

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 185
December
2010

WINNEBAGO DEAL

Rocking all
over the world!



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December

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The best in UK, European and US blues. 8-12.

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13th **CHANTEL MCGREGOR BAND (UK)**

20th **FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES CHRISTMAS PARTY**
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to be announced

Every Tuesday

THE OXFORD JAZZ CLUB

Free live jazz plus DJs playing r'n'b, funk and soul until 2am

7th / 14th **THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET**

21st **THE HUGH TURNER BAND**

Thursdays

2nd **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC PRESENTS**

9th **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC PRESENTS**

16th **SKELETOR** presents **BLUDGER / TASTE MY EYES / ANNERO / AETHARA**

23rd **THE BULLY CHRISTMAS PARTY** – *live bands and DJs 8-1am. £5*

Every Friday

FUNKY FRIDAY

Funk, soul, boogie and R&B. 10.30pm-2.30am; £2.

Early Friday shows

10th **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC PRESENTS**

17th **DESERT STORM / UNDERSMILE / HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE / KOMRAD**

Includes entry to FUNKY FRIDAY afterwards

Saturdays

4th **SIMPLE** – house & techno. 10-4am

11th **SELECTA** – Drum'n'bass – 10-3am

18th **DUB POLITICS** – dubstep – 10-3am

31st **DUB POLITICS NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY** with **FUNTCase / DC BREAKS. 9-5am; £12**

Sunday

12th **PINDROP PERFORMANCE** presents **THE GRACEFUL SLICKS / WHITE NOISE SOUND / BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE**

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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Hello and welcome to the last Nightshift of 2010.

As we come to the end of 2010 it's worth reflecting on what is one of the most eventful years for local music I can remember. Because Oxford continues to have such a vibrant music scene it can be easy to overlook just how remarkable the past 12 months have been.

There have been some major successes for Oxford bands, notably **Foals**, whose second album, 'Total Life Forever', surpassed even their debut, and who continue to be a band by which others can be judged for innovation and songcraft. Also **Stornoway** have had an amazing year, finally breaking into the mainstream, hitting the Top 20 with their superb debut album, 'Beachcomber's Windowsill', and seemingly playing every festival in the land this past summer.

2010 was quite a year too for **Little Fish**, as they toured with Hole, Blondie, Placebo and Them Crooked Vultures, while releasing their debut album, finding their way into myriad movie soundtracks and onto the latest Rock Band game.

On the flipside we've bid farewell to two of Oxford's most inspirational bands this year. **Supergrass** called it a day after almost two decades together, years which brought them huge commercial success, a stack of awards and cemented their place not just in local musical history but as one of the great pop bands of recent times.

Youthmovies also bowed out, having done so much to alter the way many local bands make music and conduct their careers. The band's restlessly inventive style was a direct influence on Foals, among others, and their DIY ethic and singular vision has inspired a new generation of Oxford acts to go out and do things on their own terms.

In the wake of all these bands we have seen the emergence of so many excellent new bands in 2010.

Fixers, Dead Jerichos, Dial F For Frankenstein, Ute, Black Hats, Spring Offensive, Gunning For Tamar, Phantom Theory and **Charly Coombes & The New Breed** have all made their mark this year, joining more established stars in waiting like **The Epstein, Jonquil, Winchell Riots** and **A Silent Film**.

The emergence of the Blessing Force collective has equally thrown up a whole slew of highly promising new acts: from ex-Youthmovies frontman Andrew Mears' **Pet Moon**, and **Trophy Wife**, formed by former-Jonquil members, to **Chad Valley**, the solo dance project of Jonquil's Hugo Manuel. That everyone from *NME* to *The Guardian* has quickly latched on to the Blessing Force theme means Oxford music is being talked about excitedly in national circles to an extent it hasn't in years, and musicians who have been working away on the local scene for years are finally starting to get the wider appreciation they deserve.

This month's Nightshift is dedicated to the memory of Michelle Woods.

Records, CDs and DVD Fair

OXFORD TOWNHALL

SUNDAY 5th December
10am-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

Of course, it's one of Oxford's great strengths that it incorporates many different genres, sub-scenes and attitudes, from the burgeoning metal scene we celebrated last month, to a strong, diverse local folk scene. That each different facet of the local scene as a whole is able to co-exist so well, crossing over at different points, is testament to a sense of community that is a rarer thing than many might imagine. The official release next year of Jon Spira's **Anyone Can Play Guitar** film will hopefully expose that sense of community to a far wider audience.

With so much good music being made in Oxford this year, Nightshift's annual end of year Top 20 was even more fun, and more difficult to collate. So much so we ended up extending it to a Top 25 and still had to leave a few of our favourites out.

The battle for the Number 1 spot has never been so close, with only a couple of Nightshift contributors' votes separating the Top 3 places. In any other year any of those bands would have snatched the top spot.

On Christmas Day **BBC Oxford Introducing** will be broadcasting the Nightshift Top 25 in its entirety, so everyone can get to hear those acts we've been most excited about.

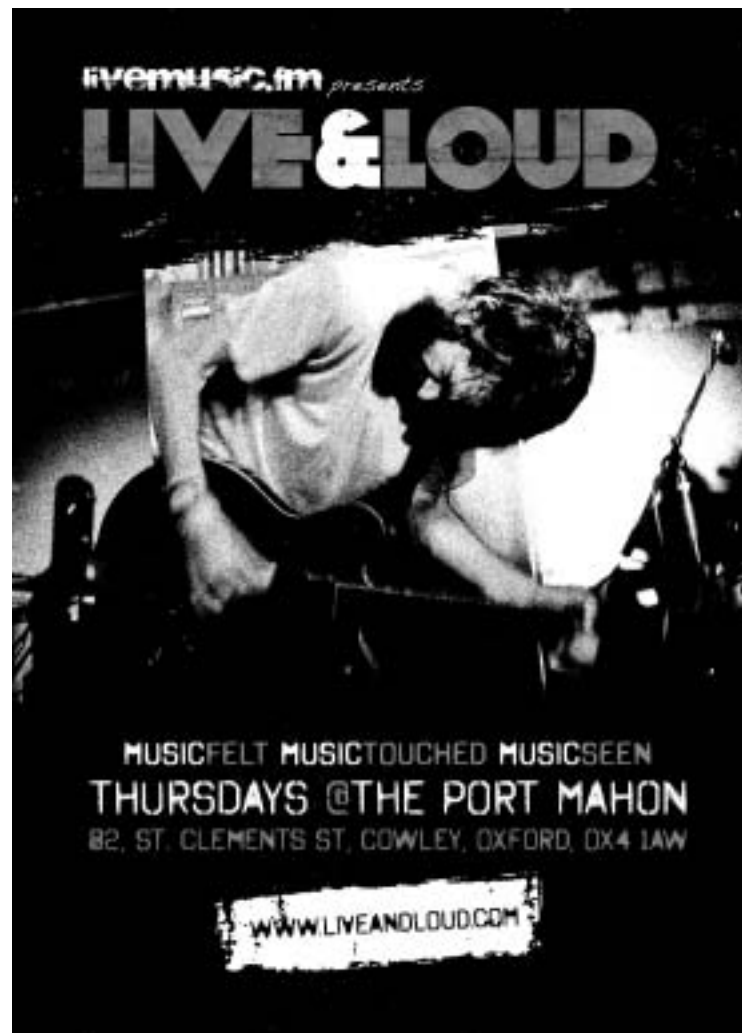
And there's something else to continue to be excited about – the fact Oxford has its own dedicated music show, one that has continued to establish itself after five years on air. It's thanks to the hard work of Tim Bearder and Dave Gilyeat that Introducing is there for everyone to enjoy and give unsigned local bands the chance of some airplay. Tim left the show earlier this year but Dave remains at the helm and long may it continue.

I could go on (and anyone who's talked to me about local music will know that I really do tend to go on), but let's just end 2010 by celebrating together all the great bands, venues, promoters and more that have made this year such a good one.

And of course, the whole thing can only continue to flourish because of the people who make the effort to go out to gigs and discover those great new bands. So, here's to you, the great Oxford gig-going public. Happy Christmas. Have a drink. Have another one.

Here's to more of the same next year.

Ronan Munro (*Editor*)



a quiet word with

Winnebago Deal



“IF IT COMES OUT FAST AND messed up that’s just how it comes out, it’s never really a strict adherence to anything. We’ve got a couple of slow ones in the back catalogue anyway; they may not be pretty but they are slow. ‘Career Suicide’, however, yeah, it’s pretty fucking fast and relentless and I’m happy about it.”

BEN PERRIER, THE SINGING, growling, screaming, guitar-shredding half of Winnebago Deal is reacting to Nightshift’s recent assertion that the duo are perhaps the most uncompromising band ever to come out of Oxford.

We suggested as much back in February when Winnebago Deal lined up alongside JOR, Sextodecimo, Faith In Hate and more at the Wheatshaf to celebrate the tenth anniversary of The Club That Cannot Be Named. Even amid that ferocious company Ben Perrier and Ben Thomas (the drum-abusing half of the band) stand out as singularly untainted by the vagaries of fashion or a craving to be successful at the expense of their creative souls.

Here is a band that, over the course of the past decade, has released four albums and myriad singles on various labels, each infused with the raw components of rock and roll, sticking hard and fast to the twin ideals of hard and fast. Songs that regularly lock in around the two-minute mark and come up reeking of whisky and gasoline and late-night brawls. People who ponder if the pair can do things differently are missing the point. Winnebago Deal are born to be wild, hairy, fast, dirty and damned loud.

WINNEBAGO DEAL’S reputation should be the envy of any local band, but the majority of the effusive praise heaped upon them comes from outside Oxford, from the dedicated rock press – *Kerrang!* and *Rock Sound* are avid fans – to respectable broadsheets, who can’t help falling for the onslaught of hardcore, punk, metal and garage rock that draws regular comparisons to Black Flag, Motorhead, Nirvana and Nebula.

Last month Winnebago Deal released their fourth album, ‘Career

Suicide’, the follow-up to 2006’s ‘Flight Of The Raven’. It’s a more stripped-down affair after the relative complexity of its predecessor, with 14 songs crammed into 30 frenetic minutes.

It’s not all noise with Winnebago Deal though; they haven’t got where they are or lasted this long without being able to crank out some serious tunes. Sad is the person who cannot bellow along to the chorus, “I don’t give a fuck about dying” like it’s the last party on earth.

THE FOUR-YEAR GAP SINCE ‘Flight Of The Raven’ can be partly put down to Ben and Ben’s adherence to staying on the road for lengthy periods of time, either supporting the likes of Motorhead and Blood Brothers, or playing with Nick Oliveri in his Mondo Generator guise. The twelve months before the release of the new album, though, were spent working in normal nine-to-five jobs to pay the bills, an experience that inspired ‘Career Suicide’.

When Nightshift meets up with Ben Perrier, we wonder how the idea of

day jobs sat with a band who seem to exist to be on the road.

“‘Career Suicide’ is by no means a concept album about work but definitely a record that amongst other things, does contain themes that relate to the rejection of responsibility and ‘real life’. It takes that punk rock route that celebrates your own mistakes because they are yours, rather than those that are forced upon you by constructs such as work. I’d say you tend to write about whatever happens to be going on in your life at that time and recently we haven’t been getting our pay cheques from playing music, so obviously that’s gonna mean it’s harder to live and breathe music full time. And that’s gonna show up in the music. I guess some people get older and begin thinking about settling down and maybe an acoustic guitar is involved...some people become even more belligerent and try and get closer to making that perfect punk rock album they’ve been chasing all these years. The latter makes more sense to me right now. It’s kind of like this too, doing what we do is ‘Career Suicide’ but I don’t care and so many people do and that becomes their motive.”

How do you feel about the new album and how do you feel it compares to ‘Flight Of the Raven’? “I’m happy with it. Well, as much as you can ever be happy with the last piece of work you have done. I always try to be thinking about the next thing. With ‘Flight Of The Raven’ we set out to make the darkest record we could. The new album feels a lot brighter and even though it’s very nihilistic the songs are short and fast and a lot more melodic. You could say, secretly we’ve always been a pop band. It’s definitely a return to the punk feel of our earlier work. I wouldn’t say that we haven’t moved on, more that we’ve returned to that initial energy and improved it.”

HAVING ALWAYS STRADDLED genres and never sat comfortably within any single one, Winnebago Deal’s sound is instantly recognisable, but they have distinct shades and colours within that sound. How, we wonder, have the pair’s influences changed lately to inspire the more stripped-down sounds of ‘Career Suicide’, with its more garage, even glam at times, rock, where Black Flag do battle with

Hanoi Rocks on songs like ‘Tokyo Rip’?

