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# NIGHTSHIFT

## Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every  
month.  
Issue 178  
May  
2010

# Foals

## Going global; keeping it local



### 4-Page Punt pull-out *Supergrass split*

plus  
Oxford music news, reviews and  
six pages of local gigs

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# NEWS

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## SUPERGRASS HAVE ANNOUNCED THEY ARE TO SPLIT.

The Oxford legends announced the split with a short statement on April 12<sup>th</sup>, citing a "17-year itch" as the cause. They added, "Thanks to everyone who has supported us over the years, we still love each other but, cliché notwithstanding, musical differences have led to us moving on and of course we all wish each other well in the future."

The split came as the band prepared to record a new album together with producer Sam Williams, who oversaw their 1995 Number 1 debut, 'I Should Coco'. It brings to an end of one of Oxford's greatest musical triumphs, Supergrass emerging in 1993 from the ashes of Gaz Coombes and Danny Goffey's previous band The Jennifers. Over the years Supergrass, along with Radiohead, and Ride before them, helped establish the name of Oxford as a hotbed of musical talent. Among the local highlights of their career were their earliest gigs at the Jericho Tavern and the Holybush in Osney; their homecoming shows at the Zodiac and Oxford Town Hall, a greatest hits set at the New Theatre and last year's headlining turn at Truck Festival.

Four final gigs are planned in June in Glasgow, Manchester, London and Paris, although local fans are hopeful the band may yet bow out with one last Oxford show.



**STORNOWAY** play three low-key acoustic shows in Oxford to promote their debut album this month. The band will play three consecutive nights at the A1 Pool Hall in Crown Street on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May. The gigs are being billed as "No electricity, no history - just a run-down pool club, candles, beer and the album played live and completely unplugged". Each gig will have a limit of 100 people and each is set to feature unusual support acts. Tickets go on sale at 9am on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup>

May, exclusively from Wegottickets.com. 'Beachcomber's Windowsill' is released on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May. We've got a copy already and it's bloody fantastic.

**DEAD JERICHO** won the chance to appear on Bob Harris' stage at this year's Truck Festival when they triumphed at the Oxfringe Battle of The Bands last month. Harris himself, celebrating his 64<sup>th</sup> birthday that night, helped judge the final, which also featured Gunning For Tamar and Message To Bears. The legendary broadcaster plugged the band the following day on Radio 2. Dead Jerichos continue their packed local gig programme this month with a set at the Purple Turtle as part of the Oxford Punt on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May followed by shows at the Cellar (20<sup>th</sup>), The Chester Arms (21<sup>st</sup>) and again at the Cellar on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

## SUPERGRASS AND ME.

*Sam Williams produced Supergrass' debut album, 'I Should Coco' and remained friends with the band throughout their career. He was due to produce the band's next album. Here he pays tribute to one of the great Oxford bands.*



"IT WAS THE SUMMER OF 93 and I had just moved down from London to Oxford and was in a little music shop that used to be on St Cements. When I came out I saw what appeared to be a living cartoon on the street.

It was Danny, Gaz and Mickey. I had no idea at the time how that chance meeting would completely change my life forever.

I went to see them play in a pub in Wheatley where they stormed through breakneck versions of 'Strange Ones', 'Lose It' and 'Caught by the Fuzz'.

They sounded angular, young and fresh. I thought they were cool, sexy, funny and completely uncontrived. We struck up an immediate vibe and started to record the demos that would become 'I Should Coco'. The whole experience of making that first record was natural, intuitive and fluid and I never doubted it for a moment.

One minute we were making demos on a four track cassette recorder in Danny's bedroom, the next we had made the biggest debut on Parlophone since The Beatles.

Much more importantly I think we captured something elusive and

magical and wonderful - the pure spirit and raw energy of youth that only happens once in a lifetime, when you have no money, worries, responsibility, or baggage. The second half of the album opened out to show the deeper musicality that was to come. They went on to become a truly great live act and expanded their sound over five more albums in a 15 year run that is a rare achievement for any band.

Although the media have always perceived them to be in the shadow of the other big bands of the day, I think time will tell the truth about Supergrass and the unique musical legacy they have left behind.

To me, at their best they had a way of saying things and playing things that was emotionally honest. That's why I think they will eventually be seen as being up there with the greats.

I am not sad to see them end. I am not sad to see anything end. What more can I say? They thrilled me as a band, made me laugh as a friend and defined me as a producer. I just loved them."

**THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA** were forced to pull out of their O2 Academy show in April when drummer Joe Durov was left stranded in Italy due to volcanic ash disrupting flights across the Europe. The band, who graced the cover of last month's Nightshift were due play their comeback show supporting The Half Rabbits and are hoping to arrange a new show in Oxford as soon as Joe is able to return.

**THE JERICHO TAVERN** launches a summer of gigs aimed at giving new young bands their first chance to

play in a proper gig venue. Tavern sound engineer and promoter Andy Nichol is looking for any bands, aged over 18, who haven't played the venue before for a series of Friday and Saturday night gigs throughout July and August. Anyone interested should contact him at oxfordpahire@hotmail.co.uk.

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**LADYFEST** comes to Oxford this month. The annual celebration of women in music runs over the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> May and includes a gig at the Jericho Tavern on the 14<sup>th</sup> with Madam, Baby Gravy, Avanti Maria and Brimstone Moth, plus a benefit disco for Oxford Rape Crisis at Baby Simple on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> with Girl Germs playing a selection of indie, riot grrl and 60s girl band tunes.

**BEAVER FUEL** are releasing their long-time live favourite 'Eurovision Political Favour Contest' as a download single in protest against the Eurovision Song Contest this month. The local noise-pop outfit are rather optimistically hoping to outsell the actual winner during the week of release. Singer Leigh told us: "The Eurovision Song Contest is a joke all on its own and doesn't really need anyone to lampoon it, but clearly many people haven't cottoned on to this yet. Either that or masochism has taken over from national pride. So in order to raise awareness about our nation's complete lack of faith, we are attempting to get the song into the charts just before the event with the hope that our melodious mocking might get some serious airplay, not to mention giving a few people who have been forcing utter crap into the public's ears for several decades something to think about. Of course the ultimate goal would be to outsell the official release of the UK entry, but we will be happy with just giving the whole Eurovision community a huge poke in the eye. With a shitty stick."

The track is due for release on iTunes and all similar outlets on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May. To hear the song, visit [www.myspace.com/beaverfuel](http://www.myspace.com/beaverfuel).

**CARNIVAL IN THE PARK** returns to South Park on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July and the organisers are inviting stallholders to take part. Stalls selling clothing, art, crafts, books, CDs and gifts, or any not-for-profit organisations can contact Stewart Garden at [music@6sensemedia.com](mailto:music@6sensemedia.com) or call 07939592732.

**SETH LAKEMAN AND JOSHUA RADIN** are the latest names to be added to this year's **Cornbury Festival**. Acts already confirmed include headliners **Jackson Browne** and **David Gray**, as well as **Squeeze**, **Noisettes**, **Buddy Guy**, **Imelda May**, **Candi Staton**, **Dr John**, **The Feeling**, **Reef**, **Newton Faulkner** and **The Blockheads**.

Festival favourite Lakeman plays on the second stage on the Sunday while Ohio singer-songwriter Radin, who played a sold-out show at the O2 Academy last month, joins Saturday's bill. Other acts added are **Danny & The Champions Of The World**, **Angus & Julia Stone** and **Fisherman's Friend**.

Cornbury Festival takes place over the weekend of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> July at **Cornbury Park**, near Charlbury. Tickets, priced £95 for adults (£115 with camping), and free for under-12s and over-70s, are on sale now at [www.cornburyfestival.com](http://www.cornburyfestival.com)

**BANBURY** promoters Jambox and the town's Wheatsheaf venue are organising a Banbury Battle of the Bands competition running from 28<sup>th</sup> May, with heat winners playing the final on July 30<sup>th</sup>. Prizes include vouchers for music equipment at One Man Band and studio time at Northgate Studios. Visit [www.myspace.com/jamboxlive](http://www.myspace.com/jamboxlive) to enter.

**PRACTICE-A-THON** is launched in Oxford this month. The nationwide campaign aims to encourage children to learn to play a musical instrument and help raise money for children's cancer charity CLIC Sargent. Among the activities involved are online tutorials. For more information, visit [www.clicsargent.org.uk/music](http://www.clicsargent.org.uk/music).

**A NEW FORUM FOR METAL BANDS** is launched this month. Inspektor Hoarse, set up by members of local metal band Mean Right Hook, intends to provide an opportunity for metal and hardcore bands and fans with a chance to meet up and help each other establish a local support network. Contact Dave at [drogers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:drogers@hotmail.co.uk).

**THE INFLATABLES** celebrate 30 years of gigging this month with a special show at the Regal on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May. The veteran ska, soul and reggae band have been long-time favourites on the local gig circuit. Their celebration party also includes 80s ska chart stars Bad Manners, One Stop Experience, featuring Jenny Bellestar, and Smoke Like A Fish. Tickets, priced £20, are on sale from [Wegotickets.com](http://Wegotickets.com) or from Rapture in Witney.

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

**AS EVER, DON'T FORGET TO TUNE INTO BBC OXFORD INTRODUCING** every Saturday



**TEENAGE FANCLUB** have been confirmed as headline act for the Sunday of **Truck Festival**. The Scottish indie stars join **Mew**, who top Saturday night's bill. Other new acts confirmed for the weekend include **Darwin Deez**; **Bellowhead**; **Mercury Rev Film Project**; **Fucked Up**; **Lau**; **Chapel Club**; **Brontide**; **Summer Camp**; **La Shark**; **Is Tropical**; **Danny & The Champions Of The World**, **Tellison** and **Sealings**.

As well as Mew, acts already announced include **Egyptian Hip Hop**; **Fonda 500**; **Future Of The Left**; **Los Campesinos!**; **Good Shoes**; **Stornoway**; **Little Fish** and **This Town Needs Guns**.

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

Meanwhile, **Jali Fily Cissokho** is the latest name to be added to the bill of **Wood Festival**, which takes place at **Braziers Park**, near Wallingford over the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> May. Acts already confirmed for the eco-friendly festival include **Frank Turner**; **The Unthanks**; **Tunng**; **Danny & The Champions of the World**; **Martin Simpson**; **Nick Cope**; **Peggy Sue** and **Dusty & The Dreaming Spires**. Wood organisers Robin and Joe Bennett will be playing a special family day event at Barracks lane Community Garden on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> May. The event runs from 2-5pm.

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

evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best new local releases and demos as well as featuring interviews with local and touring acts. Local bands can upload tracks to be played on the show via the Uploader tool on the BBC website. Visit [bbc.co.uk/oxford](http://bbc.co.uk/oxford) for more details.

**WE STILL HAVE A BACKLOG OF DEMOS** for review. Bands can submit demos for review by sending Myspace links to [nightshift@oxfordmusic.net](mailto:nightshift@oxfordmusic.net) or CDs to Nightshift at PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. The current backlog is about two months but we will get round to every demo submitted as quickly as we can.



a quiet word with

# Foals



**‘WE HATE IT WHEN OUR Friends Become Successful’.** So sang Morrissey back in 1992.

Here at Nightshift we don’t of course. Every Oxford musical success story is another triumph for the local scene, especially when the band concerned then go on to give the scene a good plug in the national press. But it doesn’t half make it a bummer trying to get hold of people for an interview when they’re touring far-flung lands.

## **LAST TIME WE INTERVIEWED**

Foals we caught up with them in New York, shortly after they signed a stateside record deal with Sub Pop. This time round the band are over in mainland Europe, already building up to the release of their highly-anticipated second album, ‘Total Life Forever’. A month away from its release the band are already following a hectic schedule of gigs and press days and it takes two days of chasing shadows before we finally catch up with Yannis Phillpakis after a

show in Bourges, in central France. He’s already spent an entire day talking to French press, radio and television but it’s a chance for him to talk about subjects a little closer to home.

**LAST MONTH NME RAN A** feature on regional music scenes and asked Foals for their opinions on the Oxford scene that spawned and nurtured them. He was quick to praise kindred musical spirits like Youthmovies and Jonquil as well as singling Nightshift out for instilling pride in the Oxford scene, which was nice.

It was Nightshift that first reviewed Yannis when he was 15 years old, fronting the band Elizabeth, before following his eclectic, restless musical career through The Edmund Fitzgerald to the initial incarnation of Foals, which he formed with Youthmovies’ Andrew Mears and on to today, which finds Foals at the top of their game, all set for a Number 1 album, selling out huge

shows and playing the world’s biggest festivals. Their rise has been rapid but organic, the band having a solid foundation in playing small gigs and house parties in Oxford and round the UK, supporting their mates bands around the country to the point where they can return the favour.

**THE FIRST CHANCE PEOPLE** got to hear Foals’ new songs was ‘Spanish Sahara’, a glacial pop epic that sounds far removed from the fidgety dance-pop of their debut, ‘Antidotes’. Foals’ musical ambition has always been apparent, their anything-goes post-punk spirit matched by an enviable musical virtuosity and of course that feeling the band are always looking towards the next step forward or sharp left turn. ‘Total Life Forever’ is a definite move on from ‘Antidotes’ but it shouldn’t alienate fans of the band’s early songs too much: the thrumming, trilling guitar sound and fluid, funk grooves are still in the mix, but now

there is so much more space in the songs, and Yannis’ voice has come on some. There are big nods to The Cure, especially vocally, while rhythmically there’s a world of influences at work, from Tina Weymouth and Stuart Copeland to myriad African sounds.

We ask Yannis first how much conscious effort there was to move into new musical territory with ‘Total Life Forever’.

YANNIS: “There was very little *conscious* effort. We didn’t feel like we needed to repeat ourselves, so everything became fair game. The writing process has become more organic and instinctive over time. There is less of a conscious attempt to achieve a specific thing.”

How much has the music you listen to and be influenced by changed over the last couple of years?

YANNIS: “I think we’ve all become more open-minded in our musical tastes. I am definitely more excited by the traditional craft of song-writing and the possibilities within specific parameters than I

used to be. We've listened to everything from Motown to anonymous Cambodian pop over the last few years. We don't feel compelled or find comfort in the aping of things we admire."

There was so much anticipation surrounding the release of 'Antidotes; you were considered a 'buzz band'; was there more or less pressure on you all to meet expectations with 'Total Life Forever'? Have the label(s) and management given you the time and space you wanted and needed?

YANNIS: "Yes, we were left totally alone when we finished touring and isolated ourselves away from everything carnivorous and industrial – the meat machine of the music industry. The pressure we feel is internal, and stems from our perfectionism."

Do you feel the success and fanbase you've gained with those early singles and 'Antidotes' has given you the security to experiment and maybe take your music into the leftfield where your creative impulses are best satisfied?

YANNIS: "Yes, we feel fortunate in having an open-minded fanbase and in having set a precedent in doing what we want which affords us room to breathe."

**'TOTAL LIFE FOREVER', LIKE** its predecessor, is well constructed as an album, a cohesive entity, even, bizarrely, in an age of CDs and downloads, as an album with two distinct sides, separated by the incidental instrumental passage, 'Fugue'. Last time round the band left 'Hummer' and 'Matheletics' off 'Antidotes' to make it a more cohesive album; is anything you wrote or recorded this time round that didn't fit on the album for similar reasons that might see the light of day in the future?

YANNIS: "Yeah, we had to cut a number of songs from 'Total Life Forever' for the sake of a well structured album. Some songs just didn't seem to fit within the confines of the record. They'll probably be released soon, separately."

'This Orient' apparently features human sequencing; what's that and how does it work?

YANNIS: "We basically gathered a group of us around some microphones and were programmed to sing, by other members of the band, according to a chart, specific patterns and notes - it was chaotic and laborious but fun."

