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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
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# FOALS!

Oxford's rising stars talk about their mad year and being the most hotly tipped band on the planet. *Interview inside*

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# NEWS

**Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**  
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**THIS YEAR'S TRUCK FESTIVAL** takes place over the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> July at Hill Farm in Steventon. Tickets for the event will go on sale locally on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March, ahead of national sales. Last year's festival sold out in under a week and local fans wanting to get a ticket should register their details at [www.thisistruck.com](http://www.thisistruck.com) to get priority information on booking. Line-up details for Truck will be announced in next month's Nightshift. Last year's event – which was initially postponed due to the flooding that hit the county in July – featured headline sets from Grant and Maud Hudson and Idlewild.

Truck are also running a new festival called Wood, which takes place at Braziers Park in south Oxfordshire over the weekend of 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> May. The festival will feature two live music stages as well as workshops and activities for all ages, plus organic food and drinks stalls and compost toilets. Tickets for Wood go on sale on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, priced £45 for three days (including camping); children under 13 get in free. Day tickets, priced £25, are also available. Tickets will be available from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com), Videosyncratic, the Inner Bookshop, Scribbles and the Music Room.

**BLenheim PALACE** is set to host one leg of this year's Wakestock Festival in June. Wakestock has been running as a live music festival for eight years in north Wales, celebrating the sport of wakeboarding (a cross between surfboarding and water skiing), which is the fastest growing watersport in the UK. Wakestock will run over the weekend of 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June with a capacity somewhere around the 15,000 mark. A host of big-name indie, dance and rock bands are set to play across three stages within the 2,100 acre palace grounds, although no names have officially been announced as yet. Local promoters TCT Music will be heavily involved in the organisation. Last year's festival featured Mark Ronson, The Bravery, Dirty Pretty Things and Scratch Perverts. More news next month.



**BANDS** wanting to play this year's **OXFORD PUNT** have until Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March to submit demos. This year's Punt takes place on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May across six venues in Oxford city centre. The Punt aims to showcase the best new unsigned talent in Oxfordshire; the event runs from 6pm at Borders through til midnight at the Cellar, taking in the Purple Turtle, Wheatsheaf, QI Club and Thirst Lodge along the way, featuring some 20 acts. Bands or solo artists should send a CD, clearly marked Punt, to Nightshift at PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email a MySpace link to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net), again clearly marked Punt and including a contact phone number.

All-venue Punt passes are now on sale from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road or online from [Oxfordmusic.net](http://Oxfordmusic.net). Passes are limited to 100 and cost £7 (plus booking fee).

The full Oxford Punt line-up will be announced on the Nightshift forum at [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net) on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March.

## THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S CORNBURY FESTIVAL

will be announced on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March. This year's event takes place over the weekend of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> July at Cornbury Country Park near Charlbury. Last year's festival saw headline sets from David Gray and Blondie as well as appearances by The Waterboys, Echo & The Bunnymen and Seth Lakemen. This

year's event will feature over 40 acts across three stages.

Tickets for Cornbury are on sale from Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March on the festival website at [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com) or from various outlets around the county.



**THE FAMILY MACHINE** release their debut album, 'You Are The Family Machine' on 17<sup>th</sup> March and are planning a series of guerrilla gigs and assorted stunts to mark the occasion. Events already planned include a Family Machine treasure hunt following a trail of trees decorated with "Family Machine fruit" as well as copies of the album launched on computer memory sticks down the Isis. Visit [www.myspace.com/thefamilymachine](http://www.myspace.com/thefamilymachine) for updated news on gigs and events.

Fans who missed last month's Nightshift interview with The Family Machine can read it online at [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net). An extensive archive of old Nightshifts is available online in PDF format. The site also features an online discussion forum for local music fans.

**WINCHELL RIOTS** play a launch gig for their debut 'Histories' EP at the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April. The band, formed by former-Fell City Girl people Phill McMinn and James Pamphilon, are currently on tour around the UK. Support for the gig comes from Her Name Is Calla and This Et Al. Tickets, priced £6, are on sale from [Wegottickets.com](http://Wegottickets.com). Visit [www.myspace.com/thewinchellriots](http://www.myspace.com/thewinchellriots) for more news and gig dates.

**THE HALF RABBITS** were featured on MTV last month after reaching the semi-finals of the MTV/Oxjam bands competition. A new round of Oxjam events is set to be launched in April, with details online at [www.oxfam.co.uk](http://www.oxfam.co.uk).

**THE BULLINGDON** hosts Oxford's first all-day funk festival on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May. The event,

hosted by local hip hop duo GTA, runs from 1pm through to 4am; bands confirmed to play are Bad Science, Q.T. & The Reservoir Dogs, Mean Poppa Lean, Tonic, Sub-Func, Swervin Merv, Kojo, Bad Sandwich and Funky Justice, plus DJ sets from Rob Life, Indecision and Count Skylarkin. Tickets are on sale now, priced £16, from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com)

**THE SKITTLE ALLEY** relaunches this month after a couple of months in hibernation. The Abingdon-based live music club lost its monthly acoustic night when the King's Head and Bell closed down late last year but returns with an acoustic session at the Venue in Abingdon on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> of March, followed by an all-day event at Abingdon British Legion on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>, featuring Superdeadlyninjabees, Superloose, Running With Scissors and more. They also host a gig at the Stocks Bar at the Crown and Thistle on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> March featuring Nightshift favourites Little Fish and The Epstein. The Skittle Alley will also be starting a regular live music night at the Jericho Tavern in Oxford from Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April, featuring Superdeadlyninjabees and This Is My Ship. Bands wanting to play any Skittle Alley nights should email Nigel at [superloose@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:superloose@hotmail.co.uk).

**AS EVER, DON'T FORGET TO TUNE INTO THE DOWNLOAD** every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos and features interviews with local and touring acts as well as a gig and clubbing guide. The show is available to listen to online all week at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford)

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## A Quiet Word With

# foals

**IT SAYS EVERYTHING ABOUT** how the world has gone mad for Foals recently that *Nightshift* is interviewing Oxford's most exciting band in years while they're in New York. The band are over in the States – where they recently signed to the legendary Sub Pop label – for a couple of showcase gigs and another round of press and radio interviews. The mood is a mixture of exhilaration and exhaustion; they've barely paused for breath this past year, rising from word-of-mouth bright new hopes on the back of endless gigging, to across-the-board media darlings and 2008's Band Most Likely To.

**FOALS' RISE AND RISE HAS** been little short of phenomenal. In January they were tipped as the band to watch by everyone from *NME* to the *Observer* to *Mojo*; they've been fêted by Jools Holland and played as the party band on a special episode of *Skins*. Last autumn they went out as tour support to Bloc Party, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of this month they will play alongside REM at the Royal Albert Hall to celebrate 60 years of the ICA. March also sees Foals head out on their biggest UK headline tour yet, a tour that takes in a sold-out gig at the Oxford Academy. The tour coincides with the release of debut album 'Antidotes', out on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March and one of the most keenly anticipated releases of the year.

True to their Oxford roots, though, they're taking long-time friends Youthmovies out as tour support. At the end of January, meanwhile, Foals played a semi-secret gig at the Cellar for local club night Abort, Retry, Fail? who had supported the band early on. The gig received widespread national press coverage with queues down Cornmarket Street, hundreds of fans unable to get in and a crazy party atmosphere inside the venue.

**FOALS LAST GRACED THE** front cover of *Nightshift* back in November 2006. The band had released their debut single, 'Play This On Your Piano', on Try Harder Records earlier in the year and had recently parted company with guitarist Andrew Mears – also of Youthmovies – who had originally formed Foals with Yannis Philippakis and drummer Jack Bevan after the demise of The Edmund Fitzgerald. At the time of the interview Foals were



*Foals get in party mood at the Cellar in January - photo by Paul Tipping*

just starting to attract the attention of Transgressive Records, with whom they signed a deal soon after. Yannis and Jack were joined in Foals by bassist Walter Gervers and guitarist Jimmy Smith, formerly of fellow local hopefuls Face Meets Grill, and a little later, by keyboard player Edwin Congreave.

Foals had quickly become a new band altogether – the convoluted math-rock-leaning sound of that debut replaced by a frantic, restless form of disco-fied guitar pop with its roots in post-punk and African rhythms, as well as those earlier post-rock influences. Two highly-acclaimed singles in 2007, 'Hummer' and 'Mathletics', pricked up ears, but it was Foals' shows at last year's South By Southwest music conference in Austin, Texas, that had the music industry in a lather, fully demonstrating the band's astonishing live energy and invention.

Gigs since then have rightly attracted ever more attention: broken bones, smashed equipment and crowd chaos have become part and parcel of Foals' touring agenda. At last year's re-arranged Truck Festival, the band's set had to be stopped before the tent they were playing in nearly collapsed under the weight of people wanting to see them, while the crowd for their set at Reading Festival spilled well beyond the tent's capacity. The fervency of Foals' ever-growing fan-base is plain to see; at their best gigs the barrier between band and fans breaks down and the thrilling spectacle is a welcome relief from the often staid atmosphere of too many gigs these days.

**'ANTIDOTES' WAS RECORDED** in New York with producer Dave Sitek from TV On The Radio, a band whom Foals much admired, and the result is a more than accomplished debut, stripping down and polishing up the tightly-reigned chaos that is the Foals live experience. It is certain to be one of the most significant albums of 2008, offering, as it does, Foals' forward-thinking take on rock, pop and dance music.

The first single from 'Antidotes' was 'Balloons', which exemplifies their catchy but restless brand of pop. The album finds Foals sounding like nothing else around at the moment, with its trebly, fidgety guitars, alternately chanted or screamed vocals and propulsive dancefloor rhythms. It is intelligent but inviting, complex but easily accessible. And it looks increasingly likely it's going to make the five young university dropouts into international stars.

### **RIGHT NOW THOUGH FOALS**

are in New York, and we're reflecting on the whirlwind that has been their last twelve months, and in particular the band's personal highlights.

"It's been fun, and it's been a blur. A lot's changed, but we're the same smelly obnoxious boys we were a year ago. We drink too much to remember much, but we have some photos, and a couple of stories, and a few more friends, and so on. Playing SXSW in Texas was an obvious highlight, as was recording the album in Brooklyn, and pretty much all the touring we've done. Basically anything that involves flying, eating good food, lots of sunshine, and having to work

really hard to impress people.

"Being able to afford a proper van with a driver is something that we're pretty complacent about now, but 12 months ago it was a new luxury, and we remind ourselves how privileged we are. It wasn't all that long since we were putting the entire fee from a show back into petrol money for our clapped-out old ex-Royal Mail van just so we can drive back home to get a few hour's sleep before we had to go to work the next morning. I'm pretty sure we'll never forget that."

Foals have been everyone's tips for this year. How do you feel about that? Do you feel it puts any pressure on the band as far as people's expectations go?

"We feel flattered and anxious according to who's saying what. None of us have ever been into the *NME*. They're infamous for building and burning bridges to bands within months. But they've been good to us so far, so we're obviously not in a position to complain about that. And some of the writers seem to understand where we're coming from, which is good. I'm pretty confident that a lot of the hype, if you want to call it that, is a result of the shows we've played, and the record that we're about to release, so when we let ourselves think straight we don't have much reason to be worried. And as we're about to start touring again, I think we all feel a lot less pressured about people's expectations.

"It's easy to sit at home on the internet fidgeting mentally, basically consuming yourself with worry, and that is definitely a result of the kind of press that we've received, but it's also our fault. We just want to get away from it all. We want our record to be released, to play shows, and to get back into a studio as soon as possible. That's all that should matter to us. Right now we're really excited by how people are reacting to us from outside the UK. We've had journalists from Brazil, Singapore, and Japan want to write about us, and we get loads of requests on MySpace from people all over the world asking us to come and play shows, and they all seem genuinely into us, so, you know, who can complain about anything. We're going to be playing all over the world this year, and the kind of excitement that generates within the band puts all the 'scene' anxiety into perspective."

**TO MUSIC FANS IN OXFORD**, and on the UK's underground scene, Foals, and their previous bands, are no strangers or newcomers. Given the band's history and hard work, how do they feel that some people will think of them as an overnight sensation?

"Yeah, that's surreal. People call us a haircut band and a hipster band and, yeah, like you say, a get-rich-quick buzz band. But we have terrible, home-made haircuts, we're seriously uncool provincial layabouts, and after two years or so of touring we still can't afford to pay any sort of rent. I don't know why that kind of shit gets spread around. Boredom, perhaps, or just plain, abstract hatred. None of us really mind, though. I don't know who's responsible. Read the DrownedinSound forum and you can see that some people will slate anything and everything just for the sake of giving themselves a boner, so it's not like we're not specially targeted. And it's not like there are these corrupt powerful figures who control the industry from above who are responsible. It's strange and complicated, and we don't understand. Like I said, our record is finally coming out, and finally people can write about that rather than what our favourite colour is or what we ate for breakfast, so we're hoping."

Another misapprehension about Foals has been about their supposed 'attitude', much of which comes from some people simply not getting the band's dry, often sardonic sense of humour. If anything, Foals are rather modest given their achievements so far. One particular interview, with the BBC's website, early in the year painted them in a particularly poor light. How difficult is it to properly convey what you want to say, or would you, in an ideal world, simply want to let the music do the talking? "It wasn't the humour, if you can call it that, that was misinterpreted in that interview. I think we were baited, and I think the journalist knew what he was doing. But whatever. We'd love to let the music do the talking, but that's impossible, and it's flattering and usually pretty interesting to be asked to speak about the music. At the same time we need to have fun to stay sane, and if that means bullshitting our way through interviews, or just plain lying, then whatever. The truth is usually pretty mundane."

**'ANTIDOTES' WAS RECORDED** in New York with Dave Sitek; what was it like to work with him, and the likes of Antibalas? How different was the album from what the band maybe envisaged before they went over there?

"It was great. He's an amazing producer. He brought Antibalas in, and he gave the record this rich, dark ambience that we could never have brought to it. He encouraged us to use

more delay and reverb – in moderation – and that is still changing our sound today. The first few singles we released were extremely dry and clipped, and while we like that sound we're much more excited by what Sitek brought to the album and what this means for our sound in the future. In retrospect it is easy to say that we knew what we were getting into by getting Sitek to produce the record, but we really didn't, and I think it's amazing that what we wanted and what he envisaged, from a position of having never seen us live, combined so effectively."

