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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 164  
March  
2009

**Big Mouse  
Strikes Again!**

# Mephisto Grande

Meet Oxford's finest purveyors  
of the Devil's own gospel

Mephisto Grande by Johnny Moto. [www.myspace.com/johnnymotos](http://www.myspace.com/johnnymotos)

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

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# NEWS

**Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**  
**Phone: 01865 372255 email: [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net)**  
**Online: [nightshift.oxfordmusic.net](http://nightshift.oxfordmusic.net)**

**BANDS** wishing to play at this year's Oxford Punt on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May have until Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March to send in demos. The Punt, now in its 13<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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. Since most Punt venues operate a strict over-18s rule, unfortunately we cannot accept submissions from any under-age bands.

Meanwhile all-venue passes for the Punt are on sale now, priced £7, online from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com) or from Videosyncratic on Cowley Road (both subject to booking fee). Only 100 are available, so buy early.

**YOUTHMOVIES** have denied they are set to split up but have put all live performances on hold from this month. The band issued a statement via their Myspace site saying, "We've been getting asked a lot lately if we're splitting up, to which the answer is simply no! We all still get on and enjoy making music together, so there is no reason to stop. We might be spread across the country these days but nothing has really changed. We've always had to fit the band around the other things in our lives. We all have full-time jobs.

"As far as this year goes we basically plan to write and record a new album. We have no idea how long this is gonna take us, but the general idea is to record in bits and pieces as we go along, with people that we like, such as Ant Theaker, Oli Horton and Hugo Manuel.

"Touring and shows are on hold for the time being. Having said that, we do have two shows in March which we're ridiculously excited about, in Tokyo. We play

Shinkiba Studio Coast on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March and another on the 15<sup>th</sup>."

Youthmovies' Myspace also includes new links to a studio video diary, some interview footage, a mix tape and live footage of the band's 2003 Truck Festival set. Visit [www.myspace.com/youthmovies](http://www.myspace.com/youthmovies).

**OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC** celebrates its new spring season of concerts with a second open session on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April at the North Wall Arts Centre in Summertown. OCM are looking for original artists of any genre. Anyone interested should email demos or links to [info@ocmevents.org](mailto:info@ocmevents.org). Visit [www.ocmevents.org](http://www.ocmevents.org) for more details as well as OCM's full spring season of events.

**CHALGROVE FESTIVAL** returns this summer after two years off. The three-day live music and family entertainment event runs over the weekend of the 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> August and organisers are looking for local bands to perform. Visit the festival website at [www.clmfestival.com](http://www.clmfestival.com) for an application form.

**TRACKING SHOT** is a new local project set up with the intention of providing new bands with low-



**WOOD FESTIVAL** returns for its second year over the weekend of the 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> May at **Braziers Park**, near Wallingford. The environmentally-friendly music festival is organised by Truck and this year's event features a special headline set from Welsh music legend Meic Stephens (pictured), now 70 years old, a pioneer of Welsh language pop and a major influence on the likes of Super Furry Animals and Gorky's Zygotic Mynci. The festival also features sets from Spiers & Boden, Stornoway, Co-Pilgrim, Jonquil, Danny & The Champions of the World and many more to be announced. Wood features a solar-powered music stage, organic, wood stove-cooked food and craft workshops among its family-friendly attractions. Tickets for the weekend are on sale now, online from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com), or in Oxford from Videosyncratic, the Scribbler and Inner Bookshop; in Witney from Rapture; from Baby John's in Didcot, and Mostly Books and Local Roots in Abingdon. For more information visit [www.thisistruck.com](http://www.thisistruck.com).

**TICKETS** for this year's **Truck Festival** will go on sale at precisely 12.12pm on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March. Truck takes place over the weekend of 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> July at **Hill Farm** in Steventon. Tickets will be available online from [wegottickets.com](http://wegottickets.com) as well as in person from Videosyncratic and the Music Box on Cowley Road. Supertrucker tickets, which give entry to both Truck and Wood, are on sale now, priced £100, online.

price, professional quality music videos, ideal for websites, Myspace and Youtube. Videos cost from around £500 and can be live, storyboard or even animation. For more details call Nick on 01235 525207 or 07590 504352, or visit [www.tracking-shot.com/music](http://www.tracking-shot.com/music).

**THIS REALITY** is looking for

reviewers to cover the local unsigned bands scene for its weekly podcast site. The site already has 80,000 downloads a week worldwide and is looking to expand. Reviewers don't need any experience, just enthusiasm. Email [thisrealitypodcast@gmail.com](mailto:thisrealitypodcast@gmail.com) or visit [thisrealitypodcast.com](http://thisrealitypodcast.com) to hear the podcasts.

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**QUICKFIX RECORDS** have reacted angrily to claims made by **Baby Gravy** in last month's Nightshift interview that they illegally released the band's debut single, 'I Hate Your Boyfriend', in 2007.

Terri Bonham from the label contacted Nightshift to put Quickfix's side of the story.

"Baby Gravy commented that the single was released 'without our legal consent', which is not true in any form: we had full verbal consent from the band to release the download single and accompanying video, to tie in with their Nightshift Punt appearance. It was promoted by the band on their website and beyond, however when it came to signing or even discussing a draft contract, Baby Gravy were uncooperative and cagey. Thus we told them we would need to remove the single from iTunes as we could not sell it without a formal contract. Baby Gravy then agreed to removing it, citing the imminent sacking of half the band and potential writing/performance credit issues as reasons.

"We then, embarrassingly, had to have the single

removed immediately from iTunes. This was, as far as we were concerned, a friendly parting of ways, despite the amount of work that had been put into the band behind the scenes for future releases and this single. It is only since then that we have heard that we were having our name tarnished by them, the proof coming a year and a half later in the form of the nasty surprise of whole paragraphs used to lie and portray us in a negative light. We have always tried to help young bands coming from a youth centre background and try hard to do things above board, always paying bands for our gigs where possible, and agreeing in written form with all bands our terms of a release, even if it meant us losing money and time ourselves. It does not always work out unfortunately but as they say in show business, 'never work with children or animals', and it seems we got bitten! We are not particularly concerned about what Baby Gravy think of us, but we would urge any bands who have read the comments to remember that there are two sides to every story."



**PJ HARVEY's Oxford show on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> April has been moved from the Regal to Brookes University Union. Harvey is performing with long-time collaborator John Parish; the pair release a new album, 'A Woman Walked By', this month. A few tickets are still available, priced £20, on 0871 2200 260.**

**REWIND FESTIVAL** offers a nostalgic trip back to the 1980s this summer. The new festival, which takes place at **Temple Island Meadows**, near Henley, over the weekend of **22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> August** boasts that it will feature the biggest line-up of 80s pop stars since Live Aid in 1985. The Saturday features a headline set from Kim Wilde plus Rick Astley, Bananarama, Billy Ocean, Belinda

Carlisle, Kid Creole, Heaven 17, Toyah and Nick Heyward, while Sunday's bill is topped by Gloria Gaynor, who is joined by Sister Sledge, ABC, Paul Young, Go West, Midge Ure, Howard Jones, Nik Kershaw, T'Pau, Chas'n'Dave and The Christians. Tickets are on sale now, priced £80 for adults. Visit [www.rewindfestival.com](http://www.rewindfestival.com) for more details.

**LADYFEST** takes place in Oxford over the week of 18<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May. The festival celebrates women in music and the arts and will feature a number of gigs featuring female acts and bands. Anyone wanting to help out or discover more can email [ladyfestoxford09@googlemail.com](mailto:ladyfestoxford09@googlemail.com), or join the organisers every Tuesday evening from 6.30pm at Far From The Madding Crowd in Friar's Entry.

**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 features the best new local releases, band interviews, gig and clubbing guide and demo reviews. The show, presented by Tim Bearder and Dave Gilyeat, is available to listen to online all week at [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford).

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# TRUCK 12

JULY 25TH & 26TH 2009



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# Mephisto Grande

## ON STAGE LIAM INGS-

Reeves sings with the voice of the Devil himself. And as he casts another baleful glance towards the audience below him, it feels like he's selecting his next victim for some unspeakable sacrifice. Around him is a band jamming out some hellish goblin blues: it's Hell's own house band, a carnivorous collision of Bayou blues, wayward jazz, subterranean punk, The Birthday Party and Beefheart's Magic Band. Amid the five-strong throng is a man dressed in gold lamé pyjamas simultaneously playing saxophone and clarinet.

Welcome to the strange and frightening world of Mephisto Grande, a band of devilish mischief who have chosen their name well.

## OFF STAGE, LIAM INGS-

Reeves is another character altogether: quiet, unassuming, wholly unthreatening. What possesses him when he steps up on stage is a question possibly best investigated by psychiatrists, priests or even an exorcist, but it's a rock and roll persona that's stood him in good stead since he fronted proggy jazz-core combo Suitable Case For Treatment earlier in the decade, a position that eventually found him performing on the *Richard & Judy Show* with newsreader Jon Snow reciting one of his songs. No doubt his onstage manner scares a fair few fans away, but it makes Liam the most beguiling and intense frontman in Oxford.

## MEPHISTO GRANDE FORMED

in 2006 when Suitable Case For Treatment split in half: guitarist Jimmy Evil and bassist Pete Bastard went on to form Eduard Soundingblock, while Liam and Suitable Case drummer Pete Ward reconvened, initially as a two-piece, under the guise Mephisto Grande. Early shows, including a set at the 2007 Oxford Punt, sounded like a stripped-down continuation of their previous band, the more expansive proggy tendencies shed in favour of a raw, garage-blues approach, powered by Pete's energetic, expansive drumming, but tempered by excursions into French nursery rhymes, such as the meanest version



Mephisto Grande by Johnny Moto

of 'Frere Jacques' you ever heard. Still central to the band's sound, though, was Liam's unholy Urukhai growl, a voice that rumbles right through you, chilling your soul slightly along the way.

After a string of gigs, Pete went travelling in Madagascar, leaving Liam unsure whether he still had a band. He turned his hand to a series of solo shows which brought out a more rootsy side of his cannon, inspired by early gospel, bluegrass and Delta blues and on Pete's return Mephisto Grande have recruited new members to fully realise that vision. Joining the original duo are former-Borderville bassist Phil Oakley; percussionist John Bosley, who drunkenly approached the band after a gig at the Port Mahon, and lastly saxophonist and clarinet player Zack Gvirtzman, whom Liam spotted busking around town and persuaded to join. His debut show with the band was at last year's Truck Festival where Mephisto Grande performed with the Oxford Gospel Choir.

This month Mephisto Grande launch their debut album, 'Seahorse Versus The Shrew', on their own Refuses label, with a show at the Cellar.

## NIGHTSHIFT TALKED TO

Liam, John and Phil ahead of the

album launch, wondering first of all how Mephisto Grande came into being after the demise of Suitable Case For Treatment.

LIAM: "We had a certain amount of success with Suitable Case; we managed to play with some top acts then it all slowed down a bit. I think the consensus was to leave it on a high, rather than let it slow any further. But it was very strange for a while, a band breaking up is an emotional experience. I mean, after appearing on *Richard and Judy* I felt dead inside. So I consulted with Jon Snow, who suggested I stop playing dad rock.

"I was angry and without direction for some time before Mephisto Grande truly solidified. In retrospect I think it all worked out well. Pete Bastard and Jimmy are doing Fat Elvis and I'm really chuffed with our work."

Yourself and Pete got Mephisto Grande together pretty quickly after the split; what was your aim when starting the new band?

LIAM: "Pete and I had discussed writing music which reached extremes in terms of heaviness but also experimented with our interest in blues and gospel. Before Suitable Case split we'd been messing around with some projects that were basically the seed from which Mephisto Grande grew, a mixture of

indulgent noise stuff and also some blues. I was very into the idea of an erratic set that involves several styles and genres, not letting the listener know what they're going to hear or see next. That's been a running theme in all the music I've written, but I feel I've come closest to hitting the nail on the head with Mephisto Grande."

In what ways is Mephisto Grande different to SC4T to be part of and in the way you approach music? Do you feel you have more freedom to do what you want now?

LIAM: "Well, discipline has been important in both bands but I would say more so in Mephisto Grande. We've decided upon a zero tolerance policy toward mistakes. We each know if we fail we must leave and cannot return before passing various vigorous tests. Suitable Case was more metal orientated, I would say. Although there were lots of different influences, I think they are probably more apparent in Mephisto Grande. Everyone had a lot of input in Suitable Case: I certainly had musical freedom. Mephisto Grande is much the same in that respect."

PHIL: "I'm not sure if it is that different. Both bands really have been about supporting Liam. Both bands have had the same kind of message. Both bands really like making a lot of well-constructed horrible noise."

