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# NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

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65 DAYS OF STATIC, PULLED APART BY HORSES, STEVE MASON, A SILENT FILM and FONDA 500 are among the latest batch of new names to be added to this summer's Truck Festival lineup. They join headliners Mew and Teenage Fanclub over the weekend of 24th-25th July at Hill Farm in Steventon. The full line-up so far for Truck is on the main Truck advert on page 19th. Tickets, priced £80 (or £60 for 13-17 year olds) are on sale from The Scribbler in Oxford city centre, the Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown, the Music Box on Cowley Road, Rapture in Witney and online at Ticketweb and See Tickets. Truck are currently looking for "Truck Ambassadors" to help with promotion in colleges and schools. Anyone interested should email Drew at drew@thisistruck.com. Visit www.thisistruck.com for more festival news.

STORNOWAY were forced to postpone two of their three planned album launch gigs at the A1 Pool Club last month after singer Brian Briggs lost his voice. The trio of low-key acoustic shows were planned as a thank you to the band's loyal Oxford following, with only 100 tickets available for each night. The shows are set to be rearranged. Visit www.myspace.com/stornoway for further news.

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND play a four-night stint at this year's Glastonbury Festival. The hot jazz collective will play at the Gaz's Rockin' Blues Rocket lounge. They also play two local shows this month, at the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 5th June and Fat Lil's in Witney on Friday 11th. Support for both nights comes from Dead Jerichos, Huck & The Handsome Fee and N Giles.



UTE were picked to perform at Radio 1 Big Weekend Festival in Bangor at the end of May. The band were nominated by BBC Oxford Introducing, who have also picked the trio as their Band Of The Year, following in the footsteps of Stornoway, A Silent Film and Little Fish. Ute joined a bill that featured Cheryl Cole, Florence & The Machine, Dizzee Rascal, MGMT and Vampire Weekend as well as fellow Oxonians Stornoway.

Talking to Nightshift ahead of the event last month, bassist and singer Michael Chilcott said, "We were picked thanks to BBC Oxford Introducing; they have been so supportive of us ever since we started out and we're lucky to have been chosen to be their Introducing Band of 2010, which is super cool and something which we feel really honoured about. But they put us forward and we were chosen! We were all at work when we found out and it was all a bit surreal. We're so excited and nervous, we've been busy replacing creaky old equipment and trying to get our shit together for it. It's the biggest show we've ever played by miles, in terms not only of the number of people there but for the exposure that it gives. We're trying not to think about all that too much because otherwise we'll implode into dust. It's gonna rule!"



HARRY ANGEL release a new EP this month. 'A Bad Business' features four new songs and was recorded with former-Xmas Lights electronics wizard Umair Chaudhry at Keynote Studios. Harry Angel launch the new EP with a gig at the Port Mahon on Friday 4th June. Support comes from this month's Nightshift Demo Of The Month winners Countryside, plus Von Braun.

**OZZY OSBOURNE**'s show at the O2 Academy sold out in under an hour when tickets went on sale last month. The legendary metal singer is playing a warm-up show on 1<sup>st</sup> July for his iTunes Festival appearance at the Roundhouse on the 3<sup>rd</sup>.



CHARLIESTOCK returns to the Black Horse in Kidlington in August. The mini-festival runs over the weekend of the 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> and the organisers are looking for local bands to pay. Last year's inaugural event raised over £900 for local charities. This year's Charliestock is in aid of Macmillan cancer support. Bands interested should call Charlie on 01865 373154.

#### A REMINDER THAT SS20 on

Cowley Road now stock local CDs and vinyl. All Oxfordshire acts are encouraged to get in contact with either Mon or Lee at SS20 at 176 Cowley Road or on 01865 791851.

#### AS EVER, DON'T FORGET to

tune into BBC Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The show plays the best new Oxford releases and demos as well as interviews with local and touring acts. Local bands can upload tracks to be played on the show via the Uploader tool on the BBC website. Visit bbc.co.uk/oxford for more details.

#### THE NIGHTSHIFT OFFICE will

be closed from Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May through to Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June. You can still email gig listing etc through at nightshift@oxfordmusic.net



BORDERVILLE, INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS, DEAD JERICHOS, MATT SAGE, RESERVOIR CATS and CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED are among the acts set play on the Riverside stage at this year's Cornbury Festival. They join the likes of Jackson Browne, David Gray, Squeeze and The Feeling at the festival which runs over the weekend of 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> July at Cornbury Park, near Charlbury.

Other acts confirmed for the Riverside Stage, which features a large number of local bands, are **Les Clochards**, **Two Fingers Of Firewater**, **Billy Pure**, **Mariana Magnavita**, **Easy Tiger** and **Brainchild**. Dead Jerichos won their slot on the Riverside after winning Fat Lil's Battle Of The Bands competition last month. Their victory came just a few days after they won the Oxfringe Festival Battle Of The Bands competition, earning a slot on Bob Harris' stage at Truck Festival.

Tickets for Cornbury are on sale from the festival website – **www.cornburyfestival.com** as well as the credit card hotline: 0871 472 0420

Win a pair of Cornbury Festival tickets with Nightshift – see page 21 for details.





#### A FEW YEARS AGO NIGHTSHIFT

interviewed Radiohead ahead of their South Park homecoming gig. The band were at the height of their commercial and critical success. Simultaneously the cult of celebrity was in full ugly bloom. Something that stuck with us from that chat was Radiohead's deep belief that they were musicians first, last and always. Not celebrities. For them the music was everything and their passion for it, and their disdain for fame as an end in itself, shone through.

Talking to Stornoway, you get a similar feeling. For Stornoway the song is very much the star. It's not the only similarity between the two sets of people. Like Radiohead Stornoway are a close-knit group of thoughtful, highly-intellectual, creative individuals with a naturally gifted frontman, a band with a well-developed sense of self-awareness and humour and a singular artistic vision. There is ambition but precious little ego. It's an extremely rare combination of assets.

#### STORNOWAY'S DEBUT ALBUM,

'Beachcomber's Windowsill', released at the end of May on the legendary 4AD label, is one of the most complete sets of songs we've heard since Radiohead's 'OK Computer'. Like 'OK Computer' it's an album with a set of lyrical themes running through it, an album of quietly intense moods, a captivating, questing nature and an album that gently twists the genres within which it operates into often wondrous new shapes.

into often wondrous new shapes. With characteristic modesty, Stornoway singer Brian Briggs emailed Nightshift to say thanks for the write-up we gave the album in our last issue – "the most amazing review we've ever had" - before adding, "Thankfully hot on its heels was the worst one, from a gig in Amsterdam, so my head hasn't grown too much." 'Beachcomber's Windowsill' is the culmination of four years of songwriting and recording. In that time Stornoway have grown to be Oxford's favourite band, a status earned with the aid of a series of ever-more ambitious shows in unusual local settings, from the Oxford Botanical Gardens to last year's history-making concert at the Sheldonian, where Stornoway became the first non-classical act ever to perform at the Christopher Wrendesigned building, playing virtually acoustic and backed by the Oxford Millennium Orchestra.

#### NIGHTSHIFT IS TALKING TO

three-quarters of Stornoway ahead of their forthcoming tour. Present are singer, guitarist and chief songwriter Brian Briggs, drummer Rob Steadman and keyboard player Jonathan Ouin. The quartet is completed by bassist Ollie Steadman, although the band is typically augmented by trumpeter Adam Briggs (Brian's brother) and violinist Rahul Satija.

With typically perverse logic, the band chose to launch 'Beachcomber's Windowsill' in Oxford with a three-night stint at the A1 Pool Hall in Crown Street, with its modest 100 capacity, the polar opposite of the Sheldonian's grandeur.

BRIAN: "We wanted to choose a venue that was as far removed from the Sheldonian as possible. Since it's part of our album release tour we wanted to do something more personal and special for fans in Oxford. We would never have come this far if it wasn't for the support of the Oxford massive."

Sadly the second and third nights of

the run had to be postponed after Brian lost his voice on the Sunday night, but this affection for and debt of gratitude to the Oxford scene that spawned and nurtured them is something Stornoway often refer to, recently spending much of an interview with *The Guardian* paying tribute to *BBC Oxford Introducing* host Tim Bearder who has done so much to big up his favourite band.

#### ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING

things about 'Beachcomber's Window' is that it is released on 4AD, a label with a 30-year legacy of unstinting quality, from The Birthday Party and Bauhaus, though Cocteau Twins and Dead Can Dance, to Pixies and Throwing Muses and on to its current roster that includes Camera Obscura, Scott Walker and Bon Iver. It feels like a natural home for a band like Stornoway, and we wonder if it was the sort of label they were always aiming for.

BRIAN: "We are very happy about it. We are control freaks so needed to be reassured that any label we signed to wouldn't transform us in to the next Blue or Jedward. We are pretty confident 4AD won't do that – they

can't even say the word 'Nightshift' without asking our permission first. I am a big Pixies, Camera Obscura, Bon Iver and Tindersticks fan, and we were incredibly excited when they sent us an offer. But to be honest the real reason we signed to them was cos no-one else was interested."

#### HOW DO STORNOWAY FEEL

about the album now it's finally completed and released?

BRIAN: "The recording experience has lasted about four years and shows no sign of stopping anytime soon. It's a continuous process and happens in bedrooms, living rooms, kitchens, wherever really. The album is a collection of our favourite songs and recordings since we started as a band, which is why we thought the title 'Beachcomber's Windowsill' would fit well - it's a bit of a ramshackle collection. We are painstakingly picky when it comes to recording so it is an extremely slow process, right through from the positioning of the microphone to the final mastering, but the album was worth all the hard work because we are very chuffed with what we ended up with."

Previously you said you find it easier to produce yourselves because producers often have a different vision of what your songs should sound like to yourselves.

IONATHAN: "As Brian said, the

JONATHAN: "As Brian said, the vast majority of the songs on the album were recorded at home over the last few years. We actually love the process of recording, partly because it's intertwined with the writing and arrangement process, but it's a time-consuming labour of love, especially since we just use a portastudio. Thankfully 4AD have been completely supportive of this side of things from the beginning. There were a couple of songs which we wanted to try and achieve a fuller band sound, so we asked Craig Silvey to help produce these, in Miloco studios in London, and thankfully he put up with us and did what we consider to be a great job."

A lot of the songs will be familiar to long-time fans and local audiences. Have you started writing the second album yet?

BRIAN: "As with the recording, the writing is an ongoing process, whenever we can find time in between the sex, drugs, and accountancy meetings."

Lyrically and musically there's a

Lyrically and musically there's a feeling of longing or yearning for a more romantic world in your songs. Are you a romantic person? A daydreamer?

BRIAN (bursting into song): "Am I a dreamer, am I, am I a dreamer? Am I a dreamer? Am I a dreamer? The answer is yes."

JONATHAN: "Breave deeper, daydreamer."

One thing that really makes

Stornoway special is the way the music is so subtly orchestrated. There are some seriously talented musicians involved here but no-one and nothing gets to dominate.

BRIAN: "Yes – we are shy and modest people so I think that comes across in the music. If one day Jon suddenly went in to a massive electric guitar solo on stage I would need to check whether Rick Parfitt from Status Quo had stolen his body. Just like he stole the wife of a devoted Status Quo fan who then got depressed and hung himself."

