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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 155
June
2008

Winchell Riots

How Oxford's ace songsmiths
learned the joy of true
independence
- *interview inside*

Plus
News, reviews and six pages of local gigs

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NEWS

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TRUCK FESTIVAL and **LITTLE FISH** have both been recognised at the 2008 Indy Music Awards.

Little Fish were voted Best Rock Act, while Truck was awarded Best Festival at a ceremony in London at the end of April.

The Indy Music Awards were started last year to highlight the best bands and venues in grassroots live music. Promoters around the UK can nominate acts and events which are then shortlisted before being voted for by the public.

Truck Festival organisers Robin and Joe Bennett spoke to Nightshift about their award: "We're delighted to receive the award for Best Festival, especially as one of the criteria for winning was 'most supportive of independent music'. That is very much what we are about. It was also a nice celebration after the flood troubles last year.

Congratulations also to Little Fish for their award. There are now so many festivals of all shapes and sizes that it's hard to tell the difference between them - most are owned by the same few major entertainment corporations - so it's extra special to be voted the best by the public. It's a sign of the times that even *Grazia* magazine runs features on 'B-fests' - they called Truck the 'all-about-the-music' one. We don't see Truck as a Boutique Festival - it's just a festival that happens to be small! The reasons we started Truck still stand: a stage for ourselves and other musicians to play on, a real community event, the farmer's Rotary Club burger stall raising funds for charity. Here's to ten more years!"

Meanwhile, **TRUCK** are making an additional allowance of tickets available during June for this year's event. Check www.thisistruck.com for details.

ARCANE FESTIVAL is the latest event to be added to this summer's local festival calendar. The two-day event takes place at Horsenden Meadow, Tetsworth over the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd August. Featuring local bands and DJs, amongst those performing are Mackating, InLight, Shirley, Danny & The Champions of the World, Stornoway, Maria Ilett and The New Moon.

Tickets for Arcane, priced £20, are on sale now from wegottickets.com

HAPPY MONDAYS are among the final acts to be announced for this month's inaugural Wakestock Festival, which takes place in the grounds of Blenheim Palace, Woodstock over the weekend of the 27th-29th June. Other new acts added include Estelle, Plump DJs, Nu-Mark and The Blackouts.

They join the likes of Groove Armada, The Streets and Mark Ronson at the 15,000-capacity event, which also features displays of wakeboarding.

For a full festival preview, see this month's gig guide.



ZAPFEST is a new one-day live music festival that takes place in **South Park** on **Saturday 12th July**, featuring bands, DJs and comedians over three stages.

The event features the cream of Oxford's musical talent, including Youthmovies, A Silent Film (*pictured*), Little Fish, Jonquil, Witches, Stornoway, The Family Machine, Richard Walters, The Rock Of Travolta and This Town Needs Guns.

The dance stage, which is being organised by local club nights Blunted, Hit'n'Run, Dugout, ASM and HQ, features sets from DJ Fu Vs Jungle Drummer, DJ Lee, Robert Luis, Para & Baila, Confidential Collective, Mackating, Riz MC, Indecision and more, while the Beard Museum and Free Beer stage hosts Danny & The Champions Of The World, Morrison Steam Fayre, Alphabet Backwards, Baby Gravy, Keyboard Choir, Black Hats, Half Rabbits, Joe Allen and more, plus comedy from Richard Herring, Nick Page and Tom Greeves.

Tickets, priced £21 for adults and £5 for children, are on sale now from wegottickets.com, as well as Ryouki on St Ebbes and SS20 on Cowley Road. Alternatively, you can buy tickets, without booking fee, direct by calling 01865 202804.

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STORNOWAY, pictured, were one of the highlights of the first Wood Festival last month. Over 1,000 people attended the environmentally-friendly festival, organised by Truck, at Braziers Park, near Wallingford, over the weekend of the 16th-18th May, with the music stages powered by recycled chip fat, solar panels and cycle power, while all the food on sale was organic and cooked in wood stoves.

A specially-constructed wooden stage was installed in the grounds, which will become a permanent fixture for future festivals. Other highlights of the weekend were The Coal Porters, Lightspeed Champion and Circulus.

LITTLE FISH singer Juju, Joe Allen and Agharad Jenkins, trip-hop duo Reverse E and Pennsylvanian singer Brooks West all play a benefit gig for Pump Aid at the Port Mahon on Wednesday 4th June. The charity raises money to install clean water pumps in African villages.

MARIA ILETT has won the chance to open this year's Cornbury Festival after being picked by Radio 2 DJ Richard Allinson and festival organiser Hugh Phillimore from a host of local acts. Electro folk-pop starlet Maria plays on the main stage at midday on Saturday 5th July, joining headliners Paul Simon and Crowded House. Tickets and full line up for Cornbury are online at www.cornburyfestival.com

THE PURPLE TURTLE is looking for local bands to play its regular gig nights. The venue's previous promoter, Greg, has moved on and new manager Tom is keen to hear from any bands wanting to play – call 01865 247007.

LOVE MUSIC HATE RACISM host a night of dance music at Baby Simple on Cowley Road on Friday 6th June, featuring DJs from many of Oxford's best club nights, including Simple, Slide, HQ, Fresh Out Of The Box, Club Dub and Hit & Run. The evening is hosted by Oxford rapper Mr Shadown and veteran local music maverick Asher Dust. LMHR also host a night of live music at Thirst Lodge on Thursday 19th June, with acts to be confirmed.

THE DOWNLOAD has been renamed as Oxford Introducing. The weekly local music on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm is broadcast every Saturday between 6-7pm and features a selection of new local releases, demos, interviews, gig previews and a gig and clubbing guide. The show is also available to listen to all week online at bbc.co.uk/oxford



THE GUTTER TWINS have been confirmed to play at the Academy on Monday 11th August as part of a short UK tour. The band, formed by former-Screaming Trees and Queens Of The Stone-Age singer Mark Lanegan, and Afghan Whigs frontman Greg Dulli, have just released their debut album, 'Saturnalia', on Sub Pop. Tickets, priced £16, are on sale from the box office or online from www.oxford-academy.co.uk.

Other gigs coming up at the Academy include **Clutch** (Mon 18th August); **Dragonforce** and **Turisas** (Thu 25th September); **The Automatic** (Sun 28th September - re-arranged from this month); **Cajun Dance Party** and **Enter Shikari** (both Tue 7th October) and **Spiritualised** (Mon 13th October)

Dr SHOTOVER Steptoe And Ones

Ah, the joys of the goggle box. Now, I know you never thought you'd hear me say this, but there REALLY are some quite ENJOYABLE programmes on it - as long as one ignores all the Barbie and Ken lookalikes crying REAL TEARS as they audition to be Technicolor Josephs and Nancies, and all the TV chefs, and all the property programmes, and the adverts, and the documentaries about obesity... Hmmm, what's left? Oh yes, just one, which has proved quite popular in the East Indies Club Television Room - Master Holland, J. and his "Later Live". Particularly the week they featured our old chums The Only Ones. Frontman Peter Perrett used to be a decent sort (if a little over-keen on leopardskin), with whom I believe I may have shared a bong or two back in the mid 70s... however, our ways have parted. I of course became ever handsomer and more distinguished, while, after decades of substance-related escapades, he has turned into Old Man Steptoe... I expected him to shout "HAR-OLD" at John Perry before the guitar solo. The song they played was, predictably, "Another Girl, Another Planet" - as Lord "Smithy" Smythe puts it, "The only Only Ones one I know". Very droll, Lord Smithy. Now where was I? Ah yes, talking of drug-related skincare ("Heroin - because you're worth it"), Barmy Winehouse seems to be catching up with Prat Doherty on the Dr Shotover Top Ten of People Most Likely To Cause Extreme Boredom. Just a quick scan of this list can be more effective than a sackful of tranks in putting one to sleep... in fact perhaps we should email it directly to Messrs Doperty and Shitehouse, and they need never reach for the ketamine again...
Next month: Tomato Ketamine



*Druggy New Wave Band
Seeks Frontman - No
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KILIMANJARO

A Quiet Word With

Winchell Riots

"I LIKE THE IDEA THAT FELL

City Girl was a little blip in people's lives and maybe once made them stop and think, feel, sing, shout, and no more. Rip it up and start again, I guess."

PHIL MCMINN IS TALKING TO

Nightshift about the demise of his old band, Fell City Girl, one of the best loved and most exciting young bands to come out of Oxford in recent years. As well as selling out the Zodiac three times, they toured the UK, performed at Reading Festival and released a string of absolutely brilliant EPs, topping Nightshift's end-of year Top 20 two years running – the only band ever to do so.

Fell City Girl seemingly had it all – a genuinely fanatical fanbase, great songs and the world at their feet. Then along came the music industry and a year later – March 2007 to be precise – they played their last gig and announced they had split. Local music fans were genuinely shocked; the rumour mill went into overdrive with talk of machiavellian goings-on, stories seemingly confirmed when Phil, plus Fell City Girl drummer James Pamphilon re-emerged a mere three months later with a new band, Winchell Riots, featuring a new guitarist and bassist.

LAST AUTUMN WINCHELL

Riots played a set at Truck Festival – "A terrible show" in Phil's own words – and finally laid the ghost of their former selves to rest. Now it is time to look to the future, with Winchell Riots already showing all the promise of Fell City Girl. In April they released their debut EP, 'Histories', on their own Andrew The Great label, a DIY approach that allowed Phil and James complete control over their songs, artwork and release schedule for the first time in years. 'Histories' is epic, cultured, atmospheric, abrasive and emotive, all the things that made Fell City Girl so thrilling, but more compact. Its inner turbulence recalls Echo & The Bunnymen's earliest post-punk days, the hollowed-out production reminiscent of Joy Division, but the whole song expanded to a more grandiose level *a la* Muse. Further in, more contemplative songs like 'The Man Who Mapped The Oceans', carry the glacial contemplation of Icelandic soundscapists Sigur Ros.



They are all, however, pocket battleship pop gems of a vintage too rarely heard in modern day indie music.

AND SO, ALREADY WINCHELL

Riots look set for better things.

First, though, Phil needs to clear up any lingering misconceptions about that Fell City Girl split.

"The quick version of events is this: we signed a deal with a label who were totally unsuited to what we were aiming for and ultimately didn't generate the sufficient 'hype' in the right circles because (we feel) we didn't have people behind us who believed in us enough to ignore other people's doubts. And when that happens it's over. We split because we knew that it would be a massive uphill struggle without management, without a booking agent and without a deal and we'd already been fighting like that for three years. Some people may say we should have stuck at it but I've seen too many bands from Oxford and elsewhere achieve great things and not realised when their luck was up and walked away."

How far ahead did you see it coming?

"It happened very, very quickly but really slowly with hindsight, but it made total sense to us when we said it out loud. Once we signed a record deal really it became a slow death on that front, but it was coupled with us getting bigger and bigger in Oxford and when we sold out The Zodiac three times in a year our label were like, "oh that's quite cool" and we were so frustrated with them for that – there was this parallel thing going on that was very confusing for us. We played our last show in front of a completely unsuspecting audience – no friends, no girlfriends, no family – just the four of us, which was one of the hardest things I've ever done. No 'Final Show' or any bullshit – we were just a band after all, so we wanted people to just remember us for what we were. A lot of people were cross with us for that, I guess but there was no way I was in any state to get up and do some final thing, I would have found that too sad.

"It really wasn't until that fairly terrible show at Truck last year that I finally understood Fell City Girl was over and we had to start again from total scratch – we were still totally riding on history and that show really made us go back to the

start again and redraw the map for the new band.”

THE NEW BAND NOW

features guitarist Rich Leicester and bass player Phil Jones. They were recruited pretty quickly after the split; had Phil had them in mind before FCG officially split and how did it help him to get over the split? “No, they just kind of popped up in the best way possible – no one else came to audition or anything, although we had a lot of people interested in what were doing. Rich I knew from years back: he used to stalk Fell City Girl, we thought he was pretty weird but he had a car so the deal was sealed, and Phil got in touch and I thought he had a cool name so that was that. I think me and James needed to sort out where we were at with each other – he’s like my big brother, I love him so much, but we’d been playing together for five years or something and because there was no break between bands we were kind of sick of each other for no real reason and once we’d sorted that out then we were away again!”

What do the new boys bring to Winchell Riots?

“It’s nice to be working with people who weren’t part of FCG because by the end of Fell City we were all so tired and confused and angry as to why it wasn’t ‘happening’ that we all needed a fresh split. In terms of working together we just retained the same work ethic from FCG that if it isn’t working, then it goes – no egos about songs, just insist that the songs are great, not merely good.”

What would you say is the biggest difference between Fell City Girl and Winchell Riots?