## AFTER SUCH A SWIFT BIRTH,

Mephisto Grande's infancy didn't run as smoothly as it might, with Pete's long-term absence. But perhaps that was the catalyst for the band to grow and evolve as it has done. With each new member has come different ideas. To witness Mephisto Grande live can be a revelation: they can appear like a bunch of disparate freaks initially and they play so loosely and naturally that it's easy to miss just how well drilled they are. In fact the intensity of their performance is quite terrifying at times – a lurching, uncaring form of voodoo rock that can feel like The Ramones colliding sideways on with John Coltrane. At every turn it is utterly captivating.

Pete was away for quite a long time in Africa and you started playing solo shows; were those just stop-

gaps or did you ever envisage doing that long-term?

LIAM: "I played under the name Mephisto Grande as a solo artist to keep the flag flying. I've always preferred playing with a full band as it allows more scope but it was fun to play on my own for a while, occasionally being joined at gigs by local musicians. After a gig playing with Tarik from the Brickwork Lizards I was approached and asked about a recording contract, which was exciting. Some big name producers and studios were being mentioned but once we started talking money and contracts I became really quite scared and I wasn't sure if I was cut out to be a solo artist. For better or worse the deal was never clinched but it was an experience that ultimately enforced my love of being in a band. I started playing with Phil on bass and percussion, which led to some new songs and an expansion on what Pete and I had started."

PHIL: "I thought it would make more sense playing percussion than bass at first while Pete was away and it was something that I always wanted to do. When Pete got back I was shown how to play the drums and went back to playing the bass."

The band has expanded now; how have the new members come to join and what do they each bring to the band?

JOHN: "I saw Liam, Pete and Phil playing at the Port Mahon. I drunkenly spoke to Liam to see if they could use some extra percussion, and Liam called me up sometime later to see if I wanted to play at Charlbury Festival. So I just turned up to the festival – Liam and Pete were quite late so I thought for a while I was going to be playing on my own! Eventually they turned up, we had a two-minute run through before the gig and I played for the first time there and then."

LIAM: "Pete and John's rhythms work really well together and helped to create a far bigger sound. I'd also seen Zac busking, playing the clarinet and saxophone simultaneously in the centre of Oxford and loved what I heard. I bumped into him and asked if he would play with us some time. He took a bit of convincing but we got him on board."

JOHN: "Having seen Mephisto Grande previously as a three piece I saw the potential for using additional drums and percussion to mix up more genres in the set and add some weight to the instrumental moments. The addition of Zac on the clarinet and saxophone has opened up possibilities for combining sounds from different ends of the spectrum, and I think it's a mix of all these

elements that helps us avoid falling into an established mould."

You also performed with the Oxford Gospel Choir at Truck; how was that and is it something you would like to do again?

LIAM: "Truck was a really good gig for us, despite some extreme hangers that day. It's always fun playing with a choir: that sweet sound that only a gospel choir can produce alongside big guitars and heavy beats is quite striking. We've got some a cappella groups that we're planning on working with in the near future. Collaborations can be good for varying your sound, and they can sometimes lead you in a different direction."

#### WITH A SETTLED LINE-UP,

Mephisto Grande have been able to get on with recording their debut album. According to Liam the process has involved a year of hard sweat but with the last three months being the most productive and the album being "bungled together in a few weeks".

JOHN: "We've tried to capture all the elements that make up Mephisto Grande in the album and it sounds awesome. It proved to be a difficult album to put together because of the massive range covered by the songs, combining the raw live sounding tracks with the heavier ones and the more gospel-influenced stuff was a tough process, but the outcome is amazing."

LIAM: "It started off as little more than my solo EP with Phil hitting stuff in the background. But it progressed massively. Paul, our producer, was superb, the most thorough engineer I've ever worked with. When Pete got back from Madagascar and everyone else was on board we knew we were working on a full album. It was a drawn out process but I'm very happy with what we got at the end of it all. What was it like to record? Imagine sitting in a dark, windowless room for a year with people that annoy you."

#### MEPHISTO GRANDE ARE

very much in a league of one in Oxford; not for them the self-consciously convoluted path of math-rock or the hapless flailing of indie rock's last hurrah. How do they think their influences and way of playing, writing and performing are different to other bands around?

LIAM: "I'm not sure how it compares to other bands, but we tend to have a pretty loose approach to our songs. We like to play around with different structures and have several versions of some of our songs so the set is very flexible. In terms of influences,

when we started out we were listening to a mixture of some classic gospel, particularly the Staple Singers, and some more erratic stuff, such as Mike Patton's various projects. I think Brickwork Lizards, A Silent Film and Fat Elvis are really powerful local bands, each very different to one another and that is testament to the diversity of the Oxford music scene."

What are your impressions of the local music scene and the way it has helped, hindered or shaped you?

LIAM: "Oxford has a great music scene, which is constantly changing with new bands starting up, breaking up or moving on to bigger things. I've met some really good musicians and worked on some interesting musical projects since coming to Oxford. You can almost always go out and catch a good gig in this town if you look for it."

JOHN: "I think the broad spectrum within the Oxford music scene has worked well for us. We've always tried to have a diverse sound and the local audience seems to appreciate it."

#### WE CAN'T LET LIAM GO

without asking him about his stage persona – so markedly different to the man we speak to outside of his performance space. There's a big difference between your onstage and

off-stage self; is that a conscious thing or does the muse just take hold? Are you surprised that people who only know you from watching the band can be intimidated by you?

LIAM: "The onstage presence is inevitably different to that off stage, it's not consciously aggressive but I'm aware that it can be a bit intimidating for the more sensitive souls out there."

Some time ago you suffered a seizure during a gig; is that something that you have to be constantly aware of?

LIAM: "The glossalalic twitches, jerks and outbursts are the voice of the devil or possibly God coming through me. I'm having an ECG this weekend to find out which. I've always known I was special."

#### SPECIAL. THAT'S AS APT A

word to describe both Liam and his band as you can get. Mephisto Grande are something unique. Strange. Disconcerting. Occasionally fucking terrifying. But always, always special. The Devil really does have the best tunes.

*'Seahorse Versus The Shrew' is released this month. Mephisto Grande play at the Cellar on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> march. Visit [www.myspace.com/mephistogrande](http://www.myspace.com/mephistogrande) for news and tour dates.*

# The Wheatsheaf

Live Music in March

Sat 1 <sup>st</sup>	COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES + WINTER CINEMATIC	8pm/£5
Wed 4 <sup>th</sup>	CAND ELECTRIC + THE BLACK HATS + DRUNKENSTEIN	8pm/£4
Thu 5 <sup>th</sup>	DAVE O'HIGGINS & QUENTIN COLLINS	8pm/£3 / £7
Fri 6 <sup>th</sup>	BRAINDOGS + OVERRATED + NON STOP TANGO	
	RED SQUARE	8pm/£5
Sat 7 <sup>th</sup>	ALPHABET BACKWARDS + JUNE + MATT KILFORD	8pm/£5
Thu 12 <sup>th</sup>	RENATO D'AIELLO	8pm/£3 / £7
Fri 13 <sup>th</sup>	SMILEX + THE DELTA FREQUENCY + TAGBAE	8pm/£5
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup>	SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND	8pm/£5
Tue 17 <sup>th</sup>	ROUGES + RUPERT & THE ROBBERS + PEERLESS PIRATES	8pm/£5
Wed 18 <sup>th</sup>	KLAUS SAYS BUY THE RECORD + WISE CHILDREN + UTE	8pm/£5
Thu 19 <sup>th</sup>	JAMES PEARSON	8pm/£3 / £7
Fri 20 <sup>th</sup>	VIC GODARD & SUBWAY SECT + LES CLOCHARDS	
	THE GULLIVERS	8pm/£4
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup>	GUNNBUNNY + THE SCARLETS + FIXERS	8pm/£5
Wed 25 <sup>th</sup>	YELLOW CRAYONS	8pm/£4
Thu 26 <sup>th</sup>	JULIAN NICHOLAS	8pm/£3 / £7
Fri 27 <sup>th</sup>	PNEU + SHIELD YOUR EYES + ELAPSE-O	8pm/£5
Sat 28 <sup>th</sup>	MUSIC FOR PLEASURE + PROJECT ADORNO	
	UNKNOWN FLOW	8pm/£4

Every Monday – Oxford Imps Comedy Club (8-11pm) Every Thursday – The Spin Jazz (8-11pm)  
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## SPIRAL 25

### 'Spiral 25 EP'

(Own Label)

Rock and roll's dark side of the street – the side where the pimps and smack dealers and rakish leather-clad waifs exist in eternal shadow – has always held a more seedily romantic lure than the sunny side. From The Velvet Underground's speed'n'smack rock experimentalism through The Stooges, Spacemen 3 and Warlocks, the needle traces a blackened line that can veer off at strange, exotic tangents or spiral forever inwards.

Here's where you'll find Spiral 25, the band, lest we forget, formed by assorted members of The Factory, arguably one of Oxford's great lost bands, certainly of recent years. Reconvened after a brief time under the moniker Dirty Sci-Fi, guitarist Chris Monger, bassist Joe Chapman and drummer Andy Proper have recruited guitarist Sunny Singh and vocalist Russell Denham, a singer in the spaced-out and devotional mode of Jim Morrison, and set out

to dig their musical furrow deep and claustrophobic. They wear their influences not so much on their sleeves as stamped on their foreheads but confidently and with single-minded unselfconsciousness, and as they lay down a groove as black as a fallen angel's armpit, guitars providing a shifting pattern of textures over the relentless rhythm, you're lost in a flotation tank full of tar and treacle, the hymnal 'Let The Light Shine On' spiralling through Loop's heavy-duty psychedelia with grim, morbid determination, while 'Signals' bubbles spaceward from its subterranean beginnings, a kindred spirit to Spacemen 3's 'Things Will Never Be The Same'.

As the mood darkens through the EP, Spiral 25 really hit bedrock with 'Today's Future (Tomorrow's Past)', exhuming those old blues via The Doors' 'The End' and a ceaseless narcotic grind that's so thick with soot you feel



you need to scrub out your lungs by the time it finishes. It may be a musical cliché but this is one CD you really must play at excruciating volume to do it full justice. Thankfully, if the neighbours do call the police, you'll be so whacked out on the pretty fractal patterns in your head you won't even mind when they cart you off.

**Dale Kattack**

## SEFTON

### 'Skimming Stones'

(Rainbow Records)

Sefton opens his album with the promising couplet, "I'm an angry man / Who lost the fight"; it's almost an echo of the old "I fought the law and the law won" clarion call. The song is called 'Rick's Seat' and through its wistful haze of melancholy, you feel there are the stirrings of some real emotion. Sadly, by the time the album ends he's singing about skimming stones and declaring that "beauty lies within us all". Sefton wasn't far wrong when he pleaded that this might not be our bag in his introductory letter.



'Rick's Seat' apparently won an award for Acoustic Song Of The Year in 2008 on American online radio and taken alone it's an easy, simple minor hit in waiting, pitched around the Nick Drake / Damien Rice school of folksy introspection. But from there Sefton is wallowing in Radio 2 playlist-friendly balladeering, ambitious in his arrangements, particularly Mark Walker's expansive electric piano, Wurlitzer and Hammond contributions, and occasionally sweetened by Charlie Amadeo's backing vocals, but craving any real emotional depth beyond lyrical clichés of the lost love variety.

'Was It Something That I Said' offers respite with its almost country jaunt, but 'Crimson Skies' is merely Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes' 'Up Where We Belong' in disguise and too soon we're wallowing in Ronan Keating-style ballads that feel soulless and sterile, while the emoting is often so over-egged you could stick the CD in an oven and it'd come out as fluffy as a soufflé.

But as Sefton says himself, this sort of thing was never going to get us going; it's aimed squarely at the safe, smooth middle of pop's highway, where anything further left than the latest Van Morrison guff would be considered edgy. And so we'll leave Sefton to his stone skimming. We're off to lob a brick through David Cameron's front window and listen to The Clash.

**Dale Kattack**

## CATMATADOR

### 'Mara EP'

(Own Label)

Even for a band who choose to walk down the less sunny side of the street, this new EP is on the downbeat side. It's a slight disappointment given the quality of last year's debut demo, which nabbed the band a place on the Punt. Certainly 'Mara' shouldn't be the EP's opening number, taking too long to work up a head of steam, over-egging the serious-young-man indie-goth schtick before Sian Lloyd-Williamson's violin scree elevates the whole thing to a more substantial level of spidery moodiness. First-song honours should instead have gone to 'Clarity', a better picture of what Cat Matador can do, tumbling in on a tom-heavy drum cascade and malevolent violin drone, marrying the Bunnymen's sullen, expansive grey skyline with Clinic's metronomic pulse-pop. Too soon, though, they're trying to steer a path through a jangly, spangly emo-math instrumental that eventually settles into a solemn orchestral pop lament and it's left to closing track 'Eyes' to try and settle the ship with its feeling of doomed urgency.

