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Oxford's Music Magazine

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Issue 192
July
2011

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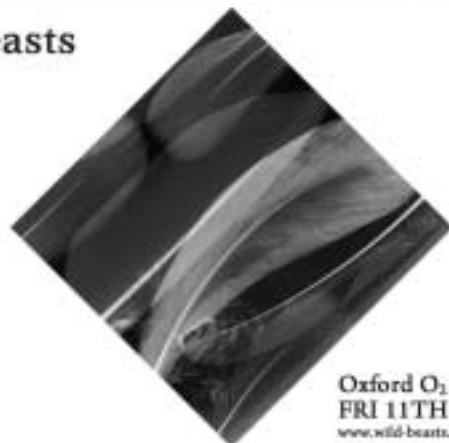
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NEWS

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STORNOWAY celebrate playing their most prestigious headline show to date at Somerset House, by releasing a limited edition EP of acoustic tracks the band recorded for their label, 4AD, in the rotunda of Graham Greene's old house last year. The EP, which features specially hand-made artwork by drummer Rob Steadman, features four songs: 'Fuel Up', 'Here Comes The Blackout', 'On The Rocks' and 'Watching Birds' and is available from Stornoway's own website (stornoway.sandbag.uk.com). The Somerset House show takes place on Saturday 9th July. The band are currently writing songs for their second album, the follow-up to 2010's 'Beachcomber's Windowsill'.

RADIOHEAD release a series of limited edition 12" vinyl singles over the summer of tracks from their last album, 'King Of Limbs'. The first release is on July 4th and features 'Little By Little remixed by Caribou' and 'Lotus Flower' by Jacques Green. The singles are available at selected indie record stores or online from www.radiohead.com.

D-FEST returns for its second run-

out this month. The annual live music mini-festival, takes place at the Red Lion and the Wheatsheaf in Drayton on Saturday 30th July. The event is organised by Drayton-based indie starlets Dead Jerichos. Acts set to play across three stages include Secret Rivals, Dead Jerichos, Tamara & The Martyrs, Black Hats, Samuel Zasada, The Anydays, Charly Coombes & The New Breed, Alphabet Backwards and Vixens.

A warm-up show for the festival takes place on Saturday 9th July, featuring Dead Jerichos with The DB Band, Braindead Collective and Hooks.

BACK & TO THE LEFT, who publish the quarterly Oxfordshire Music Scene magazine, have launched **The Sampler**, a new five-times-a-year magazine dedicated to Oxford's clubbing, dance and electronic music. The first issue features an interview with local producer and DJ Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs, plus plenty of local dance news and reviews. Pick it up from all the usual outlets.

OXFORD BAND PRACTICE returns this month after a successful run in 2009. The regular session aims to bridge the gap between being a beginner and being good enough to audition for a band. The first session takes place at 7pm on 14th July at Soundworks Studios. Drummers and singers are particularly welcome to join in. For more details, visit www.oxfordbandpractice.org.uk.



THE HORRORS return to Oxford later this year. The band play at the O2 Academy on Friday 21st October as part of their UK tour to promote new album 'Skying', out this month. It's the follow-up to 2009's Mercury-nominated 'Primary Colours', Nightshift's favourite album of the year. Tickets for the show, priced £12, are on sale now from www.ticketweb.co.uk as well as the Academy box office.

Other new shows on sale at the O2 include **Toots & The Maytals** (Tue 13th Sept); **The Subways** (Tue 17th); **Hayseed Dixie** (Mon 19th); **Dreadzone** (Fri 23rd); **Bombay Bicycle Club** (Tue 11th Oct); **Benjamin Francis Leftwich** (Tue 18th); **Turin Brakes** (Tue 8th Nov) and post-punk legends **Wire** (Fri 2nd Dec).

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** at its new 9pm Sunday evening slot. The dedicated local music show plays a wide selection of new Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews and live sessions with local acts. The show, presented by Dave Gilyeat, is available to download as a podcast at bbc.co.uk/podcasts.

FOR UP TO DATE ONLINE local music news don't forget to visit www.musicinoxford.net, which also features interactive reviews, live sessions, free downloads, interviews and a regular podcast. The Nightshift online forum at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net features local gig and band news, announcements, pleas for band members and general bickering.



DAVID GASGOYNE 1959-2011

David Gasgoyne, guitarist with seminal Oxford punk band The No, died last month after a long illness. He was 51.

With The No, David played a brief but important part in the development of the Oxford music scene. The band were featured in Nightshift's 'Whatever Happened To Those Heroes?' feature back in 2009.

Paying tribute to his former bandmate, Ian Nixon said, "Despite being probably the most naturally gifted guitarist I ever played with, he effectively quit music when he left The No to go to university. At the age of 18 he could be Johnny Thunders, Wilko Johnson or BB King, or all three at once, but his passion for cars won out – for a long time he ran a garage in Headington.

"When we reformed for a gig in 1999 he'd lost none of the magic. He was also a very funny guy, highly intelligent and a great raconteur. I was always slightly in awe of him but even I would have to admit he's not exactly a key figure in Oxford music. He played for a very short time, a long time ago. However, I think I would be right in saying that it was David who inspired and encouraged the 13-year-old Stephen (Mac) McIntyre to pick up a guitar, without which things might have turned out a whole lot different."

Nightshift's thoughts go out David's family and friends.

Bellowhead

a quiet word with

Jon and chums



THE TITLE OF BEST LIVE BAND

In The World is not one to be banded about lightly, but this month a group with a serious claim to the crown are playing at Oxfordshire's two main music festivals. What's more, the band in question are, in part at least, an Oxford act.

THE BAND IS, OF COURSE

Bellowhead, the eleven-strong folk big band formed by Jon Boden and John Spiers as an amusing indulgence in 2004 but who have since gone on to win so many awards for their live shows that the duo's mantelpieces probably need some serious reinforcing now.

Bellowhead's set at Truck Festival last year was without a doubt the high point of the weekend as the entire main field danced itself daft to the band's exhilarating big band updating of traditional tuns that range from Napoleonic sea shanties

to English ballads to Rudyard Kipling poems and on to Jacques Brel songs. So successful was that set that Truck have invited Bellowhead back as headliners for this year's event.

Earlier in the month Bellowhead will headline the folk stage at Cornbury Festival – wholly fitting since it was at the Oxford Folk Festival that Bellowhead made their live debut in 04, with Spiers and Boden going on to become patrons of the event which they were due to headline as a duo this year before it was sadly cancelled.

ANYONE WHO HAS

witnessed Bellowhead in full flow will talk excitedly of the sheer, unadulterated fun of their shows. With Boden a theatrical singer and animated fiddle player leading the line, and Spiers' concertina and melodeon playing set up against a full brass section, drums, bouzouki,

strings and pipes, Bellowhead's sound flies with untamed abandon from gypsy dance to New Orleans jazz, on through township jive and Vaudeville to classic English folk dance, jigs and reels mingling easily with cleverly arranged ballads, 'New York Girls' leading into Brel's 'Amsterdam', songs like 'Rochdale Coconut Dance' bringing an almost punk edge to proceedings. These interpretations have been captured on three albums so far, including their most recent, 'Hedonism' (produced by John Leckie, who has previously worked with Radiohead and The Stone Roses), a fitting title for a band that likes to bring the party.

It's a global and historical mash-up of styles that might in clumsier hands sound like a right old mess, but such is the skill and style of the band it works a treat and has so far seen Bellowhead performing at venues as diverse as Shepherd's Bush Empire and the Royal Opera House. But it's up on the big festival stage that they work best and they will undoubtedly steal the show at both Cornbury and Truck.

BOTH JOHN SPIERS AND JON

Boden have strong ties with Oxford. Spiers was born in Birmingham but grew up in Oxfordshire and, having moved away for some time, again lives locally. Boden, meanwhile, though born in Chicago and raised in Winchester, lived in Oxford for a number of years, above The Half Moon, the pub on The Plain famous for its regular folk sessions. The pair spent their formative years playing at the legendary Catweazle Club before forming Spiers & Boden, together breathing fresh new life into the English folk scene before coming up with the idea of Bellowhead.

AHEAD OF BELLOWHEAD'S

shows at Cornbury and Truck, Nightshift caught up with John and Jon to talk about their local roots and upcoming festival appearances, and asked first what was it like for Jon living above the Half Moon and how does he view his time here and the Oxford scene in general having since moved away to Sheffield?

JON B: "The Half Moon was an amazing place to be. Even at the time I was aware of how lucky I was to be in the right place at the right time with a critical mass of singers and musicians who were all into

hanging out at the Moon until 3am several nights a week, playing music and singing songs. Musically it was great because there was a pretty big range of stuff being played, so I learnt a lot. A few jazzers and classical types used to come in now and then. On the downside I didn't really leave the pub very often, so never got to know anyone from the Oxford rock scene."

How important was the Catweazle Club in forming your musical careers?

JOHN S: "Catweazle has been there for as long as I've been on the music scene in Oxford, possibly longer; I love the way it brings all sorts of music and performance together in one place. I think I have been drunk in that particular venue on various occasions in the dim and distant past, but that may be why I can't actually remember playing there!"

Oxford has quite a strong tradition for folk music; do you think that's something that isn't always properly recognised, either by the mainstream music press or within in Oxford itself?

JOHN S: "When I started playing around Oxford, it had not one, but two regular world-class folk sessions; The Fir Tree on Iffley Road was probably the best English session I have ever taken part in, and The Elm Tree on Cowley Road had Joe Ryan's famous Irish session, which moved to whichever pub he was running at the time. Loads of people who happened across these sessions and had a love of folk music ended up moving to the town on the strength of them. Although Joe is no longer working as a landlord, his last pub, The Half Moon, still continues the regular Sunday night session in the same vein. You can never underestimate the value of good pub landlords in traditional music. There is also a brilliant French folk music session now at the Chester Arms once a month, which I still try to get to as often as possible, and the Oxford Folk Club at the Folly Bridge Inn, so it's just as vibrant as ever.

"In the past few years, I think the mainstream music press has gotten wind of the fact that folk music is actually quite exciting but it may drop folk in favour of the next big thing. I don't think this matters all that much though, folk music has already proved it can stand the test of time."

JON B: "Yes, it's a shame that this

doesn't seem to have been picked up on by the press yet, unlike, to some extent, Sheffield or Newcastle. I think the Oxford scene was, still is, much more about playing for the love of it than trying to 'make-it' as a musician, so maybe that keeps it below the radar a bit."

HAVING MADE A NAME FOR themselves as a duo, what was the chief impetus to forming Bellowhead? Has the pair's vision for what it could or should be been realised?

JOHN S: "The main thing was to bring traditional English folk music to a wider audience in an exciting manner, so that we could let as many people as possible know about the brilliant musical heritage we all share as people living in England."

Your first appearance at the Oxford Folk Festival saw you playing arrangements of songs and tunes Spiers and Boden were playing as a duo, and the band is named after the Spiers and Boden CD, 'Bellow'. How has the way Bellowhead makes music changed since then?

JOHN S: "It's changed a lot in that all eleven members now contribute arrangements to the band and the new arrangements are made with a much greater understanding of how the band works as a unit. However, the duo still work some of the material up for the band, as was the case with the opening track on the new album, 'New York Girls'."

Bellowhead played their first show together at the Oxford Folk Festival; how important is the Folk Festival to Oxford?

JON B: "We'd had the idea for setting up a big band knocking around for a while but arguably we would never have got around to doing it without the impetus of those nice people at the Oxford Folk Festival."

JOHN S: "The first gig at the inaugural Folk Festival was pretty scary; the band was put together specifically for that show and we'd only had one full day's rehearsal prior to playing the gig. I have a recording of it and I have to say that by our current standards it's very rosy indeed! Oxford has had a very rich folk scene for many years and Tim Healey has constantly been at the centre of what's been happening, so it was no surprise when he announced that he planned to start the festival and it's been a great bonus to the scene since 2004."

You were due to headline this year's event as a duo but it was cancelled for various reasons; how big a blow was that?

JOHN S: "It's always a blow to lose a gig, but as far as we understand it, the reason for the festival being cancelled was to give it every chance of continuing in the years beyond

2011, which can only be welcomed. We also managed to put a new Oxford date in to that tour at short notice, thanks to Matt Sage and Big Village, and were introduced to a lovely new venue for us in Oxford – the North Wall Arts Centre."

JON B: "It's always a bit sad to hear when a really great festival disappears off radar. I have no doubt it will come back stronger from having a year off, though."

BELLOWHEAD WERE indisputably considered the highlight of last year's Truck; how do they feel about coming back again as headliners?

JOHN S: "Brilliant! It's such a cool little festival and I grew up around Abingdon so I'm really proud that a festival with its reputation is right on our doorstep. I wasn't sure how we'd go down with the crowd but they seemed to love it last year, so headlining will be great. Let's just hope the weather's as good as it was then."

JON B: "I'm still a bit nervous playing rock festivals: I'm never quite sure what they're going to make of us, but Truck last year was pretty much the highlight gig of the summer for me, and it was a good summer, so I'm really looking forward to going back."

Is there a particular excitement or satisfaction that comes from playing to a non-folk crowd and completely challenging their preconceptions?

JOHN S: "Yes; it's a bit perverted I know but people are often so sure of what they like and don't like and I love challenging that."

JON B: "I really like the idea that we point people in the direction of the treasure trove that is English folk music, who otherwise wouldn't think they were interested in it or might find it harder to discover."

Have you had any problems from folk purists about what you do to traditional songs?

JOHN S: "Mostly, 'folk purists' have been very supportive. We haven't had problems from others as such, but we obviously did put a couple of people's noses out of joint by doing what we did. The thing that makes me laugh the most is that a few respected performers of the previous generation have spoken out about what we do and suggest it's 'bad for folk music', but in the 70s they themselves abused the tradition as much as we are doing in the pursuit of experiment. I think that kind of attitude is just a natural part of the ageing process, so please remind me of this interview if I'm ever caught doing the same."

JON B: "I think most serious purists are too busy arguing with other serious purists about who is the most purist to worry about us. Speaking as

one myself."

You've also played Cornbury before; how do you think the festival is different, if at all, from other festivals you've played?

