

NIGHTSHIFT

Oxford's Music Magazine

**Free every
month
Issue 209
December
2012**



photo: Jamie Beeden

W I L D S W I M

**Raving, not drowning,
with Oxford's brightest
electro-pop stars**

plus

The Top 25 Oxford songs of the year
Introducing **Phil McMinn**

and lashings of festive gigs, previews,
reviews and releases.

Cooz's
www.coozes.com

Protocols HD Recording & Neve Summing
Rehearse with drum kit,
pro PA, amps and mics

'Cooz's Band Support' gives you
great deals on recording & rehearsals!

'The NVCoos' for recording courses!
Equipment Hire!

T: 01865 236117
E: help@coozes.com

*"The Best Sounding
Live room in Oxford!" - Not My Day*

**OXFORD DUPLICATION
CENTRE**
info@theduplicationcentre.co.uk
01865 457000 07917 775477

**FANTASTIC BAND RATES ON
ALL SERVICES**

Professional Full Colour CD Duplication at
Affordable Prices

Providing superb quality full colour disc, paper printing
and packaging options

Recommended by: Nick Cope, Turan Audio Mastering Ltd,
Briekword Lizards, David Frampton, The Two Busskateers,
Country for Old Men, Matchbox Recordings, Desert Storm,
Seven Year Kismet, Cooz's, Paul Jeffries, Pete the Temp.

NIGHTSHIFT: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU. Phone: 01865 372255

TUE 27 NOV
JUAN ZELADA£8 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOTUE 29 NOV
MICHELE STODART£8 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOFRI 30 NOV
THE MILK£10 ADV | ALL AGES
O2 ACADEMY OXFORDFRI 30 NOV
THE REVIVAL HOUR£9 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOSUN 02 DEC
NATALIE DUNCAN£8.50 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOMON 03 DEC
THE OTHER TRIBE£6 ADV | 18+
THE BULLINGDONTHU 06 DEC
ULTRASOUND£8 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOTUE 11 DEC
ADMIRAL FALLOW£9 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHOTUE 29 JAN
NADEAH£8.50 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO01 FEB
JIM LOCKEY & THE SOLEMN SUN£9 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO

WED 06 FEB

LEDDRA CHAPMAN£7 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO

THU 14 (AVAILABLE) & FRI 15 FEB (SOLD OUT)

STORNOWAY£15 ADV | ALL AGES
OXFORD TOWN HALL

THU 21 FEB

JAKE BUGGSOLD OUT | ALL AGES
O2 ACADEMY OXFORD

FRI 22 FEB

DOG IS DEAD£10 | ALL AGES
O2 ACADEMY2 OXFORD

TUE 26 FEB

LINDI ORTEGA£8.50 | 18+
THE JERICHO

SUN 17 MAR

MARTIN HARLEY BAND£12.50 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO

WED 20 MAR

THE TRAVELLING BAND£8 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO

FRI 22 MAR

BASTILLE£10 ADV | ALL AGES
O2 ACADEMY OXFORD

SAT 23 MAR

RUARRI JOSEPH£8.50 ADV | 18+
THE JERICHO**DOG IS DEAD****O₂ Academy2
Oxford****Friday 22nd
February**

ALL AGES • £10 ADV

ALT-TICKETS.CO.UK • 0844 871 8819

'ALL OUR FAVOURITE STORIES' Debut album out now on iTunes & in all good record shops

STORNOWAYAT THE
TOWN HALL
WITH SPECIAL GUESTS**OXFORD**
14 and 15 FEB.

£15 • ALL AGES • ALT-TICKETS.CO.UK & TRUCK STORE

**BASTILLE****O₂ ACADEMY OXFORD
FRIDAY 22ND MARCH**

£10 • 14+ • ALT-TICKETS.CO.UK • 0844 871 8819 • GIGSINOXFORD.CO.UK

NEWS

Nightshift: PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZUPhone: 01865 372255 email: nightshift@oxfordmusic.netOnline: nightshift.oxfordmusic.net

SPRING OFFENSIVE were named BBC Oxford's Band Of The Year for 2012 last month. Previous winners of the award include Stornoway, Fixers and Little Fish. The award was announced on the same night the band played a sold-out show at East Oxford Conservative Club on James Street, the location of the show having been made known to ticket-holders the day before.

Spring Offensive's epic new single, 'Not Drowning But Waving', is available on smart 7" vinyl from Truck Store on Cowley Road right now. While you're raiding your piggy bank you can watch the ace video for it at **springoffensive.co.uk**

BELLOWHEAD play their biggest Oxford show to date when they headline The New Theatre on Wednesday 13th February. The folk big band, formed by Oxford musicians Jon Boden and John Spiers, released their new album 'Broadside', last month. Bellowhead have previously headlined Truck Festival, but this will be their biggest show in Oxford itself. Tickets, priced from £18.50-£23.50, are on sale now by phone on **0844 871 3020** or at www.atgtickets.com/oxford.

THIS TOWN NEEDS GUNS release their second album on 21st January 2013. '13.0.0.0.0' is the follow-up to 2008's 'Animals' and the first to feature new singer Henry Tremain, who replaced Stuart Smith last year. The new album is released on Sargent House; a teaser track, 'Left Aligned', is online now at soundcloud.com/sargent-house/ttng-left-aligned.

ALCOPOP! RECORDS release a new compilation album this month. 'Alcopopular 5: A Hit Hiker's Guide To The UK' is out on December 10th and features 20 acts, including Oxford's Cellar Family. In typically inventive style the local label releases the album as a CD with an Ordnance Survey map of Britain, so listeners can follow the tracklisting geographically, from Glasgow to Brighton, via Dublin and Cardiff and plenty of other towns and cities besides. Other acts featured include Summer Camp, The JCQ, Wild Mercury Sound, Fear of Men and Ram's Pocket Radio. More info at www.ilovealcopop.co.uk.

BEARD MUSEUM host two nights of music at St Alban's Church in east Oxford this month. Entitled Two Nights Before Christmas, the shows include a one-off set by Trophy Wife on Friday 21st December accompanied by a string quartet. They'll be joined on the night by Kill Murray. On the Saturday night, Aylesbury's Mercury-nominated experimental folk-pop outfit Sweet Billy Pilgrim headline, supported by Phil McMinn and Adam Barnes.

Looking further ahead, Beard Museum host a special show by Patrick Wolf at St John the Evangelist church on Iffley Road, the singer performing accompanied by piano and string quartet. Tickets for all Beard Museum shows are on sale from www.wegotickets.com/beardmuseum.

THE WHITE RABBIT officially opens this month. The new pub venue, on the site of the old Gloucester Arms, in Friar's Entry,



FOALS release a new single, 'Inhaler', this month. The single is the first track to be released from their forthcoming third album, 'Holy Fire', which is out in February next year. The video for 'Inhaler' went online in November with the song finding Foals heading into the harder, heavier sound promised by Yannis in recent interviews. The band also aired a new song, 'My Number', on Later... with Jools Holland at the end of November. Live dates are scheduled through December and also in March but no hometown show has been announced. See the video for 'Inhaler' at tinyurl.com/c2vwe99

is due to host occasional live bands and DJs.

WITCHES have posthumously made their second album, 'Final Word', available free to download on Bandcamp. Hear it at **witchesband.bandcamp.com**.

UNDERSMILE have their 'Narwhal' album released in a limited-edition cassette format this month. 100 copies of the cassette will be available through Tartarus Records and come with an Undersmile sew-on patch for real authentic retro-metal appeal. The band also release a new 12" vinyl EP in February next year in their acoustic Coma Wall guise, out on Shama Records. Undersmile in full bulldozing electric mode play at Gappy Tooth Industries'

CHAD VALLEY AND TROPHY WIFE release a split EP this month on Blessing Force Records. The EP features each band playing their own material, followed by each covering the other's song. Chad Valley contributes 'Tell All Your Friends', while Trophy Wife offer 'Like No Other'. The EP comes out as a 12" white vinyl with screen-printed sleeves by Double Suns, limited to 250 copies, the first 100 of which come autographed by both acts. Smart. To order yourself a copy, go to **blessingforce.tumblr.com**.

Meanwhile, Trophy Wife are off on tour supporting Foals for the first half of December, followed by a support slot to Bombay Bicycle Club at Koko in London on the 22nd.

Winter Warmer at the Wheatsheaf on Sunday 16th December. Go to facebook.com/Undersmile for more details.

RECORD and CD fairs return to Oxford Town Hall in January. The long-running collectors fairs have been absent in recent months, but are back on Saturday 5th January, from 10am to 3.30pm. Visit **www.usrfairs.co.uk** for more details.

AS EVER, don't forget to tune into **BBC Oxford Introducing** every Sunday night between 9-10pm on 95.2fm. The dedicated local music show plays the best Oxford releases and demos as well as featuring interviews and sessions with local acts. The show is available as a podcast at **bbc.co.uk/oxford**.

Regularly updated local music news is available online at **www.musicinoxford.co.uk**. The site also features interactive reviews, a photo gallery and gig guide.

Nightshift's online form is open to all local music fans and musicians at nightshift.oxfordmusic.net, while the new Oxfordshire Music Scene quarterly magazine is available as a PDF online at **www.oxfordmusicscene.co.uk**. Another locally-themed music podcast is From The Ladder Factory, which plays music from Oxfordshire and Wiltshire – get it at **www.fromtheladderfactory.com**.

a quiet word with

WILD SWIM



photo: Jamie Beeden

“**WILD SWIMMING ISN’T** *really our thing. It transpired recently on a band holiday that I’m a useless swimmer. I sort of move in a pointless, hopeless jerking motion. I guess you could call it the front sprawl. To a bystander it would look like I was drowning for an hour.*”

RICHARD SANSOM, OCTAVE-wandering, angelically operatic-voiced singer with Wild Swim, has just shattered Nightshift’s possibly fantastical vision of the band as fearless action men. It’s a scandal. We imagined Richard to be ready and able to wrestle a shark at any moment. “I’d only have colourful language at hand, I’m afraid. It wouldn’t even be able to hear me through my swallowing of water, though.” Ah well, he may not be a dab hand with a harpoon gun, but it turns out Richard is more than adept with a needle and thread. He’s training to become a tailor, while his band-mates are all off studying at university.

WILD SWIM ARE CLEVER sorts, the latest in a long and proud lineage of academically-enhanced Oxford bands. And their music doesn’t hide the fact, neither. It’s a densely textured, intricately

orchestrated blend and blur of styles that defies easy description, never mind categorisation. And anyway, you’re far too busy losing yourself in the exotic drifting mist of their music to worry about what it all means or where it comes from.

WILD SWIM’S DEBUT DEMO back in January of last year was one of the most startling and original offerings we’ve heard in recent times. There was something of an air of otherworldliness about it as it flitted from what sounded almost like a lost Chinese opera, through glitchy electronica and house, lysergic folk and hip hop. Awarding it Demo Of The Month, we declared that, “It’s always a genuine pleasure to dig something genuinely new and innovative out of the pile.” Central to the band’s appeal was Richard’s voice, gentle but highly-strung, capable of shifting up and down octaves with startling ease, reminding us of David Sylvian, opera singer-turned-weird-pop oddity Klaus Nomi, and in particular, The Associates’ Billy Mackenzie. Hallowed company indeed. Talking to Richard about his voice, though, wondering if he’s ever had vocal tutoring or sung in a choir, it

all seems to be happy happenstance that he’s so blessed. Richard: “I can’t tell you how it happened. I think it’s been a gradual development since I joined the band at 12. I didn’t copy anyone at the time and didn’t have a style, though I had a ridiculous mockney accent in an attempt to be more British. As I got older though, I decided that I wanted my voice to be powerful. I learnt a fair bit about Greek mythology at school and something that always stuck with me from the stories we covered was the want in some characters to be remembered. Jacob, our bassist, likes to joke that this desire has made me a megalomaniac, but actually I want that for all of us, especially him.”

SINCE THAT EARLY exposure, Nightshift has been lucky enough to catch a handful of Wild Swim’s sporadic live shows, leading up to the release last month of their debut single, ‘Echo’, on Believe Records. The young quintet have been taken under the wing of manager Jon Chapman, who also looks after Stornoway, and their reputation continues to grow and grow.

WILD SWIM (RICHARD ON

vocals; Carlos Posada on guitars, keyboards and backing vocals; Jacob Lively on bass and keys; Sam Robinson on drums, and Jamie Jay on guitars, keys and assorted electronics), all grew up locally and have been playing in bands together since they were all twelve (“most of them being utterly forgettable,” admits Richard).

In fact one of their earliest incarnations, Parachutes, ended up in Nightshift’s Demo Dumper a few years back. Something they’re able to be sanguine about these days. Jamie: “I remember us all being a bit cross about the review at the time; my elder brother even wrote a rather scathing onslaught in response to said review, which I think he actually sent in! However, I remember us all listening to that old demo together a few summers ago, and it was pretty nebulous – amongst other colourful words – so now it seems we can agree on that. I guess we will never know whether we were always destined to move on from that early sound, or whether the Demo Dumper review was the key influence on that front... that’s up to your take on fatalism.”

WHAT IS CERTAIN NOW IS that Wild Swim, still all in their late-teens, are one of the brightest young bands around at the moment, with 6Music and *The Guardian* among the throng of national media catching on to their new single. Given that four of them are currently at uni and Richard is training to be a tailor, isn’t there pressure on the band to balance studies with touring and the like? Richard: “We’re all currently at different stages of our education. Carlos and Jacob are in their final years so pressure is obviously mounting. Jamie and Sam are in second year, which is seemingly less strenuous but far more challenging geographically; they’re at Leeds and Cardiff as opposed to Oxford, where Carlos and Jacob are. My situation is completely up in the air as the course recognises that students will drop out at any given moment to take up placements; something I may have to do for music-related reasons. We are all prepared to put everything on hold for the band. Carlos and Jacob’s universities have a good scheme whereby pupils can leave for a year to pursue whatever it may be and resume studies after that. It’s harder for Sam and Jamie,

who will have to quit their courses completely if the time comes to do so. I’m the lucky one because I can pretty much pick it all back up whenever I want.”

WE KIND OF TAKE IT FOR granted in Oxford that local bands will be at university either here in the city or elsewhere, but really, look beyond these somewhat rarefied environs and it’s really not that common. Why does Oxford, even for a university city, produce so many brainy bands? Jamie: “Perhaps because it’s a very small city, yet there is a massive world-renowned university in the centre of it, so the intellect would therefore be pervasive due to the high concentration and small size of this ‘tiny teacup’ city. But that only accounts for there being ‘brainy’ people in Oxford; I’ve no idea who the most intellectual band in Oxford would be. It’s hard to judge how intellectual a band is. Establishing the criteria would be difficult; should one judge a band’s intellect based on musical complexity, lyrics, affectations, tweed, or interview citations? However, I’m sure the real Oxford intelligentsia have all got better things to do than listen to bands... let alone play in one!”

If Wild Swim had to go on *Mastermind*, what would their specialist subjects be? Richard: “Bespoke tailoring and I’d probably lose.” Sam: “Zen Buddhism.” Carlos: “Eczema, I’m riddled with it.” Jacob: “I really don’t know...I could probably reel off a fair few quotes from *The Office*.” Jamie: “Adult Swim’s *Sealab 2021* US television show... due to my lack of expertise in anything useful.”

THOUGHTS OF SINGERS with PhDs in duck ecology, indie pop starlets with philosophy doctorates and rapping law graduates cast aside (all of which are academic achievements of Oxford popsters, though we’ll leave it up to you to work out who), ‘Echo’ is currently winning Wild Swim new fans across the board. As well as radio play and excellent reviews in the press for the single, the band have won the affections of Simon Raymonde, once of Cocteau Twins, who now runs Bella Union Records, and one of the music industry’s most respected tastemakers, who declared them his favourite new band of the year. Sam: “We always had faith in the song, but the sudden onset of positive media vibes definitely took us by surprise, and the love from Simon Raymonde was a serious win. If you can win at music, that is. I don’t recall us immediately

anointing ‘Echo’ as a single; it was an auspicious moment when it all came together, and there was a definite sense that we’d strayed into new and beautiful waters.” You’re managed by Jon Chapman now; how did that come about and how has he helped the band get on, given his experience with Stormoway? Jamie: “Jon got in touch with us in April 2011 after listening to one of our demo CDs that Carlos had given him at one of his gigs at The Jericho Tavern. Jon has been a tremendous asset. He always keeps us focussed and organised, and everyone he has introduced us to are always so lovely. He also provides a valuable perspective on our band as ‘the outsider looking in’. Plus, he gets our rather niche sense of humour, which is helpful.” The single is out on Believe Records; how did that come about? Carlos: “They’re primarily a digital distributor, and have been wonderfully supportive, enthusiastic

“I’m a useless swimmer. To a bystander it would look like I was drowning for an hour.”

and encouraging in the whole release process. They’ve got a great roster of artists and it’s been a real pleasure to work with them so far. I think they were a bit surprised to discover that we’ve all bought our own vinyl copies of ‘Echo’ already; apparently they were going to give us our own copies, so they’ve already exceeded our expectations.”

FOR ANY BAND, READING names of other acts that other people think you sound like can be an unusual, occasionally bewildering, often eye-opening experience, but for a band of such tender years as Wild Swim, comparisons to acts like The Associates, Japan, even The Blue Nile, must feel strange. While beloved of jourmos of a certain age, such acts must be alien to a young band these days. Jacob: “We get these kind of comparisons a lot – lots of 80s bands, half of which we’ve never heard of. It’s become quite a good way for us to actually get into new music, though; we’ll get compared to someone, if we haven’t heard them we’ll generally look them up just out of curiosity and a lot of the time it’s actually pretty good so we keep listening. It’s a bit backwards really but it seems to work. Ask the band who they have been most directly influenced by, the list is altogether more contemporary. Sam: “Grizzly Bear, Radiohead, Arthur Russell, Four Tet, Flying Lotus, Jeff Buckley, Fleet Foxes.”