**THERE'S BEEN SURPRISE**, even incredulity, that you've left 'Hummer' and 'Mathletics' off 'Antidotes' in favour of creating a more cohesive album. Such a move feels like a return to a time when the music industry was perhaps a bit less cynical and more artists had the freedom to do that. Was it a deliberate ploy or simply that those songs didn't fit with how you felt the album should be?

"Less a deliberate ploy and more instinctive. We never liked those songs that much, you know, and we simply didn't want them on the album. To be honest we're incredulous that anyone is surprised by it. It's our record, and I don't see why we'd do anything but what we want to do ourselves. It's not even like putting 'Hummer' on it would sell more records. Would it? Everyone who's liked it this far has probably either downloaded it or bought the 7", so as far as we're concerned it's finished. If it's a return to how things used to be then that's pretty sad. Transgressive work as any label should work, which is to say that they focus on distribution and let us focus on the music. We would never have signed to a label that did it differently."

Do you feel creatively restless? Each set of new songs feels like a move on and often at a tangent to previous ones. Stuff you're writing now, how different will that be from the album?

"No doubt. Yannis in particular can't keep still. He has an incredibly short attention span with new music, and with his own music. Jack also has a very short attention span, and the interplay between the two of them explains. Songs will get trashed entirely after weeks of work. And we rarely go back to old songs and relearn them or rework them. The drive to make something new is always far stronger than the drive to consolidate everything done so far. That totally affects the direction that we take. Right now the songs that we're writing, the songs that we recorded for b-sides to our next single 'Cassius', for example, sound nothing like our early songs. They're rougher, and meaner, and, well, heavier."

**FOALS' SOUND OFTEN SEEMS A** triumph of precision and tightly-reined energy and yet it seems to work best amid the chaos of gigs such as that at the Cellar and Truck where the whole event feels like it might explode at any moment. Is that something you'd agree with or complete bollocks?

"Hah! You tell us. We played those massive arena shows with Bloc Party, and it wasn't the best experience, as we think we felt pretty lost on a stage that size, and the whole event felt pretty, I dunno, anaemic, but that's not to say we wouldn't want to make it work in the future. Jimmy has some pretty epic guitar melodies up his sleeve, and as soon as we get live brass players involved I'm thinking it's going to open up a lot. But, of course, you're right, we've always preferred playing smaller shows, and the shows we play to a 'home' crowd in Oxford are always the craziest and the most fun for everyone."

The Cellar show felt like more than just a gig; it was a proper event. What prompted you to do it and do you still want to keep springing surprise gigs like that in the future?

"We did that show partly out of boredom and partly because we all really like the Cellar and obviously we're friends with a lot of people who work there and spend a lot of time there. There's no way we're not playing shows like that in the future. It's fun, and it keeps us grounded. I wouldn't say it's better than big shows, as we want to be able to play to as many people as possible, and the prospect of translating across that gulf is hugely exciting."

This month you'll headline in front of 1,000 people in Oxford. How does that feel after building your way up on the local venue circuit?

"Pretty much great. We've worked really hard; Yannis and Jack have obviously been playing around Oxford for years and years, so it is, to an extent, deserved. Mostly we're just happy that people from Oxford are still into it."

**AND SO WE LEAVE FOALS TO** another photo shoot in New York before they head across the continent to Seattle, home of Sub Pop, for another gig. The next time we catch up with them will be their homecoming gig at the Academy on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March, a gig that might lack the intimacy of that Cellar show but will be no less fervent. Their days as Oxford's best kept secret might be long gone but we can be justly proud of their success. Hopefully this is only the beginning of even greater things.

**'Antidotes' is released on Transgressive on 17<sup>th</sup> March. Visit [www.myspace.com/foals](http://www.myspace.com/foals) for news, tour dates and to hear tracks.**



## BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS...

Foals' past life through the words of Nightshift

*"Elizabeth know all about the idea of guitars as weapons, handling them with a deft touch while letting their dysfunctional melodies hover and crackle in the air before crunching down on the fretboard with an easy venom and sounding on odd occasions like a teenage Captain Beefheart trapped inside Sonic Youth's 'Daydream Nation'. Elizabeth straddle the divide between post-rock unease and a surging brand of melodic hardcore. One of the best and most unexpected surprises of the year."*

**(First live review of Elizabeth – Yannis and Jack's first band – from the Zodiac, January 2003)**

*"On any other bill they'd be the most extreme band, but tonight they'll have to fight for their lives. And fight they do. Their weaponry is more complex – tight twists and turns of the sonic screw, convoluted and intricate, but never indulgent, spurts of noise and pools of calm. Oxes mesh with The God Machine and Sonic Youth are left to pick up the pieces. Too much rock music is weak willed, following the path of least resistance. This is the sound of guitars on a victory roll. Resistance is futile."*

**(The Edmund Fitzgerald, Wheatsheaf, September 2004)**

*"Dinky guitar runs that sound like scattershot sequencer pulses flutter amongst jittery jazz-inflected flourishes and drum skips, the gossamer mania of it all somewhat akin to the incessant business of a disturbed ants nest."*

**(Foals' debut single, 'Try This On Your Piano', May 2006)**

*"Foals' armoury contains more stealth weaponry. Two guitarists, bassist and keyboard player all face each other, like a counselling group for musicians unable to find anyone able to keep up with them; they lock horns and hit the funk button, freewheeling through many-angled spazz-jazz math-rock."*

**(Live review from The Wheatsheaf, October 2006)**



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## YOUTHMOVIES

### 'Good Nature'

*(Drowned in Sound)*

One of my abiding memories of studying psychology years back was looking at photos of webs that spiders had spun while under the influence of various drugs. Oddly enough the most bizarre web was built by a caffeine-sozzled arachnid – a puzzling, complex but fascinating tapestry of tangents, open spaces and pockets of highly-condensed silk. It's an image that's come back to me many times while listening to Youthmovies, consistently one of the most adventurous, ambitious and sometimes, perplexing bands around.

Having signed to Drowned in Sound last year, 'Good Nature' is Youthmovies' first full-length album, following on from a couple of mini-albums and a series of singles and collaborative EPs. Initially at least this album seems to find Youthmovies ditching much of their prog-rock tendencies in favour of a poppier, more airy approach, an elongated electro hum making way for a tender, almost acoustic song, 'Magdalen Bridge', a bit of pastoral whimsy trying to sidle



into the picture and with Andrew Murray's vocals pushed more to the fore.

Soon enough, though, they're wrenching those twingling guitars and Toytown keyboards sideways with bulldozing, grunged-up guitar sludge, tracks like 'Soandso & Soandso' sprawling through several decades of heavy duty rock and the vocals veering between plaintive cry and desperate bark, punchy brass stabs adding extra bite at each turn.

The thing with Youthmovies is that their

individual components can sound remarkably traditional – the Thin Lizzy-like guitars scattered here and there or the odd melodic inflections that remind us of Steely Dan at times; and particularly guitar runs that could be poached from Iron Maiden's earliest incarnation – but put together and continually toyed with and stretched out of shape, they take on fresh life. The only constant throughout these ten tracks is Andrew's vocals which, while for the most part satisfying enough, do benefit from the choruses of backing vocals or overlapped effects, as on the muted 'Cannula', with its clickety clack rhythm and almost reverie-like feel. The album's real high point, though is the expansive 'Something For The Ghosts', where Youthmovies allow themselves time and space to build up the tension and power with two opposing guitar lines and some tribal drumming.

Whether Youthmovies really can become a King Crimson for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century remains to be seen. There rarely seems to be enough patience around these days for bands with a less linear approach to thrive. But, like a spider dutifully spinning its web, patience can bring great rewards.

**Dale Kattack**

## FOALS

### 'Antidotes'

*(Transgressive)*

There probably hasn't been such a highly anticipated album from a local band since 'Kid A' and weight of expectation has a way of putting a dampener on the best musical offerings. But while Foals' debut album never achieves the intensity or mania of their consistently astonishing live shows, it's a confirmation of why so many people have got so excited about the band over the last couple of years, culminating in such across-the-board acclaim at the start of 2008.

The restless, urgent flurry of opener 'The French Open', with the Antibalas horns bolstering the trebly guitar twitch and its dyspeptic vocal chants, recalls early-80s funskers Pigpag and sets out the band's stall – mixing the unselfconscious fun of the dancefloor with post-punk's strident, irony-free intensity. The rinky-dink propulsiveness of 'Cassius' is neatly offset by Yannis' clipped vocals as it builds up a head of steam that's neatly released in such short, sweet bursts that there's rarely a chance to sit and take stock. When Foals do loosen the reigns, as on the dreamy 'Olympic Airways' and the oddly out-of-focus 'Like

Swimming', it shows that they're far more than a one-trick pop pony, something that's best displayed by the Cure-like 'Big Big Love (Fig 2)', which retains a steely grip on its central melody even as the guitars wash ethereally over it. Among the album's high points is the almost militaristic 'Electric Bloom', a distant cousin of Gang Of Four's art school agit-pop disco, typifying the band's restless nature. Similarly 'Two Steps Twice' which challenges you to keep your feet still. Elsewhere, Foals dare to touch on something approaching jazz-funk, but speed off down a more rhythmically ambient path, swirling synth lines and menacing saxophone creating a dense, uneasy atmosphere. 'Antidotes' should – and must – override any premature backlash against Foals. It's the culmination of years of hard work, rather than the work of an overhyped overnight sensation. It's a great introduction to a band who manage to make pop sound interesting and intelligent while never succumbing to indulgence or forgetting that it's all about having fun in the end.

**Sue Foreman**

## COGWHEEL DOGS

### 'Cress'

*(Own Label)*

Cogwheel Dogs is the name under which local singer/guitarist Rebecca Mosley and her longstanding cellist partner Tom Parnell now operate. The pair's interaction on this EP amply displays that they're a team of equal input rather than a token string back-up to the vocal lead. Tom's cello scrapes and wheezes obnoxiously around Rebecca's more tenderly-strummed melody on 'Cress', giving it an urgent bite that most acoustic pop lacks. The vocals too seem desperate to keep up, just about retaining a demure nature while occasionally spitting lines out like bitter pips. 'Anticoagulant' is an even better demonstration of this restlessness, sharing an almost frantic determination to collapse in on itself with Rebecca's occasional other collaborator, Ally Craig. Closing track, 'Ghostwriter', is a more graceful piece, folky chamber pop with the cello more tempered and complementary. Like the plant it takes its name from, 'Cress' is an odd little thing at first glance, seemingly unlovable, and takes a little while to grow on you, but with a little patience the end result is unexpectedly rewarding.

**Sue Foreman**

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## SARAH WARNE

### 'Secret'

(Crash)

Sarah Warne won the inaugural Top Of The Ox competition at the end of last year – a text-based chart battle between various local bands and solo artists in which she pipped Stornoway. Her reward is a deal with Chinnor-based label Crash for whom 'Secret' is her debut single.

It is also evidence for why the public shouldn't ever be allowed to vote for anything, whether it be band competitions or who gets to run the country. The nicest thing you could say about 'Secret' – a nominally epic piano-led power ballad in the vein of Beverly Craven or Celine Dion – is that it might pass muster as the soundtrack to a Disney film where the heroic but lost lion cub first meets and falls gooiily in love with a cute ickle lady lion cub and they cavort merrily through savannah grass before going off to maul a wildebeest or somesuch. A more apt description, though, would be to say it's the musical equivalent of your stereo leaking weak, sugary tea all over the desk to the sound of sickly kittens mewling for dinner. With a piano. She's got talent, we wouldn't deny that, but Sarah's victory suggests she's also got plenty of mates, or just an astronomical phone bill.

Next time round I want every single one of you bastards to text in and vote for Clanky Robo Gobjobs. For Top Of The Ox winner and for Prime Minister.

Dale Kattack

## THE FAMILY MACHINE

### 'You Are The Family Machine'

(Alcopop)

In last month's cover feature, Nightshift suggested to The Family Machine that their debut album had the feel of a film soundtrack, each track shifting the mood slightly, from its chirpy, almost cheesy, intro to a downbeat coda, something the band themselves didn't refute.

Repeated listenings confirm that initial impression, and as The Family Machine's stated intention is to invite their audience to join them in a celebration of pop music, so we become fellow travellers through this CD. If it is a film soundtrack then opener, the cheerily sardonic 'Ko Tao', is an American campus romantic comedy, with the languorous, folky electro-pop of 'Did You Leave' being its more refined and bucolic English cousin. 'The Do Song', replete with banjo and cheeky "Doo-dee-doo" vocals veers scarily close to Billy Crystal or Chevy Chase territory, but the heroically melancholy 'Flowers By The Roadside' is pure Cohen Brothers, revelling in its cheery ghoulishness and reviving the ancient lost art of whistling while it's about it.

The album wanders a little in the middle, Mariachi trumpets bolstering slender acoustic balladeering (that'll be the landscape-heavy Mid-West road movie segment, then), but it's dragged back into action with recent single 'Got



It Made', itself a trilogy, that shimmers with the *noir*-ish elegance and hazy psychedelia of an old 50s spy movie. After the dry-as-a-bone humour of relationships-as-addiction track 'Lethal Drugs Cocktail', the mood takes a downward shift towards it's close, ending with the contemplative 'There's Bees That Sing and Birds That Sting' and an untitled closing instrumental piece, that signify... what exactly? Bassist Darren Feller suggests redemption and reassurance, a happy ending, but the listener can make their own mind up.

Perhaps all that is reading too much into what is essentially an album of sweet, fun pop music that carefully manages to mix emotional shifts and understated wit, but to hear an album that sounds like plenty of thought was put into its narrative is a treat in itself.

Sue Foreman

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# GIG GUIDE

## SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

### **PNEU + SHIELD YOUR EYES + EDUARD**

**SOUNDING BLOCK: The Wheatsheaf** – Great triple bill of wigged-out guitar mayhem from Poor Girl Noise. Pneu and Shield Your Eyes are currently on tour together, both cranking out a frenetic, oblique guitar attack that mixes up 80s Chicago hardcore with post-rock experimentation. Local prog-core monsters Eduard Sounding Block open the show.