A decent enough effort on balance but you do feel that given the quality of songs at their disposal, Cat Matador might have come up with a more consistently pleasing EP.

**Dale Kattack**



## DESERT STORM

### 'Desert Storm'

(Own Label)

There are two photos of Desert Storm on their album sleeve that might offer a distorted view of the band. The first pictures them deep in meditation in the studio, the other shows the band standing in a large greenhouse surrounded by flowering plants. Listen to this debut album though and it quickly becomes clear the meditation is simply them clearing their minds before unleashing hell on unsuspecting passers-by, while those plants are obviously DRUGS. Drugs that Desert Storm smoke in huge quantities enabling them to cultivate giant blunderbuss stoner-metal riffs, the better to crush your puny skull to something resembling peanut butter.

Thankfully eschewing the current trend for metalcore, Desert Storm return to source, from Led Zeppelin's bluesy hard rock riffs, through old fashioned roadhouse blues to Hendrix's high-octane psychedelic excursions, everything beefed up big time with a classic metal heaviness, solos and drum salvos. The band's real star attraction, though, is singer Matt Ryan's great gravel-gargling growl, up there with Killdozer's Michael Gerald in its earthy, ogre-ish belligerence.

While Desert Storm can be granite heavy and relentless as a steamroller with faulty brake pads, they paint from a pleasingly mixed palette of textures, tempering those hoary, hairy onslaughts with contemplative ambience and tabla (as on the track 'Desert Storm') and even



some spirited, soulful female backing vocals, as on 'Cosmic Drips'. The result is a remarkably fresh take on music that's as old as the hills, and as heavy as them too.

Ian Chesterton

## FOETUS 502

### 'Feast' / 'Torture' / 'Metal Man' / 'Sex Attack'

(Eyeless)

Bloody blimmin' 'eck, in all our years reviewing Oxford's music scene this is the first time we've been sent a quadruple album. Mind you, perhaps we shouldn't be too shocked since it emanates from Eyeless Records, the label founded by local electro-core maniac David K

Frampton.

But by god this is a trawl and a half. With a combined 148 minutes, any act would struggle to hold the listener's attention and with Foetus 502 being something of a one-trick pony, you're being driven to distraction long before you're even halfway through. The fact that that one trick isn't even his own but ripped wholesale from electro pioneers Suicide makes it all the more galling. Suicide were an incredible band who broke all sorts of barriers and performed some of the most extreme live shows in the history of rock and roll, and they've inspired some great bands since, from Spacemen 3 to Liars, but simply repeating their minimalist synth-abilly bubble and Alan Vega's heavily-reverbed Elvis yelp over and fucking over again for 36 tracks isn't just cheap, it's criminal, since we lose an entire afternoon of our lives staring ever more forlornly out of the window, hoping a passing bus might plough into the office and put us out of this misery. And we don't even live on a bus route.

Don't get us wrong – take the best four or five tracks here, including a cheeky take on Robert Palmer's 'Some Guys Have All The Luck' – and you'd have a passable, if ultimately forgettable, EP. But as each passing opus sounds more and more hacked out, random and aimless, converging as one huge mush of Casio-core inconsequentiality, you start to wonder if that copy of Oasis' most recent album, which has sat, unplayed, on the desk for the past month, might provide some kind of relief. And then you realise just how bad things have got.

Dale Kattack



This Reality Podcast – probably Oxfordshire's best music podcast in the world – is expanding. One year old and already we're too big for our boots!

We are looking for a volunteer to review occasional gigs and tell us about which artists you've seen. You will have an opportunity to present your reviews on the podcast and write them up for our soon-to-be expanded website.

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# GIG GUIDE

## SUNDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES + WINTER CINEMATIC: The Wheatsheaf** – Epic, emotive indie-rocking from C&C, with support from Lincoln's grungier stadium poppers Winter Cinematic.

**THE BLUETONES: O2 Academy** – Probably destined always to be labelled "Britpop Survivors", fourteen years on from their biggest hits, 'Slight Return', Hounslow's finest keep on

*Thursday 5<sup>th</sup>*

## HOWLING BELLS / THE JOY FORMIDABLE / CHEW LIPS: O2 Academy

After supporting Mercury Rev last November, Howling Bells return to the Academy as headliners and with a new album out. The Sydney-formed, now UK-based quartet are still at that tenuous stage of critics' favourites, but with 'Radio Wars' displaying a bolder, more sweeping take on their tumbledown rural gloom-pop than their excellent eponymous debut, commercial success probably isn't so far away now. Fronted by sister and brother Juanita and Joel Stein, Howling Bells' sound is as inspired by film as much as other music – notably the spooked soundtracks of *Twin Peaks* or *Paris, Texas*, but comparisons to PJ Harvey, Mazzy Star and Loretta Lynn are equally close to the mark. The music is shadowy, occasionally trashy countrified garage pop, but Juanita's kittenish vocals give it wings and a smoky romantic splendour all its own. Good supporting cast tonight too with Welsh boyfriend/girlfriend garage-pop outfit The Joy Formidable adding a sweet pop sheen to Sonic Youth and Breeders-style noise, while London's Lamacq-endorsed electro-pop hopefuls Chew Lips crank up the Casio and dance beats, following in the footsteps of La Roux and Little Boots.

## MARCH

keeping on. And it's worth remembering that at that commercial peak, they were only kept off the Number 1 spot by Babylon Zoo – and where are *they* now? Bluetones' dedication to touring and a DIY ethic has seen them keep their old fanbase and tonight's show follows on from a short tour where they played debut album, 'Expecting To Fly' in its entirety, so plenty of chance for 90s nostalgists to relive those glory days.

**PETE ROE + STARS OF SUNDAY LEAGUE + I SAID YES + CAMIONETTES: The Jericho Tavern** – A night of mostly acoustic talent with Pete Roe proffering rootsy acoustic folk-pop in the vein of John Martyn and Bob Dylan, while Scottish one-man-band Stars Of Sunday League mixes up Dick Gaughan and James Yorkston. They're joined by travelling troubadour I Said Yes, plus the relatively more grungey guitar-pop band Camionettes.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar** – Reggae, dub and more.

## MONDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**THE SEAN WEBSTER BAND: The Bullingdon** – The Famous Monday Blues plays host to guitarist and singer Webster as he plugs his third album, 'Live & In Session', his guitar work inspired by the likes of Albert Collins, Eric Clapton and Gary Moore, while vocally his deep, husky delivery recalls Joe Cocker and Bryan Adams.

**JAMIE T: O2 Academy** – Already sold-out return gig for the Wimbledon troubadour, set to release the follow-up to 2007's debut album, 'Panic Prevention', armed with a keen observational electro-acoustic songwriting style that somehow finds a meeting point between Billy Bragg, Arctic Monkeys and The Streets.

## TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**HORSE FEATHERS + WE AERONAUTS: O2 Academy** – Portland, Oregon folksters signed to Kill Rockstars, playing it sparse and warmly desolate in a stripped-down Neil Young-gone-bluegrass fashion. Local nu-folk popstrels We Aeronauts support.

**IPSO FACTO + KING'S SHILLING: O2 Academy** – Gothic psychedelia and dark-minded surf-pop from the London lasses last seen in town singing backing vocals with Magazine and before that supporting Last Shadow Puppets on tour, and coming in somewhere between Siouxsie & The Banshees and Long Blondes.

**DEIRDRIE CARTWRIGHT & ALISON PAYNER: East Oxford Community Centre** – The world-renowned jazz fusion guitarist

makes the trip to Oxford, backed up by regular bassist Alison Payner. Best known as the guitar presenter of BBC's *Rockschool* in the 1980s, Cartwright now performs in a number of bands as well as acoustic, mixing up jazz standards and original songs with offbeat covers of anyone from Kate Bush to Nirvana. She's currently out on the road plugging her last album, 'Tune In, Turn On, Stretch Out', and is rated as one of the most accomplished female guitarists in the world.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz club with lively keyboard-led sounds from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

**ALCHEMY: The Cellar** – Rock, metal, punk and goth club with live sets from punk-metallers Dirty Youth, thrash-punk outfit The Shuffle and death metallers As Gods.

## WEDNESDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**CHANGO SPASIUK: Wesley Memorial Church** – Oxford Contemporary Music's new spring season kicks off with a rare chance to hear Argentine accordion virtuoso Chango Spasiuk and his band, plying a lively version of his native chamamé music, a traditional barn dance style that marries Latin American and European traditions. Having won Best Newcomer at the 2005 BBC Radio 3 World Music Awards he returns to the UK to promote new album, 'Pynandi'.

**LITTLE FISH + DRUNKENSTEIN + BLACK HATS + CAND ELECTRIC: The Wheatsheaf** – Oxford's brightest young stars Little Fish shine again, building up to the release of their debut album and, for newcomers, mixing up Patti Smith-style vocals with a cool, melodic garage-rock sound. Oddly-shaped prog-punk-goth strangeness and charm from Drunkenstein in support, plus spiky new wave rocking from Black Hats.

**SOUNDS GOOD IN YOUR EAR: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Open decks night.

**FREE RANGE: The Cellar** – Dubstep and drum&bass with Jungle Drummer Vs DJ Fu and Hydro Vs Charris, plus more.

**AMOROUS JAZZ: Prince Of Wales, Iffley** – Local jazz trio fronted by Sheila Selway.

**OFF THE RADAR + ROSALITA + INLIGHT: The Jericho Tavern**

## THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**HOWLING BELLS + THE JOY FORMIDABLE + CHEW LIPS: O2 Academy** – Aussie garage-pop etherealists out on tour – *see main preview*

**RISE AGAINST: O2 Academy** – Chicago's melodic hardcore merchants continue along the path of righteousness with latest album, 'Appeal To Reason', and even have a special range of vegan shoes made for them by VANS. Musically, they show little sign of mellowing, still raging in the style of Bad Religion and Minor Threat, and nothing at all wrong with that.



**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Acoustic jazz and Latin bop from tenor saxophonist Dave O'Higgins guesting at tonight's Spin Club.

**THE SCARLETTS + THE FOLLYS + SECRET RIVALS: The Bullingdon** – Moshka club night featuring new local ska-punkers The Scarletts, while emotive rockers The Follys launch their 'Maps To Nowhere' album. Indie-punk rockers Secret Rivals complete the bill.

**GHOSTS ON PEGASUS BRIDGE + THE ELIJAH: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Epic melodic metal and emo noise from GOPB at tonight's Apple Pirate Promotions gig.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford**

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**ELECTRICITY: The Cellar** – House, bassline and electro club night with Matt Walsh, Casper C and more.

**ULYSSES + KANGO BILL + FRANCIE JONES + SMALL ENGINE REPAIRS: The Jericho Tavern** – 60s psychedelia and 70s glam from Liverpool's Ulysses, plus acoustic folk-rock from Kango Bill in support.

## FRIDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**36CRAZYFISTS + POISON THE WELL + GWEN STACY: O2 Academy** – Alaskan metalcore monsters 36 Crazyfists visit Europe in support of their 'The Tide & Its Takers' album, with bullish hardcore shouters Poison The Well in support.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BRAINDOGS + NON-STOP TANGO + OVERRATED + RED SQUARE: The Wheatsheaf** – Eclectic mix of sounds at Klub Kak as ever with Tom Waits-styled acoustic jazz and Americana from Braindogs, plus improvised electro-jazz-rock-dub-prog collective Non-Stop Tango recalling the punk-era explorations of This Heat. Also a chance to catch confrontational improvised jazz-metal mentalists Red Square, reforming for the first time in 30 years.

**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT'S FOOT SPASM BAND + DESMOND CHANCER + INIGO JONES BAND: The Jericho Tavern** – Self-proclaimed 'chav-jazz' collective The Original Rabbit's Foot Spasm Band celebrate the old time sounds of Count Basie, Fats Waller and

Jackie Wilson with an admirably punkish attitude. Desmond Chancer, meanwhile, digs deep into the sleazy, wee-small-hours side of jazz in the vein of Tom Waits.

**OPEN ROAD: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic rock covers.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

**SKYLARKIN: The Cellar** – Soul, ska, dancehall and rock'n'roll party night, featuring a live set from local Arabic dub collective Raggasaurus, plus DJ sets from Count Skylarkin, Indecision and Action Stations.

**MR WILSON + TWAT DADDIES + OSPREY: The Winchester, Crown Street**

## SATURDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**MEPHISTO GRANDE + NOUGHT + THE GROG: The Cellar** – This month's Nightshift cover stars summon the Devil from his blues shack slumber. Instrumental post-rock noisemongers Nought return to town in support. – *see main interview feature*  
**ALPHABET BACKWARDS + JUNE + MATT KILFORD: The Wheatsheaf** – January's Nightshift cover stars Alphabet Backwards get happy again with their rousing electro-pop bounce and singalong songs about polar bears. Indie rocking from June in support, plus delicately emotive acoustic pop balladeering from Matt Kilford.

