

email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.net

website: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 160
November
2008

On Target For Rock Glory

A SILENT FILM

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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NIGHTSHIFT'S WEBSITE has undergone a major overhaul this month, making it easier to read the magazine online and discuss local music matters. Nightshift is available to read online in PDF format every month, plus there are archive issues going back to 2005 available to browse. The messageboard has been completely revamped and visitors can now easily join up to the forum and post whatever pearls of wisdom they want. Or just moan about stuff. Go to nightshift.oxfordmusic.net.

FOALS have added a second night at the Academy to their tour in December after the first show sold out. The local stars will now play on Thursday 11th December as well as Friday 12th. Tickets for the new show are on sale from wegottickets.com or from the Academy box office.

THE HOLD STEADY were forced to cancel their gig at the Academy last month after guitarist Tad Kubler was hospitalised with pancreatitis. The Oxford show was due to be the band's first of a UK tour. The gig has now been rescheduled for Monday 8th December. All tickets remain valid, with more on sale, priced £14, from wegottickets.com or the Academy box office.

THE WHEATSHEAF hosts a free live music promotion workshop on

Tuesday 18th November. The event, organised by Generator Project co-ordinator Paul Reed, runs from 2-4pm and takes the form of an interactive discussion of topics such as getting established, costing and financial management, promotion and marketing, venue management, licensing, dealing with agents, artist liaison and production. For full details of the afternoon, visit www.generator.org.uk or phone Paul on 0191 245 0099.

FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND hold a special signing session and fans meet and greet at Tiger Lily ahead of their Academy gig on Saturday 1st November. The welsh emo heroes will be at the store in New Road (close to the central library) between 5.30 and 6.30pm. Visit www.tiger-lily.com for more details.

RICHARD THOMPSON plays a special show at the New Theatre on Saturday 7th February next year as part of a tour celebrating 1,000 years of popular music. The legendary folk singer and guitarist will play songs from the early middle ages to the present day, taking in everything from Gilbert & Sullivan and Nat King Cole to The Who and Nelly Furtado. Tickets for the show are on sale now, priced £20, on 0844 847 1585.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES host their annual Weekend Warmer



ISIS will play a rare UK show at the Regal next month. The hugely influential Californian post-metal titans come to Oxford on Monday 8th December, one of only four UK shows, including an appearance at All Tomorrow's Parties. Tickets for the show, are on sale now, priced £12.50, from wegottickets.com

at the Jericho Tavern next month. This year's event, in conjunction with Swiss Concrete and Co Co Club, features 22 acts playing over the weekend of the 13th/14th December. Acts already confirmed are, Alphabet Backwards (acoustic), The Black Hats, Aidan Canaday, Danny Chivers, Les Clochards, Cogwheel Dogs, Cyrus, Dear Landlord, The Gullivers, Hollow, King Of Cats, Mephisto Grande, The Middle Ones, The Mile High Young Team, The Mountain Parade, Night Portraits, Secret Rivals, Sketchbeat and The Wookies. Music runs from 3pm-12 midnight both days. Admission is £5 per day, or £3 before 3pm. A limited number of weekend tickets, priced £7, are on sale now from wegottickets.com.

THE HALF RABBITS and Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Elements are both included in a new film released this month. '1234' is written and directed by film-maker, and

occasional Sunnyvale guitarist, Giles Borg and follows the trials of an up and coming band trying to make it in the music industry. Sunnyvale make a couple of cameo appearances, while The Half Rabbits have two songs featured on the soundtrack. The film premiered at last month's London Film Festival. More details on it can be found at www.1234themovie.co.uk. The Half Rabbits, meanwhile, are currently recording their debut album for release early next year.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into BBC Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show featured the best new Oxford releases, plus interviews with local and touring bands, a demo competition and a local gig and club guide. The show is also available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.



HAMISH FERGUSON 1963 - 2008

Tributes have been paid to local musician Hamish Ferguson, who has died of cancer, aged 45. Hamish was a popular and prominent figure on the Oxford scene through the 1980s and 90s, firstly with The Hulas, the band he formed with promoter and ATL singer Mac, before he joined local legends The Anyways in 1990.

Subsequently he formed Lucky & The Losers and Botley. More recently Hamish worked as a chiropractor. Speaking about his friend and former Anyways bandmate, Relationships singer Richard Ramage said, "Hamish joined The Anyways in 1990, bringing his Telecaster twang and rippling 12-string to the (1960s, revolutionary) party. We levitated the Pentagon and celebrated Arthur Lee, the Byrds and long-haired country music, enlightening anoraked C-86 audiences in London and Brighton, supporting Ride at the Apollo, and recording a sparkling (if inevitably unreleased) album at Dungeon Studios. Hamish and Anyways keyboard star Karen left to form Lucky and The Losers, pursuing an abiding mission to spread the country-rock gospel... latterly, as his health problems increased, Hamish gave up the guitar in favour of working as a chiropractor (treating, among others, Relationships drummer Tim Turan). He was a complex character, who could change at the flip of a plectrum from quiet recluse to the rocking-est party-goer in the precinct... a natural rebel, he was also intensely loyal to friends and family. Ultimately he will be remembered - and missed - by many, as a fiercely talented guitarist, singer and songwriter, and a man of great warmth and multiple enthusiasms. Here's to you, Hamish!"

Mac too paid tribute to Hamish: "Hooch was a lovely fella, and a top player; he'll be sorely missed. When we formed The Hulas the whole band revolved around his most excellent country blues twang style. That and Thunderbird wine."

Nightshift extends its deepest sympathies to all of Hamish's family and friends.

A quiet word with A SILENT FILM



“THE BEST THING THAT CAN happen to you is the unexpected. I know exactly what I’m aiming for when I start writing but I’m always hoping for that piece of stellar wisdom that someone else brings to the table, which will drive the song further.”

NIGHTSHIFT IS TALKING TO Robert Stevenson, singer and pianist with rising local stars A Silent Film. We’re discussing the band’s debut album, ‘The City That Sleeps’, which was released last month on Xtra Mile Records. There is a feeling of musical perfection running through ‘The City That Sleeps’, and we wonder whether Robert has a clear and definite vision of what he wants to achieve when he starts writing a song.

“We all push each other extremely hard in this band; we still have a need to impress upon ourselves first and foremost. We work on the ideal that if it gets us excited, to hell with everyone else.”

AS WELL AS RELEASING their long-awaited album, A Silent Film have just returned to Oxford after supporting multi-million-selling American rockers One Republic on their UK tour and have a few days off before heading off on their own national headline tour.

From an Oxford perspective it’s thrilling to see the band’s efforts coming to fruition like this. Robert, along with guitarist Lewis Jones and drummer Spencer Walker, have more

than earned their dues on the local scene, firstly with pop-punk scamps Shouting Myke, before forming A Silent Film along with bassist Alastair Hussain.

From the very beginning you felt A Silent Film were destined for greater things. The effort they put into their shows, which even in small pub venues would include back projections and TV sets that showed all manner of weird and wonderful imagery, combining with the band’s epic, but intimate pop to blur the lines between music and cinema.

‘The City That Sleeps’ is an astonishingly well crafted album, with an attention to detail and accomplishment you’d expect from a major band making their third album, rather than a debut outing from a still young band, recorded in a local studio. Album producer Sam Williams – who recorded Supergrass’ debut album – has managed to instil A Silent Film’s majestic live power into the record, the band managing to fuse the stadium-filling grandeur of Muse with an artier, narrative approach. Some listeners might point, not inaccurately, to similarities with Keane, mostly due to Robert’s piano lead, but they’re closer to Snow Patrol, or even opulent 80s electro-rockers Ultravox. A Silent Film don’t shy away from painting big pictures, full of bold colours.

‘THE CITY THAT SLEEPS’ IS a superb 45 minutes of finely-

crafted pop that’s at once accessible and radio friendly, but also invested with romantic soul. Robert is understandably proud of the album, which the band began recording last year.

“It’s hard for us to believe but we began recording this album a year ago. We decided to gradually release a few singles over the summer and let people outside Oxford warm up to us before unleashing the album, and it seems to have worked. I wouldn’t change much; we’re extremely proud of what the album represents. Any ideas we have now are already being channelled into album number two, which will not be far away.”

What was it like to work with Sam Williams, something of a cult figure on the Oxford music scene since his time fronting The Mystics in the early-90s?

“A perfect fit, we were very lucky to find a producer whole truly understood where these songs were coming from. Most of the pre-production work on this album was done over a few bottles of wine and a piano, very laid back and stress free.”

Last year A Silent Film signed to independent label Xtra Mile Records, whose roster includes Frank Turner, The Maybes? and Lights. Action, who feature Oxford music alumni Patrick Currier, and whom A Silent Film recently undertook a joint headline UK tour. You’ve been with the label for well over a year now; how has that gone?

Are you happy to stay with them, or could you foresee a situation where a bigger label might come in for you?

“We’re very happy with Xtra Mile; their roster just keeps getting better. Bigger labels are a nightmare right now anyway; they’re all losing money hand over fist and do not seem willing to spend time and money developing artists any more. They either see you doing something exceptional they want, or they see the ‘potential’, which if censored and dressed up smart enough might sell as many records as such and such. We have to earn our stripes first before we ever consider jumping onto that hay-ride.”

A PREVIOUS TRADEMARK OF

A Silent Film’s live shows was Robert’s use of a book onstage whose pages were projected behind the band, telling the stories of the songs as they were sung. The songs on ‘The City That Sleeps’ seem to tell stories rather than simply reflect lyrical emotions. How much inspiration do you get from literature as opposed to other sources?

“There’s a huge influence from films, not so much from literature. Personally I’ve never been a big reader, I find myself drifting off every few paragraphs. I tend to get to the end of a page and realise I’ve not taken anything in and start all over again. I consider myself right at the bottom of the ‘intellectual’ Oxford stereotype.”

If you could write the soundtrack to any film or any book to be made into a film, what would it be?

“It would have to be for one of those late night documentaries about sharks or killer squid. Sam and I share an affinity for marine nature programs but the music is always so dull. Have you ever watched an octopus actually changing colour? Or seen a man induce a 15 foot shark into a catatonic state just by rubbing its nose? This is incredible stuff! I reckon there’s room for some pretty exciting soundtracks there.”

Could you imagine making a concept album with a single narrative thread running through all the songs?

“I doubt it, it sounds like one of those

things that I think would be a great and then everyone else would look at me worryingly. Like the time I took a one hundred and eight year old piano to The Water Rats in London. I thought people would get a kick out of it (nostalgically speaking) but everyone just said '...great gig but your piano sounded like shit tonight'."

Which ASF song would sound best as the soundtrack for *Match Of The Day* highlights?

"Good question; 'You Will Leave a Mark', definitely. Scratch the lyrics, just the piano riff bursting into the band entrance as the ball hits the back of the net. Get in."

THUS FAR A SILENT FILM

have generally had good reaction from the media outside of Oxford. 6Music's Steve Lamacq made them his 'Favourite New Band Of The Week' and 'You Will Leave A Mark' was used by the BBC for an ad campaign. On the flipside, DrownedinSound's review of 'Sleeping Pills' was a pretty petty dismissal of the band.

"What was with that Drowned in Sound review? He must have just got the wrong vibe from that single. I don't mind, I really don't like to read reviews, I have my own opinions and it can be such a distraction. I understand the album has been extremely well received across the board, which is a relief because we like it too. I think that DrownedinSound review was definitely the worst I've read! But feedback on the album has been excellent so we're in high spirits. In 18 months there'll be a new album out and I hope we're as pleased with it as we are with this one."

From the point of view of a band trying to make it in the current music industry climate, what are the main difficulties and what advice would you give to a new, aspiring band looking for a deal?

"Don't look for a deal; write ten times more songs than you think is necessary. Learn your craft and ignore the critics. Never lose sight of why you started making music in the first place, go about things in your own way and if you're good, you might just get by."

You're playing as part of the On A Saturday gig series this month. What do you feel about the local scene, how it's changed in the time you've been involved in it, which local bands if any inspired you and which bands around now take your fancy.

"The On A Saturday gigs are a prime example of how good Oxford music is at the moment, and the great thing is it's not just about the headliners, the support bands are all

excellent as well. If you go to any other city in England I doubt you'll find such a wealth of ambitious musicians, and that's something I don't think will ever change because the precedent has been set by so many good bands. The need to push musical boundaries is at the very core of Oxfordshire music, just look at the recent Foals phenomenon. Right now there are tons of excellent bands; to name two I'd recommend Richard Walters and Jonquil."

IN A MUSIC WORLD increasingly difficult to stand out in, A Silent Film are making progress of the slow and steady variety, building their profile and their following at a natural pace, unhindered by hype or unrealistic expectations. Supporting a band of One Republic's standing will no doubt help up the band's profile even more. How was that and how did you go down with their audience?

"Amazingly well, it was a really mixed audience. Extremely welcoming and up for it, each night we finished our set to a full house and it taught us a lot about playing to a room that size. We brought their guitarist back to Oxford on a day off and showed him some sights; these US rock stars need all the culture they can get."

The tour wasn't without incident, however, notably in Glasgow, which prompted Robert to post an explanation on the band's website. The opening line of 'You Will Leave A Mark' is 'I'm so ashamed of all the trouble I've caused'. Didn't you try and pick a fight with an entire venue full of Scotsmen?

"You're making me sound like a terrible person; I was trying to be affable. We'd just done a radio interview where we were continually referred to as 'southern jessies' by some witty presenter. So I mentioned this on stage and everyone seemed amused so I quickly snuck in the line 'cos you're all northern bastards'. Turns out they were most offended by the 'northern' part."