**THE HOOSIERS: The Academy** – Long-since sold out gig from the chirpy post-punk rockers in the vein of Dexy's and Squeeze.

### *Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>*

## **THE GO! TEAM:**

### **The Academy**

Go! Team's rise and rise brings a warm feeling to the hardest of hearts. From underground thrill-givers, riding a reputation for some of the most life-affirming live shows in the country, to national recognition and a Mercury Prize nomination, they've remained the sound of eternal summer. In Go! Team's supercharged pop world, it's always sunny and it's always time for a party (no doubt fuelled by lashings of strawberry jelly and fizzy pop). Check out their 30-minute, ultra-compact, fun-packed debut album, 'Thunder Lighting Strike', if you're in any doubt. There you'll find the Brighton crew's good-time mash up of stolen beats, old school hip hop, cheerleader pop, northern soul and NYC punk raising the dead and bidding them dance. Last year's follow-up, 'Proof Of Youth', continued the mood of unbridled childlike glee, even as it featured a guest appearance from Chuck D. Fronted by a girl simply called Ninja, The Go! Team (see, even the name bleeds positively) hark back to the glory days of uplifting, slightly mischievous hip hop, like Salt'n'Pepa and Neneh Cherry, but updated by way of The Avalanches' bamboozling sampladelica. 80s US TV themes mingle with sweet strings and children's voices and any urge to resist the temptation to dance will be roundly mocked.

## MARCH

### **LATE OF THE PIER + VIDEO NASTIES + CLANKY ROBO GOBJOBS: The Academy**

– Rescheduled gig for the retro-futurist synth-poppers out of rural Nottinghamshire, in the welcome vein of Numan, Fad Gadget and The Faint. Local digital hardcore loon Clanky opens the show.

**SMILEX: The Port Mahon** – Reliably anarchic sleaze-rock mayhem from Smilex. It's Lee's birthday tonight so expect genteel between-song banter and sober contemplation in abundance.

**MELTING POT with LITTLE FISH + HELIUM SOUL + LECORUM + ROB LEVER: The Jericho Tavern** – Superb garage-glam rocking from local starlets Little Fish headlining tonight's Melting Pot mixed bill and coming on like a wild-eyed young Patti Smith. There is no higher compliment.

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy** – The Academy's weekly three-clubs-in-one session with indie hits at Transformation, heavy rock at Room 101, plus a special 80s-themed Trashy night with music, films and dress code from that decade.

**BRICKWORK LIZARDS: The Cellar** – Cowley Road Carnival awareness gig featuring eclectic world-jazz-blues-hip hop outfit Brickwork Lizards, plus DJs til late.

**SUGARDIRT + RUE ROYALE: The Purple Turtle** – Folky heavy rock from Sugardirt, plus folk-pop in a Fleetwood Mac and Sufjan Stevens vein from Chicago's Rue Royale.

**CLASSIX: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic rock and pop covers.

**SKITTLE ALLEY ACOUSTIC SESSION: The Venue, Abingdon**

**LEE DAVIES: The Temple**

### SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**THE AUDITION + YOU ME AT SIX + VALENCIA: The Academy** – Chicago Victory Records-signed emo crew's first UK headline tour after supporting Aiden and The Academy Is. Support from Surrey's Blink 182 clones You Me At Six and Philadelphia's Blink 182 clones Valencia.

**ZANGRYUS + SACRED DIVIDE: The Port Mahon** – Gothic prog-metal noise from Zangryus.

### MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**SET YOUR GOALS + DAVE HOUSE + CHAOS DAYS: The Academy** – Punk-pop noise from San Francisco's New Found Glory-influenced rockers Set Your Goals.

**THE DERRIN NAUENDORF BAND: The Bullingdon** – Australian guitarist who migrated to

England to make his career, ending up living and touring round Europe in an old post office van, producing and selling albums without the aid of a record label. Inspired as much by the 60s British folk revival as the likes of Bob Dylan, Tom Waits and Steve Earle.

**ANOTHER LOST LEADER +**

**NORDGARDEN: The Port Mahon** – Acoustic folk-pop.

**PHIL BEER: Nettlebed Folk Club** – Classic English folk from the Show Of Hands chap.

### TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**THE GO! TEAM: The Academy** – Last night on earth party fun from Ninja and chums – see main preview

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon**

### WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**MUMM-RA: The Academy** – Ebullient lightweight synth-rock and jangle-pop from Bexhill's rising starlets, leaning towards the Killers and Cure scheme of things.

**GRAVEPAINTINGS + ALEXANDER THOMAS + EUHEDRAL + ANTON MAIOF: The Port Mahon** – Quality experimentation from Birmingham's bleak minimalist Gravepaintings mixing up electronics and found sounds, while Bristol's theremin manipulator Alexander Thomas is a mesmeric performer. Local abstract electronic soundscapists Euhedral join an esoteric bill.

**COO COO CLUB with SON OF DAVE + TOM MANSI & THE ICEBREAKERS + LIAM ING-REEVES: The Jericho Tavern** – Fantastic night of leftfield blues at Coo Coo, featuring a rare UK showing for Former-Crash Test Dummies chap Benjamin Darvill, aka Son Of Dave, utilising loops and samples to create a weird, mayhem form of hillbilly blues featuring his trademark human beatboxing and unique harmonica solos; he's played with Neil Young and Jon Spencer and toured with Supergrass in the past. There's more old-fashioned porch-style blues from Tom Mansi in support, inspired by everyone from Charlie Mingus and John Coltrane to Captain Beefheart and Beck. Liam Ing-Reeves (from Mephisto Grande) opens the show with his monstrous Tom Waits-like vocals.

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**JAMES FORD + JAMES MOSS: The Purple Turtle** – Acoustic night.  
**HIT & RUN: The Cellar** – Hip hop and drum&bass club night.  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

## THURSDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**FUTUREHEADS: The Academy** – Sunderland's pop-friendly post-punk champs make a welcome return to town after their last (secret but sold-out) show here a couple of years back. The newer material might show signs of more considered songwriting but the effusive blend of Gang of Four spikiness and Undertones bouncability remains undiminished.  
**DREADZONE: The Academy** – Veteran reggae-dance crew return to action after tragedy – *see main preview*

**GRAND POCKET ORCHESTRA + THE FOLLYS + TALE OF TWO HALVES: The Bullingdon** – Madcap frantic Toytown electro-pop from GPO headlining tonight's Swiss Concrete club. Chirpy 60s-styled rockers The Follys support.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Pianist Tim Lapthorne is tonight's guest.

**KING FURNACE + A GENUINE**

**FREAKSHOW: The Cellar** – Raucous heavyweight rocking from King Furnace.

*Thursday 6<sup>th</sup>*

## DREADZONE:

### The Academy

Dreadzone could so easily have called it a day back in 2006 when guitarist Steve Roberts died, but brother and band founder Greg (originally drummer with Big Audio Dynamite) rallied together a new band and they are back out on the road doing what they've always done best – playing live to packed houses. Dreadzone's is a peculiarly British form of reggae, fusing roots sounds and dub with a folky feel, trance and breakbeats. The band are 16 years old this year, veterans of five albums, six Peel sessions and countless tours and festival appearances, Glastonbury surely being their spiritual home. Their classic 1995 second album, 'Second Light' spawned their only Top 20 hit, 'Little Britain', but their enduring appeal rests in their ability to transform any room, or field, into a reggae party. The trippy, spacious, almost rustic feel of their sound might feel almost archaic compared to what's come since but it's following their own path that's ultimately kept them on top of their game for so long. And it's weird to think that amongst the band's earliest backing singers were Alison Goldfrapp and Melanie Blatt.



**SINE STAR PROJECT + THE MARMADUKES + THE ROUNDHEELS + SARAH WARNE: The Jericho Tavern** – Crosstown Traffic night with bombastic pop from One Little Indian signings Sine Star Project, mixing up ELO and Sparks. Local alt.country act The Marmadukes support alongside banjo-led bluegrass troupe The Roundheels and pianist Sarah Warne.

**ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston** – Weekly jam session with in-house band Rough Mix – all singers and musicians welcome.

**CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

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

## FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**SIOUXSIE: The Academy** – Imperious goth-pop ice queen goes solo – *see main preview*

**FRESH OUT OF THE BOX & ECLECTRIC PRESENT: The Academy** – Two of Oxford's best cutting edge club nights team up with a headline set from Germany's deep, minimalist trance producer Gregor Tresher. With resident DJs Ed Steele, Rich Smith and Matt Carter.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE KATE GARRETT BAND + MOIETY + MAEVE**

**BAYTON + TONGUE TIDE: The**

**Wheatsheaf** – Sweet jazz-inflected folk-pop from KGB at tonight's Klub Kak, plus folky electronics from Moiety and blues and folk from Maeve.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon SOULJACKER + LETTABEES +**

**CHRISTINA TOMLIN + LAMPLIGHT:**

**The Jericho Tavern** – Classic 60s and 70s-influenced heavy rock and funk from the headliners.

**BABY GRAVY + THE NOYZE: The Purple Turtle** – Oddball punky electro-prog from the mighty Baby Gravy.

**FREEFALL: Fat Lil's, Witney**

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

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon SHAKE: The Academy**

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks** – Weekly disco, funk and Latin DJ session.

## SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**INSPIRAL CARPETS: The Academy** – Manc pop heroes return to life – *see main preview*

**HIT & RUN BIRTHDAY SPECIAL: The Academy**

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

**NOVAKICKS + FREAKISHLY LONG**

**MIRRORS: The Wheatsheaf** – Crowded House-style jangly pop from Banbury's Novakicks.

**COO COO CLUB with JOHNNY**

**FOREIGNER + THE YOUNGS PLAN +**

**RECONCILIATION: The Jericho Tavern** – Ebullient garagey hardcore boy/girl pop in a Huggy Bear / Bis / Yeah Yeah Yeahs vein from Birmingham's sweetly psychotic newcomers Johnny Foreigner at tonight's Coo Coo Club. Twitchy math-rocking from local youngsters The Youngs Plan in support.

**PISTOL KIXX: The Purple Turtle** – Trashy roadkill rock and roll from this month's demo of the monthers.



*Friday 7<sup>th</sup>*

## SIOUXSIE:

### The Academy

Now 50 years old and with a musical career stretching back 32 years, it's amazing to think that last year's 'Mantaray' was Siouxsie Sioux's debut solo album, her musical life until then taken up entirely by The Banshees and her Creatures side project with drummer and (now ex-) husband Budgie. Under her assumed stage name Susan Dallon has become not only the most influential British female rock singer of the last 30 years but a true icon, inspiring generations of musical and aesthetic copyists, her trademark explosion of black spiked hair still as recognisable today, along with her imperious gothic ice-queen vocals. 'Mantaray' is in keeping with her arty style of post-punk and portentous gothic rock, yet again dealing with the subject of suburban conformity (something she has always railed against since she was part of the Bromley Contingent, sporting a – long-time regretted – swastika armband), as well as magical imagery. Tonight's show is likely to lean heavily on the new songs but there will be a handful of old Banshees favourites, among them classic debut single 'Hong Kong Garden' and 'Arabian Nights', but if you want to see how someone can remain monumentally cool right through to middle age, watch and learn.



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*Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>*

## INSPIRAL CARPETS: The Academy

A band who will forever be intrinsically linked with the late-80s / early-90s indie-dance crossover boom, not to mention that period's associated dodgy haircuts, Inspiral Carpets probably never got the acclaim they deserved. In truth they were master pop craftsmen, and not afraid to seriously wig out when duty called. So, for every radio-friendly 'This Is How It Feels' there was a blistering, twenty-minute 'Plane Crash' wherein Clint Boon's Frafisa organ battled ferociously with Graham Lambert's guitar in a manner not dissimilar to Lou Reed and John Cale's instrumental scrapping. And of course then there's frontman Tom Hingley, a great songwriter forever associated with a special era of Mancunian music but who was originally from Abingdon and who has regularly gigged Oxford's pubs and clubs since the Inspirals' demise. Our favourite memories of seeing the band first time round were queuing round the block to catch them at the Jericho Tavern in the late-80s and then watching them headline Reading Festival not long after, accompanied by an army of drum majorettes. But for a band perhaps as famous now for once having a young roadie called Noel Gallagher (who was originally rejected as the band's singer), they remain curiously contemporary. The band are set to relaunch their Cow label this year and tonight should give girls and boys of a certain age a chance to dig out that old Cool As Fuck t-shirt once again.

**THE GREEN:** The Port Mahon – Darkly-inclined indie rock.

**KING EARLE BOOGIE BAND:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Blues and boogie.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND:** The Cavalier, Marston

## SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**DUFFY:** The Academy – Welsh singing sensation resurrects the spirit of Dusty – *see main preview*

**STIFF LITTLE FINGERS:** The Academy – Jake Burns' old school punk warriors take it once more round the block, playing 'Alternative Ulster' and all the other classics.

**SWISS CONCRETE with ELIZA GEIRSDOTTIR + COGWHEEL DOGS + WE AERONAUTS:** The Bullingdon – One of the late-90s great lost pop gems were Iceland's Bellatrix (they once co-headlined a UK tour with Coldplay before their commercial paths diverged quite spectacularly). Anyway, they split up ages ago but here's the band's singer Eliza, out on her own and still a sweet pop sprite, mixing up Kate Bush-style vocal acrobatics with Kim Deal-like seductiveness and a spot of Nicotinic portent. Good to have her back. Oxford's own female vocal gymnast Rebecca Mosley joins the bill with her band Cogwheel Dogs.

**FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL + 50ft PANDA + RED PAPER DRAGON:** The Wheatsheaf – Instrumental rock power play from piano-led mini marvels Flies Are Spies From Hell, out on tour in support of their debut EP, plus support from local riffmeisters 50ft Panda and oceanic post-rockers Red Paper Dragon.

**JAMIE MOORE + THE MENUS + MATTHEW COLLINS:** The Port Mahon  
**LUCY & THE CATERPILLAR + MATTHEW BOARD:** The Purple Turtle – Sugary folk-pop from Lucy and her pet grub.

## MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**GUILLEMOTS:** The Academy – Return to action for Fyfe Dangerfield's expansive, orchestral pop troupe, set to release their second album, 'Red', this month, the follow-up to Mercury Prize-nominated Top 20 debut 'Through The Windowpane'. Eccentric and adventurous and prone to extended improv pieces live, and featuring in their line-up Greig Stewart, former-drummer with local faves Suitable Case For Treatment and Camp Blackfoot.

**TINA DICO:** The Jericho Tavern – Danish singer-songwriter inspired by Dylan and Cohen and previously singer with Zero 7 heads out on tour in support of her new album, 'Count To Ten'.

**STEVE ARVEY:** The Bullingdon – Acoustic and electric blues-rock from the Chicago-based guitarist, renowned for his reinterpretations of old classics by The Rolling Stones, Chester Burnett and others.

**RED INK + OLIVER JARVA:** The Port Mahon

**WATERSON: CARTHY:** Nettlebed Folk Club – Eliza, Norma and Martin come round again with a set of traditional and contemporary English folk.

## TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**THE DELAYS:** The Academy – Return of Southampton's ethereal 80s-styled indie fops, now signed to Fiction Records and set to release third album, 'Everything's The Rush'. Lovely stuff, somewhere between The Manics, New Order and Cocteau Twins.

**FAMILY UNDERGROUND + SORREL:** The Port Mahon – Experimental noise from Divine Coils / Hellhesten collaboration Family Underground.

**KID HARPOON:** The Jericho Tavern – Candid, heart-on-sleeve punky busker-rock from London's Kid Harpoon.

**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon

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

**KATE GARRETT + SU STARLING + SANDRA SHELLS + MANDY WOOD + MAEVE BAYTON:** East Oxford Community Centre – Celebration of local female singer-songwriters.

## WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**MOSHKA with EASY TIGER + RESERVOIR CATS + THE SHE BEATS:** The Bullingdon – Fun southern-fried rock from Easy Tiger at tonight's Moshka club, plus hard-rocking blues from Reservoir Cats and punky 60s girl group noise from The She Beats  
**ASIA:** The Academy – Anyone reading this who remembers the very depths of 80s prog hell will understand why the very mention of Asia brings us out in a rash and provokes us to acts of unspeakable violence towards these multi-million-selling musical abominations. The only band who make Marillion sound like The Sex Pistols.

**ALL OR NOTHING + NIGEL BROWN + DAN SANDMAN:** The Purple Turtle  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Temple

## THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**GARY NUMAN:** The Academy – Synth-rock legend plays the whole of his seminal 'Replicas' album in full – *see main preview*.

**HAYSEED DIXIE:** The Academy – Top class fun as ever from the metal-loving zydeco and bluegrass boys, covering everyone from Queen, Spinal Tap and Motorhead to the mighty AC/DC in hoedown style.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB:** The Wheatsheaf – With tenor saxophonist Art Themen.

**MIRROR MIRROR + COW TOWN + TUBELAND + THE YOUNGS PLAN:** The Cellar – Jerky post-punk out of Nuneaton from Mirror Mirror, plus frantic electro punk from Cowtown.

**ELECTRIC JAM SESSION:** The Jack Russell, Marston  
**CATWEAZLE CUB:** East Oxford Community Centre  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon  
**SMASH DISCO:** The Academy

## FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**CHARLIE DARK'S AFRICAN BEATS:** The Academy – African west coast beats meet UK electronica with Attika Blues chap Charlie Dark's new project, featuring Nigerian percussionist Chief Udo Essiet, broken beats champion Mark de Clive-Lowe and jazz guitarist Dave Okumu.

**QUICKFIX presents LITTLE FISH + BLACK HATS + REVERSE E + MALENC VOSSE:** The Wheatsheaf – Another chance to catch Oxford's brightest new rock starlets Little Fish, plus 60s-styled poppers The Back Hats, trip hop from Reverse E, and Hretha side project Malenc Vosse.

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB:** The Port Mahon  
**THE NOYZE + BOY DID GOOD + 12 SIGNS + APOLOGIES I HAVE NONE:** The Jericho Tavern – Indie rock from Reading's badly-named The Noyzes.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + SEV & STEVE + JEREMY HUGHES: The Magdalen**  
**MONKEY PUZZLE + TRAWLERS + NEW SOCIALS: The Purple Turtle** – Sturdy indie rocking from local newcomers Monkey Puzzle.  
**FREE AT LAST: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to Free.  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**  
**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Live jazz dance club night.  
**SHAKE: The Academy**  
**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

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

**FOALS: The Academy** – Long-since sold-out show for the local stars, currently enjoying their status as hottest young band on the planet and here playing their biggest hometown gig to date.  
**HIGH & MIGHTY: The Academy** – The long-time local punk-metal favourites reunite once again for another run through their old classics.  
**DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES: The Wheatsheaf** – Funereal crooning in a Tom Waits vein from the extremely talented Mr Chancer and his doomy cohorts.  
**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy**  
**SHIRLEY + PALE BLUE EYES + THE HULAS: The Purple Turtle** – Latin-tinged 60s-styled rock'n'roll and surf pop from Shirley.  
**ABORT, RETRY, FAIL?: The Cellar** Electro and post-punk club night with live bands and DJs.  
**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND: The Hollybush, Osney**  
**DANIEL KAYE + TOMMO: The Temple**

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

**THE METROS: The Academy** – Cockernee ska and rockabilly-tinged indie punk.  
**SUGAR DIRT: The Port Mahon**

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

**THE FALL + I, LUDICROUS: The Academy** – Another year, another visit from The Fall – and do you see us complaining? Course not, for Mark E Smith's ever-changing band of merry men and women are proper legends. For 30 years now they've been the most consistently inconsistent band in Britain, if not the world. What can never be denied, however, is that Mark E Smith is a musical genius. Since he formed the band in 1976 he's created some of the most startlingly original, awkward, exhilarating and obtuse music you're ever likely to hear. The Fall sound is a constantly mutating beast but forever remains unmistakably The Fall – an uneasy meeting of Beefheart, Can and Cochran, with an oddly arty edge to it, plenty of punk-inspired bile and a wit and grasp of social reality that few songwriters can equal. Gigs can be unpredictable but on their night The Fall remain, three decades on, more innovative and dangerous than any teenage rock rebels. A national treasure.

**FUNKYDORY: The Bullingdon** – Rough and raw blues-rock with a soul edge from the UK's rising stars, drawing on Led Zep, Frank Zappa and Tina Turner for inspiration.  
**DIXON: The Port Mahon**  
**MADDY PRIOR: Nettlebed Folk Club**

**THE POACHERS: The Black Horse, Kidlington** – St Patrick's Night special with Irish dance band.

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

**BUCK 65: The Academy** – Return of the Canadian Truck Festival favourite MC, gradually leaving behind his pure hip hop roots as he explores blues, country and folk.  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon**

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

**MATILDA + CHANTELLE PIKE + NICK BREAKSPEAR: The Port Mahon** – Sneaky Pete club night with Swindon's Matilda boasting a four-vocalist all-female line-up, plus local songstress Chantelle Pike and Black Hats frontman Nick Breakspear.  
**THE BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre** – All the classics, plus costume changes just like it were back in the day.  
**FISH: The Academy** – The very tall Scottish bloke what used to be the singer in Marillion (and God help us, that's the second time we've mentioned them this month) heads out on a solo tour. A great way to really wind up Marillion fans is to go up them at gigs and ask them where Fish is and they'll get all uppity and tell you that *ACTUALLY* he left twenty-six years ago and *ACTUALLY* Steve Hogarth has been the frontman since 1988. Like anyone fucking cares. Anyway. Fish. So named because he was born with a set of gills and smells of haddock.  
**LLOYD + B-PHIL: The Purple Turtle**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

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

**THE NEXTMEN: The Academy** – Skylarkin presents beatmakers Brad Baloo and Dom Search, mixing up classic soul and disco with funky beats and old skool hip hop, having worked with the likes of Public Enemy, Pharcyde and Blackalicious.  
**SWISS CONCRETE with MICHAEL KNIGHT + BABY GRAVY + ECHO BOOMER: The Bullingdon** – Lachrymose country-spiked lounge pop from Dublin's Michael Knight, plus spirited punk-pop noise from Baby Gravy.  
**4ft FINGERS: The Cellar** – Return of Cheltenham's boozy skatepunks, still kicking it out in a Pennywise-inspired style and back out on tour with new album, 'New Beginnings For Old Stories'.  
**CATWEAZLE CUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Featuring The Organ Trio.  
**ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston**  
**ONE NIGHT STAND: Fat Lil's, Witney**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**SMASH DISCO: The Academy**

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

**THE FAMILY MACHINE + ALPHABET BACKWARDS + RICHARD WALTERS: The Wheatsheaf** – Album launch party for last month's Nightshift cover stars The Family Machine, with support from promising local



*Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>*

### **DUFFY: The Academy**

Unsurprisingly this show sold out long ago. Aimee Anne Duffy is, after all, this year's hottest young singer. Okay, joint hottest with Adele, whom the media seem compelled to have set up as a direct rival in that old Blurs Vs Oasis type of thing. Both share the limelight in these post-Amy Winehouse days, a return to proper old-fashioned chanteuses, the polar opposite of Lily Allen and Kate Nash. In Duffy's world there are no tales of kebab shops and mobile phones but instead songs of yearning and love gone wrong. Having grown up in the splendid isolation of a north Wales village, Duffy took part in SC4's answer to *Pop Idol* and was scooped up by Rough Trade's Jeannette Lee who has nurtured her talent for three years, set her up with songwriting and producer partner Bernard Butler and allowed her time to come up with her debut album, 'Rockferry'. Vocal comparisons to Dusty Springfield are obvious and not entirely unwelcome, sharing not just her assuredness and vulnerability but also her haircut, and there's also a hint or two of Lulu in the mix. Unsurprisingly Jools Holland has been foremost among her fans and doubtless Duffy will soon be hitting arena-sized venues so tonight is a rare opportunity to enjoy her pure blue-eyed soul in such intimate surroundings.





*Thursday 13<sup>th</sup>*

## GARY NUMAN:

### The Academy

Back in 1979 Gary Numan – then going under the band name Tubeway Army – released his second album, ‘Replicas’, a monolithic synth-rock concept album inspired by Bowie, Ultravox and sci-fi writer Philip K Dick. From it came the number 1 single ‘Are ‘Friends’ Electric?’ which launched Numan into the pop mainstream and a 30-year career as one of music’s unlikeliest survivors. ‘Replicas’ also made Numan one of the most influential stars of the past three decades, notably in the States where everyone from Kurt Cobain, Marilyn Manson and Trent Reznor to Beck, Afrikaa Baambaata and Billy Corgan were inspired by its bruising bass synths, nightmarish dystopian imagery and futuristic feel. Back in Blighty the likes of Blur and Moloko have paid their respects and covered his songs, while Thom Yorke’s sci-fi angst owes some debt to ‘Replicas’. To celebrate both his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday and his 30<sup>th</sup> year in music, Numan is playing ‘Replicas’ in its entirety, plus associated b-sides and rarities, following on from 2006’s successful ‘Telekon’ revisit. Roundly hated by the UK music press for being the first post-punk rock star, Numan has outlived his critics and proved them wrong and reaches his half century held in higher regard than ever.

alt.rock newcomers Alphabet Backwards and sweet’n’gloomy songmeister Rich Walters.  
**MOSHKA with BEAVER FUEL + BEELZEBOZO: The Bullingdon** – Likeably chaotic punk noise from Beaver Fuel at tonight’s Moshka Club, plus titanium-coated doomy metal from Beelzebozo.  
**VAN MORRISON: The New Theatre** – The musical master of mirth returns with his classic Celtic soul. Give him a hug, he’s just a big, cuddly teddy bear. No, really.  
**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: The Port Mahon HI FLYER + HOT CITY SYMPHONY + THE KEYZ + YOUR ARMY: The Jericho Tavern** – Chiming epic stadium pop from Bristol’s Hi Flyer.  
**BIG BLUE: Fat Lil’s, Witney** – Live blues.  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon SHAKE: The Academy**

## GET DOWN: The Brickworks

### SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**MARY’S GARDEN: The Wheatsheaf** – Billowing gothic Euro-rocking from Mary’s Garden.  
**FRIENDLY GHOST DAY OUT: The Port Mahon** – Full day of emo, punk, hardcore and metal with Kill The Arcade headlining, plus sets from LAP, Antikid, Arc Angel, South Central heroes, Leaving December, We More As One and Target9.  
**FLYING COLOURS + DIVINE SECRET + UNDERSIDE: The Purple Turtle**  
**DANNY, CHAMPION OF THE WORLD + MORRISON STEAM FAYRE: The Portcullis Club, Wallingford** – Uplifting Dylan-inspired folk-pop and gospel from Truck Records signings Danny, Champion of the World, plus skiffle and rockabilly folk support from London’s MSF.  
**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy** – Transformation features a special live set from up and coming post-punk disco types Rosalita, launching their Rapture-meets-Shit Disco single, ‘Manga Girl’.  
**THE REPEATS + CLAIRE BEGLEY: The Temple**

### SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**EELS: The New Theatre** – Give us an E! – *see main preview*  
**SKITTLE ALLEY RE-LAUNCH PARTY: Abingdon British Legion** – Jazz-funksters Superdeadlyninjabees headline, with support from Running With Scissors, Superloose, Moon Leopard and more.  
**THE CORSAIRS: The Black Horse, Kidlington** – Classic rock’n’roll and rockabilly.

### MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**LITTLE JENNY & THE BLUE BEANS: The Bullingdon** – Swedish all-female blues-rockers, kicking it out in the style of Led Zep, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Jimi Hendrix.

### TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**JOSH RITTER: The Academy** – Warm-hearted country rocking in the vein of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen from Idaho songsmith Ritter, riding high on the acclaim afford last year’s ‘The Historic Conquests of Josh Ritter’ album, displaying a deft lyricism and ambitious musical outlook. Idaho once too, but some bastard broke into my shed and nicked it.  
**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND**  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon**

### WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**MALCOLM MIDDLETON: The Jericho Tavern** – Ah, so close and yet so far. Malcolm Middleton so nearly could have nabbed the Christmas number 1 spot with his festive ‘We’re All Going To Die, and yet, such success would surely have spelled ruin for a man who has spent the past decade or so revelling in his own joyous gloom and lack of self worth, from his days as half of Arab Strap to his new solo album, ‘Sleight Of Hand’. Here is a man who describes himself rather brilliantly as sounding “like a fat child throwing a Casio keyboard

down a flight of stairs and hitting an old man at the bottom who’s playing Verve songs badly on an over-priced guitar”. His live band features Delgados’ Paul Savage and Mogwai’s Barry Burns in its ranks and as spring approaches, it’ll be a grand occasion to plunge yourself right back into the winter of the human heart.

