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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
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Richard Walters

The troubled troubadour
unleashes his inner
animal and finds
true love at last



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NEWS

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THE ORGANISERS OF TRUCK FESTIVAL host a special one-day EVENT next month to celebrate Cowley Road.

OX4 takes place on **Saturday 10th October** at venues along Cowley Road, including the 02 Academy, the Bullingdon, East Oxford Community Centre, Baby Simple, Trees Lounge, Café Tarifa, Café Milano, the Brickworks and the Restore Garden Café. Bands already confirmed include hotly-tipped electro-pop outfit **The Big Pink**, improvisational hardcore collective **Action Beat** and experimental hip hop outfit **Dälek**. Among the local acts playing are **Jonquil**, **This Town Needs Guns**, **Stornoway**, **Baby Gravy**, **Dusty & The Dreaming Spires**, **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band**, **Witches**, **Dial F For Frankenstein**, **Medicine** and **Ute**. Catweazle Club and the Oxford Folk Festival will also be hosting acoustic music sessions.

As well as live music, OX4 will feature slam poetry with Hammer & Tongue, while there will be opportunities throughout the afternoon to make a music video, design an album sleeve for The Magic Numbers, record a single in a mobile recording studio, write a film script and make fanzines. More acts and attractions are still to be added.

Tickets for the festival are on sale now, priced **£15**, from the Academy as well as Videosyncratic and Oxfam on Cowley Road or online at www.thisistruck.com. 14-18 year olds can buy tickets at a discount £12.



MAPS headline this year's Audioscope festival on Saturday 17th October. Audioscope, which has raised over £17,000 for homeless charity Shelter since 2001 takes place all day at the Jericho Tavern. As well as the Mercury Prize-nominated headliners, the event features The Longcut, Remember Remember, Bronnt Industries Kapital, Talons, Ute, Cats & Cats & Cats and Bitches, with more acts to be announced. Tickets, priced £12, are on sale now from wegottickets.com, with all profits going to Shelter. Audioscope also release a limited-edition album featuring acts that have played the festival over the years. Clinic, Four Tet, Maps, Michael Rother, Dieter Moebius, Blood Red Shoes and Piano Magic are among the acts contributing tracks. The album is available from iTunes. Visit www.audioscope.co.uk for more details.

UNDER THE OAK FESTIVAL has been cancelled. The one-day live music event was due to take place in North Aston on Saturday 5th September, featuring sets from Jonquil, Baby Gravy, This Town Needs Guns, The Joe Allen Band and more, but promoters called the festival off due to poor ticket sales.

WINCHELL RIOTS host a monthly residency at the Cellar from October, featuring the band themselves as well as a selection of their favourite local and out of town bands. The first gig is on Thursday 8th October, and then 7th November and 5th December. Winchell Riots have just finished a recording session at the Manic Street Preachers' studio in Cardiff with producer Greg Haver. Visit www.myspace.com/thewinchellriots for more details on the gigs.

PETER HOOK will be signing copies of his new book, 'The Hacienda: How Not To Run A Club', at Borders on Magdalen Street on Wednesday 7th October from 6pm. The Joy Division and New Order bassist recounts the story of Manchester's iconic venue and the Manchester music scene of the times.

THE RIVER RAT PACK brings its touring boatload of bands to Oxfordshire again this month with three gigs in the county over the weekend of 5th-6th September. The tour, supported by the Strummerville Charity, showcases up and coming acoustic acts from around the UK, launching from Camden Lock and finishing off in Oxford with an all-day gig at the Isis Farmhouse in Iffley Lock. Last year's bill included Mumford and Sons, Golden Silvers and Jay Jay Pistolet; this year's bill features Six Nation State, Wild Wolves and Beans On Toast, as well as a cast of local acts at each stop-off.

The first local River Rat Pack gig is an afternoon picnic at the Abbey Grounds in Abingdon from 2pm on the Saturday, followed by an evening gig at the Stocks Bar at the Crown & Thistle. The Isis Farmhouse event runs from 2pm through to 11pm. All the gigs are free, with donations to the charity welcomed. Other acts playing include Smoky Angle Shades, Tristan & The Troubadours, Treetop Flyers, Nat Jenkins, The Agitator and Lonely Joe Parker. For more details on the tour, visit www.theriverratpack.com.

THE 02 ACADEMY'S ALTERNATIVE FRESHERS FAIR takes place on Wednesday 23rd September from 11am – 4pm, featuring assorted local venues and promoters amongst other local businesses. The fair is open to everyone.

AS EVER, DON'T FORGET TO TUNE INTO BBC OXFORD INTRODUCING every Saturday night between 6-7pm at 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show features the best new Oxford releases, interviews, demos and gig guide. The show is available to listen to online all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.



THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES celebrates its silver jubilee this month with a special party gig featuring *The Honeyboy Hickling Band* at the Bullingdon on **Saturday 19th September**. The blues club was set up by Philip Guy-Davis back in 1984, originally at the Red Lion pub in Gloucester Green, which then became The Brewhouse, where the weekly free blues nights flourished before the pub was shut down for rebranding. The Famous Monday Blues briefly relocated to Jongleurs before moving to its current home at the Bully. As well as the party gig, The Famous Monday Blues runs its regular weekly shows throughout September, with gigs by Australia's Harper Band on the 7th, Roadhouse on the 14th, American bluesman Sherman Robertson on the 21st and British blues-rock favourites The Hamsters on the 28th. Visit www.famousmondayblues.co.uk for more details.

AN INTERACTIVE local music directory is online on the Nightshift forum at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net. The directory features contact details for local bands, studios, venues, promoters, web designers, record labels and more and is free to join.

SEPT/Oct Dates

Wed 21st GSIYE Karl from Rapture hosts the Open Deck session for DJ's – Free Entry, 8pm
Thu 3rd Apple Pirata promote the best upcoming indie & metal bands every 2nd & 4th Thurs – 7.30pm
Fri 4th Li Fat Comedy Club – Simon Munnery Plus guests – £7 door £5 adv. 8pm
Sat 5th Dirty Earth Band Probably one of the most popular rock coverbands around – £4, 8pm
Wed 9th Acoustic Lounge The great Open Mic Night hosted by Alice. All welcome – Free Entry, 8pm
Revolver No Bull – Full-on Rock Club Night DJ's bang out classics – £3, door 8pm
Sat 12th **Deft Leppard** UK's premier tribute to this year's Download Sunday headliners – £8, 8pm
Wed 16th Li Fat Comedy Club 2nd show of the month. See website for details – £5 entry, door 7.30pm
Thu 17th Open The Skies + Lavondyres + In Oceans + Support – £4, door 7.30pm
Fri 19th **Blondie** without doubt the closest – Free Entry 8pm
Sat 19th Evolution The most flamboyant Hard Rock Cover-band around – £3, 8pm
Wed 23rd Acoustic Lounge Open Mic Session for all acoustic musicians thru house rig – Free Entry, 8pm
Thu 24th The Long Insiders + The Black Hats + Good Things Happen in Bad Towns – £4, 8pm
Fri 25th Queen's English + Jash – Awesome fusion of Hip Hop/Rap/Punk/Funk – £4, door 8pm
Sun 27th Monthly Blues Jam Join Dave and the band on stage or sit back & relax – Free Entry, 3pm

OCTOBER

Fri 2nd **The ZZ Top** Incredibly good fun tribute to the Texan boogie blues/rock masters £8, 8pm
Fri 16th **London Calling** The closest you'll get to The Clash experience – £8, 8pm
Fri 30th **Metallika UK** Back by popular demand after April's sell-out show. Don't miss this! – £8, 8pm

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a quiet word with

Richard Walters

THE ROAD TO POP FAME

and fortune can be long and arduous, if it ever gets there at all, and Richard Walters has been walking that road for many a long year, with plenty of obstacles along his way. Now, though, the prize may well be within sight.

This month Richard releases his debut album, 'The Animal', well over a decade after we first championed the teenage troubadour who would grow up to be possibly the finest male singer Oxford has ever produced.

RICHARD WALTERS BEGAN

his singing career at 15 in local band Polysoul in the late-90s (along with future members of Witches) and later Theremin, but for the most part his has been a solo journey, his voice the focus. And what a voice. Pure, limpid and able to convey the extremes of emotion with singular clarity. Unsurprisingly he's regularly been compared to Jeff Buckley and Thom Yorke – both acknowledged influences – but as 'The Animal' amply demonstrates, Richard is a stunning vocal talent in his own right, a singer who towers above the teeming morass of bleeding heart buskers that make up the majority of the singer-songwriter fraternity. When Richard Walters sings of sorrow, regret or loneliness, you sit in rapt awe at how something so simple can sound so extraordinary, so vast and so effortlessly intense.

ASEEMINGLY PERMANENT

fixture on the Oxford gig scene since those early years, Richard has had his brushes with musical success along the way – a publishing deal with Warner Chappell Music; a spell being looked after by Radiohead and Supergrass' Courtyard Management; working with Suede's Bernard Butler and The Cranberries' Noel Hogan (in his Monoband project); having his song 'All At Sea' used prominently in an episode of *CSI: Miami*, which led to a flurry of interest from American record labels, plus gigs across the States, Scandinavia and Hong Kong.

On the flipside, 2004 saw Richard diagnosed with epilepsy after he suffered a fit on the eve of a series of showcase gigs for major labels in Los Angeles that effectively put his musical career on hold.

Since that major setback, he's gradually built his career up again, releasing a series of singles and EPs on small indie labels, and recently signing to London-based label Kartel, who are putting out his debut album. To add to the positive outlook,



Richard has moved to Paris to be with his girlfriend, regularly returning home to Oxford to perform, but now happy to be immersed in a new city and culture that has provided an extra boost to his creativity.

'THE ANIMAL' IS OUT THIS

month. It's a concise, 32-minute, ten-song showcase of the shining vocal, musical and lyrical talent we've been smitten by all these years, an album awash with a yearning, dreamlike sadness and an ephemeral form of pop that feels like it would turn to dust if you so much as touched it.

It feels like you've been building up to this album for a long time.

"It's been forever, and that's mostly my fault. I kind of went through a crisis of confidence musically, an inability to make up my mind about things. I could have made an album five years ago but I wouldn't have been happy with it. I needed to get all the indecision and anxiety out of my system. I did have a few moments

where I convinced myself that I must be cursed; there was a ridiculously unlikely run of bad luck at one point. But my lack of focus was the real holdup, I was working on other projects and bands and kind of buried this album for a while. In an ideal world there would have been no gap between 'Pilotlights' and this record, but circumstances got in the way."

How would you describe the album to anyone unfamiliar with your music?

"I don't know, slow and swelling I guess, but that doesn't sound very appealing does it? I think most people hear slow and assume boring. It's an acoustic record in most parts, but I think the production pushes it somewhere unexpected: we really tried to make something sonically arresting, without distracting from the core, the songs themselves."

Is it everything you hoped it would be?

"I think it is; like you said it's been a long time coming, so it almost feels like a weight off my shoulders to have the debut album finally out

there. The only thing I really regret is not recording it sooner."

RICHARD'S STARK, SOUL-

bearing style of mostly acoustic pop comes with a double helping of melancholy, but it's a beautiful, bleak, romantic sadness he brings, rather than the whining self-pity of too many singer-songwriters. Still, if someone only knew him through his music and lyrics, they might assume he was a fragile creature. How close to the truth is that?

"I have my moments. It's fair to say that the period in which the album was written was pretty up and down for me personally. I lost myself for a while: too much drinking, too many late nights, too little thought for a lot of other things and other people. So of course the songs are confessional and personal to some extent, but they're personal to me *then*. It's like reading diary entries aloud two years after the event – you can look at things with hindsight and reason."

