

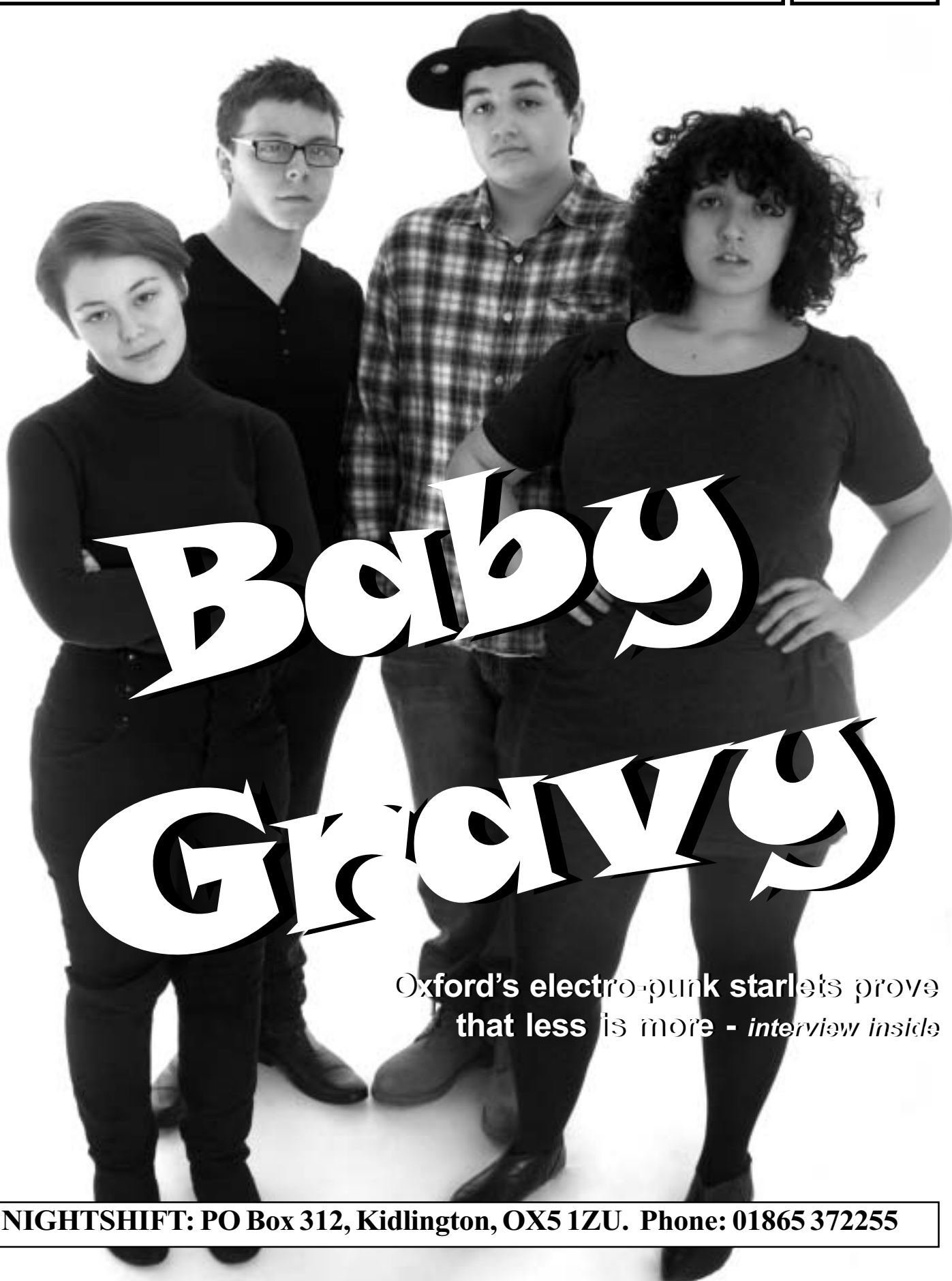
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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 163
February
2009



Baby Gravy

Oxford's electro-punk starlets prove
that less is more - *interview inside*

photo: Ahren Roland

NIGHTSHIFT: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Phone: 01865 372255

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NEWS

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CONFUSION SURROUNDS the fate of **The Regal**, with unconfirmed reports that the venue has gone into liquidation last month. The venue, which underwent a massive redevelopment last year and looked set to become one of Oxford's premier live music venues, was closed over the Christmas and New Year period but has subsequently failed to reopen. No-one at the venue has been available to confirm or deny the rumours circulating on the local music scene. A spokesman for Ka:pow! Events, who are planning a series of live music and club promotions at the Regal this year told Nightshift that as far as they were concerned the venue was still operating. Hopefully more news next month.

Zavvi, meanwhile, as has been widely reported, went into administration before Christmas following the collapse of its suppliers. Many branches of Zavvi across the UK have now closed down but for now the Oxford store remains open, though stock is limited. Zavvi's collapse follows that of Fopp in 2007, leaving only HMV and Borders as major stockists of music in Oxford.

BANDS WISHING TO PLAY AT THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT on Wednesday 13th May have until Monday 16th March to send in demos. The Punt, now in its 13th year, is Oxford's premier showcase of local unsigned music. Previous stars of the event include Young Knives, Little Fish and Elizabeth – Yannis and Jack from Foals' first band. The Punt will feature 17 acts across six city centre venues in one night, starting off at Borders bookstore and continuing at the Purple Turtle, the Cellar, the Wheatsheaf and Thirst Lodge.

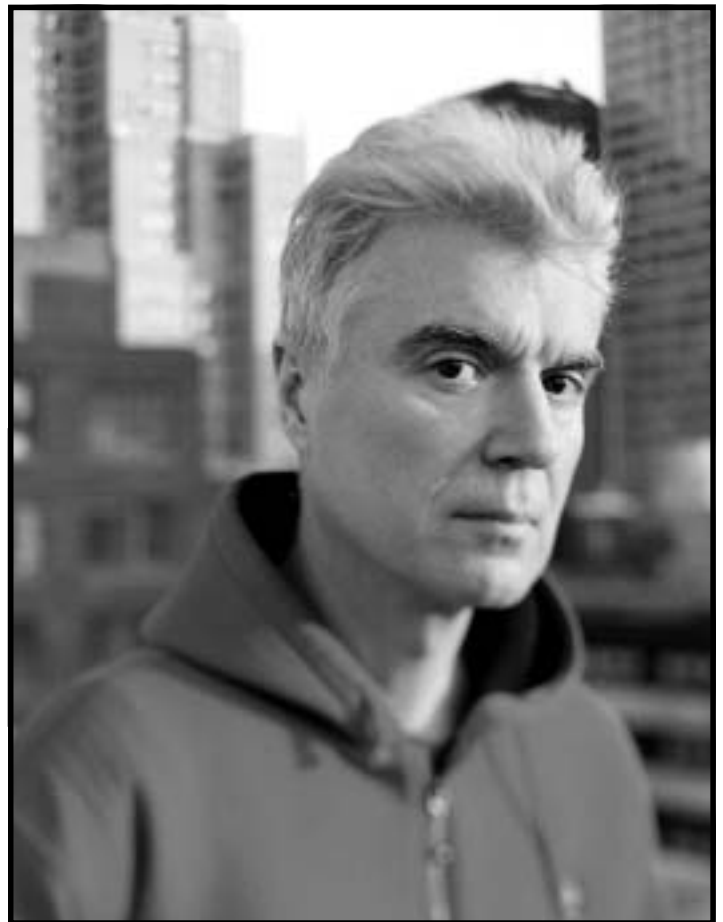
Bands or solo artists interested should email Myspace links to Nightshift, clearly marked Punt, to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net or send a CD – again clearly marked Punt – to Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Acts must be unsigned and from Oxfordshire. Please include a contact number and brief bio. Unfortunately we cannot accept submissions from any under-age bands.

THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES will celebrate its silver anniversary this year with a special weekend of live blues. The celebrations will take place on the 19th, 20th and 21st September. Promoter Philip Guy Davis started the blues club up in 1984 at the Red Lion (later the Brewhouse) on Gloucester Green, before moving to Jongleurs and then the Bullingdon, attracting some of the biggest names on the British, European and American touring circuit. Visit www.famousmondayblues.co.uk for all blues news and listings.

SEVERAL VENUES IN OXFORD are still looking for promoters to host nights or bands to play. **Borders** bookstore are keen to hear from any acts on the mellower side of things, from classical and folk to jazz, brass bands or solo artists. Email gwaite@borders.co.uk. **Thirst Lodge** in St Ebbes is looking for bands and promoters of all kinds for its basement venue. Anyone interested should call Rob on 01865 242 044 or at rob@thirstbar.com.

Any electronic acts looking for a gig should contact **The Response Collective** via their website at www.responsecollective.co.uk. The band are hosting a series of monthly club nights showcasing all types of electronic music and DJs. The next show is at the Jericho Tavern on Saturday 21st February.

OXFORD BAND PRACTICE is a new project aimed at getting local musicians together. The scheme is aimed at musicians who maybe feel they're not ready for a full band yet, or don't have the time to commit to a band full-time, or simply want to meet other musicians to form a band. It takes the form of a monthly live performance workshop where musicians learn a new song together and then practice at home to record the song in a studio. The scheme is run on a non-profit basis, attendance is free. Visit the site at oxfordbandpractice.org.uk to learn more.



DAVID BYRNE comes to the New Theatre in Oxford on Thursday 9th April as part of his 'Songs Of David Byrne And Brian Eno' tour. The tour features songs culled from all of Byrne's collaborations with Eno, including Talking Heads material, the pair's 1981 album, 'My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts', as well as their most recent 'Everything That Happens Will Happen Today' release.

Tickets for the show are on sale now, priced £35, from the 24-hour credit card booking line on 0844 847 1585, or online from www.ticketmaster.co.uk

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 plays the best new Oxford releases as well as featuring interviews with local and touring bands, a demo review and a local gig and clubbing guide. The

show is available to listen to all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

A REMINDER TOO that the deadline for all Nightshift listings and adverts is the 20th of each month. Absolutely no exceptions. No, not even for you.



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- Wed 18th Lil Fat Comedy Club Return of comic legends Jon Richardson + support - £7, door 1.80
- Thu 19th Apple Pirate Promotions Bands/Gigs confirmed. Check website for details - £3, door 7.30
- Fri 20th The Stone Saloon Country's southern style rock n' roll. Mix of original and covers. £3, door 8
- Sat 21st Hope & Glory Six covers played by a great live band. Madmen, Speed etc. - £3, door 8
- Sun 22nd Big Blues Jam Join Dave Smith and the resident band for a jam or just to relax - Free Entry, door 5
- Wed 25th Acoustic Lounge Come and play or just sit back and enjoy with host Alex Messenger - £2, door 8
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A quiet word with

Baby Gravy



photo: Ahren Roland

SOMETIME BACK IN 2006 WE stumbled across Baby Gravy playing a shambolic soundcheck at the old Zodiac. But, ramshackle though they were, we were struck by their sheer wayward invention and, at a time when every other teenage band was trying too hard to fit the emo blueprint, their bizarre mash-up of punk, dub, synth-pop and proggy weirdness was both refreshing and beguiling.

At the time Baby Gravy were a six-strong bundle of contradictions, but we stuck them on the front cover of *Nightshift* as an example of what young bands could do with the right mix of imagination and anything-goes attitude, never really expecting them to go the distance but happy to enjoy their wobbly-headed pop.

