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Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month.
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ROUND THE BENDS

Oxfordshire artists cover Radiohead's **The Bends**

plus

Oxford music news, reviews and seven pages of local gigs

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NEWS

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ALL-VENUE PASSES FOR THIS YEAR'S OXFORD PUNT

have gone on sale. 100 laminated passes, priced at £7 (plus booking fee) are available online at oxfordmusic.net or from The Scribbler in Oxford city centre and The Music Box on Cowley Road. This year's Punt takes place on Wednesday 12th May, showcasing 19 of the best new acts in Oxfordshire across five city centre venues on one night. With Thirst Lodge planning to turn into a lapdancing club, CoCo Royal has become the latest venue to be included on the Punt circuit, along with Malmaison, The Purple Turtle, The Wheatsheaf and The Cellar. Bands wanting to take part in the Punt have until 12th March to submit demos. Send Myspace links, clearly marked Punt, to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, or send CDs, again clearly marked Punt, to Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. The line-up for the event will be announced on the Nightshift online forum on March 15th.

FRANK TURNER is among the latest acts to be added to the bill for this year's Wood Festival. The eco-friendly festival takes place at Braziers Park, near Wallingford, over the weekend of the 21st-23rd

May. Acts already confirmed include Tunng, Fionn Reagan, Martin Simpson, Danny & The Champions of the World, Peggy Sue, Nick Cope and Dusty and the Dreaming Spires. Wood, now in its third year, features solar and cycle-powered stages, a cinema and disco as well as other renewable energy projects. The festival features a wide range of workshops and family activities as well as organic food and beer. Tickets for the event are on sale now, priced £70, from the Scribbler and Inner Bookshop in Oxford as well as various outlets around the county and online. Visit www.thisistruck.com for more details.

OUT GRAZE FESTIVAL returns for its third year in June. The three-day dance festival runs from 11th-13th June at an as yet undisclosed location in Oxfordshire. The festival is co-promoted by local dance clubs Bassmentality, Slide and Simple and features a mix of dance tents playing house, dubstep, reggae, funk and more and was shortlisted for best dance event at last year's UK Festival Awards. Tickets are on sale now, priced £40, from Wegottickets.com, with profits going to the Oxford Wheels Project. A launch gig for the festival takes



MEW are the first headline act to be confirmed for this year's **Truck Festival**. This will be the band's only UK festival appearance this summer. The Danish rockers' show at the Zodiac in 2005 was one of the most incredible gigs Nightshift has witnessed in recent years. Mew released their fifth album, 'No More Stories', late last year and recently supported *Nine Inch Nails* and *Jane's Addiction* around Europe.

Tickets for Truck are already selling fast. The festival takes place over the weekend of **23rd-25th July at Hill farm in Steventon**. Adult weekend tickets are £80; tickets for 13-17 year olds are £60 with under 13s going free. Tickets, including a limited number of Supertrucker tickets which allow entry to both Truck and Wood festivals for £120, are on sale from The Scribbler in Oxford, Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown, The Music Box on Cowley Road, Rapture in Witney and Local Roots in Abingdon as well as online at Ticketweb, See Tickets and other outlets. Visit www.thisistruck.com for more ticket details and festival news.

place at the Cellar on Saturday 27th March, featuring Cheap Thrills signing Rico Tubbs, plus Simple DJ Emily Watson, Angus Cowan, Mush and Melodize.

LITTLE FISH release their debut album in May. 'Baffled & Beat' is released on Linda Perry's Custard Records. Jules and Nez recorded the album with Linda in the States last

year. The pair recently supported Hole in London, following on from tours with Placebo, Eagles of Death Metal and Alice In Chains.

OXFORDBANDS.COM has become Oxfordbands.co.uk after experiencing problems with their internet provider. The site features regularly updated interactive reviews of local gigs and releases.

YOUTHMOVIES HAVE SPLIT.

The band will bow out with a final gig at the O2 Academy on Saturday 27th March.

Originally called Youthmovie Soundtrack Strategies, the band are rightly considered to be one of the most innovative and influential bands to have come out of Oxford, their diverse, genre-defying style inspiring the likes of Foals and

Jonquil. Their hard work and DIY ethic found them regularly touring the UK, often with other Oxford bands supporting, as well as releasing their own, and other acts', albums on their Try Harder label. Their first CD was a Nightshift Demo Of The Month and they twice graced the cover of the magazine. The band have been on indefinite hiatus over the past

year.

Youthmovies singer Andrew Mears spoke to Nightshift about the split. "We are miles apart and it's time for something new. For me that's my new project Pet Moon and the book I'm writing, *Songs Without Restraint*. Sam is playing with Jonquil and solo stuff under the name Solid Gold Dragons; Al has just started a band with ex-members of Murder of Rosa Luxembourg and House of Brothers; Graeme is doing some amphetamine-tribal-shit for clubbers with a conscience, and Ham's in Liverpool making his first million, building microchips that turn white noise into birdsong. "The best things about the past few years have been all the travel, working with people like Adam Gnade, Ant Theaker, Foals and Jonquil, and basically getting paid to be antagonistic vagrants.

"For the final show we're playing downstairs at the Academy, on the floor, in the round, so the crowd

will be all around us. We've never been that comfortable on big, detached stages but obviously as the band went on and the shows got bigger it was something that was a necessary evil. We're trying to get back to what was fun and essential about the early shows.

Asked about Youthmovies' very significant legacy on local music, Andrew said, "I think for the most part bands do what they do under their own steam. I guess if anything we're just another in a line of bands that have shown that you can do what the fuck you want and people will like it, that they're not stupid, that the *music industry* as it's understood, and being *musically industrious* aren't mutually exclusive."

Long-time collaborator Adam Gnade supports Youthmovies, with various guest appearances promised. Tickets for the show are on sale now at wegottickets.com.



WITTSTOCK returns over the May bank holiday weekend (28th-31st). The annual festival takes place at the Railway Inn in Culham, near Abingdon. Acts confirmed so far include The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, Vicars of Twiddly, Moiety, Small Machine, The Black Hats, Laima Bite, Baby Gravy, Quadrophobe, The Roundheels and Barry & The Beachcombers. Although the festival is free, donations to Cancer Research UK and the Oxford Young Women's Band Project are welcomed. Visit www.myspace.com/wittstockrock for more details.

THE HALF RABBITS release their debut album on Monday 19th April. The local new-wave inspired rockers will launch 'From The Horizon To The Map' with a gig at the O2 Academy on Saturday 17th April. Support on an excellent local bill comes from The Rock Of Travolta, The Dead Jerichos and Night Portraits. Tickets for the show are on sale now, priced £6 in advance, at wegottickets.com.

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND have been invited to record a session for Mark Lamarr's Radio 2 show, God's Jukebox. The local 'chav-jazz' favourites will record five songs at Maida Vale for broadcast on Saturday 13th March. The band are currently in the process of recording their debut album, due for release later in the year.

CHARLY COOMBES brings his new band, The New Breed, to Oxford Brookes Union on Saturday 27th March as part of a gig in aid of Sobell House Hospice and the Make A Wish Foundation. Charly, who began his musical career with Tumbleweed, joined brothers Gaz and Rob in Supergass a couple of years ago, filling in for Micky when he broke his back in an accident in France. Charly has since filled in for Rob on keyboards and played second guitar on tour for Supergass, including their headline set at Truck Festival last year. Other bands on the Brookes bill are Junkstar, The Scholars and Just Morale. Tickets are on sale now, priced £10, from wegottickets.com.

THE FAMOUS MONDAY **BLUES** club at the Bullingdon hosts a special Texan week this month. As well as blues guitarist Hamilton Loomis performing at the club's usual Monday night slot on March 15th, renowned country singer Heather Myles & The Cadillac Cowboys make a rare UK appearance on Thursday 18th. Details of all the famous Monday

Blues show are online at www.famousmondayblues.co.uk.

FAT LIL'S IN WITNEY hosts a battle of the bands competition in April and are looking for local acts to participate. Heats will take place on Sundays throughout April with the final on May 7th. The prize for the winners includes a recorded gig at Fat Lil's, a place on the main stage at this summer's Cornbury Festival and equipment from PMT in Oxford. Runners-up will get a slot on the main stage at Charlbury Riverside Festival. Acts have until 14th March to enter. Email fatlils@live.co.uk.

The venue, meanwhile, holds its second blues festival this month. Running from 26th-31st March Fat Lil's plays host to rising young blues guitarist Krissy Matthews, London's bluesy r'n'b act Big Mama's House and Australian bluesman Rob Tognoni as well as its regular monthly blues jam.

LADYFEST returns to Oxford in May, showcasing female bands, performers, film makers and zines. The event runs from Thursday 13th - Sunday 16th May. Events already confirmed include Madam and Baby Gravy at the Jericho Tavern on the 14th, a film and zine fest on the 15th and a benefit disco for Oxford Sexual Abuse and Rape Crisis Centre at Baby Simple, also on the 15th. Ladyfest organisers are looking for any local female bands, solo acts or DJs, or anyone wanting to get involved. Weekly meetings take place at Far From The Madding Crowd every Thursday at 6.30pm. There is also a Facebook page for the event or you can email Sally Jones at ladyfestoxford@gmail.com.

CAFÉ TARIFA launch a new weekly live music night this month. Different Light is a semi-acoustic club for local bands to experiment with a different side to their music. The launch night is on Wednesday 10th March when heavyweights Phantom Theory and Gunning For Tamar have a chance to get mellow. Minor Coles and The A Train play on the 17th, InLight and Empire Safari on the 24th and Tiger Mendoza and Mammoth & The Drum on the 31st.

MARC OF ZORRO and London's Blue Flowers launch a new monthly club night in April. Yoof will showcase a host of rising bands and DJs. The opening night is on Saturday 10th April and features Egyptian Hip Hop, plus Yuck (featuring former members of Cajun Dance Party) and Ray Dar Vees. Join the club's Facebook page for updates on acts booked to play.



Stornoway photo: Johnny Moto

STORNOWAY, THE CANDYSKINS AND RICHARD WALTERS were amongst a host of local acts who played a special in-store gig to mark the closing of *Videosyncratic* last month. The independent video and DVD rental shops, on Cowley Road and in Summertown, were forced to close due to spiralling losses due to changes in the rental market and the costs of running a retail outlet in Oxford. As well as renting videos and DVDs *Videosyncratic* sold tickets for local gigs and festivals and was the only store in the city to stock a wide range of Oxford bands' CDs. Rapture, in Witney, now remains the county's only independent CD retailer.

Richard Walters arranged the impromptu gig in the Cowley Road store, which attracted hundreds of fans, many unable to gain entry to the shop, due to the size of the crowd. Also playing were The Family Machine, Ute, Huck and Ben Walker.

Talking to *Nightshift Videosyncratic* owner Jon Spira lamented the passing of local independent shops.

"It has been an absolute pleasure to have been Oxford's outlet for local music. I got to meet some brilliant people and staged many memorable gigs in the shop. I really hope someone will pick up the slack now we're gone. Maybe a pub or venue or one of the instrument shops; it doesn't take up much space and it's really important. We are now a city which has no form of independent music shop at all. That is a fucking tragedy. Use it or lose it."

Jon is in the final stages of finishing *Anyone Can Play Guitar*, his film documenting the Oxford music scene over the last 30 years.

TRUCK are offering local bands a special spring deal of £150 a day recording at the studio on the site of the annual festival. Bands who have recorded at the studio in recent times include Foals, Stornoway, Alphabet Backwards and Danny & The Champions Of The World. For bookings call 01235 821262 or email studio@thisistruck.com. Visit www.thisistruck.com/studio for more details.

AS EVER, DON'T FORGET to tune into BBC Oxford Introducing every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm, and as a podcast all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford. The dedicated local music show celebrates its fifth anniversary this month with the release of 'Round The Bends', featuring local bands covering songs from Radiohead's classic album. See this month's main interview feature.

FAT LIL'S LIVE MUSIC & COMEDY CLUB		64a Corn St, Witney OX29 6BS Box Office - 01993 703385 www.wegotickets.com Open Tues to Sunday 4pm to Late Check www.fatlils.co.uk for details
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a quiet word with

Tim Bearder & Dave Gilyeat



THIS MONTH BBC OXFORD

Introducing celebrates its fifth anniversary. The show, produced and presented by Tim Bearder and Dave Gilyeat, has consistently showcased the best new music coming out of Oxford and championed the likes of A Silent Film, Little Fish, Winchell Riots and, in particular, Stornoway, helping them all to move onwards and upwards along the way.

To commemorate the show's landmark achievement, Tim and Dave have compiled a tribute to Radiohead's seminal 'The Bends' album, which coincidentally celebrates its fifteenth anniversary this year. Featuring thirteen of the best new bands in town, 'Round The Bends' is Oxford music's tribute to the band that, more than any other, put Oxford on the world's musical map.

LIKE SO MANY OF THE GREAT things about Oxford's music scene, it's easy to take Introducing for granted, but, like so many great things about Oxford's music scene, it only exists because of the enthusiasm and perseverance of dedicated individuals.

Initially called The Download, the show took the form of a fifteen-minute internet-only programme. The first ever hour-long broadcast went out on BBC Radio Oxford 95.2fm on March 4th 2005 and featured Harry Angel, Twizz Twangle and Nine Stone Cowboy, as well as an interview with Supergrass.

Five years later, long-since renamed, Introducing is an essential fixture for local music fans, broadcast every Saturday evening between 6-7pm and available as a podcast online. The show consistently unearths the best new acts in the area, possessing a great knack of spotting, and supporting, those bands destined to go on to greater things. In fact, being part of the BBC's nationwide Introducing network has given Tim and Dave access to contacts, like Radio 1's Huw Stephens, who take their recommendations to a higher level. Stornoway earned their slot at Radio 1's Big Weekend festivals through Introducing's recommendation, while Little Fish found themselves recording a session at the legendary Maida Vale studios.

ON AIR THERE IS A REAL

chemistry between the two presenters. Tim is effusive, occasionally wacky and prone to launch into outlandish flights of fancy. He also likes to interview out-of-town bands in the most ridiculous manner. Dave, by contrast, is more sardonic, an anchor that brings necessary cohesion to the show. In the flesh the pair, long-time friends and former bandmates (in the frankly godawful, even by their own admission, Toshi Station, who were once Demo Dumped in Nightshift), are just as much a team: whether jointly waxing lyrical about a new favourite band, or bickering like an

old married couple.