That said, the sleeve to 'The Animal' is uncharacteristically aggressive – a cartoonishly grotesque picture of Richard chewing through a plate of electrical wires as if it were spaghetti. Even the title suggests something beyond the delicate emotional excavation within.

"I love the front cover. We did so many portraits, trying to find the right image. I saw that photo and it instantly stuck, and I think it stands on its own as a great picture. I don't believe in the idea that the album cover for a set of sad songs has to necessarily explain and reflect that... the idea was that if Leonard Cohen can eat a banana on the cover of 'I'm Your Man', then I can eat a plateful of wires on my album cover. We discussed the title of the record, and when 'The Animal' was suggested I just laughed it off, but the more I thought about it, the more appropriate it seemed. It was such a perfect juxtaposition to the music. I'm not trying to throw people off, or confuse anyone about what to expect from the record, it just felt right to have every element – the title, the cover, the songs – be as strong as each other."

The title track goes places where few other songwriters would dare to tread; it deals with the horrors of domestic violence from the point of view of the abuser – dangerous territory for even the finest lyricists and here providing an emotional jolt to the listener. What inspired the song?

"There was a Travis song on a

similar subject, and I saw the singer discussing the lyrics in an interview and it struck me how weak it seemed, how that song didn't really seem to push home just how fucking hideous domestic violence actually is. So, I just wrote words that made me flinch, as cruel as I could be. I'm writing from the point of view of the abuser, but I'm not emphasizing with him. I'm just trying to work out why."

ELSEWHERE, RICHARD HAS covered Daniel Johnston's 'True Love Will Find You In The End' to stunning effect. Johnston, a cult American songwriter, famously beloved of Kurt Cobain amongst others, has a long history of mental illness, and yet writes beautifully poetic songs. Does Richard identify himself with Johnston to any extent? "I think Daniel Johnston has written some beautiful, simple pop songs, stuff that could easily stand up next to any number of classics... but the presentation and performance always seems to put people off. I find him fascinating and incredibly brave, and in that respect he's influenced me a great deal in the way I think about my own music and life in music. As tacky as it sounds, I suppose the song does have relevance to me personally, as I'm sure it does to lots of people; that's what makes it such a good song I guess, people see themselves in it."

IT'S NOW OVER TWO YEARS since we last featured Richard on the front cover of Nightshift and much has changed in his life, notably his recent relocation to Paris. "I've been in Paris for just over a year now. I met somebody and ended up spending all my free time over there. A few things changed in Oxford, and I found myself in the position of having no real ties, and it felt like a good time for an adventure. I've never really strayed too far from home before, Oxford has always been my base, so the idea of going to a new city and a new country honestly seemed like an impossibly big change at the time, but it worked. "Paris is an amazing city, I'm incredibly happy there, I never considered myself a big city person before, but Paris seems to have the right balance of bustle and green." How different is it to living in Oxford? How, if at all, has it affected the way you write, and do you miss Oxford at all? "It's a bigger place, the sirens never seem to stop and everyone speaks French. Apart from that I think Paris and Oxford are incredibly similar cities - they both feel like living museums. You're surrounded by these beautiful historical places and you kind of start taking it for granted. The main change in terms of writing has been the lack of distractions. My French is pretty dreadful, so I never read newspapers or watch television,

and I'm left with a lot more time to let my brain tick over and think about music. I do have days when I really pine for Oxford, people, places, my friends and family, but I'm only a few hours away under the ocean."

WITH BOTH HIS PERSONAL life and music career seemingly moving in the right direction, how does Richard feel about what happened in the States when it last looked like things might take off? "At the time, and for some time after, I beat myself up about that; I felt like I'd wilted in the pressure of the situation and lost out. Being invited to LA to meet and play for Capitol, American and Reprise was a huge deal to me at the time; it felt like I was on the cusp of something. That's what everyone hopes for when they start making music, that kind of opportunity... and to have it disappear in one day was horrible. But it didn't change anything or turn me off music, it just stalled things for a while. There's no point in thinking about what could have been, it's just something interesting that happened to me five years ago."

Where do you go from here? Many of the songs on the album will be familiar to local fans; have you started writing the next album yet? "There are songs on the album that people will know, and those are songs that I thought needed an opportunity to be heard by more people... they got picked for the album over newer songs for that reason. I've written the songs that will be the next album and I just keep on adding to that pile. I hope that I can start recording in the new year or soon after. Now that I've closed the gap, I like the idea of keeping the empty spaces between new music relatively small."

Any chance it'll be a happy album? "Ha! It's sounding like it could be. Certainly less personal, less about things that have happened to me and more about what I see around me. I do have a tendency to write songs that can be taken as sad, but I think that's just where my singing voice feels right... I don't hear something sad myself. I'd feel like a fake if I started writing with a forced positivity, but I'm sure it'll come of its own accord. There will obviously come a time where I have nothing to complain or worry about, and it's probably not too far off."

A HAPPY, CONTENTED Richard Walters? The very idea seems anathema, but now, having found true love, and with his music set to get its overdue reward, here's hoping this is a story with a happy ending.

'The Animal' is released on 21st September on Kartel. Visit www.myspace.com/richardwalters to hear tracks from the album.



September

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26th **TBC**

Sundays

6th **THE BULLINGDON COMEDY CLUB** with **JASON COOK** / support / compere **SILKY**. 8-11pm; £7.50 / £6.50 concessions

RICHARD WALTERS

'The Animal'

(Kartel)

The tigerish sleeve artwork and album title seem like a deliberate attempt to sabotage any second-guessing what's in store for the listener on Richard Walters' debut album. Some kind of crazed Hot Chip-meets-Aphex Twin electro-freakout, surely?

Instead, as we well know, having championed the man since his first tentative forays into pop at 15 years old, the musical world of Walters is one haunted by loneliness, regret and disappointment. Here is music that sounds like it was nurtured on trees made from icicles, airy and cold, crystal clear and fragile enough to shatter or evaporate if it's exposed to the elements for too long. If you're looking for the party, you've come to the wrong house. But hang about, this isn't some human wreck sitting on the stairs full of self-pity. It is possibly the best album by an Oxford act you'll hear all year.

Richard Walters' is possessed of a stunning voice, a delicate falsetto that's as fine as spider's silk and just as strong and flexible. Listen to him weave his vocal magic over the pristine, ethereal snowdrift of 'We have Your Head', or his gorgeous, heartstring-wrenching cover of Daniel Johnston's 'True Love Will Find You In The End', polishing and sharpening the original's rough diamond charm to perfection.

Richard's lyrical subject matter does tend toward the lovelorn and lost, but there's so much more to him than that. The album's title track is a brutal



tale of domestic violence executed with a gentle grace that only accentuates the horror within. On 'Red Brick' he looks into his own epilepsy. At every turn there's a distinct absence of self-pity, just honesty.

The music on 'The Animal' is stark and minimal, often barely there at all, just simple piano, cello, acoustic guitar or accordion lines, but such is the strength of Richard's voice, and the way it is multi-layered or harmonised, that nothing more is required. Amid the musical pearls here, the greatest treasure is 'All At Sea', Richard sounding emotionally crushed, the song akin to a moonlit ocean panorama.

And like the ocean, you can sit and lose yourself in 'The Animal's subtly shifting textures for hours at a time. A genuinely beautiful album from a genuinely unique talent.

Dale Kattack

PISTOL KIXX

'Live'

(Own Label)

When Pistol Kixx played the Oxford Punt back in May a few people questioned whether we'd picked them as a joke, pointing to the bandannas and leathers and the classic-bordering-on-cliché rock riffs they kicked out with wild abandon. Such people, of course, miss the point that within the band lies a punk rock spirit that far cooler, more career-minded bands will never *ever* possess. Of course they look like a cartoon impression of Hell's own house band. So does Lemmy. So did The Ramones. Of course they've nicked most of their riffs wholesale from The New York Dolls and The Stooges. So did Motley Crue and Hanoi Rocks. That's all part of the fun.

Because let's not deny that Pistol Kixx are fun. And if rock'n'roll is about anything else, we must have missed that particular meeting.

So, anyway, here is the band's debut release, an eight-track live mini-album. Within its half-hour you get dirty old whisky-fuelled bar-blues, growling, speed-punk, needless guitar solos, lyrics that reference strip clubs, drag queens, syringes, booze and ladies' more intimate parts and a raw recreation of the band's live energy. No free bandanna with every copy, sadly, but perhaps they can do a limited edition version later on. It's sleazy and unrefined, the whole thing sounds like it could have been made any time over the past 40 years and makes no pretence to offer anything other than cheap thrills. And for that, Pistol Kixx, we salute you.

Dale Kattack

THE GULLIVERS

'Legerdemain'

(Own label)

Legerdemain means sleight of hand, and since they expanded to become a four-piece The Gullivers have displayed a far more subtle touch than their early indie-punk offerings. It's now far more difficult to pinpoint where the band are coming from, as guitars twinkle gently like faraway stars, barely raising themselves beyond a gentle sleepwalk over which Mark Byrne's vocals meander dreamily, like a Beanie Baby Robert Smith, while Sophie McGrath adds icily ethereal back-up. Songs like 'Milieus' come on like a lo-fi indie take on Sigur Ros, lost in a snow drift rather than belting it out from the top of a glacier, while 'Letters' feels like something cute found hibernating in the depths of John Peel's record collection. The whole EP somnambulates with resolute lack of haste, and while The Gullivers maybe don't have the consummate grace of a band like AC Marias, whom they occasionally resemble, they do have a delicacy of touch that lends each song with a childish sense of wonder that's impossible not to love.

Dale Kattack

HREDA

'Minnows'

(Ingue)

Even as Oxford becomes more awash with instrumental bands, the better ones simply strive harder and continue to stand out, bands like From Light To Sound and Hreda, who seem to have been quietly going about becoming every local musician's favourite other band lately, as well as picking up the critical plaudits both here and on DrownedinSound.

This 7" vinyl release on Bristol's Ingue Records displays the three-piece's ability to mix and shift moods with consummate ease, from the pensive opening passage that allows a little playful light in, all busy fretplay and dinky subtlety, before adopting a more confrontational stance, all staccato riffs and more resolute beats breaking up the languorous drifting. They're like a heavier, more riff-based Explosions In The Sky at times, steeped in post- and occasionally math-rock, but fleet footed enough to avoid the lazy pitfalls of both genres.

Ian Chesterton

NINE STONE COWBOY

'Solar-Powered Sex Toy'

(iTunes)

Hey, we haven't heard a Speak'n'Spell toy used on a pop song for bloody ages – maybe not since OMD's 'Genetic Engineering'. Course, they didn't have Cubase and stuff back then. And sex toys, if they had batteries at all, probably used ones that were bigger than the appliance itself. Strange idea a solar-powered sex toy, given it's more than likely going to be operating in a place where the sun most certainly don't shine, but when Mark Cope sings "I'm a solar-powered sex toy / I'm what makes you smile", you can't help but wonder if there isn't some insane wisdom at work here. If the recent Candyskins' showing at Truck proved anything it's that Mr Cope is well acquainted with a decent pop tune, and he's at it again here, whistling, wobbly electronics and heroically lachrymose vocals and all. Again he manages to make something ostensibly downbeat sound like a summer anthem. More power to his elbow, or whatever else he's planning on charging up.

Dale Kattack

INTRODUCING....

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

The Gullivers

Who are they?