JOHN S: "Yes, on Tim's Oxford Folk Festival stage, both as the duo and as Bellowhead. We had good gigs both times and I think it's really grown as a festival. It's great that it's one of a number of well run festivals catering for an eclectic taste in music, but again I love the fact that it's more or less on my doorstep!"

JON B: "Mind you, it's gonna be strange playing at the same time as James Blunt!"

HAVING YET AGAIN

collected an award for Best Live Band at the BBC Folk Awards Bellowhead are rightly hailed as the best live band around in any genre. What is the secret of putting on such a great live show, night after night?

JOHN S: "There is a lot dancey material in our sets, and with the more involved songs we try our best to keep it interesting for the audience, both instrumentally and visually. Live is definitely what we like doing best, it's where we come from as musicians and the folk basis of what we do is rooted in the oral tradition, which is essentially an all-

live music medium. Whether we're better at it than any other band is not up to us to say. I can't watch what we do live. I can confirm that even after all this time, we do really enjoy performing and hopefully that's what audiences are picking up on. I personally feel very comfortable on stage with Bellowhead - safety in numbers I guess and we're all mates - but the energy and in-built humour of the music makes it really fun to play too."

JON B: "I think traditional material is a really strong starting point for creating a great live act. If you're singing songs about yourself you're much more inward looking and less focused on building the audience into a frenzy. Traditional music has always been about a communal experience. I think the fact that we retain this sense in a big show is probably our greatest asset."

Bellowhead play Cornbury Festival on Friday 1st July and at Truck on Friday 22nd. Visit www.cornburyfestival.com and www.thisistruck.com for ticket details. 'Hedonism' is out now on Navigator Records. Visit www.bellowhead.co.uk for more gig dates.



John and more chums

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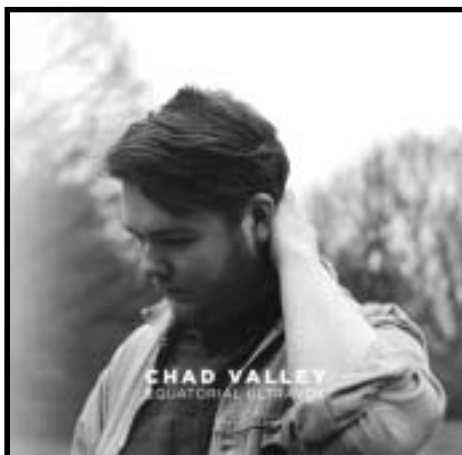
'Equatorial Ultravox'

(Cascine)

In another of its regular, unquenchably hyperbolic lists, *NME* recently voted Chad Valley as the 45th most exciting new act of the first half of 2011, which is a bit like winning the title of Ireland's Smallest Giant or something, but at least reinforces the wider recognition Hugo Manuel has attracted lately after years of being one of Oxford's best kept musical secrets leading Jonquil.

The height of summer is, of course, prime time for Chad Valley to be releasing this new mini-album, seven perfect seafront, sunrise club-comedown soundtracks. Strange to think that when Msrs Paterson and Cauty were pioneering club music specifically not to dance to, how vast and influential the idea of ambient house would become.

Titling his new release 'Equatorial Ultravox', Hugo nods to an earlier era of influence on his electronic doodling, although Kraftwerk and Riichi Sakamoto are more obvious antecedents to Chad Valley than synth-rockers Ultravox, album opener 'Now That I'm Right' possessed of similarly stark, linear lines to 'Trans-Europe Express' but mottled by oddly eastern synth motifs. High point of the whole thing, though, is the swooning 'Reach Lies', with its bonged-out funk bass, spaced-out soulful backing vocals and warm, wide groove. Elsewhere there's the bleached-out psychedelia of 'Shell Suite', in spirit



at least, a closer relative to Jonquil's earliest bedroom-bound experiments, and the lysergic, slowed-down disco of 'I Want Your Love'. 'Acker Bilk' is the sound of dance music with acute residual pot confusion trying to get out of bed in the morning (or afternoon, more likely) and only the aimless 'Fast Challenge' feels like it could be dispensed with, even as it builds to a more satisfying conclusion.

While the composite parts of Chad Valley's sound are unabashedly retro, the ease with which they're all slotted together and orchestrated brings them effortlessly into the present and, while we'd hate to see Jonquil sidelined, it's easy to see Chad Valley eclipsing Hugo's previous work.

Dale Kattack

FAULT FINDERS

'A Dangerous Road'

(Blindsight)

Fault Finders call themselves a side project, so should they be considered a contender in their own right, or an aside? If the album were a 'real' release, a boldly-presented 'core band' collection, it might not repay scrutiny, but as a footnote to other releases, 'A Dangerous Road' stands up well. It's a clear and distinctive set of seven tracks, held together with a familiar sense of melancholy built on subtle, electronica-based music.

It evokes the chilly, lonely feelings generated by a distinguished lineage of bands. From the 1980s neo-wave of early Mute releases – even pushing

at the doors of Depeche Mode – it takes cues from the pre- and post-shoegaze blurs of sound of Kitchens Of Distinction and Cocteau Twins, and nods respectfully towards more recent outfits like The Workhouse and Rothko. Such names dropped should make it clear that this isn't a party album. It's focussed in its dour outlook, with a personal-sounding set of songs based around solid, serious synthesised melodies and simplistic electronic drum patterns. Occasionally – and surprisingly – a skilful songwriter's grip of key and mood becomes apparent, as chinks of light appear: there's a tension between light and dark that is used just sparingly enough as not to grate.

Focussing on individual tracks seems churlish, as the album seems designed to be consumed as a thematic and tonal set. That might be a weak point, as it suggests a lack of standout melodies or songs, but perhaps that's why it's being put forward as the work of a side project. As a sample, a series of sketches, this album suggests that Fault Finders, if they ever wished to drop the 'side' and become a project proper, may need to tighten up and define their sound as something that's more than the sum of its parts. There's no end of pleasing moments spread across 'A Dangerous Road' and anything that reminds you at certain points of early Human League, the oft-forgotten darker moments of the Field Mice, and the oppressive tones of Slowdive, can't be altogether dismissed. If Fault Finders could combine these moments into something more concise, something repeatable, they'd be onto a good thing.

Simon Minter



STEM

'Creepy Bill'

(Own label)

In this Google-dominated age, your band name can determine whether you get noticed or not. Fifteen minutes of search-engine shenanigans and we're still no nearer to discovering anything about Stem other than that they're from Oxford and once played The Port Mahon. Still, no online info means no embarrassing declarations of greatness or lyric sheets with which to hang them, and as this album's title track opens proceedings, we're quietly impressed by a band with a neat line in warmly fuzzy power-pop, a singer with a sleepy-eyed delivery and the overall feeling of some 90s Britpop act aiming for a folksy 60s psychedelic pop feel.

Come their second song we're still on-side, 'Knives' exposing a rockier, post-grunge side to their armoury, all rolling chords and a decent hook, right up to the point they decide to hit the random button and wander off on some-look-at-us-aren't-we-clever diversion, only to realise a minute later they had a tune on the back burner and totter back to finish it off. Sadly that's where thing start to unravel for Stem. They continue down the path of uncertainty, trying to sound like they're complex and meaningful, while the singer lapses inexplicably into a lazy transatlantic accent. 'Hide & Seek' could be the warm-up act for a Foo Fighters tribute band, while lines like "I've got a knife / Demons are playing tricks in my head / I want to kill this man" sound like a murder spree being delivered as a Powerpoint Presentation at the accounts departments' annual conference.

Too much of 'Creepy Bill' simply wanders along aimlessly; not so bad it feels like a dead dog being dragged along, but lacking an emotional punch and the attempts at being epic left waiting to fly as they try far too hard to escape gravity's vindictive grasp.

'Dolphin' is a pleasantly drifting ambient piece, although the clichéd Pro Tools/Stephen Hawkins voiceover spoils the effect, while '200 Billion Birds' sounds like Idlewild's 'Make Another World' stuck through some imaginary Fleetwood Mac filter, but while Stem's high points would have made a passable demo EP, over a full album, it's too much of a trawl.

Ian Chesterton





HALF DECENT

'Pieces Of Life'

(Quickfix)

Half Decent looks about as unlikely a rapper as it's possible to get: bespectacled and not a little geeky, he looks like he'd more suited to playing bass in a slightly grungy indie band rather than spitting out rhymes and dealing in electronic beats and soulful grooves.

We're not sure if knowing this colours our impression of his music or not; initially his slightly clipped delivery sounds too much like a lot of other locally-based white rappers; his flow feels just too stilted, as if he's reading from a cue card rather than letting the feeling flow through him. But while he might lack range, Half Decent actually earns your respect with an increasingly authoritative delivery that peaks on fourth track here, 'Move Your Body'. Lyrically it doesn't

stray far from a late-night pick-up tale but steers clear of macho bragging, and it's a chiselled, thick-set rap bolstered by Natasha Chomyn's backing vocals and some heavy-duty electro back-up. In fact it's his self-made beats and loops that, on balance, make this seven-song debut outing worthwhile, rescuing weaker songs like 'Adult Life', which also benefits from Smilex's Lee Christian's vocal interjections adding welcome variety when it might otherwise drop into Britrap by numbers, and the too-Streetsy 'What We Were Like'.

Like Mike Skinner Half Decent brings a personal, soulful, element to his raps, which you can almost imagine suiting him as well in an acoustic pop format, but when he hits full flow, as on 'Can You Get Away', he shows he's as adept as any of his current local peers behind the mic.

Dale Kattack

13 GAUGE

'Fatally Punched In The Face'

(Rivet Gun)

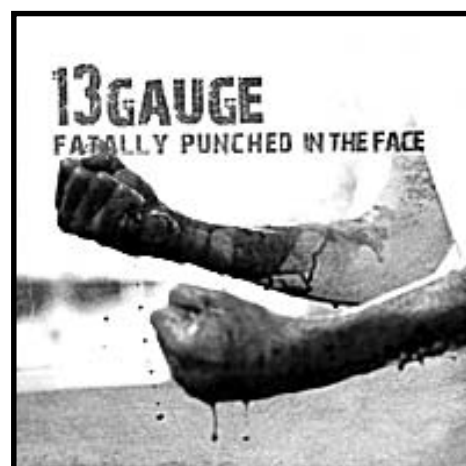
13 Gauge's EP is titled 'Fatally Punched In The Face', it's released on local punk monsters Junkie Brush's Rivet Gun label and its cover features a pair of fists dripping with gore. Obviously it's a CD of easy jazz-soul ballads.

In the real world, though, 'Fatally Punched...' is virulently ogre-ish grindcore with an obstinately nagging guitar line that needles and needles you until you're fit to start lobbing punches at passing strangers. On it tumbles, ransacking Carcass as it

goes, words like "kill" randomly popping their heads above the otherwise unintelligible gibberish the demon-eyed gibbon on vocals is spouting. And then it finishes and you realise it's a pointless three minutes of tuneless aural bastardry that merrily shifts on most of the desperate to be liked proper bands we're forced to listen to every working day (on the days when we're not working, we enjoy smashing up garden sheds while listening to tuneless aural bastardry at criminal volume).

Onward it charges, ugly, brutal and probably full of maggots, faster and fast until it turns inside out in its own skin and splits itself in two like Rumpelstiltskin, spilling innards onto the floor, which it then feverishly picks up, slops into a bucket and claims to be a chorus. Admirable behaviour of which far more bands should take notice.

Dale Kattack



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CORNBURY FESTIVAL

Friday 1st – Sunday 3rd

The Great Tew Estate

A NEW HOME AND A NEW format for Cornbury this year as the festival moves five miles across West Oxfordshire and, having teamed up with 3A Entertainment, promoter Hugh Phillimore is able to bring some bigger names to play over the three days, the event, like Truck, moving up from its traditional two day duration for the first time.

OF COURSE, SOME THINGS

about Cornbury Festival are unlikely to ever change – it will still retain its almost stately air of Englishness, a music festival with more than a hint of traditional village fete about it and an emphasis on both a civilised, laid-back atmosphere and as much attention to the food on offer as the music on stage – last year's Cornbury saw a Jamie Oliver pasta stall as well as Heston Blumenthal and Deilia Smith gazing down from the Waitrose cocktail lounge.

AS YOU'D EXPECT, THEN,

the music at Cornbury tends, proudly, towards the middle of the road. This year's headliners are **James Blunt**, **The Faces** and **Status Quo**.

Blunt, who tops Friday's bill, might have been the music press's whipping boy back when 'Beautiful' was omnipresent, but he counts his record sales in the multi-millions, so plenty of folks love him: despite the fact that he's not nearly as ubiquitous as he was in 2004 when debut album 'Back To Bedlam' was working its way towards being the biggest-selling album of the decade, last year's 'Some Kind Of Trouble' still sold over a million copies. He's a musically safe bet, though, Radio 2-listeners'

balladeer of choice, possibly even the new Cliff Richard. But for every sneering review Blunt has a couple of BRIT and Ivor Novello Awards to look upon.

Saturday night is headed by reformed early-70s rockers The Faces, original frontman Rod Stewart now replaced by ex-Simple Minds soulman Mick Hucknall and the deceased Ronnie Lane's place taken by Sex Pistols' Glenn Matlock. While even in their heyday they rarely troubled the singles charts ('Cindy Incidentally' a rare hit) their good-natured, boozy brand of back-to-basics rock has gone on to influence everyone from Guns'n'Roses to Oasis. Just close your eyes and forget it's Hucknall up there and you'll be fine.

Sunday closes with the peerless Status Quo, a band who, perhaps surprisingly for a rock band, still hold the record as the biggest-selling singles band in the UK ever. The phrase good-time could have been coined for them as they've made 12-bar boogie into an art form and stayed a 50-year course without deviating too far from that blueprint for success. Among the band's many, many hits are timeless anthems like 'Whatever You Want', 'Caroline', 'Down Down' and of course the irrepressible 'Rockin' All Over The World'. Cornbury has a tradition of ending on a singalong high and The Quo fit that bill perfectly.



Cyndi Lauper

BEYOND THE HEADLINERS,

Cornbury's line-up is a mix of living legends, cult heroes and a smattering of up and coming pop acts.

