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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 177  
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2010

# The Rock Of Travolta

Oxford's own  
monsters of rock return

*Plus*

Oxford Punt line-up announced -  
Foals sell-out - Cornbury bill  
revealed - Truck Festival news -  
six pages of local gigs.

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# NEWS

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**THE LINE-UP FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT** has been announced.

The Punt is the annual showcase event for up and coming local unsigned acts. Previous Punts have provided early exposure for the likes of Young Knives, Stornoway, Little Fish and Yannis and Jack from Foals' first band, Elizabeth.

This year's Punt takes place on **Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May** and features 22 acts playing across five venues in the city centre in one night. The full line-up is:

**Malmaison:** Helen Pearson; We Are Ugly But We Have The Music; Samuel Zasada; Telling The Bees.

**The Purple Turtle:** The Anydays; Dead Jerichos; Sealings; Risen In Black; Spring Offensive.

**Café Coco Royal:** Aiden Canaday; The Roundheels; Mariana Magnavita; Scarlett In The Wilderness.

**The Wheatsheaf:** Message To Bears; Fixers; Empty Vessels; Taste My Eyes.

**The Cellar:** Beard Of Zeuss; Ute; The Scholars; Barbarella; The Vicars Of Twiddly.

The Punt kicks off at 7pm at Malmaison with Helen Pearson and finishes at the Cellar with Vicars of Twiddly at midnight.

A limited number (100) **all-venue Punt Passes** are on sale now, priced £7, online at [oxfordmusic.net](http://oxfordmusic.net), from the Scribbler in Oxford and the Music Box on Cowley Road. Due to the nature of the hotel, entry to Malmaison will be limited to Punt Pass holders only. Coco Royal is free entry.

**STORNOWAY** have signed to 4AD Records. The local favourites put pen to paper with the legendary indie label at the beginning of March and join a roster that currently includes TV On The Radio, Bon Iver and The Big Pink. Stornoway will release their debut album, 'Beachcomber's Windowsill', on May 24<sup>th</sup> with a single, 'I Saw You Blink', preceding it this month. The band are set to grace the cover of Nightshift again in June; meanwhile an interview with Brian Briggs, Jon Ouin and Rob Steadman is up on [Oxfordbands.co.uk](http://Oxfordbands.co.uk) now.

**SS20** on Cowley Road will start stocking local CDs and vinyl from this month. The skate-wear store on Cowley Road steps into the gap left by the demise of Videosyncratic last month. All Oxfordshire acts are encouraged to get in contact with either Mon or Lee at SS20 at 176 Cowley Road or on 01865 791851. The shop already sells tickets for local festivals, including Outgraze, the three-day dance festival, which takes place over the weekend of 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> June, co-promoted by Bassmentality, Slide and Simple, in aid of the Oxford Wheels Project.



**FOALS** return to action with a sold-out show at the O2 Academy and a new single ahead of their highly-anticipated second album.

The band's show at the Academy on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May, part of a short UK tour, sold out within hours of tickets going on sale. Jonquil have been confirmed as support for the night.

Foals' new album, entitled 'Total Life Forever', is released on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> May and promises to be a more ambitious and eclectic affair than the band's debut, with new single, 'Spanish Sahara', displaying a new, more spaced-out and considered side.

Full tracklisting for the album is: 'Blue Blood'; 'Miami'; 'Total Life Forever'; 'Black Gold'; 'Spanish Sahara'; 'This Orient'; 'Fugue'; 'After Glow'; 'Alabaster'; '2Trees' and 'What Remains'.

**THE FAMILY MACHINE** return to action with a new single this month. 'See You' is released on 1<sup>st</sup> April, as a download from iTunes or from local indie store Rapture in Witney. Meanwhile the band have been chosen from over 1,600 acts to play at the final of the Glastonbury Emerging Talent Competition, with the prize being a slot on the festival's main stage. Visit [www.myspace.com/thefamilymachine](http://www.myspace.com/thefamilymachine) for news on how they get on

**RAPTURE** in Witney take part in this year's National Record Shop Day, which aims to celebrate the country's independent record stores. Rapture, in Witney's Woolgate Centre, is now Oxfordshire's sole remaining

independent record and CD shop. The day includes a series of in-store live appearances by local bands, a massive sale, a host of special limited-edition releases and some cake. Amongst the acts who have contributed special Record Shop Day releases are The Rolling Stones, Paul Weller, Flaming Lips, Foals, The Fall, Midlake and The Hold Steady. Bands already confirmed to play in the store and later in the evening at a special show at Fat Lil's, include The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, The Epstein, Ute, Two Fingers of Firewater, From Light To Sound, Matt Kilford, The Black Hats and The Roundheels. Visit [www.rapture-online.co.uk](http://www.rapture-online.co.uk) for more details about the day's activities.



**EBSEN & THE WITCH, Ms DYNAMITE AND LAU** are amongst a host of acts now confirmed for **Truck Festival**. They join Danish alt.rockers Mew who are already confirmed to headline the main stage on Saturday night. Other names added to the festival bill include **Egyptian Hip Hop, Fonda 500, Future Of The Left, Los Campesinos! and Good Shoes** as well as local favourites **Stornoway, Little Fish and This Town Needs Guns**.

This year's Truck runs over the weekend of 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> July at Hill Farm in Steventon. Adult weekend tickets are £80; tickets for 13-17 year olds are £60 with under-13s going free. Tickets, including a limited number of Supertrucker tickets, which allow entry to both Truck and Wood Festival for £120, are on sale now from The Scribbler in Oxford, Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown, The Music Box on Cowley Road, Rapture in Witney and Local Roots in Abingdon, as well as online at Ticketweb, See Tickets and other outlets.

Meanwhile, **The Unthanks** have now been added to the bill for **Wood Festival**, which takes place at Braziers Park, near Wallingford over the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May. Acts already confirmed for the eco-friendly festival include Frank Turner, Tunng, Danny & The Champions of the World, Martin Simpson, Nick Cope, Peggy Sue and Dusty & The Dreaming Spires.

Visit [www.thisistruck.com](http://www.thisistruck.com) for more details on both festivals.

**A SPECIAL TRIBUTE GIG** to the late Rich Haines will be held in the unusual surroundings of West Wycombe's Hellfire Caves on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May. Rich, who ran Dungeon Studios for nearly 30 years, died of cancer last year and is rightly regarded as a local music legend. The gig is being organised by and features Wycombe band SubRosa5, the last band ever to record with Rich. The Family Machine support with Mark Gardener hopefully playing a solo set. A limited number of 120 tickets are available for the show, priced at £25, which includes drinks, and with all profits going to Marie Curie Cancer Care and the Nordoff Robbins Trust. A CD compilation of songs by bands produced by Rich is being compiled. Details of the gig are available at [www.myspace.co.uk/subrosa5](http://www.myspace.co.uk/subrosa5).

**THE SCARLETTS** play a farewell gig at the Wheatsheaf on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April. The promising local ska-punk act are calling it a day but will bow out in style with support from Dial F For Frankenstein - who recently had their song, 'Wes Vega' used in the latest series of *Skins* - Vultures, Night Portraits and King of Cats. Meanwhile Scarletts drummer Matt and guitarist Vinnie have a new band together, Betablocker & The Bodyclock, who support Fixers at the Cellar on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April.

**WITCHWOOD SCHOOL OF ROCK** is set to open its third rock school for children aged between 6-16 this month. The school, which was set up by a group of local music teachers, started off in

Shipton-Under-Wychwood a year ago with a second school opening in Chipping Norton shortly after. This month a Witney branch will open. The schools provide a weekly workshop for kids to learn to play instruments and write songs, while the school's new record label is set to help bands put out their own releases. For more information visit [www.witchwoodrock.com](http://www.witchwoodrock.com).

**AS EVER**, don't forget to tune into BBC Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best new local releases and demos as well as featuring interviews with local and touring acts. Introducing celebrated its fifth anniversary last month by releasing 'Round The Bends', a tribute to Radiohead's classic 'Bends' album by local bands. The album is available to download from iTunes with all profits going to Children In Need.

**NIGHTSHIFT URGES** all its readers to join the campaign to save 6Music. BBC Director General Mark Thompson has earmarked the digital radio station for the axe in an overhaul of the whole corporation. 6Music is the only radio station that consistently broadcasts innovative new music, as well as providing a rare outlet for new unsigned bands, including many from Oxford who have received early airplay from DJs like Tom Robinson. The BBC is currently holding an open consultation in which everyone can express their views. Please visit [bbc.co.uk/bbcctrust/consultation](http://bbc.co.uk/bbcctrust/consultation) and fill out the online form.



**BAND OF HORSES** come to Oxford in June as part of a short UK tour. The Sub-pop-signed Seattle alt.country rockers play at the O2 Academy on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> June, their first ever visit to Oxford. Tickets, priced £13.50, are on sale now from the Academy box office. Another big name confirmed for the venue is **Goldfrapp**, who play the Academy on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June. Tickets are £22.50. **Coco Rosie** also make their Oxford debut, at the Regal, on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May. Visit [www.myspace.com/pindropperperformances](http://www.myspace.com/pindropperperformances) for details.



**JACKSON BROWNE AND DAVID GRAY** have been confirmed as headline acts for this year's **CORNBURY FESTIVAL**. American singer-songwriter and political activist Browne, who was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2004 by Bruce Springsteen, has a music career stretching back 40 years, including hits like 'The Pretender', 'Somebody's Baby' and 'These Days'.

Cornbury takes place over the weekend of the **3rd-4th July** at Cornbury Country Park, near Charlbury. Other acts so far announced include **Squeeze, Noisettes, Buddy Guy, Imelda May, Candi Staton and Dr John**, who join Gray on the Saturday, with **The Feeling, Newton Faulkner, Reef, The Blockheads, DOHL Foundation and Kathryn Tickell** among those joining Browne (pictured) on the Sunday.

Tickets, priced £95 for adults (£115 with camping), and free for under-12s and over-70s, are on sale now at [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com)

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a quiet word with

# The Rock Of Travolta



## THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA

played their debut gig at Truck Festival in July 2000, an impressive showcase of sonic firepower that at the time marked them above and beyond the local indie and alternative rock pack.

Four months later they played their second gig, supporting And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead at the Zodiac. That show remains one of the most singularly awe-inspiring performances by an Oxford band we have ever witnessed, a purely instrumental storm of coruscating synthetics and searing strings raging over an avalanche of guitar and bass noise. We hailed them as the best new band in Oxford as they, along with kindred spirits Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia, Eeeblee and Six Ray Sun kicked revolutionary new life into a scene that, if not slumbering, was rarely daring to be different at the time.

Formed by long-term friends Dave Warrington (guitar) and Phill Honey (bass and keyboards), along with bassist Jon Carter, drummer Joe Durow and cellist and keyboardist Ros Murray, The Rock Of Travolta's set-up and sound was a world away from anything else going on in Oxford: a wild, cacophonous fusion of rock, post-rock, classical and electronic music that was simultaneously innovative and accessible; intelligent but visceral with a keen eye for rock theatre.

## FROM THIS ASTONISHING

start, things just got better for The Rock Of Travolta. A debut mini-album – the tauntingly-titled 'My Band's Better Than Yours', recorded in a single day – captured some of their sublime live power on CD and in the summer of 2001 they were handpicked by Radiohead to open the legendary South Park show in front of a 40,000 crowd. A second album, 'Uluru' (cheekily named after the biggest rock in the world) was released in 2003, including a guest vocal contribution from Seafood frontman David Line on the song 'Everything's Opened Up', which topped Nightshift's end of year Top 20. The band were touring the UK with the likes of Trans Am, Oceansize, Kat Bjelland and Do Make Say Think and picking up plaudits at every turn.

But then in 2004 the band lost three of its core members – Phill, keyboard player 'Deadly' Dave Crabtree, who would often play onstage dressed as the Grim Reaper, and Ros. The Rock Of Travolta could have dissolved and remained a fond memory, another lost cult favourite to add to the pile. Instead they came back stronger than ever.

Matt Spooner joined The Rock on guitar and keyboards from Southsea Company Prospectus, while the classically-trained Jennie Bates came in on cello. After a short hiatus to regroup, The Rock Of Travolta returned to action in 2006 and immediately blew any doubts or

reservations out of the water: they were fresh, vigorous and downright brutal, Matt duelling magnificently on guitar with Dave while Jenny took the cello centre stage and made it rock harder than any guitar.

## THIS MONTH THE ROCK OF

Travolta return to the stage where they first made their name – upstairs at the Academy – once again back to remind anyone who needs reminding, of what a fantastic band they are. The quintet have also finished recording their third album, 'Fine Lines', due for release later this year. The new album's neo-classical prog-hardcore clamour is bigger, more complex than before, taking inspiration from sources as diverse as Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Shellac, Stravinsky, Add N To (X) and The BBC Radiophonic Workshop. Still almost completely instrumental, two tracks feature spoken word contributions from former-Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia frontwoman Emily Gray.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO THE

Rock Of Travolta's return to local live performance, we spoke to the band and asked first where they've been these past couple of years and why it's taken so long for the new album to come together.

MATT: "We've actually kept ourselves very busy. We took a six-month break in the summer of 2004 and then set about writing new

music. The new album is the tip of the iceberg. We made rough recordings of almost every writing session through to Summer 2007, storing ideas in an online vault called The Nursery. Most of the new album developed from there. We road-tested new tunes between 2005-2006 to remind folks that we still existed"

DAVE: "We also had to get up to speed with the older tunes and wanted the new format to be an evolution of what we were before. We played in Bath, Southampton and London and performed at Truck festival twice. We also supported Seafood and Foals at the Zodiac and played Audioscope"

How is the forthcoming album different to 'Uluru'?