**THE SWORD: The Academy** – Sludgy but melodic stoner-metal from the rising Austin, Texas behemoths, inspired by the likes of Black Sabbath, Prong and The Melvins and out on their first UK headline tour after supporting Clutch here last time round.

**LUKE & MARIUS + KATE CHADWICK: The Purple Turtle**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple**

*Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## EELS: The New Theatre

Can it really be seven whole years since Eels last graced this same stage? The memories of that show still ring clear: Mark Everett (or E as he’s more commonly known) playing the part of mildly deranged psychiatric patient on day release while he and his band – including star in her own right Lisa Germano – deliberately played silly buggers with the best known of Eels’ catalogue, radically reworking the likes of ‘Susan’s House’ and ‘Novocaine For The Soul’. It was music as theatre and displayed another side to E, generally regarded as a bit of a daydreaming misery guts, albeit an extremely talented one. The man’s songwriting credentials have kept him on top of his game over the past decade or so and now he celebrates the release of a Greatest Hits album, ‘Meet The Eels’, as well as an expansive compilation of old rarities, ‘Useless Trinkets’. Although Eels’ line-up changes pretty regularly, E’s downbeat, laconic singing and songwriting style remains as its core as he mixes up alt.rock, folk, jazz, bluegrass and country into a gorgeous, fuzzy felt whole. Given E’s relentless ambition to mess up every career-enhancing opportunity presented to him, each show is an experience and if it’s anything like his last visit, it’ll be like a two-hour visit to another planet entirely.





## THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**THE RIFLES: The Academy** – What's this, The Sword last night, The Rifles tonight. At this rate Nuclear Assault will be reforming for a gig next month. Anyway, Jam-indebted Britpop revivalism from the Walthamstow crew.

**SKY PARADE + THE DILETTANTES + FREELOVEBABIES: The Cellar** – Great triple bill of modern psychedelia with LA's Sky Parade boasting influences from Ride, Spacemen 3, Primal Scream and The Jesus and Mary Chain informing their darkly lysergic rock. San Francisco's Dilettantes, meanwhile, feature Joel Gion from The Brian Jonestown Massacre and find a meeting point between Lloyd Cole and Loud Reed via the 60s Californian sunshine. One-time Spacemen 3 chap Will Carruthers brings his gospel country band Free Love Babies along for extra LSD-spiked fun.

**MY FIRST TOOTH + CAT MATADOR + TRIAL AND ERROR + THE COOLING PEARLS: The Port Mahon**

**ELECTRIC JAM SESSION: The Jack Russell, Marston**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**SMASH DISCO: The Academy** – Local Vaudevillian glam-pop starlets Borderville play live at the eclectic indie club night.

## FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**BOOG + THE BROMPTONS + LE VENS + DIFFERENT DAY: The Jericho Tavern**

**OXFORD FOLK CLUB: Port Mahon**

**STORNOWAY + RAMI: QI Club** – The QI Club returns to gigging action after a major refurb, tonight hosting local celtic-pop favourites Stornoway, plus bluesman Rami.

**KHYBER PASS + APOLOGIES I HAVE NONE: The Purple Turtle**

**GINHOUSE: Fat Lil's, Witney**

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: Bullingdon**

**SHAKE: The Academy**

## SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with MILE HIGH YOUNG TEAM + TOUPE + DAVID K FRAMPTON: The Wheatsheaf** – Expansive, orchestral folky pop from headliners MHYT with off-kilter funk-metal, cabaret-pop support from Toupe and heavy duty electro soundscaping from Mr Frampton.

**ECLECTIC CIRCUS: The Bullingdon** – Music, cabaret and poetry with a headline set from Inflatable Buddha, plus guests.

**HARRY ANGEL + KINGS OF SPAIN + THE REPEATS: The Jericho Tavern** – Fuzz-heavy gothabilly hardcore from Harry Angel at tonight's Coo Coo Club.

**BOYZ 2 MEN: The New Theatre** – Not, as Michael Jackson supposedly believed, a special delivery service for pop star kiddie fiddlers, but multi-million-selling Philly soul crew, signed to Motown and tonight

playing all the big hits ('End Of The Road', 'I'll Make Love To You' and 'One Sweet Day' with Mariah Carey) from their recent Best Of compilation album.

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

**LITTLE FISH + THE EPSTEIN + LE VEN: Stocks Bar, Abingdon** – Skittle Alley club night with Glam-garage blues rock starlets Little Fish, plus country rockers The Epstein.

**UNDERCLASS STRIFE + NEMONIX: The Purple Turtle** – Jam-styled indie rock from Underclass Strife, plus funky hard rock from Nemonix.

**HQ: The Cellar** – Drum&bass.

**INSPECTED BY TEN: The Temple**

## SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**BE YOUR OWN PET: The Academy** – Splendidly frenetic garage punk from the Nashville teens who've managed to survive the industry frenzy that followed their shows at SXSW back in 2005. From their DIY basement beginnings – all hand-drawn sleeves and bedroom-recorded singles – they've gone on to XL Records (home to White Stripes) and been hailed as the new Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Fronted by vivacious frontwoman Jemima Pearl, who sounds like a young Kathleen Hanna, they fire out an exuberantly poppy noise that's somewhere between The Pixies, Sonic Youth and the best bits of riot grrl. A second album, 'Get Awkward', is due for release this month.

**CHRIS REA: The New Theatre** – The gravel-voiced blues-rock veteran airs his old hits like 'On The Beach' and 'Let's Dance' as well as material from his new 'The Return Of The Fabulous Hofner Blue Notes' album, back in action after retiring from live performance on health grounds a few years ago.

**BIG BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm)** – Open session.

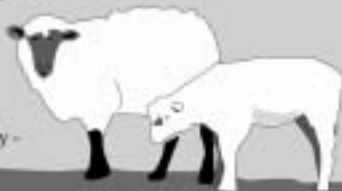
## MONDAY 31<sup>st</sup>

**BARRY ADAMSON: The Academy** – With a CV that includes stints with Magazine, The Bad Seeds and Visage, Barry Adamson should need little introduction, but it's as a solo composer that he's spent the majority of his musical career, inspired by the likes of Ennio Morricone and John Barry, as well as Motown, dub and experimental electro. He's written scores for films by David Lynch amongst others, as well as imaginary soundtrack albums on his own. Adamson's new album, 'Back To The Cat' is due out to coincide with this UK tour.

**EDDIE BLUE & THE RAVENS: The Bullingdon** – Upbeat mix of blues, funk, jazz and Southern rock from Michigan singer and saxophonist Eddie Blue and band, taking their cue from the likes of Hendrix, Ray Charles and Otis Redding.

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# LIVE

## GLASVEGAS

### The Jericho Tavern

Just as there are always shows that are doomed to failure no matter how much effort goes into them, there are others that are irrevocably fated to end up talked-about for all the right reasons.

A portentous intro to Glasvegas' set, accompanied by swathes of dry ice, is cut short with no small degree of bathos by the sounding of the fire alarm, but thankfully we're spared evacuation. Two songs in and a guitar amp blows, attenuating their glorious sheets of feedback into little more than a warming drone in the background.

Such technical mishaps, however, only serve to throw other aspects of the Glasvegas sound into relief.

James Allan boasts the most evocative Scottish brogue since Prolapse's Mick Derrick, and the basslines are wonderfully propulsive, keeping songs that might otherwise be placed at the 'stately' end of the tempo spectrum pulsing along to a climax. Beyond the slabs of Jesus and Mary Chain-inspired noise, there's everything from C86 loser-pop to

the much-quoted Phil Spector influence at work. In truth that's doing the band an injustice, since they have effectively managed to carve themselves a fully-formed, distinct sound out of influences so well-worn you'd be forgiven for thinking there was precious little inspiration still be wrung from them.

And the songs? Underneath the bluster and noise are some beautifully-observed, tender pieces of songwriting, whether it's a paean to the love between a son and his absent father in 'Daddy's Gone', twisting the lyrics of 'You Are My Sunshine' sideways to spell out heartbreak, or the stunning centrepiece 'It's My Own Cheating Heart That Makes Me Cry', which might just sew up single of the year as early as February. Glasvegas, then, are a rare entity in 2008's unsightly *mélange* of best-ofs and 'ones to watch' lists: a hyped-up tip for the top who are actually worth a damn.

*Stuart Fowkes*



Photo: pphimages

## THE JOEL HARRISON QUINTET

### The Wheatsheaf

In comes Joel Harrison, American guitarist and composer, to usher in the New Year, along with his quintet consisting of two guitarists (Harrison included), alto sax, bass guitar and beautiful, magnificent drums.

Harrison is a dab hand at the old composition game, especially film scores - he's had HBO and the History Channel pumping out his lithe, dignified pieces. His new album 'Harbor' (that's right, no 'u' - enough to make you scream) is supposed to be a 'pan-cultural', 'multi-stylistic *mélange*'. He is 'our respected jazz guitarist' - English language studies have endlessly drilled in my pasty face that the use of the collective pronoun here demonstrates the jazz world's fuzzy, come-her-Harrison-you-old-mucker relationship.

The Spin Jazz Club's crowd are characteristically warm, young, old and cordially diverse. The first set comprises most of 'Harbor', which all feels relentlessly modern. The sound is sleek and dignified but like all faceless technology; cold and unfeeling. Tonally, there exists no

grounded, tuneful comprehension, only endless floating on drifting, moody keys. An arbitrary key change here, pointlessly fractional, chords hopelessly embellished as to reduce any warmth. Unless we're speaking noise or free-improv, you can't deny that music needs a tune. Even in the most oblique Monk, Melvins or Matmos hit there is a recognisable riff lying somewhere to creep up on the persistent muso after a listen or fifty. Despite this, I'll admit the drummer is an absolute demon. Incessantly inventive, just light enough, and the paragon, the height of a drummer's Everest: delicate yet powerful. This Edmund Hillary of the hi-hat world is not afraid to go a-rocking when he gets the chance, his name is Jordan Perlson, Google him!

Before I go too harsh on these jazz brainiacs, I'll allow that the 'Here Comes the Sun' cover and jaunty number 'Mood Rodeo' are modest Mount Fijis in this tuneless tundra. An anomaly, let's hope, for Spin Club's balmy nights at the 'Sheaf. *Pascal Ansell*

## ROYWORLD

### The Jericho Tavern

Nightshift's preview of tonight's gig found us in two minds about Royworld, London-based newcomers heading out on their first headline tour. On the one hand they've got a great arty weirdo side that recalls Roxy Music's early electro-glam explosion; on the other, they might as well be supporting Keane in an enormodome somewhere in front of people who would literally collapse in a puddle of their own wee if exposed to music that challenged their brain cells one iota. After tonight's show we're really little the wiser.

Royworld look like a band that has been cobbled together by mistake - all untidy beards, bad hair and mismatched clothes - which is kind of a good thing, but you start to sense that maybe their music is an equally hotchpotch mismatch of styles. Frontman Rod Futrille is possessed of a strange, urgent charisma and has a voice that switches from Bryan Ferry to Phil Lynott at will, stopping at Tom Chaplin along the way, while behind him the band (bassless and led by

guitar and electric piano) know how to kick out a crashing anthemic crescendo. Debut single 'Elasticity' is Royworld's real gem - a deadringer for Roxy's 'Virginia Plain' - but it's encouraging to see that their choice of follow-up, 'Man In The Machine', veers towards the madder side of things, sounding like Sparks battling for the soul of the song with Supertramp. Christ, Supertramp - how much does it say about today's homogenised music scene that Supertramp can sound like something weird and new?

Elsewhere there's a risk that Royworld might turn into Marillion at any moment and their final number is little more than condensed stadium-pop bluster. So, it still remains to be seen which path Royworld take. If they chase the money, their frustrating MOR tendencies will doubtless take over. But if Royworld want to be truly loved and to be remembered in years to come, they've got enough of that strange magic to really make their mark

*Ian Chesterton*

## JOHNNY FLYNN & THE SUSSEX WIT / FIREWORKS NIGHT

### The Jericho Tavern

Half the audience tonight look like Jarvis Cocker when he dressed as Rolf Harris for *Stars In Their Eyes*; neckerchiefs abound. The other half are all Topshop gypsy princesses.

Such rustique is, of course, exceptionally contrived, but what of it? Onstage, hairy six-piece Fireworks Night pound out a four-to-the-floor beat on what is essentially an electric cardboard box, and no-one can argue with the entertainment value in that. This soon expands into an intriguingly angular, understatedly theatrical performance taking in Kurt Weill, 'Aladdin Sane'-era Bowie and the darker, better bits of The Divine Comedy. They do burlesque without the irritating "look mummy, I'm stripping" wackiness of some of their similarly-inclined peers, managing to be simultaneously progressive and traditional, not to mention rather moving. And is that Nick Gill of former Oxford instrumentalists The Monroe Transfer on guitar? Indeed it is, and now he's playing the musical saw. By this point in the set, it barely seems contrived at all. Impressive, and a hard act to follow.

Johnny Flynn and The Sussex Wit don't seem to be having the best night of their lives, due in part to technical difficulties, but also to a cellist who looks terminally ill, slumped in his chair rubbing his sweaty face. Lemsips must wait, however, as the melancholic ghost of Nick Drake must be summoned - Britain's affluent children are slightly miserable and need a home counties Bright Eyes. The boy Flynn's certainly doing something right; his calm, silky voice, neat fingerpicking and sound understanding of country harmonies are as attractive as his pretty blond head, but there's a palpable sense that he's too wryly dispassionate to be worth the hype. Eventually though, the band seem to lock in with each other, the audience finally start moving their feet and the atmosphere becomes good-time enough to deflect from the fact that there's nothing particularly new about this nu-folkie. Johnny Flynn is, at present, one dodgy Dylan cover away from simply being a star turn at a university open mic night, but for now the jauntiness of his jigs can keep the trendies interested enough.