“Musically I’ve always listened to a whole range of stuff. Obviously I’m a huge fan of 80s US hardcore and that’s always something that I’ll always return to. Black Flag is amongst this. But I guess I was probably listening to more garage stuff at the time of writing a lot of the record, bands like Dead Moon, Roky Erickson and The Heartbreakers. I also returned to the Saints; they had the whole rock and roll and punk mixture going on. I guess that made me appreciate the high strings on my guitar. Bar chords and guitar solos. Who’d have thought it, eh? I’m into all kinds of other stuff too. For example I was listening to a lot of Townes Van Zandt when writing much of the record. It doesn’t necessarily translate directly in to the music but it certainly gets me in the mood to pick up my guitar. Probably because when I throw it on I want to lock the door, pull the curtains across, start drinking and stop talking to people. And that’s an environment congenial with creative activity. In fact, appreciation for anything that stimulates the brain creatively tends to inspire you to get your shit together and do something yourself, be it a book or film or whatever.”

‘CAREERSUICIDE’ IS RELEASED on Cargo imprint We Deliver The Guts, a German label. Over the years the Deal have always been on the look-out for a new home for their releases. Has it been difficult for them to find labels who can work the best for them?

“We’ve never had decent label representation over in Europe, despite having toured over there countless times. Hopefully now, with We Deliver The Guts, we do. The deal came about after being tipped off by a friend in another band that it could be worth looking into, and it was. I suppose it has always been somewhat hard to find the right label over the years. We don’t really fit in to any particular niche; we just do what we do. Even though we are this loud and fast uncompromising band, there’s always been this edge of universal appeal. That’s why we ended up working with all kinds of people, from Sony to Fierce Panda. I suppose generic punk or indie or metal has an easier time finding a home cuz it comes with a moniker. We don’t and that was probably our first mistake.”

WITHOUT THE SECURITY OF long-term label backing behind them, Winnebago Deal’s reputation and following has been built on constant gigging around the world. Does Ben feel they were born to that life?

“It’s definitely been a big part of

our lives and we were very young when we started doing it. It’s certainly something we enjoy and always will. I’d say we’ve been extremely lucky to take our music all over the world to all kinds of people. Wow, what a cliché. Not wanting to make some sickening Bono-esque statement about the value of the live show, but it’s true, our music translates best live so we’d be fools not to go with that. It’s a great adventure and I certainly found that addictive. Got to go to a whole bunch of weird places I’d never have gone to otherwise. It’s a great way to see the world and get paid for it.”

You spent some time touring in Australia; how was that?

“It was great. It’s such a big country with so few people that you end up playing six shows in two weeks. The rest of the time is spent taking in the clichés; large poisonous spiders, dead kangaroos on the roadside and of course plenty of beer and sun burn. Melbourne is a great place, with a lot going on. We played there on the day of the bush fires and it reached 47°C in the city during the afternoon. Had to take in that bad Tom Cruise movie about the assassination plot to kill Hitler just to cool down in the A/C. Later that night the cool change came and we hit the stage. I remember a fight breaking out in the crowd during our set. That’s life on the frontiers for you.”

Do you think that constant touring approach to being in a band is a dying art or is it something that just gets overlooked by the mainstream music press?

“There are still many folks out there who do go and do that and we’ve toured with some of them. I’m sure there are countless musicians all over the world driving for miles and miles to the next show as we speak. As for being overlooked by the mainstream music press, when has the mainstream music press ever commented on that kind of thing? They’re supposed to be the tastemakers, right? The guys pushing the stones. They’re not concerned about the troops on the front line. I am joking here. I’ve never really thought about it, I think bands will always tour hard regardless. Whether the touring aesthetic is appreciated by the press or not it will still go on. I do appreciate though that people try and earn their recognition by pretending to be hip with a bad hair cut and brogue shoes aimed at the cognoscenti of East London before even playing a show. However, that’s a whole story in itself.”

The list of bands you’ve toured with over the years is incredible; which have been the best or most eventful of those?

“Ask all the bands we’ve toured

with and they’ll all say ‘Winnebago Deal’, I’m sure. Ha! I guess the most hardcore tour we did was a month across Europe with the band High on Fire. It sticks in my mind because it was the lowest budget one we ever did. We were playing in places like Croatia and staying on people’s floors. A bad scene. We had to drive from Milan to Oxford in one day on two hours sleep. It was very punk. There’s been many like it. Playing every day, playing hard and not sleeping. A definite highlight was opening for Motorhead across Germany. We were in Mondo Generator at the time. That was a good one to tick off the list of things I should do before it gets too late. We had a lot of fun.”

A big part of that touring was with Mondo Generator, lead by notorious hellraiser Nick Oliveri. Is that something that’s still ongoing?

“Mondo Generator with us as the band kind of imploded, you could say, but it was a great time. Nick’s still doing it, touring and making records, etc and I hope it all goes well for him. It was very different from the ‘Deal. For a start we were playing another guy’s songs and it wasn’t our creation. However, we threw ourselves into it completely and I think it was a great thing to do musically. Having to think in different ways and having to learn about 30 songs in a couple of

practices is good for you. Over that period we spent a lot of time living out of hotel rooms in Los Angeles, waiting for Nick to get round to practising. It was worth it though, we did some great tours and got to make a record in Dave Grohl’s studio.”

What have you learned from the bands you’ve toured with?

“It’s always inspiring to play with good bands, who throw everything in to it. If you’re doing it every night then you end up playing better yourself. It’s part mutual respect and part seeing music as a competition: ‘wow, these guys are going off tonight, they’re great...let’s blow ‘em off the stage!’. I think that’s pretty healthy. Every time you go out and tour with another band, it’s a new bunch of people with a new dynamic. Good or bad it’s always interesting to see how it pans out.”

What is the single maddest thing that has happened to you on the road?

“Ah, road stories... Y’all have to wait. I don’t want to spoil the memoirs whenever they get published. ‘Call Me Irresponsible: The Story Of Winnebago Deal’. There won’t be a dry crotch in the house.”

‘Career Suicide’ is out now on We Deliver The Guts/Cargo. Visit www.winnebagodeal.com for gig dates and news.

THE WHEATSHEAF

Live Music December 2010

Thurs 2nd The Spin Jazz Club...

KATE WILLIAMS GROUP
Doors 8pm / £10 / £5 n.h.

Fri 3rd Klub Eastenders...

THE BLACK HATS
BILLY PURE + KEELING CURVE
Doors 8pm / £5

Sat 4th Busted In Smoke – Tribute to Matt Jones...

TRIPPY WICKED & THE COSMIC CHILDREN OF THE KNIGHT
DESERT STORM + TASTE MY EYES + PROSPEKT + MOTHER CORONA + GRIFTER + ANNERO
MERRICK + EYE FOR AN EYE + BASTARD OF THE SKIES + GROAN + UNDERSMILE
Doors 8pm / £5

Sun 5th The Spin Jazz Club...

GILAD ATZMON & THE ORIENT HOUSE ENSEMBLE
Doors 8pm / £10 / £5 n.h.

Wed 15th Mobylla Present...

THE RELATIONSHIPS
Doors 8pm / £5

Thurs 16th The Spin Jazz Club...

BIG COLORS BIG BAND
Doors 8pm / £10 / £5 n.h.

Fri 17th The Winter Warmers...

SPRING OFFENSIVE
THE WORKHOUSE + TIGER MENDOZA + A SCHOLAR & A PHYSICIAN + THE YARNS
Doors 7:45pm / £4.50

Sat 18th The Winter Warmers...

DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN
ALAMAKOTA + VOLKENFUNK + DEER CHICAGO + SECRET RIVALS
Doors 7:45pm / £4.50

Wed 22nd After British Lager Present...

THE MIGHTY REDOX
BROTHERS WELSH + UNKNOWN FLOW
Doors 8pm / £5

Every Monday...The Oxford Inns Comedy...Every Thursday...The Spin Jazz Club... www.spinjazz.com
Contact us @ mrlproductions@gmail.com or www.myspace.com/wheatsheaf_music
The Wheatsheaf, 329 High Street, Oxford, OX1 4DF (Tel 01865 721356)

TRACKS OF OUR YEAR

*There's some serious competition for the title, but 2010 will go down as one of the very best in Oxford's star-studded musical history. The sheer quality of bands coming through the local scene is breathtaking when you consider once again the size of the city. 2010 was **Foals**' year. It was also **Stornoway**'s year. And it was **Little Fish**'s year. All three bands surpassed themselves with albums and live performances that have made their reputations well beyond the confines of Oxford's city walls. Coming up behind them are a legion of bands inspired by their local heroes and well aware that the quality bar is set staggeringly high in Oxford. That so many of them are up to the task is something we continue to be immensely proud of. Here, as is traditional, is *Nightshift's* run-down of the year's best songs. Be proud; be inspired.*



1. LITTLE FISH 'Heroin Dance'

Little Fish are currently Oxford's best live band. Ironical, then, that this, the highlight of their debut album, 'Baffled & Beat', is a song that rarely if ever gets a live airing. It's a song that stands at odds to Little Fish's raw garage-rock and one that finds Julia Sophie, singer with few equals, and a deserving heir to Patti Smith's molten rock siren crown, keeping a tight rein on her molten tonsils. 'Heroin Dance' is a slow-burner, a lost, lonely lament for a love that cannot be. Up and up it rises on a rising tide of smouldering Hammond and Nez Greenaway's subtle-becoming-thunderous drumming, Julia's voice unfurling as the emotion overwhelms her. It should have been the lead single from the album but apparently radio stations won't entertain the word Heroin. Their loss. This is a stunning piece of pure pop music. Some things are worth getting addicted to.

2. FOALS 'Spanish Sahara'

Having made their name as prime purveyors of mutant post-punk disco pop, Foals' second album, 'Total Life Forever', managed the seemingly impossible task of bettering its predecessor, while revealing a more emotive, human face of the band. At the same time they explored the wide open spaces within their songs and this is the result, a stunning, glacial build up of musical tension that defies all expectations at its climax by simply washing away like the tide. Yannis' spectral vocal delivery

recalled Roberts Smith and Wyatt, while the icy ambience of the song carried echoes of The Horrors and Radiohead and the result was hypnotic and utterly entrancing. Here was really where Foals' star quality was cemented.

3. STORNOWAY 'Fuel Up'

Stornoway's debut album, 'Beachcomber's Window', was an unreserved triumph, one of those almost perfect collections of pure, bright-eyed pop songs that reminds you why you love music so much in

the first place. Many of its myriad highlights – 'Zorbing', 'On The Rocks' and 'The Coldharbour Road' – have already featured in our annual end of year chart but 'Fuel Up' shows that a gorgeous, romantic sense of longing runs through everything Stornoway do, like a seam of pure silver. 'Fuel Up' is a trip down memory lane told as a car journey, one where wistful nostalgia mixes with a sense of childlike wonder at the world. Beautiful.

4. THE EPSTEIN 'Held You Once'

Hopefully set to emulate kindred spirits Stornoway's success in 2011, The Epstein's nominally countrified form of roots rock is so wide in scope and vision it's positively cinematic, as proved yet again by this glorious tidal swell of a song, a slow-burning epic that Mike Scott would be proud to call his own. Olly Wills' voice and musical craftsmanship infuses every possible ounce of emotion into the song without ever tipping into histrionics.

5. FIXERS 'Amsterdam'

Displaying a musical ambition well beyond their status as a new band on the local scene, Fixers channelled the breezy, harmony-drenched 60s pop of The Beach Boys through Animal Collective's esoteric psychedelia via a spaced-out rave. 'Amsterdam' was Fixers' debut single, revealing a band that, while steeped in classic sounds, were prepared to take them any place their imagination fancied. Expect bigger and better things for them in 2011.

6. DEAD JERICHO'S 'She Says The Word'

Adhering to the maxim that perspiration is as important as inspiration, Drayton's Dead Jerichos embarked on what seemed like an unending series of gigs throughout 2010 that took them from the backrooms of each and every pub they could find, to the Underage Festival in Hyde Park, where they shared a stage with M.I.A. Ellie

Goulding and Tinie Tempah. They rocked The Punt, blew away the competition on Bob Harris' stage at Truck and wowed everyone with pithy mod-punk vignettes like this, a nimble declamation of domestic violence that sounded like The Cure funky to the max by Gang Of Four. The fact the trio are only just old enough to drink in the pubs they regular pack out makes their rise and rise all the more incredible.

7. THE WINCHELL RIOTS 'My Young Arms'

Seemingly incapable of recording any song that doesn't come enveloped in a pristine sense of perfection, The Winchell Riots' recent 'Red Square' EP was infused with the scope and attention to detail you'd expect from a band who'd already sold several million albums. Like their chief inspiration, Sigur Ros, The Winchell Riots' epic expanse, coupled with rich textures and infinite delicacy, leads to moments of pop music like these that sound so rarefied you wonder if they were written and recorded on the Moon.