“The songs are far more concise, I think; they’re more direct. We’re much, much tighter as a band and I think that FCG became so caught up in what the label would think that we became really restricted by our own expectations of what they wanted, so I definitely feel a sense of liberation. I also think we’re learning that to be ‘epic’ doesn’t necessarily mean being big and loud and in your face; there are other ways. And for me the live thing has taken a totally new direction – I wish I could have walked away from everything after FCG but the only time I really feel any sense of ‘peace’ or total happiness is when I’m singing onstage with my band – it’s difficult to explain to someone who doesn’t do it but I feel very immersed in what we’re doing onstage that I don’t really know where I am and that’s got a lot stronger with The Winchell Riots.

“I would be lying if I said that The Winchell Riots are drastically different from FCG because my song writing is still informed by the same

set of influences and bands as before – it’s not like suddenly I became an expert on drum and bass or some weird hippy funk. My goals are still totally the same. I also had a fairly difficult year last year – my band broke up, my girlfriend and I broke up and then my Mum died just before Christmas after a long illness, so I think the songs are bound to be influenced by me actually having something to convey this time.”

PHIL HAS LONG SINCE

expressed a strong sense of frustration with so many contemporary guitar bands – the bland, seemingly mass-produced say-nothing drones that clog up the airwaves and music press, offered as some kind of alternative when really they’re as vacuous and manufactured as the pop they’re supposed to be offering an alternative to. Does Phil still feel angry?

“Right around the time FCG split I started to read Everett True’s book on Nirvana and at the close of the book Everett is on the floor of some bar drinking himself into a coma because, after everything that had happened, he says ‘music had failed me’ and that line really rung true for

for the few at the bottom of the ladder. You have to try, don’t you? Michael from the Half Rabbits put it best when he said, ‘it’s a good job we’re not part of the music industry, isn’t it’ which I liked.”

ANDREW THE GREAT RECORDS

is one of many ways Phil and the band are taking back control of their lives after that brush with industry politics. Does he see Winchell Riots continuing doing stuff on their own label, or is it merely a stepping stone to another label?

“Well it started with me sending demos out to these independents and I thought, what can they do that we can’t? Then it became a sort of rolling stone when I registered Andrew The Great as a proper label. It’s great to be able to have my Dad doing the artwork, my friend mastering it, our friends at Truck recording part of it – it feels far more like we have 100% control.”

What advice would you offer to any other band faced with a similar situation to you?

“Absolutely, utterly hold on to what you’ve got until you feel you have the right people helping you. Our mistake was to work with people

“The music industry is totally screwed”

me. Not just from my own band’s experience but in general: I feel almost totally alienated from what’s supposed to pass for ‘indie’ now – these bands just mean nothing to me in the same way that they used to. Maybe that’s me getting older but I don’t think it is: I still see a few bands that totally rock me to the core but it’s so rare now. 65 Days Of Static were really the last ‘new’ band who totally made me rethink what a band should be and that was a few years ago now – on this last tour we did almost all the bands we played with were some poor Arctic Monkeys tribute; we stood out pretty badly, which is a good or bad thing depending on how you look at it. There are other bands out there doing it – This Et Al and Her Name is Calla are two bands I have massive amounts of respect for.”

Is the music industry screwed?

“Yeah, totally screwed. But they have all the money so they’ll always retain control and they’ll be the ones putting in place a new structure that we’ll adhere to. It’s really David and Goliath except Goliath will always rule David. Guy Hands is just too powerful for anything else to happen. But part of a band’s challenge is to go in and fight because a very small percentage actually ‘win’ and then they stand

who wrestled complete control from us. And if you feel like you’re at odds with everything else around you, that’s a good reason to exist.”

RECENTLY WINCHELL RIOTS

embarked on an extensive tour of the UK to coincide with the release of ‘Histories’, playing venues far and wide, beyond the normal capabilities of such a new band. Are there still a lot of people out there who are keen to support the band on the strength of old loyalties built up by Fell City Girl?

“Yes, very much so – in every town we played on the last UK tour we did we had people from FCG days coming up and it was so good to see them because we had such a small but devoted following and it felt like a little club – and now they’re coming to see us having heard hardly any music, there seems to be a belief amongst a handful of people that we share and that feels nice to be a part of. These people travel miles to see The Winchell Riots on the back of our last band and it totally, totally validates us as human beings making music. There’s really no greater compliment for us.”

Where do Winchell Riots go from here? In particular, you’re a pretty prolific writer; when might we see a full album?

We’re going into the studio next month with Dan Austin who recorded FCG’s ‘Swim EP’ to record the next single and that for me is about as good as it gets for us – he’s amazing and he knows what we’re trying to achieve. None of us are deluded to think that any major labels would touch us in the current climate – last year only something like 20 bands got signed by majors, and sure as shit we’re not what they’re after as the ship sinks. But I’m super excited about going it alone, about trying new methods out and trying to retain a level of independence while still achieving something. We have so many new songs that I am so happy with – big epics, a few three-minute pop songs, a lot of sad stuff and a lot of very uplifting stuff. I have no plans for an album yet – it seems like it’s not the right thing for us at the moment: EPs are far better for us to find our feet and see what works before that. But probably 2009 we’ll do an album. Who knows. But my biggest regret with FCG is how little music we put out, so this time we’ll be making sure music gets out – for free, for cheap, on limited EPs, limited downloads, anything we want. We’ve given away two CDs with new material on these tours we’ve been doing, there’s a free download for our mailing list people and so on.”

You’re playing this year’s Truck, which will be the first time a lot of local music fans have seen you; what would you say to them and what can people expect from that show?

“God, I have so many memories of playing Truck. One year rain was pouring through the roof into our monitors and nearly blew us up; one year our drummer stayed out all night and turned up barely conscious just as Channel 4 announced they would be filming our set; another year I got chased by security for shouting my mouth off after too much drink and had to apologise to every single person I knew the next morning ... This year will hopefully be the first time we play like adults! I really can’t wait.”

TRUCK WILL GIVE

Oxfordshire’s music fans their first big stage opportunity to witness the emergence of a band that is destined to achieve some level of greatness. Fell City Girl may have been a lesson in how the music industry can destroy great young bands, but Winchell Riots is ample proof that you can’t keep a good band down.

‘Histories’ is out now on Andrew The Great Records. Winchell Riots headline the Bullingdon on Wednesday 18th June. Visit www.myspace.com/winchellriots to hear tracks and for more gig dates.

TELLING THE BEES

'Untie The Wind'

(Black Thrustle)

We've been send some funny gifts by bands in our time but never a large ginger beard. But having suggested they may be a bit "too beardy" for us synth-pop kids before we reviewed their demo a couple of months back, Telling The Bees have furnished us with exactly the sort of facial decoration we'll need to make it all the way through their debut album. But what do you expect from a band who name themselves after the old folk tradition of informing the family beehive of any significant events, lest they get upset and fly away? Old, folk and tradition being the key words there, since 'Untie The Wind' is steeped in English folk music's ancient traditions.

English folk music is enjoying its biggest renaissance since the late-60s at the moment and Telling The Bees are indicative of why. Formed by local luminaries Andy Letcher, Colin Fletcher, Jane Griffiths and Josie Webber, here they rejuvenate old world sounds with a



fresh, spiky approach that means they tap into the form's bucolic roots while lending an ear to more contemporary sounds, in this case everything from John Cale to Nick Cave (two men unafraid to sport the odd bit of facial hair when duty called).

Andy's voice is a full, rounded tenor and carries the hushed, atmospheric melodies with understated power, allowing Jane and Josie's

string arrangements to really fly, notably on the soaring album opener, 'Waiting For Dawn' and the intense, poetic 'The Worship Of Trees'. Only on the rather trite 'Telling The Bees' itself does Andy's voice falter, dropping into that nasal twang that can get English folk music a bad name. Straight away, though, he's making amends with the gorgeous solemnity of 'Beautiful', a close relation to Seth Laker's Devon gothic storytelling (perhaps not unsurprising given that Andy grew up in the West Country). The album's high point, though, comes almost at its close with title track 'Untie The Wind' exposing the power of Jane Griffiths' fiddle playing as she comes close to matching The Bad Seeds' Warren Ellis' darkly atmospheric scraping. Two border pipe-led instrumentals offer a different perspective on TTB's sound, and it's telling that all the songs here are originals.

Like all good traditional folk, 'Untie The Wind' accepts modern life in without surrendering its old world appeal. Telling The Bees might recall a far off place, but one that's still very much alive. Can I take this beard off now? It itches like hell.

Ian Chesterton

SHARRON KRAUS

'The Fox's Wedding'

(Durto Jnana)

Back again with a new solo album after last month's collaborative Rusalnia project with Philadelphia's Gillian Chadwick, local folkstress Sharron Kraus continues to explore the bleaker outposts of traditional English and Appalachian music.

Assisted by Telling The Bees' Colin Fletcher and Jane Griffiths amongst others, Sharron's ongoing fascination with the dark side of rustic



roots music still elicits a thrilling chill in our hearts, especially on the album's opener, 'Brigid', the eerie flutes and Sharron's high-pitched, crystal-clear voice dropping you in the middle of Summerisle on May Morning before she breaks into an unearthly warble above a hypnotic psychedelic drone. It's a genuinely unnerving moment and shows the power of traditional music to capture timeless menace. Matching that opening gambit is 'Green Man', notionally lighter in mood, for all its solemn piano, Sharron's voice literally dances over the minimalist instrumentation; it's the most captivating melody on 'The Fox's Wedding', where an earthy pagan ambience holds sway.

If there's a fault to pick with Sharron it's that over the course of an full album there's precious little change in pitch in her voice which can seem shrill when she lets it dominate too much, as on 'In The Middle Of Summer', although on the best tracks, such as the deathly, squeezebox-led 'Thrice Toss These Oaken Ashes', her pitch seems perfectly suited, enhancing the weirdly ethereal atmosphere. It's this vocal starkness that lends so many of her songs the disquieting ambience that makes them so magical. And for all its stripped-bare simplicity, the sheer richness of this music is abundantly clear.

Ian Chesterton

SUPERGRASS

'Rebel In You'

(Parlophone)

That Dave Grohl has picked Supergrass to support Foo Fighters on their US tour is great news, but it's also a bit bloody weird for a seasoned Oxford music fan. Following on from Arctic Monkeys' patronage, it seems that, almost without anyone noticing, Supergrass have become a global rock inspiration. Maybe it's because I remember seeing them sneaking sly spliffs round the back of the Jericho Tavern in their teens. So I'll have to resist the temptation to act all great aunt-like and exclaim, "Ooh, haven't you grown?"

Anyway, experienced masters of making old sounds sound fresh, Supergrass' two previous singles from 'Diamond Hoo Ha', have found the band having a bash at Led Zeppelin ('Diamond Hoo Ha Man') and Iggy Pop ('Bad Blood'). 'Rebel In You' takes them back to familiar glam-rocking territory, echoes of Bowie's 'Station To Station' period much in evidence, honky-tonk piano powering the muscular 70s stomp as Gaz Coombes sounds simultaneously like an exhausted smoker after a 200-yard dash and a strutting dandy up for a fight with anyone who looks at his threads in the wrong way.

Dale Kattack

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21st TBC

28th PHISH 6 - Old skool 90s classics with THE
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Sunday 1st BULLINGDON COMEDY CLUB with ROGER
MONKHOUSE / HENNING WEHN plus compere SILKY.

GIG GUIDE

SUNDAY 1st

DEGUELLO + SHAGGY PARASOLS: The Port Mahon – Excellent experimental psychedelic hardcore from Deguello.
LETHAL BIZZLE: The Academy – Re-arranged from April with the rabble-rousing rap and grime frontman with an eye on the indie rock dollar after a series of collaborations, including Gallows.
BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Open session for local musicians.
THE KYLA BROX BAND: The Regal – Live jazz and blues from the upcoming singer.
INDICA RITUAL + THE RIPTIDES + VON BRAUN: Thirst Lodge

Monday 2nd

BLACK KIDS: The Academy

Following on from their sold-out show at the Jericho back in January and the subsequent acclaim afforded irresistible single 'I'm Not Going To Teach Your Boyfriend How To dance', Black Kids set about conquering the UK in earnest and set to appear at pretty much every festival going this summer (including Wakestock at the end of the month). Before they'd even toured, the Florida five-piece had the music industry on both sides of the Atlantic in a right old lather, on the back of free to download debut EP, 'Wizard Of Ahhhs', creating a buzz similar to that which greeted Arcade Fire a couple of years back. And the similarity doesn't end there, Black Kids possessed of a similar orchestral clamour as Canada's finest, coupled with a wonderfully uplifting sense of pop joy akin to Go! Team. 'I'm Not Going To Teach...' 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 and with frontman Reggie Youngblood – along with sister Ali the only two actual black kids in the band – doing a scarily spot-on impersonation of Robert Smith along the way. Destined to become an indie dancefloor staple, Black Kids' job now is proving they can follow it up with equal style.

