

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

Free every
month.
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January
2011



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Oxford's pop-punk heroes
return stronger than ever!

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January

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NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU
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OXFORDSHIRE could potentially play host to two major outdoor festivals over the same weekend next summer as **Cornbury Festival** moves to a new location, while Cornbury Park itself has signed a deal to host a festival organised by HMV's live music arm.

After suffering severe financial problems over its seven year run at Cornbury Park, where it became an established as one of the UK's premier family-friendly festivals, Cornbury organiser Hugh Phillimore has teamed up with 3A Entertainment, who work with acts like Eric Clapton, Kylie Minogue and Paul Weller, to take the event – which will still hold the name The Cornbury Festival – to a new home at The Great Tew Estate, five miles down the road. This year's festival will run over three days from 1st-3rd July. Due to the ongoing licensing process, no tickets are yet on sale but visit

www.cornburyfestival.com for news as it becomes available.

Lord and Lady Rotherwick, who own the Cornbury Estate, meanwhile, have struck a deal with HMV's live music division for a new festival, provisionally on the same weekend.



DIAL F FOR FRANKENSTEIN have decided to split. The band, who have become firm favourites on the local live scene over the past couple of years, and featured on the cover of Nightshift back in August, decided to call it a day due to drummer Michael Thompson's touring commitments with Fixers as well as guitarist Chris Berger being away at university. Dial F bowed out with a headline set at

the Winter Warmer at the Wheatsheaf in December, but frontman Gus Rogers told Nightshift that, "It seemed better to end it rather than try and replace them," and has promised to return with a new band soon.

TRUCK have a whole slew of fun activities planned in the coming months. First up, tickets for this year's **Wood Festival** go on general sale on 28th January. Limited to just 800 adult tickets, these are expected to go in even faster than last year's sold out festival. Anyone who attended last year will be contacted about exclusive pre-sale tickets from the 14th January; those who bought tickets through a local outlet can email Drew@thisistruck.com to be added to the mailing list.

After the success of their workshops and shows at the Old Bookbinders on Green Street, east Oxford, Truck are planning a series of special shows there in February, including a Blessing Force gig and a Heavenly Records showcase, featuring Sea of Bees, Trevor Moss & Hannah-Lou and James Walbourne.

Most exciting though is that Truck have teamed up with **Rapture** in Witney – Oxfordshire's sole surviving independent record store – to open a CD and record shop on Cowley Road, on the site of the old Videosyncratic shop, which closed last year. After the success of the guerilla record store as part of OX4 last year, the new shop will open on 10th February. They will be stocking a wide range of Oxfordshire music, so all local acts are encouraged to get in touch – email Drew at drew@thisistruck.com.

NOVEMBER'S AUDIOSCOPE gig raised over £2,000 for homeless charity Shelter. The annual mini-festival has been running for ten years and this time around featured a sold-out show from post-punk legends Wire at their Jericho Tavern. A special 10th anniversary show at the Tavern featured sets from Dieter Moebius and Billy Mahonie, while Anticon's SJ Esau headed the bill at the third show. Audioscope has now raised

£22,000 for Shelter in its ten years. A special extra Audioscope gig takes place at the Cellar on Saturday 15th January, featuring a night of leftfield electronica from Mo'Wax's Andrea Parker and Planet Mu's Shitmat, plus Leeds' P45 and Oxford's own Coloureds. Tickets are on sale now from wegottickets.com. Visit

www.audioscope.co.uk for more details.

Meanwhile, **Braindead Collective** have teamed up with Scottish drone-rock fave Rob St. John to record a seven-minute improvised single to be sold online in aid of Shelter. The tracks was recorded in St. Michael's Church in Cornmarket. Fans can pay what they want for the music, which is available at **braindeadcollective.bandcamp.com**.

SUPERGRASS bassist Mick Quinn returns to action this month, having teamed up with old friend **Sir Bald Diddle** in a new band, Beat Seeking Missiles. The new band, who play a mix of garage rock, surf and punk, also features former members of Thee Headcoats. Their debut gig is at the Cellar on Friday 21st January as part of Skylarkin's monthly Big Ten Inch club night.

CAFÉ TARIFA on Cowley Road launches a new weekly acoustic and semi-acoustic music night this month. Bare Your Bones, every Tuesday evening, will feature local and out-of-town acts. Acts wanting to play can email Bleedingeyes79@yahoo.co.uk or drop demos in to the venue at, 56-60 Cowley Road.

PRISM, the pioneering Oxford acid house club returns to its old home upstairs at the O2 Academy (The Oxford Venue and Zodiac as it was then) for a 20th anniversary reunion celebration on Friday 25th February. The club's original DJs, Keiran, Marty P and Osprey will be back on the decks. Tickets are on sale via the Academy website and box office.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Saturday evening between 6-7pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best new Oxford releases and demos as well as interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available to listen to online all week or download as a podcast at **bbc.co.uk/oxford**

Dr SHOTOVER: Dad Rock Army

Yes, yes, I was in the British Army, and it never did ME any harm. Not even the LSD-25 testing at Porton Down in the 1950s. Hallelujah Jesus, no-sir-ee Bob, no harm done at ALL, thank the Lord and all his brightly-coloured angels... though I am told that every now and again I do take on the characteristics of a Southern Pentecostalist preacher for no good reason. HAL-AY-LOO-YAH! [Dr Shotover testifies and waves both hands in the air for five minutes, then sits back down at the East Indies Club bar]... Sorry about that. The Devil of it is, I keep spilling my drink when that happens... Would you mind doing the honours, old boy...? Very decent of you, yes, mine's a pint of Tennessee Sippin' Whiskey... ah thank yew kahndly, sir... Meanwhile, there is something a little unsettling, isn't there, about all those apparently wholesome Americans who used to infest the pop charts, such as the Beach Boys, the Carpenters and the Osmonds. One, they have too many of those teeth which look as though they have been flown in from a brand-new piano factory. Two, there is inevitably child abuse, eating disorder, religious mania and drug addiction in the background, and they end up starving themselves to death with their feet in a bucket of sand, while their personal guru attempts to spoon-feed them peanut butter laced with Triptafen. Much better to be British, with British teeth, and a healthy British appetite for pies and the sort of dodgy 70s drugs which can only be enjoyed at crap British free festivals in the drizzle and/or while sitting in a shed on one's parents' allotment. Or indeed in the Hydraulic Hallucination Chamber at Porton Down. Woo-HOOO – thank yew, JESUS! Ah SEE the angels, ah SEE them!

Next month: EVERY DAY CAN BE CHRISTMAS DAY (just send twenty dollars)!



Angelic Upstart: Dr Shotover emerges from the Hydraulic Hallucination Chamber at Porton Down

a quiet word with

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YOU CAN'T KEEP A GOOD

band down, and Dive Dive have certainly experienced their downs over the years. That they are back this month with their third album and more enthused than ever is testament to their tenacious character, but also to the irrepressible nature of their music.

'POTENTIAL': EVEN THE

title of Dive Dive's new album gushes defiance and a sense of renewed vigour. Indeed things are looking better for the quartet than at any point since they formed in 2001, following the demise of Dustball and Unbelievable Truth.

There have been times of great hope before of course: initially signed to independent London label Diablo, with who released their debut album, 'Tilting At Windmills', in 2005 before turning out to be a bunch of incompetent crooks, and a second burst of life with 2007's 'Revenge Of The Mechanical Dog' released on their own Land Speed label through Truck Records before the label went under and Dive Dive's hard work amounted to nought.

IT'S BEEN ALMOST FOUR

years since that last album but the chief cause of the band's long absence is also one of their main salvations: Frank Turner, the former hardcore firebrand turned folk-punk troubadour who has employed three quarters of Dive Dive as his touring band for the past few years and all four of them as his support act for much of that time, introducing them to a whole new audience and, now, a solid, supportive record label, Xtra Mile.

Playing with Turner, guitarist Ben Lloyd and bassist Tarrant Anderson (both formerly of Dustball) and drummer Nigel Powell (ex of Unbelievable Truth) found themselves playing at Reading Festival and Wembley Stadium last year as well as myriad packed venues around Europe and the States, but now, with singer and guitarist Jamie Stuart, they're off on their own headline tour of the UK to promote the new album.

NIGHTSHIFT CHATTED TO

Jamie and Nigel shortly after Dive Dive played The Regal with Frank Turner, both as support act and



backing band. The first thing they want to do is explain their apparent absence in recent years.

Nigel: "Tarrant, Ben and myself have been backing Frank as his touring band, and these last couple of years have been extremely busy. Outside of recording and rehearsing my wife figured out that we've been away for 23 weeks this year, which is nearly half of it. It's hard between those times to get any momentum up – as soon as you start to do something three of the band up and leave yet again. It's not just that though; with a group of four strong personalities it's hard to argue our way through to a decision which also holds us up."