Elegant and sophisticated A Silent Film's music might be, it's good to know there's still a bit of the Iggy Pop about them. They'll need every scrap of fighting spirit about them if they're to reap the success they so richly deserve.

'The City That Sleeps' is out now on Xtra Mile. A Silent Film headline the Academy on Saturday 22nd November as part of TCT Music and Nightshift's On A Saturday series. Visit www.myspace.com/asilentfilm for news and tour dates.



November

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KILL / TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER / THE PHEES *plus DJs Nell (Trashy) and Beth Lezzard til 2am. £5*

20th **BLAZE BAYLEY** (former-Iron Maiden frontman) *£7 adv from wegottickets.com*

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14th **MOSHKA** presents **THE CHEESEGRATERS** *Includes entry to Backroom Boogie afterwards*

Saturdays

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8th **CHARITY SHOW** with **HELIUM SOUL / FRANKADELIC / BEAVER FUEL / DJs.** *In aid of UVHAA. 8-2am*

15th **OX4** – *Drum'n'bass 9-3am; £6/5*

22nd **REGGAE & SOUL CLUB NIGHT**

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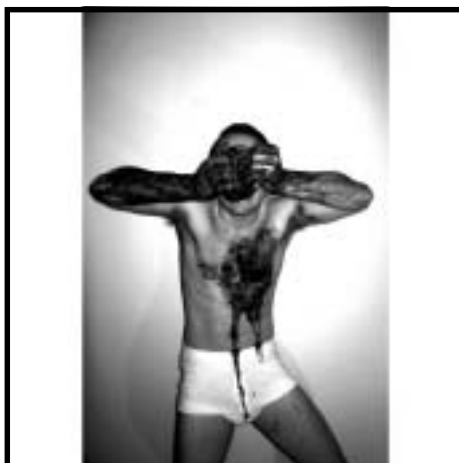
YOUTHMOVIES

'Polyp'

(Blast First)

If nothing else, Youthmovies revel in confounding expectations. Oxford's prime purveyors of convoluted, angular post-rock have recently hooked up with Blast First, a label renowned for abrasive, confrontational bands, for whom they have just released their first EP, so what do we get? Sweet, soft-centred folk-pop that sounds like it'd rather sit dreamily and watch the clouds drift by in the company of Noah & the Whale than soundtrack industrial meltdown with Big Black or Liars. The bleedin' cheek of it!

At least that's the initial impression you get from lead track 'Magic Diamond' as it thrums gently, full of lyrical whimsy, airy horns and cooing female backing vocals. But then at eight minutes long, there's plenty of time to head off in absolutely any direction, Youthmovies being firm believers that why have one idea in a song



when you can have twelve? And so it gradually morphs and meanders into an undulating choral fug by way of Penguin Café Orchestra and Steve Reich, until it bears little resemblance to its opening gambit. It's a hazy, beguiling trip filled with pockets of genuine musical beauty. Even more appealing is their latest

collaboration with Portland, Oregon poet Adam Gnade whose reading, full of subdued hysteria, over an eerily ambient backing injects some urgency into the EP; their collaboration over a full EP last year displayed just how well the two forces can work and it'd be good to hear more of this sort of stuff. EP highlight, though, is Hugo Manuel's remix of 'Magdalen Palace / Golden Palace', where the Jonquil man draws the same lysergic, bleached-out feeling from the track as he does the best of his own band's work.

The EP's title track is as uncharacteristic as the opener, preferring the softly softly approach to their usual angular attack, while lyrics like "I'll bury you with an onion bourbon" (really, we listened back six times to make sure) suggest some kind of magic mushroom involvement.

A typically atypical outing from Youthmovies, then, although as ever there's more than enough to keep us occupied, and their continual musical mutations are admirable compared to the easy rut that too many bands sink into.

Dale Kattack

INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS

'Heart Is Black'

(Planting Seeds)

Okay, quick catch-up for any newcomers: International Jetsetters is the band formed by local singer and guitarist and sometime member of The Jesus & Mary Chain Mark Crozer, along with bassist Bert Audubert and Mark's brother Paul. Joining them is drummer Loz Colbert, Mark's bandmate in the Mary Chain and former sticksman for local legends Ride. More recently they recruited female vocalist Fi McFall. This six-track mini-album for American



label Planting Seeds gathers some early recordings that were previously Nightshift Demo Of The Month along with songs recorded since Fi joined.

Listening to International Jetsetters is like entering an indie trainspotters' paradise with enough great reference points to fill an entire review, but along the way you'll hear snippets of The Wedding Present, The Velvet Underground, Spacemen 3, Ride, Cowboy Junkies, Magoo, Cocteau Twins and Galaxie 500. Often all within the space of a single song. Which isn't to say International Jetsetters are just a rehash of their myriad influences. Opener 'Inside Out' is giddy and fresh, a sunshine blast of coruscating psychedelia, while 'Never Slows Down' finds Fi capturing Liz Frazer's ethereal splendour, the guitars conjuring gorgeous, understated hooks at every turn. 'My Redemption' is smoky, ephemeral and scuzzy all at once, while the album's title track slowly spirals with an almost morbid gravity. The near orchestral crescendo of the original demo version of 'Never Slows Down', with Mark on vocal duties, captures the grandeur of late-80s indie noise, when bands would attempt to build palaces of sound rather than retreat into irony and humdrum slices of life. And for anyone who hankers for such glory days, International Jetsetters might just be here to save music as we know it.

Dale Kattack

DR SLAGGLEBERRY

'Tuc Into The Tar'

(Crash)

Having initially picked Thame's Dr Slaggleberry to play the Oxford Punt back in May it was a disappointment when they went and lost their drummer. Fast forward six months and they've got a new sticksman but seemingly lost their singer. A Shame since his disembodied, middle-distance howl and roar added extra menace to a band whose masked stage presence was already a striking spectacle.

Still, this new three-track EP, taken from a live session the band recorded for Xfm, amply demonstrates the band's main strengths – furious, pin-tight math-metal riffing with a spazz-jazz predilection for signature changes and sharp angles. Many bands play the angular post-whatever card, but Dr Slaggleberry's unrelenting attack marks them out from the pack – full-throttle classic metal riffs, machine-gun drum salvos, occasional Sabbath-like breakdowns, one moment in lead track 'Extra Strength Grandma' that could be prime Dead Kennedys and even the odd dalliance with Weather Report. Okay, we'll forgive them that last one.

It's precision stuff and stands up reasonably well compared to the likes of Rolo Tomassi and Mr Bungle.

Ian Chesterton

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SAT
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RAGGASAUROS

+ GTA
+ Loose Grip

SAT
8 NOV

STORNOWAY

+ Alphabet Backwards
+ Vixens

SAT
22 NOV

A SILENT FILM

+ International Jetsetters
+ Motion In Colour

SAT
29 NOV

THE HALF RABBITS

+ Tristan & The Troubadours
+ Space Heroes Of The People

ZASATURDAY

Five gigs showcasing the best in local talent every Saturday throughout November.

In association with

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Oxford's Music Magazine



GIG GUIDE

Saturday 1st / 8th / 15th / 22nd / 29th

ON A SATURDAY:

The Academy

It says everything about how productive Oxford's music scene currently is that we can host a five-gig series of showcase shows for the best up and coming talent in town and still think of another dozen who could have fitted the bill. Every Saturday in November Nightshift teams up with Oxford's premier gig promoters TCT Music to show off three great local acts. Delicately epic stadium-pop starlets **Winchell Riots** headline the first show, where they're joined by riffs'n'beats post-rock-cum-metal duo **50ft Panda** and electro-noise terrorists **Elapse-O**. The 8th sees another recent Nightshift cover band, **Stornoway**, headlining, with their graceful, poetic folk pop; they are supported by multi-synthed electro-ambience orchestra **The Keyboard Choir** and heart-warming electro-acoustic popsters **Alphabet Backwards**. **Raggasaurus** top a dance-orientated bill on the 15th, with their heady fusion of dub and north African vocals, while freestyle rap duo **GTA** and expansive soul, funk and hip hop collective **Loose Grip**. This month's cover stars **A Silent Film** take time out from a national tour to promote their debut album to top the bill on the 22nd, where they're joined by shoe-gazing sonic architects **International Jetsetters** and emotive 16-year-old singer-songwriter Adam Barnes in his guise of **Motion In Colour**. Rounding off the gig series are gothically-inclined new wave fuzzsters **The Half Rabbits** (*pictured*), along with ace teenage indie newcomers **Tristan & The Troubadours** and electro-krautpop dabblers **Space Heroes Of The People**. A great opportunity to discover some of the best bands Oxford has to offer, on a big stage. Now watch them go.



NOVEMBER

SATURDAY 1st

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + 50ft PANDA + ELAPSE-O: The Academy – First of TCT Music and Nightshift's joint On A Saturday gigs, featuring the cream of Oxford's new musical crop – *see main preview*

FUNERAL FOR A FRIEND + CANCER BATS + ATTACK ATTACK + IN CASE OF FIRE: The Academy – A-list emo heroes, or alternatively, the band formerly known as Bon Jovi, head out on tour in support of new soft rock opus 'Memory And Humanity'. Brutal garage thrash from Cancer Bats in support, plus anthemic stadium rockers In Case Of Fire and Welsh screamo newcomers Attack Attack.

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + THE RUINS + THE HALCYONS: The Wheatsheaf – Rising local starlets bring a little more joy to our lives with their sweet, upbeat synth-pop-cum-indie-folk. Expansive folk-rock from newcomers The Halcyons in support, plus new wave and indie rock from The Ruins.

QUICKFIX OPEN JAM SESSION: The Port Mahon

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy – Weekly three-clubs-in-one session with classic and contemporary indie at Transformation; 80s and trash-pop at Trashy and alternative rock, metal and hardcore at Room 101. **SIMPLE: The Bullingdon** – Funky house club night with Zinc and Surkin.

BOOGIE BUMPS: The Regal – Disco club night.

BANGUNGUT: Baby Simple – World dancefloor beats club, from Cuban hip hop and Rio funk to African house music.

BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – The monthly hip hop club goes head to head with ska and reggae specialists Skylarkin'.

MELTING POT with HELIUM SOUL + THE DACOITS: The Jericho Tavern – Rock, blues and funk from Helium Soul. PJ Harvey-styled rocking from The Dacoits.

ZOMBIE PROM: The Brickworks – Rockabilly, psychobilly, punk and rock'n'roll club session.

SUNDAY 2nd

CAGE THE ELEPHANT: The Academy – Kentucky's swaggering old-fashioned blues and rap-rock hopefuls mix up equal parts Chili Peppers, Reef and Kings Of Leon.

THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE + KYLE + TIRED IRIE: The Regal – Erstwhile Yourcodenameis:milo chap Justin Lockey returns with his neo-prog electro-rock project, set to release the middle part of his thematic album trilogy: ambient cinematic post-rock with careful attention to texture and mood..

THREE DAFT MONKEYS: The Jericho Tavern – Cornish folkies taking inspiration from Celtic, Balkan and Spanish traditional music.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Red Lion, Kidlington

MONDAY 3rd

WHY? + WE AERONAUTS: The Regal – Former-CloudDEAD chap Yoni Wolf brings his innovative folk-pop-hip-hop collective to The Regal, promoting new album 'Alopecia' and offering lysergic folk'n'beats pop with nods to Beck, Eels and beyond.

THE IAN PARKER BAND: The Bullingdon – Raw roots-rock and blues from the Brummie singer and guitarist who has just released his new album, 'Where I Belong', after extensive American and European touring and owing as much to the likes of The Edge and Mark Knopfler as the classic American blues tradition.

RED LIGHT COMPANY: The Academy – London's orchestral, hook-laden indie rockers casting an eye towards Arcade Fire's pop throne with new single, 'Scheme Eugene', following on from a tour support to Editors.

TUESDAY 4th

MARTHA WAINWRIGHT: Oxford Town Hall – Sister of Rufus, daughter of Loudon (and Kate McGarrigle), Martha returns with a new album, 'I Know You're Married But I've Got Feelings Too', taking a break from slugging her old man off (her debut single, 'Bloody Mother-Fucking Asshole' was a sweet-natured tribute to his parenting skills), to explore more traditional love and heartache subjects, her histrionic voice and self-examining style enhanced by guest appearances from Pete Townsend, Garth Hudson and Donald Fagen, while owing plenty to 'Rumours'-era Fleetwood Mac.

ONE NIGHT ONLY + SKINT & DEMORALISED + GENERAL FIASCO: The Academy – Soppo indie balladeering and soft-centred guitar pop from the North Yorkshire teens, somehow finding middle ground between New Found Glory and The Feeling.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz club. Tonight's guests are local guitarist Denny Ilett Jr and singer Lillian Boutte who will be recording a live album.

KAPOW: The Cellar – Indie, electro and pop club night.

WEDNESDAY 5th

ALPHABEAT + DAS POP + PANDERING & THE GOLD-DIGGERS: The Academy – Happy, clappy Danish popsters bring a little X-Factor into indie kids' lives – *see main preview*

PEGGY SUE + JAY JAY PISTOLET + DEREK MEINS: The Regal – Brighton-based girl duo Peggy Sue appear to have dropped their Pirates moniker but still combine to create a sweetly abrasive blend of blues, jazz, acoustic pop and rockabilly, leaning towards the Cat Power and Peggy Lee scheme of things. West London's introverted folk-pop troubadour Jay Jay Pistolet supports.

