

NIGHTSHIFT

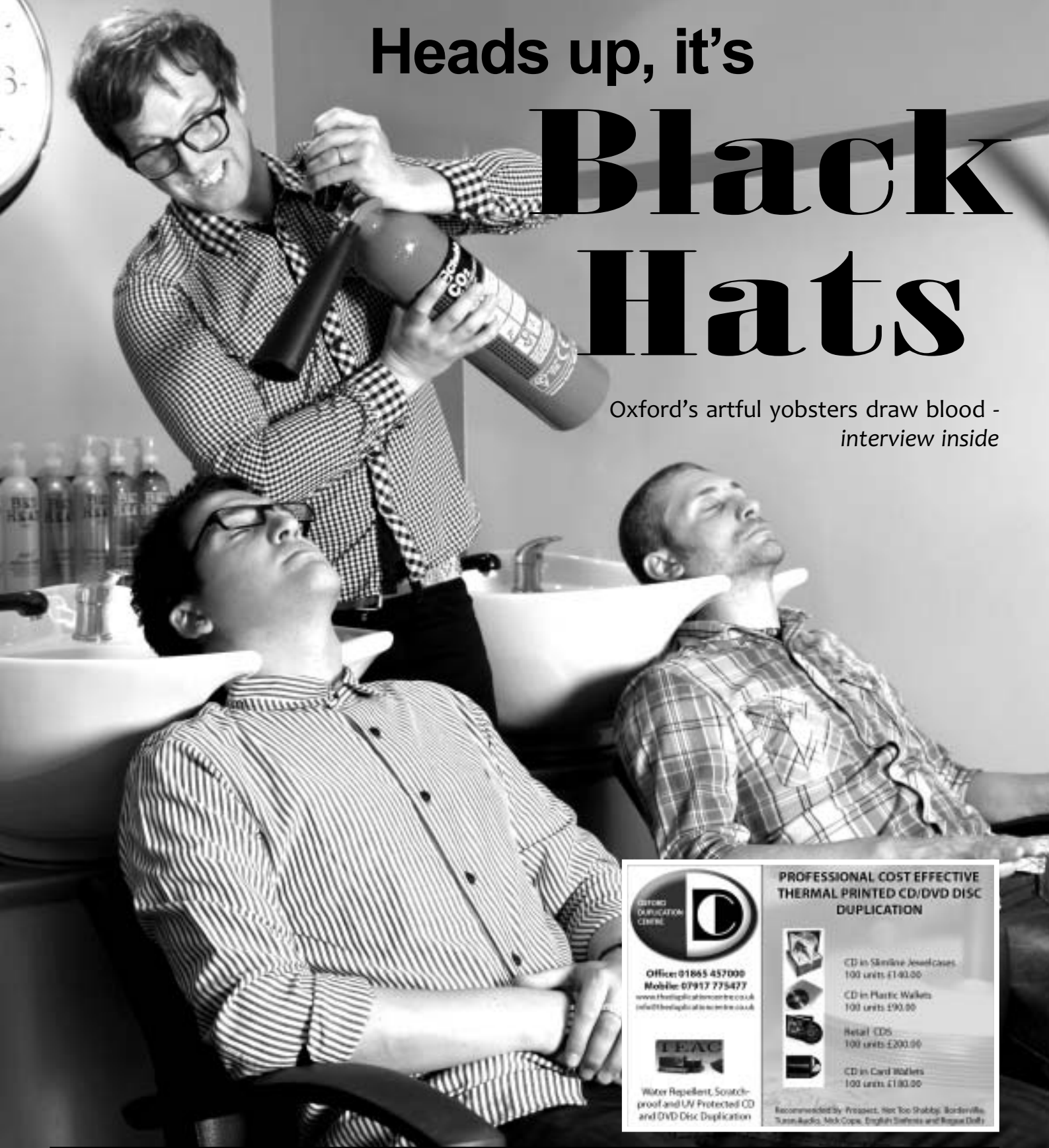
Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
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Heads up, it's

Black Hats

Oxford's artful yobsters draw blood -
interview inside



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NEWS

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TIM BEARDER HAS STEPPED DOWN AS CO-HOST OF BBC RADIO OXFORD INTRODUCING.

The presenter who, along with Dave Gilyeat, was responsible for establishing the dedicated local music show on BBC Oxford and helped pioneer the BBC's Introducing programme, encouraging new music across the UK.

Having fronted the show since 2005, Tim celebrated five years on air in March with the release of 'Round The Bends', a tribute to Radiohead's classic 'The Bends' by up and coming Oxford bands. He was instrumental in championing the likes of Little Fish, A Silent Film and in particular Stornoway as well as giving airtime to hundreds of unsigned local acts.

Speaking to Nightshift about his departure, Tim said, "It's a terrible wrench because it is the one thing I most enjoy doing at BBC Oxford and I've had an amazing time doing it over the years. But it has become quite a time intensive leviathan that seems to be rather hampering other aspects of my career.

"I have tried in vain to progress in the field of new music but for what ever reason haven't made any headway, so I've decided it's time to take stock and try something new. It's just like the familiar story we hear all the time with unsigned bands. Introducing will continue with Dave at the helm and a slight re-brand after my last show on the 4th of September."

BBC Oxford Introducing is broadcast every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm and is available as a podcast all week at bbc.co.uk/oxford.

MUSICINOXFORD.CO.UK is the new name for the re-launched Oxfordbands.com. The website provides an online resource for local bands as well as running local music news stories, interactive reviews, a photo gallery, gig guide and MP3s. Recently the site has also hosted a regular podcast covering various aspects of the local scene. Bands are encouraged to submit demos and releases for review or tracks to be made available to listen to on the site.

ARCANE FESTIVAL takes place this month at City Farm in

Eynsham over the weekend of 4th-5th September after being re-arranged from the end of July. The two-day event is headlined by Newport's rap crew Goldie Lookin' Chain, alongside Borderville, Charly Coombes & The New Breed, Inflatable Buddha, The Mighty Redox and more, while there are a wide range of dance tents hosted by the likes of Bossaphonik, Xpression Recordings, Dat Sound, Field Frequency and ZZBing. This year's Arcane is dedicated to former organiser and local graffiti artist Dan Lewis, aka Halfcut Art, who died in an accident in June. All profits from the event will go to the Art Room charity. Visit www.arcane-festival.com for full line-up and ticket details.

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS

head out on tour as main support to Oceansize this month. The local indie favourites, who have toured in Japan and the States in recent months, kick off the tour in Newcastle on 18th September, finishing, appropriately, at the O2 Academy in Oxford on 2nd October. Tickets for the show, priced £10, are on sale now from the Academy box office and online at Wegotickets.com.

HUCK & THE HANDSOME FEE

are currently undertaking a six-week tour of the States. The band have organised and financed the tour themselves, although they will be playing the tour without work visas. Maybe we shouldn't have mentioned that bit. Anyway, the band's tour kicked off in New York at the end of August and runs through Washington, Oregon, California, Texas and New Orleans, while in Albuquerque the band will reconvene with regular collaborator Tamara Parsons-Baker. After the tour they will play a homecoming show at the Wheatshaf on Saturday 9th October alongside Borderville. Visit www.myspace.com/huckmusic for more details.

BURNING LEGACY

PROMOTIONS are back in action. The metal and hardcore club returns with a show at the Wheatshaf on Sunday 26th September featuring Century Media



OX4 returns for a second outing on **Saturday 9th October**. The event, a celebration of east Oxford's music heritage, is organised by Truck. Last year's event was headlined by The Big Pink.

This year's OX4 runs from 2pm through to 3am at ten venues around Cowley Road, including **The O2 Academy, The Regal, The Bullingdon, Café Tarifa, Baby Simple, Trees Lounge, The Old Bookbinders** in Green Street and **G&D's Yard**.

Headline acts for the mini-festival are Manchester's angular indie rising stars **Everything Everything** (pictured), LA's **Abe Vigoda** and **Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin**. Other acts already confirmed include **Crocodiles, The Winchell Riots, Dog Is Dead, Chad Valley, Fixers, Dreaming Spires, Glüches, Half Rabbits and Hreda**, while **Scratch Perverts** and **Toddla-T** play a late-night show at the Regal.

As well as live music their will be film screenings, including the first public showing of Jon Spira's Oxford music scene documentary *Anyone Can Play Guitar*, plus discussion panels, workshops and more during the day.

Early bird tickets, priced £15 (£12 for under 18s) are on sale now from Scribbler in Oxford, the Academy box office, Oxfam in Headington and Oxford Guitar Gallery in Summertown as well as online from Wegotickets.com.

More news and line-up details at www.thisistruck.com

signings Tesseract, with support from Lithurgy, Taste My Eyes and K-Lacura. Bands wanting to play future nights can contact Beth via www.myspace.com/burninglegacy.

THE BLACK HORSE in Kidlington is looking for acoustic acts to play its new Friday night music sessions. Acts interested should contact Kevin at 5229@greeneking.co.uk.

A GALLERY OF IMAGES from this year's Truck Festival by local photographer Guy Henstock is up online now at www.guyhenstock.com.

THE NEXT RECORD FAIR at Oxford Town Hall takes place on Sunday 10th October. The one after that is on Sunday 5th December.

A REMINDER AS EVER 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.

FINALLY, IS IT TOO MUCH TO EXPECT that bands submitting CDs for review to Nightshift make sure they put the correct postage on envelopes. We regularly get notes from Royal Mail to say packages have arrived with postage underpaid and we're bugged if we're coughing up £1.18 for the privilege of covering for your incompetence. Acts can submit demos for review simply by emailing Myspace links or similar to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net.

a quiet word with

Black Hats



Black Hats swat up on their local music history

“MY MOMENT OF MUSICAL inspiration was at age 16 watching Steve Marriott in a small Camden pub. He blew me away, and showed how to entertain 200 people. He had whisky shots delivered throughout the set, sang his lungs out, and blew everyone away. It was one of the most amazing nights of my life. I want to take what I saw that night and put into my own music.”

BLACK HATS SINGER AND guitarist Nick Breakspear is explaining to Nightshift what first inspired him to form a band. It's an experience that has stuck with him over the years and goes some way to explaining his band's enviable reputation as one of the most exciting local live bands around at the moment.

A VETERAN OF THE OXFORD scene, Nick first played in a band called The Haze – alongside Hal Stokes, later of grunge-rockers Vade Mecum and Thieves – before forming

Chamfer, who became big favourites locally for their fusion of rock and traditional Indian music.

But with Black Hats, Nick finally seems to have struck pop gold. The band is a classic power trio who tap into the classic mod sound of The Who, The Jam and The Faces, but spiked up by nods to punk and new wave as well as the sharper current crop of indie bands such as Young Knives and Maximo Park.

In fact Young Knives' Ollie Askew even told Nick after a Black Hats gig that they were “like a better Young Knives”. High praise, but deserved.

BLACK HATS FORMED IN 2007 when Nick, alongside former-Chamfer bandmate Dave Hallett, teamed up with bassist Ian Budd, who had played in various local punk and ska bands. Their first gig was supporting The Hoosiers at the Jericho Tavern. “Their singer was a sulky prick,” recalls Nick.

After a few months Dave made way for new drummer Mark Franklin and

Black Hats were born in earnest. Gigs, including a storming set at the Oxford Punt in 2009, became increasingly packed and passionate affairs as the band's live reputation got around. A debut album, ‘What's Not To Understand’, was well received but didn't really capture their live energy. A four-song EP, ‘Magnets’, which quickly followed was a huge leap forward and cemented Black Hats' place at the head of Oxford's unsigned pack.

This month the trio self release a new double a-side single, ‘Tunnels’ / ‘Blood & Light’, a continuation of their musical progression, ‘Tunnels’ an alternately frenetic and self-contemplating mix of rock fury, squiggling electronics and big, bold spacious power-pop, ‘Blood & Light’ bolshier, funkier, a pop song fuelled up for a fight, its mood edgy, always on the edge of going off on one.

WHILE THE NEW SINGLE IS eagerly awaited, it's Black Hats' live shows that have made their

reputation, and Nightshift asks the band first off, what they think it is that has attracted people to them?

NICK: “I love playing live, it's the one time that I feel totally complete, and in control of myself, and my emotions. I think this has always come across to audiences and hopefully they can tell that we believe in the songs and what we're singing about. I watch bands and I'm amazed at how many of them can't play live. It's disgusting.”

BUDD: “It's a cliché but the gigs are where it all actually matters. If you haven't spent the time learning to actually play your instruments or how to conduct yourselves in a live environment you're never gonna get anywhere and will probably make yourself look like an idiot in the process. Having people congratulate you after a good gig is the best feeling ever – if someone pays money and has taken the time out to come and see you play, they deserve to get their money's worth and be entertained!”

MARK: "You have to cut it live – end of. Oxford is great in that respect because the quality of musicianship in this city is hugely inspiring and drives you to excel. We've shared the stage with some of Oxford's best live bands – Smilex, Little Fish – and when they're on their game you have to up yours. When we played Oxfringe with the Long Insiders; they were outstanding... and we had to follow them, which led us to play the best gig we've ever had. It's this attitude that's won us a healthy following and also served us well with a lot of promoters."

'WHAT'S NOT TO UNDERSTAND' never quite caught the buzz of those live shows, but 'Magnets' sounded like a real leap forward. What changed in the interim?

MARK: "In hindsight the album was a bit of an albatross. I still think the songs are valid but at the time they'd simply been hanging around us for so long, that once they were committed to CD, it was a relief to be able to move on. We played the album from start to finish as our Cornbury set and then we never played those songs again; it was like closure.