The Gullivers are Mark Byrne (vocals/guitar), Andrew Grillo (bass/keyboard), Sophie McGrath (keyboard/vocals) and Emma Ramsey (drums). Originally a three-piece indie-punk band formed in Bicester by Mark and Andrew while still at school. Initially indebted to The Libertines, they played at the Punt in 2007 and recorded a series of demos before expanding their line-up and changing musical tack, shifting into a dreamier, more ethereal pop world, showcased on last year's debut EP, 'Ambulance'. More recently the quartet supported Broken Records at the O2 Academy and self-release a new four-track EP, 'Legerdemain', this month.

What do they sound like?

Sweetly ethereal, contemplative and dreamy in mood, tending towards the lighter side of gothic new wave, The Gullivers' sound rests on the interplay between Mark's shimmering, spangly guitar and the dual vocals of Mark and Sophie: his plaintive, boyish Robert Smith yelp up against her more ephemeral croon. Nightshift reviews have drawn comparisons to The Cure and Life Without Buildings' sense of playful whimsy.

What inspires them?

"Oxford, geography, words, pictures, delayed guitars, frustration, a competitive nature, bands with female singers, male singers, or no singers, bad weather, the constant battle to 'out-pretentious' one another."

Career highlight so far:

"Probably our last 'Ambulance' EP launch night with We Aeronauts and The Dacoits. We weren't expecting anything like the response we got. All our friends came – they always do but there seemed to be a really great word of mouth turn out and helped give us a real lift around time of release and it went on to overachieve in terms of press for something that was recorded fairly cheaply and was out-of-date, as it was recorded as a three piece."

And the lowlight:

"The most annoying thing was losing our old drummer right before a



support slot with The Young Knives."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"We Aeronauts. They haven't played for quite a while in Oxford without us at the front singing along, which is proof enough of how good they are."

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

"'Takk...' by Sigur Ros, because it's amazingly beautiful, if lacking the underground cool of some of the earlier stuff, and *still* reveals more of itself with each listen."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"The launch night for our new EP, at The Wheatsheaf on Friday 18th September. Expect boy/girl vocals, BIG guitars, awkward banter and quite a bit of nervous energy with subsequent release."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite: great bands, a genuine sense of community and great, supportive venues run by great supportive people... the ones that are left anyway. Least favourite: the disappearing venues is the only constant negative. Bring back the Port!"

You might love them if you love:

The Cure, Life Without Buildings, Leaves.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/thegullivers

Whatever happened to... those heroes

AQUABATS

WHO?

Formed in 1993, Aquabats were an experimental band exploring the possibilities of acoustic instruments played in unusual environments and with different treatments, as well as the sounds of nature, from bird song to thunderstorms. Between them, Tim Turan, Sue Smith and Phil Freizinger played everything from flute, drums and gongs, to hardboiled egg slicers, Burma bells, a trifle bowl and jaw harp. They also experimented with vocal techniques. In short, they were perhaps the most unusual band to come out of Oxford, eschewing all the normal trappings of rock bands in favour of ever-more adventurous recording techniques over their two albums ('Magiko' in 1993; 'Sequoia' in 1999, both on their own label) and live performances – from prisons to theatres.

WHAT?

Aquabats are a band that is impossible to categorise. Their inspiration was a desire to explore sound itself, while their choice and use of 'instruments' put them beyond normal genres. You might call them world music, since theirs was the sound of the world, its wife and the kitchen sink. They were recording pioneers, being the first Oxford band ever to record live straight to CD, courtesy of their friend, the late Michael Gurzon, a legend in digital recording and mathematics.

WHEN?

Tim, Sue and Phil had worked

together on previous projects, including the band Tin Tin Tin, before forming Aquabats. 'Magiko', which went on to sell over 3,500 copies, earned the trio a front cover feature in local music mag *Curfew* in 1993, as well as a five-page spread in *Sound On Sound* Magazine in December 1995. In 1994 they became the first band to hire the Oxford Playhouse, for a sold-out live performance of the first album. They went on to perform at HMP Wellingborough and have their music used on BBC's *The Holiday Programme*. The band never officially split. As Tim explained, "We never had a rehearsal, everything was improvised so we can reform just by being in the same room together and making a noise. But the last ten years have been a bit quiet."

WHY?

Because no-one else sounded like Aquabats, or probably ever will. How many bands would go to the trouble of recording a giant gong being struck and plunged into a lake in Wookey Hole, while recording it on a microphone wrapped in a giant condom? Or risk life and limb (literally) to record a lightning bolt striking a hillside? They proved you could do absolutely anything with sound.



WHERE?

All three Aquabats are still very much active in local music. Tim runs Turan Audio, mastering everyone from local favourites to Scandinavian death metal bands to The Osmonds and beyond, while also drumming with The Relationships, Blue Kite and Easy Tiger. Phil and Sue play together in The Mighty Redox (which previously featured Tim) and run the excellent monthly Klub Kakofanney club night.

HOW?

Both 'Magiko' and 'Sequoia' are available to buy from Videosynberatic on Cowley Road, or from the band's members.

GIG GUIDE

TUESDAY 1st

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz. Tonight's guests are The Hugh Turner Band.

WEDNESDAY 2nd

THE BLACK HATS + TREV WILLIAMS: The Turf Tavern – Moddish new wave rocking from Black Hats, plus emotive acoustic pop from Trev Williams.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Hip hop and dubstep

Wednesday 9th

EMILIANA TORRINI: O2 Academy

While she's laden down with awards in her native Iceland, where she also holds the record for the longest time spent at number 1, Emiliana Torrini might not seem like a major pop success story around the world. Until of course you remember she performed 'Gollum's Song' at the end of Lord Of The Rings: The Twin Towers' and co-wrote 'Slow' for Kylie with long-term recording partner and producer Dan Carey (who has also worked with Hot Chip and Franz Ferdinand). That said, she tends to seem more of a cult favourite and critics' choice than mainstream star, ten years after her first foray into the UK's consciousness with 'Love In The Time Of Science' and its breezy accompanying hit single, 'Unemployed In The Summertime'. Perhaps she's still considered a little too quirky, her soft, warm style of folk-pop leaning leftward into Björk and Joanna Newsom territory at times as she strays into quirky electronica, atmospheric rock and haunting lullabies by turns. Her latest album, 'Me And Armini', is awash with the cutesy-quirky singing and musical style she's become known for, from the dreamy reggae lode of its title track to the madly infectious recent single, 'Jungle Drum', while she continues to maintain a playfully sexy onstage persona. Tonight's gig will doubtless be played out to a packed and loyal crowd, but in a world of bland, stage school-manufactured female singers, Torrini's style might have to stay just off centre stage for a while yet.



SEPTEMBER

club night with DJ Kydro, MC Chunky, MC Deepo, MC Phlex, Synamatix, Kid Fury and more.

THURSDAY 3rd

THE FOLLYS + AGENTS OF JANE + SAM

POPE & ELISE: The Bullingdon – Raucous 70s-styled rocking from The Follies at tonight's Moshka club.

JEFFREY LEWIS & THE JUNKYARD + JACK LEWIS & FISHERMEN 3 + RETRO SPANKEES:

The Cellar – Welcome return to town for New York's winsome wit, tragi-comic songsmith and comic book artist, following his superb showing at the X a while back. Then he was plugging his '12 Crass Songs' album, a sublime anti-folk reworking of the anarcho-punk band's catalogue. Now he's on the road in support of his most accomplished album to date, 'Em Are I', a more cohesive bunch of songs that finds his inimitable lovelorn humour undiminished. Hopefully he'll do his animated rhyming history of Chinese communism again, a skit that proves the man has more wit and intelligence than most folk singers combined.

THE FAMILY MACHINE + INLIGHT + HELLA CHOLLA + ALPHABET BACKWARDS

ACOUSTIC: The Jericho Tavern – First hometown show of the year for The Family Machine, back with their classic combination of sweet, jaunty countrified indie-rock and wry, lovelorn lyricism. Support comes from slick epic stadium-pop types InLight and an acoustic set from electro-folksters Alphabet Backwards.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running open mic club offers its weekly dose of singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 4th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE MEDICINE + VICARS OF TWIDDLY

+ THE ROUNDHEELS + FERGUS BROWN: The Wheatsheaf – Klub Kak unfurls the tie-dyed dayglo carpet again to welcome a suitably mixed bag of acts to its monthly session, tonight including sets from classic surf rockers Vicars Of Twiddly and trad folkies The Roundheels.

EMPIRE SAFARI + SOIREE FOR THE BUSKERS + SIXTY WATT

BAYONETS: The Jericho Tavern

BUNKFEST: Wallingford – First day of the annual Wallingford music festival, running across various venues around the town, including boats and trains. The music tends towards the folk and blues side of thing, with sets from Baka Beyond, Rory McLeod, Elephant Talk, Seize The Day, Warblefly and many more. Aside from the live music there

are music and dance workshops, and a beer and steam festival. Visit www.bunkfest.co.uk. Continues through Saturday and Sunday.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon – Classic funk, disco and r'n'b every week.

SKYLARKIN': The Cellar – Monthly ska, soul, reggae and rock'n'roll club night with host Count Skylarkin, tonight featuring a live set from Reading's epic, soulful roots reggae clan Jewels & Jacuzzi's, recent tour support to The Wailers, plus tunes from DJ Wrongtom.

GET DOWN: The Brickworks – Latin, funk and more every week.

VEDA PARK: The Duke of Monmouth, Abingdon Road

SATURDAY 5th

MR SHAADOW + BABY GRAVY + DESERT STORM: O2 Academy – Last month's Nightshift cover star plays his first Academy headline show, the local rapper mixing up the quickfire delivery of old-skool Brit rappers like Blade with the more showy pizzazz of Lethal Bizzle. Electro-punk scrappers Baby Gravy support, and will doubtless be inviting Mr Shadow onstage for a run-through of their collaboration 'Don't Touch Me'. Rockin' and rumblin' stoner metal monsters Desert Storm open the show.

THE NOMINEES: The Wheatsheaf
22-20s + DUSTY & THE DREAMING SPIRES: The Jericho Tavern – The return of the blues rock-cum-skiffle punkers, akin to a cross between White Stripes and Hendrix at times, and featuring Supergrass guitarist Charly Coombes, back together again after splitting earlier in the decade. Previous

THE RIVER RAT PACK TOUR

All Day FREE Festival
The Isis Farmhouse
Sunday 6th September
Free Entry - Donations Welcome!
2pm - 11pm

.....

Featuring live sets from:

Smokey Angle Shades	Beams On Toast	The Riff Raff
SoxNationState	Nat Jenkins	Clara Haidar
Wild Wolves	The Agitator	Chika
Tristan & The Troubadours	Lonely Joe Parker	Jessie Grace
Treetop Flyers		

DJs:
Ally Wolf & Big O

.....

The Isis Farmhouse is situated 30 minutes walk from Oxford Town Centre going east along the Canal Path towards Kinnerton & Wiley Lock.

There is no vehicle access to the venue - parking is available 10 minutes walk away at Donsington Skittle or Wiley Lock.
Postcode for Sat Nav: OX4 4EL

All ages welcome - under 18s to be accompanied by an adult.
Only alcohol & food bought on the premises can be consumed on site

to that they'd supported Oasis, and more recently attracted renewed interest after being featured in Guy Ritchie's *RocknRolla* film. Brothers Robin and Joe Bennett continue their journey into Band and Byrds-style country rocking with Dusty and co. **SIX NATION STATE + SMOKY ANGLE SHADES + MATT JENKINS + BEANS ON TOAST + WILD WOLVES + CIARA HAIDAR + THE AGITATORS + CHEKER: The Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon** – The River Rat Pack tour moors in Abingdon on its way to Oxford, with an acoustic live music party in the Abbey grounds in the afternoon, followed by this showcase gig at the Stocks afterwards.

BUNKFEST: Wallingford

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – Electro-house.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101:

O2 Academy – Weekly three clubs in one night with indie and electro at Transformation; glam and 80s at Trashy plus alt.rock, hardcore and metal at Room 101.