In the former class is Kinks frontman **Ray Davies**, who could stake a reasonable claim to being one of England's most influential songwriters, responsible for early rock hits like 'You Really Got Me'

enjoying her biggest hit with 'Soldier Blue' while having her songs covered by everyone from Elvis to Neil Diamond and Barbara Streisand. Irish folk-rockers **The Saw Doctors** have retained a large cult following, continuing to hold an enviable live reputation after early-90s hits like 'I Useta Lover', which remains Ireland's biggest-selling single, while reformed 1970s prog-folksters **Stackridge** should bring some quirky, singalong fun to proceedings.

BEST OF THE NEWER ACTS

include indie-folk singer **Eliza Doolittle**, best known for last year's Top 5 hit, 'Pack Up', and LA girl band **The Like**, although *X-Factor* runner-up **Olly Murs** is likely to be the biggest pull.

BEYOND ALL THESE NAMES,

though, the musical highlight of the entire weekend is sure to be **Bellowhead**, Spiers and Boden's eleven-strong folk big band who have made turning every festival into a party a speciality, winning just about every Best Live Band award going. They grace the second stage on Friday and if you're not dancing like a loon by the end of their set, you either have no feet or no soul.

OF COURSE A SPECIAL mention must also go to the Riverside Stage, which in recent times has produced many of Cornbury's unexpected highlights – notably last year's fantastic set by Indian band Raghu Dixit – and as ever gives a host of local acts a chance to play at a major festival. Amongst those taking a turn this year are **The Epstein**, **The Rock Of Travolta**, **Charly Coombes** and **The New Breed**, **Borderville** and **The Family Machine**.

Beyond the live music there's plenty to pass the time, whether you're learning Banghra or Bollywood dance, or circus skills and clay modelling, or simply trying not to be freaked out by the weird gothic Morris dancers. You see, there's loads to see and do – you don't even have to think about Mick Hucknall. Sorry, we done gone and mentioned his name again.

Tickets and info

www.cornburyfestival.com

and 'All Day And All Of The Night', which inspired the early metal bands, to later, more wistful classics like 'Waterloo Sunset, Tired Of Waiting For You' and 'Days'. Much covered and much copied, Davies followed the Kinks 1996 split with a solo career, but it's to be hoped there'll be a fair sprinkling of Kinks songs in his Saturday set.

Cyndi Lauper, who plays on Friday, enjoyed her commercial peak in the 1980s with 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' and 'True Colours', but since then she's become a benchmark for aspiring female singer-songwriters of both the confessional, folky kind and the crazy-haired disco divas

On Sunday **Wilko Johnson** brings his pioneering British r'n'b to the Cornbury stage, forty years on from leading Dr Feelgood out of Canvey Island and helping inspire the advent of punk. With his career recently immortalised in the film *Oil City Confidential*, and having recently supported The Stranglers on tour, retrospective acclaim for his work has never been higher.

Joining Wilko on the main stage on Sunday are **Straits**, featuring members of Dire Straits, playing a set of that band's hits and more.

OF THE CULT ACTS, 60s

folk songstress **Buffy Sainte-Marie** is perhaps the most hotly anticipated of the weekend, the native American singer and guitarist having emerged out of the same 60s folk scene as Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen,

James Blunt



GIG GUIDE

FRIDAY 1st

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Estate – Opening day of the annual festival at its new home, with James Blunt and Bellowhead playing – *see main preview*

PRISM REUNION Pt.2: O2 Academy – Classic 80s and 90s acid house and techno from the veterans of Oxford's groundbreaking club night,

Friday 2nd / Saturday 3rd

FIESTA/CARNIVAL: South Park

With Carnival confined to South Park again due to financial constraints, Cowley Road's annual community celebration will be slightly more low key this year, but the free music, dance, food and culture party is still one of the best free days out in the county. No news on exactly who's playing on the Sunday as Nightshift went to press but the Saturday Night's fundraising Fiesta boasts a decent line-up of carnival-friendly sounds, headed by the inimitable **Roots Manuva**, dubbed the Doyen of British Rap for his infectious blend of hip hop, dub, electronica, reggae and gospel as well as a neat line in socio-political lyrics. His 2001 album 'Run Come Save Me' was Mercury nominated and he's been up for myriad MOBO awards since. Joining him on stage is Congo's **Kanda Bongo Man**, first championed in the UK by the late, great John Peel, his pioneering guitar-led soukous has led him to WOMAD and Glastonbury as well as a special Kenyan party to celebrate the inauguration of Barack Obama in the company of the President's grandmother. The expansive **Carnival Collective** boast a twenty-five-strong percussion section, based on a traditional samba *bateria*, as well as a nine-piece brass section, all backing up big, soulful vocals, while drawing on funk, hip hop, ska, reggae and more, while horn and percussion ensemble **Brassroots** and local DJ **Count Skylarkin** get the party started. Hopefully Carnival can find the funds to return to its roots next summer, but for now, enjoy it in whatever form it takes.

JULY

reconvened once again with DJs Kieran, Marty P and Osprey, plus a live set from Two Bad Mice. The night is preceded by an early evening Prism party at the Bullingdon.

RAMMLIED: Fat Lil's, Witney – Tribute to German industrial metal titans Rammstein, hopefully featuring a giant flame-throwing penis. **SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM: The Cellar** – Count Skylarkin warms up for Fiesta and carnival in the Park, spinning a goodly mix of ska, reggae, dancehall and hip hop, tonight joined by regular collaborator Wrongtom, who has produced and remixed Fiesta headliner Roots Manuva.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with THE AROUSERS + THE SCOTT GORDON BAND + THE GOGGENHEIM: The Wheatsheaf – Onward sails the good ship Klub Kak, merrily and admirably oblivious to the changing tides of fashion, tonight featuring Sir Bald Diddley's surf and garage rock outfit The Arousers and more.

MR BIG UK: The Chester Arms – Oxford's 1970s hitmakers continue on the comeback trail with a new album out this month, 34 years on from their Top 5 hit, 'Romeo'.

BRICKWORK LIZARDS + FRANCIS PUGH & THE WHISKY SINGERS: The Port Mahon – Action Aid benefit gig with 40s jazz, Arabic folk and hip hop from Brickwork Lizards.

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

THE LIGHT DIVIDED + TYGERSTRYKE + SOLIDAGOES + ZERO HOURS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox battle of the bands heat.

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

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

SATURDAY 2nd

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Estate – Kinks legend Ray Davies and The Faces top today's bill – *see main preview*

FIESTA IN THE PARK: South Park – Roots Manuva and Kanda Bongo Man bring carnival vibes to South Park – *see main preview*

DESERT STORM + MUTAGENOCIDE + GRIFTER + BASTARD OF THE SKIES: The Wheatsheaf – Buried In Smoke metal night headed up tonight by club hosts Desert Storm and their thunderous stoner-metal noise. They're joined by progressive thrash merchants Mutagenocide, Plymouth's bluesy stoner-rock outfit Grifter and fantastically-named sludge and doom crew Bastard Of The Skies.

TOYAH: The Regal – The 80s punk siren turned pop hitmaker turned actor, and prototype Lady Gaga, revisits hits like 'I Want To be Free', 'Thunder In The Mountains' and 'It's A Mythtery'.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy – Weekly three-clubs-in-one with indie

and electro at Propaganda; glam, kitch and guilty pleasures at Trashy, plus rock, metal and hardcore at Room 101.

FAT LIL'S BIRTHDAY PARTY: Fat Lil's, Witney

CRACKERDUMMY + ACEDIA + BRACE FOR IMPACT: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – Jambox battle of the bands heat.

SUNDAY 3rd

CORNBURY FESTIVAL: Great Tew Estate – Status Quo unleash their vast catalogue of hits for the final day of the festival – *see main preview*

CARNIVAL IN THE PARK: South Park – Cowley Road Carnival stays in the park due to funding problems, but still with a full bill of live music and soundsystems – *see main preview*

CARNIVAL AFTER PARTY: The Bullingdon – Post-Carnival dubstep session.

CJ QUINN + JAY COBAIN + GARETH

GWYN: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Acoustic and open mic night.

MONDAY 4th

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

TUESDAY 5th

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

GOOD VIBRATIONS: Café Tarifa – Weekly unplugged and semi-acoustic session.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 6th

ALEX CLARE + MEGAN GOODWIN + THE BARON: The Jericho Tavern – Soulful bluesy rocking and electro-heavy r'n'b from London singer Alex Clare, whose debut album for Island Records, 'The Lateness Of The Hour', has been given some serious welly by producers Diplo & Switch.

STEREOPHONICS: O2 Academy – The Welsh (or is it Belgian? always get those two mixed up) rockers warm up for the Eisteddfod (or is it Bruges Is Rocking!?), kicking out classic hits like 'Fade To Grey', 'Grey Day', 'Cardboard & Piss' and 'All Music Journalists Are Horrid'. Don't waste your time writing in to complain; we like Welsh people really. Cerys Matthews gave us a kiss once.

CHRIS AYER + ADAM BARNES + MATT SIMONS + THE YARNS + LEWIS WATSON: The Wheatsheaf – Breezy but soulful acoustic folk-pop from New York singer and guitarist Ayer, a witty, light-hearted wordsmith who's toured with MC Lars as well as winning the John Lennon Songwriting Contest. Acoustic support from local troubadour Adam Barnes and jangly 80s-style indie types The Yarns.

JAWLESS: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.

ROCK'N'JAM NIGHT: Duke of Monmouth, Abingdon Road – Weekly band session from Asterox, plus open mic and rock jam session.



THURSDAY 7th

HOT HOOVES + OFF THE RADAR + LOS CALAVERAS + GENERALS & MAJORS: **The Bullingdon** – Great fuzzed-up alt-pop somewhere between Sugar, Teenage Fanclub and Guided By Voices from Hot Hooves, featuring former Jericho Tavern and Point promoter Mac and Talulah Gosh and Heavenly guitarist Pete Momtchiloff, plus Reading's indie rockers Off The Radar and bluesy garage rockers Los Calaveras.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: **The Wheatsheaf** – With Orphy Robinson and Pat Thomas.

CHRIS AYER + ADAM BARNES + MATT SIMONS: **Fat Lil's, Witney**

FILLIGAR + HALF NAKED: **The Cellar** – Chicago rockers Filligar come to the UK to promote new album 'The Nerve', rocking out in the style of The Stones, Doors and Black Keys, whom they recently supported. Local melodic punk outfit Half Naked support. Followed by hip hop club night Wordplay.

THE COUNTERPOINTS + REVOL + HIGH JINKS + THE SHORTCUTS: **The Port Mahon** – Chirpy indie rocking from Reading's Counterpoints at tonight's Live & Loud show.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford**

Community Centre – Oxford's oldest and best open mic session continues to showcase singers, musicians, poets, storytellers and more every week.

CIRCUIT CHASE + SATELLITES: **The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Jambox rock night.

FRIDAY 8th

OUT TO GRAZE FESTIVAL: **Fir Tree Country Park** – First night of the annual dance festival, situated just outside Banbury. Hosted by Slide, Simple and Bassmentality, there's an eclectic mix of styles across the weekend, with star turns from Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs, A Guy Called Gerald and Jazzie B – *see main preview*

THE ELIZA CATHY BAND: **O2 Academy** – The Crown princess of English folk music tours her new album, 'Neptune' – *see main preview*

LEFT OUTER JOIN + HALF DECENT + MANACLES OF ACID + ONE GEAR GO: **The Bullingdon** – Old school trance from Left Outer Join, plus electro-tinged rap from Half Decent and full-on retro acid-house from Manacles of Acid.

THE JOHN YOUNG BAND: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Prog-rock from the Scorpions keyboard player.

FUNKY FRIDAY: **The Bullingdon**

BOSSAPHONIK: **The Cellar** – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beat, world breaks and nu-jazz with a live set from Bristol's instrumental world dance outfit Sheelanagig, drawing on gypsy jazz, celtic folk, klezmer, reggae and North African and Indian folk music.

YARD SESSIONS: **Modern Art, Oxford** – New twice-monthly electronic and experimental DJ session, tonight featuring Truck Store staff spinning their favourite summer tunes.

STEAMROLLER + TRUE RUMOUR + LOST DAYS + SKEPTICS + PHIL GARVEY: **The Hollybush, Osney** – Wittstock fundraiser, with veteran blues-rockers Steamroller.

EYE-CON: **Black Horse, Kidlington**

SATURDAY 9th

OUT TO GRAZE: **Fir Tree Country Park**
DEAD JERICHOES + THE DB BAND + HOOKS + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE: **The Wheatsheaf** – D-Fest warm-up show, headed by D-Fest organisers Dead Jerichos with their reverb-drenched blend of Cure-like post-punk pop and uptight moddish indie rocking. Support from Mick Quinn's post-Supergrass outfit DB Band and nebulous improv outfit Braindead Collective.

WITHERED HAND: **Modern Art Oxford** – Edinburgh singer and banjo player Dan Willson brings his wistful, rustic folk and country-gospel to Modern Art, likened to Sufjan Stevens and Neil Young at times, he's shared stages with Jeffery Lewis and Calvin Johnson while his last album was produced by Kramer.

EVERY HIPPIE'S DREAM: **Fat Lil's, Witney** – Classic 60s and 70s rock, from Cream and Hendrix to Deep Purple and Led Zep.

THE MIGHTY REDOX: **The Bear & Ragged Staff, Cumnor** – Blues, funk and old-fashioned swamp rocking from the perennial local faves.

PROPAGANDA: **O2 Academy**

SOUL & REGGAE NIGHT: **The Bullingdon**
HEADINGTON HILLBILLIES: **The Chequers, Headington Quarry** – Roots Americana.

WHITE HEATHER + SLEEPWALKERS + CARMENTA: **The Wheatsheaf, Banbury**

SUNDAY 10th

OUT TO GRAZE: **Fir Tree Country Park**
TOM HINGLEY + THOMAS TRUAX: **The Cellar** – Former-Inspiral Carpets frontman and Abingdon lad Tom Hingley pops back to town, along with regular experimental pop professor Truax and his collection of home-made instruments.

