading and will undoubtedly lose her lease as a consequence.

Since taking over the X in 2002 All has transformed a formerly run-down pub into one of the best small live music venues in Oxford, mainly hosting local band nights as well as touring blues, jazz and folk acts. Two years ago All funded a major refurbishment of the X to make it even more conducive to live music. While All has never disputed that she owed the PRS its due payments, she did dispute the amount they demanded, given the size of the venue and the fact the X steered clear of bands playing cover versions. The upshot is that Oxford has lost both a great little venue and a landlady who was dedicated to live music. Whether the X can re-open with live music in the future isn't, at present, known. Many of the club promoters at the venue, such as Swiss Concrete and Gammy Leg Productions have worked to move their scheduled gigs to other venues, which are listed in this month's gig guide. Swiss Concrete's gig on Friday 1st February, featuring Stornoway, Liddington and You & Me, has been moved to Thursday 31st January at the Bullingdon.

AS REPORTED LAST MONTH this year's Oxford Punt takes place on Wednesday 14th May. The Punt, now in its eleventh year, showcases the best unsigned talent in Oxfordshire. Last year's Punt featured sets from Stornoway, Mr Shadown and Smilex.

The Oxford Punt 2008 takes place across six venues in the city centre – Borders, the QI Club, the Wheatheaf, the Purple Turtle, Thirst Lodge and the Cellar. The event runs from 6pm through to midnight and will feature 20 local acts. Bands or solo artists wanting to play should send a demo (clearly marked The Punt) to Nightshift at PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email a MySpace link (again clearly marked Punt) to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. Please include a phone number.

Conditions for inclusion are that acts must be from Oxfordshire and be unsigned. And if you played last year you can't do it again this time.

YOUTHMOVIES release their new album, 'Good Nature', on 17th March on DrownedinSound Records. The album will be preceded by a single, 'The

THE X, in Cowley, has closed down after The Performing Rights Society (PRS) moved to have landlady All declared bankrupt in a court hearing. All had been in dispute with the PRS over payments due to for gigs held at the venue but had already paid the majority of the amount owed. The

Naughtiest Girl Is A Monitor' on 3rd March. 'Good Nature' features ten new tracks and is the band's first album-length release since 2004's 'Hurrah, Another Year...' mini-album on Fierce Panda. March is a busy month for local releases with Young Knives set to launch their new album, 'Superabundance', on March 10th while Foals' debut album, 'Antidotes', is out on the 17th. Foals' gig at the Academy on Saturday 15th March is now sold out.

AVID RECORDS has, finally, closed down, leaving Oxford without a single independent record shop. Avid's closure had been on the cards for over a year after the shop was hit by a huge rent hike but the Aladdin's Cave of great lost vinyl treasures will be sorely missed.

THIS YEAR'S CORNBURY Festival takes place over the weekend of the 5th and 6th of July at Cornbury Country Park, near Charlbury. Last year's event featured sets from Blondie, David Gray and Echo & The Bunnymen. Tickets are yet to go on sale for



EELS return to Oxford for the first time in seven years when they play at the New Theatre on Sunday 23rd March. The band are touring in the UK to promote a new Best Of Compilation, 'Meet The Eels' as well as a rarities compilation, 'Useless Trinkets'. Tickets for the show, priced £20, are on sale now from Ticketmaster on 0844 847 1505. Tickets are also on sale now for Chris Rea on Sunday 30th March and James on Saturday 19th April. Sugababes and Van Morrison's shows at the New Theatre are now sold out.

Also sold out well in advance is Duffy's show at the Academy on Sunday 9th March and Foals gig on Saturday 15th.

this year's event but updated news can be found at www.cornburyfestival.com

SUPERGRASS are the subject of a new book by local photographer Greg Allum. 'The Night Shines Like Fireflies' is a 100-page long photographic document of the band's recording sessions for their sixth album at Hansa Studios in Berlin last year. The book is limited to 2,000 copies and is available to buy online from www.gregallum.co.uk.



DECIBEL STUDIOS are offering two free hours rehearsal time to local bands who visit their website this month. The offer is open to any band who haven't previously rehearsed at the studio. Visit www.decibelstudios.org and complete the relevant form. Any questions or enquiries, call David on 01460 221 541.

COMUS, the early-70s prog-rock band fronted by current Colins Of Paradise singer Bobbie Watson, have reformed for a festival in Stockholm, alongside modern day prog champions Opeth. Banbury

experimental jazzers Colins Of Paradise also join the bill. To hear old Comus songs, visit www.myspace.com/comusofficial.

POLICE are appealing for witnesses after a large amount of musical equipment worth more than £5,000 was stolen in a burglary in Warwick Street, Oxford sometime between 23rd December and 7th January. Three electric guitars (two Gibsons and a Tokia), a Moog keyboard, a drum machine, a saxophone, guitar foot pedals, a Roksan amplifier and a Linn turntable were stolen as well as a laptop and some jewellery.

PC Craig Burchall of Oxford Burglary Team said: "As well as appealing to anyone who saw something suspicious, I'd like to hear from anyone who may have been offered any expensive or specialist musical equipment for sale." PC Burchall can be contacted via the Police Enquiry Centre on 0845 8 505 505. If you don't want to talk to the police and don't want to leave your name, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into the Download every Saturday night between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The weekly local music show, presented by Tim Bearder and Dave Frillycat, features the best new Oxford releases, interviews and demos. You can listen to the show all week online at bbc.co.uk/oxford

A Quiet Word With

The Family Machine

WE GUESS WE'RE AS GUILTY

as anyone of taking The Family Machine for granted.

The band have been around on the local scene long enough now, sticking out the odd single here and there on various labels, while curating their own monthly club night – The Beard Museum – for them to almost have become part of the furniture. If the local scene were an extended family, The Family Machine might be a kindly uncle, or perhaps a large, cuddly pet dog: someone everyone likes but who never takes centre stage like the screaming child or the raging matriarch.

Well, let us now put things right. Because next month The Family Machine release their debut album, 'You Are The Family Machine', on the extremely cool Big Scary Monsters label. And you know what? It's a little belter.

'YOU ARE THE FAMILY

Machine' follows on from a string of singles that have cemented the band's reputation for wry gallows humour and a sweetly lachrymose style of guitar pop that takes in country, folk and even the odd moment of electro-pop. Chief among these wee gems is 'Flowers By The Roadside', a paean to the floral arrangements marking fatal road accidents around the county. 'Got It Made', The Family Machine's most recent single, meanwhile, was a more musically ambitious outing, a song in three parts that takes in film *noir* soundtracking, surf pop and casual psychedelia. In fact listening to 'You Are The Family Machine' from start to finish feels like a journey through a movie, from its chirpy, cheesy college rock opening, 'Ko Tao' through to its melancholy, ambient instrumental coda.

THE FAMILY MACHINE CAME

together in the wake of the break up of local indie favourites Medal, who came close to breaking into the big time after being taken under the wing of Courtyard Management (responsible for Radiohead and Supergrass), signing to Polydor and touring the States. Medal frontman Jamie Hyatt teamed up with bassist and pianist Darren Feller, guitarist Neil Durbridge and drummer Jay Stilwell. Apparently behind the wheelie bins behind Tesco's on Cowley Road. Neil had previously



played in late-90s Nightshift favourites Papersun, while Jay was in rock-rap act Shoktopus. Along the way to the release of this debut album the band have appeared at the Oxford Punt, Cornbury and Truck festivals, run their own stage at the annual Charlbury Festival and played with the likes of Young Knives, Midlake and Glenn Tilbrook.

Now the band prepare to step up a gear, re-releasing 'Flowers By The Roadside' as a single and filming a video for the song on the Oxford ring road, dressed as ghosts joined by a supporting cast of local bands and music fans.

NIGHTSHIFT MET UP WITH

Jamie, Darren, Neil and Jay and asked, first, whether they themselves feel as if they're taken for granted or overlooked in Oxford.

JAMIE: "I don't feel Family Machine has been overlooked; there's loads of stuff going on in Oxford. I'm not sure we're the coolest band in town and we don't have the skinniest of jeans, but people seem to like what we do. Our album is called 'You Are The Family Machine', and we like to think of the audience as our extended family, and when people sing along to our songs at gigs it kind of feels like we're all out together to have a night out, it doesn't matter who's the band and who's the audience; we all own it. The album is an extension of all that. I'm not sure it will change the way people perceive us but I think people will like it."

NEIL: "It's difficult to compare yourself to other acts in terms of

publicity because everyone has different priorities. There's always things to do in a band these days, and we've kept ourselves busy doing videos, artwork etc – all the other creative bits and pieces – while the album was being produced. Now it's time for the big push."

JAY: "We have always felt appreciated by people in and around music in Oxford. I hope the album reinforces some aspects of how we're perceived: the bits about people meeting to enjoy songs and time together."

The band has been together for a few years now; how do you feel the music and the way the band works has changed in that time and what has finally brought the full album together?

JAMIE: "Over a few years we've recorded and written in the same way. I'd write a song, bring it to the band and they'd take it somewhere I didn't imagine, or it would sound exactly as I'd imagined which is amazing when that happens. All the lads are good players, grasping what I mean with very little effort. Also I suppose the original idea of the band was to write really simple songs that make you want to sing along. I always wanted to make an album that was packed full of songs; no fillers, just good songs. It sounds a bit wanky but we've always believed that the song is the star! No one's ego is more important than the song."

DARREN: "Not a lot has changed in the dynamic of how we do things together, we just get along, make things easy and things come together

quite naturally. The album has been a part of the Machine for quite some time. It's like a lost animal we've found, fed and nurtured; now that it's fully grown we're going to release it back into the wild world where it belongs."

JAMIE'S FORMATIVE YEARS

were spent in The Daisies and then Medal, who were big local favourites. What are his memories of that time, and what lessons did he learn regarding his experiences with the music industry?

JAMIE: "When I look back on what we did, where we went and what we saw, I'm so proud. It was a great time, and to do it all with a bunch of mates was brilliant. Touring America and playing Glastonbury, stuff like that was great. Working hard at something that most people thought was a waste of time and not a real job then finally getting a record deal, it's the stuff of dreams. When people ask what it was like I say it was the best job I ever had."

"It would be too easy for me to be cynical about the music industry and it would be easy to be bitter about being just another product, but I believe we made some good albums and had a lot of fun."

"I suppose if I've learnt anything from the whole experience it's that it's all about the music; that's the stuff that lasts."