#### STORNOWAY HAVE BEEN

steadily on the rise over the last few years but 2009 was a pretty incredible year for the band, including playing at Glastonbury and appearing on Later... with Jools Holland, yet there's a feeling they have remained slightly under the radar as far as press hype goes. Has it been a conscious effort to avoid that fast-track route and let the band's reputation build organically? BRIAN: "To an extent yes, because our press agent and manager are sensitive to what we are like as a band and what we would be comfortable with. However, it is also largely down to the type of music we play - we are

just opt for a herring throwing competition down by the sea. But luckily the local *Stornoway Gazette* had been bigging up the night for a while so it was a full house and no rotten vegetables were hurled."

As an ornithologist with a doctorate in duck ecology, visiting the Hebridean island must have been a dream come true for Brian. Was there any time to explore the local bird life?

BRIAN: "Golden Eagle, Great Skua, Black Guillemot, Hen Harrier, Shorteared Owl, Puffin, Twite, Manx Shearwater, Gannet, Eider, not to mention the Otters, Seals, Dolphins..."

Your Myspace blog claims you got to jam with The Corrs.

JONATHAN: "It didn't really happen, I'm afraid. It was a cruel rumour, which we started. A 'jam' with the Corrs would have been a bit distressing for everyone I think. Perhaps if it was silent it would be okay."

You've also been playing around Europe too recently.

BRIAN: "We played at EuroSonic festival earlier this year in snowcovered Gronigen in the Netherlands. We had an amazing reception and we responsible and better paid than being in a band?

JONATHAN: "Not really. Right now Ollie is just finishing his chemistry finals, and Rob only recently left school. My brief stint as a toilet cleaner in Debenhams off Cornmarket was probably a career high after graduating. So Brian is really the only member of the band to have given up a decent job (in ecology) to make room for Stornoway; his boss was always very supportive because he was a musician too. He wanted him to 'live the dream' and practically pushed him out the door..."

Given that many of the reviews and features on the band have mentioned your academic prowess, what's the weirdest thing you've been asked? JONATHAN: "Does a duck's quack echo?"

#### AND SO WE LEAVE

Stornoway to go about their business of quietly and unassumingly being brilliant, a band happy to become great in their own time and on their own terms. And we reflect on the first time we ever encountered them. playing down at the Cellar to a handful of early converts, their set punctuated by Brian's rambling monologues inspired by oddball articles in The New Scientist and their lustrous folk-rock hymns interspersed by crowd-pleasing, critic and cool kidbaiting singalongs like 'Mullet' and 'The Good Fish Guide', songs for now left in the past. Can they ever envisage reviving that side of their music?

JONATHAN: "What are they? Never heard of them. Er...ok...well, er, our didactic Rolf Harris tendency is being suppressed with the help of strong medication at the moment; the lyrical point of 'The Good Fish Guide' is something we still believe in though! As for 'Mullet', if you strip away the pointless hirsute lyrics, the transvestite gong players and fripperies, there's actually a nice little tune lurking underneath which was written by Ollie, so maybe it might mutate into something else in the future. If the original recording we made ever comes to light, you might be able to hear Joe Swarbrick from Borderville doing some strange backing vocals. Bet he's regretting

Daft song aside, the political message of 'The Good Fish Guide' is serious and astonishingly well informed. Maybe one day, when Stornoway are deservedly the biggest band in the world they can unearth it as an anthem for the eco movement. Stornoway might yet save the planet. We wouldn't put it past them. Though doubtless they'd be far too modest to take the credit.

'Beachcomber's Windowsill' is out now on 4AD.

#### "the writing is an ongoing process, whenever we can find time in between the sex, drugs, and accountancy meetings."

not pop sensations or scenesters, so it is inevitable that it would never be an instant stardom-type phenomenon." You've played some pretty ambitious venues locally so far, which of those was the best to actually play? ROB: "The Sheldonian is definitely going to be in our favourite gigs list, ever. Having the Oxford Millennium Orchestra there with us really helped us feel not too out of place!" How much of a logistical problem was the Sheldonian show to pull off, given the nature of the venue? ROB: "Rahul - who plays violin with us on stage - is a member of the Oxford Millennium Orchestra. He set it up basically and arranged for us to meet the various authorities at the Sheldonian. Because of the nature of the gig and the fact that it was the first non-classical music event in the building definitely had them worried! Their faces darkened and melted progressively as we brought in more and more equipment. The lighting rig wasn't massive but as soon as they saw that they nearly banished us from the building."

You finally got to play Stornoway this year. How was that and how did the locals take to you?

ROB: "We were obviously a bit worried of how we would be received and whether we would actually have any audience, or whether they would got very excited about touring around Europe. But then we went back to Amsterdam recently and we bombed."

You've got pretty much a full summer of festivals lined up; which are you most looking forward to?
BRIAN: "Glastonbury – it was the

highlight of last Summer. Also WOMAD, a brilliant world music festival where Jon and I worked for Oxfam a couple of years back; Hartlepool Tall Ships Festival; Positivus in Latvia, Truck of course!" If Stornoway could organise their own festival, where would it be and who would be on the bill?

JONATHAN: "Perhaps predictably, it would be on the Isle of Lewis, featuring Euros Childs, Horace Andy, Sam Cooke, Wild Beasts, Of Montreal, The Human League, U. Srinivas, Beach House, Spacemen 3, Nico Muhly, Blink 182, Jackson C. Frank, Ry Cooder, John Tavener and Yoko Ono. That would be one odd festival."

#### GOING BACK TO BRIAN'S

doctorate, even by the high standards set by the likes of Talulah Gosh, Radiohead et al. Stornoway are almost certainly the most academically-successful band to come out of Oxford. As such has there been any pressure on each or any of them to go and do something a bit more

# RELEASED

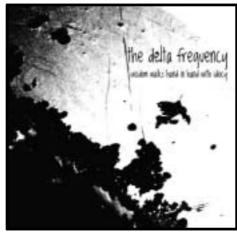
#### THE DELTA **FREQUENCY** 'Wisdom Walks Hand In Hand With Idiocy'

(Own Label)

Wisdom walks hand in hand with idiocy, but equally theatricality can often be seen out on the town with self-parody. It's a tricky path The Delta Frequency tread with their monstrously overblown gothic electro-rock. When they get it right, there are few finer, more overpowering bands in town; when they slip, even slightly, it's difficult to suppress a snigger.

Thankfully the band's debut album, following on from a couple of excellent demos and some masterfully OTT gigs, mostly gets it right. 'Introducing My Demagogues' sets a scene that quickly sets itself in stone: industrial-sized synth pulses, symphonic crescendos, Wagnerian pomp and Matt's stagey, mannered vocals, which hammer home the message that The Delta Frequency are a band who you should take very seriously indeed. And where they come on this strong, you should.

'High Five' sounds like Prince taking lessons from Specimen down at The Batcave, Phill Honey's Smashing Pumpkins-style wall-of-noise guitar carrying all before it; 'Charge Me Up' is robotically cantankerous, like Pendulum with a Daft Punk-shaped rocket up their backside, while album closer 'Eyes Wide' billows and



churns with an admirable lack of irony or subtlety. Problems arise when they underplay things or try to come on a bit playful. Here is a band that just doesn't do restraint, and nor should they try. While fellow local theatricallyproportioned rockers Borderville ride easily with high camp, The Delta Frequency tend to sound cartoonishly pompous, like a Year 11 goth tribute band when they turn the volume down and let Matt's bombastic voice take centre stage. The stilted 'Abel' is a prime example, while 'The Monkey Dies Tonight' slips close to becoming a Dio pastiche, wallowing in its own profundity.

Thankfully such lapses are the exception. Mostly 'Wisdom...' is as marvellously overegged as the band's smoke-shrouded live shows. Dale Kattack

anthem. Maybe 'Just Who Is The Ninety-fifth shoot-out defeat would be too much to swallow.

#### **EYE-CON** 'A Piece Of England'

(Own label)

It's World Cup month so obviously we'll be deluged with appropriate (or sometimes completely inappropriate) cash-in records. Here's the first of Oxfordshire's offerings, courtesy of a local band better known for their mod and Jam tributes. If we're being charitable ('A Piece Of England' is in aid of the Help For Heroes charity), it's an inoffensive slice of roustabout Kinks-y rock kicked out with cheesily earnest conviction, less about football than a general love of England, honky tonk piano, swelling brass and noodly guitar parts that all add up to a vaguely uplifting whole that'll never get sung on the terraces in a million years. It's a bit too soft rock by the book to really grab you; 'Kicker Conspiracy' it ain't, and given their background you feel they might have had more fun reworking an old classic like 'All Around The World' or 'That's Entertainment' into a footie

Minute Hero'? Perhaps not 'Funeral Pyre', though. Or 'Bitterest Pill'. Another penalty Dale Kattack

#### THE ANYDAYS 'Tambourine'

(Own label download)

While some balk at The Anydays' unabashed retro sound, for me they bring a freshness to their 60s-inspired songs that's hard to resist. New single 'Tambourine' stops at all stations from The Beatles to The Kinks, sounding like the soundtrack to an old black and white newsreel feature on Carnaby Street. They could come across as a tired, jobbing tribute band but, just as Sir Bald Diddley does with surf rock, The Anydays sound like they're living in another time zone.

Ian Chesterton

#### THE INVENTIONS OF **JERRY DARGE** 'Waking Hours'

(Regnog)

Recent releases by local acts Samuel Zasada and D Gwalia have shown how to do musical misery with real style and with the bench set so high, it was always going to be hard for The Inventions Of Jerry Darge to impress with this debut mini-album.

They have only themselves to blame though, taking an absolute age to get going, the first three songs here wallowing in a morose fug of morbid introspection, resolutely refusing to go anywhere even as the vultures circle. At last the appropriately-titled title track finds the band finding their - admittedly funereal stride, handclaps taking the place of a marching snare, mournful cello adding a bit of texture to a song that feels like it's drifted away from the orbit of Patti Smith's 'Ghostdance'

Emboldened, they offer 'Wayfaring Stranger', a drunken campfire lament that sounds like a junior drinking partner of Nick Cave, while 'False Bride' shuffles into skiffle territory, though feeling somewhat under-produced. There's a feeling TIOJD could produce something better with time, the soundtrack to a gothic western in the vein of The Proposition, perhaps, but they're too far off the pace for now. Any band with a song called 'Cocaine Blues' needs to sound like they've feasted on nothing but whisky and white powder for a month before writing and recording it and while they try to capture the stink of imminent death, they just don't sound close enough to death themselves yet to really carry it off.

Ian Chesterton





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### LITTLE FISH 'Am I Crazy?'

(Custard)

Having spent much of the past year recording with Linda Perry in the States and more recently supporting everyone from Placebo and Them Crooked Vultures to Hole, as well as hanging out with Debbie Harry (jealous? Us? You bet!), Jules and Nez are now set to begin the task of becoming utterly massive in earnest. New single 'Am I Crazy?' is a song local fans will be fully aware of - it featured on the band's first demo back in 2007 - but we approach this new version with some trepidation, lest pop mogul Perry has meddled with Little Fish's raw, propulsive formula too much. Happily, after a brief, toned-down intro, it's hell-for-leather garage-rock as we've always loved them. This new version has been tweaked, not so much cleaned up as given space within itself to breath but still powerfully and emotionally taught. Nez's drums thunder while Jules' voice remains something beyond special - the way she manages to spit line after line without pause



for breath, like a trained opera singer, is astonishing.