DAVE: "It was a different approach, starting from the writing process. Some tracks grew from subtle ideas, others from the most intense. We built many of the tracks back-to-front and inside out! Matt and Jennie have both had a huge influence on the way that we work and this proved a catalyst to the new sound."

MATT: "It shares a lot of the same elements: instrumental rock with strings and synths, and we made a conscious effort to maintain some continuity. Sequenced electronica had become more prevalent on 'Uluru' than its predecessors. Although not outside our interests and capabilities, the approach we took with 'Fine Lines' was for electronic sounds to be triggered by hands or feet."

You recorded 'My Band's Better Than Yours' in a single day; could you imagine doing that with the new album?

DAVE: "For 'My Band's...' we turned up to record a single or EP, got carried away and recorded every track we had. This time we weren't afraid to re-record whole sections if that was what it took."

MATT: "Even when recording a band playing live, the result isn't an exact replica of what it sounded like for the audience. The process is unnatural. You stick microphones and apparatus in front of things that make noise, reassemble the result, and hope that it might eventually sound like a band. The upside of recording all instruments at once is that it's really quick. The downside is the inevitable compromise in sound. We didn't feel like compromising."

JENNIE: “We had opportunities to experiment with harmonies and new textures that weren’t possible when playing live. It’s exciting to work on the spot and get quick results. I liked creating mini string ensembles on songs like ‘Acolytes’ and ‘Ships’, where the texture could sound thicker and would therefore behave differently among the other instruments. I think we saw this as an opportunity to try out our ideas – it was a lengthier process but we’re really happy with the result.”

#### WHEN TROT EMERGED IN

2000, they were part of a whole new wave of local bands (Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia, Eeeblee, Six Ray Sun) breathing fresh life and new ideas into the local scene. How do they remember that time, both from the perspective of how the scene was around then and how they changed it?

JON: “I’m not sure we realised that we were part of this new wave. It never felt any different inside the band from the first gig at Truck to South Park a year later. It kind of just felt like we were all moving up the venue scale in Oxford and London together. It’s really amazing to think that we changed the scene.”

DAVE: “For me, 2000 was the most exciting time. We had all been in various bands and we wanted to challenge our own expectations and abilities. Up to the minute we took to the stage of our first gig at Truck Festival, we didn’t know how we would be received. We could never have expected the positive reaction, otherwise we would have spent more time thinking of a band name!” Was there a conscious desire to shake things up musically? The mix of classical and electronic music, and the use of twin bass guitars was pretty radical at the time.

DAVE: “It was about doing something exciting for us. Phill was bored of guitars, so decided from the outset to play bass. When Jon joined the band, also on bass, from Soulcraft a week or so later, we started to experiment with using one bass at a slightly higher register and the other covering the lower frequencies. When I invited Ros to join, we had a third bass player! Fortunately she could also play cello and keys, so the orchestral/electronica combination started from there and we kind of stumbled upon ‘our’ sound.”

JOE: “My initial scepticism about our new sound eased after the attention we got. The absence of vocals encouraged us to use each instrument to maintain interest throughout each track.”

JON: “The no-vocals thing was also a reaction to the trouble we’d

all experienced in previous bands with getting the guitars loud enough on stage without the vocals feeding back. I’d been listening to instrumental music for many years – mostly electronic – so adding the rock aspect was really fun for me. The music has to hold the melody, otherwise we’re into an album of five-minute guitar solos.”

As regards influences and contemporaries, which bands inspired you back then and now and which bands, if any, did you feel affinity with at the beginning and now?

DAVE: “While I was at university, I remember seeing bands like Deus using interesting instruments such as strings and trumpets. Another local band that was going the instrumental route was Nought, although we were keen always to keep our ideas more accessible and inject an element of fun and humour.”

JON: “Bands like Nought and Dive Dive were certainly contemporary influences. Obviously we had an affinity with MBICR and Eeeblee, as we spent quite a bit of time touring with them. Just after we released ‘My Band’s Better Than Yours’, it felt in many ways like we were doing something that no-one else was doing.”

#### IT’S TEN YEARS NOW SINCE

that debut gig. Back then you were the most exciting new band in town. A decade on how do you think TROT are viewed, locally and beyond Oxford?

JENNIE: “Those who know us are probably wondering what the hell we’ve been doing, and why the album has taken so long. We don’t do things by halves.”

JON: “It’s always great to know that people are still interested. I still get emails from all over the world, asking when we’re going to play near them and when the new album is coming out. For example, we hadn’t played in Bath for about three years. We thought it would be a low-profile gig. On the night, loads of people turned up. Awesome!”

How do you think the local scene has changed in the last decade?

DAVE: “It has been exciting to see Foals become successful far beyond Oxford, and I think it has inspired a new generation of bands to set their sights higher. It has been sad to see some of our favourite local venues close over the years, though.”

JON: “I suppose it’s natural for venues to come and go but I still miss the Point – always had a great atmosphere. On a more positive note, it seems that the Oxford scene is as nationally and internationally relevant as ever, which is great. I was talking to Tim Turan during

mastering recently and he was telling me about the time a waiter in New York was raving about the ‘Cowley Strip’ in rock-central, Oxford!”

**GOING BACK TO 2004, THE** band were in full steam and then Ros, Deadly and most significantly Phill left. How did that affect you?

DAVE: “I guess Phill got frustrated that the band couldn’t move faster. But he also had very strong ideas about where he thought the band should go. It was a shock when he quit and Deadly followed, but we were determined to continue. After all, I formed the band with Phill, plus Jon and Joe had pretty much been involved since day one, so why should that signal the band’s demise. Matt was already bursting with ideas, and with Jennie we found we could play the old tracks with a renewed enthusiasm. I must admit, though, for a while it did feel a bit like when Nigel left Spinal Tap!”

JON: “We made a conscious decision that in continuing with TROT, we would maintain a consistent thread in the music. Sound-wise, we’ve moved the electronica away from sequencers and it’s all played live. Otherwise, in many ways the band works very much like it did back in the early days.”

What in particular have Matt and Jennie brought to the band since they joined? Jennie seems to have moved the cello more centre-stage than Roz did.

DAVE: “Jennie has a keen sense of dynamics and adds more subtlety into the quieter moments in our set. Ros used her cello to bolster the general idea or add simple textures. Jennie has a lot more range and knows how to belt out a loud tune too! Matt was a fan of the band before, so much of his contribution is informed by previous material. It sometimes feels like he has been involved from day one. Matt also played a huge role in the production of the album.”

JENNIE: “I think we began using the cello to carry melodies and duel with the guitars more – it wasn’t planned, it just happened when we were writing. Buying the electric cello was the best move for me; it had more live presence and was able to stand up to the wall of guitars.”

**THE SOUTH PARK SHOW IN** 2001 remains etched in the memories of everyone who was there and it was a phenomenal opportunity for The Rock Of Travolta to cement their growing reputation, an opportunity they readily seized upon. Is supporting

Radiohead still the band’s career highlight? What do you remember best about that day?

DAVE: “It was mindblowing. Radiohead had been one of my favourite bands since I was at school. To open for them at their homecoming show, less than a year after forming the band, was more than I could ever have imagined. However, much of a highlight that was, there have been other highs, such as our John Peel session.”

JON: “The best things that I remember about that day include the rush as we took the stage to open the whole event in front of so many people – even though the majority had no idea who we were, and then standing in the wings watching the other bands. It’s still amazing how many people mention having seen us at that gig, even nearly 10 years on.”

#### EMILY GRAY CONTRIBUTES

spoken word vocals on two of the new tracks; Can you see her becoming a more permanent fixture? You worked with David Line on ‘Everything’s Opened Up’; would you like to have more vocal contributions? Any ideal people you’d like to involve?

JON: “Matt and Jennie had the idea of having some kind of monologue, although at the time we hadn’t thought about who would perform it. We asked Emily, as we knew that she would be able to bring the right thing to those tracks.”

DAVE: “We don’t often set out with a vocal idea in mind. With ‘Everything’s Opened Up’ we had the bones of the track written, and I asked Dave Line to contribute. It really depends on whether we have a track that we feel would benefit from a vocal performance.”

Will the new album signal a concerted push to take the band on to another level or is it going to stay an on-off arrangement?

JON: “I think the new album is taking us forward, and we want to give this as big a push as we can. I think we’re still seen as a ‘niche’ thing by so many in the industry, which certainly was a problem around 10 years ago. Now, things have moved on in terms of how you can reach people and also in terms of channels for more diverse music (Save 6 Music!), so if the music is strong enough, why shouldn’t the band move to another level?”

*The Rock Of Travolta play the O2 Academy on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April with The Half Rabbits, Dead Jerichos and Night Portraits and the Stocks Bar in Abingdon on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>. Visit [www.myspace.com/therockoftravolta](http://www.myspace.com/therockoftravolta).*

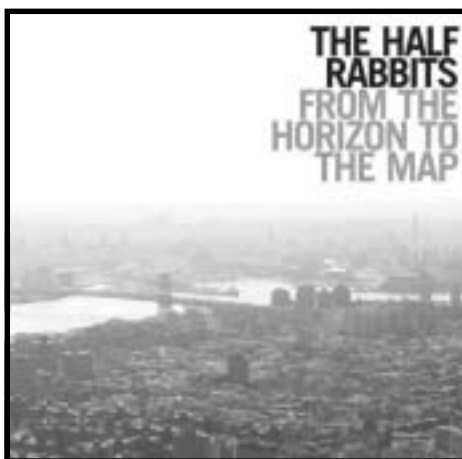
## THE HALF RABBITS

### **‘From The Horizon To The Map’**

*(Punk Elvis)*

With rock music’s tightening embrace of irony and detachment, earnest artiness was scooped into a corner. It re-emerged of course, everywhere from Muse to Borderville, and The Half Rabbits have never been a band to deliver a rhyming couplet with a knowing wink. When Michael Weatherburn delivers the melodramatic lines “Forged in the crucible of this city” and “This city is a wasteland” with the theatrical conviction of a Year 10 metaphysical poet, there’s an urge to stifle a giggle, but equally a feeling that a singer so buried within his own imagery shouldn’t be mocked so.

And that’s the conflict of emotions you constantly feel listening to The Half Rabbits’ debut album as they alternately burn and canter through gothic arthouse fizz and froth with occasional folky leanings. They’re best when they’re playing at full throttle, as on ‘Stay Positive’, the guitars dirtier, Michael’s thespian delivery less overpowering, although the



Bauhaus-like spook-pop of ‘In Vulnerability’ exhumes a lighter side to the band. Best of the lot is ‘Magnet Mountain’, with Michael showing he can properly spit the words out.

The album’s main fault, other than the fact that half the songs here have been released before in various forms, is an under-production that maybe doesn’t bring their full portentous theatricality to the fore, but amid the pomp and circumstance is a band whose convictions run deep.

*Ian Chesterton*

## STORNOWAY

### **‘I Saw You Blink’**

*(4AD)*

We’ve expended so much prose on Stornoway over the years we wonder if we’ve anything left to write about them that wouldn’t simply become a cliché. That they are the most exciting, musically ambitious band to emerge from Oxford in recent times is beyond doubt; just ask anyone who witnessed their astonishing show at the Sheldonian last year. So, while we ready ourselves for the release of their debut album next month, there’s just time to consider the (sort of) re-release of ‘I Saw You Blink’, one of the band’s older tracks, a warm, enveloping lesson in wistful reflection and airy romanticism. Stornoway’s greatest talent is in making songs of this quality seem like the easiest thing in the world to accomplish, when we know it’s a very rare skill indeed. And the fact that b-side ‘Gondwanaland’ is even better, a simply gorgeous acoustic lament where Brian Briggs’ rich, gentle voice holds sway amid uncluttered guitar, piano and cello, is even more incredible. And to think: they haven’t even got round to releasing ‘Coldharbour Road’ or ‘Fuel Up’ yet. That the best is yet to come from Stornoway fair gives us butterflies.

*Dale Kattack*

## FOALS

### **‘Spanish Sahara’**

*(Transgressive)*

Well, this is going to confound the bloody blazes out of fans and cynics alike. There’s always been a creative restlessness about Yannis Philippakis, right back to his days in Elizabeth and The Edmund Fitzgerald, and this new single is another expectation-defying curveball, a lush, spaced-out dreamscape of twinkling electronics and lost-in-the-wilderness vocals that reflect the song’s snow-bound video. It’s a tidal surge of a song, rising to a tantalising peak before dissipating, never quite breaking on the shoreline.

‘Spanish Sahara’ is a long way removed from most of the songs on ‘Antidotes’ and a world away from ‘Hummer’; there’s a definite echo of The Horrors’ ‘Sea Within A Sea’ in its undulating ambience, while moments from ‘In Rainbows’ flit around the edges. Vocally Yannis harnesses Robet Wyatt’s spectral delivery. It takes some getting used to because, even with a band like Foals, you like to think you know what you’re going to get next. But if ‘Total Life Together’ is as difficult to second guess, it’ll be an album well worth the wait.