"Family Machine have always had a very DIY attitude. We've got on with things and recorded our album without the help of a major record company and we're very involved with the way our music gets to the audience as a whole. We recently released our EP, 'Got It Made', by helium balloons and hid copies in town as part of a treasure hunt. It's all about having fun, enjoying and being involved with all parts of the process of making and releasing music. Our involvement with Beard Museum made me understand that music and songs are all about interaction with the audience and a shared ownership of moments and feelings."

'YOU ARE THE FAMILY

Machine' is released next month on Alcopop Records, part of Big Scary Monsters, a label that has strong connections with the Oxford music scene having released EPs by Richard Walters and This Town Needs Guns. JAMIE: "Last year we were asked to put a song ('Kao Tao') on an EP

released by Alcopop who are like Big Scary Monsters' little brother. I suppose after that we got chatting about our album and all decided it would be nice to do that as well. I've known Jack and Kev from the label for a while and they have loads of energy and just a passion for all kinds of music; they're the sort of people who just get on with things despite being a small label with limited resources. It's refreshing and kind of where we're at as well."

In your time you must have seen the best and worst of the Oxford music scene.

JAMIE: "I suppose the best things about the Oxford music scene would be the quality of bands and the variety of styles. Oxford just seems to keep producing some great stuff. If I we're to really nit pick and look for negatives, I'd say the worst thing in Oxford is some venues don't try hard enough to put on a good night. We're in a good place at the moment, people want to watch live music, there's no shortage of good bands but sometimes I get the feeling it's a bit too easy for some promoters to just book some bands and then kind of not bother trying to make it a night out."

"YOU ARE THE FAMILY

Machine' has a feel of a film score at times: there are shifts of mood as it

progresses, and some shorter almost incidental pieces; 'Got It Made' has definite spy film potential; it also seems to end on a bit of a low (mood-wise) with the pastoral instrumental. If it were a film soundtrack, does it have a happy ending and who would be the main stars involved?

JAMIE: "It's strange you say that. We originally wanted all the songs to run in to each other so it would move through different moods and flow as a whole piece. As we recorded the album I think we moved away from that a little, but we we're always trying to take the listener through a story. 'Got It Made' has three parts and they all sort of wrote themselves in the way that each preceding song almost asked for another chapter to be written to follow. That happens a few times on the album; it's a nice way of writing. The songs sometimes tell you what should happen next.

"We we're really lucky to record with [producer] Ian Davenport. I've known him years and worked on stuff with both The Daisies and Medal. Because of that it was easy to talk to about ideas and ways of doing things: no fear, just enjoying the process. He has become part of the band in many ways.

I'm not sure what kind of film the album would be. Probably some kind

of road movie or one of those films where the main star goes on a voyage of discovery: the sort of film that makes you cry but in a good way."

DARREN: "It does have a happy ending, yes. The song implies downfall, having it made then losing your mind and falling into a pit, but the low key end is a friend taking time to tell you it's alright. The character in my mind starts out as Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, deteriorating into Dustin Hoffman in a Ricco vain. But then, with some helpful words from Morgan Freeman, would be transformed."

'Flowers By The Roadside' and 'Lethal Drugs Cocktail' have been around for a while now and seem to be most people's favourites: both seem to have an underlying gallows humour about their subject matter.

JAMIE: "Flowers By The Roadside has been around for a while but is still one of my favourites. I love playing in towns outside Oxford and explaining the idea to the audience. I like the debate that it creates. It's no big deal, it's simply the whole idea of roadside tributes. It occurred to me that if I were involved in some kind of traffic accident and perhaps died in my car, wrapped round a tree somewhere in some ditch, I'm not sure I'd want flowers left there. It's not the place I loved, it's just the

place I died. It's just fun to think about these things. 'Lethal Drugs Cocktail' is a love song in the style of a country waltz; it's not about us being Pete Doherty."

NEIL: "I think they are both songs you can walk away and remember after one listen - they were my favourites from before I joined too; probably for that reason! And because we all share a similar sense of humour. They are also the two songs that have offended the most people!"

If The Family Machine were all to be wiped out in a horrific road crash, how would you like to be remembered?

JAMIE: "Secretly with loads of flowers but I can't say that now. No, just have a big party get drunk. Lie about how funny, lovely, and wonderfully gifted we were and then, in time, forget about us."

'You Are The Family Machine' is released on Alcopop Records on the 17th March. The Family Machine play The Portcullis Club in Wallingford on Saturday 16th February as part of the Truck Records Social, and at the Cellar on Thursday 21st February. Visit www.myspace.com/thefamilymachine to hear tracks from the album.



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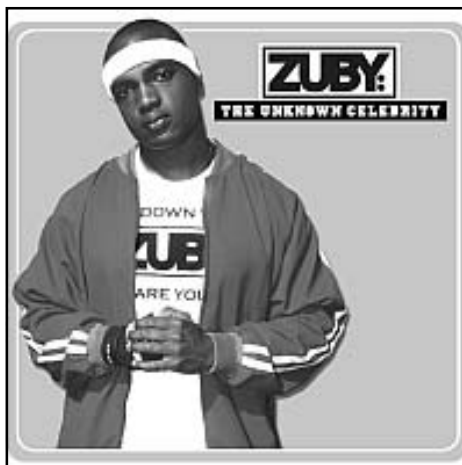
ZUBY

'The Unknown Celebrity'

(C.O.M)

Having divided his time over the past couple of years between graduating from Oxford University and earning his hip hop credentials busking on the streets of Oxford and London, Zuby finds himself in a strange but potentially exciting place. He shifted over 3,000 copies of his debut album, 'Commercial Underground', mostly at gigs and on the street, and now has to take his rapping to the next level. With his feet in the DIY underground and his eyes on big time success, he does well here to impress on both fronts.

Zuby's ambitions are obvious – check out the Dr Dre-style production on 'The Unknown Celebrity', all synth strings and bass, full blooded but slick and unobtrusive back-up, while his rap style is inspired by big-name US rappers like Nas and Jay-Z. As such, he can fall



into mainstream rap pitfalls occasionally, whether it's indulging in too much autobiographical storytelling, or simply rhyming about chatting up girls in clubs, when really he's strongest making more considered socio-political points, as on the excellent 'Can't

See Me'. That shouldn't distract from his very obvious vocal talents – he's incredibly assured, his flow is smooth and fluid with enough variety to keep you interested over 40 minutes, and on the album's stand-out track, 'Inside Out', he trades rhymes with guest rapper Hollaman like a veteran performer. Other highlights are the suave, orchestral 'Somebody's Gotta', which could fit snugly on a recent Jay-Z album, and 'Start All Over', featuring Webbfied, carried over from 'Commercial Underground', but well worth another listen.

Zuby is obviously aware of the obstacles he faces as an Oxford-based University graduate in the world of rap – experiences he touches on on a couple of numbers – not least his Anglo-American accent, although that's explained by his upbringing: educated in an American school in Saudi Arabia. Overcoming such inverse snobbery is a task all itself but if Zuby can bypass those doubters, he's got everything he needs to steal the prize he has his eye fixed on.

Victoria Waterfield

JALI FILY CISSOKHO

'Doumajoulo'

(Kaira Arts)

This is Senegalese traditional music from Witney. Jali Fily Cissokho is from Casamance in the south, but has been living in the west Oxfordshire town for some years now. A griot, a praise singer and oral historian from a long family line of griots, he accompanies himself on a traditional instrument, the kora, the long-necked 22-string African harp.

Apparently not content with his solo sound Jali Fily has now made a CD where he is supported on most tracks by the Coute Diombou Band, who are mainly other Senegalese he plays with when he returns to Casamance. No doubt, then, that this is an authentic sound, particularly as it was partially recorded in Studio Ziguinchor, Senegal.

Though every track is a song, unless your Waloff and Mandinka are up to the mark it is an instrumental CD, though you do get good sleeve notes that explain what the songs are about. I'm particularly tickled to learn one

song is in praise of "the ancient sport of wrestling", while another is about a tailor, an important craftsman in Senegal. There are several tracks in which Jali is praising specific individuals in his hometown, which is exactly what a griot has to do in order to earn his daily bread. 'Doumajoulo' means something like wake up and dance, and the idea of the band is to have a CD more upbeat and dancey than kora music might usually seem. But the best tracks here are ones where Jali is still playing solo. Some of the tracks with the band are too busy and unfocussed; the best of these is 'Apollo', the one about the tailor, but even here the band is fairly low key. There is fun to be had, though, hearing echoes of Congolese rumba and soukous on song in praise of 'Demba Walimagan', and Spanish music on the praise song for 'Seregn Job'. But it is only when you get out of your chair and start to dance round the room that you really get the point.

Colin May

THE RESPONSE COLLECTIVE

'The Documentary'

(Own Label)

Oxford is awash with instrumental bands at the moment, but while the majority tend towards the math- or post-rock end of things, The Response Collective are a different proposition; a three-piece featuring guitar, bass and keyboards as well as a turntablist going under the improbable moniker of Fireproof Skratch Duck.

'The Documentary' clocks in just under the hour mark, with the mood remaining the lively side of chilled for the most part. There's an intricate but rarely indulgent interplay between the instruments, the bass throbbing and bobbing gently under timidly funky guitar lines that spiral into darker hollows that could almost be The Cure at times. Just as you've got The Response Collective pinned down as ambient lounge goths, though, they'll saunter into old skool hip hop, with the eerie somnambulism of 'Rock This World' recalling Eric B and Rakim's 'Follow The Leader' or Ice T's 'Colours' as much as 'Charlotte Sometimes'.

Swirling, psychedelic keys and excursions into fanciful guitar noodling take the band out on a different trip somewhere between The Orb and Sky, while elsewhere a wandering, stoned jazz ambience takes over. There's more variety in the form of the album's highlight, 'Part Something Part Nothing', wherein Mike Oldfield gets a bit of an electro-grunge workover, although by the time they reach 'Losing In Stereo', via some classical rock-cum-dub interlude, they seem to have morphed into Pink Floyd circa 'The Wall'.

Too rock and roll to play Bossaphonik, but too tripped-out and dreamy for most rock-inclined club nights, theirs is a pleasingly soporific journey that retains its mood throughout while taking just enough excursions to keep you entranced. Maybe we should skip the whole live thing, just stoke up a giant bong and let The Response Collective take us wherever they damn well please.