8. BLACK HATS 'Just Fall'

Like Dead Jerichos, with whom they have shared many stages, Black Hats are a three-piece prone to concise, uptight stabs of new wave-inflected mod-rock. 'Just Fall', though, was the stand-out number from their consistently excellent 'Magnets' EP released at the start of the year, a more spacious rock anthem, guitar shapes nabbed from U2's 'Bullet The Blue Sky', bullish sky-touching melody filleted in part from Yourcodenameis:milo's 'Rapt.Dept', three-part power harmonies carrying the whole thing aloft like a trophy of war.

9. DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN 'Wes Vega'

Like Foals before them, Dial F found one of their songs soundtracking an episode of *Skins*, the irrepressibly poppy 'Wes Vega' which, while

nominally grunge in origin, and with a sleepy slacker edge to it, was irrepressibly poppy, dinking between sunshine chart pop fodder and sharp-elbowed post-punk. "I am the heir of fuck all," snipes frontman Gus Rogers before the whopping party harmonies carry the song away from such sorry thoughts. Joyously sweet stuff.

10. TROPHY WIFE 'Microlite'

Look beyond the Blessing Force hoo-ha and you quickly realise Trophy Wife have a clutch of fantastically fragile pop gems on their hands. This debut single on the painfully cool Moshi Moshi label was a glitchy, feather-light mix of guitar spangle and electronic beats that sounds like it's half awake in the morning sun. Former members of Jonquil, the trio's talent should never have been in doubt and Trophy Wife have the chops to justify the hype.

11. SPRING OFFENSIVE 'Every Coin'

They made a bit of a splash by releasing a 14-minute concept single about the grief cycle, but what Spring Offensive did best was snappier pop like this from their ace debut mini-album, 'Pull Us Apart', a snarling terrier of a song with a set of gnashers to fear but who liked nothing better than to roll over and let you tickle its tummy. Frontman Lucas Whitworth revealed himself as a versatile singer, while the band took inspiration from the likes of Jonquil and Youthmovies and made them fresh again.

12. UTE 'Stitch Up'

A band for whom the word eclectic might have been invented, a typical Ute gig was a pleasingly unpredictable journey through funereal acoustic pop, buoyant indie pop and skin-stripping rock noise. There's not many bands who'll find themselves compared to Stornoway, Radiohead and Queens of the Stone Age within a single song, but this stand-out take from their debut EP finds them masters of musical texture and dynamics, equally delicate and devilish exactly where it counts.

13. THE LONG INSIDERS 'Midnight Man'

A rattlin' and a rollin' down the old railroad track, armed with a bottle of bourbon and a trusty six-string, The Long Insiders pitch up somewhere at the end of the 1950s and introduce Elvis to the joys of Johnny Thunders at a surf party. It's dirty, lo-fi stuff that smells of cat gut and engine oil.

14. GUNNING FOR TAMAR 'The Organs. The Senses. The Muscles. The Memories'

Spangled, slo-mo post-hardcore dinking with a keen sense of dynamics and tension building, Gunning For Tamar have come on in leaps and bounds this year, while in Joe Wallis they have a singer with a strong, emotive voice. Little wonder this song, from a their split EP with Phantom Theory, ended up as an *NME* Breakthrough track of the week.

15. DESERT STORM 'Forked Tongues'

Stand-out track from the album of the same name, Desert Storm staked their claim to the local metal throne in monstrous fashion. Taking their sludgy stoner metal down to the Deep South for a gospel-blues conversion they here end up beating a preacher raw. And when he turns the other cheek? Well, they break his fucking jaw.

16. CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED 'Panic In Between The Sheets'

Finding his own voice after a spell working with brothers Gaz and Rob in Supergrass, Charly's brand of rock'n'soul was rich, rootsy and rough-hewn, pitched somewhere between The Stones, Little Feat and Squeeze, tempering its raw garage rock with a mellower, poppier piano-led edge best heard on this lead track from his new band's debut EP.

17. SAMUEL ZASADA 'Omit'

With a voice that is simultaneously intimate and grandiose, David Ashbourne defies the stereotype of acoustic songsmiths as dour social inadequates with an unhealthy fixation with Bob Dylan. His songs are slender, haunting and earthy but infused with an intense soulfulness. As a band Samuel Zasada are masters of the art of understatement, conjuring something majestic from sparse ingredients, as this highlight from their 'Neisen EP' amply demonstrated.

18. D GWALIA 'Orson Welles'

Welsh by birth but now very much an Oxfordian, Dylan Gwalia's low-key

debut album knocked us off our feet earlier this year with its ethereal gothic death-folk splendour. A pall of gloom hung over his debut album, 'In Puget Sound', with sparse, sombre songs like this sounding like an indirect descendant of This Mortal Coil at times. One for those bleak, haunted winter nights you spend alone with only strong red wine for company.

19. WINNEBAGO DEAL 'Tokyo Rip'

Continuing to adhere strictly to the twin rules of hard and fast, Winnebago Deal's third full album, 'Career Suicide', did occasionally find them seemingly intent on hanging out on Sunset Strip with Hanoi Rocks and Motley Crue, albeit waiting outside the Viper Room high on speed and whiskey, armed with a broken bottle and looking to take on all-comers while their compadres sipped fancy cocktails inside.

20. ALPHABET BACKWARDS 'Blink Of An Eye'

A band who could provoke the Easter Island statues into a hands-a-loft singalong, Alphabet Backwards once again made something intrinsically sad sound like a celebration, here documenting the loss of love with a wide-eyed ebullience that made it sound like a carefree celebration of Santa and kittens. The NHS should prescribe Alphabet Backwards CDs as a matter of course. How the world would mend.

21. EMPTY VESSELS 'Take A Hard Look'

While the local metal scene continues to blossom, Empty Vessels stole the show with this unadulterated slab of classic 70s rock, Hendrix, Led Zep and Blue Cheer fighting a monstrous psychedelic blues war over which Matt Greenham's simply huge voice boomed like a Norse god. In the very best sort of way, it sounded like the past 30 years of musical evolution never happened.

Last year...

1. STORNOWAY: 'THE COLDHARBOUR ROAD'. 2. Borderville: 'Flights'. 3. Kate Garrett: 'King of the Birds'. 4. Richard Walters: 'The Animal'. 5. Mephisto Grande: 'Sea Life Pt 2'. 6. Winchell Riots: 'Glasgow Space Flight'. 7. Alphabet Backwards: '80s Pop Video'. 8. Tristan & The Troubadours: 'This Is, To Be'. 9. Mr Shadow: 'R U Stoopid?'. 10. Desert Storm: 'Shadow Of An Eagle'. 11. The Scholars: 'Turbulence'. 12. Baby Gravy: 'Did It Again'. 13. Joe Allen Band: 'For You, My Love'. 14. From Light To Sound: 'Hearts & Electricity'. 15. Hearts In Pencil: 'Hannibal Ad Portas'. 16. Black Hats: 'Broken Bones'. 17. Dead Jerichos: 'Red Dance Floor'. 18. Hreda: 'Minnows'. 19. Spiral 25: 'Today's Future (Tomorrow's Past)'. 20. Dr Slaggleberry: 'Feed Me A Stray Cat'.

22. COLOURED 'Camelopardalis'

Not enough bands name their EPs after the Latin name for giraffes, but then not enough bands are as utterly bonkers as Coloureds. Once likened in a Nightshift review to the sound of a closing-time punch-up involving a pissed-up Cyberman, the former-Xmas Lights duo takes a similarly wayward approach to 90s trance music as their old band did to metal. You can dance to this but we'd recommend a serious dose of crystal meth first.

23. SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE 'The Modernist Disco'

Reduced to a two-piece following the departure of their drummer, Space Heroes nearly gave up, but instead just got on with getting even better, rampaging through their old 70s and 80s electro-pop records and 90s rave vinyl and releasing a superb four-track EP, of which this was the highlight, akin to a duel between Ladytron and Add N To (X), with phasers set to kill.

24. TASTE MY EYES 'Wet Nightmare'

Along with Desert Storm, Taste My Eyes led metal's victory charge through the local scene this year, absolutely slaying the room at this year's Oxford Punt with vicious, virulent slabs of sonic violence like this, Ben Hollyer screaming like a velociraptor trapped in a cement mixer. Turned up to 11, natch.

25. PHANTOM THEORY 'Trancedog'

Beats and riffs and so much more from the heavyweight duo who exposed a subtler but no less punishing side to their hardcore-tinged classic rock sound on their split EP with Gunning For Tamar, here sounding like Billy Idol fronting a stoner-rock tribute to Gang Of Four.

RELEASED

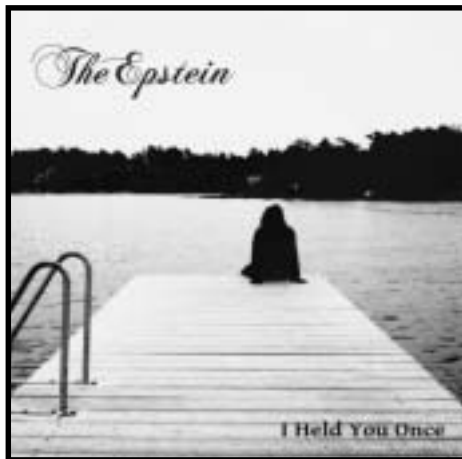
THE EPSTEIN

'Held You Once'

(Zawinul)

The title for Oxford's best kept musical secret is a tightly-fought one, but in recent times The Epstein must hold the firmest claim to the throne. Not for much longer if the increasing attention they're finally getting is anything to go by. And on the strength of this new single, wider critical acclaim and commercial success are well overdue.

'Held You Once' is simply glorious, an Atlantic sunset of a song, the colours becoming deeper and more vivid with each passing moment. It's almost heroic the way it builds and builds around Olly Wills' supremely managed vocals, never tipping into histrionics when pure, unfettered emotional intensity works so well instead. If Mike Scott had written 'Held You Once' in The Waterboys' heyday, it would rightly now be considered a classic. The Paul McCartney-like 'Ring On Her Finger' that follows it sounds slightly twee by comparison, but packs an emotive punch in the line, "She's as lonely as a widow on New Year's Eve", but 'Another Band has Gone' is a minor



masterclass in balancing bleakness and warmth in a song, and is equal to anything Giant Sand or The Low Anthem have written.

With a second album due at some point next year, preceded by a string of new singles, 2011 should be the year The Epstein cease to be Oxford's best kept secret and become our next success story. There's absolutely no doubt they deserve it.

Dale Kattack

THE COOLING PEARLS

'The Honoured Meal Of The Stranger'

(Own label)

The lovingly designed lyric sheet that accompanies The Cooling Pearls' debut album is an early give-away to the delicate, pretty, slightly desolate music on the CD. That the band is made up of local singer-songwriter Aiden Canaday and violinist Sian Williams from Cat Matador, along with Alex Pratchett, should give an indication of the quality as well as the mood of the album; 'The Honoured Meal...' is pleasingly lo-fi in a way that helps rather than hinders the songs, and with an almost haunted feel about the best songs.

Aiden has always had a slightly slipshod feel about both his appearance and his songs, which has always been endearing but can make for a frustrating live spectacle – notably his nervy Punt appearance back in May – but on CD that doesn't matter, as his soft, yet surprisingly strong voice adds a funereal gravity to somnambulating melodies, Sian's gently circling violin and pretty but understated backing vocals bringing the songs to life, pale and thin, slightly clumsy, blinking at the bright sunlight outside.

Like D Gwalia and Samuel Zasada, those other arch-miserabilists who have charmed us this year, The Cooling Pearls, sound like they exist in a separate world to the rest of us, one of decaying gothic architecture and unending shelves of yellowing tragic-romantic novels. In fact much of this album feels like it was written and performed in the middle of someone's dream – reach out and try to touch the tunes as they sadly troop before you and they'd turn to dust. But that simply makes the album all the more rewarding to sink

into. And sink into it you must, because slender and melancholic though its songs are, once you shut outside the noise of the outside world, you're consumed by pastoral lullabies that are too sweet to be murder ballads, too unsettling to comfort souls around a late-night hearth. From the hypnotic, neatly-plucked opener, 'Lucy Alaska', to the closing chant of 'The Future Is Beautiful', this is an album modest in means but big of heart, a near-perfect accompaniment to chill autumn evenings.

Dale Kattack

CHARLY COOMBES &

THE NEW BREED

'Waves'

(Own label)

A defiantly old-fashioned voice even since his teenage days in Tumbleweed, Charly Coombes' post-Supergrass career feels as much like a continuation of that band's journey as anything brother Gaz is likely to produce. Lead track on this new EP, 'Jungles & Tides', has the same slash'n'burn approach to 70s rock and soul, while the "Woah woah" harmonies sound immediately familiar. The song comes with an almost honky tonk bounce, Charly's electric piano surge leading a full-blooded, rootsy charge with echoes of Ocean Colour Scene. Charly and the band are always at their best the more lively they make it, a jaunty 'God Knows' a genial mod-rock roustabout, while downbeat ballad 'Sub Rosa' is so stiflingly twee, bordering on mawkish, it might as well have been titled 'Sub Standard'. Thankfully they manage to end on a high with the punchy, soul shimmer of 'Molly', sounding not unlike Little Feat by way of The Who.