Jamie: "There's no getting away from the fact that putting the Atlantic Ocean between the band members slows your progress. That said I used the time to write a lot of songs and start a family. Then I wrote some more songs."

Those songs are now released as 'Potential' this month. With all the disruption of touring with Frank, how different was the recording process to the previous albums?

Nigel: "We did the bulk of it in four days in a pumphouse in Nuneham Courtenay during March 2009. We recorded it all, all facing

each other and playing the songs as we would live. We finished it off in a rehearsal room we built at Tarrant's yard, but in between manic touring and other responsibilities it took until October this year to actually draw a line under the thing."

Jamie: "This really is a prime example of the 'Turner Effect'. four days to track the album – I mean we play fast, but we have never recorded that quickly – but then months before we had time to mix it. Anyway, it was such a pleasure to play it live: it's definitely how we work best and it's reflected in the energy that comes off the record. I don't know why we didn't use this method earlier – it was something we did for the Peel Sessions and *they* turned out great."

Was there a specific desire to knock it out to retain a live feel and keep the energy levels high, or simply a lack of time?

Nigel: "A little from column A, a little from column B. We were always really confident in our ability as a live band, but the first two albums were recorded with me playing either on my own or just with Jamie. Having everyone rocking together makes it sound

better and more cohesive, I think. It also means you can fuck up a bit and it becomes part of the texture of the song. Perfection, which you end up striving towards when you're listening to any instrument just on its own, can be a bit lifeless."

Jamie: "I love the imperfections on records. We record digitally now but I still think we try and keep an expensive 2" tape mentality: i.e. get it sounding right first time. There's a big difference between sounding right and being note perfect."

WHILE BEN, TARRANT AND

Nigel's time spent touring with Turner obviously impacted on Dive Dive, it's fair to say the band might not be in such a strong position now if it weren't for him.

From his point of view, how does Jamie see the way things have worked out? It's opened new doors for Dive Dive, hasn't it?

Jamie: "It's going to sound like bullshit because of the immense gap between albums but it really has given us focus. The rest of the band are now such well rounded professionals their ability to adapt and interpret what I'm trying to do with songs has increased immensely; the only problem is they could be getting a little bit too good. I think whilst they get some input into the songwriting with Frank, our rehearsals of late have felt like a group conjugal visit, a creative orgy if you will. But of course the lack of time truly dedicated to Dive Dive does result in a lack of momentum for the band."

"As for opening doors well, sure there is an associative interest from various quarters and the tour we are currently on is of course due to our relationship with Frank. But what goes around.... I mean, a few years ago Frank was still playing smaller shows and the boys were acting as his backing band for no money. I mean, really, if you want it to happen it's not about waiting for someone to open the door for you."

And from the other side, how does Nigel feel the situation has affected Dive Dive?

Nigel: "We played our first Dive Dive show for ages last night and it brought home how different it is. There's pros and cons on both sides – with Frank we're playing to big adoring audiences and get well

treated, but I was more satisfied last night in Glasgow playing 15 minutes after doors to about 60 people than I was headlining to 1,500 later that evening, because the music had something of me in it. We can and do contribute to Frank's arrangements, but quite rightly he has the final say on everything. Dive Dive is a communal activity, a proper band."

You got play at Wembley last summer with Frank (supporting Green Day), how was that? A dream come true?

Nigel: "I was quite blasé about it, weirdly. I think I'm the only one in the band who's seen gigs there, so I should have been going nuts with excitement, but I have a kind of disconnect when doing Frank's shows: it's not my music so I don't have that much riding on it. I have to drum the best I possibly can in order to keep my job, but I don't really get nervous before going on stage with Mr. Turner. I still do with Dive Dive though, because it's actually important to me."

AND WHAT IS MOST

important now is getting the new album heard. Long-time fans of Dive Dive will fall for 'Potential' immediately: from the magnificently melodic opening thunder of 'Mr Ten Percent', through the ebulliently bulldozing likes of 'Damage Control', to the more considered, but sharp-toothed 'Ape Like Me', the album is packed with all the sweetly abrasive pop-tinged punk we've long since loved them for.

Newcomers might be surprised that a band so assured but still so fresh sounding can have escaped the clutches of success for so long.

How do you Jamie and Nigel think 'Potential' compares to their previous albums?

Nigel: "It's my favourite. It maybe lacks any true wig-out moments like 'The Crock' or 'Det Gor Ingenting', but that's more the fact that we're getting on a bit now and need to takes things at a slightly more stately pace..."

Jamie: "When we play shows now it's a real struggle to cut songs from the set – I want to play them all. That never happened with the other two albums."

Lyricaly, and to a lesser extent musically, the new album seems more reflective than the last.

Jamie: "It's true; I think with the previous album we'd come off the back of a lot of touring with some great bands and musically the influences I was taking from them came from many different quarters and I tried to create an album of all of these disparate ideas and much as the others tried to prevent it I

paid little heed to things like song structure and pop sensibilities and the lyrical content was very much an afterthought.

"There is some of that still going on in 'Potential' but on the whole I wrote the songs about what had been happening around me for the last couple of years and so the growing up I've done outside of music has influenced the lyrics and should come across in songs like 'Damage Control', 'Liar', 'Collapse from the Hurt' and 'Wherewithal'; there's a lot of fear in those songs. Still there's plenty of room for spitting cynicism elsewhere on the album.

Is there a hint of irony in the album title?

Nigel: "Kind of, but for me it's also a challenge or a statement of defiance. We're still ambitious as a band, but radio and press and TV are all quite rightly looking for the new exciting thing, the new Potential. I always want to remind myself that bands don't have to be like that to be good. Mark Mulcahy is my big example of that, but Oxford has so many of its own – The Relationships, Nought, Beaker, The Bigger The God."

Jamie: "The story of my life is that people are always telling me what great potential I have. I think that's nice but also evil. I think it's designed to be encouraging but it can, at best, let you meet expectation and at worst, leave you coming up short. As I say in the song, "When I look back when I'm grey and old, I'll lay blame at the feet of days that all showed potential".

MUSICALLY OF COURSE

Dive Dive have always fulfilled their potential, particularly live where they remain a byword for pure, unrefined rock energy, but commercially they have been hamstrung by forces beyond their control, as Nigel ruefully explains.

Nigel: "The first album came out on Diablo Records, who were an independent label that turned out to be run by some shifty fuck-all-knowing spivs. We toured the hell out of 'Tilting At Windmills', including one nuts tour where we were doing school shows during the day – as many as three sometimes – and shows every night, but they wanted to try and break us like a boy band, so all our effort ended up going nowhere. 'Revenge Of The Mechanical Dog' came out on our own label but via Truck Records who went bankrupt."

Jamie: "Ha ha! Just before we signed to Xtra Mile I stupidly mentioned to the boss that signing Dive Dive has a tendency to lead to bankruptcy. Third time lucky, eh?"

How did the deal with Xtra Mile come about?

Nigel: "It was kind of an obvious fit. They're Frank's record label, and in terms of getting national attention the 'angle' of us being his backing band is something to write about. Having a label who can tie it all together makes sense for both parties. They're also good guys with an indie but ambitious attitude."

The deal also makes you label-mates with A Silent Film. Do you all get to go to fabulously glamorous showbiz parties together?

Nigel: "Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha hahahahahahahahaha! Ha ha ha ha ha ha! Ha."

Jamie: "Yes, all the time. But Nigel doesn't get invited."

WHETHER DIVE DIVE GET

that overdue commercial success and the glamour that goes with it, remains to be seen, but on so many other levels they already are a success: a band that has stuck together through thick and thin, kept their spirit and soul intact, continued to make music that sounds vital and have become an inspiration for others. Having been there and done it and seen the very best and the very worst of what a band can experience, what advice would Jamie and Nigel give to any young, aspiring local band looking to get on today?

Nigel: "Whatever you do don't ask me, or indeed anyone over 25. You all know more about how young people, the main music-consuming public, use the internet; take that knowledge and make it work for you. And work harder than anyone else you've ever met doing anything. I was a teacher on a music course while being Frank's drummer and a few students who were also fans would ask about how to become successful. I would call up the list of Frank's past shows on his website which goes on for page after page after page, and say, that's how."

Jamie: "I've got to echo that: bands without the work ethic won't survive. That's not to say you have to be bloody-minded and alienate people to achieve your goal, just try and be smart with it, learn to recognise when your band has picked up momentum and capitalise on it. And of course my personal golden rule is to always treat the industry around you with respect and don't piss people off. Lastly don't listen to my advice, I'm over 25."

'Potential' is out this month on Xtra Mile. Visit www.myspace.com/divedive to hear songs from the album.

In praise of DIVE DIVE



Frank Turner:

"I first encountered Dive Dive during a soundcheck. I was crewing for Reuben and they were the support act, and just with their check they blew me away. I've been a huge fan ever since, and of course I nicked three of them for my band as well, which I like to think is a high form of praise. I'm really happy that they're back out there playing shows and releasing records again. The world needs Dive Dive!"