Sue Foreman

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BULLINGDON COMEDY CLUB

GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st

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Saturday 2nd

THE PAN I AM / BOBBY COOK & THE SLEEPERS: The Cellar

Amongst the acts that made up the short-lived, so-called Thamesbeat scene were Larrikin Love, an oddball ska-inflected bunch of urchins who always seemed to have plenty more to say about the state of things than their Libertines-enthralled brethren. Anyway, they split, unexpectedly, last May but frontman Ed Larrikin already had a new band planned and now it's come to fruition – The Pan I Am, named after Pan in Greek mythology (a country Ed is relocating to, further affirming his Morrissey-like distaste for modern day Britain). Literary-minded, referencing Shakespeare and Rimbaud, the new band is fanciful and with an eye for theatre. They have played a mere three gigs to date, including a debut at the Lyric Theatre, replete with poetry readings and films from Lithuanian director Jonas Mekas. Musical soulmate Patrick Wolf has contributed to The Pan I Am's debut album, as have Babyshambles' Drew McConnell and Guillemots' Fife Dangerfield, and things look good for their 2008 prospects. Fellow Londoner Bobby Cook returns to town in support, bringing his suave, orchestral brand of pop with him, mixing up influences as diverse as Ryuan Adams and Sigur Ros. Local indie-ska hopefuls Tristan & The Troubadours complete the bill.

FEBRUARY

crew with local grungey garage rockers Not Too Shabby headlining. Sweet-natured alt.pop locals Agents of Jane and fundamentalist Islamic rockers Taliband support.

SHIRLEY + BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Bullingdon – Launching a new live music night at the Bully, Moshka, with cheery 60s-styled rock and rollers Shirley joining eclectic jazz-rap-gospel-blues stars Brickwork Lizards.

THE COURTEENERS: The Academy – Christ, what a way to start the month. It's almost worth forgetting all about Valentine's Day and a rare chance to see Nouvelle Vague if it means Oxford doesn't have to endure a visit from the single most abhorrent wart on the face of popular music currently in existence.

Courteeners make Pigeon Detectives sound like a wild-eyed cross between The Velvet Underground, Elvis and James Brown. Yes, *that* good. Tuck in kids, The Man says so.

REPUBLICA: The Academy – Trance and hard house club night with special guest DJ sets from Lisa Lashes and Andy Whitby.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon MARIA ILETT + PEANUT ALBINOS + UTE: The Jericho Tavern – Honey-voiced electro-jazz and trip pop songstress Maria gives her sweetly lo-fi pop wobbliness a welcome live airing.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon DUGOUT: The Cellar – Soul, rare groove and funk featuring a three-desk set from Para and Baila, plus Tom Unia, Funky Ollie and Lando.

LIGHTBOX + TINY TIGERS + SLEEPERCURVE: The Purple Turtle – Free unsigned bands night.

SHAKE: The Academy

SATURDAY 2nd

NINE BLACK ALPS: The Academy – Manchester's Nirvana acolytes celebrate the release of their new album, 'Love / Hate', introducing a little bit of Teenage Fanclub and Lemonheads-flavoured pop into their grunge sound.

THE PAN I AM + BOBBY COOK & THE SLEEPERS + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS: The Cellar – Former-Larrikin Love frontman Ed returns with his new band – *see main preview*

SHIRLEY: The Wheatsheaf – Good-time sunshine rock and roll.

MELTING POT with STRAIGHTJACKET + OK TOKYO + VIB GYOR + THE SIRENS CALL: The Jericho Tavern – Mixed bill of rock from Melting Pot. Local headliners Straightjacket give it some 60-styled blues rocking, while Reading's OK Tokyo go for a more electro-indie noise sound. There's some

dreamy guitar pop from Country Tyrone's Pocket Promise, but best of the lot are Leeds' sultry Editors-inspired Vib Gyor.

SIKORSKI + CLANKY ROBO GOBJOBS: The Purple Turtle – Squelchy electro rocking from Banbury's Sikorski, with daftly brilliant digital hardcore mayhem from CRGJ.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: Fat Lil's, Witney – Party-friendly festival funk, swampy hoe-down rock and psychedelic witchiness.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy – The Academy's weekly three-clubs-in-one session with indie hits at Transformation, trashy-pop, 80s and glam at Trashy and heavy rock at Room 101.

SUNDAY 3rd

LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION + THE SEMI-FINALISTS: The Academy – 2007's most unlikely musical reinvention was that of former-Test Icicles guitarist Devonte Hynes into existential indie-folk troubadour Lightspeed Champion. To this end he's been aided by the likes of Emmy the Great and Nate Walcott and his debut album, 'Falling Off The Lavender Bridge', is a sweet, plaintive confessional on lost love and daydreaming that's several parsecs from his previous electro-noise jumble.

MONDAY 4th

KHALIF WAILIN WALTER BAND: The Bullingdon – Rocking electric blues and boogie from Chicago singer and guitarist Kalif Walter, inspired by Otis Rush and Alberts Collins and King and currently a regular on the European festival circuit.

I WAS A CUB SCOUT + ROLO TOMASSI: The Academy – Lo-fi synth-punk-emo-disco from Nottingham two-piece I Was A Cub Scout, previously tour support to Babyshambles. Sublime support from Sunderland's incredible Rolo Tomassi: venom-spitting teen math-core demons beyond compare. Love them; fear them.

JOHNNY FLYNN & THE SUSSEX WIT: The Jericho Tavern – Literary, rootsy pop in the vein of Two Gallants, Bonnie Prince Billie and Nick Drake from the London thespian-turned-pop singer and recent tour support to Jack Penate and Iron & Wine.

THE BATTLEFIELD BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – Scotland's premier proponents of trad Celtic folk return.

TUESDAY 5th

RICHARD HAWLEY: The New Theatre – Re-arranged gig for the Sheffield bard – *see main preview*

AIRBOURNE: The Academy – Melbourne's classic rock and rollers hit the UK after supporting Motley Crue and The Rolling



Stones and telling you everything you need to know about their no-frills brand of power rock with album titles 'Ready To Rock' and 'Runnin' Wild'.

THINGUMA*JIGSAW + SHARRON

KRAUS + PANTALEIMON: East Oxford Community Centre – A night of dark-natured folk from local singer and recent Nightshift cover star Sharron Kraus, with Norwegian avant-folk troupe Thinguma*jigsaw bringing their horror movie-inspired splatter-folk spookiness to town, alongside London's psychedelic folk minimalist Pantaleimon who has played with Antony & The Johnsons and Bonnie 'Prince' Billie among others.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly jazz club with regular guests The Howard Peacock Quintet.

Tuesday 5th

RICHARD HAWLEY:

The New Theatre

Re-arranged from last September; it's heartening, if a little surprising, that Richard Hawley is headlining a venue of this size. The man's rise and rise has been slow and steady, his reputation built on a succession of gently wonderful albums, but you always feel he's been more of a critics' favourite than a commercial success. Well, it's good news anyway, because he more than deserves it. Not that you'd have imagined back in the late-90s that the pissed-up guitarist from The Longpigs would become a Radio 2 favourite and Mercury Prize nominee. It's Hawley's odd juxtaposition of earthy humour and low-life tales on the one hand and his gorgeous Bobby Darin-like croon and warm, dreamy romanticism on the other that makes his songs special. Each of his albums, 'Lowledges', 'Coles Corner' and last year's 'Lady's Bridge', are named after his hometown Sheffield landmarks, but the downbeat lovelorn nature of his laments is universal. So much so that everyone from Radiohead and Coldplay to Nancy Sinatra and REM are declared fans, while he's played guitar for All Saints and Gwen Stefani. It was Jarvis Cocker who first recognised Hawley's talent (he played on Pulp's 'This Is Hardcore') and the intelligent, romantic documentation of life is shared by both. Good to see that Hawley is now a star in his own right.



WEDNESDAY 6th

THE ROCKET SUMMER: The Academy – Uplifting emo-tinged punk-pop from Texan one-man band Bryce Avary, out on tour in support of his third album, 'Do You Feel', his first for Def Jam, having spent most of 2007 on the Vans Warped Tour and supporting The Academy Is... and Armour For Sleep.

LATE OF THE PIER: The Academy – Well cool retro-futurist synth-pop outta Nottinghamshire, in the vein of Gary Numan and Fad Gadget, as well as The Faint. Good work.

PAUL POTTS: The New Theatre – The recent *Britain's Got Talent* winner brings operatic arias to the unwashed masses, with support from German diva Adele Fitler.

VICKY STUART + HANNA HAINS: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

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

THURSDAY 7th

BLACK FRANCIS: Brookes University Union – The Pixies legend goes back to his old name – *see main preview*

ART BRUT: The Academy – Return of the arch New Cross art-rockers, having been away from these shores apparently gaining a cult following in Europe and the States. Eddie Argos continues his sneery commentary on the music industry on new album 'It's All A Bit Complicated'.

XMAS LIGHTS + 50ft PANDA + DR SLAGGLEBERRY: The Cellar – Vicious-natured industrial-strength math-core from the local metal favourites, playing their last gig until the Autumn. Support from ace riffmeisters 50ft Panda and post-hardcore troupe Dr Slaggleberry.

INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS: The Jericho Tavern – Ace shoegazey indie rocking inspired by Ride, Wedding Present and Spacemen 3.

PORT MAYHEM: The Port Mahon

CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy – Electro, indie and garage club night every week.

FRIDAY 8th

LAURA VIERS: The Academy – Nature-obsessed Seattle songstress airs songs from her new album, 'Saltmakers', the follow-up to 2005's excellent 'Year Of Meteors', breathing fresh life into the folk singer-songwriter genre with a sparse, electric style.

GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with LITTLE FISH + LUKE SMITH & THE FEELINGS + GLENDA HUISH: The Wheatsheaf – Oxford's most exciting new band, Little Fish, headline the reliably eclectic GLP club night, hopefully set to make the break into the big time after two astonishing support slots to Supergrass at the end of last year, conjuring up a raw, accomplished mix of garage rock, folk and glam that touches on the magic of Patti Smith, Sinéad O'Connor and PJ Harvey. Support from singer and pianist Luke Smith, plus former-Phyl singer Glenda Huish.



