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NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
Issue 193
August
2011

Praise be, it's

UTIE

Interview with the eclectic local trio.

Plus

Alcopop! Records hits 50.

Introducing Matt Kilford

and lashings of local music news,
reviews and previews

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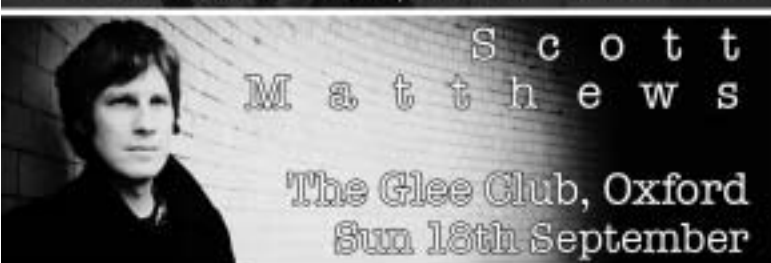
OTHER LIVES
THE JERICHO, OXFORD | WED 24TH AUGUST



CASHIER NO. 9
THE JERICHO, OXFORD
TUE 30TH AUGUST



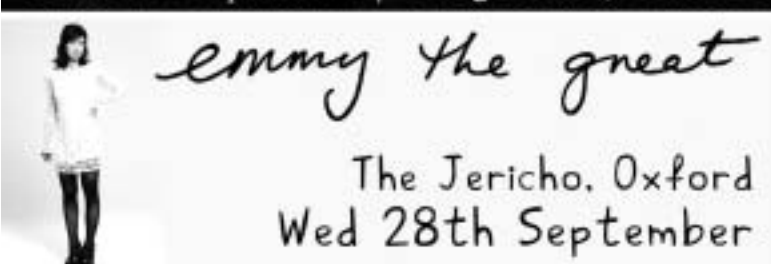
HEALTH
THE JERICHO, OXFORD | THU 1ST SEPTEMBER



Scott Matthews
The Glee Club, Oxford
Sun 18th September



DANNY & the CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD
Mon 19th September | The Jericho, Oxford



emmy the great
The Jericho, Oxford
Wed 28th September



CLOUD CONTROL
THU 29TH SEPTEMBER
THE JERICHO, OXFORD



***YOUNG LEGIONNAIRE**
THE JERICHO, OXFORD
SAT 1ST OCTOBER



MAZES
Plus special guests **MILK MAID**
Tue 11th October | The Jericho, Oxford



EMILY BARKER & THE RED CLAY HALO
PLUS SPECIAL GUEST
GILL SANDELL
SUN 16TH OCTOBER
THE JERICHO, OXFORD



Benjamin Francis Leftwich
Tue 18th October
O2 Academy 2, Oxford
14+



UGLY DUCKLING LIVE
THE BULLINGDON OXFORD
THU 20TH OCTOBER



BEN HOWARD
EVERY KINGDOM TOUR
SAT 22ND OCTOBER | THE JERICHO, OXFORD



TURIN BRAKES
Perform their classic album *The Optimist* for its 10th anniversary
Tue 8th November
O2 Academy, Oxford
14+



DANANANANAYKROND
THU 10TH NOVEMBER
THE BULLINGDON, OXFORD



Wild Beasts
O2 Academy 1, Oxford
FRI 11TH NOVEMBER
14+

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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PHIL SELWAY will play an intimate solo show at the Pegasus Theatre on Friday 11th November as part of the Pegasus' 50th anniversary celebrations. The theatre, which provides youth arts activities for the whole of Oxfordshire, reaches its 50th birthday in November 2012 but is leading up to the occasion with fifty special events over the next year. Tickets for Phil's show, featuring songs from his recent 'Familial' album, are on sale now, priced £25, from www.pegasustheatre.org.uk, with all proceeds going towards funding new youth arts activities.

LITTLE FISH release their new single, 'Wonderful' on the 26th September on Estupendo Records. The single was produced by Gaz Coombes, who is also producing the band's forthcoming second album.

SECRET RIVALS release their debut album, 'Make Do & Mend', on Kittiwake Records on 12th September. A single from the album, 'Me Vs Melodrama', is released the same day.

The local indie-pop quartet launch their new album with a show at the Wheatsheaf on Thursday 15th September. Before that, they play Bestival on Thursday 8th. Visit www.secretrivals.com for more details.

UNDERSMILE release a joint EP with Hampshire math-hardcore outfit Caretaker next month on Blindsight Records. The local sludge-core outfit contribute two new songs, 'Big Wow' and 'Anchor'. Full review next issue.

CHAD VALLEY has been confirmed as tour support to Friendly Fires on their UK tour in November, including a date at Brixton Academy on 25th November.

WINCHELL RIOTS will play the Reading and Leeds Festivals over the August bank holiday weekend. The band, who have just released their new EP, 'Figure 8s', play on the BBC Introducing Stage. They also play a local warm-up show at the Cellar on Thursday 25th August.

MUSICINOXFORD.NET celebrates ten years online this month with the first of a series of monthly live shows at the Wheatsheaf. MiO features regularly updated online local music news, interactive reviews, live sessions, free downloads, interviews and a regular podcast. Their first gig features local pop-punk heroes Dive Dive, plus a full band show from Richard Walters on Friday 19th August.



photo: Johnny Moto

STORNOWAY play their first hometown show of the year on **Saturday 3rd September** with a special **Concert4Conservation** at **The Regal**. The show will be a benefit gig for three local environmental charities: The Sumatran Orang-utan Society, The Earth Trust and the RSPB. The band announced the show at a photo-shoot in South Park last month where they were joined by some furry and feathered friends – an orang-utan, a water vole, a goldfinch and the Truck Monster.

Talking about the gig, frontman Brian Briggs, said, "I've been passionate about wildlife conservation longer than I've been passionate about making music. Concert4Conservation was the most obvious way for me to combine my interests and support three great conservation charities.

"Nearly all of my songs are set, at least partly, in the outdoors. 'Watching Birds' is about my PhD on wildfowl conservation; 'We Are The Battery Human' is about the importance of spending time in nature for our own sakes as well as for wildlife's."

Fresh from a summer of festival shows, including a Pyramid Stage appearance at Glastonbury, Stornoway are currently writing the follow-up to their Top 20 debut album, 'Beachcomber's Windowsill', and are promising plenty of new material in the set alongside old favourites. "We want to give our local fans the chance to hear them first."

Support for the show comes from **The Epstein** and **Dreaming Spires**. Earlybird tickets are on sale now, from Truck Store on Cowley Road or online at www.seetickets.com, priced £12.

DECIBEL STUDIOS has closed down. The recording and rehearsal studio, near Watlington, shut down at the end of June.

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

night from 9-10pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays a selection of new Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring live sessions and interviews with local acts. The show is available to download as a podcast every week at bbc.co.uk/podcasts.

A quick round-up of local festivals coming up

SUPERNORMAL looks like being the most exciting new addition to Oxfordshire's festival calendar. Taking place at Brazier's Park (also home to **WOOD festival**) over the weekend of the **19th-21st August**, it is an artist-led event mixing live music, art and performance and discussions, inspired by the spirit of 60s and 70s free festivals. This year's event is curated by Faust's Geraldine Swayne, Rocket Recordings' Chris Reeder and Teeth of the Sea's Jimmy Alucard. Acts set to play include 80s ambient darkwave pioneers Cindytalk and post-punk cult legends The Cravats, as well as Skullflower, The A Band, Drunk In Hell, Gnod and the fabulously-monikered Fuck Off Piss Off. Other attractions include a singalonga *Wickerman* session. Weekend tickets are £65. Visit www.supernormalfestival.org.uk.

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL returns for its annual five-day extravaganza of folk music and family fun from **25th-29th August**. Billy Bragg, The Oyster Band, Cara Dillon, Spiers & Boden and Home

Service lead a cast of performers that also includes Martin Carthy & Dave Swarbrick, Lau, The Burns Unit, Karine Polwart, The Demon Barbers and Coope, Boyes & Simpson. Aside from the music there is street theatre, poetry and literature, a children's festival, a real ale festival, sculpture, craft fair and assorted workshops. Weekend tickets are £98 with concessions for under-18s. Visit www.towersefestival.com for full details.

HANNEYFEST returns again this month, running over the weekend of **12th-14th August** at the Black Horse in East Hanney. This year the annual free festival is raising money for Hanney St James School Safe and Secure Campaign and the Royal British Legion, with merchandise and raffles. Acts confirmed so far include Lost Dogs and Quadrophobe (*Friday*); Vicars Of Twiddly, The new Moon, The Mark Bosley Band, Snipe, Daved & Confused, Ady Davey, Fiona Cox, Mark Barnes, Amy Ireson and Rik Knight (*Saturday*) and Superloose, The Hingleys, Phil Bird, Pint & A Half, Gipsy Fox, Sophie McNally and All The Clever Lines (*Sunday*). Things kick off at 8pm on the Friday and from 2pm Sat and Sun.

SKITTLE ALLEY celebrates ten years of putting on gigs at various venues around Abingdon with a three-day festival at the Railway Inn in Culham over the weekend of **26th-28th August**. Having survived the closure of numerous host pubs over the years, The Skittle Alley people present a bill of local acts that includes Mackating, The Mark Bosley Band, Dais-E & The Unsteadies, Mogmatic, The Baby Gravy All-Stars, Komrad, Superloose, Dead Jerichos, Le Vens, Moon Leopard, Evo Sylvian, Tamara & The Martyrs (acoustic), Lost Dogs, Prohibition Smokers Club, Les Clochards, Vona Braun, Anton Barbeau and Glenda Huish.

ARCANE returns to City Farm in Eynsham over the weekend of **2nd-4th September**. This year's event features headline sets from legendary anarcho folk-punks Chumbawamba, Cornish folksters 3 Daft Monkeys and London's ska-rock outfit Imperial Leisure. Among a host of local acts playing are Borderville, The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band and Brickwork Lizards. Prism bring their 90s rave vibes and there's Vaudevillian Rave as well as a host of other bands, club sessions and kids activities. Visit www.arcane-festival.com for more details.

a quiet word with

UTE

“I SAW VON BRAUN, WHO are probably my biggest lyrical influence next to Nick Cave and Jake Thackery, and they played a song which had the lyrics, “You are not Anne Edison Taylor,” about the woman who rolled off a waterfall in a beer keg. I thought they said “innocent tailor” and I thought that sounded fucking rad. I was like, what did he do or not do? So I made up a story and then phoned Dave from Von Braun and asked him if I could use the idea. He sounded very confused.”

OLLIE THOMAS, SINGER AND guitarist with Ute, is explaining to Nightshift how the band’s recent magnum opus came into being.

The lead song from their ‘Gambler’ EP, released in January, is an epic, vaudevillian escapade, the sound of Grinderman trailing round whisky bars arm in arm with Radiohead, singing gothic blues laments to each other as they go. Fabulous stuff and an early contender for best song of the year from an Oxford band.

This month the trio – Ollie, alongside bassist Mike Chilcott and drummer Joe Gibbs – release a follow-up single, ‘Brother’, on Alcopop! Records. The new single is equally epic in scale, particularly the rousing b-side version of the song which finds Ute joined by a twenty-strong cast of local musicians, friends, family and random strangers.

“It was a lot of fun,” explains Mike: “we put an ad on Facebook and the Nightshift forum, so we didn’t know who was going to show up, or what they would be playing! I think there are two mandolins and two accordions as well as a trumpet and Microkorg on there. There are some members of Minor Coles, Gunning for Tamar and Phantom Theory, as well as some guys that we’d never met before, which was really cool. There’s a few younger fans playing as well and a 12-year-old trumpet player...as well as Ollie’s mum and my girlfriend! It was just a way really of opening things up a bit and saying thanks to the people who have supported us all the way.”

INVITING ALL AND SUNDRY to help record your new record isn’t the usual way of doing things, but Ute have never been a particularly normal band.

Since we first stumbled across them two years ago they’ve always been



a very hard act to second guess, ranging stylistically from dark but delicate folk-pop to full-blooded rock-out moments by way of buoyant indie pop and frosty leftfield combinations of all the above.