Jon Spira, producer and director of Oxford music scene film *Anyone Can Play Guitar*

"The Oxford scene is so densely populated with brilliant and varied bands that it would be impossible to single just one of them out as my favourite. Apart from Dive Dive, of course, who are absolutely, non-negotiably my favourite Oxford band. Perfect angst pop songs wrapped in cynicism and good humour and then smashed to pieces with dirty yelps, jabbing bass, triumphant lead guitar and cocksure stunt drumming. I've seen them playing live more than any other band and still get a thrill seeing an unsuspecting crowd expecting a pedestrian support act get their socks blown off and handed back to them folded, realising that no headliner could possibly follow that."

RELEASED

DIVE DIVE

'Potential'

(Xtra Mile)

After two debilitating experiences with different record labels, Dive Dive could have been forgiven for calling it a day after almost a decade together. Funny how things turn out. Spotted by former-Million Dead frontman Frank Turner three quarters of the group became his backing band and sometime support act and two years along the road they've got a whole new audience and a reinvigorated enthusiasm for their own music.

Partly due to time constraints (it's hard to get a moment to yourself when you're jetting off to the States or wondering whether today's venue is Reading Festival or Wembley Stadium), partly due to wanting to keep their furious live energy, 'Potential' was recorded in just four days and it pays off handsomely as they flail through 'Mr



10%' and 'Damage Control', barely pausing to say hello before they're out the back door, wrecking the sofa on the way, smiling sweetly as they go. It's easy to forget the band are no longer

the eager young pups they once were, such is the unbridled pop-punk vim of songs like 'Liar', but age and experience do show their faces further in as occasional bitter irony and a more reflective outlook make their appearance on songs like 'The You In Me' and 'Ape Like Me'. Dive Dive have always had their more mellow side and its not always shown them in their best light but perhaps working with Turner has added a bite to the slower songs, with 'Ape..' an unexpected highlight of the album.

As Jamie Stuart explains in this month's interview feature, the title 'Potential' is both ironic and a bold statement of intent. The music industry judges success purely in commercial terms, but Dive Dive have always been winners and their legacy, both in their own music and that of the bands they have inspired along the way, will last far longer than other bigger selling acts.

Dale Kattack

UTE

'The Gambler EP'

(Alcopop!)

Even from a band as difficult to second-guess as Ute, the lead track from this new EP, 'Innocent Tailor', is a surprise. The best kind of surprise, of course. A drunken, almost vaudevillian waltz full of murderous intent, the song staggers from one whisky bar to the next, arm around Grinderman's shoulder for support as it lives out its wracked, overwrought revenge fantasies before drifting, in almost ghostly fashion into Radiohead-like ambience and out again into a gothic blues lament where the harmonies sound like the frustrated wailings from Purgatory's waiting room. It's easily the best thing Ute have created so far.

The rest of this five-song EP flits between the trio's latter-period Radiohead fetish – notably in Ollie T's limp, slightly desolate vocal performance – and a fragile rootsiness that's more frost-stricken forest than earthy meadow. Ute neatly sidestep any accusations of Radiohead plagiarism, though by adding in more than the required doses of inventiveness and style, notably on the airy, waltzing 'Brother', while 'Bunker' retreats further into darkness, awash with a creeping sense of lyrical paranoia.



'The Refuser' is perhaps too slender a piece and too throwaway to justify its inclusion here, but overall, 'The Gambler' is the sound of a band confirming all the potential we've heard in them over the past 18 months and already pointing confidently towards the direction they're intent on exploring next.

Dale Kattack

UNDERSMILE

'A Sea Of Dead Snakes'

(Blindsight)

The photo of Undersmile inside this EP sleeve shows dual singer-guitarists Hel Sterne and Taz Corona-Brown hunched over their instruments, hair cascading over the fretboards, making them look like Sadako from ultra-creepy Japanese horror flick *Ringu*. It's more than appropriate given the slow-building musical malevolence contained therein.

Even by metal's heavyweight standards, this is monstrous stuff, less than a handful of songs clocking in just under the forty-minute mark, their tectonic progress as desolately all-consuming as a river of molten volcanic sludge. That it's released on Blindsight Records – the label started by former-Xmas Lights chap Umair Chaudhry to showcase Oxford's more extreme talents – merely confirms its evil credentials.

Undersmile's ultra-doomy take on sludge-metal is Titanic in its intent and execution, theatrical bows given to Melvins and Flipper on the heroically morose 'Teutonic Dyslexia', while 'Crab People', with its galley slave beat and ugly, serrated guitar ooze is pure Swans. It's the gothic-zombie vocal interaction between Hel and Taz that really makes Undersmile, the pair never letting a sliver of light into their restless incantations.

Did we mention one of Undersmile's singers is called Hel? That's how evil they are. And they are coming to get you. Sleep tight, children.

Dale Kattack

THE CRUSHING

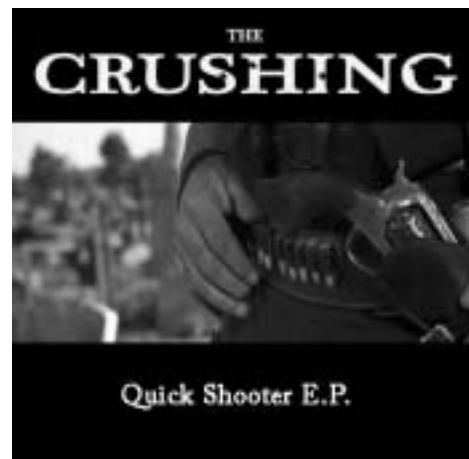
'Quickshooter EP'

(Own label)

Featuring a cast of musicians whose collective CVs include Marconi's Voodoo, Near Life Experience and Blood Roses, The Crushing sometimes sound like a condensed history of the past three decades of metal. Over the course of three songs here they move from the classic New Wave Of British Heavy Metal of Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, through Metallica-style thrash, briefly skirt nu-metal and end up at the finishing line stood alongside Lamb of God and Killswitch Engage.

There's a slightly daft theatricality about The Crushing, which is unsurprising given that former-Marconi's Voodoo frontman Snuffy is on vocal duties, and 'Gentle Lover' might be an out-take from the as-yet (but don't bet against it) unmade Metal – The Musical! 'Pile Of Skulls' is bullish but lacks a killer punch, Snuffy coming on like a direct hybrid of Bruce Dickinson and James Hetfield, but the highlight is 'Squinty Eyes At Dawn', more than a little bit silly but with a bloody great chorus hook that stops you smirking too hard.

Dale Kattack



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06 FEB - THE JERICO

DOLOREAN
+ RICHARD WALTERS

18 FEB - THE BULLINGTON

LA SHARK / A.HUMAN

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FRANCIS
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GIG GUIDE

SATURDAY 1st

Happy New Year. We've made a resolution to be nicer to angst-ridden singer-songwriters, but like our previous vow to stay off the sherry, don't expect us to keep to it.

SUNDAY 2nd

MOON LEOPARD + RICHARD BROTHERTON + BEARD OF DESTINY + SUE & PHIL: Donnington Community Centre – Free acoustic music session.

DARREN LESTER + AURORA YOUNG: The Hobgoblin, Bicester

MONDAY 3rd

TUESDAY 4th

BARE YOUR BONES: Café Tarifa – New weekly acoustic and semi-acoustic night for local and out-of-town acts.

WEDNESDAY 5th

Friday 14th

CROWBAR: O2 Academy

As the name suggests, Crowbar are hard and heavy. They're also fantastically slow. Since they formed in the late-1980s, the New Orleans outfit been a byword for metal's sludgiest excesses. The band is basically the vehicle of British-born singer and guitarist Kirk Windstein who has performed with an ever-changing cast of musicians over the past 20 years, the Crowbar sound settling, if that's the right word, from its punky beginnings to a sprawling, all-consuming thick tar of ugly, black riffage, tectonic beats and growling. Windstein is exactly what you'd expect from the frontman of such a band – big, bald and bearded, a metal colossus with the presence to carry off his band's huge, brooding sound. Over the years he's been joined by members of Pantera, Down, Eyehategod and Acid Bath and the current line-up has just released its ninth album, 'Sever The Wicked Hand', Crowbar's first in six years. Told you they don't do things in a hurry.



JANUARY

THURSDAY 6th

KOMRAD + ANNERO: The Bullingdon – Technical post-rock and hardcore from Komrad, plus super-heavyweight metal from Annero.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more at Oxford's longest-running and best open-mic club.