Thursday 7th

BLACK FRANCIS:
Brookes Union

What can we say about the man that hasn't been writ large in huge neon letters a million times before? The man who fronted The Pixies, and therefore the man responsible for three or four of the greatest rock and roll albums ever. No contest. No Pixies? No Nirvana or Radiohead. No rock music as we now know it. It's that simple. It's been a good few years since Frank Black last graced an Oxford stage, with his then band The Catholics, and that gig was somewhat overlong and indulgent, tending towards comfortable MOR, but that was before he reformed The Pixies and changed his name back to Black Francis – something of a dark nemesis to the more amiable Frank – and now he has a new band together, who will be playing together in front of an audience for the first time as a warm-up show. Whatever has happened to him since those groundbreaking days in the late-80s, and despite developing a more measured and melodic singing style, Black still produces one of the greatest lupine howls in rock music and lyrically he's still out there, living in a land of aliens, space travel and strange suburbia. Hopefully there'll be a handful of classic oldies in the set, given the Pixies reunion and last year's 'Best Of Frank Black' compilation, plus plenty of new songs from last year's 'Bluefinger' and upcoming 'Svn Fngrs' albums.



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Sunday 10th

DROPKICK MURPHYS

Friday 29th

THE TOSSERS: The Academy

Those of us who fondly remember drunken nights getting battered half senseless in the company of The Pogues and The Men They Can't Hang back in the 80s can look forward to something similar from the visits to town this month from two of The States' most prominent Celtic punk bands. First up, on the 10th, are Boston's Irish-American folk-punk crew The Dropkick Murphys. Steeped in the traditions of working class protest songs, theirs are stories of mining disasters and industrial action, all played out to a death or glory soundtrack of raging guitars and soul-stirring bagpipes. Like The Pogues and TMTC before them, traditional Celtic-tinged folk and soul gets pummelled through The Clash's rabble-raising garage punk and their live shows are near-legendary celebrations of their Irish roots and life in general. The band's sixth album, 'The Meanest Of Times' has just been released.

On the 29th, meanwhile, Chicago's finest Irish folk-punks The Tossers relive the glory days of Shane McGowan and chums. In the case of both bands it's ultimate good-time music in hobnailed boots, and if you can't party hard with these fellas, you probably died sometime back in the last century.

GABRIELLE: The New Theatre – The enduring soul-pop star promotes her recent 'Always' album, following on from her early number 1 singles, 'Dreams' and 'Rise'.

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon OUTRAZE + TALK IN CODE + THE PHILIP MORRISSEY BAND + BRANDWOOD PROJECT: The Jericho Tavern – Local bands night with headline set from Banbury's promising Outraze, mixing swaggering Oasis-style melody with darker garage and drone-rock noise.

LEAVING DECEMBER + THE GULLIVERS: The Purple Turtle
THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + TOMMO: The Magdalen Arms
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz and funk with Yabbafunk.
GRIN CITY: The Chester Arms
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon SHAKE: The Academy – Weekly club night with Skylarkin chaps playing funk, soul, rock'n'roll, jazz and disco.

SATURDAY 9th

ENON + ILL EASE: The Cellar – Theatrical, wayward noise-pop from Philadelphia / New York trio Enon, making their Oxford debut at tonight's Vacuous Pop gig, fronted by former-Brainiac chap John Schmursal and signed to Touch and Go for whom they've just released their first album in four years, 'Grass, Geysers... Carbon Clouds'. Fellow New Yorker Elizabeth Sharp, aka Ill Ease, returns in support, an ever-inventive blend of guitar loops, samples and dervish-like drumming.
JUNE + OCEANOGRAPHERS: The Wheatsheaf – Indie rocking from June.
MONKEY PUZZLE: The Port Mahon – Grunge guitar pop.
DR SLAGGLEBERYY + JET PACK: The Purple Turtle – Funked-up math-rocking.
TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy
HANGMAN'S JOE: The Port Mahon
ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar – Electro and new wave club night with live bands.

SUNDAY 10th

DROPKICK MURPHYS: The Academy – Hoed-down-tastic folk-punk fun from Massachusetts' Celtic rockers – *see main preview*
ROBOTS IN DISGUISE: The Academy – This month's most unlikely return to action – kitsch electro-disco duo Dee Plume and Sue Denim celebrate the release of new album, 'We're In The Music Biz', after seemingly disappearing from view about eight years ago.
ROYWORLD: The Jericho Tavern – London-based pop hopefuls blurring the great/rubbish line – *see main preview*
ALISON MOYET: The New Theatre – The Yazoo electro-pop starlet-turned-soul diva returns to town in support of her new, eponymous album, mixing up classic Motown sounds with modern soul and show tune epicness.
OFF-FIELD ALL-DAYER: The Port Mahon – Experimental noise from ambient doomsters Frogspawn, guitar noise abrasiveness from Elapse-O, plus leftfield folk-pop from Cogwheel Dogs amongst others.
FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL + INSTRUMENTS: The Purple Turtle – Vibrant piano-led post-hardcore instrumental rocking from FASFH.

MONDAY 11th

POLYSICS: The Academy – Japanese sci-fi electro-metal rockers return.

THE ROGUE DOLLS: The Bullingdon – Blues, jazz, 60s rock and funk from the all-female collective fronted by Bully jazz club regular Katya Gorrie, drawing on the likes of Dusty Springfield, Bessie Smith and Hendrix for inspiration.

JACQUI MCSHEE & JOHN RENBOURN: Nettlebed Folk Club – Two of Pentangle's original cast play a low-key gig ahead of their old band's reformation show at the Royal Albert Hall.

TUESDAY 12th

CHARLOTTEFIELD + ACTION BEAT: The Wheatsheaf – Double bill of leftfield post-hardcore noise – *see main preview*

GLASVEGAS: The Jericho Tavern – Fast-rising Glaswegian Spector-pop revivalists hit town – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With special guests Tevor Watts and Peter Knight from Steeleye Span.

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth and industrial club night.

Sunday 10th

ROYWORLD: The Jericho Tavern

This lot could go either way. A quartet of beardy types from London, Royworld (whose band name sounds like some long lost Nintendo game from the 80s) have a piano and have been working with Keane's producer Andy Green. They are also prone, on tracks like 'Tinman', to come on a bit Supertramp, or worse, a bit The Feeling. Which makes us slightly nauseous. But then there's recent debut single 'Elasticity', released on the rather cool Fandango label, which is a deadringer for Roxy Music's classic 'Virginia Plain', only if it had been performed by Sparks. And there's the rub: solemn Radio 2-friendly, stadium-bound, lighters-aloft cheese pop, or quirk-filled, operatically bombastic, er, cheese pop? They're both at the same time and it does our bleedin' 'eads in. Because in so many ways they deserve to be filling those big arenas, but chances are they'll have to drop all the mad stuff we like best about them to get there. Did we mention they also occasionally remind us of Ultravox, Fleetwood Mac and Talking Heads? Rarely have the lines between brilliant and blimmin' awful been so comprehensively blurred. Go along, make up your own minds.



WEDNESDAY 13th

LAST GANG: The Jericho Tavern – Melodic indie rock bounce in the vein of The Clash and The Jam from the Wakefield newcomers.

JESSE GRACE + MANUEL DEL COSTA:

The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon

GREEN: The Cellar – Hip hop club night.

THURSDAY 14th

MXPX + PUNCHLINE + THE GET GO: The Academy – Good To Go tour with headline set from Washington State's pop-friendly Christian skate-punks MXPX, set to release their seventh album, 'Secret Weapon', after ten years on the road. Support comes from UK punkers Punchline and hardcore supergroup The Get Go.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With special guest Steve Ro playing with the Spin house band.

CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar

LINDA'S NEPHEW + THE LOCAL FEW +

THE GULLIVERS: The Port Mahon

FRIDAY 15th

THE MAD PROFESSOR DUB SHOW: The Academy – Dub and trip hop legend Mad Professor, aka Neil Fraser, opens his box of records and twists them this way and that in pursuit of the ultimate dub trip.

CHANTELLE PIKE: The Wheatsheaf – Soulful, showtune folk-pop from the local songstress.

JIM REECE: The Bullingdon

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

A GHOST DEVOTION + KESHCO + ACACIA + BEN CONSTANDUROS: The Jericho Tavern – Unsigned bands showcase with London's scratchy lo-fi indie-punks A Ghost Devotion headlining.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House, breaks and techno with Alex Smoke from Hum & Haw.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

SATURDAY 16th

PARADISE ISLAND + TWAT TROT TRA LA + PREFONTAINE + SAD SHIELDS: The Wheatsheaf – Wired leftfield post-punk motoring and country-tinged weirdness from Paradise Island, fronted by Erase Errata singer Jenny Hoyston, with abstract, dissonant support from local post-hardcore hopefuls Twat Trot Tra La and guitar mangling newcomers Prefontaine.

GLITCHES: The Academy – Oxford University band who have been recording with one-time Culture Club producer Steve Levine.

WITCHES + ALL OUR GOOD FRIENDS + BROTHER FRANCISCO: The Cellar – Witches continue to speak softly but carry a big stick with their sweet-natured but deceptively hefty rock at tonight's Big Hair session.

COO COO CLUB with THEM IS ME +

SMILEX: The Jericho Tavern – Big rock noise from the band formed by ex-Reef singer Gary Stringer and bassist Jack Bessant, plus Basement Jaxx fella Nathan Curran and Lady Sovereign guitarist Jonas Jalhay, kicking off their debut UK headline tour at the reliably eclectic Coo Coo Club. Local sleaze-punk rockers Smilex support.

MONDO CADA + WIRE JESUS: The Purple Turtle – Virulent grunge and hardcore from Mondo Cada.

DANNY, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD + THE FAMILY MACHINE + THE EPSTEIN: Portcullis Club, Wallingford – Gently uplifting Dylan-inspired folk-pop and gospel from Truck Records signing Danny Champion Of The World, plus this month's Nightshift cover stars The Family Machine and country rockers The Epstein.

PHISH: The Bullingdon – 90s retro club night.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SOULJACKER + DEAD LEG: The Port Mahon

SUNDAY 17th

NME AWARDS SHOW: The Academy – The annual *NME* touring showcase of bands it has teamed up with record labels to try and make famous hits town with The Cribbs, Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong, Does It Offend You, Yeah? and The Ting Tings. Dancey DIY popstrels The Ting Tings are worth getting there early for, but the rest of the bill, especially the risible Joe Lean, is as uninspiring as you'd expect from the increasingly desperate weekly.

MONDAY 18th

ADAM BOMB + THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Bullingdon – High energy hair metal and sleazy blues rock from New York's Adam Bomb, who has played with the likes of Van Halen, Kiss and Aerosmith as well as tour support to Hanoi Rocks. Support comes from local swamp-rock and festival funk favourites The Mighty Redox.