We wonder, first, what inspired them to start the show and what the initial obstacles they faced were.

TIM: "Dave and I never really left music behind as we grew up. In 2000 I came back from travelling the world and set up an online music website called Amazingbands.com. We wrote really shoddy reviews and copied out Nightshift's gig guide and tried to stream band's tracks. It was all very experimental, which is a euphemism for terrible, but it got me noticed by the BBC and once I had a toe in the door I started working to get a local music show on the radio. I knew nothing about BBC local radio and when I heard they didn't have a local music show I couldn't quite believe it. It took years of campaigns and dedication to get it off the ground.

"Neither of us had done radio before and the BBC wasn't in the right frame of mind to have new music on its local radio network. Those were the two things we needed to fix and it was a monumental task. We started by running a 15-minute internet only show on a Wednesday evening. We did it for a year! Considering we could only play 30 seconds of each track because of online music rights and the fact that absolutely nobody listened, even I'm impressed with our dedication.

"It was invaluable though because it taught us how to put together a show and gave us time to change the mindset in the BBC. Try as we might

the editor at the time wouldn't play ball and rather annoyingly Northamptonshire got a radio show on air before us, but when our current editor arrived we were away and haven't stopped since."

What particular opportunities and restrictions does working for the BBC bring?

TIM: "For me Introducing is proper public service broadcasting, it is exactly what the BBC should be about. We might only have an hour a week but I don't think there are many musicians in Oxfordshire that haven't had some kind of relationship with the show. Perhaps they might not have been played but they know we are there to play them once they get good enough. That raises everyone's game.

"Nightshift fulfilled that role for me when I was in a band. I made singles in the hope that you might say they were good and if you didn't I'd go away and try harder. But Nightshift is a rarity and for most places in the country local music needs fostering, encouraging and developing and the BBC has the resources and now the will to achieve that."

DAVE: "There are restrictions to what we can say or play though. The conversation can often be a bit edgy, with the potential to offend local radio listeners; Tim sees to that. And there can't be any swearing in the songs of course. Some bands send us expletive-ridden tracks that are not going to go down well on a Saturday night before *Strictly Come Dancing*."

TIM: "If you count our internet show then we probably were the first dedicated local music show in the country but we certainly haven't been alone and we didn't set up Introducing. Only time will tell if we are remembered as the Charles Darwins or the Alfred Russel Wallaces."

DAVE: "That must be the first mention of Alfred Russel Wallace in Nightshift. Hurrah."

WHILE TIM AND DAVE

present the show as a team, as far as producing the show goes, they have very defined roles, roles they have to fit in around all their other work for the BBC.

TIM: "Basically I do absolutely everything and then Dave picks the music. But then it is a local music

show so Dave's role in the grand scheme of things is hardly negligible. We basically argue about everything that we do. Hopefully that keeps everything fresh and honed."

DAVE: "Tim often works into his free time to put the show together. I respect and admire that. We get sent hundreds of songs to us a month via the BBC Uploader and I trawl through that and schedule the good tracks on the playlist accordingly. It's a big job, but not a hard one, and it's always exciting not knowing what's going to come up next."

What particular talent do the pair think each other brings to the show?

TIM: "Dave brings tolerance. I'm very pushy and always want to do more than is humanly possible. I think you need to be extremely tolerant working with a man like that. He's also the polar opposite to me, so hopefully if my zaniness gets a bit much the show has something a little more reserved to offer. He always insists on 'bringing it back to the music'."

DAVE: "Tim brings enthusiasm. I'm very happy for Tim to be the face of the show. I'm not good with people, I'm completely socially inept in fact. But he understands the need for promotion, for getting the show out there and he tends to be the one dealing with the bands on a one-on-one basis. He's very creative. It's not to everyone's taste but it forces you to have an opinion!"

What's the most annoying thing about each other?

DAVE: "Tim is stubborn, grouchy and has the feeblest grasp of pop culture and music history that you will ever find in a person."

TIM: "That's true, I don't have a mind for music trivia. I find it tricky to differentiate between my Gary Numans and my Gary Oldmans – and I've met the Numan one! But Dave has an equally feeble grasp on current affairs, science, technology, politics and basically anything that isn't music, film or literature."

TALKING OF ZANY, A

characteristic part of Introducing is Tim's often, ahem, unusual interview technique, especially with bigger-name out-of-town bands.

TIM: "When I was very young I used to listen to the *Hitch Hikers' Guide To The Galaxy* on long car journeys and realised that with radio you could be literally anywhere your imagination could take you. I combined that principle with what Simon Amstell was doing on *Popworld*. His genius was realising that people were bored of the clichéd pop star interview, as Youtube exposed the fact that they were saying exactly the same thing to every reporter. He put them in unusual situations and asked silly things to get something unique out of them. I just took that a lot

further. Skydiving with Young Knives was fun and interviewing Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly! at an imaginary murder scene, where I implied he had shot Lorraine Kelly was quite funny. He knew what I was like because the time before I'd broken my leg rock climbing on the White Horse with him. The worst one was Zero 7 when I pretended we were on a territorial army training day and for 15 minutes I went crazy with them ducking and diving over furniture in the studio and imagining explosions and then at the end I realised I hadn't pressed record. As I pressed what I thought was stop and realised it was record I looked at them and they said: 'You're a bit of a knob aren't you'. I pressed stop and that was my Zero 7 interview. It ain't all a bed of roses."

A TYPICAL INTRODUCING

show features a wide spread of local music, oblivious to genre, but each year Tim and Dave pick one local band and dedicate a whole show to them. So far Fell City Girl, Little

helped them along and where do you see them going from here?

TIM: "It feels really amazing to be part of their success. It validates everything we do when bands make it onto the next level and what is so nice about the guys in Stornoway is that they continue to acknowledge that support. They just did an interview in The Guardian and mentioned our efforts. I don't want anyone to get carried away - I didn't write any of their songs and they very probably would have made it without us but having them on-side and acknowledging that really helps justify our existence and make it tenable long term. They are such lovely people as well and I've had the time of my life with them. While hanging onto their coat tails I've got to interview Jools Holland and given Michael Eavis a hug. Frankly I've got more to thank them for than they have me but hopefully I'll be able to continue the charade that I've put them where they are today all the way to my dotage, when I get to talk about

"For me Introducing is proper public service broadcasting; it is exactly what the BBC should be about."

Fish, A Silent Film and Stornoway have had hour-long programmes dedicated to them. It's another of Introducing's ways of giving that extra little push to the bands they particularly love.

TIM: "I like to think that we pick a band that everyone else on the local music scene would agree deserve to be featured. We watch Nightshift closely, go to a lot of gigs and listen to a lot of music. The best dedicated shows we've put together have been when we've featured the bands that we frequently covered and these tend to be the more prominent bands that have done lots of exciting things. So far they've all been obvious. This year there perhaps isn't one stand-out act. We've still got a few months before we have that argument so there's plenty of time for bands to do some incredible things."

DAVE: "That's not a bad thing: there's a lot of exciting smaller acts breaking through right now. It's lovely to be spoilt for choice. And we've had a good run so far. Maybe we should make a bigger deal about it, make it more official, give them a trophy or something. Or at least a groovy plaque with Tim's face on it."

Introducing has been particularly associated with the rise and rise of Stornoway; how does it feel to be among the very first people to pick up on their potential, what's it like to have worked with them and

them on a late night Channel 4 documentary."

DAVE: "They were irresistible from their first demo. Brian wrote a nice letter praising Tim's duck jumper that he'd worn to one of our live nights. Tim stuck with them ever since, which has been a long time." Tim's love for Stornoway nearly cost him his job at the BBC a couple of years ago, though.

TIM: "I did eight months presenting the early breakfast show. I used to have to get up at 3am and if I'm honest I started to go a little bit loopy. I forgot there were rules about playlists and things and decided to take my wacky band of breakfast show characters on a 'Storn-Away-Day' to bond around the music of my favourite band. We went zorbing and pigeon shooting in a crazy fantasy radio world with me doing all the silly voices and madcap antics. The boss happened to be driving to work at the time and when he walked into the building he quite understandably suspended me for the rest of the week. Like I said I was very tired, the rest did me a world of good."

STORNOWAY,

unsurprisingly, feature on 'Round The Bends', which is available as a download only, with all profits going to Children In Need. Following on from the show's album of Bond theme covers last year, the album

'Round The Bends' is almost the ultimate tribute album. How did the idea come about?

DAVE: "We knew we wanted to celebrate our five year anniversary in spectacular style. It's hard enough covering Radiohead, but to attempt to do a whole album? I've heard cover albums before and they're always patchy. And here we'd be covering one of the greatest albums of all time. Never let it be said that we don't like a challenge."

Did you have a fixed idea of which bands you wanted to get involved and which songs you wanted them to do?

Tim: "We invited bands that we love and let them choose their own tracks. We argued a lot about this as well because we love a lot of bands and there are only twelve tracks. In the end we tried to feature bands that hadn't featured on previous albums and, with a few exceptions, it is a fresh new crop."

Which is your favourite song on the album?

TIM: I love The Evenings' 'Street Spirit (Fade Out)'. I think Dave and I both agree on this one. It's so incredible the effort that has gone into making something to help us celebrate our birthday but I think it is the competitive spirit that has pushed them on more than anything else and Mark Wilden has put together an incredible rendition of one of my favourite tracks. It's simply gorgeous."

DAVE: "Yeah, I kind of want my funeral to take place tomorrow just so I can have it played. I don't think that's morbid. Having the original played would be morbid but this version is life-affirming."

Any versions that were particularly surprising?

TIM: "I guess it isn't surprising but Alphabet Backwards have made 'Sulk' sound like one of theirs and Stornoway have done the opposite and made something that doesn't sound anything like them. There are no alarms but plenty of surprises." DAVE: "To be honest, we expected them to be good – the choice of acts guaranteed that – but I was still surprised at *how* good. Every band not only covered each song; they reinvented them in their own image. Naturally, doing a straight Radiohead cover would be fruitless, a losing battle, and everyone got that. I think the passion for Radiohead shines through on every track. The sheer talent of the bands here in Oxfordshire shouldn't still be surprising me, but it does."

BBC Oxford Introducing is broadcast on 95.2fm every Saturday between 6-7pm. The show is streamed online at bbc.co.uk all week and is available as a downloadable podcast. 'Round The Bends' is available now on iTunes.

RELEASED...

VARIOUS ARTISTS

'Round The Bends'

(Download only)

Like an alignment of planets BBC Oxford Introducing's local music show shares its fifth birthday with the fifteenth anniversary of Radiohead's 'The Bends'. While the latter is one of the greatest albums ever made and instrumental in taking Oxford music to the world, the former has quietly – okay, usually not so quietly – continued to give airtime and opportunities to new generations of Oxford bands, from Foals to Stornoway.

Following on from last year's 'A Quantum Of Covers' compilation, wherein assorted local luminaries – from Borderville and The Epstein, to Witches and Xmas Lights – covered classic Bond themes in aid of BBC Children In Need, here a cast of Oxford's finest reconstruct 'The Bends' in its entirety for the same cause. It's a fun, if artistically risky conceit; Radiohead are much-covered but rarely with much success or originality (Prince, Mark Ronson and Eliza Lumley being prime culprits). But maybe getting Oxford bands to remodel Oxford's greatest band will reap greater rewards. And so, for the most part, it seems it has.

Stornoway's opening take on 'Planet Telex' is an oddity as the band dispense with their characteristic folksiness for a more scrambled electronic approach that cheekily seems to derive more inspiration from 'Kid A' than 'The Bends'. Of the bands here who owe the most direct musical debts to Radiohead, The Winchell Riots come out on top with a brilliantly dreamlike choral take on '(Nice Dream)' that reminds us as much of Julee Cruise's 'Mysteries Of Love' and is possibly the album's high point. The Scholars go a bit 'Dear Prudence' on their version of 'My



Iron Lung' before injecting a bit of Bunnymen bombast into proceedings, while Ute's 'The Bends' is introverted and considered compared to the original's rampant squall.

Aside from Winchell Riots, the best takes here come from bands you wouldn't normally think of in relation to Radiohead: The Evenings' playfully spaced-out 'Street Spirit (Fade Out)' that sounds like Queen pretending to be Jon & Vangelis; We Aeronauts' cutesy 'Fake Plastic Trees'; Jessie Grace's overwrought treatment of 'High & Dry' that could be a lost Bond theme; Little Fish's raw, garagey 'Just' and in particular Alphabet Backwards' deliciously ebullient synth-pop splattering of 'Sulk' with its chirruping boy-girl vocal duelling.

Obviously as a local artefact 'Round The Bends' is both curio and essential purchase. How much of its appeal will extend beyond Oxford remains to be seen, but the very idea of a local music scene celebrating its greatest sons respectfully but for the most part not too reverentially is surely worthy of attention.

Dale Kattack



BABY GRAVY

'Not Waiting'

(BG)

If wasps were as big as people and came armed with boxing gloves instead of stings the end

result of getting on the wrong side of one would doubtless be similar to Baby Gravy keyboard player Dale White's synth jabs, which viciously punctuate the band's latest single.

Part of Baby Gravy's very substantial charm has always been their refusal to polish off those rough edges, preferring to steer their singularly wayward path through pop with rough'n'ready punk-inspired abandon; 'Not Waiting' lacks the thrill of last year's ace 'Did It Again', preferring an uncharacteristically brooding approach. Iona Roisin is typically bullish and stropky, but it's those nasty old-fashioned synth stabs that bring to life a song that might otherwise feel too much like any other new young band trying to find their own personality.

B-side 'Hot Night', though, is Baby Gravy doing what they always do best, partying with jerky, robotic intent, a retro-futurist synth-rock hum backing up Iona's Pauline Murray-styled holler and all wrapped up in two short minutes. All of which goes to prove that Baby Gravy are at their best when they're wired and showing off instead of sulking at the bottom of the stairs.

Dale Kattack

SPRING OFFENSIVE

'Pull Us Apart'

(Friars Music)

We love spring best of all the seasons – It's so ripe with potential, so showered in positivity. Even Spring Offensive's name leaps up at you like an eager puppy dog: love us, we're fun, we're fresh, let's frolic!