**Dominic Colquhoun**

## XMAS LIGHTS / 50ft PANDA / DR SLAGGLEBERRY

### The Cellar

Wearing masks on stage isn't anything new but Dr Slaggleberry's expressionless white face coverings still add a spooky dehumanised feel to their all-out math-core assault. Hailing from Thame the four-piece strike out in angular fashion, possessed of a spasmodic type of fury, personified by the vocalist whose middle-distance screaming adds menace to the occasionally proggy guitar excursions. Leaning towards the Primus and Locust scheme of things, they've got an energy and imagination all of their own.

50ft Panda prefer the more straightforward approach to rock's summit; an instrumental drums and guitar duo, for them the beat and the riff are everything. Straddling raw roadhouse blues and angular hardcore noise, they bury their few moments of calm contemplation under a welter of shredded guitar noise. They're a sonic evisceration of 70s hard rock, marrying precision metal to hellbastard mayhem with splendid single-mindedness.

But on a superlative night for local rock, Xmas Lights are in another

league entirely. Having parted company with their old singer Marco Ruggiero, they've recruited Mounted Insanity Cannon lunatic Nick B and expanded to a six-piece. In doing so they've moved so far beyond standard metal and hardcore that they've become a force of sheer musical violence. A squalling intro explodes into virulent life, twin guitars and keyboards duelling above and behind Nick and Umair Chaudhry's distorted screams. For the next forty minutes they push industrial hardcore to its very limits, veering from monolithic Sunn0))) grind to all-out Anaal Nathrakh-style electro blitzkrieg. For all the all-consuming brutality of it, Xmas Lights' music is intricately textured, from James Gray King's wired guitar attack to the punishing keyboard drones that push everything along like an unstoppable bulldozer. The band take an enforced six-month break from here before returning with their debut album in the autumn and after that Satan can move aside because, to use the rock vernacular, Xmas Lights rule.

**Dale Kattack**

## LIGHTSPEED CHAMPION / SEMIFINALISTS

### The Academy

London *faux*-artistic scenesters Semifinalists tonight feature Mister Lightspeed Champion, Dev Hynes, in their number, who contributes little beyond a big hat and some functional bass and guitar playing. This, combined with an impressively annoying chirpy and bouncy keyboard player, who spends the majority of the performance jumping up and down like a rubbish child actor trying out for a Sunny D commercial, would likely add up to a set to be more tolerated than enjoyed. So it's surprising to realise that they're actually *not too bad*. They sound half like the intricate indie rock so artfully created by Built To Spill and half like an irony-drenched take on mid-80s sheen-rock *a la* Power Station. I must be in a good mood, as by the end of their set I'm fair old enjoying myself.

So I'm in a better mood to approach Lightspeed Champion than I was upon setting off into the cold night air for tonight's show. Hopefully I'm not the only person in Christendom to be thoroughly, violently sick of the relentless, vacuous, hyperbolic arse-kissing visited upon Dev Hynes' person in recent press coverage.

Nobody involved with the execrable, pathetic Test Icicles can ever, ever be described as involved in anything but a form of musical penance, so I'm not predisposed to a favourable reaction here. It turns out that there are in fact two Lightspeed Champions. Number One is the 'genius' (© *NME*) punchable furry-hatted tool who has rescued a music scene that didn't need help with an output of weak proto-new-rave and bandwagon-jumping alt-folk. Number Two is the surprisingly charming chap on stage tonight, knocking out perfectly listenable indie-pop songs with a voice that's not actually too horrendous at all. All marketing-led idiocy aside, I get the impression that Number Two is the *real* Lightspeed Champion. Have I just turned a corner? His music may be of a standard that could be easily equalled by any number of local acts playing at smaller venues in town, don't get me wrong. But I'm rather calm at the end of the night, when I thought I'd have gnawed my own eyes out in frustration and anger. Lightspeed Champion is quite good, despite everything you may have read.

**Simon Minter**

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## I WAS A CUB SCOUT / ROLO TOMASSI

### The Academy

The last time we saw Rolo Tomassi they were turning in one of the most electric and exciting performances at last year's Truck festival. They stood out on that weekend because they were one of the few bands who were about nothing other than unbridled psychotic rage. They hit the stage tonight and nothing is any different. From the first note to the last Rolo Tomassi are a hurricane of ideas spat out in a frenzy that might well need the intervention of a Catholic Priest in the near future. Eva Spence seems to have dispensed with singing altogether (something that once gave them something of a pop edge here and there) and has opted for a roar that few can match. As she whirls around the stage the rest of the band blend jazz with frantic hardcore to create a noise that dreams and nightmares are made of, depending on which side of the fence you sit. Reminiscent of the random grind and release Mr Bungle utilised on 'Disco Volante', Rolo Tomassi are without a doubt one of the most exhilarating live bands we've had the pleasure to witness recently.

How do you follow such an unrelenting blast? Not with I Was A Cub Scout for a start. Apart from having to follow Rolo Tomassi, the problem with IWACS is that they don't know quite what they want to be. Do they want to be a rock band, or dabble in electronica? We don't know, and they certainly don't. Well, drummer William Bowerman probably does, as he pounds his kit like he's in Slayer, which at least gives the songs a bit of a kick that they lack on their current album. The likes of 'Pink Squares' and 'Save Your Wishes' indicate a band with some potential, weighing in like a weedy cousin of Secret Machines, but when they're delivered with such an incredible lack of charisma or passion they fail to make any kind of lasting impression. Whatever happened to "Akela, we will do our best", eh?

*Sam Shepherd*

## PALLADIUM / ALPHABEAT

### The Academy

If the words 'Danish' and 'pop' automatically make you think of Aqua, Junior Senior or Whigfield, fear not, Alphabeat are far less one-dimensional. Poppy and jaunty, yet more heartfelt than flippant, they flirt with Motown and soul, but not in any dodgy Toploader way. '10,000 Nights of Thunder' reminds me of the Supremes, despite Anders and Stine's boy/girl vocal swooning, and 'What is Happening' is a slower but still perfectly Radio 2-friendly slice of pop-soul harmony. The band's single, 'Fascination', was Radio 1 play-listed, but there is better to come; they're still innocent, kooky and Europoppy enough to get away with the lovely 'Boyfriend', with its lyrics about holding hands, parents not wanting to know and whatnot. Alphabeat are so infectiously upbeat that it's impossible not to be charmed by them.

Palladium, on the other hand, are rather irritating. The fact that their best song ('High 5') sounds like sixth formers trying to play a medley of Van Halen's 'Jump' and that Orson song raises alarm bells immediately. The official line of them meeting on the session musician circuit and discovering a mutual love of Toto and Hall & Oates sounds very suspicious; the whole thing gives the distinct impression of being manufactured, especially considering their woeful, presumably Virgin-dictated look. I resent having had a childhood being told that particular acts were unfashionable only for them to resurface 20 years later via embarrassing, exploitative and frankly offensively cynical plagiarism with the sole purpose of lining record executives' pockets. It's the glam rock 50s revival all over again.

So it might not even be all Palladium's fault, despite the posturing; their guitar/keyboards

noodling (especially on the very AOR 'White Lady') shows they can play well. But for all the harmony and structure, they just can't muster up memorable songs – which utterly defeats the object, surely.

*Kirsten Etheridge*

## BLACK KIDS

### The Jericho Tavern

Weight of expectation bears down ever more oppressively on new young bands these days as the media's insatiable desire for Next Big Things and quick thrills shows no sign of letting up. So it was that Jacksonville's Black Kids found themselves at the centre of a rabid music industry feeding frenzy after their recent SXSW Festival showing. After one free download-only EP they're being touted as The New Arcade Fire and have been picked up by that band's management company.

All of which means the band have barely had a chance to prove anything to anyone before they're thrust into the international spotlight. Tonight's sold-out show is evidence of their lack of experience with the first fifteen minutes featuring missed beats and a muddled sound that does little justice to their unarguably sweet songs.

Fronted by brother and sister duo Reggie and Ali Youngblood (the

only two actual black kids in the five-strong lineup), comparisons with Arcade Fire are apparent in the set's anthemic centrepiece, 'I'm Not Gonna Teach Your Boyfriend How To Dance', a cluttered, almost orchestral disco stomp with Reggie and Ali trading closely harmonised vocals over an incessant but good-natured disco bass throb. More frequently, though, notably on 'Hurricane Jane', Black Kids are much closer to The Cure circa-'Head On The Door', Dawn Watley's sleek synth lines riding under Reggie's spookily uncanny Robert Smith impression. The band are at their best when they veer into dancier territory, as on 'Hit The Heartbreaks', Stax soul-style grooves and 70s funk mixing up the tender pop melodies, but even when Ali chants "Dance! Dance! Dance!" as a song nears its climax, the crowd remain, for the most part, motionless. And that, quite likely, will be Black Kids' biggest obstacle: living up to the hype they've played no part in creating. Given time to breathe and time to fully get their act together, they have the songs to confirm all that fevered talk.

*Dale Kattack*



# the port mahon

## Live Music in March

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Zangryus and Sacred Divide  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Another Lost Leader, Nordgarden  
 5<sup>th</sup> Permanent Vacation presents Grave Paintings + Alexander Thomas + Euhedral + DTV  
 6<sup>th</sup> Port Mayhem  
 7<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club  
 8<sup>th</sup> The Green  
 9<sup>th</sup> Jamie Moore + The Menus + Matthew Collings  
 10<sup>th</sup> Red Ink + Oliver Jarva & Band  
 14<sup>th</sup> Oxford Folk Club  
 16<sup>th</sup> Sugar Dirt  
 17<sup>th</sup> Dixon  
 19<sup>th</sup> Sneaky Pete presents Matilda + Chantelle Pike + Nick Breakspear  
 21<sup>st</sup> Oxford Folk Club  
 22<sup>nd</sup> Friendly Ghost Day Off II featuring Kill the Arcade, LAP, Anti Kid, Arc Angel, We Move as One, Leaving December, Farewell City, Target 9, South Central Heroes  
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 moiety + maere bayton Doors 8pm / £4
- Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> **NOVA KICKS** + freakishly long mirrors + the sticks Doors 8pm / £5
- Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> **FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL**  
 red paper dragon + soft panda Doors 8pm / £5
- Friday 14<sup>th</sup> **LITTLE FISH** + the black hats + malenc la vossie Doors 8pm / £5
- Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> **DESMOND CHARLIER + THE LONG MEMORIES** Doors 8pm / £4
- Friday 21<sup>st</sup> **THE FAMILY MACHINE** + alphabet backwards Doors 8pm / £5
- Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> **MARY'S GARDEN** + gog Doors 8pm / £5
- Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> **EDUARD SOUNDINGBLOCK + HEADCOUNT**  
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Saturdays

1<sup>st</sup> **SIMPLE** - Funky House 9-3am.

22<sup>nd</sup> **OX4** - Drum'n'Bass. 9pm-3am

29<sup>th</sup> **ECLECTIC CIRCUS** - Music, cabaret and poetry with **INFLATABLE BUDDHA** & guests

Sundays

9<sup>th</sup> **SWISS CONCRETE** presents **ELIZA** (ex-Bellatrix) / **COGWHEEL DOGS / WE AERONAUTS**



## BLACK FRANCIS / ART BRUT

### Brookes Union

The coming together of two gigs onto one pretty odd double header is what brings me here tonight. In many ways it's a deeply unfashionable night, Art Brut never have been or pertain to be *en vogue*, while Black Francis has spent most of his solo years in the wilderness despite the huge love still showered on Pixies.

Art Brut are simply wonderful. Tonight singer Eddie Argos will skip with his mike lead, cause an accidental conga when he jumps into the crowd and throws all manner of odd shapes. This glamourless showmanship would be cringeworthy if it wasn't so much fun. The songs, pulled from their two albums, are quite basic rock tunes but it's the lyrics that win you over, observations of modern life from the perennial loser. It's Half Man Half Biscuit without the clever wordplay, or Luke Smith if he formed a rock and roll band.

They're the first band I've seen live

in a while to remind me why I love rock music.

So Frank Black becomes Black Francis again and a change is underway. It's almost as though he's learnt to love what he does again, which seems evident from the busking down at the Bridge of Sighs before the gig. Shorn of his old backing band The Catholics and with a new three piece band in tow, they're on mighty fine form. As you'd expect there's a lot of stuff played from the new album, 'Bluefinger', but also from a forthcoming mini-album 'Svn Fngs'. A lot of the stuff is the surf-blues in which he excels, but there's a harder edge to the songs from the mini album. It has to be said though that this material is best in short sharp measures and can prove a bit repetitive over the space of an hour. All things considered, it's a victory of sorts and a sign not to write off solo Black Francis just yet.

**Russell Barker**

## DR SHOTOVER

### My White Bicycle

Howe! No, not "How!" - who d'you think I am, Poca-blasted-hontas?... I mean STEVE Howe... Yes! No, not Yes - I mean the band he was in BEFORE Yes, you paisley-jumpered moron. Tomorrow! No, that's not when I'm going to see them - that was the name of the band (or "group" as we used to say in 1967)... their psychedelic hit "My White Bicycle" was inspired by the Dutch hippies who used to leave bikes around Amsterdam for other "groovers" to use, and it was all, like, free and mellow and peaceful. Well, it certainly was in my experience, until some Situationist joker came along and spiked my waarmschokoladmelk with Mandrax... Jezus Christus, wat een downer! Now then, while I'm ON Mandrax, I mean the subject, why oh why do these half-wit students keep overtaking other cyclists on the inside? All right, by "other cyclists", I mean "me". And yes, I admit it, I HAVE fitted Boadicea-like blades to my back wheel to deal with this sort of miscreant... Slice! Slash! Rzzzz! It was like the cover of "Weasels Ripped My Flesh" by Frank Zappa all over again... I'm delighted to tell you that THAT particular spotty Herbert won't be going skiing again for some time... Where were we? Oh yes, on the Cowley Rd, just near the secret location that houses the world-famous East Indies Club! "How exciting", I hear you say, "I've been wanting to know for simply ages where THAT select and glamorous haunt of the Great and the Good of Oxford Pop and Rock is located...!" Shall I tell you where it is? Shall I? (Just one more Mandrax, thanks)... It's... it'szzzz... urgh [snores]...