Wild Swim, while never seeming to fit in with any particular scene or genre, do sound like a growing number of bands, from Wild Beasts to Alt.J, who aren’t afraid to be a bit, for want of a better word, arty, to explore more flamboyant, exotic sounds; do they feel there’s a reaction against the sort of grey landfill indie and rock of the past few years? Richard: “We’re certainly not writing our music as a reaction. We definitely have aspirations to be interesting though, and with three members of the band studying music, it’s hard for us not to want our sound to be new and exciting. Unusual bands have always been around, but one thing I have noticed is the acts which are more exotic seem to be seeping into the mainstream again; I hope this continues. It would be great too if these new interesting bands could influence what’s out there at the moment. Perhaps a current gathering wave of music from South-Korea

overlap or is it a release for ideas that wouldn’t fit in with the band? Jamie: Cubiq is essentially for Carlos and me to explore production, compositional and live techniques and technology. Over the last three or four years, we somehow developed a penchant for techno and the deeper end of house music. However, we hope that our remix of ‘Echo’ indicates our liberation from strictly four-to-the-floor genres. Ideas have occasionally overlapped between Wild Swim and Cubiq, but the general rule is to reserve most of our ideas for the former. It was nice to remix ourselves, because we obviously knew the track inside out, which meant we could take full advantage of all the stems. Aside from the various originals Cubiq have released over the last year; we have provided remixes for Spring Offensive, Ollie Gibson, Adam Banks, and this summer we finished one for Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs’ ‘Stronger’, which may be coming out at some stage.”

GIVEN THE DIFFICULTY IN pinning Wild Swim’s sound down, are there other bands around Oxford they feel any kinship with? Glass Animals for example, now signed to XL offshoot Kaya Kaya, seem to share a similar affection for understated moods and that easy fusion of guitars and electronics. Jacob: “I think it’s always great to have bands around that are developing in similar ways to you. We’ve known and been friends with Glass Animals for years and it’s great to see them doing so well. Oxford is known for having these amazing support systems for bands, with the current Blessing Force crowd being a perfect example of this, which is probably a big factor in all the success Oxford bands have had over the years.”

TO WHAT LEVEL WILD SWIM can take such success remains to be seen, but right now, the world looks very much like their oyster. Not only is their music innovative and fresh sounding, a rare balance of intelligent and accessible, it seems that the climate has never been so ripe for a band like them. Turns out they might even have a real life wild swimmer in their midst. Richard: “Jamie is mad for swimming. We all go to Ireland together and the sea there is made black by the cold; he loves it.” Action heroes after all.

‘Echo’ is out now on Believe. Wild Swim play at St. John the Evangelist on Sunday 16th December as part of Pindrop performance’s Christmas show. Visit wildswimmusic.com to hear the single and for gig dates.

Tracks of our Year

*The end of another year, and another year of fantastic music from Oxford bands and musicians. From old favourites to bright young things, the quality bar remains set thrillingly high. **FIXERS** enjoyed (and sometimes endured) a strange old year but their debut album was an absolute joy and they remain one of the most thrilling and unpredictable live bands around. Even discounting those songs from the album that have already featured in previous end of year lists, there was enough quality for them to take top spot, though they were run incredibly close by **GAZ COOMBES**’ solo debut and **THE CELLAR FAMILY**’s nasty-as-we-want-to-be hardcore, while **FOALS** took everyone by surprise with a new single that made an instant impact on Nightshift scribes. Anyway, as is traditional, we’ve voted and sorted and made difficult decisions. Tears were shed, angry words exchanged and some people’s favourites left on the cutting room floor. Here, then, is the crème de la crème. Eat up.*



1. FIXERS ‘Pink Light’

It was a rollercoaster ride of a year for Fixers. 2012 began with them tipped as one of *the* bands to watch, and a slew of superlative reviews for their debut album, ‘We’ll Be The Moon’. They promptly got dumped on by their record label, delaying its release. Then came that drunken, chaotic Truck Festival debacle and the train looked like coming off the tracks. In typically crazed style, they followed up with arguably *the* gig of the year at Oxjam, and ‘We’ll Be The Moon’ stands alongside the very best albums of 2012, awash with euphoric psychedelic love. Much of it was already familiar to Oxford fans, but among the new songs, ‘Pink Light’ was a clarion call for positivity, a song that made it feel like it was Christmas day and the height of summer simultaneously. If any song this year came with stars in its eyes and flowers in its hair, this was it. What it has coursing through its veins is possibly less wholesome.

2. FOALS ‘Inhaler’

That ‘Inhaler’ made its way into this Top 25 at all is a surprise given its late arrival on the scene. That it’s placed so high is testament to its immediacy and sheer excellence. “Can’t get enough space,” rasps Yannis as the song’s claustrophobic atmosphere inexorably builds, an ironic statement given the airy, spaciousness of ‘Total Life Forever’. It’s a lightness of touch they’ve mostly junked here for a nastier, grungier funk that sounds what Queens of the Stone-Age might have sounded like had they gone head-to-head with George Clinton. With a determination to move forever forwards musically, next year’s ‘Holy Fire’ album is already shaping up to be a modern day classic.

3. THE CELLAR FAMILY ‘Pinhead’

“The soundtrack to your next bad day,” concluded Nightshift’s review

of The Cellar Family’s ‘Jumbo’ EP, revelling in the trio’s masterclass in clanging discord, staccato dynamism and outright Jesus Lizard filth. Furious, driven by disgust, and just the right amount of downright sinister, at their best, as on the EP’s stand-out track, The Cellar Family could be malicious and mischievous simultaneously, preferring the twisting knife rather than the blunt instrument to hit home their point. That it all came with a pitch black sense of humour only added to the nastiness of it all. This was hardcore of the sort too often forgotten in the rush for macho posturing, and all the better for it.

4. GAZ COOMBES ‘Break The Silence’

With his solo debut album ‘Here Come The Bombs’, Gaz Coombes sounded like a man who’d just rediscovered his zest for life and sense

of adventure. Taking what was best from Supergrass – the innate sense of melody and a carefree glam-trash energy – Gaz introduced his loves for Krautrock and post-punk into the equation, the stomping electro beat of ‘Break The Silence’, sounding like Giorgio Moroder inviting Bowie and Neu! round for a private rave, a disco shimmer punctured by shards of serrated guitar, but at its core a heart-bursting pop anthem.

5. WILD SWIM ‘Echo’

Still in their teens, Wild Swim have been making music more complex and ambitious than bands with far more experience for a couple of years now, and this debut single was them at their most bewitching, sounding like it came from a strange, ghostly netherworld, a mist-shrouded drift through delicately twinkling guitars, softly shimmering synths and shuffling, barely-there beats, with singer Richard Sansom’s voice casting an almost operatic shadow over proceedings – one small but all-important step away from being preposterous. With a deft touch they draw a hazy line between 80s art-pop experimenters The Associates and Japan and understated modern-day heroes like Foals and The xx. Sounds like the start of something beautiful.

6. SPRING OFFENSIVE ‘Worry Fill My Heart’

While they’re more than capable of fourteen-minute, multi-part concept singles about the cycle of grief, as well as visceral bursts of agitated noise, Spring Offensive also do sweet, simple, skittish pop nuggets with a sense of drama such as this, their single from back in March. With its fractured guitars, fidgety rhythms and almost conspiratorial ambience, ‘Worry...’ was equally sparse and fulsome – deft use of space deflecting attention from just how busy it all was. Most of all it was pretty, a colour-splashed palette of pop’s poster paints, each subtle shade forming a bigger picture that only comes into focus once you step back and take in its entirety.

7. UNDERSMILE ‘Milk’

To quote Beavis and Butthead, the only thing cooler than bands who get chicks, are band who scare chicks. Beavis and Butthead would probably have called Hel and Taz from Undersmile “chicks” but they’d have found themselves gutted and hung from the nearest tree for their troubles. Cos Undersmile scared pretty much everyone. Timid wee beasties were spotted sneaking out of their shows within the first song, while true believers stood in awed wonder at the band’s Satanic doom-metal hymns. Sounding like a Gregorian Godflesh, ‘Milk’, the highlight of their ‘Narwhal’ album, was filled with genuinely unsettling malevolence. Girls, as we’ve so often said, rock harder than boys.

8. GLASS ANIMALS ‘Golden Antlers’

Glass Animals’ debut for XL imprint Kaya Kaya felt like the band were intent on recreating a smoky jazz club ambience out of purely electronic instruments, woozy synth textures initially suggesting minimalist arrangements before you find yourself trying to follow their myriad busy diversions, the vocals occasionally reminiscent of Anthony Hegarty’s breathless soulfulness amid a spooky, trippy ambience and a musical world of shifting shadows.

9. CHAD VALLEY ‘Young Hunger’

Managing to balance helming Jonquil with his Chad Valley persona, Hugo Manuel’s latter project produced a gem of a retro-pop album last month, featuring cameos from Fixers’ Jack Goldstein, Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs, Glasser and Twin Shadow among others, but it was Hugo’s own vocal performances that mostly stole the show, both on the chilled ‘Upside Down’ and this, the album’s title track, a perfect blend of neo-cheese and alerno-weirdosity, happy to reference such uncool 80s references as A-Ha and Hall & Oates, alongside New Order’s silicon disco and Tears For Fear’s pop bombast.

10. VIENNA DITTO ‘I Know His Blood Will Make Me Whole’

Where primitive reverb-heavy voodoo blues hits the 21st Century, creepy crawling into Cramps territory by way of Portishead and Royal Trux, from its sparse, lo-fi slide guitar-based

beginnings the song ramps up the tension to almost unbearable levels by way of vicious electronics and beats, singer Hattie Taylor breathlessly holding her own in the face of the oncoming storm.

11. JONQUIL ‘Run’

Reining in some of their earlier “tropical pop” schtick, Jonquil’s latest album, ‘Point Of Go’, moves the band ever forward, but never loses touch of Hugo Manuel’s way with a fantastically simple pop song. This stand-out song from the album is pure summer soul-pop fare, jaunty piano flourishes and a sense if giddy romantic optimism driving all before it. Chad Valley might get the national press column inches, but Jonquil remain, if not quite a secret any longer, one of Oxford’s best kept pop treasures.

12. RICHARD WALTERS ‘Tomorrow Begins Today’

After the misfiring, over-produced ‘Pacing’, the venerable Mr Walters got back to doing what he does best, simply and subtly soundtracking those mismatched twins of hope and despair, here Rob Stevenson’s twinkling piano circling beneath Richard’s gorgeous heartbroken reflections, hope a small, shining beacon on the far side of his valley of sorrows. But hope there is – love is lost but there’s always tomorrow. It’s Richard’s particular blend of magic though, that can make a song of such hope sound so completely devastating.

12. SEABUCKTHORN ‘It Swept Across The Open’

While Seabuckthorn – the musical moniker of Andy Cartwright – are best appreciated across a whole album, you can still pick out particular highlights, like this cut from his most recent ‘The Silence Woke Me’ – his fifth album in total and the second for French label Bookmaker. A masterful composer, here Andy weaves a heavier rhythmic element into his twelve-string explorations, the layered, rhythmic approach striking a perfect balance between scarcity and bombast, the music creeping up on you in waves until you realise you’re in the centre of a storm of arpeggiating guitars and reverb-drenched notes.

14. GUNNING FOR TAMAR ‘Time Trophies’

Suitably enough for a song called ‘Time Trophies’, Gunning For Tamar’s summer release on the ever-inventive Alcopop! came out

as a garish orange wristwatch with a download code included. Novelty aside, this was a frenetically beat-driven pile-up of melodic post-hardcore and twitchy math-rocking, coated with a yelping pop sheen, emotive and dynamic and putting lie to the idea that Oxford’s more musically awkward and esoteric types couldn’t rock out or have you humming along before bedtime. Not that you’d be able to sleep anyway. Not with this pocket-sized monster clattering around in your head all night.

15. DREAMING SPIRES ‘Just Can’t Keep This Feeling In’

An aptly-titled song from the brothers Bennett, whose Dreaming Spires incarnation finds them ever more firmly embedded in the great American folk landscape. Its exuberance is irresistible, fair bursting out of its host album, ‘Brothers In Brooklyn’, even Robin’s normally plaintive vocals here feel awash with starry-eyed delight as the band – more than ably augmented by drummer Loz Colbert – rock it up like it’s party time in the Catskill mountains.

16. COUNT SKYLARKIN & HARVEY K-TEL ‘Dub of a Preacherman’

His monthly club nights and Disco Shed outings may have been the best parties in town this year but Count Skylarkin proved he could do more than just spin great records; he could make them too. Alongside producer Harvey K-Tel, ‘Dub...’ was a great, fun mash-up, reworking an old Trojan 7” by The Gaylettes, adding a giddy, playful mix of dancehall, drum&bass and acid house to the original and setting it to an animated video that looked like a 60s acid trip prototype of *Spongebob Squarepants*. In a parallel, and better, universe, this would have been a Christmas number 1.

17. TOTALLY ENORMOUS EXTINCT DINOSAURS ‘Your Love’

Oxford not being a city renowned for creating striking dance anthems, Orlando Higginbottom, who is Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs, has single-handedly set out to change that perception this year, signing to Polydor and releasing a succession of singles, culminating in this soulful, tripped-out sliver of 90s-flavoured house, alternately languid and party-hearty and pitched partway between Hot Chip and classic Soul II Soul.

18. SECRET RIVALS ‘Once More With Heart’

Seemingly on a mission to save the true spirit of indie-pop, Secret Rivals were the musical equivalent of a playground snog and a closing-time punch-up in precarious proximity. “I’ll tell you when you’ve had enough,” chirps singer Clouds sweetly but with just the right hint of menace, while co-vocalist Jay yelps like an agitated puppy in response. Where Belle & Sebastian’s big-hearted romance and The Cure’s lovelorn electro-pop gets clobbered by Johnny Foreigner’s up-for-it fight-pop, you’ll find Secret Rivals, doubtless breaking things, stealing sweets and grinning from ear to ear.

19. TIGER MENDOZA feat. ASHER DUST & DEATH OF HI-FI ‘Lovesick Vandal’

Asher Dust seemed to be guesting or collaborating with pretty much everyone within a fifty-mile radius of Oxford this year but this was the song that showed both he and Tiger Mendoza’s strength and versatility, a relentless thrum of harsh old-school electronics and tumultuous beats over which Asher’s soulful hectoring holds court, a heady, abrasive electroclash of 65Daysofstatic, DJ Shadow, Tricky and Salem.

20. TOLIESEL ‘The Light’

While it’s fair to say you can barely move for vaguely country-tinged indie bands in Oxford in recent times, the best of them are still an absolute joy. Case in point: ToLiesel, whose debut single, ‘The Light’, carrying an air of restrained euphoria about it, added a shoegaze shimmer to the sort of haunted alt.country balladry that Band Of Horses peddle so sweetly. Lighters aloft, it’s time to love thy fellow man.

21. DEATH OF HI-FI feat. HALF DECENT ‘Until I Stop Breathing’

Witney production duo Death Of Hi-Fi’s ‘Anthropocene’ is already a contender for best hip hop album to come out of Oxford, featuring an array of rappers, local and international (including Ugly Duckling’s Dizzy Dustin) as well as Andy Hill and Dan Clear’s mix of electro, funk and industrial instrumentation, but it was fellow Witney-ite Half Decent who helped provide the album’s highlight with a smooth, rapid-fire delivery that’s as breathless as it feels effortless. Local hip hop continues to bloom, but this took it to another level.

22. MOTHER CORONA ‘Sunscope’

It starts with a riff, and the riff gets bigger. Soon the riff is rolling across the ocean, growing and growing until it’s vast enough to consume an entire continent. And so it rolls on. Black as night, hard and unforgiving as a mountain range. Didcot’s thunderous psychedelic metallers ground Stooges-like dirt under the fingernails of Sabbath’s relentless riffery and dropped a tab of acid in its pint. Then they riffed some more.

23. DALLAS DON’T ‘The Ballad of Phoebe Henderson’

Yet to officially release anything, Dallas Don’t’s reputation was built on their often incendiary live shows, sparks flying as Niall’s uptight Scottish burr rubbed up against sheet-metal guitar noise, on this regular set highlight, making for a feast of serrated post-hardcore noise that variously reminded us of McLusky, Pixies, Idlewild and Arab Strap, if the latter came armed with power tools, Marshall stacks and a murderous angst instead of a hazy sense of regret.

24. FAMILY MACHINE ‘Quiet As a Mouse’

Sweet, tremulous and slightly sinister, The Family Machine’s ode to sneaking round someone’s house while they were out would normally have responsible citizens like ourselves calling the local constabulary, but featuring guest vocals from We Aeronauts’ Anna Log, it would have felt like turning in a kitten for nicking a pot of cream. The whole song teeters precariously on the slenderest of acoustic guitar lines, sparse handclaps the only rhythmic track and it sounded like Laura Marling absent-mindedly singing ‘I Saw Mummy Kissing Santa Claus’, while baking fairy cakes.

25. KILL MURRAY ‘Superhuman’

Emerging from the wreckage of Dial F For Frankenstein, Phantom Theory and Fifty Foot Panda, you’d imagine Kill Murray might have been a rugged old sandstorm of grungy noise, but not so, as their debut ‘A Drug To Shake You Up’ EP proved. Pumped up, fidgety, wired and bordering on hysterical, EP highlight ‘Superhuman’ carries the edgy electro buzz of Radiohead’s more pensive and rocking moments, guitars, synths and harmonies building to an oddly euphoric climax.