Amid the never-ending stream of great new bands forming around Oxford, few are drawing admiring glances from so many different directions as Spring Offensive; as well as nearly nabbing Nightshift's Demo Of The Month a few issues back (only beaten by The Scholars) they've already picked up airplay from Tom Robinson on 6Music as well as recording a session for BBC Oxford Introducing and contributed to that show's new 'Round The Bends' tribute album, and the reasons why everyone seems to love them are abundantly clear throughout this debut mini-album.

Ostensibly Spring Offensive are a folk-rock band dressed in a spangly indie t-shirt and come armed with a bag of cute frills and furbelows that make everything they do feel airy and alive, where lesser bands might sink into generic doldrums. Singer Lucas Whitworth can spit and snarl on songs like 'Every Coin' but he's equally capable of a sweeter, almost keening lament on 'The Cable Routine'.

The guitars jink and twinkle, songs drift along before rousing themselves for big choruses; one minute they're marching along with a snarl across their face, the next they're nestling down to toast marshmallows on a deserted beach with Jonquil and Stornoway. Like Winchell Riots they can mix intricate textures with epic intent and Lucas even gets to sing "We've already lost the plot, now we're losing our way" without attracting derisory mirth from passing cynics.

In the end, what Spring Offensive are doing isn't anything wildly innovative, just knitting together their often quite obvious influences, but as Funboy Three and Bananarama so wisely once said, it ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it, and, as Lord Summerisle might have added, you did it splendidly my dears. After that he'd doubtless launch into a chorus of 'Sumer Is Icumen In', but for now, spring feels just great.

Dale Kattack



‘The Kneanderthal Sounds Of’

NINE TON PEANUT SMUGGLERS

(Nine Ton)

Like buses, you wait an age for a Sir Bald Diddley album to turn up, then three come at once. It's coming up to twenty years since Mark Painter, aka Sir Bald Diddley, set out his stall as Oxford's curator of classic rock'n'roll, surf rock, r'n'b, and more recently ska. His prolific output in that time has seen him emerge in various guises (he's presently also leading The Keejerk Reactions who released a new album last month) but it's his meticulous attention to detail and unbridled enthusiasm for classic lost authenticity that makes him stand out and has made him a far bigger name beyond Oxford than he's ever been in his home town. He was recording albums at London's Toerag long before The White Stripes made it the hipsters' studio of choice.

As Hipbone Slim, Sir Bald explores old-fashioned rock'n'roll, rocking blues and surf-rock with a primitive raw edge, a hootin' and a hollerin' in with the near-primal 'Eye Of The Storm', nods to early Elvis and Little Richard along the way. 'Hung, Drawn & Quartered' is a

bluesy, harp-led boogie with dirt under its fingernails and gravel in its throat, while 'Camel Neck' is pure Dick Dale-style surf shimmer, Sir Bald a master of the guitar but more than ably bolstered by Gez Gerard's superb bass playing.

Further in there are forays into more countrified surf on 'No End In Sight', reminiscent of Lee Hazlewood; a comic aside in 'Dig That Grave!', and a full-on steal from Buddy Holly's 'Not Fade Away' on 'Primitive Rock'. Bo Diddley's trademark rhythms carry everything along with real gusto, particularly the barrelling 'Untamed Love' and the album only loses its momentum when Sir Bald dips into almost crooner-like territory on 'Fire's Still Burnin'". That aside it's rollicking fun from start to finish, utterly timeless and made with a love that's never too reverential.

Nine Ton Peanut Smugglers is Sir Bald's tribute to original Jamaican ska and r'n'b, featuring a more expanded band line-up, including full horn section. The album is a collection of singles and b-sides the band have released in recent years.



As with everything Sir Bald does it's authentically done but maybe lacks some of the unfettered fun of Hipbone Slim as he's vocally far more suited to belting it out blues style. From jaunty opening skank of 'If The Coast Is Clear', it's a pretty laid-back party piece, 'Everybody Ska' and 'Baldhead' standing out from the rest, all life and bounce, while the loping 'Pempelem' sounds insubstantial and the instrumental 'Hugh Mingus' feels like an incidental afterthought. As with Hipbone Slim's album its attention to period detail is undeniable and you can't doubt the heart and soul put into it but it feels more like it's been prepared to please nostalgists rather than a new audience.

Dale Kattack



‘Let The Music Out’

(Halcyon)

It's impossible to review Matt Sage without mentioning the Catweazle Club, but it's highly relevant.

Under Matt's stewardship Catweazle has long-since established itself as Oxford's premier acoustic music club and open mic evening, helping scores of local players and singers to find their feet in a welcoming environment. Running Catweazle has also given Matt both exposure to myriad styles of music that now inspire his own songs, and introduced him to a host of talented local musicians who he can call on to play for him. On this new album you'll find the likes of cellist Barney Morse-Brown, violin player Jane Griffiths and bassist Colin Fletcher, as well as the unique vocal talents of the late,

great Kate Garrett, to whom 'Let The Music Out' is dedicated.

Unsurprisingly, given all this, the album is rich in musical accomplishment and eclectic in style, while leaning towards warm, mellow pastoralism.

While Matt's vocals tend towards the Damien Rice/Jeff Buckley scheme of things, with the odd hint of Van Morrison, a cast of guest musicians bring jazz, psychedelia, 1940s-style lounge music and country to a gathering of songs that comes with an all-together-now hippyish vibe. Best of these are 'Still The Machine', an amiable piano-led jaunt with its odd trombone skronk coda; the wafting psychedelic whimsy of the album's title track with its sultry smooch and multi-part female vocal harmonies and 'In Love With A Boy', a country porch lullaby where Matt duets with Sharon Lewis while Max Moonlight adds a little night-time colour on pedal steel.

Sometimes Matt dips too far into generic folk-pop meandering, as on the Radio 2-lite 'Lilia' or the disappointingly shapeless album closer 'Holding On', while his earnest, reflective lyrical style can feel mawkish at times.

There's the occasional feeling too that he's throwing too many ideas into some songs in the hope that something will stick and lift the whole thing out of its comfort zone. But that's not dismiss the ambition to pull simple acoustic pop songs into new shapes and for the most part 'Let The Music Out' succeeds in the same aims as Catweazle Club, providing a gentle, inclusive atmosphere in which everyone is welcome to warm themselves.

Ian Chesterton

‘X’

(Quickfix)

“It’s quite mellow for Smilex” says the accompanying email, which boils down to slightly less screaming from frontman Lee Christian, although there is still a fair amount of that towards the end, plus a hefty dose of swearing and stuff about sex, but mostly shoved slightly into the background as Smilex make with a poppier take on their short-cropped heavy rocking. Initially this makes it sound like The Cure, but the bombast slowly creeps in and by the climax they’re pumping away like Tommy Lee at a Hollywood pool party. Smilex will always be more fun to watch live, where they’re still consummate entertainers; while their work in the studio displays their melodic talents far more clearly, that spark, that chemistry the band have with each other, doesn’t always come across.

Dale Kattack



GIG GUIDE

MONDAY 1st

THE BILLY WALTON BAND: The Bullingdon – New Jersey blues-rock guitarist in the vein of Eric Clapton and Stevie Ray Vaughan.

TUBELORD: The Jericho Tavern – Deliriously energetic spazz-funk-rock and precision grunge-pop from Kingston trio Tubelord in a Biffy Clyro-gone-dance vein.

TUESDAY 2nd

PETER ANDRE: 02 Academy – In an age where the future of our planet hangs in the balance, wars continue to rage across the world, religious extremism is on the rise and there's a World Cup coming up, it's a damning indictment of why half the human race fully deserve to go to hell in a handcart that the primary concern of some people's lives is whose side they're on – Pete's or Katy's. The correct answer being they should both

Wednesday 3rd

FIRST AID KIT:

The Jericho Tavern

First Aid Kit aren't what you'd probably expect from two teenage singing sisters from Stockholm. Their own description of themselves on Myspace is promising enough: "What Gary Numan would sound like if he made folk music," while their cover of Fleet Foxes' 'Tiger Mountain Peasant Song' made them a huge Youtube hit last year. But they're some way beyond what all that might suggested; the pair, Johanna and Klara Soderberg, aged 19 and 16 respectively, are possessed of fantastically powerful, mature voices that make them sound more like old time Kentucky bluegrass singers. The effect is enhanced by the duo's subject matter, crooning and harmonising on songs about middle-aged housewives and broken marriages. Like Fleet Foxes, they sound so much older than they are. The result, on their recently released debut album, 'The Big Black & The Blue', is a wonderfully dreamy mix of sweetness and world-weary washed-out regret. There are faint echoes of Vashti Bunyan and Karen Dalton in their porch songs, as well as the rustic feel of Midlake, but First Aid Kit are the most surprising and refreshing old-fashioned band of the year already.

MARCH

be melted down into their component plastic parts and used to make something even vaguely useful, like novelty toys for Christmas crackers. That tonight's gig sold out in a matter of hours, at over thirty quid a ticket, just goes to prove that some folks shouldn't be allowed to vote, breed or leave the house unaccompanied.

FIELD MUSIC: 02 Academy – Sunderland brothers David and Peter Brewis return to action in their Field Music guise, having seemingly split back in 2007. In the meantime Peter formed the rather ace The Week That Was, but now reunited with his brother and a new album, 'Measure', due, they're back at their slightly proggy orchestral pop best.

ERRORS + SO SO MODERN: The Jericho Tavern – Glasgow's superb post-rock-cum-electro noisemakers Errors hit the road in aid of new album 'Come Down With Me', signed to Mogwai's Rock Action label and coming in somewhere between Battles and LCD Soundsystem. Frenetic electro-math rocking from New Zealand's So So Modern in support.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – The Bully's free weekly live jazz club celebrates its tenth anniversary tonight with a special party. Club regulars The Howard Peacock Quintet play live with their funky keyboard-led jazz groove.

AMYY CAN FLY + HEART IN HAND + CANADIAN WATER + MARVEL + ATTACK PLAN + STATIC ACTION: The Cellar (6pm) – Rock, metal, punk and industrial club Discord presents an extended evening of heavyweight bands, including Bourmouth's punky electro-pop types Amy Can Fly and metalcore noisemongers Heart In Hand.

SAMUEL ZASADA + KIMWEI + STEPH NEWTON: Café Tarifa – Top quality acoustic sounds at tonight's Creative Tuesday session. Nightshift Demo Of The Month winner Samuel Zasada plays folk and country-inflected pop with a keen lyrical edge and an inventive treatment of his simple songs, alternately rootsy and ethereal, coming in somewhere between Bon Iver, Jose Gonzalez and Nick Drake. Kimwei, meanwhile, brings an inventive guitar playing style along to augment her breathless, emotionally taught folk-pop.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Coco Royal – Weekly acoustic session with Scott Gordon and guests

WEDNESDAY 3rd

FIRST AID KIT + MOUNTAIN PARADE + MESSAGE TO BEARS: The Jericho Tavern – Stockholm's teenage Youtube sensations bring the folkie love – *see main preview*

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass and dubstep club night.

ASHER DUST: Baby Simple – Dub, psych-rock, breaks and wonky beats from AJ on the decks.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's Witney – Weekly acoustic open mic session.

THURSDAY 4th

ANTLERS: The Jericho Tavern – Brooklyn's isolationist songwriter Peter Silberman brings his harrowing concept album, 'Hospice', to the stage, evoking the spirit of Sylvia Plath in his intimate, melancholic and ultimately cathartic story of terminal illness, musically recalling Neutral Milk Hotel, Death Cab For Cutie and Bon Iver.

LAST DAYS OF LORCA + SAM POPE BAND + SILVANITO + PEACH: The Bullingdon – Moshka club night with epic alt.rocking in a Muse and Radiohead vein from Last Days of Lorca, plus Latino-flavoured party rock from Silvanito.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with JAMES PEARSON: The Wheatsheaf – Renowned pianist James Pearson, a former Ronnie Scott's resident, is the special guest at tonight's Spin.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Weekly open mic club featuring a varied selection of singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and performance artists.

WE.ARE.ELECTRICITY: The Cellar – House club night with Jac The Disco and Get Your Geek On.

NEVER MEANS MAYBE + ELYSIUM WAITS: Fat Lil's Witney – Post-hardcore and metalcore noise from Never Means Maybe, plus thrash and screamo from Witney's Elysium Waits.

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston

ROCKET 88: Baby Simple – Rockabilly, jook joint blues and r'n'b club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern – Slam poetry champ Pete the Temp hosts the weekly open mic night.

FRIDAY 5th

TOM McRAE: 02 Academy – Chelmsford's master of mirth returns to town after his Academy show last September, continuing to plumb the depths of musical sorrow and melancholy in rather splendid style and with a featherlight vocal touch that leavens his tales of gloom and lost love.

VICARS OF TWIDDLY + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND + THE ROUNDHEELS + NICK

TINGAY: The Jericho Tavern – Benefit gig for Helen House Hospice, featuring classic surf rocking from Vicars Of Twiddly; electro-tinged post-rock from From Light To Sound and bluegrass-tinged folk from The Roundheels.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with BODY GLASS + AGE OF MISRULE + SMALL MACHINE: The Wheatsheaf – Characteristically mixed bag of rocking sounds at tonight's KK.

SKYLARKIN SOUND SYSTEM: The Cellar – Great mix of classic reggae, dancehall, soul and hip hop from Count Skylarkin, with a live set from Zion & The White Boys, plus Mancafarian MC Kwasi Asante (Aim/Grand Central Recordings).

BOOTLEG BEATLES: The New Theatre – Original and still the best Beatles tribute, featuring authentic reproductions of the old classics.

SACK SABBATH: Fat Lil's Witney – Black Sabbath tribute



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

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern – Punk, rock and indie tunes every Friday night from 9.

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

SKYNY NYRDS: The Chester Arms – Lynyrd Skynyrd tribute.

DENNY ILETT Jr + ADY DAVEY + MIKE

DAVEY: The Port Mahon – Local guitarist Denny plays a set of Hendrix covers.