REGGAE REGGAE SATURDAY: James Street Tavern – Reggae, dub and rocksteady session.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Seacourt Arms

DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney

SUNDAY 6th

RIVER RAT PACK TOUR: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock (2pm) – The touring showcase boatshow moors at Iffley lock for an all-day live music event, featuring sets from up and coming acts like Smoky Angle Shades, Six Nation State, Wild Wolves, Tristan & The Troubadours, Treetop Flyers, Beans on Toast and a host of acoustic acts. The whole event is free, with support from the Strummerville Charity.

BUNKFEST: Wallingford

JAILHOUSE ROCK: Malmaison – The hotel kicks off its new fortnightly acoustic music night.

MONDAY 7th

THE HARPER BAND: The Bullingdon – An unusual Aussie take on rootsy blues, rock and soul tonight from The Harper Band at the Famous Monday Blues. Singer, harpist and didgeridoo player Harper draws on traditional Aboriginal music as well as the old blues greats.

TUESDAY 8th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With funk, blues and jazz from live guests The Rogue Dolls.

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, industrial, darkwave and 80s club night.

JACK GOLDSTEIN + JAMES FORDE + BEN FOSTER: Café Tarifa – Acoustic night, including a solo set from Gunnbunny frontman Jack.

WEDNESDAY 9th

EMILIANA TORRINI: O2 Academy – Quirky electro-acoustic folk-pop from the Icelandic-Italian songstress – *see main preview*

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 10th

THE LOW ANTHEM + GOLDHEART

ASSEMBLY: The Bullingdon – Already being called The New Fleet Foxes – with whom they share a record label, Bella Union – Rhode Island's Low Anthem are probably closer to Tom Waits, at least when they're in gruff, celebratory Americana mode, while elsewhere they're almost hymnally solemn and ethereal, drawing on bluegrass, country, folk and gutter level rock on new album 'Oh My God Charlie Darwin'. Harmony-heavy London beardies Goldheart Assembly have been similarly encumbered by Fleet Foxes comparisons, but together with the

headliners they'll make for a superb evening of classic rootsy pop pleasure.

NICE PETER + LES CLOCHARDS + PETE THE

TEMP: The Wheatsheaf – Hysterical acoustic rock'n'roll and improvised comedy from LA's Nice Peter, taking a pop at everything from Weezer to Sarah Palin along the way. Francophile café pop from Les Clochards and observational acoustic pop from Pete The Temp in support.

HARRY ANGEL + THE ELRICS + SECRET

RIVALS: The Cellar – Darkly atmospheric indie noise from Harry Angel, ranging from gothic grunge fizz-pop to more brooding Chameleons-inspired material. Promising guitar pop from The Elrics, where the Stones meet Placebo.

REVOLVER: Fat Lil's, Witney

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 11th

OKKERVIL RIVER + DAWN HANDES: O2

Academy – Enter the private madness of Will Sheff – *see main preview*

FREAKISHLY LONG MIRRORS + CIRCUS

CAT + MINOR COLES: The Wheatsheaf – Alternately epic and contemplative indie rock from FLM, plus grungy pop from Cork's Circus Cat. **DEAD JERICHO + THE SCARLETTS: The Chester Arms** – Jam-inspired mod-punk from newcomers Dead Jerichos, plus raucous ska-punk from The Scarletts.

BOOTLED ZEPPELIN + THE JOHNNY BERRY BAND: Kidlington FC – Tribute to Led Zep.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Jazz dance club night with live band to be announced, plus a mix of jazz dance, afrobeat, Latin, Balkan, nu-jazz and world breaks from residents Gil Karpos and Dan Ofer.

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 12th

THE HALCYONS: The Wheatsheaf – Bubbly electro dance-pop and torch songs from the local rockers.

THUNDERCLAP NEWMAN BAND + ANTON

BARBEAU: The Jericho Tavern – The 60s one-hit-wonders head back on the road, bearing little resemblance to the band that hit number 1 with flower-power protest song 'Something In The Air'. Even jazz pianist Mr Thunderclap Newman himself is long gone, although the psychedelic pop train keeps on a runnin'. Californian-Oxonian singer-songwriter Anton Barbeau supports, with his modern take on Robyn Hitchcock and Syd Barrett.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101:

O2 Academy

REGGAE REGGAE SATURDAY: James Street Tavern

DEFT LEPPARD: Fat Lil's, Witney

ANTON BARBEAU: The Magic Café,

Magdalen Street (1pm) – Early show for the psychedelic folk-pop minstrel, ahead of his support set to Thunderclap Newman later in the evening

CORN DOLLY REUNION: The Cellar –

Reconvened local blues-rock favourites Steamroller kick out the Hendrix and Cream-inspired riffs again.

NAMELESS + THE DEAD JERICHO:

Fitzharris Arms, Abingdon – Covers from Nameless, plus newcomers Dead Jerichos.

THE FOLLYS: The Crown, Faringdon

SUNDAY 13th

TREV WILLIAMS: The Living Room – Solo set from the Follys frontman.



Friday 11th

OKKERVIL RIVER:

O2 Academy

Rock music is awash with tortured souls, of course. But few are as lyrically engaging as Okkervil River's Will Sheff, a man who, listening to his band, seems to have been driven half mad by the sorrow that surrounds him. Or at least the subjects of his songs. Songs which come packaged together thematically in strange, uncomfortable concept albums, like the wanderlust-examining breakthrough piece 'Black Sheep Boy' back in 2005, or the more recent 'The Stage Names' and 'The Stand Ins' albums, that deal with celebrity, art, music and love with typically bleak insight. Okkervil River, named after a story by Russian novelist Tatyana Tolstaya, formed in Austin, Texas back in the late-90s and have expanded to a six-piece over the years. While Sheff in the centrepiece of the band, they're musical ambitious and expansive, from powerful bass or piano leads, to soulful use of horns or lap steel. There are comparisons to be drawn to The Hold Steady and even Arcade Fire at times, though Okkervil are darker and more stripped-down than either. Sheff's agitated over-singing forces home his sense of personal madness, but even as he's deconstructing the whole idea of pop music on the band's latest album, he's simultaneously creating great pop music.



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Saturday 19th

FUCK BUTTONS / ZUN ZUN EGUI: The Cellar

There seem to be a lot of great bands around these days with the f-word in their name, which means there's even more fun to be had at the expense of prudes, all of whom should be locked in a dark basement with Fuck Buttons playing at top volume. As much as any band, the Bristolian duo of Andrew Hung and Benjamin John Power are taking noise music into sweeter territory. Last time we encountered them, down at the Cellar, they were a brutal, confrontational wall of electronic noise. To a greater extent they still are, but last year's 'Street Horrnsing' debut album showcased the other side of their armoury – a sparkling ambience crafted from iridescent synths and psychedelic drones, which offer some light amid the tribal rhythms and screaming. The album was produced by Mogwai's John Cummins and Fuck Buttons have supported Mogwai across the UK and USA, picking up a cult following and across-the-board critical acclaim at every step. They're hypnotic and cathartic, but also oddly melodic and, band moniker allowing, there's nothing to say the future won't bring a far wider audience. Support at tonight's Vacuum Pop show are fellow Bristolians Zun Zun Egui, with a rhythmically-charged take on Talking Heads-style Africanised post-punk. Another reliably challenging night from arguably Oxford's best independent promoters.

MONDAY 14th

ROADHOUSE: The Bullingdon – The London blues-rock veterans return, kicking out classic 60s-inspired rock, leaning towards The Stones and Creedence Clearwater Revival.

TUESDAY 15th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Keyboard-led jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 16th

THE COMPUTERS + TURBOWOLF + PHANTOM THEORY + THE SCARLETTS: The Bullingdon – After supporting Ghost Of A Thousand in July Exeter's Computers head out on a headline tour, mixing Black Flag's screaming hardcore with high-wired classic rock'n'roll. Adrenalised synth-core from Turbowolf, plus local support from riffs'n'beats monsters Phantom Theory and ska-punkers The Scarletts.
PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Open jam session with in-house band Four Phat Fingers, playing everything from funk and hip hop to rock, dubstep and reggae.

THURSDAY 17th

MR FOGG + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE + TARIK BESHIR: Ultimate Picture Palace – Some serious musical experimentation in order tonight as glitchy leftfield electro chap Mr Fogg crafts gently spacious pure pop from an unlikely mix of loops and samples. Braindead Collective, meanwhile, who feature assorted members of Guillemots, Keyboard Choir and The Joe Allen Band, are a freakoid electro-jazz barrel of mayhem, sounding a bit like we imagine White Noise might have done, had they formed in an avant garde New Orleans jazz bar. Completing an impressive bill is Brickwork Lizards frontman Tarik Beshir, going solo with his oud for a leftfield exploration of traditional Egyptian music.
THE BIG NIGHT OUT: The Bullingdon – Live music from Richard Brotherton, plus DJ sets from Natty Mark, Artwell and Garvin Dan, in aid of Children In Need.
EMPTY VESSELS + SEROTONIN + DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS: The Cellar – Big Hair local bands night.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN THE SKIES + LAVONYSS + IN OCEANS: Fat Lil's, Witney
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 18th

THE GULLIVERS: The Wheatsheaf – Launch gig for The Gullivers' new EP, with the band carving a cute niche for themselves with their ethereally gothic spangle-pop.
JOSH RITTER: O2 Academy – Warm-hearted country rocking in the vein of Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen from the Idaho songsmith, displaying deft lyricism and musical ambition as he prepares to follow-up his acclaimed 2007 album, 'The Historic Conquests Of Josh Ritter'.
MEAN POPPA LEAN + FLOORS & WALLS + WE'RE NOT MEXICANS + LOUISE SMOOTH & THE JAZZ BRIGADE: Chinnor Pavilion – Brighton's Chili Peppers and Funkadelic-flavoured funk-rockers Mean Poppa Lean hit the Pavilion, alongside tourmates Floors and Walls and local supporters.
LITTLEWORTH ACOUSTIC MUSIC FESTIVAL: Cricketers Arms, Littleworth – Kicking off a weekend of acoustic music, today featuring The Ryes' Paul Canning.
FALL OF AN EMPIRE + FAR OUTLAW: Thirst Lodge – Live electro bands night.
BLONDIED: Fat Lil's, Witney - Blondie tribute.
BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – House and breaks club night.
GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 19th

THE HONEYBOY HICKLING BAND: The Bullingdon – The Famous Monday Blues celebrates 25 years of bringing the UK's and world's best touring blues acts to town with a special party. Playing live is renowned blues and r'n'b harpist Honeyboy Hickling, who's previous played with Bo Diddley and Steve Marriot as well as touring as part of Nine Below Zero. In-house sound engineer Tony 'Reservoir Cats' Jezzard will be taking over DJ duties for the night.
FUCK BUTTONS + ZUN ZUN EGUI: The Cellar – Synths! Screaming! Noise! What's not to love? – *see main preview*
VIC GODARD & THE SUBWAY SECT: The Wheatsheaf – Original punk hero Godard returns

to town after his excellent show back in March, the veteran of the 1976 100 Club punk festival retaining his cult figure cool after all these years.
EMPTY VESSELS + BLACK CIRCLES: The Folly Bridge Inn – Heavyweight 70s-style blues rock from Empty Vessels.
LITTLEWORTH ACOUSTIC MUSIC FESTIVAL: Cricketers Arms, Littleworth – Blues Rumour play the lunchtime slot, with Tom Lynch in the evening.
TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy
REGGAE SATURDAY: James Street Tavern
EVOLUTION: Fat Lil's, Witney - Rock covers.

