

email: [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net)

website: [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net)

# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 150  
January  
2008



***“There are no  
proper stars left.”***  
meet Oxford's new glam  
champions - inside

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# NEWS

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## HELLO EVERYONE

And a very Happy New Year to you all. January is, traditionally, a pretty quiet time for live music, but in the absence of many big-name touring bands, why not go out and catch a couple of new local acts instead. The rewards can be great and when the band you've just watched playing in your local pub venue are headlining the Academy in a year's time, you can brag to your mates you were there at the beginning. We do it all the time and it really gets on people's nerves.

The New Year is a great time to think about new bands. As well as this month's cover stars, we'd heartily recommend you checking out the likes of Hreda, 50ft Panda, Elapse-O, Traktors, International Jetsetters, Eduard Sounding Block and Raggasaurus, amongst the many great new bands in town. And of course, we just know that in the next few weeks we'll discover a great new act who've barely played a handful of gigs yet. Last year we discovered Little Fish and by the end of the year they were supporting Supergrass at the Town Hall, a superb talent who look set to follow in the footsteps of Foals, and Young Knives in the coming months.

Whatever your musical tastes, you are spoilt for choice in Oxford. Keep supporting live music and keep this great scene alive.

Ronan Munro (Editor)

## THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT

takes place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May. The Punt, now in its eleventh year, showcases the best unsigned talent in Oxfordshire and has previously provided early exposure for Young Knives, Winnebago Deal, Goldrush and Elizabeth, the first band fronted by Yannis Philippakis from Foals. 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 Wheatsheaf, 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](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net). 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.

**SUPERGRASS** release a special limited edition 7" single this month. 'Diamond Hoo Ha Man' comes out on January 14<sup>th</sup> and is taken from the band's new album, due out in March. The single and album were recorded at Berlin's legendary Hansa studios with producer Nick Launay, who has previously

worked with Arcade Fire, Nick Cave and Yeah Yeah Yeahs. A live version of 'Diamond Hoo Ha Man' is available to download from [www.supergrass.com](http://www.supergrass.com).

Last month Supergrass played two sold-out gigs at Oxford Town Hall, with Gaz and Rob Coombes' brother Charley standing in for the still-recovering Mick Quinn on bass.

**RADIOHEAD** release the first single from their groundbreaking 'In Rainbows' album this month. 'Jigsaw Falling Into Place' comes out on January 14<sup>th</sup> on XL - the same label that released Thom Yorke's 'The Eraser' album in 2006. The CD features two live tracks, 'Down Is The New Up' and 'Last Flowers', while the 7" is backed by 'Videotape'. 'In Rainbows', meanwhile, is now out on CD and vinyl on XL after its original download-only launch.

**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 Sillyhat, plays the best new Oxford releases as well as featuring interviews with local and touring acts, a local gig and clubbing guide and a demo vote. The show is available to listen to all week online at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford).



**FOALS** have announced their biggest Oxford gig to date, as well as details of their debut album. The band will play downstairs at the Academy on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March, having sold out the upstairs Zodiac venue last year. Tickets are on sale now, priced £9, from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com) or from ticketweb on 0844 477 2000.

The album, entitled 'Antidotes', is due out in March on Transgressive and includes recent Top 40 single, 'Balloons'. Full track listing is: 'The French Open', 'Cassius', 'Red Socks Pogie', 'Olympic Airways', 'The Race For Radio Supremacy', 'Balloons', 'Heavy Water', 'Two Steps, Twice', 'Big Big Love (Fig.2)', 'Like Swimming' and 'Tron'.

Foals have also recently signed a deal with SubPop in the States.

## DR SHOTOVER

### I'm A Twat, Get Me Out Of Here

Ah, there you are... What do you mean, did I have a Happy Christmas? Of course I didn't have a Happy Christmas, you shell-suited moron! (Yes, yes, I'm aware that it's the latest in 80s retro, but it still makes you look like a f\*\*\*ing idiot). The best bit was running some Young People through with my sword-stick, if you must know... What for? For shouting on their mobiles outside Chicken Cottage whilst in possession of "spicy wings" (whatever the hell THOSE are). Obviously. Meanwhile the East Indies Club Christmas Party was the usual slightly dull affair... the esteemed membership dressed up as Roman Emperors while consuming their weight in wine and sweetmeats on couches - "Peel me a Black Grape" quipped the treasurer wittily, looking uncommonly like Shaun Ryder... mind you I was accused of looking like Christopher Biggins in his "I Claudius" incarnation as the Emperor Nero... putting down my lute I beat the miscreants senseless, sparing only "Kiwi" Bayliss, as he has to go back to the land of sheep. What's that? I promised to reveal the Most Annoying Songs of the 80s, did I? Ok, that's easy. The one that goes "Life is LIFE, na-na na na-na", and the one that goes "Are you feeling Hot Hot Hot?"... There you are... happy now? Buy me a brandy and bummer off.

**Next month:**  
**Who was More Annoying in the 90s: Bleugh or Oasiszzzz?**



Nero My God to Thee -  
Dr Shotover in festive garb.

# BORDERVILLE

**“THERE ARE NO PROPER stars left. There is not a shred of glamour in any famous British musician currently hyped by the press. Punk has left us a damaging legacy: what was at the time a necessary spring-clean, a redefinition of rock music as protest, as pure energy, has become – for the UK indie scene at least – a reductive, fascistic ideology clung to by journalists terrified of not seeming cool enough. Why should Kate Nash have to pretend to have had an impoverished upbringing? It’s laughable, unnecessary and, ultimately, as inartistic as it is reductive.”**

## **BORDERVILLE FRONTMAN**

Joe Swarbrick is lamenting the state of the UK music scene: an increasingly grey, homogenised place where new music is polished and pigeonholed to make it more easily marketable and where genuine flamboyance is subsumed to fake ‘street’ authenticity and songs about going to McDonald’s.

**WITH HIS PREVIOUS BAND,** Sexy Breakfast, Joe, along with Borderville bassist Phil Oakley, set out to bring some of rock’s old glamour back to the stage, creating epic music that crossed myriad boundaries, filled with verve and ambition and a sense of theatricality that always made for great entertainment beyond the usual band-watching experience.

Borderville is an extension of that sense of musical ambition. The band was formed from the ashes of the messy break-up of Sexy Breakfast, various members leaving “in varying degrees of anger and disappointment”, as Joe puts it, until only he and Phil remained. The idea was to “redefine glam rock away from trashy, hollow glitterstomping, towards its original influences, such as Brecht and Weill, Jacques Brel and musical theatre”.

Over a period of time new members were recruited: first came pianist and guitarist Arthur House, whom Joe met while performing in Comedy Of Errors in Cambridge, followed by keyboard wizard Tom ‘Woody’ Woodhouse, also a member of The Keyboard Choir, a



musical virtuoso and “high-achieving physics student who never sleeps”. Drummer James Irving, who once played with Sexy Breakfast at Truck Festival in 1999 and who has just returned to Oxford after living in Manchester, completes the line-up.

The original idea was to make a concept album set in the fictional town of Borderville, which could be Oxford or Cambridge, or any town that isn’t London, and featuring a story arc about the characters that live there.

## **NIGHTSHIFT’S FIRST**

proper encounter with Borderville was at the final of the Oxford University Indie Music Society battle of the bands at the Wheatsheaf, where they impressively blew a strong set of challengers off stage to take the title. Since then they’ve gigged regularly, more often in London than Oxford, but including a set at last year’s Oxford Punt, building a following drawn to their dark, epic, vaudevillian brand of rock that sweeps through Weimer-era music hall to a glammy form of gothic splendour and on through folk and wigged-out electronica.

Last month the band released their debut EP, a four-song melange of epic bluster, drunken revelry and intimate semi-autobiographical narrative entitled ‘Waltziche’, which is apparently a made-up German word that would, if it

existed, mean waltzish. Three of the four songs are in 3/4 or 6/8 time signatures. Tracks like the bolshy, portentous ‘Silence and Violence’ and the carouselling ‘Lover, I’m Finally Through’ mark Borderville out as one of the bands most likely to set the Oxford scene alight this year, and hopefully beyond.

## **CERTAINLY BORDERVILLE IS**

a band born of frustration more than affinity with the current dour state of UK music.

JOE: “All the interesting bands of the moment are from across the pond. Bands like Modest Mouse and Arcade Fire rightly flourish while here, British Sea Power and iLiKETRAiNS remain on the margins. Serious marketing money needs to be pumped into thoughtful, innovative British bands or our country’s music is doomed. We’re experiencing the arse-end of an indie scene – that’s never pretty.”

JAMES: “There’s too much repetitiveness – hearing the same things all over the place, and that’s coming from someone who likes techno!”

ARTHUR: “And Mockney indie bands. When will people get bored of them? Kate Nash and Jamie T should be sent to Afghanistan.”

WOODY: “London is full of these indie-electro bands that play Libertines-esque drivel over retarded beats and synth lines that sound like they’re played by a six-year-old on

an instrument designed for a four year old by a two year old.”

There remains a feeling that you’re striving for something epic, or at least more exotic than mere rock music.

WOODY: “We are generally of the opinion that more is more, and we shouldn’t do less when we can do more, unless by doing less we are creating more of a contrast between what is more and what is less so that what is more is even more relative to what is less so by doing less, we are in fact doing more. So yes, in that sense it is epic.”