IZZI STONE + AGE OF MISRULE + KAPTAINS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock night, featuring Wycombe's classic heavy rockers Izzi Stone kicking it out in the style of Aerosmith and Motley Crue, alongside bluesy grunge-rockers Age of Misrule.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 7th

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN + SWITCH 60 + MOON

LEOPARD: The Wheatsheaf – The first KK of 2011 finds the merry collective celebrating local troubadour Jeremy Hughes' birthday in the company of Cajun-tinged country'n'western outfit Country For Old Men, as well as Jeremy's own Moon Leopard.

THE CELLAR FAMILY + COCAINE COWBOYS + GENERALS & MAJORS + DAISY & THE UNSTEADIES: The Bullingdon – Skewed punk noise from recent Nightshift Demo of the Monthers The Cellar Family at tonight's It's All About The Music promotion.

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

CIRCUIT CHASE + CRYISIS: The Port Mahon

SKYLARKIN: The Cellar – Ska, soul, roots and more with Count Skylarkin and DJ Derek.

SATURDAY 8th

BIRTHMARK: The Jericho Tavern – Not prepared to be outshone by his cousins Tim and Mike, Chicago's Nate Kinsella is emerging from his time spent with Joan of Arc to carve out a musical career of his own under the guise of Birthmark. An exceptionally talented multi-instrumentalist, Nate has made a sizeable contribution to the nebulous Joan of Arc. He plays everything on Birthmark's two albums, including the most recent, 'Shaking Hands': drums, guitar, bass, piano, cello, clarinet and mandolin, as well as singing. The result is a metronomic form of acoustic psychedelia that's equally intimate, spaced-out and minimalist.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Indie superclub Propaganda in the main room, with kitsch pop, glam and 80s upstairs at Trashy and metal and alt.rock at Room 101.

LOST INNOCENCE + ACEDIA: The Centurion, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

SUNDAY 9th

MONDAY 10th

RESERVOIR CAT: The Bullingdon – The Famous Monday Blues opens its 2011 account with

a now traditional gig by Tony Jezzard's good-time heavyweight blues-rockers.

TUESDAY 11th

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

BARE YOUR BONES: Café Tarifa

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

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

WEDNESDAY 12th

MOSHKA: The Wheatsheaf – Local bands.

WORDPLAY: The Cellar – Hip hop club.

THURSDAY 13th

AGE OF MISRULE + MOTHER CORONA + TUESDAY NIGHT PROJECT: The Bullingdon – Bluesy grunge-rock and metal.

THE AUSTRALIAN CLASSIC ROCK SHOW:

The New Theatre – Aussie-styled take on classic rock songs from Supertramp, Dire Straits, Led Zeppelin, The Eagles, Steely Dan, Genesis, Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton, Lynyrd Skynyrd and The Who.

HALF NAKED: The Port Mahon – Didcot's ska-punk newcomers.

WHITE HEATHER + CARAVAN OF WHORES + ZANGRYUS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox metal night with Banbury heavyweights White Heather and stoner-metaller Caravan of Whores.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

JAWLESS & FRIENDS: The Cellar – Drum&bass.

FRIDAY 14th

CROWBAR: O2 Academy – New Orleans sludge-metallers kick the new year into life in brutal fashion – *see main preview*

THE CRUSHING + PHYRRIC VICTORY: The Wheatsheaf – Metal night at Moshka.

MOTOWN'S GREATEST HITS: The New Theatre – Classic soul hits from the 60s and 70s.

ALAN BROWN: The Bullingdon – Live techno from Mr Brown.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOREST FICTION: The Port Mahon

WHITE HEATHER + ZANGRYUS + AVENGE

VULTURE ATTACK: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

DISC-OVERY: James Street Tavern

BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Latin dance, Balkan beats, world breaks and nu-jazz.

SATURDAY 15th

EQUITRUCK: O2 Academy – Truck all-dayer, featuring Fixers, Ute, Dreaming Spires, DB Band, Dead Jerichos and more – *see main preview*

THE PSYCHOTECHNIC LEAGUE: The Wheatsheaf – New electro night hosted by local acid-techno chap We Are Ugly But We Have The

Music, tonight's opening show features Banbury's industrial techno outfit Sikorski and 70s synth pop-meets-90s acid house duo Space Heroes Of The People, as well as We Are Ugly himself.
ANDREA PARKER + SHITMAT + P45 + COLOUREDS: The Cellar – Experimental techno at tonight's Audioscope benefit – *see main preview*

ONE NIGHT OF QUEEN: The New Theatre – Spectacular tribute to Freddie and the boys.

SWITCH 60: The Bullingdon – Northern soul and Motown club night.

PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy

SUNDAY 16th

MONDAY 17th

THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Bullingdon – Swampy, funk-up blues rock and psychedelia

Saturday 15th

ANDREA PARKER / SHITMAT / P45 / COLOUREDS: The Cellar

A sort of addendum to November's trilogy of Audioscope shows, tonight's gig, again in aid of homeless charity Shelter, features a great cast of leftfield electronica, techno and more, the bill topped by long-time champion of dark-hearted techno Andrea Parker, a classically-trained cellist and singer who's incorporated her talents into a succession of projects, mostly on Mo'Wax, including collaborations with David Morley and remixes for Depeche Mode, The Orb and Steve Reich. Joining her is Brighton's breakcore nutter Henry Collins, aka Shitmat (*pictured*), who began his experiments with gabba and jungle as a reaction to mainstream drum&bass, won himself a deal with Planet Mu and has since moved from disaffected outsider to festival regular and prolific album artist, without ever compromising his crazed musical vision. Also playing tonight is P45, originally from Oxfordshire but musically established in Leeds, where he started the legendary experimental music club Room 237, mixing up a dense collage of drum&bass, industrial electronica, dubstep, ambient and hip hop, which has seen him support everyone from Squarepusher and Venetian Snares to The Locust and Four-Tet. Oxford's own experimental techno twins Coloureds open the show.



from veteran local faves The Mighty Redox at tonight's famous Monday Blues.

BEETROOT JAM: The Port Mahon – Live bands and open jam session.

TUESDAY 18th

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

BARE YOUR BONES: Café Tarifa

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 19th

TRAGEDY: O2 Academy – Metal tribute to The Bee Gees. Again. This time they're promising "the farewell reunion tour". Oh how we laughed.

THURSDAY 20th

KIDS CAN'T FLY + NOTHING NEW + GO-X + LOST BOY: O2 Academy – The non-stop pop-punk touring experience that is Kids Can't Fly return to town for their own headline show after supports to Zebrahead and Less Than Jake.

GIVE IT SOME 'STIC: The Bullingdon – Acoustic night.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: O'Neill's – Eccentric blues rocking from the local stalwart.

LOST INNOCENCE + WAYS ACROSS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

FRIDAY 21st

BEARD OF ZEUS + DOMES OF SILENCE + CARAVAN OF WHORES + UNDERSMILE: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke metal night, featuring stoner heavyweights Beard of Zeuss and Caravan of Whores, industrial-strength sludge-rockers Domes of Silence, coming in somewhere between Primal Scream, Depeche Mode and Motorhead, and uber-sludge slowies Undersmile.
ALPHABET BACKWARDS + PROXIES + SECRET RIVALS: O2 Academy – Big-hearted, anthemic electro-pop from the fabulously ebullient Alphabet Backwards, Support from electro-tinged boy band Proxies, following in the footsteps of... oh, you know. Sounds a bit like a half-arsed Calvin Harris remix of We Are the Ocean or some-such. Sorry, you appear to have confused us with someone who cares.

THE BIG TEN INCH with BEAT SEEKING MISSILES: The Cellar – Count Skylarkin's monthly celebration of rock'n'roll, ska, soul and r'n'b plays host tonight to the debut gig by Beat Seeking Missile, the new band formed by Sir Bald Diddley and former-Supergrass bassist Mick Quinn, alongside ex-members of The Headcoats, kicking out a raw blend of garage, surf and punk inspired by Sonics, Kinks, Link Wray and Bo Diddley.

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

THE INSULT: The Bullingdon
LES CLOCHARDS + THE MARMADUKES:

The Chester Arms – Roy Orbison gets a French café folk-pop makeover in Les Clochards' exotic twilight world, plus folk from The Marmadukes.

MUNDANE SANDS: The Hollybush, Osney – Folk rock in the vein of Mark Knopfler and The Oyster Band from Mundane Sands.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 22nd

THE WALKMEN: O2 Academy – The elegantly wasted New Yorkers ride into town – *see main preview*

THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA: The Port Mahon – More symphonic electro-rocking from the mighty Rock,



Saturday 15th

EQUITRUCK: O2 Academy

Started by members of Truck Festival's bar staff, who felt a year was too long to wait for the main event to come round again, Equitruck marks the six months since and six months before point in the year, an all-day gig based on the same homegrown principles as Truck itself, and featuring many of the organisation's favourite local bands. This year's event carries particular weight, occurring shortly after the untimely demise of Equitruck founder Simon Stocker, to whom the day is dedicated and with all proceeds going to his favourite charity, The Citizen's Advice Bureau. Acts so far confirmed include the mighty **Fixers** (*pictured*) whose star is very much in the ascendancy, mixing Animal Collective's wayward psychedelia with Brian Wilson's timeless pop perfectionism and a hefty dose of danceability. **Ute**, who release their new single on Alcopop! this month bring their characteristically eclectic approach to folksy rocking along, plus the fantastically honed post-punk power trio that is **Dead Jerichos**. Of course Truck's Bennett brothers will be appearing with their **Dreaming Spires** alt.country outfit and Mick Quinn's bluesy **DB Band**.

tonight reviving plenty of songs from their debut album, 'My Band's Better Than Yours', alongside tracks from their forthcoming new album.