RELEASED

DEATH OF HI-FI

‘Anthropocene’

(DB)

If locally produced hip hop still struggles to attract a crossover audience, you’d hope an album of this quality might prove to be the game changer we’ve been waiting for. The debut work of Witney production team Andy Hill and Dan Clear, ‘Anthropocene’ is, according to the blurb, a concept album “based on the idea of aliens creating a musical interpretation of Earth, made up from hearing snatches of radio transmissions.” We love concept albums and we love aliens even more, so let’s have it.

Employing the services of myriad local rappers, Death Of Hi-Fi follow a standard enough hip hop blueprint in the pursuit of keeping things fresh, but while such an approach can leave any album open to being uneven, such pitfalls never really surface here. The vocal performances are pretty much across the board impressive, from N-Zyme’s steely-eyed delivery, akin to Rakim even, on ‘Godssaveus’, and Chuckie and Copywrite’s bullish rap on ‘Keep Me Down’, through Half Decent’s rapid-fire delivery at the album’s high point, ‘Until I Stop Breathing’, to Asher Dust’s more soulful, contemplative narrative on ‘I Come To Rest In Jericho’ and AJ Live’s invigorating shake-up ‘Manamals’. The most commercial-sounding cut on the album is ‘Bullspit’, perhaps unsurprising given guest vocal showings for Thee Tom Hardy and Ugly Duckling’s Dizzy Dustin; it’s a pithy put down of modern mainstream rap but with a chorus hook that would sit happily alongside the biggest American stars of the genre.

Throughout ‘Anthropocene’s sixteen tracks,



DOHF’s production is pretty much faultless, with a keen attention to mood and texture, at their very best on the doomy, industrial ‘Art Of Sedition’ and swooning, swimming ‘Painted Faces’, stealing snatches of old sci-fi TV themes to accentuate the ongoing themes of the album (notably cult 70s series *The Changes* on ‘Ramona Ramona’). By the finale, ‘You Are Here’, we’re in full trance mode, with echoes of Jean Michel Jarre and Future Sound of London. The album could do to lose a couple of tracks, it must be said – the soulful but slightly sluggish ‘Keep Me Down’ is passable enough, but ‘So Over You’, despite its Numan-esque feel, is vocally clunky, lacking in flow. Those are minor gripes though about an excellent, varied debut from a team who sound equally at home exploring the worlds of MC Doom and Nas as they do Nine Inch Nails and Aphex Twin. And ‘Anthropocene’ could make a reasonable claim to be one of, if not *the*, best hip hop albums to come out of Oxford.

Dale Kattack

a wee while afterwards, mind. Perhaps on a particularly broody day the thinking man’s Titan might have conjured up a slab of music not unlike this. Tiger Mendoza’s ‘LIBRE’ EP earlier this year found the band taking a downturn into darker industrial hip hop, as close to Nine Inch Nails as DJ Shadow, and this new single is a further footstep closer to the Stygian abyss. Wholly appropriate then that it features Half Rabbits’ Michael Weatherburn on vocals, his almost Stentorian delivery casting a gothic sense of drama across the piece as it gravitates from its initial scuffed-up Kraftwerk-like motoring to an altogether gloomier industrial clang that reminds us of great lost 90s hip hop maverick Hoodlum Priest.

The EP also features remixes from Space Heroes of the People, Unit 27 and Death Of Hi-Fi, providing variously more spaced-out and ethereal takes on the original and marking Tiger Mendoza, alongside DOH-F, local masters of atmospheric electronica and hip hop. As portentous as a Greek myth; tastier by far than raw liver.

Ian Chesterton

Sponsored by



HOT HOOVES

‘Fake Modern Art’

(Rivet Gun)

Hot Hooves don’t mess around. Last year’s debut album ‘Avoid Being Filmed’ crammed ten songs into 23 minutes. This follow up clocks in at an impressive 25 minutes. Short, sharp shocks are the order of the day rather than bilious pontificating. Johnny, Joey and Dee Dee would be proud. At their best Hot Hooves cram an irresistible amount of energy, melody, wit and cynicism into two and a bit minutes. Album opener ‘Youth Activator’ is a well-aimed pop grenade, singer Mac dryly puncturing modern age posturing and protest (“We will take the nation, with online information”) as the song cavorts effusively with the spirit of 77.

‘Uncomplicated Flow’ might be a decent description of much of Hot Hooves’ output – an onward rush of effortless three-chord ire and disdain with its tongue only slightly in its cheek – but tracks like ‘Serious Business’ are spikier, channelling Wire’s frantic ‘Dot Dash’, while title track ‘Fake Modern Art’ is relatively languid, almost country-tinged.

It’s not all fun, mind. ‘Christ On A Bike’ is woefully clunky, a third-rate Buzzcocks pastiche that would have been lucky to find itself opening for The Soup Dragons back in 1987, while ‘Too Fucked To Fix’ ends the album on a whimper when Hot Hooves have enough bangs in their collective pockets, surely: the 68-second breathless rush for the door of ‘Bad Robot’ for example, or the snarling fuzzpop of ‘Can’t Back That Up’.

What sticks with you throughout the majority of album though, is both the strength of melody, even when the band seem to be trashing anything to hand, and a sense of youthful abandon that’s rare and wonderfully unbecoming of a band closer to retirement age than their teens.

If only more bands would grow up so disgracefully.

Dale Kattack



BLACK HATS

‘Button Down Shirt’

(Hoi Polloi)

After their ‘Austerity For The Hoi Polloi’ mini-album earlier this year, Black Hats seemed to have confirmed their place among Oxford’s most promising new bands, particularly the spiky lollop of ‘Kick In The Doors’ and the rolling, anthemic ‘Just Fall’. Here was a band with both attitude *and* tunes you could whistle.

So why does this new single feel so disappointing? Perhaps because it sounds like Black Hats are trying to play down the more visceral side of their sound – the one that sounds like it’s on the verge of downing its pint in one and kicking the crap out of you – in favour showing their more sensitive side. With a title like ‘Button Down Shirt’, this should be ready to rumble, but it simply never kicks off, pulling its punches and coming over as a bit of a lightweight. There’s no great chest-thumping chorus and the guitars are reined too far in, dominated by keyboards and what even sounds like a steel band at one point. A temporary blip hopefully. Here lads, have another pint of Stella, that bloke over there is trying it on with your missus. Go show him what for, and come back when you’ve written the soundtrack to the ensuing bloodshed.

Dale Kattack

RAINBOW RESERVOIR

‘Love Me EP’

(Own label)

“Welcome to my weird little world / I am your weird little girl,” chirps Angela Space in the opening lines of this EP. The couplet pretty much sums up what’s both endearing and infuriating about the singer and pianist who records under the name Rainbow Reservoir.

On the one hand there’s a sweet, girlish charm about Space; she sounds impossibly chipper even when she’s recounting tales of lost love and personal phobias; on the other, she can sound too self-consciously quirky, as if quietly screaming, “Look at me, I am eccentric!” when, as anyone knows, real eccentrics have no idea they’re a bit strange.

Ironically that lead track is called ‘Normal Girl’. It coasts along on a relentlessly jaunty piano lead (Space’s musical background is in classical music and her ability is undeniable), sounding like ‘Big Yellow Taxi’ might have it had been written by New York anti-folksters Mouldy Peaches. It’s cloyingly whimsical, but such whimsy works far better for her on the EP’s highlight, ‘Scaredy Cat’, basically a list of everything she’s afraid of in the world, from spontaneous human combustion to falling off her bike or her drink being spiked. Coming on like Jeffrey Lewis without his underlying cynicism, it’s as difficult to dislike as a confused-looking kitten, and it feels genuinely churlish to knock Rainbow Reservoir down for simply sounding so lacking in bitterness about the world. ‘Love Me’? We won’t go quite that far just yet, but we guess a hug isn’t out of the question.

Dale Kattack



LISTING SHIPS

‘The Hayling Island Sessions’

(Idle Fret)

While local instrumental explorers Listing Ships’ decision to record their new EP at Hayling Island lifeboat station makes for good interview material, as does the band’s wall-to-wall nautical obsession, it’s all worth nothing without quality music to back it up.

Luckily, for the most part, ‘The Hayling Island

PHIL McMINN

‘A Crystal / A Diamond /

An End / A Start’

(Beard Museum)

Though Phil McMinn has been a consistent presence on the Oxford music scene over the last 10 years – as front man of Fell City Girl, and later The Winchell Riots – ‘A Crystal / A Diamond / An End / A Start’ is his debut solo EP, released as a limited-edition numbered CD in one of four editions – either accompanied by a handwritten lyrics card, photo print, drawing, or additional CD of unreleased material from his vast back catalogue.

In a recent interview, Phil revealed he wrote much of the EP while on a trip around the Isle of Skye, and on listening to it, it’s hard to imagine music more evocative of bleak Scottish countryside. Opener, ‘Chase Horses Down’, sets the tone with layers of atmospheric, far reaching vocals, which carry on to the wistful ‘Sixteenth’, building reverb-laden guitars over a driving drum roll and choral harmonies.



Sessions’ lives up to its backstory.

We set out on calm waters, ‘Alba Adriatica’ cutting through ocean ripples with spangled guitar twitches and sparse rhythms, before a storm starts to grow on its starboard side. Listing Ships forever try to balance out their pensive and cathartic sides. They’re far more engaging when they’re careering full on – the scouring, rise and fall of ‘Equus Ager’ provides the EP’s chief highlight, almost stately in its sonic violence. Ditto the similarly orchestrated ‘100 Gun Ship’, which delivers the requisite broadside as serrated guitars clash with coruscating synths. Less successful is the bulky, ponderous ‘American Steam Company’. While the band avoid too much widdly fretplay of the sort that blots the post-rock landscape, it’s overlong and never gets up that full head of steam.

The EP’s most curious interlude is ‘Nutmacker Six’, a cut-up patchwork of radio transmissions from the lifeboat station stitched together, which sounds like an offcut from OMD’s experimental 1983 classic ‘Dazzle Ships’.

Like sailing the ocean, listening to Listing Ships is far more fun when they’ve got all sails to the wind and all guns blazing; as long as they steer clear if the doldrums, it’s a voyage well worth undertaking.

William Bligh

Third track, ‘That House You Built From The Wreckage’, continues the isolated countryside theme, both lyrically (“I heard you moved to the mountains / Through the northern pass / Out near the shoreline”) and musically, with a delicate underlying piano riff complementing intense, soaring vocal sections.

The EP concludes with a pretty cover of John McCusker’s ‘Lavender Hill’, which, after the loneliness of the three preceding tracks, holds a sense of hope about it: “We can scratch out our sunsets so we never feel sad,” he sings, “And we’ll play these chords and sing to these chords laughing”.

Simultaneously bleak and beautiful, ‘A Crystal / A Diamond / An End / A Start’ perfectly showcases McMinn’s songwriting prowess on record, while promising an even more intense live show.

Caroline Corke

KILL MURRAY

‘For The Kids’

(Own label download)

This is a real deceptive bruiser of a song, a teaser for the band’s new EP, due early in 2013. After the pensive, skinny-limbed near-hysteria of June’s ‘A Drug To Shake You Up’ EP, with its taut excess of nervous energy, ‘For The Kids’ is a confident cruise, a canter even, guitars striking out doomy chords as synthetic silicon squiggles decorate the scenery, Gus Rogers’ vocals still high-wired but subsumed to the overall picture. It sound like what The Naked & Famous might sound like if they ditched the happy pills and lived in Norway for the winter. This, in case you’re confused, is A Good Thing.

Sue Foreman

G I G G U I D E

SATURDAY 1st

ICEAGE + THULEBASEN + POLEDO: The Cellar – Tinny, lo-fi spirit-of-76 punk noise from Copenhagen’s teen punks Iceage, whose 12-track, 25-minute debut album captures the short, sharp shock attack of early punk, heavily inspired by the likes of Wire, Richard Hell and Chelsea. Local grungy fretmanglers Poledo support. Followed by techno and house club night Extra Curricular.

THE CRUSHING + CARAVAN OF WHORES + PROSPERINA + SEA BASTARD + EYES OF EVE: The Wheatsheaf – Another great evening of metal from Buried In Smoke, with theatrical, slightly camp thrash from The Crushing; growly stoner-metal from Caravan Of Whores; progressive noise in the vein of Kyuss, Tool and Pink Floyd from Swansea’s Prosperina; doomy stoner-metal from Brighton’s Sea Bastard and epic thrash-core from Eyes Of Eve.

NETSKY: O2 Academy – Liquid funk from the Belgian drum&bass man, inspired by High Contrast.

PHRONESIS: The North Wall – Imaginative

Thursday 6th

ULTRASOUND:

The Jericho Tavern

There was a time, back in the mid-to-late 90s when Ultrasound were all set to be *the* biggest band of the decade. The music press adored them but in their case the hype was wholly justified as Ultrasound gigs took on titanic proportions, epic in every department, from frontman Tiny’s imposing presence to Richard Green’s monstrous riffs and the band’s conveyor belt of anthemic choruses. Oxford cottoned on to their charms early on; in fact Ultrasound became honorary locals for a while, becoming the only non-Oxford band ever to play at the legendary Your Song parties, where they condensed the entirety of The Who’s *Tommy* into twenty minutes of irresistible rock pantomime. They should have been a gigantic full stop in rock and roll evolution, but then it all went horribly wrong, recording sessions for their long-overdue debut album wrought with bitterness and in-fighting and they split shortly after. Fans could never forget those glorious early shows though, and when rumours of reconciliation surfaced and a few low-key reunion shows took place, it looked like everything was as great and grand as before. The release of the band’s second album, ‘Play For Today’, a mere thirteen years after its predecessor, proved the old magic was back, with interest. If you saw the band first time round we expect you’ve booked your ticket already. If not, and you like your rock music overflowing with grandeur, bombast and hooks big enough to land a blue whale, make it your mission to discover Ultrasound now.



DECEMBER

contemporary jazz improvisation from the Anglo-Scandinavian trio at tonight’s Oxford Contemporary Music show, alternating laidback grooves and spiky, brittle bass-driven pieces, nodding towards Chick Corea and Brad Mehldau.

PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy – Indie and rock at Propaganda every Saturday, plus kitsch pop, glam and 80s at Trashy, and party tunes from Jack FM DJs.

SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno club night with guests Huxley and Midland, plus resident DJs.

OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: The Swan, Wantage

SUNDAY 2nd

DAWES: The Bullingdon – Authentically vintage-sounding Laurel Canyon-style folk-rock in the tradition of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young from LA’s Dawes, back over in the UK to tour 2011’s Nothing Is Wrong’ album.

THE SAW DOCTORS: O2 Academy – Ireland’s folk-rock superstars celebrate their 25th anniversary with a ‘Best Of’ album, having recently played a 50,000-capacity homecoming show back in Galway. Rousing folk-stomping anthems and bittersweet balladry are the order of the day, alongside monster hit ‘I Useta Lover’.

NATALIE DUNCAN: The Jericho Tavern – Big-voiced blues and soul from Nottingham’s Natalie, currently being touted as the latest pretender to Amy’s vacant throne. Having come to attention on the TV show *Goldie’s Band: By Royal Appointment*, she’s signed to Verve Records and just released her debut album, ‘Devil In Me’, while live she gives the likes of The Rolling Stones and Grizzly Bear the treatment, alongside her own material.

MONDAY 3rd

THE OTHER TRIBE: The Bullingdon – Euphoric big-haired, face-painted tribal disco and rave from the recent Gathering stars.

ADAM BOMB + 1000 MILE HIGHWAY: The Jericho Tavern – Return to the Famous Monday Blues for LA’s big-haired glam-metal axe hero who, as well as supporting Chuck Berry and Johnny Thunders during his career, has also auditioned for Kiss, shared an apartment with Izzy Stradlin and jammed with Eddie Van Halen. His is an old-school form of heavy rocking, with nods to Hanoi Rocks and The Sweet along the way.

FUNKE & THE TWO-TONE BABY: Truck Store – One-man blues outfit utilising human beatboxing and loops to update the classic blues sound.

TUESDAY 4th

LUKE ROBERTS: The Jericho Tavern – Melancholic acoustic pop from the Berkshire singer-songwriter, in the vein of Elliot Smith and Iron & Wine.

JON SEAGROATT & IAN STAPLES: The Old Fire Station – Local experimental and improv heroes Jon and Ian preview their composition based on the myth of the Minotaur as part of Oxford Improvisers’ final show of the year.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – Free live jazz from

The New Jazz Collective.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue – Sister club to Catweazle, offering a similarly eclectic showcase of local singers, musicians, poets and performance artists.

WEDNESDAY 5th

GUNNING FOR TAMAR + MY FIRST TOOTH: The Cellar – Ace local label Alcopop! gets in early with their Christmas party, featuring local math-groove monsters G4T, injecting a melodic heart and soul into Mars Volta-style noise.

ACOUSTIC LOUNGE: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Open acoustic session.

THURSDAY 6th

ULTRASOUND: The Jericho Tavern – The beast returneth! Praise the beast! – *see main preview*

FOR THOSE ABOUT TO ROCK: O2 Academy – Rock tribute double with Livewire AC/DC and The ZZ Tops.

CHARLIE DORE & JULIAN LITTMAN: The Bullingdon – Folk and country from the veteran singer and actress who enjoyed her sole hit, ‘Pilot Of The Airwaves’, back in 1979. Since then she’s written songs for Celine Dion, George Harrison and Sheena Easton as well as co-presenting *Rainbow* in the 70s. Out on tour with her band The Hula Valley Orchestra, she’ll be playing tracks from her recent ‘Hula Valley Songbook’ and ‘Cheapskate Lullabies’, as well as that old hit, possibly.