SATURDAY 6th

LITTLE FISH + WINCHELL RIOTS + UTE + SPRING OFFENSIVE: O2 Academy – BBC Oxford Introducing celebrate their fifth anniversary with this joint promotion with TCT Music, presenting four of the bands who have contributed to the new 'Round the Bends' album. It's a homecoming headline show for local stars Little Fish, who have spent most of the past year in the States, working with Linda Perry on their

Tuesday 9th

FRIGHTENED RABBIT: O2 Academy

Re-arranged from last November, Frightened Rabbit's profile has risen considerably since the original planned date, with new single 'Nothing Like You' a fixture on 6Music and the Glasgow band's third album, 'The Winter Of Mixed Drinks', looking set to catapult them further towards crossover success. Frightened Rabbit were formed by and centre around singer-songwriter Scott Hutchinson and have, oddly, been dubbed Celtic-emo, probably due to the convergence of the singer's broad Scottish accent and often painfully emotive lyrics, but don't let that put you off. The band's mix of melancholic folk, bluegrass, indie and even, occasionally, grunge, is wholly engaging, rough hewn, jagged and raw but wrapped around soft acoustic melodies that can be simultaneously scathing, rousing and tender. At various times the foursome recall early REM and The Arcade Fire, as well as cult Scottish band The Reindeer Section, but Hutchinson's lyrical outpourings are always highly personal. The band toured as support to Death Cab For Cutie and Modest Mouse around the UK, ended 2009 in most magazines' end of year polls and now look forward to finally getting the recognition they deserve in 2010.

debut album, 'Baffled & Beat', due out in May. Perry's golden touch has added a pop sheen to Little Fish's tunes but live Juju and Nez's primal garage rock remains untainted and raw. Support comes from glacially epic indie rockers Winchell Riots, highly eclectic pop trio Ute and promising newcomers Spring Offensive.

EXLOVERS + VULTURES: The Jericho Tavern – Lovely, wistful boy/girl harmony-heavy folksy indie jangle in a Teenage Fanclub mould from London's Exlovers.

GODSIZED + DESERT STORM + EYE FOR AN EYE + CARAVAN OF WHORES: The Wheatsheaf – Monster bill of heavyweight noise with London's rising metal stars Godsized currently picking up the plaudits for their crunching groove-led thrash. Support from local stoner-metal tyrants Desert Storm and Banbury's sludgy heavy rockers Caravan Of Whores.

JETHRO TULL: The New Theatre – Ian Anderson and Martin Barre's enduring English folk-rock pioneers return.

JALI FILY CISSOKHO + TARIK BESHIR: Holywell Music Room (2pm) – Part of the Offshoot festival that's running all month, showcasing music rooted in traditional folk sounds from around the world. This afternoon's session finds locally-based Kora player Cissokho performing his Senegalese griot music, while Brickwork Lizards' Tarik Beshir brings his middle-eastern and north African folk along in support.

ERIC CHENAUX + THOMAS TRUAX + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE + LUM COL CON PIX: Holywell Music Room – An evening of experimental music from Offshoot Festival.

Thomas Truax should be familiar to local gig goers for his assembly of weird and wonderful home-made instruments, while French-Canadian improviser Eric Chenaux utilises electronics and guitars to create a woozy mix of jazz, folk, country, electronica and psychedelia. Multi-turntablist Lum Col Con Pix creates strange, bewitching glitchscapes on the decks, while Oxford-London improv ensemble Braindead Collective are tonight joined by Stornoway's Jonathan Ouin and Jonquil's Sam Scott for a journey into psychedelic electro, folk and drone noise, inspired by the likes of Sun Ra, A Silver Mt. Zion and Animal Collective.

MARTHA ROSE + REBECCA NEALE + MATT WINKWORTH: Folly Bridge Inn – Acoustic blues and folk from Martha Rose; fluffy folk-pop from Rebecca Neale and burlesque piano-led tomfoolery and wit from the rather splendid Matt Winkworth.

CABARET CLANDESTINO: East Oxford Community Centre – Music, poetry and cabaret with host Pete The Temp. Tonight's happenings include rowdy marches and scuzzy waltzes from Binewski Mudén; poet Byron Vincent and prog-folk from the Potato Potato Band.

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

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House, techno and dubstep with Boorly, plus club residents.

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

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

SUNDAY 7th

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS: O2 Academy – Jake Burns' punk vets head round the block once again, cranking out 'Alternative Ulster' et al.



Thursday 18th

NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB: O2 Academy

Back in September 2007 New Young Pony Club headlined the opening night of the Academy. At the time it seemed like a perfect match: the band's sleek synthetic pop sheen reflecting the clean, shiny new venue. Back then NYPC were riding high on the back of critical acclaim and a Mercury Prize nomination for their debut album, 'Fantastic Playground', and had just come off an *NME* Nu-Rave tour with Klaxons and CSS, but things have been quieter since. Now they return with a new album, out this month, and a headline UK tour. That gig showed there was plenty more to the band than Hoxton-led hype and studied coolness: singer-cum-cheerleader Tahita Bulmer is like a proper pop star, looking like a fabulously bored debutante but with a streak of dirty, low-down blues siren and the spirit of a young Debbie Harry running through her veins and she could pump a crowd while her band hit a rich electro-rock vein and mined it with steely robotic precision. Lou Hayter's Numaneque synth lines dominate the angular, funky bass and guitar and they conjure a party vibe like an android Go! Team. Infectious and irresistible, like all great pop music.

SPIERS & BODEN: Thomas Hughes Memorial Hall, Uffington – The English trad folk revolutionaries hit the wilds of south Oxfordshire.

LAUREN PRITCHARD: The Jericho Tavern – Tennessee's emotive balladeer out on a UK tour.

SUNDAY ROAST: The Cellar – Rock'n'roll and soul club night with live bands tbc.

NICK TINGAY + MINOR COLES + ALPHABET BACKWARDS ACOUSTIC: Malmaison – Semi-acoustic session at the Castle



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Thursday 18th

FRANZ NICOLAY:

Café Tarifa

Although best known as the effervescent, grandly-moustachioed keyboard player with The Hold Steady, Brooklyn's Franz Nicolay is a whole lot more – as well as his five-year stint with The Hold Steady, he founded the Anti-Social Music collective, played in gypsy-klezmer group Guignol and has sat in with Bruce Springsteen on occasion. A talented multi-instrumentalist, he's adept on piano, guitar, mandolin, accordion, saw, harmonica and banjo as well as a sterling vocal talent in the style of Tom Waits and Nick Cave. His debut solo album, 'Major General', was widely-acclaimed for its eclectic and ambitious mix of punk-informed folk, jazz and world music, while live he's renowned as a flamboyant entertainer, almost in the Vaudeville tradition. Tonight's show should carry extra spark, being set in the intimate confines of Oxford's increasingly prolific Café Tarifa. Great local support too from surf-pop outfit The Long Insider, coming on like a latterday Lee Hazlewood and Nancy Sinatra, and the raw, rootsy country rock of Huck and the Handsome Fee.

complex hotel. Dark, sparse acoustic folk-pop from Nick Tingay, plus sweet-natured indie pop from Minor Coles and ebullient pop anthems from Alphabet Backwards' James Hitchman, playing solo tonight.

SUE & PHIL + HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + BEARD OF DESTINY + RIVERSIDE VOICES: Donnington Community Centre – Free live music session with Redox's Phil & Sue and bluegrass combo Headington Hillbillies.

MONDAY 8th

THE AUTOMATIC: 02 Academy – Return of the Welsh 'Monster' hitmakers, continuing to enjoy a new musical lease of life since the departure of screechy keyboard monkey Alex Pennie and the arrival of former-Yourcodenameis:milo guitarist Paul Mullen, who brought with him a more diverse and aggressive sound that's apparent on new album 'Tear The Signs Down'.

GWYN ASHTON'S TWO-MAN BLUES

ARMY: The Bullingdon – Return of the Aussie blues-rock guitarist to the Famous Monday Blues club, playing electric blues inspired by The Stones and Led Zep, singing with a raucous, gutsy style.

POWER OF DREAMS + INTERNATIONAL JETSETTERS + DIRTY ROYALS: The Jericho Tavern – Dublin's late-80s/early-90s indie cult stars regroup as their minor classic 'Immigrants, Emigrants and Me' is re-released. Often associated with fellow Irish arty rock types A House, Power Of Dreams tended more towards the shimmering power pop of Echo & The Bunnymen and House

Of Love, but with a slightly folkier edge. A great trip down memory lane for obscure indie aficionados. Local support comes from nu-gaze sonic architects International Jetsetters and harmony-heavy 60s-styled popsters Dirty Royals.

ROCK AROUND THE CLOCK: The Cellar – Classic 50s and 60s rock'n'roll club night with a live set from George Wright & the Keynote Speakers, plus DJ Na Na Lips.

OXFORD IMPROVISERS: Folly Bridge Inn – Oxford Improvisers tackle John Zorn's game piece 'Cobra', plus there are sets from Pete McPhail (reeds) and Roger Telford (drums) and Sean Booney (poetry) and David Stent (guitar).

TUESDAY 9th

FRIGHTENED RABBIT: 02 Academy – Rearranged gig for the Scottish folk-core stars – *see main preview*

HADOUKEN!: 02 Academy – The indie-grime crossover champs follow up 'Music For An Accelerated Culture' with new album 'For The Masses'.

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

MOUTH MUSIC: Wesley Memorial Chapel – Offshoot festival show with The Wright Family, Pete Hope Evans and Jonathan Cope.

MATT KILFORD + KAT GADSDEN + NIGEL BROWN: Café Tarifa – Acoustic folk-pop from local troubadour Matt Kilford, plus mellow jazz-pop from singer and pianist Kat Gadsden.

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

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Coco Royal

WEDNESDAY 10th

AUDIO BULLYS: 02 Academy – Make or break time for Simon Franks and Tom Dinsdale as they head out on tour, hopefully to plug long-delayed third album 'Sunday Night Fever'. With 2003 debut 'Ego War', Audio Bullys' lively, inventive mix of breaks, hip hop, punk, garage and house was equal to Basement Jaxx and things looked good but their follow-up, 'Generation', utterly lost the plot, a poor-man's Streets rescued only by a vocal contribution from Suggs and the excellent Nancy Sinatra-sampling hit 'Shot You Down'.

ANONYMOUS TIP + BLACK POWDER + UNDERSMILE + CHARM ASSAULT + EIGHT DIRTY PAGES: The Wheatsheaf – Hardcore punk from London's Anonymous Tip, with support from local thrash-punk ogres Black Powder, former-Caliber grungers Charm Assault, doomy grunge types Undersmile and acid rockers Eight Dirty Pages.

PHANTOM THEORY + GUNNING FOR TAMA: Café Tarifa – Launching Café Tarifa's new weekly semi-acoustic live music night, Phantom Theory tone down the high-octane guitar noise and thunderous beats, while Gunning For Tamar bring their riff-heavy post-rock.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Fortnightly open-jam session with in-house band Four Phat Fingers, plus DJ Geenee spinning a mix of funk, reggae, hip hop, dubstep and drum&bass.

OXFORD FERAL CHOIR: St Michael's Church – Phil Minton brings his experimental choir to town as part of Offshoot Festival.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's Witney

THURSDAY 11th

TURIN BRAKES: 02 Academy – Olly Knights and Gale Paridjanian return with more earnest rock emoting in aid of new album 'Outburst'.

IT BITES + THE AYNLEY LISTER BAND: 02 Academy – Melodic prog rocking from the recently reformed Cumbrian collective It Bites, best known for the 1986 pop hit 'Calling All The Heroes' but closer in style to Porcupine Tree and Marillion. Support from heavy-duty blues rock guitarist Aynley Lister.

CHRIS TT: The Jericho Tavern – Brighton's personable folk-pop singer-songwriter returns to town after supporting The Broken Family Band here in October and having previously played with everyone from The National and The Divine Comedy to Frank Turner and Elbow over the years, now out on a headline tour to promote new album 'Love Is Not Rescue'.

WILD DOGS IN WINTER + CHAD VALLEY: The Cellar – Sleepy-eyed, sparse and heartbroken ambient folk-pop from Hampshire duo Wild Dogs In Winter, plus Jonquil's Hugo Manuel re-adopting his Chad Valley persona in support.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf THE HAMSTERS: Fat Lil's Witney – Classic rocking blues in the style of Hendrix and ZZ Top from the UK's premier touring crew.

STEVE CARROLL: The Boat Inn, Thrupp – Covers and originals from the folk and pop multi-

Friday 19th

THE BIG 10":

The Cellar

Skylarkin's Aidan Larkin has a habit of hosting some of the best parties in town; in recent times he's attracted ska legends like Alton Ellis and Skatalites as well as Ska Cubano to Oxford as well as legendary Bristolian ska man DJ Derek, while the regular Skylarkin Soundsystem nights air the best in classic ska, reggae, rocksteady and soul. This new club night aims to present the best in classic jump blues, r'n'b and rock'n'roll as well as his beloved ska and tonight's opening night is a corker. There are live sets from Sir Bald Diddle's Hipbone Slim & The Knee-Tremblers and Nine Ton Peanut Smugglers projects. The former kick out raw period rock'n'roll, rocking blues and surf-rock, while the latter reawaken classic Jamaican ska and r'n'b, both acts carrying Sir Bald's superb stamp of authenticity. But the star turn tonight is a rare chance to catch dance legend Andrew Weatherall on the decks in such an intimate setting. From remixing Primal Scream and New Order, through his time with Sabres of Paradise and Two Lone Swordsmen to his recent solo albums, taking in an astonishing production CV along the way, Weatherall remains one of the most important figures in UK dance history, and you really don't get a better man in to help launch a new club night like this.



instrumentalist and singer.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 12th

FUN LOVING CRIMINALS: 02 Academy –

Full live set from Huey Morgan and chums, still documenting New York City life, fifteen years after their biggest UK hit, 'Scooby Snacks'. From hip hop, funk and rock to lounge, there's an endearingly gleeful satire entrenched in their crime and drug narratives and Huey's innate star quality should still make the band worth a visit.

UTE + NIGHT PORTRAITS + VIXENS: The Wheatsheaf – Great triple bill of local bands with eclectic rockers Ute supported by thrash-pop types Night Portraits and post-punkers Vixens.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dance, Balkan beats, afrobeat, world sounds and nu-jazz club night, tonight featuring a live set from Alejandro Toledo and the Magic Tombolinos playing an eclectic mix of hip hop, Balkan, middle-eastern and gypsy-flavoured dance.