FIRST SIGNS OF FROST: Fat Lil's, Witney – Grungy, melodic math-rocking from

Buckinghamshire-based newcomers.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

ASYLUM: The Bullingdon – New rock and indie club playing old and new tracks.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep and drum&bass club night.

THURSDAY 6th

BUILT TO SPILL + DISCO DOOM: The Academy – Doug Martsch's psychedelic rockers play the whole of 'Perfect From Now On' – *see main preview*

SKYLARKIN' with HIP-BONE SLIM & THE KNEE-TREMBLERS: The Academy – Classic rockabilly, swamp blues and voodoo garage rocking from Hipbone Slim at tonight's Skylarkin', local rock'n'roll hero Sir Bald Diddle teaming up with Kaisers bassist John Gibbs and drummer Bruce Brand, who's played with everyone from Link Wray to Thee Headcoats and The Milkshakes, together they kick it out as raw and authentic as the 50s originators from whom they take inspiration. Count Skylarkin, meanwhile, spins his trademark mix of classic ska, reggae, soul, funk and rock'n'roll.

RESERVOIR CATS + EASY TIGER + DYING ANIMALS: The Bullingdon – Good-time, heavyweight blues-rocking from local stalwarts Reservoir Cats, plus countrified rocking from Easy Tiger and punk thrash from Dying Animals at tonight's Moshka club night.

ACTION BEAT + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND + EGYPTIAN DEATH: The Cellar – Warm-up for Audioscope with Bletchley's reliably unpredictable no-wave big band, featuring at least four guitars and up to four drummers at any given gig and aiming towards the Glenn Branca and early Sonic Youth scheme of noisy things. Instrumental post-rock from new local supergroup From Light To Sound, featuring members of Sunnyvale, The Workhouse, The Evenings and Thumb Quintet, plus experimental drone noise from Egyptian Death.

THE JAY TAMKIN BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney – British electric blues guitarist in a John Mayer vein.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running open mic club features an eclectic selection of singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists every week.

THE SCARLETTS + ALLEY RATS + THEN WE TAKE BERLIN: The Jericho Tavern – Ska-punk

from The Scarletts somewhere between The Clash, Jilted John and The Selecter, plush full-on thrash punk from Alley Rats and indie rock from TWTB.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 7th

AGGROLITES + THE GRIT + NEW YORK

ALCOHOLIC ANXIETY ATTACK: The Academy – Reggae and ska from LA's Aggrolites, the band formed to back reggae legend Derrick Morgan and who have subsequently gone on to play with Culture and Prince Buster as well as collaborating with Rancid. Punk and rockabilly support from The Grit, plus alt.rock noise from Bradford newcomers NYAAA.

NITIN SAWNEY: The Academy – Kent's Anglo-Asian fusion maestro plays his first Oxford gig in years, set to release a new album, 'London Undersound', still pushing fusion boundaries after his classic 1999 Mercury-nominated 'Beyond Skin'.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with MEPHISTO GRANDE + BLACK HATS + JUNKIE BRUSH + ALEX BITTEN COMPANY: The Wheatsheaf

– Storming southern gothic blues terror from Mephisto Grande at tonight's Klub Kak, with support from melodic 60s-inspired rockers Black Hats and punk fizz from Junkie Brush.

PLUMP DJs: The Regal – Nu-skool breakbeats from Fingerlickin' duo Lee Rous and Andy Gardner.

PISTOL KIXX + SEROTONIN: The Port Mahon – Fast'n'heavy trash-metal and garage punk racket from recent Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers Pistol Kixx.

THE REPEATS + IVAN DOBSKY + BOY DID GOOD + HELEN PEARSON: The Jericho Tavern

THE SCARLETTS + SPIRO SPERO: The Purple Turtle

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Weekly club night playing classic funk, soul and r'n'b.

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

GET DOWN: The Brickworks – Weekly DJ session with a selection of disco, Latin, and funk.

SATURDAY 8th

STORNOWAY + KEYBOARD CHOIR + ALPHABET BACKWARDS: The Academy

– On a Saturday gig with the local folk-pop favourites – *see main preview*

COMPLETE STONE ROSES: The Academy – Tribute to Manchester's finest.

VULTURES + I AM THIEVES + THE REPEATS: The Wheatsheaf – Funky indie punk from Vultures, featuring former members of Raggasaurus, Quarter Finals and Gunbunny, plus alt.rock noise from I Am Thieves and Crowded House-inspired pop from The Repeats.

HELIUM SOUL + BEAVER FUEL + FRANKADELIC: The Bullingdon – Charity gig to help children orphaned by or suffering from AIDS in Africa. Funky blues-rockers Helium Soul headline, plus alternately jangly and punky rockers Beaver Fuel.

THE TEMPTATIONS: The New Theatre – Detroit's Motown legends, still going strong over forty years since their first number 1 hit, 'My Girl'. In fact founder member Otis Williams is still in the group, who have now included over twenty singers through the years. Their classic blend of soul, r'n'b, funk and doo-wop has



Wednesday 5th

ALPHABEAT: The Academy

Testament to the power of great marketing, Denmark's Alphabeat are now the *NME*-endorsed pop-*du-jour*; when in the normal scheme of things they'd be *X-Factor*-produced contenders for the Christmas Number 1 spot. Y'see, not long ago EMI picked up on the band (yes, a real band what play their own instruments and stuff) who'd had a couple of hits in their homeland, and sent out some limited edition albums to assorted cool tastemakers and got the band a handful of small showcase gigs where they could look like, y'know, proper cool indie rock tearaways. And so it came to pass that 'Fascination' (essentially a cross between 'Footloose' and Bowie's 'Let's Dance' as redone by S Club Seven) was a radio hit, chart hit and, gasp, cool indie fanboy hit. Chuck in a cute cover of PiL's 'Public Image Limited', complete with whistling, and the odd nod to Kate Bush, Chic or Men Without Hats and it's a merry old kitsch party triumph. Which isn't to say Alphabeat aren't a whole bucketload of fun, which they can be, and perhaps they can rescue mainstream pop music from its current state of toddler-orientated pap. There is a youthful zest and sincerity about everything they do and maybe they can become a sort of *High School Musical* for the indie massive. Don't go betting against a Christmas Number 1, neither.

gradually made way for a smoother type of r'n'b and the dance routines aren't quite as energetic as they once were but The Temptations remain a byword for male harmony singing.

ABSOLUTE BOWIE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Extensive tribute to the Thin White Duke.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

BODY ROX: The Regal

SUNDAY 9th

ANATHEMA: The Academy – The one-time goth-metal monsters find themselves a long way from their early sound these days, plying a soft atmospheric kind of rock that owes more to mid-70s Pink Floyd

JOHN MARTYN: The New Theatre – A celebratory show for the Scottish folk, blues and jazz innovator who was this year presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards. From his landmark 'Solid Air' album through the experimental indulgences and 80s breakdown chaos, he's somehow survived creatively, if not, sadly, physically, intact, managing to collaborate with the diverse likes of Eric Clapton, Dave Gilmour and Lee 'Scratch' Perry along the way. His trademark slurred vocal



EVOLUTION TATTOO
23A BANBURY ROAD
KIDLINGTON
OX5 1AQ
01865 375085
WWW.EVOLUTIONTATTOO.CO.UK
EMAIL: INFO@EVOLUTIONTATTOO.CO.UK



Thursday 6th

BUILT TO SPILL:

The Academy

Idaho singer and guitarist Doug Martsch is an enigmatic musical contrarian. His initial plan for Built To Spill was to change the band's line-up for every album with him as the only constant. The plan worked for a couple of albums before he relented, although it remains a fluid collective even now. Meanwhile, experience of Built To Spill's live shows suggests a man on a mission to dismantle his art at every opportunity, taking heaven-sent melodies and leaving them bloodied and bruised amid a dizzying mix of complex structures and atmospherics and sheer bloody noise. 1997's 'Perfect From Now On' was the band's major label debut, and tonight's show finds them playing it in its entirety. It's a wonderful record that's easily stood the test of time, inspired by the likes of Neil Young, Pavement and Dinosaur Jr, a likeminded peer of Flaming Lips' 'The Soft Bulletin' and a major influence on bands like The Strokes, Modest Mouse and Death Cab For Cutie. It's an alternately languid and corrosive blend of spiralling psychedelia, grunge, dreamy 60s pop and folk. If it were released today by a new band, it'd be hailed as a masterwork, a classic of modern Americana. Whether Martsch gives two hoots about its limited popular success is debatable; give him his commercial and critical dues he'd doubtless work even harder to mess things up.

style remains undiminished and his back catalogue should get a good airing tonight.

ANDY DE ROSA: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rootsy southern blues-rockers.

BARSTOCK: The Port Mahon

REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar – Reggae and dub club night.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Red Lion, Kidlington

MONDAY 10th

DON CABALLERO + SECOND SMILE +

HREDA: The Regal – Math-rocking *par excellence* – *see main preview*

GILES HEDLEY & THE AVIATORS: The Bullingdon – Midlands-based guitarist, singer and harmonica player and UK blues veteran with a career going back to the 60s. A long-standing favourite on the European blues festival circuit, Hedley's rootsy slide and bottleneck guitar playing, along with his simultaneous mouth and nose harp playing draws on traditional Delta and

Chicago blues, but is given a funky edge by jazz-styled bassist Richard Sadler.

FUCKED UP + LET'S WRESTLE + BETTY & THE WEREWOLVES: The Academy –

Magnificent, orchestral hardcore punk from Pink Eyes, Concentration Camp and the boys – *see main preview*

LACUNA COIL: The Academy – Gothic pop-metal extravagance from Milan's Halloween rockers, playing a one-off headline date in the middle of supporting Bullet For My Valentine, with Cristina Scabbia's soaring vocals contrasting with co-singer Andrea Ferro's hardcore growl over opulent radio-friendly metal.

TUESDAY 11th

LESS THAN JAKE + PEPPER + BEAT UNION + IMPERIAL LEISURE: The Academy –

Punk rock party time ahoy as Florida's poppy ska-punk troupe return to town, now enjoying life on their own record label. Hawaii's reggae, dub and rock outfit Pepper are the main support, along with Birmingham's pop-punkers Beat Union and rap-rockers Imperial Leisure.

MICAH P HINSON: The Academy – Having survived a religious upbringing and a turbulent teenage life that involved drug addiction and jail, Texan songsmith Hinson has plenty to sing about, and he does it with a wonderfully gravelly voice that conveys all the tender sorrow in his grandiose country-rock songs, with occasional echoes of Smog's Bill Callahan

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Keyboard player Howard Peacock and his funky jazz Quintet are tonight's guests.

SIMON & COLIN FLETCHER + MAEVE BAYTON + JON FLETCHER + SAMANTHA TWIGG-JOHNSON: East Oxford

Community Centre – Acoustic night with local folk luminaries.

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial and darkwave club night with DJs Doktor Joy and Bookhouse.

WEDNESDAY 12th

SOILWORK + ONE WAY MIRROR: The Academy –

Melodic, riff-heavy death metal from Sweden's Soilwork, out on a European tour.

LOAD.CLICK.SHOOT + CASSETTES: The Wheatsheaf – Jerky post-punk dance-pop from Devon L.C.S., very much in the vein of Foals and Q & Not U.

BEAVER FUEL + PHANTOM THEORY + THIN GREEN CANDLES: The Port Mahon –

Inconsistent but entertaining punk rocking from Beaver Fuel, plus inventive lo-fi riffage from Phantom Theory and dark-hued electronic experimentation from TGC.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Live jam night with house band.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

ASYLUM: The Bullingdon

THURSDAY 13th

YOUTHMOVIES + ADAM GNADE: The Academy –

The local math-emo post-rock experimental pioneers head out on another national tour, in support of new EP, 'Polyp', where they're joined by Oregon performance poet Adam Gnade, who is also tour support, as well as members of Blanket and 65 Daysofstatic. Simultaneously convoluted, awkward and exhilarating, Youthmovies' current position as

the most influential band in Oxford is in no doubt. **SKYLARKIN with SOULJAZZ SYSTEM: The Academy** – An eclectic mix of soul, Latin, dub, dancehall, hip hop and funk from tonight's guests, Soul Jazz System, the people responsible for the seminal '100% Dynamite' album series.

VAG-ROCK: The Bullingdon – Benefit gig for the Oxford Young Women's Band Project, featuring a celebration of some of Oxford's best female bands and musicians, including the ever-excellent Baby Gravy, dark-minded rockers Courtesy Kill, acoustic duo The Pheebz, plus folky singer-songwriter Tamara Parsons-Baker, plus DJ sets from Nell and Beth Lezzard.

SECRET RIVALS + THE SCARLETTS + INSPECTED BY TEN: The Port Mahon – New local bands night.

MARK ARMSTRONG: The Wheatsheaf – Jazz trumpeter Armstrong plays alongside the Spin house band.

SHE SET SAIL + THE MARMADUKES + FREUDIAN SLIP: The Jericho Tavern – Garage rock and grunge noise from Witney's She Set Sail.

BEELZEBOZO + JUNKIE BRUSH + PHANTOM THEORY: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Heavyweight rock night, with intense metal noise from Beelzebozo, melodic punk thrash from Junkie Brush and barnstorming hardcore riffage from Phantom Theory.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: Fat Lil's, Witney

ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro, bassline and fidget house club night.

FRIDAY 14th

MERCURY REV + HOWLING BELLS: The Academy – Kings of lysergic Americana discover their electronic side – *see main preview*

FLIPRON + MISTY'S BIG ADVENTURE: The Academy – Whimsical Hammond-led psychedelic pop in the vein of Syd Barrett and The Kinks from Glastonbury's Flipron, out on tour with Birmingham's madcap Misty's Big Adventure, Truck Festival favourites over the years with their quirky, vaudevillian orchestral pop and a bloke in a giant costume made of blue rubber gloves.