With the duo recently drawing praise from *The New York Times* for making Hole sound "lacklustre", you'd hope they'll really start to grab the headlines their shows demand. Their debut album is out in September; then the storm will really break.

Dale Kattack

### **DOMES OF SILENCE** 'Hunter S T'

(Silver Buddha)

Commenting on Domes Of Silence recently, another writer of this parish said, "Who needs anger or violence when you've got mass?". It's a perfect summation of a band whose monolithic nature has a positively tectonic casualness about it. Here's a band who could bulldoze your house to rubble with a single granite-crafted riff and just keep in chugging along without even noticing the havoc they'd caused. The band's latest single finds their big ol' sludge-rock riffs peaking and troughing like waves on a stormy sea while singer Sean Parkin's growly blues holler is full is disdainful menace. Like Kyuss remodelling Led Zeppelin in the image of Depeche Mode, Domes Of Silence do heavy with such nonchalant ease you'd think twice about shaking hands with them lest they crushed every bone to powder. A band who have been quietly going about being very noisy indeed over the last few years, it's time to start paying proper attention.

Ian Chesterton

### THE KEYZ 'A Way Of Life'

(Highly Recommended)

A cynic might suggest that if the state of British politics and the existence of Joe McElderry teach us anything, it's that you shouldn't let the public vote for anything. On the flip side, the emergence of websites like Slicethepie mean the power to finance new pop acts is taken away from the established industry and given directly to the fans. Such is the situation Banbury's The Keyz have found themselves in since winning £15,000 of funding to record this debut album.

Slicethepie's 'Wisdom Of Crowds' basis does, however, mean the acts who win through can sound like bands designed by committee, and, deconstructed, its very premise is no different to public voting on X-Factor. You can see why The Keyz got the votes: their geezerish, everybloke brand of pub-funk and pop balladry isn't going to challenge anyone's taste buds. They even describe themselves as feelgood, and, like a postpiss-up burger, they satisfy a craving for salt, sugar and fat without providing any substance. 'Heist' sounds like Squeeze without the subtlety or wit, honky tonk piano runs rubbing easily against the soft-focus ska rhythm, while 'Don't Let Go' is landfill indie of the Kooks variety. Quickly the album sinks into a routine of jaunty rockaboogie songs and mobile phone-aloft ballads that might be borrowed from any number of asinine boy bands. Half the time you expect singer Robin Young to burst into a chorus of 'Chitty Bang Bang' such is his Dick Van Dykealike Gor-blimey-guvnor singing voice, and while its joviality brings with it an inclusiveness, it can feel like being trapped in a lift with the office "character" after a while.

Ultimately 'A Way Of Life' is a professionalsounding album by a band who have made the most of a decent studio budget, but, like the focus group-styled Hollywood trial viewing system, The Keyz sound less like a band setting out to please the most people and more like one programmed to offend the least.

Dale Kattack

### CLARE FREE 'Be Who You Are'

(Funky Mama)

"I wuv you fluffy bunny!" "I wuv you too ickle squirrelkins!" "Mwah!" (imagine sounds of squelchy kisses being blown across a flowery meadow). Feeling queasy yet? Now imagine this scene stretched over forty minutes to a soundtrack of polished blues-rock of the sort that makes Barbara Dickson sound like Sister Rosetta Tharpe. It's like being stuck in a room with your mum/sister/teacher (delete as applicable) while they indulge in a heavy petting session with their new boyfriend.

Now, we're not ones to kick anyone who happens to be contented, but Clare Free's album is so full of mawkish sentimentality you could grind it up and use it to sweeten cans of diet coke. Clare plays the blues, ostensibly in the style of Bonnie Raitt and Stevie Ray Vaughan. but since the blues was founded on poverty, hardship and suffering, listening to an album that is basically an extended love letter to her hubby about just how bloody fantastic her life with him and the kids is, you feel there may be a vital element missing. We're not sure what our favourite line here is but "Soon two became three / We started a little family" is up for contention. Such saccharine sentiments might be forgiven if the music had an ounce of raw emotion or soul, but it feels like it crept out of an FM radio jingle recording studio in 1985, a neat, polished establishment where the mixing desk had a button marked "Generic Country Twang". Those few tales of heartbreak and loss - all in the past now, natch - are steeped in cliché, while 'She's An Evil Woman' ("Do you see that woman? / She's fancy as can be / Attracting all the men / Like a killer queen bee") is so lacking in real spite it makes Cliff Richard's 'Devil Woman' sound like Prolapse's 'Tina, This Is Matthew Stone'. We might mention the frequent, endless guitar solos but we've probably put the boot in enough for today. Clare will get over it, we're sure. She's happily married (to her best friend!) of course.

Dale Kattack

### TRACE 'Under Cover'

(Crash)

Trace is an electronic project by established soundtrack composer and producer David Impey. Punningly titled 'Under Cover', it is an album of three covers; an electronica reworking of Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells: Part 1', plus two expansions on basic themes; George Winston's 'September: Colours / Dance' and 'The Neighbours Complain', a piece originally written by his father as a show piece for the drummer in a 1940's big band.

When approaching the Cult Of Oldfield, you have at all times to carry a big sign bearing the word 'Context', and remember that with his very first handmade piece in 1973 Oldfield literally broke down the barrier between the classical and rock worlds, changing the landscape forever. Oldfield was a guitarist who trained up on keyboards and any other instrument left lying around late at night in the studio downtime; Trace appears to be a wholly accomplished keyboardist and programmer, so while the main Celtic knot-like musical motifs remain happily in place, a machined late-80s feel of Jan Hammer and Miami Vice courses throughout, culminating in the 'MC Finale' being taken at a bit of a rough gallop. Any howls of lack of bucolic heart need to go back to the context of Oldfield himself, who explored most of these electronic themes too, so broadly this suite fits well into the great man's middle period.

'September', while occasionally crossing 'Tubular Bells' wake, is a passable show-reel of technique and well woven styles, from 'Stars On 45' backbeats, through jazz and the hemp hop trance of Berkana Sowelu to the boudoir chill of William Orbit. I'd have figured 'The Neighbours Complain' to have been a full on percussion clatter, but instead we're back in Harold Faltermeyer synth funk territory, so rounding out the portfolio feel of the whole beast, whose digital nature aside, stands up well to replaying.

Paul Carrera



#### TUESDAY 1st

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free weekly live jazz club. Tonight featuring Alvin Roy & Reeds Unlimited.

PDRR + FOETUS 502 + LIE OF RILEY: The Port Mahon – Experimental music night with improvised guitar noise from PDRR, Suicide-inspired lo-fi electro from Foetus 502 and a percussive collaboration between PDRR and Euhedral under the guise The Lie Of Riley.

#### WEDNESDAY 2nd

**ISLET: The Jericho Tavern** – Raw, rhythmic no-wave noise from Wales' elusive DIY rock crew, eschewing Myspace et al and building their following by word of mouth based on their frenetic, chaotic gigs.

Monday 7th

### **GOLDFRAPP: O2 Academy**

As you might expect, Goldfrapp's Oxford debut is already sold out and we can tick off another of our list of acts we hoped would come to town. Alison Goldfrapp is without doubt one of the most influential artists of the decade, influencing everyone from Madonna to Bat For Lashes to Florence & The Machine. The trick seems to be in taking the best ideas from the musical underground and turning them into pop gold. Their careerdefining 'Black Cherry' is close to modern day electro-pop perfection, while 2008's 'Seventh Tree' took a complete stylistic about-turn and brought a dreamy pop sheen to spooky old folk music. With their new album, 'Head First', though, Goldfrapp (Alison and long-time pop partner Will Gregory) suddenly sound like followers rather than innovators. Stealing the euphoric 80s synth-pop pomp of ELO, Giorgio Morodor and Fleetwood Mac, they're trailing behind Little Boots and La Roux. Like the label they're signed to, Mute, the band seem to be striving too hard for commercial success, when their appeal rests on their innovation and individuality. Never mind, we can forgive Alison Goldfrapp pretty much anything given the peerless music on her previous four albums and it's likely to be one of the best pure pop gigs of the year, no contest.



## <u>JUNE</u>

#### CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED:

**The Bullingdon** – Soulful 60s and 70s-inspired rocking from the erstwhile Supergrass multi-instrumentalist – *see main Introducing feature*. **GOD OF SMALL THINGS + THE** 

RELATIONSHIPS + FROM THE MILL

**HOUSE:** The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with grungy classic rockers God Of Small Things, plus sweet Arcadian psychedelic pop from local indie godfathers The Relationships.

MEAN RIGHT HOOK + BEARD OF ZEUSS + RIOTHOUSE: The Port Mahon – New local metal and hardcore community group Inspektor Hoarse launch a monthly gig night, tonight featuring stripped-down hardcore newcomers Mean Right Hook, coming in somewhere between Blood Brothers and Phantom Theory, plus support from stoner-thrash Punt stars Beard Of Zeuss and trad metallers Riothouse.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass and dubstep club night.

#### THURSDAY 3rd

LA FARO: The Jericho Tavern – Caustic, metallic hardcore from Belfast's Smalltown America-signed rockers La Faro, coming in somewhere between The Jesus Lizard, McLusky and Girls Vs Boys.

THE DAMNED + TEXAS TERRI BOMB + ED TUDORPOLE: O2 Academy – Once more round the block for the punk veterans, Mssrs Vanian and Sensible kicking out old classics like 'New Rose' and 'Neat Neat Neat' with suitably irreverent abandon. Support comes from LA's Hole-like grungers Texas Terri Bomb and former-Tenpole Tudor frontman/lunatic Ed Tudorpole.

A SILENT FILM + FIXERS + THE

SCHOLARS: The Cellar – Homecoming show for the cinematic piano-led rockers, hopefully set to release the follow-up to their acclaimed 'The City That Sleeps' debut soon, having enjoyed a Number 1 single and Top 3 album in Portugal last year. Support from Brian Wilson-inspired harmonic pop troupe Fixers and Editors-influenced new wavers The Scholars.

STATIC ACTION + K-LACURA: Fat Lil's,

Witney – Pop punk from Witney's Static Action, plus metallic post-hardcore from K-Lacura.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern REGGAE CLUB NIGHT: The Bullingdon CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

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

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon** 

#### FRIDAY 4th

#### **EXAMPLE + OU EST LE SWIMMING POOL:**

O2 Academy – Electro and hip hop from the west London rapper, formerly signed to Mike Skinner's defunct The Beats label and out on a national tour to plug new album 'Won't Go Quietly'. Funky electro-pop somewhere between Passion Pit, La Roux and Pet Shop Boys from Ou Est Le Swimming Pool in support.

LIMEHOUSE LIZZY: The Regal – Rightly recognised as one of the world's best and most authentic tribute bands, tonight playing a Greatest Hits set of Phil Lynott songs, from 'Whisky In The Jar' and 'The Boys Are Back In Town' to 'Sarah' and 'Waiting For An Alibi'.

#### KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE MIGHTY REDOX + MOIETY + COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + MARK ATHERTON & FRIENDS: The

**Wheatsheaf** – EP launch for Redox at their own Klub Kak night, kicking out their trademark swampy blues-rock, with support from folky rockers Moiety.

CODES IN THE CLOUDS + FROM LIGHT
TO SOUND: The Jericho Tavern – Expansive,

symphonic instrumental rock in the vein of Explosions In The Skies and Mogwai from Kent's Erased Tapes-signed Codes In The Clouds. Cinematic electro-post-rocking from From Light To Sound in support.