JUNE

MONDAY 2nd

BLACK KIDS: The Academy – Please note, Black Kids will not be teaching your boyfriend how to dance – *see main preview*
CUTE IS WHAT WE AIM FOR + BOYS LIKE GIRLS + WE THE KINGS: The Academy – Truly horrendous facsimile pop-punk from the Fueled By Ramen-signed New York State clothes horses.
HARPER: The Bullingdon – UK-born, Perth-bred singer and blues harpist with a string of awards to his name in his native Australia, singing with a Motown-inspired soulfulness and playing the harp in the style of Little Walter, over in the UK on tour in support of his latest album, 'Day By Day', injecting world music, including Aboriginal instrumentation, into his rootsy blues and rock.
ROSALITA + THE COLOURS + THE LE VENS: The Jericho Tavern – Post-punk yelping and electro-pop from Ipswich's Rosalita, plus Reading's stadium pop hopefuls The Colours and local indie rockers The Le Vens.
OCEANOGRAPHERS + ALPHA ROAD + THEO JACKSON: The Port Mahon
TANGLEFOOT: Nettlebed Folk Club – Return of the longstanding Canadian folk favourites.
ROCKDISCO: Po Na Na

TUESDAY 3rd

BAT FOR LASHES: The Academy – Natasha Khan warms up for her Radiohead tour support – *see main preview*
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With keyboard-led resident band The Howard Peacock Band.

WEDNESDAY 4th

PUMPAID CONCERT: The Port Mahon – Benefit gig to raise money for building water pumps in African villages, featuring Little Fish singer JuJu playing a solo set, with support from Pennsylvanian singer-songwriter Brooks West, inventively unnerving trip-hop duo Reverse E and wonderfully emotive guitar and violin duo Joe Allen & Angharad Jenkins.
BLACK POWDER + DESERT STORM + TWAT DADDIES: The Wheatsheaf – Local metal and punk night.
CARTEL: The Academy – Depressing identikit whiny American punk-pop from Georgia's Cartel who sound, ooh, just a teeny weeny bit like New Found Glory, who they just happened to support a while back. For some reason their MySpace profile has them

listing, in worrying detail, all the equipment they use. So bassist Jeff Letts (aka "Letts Party!") – geddit? Eh? Geddit? Let's p... oh forget it, it's obviously too highbrow for you mere mortals) utilises an Ampeg SVT Classic 8x10 with an Ampeg SVT Classic head. Admit it, your life is incalculably richer for that piece of information, isn't it? Anyway, load of rubbish, best left to hormonal 14 year olds with reading difficulties. What's that? It's cancelled? Aw shame; was it something we said?
HIT & RUN: The Cellar – Hip hop and drum&bass club night.
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 5th

GLASVEGAS: The Academy – Glasgae's dark-hearted wall-of-sound rockers – *see main preview*
WENDY CODE + MOLLOY + ANTON BARBEAU + DEAR LANDLORD: The Bullingdon – Another great mixed bill from Swiss Concrete, featuring a joint headline tour from spaced-out Parisian electro-prog-pop outfit Wendy Code and East London's post-punk-inspired electro-dance rockers Molloy. By way of contrast Californian psychedelic folk-pop songsmith Anton Barbeau returns to town, plus local one-man acoustic soul singer Dear Landlord, giving it some in an early Van Morrison vein.
NOT MY DAY + A GENUINE FREAKSHOW + ALPHABET BACKWARDS: The X, Cowley – Jangly guitar rocking and punky pop exuberance from headliners Not My Day, plus Reading's downbeat atmospheric rockers A Genuine Freakshow and recent electro-folk pop Punt stars Alphabet Backwards.
INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS: The Jericho Tavern – Shoegazey indie rocking in the vein of The Wedding Present and Magoos with the recent Punt stars.
ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro and techno club night featuring sets from Mental Groove's Brodinsky and Jibba.
CRUSADER + CITIZENS OF EARTH: The Port Mahon
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
SMASH DISCO: The Academy – Weekly electro, indie and garage rock club night.

FRIDAY 6th

RACHEL UNTHANK: The Academy – Northumbrian folk singer and cellist and her Winterset band riding high on the back of critically-lauded new album, 'The Bairsns', an intimate and downbeat mix of classic English folk and acoustic pop.
HOT CLUB DE PARIS: The Academy – Loveable mix'n'match Liverpoolian rockers signed to Moshi Moshi and now out on tour in



support of new album 'Live At Dead Lake', armed with a veritable smorgasbord of influences that stretches from Minutemen-style hardcore to math-rock time signatures to Afrobeat and simple folksy punk-pop. From frantic mayhem to sweet three-part harmonies in the space of a minute and who couldn't love a band whose debut single was called 'Sometimesitsbetternotstickingbitsofeachotherineachotherforeachother'.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + RISING DRAGON + MR SHAADOW + BROOKS WEST: The Wheatsheaf – Oddball punk-metal from Barry & Co headlining tonight's Klub Kak. Local

Tuesday 3rd

BAT FOR LASHES:

The Academy

Having been handpicked to support Radiohead on their forthcoming UK tour, Bat For Lashes play, appropriately enough, a warm-up gig in Oxford, memories of their last show here, back in February 2007, still fresh as shiny black daisies. Bat For Lashes is essentially Pakistan-born, Brighton-resident singer-songwriter Natasha Khan, whose 2006 debut, 'Fur & Gold' was Nightshift's favourite album of that year and was robbed of a deserved Mercury Prize last year. It was a stunning debut: a twisted, haunting and completely magical journey through smouldering sensuality and raw emotion, coming from that dark corner of folk where love and death walk hand in hand in beautiful union. It's musically inventive, dreamlike and often arcane, portentous piano, viola and harpsichord dominating the treated guitars and marching drums, something enhanced live by her all-female backing band, but everything centres on Natasha's exquisite vocals. She's been compared, not unfairly, with Bjork, Kate Bush and Sinead O'Connor, but, gender aside, she's as close to the likes of Nick Cave and Marc Almond. The truth is, though, that she is a unique talent, and after that auspicious first offering, her follow-up, expected later this summer, can't come quickly enough.



rising rap star Mr Shadown joins the supporting cast.

NATUREBOY: Jacqueline du Pre Building – Special benefit concert for Enfant de la Rue, helping street children in The Congo, with acoustic world, jazz and funk band Natureboy.

THOMAS TRUAX + STORNOWAY: The X, Cowley – Oddball anti-folk, blues and bluegrass from Thomas Truax and his eclectic collection of self-made instruments, coming on like a modern-day Viv Stanshall, plus lovely folk-pop somewhere between The Waterboys and Belle & Sebastian from local starlets Stornoway.

THE CORSAIRS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rockabilly and rock'roll.

SOULJACKER + MODERN CLICHÉS: The Port Mahon

FRESH'N'FUNKY: Thirst Lodge – New weekly club night.

LOVE MUSIC, HATE RACISM CLUB

NIGHT: Baby Simple – Special benefit gig for the anti-fascist music movement with DJs from local clubs night Fresh Out Of The Box, Simple, Slide, The Dugout, Hit & Run and OX4 playing a selection of dubstep, drum&bass and breakbeats, hosted by local rap luminary Mr Shadown and musical maverick Asher Dust.

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

SHAKE: The Academy – Funk, soul, reggae, rock'n'roll and jazz every week from Count Skylarkin and crew.

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

DUGOUT: The Cellar – Soul, rare groove and funk with Latin-tinged funksters Urban Allstars.

SATURDAY 7th

STEVE EARLE: The Academy – The hardcore troubadour brings his politicised country rocking to town – *see main preview*

DEATH VALLEY RIDERS + THE FIERCE + TEMPLETON PECK: The Wheatsheaf – Instrumental thrash, death and stoner metal from DVR.

CHAOS DAYS + MEET ME AT MIDNIGHT + PHANTOM THEORY + TARGET 9: The X, Cowley – Punky power-pop from Sussex's Chaos Days, with support from Oxford heavy rockers Meet Me At Midnight and cool, lo-fi stripped-down hardcore riffage from Phantom Theory.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club night.

BABY GRAVY: The Cellar – Kooky, fun electro-punk noise-pop at Big Hair's club night.

CHEAP THRILLS: Fat Lil's, Witney

RIVER RAT PACK TOUR: Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon (2pm) / Stocks Bar, Abingdon (7pm) – A novel idea to take nine unsigned bands on a boat trip along the Thames from London, stopping off for afternoon and evening gigs at waterside towns along the way. Among those performing these two gigs are Mumford & Sons, Six Nation State, Neil Jenkins, Jay Jay Pistolet and Beans on Toast.

THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR: Chester Arms

LEE DAVIES & FRIENDS: The Temple TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy – Three clubs in one every



Thursday 5th

GLASVEGAS:

The Academy

Following on from their chaotic, sold-out show at the Jericho back in February, that proved there is plenty of substance to the hype surrounding Glasgow's Glasvegas, the band step up a gear for their first Academy show. 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, and the 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 James 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. Alan McGee loudly sang their praises, calling them the most exciting Scottish band since the Mary Chain, and with 'It's My Own Cheating Heart That Makes Me Cry' threatening to sew up the single of the year award already, Glasvegas are a genuine rarity – a hyped-up tip for the top that live up to, and surpass, all that's written about them.

week with classic and contemporary indie at Transformation, 80s pop and kitsch noise at Trashy, plus metal, hardcore and alt.rock at Room 101.

SUNDAY 8th

JAKOB OLAUSSON + DEAR MITCHELL DUO + AMBER SLEEP +

RECONCILIATION: The Port Mahon – Intimate nocturnal drone-folk and blues from Sweden's Jakob Olausson in the style of Papa M and Leonard Cohen, plus improv experimentation from The Dear Mitchell Duo and Leeds newcomers Amber Sleep, leaning towards the Sufjan Stevens and Anthony & The Johnsons side of things.

SIMON DAVIES & COLIN FLETCHER + THE MAEVE BAYTON BAND + JON

FLETCHER: East Oxford Community Centre – Acoustic music at Maeve's Rave.

FINN PETERS: The Regal – Winners of the 2007 BBC Jazz Awards band of the year, fronted by versatile flautist and saxophonist Peters.



Saturday 7th

STEVE EARLE:

The Academy

A rare chance to see the Hardcore Troubadour in Oxford as country music's most enduringly controversial star tours to promote his Grammy-winning return to form album, 'Washington Square Serenade', the follow-up to the ragged, rampaging 'The Revolution Starts Now'. Steve Earle is that rarest of rare things – a Texan-raised country-rocking socialist. Brought up on the songs of Woody Guthrie and oft compared to Bruce Springsteen, he shares similar lyrical ground with Pete Seeger, not afraid to go against everything that is considered right and proper and patriotic in the States. Having lived most of his life in Nashville, he's now resident in New York following 20 years of hard drinking, drug-taking and seven marriages that reached its nadir in 1994 when he was jailed for heroin possession whilst living in a car outside a crack den. Now clean he's filled with renewed musical vigour, 'Washington Square...' continuing his broad-minded approach to rootsy Americana, taking in hip hop and Appalachian ballads as it rails against war in Iraq and the like. It's a long way on from his debut, 'Guitar Town', but marks him out a true survivor and outsider, one who has never stopped championing the underdog and remains very much on top of his musical game.

MONDAY 9th

LIGHTNIN' WILLIE & THE POORBOYS:

The Bullingdon – Another visit to the Famous Monday Blues club for the Texas-born, Pasadena-resident electric blues-rock guitarist, a big favourite on the UK blues circuit with his rocking blues, swing and rock'n'roll that mixes up Otis Rush, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eddie Cochran.

DOWNES & BEER: Nettlebed Folk Club – Singers and multi-instrumentalists Paul Downes and Phill Beer team up for a night of traditional English folk songs.

ROCKDISCO: Po Na Na

TUESDAY 10th

LYKKE LI: The Jericho Tavern – Cutesy, idiosyncratic electro-folk pop from Stockholm's Lykke Zachrisson – *see main preview*

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With keyboard-led resident band The Howard Peacock Band.

THE DACOITS: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 11th

RASCALS: The Academy – Arctic Monkeys-mentored indie rockers out of the Wirral.

OUTCRY: The Wheatsheaf

JOHN WESLEY + TREV WILLIAMS: The Jericho Tavern – Sometime Porcupine Tree guitarist Wesley plays a rare UK solo gig, displaying his intense, soulful acoustic side, with support from melancholic local songsmith Trev Williams.

OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon

CLUB DUB: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 12th

TOKYO POLICE CLUB: The Academy – Joyously spiky jangle-rocking from Ontario's young sensations – *see main preview*

SKAVILLE: The Bullingdon – 80s ska reunion tour with members of Bad Manners, Belle Stars and The Selecter getting it together.

ROLO TOMASSI + NOUGHT +

PREFONTAINE: The Cellar – Fearsome math-core brilliance from Sunderland's Rolo Tomassi, back in town to spread the word of pin-tight post-hardcore and hellish screaming. See them; love them; fear them. Jazz-core pioneers Nought return to their home town in support.

OLIVER JAROA + THE WORLD IS NOT FLAT + TOMCAT MURR: The Port Mahon – Launch night for Jam Jar Records.

THE VICE + NOT MY DAY + BOY DID GOOD: The Jericho Tavern

OUT OF THE BLUE: The New Theatre – More head-smashingly fantastic *a capella* covers of modern rock classics from the Oxford University barbers shop quartet.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 13th

QUICKFIX PRESENTS with HARRY ANGEL + BILLY ENGLAND + CITY

LIGHTS JUST BURN: The Wheatsheaf – Rip-snorting gothabilly fuzz-pop from Harry Angel, plus Liverpoolian alt-rockers Billy England and local psych-rockers CLJB.

MORCHEEBA: The Academy – Trip hop and r'n'b from Morcheeba, back with a new album, 'Dive Deep', and new singer, Jody Sternberg, after their mid-90s, Skye Edwards-led commercial peak.

MOSHKA with CAT MATADOR + THE CRUSHING: The Bullingdon – New York New Wave-inspired dark rocking from recent Punt stars Cat Matador at tonight's Moshka, plus a return to action for Marconi's Voodoo fellow Snuffy with his new band The Crushing.

TO THE BARRICADE + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + THE PICTURE SHOW

+ DYING ANIMALS: The Jericho Tavern – Reading's lush, oceanic piano-led rockers To The Barricade headline with grungy pop newcomers Dial F For Frankenstein and scratchy punk rockers Dying Animals.

OUT TO GRAZE FESTIVAL:

Rookery Farm, Shabbington – First day of the outdoor festival to raise money for the Oxford Wheels Project. Local bands, including Baby Gravy, International Jetsetters, Raggasaurus, Scanners, Borderville, One Dollar Peepshow, Dogshow, Von Braun and Jaberwok are joined by DJs from Skylarkin', Simple, Slide and Bassmentality. Visit www.outtograze.com for more details.

LOST CHIHUAHUA: The Port Mahon

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + JEREMY: The Magdalen

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin jazz dance club night.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

FRESH'N'FUNKY: Thirst Lodge

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Tuesday 10th

LYKKE LI: The Jericho Tavern

Born in Sweden and raised in a Portuguese mountain-top hippy commune with only a copy of Madonna's 'Immaculate Collection' for musical company, Stockholm's Lykke Li (or Lykke Zahrisson to give her her full, unpopstar name) was always going to be a slightly oddball proposition. But that hasn't stopped her becoming one of the hottest young singers around with record labels clamouring for her signature after a series of star performances at this year's SXSW festival in Texas, while she's already appeared on *Later... with Jools Holland*. The 21-year old singer is currently being compared to Robyn and Feist but listen to her eccentric, stripped-down electro-jazz pop and her so cute you could stick a pair of floppy ears on it and stick it in a hutch voice and closer comparisons would be Nelly Furtado, Clare Grogan and even Vanessa Paradis. Lykke's new album, 'Youth Novels', was produced by Bjorn Yttling from Peter, Bjorn and John, and there is much shared musical ground. She's currently signed to uber-trendy Moshi Moshi Records in this country, but songs like 'I'm Good, I'm Gone' and the wonderfully flirtatious 'Little Bit' look set to take her to another level. We lykke it, oh yes we do.

SATURDAY 14th

HREDA + ELAPSE-O + PLEASE + PREFONTAINE: The Wheatsheaf – Reliably challenging night of experimentation from Poor Girl Noise – *see main preview*

CARA DILLON: The Academy – Soft-centred folk-pop from the Irish singer and former Equation bandmate with Seth Lakeman.

CAPTAIN BLACK: The Jericho Tavern – Lively mix of folk-punk, indie rock and skiffle from Camden's Captain Black at tonight's Coo Club.

QUEEN B: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Freddie and the boys.

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

OUT TO GRAZE FESTIVAL: Rookery Farm, Shabbington – Second day of the festival.

SPIRO SPERO: The Temple – Local post-rockers.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SUNDAY 15th

THE KILLS: The Academy – Rescheduled gig after last April's cancellation The Kills return to plug new album, 'Midnight Boom' which finds them opening up their musical vista and discovering the joy of dancing, produced as it is by Alex Epton (aka Armani XXXchange). With those beats come a heightened sense of melody and increased emotional resonance, with odes to east London clubbing alongside tales of failed romance. Don't expect any great happy clappy reinvention though, the duo remain in the darker shadows of pop's underworld, sharing a love for all things Velvet Underground, Beefheart and Suicide.

OFF-FIELD 5: The Port Mahon – Extended evening of leftfield and experimental noises with Baby Gravy, Egyptian Death, Truck Pitch, Wire Rooms and Toad.

NATTY: The Jericho Tavern – Jaunty, lightweight reggae-soul from the London singer-songwriter who, at various points in his short career so far has supported Kate Nash and Adele, engineered the last Razorlight album, sampled Neil Young and Simon and Garfunkel and covered Vampire Weekend. He's also performed on *Later... with Jools Holland* with his new single, 'Cold Town'.

EMPIRICAL: The Regal – Live jazz in the style of Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane and Ali Farka Toure, promoting their recent Courtney Pine-produced album.

MONDAY 16th

THE DANI WILDE BAND: The Bullingdon – Rising UK blues and soul singer-guitarist tours her debut album, 'Heal My Blues', on Ruf Records, following on from work in Maddie Prior's Band.

STONE GODS: The Academy – Return to town for the band formed from the ashes of The Darkness with bassist Richie Edwards taking over lead duties after the departure of tight-trousered drug hoover Justin Hawkins, joined by Dan Hawkins plus erstwhile-Grahan Coxon bandmate Toby McFarlane. The band played their first gig at the end of November and have since toured in support of Thin Lizzy. And 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.

ROCKDISCO: Po Na Na

TUESDAY 17th

RONJEREMI + INSPECTED BY TEN + CITIZENS OF EARTH: The Academy – First of a two-night showcase of bands from the Oxford Cherwell Valley College music course. Hardcore thrash merchants Ronjeremi headline and are joined by rock, funk and soul outfit Inspected By Ten plus meandering funk rockers Citizens of Earth.

CHRIS TOWNSEND + MIRIAM JONES + MESH 29 + THE LAYLANAS: The Jericho Tavern

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With

keyboard-led resident band The Howard Peacock Band.

I AM THIEVES: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 18th

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + HOUSE OF BROTHERS: The Bullingdon – Headline gig for this month's Nightshift cover stars – *see main interview feature*

THE TALIBAND + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + NO DESPAIR: The Academy – Second night of the Oxford Cherwell Valley College bands showcase with instrumental metal and classic rockers Taliband joined by promising new grunge-pop act Dial F For Frankenstein.

MR GINGER: The Wheatsheaf

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

RED VALVE: The Port Mahon

THURSDAY 19th

THE SCHOOL + FLICKLISTEN + PUNCTURE REPAIR KIT: The Bullingdon – Swiss Concrete club night with Cardiff's cutie-

Thursday 12th

TOKYO POLICE CLUB: The Academy

Tokyo Police Club come from Newmarket, but thankfully that's Newmarket in Ontario, rather than Suffolk, which is good because, while we have nothing against East Anglia, Canada does just keep on giving us great pop bands. And to the growing list you can consider adding Tokyo Police Club. A four piece barely into their 20s they got a lot of people very excited early last year when they released their debut EP, 'A Lesson In Crime' – seven frantic mod-punk songs in sixteen minutes, quickly followed by equally frenetic live shows at Lollapalooza, Coachella, Reading and Glastonbury as well as a whistlestop tour of the UK at the start of last year. And now they're back, to coincide with the release of their first album, 'Elephant Shell'. Melodic and agile and infused with irrepressible youthful exuberance, songs like 'Your English Is Good' and 'Nature Of The Experiment' sound a bit like The Strokes might have done had they lived up to their early promise and maybe decided to have some fun. From jangly pop to classic college rock, there are hints of Pavement and Editors in their sound but their uplifting feel and dedication to brevity (which can, admittedly, do them a disservice at times), simply makes them a great fun pop band.





Saturday 14th

PLEASE / HREDA / ELAPSE-O / PREFONTAINE: The Wheatsheaf

Oxford's noise scene has been one of the most exciting developments on the local music scene over the past year or so but, perhaps understandably, it remains a cult concern, beyond the comprehension of too many gig goers. But tonight's Poor Girl Noise-promoted gig is as good an introduction to the experimental side of things as you'll get, so maybe cast aside any preconceptions and discover something genuinely new. Hreda are a lesson in technically-outstanding instrumental math-rock, full of ambient menace as they recall Slint's more contemplative moments with intricate interplay and a musical intelligence that never slips into self-satisfaction. The mighty Elapse-O (*pictured*) are simply astonishing live, recalling the innovative lack of compromise of bands like Suicide, Liars, Swans and Cabaret Voltaire, mixing up feedback, distortion and pulsing electronics with a truly fearsome noise. London's Please, meanwhile, mix up all manner of exotic sounds, taking influences from north Africa and eastern Europe and layering it in a stubborn, marching heaviness, while Prefontaine are angular, obstinate and antagonistic. Go on, flog that ticket for The Automatic and treat your ears to a good sonic cleansing.



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core popstrels The School, taking lessons from Belle & Sebastian and Camera Obscura amongst others, plus Cambridge's none-more-twee Puncture Repair Kit, a band with a name to put all those determinedly shambolic 80s acts to shame, armed with, oh yes, glockenspiel, recorders and a typewriter. Moshtastic!

LITTLE FISH + IVY'S ITCH + FROM MARS: The Cellar – Incendiary double bill featuring the two best female singers on the local scene – Little Fish's Juju, coming on like a young Patti Smith and dead set on rock'n'roll glory with drummer Nez with their sublimely poppy garage rock; plus demon-voiced Eliza from Ivy's Itch, making out like a cross between Linda Blair and Katie Jane Garside over her band's brutal-tender gothic grunge rocking. **TRANSMISSION + FOR THE COMMONWEALTH: The Jericho Tavern** – Epic grungy rock somewhere between Feeder and Purescence from Transmission. **OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon** **SMASH DISCO: The Academy**

FRIDAY 20th

THEAGILMORE: The Academy – Chillingly gentle folk from Thea Gilmore, back in action with new album 'Liejacker', the follow-up to 2006's acclaimed 'Harpo's Ghost', currently collaborating with The Zutons.

SAM ISAAC: The X, Cowley – Intimate country-tinged rock and electro-folk from the London singer and his band.

LIGHTNIN' WILLIE & THE POORBOYS + THE EPSTEIN: The Jericho Tavern – Second local gig in a month from the Texan blues-rock guitarist.

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House, breaks and techno featuring sets from Ape Records' Ben and Lex.

EVOLUTION: Fat Lil's, Witney **KRISSY MATTHEWS: Didcot Labour Club** – Didcot's monthly Red Hot Blues Club.

SHAKELLERS: The Port Mahon **BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon** **SHAKE: The Academy**

SATURDAY 21st

NEARLY DAN: The Academy – Tribute to Steely Dan.

WHISKY BLITZ: The Wheatsheaf **ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar** – Electro, indie and dance club night with live sets from Jersey's electro-funkers Velofax, jittery post-punkers Hair Traffic Control and local electro-rock faves 100 Bullets Back **GREEN ONIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to The Blues Brothers.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SUNDAY 22nd

TIM GODDARD: The Regal – Jazz composer and saxophonist who has previously worked with Chick Corea.

THE DEPUTES: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 23rd

ROBERT HOKUM & THE GUVNORS: The Bullingdon – West London r'n'b outfit adding funk and Latin touches to their straight-down-

the-line Delta and Chicago blues.

THE BLESSING: The Academy – Rearranged gig for the Bristolian jazz-rock crossover combo, featuring former-Portishead rhythm section Jim Barr and Clive Deamer, plus brass players Pete Judge and Jake McMurchie, whose CV includes Super Furry Animals and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, somehow finding a meeting point between The Stranglers and Ornette Coleman. **ROCKDISCO: Po Na Na**

TUESDAY 24th

THE DAYS: The Academy – Piano-led soul-pop from the rising Devon troupe who you might find lurking somewhere between Ben's Brother and Toploader were you so inclined to go looking in such places.