SLIDE: The Academy – House club night.

THE CHEESEGRATERS: The Bullingdon – Madcap cover version craziness.

QUICKFIX PRESENTS with NOT MY DAY + COP ON THE EDGE + ECHOBOOMER: The Wheatsheaf – Blokish 60s-style harmony rock from Not My Day at tonight's Quickfix presentation, plus London's Devo-ish Cop On The Edge and taut, atmospheric indie types Echoboomer, taking on some Radiohead influences.

SMALL FAKERS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to The Small Faces and Steve Marriot.

AMY BEE + OUTCRY + JULIA MIRIAM

JONES: The Jericho Tavern – Acoustic pop in the style of Dido and KT Tunstall from Amy Bee.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Live jazz dance.

SATURDAY 15th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Jericho Tavern – Kid 606 headlines this year's Shelter benefit mini-festival – *see main preview*

RAGGASAUROS + GTA + LOOSE GRIP: The Academy – TCT Music and Nightshift's On A Saturday collaboration discovers its dance side – *see main preview*

MEPHISTO GRANDE + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS: The Wheatsheaf – The mighty Mephisto Grande delve into the darkest corners of blues, southern gothic country and Beefheartian weirdness.

TROUBLE Vs GLUE: The Cellar – Vacuous Pop presents Italian lo-fi electro-popsters Trouble Vs Glue, coming on like a decidedly wonky collision between Stereolab and Deerhoof.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

STYLE: The Regal – With D Ramirez – Sheffield's veteran DJ and hitmaker Dean Ramirez brings his trademark electrohouse to Style's party.

OX4: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.
EAR-POPPING CANDY: The Port Mahon

Monday 10th

FUCKED UP:

The Academy

Given the incessant, dull drip, drip, drip of plastic, manufactured so-called hardcore coming over the Atlantic in recent years, it's all the more refreshing to welcome a real-deal punk band across the Pond – albeit from Canada. Toronto's Fucked Up aren't legendary quite yet, but they will be in years to come when their name is mentioned alongside Minor Threat and NOFX, from whom they take massive inspiration. The band's stock-in-trade is highly-charged hardcore thrash, sometimes tempered by strings, orchestral guitar arrangements, horns, nods to krautrock or classic British indie, and invested with a raging political heart that resists token sloganeering in favour of dissections of anything from organised religion to the Canadian sex trade. Genuine facts about Fucked Up aren't easy to come by, the band's biographies are full of misinformation and oblique blogs. What we do know is that their singer is called Pink Eyes and can often be found naked and bleeding in the middle of the crowd during their riotous gigs (literally riotous in the case of one impromptu midnight SXSW show). They also released over 25 singles in their first four years together before moving into full albums, the latest of which is the superb 'The Chemistry Of Modern Life', which breathes new life into an often tired genre, recalling the best bits of Killdozer, Minor Threat, Germs and even Crass at times. They're exactly what punk needs right now.



SUNDAY 16th

BETHANY WEIMERS + AIDEN CANADAY: The Port Mahon – Free acoustic gig with dark-hearted local songstress Bethany Weimers and guests, plus an open mic session.

ELLIOT MINOR: The Academy – Former choristers and McFly support band water down the punk-pop blueprint just a little more for the delectation of drooling zombies.

STEPHEN FRETWELL: The Jericho Tavern – The bard of Scunthorpe returns to his solo guise after spending the last few months on tour as part of Last Shadow Puppets. Having spent the past few years supporting everyone from Oasis and Elbow to Keane and KT Tunstall, he should be a bigger star now but his sombre, gravelly, bile-filled acoustic pop perhaps isn't soft-centred enough for mass consumption, although having soundtracked *Gavin & Stacey* with his song 'Run', he's probably better known to people than they realise.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Red Lion, Kidlington

LAB PARTNER: Ultimate Picture Palace (2.30pm) – 75 minutes of experimental filmmakers, animators, musicians, artists, poets and VJs. Including films by Jon Yeo, David O'Reilly and Bleep, and music from Telefon Tel Aviv, David Fenech, Gablé, and many more, in aid of homeless charity Shelter.

MONDAY 17th

AYNSLEY LISTER BAND: The Bullingdon – Heavy duty blues-rock from the acclaimed young British guitarist, equally at home playing it raw and acoustic or pumping it up Hendrix-style on the electric.

TUESDAY 18th

LADYTRON + ASOBI SEKSU: The Academy – Gig of the year? Gig of every year since time began? Quite possibly – *see main preview*

THE DRESDENS + APOLOGIES I HAVE

NONE: The Wheatsheaf – Blitzkrieg garage metal from the heart of the sun from The Dresdens.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With jazz guitar-led guests The Howard Turner Band.

MIS-SHAPES: The Cellar – Indie club night.

WEDNESDAY 19th

THE VIEW + HOLY GHOST REVIVAL: The Academy – Dundee's indie rockers return with the follow-up to their debut 'Hats Off To The Buskers' debut, hoping to emulate the success of singles like 'Wasted Little DJs' and radio hit 'Same Jeans'. Washington State rockers Holy Ghost Revival support.

ANATHALLO: The Regal – Michigan's expansive, celebratory folk-infused pop wonders make their first trip to Oxford, promoting new album, 'Canopy Glow' and armed with an anthemic, orchestral form of pop that treads close to Sufjan Stevens and Broken Social Scene.
JAMES MORRISON: The New Theatre – A man who won a Brit Award last year for Best Male Solo Artist after someone mistook the word woeful for soulful.

PAPIER TIGRE + SHIELD YOUR EYES + THEO: The Wheatsheaf – Another quality night of leftfield sounds from Poor Girl Noise, with Nantes' Papier Tigre mixing up a well of metallic post-hardcore, psych-rock and jazz, somewhere between Can, Fugazi and At The



Monday 10th

DON CABALLERO:

The Regal

Probably the definitive math-rock band, although they always disowned the tag, Pittsburgh's Don Caballero have always been more influential than commercially successful and there are a good few bands in Oxford who'll be lurking near the front of tonight's gig to see just how they do it. Of course the current incarnation of the Cabs isn't the one which made landmark albums like 1998's 'Whatever Burns Never Returns'. Only drummer Damon Che remains from the original line-up, although there has always been a fluid personnel, even before their 2000 split, after which guitarist Ian Williams went on to form Battles. It was his unique guitar style, along with Che's flamboyant, unorthodox drumming that made Don Caballero's reputation with their five albums on Touch And Go Records through the 90s, fusing elements of jazz, post-rock, metal and contemporary classical music into a complex, intricately-scored, multi-sectioned instrumental whole. Having recruited a new band around him, many from bands originally inspired by The Cabs, Che continues to take centre stage, his fervent mix of Keith Moon, Stewart Copeland and John Bonham dominating the guitars. It's not easy music to listen to by any means but as a lesson in how to defy rock's fundamental rules, it remains a peerless spectacle.

Drive-In, while Shield Your Eyes give it some in the angular, wired math-rock stakes. One-man band Theo recalls Battles and The Mars Volta with his experimental loops and beats.

MURCOF + OREN MARSHALL: The Holywell Music Room – Mexican composer Murcof performs as part of Oxford Contemporary Music's autumn season, mixing brooding electronics with contemporary classical sounds, including live brass, strings and woodwind sections, with visuals from Italian artists xx +xy. Pioneering electric tuba player Oren Marshall, meanwhile, mixes up jazz, classical and world music with an improvised approach to performance.

REIGN UPON US: The Port Mahon – Free showcase gig featuring local metal acts.

FOX CUBS + THE WIRELESS + VIXENS + UTE: The Jericho Tavern – Reading's indie rock hopefuls Fox Cubs take inspiration from The Killers and The Cure.

WORSMITH: Folly Bridge Inn – Laid-back London rapper out on tour.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple



Friday 14th

MERCURY REV:

The Academy

Like any great road movie, Mercury Rev's story takes all manner of plot twists while always capturing the cinematic open spaces of the world they travel through. From the chaos, addiction, violence and near collapse of their early days to the glorious rebirth with 'Deserter's Songs' and beyond, New York State's cosmic dreamers have never let the grass grow under their feet. And so, ten years after that landmark album, which saw the band instated as leaders of modern day Americana, and bassist Dave Fridmann crowned most in-demand rock producer on the planet, The Rev find themselves exploring more new ground. With 'Snowflake Midnight' they've almost completely dispensed with guitars and drums in favour of free-to-use online electronics programmes and beats and lyrically descended into existentialism. While their stock in trade remains a spaced-out, star-gazing form of psychedelia and sumptuous classic orchestral rock, now they're referencing Michael Nyman, Brian Eno and Neu!. Mercury Rev's last headline show in Oxford saw them eclipsed by the support band, a certain Flaming Lips, but the cluttered prog noodling of that show is gone now and they're doing what they do best, creating delicately huge, chemically-altered music that wonders at the beauty of butterfly wings, squirrels and snowflakes while sounding like it could eat the cosmos. Whatever the path they choose, that is the simple beauty they always carry with them.

ASYLUM: The Bullingdon

FREE RANGE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 20th

NME ROCK'N'ROLL RIOT with PRIMAL SCREAM: The Academy – Our love-hate relationships with Bobby Gillespie and co. continues as the Primals ride back into town for their first Oxford gig in over five years, and it feels like a very, very long time since the great 'XTMNT'. More recently we've had to endure the disappointing 'Riot City Blues' and this year's eclectic but unconvincing 'Beautiful Future', with its mix of krautrock, gospel, Fleetwood Mac and traditional Stones-y rocking. You wish they'd get back to doing what they're best at – ripping off Suicide – and Gillespie would stop with his 6th-form political diatribes and lyrics. Revolutionary rhetoric always sound a bit fake coming from a middle-aged man more commonly sighted mixing with the great and the good at art exhibitions than manning the barricades in Peckham.

THE WHIP: The Academy – Manchester's electro-pop indie dance revivalists take note of their home city's musical legacy, owing much to New Order and Happy Mondays, but with a fresh dancefloor-friendly pop twist.

SKYLARKIN with DJ WRONGTOM: The Academy – Not a faulty sat-nav system, but south London DJ and Hard-Fi's in-house remixer is tonight's guest DJ at Skylarkin's weekly club night. He'll be spinning a mix of post-punk, hip hop and reggae, alongside Count Skylarkin's regular ska, reggae, soul and funk set.

BLAZE BAYLEY: The Bullingdon – The former-Wolfsbane and Iron Maiden frontman returns to action with his new band, taking a darker metal path to his Maiden work.

THEO TRAVIS: The Wheatsheaf – Spin jazz club with progressive jazz flautist and saxophonist Theo Travis.

VULTURES + CAT MATADOR: The Cellar

FRANKIE'S WHISKY NIGHT: The Port Mahon – Relaxing night of single malt-infused music.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 21st

SHOW OF HANDS: The Academy – Steve Knightley and Phil Beer – recently voted Greatest Ever Devonians, ahead of Sir Francis Drake – celebrate 18 years together on the road, displaying their virtuoso style of traditional acoustic folk.

JAMES YORKSTON + PICTISH TRAIL + ROZI PLAIN: The Bullingdon – Charming, witty and unassuming folk from Scottish troubadour and Fence Collective member (alongside KT Tunstall and the Beta Band amongst others), Yorkston, a master of romantic, early-hours confessionals and, in his time, tour support to everyone from Bert Jansch to John Martyn as well as collaborating with Four-Tet. Fence founder Pictish Trail supports, making his first forays into playing his own songs, lo-fi folk-pop that sees the light of day on debut album 'When The Laar Rolls In'.

LEGO CASTLES + VIXENS + WE DO KUNG-FU: The Wheatsheaf – Swiss Concrete club night with Bath's fluffy, lo-fi indie-synth-poppers Lego Castles coming on in a Los Campesinos vein, while Hereford's We Do Kung Fu offer frantically twee electro-punk-pop in an 80s style.

THE REYNERS + EXIT TEN + SPIRO SPERO: The Port Mahon

DEFT LEPPARD: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to the gazillion-selling heavy rockers.

OUTRAZE + JOE PARKER & THE MIGHTY

POW + THE LATE GREATS + RAGTIME

EWAN: The Jericho Tavern

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

FRESH OUT OF THE BOX: The Cellar – House, breaks and techno club night.

SATURDAY 22nd

ASILENT FILM + INTERNATIONAL

JETSETTERS + MOTION IN COLOUR: The Academy – This month's Nightshift covers stars headline tonight's On A Saturday gig – *see main preview*

AIRBOURNE + STONE GODS + SOUND & FURY: The Academy – Quite a night for classic heavy rock with Australia's no-frills power rockers showing why they've supported the likes of Motley Crue and The Rolling Stones in recent

years. Former-Darkness chaps Stone Gods return to town, bringing together classic rock and metal sounds from the past 30 years.

STYLE: The Regal – Freestylers mix up funky and hard house, hip hop and breaks, while veteran Radio 1 DJ Annie Nightingale brings her signature breakbeat tunes.

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + CHALK: The Wheatsheaf – Luxurious rootsy rock and Americana from the unassumingly excellent Shaker Heights.

THE DELTA FREQUENCY + ELAPSE-O + PHANTOM THEORY: The Cellar – Electro-glam stomping from The Delta Frequency, plus experimental noise from Elopse-O and riff-heavy lo-fi rocking from Phantom Theory.