**BABY GRAVY + UNIQUE SOUL + THE VIBE: O2 Academy** – Completing a night of recent Nightshift cover stars, last month's honoured guests launch their new single, 'Did It Again', mixing up scrappy punk energy with primitive electro-pop squelch. Hip hop crew Unique Soul support, along with teenage newcomers The Vibe.

**DATA.SELECT.PARTY + COLOUR + OMES + COLLISIONS & CONSEQUENCES: O2 Academy** – Return to town for the Foals-y math-poppers, on tour to promote debut album 'Hanging Out With Humans'. Surrey's similarly-minded rockers Colour join them, along with local emotive indie types Collisions and Consequences.

**LETZ ZEP: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic Led Zep covers.

**SLIDE: The Bullingdon** – Funky house club night with guest Erol Alkon.

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: Seacourt Bridge Hotel**

**LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE: The Winchester, Crown Street** – Led Zep classics from Denny Ilett Jr, Jerry Soffe, Ady Davey and more.

## SUNDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**SUE SMITH & PHIL FREIZINGER + DES BARKUS + OVERRATED: The Magdalen** – Acoustic session from the Mighty Redox duo.

## MONDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**KENT DUCHAINE: The Bullingdon** – The blues veteran – with four decades of touring behind him, returns to the Famous Monday Blues, as ever accompanied by his 1934 National Steel guitar Leadbessie.



*Monday 16<sup>th</sup>*

## DANA GILLESPIE: The Bullingdon

Okay, so you can't always judge a musician from the company they keep, but even the most cursory glance through Dana Gillespie's resume provides a stunning who's who of rock legends. In her forty years as a singer Gillespie has made fifty albums, as well as appearing in a string of movies. In the 60s she was better known as a folk singer and was Bob Dylan's girlfriend; in the 70s she moved more into glam rock and sang on Bowie's 'It Ain't Easy' as well as working in the studio with Jimmy Page. She was the original Mary Magdalene in Lloyd-Webber's *Jesus Christ, Superstar* musical and as recently as 2005 she was duetting with Mick Jagger at her annual Mustique Blues Festival residency. So, the lady's been there and seen a fair old bit, but it's as a jazz and blues singer of the vocally raunchy type that's she's best known around the world these days and tonight's Famous Monday Blues session sees her appearing once again with her London Blues Band. Really, her voice is huge; she always declared that it was only as she got older that she was able to sing the blues properly, having developed the necessary emotional maturity, but she's taken to it pretty damn well, as her myriad Best British Female Blues Singer awards and her induction into the British Blues Connection Hall Of Fame testify.

## TUESDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**HOT LEG: O2 Academy** – Return to town for former-Darkness frontman Justin Hawkins and his cock-rocking chums.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – With Alvin Roy's Reeds Unlimited.

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

## WEDNESDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**MR HUDSON & THE LIBRARY: O2 Academy** – The Streets meets Cole Porter meets Sting in Mr Hudson's strangely timeless amalgam of hip hop, soul, lounge jazz and show tunes that has seen him support The Police and Amy Winehouse in recent times.

**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Funk jam open session.

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



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*Friday 20<sup>th</sup>*

## VIC GODDARD & SUBWAY SECT / LES CLOCHARDS: The Wheatsheaf

Subway Sect really were the lost band of punk's first wave. Though they played the September 1976 100 Club Punk Festival with the Pistols, The Clash and Siouxsie and the Banshees and subsequently toured with The Clash, their lack of released material has always seen them overlooked. Manager Bernie Rhodes (who also managed Strummer and co.) sacked all of the band on the eve of their debut album's due release and it's been lost to the world ever since. Goddard himself formed a new band around himself, started exploring classic rock'n'roll and rockabilly, Rat Pack chic and swing long before it became fashionable to do so and, disillusioned, left music behind in the 80s to become a postie. It's in the blood though, and by the end of the decade he was back writing, playing in bands with the likes of Paul Cook and ATV's Mark Perry, while re-issues of early Subway Sect material re-ignited interest in him. Goddard remains even more of a cult concern than he was back in the day, though he has influenced plenty of indie and underground bands along the way. Since the turn of the century he's been pretty prolific, re-recording the entire Subway Sect debut album with original bass player and drummer Mark Laff and Paul Myers and re-animating the band name for 2002's 'Sanged' album. Tonight's Swiss Concrete club night also features one of Oxford's original punk rockers, Ian Nixon, who played in The No and now, 30 years on, leads his Gallic-pop-cum-country-rockers Les Clochards on an elegant and exotic musical journey.

## THURSDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**THE BEAT:** O2 Academy – The 80s ska hitmakers return, playing old classics like 'Mirror In The Bathroom' and 'Too Nice To Talk To', along with a selection of ska, reggae and punk covers.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB:** The Wheatsheaf – Italian saxophonist Renato D'Aiello is tonight's guest.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford

**Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

**THE MARTIN HARLEY BAND + 100**

**THINGS TO DO IN DOVER WHEN**

**YOU'RE FRED + SEAN STEWART**

**BROOKES:** The Cellar – Acoustic blues, folk and Americana in the style of Ry Cooder and Jack Johnson from travelling man Martin Harley and his stripped-down band.

**GO FASTER + ARROWS OF LOVE + VON**

**BRAUN + MOLOTOV SEXBOMB:** The Jericho Tavern – Funky, spiky post-punk pop from Liverpool's Go Faster, recent tour support to The Wombats, plus indie punk noise from Arrows Of Love and post-rock from Von Braun.

**REVOLVER:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Alternative club night playing grunge, hardcore, punk and metal.

## FRIDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**SMILEX + THE VOORHEES**

**FREQUENCY:** The Wheatsheaf – Special Friday 13<sup>th</sup> show from Quickfix with Smilex doing their raucous garage-metal mayhem thing, while The Delta Frequency pay special homage to Jason Voorhees.

**FREE RANGE:** O2 Academy – Three-deck scratching and beats from Scratch Perverts at tonight's hip hop and electro club night.

**THE SHAKER HEIGHTS + RED BULLETS + QUOTES + MINOR COLES:** The

Jericho Tavern – Melodic rootsy Americana and indie rocking from Shaker Heights, plus bluesy rockers Red Bullets and others in support.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon **PINDROP PERFORMANCE:** Holywell Music Room – Acoustic folk-tinged minimalism from Ben Ulph, plus Gregorian string quartet Bleeding Heart Narrative and the Pindrop Chamber Ensemble tackling the likes of Messiaen, Xenakis and Birtwistle.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE PETE FRYER BAND + FILM NOIR + MOON**

**LEOPARD:** The Magdalen – Monthly residency from the local psychedelic blues favourites and assorted chums.

**GET DOWN:** The Brickworks

**BOSSAPHONIK:** The Cellar – Jazz dance, Afrobeat, latin and nu-jazz club night with live set from New York's Kokolo.

**NINE-STONE COWBOY + BLACK POWDER + OSPREY:** The Winchester, Crown Street – Through-a-glass-darkly vignettes and epic guitar pop from Mark Cope and co. plus support from thrash-punk maniacs Black Powder and acoustic songsmith Osprey.

**KING B:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Local blues-rock favourites.

## SATURDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND:** The Wheatsheaf –

Krautrocking electro-groove merchants SHOTP do the robot once again. Inventive krautrock-cum-post-rock grooves in support

from the new local supergroup made up of members of Sunnyvale, The Workhouse, The Evenings and Thumb Quintet.

**ELECTRIC SIX + TRAGEDY + THE**

**DELTA FREQUENCY:** O2 Academy – It comes as something of a shock to discover that Electric Six are out on tour in support of their fifth album ('Flashy & Sexy Trash'), since they never looked like being a band who would endure. Still, they're still going, a good few years after Top 10 hits with 'Danger! High Voltage' and 'Gay Bar'. Or at least frontman Dick Valentine is, with his revolving door line-up. The new stuff is typically clever/dumb tongue-in-cheek garage rock-disco bombast, which might be mistaken for Queen on occasions. And, in keeping with all things camp, tonight they come with heavy metal Bee Gees tribute band Tragedy in support. Local electro-goth rockers Delta Frequency open the show.

**NICK HARPER:** O2 Academy – Acoustic singer-songwriter, son of blues-folk hero Roy and a man whose Wikipedia entry must surely have been written by his own mother.

**THE EPSTEIN + THE FOLLYS:** The Cellar – Charity gig in aid of MIND with country rockers The Epstein putting an exotic twist on traditional prairie and Tex-Mex border sounds.

**STORNOWAY + IVAN CAMPO + VATICAN CELLARS + ANTON BARBEAU:** The Jericho Tavern – Seductive, big-hearted folksy pop and clever-clogs craziness from the inspired local favourites, with support from lo-fi folk ensemble Ivan Campo, plus dark-hearted acoustic pop and gothic folk lullabies from Vatican Cellars and Californian songsmith Anton Barbeau returning to his home from home for more psychedelic 60s-styled pop inspired by Robyn Hitchcock and Syd Barrett.

**MY SHIKOME + SOULJACKER + EMPTY VESSELS:** Folly Bridge Inn – Triple bill of heavyweight local bands with Banbury's full-on metal outfit My Shikome, funky classic rock from Souljacker and blues-rocking from Empty Vessels.

**THE YOU WEREN'T THERE BAND:** The Jolly Postboy, Florence Park – Classic 60s psychedelia, from Cream to The Creation.

**SOUL & REGGAE SESSION:** The

Bullingdon

## SUNDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**LIGHTS. ACTION + WINCHELL RIOTS + SAID MIKE + MOTION IN COLOUR:** O2 Academy – One-time local rock hopeful





Patrick Currier (once of former Nightshift cover stars Bloodroses) returns to town with his new band, out on tour in support of debut album, 'Welcome To The New Cold War', proffering stadium-sized soft rock. Emotive indie rocking from local favourites Winchell Riots and soft-centred guitar pop from Motion In Colour.

**THE DAVID SHIRES BIG BAND: The Bullingdon**

**GWILYM SIMCOCK: Holywell Music Room (3-5pm)** – Special afternoon masterclass from the jazz pianist.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Cellar**

## MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**DANA GILLESPIE BAND: The Bullingdon** – Award-winning blues veteran gives her lungs a workout – *see main preview*

**RIFLES + NEW EDUCATION: O2 Academy** – Re-arranged about twenty-seven times, Jam-referencing, Weller-favoured rockers the Rifles might finally get their fifteen minutes of semi-fame on the Academy stage. Tour support New Education make Oasis sound like Little Boots.

## TUESDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**ROGUES + RUPERT & THE ROBBERS + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS: The Wheatsheaf** – Electro-pop and disco-punk fun from recent Iglu & Hartley support Rogues at tonight's You! Me! Dancing! gig. Hereford's fidgety indie-punk newcomers Rupert & The Robbers and local rising stars T&TT support.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Live set from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

## WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**KLAUS SAYS BUY THE RECORD + WISE CHILDREN + UTE: The Wheatsheaf** – Elegant, wistful folk-pop and indie jangle from the last year's Red Stripe Music Awards winner. Gentle acoustic pop from Southampton's Wise Children.

**GILAD WITH STRINGS: Wesley Memorial Church** – Oxford Contemporary Music's spring season gets into gear with a tribute to Charlie Parker's jazz classic, 'Bird With Strings'.

**FREE RANGE: The Cellar**

## THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**GOLDIE LOOKIN' CHAIN: O2 Academy** – Oh, for Christ's sake....

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Highly-rated young jazz pianist James Pearson is tonight's special guest.

**ABSOLUTE BOWIE: Joe's, Summertown** – Career-spanning tribute to the Thin White Duke.

**BRUTE CHORUS + VULTURES: The Cellar** – Bluesy rockabilly and indie noise from Brute Chorus.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon TAMARA & JAMES + THE JOE ALLEN BAND + FACEOMETER: The Jericho**

**Tavern** – Acoustic pop night.

**APPLE PIRATE PROMOTIONS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Metal, emo and post-hardcore bands night.

## FRIDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**VIC GODDARD & THE SUBWAY SECT + LES CLOCHARDS + THE GULLIVERS:**

**The Wheatsheaf** – Original punk hero turned lounge-pop pioneer returns – *see main preview*

**GOJIRA + IN THE EYES OF A TRAITOR + PILGRIMZ: O2 Academy** – Environmentally-conscious death metal brutality from the French rockers – *see main preview*

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – Opening night of the sixth OFF with a headline set from Dhol Foundation – *see main preview*

**OUTCRY + THE DACOITS + WISE MAN SAID + FROM HERE WE RUN: The Jericho Tavern** – Lightweight, piano-led soul-rock from headliners Outcry, with support from grunge-glam rockers The Dacoits. Sweet-natured math-pop newcomers From Here We Run open the show.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar** – House and breaks club night.