LIL'S FAT JAM: **Fat Lil's, Witney**
PHIL FREIZINGER & CHRIS MILLS + DAVE & JEREMY + BEARD OF DESTINY + MIKE ABBOTT: **Donnington Community Centre**

MONDAY 11th

CHERRY LEE MEWIS BAND: **The Bullingdon** – Wales' rising young blues starlet comes to the Famous Monday Blues – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 12th

JAZZ CLUB: **The Bullingdon** – Alvin Roy plays at the free weekly jazz club.

GOOD VIBRATIONS: **Café Tarifa**

INTRUSION: **The Cellar** – Monthly goth, industrial, EBM and 80s club night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Port Mahon**

WEDNESDAY 13th

FREE RANGE: **The Cellar** – Dubstep, drum&bass and hip hop club night.

ROCK'N'JAM NIGHT: **Duke of Monmouth, Abingdon Road**

THURSDAY 14th

AETHARA + WAYS ACROSS + KOMRAD + A TRUST UNCLEAN: **The Bullingdon** – Skeletor's monthly metal night, featuring death-thrash outfit Aethara, as well as frenetic prog-core crew Komrad.

THE DRIFTERS: **The New Theatre** – Doo-wop, r'n'b and soul from the legendary vocal group, who have employed some 65 different members in their near-70 year history.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: **The Wheatsheaf** – With The Chris Biscoe Quartet and Tony Kofi.

THE WATER MARGIN + JACKPIKE + PLAYER2: **The Port Mahon** – Live & Loud bands night with jangly indie types The Water Margin leaning towards the Tindersticks and Lloyd Cole scheme of things, plus support from indie rockers Jackpike and prog and funk-tinged electro indie combo Player2.

SEROTONIN + STREET ORPHANS + G.O.D.S: **The Hobgoblin, Bicester** – Jambox rock night with grunge rockers Serotonin.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: **East Oxford Community Centre**



Friday 8th – Sunday 10th

OUT TO GRAZE:

Fir Tree Country Park

Jointly organised by local club nights **Bassmentality**, **Slide** and **Simple**, Out To Graze, set in Fir Tree Country Park, just outside Banbury, serves as an unofficial centrepiece of the Oxford dance calendar, a coming together of the city's disparate styles, from house and techno, to ska, reggae, funk and jazz. This year's star attraction is seminal acid house hero **A Guy Called Gerald**, Mancunian producer and DJ Gerald Simpson, whose pioneering 'Voodoo Ray' was one of the first UK acid house tracks. Since the late-80s he's turned his hand to techno and drum&bass, while last year's 'Tronic Jazz' melded his early love for jazz to electro. Joining Gerald is Soul II Soul's **Jazzie B**, himself a UK dance pioneer in the 80s and 90s, these days playing a blend of funk, soul and house. Local hot property **Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaur** brings his eclectic mix of soul, dubstep, garage, house, funky, electro and dancehall, replete with dancing dinosaurs along, having lately remixed the likes of Fenech-Soler and Sky Ferreira, while Scratch Perverts turntablist **Prime Cuts** is the pick of the hip hop and drum&bass acts. Alongside these names, regulars from the host clubs are playing sets, including local house veteran **Lee Mortimer**. Meanwhile **Count Skylarkin** spins his usual mix of ska, reggae, soul, funk and rock'n'roll, joined by regular chum **DJ Derek** and there are live band sets from New Orleans-style hot jazz combo **The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm** band and Sir Bald Diddle's authentically retro surf and rock'n'roll outfit **Hipbone Slim & The Knee Tremblers** on the Big Ten Inch stage. Loads more besides – visit www.outtograze.com for more line-up and ticket details.

OPEN MIC SESSION: **The Half Moon**
BLUES JAM: **Jack Russell, Marston**

FRIDAY 15th

NINE-STONE COWBOY + MOGMATIC + RECLAIMERS + YELLOW FEVER: **The Bullingdon** – Lachrymose indie rocking from Mark Cope's Nine-Stone Cowboy, plus bluesy rocking from Mogmatic and spiky indie from Yellow Fever.

FOUR STROKE + RESERVOIR CATS: **The Wheatsheaf** – Moshka club night with Blaze Bayley's drummer bringing his Four Stroke act to town, supported by heavy-duty blues-rockers Reservoir Cats.

THE BIG TEN INCH: **The Cellar** – Jump blues, rockabilly and swing with Count Skylarkin, Count



Friday 8th

THE ELIZA CARTHY BAND: O2 Academy

Daughter of Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson, Eliza Carthy is bona fide English folk royalty, but while she's played the dutiful daughter on too many albums to count over the past 20 years, she's rebellious enough to want to break free of the folk ghetto when the urge takes her. Back in the late-90s she experimented with drum&bass and her latest solo album, 'Neptune', finds Carthy detailing a highly personal song cycle that covers the past ten years of her life in all its turbulent detail, while only rarely touching on the traditional folk music that she's renowned for. Instead we get torch ballads, 1930s cabaret, soul, reggae and music hall, her highly versatile voice and fiddle playing taking each genre in its stride. It's an unexpected follow-up to last year's 'Gift', a collaboration with her mum, but the woman whose enviable list of past collaborators includes Nancy Kerr, Paul Weller, Billy Bragg, Wilco, Jools Holland, Patrick Wolf and Salsa Celtica, and who helped launch the careers of John Spiers and Jon Boden as part of her Ratcatchers band, hasn't stayed at the top of her game by standing still.

Sizzle and Van Mule, plus a live set from local New Orleans-style hot jazz combo The Original Rabbit Foot Spasm Band.

KINGS OF LYON: Fat Lil's, Witney – 'Sex On Fire' and other faves from the KoL tribute.

THE HEAVY DEXTERS: The Chester Arms – Local jazz-funksters.

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – BOTB semi-final.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford Community Centre

SATURDAY 16th

THE SCHOLARS + DEAD JERICHOES + PEERS + VON BRAUN + MANACLES OF ACID: O2 Academy – The third Upstairs showcase, jointly promoted by the Academy and BBC Oxford Introducing is another high-quality selection of local acts, dark-hued rockers The Scholars aiming for an Editors-meets-Interpol sound, while reverb-heavy post-punkers Dead Jerichos mix Cure-like melody with Jam-influenced aggression. Reading's Peers make the bill on the back of BBC Berkshire's recommendation, while Radiohead-influenced indie rockers Von Braun and acid-squelch noisemakers Manacles of Acid complete the bill.

COLOUREDVS V's THE ODC DRUMLINE:

Modern Art Oxford – Last month's Nightshift cover stars pit their maniacal form of techno and

wonky disco against the ODC's often brutal drumline, featuring former-Youthmovies sticksman Graeme Murray. Tonight's show is a warm-up for the two acts' face-to-face on the Blessing Force stage at Truck next week.

BEER & MUSIC FESTIVAL: Eight Bells, Eaton (12 noon) – Full day of live music, featuring local reggae legends Dubwiser, plus Kill City Saints, Mogmatic, Reservoir Cats, Jack Parker, All The Clever Lies and Chris Ayres. Plus some 16 guest real ales. A pint of each at least, else you're not trying hard enough.

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – BOTB semi-final.

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

SELECTA: The Bullingdon – Drum&bass.

FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – House, disco, breaks and beats with the FOTB Allstars.

SUNDAY 17th

DEAF HAVANA + NOT ADVISED + THE FIRST: O2 Academy – King's Lynn's post-hardcore crew head out on a headlining tour to promote their new album, the follow-up to 2009's 'Meet Me Halfway, At Least', having previously supported the likes of We Are The Ocean, and You, Me At Six.

GECKO + THE DEPUTES: The Wheatsheaf – Fuzzy, frothy indie rocking from London's Gecko, plus local popsters The Deputes.

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

STEVIE MATT COOPER + AURORA YOUNG + DALE REVELL + BLIN: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Acoustic and open mic session.

MONDAY 18th

THE MARCUS BONFANTI BAND: The Bullingdon – Rising young star of the British blues scene – *see main preview*

TUESDAY 19th

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

JIM LOCKEY & THE SOLEMN SUN + CHEWING ON TINFOIL + BEN PHILLIPS:

The Wheatsheaf

JEFF CAUDILL + TAMARA & THE MARTYRS

+ PROSPEKT: The Gloucester Arms

GOOD VIBRATIONS: Café Tarifa

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 20th

N'DUBZ + STARBOY NATHAN: O2 Academy – Oh Christ.

THOMAS WHITE + RALEGH LONG + ROB ST. JOHN: The Bullingdon – Rarefied, rootsy folk-pop from Thomas White, plugging his new album, 'Yalla!', following a tour support to Field Music and an appearance at Richard Thompson's Meltdown Festival. Support from Raleigh Long, who's been touring with Darren Hayman, and ghostly electric folkster Rob St. John, injecting some prog and krautrock experimentation into his traditional British and American folk.

ROCK'N'JAM NIGHT: Duke of Monmouth, Abingdon Road

JAWLESS: The Cellar

THURSDAY 21st

BORDERLINE:FIRE + HUSTLE & CUSS: The Port Mahon – Shouty rocking from Reading's Borderline:Fire.

APPLE PIRATE PRESENTS: Fat Lil's, Witney – New, unsigned rock, pop-punk and metal acts.

THE SHAPED: The Bullingdon

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf – With James Pearson.

NEON VIOLETS: The Cellar – Psychedelic blues from the local duo, followed by hip hop club night Wordplay.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 22nd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Stevenon – Bellowhead headline the first night of the annual

Monday 11th

CHERRY LEE MEWIS

Monday 18th

THE MARCUS BONFANTI BAND

The Bullingdon

The Famous Monday Blues has been bringing a world of blues to Oxford for over a quarter of a century now, but while it's great to see American and European stars in town, some of the best shows in recent times have come courtesy of the rising stars of the UK's blues scene. This month sees two of the most acclaimed young prospects at the Bully. On the 11th it's Wales' rising blues singer Cherry Lee Mewis, whose assumed name might look, on paper, to be a dodgy Jerry Lee Lewis tribute act, but she's closer in style to a young Bonnie Raitt, with a powerful old-time blues voice that sees her doing justice to songs by the likes of Koko Taylor, Blind Willie McTell and Memphis Minnie alongside her own material, while her classic blues sound is mixed with hillbilly boogie, 50s skiffle, jazz and soul. A week later it's the turn of Marcus Bonfanti to show why he's just been nominated for a brace of British Blues Awards – for Best Singer and Best Guitarist. The Londoner has been winning plaudits for his raw, earthy voice and versatile guitar playing, which ranges from Jimmy Page-inspired electric workouts to more delicate folk and country-tinged finger-picked style. He's recently played a special anniversary show with British blues legend Paul Jones for the BBC.



festival, going the full three days for the first time – see main preview

RACHAEL DADD + ICHI + WIG SMITH:

Modern Art Oxford – DIY experimental old world folk from multi-instrumentalist Rachel Dadd, joined tonight by sound experimentalist Ichi, utilising tape loops, steel drums and ping pong balls in an oddball collage of noise.

KILL CITY SAINTS + DAVID FULBROOK +

THE NEW MOON: The Bullingdon

GREEN-ISH DAY: Fat Lil's, Witney – Green Day tribute.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – BOTB semi-final.

SATURDAY 23rd

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Gruff Rhys and Young Knives top today's bill – see main preview

ROOM 101 METAL MAYHEM: O2 Academy (3pm) – Twelve hours of metal, with Dedlok, Crysis, K-Lacura, Taste My Eyes and more, plus Room 101 DJs playing the heavy, heavy monster sounds until 3am – see main preview

PROPAGANDA + TRASHY + ROOM 101: O2 Academy

NEBULA: The Cellar – Dubstep, hip hop, house and funk with Senior G, Thomas Kilpatrick and Angus Cohen.

AIRTIGHT: Fat Lil's, Witney – 80s AOR rock covers, from Mr Mister and Toto to Bon Jovi.

YARD SESSIONS: Modern Art, Oxford – Electronic DJ session with Rophone and Mego.

RELEASE THE BATS + TRIDEM: The

Bullingdon

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – BOTB semi-final.

SUNDAY 24th

TRUCK FESTIVAL: Hill Farm, Steventon – Final day of Oxfordshire's centrepiece festival – see main preview

ATHLETE + MY FIRST TOOTH: O2 Academy – The indie faves play an unplugged set of hits.

MONDAY 25th

THE ALEXANDER HITMAN BAND: The Bullingdon – New York veteran Russell 'Hitman' Alexander comes to the Famous Monday Blues, having shared stages with Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson and Whitney Houston amongst others. Best known for his slide and electric guitar style, inspired by Elmore James, BB King and Buddy Guy.

TUESDAY 26th

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

GOOD VIBRATIONS: Café Tarifa

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Port Mahon

WEDNESDAY 27th

SHATTERED DREAMS + HOT HOOVES + MARY BENDY TOY: The Wheatsheaf – Spirited but melodic punk-pop from Shattered Dreams at tonight's Moshka club night, with support from the mighty Hot Hooves, cranking it out somewhere between Sugar, Guided By Voices and Eddy & The Hotrods. Industrial pop from Mary Bendy Toy.

FREE RANGE: The Cellar

THURSDAY 28th

ROOM 94: O2 Academy – Hertfordshire's soul-crushingly generic pop-punk scrappers out on tour.

CHARLY COOMBES & THE NEW BREED + WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD + DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG MEMORIES + INSTRIX + MARK BARNES: The Bullingdon – Soulful 70s-style rocking in the vein of Little Feat from Charly Coombes and band, plus genteel acoustic folk-pop from Welcome To Peepworld and gutter jazz and blues from Desmond Chancer.

SPIN JAZZ CLUB: The Wheatsheaf –

Tonight's guest is Chris Garrick.

K-LACURA: The Port Mahon – Molten metalcore from the local faves at tonight's Live & Loud show.

MUTAGENOCIDE: Fat Lil's, Witney – Fat Lil's metal extravaganza with local prog-thrash outfit Mutagenocide and more.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford

Community Centre

ZANGRYUS + LO-AUDIO + ORPHAN

GEARS: The Hobgoblin, Bicester – Jambox rock night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 29th

THE PISTOLS: Fat Lil's, Witney – Sex Pistols tribute.

VERY NICE HARRY + BLACK HATS + THE GRACEFUL SLICKS: The Cellar – EP launch show for local indie rockers Very Nice Harry, plus guest support from power-pop trio Black Hats and Velvet Underground acolytes The Graceful Slicks.