KING EARL BOOGIE BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney – Blues rock and boogie, featuring former members of Status Quo and Mungo Jerry.

THREE BLIND MICE PRESENTS: The Port Mahon – Three live bands for three quid. Simple, eh?

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy

REGGAE & SOUL CLUB NIGHT: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 23rd

IDA MARIA: The Academy – The Norwegian songstress, and contender for the title of Young Female Iggy Pop, returns to town, now riding high on the back of sexy hit 'I Like You Better When You're Naked', musically coming on a bit like Björk fronting The Strokes with her idiosyncratic, poppy take on garage-punk, but live possessed of a great, unpredictable performing nature.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Red Lion, Kidlington

REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar

MONDAY 24th

FINCH + SHADOWS CHASING GHOSTS: The Academy – California's emo popularisers Finch return from their two-year hiatus and head back off on the road

BIG DEZ BAND: The Bullingdon – Rocking Texas-style blues from Parisian singer and guitarist Phil Fernandez and band, paying tribute to Alberts Collins and King.

TUESDAY 25th

DIONNE WARWICK: The New Theatre – The soul, r'n'b and lounge-pop legend runs through nearly 50 years of hitmaking.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With a live set from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

KAPOW: The Cellar

WEDNESDAY 26th

TASTE MY EYES + BLACK SKIES BURN + VISION FALL: The Port Mahon – Triple bill of local metal and hardcore talent play a free showcase gig.

MY AMERICAN HEART: The Academy – San Diego's pop-punk favourites.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Temple

ASYLUM: The Bullingdon

THURSDAY 27th

SKYLARKIN with MAX ROMEO + RAGGASAUROS: The Academy – Jamaican legend Max Romeo make a return visit to Skylarkin'. Best known in the UK for his solitary

Top 10 hit in 1969, 'Wet Dream', an innuendo-laden novelty that made the most of a radio ban. But his best work was in the 70s when he teamed up with Lee 'Scratch' Perry, notably on the now legendary 'War Ina Babylon'. One of reggae's most influential singers, Romeo has covered most styles of reggae in his time and is widely regarded as a true

Saturday 15th

AUDIOSCOPE: The Jericho Tavern

Since its inception, Audioscope's annual fundraising mini-festival has raised almost £20,000 for homeless charity Shelter. Just as important, on a different level, is its continuing showcasing of the best underground, leftfield and downright maniacal music talents from around the world. Last year's show, featuring krautrock legends Rother and Möbius, as well as Einstellung and the incredible Shit & Shine was easily the best gig of 2007, and if this year's event takes place in the more intimate setting of the Jericho, the quality is typically high and varied. Headliner is San Francisco-based Venezuelan DJ and producer **Kid 606**, out in a class of one in the genre of glitchy, hardcore techno death metal breakcore. He paints from a broad canvas and can be hit or miss but with a grounding in doom metal and industrial noise, his take on DIY electro is unique and often visionary. Joining him on today's bill are Leeds' angular, sludgy math-core riffmongers **That Fucking Tank**, who belie their sparse two-piece set-up with a big, big noise. Then there's **The Oscillation**, who mix spooked psychedelia with eerie, ambient electronics and folky space-rock; Belfast's dark, eerie dubstep leader **Boxcutter**; **Hey Colossus**, with an eye-of-the-storm brand of sheet metal noise and lupine howling; Bristol's french-horn-led seven-piece **Soeza**, coming on like a cute Sweep The Leg Johnny, plus former-Komakino people **You Animals**, bringing a little melodic respite with their spiky indie-punk. Holding up the Oxford side of things are gorgeous, melancholic popstrels **Witches**; ethereal post-rock soundscapists **The Workhouse** and of course Audioscope hosts and electro-hellmongers **Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element**. A day of great musical challenges then, but also sublime pleasures.

godfather of Jamaican music. The Prodigy extensively sampled him, while Madness covered him on their 'Dangermen Sessions'. Local Arab-dub reggae faves Raggasaurus support, while Count Skylarkin' spins ska, soul, reggae, funk and rock'n'roll classics.

JUNKIE BRUSH + DEDLOK + THE

CRUSHING: The Bullingdon – Moshka goes heavy with melodic thrash-punkers Junkie Brush, metalcore monster Dedlok and The Crushing, featuring former members of Near Life Experience.

JOHN DONALDSON: The Wheatsheaf –

McCoy Tyner-influenced pianist Donaldson is the guest at tonight's Spin jazz club.

YOUNG PLAYTHINGS: The Port Mahon – Sunshiny power-pop.

THE MANACLES OF ACID: The Jericho Tavern – Analogue synth craziness.

WILL YOUNG: The New Theatre – No, we still can't find it in ourselves to forgive him for that version of 'Light My Fire'. Yeah, we'll light a fire, mate. Under your bed while you're asleep in it.

MARIANA MAGNAVITA + HADAR MANOR:

Baby Simple – Sweet, soulful acoustic pop from the local Latino songstress.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: Fat Lil's, Witney

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 28th

THE TRAVELLING BAND: The Cellar –

Rootsy Americana and bucolic psychedelia from Manchester's answer to Goldrush.

THE CHRISTIAN WALLUMROD ENSEMBLE:

Holywell Music Room – OCM present the Nordic jazz man.

QUEEN OF CLUBS CABARET: Isis Tavern

Iffley Lock – Live music and cabaret including slam-poet punk-funk collective Inflatable Buddha, plus singer and double bassist Susanna Starling.

THE PURPLE PROJECT: Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic Deep Purple covers.

THE JOHN OTWAY BIG BAND: The Jericho

Tavern – The Clown Prince of punk and rock and roll's self-proclaimed greatest loser returns with more madcap stunts and musical silliness.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 29th

THE HALF RABBITS + TRISTAN & THE

TROUBADOURS + SPACE HEROES OF THE

PEOPLE: The Academy – Last of this month's On A Saturday series of local showcase gigs with dark-minded indie rockers Half Rabbits headlining – see main preview

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with

EUHEDRAL + SEMAPHORE + DEATH OF A

SMALL TOWN: The Wheatsheaf – Reliably

mixed bag at tonight's GTI with minimalist electronic experimentation, loops, drones, glitches and effects from Euhedral, plus Americanised folk from Semaphore and theatrical pop from DOAST. **NINE-STONE COWBOY + BLACK POWDER + DEDLOK + TWAT DADDIES + THE OX4**

ALLSTARS: The Port Mahon – Epic but personal indie rocking from NSC, plus hardcore punk from Black Powder and metalcore from Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers Dedlok.

THE RIFLES: The Academy – More Jam-



Tuesday 18th

LADYTRON / ASOBI SEKSU: The Academy

What a double bill. What a double bill! This has every potential to be gig of the year, and maybe gig of several years to come. Nightshift's favourite band on the planet, Ladytron, are so cool they could reverse global warming just by looking at it. Within their steely, detached machine pop beats a very human heart; one that just wants to dance, dance and dance some more. Having taken their cues from Kraftwerk, The Normal, Gary Numan and John Foxx, and added some soul by way of Helen Marnie and Mira Aroyo's seductive android vocals, they're retro-futurist perfection personified. From their 2001 debut album, '604', through to this year's 'Velocifero', they've continued to evolve and augment their classic analogue synth sound with live guitar and drums, while retaining an otherworldly presence. Really, it doesn't matter how forward thinking any sci-fi authors might be, they couldn't have envisaged futuristic music as great as Ladytron.

On any other occasion, New York's Asobi Seksu would stars of the show: their last visit to town a year ago displayed a band with a playful grasp of pop power with few equals, a shoegazing, electro-rocking storm of noise with a fragile songbird in the form of Japanese vocalist Yuki Chikudate at its heart. Unashamedly in thrall to My Bloody Valentine and Sonic Youth, they're a riot of glitter, shrapnel and raw fuzz and you *will* love them. God, we're excited!

indebted Britpop revivalism from the Walthamstow crew.

DJ SPOONY: The Regal – Former Radio 1 and Dreem Team garage champion, turned 6-0-6 presenter continues his live DJing duties, plus sets from FM 107.9's Spex, Archie Bizzle and Darren D. **TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: The Academy**

PHISH: The Bullingdon – 90s pop, rock and indie club night.

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass session.

SUNDAY 30th

COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES +

ARCHIE: The Wheatsheaf – Melodic punk-pop and post-hardcore.

BIG BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney – Monthly open blues jam session with in-house band. All welcome.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Red Lion, Kidlington

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LIVE

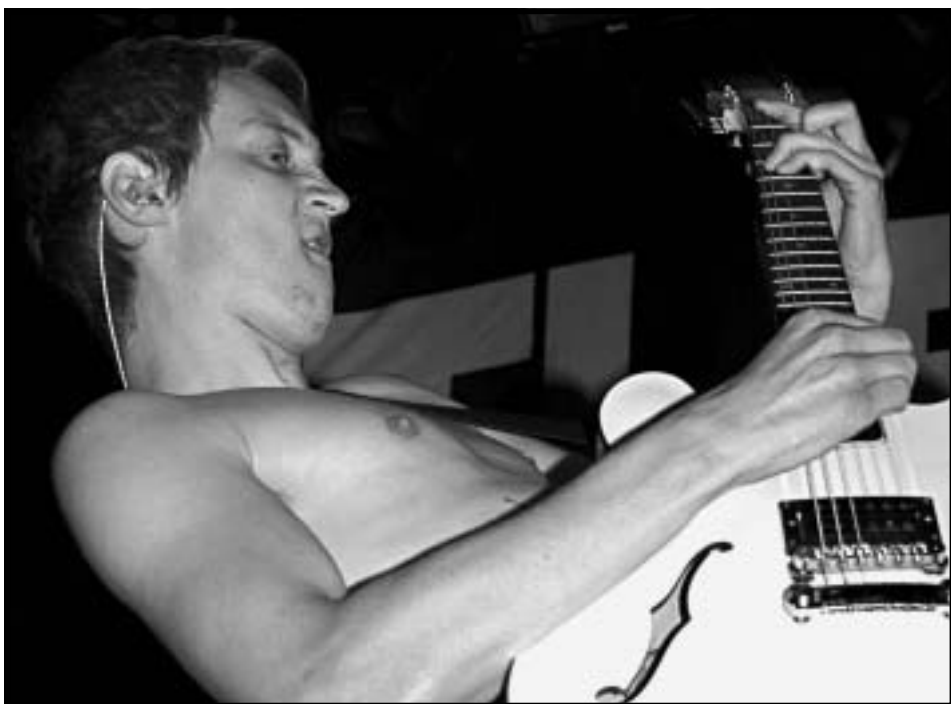
THE SUBWAYS

The Academy

I wasn't really expecting to like The Subways. The Welwyn Garden City trio's debut album, 'Young for Eternity', was released in 2005 and completely passed me by in the flurry of mid-2000s post-punk garage rock and bands with plural names all starting with 'The'. Since then however, singer and guitarist Billy Lunn and bassist Charlotte Cooper have split up, Billy's had nodules on his vocal chords and they've recorded a second album in LA with Butch Vig. All these things have influenced the result, this year's 'All or Nothing', a record which has made me regret my indifference.

Tonight's set neatly highlights the contrast between the first and second albums. The audience favourite 'Oh Yeah', the epic 'With You' and the 60s-esque dollop of Ash-like nostalgia that is 'Mary' are more lyrically naïve, whereas the new album's 'Kalifornia' and current single 'Shake! Shake!' demonstrate some social awareness; introspection is everywhere, especially on 'Always Tomorrow' and the more acoustic 'Strawberry Blonde'.

Butch Vig's production has resulted – or maybe coincided – with a heavier sound; free download single 'Girls and Boys' is the heaviest they get tonight, though they never sacrifice a tune for noise.



There's no lack of energy either; Billy obviously thinks he'd be too hot if he wore a top, which lends him a slightly dodgy Iggy Pop vibe, and Charlotte's hairdo takes quite a thrashing. The pair obviously still share a certain synergy; their voices complement each other sweetly and they look to be at ease with each other professionally, which is heartening in the resentment- and anger-filled world of rock.

They finish with 'Rock & Roll Queen', a three-year-old song which must be their best known,

by virtue of its (and the band's) appearance in this year's Guy Ritchie film, *Rocknrolla*. It's anthemic and catchy – and ticks all the popularity boxes while not really being structurally, musically or lyrically their best hour. Their extended performance of it allows Billy the opportunity to crowd surf and orchestrate a deafening screaming competition between both halves of the audience, which goes on for ages and leaves everyone on a high.

Kirsten Etheridge

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS/JONQUIL

The Academy

The Academy is bulging. Full upstairs and down, so I get snarled up in the snaking queue outside the ticket booth and miss the first part of This Town Needs Guns' set. Two minutes after pressing into the wall of bodies at the rear of the hall I can't say I mind

Gone is TTNG's 2006 wide-screen lushness, and in has come the anally math-y, Steve Hackett-like guitar noodle of the age with its attendant scuttling drum shuffle. It's jazzy, even proggy, with its tight time changes and has musos in the crowd nodding approval to each other in the darkness. Stuart Smith's vocals, once soaring wings on wind currents, is now buffeted by the turbulent music into the needling whine of a teenager who has chores to do round the house. They sign off to their biggest cheer with '26 Is Dancier Than 4', which distils all the pretensions of the above into something memorable, but already I've forgotten what it is.

I like Jonquil a lot. But what is it with Oxford bands and trumpets? I can quickly count seven in my head, and the solitary brass motif in each is now beginning to make them all sound like Lemon Jelly's 'Nice

Weather For Ducks', and no longer eclectically original. But, as I say, I like the way Jonquil have moved on up from being a wheezy, open-mic night collective to a fully-muscled band, jostling for their second division place in the mainstream-crossover league vacated by Elbow's recent move to the Premiership.