NICK: "'Magnets' was written just as we finished the album. As soon as the album was recorded I felt like I had a blank canvas, an opportunity to try something different. The fact that we chose to make the new material an EP was a great challenge: compose four songs, record them, rehearse them, and release them within a couple of months. It put me under pressure, and that's how I work best. The album was a chance to put some songs to bed. We probably could have made a much better EP out of the best songs on that album... maybe we will some day. I still love 'We Go Out'; it's one of the first Hats songs that I wrote, and I continually fight to keep it in the live set."

BUDD: "Magnets was started pretty much straight after we finished the album, mainly because we immediately knew we could do so much better. The recording approach was different as we wrote and recorded as we went along, whereas with the album all we were really doing was recording 'finished' songs that we'd already been playing live for ages and didn't feel like they could be altered. It made a difference and nothing got set in stone until we were sure we were happy with it. It was kind of a rebirth for us."

MARK: "The EP – all four songs just exploded from us within weeks of Cornbury and the natural energy and excitement that came from those songs... that was something that carried through to the recording. We laid all four down in just five hours one Monday night. As for the mixing and production – obviously we learnt a lot from the album (mainly what

not to do) but also we got Lee Smilex on board simply as an impartial fourth voice. Sometimes you need an outside opinion to kick you about a bit. That's something we're keen to pursue."

AFTER THE PLAUDITS HEAPED on 'Magnets' (Nightshift marvelled at a quartet of songs that were "sharper and more succinct than those on the album and course with yobbish swagger and singalong gumption"), how do Black Hats think their new single compares?

NICK: "It's a dark look into the tunnels of the mind. Seriously, that's what it's about! I'm really excited about people hearing it; they're probably the best lyrics I've written."

BUDD: "It's actually kind of two singles in one. After we recorded the tracks we were really happy with them both, and didn't want either to be relegated to a 'b-side'. We're

the most out of the traditional guitar, bass, drums three-piece. Expanding the dynamic range but never at the expense of the song."

WITH NICK PREVIOUSLY

having explored a fusion of western rock music and traditional Indian sounds in Chamfer, while Budd was previously in ska and punk bands, what, we wonder, have the pair of them brought to Black Hats from those previous bands or has there been a desire to leave that past well behind?

NICK: "Chamfer was a great band. Once we split up then there really wasn't any way for me to carry on with the Indian fusion music. So I went back to my original influences and learnt how to write simple songs again. So yeah, I guess there was a desire to do something different. The Hats are a natural progression from this, I guess. I was also very interested

"Yobbish artisans? It's better than being called Oxford's answer to Bon Jovi!"

gonna do two limited runs of hand-numbered singles, one with 'Tunnels' as the first track and with its own artwork, and the other with 'Blood and Space' first and its own artwork. People can then get whichever one has the song they prefer as the main single – it's a gimmick but it's saved internal bickering!"

The sound has got darker and utilises more electronics now; is this a direction you see yourselves going further along?

NICK: "Yeah, I'm definitely writing darker lyrics, and using more unusual chords and progressions. The samples and effects are adding to this to make it even darker. It's the sound that I've always had in my head since starting the Hats."

BUDD: "I think after being so frustrated with how the album came out we started experimenting more and more with new sounds to coax more out of ourselves. The 'Magnets' EP was a step up with some added stuff in there, but we've tried to take that even further with the new single. We'd been experimenting with some drum'n'bass-influenced beats, synth leads etc. and it adds a ton of energy to the sound. It also challenges us to think of ways to make it work live which keeps it interesting for us as musicians."

MARK: "Black Hats are always gonna be about the three-and-a-half-minute pop song – proper tunes. Catchy, riff based with great hooks. That's what we do. The samples, the effects, just like the vocal harmonies... it's a natural progression for us. Squeezing

in Budd's ska and punk influences. We definitely use more of Budd's sound in our music than my previous band."

BUDD: "Although I brought some ska and reggae to the band, a lot of that stuff has always gone hand in hand with punk rock anyway. The Clash did it with 'London Calling'; The Police did it with their entire career! I had more of a hand in bringing in the electronic style stuff to the band. I'm pretty much a computer and technology geek, so I'm up for trying to work anything new that comes along in to the songs."

UP UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY, A band like Black Hats could have expected to be signed or at least chased by record labels but you're doing it all yourselves. How do you think things have changed and how has it made you work differently?

BUDD: "Traditional record deals just aren't around anymore and I think it's probably a good thing in most respects. Far too many bands fell into the trap of trying to do or write what they thought A&R men were looking for and ended up writing a pile of shit. You have to learn to look at your band a bit like a mini business and that means you put more thought into what you do, and ultimately get back out as much as you put in. We record everything ourselves on our own equipment in a tiny little store room at a bus garage, but in doing so we've learned so much and end up so much prouder when things work out, and people like what we do."

NICK: "There are still deals to be

had, but the labels aren't signing the quantity of bands that they used to. At one time they had plenty of money and took a punt at the percentage game: sign ten bands and hope one gets big. Those times are over, although it is still possible to get signed, and we've seen local bands do this recently, like Foals and Stornoway. So we are still looking for a deal, but whilst we're waiting, we want to get our music out to people whilst it's fresh; we also don't owe a penny to anyone!"

The support of your local fans and the Oxford scene in general obviously keep you going. How much has the local scene helped? As relative veterans of the Oxford scene how do you think it has changed since you've been playing in bands?

NICK: "There have always been a great bunch of promoters, press and bands in Oxford. I think it's as strong as ever right now; there's some amazing stuff going on. It would be good to see some more managers and little labels starting, I'm sure this will happen though. Saying all that, the Ark T project is doing an amazing job of getting the young bands started. They keep turning out great teenage bands who sound like they've been playing together for years. I think there is a togetherness amongst bands that has never been stronger in Oxford. I do miss the downstairs at the Zodiac venue though.... that cocktail bar was dangerous!"

THE RELEASE OF THE NEW

single and the band's return to live action will only serve to confirm Black Hats' standing as one of Oxford's most promising bands. Along with friends and kindred spirits Dead Jerichos, with whom they've regularly shared the stage, they feel like that perfect blend of undying pop sensibilities, an arty edginess and hooligan anthems. It's a mixture that found them dubbed "yobbish artisans" in one review: is that a description that sits easily with them?

NICK: "Yeah I guess that's a pretty fair statement, I guess we just don't do the quiet hippy thing very well. Mark and Budd are definitely the most yobbish.... they make me look truly angelic!"

BUDD: "I guess so. 'Artisan' in the fact that we take time and a great deal of pride in what and how we play, but 'yobbish' as so far as we're not afraid to put on a show and channel some aggression in to the performance. We've probably been described as far less flattering things!

MARK: "Like 'Oxford's answer to Bon Jovi'."

Black Hats launch 'Tunnels' / 'Light & Space' at the Wheatsheaf on Saturday 18th September. Visit www.myspace.com/blackhatshome for tracks and live dates.

DESERT STORM

'Forked Tongues'

(Buried In Smoke)

"A preacher started yelling / So I slapped his face raw / When he turned the other cheek to me / I broke his fucking jaw."

That's how you write a proper lyric, people. God, we love Desert Storm. When their debut album landed on our doormat last year we got a bit giddy about the band's fresh, brutal take on stoner rock, trad metal and psychedelia but assumed they were grizzled old bastards with giants beards and their own tankard hanging above the bar in some biker dive. Witnessing them live shortly after and realising they were all barely out of their teens and yet still making the sort of noise you'd expect from an army of Vikings at the end of a particularly debauched victory feast, simply served to compound the unbridled adoration we felt for them.

And so here they are, back with a second album; forty minutes of gloriously hellish gutter blues and rampant riffage. From the rolling opening powerchord and Matt Ryan's biblically grizzled vocal growl, they rarely let up on the pressure, while never taking their eye off the ball – there's no resting on their riffs or grooves. Even the monstrously grinding 'Cosmic Drips' features lighter shades, Lauren Hayes' sweeter backing vocals adding a silver lining to the band's boiling storm clouds.

'Ol' Town' finds Desert Storm driving their wagon train into the deep south, Matt, like Mephisto Grande's Liam Ings-Reeves, summoning his inner hellfire Baptist preacher to come on like Captain Beefheart kidnapped by Kyuss. But soon after he's hollerin' like a Hellspawn about battering that ol'



preacher man in the album's title track and you're getting the idea these aren't folks you'd want to get on the wrong side of.

While most of 'Forked Tongues' grinds ominously and unrelentingly, when they drop down a few notches on 'Connected' they show a completely different, but equally powerful side to their armour, Chris White and Ryan Cole giving their fretboards some respite and some space, laying it down more tenderly on an almost folksy psychedelic incantation, while album closer 'Pocketwatch' mixes country and blues together into a Stygian brew that's closer to Tom Waits.

What Desert Storm do best though, is rock to the max. While they are firmly in the stoner-metal camp, they're also willing and able to look outwards and draw in different styles to keep their sound fresh. So learn to love them. Otherwise they'll break your fucking jaw. And you know what? You'll damn well deserve it.

Dale Kattack

THE WINCHELL RIOTS

'Red Square EP'

(Andrew The Great)

A four-song EP from The Winchell Riots who sound less like hopefuls and more like certainties with each new recording.

From the opening 'Love, The Great Olympic Sport' with Phil McMinn's breathlessly keening vocals and its giddy, chiming guitars, through 'Glasgow Spaceflight', a more abstract kaleidoscope pop picture, with its gentle synth washes, pretty guitar spangle and yearning vulnerability, to 'Red Square' itself, a song so gently yet perfectly composed it feels like it was recorded on the moon in the ghostly light of a half concealed sun, the band never put a foot wrong. The epic expanse of their live sound is here tempered by delicacy and rich attention to textures. Nothing sounds throwaway or there to

cover any holes in the melodies themselves. It's 'My Young Arms' that's the real stand-out track here, though, Phil's romantic, pleading voice at its captivating best.

While a perfectionist nature can stifle creativity and spontaneity in music, in The Winchell Riots' case it continues to take them to greater heights. This EP, produced by Sam Williams, whose own driven style has previously brought out the best in Supergrass and A Silent Film, feels like something well beyond a self-released effort. Each song feels epic in scope but with a meticulous ear for detail that brings out new pleasures with each listen while never detracting from the dominant, questing melodies.

Dale Kattack

DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN

'USA'

(Download)

After their riotous Friday night set at Truck, no-one can be in any doubt that Dial F For Frankenstein are something a bit special. There, as here on this new single, they deliver a slacker grunge grin with a sweet pop punch, Sonic Youth's 'Sugar Cane' coated in Get Up Kids' cinder toffee urgency, Gus Rogers' cracked Cobain-cum-Mascis drawl summoning the energy to keep up with the hook-heavy bluster going on around it, while the chorus sounds like it's just tied his shoelaces together and pressed the fire alarm just to watch him leap into life. Smashing stuff, in every sense.

Dale Kattack

SPRING OFFENSIVE

'The First Of Many Dreams About Monsters'

(Free download)

Following on from their excellent debut mini-album earlier this year, Spring Offensive offer up a 14-minute concept single based on the ideas offered up by Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross' 'Grief Cycle'. Anyone downloading the single will also get a "lyrical art collage". Someone, somewhere is shouting "Perfumed ponces!" even as you read this. Still, nothing wrong with a bit of conceptualism in music, as long as you avoid the silver capes and twenty-minute Moog solos, and, following very much in the style of Youthmovies and Jonquil, Spring Offensive offer a journey that's neither as laborious nor as preposterous as those road signs might suggest.

'The First Of Many Dreams...' is a series of mood pieces, each reflecting a stage of the grief cycle, the rhythms and guitar tangents shifting from almost euphoric chants and spangled, angled alt.rock to pensive passages of rumbling low frequency noise and insular close-harmony singing. It's a neatly-composed idea that never outstays its welcome despite its length, but there's a feeling that some of the freshness of the album is absent and they're paying too much homage to other local heroes. Equally, while they avoid the cliché of closing with a dramatic crescendo, the climax lacks the defiance you might expect. Perhaps that in itself is a reflection of Kübler-Ross's final acceptance stage.

Flawed then, but ambitiously flawed and we'll take that over safe and dull any day and Spring Offensive still look like becoming a serious force.

Dale Kattack



100 BULLETS BACK

'A Duty To Yourself & Thy Neighbour'

(Abort.Retry. Fail?)

Having all but disappeared off the radar for the past few years local electro duo 100 Bullets Back return with an assured, if overlong, second album, the follow-up to 2005's 'Refute Fake Icons'.

As well as the band David Clayton and Noel Pearson also used to run the excellent Abort, Retry, Fail? club night at the Cellar, hosting one particularly riotous Foals gig as well as regularly proving an outlet for new electronic music in town. As such they know their synthetic stuff and it shows here, with nods to early pioneers like The Normal and Human League, to later, more club-orientated acts from Messiah to Chemical Brothers and on to more contemporary protagonists like Metronomy and even Maps at various points.

'A Duty To Yourself...'s chief strength is its variety, with the duo switching styles with ease, often within individual tracks - 'German Dancing Musik' fires in full of harsh electro-primitivism before drifting seamlessly off into more dreamy Eurotrance territory. For the most part they're at their strongest on the harder, harsher songs, like 'ON', with its driving rhythms and raw synth sounds, or the all-out dancefloor belters like 'All These DJs', with its echoes of prime Chemical Brothers and amyl-house throb, or the sweetly buoyant pure pop of 'Nervousness' with its big Numan-esque synth swirls and Rebecca Mosley's airy backing vocals.