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

**THE YOU WEREN'T THERE BAND: The Red Lion, Yarnton**

**MARIA ILETT & SMITHY BAND + OSPREY: The Winchester, Crown Street** – Sunshine electro folk-pop from Maria and band.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon** – Skittle Alley open session.

**COVERS NIGHT: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Charity gig featuring a selection of local covers bands.

## SATURDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – Kate Rusby and Lau are today's headline bands – *see main preview*

**ELECTRONIC NIGHTS: The Jericho Tavern** – Response Collective headline the third Electronic Nights show, celebrating the best electro and experimental sounds in Oxford and featuring their own cinematic electro-hip hop soundscapes, plus DJs and visuals.

**CAPILLARY ACTION + ICE, SEA, DEAD PEOPLE + FRIENDSHIP: The Cellar** – New York's confrontational jazz-rockers hit town – *see main preview*

**HIGH & MIGHTY + BLACK POWDER + SOUTH PARADE: O2 Academy** – Annual reformation gig for the veteran local punk-metal faves, plus support from rising local thrash-punk monsters Black Powder.

**OXFORD PROFESSIONAL CHOIR + MWA: The Bullingdon** – Oxjam Benefit gig. **FREE AT LAST: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to Free.

**ATTACK OF THE.....: Bar Milano** – Breakcore, gabba, electronica, drum&bass and dubstep from Macheen Boi, Sinister Tek, Dinner Ladies and more.

**PETE FRYER BAND: Blue Boar Inn, Chipping Norton**



*Friday 20<sup>th</sup>*

## GOJIRA: O2 Academy

Gojira was the original name for the first Godzilla movie. In a reversal of that, Gojira were originally called Godzilla, changing their name due to legal problems. Whichever way it works, the band are every bit as monstrous as the star of the film. Hailing from the southern French town of Bayonne, Gojira formed back in 1996 and have retained the same four-man line-up since, featuring brothers Joe and Mario Duplantier, Joe also being an original member of Max Cavalera's Cavalera Conspiracy. Theirs is a mid-tempo, sometimes meandering, but technical and highly rhythmical form of death-metal with all its hallmark sounds, from the double kick-drum salvos to Duplantier's death growl vocals. As such they come in somewhere between Morbid Angel, Sepultura and especially Meshugga: brutal but (for the genre) melodic. In their 13 years together the band have progressed from playing support to Cannibal Corpse and Impaled Nazarene to a wider audience touring with Trivium and Lamb Of God. They only released four albums in that time, but each is an epic work, last year's 'The Way Of All Flesh' continuing their lyrical fascination with all things spiritual and environmental, beacons of positivity in a genre more normally obsessed with black-hearted death and ruin.

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or [colin@oxfordbands.com](mailto:colin@oxfordbands.com).



OxfordBands.com



*Friday 20<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>*

## OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL:

### Oxford Town Hall

The sixth annual Oxford Folk Festival finds the event now firmly cemented not just in the local music calendar but also the national folk music one. Testament to the hard work and innovation of the organisers, and as per previous years, the weekend attracts a cross section of folk and world music favourites, plus a selection of newcomers, local hopefuls and an array of workshops, celidhs, buskers, morris dancers and the traditional parade that make for a diverse and colourful festival. Friday evening finds Punjabi bhangra collective Dhol Foundation headlining, along with two great local acts – Afropean Choir, mixing urban beats with traditional African song, and Tandara Mandala, playing traditional eastern European and Russian folk tunes. English folk star Kate Rusby is Saturday's star turn, this year teaming up with Donald Grant and the Red Skies String Ensemble. Also on the bill is Orkney singer Kris Drever's Lau band, who won Best Group at last year's BBC Radio Folk Awards, plus African dance from Robert Maseko and Congobeat, and innovative trad. English folk from locals Telling The Bees. Festival stalwarts The Ukulele Orchestra Of Great Britain and Spiers and Boden headline Sunday and are joined by, among others, Dutch folk group Cum Suis. While the majority of events take place at Oxford Town Hall, there is a ceilidh up at Brookes on Saturday night featuring the Cock & Bull Band, while other concerts take place at the Holywell Music Room and around the castle complex. Visit [www.oxfordfolkfestival.com](http://www.oxfordfolkfestival.com) for full line-up and ticket details.

**JIMI HENDRIX TRIBUTE: The Winchester, Crown Street** – Denny Ilett Jr pays homage to the guitar master.

## SUNDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – The Ukulele Orchestra Of Great Britain and Spiers and Boden headline the final day of the festival – *see main preview*

**THE BOXER REBELLION: The Bullingdon** – Having hit the Billboard Top 100 and iTunes Top 5 recently with self-released album 'Union', Boxer Rebellion continue to make their comeback in forceful style after early hype surrounding their Poptones deal and tours with Biffy Clyro and Killers. By turns dark and grungey and pretty and ethereal, they're somewhere between Muse and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club.

**THE DIRTY EARTH BAND: The Cellar** – Classic heavy rock covers at the Dolly 28<sup>th</sup> reunion party.

## MONDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**ROADHOUSE: The Bullingdon** – Blues-rock from the London veterans, currently sporting three female vocalists and taking inspiration from The Stones, Creedence Clearwater Revival et al.

**COURTNEY PINE'S JAZZ WARRIORS: Oxford Playhouse** – The UK's leading jazz saxophonist reconvened his seminal big band for the Afropeans project in 2007 to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery and now takes it on the road, featuring a selection of the country leading soloists, including Jason Yarde, Alex Wilson and Omar Puente.

**SILVANITO + DRUNKENSTEIN + GABRIEL MESH: The Jericho Tavern**

## TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**ASH GRUNWALD: O2 Academy** – Australian bluesman over in the UK to promote his recent acclaimed album, 'Fish Out Of Water', initially inspired by classic blues and roots legends like Howlin' Wolf and Robert Johnson but more recently taking in some of Tom Waits' more experimental influences.

**THE BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre** – Spectacular homage to The Beatles from the original and best tribute act, from Hamburg to Abbey Road, costume changes and all.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Live set from The Howard Peacock Quintet

## WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**RESONATE + SAN ANDREAS + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + I AM THIEVES: The Bullingdon** – Double dose of Lockjaw Records bands at tonight's Burning Legacy promotion. Exmouth's Resonate fire out progressive post-hardcore while Holland's San Andreas opt for a spot of melodic emo. Local grunge-pop outfit Dial F and Led Zep-shaped heavy rockers I Am Thieves add extra weight to proceedings.

**YELLOW CRAYONS: The Wheatsheaf**  
**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar**  
**ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney**

## THURSDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**GLASS LIGHTS + SECRET RIVALS: O2 Academy** – Anthemic, emotive AOR out of London.

**GARY GO + VV BROWN: O2 Academy** – Double headline tour from two of the most widely-touted new pop offerings around. MOR pop softie Gary Go belies his fun moniker in favour of safe Athlete-cum-Coldplay emoting, which has at least caught the ear of Take That, who have picked him to support them on tour this summer. This after supporting Script around Europe. A collaboration with Rammstein seems unlikely at this point. Meanwhile, bubblegum soul-pop lady VV Brown offers far more fun, mixing up lively electro-dance, classic rock'n'roll and doo-wop with a quirky approach to soul.

**WE Vs THE SHARK + PULLED APART BY HORSES + IVY'S ITCH: The Cellar** – Athens, Georgia's sharp-elbowed math-rocking disco-punk noisemongers over in the UK to plug last year's 'Dirty Version' album, drawing on Fugazi, Q & Not U and Les Savy Fav for post-hardcore inspiration. Leeds' hardcore spazz-rockers Pulled Apart By Horses support, along with angular hardcore monsters Ivy's Itch.

**THOMAS TRUAX + THE RELATIONSHIPS + KANGO BILL: The Bullingdon** – Oddball Americana and folky pop from the eccentric Mr Truax and his assortment of homemade instruments. Tweedy psychedelia and lovely melancholy 60s pop from The Relationships in support. Acoustic rockers Kango Bill complete tonight's Moshka club night.

**SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf** – Expressive, dynamic alto and soprano sax from guest soloist Julian Nicholas at tonight's Spin.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Jericho Tavern**  
**THE LONG INSIDERS + BLACK HATS + GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN BAD TOWNS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Sultry, shimmering cinematic pop from The Long Insiders, plus raucous new wave rocking from Black Hats.

## FRIDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**PNEU + SHIELD YOUR EYES: The Wheatsheaf** – Great double bill of wiggled-out guitar noise, with regular tour partners Pneu and Shield Your Eyes both cranking out a frenetic, oblique guitar attack that mixes up 80s Chicago hardcore with post-rock experimentalism.

**MELTING POT with THE SIRENS CALL + HEARTS IN PENCIL + 14TEN: The Bullingdon** – Emotive grunge rocking from The Sirens Call at tonight's Melting Pot, plus chipper indie-punk from Hearts In Pencil and female-fronted metal from 14Ten.

**CHALK + LOYAL TROOPER + SHATTERED DREAMS + URSULA ROSE: The Jericho Tavern** – Indie rock from Chalk,

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plus acoustic rock from London's Loyal Trooper.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX + THE HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + MARK COBB:** The Ampleforth Arms, Risinghurst  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon  
**GET DOWN:** The Brickworks  
**HQ:** The Cellar – Drum&bass session with Lynx, Dan B and MC Fozz.  
**EASY TIGER + JSK + OSPREY:** The Winchester, Crown Street – Classic 60s and 70s-style rocking from Easy Tiger.

## SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**DANANANANAYCKROYD:** The Bullingdon – Brighton fight-pop scrappers hit town; furniture removal and minor demolition jobs a speciality – *see main preview*  
**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with MUSIC FOR PLEASURE + PROJECT**

*Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>*

## CAPILLARY ACTION + ICE, SEA, DEAD PEOPLE + FRIENDSHIP: The Cellar

A rare UK showing for New York's confrontational jazz-rockers, centred around virtuoso guitarist and composer Jonathan Pfeffer, who recorded the band's 2004 debut album almost single-handedly when he was just 17. By the band's second album, 'So Embarrassing', the sound had expanded, embellished by strings, horns, electronics and vocals and featuring a revolving door cast of players, mainly drawn from Philadelphia's music college graduates, who somehow manage to meld Zappa, Steely Dan, Shellac and Black Sabbath together, often as not in the space of a single song. As such Capillary Action find themselves feted as much by the jazz press as alt.rock critics, and if they remain a cult concern – supports to acts like USAIsamons and Fugazi bassist Joe Lally are hardly likely to make them household names – their challenging clash of styles should see them reap their reward in time. Energetic angular post-hardcore noise from Bedford's Ice, Sea, Dead People in the vein of Oxes and Ex-Models, plus lo-fi, super-fuzzed London-based two-piece Friendship. Another triumphantly esoteric night courtesy of Vacuous Pop.



**ADORNO + UNKNOWN FLOW:** The Wheatsheaf – Mixed bag of sounds at tonight's GTI with melodic guitar pop in an REM vein from Music For Pleasure, featuring assorted members of Unbelievable Truth and Harry Angel, plus quirky clever-clogs electro-pop from Project Adorno, offering musical tributes to Jeremy Paxman and Davros, and rambling neo-prog rock from Unknown Flow.  
**STIFF LITTLE FINGERS:** O2 Academy – More punk revivalism from Jake Burns and crew.

**THE PINEY GIR ROADSHOW + THE WOE BETIDES + THE ROUNDHEELS:** The Jericho Tavern – The Kansas singer and Truck Festival stalwart returns with her sweet-natured country review, with support from skewed folk-pop and art-rock duo The Woe Betides and local trad folkies The Roundheels.

**THE PETE FRYER BAND:** The Magdalen BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Ska, reggae, hip hop and drum&bass club night with live set from Imperial Leisure.

**DENNY ILETT Jr:** The Winchester, Crown Street – Jazz session.

**BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + TELLING THE BEES + CHICKEN SHED:** Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Skittle Alley live music night with eccentric punkers Barry & The Beachcombers, plus inventive folkies Telling The Bees.

**QUEEN OF HEARTS CABARET:** Isis Tavern, Iffley Lock – Live music from Edinburgh street band Orkestra Del Sol, plus Horns Of Plenty, Bop Samba and DJ Mystic.

**ECLECTIC DANCE:** The Bullingdon  
**LONG WEEKEND:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic rock covers.

## SUNDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**LEMAR:** The New Theatre – Bizarre mutant hybrid of Kajagoogoo's old singer and a long-tailed monkey creature created in the notorious *Fame Academy* laboratory and turned insane after accidentally sharing a stage with Usher.

**ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION:** Red Lion, Kidlington

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY:** The Cellar

## MONDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**THE KYLA BROX BAND:** The Bullingdon – Daughter of British blues legend Victor Brox, Kyla has shared a stage with her father many times, matching his powerful vocals easily and on course to become the UK's premier female blues singer, mixing up classic r'n'b, funk and soul.

## TUESDAY 31<sup>st</sup>

**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon – George Haslam is tonight's guest at the free weekly live jazz club.

*Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month - no exceptions. Call 01865 372255 (10am-6pm) or email listings to Nightshift@oxfordmusic.net. All listings are copyright of Nightshift and may not be reproduced without permission*



*Saturday 28<sup>th</sup>*

## DANANANANAYCKROYD: The Bullingdon

There are of plenty spellcheck-bothering band names out there but Glasgow six-piece Dananananayckroyd really make you have to think what you're typing. Still, such silliness is all part of the fun of the band, recently described by DrownedInSound as the best live band in the world. Such hyperbole is possibly a bit previous but their notoriously over-enthusiastic shows are what are getting the band noticed, venue furniture tending to get rearranged in a decidedly un-feng shui fashion as the band hurtle through the sort of hook-laden post-hardcore angularity and screaming noise that marries Blood Brothers, Fugazi and Futureheads. Talking of which, bass player Laura Hyde is married to Futureheads' Barry Hyde. Elsewhere Dananananayckroyd feature two drummers and two vocalists, though their drummers tend to leave or change roles with such regularity it's hard to keep up, and really you should concentrate more on their all-action party-fury performances and any stray flying bar stools. After a couple of low-key singles, including a debut for Moshi Moshi Records, they have signed with Best Before and are set to release their first album, 'Hey Everyone!' next month, a statement of their chaotic fun intent. Along the way they've supported Foals and Johnny Foreigner and are fresh back from a European tour with Kaiser Chiefs. They describe themselves as "Fight Pop" and if Hollywood starts making 21<sup>st</sup> Century cowboy films, Dananananayckroyd will doubtless be soundtracking the saloon bar brawl scenes.

## VENUE PHONE NUMBERS

O2Academy: 0844 477 2000  
(ticketweb)

The Bullingdon: 01865 244516

The Wheatsheaf: 01865 790380

The Cellar: 01865 244761

The New Theatre: 0844 847 1585

The Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775

The Purple Turtle: 01865 247086

The Temple: 01865 243251

East Oxford Community Centre:  
01865 792168

Isis Tavern: 01865 243854



## MAGAZINE

### O2 Academy

As the opening bars of 'The Light Pours Out Of Me' kick in and Howard Devoto shimmies onstage the triumphant roar of the crowd is tempered by looks of near disbelief: this is really happening; Magazine are back. Lifelong world-weary cynics of our acquaintance are grinning like loons and we're grinning right back.

Amid the throng of new wave veterans younger fans realise they're witnessing something historic.

Magazine are probably equalled only by the far more widely celebrated Joy Division amongst the post-punk era's pioneers and tonight, a low-key warm-up for their upcoming London and Manchester shows, is their first gig in 28 years. All the original line-up, bar the sadly deceased John McGeogh, are here and it's obvious this isn't just some ageing rockers' cash-in show. Magazine were always more artful than that: the Pistols may have spurred them into life but it's Kafka, Dostoyevsky and Ballard that shape their sprawling, crawling tales of paranoia and detachment.

Tonight Devoto, completely bald and without his specs, looks every inch the genial psychopath, indulging in typically oblique between-song pronouncements, his singing voice still a crisp, caustic snarl. Behind him a dapper Barry Adamson conjures darkly funky basslines, while drummer

John Doyle is equally solid and flexible. Guitarist McGeogh (remembered tonight as a missing friend) is replaced in the band by Noko, Devoto's former partner in Luxuria and he plays his part perfectly, his raw, jagged style powerful but never overbearing, allowing Dave Formula's powerful synth sounds to invade every corner.

Most of tonight's set is exactly what we expected and hoped for: a strident 'Model Worker', a simply gorgeous 'You Never Knew Me' featuring sweet backing vocals from Ipso Facto's Rosalie Cunningham and a majestic 'Motorcade'. But Magazine are typically perverse too: there's a reading of – even by their standards – bizarre short story 'The Book', which segues into '20 Years Ago', which in turn morphs into 'Definitive Gaze', while for the encores they eschew the longed-for 'Back To Nature' in favour of two cover versions they made their own back in the late-70s: Sly & The Family Stone's 'Thank You For Letting Me Be Mice Elf Again' and Beefheart's 'I Love You, You Big Dummy'. Twin peaks of a phenomenal set are an imperious 'Permafrost' and the set closing 'Shot By Both Sides', one of punk's definitive anthems. Along the way they remind us why they stood out so much first time round, unafraid

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to delve into prog, even jazz. And when they finish there's the thrill of knowing that perhaps their legacy won't now be lost to new generations of fans. Over in the corner Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood is

stripping a Magazine poster from the wall as a memento: a modern-day rock great reduced to the state of over-eager fanboy. That's how important Magazine are.

**Dale Kattack**

## RICHARD THOMPSON

### The New Theatre

For those of a certain age Richard Thompson is both an English treasure (even though home is in California) and a legend in his own lifetime. He was with Fairport Convention when they made 'Liege and Leaf' and is regularly listed amongst the top twenty guitarists ever. A prolific songwriter, he has shown he is very much his own man over the past four decades.

This tour, however, finds Richard Thompson and friends taking on "1,000 years of popular music", rather than his own songs. The 1,000 years concept is Thompson's way of reminding his audience not to forget to take "a look at what's back there to see if it still does the trick".

He comes on stage playing a hurdy gurdy and singing a song from the 1200s. With his collaborators Debra Dobkin on percussion and

vocals, and Judith Owen on vocals and keyboard, Thompson proceeds to indulge in some rapid and audacious time travelling, getting into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century by the end of the first half. Along the way he moves seamlessly from singing with relish about ravens picking out the eyes of a dead knight, to medieval Italian to Gilbert and Sullivan, all treated with respect and introduced in a dry, droll style.

Thompson makes his guitar sound like a lute to redeem the dodgiest moment of the night, Judith Owen singing Dido's final aria from Henry Purcell's opera 'Dido and Aeneas', and then displays his versatility by launching into a steaming version of the early-19<sup>th</sup> Century 'Blackleg Miner'.

The first half of the show is like a watching a

highwire act, albeit a well-practised one, that just might fall at any moment. The second half is more relaxed and lacks that earlier tension as it covers ground much closer to both the musicians and audience, and also maybe there is a touch of tour fatigue creeping in. We get enjoyable cover versions of early Beatles, The Easybeats' 'Friday On My Mind', and Abba's 'Money, Money, Money'. Judith Owen performs expressive versions of the standards 'Night and Day' and 'Cry Me a River', complete with beautiful 1950s jazz guitar from Thompson.

It's not until Thompson pulls off Nelly Furtado's 'Maneater' – partially in medieval Latin – and sticks a 12<sup>th</sup> Century troubadour song in medieval French by Richard Lionheart into the encore, though, that the show really rediscovers its vibe of making a serious point, while keeping its tongue firmly in its cheek.

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# SKY LARKIN / PULLED APART BY HORSES

## The Bullingdon

Pulled Apart By Horses? That'll probably be the fate in store for bassist Rob Lee when he gets back to Leeds, if pictures get out of him sporting a T-shirt endorsing the work of Sheffield cock rock kings Def Leppard get out. His band may look like Kings Of Leon, but judging by the racket they make – a head-on collision of thrashy punk and Sabbath riffs that at times calls to mind Modey Lemon – they can only be the sons of a preacher man if the old fella spent his days spreading the word about the Church of Satan.

Having spent the last week squeezed together within the narrow confines of a van, it's little wonder they set about their sub-half-hour slot like uncaged beasts. As charmingly-titled debut single 'Meat Balloon' gives way to 'High Five, Swan Dive, Nose Dive' and the on- and frequently offstage frenzy intensifies, guitarist James Brown's barnet mushrooms to epic Buzz-Osborne-esque proportions like some kind of hairy erection. Not to be outdone, frontman Tom Hudson ends 'I Punched A Lion In The Throat' rocking back and forth on the floor clutching his guitar in a disturbingly amatory fashion.

Which means their hometown pals Sky Larkin are quite a contrast. Not only have they shared a tour with twee indie band *du*

*jour*; Los Campesinos!, they now share a label (Wichita) and a producer (John Goodmanson). Pigtailed Katie Harkin (vocals, Korg, "tip toes guitar") also takes the time to thank us effusively for coming out to see them and "making our little hearts glow". Aww, bless. Well, Katie, all we can say is that the feeling is mutual.

Sky Larkin's is the confident performance of a band secure in the knowledge that they have a brace of great singles ('Fossil, I' and 'Beeline') behind them and a corking debut album ('The Golden Spike') in the can. Particularly glow-inducing on the night is the slow-burning 'Matador', dedicated to PABH's Rob in honour of his being so engrossed in a porn film that he was late for the soundcheck.

There's nothing fashionable or self-consciously clever about what Sky Larkin do – early 90s college rock that could be described without any derogatory connotations as "classic" – but that's all part of the charm. As an antidote to landfill indie and what is fast becoming its equally vapid, tedious and disposable opposite, sleazy electronica, 'The Golden Spike' could prove to be an invaluable shot in the arm.

**Ben Woolhead**

## SOULFLY

### O2 Academy

Metal doesn't take snow days off. While the rest of south east England folds into a duvet week (poring over the Xbox and crafting inane ice sculptures), a near-capacity Academy proves that it takes more than a dump of frozen water to keep Oxford's long-haired, Satan-rockin' devotees from a night of Brazilian groove-thrash.

Max 'nee Sepultura' Cavalera emerges – face obscured by a black hood for the first few numbers – and dominates the room like the

legendary troll-giant of metal lore that he is. Soulfly do sound like Sepultura, in that they're cranium-crumbling loud. The opening numbers pound the claustrophobic industrial riffs of late-90s alt-rock – circa 'Drowning Pool' – into Cavalera's unmistakable, scratched-over-concrete growl. By 'Killing Fields' – appropriately titled – he's split the audience into a wall of death; an ever-expanding tornado of a circle pit flipping on a drum riff to slam into the other side of the

venue. It makes throwing snowballs look conciliatory. Cresting the wave of sheer ritual destruction comes one of the Brazilian beat breakdowns Soulfly are famous for: an extended, tribal rhythm drum fill. But before it all turns too jungle, the run-up to the encore shreds the exhausted pit into Slayer-style frenzy: a quick dive into Dave Grohl/Probot collaboration 'Red Wall', then a pause. "Here's something a bit more familiar," Max barks, before ripping into endorphin-pumping, grisly anthem 'Roots Bloody Roots'. Everything about the band is enormous, from the throbbing volume and violence to metal myth. Pounding original thrash whirlwinds like Sepultura is old news; Soulfly's merciless rock blasts out the February cobwebs and disintegrates the snowdrifts.

**Liz Dodd**



Soulfly photo by rphimages

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# VON BRAUN / THE HOLY ORDERS / DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN / THE SCARLETTS

## The Wheatsheaf

The Scarletts are causing a fair few ripples at the moment, and although on first inspection it's not entirely clear why, they do grow on you. Young and impetuous, they've got a heap of energy as they tear into a set that calls to mind The Specials and Libertines in equal measure. Musically they're stupendously tight, with the rhythm section locking down ska motifs with considerable aplomb. Only frontman Johnny threatens to derail things with a voice that is one part Terry Hall and one part drunken gibbon. That said, the enthusiasm and commitment make such quibbles practically irrelevant – when they're coasting on attitude and rolling basslines The Scarletts are a genuinely exciting proposition.

Dial F For Frankenstein look like they belong in a scrapbook of 90s college bands. In fact they sound like they've stepped larger than life from a scrapbook of 90s college bands. Elements of grunge punctuate their set of comfortably competent indie-rock to the point where we'd swear there are at least a couple of Green River riffs in there. With a resurgence in the grunge aesthetic beginning up

north with the likes of Dinosaur Pile Up, Dial F could well find themselves adorning a fair few modern scrapbooks.

Kudos must go to Hull's The Holy Orders who have travelled down for the gig despite losing their bass player temporarily due to a car crash. The lack of a bassist means their songs seem a little disjointed, but the spirit shines through. Like a meths-powered Wedding Present, they are both emotive and cathartic as they switch between jangling sentiment and immersion in noise. With the bottom-end replaced they'd be a stunning prospect.