SOLE + SJ ESAU + JONQUIL: The Cellar – Crosswords Records night with a rare UK appearance from Anticon founder Sole, aka Tim Holland, displaying his dark, dense stream-of-consciousness rap style. Fellow Anticon chap SJ Esau, from Bristol and a former Tricky

Friday 27th

THE MUSIC: The Academy

Funny how you can forget all about a band's existence if they deign to disappear for a year or two. Such is the case with The Music, Leeds' rockers touted as the future of, erm, music, back in the early noughties on the strength of their Fierce Panda debut single, 'Take The Long Road And Walk It' as well as their pretty incendiary early live shows. After a Top Ten debut album and a reasonably successful follow-up in 2004, singer Robert Harvey's depression and alcohol dependency caught up with him and it's only now the band are back in action. Their forthcoming third album, 'Strength In Numbers', has been co-produced by Flood and Orbital's Paul Hartnoll, which bodes well, and they were always a step above most of the lauded guitar-toting hopefuls that were their contemporaries. Most recognisable for Harvey's trademark vocal wail, it's Adam Nutter's cacophonous guitar playing that really makes the band, a wah-wah heavy wall of noise, funk chops and oceanic drifting that rides over the clattering tribal rhythms. They're epic in a similar way to U2 but equally in thrall to Led Zep's mighty hard rocking blues. Whether they're still anyone's tip for the future of rock is doubtful but for the present, it's good to have them back.



protégé, has more recently ditched his alternative hip hop style for a wyrd folk and psychedelia path, while local cinematic alt.folk starlets Jonquil bring the sea shanties.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With local jazz guitar stalwart Denny Ilett Jr.

WEDNESDAY 25th

1000HERTZ + GUNNBUNNY + 50ft PANDA: The Wheatsheaf – Triple bill of heavyweight noise with screaming hardcore hellbasters 1000 Hertz, who claim to originate from Fuckston, Fuckshire, and listening to them, we don't doubt it. Raw, bluesy grunge beasts Gunnbunny and riffastic instrumental duo 50ft Panda support.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

THURSDAY 26th

TRANSFORMATION: The Bullingdon THE BRAIN POLICE + THE FULLERTONS + THE COOLING PEARLS: The Jericho Tavern – Not the Scandinavian stoner-metal Brain Police, but the new band formed by ex-South Sea Company Prospectus keyboard player Jim, with support from maudlin folk-pop band Cooling Pearls and Watford's mod-punkers The Fullertons.

SKYLARKIN: The Cellar – Ska, soul and reggae with Count Skylarkin plus guest DJ Derek.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

SMASH DISCO: The Academy

FRIDAY 27th

WAKESTOCK: Blenheim Palace –

First day of the new three-day wakeboarding and music festival – *see main preview*

THE MUSIC: The Academy – Leeds' epic rockers resurrected – *see main preview*

MOSHKA with THE DRUG SQUAD: The Bullingdon – Ska-punk chaos at tonight's Moshka club night.

VIXENS + TURNPIKE GLOW + GIOVANNA & THE SANDS + THE RRRRRs: The Jericho Tavern – Dark-minded indie jangling from the headliners, plus electro-indie rock from Italy's Turnpike Glow.

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with Random Movement, Jordan V and DJ Bekah.

SNEAKY BONUS: Fat Lil's, Witney DEDLOK: The Port Mahon – Grinding thrash metal.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SHAKE: The Academy

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

FRESH'N'FUNKY: Thirst Lodge

SATURDAY 28th

WAKESTOCK: Blenheim Palace – Day two of the wakeboarding festival – *see main preview*

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE DEPUTES + L-MO + LES CLOCHARDS: The Wheatsheaf – Strangulated folk-rock and jangly indie pop from The Deputes at tonight's GTI club. Leeds' acoustic funk trouper and human beatboxer L-Mo and local Gallic-pop faves Les Clochards support.

THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Jericho Tavern – Lovely lachrymose mood pop from the recent Nightshift cover stars.

GHOSTWOOD: The Academy – Aussie rockers, mixing Oasis-style stadium indie with more dark-hued shoegazing noise, kick off a short UK tour.

PHISH 6: The Bullingdon – 90s club night with DJs The Mighty Miso and Lezzard spinning everything from grunge to trance, plus a live set from US rockabilly band Ladyfingers.

MUNCH MUNCH + LONELY GHOSTS: The Cellar – Vacuous Pop night with Bristol's chaotic Casio-core manglers Munch Munch and Brighton's strident electro-rockers Lonely Ghosts.

GREENISH DAY: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Green Day.

BEELZEBOZO + TALC DEMONS: Stocks Bar, Abingdon – Skittle Alley bands night with local metallers Beelzebozo and Rami's bluesmen The Talc Demons.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Crawley Inn, Witney

BEHAVEYA: The Temple TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

SUNDAY 29th

WAKESTOCK: Blenheim Palace – Final day of the festival – *see main preview*

ZANGRYUS + SACRED DIVE: The Port Mahon

MONDAY 30th

THE JONATHAN KALB BAND: The Bullingdon – Renowned US blues guitarist and singer, steeped in the traditions of Muddy Waters, Albert Collins and BB King, but drawing on a wide range of blues styles as well as soul, funk and country, now enjoying his 36th year on the road, touring the US and Europe, as well as backing the likes of Bo Diddley, Otis Rush and Lightning Hopkins.

THE GALVATRONS: The Academy – Fantastically OTT Aussie robo power-rockers of a distinctly 80s hue. It's like Van Halen, Queen and Rush never went away.

ROCKDISCO: Po Na Na



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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
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WAKESTOCK

Friday 27th - Sunday 29th

Blenheim Palace

OXFORDSHIRE'S SUMMER FESTIVAL season has a new giant in its midst with the arrival of Wakestock to the spectacular surroundings of Blenheim Palace in Woodstock. Wakestock began in north Wales eight years ago as part of the annual wakeboarding championships – the fast-growing sport that mixes water-skiing with surfboarding. And if you're wondering what surfers are doing in landlocked Oxfordshire, you obviously haven't seen the size of the lake in Blenheim's 2,100-acre grounds. In fact there can be few more spectacular sites for a music festival than Blenheim, and if all that having a good time gets a bit much at any point, you can simply sit back and marvel at the vast landscaped gardens. So anyway, there'll be displays of wakeboarding over the weekend (and after last summer's downpours, we're hoping they'll be the only people getting wet over the weekend) but it's the music we're most interested in and there's plenty of that on three stages across the three days.

Being a new festival to the area Wakestock will looking to establish its identity this year and set the scene for (hopefully) future years. This year's bill is a mix of dance, indie and rock, with a good few local acts included on the bill.

Electro, big beat and house stars **Groove Armada** were the first headline act to be announced and they top the Friday night main stage bill, along with electronic duo **Audio Bullys**, while Australia's drum&bass hitmakers **Pendulum** head the main tent stage the same night. They are joined by new ravers **Hadouken!**, post-punk funk-pop starlets **Friendly Fires**, Aussie teen-punks **Operator Please** and Sparks-meet-Supertramp stadium-pop newcomers **Royworld**. Among the other dance-orientated acts on the Friday bill are London's nu-skool breaks team **Trophy Twins**, Polish-Iranian-American hip hop DJ **Nu-Mark** and funky house duo **Trophy Twins**.

Mark Ronson heads Saturday night's bill, with his band and assorted guests set to mix up his

hip hop roots and covers of UK indie hits. Manchester veterans **Happy Mondays** are the most recent addition to the bill, following their recent sold-out show at the Academy, while Welsh emo heroes **Funeral For A Friend** up the guitar count.

There's cheesy 80s electro revivalism from **Calvin Harris**, choirboy punk-pop from **Elliot Minor** and similarly-minded rocking from **You Me At Six**, quirky prog-tinged jangle-pop from regular Oxfordshire favourites **Mystery Jets**, party house from **Brandon Block**, post-hardcore noise from Wales' **The Blackout** and epic prog-tinged rock from Northern Ireland's **In Case Of Fire**. Former-Soul 2 Soul legend **Jazzie B** heads up the DJ cast, along with sound system king and Kiss FM founder **Sir Norman Jay**.

Sunday's bill looks to be the strongest, with local promoters TCT Music teaming up with Xfm for one stage, featuring local heroes **Supergrass** and **The Young Knives**, as well as the best of Oxford's rising stars, **A Silent Film** and **Little Fish**. Joining them are post-punkers **The Futureheads**, melancholic acoustic songsmith **Lightspeed Champion** and synth-pop revivalists **Metronomy**.

The big names on the main stage include Mike Skinner's hip hop storymakers **The Streets**, Radio 1's veteran dance DJ **Pete Tong**, r'n'b singer **Estelle**, Scottish new wavers **The Dykeenies**, Californian folk singer **Matt Costa**, acclaimed hip hop remix team **The Nextmen** and house and trance producer and DJ **Miguel Del Bosque**.

For full updated information visit www.wakestock.co.uk

Tickets for Wakestock are on sale from the festival website and wegottickets.com, as well as the credit card ticket line on 01758 710 000. Tickets can also be bought from HMV Oxford in Cornmarket Street, SS20 on Cowley Road and Rapture in Witney. Prices are £85 for weekend tickets, or £110 with camping. Day tickets are also available at £40 per day.



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Non-Stop Tango

THE OXFORD PUNT

Will Tattersdill sits facing the early evening Borders crowd and announces, "Hi I'm **FACEOMETER** and I'm from Birmingham". As an opening gambit at the Oxford Punt it's not a great start. Will is, however, studying at Oxford University, so we let it pass. You can tell he's a clever fellow because he manages to squeeze about 100 words per minute into his twitchy, caffeinated anti-folk, even managing a song that takes in the complete life of William Blake. Abetted by the excellently-named Dapper Swindler, Faceometer produces what sound like frenzied Polish dance tunes with lyrics by Bob Dylan and Edward Lear and shows an odd mixture of New York cool and slightly frightening effervescence: imagine Lawrence Ferlinghetti as an assistant scoutmaster. His vocals might not be very supple but his way with language is dexterity itself.

We're leaning against the pulp romance section at Borders this year, trying to ignore the bodice-ripping sleeve artwork and concentrate instead on **DESMOND CHANCER AND THE LONG MEMORIES**, which isn't difficult given Desmond (aka Tomohawk from Big Speakers, Brickwork Lizards et al) has a voice that could disembowel buffalo at fifty paces. In retrospect his drunken barfly delivery may be better suited to a wee small hours whisky session instead of a strip-lit bookshop but the band's smoky trawl through gutter life jazz ballads that recall 'Blue Valentine'-era Tom Waits is louche and endearing, with some excellent jazz sax solos.

There are some heroic scenes at the Purple Turtle where sound engineer James Sergeant is coping with a venue seemingly stripped of any working

parts. It's no exaggeration to say that **INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS** hitting the stage at all, never mind on time and in front of a packed house, is a minor miracle. They have pedigree, which shows in their mature songwriting and sophisticated sound, oddly reminiscent of Sisters Of Mercy without the goth baggage, and better haircuts. One of the bands tonight most likely to make waves, and true to their name they fly off to New York the next day.

From here on is where the Punt gets considerably more hectic and occasionally messy with disrupted set times meaning we sometimes charge across town to stand and watch an empty stage for twenty minutes, or are forced to down pints in seconds to make it elsewhere in time for the second half of some band or other.

At Thirst Lodge nervous audience members are weighing up the risk involved trying to walk across the dancefloor to get to the loos, since **BLACK SKIES BURN**'s heavily-tattooed frontman is prowling the open space like a guard dog with toothache and a ferocious roar as his band do a fair approximation of Slayer locked in combat with Meshugga, and we feel it wiser to hold on to our bladders and simply enjoy the undeniable pleasure of an extreme metal band in full flight.

Many in the crowd have got here extra early to be sure of catching **LITTLE FISH**, and by the time JuJu and Nez take to the stage, it's impossible to get in the door, the audience at the back stood on tables and hanging off every vantage point to see this astonishing duo perform. We've ranted and raved about Little Fish's feral soul-bearing garage rock so much over the last 12 months but it bears repeating, especially with new songs like the Pretenders-play-'Heroin' churn of 'Darling Dear', that here is a band that has star quality running

through them like seaside rock, and that they're currently being courted by Linda Perry, undisputedly the world's premier A&R person, is hopefully a sign that things will very soon be going stratospheric for them.