JOE: “Regardless of calling it ‘prog’ or whatever, it’s all about the arrangement of our songs – finding that precise moment when a good song becomes great. We’re trying to get more economical – it shouldn’t have to always take us ten minutes to reach that transcendent moment. We’re getting better at it! One new song, ‘History Books’, clocks in at four minutes despite sounding hugely epic. And you could look at ‘She’s Not A Guitar’ as three separate songs really.”

## **WHILE THERE ARE MANY,**

myriad differences between Borderville and Joe and Phil’s old band, Sexy Breakfast, there is that similar feeling that the band are searching for something grander. What does Joe think are the essential differences?

JOE: “Sexy Breakfast was, at times, quite tempestuous. If the songs are better now it’s because I feel a lot more comfortable. It’s hard to play new songs to a band when you know they don’t like what you’re doing. I drew a line in the sand; most of them left. I couldn’t be happier how it’s ended up; every member of Borderville shares an instinctive understanding of how this kind of music should work. It’s also great to be disciplined enough to be able to use things like laptops and be able to swap instruments when the need arises.”

There’s an almost folk-like feel to some of the EP, notably ‘One Solitary Violin’, while ‘Lover, I’m Finally Through’ recalls Brecht and Brel; ‘She’s Not A Guitar’ seems to

veer from show tune to drum&bass experimentalism at will; how have your influences changed in recent times?

JOE: "At the Edinburgh Fringe in 2005 I had a Eureka moment, watching a cabaret singer called Camille O'Sullivan. Over the course of an hour in an antique mirror tent, she stormed through songs by Brel, Brecht, Bowie, Tom Waits, Nick Cave... bitter, passionate songs about the romance of decay – physical, emotional decay, syphilitic whores and drunken sailors, war songs, torch songs. It was profoundly moving and hugely entertaining. She finished off two bottles of wine between songs and ended in the middle of the crowd singing 'Is That All There Is?', a single spotlight shining on her as a single tear fell down her cheek. It is the single greatest performance I have ever seen. That, aesthetically at least, was precisely what I wanted."

WOODY: "I don't find it easy to identify musical influences. When I hear other people's music I'm aware of the individual ingredients that make up the sound, but more often than not it is the overall effect of these that dominates and defines a piece of music."

JOE: "Looking at our musical backgrounds, the theatrical rock stuff seems to come from myself and Arthur, whereas Woody and Phil are more classically minded and more into experimental stuff. James's background as a DJ obviously helps as he has a great understanding of how rhythms work. Not particularly enlightening: the creative process, when it works well, is much more complicated."

"Basically, the reason we're all in a band is to diversify the sound we can potentially make. I'd say we're all just about on the same page, but we inevitably all approach a song slightly differently. In truth, a musician is the least adept person to comment on their own music. If it were easy to pinpoint all our influences we'd be a shadow of the band we've become over the last few years. When people ask me what sort of band I'm in, I say glam rock, but closer to the truth would be to call it Glam X – glam is the prefix, the aesthetic rule, but the suffix – the genre – changes to complement the lyric and the emotional tone of the song. We're attempting to utilise a clear musical vocabulary. Making music is all about making decisions – the broader your musical pallet, the

more decisions you have to make, but the range of expressive devices can be virtually limitless."

**THE NAME BORDERVILLE** has obvious references to Vaudeville; is there a conscious attempt to bring some of that theatricality to the band's music and live show?

JOE: "There's no point in being coy about it. I see too many gigs where I'm bored senseless by static, introverted performances, even when the music itself is good."

JAMES: "Give us a big stage and a budget and we'll go mental."

JOE: "We're trying to tell a story: the songs are played in an order which gives the set a narrative arc, lyrically and musically. That's what gives us opportunities to be stylistically diverse while remaining true to some core themes, but there's a lot more I want to do. Theatricality is not just about costumes and makeup and dancing like a tit, after all. Our next set of songs is going to see a real step up in terms of what can be achieved within the confines of an album or a gig. Theatre is a dialogue; it requires an audience to be complicit in the drama unfolding on the stage. To somehow work

this into a live show is a really exciting idea for us."

If Borderville were a real town, what would it be like?

JOE: "Borderville is an historic town near to a big city. Parts of it are beautiful, but this does not always provide comfort, for it serves to make the run-down areas seem all the more bleak. The beauty in itself is an unstable artifice; a history of depravity and corruption is hewn into every sandstone brick of every gothic arch. In Borderville you never think you're having as good a time as you think you deserve, but trips to the big city end in desperate races towards chemical annihilation as if you're making up for lost time. It constantly defines its inhabitants whether they like it or not – if they rebel against the town it is in ways so predictable that the town seems to laugh back at them."

WOODY: "From a practical perspective, it does have a lot of cycle lanes. And the sandwich shops stay open late. Not just late, but really late, often all night."

ARTHUR: "It's basically like Abingdon, but better."

*'Waltziche' is out now. Check out [www.myspace.com/borderville](http://www.myspace.com/borderville) to hear tracks.*



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# RELEASED

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## MARY'S GARDEN

### 'Mind Control'

*(Own Label)*

Even as I sit to review this debut album from Mary's Garden outside it's blowing a hefty gale and banks of dark clouds are gathering on the horizon, ready to unleash their wintry downpour. How appropriate.

Mary's Garden are the band formed by former-Factory vocalist Laima Bite and guitarist Moty Dimant, and here they carry much of that previous band's gothic weight with them, stripping out some of the scouring Velvets-inspired drone and replacing it with a billowing stadium rock sense of epic bluster. Where with The Factory Laima's voice was the doomed songbird at the heart of the storm, here she leads the charge, her often beautifully limpid, strident voice riding over washes of fuzzed guitar and pounding keyboards, a powerful, dominating presence.

Mary's Garden's commercial potential seems to be limitless at times, their music might tread



close to overblown Euro-rock much of the time, but given the right break it's exactly the sort of sound that could see them selling several million albums. The bright sheen and polish of the album only very occasionally trips the wrong side of the line, notably the overwrought 'Staircase Man', that's so middle of the road it sounds like Elkie Brookes reborn into a dodgy

mid-80s soft-metal band. Contrast it to the album's opening number and title track, or the stylishly portentous 'Live In Your Head', with its lush synth lines and Laima's Tamsin Archer-like chirp and you can feel Mary's Garden really come alive.

Suitably for a band who seem to thrive on the build up and release of musical pressure, 'Mind Control' hits a peak and lets rip like those storm clouds on its final two numbers, the majestic 'Gasoline', with the post-punk synth sound cutting through the guitars like a knife as Laima's voice flowers into full rock goddess imperiousness, and 'Mary's Garden', which exhumes the bones of prime Sisters Of Mercy and fleshes them out with daydreaming folk melody.

Ultimately you feel that if Mary's Garden were German or Dutch they'd be headlining festivals across the continent by now. Coming from cynical scene-obsessed England they might have to battle harder to be taken seriously, but on this evidence they fully deserve every success.

**Ian Chesterton**

## THE PLAUDITS

### 'Regulation'

*(Squelch)*

A veteran of some half a dozen local bands (amongst them Counter Zero, Jod, The Cliffhangers and Red Star Cycle) Plaudits frontman Jeremy Leggett seems like a creatively restless musician, quickly tiring of his current project as his tastes change.

With The Plaudits' debut release, the jerky post-punk of Gang Of Four and XTC now seems to be the significant driving factor, at least on the title track of this four-song EP. Guitars fret and wobble as Jeremy does a fair impression of Young Knives' Henry Dartnell, at least until halfway through the song when the band seem to forget they're meant to be all awkward and start trying to be an anthemic Radio 2-friendly indie band, something they carry through to 'Tense', which sounds like nothing so much as Travis.

The moody, overwrought 'Measure Of You' hints at darker matters but never really gets out of second gear, although final track 'Judgement' hints at better things, returning to the sharp-elbowed shimmer of the early-80s nascent indie scene, albeit coated with more pop-friendly vocal harmonies.

A bit of a difficult one to decipher then, but

more than anything because The Plaudits don't seem to know themselves exactly where they want to be. Once they get that sorted, the rest of the pieces might fall more neatly into place.

**Sue Foreman**

## DANIEL HAMMERSLEY

### 'Choreographs EP'

*(Own Label)*

Daniel Hammersley is an Oxford University student inspired by the likes of Nick Drake and Jeff Buckley and this debut EP was recorded in a home studio in Shotover. So we're pretty certain we're not going to get an hour of extreme death metal, and so it proves. 'Choreographs' is as mellow and pastoral as you can imagine, Daniel's voice all hushed and breathless on lead track 'Dance With Me' as he dreamily recalls some ethereal ladyvision over economically-plucked acoustic guitar, softly cooing backing vocals and a nice bit of cello to give it all some weight.

It could be nauseatingly twee and sentimental, and to an extent it is, but it's accomplished enough to get soft-hearted daytime Radio 2 listeners swaying their hips along as they neck

another large sherry and contemplate why they didn't elope with that drug-dealing scamp with the motorbike in year 11 and married a fucking bank manager instead.

The rest of the EP, sadly, tends to sink into sub-James Blunt wistfulness too quickly and too comfortably, Daniel over-emoting and coming on all urgent when he wants to sound intense, even as the bland Fox FM-friendly ballads trickle out of the stereo like weak, milky tea.

In the modern cockney vernacular: what a soppy bollocks.