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Chester Arms – Eccentric blues-rocking from the local stalwart.

FUNKY FRIDAY: The Bullingdon

FOUNDATION REGGAE: East Oxford

Community Centre

SATURDAY 30th

D-FEST: The Red Lion, Drayton – Dead Jerichos host the second D-Fest, providing a full day of local live music, featuring their own reverberated brand of new wave pop. They're joined by fuzzy boy-girl electro-indie popsters Secret Rivals; spiky power-pop trio Black Hats; ethereal alt.folksters Samuel Zasada; gothic blues songstress Tamara Parsons-Baker; emotive folk-pop troubadour and 60s garage-pop outfit The Anydays. Plenty more besides over two stages at the Red Lion, plus an evening of acoustic music over at the nearby Wheatsheaf with the likes of Lost Dogs and Mew, Wooster & Boon.

GAPPY TOOTH INDUSTRIES with THE SCREAMIN' JOE JEFFERSONS + THE LIFTMEN + DRIFTWOOD STAGE: The Wheatsheaf – Mixed bag of bands as ever at GTI, tonight featuring Stefan from The Epstein and Drug Squad's new band, Screamin' Joe Jeffersons, kicking out a raw garage rock racket. Great warped indie from Bristol's The Liftmen, harking back to Beefheart and Pere Ubu as well as Gorky's and Pavement. Sweet-natured chamber pop in the style of Belle and Sebastian and The Divine Comedy from Driftwood Stage.

DAISY & THE UNSTEADIES + THE CELLAR FAMILY + THE COCAINE COWBOYS + DEAD BETAS + THE JACKDAWS: The Bullingdon – New club night showcasing ska and punk acts, tonight featuring melodic ska-punk outfit Daisy and the Unsteadies alongside Nightshift faves The Cellar Family, with their serrated mix of McLusky, Fugazi and At The



Saturday 23rd

ROOM 101: METAL MAYHEM: O2 Academy

Back in the day Truck had its own mini metal festival going on in the barn. With the festival having moved on, local metal fans can comfort themselves over Truck weekend with this all-day event, jointly hosted by the Academy's weekly metal and alt.rock club night Room 101 and Skeletor Promotions who have been flying the flag for local metal for the past year at the Bully. Kicking off at 3pm, Metal Mayhem gathers a good cross-section of the local heavyweight scene together, plus sets from Room 11 DJs throughout the day and into the wee small hours. Heading the bill are extreme thrash colossi **Dedlok**, doing a good job at emulating Bolt Thrower's genre-defining brutality. They're joined by metalcore outfit **K-Lacura**, thrash-core newcomers **Crysis**, prog-thrash merchants **Mutagenocide**, virulent hardcore tigers **Taste My Eyes**, death-metal-tinged grindcore urchins **13 Gauge** and industrial death-thrash monsters **Risen In Black**, cranking it out in the style of The Haunted and In Flames. It's a shame the Truck barn no longer resonates to the sound of music carved from granite and unrefined fury, but on a (hopefully) sunny summer's day, where better to have your sensibilities blown to smithereens than in this fine company?

Drive-in, plus old-school pub-punk crew Cocaine Cowboys.

COOLING PEARLS + THE MAGIC

LANTERN: Modern Art Oxford – Delicate, pretty and slightly desolate romantic lo-fi pop from Aiden Canaday and violinist Sian Williams, together as The Cooling Pearls and joined for this Pindrop Performance by London's alt.folk-meets-free jazz collective Magic Lantern.

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

JAMBOX BATTLE OF THE BANDS: The Wheatsheaf, Banbury – BOTB final.

PROPAGANDA : O2 Academy

A FLY VARIETY: The Cellar

SUNDAY 31st

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil's, Witney (3pm) – Dave Smith hosts a full day of blues jamming, with all-comers welcome.

LORD AV MERCY: The Port Mahon – Free, monthly reggae, dancehall and dub club night, tonight featuring Siobhan from London's dancehall club night Physically Fit and Suze from the Shimmy Shimmy website.

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

TRUCK FESTIVAL

Friday 22nd – Sunday 24th

Hill Farm, Steventon

MUCH HAS CHANGED ABOUT Truck Festival over its thirteen-year lifetime. From its cosy beginnings as an ambitious birthday party for founder Robin Bennett, it's expanded and morphed into something far bigger and more eclectic. But the festival's heart and soul has remained pretty much the same over all that time: bigger names mix with undiscovered gems and a healthy smattering of locally-produced acts, while a rotating cast of guest promoters keeps the various stages fresh each year.

THE FOURTEENTH TRUCK

Festival is the biggest yet, with capacity increased and the entire site given a revamp, in particular allowing for a bigger second stage after health and safety rules restricted the capacity in the barn. Leading indie labels **Transgressive**, **Bella Union** and **Heavenly** have thus been invited to curate the new big top Clash Stage, bringing their respective rosters of bright hopes and pop veterans with them. The main stage has been moved to a new location, in a natural amphitheatre, while **Nonclassical** and the **Oxford Folk Festival** curate a new Wood Stage. The Last.FM stage plays host to **BBC Introducing**, **Blessing Force** and the **Truck Store**, while the **Oxford Playhouse** brings variety to a new theatre stage. **The Long Insiders** host a cabaret stage and of course there'll be a 24-hour dance party in the **Boxford** field, hosted, as ever, by the good folks from Fresh Out The Box.

For the first time too Truck goes the full three days, having experimented with a low-key Friday night last year.

THIS YEAR'S TOP ACTS TEND

towards the solo careers of current or former members of big-names bands, while last year's Truck show-stealers **Bellowhead** are rewarded with a

Friday night headline set.

The folk big band, formed by John Spiers and Jon Boden, have their roots in Oxfordshire's music scene, the duo having met and started their careers locally, while Spiers is still resident in the county. Their initial, novelty idea of creating big band arrangements for traditional folk tunes from around the world has spiralled to the stage they're regular recipients of Best Live Band awards, and anyone who was present for their set last year will testify that no-one kicks up a party quite like Bellowhead. And don't be put off if you don't think you're a folk fan: Bellowhead have as much in common with punk as they do the world of crumhorns or sea shanties.

Saturday's top spot on the main stage is taken by Super Furry Animals' **Gruff Rhys**, who'll doubtless be airing a fair proportion

of his latest solo album, 'Hotel Shampoo', alongside a selection of Furries faves. With typically eccentricity, Rhys recently showed off an art installation made from the free hotel toiletries he'd accumulated over 20 years touring and his new album is equally quirky, ranging from lounge to Latin, while never threatening to alienate Furries fans too much.

One-time Czars frontman **John Grant** is a man whose solo career is now eclipsing his previous incarnation, with a Mojo Album Of The Year just one of the many accolades heaped upon him lately, while his ultra-emotive brand of rootsy Americana saw him blow Midlake comprehensively off the stage at the O2 recently.



Graham Coxon



Gruff Rhys

BLUR GUITARIST GRAHAM Coxon, like Gruff Rhys, is an inventive musician whose commercial success has given him the freedom to do what he damn well likes in his solo work. Still something of the archetypal indie kid, over the course of his (so-far) seven solo albums, up to 2009's 'Spinning Top', he's drifted into mellower, folkier territory, closer to John Martyn or Nick Drake than Blur's later, rockier sound, but remains a highly versatile

YOUNG KNIVES HEAD A CAST of Oxford names that give Truck its own particular flavour. Having just released their fourth album, 'Ornaments From The Silver Arcade', the trio have discovered a more upbeat, poppier edge.

Other top indie names include electro-pop veterans **St Etienne** and the irresistible **Go! Team**.

A full day of Blessing Force-curated acts will see the likes of **Jonquil**, **Chad Valley**, **Pet Moon** and **Trophy Wife** celebrating the community spirit that has helped all the acts concerned achieve national attention, while a potential highlight is skewed techno monsters **Coloureds'** head-to-head with the **ODC Drumline**.

Fixers may have left BF but after an astonishing twelve months since they last graced the Barn stage the techno-tinged psychedelic pop collective will surely enjoy a heroic homecoming.

Of course no Truck would be complete without an appearance from Bennett brothers Robin and Joe, the festival hosts' own **Dreaming Spires** band as well as their supergroup, **The Truck All-Stars**, an indulgence we'll allow them for co-ordinating the whole thing.

BEYOND THESE CHARACTERS,

Truck throws up its usual array of treats, the best of which are usually hidden away in the smaller tents, little known to the wider public yet, but often the stars of tomorrow. Stuff even we don't know yet (who'd have thought when we stumbled across The Xx in the Beathive Tent just how far they'd go?). Whether it's **Alessi's Ark**, **See Of Bees**, **Caitlin Rose** or Oxford's own **Cellar Family**, you'll discover something special along the way.

AS EVER, THERE'S TOO MUCH going on at Truck to preview it all here. Like so many of the great things about Oxfordshire's music scene, Truck's success and influence is perhaps better appreciated outside of the locale, part of the movement that pioneered small-scale, independent events that redefined the UK's festival scene. Long may it continue.

Tickets and info
www.truckfestival.com

multi-instrumentalist. Doubtless he'll be able to compare stories of global rock success with our own **Phil Selway**, genial Radiohead sticksman-turned solo artist, who'll be playing his 'Familiar' album, possibly with a few special guests (past collaborator **Roddy Woomble** is also on the bill so here's hoping...). Oh there you go - another chap out of a band doing his own thing at Truck this year - the mighty Roddy Woomble, frontman with Nightshift faves Idlewild, whose solo career has seen him exploring the classic folk traditions of his native Scotland.

EDWYN COLLINS IS PERHAPS

as well known these days for his solo work as his pioneering pop band Orange Juice, while his fantastic return to songwriting and performing after a double brain haemorrhage is testament to his resilience. Collins' live shows since his return have been emotional affairs, aided and abetted by much of indie rock's royalty who owe the man a huge creative debt, not least Johnny Marr and Franz Ferdinand's Alex Kapranos.

Another real treat comes in the form of **Dean Wareham**. While he's been very much a cult concern since Galaxie 500 called it a day in 1991, this weekend he's playing a whole set of Galaxie songs, gorgeous dream-pop anthems that were a major influence on shoegaze and several subsequent generations of rarefied indie bands.



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JULY

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THE FAMOUS MONDAY NIGHT BLUES

The best in UK, European and US blues. 8-12.

4th LARRY MILLER (UK)

11th CHERRY LEE MEWIS (UK)

18th THE MARCUS BONFANTI BAND (UK)

25th THE ALEXANDER HITMAN BAND (USA)

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Free live jazz plus DJs playing r'n'b, funk and soul until 2am

5th / 19th THE HOWARD PEACOCK QUINTET

12th ALVIN ROY

26th THE HUGH TURNER BAND

Wednesday

20th THOMAS WHITE / RALEGH LONG / ROB St. JOHN

Thursdays

7th HOT HOOVES / OFF THE RADAR / LOS CALAVERAS /
GENERALS & MAJORS

14th SKELETOR presents AETHARA / WAYS ACROSS /
KOMRAD / A TRUST UNCLEAN

21st THE SHAPED

28th CHARLY COOMBS & THE NEW BREED / WELCOME
TO PEEPWORLD / DESMOND CHANCER & THE LONG
MEMORIES / INSTRIX / MARK BARNES

Every Friday

FUNKY FRIDAY

Funk, soul, boogie and R&B. 11pm-2.30am; £3.

Early Friday shows

1st PRISM PRE-PARTY

8th LEFT OUTER JOIN / HALF DECENT / MANACLES OF
ACID / ONE GEAR GO

15th NINE-STONE COWBOY / MOGMATIC / THE
RECLAIMERS / YELLOW FEVER

22nd KILL CITY SAINTS / DAVID FULBROOK / THE NEW
MOON

Saturdays

9th SOUL & REGGAE

16th SELECTA (Drum'n'bass)

23rd RELEASE THE BATS / TRIDEM

30th DAISY & THE UNSTEADIES / THE CELLAR FAMILY /
COCAINE COWBOYS / DEAD BETAS / JACKDAWS

Sunday

3rd CARNIVAL AFTER-PARTY – Dubstep til 2am

Coming up: Aug 1st SHERMAN ROBERTSON. Aug 3rd IAN McLAGAN.
Sept 16th RICHARD FONTAINE. Nov 12th HOT CLUB OF COWTOWN

THE WHEATSHEAF

Live Music July 2011

Fri 1st

THE AROUSERS + SCOTT GORDEN BAND + THE GOGGENHEIM 8PM/£5

Sat 2nd

DESERT STORM + SNAKEBITE + GRIFTER + BASTARD OF THE SKIES 8PM/£5

Wed 6th

THE YARNS + CHRIS AYER + ADAM BARNES + MATT SIMONS + LEWIS WATSON 8PM/£5

Thu 7th

ORPHY ROBINSON & PAT THOMAS 8PM / £5/£5 NUS

Sat 9th

DEAD JERICHO + dB BAND + BRAINDEAD COLLECTIVE 8PM/£5

Thu 14th

CHRIS BISCOE QUARTET WITH TONY KOFI 8PM / £5/£5 NUS

Fri 15th

FOUR STROKE + RESERVOIR CATS 8PM/£5

Sun 17th

GECKO + THE DEPUTES 7PM/£5

Tue 19th

JIM LOCKEY & THE SOLEMN SUN + CHEWING ON TINFOIL + BEN PHILLIPS
8PM/£5

Thu 21st

JAMES PEARSON 8PM / £5/£5 NUS

Fri 22nd

MIXTAPE WITH DJ'S MATT PARADISE & ASHLEY EDANE 8PM/£5

Wed 27th

HOT HOOVES + SHATTERED DREAMS + MARY BENDYTOY 8PM/£5

Thu 28th

CHRIS GARRICK 8PM / £5/£5 NUS

Fri 29th

THREE BLIND MICE / TBC 8PM/£5

Sat 30th

THE LIFTMEN + THE DRIFTWOOD STAGE 8PM/£4.50

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LIVE

WOOD FESTIVAL

Braziers Park

This year's WOOD, the fourth, comes up and hits me from below. I went looking forward to enjoying the general vibe, though with only strong anticipation about one band, Mama Rosin. How wrong; this turns into the best WOOD ever for music, with a truly stellar performance from **Khaira Arby** and her band that comes out of nowhere.