**BON GIOVI: The Bullingdon** – Bon Jovi tribute

HARRY ANGEL + COUNTRYSIDE + VON BRAUN: The Port Mahon – Dark-minded gothic rockers Harry Angel launch their new EP, mixing up elements of Radiohead, Sonic Youth and Bauhaus. Excellent support from this month's Nightshift Demo World Cup winners Countryside, inspired by Guided By Voices and Grandaddy, plus Cure and Radiohead-influenced alt.rockers Von

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Ska, soul, reggae and rock'n'roll with live sets from Zion & The White Boys and Japanese rocksteady chap Dan Tenoshi, plus DJ sets from Wrongtom and Deemers J.

**BREATHE:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Pink Floyd tribute.

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

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

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

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

#### SATURDAY 5th

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + DEAD JERICHOS + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE + N GILES: The

**Wheatsheaf** – Authentically drunken and lively New Orleans-style speakeasy jazz from TORFSB,

with a great mixed bill of support, featuring uptight new wave popstrels Dead Jerichos, Rootsy gothic country types Huck & The Handsome Fee and dirty swamp-blues chap N Giles.

#### TOM HINGLEY + BRICKWORK LIZARDS:

The Cellar – Soulful garage rock and psychedelia from former-Inspiral Carpets frontman Tom Hingley, plus eclectic Arabic folk, hip hop and jazz outfit Brickwork Lizards.

I SAID YES + MESSAGE TO BEARS + MATT KILFORD + TOLIESEL: The Port Mahon –

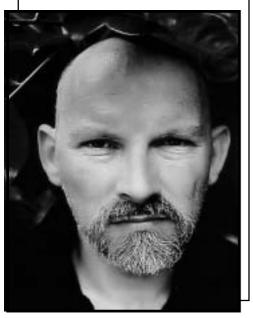
Great local bill featuring lo-fi indie-folksters I Said Yes, ambient neo-classical soundscapers Message To Bears, emotive acoustic singer-songwriter Matt Kilford and soft-centred indie-pop newcomers Toliesel.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Dolphin, Wallingford – Eccentric blues rock.

Monday 7th

### BRENDAN PERRY: O2 Academy

As one half of Dead Can Dance, alongside Lisa Gerrard, Brendan Perry long ago set the benchmark for ethereal gothic portent. Even more than Cocteau Twins the band created a whole new universe of sound, mixing tribal rhythms with grandiose neo-classical arrangements and Gerrard's astonishing operatic voice and idioglossia. Perry's rich, meditative baritone was a more measured counterpoint to Lisa's heavenly vocal style but some of Dead Can Dance's greatest moments came when he took the lead. Since the band split in 1996 (reforming briefly for a world tour in 2005) the London-born, New Zeland-raised singer and composer has isolated himself in his studio home in Ireland and it's here that he's written his latest solo album, 'Ark', his creative isolation and perfectionist approach exacerbating his themes of dystopia and alienation. While his previous solo work, 1999's 'Eye Of The Hunter', explored his fascination with African rhythms, 'Ark' is almost completely electronic and closer in sound to Dead Can Dance. Having left 4AD after 25 years on the label (and for whom DCD were the biggest selling band), he's found a new home at Cooking Vinyl and this first ever Oxford show is a rare chance to catch one of the most singular musical visionaries of the past 30 years.



#### MARK BOSLEY & STELLA SHAKERCHI:

Magic Café, Magdalen Road (1pm) — Lunchtime gig for the local gothic-folk songsmith, playing a set of originals, plus covers of The Kinks, Beatles, Cohen and Fairport Convention.

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

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

CLASSIC CLUB: The Bullingdon HONEYTHIEF IV: Baby Love – 80s and 90s dance and pop in aid of Amnesty International.

#### SUNDAY 6th

**DEAR SUPERSTAR + NEW DEVICE: 02** 

Academy – Sleazy glam-rocking in a Motley Crue vein from Manchester's Dear Superstar, recent tour support to Heaven's Basement. Guns'n'Roses and Van Halen-influenced hard rock from New Device

CROWDED HOUSE: The New Theatre – Neil Finn's multi-million-selling folk-rockers return with a new album, 'Intriguer', a full band effort after their last, low-key affair, 'Time On Earth'. FULL CIRCLE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Acoustic rock.

CHRIS THOMPSON + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + DEPUTEES: Malmaison –

Semi-acoustic session in the salubrious surroundings of the Mal, with hushed acoustic country-folk songsmith Chris Thompson in the style of Iron & Wine, plus ethereal folk-pop from International Jetsetters side project Welcome To Peepworld and airy acoustic rocking from The Deputees.

GUY & SOL + MOON LEOPARD + SUE & PHIL + BEARD OF DESTINY: Donnington Community Centre – Free acoustic session.

#### MONDAY 7th

**GOLDFRAPP: O2 Academy** – Already sold-out show from the electro-pop diva – *see main preview* 

**BRENDAN PERRY: O2 Academy** – The former-Dead Can Dance leader makes a solo showing – *see main preview* 

LIGHTNIN' WILLIE & THE POORBOYS:

The Bullingdon – Return to the famous Monday Blues for the Texas-born, Pasadenaresident electric blues guitarist, a big favourite on the UK circuit with his mix of blues, swing and rock'n'roll, inspired by Otis Rush, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Eddie Cochran.

**DEDLOK + ASHLEY EVANS: The Port Mahon -** new metal night.

#### TUESDAY 8th

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

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

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Port Mahon – Unplugged open session.

#### WEDNESDAY 9th

MURDER BY DEATH: O2 Academy – Growly, gothic saloon bar blues, country and punk somewhere suitably dark between Johnny Cash and The Bad Seeds.



Friday 11<sup>th</sup>

### **BAND OF HORSES: O2 Academy**

A cult band among cult bands over the past five years, South Carolina's Band Of Horses finally look like making the big breakthrough this year with the imminent release of third album, 'Infinite Arms'. The collective's infrequent previous visits to the UK have sold out in double quick time so this first ever trip to Oxford is doubly welcome. Formed by and centred around singer Ben Bridwell's keening vocals - remarkably similar to Neil Young -Band Of Horses, like Fleet Foxes and My Morning Jacket, are simultaneously melancholy, uplifting, earthy and spaced-out. They also sound hopelessly romantic, typified by the simply gorgeous 'No-One's Ever Gonna Love You' from their superb second album 'Cease To Begin'. While that album was almost hymnal in its lush moodiness at times, the new album is rockier, led by new single 'Compliment', and early reports suggest the band are coming out of their shells on stage. And for those of us who've tried and failed to get tickets for their London shows in the past it'll be a reward worth waiting for.

RESERVOIR CATS + ANTON BARBEAU + MONSTER: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with Flash Harry's notoriously loud goodtime blues-rockers Reservoir Cats headlining, plus psychedelic folk-pop troubadour Anton back over from California and tonight joined by former-Robyn Hitchcock & The Egyptians chaps

WORDPLAY: The Cellar - Hip hop club night.

Andy Metcalf and Morris Windsor.





 $Saturday 19^{th} - Sunday 20^{th}$ 

### RIVERSIDE FESTIVAL: Charlbury

The annual festival returns, now established as an essential part of the local music calendar. As ever the weekend is free, with a mix of music that's both credible and family-friendly. The organisers have taken a leaf out of Bestival's book this year and introduced a 'Crazy Bug' fancy dress theme and there'll be an Ugly Bug Ball after the music finishes on the Saturday night. As far as bands go, Saturday's bill is headlined by vaudevillian glam-rockers Borderville, who are joined by country-tinged downbeat indie faves The Family Machine, Charly Coombes & The New Breed, bringing a little 60s and 70s-style rock and soul to proceedings, while industrial goth-rockers The Delta Frequency and Canadian folk singer David Celia also feature, the latter due to play at Glastonbury the following weekend. Beard Of Zeuss. The Roundheels, Huck and the Handsome Fee and Barabrella are among the acts on the second stage. On Sunday The Quiet Men headline, while The Mighty Redox bring their swampy blues-rock to the festival stage, along with moddish new wave rockers The Black Hats (pictured); recent Scouting For Girls tour support Dead Like Harry; local supergroup Prohibition Smokers Club with their oddball mix of jazz, punk, arthouse pop and folk and folksters Slainte are among the acts playing. Over on the second stage Bicester rockers Phyal reform and there's some White Stripes tributing going from The Stripe Whites. The festival site is a couple of minutes walk from the train station which is on the Oxford-Hereford line, so it's easy to get to. Full details and line-up are online at riversidefestival.charlbury.com



#### THURSDAY 10th

RUN! WALK! + PHANTOM THEORY + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Cellar -

Frenetic garagey thrash-core from Run! Walk! with local new wave-leaning hardcore duo Phantom Theory in support. Riff-heavy post-rockers Gunning For Tamar open the show.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern CRASH'N'BURN: Fat Lil's, Witney CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old MarstonOPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Prince Of Wales

#### FRIDAY 11th

**BAND OF HORSES + DARKER MY LOVE:** 

**O2 Academy** – South Carolina's beardy country-rock heroes make their Oxford debut – *see main preview* 

UNITE: O2 Academy – Global dance collective project from Transglobal Underground people, mixing trance with traditional music from Ireland, England, eastern Europe, Scandinavia, France and more and featuring the likes of Jim Moray, Martin Furey, Trio Bulgarkin, Balkan Fanatic, Valravn, Village Collektive and Recycler. THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + DEAD JERICHOS + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE + N GILES: Fat Lil's,

**Witney** – Repeat of the Wheatsheaf bill on the  $5^{th}$ , taking the party fun to Witney.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin, Balkan and world beats and nu-jazz with a live set from Awale, mixing Afro-jazz with Ethiopian funk and eastern European harmonies

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

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

Community Centre UNITE: O2 Academy

#### SATURDAY 12th

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + KOMRAD: The

**Cellar** – Symphonic instrumental electrorocking pitched partway between Stravinsky, Shellac and Add N To (X) from local heroes The Rock Of Travolta. Proggy hardcore noise from Komrad in support.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern REGGAE CLUB NIGHT: The Bullingdon

#### SUNDAY 13th

WYCHWOOD SCHOOL OF ROCK NIGHT: Fat Lil's, Witney – A night of live music from school-age bands.

**SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar** – Chilled out rock'n'roll, Motown and soul.

#### MONDAY 14th

3<sup>rd</sup> **DEGREE LEBURN: The Bullingdon** – Soulful funky blues from the Californian guitarist at tonight's Famous Monday Blues club.