What does let 100 Bullets Back down is Noel's lead vocal, suitably distorted and militantly robotic,



perfectly suited to leading the line on more post-punk-leaning songs like 'Michael's Holiday' and the album's stand-out number, 'All These DJs', but perhaps lacking the range to keep up with the band's musical variety; maybe next time get a few mates from local bands into do guest vocals.

Equally the band's desire to squeeze a full hour out of the album means two or three tracks, notably towards the end of the album, are superfluous and dilute its energy. That's hardly a fault unique to 100 Bullets Back, more a symptom of the widespread misplaced desire to fill a CD's full capacity and make it feel like value for money.

At their best though, 100 Bullets Back are far more than token electro devotees in a guitar-centric scene, a band who happily mix old school synth-pop with dancefloor-friendly beats and rock's live energy. A band who you feel could be just a decent tour support or a club hit away from bigger and better things.

Dale Kattack

JUNKIE BRUSH

'What You See, What You Hear'

(Rivet Gun)

Bedwetting cry-babies who think punk rock is all about sports gear endorsements and branded tours should be cuffed to the nearest radiator and forced to listen to Junkie Brush's new EP at obscene volume until their ickle noses bleed and snot comes out of their eyes. Then, of course, they should be shot at point blank range.

Junkie Brush's strain of punk, like that of Headcount, their closest local compadres, has its roots in the late-70s, early-80s protest punk, when you were nobody til you'd written an entire album of two-minute spleen-venting tirades against Norman Tebbit and nuclear weapons.

They're furiously yobbish but righteous to the point of delirium, songs like 'Sickening' full of chant-along ire, drums that sound like a madman at the wheel of a blazing petrol tanker and guitars that churn and burn with molten intensity. 'Fucked In The Mind' is gloriously mindless, careering to its conclusion like a speed-freak rioter wondering whether to lob the Molotov cocktail in his hand or neck it in one, while 'Problem-Reaction-Solution' is militantly uptight like a cross between Crass and Dead Kennedys.

It's the sort of music that makes you want to go and get tattoos and hit a policeman, and thus succeeds in a way too few so-called punk bands at the moment ever could.

Ian Chesterton

GWYN ASHTON

'Two-Man Blues Army'

(Fab Tone)

Blues-rock guitarist Gwyn Ashton has lived in Australia most of his life but is now resident in Oxfordshire. He's long been a regular at the Bullingdon's Famous Monday Blues club as well as the European blues festival circuit where his high-energy heavyweight style, owing plenty to Hendrix as well as Jimmy Page, goes down a storm with an audience that likes its rock steeped in 60s and 70s tradition.

The title of this, his fifth album, suggests he's a fan of The White Stripes and that's confirmed by the raw garage-rock-tinted electric blues within, Ashton playing with a genuine conviction that prevents the album sounding like a stale, sterile period piece. That said it does sound like it could come from any year since about 1960 and never strays too far from the beaten track even as he gets his hands dirty dabbling in spaced-out psychedelia and rootsy Delta blues. The ragged, beaten-up 'Cross Road Blues' is a notably timeless highlight, while 'Junior Got A Blade' finds him playing slide on a country-blues tip.

Ian Chesterton

BLACK HATS

'Blood & Space' / 'Tunnels'

(Own label)

This month's cover stars continue to get better and better, following their excellent 'Magnets' EP with this double-a-side single, the strongest half of which is 'Blood & Space', squelching in on a wash of synths, briefly threatening to go all U2-do-art-rock, before opening out into a serrated post-punk power-pop anthem that sounds like Young Knives reinventing themselves as a particularly venomous synth-pop band. Nick Breakspear explores his inner Edge on guitar while spitting the words out like a tooled-up Paul Weller.

'Tunnels' is more straightforward, a bolshy modish rock-out that's jerky of limb and ready to lash out at the first person to draw comparisons to The Jam, but while all this might make them sound like artless oafs, their aggression can't hide fantastic hook-laden pop that only benefits from its inability to play nicely.

Sue Foreman

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GIG GUIDE

WEDNESDAY 1st

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + MARTIN

HARLEY + OLIVER SHAW: The

Wheatsheaf – Eclectic mix of jazz, soul, Arabic folk and hip hop from Brickwork Lizards.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Hip hop, dubstep, reggae and r'n'b with DJs Kid Fury, Geenee and Sultan.

TREVOR WILLIAMS: Horse & Jockey, Stanford In The Vale – First of a handful of local gigs around the county for local acoustic pop troubadour Trev.

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

Saturday 4th

BLACK MOUNTAIN: O2 Academy

Excited doesn't go even half way to describing how we feel about this gig. We've waited six years to see Vancouver's Black Mountain live, ever since we chanced upon their gently monolithic eponymous debut album with its timelessly retro mix of stoner rock, psychedelia and pop on the reliably great Jagjaguar label. Formed by a quintet of friends who all work for a community programme helping chronically poor families, drug addicts and mentally ill people in their home city, Black Mountain echo both the community-spirited ethos and collective thinking of Broken Social Scene and Wolf Parade and the social awareness of Fucked Up. It must be something in the Canadian water system that produces bands like these. Between the five of them they have myriad side projects as well as being the hub of a nebulous "Black Mountain Army" that draws in friends from music, film and other artistic disciplines, but what really matters tonight is Black Mountain the band – a spacey, spaced-out, occasionally pretty bloody heavyweight mix of Black Sabbath, Velvet Underground, Rolling Stones, Beach Boys and HP Lovecraft that's happily retro and timelessly brilliant. It's a night to let your hair down. Maybe grow a beard. Lose yourself in rock and roll. Perhaps forever.



SEPTEMBER

THURSDAY 2nd

NOUGHT + THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND: The

Wheatsheaf – Monstrously good night of instrumental rock and post-rock with seminal jazz-core experimentalists Nought returning to Oxford, mixing extreme virtuosity with extreme musical punishment. Extravagant electro-tinged symphonic soundscapes from The Rock Of Travolta in support, finding a fantastic middle ground between Stravinsky, Add N To (X) and Spinal Tap, plus a final ever show for synth-heavy post-rockers From Light To Sound with guitarist Mark Baker going off to concentrate on his Workhouse band and drummer Mark Wilden working on more Evenings sounds. Unmissable stuff all round.

BLONDE LOUIS + SCOTT E COOPER:

The Jericho Tavern – Spangly, angular post-punk indie pop from Blonde Louis.

MR FOGG + TARIK BESHIR: Phoenix

Picturehouse – Oxford-Reading electro chap Mr Fogg launches a series of monthly shows at the Phoenix, each time playing a different set – live or laptop – in the company of a specially chosen guest. Tonight Fogg himself will be playing a laptop DJ set while his guest is Brickwork Lizards' Tarik Beshir who will be leading a three-piece band utilising violin, oud and qanoun for a leftfield exploration of traditional Egyptian music.

SPRING OFFENSIVE + MY FIRST TOOTH + GUNNING FOR TAMAR +

AIDEN CANADAY: The Cellar – Alcopops club night with Northampton's excellent big-hearted porch folk-pop act My First Tooth, taking inspiration from the likes of Wilco, Bon Iver and Beirut. Joining them are local folky post-rockers Spring Offensive who have just released their new 14-minute concept single, plus riff-heavy alt.rockers Gunning For Tamar and sweetly spaced-out acoustic pop chappie Aiden Canaday.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre – Oxford's longest-running and best open mic club continues to showcase local singers, musicians, poets, performance artists and more every Thursday. **MIMI SOYA + KYOTO DRIVE + FLYING AT TREE LEVEL: Fat Lil's, Witney** – Mixed bill of pop-punk and post-hardcore headed by Brighton's Paramore-influenced power-pop outfit Mimi Soya.

PETE FRYER BAND: Copa Bar – First of many gigs around the county this month for the eccentric blues-rockers.

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 3rd

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + DEAR CHICAGO + THE UNFORGIVEN: The Wheatsheaf – Cajun, bluesgrass and English folk from Knights of Mentis at tonight's reliably eclectic Klub Kak.

SHATTERED DREAMS: The Jericho Tavern – CD launch gig for the promising local punk-metallers.

ABSOLUTE BOWIE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to the Thin White Duke.

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Reggae, dancehall, hip hop and soul with Count Skylarkin, Wrongtomb and Indecision, plus a live set from roots reggae, ska, dancehall, jungle, dubstep and hip hop collective Laid Blak.

BUNKFEST: Wallingford – First day of the three-day music, dance, beer and steam festival, featuring an array of stages around venues in Wallingford. Among the acts playing over the weekend are Afrobeat, dub and reggae band Soothsayers; folk collective Pressgang; Celtic dance act Mabor and three-part close-harmony group Artisan. There's plenty more live music besides as well as celidhs, workshops and open mic sessions.

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

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

SATURDAY 4th

BLACK MOUNTAIN: O2 Academy – Heavyweight psychedelia from the Canadian collective – *see main preview*

EMPIRE SAFARI + SPRING OFFENSIVE + CAT MATADOR: The Wheatsheaf – Grungy alt.rocking from Empire Safari, plus folk-tinged math-pop and angular indie noise from Spring Offensive. String-led new wave rocking from Cat Matador in support.

YOOF!: The Cellar – More quality up and coming indie sounds at Yoof, with a headline set from Kent's Wild Palms, epic, soaring post-punk types in the vein of New Fast Automatic Daffodils, A Certain Ratio and TV On The Radio, who have recently played at the Camden Crawl and Great Escape. Joining them are London's ethereal popsters Porcelain Raft, soon to head off on tour with Blonde Redhead, plus local synth orchestra Keyboard Choir. Indie dance sounds afterwards from Will Gilgrass and Major Fraser.

ARCANE FESTIVAL: City Farm, Eynsham – Re-arranged from July, Arcane returns with two days of dance and rock, in memory of local festival organiser and graffiti artist Dan Lewis. Previous headliner Levi Roots is replaced by Newport's hip hop pastiche crew Goldie Lookin' Chain, plus live sets from Charly

Coombes, The Goggenheim, Inflatable Buddha, The Mighty Redox, the Scholars and more, plus myriad dance sounds from Bossaphonik, Xpression Recordings, DAT Sound, Field Frequency and ZZBing. Full line-up and ticket news at www.arcane-festival.com.

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

DEDLOK DAY: The Port Mahon (2pm) – Nine hours of solid metal, hosted and headlined by Dedlok, who will be joined along the way by The Crushing, Akermyst, K-Lacura, Aethara, Hollowpoint, Annero and Taste My Eyes.

TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy – 80s, glam and kitsch pop at Trashy, plus metal, hardcore and alt.rock at Room 101.

REGGAE CLUB NIGHT: The Bullingdon

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

NIKKI LOY & JOHN POOLE: The Fishes, North Hinksey

SUNDAY 5th

DOMES OF SILENCE + DESERT STORM + DIRTY BEARD + BEGGARS LANE: The Wheatsheaf – Another quality night of metal from Buried In Smoke featuring tectonic industrial grunge rock from Banbury's Domes Of Silence, preparing to launch their second

Thursday 5th

THE DEPRECIATION GUILD: The Jericho Tavern

Although Brooklyn's Depreciation Guild were formed by Pains Of Being Pure At Heart drummer Kurt Feldman and guitarist Christoph Hockheim, they precede that band by a good couple of years, despite their early chiptune work being eclipsed by Pains' twee-pop ascendancy. Now, having recruited Christopher's identical twin brother Anton, the Guild are back with a second album, 'Spirit Youth', the lushly produced follow-up to their 'In Her Gentle Jaws' debut. As you'd expect from a band associated with Pains, it's a fey, tender of touch affair, hearts worn firmly on sleeves amid the temulous, dreamy fuzz-pop that subsumes the old computer game chip cheeriness beneath swathes of shoegazey etherealism, drawing comparisons to the likes of Slowdive, M83 and Mew. Tonight's show is part of the band's first ever UK tour and while they may not get the rabid reception that Pains received at this venue last year, their cult status should ensure a healthy crowd for a band still relatively unknown band.



album, grinding in somewhere between Primal Scream, Depeche Mode and Motorhead. Support comes from psychedelic stoner metallers Desert Storm, Nottingham's southern-style rockers Dirty Beard and thash-metal and death-core outfit Beggars Lane

THE DEPRECIATION GUILD: The Jericho Tavern – Debut UK tour for the Pains Of

Being Pure At Heart chaps – *see main preview*

ARCANE FESTIVAL: City Farm, Eynsham

BUNKFEST: Wallingford

DESMOND CHANCER + ABLE ARCHER + FRED BONES: Malmaison – The Mal hosts its fortnightly semi-acoustic evening, tonight featuring Tom Waits-inspired gutter blues crooner Desmond Chancer.

TREVOR WILLIAMS: The Red Lion, Faringdon

MONDAY 6th

THE AYNSLEY LISTER BAND: The Bullingdon – Heavy-duty blues-rock from the acclaimed British guitarist, equally at home playing it raw and acoustic or pumping it up Hendrix-style on the electric.

EX-SIMPLE MINDS: O2 Academy – Original Simple Minds bassist Derek Forbes and drummer Brian McGee reunite.

CAKE? METAL!: The Port Mahon

TUESDAY 7th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz every Tuesday at the Bully, tonight featuring funky keyboard-led ensemble The Howard Peacock Quintet.

PDRR: The Port Mahon – Electro experimentation.