JULIE MURPHY: Holywell Music Room – An evening of sombre, plaintive songs from singer and pianist Murphy, best known as singer with Welsh folk innovators Fernhill, as well as collaborations with Robert Plant and John Cale, touring her first solo album in ten years, ‘A Quiet House’, joined live by Canadian cellist and harpist Ceri Owen Jones.

CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre – Oxford’s longest-running and best open mic club night showcases local singers, musicians, poets and more every week.

DREAMCATCHER + SIX BULLET CHAMBER + THE MARK: The Bell, Bicester – Jambox metal night.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon

BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

OSPREY & THE OX4 ALLSTARS: Fat Lil’s, Witney

ROLL ON THURSDAYS: The Cellar – Cheesy dancefloor faves and party tunes every Thursday.

FRIDAY 7th

MARK MULCAHY: The Jericho Tavern – Intimate, soul-bearing pop from the former-Miracle Legion cult hero – *see main preview*

TRUCKFIGHTERS + DESERT STORM + STEAK + MOTHER CORONA: The Bullingdon – Quality night of groove-heavy stoner rocking courtesy of Buried In Smoke tonight with Swedish desert rockers Truckfighters dishing out wacked-out riffage in the vein of Kyuss and Fu Manchu, while moving towards a more progressive metal sound. Great local support from blues-infused stoner metallers Desert Storm and oceanic heavyweights Mother Corona.

SKYLARKIN SOUNDSYSTEM with THE RESONATORS + TENOSHI: The Cellar – Brighton’s deeply dubby eight-piece outfit The Resonators top the bill at the last Skylarkin

Soundsystem night of 2012, taking vintage Jamaican rhythms into the 21st Century. On the decks Tenoshi returns to town with a bag full of bass bangers, plus club host Count Skylarkin.

BOOTLED ZEPPELIN: O2 Academy – Led Zep tribute.

KLUB KAKOFANNEY with KNIGHTS OF MENTIS + BIG SOCIETY + THE INDESCRIBABLE UNKNOWN + ELEPHANT SHAMPOO: The Wheatsheaf – More mixed bag goodies from Klub Kak, including rootsy Americana, country and bluegrass from Knights of Mentis and electronic dance from Elephant Shampoo, the solo project of Guillemots and former-Suitable Case For Treatment drummer Grieg Stewart.

MY GREY HORSE: Truck Store – Harmony-heavy folk-pop from Stratford’s My Grey Horse.

HOPE & GLORY: Cowley Workers Social Club – Two-Tone and ska tribute with covers of The Specials and Madness, through to Skatalites and The Selecter.

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon – Funk, soul, r’n’b and house every Friday.

BREEZE: The Duke’s Cut – Rock covers, Axl Rose to ZZ Top.

STRANGE DOORS: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Doors tribute

WHO DO YOU LOVE? The Duke, St Clement’s – Alt.rock, surf-pop, 60s garage-rock, soul, new wave and electro sessions with DJs Jim, Jens and Grizilla.

DISCO MUTANTE: The Library – Disco, cosmic funk, electro boogie and acid house session.

SATURDAY 8th

UPSTAIRS with LEWIS WATSON + ADAM BARNES + GAVROCHE + JASMINE HILL + ALEX LANYON: O2 Academy – Local songsmith Lewis rounds off a successful year with a headline set

Friday 7th

MARK MULCAHY:

The Jericho Tavern

If you can judge a person by their friends and fans, then Mark Mulcahy is a prince among men. When his wife Melissa tragically died in 2008, leaving him to bring up his twin daughters alone, those who gathered round to record a tribute album of his songs to help him out financially included Michael Stipe, Thom Yorke, Frank Turner, Frank Black, The National, Dinosaur Jr, Mercury Rev and Juliana Hatfield. Thom’s contribution was a collaboration with his brother Andy, the only time the pair have officially recorded together. Radiohead are long-time fans of the Connecticut singer, dedicating songs to Mulcahy in the past. Having started his musical life in jangly 1980s alt.rockers Miracle Legion, Mulcahy enjoyed critical acclaim but little commercial success and the band split after protracted legal problems with their label. Since then he’s retained his cult status, a straggly troubadour armed with an arsenal of fragile, stripped-back, highly personal songs brought often strikingly to life by his sweet, soulful voice. And thanks in part to that benefit album, Mark is able to carry on plying his trade, and tonight he makes his first appearance in Oxford since 2005.



at the monthly Upstairs showcase – *see main preview*

PHIL McMINN + HALF RABBITS UNPLUGGED + JORDAN O’SHEA: The Phoenix Picturehouse – Phil launches his debut solo EP in the suitably intimate confines of the Phoenix’s bar venue, his new record awash with the intense but understated emotion we’ve come to love him for. He’s joined by darkly-inclined indie rockers The Half Rabbits in acoustic mode, plus recent Nightshift Demo of the Monthers Jordan O’Shea, renamed from Camena.

HEADCOUNT + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + BEAVER FUEL + TRAPS + LAIMA BITE: The Wheatsheaf – Excellent local bill at tonight’s Moshka club night, celebrating promoter Jamess’s birthday. Veteran local punk titans Headcount make a welcome return to action, mixing elements of Killing Joke and Siouxsie & The Banshees into their heavyweight sound. They’re joined by techno-tinged electro-pop duo SHOTP, potty-mouthed indie-punks Beaver Fuel, feisty punk-popsters Traps and wonderfully melancholic songstress Laima.

TRAPS: Truck Store – Local punk-popsters launch their debut single ahead of tonight’s show at the Wheatsheaf.

THE GREAT BIG BARGAIN + EVERLASTING + REEDS: The Port Mahon – Ska-punk from Banbury’s Great Big Bargain, plus the return of four-fifths of 80s indie heroes That Petrol Emotion under their new name Everlasting.

DONNINGTON COMMUNITY PARTY: Donnington Community Centre (2-10pm) – A full day of live music, with sets from Beard of Destiny, The Ben Mowart Strings Project, Celeste, Daisy, Green Children of the Wolf Pit, Little Drum, Mike Abbott, Moon Rabbit, Oxford Ukuleles, The Riverside Voices, Superloose and Stem.

SONIC: The Bullingdon – House club night with Paleman, Obliqka and Lonerose.

WHAT YOU CALL IT GARAGE: The Cellar – UK garage, 2-step, 4x4 and bassline club night.

PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy

SUNDAY 9th

OLI BROWN: The Bullingdon – Return to town for Norfolk’s rising blues singer and guitarist - *see main preview*.

OPEN MIC SESSION: The Jericho Tavern

MONDAY 10th

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

TUESDAY 11th

ADMIRAL FALLOW + OLYMPIC SWIMMERS: The Jericho Tavern – Expansive, uplifting folk-rock, infused with epic pathos from Glasgow’s Admiral Fallow – one of the highlights of 2011’s Truck Festival, drawing comparisons with Mumford & Sons, Arcade Fire and Broken Records. Fellow Glaswegians Olympic Swimmers, meanwhile, breathe new life into classic indie jangle in the style of The Sundays.

THE DAMNED + THE DICKIES: O2 Academy – Panto punk time in the build-up to Christmas as original musical anarchists The Damned take another trip round the block, cranking out the old classics, from ‘New Rose’ and ‘Neat Neat Neat’ to ‘Smash It Up’ and ‘Eloise’. The Dickies, meanwhile, will doubtless be giving their frantic comedy punk take on ‘The Banana Splits’, ‘Sound Of Silence’ and ‘Knights In White Satin’ one more airing.

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With a live set from Heavy Dexters.

OPEN MIC SESSION: James Street Tavern

THE BLUEBIRD CLUB: The Oxford Blue



Saturday 8th

UPSTAIRS with

LEWIS WATSON:

O2 Academy

It’s been a hell of a year for 20-year-old local singer-songwriter Lewis Watson, so it’s appropriate he rounds it off with his biggest hometown headline show to date. Having accumulated a series of Youtube videos of himself covering the likes of Tracy Chapman, Bombay Bicycle Club and Bon Iver, he found his viewing figures go stratospheric and was soon writing his own songs. The result of that was July’s self-released ‘It’s Got Four Sad Songs On It BTW’ EP, which upped his profile still further, and a mere four years after he first picked up a guitar, Lewis found himself touring Australia and signing to Warners, for whom he’s currently recording his debut album in the company of assorted songwriters and producers. His appeal is obvious – romantic of heart and plaintive of voice, his songs are awash with longing and insecurity, which pitches him comfortably close to Ed Sheeran and Newton Faulkner. Two million Youtube hits don’t lie and you just have to hope the big, bad music industry doesn’t chew him up and spit him out as it does so many budding young talents. Among a handful of similarly solo local acts supporting at tonight’s Upstairs showcase show are soulful and emotive songsmith Adam Barnes and witchy, oddball songstress Gavroche.

INTRUSION: The Cellar – Goth, cyberpunk, darkwave, ebm and industrial sounds at the monthly club night.

WEDNESDAY 12th

DARREN HAYMAN + MY CROOKED TEETH + TREVOR WILLIAMS: The Bullingdon – Former Hefner frontman Darren Hayman comes to town. Highly prolific, the man hailed by Stewart Lee as “The thinking person’s indie pop legend”, continues to document the mundane, emotional and embarrassing details of life in his delicately-crafted, dog-eared and highly personal songs, making a virtue of under-achievement, while also documenting the decline of his native Essex new towns along the way. A quintessential English songwriter in the great tradition of Ray Davies.

FREERANGE: The Cellar – Drum&bass, hip hop and dubstep.

THURSDAY 13th

ORBITAL + NATHAN FAKE: O2 Academy – 90s rave anthems from the brothers Hartnoll – *see main preview*

FRANKIE’S WHISKY NIGHT: The Port Mahon – Francis Pugh & The Whisky Singers host their monthly malt-infused night of song and spirits with their boozy Americana. They’re joined by Jamie and Ben from Dive Dive and their Xtra Mile labelmate Ben Marwood. “Show me the way to the nexsht whiskey bar / Oh don’t askk why / Oh don’t askk why... hic”

IN ZANADU + DAMN VANDALS + THE OMNIVIBES: The Cellar – Rock, blues and funk



Sunday 9th

OLI BROWN The Bullingdon

To be considered ‘young’ in the world of blues can sometimes mean being any age under about 50, but Norfolk’s Oli Brown really is young – still a tender 21 and already on to his third album. His first, ‘Open Road’, came out when he was just 17, marking him out early on as one of the UK’s new breed of blues heroes, while drawing admiring comparisons to Rory Gallagher and Steve Cropper. Its 2010 follow-up, ‘Heads I Win, Tails You Lose’, featured regularly in end of year blues round-ups and found Oli winning Best Male Singer and Best Young Artist at the British Blues Awards. Since then his reputation has continued to grow, winning Best Album at last year’s Blues Awards and another Best Young Artist gong, while his latest album, ‘Here I Am’, features cameos from Paul Jones and Dani Wilde among others. Brown also achieved that blues seal of approval when he briefly replaced Rocky Athos in John Mayall’s band. Praise from the venerable likes of Johnny Winter, Walter Trout and Joe Bonamassa attest to his still growing talent, which mostly avoids the pitfall of displaying clever fret technique over real blues soul, instead relying on simple riffs and rolling grooves to get his music across.

from Banbury’s In Zanadu at tonight’s It’s All About The Music show, plus dark, dramatic blues-rock from former Nightshift Demo Of The Month winners Damn Vandals, leaning towards the Nick Cave and Godfathers scheme of things.
IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ACOUSTIC CLUB CHRISTMAS GATHERING: The Bullingdon – Osprey and friends keep it live and unplugged.
PILGRIM’S WAY: Unicorn Theatre, Abingdon – Traditional English folk in the style of Fairport and Steeleye Span from Stockport’s Pilgrim’s Way.
THE MIGHTY REDOX UNPLUGGED: The Wheatshaeaf – Acoustic set from the local blues-rockers in the Sheaf’s downstairs bar.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 14th

ELECTRIC SIX: O2 Academy – If it’s nearly Christmas it must be time for another Electric Six tour, Dick Valentine’s garage-glam crew celebrating the tenth anniversary of their biggest hits, ‘Gay Bar’ and ‘Danger! High Voltage’, so they’ll be playing the album in its entirety, playing it deliberately dumb with their tongue-in-cheek rock disco bombast.
TOLIESEL + THE YARNS + EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES: The Jericho Tavern – Euphoric country-tinged rocking meets shimmering shoegaze noise in ToLiesel’s supremely melodic world, tonight headlining Daisy Rodgers’ music club and joined by fluffy 80s-styled indie types The Yarns and rising alt. folksters Empty White Circles.
BOSSAPHONIK: The Cellar – Dancefloor Latin, Balkan beat, afrobeat, global grooves and nu-jazz club night, tonight with a live set from Fela Kuti keyboard player Dele Sosimi and his

Afrobeat Orchestra, as well as guest DJ Cal Jader (Movimientos).
DIRECTORS OF SPACE + THE LOST ART + MAPS: The Port Mahon
JALI FILY CISSOKHO + NAIROBI + DUCHESS: East Oxford Community Centre – A night of African food and music, with Witney-based Senegalese kora player JFC, alongside local Afrobeat-tinged rockers Nairobi and samba harmony group Duchess.
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The Red Lion, Eynsham
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon

SATURDAY 15th

SKELETOR presents CHIMP SPANNER + PROSPEKT + CRY SIS + REIGN UPONUS + ANNERO: O2 Academy – Skeletor’s final metal extravaganza of 2012 brings progressive metal machine Chimp Spanner to town for the first time, the band fusing elements of jazz-rock and electronic soundscaping into their heavyweight explorations on recent concept album ‘All Road Lead Here’, mixing influences as diverse as Meshuggah, Dream Theatre, Toto and Vangelis. Local support comes from proggy heavyweights Prospekt, and Pantera-inclined thrash crew Crysis.
THE WINTER WARMER: The Wheatshaeaf – First night of Gappy Tooth Industries’ annual snowbound musical wonderland, running over two evenings at the Sheaf, with four bands on each night. Tonight it’s the turn of 60s-styled psychedelic garage rockers The Graceful Slicks; frantic warped blues rockers Ulysses Storm, inspired by Jon Spencer’s Blues Explosion and Captain Beefheart; afrofunk-tinged indie types Yellow Fever and rockers Very Nice Harry.
MR FOGG + DEATH OF HI-FI + SIER PIN SKY + AFTER THE THOUGHT: The Cellar – Daisy Rodgers Music’s second show of the weekend, featuring a hometown show for electro-pop chap Mr Fogg, plus rising local electro, industrial and hip hop duo Death Of Hi-Fi and autumnal, misty-eyed indie-folksters Sier Pin Sky.
SIMPLE: The Bullingdon – House and techno with resident DJs.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy
THE MIGHTY REDOX + BIG SOCIETY: The James Street Tavern – Swampy blues-rocking from local faves The Mighty Redox.
WHAT YOU HEAR IS WHAT YOU GET + CHANGELING + GREEN CHILDREN OF THE WOLFPIT + MARK NOBLE + LOST DOGS: The Hollybush, Osney – One gig closer to Wittstock fundraiser for the annual free festival.
THE HI-LO CHRISTMAS HI-FI: The Hi-Lo Jamaican Eating House – DJ Derek and Count Skylarkin spin reggae, dancehall and ska classics.

SUNDAY 16th
THE WINTER WARMER: The Wheatshaeaf – Night number two of Gappy Tooth Industries annual warmer mini-fest, tonight featuring ghostly doom-metallers Undersmile, spiky, Pixies-inspired noise urchins Dallas Don’t; industrial hip hop and electro outfit Tiger Mendoza and atmospheric songsmith D Gwalia – wall to wall quality and no mistake.
CHRIS PADMORE + LAURIE WALTON + TOMMO + MEGAN JOSEPHY + TWIZZ
TWANGLE + RAGDOLL: The Wheatshaeaf – Klub Kakofanny unplugged session downstairs in the Sheaf.
LITTLE FISH + CANDY SAYS: The Rotunda, Iffley (3pm) – Already sold-out show from the local favourites, playing a brace of pre-Christmas gigs at the fantastic Rotunda venue in Iffley where they supported Gaz Coombes last year. Today’s afternoon show is a family-friendly affair with kids welcome and mince pies and mulled wine provided as a bonus to the band’s powerful, emotive blend of soulful post-punk and increasingly intimate folk-leaning sound, with many of their old favourites reworked to suit the

new line-up, still helmed by Julia Sophie’s exquisite voice. Tomorrow’s show is similarly sold out.
THE EPSTEIN + WILD SWIM + FLIGHTS OF HELIOS + HUCK + RAINBOW RESERVOIR + MARCUS CORBETH + UNTIL THE BIRD + JESS HALL + BILLY T’RIVERS: St John The Evangelist (4pm) – Pindrop Performances celebrate the end of another great year of putting on brilliant, esoteric shows in unusual venues with an extended evening session. The first part of the show is an acoustic session, including local types Jess Hall, Huck, Rainbow Reservoir etc, before they go full-on electric for the finale, with a headline set from local alt.country favourites The Epstein, this month’s Nightshift cover stars Wild Swim and spacey psych-pop types Flights of Helios.
EMPTY WHITE CIRCLES: Truck Store – Truck’s final instore of the year, with rising local alt.folksters Empty White Circles and more acts to be confirmed.
IRREGULAR FOLK CHRISTMAS SPECIAL: The Cellar (3-9pm) – The Cellar’s new alternative folk club night presents an afternoon and evening of Christmas songs reworked and reimaged by assorted local luminaries, including Phil McMinn.
DAPPY: O2 Academy – Oh he’s a character ain’t he, that Dappy. Whether he’s texting death threats to women who don’t like his music, or calling for convicted murderers to be released, he’s always worth a laugh. What a lad, eh, what a bleedin’ character.
STOOSHE: O2 Academy – Lush, Motown-styled soul and r’n’b from the London girl group, who’ve hit the Top 5 with ‘Love Me’ and ‘Black Heart’ so far, as well as being invited to support Nicki Minaj and Jennifer Lopez on their UK tours. They also didn’t bother turning up to Cornbury Festival in the summer,

Thursday 13th

ORBITAL: O2 Academy

Born of the M25 rave scene that gave them their band name, Orbital were true titans of 90s dance, their high point undoubtedly their 1994 Galstonbury set that will live long in the memory of anyone who experienced it. Brothers Phil and Paul Hartnoll’s secret weapons that took them from the underground to regular Top 5 appearances and festival headline sets wasn’t just a way with a big, pretty melody, although they had many – from debut single ‘Chime’, through hits like ‘Satan’, ‘The Box’ and a reworking of *The Saint* theme – as much as their appearance as a live spectacle, their sets an energetic and very human display of live improvisation and movement as well as a euphoric come-together clarion call. Fun, in other words. The sort of fun the Criminal Justice Bill was designed to put down and which Orbital mocked in their silent track of the same name. The duo outlived that folly, even if their musical output later on fell away – notably the poor ‘The Altogether’ – but 2009’s reunion at The Big Chill was as triumphant as anyone hoped for and the duo’s new album, ‘Wonky’ is anything but – a real return to form. Whether an Orbital gig in the O2 in 2012 could ever recreate the freedom and anarchic spirit of those secretive outings around the M25 in the early-90s, particularly with an audience more likely to be heading home to pay the babysitter as greet the new dawn ‘on one’, is unlikely, but musically they’re timeless.



else we could tell you what they’re like live. Probably had some consumer product endorsement to film.
WITNEY WINTER WARMER FESTIVAL: Fat Lil’s, Witney (5pm) – Witney gets into the pre-Christmas rocking and rolling scheme of things with an afternoon and evening of bands, with sets from The Scholars, Very Nice Harry, Black Hats, Player2, Yellow Fever, Robots With Soul and Matt Midgely.