#### RETURNING TO THE

subject of Oxford itself, Jonquil are supporting Foals on their

forthcoming UK tour, the band being long-time friends; how important is it to you to keep those old local roots? How much do you keep up with what's happening on the local scene?

YANNIS: "We're still really good friends with number of Oxford bands and still live here so are fairly aware of the current climate. Oxford has always been an exciting place musically, now that we're in a position to take bands on tour it's only natural to support those who have shown us the same love."

Youthmovies split up this month; how do you feel about that and how much of a help and inspiration to you were they along the way?

YANNIS: "We wouldn't exist without Youthmovies; they've been an inspiration to us and I think to many bands in Oxford over the years. There should be no sadness but excitement about what is to come. AI is forming a band with members of House Of Brothers; Andrew is working on his Pet Moon project, which sounds amazing and also writing a book. Graeme is starting up a monkey drum club, which I haven't been invited to."

Talking of your roots, how do you feel about the level of gigging you're doing now compared to the intimate gigs of even just a couple of years ago? Can you see yourselves going back and doing a secret show at the Cellar or wherever?

YANNIS: "Yeah, we'll always want to mix it up a bit, and even in the larger shows we play, we still have the same spirit that we did when we started."

The Academy show sold out in a day, the fastest selling show there ever by a local band. How do you feel about that?

YANNIS: "It's great! That's kind of unreal but nice to know that people wanna see us do our thing."

You've got the UK tour and the summer sees you at Benicassim and Fuji festivals amongst others – is it all touring and promotion for the rest of 2010? Can life ever be normal again, if it ever was before? How do you keep each other sane in the middle of the madness?

YANNIS: "Our tour manager Pickles keeps us in our place. We can't imagine not doing this right now. I wouldn't dare guess what would happen if it was all over tomorrow. Things were weird before, just in a different way."

**'Total Life Forever' is released on 10<sup>th</sup> May. Foals play the O2 Academy on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May with Jonquil. The show is already sold out.**



## May

Every Monday

### THE FAMOUS MONDAY NIGHT BLUES

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1<sup>st</sup> **INDIE NIGHT 10.30-2.30; £3**

8<sup>th</sup> **INFLATABLE BUDDHA / BORDERVILLE**

15<sup>th</sup> **SIMPLE.** House & techno with sbtrkt / residents. 10-4am

22<sup>nd</sup> **DUB POLITICS** dubstep. 10-3am

29<sup>th</sup> **SELECTA** Drum'n'bass with Heist & Cabbie. 10-4am; £8adv

Sundays

2<sup>nd</sup> **BLACK SPIDERS / SLAVES TO GRAVITY / DESERT STORM / BEGGARS LANE 7pm; £7adv**

9<sup>th</sup> **AKAHUM** – Shamanic tribal techno.

16<sup>th</sup> **THE 80s MATCHBOX B-LINE DISASTER 7.30; £8**

30<sup>th</sup> **ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE / CHAMBERS OF THE HEART 7.30; £12**

### OXFORD GIGS BATTLE OF THE BANDS HEATS

Thu 6<sup>th</sup> Born From Ashes / Branch Immersion / Dead Jerichos

Wed 12<sup>th</sup> Fragment / Freakishly Long Mirrors / The Sirens Cal

Fri 21<sup>st</sup> Sonic Drop / Serotonin / Beaver Fuel

Thu 27<sup>th</sup> Mother Corona / Hot City Symphony / Taste My Eyes

Fri 28<sup>th</sup> We Walk In Airways / South Parade / 14Ten

# RELEASED

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## STORNOWAY

### **'Beachcomber's Windowsill'**

(4AD)

I can't remember being as excited at getting an album through the letterbox as this in ages. That Stornoway's debut – the most highly-anticipated album by an Oxford band since Foals'

'Antidotes, if not longer – is released on 4AD is the icing on the cake really: a legendary label with a legacy of unstinting quality for over three decades now. It feels like confirmation of the love we've had for the band these last few years.

That virtually all of 'Beachcomber's Windowsill' is already familiar does little to lessen the thrill of finally hearing it all laid out as a full story, a complete picture. This is an album without a single weak link, not an ounce of filler. All killer would be going too far where Stornoway are concerned; they're too gentle for such a description. Here instead is love and longing, a widescreen romanticism that transcends genre or geography.

Stornoway's show at the Sheldonian Theatre last year, in itself an ambitious statement of intent, revealed a band who, having promised so much, delivered it all, and more, and reduced the audience to rapt awe. This album, even removed

from such a rarefied environment, is the acme of songwriting, performance and musicianship.

Instrumentally there's no point searching for ostentatious displays of virtuosity: arrangements are sparse and subtly orchestrated to allow the songs to breathe. It's Brian Briggs' voice that retains star billing – pure, powerful and magnificently restrained, from plaintive, almost hymnal solemnity to a rich, rounded burr – he carries every song, every line with masterful craftsmanship, and when he's joined by the rest of the band, as on album opener 'Zorbing' or the sweetly oddball ode to technological enslavement, 'We Are The Battery Human', it's with an inventiveness and ear for something slightly strange.

It's difficult to pick out one song from another for particular praise but the sepia-tinted 'Fuel Up' and the magnificent, soaring 'Coldharbour Road' are obvious highlights. But then there's the snaking country twang of 'Here Comes The Blackout' and the limpid, desolate 'On The Rocks', both songs that most bands would give their souls to have written. When Stornoway do



rock out a bit, on 'Watching Birds', it's done with a wide-eyed simplicity that recalls Belle & Sebastian's early outings.

Stornoway's rise to this point in time has been steady and natural, allowing the band to develop into something genuinely special. Just how far that rise can take them is anyone's guess, but if critical favour and commercial success does evade them, then I give up, because if music this good is to be wasted on the world, then the world isn't worth bothering with.

**Dale Kattack**

## THE FAMILY MACHINE

### **'See You'**

(Beard Museum)

The Family Machine set their own bar extremely high with their debut album two years ago and have been pretty quiet since, so expectations are high for this new single. You can't help think it's a bit of a slender affair after the joyously morbid 'Flowers By The Roadside' and the ambitiously cinematic 'Got It Made', a simple, semi-acoustic canter through summery Radio 2-friendly pop, like a lightweight Beautiful South in a brief moment of glass half-full jollity. It's sweet enough but unmemorable and throwaway.

Unlike the decidedly more autumnal b-side, 'Sleep', the sort of lachrymose bed-headed lament the band do so well, Jamie Hyatt's misty-eyed lyrical reflection hangs in the air as a steel guitar twangs dreamily behind him. The whole "I will never be in love again" schtick has been worn to a cliché over the decades but in these hands it sounds like an honest admission.

**Dale Kattack**

## VIXENS

### **'Mirrors'**

(Own label)

A billowing, barnstorming chunk of gothic power-pop from Vixens here, leading their debut EP with the song 'These Hearts They Cannot Love'. It's a great mix of artiness and pure yobbish noise, a chest-beating anthem-in-waiting, pitched somewhere between New Model Army, Sister of Mercy and Editors and sounds like it was recorded in a room full of spiders and skeletons. The rest of the band's EP struggles to match that sterling introduction, tracks like 'K1' and 'Pandora' touching on elegance but relying too much on efficiency and lurking in the shadows of Interpol, and even The Wedding Present in the case of the latter, but still managing to inject a sizeable chunk of drama into their songs even here. 'Action/Speak' finds the EP tailing off disappointingly, but a quick skip back to 'These Hearts...' is enough to get your pulse racing once more, like a snakebite-fuelled vampire on the Batcave dancefloor.

**Ian Chesterton**

## THE GULLIVERS

### **'All That Fall' / 'In Orbit'**

(Own label download)

Having spent my formative years living the cliché of listening to the John Peel show under the duvet on an old clock radio, entranced by strange, otherworldly bands, The Gullivers always feel like a trip back to childhood for me. Their sweetly spaced-out dream-pop sounds like it might blow away in the slightest breeze; in the case of 'All That Fall', it feels less like a song, more the musical incarnation of a particularly sad ghost of a young girl. It barely holds together as a tune but it's so delicately put together, you can't help but be entranced, and Sophie McGrath's barely-there chirrup makes her sound like The Sundays' Harriet Wheeler pumped full of Mogadon and singing from the far end of a dream. 'In Orbit' takes an even more downbeat, ethereal path, all wispy organ hum and restrained tremolo with guitarist Mark Byrne joining Sophie on vocals for a duet that's less a duel, more kisses blown from a distance. All in all, a gently quixotic pleasure.

**Dale Kattack**



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## DEAD JERICHO

### 'Spaces & Sounds'

(Own label)

From fighting on the dance floor to filling it, this new EP is an impressive move on from Dead Jerichos' debut from last year. Back then they sounded like a young Paul Weller all tooled up and looking for a scrap with Foals as back-up. Now they sound like they've polished their shoes, straightened their collars and are set to take on all-comers with their moves instead of their fists. Craig Evans still sounds like he's not ready to take any nonsense, mixing a little Alex Turner-like pithiness into proceedings, but the guitars jangle and spangle with a steely lightness of touch, flowery but with an insistency that starts to feel like menace come the end of 'She Says The Word', a hollowed-out indie disco skydrive about domestic abuse that uses the power of suggestion to rain home the lyrical punches. 'Too Late' is a DNA test-confirmed lovechild of The Cure's '10.15 Saturday Night' and British Sea Power's 'Do You Remember Me?' and the spirit of early Cure jinks about the whole EP like a fidgety poltergeist. Live, Dead Jerichos increasingly feel like a riot in the making but with this knack for neat, succinct guitar pop, they could also lay claim to being disco kings.

**Dale Kattack**



## FOALS

### 'Total Life Forever'

(Warners)

Such is the speed at which pop culture moves now, bands don't even get the luxury of Difficult Third Album syndrome. All eyes are on Foals for second album 'Total Life Forever', with expectations and presumptions sky high. Already there have been suggestions they've turned into The Cure (partly true), or even Coldplay (definitely not true), mostly on the back of the handful of songs from this new album already aired live or leaked.

What is certain is that there now seems to be a significant distance between Foals on album and Foals live. 'Total Life Forever' is an album that reveals itself in increments, a first listen through offering only a partial view of its often cinematic scope. First impressions suggest that Yannis is a far better singer than he's previously been given credit for and that, while rhythm is still king, it can be mixed in subtle shades that complement rather than subsume the intricate textures of the songs.

Album opener 'Blue Blood' builds from soft, sparse beginnings – early Beta Band reconfigured by Steve Reich – the band's trademark trebly guitars shimmering and trilling over restlessly fluid funk bass, a folky clarion call building to an understated climax. Such layer-on-layer building seems to be a formula for much of the album: 'This Orient' and 'Spanish Sahara' in particular displaying an adept grasp of mounting tension and atmosphere; in fact, on first listen, this formula can feel overdone.

Anyone trying to pin reference points on Foals now will be continually thrilled and confounded. Echoes of The Cure abound throughout, not least in Yannis' now softer singing voice, but as soon as you've pinned them down to early-80s funk – Prince, Talking Heads, even Hall & Oates on the album's title



track – they drift into something far more ephemeral: witness the starlit reverie that is '2 Trees' or the rhythmic firework clatter and factory beat of 'Alabaster'. From Robert Fripp-style guitar textures to Stuart Copeland's inventive world rhythms, the apparent influences here point both to a mastery of detail and an off-kilter vision that reflects Foals' ongoing restlessness.

Where they sound most like Foals of old, on 'Black Gold' the rhythm is more to the fore, the vocals less restrained. Perhaps the unsung star of 'Total Life Forever' is bassist Walter, inventive and adaptable but equally holding all the other elements together.

But really, whatever your expectations of this album and however they're matched or defied, Foals' artistry is abundantly clear; simply the way they give themselves so much space within each song to operate and then fill that space only with what is necessary so as not to clutter it up, is a rare skill.

How all this translates to the stage we'll find out later this month, but for now Foals continue to go from strength to strength, now more soulful and human than we've heard them before.

**Dale Kattack**

## CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED

### 'Panic EP'

(Own label)

Having started his musical career in late-90s teen hopefuls Tumbleweed, before graduating through early-Noughties rockers 22/20s to join the Coombes family business (ie. Supergrass, for whom he's variously played guitar, bass and keyboards alongside brothers Gaz and Rob), Charly now heads out under his own steam once again, his new band already an accomplished gigging outfit who have jammed with Dave Grohl in the States.

Where Tumbleweed were a nervous early attempt to approximate Squeeze's roustabout pub pop, The New Breed sound so much richer, not to say hewn from rougher cloth, Charly's voice cracked and bluesy enough now

to hit that 60s/70s rock'n'soul dirt trail. Lead track on this four-song debut EP, 'Panic Between The Sheets', joins the dots between The Small Faces and Stones and Supergrass's 'Diamond Hoo-Ha', an album which he helped tour last year. There's still a tendency to sink into polished MOR, like the piano-led, harmony-heavy 'Serge' and 'For The Pain' but when the band cut loose, on 'Hell Below', they're raucous and raw, crashing into a 'Stepping Stone'-like psychedelic garage-rock storm. Those softer moments might get them the radio play, but it's when they're rocking on all cylinders they'll really get the love.

**Ian Chesterton**

## SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE

### 'Dancing About Architecture'

(Own label)

When Space Heroes Of The People lost their drummer Lizz last year, they also lost an integral part of what made them such a unique band; her propulsive, organic drum tattoos lent the band a solidity that prevented them ever falling into typical electronic noodling. So what have the newly pared-down duo of Tim Science and Jo Edge gone and done? Just gone and bloody well got twice as good is all. Possibly inspired by the return of *Dr Who*, they sound on this new four-track EP like a band who've time-travelled back to the late-70s and then the late-80s to steal, like crazed alien cyborgs, the coolest synth sounds of the time from under the noses of myriad electronic innovators. EP opener 'Skylon' is all synthetic pulses and

swirls and Vocoderised vocals, part 'Trans-Europe Express', part 'Pleasure Principle', while 'The Modernist Disco' comes on like a duel between Ladytron and 'Add N To (X)', phasers set to kill. Through the linear grooves of Kraftwerk, early Human League, Jean Michel Jarre and The Normal they burn, Giorgio Moroder's blossoming electro-disco keeping it all dancefloor friendly, before they glide into some sleek silicon futuristic monorail station to hook up with Baby Ford and party on through the night until the Dream Police come calling. It's all fantastically retro, but equally just like people in the past imagined the future would sound. Fantastic stuff, one of Oxford's most underrated musical treasures.

**Dale Kattack**

# GIG GUIDE

## SATURDAY 1<sup>st</sup>

**JOHN OTWAY: The Bear** (6am) – Clown prince of Pop Otway plays his traditional Oxford May Morning show, this year outside the Bear, featuring all his hits (both of them) and misses (rather more) and all the usual lunacy that goes with them.

**THE LEVELLERS: O2 Academy** – The anarcho-green folk-punk vets continue levelling the land, twenty years on from their debut album.

**HEADCOUNT + BEAVER FUEL: The Wheatsheaf** – Moshka club night with punk-metal titans Headcount kicking out a suitably sulphurous mix of Killing Joke, Therapy? and Adam & The Ants, while indie noise-popsters Beaver Fuel bury their deceptively great tunes and quirky satire under a welter of knob gags and profanity.

**GEORGE HASLAM + THE MARK BOSLEY DUO: The Ox, Abingdon** – Skittle Alley acoustic session with globally-renowned baritone .

*Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup>*

## NME RADAR TOUR:

### 02 Academy

While *NME*-promoted tours have something of an air of self-fulfilling prophesy about them, there's always something worth seeing on the bill. In the case of this latest package tour it's Manchester's **Hurts** and New York's currently much-touted **Darwin Deez**. Hurts are a classic synth-pop duo in the mould of Pet Shop Boys and Blancmange, all artfully stylised and musically understated, exemplified by their soulfully downbeat 'Wonderful Life' single from last year. Darwin Deez are this month's buzz band. Formed by members of Creaky Boards and seemingly on a mission to appear as daft as possible, whether it's badly choreographed dance routines or their likeably quirky, spaced-out pop that sounds like The Strokes filtered through They Might Be Giants. If any of the bands on this *NME* tour are going to be huge, it's them. Manchester's **Everything Everything** sound like being the tour's filler band, quirky and complex in equal measures but coming on too much like a cross between 10cc, XTC and Hall & Oates for comfort. Local interest, meanwhile, comes in the form of malevolent industrial hardcore noisenicks **Bitches**, who should kick-start the evening in suitably irreverent style.

## MAY

saxophonist Haslam, plus local downbeat folk-pop chap Bosley

**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM**

**101: O2 Academy** – Three clubs in one every Saturday with indie and electro at Transformation, trashy pop, 80s and glam at Trashy and alt.rock. metal and punk at Room 101.

**INDIE NIGHT: The Bullingdon**

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

**MIX'N'BLEND: The Cellar** – Club night with Shubba Youth, Dr Erbz, DJ Amen, Lt Rowley, Garvin Dan, Noise Diggaz and Miss Mac.

**14TEN + AGE OF MISRULE + CHARM**

**ASSAULT: The Centurion, Bicester** – Punk, metal and alt.rock bands night.

**THE JOHN BERRY BAND: The Red Lion, Yarnton** – Live blues and rock.

## SUNDAY 2<sup>nd</sup>

**BLACK SPIDERS + SLAVES TO**

**GRAVITY + DESERT STORM + BEGGARS**

**LANE: The Bullingdon** – Classic sleazy heavy rock action of the old school from Black Spiders, featuring former-Groop Dogdrill frontman Pete Spiby, recent support to Airbourne and cranking it out in the style of Turbonegro, Clutch and Afghan Whigs. Support from former Kerrang! Best New Act winners Slaves To Gravity touring their new 'Underwaterouterspace' album following a support tour with Aiden. Local bluesy stoner-metal titans Desert Storm join the bill.

**BEST COAST + FIXERS: The Jericho Tavern** – Scratchy sun-kissed surf-pop where The Beach Boys and Standells meet The Shangri La's and Vivian Girls from LA's Bethany Osentino. Local Brian Wilson acolytes Fixers support.

**ASH: O2 Academy** – Still working their way diligently through their A-Z singles project, releasing a new single every fortnight, the multi-million-selling Irish indie-punk stars hit town, sounding more like their early selves since returning to their original three-piece line-up and playing songs from their '1977' and 'Twilight Of The Innocents' albums, alongside the new singles.

**THE CHEEK: O2 Academy** – Suffolk's bouncy indie rockers, previously known as Cheeky Cheeky & The Nosebleeds.

**JOAN ARMATRADING: The New Theatre** – The veteran singer heads into her 40<sup>th</sup> year in pop with a new album, 'This Charming Life', still a major league act after her commercial heyday in the early-80s with 'Me, Myself And I' and 'Walk Under Ladders'.

**BEARD OF DESTINY + STEVE & CHRIS + MUNDANE LIGHT + MOON LEOPARD: Donnington Community Centre** – A night of free live music.

**STEVE MORANO + KAT GADSDEN +**

**BETHANY WEIMERS: Coco Royal** – Acoustic music night with blues and funk chap Steve Morano, pianist and singer Kat Gadsden and folk-pop favourite Bethany Weimers.

## MONDAY 3<sup>rd</sup>

**ANA POPOVIC: The Bullingdon** – The Yugoslavian-born former Hush guitarist and singer gone solo brings her funky blues-rock to the Famous Monday Blues for the first time, promoting her new album, 'Blind For Love'.

**MR HUDSON + TINIE TEMPAAH: O2 Academy** – Guaranteed sold-out show for the coming together of Mr Hudson and Tinie Tempah, the former a strangely timeless amalgam of hip hop, soul, lounge jazz and showtunes, endorsed by Kanye West, chum of N-Dubz and previously support to the likes of The Police and Amy Winehouse. A considerably more exciting prospect is South London grime MC Tinie Tempah, who's just celebrated a Number 1 hit with 'Pass Out'.

**STEVE WEBBER: Coco Royal** – Acoustic night with pianist Webber.

## TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup>

**NME RADAR TOUR: O2 Academy** – Hurts, Everything Everything and Darwin Deez play the latest *NME* package tour – *see main preview*  
**JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon** – Free weekly live jazz club, tonight featuring funky keyboard-led outfit The Howard Peacock Quintet.

**EUHEDRAL + PDRR + BAMBIKILL + JOEY CHAINSAW: The Port Mahon** – A night of experimental noise with local ambient electronic soundscapist Euhedral playing alongside Bristol's sinister guitar drones and loops chap Bambikill and the dissonant drones of Joey Chainsaw.

**CREATIVE TUESDAY: Café Tarifa** – Acoustic night with Kimwei, Bethany Weimers, The Tommy Guns and The Elrics.

**MARK ATHERTON + TINIREGOR: Coco Royal** – Acoustic night.

## WEDNESDAY 5<sup>th</sup>

**MARIACHI EL BRONX: O2 Academy** – LA's hardcore punkers return again with their Mariachi incarnation.

**KYTE + STROBOLIGHT: The Jericho Tavern** – Dreamy, trippy Leicester nu-gazers Kyte, pitched equidistant between Sigur Ros and Snow Patrol.

**THE NEAT + DRUNKENSTEIN + RIOTHOUSE + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Wheatsheaf** – Moshka club night introducing Hull's fast-rising post-punk crew The Neat, kicking out a spiky, staccato noise inspired by The Buzzcocks and The Fall. Drunkenstein bring their eccentric prog-funk Hammer Horror rock along in support, plus trad-metal outfit Riothouse, and hopefully Jefferson Airplane-inspired types The Graceful Slicks.

**SIMON DAVIES & COLIN FLETCHER + MAGAM + THE JON FLETCHER GROUP + SUE STARLING + ALAN BUCKLEY: The Vaults Café** – A night of acoustic pop and folk in aid of Amnesty International.

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



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

## **THURSDAY 6<sup>th</sup>**

**ALABAMA 3: O2 Academy** – Another return trip to town for the Brixton acid-gospel-blues preachers, led by The Very Rev Dr D Wayne Love and Larry Love.

**SENNEN: The Jericho Tavern** – Norwich's poppy, Ride-influenced shoegazers return to town to plug new album 'Age Of Denial' having previously supported the likes of Editors, Explosions In The Sky and Ulrich Schnaus.

**THE AUSTRALIAN PINK FLOYD: The New Theatre** – More theatrical Floyd worship from the veteran tribute band.

**YOUR TWENTIES + BRING A GUILLOTINE: The Cellar** – Sunny electro-psych-pop from the headliners.

**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford**

**Community Centre** – The long-running open-mic club continues every week.

*Friday 7<sup>th</sup>*

## **ERLAND & THE CARNIVAL:**

### **The Jericho Tavern**

*Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup>*

## **IAN KING:**

### **The Bullingdon**

"The worst thing you can do with traditional songs is not sing them" said folk veteran Martin Carthy by way of support to Yorkshire singer Ian King. These two shows, King's at the Bully and Erland & The Carnival's at the Tavern, show off two acts who are currently plundering generations-old traditional folk songs and bringing them into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Former dry stone wall builder King was moved to song by the death of a close friend from cancer and discovered the modern day relevance of medieval morality tales like 'Death & The Lady'. On his debut album, 'Panic Grass & Fever Few', he's mixed them with dub reggae and world rhythms and, produced by Adrian Sherwood, it's an enlightening genre-defying style that echoes Tinariwen's blend of West and East.

Erland & The Carnival, meanwhile, is the band formed by Verve guitarist Simon Tong and Orcadian singer Erland Cooper, again mixing old traditional songs and ballads with psychedelia and analogue electro-pop to seductive effect, coming in somewhere between *The Wicker Man* soundtrack, Last Shadow Puppets and Crosby, Stills & Nash. Two great nights that serve as a reminder of the power of traditional folk music and the potential of its future self.



**OXFORD GIGS BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Bullingdon**

**E 4 ECHO: The Hobgoblin, Bicester**

**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston** – Open blues session.

**OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**

**OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon**

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

## **FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup>**

**ERLAND & THE CARNIVAL: The Jericho Tavern** – Nu-folk starlets on the rise – *see main preview*

**ATTACK ATTACK + MIDNIGHT DRIVE + PUMP ACTION STEREO: O2 Academy** – Punky power pop from Wales' Attack Attack, out on a national headline tour having previously supported the likes of Lostprophets, Funeral For A Friend and You, Me At Six. Local emo types Midnight Drive support.

**THE BIG PINK + IS TROPICAL + EBSEN & THE WITCH: O2 Academy** – Excellent triple bill of bands with the return of The Big Pink after their OX4 Festival showing last October. They're considerably heavier live than on CD, anthemic hits like 'Dominoes' and 'Velvet' layered in gothic portent and feedback and coming on like a Gregorian Jesus & Mary Chain. Is Tropical create a pleasingly wobbly psychedelic form of electro-pop while Brighton's brilliant Ebsen & The Witch are a ghostly tribal gothic pop dream, with echoes of Dead Can Dance and Bat For Lashes.

**FUSE & FRESH OUT THE BOX with PLUMP DJs: O2 Academy** – Nu-skool breaks from Andy Garden and Lee Rous at tonight's joint FOTB and Fuse club night, re-arranged from March.

**KLUB KAKOFANNEY with VEDA PARK + MUNDANE SANDS + MATT WINKWORTH: The Wheatsheaf** – Acoustic rock from Veda Park, folk-rock from Mundane Sands and humorous cabaret-pop from Matt Winkworth at this month's Klub Kak.

**MELTING POT: The Bullingdon** – Early gig.

**BATTLE OF THE BANDS FINAL: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Bands to be confirmed, with a slot on the Cornbury Festival main stage up for grabs for the winners.

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

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

**SKYLARKIN: The Cellar** – Great mix of ska, soul, reggae and rock'n'roll from Count Skylarkin, plus a live set from Laid Blak, combining roots reggae, dancehall, ska, jungle, dubstep and hip hop.

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

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

## **SATURDAY 8<sup>th</sup>**

**DINOSAUR Jr + BUILT TO SPILL: O2 Academy** – Double dose of alt.rock legends – *see main preview*

**INFLATABLE BUDDHA + BORDERVILLE: The Bullingdon** – Great head to head of local bands with an eye for real performance. Gypsy-ska-punk collective Inflatable Buddha mix in a good dose of humour into their enjoyably off-kilter set, while Borderville bring Vaudevillian gothic drama to their flamboyant rock opera.

**ABEL IS DYING + FERAL EVE + TASTE MY EYES + VENTFLOW + K-LACURA: The**

**Wheatsheaf** – Seriously uncompromising night of metal and hardcore with Milan's death/black-metal stars Abel Is Dying currently receiving plaudits for their 'Gazing From The Abyss' album and cranking it out in the style of As I Lay Dying and Darkest Hour. There's also metalcore from Coventry's



*Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>*

## **DINOSAUR Jr / BUILT TO SPILL: O2 Academy**

A return to town for king of stoner-grunge noise J Mascis after last summer's exemplary display. A band for whom volume is king (why else do you think Mascis' hair is now completely white?), the reunion of J and former sparring partner Lou Barlow after years of antipathy was cause for great celebration, recreating the band who helped formulate what was to become grunge, taking inspiration from Black Sabbath and Black Flag and fusing classic metal with hardcore. Their 'You're Living All Over Me' and 'Bug' albums are seminal releases, masterclasses in combining melody with bulldozing noise, and thankfully age doesn't seem to have mellowed them much. An added bonus tonight is the inclusion of enigmatic Idaho alt.rockers Built To Spill, led by musical contrarian Doug Martsch, who has led the band since their inception, at once creating great languid melodic rock while simultaneously seeking to destroy it while it's being built. Likeminded peers of Flaming Lips, BTS have inspired the likes of The Strokes, Modest Mouse and Death Cab For Cutie with their blend of spiralling psychedelia, grunge, dreamy 60s pop and folk, and are a band who were well ahead of their time.



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*Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup>*

## THE SLITS: O2 Academy

The Slits will forever be known as punk's chief all-female band, but in reality they weren't always all-female (Budgie, later of the Banshees, and the Pop Group's Bruce Smith both drummed for the band at various times), and neither were they as in tune with punk as collective memory serves. Sure they formed in 1976, inspired by the freedom punk offered non-musicians like themselves, and they toured with The Clash and Buzzcocks in 77, but debut single 'Typical Girls' and album 'Cut' were more in tune with the emerging post-punk movement of bands like Gang of Four and The Pop Group, taking reggae rhythms and a more uptight, wiry guitar sound to their righteous anger. Becoming increasingly experimental into the early-80s they split in 82, only to reform in part in 2005 when Ari Up and Tessa Pollitt recruited Sex Pistol Paul Cook and Adam & The Ants guitarist Marco Pirroni temporarily into their ranks. Viv Albertine also rejoined for a couple of shows before feeling uncomfortable about the whole thing. The original duo have continued to tour though, going places their original incarnation never got to – from Japan and Australia to playing with Sonic Youth in the States – and their well-earned legacy carries them onwards as they tour to promote last year's 'Trapped Animal' album.

Feral Eve; vicious metalcore from Punt stars Taste My Eyes; post-hardcore rocking from K-Lacura, and possibly a show-stealing set from Swindon's brutish metallers Ventflow, in a Pantera/Lamb Of God style.

**WINCHELL RIOTS + GUNNING FOR TAMAR + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE:** *The Cellar* – Intricately epic indie rocking from Winchell Riots, inspired by Sigur Ros and Radiohead; heavyweight post-rock from Gunning For Tamar and experimental improv from Braindead Collective. **BAD MANNERS + THE INFLATABLES + ONE STOP EXPERIENCE:** *The Regal* – Local ska, soul and reggae party band The Inflatables celebrate their 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the company of 80s ska hitmakers Bad Manners and Jenny Belle Star's new band, One Stop Experience.

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

**WAX ON WAX OFF:** *James Street Tavern*  
**STEAMROLLER:** *The Duke of Monmouth, Abingdon Road* – The reformed local blues-rock heroes crank it out in a Cream-meets-Hendrix style.

**HONK IN:** *Castle Complex (7pm)* – Inspired by the Hop Festival in the States, OCM present a

weekend of street bands, starting today with a free session in the castle complex, with a mix of New Orleans, African, Balkan and Latin American-inspired music, featuring Horns of Plenty, Peace Artistes, 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Blast Furnace.

## SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup>

**DIANA VICKERS:** *O2 Academy* – The one-time X-Factor semi-finalist and star of the West End production of *The Rise and Fall Of Little Voice* heads out on tour to promote her debut album, aimed at anyone who finds Kate Nash a bit too edgy.

**THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND + BRAINDOGS + YELLOW FEVER + DAVID SIMON:** *The Regal* – Great 1930s-style New Orleans speakeasy jazz from local faves The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band  
**HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES + JAMIE FOLEY + OLIVER SHAW:** *Malmaison* – Semi-acoustic session with country, Americana and bluegrass outfit Headington Hillbillies, acoustic folk-rock from Jamie Foley and Worldview frontman Oliver Shaw.

**PEOPLE & PLANET FUNDRAISER:** *James Street Tavern (1-9pm)* – All-day fundraiser for environmental and human rights causes, with live music from Fixers, Huck, The Inventions of Jerry Darge, Paul Askew, Picturehouse, Chris TT, Solemn Sun, Oxygen Thief and Cassette Culture.

**AKAHUM:** *The Bullingdon* – Shamanic tribal trance club night.

**STREET BAND GATHERING:** *Broad Street* – Second day of the street band celebration, with an international street band symphony planned.

## MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup>

**VAL COWELL & BAD INFLUENCE:** *The Bullingdon* – Rocking blues and r'n'b from singer Val Cowell and long-time guitar compatriot Richard Hayes at tonight's Famous Monday Blues session, inspired by the likes of Bonnie Raitt, Tom Petty and Rory Gallagher.

## TUESDAY 11<sup>th</sup>

**DUKE SPECIAL:** *O2 Academy* – The dreadlocked Belfast balladeer performs his new 'Silent World Of Hector Man' album as well as songs from his recent production of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage & Her Children*.  
**THE SOUND OF GUNS:** *The Jericho Tavern* – Epic, billowing 80s-style soft rock from Liverpool's Sound of Guns.

**E 4 ECHO + LINE & A DOT + THE LIE AWAKES:** *The Wheatsheaf* – Acoustic indie rocking from recent Top Of The Ox winners E 4 Echo.

**PAUL DUNMALL + NICK STEPHENS + RED SQUARE:** *Folly Bridge Inn* – Oxford Improvisers night with experimental jazzman Paul Dunmall as well as confrontational improv collective Red Square.

**JAZZ CLUB:** *The Bullingdon* – With special guest Alison Bentley.

**CREATIVE TUESDAY:** *Café Tarifa* – Top quality emotive acoustic pop from Matt Kilford, fresh from his showing at the Camden Crawl. He's joined by Branch Immersion and Joshua Knight.

**THE SCOTT GORDON BAND + KITE ASYLUM:** *Coco Royal* – Acoustic night with local blues-roots fella Scott Gordon and London folk-rockers Kite Aylum.

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

## WEDNESDAY 12<sup>th</sup>

**THE OXFORD PUNT** – *See main Punt pullout*  
**HELEN PEARSON + WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC + SAMUEL ZASADA + TELLING THE BEES:** *Malmaison*

**THE ANYDAYS + DEAD JERICHO + SEALINGS + RISEN IN BLACK + SPRING OFFENSIVE:** *The Purple Turtle*  
**AIDEN CANADAY + THE ROUNDHEELS + MARIANA MAGNAVITA + SCARLETT IN THE WILDERNESS:** *Coco Royal*  
**MESSAGE TO BEARS + FIXERS + EMPTY VESSELS + TASTE MY EYES:** *The Wheatsheaf*  
**BEARD OF ZEUSS + UTE + SCHOLARS + BARBARE11A + VICARS OF TWIDDLY:** *The Cellar*  
**FOALS + JONQUIL:** *O2 Academy* – Homecoming show for the local stars ahead of their second album – *see main interview feature*  
**THE SLITS:** *O2 Academy* – The reformed punk legends come to town – *see main preview*  
**FOLK TRIO:** *Café Tarifa*  
**OXFORD GIGS BATTLE OF THE BANDS:** *The Bullingdon*  
**ACOUSTIC LOUNGE:** *Fat Lil's, Witney*

## THURSDAY 13<sup>th</sup>

**OIL ON CANVAS + THE A TRAIN + ALPHABET BACKWARDS ACOUSTIC + JESS HALL + SIMON DAVIES:** *The Port Mahon* – Christian Aid charity gig.

*Friday 14<sup>th</sup>*

## COCOROSIE: The Regal

We guess if we'd had Cocorosie's upbringing, we'd be a bit weird too. Two sisters, Bianca 'Coco' and Sierra 'Rosie Casaday, who were born in different parts of the States to a native American mother and a farmer father who was obsessed with native American spirituality, to the point he spent each summer taking his daughters to vision quest events on reservations, the pair spent their childhood living a nomadic existence with their mother after their parents separated and eventually became estranged themselves until they met years later in Paris and formed this band. At first it was a lo-fi affair involving kids toys, electronics and piano before expanding over three albums on the revered Touch & Go label, and it's seen the sisters become a genuine cult concern, equally loved and loathed by critics (in the case of their meandering, indulgent last album, 'The Adventures of Ghosthorse & Stillborn', mostly loathed). They've worked with Anthony Hegarty and Devendra Banhart and been produced by long-term Björk collaborator Valgeir Sigurðsson, all the while creating a distinctly weird form of electronic folk music that has seen them compared to Joanna Newsom at times. Now signed to Subpop, and based in New Mexico, they've just released a new album, 'Grey Oceans' and play a handful of UK shows. Support comes from Jonquil frontman Hugo Manuel in his solo Chad Valley guise.



**CRASH'N'BURN:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Rock club night.

**OPEN MIC SESSION:** James Street Tavern  
**CARMENTA + K-LACURA + SENTURIA:** The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Rock and metal night.  
**WE ARE ECLECTRICITY:** The Cellar

## FRIDAY 14<sup>th</sup>

**COCO ROSIE + CHAD VALLEY + LIGHT**

**ASYLUM:** The Regal – The real life Weird

Sisters make their Oxford debut – *see main preview*

**STACEY EARLE + MARK STUART:** The Bullingdon – Stacey Earle – younger sister of country rock rebel Steve – and husband Mark Stuart return to the Bully with their country, blues and Cajun folk sound owing something to Woody Guthrie as well as Johnny Cash and June Carter.

**CHIDDY BANG:** O2 Academy – Indie-sampling Philly hip hop duo head out on tour, following on from their reworking of MGMT's 'Kids'.

**MEPHISTO GRANDE + THE LONG INSIDERS + VIENNA DITTO + LORD MAGPIE + KING OF CATS:** The Wheatsheaf – The Devil's own blues-punk from Mephisto Grande tonight with frontman Liam having rebuilt the band over the last year but still making a suitably monstrous racket where Tom Waits and Captain Beefheart meet The Birthday Party. Gothic cabaret surf-pop in a Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra vein from The Long Insiders, plus Reading's promising tripped-out rockabilly outfit Vienna Ditto.

**HAUSCHKA, NANCY ELIZABETH & JAMES BLACKSHAW:** The Holywell Music Room – Oxford Contemporary Music host a coming together of experimental German pianist Hauschka, folk singer Nancy Elizabeth and twelve-string guitarist James Blackshaw for an evening of classical, folk and contemporary song.

**MADAM + BABY GRAVY + AVANTI MARIA:** The Jericho Tavern – Ladyfest live show bringing London singer Sukie Smith to town in her Madam guise, a sultry, shuffling form of acoustic pop that leans towards Portishead and PJ Harvey at times. Dublin's lo-fi experimentalists Avanti Maria and local electro-punk scrappers Baby Gravy support.

**THE MIGHTY REDOX:** The Chester Arms – Swampy blues rocking.

**ZZ TOPS:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to the southern boogie legends.

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

**BOSSAPHONIK:** The Cellar – Latin, Balkan, World and nu-jazz dance with a live set from eight-piece brass ensemble Brassroots.

**GET DOWN:** Brickworks

**FOUNDATION REGGAE:** East Oxford Community Centre

## SATURDAY 15<sup>th</sup>

**BOOTLED ZEPPELIN:** O2 Academy – Tribute to the 70s rock titans.

**SIMPLE:** The Bullingdon – House and techno with sbtrkt and residents.

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

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

**LADYFEST DISCO:** Baby Simple – Girl Germs and guests spin a selection of indie, riot grrl and 60s girl groups, in aid of Oxford Rape Crisis.

**MARK BOSLEY:** Royal British Legion, Abingdon – A special tribute gig to former-Horse & Jockey landlord Martin Kelly, also previously a Nightshift Demo of the Month winner in his techno guise of S&M.

**VACUOUS POP NIGHT:** The Cellar – Eclectic leftfield noises from the local label; bands to be confirmed.

**JOHN BERRY BAND:** Bricklayer's Arms, Old Marston

**W.A.M:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Ska and punk covers.

**TREVOR WILLIAMS:** The Magic Café, Magdalen Road (1pm) – Lunchtime gig for the local acoustic pop troubadour.

## SUNDAY 16<sup>th</sup>

**THE EIGHTIES MATCHBOX B-LINE**

**DISASTER:** The Bullingdon – The coffin-voiced gothabilly monsters return from the grave – *see main preview*

**STORNOWAY:** A1 Pool Club, Crown Street – First of a three-night residency for the local heroes, launching their debut album with a series of low-key acoustic shows.

**HOMAGE:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to The Beatles.

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

**SUNDAY ROAST:** The Cellar

## MONDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

**NEVER THE BRIDE:** The Bullingdon – Famous Monday Blues host Philip Guy Davies celebrates his birthday in the company of club regulars Never The Bride, with award-winning frontwoman Nikki Lambourn belting it out in the style of Janis Joplin and Tina Turner.

**STORNOWAY:** A1 Pool Club, Crown Street  
**THE CASTING OUT:** O2 Academy – Delaware's punk-pop outfit.

**NORTH ATLANTIC OSCILLATION + LITTLE COMETS:** The Jericho Tavern – Proggy, spaced-out electro-rock somewhere between Flaming Lips, Mogwai and Pink Floyd from Scotland's NAO, plus Newcastle's airy indie pop outfit Little Comets in support.

**BEETROOT JAM:** The Port Mahon – Live sets from Matt Chanarin and Speakowire, plus open jam session.

## TUESDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

**JAPANDROIDS + SIX GALLERY:** The Jericho Tavern – Fuzzed-up, stripped-down garage rocking Canadian style – *see main preview*

**STORNOWAY:** A1 Pool Club, Crown Street  
**JAZZ CLUB:** The Bullingdon – Funky keyboard-led jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

**CREATIVE TUESDAY:** Café Tarifa – Acoustic night with Emily Pickrell, An American Guest and Mark Allan Barnes.

**SCOTT E COOPER + THE KEYS:** Coco Royal – Acoustic folk-rock from Scott Cooper, plus sweet-natured Americana from The Keys.

**DISCORD:** The Cellar – Rock and metal club night with live sets from Aethana, Nervous Endings and Riothouse.

## WEDNESDAY 19<sup>th</sup>

**PO'GIRL + JT NERO + THE EPSTEIN:** The Holywell Music Room – Fantastic night of alt.country, Americana and folk tonight with Canadian 'urban roots' quartet Po'Girl mixing elements of jazz, bluegrass and rock into their uplifting but wistful porch songs. Chicago's JT Nero brings his rich, emotive brand of traditional American folk along in support, while local alt.country heroes The Epstein open the show in style.

**BEAR IN THE AIR + DEAD JERICHO:** Café Tarifa – Different Light night with unplugged sets from Dead Jerichos and Bear In The Air.

**FREE RANGE:** The Cellar

## THURSDAY 20<sup>th</sup>

**FUZZBOX:** O2 Academy – Yes! With just about every band from the last 20 years reforming these days, it was only a matter of time before these heroines of the mid-80s indie scene came back to



*Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>*

## THE EIGHTIES MATCHBOX B-LINE DISASTER: The Bullingdon

They're back from the grave. Again. But then they're proper goths, so they can never truly die: as long as it still gets dark at night, they'll be back for your soul. Over their sporadic career Brighton's EMBLD have been one of the most entertaining live bands on the underground circuit, a riotous rockabilly carnival, inspired by The Cramps, Sisters of Mercy and Birthday Party and fronted by the coffin-voiced Guy McKnight, and a complete repudiation that goths are overly-sensitive panstick-covered wimps. They inspire slam-dancing frenzies to equal any hardcore bunfight. Having undergone some serious upheaval in their time, TEMBLD have undergone rehab, myriad personnel upheavals (including losing guitarist Rich Fownes to Nine Inch Nails), quit drugs and discovered Buddhism and at last they're back with their first album in five years, 'Blood On Fire', this time on Black Records, following their incendiary 2002 debut 'Horse Of The Dog', which preceded The Horrors by some years. And so it's all songs about paranoia, the wrath of God and high-diving circus horses, wrapped up in regulation black and howling at the moon.

brighten up the world a little bit. Originally called We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It the all-girl quartet's mix of rudimentary fuzz-pop, crazed four-part harmonies and bold, bright colour schemes made them cult stars in 1986 with debut outing 'XXSex' and album 'Bostin Steve Austin', while their regular Peel sessions found them demolishing the likes of 'Bohemian Rhapsody' with chaotic glee. By the time they signed to a major label and got the big hits though ('International Rescue'; 'Pink Sunshine') they'd been sucked into the industry game, lost their DIY spirit and punk soul, but if they're back to kick out those early gems, we'll be right down the front. **BLOOD RED SHOES:** The Jericho Tavern – Brighton's spiky, fuzzed-up noise-pop duo return to action with a mammoth UK tour to plug second album, 'Fire Like This'. **DEAD JERICHO:** The Cellar – Oxford's brightest and busiest young band continue to impress with their live wire, uptight mix of post-punk funk, mod rock and indie noise. **OPEN THE SKIES:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Hardcore and alt.rock.

**BACK POCKET PROPHET + GOLDEN TANKS + NO SECOND CHANCE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester**  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre**  
**OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern**  
**WORLD MUSIC NIGHT: Café Tarifa**

## FRIDAY 21<sup>st</sup>

**WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park** – The first day of Truck's eco-festival – *see main preview*  
**RICHARD WALTERS + JO HAMILTON: The Jericho Tavern** – Gorgeously glacial, richly emotive acoustic pop from local troubadour Rich Walters.

**DEAD JERICHO + VULTURES + EMPTY VESSELS: The Chester Arms** – Uptight post-punk pop from Dead Jerichos, plus indie rocking from Vultures and big ol' bluesy hard rock from Empty Vessels.

**EMPIRE SAFARI + BLACK HATS + THE ANYDAYS: The Wheatshaf** – Grungy hard rock from Empire Safari, plus moddish new wave rock from Black Hats and 60s-inspired pop and garage rock from The Anydays.

**DEL CASHIER + THE LOTUS PEDALS: Modern Art Oxford** – OCM presents one of rock's great overlooked innovators, Californian guitarist Cashier being the man who invented the wah-wah pedal amongst other things (including the guitar-synth). Along the way he's played with Elvis, Bobby Vinton, Burt Bacharach and Sonny &

*Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup>*

## JAPANDROIDS:

### The Jericho Tavern

Rock'n'roll: it's not rocket science, but at its best it can sound like you're standing underneath the rocket as it takes off. And here's Vancouver's Japandroids to prove our point. Formed in 2006, there are only two of them (guitarist Brian King and drummer David Prowse) and they don't even pretend to be doing anything clever: garage rock stripped down, pumped up and dealing with the alternately joyous and heartbreaking subjects of beer and girls. At top volume. The duo have been much hyped lately ahead of their debut album, 'Post-Nothing', but they don't seem to be getting too carried away by all that, possessed of a knowing sense of humour that keeps them grounded and infects their songs so they never get too macho. Their musicianship is rudimentary but fired with high-octane energy, waves of guitar fuzz, trebly rattle, rapid-fire beats and gut-level lyricism making for a noise that's equal parts Dinosaur Jr, Husker Du, McLusky and Superchunk. Their gigs can be either incendiary or fall apart at the seams, often depending on just how badly they've abused their instruments, but if you want your rock music red and raw in tooth and claw, here's your band.



Cher and tonight, with The Lotus Pedals, he's paying tribute to Les Paul, as well as music from his own recent 'American Suite For Orchestra'.  
**VECTORKAT + FURLOTTI: Love Bar** – Glitchy techno from French trio Vectorkat, plus electronica from Crystal Fighters side-project Furlotti.

**CROWDED OUT + CLAPTOUT: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Double dose of tribute acts – Crowded House and Eric Clapton, in case you hadn't guessed.

**OXFORD GIGS BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Bullingdon**

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

**BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar** – Local reggae faves Mackating play live.

**GET DOWN: Brickworks**

**FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre**

## SATURDAY 22<sup>nd</sup>

**WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park** – Full day of acoustic music and eco fun with the Truck crew – *see main preview*

**HOLY FUCK: O2 Academy** – Always welcome back in town, Toronto's superb electro-rock outfit bring their hypnotic, propulsive blend of krautrock, vintage synth-pop and techno-prog to the Academy, creating great electronic music without loops or laptops, everything played completely live. It's militant party music, like Neu! reinterpreting Justin Hayward's 'War Of The Worlds' at an 80s acid rave. Fantastic stuff.