SUNDAY 20th

LITTLEWORTH ACOUSTIC MUSIC FESTIVAL: Cricketers Arms, Littleworth – More acoustic music, with a lunchtime set from Blue Fox, plus open mic session.
JAILHOUSE ROCK: Malmaison
SILVANITO: The Jericho Tavern – Spaghetti western-flavoured rocking.

Saturday 26th

NME RADAR TOUR: O2 Academy

Another NME tipped-for-the-top package tour heads off round the country, tonight being the first night, hoping to emulate the last one, which brought La Roux to a wider national audience. As ever with these things, it's something of a mixed bag, with the genuinely promising propped up – or propping up – stuff some record label is desperately trying to foist on the music-buying public. In the former category are London's **Golden Silvers** (pictured), an eclectic outfit who somehow manage to meld Beach Boys-style harmonies, doo wop and glam-rock with LCD Soundsystem and Blur's more electro-tinged outings on their XL-released 'True Romance' album. Similarly promising is Wales' **Marina & The Diamonds**, wobbly synth-pop with an occasional orchestral flourish topped by the sort of OTT siren vocals you'd expect to find in the middle of an old Kate Bush or Hazel O'Connor record. Further down the bill the tautologically-monikered **Local Natives** sound like a major label's desperate attempt to leap on the Fleet Foxes / Band Of Horses bandwagon, while Boston's **Yes Giantess** are possessed of a few nice big electro-pop choruses but tend too much towards a cheesier MGMT. On the night, though, expectations can be overturned and careers made. The true test of the tour's success, however, will be in how many of these names you remember a year from now.



MONDAY 21st

SHERMAN ROBERTSON: The Bullingdon – Texan guitarist returns to the famous Monday Blues club, with over 40 years of gigging experience under his belt, having played with Bobby Bland and Junior Parker in the 60s before he joined zydeco king Clifton Chenier in the 70s. Since then he's played with Paul Simon (on his classic 'Graceland' album), before going solo. He's an energetic showman, often likened to Albert Collins, and a soulful singer, while his guitar playing adds a rock edge to traditional blues, zydeco and r'n'b.

TUESDAY 22nd

THE MISSION DISTRICT: O2 Academy – The Montreal-based quintet, named after an area of San Francisco, head off on a European tour, coming on like A-Ha going emo.

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

JACK HARRIS + TAMARA PARSONS-BAKER + JAMIE FOLEY + STEVE & BRIAN: Café Tarifa – Acoustic night.

WEDNESDAY 23rd

GENUINE FREAKSHOW + UTE: The Wheatsheaf – Breathless, squiggly alt.rock in a Radiohead vein from Genuine Freakshow, with support from local newcomers Ute, promising great things with their lachrymose rootsy pop.

AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR + HREDA + NITKOWSKI + IVY'S ITCH: The Cellar – Back in town after their impressive showing at Truck Festival, ASIWYFA mix up Don Cabellero's tricksiness with Pelican's heaviness and come out sounding like Explosions In the Sky with huge metal balls. Support comes from local post-rock trio Hreda, fidgety instrumental rockers Nitkowski and hardcore merchants Ivy's Itch.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 24th

TINCHY STRYDER: O2 Academy – The diminutive grime hitmaker celebrates an astonishingly successful year that's brought him a string of hit singles, including the chart-topping collaboration with N-Dubz ('Number 1') and heads off on tour to plug his second album, 'Catch 22', a somewhat patchy follow-up to his superior debut, which earned him a MOBO Best Newcomer nomination. Still, hits is hits and the fella has enough pop hooks to hang an elephant on.

THEORY OF A DEADMAN: O2 Academy – Canada's nominally grunge-tinged anthemic rockers plug their third album, 'Scars and Souvenirs', sounding unpleasantly like the bastard offspring of Nickleback and Stillskin.

DRUNKENSTEIN + THE WOOKIES + SECRET RIVALS + MATT KILFORD: The Bullingdon – Moshka club night with creepy goth-funk rockers Drunkenstein headlining, plus Reading's Wookies, local noise-pop types Secret Rivals and epic acoustic pop troubadour Matt Kilford.

BIG NIGHT OUT: Café Tarifa – Children In Need benefit with live music from Jessie Grace, plus DJ sets from Natty Mark and more.

NOTORIOUS HI-FI KILLERS + SPIRAL 25: The Cellar – Psychedelic garage-rocking in the style of Spacemen 3 and The Red Crayola from Notorious Hi-Fi Killers, plus slo-mo narcotic groove rocking from Spiral 25.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

THE LONGINSIDERS + BLACK HATS + GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN BAD TOWNS: Fat Lil's, Witney

FRIDAY 25th

LIVEWIRE + LIMEHOUSE LIZZY: O2 Academy – Double dose of classic heavy rock tributes tonight with AC/DC from Livewire and a Thin Lizzy tribute from Limehouse.

TOM McRAE: O2 Academy – Chelmsford's master of mirth McRae continues to plumb the depths of sorrow and melancholy in rather splendid style and with a featherlight vocal touch that leavens his tales of gloom and lost love.

CUT UP BOYS: O2 Academy – The Bourmemouth-based mash-up duo bring their mix madness to the Academy, fusing everything from Dizzee Rascal and Armand Van Helden to Dr Dre and The Prodigy to Timbaland and Faithless with their own beats and vocals.

EMPTY VESSELS: The Wheatsheaf – Bluesy hard rocking.

UNGDOMSKULEN + BITCHES + RISE EAST, STRIKE WEST: The Jericho Tavern – Proggy, convoluted alt.rocking from Norway's geek-freak act Ungdomskulen, tackling such weighty issues as masturbation, public erections and mythical beasts by way of an intriguing mix of Zappa, Shellac, Can, Fugazi and Liars. Nasty-minded industrial noise from Bitches in support, plus mathsy post-rock newcomers Rise East, Strike West.

MELTING POT: The Bullingdon

QUEENS OF HEARTS CLUB: Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Live music, dance, cabaret and comedy with live sets from Zen Hussies, Inflatable Buddha and Simon Davies.

QUEEN'S ENGLISH + JASH: Fat Lil's, Witney – Hip hop, jazz, rap and r'n'b from the London newcomers, with chilled beats and electronica from Bristolian DJ and producer Jash in support.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon
BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Club night with a live set from local reggae favourites Mackating.

IONIX + MISTAKEN RETRIBUTION + IN OCEANS: The Net, Abingdon – Heavyweight under-18s gig.

SATURDAY 26th

NME RADAR TOUR: O2 Academy – The latest NME-sponsored package tour – see main preview

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + DOG PARTY + SCHNAUSER: The

Wheatsheaf – Strong, eclectic mixed bill at tonight's monthly GTI club with highly promising local youngsters Dial F offering a subtly complex racket that mixes Dive Dive's sharp-elbowed precision punk with Radiohead's more rockist moments. Meanwhile, Sacramento's Anton Barbeau brings his new acid-tinged psychedelic pop band Dog Party along. Surprise treat of the night, though, might be Armenia-via-Bristol three-piece Schnauser, with their authentically 60s-sounding psych-rock wig-out.

WE AERONAUTS + LEFT WITH PICTURES + BROADCAST 2000 + THE FOX AND THE BRAMBLE: The Jericho Tavern – Buoyant, feelgood folk-pop with an epic scope from We Aeronauts, with support from London's promising new acoustic ensemble Left With Pictures and sweet-natured alt.folkies Broadcast 2000.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy
REGGAE REGGAE SATURDAY: James Street Tavern

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Royal Standard, Headington

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass with live sets from Metalheadz' Commix and Data.

SUNDAY 27th

HOCKEY + DEASTO + LITTLE COMETS: O2 Academy – Portland, Oregon's scruffy vegan three-piece return to town with their updated 70s soul-rock sound bridging the gap between Strokes and LCD Soundsystem.

BIG NIGHT OUT: Malmaison (5pm) – Acoustic music from Nikki Loy, in aid of Children in Need.

ACOUSTIC OPEN MIC SESSION: Red Lion, Kidlington

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm)

MONDAY 28th

THE HAMSTERS: The Bullingdon – The British blues-rock veterans return to Oxford with their Hendrix and ZZ Top-inspired show.

INME + SYMPHONY CULT + ZEROSCRAP: O2 Academy – Melodic grunge-rock with an epic scope from the long-serving but still fresh-faced Essex four-piece, coming in somewhere between Nirvana and Muse.

TUESDAY 29th

ZERO 7: O2 Academy – Plastic soul, cod-funk and downtempo MOR jazz from the London outfit.

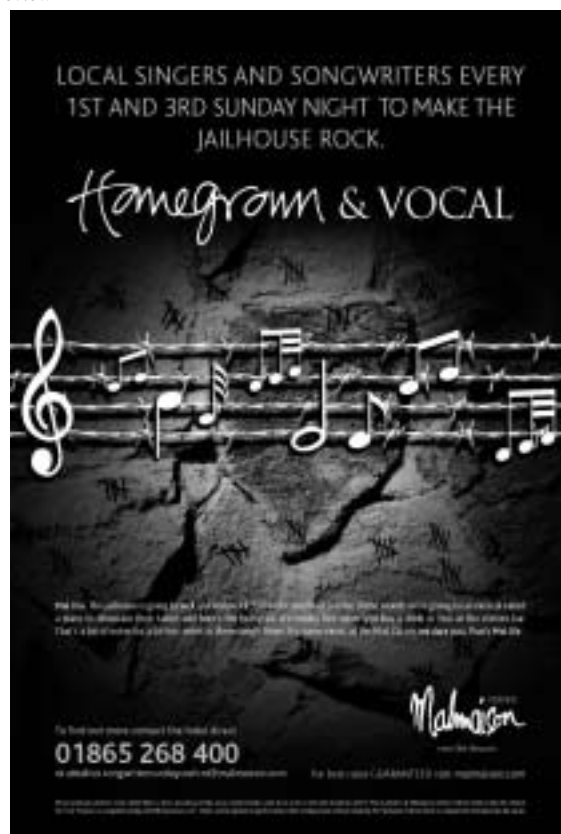
JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 30th

MUMFORD & SONS: The Bullingdon – Rootsy, leftfield bluegrass and folk from Mumford & Sons, likened to a 'hillbilly Coldplay'.

MOUNTAIN PARADE + KING OF CATS: The Wheatsheaf – Cute, expansive folkies The Mountain Parade attempt a time travel bridge between Fairport Convention and The Pastels, with surprisingly sweet results.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar





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TRUCK 12

SATURDAY

The drug sniffer dog and increasingly prominent security contingent hint that Truck lives in the big scary world of proper music festivals these days, but as ever it's the little things that remind you of its rural Oxfordshire roots and bijou charm, and not just the multitude of thunder flies that seem to get everywhere, from your pint to down the back of your t-shirt. The main stage might be a few steps up the evolutionary ladder from the old flatbed truck but the Rotary Club burger stall and the rustic fug of the barn never change. We're a tad concerned, though, that the barn walls we've spent so many years leaning against are now plastered with notices stating, "Warning: Asbestos". Thanks for the advance warning.

It's barely past midday, we've only just arrived and yet in the Beathive tent there's a full-on rave going on. **DJ JAY B**, described in the programme as Stevenon's king of drum&bass, is on the decks and a sizeable contingent have started the party early: admirable behaviour, while most festivals goers are still sitting idly around the main field, enjoying a rare day of sunshine. **THEIR HEARTS WERE FULL OF SPRING** are doing their best to rouse people, peeking out from an elaborately-dressed stage, though they're a gentle introduction to the weekend's music, their cutesy pop takes in the likes of Camera Obscura and the knowing humour of The Divine Comedy. No songs about cricket here but a good deal to tug at the heartstrings; really, who couldn't love a band that adorns their mic stands with flowers and the severed limbs of dolls?