WEDNESDAY 8th

WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + ZEM + VERY NICE HARRY + PEACH: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with fluffy acoustic pop duo Welcome To Peepworld alongside another International Jetsetters side project, Zem. Didcot's bluesy rockers Very Nice Harry support.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Hip hop and more from Mizz Lyrikal, Sarah Love and resident DJs.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

THURSDAY 9th

MESSAGE TO BEARS + SAMUEL ZASADA + THE YARNS + TOLIESEL: The Bullingdon – Everyday Folk presents a night of folk-tinged pop with expansive classical-folk ensemble Message To Bears teaming up with dark-minded alt.folk outfit Samuel Zasada for a joint set, while indie janglers The Yarns and promising new rockers Toliesel in support.
ADAM BARNES + STRAIGHT LINES + SPRING OFFENSIVE + WISE CHILDREN: The Cellar – EP launch for former-Motion In Colour frontman Adam Barnes, now really finding his voice with a sweetly soulful blend of folk and pop that leans towards Bon Iver and Ray Lamontagne. Restlessly inventive alt.rockers Spring Offensive support.
OXFORD IMPROVISERS: The Port Mahon – With special guest Eugene Chadbourne. A legend in underground improv circles, the



Friday 10th

THE LIKE:

The Jericho Tavern

The classic girl group sound really is back with a vengeance. After Vivian Girls and Dum Dum Girls come the recently re-invented The Like. Having formed in California in 2001, all daughters of music biz movers and shakers, (singer Elizabeth Anne Berg's father was a Geffen A&R exec and producer, while drummer Tennessee Thomas' dad drummed for Elvis Costello and original bassist Charlotte Froom's father produced everyone from Crowded House to The Bangles), The Like quickly found themselves signed to Geffen, starring in a film to promote Zac Posen's Target fashion range, directed by Gia Coppola, no less and out on tour supporting Kings Of Leon, Muse and Razorlight. Perversely things got better for them when Geffen dropped them after one album and they chanced upon king of pop kitsch Mark Ronson. With him at the controls they've made a great album of superb retro pop that draws on everything from Stax soul and Petula Clark to The Monkees and The Donnas. So it's all Farfisa organ hum, indie jangle and handclaps, while Berg's sharp, literate vocals and lyrics keep the old boy-trouble schtick fresh. Last year's tour support to Arctic Monkeys doubtless helped raise the band's profile and now they're set to escape any accusations of nepotistic favour by proving they're a pretty bloody fantastic pop group in their own right.

guitarist and banjo player started off playing experimental rockabilly songs in Shockabilly before going on to work with the likes of John Zorn, Fred Frith and Jello Biafra, fusing different strands of music into an eclectic, unconventional style all of his own.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 10th

THE LIKE: The Jericho Tavern – Classic girl group pop from the Californian glamour girls – *see main preview*

GUNS 2 ROSES: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to Axl and chums.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon



Sunday 19th

COMANECHI / DIVORCE / SEALINGS: The Wheatsheaf

It's great news that Poor Girl Noise are back promoting local gigs after a lengthy lay-off. Tonight's show is as good a welcome back as you could hope for, London's mayhem boy-girl duo Comanechi out on a co-headline tour with noise rockers Divorce. Comanechi frontwoman Akiko Mafsuura is better known as the drummer with The Big Pink as well as singing with PRE but here she gets free rein to indulge her most cathartic desires, often performing in nothing more than t-shirt and knickers, a tiny, ferocious screaming banshee. The band mix up elements of sludgy stoner rock, riot grrl, punk and no-wave, Simon Petrovich adding lacerating guitar noise into the mix. They pair have supported Yeah Yeah Yeahs, The Gossip and DJ Scotch Egg and while it looked for a while that they'd fallen by the wayside as Akiko pursued her daytime jobs their debut album, 'Crime Of Love', is worth the wait – furiously uncompromising stuff. Glasgow's four-girl, one-boy outfit Divorce have shared stages with Part Chimp, Health and Deerhoof so are obviously no softies, something borne out by their shrill, clattering lo-fi hardcore racket that recalls Sonic Youth's earliest incendiary outings. Completing a fine old hellbastard riot of an evening are local noise merchants Sealings, whose fantastically dour noise comes in somewhere between early Mary Chain, Sisters of Mercy and Godflesh.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dance, Balkan beats, world breaks and nu-jazz club night, with live rumba, soukous and Afro-jazz from Kasai Masai.

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

PIGSTOCK: Witney Rugby Club – Charity gig in aid of Sobell House Hospice with The Rock Doctors.

SATURDAY 11th

NO.LAY + MIZZ LYRIKAL + UNEEK + LADY EXONIC: Fusion Arts Centre, Princes Street – The Oxford Young Women's Music project present an evening of female rappers and MCs, including London's grime and hip hop MC No.Lay, who has worked with Skinnyman. The gig is preceded at 5pm with a lyric workshop with No.Lay.

HIGH & MIGHTY: Fat Lil's, Witney – The local rock vets kick out their heavyweight punk-tinged metal noise.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep and drum&bass.

PHANTOM THEORY + TARGET 9 + SMALL MACHINE: The Port Mahon – Big beats and heavy riffage from the new wave-tinged heavy rockers.

MANIC CIRCUS + ALAMAKOTA: The Folly Bridge Inn – Indie thrash from Germany's Manic Circus.

DUB POLITICS: The Bullingdon – Dubstep club night.

TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

SUNDAY 12th

TREVOR WILLIAMS: The Living Room

NIKKI LOY: Head Of The River

MONDAY 13th

THE SHERMAN ROBERTSON BAND: The Bullingdon – The Texan guitarist returns to the Famous Monday Blues with 40 years of gigging experience under his belt, having played with Bobby Bland and Junior Parker in the 60s before he joined zydeco king Clifton Chenier in the 70s. Since then he's played with Paul Simon (on his classic 'Gracelands' album), before going solo. He's an energetic showman, often likened to Albert Collins, a soulful singer and a guitarist who adds a rock edge to traditional blues, zydeco and r'n'b.

ROWAN COUPLAND + SWINDLESTOCK + ANIMAL MAGIC TRICKS: The Wheatsheaf – The reliably esoteric Pindrop Performance crew entice Brighton's Animal Magic Tricks to town, the work of Frances Donnelly who uses toy instruments and electronics to create a dreamy, bewitching sound that's like a spooky, minimalist mix of Solex and Scout Niblett. Fellow south coast experimenter Rowan Coupland joins the bill with his unconventional style of folk that occasionally recalls King Creosote. Goodtime rootsy folk and country mixed with Creedence-style 60s rock from Swindlestock to open the show.

TUESDAY 14th

DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + BITCHES + SHEARING PINX: The Wheatsheaf – Last month's Nightshift cover stars Dial F kick out their pop-friendly post-hardcore and grunge racket, with support from industrial noise urchins Bitches in support.

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

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

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 15th

PULLED APART BY HORSES: O2 Academy – After their characteristically riotous showing in the barn at Truck Festival, Pulled Apart By Horses head off on a national tour, showing why they're widely considered to be the future of UK hardcore, possible successors to Nation Of Ulysses' crown and a pretty awesome fusion of art-metal, tightly-wound hardcore and belligerent, angular punk fury. Explosive but tightly focussed, they're consummate noise-rock entertainers. Come on, who couldn't love a band with a song called 'E=MC Hammer'?

HORSE FEATHERS: The Jericho Tavern –

Portland, Oregon's folkies return to town, playing it sparse and warmly desolate, like Neil Young gone bluegrass.

HOUSE OF ROOTS: The Cellar – Reggae, dubstep, breaks, electro and drum&bass with Grifta and Linguistics.

THURSDAY 16th

DIVINE CHAOS + ANNERO + CARAVAN OF WHORES + CRYSIS: The Bullingdon – Another Skeletor metal night with Slough's thrash-cum-death crew Divine Chaos, local growly thrash merchants Annero and Banbury's stoner and doom-metal outfit Caravan Of Whores.

CATS IN PARIS + COLOUREDS + UTE + GULLIVERS: The Cellar – More Pindrop Performance fun tonight with Manchester's lopsided synth-prog-pop trio Cats In Paris. They're joined by electro-mentalists duo Coloureds, eclectic indie rockers Ute and epic electro-indie types The Scholars.

NEVER MEANS MAYBE + MALLORY KNOX: Fat Lil's, Witney – Impassioned screamo noisemaking from Essex's Never Means Maybe out on tour.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Tuesday 21st

BRING ME THE HORIZON / CANCER BATS: O2 Academy

Dividing opinion is always a good thing for a rock band so Bring Me The Horizon's achievement of being voted Best Band and Worst Band at the Kerrang! Awards and having their 'Suicide Season' voted both best and worst album of the year by Rock Sound readers bodes well. The Sheffield metalcore merchants seem to drag controversy behind them like a pet dog, from frontman Oliver Sykes' charge of urinating on a female fan back in 2007 to his staged punch-up with Architect's Sam Carter that found its way onto Youtube and provoked death threats from fans on both sides, they've enjoyed silly season exposure that's thankfully never eclipsed the music. Following the well-worn hardcore path of constant touring, including supports to Killswitch Engage, The Haunted and Lostprophets along the way, as well as appearances on the Kerrang! and Vans Warped tours and Download, they're consistent crowd pleasers as tonight's already sold-out show testifies. They're on tour in preparation for third album 'There Is A Hell, I've Seen It. There Is A Heaven, Let's Keep It A Secret' and their star is still very much in the ascendancy. Fantastic support from Toronto's anthemic blitzkrieg metalcore crew Cancer Bats, low on subtlety and innovation but big on singalong mayhem and ferocity.



Community Club

PETE FRYER BAND: Prince Of Wales, Iffley

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 17th

GUNNING FOR TAMAR + ABOVE US

THE WAVES + DRUNKENSTEIN +

SMALL MACHINE: The Wheatsheaf – Riff-heavy post-rock in a Biffy Clyro vein from Gunning For Tamar, with support from promising alt.rock-cum-folk-pop types Above Us The Waves, sounding like a cross between Explosions In The Sky and King Creosote at times. Hammer Horror prog-funkers Drunkenstein add a little lunacy to the bill.

CIRCA SURVIVE: O2 Academy –

Philadelphia's post-hardcore crew tour their third album, 'Blue Sky Noise', having previously toured with the likes of My Chemical Romance, Pelican and Rise Against.

RELIK + DEAD JERICHO + LUNA

MARIA + FELIX & FOX: The Jericho

Tavern – Classic rock and indie from Relik, with support from uptight post-punk power trio Dead Jerichos and more.

LETZ ZEP: Fat Lil's, Witney – Led Zeppelin tribute night.

DRUNKENSTEIN + ABOVE US THE

WAVES + SMALL MACHINE: The

Wheatsheaf – Last gig for gothic prog-funkers Drunkenstein before they go on extended hiatus at tonight's Moshka night, with support from folksy post-rockers Above Us The Waves and heavy rockers Small Machine.

SKYLARKIN'S BIG 10 INCH: The

Cellar – Jump blues, rock'n'roll, swing and loads more from Count Skylarkin, tonight joined for a live set by local hot jazz collective The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band, bringing some authentic New Orleans debauchery to the party. Greg Butler (Shellac Collective) and Sir Bald Diddlely help man the decks.

PETE FRYER BAND: Prince Of Wales, Horspath

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

NIKKI LOY: Cricketers Arms, Littleworth

SWINDLESTOCK: The Port Mahon

SATURDAY 18th

THE LONG INSIDERS: The Jericho

Tavern – Raw and rootsy rock'n'roll, surf-rock and garage in the classic mould from Long Insiders – *see main Introducing piece*

THE BLACK HATS + PLAYER 2 +

SPRING OFFENSIVE ACOUSTIC: The Wheatsheaf – The local post-punk and mod-rock faves launch their new single – *see main interview feature*

LISBEE STAINTON: O2 Academy –

Wistful confessional acoustic folk-pop in the vein of Joni Mitchell from Southampton's rising young singer-songwriter, recently seen supporting Joan

Armatrading on tour.

THE DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic rock covers.

THE BIG MESS AROUND: The Regal –

A celebration of mod culture featuring a night of northern soul, ska, r'n'b, jazz, Motown and reggae with DJs Count Skylarkin, Bob Noble and Jazz Jon, plus live sets from top UK ska faves Top Cats and new mod collective Captive Hearts, recent tour support to Paul Weller.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: Bear & Ragged Staff, Cumnor

TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

REGGAE & SOUL NIGHT: The

Bullingdon – With King Lloyd and Sambo Sound.

FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – House, breaks, garage and electro party tunes.

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

SUNDAY 19th

GET CAPE, WEAR CAPE, FLY!: O2

Academy – Sam Duckworth and his band return to live action to coincide with the release of his third, eponymous, album, mixing up the personal and political and variously witty, emotive, angry, glitchy and rootsy with his trademark electro-folk pop.

COMANECHI + DIVORCE +

SEALINGS: The Wheatsheaf – Great

night of noise-rock courtesy of Poor Girl Noise – *see main preview*

THE JOHN YOUNG BAND: Fat Lil's,

Witney – Prog-rock of the old school from veteran keyboard player John Young and his band. Young's CV includes working with Scorpions, Steeleye Span, Bon Jovi, Asia, Bonnie Tyler and Jon Anderson. Tonight's gig, inspired by Radiohead's 'In Rainbows', asks punters to pay what they feel it's worth on the door.

PHOUSA + JAMIE FOLEY + BAND OF

HOPE: Malmaison – Semi-acoustic night in the Mal's cocktail lounge with dreamy folk-pop songstress Phousa, acoustic rock chap Jamie Foley and Mississippi-style folk-jazz collective Band Of Hope.

NIKKI LOY: The Fishes, North Hinksey

MONDAY 20th

RICKY WARWICK: O2 Academy – Solo show for the Almighty frontman who has also played with New Model Army, Def Leppard and Billy Duffy of The Cult along the way and is currently fronting a new line-up of Thin Lizzy alongside Scott Gorham.