UTE ARE LONG-TIME

friends; Ollie and Joe formed the band as an acoustic duo after Ollie returned from university in Cardiff before Mike, previously studying in Cambridge, pestered his way into the line-up.

Ollie: “I’d just moved back to Oxford and had difficulty finding any likeminded musicians. When I found out Joe was back in Oxford I was so pleased because we had played together when we were younger and I knew it would work. It started off more folksy than I had ever thought it would and has grown into something more rocky than I ever thought it would!”

Joe: “It was really the addition of Mike on bass that instigated the

move to a rock sound.”

Mike: “I was gunning so hard to play with these guys. I used to go to school with Ollie back when pudding bowls were cool, and we sort of vaguely kept in touch through poorly-written letters and occasional chance encounters. When I first heard the stuff that Ollie and Joe were making I just thought ‘I gotta jump on that wagon!’...so I sent a speculative message saying ‘SOUNDS LIKE YOU WANT A BASS PLAYER, YEAH?’”

THE BAND’S REPUTATION

took off rapidly, thanks in the main to sets at Truck Festival and Truck’s OX4 mini-festival in 2009. An outing at the Oxford Punt followed and people were drawn by Ute’s eclectic blend of styles and dramatic live performances; they are a band that’s night on impossible to categorise.

Ollie: “I recycle a lot of things as a writer so I’m reluctant to throw anything away. That often means

things get thrown in from old songs and things get tied together. Like a string of sausages! I grew up on Led Zeppelin and listened to a load of stuff like Joni Mitchell, The Band, Free and all that kind of thing you find in your parents’ record collection. I loved Lionel Richie’s album ‘Back To Front’ too. I couldn’t go to sleep at night without ‘Say You, Say Me’ on repeat.”

Mike: “The first thing I really got into was jazz because I started out as a jazz bassist, but after that I got into guitar music and noisy stuff and songwriters and really just anything I could get my hands on that tolerated my criminally short attention span. That’s still the case really. I got really into the local scene too, bands like Nought and Youthmovies and the sort of things that Vacuous Pop and Audioscope used to put on. Youthmovies are actually a really big influence for me, not only because of their own music but the stuff that I discovered through them; they sort of blew my musical world apart.”

Opening the main stage at Truck on their Oxford day back in 2009 must have been something special, coming so early on in your time together.

Mike: “It was amazing! Everyone was so cool to us and the stage was absolutely massive. The coolest thing was seeing the field go from empty to having hundreds of fuzzy eyes and heads in it. All with bacon sandwiches. We brought a couple of friends to play sax and clarinet skronk at the end of our last tune; it was really fun watching them do that. Pretty much straight after the gig both Ollie and I started coming down with swine flu, so playing at Truck was a peak before an enormous sickly, sweaty trough.”

A FURTHER BOOST TO UTE’S trajectory has been the patronage of Tim Bearder and Dave Gilyeat at BBC Oxford Introducing. Through them Ute found themselves playing Radio 1’s Big Weekend alongside a host of household names.

Ollie: “Tim and Dave have been amazing. Couldn’t have done it without them. Big Weekend was weird. It got out of hand in my head and on the way I was imagining crowd surfing and sing-a-longs. It was a long old journey and the climate does strange things to you! There were a few people there but it was mainly for the crisp videos that everyone says it’s worth it for. So it

felt very pressured.”

Mike: “I think it was the only show we’ve played where I got proper brown-pants nervous. That wasn’t really because of the crowd but the whole slick set-up. Also the fact that there were video cameras in your face every five seconds; I didn’t really know where to look! It’s been really cool to be able to say that we’ve played that, though; also we got to see loads of mega celebs like JLS and Billy from *Eastenders*, which is really important for us. It was an incredible experience, though.”

In 2010 BBC Oxford Introducing named Ute as their Band Of The Year, following in the footsteps of Stornoway and Little Fish.

Mike: “Deserved or not, it was such an honour! When you think how many amazing bands there are in Oxford it seems mad that we would be picked out of the crowd. They have been unbelievably supportive though, I really don’t think that we would be anywhere near the position that we are in if it wasn’t for them. They’re our Simon Cowell and Louis Walsh. But which is which?”

FOLLOWING ON FROM THE

Big Weekend, Ute have found themselves at events like Brighton’s Great Escape and Radio 1 Sound City in Liverpool, while this month finds them performing at the Green Man Festival. The release of ‘Brother’ comes at just the right time for the trio; more so since it coincides with their label, Alcopop!’s fiftieth release. Having previously contributed to a compilation album for another local label, Big Scary Monsters, how do they feel those labels have helped them?

Ollie: “They have been like kind older brothers to us. We feel really close to those guys cos of the belief they put in us.”

Mike: “Both Jack and Kev have been amazing to work with; everything they’ve done has given us a massive boost and kind of affirms everything that we’re doing... it’s fantastic to have someone believe in our stuff as much as we do, and all the bands on both labels are pretty amazing, so it’s sweet to be considered alongside them! Both labels have given us a circle of bands who we’ve become firm friends with and have given us amazing support, so that’s a really cool aspect too. We really feel like we’re part of something.”

‘The Innocent Tailor’ was quite a departure even by your usual standards and yet produced your best song so far.

Mike: “It’s a fun song to play live, and it’s not only a bit of catharsis but also it brings out our silly side a

bit more. Because at the end of the day we’re just three guys being silly most of the time, I think. I mean, we’ve done shows in Morris dancing outfits and had all these ideas about jazzy costumes and sword fights and jousting and loads of stupid shit to have fun with on stage, so the end of ‘Innocent Tailor’ is, I guess, a more palatable version of that. It kind of started small and short and got out of control... in a good way I hope. People seem to really enjoy it, I think people really respond well when a gig becomes a bit more participatory rather than just watching a band up on a stage. It’s nice for us too to trash that fourth wall a bit.”

You’ve said want to keep the tradition of folk storytelling alive, but you’re doing it in a more rock-orientated manner.

Ollie: “We did dress in Morris dancing outfits once! I just enjoy writing narrative stories. That doesn’t always go hand in hand with the music we want to write and sometimes the metre of the words take us in a folky direction. I don’t think we’ll ever write full-on folk as our influences are too diverse and we would stop being the sum of our parts if we did that.”

Mike: “I think the folk element of our music is really in the lyrics and the storytelling rather than the music; it’s much more interesting for us that way, we’re not really a weepy love-song sort of a band.”

UTE’S PLAN NOW IS TO

work towards their debut album (‘The Holy Grail,’ according to Ollie) but after a busy summer they can reflect with justified satisfaction at how they’ve established themselves in Oxford and started to make waves beyond. It could easily, though, have never happened this way. As Ollie confesses, but for some rash spending, they might not even be an Oxford band.

Ollie: “We all returned like homing pigeons. I didn’t want to be in Cardiff anymore, though to be honest I didn’t even want to be in Oxford really. I saved up money to move out but I just spent it all on a holiday, so I was stuck here and then these two dreamboats turned up. Ha!”

Mike: “I think it was fortune really that Oxford was the place the band formed, just because we all happened to be in the same place at the same time. Oxford has an amazing music scene though for its size: it’s always being said but given the size and makeup of the city it’s an amazing place to play music.”

‘Brother’ and ‘The Gambler’ are both out now on Alcopop! Visit www.myspace.com/utetheband for more tunes and gig dates

ALCOPOP! AT 50

Nightshift talks to Jack Pop from of the innovative local label who celebrate their 50th release this month

When did you set up the label and why?

Summer 2006 was when the label was first formed, primarily because there was so much awesome stuff out there, just not getting released. I liken running a label to when you get your first car and you just want to give everyone a lift so you can subject them to your favourite mix tapes... It’s awesome when people dig the stuff you release!

Who was the first act you released?

An electronically-infused power pop duo from Yeovil called Encyclopædia. They wrote *the* biggest pop hits... It was part of our inaugural year’s single’s club and released on a 3” CD in a handmade, numbered, limited edition sleeve.

What’s been your personal favourite release so far?

So tough to call! Obviously as an indie we actually like the records we release, so pretty much everything has a place in my heart. We really pride ourselves into putting love and creative thinking into our releases though – so the ones with slightly off-the-wall concepts probably stick out. We recently released a CD on a Frisbee for Johnny Foreigner, put together 100 different Polaroid sleeves for Elephants – and released a treasure map in a bottle compilation last year (we literally cooked and stained the maps, and drank the beer from the bottles) which *NME* called the “coolest compilation of all time”.

What have been your best and worst-selling singles?

The Johnny Foreigner Frisbee EP sold out in under 24 hours, so that was nice. As for the worst selling, I shan’t name the band but it was a bit of a nightmare. The run up was a mess, they pulled a UK tour on the day of release, had a massive falling out with their manager and split up a week later. Such a shame as it was a lovely single, but we’ve still got a fair few left.

Anyone in particular that got away?

Well, in hindsight we should probably have had a better look at that Foals lot, being local and all. But in all seriousness, no. We’ve pretty much got every band we seriously chatted too and wanted. The only band I was properly gutted we missed out on was Johnny Foreigner when we lost out on getting them in our first year, before they moved on to a huge label. Three years on and it’s all come round, and we’re in a much better position to work with them for the long term.

Which acts you’ve released have gone on to bigger things?

We released the Wolf Am I album a couple of years ago – the band who have since gone on to form Viva Brother. Obviously people will have their own opinions on the new band, but Wolf Am I were proper awesome, and ‘Lead the Way’ is well worth a look.

What are the challenges facing a small label in this day and age?

The consistently shifting shape of the UK music industry – which is as much of an opportunity as it is a challenge. It’s all changed so much that you can’t just chuck money at things and expect to recoup these days, and kids don’t buy in the same manner that they used too. I hate all the bullshit spouted about the death of music as a physical format though – that’s just lazy talk for people who can’t be bothered to innovate and try new things. Sure people download music, and everything can be found for free – but in some ways that unlocks epic potential for getting your stuff out there. Labels just need to make sure that they build something that people want to be a part of, and put out releases that people need to own. The musical landscape is ripe for innovation right now.

You’re releasing Ute’s new single this month; which other local act would you like to work with?

There’s a lot of ace acts in Oxford right now. I love Spring Offensive, Cat Matador, Phantom Theory and a whole load more... But the boys who I’d most like to work with are probably Gunning for Tamar. They’re an ace, hard-working lot and their new EP (on Walnut Tree Records) is grand.

If Alcopop! had a motto, what would it be?

We do... ‘Fuckin’ Indie!’ Kinda sums us up really...



RELEASED

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TAMARA & THE MARTYRS

‘Hang My Picture’

(*Big Red Sky*)

Once upon a time it was Janis Joplin; these days any female singer with a bit of grit and blues in her voice immediately gets lumped alongside Polly Jean Harvey. It certainly seems to be the case for Tamara Parsons-Baker, a singer whose voice is so wracked with drama, she could make a simple request for a cup of tea sound like the tragic denouement of some grand opera. Her voice, which forever sounds like it's about to crack under the weight of all the world's troubles, is, at times, such an astonishing instrument in its own right you barely notice everything else that's going on in the songs.

In this she's actually closer to current queen of rockabilly blues Imelda May, another singer



capable of wringing stinging emotion out of every syllable. Of course the drama is laid on so thick you occasionally feel slightly overwhelmed, like finding yourself talking to someone at a party who is compellingly beautiful but quite clearly unhinged. But that's

simply the small price you pay for being able to enjoy such talent.

These four songs on this debut EP ride the choppy waters of angsty blues-rock and almost Brel-like pop turmoil, steeped in an age long gone by but too sharp ever to sound dated. On lead track ‘Payday Slag’ she's got them shopping spree blues, while the marginally less wired ‘Hang My Picture’ is what Blondie might have sounded like had Debbie Harry been born into the Memphis blues scene.