#### TUESDAY 15th

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

#### WEDNESDAY 16th

RICHARD JAMES: O2 Academy – The former-Gorky's Zygotic Mynci frontman returns with his second solo album after spending some time playing in Cate le Bon's band. 'We Went Riding' is the follow-up to his lovely 'Seven Sleepers Den' debut, a mix of soulful, lysergic roots-pop, folk and gentle blues.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

FREE RANGE: The Cellar

#### THURSDAY 17th

QUEEN OF CLUBS SUMMER BALL: The Regal – The reliably off-the-wall cabaret club hosts a special summer ball in the grand setting of the Regal, featuring a line-up of music, cabaret, circus skills and DJs, including live sets from Edinburgh's gypsy big band Orkestra Del Sol,

gyspsy-ska-punk collective Inflatable Buddha and

street band sounds from Horns Of Plenty. Beyond

Wednesday 23rd

### **ELVIS COSTELLO:** The New Theatre

A musical legend, no doubt about it. From his earliest incarnation in a youthful folk act to his groundbreaking 1977 debut for Stiff Records, 'My Aim Is True', to his current status of Grammy-winning elder statesman, Costello has covered pretty much every style of music from new wave, country, acoustic pop and soul to jazz, classical and opera – and collaborated with everyone from Paul McCartney and Bruce Springsteen to Burt Bacharach and even Fall Out Boy. Singer, songwriter and producer (notably The Specials), he's done it all and with style to spare. If his vast canon of work hasn't always been consistent, it's probably because he set himself such high standards from the very beginning, but over nearly 40 years writing and performing, in his characteristically literary style, he's never lost credibility and now, in his mid-50s, remains an artist who defies both genre and fashion. Expect a typically a-typical set of songs tonight, doubtless featuring songs from his last album, 'Secret Profane and Sugarcane', as well as cover versions and classics (the man wrote 'Shipbuilding' - worship him!) and obscurities from his back catalogue.



that there's Bop Samba, Fakir Fire, The Winged Lady, tapdance queen Josephine Shaker and DJs Kobayashi, Gypsy Hill and Mystic. An exotic evening out for all ages. DEAR CHICAGO: The Cellar OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers

Arms, Old Marston AP PROMOTIONS PRESENTS: Fat

Lil's, Witney

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon** 

#### FRIDAY 18th

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + TELLING
THE BEES + MATT SAGE: The Cellar –
Eclectic mix of hip hop, north African and
Arabic folk, blues and jazz from Brickwork
Lizards, plus dark, psychedelia-tinged
English folk from recent Oxford Punt stars
Telling The Bees. 60s pop and world sounds
from Matt Sage in support. Followed by
Fresh Out The Box, with resident DJs
playing house, garage and electro.

**PURPLE RAIN: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Tribute to Prince.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

TELLALL YOUR FRIENDS: James

Street Tavern

GET DOWN: The Brickworks
FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

#### SATURDAY 19th

RIVERSIDE FREE FESTIVAL:

**Charlbury** – First day of the free music fest, with Borderville, Charly Coombes and more – *see main preview* 

WITCHSORROW + DESERT STORM + THE CRUSHING + TRIPPY WICKED & THE COSMIC CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT + DEATH VALLEY RIDERS: The

Wheatsheaf – Another great night of heaviosity from Buried In Smoke Promotions, tonight featuring Brit doom rising stars Witchsorrow, cranking it out slow and malevolent and attracting plaudits from the doom zine scene in the UK and States. Local psychedelic stoner monsters Desert Storm build up to the release of their second album, The Crushing bring a bit of humour to the party, while there's stoner-rock from London's Trippy Wicked and expansive instrumental metal from Death Valley Riders.

**DEFINITELY MIGHT BE: O2 Academy** – Oasis tribute.

OX4 NIGHT: The Bullingdon SNEAKY BONUS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

MIX & BLEND: The Cellar – Reggae, drum&bass, dubstep and electronica.

#### SUNDAY 20th

RIVERSIDE FREE FESTIVAL:

**Charlbury** – Second day of the festival, with The Mighty Redox and more – *see main preview* 

#### MONDAY 21st

THE DANI WILDE BAND: The

**Bullingdon** – Rocking blues, soul and the occasional piano-led power ballad from the Brighton singer at tonight's Famous Monday Blues session.

**BEETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon** – Open jam session plus live set from Fall Of An Empire.

#### TUESDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

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

#### WEDNESDAY 23rd

**ELVIS COSTELLO: The New Theatre -**

An evening with the legendary singer, songwriter, composer and producer – *see main preview* 

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

**PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar** – Live funk jam with house band Four Phat Fingers.

#### THURSDAY 24th

ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO & THE SENSITIVE BOYS: The Bullingdon –

Glastonbury warm-up show for the Houston alt.country cult hero – see main preview JOHN ILLSLEY: O2 Academy – The former-Dire Straits bassist releases his latest solo offering, 'Streets Of Heaven', now following a bluesier rock path after his time in Mark Knopfler's world-conquering stadium rockers.

BRIGHT SPARK DESTROYER + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE: The Cellar –

Glitchy electro-indie in a Radiohead vein from London's Bright Spark Destroyer, plus country gothic blues from Huck.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street

IN THE POCKET: Fat Lil's, Witney CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

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

**OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Half Moon** 

#### FRIDAY 25th

WE ARE SCIENTISTS: O2 Academy — It's undoubtedly true that Keith Murray and Chris Cain could make a decent living as a comedy duo, or Murray as a campaigning male model, if they didn't have We Are Scientists as their musical day job, but it's always good to have them back on a local stage, this time round augmented by former-Razorlight drummer Andy Burrows. They're over on a UK tour to plug new album 'Barbara', mixing up their leftfield indie influences with nods to Fleetwood Mac and Hall & Oates.

#### GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with DEAD JERICHOS + FLIES ARE SPIES FROM HELL + PDRR: The Wheatsheaf

Recent Punt and Nightshift cover stars –
 as well as winners of pretty much every band competition going at the moment – Dead
 Jerichos headline this month's Gappy Tooth eclectifest (not a real word but it does the job in this case), where they're joined by the mighty Flies Are Spies From Hell, raucous



#### **VENUE PHONE NUMBERS**

O2Academy: 0844 477 2000 (ticketweb)

The Bullingdon: 01865 244516 The Wheatsheaf: 01865 790380 The Cellar: 01865 244761

The New Theatre: 0844 847 1585 The Jericho Tavern: 01865 311775

Fat Lil's: 01993 703385

East Oxford Community Centre:

 $01865\,792168$ 

The Port Mahon 01865 790970 Malmaison: 01865 268400





Thursday 24th

# ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO: The Bullingdon

Hardly a household name, Austin, Texas' Alejandro Escovedo is known back home as the King Of Austin – not a bad title given it's the music capital of America. There he's established his reputation as a singer and songwriter who has inspired scores of far more famous acts. When he nearly died of Hepatitis C back in 2003 and struggled to pay his medical bills, a benefit album for him featured the likes of John Cale, Steve Earle, Ian Hunter, Son Volt and The Javhawks.He also shares management with Bruce Springsteen. Having started out playing punk with San Francisco outfit The Nuns, Escovedo moved to Texas and fused that punk attitude with his new-found love of country and roots music and his dark, moody songs still feature glimpses of Stoogesinspired noise. This year he releases his tenth solo album, 'Street Songs Of Love', and is over in the UK to play Glastonbury and the Isle Of Wight Festivals. Tonight, though, is a rare chance to catch the cult hero with his band The Sensitive Boys in his more natural intimate gig environment.

piano-led post-rockers pitched somewhere between Chopin and Explosions In The Sky. Experimental electronics chap PDRR opens proceedings.

**BREEZE:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock covers. **MELTING POT:** The Bullingdon – Early gig with mixed bag of bands.

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

**GET DOWN: The Brickworks** 

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

WALHALA: The Cellar - Deep house, tech

house and acid house club night.

**RELIK: The Jericho Tavern - Metal night.** 

#### SATURDAY 26th

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern ROCK COVERS NIGHT: Fat Lil's, Witney HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass.

#### SUNDAY 27th

**BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Monthly all-comers jam session.

REBECCANEALE+FACEOMETER+LES CLOCHARDS: Malmaison – Acoustic night at the Mal with local songstress Rebecca Neale, wordy Jeffrey Lewis-inspired singer Faceometer and Roy Orbison-goes-Parisian-café-pop collective Les Clochards.

**DAMON BROWN: The North Wall, Summertown** – Jazz trumpeter who made his reputation at Ronnie Scott's and has played with the likes of Steve Grossman, Benny Golson and Don Braden.

#### MONDAY 28th

**NORTHSYDE: The Bullingdon** – Funk, rock, blues and soul from Newport Pagnell's Northsyde at tonight's Famous Monday Blues.

#### TUESDAY 29th

**GASLIGHT ANTHEM: O2 Academy** – Already sold-out show for the anthemic New Jersey

rockers who've enjoyed a pretty meteoric rise over the last couple of years, culminating in supporting near neighbour Bruce Springsteen and having him guest with them on stage. They share a similar love for traditional rootsy American rock, taking inspiration from Johnny Cash and Tom Petty, but also from punk bands like The Clash and Ramones. Tonight's show is one of only a handful of UK gigs amid a hectic summer festival schedule.

#### THE BROADCAST: O2 Academy -

Depressingly generic punk-pop/post-hardcore call it what you like whiny old guff that can't even be bothered to give itself an original band name.

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

TIPPETT QUARTET: The North Wall, Summertown – Jazz collective formed in tribute to Sir Michael Tippett.

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** The Port Mahon

#### WEDNESDAY 30th

DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG
MEMORIES + RORY ELLIS: Baby Simple –
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#### FOALS/JONQUIL O2 Academy

Before the homecoming heroes, the homecoming heroes. Just as folk has somehow fallen back into popular favour with Noah And The Whale and Mumford And Sons, Jonquil appear to have abandoned the idea of carving out a niche for themselves as a pastoral folk-indie troupe. Tonight the only real nod to their former incarnation as an Arcadian Arcade Fire is holler-along anthem 'Lions', received fittingly enough with the biggest roar of the set.

Not that the brighter, bolder Jonquil 2.0 – an unusually on-the-same-page Broken Social Scene merrily marching along to Afrobeat – could be said to be fleeing from fashion. There remain some constants: the strength of Hugo Manuel's vocals; Kit Monteith's fluid, loose-limbed drumming; the sextet's status as one of the most accomplished and consistently fascinating bands Oxford has produced in recent years.

And so to another. Nightshift has long championed the various projects of Yannis Phillipakis, only for his latest to schedule (and sell out) a gig on the same night as our very own Punt. There's gratitude for you...

Tongue removed from cheek, though, the timing couldn't really be much neater. Not only have Foals graduated from the local scene in the same way that all those playing the Punt are aspiring to do, but as revered alumni they've also gone on to shape it. And you will know them by the trail of influence, and all that. Yannis takes time to express his thanks for our support along the way, even if he can't quite bring himself to crack a smile.

So, what of the reason that's brought them back home, second album 'Total Life Forever'? Interviewed in the last issue, Yannis stated "We didn't feel like we needed to repeat ourselves" and alluded to a new-found appreciation for "the traditional craft of song-writing" – both of which claims seem, on first impressions, to be borne out by the new material.

Every element feels as though it's on a shorter leash, operating within itself, reined in in the service of a greater good. The portentous swell of 'Spanish Sahara' is typical of the album's grander gestures, but compared to the songs that won them such a fervent fanbase – like tightly-coiled springs, compact but full of potentially explosive energy and force – the likes of 'This Orient' come across as (sacrilege alert!) a touch bland. Might 'Big Big Love (Fig. 2)', 'Antidotes' tantalising toe-dip into electronica-of-sorts, not have signposted a more interesting alternative future?

Perhaps that's yet to come. For tonight, though, as well-received as the new tracks are, 'Antidotes' continues to supply the cornerstones of the set – the pinpoint rhythms of 'The



French Open'; the whipcrack snare and unexpectedly heavy guitar interchanges of 'Cassius' and 'Two Step Twice'; the exhilarating drum-and-strobe frenzy of 'Electric Bloom' –

and helps ensure that Foals end the night exactly as they started it: the Crown Princes of Cowley Road.