STEVE KNIGHTLEY & JENNA WITTS: Nettlebed Folk Club – Show Of Hands fella Steve returns with another display of classic English folk songwriting.

TUESDAY 19th

HOT CHIP: The Academy – Like monkeys with miniature cymbals, their rhythm keeps on going – *see main preview*

THAT FUCKING TANK + PLEASE + NERVOUS KID: The Port Mahon – Swift return to The Port for Leeds' quality instrumental duo That Fucking Tank, working up a bruising, sweaty cacophony of noise.

HARRY ANGEL: The Wheatsheaf – Super-fuzzed goth-core storm pop from local faves Harry Angel.

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

SKYNY NYRDS: The Jack Russell, Marston



Tuesday 12th

CHARLOTTEFIELD / ACTION BEAT: The Wheatsheaf

Another night of quality leftfield rock noise from Poor Girl Noise promotions. Tonight's gig sees the return to town for Brighton's Charlottefield, visceral, inventive noisemakers inspired by DC hardcore and post-punk, who come on like a twisted mash-up of Fugazi, The Jesus Lizard and The Fall at times. Where previously they were an adrenalised blast of dislocated noise, now the band's dexterity, melody and rhythmic edge comes more to the fore.

Complex and brooding they can be but equally when they let the reins slip loose they're an exhilarating barrage of sound.

A welcome return to town too for Action Beat, last seen tearing up this same venue back in November as part of a Permanent Vacation night. The Bletchley collective are inspired by early Sonic Youth and Glenn Branca and variously feature anything between one and four drummers, and at least four guitars; no two sets are ever the same, but carefully-orchestrated mayhem is the general rule.

WEDNESDAY 20th

THE ALFONZ + JOOLZ LITTLE FISH + MANTA: The Port Mahon – Sneaky Pete club night with a solo set from Little Fish singer Joolz.

100 RESOLUTIONS + JOHN SIDDLE + CHRIS AYER: The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

HIT&RUN: The Cellar

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Tuesday 12th

GLASVEGAS:

The Jericho Tavern

Amid the frantic record label bidding war currently underway for Glasvegas' signatures, one company bought singer James Allan a classic T-Bird, which must have made for a nice bribe, but such reward looks like being small fry compared to the riches he will reap if the band fulfil their ample potential. At the end of 2007 *NME* awarded Glasvegas' debut single, 'Daddy's Gone', the number 2 slot in their tracks of the year; not bad for an unsigned act. But while the hype might seem out of hand, the Glaswegian band are well worth the attention, mixing up lo-fi sonics with epic pop ambition and making sweet teen poetry out of gritty slice of life lyricism (notably on the brilliant, tragic 'Flowers & Football Shirts'). The raw simplicity derives from early Jesus & Mary Chain and classic Doo-Wop, the grand arrangements come via Phil Spector's 60s girl groups, notably the Ronettes. Add in Allan's broad, warm Scottish singing voice and it's not unlike The Proclaimers reinventing Wah!, but in the dark recesses of 70s New York drone-pop. Not surprisingly Alan McGee is loudly singing their praises, calling them the most exciting Scottish band since the Mary Chain, and you can bet Sony's entire annual profits that six months from now Glasvegas will be headlining the Academy and this gig will have attained some kind of legendary status.

THURSDAY 21st

DAVID CRONENBURG'S WIFE + THE NEW MOON + EXTRADITION ORDER: **The Bullingdon** – Swiss Concrete night with London's lopsided, ramshackle surf-pop and backwoods folksters David Cronenburg's Wife, plus lachrymose local acoustic pop trio The New Moon and trashy garage rockers Extradition Order.

SANDI THOM: The Academy – She wishes she was a punk rock girl with flowers in her hair. We think she might have the wrong sort of girl in mind. Possibly the wrong decade. Whatever she wishes, we wish she was dead under a bus for crimes against music. Oh for God's sake, of *course* we're fucking joking! But come on, just for a second there a small part of you agreed with that sentiment, didn't it?

WHITE SUNDAY: The Jericho Tavern – Reading's moddish rock'n'soul outfit head out on tour.

OCTOBER GAME + THE FAMILY

MACHINE + LIAM: The Cellar – Nightshift cover stars The Family Machine show off their country-tinged rock wares.

CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 22nd

NOUVELLE VAGUE: The Academy – Sweet, soulful, often sublime bossa nova reinventions of classic and obscure new wave classics – *see main preview*

GET CAPE, WEAR CAPE, FLY: The Academy – Heroic laptop troubadour Sam Duckworth makes another trip back to his spiritual home town, still on the up and up with his funny, clever, politicised electro-folk ballads that takes the details of life's humdrum nature to poetic new levels.

FUSE with AUDIO BULLYS: The Academy – Local electronic and house club nights Simple, Slide and Eclectic team up for a new club night, tonight featuring a live set from electro duo Simon Franks and Tom Dinsdale, bringing chunky abrasive house, hip hop, punk, soul and garage to the party. Joining them is energetic electro-punk chap Boys Noize, best known for remixing the likes of Depeche Mode and Bloc Party, while upstairs rising house DJ Nic Fanciulli mans the decks.

KANED CITIZEN + LITTLE FISH: The Bullingdon – More top-notch garage blues rocking from Little Fish, plus indie pop from Kaned Citizen.

D-BLOCKERS + THE RUINS: The Wheatsheaf

OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon

SOUTH CENTRAL HEROES +

DIVEBOMB REVOLUTION + PETE ROE:

The Jericho Tavern – Lightweight pop-punk from local headliners SCH, plus prog-metal support from Wiltshire's Divebomb Revolution.

PHANTOM THEORY: The Purple Turtle

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar

SATURDAY 23rd

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with DOOLITTLE + SUNNYVALE NOISE SUB-ELEMENT + THE CARTER MANOEUVRE: **The Wheatsheaf** – Former-Eat and We Know Where You Live frontman Ange Doolittle returns to town with his current band, which features local duo Mr G and Rich, playing reworked versions of some of his old classics (and classics they were, even if the great, wide world foolishly chose to ignore them at the time) as well as new material from the band's recent 'Hello To The Fortunate Few' album; a genuine overlooked star of English pop music. Support comes from musically confrontational post-rockers Sunnyvale and Leamington's grungey math-rockers Carter Manoeuvre.

COO COO CLUB with THE LONG INSIDERS + BLACKHATS + DAVID SANDERS: The Jericho Tavern – Triple bill of local bands. Shimmering cinematic pop from The Long Insiders, plus harmony-heavy 60s – styled rock from Blackhats.

Tuesday 19th

HOT CHIP:

The Academy

Without doubt one of the great crossover successes of recent times, Hot Chip – who not so long ago were playing for Vacuuous Pop down at the Wheatsheaf – are an example of how and why electro-dance can still be inventive, melodic and – oh yes – fun. Obviously 'Over and Over' demonstrated this most amply, but Alexis Taylor and Joe Goddard's acclaimed and Mercury shortlisted last album, 'The Warning', was packed with such mischievous gems, while live their infectious rhythmic attack is peppered with steals from everyone from Kraftwerk and Aphex Twin to Pigbag and Laurie Anderson. They're also in-demand remixers, working with the likes of Gorillaz, Go! Team and Queens of The Stone Age along the way. Proclaiming to write folk songs for synthesizers, they're equally inspired by maverick songwriters like Robert Wyatt and their awkward bedroom-bound naivety forever shines through. From glitchy techno-soul curiosity they've never looked back after their chart-bashing breakthrough and now they prepare to release their third album, 'Made In The Dark', already a Mixmag album of the month. Renowned for almost completely reinventing their own songs when they play them live, they will, without doubt, force you to dance and leave the venue grinning like a loon.



KASIA: The Purple Turtle
DOG SHOW + CLANKY ROBO
GOBJOBS + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: The Cellar – Electro night at Big hair.
TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy
OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum& bass club night.

SUNDAY 24th

DAVID GRAY: The New Theatre – Little Richard, Elvis, Iggy Pop, David Bowie, Johnny Rotten, Prince... and of course David Gray. Rock history is littered with wild-eyed maverick singers who broke the rules and performed like it was the last show on earth. Seriously, if David's acoustic headline set at last summer's Cornbury Festival is anything to go by, the New Theatre won't know what's hit it. Hopefully a nuclear warhead.
ELECTRIC SIX: The Academy – Back from the brink of obscurity after the chart success of 'Danger! High Voltage' and 'Gay Bar', Dick Valentine and his ever-changing crew of bandmates return to the UK in support of new album, 'I Shall Exterminate Everything Around Me That Restricts Me From Being The Master', with their trademark mix of hometown Detroit garage rock and disco.
GO FASTER + ELLE S'APPELLE: The Jericho Tavern
BEARD MUSEUM: The Purple Turtle – Oddball electro-punk starlets Baby Gravy do their thing with support from Repeats and Alphabet Backwards.

MONDAY 25th

THE CARVIN JONES BAND: The Bullingdon – Roadhouse-tinged Texas blues-rock from the electric guitarist and charismatic frontman Jones and his band, inspired by the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, John Lee Hooker and Jimi Hendrix.
MAGNA CARTER: Nettlebed Folk Club – Classic English folk from Linda and Chris Thompson.

TUESDAY 26th

REEL BIG FISH: The Academy – More stomping ska-punk from South California's ever-touring party rockers.
EPIDEME + AXIS MUNDI + SERFS: The Port Mahon – More leftfield noise excursions from Permanent Vacation, tonight with Brighton's urgent lo-fi rantcore outfit Epideme, Manchester/Lyon ambient dissonant crew Axis Mundi and acoustic psychedelic jam band Serfs.
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 27th

ONE NIGHT ONLY: The Academy – All set to become Yorkshire village Helmsley's biggest export after their hometown-based video, featuring the local castle, teashop, deli and assorted pensioners, became a MySpace phenomenon last year, the teenage indie rockers, mixing up Arctic Monkeys-style froth with occasional moments of Muse-like epic bluster, have most recently been out on tour

with Pigeon Detectives, but bigger things beckon.
GRAND POCKET ORCHESTRA + THE FOLLYS + LUKE LEIGHFIELD: The Port Mahon – Swiss Concrete night with Dublin's child-like electro-pop weirdoes Grand Pocket Orchestra, chirpy Beatles-influenced popsters The Follys and soul-pop pianist and singer Luke Leighfield.
MONTJOY'S JACKET + TAMARA PARSONS-BLAKE: The Purple Turtle
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple
CLUB DUB: The Cellar

THURSDAY 28th

PAMA INTERNATIONAL: The Academy – Swift return to town for the ska, rocksteady and dub supergroup, at various times featuring members of Galliano, Steel Pulse, The Specials and Madness, formed by Special Beat duo Finny and Sean Flowerdew and signed to legendary reggae label Trojan. The gig is followed by Skylarkin's regular ska, reggae and soul club night with Bristolian legend DJ Derek plus Indecision.
NINE-STONE COWBOY: The Bullingdon – Through-a-glass-darkly lo-fi orchestral pop from Mark Cope and his band.
SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guest Tony Kofi.
THE HAMSTERS: Fat Lil's, Witney – The veteran British blues-rockers return with their Hendrix and ZZ Top-styled noise.
CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
SMASH DISCO: The Academy
PALE BLUE EYES: The Port Mahon
ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro and house with live set from Les Petits Filous.