*Dale Kattack*

## PHANTOM THEORY / GUNNING FOR TAMAR

### **‘Split EP’**

*(A Mother Python)*

There’s always a risk with split EPs like this that there’ll be an unequal partnership, one band eclipsing the other (Fell City Girl’s team-up with Latitude Blue a few years back being a case in point). It’s something we’re keenly aware of here with Phantom Theory being big favourites of ours while in their previous incarnation as Rise East, Strike West, Gunning For Tamar put out a disappointingly unfocussed CD late last year. Such fears are quickly allayed.

Phantom Theory have rapidly developed their sound, from their early hardcore-cum-classic-rock riffage, they’ve mastered a combination of solidity and spindly aggression, big, greasy bass rumble and chugging guitar fed through a post-punk filter and on ‘Trancedog’ ending up a staccato sludge-fest, like Billy Idol fronting a stoner metal tribute to Gang Of Four, while on ‘Playground’ they sound more like Yourcodenameis:milo getting mugged by Free. Great stuff.

Gunning For Tamar are a more considered proposition altogether: spangled, slow-mo post-hardcore dinking but given an added kick by singer Joe Wallis’ strong, emotive voice and a keener sense of building dynamics than they previously displayed. It takes more effort to get caught up in it than Phantom Theory, but the rewards are just as rich. There is a feeling though, on ‘The Organs. The Senses. The Muscles. The Memories’ that they’d be better to finish on a fireball of unrestrained noise rather than fizzle out as they do, but the creeping menace of ‘Norse Blood’ shows off a keen grasp of atmospheric control and reveals a bigger musical stick with which to bludgeon you.

*Ian Chesterton*



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## CABARET RAT

### 'Walking With Sharks

(CAB)

Born and raised in Blackpool, now living in Banbury, one-man-band Cabaret Rat should know all about the less salubrious side of life and here he puts it all to music, a lo-fi smash-up of garage-punk, industrial grind, electro-pop and profanity that at its best (the opening 'Slice'n'Dice') sounds like Ministry deconstructing Terrorvision's 'Tequila', industrial chug'n'churn cut through with bizarre jollity by way of the exuberant female backing vocals, but at its least effective ('Next To You, Forever') is a clunky, ungainly Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine pastiche without the bludgeoning satire.

Throughout the six-song mini-album Cabaret Rat (aka the improbably-named Matt Prosac) keeps it

cheap and cheerful, or, if not cheerful, then angry, disgusted and jaded, sampling Bill Clinton denying sexual impropriety as he wanders the gutters and byways of Shitsville-by-the-Sea. Sometimes the clattering drum machine and limited production feels like it needs to kick harder, but at others it's this rudimentary construction that adds his songs the slightly seedy edge they need. Given that it's just Matt, a guitar and his little box of electronic tricks, it's a well-formed racket and you feel his basic set up could work in his favour if he's prepared to cram it all in the back of an old mini and play every dive on the UK gig circuit for the price of a bag of chips and two cans of warm lager. That in itself would doubtless add more fuel to his ire

*Ian Chesterton*

## D GWALIA

### 'In Puget Sound'

(Own Label)

Once in a blue moon a CD from a local act we've never heard of will drop through the letterbox and knock us sideways. In fairness the enigmatically-named D Gwalia is reasonably new to Oxford, originally hailing from Wales, but this debut album is utterly captivating, the sort of homespun artistry that makes us wonder why more acts can't do something a bit more, y'know, *special*.

There's a pall of gloom that hangs over 'In Puget Sound' that intensifies every sparsely-placed note, every sombre vocal incantation. It's not an album to party to, more an album to bury

loved ones to. It's almost Gregorian in its hushed portent, an indirect descendant of This Mortal Coil, particular in its dark mix of viola and cello and D's rich, resonant baritone, which reminds us of TMC's Dominic Appleton. Occasionally, wraith-like female backing vocals drift in and dissipate and there's a delicate touch to everything here, as if not a single note of a single instrument can be wasted.

Over thirteen tracks and forty-five minutes D maintains an unerring air of bleak, haunted melancholy that turns these simply-arranged pieces into something far grander. That it's all so unrelentingly downbeat is its strength, not a weakness. You're hypnotised from the off and only returned to the real world when the album finishes and you realise it's still daylight outside.

Wonderful stuff, a real discovery. Let's hope D Gwalia is Oxford's to keep.

*Dale Kattack*



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# GIG GUIDE

## THURSDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**PORT MAYHEM: The Bullingdon** – April Fools Day special for the music and cabaret club night, tonight featuring purveyors of fast'n'dirty swing Top Shelf Jazz, plus ukulele player and tap dancer Josephine Shaker, punk poet Dalai Larkin, plus swing'n'bass from DJ Mike Rack and Oxford Circus School.

**NITKOWSKI + SILENT FRONT + PNEU + SHIELD YOUR EYES: The Cellar** – Great four-band bill at tonight's Pure Concentrated Evil club, with London's dynamic math- and post-rock instrumentalists Nitkowski alongside angular McLusky-style hardcore types Silent Front, industrial noise-rockers Pneu and frenetic Fugazi and Blood Brothers-influenced post-hardcore types Shield Your Eyes.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford**

*Friday 9<sup>th</sup>*

## CHAPEL CLUB / SCHOLARS:

### The Jericho Tavern

After a debut single at the end of last year, 'Surfacing', that seemed to be little more than a grunged-up take on 1930s standard 'Dream A Little Dream Of Me', London's Chapel Club are now finding their own voice with the excellent follow-up, 'O Maybe I', a big wash of dark, epic guitars, impassioned baritone and wry lyrics that brings to mind Morrissey fronting Editors in some parallel universe. Frontman Lewis Bowman is a commanding singer with a literate way with words, inspired by Ted Hughes and Ernest Hemingway, while around him the band build a wall of noise that variously borrows from My Bloody Valentine, Swervedriver and particularly great lost 80s indie types Easterhouse. After that underwhelming opening salvo they're now attracting a groundswell of press and radio attention and tonight's show is part of their first ever headline tour. Great local support from Scholars, who rank alongside the most promising new bands emerging in Oxfordshire at the moment, coming in somewhere between Editors, Stellarstarr\* and Interpol.



## APRIL

**Community Centre** – Original and best acoustic open mic club, every week.

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

**LOST INNOCENCE + UNTIL WE BURN +**

**AGE OF MISRULE: The Hobgoblin,**

**Bicester** – Metal, hardcore and heavy rock night at the Hob's weekly live rock night.

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

– Weekly acoustic session hosted by Pete The Temp, Tamara Parsons-Baker and Huck.

**STEVE MORANO + BETHANY WEIMERS:**

**Café Coco Royal** – Acoustic night with Reading's folk and blues chap Steve Morano and ethereal local folk-pop singer Bethany Weimers.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: Copa, George Street**

**HOLY THURSDAY: The Cricketers Arms** – Special Brickworks reunion club night for all the DJs who played the venue between 2002-06, spinning a mix of soul, funk, reggae and r'n'b.

## FRIDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY: The Wheatsheaf** – It's a special birthday do for host Sue Smith at tonight's KK, with sets from Switch 60, Superloose and Horns of Plenty.

**PETE LAURIE: The Jericho Tavern** – Lachrymose blues, folk and gospel from the Welsh troubadour.

**WHOLE LOTTA DC: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to AC/DC.

**SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM'S GOOD**

**FRIDAY FISH FRY: The Cellar** – Live set from speakeasy jazz combo The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, plus classic ska, soul and funk from DJ Derek and Count Skylarkin.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon** – Classic soul, funk and r'n'b every Friday.

**TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern** – Punk, rock and indie tunes every Friday night.

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks** – Funk, Latin and Afrobeat every week.

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre** – Roots, dancehall and dub club night every week.

**BRANCH IMMERSION: The Duke's Cut**  
**THE GEES: The Port Mahon**

## SATURDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**CARNIVAL FUNDRAISER: James Street Tavern (1.30pm)** – Full day of live music and DJs in aid of Cowley Road Carnival, including sets from Alphabet Backwards, Huck and the

Handsome Fee, Pete the Temp, Jessie Grace and more.

**MC LARS: O2 Academy** – Return to town for the Shakespeare and Poe-quoting, Fugazi and Supergrass-sampling, emo and punk-inclined Californian rapper and nerdcore pioneer to coincide with his new 'Lars Attacks' album  
**SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + PICTUREHOUSE + GUNNING FOR TAMAR + SECRET RIVALS: The Wheatsheaf** – Synth-pop from Space Heroes, plus jerky post-punk pop from Picturehouse and atmospheric alt.rocking from Gunning For Tamar.

**ZEN PIGS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Rock covers.

**CABARET CLANDESTINE: East Oxford Community Centre** – Country bluegrass from Knights of Mentis, psychedelic pop from Anton Barbeau, plus Gerry Potter and host Pete the Temp.

**LAIMA BITE: The Ox, Abingdon** – Skittle Alley acoustic night featuring the return of superb gothic folkstress Laima Bite, plus more to be confirmed.

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy** – Weekly three-clubs-in-one night with indie and electro at Transformation; trashy pop, glam and 80s at Trashy and metal, punk, hardcore and alt.rock at Room 101.

**DANCE NIGHT: The Bullingdon**

**WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern** – Weekly funk, soul, disco, breaks and hip hop session.

**IZZI STONE + SIX BULLET CHAMBER + MOTHER CORONA: The Centurion, Bicester** – Classic heavy rock from Izzi Stone, plus metalcore and southern rock in the vein of Metallica and Clutch from Six Bullet Chamber.  
**BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar**

## SUNDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**VON BRAUN + EIGHT DIRTY PAGES + UNDERSMILE: The Wheatsheaf** – Cure and Radiohead-style alt.rocking from Von Braun, plus heavyweight grunge noise from Undersmile.

**AGENTS OF JANE + ANTON BARBEAU + CHRIS PADMORE: Malmaison** – Mellow, dreamy indie folk rock from Agents of Jane at the Mal's semi-acoustic session. Psychedelic folk-pop chap Anton supports.

**DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + VISIONS FALL + AS SEEN ON RADIO + GO GO BUFFALO + MIDNIGHT DRIVE + THE KEYZ: Fat Lil's, Witney** – First heat of Fat Lil's Battle of the Bands competition, with a slot on the main stage at Cornbury Festival up for grabs for the winners.

**TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE: Baby Simple** – Prog, glam and psychedelia club night.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Port Mahon**

## MONDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**ROB TOGNONI: The Bullingdon** – Driving blues-rock from the versatile Tasmanian guitarist, still going strong after 30 years on the road.

## TUESDAY 6<sup>th</sup>

**ROBOTS IN DISGUISE: O2 Academy** – Electro-punk *Mighty Boosh* regulars Sue Demin and Dee Plume head out on tour to promote new album 'Year 3000'.

**E 4 ECHO + LADY & THE LOST BOYS + POOKAGE HAYES: The Wheatsheaf** – Ramshackle acoustic pop from E 4 Echo, plus showy folk-pop from Lady and co. in support.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz club with IDST.

**CREATIVE TUESDAY: Café Tarifa** – Acoustic night with Motion In Colour's Adam Barnes, plus Portuguese singer-songwriter Pedro de Vasconcelos and Rob Beckinsale.

**NIGHTFLIGHT: The Cellar** – Jungle, reggae, dubstep and funk club.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Masons Arms, Headington Quarry**

## WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup>

**LAST DAYS OF LORCA + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART + IF ALL ELSE FAILS: The Wheatsheaf** – Jaggedly epic Muse-style rocking from Sussex's Last Days of Lorca, plus experimental improv rocking from Chambers of the Heart.

**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Open jam session with in-house band Four Phat Fingers.

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

## THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup>

**BRONTIDE + ELK: The Jericho Tavern** – Lightweight instrumental math-rocking in a Battles-with-riffs vein from Brontide.

**DOMES OF SILENCE + DESERT STORM + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS: The Cellar** – Monstrous, grizzled industrial rocking in the vein of Primal Scream and Nine Inch Nails from Domes of Silence, plus granite-heavy stoner metal from Desert Storm and epic instrumental metal from Death Valley Riders.

**DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD: The North Wall, Summertown** – Life-affirming 60s-styled sunshine popstrels return to Oxford after their recent support to Fionn Regan.

**RIOT HOUSE + AGE OF MISRULE + TRIDEM: The Bullingdon** – First heat of the Oxford Gigs Battle of the Bands.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**ALLEY RATS + RADIATING EYES + GO GO BUFFALO: The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Punk triple bill with local thrash-punkers Alley Rats and Bedford's Radiating Eyes.

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon CRASH AND BURN: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Rock club night.

## FRIDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**ROLO TOMASSI + THRASH TALK + THROATS: O2 Academy** – Sheffield's raging math-core monsters return – *see main preview*

**PLAN B: O2 Academy** – London's rap balladeer and occasional actor Ben Drew continues his commercial ascent after the success of 2006's debut album, 'Who Needs Action When You've Got Words', documenting life's less pleasant side in a style somewhere between Eminem and Damien Rice. From sampling Radiohead and Nirvana he's moved more into an acoustic rock style and is set to support Noel Gallagher ahead of the release of his new album and film, 'The Defamation of Strickland Banks'

**CHAPEL CLUB + SCHOLARS: The Jericho Tavern** – Rising indie stars head out on their first headline tour – *see main preview*

**EMPTY VESSELS + SAMUEL ZASADA + THE NUMBER 9S: The Bullingdon** –

Moshka club night with big'n'bold bluesy hard rocking in the vein of Blue Cheer and Creedence Clearwater Revival from recent Nightshift Demo Of The Monthers Empty Vessels. Support from excellent alt.folk newcomers Samuel Zasada.

**DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + CAST OF THE CAPITAL: The Wheatsheaf** – Sharp-elbowed post-hardcore from Dial F.

**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + BRAINDOGS + YELLOW FEVER + DAVID SIMON: The Regal** – Authentic 1930s-style New Orleans speakeasy jazz from the very mighty Rabbit Foot.

**FRED HOT CHILI PEPPERS: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute band.

**BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar** – Latin, Afrobeat, Balkan, World and nu-jazz dance with live set from Ottawa's Souljazz Orchestra, mixing up raw 60s and 70s-style grooves with an eclectic blend of funk, soul, jazz and Afrobeat.

**THE ANIMALS: Kidlington FC** – Drummer John Steel brings the latest incarnation of the 60s rockers to Kidlington.

**WITTSTOCK FUNDRAISER: The Ox, Abingdon** – Fundraiser for the annual free festival, with Barry & The Beachcombers, Half Naked Music, Mark Barnes, Glenda Huish and Mark Sollis.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern**

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

## SATURDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**ULTRAVOX: The New Theatre** – The 80s electro-rock behemoths revisit their classic hits – *see main preview*

**DESERT STORM + IVY'S ITCH + ANNERO + MOTHER CORONA: The Wheatsheaf** – Brutal local stoner metallers Desert Storm bring the riffs – hand-made from girders and granite – while Ivy's Itch continue to explore the darker, more complex corners of their gothic hardcore mansion.

**THE BLACK HATS + THE LONG INSIDERS + BEAR IN THE AIR + EMPIRE SAFARI: The Jericho Tavern** – Excellent



*Friday 9<sup>th</sup>*

## ROLO TOMASSI / THRASH TALK / THROATS: O2 Academy

Grrraawwwgh!!! And, if you will, Grrraaaaaaaaggghh!!!! Ah yes, the sweet, sultry sound of Sheffield's sublime math-core monsters Rolo Tomassi, one of the greatest bands we've had the pleasure of witnessing in recent times. And my how they've grown. The first time we saw them they were cracking the walls at the Port Mahon; now they're headlining the Academy. In between they've brought the house down at Truck and wowed everyone lucky enough to catch their incendiary live show. Young and rather sweet to look at, Rolo Tomassi, for the uninitiated, are utterly ferocious. With musical nods to Mr Bungle, Dillinger Escape Plan and Babes In Toyland, theirs is a breakneck switchback ride through the complexities of angular math-rock and pure distilled hardcore rage, with a subtle electro-pop element that prevents the whole thing tipping into the abyss. Singer Eva Spence tends to make Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* sound like Judie Garland in *The Wizard Of Oz*, belching out guttural invective like a chain-smoking human volcano. The band release their second album, *Cosmology* this month. Support comes from California's hardcore thrash merchants Thrash Talk and UK grindcore types Throats.



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*Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>*

## ULTRAVOX:

### The New Theatre

To most people, Ultravox will always be associated with the early-80s new romantics and the decade-dominating electro-pomp, but really there were two distinct bands called Ultravox. The first, fronted by John Foxx, emerged out of punk and glam rock and created three albums of revolutionary synth-rock that inspired acts as diverse as Gary Numan and Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine. After being dropped by Island Records, Foxx departed and former-Rich Kids chap Midge Ure took over vocal duties and a whole new Ultravox was born. The band's commercial fortunes took flight as they moved increasingly towards the mainstream. Their first Ure-led album, 'Vienna', was a landmark in many ways, with its title track a huge worldwide hit and musically much of the band's early innovation remained, especially with Billy Currie's virtuoso keyboard and violin playing. From there Ultravox's music became more epic, even bloated at times, while the videos became more elaborate. Hits like 'The Thin Wall' and 'Dancing With Tears In My Eyes' cemented their popularity but after Live Aid in 1985 (jointly organised by Midge Ure with Bob Geldof) the frontman departed for a solo career. Last year saw Ure and Currie reunite with drummer Warren Cann and guitarist Chris Cross to play a set of classic hits and tonight's show will feature songs from 'Vienna', 'Rage In Eden' and 'Monument'.

moddish new wave rocking from The Black Hats, with support from Lee & Nancy-inspired surf popsters The Long Insiders.

**FUSED + MOLOTOV SEX BOMB + THE LONG WEEKEND:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Punk and alt.rock bands night.

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101:** O2 Academy

**KINO MACHINE:** The Bullingdon – Indie club night.

**WAX ON WAX OFF:** James Street Tavern  
**CEILIDH:** Kennington Village Hall – Folk dance with Chalktown.

**S.U.N + REVINANT DEAD + MOOCHER + CHRIS MARTIN + PAUL WOOD:** The Port Mahon

**JAWLESS:** The Cellar – Drum&bass.

## SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**BOWLING FOR SOUP ACOUSTIC:** O2 Academy – Unplugged set from Jaret and Erik.

**THE EPSTEIN:** The Bullingdon – Soulful, widescreen alt.country rocking from the local favourites, taking detours into folk and Tex-Mex-influenced roots music, climaxing the Oxfringe festival. The night also features the final of the New Music Awards Battle of the Bands competition.

**THE BLACK HATS + K-LACURA + SEROTONIN + CASTAWAY OYSTER + ELYSIUM WAITS + DEAD JERICHO:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Battle of the bands heat with moddish new wave rockers Black Hats and more.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY:** The Port Mahon

## MONDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**STORM WARNING:** The Bullingdon – Classic blues and blues-rock from guitarist Bob Moore and his band.

**BALMORHEA + NILS FRAHM + DUOTONE:** Holywell Music Room – Cinematic soundscapes inspired by Debussy and classic Americana from Texan outfit Balmorhea, plus Berlin-based contemporary classical composer Frahm and experimental cellist Barney Morse-Browne's Duotone project.

## TUESDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**TWENTY TWENTY:** O2 Academy – Wet'n'windy punk-pop of no discernible merit.

**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon – Funky, keyboard-led jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

**CREATIVE TUESDAY:** Café Tarifa – Cellist and guitarist Alice Ream plays the weekly acoustic session, along with Steve Morano.

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

## WEDNESDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**ROBYN HITCHCOCK:** O2 Academy – The surrealist pop cult hero returns to town, his last visit, back in 2007, featuring guest appearances from Michael Stipe and Mike Mills, while their REM bandmate Peter Buck continues to play as part of Hitchcock's Venus 3 band alongside Scott McGoughey and Bill Rieflin. From his days fronting The Soft Boys, through the sublime psych-rock of The Egyptians, Hitchcock's very English brand of whimsy has remained, leaking from the songs into his onstage banter where he's a renowned storyteller. Expect plenty of classics from his career as well as songs from his new 'Propeller Time' album.

**LAISH + KRISTIN McCLEMENT:** Baby Simple – Downbeat rootsy folk in the vein of Smog and Will Oldham from Brighton's Laish, with support from hushed and haunted folk singer, guitarist and pianist Kristin McClement.  
**STRANGE BOYS:** The Bullingdon – Garage rock, punk and r'n'b somewhere between early Rolling Stones and Nuggets from the Austin, Texas outfit, fresh from supporting Julian Casablancas on tour in the States.

**MARK CROZER + LAVINGTON BOUND:** Café Tarifa – Solo set from International Jetsetters and Jesus & Mary Chain guitarist Mark Crozer, plus Swindon folk band Lavington Bound.

## THURSDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**TEQUILA ROSE + K-LACURA + THIN**

**GREEN CANDLES:** The Bullingdon – Oxford Gigs Battle of the Bands.

**MIMI SOYA:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Brighton-based power-poppers.

**STRIPE WHITES + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE:** The Cellar – Tribute to The White Stripes, plus Huck and co. play tribute to Nick Cave and The Birthday Party.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre

**CARAVAN OF WHORES + BEING JO**

**FRANCIS:** The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Heavyweight stoner metal and bluesy southern rocking from Caravan of Whores.

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM:** Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** James Street Tavern

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

*Friday 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>*

## OXFORD FOLK

### FESTIVAL: Oxford

### Town Hall & more

The seventh Oxford Folk Festival finds the annual event in rude health, still managing to attract a wide range of English and world acts to town, the live shows for the most part taking place in Oxford Town Hall but with gigs, ceilidhs, workshops, morris dancers and buskers spread across town and the Castle complex. Friday night is topped by Spiers and Boden's irrepressible big band Bellowhead (*pictured*), who have won so many folk awards now they probably need a new mantelpiece. Joining them are melodeon and hammer dulcimer trad folk duo MacLaine Colstar and Saul Rose and local psych-folk favourites Telling The Bees.

Saturday sees top billing go to emotive Irish songstress Cara Dillon, with a supporting cast including 2009 BBC Folk Award Best Live Band winners The Demon Barber Roadshow; Young Folk Performer winner Megan Heward and French-based Balkan folk act Torivaki.

The final day of the festival finds traditional Polish folk-dance collective The Warsaw Village Band closing proceedings and they're joined by earthy English singer Chris Wood and celtic-tinged folksters Jez Lowe and the Bad Pennies. There's plenty more besides all these acts; full line-up and ticket details are online at [www.oxfordfolkfestival.com](http://www.oxfordfolkfestival.com).



## FRIDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – First night of the annual folk festival – *see main preview*

**JOSHUA RADIN: O2 Academy** – Soulful acoustic roots rocking from the Ohio singer-songwriter who has toured with KT Tunstall and Tori Amos.

**THE WONDERSTUFF: O2 Academy** – Miles Hunt reconvenes some of his old band for a tour dedicated to the band's 1989 second album 'Hup', following on from their previous 'Eight Legged Groove Machine' revival.

**INVISIBLE VEGAS + NO BUTTONS TO PUSH + INVENTIONS OF JERRY DARGE: The Wheatsheaf** – Old-fashioned roadhouse rock and blues from Invisible Vegas.

**ESSENTIAL JOURNEY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to Journey.

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

**E 4 ECHO + DLUGOKECKI: The Port Mahon**

**THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Chester Arms**

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

**TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern**

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

**CEILIDH: Newman Rooms, St. Aldates** – Folk dance with Tiggerz, mixing dance samples and beats into their trad folk sound.

## SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – First full day of the annual folk festival – *see main preview*

**THE HALF RABBITS + THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + DEAD JERICHOES + NIGHT PORTRAITS: O2 Academy** – Album launch gig for local goth-pop faves The Half Rabbits, with support from this month's Nightshift cover stars The Rock Of Travolta, moddish new wave starlets Dead Jerichos and thrash-pop noisemakers Night Portraits.

**SAMUEL ZASADA: The Wheatsheaf** – Excellent new alt.folk and country gothic rock.

**ICE, SEA, DEAD PEOPLE + VIXENS: The Cellar** – Vacuous Pop night with London's angular punk noise trio, plus local post-punkers Vixens.

**SIMPLE: The Bullingdon** – House, electro, dubstep and more with Jayou plus residents. **TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy**

**NATIONAL RECORD STORE DAY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Celebration of independent record stores across the country with Rapture hosting a night of bands and DJs.

**CEILIDH: Newman Rooms, St. Aldates** – Folk dance with Jazz, blues and folk act Steamchicken.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion, Witney**

**WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern**  
**COMRADE + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS: The Port Mahon** – Esoteric prog-core from Comrade, plus expansive instrumental metal from DVR.

## SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**OXFORD FOLK FESTIVAL: Oxford Town Hall** – Final day of the annual folk festival – *see main preview*

**LOU REED'S METAL MACHINE MUSIC: O2 Academy** – The former-Velvets man goes improv crazy – *see main preview*

**SHALAMAR: The New Theatre** – The bodypopping early-80s soul and disco hitmakers reunite for a run through old faves like 'A Night To Remember' and 'There It Is'.

**THE UNION: O2 Academy** – New hard rock band formed by Thunder guitarist Luke Morley and Winterville chap Peter Shoulder.

**OLLY WILLS + MOUNTAIN PARADE + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE +**

**DANNY CHIVERS: Malmaison** – The Mal's fortnightly semi-acoustic session tonight features Epstein frontman Olly Wills alongside cutesy folk-pop types The Mountain Parade, sombre alt.country chap Huck, plus spoken word stuff from Danny Chivers.

**SHATTERED DREAMS + IN OCEANS + MISTAKEN RETRIBUTION + CRACKER DUMMY + 14TEN + PLAYER 2: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Local punk and alt.rock bands night with promising punk-popsters Shattered Dreams.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Port Mahon**

## MONDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**THE LISA MILLS BAND: The Bullingdon** – The Mississippi singer and guitarist comes to the Famous Monday Blues with her country and gospel-orientated roots balladry, inspired by Bonnie Raitt and Brenda Lee.

**DUCK BAKER: The Phoenix Picturehouse** – The Phoenix plays host to the influential American finger-style guitarist, now resident in the UK, renowned for his wide-ranging style, taking in everything from blues, jazz and swing to Cajun, bluegrass and country.

**BEETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon** – Live bands and jam session, including Branch Immersion.

## TUESDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

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

**CREATIVE TUESDAY: Café Tarifa** – Acoustic night with Castaway Oyster, Phousa and Scott Cooper.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: Masons Arms, Headington Quarry**

## WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**SAMUEL ZASADA + LES CLOCHARDS: Café Tarifa** – Different Light session with semi-acoustic sets from gothic country-folk starlets Samuel Zasada and Francophile café pop ensemble Les Clochars.