AND THEY DIDN'T LAST. NOT IN their original incarnation anyway. Inter-band disagreements came to a head with an acrimonious record deal and half the band departed, leaving its core to regroup and come back stronger, leaner and poppier. But just as wayward and fun as before. And now Baby Gravy are preparing to finally release their debut single on a label they feel fully at home with. More importantly, they feel comfortable with each other. The band's music has taken on a new life: more cohesive and confident, buzzing with the energy of punk, the determination of

hip hop and the playfulness of early synth-pop.

BABY GRAVY THESE DAYS consists of singer Iona Roisin, drummer Zahra Tehrani, her brother David on bass and newcomer Dale White on keyboards and bass. Gone are guitarist Adam Whitley, saxophonist Cecilia White and keyboard player Freddy Mason.

When *Nightshift* last caught the band live, we were struck by the way Baby Gravy have managed to retain that old freshness and sparky attitude, while no longer sounding like two bands playing different songs simultaneously or threatening to collapse in an untidy heap any moment.

The biggest shift though is Dale taking a lead role with his arcane Alesis synth, which buzzes like an angry hornet, rendering any need for a guitar obsolete and, when coupled with Zahra's clattering drums and Iona's strident vocals, makes Baby Gravy sound like Penetration's Pauline Murray fronting The Human League's earliest incarnation, or perhaps Kathleen Hannah dragging Soft Cell to a punk-rock party. It's this synth-punk side of the band that comes to the fore on new single 'Did It Again', released next month on London's STW Records. Elsewhere Baby Gravy team up with local rap star Mr Shadown for the furious electro-rap skank of 'Don't Touch

Me', indulging the band's chief love of hip hop.

Musos will still balk at Baby Gravy's primitive approach to music making, but for simple pop pleasures, they're hard to beat.

NIGHTSHIFT TALKED TO IONA, Zahra, David and Dale, and asked them first how we reached Baby Gravy Mk.II. How did the split in the original line-up come about?

IONA: "We weren't rock'n'roll enough. We wanted to sleep and eat and we don't understand minimal techno."

ZAHRA: "We were all completely different people and when we started out that was a great thing. It was once said we sounded like two bands playing at once, and this spilled out into our personal lives. We wanted different things. David, Iona and I want this for life, not just for Christmas."

How would you say the band's sound has changed?

DALE: "We are more dynamic, and darker in places, but still edgy."

IONA: "We cut out the prog, and indulged the pop; with only the four of us there's a lot less ego, people are willing to drop out to improve the song."

ZAHRA: "It was difficult to keep six of us playing interesting parts that weren't out of time, out of tune or out of key. Having Dale meant we could have one musician playing two

instruments competently. And he has a car! We were able to make the dual bass more of a feature, which helps us stand out a bit more."

Baby Gravy's sound and performance is now certainly much more disciplined and cohesive than before.

ZAHRA: "When it comes to songwriting we write a lot more than we used to, things come out a lot more easily, cuz we all listen to each other's opinions. Playing live comes before practice. I know this isn't how the average band would work but we learn a lot more from playing gigs than practicing two or three times a week. That's why our stage presence stands out. Getting in the studio is what we try to practice for more than gigs. Live and recordings are two completely different things to us."

Pleasingly, despite Baby Gravy's new cohesiveness, there still remains that primitivism about their sound. Is there a desire to keep the sound stripped down and raw?

IONA: "Yeah, we'd like to layer up the recordings to give some variation on our live sound. Over-producing things can be quite fun. I thought we'd mainly grown out of our punky roots, though. Punk as part of our sound is a total accident; it's the sound that works best with getting across what we want to say."

Zahra: "One of our biggest influences is hip hop and the majority of hip hop we listen to doesn't involve a guitar; it's very sparse. But as most hip hop is designed not to play live, and there are different genres and influences integrated into what we play, not to mention all the aggression, it comes across as punk."

'I HATE YOUR GIRLFRIEND'

wasn't released in the end; what happened with the Quickfix deal?

ZAHRA: "The single was released without our legal consent. Verbal agreements weren't met in the contracts, so we asked for it to be removed from iTunes. It was a shit time for us, but as a band it helped us to prioritize what we wanted. Shortly after the Quickfix saga we decided to take the band in a different direction and things have been on the up ever since."

IONA: "Even before the single came about relations between us and the label were steadily deteriorating. We learnt a lot from the experience, and won't make the same mistakes again. It's a real shame that we've had our name tarnished with no real chance

to defend ourselves. We are just helpless children, and nobody wants to be made into a playboy bunny."

Now, though, you've got 'Did It Again' coming out on STW records. Zahra: "They're really nice guys, it's really low-key and fair. Nobody's in it for the money, we're just releasing our single and touring across March. We're recording a music video to accompany the track with Darren Brinham from Love Film Productions."

You're recording your album with Jimmy Evil (from Suitable Case For Treatment, Ivy's Itch and Eduard Soundingblock).

Iona: "We've had a few setbacks, due to being forced to re-record three of our old tracks. Other than that it's coming along nicely, but there's a long way to go. We're not even thinking about it at the moment, just trying to sort all the single details."

Zahra: "Production-wise Jimmy gives us a lot of positive input. Songs are coming out a lot quicker now that we're having a break from playing locally. When we come back from tour we hope to have many more new tunes to nail in the studio."

AH YES, TOURING. ALMOST since their inception Baby Gravy have played around the country, happier to hone their skills in front of an audience than hidden away in a rehearsal studio. It's a smart move; noticeably the band never seem phased when things do go awry on stage. They've continued to pick up new fans, often in unexpected places, as well as attracting the attention of producers and media companies, including Dynamics Media, which has led to a number of sponsorship offers.

IONA: "Hah, yeah. It's just a little bit of equal promotion, we've got nothing to lose from it, so why not?"

ZAHRA: "We've managed to score Rockstar energy drink sponsorship for our tour. There are future deals with Les Ettes (women's extreme sports fragrance) and custom trainers by Odessa."

Any particularly good, bad or weird touring tales?

DALE: The worst was Hampton's in Southampton. A fight broke out between a couple during our set and I just wondered why no one was clapping. The best was at Bloomsbury Bowling Lanes: it was cool watching people bowl whilst performing!"

IONA: "I don't think we notice the strange occurrences, they're just everyday happenings. Giggling around the country has gained us a much older fan base, still living in the punk glory days. It's nice playing to people that actually stand and watch bands, not just snotty fringe scenesters."

SCENESTERS. BABY GRAVY don't like scenesters. Maybe it's because the band resolutely fail to

fit into any neat pigeonhole or scene. Having grown up on the Oxford scene, how has it shaped them?

IONA: "We're really lucky to have grown up in one of the country's most active music scenes, but even in the few years I've been a part of it I've felt stuff taper off a bit. There are so many people in Oxford who are too interested in the aesthetics of music rather than the sound. They pay to come into shows to stand around and look miserable and not listen to the bands. I guess it isn't cool to look like you're enjoying yourself any more. You've gotta get in with the right people to get popular, apparently, and you need the right shoes for that. On the plus side there are a lot of promising young bands cropping up in Oxford, it's just a shame that there are so few opportunities for underage bands to play the Oxford venues."

ZAHRA: The Ark T (young people's music project) has shaped me as a musician and the sound of the band. I was given opportunities to perform, write, record and practice from the age of 14 in a safe and relaxed environment, with many different musicians. Now that I have been employed by Ark T, I work on the music project with loads of musicians, from rappers to bands to singer/songwriters, in and out of the studio."

ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING developments in Baby Gravy's sound is teaming up with MCs such as Daniel 'N-Zyme' Odong, and in particular Mr Shadown for 'Don't Touch Me'; how did that collaboration come about, and what other collaborations would you realistically like to indulge in?

DALE: "We met him at a Love Music Hate Racism gig. I liked his performance, mixing martial arts with music! Mr Shadown is one of the most determined musicians out there, so it was great to work with him."

IONA: "Realistically? How about Steve Albini and Timberland, which one's cheaper?"

Many people in Oxford might not have seen or heard you since the early incarnation of the band; how would you persuade them to come back and give you another listen?

Zahra: "Everyone deserves another chance."

Not that Baby Gravy will need such charitable feelings to win fans' hearts. They're a retro-futurist, pop-clad punk party with an irresistibly bratty, catty, coquettish charm. A party with a newfound purpose that retains the right to be unpredictable and silly if it chooses. So, choose life. Choose fun. Choose Baby Gravy

'Did It Again' is released next month on STW Records. Baby Gravy play at the O2 Academy on Saturday 7th March. Visit www.myspace.com/babygravy for songs and tour dates.



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GTA

'The Way'

(Phoenix Down)

Over recent years hip hop has been making itself increasingly felt in Oxford with Asher Dust, Zubu and Mr Shadow creating ripples. It's still something of a rarity, but now GTA can add their impossible-to-Google name to a list of Oxford acts that easily punch their weight.

Chima Anya has toiled for three years over 'The Way' and for the most part the time spent getting it right has paid off. The production is pretty tight throughout, and although there's little here that is arresting in the way that, say, The Pharcyde, Public Enemy or Spank Rock are, this is a solid showing.

There are some nice touches throughout, most notably their working of the O Jays sample on the opening brass bombast of 'Breakthrough', and their sneaky use of The Isley Brothers' 'Summer Breeze' on 'All in My Mind'. The

addition of Jada Pearl on 'The Way It Is' and 'All in My Mind' lends GTA a much needed alternative voice, while also adding an element of soul to their sound. It's unfortunate that she's underused on the album. You feel GTA might have missed a trick here and that with her inclusion, many of these songs would have really soared.

Being complete wusses here at Nightshift, the posturing and homicidal nature of the likes of 50 Cent leave us cold, so it's refreshing to find that GTA haven't gone for the lowest common denominator. Their rhymes are filled with positive vibes, and it all reminds us of the tone KRS One found when he initiated the Stop The Violence Movement.

Musically their sound is distinctly American, and despite KRS' East Coast influence, there's a definite West Coast edge to proceedings, cut with a Daisy Age philosophy. MCs Chima and Ineffable are unashamedly British however; rounded vowels positively drip from Ineffable, while their style could best be described as polite. Once past the regional accents, Chima and Ineffable's technique is smooth, and at times their interplay is pretty impressive.

The almost throwaway 'Till Tomorrow Comes' finds the pair revelling in a party vibe, and bouncing off each other with considerable aplomb. You get the feeling that the relaxed nature of the track allows them to really loosen up and throw down their best stuff.

If there's a criticism to be levelled at 'The Way', it's that it is a little one paced here and there, causing the mind to wonder. At times it's practically impossible to give it the attention it deserves. There's enough here to suggest that the pair are on to something though, and with a little tweaking, maybe they could beat Grand Theft Auto to the top of Google searches for GTA.

Sam Shepherd

BORDERVILLE

'Short Sharp Shock'

(iTunes)

Clocking in at a compact two and half minutes, most bands would still be grinding their way to an inevitable middle-eight by the time 'Short Sharp Shock' collapses in on itself, but by that point Borderville have already ransacked Bauhaus' 'Dark Entries', half of Bowie's 'Hunky Dory', paused for a quick *Godspell* moment, a snippet of medieval madrigal and plenty of hammering baroque pop. What else would you expect from a band whose ambition seems to be to make Queen look like Oasis in the theatricality stakes? So anyway, guitars

churn, the piano hammers mercilessly, Joe Swarbrick sneers and snarls like Pete Murphy and occasionally yelps like a scalded puppy and it barges and billows to a clamouring finale. We're still waiting for Borderville's full-blown two-hour rock opera, but in the meantime this single contains enough ideas to last a full album. Hell, even the accompanying letter came written in wonderfully elaborate handwriting in gold pen. Note to everyone else: make more of an effort, okay?