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

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

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

**STEAMROLLER: The Plough, Bicester** – Heavyweight blues-rocking from the local veterans.

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

## SUNDAY 23<sup>rd</sup>

**WOOD FESTIVAL: Braziers Park** – Final day of the festival – *see main preview*

**SPIRO + CLIFF STAPLETON: The Holywell Music Room** – Innovative, experimental acoustic folk-dance from the Bristolian quartet, drawing inspiration from the likes of Penguin Café Orchestra and Lau.

**PHOUSA + FIXERS + BEAR IN THE AIR: Malmaison** – Soulful and intimate acoustic pop from Oxford-born, London-based singer-songwriter Phousa at tonight's semi-acoustic session. Unplugged set from Beach Boys-inspired popsters Fixers in support.

**RIVERSIDE WARM-UP: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm)** – Free warm-up gig for the June festival.

## MONDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

**SLEIGH BELLS: The Jericho Tavern** –

Supremely loud hip hop-rock hybrid duo Sleigh Bells, based in Brooklyn and formed by former-Poison The Well guitarist Derek E Miller and singer Alexis Krauss. Sounding like an massively distorted hybrid of Guitar Wolf and M.I.A., they've found themselves to M.I.A.'s own N.E.E.T label and now they're making their UK debut in support of new album 'Treats'.

**STEVE ARVEY: The Bullingdon** – Acoustic and electric blues from the Chicago-based guitarist, renowned for his interpretations of classic tracks by the Stones, Chester Burnett and more.

**RX BANDITS: O2 Academy** – California's technical ska, reggae, prog and punk-tinged rockers head off on a UK tour.



*Friday 21<sup>st</sup> – Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>*

## WOOD FESTIVAL:

### Braziers Park

Only in its third year, Wood has rapidly become a fixture in the local music calendar, immediately carving out its own identity, showcasing three days of mostly acoustic music in the isolated, picturesque grounds of environmental education establishment Braziers Park, near Wallingford. Organised by Truck, the idea was to create a festival that did more than pay lip service to being carbon neutral, so as well as solar and pedal-powered stages, there is plenty of organic food and drink, compost toilets and assorted workshops showing ways to go greener, with an emphasis on family-friendly activities. This year's musical highlights include punk preacher-turned travelling troubadour **Frank Turner**, with his great mix of personal and political storytelling; experimental folksters **Tunng**; veteran English folkie **Martin Simpson**; Northumbrian alt.folk family band **The Unthanks** (*pictured*); sunshine popsters **Danny & The Champions of the World** and local favourites like **Dusty & The Dreaming Spires** and **Nick Cope**, who'll hopefully be playing songs from his recent 'What Colour Is Your T-shirt?' kids album.

The festival atmosphere is as mellow as you could hope for, very different from a typical music fest, but once you're into the spirit of Wood, it's a simple fun weekend away from the organised chaos of the majors

## TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup>

**SLOW CLUB: O2 Academy** – Charmingly chirpy indie-folk from Sheffield's Moshi Moshi signings, reminiscent of Tilly & The Wall's innovative take on traditional song.

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

**CREATIVE TUESDAY: Café Tarifa** – Acoustic session with Mighty Redox and Klub Kakofanny duo Sue Smith and Phil Freizinger, plus Lewis Newcombe-Jones.

**MATTHEW NEIL + BRAINDOGS: Coco Royal**

## WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup>

**NILS FRAHM + HEATHER WOODS-BRODERICK + MESSAGE TO BEARS: The Holywell Music Room** – After last month's hypnotic performance, Nils Frahm returns to the Holywell for some more delicate, emotive acoustic pop minimalism, this time with Danish-American singer-guitarist Heather Woods-Broderick in support, plus local chamber-pop orchestra Message To Bears, getting a chance to shine in a more rarefied environment after their recent Punt showing.

**INME + FEI COMODO + ENVY OF THE STATE: O2 Academy** – Essex's angsty, epic post-

**NIGHTSHIFT** presents

# OXFORD PUNT 2010

**22 ACTS, 5 VENUES, 1 NIGHT**  
The year's best showcase of new local music

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> May**

**Malmaison**

7pm Helen Pearson  
7.45 We Are Ugly But  
We Have The Music  
8.30 Samuel Zasada  
9.15 Telling The Bees

**The Wheatsheaf**

8.15 Message To Bears  
9pm Fixers  
9.45 Empty Vessels  
10.30 Taste My Eyes

**The Cellar**

8.45 Beard Of Zeuss  
9.30 Ute  
10.15 The Scholars  
11pm Barbarella  
12 midnight Vicars Of Twiddly

**Coco Royal**

8.30 Aiden Canaday  
9.15 The Roundheels  
10pm Mariana Magnavita  
10.45 Scarlett In The Wilderness

**The Purple Turtle**

7.30 The Anydays  
8.15 Dead Jerichos  
9pm Sealings  
9.45 Risen In Black  
10.30 Spring Offensive

*The Oxford Punt runs from 7pm through to  
1am, starting at Malmaison and finishing  
at the Cellar.*

*Music at Malmaison is open to Punt Pass  
holders only.*

*10% discount on all meals at Coco Royal  
for Punt pass holders from 6pm*

**100 all-venue Punt passes on sale now from  
Oxfordmusic.net, The Scribbler (Bonn Square) and  
The Music Box (Cowley Road). Only £7 (subject to booking fee)**

**nightshift.oxfordmusic.net**

# OXFORD PUNT 2010 -

photo: Johnny Moto



Empty Vessels

## MALMAISON

This year's Punt sees two brand new venues taking part. We're very pleased to be able to kick off this year's event in considerable style in Malmaison's public bar. Which if you've never been there before, is up on the second floor of the Castle Complex hotel, so you'll need to take the lift. It's well worth it for the Brandy Alexanders alone, but there's an equally rich menu of music on offer too. **HELEN PEARSON** has the honour of opening this year's Punt and her gently wistful acoustic folk-pop should ease Punters into the evening. Helen has played the likes of Ladyfest and the Elder Stubbs Festival as well as every intimate venue in town and has been known to reduce hardened, cynical soundmen to a blubbering heap with her gorgeously airy voice. **WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC** were formed by Kidlington electronic musician Thin GreenFred as a side project to his Thin Green Candles band because he was fed up of his family liking his music and wanted to alienate them. We've a feeling, though, that his bubbling, squelching update on classic 80s acid house and techno is more likely to get them, grannies, maiden aunts and all, dancing on the tables, possibly after a few large Brandy Alexanders. **SAMUEL ZASADA** isn't a person at all but the collective alter-ego of Witney singer David Ashbourne and chums. The word breathtaking is no exaggeration as a way to describe their intensely melancholic gothic country, folk and spaced-out semi-acoustic pop. Neither is staggering. You'll not hear better harmonies or witness better microphone technique all night. Fresh from performing alongside Bellowhead at the Oxford Folk Festival, it's a real pleasure to have **TELLING THE BEES** on the Punt bill. Traditional English folk music with a darkly psychedelic twist, their tales of local workers' revolutions and love in the wilderness are utterly captivating and if you've a penchant for all things Fairport or Wicker Man, down your Brandy Alexander, pour yourself a large glass of mead and enjoy.

**HELEN PEARSON: 7pm; WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC: 7.45pm; SAMUEL ZASADA: 8.30pm; TELLING THE BEES: 9.15pm**

## THE PURPLE TURTLE

The Turtle, part of the Oxford Union, is a bit of a hidden gem of a venue. Set at the end of a labyrinth of underground tunnels, it feels a bit like a gig in an old air raid shelter somewhere in the middle of *A Clockwork Orange*. Which makes it a perfect setting for **DEAD JERICHO**s, teenage purveyors of militant post-punk disco rock where The Cure get mangled by Gang Of Four's uptight funk. Tales of blood on the dancefloor and domestic abuse get kicked out with precision malevolence. They were last spotted serenading a smitten Bob Harris on his birthday at the Bully. Now there's a man who knows good music when he hears it. He'd doubtless approve heartily of **THE ANYDAYS** too whose 60s-inspired rock has its roots in the classic sounds of The Beatles, Kinks and Who but who bring a fresh pop twist to their party vibe. If this were a party, **SEALINGS** would be the sociopathic gatecrashers skulking in the darkest corner of the room, waiting to fillet your very soul with a sharp object. Two guitarists, a drum machine and an admirable disregard for the finer points of pop make them a fantastic noise machine, having supported the likes of Ringo Deathstarr and Vivian Girls recently, cranking out a ragged, relentless cacophony that harks back to the gloriously bleak sound of early Jesus & Mary Chain or very early Sisters of Mercy. Triumphant sullen stuff. Darker still, and possibly even noisier are **RISEN IN BLACK**, metal as metal can be, a roaring, squalling mix of thrash, death and industrial thunder and recently hailed, quite rightly in our opinion, as as musically pure a form of music as you're likely to hear. Risen In Black may have the Devil and several large hammers on their side, but **SPRING OFFENSIVE** have stealth and a nimbleness of foot to enable them to follow that. Like pioneering Oxford acts like Youthmovies and Jonquil, Spring Offensive twist indie rock to their own devices, mixing in shades of folk and post-rock and coming out fresh as a rock and roll daisy.

**THE ANYDAYS: 7.30pm; DEAD JERICHO: 8.15pm; SEALINGS: 9pm; RISEN IN BLACK: 9.45pm; SPRING OFFENSIVE: 10.30pm**



The Roundheels

photo: Johnny Moto



- 1 - Malmaison**  
(Punt pass holders only)
- 2 - Coco Royal**

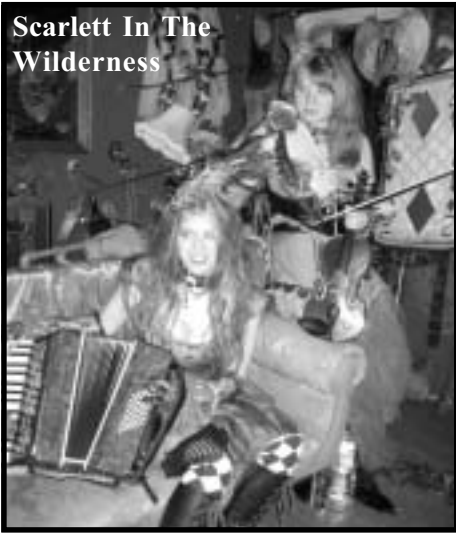
## THE WHEATSHEAF

Ah, home from home. How we love the Sheaf, the quintessential Oxford gig venue. Tonight's bill hopefully reflects the eclectic nature of the place, not so much kicking off with as drifting in with **MESSAGE TO BEARS**, originally a bedroom-based solo project for guitarist Jerome Alexander, now a fully-fledged mini chamber orchestra, mixing acoustic and electric guitars with strings and electronics to create a highly rhythmic neo-classical ambience, sort of a dreamy meeting point between Sibelius, Mogwai and John Williams. Hypnotically lovely. **FIXERS**, meanwhile, are the sweet, lysergic lovechildren of Brian Wilson and Ronnie Spector, replete with heavenly five-part vocal harmonies and sleigh bells. No night out on the town is complete without sleigh bells. If Fixers are the sound of acid-dazed 60s, **EMPTY VESSELS** are the booze-sodden, cranked-up 70s, a fantastically unreconstructed rock and roll band in the classic tradition of Creedence Clearwater Revival, Blue Cheer and Led Zep, all monstrous chunky riffs, psychedelic swirls and hairy blues chops. Proof that if something ain't broke, don't try and fix it, just turn it up to 11 and get on with the party. You might think any band called **TASTE MY EYES** would be malevolent freakazoid hardcore metal devils with a lust for noise and blood. And you'd be right. Fronted by former-JOR frontman Ben Hollyer, Taste My Eyes nab all the best bits of metalcore (screaming, growling, shredding their guitars and hammering beats into your skull with a big hammer) and dump all the soppy bits. The results are not for the faint-hearted, but then neither is the Punt itself.

**MESSAGE TO BEARS: 8.15; FIXERS: 9pm; EMPTY VESSELS: 9.45pm; TASTE MY EYES: 10.30pm**

# Where, when and what

Scarlett In The Wilderness



## CAFÉ COCO ROYAL

The second of our Punt virgin venues tonight and hosted by the good people behind the great Creative Tuesday acoustic nights at Café Tarifa. As such the music is on the mellower, more acoustic side, and you can even enjoy a pizza while you sit down to listen (the Mediterranean goats cheese one gets our vote). They don't get more acoustic or mellow than **AIDEN CANADAY**, that's for sure, a man who, the first time we saw him perform, we assumed was simply a genial drunk who'd wandered on stage by accident and decided to sing a few songs. That was until he opened his mouth and we realised he was a singer with a sweetly rough-hewn voice that carries more soul than any Brit-schooled starlet ever could and his decidedly downbeat paeans to love and loss are captivating company. **THE ROUNDHEELS** may be acoustic but they're far from downbeat, instead an uplifting bluegrass and American folk-inspired trio led by Sharyn Salwowski's wonderfully pure voice. They've got a banjo and accordion too and a heart full of soul and if you feel so inclined you can even re-enact your favourite scene from *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Possibly in between mouthfuls of pizza. From Mississippi down to Brazil for **MARIANA MAGNAVITA** who's been bringing a little bit of south American sunshine to the local acoustic seen for a while now, armed with a voice that recalls both Vashti Bunyan and Minnie Ripperton at times, simple folksy songs delivered with sweetness and soul. If there's a more visually arresting band in Oxford at the moment than **SCARLETT IN THE WILDERNESS**, we've yet to see them. Recent winners of the Oxford University Indie Music Society's Battle of the Bands, as well as this month's Nightshift Demo Of The Month, the student collective play a burlesque form of gypsy folk, taking in everything from klezmer to flamenco, replete with feathered hats and stylish flair. Time for vodka shots and a bloody good knees up, we think.

**AIDEN CANADAY: 8.30pm; THE ROUNDHEELS: 9.15pm; MARIANA MAGNAVITA: 10pm; SCARLETT IN THE WILDERNESS: 10.45pm**



- 3 - The Wheatsheaf
- 4 - Purple Turtle
- 5 - The Cellar

Taste My Eyes



photo: Johnny Moto

## THE CELLAR

Look up the phrase rock and roll in an encyclopædia and you'll find a photo of The Cellar staring back at you. It's in the walls you know – it's seeped in there over decades of hosting live music. If you extracted all that pure rock and roll essence from the building and condensed it, you'd get **BEARD OF ZEUSS**, stoner-metal protagonists of the very highest order, welding Kyuss to Led Zep on their rumbling, rampaging riot of riffage, a big, fat spliff hanging from its lip as it goes. You want hellbastard noise? Beard Of Zeuss give you hellbastard noise. On a plate. With a side order of curly fries. **UTE** are one of the most varied acts on this year's bill, from almost grunge-like rock to funereal acoustic pop with the odd excursion into zydeco and buoyant pop. It's always good not to be able to second-guess a band and while their contribution to *BBC Oxford Introducing's* Radiohead tribute was wholly appropriate, they're a band that's never in thrall to anyone. **THE SCHOLARS** took everyone by surprise last summer when they pipped Borderville for a place at Truck Festival and they've never looked back. Hailing from Banbury, their elegantly dark electro-indie rock has found them compared favourably to Editors and Interpol and fronted by the powerfully theatrical vocal talent of Chris Gillett they have all the futuristic pomp and potential of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ultravox. **BARBARE11A** too have an element of theatricality about them that lifts them above and beyond the humdrum indie rock masses. Like David Bowie via a costume collision between *Mad Max* and *Two Gentlemen Of Verona*, they're camp and gothic and consistently entertaining. And thus we reach the end of The Punt, and what better way to bring the shutters down than with **THE VICARS OF TWIDDLY**. Did you mention something about wanting some serious surf-rock action played by people dressed as vicars and nuns? Well here you go – called it *Pulpit Fiction* if you like (one writer of this parish did and we liked the description so much we've just nicked it). This is fun-time rock'n'roll with no airs and graces, just a religious zeal for good time entertainment.