FIXIES + HUCK + PINK ROOM: The Port Mahon – Stripped-down show from some of Fixers and chums.

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM

BAND + SQUEEKY + SCOTT ROWSON: The Stocks Bar, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Untamed speakeasy jazz from Oxford's finest party band.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

SATURDAY 13th

HEAVEN'S BASEMENT + DEAR SUPERSTAR: 02 Academy – Double dose of hard'n'heavy rock of the old school tonight with Heaven's Basement fresh from supporting Papa Roach on tour and kicking it out in the style laid down by AC/DC decades previously. Heavily-tattooed Motley

Crue-style rockers Dear Superstar support.

VON BRAUN + SAMUEL ZASADA + PICTUREHOUSE: The Wheatsheaf – Cure-inspired new wave and alt.rock from Von Braun, plus esoteric roots pop from Samuel Zasada.

SPRING OFFENSIVE + OUR LOST INFANTRY + WAITING FOR WINTER +

SLEEPING PASSENGERS: The Cellar – Album launch gig for highly promising local newcomers Spring Offensive, mixing up folksy melodies with tricky alt.pop angles and twinkles. Aldershot's Our Lost Infantry bring their punchy indie-pop along in support after gigging with Johnny Foreigner and Frightened Rabbit.

TROUBADOURS & TROBAIRITZ: The Half Moon (2pm) – Part of the Offshoot festival, an afternoon of local acoustic acts, including Catweazle supremo and world-folk singer Matt Sage, wordy anti-folk chap Faceometer in a Jeffrey Lewis vein, plus Ed Pope and Sam Taplin.

TREMBLING BELLS + THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Jericho Tavern – 60s folk revival revivalism from Trembling Bells, fronted by the Sandy Denny-like vocal talents of Lavinia Blackwall and coming on like a latterday Fairport Convention and Incredible String Band.

STATE OF UNDRRESS: Fat Lil's Witney – Folk-rock.

BARBARELLA + GUNNING FOR TAMAR:

The Port Mahon – Benefit gig for the Multiple Sclerosis Society with campily theatrical rockers Barbarella and riff-heavy post-rockers Gunning For Tamar.

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: 02 Academy

KINO MACHINE: The Bullingdon – Classic and modern indie club night.

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

SKITTLE ALLEY ACOUSTIC NIGHT: The Ox, Abingdon – Unplugged sets from A Pint & A Half Of Blues plus Mark Bosley & Mark Sollis.

SUNDAY 14th

TROUBADOURS & TROBAIRITZ: The Half Moon (2pm) – This afternoon's Offshoot Festival acoustic session features Roxy Brennan, Ben Walker, King Of Cats and Kimwei.

WE AERONAUTS + JOE ALLEN + BLEEDING HEART NARRATIVE + JUJU FISH: Holywell Music Room – An evening of local folk-inclined bands as part of the Offshoot festival. Expansive, Arcade Fire-influenced sweeties We Aeronauts headline, with support from emotive local troubadour Joe Allen and multi-layered classical-folk-electronica outfit Bleeding Heart Narrative.

Little Fish's Juju presents her stripped-down acoustic versions of the band's taut, battling garage-rock.

MONDAY 15th

HAMILTON LOOMIS: The Bullingdon – Texan bluesman mentored by Bo Diddley, Albert Collins and Clarence Brown, a virtuoso multi-instrumentalist, as adept with piano, drums and blues harp as he is on his trademark Strat guitar and adding a funky dash to traditional Delta blues.

TUESDAY 16th

THE COURTEENERS: 02 Academy – Planet Earth's least remarkable bunch of guitar-bothering oxygen users return with a new album, the title and content of which we have forgotten already.

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

NATUREBOY + AIDEN CANADAY + ADAM BARNES: Café Tarifa – Pastoral, Beatles-y pop and nu-jazz grooves from Natureboy at tonight's Creative Tuesday session, plus amiable folksy rocking from Aiden Canaday and soulful acoustic pop from Adam Barnes.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Coco Royal

WEDNESDAY 17th

THE STRANGLERS: 02 Academy – The punk-era hitmakers hit town, still a going concern twenty years after the departure of Hugh Cornwell. Those old classics, from 'Peaches' and 'Down In The Sewer' to later hits like 'Duchess' and 'Golden Brown' were masterclasses in malevolence and sophistication and lifted the band well above bands considered by the press to be more pure punk. How it'll all sound now with the old helmsman long gone is unsure.

JOSH PYKE + EMMA POLLOCK: 02 Academy – Aussie singer-songwriter Josh Pyke returns to the Academy after last year's acclaimed show, set to finally release his new 'Chimneys Afire' album over here. His delicate folk-pop melodies hide a more painful lyrical content, not dissimilar to Elliott Smith or even Evan Dando at times, and he's gradually earned himself a loyal following. He's joined tonight by former-Delgados



Sunday 21st

THE JOY FORMIDABLE: 02 Academy

Sometimes a band comes along who, while hardly taking the world and its shark-hungry media by storm, taps into a particular vein of passion among Oxford gig goers and we take them almost as our own. As it was with Rolo Tomassi, so it seems too with The Joy Formidable, whose local gigs have been rapid, cathartic celebrations of a band who know how to behave exactly like rock stars on stage, make a ferocious racket *and* write more than their fair share of cracking pop songs. The three-piece, led by Welsh childhood sweethearts Ritzy Bryan and Rhydian Dafydd, tend to sound like a motorway pile-up involving Sonic Youth, Kate Bush, The Breeders and The Ting Tings, all chiming guitars, furious distortion and the sort of thunderous drumming that wouldn't seem out of place in a death metal band. Amid all this the diminutive Roxy more than holds her own, her voice apparently delicate but equal to the huge, fizzing grunge-goth pop noise the band create. She's not averse to throwing herself into the moshpit either, where the teaming hoards of devotees are always ready to catch her and bear her aloft back to her natural playground, the stage. Back in town after last summer's fantastic showing at Truck Festival, if you're not already a convert, get down here and be ready to be awed.

singer and guitarist Emma Pollock, whose solo career sees her move into more gently crafted folk-pop territory, while retaining some of that old dark indie mystique.

MINOR COLES + THE A TRAIN: Café Tarifa – Semi-acoustic set from promising local indie types Minor Coles.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Featuring Blackalicious' Gift Of The Gab.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's Witney

THURSDAY 18th

NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB: 02 Academy – Ace party synth-pop action from the returning London cool kids – *see main preview*

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA: The Cellar – Oxford's kings of instrumental rock action return after a long lay-off, which they've spent recording their third album, due for release in the summer and giving us a timely reminder of why



Monday 22nd

PATTI SMITH: The Holywell Music Room

Tonight's concert is billed a 'A night of music and words with Patti Smith', and given the slightly rarefied surroundings, it's uncertain if this show will be anything like her gig at the Academy two years ago – an astonishing display from the greatest female vocalist in rock history in which she belted through the best bits of her classic 'Horses' and 'Easter' albums, but it's likely that large chunks of her old classics will be unearthed once more in some form and for those alone it's worth trying to track down a ticket for what is already a sold-out event. The 'words' bit isn't unexpected though since Smith was always a poet who drifted into punk's orbit, along with Tom Verlaine bringing an arty, literate bite to the freshness and aggression of punk. She's a great raconteur too, weaving seemingly abstract, rambling monologues together between songs that suddenly fall into place, often hilariously. But it's her voice that's the real wonder – undiminished almost forty years on from her debut, it's a potent primal howl of a voice, full of rich emotion and power that makes songs like 'Because The Night', 'Dancing Barefoot' or her peerless take on 'Gloria' amongst the greatest pieces of music ever made. A great chance to witness a true legend in action.

they're such an inspirational band, somehow bridging the gap between Stravinsky, Spinal Tap and Add N To (X) with their flamboyant electro-classical noise.

FRANZ NICOLAY + THE LONG INSIDERS + HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE + DANNY CHIVERS: *Café Tarifa* – Special solo show from the former-Hold Steady multi-instrumentalist – *see main preview*
HEATHER MYLES & THE CADILLAC COWBOYS: *The Bullingdon* – Second Texan show of the week for the Famous Monday Blues, making a rare foray into Thursdays and with good reason. The Texas-bred, Nashville-based singer is firmly in the Bakersfield tradition of country music, inspired by Loretta Lynn and George Jones, likened to Tammy Wynette and Patsy Cline and a firm favourite on the US country circuit for her fresh approach to traditional country. Along the way she's collaborated with

Dwight Yoakam and Merle Haggard and released a fistful of albums, including a brace for the renowned Hi-Tone label.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – London saxophonist Josephine Davies is tonight's guest.

RELIK + COWBOY RACER + SECRET RIVALS: *The Jericho Tavern* – Melodic heavy rocking from Relik, plus sultry electro-pop from Cowboy Racer, featuring former-Salad singer Marijne van der Vlugt.

DEAFHAVANA + ALL FORGOTTEN + FRANCESQUA: *Fat Lil's Witney* – Metalcore and post-hardcore from King's Lynn's Deaf Havana.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: *East Oxford*

Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: *Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston*

OPEN MIC SESSION: *James Street Tavern*

OPEN MIC SESSION: *The Half Moon*

FRIDAY 19th

PUSSYCAT & THE DIRTY JOHNSONS + SOHO COBRAS + PHANTOM MACHINE:

The Wheatsheaf – Supremely entertaining punk-inspired rockabilly and surf-rock from Basingstoke's Pussycat & The Dirty Johnsons at tonight's Stone Free promotion. Fronted by the irrepressible Pussycat (kind of a mix of Polly Styrene and Poison Ivy), the band kick it out raw and energetic in the mould of The Cramps, Gun Club and Plasmatics. Support comes from former-Pistol Kixx people Soho Cobras, now female-fronted but still in awe of The New York Dolls, Dead Boys and Ramones, while Phantom Machine features members of Phantom Theory and Family Machine playing a set of Nirvana covers. Punk rocking action all round. What's not to love?

THE BIG 10th: *The Cellar* – Skylarkin' launch their new 50s and 60s jump blues and rock'n'roll club night with sets from Hipbone Slim and The Nine-Ton Peanut Smugglers, plus a DJ set from Andrew Weatherall – *see main preview*

TWO DOOR CINEMA CLUB + CITADELS: *02 Academy* – Northern Irish indie-electro types Two Door Cinema Club arrive in town in support of debut album 'Tourist History', contentedly cool on Kitsune, inspired by Bloc Party amongst others and having supported Foals, Autokratz and Delphic ahead of this headline tour.

PLUMP DJS: *02 Academy* – Andy Gardner and Lee Rous return to the Academy decks for a night of nu-skool breaks.

BEAUTIFUL SOUND: *Fat Lil's Witney* – Beautiful South tribute.

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

GET DOWN: *The Brickworks*

SATURDAY 20th

TRIVIUM + CHIMAIRA + WHITECHAPEL: *02 Academy* – A night of big ol' metal noise with Florida's Trivium increasingly leaving those Metallica comparisons behind as they move away from thrash and into a more melodic and progressive form of metalcore. Support comes from Ohio's metalcore types Chimaira and best of all Tennessee's relentlessly monstrous deathcore outfit Whitechapel.

THE CRUSHING + BEELZEBOZO + RISEN IN BLACK: *The Wheatsheaf* – Local metal night.

VACUOUS POP NIGHT: The Cellar – Esoteric sounds from Vacuous Pop, with bands to be confirmed.

SUNFLY: *Fat Lil's Witney*

TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: *02 Academy*

DUB POLITICS: *The Bullingdon* – Dubstep club night.

ASHER DUST: *Cricketers Arms* – Dub, breaks, wonky beats, ska and jump blues from AJ on the decks.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: *The Dolphin, Wallingford*

WAX ON WAX OFF: *James Street Tavern*

SUNDAY 21st

THE JOY FORMIDABLE + BADDIES: 02

Academy – Honey-dipped rock noise from the rising starlets – *see main preview*

CHRIS REA: *The New Theatre* – The Middlesborough growler brings his gravel-voiced

Friday 26th

THEE SILVER MOUNT ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA:

The Regal

A first appearance in Oxford for three years for A Silver Mount Zion tonight, playing as part of Pindrop Performance's Offshoot festival. Originally formed as a one-off side project by Godspeed You! Black Emperor trio Efrim Menuck, Sophie Trudeau and Thierry Amur to record a tribute to Efrim's deceased dog, Montreal's A Silver Mt Zion rapidly grew from their 1999 inception to a seven piece that has become full-time employment with Godspeed on indefinite hiatus. Sharing a similarly desolate miserablism to Godspeed, A Silver Mt Zion lean more heavily towards classical music, adopting its stately presence into their eloquent take on post-rock (in its truest form), utilising drones, drifting, portentous peaks of noise and gentle dissipation of tension. Another major difference between the bands is that ASMZ use vocals, despite Efrim's apparent discomfort with both singing and being the centre of attention. Still, his poetic, political lyrical style helps define the band. Having undergone numerous elaborate name changes to match their perversely wordy album titles (try 'He has Left Us Alone But Shafts Of Light Sometimes Grace The Corners Of Our Room' on for size), tonight they perform as Thee Silver Mount Zion Memorial Orchestra, joined for the evening by Bleeding Heart Narrative and Pindrop Performance's own Braindead Collective.



MOR rock back to town, touring last year's Best Of compilation. Having defied the vagaries of fashion for 30 years now his music continues to be rooted in traditional 60s American rock. Expect all the hits - 'Road To Hell', 'Let's Dance', 'On The Beach' as well as plenty of crowd pleasers for the loyal masses as he digs deep into his extensive 24-album back catalogue.

CHRIS THOMPSON + EMPIRE SAFARI + THE NEW MOON: Malmaison – Semi-acoustic local bands night.

MONDAY 22nd

PATTI SMITH: Holywell Music Room – Possibly the greatest female rock singer of all time brings her words and music to the rarefied environs of the Holywell – *see main preview*

KING KING: The Bullingdon – New rising stars of the UK blues circuit following on from their debut show at Monaghan Festival. Fronted by Nimmo Brothers chap Alan Nimmo, they play rocking blues inspired by BB King, Albert Collins and John Mayer.

TUESDAY 23rd

BOYCE AVENUE: 02 Academy – Sick-inducing acoustic rocking brothers from Florida with an over-earnest approach, midway between Crowded House and Boyzone, that will have zombieified Jesus Army warriors swinging their hips with gay abandon. Or maybe not. Being gay is a sin, apparently.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With guest Alvin Roy.