It's to the credit of Tamara's bandmates Humphrey Astley and Tommy Longfellow that they resist the urge to rock out to compete with Tamara's vocal acrobatics. And we know they really can rock out, given they were once two-fifths of Sextodecimo, a band that took extreme metal into previous uncharted depths of noise. Here, though, they're, if not discreet, then tenderly restrained, Tamara, the righteous diva, star turn in the musical storm of her own making.

Sue Foreman

MATTHEW KILFORD

‘Funeral Circus’

(*Own label*)

It's well over two years since Matthew Kilford released his solo debut, after the demise of his band Belarus. Whereas that band were all about big, bold indie anthems, Matt's solo songs are sparse, delicate, filled with an air of romantic resignation. Comparisons to Rufus Wainwright and Damien Rice might be obvious on slender contemplative laments like ‘Fire On My Shoulder’, but there's a subtle soulfulness about ‘Funeral Circus’ that's as close to Van Morrison. Plucked guitar mingles with spinkling showers of piano as Matt's voice drifts amid the instrumentation like a cool and very English morning mist.

The musical place Matt is occupying is a crowded one and only the special, or lucky, few ever get to be heard beyond their local open mic sessions, but in the more fleet of foot, almost jazzy ‘One More Thing’ he's got a tune you can easily imagine being a Radio 2 hit or filling a corner of *Later... With Jools Holland*. Hopefully he can get that all-important break.

Ian Chesterton



FIXERS

‘Swimmhaus Johannesburg’

(*Vertigo*)

Now here's a bold – or possibly crazy – move for Fixers. Ditching the pristine interplanetary psychedelia of previous releases, new single ‘Swimmhaus Johannesburg’ is the band's attempt at J-Pop, cranking up the cheese quota and awash with big gestures, 80s stadium-rock guitar, bolshy synths and almost honky-tonk piano, it's like a sort of Latin-American electro-pop ‘Final Countdown’, which isn't a description we ever dreamed we'd be applying to Fixers this side of judgement day, but maybe that's the genius in it all: confound expectations and keep the buggers guessing. The odds on Fixers to represent the UK in next year's Eurovision just shortened considerably.

Less of a shock is b-side ‘It Won't Be Long’, crystal-perfect surf pop that could be Dennis Wilson remodelling Quo's ‘Living On An Island’ in his own image, the huge choral crescendo typical of Fixer's grand vision and a reminder that here's a band with musical ambition to spare.

Dale Kattack

K-LACURA

‘Portraits Of The Faceless’

(*Own label*)

South Oxfordshire's K-Lacura were featured amongst a host of promising new young metal acts in Nightshift's metal special last November and here they present – sorry, unleash – their full-length debut, delivering on that early promise with an album that wears its

influences on its sleeve but displays enough of its own identity to make it worthy of the local metal canon.

Melodic metalcore is K-Lacura's bag, Glamour Of The Kill, Vision Fall and Killswitch chief among their inspirations, vocalists Iann and Neil providing the standardised upfront duelling over solid shredded beats and battering ram blast beats. While K-Lacura, like most metal bands, are far better appreciated in their natural live environment, ‘Portraits...’ enjoys a fulsome enough production to drag the best out of the band, notably stand-out piece ‘SHIAB’, which never loosens its hold on your throat for nigh on six minutes, vocally detouring slightly at one point into almost Rage Against The Machine territory. ‘Beneath The Buried’ is a perfect album opener, a short, sharp shock of virulent hardcore metal noise, while ‘33’ is similarly aggressive but more angular. ‘Receiving End’, by contrast, tends more towards the generic side of things, K-Lacura briefly losing their melodic touch and thrashing wildly but ineffectually, but ‘Severed’ shows them at their most structured and technical, a slow-build bundle of belligerence that manages the difficult task of feeling too short at five and half minutes.

Ian Chesterton



PEDRO deVASCONCELOS

'Hidden In Clues'

(No Pasa Nada)

If there's one feeling you should never come away with when listening to any album, it's the sense that everyone involved in the process at some point just thought to themselves "that'll do". Alas, that seems to be the defining sentiment running through 'Hidden In Clues'. Across fourteen tracks, Pedro and guests offer their take on glossy r'n'b choruses and spitting socially-conscious verses, omitting almost everything that makes those genres what they are. The beats drag their heels, the lyrics are languid and frequently clichéd where there should be urgency and insight, and the choruses all but devoid of genuine hooks.

While it would be churlish to demand production values matching, say, the gloss of Timbaland with the invention of El-P, it would by the same token be not too much to ask for the production to vary occasionally from preset synth sounds and a snare drum that sounds like a ruler hitting a bucket. A full band, a live drum kit, even a temporary digression from cheap plastic sounds: all would improve the musical experience immeasurably, though not rescue the songs entirely.

Kudos is at least due to Pedro for tackling a bunch of different genres across the album, from the anticipated angsty social commentary hip hop to an unexpected but not altogether successful mid-album diversion into bar-room crooning entitled 'Not Your Second Best'. The album as a whole, unfortunately, is.

Stuart Fowkes

FROM THE MILL HOUSE 'RoughLove'

(Own label)

If you get a "Live Recording" labelled 'From The Mill House: RoughLove', you'd assume, that the band is called RoughLove and it is a set from the Banbury venue. Two tracks in and you're thinking the audience hasn't shown up, and you're scouring the sleeve to find it's the other way round and that the 'band' have a dreadful name and the only live bit is that they did it in single takes at Horspath Methodist Chapel.

The whole thing feels schizophrenic and clumsy anyway. Half the songs are by singer-songwriter Mark Cochrane, who sounds like the lovechild of Richard Ashcroft and Tommy Steel, and the rest is made up of various covers like Gershwin's 'Summertime' and Corinne Bailey Rae's 'Till It Happens To You', all shrilly and politely vocalised without any real depth or soul by Zoe Nielsen, who also provides backing vocals to Cochrane's songs. His own songs are passable and rainy day downbeat enough to stand up on their own, but the male and female voices never once gel, and should be softened, mixed back and blended in post production.

I'll gloss over the raucous cover of Duffy's 'Mercy' and just say; it comes to something where the best thing here is a secret track at the end, by bass saxophonist Roy Midwinter, where he obviously sneaked back in the chapel when they had all gone home, and laid down an unnamed sultry lament that sounds awfully 40s, but it at least paints a picture for the listener of dawn at an emptying jazz club, and two lovers sat across from each other, as the barman stacks

chairs on tables around them, and who are, probably like this CD, sadly doomed.

Paul Carrera

TREVOR WILLIAMS

Keep Singing

(Own label)

Trev Williams knows that music matters, that like food, it's a quick route to the emotions. Here on this four track EP he consolidates his brilliant 2006 debut album 'Guiding Light' (which recently got its long-overdue digital release) with an equally well-rounded batch of songs that glow with the mindful optimism of Labi Siffre, and a voice that will please anyone who is a fan of Damon Albarn.

To Trev, the song, and singing, is synonymous with life, and living. So 'Happy Song' ("There's always a happy song / You've just to find the right one") and the McCartney-esque 'Keep Singing', speak for themselves as beacons of hope, while in 'You Cut, We Bleed' he takes the bear-like gait and growl of a rising piano scale and bursts out onto a rooftop in a waltzing remonstrance against the Government's Age of Austerity. 'In The Dark' is quintessential Trev at his very best. Ostensibly a plea for the survival of a relationship, it has all the hallmarks of his pin-perfect production and lightness of touch, that means the melody will continue to appear suddenly in your mind long after you've heard it, making you play it again and so continuing the cycle. Good enough for second helpings.

Paul Carrera



AUGUST 2011

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GIG GUIDE

MONDAY 1st

THE SHERMAN ROBERTSON BAND: The Bullingdon – Back to the Famous Monday Blues for the Texan guitar vet, a favourite on the American and European scene for forty years now, having played with soul legend Bobby Bland and later Junior Parker before he went on to tour with Zydeco king Clifton Chenier and star on Paul Simon's 'Graceland' album. Live in his own right he's possessed of the same physical showmanship as Albert Collins, adding a powerful soulful voice to his dynamic blues guitar, drawing on rock, r'n'b and funk as well as electric and Delta blues styles.

TUESDAY 2nd

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

Wednesday 3rd

IAN McLAGAN: The Bullingdon

Empty Room Promotions keep up their tradition of bringing some of the world's unsung cult heroes to Oxford, tonight, following shows by the likes of Willie Nile and Mary Gauthier, putting on Small Faces and Faces keyboard chap Ian McLagan in the intimate confines of the Bully. McLagan has, of course, been to Oxfordshire as recently as last month, playing Combury with the reformed Faces, while he played Truck in his own right back in 2008. Having replaced Jimmy Winstone in The Small Faces back in 1965, McLagan later joined Ronnie Wood and Rod Stewart in forming The Faces after Steve Marriott went his own way. In the years after that band split, he toured and recorded with The Rolling Stones and Ronnie Wood's solo records, as well as playing sessions for Bob Dylan, Chuck Berry, Jackson Browne, Bonnie Raitt and Bruce Springsteen, while more recently he's been part of Billy Bragg's touring band. In between hanging out with assorted musical legends, McLagan's conducted his own solo career, sticking close to the classic rock and r'n'b blueprint for which he made his name. After his 'Spiritual Boy' tribute to his late friend and bandmate Ronnie Lane, he released his seventh solo album 'Never Say Never' in 2008 and he'll be drawing on his extensive back catalogue for tonight's show

AUGUST

CASUAL CLASSICS: The Cellar – 80s pop, 90s rave, garage and electro.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 3rd

IAN McLAGAN: The Bullingdon – The Faces keyboard player brings the rock – *see main preview*

JEFFREY LEWIS & THE JUNKYARD + ANGUISH SANDWICH: The Cellar – Wordy anti-folk from the New York maverick – *see main preview*

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Free acoustic session, featuring Tamara & The Martyrs, Tom Smilex, Matt Midgley and more.

THURSDAY 4th

SHAKER HEIGHTS + GO ROMANO: The Port Mahon – Americana-tinged indie rocking from Aylesbury's Shaker Heights at tonight's Live & Loud gig, plus local dance-rock outfit Go Romano.

K-LACURA + CRYISIS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Virulent metalcore from local crew K-Lacura, tonight launching their debut album, plus local thrash newcomers Crysis.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford's oldest and best open-mic club night continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets and performance artists every week, with host Matt Sage.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Hip hop, dubstep, soul and reggae club night.

DYING BREED + CRACKERDUMMY + BLACK JUJU BAND: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock and metal night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

FRIDAY 5th

PROSPEKT + WAYS ACROSS + FUZZY LOGIC: The Wheatsheaf – Intense, epic prog-metal from highly-rated local outfit Prospekt, kicking out technical riffage in the vein of Opeth, Meshuggah and Dream Theatre.

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar – Bristolian DJ legend Derek return alongside Count Skylarkin, spinning a selection of ska, reggae, dancehall and hip hop, plus a live set from The Sidewalk Doctors.

THE BOHEMIANS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Queen tribute.

ANNIE B + SPRING OFFENSIVE + VISIONS OF TREES: The Ashmolean – The revamped museum hosts an evening of live music and DJs, including local math-pop faves Spring Offensive. MIM and Rita Maia man the decks.

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

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre – Roots and dub club.

WHO DO YOU LOVE?: The Duke, St.Clement's – Alt.rock, 60s garage, soul, new wave, punk and electro-pop DJ session with Jim, Jen and Grizilla.

ECHOVIRUS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury
PETE FRYER: Prince of Wales, Horspath

SATURDAY 6th

MARY HAMPTON & ROZI PLAIN: Modern Art, Oxford – Adventures Close To Home continue to host quality alt.folk acts, tonight featuring Brighton's inventive, dark-hued singer-songwriter Mary Hampton and her string-heavy band, managing to bring a delicately unnerving edge to traditional folk sounds, drawing admiring praise from Eliza Carthy along the way.

JOHN ETHERIDGE: The Wheatsheaf – Intimate concert for the renowned jazz guitarist who has played with Soft Machine, Pat Metheny and Stephane Grappelli.