Ian Chesterton

CHAD VALLEY

'Chad Valley EP'

(Cascine)

Hectic times in Hugo Manuel's house as he tries to balance his twin musical careers, helming Jonquil and now going out on his own as Chad Valley. But then hectic isn't really a word you'd use in relation to either act, Chad Valley on this debut EP managing to sound singularly laidback as he goes for the Balearic house sound. This is the 5am sunrise chillout set, even the 80s-style bass chops on 'Anything' refusing to giddy the track up too much, while 'Up & Down' is even airier, tribal beats barely touching Hugo's euphoric incantation. 'Ensoniq Funk' brings in a lysergic phasing that stops anyone getting too comfortable, while retaining the blissed-out beat-driven vibe.

Too often side projects are merely a slightly tweaked take on the individual's main music event but with Chad Valley Hugo has side stepped Jonquil and found a new space entirely. What does remain, however, is that slightly bleached-out feel that always makes his music feel woozily disconnected from the rest of the world.

Victoria Waterfield

DEAD JERICHO

'Mountains'

(Own label download)

If Dead Jerichos' debut EP was for fighting to and their second was to dance to, this new single is one for staring wistfully out of a bus or train window to. 'Mountains' finds the uptight funk dispensed with in favour of airy but tidy spangle and reverb and Craig Evans' urgent bark downplayed to a dreamy reverie. And, it turns out, it actually is all about staring out of a bus window, a bus that's taking Craig over the mountains to see his beloved in some far flung corner of these Isles. The band's Cure leanings remain, with echoes of 'Lullaby' here, but that dreamy guitar sparkle pulls them closer to Cocteau Twins than we ever thought possible. Another corker then, and from a place we were never expecting.

Dale Kattack

TROPHY WIFE

'Microlite'

(Moshi Moshi)

The band that has got Blogland in a particularly fluffy froth lately due to Foals' seal of approval and their association with the Blessing Force scene. Already signed to the none-more-cool Moshi Moshi label, the first thing you take from 'Microlite' is that it is easily as good as the hype suggests, a song so feather-light you worry if you listen to it too hard it'll crumble to dust under the pressure. It's glitchy and spangled in a similar way to Foals' more tender moments and has an airy breathlessness akin to recent tour mates Toro Y Moi, but it breathes with its own gentle life, sounding like a baby unicorn blinking in the harsh morning sunlight, languorous in the extreme. Of course, Trophy Wife's quality was always assured, made up as they are by former-Jonquil chaps Kit Monteith, Ben Rimmer and Jody Prewett and if they keep writing songs of the quality of 'Microlite', the sky really is the limit.

Dale Kattack

MICHAEL LEE

'Face Forward'

(Crash)

In a week when the extent of NATO forces' collusion in torture is revealed, we find ourselves trapped in the office with this album, eleven tracks over 54 minutes that are surely the aural equivalent of Chinese water torture. We'd say water-boarding but they're simply not interesting enough to warrant such comparison.

While we're about it, Michael Lee, hailing from somewhere near the Oxon-Bucks border, must be the only man alive who confesses to being influenced by Sting and Phil Collins without having his toenails forcibly removed first.

Christ, where to start. Or can we simply just stop now? It's like the very worst excesses of soulless, over-produced, creatively bereft 80s MOR musical faecal matter have returned to haunt us, like the undead souls of Michael Bolton, Level 42 and Hall & Oates. Except, unbelievably, this makes you nostalgic for even those abominations.

'Face Forward' (though 'Face Down in a Puddle of His Own Making' might be a more appropriate title) is neat, precise and sterile, like a new-build show home, when great pop music should be filled with a homely mess of discarded kids' toys and a litter of naughty kittens. Lee is obviously very efficient in the studio, playing almost every instrument as well as a singing, but this is more like a flat-pack assemblage of parts than a collection of proper songs. And his voice is a wonder of nature in its own way, ranging from dull adenoidal moan to overwrought, testicle-clutching howl, via the sound of a man trying to relieve himself of a particularly stubborn bowel movement. Did we



mention that his Myspace blurb is the single biggest heap of arse guff we've read since the Conservative Party manifesto promised us a better, brighter future back in May?

On and on it goes, trudging from asinine sub-Boyzone balladry to a few rockier numbers, which basically boil down to songs dragging their sorry carcasses from a to b in a very slightly less laborious fashion. The last sound you hear is the Nightshift reviewer violently hurling the CD across the room and crying for the last hour of his life back.

To call 'Face Forward' the worst album ever would be to convey upon it a character it doesn't deserve. Instead it is the acme of earnest, overbearing mediocrity. It's like an unwinnable war in a desolate faraway land. Only one thing for it, then: an all-out nuclear strike. Everyone would die and the troops wouldn't be home for Christmas, but by Heaven, it would end some serious suffering.

Dale Kattack

HEADCOUNT

'Hartland Point'

(Malicious Damage)

To say Headcount have mellowed over the years would be laughably inaccurate, but it's interesting to listen back to some of their earliest recordings next to this new EP, their first since their 2007 album 'To The Point'. Where once they were bullish and belligerent, now they are brooding. But that feeling of imminent violence remains, like that infamous footage of Björk at the airport, becoming oddly quiet seconds before she explodes and attacks a photographer who's been hounding her.

You wouldn't want to hound Headcount. Not unless you fancied ending up as a puddle down some unlit alleyway. At heart the trio are still the same foot soldiers for industrial punk noise they ever were, but increasingly they rein in their shock and awe approach, rumbling ominously on 'Hartland Point', guitars humming like synths, the bass dark and heavy as an entire Panzer division.

Headcount still adhere to the Killing Joke book of misanthropic techno-grind but equally they lean towards The Banshees circa-John McGeogh and Adam & The Ants' overlooked classic debut 'Dirk Wears White Sox'. 'About Time' here is a rudimentary chug, but 'Greed' sounds like a paranoid gorilla rattling the bars of its cage as it plans to rip its keeper limb from limb. Headcount then, still here for the nasty things in life, still coming to eat your soul in the we small hours.

Dale Kattack

OPEN SUNDAYS DURING DECEMBER

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GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st

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

THURSDAY 2nd

NINA NASTASIA: The Jericho Tavern – Gorgeous dark-folk from the cult New York songstress, initially championed by John Peel and Steve Albini and latterly a major influence on Laura Marling. Out on tour to promote new album, 'Outlaster'.

AGE OF MISRULE + THE CELLAR FAMILY + JUNE + HALF NAKED: The Bullingdon – Bluesy rock from Age of Misrule, plus mutant punk and post-punk from recent Demo of the Monthers The Cellar Family.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With guests The Kate Williams Group.

TERRATHORN + BLACK SKIES BURN + APPARITIONS OF THE END: The Hobgoblin,

Saturday 4th / Sunday 5th

COMMON ROOM:

The Jericho Tavern

The first of two great weekend mini-festivals this month as the big names start to dry up ahead of Christmas. Common Room is being organised by Back & To The Left who have been putting on gigs at Malmaison over the past year or so. This weekend is basically an a-z of the best local unsigned bands of the year, from spiky, uptight post-punk starlets **Dead Jerichos** and ebullient electro-pop faves **Alphabet Backwards**, to the gorgeously lachrymose alt.country of **The Epstein** and the neo-classical folk-rock stylings of **Message To Bears**. And there's loads more besides: the vaudevillian gothic concept rock of **Borderville**, **Spring Offensive's** technical folk-pop, **Huck & The Handsome Fee's** earthy alt.country and blues growl, **Scholars'** epic electro-goth squall, **The Gullivers'** ethereal indie swirl, **ToLiesel's** sprightly stadium pop and **Band Of Hope's** spiritual Americana. Over 20 acts in all over the two days, which makes for a neatly compact opportunity to catch up on all the great young bands you might have missed over the past 12 months. In fact, wrap that little lot up in shiny paper and it'd be the best Christmas present you could hope for. So eat up your greens and indulge yourself.



DECEMBER

Bicester – Jambox metal night with Terrathorn updating Metallica and Megadeth-style thrash, alongside ultra-brutal grindcore merchants Black Skies Burn.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running, and best, open mic night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets and more every week.

MAKKELA'S TRASH LOUNGE: Folly Bridge Inn – German-Finnish singer-songwriter teams his lo-fi indie-folk up with tango outfit Uusikuu.

MOLOTOV SEXBOMB + DRY RISER + AS SEEN ON RADIO + MIND THE WHITE LINES: Fat Lil's, Witney – CD launch for local punkers Molotov Sexbomb.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 3rd

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BLACK HATS + BILLY PURE + THE KEELING CURVE: The Wheatsheaf – Moddish power-pop from Black Hats at tonight's Klub Kak, plus country and folk-rock from Billy Pure and Keeling Curve in support.

THE VACCINES: The Jericho Tavern – A first chance locally to see the heavily-hyped fuzz-pop newcomers, fronted by former-Jay Jay Pistolet chap Justin Young. Mixing up Mary Chain-like lo-fi noise pop and Spector-esque two-minute bittersweet melodies with a reverb-drenched surf twang, they've already been called "The New Drums", which does make you worry how fast the wheel of fashion is spinning.

THE DOORS ALIVE: O2 Academy – Tribute to The Doors.

THE KINX: Fat Lil's, Witney – Kinks tribute.

MATT CHANARIN + JAGGY EDGES + THE SHAPES: The Port Mahon – Acoustic folk-pop.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon – Classic, soul, funk and r'n'b every Friday.

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Community Centre – Roots, dancehall and dub every week.

DISC-OVERY: James Street Tavern – Disco, deep house and funky beats session.

SATURDAY 4th

COMMON ROOM: The Jericho Tavern

(1pm) – First of two full days of local bands – *see main preview*

TRIPPY WICKED + DESERT STORM + TASTE MY EYES + PROSPEKT + MOTHER CORONA + GRIFTER + ANNERO + MERRICK + EYE

FOR AN EYE: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke host a metal all-dayer, featuring London's stoner-metal crew Trippy Wicked; bluesy psych-core heroes Desert Storm, furious metalcore outfit Taste My Eyes and a host of others.

WHOLE LOTTA LED: O2 Academy – AC/DC tribute.

AGE OF MISRULE + WAYS ACROSS +

IONEYE: The Wheatsheaf – Jambox rock night with bluesy grunge types Age of Misrule and more.

YOOF! With D/R/U/G/S + VISIONS OF

TREES: The Cellar – More up'n'coming indie sounds at this month's Yoof! Headliners are spaced-out electro-pop outfit D/R/U/G/S, mixing in

dubstep and chilled-out Balearic grooves. Ethereal electronica and ambient beats from Visions of Trees in support. Afterwards there are electro and indie sounds from DJs Blue Flowers, Will Gilgrass and Graphics.

SHEPHERD'S PIE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.

MUNDANE SANDS + TOMMY HALE + GLENDA HUISH: Folly Bridge Inn – Folk-rock and Americana from Mundane Sands, with support from American barroom balladeer Tommy Hale and local blues-folk singer Glenda Huish.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night, tonight featuring a special guest set from pioneering DJ, producer and remixer Erol Alkan, famed for his residencies at Trash.

FUZZY LOGIC: The Port Mahon – Livewire grime-rock fusion from the London rap crew.

SELECTA: The Regal – Drum&bass night with DJs Dillinga, TC, Hazra, Original Sin, Taxman, Cabbie, Sinista and Mr Reapa, plus MCs Eksman, Funsta and Spooka.

BLUE MOON TRAIN: The Half Moon – An evening of Hawaiian guitar music.

NIKKI LOY: The Royal Standard, Headington

SUNDAY 5th

FRANK TURNER: The Regal – The folk-punk troubadour returns to his spiritual second home – *see main preview*

COMMON ROOM: The Jericho Tavern *(1pm)* – *see main preview*

CAST: O2 Academy – John Power's reformed 90s Britpop hitmakers relive their glory years, playing hits from their Platinum-selling albums, 'All Change' and 'Mother Nature Calls', including 'Sandstorm', 'Walkaway' and 'Guiding Star'.

STORE 309 + THE BREAKFAST MEN: The Unicorn Inn, Deddington

MONDAY 6th

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN: O2 Academy – And after last night's Cast show, here's Liverpool's real class act, reliving their first two classic albums in full – *see main preview*

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

KIMMIE RHODES: Christchurch College – Unlikely venue show for the Texan songwriter whose tunes have been turned into hits by the likes of Emmylou Harris, Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Peter Dinklage and Mark Knopfler. Tonight's show finds Kimmie playing Christmas songs from her new 'Miracles On Christmas Day' album, while at 6pm the show is preceded by a talk from Kimmie and Bob Harris on the subject of religion and Johnny Cash.