MONDAY 17th

THE FAMOUS MONDAY BLUES CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Jericho Tavern – The Famous Monday Blues hosts its traditional Christmas party with an array of guests, including hosts for the evening, The Blue Bishops with their trademark rocking blues, classic 60s-style rock and r’n’b. They’ll be joined by FMB regulars like Lebum and Cherry Lee Mewis, as well as Jules and Lorna Fothergill, Claire Johnson, Jedson Davies and Laurence Jones.
LITTLE FISH + CANDY SAYS: The Rotunda, Iffley – Second, sold-out show from the mighty Fish.
KERFUFFLE: St Michael @ The Northgate – Traditional English, French and American tunes brought up to date by the rootsy folk four-piece.

TUESDAY 18th

JAZZ CLUB: The Bullingdon – With live guests The Hugh Turner Band.
SOUL TRAIN: The Cellar – 60s and 70s Motown, funk and soul night.

WEDNESDAY 19th

DREAMING SPIRES + LAST SHOP STANDING: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Local Americana faves Dreaming Spires play a special live set alongside a screening of the film *Last Shop Standing*, documenting the decline and resilience of independent record stores in the UK. Graham Jones, author of the book the film was based on, will also be holding a Q&A session on the night.
FLUID Vs CALLIGRAPHY: The Cellar – Drum&bass, dubstep and jungle club night with Masp, Swings & Spangle and Neon Concept.

THURSDAY 20th

LISTING SHIPS + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE: The Cellar – Following on from last month’s Nightshift front cover feature and an epic showing at Audioscope, Listing Ships turn their 100 gun post-rock broadside on the Cellar. Support comes in the guise of a very welcome return to live action for acid-tinged synth-pop duo Space Heroes. Followed by Roll On Thursdays.
OX4 ALL-STARS: The Bullingdon – Local musical luminaries kick out the party tunes in celebration of Bully landlord Arron’s ten years in charge.
GNARWOLVES + CAMERA LUCIDA + BEAR TRAP: The Wheatshaeaf – 100% Mosh club night with Brighton’s spindly, frenetic punkers Gnarwolves.
CATWEAZLE CLUB: East Oxford Community Centre
THE PETE FRYER BAND UNPLUGGED: The Wheatshaeaf –
OPEN MIC SESSION: The Half Moon
BLUES JAM: The Jack Russell, Marston

FRIDAY 21st

THE ORIGINAL RABBIT FOOT SPASM BAND CHRISTMAS KNEES-UP: O2 Academy – Of all the pre-Christmas party gigs, this will be the one not to miss, given the mighty Rabbit Foot Band’s propensity for onstage jazz carnage, living every night like it’s the height of prohibition-era speakeasy culture, their New Orleans hot jazz sound authentic and kicked out with punk spirit. We’ll raise a glass to that. Then head to the bar for a refill.
TROPHY WIFE + KILL MURRAY: St. Alban’s Church – First of Beard Museum’s Two Nights Before Christmas shows in a church – *see main preview*

A TRIBUTE TO LED ZEPPELIN: The Bullingdon – Tribute to the gods of rock, with Denny Ilett, Jerry Soffe, Ady Davey, Andy Crowdy, Daisy Palmer, Tony Batey and The Shapes.
THE CELLAR FAMILY + AGNESS PIKE + X-1 + BOX FACTORY: The Port Mahon – Virulent local hardcore faves The Cellar Family reconvene for some serious angular rock punishment, channelling Fugazi, McLusky and At The Drive-In through a tunnel of pure rage. Hammer Horror thrash from the mighty Agness Pike in support, alongside hardcore nasties X-1.
WE ARE ELEMENTS: The Cellar - Cosmic funk, boogie, house, beats and soul with Man Of Science, Main Of Faith, plus residents.
FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
DIRTY EARTH BAND: Fat Lil’s, Witney
THE MIGHTY REDOX: The James Street Tavern

SATURDAY 22nd

SWEET BILLY PILGRIM + ADAM BARNES + PHIL McMINN + THE BEARD MUSEUM CHRISTMAS SINGERS: St. Alban’s Church – Second of Beard Museum’s pre-Christmas shows, with experimental folk-pop stars Sweet Billy Christmas – *see main preview*
BIG RED SKY RECORDS CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Wheatshaeaf - The local label gets into the festive spirit in the company of grungy indie rockers Von Braun; Parisian café-folk-cum-rock-n’rollers Les Clochards; trippy electro drifters Stem; acoustic folk-pop types Welcome To Peepworld and Beard Of Destiny.
FRESH OUT THE BOX: The Cellar – House, disco, old skool dance and more.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy
HODGE PODGE: The Bullingdon – Funk club night with live sets from Funk Jugglers and Funktional, plus DJs sets from Bastados and Oozat.
FUSED: Fat Lil’s, Witney – Rock covers.
THE PETE FRYER BAND: Cricketers, Cowley

SUNDAY 23rd

PLACE ABOVE + HOT HOOVES + JIM GERRARD: The Port Mahon – One-off reunion show for grungy indie rockers Place Above, supported by fuzzgun rockers Hot Hooves.

MONDAY 24th

MACKATING + DJ WRONGTOM + COUNT SKYLARKIN + PIEMAN + SULTAN: O2 Academy – Mackating host and headline their traditional Christmas Eve reggae party – a tradition that goes way back to the 90s, the expansive local collective kicking out a heady brew of roots, dub and more. A select team of DJs spin reggae, dancehall and ska classics into Christmas Day, bringing a little Jamaican sunshine to the bleak English midwinter.

TUESDAY 25th

DR WHO CHRISTMAS SPECIAL: Nightshift Towers – Sorry, you’re not invited. Bloody oiks.

WEDNESDAY 26th

THE PETE FRYER BAND: The Seacourt Bridge Inn

THURSDAY 27th

THE FRIDGE & BUNGLES CHRISTMAS CRACKER: The Cellar – Hip hop, 80s boogie, old school garage, jungle and rave.

Nightshift listings are free. Deadline for inclusion in the gig guide is 6pm on the 20th of each month - no exceptions (not even for you). 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



Friday 21st / Saturday 22nd

TWO NIGHTS BEFORE CHRISTMAS: St. Alban’s Church

Teaming up with rock-friendly restaurateurs Oxford, Beard Museum follow up last year’s superb Rotunda sessions with a brace of intimate shows in the rarefied environs of St Alban’s Church on Charles Street. The first, on the Friday, features **TROPHY WIFE** playing a set with a string quartet, which should complement their airy, spectral electro-tinged pop perfectly. They’re joined by **KILL MURRAY**, whose excellent new single, ‘For The Kids’, finds them aiming for a heavier electronic sound. Sunday’s show brings the potential high point of the weekend with Aylesbury’s folktronica outfit **SWEET BILLY PILGRIM (pictured)**, riding high on the acclaim afforded their new album, ‘Gown & Treaty’, the follow-up to 2009’s Mercury Prize nominated ‘Twice Born Men’, now joined by new singer Jana Carpenter to add to Tim Elseburg’s vocal lead, the band conjuring a complex, emotional blend of lo-fi electronica, sparse folk arrangements and brooding melodies, at their most intimate reminiscent of Elbow and Elliott Smith, while in their more epic moments, closer to ‘Bends’-era Radiohead, but very much their own band and one of the most understated success stories of recent years. They’re joined for the evening by **PHIL McMINN** and **ADAM BARNES**, as well as the **BEARD MUSEUM CHRISTMAS SINGERS**.

FRIDAY 28th

FUNKY FRIDAYS: The Bullingdon
HQ: The Cellar – Drum&bass club night.

SATURDAY 29th

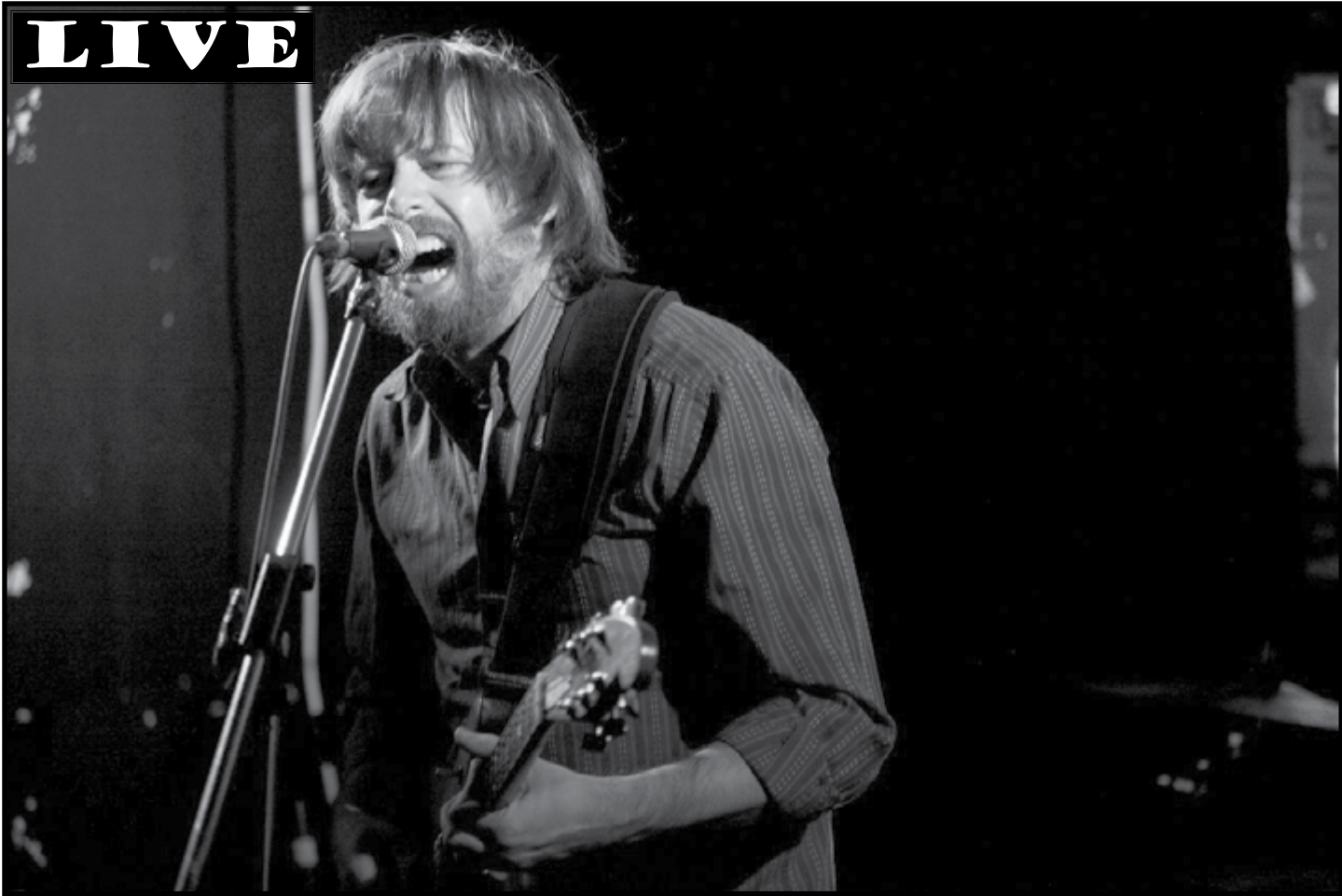
SKITTLE ALLEY CHRISTMAS PARTY: The Crown & Thistle, Abingdon – The Mighty Redox and more keep the festive spirit going.
BLUNTED: The Cellar – Hip hop, funk, raga and drum&bass.

SUNDAY 30th

BLUES JAM: Fat Lil’s, Witney (3pm)

MONDAY 31st

HOUSE OF ROOTS presents THE DUBLINGS: The Cellar – Feelgood reggae and dub tunes from The Dublings at Dub Politics and House of Roots’ joint NYE party.
PROPAGANDA + JACK FM DJs + TRASHY: O2 Academy – New Year’s Eve party with weekly indie club night Propaganda, plus party tunes from Jack FM DJs and kitsch pop thrills at Trashy.
NEW YEAR’S EVE PARTY: The Bullingdon – Soul, r’n’b and raga tunes into 2013.



AUDIOSCOPE

The Jericho Tavern

There's an overwhelmingly heart-warming feel about today's gig, and it's nothing to do with the opportunity to spend an entire day in the pub. For starters, the music across ten hours is almost universally excellent. Then there's the fact the venue is packed pretty much all day. And that the packed crowd are so enthused by the music on show that they remain respectfully quiet during even the quietest of sets, where too many other local crowds would gibber incessantly, probably while taking photos of themselves and their mates on their phones. Oh yeah, and it's all in aid of homeless charity Shelter, so we can even feel good about ourselves while we're indulging in such Bacchanalian revelry.

With Audioscope's characteristic leaning towards all things leftfield or Krautrock-inspired, it's little surprise that the first three acts on count not a single vocalist between them. Openers **LISTING SHIPS** are equally intricate and bruising, at their best when they're aiming for the latter, as on 'The 100 Gun Ship', while Liverpool's **BALTIC FLEET** rarely venture beyond their self-created musical shadows, ominous rumbles building to a range of jagged electronic spikes and shards over which furtive melodies drift, becoming periodically pastoral and pretty before diving back into darker

waters, fleeting echoes of Future Sound Of London, Air and the outer reaches of Ochre Records' 90s output adding to the hypnotic shifting sound picture. By stark contrast **ALRIGHT THE CAPTAIN** are frantic, fractured and even a bit funky. Their staccato, shredded hardcore makes for a more visceral spectacle, all clatter and burn, but it feels slightly old hat now – Billy Mahonie were doing something similar almost twenty years ago, and there's a sneaking suspicion, as with many bands of this ilk, that they'd secretly like to have been in Weather Report but know it's cooler to reference Fugazi.

We'd normally be loathe to watch **MESSAGE TO BEARS** in an unforgiving pub setting, but the entire crowd are stood in near-rapt silence throughout their set. The wispy, barely-there fusion of folk, electronica and minimalist classical music is deceptively enveloping and, after a couple of mid-afternoon pints, pleasantly soporific. **LAURA MOODY** is a more striking proposition. One quarter of The Elysian Quartet, she's so much more than a girl with a cello, variously hitting her face with her bow to create odd rhythms, or yodelling and caterwauling in disconcertingly witchy fashion as she attacks her instrument in inventive ways.

She's patently mad as a goat but you'd expect nothing else from a woman who records string quartet compositions in a fleet of helicopters. In fact, calling her a cellist is a bit like describing Heston Blumenthal as a chef; it's correct, but tells you less than half the story.

The day's ambient interlude over, **GUNNING FOR TAMAR** bring back the rock. Like Alright The Captain they've got awkward shapes and a slightly funkied-up take on hardcore, but unlike that band they also have tunes. Big, big tunes that can survive the outright pounding the band dish out and their vibrant set comes over like The Mars Volta with a sense of soul. After which, **LAND OBSERVATIONS** provides the day's chief disappointment: one bloke and a guitar with a ratio of effects pedals to decent ideas of about 20-to-one.

Today's headline act is former-Can legend **DAMO SUZUKI**, making his second Audioscope appearance, although he's become a semi-regular feature on the local scene, performing with assorted casts of what he terms sound carriers. Today's backing band are the **ODC DRUMLINE**, led by one-time Youthmovies sticksman Graeme Murray. A five-man drum circle works up a steady Afrodemic tattoo over which Damo's barely

decipherable incantations rise and fall. It's fun enough for half an hour and the drummers really make the set, but Damo himself is less engaging than we've seen him before; maybe familiarity has simply worn away the novelty.