**SOIREE FOR THE BUSKERS: The Wheatsheaf**  
**ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney**

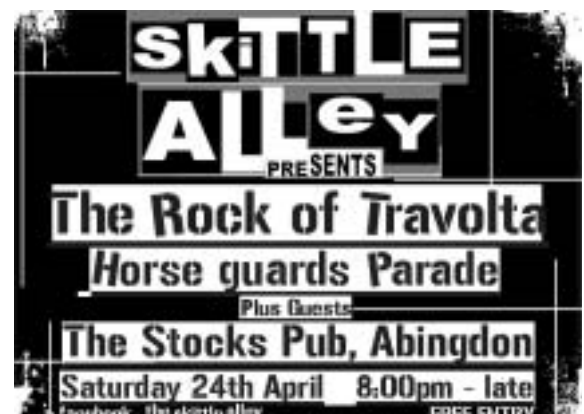
**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Open jam night.



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

## METAL MACHINE TRIO: O2 Academy

As frontman of The Velvet Underground, Lou Reed is responsible for arguably the greatest album ever made, the band's 1967 debut 'The Velvet Underground & Nico'. After that band's demise Reed's solo output was uneven, sometimes inspired, but in 1975 he released an album that tore up his reputation along with the rock'n'roll rulebook and has been the subject of frenzied discourse ever since. 'Metal Machine Music' has been considered a joke, a massive 'fuck you' to his record label and a pioneering piece of noise-rock that has inspired generations of experimental musicians since. Basically it was four sides of feedback, nothing more, nothing less. If nothing else it presaged the 1970s New York No Wave movement and as the album is re-released this month, Reed has assembled a band featuring himself, German composer and improviser Ulrich Krieger and Brooklyn-based electronic musician Sarth Calhoun to play a series of shows of music inspired by the spirit of 'Metal Machine Music'. The shows are billed as "Lou Reed without words or songs" and "A night of deep noise". The trio's 'The Creation Of The Universe' album gives an indication of the eclectic improvisation to expect, mixing in elements of electronica, jazz, neo-classical and noise-rock. Anyone going along hoping for a quick blast of 'Walk On The Wild Side' will be disappointed. Or perhaps pleasantly surprised. However atonal and confounding the music on offer, it's got to be better than Reed's last few 'proper' albums.





*Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>*

## EFTERKLANG:

### O2 Academy

A welcome return to Oxford for Copenhagen's experimental indie-electro-classical ensemble, even if that over-extended term only gives you a partial glimpse of their expansive and ambitious musical vision. Like Sigur Ros, Múm and fellow Danes Mew, Efterklang's music seems intended to capture the majestic landscapes of Scandinavia's bleaker outposts, full of glacial ambience and hushed, choral vocal arrangements that lend a ghostly atmosphere to tense, dramatic and highly emotive pieces of music. On CD they can be a fragile experience, but live Efterklang are a more robust proposition, all marching snares and exuberant brass and strings that embellish the evocative electronics. Even the band's name sounds like an exotically arcane instrument designed entirely to reflect the sound of glaciers and tundra. Their latest album, 'Magic Chairs' is a poppier, more restrained affair than their critically-acclaimed 'Parades', pitching them closer to Talk Talk, Philip Glass and even Elbow, but they remain a grandly-proportioned ensemble.

## THURSDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**EFTERKLANG + HEATHER WOODS BRODERICK:** O2 Academy – Musical glaciers and Tundra from the expansive Danes – *see main preview*

**FIXERS + BETABLOCKERS & THE BODYCLOCK:** The Cellar – Brian Wilson-inspired psychedelic West Coast harmony pop from Fixers, plus debut gig from Scarletts side-project Betablockers.

**HEADCOUNT + FREAKISHLY LONG MIRRORS + BEAVER FUEL:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Proper 'ard'n'eavy punk rock noise, inspired by Killing Joke, Therapy? and Adam & The Ants from the brilliantly belligerent Headcount, with suitably foulmouthed indie-punk from Beaver Fuel.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre

**IN THE ABSENCE OF LIGHT + TRAITOR BORN + HOPELESS POTENTIAL:** The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Double dose of death metal at the Hob tonight.

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM:** Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** James Street Tavern  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Half Moon

## FRIDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**THE SCARLETTS + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + VULTURES + NIGHT PORTRAITS:** The Wheatsheaf – Farewell gig for the local ska-punk favourites, cranking it out suitably fast and furious. Tightly-wound angular heavyweight post-hardcore from Dial F in support, alongside indie rockers Vultures and hardcore pop noisemakers Night Portraits.

**THE BEAT:** O2 Academy – Dave Wakeling takes his Two Tone revivalists back on the road, playing all the hits, from 'Mirror In The Bathroom' and 'Too Nice To Talk To', to 'Hands Off She's Mine'.

**DUB POLITICS:** O2 Academy – First birthday party special for the monthly dubstep club night, featuring Skism, Cotti B2B, Sukh Knight, Bar 9ft, Kyza, Chasing Shadows and Akira Kiteshi.

**TURNING POINT + GO GO BUFFALO + LAST DAYS OF THE SUN:** The Bullingdon – Battle of the Bands heat.

**ALPHABET BACKWARDS + TAPE THE RADIO + CRAYON:** The Jericho Tavern – Ebullient, anthemic synth-pop fun with local faves Alphabet Backwards, with support from London indie rockers Tape The Radio and folk-rockers Crayon.

**THE BRYAN ADAMS EXPERIENCE:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute band.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon  
**TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS:** James Street Tavern

**GET DOWN:** The Brickworks

**FOUNDATION REGGAE:** East Oxford Community Centre

**RIEGERFEST:** Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Live music from Empty Vessels, Colonel Mustard and Echo Boomer, plus cabaret and circus skills.

## SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE YARNS + LEVENSHULME BICYCLE ORCHESTRA + AGE OF MISRULE:** The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically mixed bag of styles at this month's GTI, consistently the most adventurous and conscientiously untrendy live club night in town, tonight playing host to local country-tinged indie janglers The Yarns and bluesy punk rockers Age Of Misrule. The real treat, though, is Levenshulme Bicycle Orchestra, an experimental collective playing synths, clarinet, bass and... well, bicycles. Lots of them. Creating beats and drones from the wheels and spokes and coming on like a modern day English Faust. Where else you gonna hear bikes being played this month, huh?

**THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + HORSEGUARDS PARADE:** The Stocks Bar, Abingdon – The symphonic instrumental rockers hit Abingdon – *see main interview feature*

**THE DELTA FREQUENCY + DESERT STORM + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN:** The Cellar – Album launch gig for electro-industrial rockers The Delta Frequency, with a suitably heavy supporting cast.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX:** The Bricklayers, Marston – Swampy blues-rock from the local vets.

## THE GULLIVERS + TRISTAN & THE TROUBADOURS + MESSAGE TO BEARS:

**The Port Mahon** – Excellent local triple bill of bands with flighty gothic pop from The Gullivers, Velvet Underground-inspired indie rock from Tristan and electro-classical soundscaping from Message To Bears.

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101:** O2 Academy

**DANCE NIGHT:** The Bullingdon

**ELECTEC:** Cricketers Arms – Techno and minimalism from Art Lagun and guests.

**ZEM + THESE DEAD ANIMALS + JUSTIN**

**GIBSON:** The Winchester, Crown Street

**WAX ON WAX OFF:** James Street Tavern

## SUNDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**ALPHABEAT:** O2 Academy – The Danish wonky pop crew head out on a headline tour having supported Lady Gaga in the States. The cheesy, cheery S Club-like pop band it's cool to like follow up their hit debut album 'This Is Alphabeat' with 'The Beat Is', kicking out kiddie-friendly chart fodder with a youthful

*Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>*

## THE PRIMITIVES:

### O2 Academy

Back in the mid-80s, inspired by the furious musical iconoclasm of The Jesus & Mary Chain, but also the pure pop of 60s girl groups and Phil Spector's wall of sound, a host of bands emerged from the indie scene, creating pop music that was the antithesis of the prevalent asinine chart sounds of the time. The Shop Assistants, The Flatmates, The Primitives et al. made sublime pop records that came wrapped in fuzz and energised by the freedom their forebears had shown them was theirs for the taking. The Primitives' debut single, 'Thru The Flowers' was a cathartic headrush of bounteous guitar noise and sugar-sweet female vocals, courtesy of singer Tracy Tracy. Morrissey quickly proclaimed them as his favourite band on the planet. After a succession of brilliant singles on Lazy Records they released their debut album, 'Lovely', which went Top 10 while its lead track, 'Crash' provided the band with a Top 5 single. The Primitives eventually fizzled out in the early-90s and bassist and co-songwriter Steve Dullaghan died last year, but the band have now reconvened and are recording an album of covers by obscure girl bands and female singers. Although considered little more than a footnote in musical history, The Primitives are a reminder of indie music's golden age and for fans of pure pop thrills, this reunion is unmissable.





zest it's difficult to resist, and unlike their mainstream pop counterparts they earned their dues on the pub circuit before hitting the big time.

**BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Open blues jam.

**ACOUSTIC SESSION: Eurobar** – With Sue Smith and Phil Freizinger.

**REGGAE REGGAE SUNDAY: The Port Mahon**

## MONDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**WAMMAJAMMA: The Bullingdon** – Reunion tour for the rocking blues outfit fronted by saxophonist Nick Parkes.

**UNKNOWN PLEASURES: O2**

**Academy** – Spoken word night with Joy Division and New Order chappie Peter Hook, talking about his time with those bands, Factory Records and the Hacienda, plus legendary drug-dealer-turned-raconteur Howard Marks recounting tales from his eventful life.

## TUESDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**THE PRIMITIVES: O2 Academy** – The 80s indie stars reunite – *see main preview*  
**JOHN COOPER CLARKE + FRANK SIDEBOTTOM: O2 Academy** – The North West's twin titans of poetic wit join forces with Mancunian punk poet legend JCC continuing to explore the gutter and the sky in his undiminished sardonic style, the godfather of slam poetry and a rhyming genius with few peers.

Timperley's big-headed would-be pop legend Frank Sidebottom continues to be a cult hero long after his late-80s peak of infamy. From songs and poems to lectures and straight-up comedy, his relentlessly upbeat outlook on life is a joy to behold.

**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Live jazz from The Hugh Turner Band

**CREATIVE TUESDAY: Café Tarifa** – Acoustic night with Kate Gadsden, Nikki Loy and Steve Morano.

## WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**KINGSKIN + THE CRUSHING + SHILLING SHAKERS: The Wheatsheaf** – Funked-up grunge rocking from Kent's Kingskin, plus thrash-metal from The Crushing.

**ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney**

**DACOITS + VEDA PARK: Café Tarifa** – Different Light session with Faringdon's PJ Harvey-inspired rockers The Dacoits and folk-rockers Veda Park.

## THURSDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**MISTY'S BIG ADVENTURE + MOUNTAIN PARADE: The Jericho Tavern** – Return of Grandmaster Gareth's ebullient feelgood indie pop tribe, with local support from folk-pop ensemble Mountain Parade.

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

**E 4 ECHO + DIRTY VOICE + ANNERO: The Bullingdon** – Battle of the Bands heat.

**FITKIN: St. John's College Auditorium** – Oxford Contemporary Music presents 2009 British Composers Award winner Graham Fitkin, mixing elements of classical, jazz, rock and improv into his trademark hard-edged minimalism.

**THE QUIREBOYS: O2 Academy** – Spike Gray brings his veteran glam-metallers to town in support of recent 'Halfpenny Dancer' album.

**THE DELTA FREQUENCY: Fat Lil's, Witney** – High-octane electro-goth rocking in the vein of Nine Inch Nails and Marilyn Manson.

**FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND + YOU ALREADY KNOW: The Cellar** – Return to town for the instrumental classical-core instrumentalists, mixing up Explosions In The Sky and Chopin. Electro-heavy post-rockers From Light To Sound support.

**SPRING OFFENSIVE + SEROTONIN + RECLINERS: The Port Mahon** – Epic, intimate indie rocking from Spring Offensive, plus grungy rock noise from Serotonin.

**FLAMENCO GUITAR JAM: Café Tarifa**

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

## FRIDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**THE BLUETONES: O2 Academy** – Must be that time of year again.

**EMPIRE SAFARI + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART + PROSPEKT: The Bullingdon** – Battle of the Bands heat.

**LYREBIRDS: The Jericho Tavern** – Free gig from Brighton's Bowie and Doors-inspired indie rockers.

**MURRAY TORKILDSEN + REBEKAH DELGADO + NICK BREAKSPEAR:**

**The Port Mahon** – Former-Sweeney frontman and Otway Band guitarist Murray plays his traditional May Eve show, with support from Ciccone and Last Army frontwoman Rebekah and Black Hats chap Nick.

**LOS ALBERTOS + INFLATABLE BUDDHA: Baby Simple** – Ska-punk from Brighton's cult heroes Los Albertos, plus gypsy punk from Inflatable Buddha in support.

**BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon**

**TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern**

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks**  
**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

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Faith In Hate photo by Stuart Fowkes



## THE CLUB THAT CANNOT BE NAMED 10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

### The Wheatsheaf

They could have sold the Wheatsheaf out many times over for this celebration party, but tonight The Club That Cannot Be Named really are going back to their roots. Conceived by friends Alan Day and Dave Hale as an outlet for their favourite metal and hardcore bands of the day, including rising stars like Hundred Reasons and Lostprophets, the club rapidly grew and today the pair are part of one of the biggest gig promoting organisations in the world. Tonight,

though, it's all about those old local heroes, many of whom have reformed for the occasion and one of which is playing their final show.