FRIDAY 29th

EINSTELLUNG + VON BRAUN: The Wheatsheaf – Awesome (in capital letters, underlined, twice) krautrock-inspired noisemongers outta Birmingham who tore the Academy a new exit hole with their stunning set at Audioscope last year. Panzer-heavy, pressure cooker-intense wall-of-noise motorik rocking that sounds very much like Kraftwerk's 'Autobahn' being played by Hell's own house band. We heartily recommend you attend.
THE BEAT + NEVILLE STAPLES: The Academy – Double dose of classic Two Tone veterans with 80s hitmakers The Beat giving songs like 'Mirror In The Bathroom' and 'Too Nice To Talk To' a new airing. They're joined by Specials and Fun Boy Three star Neville.
THE TOSSERS: The Academy – Chicago folk-punks – see main preview
OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon
STORNOWAY + CANDY & THE



Friday 22nd

NOUVELLE VAGUE:

The Academy

On paper the idea of Nouvelle Vague is like some indie-inclined marketing man's kitsch wet dream: take a bundle of cult new wave classics and reinterpret them in an acoustic bossa nova style: cue a whole wad of advert-related dosh landing on the doormat. But that's to overlook the genuine love for and knowledge of the source material of arrangers Marc Collin and Olivier Libaux, as well as the often stunning end results of their reworkings, aided by an assortment of young female singers from France, Brazil and the States, all of whom were picked for their lack of familiarity with the original songs. On the band's debut album fresh life was breathed into the likes of Dead Kennedys' 'Too Drunk Too Fuck' and Sisters of Mercy's 'Marianne', as well as an absolutely sublime take on Modern English's 'I Melt With You', while the follow up saw hits by Buzzcocks, Blondie and the Bunnymen rub shoulders with more unlikely cuts from Blancmange, Bauhaus and Visage. And if that ad money did come tumbling in, then it does nothing to cheapen Nouvelle Vague's music. Of the band's constantly changing roster of singers, many have gone on to further prominence in their native France, notably Anaïs Croze, Camille Dalmais, Mélanie Pain and Marina Céleste. Most recently Collin and Libaux compiled a CD featuring covers of new wave classics by other post-punk bands.

RAINCLOUD + HELEN PEARSON: The Jericho Tavern – Sweet-natured, folk pop in a Belle & Sebastian vein from rising local stars Stornoway.

MACHIEVELLIS: The Purple Turtle
SKYNY NYRDS: The Chester Arms
LOST CHIHUAHUA: Fat Lil's, Witney
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
SHAKE: The Academy
HQ: The Cellar

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LIVE

INFLATABLE BUDDHA / KANUTE / TREVOR WILLIAMS

The X

Stepping in at the last minute to replace The Minutes, Faringdon-based singer-songwriter Trevor Williams' act of selfless heroism is cruelly overlooked as precisely no-one appears to be listening to him, preferring instead the sound of their own voices. His cover of Radiohead's 'Karma Police' does cause a few ears to prick up, but generally, when he's taking their introspective lead poor old Trev does himself a disservice. It's when he's got sunshine in his life (and indeed in at least two of tonight's songs) he's at his best, somehow occupying similar ground to Ray Davies.

Introspection is something that sits at the heart of Kanute's music and we were quite looking forward to their Portishead-inspired lounge lizard tunes. However, they are so

laid-back and chilled-out that it is practically impossible to stay awake throughout their set. Dream-like would be one way to describe it; slightly tedious would be another. Either way, should you find yourself operating heavy machinery in the vicinity of a Kanute gig you should cease immediately on health and safety grounds.

Inflatable Buddhas are a blast; initially. Finding a point at which Ian Dury and The Straycats meet, they blow the cobwebs out of your ears and wake you from the Kanute-invoked sleep. Confronted with a lead singer that babbles out scattershot poetry and who looks for all the world like an emaciated Alexi Sayle causes us to wonder whether a cover of 'Hello John, Got A New Motor?' is on the cards. Forays into shaky world music



Photo: Sam Shepherd

territory cause the Buddhas to stutter mid set, but when they stick to their guns and play it straight, they prove

themselves to be a curiously enjoyable oddity.

Sam Shepherd

DR SHOTOVER Krautrock In Bonn Square

Ah, it's young Wyngarde, isn't it? I was at school with your father, of course. Sit down, sit down, why don't you – I see from your expression that you wish to buy me a drink, and also to hear some of my stories from the Burma Campaign and/or about my time as a synthesiser roadie for Amon Duul II – ja, that crazy bongo player, we couldn't get him out of the Grim Reaper cloak for MONTHS...

Something to do with the strength of the acid in those days, I believe... Anyway, I'm sure that like me you are TERRIBLY excited by the prospect of another year on the Oxford music scene, especially the more experimental aspects of it.

What do I mean? Oh, things like... a new Performance Event planned by Stubby Steadman in which the Pan Pipes Orchestral buskers from Bonn Square do their usual set... but while dangling from a tree! ...No, not by the neck, you cynical bastard – how would they play those lovely warbly notes then? What do you mean, it's all pre-recorded anyway and they just sway around whilst wearing irritating ponchos and coining it from stupid tourists??? How COULD you??? [runs away sobbing into his Pernod and black]. Erm, yes, come to think of it, you're probably right. Then of course there's the Gamelan Event... this lovely tinkly, airy Javanese musical phenomenon, we feel, would be just right as an antidote to all those ghastly heavy metal bands, especially if set up IN A TREE, in Bonn Square! Wait a minute, what's that you say, Beddingfield? They've chopped DOWN the Bonn Square trees? Oh well, bang goes another fantastic initiative from us crazy music lovers here at the East Indies Club. Back to Tanz der Lemminge...

Next month: Toxicological Whispering



No-one I think is in my tree: Amon Duul II plan a "Terrorist Art Event".

RAGGASAURUS / VIGILANCE BLACK SPECIAL / THE TALC DEMONS / JEREMY HUGHES

The Wheatsheaf

We're all justly proud of our music scene, but it's worth remembering what Oxford is: a small provincial city. This means that for every Little Fish bursting into the limelight we have a bunch of blues bands dawdling through the classics. It also means we have Klub Kakofanny, a fantastically unglamorous hippy enclave that has been making people happy for as long as anyone can recall, and is about as far from the flick of a cool kid's haircut as one can get. In fact, half the audience haven't had a haircut in years. And the other half are bald.

After mightily-bearded Jeremy Hughes has played some intricate little guitar doodles, The Talc Demons take to the stage. Rami's band are more often found playing interminable jam sets in empty midweek bars, but thankfully they produce a taut, condensed thirty minutes of his own circus freak pop, in which 70s rock clashes with funky reggae. His songs boast about 90 words per minute, buoyed up by clipped, nasal guitar lines and bouncy rhythms, and they should definitely ditch the dubious covers gigs and concentrate on this quality fare.

Last time we saw Vigilance Black Special they had a trombone and a lonesome Nick Cave swoon to their music; now they have no trombone and sound a bit like a sleepier version of Goldrush, the lyric "too much time kicking around in the half-light" summing the show up nicely. A decent band, with a rich lead vocal, but nothing to get excited about.

Raggasaurus are a group who definitely weren't formed in their stylist's office: a bunch of stoned-looking students playing dub, with a 50 year old Tunisian singing in Arabic over the top; who would have thought it? And who would have thought they would make such excellent music? The horns are acidic and subtly used, the rhythms are spry and infectious, and the bass is simply gigantic, causing glasses to topple to the floor behind the bar. Add some searing vocals, that seem to communicate messages of love and integrity even though nobody understands a blinking word, and the effect is glorious. A wonderful band, likely to enliven many an Oxford weekend, and one unlikely to appear on *Skins* any time soon.

David Murphy

COMBOFEST

The Port Mahon

I felt somewhat daunted at the prospect of this all-dayer, promoted jointly by Poor Girl Noise and Permanent Vacation, assuming an onslaught of noise that would quickly wear me down. Well, assumption made an ass of at least me, as the day presents a well-programmed selection of artists. There is noise aplenty, but along with it subtlety, texture and variation.

Things open gently with **Spoonoo's** fingerpicked acoustic guitar, mixing Matt Valentine/Wooden Wand-style nervous folk with the progressive melodic lines and structures of Love. This is folk through a post-rock lens, with relentless breaking down of songs into constantly changing parts, and it sometimes gets caught up in its own complexity, but it's interesting to examine the fractured style laid bare with only six strings.

Divine Coils take the floor (literally) after setting up a vast array of sound-production tools, all resting on a plinth and a snare, and close-miked so that every scratch and movement is projected out to the room. The nature of their improvised music is such that Divine Coils can seem as if they are reaching for something but not quite finding it. Their set is built around scuffles on a high-pitched whine, but it wanes – they've shown more power than this in previous performances.

Traktors, featuring Youthmovies' Andrew Hammond, are initially an annoying exercise in sub-Wolf Eyes/Dylan Nyoukiss power electronics shouty nonsense. Then, pleasingly, the noise levels out into an endless rhythmic pulse, gradually modulating and developing with such a slow pace of change that it lulls me into semi-trance. Ostensibly, this is an act not doing much at all. But the results are strangely mind-altering. **Whores and Wizards** start out as a killer take on a stoner-rock-goes-screamo sludgefest, but quickly dissolve into a mess of forced histrionics and egotistical

posturing, with the singer barging his way through the crowd and the guitarist lying head-first inside the bass drum. Such antics are fine, but in this case they seem to distract the band's attention, and their heaviness becomes sloppiness.