JAMIE FOLEY + REBECCA NEALE: Café Tarifa – Creative Tuesday acoustic session.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Coco Royal

WEDNESDAY 24th

MOTION CITY SOUNDTRACK: 02 Academy – Emo-tinged power-pop in a Get-Up Kids and Jimmy Eatworld vein from Minnesota's Motion City Soundtrack, over in the UK to tour their new 'My Dinosaur Life' album.

KILL IT KID + A GENUINE FREAKSHOW + MINOR COLES + SPRING OFFENSIVE: The Wheatsheaf – Authentic sounding American blues-roots from Bath's Kill It Kid at tonight's Coo promotion, led by Chris Turpin's raw, passionate voice and epic fiddle playing. Reading's intense, epic indie types A Genuine Freakshow come in somewhere near Radiohead and Purescence at times, while local support comes from sweetly inventive local indie types Minor Coles and promising newcomers Spring Offensive.

INLIGHT + EMPIRE SAFARI: Café Tarifa – Semi-acoustic sets from local stadium-pop types InLight and occasionally funk heavy rockers Empire Safari.

PHAT SESSIONS: The Cellar – Open jam session.

THURSDAY 25th

MADINA LAKE: 02 Academy – Chicago's punky power-poppers continue to build on their 2007 Kerrang! Best International Newcomers award and last year's Vans Warped Tour.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB with HARRY BECKETT, CHRIS BISCOE & PAT THOMAS: The Wheatsheaf – A masterclass in free jazz and improv at the Spin tonight with veteran trumpeter Harry Beckett teaming up with multi-instrumentalist Chris Biscoe and local keyboard wizard Pat Thomas.

BOMBAY BICYCLE CLUB + LUCY ROSE + DUTCH UNCLES: The Jericho Tavern – Return to town for the north London teen rockers, kicking out a heavy rock thrash, packed with slacker fuzz and melodic fragility that earns them a secure perch between The Strokes, My Bloody Valentine and Pavement.

KID PANG + HREDA: The Cellar – Many-angled spazz-core from Canterbury's Kid Pang, plus local post-rock instrumentalists Hreda.

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA: Fat Lil's Witney – Return of the orchestral post-rock heroes.

BEAVER FUEL: The Port Mahon – Alternately witty, satirical or just plain abusive punk-fuelled indie pop from the Fuel. In the words of the wise man, Fuck Off, I've Got Tourettes.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 26th

ELLIE GOULDING: 02 Academy – Sold-out gig for the BRIT-winning songstress – *see main preview*

A SILVER Mt ZION: The Regal – Epic, esoteric post-rock from Canada's finest orchestral ensemble – *see main preview*

TWILIGHT SAD + TAKE A WORM FOR A WALK WEEK + CAT MATADOR: The Jericho Tavern – Epic melancholy from Glasgow's Twilight Sad, brewing up a potent wall of noise that mixes Tindersticks, Glasvegas and Mogwai.

DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + ACE BUSHY STRIPEASE: The Wheatsheaf – Sharp-elbowed post-hardcore noise from Dial F, with support from Birmingham's ramshackle thrash-pop and twee-prog rockers.

STATES OF EMOTION: The Bullingdon – Rabble-rousing nu-baggy pop in the vein of Reverend & The Makers and The Twang from Essex's States of Emotion.

KRISSY MATTHEWS: Fat Lil's Witney – Rocking blues kicking off Fat Lil's blues festival.

BACKROOM BOOGIE: The Bullingdon

HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night with Metalheadz' Loxy and Jubei.

MARK BOSLEY & STELLA SHAKECHI: St Michael's at the Northwall

TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS: James Street Tavern

GET DOWN: The Brickworks

PETE FRYER BAND: The Nelson, Wantage

SATURDAY 27th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with FROM LIGHT TO SOUND + FLASH BANG BAND + ROZZ McDONALD: The Wheatsheaf – Elegantly turbulent electro and post-rock soundscaping from From Light To Sound at tonight's GTI gig. Brighton's Flash Bang Band bring their quirky take on funky psych-rock, like a Blaxploitation Flaming Lips at times, while Rozz McDonald adds her breathlessly emotive piano-led acoustic balladry to the eclectic mix.

YOUTHMOVIES + ADAM GNADE: 02 Academy – And so it's farewell to one of Oxford's most consistently inventive and inspiring bands. Youthmovie's often sublime blend of visceral rock thrills and cerebral avant-rock experimentation inspired the likes of Foals and Jonquil, while their hard-working commitment to the DIY ethic saw them touring around the UK



Friday 26th

ELLIE GOULDING: 02 Academy

With a BBC Sound of 2010 win and a BRIT Awards Critics Choice award already to her name, and with her debut album not even out yet, you could say things have moved pretty quickly for Ellie Goulding. Having grown up in Herefordshire and moved to Kent to study drama, while writing her own folk songs, a chance encounter put her in touch with Frankmusic and the producer's silicon touch has found her swept along on a tidal wave of critical acclaim and record company hype. Last year's 'Under The Sheets' single got the right people very excited and a collaboration with Starsmith kept the wave rolling. Goulding is now signed to Polydor, has appeared on *Later... With Jools Holland* and supported Little Boots on tour. Thing is, amid all the excitement, few people seem prepared to ask if she's really as good as all that suggests. Any comparison to Little Boots herself won't go in Ellie's favour, that's for sure, and while she's got a sweet, sleepy-eyed voice, she's no Florence Welch. A closer match would be La Roux, whose Elly Jackson similarly started off singing and writing folk songs before heading into electro-pop territory. That's the problem with the modern music industry machine – acts are thrust into the limelight and heaped with plaudits before they're really ready and Ellie Goulding probably deserves a fairer crack the whip than the one she'll get if she doesn't immediately repay all that expectation.

and releasing a host of great albums and singles, not least when they were collaborating with tonight's support act, poet Adam Gnade. Tonight's show should be a fitting send-off if the band's commitment to inventive performance is anything to go by and a timely reminder to everyone of just how to break barriers and genre boundaries while also rocking like bastards.

SMITHS INDEED: 02 Academy – Tribute to The Smiths.

BENNI HEMM HEMM + MESSAGE TO BEARS + ADAM BARNES: The Jericho Tavern – Tastefully quirky, heavily-orchestrated country pop and folk from Iceland's Benedikt H Hermannsson and his fluctuating cast of musicians, which tonight features members of Sigur Ros and Múm. Ranging from discreetly epic to rousing and joyous, it's a fresh twist on what people might have come to expect from Icelandic pop. Jerome Alexander and chums' Message To Bears support with their bucolic folksy experimentation, while singer-songwriter Adam Barnes opens the show.

JUNKSTAR + CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED + THE SCHOLARS + JUST MORALE: Brookes University Union – Benefit gig in aid of Sobell House and the Make A

Wish Foundation, featuring electro-bolstered disco-punk crew Junkstar, plus sometime Supergrass chap Charly Coombes with his new band, leaning back to 60s rock and soul, Editors-influenced indie starlets The Scholars and Coventry's rock and rollers Just Morale.

BIG MAMA'S HOUSE: Fat Lil's Witney – Blues and r'n'b.

OUT TO GRAZE FESTIVAL LAUNCH: The Cellar – Cheap Thrills' Rico Tubbs heads a night of dance to launch the local festival. Plus Melodize, Emily Williams and James Weston.

OXFORD CONTEMPORARY MUSIC OPEN SESSION: The North Wall, Summertown TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101: 02 Academy

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass with Modified and Motion.

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Seacourt Arms, Botley

SMALL MACHINE + QUADROPHOBE: The Stocks, Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – Heavy rock action from the former-Phyl people Small Machine plus ska-pop types Quadrophobe at tonight's Skittle Alley bands night.

MUNDANE SANDS: The Port Mahon

SUNDAY 28th

PALOMA FAITH + LA SHARK: 02 Academy – Riding high on the back of Jools Holland's enthusiastic endorsement and already being hailed as The New Amy Winehouse, the former-magician's assistant and burlesque dancer turned actress, turned singer brings her decidedly old-school soul, blues and gospel to town. Having

impersonated the likes of Etta James and Ella Fitzgerald in her acting job, she's found her own voice on Top 10 debut album 'Do You Want The Truth Or Something Beautiful?'.

DAN LE SAC Vs SCROOBIUS PIP: 02

Academy – The poet'n'producer duo keep on keeping on with new album 'The Logic Of Chance' after their peerless Noughties classic 'Thou Shalt Always Kill'. Part popsters, part pranksters (check out their *X-Factor* spoof on Youtube if you haven't already), their wit and inventiveness continues to shine through.

SOPHIE GARNER: The North Wall, Summertown – Jazz and blues from the Perrier Jazz Vocalist Award winner.

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's Witney – All-comers blues open jam session.

SUE SMITH & PHIL FREIZINGER +

KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + STRANGE VINTAGE + PETE FRYER: Eurobar – Acoustic session from the Klub Kakofanney Krew.

MONDAY 29th

DEBBIE GILES' NIGHT TRAIN: The

Bullingdon – Funky blues and soul from the Guildford singer at tonight's Famous Monday Blues club.

TUESDAY 30th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With a live set from The Hugh Turner Band.

TREV WILLIAMS + BETHANY WEIMERS:

Café Tarifa – Emotive acoustic rocking from Trev, plus sweet-natured folky pop from Bethany Weimers.

ACOUSTIC NIGHT: Coco Royal

WEDNESDAY 31st

GLAMOUR OF THE KILL: 02 Academy – York's melodic post-hardcore and metalcore warriors steam into town, releasing 'The Summoning', their debut album proper following on from acclaimed mini-album 'Through The Darkness They March' and supports to Avenged Sevenfold and Bullet For My Valentine.

THE ROUNDHEELS + AGENTS OF JANE + CRAYON + MEW & WOOSTER: The

Wheatsheaf – A night of folk and bluegrass at tonight's Coo promotion as part of Oxfringe.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – drum&bass and dubstep club night.

ROB TOGNONI: Fat Lil's Witney – Return of the Aussie blues-rock guitarist.

BABY GRAVY + ASHER DUST: Baby Simple

– Electro-punk disco noise from Ver Gravy at tonight's benefit gig for the Mill Centre, plus AJ playing an eclectic mix of sounds on the decks.

MATT DA CAT: The Port Mahon – Big band jazz.

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

THE CELLAR

OXFORD'S LEADING INDEPENDENT LATE NIGHT MUSIC VENUE
10TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

MARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Friday 5th

Skylarkin' Soundsystem

Reggae, Dancehall, Hip Hop, Soul
ZION & THE WHITE BOYS Live

Wednesday 17th

Wordplay

GIFT OF GAB (of Blackalicious)

Thursday 18th

Red Stripe Music Awards

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + more TBA

Friday 19th

The Big Ten Inch!

Hipbone Slim & The Knee Tremblers Live

The Nine Ton Peanut Smugglers Live

ANDREW WEATHERALL

exclusive rock n roll set

Friday 26th

HQ: Drum & Bass

LOXY (Metalheadz, Cylon)

Saturday 27th

Out to Graze Festival Launch

RICO TUBBS (Cheap Thrills)

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EBSEN & THE WITCH / THE RIFLE VOLUNTEER

The Jericho Tavern

Having just released a record on Too Pure's singles club, The Rifle Volunteer come with a certain pedigree. Previously members of assorted hardcore bands they've traded their punk in for an ethereal indie shimmer, more reminiscent of undervalued 90s pop types Geneva or Radiohead's more wistful moments. Featuring a guitarist sporting an unnerving tweed, tie and 'tashe combo, they're the ultimate in geek chic and as the set progresses it's apparent they're never going to stand up against the incessant chatter of the crowd. They're musically too timorous and probably best listened to alone in the dark. It's difficult to tell here whether their airily brooding songs come with any real substance.

Ebsen & The Witch's ghostly gothic folk-pop might suffer a similar fate if it wasn't so intense and simply terrifies any yahoos at the back into silence. With an opening salvo that sees singer Rachel hammering a sparse drum kit with venomous intent, while unleashing an unearthly howl as guitar fuzz and electro pulses swarm around her, the Brighton trio, last seen here supporting The XX, are deceptively ferocious. Frequently compared to Björk and Bat For Lashes, there are undeniable traces of both those acts lurking in the shadows of Ebsen and the Witch's sound, but really they hark back much further, the portentous, spidery guitars are pure Bauhaus, while Rachel's haunting shriek reminds us of orchestral Aussie gothsters Dead Can Dance. As hallucinatory electronic noises swirl around her, Ebsen and the Witch could be the perfect soundtrack to Tim Burton's new remake of *Alice In Wonderland*, and there's more than a hint of Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit' about them too.

The music builds ominously before dissipating with the eerie sound of the tide against a pebble beach, Rachel's multi-tasking is almost as breathtaking as her voice; perhaps the most astonishing thing is the band manage to keep the tension alive for the entire set, exploring myriad shades of black along the way and keeping the crowd spellbound throughout. A little bit of witchcraft on a chill Saturday night.

Ian Chesterton

WE AERONAUTS/ ALPHABET BACKWARDS/ MESSAGE TO BEARS

The Wheatsheaf

Outstanding ensemble WLTm song for meaningful relationship.

Message To Bears are phenomenal musicians. Every bucolically plucked guitar, subtly controlled rhythm and delicious violin lick is impeccably phrased and beautifully balanced. On its own this is enough to make the set a joy, but how much better it would be if they had just one memorable composition. Every piece chugs and arpeggiates its way along like a refined folky Mogwai – Implosions In The Sky, if you will – and we yearn for a soaring line from the violin to lift proceedings. Nick one from Sibelius or an Irish air or something, we don't care, just give us a reason for this astonishing band to perform. One for late night headphone listening rather than a swamped Wheatsheaf, perhaps.

Band seeks audience for inconsequential frolics. VVVVGSOH essential!!!

As they're a perky cross between Blur and Erasure, with two children's TV presenters on vocals and a keyboardist who ought to be in Air, singing songs about low end High Street retail and duff sex, we'll concede that Alphabet Backwards can verge on the infuriatingly wacky. But, by God, give us sugary, day-glo, shimmering pop songs like these and we'll forgive any peccadilloes. As catchy as Ricky Ponting covered in Velcro

and spraying swine flu serum, these are possibly the most liberating, uninhibited, spring-loaded pop songs in Oxford's history, and if you haven't heard them yet get ready to be swept up in the euphoria or sent back to your miserable little life even more enraged than before.