There must be some kind of stage dressing fever going on because over in the market tent – at the far end of the Truck site, past a stall selling military clothing, including gas masks: at a music festival? Why? Surely the portaloos aren't that bad? – **6 DAY RIOT** have covered everything in little flowers in order to stamp their authority on the stage.

The name is misleading: instead of Crass-style punk protest and an incitement to civil disobedience, they indulge us with perfect pop-folk tunes, all delivered with a smile and a spring in their step. Quirky time changes and occasional mariachi spice add a distinct edge to their tunes, and if there are mentions of social upheaval mentioned in the words, we're too lost in the infectious smile of singer Tamara Schlesinger to care about such things.

In the Village Pub tent, BBC Radio Oxford battle of the bands winners **THE SCHOLARS** are showing why they managed to beat stiff competition to earn their slot, kicking out a big old noise, all chiming keyboards and a three-guitar spangle that reminds us of Stellarstarr*, while the singer adds a hefty dose of drama with his rich delivery.

Initially we're expecting little from **DETROIT SOCIAL CLUB** as they crank out a grizzly old Oasis-style bluster, but since we're sitting comfortably, we hang about and even though the hairy frontman looks like he needs a good punch the music improves hugely until they're mining a far deeper groove and come up smelling of pure rock and roll gold, somewhere between Kasabian and Black Rebel Motorcycle Club.

Total and utter best surprise treat of the day comes courtesy of New Zealand's **DISASTERADIO**, a chubby, cheesy Atari-sampling laptop pop chap in the Beathive, belying his novelty feel with solid dance beats and cool electro moves, a gabba mash up of Gary Numan and Hot Chip. **WHITE BELT YELLOW TAG**, meanwhile, are taking advantage of the fact the barn's PA seems to be stuck on Spinal Tap One-Louder setting, as their surprisingly effective droning indie takes on a savage mask, like a sonic playing out of *Revenge Of The Nerds*, totally wimpy guitar pop made ear-shreddingly violent by sheer volume alone.



FANFARLO ride the crest of Arcade Fire's orchestral pop wave – swooping tremolo vocals that dart across the high-low register like a ferret on speed: it's decent close-harmony pop layered with xylophones, strings and woodwind. And so begins Saturday afternoon's series of record-breaking efforts to cram as many extraneous band members onto the main stage as possible.

And talking of cramming, it's time to go walkabout and try and cram as much in from across the five main stages as possible, from **DUSTY & THE DREAMING SPIRES**, who turn out to be the latest incarnation of Goldrush, just with a few minor line-up changes, and making their traditional The-Band-meets-The-Byrds alt.country hazy pop presence felt.

What the f... moment of the day comes from **FREDRICK STANLEY STARR**, who looks like Wild Billy Childish and is thrashing away at a ukulele in the Village Pub tent alongside a stand-up drummer and a key-tar-toting chap, who together look like a bunch of drunks who have randomly wandered onstage and decided to play whatever first came to hand. Which is exactly what their odd Steve Reich-does-Jonquil racket

sounds like too. Fredrick turns up again shortly after with **THEM SQUIRRELS**, playing double bass and screaming. It still sounds like a bunch of drunks randomly invading the stage, although this time they've picked up a violin.

On the main stage we await **HJALTALIN** with blind excitement. As an Icelandic band we've already saved the adjectives cold, glacial, emotive and soaring for their set. That's what bands from Iceland are all about, isn't it? So when their set is full of quietly brooding pop numbers, shot through with lounge jazz chops it firmly knocks all expectations into a cocked hat. Fronted by a man who looks like Jimmy Saville - if Sir Jim had assembled a South American jungle death cult – they're a strangely fascinating bunch. By the end of the set they've even managed to allude to Hawkwind's 'Silver Machine' and riff on a dub bassline without sounding indulgent in the slightest.

WINTERSLEEP make us wish that they were from Oxford and not Canada. It would be great to claim them as our own, as you rather fancy that Sunday afternoon (which is given over to Oxford bands this year) would have suited them far better than their slot today. Occasionally they're brutish and

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Broken Records



Detroit Social Club



Ash



A Place To Bury Strangers



simplistic; recalling early REM, but where they really get you is when their songs slowly build to a crescendo that always hits the mark. They'd be best appreciated here in the dreamlike state that can only come after a solid day of drinking cider and avoiding the sniffer dog. If we were lying in a heap in this field on Sunday and Wintersleep came on, we'd swear they played the set of the weekend. Such as it is, they're impressive but suffer from their placing on the bill. You don't want to be dreaming at six o'clock at night.

Bizarrely, the greatest adulation all weekend is saved for a giant furry monster, Truck's mascot, who is mobbed as he wanders round the site, gangs of otherwise too-cool-for-school kids queuing up for photo opportunities. We vow to get ourselves a big furry suit pronto. It certainly dispenses with the need for witty chat-up lines.

We're rather taken too with the cool designer ear protectors all the toddlers are wearing – green for boys; pink for girls. Once, kids would be shoved up chimneys or under looms to earn their keep. These days they're not even allowed to go deaf from rock and roll. Bloody nanny state.

Into the barn again for **WE WERE PROMISED JETPACKS**, who might look dour but whose songs positively soar. Adam Thomson's vocals are shot through with an aggression that masks the fragility lurking at the centre of their songs. Thoroughly atmospheric they manage to make

these songs euphoric and depressive within the stroke of a beat.

Most astonishing set of the day is **A PLACE TO BURY STRANGERS**, for sheer ear-threatening brutality if nothing else. Listening to New York's self-crowned loudest band is like being scoured from the inside: wall upon mighty wall of hissing, fizzing guitar noise, feedback, cascading drums and doomladen vocals, with every second of every song sounding like the apocalyptic climax of the set. This is what a jet engine would sound like if was screaming for its mother whilst being tortured. And it's fucking fantastic. Just as you think, amid the disorientating blizzard of smoke and strobes, that it can't get any more punishing, they shift into a higher key and every remaining person in the barn visibly flinches. Magnificent.

And so, even after that, onto the performance of the day. Krautrock legend **DAMO SUZUKI** is no stranger to Oxford, with his improvised performances, but tonight he's joined by no less than fifteen local musicians, most of whom have never met before, never mind played together, including both Loz Colbert and Tim Turan on drums, as well as Mark Gardener on guitar and Robin and Joe Bennett on whatever comes to happen. Oh, and The Elysian String Quartet. It could be a recipe for calamity, but as Damo dispenses with debate as to who should start with his crazed incantation, the hour-long set takes incredibly coherent shape, rising and falling, from spacious

psychedelia to abrasive crescendos, driven by Tim's versatile drumming and Mark's brilliantly simple guitar mantra – not unlike Sterling Morrison at times. Musicians wander off stage, rejoin the throng and Damo simply stands in the middle and repeats unintelligible phrases, is joined by the Truck monster, jumps off stage, returns and ends in utter triumph.

ASH can't follow that, can they? Seventeen years young, Saturday's main stage headliners offer pure punk-pop nostalgia. Even those of us who never really got it, can't help but nod along when 'Girl From Mars' hits those same breakdowns it did back in the day, while set closer 'Burn Baby Burn' reaches its reassuring tendrils over a packed field, but in between the illusion disintegrates, leaving seventeen years worth of stretched-back catalogue to be sung – barely – by a man who should never have been put in charge of a flying-V.

Thankfully the market tent offers a more fitting climax to the day, with **BROKEN RECORDS**, who freely admit they had misgivings about playing so far away from the main arena. They seem genuinely touched that anyone even bothered to walk all that way to see them. The relocation of the Market Tent this year ensures that those who really wants to catch a band have to make an effort. Broken Records are well worth the effort tonight as they make a bid for performance of the day. Their earnest folk-infused rock sounds huge tonight. The orchestration is handled

with great aplomb, with violins and piano occasionally taking the lead before the drums roll in and the band combine to create something that borders on the anthemic if not hymnal. Comparisons to Arcade Fire, even Big Country, will be plague the band for ever, but in performance terms and in vocalist Jamie Sutherland, you could do a lot worse than look to Springsteen for a better comparison. It's rare to hear an unbridled roar of approval emanating from the Market Tent, but tonight Broken Records tear the roof off. A simply stunning set.

And later, in this same tent, this year's Truck hidden treasure is revealed: the Non-Classical Stage, tucked away while the rest of the festival dances into the early hours. With a rapid turnover of short sets, the quality is variable, but the peaks are some of the highlights of the whole weekend. **THE ELYSIAN QUARTET**'s improvised set might crash and burn where their performance earlier with Damo soared, but their version of Gabriel Prokofiev's 'String Quartet No.2' is intricate and stunningly moving. And anyone who saw cellist **LAURA MOODY**'s solo set would have wandered around for the rest of the night seeing stars: Unbelievably powerful stuff, cramming in the idiosyncratic virtuosity of Joanna Newsom with the feral howl of PJ Harvey.

Words: Dale Kattack, Sam Shepherd, Liz Dodd, Start Fowkes.
Photos: Sam Shepherd

TRUCK 12

SUNDAY

Sunday's main stage bill is a celebration of Oxford music past and present, with the emphasis on bands who sum up Oxford music's success over the past few years, plus the odd surprise inclusion.

Given it's celebratory nature there's appropriate irony in **THE RELATIONSHIPS'** set, dedicated as it is – and not for the first time today – to the memory of Dungeon Studios' Rich Haines who passed away only a week before; the man whose tireless work getting the best out of hopeful local bands for almost three decades is as much a part of our story as today's headliners, Supergrass. From the stage to the bar, many toasts are raised to Rich through a day which finds a host of veteran faces appearing, or simply looking on from the crowd.

What to say about The Relationships themselves that we haven't said so many times before? Consummate classic 60s-styled pop that sees California as an extension of Home Counties suburbia. A very civilised start to a typical, slightly cloudy Sunday. Falling like rain on barbecues, indeed.

Somewhat less genteel are **TALONS** over in the barn. Purely instrumental they might be, but that only tells you half the story. They mix post-rock, thundering power metal and trembling string passages and the resulting cacophony is nothing short of awesome. There are a few math-rock dalliances here and there, but Talons are more about tumultuous explosions of noise and controlled aggression than expressing Pi to the 50th decimal point on a fretboard. They're the closest thing we've heard to early 65 Days Of Static in many a year, and they're a fine way to kick-start Sunday, even if they make us spill our tea in excitement.

The Market Tent is home to the whims of 'Whispering' Bob Harris today, a man who is practically unrecognisable now the beard has disappeared. *That* voice, on the other hand, still conjures up images of sensible jumpers and *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, so all is not lost.

Austin Texas' **Eliza Gilkyson** charms us with delicate but cutting country-folk songs that are charged with humour and political comment. She's got the kind of voice that could lull you to sleep in a matter of minutes, but thankfully she's also in possession of a keen wit, and more than capable of holding your attention. Describing the Anti-George Bush song 'The Party's Over', she explains that she once played it in

South California and had an audience member state that the party she was singing about "sounds like the worst party ever – I'm glad I wasn't there." Affable, clever and clearly a master of the political song, it seems a shame to leave. But leave we must as we head to the Barn to find what delights Calories have for us.

We're pretty sure **CALORIES** should be pretty amazing. There are definite hints of Bob Mould's Sugar to their splenetic pop-punk. It's aggressive and zips along in a speed-fuelled fury but they do remember to add some semblance of a tune to everything, and yet here in the barn, the acoustics are hobbling the band of all their subtlety. Sometimes playing at a volume that causes people's ears to pack their cases and fuck off on holiday is not always to your advantage. In the case of Calories, it's stripped them of all the elements that would, on another day make them interesting.