THE LARRY MILLER BAND: The

Bullingdon – Rocking blues from the UK guitarist, inspired by the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Gary Moore.

ERIC CHENAUX + TELLING THE BEES + DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA +

BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE: The

Wheatsheaf – More leftfield folk from Pindrop Performances tonight as Toronto improviser Chenaux returns to town after his support set to Thomas Truax at the Holywell earlier in the year. Chenaux utilises guitars and electronics to create a woozy mix of jazz, folk, country and psychedelia that's mellow and hypnotic. Local dark folkies Telling The Bees bring their own

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Saturday 25th

WINCHELL RIOTS / THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA / VIXENS: O2 Academy

With the success of Stornoway, Little Fish and A Silent Film lately it's easy to miss Winchell Riots coming up in their wake, a band whose new EP shows them to be one lucky break away from some serious stadium-sized success. Mixing the glacial splendour of Sigur Ros with Snow Patrol's intricately epic indie rock, and fronted by Phil McMinn's aching, angst-ridden vocals, they're simply oozing with mega crossover potential. Having recorded their latest CD with Sam Williams, a man who knows a bit about working a hit single, Winchell Riots are set to launch one of the best local releases of the year tonight and their live shows are always grandly-proportioned affairs, so make the most of tonight's chance to see them in intimate surroundings. Great local support from The Rock Of Travolta with their symphonic blend of guitar noise, electronics and strings, coming on somewhere between Stravinsky, Add N To (X) and Shellac, with a hefty dose of rock showmanship into the bargain. Local gothic rock hopefuls Vixens complete the impressive showcase of local talent.

special twisted take on traditional English folk along in support, while improv collective Braindead Collective open the show.

TUESDAY 21st

BRING ME THE HORIZON + CANCER BATS + TEK-ONE: O2 Academy – Sheffield's metalcore monsters hit the road once more – *see main preview*

I AM ARROWS: The Jericho Tavern – Former-Razorlight member makes decent solo career, shock horror! Drummer Andy Burrows left the Brit-rock abominations in 2008 and has been sticksman for We Are Scientists on their recent tour but with his own I Am Arrows project he's gone down a playfully folksy hip hop path, sounding a bit like a lo-fi Toytown Hot Chip at times and with an individuality and charm that his original paymasters so resolutely lack.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Live jazz from The Howard Peacock Quintet.

WEDNESDAY 22nd

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Unplugged open mic session with Adam Barnes and Spring Offensive.

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

playing a mix of hip hop, Latin, funk, reggae, ska and drum&bass.

THURSDAY 23rd

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

WORDPLAY: The Cellar

FRIDAY 24th

TWO-DOOR CINEMA CLUB: O2 Academy – Return to town for Northern Ireland's Kitsune-signed post-punkers after their headline show here back in March, inspired initially by Bloc Party but finding their own feet on debut album, 'Tourist History', after supports to the likes of Foals, Autokratz and Delphic along the way.

FYFE DANGERFIELD + THE BOY WHO

TRAPPED THE SUN: O2 Academy –

Guillemots frontman Fyfe goes solo for his recent 'Fly Yellow Moon' album, getting an extra career boost from the John Lewis advert featuring his take on Billy Joel's 'She's Always A Woman'.

WE AERONAUTS + MINOR COLES + ACE

BUSHY STRIPTEASE: The Wheatsheaf – Expansive folk-rock from We Aeronauts, plus promising new indie pop from Minor Coles in support.

FUSED: Fat Lil's, Witney – Modern rock covers.

MELTING POT: The Bullingdon – Early show with mixed bag of unsigned bands.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

BASSMENTALITY: The Cellar

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

SECRET RIVALS + KING OF CATS: The Port Mahon

WHO DO YOU LOVE?: The Duke, St

Clements – DJs playing a mix of alt.rock, 60s garage, punk and electro.

NIKKI LOY: The New Inn, Witney

SATURDAY 25th

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + VIXENS: O2 Academy – Single launch gig for the local indie stars – *see main preview*

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with

SILVANITO + DOTS & STOPS +

QUADROPHOB: The Wheatsheaf –

Reliably mixed bag of sounds at this month's GTI with Latin-flavoured pop and spaghetti western rocking from Silvanito, plus art-punk, psychedelia and krautrock-inspired outfit Dots & Stops and jaunty ska-pop types Quadrophobe.

PHILADELPHIA GRAND JURY: The Jericho

Tavern – Sydney's PGJ bring their classic rock'n'roll, boogie, punk and soul sound to town.

WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + LE VENS +

MATT SAGE: Stocks Bar, Abingdon – Skittle Alley bands night with sweet-natured acoustic pop troupe Welcome To Peepworld and world-folk

and 60s pop singer-songwriter Matt Sage.

PETE FRYER BAND: Blue Boar, Chipping Norton

TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass.

WAX ON WAX OFF: James Street Tavern

HQ: The Cellar

SUNDAY 26th

KATE RUSBY: The New Theatre – The first lady of new English folk music returns to town – *see main preview*

LACUNA COIL: O2 Academy – Gothic pop-metal extravagance from Milan's Halloween rockers, contrasting Christina Scabbia's soaring vocals with co-singer Andrea Ferro's hardcore growl over opulent, radio-friendly metal.

TESSERACT + LITHURGY + TASTE MY EYES

+ K-LACURA: The Wheatsheaf – Burning

Legacy return to metal action with a great bill that includes Milton Keynes' progressive metallers Tesseract whose technical, polyrhythmic style recalls Meshugga ad Sikth. Support comes from Brighton's proggy hardcore outfit Lithurgy, whose sound spans influences as diverse as Mastodon, The Mars Volta and Pink Floyd, venomous local metalcore monsters Taste My Eyes and promising newcomers K-Lacura.

MONDAY 27th

GEOFF ACHISON & THE SOUL

DIGGERS: The Bullingdon – Melbourne-based blues-rockers and previous winner of the

Sunday 26th

KATE RUSBY: The New Theatre

Like Seth Lakeman, Kate Rusby has been around too long now to still be called a rising star of UK folk music, but in a genre that appreciates longevity, she's still something of a stripling and her star is still very much in the ascendancy, firmly ensconced as the first lady of English folk and hopefully set to release her tenth album this year after some time off to have a baby. Having made her name as a re-interpreter of traditional songs, Rusby came into her own when she teamed up with former husband and producer John McCusker and Idlewild's Roddy Woomble and began writing more of her own material. Her charmingly disarming style, infused with gentle humour, coupled with her pure, dreamy voice and a style that ranges from simple acoustic ballads to more elaborate and lively fiddle and accordion-led jigs has won her numerous BBC Folk Awards as well as a Mercury Price nomination, while her 2006 duet with Ronan Keating on 'All Over Again' took her into the singles charts and a wider audience. After 2008's album of traditional Christmas songs, 'Sweet Bells', the woman dubbed The Barnsley Nightingale heads back on tour to restate her claim to the folk throne.



prestigious Albert King Award for most promising young blues guitarist returns to the Famous Monday Blues club, excelling at both electric and acoustic blues styles, adding jazz and funk improvisations into his traditional repertoire.

TUESDAY 28th

HORNBLOWER BROTHERS + THE YARNS + POPPY PEREZZ: **The Wheatsheaf** – After returning to gig action with Tender Trap's show at the same venue last month Swiss Concrete continue to indulge their love of 80s-style indie pop with Brighton's ebullient, shambolic Hornblower Brothers, a summery take on Half Man Half Biscuit's sharp-edged jangle pop. Sweet-natured indie jangle from The Yarns in support.

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

OPEN MIC NIGHT: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 29th

CHAMBERS OF THE HEART + SPINNERS FALL + HEMULENS: **The Wheatsheaf** – Free gig with psychedelic space-rock improvisers

Chambers of the Heart, plus a debut show from Spinners Fall, featuring former members of local hardcore heroes Callous.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney

FREE RANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep and drum&bass.

THURSDAY 30th

THE LONG INSIDERS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Classic raw rockabilly, garage rock and surf from the local starlets – *see Introducing feature* **HOLD YOUR HORSE IS + SHOES & SOCKS OFF + WAITING FOR WINTER + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Cellar** – Co-headline tour for Hella-inspired angular post-hardcore types Hold Your Horse Is and folksy math-rockers Shoes & Socks Off at tonight's Pure Concentrated Evil club night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
ELECTRIC BLUES JAM: Bricklayers Arms, Marston
OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

NIKKI LOY: Joe's Bar, Summertown

THE WHEATSHEAF

Live Music September 2010

Wed 1st
BRICKWORK LIZARDS + MARTIN HARLEY + OLIVER SHAW

Thu 2nd *Shed In Oxford Presents...*
NOUGHT + THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA + FROM LIGHT TO SOUND

Fri 3rd *Club Rockingway Presents...*
KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + THE UNFORGIVEN + DEAR CHICAGO

Sat 4th *Miss Oxford Logic Presents...*
EMPIRE SAFARI + DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + CAT MATADOR

Sun 5th *Bunked In Smokey Presents...*
DOMES OF SILENCE + DIRTY BEARD + BEGGARS LANE UNITED KINGDOM

Mon 13th *Peatrap Performances Presents...*
ROWAN COUPLAND + SWINDESTOCK + LORD MAGPIE & THE PRINCE OF CATS

Tue 14th *Miss Oxford Logic Presents...*
DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN + BITCHES + SHEARING PINK

Fri 17th *Musical Presents...*
GUNNING FOR TAMAR + ABOVE US THE WAVES + DRUNKENSTEIN

Sat 18th *Miss Oxford Logic Presents...*
BLACK HATS + PLAYER 2 + SPRING OFFENSIVE (ACOUSTIC)

Sun 19th *Peatrap Performances Presents...*
COMANECHI + DIVORCE + SEALINGS

Mon 20th *Peatrap Performances Presents...*
ERIC CHENAUX + TELLING THE BEES + DEAD RAT ORCHESTRA + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE

Fri 24th *Thorn Road Music Presents...*
WE AERONAUTS + MINOR COLES + ACE BUSHY STRIPTease

Sat 25th *Happy Town Industries Presents...*
SILVANITO + EVOKATEUR + QUADROPHOBIA

Sun 26th *Bunked In Smokey & Smokey Presents...*
TESSERACT + TASTE MY EYES + LITURGY + K-LACURA

Tue 28th *Swiss Concrete Presents...*
HORNBLOWER BROTHERS + THE YARNS + POPPY PEREZZ

Wed 29th *Miss Oxford Logic Presents...*
THE HEMULENS + SPINNERS FALL (EX-CALLOUS) + CHAMBERS OF THE HEART

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
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TRUCK 13

Hill Farm, Steventon

Saturday

We've been coming to Truck for so many years now – since the inaugural event in 1998 – that we wonder what surprises the festival can still hold for us.

Not that we're knocking its comforting familiarity, like finding a brilliant secret beach resort and returning each summer to swim in the clean, crystal waters. Of course Truck's a national treasure now, hailed by myriad magazines and broadsheets as the godfather of small festivals even as we tend to take it for granted. But it still feels like Oxford's private pleasure: forget the indie cred and girls in fifty quid wellies; it's as much about the vicar frying doughnuts and the round tablers serving tea and the slightly makeshift nature of most of the stages that infuse it with subtle magic.

But surprises there still are. Like the fact there's no carpark-length queue on Saturday morning. Probably because nearly 1,000 punters were here for the new Friday night fun, the unanimously-acclaimed highlight of which was **DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN**'s riotous set up on the market stage. Everywhere you look, kids are sporting Dial F shirts and one Nightshift snapper is raving that they should have been signed on the spot.

As it is the first act we encounter are Edinburgh's **MEURSALT**, making an early bid for most impressive set of the day with their fusion of electronica, expansive choruses and noise, filled with an inherent drama that reminds us of Witches. Vocalist Neil Pennycock positively booms from the PA and there's a power to his performance that is in direct contrast to the understated nature of his backing tracks.

In a swirl of NASA suits, bubble machines, theremin and stylophone **SPACESHIPS ARE COOL** prepare for takeoff. Their wonderfully tuneful music is akin to something on the Duophonic label minus the furrowed brows, and at least three tracks sound like White Town's bedroom wonder

'Your Woman' covered by a cheery Glaswegian indie band. They're also one of the best acts of the afternoon, but if they have a Smile-Off with members of Alphabet Backwards stand well back, you might get caught in some hideous chirpiness crossfire. They also give out tiny origami space shuttles to the crowd, which we find scattered around throughout the day; is subliminal craft merchandise a new sales concept?

In the Barn **FIXERS** are sounding far noisier than when we last saw them at the Punt, coming on like The Beach Boys if they'd grown up in a rainy Seattle in the 80s rather than sunny California in the 60s. At their best they resemble Mercury Rev in their ambition and epic scope and as their electronic side comes to the fore, we unexpectedly get our first hint of a rave of the weekend.

We were fervently hoping **THOMAS TANTRUM** would be Thomas Truax going ape because all his machines had gone wrong, but sadly not. Nothing else about them is a let down, though. Get past the ultra-contemporary pared guitar sounds, and you find pop gold something like The Cardigans, or perhaps even The Cowboy Junkies, if they were cooked in a cutely effervescent pixie pie. It's musically spotless and hugely enjoyable.

In the village pub we're attempting, once again, to figure out exactly what it is that makes people love **THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS** so much. The place is heaving, they're greeted on to the stage like returning heroes, and before long there's an outbreak of crowd surfing. They clearly inspire devotion. The band is remarkably tight, and their songs do show some incredibly clever technical touches, but there's something missing. They've got all the necessarily clever spidery guitar lines and brittle vocals but TTNG seem unable to fully build on such a framework. Their songs are a little like an unstirred paint by numbers – the ideas are there, they just have no colour yet.