TUESDAY 7th

VOLBEAT + BLACK SPIDERS: O2 Academy – Denmark's rockabilly metallers ride their longship

across the North Sea to Blighty – *see main preview*
BOY & BEAR: The Jericho Tavern – Sydney's indie-folksters arrive in the UK after supporting Laura Marling and Mumford & Sons in their native Australia.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz club, tonight featuring funky keyboard-led band The Howard Peacock Quintet.

DEAD JERICHO + SCHOLARS: The Purple Turtle – Post-punk jangle and uptight indie-funk from local starlets Dead Jerichos, plus Editors and Interpol-inspired indie-electro faves Scholars.

NIKKI LOY + RELIK + TIMEA VENCHARDO + TIM GOLDMAN: Baby Simple

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 8th

RAY PEACOCK: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 9th

BROTHER: The Jericho Tavern – Next year's big new thing, apparently, coming out of Slough and following in the musical footsteps of Oasis, Kasabian and The Bluetones.

Sunday 5th

FRANK TURNER: The Regal

Somehow Frank Turner has become something of an honorary citizen of Oxford. It might, in part, be due to his regular visits to our venues, including appearances at Truck Festival, but also due to his backing band being mostly made up of local punk-pop heroes Dive Dive. Whatever, he's very welcome. The Bahrain-born, Eton-educated Turner has made the unusual but not unprecedented journey from hardcore punk screamer to folk singer over the past decade, from his days in Million Dead to his more mild-mannered, but no less politicised modern day incarnation. His solo acoustic career was well underway before Million Dead split, Turner finding many of his songs working better stripped of their noise, and his debut solo release, 'Campfire Punk Rock', was as much a perfect description of his music as it was a title. Since then he's managed to mix love songs and social commentary on his two albums, 'Sleep Is For The Weak' and 'Love, Ire & Song', in much the same way as his most obvious antecedent, Billy Bragg. Along the way he's toured with the likes of Biffy Clyro and The Holloways, becoming a star in his own right, reaching out to an expanding new folk audience while retaining his old hardcore following, no mean feat. Tonight's show in the fantastically grand setting of the Regal follows on from a whole slew of local shows last year when he used his adopted second city to showcase new songs, and you just know the venue will be packed, and his reception will be as rapturous as for any home-grown heroes.



UTE + ELEPHANTS + GUNNING FOR TAMAR + SPRING OFFENSIVE: The Cellar – BBC Oxford Introducing band of the year Ute headline tonight's excellent bill of rising local talents, mixing up an eclectic blend of semi-acoustic folk-rock and full-on noise. Inventive post-rockers Gunning For Tamar support, alongside an acoustic set from Spring Offensive.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Featuring a guest set from Gilad Atzmon & the Orient House Ensemble.

FNM + UNDERSMILE + MOTHER CORONA: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Faith No More, plus ultra-slow sludgecore from Undersmile and metal from Mother Corona.

SIX BULLET CHAMBER + MEET THE PUBLIC + WE WALK ON AIRWAVES: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Banbury's Clutch and Metallica-influenced heavyweights headline tonight's Jambox rock night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Prince of Wales, Iffley – Eccentric blues rocking from the local gig regular.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 10th

EMAROSA + YASHIN + ALL FORGOTTEN: O2 Academy – Highly-polished pop-punk and post-hardcore guff from the Kentucky oxygen users, out on tour to plug their new eponymous album, lacking the imagination to even give it a proper title.

MR FOGG + TIGER MENDOZA + REAL FUR + THE NICHOLE STEAL: The Jericho Tavern – Great night of electro-pop at tonight's Daisy Rodgers club. Groove-led synth-dance from Mr Fogg, tonight playing a full band show; alternately sweet-natured electro-acoustic folk-pop and more boisterous analogue noise from Tiger Mendoza. Two-time Nightshift Demo Of The Month winners The Nichole Steal play their debut show, their demos previously mixing elements of Moby, Aphex Twin and even Cabaret Voltaire into inventive electronic soundscapes.

DREAMING SPIRES + MATT SAGE + RAEVENNAN HUSBANDES & KATIE MADDOCKS: The Old Bookbinders, Green Street – Truck return to the scene of their recent OX4 mini-festival, with lachrymose alt.country and folk-rockers Dreaming Spires keeping the spirit of The Band and Crosby, Stills & Nash alive. Matt Sage mixes several shades of world music into his 60s-inspired folk-pop, while London's Raevennan HusbanDES recalls the ethereal, spiritual folk of Vashti Bunyan.

BLONDIED: Fat Lil's, Witney – Blondie tribute.

SAMUEL ZASADA + MESSAGE TO BEARS + DUOTONE + JESS HALL: The Port Mahon – Tense, ethereal gothic campfire pop from the mighty Samuel Zasada, alongside neo-classical folk-popsters Message To Bears and Barney Morse-Browns' excellent cello-led experimental pop act Duotone at tonight's gig in aid of Christian Aid..

HARRY ANGEL + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART + THE PROHIBITION SMOKERS CLUB + DYING ANIMALS: The Bullingdon – Dark-hearted post-punk and gothic pop from Harry Angel, plus psychedelic drone-rock from COTH, ambient pop from PSC and punk noise from Dying Animals.

BARRY & THE BEACHCOMBERS + SMALL MACHINE: The Hollybush, Osney – One of a series of free gigs to raise funds for next year's Wittstock Festival, which raises funds for local mental health charity MIND. Witney's eccentric punk crew Barry & The Beachcombers head the



Monday 6th

ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN

Saturday 11th

THE WEDDING PRESENT O2 Academy

A double dose of bands to get the indie veterans massive in a froth, with both acts set to play classic albums in their entirety. The Bunnymen's show on the Monday looks to be the more exciting prospect, despite the band's lukewarm display here a year ago. This time round they're playing the whole of their first two albums, 'Crocodiles' and 'Heaven Up Here', in their entirety, which will please the hardcore fans. Emerging out of Liverpool's astonishingly fertile post-punk scene, The Bunnymen's dark take on alternative pop, cloaked in a heavy-duty overcoat, inspired as much by Scott Walker's sweeping gothic portent as punk's spirit of rock revolution, always had a vision and ambition beyond most of their peers, one that has helped core members Ian McCulloch and Will Sergeant survive the deaths of two of their bandmates in motorcycle crashes and remain the epitomes of rock cool for three decades.

The Wedding Present were never credited for being cool even in their prime, more commonly derided for being the epitome of artless indie chugging, but they've outlived their critics and their influence still looms large over indie rock, although having originally been influenced by The Fall, frontman David Gedge seems to be on course to equal Mark E Smith's total of band members at some point. Tonight Gedge and co. are revisiting 1989 album 'Bizarro', which spawned the singles 'Kennedy' and 'Brassneck', and if it's a perfect mix of fuzz, sharp-angled guitar pop and bitter-sweet melody you're after, you won't see much better than this.

bill. Drop a few coins in the collection bucket on your way in and help the festival happen again.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Chester Arms – Psychedelic blues-rock and swampy funk.
FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Community Centre
DISC-OVERY: James Street Tavern

SATURDAY 11th

NEVILLE STAPLES: O2 Academy – The former-Specials and Fun Boy 3 chap follows up his old band's reunion with another solo tour of his own, playing old classics and new solo material.



Tuesday 7th

Volbeat: O2 Academy

Mixing heavy metal and hardcore punk with classic rock'n'roll and even country isn't entirely original – The Misfits did something similar back in the day – but Denmark's Volbeat aren't really like much else around these days. Acclaimed in their homeland where they're laden with awards and platinum discs, they've been all but ignored over here until very recently, their status elevated by regular support slots to Metallica, plus sets at this summer's Download and Sonisphere festivals. Now with the release of their fourth album, 'Beyond Hell / Above Heaven', they're touring the UK giving a wider audience the chance to hear their rootsy rockabilly thrash and epic retro metal. Principally inspired by Metallica, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, Volbeat shift from old-fashioned if beefed-up hoe-down, to pull-pelt classic metal, led by Michael Poulsen's soaring, slightly overwrought vocals. The new album also sees a host of guests, including members of Napalm Death, Kreator and Mercyful Fate lending a helping hand. With fans in such high places and a style of metal that's both fun and a bit over the top, some of that homeland success might just transfer across the North Sea.

THE WEDDING PRESENT + TROPHY

CABINET: O2 Academy – David Gedge's indie vets give their 'Bizarro' a full run-through – *see main preview*

DESERT STORM + SMILEX + KOMRAD: The Cellar – Bluesy stoner-metal from local heavyweight heroes Desert Storm, plus enduring rock monsters Smilex and prog-core types Komrad.

DEDLOK DAY: The Port Mahon – A full day of metal, hosted and headlined by super-heavyweight thrash monsters Dedlok.

FUSED: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.

AHMED DICKINSON & TRIO MESTIZO: The North Wall, Summertown – OCM presents an evening in the company of Cuban guitarist Dickinson, with a highly technical, jazz-influenced approach to traditional Cuban music.

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club.

HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: Cricketers Arms, Temple Cowley – Local bluesgrass and Americana band.

SUNDAY 12th

MARTHA REEVES & THE VANDELLAS: O2 Academy – The Motown legend brings her reformed soul sisters to town – *see main preview*
THE GRACEFUL SLICKS + WHITE NOISE SOUND + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE: The Bullingdon – A superb night of neo-psychedelic sounds courtesy of Pindrop Performances. Local 60s psych-pop and shoegaze acolytes The Graceful Slicks headline, while Pindrop's multi-faceted psychedelic improvisers Braindead Collective open the show. The big treat, though are south Wales'

White Noise Sound, with a fantastic narcotic drone-rock sound inspired by Spacemen 3, Loop and Spiritualized. After supports to Super Furry Animals, Mark Gardener and The Warlocks they've recently recorded their debut album with Spacemen 3's Pete Dinklage and if you like your rock seriously blissed out on the finest quality acid, they're the band for you.

QUEEN'S ENGLISH: Fat Lil's, Witney – London-based hip hop outfit.

MONDAY 13th

CHANTEL MCGREGOR BAND: The

Bullingdon – Young Bradfordian guitarist currently being acclaimed for her virtuoso approach to electric blues, covering the likes of Hendrix, Blind Faith, Bonnie Raitt and Stevie Nicks along the way.

TUESDAY 14th

LISSIE + THE PIERCES: O2 Academy – Country-tinged MOR pop in a vaguely Fleetwood Mac vein from the Illinois songstress, who has toured with Lenny Kravitz and Joshua Radin.

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

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 15th

THE BEES: O2 Academy – The Isle of Wight's psychedelic indie darlings return to action with the release of their fourth album, 'Every Step's A Yes', the band now embedded in the nation's consciousness for their ad-friendly hits, including their cover of Oz Mutantes' 'A Minha Menina'.

THE RELATIONSHIPS: The Wheatsheaf – Quintessentially English psychedelic pop from the local pop godfathers, playing songs from their forthcoming album, 'Thyme'.

EVERY HIPPIE'S DREAM: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rapture record store host their pop quiz night with a live set from Witney rockers EHD.

THURSDAY 16th

BLUDGER + TASTE MY EYES + ANNERO + AETHARA: The Bullingdon – Skeletor metal night featuring Leeds' metalcore titans Bludger, featuring former local axe hero Ansley Prothero from JOR and Sow, and showing absolutely no sign of mellowing with his new band. Support comes from venomous local hardcore metal faves Taste My Eyes, fronted by Aynz's erstwhile JOR bandmate Ben Hollyer, and Meshugga and Pantera-influenced Vikings Annero. Afterwards, Skeletor DJs will be playing heavy, heavy monster sounds til 1am.

HAWKWIND: O2 Academy – Dave Brock continues to drag the decomposing carcass of his once-great space-rockers round the country, this time in support of latest album, 'Blood Of The Earth'.

ROOM 94 + FORMER LIVING DEAD + VIENNA + SHATTERED DREAMS: O2 Academy – Throat-slashing, eye-gougingly, soul-devouringly awful attempt at what we can only assume is some desperate record company exec's idea of what an *X-Factor*-friendly grunge might sound like from Room 94. Expect all concerned to be sucking cocks for small change in hell forever sometime soon.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – Big band jazz from the Big Colour Big Band.

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + CARETAKER: The Cellar – Glacially epic rock from local faves Winchell Riots, drawing on Sigur Ros for inspiration as they manage to create a sound that's simultaneously delicate and huge.

THE PINDROP CHOIR + BORDERVILLE UNPLUGGED + DAVID G COX: St Michael at the Northgate – Pindrop return to the rarefied environs of St Michael's Church with a special performance from their own Pindrop Choir, singing a selection of Christmas carols and mediaeval songs, plus an acoustic set from local vaudevillian rockers Borderville, joined tonight by a string quartet, and local blues and gospel singer David Cox.