**Sue Foreman**



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Smile + Clour + Blitz Cartel

9<sup>th</sup> Oxford Improvisers present Tim Hill's Worlds  
Unknown

11<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club

12<sup>th</sup> Poor Girls Noise and Permanent Vacation  
presents Combofest with Bilge Pump + Helhesten +  
Zettasaur + Traktors + Chi Champions + Divine Coils  
+ Spoono

13<sup>th</sup> Will Knox + more

16<sup>th</sup> Nick Breakspear

17<sup>th</sup> Dirty Boys presents I Need To Discover + All  
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18<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club

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party. Support from **MINUTES + FORK +  
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26<sup>th</sup> **EXCESS** – Techno club night.

# GIG GUIDE

## TUESDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION:** The X, Cowley

## WEDNESDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**TOUTE SWEET:** The Purple Turtle

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Temple

## THURSDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**CAT MATADOR + OTOKO + THE**

**SIREN'S CALL:** The Cellar – Dramatic, misanthropic pop darkness from Cat Matador

*Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## **EQUITRUCK III: The Jericho Tavern**

Can't wait seven months for the next Truck Festival? Well how about a mini version, featuring a dozen of the sort of bands you'd expect to find playing the main event, but indoors because it's January and therefore blimmin cold (as opposed to July and pouring down with torrential rain, but that's by the by). Anyway, after two successful outings at the Port Mahon, Equitruck moves to the slightly larger Jericho Tavern and runs from 1pm through til midnight. Headliners for the day are the irrepressible Smilex, fresh from releasing their rather ace debut album, '7', and making out like a punch-up on Sunset Strip at closing time. Joining them will be pressure cooker noise machine Nought, sharp-elbowed pop-punk legends Dive Dive, former-Million Dead fella gone acoustic troubadour Frank Turner, sun-kissed alt.pop wonders Witches, blues and skiffle starlets Morrison Steam Fayre, goth-grunge monsters Ivy's Itch, dark-minded fuzz-rockers Harry Angel, post-rock manglers Sunnyvale, synth-pop krautrockers Space Heroes Of The People; magnificent garage blues glam-stompers Little Fish and piano-led classical rock hardcore newcomers Flies Are Spies From Hell. An excellent mixed bill, and all for £8 in aid of Truck-related charities. There's no better way to shake of the post-New Year gig hiatus and get back into the swing of things.

## JANUARY

headlining the first Big Hair gig of the year, plus Swindon's floaty indie types Otoko.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

## FRIDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**NERVOUS\_TESTPILOT:** The X, Cowley – Frantic breakbeat and sample mash-up from the Truck Festival favourite.

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**RAGGASAURUS + VIGILANCE BLACK**

**SPECIAL + TALC DEMONS + JEREMY:**

**The Wheatsheaf** – Dub reggae-meets-North African folk music in Raggasaurus' exotic world of dance at tonight's reliably eclectic Klub Kak. Elegantly dark rockers VBS return for a rare gig in support.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon – Weekly club night playing classic soul, funk and disco.

**DUGOUT:** The Cellar – Soul, rare groove and funk club night.

**THE MACHIAVELLIS + VOID:** The Purple Turtle

## SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**QUICKFIX ALL-DAYER:** The Port Mahon

– Quickfix Records rock all-dayer with recently-reformed local grunge rockers Verbal Kink headlining, plus metalcore monsters Xmas Lights, Killing Joke-inspired punk behemoths Headcount, doomy metallers Beelzebobo, plus sets from Black Powder, Desert Storm, Scoundrels, Pistol Kixx and Missing Leg Compartment.

**SCRIPT + BARRY & THE**

**BEACHCOMBERS + JAMES BELL:** The

**X, Cowley** – Dark-edged country rocking

from Script, with oddball support from

weird-punk collective Barry & The

Beachcombers.

**MELTING POT with BLACK HATS + THE**

**FURZE + LITTLE VILLAINS + THE**

**FOLLYS:** The Jericho Tavern – Melodic 60s-styled pop in the vein of The Jam, Stone Roses and La's from headliners Black Hats at tonight's Melting Pot club. They're joined by pop-punkers The Furze, Libertines-influenced rockers Little Villains and harmony-heavy popstrels The Follys.

**NAGATHA KRUSTI + SAVAGE HENRY:**

**The Purple Turtle** – Ska-punk from Nagatha Krusti.

## SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

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

## MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**RESERVOIR CATS:** The Bullingdon – Good-time hard-rocking electric blues from long-standing local guitar favourite Tony Jezzard and crew.

**DECIBELS + COLLISIONS &**

**CONSEQUENCES + SECOND SMILE +**

**CLOUR + BLITZ CARTEL:** The Port

**Mahon**

## TUESDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz. Tonight's guests are The Hugh Turner Band.

**SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION:** The X, Cowley

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

## WEDNESDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**TIM HILL'S WORLDS UNKNOWN:** The Port Mahon – Oxford Improvisers session with special guest Tim Hill (from Tongues of Fire) on saxophone, playing alongside drummer Steve Noble and bassist Dominic Lash.

**SHIRLEY WEDNESDAY with STEVE & SEV + LOVEHATELOGIC + SHIRLEY:**

**The X, Cowley** – Local power-pop champs Shirley continue their quest to make the whole world dance, tonight with some help from Leamington's urgent blues rockers Lovehatelogic.

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Temple

**MARTHA ROSWELL:** The Purple Turtle – Acoustic night.

## THURSDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**VESSELS + HREDA + VON BRAUN:** The Cellar – Atmospheric, glacial drone-pop from headliners Vessels, plus math-rock jiggery from Hreda and turbulent alt.rock from Von Braun in support.

**RUBBER DUCK:** Thirst Lodge – Funk, rock and reggae.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

## FRIDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**GAMMY LEG PRODUCTIONS with INFLATABLE BUDDHA + KANUTE + MINUTES:** The X, Cowley – Slam poetry, Eastern European folk dance and experimental pop madness make up the spectacle that is Inflatable Buddha, a reassuringly eccentric presence on the local scene. Kanute support with their downbeat, smoky jazz-pop, along with melodic guitar-pop types Minutes.

**THE COURTESY KILL:** The Wheatsheaf – Quickfix Records night with local goth-grunge hopefuls Courtesy Kill.

**BOSSAPHONIK:** The Cellar – Live jazz dance with Barcode.





**TAILFIN + THE BRAMPTONS + CHALK + B-PHIL:** The Jericho Tavern – Unsigned bands showcase.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + SEV & STEVE + TOMMO:** The Magdalen – The non-stop gigging machine that is The Mighty Redox bring their festival funk and witchy swamp rock to the Mag with support from madcap bluesman Pete Fryer and indie rockers Film Noir.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon TOY #1 + INLIGHT: The Purple Turtle** – Local rock double bill.

## **SATURDAY 12<sup>th</sup>**

**EQUITRUCK: The Jericho Tavern (1pm)** – The third annual Equittruck with a dozen local and out of town acts across the day. Smilex headline – *see main preview*

**COMBOFEST: The Port Mahon (4pm)** – Permanent Vacation and Poor Girl Noise team up for an extended session of noise and experimentalism, featuring Bilge Pump and more – *see main preview*

**WITTSTOCK FUNDRAISER: The X, Cowley** – Fundraiser for the annual summer free festival; bands tbc.

*Saturday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## **COMBOFEST: The Port Mahon**

Another joint promotion from Poor Girl Noise and Permanent Vacation, twin champions of all things noisy and experimental in Oxford. Today's extended session features a headline set from Leeds' fantastic Bilge Pump (*pictured*), a frenetic and dirty blues, hardcore and math-rock three-piece taking in elements of Fugazi and Big Black as well as something lowdown and lo-fi from the swamps of Louisiana. Joining them will be London-Cambridge outfit Helhesten, creating menacingly dissonant jazz-drone improvisation; Brighton's wired post-hardcore noisemakers Zettasaur; Milton Keynes' Hella-inspired spazzy post-rockers Chi Champions; atmospheric local dronemeisters Divine Coils, plus industrial brutalists Traktors, featuring Youthmovies' Stephen Hammond. There's also some acoustic respite in the form of London guitarist Spoono. Things kick off at 4pm and run through til midnight so it's a challenging session, but one well worth losing your hearing for.



**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL: Modern Art Oxford** – Uncurated open festival weekend for local musicians and artists, with bands to be confirmed.

**SKINNYMAN: The Cellar** – North London's stoner-friendly rapper Skinnyman returns to live action after his latest 'Live Right' release after 2004's acclaimed debut album, 'Council Estate Of Mind'.

**ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN: The New Theatre** – Spectacular tribute to Freddie, Brian, Roger and the other one.

## **SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup>**

**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL: Modern Art Oxford** – Bands to be confirmed.

**MEAN POPPA LEAN + KOJO + THE YOUNGS PLAN: The Purple Turtle** – Funk, soul and rock from MPL, plus electro-funk from Kojo and proggy indie noise from Youngs Plan.

**WILL KNOX: The Port Mahon**

## **MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup>**

**EASY TIGER: The Bullingdon** – Southern-fried rock and boogie in the vein of Lynyrd Skynyrd from the local good-time supergroup, led by singer Ady Davey.

## **TUESDAY 15<sup>th</sup>**

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Live jazz from Alvin Roy and Reeds Unlimited.

**SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley**

## **WEDNESDAY 16<sup>th</sup>**

**NICK BREAKSPEAR: The Port Mahon** – Acoustic set from the Black Hats frontman.

**GREEN: The Cellar** – Hip hop club night.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple TREV WILLIAMS + ALICE DOYNE: The Purple Turtle** – Acoustic night.