Instead today's two crowning glories are **WARM DIGITS** and **ARBOURETUM**. The former, a trans-Pennine electronics and drum duo, are a hypnogogic kraut-rave wash of pure musical euphoria, Neu! re-imagined by Chemical Brothers and given the keys to some fantastical starship. It's one of the most exciting, uplifting shows we've witnessed all year. But it's bettered immediately by Baltimore's Arbouretum, who are simply stunning. A dark, dirty ooze and rumble of grunge-adelic sonic lava that sounds like Fairport Convention's finest songbook being bulldozed by 80s dronemeisters Loop, or an eternal, infernal battle for sonic supremacy between Black Sabbath, Crazy Horse and Band Of Horses. We're left almost speechless and not a little deaf, reminded again of the power rock music, in the right hands, can wield. And then the promoter informs us they're also the nicest band he's had the pleasure to put on. Now that is heart-warming. *Dale Kattack*

GAZ COOMBES

O2 Academy

Cut loose from Supergrass, Gaz Coombes increasingly sounds like a man reborn. Tonight's show finds him as fresh as we can remember, the effusive proclamations about playing to his hometown audience natural enough to be more than crowd-pleasing bluster. The capacity crowd play their part too – no lazy demands for old favourites, instead an enthusiastic acceptance this is Gaz Mk II. Their reward is a set awash with enthusiasm and invention. From 'Hot Fruit', rocked to the max with a trashy sense of glam, to the airy, atmospheric 'Sub Divider', echoes of his old band permeate the set (notably in the vocals – you'd recognise Gaz's yelp and yowl anywhere), but now the bigger numbers sound harder and sharper, the more introspective songs even more lysergic and languorous, as if everything's been set free. In the former camp 'Simulator' borders on hysteria as it hits its peak; in the latter 'White Noise' bubbles and spangles like an acid lullaby, gorgeously pastoral. While tonight's set is almost entirely devoted to Gaz's solo

debut, 'Here Come The Bombs', it's punctuated by a couple of covers – The Beat's 'Mirror I The Bathroom', and a closing take on Gang Of Four's 'Damaged Goods', held over from his and Danny's Hot Rats indulgence. The latter is a particular joy, kicked out with real attitude and coming as it does after a couple of obligatory Supergrass numbers. 'Moving' and 'Sitting Up Straight' might have been slotted in as crowd pleasers but in truth they break the set up too much and coming as they do straight after tonight's crowning glory, 'Break The Silence', they feel hacked out, slightly redundant. 'Break The Silence' is just magnificent, a euphoric explosion of Giorgio Moroder-style disco, Ziggy Stardust glam and rave-friendly Krautrock with teasing hints of 'Blue Monday', 'Papa Was A Rolling Stone' and even 'White Lines' slotted into the breakdown. Gaz's musical past is something he should forever be proud of, and a huge part of Oxford's enviable music history, but tonight proves, his future looks just as bright. *Dale Kattack*

LAU

The Jericho Tavern

Enjoying a pre-gig pint in the nearby Gardener's Arms, we admire the old records displayed round the walls. What a great way to celebrate vinyl, we think; followed by, well, not as much as actually playing it. We're sorely tempted to indulge some proper vinylphilia, and half inch a twelve inch, and that's the paradox: as soon as you start actively celebrating something, you're effectively admitting its demise - the living need no eulogies, after all. Which makes Lau an interesting band. The gig's promoters describe them as sounding like Godspeed You! Black Emperor, which they do, but only in the sense that a shrew probably looks like a puma from the point of view of a cuttlefish. Crazy comparisons aside, it's quite hard to pigeonhole an eclectic trio that fights hard to walk between the twin evils of preserving folk as a taxidermied museum piece and clogging the arteries of a living tradition with an excess of gloopy crossover syrup. And, to a great extent, they succeed. The playing is impeccable, especially Aidan O'Rourke's fiddle, the mid-range so creamy and rich, the phrasing so natural, you'd swear it was talking to you, murmuring secrets so comfortably indulgent they'd make Nigella sound like Dot Cotton. The atmosphere is wonderful, too: some of

the apparent ad libs are probably well aired, but they stop the gig getting too salon polite or rock pompous. There are impressive musical twists to discover, 'Horizontigo' displaying the clockwork sugar locals might associate with Message To Bears, and 'Far From Portland' a stately plucked coda that reminds us unexpectedly of Papa M. There are also less successful departures from the folk path, like fuzzy laptop snuffles somewhat akin to Four Tet, and it's frustrating to watch Martin Green leave off the spry accordion lines to tinkle *faux*-atmospherically at a Rhodes. Folk trios don't normally sell out the Jericho, or require much award storage space, so it would be easy to assume that Lau have cynically cross-bred their music to make it palatable. It would also be downright wrong, as the honest love of what they're playing oozes from the musicians. It's just that, in general, the more folk they are, the more we like them, and the pieces that transport us are 'Torsa', with its lively Scottish rhythms, and Kris Drever's lovely, straight take on Lal Waterson's 'Midnight Feast'. Not perfect, then, but still great to see a band with a love of British folk, and wide enough tastes to distract the barman at the Gardener's whilst we swipe that old Warp EP. *David Murphy*

THE CELLAR

EST 1999



LIVE SHOWS THIS MONTH

Oxford's Best Independent Live Music Venue

SAT 1ST ICEAGE + THULEBASEN + POLEDO 7pm / £7adv www.alt-tickets.co.uk/alttickets/event_ate_15263A.html	THURS 13TH All About The Music Presents... IN ZANADU + THE DAMN VANDALS + OMNI VIBES 7.30pm / £5	SUN 16TH IRREGULAR FOLK – ALL DAY CHRISTMAS SPECIAL Alt Folk / Christmassy / Acoustic <i>A select crop of local talented alt folk and folk artists play Christmas covers, carols and beyond.</i> 3pm – 9pm approx / £3 otd and adv
WED 5TH ALCOPOPI! RECORD'S OXFORD CHRISTMAS POPTACULAR <i>Fuckin' INDIE</i> Goth / Industrial / EBM Club	FRI 14TH BOSSAPHONIK rdance floor latin/afrobeat/ Balkan beats/global grooves/nujazz bizniz	THURS 20TH AMERICAN STEAM COMPANY PRESENTS... krautrock / instrumental / electronica LISTING SHIPS + SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + MORE TBC 8pm / £5
GUNNING FOR TAMAR + MY FIRST TOOTH + TBC 7.30pm / £5	FRI 7TH SKYLARKIN' SOUNDSYSTEM reggae / dancehall / hip hop THE RESONATORS + TENOSHI + COUNT SKYLARKIN' 9pm-3am / £5adv / motd	MON 31ST HOUSE OF ROOTS AND DUB POLITICS PRESENT... Reggae / Dub / Dubstep THE DUBLINGS (LIVE @ 10PM) + VERY SPECIAL GUESTS 9pm-3am / £9adv / motd
SAT 15TH Daisy Rogers presents... MR FOGG + DEATH OF HI-FI + SIER PIN SKY + AFTER THE THOUGHT 7.30pm / £3 (+ Free vote) / £5 otd		

DECEMBER

HOME OF OXFORD'S CUTTING EDGE MUSIC SCENE



The Cellar, Frewin Court (Off Cornmarket St), Oxford, OX1 3HZ

WWW.CELLAROXFORD.CO.UK • WWW.WEGOTTICKETS.COM

 www.facebook.com/TheCellar.Oxford  @CellarOxford

photo: Sam Shepherd



GORJIRA / KLONE / TREPALIUM

O2 Academy

Despite the headliners’ name being a reference to a mighty Japanese lizard pepped up on radiation, piss and

vinegar, all three of tonight’s bands hail from France. We’re pretty sure that the only monster that

attacked France was in a Chewits advert, and he was placated with sweets. However, clearly something

evil and twisted lurks over the channel because tonight is a frantic lesson in inspired (and occasionally incomprehensible) brutality. First up are Trepalium, a band who seems quite happy to dredge the history books, dust off a bunch of old thrash riffs, twist them into new feverish shapes and batter them into submission. They sail so close to mid-period Sepultura at one point that it sounds as if they’re covering ‘Subtraction’ from ‘Arise’. Regardless, they are a good start to the evening, the small crowd that made it in early treated to a blaze of quick-fire riffs and even more quick-fire drumming. The same can’t be said for Klone, who are considerably noisier and murkier than Trepalium but lack their incisive edge. More adventurous they might be (think Deftones, but spongier), but the sound tonight hampers them terribly. Dynamics are squashed into a mushy ball of thrum, and although the band themselves are firing on all cylinders it’s almost impossible to work out what’s going on. Gorjira take the evening to another level and prove just why they’re one of the most revered metal bands around today. Tight and aggressive, their intelligent spin on death/thrash metal is devastating when it lands its blows. ‘Explosia’ is a white hot blast that threatens to break every neck in the venue. The pace rarely lets up, driving the crowd into a rapturous frenzy as the band hurtle across the stage. The drum solo from Mario Duplantier towards the end of the set seems like a relic from another age, and is the only low point in a set that threatened to flatten Oxford like Tokyo. As is Gorjira’s usual wont.

Sam Shepherd

KATZENJAMMER / BEN CAPLAN

O2 Academy

It makes perfect sense that Katzenjammer bring their own performing man-lion to Oxford. After apologising unnecessarily for being a “beardy Canadian” and not being Katzenjammer, Ben Caplan proceeds to rip the venue apart with his voice and the remaining bits of his acoustic guitar. When he shakes his mane and roars it seems inconceivable that his own website describes him rather limply as “terrific” and bangs the final nail in with the words “experimental artistry”. This is the man who exhorts the rather timid Oxford audience to scream until we have “CREATED A VAGINA FROM WHICH WE CAN ALL BE REBORN!”. That’s not ‘experimental,’ that’s just mad, and anyone who can send me back to the birthing suite with Aslan as my midwife deserves better superlatives. After the dust settles, I attempt to make my way to the front for Katzenjammer. It’s hard-going, and I have to kill at least thirty salivating men to get

get anywhere close to the stage, including my own husband, but the trail of twitching corpses is a small price to pay. For those of you struggling to justify this wanton destruction of life, then you need to imagine Katzenjammer as a bonkers fairground ride with The Pogues and Madness just in front of you, and Tom Waits behind you with a foghorn. Björk and PJ Harvey are talking you through the safety procedures and Dolly Parton is grinding your organ in the background. And just in case you are still contemplating turning me in for grievous, let me add that Katzenjammer are very beautiful and come from Norway, so probably deliver your Christmas presents too. It’s a heady mixture, particularly if you are a red-blooded man, and I notice a fair few come down with a fit of the vapours, particularly during the trumpet solo. Foolishly, I expect to remain immune to their feminine charms but in reality it only takes five minutes of their brilliance before I am desperately

searching for ways to become the fifth member of the band. Needless to say, they carry on without me, despite playing at least twenty instruments between them and all taking turns on lead vocal duties. It’s all so dynamic that every so often an extremely lucky man called Hans, who is Swedish (apparently this is important), has to leap manfully on stage and untie them from each other. After a brilliant encore, including a transcendent rendition of ‘God’s Great Dust Storm’, I stagger down the stairs and on to the Cowley Road in a bit of a daze before I remember that the only person technically capable of driving the car home has been left for dead on the floor of the venue. I go back up stairs to find hubbie miraculously revived, peeling moist gaffer tape off the drumkit and sticking it to his pants as a memento. After a brief and slightly undignified scuffle with Hans, he agrees to leave. In a faintly surreal, but probably necessary, renewal of our wedding vows, he promises me that he won’t run off with Katzenjammer and I promise him the same. Normal relations resumed, we head home.

Claire Howard-Saunders



EVOLUTION

RECORDING STUDIOS

We're a new 1000 sq. ft. recording, tracking and mixing facility in Oxford featuring, at our heart, a beautifully refurbished and awesome-sounding Trident Series 80B console.

Experienced Engineers, Session musicians and Producers in-house.

Call us for rates or to arrange a visit. Special rates for local unsigned bands.

Services Include

Recording and Mixing • Voice-overs • Producing and Programming • Film, TV and Advertising Music • Audio Post-production • Songwriting and Session Musicians

01865 203073
info@evolutionstudios.co.uk
www.evolutionstudios.co.uk

SATURDAY 8TH DECEMBER · O₂ ACADEMY OXFORD

UPSTAIRS


in association with introducing...

Listen to exclusive interviews and play backs on BBC Introducing in Oxford · 952FM every Sunday at 9pm or download the podcast at www.bbc.co.uk/oxford

Lewis Watson

WWW.LEWISWATSONMUSIC.COM

Adam Barnes Jasmine Hill Gavroche Alex Lanyon



All Ages Gig!
(under 14s accompanied by an adult 16+)

Doors 7pm · Curfew 11.30pm · Tickets include free entry to Propaganda · 66 adv CHEAP BEER PRICES
O₂ Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE · www.o2academyoxford.co.uk

fine Guitars



Ovation **Paco Castillo** *Tanglewood* *Takamine*
GUITAR MAKER

Martin & Co EST. 1833 **YAMAHA** **Ibanez**

CHRISTMAS SALE NOW ON!!

24 Stert Street Abingdon, OX14 3JP
Tel: 01235 530673
Open Monday-Saturday 10am-5pm
(2 HRS FREE PARKING)

www.fineguitars.co.uk info@fineguitars.co.uk

SATURDAY 19TH JANUARY · O₂ ACADEMY OXFORD


UPSTAIRS

in association with introducing...

Listen to exclusive interviews and play backs on BBC Introducing in Oxford · 952FM every Sunday at 9pm or download the podcast at www.bbc.co.uk/oxford

Tall Ships

Listing Ships
My Grey Horse
Robots with Souls
The Sea The Sea



All Ages Gig!
(under 14s accompanied by an adult 16+)

Doors 7pm · Curfew 11.30pm · Tickets include free entry to Propaganda · 66 adv CHEAP BEER PRICES
O₂ Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE · www.o2academyoxford.co.uk

TIGRAN HAMASYAN
The North Wall

Armenian born, but now a New York and Paris resident, Tigran Hamasyan is billed as a jazz pianist but, it turns out it would be more accurate to announce him as pianist, singer, and electronics manipulator and much else besides, without such genre confines. The 25-year-old sometimes calls his music “alternative math folk” but as well as the rhythmic complexity of math rock it draws in other contemporary influences. The folk element is the inspiration Hamasyan takes from Armenian roots, including its literary traditions; he is inspired by Armenian storytellers and poets and his debut solo CD is titled ‘A Fable’.

Tonight’s North Wall set reflects this mix of influences. So ‘Le Petit Experience’ is shaped by a traditional Armenian musical form restricting the musician to exploring what can be done with a limited range of notes, which is quite a lot in Hamasyan’s case. With ‘Cherokee’ he shows he can play an elegant, straight ahead version of a classic jazz standard, but transforms ‘Someday My Prince Will Come’ into a gothic Armenian folk tale, with the prince probably the Prince of Darkness.

For someone billed as a jazz pianist, his opening number is certainly a surprise and even a little disorientating, since he doesn’t touch the piano keys at all, instead chanting and singing a wordless vocal which he multi-tracks and loops for what seems to be an ancient Armenian incantation. He also frequently uses the effects panel with the piano to bend, loop and re-mix the notes and invent shimmering soundscapes.

Even more arresting is his use of it with a toy xylophone and wireless static to create an eerie sound for what Hamasyan explains is an Armenian pagan lullaby. He uses a beat box too much, so electronic beats become a boring distraction from what is generally an intriguing mix of music and soundscapes and of the traditional and the very new.

Colin May

THE D.O.T. / GET PEOPLE

The Bullingdon

London three-piece Get People gambol through a multi-instrument landscape of guitars, electronics and African drums like a low-budget Hot Chip, and for a while it’s all quite engaging. But the over-emoted singing and whiny Edge-y guitars soon start to grate on the nerves and we start to look forward to something a little more substantial.

There’s a general consensus that Mike Skinner ended up running out of ideas and overstaying his welcome with The Streets, though ticket and record sales may indicate otherwise. His dryly sardonic, introspective songs may have lacked cheer but they had the knack of making you want to hear more: like all the best rappers his voice works by being interesting rather than technically impressive.

The D.O.T. is his collaboration with Rob Harvey from defunct Leeds rockers The Music,

and this short tour to promote debut album ‘And That’ has targeted small venues in a back-to-basics approach. Anyone expecting a recognizable hybrid of the duo’s previous bands would be disappointed, but neither is it any kind of radical departure. There’s less of the obvious debt to UK garage, with a more bouncy, upbeat pop sensibility, the two voices working together well.

Whippet-thin Harvey, half hidden under a hoodie, takes on most of the vocals and contributes occasional guitar while Skinner fiddles with boxes and plays bits of keyboards. The set begins with catchy album opener ‘And A Hero’ and it soon becomes clear that Skinner wants the attention to fall more on his bandmate, despite the cameras thrust in his face. In a comic moment someone hands him their phone, asking him to film his friends and, amazingly, he agrees.

In their inexperience The D.O.T. don’t know quite where to put themselves onstage, ploughing through the set with few pauses, though this is a refreshing contrast to The Streets’ latter tendency towards arrogant swagger.

Overall the new project succeeds quite nicely, though Skinner can’t prevent a familiar mawkish sentimentality creeping in amongst the urban grit and grime, and this may prove to be a consistency with his previous venture. Well known for flashes of bad temper, one emerges at the end when someone shouts for ‘Too Much Brandy’ once too often. The strength of his angry retort shows us that book has been firmly shut.

Art Lagun

ALT-J / STEALING SHEEP O2 Academy

Rock’n’roll abandon ain’t what it used to be. After winning the Mercury Prize in 1992, Primal Scream famously lost the cheque for their winnings during an evening of mayhem; twenty years later, Alt-J politely inform us that we’re ‘lovely’ and play a well-behaved and meticulously-controlled run-through of their Mercury-winning ‘An Awesome Wave’ album.