Band looking for...err...not sure.

We Aeronauts suffer partly from being uncertain what they are. Epic pop? Folk shanty singalong? Belle & Sebastian delicacy? Stornoway eloquence? Here's an idea: how about starting by becoming a band who sound like they're all playing in the same room, who have discernable tunes, and whose concept of "arrangement" doesn't approximate "seven people play simultaneously until we end up with an indistinguishable sonic hummus"? Perhaps it was the atrociously muddled mix, making them sound like they were playing in a wellington on Botley Road, or perhaps it was an off night, but in a blind test we'd never believe this was the band we found so good at Punt. If you believe this is one of Oxford's best bands, then you'll believe the people in lonely hearts ads really are slim, attractive, charming and into Chekhov.

David Murphy

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LAURA VEIRS

O2 Academy

Although essentially a folk artist in the North American roots singer-songwriter tradition, Laura Veirs likes to take her influences from everywhere. Tonight's gig, to showcase material from her new album 'July Flame', takes influences from a whole host of genres from Ryan Adams-style alt-country to Nada Surf-esque post-grunge. This is no surprise from someone who is the female personification of eclecticism; the sort of eclecticism you might expect from a woman who studied geology and Mandarin at university in Minnesota.

Laura delivers a substantial set lasting around ninety minutes, which for someone so heavily pregnant as she currently is, is no mean feat. She is supported by a three-piece band who compliment her tricky genre-bending surprisingly well. Although not a naturally gifted singer, she is a gifted multi-instrumentalist; she puts on several metaphorical musical hats, and is as happily at home plucking a banjo as she is with an acoustic or electric guitar.

Although material comes mostly from her new record, she features

old favourites, most heavily from her previous album, 'Saltbreakers'. Although varied there is a lot of consistency in her material; her style is to marry a couple of apparently disparate influences and weave them into a song where any transitions or fusions are seamless, subtle and organic, as on the 'Saltbreakers' track 'Pink Light': it opens like a dirty Alice In Chains number, before employing electronic beats *a la* Beth Orton.

If a criticism can be made, it is of her slightly distanced approach to her song writing. Although there is warmth applied at suspiciously regular intervals, it's hard to get much sense of personality emerging from much of her material. Her stage manner can be equally as cool, despite dips into friendly chatter. It's possibly a reason why she has remained a critical darling, and failed to reach a wider audience. That said, Veirs puts many of her contemporaries to shame, and her technical song writing expertise and variety keep the wow factor ticking along just nicely.

James Benefield

VIV ALBERTINE / LITTLE ERIS / BABY GRAVY

The Cellar

Baby Gravy's single launch for 'Not Waiting' is not going to plan: The CDs have got the tracks in the wrong order and drummer Zahra's just sprained her ankle. Undaunted, they give away the single and Zahra just drums her way through the pain. This four-piece line-up is more focused and less wild than the band's original version, as well as largely guitar-free. Singer Iona is still the born show-off, and you wonder whether they would amount to much without her powerful, agile voice. They're still a lot of fun but there's further potential in their futuristic, keyboard-led wackiness to unlock.

Next up, more lo-fi 80s electronic noodling from Cardiff's Little Eris, accompanied by her dancing mate and a sparse percussionist. Possessed of a haunting voice, the songs are a little dark and inaccessible but intriguing enough, if suggestive of a good mushroom season.

The Slits are best remembered for being the only, or certainly the first, all-female band of the first punk era to break into what was a heavily male-dominated, even macho,

musical movement. The band's guitarist and principle songwriter, Viv Albertine, joined their re-formed line-up last year, with Madonna their biggest fan, but quit after two gigs, finding the experience "awkward". Tonight a couple of hopeful hecklers shout for some old songs, but Viv's clearly moved on. She introduces tonight's set as having an anti-Valentine theme, and does seem almost obsessed with the bittersweet power of love and relationships. Backed by a small band, the songs are more fragile and thoughtful than expected, and decidedly un-commercial. The result is a somewhat poignant, even uncomfortable, atmosphere compounded by a Robert Downey Jr lookalike on keyboards glaring at the small audience. As with The Slits, her guitar-work is sparing and understated, with some of the quirky little runs that typified their sound. Clearly enjoying being back on stage after a long spell directing for TV and film, she's been taken up by Thurston Moore's Ecstatic Peace! label and a new EP is imminent. Just don't expect punk rock.

Art Lagun

the JERICHO

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THE MACCABEES

The Regal

Up until now, The Maccabees seem to have lurked just below the perimeter of wider public consciousness. Tonight, however, a warm-up show for their forthcoming *NME* Awards tour, the band command the stage Thatcher style in front of a packed house. Frontman Orlando Weeks whips up a vocal storm, amid thunderous efforts from the rest of the band. Hugo and Felix White's guitars add heightened melodies over Orlando's flawless vocals, merging into each other with effortless precision, while Rupert Jarvis's bass and Sam Doyle's drumming linger in the background. Mixing in with their unbridled beats, they pulsate through each song, culminating in something that sounds like a frenzied revamp of the Arctic Monkeys. Finished off with a brass ensemble that delivers the final kick to the cocktail, tonight's show simply confirms their upcoming sell out tour as rightfully deserved.

Older fans are graced with 'All In Your Rows' and the much loved 'Toothpaste Kisses', during which the crowd becomes a frenzied sea of arms. Whilst these older songs seem to have failed to ripple the waters commercially, tonight they are propelled out with such force, we could be forgiven for mistaking them as chart-topping classics. Nevertheless, it's the newer songs, like 'No Kind Words' from their



photo: Harry Wade

recent acclaimed 'Wall Of Arms' album, which really bring *The Regal* to life. Hinting towards Arcade Fire and Maximo Park, before taking off in their own right as exhilarating rock anthems in waiting. Whilst at times there's a slight risk of sounding similar to so many other indie bands, Maccabees' poignant lyrics save the day, particularly

the haunting 'Love You Better'.

The secret of The Maccabees seems to lie in their grasp of brevity. Short, stabbing numbers are their forte, every number climaxing at around three minutes to ensure maximum impact and while there is a small amount of longing for them to pull an eight-minute wonder out of the bag just to mix up the

tempo, it's safe to say the band never loses the crowd's attention. Add to this a cover of Orange Juice's 'Rip It Up' and a reference to the Righteous Brothers' 'Unchained Melody' at the end of 'Precious Time' and the result is a feverishly exhilarating set, both delightful and diverse.

Lisa Ward



photo by Sam Shepherd

THE EMPTY VESSELS / THE HALCYONS

The Wheatsheaf

Having spent most of the evening swearing at 20mph limit signs, lack of parking, road works and gaggles of students who seem to all be in search of a barrel full of chins we finally arrive at The Wheatsheaf and hope that we'll be transported to a different place, anywhere but the Oxford we left outside.

The Halcyons seem to be up for the task, but we're not entirely sure we want to go where they want to take us. As vocalist Emma de Lacey emotes wonderfully with an almost professional assurance (that she reminds us of All About Eve's Julianne Regan is an added bonus), the rest of the band seem to be intent on replicating the ambience of a 1980s bar full of suits on Wall Street. To say that The Halcyons are cruising down the middle of the road is something of an understatement; they seem to be terrified of wandering off to explore edgier options. When one half of the band seem intent on getting a little grimy or gothy, the other half balance everything out by going all Monkees on them. Still they do have a superb vocalist in Emma and the Thunderbird incarnation of Ian Paisley that inhabits the keyboards (Oxfordband's Colin

MacKinnon, no less) keeps us entertained throughout.

The Empty Vessels lead us by the hand from the 80s and take us to a southern states biker bar as imagined by a Hollywood exec – one full of non-threatening rednecks. What you get is some good, honest southern fried rock which lacks a real cutting edge, but is nonetheless impressive in its commitment to authenticity. Despite their amps melting during their first number, The Empty Vessels soldier on in the face of adversity, as you would expect. Taking their chops from Led Zeppelin and Creedence Clearwater Revival, it's pretty hard to find fault with a band content to live in the past, beyond the fact that they're content to live in the past. Occasionally they drag songs out beyond breaking point, but given that they've got a vocalist in Matt Greenham that can belt it out like John Fogerty, they get away with it. The rest of the band is remarkably solid too and it's impossible not to join The Empty Vessels in their world, pull a bar stool and indulge heavily in some real bourbon liver killing – if only we weren't driving.

Sam Shepherd

DEAD JERICHO / THE BLACK HATS / THE SCARLETTS / NIGHT PORTRAITS

The Chester Arms

Not all of Oxford's best music comes armed with intellectual intent or a theatrical flourish. Tonight's four-band bill finds a keen-eyed sense of yobbism alive and kicking, the night's raw, punk spirit accentuated by the surroundings – a PA having to fight its own small battle and a lack of proper stage that increases the intensity of the band-crowd interface five-fold. The Chester probably hasn't seen a moshpit like this before, but you feel it's perfectly suited to doing so a lot more in the future.

Night Portraits don't seem to have changed an iota since we clocked them a year ago – rough, ragged and raucous to an almost pathological degree. 'Otters Of Beirut' is still screamed out with speed-freak zeal and they're impossible not to get caught up in, but we wonder if they can make this a real riot.

The Scarletts are possibly the coolest looking young band in town at the moment, with a bassist who looks like Luna Lovegood and a singer who might just have fallen out of the space-time vortex from the coolest new wave club night in 1979. He'd do himself a few favours to learn some microphone technique: virtually swallowing it means his words come out as distorted mush too often, especially through this PA,

and that's a shame because lyrically they're great – the bloke next to me is grinning like a loon throughout 'Fifteen At The Bus Stop', while their cheery vigour papers over any lack of subtlety.

The Black Hats are the most musically accomplished and melodic of tonight's bands but even they sound like they're looking for a fight. Moddish urchins in the mould of The Jam and The Who, they're strident enough to fit in at a punk party, but with songs like 'Just Fall' and 'We Write Things Down', they're anthemic yob-savants of pop's highest order.

Last month's Nightshift cover stars Dead Jerichos kick in with tangled afro-funk rhythms, uptight post-punk twinkle and a spidery morass of guitars and the front few rows start to go bonkers. Everyone is right in frontman Craig's face and he's right back in theirs, his voice broken and twisted by the sound system, the band's militantly clean-cut post-punk dance reduced to a riotously vibed-up noise that's fighting its corner on adrenaline alone. And when they finish, everyone wanders out into the night, meek and mild as you like. Still Oxford after all then, but for a few hours at least, a proper spit'n'sawdust sound of the suburbs.

Dale Kattack

VIENNA DITTO / 1877 / SMALL MACHINE

The Wheatsheaf

If you like your scuzzy metal with added grunginess and a primal Foo Fighting-style roar, then Aylesbury's Small Machine is for you. Singer Sam Wadsworth, who looks like Marcus Brigstocke's younger brother, teams up with parts of Bicester rockers Phyal, and the legendary Jim Spunkle on bass, to pound out tight, clear air turbulence rock, that jostles the shit out of us like we are Michael Flatley's testicles. Caustic songs like 'Corner Of The Eye' and 'Covered' cavity search the room with gardening gloves and bad intent, and overall there is a deft flourish of functional brutality.

Any song ('I Am An Antagonist') that intones "No Future", Dave Gahan-style, over the click and spank of a computerised industrial beat has got my attention. Like

Small Machine, also hailing from Aylesbury, 1877 (isn't that the year the microphone was invented?) should really be called 1982 such are the nailed-down Depeche Mode influences bursting out. What I find most satisfying though, is, dispensing with the services of a drummer, they have instead added a wall of Johnny Greenwood guitar, so that typical tracks like 'Narcolespy' or 'All Our Flawed Efforts' become The Human League's 'Seconds' by way of Sigur Ros and a fabulous hybrid genre is born.

There is enough buzz about Vienna Ditto to bring people up from London tonight, but they don't quite bowl me over. The band are a Home Counties trio, in which the dog-on-a-string scruffiness of Nigel Firth on storming guitar, and Scotty Lawrence's rampant jungle drums are both offset by Hatty Taylor's swingout sister metropolitan iciness.

Its appeal to the slick, *Hollyoaks*, *Q* Magazine side of the Channel 4 industry is obvious, but I never got the Sophie Ellis-Bextor routine the first time out, and while rockabilly numbers like 'Long Way Down' and the stomping pop of 'Shake It Down' hit the mark, I would love a bit more Va Va Voom, as too often the band simply plays the songstress off the boards.

Paul Carrera



photo by Johnny Moto

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DR SHOTOVER (QC)

Guitar Lesson

One two, one TWO... TWO [skreeeee]... Harumph. Testing, testing... Ah yes, good evening [skreee]... it's wonderful to be back here, at the East Indies Club Enormodome... [dee-duh dee-duh dee-duh]... Just tuning up the old acoustic guitar... [dee-duhhh... snap-PLINK]... Argh, bastard G-string's broken, nearly took my bloody eye out! No, Merryweather, that is NOT AT ALL funny. You come up here and have a go... oh yes, of course, we've just heard your rendition of "The Streets of London", haven't we? Bloody awful it was too. What a marvellous idea these Open Mic Nights are - I DO NOT THINK. Load of old jockstraps, if we're going to be brutally frank. But yet extremely, incomprehensibly *popular*. That is why the East Indies Club fund-raising committee, in its ineffable wisdom, has decided to start putting them on. "Overheads much lower... blah blah... easy to license... blah blah... goes down well with the Youngsters... blah blah... and where else on a Tuesday night could you hear a kazoo and mandolin duo?" etc etc. Now, when have I ever, EVER wanted to go down well with the Youngsters? Mm? And when have I ever, EVER claimed to like kazoo-and-mandolin-duo bollocks? Frankly I would pay good money to be brandishing my 1964 Telecaster Custom onstage right now... or indeed that star-shaped guitar I used to have when I was a part-time member of The Glitter Band. Let's face it, Mr Les Paul and Mr Leo Fender went to all that effort to update the instrument - and now a lot of stupid kids with bad facial hair want to "go back to basics" and UNDO nearly a century's worth of hard work! [Throws acoustic guitar onto stage and storms off]... [storms back]... Oh, and another thing - my favourite shop on the Cowley Rd has just closed, you worm-eaten ingrates... yes, that's right, Videosyncratic, where a man could get a pie, a pint and a DVD for a fiver and still have change to cross the Channel! I AM NOT HAPPY!