No bottom-end by choice for Von Braun, just two guitars intertwining beautifully. Or so we'd hoped. A malfunctioning guitar amp hamstringing the band considerably tonight to such a degree that we wonder if we're missing the point somewhat before feeling a bit sorry for them. Without the twin guitars working as they should they seem directionless and morose, but seeing as they've been dealt a bad hand tonight it's unfair to judge them on this showing.

*Sam Shepherd*

# THE JOE ALLEN BAND / JUJU FISH The Wheatsheaf

It's one of those nights, where it feels as if the artists have crept inside your head, feasted on your feelings and then regurgitated them on stage for all to hear. For a moment this creates a sense of being crudely violated but a quick glance around the pub shows nodding approval from the entire audience, suggesting such an emotional offering is the order of the day.

It opens with Chris Thompson, who doses the Wheatsheaf with a decent helping of gloom created by his own crafting, as well as a humbling finger-plucking cover of Oasis' 'Half The World Away', resulting in a more than satisfying start to an evening that's not for the faint of heart.

With that in mind, Little Fish's Juju rises to the stage and promptly adds to the cocktail of prescription sadness. Offering delightful acoustic versions of some of Little Fish's most poignant songs, as well as nerve-tingling newbie 'Sorry State', she ensures the audience receive all the sorrow the doctor ordered, paving the way nicely for the headline act.

By the time the recently expanded Joe Allen Band reach the stage there seems to be nothing else to do, except to crank up the volume and welcome more melancholy into the mix. Cue gut-wrenching lyrics and

blood-chilling guitar melodies from Joe, taut harmonies from Angharad Jenkins' violin and thumping beats from stand-up drummer Chrissie Sheaf and it's a wonder there aren't physical tears being shed. Gone are the musical interludes which allowed audience to drift off and in its place are short bursts of instrumentals which seem to stab at your consciousness, ensuring every ounce of attention is devoted to the music alone. Whilst 'Watered Down' stands out as the song of the night, they never fail to thrill. It seems, then, that their break from the Oxford scene has been time well spent, allowing them to develop their sound, which now immerses itself in emotion and fuses feeling into every chord, rendering it truly breathtaking.

They say misery loves company and there's seemingly no better camaraderie for all things depressing than the three talented acts witnessed at the Wheatsheaf tonight. Nevertheless, despite the melancholic nature of the gig, somehow the music seems to turn even this bleakest of evenings into a heart-warming affair, using music the way it was intended; to capture the essence of human emotion, be that happy or sad.

*Lisa Ward*



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# THE ORIGINAL RABBIT'S FOOT SPASM BAND / SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE / PICTURE BOOK

## The Wheatsheaf

At their best Leeds' Picture Book are a cross between Lamb and Sade (as in 'Smooth Operator', not De Sade); at their worst they're a load of old balaerics. They do show plenty of rhythmic inventiveness in their sleek techno pop, and a nice line in flatulent 80s keyboards, but the vocals aren't able to breathe life into the songs; if they had an Alison Goldfrapp or a Roisin Murphy hamming it up we might be talking. Having said this, the last two tracks blow the rest of the set out of the water, the finale pitching keening violin against the synth hum, and single 'Strangers' a fussy bustle of dubstep keys and exuberant syn-drums that are half Karl Bartos and half Tito Puente. More like that, please.

Space Heroes Of The People have always been about balance. Their music is live enough to feel organic, and programmed enough to seem inhuman; the sound is minimalist enough to be hypnotic, but compact enough to class them as an ace pop band. It's a tough tightrope to walk, but tonight they nonchalantly saunter across, possibly stopping midway for

a somersault or two. Perhaps it's the live vocals; perhaps it's the unexpectedly meaty Sabbathesque half time sections; perhaps it's the righteously hefty sound that the engineer coaxes from them, but this is a superb set. We just can't shake the image of Maggie Philbin coming onstage during 'Barbie Is A Robot' to explain what a vocoder is, though.

The Original Rabbit's Foot Spasm Band are not at all original, but everything else about them is fantastic. They play 30s jazz songs, but we feel as if we're in a sordid sweaty speakeasy, not some horrific sanitised tea dance. These songs ('Mack The Knife', 'The Sheik Of Araby') are about sex, narcotics and impossibly louche tailoring, and they should be treated with the dirt they deserve, not emasculated by legions of function jazzers. The Spasmers get to grips with the soul of the music through riotous trumpet, rasping sax, and by being heroically, Biblically, drunk. This, my friends is the authentic sound of New Orleans. Possibly during the hurricane.

*David Murphy*

## LILY ALLEN

### O2 Academy

A fool of my acquaintance questioned why the hell I'd want to go and see Lily Allen, while another couldn't believe it was my "sort of thing". Both of course missed the point that Lily Allen simply makes fantastic pop music. Or, since this is Lily Allen we're talking about, *fucking* fantastic pop music.

Lily likes the F word. It crops up throughout her songs, from debut hit 'Smile' to superb newbie 'The Fear'. And her new album, 'It's Not Me, It's You', even weighs in with a song simply called 'Fuck You'. But with music as great as hers she could recite the contents of *Roger's Profanascaurus* and we'd love it.

Lily live is a bit different to Lily on record, and not always for the better. Too often tonight her band are caught trying to rock out, either to try and earn cred points, or simply to beef out songs that might otherwise get lost in the crowd. But doing so strips some of the charm from it all, '22', for example, losing its playful spite as Lily is overwhelmed by guitars. Equally for all her bubble and bounce, she lacks the kind of charisma as a performer that her ever-entertaining interviews and blogs promise. Noticeably, she repeats most

of her banter word for word in London the following night.

Still, you can't argue with *fucking* fantastic pop music, can you, and 'It's Not Fair', with its western movie theme scurry or the electro sparkle of 'Go Back To The Start' are good enough to battle through any barriers. Elsewhere there is Bavarian-style oompah, circus ring bombast and something that sounds like 'Rawhide' amid the effervescent electro-pop, soul and slender funk. Those hit singles are tonight's highlights, though – the sunshine calypso tilt of 'LDN', the razor-sharp lyricism and gilded synth bubble of 'The Fear' (joyously announced tonight by Lily who boasts its mid-week sales are higher than Lady Ga Ga's, putting it at Number 1), and of course 'Smile', a complete and utter joy of a song with its infectious reggae lope and Lily's typically creamy vocal delivery.

She encores with Britney's 'Womanizer', a glitterstomping finale that sends tonight's packed throng home in the highest of spirits. Back home still singing along to each and every pop gem as passing prudes doubtless blush and mutter at such base language. Ah, fuck 'em.

*Sue Foreman*



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## BRONTIDE / BITCHES

### The Jericho Tavern

Bitches is a great name for a band – it's direct, aggressive, cuts the crap and has a hint of tongue-in-cheek stupidity about it. It's a great name for *this* band, as they've got all of those qualities in abundance. Although this is explained to me as one of their first gigs, I remember seeing them play around a year ago, in this very same venue, soon after the dissolution of the ridiculous, brutal, bear-fetishising Walk-Off, whose frontman Blake Iverson now takes the lead as chief Bitch in a two-piece consisting of two vocalists, one angry fuzz bass player and one yelping drummer in the form of one-time Harlettee Staz. The previous gig was centred around the furious thrashing of a full-size trash can by another ex-Walk-Off; that aspect is now gone, and Bitches are all the better for it. They're now everything that is or was good about Bratmobile and Bikini Kill, White Stripes and Coachwhips, Sonic Youth and Black Flag. Amazingly full-sounding songs, constructed from nothing more than a few effortlessly effective bass riffs, a ton of

light-hearted fury and no end of chaotic punk-style rock'n'roll, that's aware enough not to outstay its welcome. They're done and dusted within twenty minutes.

Conversely Brontide, for all of their studied musicianship and super-tight thrash, quickly become stale. As one fellow punter remarks, "Battles with riffs" – and that's more accurate than it's pleasant to admit. For every ear-swilling pound of noise and arcing guitar squall that they seem impressively great at leaping into with vigour, there's a whole pile of today's *de rigueur* circular melody, guitar interplay twinkling and pseudo-post-rock deconstruction to be seen here. Whilst they can certainly bring the house to attention with often unexpected turns of squeal and freneticism, they're still safe at the core – they're going through the motions with a set of tunes that would once have been exciting and fresh, but nowadays is becoming increasingly laboured and wearing.

*Simon Minter*

## NME AWARDS TOUR

### O2 Academy

I really should know better than to trust NME's opinion on things by now. Two years ago I went to the Indie Rave leg of these tours and was shocked just how bad The Klaxons, CSS (a good band normally) and some others whose names escape me, actually were. Tonight is better, but still not the amazing showcase you would hope for.

Firstly, take **White Lies** and **Friendly Fires**. Please. If this is what passes for the best nowadays I fear for the bands who weren't good enough. White Lies don't help their cause by having a singer who bellows like a donkey caught in an animal trap. This combined with some fey 80s industrial greyness makes for an unholy combination. One song sounds like 'Love Will Tear Us Apart' played really badly; others are sub-Editors dullness. Their best moment is when a hi-NRG disco beat unexpectedly intrudes half way through the last song, but even that can't save them.

Friendly Fires start promisingly with 'Lovesick', all bubbling beats, jungle rhythms, yawning vocals, and a whole lot of Rapture. Thereafter the law of diminishing returns applies as they play what appears to be the same song over and over, making the next forty minutes seem the longest of my life.

Before both of these we at least get **Florence & The Machine**. Florence knows how to work an audience, and doesn't need any tricks to do it. She just struts around with her kooky, imposing stature. It's a bit disconcerting just how much louder her band is than the others; this is a band, after all, featuring a harp, but the songs still come through. The

singles are the stand outs: 'Kiss With A Fist', with all its resigned brutality, and the crystalline beauty of 'Dog Days Are Over'. New song 'Ghosts' is another to remember, its pummelling drums, which threaten to blow your brains out, making it, in Florence's words, perfect headbanging material. As their set comes to a close I'm ruing the queueing problems that caused me to miss the start of their set.

From first to last and **Glasvegas** prove themselves worthy headliners, being by head and shoulders the best thing tonight. They know how to make an entrance, unleashing 'Geraldine' right at the start. This is how great stadium rock could sound in the right hands as the band threaten to surge the song right through the roof. Two things seem key to Glasvegas' greatness: the rudimentary drumming, standing up and with half a kit, is perfect for the band. Less is often far more. They also manage to pick up the baton from the Jesus and Mary Chain and take the fuzzed-up Spector-ish Wall of Sound one step further, a feat they do best on 'It's My Own Cheating Heart That Makes Me Cry'. 'Flowers and Football Tops', while not as epic as on record, does at least have a maudlin/epic refrain of 'You Are My Sunshine', while 'Go Square Go' is a barrelling fight club-style song, and contains a "here we fucking go" chant. It's another Glasvegas trick: if the obvious works, you might as well use it. The set ends with a cracking version of 'Daddy's Gone', again making a sad tale sound optimistic. And for that we should be grateful.

*Russell Barker*

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## EMMY THE GREAT

### O2 Academy

Despite being a London-based Hong Kong émigré, Emma Lee-Moss doesn't display universality in her songs. She is touring to promote her first album, 'First Love'. This is all about personal diaries torn and shredded and then re-taped in the form of music. Personal notes that do not go further than boyfriend tales, trips to the grocery store, friends nearly (but not in the end) getting pregnant and daily trivialities. Mind you, her acoustic vignettes fizz with dark humour and sarcasm at times when she sings, "Every time I think of you, I have to go to the toilet / Can't tell if this is love or a stomach disorder". But then I gather it's only men that laugh, and who clearly seem to be about to wet in their pants and would be more than willing to go to the loo with her. Indeed her immaculate, doll-like looks are a wonderful marketing tool.

But surely there must be something special in her music? Apparently, she wants to steer away from her basic acoustic sound and go for a more electric

approach. Backed by violin, bass, guitar, drums, piano, it seems that, gradually, once the set starts wearing off, all songs blend into the same mash of melodies. I can't distinguish one from another. There is so much one can do to pump things up with only a few bare chords arranged per song. There clearly is a dichotomy between Emmy and the band too, both going in different directions. Whereas Emmy sticks to the sweet lollipop folk lyrics while caressing acoustic strings (where is that electric approach?), the band breaks into a full swing of Americana, as if ready to gallop away without her. Not surprising really, since she insists on ripping off Leonard Cohen's 'Hallelujah', Lou Reed's 'Walk On The Wild Side', and also Billy Bragg, Magnetic Fields and even Cat Power at one point.

There is some potential here, but if they don't fix this mix-up soon, there will be soon an even greater distance between Emmy and 'The Great'.