Dale Kattack

RED SQUARE

'Thirty Three'

(FMR)

Jon Seagroatt and Ian Staples are two of the most interesting people we have met on the local scene over the years. We first came across the pair when they went under the name B So Global, making strange, beguiling electronic music out of a canal boat near Banbury in the early 90s. They regaled us with tales of playing Deep Purple covers on comb and paper to indignant, often violent crowds of bikers or squaddies. More recently Jon has played in avant-jazz groovers The Colins Of Paradise. Red Square was the band they formed along with drummer Roger Telford (now apt of Oxford Improvisers) in Westcliff-On-Sea back in the mid-70s. Red Square were anarcho-socialist squat-dwelling musical confrontationalists, playing heavily-amped improvised gigs, often at deliberately inappropriate venues and at such a volume they once drowned out a Cliff Richard gig taking place half a mile away.

Thirty three years after the trio recorded this album they've unearthed it and are reforming to celebrate its overdue release. Music made so long ago could easily fall flat – what once was revolutionary soon becomes humdrum – but this never sounds out of date. It is bloody hard work, though. Roger's polyrhythmic drumming provides an ever-shifting platform for Jon's atonal clarinet and sax squalls and Ian's sometimes thunderous guitar intrusions or violin scraping. Over the course of an hour or so free jazz collides head-on with experimental metal and the more *outré* moments of psychedelia. Such sounds are, of course, far more commonplace now than they were when the band first existed, but thankfully there are still a majority of people out there for whom this will be the sound of hell on earth.

Dale Kattack



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BRANCH IMMERSION

'EP 1'

(Own label)

A new name to us, Branch Immersion. They're an Oxford/London-based trio boasting an eclectic range of influences but very much locked in the stripped-down, laidback acoustic pop scheme of things. And such is the way of these things it's easier to pick the holes in such bare music than the full-throttle attack of metal or somesuch. This four-song debut EP reveals a band who can occasionally infuse their simple, folk-minded songs with elements of

gentle bossanova or the odd flamenco flourish but mostly seem unable or unwilling to spread their wings. The neatly plucked acoustic guitars are pretty enough, with echoes of Bert Jansch and John Renbourn, but too often sound innocuous, just passing time, while the vocals, although strong enough in their breathy way, start to sound humdrum over four tracks. The sheer lack

of any kind of emotion on 'Howling Wind' is almost comical given the song's stormy subject matter, and as we stare out at the drizzle-sodden pavement outside as we listen through once more, an oppressive feeling of greyness descends.

This isn't the kind of overly-earnest, navel-gazing confessional torture we often feel obliged to condemn to the Demo Dumper; Branch Immersion would probably sound just fine at some low-key open mic session around town, but there just doesn't seem to be any real character trying to reach out of the music and make us care.

Dale Kattack

DR SHOTOVER

Mixes politics with sport

"There are housing estates in Britain where people have a lower life expectancy than in the Gaza Strip."

David Cameron, Conservative Party conference, 2008

Yes yes, and all this from a man who until a few days before the conference thought "the Gaza Strip" was a football kit worn by a certain washed-up Geordie mid-fielder. Go back to Witney, thick rich posh-boy! (That's David Cameron, not, ahem, Paul Gascoigne). Talking of poshos and sport, the East Indies Club enjoyed its annual sporting fixture last week to see in the New Year... Now, we have our fair share of decadent aristocrats on the books, but, let me tell you, the Woodstock And Northern County Alternative Rock Society is crawling with earls, dukes, counts, c*nts etc. Anyway, we saw 'em off on the Mediaeval Football pitch, but sadly the WANCARS proved the stronger team when it came to the Pig Wrestling event. (Don't ask). Anyway, all that was forgotten when it came to the post-match Drinkathon. In fact, MOST things were forgotten after that. The home team had cleverly arranged it so that Ye Iron Lady, the rustic ivy-clad inn to which we sportsmen repaired, served only locally-brewed mead. They'd all been weaned on it, but the East Indies Club "townies" were soon giggling like helpless infants as the effects of the honey-and-mescaline-impregnated brew kicked in. (Talking of "kicking in", we will draw a veil over the belligerent antics of Figgy Sturgess on the Mediaeval Football pitch). No idea how, but I found myself later in an East Oxford pub where the Yardbirds appeared to be doing an impromptu gig supporting the Dead Kennedys. "Happy Birthday, Julia!" I found myself crying, as "Shapes of Things" blended into "Holiday in Cambodia"... and the next morning I woke up, manacled to a radiator, in a crack den in one of those housing estates David "Oily Chops" Cameron was talking about. But that is another story.

Next month: Another Story



Dr Shottoverre limbers up at ye Mediaeval Football event

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Fri 20: **YOUNG SENSATION**

SECRET RIVALS + SUPERMAN REVENGE SQUAD Apr / 14

Sat 21: **THE SHAKER HEIGHTS** Apr / 15

Tue 24: **SPECTRUM** Apr / 17

Wed 25: **VERTICAL MOUNTAINS**

HREDA + VIXENS + I AM THIEVES + SEABUCKTHORN

ECHEDRAL Apr / 15

Fri 27: **THE HALCYONS**

ANDENSUM + FACEOMETER Apr / 14

Sat 28: **DON VITO**

ACTION BEAT + ELAPSE-O Apr / 15

Every Monday - Oxford Inn Comedy Club (8-11pm) £3... Every Thursday - The Spile Inn (8-11pm) £3
For all gigs email email@wheatsheaf.co.uk or visit our website www.wheatsheaf.co.uk
The Wheatsheaf, 120 The High Street, Oxford OX1 1DF / Telephone: 01865 721156

GIG GUIDE

SUNDAY 1st

REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar – Double helpings of reggae, dub and stuff.

MONDAY 2nd

MONGREL + MPHO + THE ELRICS: O2 Academy – Supposed supergroup made up of Reverend & The Makers' John McLure, along with ex-Arctic Monkeys bassist Andy Nicholson, current Monkey Matt Helders,

Friday 2nd

SOULFLY: O2 Academy

There can't be many people would argue that Max Cavalera isn't a modern-day metal legend, mainly due to his involvement with Brazilian death-thrash monsters Sepultura, but even the less inspired moments of certain subsequent Soulfly outings – notably 'III' and 'Prophecy' – can't dim his star rating too much. And anyway, with the release of last year's 'Conquer' – Soulfly's sixth studio album – the man, and the band, are very much back on form, sounding heavier and more focussed than they have in years. The birth of Soulfly was a turbulent one. It followed Cavalera's acrimonious departure from Sepultura and the death of his stepson, at which point Max developed a more spiritual outlook and lyricism. This doesn't detract too much from his trademark guttural rasp and frenzied showmanship though and he remains a born rock and roll showman. For the first few Soulfly albums he maintained a revolving door policy to musicians that has seen members of bands like Machine Head, Fear Factory, Deftones, Dubwar, Slipknot and even Limp Bizkit as well as Sean Lennon join Cavalera. More recently a core, including excellent young metal guitarist Marc Rizzo, has solidified and brought greater innovation and stability. Soulfly's stock in trade remains full-throttle metal, but elements of Brazilian tribal music as well as everything from reggae to Siberian folk music play a part. Max has been much imitated but rarely bettered and this, his first ever visit to Oxford, should be a riot.

FEBRUARY

Babysambles' Drew McConnell and political Anglo-Iraqi rapper Lowkey, together mixing up indie rock, funk and hip hop.

SOULFLY + INCITE: O2 Academy – Metal legend Max Cavalera rages into town – *see main preview*

PETE BOSS & THE BLUEHEARTS: The Bullingdon – Oxford blues-rock veterans Pete Boss and Tex Elmore – both formerly of The Elmore – return to the Famous Monday Blues with their electric blues, led by Boss' virtuoso fretplay in the style of Eric Clapton.

TUESDAY 3rd

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz club. Tonight's set comes from lively keyboard-led band The Howard Peacock Quintet.

ALCHEMY: The Cellar – Live music club night with goth-rockers Karn 8, thrash metallers Dedlok and punk-core noisemakers Elmbridge Court, plus DJs playing rock, metal, punk, hardcore, goth and industrial sounds.

IAN STAPLES + SUE SMITH & PHIL FREIZINGER: The Wheatsheaf, Hook Norton – Former-B So Global and Red Square musical experimenter Ian Staples mellows out in rural Oxfordshire with some help from Klub Kakofanney and Mighty Redox pair Sue and Phil.

WEDNESDAY 4th

THE JOE ALLEN BAND + JU JU + CHRIS THOMPSON: The Wheatsheaf – Stripped-down, emotive acoustic pop from highly promising local songsmith Joe Allen, along with violinist Angharad Jenkins and stand-up drummer Chrissie Sheaf. Little Fish singer Juju plays a solo acoustic set in support.

VICES + THE BLACK HATS: The Jericho Tavern – Raw, Stonesey roadhouse blues rocking from Reading's Vices, plus muscular, melodic new wave pop from Black Hats in support.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep, drum&bass and more with Caspa, Rod Azla et al.
OPEN DECKS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Open session for local DJs.

THURSDAY 5th

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with PHIL PESKETT: The Wheatsheaf – Return of the renowned keyboard player to the local jazz club.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running, and best, open mic session continues to showcase an eclectic selection of singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists ever week.

AGENTS OF JANE + ANTON BARBEAU + DEATH OF A SMALL TOWN + THE NEW MOON: The Jericho Tavern – Folky acoustic pop from Agents Of Jane, plus a return to town for psychedelic folk songsmith Anton Barbeau, who is joined by Jon, Oliver and Rob from Stornoway as his special backing band for the night. Elegantly downbeat acoustic pop from Death Of A Small Town opening the show.

ECLECTRICITY: The Cellar – Electro, bassline and fidget house with JoJo de Freq, Nikniknik and Slimful.

EAR-POPPING CANDY: The Bullingdon OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon APPLE PIRATE PROMOTIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Alt. Rock, hardcore and grunge bands night.

FRIDAY 6th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + PICTURE BOOK + ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND: The Wheatsheaf – Beats-led robo-rockers Space Heroes add a krautrocking groove and electro glitchiness to synth-pop noise at tonight's Klub Kakofanney, while Picture Book come in somewhere between Daft Punk and Pussycat Dolls on their recent electro-disco single.

THE RYES: O2 Academy – Jaunty 60s-styled soul-rockers out of London.
FUSE featuring STANTON WARRIORS + FAKE BLOOD + TODDLA T: O2 Academy – House and breaks club night with a headline set from nu-skool breaks duo Dominic Butler and Mark Yardley, mixing in electro and 2-step, while London's one-man electro mangler Fake Blood should get the crowd going with club hit 'Mars'. Star turn, though, might come from Sheffield's rising producer Toddla T, providing an eclectic mix of sounds that ranges from hip hop, jungle and ragga to bassline, electro and fidget house, his collaboration with Roots Manuva setting him up for crossover success the year.