## **THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup>**

**I NEED TO DISCOVER + ALL THESE ARMS + WHISTLER + BALLY'S ATTIC: The Port Mahon** – Disco-friendly math-rocking from Lincoln's boy/girl duo I Need To Discover.

**THE LIGHTS: Thirst Lodge** – Melodic indie rocking from Reading's Lights.

**ELECTRICITY: The Cellar** – Club night with D.I.M and the Fresh Out Of Death sound system.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

## **FRIDAY 18<sup>th</sup>**

**ATHLETE: The Academy** – More plaintive wonderings from Deptford's Christian soft-rockers, out on tour to promote recent album, 'Beyond The Neighbourhood'.

**LES CLOCHARDS + DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + MAEVE BAYTON: The X, Cowley** – Sweet, jangly Gallic folk-pop from Les Clochards, plus Tom Waits-inspired blues from Brickwork Lizards chap Desmond Chancer, and folk and blues from songstress Maeve Bayton.

**FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar** – House and breakbeats with Finger Lickin' Records' Brothers Bud.



*Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## **YOAV:**

## **The Jericho Tavern**

YOAV is an acoustic singer-songwriter, but one with a difference. Born in Israel to Romanian Jewish parents, he grew up in a religiously intolerant Cape Town before relocating to New York. While trying to busk in Central Park, under the influence of magic mushrooms, he developed his trademark style of creating rhythms on the body of his acoustic guitar, something he's since developed with the use of delay pedals and the like. His vocal and melodic style leans towards Damien Rice, stripped-down and melancholic, but equally soulful and inspired by the r'n'b and hip hop work of Neptunes and Timbaland and Massive Attack's dark trip hop. Add in the odd Pixies cover and YOAV isn't just another Bob Dylan or David Gray wannabe. Recently signed to Rollo from Faithless' Field Recordings label and having toured with Tori Amos, his debut album, 'Charmed And Strange' is released this month.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon LIDDINGTON + STRAIGHTJACKET: The Jericho Tavern** – Melancholic indie-folk from the headliners.

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

**MARY'S GARDEN + MINUTES + FORK + LOVE HATE LOGIC: The Bullingdon** – Album launch gig for local goth-rocking starlets Mary's Garden, with support from prog-punkers Fork and more.



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*Thursday 24<sup>th</sup>*

## STONE GODS:

### The Academy

Anyone here remember The Darkness? Okay, okay, anyone here remember The Darkness without breaking into a cold sweat or howls of derisive laughter? Well anyway, after tight-trouser frontman Justin Hawkins departed the rest of the band had the choice of bugging off to work in KFC or wherever, or getting back in the rock and roll saddle. And so bassist Richie Edwards assumed guitar and vocal duties in The Stone Gods, while Dan Hawkins takes the lead guitar role. Meanwhile, erstwhile-Graham Coxon bandmate Toby McFarlane has come in on bass. The band only played their first gig at the end of November but have since played a short tour in support of Thin Lizzy, and tonight's show is part of their first headline tour, promoting debut EP 'Burn The Witch'. The song itself is a dead-ringer for early-80s Iron Maiden, and the band veer from classic metal to FM rock and - gulp - ballads, but for anyone who frets over the progress hard rock has made in the last 25 years, here's a reminder of how it used to be played.

**A SILENT FILM + SPEED CIRCUS + RIPTIDES:** The Academy – Epic but intimate rock out of the top drawer from rising local favourites A Silent Film, with support from London-based Clash and Oasis-inspired rockers Speed Circus.

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

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND:** The Cavalier, Marston  
**JONNY DARE:** The Purple Turtle

### SUNDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**ELECTRIC JAM:** The X, Cowley

### MONDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**KING B:** The Bullingdon – Lively electric blues from the local crew fronted by singer Claire Johnson.

**OPERAHOUSE:** The Jericho Tavern – Spiky indie rocking from Camden's post-Libertines hopefuls.

**THE BULLY WEE BAND:** Nettlebed Folk Club – Traditional Scottish folk from the recently reformed band.

### TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**DAVID FORD:** The Academy – Eastbourne's travelling folk troubadour in the vein of Ryan Adams and Bright Eyes takes to the UK's roads again after spending much of the last couple of years touring the States and Australia, the appropriately-titled 'Songs For The Road' is out now.

**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon – Keyboardist Howard Peacock and his jazz quintet are the guests tonight.

**SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION:** The X, Cowley

### WEDNESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**YOAV:** The Jericho Tavern – Globetrotting Israeli singer-guitarist with unusual beatboxing style – *see main preview*

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Temple

**HIT & RUN:** The Cellar

### THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**STONE GODS:** The Academy – Former-Darkness chaps keep on rocking and rolling – *see main preview*

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB:** The Wheatsheaf – With special guests The Joel Harrison Quartet.

**THE DONUT KINGS:** The Bullingdon – Oxford University jazz band.

**FOXES!:** The Cellar – A return to Oxford from the one-time local indie janglers now relocated to Brighton.

**JOHN THE YARNS:** The Port Mahon

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

### FRIDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**ELLIOT MINOR:** The Academy – Former Yorkminster choristers branch out into the world of major label-approved punk-pop in the vein of Good Charlotte and All American Rejects, out on tour after supporting McFly and performing on BBC's Children In Need evening. Gallows, they ain't.

**SLIDE:** The Academy – Oxford's premier house club night - which recently celebrated its 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary – hosts DJ sets from Layo and Bushwacka.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon

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

**JAZZ JAM:** The X, Cowley

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR:** Chester Arms

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

**THE VICE + HOUSE OF BLUE DOLLS:** The Jericho Tavern

### SATURDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**NORTH SEA RADIO ORCHESTRA + THE EPSTEIN + STORNOWAY + STUTI MEHTA:** Jacqueline du Pre Building – Sublime chamber pop from London's 20-strong ensemble North Sea Radio Orchestra, drawing on influences as disparate as Eno,

Godspeed, Kate Bush, Bert Jansch and Vaughan Williams. Local talents Stornoway and The Epstein provide more rockist support.

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with EDUARD SOUNDING BLOCK + UNTITLED 1961 + DAVID K FRAMPTON:**

**The Wheatsheaf** – Prog-core explorations from Eduard Sounding Block in the style of King Crimson scrapping it out with Dillinger Escape Plan at tonight's typically eclectic GTI session. Support comes from London's fidgety math-rockers Untitled 1961 and local electro brutalist David K Frampton.

**TEDDY THOMPSON:** The Academy – Genteel acoustic folk-pop from the offspring of English folk legends Richard and Linda Thompson, back at the Academy after supporting Seth Lakeman and showcasing songs from his new classic country covers album.

**EXCESS:** The Bullingdon – techno night.

**A&E LINE:** The Port Mahon

**INSPECTED BY TEN + DEATH BY ORCHESTRA + VON BRAUN:** Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Skittle Alley club night.

*Monday 28<sup>th</sup>*

## BRITISH SEA

### POWER: The Academy

Easy to forget amid the success of Editors and iLiketains et al. that Brighton's British Sea Power pretty much kick-started the current new wave revival with their excellent 'Do You Remember Me' single. A slow and steady rise has been their just reward, earning themselves a fanatical cult following who see nothing unusual in bringing their own extravagant foliage along to gigs to complement the band's own quirky stage sets. Add in some eccentric pastoral pursuits (campaigning for the reinstatement of manned lighthouses and an obsession with ornithology) and you might suspect BSP are just a bunch of art-school chancers, but their music outshines such distractions, drawing on the dark-hearted post-punk of Joy Division and Echo & The Bunnymen as well as the likes of The Wedding Present. New album, 'Do You Like Rock Music?', is, ironically, their least rock and roll affair to date, swapping the more sinister elements of old for a lush, orchestral form of chamber pop, still led by singer Yan's literary lyricism, but live at least, still willing and able to crank up a splendidly epic cacophony.





*Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup>*

## BLACK KIDS: The Jericho Tavern

This could well turn out to be one of those tell-your-grandchildren gigs if the current hype surrounding Black Kids is to be believed. Even though the Florida-based five-piece have never even toured, their free to download debut EP, 'Wizard Of Ahhhs', has got the music industry on both sides of the Atlantic in a right old lather, creating a buzz similar to that which greeted Arcade Fire a couple of years back. And the similarity doesn't end there, Black Kids are possessed of a similar orchestral clamour to Montreal's finest, coupled with a wonderfully uplifting sense of pop joy akin to Go! Team. The band's best song, 'I'm Not Going To Teach Your Boyfriend How To Dance', is the meeting point between The Cure's most pop-friendly moments, New Order and Motown – soul and disco grooves, synth-pop and classic 80s indie all rolled very neatly into one. The band name is partially misleading with only singer Reggie Youngblood and keyboard-playing sister Ali being black. But it's music unconfined by such boundaries anyway, and when Black Kids return in months to come, packing out the Academy, you can smugly tell everyone you were here.

**HQ: The Cellar** – Drum&bass club night with Saburuko, Will Miles and Big Bud.

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

**DUBWISER + SUNSHINE**

**BROTHERS: The Jericho Tavern** – Local reggae legends Dubwiser come out of hiding once again for a reliably party-friendly mix of roots, ragga and dancehall. Australian dub, soul and roots troupe Sunshine Brothers support.