**Liane Escorza**

## THE BUMBLEBEES / PARAFFINS / ACE BUSHY STRIPTEASE

### The Wheatsheaf

If I was being true to the spirit of this evening of Enid Blyton pop-punk, then this review would be written in crayon on a hand-folded 'zine made out of paper torn from the LazyTown Christmas Annual. It would also shower you with glitter when you opened it and end by giving you instructions of how to refold it to make a hot air balloon that wouldn't work, but hey, you had hours of fun, not watching TV.

Ace Bushy Striptease, out of Brum and Brighton, have gruff riffing guitar, confidently unconfident hollering and what could easily be a pillow talk translation of 'Jolie Taxi' by singer Emma Champion, counterpointing the chaotic punk thrash of songs like 'Mervyn and Issac Find A CD'. It's as daft as a 13-year-old dad, and would have kookily eased into John Peel's Festive Fifty.

The "windows are where the doors should be" weirdness continues when Billy from Knockentiber in Scotland climbs up on stage and announces that "We are the Paraffins", when actually it's him, a few instruments and a laptop,

and we are not sure he actually knows that. He is a brilliant well-pool of creativity, though, as if Lou Reed or Ian Broudie were running early OMD. His computer squelches and oozes bass, cheesy Hammond and faux tabla layers during 'Cardboard Cut-out', as he daubs us with lyrical gems like "Every black hole has a silver lining", before suddenly going all genius on us by leaping off the stage to pop the balloons on the floor amongst our feet, each blast totally in time with the music. You had to be there.

The Bumblebees, from Bristol, continue the We Aeronauts ethos: that not having any pitch shouldn't stand in the way of starting a band. Lopsided art school haircuts, Iggle Piggle keyboards, and what's this, the ghost of Oxford's arch punk discoists Holy Roman Empire rising up to say, it's not the sound that's being played but what you are hearing in your head that matters.

As Shakespeare always puts it better than I can: Joy's soul lies in the doing.

**Paul Carrera**

## INTRODUCING....

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

### Dr Slaggleberry

#### Who are they?

Dr Slaggleberry are an experimental metal band from Thame made up of Chris Pethers (guitar) Lewis Turnbull (guitar) and Rich Bateman (drums). The band formed back in 2005 with a completely different line up and was originally a funk-metal band inspired by bands like Primus and the Melvins. Eventually they ditched the bass and went for two guitars instead. After several line up changes and some individual progression, the sound became more technical. Dr.Slaggleberry was "one of those names that seemed funny and clever at the time when you're out of your face, but in retrospect probably wasn't." But on the other hand, "People never know quite what they're in for when they see Dr.Slaggleberry on a live up." The current line-up has been together since April 2008 and has spent most of that time gigging, and getting airplay and some decent reviews in the underground press. Their new EP, 'Tuc Into The Tar', recorded live at the XFM Studios for the John Kennedy show, is out this month.

#### What do they sound like?

Jazz-metal freakery, math-core time signatures, tormented riffage, funky fury, monster grooves and spooky masks all add up to an instrumental band full of energy and imagination that takes their technical approach to metal to virulent new levels of noisy fun. They opt for the short, sharp shock approach, leaving no room for indulgence. Or, in their own words, "Spazzy experimental metal, with hints of jazz, funk and prog with the odd straight up metal riff."

#### What inspires them?

"Bands like Pysopus, Meshuggah, Sleepy Time Gorilla Museum and Sikth to name a few, but we listen to all sorts, from hip hop to funk to death metal."

#### Career highlight so far:

"There have been loads; it's been a pretty hectic roller coaster year for us. Supporting Italian band ZU at the Kiln Farm in Milton Keynes; getting EP of the week and appearing on the front cover of Organ Magazine; a 98 out of 100 rating and great review with Lords of Metal, 12 out of 13 with



Room Thirteen; getting our video on The Pitz metal TV show... Doing the XFM live sessions was great as well, also making our debut video was a lot of fun but I hope the big highlights are yet to come."

#### And the lowlight:

"Whenever we lost a member or had some other setback and thought whether it is all worth it or not. We always managed to drag it through the shitty times and it's always been a blessing in disguise."

#### Their favourite other Oxfordshire band is:

"Xmas Lights"

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

"Skull Grid" by Behold... The Arctopus."

#### When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April at the Bullingdon. Expect "A super tight experimental metal show with twists and turns and a sinister vibe."

#### Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"There are lots of great venues that are putting on new up coming acts..... Oh, and Nightshift of course! The bad thing is there are too many indie bands."

#### You might love them if you love:

Mr Bungle, The Locust, Rolo Tomassi, Behold... The Arctopus.

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### MONDAY MORNING SUN

If this month's page was a real war, with Monday Morning Sun up against most of the rest of the pile it would be akin to a bunch of cave-dwelling pygmies armed with sharpened slices of mango going head to head with an entire armoured tank division. This is proper heavyweight stuff, none of yer poncy sub-Metallica thrash metal. These boys look towards Swans, Joy Division and maybe even Psychic TV for inspiration, keeping the mood relentlessly downbeat through five tracks that clock in at a weighty 40 minutes. But why, shout the fools in the crowd, would anyone want to sit through forty minutes of unrelenting doom, misery and deathly ambience? Well, we'd sagely counter, because it's a damn sight more life-affirming than most of the stuff reviewed here this month. Umair Chaudhry and Marco Ruggerio have crafted vast slabs of claustrophobic but wonderfully melodic industrial-pagan electro-doom that alternately sound like Ian Curtis being inducted into a particularly morose chapter of Gregorian monks and afro-industrial tribal mantras. Beats rumble almost at subsonic level, heavily-treated guitars sear and grumble and Marco's middle-distant chants reverberate eerily around the room. It's like Depeche Mode on seriously super-strength downers making one last apocalyptic opus before being sucked into the void forever, and you know what? It's bloody great fun.

### LARRY REDDINGTON

As we listen to Larry's CD it's snowing outside and we can see Pertwee the Nightshift cat sitting forlornly on a parked car gathering a fine dusting of white on his poor wee furry head. Inside, though, it's like someone's lit a roaring fire and cracked open a bottle of fine sour-mash. This is country and western of the old school, all Nashville twinkle, down-home lap steel and banjo, with Larry's pretty authentic Stateside accent recounting tales of loose women and sad cowboys. We start to imagine we're holed up in a blizzard-strewn roadhouse bar with only whisky for sustenance and Glenn Campbell for company and it's the sort of

daydream we're disinclined to rouse ourselves from given the look of the some of the other demos in this month's pile. And when 'Hannah' introduces what sounds like a Hawaiian guitar, the temperature in the Nightshift office rises another five degrees and we're all set for a proper 24-hour drinking session.

### SEROTONIN

Back down to earth with a bump, though, and Bicester's Serotonin, who not only profess a love for all things Nirvana, and spend much of this demo trying to sound exactly like Nirvana, but also have a singer called Jay Cobain, who we sincerely hope really is called that and hasn't just adopted the surname in some deluded misadventure. What to say? They sound a lot like Nirvana, but, like, not really anything like as good, and hopefully as stated fans of that band, they'd concur. 'Save Me' is single-minded and bullish, full of grungy rumbling and gruff shouty vocals, while 'What About Me' aims more for that mid-paced 'Polly' feel. All harmless tribute fun, but elsewhere they lay it on too thick with some Stiltskin-style bombast on 'Farewell', while the apparently obligatory ballad, 'The Unattainable', clocks in at an unwelcome six minutes and sounds more like some terrible 1980s hair-metal band trying to write one "for the ladies", Jay's heavy transatlantic accent sounding way too forced and the whole thing a sickly, gooey exercise in soft-rock indulgence.

### THE NOMINEES

The nominees declare themselves to be "proud to sport an original blend of catchy material", although how that fits in with what sounds like a hamfisted attempt to copy The Kinks as fronted by a singer with a dose of rhotacism and hence sounds like a pub karaoke take on David Bowie on opener 'In The Company Of Trees' is anybody's guess. Perhaps the next song will provide a better insight into their originality. Except it's a cover version of Gnarl's Barkley's 'Crazy', played in a vaguely grunge-pop style that'll doubtless prove to be a crowd-pleaser on the band's forthcoming university tour. A switch to acoustic mode surprisingly seems to do them some favours, although the increasingly Bowie-baiting nature of the singer, and his self-referencing lyrics do detract from the piano and harmonica-led jaunt of 'Music You Love' with its sweetly cheesy female backing vocal sighs. It all ends with a fair-to-middling indie-grunge stumble that at least finds a little bit of summer in its heart and we feel that maybe there's nothing especially wretched about The Nominees,

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but we just know any memory of any of these songs will disappear as swiftly as snow on recently gritted tarmac.

## SAMUEL ZASADA

Samuel Zasada is, apparently, the catharsis of Witney singer-songwriter David Ashbourne, which makes you wonder whatever happened to writing sternly-worded letters of complaint to The Oxford Mail, and as he opens his account with 'Inside A Bomb' and the immortal line "I grazed my knee as a little boy", we prepare for an onslaught of self-pity and aggressively strummed acoustic guitar. But we're pleasantly surprised to hear what sounds like some between-the-wars gospel blues over which Samuel/David croaks like a budget Joe Cocker. It does sound a bit forced but has an ambition and a strangely exotic feel that holds it all together well. 'Big Pointless Nothing' does bring with it some of that expected constipated anger we forever expect in these cases and ends up with Samuel/David shouting really, really loudly, probably about something terribly poignant and existential, but we're temporarily distracted by some stories in the paper about some real suffering in the world and so try and blot out such overwrought showboating. Much better is 'Too Long', a string-laden swirl with some more of that Joe Cocker-style growling, though we could do without the soft-centred piano-led duet with his girlfriend that concludes matters. Save it for a quiet smoochy night in, eh?

## TREV WILLIAMS

When he's not blogging about what he had for tea yesterday and how Nightshift doesn't like him, Faringdon singer-songwriter Trev Williams occasionally actually writes some songs. There's one on this CD here and it's called 'Keep Singing' and it features our favourite metaphor of the year so far: "Blackbird singing in the dark / Falling like a star / But singing like a lark". Now, we're no ornithologists here at Nightshift, but blackbirds sound nothing like larks, do they? Unless it's a sign of some catastrophic biodiversity meltdown event. Anyway, lest we allow such pedantry to unseat his paean to positivity, we'll concentrate on the fact Trev appears to be wearing a clothes peg on his nose while singing. Or maybe he's paying overdue homage to Frank Sidebottom, which is odd since usually he's a pretty decent singer. Anyway, at two and a bit minutes, it does display a brevity that some of his web postings have thus far failed to match. And since he does indeed sound pretty chipper for the duration and since it's nearly spring, we'll hold back on the critical chainsaw. Talking of spring - is that a blackbird we hear? Or a lark? So difficult to tell.

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU. Or email MySpace link to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto: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.

## PEERLESS PIRATES

Oh thank God, a bit of life. Peerless Pirates might display an annoying tendency to paint themselves as swashbuckling warriors of the high seas in their biog, but musically they're decidedly less rum, kicking out a heavily Smiths-indebted form of jangly rockabilly on 'Bring Out Your Dead' with a sense of melodramatic melancholy that Moz himself would once have been proud to display. In fact you can imagine the singer gallivanting about in front of his bedroom mirror, a bunch of gladioli in his back pocket, as he celebrates the romance of tedium with a flourish that is a rarer occurrence than you might imagine in modern day indie rock. 'One Over The Eight' is better still, akin to 'Hand In Glove' remade in the style of The Wedding Present, and if 'High Seas Love Affair' overdoes the pirate motif a little, it eventually blossoms into a lively jangle-pop sea shanty. Not quite a buried chest of musical treasure just yet, unlike too many acts this month, who we'd gladly force to walk the plank, at least Peerless Pirates are looking at the right map and appear to have a bit of the X-marks-the-spot-factor.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### THYRD EYE

This CD came in an envelope marked "Requested Material", an old trick from years back when bands or labels would try and trick overloaded reviewers into thinking this was something they'd been looking forward to for weeks. Now it just feels cheap and desperate, especially when the music within is so unappealing we'd be more likely to call up our local pizza delivery outlet and request that the chef blew his nose on the top of the pizza, wiped his backside on the base and left the whole thing to fester in a dustbin for a week before delivering it to our doorstep. Thyrd Eye promise something they describe as ethereal metal. What they actually offer up is more like a low-rent Lacuna Coil teaming up with a grunged-up Good Charlotte, sullen, soulless professionalism winning over any kind of lively enthusiasm at each turn. The female singer's supposedly ethereal turns sound more like the desperate gasps of a panicked commuter trying to wedge a fiver in the ticket machine as her train starts to depart the platform and the guitars and synths carousel with all the charm of so much poo swirling around the toilet bowl before flushing away forever. Thyrd Eye also promise "crashing riffs as heavy as time itself". Is time actually heavy? Maybe if Big Ben lands on your head - an experience doubtless more pleasant than having to listen through to this bollocks again.



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