Ben Woolhead

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### **COCOROSIE**The Regal

Within minutes of Cocorosie arriving on stage I imagine I'vestumbled upon some art project in which Bat For Lashes and Nizlopi host a David Lynch theme party. The group – made up of American-born sisters Bianca and Sierra Casaday, plus various backing musicians – are in town to promote their fourth album, 'Grey Oceans'. It's no less odd than anything they've done before.

One of the two sisters, dressed in something resembling a bed sheet, is singing soprano to an opera (which, clearly, is in full swing in her head). The other sister is dressed as Adam Ant, and growls out semi-decipherable childish, and sometimes sinister, mutterings. Also on stage is a (virtuoso) human beat boxer, and another man playing a jet black grand piano. This is all to the backdrop of surreal projections which include everything from a funfair ground to a close up of a horse's face, complete with a super-imposed evil eye. You can't say it's less than unique.

It's also Cocorosie's first ever gig in Oxford, which given their singular sensibilities and the six or so years since their debut album, is a surprise. It's also surprising the two have been allowed leave from whatever bohemian alternative universe they danced insanely out of. But their presence is more than welcome. Their new material is not a huge departure from their back catalogue of glitchy, ethereal folktronica. Which is fine, because they still sound like nothing else. There is a harp on stage, but the sound they make with it is nothing like Joanna Newsom, to whom they are frequently, if tenuously, compared. Some of the sisters' vocals sound a little like Björk, but unlike the Icelandic songstress, their music is consistently insular and evasive.

It's also jaw-droppingly lovely and heartbreakingly elegiac. The pair wear their craziness on their sleeves. It may annoy or perplex some, but it's great to see such free spirits producing music so damn odd at major venues. After a while, you wonder why more bands don't raid the fancy dress box and produce something so spontaneous, fresh and baffling.

James Benefield

### THE PRIMITIVES O2 Academy

We'd forgotten just how tiny Tracey Tracey is. The diminutive Primitives singer has aged well in the 18 years since the band split, although with her glitzy clothes, stack heels and peroxide hair she does look like an HR manager out on a hen night. The middle-aged indie kids in the crowd are still smitten though and tonight witnesses some of the least dignified dancing the venue has seen.

The Primitives will probably never get the historical respect their form of perfect buzzsaw pop deserves but tonight is a reminder of just how many great 80s indie moments they were responsible for. From a forgotten but quickly remembered 'Everything Shining Bright', through the chiming 'I'll Stick With You' to 'Way Behind Me', they rattle through everything with a gleeful lack of pretension, a little ragged around the edges, but then they always were – it was always part of their very considerable charm. Tracey's voice cracks a little in the early numbers but come 'Stop Killing Me' she's belting it out like Petula Clarke fronting The Jesus & Mary Chain. 'Thru The Flowers' remains one of pop music's greatest debut singles, a honeydipped atomic explosion of a song, Tracy all sparkling sequins and shimmering tambourine over Paul Court's turbulent

'Really Stupid' hurtles into hit single 'Crash', while 'Stop Killing Me' gets the biggest cheer of the night and provokes those awkward moves on the dance floor. It's sweet nostalgia, professionally executed. Sadly there's precious little communication from the band, bar a couple of perfunctory "It's good to be back"s, nothing to suggest the band are back for anything other than a belated pay day. Coupled with an oddly anticlimactic encore and you wonder just how much their hearts are in it. Tonight is fun without a doubt, but when the likes of Magazine and Gang Of Four have shown just how fresh and vital a reformed band can sound, perhaps we simply expect a little bit more.

Dale Kattack

### THE NEAT / BEAVER FUEL

The Wheatsheaf

Tonight is Leigh from Beaver Fuel's birthday, which might explain why he's wearing his hair in girly pigtails, but if he's having fun on stage it'd be nice to be in on the joke. Beaver Fuel are easily one of the funniest bands around (if not always intentionally) but the humour is in the lyrics: profanity-littered tirades like 'Fuck You, I've Got Tourettes' or the daft 'Eurovision Political Favour Contest'. The problem is, the band are cranking it all out so loudly you can't hear a bloody word Leigh is singing. Where once they were a fuzzy indie-pop clatter, now they're close to being a grunged-up sludge-rock band. Their clunkiness can be endearing at times but isn't perhaps fitting to their experience as musicians, but hey, if you can't do what the hell you like on your birthday, when else can you?

Hull's The Neat are virtually unheard of outside their home city but even so they seem to have a small local following already and it's certain to be far bigger the next time they come round. They look like a bunch of Madchester scallies but sound far more like cult early-90s indie punkers Sultans Of Ping FC, particularly in the singer's shrieking delivery. Like The Fall there's a nagging insistency about each song that borders on militancy and one song sounds oddly like Mark E Smith singing 'Hey Mickey!'. Very occasionally they let their guard down and sound like The Automatic, but mostly they're tightly-coiled and as edgy as speed freaks, while set closer 'Opaque' is brilliantly belligerent. Probably too uptight and wired for mainstream acceptance, some kind of cult success is easily due to them

Dale Kattack





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#### THE OXFORD PUNT

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#### MUSICALLY THE PUNT MIGHT BE AN

eclectic mix, but it's worth noting what a range of atmospheres the venues have too. In a few scant hours we'll be swilling lager from a plastic skiff in the Cellar, but we start the night with cocktails in the plush, velvety Malmaison bar. And in refined environs we find a delicate and subtle artist.

HELEN PEARSON's light, airy songs are lovably idiosyncratic without falling into the anti-folk trap of self-conscious tricksiness. Her set is bookended beautifully by 'Labrador Song', essentially an Alan Bennett stage direction set to hazy guitar plucking, and a wonderful closer about boxers, which is so gorgeous we feel bad about slurping the last of our G & T through a straw...but at these prices we're determined to get every single drop.

Even as it markets itself as the trendy cousin of posh hotels, Malmaison probably isn't used to acid house. To ease the clientele in gently, **WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC** – aka Fred Toon and his laptop - has printed out some cheeky menus of what to expect. Fred's smiley t-shirt hints it's a retro feast and so it turns out to be. In fact the last time techno like this was in fashion, the Mal was still a prison and you could be locked up for organising raves. Oddly though, and perhaps helped by the fact he's playing at a volume lower than he'd like, We Are Ugly suits these cosily glitzy surroundings.

#### OVER TO MORE FAMILIAR TERRITORY OF

The Purple Turtle. Here we discover there are two elements to THE ANYDAYS. On one hand they are three middle-aged men trying to capture rock hedonism with skinny jeans, leather jackets and a Camden desperation (shades indoors is heinous enough, but shades in a basement? There ought to be a law), but luckily this is vastly overshadowed by the summery tunefulness of their songs. There are elements of 90s fuzz rock such as The Wannadies in the mix, but the real influence seems to be The Kinks - one song reminds us happily of 'Sittin' On My Sofa'. There are echoes of all your favourite good time rock songs floating about, from 'Louie Louie' to 'No Fun' but, like the Crabbie's alcoholic ginger beer we discover at the bar, The Anydays are a new twist on classic flavours.

#### AT THE WHEATSHEAF MESSAGE TO BEARS

are even more hushed and controlled than last time we saw them. Their bucolic compositions swell and glide with great precision, and if their clockwork countryside feel marks them out as Mogwai for Young Conservatives, the set is astonishing, the twin violins adding a richness that draws us in from the outset. The vocals might be superfluous, but Message To Bears have quietly become our favourite act of the evening.

Waiting for **BEARD OF ZEUSS** to come on gives us a chance to investigate the Cellar's recent mural, which turns out to be a strange mix of Keith Haring and Inca art. Then suddenly all thoughts of interior décor evaporate, as all our concentration is needed to deal with what feels like being kicked in the chest by a randy camel. Beard Of Zeuss are sludgy, greasy and definitely bad for you. Their uber-stoner thump is the sonic equivalent of injecting an all day breakfast directly into your left ventricle. New drummer Frank might not be the





most intricate sticksman at the Punt, but every pummelling rhythm feels like a breezeblock cocktail. They introduce one number as "a song about hunting wild board on the plains of Africa". It's called 'Boar Hunt'. Fabulous. Down in one!

#### HAVING BEEN FORCED TO SHOW OUR

driving licence to enter The Purple Turtle for the second time (not because we look young, but just to "see who's coming in" - does the bouncer have a photographic memory for photographic ID or something?) it's back to the Crabbie's. The crowd is sadly sparse for SEALINGS, but then, so is the music. Bleak drum machine rock that recalls precabaret goth is tempered with the odd fleck of grunge insouciance. Hang on, slacker nihilism, does that work? The music is a blast whatever. Perhaps not quite the finished product, but a great start. Virtually everybody out for the Punt tonight seems keen to see what all the fuss about DEAD **JERICHOS** is about. Afterwards singer Craig Evans, who seems to have set himself unbelievably high standards for himself, isn't best pleased with the performance, but no-one here seems to have noticed, as the trio run through their tight rhythms like a Duracell bunny on speed and come on like musical mortar fire - urgent and relentless. Surely they can't stay unsigned for long.

UTE too unequivocally fit the bill of a "Punt band most likely to go places", but hopefully they'll prove too weird to be fully embraced by an ultimately unappreciative mainstream audience. They've turned from gawky, shylooking nerds to proper, confident showmen, casually bantering with tonight's thronging and eager crowd. Musically, Radiohead are an obvious reference point, but thankfully there's more of that band's invention and experiment in Ute's output, rather than obvious soundalike parallels. A unique sound is being crafted tonight; a skeletal mix of acoustic guitar, buzzing bass and deceptively complex drum patterns. Ute have become their





own entity, and it's exciting to watch this happen.

#### AFTER A SEEMINGLY ENDLESS WALK

("Are we in Reading yet?") we reach Coco Royal. We had our doubts about this as a Punt venue, what with it being out of the way and, essentially, a restaurant, but we find ourselves instantly relaxing in a room that looks like the Mos Eisley cantina remodelled for a Roxy Music video.

AIDEN CANADAY is a suitably understated opening act here, although we're forced to ponder whether he's suffering a terrible bout of nerves or is deliberately avoiding making any contact with the audience. Often he sounds out of tune and the songs clunky, but when he rouses himself he's got a frailty not unlike Belle & Sebastian's earliest recordings and when he's joined by Jamie from Mountain Parade on accordion it's less of a dirge, more of a Parisian café folk session.

THE ROUNDHEELS, by gentle contrast, are proof that acoustic music doesn't have to wallow in melancholy. Theirs is a simple, stripped-down, quaintly English take on bluegrass, a world away from their previous incarnation as Cargo Cult and, particularly given the slightly reserved environment, excellent drinking music.

#### DRINKING YOUR WAY ROUND TOWN IS

very much part of the Punt but, without wishing to come over like a Health & Safety campaign, it's wise to retain control of your faculties while watching live music. Especially if there are decorative candles dotted around the venue, as there are at Coco Royal. At first we assume someone's burnt a pizza but it turns out to be our jacket, carelessly draped too close to a flame. At least everyone gets a good laugh watching us stamping out the resulting conflagration.

It kind of breaks the spell of watching MARIANA MAGNAVITA for us. At first we're not sure if the

MAGNAVITA for us. At first we're not sure if the PA is even working for her, but it doesn't seem to matter, since everyone is stood hushed and





captivated by her wonderfully playful, emotive voice, backed by simple acoustic guitar and violin, the trio ensconced in the comfy armchairs on stage, adding to the relaxed feel of it all. It's rare to hear such a mix of vulnerability and confidence.