Despite vowing to avoid our more familiar local heroes this weekend, we can't not catch **ALPHABET**

BACKWARDS on the main stage, despite having seen them so many times now we're in danger of being accused of being stalkers. Their blissfully summery songs find themselves in their perfect setting here at Truck. The inspired chorus to '80s Pop Video' has half the field singing along, which only confirms its pop genius. Altogether now: "Nah nah nah nah naaaaaahhhh!"

At first glance a Senegalese kora player might not seem an obvious choice for a stage dedicated to Oxford music, but **JALI FILY CISSOKHO** has been based in the county these past few years, making quite a name for himself. His solo set might be mellow enough for this bucolic afternoon setting, but it don't half sound like someone tuning up a banjo for an hour. We wander off to go and see Candyskins' **NICK COPE** doing a special kiddies' show in the playbus, return via a not very funny adult Punch and Judy show in the village pub tent and find Jali still ambling through his set, although by now he's hit a more jaunty mood and we spy a fellow Nightshift scribe frugging enthusiastically down the front with unabashed ebullience. And you thought we were all spitefully cynical barflies who only listen to old Joy Division bootlegs, didn't you?

Sunday afternoon does seem to involve trudging around the site catching bits and pieces of assorted



The Joy Formidable

lonesome cowboy singer-songwriters whose names we can't be bothered to jot down, never mind remember; no wonder it's almost impossible to get into the barn to see **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR**, who have one of the worst names on the entire bill – like some wretched sequel to *I Know What You Did Last Summer* – but really they're fabulous, with Don Cabellero's sense of precision and timing coupled with the delightful crunchiness that comes along with Pelican's greatest, granite-heavy riffs. They're like Explosions In The Sky if they had HUGE METAL BALLS.

From one Smalltown America label band to one of its founders, Jetplane Landing's **ANDREW FERRIS**. A charming and engaging man to be sure, and his heartwarming praise for the indie ethic of Truck brings a tear to the eye, but his solo set is sadly like someone covering Beck if they'd only been played 'Midnight Vultures' down a crackly phone line for five minutes.

THE EPSTEIN are another Truck institution it's impossible to avoid, and they at least offer a more widescreen version of the cowboy theme, moving it down to the Tex-Mex border, attracting the first mass crowd in front of the main stage today and inviting festival host Joe Bennett onstage to play fiddle as a

small hoe-down breaks out down the front.

THE LONG INSIDERS, in their previous guise of The Four Storeys, would once have fitted a similar niche, but these days brothers Nick and Simon Kenny, along with local drumming stalwart Dan Goddard are joined by singer Sarah and have galloped into the surf by way of several spaghetti western themes. At their best they're like Nick Cave re-imagining Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra, while even the loungey, cruise liner cabaret of their lesser songs is elegantly wasted, like an imaginary wedding band in a Tarantino movie.

Realising how difficult it's going to be to get into the barn to catch Hot Rats, we arrive a whole hour early, and endure most of **SKYLARKIN**'s almost supernaturally characterless indie rock, so generic we can't think of a single thing to describe it beyond a scribbled "lobotomised Duke Spirit".

HOT RATS are, of course, Danny Goffey and Gaz Coombes' covers band side-project, normally involving producer Nigel Godrich, but today it's just the pair of them, and if the absence of their bass player has unnerved them, a succession of technical problems doesn't help matters. In the end, if it weren't for the fact they're Gaz'n'Dan from Supergrass, they could be any half-



Supergrass

Pulled Apart By
Horses

The Long Insiders



The Candyskins

cocked pub band, hacking lumps out of The Doors and Roxy Music, collapsing halfway through the Pistols' 'EMI' and performing the single worst version of 'Fight For Your Right To Party' ever, before redeeming themselves only slightly with spirited takes on 'Mirror In The Bathroom' and 'Love Cats'. Don't give up the day job, lads, and keep the indulgence to the rehearsal room.

Having wasted so much time (not to mention missing Dive Dive), we're recompensed with interest by **THE JOY FORMIDABLE**, who more than live up to their name: fizzing grunge-goth-pop songs played with an intensity that borders on terrifying. Singer-guitarist Ritzy may be tiny and her voice may well be gloriously delicate, but battling against hammering drum patterns that wouldn't be out of place in a thrash metal band, she more than holds her own. Beautiful chiming guitars give way to waves of fizzing distortion and furious wig-outs, and at the heart of it all are epic choruses that simmer with a sultry fire and an almost religious sincerity. Watching Ritzy thrash her guitar within an inch of its life has a strangely cathartic quality, but it's not just about looking cool, she's in possession of some killer licks too.

For veterans of the local music scene, there is nothing more exciting than a **CANDYSKINS** reunion, however

rarely they come around. "It's been a busy year for The Candyskins," jokes Nick Cope, looking increasingly rakish (and increasingly like Jarvis Cocker in his new specs), "Two rehearsals and a trip to the pub". But they play like they've never been apart. From the Ramones-simple thrash-pop of '24 Hours' to a glorious singalong 'Monday Morning' and an emotional 'Car Crash', they're as close to a perfect guitar pop band as you'll get, and you just know that with a decent run of luck first time round it might have been them instead of Blur regrouping for Glastonbury this summer.

They're philosophical about luck though, declaring themselves lucky to have worked with Rich Haines so often over the years and dedicating 'Feed It' to him. Their entire set is a triumph, and to celebrate The Candyskins is to celebrate Oxford itself.

After which, we fear **STARS OF TRUCK & FIELD** is bound to be a huge comedown, being a mostly acoustic collaboration between the Goldrush people and Mark Gardener, and tending too much towards the Bob Dylan scheme of things, but then they play 'Dreams Burn Down' and end up inviting Loz Colbert on stage for a finale of 'Vapour Trail' and it ends up being an almost perfect slice of local pop nostalgia.

Back to the present for a while and **PULLED APART BY HORSES** have a lot of work to do to live up to their stunning previous visits to town. And yet for them maintaining a level of energy and showmanship that puts 99% of other guitar bands to shame seems effortless, and the closest we'll come to a 2009 reincarnation of Nation Of Ulysses. Repetitive beats and furiously hammered notes collide with violent riffs as the band build songs up to unsustainable heights before bringing them crashing down into chaotic outpourings of vented spleen. The band are frantic, frequently climbing the PA, jumping into the audience, or performing handstands mid-song without missing a beat. If there's a better live band in Britain, we'll be at the front of the queue for their next show.

On the way over to catch Frank Turner's not-so-secret set in the village pub tent – where he's billed as Funk Ranter – we amuse ourselves with **DETACHMENTS**, an almost hilariously self-conscious early-80s new wave pastiche, complete with button-down black shirts and tight, high-waisted trousers and a singer who is absolutely convinced he's Ian Curtis, but who sound rather more like one-hit-wonder The Motors than they'd probably care to believe.

Having come a long way since he fronted Million Dead, **FRANK TURNER** is no longer an angry young

man fronting a hardcore band. Now he's an angry young man with an acoustic guitar. But unlike most acoustic singer-songwriters, he's remembered that choruses are important, so although he's venting his political spleen at times, he always has a hook that ensures the audience stays with him.

Finally, back outside where the threatened rain has started to fall in politely earnest fashion and **SUPERGRASS** play Truck for the first time, but seemingly well aware of the festival's stature and in particular today's local significance. It can't rain on their parade today. Supergrass are a rare band in that they adapt to suit whatever venue they perform in. So tonight they're in full-on stadium rock mode, from the glam-blast of 'Diamond Hoo Ha Man', through the grunged-up rumble of 'Richard III' to an inevitable, rapturously-received 'Caught By The Fuzz'. The bluesy intermissions occasionally bring the atmosphere down, but a quickfire take on 'Sunday Morning' shows what Hots Rats' set might have been and they're one of the few bands who can bring the whole of Truck Festival together for one last mass sing-along.

Truck, then, is like a microcosm of Oxford music itself: small, proudly independent and able to punch well above its weight. Now ain't that something worth celebrating?



NISENNENMONDAI / ELAPSE-O / FROM LIGHT TO SOUND

The Wheatsheaf

There won't be many occasions where From Light To Sound are the most melodic and accessible band on the bill, but tonight is one of them. Their instrumental soundscapes move along with imperious grace, notably set opener 'Heart & Electricity', which sounds like Gary Numan's 'Complex' rewired for the

post-rock generation. They're less effective when they crank it up or the guitars get too flowery, but with tracks like 'Compliance' they find a hypnotic meeting point between Mogwai and Cluster and they're easily one of the most impressive new bands in town.

While From Light To Sound glide

with fluid ease, Elapse-O are full of hissing, metallic malevolence, all tremulous drones, punishing, relentless rhythms and machine beats, the offspring of Cabaret Voltaire's pioneering electro-primitivism, Throbbing Gristle's oppressive industrial doom and Liars' wayward psychedelia, all modernised,

melted down and modelled into something new. Like man's primeval fear of being eaten alive recast as a terror of machinery.

After which, Japan's difficult-to-spell, even more-difficult-to-pronounce Nisennenmondai could have been a disappointment, and after a ten-minute intro that's nothing more than a simple, low-volume guitar loop repeated to the point that even the strange dancing lady gives up gyrating dreamily and starts to wonder when, if ever, things will start to happen, it looks like all the anticipation is for nothing. But suddenly there's the thump of a drum, a minute later another and almost imperceptibly the trio take their almost brutal minimalism out on the road, making Kraftwerk's 'Autobahn' sound like a loose blues jam by comparison. They're like quantum geometry made into music, bassist Yuri Zaikawa and guitarist Masako Takada a picture of studious intensity, while Sayaka Himeno is all flailing limbs and flying ponytail behind the drumkit. There are odd moments halfway through where it threatens to go a bit Tangerine Dream but the tetchy, nagging, abrasively trebly trance-rock forever drags you back in and three tracks and forty-five minutes later, you realise the time had flown by. A triumph of precision engineering.

Dale Kattack

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THAT FUCKING TANK / MONSTER KILLED BY LASER / IVY'S ITCH

The Wheatsheaf

Since we last saw Ivy's Itch they've changed, perhaps in the way a red giant changes into a white dwarf. Everything is heavier, denser and more oppressive. Gone are the spacious goth passages, replaced by mismatched metal pummelling topped with orc tantrum vocal tirades. The sound is fascinatingly oppressive, akin to Babes In Toyland folded intricately in on themselves like an autist's bus ticket. It's a brilliant set, made even more intriguing by the degree to which Eliza's outfit and mannerisms remind us of Morwenna Banks as the five year old on *Absolutely*.

Aside from a slightly messy synth noodle intro, which sounds as though two kittens had got loose in Klaus Schulze's studio, Yorkshire's Monster Killed By Laser produce a proggy breed of contemporary instrumental rock that often sounds enticingly like 'Dark Side Of The Moon' reinterpreted by Mudhoney. At times they can become overly introspective, and spend too much energy focussed on miniature twiddles like some post-Slint version of Sky, but in general they produce an impressively well-structured take on wordless post-rock.

Having heard Leeds' That Fucking Tank on record, we'd dismissed them as one more guitar and drums act littering the byways and culs-de-sac of hipster rock. Seeing them live is a different matter altogether. Their music is dirt simple, primarily just straightforward rhythms and two or three note motifs, but they perform it with such energy, tension and elasticity that they could spearhead a Bungee Rock movement. It's sets like this that remind us why we spend so much time in dark cellars and drizzly paddocks, as a great performance holds pleasures no recording can possibly capture. Perhaps not the greatest band in the world, but one of those lovely gigs that justifies all the night buses, tinnitus and bad plastic pints we endure in the search for exciting music.