THE SHUDDERS + MUSIC FOR PLEASURE + THE SCHOLARS + THE MUSGRAVES: The Jericho Tavern – Mixed bill of unsigned acts headed by Swindon's Shudders with a pirate-fixated mix of folk-rock and jangly pop. They're joined by Music For Pleasure, featuring Unbelievable Truth's Jason Moulster and Harry Angel's Hayley Philips; shimmering indie popsters The Scholars, plus folksters The Musgraves.

CHRISTINE KOWALCHUCK + KIMWEI: The Bullingdon

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

OVERRATED: Chester Arms – Live rock.
SKYLARKIN SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin's soul, reggae and ska knees-up moves to the Cellar, tonight featuring a live



set from Sir Bald Diddle's period rock'n'rollers Hipbone Slim & The Knee Tremblers.

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

FRAGILE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Yes tribute band who have played with Steve Howe.

SATURDAY 7th

RICHARD THOMPSON: The New Theatre – 1,000 years of pop in one night - *see main preview*

THE UK GUNS'N'ROSES: O2 Academy – Tribute to G'n'R, hopefully not featuring too much stuff off 'Chinese Democracy'.

MONDO CADA + GUNNBUNNY: The Wheatsheaf – Monstrous, full-throttle hardcore grunge noise attack from the West Oxfordshire amp botherers.

DR SLAGGLEBERRY + THE ELRICS + BRICKWORK LIZARDS + SOULJACKER: The Cellar – Red Stripe Unsigned Music Awards heat with Thame's excellent young math-core noisemongers Dr Slaggleberry, spiky indie rockers The Elrics and jazz, world and hip hop eclecticism from Brickwork Lizards.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Three clubs in one every Saturday night with classic and contemporary indie and electro at Transformation, trashy pop, glam and 80s at Trashy, plus hardcore, metal and alt.rock at Room 101.

BRONTIDE + BITCHES + FROM HERE WE RUN: The Jericho Tavern – Complex, heavyweight math-metal drones and atmospherics from Brighton's rising stars Brontide, featuring former members of Pictures and I Was A Cub Scout. Bitches provide the night's requisite dose of virulent industrial hardcore sonic violence, while From Here We Run offer a melodic pop slant on sweet-natured math-pop and are really quite lovely.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Funky house club.

SUNDAY 8th

FIGHTING WITH WIRE + THE NEW 1920s + TARGET 9 + TWENTY FIVE TO 9: O2 Academy – Return of Derry's Foo Fighters-styled grunge-pop outfit, formed by ex-Jetplane Landing guitarist Cahir O'Doherty and set to follow up last year's 'Man Vs Monster' debut album. Meanwhile, a new world record will be set for the number of bands on one bill with the number 9 in their name.



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NELL BRYDEN: O2 Academy – Throaty big band jazz, modern-day Dixie, bluegrass and blues from the New York songstress, taking inspiration from Cher, Norah Jones and Mari Wilson.

BUMBLEBEES + THE PARAFFINS: The Wheatsheaf – Double dose of lo-fi twee pop pleasures with janglers Bumblebees getting all sunshiney on yo ass with songs like 'Fluffy Clouds Of Joy', while Scotland's Paraffins proffer a scratchy, primitive blend of electro-pop and rockabilly.

MONDAY 9th

IMELDA MAY: O2 Academy – Raw, bluesy rockabilly and old-fashioned r'n'b from the Irish singer who opened both days of last year's Cornbury Festival.

LES WILSON & THE MIGHTY HOUSE ROCKERS: The Bullingdon – The Famous Monday Blues presents Staffordshire's livewire electric blues, boogie and slide guitar star Les Wilson, taking his cue from the likes of George Thorogood, The Fabulous Thunderbirds and Elmore James.

TUESDAY 10th

MAGAZINE: O2 Academy – Gig of the year, no contest – *see main preview*

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

HOORAY FOR HUMANS + AIDEN CANADAY: The Wheatsheaf – Ireland's Smalltown America-signed boy-girl pop-punkers Hooray For Humans head out on tour with local melancholic singer Aiden Canaday in support.

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

WEDNESDAY 11th

DEAR SUPERSTAR + NIGHT BY NIGHT + GUNNBUNNY + THE CRUSHING: The Bullingdon – A Burning Legacy metal night with Manchester's Dear Superstar kicking out a classic glam-tinged hard rock in the vein of Guns'n'Roses and Hanoi Rocks, whom they recently supported. Night By Night are fronted by sometime Sisters Of Mercy guitarist Ben Christo but ply a more traditional Def Leppard and Bon Jovi-inspired rock furrow. Local grunge bunnies Gunnbunny support, along with uber-metallers The Crushing.

PHAT BEATS: The Cellar – Live open funk jam session.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Acoustic open mic session.

THURSDAY 12th

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with STEVE

WATERMAN: The Wheatsheaf – Trumpeter and composer Waterman is the special guest at tonight's jazz club.

GENERAL BOVINE & THE JUSTICE FORCE 5 + BUICK McKANE + ALLEY

RATS: The Cellar – More comic superhero-obsessed hard rocking and costumed tomfoolery from General Bovine, plus trashy 70s-style heavy rock from Buick McKane and thrash punk noise from Oxford's Alley Rats.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre – Tonight's Catweazle features a main set from Dave Noble's



Saturday 7th

RICHARD THOMPSON: The New Theatre

Since emerging in the late-60s as a founding member of Fairport Convention, Richard Thompson has carved out a particularly individualistic musical career, from that pioneering folk-rock, through his early solo albums like 'Henry the Human Fly', the candid collaborations with his (now ex-) wife Linda in the 70s and early-80s, through a further 20 years of critically-lauded, award-winning solo outings and live shows. Thompson is widely regarded as one of the greatest guitarists the UK has produced (he is included in Rolling Stone's Top 20 All Time Guitar Greats), easily mixing the dynamic with the delicate, as well as being a wry, emotive lyricist, switching from personal to political with a keen knowledge of history. And it's this knowledge that has inspired his latest tour: taking a tour through 1,000 years of popular music. So he starts way back in 1,000AD with the oldest surviving record of English language music, written by the hermit St. Godric, along with the ancient 'Sumer I Iucmen', and moving adeptly through 15th and 19th Century ballads, sea shanties, the works of Purcell and the hits of Britney Spears. In between there's everything from madrigals to moptops; rounds to rap and courtly dances to Cole Porter. It's not just Thompson showing off – he really doesn't need to – but a celebration borne of a frustration that pop music before Elvis is all too easily forgotten.

Natureboy, mixing in good-natured Beatles-y pop and Autumnal 60s folk-pop as well as elements of country and jazz.

28 COSTUMES + I AM THIEVES +

SECRET RIVALS: The Jericho Tavern – Hysterical post-punk and trash-rock from Liverpool's 28 Costumes, with support from Led Zep-inspired rockers I Am Thieves and indie-punk newcomers Secret Rivals.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

REVOLVER: Fat Lil's, Witney – New monthly alt.rock club night playing grunge, hardcore, punk and new wave.



Tuesday 10th

MAGAZINE:

O2 Academy

Words can barely start to describe how excited we were when we heard Magazine were reforming for a couple of dates in London and Manchester this year. But when we learned they'd also be playing a special warm-up show in Oxford, well, we nearly been done wee wee in our pants. If you're not already aware that Magazine are one of the greatest – and most influential – bands of the post-punk era (up there with Joy Division, Wire and Echo & The Bunnymen), then you should investigate them immediately. Formed in Manchester in 1977 by original Buzzcocks vocalist Howard Devoto, Magazine brought literary paranoia and a pop-friendly electronic edge to the taut, aggressive new wave sound of the day. It helped that Devoto's elegant, barbed lyricism and sardonic delivery was backed up by a band of phenomenal individual talents – including bassist Barry Adamson, later to join Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds; innovative guitarist John McGeogh (later of Visage, Siouxsie and the Banshees and PiL) and keyboard player Dave Formula. Through four studio albums they went places that no other band had been before and have subsequently been a massive influence on Radiohead, U2 and The Smiths as well as modern electro bands like Late Of The Pier. Sadly McGeogh died in 2004 and his place in Magazine is taken by Noko, who formed the short-lived Luxuria project with Devoto in the late 80s. Tonight has every potential to be the gig of the year already and you'd be a damn fool to miss out on witnessing real musical legends in action.

FRIDAY 13th

FREE RANGE: O2 Academy – Grime, dubstep, drum&bass and hip hop club night with D&B duo Chase and Status, plus MOBO-nominated DJ Kano, an onstage face-off between UK beatbox champion Beardyman and UK DMC champion JFB, as well as dubtep DJ N-Type. There's also a Free Range resident DJs showcase featuring Mr Lager, Darkman and more.
QUICKFIX PRESENTS with VON BRAUN + THE HOLY ORDERS + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + THE SCARLETTS: The Wheatsheaf – Darkly-inclined atmospheric alt.rock from Von Braun at tonight's Quickfix session, plus Hull's raw, angular punk rockers Holy Orders, local angst-driven grunge-rockers DF4F and ska-punk newcomers The Scarletts.

LAST DAYS OF LORCA + SPIRAL 25 + THIN GREEN CANDLES: The Bullingdon – Moshka mixed bill.

ELECTRALYTE + TURNPIKE GLOW + WHITE SUNDAY + INVISIBLE VEGAS: The Jericho Tavern – Chelmsford's soft-rockers Electralyte headline, plus support from Reading's spacey indie types Turnpike Glow, classic indie rocking from White Sunday and heavyweight blues-rock from Invisible Vegas.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Jazz dance, Afrobeat, Latin, Balkan beat and world breaks club night with a live set from London's The Soothsayers.

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + THE ISAMBARDS: The Magdalen – Monthly residency for the swampy psychedelic r'n'b favourites and chums.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SOULJACKER: Fat Lil's, Witney – Funked-up heavy rock in the vein of Led Zep and Clutch.

SATURDAY 14th

EXLOVERS + WE AERONAUTS + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS: The Cellar – Lovely, sweet-natured Byrds-inspired jangle pop from London's dreamy new pop darlings

Exlovers, who have recently signed to Chess Club Records – the label responsible for White Lies amongst others. Their airy Elliot Smith-meets-Teenage Fanclub melancholy and boy-girl harmonies is surely the first sign of summer. Great expansive folk-pop support from We Aeronauts, plus an acoustic set from the very wonderful Tristan & The Troubadours.

BORDERVILLE + DYING ANIMALS: The Wheatsheaf – Borderville launch their new single, twisting glam-rock into cool new baroque shapes with some urgent early-70s Bowie sparkle and plenty of Bauhaus-style art-goth rocking. Grungy punk noise from Dying Animals.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

LUCID: Coven II – Psychedelic and progressive trance and breaks at the Lucid Valentine's Day special, with sets from Krusada, Mr Minimax, Earth Monkey and more.

SUNDAY 15th

SUE SMITH & PHIL FREIZINGER + DES BARKUS + ZIM BRADY + THE HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Magdalen – New acoustic night from Mighty Redox couple Sue and Phil, plus friends.
REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar

MONDAY 16th

LATE OF THE PIER + MICACHU + CONNAN MOKASIN: O2 Academy – Electro-glam ravers get the party started – *see main preview*

THE ADAM BOMB BAND: The Bullingdon – Return to town for the big-haired LA glam-metal guitarist, currently on a mammoth European tour, and whose past experiences include auditioning for Kiss when he was 18, sharing an apartment with Izzy Stradlin, jamming with Eddie Van Halen and, along the way, supporting the likes of Chuck Berry and Johnny Thunders. Stylistically he's a heavy rock guitar

hero of the old school with nods to Hanoi Rocks and Sweet along the way.