Someone who is highly unlikely to have the music industry chasing him for a signature is **DAVID K FRAMPTON**, but he seems to be everyone's Punt highlight, playing a powerful, pulverising set of laptop brutality at the Cellar that at first encounter seems more like physical assault than music, but stealthily hits a groove that's irresistibly danceable, like Fuck Buttons mangling dubstep with an angle grinder. Clutching three mics like a fat kid returning from an ice-cream van, he screams, "We're gonna rock'n'roll tonight!" It's no empty promise.

It's the heavier, more experimental side of Oxford music that comes to the fore tonight, from **ELAPSE-O**'s rumbling, bass-heavy percussive urgency and wandering guitar noise that dwarfs the slightly sparse crowd, to **EDUARD SOUNDINGBLOCK**'s Beefheart-flavoured boundary-pushing blues-core explorations, their increasingly complex riffs displaying their dexterity while remaining unrelentingly rock solid.

And then there's the misleadingly-named **NON-STOP TANGO**, who sound like Talking Heads and King Crimson and Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart and The Doors and Hawkwind and Björk and The Fall and The Art Of Noise and lots of others. Not necessarily our opinion, but this is just a selection of comments we overheard in The Wheatsheaf as the set progressed, which goes some way to explaining how varied their sound is. Composed of Oxford's free improv luminaries, Non-Stop Tango is really an experiment in taking



Eduard Soundingblock



King Furnace



David K Frampton



International Jetsetters



Little Fish

All photos: Sam Shepherd, except Little Fish: rphimages; King Furnace: Jonny Moto

groove-based music and destroying it from the inside, bombarding funky basslines with electronic drums, tinny keyboards and incomprehensible vocals. Not many people last the distance, but if they left confused we'll call it a victory. The Punt needs bands like this. Scratch that, the world needs bands like this, there aren't enough surprises left.

On the poppier side of the coin are Witney's **TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS**, still all 16, once demo dumped in these pages and now looking like an outside bet for local band most-likely-to in the next year or so, managing to sound simultaneously naïve and ramshackle and exquisitely on the nail with a keyboard-led sound that's greatly augmented by B's violin scrawls. More violins with **CAT MATADOR** at the Wheatsheaf, combining well with the chiming guitars, creating a high-octane form of indie rock that veers between epic and introspective but with enough force and character to keep the large crowd fully engaged.

Sadly **ALPHABET BACKWARDS** isn't just someone rewinding an episode of *Sesame Street*, but happily they *are* a pretty feisty pop concoction with some excellent fixing keyboards and bouncy backbeats. Sadly the vocals let the side down with some clumsy pub rock intonations, but apparently the normal vocalist is off tonight, so we'll give them a bye. Worth a second listen, we feel.

As an evening of venue-hopping and badly-paced drinking begins to take hold there is an opportunity to dance in that ungainly fashion we have, to **RUBBERDUCK**, undoubtedly the Punt's most unselfconsciously good-time band. From their 70s-styled guitar chops and loping funk grooves to

the sudden, welcome drop into dubby reggae, they're never going to be chin-stroking critics' favourites but will always create a party wherever they play. **RAGGASAURUS'** take on the reggae beast, meanwhile, is more exotic and esoteric, helped in no small part by frontman Tunki's huge, soaring Arabic vocals.

Beats and grooves of a very different nature from **SIKORSKI** at Thirst Lodge. 80s electro with a hint of industrial, they're like the future as it used to be viewed. They pack an electronic punch more subtle than David K Frampton, although subtle isn't a word you'd normally associate them with on any other night; they're more like the soundtrack to a night time drive through central Detroit with Robocop, and don't tell us that isn't an inviting prospect, especially when they've got recent Miss England, Ellie Glynn, on hand for company and guest vocals.

The Punt never peters out. Even as the school night gets later and the more responsible souls out on the town start to contemplate tomorrow's consequences, **KING FURNACE** are showing why we think they're the most improved band in town over the last year. These days they've got character, and a sense of showmanship, and loads and loads of unabashed balls-out rocking energy, frontman Jan leaping from keyboards to mic, the band decked out in dapper shirts-and-braces clobber that adds a touch of civility to their otherwise primal party blues-rock clamour.

50FT PANDA are Oxford music's equivalent of a Belgian truffle: creamy and delicious, but too rich to want too much of. Imagine all your favourite heavy rock records distilled down to their essence, and that's essentially what this duo produce: nothing but fiery drumming, the riff, and the

volume (my God, the volume!) again and again and again. They really do it incredibly well, but, like another local duo that has two people making the noise of ten, Winnebago Deal, listen to it for more than thirty minutes and your brain starts to melt.

At this point the sight of the Cellar bouncer eating raw eggs sends those remaining sensitive souls off to their beds, leaving a rump of hardcore Punters to discuss the relative merits of **CLANKY ROBO GOBBOBS** in the liveliest of drunken fashions. "But it's not even music", declaims one. Perhaps, but it is theatre. And noise. And a bit silly. And, and this is important, fun. Does that count for nothing?

It maybe something of a forgone conclusion that bands at the Punt get a good write-up in Nightshift – we chose them after all – but the truth is the Nightshift writers out in force tonight argue belligerently about the relative merits of just about every one, except the unanimously admired Mr Frampton. For every act on here tonight there is a critic who loves them, and that's what's important. We can only hope that any inquisitive local music virgins who got a Punt pass found something they loved to treasure in their memories...and we hope they found something they abhorred too, that's what music should be all about.

And in a week that found the newly-published *Rough Guide To England* declaiming Oxford's live music scene as not all that, the Punt, and the variety of bands it hosts, is living proof that what we've got in Oxford is the envy of any town and city in the country.

Words: Dale Kattack, David Murphy, Sam Shepherd, Pascal Ansell, Art Lagun, Ben Woolhead.

THE WHIP / SOUTH CENTRAL

The Jericho Tavern

It's always worrying when a band is prone to giving each other pre-gig hugs and high fives as a kind of motivational bonding tool. It's particularly disturbing when the band in question is a bunch of pencil-thin, hoodie-wearing indie-kids who look like they've come straight from the streets of Shoreditch. Looks can be deceiving, so we try and ignore the in-band hugging and the fact that there's a keytar on stage. Turns out that there might be something in this self congratulation because South Central are awe inspiring. There's nothing particularly new about what they do, which is fairly brash punked-up electro, but it is steeped in attitude and sometimes that's enough. So when they deconstruct The Fall's 'New Big Prinz' for 'Nothing Can Go Wrong' and turn it into a dancefloor stomping anthem it doesn't feel like plagiarism, more like a fitting tribute. Likewise when they lift from 808 State's 'Cubic' for 'Revolution' it feels like they've taken the original in a new direction, appropriating rather than engaging in some cheeky shoplifting. South Central are perhaps a little too harsh to appeal across the board, but they make an irresistible noise.

Just like South Central The Whip are hardly pushing back barriers by adding their name to the list of bands that can happily call



Whip photo by Sam Shepherd

themselves New Rave. However, The Whip have something about them that elevates them above the likes of Klaxons and the like. Mixing up indie guitars with 80s dance sounds such as New Order or Human League, their sound is far more subtle and infinitely more poppy than most. That's not to say they make instantly forgettable tripe, in fact their songs are quick to

hook you and reel you in, which is why within seconds of 'Trash's rumbling bassline kicking things off, the Jericho has turned into a seething dancefloor. It is not inconceivable to believe that in a matter of months The Whip will be huge, in fact on this evidence it's almost a certainty.

Sam Shepherd

RAY / THE SWAMIS / WHYBIRDS

The Jericho Tavern

At first sight The Whybirds look like a bad accident with a time-machine. They are flowing haired, Lynynrd Skynyrd-style rock stars that have stumbled off a tour bus from Okie Fanokie, USA circa-1969. But titter ye not, they turn out to be the most consummate and charismatic British band doing alt-country rock I've ever seen. In a personnel of four they have four lead singers of great quality, and in taking their turn each subtly changes the texture of the band. So 'Girl Is On Fire' is something Bon Jovi would be proud of; 'Hauling' is prime Eagles, and the E Street Band would be slaving to have a crack at 'Four Letter Word'. By the end I don't want them to leave the stage, the crowd whooping and hollering, and I think, I really wouldn't want to follow that.

But The Swamis' singer Dan Buckland would happily follow Queen on stage, given the chance, such is his confidence. With brilliant guitarist Paul Jackson acting as a sort of Mick Ronson to his Bowie, they embark on a session of tight-riffing rock songs ('Gypsy Pig') and epic Led Zep balladry ('Take You Soon), replete

with a snappy humour, and a woman's "thousand word" glare. The audience mosh and things get trampled. Matt Banham's pin-sharp drumming completes the feeling that this Milton Keynes band are not only bathed in sweat but also great potential.

After all the fizz and fireworks, Ray's black-shirted, sober lamenting is really the only way forward. Powerful songs of quiet desperation, this is indie as it was and should be, where Guy Chadwick drinks with Brett Anderson aftershow in the 12 Bar Club, and Janis Long puts on another Echo and the Bunnymen track as you sit up in bed, reading with the radio on after midnight. The band's sound revolves round the two Bradford brothers: Mark's guitar a swirling counterpoint to Nev's one-line-at-a-time tenor phrasing. 'Roulette Sun' is typical of the grave but beautiful feel to it all, and while you really need to live with their album, 'A Death In Fiction', a week or two before coming to see them, you can see they are worthy of their place in the *noir* canon.

Paul Carrera

DJ YODA'S MAGIC CINEMA SHOW

The Academy

DJ Yoda – aka Duncan Beiny – is a North London scratch DJ who, despite selling out venues nationwide, modestly admits he does it all "purely for my own amusement". A vinyl-scratching virtuoso and cereal box-collecting freak, he is 'One of the top three DJs in the world' according to *Hip Hop Connection* magazine. His Magic Cinema Show is the culmination of a brand-new hip-hop conception: scratching DVDs. The £1500 Pioneer DVD Mixer has been keeping Yoda company in his past months of touring – the gadget enables him to scratch DVDs at the same time as CDs. The result is, in his own words, "a big potpourri of... all my favourite bits of all my favourite movies, TV programmes, cartoons, music videos..."

Styluses, turntables, covert spliffs; we're now a couple of hours before his set, DJ Dub providing a tidy warm-up session with sludgy, throbbing slices of dark choc hip-hop à la Flying Lotus. A dizzying concoction, spiralling basslines travelling snail-paced with some laid-back but unremarkable scratching.

Before long, the Star Wars theme blasts from the crackling Academy speakers – the unmistakable triumph of the cheeky North London DJ announces himself via a hefty span of Western video culture. Those fleeting galactic letters pass by on the screen behind Yoda's desk; "A DJ to scratch DVDs in ways never seen before". Hundreds of the clips invade the screen: Superbad, Anchorman, Sesame Street, David Dickinson, Tom Jones, Rocky; all get the DJ Yoda treatment. The warm, nostalgic clouds from The Simpsons appear, cunningly matched with a jungle beat accelerated to the tempo of a speedy infantile sugar-rush. It's not always thrilling to watch a grumpy DJ pore over his decks all evening.

DJ Yoda, however, is far from pofaced: his grinning and immature humour is irresistible. While transcending the 'novelty' status, Yoda achieves an amazing spectacle, a brilliantly puerile hotchpotch of images and beats, stuttering, multiplying the clips into a scratching mayhem.

Pascal Ansell

NME NEW NOISE TOUR

The Academy

NME's latest heavily-sponsored showcase tour could more aptly have been called The New 80s Tour, such is the unabashed genuflecting at that maligned decade going on tonight from the four bands involved.

The night starts badly, gets worse and finally picks up a head of steam. **WHITE LIES** are a functional post-punk tribute act, a sort of Editors Reserves who only get us to contemplating how many different marketing committees were needed to perfect their sterile take on all things Bunnymen, Associates and Simple Minds. There are a thousand bands better than this rehearsing in village halls and garages across the country every day. The irony is, back in the early-80s, the NME would doubtless have savaged White Lies for their utter lack of authenticity, but since the weekly has lost its soul, we'll do it for them.

TEAM WATERPOLO are a new nadir altogether, though. Whether it's the singer's cocksure falsetto 'rap', the band's anonymous funk-pop and sluggish MOR rock stomp or simply the drummer's Peruvian hat that simply screams "KICK ME, I'M A TWAT!" there really is no end of reasons to despise them for even daring to exist. Team Waterpolo is a name that suggests some degree of skill or exotic

nature. A new name is in order to fully reflect their talent. Might we suggest Team Shite?

The night takes a significant turn for the better with **FRIENDLY FIRES**, steeped in the turn-of-the-decade funk of Talking Heads and Gang Of Four as well as New York's burgeoning disco scene. They, so much more than what's come before, sound fresh and in danger of getting a party started.