TARIK BESHIR + JOHN KAMEEL FARAH + LES OCELOTS: Modern Art Oxford – Pindrop Performance continues to showcase some of the most esoteric acts around, tonight featuring Brickwork Lizards frontman Tarik Beshir, mixing up electronic, modern classical and north African music, plus virtuoso pianist John Kameel Farah, joining the dots between Rachmaninov and Squarepusher, and contemporary jazz ensemble Les Ocelots, featuring bassist Ruth Goller.

PETE FRYER BAND: The Red Lion, Yarnton
PROPAGANDA / TRASHY / ROOM 101: O2 Academy



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Saturday 22nd

THE WALKMEN:

O2 Academy

The sublime Jonathan Fire*Eater were a band too far ahead of their time to make it big; instead The Strokes stole their thunder, but at least their premature demise – along with that of The Recoys – led to the creation of The Walkmen, who have continued that heroically untamed exploration of vintage rock'n'roll, surf, garage and punk, drawing on influences like Sun Records, classic blues and The Velvet Underground. Over the course of six critically-acclaimed albums the New York outfit have championed the terminally regretful, resentful and world weary with elegantly dishevelled aplomb. More theatrical and uptight than fellow well-dressed New Yorkers The National, The Walkmen are capable of some undeniably awesome rock moments, like 'The Rat', and 'Angela Surf City', from their most recent album, 'Lisbon'. Hopefully all that sustained positive press will start to translate into wider commercial success this year, although their continued outsider status is surely fuel to singer Hamilton Leithauser's creative fire.

FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – Hip hop, breaks, disco, electro-boogie, techno, reggae, house and funk club night.

DUBSTEP NIGHT: The Bullingdon

SUNDAY 23rd

MONDAY 24th

STEAMROLLER: The Bullingdon – Heavyweight 60s-style blues-rock from the reformed local rockers.

TUESDAY 25th

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

BARE YOUR BONES: Café Tarifa

WEDNESDAY 26th

FUNERAL PARTY: O2 Academy – California's spiky dance-punk three-piece hit the UK on the back of their acclaimed, 'New York City Moves To The Sound Of LA', and appearances at last year's Reading and Leeds festivals, coming on like a more aggressive Rapture at times.

MOSHKA: The Wheatsheaf – Bands to be announced.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 27th

ONE DIRECTION: The Regal – Abs out and let the screaming commence as this year's X-Factor third-place boy band bring their all-dancing cabaret to town. Expect covers of 'Viva la Vida', 'Kids In America', 'Summer of 69' and of course 'Torn'.

THE CRUSHING + MALTA TONKIN + SIX BULLET CHAMBER + WAYS ACROSS: The Bullingdon – Skeleto metal night with theatrical heavyweights The Crushing launching their new EP, offering a lopsided take on classic Judas Priest, 80s thrash and more contemporary hardcore metal. Support comes from promising new stoner-metallers Malta Tonkin, Banbury's thrash merchants Six Bullet Chamber and female-fronted thrash crew Ways Across.

NITKOWSKI + GUNS OR KNIVES + GUNNING FOR TAMAR: The Cellar – Post-rock at tonight's Big Hair night.

CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED + BLACK HATS + SPRING OFFENSIVE: Fat Lil's. Witney – Great, earthy 70s-style soul-rock in the vein of Little Feat from Charly Coombes, plus modish power-pop from Black Hats and wiry, sharp-elbowed indie from Spring Offensive.

DYING BREED + THE BREAK AWAY + CRACKERDUMMY: The Hobgoblin, Bicester

FRIDAY 28th

THE EPSTEIN + GLASS ANIMALS + VARIOUS CRUELITIES: The Jericho Tavern – Radiate Management – responsible for looking after Stornoway – launch their new monthly live music night in style tonight with the increasingly mighty Epstein headlining, now established as undisputed princes of the local scene with their superb 'Held You Once' single just released and a second album due in the summer. Mixing the epic big folk sound of The Waterboys with the emotive bleakness of Giant Sand and The Low Anthem, they're stars in waiting. Excellent support too from Glass Animals, Nightshift Demo Of The Month winners last year with their wispy, atmospheric electronica, trip hop and psychedelia, touching on Tricky, Liars and Pink Floyd at times, while London's Various Cruelties mix up surf pop and indie-folk, having supported Villagers and Mumford & Sons previously.

TRY THIS PINK: Fat Lil's, Witney – Get the party started, it's a tribute to Pink.

MOON WIRING CLUB + TIME ATTENDANT: Modern Art Oxford – Playfully ghostlike electronic experimentation from Moon Wiring Club, signed to the cool Ghost Box label (also home to Ariel Pink and Broadcast), inspired as much by Hammer Horror and lost TV broadcast tapes as anything and accompanied by collages of bizarre, arcane TV clips as they play music from recent album, 'Shoes Off, Chairs Away'. Support comes from Resonance FM regular Time Attendant, playing radiophonic electronica.

MESS AGE TO BEARS + THE GULLIVERS + COOLING PEARLS: The Wheatsheaf – Neo-classical folk-rocking from M2B, ethereal indie pop from The Gullivers and sweetly dark-hearted folk-pop from Cooling Pearls.

KILL CITY SAINTS: The Bullingdon
FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon
SECRET RIVALS + BLACK HATS + KING OF CATS: The Port Mahon

SATURDAY 29th

MAMA ROSIN: The Bullingdon – Punked-up Cajun and zydeco from the Jools Holland-endorsed Swiss outfit – see main preview

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with VICARS OF TWIDDLY + EVOKATEUR + ABOVE US
THE WAVES: The Wheatsheaf – Classic surf-rock delivered with a papal bull by the ever-entertaining Vicars of Twiddly at tonight's GTI. Support comes from London's sultry boy-girl electro-pop duo Evokateur, in a St Etienne, Dubstar and Glass Candy vein and complex, angular alt.pop from Above Us The Waves.

JOHN OTWAY: The Port Mahon – Return to town for the enduring clown prince of pop.

PROPAGANDA: O2 Academy
KOMRAD + SCOTT GORDON + THE SCEPTICS + BLIN JONNIE: The Hollybush, Osney – Benefit gig for next summer's Wittstock Festival, in aid of the Oxfordshire MIND charity. Proggy hardcore merchants Komrad head the cast; it's free to get in but you can donate to the festival or buy raffle tickets on the night.
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: The Chequers, Headington.

SUNDAY 30th

THE RICHARD THOMPSON BAND: The New Theatre – The folk guitar legend returns.

MONDAY 31st

THE CLARE FREE BAND: The Bullingdon – Electric blues-rock in the vein of Bonnie Raitt from the local singer and guitarist.

Saturday 29th

MAMA ROSIN:

The Bullingdon

Formed on the tranquil banks of Lake Geneva, Swiss trio Mama Rosin's real roots lie in the Louisiana Bayou, where their raw, swampy mix of blues, Cajun, zydeco and rock'n'roll would be right at home. Inspired by the French migrant music of the southern states, but equally by punk and rock'n'roll, guitarist and melodeon player Cyril Yeterin and banjo and washboard player Robin Girod have slowly but steadily earned themselves an enviable reputation around Europe for their authentic take on lost folk sounds given a hefty injection of rock energy, championed early on in the UK by Mark Lamarr and more recently by Jools Holland. Along the way they've toured with British cajun legend Chris Hall as well as The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and it comes as little surprise to learn their first album was released on Swiss punk label Voodoo Rhythm. With their new album, 'Black Robert', the band have drawn in new calypso and jazz influences, spicing their musical gumbo with elements of Blue Note as well as The Velvet Underground and with a full UK tour to promote the album, Mama Rosin look like being one of this year's most interesting and fun breakthrough world/folk acts.



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The Workhouse photo: Johnny Moto



THE WINTER WARMER

The Wheatsheaf / Café Tarifa

It all starts so well. On the night the emergency services apparently dub Black Friday, due to the number of office party casualties left sprawled across city centre streets, Gappy Tooth Industries presents its own annual festive celebration: two nights and two afternoons of live music of the sort you will never encounter battling for the Christmas number 1.