TUESDAY 17th

GLASVEGAS + FRIENDLY FIRES + WHITE LIES + FLORENCE & THE MACHINE: O2 Academy – NME's annual awards tour returns to town – *see main preview*

FIVE FINGER DEATH PUNCH + EXIT 10 + RISE TO REMAIN: O2 Academy – LA metalcore troupe out on a headline tour in support of album 'Way Of The Fist' after supports to the likes of Slipknot, Korn and Disturbed.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz club night with singer Katya Gorrie.

KAPOW!: The Cellar – Indie and electro club night.

WEDNESDAY 18th

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and grime club night.

THURSDAY 19th

HOCKEY + PASSION PIT + BEAR HANDS: The Bullingdon – US pop underground showcase tour – *see main preview*

TESTAMENT: O2 Academy – The veteran Bay Area thrash merchants return with a new album, 'The Formation Of Damnation' – their first in eight years – having undergone myriad line-up changes since the early-80s when they were peers of near-neighbours Metallica. Their commercial success came early on and these days they're more of a cult concern, but later this year they head off on tour with Judas Priest and Megadeth, and their early thrash style remains influential.

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS + THE GREAT ESKIMO HOAX + UTE: The Cellar – Melodic, dreamy math-pop from TTNG, plus Worcester's skittish Youthmovies-styled math-rock types Gt. Eskimo Hoax and local ambient minimalist alt.pop crew Ute.

CROSSTOWN TRAFFIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Jericho Tavern – Jazz musician Stephanie Pirrie hosts an all-comers session.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
APPLE PIRATE PROMOTIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney

FRIDAY 20th

YOUNG SENSATION + SUPERMAN REVENGE SQUAD + SECRET RIVALS: The Wheatsheaf – Swiss Concrete come up with the goods once again with wonderfully expansive popstrels Young Sensation, at times coming on like Bryan Ferry fronting Arcade Fire, their summery jangle-pop occasionally giving way to more full-blooded electro-tinged material. Croydon's one-man acoustic social commentary Superman Revenge Squad continues to dissect the idiocy and general unpleasantness of humanity in support.

THE NOMINEES + THE COLOURS + HEARTS IN PENCIL + BLUE

STRAGGLERS: The Jericho Tavern – Chunky rock chugging from The Nominees, with

support from Reading's promising epic stadium-pop types The Colours, Witney's pleasingly ramshackle indie-punks Hearts In Pencil and grungy 70s-styled rockers Blue Stragglers.

LES CLOCHARDS: The Chester Arms – Exotic blend of Gallic café pop, raw country and Elvis-style rock'n'rolling from the Francophile local favourites.

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

THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + THE HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES:

The Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

THE STONE SALOON: Fat Lil's, Witney – Southern-fried roadhouse rock.

SATURDAY 21st

ELECTRONIC NIGHTS with THE RESPONSE COLLECTIVE + DJ MATT: The

Monday 16th

LATE OF THE PIER: O2 Academy

The last time we went down to the Academy to see Castle Donnington's late Of the Pier the gig was cancelled at the last minute because their keyboard broke down. It was just like the early-80s when bands entire set would grind to a halt as their state-of-the-art Fairlight went on the blink and all that futuristic promise looked a bit fragile. That's not the only reason why Late Of The Pier remind us of that period. Their squelchy electro-pop, funny robot voices, extravagant costumes and deliberately silly stage names (Francis Dance; Jack Paradise) scream new romantic excess, an unabashed throwback to a time when flashy indulgence wasn't frowned upon by horrible grey little men. And it's great that the UK is producing bands like this after a few years of dreadfully dreary post-Libertines, Jam-indebted workaday pub rockers. Although unfortunately lumped in with the far more normal and boring Klaxons as new rave, LOTP are much more fun, and far more flamboyant; their debut album 'Fantasy Black Channel' references everything from Gary Numan and Roxy Music to Aphex Twin, Blur and Queen, veering from glitchy electronica to stomping spandex rock in the blink of an eye. Quite simply they're a fantastic party band, and hopefully their ongoing success means they can now afford more reliable synthesizers. We wouldn't want to get all dolled up in bacofoil suits for nothing, now, would we?



Jericho Tavern – A night of electronic music with hosts Response Collective creating dreamy electronic soundscapes with hip hop beats and cinematic ambience.

REEL BIG FISH + SUBURBAN LEGENDS + RANDOM HAND: O2 Academy – More stomping ska-punk from south California's ever-touring party rockers.

OXFORD COLLAPSE + PHANTOM

THEORY + ELEPHANTS: The Cellar – Brooklyn's melodic jangle-punk starlets play Vacuous Pop's club night – *see main preview*

THE SHAKER HEIGHTS: The Wheatsheaf – Rootsy, rocking Americana from the promising local act.

KATE GARRETT + DUOTONE: Cumnor Old School – Launch night for Kate Garrett and Barney Morse-Brown's new record label, with Kate plying her dreamy acoustic folk-pop, while Barney mixes up folk, classical and post-rock sounds with his cello-led project Duotone.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

THE YOU WEREN'T THERE BAND: The Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston – Yardbirds and Cream covers plus plenty of 60s-style r'n'b, rock and psychedelia from Hugh McManners' new band.

ECCLECTIC DANCE: The Bullingdon HOPE & GLORY: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Madness, The Specials and other ska and Two Tone favourites.

SUNDAY 22nd

LITTLE FISH + THE DACOITS + THE FOLLYS: The Bullingdon – Sublime garage-rock splendour from the Fishes, set to be Oxford's next big success story, plus grungey glam-pop from Dacoits and feelgood 60s-style pop from The Follys.

SKINT & DEMORALISED: O2 Academy – South Yorkshire soul-pop duo set for PR-led success in 2009, mixing Arctic Monkeys' earthy narratives with a brassy, lightweight pop froth that sounds like it might have escaped from an old Blow Monkeys album, and the general feel of Robbie Williams slumming it at a Wham! convention, but with a deal with Mercury under their belt and a debut album, 'Love & Other Catastrophes', featuring Amy Winehouse's backing band, The Dap Kings, you'd be a fool to bet against them making it chartward in the very near future.

SUE & THE UNICORN: The Jericho Tavern – Solo project for Robots In Disguise's Sue Denim, taking a more acoustic DIY approach, more personal and less kitsch than her retro synth-pop disco outfit.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: The Red Lion, Kidlington

BIG BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney

MONDAY 23rd

KING B: The Bullingdon – Groove-led roadhouse blues led by the powerful vocal talents of singer Claire Johnson.

THE RILEYS: O2 Academy – Essex rockers out on tour in support of their new single, 'Do You Feel Me', alternately frothy and spiky or stuck in a funk-rock rut.

THE BATTLEFIELD BAND: Nettlebed Folk Club – Veteran Scottish folk heroes, successors



Tuesday 17th

SHOCKWAVES NME AWARDS TOUR: O2 Academy

NME's annual statement of intent rolls into town again, boasting the usual mix of a big name and a handful of promising newcomers. This year's event is typically mixed, with headliners **Glasvegas** already established as one of the best new bands around, coming off the back of some cracking singles, notably the brilliant melancholic sweep of 'Daddy's Gone', the Glaswegian rockers capturing the essence of both Spector-esque girl pop, the honey-dripping noise of The Jesus & Mary Chain and the earthy Scottish brogue of The Proclaimers. Fantastic stuff. Joining them on the tour are St Albans' **Friendly Fires**, with their anthemic mix of Talking Heads-style punk-funk, 70s disco and nu-rave and Editors-referencing new wave revivalists **White Lies**, who along with Friendly Fires, played last year's NME New Noise tour. All this plus **Florence & The Machine** (pictured), one of the most talked about new acts around, basically singer/songwriter Florence Welch, who has just won the second Brit Critics Choice Award, following on from Adele last year. If the award isn't a sure-fire guarantee of success, it's as good a leg up the music industry ladder as you can hope for, although Florence's kooky, captivating folk-blues voice and raw, garagey pop is easily deserving of any and all success that comes her way.

to The Corries' throne and currently in their 30th year fusing traditional Celtic folk traditions and instrumentation with modern day sounds. Currently out on tour in support of a new live DVD and well worth catching as premier proponents of traditional Scottish music.

TUESDAY 24th

SPECTRUM: The Wheatsheaf – Sonic Boom brings his Spectrum project to Vacuous Pop's club night, Spectrum being more of a linear continuation of his Spacemen 3 work, mixing drones and electronic spaciness with devotional lyrics and vocals, taking inspiration from Suicide and creating a hypnotic otherworldliness.

A DAY TO REMEMBER: O2 Academy – Grunting metalcore meets spiky emo and punk-pop with Florida's Victory-signed ADTR.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – The Hugh Turner Band are tonight's live act.

MIS-SHAPES: The Cellar – Indie club night.

WEDNESDAY 25th

DAS POP: O2 Academy – Pop by name, pop by nature with the cheery, cheesy Belgian outfit who've recently been out on tour with Alphabeat, Soulwax and The Feeling.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 26th

WE ARE WOLVES: O2 Academy – Harsh, dirty and downright primitive synth-pop-cum-rockabilly from Montreal's We Are Wolves, taking cues from Devo and Suicide but sounding more like a cross between Add N To (X) and The Cramps at times.

SMILEX + MOLOTOV SEXBOMB: Fat Lil's, Witney – Sleazy punk rock from the ever-exuberant noise machine that is Smilex. Similarly-minded Witney thrash-punkers Molotov Sexbomb support.

Thursday 19th

HOCKEY / PASSION PIT / BEAR HANDS: The Bullingdon

Hardly household names yet, but this package tour of three of the US pop underground's brightest hopes for 2009 is an early chance to catch bands you'll doubtless be hearing and reading a lot more of in the coming months. Portland, Oregon's Hockey may have a seriously crap name but the scruffy vegan three-piece manage that difficult task of bringing 70s MOR soul-rock up to date, at their best coming in somewhere between The Hold Steady and LCD Soundsystem, although there's also the odd J Geils Band moment to be had in there. Perhaps an even brighter prospect are Cambridge, Massachusetts' Passion Pit, a band formed around songwriter and producer Michael Angelakos, who only got into recording stuff so he could make a CD for his girlfriend as a Valentine's present. All hysterical synth-pop, cheesy AOR and disco, shouty falsettos and crazy electro squiggles, they're a highly unlikely fusion of Flaming Lips, Randy Newman, Stevie Wonder and The Go! Team, or as someone pointed out, the MOR MGMT. Finally, Too Pure's new signings, Bear Hands, from New York, add a slightly heavier alt-rock edge to the tour, blending spacey electro-rock and grungy pop fuzz. And we'll bet our bottom dollar, as Americans might say, that however unfamiliar the names are now, you'll find something to love tonight.



HOUSE OF BROTHERS + WITCHES + ARCANES ROOTS: The Cellar – Former-Murder Of Rosa Luxembourg fella Andrew Jackson goes acoustic with his new House Of Brothers project. Support comes from excellent, dark-hearted rockers Witches and Surrey's Biffy Clyro-like grungers Arcane Roots.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 27th

SLIDE with HOT CHIP DJs: O2 Academy – Oxford's premier house club night celebrates its 14th birthday with a DJ set from Hot Chip's Felix and Al and a live electro-house set from Rex The Dog.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE HALCYONS + ANDENSUM +

FACEOMETER: The Wheatsheaf – Another varied bill from GTI, tonight featuring Mile High Young Team offshoot The Halcyons, mixing organ-led torch songs with squelchy electro dance-rock. Bicester's Andensum bring their melodic prog-tinged metal to the party, plus witty, literary acoustic singer-songwriter Faceometer.