**Next month: I've got a bike, you can ride it if you like...**



"Oh no, guys, I thought I was auditioning to be the new Dr Who, and look where I ended up! I'll never take Mandies again!"

## HOT CHIP

### The Academy

A good measure of a band's worth is sometimes, to paraphrase Voltaire, to ask yourself whether if they didn't exist, it would be necessary to invent them. Hot Chip offer one of the (relatively) few cases in which the answer would have to be a resounding 'yes', such is the colour, invention and character the band bring to the table. They are, however, such a one-off that you'd have trouble working out yourself how to assemble such an unlikely combination of buzzing synths, dancefloor *nous* and an honest devotion to pure pop sugar into such a mercurial treat.

The overall effect of such an idiosyncratic range of influence and instrumentation is split between inspirational moments and ideas that don't quite gel. For example, much of the set is marred by the kind of mawkish, awkward balladry that forms the centrepiece of new album 'Made In The Dark'. Slight and insipid where they ought to be affecting, they often lack the nimble interweaving of ideas that marks out the band's more inspired - and usually upbeat -

moments. Alexis Taylor's vocals seem a little reedy and underweight to make the desired impact, resulting in moments that bring to mind nothing so exciting as Postal Service b-sides. On the other hand, at their strongest they're thrillingly unpredictable, bouncing from nursery rhyme acronym games (witness 'C-A-S-I-O' et al.) to the kind of undulating, arpeggiated workouts that the likes of Justice and Digitalism have been peddling to the kids with great success of late, albeit simultaneously tempered with an ear for a classic pop chorus.

Hot Chip, then, are testament to the fact that you can make quirky, infinitely-malleable music entirely on your own terms and still reach the very pinnacle of indie royalty, and for that reason alone they're worth celebrating.

**Stuart Fowkes**

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## PARADISE ISLAND / PREFONTAINE / ELAPSE-O / SAD SHIELDS

### The Wheatsheaf

Portsmouth's Sad Shields have a great name, great haircuts and an even greater guitarist. Harking back to the golden age of the Gang of Four, The Slits and Fugazi was always going to make them more friends than enemies, but doing it without a bass player has always been a brave, if increasingly popular, move. Okay, so they don't always hit their target but when they do, such as on 'Theme From Surf', they tread the line between noise and tunefulness quite exquisitely.

Local duo Elapse-O are without doubt the best new band I've seen in the last year. Or rather 'Golden Ships' is the best song by a new band. Not the lacklustre version on their Myspace but tonight's stomach-kicking, frighteningly exhilarating rendition, like Cabaret Voltaire meeting The Cocteau Twins at Michael Gira's house and deciding to make one last song together before huddling together in a funeral pyre. It all sounds as much like a distress signal as pop music, and they also manage to be menacing and camp at the same time - no mean achievement.

Prefontaine are altogether less

multi-layered and more angular, but still obstinately antagonistic to conventional song structures. Another vocals, guitar and drums two-piece, they're annoyingly reminiscent of someone you can't put your finger on, and it's not The White Stripes. They're the sound of a hangover, albeit the ones you find yourself quite enjoying.

Jenny Hoyston, from San Francisco, has had considerable success with her main band Erase Errata, a fairly conventional punk pop band. This Paradise Island project allows her to space out into a territory where Sonic Youth might dwell for a while and guess what, they're a vocals, drums and guitar duo! There are ponderous parts reminiscent of Cat Power (fabulous records, unwatchable live) and some unfathomable staged dialogue, but when she starts coming on like Thurston Moore a really interesting dialogue between the guitar and drums starts, and all is forgiven. In fact nothing tonight sounds much like anything from her lengthy back catalogue (four bands plus collaborations, DJ sets etc), and that's saying something.

*Art Lagun*

## THINGUMA\*JIGSAW/ SHARRON KRAUS

### East Oxford Community Centre

Sharron Kraus, Oxford's witch-queen of folk, is not very well tonight. For this she apologises, before embarking on as much of her set as the combined powers of Resolve and Lemsip will allow. She's a little croaky, which is a shame, but it doesn't undermine the bleak beauty of her songs. Her voice lends a bird-boned fragility to tales of infanticide and winter, underpinned by the foreboding death-tug of accordion and double bass. It's got all the darkness associated with traditional folk, and a desolate kind of mysticism pervades the set. It all feels very interior; the sort of songs that seem to exist behind a veil or pane of glass. This exclusion of the listener is perhaps what lends the music its poignant beauty; its ghost worlds perfected through being placed tantalisingly beyond reach.

With the lurgy forcing Sharron's set to a premature conclusion, Thinguma\*jigsaw take to the stage. Originating from Norway, they are a two-piece who perform under the aliases of The Severed Headmaster and Little Myth Epiphany. In a way, these ludicrous sobriquets suit them down to the ground: cutesily

eccentric in a way that's in danger of trying too hard and leaving you itching to act out the homicidal plot-lines of their songs.

Actually, this is only half true. Little Myth Martha (her real name) is a delight. Her main instrument of choice is the saw, and from this unassuming piece of hardware she plucks melodies of such softly ululating, almost painful loveliness that they seem to come from another planet, as though someone had given the Clangers a Conservatoire education and a job-lot of laudanum. Her co-pilot Seth (the Headmaster) foregrounds her with vocals and banjo, and although there's initially something to be liked in his frail delivery and the psycho-whimsy of his narratives, it quickly gets grating. He contorts his voice into a succession of poses without ever finding one that suits it. He's clearly an accomplished banjo player, he just doesn't seem to be putting the effort in tonight, and his pluckings are clumsy. It's Martha's saw that glows life into what might otherwise be fumbling drear - which just goes to prove that DIY can be sexy, after all.

*Emily Gray*



# OX4 Radio 87.9 FM



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GMT	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
7.00 AM	Breakfast Serial Summer Love	Breakfast Serial Summer Love	Breakfast Serial Summer Love	Breakfast Serial Summer Love	Breakfast Serial Summer Love	Saturday Morning Coolest Ian & Truck T	Praise And Worship Steve & Val
10.00AM	Get Up To Get Down OX4	Get Up To Get Down OX4	Get Up To Get Down OX4	Get Up To Get Down OX4	Get Up To Get Down OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4
12.00 PM (1.00 PM Sat)	Around Oxford Ed Nubian	Around Oxford Ed Nubian	Around Oxford Ed Nubian	Around Oxford Ed Nubian	Around Oxford Ed Nubian	Project Mayhem Al Cappuccino	OX4 OX4
2.00 PM (3.00 PM Sat)	Cowleyformia Drearing Osprey	Cowleyformia Drearing Osprey	Cowleyformia Drearing Osprey	Cowleyformia Drearing Osprey	Cowleyformia Drearing Osprey	Time To Blaze Ruhay's LeBlack	Back In Da Day OX4
4.00 PM (5.00 PM Sat)	Hard Drive Dan Gil	Hard Drive Dan Gil	Hard Drive Dan Gil	Hard Drive Dan Gil	Hard Drive Dan Gil	Rice And Pass Ed Nubian	Next Generation OX4
7.00 PM	Underground Business Rebel AC	Chill-Out Zone Ian & Truck T	OX4 OX4	Chill-Out Zone Ian & Truck T	Old Skool Fridays MJ	Natural Elements Firecoous	Hook-Up Bobby D
9.00 PM	Quick Fix Radio Lee Smiles	Natural Elements Firecoous	Flap And Flap Flap & Flap	Live Burn Miss Nelly B Page	Vibes Kni Linx & Kpin	Kinkadee Mikee Midge	Dezta Nation Firecoous, Cachet & Dezta Family
11.00 PM	Roots Garden Shumba & Little Tom	Dett Selection Sage A Bass	Kinkadee Mikee Midge & John Bobby	G-Spot Rob G & Tay G	East African Street Beats Di-Glof	Ultra Culture Juicy & Deadly	G-Spot Rob G & Tay G
1.00 AM	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	Reggae Time OX4	Ultra Culture Invisible Man	DAT Sound Suley, Wayne, Danny Prince, Family Man & Danny V	Dezta Nation Firecoous, Cachet & Dezta Family	Music 4 A Reason Makepeace
4.00 AM	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4	OX4 OX4

Live across Oxford throughout March 2008 on 87.9 FM! Tune in!

## **RICHARD HAWLEY / VINCENT VINCENT & THE VILLAINS**

### **The New Theatre**

Tonight's show isn't so much a gig as a trip back in time. To a golden age of classic rockabilly and crooners; to pop music's very birth.

London's Vincent Vincent & The Villains even have the sort of name you can't get away with these days and kick out a stripped-down 50s-style of rock'n'roll with a Latin kick that sounds like it escaped from David Lynch's *Wild At Heart*. Such a rough'n'ready band seem ill-suited to these opulent surroundings and the audience's enthusiastically polite applause, and you feel they'd be better suited to a raucous, sweaty pub gig, but few could fail to fall for their timeless tales of lovers' tricks and songs with sweet, old-fashioned titles like 'Pretty Girl' (even if it does namecheck Tesco's). It's like Eddie Cochran and Richie Valens never left us.

Sheffield bard Richard Hawley is similarly steeped in the past, a crooner of the old school, but one with impeccable contemporary connections (member of Pulp, guitarist for Gwen Stefani, beloved of everyone from Radiohead to REM). As his star has risen he's managed to straddle the divide between Radio 2 comfort and 6Music cool with ease and his recent success is well deserved and hard-earned.

On stage he cuts a dapper, anachronistic figure, bequipped and bespectacled. "Right, let's ballad!" he announces and we're off into a parallel pop world. Current single 'Valentine' is luxuriant and orchestral, full of Hawley's trademark through-a-glass-darkly romanticism, while 'Roll, River, Roll', with its swooning strings and huge double bass rumble, recalls Neil Diamond's more

extravagant moments.

Hawley himself is possessed of a wonderfully sonorous baritone and armed with a warm, sardonic wit, delivered in his dry Yorkshire accent; years of experience have made him a true performer rather than simply a singer. From the glorious, shimmering 'Tonight, The Streets Are Ours', through to the dreamy swing of 'Hold Back The Night', he evokes the spirits of Matt Monroe and Bobby Darin, while 'Something Is' would fit easily on Morrissey's most recent albums.

Strangely, and unfortunately, most of the encore is spent in downbeat acoustic contemplation, Hawley and a harmonica player covering Ricky Nelson's 'Lonesome Town', before he brightens briefly for the final number. It can't dampen a sometimes magical evening, but then it's back out into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and its rain and traffic. Perhaps the past really is a foreign country, and a better one at that.

*Ian Chesterton*

## **CLANKY ROBO GOBJOBS / SIKORSKI**

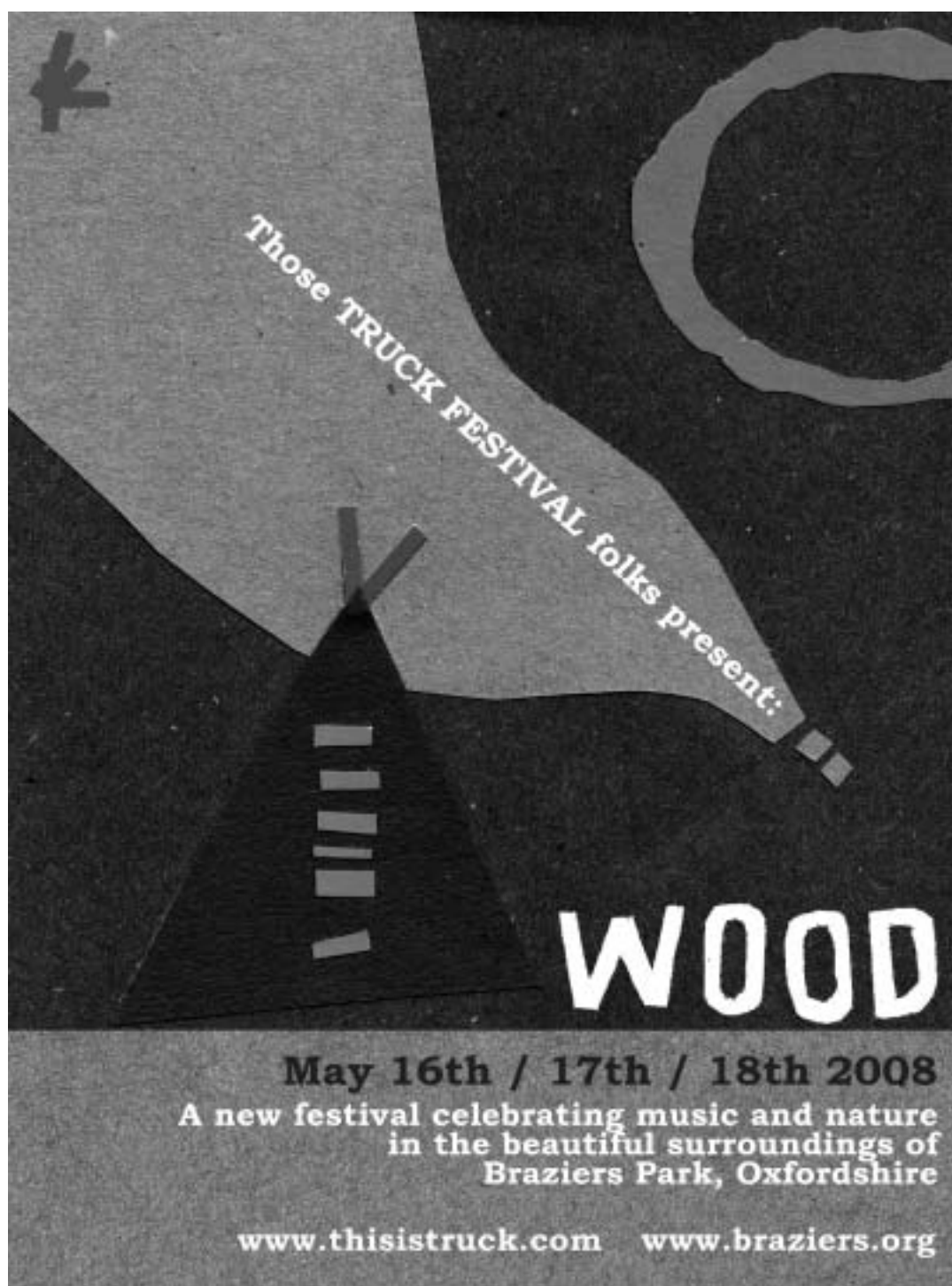
### **The Purple Turtle**

The Purple Turtle, with its bleak, arch-shaped gig room, is the perfect setting for Sikorski's brand of industrialised electro-pop. The Banbury-based duo resurrect late-80s European techno of the type Front 242 and Nitzer Ebb once pioneered: acid house squelches subsumed by more monstrous synth pounding, the occasional vocal tracks featuring an angry sort of shouting about slaves and cool, dark stuff like that.