Zettasaur effectively blow them offstage, taking the same blueprint and forcing it through a stricter songwriting process. Like Charlottefield or Trumans Water, they're chaotic (and at times ear-splitting) but never cease to be melodic and weirdly accessible. This is to a large extent due to a fantastic rhythm section: super-tight messy drumming (if that makes sense) and sharp, almost funky bass cutting through the slabs of guitar skree. **Helhesten** then take us back to an improvised floor-crouching set of Divine Coils-style experiment – and in fact the Divine Coils' members form part of this outfit. A delicate, simple gamelan-style dalliance around plucked strings and clanged bowls gradually builds into squalling, thick charges of high-pitched outsider noise. It's more assured and controlled than Divine Coils' set, and benefits from Helhesten controlling their sound, rather than vice versa.

Finally, **Bilge Pump** jump headlong into Zettasaur's world of riffs. They're a somewhat perverse band, one that seems to have created some workable songs and then fed them through a random editing sequence: they're heavy post-hardcore pounded senseless by power chord repetition. This provides moments of brilliant idiocy but for the most part it's slightly boring – as if they've gone too far down a road of invention without the correct navigational tools in place. They are, though, a fittingly out-there end to a consistently involving day. Hats off to the promoters for a line-up that drops just enough breadcrumbs of magic to create a day that is as eye-opening as it is challenging.

Simon Minter

RESERVOIR CATS

The Bullingdon

The Blues has come a long way since the Mississippi Delta share croppers fanned out across America on the newly built railroad system, spawning along the way a thousand 'famous' and 'legendary' blues clubs, and names like "Blind Lemon" Jefferson, "Big Mama" Thornton and "No Nickname" Williams.

This blues explosion in turn seeded a million further clubs world-wide, where keepers of the flame could play to their congregations, who love the downbeat and the familiar. The brightest of Oxford's keepers of the blue flame is veteran vocalist and guitarist Tony Jezzard, and his band Reservoir Cats, whose punchy, slightly edgy, yet thoroughly rocking take on r'n'r-laced hard blues is still winning over new fans, young and old. Jezzard's voice has developed some gritty character over the years and goes well with his *nonpareil* blues guitar mastery. But it's his duelling with stunning lead guitarist, Baxter, from

Edinburgh, "...and a bit of a bastard in the nicest possible way", which catches the eye and ear, as they take to the stage to the theme of the TV cartoon *Top Cat*, and launch into 'The Key To Love' with a Monster Truck demeanour that would get the stodgiest of joints jumping.


There's no trademark Hawaiian shirt tonight, and only a bit of banter about walking his huskies, before 'I Can't Stand The Rain', preferring instead to let the game flow, with old favourites 'Suzi Q' and 'Handy Man', before goofing off with Status Quo-like three-chord boogie, 'Tough Enough'.

It's halfway through the second of their two 45-minute sets that Baxter does what seems inevitable, blowing up his "cheap Amurkin" amp, and prematurely ending the show. Still, a band who sound like The Destroyers, and a wrecking-ball finale: those lonesome cotton pickers would be proud.

Paul Carrera

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LES CLOCHARDS / DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES

The Wheatsheaf

It's a testament to all involved that this gig happened at all: it's less than 12 hours since the announcement that the X was to close, and the bands booked to play there have found a new home for the evening across town at the Wheatsheaf, and the show doth go on, though the mood is gloomy.

Desmond Chancer aren't planning on lifting anyone's spirits. Tom McDonnell, formerly Tomohawk with local rap outfit Big Speakers, currently inventing 1940s jazz rap in gypsy-folksters The Brickwork Lizards, has reinvented himself again as Desmond Chancer, a funereal crooner with a pathological hunger for misery. As such, we get torch songs aplenty, made rich by Oliver Shaw's luxurious, expressive piano playing. The lyrics are occasionally astounding; "There's no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow...there's not even a rainbow" is a dark little gem, particularly when sung in Tom's growly, Tom Waits-ish voice. The unrelenting darkness of the material is undercut somewhat by the fact that Oliver – or Junk Food Jones to give him his stage name – is

wearing a big, fake, Rasputin-style beard, and between songs Tom asks the audience, "Do you want some more misery?" like the villain in a pantomime version of *Of Mice and Men*. Odd, but engagingly odd.

It's always a pleasure to feel a bit French on occasion, so in some ways Les Clochards can't fail to entertain. For, you see, the music they play is FRENCH MUSIC. They have an accordionist, Brel and Gainsbourg covers are present and correct, and there are even breathy, spoken-word sections inviting other French people to bed. They could only be more French if they wore stripy tops and strings of garlic and rode bicycles round the stage and were all, well, French. The music's pretty enough, particularly that accordion which plays an impressively subtle dynamic role, but more daring arrangements and a concerted effort to engage with the audience would make this a band worth watching, rather than just a pleasant accompaniment to a glass of the Wheatsheaf house red.

Dominic Colquhoun

VESSELS / HREDA

The Cellar

Last time Nightshift took in a Hreda show, they may well have been experiencing an off day, and we came away thinking it was just more of the same instrumental guitar twinkling that's been doing the rounds of late. Tonight, though, they've clearly had their three Weetabix; it's little short of outstanding. Their opening salvo in particular impresses, building a kind of ambient menace until it approximates the quieter moments of Slint. Elsewhere, it's heads-down, intricate interplay which, thankfully, doesn't get caught up in its own cleverness and builds fulgently to a purpose. If there's any criticism to be made, it's that there's still the odd track that seems to have been pulled from the Faber & Faber *Big Book of Math Rock*, but Hreda are increasingly developing their own voice, and it's sure to be one of the loudest in Oxford this year. For those who have been craving for some technically-outstanding, engaging

instrumental guitar music since the untimely demise of the Edmund Fitzgerald, look no further.

What Hreda have in their favour in terms of clean, taut instrumentation that relies on interplay and invention over gimmickry, Vessels unfortunately fall down by having loads of gear but too few ideas of their own. The stage is packed with two drumkits, a mountain of synths and multiple guitars and vocals, but scarcely an original idea between them. They display such blatant obeisance towards their influences – bit of math rock here, bit of a post-rock workout there – that it's like a series of join-the-dots, my-first-paint-set versions of other, better material: the tasteless musical equivalent of Tesco Value Honey Nut Flakes compared to your full-on, trademarked Crunchy Nut Cornflakes, as it were. Do less, but do it better – salutary musical advice for 2008 as far as we're concerned.

Stuart Fowkes

I NEED TO DISCOVER / ALL THESE ARMS / WHISTLER / MEWGATZ

Port Mahon

Mewgatz are an Oxford-based duo whose recordings use something they call 'circuit bending'; altering circuit boards from toys and cheap keyboards to make unexpected sounds. While the resultant recordings are somewhat uneven, their live shows highlight more of guitarist Frida, creating a pleasingly dreamy early-80s indie sound. When they successfully resolve this with their wilfully experimental side they can produce charming lo-fi ballads like 'Arm Control'.

Whistler play their last gig tonight, before changing their moniker to Apone, apparently. Don't worry if you missed them as their, ahem, melodic rock is chock-full of more clichés than a David Cameron speech, both lyrically and musically. In fact they're almost so bad they're good, like something out of *Phoenix Nights*, though a decent rhythm section rescues them from being completely written-off. All These Arms, however, are a more enticing affair. A fairly successful mix of tuneful rock and math, they radiate confidence and focused energy. Despite the great singer, most of the songs are a bit too complex and fussy to make

it all work, though there's plenty of potential.

I Need To Discover may well be the best band in the Lincoln area. Another two-piece, they describe themselves as "mathematic disco punk", made with vocals, guitar, drums and laptop. They seem, initially, nervous but soon get into their stride with a powerful and studied sonic assault. Of course the drums don't need amplifying in the Port so you always get a nice clean sound, and the band's single, 'Mixandmatch', sounds a lot better tonight than the record. Karina Lawrence regularly emerges from behind her kit to take over vocals from guitarist Colin Barstow and they both throw themselves into the performance, like Hot Chip playing a set of punk covers. Like all tonight's bands (except Whistler) they seem a little too keen on math-related current trends, like that vocoder sound everyone's using, but when Karina gets back behind that drum kit things look up. Ultimately they seem to be struggling to find their own voice, as all new bands do, but my guess is that they soon will.

Art Lagun

MARY'S GARDEN / FORK

The Bullingdon

Few people reading this will have heard of, or even want to have heard of, 80s weirdoes Deep Freeze Mice but something about Fork reminds us of them. Mostly the way they typify a certain type of band who revel in their lack of ambition and wear it as a badge of honour. Fork have been lingering around the local scene for some years now, which makes their resolutely ramshackle approach both surprising and oddly refreshing. Initially at least they sound like they should have been opening the bill on one of the old Stiff Records tours back in the mid-70s, punked-up pub rock cranked out with a snarl and the odd afrobeat exercise from the drummer, but ultimately their lack of cohesion, and occasional tendency towards dubby hippy indulgence means that by the end of their set, they're simply treading water.

Mary's Garden's musical ambition, by contrast, seems to stretch to the sun. Or perhaps the moon, since they're goths. We

know this because we can't actually see them – they're completely shrouded in smoke. And then there's Moty Dimant's Sisters Of Mercy-inspired guitar runs and Laima Bite's imperious vocal performance and the fact she resembles a young Siouxsie Sioux at times.

It's Laima's voice, limpid and strident, that dominates the lighter material, like 'I Live In Your Head', which can feel disjointed at times, lacking the driving power of songs like 'Gasoline', where out and out bombast is carefully tempered by skilfully textured arrangements, the interaction between guitars and keyboards adding extra depth, allowing the pressure to build and the songs to expand. The smoky, sultry 'Mind Control' encapsulates Mary's Garden's governance of mood and tension perfectly, its almost folky heart taken to a higher level by the billowing rock that surrounds it. Some kind of cult status definitely seems due to their dark, disaffected noise.