The night's finest moment of irony comes at the end of SAMUEL ZASADA's set at Malmaison, with singer David Ashbourne singing "I want to grow up to say, fuck you to The Man" ever so nicely in this nicest of The Man's venues. In truth they are wholly suited to such salubrious surroundings, powerful by stealth and subtlety while unravelling fresh new layers of guitar and vocal interplay with each song.

#### BACK IN THE THICK OF THINGS AT THE

Wheatsheaf, which is packed for FIXERS. Their mix of Beach Boys-style five-part harmonies with sheer heaviness marks them out as one of the most musically ambitious bands on show. It's also a highrisk strategy and they have a shaky start before Jack Goldstein's voice fully warms up. From thereon in there's no stopping them and they get to show the potential that's already seen them invited to play this summer's Wychwood Festival. Of all the bands tonight, EMPTY VESSELS are the most proudly retro. The polar-opposite of trendy haircut indie, their raw, raucous bluesy rock is pure Blue Cheer by way of Led Zeppelin and Humble Pie and when they crunch into 'Take A Hard Look' you can't help but start playing air guitar. A bruising period piece and a reminder of rock music's timeless power and appeal.

#### BACK AT MALMAISON AND A DIFFERENT

backwards glance in the form of TELLING THE **BEES**. The quartet have quietly claimed Oxford's folk music crown over the past year, culminating in their triumphant main stage set at last month's Oxford Folk Festival, alongside Bellowhead. Tonight they straightaway make up for not playing their rabble-rousing anthem 'Otmoor





Forever' at that show, a tale of an almost forgotten local revolution of the type that English folk has long since thrived on. Though hushed they're still driving and uplifting, Andy Letcher's warm, rich voice standing out from but never dominating the inventive string arrangements.

This middle part of the Punt evening is now so hectic we only catch the last ten minutes of SPRING OFFENSIVE's set, which is all one, extended finale, the almost folksy subtleties of their album subsumed by a mathsy grunged-up cacophony that brings whoops of delight from the gathered throng at its conclusion.

SCHOLARS receive possibly the biggest cheer of the night for 'Turbulence', an indie anthem in waiting, and if their set now seems familiar to those who have seen them over the past six months, they're amongst the most polished and commercially promising young bands around for precisely that reason. These are songs that stick their claws into you from the first listen.

#### ANOTHER MAD RUSH HALFWAY ACROSS town back to Coco Royal where a fair few customers are listening intently to WELCOME TO

PEEPWORLD, last-minute stand-ins for Scarlett In The Wilderness. At first we have their ultra-polite ditties pegged as Nothing, Nor The Girl, but we soon warm to Fi McFall's sweetly expressive vocals touches of Beth Gibbons at times - and by the end of the set we're caught up in their melodic snares. They could probably do with a bigger PA to make the most of the subtleties, though.

#### IF BEARD OF ZEUSS BOILED METAL'S

flayed carcass to nothing and served us the greasy residue, RISEN IN BLACK are the pure distillation of thrash collected from the escaping vapour. The vocals might be slightly unconvincing, but the rest of the band is as tight as all hell and this sort of music will always be fun. Their defiantly unreconstructed metal is, if anything,





even louder than BoZ and it's a joy to see the soundman visibly flinching with pain as they kick in at the moment he walks past the PA stack. Similarly musically violent, TASTE MY EYES have an astonishing vocalist, screeching and growling like a Velociraptor trapped in a rusty cement mixer. The riffs churn and bludgeon behind him gloriously and, beneath the noise here is a band with a set of seriously good songs with structure and depth, played with astonishing passion, and we decide, if the Punt is any indicator, that the city's metal scene is as healthy and diverse as it was a decade or so ago.

#### THE PUNT TRADITIONALLY BUILDS TO A

climax rather than warms down and BARBARE11A are making the most of a packed house at the Cellar, replete with their trademark Cabaret-styled costumes and a frontman obviously modelled on Joel Grey who's simultaneously slightly sinister and really rather silly. Musically the band have travelled from Young Marble Giantsstyle 80s indieness to loud, in-yer-face vaudevillian rock over the past year, significantly more confident, but less quirky and delicate than before, now looking and sounding like the band you'd expect to be playing in a club scene of some camp retro-futuristic sci-fi movie.

THE VICARS OF TWIDDLY hit the spot perfectly for a closing act, tossing cheap surf instrumentals out to the audience with a cheeky grin. Never mind the cassocks, the organ drenched music is addictive fun on its own, even if they aren't the tidiest band on the bill, and if anyone tries to tell you this isn't ten tons of fun, they're talking papal bull. Of course, the other great thing about the Vicars is that they allow third rate music journalists to make terrible puns, so let's just say Automatic For The Wimple! Nun more black...

Words: David Murphy, Dale Kattack, Art Lagun, Simon Minter, Lisa Ward, Colin May.

by Terri Bonha



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#### JAPANDROIDS / PHANTOM THEORY / KEYBOARD CHOIR

#### The Jericho Tavern

Comprised of members of The Evenings and Sunnyvale Noise Sub-Element, and orchestrated by one chap with his back to the audience and arm outstretched in signal, Keyboard Choir are for the most part Fuck Buttons ransacking a Korg factory in search of a tune. But then, at the very end, the ear-chafing electro terrorism gives way unexpectedly to expansive star-scuffed twinkliness, the tender caress of a robot whose setting has defaulted from angry to amorous. Though in all likelihood that'll probably be the song they've christened 'Death Wank In Toy Town'.

It seems perverse to talk about Winnebago Deal being quiet, but that's exactly what they've been of late - and, what with the demise of fellow two-strong noiseniks and Nightshift favourites 50 Ft Panda, Phantom Theory have clearly sensed a situation vacant. In between cranking out riff-roaring beasts that borrow from the weightier end of Nirvana's back catalogue as well as alluding to Kyuss and Queens Of The Stone Age, the duo have managed to find the time to reflect on how hard life must be for multimillionaire twat Phil Collins, whose daily struggles they pay tribute to in a new song. 'Phil Collins Vs The World' they've called it, but 'Sympathy For The Devil' might have been more appropriate.

The Clash. Crass. Minor Threat. All "true" punk rock is political, right? Wrong. Canadians Japandroids are political only in the very loosest sense of vociferously proclaiming personal freedoms, and are far more emblematic of the real reasons why punk holds such appeal for teenagers in the first place. Namely, that it's fast, loud and as such has considerable potential for annoying parents and neighbours. There are slogans, sure – but they're all about going out, getting drunk and wanting to French kiss some French girls.

Neither, though, are they shallow squeaky-clean corporate-mall-punk dweebs. For a start, they're much too abrasive and loose – even more so live than on what is already a deliciously unrefined record, 'Post-Nothing'. And there's a curious



sort of naive but sincere profundity in lyrics like "I don't wanna worry about dying / I just wanna worry about those sunshine girls" ('Young Hearts Spark Fire') and "It's raining in Vancouver / And I don't give a fuck / 'Cos I'm in love with you tonight" ('Sovereignty'). So it's a terrible shame that this turns out to be a case of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. Guitarist Brian King leaps

around on his guitar case, blurs his face with

Mclusky's 'To Hell With Good Intentions' but all to no real avail – most of those assembled seem to have come just to gawp. "Is this a school night?", he asks, visibly discouraged. "Every night's Friday night for us", chips in drummer David Prowse cheerily. And so it is for these two garglers on the elixir of youth, this pair of apostles of the hedonist's credo, whose message does at least spark one not-so-young heart into flame tonight.

head-shaking, thrashes through a meaty cover of Ben Woolhead

### THE EPSTEIN / PO GIRL Holywell Music Room

It's probably best to make an admission from the off: this reviewer is a newcomer to Oxford, a baffled migrant venturing west from London, gingerly working his way around the city's various venues as only an out of towner can, which goes someway towards explaining the loud crack as my jaw smashes to the ground upon entering the Holywell Music Room. Sweet Jesus, what a venue! No sweat-perfumed noise box swathed in black for the Epstein, oh no. If God listened to alt.country he would do it here, and seeing as he's almost definitely got a beard and is a deity of refined tastes, maybe he does.

In such a perfectly formed arena, The Epstein

give themselves a stunning platform to showcase their new album, the refined atmosphere suiting them down to the ground. For their part, The Epstein are flawless; tight, Fleet Foxes-style harmonies decorate their singular brand of tender, beautifully arranged Americana as the highly attentive and affectionate crowd lap up every delicately plucked note.

There's an awful lot to love about The Epstein, a bunch of hugely talented musicians with great vocals (and wonderful beards). For anyone enjoying the current vogue for all things folk flecked and country tinged they are a must see, and the new album will no doubt help

push them further towards wider acceptance. Po Girl are a wonderfully eclectic group from Canada with a schizophrenic set of influences, ranging from accordion-fuelled French ballads to Balkan stomps, swampy Southern rock and a hefty dollop of Memphis soul. Powering things along on a wave of relentless energy, the instrument swapping four-piece (augmented by JT Nero of Chicago outfit JT and the Clouds) bounce between slinky, soulful pop to heartfelt ballads before finally arriving at all-out footstomping abandon. With not one but two powerful female vocalists, a tea chest bass and some astonishingly good slide guitar from luthier and guitarist Benny Sidelinger, Po Girl are a revelation, restlessly inventive and with a warmth and humour that envelopes the whole

Rob Power



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### INTRODUCING....

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

### **Charly Coombes & The New Breed**

#### Who are they?

Charly Coombes & The New Breed came together in summer 2008. Charly, of course, had been playing in Supergrass with brothers Gaz and Rob. Charly (vocals; keyboards) and Rory Kirkpatrick (drums) had known each other for a while and soon poached Dave Ashworth (guitar) and Jake Roos (bass). The band played a short UK tour before releasing their debut 'Panic' EP, produced by Gaz Coombes. After supporting Supergrass at their Christmas show in Oxford in December 2009, they were invited over to the States for SXSW. A US tour kicked off at The Viper Rooms in LA in March, where, after a sweaty headline show, they were joined on stage by Foo Fighters for a heavy dose of jamming and covers. This summer finds them playing Cornbury and Riverside festivals as well as supports with Taylor Hawkins' band The Coattail Riders in London and Supergrass on their final tour.

What do they sound like?

A rich, rough-hewn form of rock and soul, inspired by classic sounds of the 60s and 70s. The band's debut EP joins the dots between The Stones, The Small Faces and Supergrass' more recent outings. Their heavier material is raw, raucous garage rock, while the other side of their sound is softer, mellower and more polished, heavier on piano than guitars.

#### What inspires them?

"In a lyrical sense, the people around us, our own lives. Charly writes most of the lyrics and he moans a lot - so it's a good outlet for him!"

#### Career highlight so far:

"Playing 'Stay With Me' on stage in LA with Dave Grohl, Rami Jaffee and Jesse White from The Foo Fighters. They're lovely guys and it was an honour to share the stage."

#### And the Lowlight

"Our two-month-old van 'Fanny' broke down on the way to a gig in Portsmouth, right in the middle of that freakishly cold snap in January. We were stuck in the snow for a couple of hours. Fanny didn't make it."



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Little Fish. Also Spring Offensive and Family Machine are good bands. If they could only keep one album in the world, it would be: "Michael Jackson's 'Thriller'."