**BEARD OF ZEUS: 8.45pm; UTE: 9.30pm; SCHOLARS: 10.15pm; BARBARE11A: 11pm; VICARS OF TWIDDLY: 12midnight**

photo: Johnny Moto



Vicars Of Twiddly

# Oxford Punt Guide

## Welcome to this year's Oxford Punt.

If you already know what the Punt is all about don't let us keep you; you're probably giddy with excitement and can almost taste that first, cool, calming cocktail of the evening ahead of the best night of new local music of the night. So off you toddle; we'll have a Brandy Alexander, since you're asking.

Right, for those of you less familiar with the concept, The Oxford Punt started off in 1997 as a way of showcasing the best up and coming unsigned acts in Oxfordshire in one night. Because we know it's hard sometimes to keep up with everything. Just look at this month's gig guide – so much to see, so little time, it's enough to make you faint with choice. So we have the Punt, so you don't have to turn up at half seven every time you go to a gig in the hope of catching the next big thing in town. They're all here in one handy one-night, five-venue package. Mmm, drink in that raw, untamed talent.

In the past the Punt has played host to early gigs by the likes of Young Knives, Stornoway, Little Fish, Richard Walters, Elizabeth (who went on to become Foals), The Modern (who mutated into Jonquil) and so many more. Some of the acts you'll see on the Punt sound like

they're destined for greatness, others are simply a bloody great barrel of fun. There are 22 acts crammed into tonight's event so there's bound to be something in there for everyone. Unless you're a brass band purist. In which case sorry, we'll try harder next year. And find a bigger venue to accommodate one.

Ah yes, venues. Some on the Punt circuit are old favourites (step forward The Wheatsheaf, The Cellar and The Purple Turtle), others are new to Punting (hi Malmaison; how ya doin' Coco Royal?), but each brings something unique to proceedings and each hosts an eclectic mix of live music over the evening.

Things get going at Malmaison at 7pm with Helen Pearson and finish sometime around half past midnight at the Cellar with Vicars Of Twiddly and we always find it advisable to take the following morning off work.

The best way to get the most out of the Punt is to get yourself an all-venue Punt pass. There are only 100 of these available and they're a mere £7 (plus a quid booking fee) which is beyond a bargain when you consider just how many acts you could potentially see (a word of warning: please do not attempt to

see all 22 acts; it is impossible in the same way that it's impossible for Santa to deliver presents to every house in the world in one night, and we don't want to be sweeping innards off the pavement after you've combusted trying to get two places at once). Anyway, Punt passes. You can buy one from The Scribbler on Bonn Square, the Music Box on Cowley Road or online from Wegottickets. Support local independent businesses while you're about it.

If you don't get a pass, you can pay on the door at any of the venues. Coco Royal is free (and if you have a Punt pass, you can get 10% off your dinner while you're watching). Because it's a hotel, Malmaison is only open to Punt pass holders, so extra double reason to get a pass.

Right, think that covers just about everything. Best get moving – that other lot who have been here before are already ahead of you at the bar and there's a big long evening of drinking and gigging to get through. We've staggered the bands' set times to make sure you get to see as much as possible (see below for ultra-handy spreadsheet thingie guide). How much you're staggering by the end of it is your choice, so don't blame us tomorrow, we'll have our own aches and pains to contend with.

	7pm		8pm		9pm		10pm		11pm		12 midnight	
Malmaison	Helen Pearson		We Are Ugly But...		Samuel Zasada		Telling The Bees					
Purple Turtle		The Anydays		Dead Jerichos		Sealings		Risen In Black		Spring Offensive		
Coco Royal					Aiden Canaday		The Roundheels		Mariana Magnavita		Scarlett in the Wilderness	
Wheatsheaf				Message To Bears		Fixers		Empty Vessels		Taste My Eyes		
Cellar					Beard Of Zeuss		Ute		Scholars		Barbarella	Vicars Of Twiddly

grunge rockers head out on tour again ahead of their fifth album.

**THE DIRTY ROYALS + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART + FIX MONDAY:** The Wheatsheaf – Effervescent, harmony-heavy pop from The Dirty Royals at tonight's Moshka show, plus improvised noise-rock from Chambers of the Heart.  
**WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + THE DEPUTES:** Café Tarifa – Different Light unplugged bands session.  
**ACOUSTIC LOUNGE:** Fat Lil's, Witney

### THURSDAY 27<sup>th</sup>

**DEAD JERICHO + CAT & CATS & CATS + THE SIEFRIED SASSOON:** The Cellar – More uptight post-punk pop fun from Nightshift faves Dead Jerichos, along with London's dour, spiky indie rockers Cat & Cats & Cats and math-emo types The Siegfried Sassoon.  
**OXFORD GIGS BATTLE OF THE BANDS:** The Bullingdon  
**WOODEN BOY + BAD SIGN + BLOOD FEUD:** The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Grungy post-hardcore noise in the vein of Queens of the Stone-Age from Telford's Wooden Boy at the Hob's weekly heavy rock night.  
**CATWEAZLE CLUB:** East Oxford Community Centre  
**ELECTRIC BLUES JAM:** Bricklayers Arms, Old Marston  
**OPEN MIC SESSION:** James Street Tavern

### Friday 28<sup>th</sup>

## WHITE HINTERLAND / GULLIVERS:

### The Jericho Tavern

Back in 2006 classically-trained singer and multi-instrumentalist Casey Dienel released her debut album, 'Wind Up Canary', a jazzy acoustic pop nugget that promised something good but hardly took the world by storm. Fast forward to 2010 and under her guise of White Hinterland, Dienel has come close to releasing the album of the year so far. 'Kairos' is a bleak, soulful, trippy gem. Dispensing with the acoustic instruments that made her last album, 'Phylactery Factory', a contender for Joanna Newsom's freak-folk throne, she's gone completely electronic, creating hypnotic, haunting digital chamber-pop that defies easy categorisation but mixes ambient electronica, classical minimalism, krautrock, tribal rhythms and folk into her very individual pop vision. The Massachusetts-based musician multi-tracks her voice playfully to capture different moods perfectly, while experimenting with myriad styles within her pure, electronic framework. The result is little short of astonishing. And just to make tonight's You! Me! Dancing! gig even more unmissable, excellent ethereal local goth-popsters Gullivers are the support and it's all free. Be there.



**FLAMENCO GUITAR JAM:** Café Tarifa – Open jam session.  
**WE ARE ECLECTRICITY:** The Cellar

### FRIDAY 28<sup>th</sup>

**WHITE HINTERLAND + GULLIVERS:** The Jericho Tavern – Trippy electro freak folk starlet – see main preview  
**JON BODEN & THE REMNANT KINGS:** O2 Academy – The very talented Mr Boden extricates himself from John Spiers and Bellowhead for a tour with his new band, fresh from winning the 2010 BBC Folk Award for best vocalist. That man's mantelpiece must be a tad crowded by now.  
**ALEXANDER THOMAS + GREG HAINES:** The Holywell Music Room – A rare chance to see British-born, Berlin-based contemporary composer Alexander Thomas performing his new 'Until The Point Of Hushed Support' piece for string quartet, church organ, piano, percussion and electronics, the man having proved his leftfield classical credentials with acclaimed debut album 'Slumber Tides', inspired by Steve Reich, Philip Glass and in particular Arvo Pärt. Bristolian theremin master Alexander Thomas supports.  
**MOTHER CORONA + SOHO COBRAS + AGE OF MISRULE + THE FIERCE:** The Wheatsheaf – Punk and metal bands night.  
**CHICKENSHACK + STEAMROLLER:** Kidlington FC – Guitarist Stan Webb brings his enduring British blues-rockers to the new home of vintage rock in Oxfordshire. It's over 40 years since their critical and commercial peak, when they were fronted by Christine Perfect (later McVie) but the eccentric old trouser Webb keeps knocking out those old hits. Local blues-rock vets Steamroller support.  
**E 4 ECHO + RUN TOTO RUN:** Port Mahon  
**BON GIOVI:** Fat Lil's, Witney  
**BATTLE OF THE BANDS:** The Bullingdon  
**BACKROOM BOOGIE:** The Bullingdon  
**TELL ALL YOUR FRIENDS:** James Street Tavern  
**FRESH OUT THE BOX:** The Cellar – House, breaks, garage and electro club night.  
**FOUNDATION REGGAE:** East Oxford Community Centre  
**MAGIC NUMBER SWING EMPORIUM:** Isis Farmhouse, Iffley Lock – Dixie and gypsy swing with Mike The Mic and Huff & Puff.

### SATURDAY 29<sup>th</sup>

**GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE ELRICS + COUNTRYSIDE + WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC ROOM:** The Wheatsheaf – Another fine mixed bill at this month's GTI with ballsy indie rockers The Elrics knocking it out big and bold somewhere between Placebo and Oasis, plus cerebral Somerset indie kids Countryside and one-man acid-techno army We Are Ugly, recently heard raving it up at Malmaison on the Oxford Punt.  
**THOMAS TRUAX + MATT WINKWORTH + KING OF CATS + SPRING OFFENSIVE:** The Jericho Tavern – Swift return to town for eccentric and inspired steam-punk multi-instrumentalist and inventor Truax after his show at the Holywell Music Room in March. Supporting cast includes wry pianist and singer Matt Winkworth, plus an acoustic set from recent Punt stars Spring Offensive.  
**MISSTALLICA + 14TEN:** O2 Academy – "All-chick Metallica tribute" – their words, not ours.  
**TRANSFORMATION / TRASHY / ROOM 101:** O2 Academy

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



### Sunday 30<sup>th</sup>

## ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE / CHAMBERS OF THE HEART: The Bullingdon

The question of who or what Acid Mothers Temple is or are would probably need a dissertation to answer fully, but in short they are a Japanese collective/commune/band formed by and centred around guitarist Kawabata Makoto back in the mid-90s. Since then they have gone out under myriad names, formed countless coalitions (including, unsurprisingly, Gong) and involved a fluid and expansive line-up that can number up to 30 (including, according to their website, musicians, artists, dancers and farmers). They are also incredibly prolific and the style of music you get can vary wildly depending on which exact incarnation of the band you chance upon. Somewhere in the centre of all this, though is a stated desire to create "the ultimate trip music", and AMT's gigs veer towards the psychedelic side of things, taking in elements of drone-rock, space-rock, freeform jazz, world rhythms, krautrock and avant-garde classical music. From Faust to Sun Ra, via Stockhausen. Tonight's show is part of Pindrop Performances' reassuringly ambitious and leftfield promotions and features local improv-rock supergroup Chambers Of The Hearts, featuring members of International Jetsetters, Spiral 25 and more.

**EVOLUTION:** Fat Lil's, Witney  
**WAX ON WAX OFF:** James Street Tavern  
**SELECTA:** The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night with Heist and Cabbie.

### SUNDAY 30<sup>th</sup>

**ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART:** The Bullingdon – Crazy psych-rock freakout from the Japanese collective – see main preview  
**BLUES JAM:** Fat Lil's, Witney – Open blues session.

### MONDAY 31<sup>st</sup>

**KRISSY MATTHEWS & HIS BLUES BOYS:** The Bullingdon – Rocking blues in the vein of BB, Albert and Freddie King from the local guitarist at tonight's Famous Monday Blues.  
**CAM SPENCER:** Fat Lil's, Witney – American folk.



## ROLO TOMASSI / TRASH TALK O2 Academy

Trash Talk have a name that would be horrifically camp or lame, unless this was a band from California. Luckily, it *is*, and they cut an imposing figure on stage, with a beefy guitarist and bassist flanking a wiry, long-haired crackling streak of energy in their frontman Lee Spielman. In between pacing the stage, the area in front of the stage and the wider (normally uncharted) geography beyond this, regaling us with surprisingly charming chat about his dinner (Nando's) and how we're all, y'know, dudes and awesome and stuff, he has the ability to snap into a screeching, growling mess of hair like his life depends on it. Effectively crossing over the macho dumb-ass posturing of commercial heavy metal, and a weirdo underground stalk *a la* any number of bands from the Stooges to Oxes to Isis, they're heavy yet funny, brutal yet melodic. They also manage to whip up a circular moshpit made up of no more than around five flailing Oxfordshire teenagers, before Spielman finalises their set by puking over the security barriers. That'll be the Nando's. Excellent work.

Many bands would find this a tough act to follow, but Rolo Tomassi do things that not many bands can do. They're all about strange contrasts: they look like some ramshackle indie popsters, but they can sound like Space Streakings or Melt Banana. They're fronted by a somewhat glamorous, pose-pulling lead singer, but she barks out guttural noise like every parent's worst fear. Their songs quickly descend into a hellish mix of treble and scream, until they're pulled together with a carefully-placed keyboard line or cutesy melody. It's about two-thirds of the way through their set that I realise exactly what this band *are*. They're psychedelia for the modern age. This is, not least, due to the Hammond organ sound that permeates a number of their songs, but Rolo Tomassi aren't looking backwards, they're some kind of logical interpolation of *something* that has yet to be decided upon. Musically, it's a mashup (very 2.0, oh yes) of electro, pop, hipster indie and sheer head-bleeding noise. Visually, it's a confusing blend of twee and threatening. Whatever they're playing at, the outcome is brilliant – it speaks of the modern world with a bizarre, twisted sense of fun that's shot through with cynicism and fear.

*Simon Minter*

## DUCK BAKER

### Phoenix Picturehouse

Every two-bit mouse-clicker has had a crack nowadays at a "soundtrack to an imaginary film", but watching a gig in a cinema with no projections is something else. Surreally, Virginian guitarist Duck Baker plays beneath the huge white expanse of the unused screen, on a little stool so that we can only see his twitching moustachioed head, like some strange Beckett play about a disembodied downhome musician.

Thankfully, Baker's affable presence defuses the environmental oddity, and the show is half concert, half rambling, fascinating lecture on 'The Roots & Branches Of American Music', to quote his latest album title. He's an urbane and jovial raconteur – to be honest, if there hadn't been a

timetable to keep, he'd probably still be sitting in the foyer now, chatting to the listeners during the interval – and he makes some insightful comments (Scott Joplin is the jazz J S Bach, in Duck's world, which actually makes perfect sense), but the night is really about the music.

Unlike many fingerstyle guitarists, who use their impressive technique to create a mellifluous and hollow new age waft, Baker really attacks the music, burrs and percussive snaps from his strings interjecting rudely into delicate licks. Baker plays a wide range of material, highlights being a Salif Keita number and his own gospel whirlwind, 'Blood Of The Lamb', but every tune is a rumble down a rocky road in an old jalopy:

listen to the way in which he stretches the melody in 'For Dancers Only', and you'd be forgiven for thinking he's trying to recall how it goes, or the amazing way he dissects Chuck Berry's dumbass 'Maybelline' like James Blood Ulmer deconstructing Ornette Coleman.

Baker's knowledge of American music, as well as related work from Europe and Africa, is encyclopaedic, but this respect for the material doesn't stop him adding his own idiosyncracies. He adapts tunes written for banjo, piano, fiddle and The Duke Ellington Orchestra, but never tries to emulate artists, no matter how highly he regards them. Duck Baker is something rare, especially in roots circles: an expert who isn't a purist. Or perhaps he'd rather just be called a *musician*.