PLAYER2 + PRAXIS BOLD: The Port Mahon
APPLE PIRATE PRESENTS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Alt-rock bands at the monthly rock night's Christmas bash.

INSANE YOUTH + MIND THE WHITE LINES: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox punk night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

NIKKI LOY: Joe's Bar & Grill, Summertown

FRIDAY 17th

THE WINTER WARMER: The Wheatsheaf – First night of the annual Gappy Tooth Industries mini-festival, also running at Café Tarifa over the weekend, tonight featuring Spring Offensive and The Workhouse – *see main preview*

SKIN: O2 Academy – Farewell tour for the 90s hard rockers, plus former-Little Angels frontman

Sunday 12th

MARTHA REEVES & THE VANDELLAS: O2 Academy

There's always a feeling of trepidation when a legendary name from the past makes a comeback, particularly one whose career high point was over four decades ago, but just the name Martha Reeves should get any fan of great pop music excited. The group's 1964 hit 'Dancing In The Street' was at the epicentre of Motown's move from feisty indie label to being the greatest hit factory in the world and perfectly encapsulates the label's exuberant, funk-driven soul sound. It is, arguably, the greatest single ever released on the label, which is really saying something. Martha Reeves & The Vandellas enjoyed a string of classic hits, including 'Jimmy Mac', 'Heatwave' and 'Nowhere To Run'. The group's star went into steep decline in the 70s as Motown lost its core songwriting team, Holland, Dozier, Holland, Reeves fell ill, Diana Ross became Motown's chief concern and the band succumbed to infighting and various incarnations have toured over the years, but having recently lost her seat on Detroit City Council, the 70-year-old Reeves is back out to relive those timeless hits and has a new, self-produced album, 'Home To You', out, and it feels like a sin to miss out seeing such a legend in the flesh at last.



Toby Jepson in solo support.

DESERT STORM + UNDERSMILE + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE + KOMRAD: The

Bullingdon – CD launch show for gothic sludgecore sirens Undersmile, joined for the night by the mighty Desert Storm, mixing a little psychedelia and blues into their stoner-metal sound, Nick Cave-inspired folk-blues from Huck, and technical hardcore from Komrad.

CAT MATADOR + BLEEDING HEART

NARRATIVE: Modern Art Oxford – Dark-hearted, violin-led dream-pop from Cat Matador at tonight's Pindrop performance, with neo-classical soundscapes and post-Pärt melodicism from Bleeding Heart Narrative in support.

DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.

SMALL MACHINE: The Port Mahon

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

PROGRESSIVELY LESS ELEPHANT: Baby Love – Indie, electro and Motown dance tunes.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Chester Arms

SATURDAY 18th

THE WINTER WARMER: Café Tarifa (2pm) –

Free afternoon of live music – *see main preview*

THE WINTER WARMER: The Wheatsheaf – Dial F For Frankenstein headline.

ELECTRIC SIX: O2 Academy – The what now seems like an annual pre-Christmas rock pantomime from Dick Valentine and his garage-glam crew, still kicking it out after the success of their hits, 'Danger! High Voltage' and 'Gay Bar', treading a fine line between smart and dumb with their tongue-in-cheek garage-rock-disco bombast.

OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS + NINE-STONE COWBOY + SMILEX + KILL CITY SAINTS + PEEPWORLD: O2 Academy – It's All About The Music Christmas party.

DUB POLITICS: The Bullingdon – Dubstep club night.

AIRTIGHT: Fat Lil's, Witney – 80s rock covers.

SUNDAY 19th

THE WINTER WARMER: Café Tarifa (2pm) – Soothe away the pains of yesterday's marathon session with some mellow acoustic sounds and incendiary cocktails as the Winter Warmer drifts to a close – *see main preview*

SOPHIE ELLIS BEXTOR: O2 Academy – Return of the nu-disco queen after time off to have her second child, the voice behind smash hit 'Groovejet' releases her fourth solo album this month, 'Straight To The Heart', featuring contributions from Calvin Harris, Richard X, Groove Armada and Metronomy, and out on a headline tour after supporting Pet Shop Boys on their 'Pandemonium' tour.

QUICKFIX CHRISTMAS ALL-DAYER: Fat Lil's, Witney (1pm) – Twelve hours of bands and DJs courtesy of local label Quickfix, including sets from free-flowing rapper Episodic, beats and rhymes from Half Decent, soul and funk from Supafunk, stadium-sized rocking from Smilex, stoner-metal from Desert Storm, technical metal from Prospekt, gothic campfire folk from Samuel Zasada, atmospheric romantic acoustic pop from Bethany Weimers and spindly indie-rock from Player 2. Much more besides from the likes of Skullthrash, Deer Chicago, Way Across, June, PSC, Billy Ray Cypher, Ursa Minor and Tommy Guns.

BETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon – Live bands and open jam session.

MONDAY 20th

ROADHOUSE & GUESTS: The Bullingdon – The Famous Monday Blues club celebrates with its traditional Christmas party, electric blues-rockers Roadhouse heading the bill and joined by the likes of Debbie Bond, Leburn and more.

TUESDAY 21st

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With the Hugh Turner Band.

WAYS ACROSS: The Purple Turtle

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 22nd

THE NEW MOGMATIC: The Bullingdon

THE MIGHTY REDOX + BROTHERS WELSH

+ UNKNOWN FLOW: The Wheatsheaf

THURSDAY 23rd

DENNY ILETT Jr PLAYS JIMI HENDRIX: The Bullingdon

VERY NICE HARRY: The Port Mahon – Geezerish blues and indie rocking from the local newcomers.

REIGN UPON US + THE LIGHT DIVIDED + CIRCUS CHASE + SIMPLY SLOTH: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox metal night with super-heavyweight thrash merchants Reign Upon Us.

FAT LIL'S ROCK CHRISTMAS PARTY: Fat Lil's, Witney

FRIDAY 24th

MACKATING: O2 Academy – The local reggae stalwarts play their traditional Christmas Eve show.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney – A festive-themed open mic session.

SATURDAY 25th

SUNDAY 26th

MONTHLY BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Shrug off those post-Christmas blues with some, erm, blues.

MONDAY 27th

BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar – Reggae, hip hop, funk, house, bassline and drum&bass club night with live sets from Thame funkies Mean Poppa Lean and hip hop crew The Fridge and Bungle Experience.

TUESDAY 28th

WEDNESDAY 29th

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 30th

PROSPEKT + UNDERSMILE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox metal night with epic, intricate technical metal outfit Prospekt bringing a little prog to the party, while Melvins and Flipper-inspired sludgecore outfit Undersmile keeping things ultra slow and ultra heavy.

IN THE POCKET: Fat Lil's, Witney – Local indie bands.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

FRIDAY 31st

PROPAGANDA NEW YEAR'S EVE

CARNIVAL: O2 Academy – Circus and carnival-themed NYE party with indie and electro at Propaganda, kitsch pop at Trashy and metal and punk at Room 101.

GREEN ONIONS: The Jericho Tavern – Blues Brothers tribute at the Tavern's NYE bash.

DUB POLITICS: The Bullingdon – NYE dubstep party with DC Breaks and Funtcase.



Friday 17th – Sunday 19th

THE WINTER WARMER: The Wheatsheaf / Café Tarifa

The annual mini-festival jointly organised by local promoters Gappy Tooth Industries and Swiss Concrete is now in its sixth year and an always welcome festive institution, a grass roots musical alternative to the pretty Best Of trinkets being dangled in front of gawping Christmas shoppers. You'll find no big names here, just a couple of dozen acts of varying shapes and sizes mixed up for a seriously eclectic weekend of live music. After last year's freezefest at the Jericho, this year they're moving between the homely rock snug of the Wheatsheaf and the Moroccan decadence of Tarifa on Cowley Road. Friday and Saturday evenings at the Sheaf you'll find local indie faves like **Dial F For Frankenstein** (pictured) and **Spring Offensive** rubbing shoulders with the electro mischief of **A Scholar & A Physician** and the sweet electro-acoustic fluffiness of **Tiger Mendoza**, while instrumental soundscapists **The Workhouse** will be making a welcome return to action. Saturday and Sunday afternoons find Tarifa hosting free unplugged gigs by psychedelic minstrel **Anton Barbeau**, doomy etherealism from **D Gwalia**, witty anti-pop from **Matt Winkworth**, genteel acoustic folk from **Helen Pearson** and plenty more besides. That's just the tip of the musical iceberg of course and there's plenty more besides and really it's a perfect escape from pre-Christmas consumer madness, a budget way to discover something new and unusual on your doorstep.

URBAN GOODIES – THE BIG ONE: The Regal – New Year's Eve urban music extravaganza with a host of Radio 1 and 1 Xtra DJs, including Ras Kwame, Mistajam, Seani B and Ronnie Herel.

BON GIOVI + OTHER BEATLES: Fat Lil's, Witney – Fat Lil's NYE party.

JAMBOX NEW YEARS EVE PARTY: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – With Six Bullet Chamber, Tyger Stryke and more.

THE PETE FRYER BAND + THE NEW MOON: The Prince of Wales, Iflley

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photo: Marc West



M.I.A / SLEIGH BELLS

O2 Academy

When Kevin Shields declared volume to be an instrument in its own right, we're not sure he realised what he was starting. For Brooklyn duo Sleigh Bells, sheer, unforgiving volume is very much their third member. Arriving on stage amid a cacophony of death metal, church bells and air raid sirens, they proceed to get proper brutal, their set played out in front of a vast stack of Marshall amps, amid a dizzying blizzard of strobes. From opener 'Tell 'Em', through to new

single 'Infinity Guitars', Alexis Krauss and Derek Miller crush pretty cheerleader pop and rabble-raising hip hop with bomb blast beats and guitars that sounds like a thousand chainsaws in kill mode. When Miller takes a break on a couple of numbers, Krauss comes across as a satanic Nenah Cherry possessing the soul of Pixie Lott, but at full blast they're the glorious sound of M.I.A herself being run through by Guitar Wolf. Awesome. Astonishingly, M.I.A is even louder, thanks for

the most part to her fabulously coiffured DJ who is equal to Public Enemy's Bomb Squad in the monolithic density of her loops and rhythms, the bass set so low and so loud as to rattle your internal organs. Anglo-Tamil rapper/producer/musician/conspiracy theorist M.I.A herself is a crazy, contradictory, hugely entertaining mix of showgirl and political polemicist, dressed like a cross between an Arab sheikh and an extra from an old Bananarama video, continually stalking the stage along with her gurning dancers, doing her best to equal the towering wall of sound built around her.

M.I.A has few if any equals in her fusion of pop, grime, electro, world music and punk, a fusion that has seen her sell vast quantities of albums around the world while always sounding like they were recorded in her bedroom on a budget of zero, fuelled only by an ocean of enthusiasm and a thousand strands of mad invention. Tonight's set is drawn from all three of her albums, tracks segueing into each other, the pounding, pulsating call to arms that is 'Boyz', contrasting with 'Bamboo Banga' with its strung-out dancehall remodelling of Modern Lovers' 'Roadrunner'.

The set builds almost imperceptibly in intensity, like an old Jah Shaka soundsystem show, the irresistibly restless pop of the records made bigger and bolder in this live setting where everything feels like an assault on the senses. 'It Takes A Muscle' feels like a pause for breath as energy levels briefly dip but it all kicks off deliriously with 'Born Free', a genius sample of Suicide's 'Ghost Rider' underpinning M.I.A's giddy whoop and holler, and when she finishes with 'Paper Planes', with its chiming Clash sample, ringing cash tills and gunshots, every hand in the venue is up in the air, every mouth singing along. It's a triumphant performance, from one of the few real musical mavericks operating anywhere near the musical mainstream.

Dale Kattack

PET MOON / TROPHY WIFE /

BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE

The Bullingdon

Tonight's Pindrop Performance show features debut outings for two bands linked to the much talked-about Blessing Force collective.

Preconceptions left at the door, we're first presented with Braindead Collective, a nebulous outfit that might pass for Pindrop's in-house band, tonight playing as a five-piece and performing psychedelic free jazz mixed with noise and drone. To say they're mind-blowing doesn't do their name any justice. This is the type of act we'd love to see more often around the shire – refreshing, original, controlled yet creatively carefree. Trumpet, sax, bass, synths and drums interweave like sparkling silk threads into earthy fabric. Everyone expects a superbly receptive nature from jazz musicians so as to create a flavoursome concoction of blissful musical scripts – without losing the plot – and Braindead Collective accomplish just that.

Left groggy by that opening salvo, there's no time to recover before we get our first glimpse of Trophy Wife, a three-piece featuring ex-members of

Jonquil, who have ditched Caribbean flares for a paradoxical relationship between nostalgia and smooth dance beats. Their set is shaky; understandably so considering it's their Oxford's debut. While they fail to fully grasp the reins for much of the set, their music is nevertheless perfumed by oncoming success. Combining Jody Prewett's soft vocals and melodic harmonies with waves of elongated keyboard play and contrasting guitar flickering, Trophy Wife prove they have the potential to fill rooms. It's only a matter of time.