Sikorski's death-faced metronomic techno assault almost seems to revel in the sparse, static crowd and really the only downside is the singer's personable between-song banter with his mates in the crowd. Come on, we don't want cheery sarcasm, we want the fucking Terminator!

Clanky Robo Gobjobs, meanwhile, really is a bloke you wouldn't want to leave in a room full of young children. Dressed in an ill-fitting tracksuit he contorts and cavorts around the available floor space, screaming maniacally over the top of brutal electro squiggles and crunches. And that's it really: two-minutes slap-in-the-face slabs of vicious Toytown death techno and screaming punctuated by self-effacing asides delivered in a daft, fake Yorkshire accents. And it's great, a one-man mash-up of Napalm Death, Atari Teenage Riot and Harry Enfield's Kevin the teenager. Maybe his therapist suggested this act as a way of connecting to his primal inner self, but what is certain is that someone with such a lack of shame or self-conscious cool is the real distilled essence of rock theatre.

*Dale Kattack*



## LAURA VEIRS

### **The Academy**

Laura Veirs. Who the heck is she? Have you ever heard of this American siren from Portland Oregon? Probably not. And yet she fills the Academy – and I am betting most shows on her tour. There is just something about her. She's been around for a while now and has what could only be called a cult following. She's on her own this time round, out on tour promoting her latest album – actually not that new any more – 'Saltbreakers'.

Usually Laura tours with a band but on this latest one she's flying solo. Just her, a loop machine thingy (sorry to get so technical) a guitar and a banjo. Feeling ever so slightly jilted at Laura standing there on her own on that big empty stage, I'm soon put to rights. The intimate setting just opens up whole new insights into this truly gifted songwriter and musician. Her opening track, 'Pink Light', lets the audience know what's in store. Complicated

picking she sets into loops on a delay pedal, where she builds layers upon layers like waves in an ocean: the theme for most of her album.

Mermaids, mermen, pirates, salt water eyes, tattered sails. These backdrops to her enigmatic songwriting and the essence of her style of folk, blues, and bluegrass combines for a hypnotic effect. Although her beautiful poetry set to catchy folky pop tunes is relentless, with every song she brings something new and different. 'Cast A Hook' and 'Ocean Night Song' are just two of the many highlights. Not to mention that her technical ability with the guitar is something that with a full band can't be truly appreciated.

Between songs Veirs reveals herself as an appealingly witty and warm raconteur. Even folks new to her songs could not help but feel enraptured by such a performance tonight.

*Katy Jerome*

## MARIA ILETT BAND / PEANUT ALBINOS

### **The Jericho Tavern**

Imagine a band that look like a bunch of old-fashioned tinkers, who play skiffle banjo, mandolin and brushed drums with a masterful depth of dark gothic and celtic soul, but are mercifully devoid of any carousing Irish accents. London's Peanut Albinos, in soft, battered, slept-in suits and hats, have an English take on longing, regret and coming to terms with consequences, all while making you think you are in a late night lock-in with Tom Waits on the Kilburn High Road.

Tonight's sold-out crowd has three separate garrulous birthday parties going on within it, so you'd think it would be a cinch for east Oxford darlings The Maria Ilett Band to take the warmed-up baton over. But Maria misjudgingly opts to go solo for the first two numbers, thereby letting the said baton start to slip from her grasp. The mob gets

restless. Her band, in the form of Paul and Lucy Hamblin (guitar and backing vocals respectively), and Ryan Dale (drums and backing tracks), storm the stage, buckle up and quickly get the pop-party off the launch pad with the aptly titled 'Pick Me Up'. This is Maria's forte, being the kind of gal KT Tunstall thought of when she sang that "Everything around her is a silver pool of light", while having the *nous* on tracks like 'Alpine Dog' to be able to say, "Hey, I can do epic and paranoia too". She is the reborn skittish soul of Kirsty MacColl on her glowing pop classics 'Sit On The Sun' and 'Hit The Blue', and a mockney Sarah Cracknell on the equally hook-laden audience sing-alongs 'This Place' and 'You Play These Games'.

They finish up with a wonderfully vampy cover of Feist's 'My Moon,

My Man', with Maria's emerald hot pants and Goldfrapp-style pole dance sending the photographers into meltdown. Cowley Minogue or Kylie Ilett... you just can't get too many spangled pop divas in your life.

*Paul Carrera*



Photo: [myspace.com/johnmphotos](http://myspace.com/johnmphotos)



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Sat 15<sup>th</sup> Closed: private do.

Thu 20<sup>th</sup> **ONE NITE STAND**

Fri 21<sup>st</sup> **BIG BLUE**

Sat 22<sup>nd</sup> Closed: private do.

Fri 28<sup>th</sup> **GINHOUSE**

Sat 29<sup>th</sup> Closed: private do.

Sun 30<sup>th</sup> **BIG BLUES JAM.**

From 3pm. All Welcome

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Fri 11<sup>th</sup> **THE MIGHTY PIE**

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(Tributes to Elvis and Queen)

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Fri 18<sup>th</sup> **TAKE ON THAT**

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### PISTOL KIXX

"There is nothing clever about our music", state Pistol Kixx bluntly, and they're not wrong. But let's be honest, which would you rather sit through, a three-hour lecture on quantum physics or a sci-fi blockbuster packed with heavily-armed spaceships, exploding cyborgs and scantily-clad futuristic freedom fighters? If you go for the first option, you're reading the wrong bloody magazine. Anyway, Pistol Kixx: they cite New York Dolls, Ramones and Nashville Pussy as primary influences and have a guitarist called Sober Dave who is also the singer in local hardcore monsters Thirty Two and who is doubtless ironically named. Musically each of the four tracks here are pretty much interchangeable: straight-down-the-line rockaboogie thrash that sounds like Motörhead in Mid-West trucker mode. Roadhouse blues gets a hairy metal make-over and it's down with that bottle of JD and off down the freeway til dawn. 'Wild West' would make a decent soundtrack to a saloon bar brawl, while 'Rock'n'roll Trash Queen' is so unreconstructed you can almost hear it scraping its knuckles along the ground. It doesn't matter much that the whole thing is a living, breathing cliché. "Hopefully it's as much fun to drink to as it is to play," continues the accompanying scrawled letter. Absolutely. We're off to the spirits cupboard right now.

### ARCANGEL

Ah yes, the squeal of guitars being wrung by their necks until they're close to death, and the sound of a young man bawling and bellowing and screaming like he's re-enacting the Battle of the Somme in his bedroom. It can mean only one thing: heavy metal. Arcangel's brand of metalcore, at least on lead track 'Jigsaw', ticks most of the right boxes, from the squiggly blasts of guitar thrash to the larynx-threatening vocal vomiting, the overall effect only slightly tempered by the fact that the drumming sounds like an angry toddler smashing a plastic cricket bat against a hollow wooden door. It's an efficient rampage with extra entertainment value to be had hearing the singer trying to see just how low he can get his voice to go in the song's breakdown (really, quite low, truth be told). Onwards they rage through 'This Is War' before we're stopped in our tracks by the intro to 'And In Lites I'll Love', wherein they go all soft and

*Demo of the Month wins a free day's recording at Keynote. Call 01189 599944 to claim your prize and get special deals for local bands!*

slow and sensitive and generally sound like Boyzone toning their act down for a Christian pop convention. It only lasts a minute before they're crunching out those nasty old metal chords and blast beats again but for those few seconds it reminds just how much more evil Christian pop is than any amount of devil-worshipping aural carnage.

### ASHER DUST

Demo page denizen Asher Dust has been absent from these pages for some time, off doing a music production course at college apparently, but now he's back, with not one but two demos, and, as we've come to expect from the man, the results are uneven but never dull. Well, actually this offering does tend towards the less interesting end of the musical spectrum, AJ going for some straight r'n'b / funk that sounds like it'd be more at home in the mid-80s, replete with Herbie Hancock-style bass squelch and period-sounding electronics, plus the odd tendency towards disco. At its best, there are faint echoes of Stevie Wonder, but that's a mere wrong foot away from – gulp – Jamiroquai, an insult we're loathe to heap on anyone. Perhaps the demo's main fault is that it feels under-produced. Much of AJ's best music in the past has had a great DIY feel to it but the lo-fi quality here lets it down, modern r'n'b relying heavily on high quality production.

### BLANKDREAD

And so here's AJ again, and a much more satisfying display of his often eccentric output. This is all over the place, with an everything-including-the-kitchen-sink approach to style and production. Opener 'Kiss Me Neckback' is a jumble of mumbles, clickety clack roots reggae, Depression-era blues, gospel, old time jazz and scatting, that sounds like an overused tape unearthed in an abandoned Trenchtown recording studio from 40 years ago. 'Queen Elenorria' is even more madcap, from its punky surfabilly guitar strike that sounds weirdly like it was sampled from Sigue Sigue Sputnik, through to lyrics about chopping off willies and random blasts of sci-fi lazer synths, to the stream-of-consciousness vocal growl. 'Piss Stain On My Bed' deals with... well, need we go into it in any depth? Needless to say it captures the glamour of stained sheets perfectly. And there we have it – a rambling, seemingly directionless collection of music, rhymes and found sounds that makes little sense but remains, at each turn, oddly captivating. Good to have you back, AJ.

### CABEZA

A new band from Chinnor boasting Winnebago Deal and Degüello as influences,

along with Black Flag and The Melvins, which is always a good start. This slightly rudimentary demo offers a few glimpses of what might end up doing justice to those starting points, notably the last song on the CD, 'Old Stained Memories', a slow-burning grunge-sludge metal piece, nominally in the vein of Killdozer, that recalls some of the queasy heaviness of US hardcore's early years. Elsewhere, 'March Of Melvin Mindugas' and 'Murky Waters', lurch more into squalid 80s anarcho-punk territory with the feeling the band might drop into a reggae skank at any moment. Time will doubtless tell whether Cabeza can achieve the monstrous heights of their fellow Oxfordshire noisemongers.

## TELLING THE BEES

Telling The Bees apologise for their demo, thinking it might be a bit "beardy" for Nightshift, perhaps under the misapprehension that we only ever listen to, say, 80s synth-pop or something (erm...) but, hey, as wee kiddies we were force-fed old Corries records noon til night and love a bit of folk music, especially if it's of the more downbeat persuasion, as this here most undoubtedly is. The band features local folk luminaries Andy Letcher, Colin Fletcher and Jane Griffiths, whose names seem to crop up all over the place (notably on Sharron Kraus's 'Right Wantonly A-Mumming' album last year) and, on the vocal tracks, 'Beautiful' and 'Wood', recall both early Fairport as well as Kris Drever, while instrumental piece 'Lyra' is an almost classical lament, based on cello, English bagpipes and fiddle. Andy Letcher's voice is softly resonant and adds a poetic edge to the flowery, occasionally psychedelic instrumentation. Of course the whole thing sounds like it's landed unexpectedly in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century from some time around 1968, but, really, that only ups its appeal.

## JC's DIGITAL KITCHEN

As well as having the sort of name you'd expect to come across at a student Battle of the Bands, JC's Digital Kitchen are a bit of a mess, an ungainly juggernaut of a band, full of fuzz and bluster but lacking focus and ending up chugging along inoffensively but with little style or flair. They seem to be quite angry about stuff too. The singer shouts a lot and his mood worsens as the demo progresses, from general disgruntlement at the start to all-out *Daily Mail*-reading rage by the final song, which seems to involve a fair amount of spleen-venting at beggars and general scum of the earth types ("No I don't have any fucking change!") proffers the well-spoken vocalist, doubtless through spittle-

flecked lips). Thing is, they're not actually as bad as all that makes them sound – they've got a bit of almost militant fire in their bellies and you can imagine that live they probably make quite a racket; one song bares a passing resemblance to The Automatic's 'Monster', while there's an almost rockabilly thing going on under the mess of grungy guitar noise, but really, beyond that some serious sorting out is in order.

## THE FOLLYS

No trace of any anger here. Instead it's all sunshine, harmonies and the 1960s in The Follys world. The Follys are fronted by Nightshift demo review regular Trev Williams, but instead of the usual dose of lovelorn angst, here, at least on 'Give A Little Love', he seems to be in far more buoyant mood, guitars jangling pleasantly as he chirrups on about his heart leaping. Nice to hear him having fun for a change. 'Pretty City Boy' may contain traces of residual ire but even here the sun is, apparently, shining, and to a soundtrack of an old Kinks song if we're not much mistaken. 'In The Dark', unsurprisingly, brings the mood down and is a bit whiney in a 'My Girl' kinda way, truth be told, but then we're back in Cheesy Happyland with songs called 'Sunrise' and 'Butterfly' and we could swear spring is on its way.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### STALKING TYLER

"We are young, enthusiastic, reasonably talented and desperately seeking fame and fortune," declare Stalking Tyler. You hear that? They're desperate! Oh dignity, where art thou? Anyway, desperate is the key word here, but what would you expect from a band who claim they started out playing Libertines covers? Nowadays they play their own songs, but sadly these tend not have any verses or choruses or tunes or, well, anything really. They're just untidy, clumsy thrashes through characterless sub-Pete Doherty pub rock, an onward canter of musical slurry with only the odd incongruous and decidedly half-arsed ska skank offering any kind of variety. This is the sound of a sewage pipe eternally oozing effluent into a bubbling stream. The band's website tells us that Stalking Tyler recently had some small record label interest but nothing further came of it. Maybe, just maybe, the bloke at the label actually heard your music, boys. Might explain why he hasn't called back. Tell you what, why not try holding your breath until he does. We'll be round to check on you in a couple of months.

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

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



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