It's something of a mystery, probably even to Khaira herself, that a middle-aged diva from the desert north of Timbuktu, and a star in Mali, but with no profile in the UK, can find herself on a solar-powered wooden stage in a green field in Oxfordshire. Her set starts as dusk falls with the crowd mainly stretched out on the grass and only paying casual attention. An hour later in the darkness, she's transformed laid-back, family-friendly WOOD into a moshpit of ecstatic bodies and electric energy.

The extraordinary power and range of Khaira's voice and her feel for melody tear into the crowd and galvanise it, even though no one probably knows what she's singing about. The ease with which she sustains this level of performance without ever flagging is amazing. Her band, with two guitarists alternating lead, are very much at the heart of this too, combining laid back aggression with hypnotic trance, a sound mix characteristic of Malian desert blues. The very young looking acoustic lead guitarist is particularly riveting, standing almost stock still while letting go whenever Khaira commands; Ali Farka Touré meets Jimmy Hendrix. Khaira in her blue traditional dress and head-dress, becomes ever more confident, working the crowd, and finally has to be dragged off stage by her manager, as neither she or the crowd want her to stop. An astonishing "I was there" gig.

It says much for how good WOOD is this year that after Khaira the rest of Saturday night isn't a let down. In their different ways WOOD perennials **Trevor Moss** and **Hannah Lou**, headliner singer songwriter **Willy Mason**, with his geeky looking young brother on drums, and recent Nightshift cover stars **The Epstein**, playing in their new grander, fuller filmic style, all step up to the proverbial plate.



Khaira Arby photo: Colin May

On Friday the Swiss-based threesome **Mama Rosin** live up to expectations with their take on Zydeco and Cajun music. Theirs is a lively, good-humoured set in which the standout track, 'The Story of Mama Rosin', adds an Afro-Cuban feel to their Louisiana style.

On Sunday **Eliza Carthy** and her band headline. This is not Eliza in folk singer mode, but in her other persona as singer of her own edgy contemporary songs, playing an electric guitar more than her fiddle, though 'Romeo' and 'Mr Magnifico' are familiar from the folk tradition and 'Blood On My Boots' could have been the title of an ancient murder ballad covered by Nick Cave.

Time for a few awards. The group who make me most want to see them again soon are **The Treetop Flyers**; they narrowly beat the young Brummie alt-folk/nu-country band **Goodnight Lenin**, who, as well as being at the forefront of the Khaira Arby moshpit, win both the best band name stolen from a film title and the hit record award, with a number 14 in Peru.

Most heart warming moment goes jointly to the crowd, who give a standing ovation to Witney resident, Senegalese kora player and praise singer and WOOD regular **Jali Fily Cissokho**, and to Jali Fily for sticking to playing what he believes in.

Best performance with a hangover and too little sleep goes to **Matt Sage**, sleep deprivation making his voice rougher and bluesier even at

Saturday lunchtime.

The children's award is a very important award at family friendly WOOD. This year the winner is Marcie Bennett, born on Thursday morning to WOOD promoter Robin Bennett and his wife Megan and onsite at WOOD by Friday evening. As usual the award for playing with most bands goes to Robin's brother and fellow organiser Joe Bennett, who has now won this so often he gets to keep the trophy so that we don't have to award it to him again next year.

Best performance by a local act is impossible to award as there are so many, though **Telling The Bees** easily win the best hats award this year and use the midnight intimacy of the Tree Tent to charm and weave a magic set. Also, as is now traditional, **The Dreaming Spires** play the last set of the festival and bring it to a suitably rousing and emotional end.

Even the weather is special; we have every season except deepest winter: sunshine and sun cream afternoons are followed by cold, two-pairs-of-socks nights. We have an overnight rain storm, and a wind that, after almost wrecking my tent and nearly sending it to join others in the dead tent park, turns it into a flapping inflatable when it came to packing up time. Such inconveniences will be quickly forgotten, while the memories of Khaira Arby and what was a great WOOD will linger far longer.

Colin May

WINE, WOMEN & SONG

The Jacqueline du Pre Building

Suzy Bogguss, Gretchen Peters and Matraca Berg sounds like something of a dream line up on paper. Three Country Music Award winners with extensive back catalogues, combined with several bottles of wine almost guarantees its success. Nevertheless there are times when the more relaxed nature of the show simply doesn't translate, especially when Peters' rambling introduction to 'You Don't Even Know Who I Am' leaves Bogguss backing on the wrong instrument, having assumed a different song.

This, combined with some confusion at another point from Berg who seems unclear what key her guitar is meant to be in, makes for something of an underwhelming set. Whilst the banter is at times humorous it seems somewhat detached from the crowd, just as each singer seems detached from each other. Paradoxically it's Berg, who is by far the least interactive on stage, who steals the show, 'South of Heaven' reducing Bogguss and several audience members to tears.

Peters' 'On A Bus To St Cloud' and Bogguss' 'Heartache' act as their

individual highlights, the forlorn songs brimming with emotion and musical weight. While Berg's softer voice brings a delicate edge to the evening, this fragility also means her backing contributions get overlooked, her vocals never measuring up to the weight of her counterparts. Similarly, though, Bogguss is solid, she doesn't deliver any of her more upbeat numbers which would have added much needed pace, in turn leaving centre stage Peters to act as the driving force of the show.

It's only in the closing covers of Tom Waits' 'Hold On' and The Rolling Stones' 'Wild Horses' that the trio finally shine through, joining together to harmonise in a way that I'd longed for throughout the show. Whilst each sympathetically accompanies each other, the concept of singing in the round means the power of three acclaimed women never quite reaches full potential, leaving it only to dazzle at individual moments, rather than as a sum of the whole.

Lisa Ward

YO LA TENGO

O2 Academy

That esteemed organ of news satire *The Onion* once carried a story headlined: "37 Record-Store Clerks Feared Dead in Yo La Tengo Concert Disaster". Walking down Cowley Road on the way to see the Americans make their ridiculously long-awaited Oxford debut, I notice that the Truck Store is already advertising for part-time staff – tempting fate, perhaps?

So how, after 27 years together, do you keep things feeling fresh? Much as marriage guidance counsellors would advise, Yo La Tengo have chosen to introduce an element of play and randomness. Each night of the Reinventing the Wheel tour, the nature of the first turn is determined by the spin of a wheel. Support acts don't get much more TBC than that.

We could be treated to anything from a set of Yo La Tengo songs which begin with vowels or a clutch of cover versions, through a performance by their alter egos the Condo Fucks, to 'Freewheeling' (essentially a Q&A session) or even a full and uninterrupted run-through of a sitcom episode – a possibility which, we're told, is usually met with significantly less applause afterwards than before.

So we're perhaps entitled to feel a bit disappointed that fate decrees the evening actually begins with a suite of songs by Dump, bassist James McNew's side project. But soon it becomes clear that that's a bit unfair on the man mountain, who flaunts a Mascis-like mastery of the guitar, whose lyrics reveal a sweetly incorrigible romantic and who borrows Prince's 'The Beautiful Ones' to brilliant effect.

Yo La Tengo, though, are something else. While their influence might be overshadowed by contemporaries and fellow Hoboken, New Jersey aficionados Sonic Youth, the trio – completed by Kaplan's wife, drummer Georgia Hubley – should be

revered as legends in their own right, and for more than just commendable longevity. Both bands have equally catholic musical tastes, but the difference is Yo La Tengo aren't afraid to allow their full expression.

Post-rock, theoretically an open highway, all too often turns out to be a stylistic cul-de-sac, as formulaic (in its own way) as anything to which it's opposed. Post-rockers are fond of casting themselves as fearless sonic explorers but regularly get no further than exploring the contents of their own navels. Sure, Yo La Tengo are no strangers to the ten-minute-long largely instrumental guitar freakout (exhilarating main set closer 'Blue Line Swinger' being a case in point), but they're also ramblers with a flagrant disregard for the fences and hedgerows that divide the musical landscape up into separate genres.

Over the course of twelve studio albums – and by the end of this evening's gig – they've covered pretty much every base with considerable aplomb: superfuzzy indie ('We've All Got Something to Hide'), falsetto-led jollity that in anyone else's hands might be cringingly awful ('Mr Tough'), cooing torch songs that fade in and out of a fog of feedback ('Nowhere Near'), dreamily ambient pop ('Autumn Sweater'), breathless garage punk ('Watch Out for Me Ronnie') and soothing acoustic folk (a cover of Sandy Denny's 'By the Time It Gets Dark', which benefits from the twats near me finally shutting their slackjaws). The only thing missing, arguably, is space-jazz in the form of their version of Sun Ra's 'Nuclear War'.

This, we can only conclude, isn't so much a band in love with a particular type of music as a band in love with music itself. "Yo La Tengo Concert Disaster"? I rather think not. Worth the wait, Oxford, wasn't it?

Ben Woolhead

PETE BROWN & PHIL RYAN WITH PSOULCHEDELIA

The Bullingdon

Just when it seems that the band might outnumber tonight's Famous Monday Blues audience, a respectable crowd gathers for a genuinely inspiring performance. Pete Brown is something of a minor legend: first a performance poet, then lyricist for Cream in the 60s, with most of their classics like 'Sunshine Of Your Love' to his name. His long-time collaborator is Phil Ryan, who used to play keyboards in 60s hippie rockers Man; they played a memorable set at Stonehenge '84, much of it spent giving each other blowbacks during solos.

Tonight the two are joined by a full band, including a horn section and two backing singers. Soul-tinged blues in the style of Van Morrison with the odd reggae number is hardly fashionable but this is a graceful, classy and polished affair. Brown's voice is rich and distinctive, everyone plays their heart out and the songs are finely turned. Considering his fame as poet and lyric writer

it's slightly disappointing that the subject matter rarely strays too far from the blues staples of bars and cars, but that does little to lessen the enjoyment. 'Flag A Ride' has a neat little quirky hook, 'Hard To Say' is a powerful ballad pulled off with ease and in fact all of the new album, 'Road Of Cobras', grows on the listener like a warm, satisfying whiskey. Brown makes good use of his little percussion set and the whole band seem very comfortable together, despite only having a handful of gigs under their belt.

To see such clearly world-class showmanship in front of a relatively modest crowd and surroundings is a touch embarrassing but increasingly common, and not just in Oxford. Pete Brown's success lies in keeping alive old song writing traditions rather than tiresomely seeking a new twist on something that just doesn't need twisting.

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...AND YOU WILL KNOW US BY THE TRAIL OF DEAD / THE ROCK OF TRAVOLTA

O2 Academy

Nearly ten years ago ...And You Will Know Us By The Trail Of Dead were riding high as one of *the* bands to watch. Their incendiary live shows were garnering a rapturous response as they toured their 'Madonna' album around the country, leaving a

trail of devastation in their wake. When they made it to Oxford, The Rock Of Travolta provided the support, and anyone who witnessed them that night will remember TRoT pulling off a truly jaw dropping set, and Trail Of Dead

struggling to match them.

So it's to the credit of Trail of Dead that they've asked for TRoT to support tonight. Crammed on to a very tight stage, the Travoltas are already somewhat hamstrung. The drumkit is sat front and centre and

cuts the band in two, constricting their movements. Despite this they thunder through a muscular set, cutting shapes and giving a sharper, more urgent edge to the material culled from their latest album, 'Fine Lines'. They're not the same band that graced the stage ten years ago, that much is true. The sense of fun that could be found in the likes of 'I Am Your Father' might be missing, but they can still turn it on when they want to.

Trail Of Dead are also a much-changed band, Jason Reece and Conrad Keely are the only original members left and the lunatic edge of old bassist Neil Busch and the cool charisma of Kevin Allen are missed dramatically at first tonight.

Kicking the set off with 'Strange News From Another Planet' – an epic 16-minute prog-marathon from the new album 'Tao Of The Dead' – they test the patience of the audience right from the off. It almost backfires, but just as the attention levels start to drop to critical levels, they switch through the gears and starts dragging everyone back on board. By the time they start hitting old favourites such as 'Caterwaul' or 'Perfect Teenhood', they're back on the kind of form that had them described as one of the most exciting live bands on the planet.

They might not trash the stage as frequently these days, but the tremendous wall of chaos they conjure up on closer 'Richter Scale Madness' is still as exhilarating now as it was all those years ago.

Sam Shepherd

TINDERBOX FESTIVAL Cropredy Old Wharf

Freeform jazz, experimental sonic improv and laptopers. If this festival was a tin, then it certainly did what it said on it. Mind you, if it were a tin, you could be sure that someone would be hitting it with a free-range stick or had it full of herrings and holes and were blowing it, but that is the watchword of the day: integrity; making sure we're not sat in a small field in Cropredy having the piss taken out of us.

Myrtle & the Chuck Rags, a three piece from Oxford Improvisers, set the tone for the day with a 30-minute set that worries the brain like a hangnail. Itchy home-made electronics and an ancient Korg Synth, or aliens tuning their ham radios and picking up stations from the nebulae. You choose.

Brighton Safehouse (Group A) are the first of two outfits from this south coast performance collective. This one is the 'wildcard' quartet, a free association of a free association, made up of names that had been picked out of a hat at a preceding open session. So if you want a chicken scratching guitarist/theraminist, and a man with samurai hair making up his own language as a dancing girl commits slow-motion tai-chi orgasm to life, then you should have been here.

Chenenko, from Southend, bring us back to slightly more solid ground with their Miles Davis-influenced found-jazz, led by the great drummer Trevor Taylor, soundtracking the clouds changing shape as the beer flows. London Duo **Morgen Und Nite** (see that they did there?) are a white feedback of Lee Knight's squalling guitar over Francis May Morgan's collapsing universe of synth and get the most peer applause of the day, while **BS (Group B)** again act like a sorbet as trumpet, flute and bowed guitars look for a more structural model and high summer drowsy drone.

Another Brighton band, **Bolide**, provide me with my first personal highlight of the day. Influenced by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, they are a genuine cacophony in all the right ways. I stop counting at over 40 individual home-made percussion instruments and marvel instead at the living proof that fractal chaos theory really does play out as a coherent whole, and when a small black mutt that has been roaming the site making friends with everyone, mounts the stage and joins in faultlessly by barking, we're pretty much as near ecstasy as it comes in the improv world.