Dale Kattack

JANUARY 2008

Fri 25 - £10 adv *Doors Open 10pm*

**Slide feat.
Layo and Bushwacka!**
+ Lee Mortimer and Matt

Fri 25 - £10 adv

Elliot Minor

Sat 26 - £10 adv

Teddy Thompson

Sat 26 - £4 adv

Man From Michael
at Transformation

Mon 28 - £12.50 adv

British Sea Power
+ These New Puritans
+ Eamon Hamilton (Brakes)

Mon 28 - £7 adv

Palladium + Alphabeat

Tue 29 - £10 adv

Tom Baxter
+ Charlie Wilson + Beth Rowley

Thu 31 - £12.50 adv

New Found Glory

Thu 31 - £10 adv

Simian Mobile Disco (Live)

FEBRUARY 2008

Fri 01 - £12.50 adv

Doors Open 10pm - Over 18s only
Lisa Lashes + Andy Whitby + Adam Lob
4Live + James Condon + Miguel Del Bosque

Fri 01 - £7.50 adv

The Courteeners

Sat 02 - £8 adv

Nine Black Alps

Sat 02 - £4 adv

The Author @ Transformation

Sun 03 - £7 adv

Lightspeed Champion
+ Semifinalists + Jonquil

Mon 04 - £7 adv

I Was A Cub Scout + Rolo Tomassi
+ This Town Needs Guns

Tue 05 - £6 adv

Airborne

Wed 06 - £7.50 adv

The Rocket Summer
+ The Secret Handshake
+ Between The Trees

Wed 06 - £7.50 adv

Late Of The Pier
+ Slagmatsklubben + Video Nasties
+ DJ's Radio Zarcop vs Liars Club

Thu 07 - £10 adv

Art Brut

Fri 08 - £14 adv *Doors Open 10pm - Over 18s*

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Special** (True Playerz Tour)

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Laura Veirs + Your Heart Breaks

Sun 10 - £14 adv

Dropkick Murphys
+ Mad Caddies + The Briggs

Sun 10 - £8 adv

Robots In Disguise

Mon 11 - £7 adv

Polysics + Cutting Pink With Knives

Thu 14 - £10 adv

MXPX + Punchline + The Let Go

Fri 15 - £10 adv

The Mad Professor Dub Show
(inc. free entry to DJ Derek)

Fri 15 - £14 adv

Justice

Sat 16 - £5 adv

The Glitches

Sun 17 - £15.50 adv

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Hot Chip

Thu 21 - £7 adv

Metronomy
(followed by Smash Disco)

Thu 21 - £10 adv

Sandi Thom

Fri 22 - £10 adv

Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly.
+ X-Certs

Fri 22 - £15 adv

Nouvelle Vogue + Phoebe Kildeer
and The Short Straws

Fri 22 - £13 adv

Doors 9.30pm - 10pm - Over 18s only
Fuse ft. Audio Bullys (live)
plus Boyze Noise and Nic Fanciulli

Sun 24 - £10 adv

Electric Six

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DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE

We've been looking forward to getting hold of this since we first heard Space Heroes play their new song, 'Motorway To Moscow', a few months ago. Because it's bloody effing fantastic and sounds like Visage trapped in a cyborg factory in the 22nd Century trying to clone Kraftwerk, complete with ace retro-futurist synth sirens and 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. It bleeps, it bleeps, it'll make even broken down washing machines dance like short-circuiting Terminators. The rest of the CD is pretty neat too, especially 'Barbie Is A Robot', a motorik electropop dirge that's the meeting point between Daft Punk and Silicon Teens. What's great about Space Heroes is that while they can do abstract, sample-heavy glitchiness, there's nothing clever-clever about them; instead they mostly keep it simple and deceptively hardcore, like some great sci-fi disco.

MARK BOSLEY

Or, to give him his full and proper title, Mark 'Master Of Misery' Bosley. Cos there ain't gonna be no disco fun and frolics round his place, mister. Not when he's got several satchels of grim, gothic lovelorn angst to unload. And we know he's angst-ridden because he even includes an extensive lyric sheet with this demo, which reveals, unusually for a one-man acoustic singer-songwriter, some rather neat poetry, and a way with almost arcane words that lends weight to his woes. 'Flower' reminds us a little of Leonard Cohen's 'The Story Of Isaac', although Mark's voice is a some way removed from Cohen's dulcet groan. Best of the bunch is 'Bad Bad Cupid', Mark's cracked, plaintive voice and the lyrical fancy combining to make the ode to unrequited love sound like an old Belle & Sebastian number. The backlog of demos means that Mark's take on 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' is a bit out of season now, but if you can imagine a slightly sozzled Andrew Eldritch from The Sisters Of Mercy popping round for Christmas lunch and then singing himself into a festive slumber on the sofa, you'll get some impression of Mr Bosley's idea of Christmas cheer.

THE SUPERMODELS

Okay, so their band name is slightly more dull even than Oasis or Shed Seven, conjuring up images of painfully cool, Camden trendies with skinny jeans and £200 haircuts, but The Supermodels are actually hilariously uncool Watlington freaks who here deliver a one-song demo of such gobsmackingly brilliant awfulness we didn't know whether to give it demo of the month, sling it in the dumper or nominate it for some kind of care in the community award. The song in question is called 'Yummy Mummy' and features a devastatingly out of tune vocal over a dreadfully distorted sub-Velvet Underground dirge, celebrating the joy of pulling a – you guessed it – yummy mummy. It makes Twizz Twangle sound like Def Leppard or something. It's so absolutely rubbishly great you can only marvel at its audaciousness and wish that NME and their ilk would stick their necks out and hail this kind of mentally unstable crap as This Week's Big New Thing instead of grey, moribund shit like Joe Lean & The Jing Jang Jong. Just for once, eh?

THE BLITZ CARTEL

Having worked hard to decipher any kind of musical merit in their previous demo offering, we're now not sure whether The Blitz Cartel actually try hard to sound like a complete bloody mess, or if the carnage comes naturally. From the acoustic punk thrash of opener 'Ben Is The Mayor', where half a distant memory of a tune gets scrawled over a vague folk hoe-down-cum-ska skank that sounds very much like a closing time pavement bundle, to the haphazard chugging of 'Explaining Is Hard', we don't know whether to be charmed by their adherence to punk's original philosophy, or appalled by their resolute lack of a clue. At their worst they're just a bit silly – as on '1944' with its attempt at Flamenco guitar and drunken slur about fish or somesuch – but at their best – 'Ninja Punk' – they sound like a lost Fall classic, all bastardised rockabilly and buzzsaw fug. More of that kind of thing and we'll start giving them the benefit of any doubt.

GILLESPIE

We guess Abingdon isn't exactly overrun with budding rap stars, so Adam Gillespie shouldn't struggle too hard to stand out, and there are signs he's got some neat ideas to back up his MC-ing talents, relying for the most part on understated classical or acoustic guitar backing alongside the more predictable snippets of news reportage and

scratching. Vocally he can at least flow with some fluidity, as on 'So Hungary', although the well-intentioned 'Dear Britain' starts to show his stylistic limitations, lamenting the almost faddish love of guns and knives amongst Young People Today (cue Daily Mail-style huffing and puffing at the mere mention of TEENAGERS). Adam introduces some old-time swing into his eponymous title track, but quickly, and disappointingly, dumps that in favour of more sullen rapping. In the end he sounds lack he lacks some of the confidence to take this as far as he could, perhaps needing to ditch some of his earnest commentary in favour of some showbiz swagger or panache.

PHYTE

An album-length demo from Oxfordshire's own industrial rock butcher Dan Clarke, whose past projects have included Kazor and Reactor Mind. Here he promises us some "Ambient destructions", which sort of explains what's on offer – mostly heavyweight electro-doom nastiness, that at its best involves gently pulsing synth-rock set pieces that recall Gary Numan's most recent noisemaking, or some frantic industrial techno. Unfortunately amid all the great ideas there is also some dull musak filler, Dan wandering off to play at being Brian Eno, or building up ponderous guitar jams into potentially great plateaux of noise only to let them dissipate and die after a few minutes when he'd do better to keep the mood going and really pile on the pressure. And that's the album's major flaw – it doesn't hold together, sounding too much like disparate pieces have been set up in line with little thought to their dynamic interaction. A shame because with a bit of editing and cohesion, this could make for great black mass coffee table music.

CITY LIGHTS JUST BURN

Always encouraging to hear a band developing their own sound over a couple of demos and here City Lights Just Burn leave some of their old punk-pop tendencies behind in favour of something a bit harder and heavier. Claiming to make "edgy alternative rock" they switch from an urgent, pent-up punk crunch, through to choppy math-rock to churning metal noise, the singer's strong, often dramatic delivery, not dissimilar to Jello Biafra at times, giving the music added punch. The band still hark back to their old emo thrash tendencies on 'So, That Makes Me The Assassin', and the elongated instrumental thrash at the end lacks any discernible character or point and occasionally it seems like City Lights Just Burn are struggling to get out of third gear,

but their innate bolshiness keeps them chugging along nicely, partway between Biffy Clyro and Q And No U.

THE YOUNGS PLAN

On the one hand it'd be easy to damn The Youngs Plan from the off, falling as they do, into that growing clique of generic Oxford bands that take their cue from local innovators like Youthmovies, Dive Dive and Jonquil but possess little of the restless invention, to-die-for melodies or folky mania of those bands, content instead to hack out by-rote guitar noise. Everything here has been done better before by another local band, from the fidgety guitars right down to the trumpets and chanted harmonies. But while it might be frustrating that a form of music that so very recently was beating a path out on its own can now sound like it's slovenly following the herd, we need to remember that they're a new young band and may simply need to find their own identity, which will hopefully come. In the meantime we'll forgive them and be thankful they're at least listening to the right bands in the first place.

THE DEMO DUMPER

OBSCENE ADDICTION

There's no indication of exactly what kind of obscene addiction the band are talking about here, whether it's hardcore pornography, crystal meth or a desire to go to every Courteeners gig, but what we do know is that the band are all 16 years old and come from various local schools, and as such maybe we shouldn't be such utter bastards to them, but since they're a metal band and the only things you need to get right to sound great as a metal band are to play loud, fast and heavy and make a noise that makes you want to smash your head – or even someone else's – against a wall out of sheer giddy excitement, and that they can't even get that simple task right, makes us despair for all young people everywhere. Come on! The world is dumbing down – at least play dumb music properly! The requisite parts are all here: growly doom metal grumbling and shouting, bit of angst, a couple of Thin Lizzy guitar steals, even a pointless ska break at the end of the final track, but it's resolutely lacking in brutality, instead coming on like a non-committal ragged thrash that, if we're being kind, and we really are trying to be, sounds a bit like Supergrass might have back in their early days had they grown up listening to Iron Maiden instead of Ride.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU.

IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number (no email or mobile-only). No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. Nightshift accepts no responsibility for deflated egos. We currently have a two-month backlog of demos for review. We will try and get round to all of them as soon as we can.



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