Spaceships Are Cool



This Town Needs Guns



By marked contrast **ALPHABET BACKWARDS** seem incapable of penning anything other than joyous singalong pop gems; their sense of pop perfection is instant, even when they play a stripped-down acoustic set in the Rapture merchandise tent and it's no surprise to learn theirs is the biggest selling local CD of the weekend.

BOAT TO ROW are likened in the programme to Stornoway and Bert Jansch, which is phenomenally generous and puts us off their folksy pop at first, but we warm to them, and mentally file them alongside Sonny Liston as pleasing acoustic troubadours. Still, nothing here to get the pulse racing, so we let our fingers do the walking and pick something at random from the programme. Fucking fingers. We're up at the Cabaret tent, where two men, who may be **BISHOP & DOUCHE**, are playing the introductions to cheesy records to inexplicable applause. God, how we hate the Nathan Barley world we live in sometimes, that equates recognising something with understanding it, and thinks quoting something is the same as criticising it. This is desperately unfunny and makes Boat To Row seem like a halcyon age, so we leave promptly. Luckily it means we catch some of **MR SHAADOW**'s set from the door of a packed Beathive. A few years ago he was fumbling his way through a Punt set whereas now he

Thomas Tantrum



Mew



(and battle brother LeeN, amongst others) has the crowd by the scruff of the neck, and is sending it, frankly, loopy.

We think that **Y** was on our bus, trying to impress some 15 years olds and telling a dizzy girl she was psychic; on Sunday he's refusing to leave the tiny Rapture record stage whilst he slurs non-sequiturs and plays fudged arpeggios on a weeny keyboard, like a horrific cross between Suicide and John Shuttleworth. Somewhere in the middle of this embarrassment, though, he puts a tiger in his tank and churns out a steaming wall of psych-rock noise, along with an ace jamming band. Imagine all the great sounds that influenced Spacemen 3, and then put them together, replacing the narcotic mope with a Watney's Party Seven barrel of fun, and you get a set that might not be complex, but is exactly what is needed as the afternoon tails away. Some toddlers are also going nuts for it, alternately dancing crazy and running their fingers through the pebbles in the Village Pub tent like people on their first acid trip. "Dude, my hands are so big. For a three year old".

We've made a vague resolution to avoid the usual suspects this year but it feels improper not to mention **DREAMING SPIRES** since they're the current incarnation of Truck founders Robin and Joe Bennett. Safe to say their set is as homely as a

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65Daysofstatic



prairie porch and as comfortable as old slippers, with an added bonus of a timely tribute to Alex Chilton.

We'd hope for more from **STEVE MASON**, always the pop heart of The Beta Band, but aside from the superbly lysergic recent single, 'Lost & Found', there's little evidence of songwriting genius. He does sound increasingly like Julian Cope though, which is always worth bonus points.

The Beat Hive seems to be the place to be today, and **ACTIVE CHILD** is proving why. His dreamy electronica is simply stunning, and not a little gothic in places too; he plays the harp after all. It's so gothic in fact there's a girl dressed as a fetish-styled bride crying outside. There's actually nothing that upsetting in Active Child's music other than an occasional nod to Depeche Mode, which is easily balanced out by the strange gospel tones that many of his songs take on. It's a delirious mix.

The reduced capacity in The Barn this year is starting to cause problems by the time headbanded, breakdancing moustache fan **DARWIN DEEZ** takes to the stage. We ask the couple at the end of the snaking queue whether they're waiting for Deez or 65daysofstatic and the reply is slightly worrying: "Dunno mate, we saw a queue and thought we'd join it". We check to make sure they have the requisite number of thumbs, pause for some chips and finally make it in for **65DAYSOFTSTATIC**. Their setting up time is almost on the same scale as that of Battles a few years ago, but the wait is, initially at least, worth it. The new material from 'We Were Exploding Anyway' is incendiary and when mixed with the

likes of 'Retreat! Retreat!' the band hits the ground running, stripping the flesh from the front few rows. Such intensity can't be continued though, and towards the end of set, they're not quite hitting the target. For those first few songs though, 65daysofstatic can't be touched by many other acts today.

Having **MERCURY REV** on the bill initially seemed like something of a coup for Truck. However this improvised set, played out whilst pretentious black and white films are projected centre stage, is not what most of us had in mind. Yes we're familiar with Kenneth Anger, and sometimes there's nothing wrong with improvisational sets, but this is just dull and lacking in the necessary invention. If there was a film of an arse, everyone involved in this set would disappear up it. Can we have a film of an arse please? Quickly now.

Outside on the main stage **STORNOWAY** have attracted by the far the largest and most enthusiastic crowd of the day; kids are up on parents' shoulders ready to sing along to a set of songs that already feel like greatest hits. Stornoway are a chameleon band, capable of expanding or contracting to fit whatever space they find themselves in and subtly change the shade of their songs to match the mood. And so there's an expansively pastoral feel to 'We Are The Battery Human' and the soaring 'Coldharbour Road', while 'I Saw You Blink' has now reached anthem status. They even manage an almost mediaeval rendition of Black Box's 'Ride On Time', just to remind us never to get too comfortable in their inspirational company.

Bellowhead



Phantogram



Meursalt



As it turns out, Stornoway feel like a mere warm-up act for **BELLOWHEAD**, who tonight justify every accolade and award proffered their way and who throw so many ideas against the wall they have to build another wall. Beneath their astounding virtuosity they're simply immense fun, taking old folk standards like 'New York Girls' and 'Amsterdam' and adding lashings of show band pizzazz. In a genre that celebrates revitalisation rather than reinvention Bellowhead are both the biggest and best band around and this set is so rousing, so unbounded, you don't know whether to dance or march to war.

After which, sadly, **LAU** are a bit of a letdown. Supremely talented musicians, they can't match Bellowhead's party vibe, concentrating too studiously on hornpipes and jigs when they should let Kris Drever sing more.

So we wander over to the cabaret tent again for **INFLATABLE BUDDHA** who are doing a far better job of keeping the party going. They're like a gypsy-punk hoe-down at the Mad Hatter's tea party and fronted by one of Oxford's most engaging – and genuinely funny – frontmen in Steve Larkin. From meandering jazz dance to cheesy klezmer into frantic waltzes and polkas they are more than a little daft but infectiously fun.

"This is the future," chant **PHANTOGRAM**, because they've got some synths, see. Not really the future, is it, more a refracted present, seeing as they sound like The XX mixed with Crystal Castles. Bloody good, though, as only glacial

synth pop drenched in reverb can be. Ah, the reverb, surely it's the sound of 2010. If you want to taste the zeitgeist buy an Ariel Pink album. Or sit at the bottom of an empty culvert with a broken radio playing Heart FM, there's not much in it.

MEW's show at the Zodiac a few years ago was one of the most astonishing gigs we've witnessed and since they've brought their towering lighting rig all the way from Denmark to Truck, expectations are high. And they're quite a spectacle as the light finally fades over Stevenston. Like The Flaming Lips' psychedelia filtered through Sigur Ros' glacial splendour and ramped up via Simple Minds' stadium pomp-rock they know how to put on The Big Show. They just about justify their top billing today but we leave bemoaning the fact their new songs simply don't match the material from 'And The Glass Handed Kites'.

Before the end we sneak off to see **MS DYNAMITE** in the barn. Us and the rest of Oxfordshire it seems, and we don't get in, but it does let us watch the band we should have been watching all along, **THE ORIGINAL RABBIT'S FOOT SPASM BAND**. Most trad jazz and blues comes to us pickled and dried with all the life leached out of it by some dead-eyed sense of heritage; The Rabbit's Feet let the music live, but this time it's the band that are pickled. Seriously, half of them seem to be drunk. And the other half paralytic. But they can still play fast, loud, funny and with as much passion as anyone on the bill. Now *that's* how you should end a Saturday night.

Words: Sam Shepherd, David Murphy, Dale Kattack

TRUCK 13

Sunday

Having opted to go home on Saturday night, mainly to avoid being kept awake by people arguing about macaroons at 3am in the campsite like last year, we find ourselves hurtling back towards the Truck site Sunday morning in a slight running-late panic. Panic that's soon smoothed away by a family of ducks crossing the road up to Hill Farm by virtue of its enormous "awww" factor.

No such factor exists for **PHANTOM THEORY**, as they hit The Barn with a relentless fury that conjures up memories of Winnebago Deal on this stage a few years ago. Frantic drumming coupled with gigantic stoner riffs sets them apart from The Deal somewhat, as Phantom Theory are more adept at laying down enormous grooves as well as white fury. In a weird turn of events, they somehow manage to sound louder from outside The Barn, which is of no relief to anyone who's left the venue for some kind of piece and quiet.

But even they are eclipsed in the Beathive where **THE KEYBOARD CHOIR** are making music hand-built by robots. It's a simple proposition: a bunch of synths, music that is pitched roughly between Klaus Schulze and Luke Slater and fifth column of dancers dressed in woefully poor android costumes. Not only is it one of the best things we see all weekend but Seb Reynolds alternately doing a gangly new-born foals dance and trying to fix broken machinery is officially funnier than anything in the cabaret tent, ever.

Bob Harris is curating the Market Stage today, but just before he manages to bore everyone to death with a turgid run of bands that play both kinds of music: country *and* western, there's the small matter of **DEAD JERICHO**. This is a band not suited to the customary chilled out, sitting on the floor vibe of this particular arena and from the minute they burst on to the stage, their vibrancy demands that you stand up and pay attention. Their tightly-wound new-wave songs are propelled by a muscular rhythm section and stabbing guitars that have more in common with The Jam's early years than anything else. There's a palpable tension in these tales of market town violence, love and rejection, and Dead Jerichos themselves are shot through with an infectious energy that transmits to the crowd within seconds of them starting their set. As they wind things up, we try to remember the days of *The Old Grey Whistle Test* and sure enough, there were good bands on that show.

Someone should remind Bob. Don't whisper though; shout it in his ear.

Back to the Beathive again for **MIAOUX MIAOUX**. There he is plucking a guitar, playing Korg and programming drum machine beats live. It's decent electro but it would be better if we didn't have to watch every track being so painstakingly put together. All very commendable doing it live but it's a bit like watching a glass-blowing demonstration when all you want is a pint.

Talking of which, right next door to the Market Stage is the Butts organic ale stall: great beer, no queues, 1990s prices, it's tempting to just sit here all day, except it'd mean having to endure ten hours of country. And western.

Over on the main stage **FLOWERS OF HELL** are proving you can make it mellow without being soporific. Sometime we wonder at the logic behind which bands play on what is by far the biggest stage at Truck, but with a band like this there is no question. Their music is vast in scale, torrents of miserabilist strings tumbling over humming guitars to form a whirlpool where Mogwai meets Morricone. They even do a Plastic People Of The Universe cover, which has got to be worth points, and a pretty decent version of The Velvet Underground's 'Heroin', which has huge rarity value.

Talk to anyone who witnesses **ISLET**'s set in the Barn and they'll wax lyrical about a band who attempt that desperately difficult task of marrying experimental showboating with a cohesive rock sound and get it completely, flawlessly spot on. Starting their set as a four-piece percussion ensemble, we fear some Glastonbury hippy field bongo nightmare but soon they're up and at us like a pocket-sized Shit & Shine, only filtered through the idea of Stump quirking out at Notting Hill Carnival, then veering into a passage of drones and chants like Liars in full tribal mode, bouncing comically like rabbits and chanting like a CBeebies take on Gregorian monks. At one point the guy who looks like an emaciated Sgt Pepper-era John Lennon is at the back of the barn smashing a tambourine on the mixing desk. Sometimes they all just howl like wolves and it all climaxes with a cacophonous, dissonant storm that cleanses the soul and clears your sinuses. Through it all a toddler wearing huge luminous green ear protectors slumbers peacefully on his mother's shoulder. Kids today – no

Future Of The Left



appreciation of culture.

In some misguided act of karma balancing, we seek out something a bit more straightforward after that. What we get in **SOUND OF GUNS** in the Village Pub tent. It's a rare occurrence to find a middle of the road rock band at Truck but Sound of Guns managed to sneak in somehow. There's no doubting their conviction, or the fact that their vocalist has a pretty strong voice, but there's very little here beyond stadium-sized songs with pea-sized brains.

In the wake of Fuck Buttons there's a new breed of leftfield musicians who aren't afraid of offering tribute to simple, hedonistic musical pleasures. Takes **MASKS**, who may have the Vivian Girl t-shirts and Explosions In The Sky guitar hazes but who aren't afraid of throwing huge 808 drum pulses behind one of their spidery numbers. Perhaps the bulk of their set is too hesitant, even as spacious guitar pieces erupt into almost Swans-like fury, but near the end of the set everything comes together and suddenly they make a sombre yet insistent post-goth groove that could soundtrack some hip torture dungeon.

On the opposite end of the mood spectrum are **DOG IS DEAD**: completely unashamed about their away-day pop with its sunny sax breaks and bleached funk guitars that put them equidistant between Pigbag and Vampire Weekend. Their uptight, grinning mess of Haircut 100 and Steely Dan is impossible to dislike and we find ourselves singing the line "This is a zoo, could you not feed the

animals?" all afternoon.