Pet Moon, on the other hand, kicks off like an unexpected late-summer storm. There's no hesitation and no foreplay. Pet Moon is essentially Andrew Mears, ex-Youthmovies frontman; his world is a human version of the divine Big Bang, whereby all forces of nature are bottled up, shaken and released in every track. His canvas is psychedelic, with splatters of pop, edgings of r'n'b, punches of 80s disco and pangs of industrialisation. Backed by two musicians hidden behind suitcases of gadgetry and effects paraphernalia, this vision is astonishingly superior. From the more accessible 'Impossible Muscle' to the heavy hammered yet overwhelmingly sexual 'Omen Pot', Pet Moon makes the unthinkable effortlessly possible: fiercely real and utterly true.

Liane Escorza

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WIRE / TEETH OF THE SEA / EINSTELLUNG

The Jericho Tavern

Opening tonight's Audioscope show, Birmingham's Einstellung, featuring ex-Godflesh guitarist Steve Hough on bass, wear their Krautrock influences prominently on their sleeve; raw, thoughtful and melodic in equal measure. They become more captivating as each song unfolds, their years of experience plain to see.

Teeth Of The Sea aren't the only band in the world with a debt to early Ultravox, but they capture the spirit of 80s psychedelic prog better than most. Defiant of fashion and commerciality, they're far more wild and abandoned than their rather studied recordings, and all the more enjoyable for it.

Of all the bands of the first punk era still treading the boards none can match Wire in staying as vital and relevant as the day they formed. If you didn't already know which of the five decades a song from tonight's selection originates, you would never guess. They were never comfortable with punk's naïve posturing in the 70s, nor with the 80s' over-dressed futurism, the 90s' heads-down digital soundscaping or the noughties money-grabbing revivalism. And yet they flirted with them all and now enter yet another new decade, still

looking forwards, the dry humour and razor-like intelligence as sharp as ever.

Original guitarist Bruce Gilbert tried to incorporate elements of conceptual art, leading to a tension only resolved two years ago by his departure, at least for now. This has allowed them to become what they've always been deep down: a band capable of producing some of the greatest pop music ever, the punk framework just a flag to sail under. The three remaining original members are joined tonight by Matt Simms on second guitar, with singer Colin Newman actually looking younger than he did two years ago, no longer reading his lyrics off a laptop. No-one came expecting a greatest hits set so of course that's exactly what we get; 'Drill', 'Pink Flag', 'The 15th', 'Boiling Boy', 'Advantage In Height', all matching or exceeding their original power. Interspersed are tracks from the new album 'Red Barked Tree', out in January and on this hearing well up to standard. 'Adapt' is yet another poignant vignette, concise and almost understated. Tonight the highlight for many comes with 'Kidney Bingsos', a catchy song of almost unbearable



Wire photo: Johnny Moro

beauty, despite its lyrical content about rationing NHS treatment. As they depart bassist Graham Lewis reminds us that tonight is all about Shelter and his own experience of homelessness, "a fucking nightmare".

The rest of us stand shell-shocked, not quite believing what we've seen. The talk of Public Image Limited as gig of the year already seems like history.

Art Lagun

BELLOWHEAD

The Regal

It's clear and light with a surprising fruity afterbite and – what's that? We're not supposed to review the beer? Okay, but it's damned unusual for a touring band to bring their bespoke ale along, especially in the grandeur of The Regal. Whilst we're not naïve enough to believe Bellowhead themselves nurtured the brew, any more than Christina Aguilera slaved long nights in a lab perfecting her perfume, in some ways a thousand pints of real ale on treble stands is the perfect symbol of Bellowhead: it clearly communes with craft and tradition, but also says unequivocally, "we are here to party". And party we do. It's unfair to judge any musicians by their fans – we'd have to throw out those Wagner CDs if so – but the Bellowhead massive are so infectious, swaying like a vast choppy sea to Jacque Brel's 'Amsterdam', and leaping like randy crickets to 'New York Girls' (not bad when the room's average age is double that of many events), until it's physically impossible to leave having had a bad time. But then again, the music would do that if the gig were in an empty undertakers.

Spiers and Boden's folk cabaret juggernaut has been rumbling for six

years now, but we've only just realised the genius twist that makes them unbeatable. Yes, the vocals are seedily dramatic, yes the rhythms are thumping and carnivalistic, but it's the four brass players who add the secret spice, pitched somewhere between Oktoberfest oompah, jazz abandon and Stax horn stabs: they turn folk standard 'A-Begging I Will Go' into a taut blaxploitation theme, a stakeout outside Cecil Sharp House. Here, Bellowhead remind us of Blood, Sweat & Tears (owners of the greatest funk tuba solo ever recorded), being as they are a huddle of kickass musicians who don't let their chops obscure their sense of fun, but who don't let the craic prohibit intricate arrangements and sensitive playing.

It's a week where Oxford's self-styled Blessing Force movement dandles the London media like a Machiavellian puppeteer; best of luck to them, but how many of the thousands of people reading encomiums of bands barely out of the bedroom stage know that one of the best acts to come from Oxford this millennium is currently touring the nation? If they gave Bellowhead a chance, they'd never look back: trad, bad, and euphoric to know.

David Murphy

JONQUIL / RHOSYN / NEON PULSE

The Jericho Tavern

A four-page feature on the Blessing Force collective in this week's *NME* has made tonight's gig an *event*. The slight downside of a full house is too many in the crowd are intent on yakking on and fucking on throughout each band. Neon Pulse (aka Hreda's Alex Robinson) suffers the most from such impoliteness, which is a shame since his twinkling tapestries of electronics are pleasingly hypnotic once he's reeled you in. Hooded and hunched over a Yamaha and laptop, his shifting patterns of noise come on like a bonged-out Steve Reich and have enough muscle to pervade the chatter. Still, probably best enjoyed herbally at home rather than in a noisy pub.

Rhosyn are the renamed Wap Wap Wow, a startlingly unusual string quartet bolstered by a drummer and nothing like the sedate chamber pop we expect. Strings run rings round each other as the drummer kicks out rockabilly and Burundi beats, but it's the strange vocal interaction between each member that's most striking, while cellist and lead vocalist Rose Dagul is a superb singer, sharp and strident but full-blooded and the end result is, at times, almost akin to Imelda May fronting The

Venomettes. Odd, in the very best kind of way.

If Blessing Force finally draws wider attention to Jonquil then its existence is more than justified. Downsized earlier this year to a three-piece (the remainder of the band now playing as Trophy Wife), Hugo Manuel remains creatively restless. Most of tonight's set is new, taken from a forthcoming album due in February, and the wanderlust of 'Lions' is replaced by an almost tropical party vibe, dancing into offbeat Afro-funk and then into the exuberant brass-laden pop we've previously known them for. Occasionally it teeters close to beach party parody and one tune might well be a close cousin of 80s pop idol Nik Kershaw, but Hugo's urgently emotive vocals echo Paul Simon for the most part. The final number, with its funk-up r'n'b feel and complex harmonies might even be described as a Hi-life Proclaimers, such is its lack of resemblance to anything even remotely routine. A singularly idiosyncratic talent still, then, and if Jonquil sound like they've finally arrived at the party, hopefully now they really have something to celebrate.

Dale Kattack

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE

The Wheatsheaf

To hell with post-modernism. We liked it better when we really could hope for jetpacks and gleaming silver city-scapes from which mankind would launch heroic expeditions to the stars. Luckily for us then that amid all the drearily earnest peddlers of authentic rock music, a band like Space Heroes Of The People exists to dream, like androids, of electric sheep.

Having stripped back down to a two-piece at the start of the year following the departure of their drummer, Tim Science and Jo Edge now sound more potent than before. The pair seem split down the middle between Tim's studiously synthetic side – laptop, heavily-Vocoderised vocals, Wii remote – and Jo's taut, sinewy organic half – upright bass, floor tom – like Kraftwerk's 'Man Machine' ideal on a *Blake's 7* budget.

'The Modernist Disco', possibly the only song written about modernist architecture, owes an unabashed debt to Kraftwerk, twitching and twinkling clinically along the autobahn, while 'Barbie Is A Robot' is the last dance at the Cylon disco, Jo's bass adding booming depth to the robotic rhythms. As the mad animated art-house projections wash over them, Space Heroes ratchet up the tension, the beats and synth sounds getting harsher, the mood more exuberant as they hint towards Belgian synthesists *Vivre la Fête* or Daniel Miller's early musical projects, and when they hit 'Groovy Dancer' it's party time in Metropolis with Brigitte Helm on the decks.

It's Space Heroes' very obvious humanity that gives them their strength, far removed from the

grey, soulless laptop botherers that ruined electronic music by taking it back from the disco to the laboratory. Here its rightful place in pop is restored. Together in electric dreams.

Victoria Waterfield

EDWYN COLLINS

O2 Academy

Much has been made of Edwyn Collins' miraculous recovery from two cerebral haemorrhages and a bout of MSRA, and it's true that the fact he is even here to play the show tonight is amazing. Leaving that to one side for a moment, this is a brilliant show by anyone's standards.

Tonight we get a rich and varied selection of tunes from the beginning of *Orange Juice*, through seven solo albums, up to the freshly released 'Losing Sleep'. Edwyn makes his own way on stage after the band take up residence, and they give him a funky backing track to arrive to. And what a band. Paul Cook of the Pistols on drums, long-time Morrissey band member Boz Boorer on keys and sax and Andy Hackett of the Rockingbirds on guitar for starters. Pick of the band is lead guitarist Tom Edwards who plays some wicked licks, but in a wonderfully understated way. It's some achievement to stand out in this line up, as Boorer delivers some delightful teasing sax interludes and Cook looks like he's having the time of life on drums, and having much more fun than any Pistols reunions.

For his part Edwyn has a book to prompt him with the lyrics, but it's an entirely natural delivery and the band adds a little beef to some of the more twee OJ numbers. The quality of the songs and show are such that I forget all about 'A Girl Like



photo: Marc West

You' until it kicks in pre-encore. For the start of the encore itself there's an acoustic interlude which is divine, then the band return with Frankie from the Heartstrings (who were excellent in support earlier) for a storming 'In Your Eyes' from the new album, before they deliver my favourite OJ song, 'Blue Boy', which sounds just fantastic.

Before tonight's gig I was biased towards Edwyn's talents and hoping it would go really well for him, while at the same time worried it would all go wrong. I needn't have fretted; Edwyn has overcome another big challenge, and then some.

Russell Barker

the Jericho

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INTRODUCING....

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

CHAD VALLEY

Who is he?

Chad Valley is Hugo Manuel, better known round these parts – and beyond – as frontman of psychedelically funky post-rockers Jonquil. He has been making music under the Chad Valley guise for nine months. An early MP3 release, 'Up And Down', got various bloggers in a fluffy kind of froth and attracted the attention of Huw Stephens, while appearances at this summer's Truck Festival and October's OX4 exposed him to a wider local audience. Hugo has also remixed Foals, Penguin Prison and We Have Band under the Chad Valley name and played shows in Istanbul, Budapest and Belgrade. His debut EP is released this month on Swedish-American label Cascine Records. Close friends with Foals, Chad Valley is part of the self-titled Blessing Force collective of acts that also includes Fixers, Trophy Wife and Pet Moon, and he's set to play with Foals at their New Year's Eve party.

What does he sound like?

Disco-infused summer pop that sounds like it's drifted in a stoned haze over from Ibiza, all shimmering synths, laidback house beats, reverb and samples, fused together in a lovingly lo-fi kind of way, airy and spacious and sounding simultaneously uncertain and serene, like a gently spaced-out Hot Chip at times. Or, in Hugo's own words, "Eighties nostalgia with a fascination for Balearic sounds, field recordings, disco and hooks. Club Tropicalia party bangers."

What inspires him?

"Queen; bongo loops; 808 drum sounds; Nile Rodgers; digital synths; unexpected cups of tea; mountain dew."

Career highlight so far:

"Playing at OX4 festival. The crowd was so on it, and despite technical problems, it was one of the most enjoyable shows yet for me."

And the lowlight?

"The general amount of 'waiting around' that inevitably has to happen



whilst on tour. I hate wasting time. I've done enough waiting in venues, vans, trains and planes for now, thank you."

His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"All of the bands of the Blessing Force."

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

"Queen II'. I've listened to it for a longer time than any other album, and still not become bored of it. It's fairly ridiculous and bombastic, but I love it."

When is his next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"Next up is a tour with The Concretes, and then shows in Paris and London. Expect beachy visuals, crooning, and sweating."