W.A.M: Fat Lil's, Witney – Ska-punk covers.
PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Weekly three-clubs-in-one extravaganza, with indie and electro at Propaganda; glam, 80s and kitsch pop at Trashy and metal, hardcore and alt.rock at Room 101.

THE GOGGENHEIM + THE BIG SOCIETY + THE JUKES: Folly Bridge Inn – Seriously spaced-out mutant punk, psychedelia and off-kilter funk from The Goggenheim, sounding like a seriously whacked collision of Faust, The Slits, Soft Machine and Renaldo & The Loaf.

MELISSA & MERMAN'S BIRTHDAY BASH: The Cellar – Drum&bass, dubstep and house.

SUNDAY 7th

ACOUSTIC AND OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Sam Mather and Karl Herring perform, plus open mic session.

HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI COMMEMORATION CONCERT: Donnington Bridge (5pm) – CND commemorate the dropping of atomic bombs on Japanese cities with an afternoon of live music from Moon Leopard, Beard Of Destiny, Phil & Sue, Blin' Jonnie and The Riverside Voices.

MONDAY 8th

NEURAL OHMLETTE YARD SESSION: Modern Art Oxford – Electronic bleeps and beats from sometime Damo Suzuki bandmate Justin Paton at tonight's NO session, plus Adventures Close To Home DJs.

TUESDAY 9th

THE HIGH JINKS + THE LIGHT DIVIDED + DISCLOSURE + CIRCUIT CHASE: The Wheatsheaf – Local bands night.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz with singer Alison Bentley.

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

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 10th

FREERANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep, drum&bass, grime and funky.

THURSDAY 11th

LOSTPROPHETS: O2 Academy – The pop-metal pin-ups crank out their arsenal of anthems – *see main preview*



GYRATORY SYSTEM + MANACLES OF ACID + TIGER MENDOZA: The Cellar – A night of electronica from the Modernist Disco people, tonight featuring playfully crazed electro-acoustic chap Andrew Blick, under his Gyrotory System guise, mixing brass and reeds with synths to create soundscapes once, quite accurately, described as like Loonytune themes composed by Kraftwerk. Support from local techno bleep'n'squelch merchants Manacles Of Acid and trippy electro-popsters Tiger Mendoza.

CRIMINAL + K-LACURA + CRYISIS + AETHARA: The Bullingdon – New metal promoters Hammer Of The Gods present Chilean thrash veterans Criminal, injecting elements of hardcore and death-metal into their classic heavyweight sound. In the past they've played with Metallica, Slayer and Sepultura, while more recently they've toured with Lamb Of God. Local support comes from metalcore urchins K-Lacura, thrash-core types Crysis and extreme heavyweights Aethara.

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – Opening night of Fairport Convention's annual folk, blues and rock festival – *see main preview*

DOGSTATE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

Wednesday 3rd

JEFFREY LEWIS & THE JUNKYARD: The Cellar

How and why Jeffrey Lewis isn't too big for a venue like the Cellar yet is one of life's imponderable questions, but in a way it's a good thing, since Lewis's complex, highly literate form of anti-folk works best in intimate confines where the audience are in on the many jokes and can fully appreciate the man's wordy delivery. Having emerged out of the same 1990s New York café scene as Moldy Peaches, Lewis has been prolific in the extreme, recording a succession of self-released EPs and albums before signing to Rough Trade in 2001 and releasing 'The Last Time I Did Acid I Went Insane'. He hasn't let up much since then, with last year's 'Come On' sure to be followed up any time soon. A particular highlight of his recent output was 2007's '12 Crass Songs', where he radically reworked the anarcho-punk collective's songs in his own image, often brilliantly. His roots, of course, lie as much in punk as in folk, with a cynical world outlook mixing with his self-deprecating humour. He's also an accomplished comic book artist, which he sometimes incorporates into his live sets, managing to cram the entire history of Chinese communism into a three-minute song with accompanying graphics. Lewis remains an oddball character though, which is why he's still a cult concern, but convert or newcomer, you'll find a warm and witty welcome into his world.



CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford
Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 12th

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – Seasick Steve headlines the first full day of the Fairport shindig – *see main preview*

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

HANNEYFEST: The Black Horse, East Hanney – The annual free festival returns. Tonight's opening session features Three Minute Tease, Blin' Jonnie, Lost Dogs and Quadrophobe.

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, afrobeat, Balkan beats and world breaks, plus a live set from The Apples.

DOGSTATE + BLACK JUJU + SHATTERED DREAMS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury –

Jambox rock night, featuring promising local pop-punk outfit Shattered Dreams.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon
FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford
Community Centre

SATURDAY 13th

CROPREDY FESTIVAL: Cropredy – Fairport Convention close their annual party with a host of guests and an epic set of classic folk-rock – *see main preview*

THE PYROTECHNIC LEAGUE presents LEFT OUTER JOIN + WE ARE UGLY BUT WE HAVE THE MUSIC + CEZ + KINETIC WARDROBE: Baby Love – A night of live electro and acid house from The Pyrotechnic League, plus DJ sets from Coloureds, Tiger Mendoza and Exodus playing a selection of electro, old-school rave, breaks and dubstep.

HANNEYFEST: The Black Horse, East Hanney – Full day of live music at the free festival, featuring Vicars Of Twiddly, The New Moon, The Mark Bosley Band, Snipe, Daved & Confused, Ady Davey, and more.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

FREERANGE: The Cellar – UK garage, 2-step, 4x4 and bassline.

UNHINGED: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass.

SUNDAY 14th

RELEASE THE BATS + JUNCTION XIII + YOUNG LUST: The Wheatsheaf – Raging gothic garage noise inspired by The Birthday Party, Sisters of Mercy and 80s Matchbox B-Line Disaster from Nightshift Demo of the Monthers Release The Bats.

HANNEYFEST: The Black Horse, East Hanney – Superloose headline today's full day of music, joined by The Hingleys, Phil Bird, Pint & A Half, Gipsy Fox and All The Clever Lines.

MC SILECTA: The Cellar – EP launch gig for the local rapper, whose amiable style incorporates acoustic pop and funky house. Tonight's show features a nine-piece live band and guest appearances by Ella Martini amongst others. Support comes from Aikz, Esby and Ella Martini herself, as well as a DJ set from Likkle Platinum.

MONDAY 15th

TUESDAY 16th

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

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 17th

JAWLESS & FRIENDS: The Cellar – Jungle, drum&bass, bass-heavy house and hip hop.



Thursday 11th

LOSTPROPHETS: O2 Academy

Slating Lostprophets for being pretty, polished and nicely dressed is a bit like condemning Children's TV for being brightly coloured – that's the whole point. When Pontypridd's finest emerged out of the rock underground with debut album 'Thefakesoundofprogress' back in 2000 they were something of a revelation – a young British band melding metal riffs with funk, hip hop and, most importantly, pop in a way that eclipsed the dominant American bands of the time. That singer Ian Watkins and chums looked like they could have stepped off a catwalk only served to increase their teen appeal. Taking inspiration from Faith No More and Refused and adding sweet pop hooks to the power riffs and battering ram drums they hit a winning formula and a succession of chart-topping albums have followed, not to mention a host of *Kerrang!* *Pop Factory* and *NME* awards to sit alongside the gold discs. Of course, none of this has endeared Lostprophets to serious heavy rock fans, for whom the band were never really intended. And so they continue doing what they do best, penning singalong anthems and the odd love ballad and sticking enough roaring, screaming and general riffing in the mix to make them sound cool on video game soundtracks and keep the boys on-side. Their latest album, 'The Betrayed', apparently followed the dumping of half a million quid's worth of recordings, testament to the level of success they've achieved, and whether their audience will grow out of them any time soon doesn't yet seem to be a particular concern.

THURSDAY 18th

TALKING ENDLESSLY: The Cellar – Camberley's grungy alt.rockers on tour.

13GAUGE + BEELZEBOZO: The Wheatsheaf – Goblin-voiced grindcore from 13Gauge at tonight's Moshka promotion, plus unrepentant old school metal from Beelzebozo.

CHARLY COOMBS & THE NEW BREED + BLACK HATS + PLAYER2: Fat Lil's, Witney – 70s-inspired soul-rock from Charly Coombes, with support from spiky mod-pop and new wave trio Black Hats.

K-LACURA + A TRUST UNCLEAN + MARY KELLY: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Metalcore from K-Lacura and vicious grindcore and death metal from A Trust Unclean at tonight's Jambox rock night.



Thursday 11th – Saturday 13th

CROPREDY

FESTIVAL: Cropredy

Fairport Convention's annual gathering of the tribes once again turns a very quiet corner of north Oxfordshire into a giant folk and rock party. Well into its fourth decade, Cropredy still feels, quite pleasingly, like the festival that time forgot, although there are increasing signs the event is happy to leave the folk on the backburner for a few hours and bring some (relatively) more contemporary sounds along. This year this includes enduring British reggae hitmakers **UB40** and Ian Dury's former backing band **The Blockheads**, while psychedelic popsters **The Coral** up the cool quota. **Hayseed Dixie** bring their Cajun and Zydeco interpretations of classic rock and metal anthems to the party and roaming troubadour **Seasick Steve** should be an entrancing Friday night headliners. Amongst a host of other acts playing, Kris Drever's excellent **Lau** trio should go down well with the folk traditionalists, while festival regulars like **The Dylan Project** and even **Richard Digance** return. The weekend, of course, belongs to Fairport themselves, the never-ending folk-rock story continuing with its ever-evolving cast of players who will be joined by various friends for an epic festival-closing set on Saturday night. 'Meet On The Ledge? Oh aye, and see you all again for more of the same next year.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 19th

SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park – First day of the new artist-led music and art festival in Brazier Park's grand 17th-Century gothic mansion – see main preview

PROFESSOR GREEN: O2 Academy – Return to town for East London rapper Stephen Manderson after his showing at the O2 last October. Knowingly cheesy and awash with pop-friendly samples, from INXS to Beats International.

DIVE DIVE + RICHARD WALTERS + KOGUMAZA + SEABUCKTHORN: The Wheatsheaf – MusicInOxford.net celebrates ten years online with the first of a new series of monthly gigs at the Sheaf. Tonight's star turn are Dive Dive, veterans of the local scene but now regarded nationally as one of the UK's most underrated and exciting rock bands, mixing up big pop hooks with their fiery, angular post-hardcore noise; an irresistible combination that made them a major influence on Foals as well as attracting the attention of Frank Turner who employs them as his backing band. Ethereal local troubadour Richard Walters supports, performing with a full band, while Andy Cartwright conjures atmospheric, cinematic soundscapes under his

Seabuckthorn guise. Kogumaza complete an impressive bill with their dense, dark loop-based rock.

NEURAL OHMLETTE YARD SESSION:

Modern Art Oxford – Live music and DJs, tonight featuring 8-bit J-pop duo Pseudo Nippon, electro and krautrock grooves from Andy Weatherall collaborator Tim Fairplay, plus cutting edge indie and electro from Yoo! DJs.

ZZ TOPS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute band.

K-LACURA + THE SCARS REMAIN: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox rock and metal night.

WE ARE ELEMENTS: The Cellar – Dubstep, garage and hip hop club night.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Chester Arms – Swampy blues rocking and psychedelic funk from the local stalwarts.

SATURDAY 20th

ALPHABET BACKWARDS + THE HALF RABBITS + ANCHOR & THE WOLF + THE COOLING PEARLS + NAIROBI: O2

Academy – More quality local sounds at the Academy's monthly Upstairs showcase. Euphoric synth-popsters Alphabet Backwards headline, finding a joyous middle ground between Buggles and S Club 7, while The Half Rabbits plough a darker furrow, bringing a gothic edge to Doors-y rock sounds. String-laden dream-pop from Anchor & The Wolf and melancholic romantic pop from The Cooling Pearls.

SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park – See main preview

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – Wonky disco, guilty pleasures, breaks and beats from the FOTB regulars.

FUSED: Fat Lil's, Witney – 90s and noughties rock covers.

SWINDLESTOCK + PYRRHIC VICTORY + BEN PHILLIPS: Folly Bridge Inn –

Traditional good-time American country-blues from Pyrrhic Victory in support.