There's a distinct and slightly disappointing disparity in the reception for two lots of local heroes today. In the Barn **LITTLE FISH** are duly greeted with the rapture they deserve. How Jules manages to hurtle through the first three numbers dressed in woolly hat and leather jacket in this heat and not combust is anyone's guess but their set is as tight and confident as you'd expect from a band who've just finished touring with Blondie and blowing Hole offstage night after night. From the opening mania of 'Whiplash', 'Am I Crazy' and 'Darling Dear', they whip the crowd up and a nervously manic Jules has everyone clapping along in unison before they hit us with new song 'Only A Game', a monster of a song with a chorus hook so huge you could use it to raise the Titanic; it's also the vocal performance of the entire weekend.

Contrast that to the sparse crowd for **A SILENT FILM** on the main stage. Easy to forget as Little Fish, Foals and Stornoway conquer all before them that Robert Stephenson and band have just had two number 1 hits in Portugal and are currently playlisted on radio stations across the States. So where's their heroes' welcome? A Silent Film's breezily epic piano pop is all geared up for this kind of festival arena. Another writer of this parish dismisses them ahead of their set for sounding like Coldplay. They're wrong. They're far closer to Ultravox, with all the attendant pomp that suggests and a blinding



Little Fish



Unicorn Kid



Nedry



Dead Jerichos



Fucked Up



Keyboard Choir



Islet

version of 'Lamplight' is big and bold enough to stand up to the afternoon's stiffening breeze with ease.

NEDRY usher in the return of the epic reverb pedal, offering us icy clicks and glitchy ambience surrounding girl-lost-in-fog vocal mantras. The songs are something like the forlorn ghosts of old Donna Summer tracks in some laptop purgatory, except the one that sounds like Stina Nordenstam. Another wonderful Truck discovery a long way from the main action.

Unfortunately lightning doesn't strike twice as we try to stay off-piste and our next adventure brings us to **SUMMER CAMP**, who play something like late-period OMD, which would be passable if it weren't for their horribly plastic wedding singer vocalist, who ruins any small chance their songs have of winning us over. The crass lyrics mostly boil down to "Ooh, ooh, nice things are nice". If you think it would be great if all towns were like Milton Keynes, this is the band for you. If you're a fully-functioning adult, steer well clear.

No adults in **EGYPTIAN HIP HOP**. They're a band who are very young to have received the plaudits already heaped on them, but we shan't let that affect our judgement. And it turns out they're... alright. There are plenty of ideas in their songs and they can chug through a slacker riff like Dinosaur Jr before flipping out some cheesy Huey Lewis keyboards and throwing in some high life-inflected jerky guitars that remind us

of – oh, you know – **FUCKING EVERYBODY!** They sound more like a promising band than one fully formed but that's no crime. Also, they are probably about half our age and we think they look bloody ridiculous so they must be doing something right. That name is wildly misleading though. Someone should book them a gig with Non-Stop Tango and try and start a riot.

We're even more excited by the sounds of young Britain when we visit **UNICORN KID** and his hyper-active Nintendo toybox rave, in a style we christen Arpeggi8. 'Where Is Your Child' and 'Tricky Disco' would have come out a few years before he was even born, which intriguingly means that he saw them the same we saw 'The White Album'. And let's be honest, they're better. While Unicorn Kid's music has its fluorescent charms, the material is strong because a lot of care has obviously gone into the construction, there are lots of interesting ideas in his Wonky Kong palette and when the set ends with a stage invasion of Day-Glo youths we feel like we've stumbled into a Byker Grove wrap party. Gigs are rarely this much fun and you don't need to be a kid to enjoy something this great.

As Sunday starts to draw to a close we realise we've barely been near the main stage today: there's just too much fun stuff going on at the festival's fringes. A quick visit to **BLOOD RED SHOES** simply serves to remind us why we love

Little Fish so much, while **LOS CAMPESINOS!** most remarkable achievement is in making eight people sound like two and a half, while only semi-resurrecting the spirit of 90s boy-girl indie noise.

Instead it's the Barn where Truck not so much winds down as goes out in a blaze of bloody glory.

You can't even get in the place for **PULLED APART BY HORSES**, the queue once again stretching the width of the festival field, but we've secured out places for **THE FUTURE OF THE LEFT**, who are more than worth the time and effort. Yelping attack dog hardcore with a surf rock steel-bladed edge, they near enough rip the venue a new arsehole, frontman Andy Faulkous' between-song invective barely dulled by the fact it's almost indecipherable. The Pistols and Buzzcocks get mashed up and kicked out at double speed, all sense of subtlety is blasted into smithereens, either by the band or the barn's acoustics and when they throw in a couple of old McLusky numbers the roof is hanging by a thread. Viciously funny though Falkous is, though, he can't make us laugh as much as the guy in front of us with a tattoo on his shin of a monkey doing some weightlifting. We'd love to know the thought process that made him decide on that design.

If Puled Apart By Horses and Future Of The Left had security reaching for their copies of the Health & Safety rulebook, **FUCKED UP** simply tear its pages apart and wipe their backsides on it. From the moment

they hit the stage it's all-out war. Human bull elephant on heat frontman Pink Eyes in soon in the crowd, blood seeping from his forehead where he crushed a coke can on it and half the venue has become a swarming circle pit in the centre of which a semi-naked Pink Eyes bellows and rages as his band turn up the heat and the pressure to beyond boiling point. It's pure punk rock theatre and for spectacle alone it's the absolute zenith of the weekend's entertainment.

After which we can barely consider heading over to watch Teenage Fanclub, however genially, erm, genial they may be. Instead we end our Truck for another year over at the Market Stage with **THE EPSTEIN**, stars of many a bygone Truck and perhaps the band who more than even Dreaming Spires, personify this fantastic festival. Their set is beautiful, the jewel in the crown being a glistening 'Leave Your Light On' and we realise that while Truck may have got a little bigger, a bit more expensive, it still feels very much like it used to a decade ago. And we realise that, yes, there have been surprises. Plenty of them, often where we least expected them. And we marvel that Truck can hold on to this frail ability to welcome everyone, yet not blandly smooth itself out to try and please everyone. There's still a natural, unforced wonder about the event, and no glib, corporate slogan is ever going to encapsulate that feeling

Words: David Murphy, Sam Shepherd, Dale Kattack



BEELZEBOZO / KOMRAD / UNDERSMILE

The Wheatsheaf

Three very different shades of metal on show at tonight's Buried in Smoke, the monthly rock club run by members of Desert Storm.

There's something genuinely spooky about Undersmile. Dual singers Hel and Taz, tattooed and dressed in baby doll dresses and torn fishnets, might look like Babes In Toyland fangirls but put their voices together and it's a disturbing chorus, like the morbid growling that came out of Linda Blair's mouth in *The Exorcist*. The pair's almost haunted look of resolute disinterest seals the deal. Behind them is a wall of toxic sludge metal that oozes ominously and irresistibly from the PA, equal parts Melvins, Flipper and Swans, two songs that span twenty minutes. When they ask if they have time for one more number the soundman checks his calendar rather than his watch. We get one though, allowing Undersmile to burrow deeper into our rib cage. Great stuff; stick them on before you go out on a Saturday night and everything will seem that much faster afterwards.

Komrad's music rarely sits still long enough to pin a tag on. These days it's called tech-metal but back in the day it was better known as prog, all sudden signature changes, songs that turn on a sixpence and a virtuoso powerhouse display from the drummer that's worth the admission price alone. They've got pedigree too, featuring former-Underbelly singer James Green and Suitable Case For Treatment guitarist Jimmy Evil who has more pedals than PMT and whose Shellac t-shirt shows the direction they're coming at it from and when they introduce the last number as 'Cowley Necktie' and stick a slasher burst of Albini guitar into the mix, they're heading far into avant-hardcore territory, like King Crimson if they'd let Mike Patton in to play.

Back along a completely different path to the past with headliners Beelzebozo who you feel, if they ditched the 'Beelzebozo Corporation' concept, grew their hair and wore simple denim and leather, would be playing to packed houses every night. The blood-stained shirts might suggest Screaming Lord Sutch but the riffs are pure Saxon, while Mike Gilpin's powerful voice brings them closer to 60s metal innovators Blue Cheer. When they step up a gear they're really rolling and you think maybe they should play it dumb a bit more often.

Dale Kattack

JUNKIE BRUSH / AGNESS PIKE

The Wheatsheaf

With a musical history that includes Madamadam, Sevenchurch, Underbelly and Suitable Case For Treatment, the four members of Agness Pike have more rock pedigree than is decent and nothing to prove. But they're gonna prove it anyway, with extreme prejudice.

While guitarist Chris Brown unloads several tons of serrated punk-metal riffs and Pete Bastard hunches with his back to the crowd, dragging thunderous grooves from his bass, it's singer Martin Spear who remains centre of attention. Always one of the most bizarre and charismatic frontman to grace the Oxford scene, his oddball observational sense of humour remains intact even though he hasn't fronted a band in well over a decade. Tonight he's reading extracts from some anachronistic guide to women's fashion and deportment in between reciting the lyrics from the book he clutches in his hand.

For such a natural showman he's strangely reserved tonight. Initially at least his voice too lacks its old authority. There's none of the Lydon-esque sneer of his Madamadam days, nor the Gregorian growl of Sevenchurch. Instead it's a non-committal drone that threatens to neuter the molten storm around him. But gradually as the set progresses he comes out of his shell and some of that old magic reveals itself. Too early to judge fully a band who have the potential to crush all before them, but hopefully utter carnage lies ahead.

Junkie Brush might lack a little of Agness Pike's character but they have righteous fury on their side. Frontman Big Tim is less big, more wiry. And angry. Very angry. Alongside co-vocalist Rabid (seriously – his mum was a pitbull and his dad was a knuckle-duster), he seems intent on venting his spleen about the stupidity of the world that surrounds him. Partway between the first wave of American hardcore and early-80s UK street punk, particularly in their sloganeering vocal approach, 'Problem – Reaction – Solution' sounds like it might have been ripped from an old Killing Joke album but it's set closer 'You Are A Target' that's the real killer, simmering with neatly repressed rage. Against the machine, obviously.

Dale Kattack

JAH WOBBLE AND THE NIPPON DUB ENSEMBLE

O2 Academy

"Wobble ran away, he wanted more money!" ad libbed John Lydon during July's astonishing Public Image Limited gig, but the truth is that since quitting as their bassist in 1980 John Joseph Wardle has never played second fiddle to anyone. Last year he turned down the offer to join the reformed PiL, with wages being a sticking point. Constantly creative and always seeking out new influences and possibilities, he's released over forty albums, including collaborations with Brian Eno, Holger Czukay and Bill Laswell. Seemingly happy in his current role as bandleader of an ever-changing orchestra, this project is his shot at merging Japanese music with dub, his longstanding weapon of choice, following 2008's 'Chinese Dub' album.

Tonight the elaborately decorated stage features assorted foliage, wooden frames and vases for flower arranging. Keiko Kitamura dashes between her two kotos (to accommodate different tunings) and long-time collaborator Neville Murray plays percussion. A less expected inclusion is Mark Sanders on drums, more commonly found in jazz and improvising circles.

Wobble oversees matters in his trademark grey suit, listening attentively to everything around him, only occasionally taking on vocal duties, a shame as his unmistakably deadpan East London intonation is an integral part of the Wobble experience. The set takes in a selection from the recent 'Japanese Dub' album, with its war-like Taiko drums, haunting oriental woodwind and digital trickery, plus a few reggae standards like Augustus Pablo's 'Java'. The ensemble ooze talent but seem a little under-rehearsed, while the PA fails to do justice to the earth-shaking power normally associated with his bass playing. Ultimately there's just too much going on, suggesting a project of such ambition may be more at home in the studio and best appreciated in its recorded output. His solitary hit, 'Visions Of You', originally recorded with Sinead O'Connor, brings a big cheer but memories of him headlining a WOMAD festival, playing it to several thousand ecstatic revellers, are impossible to shake off.

Chatting after the show I mention Lydon's comment from a fortnight earlier. Surprise quickly turns to amusement as he reasons: "I suppose I did want a few more bob". Who's to blame him, he's already working on 'Korea Dub', what's the point in looking back?

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DR SHOTOVER Phones It In

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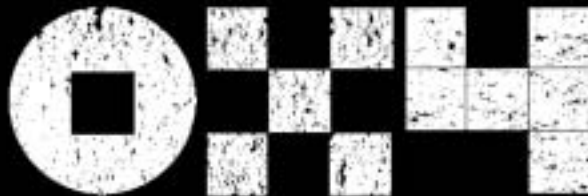
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OXJAM

INTRODUCING....

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

The Long Insiders

Who are they?

Surf-rockin', garage-poppin', old-time rock'n'rollin' quartet The Long Insiders were formed by brothers Nick and Simon Kenny (vocals and guitar and bass respectively) alongside singer Sarah Dodd and drummer Dan Goddard. Nick and Simon have a fantastic history in local music, playing together in 2Die4, Thurman and The Four Storeys before arriving at this point, while Dan has drummed for The Hyde, The Nubiles and The Four Storeys, as well as a short spell with The Mystics. The band formed as a result of listening to loads of vintage rock'n'roll and wanting to play music boiled down to its primitive pre-60s essence. Nick, Simon and Dan met Sarah in a studio in Wales. As well as local shows over the past couple of years they've played plenty of London club shows, including Gypsy Hotel, Teenage Bop and Rock & Bowl, where the classic rock sound is kept very much alive. Last month they released their debut single, 'Midnight Man' b/w 'Nervous' on Insider Records, on good old-fashioned 7" vinyl, naturally.

What do they sound like?