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"The constantly evolving state is very healthy, and the fact that it is a small city means that it's easier to get yourself heard, which is a good thing. Also, thank you to The Cellar and The Star: the two pillars of our society. Least favourite? I would say that there are lots of really terrible bands, but that would be the same in every city."

You might love him if you love:

Hot Chip; New Order; Tanlines; Ducktails; Toro Y Moi.

Hear him here:

www.myspace.com/hugomanuel

Whatever happened to... those heroes

Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia

WHO?

Emerging into the particularly fertile Oxford indie scene of the early-Noughties, electro-heavy, post-rock art-pop collective Meanwhile, Back In Communist Russia were Emily Gray (vocals), Mark Halloran (guitar), James Matthews (guitars, keyboards), Ollie Clueit (bass) and Tim Croston (keyboards, electronics). Their first, semi-accidental, gig was at a University band competition. They lost but gained a bassist, Ollie, from the judging panel. Arriving around the same time as The Rock Of Travolta, Eeeblee and Six Ray Sun, they helped pioneer a scene that would, years later, take electronic, post-rock and avant garde influences as a matter of course but which, at the time, were novel. Steve Lamacq played an early demo on Radio 1, they recorded three Peel sessions, supported Pulp at Radio 1 Sound City in Birmingham, released two albums, 'Indian Ink' and 'My Elixir, Your Poison' and were voted fifteenth worst band name of all time on Mark and Lard's radio show.

WHAT?

Inspired by the dynamics of post-rock and art-rock, MBICR songs were densely-arranged, highly-textured collages of electronic beats, treated guitars and atmospheric, often harsh electronics that tended to build into sweeping crescendos over which Emily's delicately poetic and emotive narratives played out. Sylvia Plath fronting Mogwai was one, not inaccurate, description. The band were self-confessed "pretentious whoopsies" and their trademark tab-on stage personas found them dubbed Mum, Look I'm

Smoking by Dr Shotover.

WHEN?

After a series of gigs at the Point and elsewhere the band released a split-EP with friends Moonkat in 2000, quickly followed by debut album 'Indian Ink' on Jitter Records in 2001. Its follow-up, 'My Elixir', came out on Truck in 2002. 'Morning After Pill' featured at Number 11 in Peel's Festive 50 in 2001. The band eventually fell apart in 2003, but not before they'd played one of the best shows by a local band ever, at the Holywell Music Room, a show split into two sets so the band could go outside and enjoy a fag break halfway through.

WHY?

There's little doubt MBICR, alongside close compatriots The Rock Of Travolta, helped inspired a young Yannis Phillipakis among others, and were instrumental in creating an Oxford scene where traditional indie mixed with more experimental and electronic sounds would become a dominant force. Listen back to those albums now and they sound remarkably current, despite being almost a decade old. They also remain one of the coolest-looking – or daftest, depending on your viewpoint – onstage acts in Oxford and probably helped maintain sales of Camel Lights all by themselves.

WHERE?

After the band gradually fell apart some of the band formed the short-lived MSPLX, while Emily and Tim together played as Ape has Killed Ape!. Emily wrote reviews for Nightshift until recently and now works as a researcher for the Oxford English Dictionary. Mark is a doctor in Brighton, Ollie was an A&R man for a while and now DJs regularly. James shares an office with Gary Barlow at Universal Records, while Tim is a professional pianist and still plays regularly with bands in Oxford.

HOW?

Both albums, plus various MP3s are available on Amazon, though be warned, 'Indian Ink' will set you back close to £40.



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DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

MINOR COLES

Urgently spindly yelping indie with worryingly high blood pressure here from Minor Coles, doubtless caused by all the self-medication they sing about in opening track, 'Take With Lots Of Alcohol', nodding towards Bloc Party and You Say Party, We Say Die at times but stopping from their highly-strung opining only to chant randomly in the middle of the street and suggesting that Youthmovies really are the most influential Oxford band of recent times. This is great, simple, fresh pop fun, 'My Invisible' a carefree skip through amiably up-for-a-scrap pop, fuzzing playfully under cheerily uptight vocal harmonies. A change of tack for 'Black Hole', a twinkling, downbeat lament that if not entirely convincing at least shows a different side to the band, but they finish in some style with 'Caroline', fizzing and frothing in what might, by their standards, be considered epic style. As we say, probably not the most original sound we've heard lately, but of all the bands we've come across that owe a sizeable debt to Youthmovies, Minor Coles are one of the few we'd actively cross the street to investigate further.

RISEN IN BLACK

This month's obligatory metal demo, although by obligatory, we mean more than welcome, especially coming from a band who impressed greatly at this year's Oxford Punt. Risen In Black make hard work of it to start with, mind. Opener 'When We Are Called' grinds in on a slo-mo gothic intro but proceeds to chug and churn rather less ferociously than we've come to expect of them, the rhythm guitar in particular refusing to lead anywhere new after its initial opening salvo. The clean/dirty duel vocals merely confirm its similarity to too many other metalcore bands and after six minutes it all feels a bit ponderous: hey, boys, ditch the attempts at melody and just get on with the nastiness. Melodies are for gurlz. It gets better though, 'Circle' being an anthemic old-school metal piece run through with the gnarlier, doomier side of thrash, sounding more like the musical equivalent of someone screwing a large bolt into the side of your skull while speaking parseltongue and by the time they get to final track, 'Leper's Embrace', they've ramped it up a good few notches and upped the venom levels, not to mention Venom levels.

SLOW LEARNER

A solo outing for former-Anyways, Relationships and Blue Kite chap Pete Lock, so quality levels should be assured. And initially at least we're not disappointed, despite the fact that much of this was recorded in Pete's bathroom because he didn't have a reverb unit ("Hey, it worked for Joe Meek," he rightly adds), 'Competition' is a great, winsome folk-pop nugget, clattering merrily along like a stranded but undaunted travelling minstrel from the 60s folk-rock revolution. A shame Pete can't stay on the sunny side of the street, instead dipping into morose strumming and keening, the chief pitfalls of so many nominally acoustic solo acts. 'Into The Crowd' feels sullen and laboured, while on 'Wrappers', the tune seems to go walkabout halfway through, never to return. Better is 'Chase Away With The Moon' with its vaguely Indian feel in the rhythm and guitar, but, possibly due to its lo-fi recording, the vocals feel too far away and fail to connect. Come on Pete, chin up, we're happiest when you're happiest. Saddington is no place to be.

VERY NICE HARRY

Named after a line in *Lock, Stock & Two Smoking Barrels*, we should have expected Very Nice Harry to be a bit geezerish but this kind of pub rock is lacking even the rudimentary blokey humour or pizzazz of that film. 'Sterling Fella' starts off promisingly enough, the singer employing a similarly over-egged style to Half Rabbits' Michael Weatherburn, but VNH lack that band's enjoyably preposterous sense of gothic theatre and simply bundle along with few frills and even fewer thrills. 'Tragic Tale Of A Holiday Romance' is bolshier and bluesier but graceless, unable to commit itself to anything in particular other than a lightweight steal from Free's 'Wishing Well', all chug and bluster and no character. 'Oliver Stone' is nominally jaunty, nominally funky even and at least comes with a bit of gusto but is so lyrically prosaic it's hard to take it seriously. It's not until the very end of the demo that the band chance upon something that might salvage the whole exercise, a slower, doomier number called 'Jabberwocky'. What Very Nice Harry really need to do, though, is get out of the boozier, ingest some serious hallucinogens and hope the ensuing visions can inspire something a bit more imaginative.

SOMA HIGH

Talking of drugs, this lot are named after the hallucinogen of choice in Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World', and being into drugs and stuff as they so obviously are, Soma High obviously thought it'd be a good idea

to wholesale plunder Queens of The Stone-Age's 'The Lost Art Of Keeping A Secret', doubtless so whacked out of their gourds they didn't realise even a lost Amazonian tribe would spot the glaring similarity. Undaunted by the shame they've brought on themselves they plough headlong through what sounds like Kaiser Chief's 'I Predict A Riot' filleted of its main hook and slightly remodelled as an old mod-punk song. Like so much else this month it's not bad so much as generic, lacking any spark of adventure or danger. The accompanying blurb, meanwhile, informs us they've previously supported Razorlight, beside whom this overblown guff doubtless sounds like the apex of groundbreaking rock excess.

HIGHSCORES

Difficult one to call, this. The demo is entitled '4 Remixes For No Cash' and dutifully features remixes of tracks by The Family Machine, Cat Matador, Black Hats and Youthmovies, but there's no other information available. Hell, it could be Thom Blummin Yorke messing about in his bedroom studio for all we know. Probably not but it'd be nice to think he was casting his gaze over his spiritual offspring. As it is, The Family Machine get a simple, playful and slightly glitchy rendering, but the remodelling of Cat Matador lacks such frivolity and makes them sound even more morose than they usually do. It's difficult to make Youthmovies sound any more random than they did, although Highscores has a go, but best of the lot here is the Black Hats remix, giving the band a heavy-duty dub bass back-up and turning the song into a loping skank with just the merest hint of a Latin street fair vibe. It ends up in a mazy buzz of Toytown synthetics and is worth the price of admission on its own.

CRZ

Blimey, is it the late 90s again? So it seems with this demo from local rapper/producer CRZ as he revisits that era's rap-rock fusion, initially threatening a low-rent Rage Against The Machine pastiche on opening track 'Final Fuse', that evolves into something closer to Senser as the strident female co-vocalist joins in. It's full-blooded stuff but you do get the feeling it had its time in the last century, especially when the overblown and too clean-cut guitar solo sails in like something half-inched from Van Halen. CRZ takes a backseat for 'Overseas', which is dominated by overly shrill female vocals and sounds like another attempt at Disney-fied grunge, but 'Reflection' is back to the rap-rock formula of the first track. By the time they get to 'Little MC' it's all gone a bit Lacuna Coil, with the epic female vocal wailing doing battle with some seriously gnarled rapping.

The whole thing sounds well put together but equally sounds like it was done better by plenty of other bands some considerable time ago.

BROTHERS WELSH

Brothers Welsh used to be, in part at least, Collisions and Consequences, who we reviewed a few times previously. This current band is made up of two brothers and a Welshman, which is a neat coincidence given their name, isn't it? What are the chances of that? Very much in the local lineage of Dive Dive, Youthmovies and most recently This Town Needs Guns, the trio spangle their way airily through vaguely maths-y indie jangle, not quite angular enough to keep you guessing but not beatific enough to sound blissed out. Seemingly neither one thing nor the other, perhaps their destiny lies with songs like 'Tatt My Back', which is simpler and prettier and suggests they've got a future as a gentle-minded acoustic pop band, though they might do well to ditch the incongruous crescendo that adds an unnecessary extra couple of minutes to the song. And while we're about it, what does 'Tpaoms' mean? Even Google Translate didn't help, which suggests it isn't Welsh for haemorrhoids or anything.

THE DEMO DUMPER

GYNDY

Sometimes a demo comes along that turns us into a raging, purple-faced drill sergeant, bawling out the hapless miscreant for being such a bloody effing mimsy who needs a size-11 Doc Martin rammed up his backside with lethal force. Gyndy here is a case in point. For God's sake, boy, speak up! Stop mumbling into your navel like a sleep-deprived sulky teenager. And what in blazes do you think you're doing with those guitar strings? Do you think Pete Townsend became a multimillionaire rock god by picking at his fretboard like a toddler with a plate of greens? No, he bloody didn't, he smashed the fucking thing into his amp until it burst into flames. What's that? You're feeling a bit down? A bit listless? I'll give you down! Face down in a bloody frontline trench surrounded by rats and cholera and bloody big German artillery. Might inspire you to write some better poetry. Never bloody did Wilfred Owen any harm, eh? Sorry, got carried away then. Spot of the old post-traumatic stress disorder. You'd bloody have it too if some record company fucker had just posted you a copy of the new Phil Collins Motown covers album. Even George W Bush couldn't sanction that kind of psychological torture, could he?

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

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



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30th Anniversary Tour



Room: 101

Europe's biggest Indie night Every Saturday at O2 Academy Oxford

Door time: 10.30pm - 1am

Main Room - Propaganda: The Best New & Classic Indie Alternative Music
Academy2 - Trashy: Kitsch glam pop and guilty pleasures
Academy3 - Room 101: Rock, Metal & Punk anthems

Door - £5 / £5nus/advance / £4 NHS

Group discounts available for groups of more than 10,
contact mail@o2academyoxford.co.uk

> Carlsberg £2.50 > Dbl Vodka + mixer £3.50

> 2x Jagerbombs £5 > Sourz £1.95

> Sambuca £1.95 > Propaganda Club Card drink - GlitterDisco £2

Facebook: Propaganda Oxford, Advance Tickets, Weekly Photos

and more info: www.thepropaganda.com. Photo ID required for entry.

Tickets for Saturday night shows include free entry to Trashy / Room 101 / Propaganda (or £6 / £5 NUS on the door)