**BEARD MUSEUM: The Purple Turtle** – More sweet-natured, eclectic pop majesty from local heroes Witches.

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

**BRITISH SEA POWER: The Academy** – Literary new wave pop from the Brighton ornithologists – *see main preview*

**PALLADIUM: The Academy** – Joy upon joy upon joy, jazz-rockers Palladium return to town, touting their heady blend of Level 42, Toto and Zoot Woman as if it's something to be proudly aired in public, rather than hidden in shame, like an overgrown goiter. Their increasing popularity is merely confirmation that some people shouldn't be allowed to vote, breed or leave the house unaccompanied.

**PETE BOSS & THE**

**BLUEHEARTS: The Bullingdon** – Contemporary electric blues from the local guitarist and long-time vocal partner Tex Elmore.

**JEZ LOWE: Nettlebed Folk Club**  
**TUESDAY 29<sup>th</sup>**

**BLACK KIDS: The Jericho Tavern** – Florida's new pop sensation – *see main preview*

**TOM BAXTER: The Academy** – Tender acoustic folk-pop and grandiose balladry from the singer-songwriter, inspired by the likes of Jeff Buckley and Paul McCartney.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – With renowned singer Alison Bentley.

**SHUSH OPEN MIC SESSION: The X, Cowley**

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

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

**CLUB DUB: The Cellar** – Reggae and dub club night.

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

**SIMIAN MOBILE DISCO: The Academy** – Acid house retro disco from duo James Ford and Jas Shaw, still riding high on the back of club hit 'We Are Your Friends' and

having worked with Arctic Monkeys, Klaxons, Go! Team and Mystery Jets.

**ALLY CRAIG + COGWHEEL DOGS +**

**SPOKANE: The X, Cowley** – Jeff Buckley gets mangled by Sonic Youth in Ally Craig's highly individual remake of the singer-songwriter blueprint. Ace local songstress Rebecca Mosley supports with Cogwheel Dogs.

**ECLECTIC CIRCUS: The Bullingdon**

**PARAGON: The Wheatsheaf**

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**ELECTRICITY: The Cellar** – With DJ sets from Lee Mortimer and TJ Hertz.

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The Bullingdon: 01865 244516  
The Wheatsheaf: 01865 721156  
The X: 01865 776431  
The Cellar: 01865 244761  
The New Theatre: 0870 606 3500  
The Port Mahon: 01865 202067  
The Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775  
Brookes Union: 01865 484750  
The Purple Turtle: 01865 247086  
The Temple: 01865 243251  
East Oxford Community Centre: 01865 792168

## NIGHTSHIFT

**PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**

**Tel: 01865 372255**

**email: [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net)**

**Online: [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net)**

*Editor: Ronan Munro*

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

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# LIVE

## SUPERGRASS / LITTLE FISH

### Oxford Town Hall

What a year 2007 has been for Little Fish, starting it as complete unknowns and ending it supporting local legends Supergrass at their biggest gig to date. Typical perhaps that in their moment of triumph singer Julia has the flu and can barely talk between songs (but hey, it adds an extra dimension to their song 'Sweat And Shiver'). Incredibly, though, it doesn't affect her singing voice – a thing of wonder that the more we hear it the more it reminds us of a young Patti Smith. Truly there is no greater compliment.

Of course time was that Supergrass were the most promising young band in Oxford. Weird to think that they're now something akin to Godfathers of the new wave of UK indie, a major influence on the likes of Arctic Monkeys, whom they supported last summer at Old Trafford. That was all before bassist Mick Quinn fell from a balcony in France and put himself out of action for several months. Replacing Mick for these two special homecoming shows in the suitably grandiose setting of the Town Hall, is Gaz and Rob Coombes' brother Charlie, latterly of Tumbleweed, and tonight playing bass lines on keyboards, something that takes none of the vim away from even the most rocking tracks.

With the stage decorated in fairy lights and Christmas trees, it is only

ever going to be a party and a Greatest Hits set peppered with tracks from their forthcoming new album has a festive crowd lapping it up.

They open with new single 'Diamond Hoo Ha Man', classic Supergrass – all Bowie-esque glam rocking spat out with punk vigour, something they've honed to near perfection over the past decade, borrowing riffs from Led Zeppelin or The Who and making them fresh and vital, imbued with a cocky swagger. 'Richard III' is a bulldozing thrash monster, as heavy as any pop hit has a right to be, while 'Pumping On Your Stereo' is a stomping celebratory roustabout. 'Caught By The Fuzz' has lost nothing with the familiarity of time, a genuine teen anthem with few equals in modern rock music. It provokes the first pogo pit of the night, which carries on through 'Strange Ones'.

Contemplation sits more awkwardly with Supergrass as the short acoustic segment, just Gaz and Rob, demonstrates, but even here 'St Petersburg' is an undeniably pretty tune. Soon enough they're back in the fray with 'Moving'. Of the new songs, 'Bad Blood', with its Bo Diddley chug, and '345', a song about the band's early days living on Cowley Road, stand out.

Gaz wishes Mick – sat up in the



Photo: pphimages

balcony – a merry Christmas and as the glorious psychedelic pop fantasy that is 'Sun Hits The Sky' makes way for a knockabout version of 'Silent Night' a pair of Santas throw sweets into the exuberant throng. Maybe Supergrass are this generation's Slade – a band with an armoury of

great rock songs that goes far beyond the few throwaway hits most people recognise them for. On this evidence they have a similarly indefatigable ability to warm a crowd on the coldest of winter nights. Merry Christmas Everybody.

**Dale Kattack**

## THE LONDON GYPSY ORCHESTRA

### The Academy

A little disappointingly, they aren't *really* gypsies. It would have been deeply refreshing to see a group who, in the normal run of things, find themselves debarred from pubs and clubs in what is the most socially sanctioned form of racial discrimination presiding over such a venue. Hey-ho, it seems that those days are still to come.

Eschewing the soap-dodging pickpocket image that is advertised in the Daily Mail, the London Gypsy Orchestra instead recreate the romantic fantasy of gypsedom, all exoticism and spice and fiery-blooded camaraderie. Ring-led by violinist and founding member Gundula Gruen, an appropriately flamboyant ensemble of about forty multi-generations wield wind, brass and

string, together with bits of esoterica such as the goblet drum. Assorted singers take turns to lend their lungs to traditional folksongs. In this fashion they traverse Eastern Europe, marking out an itinerant's itinerary across its musical history. Turkey, Macedonia, Hungary and Russia are all visited in a set that includes 'Petyorushka', 'Jovano Jovanke' and 'Kalinka', which has also found fame as Chelsea FC's pre-match pep-tune. Most memorable is the Romanian song which begins the second half. Violins and accordions creak out the creepy kind of sweetness you can imagine spiders waltzing to, before the pace is upped and the whole thing takes off in a riotous shindig. It's this sense of revelry and drama that makes them

so winsome. Combined with the skipping and hand-clapping of the folky audience, it's enough to make you feel as though you're caught up in a Romany remake of *The Wicker Man*. Which is clearly no bad thing.

In spite of the inevitable novelty factor, and although it's doubtful they'd have enough Romany blood between them to sate a flea, there's nonetheless a sense of *genuineness* about the London Gypsy Orchestra. They come across like a big sprawling family who probably do this kind of thing all the time for fun, sitting round a fire in a field far removed from the urban confines of gig venues. They're the kind of gypsies you'd dream of running away with – safe in the knowledge that their free-spirited carnival is unlikely to be marred by a history of persecution.

**Emily Gray**





## CSS / METRONOMY / JOE LEAN AND THE JING JANG JONG

### **The Academy**

There are two things you need to know about Joe Lean And The Jing Jang Jong: they have a shit name, and they are shit. Could a band be any more jaw-droppingly, gob-smackingly, teeth-grindingly, buttock-clenchingly generic? Imagine watering down Razorlight like a weak lemon drink, diluting them a bit more and you've got Joe Lean, former drummer with The Pipettes, and his pointless, pointless little band with all their skinny swagger and *faux*-intellectual posturing. Okay, so they have one thing in their favour: they're slightly better than The Courteeners. There, they can stick that quote on the album sleeve.

Last time we encountered Metronomy they were supporting Foals and we decided they were our favourite new band. Tonight, though, they don't seem to cut such a dash. Tracks like 'You Could Easily Have Me', where the synth sound is harshest, still sound superb – partway between Devo and Fad Gadget – but there are times when you wonder if it's all just another scam concocted by Vince from *The Mighty Boosh*. Worse, one track even sounds like Hall & Oates. We'll give them the benefit of the doubt for now.

Tonight is part of CSS's special Christmas tour and they've brought the party: quite literally, since the stage is decked in balloons and tinsel and the band hit the stage dressed as giant presents. Weirdly Lovefoxxx spends the first song looking like she's wearing the world's largest cotton wool ball on her head. Initially the set fails to sparkle as brightly as Lovefoxxx's gold catsuit, CSS plagued by similar sound problems that ruined their last Oxford gig at Brookes, but when 'Meeting Paris Hilton' and 'Alcohol' are allowed to shine through, the fun really starts.

Like Metronomy CSS are rooted in the 80s, but here it's Toni Basil's cheerleader pop and The B52s' bubblegum rockabilly that make up an irresistible cocktail. Tracks from the band's debut album maybe suffer a little from over-familiarity now, but that's only because they're pop gold in the first place and therefore everywhere you look or listen, from 6Music to CBeebies. Highlight of tonight's gig, though, is a cool cover of L7's classic 'Pretend We're Dead'. After this tour, the band head back to Brazil to record their follow-up album. Whether it's another work of electro-disco brilliance or we never hear from them again, CSS have left us half a dozen moments to cherish.