Winter Warmer opens **A SCHOLAR & A PHYSICIAN** are very much in keeping with the spirit of Gappy Tooth Industries: singularly oblivious to the constraints of fashion and a little bit ramshackle. A dodgy lead means the duo's laptop crackles and pops at regular intervals, but it can't diminish the frivolous enthusiasm of their shouty electro-punk which at its best sounds like Bis trying to be Devo, or possibly John Otway, and only occasionally sounds like bad Pet Shop Boys karaoke. It's daft but fun and they might be that thing Oxford never knew it needed: a spiritual successor to Holy Roman Empire.

THE YARNS start off promisingly enough, gangly and jangly in an undeniably 80s kind of way, hints of The June Brides at times with the trumpet interrupting the sweet-natured songs that come over as a cross between a tumbledown cottage and a sleepy puppy, but they quickly get bogged down in a semi-acoustic pop mire, chugging with precious little personality and then really blowing it by trying to get funky.

TIGER MENDOZA are a welcome wake-up call after that, their big mechanical beats and vaguely acrobatic female vocals creating an approximation of an unlikely collaboration between Tricky and Maria Carey, but the band don't seem to gel and often it sounds like four different genres, never mind songs, being played simultaneously.

So rarely do **THE WORKHOUSE** play live it's easy to forget that they're one of Oxford's most underrated bands. Their magnificently dour glissando sounds like it's arrived direct by Tardis from 4AD's early catalogue – a little bit Cocteau Twins, a little bit Modern English – but with an attention to texture and dynamics that make it timeless. Guitars sparkle like diamonds over metronomic beats and tunes rise into tidal waves of dense, heavily-

effected noise. Effortlessly great stuff.

SPRING OFFENSIVE's guitar spangle is skinnier of rib and sharper of elbow; their debt to fellow local stars Youthmovies and Jonquil apparent throughout, with their offbeat harmonies and willingness to veer off-road at will, but they've got such a way with a tune – especially the excellent 'Every Coin' – and an ability to wring every ounce of tension out of a song, that they stand out as a great young band in their own right.

And so we head home enthused and merrily oblivious to the shrieking harpies and bellowing oafs staggering along Cornmarket stuffing their wretched faces with mechanically-recovered meat-based food substitute. This is going to be a great weekend.

If the first day of the Warmer is Black Friday, the second is White Saturday. It's snowing. And snowing. And snowing. It takes three hours to get from Kidlington to Café Tarifa on Cowley Road – albeit including a glorious amble along Queen's lane that feels like a Dickensian Christmas scene – only to find most of the acts have been stranded at home. Of those who have made it here, we've already missed **JESS HALL** and **BOATMAN'S CALL** (a gothic Crowded House, according to a fellow Nightshift scribe), but we're in time to catch **KING OF CATS**, who wanders around the sparsely-populated venue emoting in startling fashion, like a nutter who's wandered in from the blizzard to sing us his singularly tragic and surreal life story. One more daydreaming number is about being Hannah Montana's guitarist, but he saves his best to last, the more tender 'Cat Manoeuvres'.

Two severely worse-for-wear barflies then volunteer their services and stumble heroically through what might in another life have been actual songs but at least they're entering into the blitz spirit of the event.

Just as the compere is about to announce that's it for the day, **JAMES BELL** staggers in from the cold for a short set, updating a selection of trad folk numbers in urgent fashion amid his own tales of social reformer Jeremy Bentham and more and keeping the atmosphere alive for a little while longer.

And then that's it. The buses have stopped so the Wheatsheaf can't open for the evening and even the Sunday afternoon session has to be cancelled as acts remain cut off around the county.

As a hundred or so confused souls mill about the bus stops we decide to walk the six miles back home through the ghostly snowdrifts, armed only with a bottle of brandy. Now that's what we call a winter warmer.

Dale Kattack



Spring Offensive photo: Johnny Moto

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MR FOGG / TIGER MENDOZA / REAL FUR / THE NICHOLE STEAL

The Jericho Tavern

Daisy Rodgers Music's monthly club night features the neat novelty of allowing everyone who buys an advance ticket to vote on one of the acts playing an unusual cover version. Tonight's overwhelming winner, the excited host announces, are gig debutantes The Nichole Steal whose take on Musical Youth's 'Pass The Dutchy' – segueing neatly into Roni Size's 'Brown Paper Bag' – is coolly defunked in the same way Black Box Recorder remade 'Uptown Top Rankin' a few years back. It's great sing-along fun but nowhere near the highlight of a set that starts hesitantly but quickly blooms into something seriously promising. Tonight might be the quartet's first live show but they have a couple of Nightshift Demo Of The Month awards under their belts and Lucy Hamblin's dreamily childlike voice hovering over the tripped-out funk grooves and acid house squiggles reminds us of Sneaker Pimps at times, while odd snatches of guitar echo Talk Talk and the bass player unleashes his inner Mick Karn. They leave the best to last, a seductively bruising industrial trip hop piece that breaks the gently hypnotic spell.

From a 90s-style trip to a jaunt through 80s jangle with Real Fur, who take Orange Juice as their starting point, musically and sartorially, before funking it up in

the style of A Certain Ratio, layering on the reverb as they pay a visit to Vampire Weekend and finally end up, via Talking Heads' road to nowhere, at Paul Simon's Gracelands for a calypso pop party. Derivative stuff, but no less fun for all that.

A shame we can't be so kind about Tiger Mendoza, whose impressive Myspace tunes couldn't prepare us for this ramshackle showing, featuring a singer completely off key for most of the set, which churns bullishly but never gets out of second gear.

What you get from any given Mr Fogg gig depends on whatever format or band line-up he employs for the night. Tonight is a full band synth-rock extravaganza, Fogg and bandmates looking like a cross between Kraftwerk studiousness and Heaven 17 glitz, but musically, and particularly vocally, they sound more like an electro My Chemical Romance, such is the yearning nature of the songs. The synths are pleasingly raw but tunes are emotive rather than austere, Mr Fogg's breathless vocal delivery occasionally drifting into Julian Cope territory. The whole show is slickly executed and seems tailor-made for chart success, but it's the less commercial closing number, 'Answerphone', that's the highlight, all marching snare and emo made for robots.

Dale Kattack

THE VACCINES

The Jericho Tavern

In shrugging off the tidal fuss about The Vaccines, their singer Justin Hayward-Young has said they are the "antithesis of 'clever' guitar bands, and are just straight-up rock'n'roll you either get or not within the first few bars."

What he's omitting from that statement is that The Vaccines are actually *very clever*, in that they instinctively understand what all the great producers – Spector, Brian Wilson, Berry Gordy – understood, that timeless pop/rock, while appearing simple and real, is swaddled in the sound of unreality, as if you are hearing it all through someone's distant memory.

The current, short attention span, hipstamatic app, transistor head culture they feed into is very retro too, but not so much *Ready Steady Go*, more Ready Steady Gone in Sixty Seconds, as, from my position squashed up against the sound booth, I can see the engineer's set list, and

that just ten minutes in they are about to start song five with just four songs left to go.

The Ramones-tinged 'Wreckin Bar (Ra Ra Ra)' accelerates into 'Post Break-Up Sex' and 'If You Wanna', and suddenly you're thinking this is Fleet Foxes on uppers doing Eddie Cochran riffs, or the Stone Roses in Speedos, Surfin' USA. But past the 'Wake Up Boo' Motown stomp of 'European Sun', they show they are more than just half-time football anthems to keep warm to, as 'Wet Suit' jumps full on into bittersweet Beach Boy philosophy, before going back to give the stage divers one last sugar rush of 'Norgaard'.

So are Zane Lowe and *The Guardian* right that The Vaccines "Kick-start a new era"? Nah. They are a great band though, just reminding us how much jump-around-the-room, primal fun the *old* eras were.

Paul Carrera

LISSIE / THE PIERCES

O2 Academy

Having discovered Lissie as support act for various household names over the past year, it follows suit that her own support is of equal calibre. If Kate Bush had met up with Abba, The Pierces would be the end result. Uptempo riffs interwoven with dramatic vocals and heavy synths mean 'How Can I Love You More?' reads like an answer to 'Waterloo', whilst 'Secret' would fit neatly onto 'The Kick Inside'. The Pierces are doing in the States what Marina & The Diamonds have done over here and it's not long before the audience is nodding along, proving that quirk is the new cool.

Lissie, by contrast, is low-key Americana. Opening with the mellow 'Wedding Bells', there's instant panic that she's about to be overshadowed. 'Worried About' soon rectifies this and as the tune builds with its horse-like canter, the combination of Lissie's arresting vocals, over well-timed rock-driven guitar lines, rope the audience in, cowboy style. As she continues with

'Record Collector' and 'Little Lovin' her ability to fuse pop with her native style culminates in a set filled with life.