ELDER STUBBS FESTIVAL: Elder Stubbs Allotments, Rymer's Lane – The annual allotments festival celebrates its 20th anniversary with a special Back To 1991 theme. Two stages of live music feature sets from The Mighty Redox, Mackating, Samuel Zasada and Fuzzy Logic among others and all in aid of local mental health charity RESTORE.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: Crawley Inn, Witney

SUNDAY 21st

SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park – See main preview

ACOUSTIC AND OPEN MIC SESSION: The Hobgoblin, Bicester

THE MIGHTY REDOX + PETE FRYER BAND + THE NEW MOON + HEADINGTON

HILLBILLIES + DES BARKUS + MARK BOSLEY + JEREMY HUGHES: The Six Bells, Warborough (2.30pm) – All-day live music.

MONDAY 22nd

GINGER: O2 Academy – Solo show from the Wildhearts frontman.

TUESDAY 23rd

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – The Hugh Turner Band are tonight's guests.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 24th

THE MIDNIGHT BEAST: O2 Academy – The puerile, potty-minded pop-rap crew make the most of their fifteen minutes of fame with this already sold-out show, having moved on from parodying Ke\$ha to remaking Katy Perry and Rebecca Black in their own mould. Their mould being somewhere between Beavis & Butthead and Goldie Lookin' Chain. But, like, even less sophisticated.

OTHER LIVES: The Jericho Tavern – Rarefied indie-folk from Oklahoma's Other Lives, over in the UK for a short tour to promote new album 'Tamer Animals'.

FREERANGE: The Cellar – Dubstep, drum&bass, grime and funky.

THURSDAY 25th

THE WINCHELL RIOTS + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Cellar – The Winchell Riots

warm up for their sets at Reading and Leeds Festivals, with support from riff-heavy maths-rockers Gunning For Tamar.

GO ROMANO: The Wheatsheaf – Moshka club night with local live bands.

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Village – First night of the long-running folk festival, tonight featuring a headline set from Billy Bragg.

BARMY ARMY: The Bullingdon – One-time local hippy-punk faves Barmy Army reform for a one-off show after a 25-year absence, reviving their 80s stoner-punk and psych-rock sound.

MIND THE WHITE LINES: The Port Mahon – Trashy punk pop with nods to The X and Dead Kennedys from MTWL at tonight's Live & Loud session.

LOST INNOCENCE + IZZI STONE: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 26th

DAVID RODIGAN + LAID BLAK + COUNT SKYLARKIN + SULTAN + SET-IT-OFF

SOUND: O2 Academy – Oxford reggae promoters Skylarkin' Soundsystem, Bassmentality, Tony N, Master Barbers and House Of Roots come together for a bank holiday extravaganza, featuring Kidlington born and bred David Rodigan, a veteran of Kiss FM, live reggae from Bristol's seven-strong collective Laid Blak, MC Sultan and reggae party tunes from Count Skylarkin.

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Village – First full day of the folk and family festival, featuring 17Hippies, Home Service and 3 Daft Monkeys.

CHARLY COOMBS & THE NEW BREED + THE FAMILY MACHINE: The Cellar – Soulful 70s-inspired rocking in the vein of Little Feat from the former-Supergrass chap, plus sweetly melancholic country-tinged indie rocking from The Family Machine. Followed by drum&bass club night HQ at 10.30.

SKITTLE ALLEY 10th ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL: Railway Inn, Culham – The longstanding Abingdon live music club, which has survived myriad venue closures, rightly celebrates making it past the decade mark. A weekend of local music kicks off tonight, featuring a headline set from reggae faves Mackating, who are joined by The Mark Bosley Band, Dais-E & The Unsteadies and Horse Guards Parade.

UK BLUES BROTHERS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Blues Brothers tribute.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

LORD AV MERCY: The Port Mahon – Switching from its usual Sunday slot to avoid clashing with Notting Hill Carnival, the monthly reggae club hosts its own bank holiday party, playing a goodly selection of roots, dancehall and dub, with Red Stripe, dominoes and plantain snacks adding to the atmosphere.
TALC DAEMONS: The Half Moon – Oddball pop and reggae from Rami and chums.

SATURDAY 27th

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE DACOITS + TIGERLINE + TIGER MENDOZA: The Wheatsheaf – Another quality mixed bag of sounds at this month's GTI, with polished gothic garage-pop from The Dacoits, proggy, jazzy post-rock-inspired instrumental rock from Tigerline and heavyweight, tripped-out electronica and soulful pop from Tiger Mendoza.
SJ ESAU + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE: Modern Art, Oxford – Pindrop Performance

Friday 19th – Sunday 21st

SUPERNORMAL: Braziers Park

First organised last year as a return to the counter-culture, anti-commercial gatherings of the 60s and 70s free festivals, the artist-curated Supernormal has the potential to be one of the best small festivals anywhere in the UK; certainly one of the most unusual. Among this year's curators are Faust's Geraldine Swayne, Rocket Recording's Chris Reeder and Heidi Heelz from Proxy Music. It's about far more than just music – from film screenings and artist talks to discussions and performance art, but amongst the host of acts playing are seminal ethereal darkwave pioneers **Cindytalk** (pictured), fronted by This Mortal Coil contributor Gordon Sharpe; wayward post-punk mavericks **The Cravats**; psych-noise band **Skullflower**; claustrophobic, doomladen krautrockers **Black ABBA**; lo-fi electro-pop-cum-hip hop chap **SJ Esau**; reverberated blues-punk hobo **Pink Reason**; vicious lo-fi crew **Drunk In Hell**; free-drone innovators **The A Band**; taut garage-punkers **Monkey Island**; Kosmiche outfit **Gnod**; all-female Monks tribute band **The Nuns** and disturbing electro artist **Man-Flu**. Hosted by the eco community in Brazier's 17th-Century gothic mansion, it's a suitably exotic location for an event that boasts anything from a singalong *Wickerman* session to beer served from a cement mixer and cocktails provided in a sandblaster. Somehow, after a weekend at Supernormal, the outside world is unlikely to look the same again.



continues to deliver the goods on the esoteric music front with tonight's show by alternative hip hop cult hero **SJ Esau**, set to release his new album on the peerless Anticon label soon – the follow-up to 2008's 'Wrong Faced Cat Feed Collapse'. Mixing a rap-style delivery with warped beats, lo-fi electronica and a Pavement-style form of skewed indie, his free-ranging genre-bending is certain to attract a sell-out crowd, so book early. And get there early for support act **The Braindead Collective**, the nebulous local improv ensemble mixing up drones, electronics and free jazz into a psychedelic audible blancmange.

SKITTLE ALLEY 10th ANNIVERSARY

FESTIVAL: Railway Inn, Culham (2pm) – A full day of live music and family activities, with two stages featuring sets from The Big Society, Mogmatic, The Baby Gravy All-Stars, Komrad, Shifty Chicken Shed, Superloose, Stem, Thousand Mile Highway, Dead Jerichos, Le Vens, Moon Leopard, Evo Sylvian, Blind Dog Blues and Tamara & The Martyrs.

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Village – Today's live highlights include Burns Unit, Cara Dillon and Martin Carthy & Dave Swarbrick.

GLAMNATION: Fat Lil's, Witney – 70s glam rock classics.

MASK OF JUDAS + REIGN UPON US +

VISION FALL + IONIX: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox metal night.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass club night.

SHATTERED DREAMS + ELEPHANT 12: Folly Bridge Inn – Poppy punk noise in the vein of Penetration from Shattered Dreams, plus east London's electro-rap-rockers Elephant 12.

SUNDAY 28th

SKITTLE ALLEY 10th ANNIVERSARY

FESTIVAL: Railway Inn, Culham (2pm) – Lost Dogs, Prohibition Smokers Club, Les Clochards, Nu Soul Rebels, Von Braun, Samuel Zasada, Listing Ships, Humphrey, Pint & A Half, Anton Barbeau, Mark Solis and Glenda Huish are among the acts celebrating Skittle Alley's tenth anniversary.

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Village – English folk stalwarts The Oyster Band head today's live music bill; they're joined by Karine Polwart and Lau.

ELECTRO-CUTE: The Cellar – New electro club night, tonight with live sets from Banbury-Manchester Moog fetishists Shmoo, plus Oxford synth-pop duo Space Heroes Of The People, glitchy but melodic and chilled electro-popstrel Miaoux Miaoux; local rising rapper Uneek and Keyboard Choir's Adrian Wardle.

TOXIC FEDERATION + RELOAD THE RADIO + BAD SIGN + CJ QUINN: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock all-dayer in aid of Breast Cancer Awareness.

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Monthly free open blues jam session.

THE TRUTH + LOST DOGS +

DISCLOSURE + JAGGY EDGES: The Plough, Appleton (12noon) – Live music and family fun day.

MONDAY 29th

TOWERSEY FESTIVAL: Towersey Village – Final day of a the long-running village folk festival, with The Demon Barbers, Spiers & Boden and many more.



Tuesday 30th

RON SEXSMITH: O2 Academy

Ron Sexsmith isn't the first singer-songwriter to receive critical praise in inverse proportion to his commercial success and he won't be the last, but few troubadours can count Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, Ray Davies, Elton John and Bruce Springsteen as ardent fans. The quiet Canadian has been writing and recording since the mid-80s, releasing his debut album in 1991, but, despite the plethora of rave reviews accorded albums like 2000's nominal breakthrough album 'Cobblestone Runway' and the popper *Retriever*, it's only much more recently he's started picking up wider radio play, even in Canada, a country renowned for championing its native talent. Some of this is due to Sexsmith's gradual move towards a more focussed, commercial sound, mixing his palette of moods with more purpose on new album 'Long Player Late Bloomer' (his twelfth). There's no real reason why he isn't a world-renowned star: inspired by Davies, Costello and McCartney his is classic melancholic folk-pop of an almost timeless vintage. So well does he do it that those he was inspired by have regularly sung his praises and covered his songs, while Davies invited him to play when he curated *Meltdown* earlier this year. A documentary about Sexsmith, 'Love Shines' helped expose him to a new audience and, in it for the long haul, maybe his day is finally dawning.

TUESDAY 30th

RON SEXSMITH: O2 Academy – Melancholy folk-pop from the enduring Canadian songsmith – see main preview

CASHIER NUMBER 9: The Jericho Tavern – Sweeping 60s-inspired West Coast pop and Americana from Belfast's Cashier No.9, mixing it up somewhere between The Byrds, Flaming Lips and Pavement on their David Holmes-produced debut album.

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

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 31st

WILLY MASON: The Glee Club – Return to town for the lachrymose alt.country troubadour.
JAWLESS & FRIENDS: The Cellar – Jungle, drum&bass, bas-heavy house and hip hop.

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LIVE

CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Great Tew Estate

FRIDAY

"Did you see James Blunt last night? That was the best I've seen him."

Nightshift is sitting on a pub bench in front of Cornbury's main stage on Saturday afternoon chatting to a very nice lady about her favourite singer. She's been to see him five times now. Next to her her 12-year-old son is listening to Biffy Clyro on his iPod and helping himself to sneaky sips of his mum's cider.

And that's kind of Cornbury in a nutshell – nice people with sometimes dubious musical taste.

Not that they're beyond hope though. Soon afterwards the nice lady is raving about Bellowhead who she'd witnessed for the first time and whose entire back catalogue she was about to splash out on.

So, you see, we shouldn't ever be too snobbish about James Blunt fans – they're as enthusiastic about their musical choices as anyone and, it seems, as willing to discover new things as the most eager indie fanboy; they just need exposing to it.

And again, that's kind of Cornbury in a nutshell. Yes you've got your James Blunts and your Status Quos and a fair few instantly forgettable middle of the road blues-rock widdlers, but you've also got a band like **PHANTOM THEORY** snuck in there to keep everyone on their toes.