*Sue Foreman*

## ELAPSE-O / PLEASE / PNAK

### **The Bullingdon**

We've often supposed that Autechre came up with their song titles when they were losing at Scrabble – "Of course it's a word, it's a track on our new album!" – and Pnak must have got their name from the same place. Names, however, seem unimportant when the first track consists of gloriously greasy electronic tones smeared over some sprightly drumming, and sounds like Fripp & Eno's 'No Pussyfooting' being played at the same time as 'Teach Yourself Afrobeat'; a couple of vocal loops aside this sets the tone for the whole of Pnak's deeply satisfying performance. The abstract tones that are generated from a single Casio keyboard are incredibly visceral and inventive, and even if the drums could do with being a little more decisive, the effect is a surefire winner.

The more pronounceable Please use two tremolo-heavy guitars and a pounding drumkit to make the sort of cross-eyed rockabilly you might get if The Blue Orchids tried

to play The Shadows. We find ourselves deeply in favour of this, at least until one of them starts singing, and a random selection of squeaks, groans and burps gets in the way of what could be knockout instrumentals. Shut your mouth, boy, and you've got a hell of a band.

Local experimental favourites Elopse-O get rid of the drums, and play seriously fuzzed and reverbed guitar and bass over chugging pre-recorded rhythms, whilst the odd '50s ultra-slapback vocal makes an appearance. The formula is one part shoe-gazing hum to two parts Suicide's plastic Elvis trundle, which ought to be a recipe for sonic success, but ends up dull, grey and rather annoying. Perhaps the slightly flat sound of a nearly empty Bully sucks some of the life from the set, but it doesn't look as though they had much suckable life the outset. This gig didn't entice, excite or develop, it just elapsed. Oh.

*David Murphy*

## SETSUBUN BEAN UNIT

### **The Academy**

If you're the kind of person who burned out taking the acid test with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, only to find the wheels have fallen off your psychedelic bus halfway up Mount Fujiama, then this incongruous and wrong-footing reconstruction of hippie space funk and Japanese folk songs should be right up your hubble-bubble pipe.

Setsubun Bean Unit, a collective formed by sometime Bellowhead and Farmyard Animals trio Gideon Jucker, Pete Flood and Brendan Kelly, plus a cast of Japanese musician and dancers, are what you might hear underwater if you were a goldfish living with Tim Turan and the Aquabats in a thin-walled terraced house situated between the PMT music shop and a sushi restaurant.

On stage, among this nine-piece collective, Juckles is playing extended birth-inducing tuba solos, while drummer Flood is twitching and flailing like Ozzy Osbourne driving a clown car over a cattle grid. Meanwhile three women in full

geisha dress are harmonising over a Dreadzone dub beat as played by The Egg.

Of course it's very easy to be comically stereotypical in this Klub Kakofanny of world music, that has more triangle and xylophone action in it than you could shake a nunchaku at, but amongst all the papier-mâché dragons and robots there is a subtle, twisted genius at work in Setsubun Bean Unit's culturally cross-pollinating tracks like 'Gujo Ondo' and 'Rettsu Kissu'.

And, for me, still hugging my formal chromatic scales to my bosom, it's in this cultural area that I am a winner, having learned that Setsubun Bean Unit is not Frank Zappa's nephew, but is indeed a spring festival in Japan banishing the demons of winter, and so from the stage the audience are showered in several tubfuls of dried black-eyed beans, most of which end up down my collar and going home with me in my pants. But hey, Kimono my House!

*Paul Carrera*

# THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES

## CHRISTMAS PARTY

### The Bullingdon

The Famous Monday Blues ends its twenty-third year with a bang and yet another impressive multinational line-up. Taka Boom is Chaka Khan's sister, not that you'd need telling as her looks, voice and stage presence are uncannily familiar. Her career dates back to the 70s, from backing vocals on Parliament and Funkadelic LPs through disco to some great thumping house tunes, including collaborations with Joey Negro. With her taut, professional backing band Blaze she storms through an original set that highlights her soul roots, particularly on the marvellous, downtempo 'Damn Your Eyes'.

Next on stage is a bloke from Leighton Buzzard who looks like a train driver, clutching a guitar. Giles Hedley very nearly steals the show with effortless blues licks and an amazing voice that conjures up Andy Fairweather-Low or even Captain Beefheart. He obviously totally loves what he's doing, though I bet he'd be earning more doing the Christmas post. Broad smiles all round seem to be tonight's theme, plus the joy of realising that people over student age still go out to

gigs. Or maybe I've just been spending too much time in The Academy.

Local girl Clare Johnson belts out some fine numbers with a clear, powerful voice, but she'd probably sound better away from such stiff competition. Bruce Parker, meanwhile, throws himself into a short set of standards like 'Stand By Me' with gusto, though there's too much great original material aired tonight to get too involved.

Another unexpected change of direction comes from LeBurn and his trio, playing a blues-rock-funk hybrid (complete with slap bass for *Mighty Boosh* fans). Originally from Monterey, now settled in Somerset, he tips a hat to Living Colour and James 'Blood' Ulmer and would justify the ticket price on his own. Taka hasn't stopped dancing at the side of the stage all night and joins everyone for a rousing 'Signed, Sealed, Delivered'. A fitting end to a great night, and a reminder that Oxford's best club nights are to be found well away from the weekend. Here's to the next twenty-three years.

*Art Lagun*

## SCOUT NIBLETT / DEVASTATIONS

### The Academy

The long and winding queue outside the Academy promises a packed venue tonight; it's only when we've made the trudge up those familiar sticky stairs that we start to realise that ukuleles might be slightly more popular than we'd imagined. To say that the audience tonight is thin on the ground would be something of an understatement. One can only imagine why so many people would want to clamour for the entire orchestra of ukuleles currently twanging away downstairs but we find it far less terrifying to force those thoughts from our minds.



photo by Sam Shepherd


Attempting to encourage the scant audience is a hard sell at the best of times, but to give Devastations their due, they do try several times to tempt him forward. The knowledge that they are fighting a losing battle does fill them with a certain amount of vim however, and the songs from their rather disappointing album 'Yes, U' suddenly find themselves a far more interesting proposition. They become more threatening as the performance progresses, as indeed do the band, who look like they could take on all-comers by the end of their dense, Nick Cave-inspired dirges.

Scout Niblett is unwell, but unlike some she doesn't try to garner sympathy. If anything the chest infection she's got adds an additional edge to her pained vocals. The problem tonight is not with her performance, it's the atmosphere in the room. These sparse songs should inspire silence of a kind, but it should be an awed hush rather than the echoing void of a far from full room. As such, songs from her album, 'This Fool Can Die Now', have far less impact than perhaps they should. The likes of the grunge-inflected 'Nevada' still have the power to make the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end though, and when Scout really lets go she can make you wonder how such simple little songs can be so affecting. It doesn't happen quite enough tonight, but we're willing to accept a note from her mum and let her off.

*Sam Shepherd*

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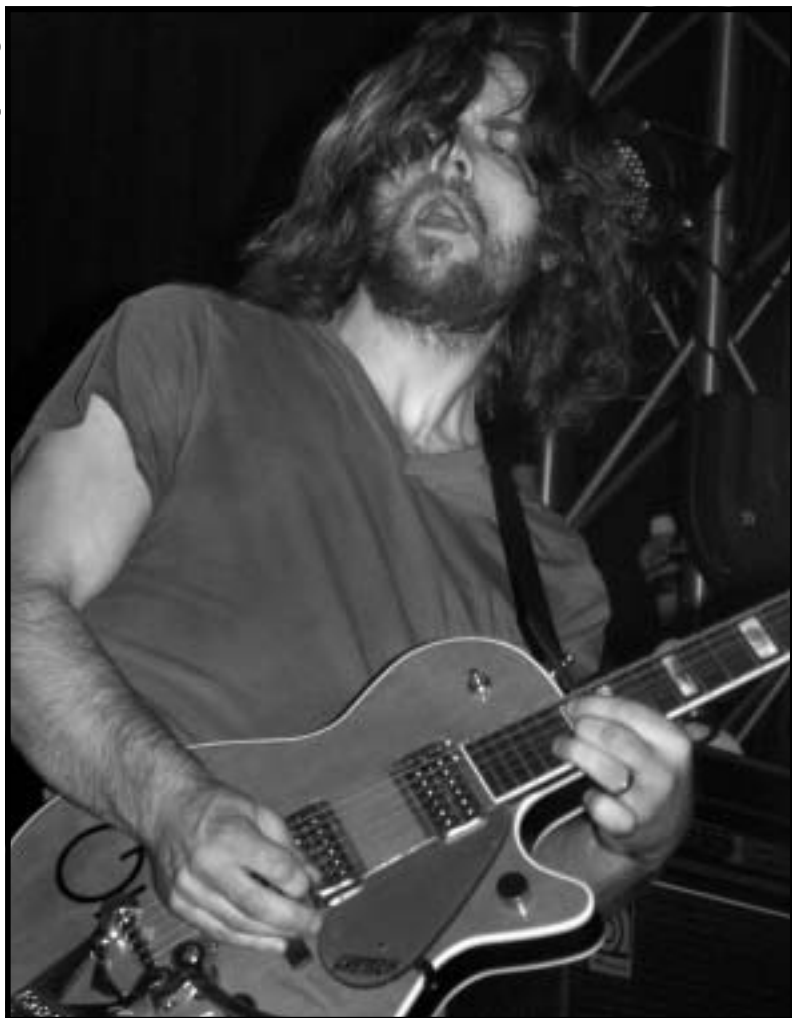
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## MINUS THE BEAR

### The Academy

The worst thing about attending an ace gig is having to suffer through sub-standard support. Which makes it heartening to hear, upon arrival, the singer from Minus The Bear announce that support act I Was A Cub Scout were forced to pull out – as if it were a bad thing, when in reality, I wouldn't inflict that conga line of suckholes on my worst enemy. The main event, however, is pure magic.