**THE WALK OFF** sound as unrehearsed and unrefined as they did at the debut gig, but their synapse-bothering digital hardcore sets the scene for tonight's mayhem perfectly and they've still got the dancing bear. That costume must stink by now – even more so when he ends up drenched

in lager after provoking the evening's first moshpit.

Every band tonight looks a little older, a little more grizzled than last time we saw them and if a few people have forgotten a few lyrics over the years it really doesn't matter when, like **FAITH IN HATE**, they're grinding unrelentingly through their sludgy death-metal, a screeal and scrale of shredded guitars and bludgeoning blast beats. They're missing their old lead singer but you'd barely notice amid the chaos of the circle pit and what sounds like Napalm Death, Pantera and Slayer all colliding head-on with several juggernauts. And a tank.

**WINNEBAGO DEAL** are the only going-concern on the bill, but tonight they're playing a set of old songs. The duo's wild, wired Hicksville mix of Motorhead and Black Flag has never mellowed and flies out like shit off a shovel, perpetually high on speed and mania. In many ways they're Oxford's most uncompromising band – ten years together and they're still a stripped-down two-piece and have never come close to writing anything resembling a ballad. Garage rock at its most raw and primal.

**SEXTODECIMO** have long been one of our favourite local bands, capable of clearing a venue – even of confirmed metalheads – like no other. Tonight, they announce, is their farewell gig and characteristically they sound like the end of everything, their oblivion-core sounding like Carcass filtered through The Melvins and every minute of every track feeling like the climax to the last gig on earth. It ends in tribal carnage and a smashed guitar and we're gutted they're gone for good.

It says a lot about a gig when **SHOUTING MYKE** are light relief. The band that spawned A Silent Film, Shouting Myke were melodic, hard-edged emo before that genre was sucked dry by a trillion corporate-sponsored clones. Rob Stevenson forgets his words, the drummer breaks his kit and they claim it's just like the old days, shitty gear and all, but they rouse themselves for an anthemic finale and pass the test of time with something approaching flying colours.

Which just leaves **JOR** to mop up any survivors. "Fuck me, I'm too old for this shit" proclaims Ben Hollyer before proving he really isn't and as the pit opens up to swallow half the room their epic, grinding metalcore rages like the monster of old. As their set crashes and burns to an end, one reveller rushes across a floor covered in broken glass, his nose bleeding profusely from a misplaced headbutt, the joyous chaos and carnage of those old TCTCBN gigs revived for one night only.

*Dale Kattack*

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## PETER ANDRE

### O2 Academy

Tonight's gig comes at the end of a day when it's announced that the BBC are to axe 6Music, the only station consistently broadcasting new, innovative music. As such it's an even more depressing spectacle than it would otherwise be.

You can hear the screams of the crowd before you even get inside the venue. They scream at the unremarkable support act, GTL. They scream at every thump of the drumkit as the stage crew tune up. They scream when a small wardrobe is placed on the stage. They scream when the PVC-clad dancers take to the stage and when Peter finally emerges from (yeah, you guessed) the wardrobe, all hell breaks loose. Two songs in and we're screaming too, internally, at the horror of it all.

Putting aside the symbolism of Peter Andre emerging from a closet (or perhaps just escaping from the confines of a miserable marriage?), it's interesting to see him dressed all in white. He's The Good Guy, and no guessing who the baddie might be. He's an angel, albeit an angel who happily prostituted his kids to the gossip mags in return for money and a resurrected pop career that fizzled out a decade previously.

Anyway, the music – asinine, pumped-up r'n'b and several tons of soppy bollocks ballads so devoid of character or sincerity they make Boyzone sound like Leonard Cohen, performed replete with every boy-band cliché imaginable: imbecile-pleasing platitudes, loads of costume changes and dance routines that at least show some of the imagination the songs so abjectly lack.

“Pe'er! Pe'er!” chant the crowd with admirably harmonised glottlestops. Jesus, Field Music are playing upstairs and muggins here let some other bugger review it, while I'm stuck down here. I try and pretend I'm experiencing a cultural event, although a public hanging might have been more fun. And with better tunes.

Don't get me wrong, I love a bit of manufactured pop but Andre's voice is so thin he makes Craig David sound like Scott Walker and when he metaphorically takes a huge dump on Michael Jackson's 'Man In The Mirror' you don't know whether to cry or piss in a pint glass and lob it onstage. He announces one of his old number 1 hits but we don't recognise it. As far as number 1 hits go it's hardly 'Paint It Black' or 'Don't You Want Me'. Fucking hell, it's not even up there with Mr Blobby. By now Andre and his dancers are dressed all in red Devil costumes: you see, he's a complex character is Peter. His music's still shit, mind. Shit on stilts. Shit on stilts dressed in a £25 skinny-fit 'Team Andre' t-shirt.

So, 6Music dies; Peter Andre prospers. Did you watch *Survivors*? Nights like this, and the vacuous celebration of nonentity celebrity culture that allows them to happen, make you want to unleash a similar plague upon the world, starting with every fucker in this room. Instead, the future is set out before us: a pair of boots with Peter Andre and Katie Price's gurning mugs painted on their soles stamping on a human face. Forever.

**Ian Chesterton**

## SKA CUBANO / ORIGINAL RABBIT

### FOOT SPASM BAND

### O2 Academy

Oh what a night. Ska Cubano's now legendary Zodiac gigs back in 2005 mean anticipation for tonight is sky high, the gig has been switched to the main downstairs venue and it's a real party atmosphere.

Local favourites Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band are the perfect warm-up act. Dixieland, Bessie Smith and early Louis Armstrong influence their gritty 21<sup>st</sup> Century take on 1930s jazz, into which they mix their own original songs. Dressed in dark suits and trilbys, they're at ease on the big stage despite front man Stuart fighting a losing battle with a stubborn mic stand throughout the set. From the off the band connect with the crowd as Stuart growls his way through a set of classic numbers and originals like 'Peggy', all driven forward by the band's relentless rhythm. It's Bunny Eros' classy trumpet solos that stand out in what is a rollicking ensemble performance.

Many of Ska Cubano's members are veterans but are still at the top in generating energy and excitement. The

mambo rhythm has hips swaying and feet moving even before the horns come in on the ska beat. Natty Bo and Benny Billy take vocal turns throughout the night, Benny, the ex-boxer who Natty found busking in Santiago de Cuba a more laid back foil to Natty. His lyrical, melodious singing is at one with classic Cuban rumba, mambo and son. Natty is the lesser singer but with his trademark white suit he is a natural showman and magnetic front man who knows all about working up a crowd, all call and response chants and poses.

Ska Cubano, though, are much more than just a party band and everyone gets a chance to show their virtuosity with short solos before returning to the groove. Despite the solos and occasional surprises, like quoting from a Northumbria folk tune, they could be criticised for their music now being a little predictable. But that would be to completely miss the point. Ska Cubano in Oxford is a special brand of gig you can trust to deliver compulsory sweaty enjoyment.

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**11am-4pm**  
**ROCK-POP-DANCE-GOLDEN OLDIES-INDIE-SOUL-TECHNO-HIP-HOP-JAZZ-LATIN-REGGAE-DRUM&BASS-GARAGE—R&B-DISCO-1950s-2000s. Brand new back catalogue CDs £4 - £7**



## **THOMAS TRUAX / ERIC CHENAUX** **/ THE BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE /** **LUM COL CON PIX**

### **Holywell Music Room**

OFFshoot is the Oxford Folk Festival fringe. Well, in fringe terms Lum Col Con Pix make Phil Oakey look like Duncan Goodhew; we haven't the merest conception how they relate to folk music in any form, as they hover styli above record decks, using the natural warp of vinyl to create jagged loops. It's fascinating that the layered fragments are of a similar brief length, yet have such different sonic qualities, and the set feels intriguingly like battling through a blizzard of cracked Lego blocks.

Improv scamps The Braindead Collective play traditional and well known themes tonight and, the odd synth burr or hushed scuffle aside, sound like a slightly augmented pub song session – which is no bad thing, and the set is gorgeous, especially a plangent take on Mercury Rev's 'Holes', Chris "Harry Angel" Beard's delicate voice sounding like Art Garfunkel bounced to us from the surface of the moon.

Toronto's Eric Chenaux has a warm intimate voice and a neat lute-like guitar plucking technique, but he doesn't leave a huge impression. His songs are decent, but feel as though the salient points are all missing, like a half-sucked sweet. Pleasant? Definitely. Interesting? Let's just say, on the fringe.

Despite his famed mechanical instruments, like the product of dusty frontier cybernetics, it's easy to see a link between Thomas Truax and folk, his songs all have the easy narrative drive of Cash, and the downhome grotesquery of Waits. This is an intermittently successful show by his standards, but the mixture of eloquent storytelling and clunky cabaret wins out. He embodies folk as low-end showbiz, rather than heartfelt *cri de coeur*: Furry Lewis jamming at a medicine show, not Ewan MacColl rallying the workers. With his joco-futurist noise makers and his twists on rock and blues stylings, Truax is making the whole of the twentieth century into a carny freakshow: no wonder he made that David Lynch tribute album.

*David Murphy*

## **SAMUEL ZASADA** **Café Tarifa**

Samuel Zasada's CD has stayed pretty close to the Nightshift stereo since winning Demo of the Month last summer, unveiling new riches and subtleties with each listen – a genuine rarity for any acoustic act, let alone a local unsigned one.

Samuel Zasada is the musical alias of Whitney's David Ashbourne and friends. Recently they've started playing as a full electric band but tonight, as part of Café Tarifa's Creative Tuesdays acoustic sessions, there's just the three of them, David joined by acoustic guitarist Luci Flynn and electric bassist Thomas McKibbin, each perched on a low stool amid the bar's Moroccan rugs and sofas. From the first moment you can tell the trio are something special, their three voices interacting perfectly, often with unusual consequences, David a master of microphone technique and a powerful singer who recognises the importance of understatement. Often he allows Luci to take the vocal lead, his own voice reduced to a distant howl or hum, while the twin acoustic

guitars weave their way around each other, exposing a depth of song arrangement that is virtually unknown in the often arid world of acoustic folk-pop. 'Pursuit' thrums gently between Steeleye Span and Bon Iver, while the sturdier 'Losts and Founds' brings Thomas' bass more to the fore without ever submerging the acoustic subtleties of the tune and harmonies.

'I Want To Be' best showcases David's lyrical prowess, a succinct critique of a humdrum life and jaded outlook, but best of the lot is 'The Blade That You Hold', a spellbinding mix of 60s-styled acid folk and romantic gothic pop, breathlessly delivered with crushing delicacy. It's a reminder of how detached from emotional engagement too much acoustic music has become and a great example of how a band can be earnest without sounding mawkish. How all this translates into a full plugged-in band set up remains to be seen but tonight proves that Samuel Zasada are a band with talent and imagination to spare.

*Dale Kattack*

## **FRIGHTENED RABBIT / TRISTAN &** **THE TROUBADOURS**

### **O2 Academy**

Tristan And The Troubadours look as though they have been dumped under the spotlight, totally unaware. Whilst their psychedelic, surreal pop oozes panache, visually they lack flamboyance. Whilst frontman Ben Conway bounces around, the others seem lost in their own worlds, unaware that the rest of their bandmates even exist. Musically they're robust, 'Lamplight' filled with irresistible keyboard harmonies and guitar melodies while 'Reel To Reel' emphasises the prowess of drummer Richard Smith. In terms of sound, they delight at every turn but we can't help but long to yell "look lively lads!" until they stomp the same drive their music contains into their appearance.

On the other hand, while Frightened Rabbit look ready to rock, musically it's a different story. Despite rave reviews and the rapturous audience response we can't seem to help but wonder why. They open with a song which reminds us distinctly of Buffy Clyro, and then move rapidly into a

second which is not dissimilar to Logan. It would be nice to say this is simply due to singer Scott Hutchinson's thick Scottish accent but in reality we can't help but think they've realised the aforementioned bands have a winning formula and decided the secret to success is imitation.

There's a brief glimmer of hope when they start 'Swim Until You Can't See Land' but this soon spirals in the same direction as all the others, starting with a slow beat before climaxing in yet another song that can only be described blandly as mainstream rock. Lyrically they're emotive and captivating and their recorded material seems to add an element of differentiation with a downbeat folk vibe. Live however, it quickly becomes apparent that none of the songs can be differentiated from each other. Suffice to say, midway through the set, Frightened Rabbit successfully scare us away, before we get sucked into a depressive void of disillusionment.

*Lisa Ward*

## ERRORS / SO SO MODERN

### The Jericho Tavern

I hate the genre name 'electro-pop'. It sounds like a description of music that's lame, twee and ridiculous, but more often than not that isn't the case. It needs reinvention into something that correctly describes music that is often melodic, but which can also be driving, dark, brutal and able to bubble about your insides with odd frequencies. I like the music - generally - I just hate the name that's been attached. Tonight finds two outfits that have been pigeonholed as such, and broadly similar though they may be, each has its own traits and idiosyncracies that reflect very differently.