The local duo are the first band we see over the weekend, opening the Riverside stage, their sparse, spiralling opener suggesting a new psychedelic direction to fit in better with the glorious sunshine and generally mellow vibes. Outside of their natural pressure cooker small venue environment it's easy for some of Phantom Theory's power and intensity to dissipate, but 'Trance Dog' rescues them at the death and you hope that at least a couple of folks took notice while strolling down to the main stage for the shocking blandfest that is **BEN MONTAGUE**, a man whose sole notable moment is an abominable take on Gnarl's Barkley's 'Crazy'.

Strolling between stages is what people do at Cornbury. Unlike Truck where you're forever rushing to one of half a dozen stages to try and catch the next underground darling or future Mercury Prize winner, at

Cornbury few acts clash with each other so a leisurely walk through the tree-lined field is well in order, particularly since everywhere you wander someone is trying to give you something for free: organic yoghurts; newspapers; Higgledy pies; biodegradable washing-up liquid and cereal bars. Lots of cereal bars. By the end of the weekend we've accumulated a dozen of them and are contemplating a new career as a squirrel. Getting stuff for free at festivals isn't what you expect as a rule, at least not since Michael Eavis handed out pints of milk to revellers at the first Glastonbury.

The first genuine highlight of the weekend comes courtesy of Birmingham's bluegrass family band **THE TOY HEARTS** – sisters Hannah and Sophia Johnson, who also feature their dad on banjo and dobro. Like Secret Sisters they're steeped in classic Americana, aware of its history and main players, name-checking and covering Bill Monroe and Django Reinhardt. They even recorded their debut album in Nashville, and if its title track, 'Femme Fatale' isn't, sadly, a cover of the Velvet Underground tune, it's authentic enough to convince you they're from the Deep South rather than the West Midlands.

THE DIRTY ROYALS provide another moment of the day when they revive 'Xeroxy Music', their debut single in their original incarnation as The Samurai Seven. Elsewhere the quartet's joyously retro beat pop, all tight vocal harmonies and genially pushy power pop, comes across like early Beatles by way of XTC.

We think **BUFFY ST MARIE** is possibly a bit bonkers. Or a witch. There she is shrieking and wailing like a harpie over an old blues-rock soundtrack, the odd rockabilly number providing brief respite. Just as we're about to give up, though, she digs up 'Universal Soldier' and 'Soldier Blue' and starts talking about her native Cree roots (her backing band are drawn from the same Native American tribe) and you remember why she ended up writing songs for Bob Dylan and Neil Diamond.



Sophie Ellis-Bextor

It takes a while to remember why we used to love **CYNDI LAUPER** too. It's a quarter of a century on from her biggest hits so we can hardly expect time to have stood still for her, but a full set of traditional Memphis blues songs – punctuated by a radically reworked 'She Bop' – isn't quite what we'd expected. Still, she's got the legendary Charlie Musselwhite on blues harp and her voice, strong and strident, is a world away from what we remember and we're starting to get into it to the point that when she does change tack and introduce 'Girls Just Want To Have Fun', it feels tagged on. Still, 'True Colours' is, and always will be, glorious melancholy, romantic pop of the first order.

BELLOWHEAD are, as our nice new lady friend discovered, the perfect festival outfit. They could get a cemetery jiggling, never mind a field of tipsy gig-goers. From the brassy ragtime of 'Yarmouth Town', through a set that ranges from raucous sea shanties to stabbing jazz-punk and climaxes with a singalong 'New York Girls' and a series of reels and hornpipes, they seem incapable of putting a foot wrong.

Which, for us, is why finishing the day off with ninety minutes of **JAMES FUCKING BLUNT** is very much a case of After The Lord

Mayor's Parade. In fact, on that theme, amongst a host of TV celebs on site over the weekend, is Theo Paphitis, who recently gave his backing on *Dragon's Den* to a disposable cardboard festival toilet called a Ploo. The urge to acquire one and, having used it, to chuck it on stage, is great. Really, would anyone be able to tell the difference between the two bags of shite up there?

SATURDAY

Saturday mornings are generally good for two things: regretting what you did on Friday night (watching James Blunt, for example) and kids' TV. Putting the regret to one side, we go in search of the next best thing to kids' TV and seek out former-Candyskins main man **NICK COPE**, who has a fine line in songs written specifically for children. His album 'What Colour Is Your T-Shirt?' might well be kids stuff, but Cope has always had a way with a melody and everything he touches is shot through with a keen pop *nous*. We leave Nick entertaining some abhorrently energetic children with a song about socks and wonder just how he might have gone down had he been headlining the main stage. Several thousand people engaged in a



Alice Gold



Borderville



Sorry!

All photos: Sam Shepherd

call and response anthem about dental care seems like a pretty reasonable idea at this point.

This year's Cornbury programme carries a tribute to Tracy Watkins, the festival's longstanding head of PR who died unexpectedly in January and her brother, **KEITH FORREST** opens Saturday's proceedings in fine style. He could be just another acoustic singer-songwriter, but for all his down-home simplicity he's an engaging performer with a set full of decent tunes – his own and covers – and a fine voice that reminds you instantly of Paul McCartney.

It's a gentle way of easing us into a day when the sun illuminates Great Tew Country Park, Cornbury's new home and possibly an even more picturesque setting than its original setting.

On the Riverside stage **PROHIBITION SMOKERS CLUB** finds Smilex frontman Lee Christian opening up his inner Prince (something that's never been far from the surface) alongside a ragtag bunch of local scene mates. Their soft-centred acoustic soul and funk initially recalls Terence Trent D'Arby before veering into gospel country, wandering funk bass and a loose sense of melody giving Lee

room to ham it up, never more so than when they lurch into a ballsy, bluesy take on Prince's own '5 Women' and a cheeky jazz take on 'You Really Got Me' in tribute to today's star turn, Ray Davies.

Anyone remember **DEACON BLUE**? Yes? Anyone remember anything about Deacon Blue other than 'Dignity' and 'Real Gone Kid'? No? Well those are the high points of a set that couldn't have got more pedestrian if it had been a pavement. With The Faces headlining tonight, it's unsurprising that there's an inordinate amount of blues-rock to be heard today. **SAINT JUDE** are better than most, mixing Janis Joplin with early-years Black Crowes (we could swear one of their tunes is a direct steal of 'Sting Me'). We're also fairly sure there's a song in there about Visa cards, penthouse flats and overdrafts, which makes them sound as if they wrote it with one eye on being picked up to advertise ISAs. If it's financial advice with a side order of bourbon you're after, you could do a lot worse than St Jude.

After catching the Randy Newman-esque tones of **DAVID CELIA** it's off to see perennial Cornbury favourite **IMELDA MAY**. She's about as cool as this festival gets, and looks the part with her heavy make-up and

quaffed hair as her band whip through a set of fine rockabilly tunes. There's precious few ploughing such a furrow these days, and even fewer doing it with such authority. No wonder she's such a rising star.

RAY DAVIES' star may have long ago risen and set in the rock firmament but he can still kick it out when duty calls. We weren't in all honesty expecting any of The Kinks' early riffola yet we get 'All Day & All Of The Night' alongside more expected classics like 'Sunny Afternoon' and a genuinely rousing singalong closer in 'Lola'. In between there are brief snatches of 'Victoria' and even 'Apache' for some reason, but sadly no 'You Really Got Me' or 'Waterloo Sunset'. Forty plus years on from his commercial peak, Davies obviously feels he can still mix it up a bit and not simply hack out the hits. He can do what the hell he likes as far as we're concerned. The guy's a legend.

Today's real concession to pop is **SOPHIE ELLIS BEXTOR**, a lady about whose music it is all too easy to be cruel. Her attempts at 'indie' with the audience were rather poor, but there's no denying that 'Murder On The Dancefloor' was a gem. Rather unsurprisingly the rest of her material don't quite match up to

that kind of quality, but she's a pleasant enough performer and keeps the kids quiet whilst the adults concentrate on their copious cider consumption.

THE FACES were always the ultimate good time band and in Rod Stewart had one of *the* great frontmen. So when the surviving members of the band reformed a couple of years back it was a traumatising shock to discover they'd replaced Rod with Mick Hucknall of all people, one of 80s pop's most abhorrent presences. Even the recruitment of ex-Pistol Glen Matlock couldn't offset that horror.

It has to be said, though, that The Ginger Satan does a pretty decent job. If you close your eyes and pretend it's not him. Dammit, the guy's got a great soul-rock voice, one he kept well hidden in Simply Red, and as The Faces kick out the classics – 'Cindy Incidentally', 'Losing You' and a set-closing 'Stay With Me' – and even manage a couple of old Small Faces numbers (dedicated to the departed Steve Marriott), 'Tin Soldier' and 'All Or Nothing'. It's a suitably epic festival headline set and, who knows, give it another twenty or thirty years and we might even warm to The Hucknall. Only kidding.



Ver Quo

SUNDAY

Cornbury might play it safe musically but never let it be said it can't do contrast. Midday Sunday and the choice is between big band lounge jazz and a Faith No More tribute.

THE CHIPPING NORTON ALLSTARS are the former, with an alternately rousing and sultry collection of standards and nominally more modern covers (including The Zutons' 'Valerie'), while Witney's own **FNM**, despite apparently having made the most of their weekend camping so far, do a pretty fantastic job of covering their heroes' major hits - 'Epic'; 'Easy' - as well as more surprising tracks like 'Last Cup Of Sorrow'.

After which it's back to our favourite Cornbury staple - the Charlbury School tea and cake tent. Tea. In a china mug. And cream-filled cakes so light they melt... oh sorry, a music festival you say? Sorry, we'll just wipe this icing sugar off our t-shirt and be getting on with it.

Attempting to be Janis Joplin seems to be where it's at at the moment. Over on the main stage we find **ALICE GOLD** trying to do a little better than Saint Jude and failing somewhat. There's not much in it, except that Gold is like an angelic alcohol-free version. Her songs aren't as down and dirty as you'd hope for; in fact they're downright poppy. The likes of 'Orbiter' are perfectly formed if not exactly groundbreaking pop singles. She's less Janis Joplin, more Joss Stone, but nowhere near as annoying.

There's a huge crowd for **STAXS WITH JACK BRUCE**. We arrive

just as the band is working their way through an ersatz version of The Doors' 'Light My Fire'. Sadly it's got more in common with the Jose Feliciano version, but even that's a bit unfair on poor old Jose. Yet the sheer visual spectacle of the band is grand, and with the introduction of Jack Bruce the excitement of the assembled throng edges towards fever pitch. A bass solo soon quashes that, and then a lacklustre run through Cream classic 'White Room' really crushes any hope of this being something special. It gets worse with 'Sunshine Of Your Love'. Initially it's greeted with a roar of approval but the extended solos become tedious beyond belief and the whole thing leaves us hankering for Fudge Tunnel's raucous version from 'Hate Songs In E Minor'. We were expecting something dirty and vibrant, what we get is too smooth and self-indulgent.

And so once again it's down to a couple of locally-bred bands to pick the day up. **ALPHABET BACKWARDS** - sporting a brand new, but reliably exuberant backing vocalist, are in an odd position in that they're steeped in the pub venue circuit yet boast a clutch of genuine, unabashed pop gems with Top 5 potential: you could imagine Lily Allen covering 'Primark', while elsewhere there's more than a hint of S Club 7 about their buoyant, sunshine electro-pop. Tea, cake and perfect pop. Now we're happy.

The most rock'n'roll moment of the festival takes place over on the Riverside stage. **BORDERVILLE** are

midway through a particularly impressive set, when their blend of theatre and glam rock inspires a young member of the crowd to invade the stage and, to the horror of the security, dance about a bit. Having wrestled the delinquent from the stage, he's only let go by the heavy handed security chap after a fair amount of derision from the audience. Dancing at a festival, eh? Whatever next?

Well how about a pair of giant walking furry armchairs? With creepy puppets sitting on them trying to talk to kids who are obviously slightly freaked out. But slightly less so than the adults.