Like Ewan McColl morphing into Stephen Bishop or Christopher Cross, they have a real Disney shine about them tonight. They still need to sort out the knotty problem of song structure though, as their best and most inventive ideas, like 'Parasol', bloom excitingly for a minute or so, then annoyingly wither on the vine. Even more annoying is if they do try to extend them, all they can come up with is for the whole band to sing (and bear with me on this) "Woouoo -Ah, Woouoo-Ah, Woouooeee-AAHHH". Repeat this five times, in each of three different songs. Come on boys, if you have the radical genius to rhyme the word Castles with Arseholes, then you can do a lot better than stand there, short changing us, like Brian Wilson and the English Beachboys.

Paul Carrera

ALAN TYLER & THE LOST SONS OF LITTLEFIELD / THE MARMADUKES

The Bullingdon

The Marmadukes give tonight's show a high-energy start, playing four or five numbers without a break that lifts the atmosphere immediately. With a pedal steel guitar laying down some complex ethereal runs against a hard-driving bass and drums, and plaintive riffs on trumpet (think mariachi plus Miles Davis influence), their alt-country rock style has a pleasing otherworldliness. Tom from the Roundheels makes a welcome re-appearance and his banjo playing adds a touch of class but it's a pity that the sax sound of their other guest, Gerry, is largely inaudible. Vocalist, songwriter and main man Nick is confident and relaxed and this helps the band, as well as the crowd, enjoy the gig. I like Nick's slightly strangled back-of-the-throat vocal sound and tonight you can hear more of the words. The Marmadukes might never become regular headliners but they're well worth their place on tonight's ticket.

Alan Tyler and the Lost Sons of Littlefield look a bit bedraggled and worn but seem very comfortable

with it, rather like the Backroom at the Bully where they quickly sound right at home. Though the songs are mainly the usual alt-country mix of loneliness, pain, yearning and stiff upper lips ('Cowboys Don't Cry') tonight's set is more upbeat and spreads more warmth than when the band were last sighted at the Jericho. Tyler's lived-in, lilting voice is beguiling and the rest of the band are quality and make you think there are far more of them. The fiddle sometimes has me looking for a harmonica player, and the lead guitar for a pedal steel. And then there are the moves the bass player makes, which would be naff if made by someone lacking his class.

Thankfully a raid, which goes unnoticed by those doing *faux* line dancing down the front, from a hygiene hit squad accompanied by PC Plod doesn't find any bugs on the Bully's pint glasses, so the gig doesn't suffer an early close. The band and the crowd are able to carry on creating much mutual enjoyment.

Colin May

THE LAST DANCE / SCREAMING BANSHEE AIRCREW

The Cellar

Every second Tuesday of the month Intrusion provides a suitably subterranean sanctuary for local goth fans. Tonight the club hosts California's leading darkwave proponents The Last Dance, who have headlined the Witby goth weekend, along with Leicester's fantastically-monikered Screaming Banshee Aircrew.

The Aircrew are a motley bunch but they have a bit character and colour, and a sense of humour. Although our view of the expansive line-up is obscured by the huge plume of peacock feather attached to the woman in front of us, we're quickly reminded of 80s pop-inclined gothsters The March Violets, mostly due to the male-female vocal interaction. But it's the Princess Leia look-alike on violin that makes the band, adding an edge to their best songs, which lean towards Virgin Prunes' sleazy dark rock. They spoil it a bit by being rather too cheery between songs and also by sounding worryingly like Chumbawamba for a while, but the Cramps-y gothabilly number that closes their set finds them redeemed.

The Last Dance are more the typical face of contemporary dark rock, gruff, growly and synth-heavy. Initially they sound like a hardbeat take on Depeche Mode, or The Cure all mixed up with Cassandra Complex, spidery atmospherics rubbing up against propulsive beats. It's imposing stuff, but after a while it heads up a blind alley. Playing over an hour, you start to wish they'd adopt some of Screaming Banshee Aircrew's personality. But perhaps showing your human side is anathema to their whole philosophy. And on a night when this reviewer's dark grey jacket is the lightest colour in the house, such black-hearted showmanship is very much the order of the day.

Ian Chesterton

RACHEL UNTHANK & THE WINTERSET / NANCY ELIZABETH

The Holywell Music Room

Tonight's Holywell concert is another typically inspired and astute piece of programming by Oxford Contemporary Music, pairing Mercury Prize nominees Rachel Unthank and the Winterset with Manchester singer/songwriter Nancy Elizabeth in an evening of folk and I guess what is called post-folk.

Nancy Elizabeth lays her vocal ability and artistic integrity on the line straight away, walking onstage and effortlessly singing a beautiful Spanish song *a cappella*. Her voice is wonderful - clear as a bell and stunning in range and emotional compass while retaining all the character of her northern roots. Beyond the disarming modesty of her stage presence, her songs have real depth and imagination. The folk idiom is never really completely passed over but she sometimes edges it into territory of PJ Harvey, and even fellow Mancunians Joy Division in the dark power of 'The Canopy to Fall'. 'Coriander' is a love song on a merry-go-round of gentle surrealism while she ends the set with an older song, 'I Used to Try', which, with its characterful message of self-belief and self-determination, seems as good a personal manifesto as any.

Riding high on the crest of their Mercury Prize exposure, Rachel Unthank and the Winterset have predictably made this gig a sell-out. They're an all-female group featuring the two Unthank sisters, Becky and Rachel, on vocals, along with Steph Conor on piano and Niopha Keegan on

fiddle. The sisters' Northumbrian heritage and character is at the heart of what they do and communicate, from the traditional songs they remake to the warmth and fun of their interaction with the audience.

Rachel's name has the high profile but Becky has at least as evocative and moving a voice.

They play most of the material from the acclaimed album 'The Bairns', plus a haunting, unaccompanied song from the Shetlands in the ancient Norn language. But the songs that work best are not always the ones you'd expect. A whirling take on Jacques Brel's 'Amsterdam' is a bit too obvious in its histrionics, while Robert Wyatt's excellent 'Sea Song' comes across as rather leaden. But there are many special moments. 'Blackbird' is a lovely song, penned by song-writer pianist Belinda O'Hoolley whose playing and writing contributed so much to the atmosphere of the 'The Bairns'. Most stunning of all is 'Newcastle Lullaby', sung in a round by all four band members which is mesmerising in its control and beauty. Part of this group's quality is that rare ability to make folk sound contemporary and relevant and yet still wear their heart on their sleeves. They encore with 'Farweel Regality', which fairly drips with sentiment - a sort of Northumbrian 'Auld Lang Syne' - but cynicism doesn't have much place here tonight and in the end you can't help feeling your heart strings pulled.

Steve Thompson

ROOTS MANUVA

The Academy

For all of the genre-hopping, multifaceted production evident across Roots Manuva's four albums, he's become a huge presence on the UK hip hop scene as much through force of personality as anything else. Affable, conversational and self-deprecating ('I'm just a UK black making UK tracks', he understates on 'Colossal Insight'), it's Rodney Smith who shines through the Roots Manuva persona. His laconic delivery, charisma and refreshing lack of posturing make him one of the most engaging presences in UK hip hop.

Happily, this translates in his live show, with Smith predisposed to throw witty asides in amongst his weightier observations, and content to throw some pantomime-style fun and games amongst his more than accomplished MCing. He ends with a hands-in-the-air singalong of 'Dreamy Days', turning it into a strange mixture of breathy, introspective hip hop and West End musical show-stopper. He even tries to make us believe that there will be no 'Witness', and that, yes okay, he'll do it just this once, but just for us because we're a special audience. What a card.

Yet despite the undoubted quality of the music and Smith's engaging, genial personality, the live show still leaves something to be desired. Other than Manuva, the remaining assortment of MCs, backing singer and two token bobbing blokes behind decks and samplers don't offer much to hold the attention. What's more, the sound system lets the side down on a few occasions, overemphasising the throb of the low end: much of the sparkle and detail of the excellent, meticulously-detailed production is completely lost in the squelchy morass of the PA. All of which means that it's even more important for Manuva's personality to carry the show through - thankfully a task he's more than up to.

Stuart Fowkes



Oxford Contemporary Music

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MAPS & ATLASES

The Regal

Tonight has already been complicated, but forgetting about work, trying to find food and leaving a student night that weirdly featured no students behind, we find ourselves at The Regal negotiating a bar that curiously features no alcohol.

Maps & Atlases have just taken the stage and just looking at their fingers brushing across the fretboards of their guitars is kind of intimidating. It would appear those complications have manifested themselves in the band. They play in a way that would make accomplished guitarists unplug and give up. Remember Eddie Van Halen's fingertapping tricks? Maps & Atlases do that kind of thing for the whole set, and Dave Davison does it whilst singing – it's mind boggling to watch. But here's the thing: there is nothing in the slightest bit flashy about them. They might be technical, but it's not for show. The multiple notes and harmonics they throw out are vital for the delicate make up of their songs. Although many would rush to package them up in a neat little box labelled math-rock, that's far too easy. Certainly there are math

elements to their sound, which at times is angular and frequently changes tempo, direction and feel. But there is so much more going on. Sometimes they disappear into peculiar little jazz avenues only to reappear surfing a wave of irresistible pop.

Sometimes Maps & Atlases feel like they're jamming on ideas, at others they feel like they're sticking rigidly to a typically expansive formula and pattern that must never be strayed from. At the centre of all these ideas is the one constant that are Davison's vocals, which are always steeped in caution and uncertainty. Highly pitched and at times apathetic, these sometimes mechanical songs are lent a human element by Davison which gives them an almost childlike fragility.

There's a lot of talk about the band mixing up the organic and inorganic sounds, but tonight proves that pondering and thinking about this kind of music is basically a waste of time. Beneath all the complexities and techniques lies a bunch of songs that speak to the part of you that responds to sound on a primal level. A complex night just got a lot easier.

Sam Shepherd



photo: Sam Shepherd

ARCTIC CIRCLE / WINSTON ECHO / THE MOUNTAIN PARADE

The Port Mahon

Tonight sees the welcome return of MyAnalog as a promoter, for how long or how frequently is anyone's guess, but it's good to have them back, however fleetingly.

The Mountain Parade number nine or ten tonight, which is far more people than they actually need to create the noise they do, but it's all part of the fun watching them squeeze onstage. It takes a couple of songs for them to get into their stride, but when they do it's delightful stuff. It's the horn section that makes the songs special, cushioning the tunes and gently ushering them along. This is over-populated folk-pop at its best; they have some cracking tunes of which 'Shackleton Bewley' and the climatic 'Skyscraper' are the best.

Winston Echo is a funny fellow. Rather sweet and bewildered onstage, yet slightly terrifying off it. You wouldn't imagine such a frail yet tender voice to come out of such a man, but it does. Singing his set off mic makes people pay more attention and renders things

still more lo-fi. He's a troubadour with a funny tale to tell and some deft, witty lyrics. 'Bureau de Change' proves the highlight and provokes a singalong and to quote the man himself, he really is a "millionaire in yen".

Arctic Circle have a lot to follow, but trump the lot. They're nowhere near as lo-fi as I expected, but exuberant, funny and multi-faceted. Sometimes they're a little like Los Campesinos! with the more irritating bits taken out. Other times they're layering loads of noise over the end of a song. The other thing that sets them apart is that usually acts with two vocalists have one that's noticeably stronger than the other, but not in this case. They swap over regularly and seamlessly; he more laid back and tender, she more hyper and excitable. They make the kind of crazed, ramshackle pop that sounds like pots and pans rattling in a kitchen too close to the railway line as a train goes past. They make me smile, which is the best thing of all.

Russell Barker

HOT LEG

The Academy

With a name that's presumably a euphemism and lyrical hooks such as "I want to do it in the dark", Hot Leg would seem to be playing for the lowest possible common denominator. This puerility, however, belies the complex exposé of performativity and gender which the band - possibly unwittingly - effect. As you might expect from an act fronted by Justin Hawkins of the Darkness, they are an amalgam of every cock-rock cliché going: the theatrics, the thrusting riffs, the ridiculously masturbatory solos, the gratuitous cum-spattered finale towards which every song charges. Yet to see this as basely unsophisticated is to miss the point. They're a parody of a parody ad infinitum - to the extent that they achieve a kind of Swiftian purity, detached from any direct satirical object. In this sense, their brains-between-the-(hot)-legs dumbness becomes its own post-modern commentary.

They also offer an interesting study in gender construction. In spite of the penis-waving nature of the music and the insistence of their My Space page that this is

"Man Rock", what they actually reveal about sexual difference is much more ambiguous. For Hot Leg, masculinity is something to be performed in a way which undermines gender's claim to be a product of nature rather than culture. A clean-cut and stylized re-imagining of an eighties hair rock outfit, they look like Poison after a crawl through Vince Noir's laundry basket. All long locks and make-up and pouting, they employ conventional signifiers of the female in order to spoof masculinity. Through this paradox, they highlight the fact that gender is always a form of drag.

Of course, it seems doubtful that any of this might be in the band's mission statement. They just want administer a none-too-deep testosterone hit for the crowd to get its rocks off to. This they do achieve, and yet ironically they are much more thought-provoking than many more avant garde and overtly "intelligent" acts. To quote Spinal Tap, to whom Hot Leg owe no small debt, it's such a fine line between stupid and clever.