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INTRODUCING....

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

Telling The Bees

Who are they?

Purveyors of darkly crafted folk, Telling The Bees met at the Catweazle Club, the band coalescing around Andy Letcher's song-writing – Josie Webber (*cello*) Jane Griffiths (*fiddle, concertina*) and Colin Fletcher (*bass*) all joined in quick succession. Although Andy (*mandolin, vocals, English bagpipes*) brings the songs and tunes to the band, everyone has a creative input and often the process brings unexpected results, with everyone coming from such different musical backgrounds. Andy cut his teeth in various drone-based tribedelic bands at festivals and road-protests. Classically trained Jane emerged out of local Irish folk sessions. Colin played in the Sonic Catering Band (making music out of making food). Josie played with the late Richie Haines in Soma and with funk rockers The Conscripts, and has apparently seen every major main stage gig at Glastonbury in the last ten years.

Telling The Bees have played gigs and festivals across the south of England, and supported Three Daft Monkeys and Jon Boden. They have released two albums, 2008's 'Untie The Wind' and last year's 'An English Arcanum', which was nominated for a Spiral Earth Award for Best Album in 2009.

What do they sound like?

Theirs is a very traditional form of English folk music but infused with darkness and a subtle psychedelic edge. Nightshift's review of 'Untie The Wind' pitched the band as close to The Dirty Three and John Cale as to more typical folk fare, mainly due to Jane and Josie's superb string arrangements, while Andy's warm, rich vocals bring his tales of working class protests, rustic living and more pagan subject matter to life. Like all good traditional folk music, they accept modern life without surrendering their old world appeal.

What inspires them?

"Folklore; the weird things that the English get up to at the weekend, from Morris dancing to witch-burning; the stuff that Frazer gets frothy about in *The Golden Bough*. Oxford, with its trippy Alice In Wonderland vibe; colourful characters, history and stories."



Career highlight so far:

"Closing the very first Wood festival in 2008, with the entire tent singing along to our song, 'Wood'."

And the lowlight:

"Driving for three hours to the Gower peninsula to play to ten people in a soggy gazebo in the pissing rain probably wins it."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The Brickwork Lizards."

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

"'Authentic Music of the Snake Charmers of India' by Iqbal Jogi and Party."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"Oxford Folk Festival, supporting Bellowhead, on April 16th. Expect haunting troubadour songs, funky folk rabble-rousers, angsty pagan paeans, and Andy bantering rude innuendo with the audience."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite? Catweazle – consistently brilliant and quirky performances with consistently brilliant and quirky audiences. Least? Bring back the Zodiac!"

You might love them if you love:

Fairport Convention; John Martyn; Kris Drever; Magnet, Dirty Three.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/tellingthebees

Whatever happened to... those heroes

WONDERLAND

WHO?

Darlings of the local scene for most of the 1990s, Wonderland were a band in constant flux. They formed in 1990 and split in 99 and the only two constants in that time were Richard Hobin (*guitars*) and Joal Shearing (*bass*). The original line-up came together in 1990 when school friends Hobin, Shearing, Simon Holmes (*vocals*), Piers Lawrence (*drums*) and Matt Featherstone (*guitars*) rehearsed together in a factory unit in Slough – opposite the building *The Office* was supposed to be set in. Holmes was replaced first by Helen Marshall and then Leigh Witcher, with Stuart Hawe taking over drumming duties in 1993 and Jason Coppock replacing Featherstone in 96 before being supplanted by Martin Newton in 97. At their peak, with Leigh fronting them, Wonderland toured with Echobelly, played at the first Truck Festival and at Oxford Radio 1 Sound City, signed to Tim Healey's Luscious Peach label and released two singles, 'Children Of The Sun' and 'Kissing A Stranger', as well as appearing on the 1996 compilation 'OXCD'.

WHAT?

The clash of Leigh's glacial, ethereal vocals and the brooding, often ferocious guitar noise made for an intoxicating form of gothic pop, at their sweetest, not far from The Sundays, all twinkling guitars backing Leigh's chirruping voice, but at their heaviest they cannonballed like Senser, all powerhouse drums, overdriven guitars and Leigh singing like a songbird lost in a storm. 'Falling Down', their contribution to the scene-defining 'OXCD' and the single 'Children Of The Sun' were perfect pop moments. Nightshift reviews of the band came filled with suitably purple prose and



reference to magical kingdoms hidden in mysterious wardrobes. We liked them.

WHEN?

While the band's origins went back to the start of the decade it was the arrival of Leigh on vocals that turned them into local favourites and saw Wonderland at their peak. Bad management meant they turned down a series of record company offers before Luscious Peach stepped in. Despite the singles being well received the label decided against releasing the band's album. With the various members pulling in different directions the band disintegrated.

WHY?

While Wonderland could be considered just another 'nearly' band, in Oxford at least they were much loved and for a long time many on the scene believed they were destined to go on to far greater things. While their legacy might not stretch to much now, at the time there were few bands equal to them for sheer unadulterated pop pleasure and those songs that were recorded and released still sound as precious and otherworldly as they did back in the day

WHERE?

Joal and Stuart went on to form Theremin with Richard Walters, with Martin as their manager, before Richard went solo. Joal now runs the music at the Wheatsheaf and is a pivotal figure on the local scene. Stuart moved to the

Caribbean where he lives with his wife and family. Leigh is now a teacher in Oxford. Richard lives in Kidderminster and wrote a book about his time with Wonderland, It's A Band Thing, which wasn't published, for legal reasons. Martin spent his time post-break-up building a recording studio and playing keyboards in various pub bands until invited to join Witches. He claims not to have had sex since giving up playing guitar and holds the world record for membership of most internet dating sites without ever getting a date.

HOW?

None of Wonderland's releases are still available, although there is a fan site at www.myspace.com/wonderlandoxford with a selection of tunes on it.

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

EMPTY VESSELS

Last time we reviewed Empty Vessels, less than a year ago, we concluded that their laborious classic rock and constipated Robert Plant-alike singer would best be dealt with by semi-automatic weapons and a good hiding from Beelzebub himself. So this new offering is little short of a revelation. The late-60s / early-70s-styled heavy rocking is still there; the singer still sounds like Robert Plant, and initially at least, for the first minute or so of 'Blood On The Streets' we feel another critical kicking might be due, sounding a bit too much like a cross between Reef and Ocean Colour Scene, but really, this rocks. Like the proverbial bastard. Frontman Matt Greenham leads the charge from the front – an unreconstructed rock warrior and we like to think he's wearing a leather waistcoat whilst unselfconsciously bellowing and howling sky-touching anthems like 'It Moves Me'. Best by far of the four songs here is 'Take A Hard Look', all Led Zep riffery, Hendrix-y psychedelia and a touch of Rush's operatic prog, each bar hammered down as hard and solid as the last. Some will say it's just old fashioned; others will call it timeless, but lost in another era it might be, Empty Vessels, like Desert Storm, simply take a classic sound, give it a bare excuse for a polish and kick it out as fresh and alive as you could hope for.

COLOURED

Coloureds are made up of Matt Mooney and Nick Brewer, both formerly of local industrial hardcore spazz-metallars Xmas Lights. They were previously described in these very pages as the sound of "A closing time punch-up involving a pissed-up Cyberman" and that description still stands as the pair riot through three tracks in seven minutes of mental electronic mayhem, sounding like an ADHD-afflicted collision of Aphex Twin, Pendulum, Daft Punk and Skinny Puppy, hammering hard and heavy, if arhythmically, on the mad-sane door of musical normality. Each track plays skittish musical rabbits, switching from Terminator-like grinding one minute to rapid flitting the next, their self-designed circuit-bending keyboards and Dalek voices keeping everything restless to a

pathological degree. Along the way they sample both BBC Oxford's Tim Bearder and Nightshift's editor and have one track called 'Gary Numan After All' and they cover more bases in seven minutes than many bands will manage in an entire career. The pair claim that after Xmas Lights they wanted to take their math-core roots to a more dance-orientated format, though we doubt anyone other than an electrocuted speed-freak could even start to dance to this.

TEMPLARS

Faringdon-based folkies who seem to be trying to follow in Stornoway's bucolic footsteps by the sound of this three-song demo. There's a distinctly similar air of romantic wanderlust about the singer and the way they weave in the harmonies, but opening track 'Nameless' sounds too earthbound: earnest and overwrought when it should be airy and uplifting. 'Alias' is lighter, the vocals softer, a high tenor, while the track is a simpler acoustic thrum, less tied to rock's constrictions, but it still tends to wander off-melody without really getting anywhere interesting and the sax break at the end seems chucked in simply to stop the whole thing simply dying out. They pick up considerably, though, with 'The Other Side Of The Wedding', the emotional heart of the song starting to make itself felt and the singer finally coming into his own. Templars have a way to go to emulate the mighty Stornoway but even over the course of this demo they show they're perhaps heading in the right direction.

MUNDANE SANDS

Well whoopee doo, there's a band name to inspire untethered party abandon. But again we're being too hasty. Mundane Sands might cite The Velvet Underground and Joe Strummer as primary influences but this is nothing like that might suggest. Instead 'Wishing Well' is a brooding campfire folk-country amble that pitches in somewhere at the point where Chris Rea and Robbie Robertson sat down to toast marshmallows with Dire Straits back in the days when they were actually quite good (yes, it's true). Alan Foulkes leads ably with his softly gravelly voice and discreetly used accordion, while Rachel Hughes adds sweet, soft backing vocals. 'Setting Sun' finds the band trying to get a bit funkier, while clinging on to the vestiges of folk and ending up stuck between Del Amitri and The Waterboys, indulging in unnecessary rock histrionics that spoil the

old-time r'n'b rhythm and, given the song's six-minute duration, could easily be snipped out completely. The same tripwire greets 'Mundane Sands' itself, only Alan and Rachel's harmonising leavening an over-egged arrangement of what could be a fine, simple song. But the closing 'Rathmullen Boy' is an absolute gem – Rachel given full reign on lead vocals, the band allowing themselves to give in to those old world folk temptations and coming out sounding like June Tabor's dalliance with The Oyster Band. There's a full album on the way, apparently, and Mundane Sands should be a band well worth investigating further.

SEAN STEWART

A one-song demo here from the local singer, entitled 'Are You Out There?', which would be a good question to ask Sun-Ra or Captain Beeheart, but maybe not someone whose Myspace site finds him described as "A bohemian Noel Gallagher" even if it's by local gutter jazz crooner and Nightshift fave Desmond Chancer. And for the first minute or so it sounds like the only "out there" that might apply to Sean's doleful strumming and moaning is that it sounds like someone dying slowly out there in the freezing cold. But, hark! What's this? Why, it's Mr Chancer himself lending his earthy operatic growl to proceedings and suddenly it's a grime-covered gospel lament, heavenly choir and all. Lovely. And as it drifts off in a fading mist of collapsing piano, sha la la choruses and odd Beatles-y backwards bits, we conclude that yes, in its own sweet way, it is a little bit out there.

FOR YOUR EYES

Blast beats, shredded guitar riffs, ogre-ish backing vocals and a song called 'Love Like Leeches' – this is the sort of demo we always look forward to. The only problem is, the female lead vocals simply don't sound like they belong in this band. They're just too... well, nice. A bit conversational. It's like listening to Avril Lavigne having a chat on the phone to a mate while playing a Killswitch CD in the background. And we're sure she sings "I'm pastry" at one point. The band are seriously tight and pretty ferocious in a typically metalcore fashion and as they up their ante the singer sounds like she's having to try harder and harder to keep up and we're shouting "Get nasty!" at her and willing her to crack up and go on some demon-possessed screamfest and show us that, yes, she's really an evil devil harpy in disguise. By the time For Your Eyes get to their last number, 'Judgmental', she's showing signs she might just get there and everything gels far better. For the immediate future, though, we suggest a solid diet of bourbon, fags and a couple of My Ruin albums. That should do the trick.

MANJAM MONKEY

Manjam Monkey's Myspace blurb suggests they might be a previously unimagined hybrid of Nick Drake and Red Hot Chili Peppers, but the reality is as far from that proposition as you would expect. They start off promisingly enough with 'Kill The Nation', apparently an attack on reality show pop stars, a prairie ramble enhanced by 80s-style funk bass that oddly ends up sounding a bit like Love & Rockets, but it's all downhill from there. Firstly there's the utterly pointless ambient guitar instrumental called 'Melancholy' whose only notable feature is a passing resemblance to John Williams' version of 'Cavatina'; then there's 'Prozac' (oh come on, simply everyone's necking Ritalin these days, daaaarling...), which appropriately enough induces a hazy numbness in the listener and then we're really moping with the sullen, soporific jangle that is 'Never Mind The Rain', the band sounding like they're weeping silently into their weak lemon drinks and we just know it'd be the kindest thing to do to get the bolt gun out and end this misery before it deepens any further.

THE DEMO DUMPER

MARIALAGUA

If the name is a bit of a tongue-twister it's because Marialagua are an Argentinian band, in love with English rock music from the 60s and 70s, who have relocated to Oxford and are currently in the process of translating all their lyrics into English. We simply can't imagine a bunch of English tango aficionados moving to Buenos Aires and singing everything in Spanish, so respect is due there. What we find difficult to stomach is the hotchpotch of lumpen rock clichés that seeps endlessly from Marialagua's Myspace: the T-Rex boogie of 'Loner' is passable if rudimentary, but 'De Cristal' is genuinely painful as the singer sounds increasingly constipated and the band heap shovel-loads of stolen riffs on top of each other, demolishing any semblance of character as they do so. With crushing inevitability 'Yya' is a rocking power ballad with the intense desperation of a man stuck at the back of a long queue for the loo while trying hold a giant poo in. There's a vague nod to 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' but in the end it's just torture. The whole thing becomes increasingly overwrought, desperate and lacking in cohesion as it goes on and by the sixth or seventh song we've given up because it feels cruel and intrusive to dwell on such musical pain. What's Spanish for "Please stop. Now"? Or "A single to Dignitas, please"?

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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