It's fair to say, even before tonight I was drawn in by Lissie's style. Still, more of a folkie than a pop fan, I'm naturally dubious of records that hit the decks of Radio 1 but tonight reconfirms why sometimes it's right to break your own code of conduct. The eclectic crowd, which leaves me caged in at the front of the stage, mouth nearly every lyric back.

Whether it's the passion of heartfelt 'Bully' or the bluesy 'O' Mississippi Lissie's vocal prowess never falters. Rounding off with a festive cover of '2000 Miles', she continually hits the mark and makes it look easy. When she "fell in love with being defiant," Lissie also defies my ability to find fault. Every song brims with single potential and whilst the album seems perfect for a sunny day, live she proves to be more than a summer fling.

Lisa Ward

HEAVEN 17

O2 Academy

The recent wave of 30th anniversary tours has thrown up a mixed bag of curiosities, but tonight's offering proves to be more enjoyable than expected. Sheffield's Heaven 17 emerged from the 1980 split of the original line-up of The Human League (also currently out on tour), and both are also releasing new material.

Tonight's show is themed around debut album 'Penthouse and Pavement', a mix of dancefloor-oriented numbers and futuristic (for the time) tunes progressing ideas from the last League LP. Events like this are a good excuse to prepare with a pile of long-neglected vinyl, and Heaven 17's early material lacks the dated quality and lumpy production that typifies so much of this era. Tonight original members Glenn Gregory and Martyn Ware lead a full band, playing the album live for the first time.

Opening side one, 'We Don't Need This Fascist Groove Thang' was always a better conceptual joke than political statement, famously banned from the BBC for the line "Reagan's President Elect, fascist god in motion". The songs are faithfully recreated but nothing's added to bring them up to date and the mix is far from dazzling, so by the end of the side it looks like disappointment will rule the day. But then they go off-road and things perk up. 'Ball of Confusion' from 'Music of Quality

and Distinction', a later album featuring an array of guest singers, became the launch-pad of Tina Turner's resurrected career. Here, vocal duties are handled by Billie Godfrey, whose energetic performance and delivery maintains the momentum of the whole show. Gregory then plays acoustic guitar to The Human League's 'Don't You Want Me', and the evening starts to turn into a bit of an 80s revue. Side two of the album reminds us that their success was down to intelligent song-writing and Gregory's distinctive voice, rather than forging a new frontier in electronic dance music. Over the Penines New Order would end up taking that accolade, if more by accident than design.

Towards the end comes a touching, piano-led cover of The Associates' 'Party Fears Two', a tribute to their late friend, its author and singer Billy McKenzie, with Gregory carefully reproducing the unusual phrasing of the original. A few old singles are chucked in and they conclude with The Human League's 'Being Boiled', still the greatest pop song ever written, and the show ends up a resounding success. The fact that no-one in the audience appears to be under thirty-five, unusual even for these kind of tours, suggests that its significance is more sociological than musical, but this was a moment in time well worth re-living.

Art Lagun

UNSILENT NIGHT

Oxford City Centre

Through the joint efforts of local ivory-tinkler Matt Winkworth and the always game Oxford Contemporary Music, a boombox symphony has made its mark on the streets of Oxford.

New York artist Phil Kline's fusion of art piece and amplified music 'Unslient Night' floats down the likes of Cornmarket and Merton Street like a cloud of sparkly, twinkly ambient feel-goodery on a bitterly cold evening. The piece consists of several different forty-five minute tracks, given randomly to volunteers. At eight o' clock on Winter Light night, the volunteers gather at Radcliffe Square with various ghetto blasters, mp3 speaker docks, laptops and mobile phones – basically anything that could project music – and, after some basic instructions, press play and lift their speakers skyward.

Their tour of central Oxford produces some interesting results. Students stop in their tracks in Oriol Square, some of whom even join the (literally) humming throng. Walking past some of the city's less salubrious drinking establishments, quizzical looks meet with open mouths. The occasional half-chewed bargain

basement chip falling out of drinkers' maws.

But for all the parading and the spectacle, there is something unexpectedly warm and fuzzy about the experience. Thanks to the simultaneous playing of different tracks, the music itself is a nebulous, indistinguishable mass of humming synthesisers, jangling bells, chimes and almost choral-like euphoric vocals.

At once organic and defiantly artificial, it's a piece that could compare and contrast to any space it wraps itself around. Sound disappears down the High Street, yet was all-encompassing moments before down around New College. Under bridges, it's hard not to get knocked out by the reverberations.

What it does do is make you aware of the jaw-flooringly gorgeous city we live in. The constant changing modulation and volume of the sound makes you look at your changing surroundings like the first time you saw those dreaming spires. And, without trying to sound like a new age guru spouting hippy crap, it's pretty peaceful and rejuvenating stuff.

James Benefield

WE AERONAUTS / CAT MATADOR

Modern Art Oxford

Having spent most of the day jammed between two women at a Christmas "do" who redefined the words gluttony and ear-shattering we arrive at Modern Art expecting something to calm the nerves from a typically high-quality Pindrop Performance show. Fate has other plans however – tonight's headliners Bleeding Heart Narrative have had to pull out due to illness and transport issues.

Tonight's heroes are We Aeronauts who have stepped into the fray with only a few hours notice. They also have members missing, and rather than being seven or eight strong they're a threadbare four-piece. However, this stripped down version of the band is just as effective and if anything they're more direct than normal. The likes of 'Distance Learning' are gorgeous, with the band's vocal harmonies resonating dramatically in the small performance space. It would be wrong to suggest that the band are taking it all entirely seriously; although they're playing everything in an assured manner, they are basically just having fun with their own material and the audience. It's lucky they've got enough charm and

some truly astonishing melodies to carry it off.

Cat Matador are similarly exposed tonight – something vocalist/guitarist Liam Martin is at pains to point out. Playing an acoustic set means there's no effects pedals to flesh out their sound, so the emotional rise and fall of the music is more reliant on delicate vocals and Sian Lloyd Williams' haunting violin than the judicious application of volume and distortion.

Liam needn't have worried; although the sonic assault of 'Down' is absent, the gloomy nature of their songs is all the more apparent – and there's plenty of beauty to be found amongst the dour lyrics and sombre tones that the band revels in. Towards the end of their set they find time to cover The Postal Service's 'The District Sleeps Alone Tonight', and they make it their own, Liam putting in a particularly heartfelt performance. They close with the remarkably delicate 'We Can Change', which possesses urgent bass lines and gorgeous vocal harmonies and proves that beneath Cat Matador's usually more robust sound beats a broken heart full of fine melodies.

Sam Shepherd

INTRODUCING....

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

UNDERSMILE

Who are they?

Undersmile are a four-piece sludgecore/doom band, compromised of Taz Corona-Brown (*vocals / guitar*); Hel Sterne (*vocals / guitar*); Olly Corona-Brown (*bass*) and Tom McKibbin (*drums*). They formed in 2008, playing a handful of "shambolic" gigs before their style morphed into its current dissonant incarnation. More recently they have played regularly on the local circuit, alongside fellow local noise-mongers Desert Storm, Komrad and others. In December the band released their debut EP, 'A Sea Of Dead Snakes', on Blindsight Records, the label set up by former-Xmas Lights chap and Oxford's King Of Doom, Umair Chaudhry.

What do they sound like?

Slow and heavy to the N'th degree, Undersmile songs tend to clock in around the ten-minute mark: monstrously dense slabs of downtuned guitars and galley slave beats, topped off by Hel and Taz's genuinely disconcerting vocals – gothic, slightly ghostly, zombified incantations straight out of *The Exorist*. Heavily influenced by the likes of Swans, Melvins and Harvey Milk, tracks progress at tectonic pace but scour and crush pretty much everything in their path.

What inspires them?

"Harvey Milk, Melvins, Swans, Pissed Jeans, Boris, The Birthday Party, Leonard Cohen, Kyuss, Pumpkins, QOTSA, Codeine, Komrad, Sextodecimo, Caretaker, Huck and the Handsome Fee, Ivy's Itch, Desert Storm, The Rock Of Travolta, Von Braun, Suitable Case For Treatment."

Career highlight so far:

"Being unplugged mid-set at a recent gig."

And the lowlight:

"Not being plugged back in."

Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"The mighty Komrad."



photo: Pier Corona

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

"This is an excruciating question, but an album of recent years which we have all enjoyed wholeheartedly is Pissed Jeans' 'King Of Jeans', especially the slow-tempo tracks 'Spent' and 'Request For Masseuse', which best display their No-Wave inspired sound."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"We are actually taking January off gigging to go back into Studio 101 with Jimmy Hetherington and continue working on our album. Newcomers can expect tinnitus and a very drunk rhythm section."

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Our favourite thing is the quality of bands and musicians here; there is always a great gig to go on any night of the week. That said, apathy amongst audience members is a bit of a trend in Oxford."

You might love them if you love:

Melvins, Swans, Flipper, Babes In Toyland, Ivy's Itch.