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

"June 2nd at The Bullingdon. There's no pretense with us; we just want to play good music and play it well. With dancing bears and rings of fire." Their favourite and least favourite thing about Oxford music are:

"In this instance, they are one and the same thing: the general population of Oxford. Bands in Oxford are always up against the fact that this is a student town, and for the best part, our beloved students only want clubs, and apparently bad ones, at that. The surrounding suburbs and villages continue to provide endless pools of talent. The problem is, without gig-goers, we lose venues, which makes the whole scene struggle along in the shadow of what was once a great city for music. This is also what's great about Oxford. The adversity makes us all work harder for it. There's a passion among the bands in Oxford that I'm convinced is rarely seen elsewhere."

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

Squeeze; Heavy Stereo; The Rolling Stones; Supergrass; Randy Newman. Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/charlycoombes

#### DR SHOTOVER: Is There Life After Death?

...Or even after dentistry? I seem to spend increasing amounts of time there these days – at the dentist's, that is, not in Heaven. Ha ha harghhhh [laugh turns into wheezy cough which continues for several minutes]. Oh, thanks, old boy, a small libation (followed by another, and perhaps another) would be most welcome. My dentist? Ah yes, Mr Dentowski... nice chap, constantly drunk on cheap Polish vodka... he simply breathes on the patient and no anaesthetic is necessary. Anyway, all my time spent at his practice has had one positive result, in that I now have a marvellous list of bands and song titles relating to the great dentistry/rock crossover. In fact I've got it here somewhere... [fumbles in capacious trouser pockets, producing various items which are piled up on the bar, viz a return bus ticket to Looe, a signed picture of Betty Grable, a small phial of ground rhino horn, one of Tony 'TS' McPhee's plectrums and a James Bond-style miniature wristwatch TV]. Ah, here we are. Yes, it's written on the back of some band's set list from 1975. What does it say on the other side? "Tales From Topographic Oceans, Parts 1-4"? Oh yes. Yes. YES. Oh, never mind... So, here it is.



Dr Shotover in Heaven

What do you mean, here WHAT is? The Great Dentistry/Rock Crossover List, of course, bumface!

AC/DC - Back in Plague Slade - Gum On Feel The Noize

Canine Inch Nails - With Teeth Matching Molar's Little Red Record

Incisor Sisters - Comfortably Numb

Jimmy Cliff - Many Rivers To Floss

[Dr Shotover is carried out of the bar - still declaiming - by various members of the East Indies Club, put in a large wheelie bin and wheeled off down the road] Next month: Josef K - Radio **Drill Time** 



#### WIN CORNBURY FESTIVAL TICKETS!

Cornbury Festival has become one of the cornerstones of Oxfordshire's summer festival season. The annual two-day live music festival in the picturesque grounds of Cornbury Country Park, near Charlbury boasts a laidback atmosphere and levels of comfort unknown at most larger events. Cornbury 2010 takes place over the weekend of Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> / Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July. Past events have seen the likes of Paul Simon, Blondie, Amy Winehouse, Sugababes and The Waterboys performing; this year's line-up sees legendary singer-songwriter Jackson Brown and multi-million-selling star David Gray headlining. They are joined over the weekend by Squeeze, The Feeling, Buddy Guy, Seth Lakeman, Dr John, The Blockheads and many more. Some 25 acts will be performing over the festival's two main stages, plus an array of local acts appearing on the Charlbury Riverside Festival stage. Tickets for Cornbury Festival are on sale now, priced £95 for adults or £115 with camping. There are discounts for under-16s, while under-12s and over-70s go free. Visit the festival website at www.cornburyfestival.com for full details, or call the credit card hotline on 0871 472 0420.

Nightshift has two pairs of adult weekend camping tickets to give away. To win a pair, simply tell us which of the following acts has never played Cornbury: a: Amy Winehouse. b: Half Man Half Biscuit. c: Motorhead. Answers on a postcard (no email entries please) to Cornbury Competition, Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1DP. Please include address and a daytime phone number. Deadline for inclusion is the 20th June.



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### Nightshift's

# Demo World

So, World Cup time again. The joy of sitting slumped on the sofa all day every day getting excited about the prospect of Algeria versus Slovenia and wondering why we're cheering a team that features Ashley Cole, John Terry, Frank Lampard and Rio Ferdinand, and knowing it's all going to end in ignominy and a penalty shoot-out defeat in the quarter finals. But, it does give us the chance to fiddle with the demo review format occasionally.

We were going to do an election-themed one last month but then there wouldn't have been a clear-cut Demo Of The Month at the end of it and what about the Demo Dumper? We're not mean enough to compare even the most wretched bunch of indie shamblers to the BNP and Oxford is thankfully thin on white supremacist skinhead bands.

So here we go, for the first time since we last did it, it's the Nightshift Demo World Cup. And being old-fashioned types we're going to do it in straight knock-out format. Though the idea of following the convoluted Europa League set-up and introducing some of the less appealing CDs from the Released pages halfway through did briefly appeal.

The winners get a couple of cans of warm Carling, if we have any left by the time the real World Cup is over.

# ROUND 1 JOSH VIZOR vs DAVE FULBROOK

Luck of the draw pitches two solo acoustic acts against each other and we fear for a goal-less snoozefest, but Josh Vizor has a delicate touch, coupled with a similarly tremulous vocal style to Richard Walters, so he has a tactical advantage from the off. 'Ever After' is sparse and melancholic, some discreet guitar distortion aside, perhaps a bit too timid in his approach, but 'Gravity Exile' is full of swirly psychedelic effects and sounds like an extended intro to something off 'Sgt Pepper' as filtered through Frankie Goes To Hollywood's 'Power Of Love'. Josh's songs are airy and ambient and if they maybe lack a bit of killer instinct the ghostly backing vocals add a silky touch. Dave Fulbrook is similarly mournful of mood, but lacks Josh's gentle grace, preferring a slow, workmanlike buildup that tends to fizzle out before it reaches the opposition's penalty area. 'Space Cadet' is a dirge and at six and a half minutes in length, a bit like watching Barnet play Accrington Stanley on a wet Tuesday night in February. 'In A Perfect

World' finds him lift himself out of moaning mode and actually singing like relegation isn't a mathematical certainty and then, just at the end the whole thing, projected by a rising organ hum, crunches into life, all meaty, distorted guitar and muscular riffage. It's like he's just lumped a long ball up to the big lad up front who's turned on a sixpence and banged one in from 20 yards. Shame he can't repeat the trick on the remaining songs and come the final whistle Josh has held on for a 2-1 victory.

# WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD vs LE VENS

More acoustic happenings from Welcome To Peepworld who, given they feature half of International Jetsetters and were recent lastminute stand-ins at the Oxford Punt, seem, on paper, like obvious pre-match favourites. Despite the fact their music is lightweight, they're deceptively strong, Fi McFall's voice is delicately strident and can flutter like a butterfly, while sparingly-used strings add colour and tension to songs like 'Out Of My Depth', which sounds like it might be an unplugged International Jetsetters number. They pick up a couple of bookings for letting songs drift ethereally out of focus at times but 'Set In Stone' which initially feels half-formed, like a gangly youth teamer thrown into a first team dogfight, slowly reveals its understated Celtic seductiveness. Le Vens are the most straightforward kick'n'rush outfit so far, an earthy, almost agricultural blues-rock quartet, originally from Abingdon, now based in Brixton and owing plenty to the old-fashioned tactics of The Rolling Stones and early Kings Of Leon. Their rockaboogie riffs are solid and insistent but the singer is far too overwrought, trying to come on all Mick Jagger or Robert Plant at different points and it all ends up a bit like a solid midfield, lacking any real flair, who keep feeding a showboating centre-forward who then wallops every chance into Row Z. Finally they tone things down for 'Hospitality' but now they sound like an acoustic pub rock take on Red Hot Chili Peppers. 3-1 to the Peepworld people.

### ABOVE US THE WAVES VS COUNTRYSIDE

As soon as we've heard both these demos we're think this should maybe have been the final. Kennington's Above Us The Waves lead in with a big, booming intro, almost gothic in its portent, quickly





dipping into contemplative drifting and overly-sensitive vocals. From there they display a neat grasp on texture and dynamics, songs that dink and shimmer before momentarily bulldozing everything out of the way; it's engaging if not entirely original, although singer Joe Harrison also finds time to play both guitar and violin, which is something akin to Cruvff's vision of total football. 'Mind For Business, Body For Sin' feels like a lostat-sea-shanty, a delicate folk piece that builds into a tower of noise, like King Creosote meets Explosions In The Sky. They have an ear for grandiosity as well as subtlety and they'd probably beat anyone else on this form, but just for now they maybe lack that killer touch when it comes to memorable tunes and that's their undoing faced with such strong opposition. Because Countryside are going to take some beating: cheap Casio keyboards, uber-fuzzed guitars and cloudgazing vocal harmonies; they're like a cross between Grandaddy and Mew, lo-fi but lovely, uplifting stuff that's powerful but sounds completely effortless. They're WELCOME TO 1960s West Coast psych-folk by way of something exotic and Scandinavian and after extra time they come out 3-2 winners.

#### SAM TAPLIN vs PRI

After the previous close call, this is a walkover. Sam Taplin is a Witney-based singer and pianist who sounds like Richard Stilgoe and Victoria Wood trying to write a comedy version of Les Miserables for a student revue. He's wordy but it's all non sequiters designed to show how clever and witty he is when actually it's just all too wacky. And shit. There's a song that starts off going on about learning Santa doesn't exist and ends with the singer having a fight with the Grim Reaper in a butcher's shop, and another about the families of soldiers killed in action that might, in the farthest corner of its imagination, be trying to make some kind of social comment on it all but it just sounds trite and not a little offensive given the subject matter. It's all so kerrazy and self-satisfied it's like taking to the pitch wearing a red nose and clown shoes and fully deserves the drubbing it gets. Because while singer Pri might be in love with Neil Finn and has a voice that wouldn't get past the first audition of X-

Factor, she's got warmth and a sunny disposition that's endearing where Sam is just irritating. Armed with an array of instruments, including a well-used mandolin, Pri is unrefined and natural, cosy and with a lightness of touch that brings out the best in her simple songs, like an upbeat, acoustic Camera Obscura. 5-0 to the girl with the mandolin.

#### **SEMI-FINALS** JOSH VIZOR Vs PRI

The melancholic acoustic young man against the more vivacious young woman. It's a close call: despite his slightly timorous disposition you feel Josh has a voice that just needs a few stronger songs, while Pri isn't a particularly powerful singer but brings out the very best in everything she sings. In the end her natural, unrefined warmth and lightness of touch takes her over the line after a penalty shoot-out.

### PEEPWORLD vs COUNTRYSIDE

Peepworld's ethereal haziness against Countryside's effortlessly powerful country-folk shoegaze fuzzstorm. The fog versus the blizzard. Again it's a match that goes to the wire but in the end Welcome To Peepworld's weary siren songs and gentle lullabies can't quite hold out against Countryside's wider vision, and it is they that come out on top, 3-2. The losers go home with heads held high.

#### **FINAL** PRI vs COUNTRYSIDE

Pri's simple, buoyant acoustic songs don't always feel fully formed but they're unstintingly gregarious and would sound just great in the acoustic tent of any local festival, but you feel Countryside are all ready for the bigger stage, fusing different styles into an easy whole and making something intrinsically lo-fi sound big and bold and ambitious. They speak softly but carry a big stick. The big shiny trophy is theirs, but both finalists are talents worth keeping an eye on for the future.

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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