New Zealand-based So So Modern kick off their set most excitingly, with a building tone that hints at some properly strange experimental things might be about to happen. This is somewhat scotched by the transition into more traditional fare - hyper-repeated electronic arpeggios munged through a Kraftwerk filter, crossed with somewhat hackneyed wail/yelp-style vocals. And believe me, that description is more exciting than the sounds it covers can end up being. However this band prove more interesting than being happy to settle with simplicity, and drop in enough hints of oddness and invention to hold the

attention (one mid-set song does nothing but repeat an electronic mantra for around ten minutes - it's *outstanding*). I like it when a band takes a familiar and oft-copied framework and grafts on some new sonic architecture.

Glasgow's Errors continue the electro-pop theme of the evening - albeit in a format that they themselves describe as 'post-electro'. Another genre name, and perhaps one that's more fitting. But let's not get into that. Errors sound broadly similar to So So Modern (or vice versa - I'm not trying to stir up some kind of 'they came first' debate here) but they keep things tightly contained. In one way this provides definition and clarity - this is a band with a definite *sound* - but it also results in a limitation of experimentation. This isn't altogether a bad thing; Errors sound brilliant; they're perky, confident and bring a slice of Glaswegian neo-Optimo acid-house-gone-new-wave fun to the table. They begin to repeat themselves, though, and gradually it all turns into one long piece: subtly different shades of the same rhythm, instrumentation and sound struggling to find their way through a relentless good-time set of party music. Enjoyable enough, but with the rug pulled from under them somewhat by what had gone before.

*Simon Minter*

## FRANZ NICOLAY

### Café Tarifa

With his big beard, pale skin, waistcoat and accordion, Franz Nicolay is an imposing figure. He could be mistaken for a turn of the century Eastern European peasant.

However, when he opens his mouth to sing or to speak he is pure Brooklyn, New York.

After working with critical darlings The Hold Steady for a while, he's now gone solo. That's not to say his former band haven't made a mark on him; his songs on the acoustic guitar exist in the Springsteen-like furrows that the HS ploughed but likewise, there are some traditional, folksier elements. He plays a tango on his accordion at one point and whips out a banjo for a song or two, including a pretty little Americana cover at the end of the set.

The quality of his music does vary. Frustratingly, all his songs feel a little too compact: after two minutes (or less) they tend to just stop. His lyrics, though, threaten

to break free of his music, struggling for air amongst the brevity. His verbosity and 'look at me' stage manner indicates all this could be down to insecurity. This earnestness is not always irritating; it works best with his rather lovely plaintive ballads and he does have a good line in storytelling, especially as he turns the air unexpectedly blue with a story about an unusual circus act.

It's a good night spent in his company. It's also a promising start to the proposed cabaret nights Tarifa are planning on having as a mainstay: the support tonight is a real mix, from the good (an amp-lite incarnation of The Long Insiders) to the middling (the vocal caterwaul of Huck and the Handsome Fee) to the rather trying (dodgy performance poet Danny Chivers). Yet, the sheer variety and unusualness of the evening and set up means it's a winner.

*James Benefield*



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## **ANTLERS / MORNING PARADE / HUGO MANUEL**

### **O2 Academy**

Hugo Manuel, singer with experimental local folk-pop types Jonquil, tonight humps his coffin-sized, wire strewn, one man studio of gadgetry to the very lip of the

stage and juggles his wide ranging voice high into the lights along with arbitrary delays, Adhan-like cries and marimba beats, all dubbed-out and stretched. It's a slick, battling

performance, and as compelling as watching someone doing a thousand piece jigsaw at gunpoint. Morning Parade are normally the sort of band I'd rally a flaming

torch and pitchfork mob against; a patently industry- and radio-focussed package, as if a made-over Cooper Temple Clause had opted to become an off-the-peg sub-Killers outfit with all their shiny-shiny pump and drive, but none of the hooks. But maybe they've caught me on one of my live and let live nights when I've tired of railing against the soulless gunk emanating from the charted media. They are flashily tight, endlessly one fast pace and, augmented by a brilliant synth player, appeal to my love of trance, into which most of these songs will end up being remixed.

Brooklyn NY next to a band name has increasingly become a guild sticker of quality, and Antlers don't disappoint. Upgraded from the Jericho due to demand they immediately put the stone-faced Oxford crowd in a thrall with 'Two', a kinder-ditty, typical of their album 'Hospice', where the leitmotif is Peter Silberman's fixation with all things medical. Keyboardist Michael Lerner gradually floods the searing rhymes with progressive church organ, a spiritual bombast so unlike Athlete's 'Wires' NHS normality, you feel you're more in the hospital chapel praying for a supernatural, rather than scientific, saviour.

'Bear' takes a similar musically repetitive 'Tom's Diner'-like phrasing, a tale of a couple's pregnancy in New York city, but this time sounding as if Oxford's own Witches had added a bossanova chorus. The set's success is based on life's two bookends; of the childlike and the holy subtly circling, as one, round the traumatic years between, and ending in the warmest reception I can ever remember for a travelling band.

**Paul Carrera**

## **SPRING OFFENSIVE / OUR LOST INFANTRY / CAT MATADOR / SLEEPING PASSENGERS**

### **The Cellar**

An acoustic guitar, a child-sized keyboard, a djembe and a laptop could, in the right hands, be a magical combination, but Leamington's The Sleeping Passengers' brand of try-hard folkadelia isn't it. A clutch of unimaginative beats paired with a vocal dynamic that lacks any spark makes for a pretty rough set which, at times, feels more like a bedroom jam than a performance.

Cat Matador liven things up with a pinch of shoegaze-flavoured melodrama. They possess a strong vocalist who is neatly augmented by some well crafted delay-fuelled guitar and classy violin work. Unfortunately, a rhythm section that often feels like it's playing in a

different band steamrollers the whole thing, smashing through the subtlety that the songs demand. With the guitar and violin straining to be heard over the thundering drums and bass, you can't help but think that Cat Matador have a lot more to offer.

The Cellar is beginning to feel suitably hot and sweaty by the time Our Lost Infantry take to the stage; their spirited, if at times slightly predictable, synth-rock is broken up with neat tempo changes and some inventive keyboard weirdness that sets things up nicely for the headliner, the swiftly ascending Spring Offensive, a band with a shiny new mini-album to tout. There is a lot here to like: they're

incessantly catchy, with a dynamic frontman who's a tangle of fringe and limbs. They're all big choruses and handclaps, which are aided and abetted by a sizeable chunk of a suddenly frenzied audience.

Their folkier tendencies are hard to spot, and if anything the occasional strum of an acoustic feels tacked on in what is clearly a rock show. More soaring Britrock than folk-flecked Stornoway, then, and it's no bad thing – if anything you get the feeling this is a band that operates best at full volume.

In the end it's simply the fact that it's all from the heart with Spring Offensive, and that's what wins you over. They radiate a self-belief that is irresistible, safe in the knowledge that all the fuss they've been causing is more than justified.

**Rob Power**



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## THE DRUMS

### O2 Academy

She bangs the drums? Well, yes, but the truth is that just now EVERYONE's banging The Drums. It seems you can hardly open a music publication or browse a website without being told in unequivocally gushing terms how they're the brightest bright young things of 2010.

If you're anything like me, then this amount of fawning adulation surrounding a band always tends to stick in the craw, meaning that I'm automatically predisposed to stand back, fold my arms and challenge them to impress me. All rather unfair, you might argue, given that responsibility for all the hype doesn't lie with them – but responsibility for being good very definitely does.

Tonight, thankfully, they are.

Listening to The Drums is like tuning in to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as someone twiddles the dial, picking up frequencies from each decade – harmonic 50s doo-wop, effervescent 60s surf-rock, taut 70s NY punk, gloomy 80s Manc post-punk jangle, self-confident 90s indie. It's a dazzling post-modern bricolage of sounds and styles – though admittedly there's nothing much new except in the mildly audacious but successful splicing of such ostensibly disparate musical threads. And yet this isn't to suggest an excessively dense quality to their music, or a sense of it being weighted down by the baggage of history and lineage – on the contrary, there's both a breezy levity and a spaciousness to their sound.

Genius single 'Let's Go Surfing' I already knew and loved unconditionally, but I had significant



photo: Marc West

reservations about the rest of last year's debut mini-album/EP/call-it-what-you-will, 'Summertime': reservations which are, by and large, obliterated, 'Down By The Water' and 'Submarine' translating particularly well live.

And there's more to come this year, with encore-closer 'Forever' and new single 'Best Friend' both making an instant impression.

The truth is, though, that without focal point Jonathan Pierce The Drums would be far less engaging a prospect. Of the four streaks of piss on stage Pierce is the streakiest – but he's also a fantastic frontman with a great vocal range,

whipping the mic cable during 'Make You Mine', theatrically bowing and scraping through his between-song thank yous and generally dancing like Peter Crouch trying to do the robot in the style of Ian Curtis.

The Drums aren't, I suspect, a band with hidden depths, and my current lustful attraction may possibly turn out to be not much more than a one-night stand. But right now, even if you ignore all the vigorous tub-thumping going on on their behalf, it's not hard to see why everyone's dancing to their beat.

**Ben Woolhead**

## FIRST AID KIT

### The Jericho Tavern

We don't know whether to feel sorry for First Aid Kit or curse their lack of organisation. Two songs into tonight's set and the pair, Swedish sisters Johanna and Klara Soderberg, aged 19 and 16 respectively, have broken their guitar. Cue much faffing about and awkward attempts at a bit of banter. Gig resumed they break their second guitar. Tonight's show is rapidly descending into farce as they seem unable to mend either instrument or find a replacement. By the time they finally do find a substitute – after an appeal from the sound engineer to the support acts – many in the sold-out crowd have lost interest or left and the set has lost its momentum and overrun.

Which is a shame because when they do get their act together, as on the mesmerising 'Tangerine' or the warm, hypnotising 'Hard Believer', they show themselves up as quite superb singers with keen harmonising interaction. To be honest, it's often difficult to believe that the pair are either as young as they look, or even from Sweden. They sound like veteran bluegrass

singers from Kentucky or Mississippi, in the tradition of Alison Krauss or The Cox Family. They even speak with American accents. They're obviously in love with American folk music; their cover of Fleet Foxes' 'Tiger Mountain Peasant Song', which made them a Youtube sensation last year, is stark and quite magical, while at times their acrobatic vocal performance recall Joanna Newsom.

As with so many acoustic acts, First Aid Kit suffer from occasionally being drowned out by the incessant chatter of people who, having paid to get in, seem intent on ignoring the band, but when the sisters turn off their microphones for an *a cappella* 'You're Not Coming Home Tonight' every voice in the room is hushed in awe. If they could maintain such a spellbinding performance for the full set, and maybe employ the services of a decent guitar tech while they're about it, they'd soon escape the pub circuit and its pitfalls and would be playing the size of venues their very obvious talents deserve.

**Sue Foreman**

## FIONN REGAN / DANNY AND THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD

### The Jericho Tavern

Danny & The Champions Of The World gigs are always a real event. You never know quite who's going to be playing, and first impressions can suggest a certain carefree shambolicness, but the moment the music starts everyone is studied and focussed. The highly-acclaimed new album 'Streets Of Our Time' reunites the core lineup, including Truck's Bennett brothers, and is somewhat more sparse, understated and personal than its predecessor. Robin Bennett isn't playing on most of this tour but has made an exception for tonight, where we also have Romeo from The Magic Numbers with some subtle, thoughtful extra guitar. Starting with 'Henry The Van', the most poignant track from the LP, Danny George Wilson is a captivating performer, combining a highly personal storytelling approach with a sense of celebration that they've described as "the yesness". The new material sounds pleasingly distinct from the LP versions, without its abundance of pedal steel

guitar. 'These Days' remains their defining rallying call, though everyone here is already converted.

Fionn Regan looks uncannily like Mike Reid (the radio DJ not the actor) with a matching mop-top haircut and an occasional Beatles-like shake of the head. He's also touring a new album, 'Shadow Of An Empire', after his Mercury-nominated debut. Tonight he's backed by a few Champions, playing a strident set that mixes folk with a rockabilly edge and more than a touch of The Waterboys. His key strength is an inventive lyrical style heavy with poetic metaphors, such as "Ideas are like sparrows, they dart down the hall". Tonight's set may surprise those expecting delicate wistfulness but, just when the set looks in danger of lacking variety, he encores with a beautiful solo acoustic 'Be Good Or Be Gone', as perfectly-formed and concise a musical sentiment as you're likely to hear anywhere.

**Art Lagun**

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## DR SHOTOVER

### DANGER – High Expletives

Lou Reed? Sounds like something you do when you're constipated – a well-thumbed copy of *Horse and Hound*, perhaps, or (my own favourite) *Steam Fair Monthly*... Anyway, the old ex-toilet-trader himself is due at the Eau Too later this month. Now I am the FIRST to admit the brilliance of the Velvet Underground, but I am really not convinced that the world needs Lou's Metal Machine Trio droning away in a smug Art Rock kind of way – Art with a Capital F, what? I *certainly* don't need it. Personally I wouldn't go if you paid me... in fact, so strongly do I feel about it that I would rather be locked in Lee Smilex's vocal booth for three hours with that moustachioed c\*\*t who sings "Go Compare" on those vile TV adverts... Meanwhile, talking of TV, Lou Reed never even had the decency to cross-dress properly... it took our own dear "Queens from Queens" the New York Dolls to bring that particular strand of Big Apple decadence to (ahem) fruition. Where was I? Oh yes, about to order a pint of Pernod and a jewelled straw. You're paying, by the way. Oh YES you ARE, honey – I don't care if you WERE an extra in Lady Gaga's latest video, bee-yuch! [cries of "girls, GIRLS" from the East Indies Club bar]... Harumph! Sorry, old boy, can't tell you what happened there. Oh all right, never mind the jewelled straw... Jug with a handle, please. And a pickled egg. And a manly round of darts.