David Murphy

THE JOE ALLEN BAND / AIRTIST

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In terms of cyclical breathing I really doubt there is a better act than Airtist, certainly not without the present danger of a collapsed lung. On paper it's just Markus Meurer on didgeridoo, Aron Szilagyi on Jew's harp and Döme as beatbox-vox, but live they organically recreate the overwhelming force of a computer-driven trance club. So realistic is the biodynamic rave that on record it works against them, for it's live that the real shock and awe is generated. Aron twangs like he's going to rip his face off, Markus goes to a breathing zone that chemically can't be good for you, and the relentlessly complex and percussive nature of Döme snaps the audience out of their seats and into the aisles, dancing til the assembly hall staidness of the JDP looks like a class reunion at Cream. Simply breathtaking.

After successful recent festival appearances The Joe Allen Band are, at last, cementing their reputation as a potent and compelling force. Initial fears that adding the percussion of Chrissie Sheaf and the bass of Phil Oakley would upset the vital partnership of Joe's voice and the incredible riffs of violinist Angharad Jenkins seem allayed, and new rollicking song, 'For You My Love', shows that a buoyant degree of levity can be added to the signature epic ballads with which the original duo made their name.

Old tracks too, like the heartbreaking 'Locked In A Cross', are revamped to fit in with the solid feel that is alerting the labels to their across the board appeal. They are still at their most unique and demanding in songs like 'Watered Down', that go to the mat with a fist of despair, but although they play the similar 'Chase' tonight, that song, and another more experimental duo song

'Gunpoint', have been sidelined in search of a more traditional band vibe. This transitional phase for The Joe Allen Band has something of the "will it, won't it" of soufflé making about it: the ingredients are perfect, the heat is on, it's just a question how far they will rise.

Paul Carrera

NATALIE IMBRUGLIA

O2 Academy

Natalie Imbruglia is back and giggling! She's spent the four years since her last studio album hanging out with celebrity chums, doing a bit of acting and crafting her new album, 'Come To Life'. Its release was delayed to include tracks she wrote with Chris Martin, who joked that he gave her "the best Coldplay song of all time". One of these collaborations stands out: the first single, 'Want', a track definitely written to be remixed, with its rather un-Coldplay-like (and un-Natalie-like) repetitive bassline and vocal hooks.

Some of the new tracks aired tonight are so like 'Torn' that they make it seem drab, which is a shame for 'Torn'. Natalie seems to have more fun with the older, rockier stuff like 'Wishing I Was There', anyway. 'My God' sounds like a Melanie C track, but Natalie carries these tracks off better than Mel would — she's more natural and less pretentious and forced. Her versatile voice has a surprising musical theatre quality live, and she can actually sustain a note.

More divergence from 'Torn' comes in the form of 'Cameo', with its scuzzy synths (possibly the work of the album's main producer, Ben Hillier, who did the most recent two Depeche Mode albums), and the Feist-esque 'Wild About It'; the latter is plodding, but the top hat and poses Natalie adopts to sing it certainly please the crowd. In all, a great voice but a mixed bag; she deserves an overall higher quality of material, really.


Kirsten Etheridge

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ADRENOCHROME

A band named after an old Sisters Of Mercy song are unlikely to be a cuddly kitten-flavoured barrel of laughs, and so Adrenochrome prove to be, weighing in with a meaty electronic rhythm that's quickly joined by a wave of squelching synths and a razor-ravaged rasp of a voice that's 90% venom, 10% hot charcoal. They're jittery and aggressive, harking back to the 80s industrial techno of bands like Front 242 and Skinny Puppy, battering it all into shape with a Fear Factory-shaped mallet and doubtless rehearsing under a huge banner with the word Relentless scrawled on it in lamb's blood. 'Praise The Innocent' sets the bleak scene before 'Unnameable Returns' kicks in with its harsh, hissing drum machine rhythm, a seven-minute epic that features an incongruous and, initially at least, unnecessary melodic change of direction that's dangerously close to metalcore cliché, but perhaps offers a glimpse of light and variety amid the otherwise bleak, bastard brutality of it all. There's a feeling Adrenochrome are too single-minded in their approach and things can feel a bit laborious as they thunder, growl and squawk through yet another oppressive industrial dirge, but that's also their strength, plundering Prong on 'Perfect Storm' and Nine Inch Nails' factory rhythms on 'Let Go' and all in all making for pleasingly uncomfortable listening. Play them at your pets.

SHATTERED DREAMS

Reading through self-confessed 'pop-punk' band Shattered Dreams' short list of influences fills us with a terrible sense of dread: Green Day, Blink 182, Paramore... we just know we're in for some risible old sub-All American Rejects tud. Against all odds, it's nothing of the sort, mainly due to singer Steph Branch's husky voice, sort of a cross between Hazel O'Connor and a punked-up teenage Bonnie Tyler. Splattered untidily over some spiky garage rock on demo opener 'Get Out Of My Way' it makes a for a cracker of a lightweight punk number, with a naïve old fashioned feel to it, from a time before Victory Records and their ilk sucked every last vestige of life out of the genre. After that they get a bit dull and pub rocking, plodding when they should canter and with some painfully prosaic rhyming (though matching "druggies and alkie" with "house keys" might be borderline genius) and

FULANGCHANGANDI

No, we don't know how you're supposed to pronounce it either; it's upset our spellchecker and we doubt you'd even be able to spell it correctly to find them on the internet, but Fulangchangandi manage to impress to a degree with a brand of glowering, slightly off-kilter, mostly instrumental rocking that's most parts Mogwai but occasionally hits God Machine levels of heaviosity. 'Bottletop Against a Brick' finds the band providing the backdrop to some almost indecipherable narrative, possibly about a night down the pub, which only detracts from the crescendos and spangled star-gazing. Really, if you want poetry and noise, check out Youthmovies' joint EPs with Adam Gnade. Their best moments come in the purely instrumental passages, showing a band who aren't exactly original, but carry it off with some style and power, and when they do try to sing, on 'Emergency', simply spoil the effect.

THE AFFECTORS

The Affectors feature two former-members of local 80s indie hopefuls The Quiet Men, so we guess they're no whippersnappers, but sometimes it's older musicians, untethered by desires to be cool, that come up with the most interesting sounds. And so, for the most part, it turns out to be here. From the dark, ambient electro minimalism of 'The Experiment', through the Kraftwerk-meets-John Foxx snowbound soundscape of 'Objected' they mix 70s synth noises with breakbeats and make a virtue of their linear, not overly adventurous approach, building up a gently hypnotic, glacial mood. Sadly this is punctured by what follows, 'Next' introducing an acoustic guitar over the hissing electronic beats but merely wandering aimlessly through dull hippy ambient musak, while 'Why', with its indistinct middle-eastern vocal chants is equally ponderous, and it's left to 'Sad Eyed' to restore order with its squelchy electro-acoustic wander through a dreamy acid haze.

MOUNTAIN PARADE

We like any band that describes themselves as ramshackle, since it saves us the effort of having to do so. It also suggests a self-effacing nature, which is a boon in this winsome variety of folksy pop. Mountain Parade boast six members but you'd be hard pressed to notice more than two at any time, and a song like 'Awesome Wonder' makes you think they're trying just a bit too hard to be cute,

but then they hit you with a lullaby-soft shanty like 'The Squid & The Whale', which is quite lovely and not a million miles away from Emmy the Great. At every turn they manage to keep their songs short and rather sweet, ukulele and squeezebox adding to the rough, pastoral nature of the music, like something from a Jeffrey Lewis waking dream, and 'Apple Trees' is a charmingly lo-fi bucolic croon that sounds exactly like we imagine Fairport Convention might have sounded like had Sandy Denny grown up listening to The Pastels, several years after her untimely demise. If you know what we mean.

UTE

Ute are currently getting plenty of folks, including a fair number of Nightshift scribes, excited, although excited doesn't seem an appropriate word to use in the context of their mournful form of acoustic folk-pop. 'Stitch Up' might, at a stretch, be described as playfully melancholy, but the emphasis is very much on the melancholy. But for all that, it's very well executed and Ollie Thomas has a great voice, soft but gravelly, that dominates but never subsumes the politely subdued music. Vocally and lyrically he keeps his cards close to his chest and rarely expresses any great emotion, but in doing so he maintains an earthy attraction, while the music can be rootsy and buoyant as well as sombre, bordering on funeral, as on 'Lost Voice', that touches on old Appalachian folk music. Elsewhere the choral flourish on 'Panic Float' injects a sudden spark of life into the moodiness, while 'Airborne' switches on a sixpence from bucolic dirge to fervent zydeco, and while the songs themselves might be rather slender, there's more than enough evidence that this new band have brighter things ahead of them.

SOIREE FOR THE BUSKERS

Yeah, we feel sorry for buskers too sometimes. All that huffing and puffing and having to learn four different Bob Dylan songs, only for pedestrians to absent mindedly kick your cap full of coins across the street as they bustle out of Next, or urchins chucking half-drunk bottles of Fruit Shoot at you. Not that bagpipe player, though – seriously, does he only know 'Scotland The Brave'? Make a fucking effort, laddie. Ah, sorry, Soiree For The Buskers. Sorry. Hmm, anyway, sorry might be an apt description for this effort. It starts off reasonably, if lacking in character, a rudimentary pub pop jangle, a bit of guitar spangle to make it look pretty and it hobbles along, if not merrily, then without offending anyone, but then it's like someone pressed a mute button accidentally and everything's lost in a dull grey gruel of inconsequentiality. Maybe because it's a live recording – never a good idea to include for review. That said, 'The Visionaries', while lacking the strength to punch its way out of a poodle fanciers'

convention, is a pleasantly winsome slice of starry indie jangle and means we'll hold off chucking those bottles of sticky fruit squash for now.

SOCRATES JOHNSON

Ah, joy unbounded, some more of that acoustic strumming and moaning you know we're so fond of. Hell, you must think we're fond of it else why keep sending it in? In the hope we'll change our minds or something? That we'll fling our sequinned pants in the air with unbridled glee and sing from Carfax Tower, "Hurrah! More self-pitying donkey dung in a bucket!"? Dream on, people. Socrates Johnson is the work of two people, called Ed and Jude, but mostly it's just Ed moaning lots, though we're never quite sure what about. And usually in that vaguely conversational style that suggests he's going to impart some toe-curlingly wry nugget of wit at any moment, like shit folk singers in provincial pubs through the ages, but it never comes. He just keeps on moaning. Until the whole thing becomes soporifically dull and you feel like clambering back up Carfax Tower just so you can throw yourself off. There's a vague, misjudged attempt to sound like Johnny Cash on the final track here, 'Wild Wind', but it's too little too late and the whole demo is bit like the musical equivalent of downing an entire bucket of Amitriptyline with a litre bottle of gin: slow, rather hazy, slightly depressing and ultimately ending in an unremarkable death.

THE DEMO DUMPER

SMALL MACHINE

We regularly ponder what some bands actually hear when they listen back to their demos. We worry about their state of mind if they deem what they're hearing fit to present to their friends, family and members of the general public, never mind seasoned cynics like us. Small Machine are nothing more, nothing less than indistinct indie rock thrash that's just a mush of clattering drums, vaguely fuzzy guitars and a nondescript vocal mumble that makes J Mascis sound like Henry Rollins in a particularly bad mood. This demo doesn't contain one single memorable moment. All that effort and it's like listening to a marketing executive's absent-minded tea break doodle of what a third-rate indie band might sound like heard through a tinny radio, a thick fog and a mild hangover all rolled into one. They're so non-descript they could strip naked and parade down Cornmarket Street with a giant neon sign proclaiming "We Are The Anti-Christ" and no fucker would take the blindest bit of notice. Poor wee lambs.

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

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