MELTING POT with PEERLESS PIRATES + ECHO BOOMER: The Bullingdon – Punked-up indie pop with a Smiths sense of melodrama from Peerless Pirates at tonight's Melting Pot, plus Radiohead-styled rock from Echo Boomer.

QUEEN OF CLUBS CABARET: The Isis, Iffley Lock – Another mixed bag of treats with music from vintage jazz 10-piece The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, songstress Susanna Starling and bluesman Richard Brotherton, plus comedy and magic.

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with Alix Perez, Bekah B2B and Tasha.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SUNFLY: Fat Lil's, Witney – Veteran local blues-rockers.

SATURDAY 28th

ACTION BEAT + DON VITO + ELAPSE-O: The Wheatsheaf – Another visit to town for the Bletchley collective, whose carefully-orchestrated chaos is inspired by early Sonic Youth and Glenn Branca and variously featuring anything between one and four drummers and at least four guitars. Germany's Don Vito are over in the UK as tour support, cranking out a clanging, sheet-metal form of experimental hardcore and math-rock, while local experimental heroes Elapse-O bring their excellent Suicide and Liars-inspired noise along in support.

COO COO CLUB with THE LONG INSIDERS: The Jericho Tavern – Elegantly cinematic 60s pop shimmer from The Long Insiders at tonight's Coo Coo Club.
4 OR 5 MAGICIANS + EXILES + THE REPEATS: The Cellar – Spiky indie punk thrash and American college rock from the headliners.



Saturday 21st

OXFORD COLLAPSE / SWOUND / PHANTOM THEORY: The Cellar

Great to see Vacuum Pop back in the promoting game after a quiet 2008; their gigs are consistently some of the most fun and challenging in town and tonight's show should be no exception as they invite Oxford Collapse over the pond just as the Brooklyn-based three-piece look like they might make the commercial breakthrough their consistently enthusiastic reviews always promised. With their most recent album, 'Remember The Night Parties', Oxford Collapse find themselves on Sub Pop and moving above and beyond their early nervous, angular punk-disco yelp into far poppier and sophisticated territory. The band are steeped in 80s American alt.rock, from the energetic garage froth of early REM, through the fuzzy pop of Superchunk to Polvo's abstract noise. The vocal harmonies and jangly guitars of the new songs are less hurried but more ambitious than before and the band cover bases from youthful exuberance to grandiose pastoral moodiness, alternately joyous or plaintive. In some ways they now sound like a much younger take on The Hold Steady, which perhaps shouldn't come as a surprise given they share a producer, John Agnello, whose influence is tangible. Oxford Collapse fizz with a warm punky energy and it's a good to hear a band not simply resting on their cult-pleasing laurels. Excellent support tonight from the Isle of Man's spiky, angular rockers Swound, plus one of Oxford's own most promising young bands, Phantom Theory, getting the right mix of hardcore noise and elaborate beats'n'riffs innovation. Kent's polyrhythmic popsters Elephants open the show.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy
THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND: The New Inn, Witney
THE YOU WEREN'T THERE BAND: The Waterwitch, Didcot
DUBSTEP GARAGE: The Bullingdon

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INTRODUCING....

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

Spiral 25

Who are they?

Spiral 25 are Sunny Singh on guitar; Andy Proper on drums and percussion; Chris Monger on guitar, harmonica, electric mandolin and synth; Russell Denham who sings and Joe Chapman on bass guitar. Occasionally they also have their friend Nick Gray, a doctor of music from London, playing violin with them live. Joe, Chris and Andy were part of much-loved but short-lived The Factory. After that band split they briefly formed Dirty Sci-Fi. Sunny, Andy, Russell and Joe played as two thirds of Indika. Nick and Joe were in Henry Marten's Ghost in the 1990s. Spiral 25 formed after getting together for a jam in January 2008 and "decided we liked what we were doing so carried on jamming." So far they have played a series of gigs locally and in London; their first review came in Nightshift from a gig at the Cellar last autumn. This month they launch their debut EP on their own label.

What do they sound like?

"Slow-motion narcotic groove rock" according to Nightshift's review of their gig at the Cellar last September. The band's chief inspiration harks back to The Velvet Underground and 13th Floor Elevators, through the narcotic drone-rock of Spacemen 3 and Loop to more spaced-out garage rock of Black Rebel Motorcycle Club and The Warlocks. "They're hairy and blissed-out, spaced-out vocals riding the heavily opiated guitars, often recalling Loop's more dark-minded take on psychedelia. Spiral 25 will be one of the local bands to lose your mind to in the coming months," we said.

What inspires them?

"We all have our individual influences and we get together and jam around a riff, melody or just some feedback and then refine it until we have a fully formed song, all created from scratch in one room."

Career highlight so far:

"Creating the EP together. Joe was also interviewed on *BBC Introducing* one afternoon whilst running a bath.

And the lowlight?

"We played a 'music industry showcase' in London, which turned out to be a



badly organised pay-to-play gig in Lewisham. The local Nando's had boarded up windows, which looked about the safest place to eat. By the time we got on stage, 40 minutes late, half the people who had come to see us had to leave to get their last train home. It wasn't all bad though, as Reverend D Wayne Love from Alabama 3 was DJing, and as well as playing some great music he seemed to love us. The chicken was nice, too."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Raggasaurus."

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

"Star Wars Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back' by John Williams."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

Spiral 25 launch their new EP on January 31st along with Cat Matador at the Cellar. They also play at the Bullingdon on Friday 13th February with Last Days Of Lorca and Thin Green Candles.

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"The variety of music is refreshing and unlike many other places, especially for its size, the music community is close and supportive too. There's not enough drugs though."

You might love them if you love:

Loop, Spacemen 3, Thee Hypnotics, Wooden Shjips.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/thespiral25

Whatever happened to... those heroes

The No

Who?

The No were proper punk rock in the days of proper punk rock. The teenage band consisted of David Gascoyne on guitar; Mark Tanner on vocals; Andrew Fulkes on drums and Ian Nixon on bass and vocals. The band used to hang around, and frequently play at the Oranges & Lemons on St Clement's (now the Angel & Greyhound). The pub was a haven for local punks, skins, hippies and deadbeats and, despite its violent reputation, is remembered by veterans of the scene now as a creative and welcoming venue.

What?

As we say, The No were punk rock. With a proper punk rock name, at a time when punk itself was still fresh and vital. Their melodically yobbish sound fell somewhere between The Jam, Generation X, Undertones and Sham 69.

When?

The band came together in July 1978 after Ian replaced 'Handsome Dick' in Handsome Dick and the Members and started gigging at the Oranges & Lemons and the Caribbean Club (in Paradise Street, long since demolished but once a great informal gig and club venue, run by local West Indian guys who would sell cans of Red Stripe and patties to speed-addled punks, while the in-house sound system played Dennis Brown records). Having acquired a manager (Richard Armstrong, the then social secretary of the College of Further Education) and the patronage of the people who ran 722027 sound hire,



The No supported the likes of The Adverts, The Only Ones and John Otway and recorded their debut single "somewhere along Banbury Road". It was, according to Ian, "Rough as a bear's arse, but the melodies hold up and it has a stupid charm about it". Typical of the times, the single itself, 'Everything I Need', was never properly released. The band split up shortly after the single's production stalled. "We always squabbled, being young and daft, but then David went to university and even with a new guitarist the chemistry was gone."

Why?

While The No never had any great success outside of Oxford, and barely existed for more than a year, they were at the centre of a very special Oxford scene while it lasted, and they inspired a lot of other local youngsters to form bands. Chief amongst these was Mac, then only 13, and who the band had to smuggle into gigs and who would go on to be one of the most important figure in Oxford's musical success story as promoter of the Jericho Tavern and The Point.

Where?

Too much has happened to all the members since they split to document here, but right now Mark lives in Scotland and works as a chef and is part of the Darlin Clementines Old Time Harmony Duo. David is still around Oxford, he ran a garage for a while and still sells motors. Andrew seems to have completely disappeared from view, while Ian has remained a regular on the local music scene with bands such as Borgnine and currently fronts Les Clochards, a band also featuring ex-Anyways keyboard player Karen Cleave and Talulah Gosh/Heavenly guitarist Pete Montchiloff. The No did reform for one gig in 1999. Andrew's place on drums was taken by Tim Turan.

How?

A compilation CD of all of The No's studio recordings, called 'Oh Yeah?', exists. Buy it from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road for a fiver.



LIVE

FRANK TURNER

O2 Academy

"Three years ago I was playing to two people in the Kiss Bar," says Frank Turner as he nears the end of his set. Since then, the former Million Dead man has been tirelessly touring the country, more often than not with an acoustic guitar as his only travelling companion. That the Academy is rammed tonight is testament to his commitment to the cause, which is centred on the DIY philosophy of hardcore punk than more anything else. More pertinently, it's rammed tonight because Mr Turner has more than his fair share of great songs.

When on his own, Turner is a consummate performer, with an affable nature and a sharp wit that elevates his shows above the archetypal bloke with a guitar singing songs about how he doesn't have a girlfriend. Tonight, as ever when he plays his full band gigs, he's backed by elements of local heroes Dive Dive, which expands the depth of these songs considerably, and allows a more faithful rendering of the material from his albums, 'Sleep Is For The Week' and 'Love, Ire and Song'.

Their presence also means that he can prowl the stage with more intent, whipping the front few rows into what can only be described as a joyful catharsis – it's like a mini Springsteen gig. He may have songs about break-ups ('Worse Things Happen at Sea'), the death of close friends ('Long Live The Queen') and facing up to the trials of middle age (practically every other song) but rather than the mournful tone adopted by many a singer-songwriter, it's all laced with positivity and ridiculously catchy choruses.

He keeps his political side relatively quiet tonight, with no soundbites between songs and the omission of 'Thatcher Fucked The Kids'. But you suspect, and hope, that in these uncertain times he'll start to rev his political engine. Bands with great tunes and a high level of political articulacy tend to float to the top when things start to go belly up. Not that he needs political unrest to make his mark of course. Three years ago, he could hardly have hoped to have nearly 400 people providing backing vocals to his songs, but here we are, and his star is in the ascendency.

Sam Shepherd



Frank Turner photo by rphimages

THE VOLUNTARY BUTLER SCHEME /DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS

O2 Academy

What is going through the minds of people who insist on playing (or should I say murdering) music when it is clear they cannot differentiate between a C minor and a sharp one? And what is up with people that use music to enforce Chinese torture onto audiences? And what makes them think that stopping in the middle of a song because they're playing crap is the way to go? And what is up with people that want to call themselves Dirty Rotten Scoundrels and really take it that far? This is the case of these five kids from Oxford with huge egos but small butter hands, who can't agree whether they are playing 4/4 or 4/3.8, who can't sing in tune nor play guitar in the appropriate key nor listen to each other whatsoever. Meanwhile, the bass player decides to pretend he is not there and the drummer proceeds to perform a raving, rampant solo on his own... probably out of desperation.

Utterly and awfully rotten, indeed.