Kudos to the sound desk personnel first of all, for wiring the drums up to within an inch of their lives, adding a snappiness to proceedings rarely experienced. Actually, most of the set is remarkably like jumping on a bouncy castle (officially the most fun outside of sex and substance abuse), with vocalist Jake Snider possessing a wonderfully choral cadence that is unfortunately only hinted at live, and much better encapsulated on record. If Minus the Bear were even remotely popular outside the indie circuit, tonight could easily be construed as a by-line for a Greatest Hits set. In fact, with the barely-there anti-riff of 'The Fix' followed closely by arch-singalong track 'Drilling', the festival of numbers sees the band in danger of blowing their collective load. This actually almost occurs mid set, as couple of duds from recent release 'Planet Of Ice' are rolled out to minimal fanfare.

With media exposure on the up and up for the band, a few lazy journo's have latched on to the spacey Pink Floyd influence amongst the new recordings. A more accurate assessment is that the band have become a bit lazy themselves. Perhaps it's the departure of seminal member Matt Bayles, but they have certainly toned down a large percentage of their more math-rock aspects. Nevertheless, at the risk of sounding like an "I like your old stuff better than your new stuff" curmudgeon, I must point out that a bad Minus The Bear song is still ten times more enjoyable than most of what is circulating in the charts right now.

*Matt Bayliss*

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## EMMA POLLOCK

### The Jericho Tavern

Glaswegian geniuses The Delgados were that rarest of beasts: a resolutely non-parochial British indie band with a vision and ambition to match those of the Americans. 'The Great Eastern', and in particular 'Hate', exhibited a masterful grasp of dynamics and dramatics. Every song was possessed with poise, beauty and grace, simultaneously bleak in outlook but lush and seductive in execution.

The hopeless romantics split in 2005, soon after the release of fifth LP 'Universal Audio', and now singer/guitarist Emma Pollock is touring in support of 'Watch The Fireworks', her first full-length release as a solo artist.

In many ways, it's an unfortunate choice of title; there may not be any damp squibs, but there aren't many jaw-droppingly explosive moments either. Neatly-crafted songs like 'Paper and Glue' and piano-led single 'Adrenaline' continue along the route towards contentedly centrist pop signposted by 'Universal Audio' rather than blasting off into the stratosphere. There's little sense of

being enveloped in that familiar sumptuous gloom, or of Pollock's accompanying trio of impeccably coifed toy-boys being anything more than a backing band of hired hands, as is illustrated when they're dispensed with for a period mid-set, forced to make their way awkwardly off the front of the Jericho's stage and into the crowd.

But of course such comparisons, while inevitable, are also horribly unfair. Pollock is an engaging and cheerfully garrulous performer, even when suffering the indignity of her guitar strap slipping off barely ten seconds into the set, and there are enough indications – particularly in album closer 'The Optimist', pared down tonight to circumnavigate sound problems without losing any of its power, and 'Jesus on the Cross', the darkly comic collaboration with author Louise Welsh for Roddy Woomble's 'Ballads of the Book' project – that, instead of dwelling wistfully on past glories, we should be looking forward with relish to those which are yet to come.

*Ben Woolhead*

## **THE TELESCOPES /** **SORREL / EGYPTIAN** **DEATH**

### **The Port Mahon**

Oxford's building quite a reputation for being both a breeding ground for experimentation and a welcoming port of call - pun intended - for many luminaries of the ever-more-popular local, national and international noise scene. Obviously 'noise', like any other genre name, is a ludicrous epithet, marking out no meaningful distinction between gliding shards of life-affirming feedback and an idiot crouching on the floor banging spoons onto a guitar pickup whilst wailing into a baked bean can. However, it is what it is, and it's often intriguing and fascinating, as displayed by what's on offer this evening from the Permanent Vacation promotions outfit.

Egyptian Death - featuring members of Traktors, Elapse-O and Euhedral, as the obviously-aimed-at-those-deeply-entrenched-in-local-music poster informs us, are a four piece who layer glassy slabs of drone on top of each other in a surprisingly sensitive fashion. They produce a lot of sound, recalling the intense, echoey worlds inhabited by artists like Double Leopards or Keiji Haino, but they stop just short of becoming a pointless battering ram: there's some artful control on display, eventually creating music rather than mere sound.

And just as some sparse strikes on a snare drum threaten to make too much sense of everything, they're ended, to be followed by Sorrel, a slightly awkward-looking lone female huddled at ground level. After some very brief technical troubles, the set begins to make sense: long, long, relentlessly long vibrations of tone, gradually modulating and slowly intensifying. As with Phill Niblock's experiments with the most austere and simplistic arrangements, there's not a lot to hang on to here in conventional terms. However, this is truly psychedelic music in its synaesthesia translation of sound into creeping, sinister tendrils, crawling out of the speakers over the heads of the entranced audience.

The Telescopes end proceedings tonight with a set that's as much a refinement of their abortive last (solo) Oxford outing as it is a spin on the dynamics and relentlessness of their Audioscope performance a couple of years ago. After a recent lineup change, taking on ex-Vibracathedral Orchestra member Bridget Hayden, this incarnation of The Telescopes is perhaps the most abstract and inward-looking so far. The duo perform together, but each seemingly independent of the other's presence in every sense of the word. Dual waves of bowed, reverbed guitar bounce and intertwine over some very subtle electronic blips and heavily masked and treated vocals. The majority of the set is oppressed under a bassy rumble that's apparently due more to a faulty Wasp synth than by design - but that rumble *works*, especially at the point when it ends, and the remaining sound floats into the stratosphere in an amazingly liberating moment.

Tonight all of the acts perform for a busy and appreciative crowd, and that's good to see. 'Noise' may be becoming the current vogue of the hip kid *du jour*, but as so often happens, Oxford seems to be just ahead of the curve. Simon Minter

## **LETHAL BIZZLE**

### **The Academy**

Chances are that anyone who's picked up a copy of the *NME* during the last six months is pretty familiar with grime kingpin and Tory-baiting indie darling *du jour* Lethal Bizzle. If not, he's not slow to remind you who exactly you've come to see. If colossal Bizzle banners and laminates offering free Bizzle goodies weren't enough, there's also 'Bizzle Bizzle', a masterpiece in self-aggrandisement that just has to be the theme tune Bizzle plays every morning while he's cleaning his teeth to get him set up for the day.

And that's Lethal Bizzle in a nutshell - brash, energetic and absolutely the centre of attention. His crowd-baiting posturing might play up to his own mental image as a bad boy so bad he could send all the nuns in nundom screaming back to their convent with a single well-timed lyrical barb, but this is actually just harmless fun. While on record, Bizzle relentlessly pursues the kind of success denied his (presumably more purist) peers by sampling or collaborating with every indie kid in a 100-mile radius, in a live setting it's a relief that Kate Nash doesn't suddenly wheel up for a quick freestyle. Instead, he boasts a taut, scattershot delivery to rival the best in the (ahem) bizznizz, backed with throbbing, defiantly old-school bass squelches and a snapping snare sound straight out of 1987. In terms of subject matter, by contrast, it couldn't be any more 2007: if lyrics about MySpace top eights and ringtones are such a danger to society, wait 'til David Cameron gets a load of my Facebook'n'happy slapping-based dubstep side project. Until then, the kids will be tuning into whatever fatuous zeitgeist-hopping Bizzle gets up to, and doubtless loving every second of it.

*Stuart Fowkes*

## **JOSH ROUSE /** **JENS LEKMAN**

### **The Academy**

I'd gone to this gig with an open mind, but for once far more familiar with the support act's work than the headliners. And while the crowd seemed content with the natural order of things tonight, in my mind it couldn't have been a more convincing upset. Josh Rouse plays a MOR form of country music totally devoid of all life, which surprises me as the song of his I do know, 'Winter in the Hamptons', is wonderful. There's no real bite to the tunes, no hooks, nothing. The band seem quite contented, settled into some sort of muso comfort zone, and the crowd lap it up, so what do I know?

Well, what I do know is that what precedes him is marvellous. For one man with a guitar, delicate songs and a bongo player to silence the crowd's chatter is great to see. Most of Lekman's set is made up of songs from his recent 'Night Falls Over Kortedala' album, his voice sounding a lot sweeter than the Magnetic Fields-style baritone of previous times. There are moments when he smiles and looks particularly pleased with himself, and well he might. It all comes together, whether sampling and looping his vocals, slipping in samples and backing tracks, or paring things down to the bare guitar. Highlights come in the form of 'Postcard to Nina', stripped right back and complete with spoken word bits explaining the story behind the song; oldie 'A Sweet Summer Night On Hammer Hill', with it's "boom ba boom" heartbeats and 'The Opposite Of Hallelujah', the joyous climax which comes to a head when the sample of 'Give Me Just A Little More Time' kicks in and Jens and Tammy come together centre stage for a little dance routine. It's literate pop with a smile on its face, which is how it should be. Poor Josh must be kicking himself.