*David Murphy*

## DAN LE SAC VS SCROOBIUS PIP / BERNARD DOLAN / THE SOUND OF RUM

### **O2 Academy**

Three very different takes on white hip hop are offered tonight, as The Sound of Rum offer a gentle introduction to proceedings. Taking a cue from Gil Scott Heron's creative twist on jazz and early blues vocal traditions, their blend of acoustic instruments and strong, impassioned vocals impresses the capacity crowd more than the average opener.

Rhode Island's Bernard Dolan openly invites disapproval of his nationality and general existence, but the pedestrian nature of his downbeat, colourless music does a better job, if enlivened by an amusing and unquotable poem about Justin Timberlake.

An unexpected consequence of the recently imposed (and hopefully temporary) decibel limit on upstairs Academy gigs is that bands have to work that bit harder to connect with the audience. At Bestival last year dan le sac and Scroobius Pip dashed through their set and scuttled off as fast as their rhymes would carry them. Tonight they're in playful mood, clearly relaxed and bantering at length with the crowd, enjoying the intimacy of a small gig. The new album, more radio- and dancefloor-friendly than 2008's debut, sees them spread their

musical wings with varied results. The forays into drum&bass don't really work but an uplifting singalong anthem like 'Get Better' sweeps everyone along with its infectious optimism. This sits at odds with their recurring lyrical themes of self-harm and suicide, such as on 'Angles' and 'Magician's Assistant', not that their inclusion tonight puts any kind of damper on events. Scroobius is undoubtedly a true poet, in that he exploits his own vulnerabilities and turns them into strengths, not afraid to turn that pointing finger back at himself. Even dan joins in the audience interaction, bravely outing himself as a Reading lad and making an impassioned plea to support small venues. Musically the closest reference may be Mantronix, the hugely influential 80s hip-hop pioneers, in that they seem very close, the whole being much greater than two halves, and their refusal to follow any kind of trend. 'Thou Shalt Always Kill' is reworked with a touch of acid house, a bold move for their best-known song but it works perfectly. To misquote the song; dan le sac vs Scroobius Pip... not just a band.

*Art Lagun*

## ROBOTS IN DISGUISE / SCREAM CLUB / SHATTERED DREAMS

### **O2 Academy**

Move along now, there'll be no musical snobbery here. Just reporting the facts. Sure, tonight the O2 hosts a yelping, cheering, *High School Musical* audience as if it was at a *Britain's Got Talent* audition, but hey, I'm going to be cowering in the shadows by the merchandise stall at the back, along with the parents, and not make a fuss.

Locals, Shattered Dreams, have the all-conquering Steph Branch fronting their classic, few-chord, power rock, sounding like Hazel O'Connor covering Kim Wilde's 'Kids In America'. Its a heady Midleresque performance, and if she is going to be Oxfordshire's answer to Ann Wilson, you can see she's sure as heck going to do it from on-top of five-inch killer heels and take no prisoners.

You want weird? Scream Club are the Primark Padded Bikini Top of weird. Cindy Wonderful, Sarah Adorable and a guy, working out of Berlin via Olympia USA, look like three cussing children's TV presenters playing at being the Beastie Boys. The Glymph design, striped MC Hammer pantaloons add a further surreal Andy Pandy feel to the openly gay Euro hip hop mindwarp. Best song of the night is when they go all Pet Shop Boys with 'Break You Nice'. It's the road out of hell they need to take.

And so to the end of the pier show. After over ten years Robots in Disguise would be better off just staying on the net doing Debbie Harry pastiche electro videos for Youtube; it would at least spare us the tense and toe-curling nature of their stage show.

They may be more famous for appearing on *The Mighty Boosh* these days, but there are too many uneasy tumbleweed moments throughout their set to excuse their cultishness. Sue Denim is the repeat offender. In a bid to whip up the crowd between songs, she yells "So what's Oxford all about then?" A chorus of voices yell back, "Drinking", to which her face looks like she's eaten too much Activia: "Oh, well I'm teetotal". Cue deathly silence and the atmosphere leaving the room to catch a taxi. Two songs later, while shifting her guitar, the top button on her hot pants finally gives up the uneven struggle, like a sausage stuffed with too much pork. It's an ample, if sad, simile.

In one of their final songs they invite half the audience to clamber unceremoniously over the barrier at the front and onto the stage, to goof off to something direly akin to Abba's 'Does Your Mother Know', at which point this review all but writes itself.

*Paul Carrera*

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## BALMORHEA / NILS FRAHM / DUOTONE

### The Holywell Music Room

Seeing Duotone's set up of a guitar and cello separated by an effects unit, it's hard not to muse on how the likes of Handel, who once graced this very building, would have got on in the digital age. If nothing else, he'd have saved a few quid on paying out for a full orchestra, although you suspect that Duotone (aka Barney Morse-Brown) would have featured among his chosen few. Barney's songs are built using a clever layering technique, slowly building tracks and constantly darting between guitar and cello as he extrapolates themes. His album 'Work Harder and Someday You'll Find Her' sounds distinctly more folky than his re-workings of the songs tonight. Perhaps it's the room's acoustics but the cello cuts through his guitar tracks effortlessly, giving songs such as 'Golden Hair Saved My Life' a more obvious orchestral edge. It's a fascinating set, and easy to get utterly lost in.

Equally captivating is pianist Nils Frahm who encapsulates every virtue we'd expect from an artist on the Erased Tapes label. Kicking off with the incessant hammering of 'Said And Done' it soon becomes clear that he can make the most minimal passages

seem loaded with emotion. His delicate compositions are so laidback that towards the middle of his set we find ourselves drifting off into our own dreamworld, before jolting back to reality and the realisation that snoring would probably not be appreciated over the hazy ambience that Frahm creates.

Balmorhea have their work cut out after such an extraordinary set, but they more than rise to the occasion. Unlike their recorded work, tonight's set is peppered with insanely loud percussion which ensures there's no snoozing going on. The new, but as yet untitled, song they drop into the middle of the set suggests a more rock-oriented approach for the band in the future, but tonight's version of 'Settler' from 'All Is Wild All Is Silent' is similarly bombastic. Every song is a perfect pastoral joy, with acres of space in each piece ably filled with aching purpose and swelling emotion. They are frequently, if not constantly stunning tonight, and when they wrap things up with the hymnal 'November 1, 1832', it feels as if they are gone too soon.

*Sam Shepherd*

## LOU REED'S METAL MACHINE TRIO

### O2 Academy

By anyone's standards this was always going to be a bit of a special night, a genuine rock legend in our midst on Cowley Road. It's also unusual in that here is the author of some of pop's best-known songs, yet no-one has a clue what we'll hear tonight. To bring the story up-to-date, 'Metal Machine Music' was a double album Lou Reed released in 1975, consisting of four sides of guitar-driven feedback with no apparent structure. Though rumoured to be some kind of dig at his record company he insists it was a sincere work born out of a love of feedback and its possibilities. It certainly divided the public, though he seems to have been years ahead of the pack, not for the first time, as industrial music and later drone became established, if niche, musical genres.

This show, one of only three UK dates in a short European tour, is billed as 'a night of deep noise' and takes the album as a starting point without trying to recreate it. It features Reed on processed and unprocessed guitars, Ulrich Krieger on tenor sax and live electronics, and Sarth Calhoun on Fingerboard Continuum & live processing. The Academy had been filled with seats but earlier today Reed took one look at them and, very sensibly, ordered they be removed.

Starting out as a low rumble, the music is less loud, discordant and abrasive than many expected, the three performers clearly used to playing together. The stage is crammed with laptops, ancient amps and all kinds of electronic gadgetry dwarfing the musicians, while roadies creep around with more laptops and guitars, adjusting amp settings. Kreiger spends the first few minutes holding his sax unplayed, slowly turning it this way and that and listening intently to the results. Later he plays repetitive motifs and gets increasingly animated as the musical pace picks up.

Everything is improvised and Reed picks out notes and chords, or turns to processing units as the mood takes him. The results are surprisingly beautiful and not dissimilar to what Sunn O))) and others have produced, a continuous wave of musical textures. Many of us choose to close our eyes, but it isn't to everyone's taste and over a hundred people leave before the end. Reed has put two complete concerts from this trio on his website, to listen to for free, and the original album has just been re-released. Highly enjoyable though this was, the album belongs to 1975, culturally at least, as this concert belongs here tonight, never to be repeated.

*Art Lagun*

## THEE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA

### The Regal

If you forget about the foam parties, r'n'b club nights (and the occasional stabbing), The Regal, with its stately art deco interior, is one of the most beautiful venues in a city boasting a few of Britain's most venerable musical institutions.

Sound quality, however, is not one of its strong points, and its chasmal, reverberant interior can dispossess bands of their finer subtleties. So it is with Silver Mt. Zion tonight, who during their louder moments sound as if they're performing inside a leisure centre sports hall, entirely to the detrimental of their usual glacial, expansive beauty.

What's more, once you get past such intrusive sonic obstacles, half of tonight's set feels pretty ordinary. Whereas the band were simply unbelievable on their last visit to town three years ago, by contrast, much of the newest material suffers from the band apparently wearing out their own palette and taking an

awfully long time to make a pretty basic point. Unlike, say, 'He Has Left Us Alone...', for the most part it falls awkwardly between the beauty of Rachel's, the jaw-dropping epics of Mono and the stately grace of sister band Godspeed You! Black Emperor.

But when they do hit their peak, the highlights of the set are extraordinary. Opener 'I Built Myself A Metal Bird' is a coruscating instant classic that condenses their signature soaring string lines and tenebrous portent into a succinct six-minute blast. And though it takes the best part of two hours to arrive, '1,000,000 Died To Make This Sound' is unparalleled – easily the equal of anything tenuously labelled as post-rock in the last fifteen years. There are some wonderful moments to be had, even if they take a long time coming. But since when was ambitious, artfully-constructed music ever about instant gratification?

*Stuart Fowkes*

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# THE EPSTEIN / MESSAGE TO BEARS / GUNNING FOR TAMAR / DEAD JERICHO

## The Bullingdon

Tonight's show is the final of the Oxfringe Battle of the Bands, plus a headline set from The Epstein. Bob Harris is in the house as a judge. He's 64 today. Do we still love him?

Well Dead Jerichos doubtless do after he helps vote them as winners, with a slot on his own stage at Truck Festival their prize. We've covered the Drayton teen trio extensively recently but it bears repeating that their uptight and funky form of post-punk, where Cure-like melodies get roughed up by Gang Of Four's militant dance rhythms and kicked out with a sizeable chunk of Arctic Monkeys-like bile remains the hottest new ticket in town.

Gunning For Tamar obviously have something going for them to get to this final but tonight they often sound part formed. They're all angles and spangles, at their noisiest – and best – coming on like a mathsier Biffy Clyro; at the other end of their scale, they're scampering along in Youthmovies' shadow but lacking some key magical element. You feel they need another six months and a few stronger songs to really work. That gelling of visceral and cerebral rock is a difficult thing to achieve and sometimes you just want them to cut loose and kick out a proper storm.

Message To Bears are already set to perform at the Holywell Music Room at the end of May, which will doubtless suit them far better than the pub venues they're used to playing. As ever tonight too many fucknuts at the back prefer the sound of their own voices to the delicate music being performed on stage. Originally a solo

project of guitarist Jerome Alexander, Message To Bears are now a mini chamber pop orchestra, featuring two violinists alongside the guitarists and drummer, building each number up from subtle acoustic guitar beginnings to a plateau of softly rhythmic neo-classical ambience led by Jerome's strumming and picking. It loses some of its potential impact in a pub setting but give them the right space and they're a gently hypnotic pleasure.

Bob Harris is soon on stage announcing Dead Jerichos as the competition winners but The Epstein are definitely kindred spirits to the softly-spoken DJ legend. Even if frontman Olly Wills did spend some formative time working on a farm in Wyoming, it still feels odd to have a band from Oxford who sound so fantastically authentic in their appropriation of American roots music. Their mix of porch folk with country rock is at once warm and sparse, their five-way vocal harmonies sublimely orchestrated, while their musical versatility finds them effortlessly slipping into waltz time halfway through a song. There is a magical moment when they all sing off-mic, silencing all chatter from the crowd, before coming back bolder on the yearning 'Leave Your Light On'. We haven't heard music this soft and subtle since a room so completely since The Low Anthem. With a new album due later this summer, The Epstein should soon outgrow their cult Oxford standing and earn the wider plaudits their music so obviously deserves.

*Sue Foreman*

## ULTRAVOX

### The New Theatre

1981's 'Rage In Eden' was the start of Ultravox's creative decline: the point where the maverick tendencies of their John Foxx-fronted incarnation gave way to Midge Ure's more epic rock pretensions. So a reunion tour entitled Return To Eden doesn't bode well in our book. As it turns out, we're utterly, hopelessly wrong. Tonight is a triumphant show, a chance to revisit the band and revise perceived wisdom. Ultravox, circa Foxx, were a band ahead of their time. Fronted by Ure, they were simply a band out of time.

They open with 'New Europeans' and 'Passing Strangers', from their classic 'Vienna' album, Billy Currie's trademark synth squall as futuristic as it ever was, while Ure, now bald and bespectacled, hollers operatically as the stage is drenched in the elaborate light show. It's like they've never been away. Songs from 'Rage In Eden' and its follow-ups, 'Quartet' and 'Lament', can sound bombastic, almost proggy in their indulgence at times, as on the blustering 'Death In The Afternoon', or 'One Small Day', where Ultravox finally went all U2, but while 'Hymn' is completely overblown, it sounds great tonight, finally drawing a

packed theatre to its feet and when the foursome all take to their synths for the harsh 'Mr X', pure Kraftwerk in its origins and execution, it sounds weirder now than it did thirty years ago, a sure sign of just how bland and manufactured mainstream rock has become. 'The Thin Wall' brings a heady grandiosity to basic synth-rock; 'Vienna' gets the biggest cheer and showcases Currie's virtuoso talents and an encore of 'Sleepwalk' tumbles and scours with real malice. But it's the instrumental 'Astrodyne' that is tonight's killer, a staggering fusion of electronic pop, rock pomp and classical expansiveness. If the likes of MGMT or Holy Fuck wrote that today it'd be hailed an instant classic.

Next month John Foxx will perform a set of early Ultravox songs along with his own solo classic 'Metamatic' at the Roundhouse in London in what will doubtless be a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but any reservations that tonight would be a pale pastiche of that visionary talent have been blown wide open. If Billy Currie were to join Foxx onstage, however unlikely, it'd be a reunion made in Heaven.

*Dale Kattack*

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## ROBYN HITCHCOCK/MIKE HERON

### O2 Academy.

Although The Incredible String Band are somewhat legendary, secretly at the back of every String Band fan's mind must be the sneaking notion that they were always a little bit shit. It's possibly the reason that there are only a handful of people who've made the effort to get here early to see Mike Heron and his band. They make their way through the likes of 'The Hedgehog Song' (cute but undeniably annoying) and 'Painting Bo' (quaint, but also annoying) but whatever it was that made Heron and The Incredible String Band such cult figures seems to be missing tonight. However, when Heron's daughter Georgia Seddon, who is playing piano for him tonight, takes over for a couple of solo spots, things take a turn for the better. 'Bird' in particular is a revelation, and the delicate piano figure is complimented perfectly by her ethereal voice. It might be time for Heron to step to one side and let the new generation take over.

The last time Robyn Hitchcock

graced these parts there was something of a hysteria surrounding the whole event, what with members of REM and Radiohead cropping up as band and audience members.

Tonight his band consists of no big names, but the solid bass of Paul Noble is ably augmented by the sweeping grandeur of Jenny Adejayan's cello. He opens with an acoustic trawl through 'Aeries', before quickly heading into 'The Wreck of The Arthur Lee', which kicks off like a trippy Bowie anthem and then morphs into a Beatles circa- 'Sgt. Pepper'-style epic. It's played with such conviction and a sense of good humour that it is impossible not to be won over from the minute Hitchcock's fingers hit the fretboard and he opens his mouth to sing.