But it's the rapturous reception afforded **CRYSTAL CASTLES** that shows who tonight's stars really are. A blizzard of bleeps and squiggles, beats and strobes, a bolshy, minimalist techno-rock throb fronted by raven-haired pop vixen Alice Glass, they are an unnatural, unholy and cool-as-fuck collision between Bikini Kill and Visage. Such is the blizzard effect of the strobe lighting it's hard to really see what's going on on stage and Alice's vocals are little more than a squeaky, shouty hectoring succession of sloganeering chants but she's one of the most engaging frontwomen we've seen since Karen O on this same stage, and when she dives into the crowd she's predictably mobbed. Perhaps NME's tastemaking talent isn't quite moribund just yet. And as for synth-pop? Who says it can't rock like a bastard?

Dale Kattack

THE MENTALISTS / BABY GRAVY

The Academy

Tonight's gig serves as a launch party for 'Spark 3', an album showcasing the local talents being discovered by the Young Women's Band Project. As well as the two main attractions, we have five acts from the CD who, in a shift from the 'Spark 2' rock acts, are mainly folk and blues, duos and solo acts. Of these, the pick are Rachel Hughes, who has a fantastic bluesy voice for one so young, and Jadey & Spam who write well-crafted pop with a country feel. Their contrasting voices blend well, the homely one of Spam and angelic style of Jadey's.

Baby Gravy have come a long way since they stripped out the deadwood and came out fighting with their current line up. It's a fact that seems to have gone un-noticed by most of Oxford, but it can surely be only a matter of time before it dawns on them what they're missing. Dale and David

keep things tight and allow Zahra and Iona to add the sparkle and flair, an ideal combination. 'I'm Not Like That' will hammer its way into your consciousness. It's a short sharp set and Baby Gravy seem best that way, a musical shock to the temples.

And so to special "professional" guests The Mentalists. To be honest, what with them having a frankly dire name and having gone on a program where Jo Whiley is the arbiter of musical taste, I hold out little hope. However it's almost like they created their own obstacles to give them strength to go on. The band is locked together as one, slapping you about with more brutal songs than I expected. They throw a magnificent curveball on the last song, a song that is impossible not to dance to. Its galloping horse rhythm has people cavorting around the dancefloor.

Russell Barker



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EX-MODELS/ELAPSE-O/LOAD.CLICK.SHOOT!

The Cellar

Load. Click. Shoot! are a bunch of youngsters from Devon playing frenetic spazz disco indie punk who, albeit talented, don't seem to have found their little niche yet. Loud synths, quick riffs, and athletic beats intermingle in a confusing mushy mumble which, somehow, fall

into place about a minute before the end of each song, when, miraculously, it all feels tight and airy and superbly math-poppy. But hang on, the tune is strangely familiar. It edges the contours of Bloody Panda on 45rpm, a muffled Black Eyes set, and a hungover team Foals.

Despite their name, they have not figured out that they need to load before shooting.

Oxford's Elnapse-O duo have slowly but steadily settled themselves in a growing local experimental noise scene, and with a good reason. They create a sound difficult to describe, a beat reminiscent of a Viking goldsmith at work or a Japanese coin press factory, combined with layered guitar strums and broken primal vocal utterances, all displayed in a surprisingly elegant and clean metallic environment. It is like a trip back to our overly-curious innocent childhood mumbling, through self-cleansing showers of noise.

Ex Models started off as a high school project by Shahin Motia and his brother. Now based in Brooklyn, and together with Zach Lehrhoff and guest drummer Kid Millions from Oneida, they display an enthusiastic, overloaded, defined guitar finger work, and muddy, noisy and minimalist un-linear time changes. With more than four years of touring under their belt and 'Other Mathematics', 'Zoo Psychology', and 'Chrome Panthers' released, they have developed musically and professionally into an exploding burning spirit. They wear and breathe their disparate musical influences - manipulating, interplaying, simulating and frenetically pacing sounds to excellent precision. In this mixed mush of stimuli, there is an overall introspectiveness that other post-punk, experimental bands lack, which entices the audience to create their own little world - an explosive bubble of ecstatic blur.

Liane Escorza

WAS (NOT WAS)

The Academy

Was (Not Was) have been around since 1980 and their debut single on the ultra-hip Ze Records. 'Wheel Me Out' sounded like no other music being made; a hard-edged funk beat, Latin-tinged percussion, Wayne Kramer from The MC5 strangling his guitar and a deranged lyric about a jealous, wheelchair-bound scientist. Masterminds Don and David Was had painstakingly collected an outrageously talented set of musicians from their native Detroit, including the soulful vocals of Sweet Pea Atkinson and Sir Harry Bowens and led them into twelve years of modest success and a pocketful of hits, after which they went off into hibernation and side projects. But now they're back with a new album 'Bool' and this, the first date of a world tour.

The new material takes up pretty much exactly where they left off sixteen years ago. Infectious, funky tunes with offbeat lyrical content, expertly and confidently played, it's like a trip back to a more innocent time. Pretty much all the original faces are here apart from Kramer, though he does appear on the album. Randy Jacobs more than makes up with the kind of

screeching but measured guitar you only hear in American funk bands. They still drop the odd ballad and bring out hits like 'Walk The Dinosaur', but sadly no 'Shake Your Head'. 'Wheel Me Out' still has the power to thrill and the original record still sounds incredibly fresh.

The problem they have is that sixteen years is an awfully long time in pop music. Barely forty people greet them tonight and reports are that other dates have been less than packed out. Another issue is that they've always been more popular with musicians than the general public, a lot of whom just don't 'get' their sense of humour. Don Was has worked with Dylan, the Stones and a host of others as producer and co-writer, while David has done the soundtrack for the new *X Files* movie, and there aren't many bands who get Brian Wilson asking to guest on backing vocals.

Outside I grab Sweet Pea's hand and gush like a hopeless fan about all my original records. "Yeah" he says, fixing me with a stare, "but what about the new one?"

Art Lagun

JUSTIN ADAMS & JULDEH

CAMARA TRIO

The Academy

The coming together of Justin Adams, an English rock guitarist whose day job is with Robert Plant's band, and Gambian Juldeh Camara, playing the traditional African one-stringed fiddle, the riti, and singing in his African language, has made waves in the World music scene. Their debut CD together, 'Soul Science', was near the top of many best of 2007 lists and won them a BBC World Music award. So this is highly-anticipated Big Village gig.

Camara, wearing traditional robes and standing tall and still for most of the time, oozes charisma; the riti seems part of his body as his obsessive bowing makes the sound swoop from high-pitched near-scream, down and back up again. Also as well as giving us powerful vocals, by also singing in a conversational style, he creates an intimate feel.

Adams' guitar work is brilliant; he plays as a rhythm guitarist - no showy solos, just the occasional little run. Using his deep knowledge of West African and Arabic rhythms, as well as bursts

of bottleneck and Muddy Waters-style Chicago Blues, he makes the gig by making sure that his and Juldeh's music really mesh.

Together they create raw, gutsy music as they work their way through the tracks on 'Soul Science'. Drummer Salah Dawson Miller, very much looking the old hippie with long, white wispy beard, and using only African percussion instruments, makes the sound even earthier.

Adams' varied playing helps avoid their sound becoming overly repetitive, as do stylistic twists like doing the traditional call and response between Camara's voice and Adams' guitar, rather than two voices.

They vary it so well, it begs what more they could possibly do when it comes to that difficult second CD to keep the music fresh. The only song not to come off on the night is a cover of a Carter Family Appalachian Mountain song, but it does show Justin and Juldeh are up for trying the very unexpected, which could be the answer.

Colin May

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PHOEBE KILLDEER & THE SHORT STRAWS

The X

It's a rough start. Tonight is the first night for the promoters at The X, which itself is only just getting back into action after its forced closure and having their PA explode during sound check certainly gives everyone some challenges. Unfortunately it's too much for the first band and they're off, but for Phoebe Killdeer & the Short Straws having to piece a PA back together themselves and playing to only a handful of people only seems to raise their spirits. When they do finally take to the stage you get the feeling whether it's two people or two thousand, Phoebe and co. are going to still put on an amazing show.

Rumour has it that Phoebe was fired from her breaking band, Nouvelle Vague, for 'bad behaviour' and albeit she's not throwing water balloons at us or making farting noises with her armpit, she definitely seems to have a deviant streak about her. As she and the Short Straws

delve into their first song she hangs on to the mic stand with a haughty stance and with a punchy voice that is dark and deep, we're immersed in bluesy, dirty, rock and roll, a slowness that verges on dirge. The smattering of souls that have stuck around are deathly silent, including the three or four previously rambunctious drunks in the corner.

Song after song Phoebe treats us to something a little different. In 'Paranoia' there's simplicity and space with shards of Portishead and Alison Goldfrapp poking through. 'Looking For A Man' brings to mind Holly Golightly as the Short Straws bring a 60s twist to this drunken sardonic ¾ waltz ("I cook and clean, I'm a perfect machine," she croons). And on 'He's Gone' Phoebe goes all Eartha Kitt over angular and scratchy guitars and tribal, rhythmic drums.

It's the best gig of the year so far for me. A shame about the difficult start and the paltry



photo: Nick Courtney

number of people here, but I hope she'll come back and be bad for us again. Very, very bad.

Katy Jerome

HARRY ANGEL / TOUPE / BEAVER

FUEL / JAMES BELL

The Bullingdon

We're fascinated by acts that nearly don't work, performers who skirt the shores of musical embarrassment and somehow arrive safely at the port of artistic integrity. James Bell is a fine example; his supersized, falsetto-heavy cabaret acoustic shows, replete with implausible covers and frenetic leaping, should have all the charm of a precocious toddler, yet somehow he not only escapes with pride intact, but also manages to sneak some powerful emotions into the room. His cover of 'Canadee-i-o' may sound like Thin Lizzy, but it reveals a deep fondness for traditional folk song, and 'Last Of The Corners' manages to mix Elvis Costello's lyrical intricacy with authentic Waterboys yearning. A real talent.

That song aside, Leigh Alexander's songwriting for Beaver Fuel can actually be more subtle than is generally perceived, and he cuts big issues down to size with cheeky verbosity *a la* Carter USM. Having said that, the new tune is called 'Fuck You, I've Got Tourettes', so let's not get carried away. Beaver Fuel is an act that doesn't normally thrive in the live environment, ending up a stodgy mess. Not tonight, however. Something's changed in Camp Buttrack since the lacklustre EP launch scant weeks ago: Leigh's voice may not be the most versatile in town, but he's clearly been working on his projection and his lyrics sail clearly over a surprisingly neat and

bouncy band. We still wonder whether lumpy punk with *Mojo* solos is the ideal vehicle for Leigh's writing, but this is a band improving steadily.

Slap bass. Swearing. Boob jokes. You're not going to believe us that Southampton's Toupe are geniuses, are you? Led by stand up comedian Grant Sharkey, they use drums and two basses to create propulsive and surprisingly varied smut funk, coming off like a cross between Frank Zappa and The Grumbleweeds, like a pier-end Primus. Ozymoronically, they survive because they don't take their silliness too seriously, and goof off more to amuse themselves than to create an air of calculated wackiness – and beneath it all the music is actually superb, with magnificent drumming from Jay Havelock. One of the best bands you'll see all year, though we know you *still* don't believe us.

It's been two years since we last saw Harry Angel, and we're glad to report that little has changed. The early Radiohead references may have been swapped for some mid-period Sonic Youth, but otherwise they still spew out fizzing amphetamine goth, a huge wall of irascible noise with Chris Beard's vocals as a black smear across the front. They also look like they're playing in the last few seconds of their lives. "Proper rock'n'roll", shouts a drunken punter. Girls Aloud must still be getting over it.

David Murphy

THE SMITHS INDEED

The Academy

The genius of Morrissey lies in the fact that he's at once deeply heartfelt and utterly artificial. Even when he's probing the rawest lesions of his psyche, its done with a smirking awareness of the absurdity of all human emotion which turns self-disclosure into self-parody. The persona at all times steps in for the person - and somehow that's what makes him such a real presence. It's this paradox as much as the accessible brilliance of the songs that makes The Smiths such perfect candidates for a tribute act. Imitation - with its subtexts of contrivance and proverbially incomparable sincerity - was what The Smiths were all about.