Prior to this, Liverpoolian three-piece Stealing Sheep fail to steal the show (see what we did there?). It’s difficult to pinpoint whether this is due to their music or because of the atmosphere. Musically, they call themselves ‘psychedelic folktronica’; one feels that a ‘lite’ tag should be added to this. They tick several hip contemporary boxes (quirky? mobile-phone-ad-folky? melodically simple and slightly jaunty? check, check, check) but fail to progress beyond a rather awkward and shambling mix of alt-folk and indie-pop. The atmosphere is odd for their set, though: combine bizarre, unhelpful acoustics with a muttering, burbling crowd who seem mostly to be awaiting the headline act, and it’s not really a canvas for introspection.

So, to Alt-J, with their ridiculous name, careful branding and shiny new Mercury Prize. ‘An Awesome Wave’ is a rather good album, dredging the sparseness of The XX into a more mainstream and hummable format, with pleasingly odd vocals and a twisting, turning sense of song construction. This is what Alt-J deliver, and that’s what 95% of the audience seem to want: a completely adequate reading of the album, with little to extend it into a richer experience or to hint at what might

come next, post-Mercury.

That may not be as critical a point as it seems - they’re fantastically well received, flawless performers, and at several points a captivating combination of pure rhythm and melody. But the threat of breaking free of their self-imposed uptightness - a possibility hinted at on ‘An Awesome Wave’ - is never carried through. This, rather than creating a growing sense of tension and drama, results in feelings alternating between repetitive boredom and the sad thought that a low common denominator is being settled upon.

What on record sounds like inventive autumnal indie jittering seems - at least in the atmosphere here tonight - frustratingly noncommittal; an ADHD/Spotify-track-skipping band that can’t decide upon or flesh out any one of scores of their rhythmic, melodic and tonal sketches. In a small, dank venue, with band and audience members less separated, this music could be spooky, skeletal and repay thoughtful analysis.

Tonight, there isn’t enough anger, aggression, weirdness, confidence or just something to really hold the attention.

It’s not that every band - or even every Mercury Prize winner - need to embrace the void like Primal Scream once did. Never forget, M People also feature in the previous winners’ list. There just seems to be too little commitment to chaos, too few tortured souls wrenching music out of their darkest places, in much of recent modern music. If Alt-J are prizewinners because they represent the best of something, it’s difficult to know what that thing actually is, and that’s a strange situation.

Simon Minter

BRIGHT LIGHT BRIGHT LIGHT

The Jericho Tavern

Every so often a musical act comes along with all the right characteristics for it to become your new favourite but fails in some way, be it execution, tone or sheer lack of tunes. For me, Bright Light Bright Light is not one of those musical acts. In fact, he – singer/drummer/sample triggerer Rod Thomas – takes those characteristics and conjures them into something glorious.

A love of both the sweeping synths and soundscapes of the Pet Shop Boys and 90s piano house is evident; in places, I even get a whiff of Sybil (of Stock, Aitken & Waterman fame). ‘Moves’ veers into the dreamy territory of the wonderful Swedish synthpop duo The Sound of Arrows, and latest single ‘Feel It’ even has an amazing Carol Kenyon/Loleatta Holloway bit.

New song ‘In Your Care’ is probably most representative of the songwriting craft on display; atmospheric but with a pounding bass, it sounds like a dance remix of a much more delicate and

mellow song. The drops and peaks are carefully paced, enveloping and carrying you on the song’s journey.

Rod sings (beautifully) like he’s saying what he wants to say the way he wants to say it, not worrying about cynicism or conforming to any sort of expectation of what people want to hear. And it’s heartfelt and poignant. ‘Disco Moment’ brilliantly captures a moment it’s hard to describe and one you might not even admit acknowledging to yourself; ‘Cry At Films’ laments the difference between the perfection of celluloid relationships and reality, and the anthemic refrain of ‘Love Part II’ – “I’m in love again” – seems simultaneously euphoric and vulnerable. Sometimes all the analysis you can muster can’t describe the emotion something provokes in you. “I’m in love again”; quite.

Bright Light Bright Light is utter pop magnificence and the world needs to know.

Kirsten Etheridge

SMART GUITARS
... RESTRING ...
... REVALUE ...
... REBORNT ...
• Guitar, amp and pedal repairs, custom modifications, strings and accessories
• Collection and delivery service available
CONTACT DAVE SMART
smartguitars@ntlworld.com • 07710 216368

Famous Monday Blues
at THE JERICHO TAVERN
56 WALTON STREET, OXFORD, OX2 6AE
01865 311775
December
3rd ADAM BOMB (USA)
plus support from 1000 MILE HIGHWAY
10th THE AYNSLEY LISTER BAND
17th Famous Monday Blues Christmas Party. Hosted by THE BLUE BISHOPS (UK)
with special guests Leburn, Jules & Lorna Fothergill, Claire Johnson, Jedson Davis and Cherry Lee Mewis
CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR INFO GIGS, PHOTOS ETC
www.famousmondayblues.co.uk

NEUME AUDIO
neumeaudio.com
07919 400 527
tim@neumeaudio.com
Location recording and production services
• Fully mobile digital recording studio
• Experienced and creative engineer
• Setup in any space
• Very competitive prices

THE OXFORD RECORD DVD & CD FAIR
OXFORD TOWN HALL
Saturday 5th January
10am - 3.30pm
Rock/pop/jazz/soul/reggae/indie/all other genres
Accessories/memoriabilia/books.
Brand new and back catalogue/Rare Vinyl
www.usrfairs.co.uk

TRUCK MUSIC STORE
a rapture company
OXFORD'S INDEPENDENT MUSIC HUB
CD VINYL DVD
NEW RELEASES, RECOMMENDATIONS, PRE-OWNED VINYL, CD AND DVD, LOCAL BAND SECTION, LOCAL GIG TICKETS
Now incorporating... THE KEEN BEAN COFFEE CLUB
101 COWLEY ROAD OXFORD OX4 1HU 01865 793866
INFO@TRUCKMUSICSTORE.CO.UK WWW.TRUCKMUSICSTORE.CO.UK OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK @TruckMusicStore
SHOP INDEPENDENT THIS CHRISTMAS
We have lots of great gift ideas in-store... Visit us for all the seasons best-selling albums and films and our usual depth of stock. We are also keen to try and recommend something new and exciting for the music lover in your life!
Why not treat someone to a deluxe vinyl reissue or box-set? We've got recent titles from The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Nick Drake, Blur, Velvet Underground and many more!
And of course Rapture vouchers are available and redeemable in-store all year round!

the

backroom

@ the bully

162 Cowley Road Oxford

01865 244516

DECEMBER

Every Tuesday

THE OXFORD JAZZ CLUB

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

4th NEW JAZZ COLLECTIVE

11th HEAVY DEXTERS

18th THE HUGH TURNER BAND

Wednesdays

12th DARREN HAYMAN / MY CROOKED TEETH / TREV WILLIAMS (Prince’s Trust Benefit). £8.50 adv / £10 door

Thursdays

6th CHARLIE DORE

13th IT’S ALL ABOUT THE MUSIC ACOUSTIC CLUB CHRISTMAS GATHERING – With Osprey and friends.

20th OX4 ALL-STARS

Every Friday

FUNKY FRIDAY

Funk, soul, boogie, house and R&B. 11pm-2.30am; £3 before 12; £4 after.

Early Friday shows

7th BURIED IN SMOKE presents TRUCKFIGHTERS / DESERT STORM / STEAK / MOTHER CORONA

21st A TRIBUTE TO LED ZEPPELIN with Ady Davey, Denny Ilett, Jerry Soffe, Tony Batey, The Shapes, Andy Crowdy and Daisy Palmer.

Saturdays

1st SIMPLE – House & techno – with HUXLEY / MIDLAND / residents

8th SONIC – House

15th SIMPLE – Residents night.

22nd HODGE PODGE – Christmas funk night feat. FUNKTIONAL / FUNK JUGGLERS / DJs Bastados / Oozat

Sundays

Haven Club – live blues

9th OLI BROWN

Monday 31st NEW YEAR’S EVE PARTY – 90s soul, modern r’n’b & ragga. 10-3am; £5adv

DR SHOTOVER: Slight Entertainment

Ah, there you are - pull up a pew. Stiffeners all round, what? Don’t mind if I do, old boy. Make mine a quintuple brandy-and-cocaine, with a DLT sandwich on the side. I need hardly tell you that all of us here at the East Indies Club are still reeling. (Well, yes, point taken – we are *always* reeling, especially after the sun has hit the yard-arm in Kowloon)... No, it’s this terrible news from the world of Light Entertainment... particularly the business with our late chum Quimby-Saddleworth... yes, the popular and zany presenter of *Quimbers Plays Pop*, *Quim’ll Fix It* and (going back a few years) *Saddle’s Travels*. The revelations, the cover-ups, the simply frightful frightfulness! Who’d have thought when he judged *Hospital Radio ‘Rear of The Year’* in 1983 that he was taking such a, erm, *hands-on* approach? As for the stories emerging from the dressing room at *Top of the Gropes*... well, I don’t mind telling you that we’re all really REALLY shocked. [Solemn nods along the length of the East Indies Club bar]. Thing is – and I think I speak for all of us here - we were all convinced he was as gay as George Boy-Michael-George. Hwagh HWAGHHHH [Dr S breaks into wheezy laughter, which spreads along the bar]... What’s that? The net is tightening on all those who consorted with Old Quimbers? Quimby WHO? Never heard of him. No photos! [Dr S leaps surprisingly nimbly over the bar and legs it out of the back door of the East Indies Club]. So long, suckers! Next month: Noel’s Louse Party



‘Can you show me on the puppet exactly where old Quimbers touched you, Dr S... preferably without saying “Gottle o’ geer”?’

THE WHEATSHEAF

Saturday 1st December

THE CRUSHING

CARAVAN OF WHORES + PROSPERINA + SEA BASTARD + EYES OF EVE 8pm /£5

Friday 7th December

KNIGHTS OF MENTIS

BIG SOCIETY + THE INDESCRIBABLE UNKNOWN + ELEPHANT SHAMPOO 8pm/£5

Saturday 8th December

HEADCOUNT

SPACE HEROES OF THE PEOPLE + BEAVER FUEL + TRAPS + LAIMA BITE 8pm/£5

Friday 14th December

TORN LIKE COLOURS

CHILDREN OF THE SUN 8pm/£5

Saturday 15th December

THE GRACEFUL SLICKS

ULYSSES STORM + YELLOW FEVER + VERY NICE HARRY 8pm/£5

Sunday 16th December

UNDERSMILE

DALLAS DON’T + TIGER MENDOZA + D GWALIA 8pm/£5

Thursday 20th December

GNARWOLVES

CAMERA LUCIDA + BEAR TRAP 8pm/£5

Saturday 22nd December

VON BRAUN

LES CLOCHARDS + STEM + BEARD OF DESTINY

WELCOME TO PEEPWORLD 8pm/£5

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford, OX1 4DF

mblproductions@gmail.com / www.facebook.com/wheatsheaf.oxford

INTRODUCING....

Nightshift’s monthly guide to the best local music bubbling under

Phil McMinn

Who is he?

Phil McMinn should really need little introduction to local music fans. Over the past ten years he’s fronted both Fell City Girl and The Winchell Riots – both big local favourites and in the case of FCG, the first (and only) band ever to top Nightshift’s end of year Top 20 two years running. “I got bored of compromise and democracy so I split them up,” he says of his previous bands. After Winchell Riots split, Phil took some time off from playing music before returning under his own name, having played solo shows in the past. He has regularly played at Beard Museum Records nights, recently supported Sea Of Bees, and this month releases his debut four-track EP, ‘A Crystal / A Diamond / An End / A Start’ on the label.

What does he sound like?

Possessed of one of the most striking voices of any local singer, Phil’s songs are sparse, hushed affairs, as close to arias as typical pop songs at times and infused with intense but understated emotion. Tender piano runs and a middle distance swirl and swell of electronics allow his voice centre stage. Asked to describe his own music, Phil says, “Andrew Mears from Pet Moon once took the piss out of my music for being ‘too sad’. That’ll do nicely.”

What inspires him?

“A particular place on the east coast of England; my dad’s paintings; David Grossman; John Martyn; Kieran Hebden.”

Career highlight so far:

“I sent copies of my music to Dave Eggers at McSweeney’s who wrote back saying he loved it and it was ‘soundtracking’ the writing of his new book. Graham Swift also sent me a long letter and a copy of his collected essays with one of my lyrics inscribed in the front of it. For me that was as big as it gets.”

And the lowlight

“Working with people with local ambitions.”



photo: Jonny Fugstley

His favourite other Oxfordshire act is:

“Gunning For Tamar. I’d like to make toy dolls out of all of them (with accessories) and have a different favourite depending on what day it was.”

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

“‘Hope Is Important’ and/or ‘100 Broken Windows’ by Idlewild. Sorry it’s not one but there’s a double disc available, I think.”

When is his next gig and what can newcomers expect?

“December 16th at the Cellar as part of a new night called Irregular Folk. It’s like they made the name up just for me.”

His favourite and least favourite things about Oxford music are:

“Best things: There are a handful of people who are literally dedicating their lives to keeping the scene alive – Jimmy at the Cellar, Joal at the Wheatsheaf, Nightshift. Worst thing: The loss of the Zodiac. If you weren’t there you don’t know Oxford.”

You might like him if you like:

Bon Iver; James Vincent McMorrow; John Martyn; Roddy Woomble; Elliot Smith.

Hear him here:

philmcminn.bandcamp.com

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

20 YEARS AGO

Fuzzgun slouched disinterestedly on the front cover of December 1992’s issue of *Curfew* magazine. The indie-metallers were interviewed in “a tiny pub in an even tinier village where the local teenagers entertain themselves by standing in the middle of the road. Not doing anything; just sanding in the road.” “They used to stand outside our garage when we rehearsed,” revealed Fuzzgun, “until they got bored. It was like having a fancub.” Apparently someone from Fuzzgun had once thrown a pint of beer at the *Curfew* editor after he told a member of The Daisies at a gigs that he thought they were great and the member of **The Daisies** told Fuzzgun he’d said they were shit. Thrill a minute stuff.

Radiohead’s ‘Creep’ and **Ride**’s ‘Chrome Waves’ topped *Curfew*’s Top 20 Songs of The Year, which also featured tracks by **The Anyways** (‘Wider’); **Arthur Turner’s Lovechild** (‘Lucy House’); **Death By Crimpers** (‘Nameless’) and **The Jennifers** (‘Tomorrow’s Rain’).

Arthur Turner’s Lovechild were also that month’s Demo Of The Month, sharing the accolade with Banbury metallers **Five Alarm Panic**, while the simply-monikered **Y** were bottom of the pile, prompting the exasperated reviewer to ask “why does every rock band feel the need to write a fucking ballad?” A question we still ask ourselves twenty years on.

Top gigs this month included the mighty **Shonen Knife** and **Therapy?** at the **Oxford Venue** and **Boltthrower** at the **Jericho Tavern** – still regarded as the loudest gig ever in Oxford, based mainly on the fact that it made the normally steel-stomached **Mac** vomit afterwards. The second **Your Song**

party featured a now legendarily drunken set from Radiohead (playing ‘Money’, ‘Rhinstone Cowboy’ and ‘Hooked On Classics’), who were joined for a night of mayhem by The Jennifers, Death By Crimpers (a mighty ‘Are Friends Electric?’), **The Candyskins** and **The Bigger The God**, among others. Hangovers were had.

Among local band names lost to history were **Vicar’s New Mistress**, **Love Like Us**, **Wendy Falls**, **Temple Dogs** and **Sunfly**.

10 YEARS AGO

The Young Knives, who still had a The in their name back then, topped **Nightshift**’s end of year Top 20 in December 2002 with their timeless classic ‘Walking On The Autobahn’. “While the world and his dog relived late-60s Detroit, they sneaked a sack of post-punk screwballs under the wire and doused them in hysterical Pixies-inspired pop. Blindin’ stuff,” ran the editorial tribute. Runner up was **Supergrass**’s ‘Grace’, while **Goldrush** (‘Same Picture’), **Winnebago Deal** (‘Whisky Business’), **Coma Kai** (‘Fury’) and **Dustball** (‘Name & Number’) also featured at the top of the list, though we have no idea where the likes of **Firebrand** or **Cactus** are nowadays, their moment of glory being bright but brief.

Little by way of local music news this month other than that **Fusion FM**’s local music show **The Fortnightly Fix**, presented by Smilx frontman **Lee Christian**, was in doubt as the station rescheduled its programming. After a timetable change, it was eventually saved.

The National headlined **The Cellar** as part of **Vacuous Pop**’s monthly club night, while other

THIS MONTH IN OXFORD MUSIC HISTORY

names in town included **Gomez** up at **Brookes** and **Add N To (X)** at the **Zodiac**.

5 YEARS AGO

An enigmatic front cover of **Sharron Kraus** graced the cover of **Nightshift**’s December 2007 issue, the local folkstress a far more successful artist over in the States than she was in her adopted home city, despite a numerous rave reviews of her myriad albums in **Nightshift**. You just don’t take any notice, do you? Her songs drew on traditional English and Appalachian murder ballads. “I don’t sleep with my brother or sit in a tower waiting to murder potential suitors, but on some level what I’m writing about is true. Probably in the same way the Bible is true,” declared Sharron of the gothic horror nature of her dark, rootsy music, slipping a sleeping draft into our pint of lager. Her ‘Right Wantonly-A-Mumming’ album was out this month, an album of traditional songs recorded with fellow local folk luminaries including **John Spiers**, **Ian Giles**, **Fay Field** and **Claire Lloyd**.