It suitable rains as **Bitten By A Monkey** play their quaintly funereal pieces on overtone flute,

bowed saw and piano, interpreting and dissecting Richard Strauss's mourning music 'Metamorphosen', itself based on the theme of the funeral march from the Beethoven's 'Eroica'. Equally ironic is the way the crowd bustle together for warmth as doyens of Dalston's Cafe Oto, **Temperature**, take the boards mid-evening. James Dunn's krupa style drums are wired to a magnificent ARP synth (an early American rival to Moog) producing *the* most arrhythmic sound that ever tangled with a bass guitar, ramping up the evening mood before handing over the baton to the day's hosts, **Red Square**, who generously cut their set in half because of the overrun, but even in their twenty minutes they prove why they are such legends in the brainfry jazz genre. Hyper-fast; hyper-free; hyper-dexterous; hyper-a-musical.

South London's **Snorkel** deservedly headline and are the nearest thing to a tune all day. A stunning five piece of avant gardeners, the combative dubby highlight of Minimoog Vs two bass trombones, exploring the cracks between where Funkadelic meets poly-perverse krautrock, is as memorable as it is groundbreaking.

So there's the first Tinderbox Festival: small but perfectly formed. You couldn't make it up, but organisers Jon & Bobbie Seagroatt, and Ian Staples would be happy if you came, listened and did.

Paul Carrera

APARTMENT HOUSE

Oxford Playhouse

“The trouble with state arts funding,” runs the common argument, “is that it only supports things most people don’t like”. Funny that. It’s like asking why Baron Sugar doesn’t get any housing benefit. Tonight’s show, four pieces performed by the excellent Apartment House, selected and introduced by composer Jennifer Walshe, is exactly what Arts Council funding is for: niche interest music that simply wouldn’t work in The Wheatsheaf.

Amnon Wolman’s ‘Dead End’ pits a clarinetist against four noisy toy vehicles that bumble around his feet, as if he were an unfeeling deity surrounded by excitable mortals. At first their constant buzz is annoying, but as the ear calibrates itself the noise makes sense with the clarinet lines. We start thinking about tape hiss, vinyl crackle and all extraneous noises we unconsciously experience alongside music. **Zachary Seldess** attempts to evoke the sound of a cranky old New York shower in ‘124 Milton Street Extract’, using marimba, drums, radio static and rubbed wine glasses (played by five solemn middle-aged performers at a table, like a glum seance convened by Jilly Goolden). The two drummers are superb, teetering on the edge of a cohesive rhythm, and the music is more like a photofit of the sound of plumbing, than a snapshot. It’s

fascinating and immersive.

In Peter Capaldi’s film *Franz Kafka’s It’s A Wonderful Life*, the Czech writer is trying to stay miserable enough to finish *Metamorphosis*, but has trouble as parties rage around him. ‘Plateaux Pour Deux’ by **Pelle Gudmundsen-Holmgreen** is pretty similar: a cellist plays paradoxically dour notes, trying hard to ignore the fact he’s on a small motorised platform nipping across the stage, and that someone is smacking cowbells and honking vintage car horns, making noises like Harpo Marx attacking a swan. The solo cello coda is pointless, but for sheer spectacle, this is truly unique. Finally, **Jonathon Marmou**’s ‘Dog Star’ is composed with randomly selected snippets of melody, but this is unimportant because it sounds like Parisian salon music created by Brian Wilson. At another time it might seem too prissily pretty, but it concludes the night gorgeously, with a fragmented chamber elegance that might just entice fans of The Penguin Cafe Orchestra.

The next in Sound & Music’s Listen To This series is at the same venue on 8th September. Should minority interest arts be funded by the tax-paying majority? Take the odd risk on new experiences, and they wouldn’t have to be.

Richard Catherall

THE KILLS / S.C.U.M

O2 Academy

The Academy’s curious insistence on starting gigs very early means by the time I’ve bumped my way through the thronging masses, S.C.U.M. are doing their thing. And their thing can be squarely defined as shoegaze. I wouldn’t normally plump so easily for a genre pigeonhole, but when a band seems so clear in their intent, it seems churlish not to. So, we get the all-too-familiar sound of what Spacemen 3, The Jesus & Mary Chain and Loop begat the indie bands of the late 1980s, topped off with a voice that’s equal parts Lou Reed and Ian McCulloch, but without the spark of originality that both once displayed. Fuzzy blankets of sound are nice enough, but that’s all that’s on offer: there are no hooks, no definition, no power. It’s frustratingly torpid when it needs to be urgent and gripping.

The Kills initially suggest a turned corner of interest, with the ability to put together a cool-sounding lyrical phrase or blues-based guitar riff. It becomes apparent all too quickly, however, that what they used to have – a sense of danger, the means to

generate feelings of wanting to be in their gang – has been subsumed into a templated, formulaic set of songs. It’s a great template, sure: a stripped-back, Beefheart-meets-White-Stripes take on blues rock, but the hit rate isn’t as high as it should be. When they go for a more traditional style of guitar rock things crash even further, sounding lacklustre and passionless. A false start on one song results in the need for it to be completely restarted, belying the lack of sorely-needed improvisational skill and, well, rock’n’roll spirit. The ‘wasted cool’ motions are trotted through, but it all seems rehearsed, almost choreographed.

Very occasionally everything clicks, and they’re what they used to be: a unique-sounding twosome with a nifty turn of attitude, but mostly they tend towards being an all-too-familiar echo of this, as if their pseudo-jaded personality has taken over and swallowed their passion. In days past, in a tiny, grubby venue, this band would triumph; tonight, in this venue, it falls flat.

Simon Minter

WALLIS BIRD

O2 Academy

You know you’re witnessing something pretty special when you don’t even notice until half way through that the singer is playing a right-handed guitar upside down. It’s this random fact, coupled with a second involving Wallis Bird’s fingers and a lawnmower accident which perhaps go some way to defining the magic she creates.

Fingers aside, Wallis is something of a whirlwind on stage, stamping her feet, tossing her head and singing as if she is exorcising ever last bit of emotion she has to offer. Her distinctive playing style is simply an afterthought, overridden by the humour and energy that carries the set. Despite playing solo, ‘Blossoms In The Street’ contains just as much punch as the album version and instantly conjures up illusions of the type of music P!nk might have created if she had not been led astray by the sheen of the industry. “Drum solo!” she yells mid set, before laughing, and yet drum solo she delivers during ‘Meal Of Convenience’, as her foot stamping

creates just as much noise and rhythm as an accompanying drummer might have provided. Yet amid the banter and gravelly upbeat numbers, Bird also layers in the heartfelt number ‘Measuring Cities’, half of which is delivered without a mic over a quietened guitar to a hushed crowd. Here her voice softens, marking its diversity and giving justification to comparisons to the likes of Ani DiFranco and Fiona Apple.

New song ‘I Am So Tired Of That Line’ becomes a rousing anthem for modern times and as she sings “You’ll find the food and I’ll make the babies. I am so tired of that line,” she’s offered a cheer of approval from the predominantly female crowd. Suffice to say whilst she might have been quiet for a few years, ‘To My Bones’ and ‘The Circle’ have not tired, and judging by the reaction to the autobiographical ‘In Dictum’ there’s a re-emergence of Bird’s fiery folk-rock sound just around the corner.

Lisa Ward

APOLLO

The Oxford Playhouse

In picking one of ambient music’s most seminal works, and one concerned with the Apollo moon mission at that, Oxford Contemporary Music have apparently widened their audience considerably tonight.

That’s not to say that the audience of cosmonauts (not-literarily obviously) gathered here are going to get an easy ride. Before the performance of ‘Apollo’, there’s Phillip Glass’ ‘Music With Changing Parts’ to negotiate. A lost minimalist masterpiece, it’s a looser relative of the considerably more rigid structures of ‘Music With 12 Parts’, but still explores minor variations on a theme, with almost relentless repetition. Tonight’s version is slightly edited, but still runs to around 40 minutes, which is enough to get even the most patient patron of the arts fidgety. It’s not that the piece isn’t well performed; it’s just that it seems rather dull.

Of course ‘Music With Changing Parts’ doesn’t have the additional boon of visual accompaniment. Something that Eno’s ‘Apollo’ does, and what stunning footage it is. On its own, in a pure audio form, ‘Apollo’ is enchanting, but with film from the moon mission, it takes on new gravitas. Much like Glass’ ‘Koyaanisqatsi’, ‘Apollo’ benefits significantly from the addition of visual material – giving an already interesting piece of music more

focus and dynamism. Of course it’s a two-way relationship, Eno’s music piles on the drama to the unfolding story flickering away on the screen. The opening 15-minutes in particular where the crew are waiting to launch are ridiculously tense and Icebreaker do a good job of conveying a sense of fear that must have gripped the astronauts and the watching world in 1969. The spacewalk scene in particular becomes almost too terrifying to watch when coupled with Eno’s soundtrack.

Things loosen up when the crew make it to the moon, and the mood switches to playful, with a side helping of wondrous. Images of the Earth drifting in the infinite blackness of space provoke an acknowledgement of just how impressive the Apollo mission was, while a good two minutes of footage of the astronauts falling over goes to prove that even when at the heart of one of the most impressive achievements in the history of humankind, there really is nothing quite as funny as a someone going arse over tit (really slowly in this case). When the crew returns to earth, completing their mission, the piece too draws to a close – over far too soon. Icebreaker’s performance is immaculate, but for tonight at least, they were always going to be operating in the shadow of the moon.

Sam Shepherd

WIN TRUCK TICKETS!

Fourteen festivals old and **TRUCK** still our favourite weekend of the year. And my how Truck has grown – from a bunch of local bands on top of a flatbed Truck back in 1998, this year sees a whole new set of stages, hosting some of the biggest and brightest names in rock. There's **Gruff Rhys**, **Graham Coxon**, **St Etienne**, **Phil Selway**, **Bellowhead**, **Edwyn Collins**, **Johnny Flynn**, **John Grant** and **The Go! Team** for starters. Bellowhead and The Go! Team by themselves would make for the best live music party of the summer.

For the first time ever Truck is expanding to three full days. There's a new main stage, a bigger second stage (the **Clash Stage**), plus a new **Wood Festival Stage**, the **Last.FM** stage, a theatre stage, a cabaret stage and of course the mighty **Boxford** dance field, where you can become a bona fide 24-hour party person in the company of Fresh Out The Box and friends.

To help thing stay fresh and exciting, Truck have again invited a select band of their favourite indie record labels and other promoters to curate different stages. So **Bella Union**, **Heavenly** and **Transgressive** will each host a day on the Clash Stage, while **Blessing Force**, **Truck Store** and **BBC Introducing** will be picking the bands for the Last.FM stage. The Oxford Folk Festival and Nonclassical host the Wood Stage on different days, while the **Oxford Playhouse** brings some theatrical culture to Truck and **The Long Insiders** present a day of cabaret and classic rock'n'roll.



John Grant

One of the many joys of Truck each year is flitting between stages to catch favourite bands or discover something new, so whether it's **Young Knives**, **Electric Soft Parade**, **Roddy Woomble** and **Tunng**, or **Sea Of Bees**, **Trophy Wife**, **Alessi's Ark** and **Cherry Ghost**, your only problem is cramming it all in.

Of course, Truck, for that it gets bigger and better, remains, at heart, the wee village party it's always been. So the Rotary Club still do the

catering and of course, the bar staff still dress up in their *hilarious* lady costumes and your gracious hosts **Robin** and **Joe Bennett** will be up on stage with **Dreaming Spires** and the **Truck Allstars**.

Splendid, so you've got your ticket already, right? No? Shame on you, but there's still time. Weekend adult tickets are a snip by festival standards at £100, available from www.truckfestival.com, by phone on **0844 854 1350**, or in person from the **Truck Store** on Cowley Road and various outlets around the county. There's also day tickets and concessions for under-16s, while under-12s go free.

But, thanks to the nice folks at Truck and the lovely Claire at Zeitgeist PR, we've got a **pair of adult weekend camping tickets to give away**. Free. In a competition. Hurrah!

To stand a chance of winning this frankly bloody fantastic prize, all you have to do is answer the following question:

Which band is Gruff Rhys the singer with?

Answers on a postcard (no email entries – sorry), to **Truck Competition, Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU**.

Please include full postal address and a daytime phone number. Closing date for entries is the 15th July. Multiple entries will be shredded. The editor's decision is to get increasingly over-excited before Dean Wareham's set, then need the loo just as he comes on.

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DOCTOR SHOTOVER

Emma, Swan Lake & Palmer

Q: I say, I say, I say, what happens when Baby Spice goes to the ballet with an ageing golfer? A: See above. No, all right, Bridgewater, I know that was doubtless a little TOO subtle for an inbred chinless oaf like you, but perhaps you should stay off the ancestral chillum pipe for a minute or two, and all might possibly become slightly clearer. What's that? Pot calling Afghan Black, you say? Yes yes, very amusing. Now, where was I? Oh yes, Prog Rock. More specifically, Emerson Lake and Palmer, or ELP, as we used to call them – frightful rubbish, really, but they will always have a place in our hearts for their personalized monster trucks, not to mention their custom-built British Steel drum kit. Now, just ask yourselves – wouldn't you really rather go back in time to see ELP playing *Brain Salad Surgery* live in 1973, with rotating drum-risers and a Hammond organ full of commando knives? Or would you really, REALLY prefer to see Mummsy & Sons at Glastonbury, hopping about in their ghastly espadrilles like kids who want the toilet? (Kids with stick-on miniature BEARDS who want the toilet...? God, the whole thing really is too f***ing *Twin Peaks* for WORDS, isn't it?)... I need hardly remind you of my loathing for modern pop festivals, apart from the amusing events we put on here at the East Indies Club. We're all looking forward to our latest promotion, Fog Fest, at which I will be headlining with my latest band, Killed By Flapjacks. What's that? Oh ummm, sort of *tantric Mellotron grindcore*, if you really want to pigeon-hole our autistic, I mean artistic endeavours. Anyway, that's all from me for this month. Time for an early night and no more booze or nasty 70s drugs... HA HA! Only kidding! Your round, lard-face! And let's have another of those "interesting cigarettes" too, while you're about it... CHEERS!