Just as I think I'd be better slice my wrists open than suffer any more, here come The Voluntary Butler Scheme. What a breeze of fresh air. What a bouncy, poppy, glossy, wonderful little holiday. Rob Jones, a one-man band from the West Midlands, and his two companions for the night on drums, percussion, brass, synths, claps, doobedooahhs (you name it, they play it) could not have stolen the show in any better way. This is indie pop to the core, no pretense, no fluff, no cellophane wrappings. His lyrics are original, silly and California-like sunny in contrast to a near-to-rusty but harmonious voice. There is no denying his music and vocals lift the atmosphere up and many heads into a constant nodding and foot tapping. If I ever feel like killing myself again, I'll go listen instantly to The Voluntary Butler Scheme all over again.

Liane Escorza

WE AERONAUTS

The Wheatsheaf

Playing to a full, if noisy and rambunctious, Wheatsheaf, We Aeronauts seem to be channelling the spirit of the Arcade Fire, The Decemberists and Spiritualized, if the Arcade Fire were ten years younger, The Decemberists liked shoegaze and Jason Pierce if he'd never discovered drugs.

They're the kind of band you'd like to take home to your mother, all fresh-faced and, somewhat previously, full of the joys of spring. Their music mixes the delicate (melodies so fragile, light and pretty they would disintegrate in your hands), the soaring (head-swimmingly climactic endings to many of their songs, *a la* Spiritualized) and the eccentric (at one point they all jump off the stage to play a whole song to the somewhat indifferent audience. Lurking at the back, I have to move forward and practically press my face to a guy playing an acoustic guitar to hear anything). An accordion is produced and becomes a mainstay of the rest of the set.

They clap their hands. There is a trombone. It's such a refreshing sight, and sound, after the guitar-heavy stylings of the previous act on the bill, The Dacoits.

It's a shame, then, that the crowd is so bloody rude, talking at the tops of their voices throughout the set, and even more of a pity that the sound quality is so muddy. You can barely hear the trombone, and the accordion struggles to make an impression.

Their set is also frustratingly short, a little over thirty minutes. They're pretty earnest at times, and completely unsuited to the venue and crowd, but their music still captivates.

We Aeronauts are becoming a bit of a mainstay of the Oxford music scene already, having only performed their first gig just over a year ago, and when they're next about I'd advise you to check them out. Just make sure you get right to the front if you want to properly enjoy the full experience.

James Benefield

THE RESPONSE COLLECTIVE

The Jericho Tavern

Knowing how hard it is to start off a new club night, respect must be due to The Response Collective for packing in a healthy number of punters tonight. Even more brownie points to the first DJ for dropping Elton John's 'Tiny Dancer'; the original 1971 track, not that terrible dance version.

The Response Collective is a somewhat cheeky name, in that there's only three of them, but it seems to sum up a cheerful determination to do things their own way. On top of a backing track we get guitar, bass and 'turntablism', which translates as rhythmic digital scratching to augment their somewhat aimless, dreamy soundscapes. The pieces – you'd struggle to call them songs – meander around in a vaguely pleasing manner without really revealing any structure. Several times I find myself checking to see if the set is still in progress. Their attitude seems to mirror Newman and Baddiel's approach to comedy: don't worry about punchlines (musical hooks) or timing (song structure), just keep firing out the material. Coming across as bedroom musicians, particularly guitarist Russell, who've suddenly

found themselves in front of an audience, they even tellingly introducing their computer, 'Mr Mac', and effects rack to us.

If all this sounds negative I should point out that I absolutely love this band, not for their musical prowess but simply for their complete lack of pretentiousness or regard for anything resembling fashion. 'Tropical State' is the closest they come to a fully-fledged song and could be knocked into a chart contender, but maybe that's exactly what they don't need. David Thomas of Pere Ubu once defined rock music as "the moving of black boxes from one side of town to the other", and I have nothing but respect for all those bands who spend every weekend doing just that. We need them a lot more than we need Muse.

In a further twist the closing DJ Matt plays a kind of Hi-NRG set, close to what you might have heard in a gay club a few years ago, and the dancefloor erupts accordingly. All this returns to the Tavern on February 21st, you could do a lot worse than join them.

Art Lagun

THE MEDICINE / THE MOUNTAIN PARADE / DUOTONE

The Jericho Tavern

The sonic pairing in the name is presumably that of acoustic guitar and 'cello, but Duotone is a one man operation, and that man is Barney Morse-Brown. With the aid of a loop pedal Barney strings together some meltingly gorgeous licks and melodic fragments, until his music sounds alternately like Nick Drake in a hall of mirrors, and Sibelius' 'Swan Of Tuonela' caressed by Arthur Russell's sleepy ghost.

The only weak point in a stunning set is the vocal: Barney's voice, whilst not unpleasant, has all the power and resilience of wet tissue paper, and can't find a comfortable place in the intricately constructed musical skeins. To be honest, there's no need to even open your mouth when your 'cello sings like this, and you'd wait a long, long time to see a musician with such a wealth of subtle phrasing opening a gig. Everyone should see Duotone, whether they're introspective folkies, classical vultures, melodic pop kids or post-rock clever dicks, it's a treat.

The Mountain Parade's set is roughly a 'Concerto For Trumpet, Melodica, Cardigans And Standing Around Sheepishly'. Think of the twee-est thing you can, multiply it by glitter to the power of homemade badges, and go from there. The music is quite pleasing – something like Belle & Sebastian at a toddler group – but the performance is so

cutesy and ramshackle the only possible reactions are gooey condescension ("How sweet"), or towering rage ("Try to look like you're making a bloody effort!"). Singer Roxy has a clear, limpid voice, and some of the songs are good, especially the history of 'Shackleton Bewley, Explorer Extraordinaire', but whilst we're not insistent that every gig is a sweat-drenched hell pit, we'd rather not feel as if we were watching someone else's kids in the infant school nativity.

No hint of the unrehearsed or whimsical as The Medicine crack into a tight set of bluesy, roadhouse rock yarns. The playing is faultless, with especial mention for Joel Bassuk's incisive drumming, but although we have a lot of respect for leader Matt Sage, both for his acoustic performances and his running of the excellent Catweazle and Big Village promotions, the gig gets tedious after about a song and a half. The third number is approximately The Beatles' 'Don't Let Me Down' as performed by the band who do the incidental music on *Friends*, whereas the majority of it resembles Bob Dylan's 'Oh Mercy' LP without the mysterious alchemy that makes it a Dylan album, and whilst we're not insistent that every show is a heart-rending exploration of the soul, we'd rather not feel as if we were watching someone else's Dads in a garish small town covers bar on a slow Wednesday.

David Murphy



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THE MIGHTY REDOX

The Bullingdon

When you have nothing to fear, you are truly free. So discovers Evie Hammond in Alan Moore's masterpiece, *V For Vendetta*. Perhaps the same could be true of The Mighty Redox, the

band centred around Klub Kakofanney couple Phil Freizinger and Sue Smith, the pearly king and queen of the Oxford music scene.

Steeped in hippy, 'anything goes' ideology,

they're as far removed from cool as it's possible to be, but paradoxically they're far cooler than any band of twenty-something hopefuls trying to tag onto the latest big thing. The palpable affection tonight's crowd have for the band reflects The Mighty Redox's unique standing in Oxford. It's Monday night at the Bully's blues club, the place is packed and by the end everyone is dancing. No-one, not band or crowd, care if they look daft or not. And by heck, Sue Smith, alternately wearing a Viking helmet and military cap, occasionally dancing onstage with a miniature emu puppet, looks daft.

Tonight's gig is split into two sets. The first caters more for the regular blues crowd, Phil cranking out chugging Bo Diddley riffs over Graham Barlow's solid, meaty bass lines. For the most part it's a bit pedestrian, only the poppier, more psychedelic 'Blood' lifting them out of their swampy dirge. The second half is far better and the party starts in earnest, the bass immediately feels funkier, like something snatched from mid-70s New York, and the band loosens up, Sue revealing her inner Patti Smith on 'Eternity' before a lively stoner vibe takes hold. Admittedly there are some embarrassing jazz-funk and cod-reggae moments amid the gutsy r'n'b stabs, but that's what you get from The Mighty Redox – a bit of everything, and by the end they're kicking down the door with a crusty folk-punk stomp before hitting on their madcap finest moment, 'Bullaburra', an acid-frazzled barn dance.

Two hours have passed, we're beyond drunk and we feel a strange sense of liberation. There's no cool to be had with The Mighty Redox. But there is plenty of warmth.

Dale Kattack

MONDAY MORNING SUN / WITCHES

The Wheatsheaf

Dizzying Friday nights; they're still possible, even if the world is falling apart. So say Swiss Concrete, who tonight offer to occupy your hours between work and closing-time with a see-saw of musical dynamics; from gigantic melodic rock to

pseudo-Depeche Mode.

Witches tear open a generous support set, exploding musical space between tense metal riffs. The sound is gigantic - stretching the boundaries of The Wheatsheaf – and wrenches excitement from

every chord. Exuberant and spectacular: their crazy, Soviet-waltz beats splinter brass colliery band into a closer that bursts with vocal harmonies and hardcore maraca action.

The Wheatsheaf is soaring, which

is a weird place to be when tonight's headliners, Monday Morning Sun, seep onto stage.

Going for latter day No Wave, their laptop and drumkit make more conspicuous the absence of the previous band's motley orchestra. Witches lift you out of your own head, whirl you around the room on the cusp of a trumpet tremolo and drop you, gently, back beside the bar. Monday Morning Sun's bleak, neo-gothic soundboxes are enough to make you think the Middle East is being ripped to pieces and there's a recession. Oh, wait. All five grandiose tracks bleed into one landscape, any number of different shades of grey. While closer 'Questions' brings the gig to a snappier close, the set lacks the sympathetic respite of, say, Godspeed You! Black Emperor.

It's churlish to slate a band for being depressing and the two are, undeniably, the architects of a reference layered, moody-atmospheric suite. Maybe doom-dance is what you're after on a Friday night. Even if it isn't, chances are the exuberance of Witches' sonic ecstasy should reverberate long enough to see you to the next watering hole.

Liz Dodd

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FREAKISHLY LONG MIRRORS / **EUREKA MACHINES / MOLOTOV** **SEX BOMB / SECRET RIVALS**

The Wheatsheaf

Ramshackle, but curiously likeable, there's something undoubtedly naïve about Secret Rivals, from the squall of feedback that seems to be a mainstay of their set, to the way the instrumentations bump into each other like a genial drunk on the dodgems. At the point where Sonic Youth meets Belle and Sebastian is where you'll find Secret Rivals; it's worth a visit.

Despite being in possession of the best band name since Anal Cunt, Molotov Sexbomb don't provide the blast of sex and excitement we'd hoped for. Decidedly pub-rock in an Eddie and The Hotrods kind of way, we forgot they made bands like this any more. Hardly the revolutionary sound we wanted but it's all pretty good fun at the end of the day, damn it.

Eureka Machines take to the stage and explode like we hoped Molotov could have done. Resplendent in black suits and black and white brothel creepers, they look like a bunch of teddy-boy bankers about to spend all your cash on long knives. Eschewing any kind of

sophistication, they fuse classic rock and roll with a punk spirit. It's not directionless thrash though; these are carefully crafted chunks of serotonin-laced exuberance designed to create a hedonistic party atmosphere. Suffice to say they succeed comfortably. If the UK needed its own version of Rocket From The Crypt, then we need look no further.