Watching The Smiths Indeed requires a similar doubling up. Half your brain suspends disbelief in order to immerse itself in delighted nostalgia; the other half eyes proceedings from a skeptical remove, fearing the whole thing may descend into ludicrousness of the Stars in their Eyes variety at any moment. The nostalgia-illusion is greatly fostered by the fact that the band clearly live The Smiths. It's impossible to imagine "Morrissey" combing out his quiff and donning the weekday uniform of management consultant, or anything else for that matter. He looks too much like his inspiration - with the skinny frame and bookish appeal and backside furnished with a veritable forest of springtime flora. He's got the

voice down to a tee - the operatic flourishes; the R-rolling; and the dancing, too - that rather gauche posturing that oscillates (wildly) between Emily Bronte swoon and the warm-ups of an amateur hammer-thrower. Nor do the songs disappoint, the setlist being an Everyfan's treasury of favourites: 'This Charming Man', 'Still Ill', 'Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now', 'There is a Light The Never Goes Out'. No 'Girl Afraid', sadly, but you can't have it all. With the exception of a bit of dodgy guitar playing, the similitude is pretty spot-on - great enough, certainly, for middle-aged men in the audience to near-sob with the emotion of it all and to chant 'Morrissey! Morrissey! Morrissey!' as though the flower-tossing figure on stage were he in fact.

As to the suspicion of cringeworthiness simmering just below the surface, I suspect this may be in the nature of the tribute band, rather than owing to any particular failings of The Smiths Indeed. It seems sadly unfair that an imitation done in the spirit of eulogy, as opposed to satire, must always be a little embarrassing, but there it is. The human heart's a bitch. Then again, in the context, even this hint of the risible is fitting. As the 'real' Morrissey once opined, 'I think we all have to sit down and look in the mirror and think, What is that absurd monstrosity?'

Emily Gray

ULRICH SCHNAUSS / AIRIEL / INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS

The Cellar

Shoegazing was a term of description offered almost as a piss-take of bands the music press of the early-90s considered to be somewhat lacking in charisma, hiding their dearth of star quality behind vast walls of turbulent guitar drones as they studiously avoided eye-contact with their audience. The term has morphed since the days of Ride and their ilk to signify a particular strand of indie rock, one that had a major impact on the whole post-rock movement and where attention to sonic texture, either of the dreamy, ambient kind, or the more eviscerating variety still holds sway over performance or easy pop tunes. Sonic Cathedral is a regular club night, in Oxford, London and beyond that celebrates what, at its best, can sound like the music of the heavens.

As drummer with Ride Loz Colbert should know all about that and having joined his current Jesus & Mary Chain bandmate Mark Crozer's International Jetsetters, they're a welcome reminder of a time when indie really meant independence of mind and spirit. From the giddy, spiralling rush of 'Inside Out', they cut a dash through prime Wedding Present, while new singer Fi McFall provides an often strident counterbalance to the

narcotic guitar squall. 'California Here I Come' is more 60s sunshine psychedlia with the guitar fuzz coating its lightness with a layer of sonic tar, while closing number, 'Inside You' finds Fi's voice at its peak as the band come close to matching Magoo's sublime 'Billion Dollar Brain'.

Chicago's ARIEL are an even more pure, distilled amalgam of the shoegazing firmament. From the clattering Ride-like drums and an opening number that sounds remarkably like that band's 'Seagull', they mix soaring melodies with incandescent fuzz that threatens to strip layers of your inner ear.

Flange-heavy, they can be as delicate as Pale Saints or as unforgiving as Loop, ultimately spiralling in on themselves for a final number that you'd gladly lose yourself in for an hour.

Berlin's one-man electronic shoegazing cult star Ulrich Schnauss joins ARIEL for one number but after their raucous, incessant set his own solo performance is a come down, undulating keyboard textures providing a gently spaced-out ambience but too close to Tangerine Dream's *cosmiche musik* to really engage your head. Or your shoes for that matter.

Ian Chesterton

HEALTH / JAYETAL

The Wheatsheaf

There is a bit of a hype surrounding Jayetal, a duo from Winchester, making experimental rock electronica from Macs and drums and guitar riffs. They have been said to drive people into a dancing frenzy with their soundscapes. However, even though there is a pretty large crowd tonight watching them, the audience seem uninterested. I don't blame them. Their guitar melodies are too simple, stretched a bit too far, and the drums, although passionate, do not seem engaging enough. Their energy is lost in Al Gaudie's laptop manoeuvres, so absorbed in creating his sample tricks that he fails to pay attention to the audience's response. We can faintly

grasp their intention, but it is not powerful enough to keep us transfixed.

I Google Health and the BBC News come up: 'Health | Music' makes the brain learn better'. Indeed. Health's music is like a magic jagged little pill. It sticks to the tongue, the jaw, the throat and ends up dissolving in your body and attacking the brain fiercely. There is moaning, wailing, tribal rituals. There are spasms, climax, and voodoo howling. They make organic mother earth love and they share it raw and heavy. Having recorded with the bruising Crystal Castles explains this ferocious tendency. They may come from a sunny Californian Los Angeles, but BJ Miller,

Jake Duzsik, John Famigletta and Jupiter Keyes plunge into the dark, unconscious to resuscitate the animal in us. Rhythm is everything – a brutal, wild fight with ourselves. We are left exhausted with this euphoric re-discovery, yet we cannot wait to pop another one of their mind-blowing pills.

Liane Escorza



Photo: Liane Escorza

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

FEE FI FO FUM

In a pretty wretched month for demos this is the only one that didn't have us despairing in some small way about the state of modern music / the music industry / human existence, and given it was made by two teenagers, that makes us all the more optimistic that our future world won't just be an endless morass of shopping malls with those high-pitched anti-hoodie mosquito alarm things stuck on the side. Thame-based duo Fee Fi Fo Fum are an instrumental guitar'n'drums set up who sound a lot like a stuttering, blundering, rumbling, twitching, ponderous, careering android trying to negotiate the aisles in his local Spa store after a night out on the lash, attempting to locate the Pot Noodles while his circuits fail to respond efficiently to his commands. There is also the sound of drilling, and drilling, and drilling. And more awkward, clever, doesn't-quite-fit, oh-shit-we-forgot-the-tunes noodling, twitching and rampaging, the pair stealing bits and pieces from Hella, Philip Glass, Sunn O))) and That Fucking Tank along the way (we're not trying to be clever and obscure here, we just copied the bit out of their letter where they admitted nicking all their ideas from those acts). There's also a great guitar passage towards the end that reminds us a lot of Throbbing Gristle's 'Six Six Sixties'. We spotted that all by ourselves. Anyway, in summary: a right old racket, but in a sea of mediocrity, the closest thing to fun.

JADA PEARL

A singer with the sort of voice most *X Factor* contestants and stage school students would kill for, Jada Pearl is this month's demo person most likely to appear on *Later... with Jools Holland*, or in a West End stage production any time soon. She does fluttering jazz cabaret warble and slick soul emoting with consummate ease over stylish honky tonk piano, and you feel with some really decent material she'd tear the place down. Here though there's the feeling she's showing off her voice too much in the absence of any great songs. At times it's as if Jada is simply practising her scales, injecting

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"Take the pain away-ee-aye-ee-aye-ee-aye" with so much intensity that something might burst. Part way between Maria Carey and Minnie Ripperton, a voice this powerful needs tunes to match, else everything gets overwhelmed. Still, a genuine talent and no mistake.

THE ETERNAL SUNSHINES

The Eternal Sunshines come from Newbury and they've got someone in the band called Danny Bash, which sounds like an old punk rock moniker for a spectacularly inept drummer with a penchant for trashing kits, venues and passing journals. The Eternal Sunshines are, however, as far away from a punk rock riot as it's possible to be without actually being a tea party on Rick Wakeman's lawn. It's dreamy, innocuous, nominally country-tinged semi-acoustic pop that trots, jogs and shuffles along pleasantly, well mannered and neatly textured but apparently incapable of getting anywhere in any kind of a hurry. There's a sweet guitar shimmer to the languid, reflective 'Running Nowhere', but 'Cherry Sunset' tends to drift just a bit too much, ultimately lacking real substance, more suited to being the incidental music on a documentary about Britain's coastline. So, nice enough in a soporific kind of way, although you start to wish Danny Bash would live up to his name and starting hitting things. Though not us, please.

SONIC BOB

With a moniker that sounds like the nickname of the rhythm guitarist in a pub-rock covers band, Sonic Bob, aka Rob Digweed, promises us a free Milky Way for just listening to his demo. Milky Way is, of course, a poor substitute for a bar of Bourneville, in much the same way as Sonic Bob is a poor substitute for Depeche Mode. Or possibly Utah Saints. Or maybe Deftones. Depends on what mix and match Bob's going in for at any given time, veering from happy trance to industrial synth-pop to all-out screamo hardcore noise. And then there's the strange drop into almost country-rock singing on one track. All of which can be pretty entertaining, even if the synth patches seem to have been phoned in from some point in the mid-80s at times. The main problem is Bob's vocals, which, apart from the fact he's standing way too close to the

microphone, tend towards the shouting and moaning very loudly through his nose style of emoting. What he needs here is a sultry robo-rocking siren to do justice to the retro-futurist-hardcore backing. More than a bit of a mess at the moment but a mess with some fun potential.

NOT TOO SHABBY

Awful name; really awful, but then so is Derek and we know two Dereks who are very decent blokes, and so it is that Not Too Shabby manage to squeeze past the Nightshift attack dogs relatively unscathed, despite that name and despite the fact the singer is so overwrought he sounds like he might burst like a giant Tom Jones-shaped abscess at any moment. Or the fact that the bass player is so rudimentary and so domineering in the mix that he could be a cross between Peter Hook and Pol Pot. And why do we let such things pass? Well, partly because it's sunny outside and partly because they remind us a bit of Pearl Jam when they were doing good stuff like 'Jeremy' (see, again, rubbish names that can actually be good). They chug along in ungainly fashion but undistracted by easy escape routes like funk interludes or widdly guitar solos, preferring a squalling blues-metal guitar noise, and we gaze benignly upon its bullish single-mindedness.

THE HUNGRY I

The Hungry I describes itself as "dark-hued electronic post-rock", although "the sound of wallpaper slipping into a coma" might be closer to the truth. There's some Mogwai-style guitar fuzz, plenty of Boards Of Canada-like drifting and heavy attention to texture as the music somnambulates through its six-minute duration, completing its journey competently and effortlessly (and therein lies the chief problem), gently-plucked acoustic guitar and shimmering synth strings aiding the music along to its inevitable plateau-of-noise peak with all the predictability of counting blades of grass on a croquet lawn. Don't no-one write pop songs with tunes any more?

VAPOUR TRAIL

We were really rather rude about Vapour Trail last time they deigned to send us a demo and their letter suggests they haven't forgotten as much, although the fact they've sent us another suggests they're not quite the lily-livered cry-babies we suggested, so more power to them. And more power they have, having ditched all that self-pitying indie navel-gazing in favour of a gutsier mod-rocking sound of

the sort His Modjesty Paul Weller would probably approve. 'Electricity Travelling Through Metal' carries a Who-like punch and if 'Stitches' is sturdy rather than stupendous it carries itself well. Best of the bunch is 'I've Got This Riff', despite the fact it's got bongos on it (a bit like admitting someone's quite attractive despite suffering from rampant acne). It starts off as an incongruous mod-funk jumble, complete with trebly guitar chops, but then kicks in in the style of a soundtrack to a 60s Ealing crime caper. 'Waterfall', meanwhile, is a bit too Oasis-like and the emotionally-wracked vocals do it few favours but it's a got pretty hefty main hook to keep you interested.

THE DEMO DUMPER

JOSHUA KNIGHT

Dear old Joshua comes a moanin' and a bleatin' and a strummin' at us with all the vivacity of a fingerless, laryngitis-infected sloth. His first song, 'Kingdom', is a whopping seven-minutes of mournful dirge. Now, seven minutes can seem like a very short time indeed, if, for example, you're a goal down in the cup final with the clock running down, or you've got seven minutes with the girl/boy of your dreams but the last bus is about to leave. But what about seven minutes having your more tender bodily parts drilled into by a sullen sociopath who insists on reciting his poetry homework to you in a dead-eyed monologue before exploding into an elongated howl of constipated self-loathing that only he has the power to stop? That's a long seven minutes. Guess which one of those 'Kingdom' most closely resembles? 'Restless Again' is the musical equivalent of a laborious trawl along Scunthorpe's main shopping precinct while trying to stop your intestines spilling out of your stomach and dragging a dead lurcher behind you on a heavy chain. And then, joy unbounded, there's 'Our Mother', six minutes of strangled living purgatory that crawls along like a slug over a mat of sawdust and salt, onward to a shrivelled death, while Joshua whistles like a wounded nightingale to soothe its path. Do you think that Bob Dylan, when he wrote 'Maggie's Farm', or Leonard Cohen when he penned 'Suzanne', had the slightest inkling what they were leading on to? They'd have felt like Oppenheimer after Hiroshima. Mind you, reckon he'd have heartily approved of nuking this heap of crap to prevent untold future suffering.

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.



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