Next month: Emerson, Lake and Parmesan



*Is golf the new Prog Rock?
Arnold Palmer says YES*

INTRODUCING....

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

PROSPEKT

Who are they?

Prospekt are a five-piece progressive metal band formed in 2008, with the aim of "creating a modern mix of technical metal and melodic prog". The band are: Matt Winchester: *vocals*; Lee Luland: *guitar*; Phil Wicker: *bass*; Richard Marshall: *keyboards*; Blake Richardson: *drums*. Early gigs saw them developing their complex, epic sound through constant gigging, where Lee's virtuoso playing won praise from many of the band's metal peers. Their debut EP was released last month, with a full album currently being recorded and set for release at the end of the year.

What do they sound like?

Intense, epic metal that perfectly blends the technicality of prog with the brutal riffage of metalcore. Matt's soaring vocals are reminiscent of Geddy Lee at times, while Lee's guitar playing is alternately elaborate and fanciful and darkly brutal, recalling the likes of Opeth, Tool and Meshuggah. Or, in their own words, "A modern mix of technical metal, fuelled with the symphonic elements of prog. Plenty of odd time signatures, guitar solos and complex rhythms, we try and create music that is both original and interesting. Or simply put...prog!"

What inspires them?

"Everything from good music and composition to video games and movies. For example, the song 'Shutter Asylum' was written after watching the movie *Shutter Island*....man, what a head trip that was!"

Career highlight so far:

"Releasing our EP at the start of April was very satisfying. We put a lot of time and effort into it, and we were all pleased with how it turned out. I guess it serves as a pretty good introduction to what we are all about."

And the lowlight:

"Playing a one-off set at a Bicester rugby club in front of a small crowd of girls with glow sticks! We were also very ill!"



Their favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

"Unknown Flow; there are not many bands out there anymore that are prepared to embrace prog the way they do."

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

"Symphony X: 'The Odyssey'. The word epic is an understatement. Unbelievable vocals, incredible guitar work and wonderfully composed, 'The Odyssey' optimizes what progressive metal is all about."

When is their next gig and what can newcomers expect?

"5th August at the Wheatsheaf. Expect a frenetic show full of energy and showmanship, plus a ginger bassist flinging his hair around!"

Their favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

"Favourite thing has got to be the resurgent metal scene, with top bands such as Desert Storm and Taste My Eyes leading the way. Least favourite is the lack of metal coverage throughout the region from various forms of local media - Nightshift excepted obviously."

You might love them if you love:

Opeth; Dream Theatre; Meshuggah; Rush; Symphony X

Hear them here:

www.myspace.com/prospektoxford

Whatever happened to... those heroes

Dee D. Jackson

WHO?

Born Deirdrie Elaine Cozier in 1954, Dee D. Jackson was, after Mr Big, the second Oxford pop act to hit the charts when her sci-fi disco single 'Automatic Lover' reached number 4 in 1978. Having spent her childhood in Blackbird Leys representing her school at various music events, Jackson visited Munich in the mid-70s where she met the likes of Giorgio Moroder and Harold Faltermeyer, sang backing vocals for Lou Rawls and performed in German clubs. Her theatrical personality and extravagant costumes lent themselves to the burgeoning disco scene and after a low-key debut, 'Man Of A Man', 'Automatic Lover' became a world-wide hit, charting across Europe, South America and Japan, selling some eight million copies.

WHAT?

Disco divas aren't something you'd automatically associate with Oxford but Dee D. Jackson's camp, fantasy-based songs turned her into a star, particularly in Germany and Italy, where her success continued long after her UK success waned. In the wake of Donna Summer's disco hits, Jackson hit the charts at the same time as Sarah Brightman's 'I Lost My Heart To A Starship Trooper' and Cerrone's 'Super Nature', completing a trio of sci-fi-themed disco hits. With its nagging robotic voice and



Jackson's oddly serene singing it was a strange piece but equally a perfect slice of club-friendly pop.

WHEN?

'Automatic Lover's follow-up, 'Meteor Man' was a hit in most places beyond the UK and an album, 'Cosmic Curves', coupled with relentless touring, kept her flame alive. A succession of singles followed as Jackson relocated first to LA then Italy, and a second album in 1980, 'Thunder & Lightning', saw her move into a more jazz and rock-orientated style. Most

of the 80s and 90s was spent raising a family and writing, including music for TV, before a third album, 'Blame It On The Rain' came out in 1994.

WHY?

Because Jackson was one of the first Oxford musicians to enjoy real pop success, long before the city had a recognised scene, and because in its way 'Automatic Lover' was a strange but groundbreaking record, sampled brilliantly on hardcore techno act Messiah's 1993 hit 'Thunderdome'. Also, how many Oxford acts have been so successful they had to have a Brazilian impersonator, employed to fulfil personal appearances? That's right, not even Thom Yorke.

WHERE?

Jackson currently alternates between the UK and Italy and still sings and produces music, running her DDE Records. 'Thunder & Lightning' was recently released on CD for the first time.

HOW?

www.thefantastic.net is a pretty comprehensive Jackson website, while the video to 'Automatic Lover' is on Youtube. 'Thunder & Lightning' is released on CD this summer, while many other old artefacts are available, at a price it has to be said, on Amazon.

DEMOS

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DEMO OF THE MONTH

OCTAVIA FREUD

A girl in a bedroom surrounded by loop pedals and a mess of musical toys, playing "gender personal political electronics"? Yep, sounds good to us. And so it is. Olivier is new to Oxford, having apparently played in myriad bands previously and now pursuing a solo direction, but, like those other recent arrivals The Cellar Family, she sounds set to benefit the local scene. There's an unevenness about these five songs but that doesn't detract too much from their inventiveness, creating a spooked, somnambulating ambience across the course of the demo during which she variously sounds like a spaced-out Grace Jones ('This Happy Death'), tripped-out krautrock ('Slow Motion') and Can, at their most Afrocentric, fronted by Danielle Dax. In fact, with her witchy vocals, heavily-treated guitar, which tends to waver off-course at random, and general clutter of electronic toys, Octavia sounds like she's beamed in from that fertile subterranean wilderness of post-punk's more esoteric protagonists, with echoes of Lydia Lunch and Poison Girls melding with more contemporary sound mosaic makers like Tune-Yards and Solex. Whether there's any chance of her translating all this into a live setting we don't know (probably depends on how versatile and resilient her laptop is) but for now it's an oddball treat well worth your investigation.

THE UNTITLED

While the increasing number of local hip hop demos coming in lately is more than welcome, there seems to be a paucity of stylistic variety amongst too many of them. The Untitled are a case in point: the loops and sounds they use across these four untitled – oh yes – tracks are cheap and cheerful, quite seductive at times, but they then simply let them amble along for the duration with little desire to move things along. Similarly too much of the lead vocal is content to rest in that laconic, slightly stoned narrative style, not quite Rakim, not quite Mike Skinner but hoping to end up somewhere between the two. Occasional more urgent interjections can give tracks a bit of variety or energy but each eventually drifts to an anonymous conclusion, even the strongest closing number with its woozy, almost drunken feel and wayward back-up. It's hardly a disaster – both vocalists have decent flow and the backing tracks do have plenty of appeal for a short space of time but you feel they need to give themselves a bit of a creative kick up the backside to hit on something beyond hip hop elevator music.

GONZO & THE RAZZ

With a name like that you'd expect something simple and unsophisticated and so it turns out as Gonzo and the Razz bounce merrily, if not always gracefully, through harmony-heavy 60s-style retro pop, landfill indie and boy band balladry with an almost admirable lack of cool. 'The Hardest Part' is cheerful, sunshiny and hopelessly out of time, sort of partway between The Kinks and, oh, we don't know, The Hoosiers or something. Sorry, we're not sure we're selling this too well, are we. From there we're into cheesy grins and airy harmonies and the sort of rinky dink pop melody even a toddler could hum. 'Paranoid' is, despite what its title suggests, soft-centred and slightly sickly, like Take That attempting to be The Beach Boys. Just as we're fearing our teeth might dissolve from all the sugary content, Gonzo and the Razz switch tack completely for 'Forget It', unreconstructed 70s hard rocking of the Deep Purple kind, but while their earlier songs might have grated slightly in their overly good-natured delivery, they kept us on-side like a genial simpleton, while rocking out, however gently, just doesn't sit well here, sounding clunky and even more dated than their 60s pop pretensions. At least until it quite bizarrely turns into something vaguely resembling Super Furry Animals halfway through. Aw heck, full marks for keeping us on our toes at least.

FUCK UDDERS

It'd be difficult, you'd imagine, to sound relentless when your songs rarely clock in over the ninety-second mark, but so it is with the splendidly-monikered Fuck Udders, a new local industrial-punk-metal act linked to Rivet Gun Records. Over four short numbers here they crank it out at full pelt in the style of early Ministry and Pigface, finding a simple formula of hitting stuff very hard and very fast, sticking to their guns with whitened knuckles and shouting a lot, like they're preparing to head off on some ritualistic buffalo disembowelling expedition. 'Rocky The Spydog' sounds like a death metal Cravats, but best of the lot here is 'Shithead' (we're lost in pleasant daydreams of Tommy Vance or Bruno Brookes announcing "And this is 'Shithead' by Fuck Udders" in genial tones on the old Radio 1 Top 40 rundown), a sullen, pounding mantra coasting – or rather bulldozing – on tribal drums and a virulently unchanging guitar riff. It's too short by half and leaves us craving more. Not bad for a song with a one-word lyric. Seriously, it could go on for another hour and we wouldn't get bored. It's entirely possible, though, that some brain matter might leak out.

LYRIAN

From sweet and simple to full-on pastoral prog-rock extravagance. Pastoral prog-rock extravagance with an obsession with religion at that. Lyrian quote Muse as an influence but

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this is yer real Jethro Tull Deal, 'Sick Roses' sounding like a cross between early Genesis and a mediaeval madrigal, all flutes and synths weaving themselves into each other. Difficult to take it all too seriously though since the singer sounds like a kindly old guinea pig: a sort of domesticated rodent Yoda figure contemplating the notion of faith and its corrupting influence on the human soul, while imagining himself as Peter Gabriel. Considerably more epic is 'The Hollow', clocking in around the nine-minute mark and full of massed (synthetic) choirs and everything. It kicks in like a Tudor take on the old *Blake's 7* theme tune before heading off into a world of cosmic whimsy (sample line: "The moon has human features / But his tongue is strange, his language cannot reach us"). Great bombastic drumming and enough unintentional silliness to outlast the duration of an average Ramones album, there's something admirable about Lyrian's unselfconscious indulgences and we're already knitting ourselves a giant sunflower head dress in preparation for their forthcoming double concept album, provisionally entitled 'The Tongues Of Men & Angels'.

WOODEN KINGS

A bunch of 16 and 17-year old from Banbury, it's hardly surprising Wooden Kings aren't the finished article quite yet but there's promise aplenty here over two tracks that find them adept with a decent hook and fronted by a singer seemingly on the verge of a complete mental and physical breakdown. 'She Said Oh' shimmers and jangles but comes armed with an oddly laddish chorus, the singer becoming increasingly overwrought as he goes on and the music initially seeming incapable or unwilling to follow him into somewhere more intense. Eventually the band do spark properly into life and the final chorus is full of singalong bravado; they'd do well, though, to lose a good minute of the song and get to the good bit before anyone's attention wanders too far. 'Hold back' is similarly untidy and overlong but again chugs with some purpose, not unlike Veils at times, and when it finally cuts loose it's pleasingly rambunctious.

DEPORTIVO

"Every now and then, a band marches loudly onto the scene, plugs themselves in and with no apologies they transport us happily into the archives of bands gone by. Deportivo have stepped up to the podium like a determined footballer ready to challenge the hordes of skinny jean wearing drama school drop-outs to bring the much-missed Brit-pop genre back to the fold. Frontman Justin seems all set to get Britain's teenage hearts racing as he leads the band with distinctive and hooky vocal." Sorry, we had to reprint that opening slice of press blurb from Deportivo in its entirety so you can see the sort of utter fucking garbage we have to

endure on a regular basis before we even get to the living hell that is the music the band produce. Okay, Deportivo's music isn't anything like as bad as their publicity material suggests, but when your lead song sounds a bit like something left over from an early Blur rehearsal, picked up and dusted down to be used by Blue, it's maybe better to approach the world with a modicum of humility. And anyway, what's all that about a determined footballer stepping up to the podium ready for the challenge? The podium's where you go after the game to get your medal, you silly nitwits! And is the world really sitting around waiting for a Britpop revival to save it from nasty modern pop music? Shed Seven and The Bluetones anyone? Golden times, dear reader, golden times.

THE DEMO DUMPER

THE PORN ISSUE

For all that some bands bleat like colic-afflicted babies when they get a slating here, it surely shouldn't come as a startling shock to the system after all these years that if you send a demo in for review you might potentially get a bit of a critical kicking. The Porn Issue must surely know more than anyone what lies in store for the hapless and hopeless, having ended up in the Demo Dumper as recently as February, but here they are back for more. Last time round their press blurb promised that they were a band who "Leave much in reserve for future release", though listening to these four new tracks, it's closer to the sort of thing unsociable slob might leave behind in a public toilet bowl. Nominally a funk-rock band, they're not funky and they don't rock, which counts as a fail, we'd posit. 'Raucous Groove' is neither raucous, nor groovy, instead a half-finished jam session with some random bloke speaking in heavy patois interjected at intervals, perhaps in some misguided attempt to lend the whole wretched affair a degree of authenticity. More frantic fretwankery from 'Pauper's Melody', The Porn Issue displaying an almost heroic disregard for structure or dynamics or the fact we only have so many hours on this planet and don't really want to spend any of them listening to something that makes Reef sound like an acid-fuelled collision of Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Wonder. Eventually they give up even pretending to be funky and drag themselves through a couple of turgid tracks of soft rock, the singer's constipated buffalo/wounded dog vocals some small distraction from the anonymous riffery but also a reminder that life can be an endless succession of crushing disappointments amid a sea of liquid shit. Thanks, guys.

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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