Freakishly Long Mirrors have an impossible task ahead of them trying to follow such a show. They admit as much when they take to the stage, practically waving the white flag of defeat. It's as if they've given up before they've even started, and with languid songs and no real discernable hooks, they fail to make any real impact. There are glimpses of what might be when the guitars soar in a My Bloody Valentine kind of way, but sadly these occurrences are few and far between, and even then they're linked with fairly lamentable fare. There is promise there, but they'll need to work hard to find it.

Sam Shepherd



Eureka Machines by Sam Shepherd

KADIALY KOUYATE & JULDEH CAMARA

St Margaret's Church

Kadialy Kouyate and Juldeh Camara are two top British-based West African musicians who have each been in and around Oxford: Kadialy playing in Nuru Kane's band, and Juldeh called in with Robert Plant's guitarist Justin Adams on what became a world tour. Here tonight they each play a solo set for the second African Christmas fundraising event for the small Oxford-based charity SOS Sahel, which quietly does invaluable development work along the southern shore of the Sahara.

Senegalese Kadialy Kouyate wants to take the kora in new directions, while respecting its ancestry as the instrument of praise singers, storytellers and the court musicians of the former Mandinka kings. His playing is a cascade of notes and he just might have the fastest thumbs in the world. It is mainly the thumbs which pluck the strings; if Chopin had played the kora, he would probably have sounded like this. His sound also echoes the Zimbabwean thumb piano, the mrimba, which played a part in the liberation struggle, and which is sometimes talked of as rain falling on stone. As Kadialy's appealing singing is gentle and rich the whole effect is very warm, smooth and relaxing. Perhaps a little too smooth. Kora players should be a little dangerous too.

Juldeh Camara's brief solo set at last year's

African Christmas was that night's star turn. In 2008 he has become a star touring with Adams. In contrast with the stillness of Kadialy, Juldeh is more visual as he dances over the stage. Watching the fingers of his left hand on the stem of the riti, the African one-string fiddle, is hypnotic, as they point and stretch like those of a traditional dancer from India or China. His is a wilder, earthier sound and very much in tune with the late Ali Farka Toure in stark contrast, suddenly soaring like Dhafer Youssef's. He believes traders from Africa brought their music to Ireland and Scotland centuries ago and both use the pentatonic scale and one his numbers sounds Gaelic.

This is all very good but even better is a spontaneous jam between the Camara and Kouyate. Juldeh who had been playing the equivalent of lead guitar on the riti, now gears back and plays the equivalent of rhythm to Kadialy's lead kora. Their start is tentative but their confidence rapidly increases with the realisation that their instruments and voices together are more than the sum of the individual parts. They visibly relax, full of smiles, particularly on what turns out to be the final improvised number as both their vocals and instruments talk to each other.

Colin May

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS

And so T&TT cruise to their second Demo Of The Month award, so far ahead of this month's pack there's time for them to enjoy a lazy picnic in a meadow not far from the finishing line. Which is appropriate since listening to this new demo makes us think of summer and sunshine and happy, carefree days and being young. They're proof positive you can make clever, ambitious pop without going all proggy and epic. Opening track 'This Is, To Be' initially feels a bit more grown up, less breathless than their previous outing, and with its swirling synths and rumbling, teasing atmosphere does a grand job of reigning in the tension until you expect it all to explode. Except it doesn't, it pauses for breath then dinks off playfully, balancing between sweet-natured post-punk and bubbling synth-pop. 'Lamplight' is closer to what we expect from the band, a violin and electric piano-led shimmy full of keening naivety and an airy sense of springtime romance. Such breeziness comes to full bloom on 'Tapes & Tapes', possibly a tribute to the band of the same name, with boy-girl harmonies and the potential to turn into the theme to *Sesame Street* at one point. A shadow falls across the end of the demo with the darker '3 Studies For Fingers', the violin circling like a murder of crows over a militant melody that eventually spirals into a vicious, fizzing finale. Tristan & The Troubadours are quite simply a superb pop band, and they're still so young it fair makes you dizzy thinking about their potential.

CENTRAL SPACE

The photo on Central Space's Myspace reveals a bald bloke wearing tinsel deelyboppers, and the music has a similar – ahem – zany feel about it for the first couple of tracks, notably 'Who Am I To Wonder Why', which features a rap so stilted it's almost embarrassing, but remarkably gets away with it, mixed up, as it is, with a shuffling reggae groove and faint echoes of Fun Boy Three. Better than this though is an odd subterranean rockabilly piece, 'It's All That', carried along on a snapping snare beat, period guitar sound and the singer's breathless rock'n'roll gasp. Sadly they can't quite keep it up, 'Super Sixteens' sinking into a loungey ambient electro groove that's too coffee table to grab you like the oddball stabs that preceded it, and featuring a rap that thinks it's

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

The Sugarhill Gang but sounds more like that bloke from The Twang pretending to be the annoying one from Faithless. Still, stick to the less obvious path and we'll come back for more.

K-LACUNA

Heavy metal – tis the Devil's work. We know this to be true because however many times we try and get K-Lacuna's Myspace to work it refuses to yield its musical treats. We tried refresh. We tried refresh again. We signed on using a different web browser. We shouted and threw stuff and still it stayed silent. So we read the band's list of influences instead which include Killswitch Engage and Bullet For My Valentine and decided that they probably sound a bit like a cross between those two. Which isn't such a terrible thing. So why so reticent?

MEMORY FADE

Yikes, another metal band cursed by the Horned One. Memory Fade's CD arrived snapped cleanly in two (which, we must impress, is our job), suggesting dark forces didn't want us to hear its devilish contents. Happily their Myspace did work and soon we're cantering off on some lightweight thrash trip – not heavy enough to worry Metallica or Testament – with shouty vocals that could do to be a bit lower down the register. There's a particularly worrying minute at the start of 'Breath Deeper' when they threaten to deliver that most incongruous of things – a thrash-metal lullaby, but soon enough they're back chugging, shouting and thrashing like there's no such thing as next door neighbours. To be honest there's nothing here that's remotely original and they work their way through every thrash-metal cliché going, but since they declare as much themselves, we'll let them off and let them enjoy making some noise.

HEARTS IN PENCIL

With song titles like 'A Place called Pandemonium', 'Ghosts Of The Conquistadors' and 'Hadron Collider Blues', this bunch of Witney youngsters really should be a full-on prog-metal death noise machine. Instead they far too chipper for such heavyweight subject matter, coming on more like exiles from last year's Thamesbeat scene (you know – Chris T-T and assorted cockernee storytellers), mixing an almost folkie element into their energetic indie-punk noise. They up the ante as their demo progresses, from the bolshy Rolling Stones-style swagger of 'Hadron Collider Blues' to the gruff, muscular determination of 'Ghosts...' Their final number, 'Dusk Is Drowned Forever', however, loses them points for

sounding like a very posh, very pissed student trying to impersonate a cartoon David Bowie and seems to go on for about three weeks.

DEADBEAT CAVALIER

We reviewed this lot a year or so ago and since they're a punk band of the old school it's refreshing to hear they haven't polished their sound or become any more musically proficient in the interim. We guess the starting point for Deadbeat Cavalier's particular brand of rabble-rousing, occasionally folky, punk would be The Clash, but they're actually closer to Sham 69 or The Angelic Upstarts when they're cranking it out, shouting slogans and coming up with song titles like 'Boris Johnson Is A Fucking Tory' (you can't argue with the facts, kids). They're at their best when they sling it out fast, shouty and simple, a rudimentary thrash, but less so when they do their folky thing, as on the awkward, semi-acoustic 'Take Me Away', sounding like a bunch of drunken rugby students trying to sing 'Hi Ho Silver Lining'. And since we'd guess that drunken rugby students are exactly the sort of people Deadbeat Cavalier would consider to be the enemy, perhaps they'd best stick to sounding like Sham 69 in future.

THE 'O'

We went to see another band called The O a few years ago, in a rather altered state of mind, we must admit, and they sounded really good so we bought their CD, only to come back down to earth and realise they were a right load of old shit without a lethal cocktail of drugs running riot through out system. But this isn't them. This 'O' is the solo work of 18-year-old Theo Bass, who tells us he's only got a microphone, an acoustic guitar, a drum kit and a recording desk that crashes when any track goes over two minutes. Unlikely to sound anything like Muse, then. Despite such limitations it's reasonably engaging for a couple of tracks, fidgety, glitchy and very random pieces of noises crunched together and full of squiggles and thumps and a pleasingly pots'n'pans drum sound that is fervently disorganised. Sadly Theo discovers some semblance of cohesion three tracks in and starts sounding like every other vaguely ambient electro-glitch noodler, before sinking completely into normality with a closing acoustic ballad with vocals and everything. When will folks learn that simply not giving a shit and making music – or even non-music – is far preferable to the dull half-life of normal music that only spiritually dead marketing analysts might listen to.

SONIC BOB

Last time we reviewed Sonic Bob we thought he was a bit of a mess but had some fun potential. Since then his homemade electro-rock has come on some in technical terms but we fear he's left the idea of fun behind. 'One

Sharply Dressed Dead Man' is promising enough, with its electro-dirge intro and cheesy, overblown Euro-rock feel, but as the guitars billow and churn in ever more elaborate patterns and Bob's voice singularly fails to inject a modicum of emotion into proceedings it all starts to sound like some dodgy Belgian chart hopefuls circa-1984. From there he heads further into mushy, chugging lo-fi MOR, like Styx sucking the soul out of Buggles, bubbling and splurging somewhere between stadium pomp-rock and synth-prog hell and damnation. It's well produced and efficiently constructed but all so sullenly passionless, simply churning and churning laboriously like a tired one-armed man stirring a thick tasteless broth, too often devoid of energy. Which is frustrating, since along the way there are odd moments when you feel Bob has something far better in him: at one point it all promises to turn into long-lost 80s synth-pop band Dalek, I Love You. He needs to rediscover his playful side and ditch the overproduced bluster and grown-up tedium.

THE DEMO DUMPER

CRAIG BROWN

Craig's tells us he could do with a review from us even if it's a list of reasons why he should throw his recording equipment on a fire, along with a leftover gas canister and then toss himself in. But, then why should we be denied that pleasure? Okay, if Craig wants a list of reasons, then quoting Babyshambles as your chief inspiration is probably enough in itself to secure a fiery fate. But then there's the moaning and strumming and self-pity to consider too. Craig ain't a happy bunny – something to do with girls not loving him enough – so he's set off on a journey into alcohol-induced self-destruction, which is neither as clever nor romantic as impressionable indie kids might believe and will only result in liver damage and facial puffiness, and is all a bit selfish when you consider the effect it'll have on those around you who, despite your self-pitying world outlook, do actually care. (Hey, stop smirking, we're trying to cheer Craig up, maybe stop him jumping off that window ledge or sending late night emails when he's too pissed to know better). Where were we? Ah yes, it's not all bad – 'Taxis' in particular has hints of a decent tune but Craig falls into the common trap of strumming too hard and getting a bit shouty when he gets emotional. The cover of Brand New's 'Degausser' is okay – and definitely the best tune here – stripping the original back to a simple acoustic ballad that maybe needs to get a decent meal inside it. Beyond that, it's all navel-gazing, self-pity and too much cheap vodka. Come on girls, this man needs your love. Bring a bottle. Either you or he is going to need it.

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. Demos reviewed may also be played on BBC Radio Oxford Introducing. By submitting a demo for review you also agree to it being played in part or whole on the show.



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