*Russell Barker*

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## **GILAD ATZMON AND THE ORIENT HOUSE** **ENSEMBLE**

### **Wesley Memorial Church**

London-based, Israeli exile saxophonist Gilad Atzmon is one of The Blockheads and as leader of his jazz quartet, a big and sometimes controversial personality as well as a major talent on the reeds. Previous Gilad gigs have always been exciting, but this time, while Gilad was still very much himself, 'a triumph of understatement' could be the best description of what is an enthralling Spin and Oxford Contemporary Music co-promotion.

While Gilad's talent means his playing moves seamlessly through a variety of styles, the lasting impression from earlier gigs has been of a torrent of fiery, angry bebop solos that are the musical equivalent of the scathing criticism he unloads on his audiences of the politics of Bush, Blair and Israel. There is still the seemingly seamless flow between Arabic, klezmer, and mainstream jazz styles, on clarinet as well as sax, sometimes on both at once, but what I hear for the first time is Gilad the magnificent player of long jazz ballad passages. The space given to ballads and to the beautiful double bass bowing of Yaron Stavi makes the music more reflective. Even when the playing is at its most blistering, as in 'The Burning Bush', there's a contemplative thread as one of the band plays a contrasting quieter line.

Also different tonight is the intensity of the ensemble playing which includes Gilad and keyboard player Frank Harrison, really for the first time using electronica. Both they and Stavi on double bass and Asaf Sirkis on drums are all on top form as individuals, yet also listening to and so responsive to each other as a quartet.

It is disingenuous though for Gilad to say as he did, "No politics tonight, I just play music to you". He and his band certainly do play, just this time his politics are mainly in the track titles and the music itself. The encore is Louis Armstrong's 'Wonderful World', played as a slow, meditative ballad, in the context of what went before it became very much a hymn to human spirit. One of gigs of the year.

*Colin May*

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### BOY WITH A TOY

After a couple of serious misses (his Demo Dumped The Filthy Honey project and last month's cringeworthy Palace Of Righteous Justice 'joke') Phill Honey gets back to doing what he does best, throwing everything, including the kitchen sink, into the mix, imagining what it might be like to be Prince and Marilyn Manson at the same time and making sleazy, silly electro-funking industrial dance music. With Phill handling the electronics side of things and Smilex's Lee Christian on vocals, Boy With A Toy hit the gay bars with 'Pushin' For The Pink Pound', with its blatant Gloria Gaynor remodelling and Scissor Sisters steals, before going the whole James Brown on 'Huntress'. When they ditch the dancefloor it's for final track 'All The Lovers Are Dead', an oddly pastoral prog-rock piece that trades disco beats for a fug of synth washes and lysergic multi-tracked vocals. When we say that Boy With A Toy wipes the floor with Calvin Harris we mean much more than the faint praise that suggests.

### THE MYSTERIOU2

A one-track demo from two blokes going under the names Electro and DeFactOh who appear to be under the impression they are intergalactic freedom fighters on the trail of an evil space villain called Zaproc and are now holed up in a top-secret HQ (which they inadvertently reveal to be in Witney), none of which seems to be particularly credible, but we'll let it pass since the track in question, 'Megablast', does indeed sound like it comes from another place, like a lost 12" single from 20 years ago. Mixing up Human League electro disco with old school hip hop in the vein of Mantronix, a neatly metallic bass line and some grimy synths they're about ten times better than most of the new hip hop CDs we've been sent this year.

### THE COLOURS

Second demo from a Reading/Oxford band of no little commercial potential if some worrying MOR tendencies. Musically The Colours lurk in those corners marked Keane and Athlete – politely epic with the

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feeling you might have heard it all on daytime Radio 1 back in 1985 – while the singer is of the tight-trousered falsetto type, part Jeff Buckley, part strangulated, caterwauling power balladeer who sounds like he's so racked with pain and angst that he can barely even move, never mind get his words out. It's muscular but ultimately pedestrian stadium pop that at its best is probably only a few degrees away from Galaxie 500's frosted splendour but over-steers badly and ends up crumpled and ablaze in the canyon of dodgy FM rock.

### THE CARTER MANOEUVRE

If there were such a thing as a typical Oxford band around at the moment it might be this lot. Except they seem to be from Leamington, which completely ruins our theory. But ignoring such trivialities and returning to that point, The Carter Manoeuvre touch musical bases with Youthmovies, Foals, This Town Needs Guns and Dive Dive along their fidgety rock way, highly-strung vocals topping off off-funk canthers and dinky, tightly-wound guitar runs. Post-hardcore meets 70s jazz-pop (it's strange how similar Dismemberment Plan are to Steely Dan at times) and it passes the time without leaving much if any great impression. Maybe they simply need to start stamping their own identity on proceedings a bit more firmly.

### THE YOUNG PLAYTHINGS

Initially we worried that this lot had unknowingly plumped for the same name as the band that was signed to Jetplane Landing's Smalltown America label, but a bit of research reveals it's the same Young Playthings, now relocated, at least in part, to Oxford for study reasons. And the jaunty Americanised college rock of songs like 'Hot Sex With A Girl I Love' makes a nice change from all the "Girl done gone left me" moping of some of the hapless sods what turn up in the demo pile. This reminds us of when emo used to sound like something that might be the future – Get-Up Kids and stuff like that, plus plenty of early Weezer's lyrical whimsy and sunshine harmonies. It's happy, uncomplicated stuff with an almost unwaveringly cheery demeanour suited to its only slightly bolshy jangling style.



They only lose favour when they get tied up in bombastic noodling, as on the end of 'Tune', while the more considered 'Never Let U Go', with its countrified melancholy could do to lose a couple of minutes. Otherwise, it's guitar pop with a smile on its face.

## ARTY KARATE

There's much boasting from Arty Karate about giving the music scene a much-needed kick up the arse, which only really carries weight if the music wears suitably hefty boots to do the kicking. Instead we get six minutes of non-arse-kicking, two-chord garage-rock thrash which is gruff, but never scary, and raw but seemingly in a contrived fashion, and which could have been scraped from the detritus of any musical period from the mid-70s onwards. It's not terrible by any means, just anonymous, which in this genre is surely as a bad a thing to be as you can get. Arty Karate just ain't got the chops.

## THE GULLIVERS

Once scrappy but cute punk-pop rascallions, The Gullivers seem to have developed a sudden need for self-contemplation. And, perhaps surprisingly, it suits them. Opening track here, 'Forever', finds singer Mark Byrne in downbeat, emotionally fragile mood, coming on like a street urchin version of the Cure's Robert Smith, while the band layer a fine coating of fuzz on slight but pleasingly angular tunes, like Wire might have sounded if they'd woken up one morning and decided today was going to be the day they didn't try and fuck with the rest of the world's minds. The Gullivers retain much of their old untidy style, notably on the messy 'The Fun We Have', and the ghost of The Libertines still lurks on the edges of songs like 'Chemicals', but after promising much over the last couple of years, maybe they're really starting to find a sound that suits them best.

## ARCHIPELAGO

This band features former-Llama Farmers frontman Bernie Simpson, which should get any obscure mid-90s indie band transpotters out there mildly excited, but this is a long way from his old band's frothy indie rock. Initially it's passable enough, 'Polish Your Halo' offering some simple, deadpan electro-pop with just the merest hint of a trip-hop edge, sounding like the sort of stuff people might dance

to in slow motion in some arty Brit-flick, but then it goes horribly downhill, firstly with the piano-led ballad that is 'Call My Bluff', which is either Beverly Craven's charisma-free kid sister or an attempt to wow the *X Factor* audience with a show-stopping display of lowest common denominator doe-eyed insipidness, and then 'A Risk I Won't Take', which can only be described as what Everything But The Girl might sound like if Tracey Thorn couldn't sing and they'd never met Massive Attack. The bottom of the barrel is finally scraped with 'A Couple Short', more tinkling piano and a soul-lite flounce that Phil Collins might have left off 'No Jacket Required' for lacking a cutting edge. Start forming that moshpit now, kids.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### GTA

Previously a duo who we thought might become one of the leading lights of Oxford's small but slowly blossoming rap scene, GTA (two rappers going under the names Chima and Ineffable) here present an album-length demo that actually manages to irritate this reviewer so much he sticks it in the dumper ahead of a band who sound a bit like Phil Fucking Collins. Now that takes some doing. It starts innocuously enough with an intro from Vena Vee over a laid-back stoner beat before taking way, way too long to get going and when it does it's an utter bloody shambles, its laborious 25 tracks seemingly stuck together in piecemeal fashion with no thought to editing. As a freestyling duo, the pair obviously have some talent – when they do get going they flow reasonably well together, but more often it sounds like two wideboys chatting to each other down the pub, private jokes and all, over uninspiring beats and loops. From taking the piss out of rich white kids getting off on the gangsta lifestyle, they quickly descend into jokes about farts and BO and hit a nadir with a supposedly humorous piss take of all things Scottish. Because, like, haggis is just soooo funny. Right? Sitting through an hour of this is like being stuck on the last bus out of town on a Saturday night in front of two juvenile wannabe rap stars whose tolerance to alcohol extends to two cans of cheap cider. Sort your fucking act out, boys – you're capable of better than this.

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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