Like rock'n'roll as it sounded in the old days. The real proper old days, before you, I or they were even born. Initially The Long Insiders had a surf-tinged cabaret lounge feel to them, leaning towards Lee Hazelwood and Nancy Sinatra, Chris Isaac and Nick Cave, but more recently their adherence to primitivism and vintage instrumentation, as well as the great god Reverb has swung them fully into dirty, low-down rock'n'roll, gutter blues and garage rock. Forget Teen Spirit, it's the smell of cat gut and engine oil. Or, in their own words, "music from the hip, not the head".

What inspires them?

"Johnny Burnette, Charlie Feathers, Link Wray, Dick Dale, The Cramps, Wanda Jackson, Sun-era Elvis, Ace Records, Louisiana rhythm'n'blues, 50s sci fi, discovering little-heard wild rockabilly, playing great gigs and hearing great DJs in clubs."



Career highlight so far:

"Releasing our debut 45 on seven inches of deep black vinyl!"

And the lowlight:

"Having to blow a gig because the PA didn't work but was great at electrocuting the band."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band. Guaranteed excitement every gig."

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

"Sun Records complete box set. Pure, primitive, exciting."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"18th September at the Jericho Tavern. Expect hot guitar reverberation, beautiful lipstick and caveman drumming!"

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"It's a good friendly local scene but Elvis never comes to town."

You might love them if you love:

Link Wray, The Cramps, Lee & Nancy, Tammy Wynette, Elvis.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/longinsiders

Whatever happened to... those heroes

2Die4

WHO?

2Die4 were a Rock band. That's rock with a capital R and possibly spelt with an awk. They were formed in Radley in 1990 by brothers Nick and Simon Kenny (guitarist and bassist respectively) and drummer Paul 'Diz' Disley, who had previously played in the band Mask Party. Singer Andy Shaw, from Liverpool, answered an ad in Melody Maker. Nick was only 16, Simon 19 when they were signed to Morgan Creek Records in the States. Nick's parents had to sign the contract for him. Before they knew it they were over in LA, hanging out with Lemmy at the Rainbow Bar & Grill on Sunset Strip ("Lemmy would routinely get me in as I was underage, and proceed to get the drinks in," recalls Nick), recording mega-budget videos that involved bungee-jumping while playing guitar and appearing in a movie with Michael Madsen and Lisa Bonnet.

WHAT?

Unadulterated, long-haired rock music. With nods to the likes of Aerosmith and Extreme, but with a funk edge, it was little surprise that it was an American label that picked them up. Morgan Creek was principally a movie company that wanted to branch out into music and 2Die4's classic sound coupled with their youthful energy and looks fitted the bill perfectly and led to them appearing on a string of high-profile film scores.

WHEN?

Having signed to Morgan Creek in 1990, 2Die4 released their eponymous debut album in 1991,



although by then they were already changing in their musical tastes and they had split by the start of 1993. Their single 'You Got What It Takes' made it onto MTV but when the band failed to recoup the very sizeable investment in them interest waned on both sides. Along the way they toured the States and Europe, supported WASP in the UK and had songs featured in the sci-fi movie *Freejack*, starring Anthony Hopkins and Mick Jagger, *Final Combination*, with Michael Madsen and the Bruce Willis film *Striking Distance*. Almost two decades on they still receive royalties from the films.

WHY?

Firstly because this is a story of a full-on rock band making it out of

Oxford and on to the big stage. Secondly because their story is a salutary lesson to young bands of the pitfalls of getting sucked into the big, money-fuelled music industry ("We struggled to keep an identity as the record company had a say in everything we did. They owned us and we owed them," says Nick). Thirdly, Nick and Simon together have gone on to star in some of Oxford's best loved bands since – from moddish Britpoppers Thurman, who enjoyed significant success in Japan, through alt.country outfit The Four Stories to their current band The Long Insiders (see *Introducing piece above*). 2Die4 are still fondly remembered on assorted rock blogs around the world.

WHERE?

As mentioned, Nick and Simon currently play together in surf-rock act The Long Insiders, enjoying increasing cult status on the classic rock'n'roll scene, while Diz briefly played in Twinjet Superstar with ex-Sevenchurch guitarist Dave Smart. Andy is presumed to have returned to Liverpool.

HOW?

'2Die4' is available on a few torrent sites while the video for 'You Got What It Takes' is on Youtube.

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DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

MALTA TONKIN

Abingdon's Malta Tonkin tell us they've heard we like a bit of stoner metal and they're oh so very right. In fact the world, or at least a fair few open mic sessions, would be far better places if the mopey old wankers who populate them would just ditch their battered acoustic guitars, their Year 10 poetry and their old Bob Dylan albums and set about smoking high-grade skunk and listening to nothing but Kyuss and Sextodecimo for six months solid before doing something musically worthwhile and noble for a change. Anyway, Malta Tonkin's members all have names like Tommy Boy, Barty Boy, Willy Boy (arf) and Beelzebubby Boy (we might have made that one up, but it feels appropriate somehow and they can borrow it if they like) and they claim to sound like "A million gassy bottoms crying out in unison". Which isn't strictly true. Instead they sound more like a gang of 50-year old Vikings after a serious mead and fly agaric session. In slow motion. Songs are spread over seven or ten minutes and chug with morbidly bluesy intent, stopping at all stations Sabbath, Down and Kyuss. Pretty much exactly what you'd expect from a stoner metal band. It may be a case of simply getting all the right ingredients in roughly the right proportions to make this kind of thing work but once you do that, there are few finer sounds known to humanity than sludgy, satanic metal in full flight. Malta Tonkin occasionally meander off course but the singular riffage brings them back, never better than on the gargantuan 'Nothing More, Nothing Less' and we can fully picture them in a few months time breathing down the necks of current local sludge champs Beard Of Zeuss, like a pack of savage, slobbering hunting dogs.

ROBOMAN

With a pseudonym like that and boasting a list of influences headed by Gary Numan, John Foxx, Kraftwerk and Aphex Twin, you'd think Roboman had been dreamed up specifically to get us all frothy inside. As it is, it turns out to be the work of Rob McLean, a man who's previously furnished us with some pretty pleasing electro demos and we know to be a gentleman of good taste. This latest incarnation finds him delving right back into the snowbound ambient synthscapes of Kraftwerk circa-'Trans-Europe Express' and even Jean Michel Jarre's 'Equinoxe' period, pumping it all up a wee bit with some ambient electro beats nabbed off the last Numan album and a generally tripped-out Orb-like feel. 'Canal' pulses and fades in and out like a malfunctioning transmission from Alpha Centuri, while 'Seven Seas' is more bubbly,

giving it some serious squelch in a vintage acid house fashion. A slight change of tack on 'Not Gonna Drown' finds Rob teaming up with someone called Ruskin Bob, who we presume to be a bloke called Bob who goes to Ruskin College and who we take to be the man behind the doomy, distorted robot voice layered over the sullen electro-funk rumble. Gently pleasing stuff, if a little too ambient and in need of some more jagged edges and possibly best appreciated in the company of a fine Shiraz, a well-filled bong and a few glazed and giggling mates of a quiet evening.

THE GRACEFUL SLICKS

We don't know if The Graceful Slicks deserve congratulating or kicking for coming up with a name like that, but hopefully it suggests a sense of humour about their self-consciously 60s-referencing music. From the opening strung-out twang of 'Black & Blue' they set their stall out shamelessly, the song a doleful indie jangle that recalls the more subtle 60s stylings of local legends The Anyways. By the time they get to 'Show's Over' they're in full Buffalo Springfield mode, a spaced-out amble across the prairies in search of whisky and brown acid, although its hazy nature is more campfire comedown than Haight Ashbury high. Best of the three songs here is the drawn-out 'Theory Of The Times', promising 'All Tomorrow's Parties' but delivering something that's closer to Pink Floyd's 'Set The Controls For The Heart Of The Sun'. In truth it's way too laidback to really work its magic, needing to either stamp its hypnotic authority more firmly or else seriously go to town on the mad-eyed freakzoid psychedelia. Crank up the volume, drench the vocals in reverb and smear the whole spectacle in strobe lights or oil wheel projections and you've got yer actual authentic trip back in time. Man.

A CLEAN HOTEL ROOM

Back so soon after his recent dismissal in these very pages for being completely and utterly inaudible on his last demo, Simon Du, who is A Clean Hotel Room (and who here hasn't believed themselves to be some random inanimate object after a few tabs of acid? Eh? EH? Just us then...) sounds like he's recorded these latest songs in his bedroom, rather than inside an empty oil drum in the middle of a motorway, so it's an improvement from the start. Like so many acoustic strummers and moaners Simon suffers from a lack of range and emotion, substituting shouting and hitting his strings extra hard to compensate, although this isn't quite as unbearable as it might be due to Simon seemingly sticking his voice through a distortion pedal to cover up his lack of innate vocal skill. 'Minor Notes & Chords' seems to be a song about his own songs and how they've helped him get to the age of 20 and will be all that's left behind when he's,

y'know... gone. Which is both morbid and a bit too self regarding but relatively free of moping about like a urine-soaked pillowcase, so we'll let it pass for now. 'The Notes I Won't be Playing' seems to carry this tone on but by now Simon is angrier. We know this because he uses the F word, albeit it in the line "It fucking hurts". Not as much as a claw hammer and a pair of pliers, old chap, so don't go getting us all cross too. By the time he gets to 'Fast Food & Drinks In The Forest' he's positively fuming. "I forgot my pills," he yelps, sounding like he could crush a grape. Come on Simon, old mate, go and get yourself a proper heavy metal band to front. Such venom needs a proper outlet.

THE KEELING CURVE

In an oddly formal letter that comes close to being a full-on CV, The Keeling Curve describe their "primary genre" as pop and their "secondary genre" as folk. So we deduce they're a folk-pop band. This job's a doddle sometimes. But they're not just any old folk-pop. No, they're "dirty blues" and "sweaty samba" and, erm, "Balkan folk". Not "filthy" or "grease-spattered" Balkan folk, just the normal, off the shelf stuff, we guess. But, tedious pedantry aside, are they much cop? Well, yes. And a little bit no. Mostly yes: they've got a couple of gently strident songs here fronted by the stern, occasionally shrill vocal talents of someone called Eve. It's not all about Eve though (ha! Did you see what we did there? Did you? Did you see?). There's some neat violin mood-making going on amid the fulsome folky guitar strumming and while songs tend towards the reflective and autumnal they're sturdy enough to withstand a strong breeze; hell, 'Superhero' is positively buoyant compared to the glum old guff we've come to expect from acoustic stuff round here. On the downside 'Didn't Listen Anyway' lacks some of that earlier earthiness and sounds like any old pub blues rock band. Not dirty blues, neither. The nasty polished stuff we make a big song and dance about not liking much. And so the demo sort of wanders aimlessly to an unremarkable death when we kind of hoped for some dark, folky murder on a mountainside type of climax. "The Keeling Curve is a melodic pop-folk band on the verge of rocking out," they conclude. May we make so bold as to request they don't bother; just stick to the folk and the pop, which is pretty enough as it is, and leave the rocking out to those who know how to do it properly.

BRASSNECK

We're not sure if we're going to like any band who describe themselves as a cross between The Beautiful South and Dexy's Midnight Runners. Seriously, buy us a few beers. Then buy us a few more. And then get us onto the subject of 'Come On Eileen'. You will witness an outpouring of bile that verges on murderous misanthropy. Drop a mention of 'Old Red Eyes Is Back' into the conversation and the

resultant bloodbath could takes months to get out of the carpet. This demo, though, is less abhorrent than that description might suggest, initially at least sounding like a follow-on from The Keeling Curve's folksy pop. There's a neat line about wishing someone would die in a hurricane as it ambles and shuffles amiably enough along, but slowly those Beautiful Southisms creep in. 'Nil By Mouth' even carries a hint of that really bloody annoying one they did about being a perfect 10 and by the end our internal jukebox is blasting out 'A Little Time' as the stereo threatens to die of twee overload. Come on, shouldn't a band called Brassneck sound a bit more like The Wedding Present and harbour dreams of working with Steve Albini instead of sounding like they're auditioning to soundtrack the next BT advert where that gormless twat and his piss-faced girlfriend reconcile and have a jolly old shag on their tastefully minimalist coffee table? Oh God, we think a tiny bit of sick just came up.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE WATER MARGIN

Named after a classic ancient Japanese epic, we've high hopes that The Water Margin will be crazy Samurai cyborg metal warriors with a mission to slay all that stand in their way. The first tinkle of cheesy electric piano sticks a metaphorical spanner in that particular dream. We're not entirely sure what The Water Margin imagine themselves to be, but a corner cabaret turn in the sort of pub frequented by people who breathe through their mouths and have had their brains removed and replaced with a family of twittering, shitting budgies probably wasn't it. The singer initially sounds like Chris Rea with all traces of personality polished away, but later reveals himself to be after Stuart Staples from Tindersticks' job, although sadly lacking any of the talent or emotive depth Mr Staples possesses. 'Cultural Tribalism' sounds like a Cambridge Footlights pastiche of rock'n'roll's attempts at social commentary, to the point where we honestly don't know if we're meant to take it seriously or not. 'Flannel' is where they try and come on all Tindersticks but it's all so gobstoppingly cheesy and jaunty, while simultaneously depressingly downbeat, while 'The Last Goodbye' might as well be Klaus Wunderlich plays The Gothic Indie Greats. We're kind of hoping 'The Killing Moon' isn't what we think it's going to be. It is. An unforgivable musical sodomising of Echo & The Bunnymen's classic hit. And by the end, we're hopelessly confused. They've got a great band name. They obviously like great music. Hell, they're even mates with St. Etienne, Granddaddy and Decemberists on Myspace. So how can they be so overwhelmingly awful? Tell us it's all a big joke, chaps. Pretty please?



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