Next month: A nice game of Scrabble with Smilex.



John Cale – *The Academy in Peril*

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# INTRODUCING....

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

## FIXERS

### Who are they?

Modern day psychedelic surf pop quintet Fixers are Jack Goldstein (*piano, hand percussion*); Roo Bhasin (*guitar, synth, samplers and sleighbells*); Micheal Thompson (*drums and percussion*); Christopher Dawson (*guitar and sleighbells*) and Jason Warner (*bass and percussion*). On top of this everyone sings, in perfect harmony. The band took shape from a bunch of Jack's early bedroom demos in 2006, trying to create 'Smile'-esque pop with Jack's vocals multi-tracked and sprinkled in generous layers of echo. Jack, Dawson and Jason were collaborating on Fixers in early 2009 before recruiting Roo and Micheal. Booked to headline the Cellar's Xmas party they were presented with the challenge of trying to recreate Phil Spector's wall of sound onstage with just five people. Incredibly, it worked. The band have already been picked to play at this year's Oxford Punt in May.

### What do they sound like?

A gorgeous, summer salad of 60s West Coast psychedelia, spaced-out Americana and lysergic sunshine pop, all plentiful multi-part harmonies, sleighbells and handclaps. The sweet-natured bastard offspring of Brian Wilson and Ronnie Spector.

### What inspires them?

"Wolves howling. Suns and moons. Sleigh bells and castanets. The Wizard Of Speed & Time. Just discovering new music too. There are so many great new bands seeping out of the woodwork, like Nite Jewel, Moon And Moon, Beach House and Heavy Hawaii and with the speed at which music is obtainable these days, before you've had a chance to really grasp one great band you've found another."

### Career highlight so far:

"Purchasing a large white tambourine; we are looking forward to supporting Best Coast in May."

### And the lowlight:

"We had a drummer who quit a while ago. A drummer must be the hardest



member of a band to replace too because they really typify the level of musicianship within the band."

### Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"We haven't really seen many. We have friends who are in various bands but that's about as far as it goes."

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

"'Love You' by The Beach Boys. It was recorded in the late 70s when Brian Wilson was coaxed back to produce a few records. He essentially wrote and recorded the entire record himself with a few exceptions. It sounds like nothing that came before or since; it's just a phenomenally beautiful record with all the straight-up childlike innocence and all the underlying, unhinged sophistication that typifies Brian Wilson's genius."

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

"We will be headlining The Cellar on April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Expect heavy vocal harmonies and pop songs coated in reverb."

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

"Promoters. They are both our favourite and least favourite thing."

### You might love them if you love:

The Beach Boys, Brian Wilson, Beulah, Van Dyke Parks, Fleet Foxes.

### Hear them here:

[www.myspace.com/fixerstheband](http://www.myspace.com/fixerstheband)

## Whatever happened to... those heroes

## Holy Roman Empire

### WHO?

Revered in select local circles as a genuine Oxford cult band, Holy Roman Empire were Ste Fleming, Martin Jones and Emma Killick (generally referred to as Emma Empire at the time, mainly because she was known to hate it). Together they played a ragtag collection of guitars, synths, tambourine and a cymbal, augmented by the tinniest, trashiest drum machine on God's earth. Three friends who shared a house and a vision of lo-fi pop, their first gig was in 1995 at a Battle of the Bands at Westminster College where they were all studying Theology. They wanted to make sure there was at least one band on the bill who didn't play dreadful old blues covers. They lost. Championed by local promoter Mark Sargeant, they became regulars at his Kooler Club nights, which he ran at Oxford United Social Club and later at the Bullingdon.

### WHAT?

Cheap'n'cheerful lo-fi electro-indie pop that was for the most part heroically out of tune. Not that such trivialities mattered – Holy Roman Empire's exuberant, brassy DIY brand of pop was a joyous thing for all its string'n'blu-tak collapsability. Songs like 'My Life For Yours' were irresistible, sing-along anthems, while 'Benazir Bhutto' was a fantastic ode to the now-deceased Pakistani politician. Imagine a frantically ramshackle mash-up of Bis and Carter The Unstoppable Sex Machine playing a punk version of the theme tune to *Rupert The Bear*, with only a passing thought for the actual tune. Sound terrible? You might be right, but you'd also be utterly wrong.



### WHEN?

Formed in 1995, Holy Roman Empire earned their small but devoted following by supporting pretty much everyone who played at the Kooler and attracted enough love to release four singles on different labels: their self-released 'Glitterkissed'; 'Holy Water Baby' and 'Benazir Bhutto' on Tim (Oxford Folk Festival organiser) Healey's Luscious Peach label and 'Dante's Inferno' on Bluefire, which also released the Snakebite City compilations back in the day. Notable gig highlights included playing a special Oxford United show just before the team ran out to suffer their heaviest ever home defeat, and a gig at the Jericho Tavern where they spectacularly managed to stay in tune for the entire show. They also received a foul-mouthed review from Steven Wells in *NME*. They split in 2001 after Martin became a dad and couldn't commit to the band.

### WHY?

Why indeed. To most people, Holy Roman Empire were a musical mess, a tuneless racket or a cheap novelty. But to connoisseurs of lo-fi pop, they were passionate purveyors of simple, life-affirming electro joy. Who just couldn't sing in tune. Ste claims Holy Roman Empire introduced Radiohead to electronic music, for which he apologises, but claims beyond that they were more notorious than popular; more infamous than famous.

### WHERE?

Martin lives in Witney and is married with two kids and a dog. Emma is now Emma Yendell and lives in Swindon, married with two kids, but, as far as we know, no dog. Ste moved to Liverpool a few years ago and is training to be an RE teacher. He also has a new band, Le Emu Tavern, who are set to release their debut album anytime soon. Apparently some of his best friends are dogs.

### HOW?

A decent selection of tracks is available at [www.myspace.com/holyromanempirepop](http://www.myspace.com/holyromanempirepop). Ste hopes a compilation of the band's old songs might be made available at some point

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### GLASS ANIMALS

This was the last demo in the pile this month and we were just about to give up to be honest. Not just give up listening to demos, but give up breathing, such was the depressing nature of most of what we'd ploughed through previously. So you can thank or blame Glass Animals for our continued existence. A three-piece based in Jericho and Headington, theirs is a dark form of electronic psychedelia that occasionally touches bases with Liars and some of Tricky's more oblique moments. There are chants and drones, wispy, atmospheric electronics, wired, trashy guitar interruptions, ambient dubstep, overlapping vocals and a steely machine rock, all of which form a ghostly collage of shifting, not quite interlocking pieces. 'Golden Antlers' is amiable lysergic drifting, while 'Aureus' comes with weirdy bits that sound like the stuff Pink Floyd toyed with in the immediate aftermath of Syd Barrett's departure. It's all just weird and trippy enough to keep your attention throughout, but light enough to be allowed out during the day. They maybe need a little bit more focus at times but in a month when most of the competition makes us want to drink petrol Glass Animals are a welcome breath of fresh musical air.

### SANDRA MCKENZIE

Sandra is another honourable exemption from the vicious cull we plan to wreak upon the month's hapless demo perpetrators, which is no more than you'd expect from a woman whose vocals graced both CJ Bolland's 'Sugar Is Sweeter' and Goldbug's remake of 'Whole Lotta Love'. Sandra is possessed of an astonishingly powerful voice, equally bluesy and soulful, and combined as it is here with a discreetly squelchy electro-trance backing track comes over as a cross between Alison Moyet, and Grace Jones. And we can say with some confidence we've never heard the line "Burn this motherfucking motherfucker down" belted out so seductively. She may be a great singer but she sure ain't no lady, obviously.

### ADAM BARNES

Adam's Myspace suggests that his previous band, Motion In Colour, is no more and it's just him on his own now, which is no bad thing since it was generally his solo acoustic interludes that made that band's gigs all the more palatable. And so out goes the emo-lite emoting and in comes a more fragrant soulfulness, mixing in elements of Americana and celtic folk, which suit his voice far better. 'Come Undone' is the better of the two tracks here, light and airy in a Damien Rice vein and possessed of a simple, downbeat charm. 'Lighthouse' has a similar delicate plaintiveness about it but is at least twice as long as it needs to be, it all gets a bit over-egged and adenoidal and loses you well before then end. Adam might not be easily distinguishable from a whole swathe of other acoustic strummers but there's enough evidence here to suggest he's starting to fulfil some of the potential he's previously hinted at.

### STRANGE FOLK

Neither as strange nor as folky as we'd hoped they might be Strange Folk have one good song and a load of other stuff we feel would be better off being flushed down the nearest toilet. The good song is called 'Voices From The Lake', a strident, slightly stagy 60s-style folk-rock track somewhere between Jefferson Airplane and Sinead O'Connor. A bit more of that and they might be on to something but as it is most of the time Strange Folk sound like a band designed in a laboratory to soundtrack mobile phone adverts, billowing, saccharine Euro-rock fronted by Elaine Page by way of Lacuna Coil. Everywhere you look there's an unnecessary guitar solo ready to erupt, which is at least respite from the lethargic chug of overwrought pub rock numbers like 'On My Own'. 'Buried Me' promises something more with its tale of pagan sacrifice or somesuch but even here there's too much wailing and soloing to be bearable for long and we've bugged off to make more tea before the poor lass is even cold in the ground.

### UNKNOWN FLOW

We reviewed this lot about three years ago and while we remember admiring their technical ability we ended up begging for that half hour of our life back. For this, people, is prog rock of the old school. Prog



rock with lashings of swirling and widdling and elaborate fretplay and 17-minute-long songs constructed in three movements, possibly about six-dimensional broccoli-shaped beings who control our very destinies from their Atlantis hideaway when they're not breeding unicorns under the light of a black sun. Actually, we think the second song here – weighing in at an admirably succinct seven minutes – is about Rome or something but it's narrated in such a po-faced, pedestrian manner we're too busy giggling to really pay attention. It's not all bad of course, there are some great widescreen crescendos that dissolve into pockets of ponderous calm and they've even got a chime bar and it's all wonderfully elaborate and clever, but just when you're getting interested and think they're really going to go off on one they stop to contemplate a passing cloud formation or consider the ripples on the Black Lake of Gondor and we end up reaching for our treasured copy of Shit & Shine's 'Ladybird' – 45-minutes of unrelenting blitzkrieg noise without a single pause for breath. That's the way to do it.

## WICKHAM

Having been comprehensively demo dumped as recently as December Witney-based American one-man-band Wickham returns for more of the same, decrying our lack of feel for irony, although what irony there is to be found in a dirge so tuneless it makes the dying groans of a harpooned elephant seal sound like the chorus to Britney Spears' 'Toxic' escapes us. But anyway, joy upon joy upon joy unbounded, in a month where we believed a 17-minute prog-rock epic was the zenith of indulgence and arduous endurance, Wickham here robs us of another quarter of an hour of our rapidly diminishing time on earth with a single track (we hesitate to call it a song) called 'Doll' (at least in the title he makes a nod to brevity), which appears to be nothing more or less than a semi-musical mush of detuned piano falling down a concrete stairwell in slow motion while a half dead tramp mutters something incomprehensible from a distant corner. At its best – and we hate having to use the word best in the context of this – it sounds like an appallingly poor quality recording of a rough Dinosaur Jr demo written and performed by J Mascis while lying in a deep coma. And if that in any way shape or form makes it sound even vaguely interesting, we apologise for misleading you.

## NOBLE ROGUES

After the interminable dirge of the last few demos we initially welcome this unadulterated slab of bluesy garage rocking with open arms, a refreshing change from the misery of it all. But it's a horribly brief respite, a treacherous illusion created by a band with barely an ounce of soul or an original bone in their body. The rhymes are terrible, the vocals strangled, the chord structures clichéd and the whole thing sounds like Oasis with any semblance of a tune filleted and replaced with extra volume. It's Aerosmith with all the fun taken out, lumpen, laboured pub-rock stuck in a bog and crying for its mum like a hippo with laryngitis. It's all "My baby" this and "My Baby that" and "I can't find my baby". You know why you can't find your baby? Cos she done gone fucked off with the bass player from Stereo-fucking-phonics. She was that desperate for a break.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

### ILKER AKTAN

If there is one phrase in the English language that can have us running screaming from a room before any further information is proffered it's jazz-fusion. Has there ever been a more hatefully self-satisfied form of music? It's a genre seemingly invented for the sole purpose of giving technically-proficient, spiritually deceased musicians something to play where they can con themselves and their equally sheltered peers that they're somehow doing something relevant to what is nominally the modern age? It makes us think of all those college rock society members who eulogised Pat Metheny and Jaco Pastorius, or the sort of people who actually make an effort to go and sit in the drumming circle at Glastonbury, revelling in the "wonderfully ethnic vibe". Ilker Aktan is originally from Turkey and there are occasionally pleasing moments where he takes on board some of his home country's traditional music, along with some north African and middle-eastern influences. There's even a brief, encouraging glimpse of something resembling something psychedelic, but mostly it's just an endless jam session conducted by people who listened to Jimi Hendrix, tried to copy him and got it all horribly wrong. This is by no means the worst musical disaster in this month's demo pile but, y'know, jazz-fusion. Just fuck right off.

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

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



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