If we needed something ultra-normal and ultra dull to calm us down then **STRAITS** do the job. Straits are basically the ones out of Dire Straits you've never heard of, jobbing session musos playing heavy-handed versions of 80s behemoths like 'Walk Of Life' and 'Money For Nothing' before ruining the once elegant 'Romeo & Juliet' and heading off into an hour of artless rockaboogie bollocks that's not worth recounting. Noel Edmunds is even spotted heading rapidly in the opposite direction early in their set; what this says about the quality of a band is anyone's guess but he's later overheard blagging a handful of free cereal bars, proclaiming that they keep him regular; it's an image that will take years of psychotherapy to free ourselves from.

Reconvened 60s eccentrics **STACKRIDGE** are our most

unexpected weekend favourites: their opening number promises all manner of glorious psychedelic strangeness and charm, treated violin taking their swirling, hypnotic sound to places unknown for the first few minutes of the set. From that great opening gambit they head off into more whimsical folkie territory, via Syd Barrett, until they unearth 'Everybody's Got To Lose Sometimes', the hit Andy Davis and James Warren enjoyed after morphing into The Korgis in the 70s. A shame they couldn't just have kept that initial trip going for the full hour, though the worry is that the furry armchairs might have reappeared and we'd convince ourselves we'd actually spent the past three days at Glastonbury. In 1975.

There are girls screaming. Has Noel Edmunds been announcing his bowel habits again? No, it's **OLLIE MURS**, who proves that TV coverage rather than musical talent gets you places these days (so that's where Alphabet Backwards are going wrong). He murders Labi Siffre's 'It Must Be Love' (complete with Madness' Nutty Boys dance moves), before describing Jason Mraz's 'I'm Yours' as a classic. The kids love him, though we're not sure why. Oh yeah, he's on telly.

And so to the weekend's grand finale: **STATUS QUO**; the Jim Davidson of rock music. Lost in another age, still loved by a sizeable, highly fanatical fanbase, uncrushable in spirit, unchanged by the tides of fashion.

The crowd is whipping itself up into a frenzy. Which in Cornbury's case means folding away their camping chairs. Quo kick off with 'Sweet Caroline', but quickly dip into new album 'Quid Pro Quo' (surely they're going to run out of puns eventually?), which sets the tone for a frustrating set: we're teased with 'Mean Girls' but it's followed by another new one. A final flourish delivers 'In The Army Now' and 'Rocking All Over The World' and you feel that Quo will probably be hammering out their trademark twelve-bar boogie even after they've died.

And so it is that Cornbury's real finale comes on the second stage with **SAW DOCTORS** singalong anthem 'I Useta Lover', the sort of inclusive, good-time anthem for which warm summer weekends were created.

So, there's Cornbury for you: scenic and polite. It might not push the boat out musically but that's never been its purpose; it's as much a sanctuary as a rock festival but for all that it can still deliver the goods and provides a chance to witness acts you never thought you'd otherwise get to see. Hopefully it's safe now in its new home.

Words: Dale Kattack; Sam Shepherd

COLOURED VS ODC DRUMLINE

Modern Art Oxford

It's a bold move, presenting live music in an art gallery. The rarefied atmosphere of Modern Art Oxford is at odds with a sweaty, dark, traditional gig venue, and whilst nobody would claim music and art to be completely separate entities, they do tend to become contextualised by their surroundings.

ODC Drumline and Coloureds have already proven themselves as engaging, thrilling live acts - the former with an outstanding performance at the Blessing Force event some months ago, the latter with no end of high-energy shows that have repeatedly transformed motionless Oxfordian gig-goers into a writhing, raving mass. The thought, then, of them playing together, is a particularly exciting one, especially in this odd setting, and that promise isn't unfulfilled with tonight's show. Although the set does include individual tracks, punctuated by short pauses, stabs of guitar or the vocal jabber of a singer, it's better to think of it as a continual exploration of rhythm. It's an almost scientific journey through the pitch and timbre of

different drum elements. For whilst Coloureds could never be described as shy and retiring, or anything less than forward in their energetic post-rave/post-jungle beats and noises, the electronic sounds are very much subservient to the power of multiple drumkits played by multiple musicians.

Coloureds have texture and richness in their music; don't think otherwise, but when paired with a battery assault like that provided by ODC Drumline, it needs to be hunted out. The multiple drumkits are played together, or contrast each other, at different points, forming an amazing visual spectacle, as drummer arms blur into symmetrical shapes and visual representations of the sounds they're creating. The rhythms shift from military-style, to pounding, to subtle, to complex, and the playing is so extraordinarily good that the sound subsumes the location and leaves the crowd gobsmacked. This is up there as one of the best live performances of the year - truly, the collision of music and art.

Simon Minter

THE SCHOLARS / DEAD JERICHO

/ PEERS / VON BRAUN /

MANACLES OF ACID

O2 Academy

"Not from round here, are you, boy?" Some of you may be cynical about this statement, but the worst band by far at tonight's latest in the Academy's Upstairs local band showcase series are the one from outside Oxford. Reading's Peers make a clumpy sort of epic indie, that's a bit like Echo & The Bunnymen meets Simple Minds, but is more like a Runrig tribute made by flustered heifers whilst nearby a maudlin drunk honks out indecipherable paeans to a shop dummy that his addled brain thinks is his Mum.

Dead Jerichos have an easy job reinvigorating us after that, their music still a flurry of skittering hi-hats and beery bonhomie, like The Jam on a weekend long stag do with Suggs. We could do with a more restrained use of the delay pedal, but otherwise familiarity has not spoiled this young band.

Much earlier The Manacles Of Acid reprised their Charlbury set by playing to almost nobody - in fact, even one of the band wasn't there this time. Like the coelacanth in 1938, many have just discovered that acid house is far from extinct,

and that it laughs in the face of evolution. The Manacles have a great sound, half-inching bits from Bam Bam and Model 500 to make a sleek yet squelchy ride. One noodling Sven Vath wrong turn is swiftly forgiven.

Sadly 'Black Saxon' isn't a NWOBHM retelling of *Shaft*, but in it and other tracks, Von Braun present a honed rock sound that balances light Sonic Youth guitar chug with Allman Brothers vocal harmonies. The set starts shakily, but builds to great head, complete with wired Frank Black declamations.

The Scholars, conversely, play a balanced set of evocative pop, honed and studied (as the name suggests), all forlorn, dewy-eyed vocal lines bolstered by keyboard washes and well placed crescendos. We consider The Scholars to be an impressive band with full control over their material, and the ability and focus to present it convincingly, even whilst our heart is screaming "Stop making these boring noises at us, and do something worthwhile". Call it a draw?

David Murphy

THE EMPTY VESSELS /

THE CELLAR FAMILY /

DEAD JERICHO

The Port Mahon

Three local bands present their wares in the reliably unfussy surroundings of the Port tonight. Dead Jerichos look increasingly confident these days, comfortably established in the major league of Oxford bands, and possible claimants to the best name. Instantly recognisable but never samey, the itchy urgency of their songs uncovers new facets at every listen. They remain a genuinely interesting proposition in a sea of uniformity.

At a recent Nightshift team-building session one band kept cropping up in the (highly opinionated) conversation. The Cellar Family have been around for over eighteen months but a buzz has recently begun to snowball about their incendiary live shows. After an early EP drawing comparisons with Fugazi and McLusky, new EP 'Flab' sees them moving in a broader, almost theatrical direction. Tonight, though, sees them sticking to fast, spiky and angular material, mercilessly delivered with almost military precision, particularly in the drumming. Frontman and guitarist Jamie Harris is the son of drummer Kenny Harris from The Screaming Blue Messiahs, once David Bowie's favourite band. Jamie kicks and screams like he's trying to exorcise

inner demons, and a listen to their lyrics suggests there may be some kind of truth in that. Their success lies in focusing something like disgust into a living, breathing musical force that draws in rather than repels the listener. Plus they're not devoid of a lightness, even humour, to create a pleasing sense of balance.

After two bands with some kind of shared heritage The Empty Vessels surprise us by being an old-fashioned pub rock band with more than a touch of prog, 80s metal and even pomp about their person. The sheer shock of this keeps the audience looking on bemused and eventually amused, in a good way. The singer's debt to Robert Plant creates no embarrassment, and the complete absence of any modern or modish reference points is worth applauding. However, they're not Led Zep or ELP, and invoking such spectres can only lead to unfavourable comparisons. For some reason my mind is drawn back to a night in 1981 at Scamps nightclub in The Westgate and 50p spent watching a young band who I judged as hopelessly lost in the past; I believe they were called Marillion.

Art Lagun

STEREOPHONICS

O2 Academy

It says a lot for Stereophonics that they have fans dedicated enough to travel from all over the UK for the chance to see them in such a (comparatively) intimate venue, managing to sell out the venue before the gig was even publicly announced. One woman I spoke to before the gig has come all the way down from Glasgow for tonight's warm-up gig before they headline a festival in London the next day.

Unsurprisingly, considering the length of Stereophonics' career, the average age of the crowd sits comfortably into the early forties, these are super fans, many of who have probably been following the band since debut - and tonight, much referred to - album, 'Word Gets Around'.

They open, to a riotous cheer, with 'Madame Helga', Kelly Jones's distinctive vocals as strong and melodic live as they ever were on record and the band's easy rapport with each other is apparent from the start. The set is pretty evenly spread throughout their back catalogue; they play as many songs from the

debut as they do from their most recent album, 2009's 'Keep Calm and Carry On'. 'Just Looking' provides the first mass sing along of the evening, which is subsequently bettered a few songs later by a triumphant 'Have a Nice Day'.

After something of a mid-set slump, where lesser known hits like 'Bright Red Star' and 'Trouble' provide an uncharacteristic quiet point of the night, a two-song encore - comprising 'The Bartender and the Thief' and 'Dakota' - reawakens that ardent devotion.

Certainly all the components of a good set are present; it's packed with hits; the band are clearly enjoying themselves; the crowd are singing along to every word. Yet it seems there's something missing. Maybe at this stage in any band's career it's all too easy to settle into recurrent gig habits, but considering Kelly's repeated assertions that they've been in the studio for the last four months, would it be too much to ask for something a bit new or different?

Caroline Corke



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INTRODUCING....

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

MATT KILFORD

Who is he?

Matt Kilford is a songwriter from the Oxfordshire-Wiltshire border. He used to play guitar in local favourites Belarus. Post-split Matt decided to try his hand at writing songs and "try out warbling in front of people". His debut EP, 'House On The Hill', came out two years ago and got him airplay on Radio 1 and 6Music as well as supporting The Low Anthem in New York. Since then he's played at Wychwood, Guilfest and Honeyfest, alongside Laura Marling and Damien Rice, and appeared on a compilation album with Noah & The Whale. He's just released a second EP, 'Funeral Circus'.

What does he sound like?

Delicate, romantic acoustic pop based on sparse finger-picked guitar and piano arrangements over which Matt's warm, wistful voice drifts like morning mist.

What inspires him?

"I long to be one of those who can read and take in information like Johnny 5 from Short Circuit but alas, I'm more like an 80s sampler with a two second sample limit. I grew up listening to musicals and Carol King, James Taylor: the albums that every parent over 50 has tucked away."

Career highlight so far:

"Honeyfest this year. Playing in front of a thousand people, just me on my own on that big stage and having Damien Rice and Romeo from the Magic Numbers be complimentary of my songs was something I won't forget."

And the lowlight:

"A gig in Bristol where I played to six people, who were eating noodles. The main act never showed up, the other local act wanted to go on first as he had to leave, then proceeded to sit and chat to his mates through the entire set. The promoter was on his laptop throughout the gig and the sound man sat and listened to his iPod at the bar. When I finished I was told I needed to get a few more upbeat songs and was asked if I'd play an encore."



His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Radiohead. I can't think of another Oxford band that's inspired me more to write songs."

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

"The official 'Motown Collection'. If ever you want a lesson in how to write a song, have it played with unbelievable feeling and rhythm, then I don't think anyone will come close to such a thing."

When is his next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"I'm wanting to play more in Oxford so I'm hoping some promoters might have a listen and get in touch. I've got Summer Breeze in Wiltshire and Fieldview Festival. Expect some lovely songs, and maybe the requirement of the occasional tapping foot."