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/undersmile.

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DEMOS

DEMO OF THE MONTH

WILD SWIM

It's always an absolute pleasure to dig something genuinely new and innovative out of the demo pile, and this is one of the most unusual offerings we've unearthed in some time. Wild Swim were previously known round these parts as Picturehouse but a new name has also brought with it a new sound, one that, excitingly, is desperately difficult to pin down. Like Radiohead – to whom they bear no noticeable musical similarity – Wild Swim cherry pick from myriad genres and cleverly, delicately knit the resulting disparate influences into something completely cohesive and their own. They wash in with a backwards slice of not-quite-psychedelia, verging on classical minimalism, breezing through what might be an airy Japanese operetta by way of Klaus Nomi and the wired pop of The Associates (particularly in singer Richard Sansom's gentle but highly-strung voice). Glitchy electronica and house, lysergic folk and hip hop shimmer by, adding their little bit of magic before disappearing, the outstanding highlight of the whole demo being 'The Surrender', which would make the perfect soundtrack to a drug or dream sequence from a future Alejandro Jodorowsky movie. In fact, if there's a single fault we can pick in this it's that the CD itself is scratched so the first song skips horribly halfway through. It doesn't spoil the experience too much though, and this is a great band who will hopefully make their mark under their new name sooner rather than later. They're also planning a collaboration with Mr Shadown in the near future, which will be something well worth holding your breath for.

PLAYER2

Regular gig fodder round the local circuit in recent times, the experience seems to have done Player2 plenty of good, showing themselves as a band who can be solid and inventive. They take a while to settle down, mind, seemingly having drunk a two-litre bottle of coke before setting out on their musical mission and demo opener 'Blueprints' feels a bit all over the place, coming in like an old Kid Creole & The Coconuts cast-off crossed with a bit of indie jangle before suddenly dropping into a more full-blooded rock intermission, trading its groove for heaviosity for no apparent reason and then cantering off in another direction altogether, as if they're trying to escape from the tune in hand. It

catches up with them for the final minute when they become less prog and more comfortable and accessible and things work better from there, 'Bring The Force' and 'A Step Away' being hurried, slightly jerky technical indie fuzz and jangle, the vocals in particular reminding us of Mew, cheesy keyboards managing to complement rather than detract from the songs. Everything is very busy, like they're trying to cram as much into every three minutes as possible and a little bit of space here and there might not go amiss, but on the whole, a well rounded effort from a band coming from just off the beaten track.

FLOODED HALLWAYS

It's been a long while since we heard from hip hop duo Nemrot and Deeq and they now sound like a more cohesive team, while retaining their lo-fi credentials, preferring minimalist backing for their rhymes, chattering electronic beats, synths and electric piano pretty much all they need as they trade raps, Deeq adopting a vaguely Streetsy style on his narratives, contrasting with Nemrot's more free-flowing style. Both of them sound confident while avoiding generic bragging, a downbeat ambience pervading each track, Deeq in particular sounding world-weary on 'Official Story', and over four tracks such a meandering pace, with a slight stoner edge, can make it feel like they lack range, but the slo-mo funk bass and genially pitter-pattering beats of 'What A Coward Won't Do' neatly complement the resignation of the story being told, while the more assertive Arcane Sway' similarly shows how well the pair complement each other.

AETHARA

This month's obligatory mention of the obligatory monthly metal demo, this time from a new Oxford band, inspired, it seems, by the summery Scandinavian sounds of In Flames amid the cast of usual suspects, ranging from old school Brit metal, through thrash and death to Lamb Of God et al. For a relatively new, young band, they've got a decent grasp of epic noise and technical ability, building demo opener 'The Marsh' up into a thundering old storm of goblin rage, the too-high-pitched melodic vocals perhaps the sole distraction when the growling homunculus on lead does the job perfectly well by himself. It's a genre trap too many bands fall into, trying to keep things melodic but perhaps losing some of the more primal thrills in the process. Further in there are the requisite florid guitar breaks to prove that, hey, these guys are got serious talent, right, but we prefer it when they just bludgeon all before them on 'Self-Inflicted', sounding like a

tribe of trolls seriously pissed off because some fucker drained their pet swamp in the night and now they ain't got no toads for breakfast. Here they're dark, dense and more dangerous, while 'Discovery and Damnation' finds them freewheeling into rampant speed-metal territory, leaving our earlier doubts lying in the dust.

AGS CONNOLLY

What's this? Folk-inclined acoustic singer-songwriter in Not Shit shocker? Yes, it's true, Ags here, from west Oxfordshire outpost Finstock may be possessed of a singing and songwriting style that's reflective bordering on morose, but he's also possessed of a welcoming campfire session voice, one that reminds us quite a lot of Kenny Rogers. This is proper old-fashioned – bordering on antique – country-folk, simple and to the point on every level but warm and engaging nonetheless, and the biggest shock is seeing his website profile pic in which he doesn't have either an enormous beard and Stetson, nor a half-empty bottle of sour mash by his side. Whisky does crop up in one of his songs, mind, the classic hard-luck tale that is 'I'm Not Someone You Want To Know', in which poor Ags loses his job, his friends and his girl before taking to the bottle. Hey Ags, cheer up, maybe we do want to know you after all. First round's on you. Altogether now... "Rubeeeeeeeee... don't take your love to town!". Hic.

THE GRACEFUL SLICKS

Hope were high for The Graceful Slicks after their debut demo a few months back suggested a band with an almost heroic disregard for the evolution of music after 1969. Which makes the disappointment of this new offering all the deeper. Gone, it seems, is the tar-coated psychedelia of their first demo, replaced by a half-arsed indie jangle dug out from the back of a discarded mid-1980s unsigned showcase compilation and a sullen attitude that suggests they might have been at home opening the bill for one of Creation Records' less inspired signings back in the day. 'I'm Not The Only One' gives cursory nods to The Velvet Underground and The Monkees' 'Steppin' Stone' but is little more than common-or-garden pub rock at its core. 'Bravery Through Repetition' initially snakes in with a bit of atmosphere but quickly descends into aimless plodding, the tune – or any resemblance to one – left at the door with the stash of drugs we'd hoped they were coming up on last time round. By the time they reach final number 'The End' they've degenerated into mumbling barely coherently and seemingly trying to sound like mid-80s goth also-rans The Rose Of Avalanche.

THE WATER MARGIN

Here's another band back after being reviewed a couple of months back, although in this case, the result is an improvement on that previous effort. In fact The Water Margin ended up in the Demo Dumper last time, but have the character and attitude to bounce back, declaring that they're both thick and thick-skinned and ready for more of whatever we choose to dish out, which endears us to them enormously. And this is a good step up in quality, if still in need of some serious work. 'The Time Being' is modest but jaunty, like a folksy Tindersticks, or The Housemartins at their most reflective, although there's some irony in the singer declaring "I'll take your breath away," while sounding like he's gasping for air himself. Better is 'Fairweather Friend', which just about manages to blend the odd combination of downbeat indie jangle and cheesy Miami Vice incidental music, like Lloyd Cole done over by Jan Hammer, a big old 80s-style synth chiming in halfway through the understated surf shimmer. So anyway, there you have it: take your punishment like proper men and we'll treat you with respect. Still not the crazy Samurai cyborg rock demons we hoped for with that band name but moving in the right direction.

THE DEMO DUMPER

AGES

We love a bit of lo-fi amateurism. We thrive on it. But, by God, at least make some fucking effort to sound like you care about what the word 'music' actually means. Opening with what sounds like the opening bars of 'Are Friends Electric?' played over and over again on a biscuit tin and half a guitar and all shoved through a wonky distortion pedal permanently set to max, Ages manage to draw two and half minutes out to a gruelling degree; when the vocals eventually join the fray they too are distorted to buggery, which at least distracts from the fact the perpetrator seems to be reciting his shopping list with a sterling lack of anything resembling enthusiasm. Onwards they churn, the sole glimmer of melody popping up briefly on 'Surf The Wave', only to retreat back into the suffocating fug of half-cocked thrash at the precise moment we realise it's nicked off 'Blister In The Sun' anyway. By which point we've realised why Ages have absolutely no friends on their Myspace site. And talking of which, why is Myspace so bloody rubbish nowadays? Just because some overpaid, underemployed twonk in Murdoch Towers decided things needed changing for the sake of fucking change. Heftily kicked arses all round.

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

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



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> Goldschlager - £2.50 > 2 x Jagerbombs - £6.50
> Dbl Vodka and mixer - £3.75
All other shots and beer - £2.95

Facebook: Propaganda Oxford, Advance Tickets, Weekly Photos
and more info: www.thepropaganda.com. Photo ID required for entry.

Tickets for Saturday night shows include free entry to Trashy / Room 101 / Propaganda (or £6 / £5 NUS 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
ticketweb.co.uk • wegotickets.com
seetickets.com • gigantic.com