His songs seem to channel the gamut of the British pop music canon; when the ghost of Bowie disappears, he's replaced by the smart wit of Lennon, or the glam spectre of Marc Bolan. Yet to suggest that Hitchcock is anyone but



photo: Sam Shepherd

his own man is to do him a disservice. His idiosyncratic lyrics, phenomenal guitar work and keen sense of humour mark him out as a very special performer. Not many could or would write a love song for their wife entitled 'Red Locust Frenzy', which is every bit bizarre as it sounds, and there aren't many

executing psychedelic inflected Merseybeat tunes with a touch deft enough to ensure that they sound vital. Tonight's set shows why Hitchcock is such a well respected artist, but quite why he remains a cult concern is, on this evidence, something of a mystery.

**Sam Shepherd**

## LISA MILLS

### The Bullingdon

Lisa Mills has an unabashed ability to tear up her vocals and spit them towards the audience, howling through songs with such power, that she makes pop seem apathetic. With her band she encompasses all the technical elements of blues; bent notes, melancholic lyrics and soulful vocals filling up the set. Yet their culminating efforts create foot-tapping melodies, which, when combined with Lisa's beaming smile, make it impossible not to feel uplifted.

Opening tonight's Famous Monday Blues show with just her guitar and a double bass for accompaniment, Lisa delivers 'Tennessee Tears' with gritty vocals overwrought with

emotion and filled to the brim with guts. In an instant it is like watching a born again Joplin, faultless and sublime. When the additional guitar and drums arrive, there's a moment of fear that Lisa's soulful vocals might become submerged in the melodies, but thankfully this is not the case. Instead the band add extra twists and turns, which lift Lisa's voice and add emphasis to her power, creating a spellbinding result.

Able to transform three-minute songs, into ten-minute epics and delivering songs of "love and frustration, with emphasis on the frustration," the band enchant the audience at every turn. Whilst the recorded version of 'I'm Changing' reads like a

downbeat ballad, live it becomes a heartfelt roots number. It's songs like this, counterbalanced with gospel-like numbers such as, 'I Need A Little Sunshine' that confirm Lisa as an artist who is undoubtedly best appreciated live.

It's not just Lisa who makes the whole thing dazzling though, but instead the culmination of each musician. Bouncing off each other in unplanned improvs, 'My Happy Song' becomes something of a hoe-down, each member picking up the others' melodies and merging into them, until they become inextricably intertwined. Nevertheless, it's their closing cover of Hendrix's 'Little Wing' which confirms them as rhythm and blues masters, able to twist up classic songs and making the music as interesting and intricate as Lisa's vocals.

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# INTRODUCING....

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

## SPRING OFFENSIVE

### Who are they?

Indie/alt.rock quintet Spring Offensive are Lucas Whitworth (*vocals*), Theo Whitworth (*guitars*), Matt Cooper (*guitars*), Joe Charlett (*bass*) and Pelham Groom (*drums*). Other than Joe they all met at school, gigging sporadically until they decided to record a song, 'A Let Down', which almost immediately found them played on BBC 6Music by Tom Robinson. Spurred on they recorded an eponymous debut EP, quickly followed by a mini-album, 'Pull Us Apart', which was released in March. They've very quickly won a large fanbase, drawing praise from fellow local bands as well as Nightshift and BBC Oxford Introducing, who got them to record a version of 'Bones' for their 'Round The Bends' tribute album. They've supported Frank Turner and Little Fish along the way and have been picked to play this year's Oxford Punt.

### What do they sound like?

Taking influence from US indie and emo, post-rock, folk and a little bit of punk, theirs is a spacious, energetic form of spangly indie rock with a distinct folk-rock edge that finds them launching into full-on shanties occasionally. Guitars tend to twinkle, jink and jitter with nervously energy while singer Lucas can spit and snarl with some conviction while also being able to come out with sweet laments. They're intricately textured but also epic, following in the lineage of eclectic local bands like Youthmovies and Jonquil.

### What inspires them?

"Blind stubbornness. The fact that there are so many people who want to do what you want to do, and the knowledge that you've got to be much better than you think you can be in order to carry on. It's fear of failure, basically! Storms as well, storms are good."

### Career highlight so far:

"Playing to a hyped crowd at our album launch at the Cellar in March. It was really the first time it felt like people actually cared about our music."

### And the lowlight:

"We played a gig at a house party, which the host chose to time with a



firework display outside; a dog wandered in at one point, but other than that we were on our own. We then slept in the van while pissed up kids pissed against the door and discussed tipping it over for a laugh."

### Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Youthmovies was and always will be the first love."

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

"Horses In The Sky' by A Silver Mt. Zion is a beautiful record."

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

"The Purple Turtle at the Punt on 12<sup>th</sup> May. We're playing at the same time as the Scholars, so expect us to really up the stakes."

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

"It's a genuinely supportive scene, and it feels like we're all on the same side. But there are probably too many gigs; a lot of the time it feels like the only people in the crowd are the other bands playing, which is a damn shame, considering the quality of the shows. Perhaps it can be a little insular, which can feel a bit suffocating."

### You might love them if you love:

Youthmovies; Owls; Death Cab For Cutie; Jonquil.

### Hear them here:

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

## DR SHOTOVER Gets an Election

"There'll be blue birds ovahhh the White Cliffs of Dovahhhh...". Not if I can bloody help it, there won't. Election fever has really set in at the East Indies Club, I can tell you. Yes, we're all REALLY EXCITED... over who gets the club Chairmanship for the next four years. In the blue corner we have Darth Camay, the smooth-cheeked Harrovian android, who pledges lower membership rates, free cake, and subsidised fox-hunting (small print – "unless you are poor or lower-class, in which case you will be legally obliged to join the army or become a servant"). In the red corner we have the present incumbent – grizzled old "Teutonic Celt" McGillicuddy von Braun, who promises not to smile unpleasantly or shout at children if we vote him in. And on the club putting green, waving at girls... well, it's the one who looks a bit like Darth Camay, whose name no-one can remember. His policies? Whatever the other don't offer, it's yours, apparently. I'm seriously thinking of standing myself, if truth be told. As the Miserable Old Bastard Candidate, who badgers all the other members for free drinks and moans on and on about how much better things were in the old days... What was that, Hennessy? *No change there then?* You little shyster, just wait till my gout wears off and I will come over there and fetch you a TUPPENNY one across your ugly inbred features!... Still, enough of that.

I've just had great idea – pass me a pint and I'll tell you... attaboy [*slurp*]. We'll have a record hop, and whoever gets the most cheers for their choices of disc gets the Chairmanship. A bit like a cross between "Crackerjack" and a hip-hop DJ playoff. Here are my choices: The Who – *Won't Get Fooled Again*; Michael Head and The Strands – *X Hits the Spot*; The Saints – *This Perfect Day*; and of course *Elected*, covered by Dutch prog-metallers AYREON. Ha ha, now to start planning my VICTORY PARADE!

Next month: Dim-ocracy



"Yeah, like, vote for ME, Doofus!"

The Jericho

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# DEMOS

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## DEMO OF THE MONTH

### SCARLETT IN THE WILDERNESS

Based at St John's College, Scarlett in the Wilderness recently won the University's Indie Music Society Battle of the Bands, a deserved victory for a band whose sound and performance, though steeped in centuries-old folk tradition, was far more alive than most of what they were up against. And here, in another month where quality is depressingly scarce on the ground, they're well ahead of the rest of the demo pile in every possible way. You've got to see this band live to really get what they're about and what they're capable of (something you can easily do at the Punt this month): a burlesque take on gypsy folk, taking in elements of klezmer, eastern European folk and flamenco as their songs become a whirling carnival of accordion, fiddle, flute, saxophone and folk-dance beats. The twin female vocal leads are strident and strong and the whole thing has a swing and soul about it that nothing else here this month comes close to. So what if it's one step removed from a student review cabaret turn: it's that degree of authenticity that lifts them above such an accusation. All you need to know is that they're fun. Y'know, entertaining. Something music was always meant to be about. Something some of the miserable fuckers in the pile here might do well to remember in future.

### MEAN RIGHT HOOK

Good name. Bit of the old musical ultra-violence is always welcome round here. It's not quite the apocalyptic sludge-metal storm we might have initially hoped for but it's a rough'n'ready blast of garage-metal that's rendered ever so slightly silly by the lead vocalist's odd theatrical delivery, especially on 'Reel 'Em In', sounding like The Very Things' lead loony The Shend (go and check out 'The Bushes Scream While My Daddy Prunes' on Youtube if you have no bloody idea what we're on about). Still, a bit of daft is all the more welcome given the despairing sensibleness of some of what is to follow on these pages, and the screaming hardcore mess that goes on around him, sort of a cross between Blood Brothers and Oxford's own Phantom Theory at times, is fun enough. They lose a few fun points as well as their momentum for trying to break things down a bit on 'The Severed Head Of The Matriarch' (song title of the month, by the way), when

Demo of the Month wins a free half day's recording at Keynote. Call 01189 599944 to claim your prize and get special deals for local bands!

they really just need to keep it pedal-to-the-metal throughout, and if Breakfast Of Champions' is little more than a noisy mess for the most part, it's got a great Big Black-style metallic bass clang about it and we'll 'ave a bit of that over some miserable old goat mithering to himself in his bedroom any day of the week.

### BRING A GUILLOTINE

Following on from the OTT semi-comedy vocals of Sweet Right Hook, Bring A Guillotine's singer sounds like a pub Elvis trapped in an indie band and not knowing quite how to play it. To give him his due, he really goes for it for the most part, growling boldly and unselfconsciously like a closing time drunkard with delusions of blues glory attempting a cross between Lee Hazelwood and Lee Marvin over a jangly, droning fuzz-pop backdrop. And he puts enough energy and gusto into his performance to mean you're on his side straight away, even as you stifle a snigger when he rhymes "Big red Beemer" with "Argentina". 'Watership Downs' is the best track here, the band behind him that much bolder, riffing like The Kinks at times as the singer croaks it out in unnuanced, over-egged fashion. You see, you don't have to be a musical geniuses to get our vote – just make it sound like you're giving it your all and maybe having a laugh while you're about it. Is it really that difficult?

### SELF-MADE MANIAC

Like Sweet Right Hook before them, we like the band name. We immediately think about Mounted Insanity Cannon and the murderous, sociopathic spazz-core they perpetrate and hope this lot can do something equally brutal. And for a few brief seconds of opening track 'Weirdo' it sounds like they might just do so. All too soon it collapses into generic Victory Records-style punk-pop-lite, its chief saving grace being that the singer, who, instead of adopting that nauseating trans-Atlantic whine, sounds more like a pub karaoke Bowie impersonator. So far so not entirely unpleasant, but come the all-too-predictable breakdown and even more predictable extended guitar solo and an endurance-testing six-minute duration and we're slowly starting to simmer in our own bile. It's all downhill from here: the possibly self-aware 'Futureproof' loses all the ballsiness of the first song, an interminably sluggish mush of spare body parts gleaned from the graves of Good Charlotte, Fall Out Boy and New Found Glory. By now even the singer has given up any pretence of originality and started doing

that horrible adenoidal brat whine that makes us want to take a cricket bat to the lot of 'em. That's a cricket bat, okay, not a baseball bat. We think we've had quite enough of people pretending to be American for now, don't you?

## IONEYE

This lot have got a pretty cute backstory, all being 14 or 15 years old and having formed in Woodstock when they were 10 and performing in the school Christmas play (versions of 'Teenage Kicks' and 'Merry Christmas', fact fans), and given their tender years we can excuse most of their minor failings (not least that they're - putting it kindly - not too tight on cornering). It's all a bit clumsy and rudimentary but when they get up a head of steam they fizz and fuzz with some gusto. A shame they feel the need to break it all down two-thirds of the way through the two-minute-long 'Who Do You Think You Are?': what's wrong with just thrashing it out for 90 seconds and calling it a song? 'Now I've Got A Witness' shows they've got an ear for a decent tune, even if it might well be someone else's and they can chug it out like T-Rex at times. The thing that lets it all down though is the singer's voice. If we didn't notice he was called Dave Allen we might have thought the timid squeak he emits was a girl's voice. Shame it's not Dave Allen the veteran (and sadly now deceased) Irish comedian on vocals. That's something we'd pay good money to hear.

## LAST CHANCE

What kind of a crappy, give-up-before-you've-even-begun kind of a band name is that? It makes it sound like they're a bunch of jaded old musos who've given up touring as a back-up to proper pop stars and retreated to their local boozer to eke out their twilight years playing old Hendrix covers. That they also quote Stereophonics and Bon Jovi as principle influences makes us even more anxious as to the horrors that might lie within this CD. And then against most of our expectations it isn't all that bad. At least to start with. 'Never Home' is lachrymose Americana that pitches a grizzled male vocal against its sweeter female counterpart to decent effect. It's overlong at five minutes and the melody itself is pretty slender but it keeps us listening throughout. Quickly though they degenerate into common-or-garden regional band competition fodder, some nominal fuzz and thunder trying to patch up the gaping lack of melody or soul and with a singer who sounds like she couldn't muster an ounce of emotion if you started sawing her hands off. The whole affair ends with some desperately characterless sub-grunge pub rocking that eventually, after several weeks doing not much, blows up into a billowing fart of pointless fretwankery. And there we were with such high hopes for it all early on. Which is how it doubtless feels to be an Oxford United fan.

## THOMAS WILLIAMS

Thomas informs us that he recorded this demo in the granny flat of his parents' home in Swansea. All we can say to that is, poor old granny. If it's not bad enough having to live in Swansea, now you've got one of your descendants, who you secretly hoped would grow up to be a vet or a columnist for *The Daily Mail*, moping about your last vestige of privacy writing songs that are the musical equivalent of food rationing and powdered egg. It's yer typical strum'n'moan fare, beefed up a little with a few handclaps and the odd drumbeat, but mostly it just plods along inconsequentially, entire hours at a time spent just doodling half-arsed acoustic nothings and making faint groaning noises that we take to be the vocals. Thomas is probably too self-absorbed to notice that gran left the flat a week ago, telling him she was just popping out for some more teabags and a bottle of gin. Last time we saw her she was following Holy Fuck around on tour, waving the empty gin bottle in the air and shouting about young people not knowing how to have fun any more.

## THE DEMO DUMPER

## FRANKIE McLOUGHLIN

Frankie describes himself as "Cohen on uppers; Lou Reed in love; Ashcroft without attitude". We're inclined more towards "tramp with a gangrenous leg wound". You know those irritating Radio 1 trailers that always have some twat whispering everything the announcer says like some arty echo effect? Or that bit in Chris de Burgh's 'Lady In Red' where he sings "Cheek to cheek" and you want to smash your fist into whatever medium the musical abhorrence is emanating from? That's just what Frankie does here on the earnest, moribund 'Heart Attack', which genuinely encapsulates the feeling of a breathless old man slowly expiring. A rare skill. 'Dangerous Game' should - must! - with a title like that be more of a thrill ride, yet, incredibly, it's even more soporific, a cross between 'Whiter Shade Of Pale' and 'Je T'aime', by way of Frank Sidebottom's arsehole. Outside the office the sun is reflecting off a parked car, dazzling us slightly. Something this man's talents never could. "It's enough to drive a man insane" he croaks, and we're finally impressed by his observational skills. It gets worse. 'Proud People' is a political protest song that might be the bastard offspring of Chumbawamba's 'Tubthumping' if it had any vestige of fun, anger or a tune to call its own, while 'Stop (In The Name Of Love)' sadly (or perhaps thankfully) isn't a cover of the old Supremes hit, but instead a litany of social injustices that infest an old town. Really, stop (in the name of decency). Please. Stop. Now.

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

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



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## Fuzzbox

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+ Monsoon

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Thurs 3rd June • £15.50 adv

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