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite thing is the history; it will always make Oxford's musicians know they have to pull their finger out if they are to make things happen. Worst part: the air conditioning in the New Theatre; people at the Ryan Adams gig a few weeks back will know what I'm on about."

You might love him if you love:

James Taylor; Van Morrison; Nick Drake; Rufus Wainwright; Damien Rice.

Hear him here:

www.matthewkilford.co.uk

DOCTOR SHOTOVER

Beered Again

I grew one once. (Stop sniggering, Wilberforce). Yes, yes, it was when I was still roadying for Hawkwind. I gave up shaving during the German leg of the *Space Ritual* tour, for the simple reason that, by the time we got to Bremen, all the razor-blades had strange gritty white powder on them... apparently that's why Lemmy's side-whiskers grew so f***ing FAST. Need I say more...? When we returned to the UK, I was detained by Customs for three hours while they searched my facial hair – "beard-frisking" they called it. Just as well the Unabomber hadn't hit the headlines by then – or they might have looked for *him* in there too. Mind you, I can't stand those dwarf beards the kids have nowadays, you know, the ones that resemble the fuzzy-felt topiary you get on architect's models. What's that – I've mentioned this before, you say? Buy me a pint of Old Scroggie, then, bloat-features, and I will change the subject... Ah, that's it [gulp-o]... Talking of models, Your Humble Scribe is recently back from the Kate Moss/Bloke-From-The-Kills wedding. OH. YES. INDEED. We-e-ell, after I stood near her at the Zodiac once, she just HAD to invite me to the gorgeous all-star luvvy-fest and piss-up, didn't she? Buy me another pint and I will tell you ALL about it [gulp-o-rama]... What's that, Bedingfield? The police are at the front door? Something about breaking and entering...?? Gate-crashing and trespassing at a private function in the Cotswolds...?? Serious breach of the peace whilst impersonating a photographer???

NAOMI CAMPBELL TO SUE???

[Dr S vaults over the bar and legs it out the back entrance as sirens wail and truncheons batter at the front door of the East Indies Club]. F*** ME! Where's Lemmy's Fast-Grow Beard Powder when you need it?



Next month:
Disguise in Love

Never in Hawkwind: Peter, Paul & Mary work on those miniature beards.

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DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

RELEASE THE BATS

Once upon a time, before the pan-stick and poetry brigade turned it into a wretched pantomime of angst and bad Sisters Of Mercy copyists, goth, as it wasn't even called back then, was a fantastically nasty, violent form of mutant punk with a young spiky-haired, black-hearted lad called Nick Cave screaming (like, properly *screaming*, as if demons were tearing his very soul from his earthly body while he was singing) about releasing the bats. Fan-bloody-tastic. It's something this lot seem to appreciate, based just over the Ox-Bucks border and named after The Birthday Party's tortured masterpiece. They rumble, they thunder, the singer growls like some stentorian redneck on a murder spree on demo opener 'Make You My Baby' and it all collapses wonderfully together like a re-animated, revitalised 80s Matchbox B-Line Disaster. Which suits us just fine, cos we kind of miss that band's frantic, coffin-hearted disregard for any colour other than black. Like a garage-rocking freight train, Release The Bats continue to roll down the tracks with the (hopefully) tongue-in-cheek 'Spooky Julie', a full-on Bad Seeds shout-along about snake-haired whores, fishnet stockings and the like, before slowing it all down for the Michael Gira-like gothic country lament that is 'To Find You', which, while demonstrating the singer's excellent baritone, lacks some of the wired thrills of the first two numbers. By 'Spinning In A Lover' they sound like Sisters Of Mercy covering Little Fish's 'Am I Crazy?' by way of The Cramps, an inch away from becoming a parody but, as Spooky Julie would doubtless testify, that inch can make a whole heap of difference to the experience.

A TRUST UNCLEAN

Supremely violent death-metal-cum-grindcore from Bicester's A Trust Unclean, becoming the closest we've heard any local band sound to the peerless Anaal Nathrakh as they stick savagely shredded riffs over the top of implausibly fast blast beats and get an Uruk-Hai strike force and a gang of Finnish serial killers to fight to the death over the top. Seriously, this is vicious, especially opener 'Omni Universal Annihilation' as it growls, screeches, belches and eats baby rabbits with a remorseless lack of compassion or pity. The breakdown towards the end finds the band losing necessary momentum but

they're soon nagging and vomiting their way back to full pelt with 'Forced Entry' and never look back. We've got entire *Terrorizer* cover-mount sampler CDs packed with similar stuff, but that doesn't detract one iota from how much fun this lot are. Necking a litre of vodka and firing nuclear warheads at Mount Everest wouldn't be any less enjoyable just because you'd previously downed twenty cans of Stella and rammed a Tornado jet into a tower block would it? Eh? EH? Sorry, what did you say? We think A Trust Unclean might have perforated our eardrums. Fabulously brutal stuff. Good work, lads.

ONE-MAN DANCE TEAM

We're not sure if O-MDT really is just one man or a whole band but we do know that he/they come from Wycombe and might own the odd Hella album or two. And nothing wrong with that. There's some nasty, grimy synth noises splattered around here, reminding us of American analogue fetishists and one-time Peel faves The Sewer Zombies, while the combination of those noise machines with some frenetic drumming remind us most pleasingly of Trans Am. Trilling, high-end synth stabs pierce tracks like 'Space Cadet', while the drummer plunges rabidly through his favourite jazz timings at double speed, giving the whole thing a manic, amphetamine-addled feel, at its best on tracks like 'Whisky & Cheese' (sole lyric: "What do we want? Cheese! When do we want it? Now!"), which ends up feeling like you're being attacked by a swarm of cyborg mosquitoes, and the dirty and dynamic 'Walker'. 'What Would Webbs Do?' reveals a less impressive side, a directionless dirge, while there's a tendency for a couple of tracks to come across as little more than awkwardly-shaped electro-jazz incidental noise. Not to worry, it sounds like an act in the process of fully realising itself and making a serious amount of noise while it's about it.

JOE TRUBY

Joe here proffers us a one-track demo entitled 'Revenge Of The Lumberjack', which we're half hoping/dreading will come backed with several knowing Monty Python samples but instead turns out to be a nicely dirty electro-house instrumental, squelchy acid house leavened by shiny Euro-trance keyboards, occasionally threatening to break into some cheesy chart-friendly dancefloor filler a couple of times but elsewhere possessed of a nice grimy texture. Glitchy awkwardness is mostly avoided but this six-and-a-half-minute journey is probably a bit too of-kilter to make a smash in the

clubs as it shifts tack at strategic points, breakdowns and build ups promising detours that always veer back on course, but keeping itself fresh til the end.

GO PLAY

You know how we like to reprint band's press releases for the sole purpose of getting everyone to laugh at the pompous bullshit they're capable of spouting? Well, here's another one for you: "Go Play: a reflection of love, life and the powers of seduction. Flickers in the shadows and contrast in the grain reveal the illicit truth behind the glamour and allure surrounding the tenacious Alyse K. If you think you know the truth. Here is the story." Shite and onions, we're sure you'll agree, especially when Go Play go on to describe themselves as "Combining the authoritative vocals of Gwen Stefani with the pulsating grooves of Jamiroquai". We're not sure about Jamiroquai's pulsating grooves but Jay Kay is certainly a throbbing great member. Anyway, having damned them before we've even managed to get the CD into the stereo (using sterile latex gloves and a pair of tweezers), we prepare to be confounded. We're not. They really do sound like a cross between Gwen Stefani and Jamiroquai, albeit as imagined by a Disney executive desperately trying to conjure a soundtrack for the new *Idiot Toddlers Dance Club* show. Insipid doesn't even start to get close to the reality. In fact Insipid just got tooled up and miraculously morphed into Violent at even being lumped in the same sentence as Go Play. No doubt the band's lobotomised army of fans will write angry letters asking why we didn't concentrate on writing about their "tight arrangements" and "toe-tapping rhythms" instead of slugging Go Play off for possessing a yawning chasm of fuck all where their souls should be and we'll, regretfully, have to tell them, Go Play. With the traffic, why don't you?

MONTANA GOLD

What the flip... another band influenced by Jamiroquai? Is some fucker having a sneaky laugh at our expense? Okay so Montana Gold don't overtly declare their affections for The Grand Overlords Of Vacuous Twattery, but it leaks noxiously from every cod-funk chop and groove here. 'Dear Lady' is all widdly-widdly-wah-wah-ball-aching-wannabe-superfly-music-for-people-who-hate-music-dogs-arse-in-a-bucket, show-off guitar solos wandering all over the shop from the very beginning, leaden grooves battling the flat, emotionless semi-rapped vocals for top billing in the Lack Of Gumption charts. Montana Gold are all sixteen-years-old, which might go some way to excusing a glaring lack of fluidity in their grooves, but not the spirit-draining

blandness of the whole exercise. Or the fact it sounds like it was made by blank-eyed old men who like nothing more than sneering at shiny new disco and synth-pop music and will bore the skin off your bones going on and bloody on about authenticity in music before mentioning something about Stevie Ray Vaughan, while you desperately try scooping your innards out with a fork just so you can die and not have to hear another fucking second of it all. You're sixteen for god's sake, sound like you're enjoying yourselves! Like you haven't died inside and been reincarnated as Paul Weller on a particularly wet Tuesday evening in January enjoying a vision of The Red Hot Chili Peppers stripped off their last vestiges of knockabout fun. Kids today, eh? Far too sensible.

THE DEMO DUMPER

FOURWALLS

Hell, at least Montana Gold's demo only lasts seven minutes or so. This lot are still hacking it out ten tracks and about three weeks after we've given up having our very life-force sucked out of us like poor old Sirius Black by the Dementors in *Harry Potter & The Prisoner of Azkaban*. If we were feeling kind we'd simply dismiss this as typical jobbing Sunday afternoon corner of the pub nominally blues-rock wankery. But we're not inclined to be kind. No sir, not when we're sitting here feeling like Fourwalls really are closing in around us, the singer pouring every ounce of emotion out onto the love of his life ('Lily White' if you need a name) like thick slurry down a blocked drain. Behind him, sometimes over the top of him, a turgid storm of soft rock clichés rages uneventfully. 'Tune Me In' is like the distilled essence of everything that was unbearable about overwrought, strangled mid-80s American stadium rock, recorded at the bottom of a well, seemingly by some bloke who just fell down the well and is now in some considerable discomfort. Or in need of a good poo. There is a point on this CD – two minutes into the first track if we're honest – when we've sunk into such a slough of despond any rational sense of criticism escapes us and all we're fit to do is slump across the desk and make pathetic gestures for it all to stop. We can't even think of anything witty to add to the tortured lament, "Please save me from myself", since it's beyond parody. The tragedy is this is obviously a work of love. Mind you, so was Stalin's Five Year Plan, which lasted almost as long as this album and caused a similar amount of suffering.

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

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


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Go West

Sat 17th Mar 2012 • £19.50 adv
6.30pm - 10pm
Killing Joke



Propaganda
THE UK'S BIGGEST INDIE NIGHT
EVERY SATURDAY
★ O₂ ACADEMY OXFORD ★

M R	PROPAGANDA	R	TRASHY	R	ROOM 101
A O	THE BEST NEW	O	KITCH GLAM	O	ROCK
I O	CLASSIC INDIE	O	POP AND	O	METAL &
N M	ALTERNATIVE	M	GUILTY	M	PUNK
	MUSIC	2	PLEASURES	3	ANTHEMS

£5 ADMISSION, £5 NUS/MEMBERS, £4 NHS
10:30PM-3AM, DRINKS FROM £1.95
WEEKLY PHOTOS, MORE INFO & ADVANCE TICKETS:
WWW.THEPROPAGANDA.COM

Tickets for Saturday night shows include free entry to Propaganda / Trashy / Room 101 (or £6, £5 NUS / members, £4 NHS on the door)

o2academyoxford.co.uk

190 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE

Doors 7pm unless stated. Venue box office opening hours: Mon-Sat 12pm-5.30pm
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