Emily Gray

SPIRITUALIZED

The Academy

Powerful, intense, emotional; adjectives many bands strive to see attached to their name but possibly no other achieves this so successfully as Jason Pierce's Spiritualized. Essentially a rock band with elements of country, gospel and droning experimentation, they're instantly recognisable but difficult to define. The release of new album 'Songs In A & E' has been overshadowed by Pierce's near-fatal bout of double pneumonia in 2005, though the songs all pre-date that episode.

Live shows are infrequent and always eagerly anticipated. In the early '90s they became unlikely champions of the first dance generation and found themselves at festivals playing to tens of thousands of E-chomping, sweat-soaked ravers literally unable to speak. Songs got longer, the band got bigger with strings, horns, choirs and Dr John often playing piano but Pierce, always looking for new challenges, moved down a gear to a more restrained, song-based approach.

Tonight the air-conditioning has been cranked up to make the normally hot Academy icy cold. Compared with earlier incarnations, a stripped-back group emerge; five musicians (Pierce now the only original face) and two backing

vocalists, but shut your eyes at times and you'd never believe it. He looks healthier than I've ever seen him, with a voice as strong as ever, playing a full two hours of material from across their eighteen years and six albums. This is very much a return to their guitar-heavy electric sound after their Acoustic Mainline shows of the last two years; extraordinary events that frequently left the audience and band in tears. 'Soul on Fire' from 'A & E' is a return to form, a simple and understated mix of melancholy and optimism. 'Lay Back in the Sun' takes us back to the summer of '95, their 'Pure Phase' LP the defining soundtrack, but shows up the absence of a horn section. Towards the end 'Come Together' turns into the wall of noise all the true fans are expecting and recreates the almost devotional atmosphere of shows from a decade ago.

If I had to find fault, this Spiritualized treads a path between the epic grandiosity of ten years ago and the delicate intimacy of the acoustic outings, but it's still a very fine path. Alan McGee once said Pierce is "as important to British culture as Neil Young is to American culture", and he's probably right. Tonight I would not have wished to be anywhere else.

Art Lagun

STACEY EARLE & MARK STUART

The Bullingdon

Being more *au fait* with mainstream music, I have to confess there was a 'phone a friend' session prior to this gig, in which my Dad enviously informed me this was one show that shouldn't be missed.

Opening the show with a twee introduction that sees Stacey Earle profess "We have two different last names, but we are married and stuff" and Mark Stuart respond with "to each other", they launch straight into a song displaying the makings of a kids' TV jingle and fear begins to hit that I may have been mislead.

Fortunately, the duo seem wise to this and manage to swiftly move away from clichéd sounds, turning their efforts to what they do best: making Americana music that unites the perfect balance of folk, country, rock and blues. Like any good marriage, they play to their strengths and compensate for each other's weaknesses, displaying impeccable timing and an intuitive ability to second-guess the other's next move, which manifests itself in

high quality music, quickly removing all previous doubts.

Stacey's vocals are syrupy, best likened to Nanci Griffith, whilst Mark contributes elements of John Hiatt, with a gruffness that balances Stacey's saccharine sounds. Likewise, Stacey provides the high-pitched guitar melodies, trademark to country sounds, whilst Mark's rhythm guitar adds a tinge of rock and roll that collectively typify the sound for which Tennessee has become infamous.

With a show combining joint and solo sets, alongside acoustic numbers and fully amped songs, they cover 16 years-worth of material in their two hour set and appeared as if they would could continue all night, given half a chance. Introducing songs with stories as captivating as the music itself, it doesn't take long for them to affirm why a self-confessed Radio 1 junkie like me should take her father's advice and step outside the box from time to time.

Lisa Ward

CHARLES HAYWARD & OXFORD IMPROVISERS

The Port Mahon

You never know it all. We recently witnessed The Wheatsheaf's engineer and landlord – who've presumably seen a thing or two – reduced to silent incredulity by a recording of free vocalist Phil Minton. Whilst volume and rebellion have been co-opted and flimsily assimilated by an ever more voracious mainstream, free improv remains capable of causing incomprehension, smothered giggles, and irate walkouts that metal, punk or techno can rarely inspire. Which is not to say many of its adherents are bent upon creating a counter-cultural broadside; in fact, tonight's chatty coterie of relaxed, primarily middle aged listeners looks tellingly like the AGM of some West Oxford allotment. All of which is a way of observing that Oxford Improvisers is something all too rare: a group unassumingly playing music for themselves, but with no hint of exclusivity or insularity. You're all welcome, so long as you *listen*. Tonight's show features This Heat member Charles Hayward, but we shan't mention his past again, as this gig bears the same resemblance to a rock legend headline showcase that a side salad bears to *Attack Of The Killer Tomatoes*.

Atmosphere aside, the music is also impressive. The opening duo loses John Grieve's *noirish* sax under Chris Brown's guitar, which

sounds like an ill-thought out parade of pedal effects, but Brown redeems himself with some later longwavy treble tones that wouldn't sound out of place on a lost Oliver Postgate project, with inventive double bass accompaniment from Dom Lash (who improbably also plays with charmless local cock rockers, The Treat). Pete McPhail is superb throughout, whether clicking his unblown flute or enlivening the final blowing session with some keening emotive flights, clean shafts of sound amid the skronking morass.

Hayward himself veers gloriously from near-silent stone rubbing to skittering hi-hat tapping, via sententious (if vague) pronouncements on atomic physics and heavyweight thumping *a la* Shellac's Todd Trainer. He even stops mid-solo to tell a little muso anecdote. Conversation of a musical sort when he plays with the other performers, somehow allowing everybody space without ever falling into the background.

There's a danger that descriptions of improv can become mere lists of tricks and techniques, making it all sound aridly academic; however, this is music making in its most intimate, unpretentious, *social* guise, which is something we thought was unheard of in Oxford. You never know it all.

David Murphy



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ANDY YORKE / RUARRI JOSPEH / MATT KILFORD

The Jericho Tavern

Matthew Kilford previously played in local indie rock hopefuls Belarus but since their untimely demise he's ditched it all and gone solo. When his powerful voice fills the room, the audience listens in awe. He plays melancholic guitar riffs crafted in a way that resemble Joni Mitchell's painfully soft accounts, Rufus Wainwright's polished arrangements, or even a sleepy Mugison in a winter morning.

Such a combination and skilful display warms us up and promises an hypnotic evening of enlightenments. Yet when Ruarri Joseph comes along, such bliss doesn't last long. Forcing the mind from a drowsy trance to happy country-like tunes in one sudden go is a bit like pouring ice in a warm, aromatic bath. It is not that this Cornish musician isn't skilful in what he does, but I am not completely convinced about something that sounds like Paolo Nutini in folk mode. Still, he has a natural, joyful way of singing tales of love, family and friends and a fresh sense of perseverance and determination that transcends his performance – a missing sell-out point in many songwriters.

Jeff Buckley once said, "Music should be like making love - sometimes you want it soft and tender, other times you want it hard and aggressive". Andy Yorke definitely likes it the former ... ALL the time; so you have to tune into the mood to appreciate the full scale of his multiple cellophane layers. Still, his caramel melodies of nostalgia, despair and unrequited love



Andy Yorke by Liame Escorza

are displayed in precise and highly-technical expertise, backed up by a four-piece ensemble, who execute a near-to-perfect blend of textured journeys and impersonate the long-missed TheUnbelievable Truth. But let's face it: Andy Yorke WAS The Unbelievable Truth. Tonight, he presents his new songs with vocals that almost reach mastery, with crescendos that make our spines shiver. Tonight's show is a perfect late toffee treat of loved-up (or not) Sunday supper.

Liame Escorza

HOLY FUCK / KELPE

The Academy

By delicious coincidence, while clean-cut Christian popsters Delirious? are bowing out downstairs at the Academy tonight, dirty, blasphemous electro noisemakers Holy Fuck occupy the high ground; it's Heaven and Hell in reverse. As ever, the Devil has the best tunes.

First, though, Kelpe, a duo from London featuring a live drummer and a bloke with a laptop. An early jazz drum solo doesn't bode well but after a while their tricky rhythms and sometimes disorientating electronics become hypnotic, at their best sounding like the sonic terror you get in brainwashing scenes from old 60s spy thrillers. The pair are often deliberately out of sync, and the tripped-out mess of squiggles and squelches is unexpectedly fun, even of the laptop chap seems to disagree, checking his watch half a dozen times during their short set.

Toronto's Holy Fuck defy every lazy dismissal thrown at electronic music, injecting it with all the spectacle and thrills of organic rock music. Without even a cursory hello, Brian Borchedt and Graham Walsh hunch down over tables of assorted gadgetry, old and new, constantly plugging and unplugging different keyboards, twiddling knobs and toys with fevered concentration as the drummer and bassist knock out an incessant, towering motorik rhythm.

It's hard to do Holy Fuck justice in print, so exhilarating is their militant party groove, all gleaming synth lines and bass pulses. Imagine Neu! reinterpreting Justin Hayward's 'War Of The Worlds' at an 80s acid house rave and you start to understand the splendour of their set. But that doesn't capture the hard-edged power of the set's gloriously cacophonous climax, a sci-fi psychedelic storm that has every body in the house jerking and bobbing in involuntary union. It's unbelievable that a bunch of bearded geeks with their gadgets can rock so hard, but they do, and it's a sound that brings us closer to heaven than any devotional songs of praise ever could.

Dale Kattack

THE DRESDENS /

BLACK POWDER

The Wheatsheaf

Slice off your fringe and ditch the Converse: math-rock and tech meandering may be where the scenesters are at, but there's nothing like sweating dingy punk-rock vibes and tight-packed metalcore riffs to remind you that rock'n'roll has a dark soul and a nastier temper. Tonight the Wheatsheaf proves an ideal pit in which to circle-mosh through a night of dense-riffed disaffection and metal-tinted rock: local hardcore outfit Black Power open at breakneck speed, trading high-speed riffs with Hetfield-esque vocals and pop-metal breakdowns. More metalcore than punk, they headbang gloriously into southern-drenched rising stars To The Bones and their sludgy, early QOTSA shriek vocals-falsetto mix.

The Dresdens tear into their headlining set with brutal, LA hardcore-style snapshots of energy: frontman Jack Goldstein spits rabid energy at the frontline, sloping from the stage with the nerve-wracking, quasi-violent unpredictability that marks any real punk gig. Breathless and viciously thrilling, The Dresdens, who once toured with Charged GBH, fill their set – from brutal anthem 'You'll Be Sorry' to Black Flag-style 'Revolution' – with aggressive underground references. There's the odd break from feverish, quick-tempo three-chord changes – closer 'Street Rats' plunges into bass-heavy tribal ethnic beats that, in a crescendo of feedback and ear-splitting distortion, squeals The Dresdens offstage before you've had time for a decent pogo.

With new music busy draping itself in four-minute indie epics, a night like this is a blast of fresh air. Too fast for pondering and too brutal to dally on musicianship, aggressive punk-metal-core is all too rare in Oxford. There's an audience waiting, hungry for a headbang: viva the grisly revolution.

Liz Dodds

SAM ISAAC

The Jericho Tavern

It's not the easiest of tasks, to follow one of Oxford's most popular bands, Stornoway, who have just played a blinding set, and should perhaps have headlined. The place is absolutely heaving, yet half the audience disappears and the other half run to get drinks and start loud conversations as soon as Stornoway finish.

However, Sam Isaac gives the appearance of not giving a crap. In fact, as he quietly takes the stage he looks like an old pro. From his website it would appear that this bright spark at only 21 is just that. Recently getting a record deal, he seems to be gaining some cred doing the radio plugging circles, playing as many festivals and venues as he can cram in and even gets a great mention in *NME*. So how come we feel so underwhelmed?

Sam and fellow bandmates (who surely should be in bed now, given it's a school night) give a slick performance. These are thoughtful arrangements, powerful indie pop songs with distinctive dynamics reminiscent of Brendan Benson. 'Fire, Fire, Fire' is one of the highlight's tonight; throughout the set there are overtones and nods to Snow Patrol, but Sam is no Gary Lightbody. His soft spoken-voice, verging on posh, between songs somehow gets transformed into some stilted speaking type singing, veering on Billy Bragg, that can't seem to vary beyond four tones. And although this quirky-ness seems to work for the first few numbers, his consistency verges on the monotonous and he just can't quite hold the audience for long.

But given his gaining popularity, there is obviously a market for Sam. He would be equally at home on either Radio 1 or 2. The same crowds that love bands like The Streets will make room for him.

How long they'll let him stay in the room is anyone's guess.

Katy Jerome

INTRODUCING....

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

TRISTAN & the TROUBADOURS

Who are they?

Ben Conway: lead singer; Joe Weller: keyboardist; Richard Smith: drums / percussion / bass; Rowan Brackston: drums / percussion; Sam Conway: guitar; Josh McCaffer: guitar, and Bernard Goyder: violin, all from Witney.

"We all met at school or involved in equally childish undertakings. The beginnings were a little tempestuous, losing members and such. Once we got a more solid foundation, which was about a year ago, it all went from there." They were recently awarded Nightshift Demo Of The Month. This followed on from an early Demo Dumper review when the poor wee things were all about 14 years old.

What do they sound like?

With an expansive line-up and no obvious lead, their sound is dense and diverse, piano and violin equal partners to the guitars. Equally though, their songs are short, very sweet and packed with a giddy, youthful exuberance. Their recent Demo Of The Month review described them as "a great mix of fluffy jangle-pop naivety and something more virulent from the gloomier side of New York's musical underground".

What inspires them?