Foals topped **Nightshift**’s traditional end of year Top 20 with their anthemic ‘Hummer’, the band’s growing reputation helped along by an appearance at a special *Skins* party and a riotous set at **Truck Festival** earlier in the year. **Little Fish**’s ‘Devil’s Eyes’ was runner up, while **Radiohead**’s ‘House Of Cards’, **Mr Shadown**’s ‘Look Out, There’s A Black Man Coming’, **Jonquil**’s ‘Lions’ and **A Silent Film**’s ‘Chromatic Eyes’ also featured.

Supergrass played a two-night stint at **Oxford Town Hall**, while **CSS**, **Metronomy**, **Olafur Arnalds** and **Minus The Bear** were among other highlights of the gigging month in Oxford.

APPLETREE studios
72 TRACK DIGITAL / 24 TRACK ANALOGUE
Est. 1985
CELEBRATING 26 YEARS IN THE BUSINESS
Take a look at the new website and recent refurb at
www.appletreestudios.com
FOR ALL YOUR RECORDING, MASTERING AND DUPLICATING NEEDS
01844 237916
Great rates for local Bands / Soloists

WAREHOUSE STUDIOS
Recording and rehearsal studios
3 Rehearsal rooms
25 years of quality recording
Tel: 07876487923
Email: info@warehousestudios.com
www.warehousestudios.com

Coldroom Rehearsals
Dungeon Recording
Professional multi-track Recording Studio
with large Live Room (45 Sq. Mtrs)
From £125 per day
3 Rehearsal Rooms, all backline, P.A.,
Tuned piano inc. From £10 per hour
SUSY HAINES 07823 770079

Grannyflat Studios
*Great selection of analogue and digital recording equipment
*Fantastic Live room with natural light
*On Site Accommodation
*Idyllic Farm Location
*Evening and Weekend Bookings Available
info@grannyflatstudios.co.uk
01865 884042
www.grannyflatstudios.co.uk

DEMOS

Sponsored by

TROJAN HORSE RECORDINGS

Demo of the Month wins a free half day at Silver Street Studios in Reading, courtesy of Trojan Horse Recordings. Visit www.trojanhorserecordings.co.uk

DEMO OF THE MONTH

SEBASTIAN REYNOLDS

By God the evenings are drawing in. Hell, the bloody afternoons are pretty much pitch-black. So we need something fittingly sad and autumnal to soundtrack our epic cabin fever wine consumption, and this seems to do the job. Seb Reynolds has probably been in more bands than we've had bottles of cheap Shiraz (and that's a lot), from Sexy Breakfast and The Evenings through improv outfit Holiday In Vietnam to his current involvement in The Epstein and Flights Of Helios. Not busy enough with all that and running his own music PR and management business, he's recording a solo album, from which the two songs on this demo are taken. From starlit twinkling and spaced-out hums and bleeps, to pulses of jagged noise, his gloomy but deftly lightweight electronica and piano parts pitch and yaw between Eno, Steve Reich and even Boards Of Canada, by way of assorted Warp Records alumni, soundtrack music for lo-fi sci-fi movies that rely on shadows and hints of things rather than CGI monsters and laser guns. Actually, thinking about it, much of this sounds like Vangelis' soundtrack to Carl Sagan's classic *Cosmos* series. Yep, that'll do us just fine. More wine anyone? We could be here some time.

GAVROCHE

"I write songs for insomniacs, ne'er-do-wells, lonely souls and those with misery in their guts," writes Lucie Norton, who appears to be Gavroche. We think at least three of those apply to Nightshift. Possibly all four on those nights we're forced to go and review gigs on our own, which is quite often. So anyway, Gavroche is seemingly music created bespoke for us. It's not as dark as we're hoping for, we must confess, though Lucie's got a playful musical imagination, which manifests itself as slightly wayward piano-led jazz with a leaning towards the Joanna Newsome school of avoiding too many obvious rules. Her voice is warmly soulful but slightly girly, the piano dancing around the melody, everything bizarrely interrupted by an alarm clock going off halfway through. "The Devil has my soul / And the worms have my flesh / But you have my heart," she croons on the comically morbid 'Vena Cava', suggesting she's the sort of girl you'd like around at Christmas to recount ghastly gothic ghost stories to the kids in front of the fire. She's probably a witch.

DR DUB & THE UPSETS

We get some weird old stuff through for review purposes here at Nightshift but we're not sure we've ever had a cover version of The Turtles' 1967 hit 'Happy Together' remade by a prominent member of the local improv community, accompanied by a video featuring various people wearing David Cameron, Rebekah Brookes and Rupert Murdoch masks. Because, let's face it, that's kind of a niche market, isn't it? Anyway, this is the work of local musical veteran Malcolm Atkins, a stretched-out psychedelic electro-folk take on the song, with his masked chums doing their performance art thing in the setting of a Cotswold country house. Dave and Rebekah are seen texting each other while Rupert humps an inflatable globe (not exactly subtle in the metaphor stakes, you have to agree), before the trio are seen sharing a cosy supper together – a Cornish pasty, obviously. The final scene features the delightful Ms Brookes behind bars. We live in hope.

SIERPINSKY

Sierpinsky are named, we presume, after the Polish mathematician Wacław Sierpinski, which we guess makes a change from naming your band after the title of an old Oasis or Stereophonics song. They probably are a pretty highbrow bunch since they credit Mahler as an influence, alongside The Beatles and Pink Floyd, and claim that "the modern commercial crap we've grown up with has turned our brains to mulch, only capable of recycling the same old tunes," before adding, "please don't put us in the Demo Dumper." Little chance of that, since at their best Sierpinsky capture a little of Stornoway's autumnal folk ambience, notably demo highlight 'The Dusky Lindens', a misty-eyed folk-pop reflection that's all twinkling acoustic guitar and handclap rhythms, reminiscent in parts of Jonquil's early songs. It's got a bit of drama about it too even if they lose sight of the central core of the song by trying to be a bit too clever at timers. 'Raging Rams' is a sweet lament, tinged with bitterness that rouses itself to a swashbuckling shanty towards the end, but final track 'Us Onwards' finds them dropping the ball somewhat, sounding strained when, as they've just shown, they're at their best when it sounds like they're not making too much of an effort.

LEIGH BEAVERFUEL

Anyone even vaguely aware of local noisemakers Beaverfuel – and there must be at least twelve or thirteen of you who

are – will know that singer Leigh tends towards the cynical and potty-mouthed side of lyric writing. So this one-song demo, seasonally entitled 'Santa's Ruined Christmas', will come as no surprise. Nor will the dubious quality. "I went Christmas shopping with my mummy / She made me sit on some bad bloke's knee," is his opening gambit of a determinedly trashy one-chord musical grumble, that relives various years' Yuletide traumas, always ending up with Leigh discovering Santa shagging* some member of his family – his mum, his missus, and finally his dog. It's almost heroic in its puerility, but dig beneath the surface profanity and it's a metaphor for the emptiness of the festive season and a critique of how the true spirit of Christmas has been lost amid rampant commercialism and... oh sod it; it's a song about Santa shagging a dog. Buy your gran a copy and stick it in her stocking. Fnar fnar. (* - not his word usage – but this is a family magazine)

D'KARCC

The name sounds like the sound a parrot might make if it was throwing up the morning after a heavy vodka and sunflower seed session and the scrappy accompanying note looks like it was scrawled by a maniac toddler in a hurry, but despite this, there's something about d'Karcc we quite like. We *think* the first track here is called 'Pin Insamountable Effort', but your guess is as good as ours, and you can't even see the paper it's written on. Whatever it's called it's a churning lo-fi rap number, ultra-minimalist beats mixed with middle-distance guitar dissonance over which the monotone monologue is performed. It borders on industrial but in the end it's too pedestrian to pack a real killer punch. And that's kind of the criticism we could level at the rest of the demo – some neat ideas and a way with an atmosphere but no ability or inclination to move things along. 'The Box, The Box' is nasty and electronic but meanders too long in the same murky pool of factory noise, while 'Something Goa Neva Wanted' is growly, doom-laden industrial hip hop, primitive in a good way but too basic to fully engage. Reservations aside, there's enough here to suggest d'Karcc (or Daniel from Wallingford as we'll call him) can take these basic ideas to a higher level next time. And Dan, work on that handwriting too while you're about it – it's shocking.

HARRIET AINSCOUGH

Like d'Karcc, Harriet Ainscough has more than a germ of something special about her but maybe doesn't have the full package yet. Not that she sounds even remotely like old Karccy boy. Instead she's a rather wistful acoustic singer-songwriter of the questing and confessional variety. She's got a lovely voice – very slightly cracked and plaintive,

managing to convey plenty of emotion (mostly, it has to be said, the emotions of deep hurt and reflective sorrow) without even having to try too hard – always a sign of a good singer. 'The Wolves' marks her out as the sort of dreamy, slightly kooky singer that might end up soundtracking a mobile phone advert; there's a bit of the Eliza Doolittle about her without a doubt. The problem is the song's been and gone before it's really properly started. Better is 'And So Much For Them', even more minimal in its arrangement – just some stark acoustic strumming to augment her voice – and reminiscent of Camera Obscura's most reflective moments. It's all too timid to make a sizeable impression just yet and she'll need to up her game a fair bit to compete in an overcrowded marketplace, but Harriet here's got the essential building blocks to make a go of it, which is more than most singers of this sort have.

THE DEMO DUMPER

MILLION FACES

In a sort of reverse scenario to the two previous demos, Million Faces seem to have their act all sorted, from the big, lush production, to the sky-searching guitar solos and chest-beating choruses. But unlike those previous two demos, this sounds emotionally stunted, any character it once possessed polished away to a bland sheen to avoid offending anyone whose idea of musical innovation is yet another cover of a Rihanna song on *X-Factor*. It starts off well enough, all echo-laden guitar and a vaguely funky undertow, the sort of thing U2 did very early on before Bono's ego developed its own gravity field – all hollowed-out stadium rock and big, heroic backing vocal chants. Lyrically though it's more than a little suspect: "The sex is on fire / The temperature in the room is going higher and higher," and it all sounds like it's taking itself way too seriously. From hereon in things go all to pot. 'Pictures' has more Edgy guitar (edgy as in it sounds like The Edge, rather than, "Whoo, that's a bit out there, ennit?") but is ultimately sterile stadium-friendly Christian guitar pop. An acoustic 'Words For Her' is what *faux*-Cockney footie hooligan types might rightly describe as soppy bollocks and they've gone down the bland boyband route, which means they'll probably sell a million albums. One thing that does puzzle us about Million Faces is their description of themselves as "the biggest musical accident to come out of Witney since they decided to form in 2010." Which not only means they consider themselves an accident (perhaps of the sort an untrained dog might deposit), but one that is comparable to themselves. Makes no sense to us, but then neither does the appeal of this kind of wishy washy soft rock syrup.

*Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, OX5 1ZU, or email links to nightshift@oxfordmusic.net, clearly marked Demos. **IMPORTANT:** no review without a contact address and phone number; no more than four tracks on a demo please. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo.*

rotator
Interzone House
74-77 Magdalen Rd
Oxford OX4 1RE
REHEARSAL ROOMS
Available 7 days a week • From £28 for 3 hours
Centre of town location with car parking
Backline hire available on request
for bookings and enquiries please call
01865 240250
24 hour text & phone 07851 400618

shonk studios
Recording Studios
Protools on Mac
Great Sound
Rates For Local Bands
Phone - 01865 203922
or
07878960286
info@theshonk.com www.theshonk.com

TURAN AUDIO.co.uk
Professional, independent CD mastering

Artists mastered in the studio last month include;
**SHAKER HEIGHTS, SYMPHONY OF PAIN, MOSCOW DRUG CLUB, HOT HOOVES, FELLA, HEADCOUNT, DB BAND, RED ENEMY, SAM WILLIAMS, JONA OVERGROUND, MIKE BLOW AND CAMILLE BAZIADOLY, RAMONES, NIDINGR, JOSH SHIRES, VALERYAN, DAVID PEARCE, PETER MOORE, NICK COPE, THE BIG SUN, G SOUL, PASSION PLAY, THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY, GO ON DO IT JUMP,
01865 716466 tim@turanaudio.co.uk**

THE COURTYARD STUDIO

PROTOOLS HD2, MTA 980 CONSOLE 32/24/24, OTARI MTR90 MK2 24 TRACK TAPE MACHINE, 2 TRACKING ROOMS, SUPERB CONTROL ROOM WITH GOOD SELECTION OF MICS & OUTBOARD GEAR + MIDI FACILITIES (Inc LOGIC AUDIO, AKAI S1000, OLD SKOOL ROLAND etc.)

Residential facilities included.
www.courtyardrecordings.com
PHONE PIPPA FOR DETAILS on 01235 845800

TAD STUDIOS
www.tadstudios.co.uk
www.facebook.com/tadstudios
Four hours from £30!
Call **07882569425**, e-mail info@tadstudios.co.uk or find us on Facebook to make an enquiry / booking
Two fully equipped rehearsal rooms located just off the A34 near Bicester:
• Mapex kits
• Fender/Marshall/Ashdown amplification
• 1kw PA system and microphones
• Backline included with room
• Fully maintained equipment
• Tea and coffee making facilities
• Doorstep parking
• Convenient hourly booking
• Open 7 days a week, 8am – Midnight
• Introduce a band / block booking / student deals
• Book by phone / e-mail / Facebook for your convenience

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT

£5 adv / NUS / members, £4 NHS

10.30pm - 3am • over 18s only



Sat 1st Dec • £11.50 adv
7pm - 10pm

Netsky Live

Sun 2nd Dec • £21.50 adv
The Saw Doctors

Thurs 6th Dec • £17.50 adv
For Those About to Rock
with Livewire AC/DC and ZZ Tops

Fri 7th Dec • £12 adv
7pm - 10pm
Boot Led Zeppelin

Sat 8th Dec • £6 adv
Upstairs
ft. **Lewis Watson**
in association with BBC Introducing
+ Adam Barnes + Jasmine Hill
+ Gavroche + Alex Lanyon

Tues 11th Dec • £18 adv
The Damned
+ The Dickies

Thurs 13th Dec • £24 adv
Orbital
+ Nathan Fake

Fri 14th Dec • £12.50 adv
Electric Six
10th Anniversary Tour,
performing FIRE in its entirety

Sat 15th Dec • £7 adv
Skeletor

Sun 16th Dec • £15 adv
7pm - 10pm • Rescheduled from 28/9/12
• original tickets valid

Dappy

Sun 16th Dec • £12.50 adv
Stooshe

Fri 21st Dec • £8 adv
8pm - 12 midnight
The Original
Rabbit Foot Spasm Band
Christmas Knees-Up
ft. The Original Rabbit Foot
Spasm Band (Live),
Count Skylarkin'
& more

Mon 24th Dec • £8 adv
10pm - 2am • over 18s only
A Reggae Christmas
ft. Makating
+ Count Skylarkin'
+ Wrongtom
+ House of Roots

Mon 31st Dec • £10 adv
10.30pm - 3am • over 18s only
Propaganda
New Years Eve
Party Animal
with Jack FM & Trashy
includes Propaganda
Wristband giving you FREE
entry to every Propaganda
across the country in January!

Sat 19th Jan 2013 • £6 adv
7pm - 11.30pm
Upstairs
ft. **Tall Ships**
in association with BBC Introducing

Sun 10th Feb 2013 • £12 adv
Modestep

Thurs 14th Feb 2013 • £14 adv
Everything
Everything

Fri 15th Feb 2013 • £10 adv
CASH
Johnny Cash Tribute

Thurs 21st Feb 2013 **SOLD OUT**
Jake Bugg

Fri 22nd Feb 2013 • £8.50 adv
11pm • over 18s only
Off Ya Rocka
ft. Slipmatt, Brandon Block,
Delite, John Bond,
Andy Armstrong, Steely Dan

Fri 22nd Feb 2013 • £10 adv
7pm - 10pm

Dog Is Dead

Sun 24th Feb 2013 • £20 adv
7.30pm
U.F.O.

Fri 1st Mar 2013 **SOLD OUT**
Of Monsters
and Men

Sun 3rd Mar 2013 • £14 adv
Funeral For
A Friend

Thurs 7th Mar 2013 • £15 adv
The Alarm

Sat 9th Mar 2013 • £17.50 adv
7pm - 10pm
Rescheduled show • original tickets valid
Space

Mon 11th Mar 2013 • £14 adv
Jessie Ware

Sat 16th Mar 2013 • £14 adv
7pm - 10pm
Lawson
Chapman Square Tour

Mon 18th Mar 2013 • £23 adv
The Stranglers

Thurs 21st Mar 2013 • £9 adv
7pm - 10pm
Dizraeli &
The Small Gods

Fri 22nd Mar 2013 • £10 adv
7pm - 10pm
Bastille

Fri 22nd Mar 2013 • £12.50 adv
7pm - 10pm
David Ford

Fri 5th Apr 2013 • £8.50 adv
7pm - 10pm
Janet Devlin

Fri 19th Apr 2013 • £22.50 adv
7pm - 10pm
Michael Schenker's
Temple Of Rock

Thurs 9th May 2013 • £20 adv
Seated show • unreserved seating
Colin Hay

Sat 1st June 2013 • £10 adv
7pm - 10pm
Senses Fail

Tickets for Saturday night shows INCLUDE FREE ENTRY to Propaganda / Trashy (or £6, £5 NUS / members, £4 NHS on the door)

o2academyoxford.co.uk



facebook facebook.com/o2academyoxford
twitter twitter.com/o2academyoxford
YouTube youtube.com/o2academytv

190 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UE • Doors 7pm unless stated
Venue box office opening hours: Mon-Sat 12pm-4pm
ticketweb.co.uk • wegotickets.com • seetickets.com • gigantic.com