"I think in an odd way creativity is a false concept, that the creative act is just the transmutation of feeling into something functional. Function makes you sweat and fuck and dance a little. The tiny chance that we can turn that patchwork self into a function, like a quickened pulse or handclaps, that's very inspiring. So is 'Stop Making Sense'."

Career highlight so far:

"Saturday on the Bar Stage at Truck Festival. The tent was rammed, we didn't fit on the stage and we played our little hearts out."

And the Lowlight:

"Sunday on the Market Stage at Truck. Turns out you *can* have too much fun. And that tuning *is* important."

They describe themselves as:

"There is a darkness about it, a rumbling and repetitive urgency that for me sounds like dubstep and human biology. Drums like machine-guns and a peal of bells, guitars that scrape from granite to glass. We try to be frantic and charming all at the same time."



Their Favourite other Oxford band are:

"Borderville. That sinister vaudevillian sound just rattles out of them, and it's all very, very exciting. They play music that cannot quite be reduced to its parts."

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

"Pole '2'. It's seminal and beautiful and feels like heartbeat."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

Saturday 29th November at the Academy with The Half Rabbits and Space Heroes Of The People. "Hopefully newcomers will experience a tension and a controlled fragility to our live show. Most importantly though, a band who enjoy performing live, perhaps playing a new song or two, and as we did on the Saturday at Truck, play our little hearts out!"

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Least favourite is definitely age-restrictions on bands themselves. We've had to move gigs, cancel gigs, and leave gigs at strictly the exact microsecond we finish."

"Favourite thing is probably the diversity. Shoegaze, mathcore, metal, dub, hip-hop, antifolk, vaudeville, blues. You can see pretty much anything round here."

You'll love them if you love:

Larrikin Love, Doctors Of Madness, The Velvet Underground, Jamie-T.

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www.myspace.com/tristanandthetroubadours

Whatever happened to... those heroes

SEVENCHURCH

Who? "Five extremely pleasant blokes playing extremely unpleasant music", it was once written. Sevenchurch were singer Martin Spear, guitarists Dave Smart and Dave Capel, bass player Paul Oliver and drummer Grahaeme Bastable. Dave S and Paul had played in bands together since the early 1980s, while Martin fronted infamous local punk-metal faves Madamadam, members of whom later went on to form Underbelly. An early incarnation of Sevenchurch made their debut supporting Madamadam at the Jericho Tavern in 1991. When Madamadam split shortly after, Martin joined Sevenchurch. His first gig with them was supporting Carcass at the Tavern.

What? An uncompromisingly slow, bleak Gregorian form of doom-metal, with the crushing, intricate guitars only occasionally giving way to



proggy flights of fancy. All this topped off with Martin's theatrically portentous vocal performance. Or maybe a titanicly morose Brian Blessed fronting a bucolic, mediaeval Black Sabbath. At half speed. On Mogadon. Fantastically, but very much true, every single Oxford show was marked by a thunderstorm, which prompted local music mag Curfew to question the dark forces at work in the band.

When? After a self-released demo, Sevenchurch signed to Noise Records in 1992 and released their debut album, 'Bleak Insight' in 93. The album featured six tracks clocking in at an astonishing seventy minutes. It was epic in every way. Problems with the label, which later folded, led the band to split in 1994.

Why? Despite only releasing one album, Sevenchurch have become underground metal legends, particularly in Eastern Europe, where they have numerous websites dedicated to them. Metal Hammer declared their first offering "The best British metal demo in years". In 2006 Terrorizer Magazine retrospectively hailed 'Bleak Insight' the third greatest doom-metal album of all time, behind Black Sabbath and Cathedral. Their success also puts a lie to the idea that Oxford only produces indie bands.

Where? After Sevenchurch split the two Daves and Ollie formed the short-lived Earth Machine; later Dave Smart formed Twinjet Superstar with local reggae band singer Jonas. Ollie and Dave C subsequently formed a band called Flume. Martin, meanwhile turned his not inconsiderable comic talents to the London stand-up circuit. In 2001 Dave Smart opened the Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown, which remains Oxford's premier specialist guitar shop. In the wake of Terrorizer's posthumous acclaim a Sevenchurch reunion was mooted but sadly never materialised.

How? Sadly 'Bleak Insight' is completely unavailable, but there is an excellent, extensive Sevenchurch website at www.sevenchurch.co.uk where, amongst other things, you can buy the band's first demo.

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the port mahon

Live Music in November

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 19th Burning Legacy presents Metal Showcase with Reign Upon Us + more (FREE ENTRY!)
 20th Frankie's Whiskey Night
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The Wheatsheaf

Live Music in November

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JUNKIE BRUSH + ALEX BITTERN COMPANY Apr / 03

Sat 8th VULTURES
I AM THIEVES + THE REPEATS Apr / 03

Thu 10th MARK ARMSTRONG Apr / 08

Fri 14th NOT MY DAY
COP ON THE EDGE + JUNE + ECHO BOOMER Apr / 05

Sat 15th EDUARD SOUNDINGBLOCK
MEPHISTO GRANDE + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS Apr / 05

Wed 19th PAPIER TIGER
SHIELD YOUR EYES + THEO Apr / 05

Thu 20th THEO TRAVIS Apr / 08

Fri 21st LEGO CASTLES
VIXENS + WE DO KONG FU Apr / 04

Sat 22nd SHAKER HEIGHTS
CHALK + TBC Apr / 05

Thu 27th JOHN DONALDSON Apr / 05

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

DEDLOK

A quick browse around Dedlok's MySpace site finds them plugging their last Nightshift demo review, tempered with the comment, "at least they didn't slate us like most other metal bands in Oxford". Excuse us, when did we last slate a local metal band? We love metal. If anything, local metal bands get an easier ride in these pages than anyone else, cos we love the loud, fast, shouty brutality of it all. It's them there wimpy acoustic whingers we like to stamp on, mainly due to the fun bleating sound they make. Really boys, do pay attention in future. But anyway, that blundering *faux pas* aside, here's another chance for us to restate our liking for most things metal (because for every Slayer there is a Gillan). No beating about the bush, Dedlok are straight into battle with opener 'Why?', squealing thrash riffs, double kick-drum salvos and plenty of guttural bawling. It's equal parts Lamb Of God, Iron Maiden and Pantera, taking in influences from the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal to 80s thrash and beyond into hardcore. In fact 'Believe' stomps closer to the hardcore punk of Anti Pasti and Discharge than pure metal. It's a pretty uninspiring month for demos but amid the mediocrity, Dedlok's uncluttered vision and proud single-mindedness is pretty refreshing. Plus, they can swear with far more conviction than certain other bands in this month's demo pile.

THE ELRICS

And this lot ain't too bad either. Ostensibly a solid, steady indie rock band in the lineage of Oasis and their ilk, they've got enough spiky individualism about their stadium-sized chug and bluster to win through. A wall of sound approach does well to hide occasional clumsiness as 'She Doesn't Exist' shoves its way through a decent Kaiser Chiefs-by-way-of-Maximo Park three-note guitar groove, while 'Nothing Truly' shows they have an ear for a melody, with a touch of Husker Du about it. They seem to get more Americanised as they go on through the demo, touching on Californian punk-pop on 'Sleeplessness Creeping In', while closer 'The Failure' has a jerky buoyancy about it that reminds us of The Samurai Seven. Spirited stuff all told and it seems that The Elrics recently won a vote on Fox FM to support The Subways at the Academy.

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Which proves that even Fox FM listeners once in a while can have some taste.

THE OOLITES

There's a lot of jaunty indie rocking in this month's demo pile and Oolites are perhaps the jauntiest of the lot. Their first song here, 'Abbey Fields', sounds ever so slightly exactly like The Wonderstuff, who everybody seemed to love for about six months back in about 1989 until they stopped being good and wrote 'Size Of A Cow'. Oolites follow in their folk-tinged punk roustabout footsteps and it's rather jolly. And it could continue in this vein if it weren't for the vocalist's apparent mission to take the piss out of David Bowie for the rest of the CD, which would be quite funny if it was part of a stand-up comedy routine, or a Flight Of The Conchords song, but here tends to detract rather monstrously from what the rest of the band are doing, like the rough and ready Buzzcocks riff that opens 'Last Night's Song', with its whiff of good-natured grunge maliciousness. Mind you, by the time they've lapsed into wandering 60s blues-rock at the end, the singer's theatrics are almost a pleasant distraction.

SEABUCKTHORN

This is one of those dinky mini CD thingies which we've already mistaken for an oversized Polo mint to the detriment of our teeth. Thankfully the music is softer natured and more palatable: understated electronic noodling and acoustic guitar contemplation that finds a neat meeting point between Bert Jansch and Boards of Canada, with the odd crunching, glitchy Radiohead bit thrown in to stop anyone nodding off at the back. Because you could you know, as the floaty choral voices waft around you and the folky, almost classical guitar strum lulls away your cares. Sometimes it's all a bit too laid-back to grab you, but at its best there's real purpose in the gentle throb of the electronics and after a while it gets mildly hypnotic. Nice.

JAMES GRAY KING

Blimey, you wait an age for some hushed, neo-classical acoustic techno contemplation and two come along at once. This is a demo that Xmas Lights guitarist James made while in Kenya working for a children's charity, and suggests the time spent away from Blighty made him prone to star-gazing and wistful reverie, since it's about two and half universes away from his band's black-hearted industrial hardcore metal. There are 13 tracks here, which shift somnambulantl

through similar Bert Jansch guitar work to Seabuckthorn's demo, taking in elements of Steve Reich, Beethoven's piano sonatas and Vangelis' swirling, soporific electronic soundscaping. It's very, very mellow, and, if not exactly indulgent, then far too drawn out over a full album to hold your attention, unless you're virtually comatose from high-grade Kenyan weed, and really, for all the good work he was doing over there, we're glad Mr Gray King is back making evil noises with Xmas Lights. The thought of him mellowing is almost as terrifying as the racket his band make.

SLASHED SEAT AFFAIR

Named after a line from 'That's Entertainment', Slashed Seat Affair are about as far from the spirit of The Jam as it's possible to get, instead presenting an album-length CD of soft rock as imagined by a Disney Corporation marketing committee. There are contemplative, vaguely gothic guitars and swirly synths and a histrionic female singer who sounds a bit like Gwen Stefani at times and Natalie Imbruglia at others. It's sumptuous, over-produced stuff that you just know could shift several million copies across the globe and single-handedly re-ignite the world economy so we shouldn't knock it too much, but from a band who describe themselves as raucous, loud fun, we expect something a bit more challenging than a cross between The Corrs and Lacuna Coil. Where are these "showers of almighty drums" we're promised in the press blurb, eh? Oh yes, we're rat-tempered lo-fi noise snobs here at Nightshift, we'll not deny it, but twelve tracks of shiny orchestral rock and soft-centred ballads is enough to suffocate the most vacuum-headed Radio 2 listener.

THE SHUDDERS

Ah, some more of that jaunty rock we were talking about earlier. The Shudders have a rather annoying band bio on their website which tries to make them out as crazy pirates and makes us want to slit their gizzards with a cutlass, but we stay our hand for a while since they're banging out some decent (and, it must be said, jaunty) skiffle-inflected jangle-pop that at first glance comes at us from somewhere not far away from Aztec Camera, which is never a bad thing. Unlike starting to sound a bit too much like The Travelling Wilburys, or slipping into weary, dreary ballad mode, as on 'Moonrakers' (which, incidentally, we had high hopes for since the band are from Swindon). But just as we're preparing to make them walk the plank, they're back with a punked-up country stomp, banjo and all and sounding refreshingly like The Men They Couldn't Hang. But, blistering barnacles, they go and do it all over again –

just as they've got the party restarted, they get all sentimental and try to be The Beautiful South for a seriously painful five minutes. The lesson we learn, then, is that The Shudders just can't do slow and sensitive and are much, much better when they're full of rum and three sheets to the wind. So, very much like pirates, then.

WILLIAM WILSON

Dear God in heaven, James Blunt-lite. Can you imagine something so terrifyingly bland? Well here's the proof. Plodding piano, for-the-sake-of-it strings and whiny please-love-me vocals that sing to us of stuff that's, y'know, like, really, really bad about, y'know, the world and stuff. Like bombs and, erm, war. And bombs. And, oh Christ, then someone starts rapping. And now it's like all the very worst bits of James Morrison (yes, really) crossed with the intensely irritating talky bits of Faithless. And then, for absolutely no reason at all, three and half minutes in, it all turns into a bad imitation of Nine Inch Nails. Where in blazes did that comes from? We're confused. Really confused. And very, very depressed.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE FOXES

Not to be mistaken for Foxes! with an exclamation mark, the local janglers and former-Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers whose relocation to Brighton means there's maybe room for another vulpine-themed band in town. Or maybe not on the strength of this evidence. On the strength of this evidence they should be driven out of town by yokels armed with torches and pitchforks. Ah, fuck the evidence, just stick them on a ducking stool. "I do not want to use public transport because it is full of twats," announces the singer as an introduction to his undergraduate essay on misanthropy, delivered over the top of some third-rate indie punk of the sort Young Knives would discard, embarrassed, in an instant. And the thing is, for all the supposed vitriol inherent in the lyrics, it's all so tame, there's no venom here. Give the same song to Dedlok and they could at least make it sound like they were off home to tool up and take out the entire George Street binge drinking massive. No, it's just posturing, and when they use the word paradigm, you just know they'd weep tiny tears of wee wee if anyone so much glanced at them on the last bus out of town. Still, The Foxes have the temerity to describe themselves as "gritty" in their accompanying letter. We can think of a more appropriate description that rhymes with it. Shhh... it's not pretty.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email MySpace link to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demo for review.

IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number. No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo.



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